

Passionist Family Group Newsletter – 23 August 2026



Reflection

There is much to reflect on in this week's readings. The image of the keys to the kingdom in the first reading from Isaiah is particularly important, as it helps us understand the significance of Jesus entrusting Peter with the keys of the Kingdom. Eliakim is given a position of responsibility: he is entrusted with opening and closing doors. This authority concerns who is admitted and who is excluded, an idea understood within the Jewish tradition in terms of binding and loosing—that is, discerning what is permitted and what is not.

In the second reading, Paul expresses a profound humility before the mystery of God. He recognises that he cannot fully grasp the mind of God, yet through faith and experience he has come to trust deeply in God's love. Paul's faith speaks of a mature contentment: "Thy will be done." Pastorally, his work leaves no stone unturned as he proclaims Christ to the Gentiles. He is a missionary of truth, willing to embrace suffering because he knows that God calls him to go out, support others, and bring the Gospel to them with faith, peace, love, and justice.

In the Gospel, William Barclay observes that at Caesarea Philippi Jesus "*is determined to demand a verdict from his disciples.*" Before setting his face toward Jerusalem and the road to the Cross, Jesus needs to know whether any of his followers have truly grasped who he is. They are confronted with the ultimate question: "Who do people say I am?" They respond with familiar and significant associations—Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. But Jesus then presses the question more personally: "But who do you

This question "Who do you say I am?" is also addressed to each of us. That, in the midst of daily life, with its trials and challenges, we are invited to ask ourselves: Who is Jesus for us? Our responses may take many forms, including silence. For some, Jesus is the one to whom they pray; for others, he may be the one who challenges or unsettles them. Still others may encounter him most deeply in the Church, in the celebration of the sacraments, or in moments of quiet faith.

There is great hope in Peter's response: "You are the Christ." The implications of this confession are immense. It reflects what Peter's eyes have seen, what his ears have heard, and what his heart has come to recognise. Because of this profession of faith, Peter is entrusted with responsibility. His recognition and belief that Jesus is the Christ become the foundation for his mission. As Barclay writes, "*Christianity never consists in knowing about Jesus; it always consists in knowing Jesus.*"

Peter's knowledge of Jesus—of who he truly is—makes him the first stone in the structure of the new community of believers. Jesus remains the cornerstone: the centre, the foundation, and the source from which this new assembly will be built.

Just as Eliakim was entrusted with the role of doorkeeper in the first reading, we too are called to be stewards who help open the doors of the Kingdom, so that both believer and unbeliever may enter and encounter God's mercy.

Significantly, Jesus opens the eyes of his disciples to the reality that there is no path except the way of the Cross. Human beings still tend to seek power and prestige, but these are not the values of the Kingdom. The journey to Jerusalem is the path Jesus takes in obedience to the will of his Father. It is there that the Cross must be carried, and Jesus embraces it. Throughout his ministry, he reveals the mind and heart of God, grounded in compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and justice.

The truth is before us, and although it may be difficult, it is essential that we understand the mission entrusted to us. We are called to carry the mind and heart of Jesus and to bring the lost, the lonely, the sick, and the poor to him, so that they may drink from the stream of God's mercy. When we do this, we are truly living as disciples of Jesus. Our Passionist Family Groups can be places where home is created, and where people are loved and accepted as they are. Through community and belonging, we serve one another.

As Paul wrote to the Philippians, *"Nothing can outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus... all I want is to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death"* (Philippians 3:8, 10–11).

God go with you,

Paul





Scripture reflection: 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A, 23 August 2026

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful to unite in a single purpose, grant your people to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, amid the uncertainties of this world, our hearts may be fixed on that place where true gladness is found.

LECTIONARY READINGS

First reading: Isaiah 22:19-23

Responsorial psalm: Ps 137(138):1-3, 6, 8

Second reading: Romans 11:33-36

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20

[Link to readings – click here](#)

The prophet Isaiah (today's First Reading) reminds us that God's will is always accomplished. And as we are reminded in the words of the Entrance Antiphon, 'Save the servant who trusts in you', it is God's will that the lowly servant, trusting in God, is to be given the place of honour and authority.

The **Psalm** might be the voice of that same lowly servant, praising God's wisdom and knowledge for its depth and richness (**Second Reading**). Though God is beyond all, the servant's call is always answered. God looks to the lowly with faithful and merciful love.

This inscrutable wisdom of God becomes apparent in the **Gospel**. Jesus chooses Peter, who, despite his human failings, is nevertheless to be a rock and custodian of the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Let us pray, this week, that we might trust the unfathomable wisdom of God. We ask that this wisdom, though from on high, might even look to each one of us, with our own fragilities – and that we ourselves might be God's choice to spread the joy of the kingdom here and now.

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, Levin and Otaki November 1st

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 renewed threat of hostilities between US and Iran is predicted..
2. We pray for the refugees for all those displaced
3. We pray for Pam and Bob Arthurs also remember Richard Gibbs
4. We pray 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. 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:

- "Dad, can you put my shoes on?" "No, I don't think they'll fit me."
- "Why can't a nose be 12 inches long? Because then it would be a foot."
- "What does a lemon say when it answers the phone?" "Yellow!"
- "This graveyard looks overcrowded. People must be dying to get in."
- "What kind of car does an egg drive?" "A yolkswagen."
- "Dad, can you put the cat out?" "I didn't know it was on fire."
- "How does a taco say grace?" "Lettuce pray."
- "What time did the man go to the dentist? Tooth hurt-y."
- "Why didn't the skeleton climb the mountain?" "It didn't have the guts."
- "What do you call it when a snowman throws a tantrum?" "A meltdown."
- "How many tickles does it take to make an octopus laugh? Ten tickles."
- "I have a joke about chemistry, but I don't think it will get a reaction."

Belong, Behave, Believe



Have a great week everyone.....