

Pastoral Assistant report 2018

Good morning,

Since our last AGM, there have been a few changes:

We welcomed Fr Brian Carmine to the parish in late January, Fr Brian touched the ground running, visiting was a priority and getting to know as many parishioners and their needs.

During 2018 Fr Vince took sabbatical leave, in total of just over 4 months. The parish ran smoothly under the wonderful direction of Fr Brian and Fr Nathaniel.

Trung our seminarian arrived late July, and quickly became a valued member of our parish and schools.

I hope and pray that we are successful in having him back again someday, for a much longer period.

In January this year, we farewelled Fr Nathaniel. We will miss his friendship, humour and presence here in the parish. It has definitely been Wanganui's gain.

October 2017 to March 2018 saw me working in the Finance and Property Administrator role, along with doing my pastoral duties.

In late November of 2017 I was informed by the Diocese that The Catholic Parish of Hastings was going to be audited in February 2018. Dave Mullins along with Mary Sutton spent 3 days looking at our financial, payroll and pastoral systems we have in place. Their feedback verbally was very pleasing.

Late February, we sought to find a new person to fill the financial duties of the parish. We had many applicants apply. Jean-Ann was our successful candidate and I am pleased to say that our choice in employing Jean-Ann was spot on. Her mannerism and go to attitude have meant that she has become a valued member of staff. Between Trish and Jean-Ann the office is a welcoming place for all who enter through the front door.

Sacraments:

In 2018, 26 children received their 1st Holy Communion, 34 children made their 1st Reconciliation and 26 school aged children became Catholic through the Kids Becoming Catholic programme. A big thank you goes out to our wonderful and dedicated leaders.

The personal touch of visiting classrooms to get to know the children and speak about the sacraments is truly paying off as you can see by the increasing numbers.

15 youth celebrated the sacrament of Confirmation. This Sacrament is a 7-week programme, Faaki, myself and Fr Vince lead the evening classes to discuss different topics

pertaining to the sacrament. I always find these evenings most rewarding, especially when you see the teenagers interacting and active in the discussions.

Prayer and the celebration of the sacraments help us grow in our love of God. Without them our souls can go malnourished.

A pot luck dinner for our 1st Holy Communion families was organised a month after the celebration. This night was immensely enjoyed by all. Children were entertained by college Students from St John's while the parents sat and got to know each other in a stress-free environment.

RCIA: this sacramental programme runs for 9 months and meets each week, I enjoy helping to lead the evenings and supporting the candidates and catechumens, along with the priests and our wonderful coordinator Lee Russell, who does a marvellous job in creating a welcomed relaxed evening each week.

Formation:

In June I was lucky to attend the NZ Catholic Education Convention, it was a wonderful 4 days of attending workshops and listening to speakers on different topics relating to our faith within the Education sector. I came away feeling refreshed but at the same time somewhat disappointed with the knowledge that a connection between the schools and parish was lacking. One of the quotes from a speaker that has stuck with me from the Convention is 'The youth are not our future, they are our NOW!' Since being back I have made it my focus to be more visible in the schools. I attend their weekly assemblies and, as I said before, visit classrooms for the sacramental programmes. I hosted and lead the year 8 retreat day for St Joseph's in December, at our Bach in Waimarama. It looks like both St Mary's and St Joseph's will be on board this year. The day was both spiritual and enlightening for all who attended. I have also been asked to lead a retreat afternoon for the teachers of t St Mary's which I am very excited about.

At the end of last year a new initiative from St Mary's year 7/8 students was undertaken, during class they made Christmas cards for those who were in residential care in our community, I was invited to speak to the classes on the need to care for our elderly and also to help with what they could write in the cards. A big Thank you to Kathy Kavanagh who helped distribute the cards to the rest homes. The feedback I have received has been very positive and this has been relayed back to the children through my assembly visits.

I attended two other workshop days in 2018, one on Mental Health which helped to show me ways in dealing with different situations that I may encounter and the other was based on Life teen and Youth Ministry which is an area that always needs supporting.

My visiting within the community is always a highlight for me. Making connections has always been a pastoral focus but one person can only do so much, we need a team of people.

We are truly blessed with having Deidre Russ who is our hospital Catholic chaplain. Our relationship is essential for identifying those who are sick in our parish and putting in to place, spiritual care through the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Quite often I have people asking why we are not doing this or doing that, one of the issues we face in wanting more, is the lack of volunteers. The volunteers we have, are overworked! They are so valued, in all that they do for the running of the parish.

Service is essential to growth as a follower of Jesus Christ. Jesus said about himself that he did not come to Be served but to serve. Growing in discipleship requires us to have a servant's heart. As a Church, if we are to make an impact on our community and world, we need people who are committed to giving their time in service.

The Parish Vision has taken up a lot of hours and I am pleased to say that we are happy with the progress. Two things that stood out for me from working on the Vision is that we have some great things happening in our parish already. Second, acknowledging that there are areas in our parish that need to be worked on. But, with a positive attitude, identifying these areas and working on them, that they too will one day be strong. To achieve this outcome all parishioners, need to be involved in some way.

I would like to thank our Parish Committees: The Finance, Liturgy and Pastoral Council. Your commitment and leadership to our parish is so appreciated. To our volunteers who are the building blocks in building a wonderful welcoming parish, thank you, without you our parish would not be.

To Fr Brian, thank you for your friendship. I pray that you will feel better soon with the help and guidance from our loving God.

To all the staff employed at the CPOH, thank you for all you do in supporting me in my role.

Fr Vince, you are amazing! Ten years I have worked with you. I have come to learn your way of leadership...quietly, respectfully...remembering why we are all here – to do God's work. Some days can be long and hard – every morning I give my day to the Lord and ask for his help in whatever I may encounter, he hasn't let me down yet!

To all the parishioners, thank you for your friendship and support over the past two years. I ask that you pray for our Priests and especially for vocations.

May our loving Lord bless each and every one of you.

Deb Lucy

