

Passionist Family Group Newsletter – 16 August 2026



Reflection

In his book *The Kindness Revolution*, Hugh Mackay suggests that our influence endures long after we are gone.

“We are all a work in progress and, curiously, the work does not stop at death. Life’s work—especially love’s work—goes on, mainly through the influence we have exerted on those whose lives we have touched. It is the recollection of our presence in their lives, rather than any achievements, that people will carry with them after we are gone.”

This theme of ‘presence’ is common to us. In our liturgies, we speak of the presence of God, and we attest to Christ being present in the Eucharist. As liturgists also remind us, God is present in the Word and in us, the People of God. This sense of presence is a living dynamic, not merely a ritual associated with pledges or achievements recognised by society.

Mackay makes a valid point, and one that Christians need to consider carefully. At the end of our lives; How were we present to others? How were our love and care made visible? Were our love and service offered for accolades, or for the lifting up of others and the restoration of their worth and dignity?

The readings this Sunday again invite us to reflect on who we are and how we treat others. Isaiah reminds us that God’s covenant is open to all who recognise it and hold fast to it. In this way, the invitation to belong to God remains open to all.

None of us is self-made. We stand within a history shaped by patriarchs and ancestors consecrated to God; therefore, the Jewish people are not cut off. God remains open and inviting. From them, a whole nation arose. As Paul helps us understand, the Gentiles were once outsiders, yet through invitation they are welcomed: they too belong.

Much of Paul’s calling is expressed through his presence to the Gentiles, and he never shies away from his hope that the Jews will come to see what he sees: that Jesus is the Christ. This sense of belonging is central to our life and faith through love. It places an ongoing demand upon us to serve others, so that our presence may become a sign of God’s presence and leave lasting effects that foster love, compassion, and transformation.

The Gospel offers yet another opportunity to see Jesus as he is. Here, his thoughts turn to mission. He understood his mission as being directed first to the Jews. However, the Canaanite woman opens Jesus to see differently. He is confronted by this woman's faith—a faith made present through her love for her daughter. She seeks healing and will not stop pressing her cause because of the depth of that love.

Jesus recognises her faith and reveals his presence by accepting that such faith has come from an unexpected place. His presence enables him to recognise that God is encountered precisely in those unexpected places where judgement, bias, and prejudice may reside. He does not choose to save face or avoid embarrassment. Instead, he chooses to heal in response to her faith. Here, love is met through compassion, presence, and healing.

In our Passionist Family Groups, we can sometimes forget that this power of presence lies at the heart of our motto: we are “a Family for All”. Age does not matter. Just as parents and families strive to love and support one another, this call to be present asks us to reach out. We notice the lost and lonely, welcome those we do not know, and keep our doors open to anyone who comes.

Like Jesus we can be open to God's presence, which will lead us to unexpected places. We may not be raised up, applauded, or given accolades, but through our love and care we can offer a presence that helps others to be lifted. Through humility, service, and care, we can release the power of God in practical, down-to-earth ways that endure in people's minds and hearts long after we are gone.

Thus, the words of Matthew 25 arise: *“Insofar as you did this to one of these little ones, you did it to me.”*

God go with you,

Paul





Feast of the Assumption Saturday August 15

Mary exemplifies the ideal disciple: open, receptive, and aware of her own needs. She demonstrates how to embrace faith with humility and courage, responding to God's call with trust despite uncertainty. Her words, "I am a servant of the Lord. Let what you have said be done to me," reflect a spirit of service, faith, and love.

We are invited to adopt this attitude, facing daily challenges with a heart focused on Jesus and guided by gratitude and service. None of this is easy and it suggests that our focus needs to have God, as our centre, as did Mary. Mary's example reminds us that faith is shared, strengthened by the support and love of others, recognising God in all aspects of life. We can do this with community where love, forgiveness and compassion guide our every action.

That is our challenge – to be for others a light, a shoulder to lean on, a warm embrace, a silent strength, a humble person through smiling and accepting of our call- to not be afraid, to be present and trust in the belief our God is with us, 'Emmanuel'!

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." 2 Cor 4:7

Scripture reflection: 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A, 16 August 2026

My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples

O God, who have prepared for those who love you good things which no eye can see, fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of your love, so that, loving you in all things and above all things, we may attain your promises, which surpass every human desire.

LECTIONARY READINGS

First reading: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

Responsorial psalm: Ps 66(67):2-3, 5-6, 8

Second reading: Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

Link to readings - [click here](#)

God's love, mercy and salvation are for everyone. Although the Israelites were known as God's chosen people, the story of their beginning, their time in exile, slavery and rejection is also a story of God's love for the whole of humanity. Each of our readings this Sunday approaches this truth from a different perspective.

The prophet Isaiah (**First Reading**) exhorts us to act with justice and integrity. He foresees a time when anyone who loves and follows the way of the Lord will be part of the salvation covenant. The **Psalm** is a song of praise ringing with this truth, telling of a time when all nations will share in the loving light of God. Paul, writing to the early Gentile church in Rome, describes his conviction that their personal conversion and belief in God will help to fulfil God's promise to bring salvation to everyone, and not just to the chosen people. (**Second Reading**)

Today's **Gospel** presents an uncharacteristically abrupt Jesus initially rejecting the pleas of a desperate Canaanite woman. And yet it is this woman's determined faith and sense of humour that challenges Jesus to step beyond the boundaries of his initial mission, thus revealing the truth that his salvation and healing is for all people – no exceptions.

Let us pray that we will be able to recognise and have the courage to respond to faith expressed in surprising places. We ask too that we will each play our part in revealing God's love to the world.

Social Justice week 6-12 September Theme is You Belong 2026-2028

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'* - Our Care for our Common Home published in 2015, Pope Francis writes that our lives rest on three connected relationships: with god, with our neighbour, and with the earth itself (*Laudato Si'*, 66)

We are invited to reflect on this truth; God made you. God knows you. God loves you. You belong. **For Resources:** www.caritas.org.nz/parishes/social-justice-week

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 2026:

The Theme for this year's Formations is Nurturing and Nourishment.

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. Email: paulus663@gmail.com or Mobile: 021357933

Formation Bookings: Waihi Paeroa KatiKati October 17 & 18

There are parishes that are to confirm dates.

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 the renewal of hostilities between US and Iran continue No winners here. Again we witness the non sensical actions of power and war while the human suffering goes unchecked.
2. We pray for the refugees for all those displaced
3. We pray for Pam and Bob Arthurs
4. We prayer for all those who are experiencing the difficulties with Wild fires in Europe, Canada, USA. And the earthquake in Colombia.
5. We pray for all the people who continue to support, assist and help the people of Venezuela. May they find support, acceptance and comfort due to their loss.
6. We pray for peace.
7. We remember all those who are suffering as a result of wars and injustices and hear and act on the words of Pope Leo XIV in his first encyclical to stay strong in the preservation of human dignity.
8. 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.
9. We pray for many members of PFG's in Whakatane who are seriously ill.

10. We pray to be like Jesus, spending ourselves in the service of others- welcoming, guiding and leading people through care, compassion and forgiveness.
11. We pray for all struggling to live due to the constraints globally impacting our world
12. We remember that God calls on us, as people of faith, to offer our voices to help those who have none.
13. Keep in mind all those who continue to struggle with mental health challenges, and their families who support them in their daily lives.

Please remember in prayer Shelley Wards's brother Brett Hanlin. Please keep Jo Moorcroft and family in your prayer. Fr. Litto, 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, Norma Bellamy and family.

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

We prayer for each other and our intentions.



Humour:

- "How do you get a squirrel to like you? Act like a nut."
- "Why don't eggs tell jokes? They'd crack each other up."
- "I don't trust stairs. They're always up to something."
- "What do you call someone with no body and no nose? Nobody knows."
- "Did you hear the rumour about butter? Well, I'm not going to spread it!"
- "Why couldn't the bicycle stand up by itself? It was two tired."
- "What did one hat say to the other?" "Stay here! I'm going on ahead."

"Why did Billy get fired from the banana factory? He kept throwing away the bent ones.

"Teacher: Why are you late? Student: Class started before I got here.

Teacher: Maria, go to the map and find North America. Maria: Here it is.

Teacher: Correct. Now class, who discovered North America? Class: Maria.

Teacher: John, why are you doing your multiplication on the floor?

John: Because you told me to do it without using tables sir.

Teacher: Glen, how do you spell crocodile? Glen: KROKODIAL

Teacher: No, that's wrong.

Glen: Maybe it is wrong sir, but you asked me how I spell it.

Teacher: Donald, what is the chemical formula for water? Donald: HIJKLMNO.

Teacher: What are you talking about? Donald: Yesterday you told us it's H to O.

Teacher: Winnie, name one important thing we have today that we didn't have ten years ago. Winnie: Me!

Teacher: George Washington not only chopped down his father's cherry tree, but also admitted it. Now, Louie, do you know why his father didn't punish him?

Louie: Because George still had the axe in his hand.

Teacher: Simon, tell me honestly, do you say prayers before eating?

Simon: No sir, I don't have to. My mum is a good cook.

Teacher: Clyde, your composition on "My Dog" is exactly the same as your brother's composition. Did you copy his?

Clyde: No, sir. It's the same dog.

Teacher: Harold, what do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?

Harold: A teacher.

Belong, Behave, Believe



Have a great week everyone.....