

Launch Out Letter (LOL)

November-December 2019

World Day of the Poor



On November 17 we celebrated the 3rd World Day of the Poor. At the conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy in 2016, Pope Francis called for an annual day to mark our relationship with people living on the margins of society. He has asked for us to offer practical assistance, but most importantly to meet and talk with people experiencing poverty. Our Gospels are full of examples of the life-changing moments when Jesus reached across the boundaries and chasms of his society to speak a word of healing, forgiveness and welcome to the outcasts of his time. In New Zealand, despite huge increases in inequality over the past 30 years, we still like to think of ourselves as an egalitarian society.

However, sometimes side-by-side within our communities, even within our pews, are some people who regularly take overseas holidays and others who struggle to find the bus fare to town. Finding opportunities to talk about those differences and build bridges can be challenging for us and for our communities.

In the week before the First World Day of the Poor, on the first day of the 2016 Archdiocesan Benefit Impact in Upper Hutt, our new volunteer advocates nervously awaited the arrival of beneficiaries seeking assistance. Some revealed stereotypes about beneficiaries, asking what we might do if there was abuse or violence, or alcohol or drug use. One of the first beneficiary couples to arrive asked for help to pay a power bill. They had significant health challenges requiring multiple appointments in the Hutt Valley and Wellington. It became clear that after paying rent, medical and transport costs of appointments, there was no money left for food, let alone power bills. One of the new volunteers realized he knew how to help this couple apply for disability allowance.

Two hours later they were still talking. I went over to check, and they had long finished the benefit entitlement question, and were just enjoying a cup of coffee together. At the end of the day, the advocate referred to the conversation. "It was nice to be able to help, but mostly what I learned was how likeable they were. I hadn't expected to like them."

Beneficiaries are often demonized in political discourse and the media, stereotyped as lazy or belligerent. As Pope Francis says in his Message for the World Day of the Poor, "We see before us a multitude of poor people often maligned and barely tolerated", who become invisible and their voice is no longer heard.

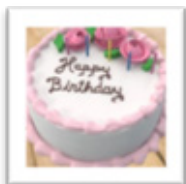
He acknowledges that churches as well as other sectors in society can end up talking about rather than to people living with poverty. "The poor are not statistics to cite... the poor are persons to be encountered."

Reaching out to the margins and peripheries of our society can feel like a daunting mission. But setting up an occasion where members of our communities can have a cup of tea and a conversation with someone outside their usual comfort zone has the potential to bring about conversion on both sides. Creating those opportunities is a pastoral challenge and opportunity.

---Lisa, November 2019



Happy Birthday!



Greetings and blessings to *Mely Kartawidjaya* who will be celebrating her birthday on 14 December 2019

Project Presentation Highlights

I put together a power point documentation of the Project Presentation. I am attaching it as a file if you are receiving your LOL copy as an email.

Calendar of Activities 2020

Last LOL issue I posted an overview of the Calendar of Activities for 2020. Further working on the details of each event, below is a more detailed Calendar.

DATE & TIME	ACTIVITY	VENUE
25 January 2, Saturday 9:30am-4:30pm	Professional Development 1 Topics: Collaborative Styles (Reflective Practice) by Bridget Taumoepeau Collaborative Ministry in Action Mary Ann Greaney, Charles Cooper and Sharon Penny	Catholic Centre
07 March, Saturday 10:00am-4:00pm	Prayer Day 1 Facilitator: Brian Cummings, SM	Pa Maria, Hobson St. Thorndon
01-03 May Friday evening to Sunday 1:30 (after lunch)	Retreat Facilitator: Mary Jackson Kay, RC	Magnificat CommunitFeath- erston
09 August- Sunday 9:30-4:00PM	Professional Development 2 Topic: Doing Theological Reflection with Anne Powell,RC	Catholic Centre
10 October, Saturday 10:00am-4:00pm	Prayer Day 2 Facilitator: Regina Daly PBVM	Pa Maria, Hobson St, Thorndon
21 November, Saturday 9:00am-4:30pm	Project Presentation	Catholic Centre
12 December, Saturday Lunch	Christmas Gathering	TBD

Updates

- Thank you, **Lisa Beech**, for writing our November reflection
- We welcome new members, who will officially join us on 06 Jan 2020.
 - **Vicky Raw**
 - **Margaret Bearsley**
 - **Bernadette Patelesio**
- Congratulations to our new TCI Graduates:
 - **Lisa Beech** - NZ Diploma in Christian Ministry- Christian Leadership Strand
 - **Theresa Begley**- NZ Certificate in Christian Studies- Christian Ministry
 - **Jude McKee**- NZ Certificate in Christian Studies- Christian Ministry
- Congratulations to **Mary-Ann Greaney**, Director of Pastoral Leadership Ministry and Launch Out Graduate for being awarded as TCI Exemplar in the TCI Graduation last 26 November 2019

LOL @ 2019

This would be our last LOL for the year. It would have been nice to have a December issue for Christmas but there's not just enough time. I'd like to thank you all for supporting the LOL. Next year, we hope to see more theological reflections from the Candidates and from the Launch Out graduates. We received a lot of good feedback and we hope to improve the quality of our issues next year.

My Church

Joan McPetridge shared this interesting poem from Carlo Caretto (1910-1988) on how he feels about the Church. I think this poem speaks to us at this time.

'How much I must criticise you, my church, and yet how much I love you!
You have made me suffer more than anyone, and yet I owe more to you than to anyone.
I should like to see you destroyed, and yet I need your presence.
You have given me much scandal, and yet you alone have made me understand holiness.
Never in this world have I seen anything more compromised, more false, yet never have I touched anything more pure, more generous or more beautiful.
Countless times I have felt like slamming the door of my soul in your face —and yet, every night, I have prayed that I might die in your sure arms!
No, I cannot be free of you, for I am one with you, even if not completely you.
Then too—where would I go?
To build another church!
But I could not build one without the same defects, for they are my defects. And again, if I were to build another church, it would be my church, not Christ's church.
No I am old enough. I know better'

Christmas Greetings



To close, I'd like to share this painting by Craig Greenfield depicting the first family as among the refugees of the controversial 'caravan' from South America the US President has announced as out to invade the United States. Imagining the first Christmas, it is hardly a time for celebration. A young mother giving birth literally DIY-style--not in a medical facility and with no midwife. A nervous father trying to keep his young family as comfortable as he can. This ordinary couple feeling a mix of awe and confusion as they welcome this mysterious child into their lives for the world. A child not from them but feeling just as much as theirs in every way.

Surprised and heartened by the visit of shepherds and three foreigners who came to worship their wee boy. Nothing much to get by than some clothes and food (I hope) and a tired donkey. Instead of going home the next day, they flee for their lives.

The God of all creation has chosen to enter our humanity and become one of us through the peripheries. When we go, as we are sent forth, to reach out to the least, the lost and the last, we are in fact, entering the Christmas space, where we are called to proclaim the heart of the Christmas message-- that God is truly with us.

Maya, 16/12/19



When he had finished eating, he said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch". Luke 5:4

Have a Blessed Christmas and Hope-filled New Year !