

Passionist Family Group Newsletter – 2 August 2026



Reflection

There is much to contemplate in this week's readings. They are full of invitation and surprise, reminding us that we are welcomed into relationship with God. The food for our journey comes freely from God, without cost or conditions that would prevent us from accepting the invitation. It is an invitation offered with support, guidance and grace.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul reminds us that God is at the centre of our lives and that Jesus is essential to our journey. His life, death and resurrection reveal God's constant presence. Through his ministry, Jesus shows us the qualities of God, and we are reminded that, in the end, nothing can separate us from God's love. Jesus pleads our case; therefore, we are invited simply to turn towards him and live in the way he has shown us.

In the Gospel, the theme of food brings the readings together. God knows our needs and provides food for our journey, but we too are called to provide nourishment for others along the way. It is not only about what we can do, but about what God can do through us. In the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, we are invited to stand in awe of how Jesus uses ordinary things, such as bread and fish, and encourages the disciples to recognise the resources already available to them.

As we know, they come forward with five loaves and two fish, asking, in effect, how this could be useful among so many? Yet we can be sure that others in the crowd also had resources, and the invitation to generosity may well have moved people to share what they had. In doing so, all were fed and nothing was wasted. We might also pause to consider Jesus himself. What would he have been feeling after hearing of the death of his cousin John? He would surely have been sad and wanting to withdraw to a quiet place to reflect and mourn. However, the people work out where he is going and arrive before him. How does he respond?

He responds with compassion, offering love, forgiveness and healing. Then, as evening approaches, he attends to the practical need for food. This reveals what God is like: through Jesus, God's love is shown as active, generous and always offered. Scripture scholar William Barclay offers an important insight into this miracle: *"We must never be content to regard a miracle as something which happened; we must see it as something which happens."* Every encounter with Jesus becomes a moment of presence and power, shaped by love and mercy.

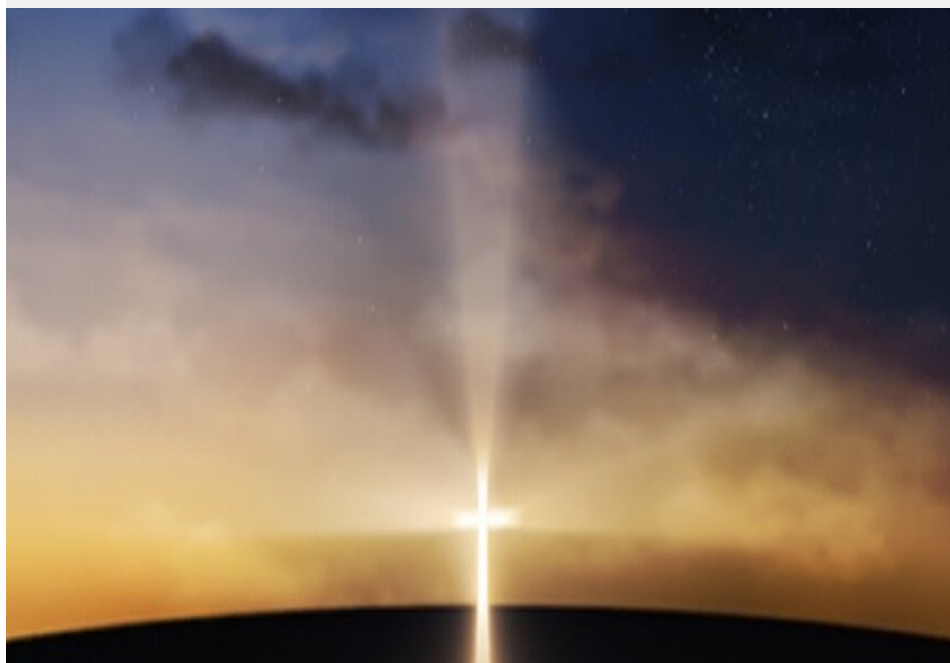
The miracle may be understood as the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, but Barclay also suggests that it is the miracle of selfish people becoming generous at the touch of Jesus. He writes, *"It was the miracle of the birth of love in grudging hearts."* However we understand this miracle, one thing is certain: when Jesus is present, the weary find rest and the hungry are fed.

We sometimes forget that the call to be like Jesus means remaining active in service to others. Yes, we may become tired, lonely or distressed, but there will always be someone who needs us to listen, to accept, and to stand alongside them. Our time and our lives are bound up with being present to others. This call reflects the example of Jesus, who, even in his grief, found a way to minister and lead others back to God through practical care and compassion.

Michael Fallon MSC writes, *"Nothing is impossible to God. Our talents, our time, our hands, our hearts, our love, our acts of service can bring sustenance to a hungry world. We do not 'send them away'. We do need to unite ourselves to Jesus and be caught up in his prayer to his Father. We need to believe the Good News and be open to what God may choose to do through us."*

God go with you,

Paul



17th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A. August 2, 2026

Nothing will separate us from the love of God

Draw near to your servants, O Lord, and answer their prayers with unceasing kindness, that, for those who glory in you as their Creator and guide, you may restore what you have created and keep safe what you have restored.

LECTIONARY READINGS

First reading: Isaiah 55:1-3

Responsorial psalm: Ps 144(145):8-9, 15-18

Second reading: Romans 8:35, 37-39

Gospel: Matthew 14:13-21

[Link to readings -click here](#)

This week the readings focus mostly on food, and more particularly on people eating together: a symbol of fellowship and togetherness, and a reminder of God's covenant with his people.

Isaiah (**First Reading**) issues an invitation to such a meal: 'Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price . . . I will make with you an everlasting covenant.' The **Psalm**, traditionally sung at mealtimes by the Israelites, praises the Lord for giving them fulfilling food. Even when he is tired and grieving the loss of John the Baptist, Jesus still shows compassion for the crowds who follow him (**Gospel**). He ensures that they can be fed, transforming the little that the disciples bring him into great abundance. This blessing and sharing of the loaves and fish by Jesus prefigures the meal we share in the Eucharist.

Great comfort and support will be gained when we fully appreciate that nothing whatsoever can separate us from the love of God through Christ our Lord. (**Second Reading**).

Aware that nothing we do or think can make God love us less or more, we pray this week for all who do not know or accept Jesus as their Lord. We also keep in our prayers those who are in desperate need of food, whether physical or spiritual.





St Heliers 35th Anniversary:

(Iain and Jan cutting the cake)

Last weekend I had the good fortune to meet with the St Heliers Team: John and Rosie Crawford, Pat and Michael, Jan and Iain, the first parish coordinators, and John and Catherine. We were welcomed by an enthusiastic and warm-hearted group who remain strong in their commitment to the aims and goals of the Passionist Family Group Movement.

Fr John Dunne, the previous parish priest, celebrated the two Masses, and the welcome he received reflected the warmth and appreciation he felt from and for this community. It was clear that his time in the parish had been spent building positive and supportive relationships, and it was equally clear how much the community valued him as their pastor and friend.

It was impressive to experience the warmth and enthusiasm on Sunday morning: a community full of energy, with many children present. We also held a formation session and were joined by our Howick PFG members.

In loving memory of Jocelyn Bryant by Mary Ellen Leen:

Dear friends

I wanted to acknowledge the passing of Jocelyn (Joss) Bryant on 21 June.

With her husband Kevin, Joss was a valued member of our Wellington Regional Team for the Passionist Family Group Movement for a number of years. [\(Photo below\)](#)

Along with Heather and Terry O'Brien, John and myself, Joss and Kevin helped support the Wellington parishes involved in the movement. They looked after Plimmerton Parish and the parishes on the Kāpiti Coast as far north as Levin, speaking at Masses, keeping in touch with parish coordinators, and meeting as a Regional Team every three months. Joss and Kev were always happy to go where needed, always with a smile and with a true Passionist Family Group heart.

When the Regional Team disbanded, we remained in touch, especially after Joss, Kevin and their family received the devastating news of a terminal cancer diagnosis in December 2023. Being Joss, she fitted her work as parish secretary at St Teresa's Plimmerton around her cancer treatment, and life continued as Joss, Kevin and the family came to terms with what this meant for them moving forward.

What amazed me was their openness and honesty throughout their journey. This helped me and many others immensely as we spoke with Joss and Kevin and considered how best to support them. We farewelled Joss on Friday 26 June in a howling southerly storm. It was a beautiful celebration of her life, full of laughter, love and tears, and it was just as she had wanted.

Kevin, the love of your life is now at peace, and our thoughts and prayers are with you, Sam, Hannah, Emma and your families.

Rest in peace, Joss. - Love always, Mary-Ellen Leen



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

www.safeguarding.catholic.org.nz

The theme for this year's formations is Nurturing and Nourishment. Hugh Mackay prefers the term “kindness” because it is the only form of human love that does not depend on affection. It is a response to 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 one another brings joy, understanding, service, care and support. It is not only about “me”, but about the welfare and nourishment we can offer one another through love, concern and compassion. This nurturing leads to nourishment of the heart. Email: paulus663@gmail.com or Mobile: 021357933

Formation Bookings: Ashburton, 8 August; and Christchurch parishes, 9 August.

A Blessing for Nurturing

*May you see your body as a well where water needs to be replenished.
May you learn how to balance your self-needs with the needs of others so that you can live in*

harmony with the world.

*May you take the time to notice and nurture what your inner wisdom is asking of you.
May you find a place in nature where you can be in silence and hear your Creator in the trees,
the birds, the wind, and the earth.*

May you care for all of creation in gratitude, humbleness, and respect.

— Kaki Grubbs, *Spiritual Literacy Certificates Program, 2024 Cohort*



Belong, Behave, Believe



Prayer:

1. We pray for peace as hostilities continue between the United States and Iran. There are no winners in war. Once again, we witness the senseless actions of power and conflict while human suffering continues unchecked.
2. We pray for all those who continue to support, assist and care for the people of Venezuela. May they find support, acceptance and comfort in their time of need.
3. We pray for peace.
4. We remember all those who are suffering as a result of wars and injustices.
5. We are reminded by Pope Leo XIV, in his first encyclical, to remain committed to the preservation of human dignity.
6. We pray with gratitude for all the men, women and children who have contributed to the life and spirit of our Passionist Family Group Movement over the past 38 years.
7. We pray for the many members of PFGs in Whakatāne who are seriously ill.
8. We pray to be like Jesus, spending ourselves in the service of others — welcoming, guiding and leading people through care, compassion and forgiveness.
9. We pray for all who are struggling to live with the pressures and constraints affecting our world.
10. Let us take up the call of Pope Leo to foster a sense of belonging in our communities and to be united in Christ — united in mission.
11. We remember that God calls on us, as people of faith, to offer our voices to help those who have none.
12. We keep in mind all those who continue to live with mental health challenges, and the families who support them each day.

Please remember in prayer Shelley Ward's brother, Brett Hanlin. Please also keep Jo Moorcroft and family, Fr Robert Steele PP and family, Leonie Christian, Margaret and

Graeme Armstrong, Kev Bryant and family, Tim Walsh, Debbie Cotter, Christine and Derrick Scott, Paul, Deb and Nick Kelly, and Norma Bellamy and family in your prayers.

Also, please remember Pat Carson, Graeme Matthews, Di Buckley, Adrian van de Pas and her sons Robert and Dean, Tim Bartells and family, Linda Darbyshire and family, Christine Geoghegan's daughter Kate, and their extended families in your prayers.

We pray for one another and for all our intentions.



Humour:

- "If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring?" "Pilgrims."
- "I thought the dryer was shrinking my clothes. Turns out it was the refrigerator all along."
- "How does dry skin affect you at work?" "You don't have any elbow grease to put into it."
- "What do you call a factory that makes okay products?" "A satisfactory."
- "Dear Math, grow up and solve your own problems."
- "What did the janitor say when he jumped out of the closet?" "Supplies!"
- "Have you heard about the chocolate record player? It sounds pretty sweet."
- "What did the ocean say to the beach?" "Nothing, it just waved."
- "Why do seagulls fly over the ocean?" "Because if they flew over the bay, we'd call them bagels."
- "I only know 25 letters of the alphabet. I don't know y."
- "How does the moon cut his hair?" "Eclipse it."
- "What did one wall say to the other?" "I'll meet you at the corner."
- "What did the zero say to the eight?" "That belt looks good on you."

Belong, Behave, Believe



Have a great week everyone.....

