

Archbishop's Message
Archbishop Christopher Prowse

Peter, Mary and Grandmother

Years ago I remember the tragic death of a 20-year-old man.

I was the local Priest and spent much time with the family. In the first days the family was in utter chaos. There was shock, anger, total bewilderment. Naturally. There was a complete lack of structure and we could not really plan for the Funeral Mass.

This continued until the arrival of the grandmother!

She was delayed a few days as she lived interstate. When she arrived at the home I was there and it was a marvel to behold.

The grandmother did not say a word. She simply put her arms out and three generations approached her. She embraced them with great love and the ultimate consolation they were looking for. There were many tears but very few words.

Although the pain continued, after that moment of embrace, we were able to move on to the next stage of preparing for the funeral.

It seemed the grandmother did not want to find answers to the mystery surrounding her grandson's death. She simply wanted the mystery of life and death to surround them all in a silent family embrace. This family embrace expressed the unity of both the "Petrine" and the "Marian dimensions" of our Catholic Church.

In this season between the Resurrection and Pentecost, we observe in the readings how the early Christian Church is forming.

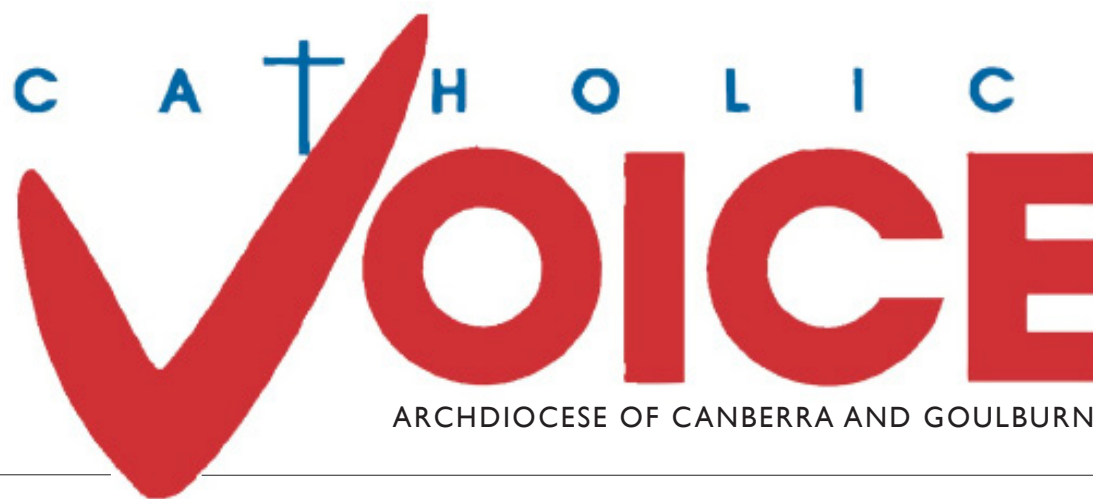
Certainly there were "governance issues." We might talk of the 'Petrine' dimension given the primary role of Peter and the apostles. But this cannot be the only dimension. The Church is not a type of machine functioning according to plan; just another corporate organisation, albeit ecclesiastical.

We need a heart! We are the Body of Christ! We are to ponder and treasure the life, death, resurrection and sending of the Holy Spirit of Jesus, the Son of God, in our midst.

Eminent theologians call this the "Marian dimension" of the Church. It is Mary, the Mother of God, who is the prime example of this dimension. Hence, we call it "Marian". We think of Mary in a special way in this month of May.

Both the Petrine and Marian dimensions are needed in the Church, like two lungs of the one body.

In these times of the Covid-19 pandemic, we are concerned about the health of the world and its future. Perhaps the Church's most sublime role in these times is to "embrace" the world, like this wonderful grandmother, to give it hope and strength.



ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN



Being a journalist is a privilege and the highlight of my week was meeting Clare and Phil Brooker and their four gorgeous children.

Their family home is warm, their family life nourishing. And what an honour to meet Canberra's identical twin Popes!

EDITOR: Felicity de Fombelle
catholic.voice@cg.org.au

From sleeping rough to sleeping safe

BY FELICITY DE FOMBELLE

A FORMER convent in Lyneham will reopen next month as accommodation for 26 homeless women, including mothers and children.

And a separate two-year pilot program is supporting 32 homeless men and women to move off the streets and into permanent homes, with ongoing help to rebuild their lives.

Social services agency CatholicCare is leading both projects which CEO Anne Kirwan says are huge opportunities.

"These are significant initiatives and very much about the mission of the Catholic Church," the psychologist said.

"We see the humanity in every person on the street. These projects are like gifts to us and we are so excited about what we can achieve."

Former convent MacKillop House was built in the 1960s for



CatholicCare CEO Anne Kirwan

the Sisters of Saint Joseph and has recently been used as university accommodation. CatholicCare received a \$150,000 ACT government grant for the project which involves:

- Repurposing the main building as housing for up to 12 months for 20 homeless women who have experienced relationship breakdown, economic hardship or domestic violence

- Six townhouses will shelter mothers and children.

"This is part of the Sisters' legacy," Anne said. "Their mantra was never see a need without doing something about it. CatholicCare saw a need and went to the Sisters who wanted to support us.

"Single women over the age of 50 are the fastest-growing population of homeless people. They are part of the hidden face of homelessness, so to be able to offer them safe accommodation is a fantastic opportunity."

The program for 32 rough sleepers is called Axial Housing and will see CatholicCare work closely with HousingACT, St Vincent de Paul Society, the Early Morning Centre and Onelink.

The 'Housing First' approach helps people sleeping rough, in cars, tents, alleyways or behind dumpsters, move from the streets into a permanent home.

That is when the real work begins, with CatholicCare provid-

ing intense support services to help people rebuild their lives and address the issues that may have led to homelessness, such as mental illness, drug and alcohol addictions, abuse, family breakdown, incarceration or childhood trauma.

"It was very cold last week and we housed two older men who were in sleeping bags in the open air," Anne said.

Job satisfaction comes easily to Anne, a mum who worked for CatholicCare for many years before taking the helm six years ago.

When someone walks in off the street with their life in a shopping trolley, and Anne and her team can see them into a home, that makes work so much more rewarding.

"We have housed 10 people in the last three weeks," Anne said.

"If we can help 32 people move from the streets through Axial Housing, and provide safe accommodation to homeless women through MacKillop, what a fantastic outcome for everyone."

Canberra's identical twin Popes



L-R: John and Benedict. Middle picture: Phil and Clare with Catherine 11, Therese 9 and the boys. Above right: Benedict and John.

BY FELICITY DE FOMBELLE

MUM-of-four Clare Brooker did a 'saint check' before each child was born to check the names she had chosen were saints' names.

With her identical twin boys she could almost have done a Pope check too – they are named John Paul and Benedict.

Strictly speaking the four-year-olds are John and Benedict, but John's middle name is Paul, and Clare's Mum Anna is Polish, so John Paul and Benedict seem the right fit.

And that is how they are known in Poland where Anna's relatives ask "How are the little Popes?"

While yet to detect any signs of holiness, Clare said the pair

do seem to have taken a vow of naughtiness.

"A few weeks ago we overheard John say, 'Benny, let's be naughty,'" Clare chuckled.

"It must be a twin thing; sometimes the effect of naughtiness is exponentially magnified because of the twin factor."

A lawyer with the ACT Government, Clare and husband Phil, who is employed by the Federal Government, work four days a week and each spend a day at home with the boys. The other three days the twins attend day care.

Older sisters Catherine, 11 and Therese, 9 attend Rosary Primary School in Watson.

It goes without saying that learning she was expecting twin boys

was a shock for then 39-year-old Clare.

"Our first thoughts were, this is amazing, what a miracle," she said.

"The girls would be five and seven when the boys were born so we were just so happy they would have each other, a ready made companion."

It was Clare's Mum Anna, a linguist at ANU, who instilled in her two daughters the idea that they name their children after saints.

"I always thought it was a nice thing to do, so the kids have a built-in patron saint," Clare said.

She had long thought she would name a son John, after her beloved Dad.

"Phil's grandfather was a John, and his Dad goes by John even

though that is not his name, so it seemed a good head start," Clare explained.

"We thought Benedict was a nice name and I was pretty sure there was a Saint Benedict.

"Then we discovered that Saint Benedict had a twin so we thought, 'oh that must be a sign'.

"I was sick with my pregnancies and cannot remember all the discussions we had but it probably crossed our minds at some point that they were the names of two recent Popes."

The proud Mum describes her sons as "dear little boys and a joy".

"They can get up to mischief," she adds quickly.

"They are active, rambunctious and very affectionate."

Clergy class photo canned

BY FELICITY DE FOMBELLE

THE annual group photo has been shelved but the clergy assembly will go ahead next week, online.

The gathering of up to 60 priests and deacons who work in the Archdiocese is usually held over several days at St Clement's Retreat Centre in Galong.

But next Tuesday and Wednesday morning clergy will log in to a Zoom event instead.

Former Archbishop Francis Carroll, who served from 1983 to 2006, started the assembly for professional development and for clergy to network and socialize.

"It has an education and formation component and is also an opportunity for clergy to build a sense of collaboration and fraternity," organizer Fr Simon Falk said.

"Obviously this year we won't have that opportunity for informal gatherings to chat over meals which is a shame."

The annual group photo has also gone. Retired clergy Deacon Paul Rummery and Fr Allen Crowe

used to take the photo as both were professional photographers.

This year's assembly program will include:

- Cathedral Administrator Fr Trenton van Reesch leading a session about different images of the church, as an organization with a plan but also a relational institution of prayerfulness that reaches out to people,

- Trauma psychologist Angela McCabe speaking about how people manage their own trauma and how clergy may be affected as they support others experiencing trauma; and

- Former international head of the L'Arche community, Eileen Glass, examining trauma in terms of what it means for a person's spiritual life and prayer.

Mindful of "Zoom fatigue", Fr Simon said sessions would be shorter than usual as clergy have been spending so much time online.

"There is also the challenge of our clergy being different ages and so their capacity to respond to technology varies," Fr Simon

added. "Some have been travelling to neighboring priests' houses to log on from there."

A highlight of each assembly is celebrating the jubilarians; clergy clocking up ordination anniversaries of 25 or 50 years or subsequent 10-year milestones.

"The jubilarians would be featured at Mass and there would be a tribute during dinner with some speeches and comments," Fr Simon said.

"We'll look at doing that at the clergy retreat in November."

The major anniversaries for 2020 are:

- **65 years** – Fr Kevin Flynn,
- **60 years** – Fr Bill Kennedy.

There are no 50 or 25-year celebrations in the Archdiocese but there are a handful of 40-year and 20-year anniversaries.

- **40 years** – Fr Tom Thornton and Archbishop Christopher Prowse (ordained on August 16, 1980),

- **20 years** – Fr Emil Milat, Deacon Joe Blackwell, Fr Peter Day and Fr Simon Falk.

My first Mother's Day without Mum

BY FR FRANK BRENNAN SJ

Not all mothers are perfect. But in a broken world, we give thanks for our mothers who have held that world together for us, especially at the most precarious of times. Pope Francis has said, "In today's fragmented world, when we risk losing our bearings, a mother's embrace is essential."

This is the first Mother's Day for me without my mother. The fair Patricia died seven months ago, aged 91, a mother, grandmother, and great grandmother many times over.

At Mum's funeral, one of my sisters Anne, a mother and grandmother, reflected:

"I have the absolute privilege of talking about this wonderful woman, our mother. She was intelligent and curious. She was gentle and strong. She was so wise, yet humble. She had firm opinions but was open to new ideas and embraced change with interest and amazement. Her wit and, at times, irreverence were entertaining, genuine and endearing. Patricia Brennan was resilient. Her life was not always easy. It began happily but when Pat was aged five years, living in Mt Morgan Queensland, her young mother Rita Quinlan died. Two years later her young father, Dr Jo O'Hara died. Three little orphans were separated."

Having traced the contours of Mum's rich life as doctor, wife and mother, Anne, also a doctor, went on to say: "The great legacy Mum leaves is her seven well-educated children with good lives. This didn't happen by accident. All parents work hard but Mum worked tirelessly and yet made time to read, relax and play. What Mum loved most was just to be with those she loved, who will always



Patricia Brennan, 26, taken in 1954 after the birth of first child Frank.

love, honour and remember her."

Not every mother's life is blessed. And no mother's whole life is blessed. No family is perfect, and mothers are inevitably caught in the centre of the mess. For many mothers, life brings great burdens and tragedy. Today we particularly remember mothers who do it tough, those who have endured the loss of a miscarriage, those who carry the burden of caring for a child with acute disabilities and those who have known abuse and violence in the home. And we remember those who though not mothers have done much good mothering to nurture up-and-coming generations.

We know the comfort of being in our mother's arms at those times when our joys and hopes, our fears and anxieties are intimately shared and securely held. It's been in the embrace of our mother's unconditional love that right values have been taught, and our lives enriched.

We remember those simple, most unlikely moments around the home when each of us had that time to be with our mother



Bringing home nine day old Frank from hospital in March 1954.

and for her to be so present to us. My sister Anne at Mum's funeral reflected that the fair Patricia "had a unique strong relationship with each of us, to the point we each felt it was all about us, yet there were six others". One of my fondest memories of my mother's last days when she had dementia was when I wheeled her in her wheelchair down to a park by Sydney Harbour. It was a glorious late spring day. The water was glistening. The sky was blue. The jacarandas were in full bloom. I bought her a coffee. When she'd finished, I asked, 'How was the coffee?' She replied, 'Mediocre'. She then smiled, her eyes lit up, she lifted her hands, and looked around, exclaiming, "But this!"

There she was in the autumn of her life surrounded by the beauty of nature, in company with one of her own. She counted herself abundantly blessed. And she was.

• *An extract from Fr Frank's Mother's Day homily.*

The circles in life



Don Smith with Sr Fran in Brisbane in December 2017

BY DON SMITH

In January 1967, a five-year-old boy sat upright in class ready for action. It was grade one, his very first day of school in a small country town in outback Queensland.

In her white veil and habit, Sr Francesca stood at the front of the class pointing at the blackboard. She drew one circle and below it, two circles. How many circles come next, she asked?

The boy thrusts up his hand. "Three circles, sister."

Well done young man. May you be a great mathematician, a philosopher perhaps or even a pope!

And so my schooling began with Sr Francesca my first ever teacher. By grade two my family had moved out of town and I would not see Sr Francesca again.

Until ...

It was 45 years later and I was working at the Australian Embassy in Dublin when I met a group of Irish religious sisters recently returned to their native land after many years in Australia.

They were Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart; the order founded by St Mary of the Cross, Mary MacKillop.

I mentioned that my grade one

teacher mega moons ago was a Josephite nun. "Sister Francesca I think her name was," I said.

"Oh, yes, that would be Sister Fran," they said. "She's still alive, living in Brisbane."

I almost fell dimple over pimple.

A year later I was back in Australia and there she was, my Sr Francesca, in her late 80s, living in quiet retirement in a Brisbane convent.

She baked a cake to celebrate the reunion and we had a good chinwag about times past.

We are still in touch. Sr Fran has still got her pluck and vigour and still writes as clear as the day she drew circles on our grade one blackboard.

She is nearing 95 and recently celebrated 70 years in religious life.

We both ponder the connect-the-dot mysteries, spiritual and otherwise, that brought teacher and pupil together after all these years.

"One circle, then two circles. What comes next?"

We could never have guessed.

• *Don Smith is a parishioner at Mary Help of Christians Parish in Pearce.*

ST EDMUND'S ONLINE
Vibrant Spirit. Strong Character. Tailored Learning.

DAY 5

Mitchell Mynott Smith
Year 6 Student

My tip is...
Play lots of games with friends but do all of your chores before hand and don't be hard on your parents.

My challenge...
Learn a new scooter trick each week.

My quote to live by is...
"Do not let circumstances control you. You change your circumstances" - Jackie Chan

My prayer is...
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love
Where there is injury, pardon
Where there is doubt, faith
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
And where there is sadness, joy. - Prayer of Saint Francis

ST EDMUND'S COLLEGE
CANBERRA • EST 1954

"Whatever you have learned, received or heard from Christ—put it into practice."

Eddies Online

To support their boys doing remote learning from home, St Edmund's College posted #EddiesOnline. Each day a student or staff member shared their tips and challenges.