

Te Kete Atawhai

MERCY BASKET



EX-Carmel College student Loren O'Sullivan, seen here with one of her young charges, is currently serving as a volunteer at an orphanage in Honduras. 'We may not be able to change the world,' she says, 'but we can change it for one child.' See story, page 3.



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Mercy Hospital recognised for 'smoke-free' theatres

Mercy Hospital in Dunedin has won a Workplace Safety award for its success in eliminating electrosurgical smoke plume from its operating theatres. The result has been improved air quality in its six operating theatres and a reduction in headaches and respiratory conditions among the hospital's 51 theatre staff.

THE HAZARD COMES FROM THE USE of lasers and electrosurgical devices which cut, coagulate, vaporise and remove tissue during surgical procedures. The devices heat targeted cells in a way that releases cellular content into the air as surgical smoke.

Staff working in an operating theatre are constantly exposed to what is known as an electrosurgical smoke plume (ESP) during their work day, and inhalation can become harmful to health. Many studies have analysed the contents of these airborne contaminants and identified toxic gas and vapours. These have an unpleasant odour, create problems with visibility of the surgical site, and cause visual and respiratory tract irritation.

Anecdotal evidence from theatre staff at Mercy Hospital has backed concern about health issues from ESP. "You get a headache, feel tired and chesty, and it takes the weekend to feel better," says one. Says another: "The smell in the air from some types of surgery is worse than others, and if the theatre list is long – well, it's always been that way."

But not anymore. As a result of extensive research and education over several years, Mercy Hospital has identified the hazard and introduced control measures which significantly reduce the ESP problem.



MERCY Hospital team receive Worksafe award (from left) Richard Ward (theatre unit manager), Sr Sue France (board of directors), Judith Vercoe (Quality coordinator), Philippa Pringle (director of clinical services), Miriam Vollweiler (occupational health and infection control nurse) and Richard Whitney (CEO, Mercy Hospital).



MERCY Hospital's workplace health and safety award, presented for its smoke-free theatres.

Theatre staff at the hospital report an improvement in air quality and better visibility of the surgical site. They report a sense of improved wellbeing, with a reduction in headaches and respiratory conditions.

Mercy Hospital's CEO, Richard Whitney, says the Workplace Health and Safety award "for the best initiative to address a health hazard" was richly deserved. "Many of our staff and specialists have done an enormous amount of work in this area over an extended period of time.

"Achievement of this award cannot be overstated; it is significant.

Mercy – be proud!"

Next year, Mercy Hospital hopes to present a paper to a conference of New Zealand theatre managers on its efforts to address the ESP issue. "We hope to both inspire other healthcare facilities to recognise ESP as a significant hazard and to encourage other theatres to become smoke-free," says Mr Whitney.

Mercy needed more now than ever

Philippa Pringle, director of clinical services at Mercy Hospital in Dunedin, returned home earlier this year from attending a Mercy Leadership programme in Dublin. She reported in the hospital's newsletter that comments from one presenter, Sister of Mercy Maria McGuinness, had made a deep impression.

SPEAKING ON WHY MERCY IS NEEDED MORE NOW THAN ever before, Sr Maria noted the following facts:

- Almost half the world's wealth – \$170 trillion – is owned by just one percent of the world's population.
- The bottom half of the world's population – 3.6 billion – own the same as the richest 85 people in the world, all of whom could fit on one London double-decker bus, according to Oxfam.
- Almost one billion people go to bed hungry every night, 200 million of whom are children.
- Last year, there were 232 million international migrants.
- There are at present 60 countries at war.

The challenge presented by Sr Maria to those on the course and the organisations they represented was 'How do we show Mercy today?'

Former Carmel College student Loren O'Sullivan received a North Harbour Award in 2013 for her volunteer service at a home for abused and abandoned children in Honduras. She talks here to Te Kete Atawhai about her experience.



We can all change the world for someone else

Loren O'Sullivan was a student at Carmel College between 2001 and 2007. Today she teaches pupils at an orphanage in Honduras, an hour from the capital Tegucigalpa.

"ONE GREAT THING ABOUT CARMEL IS ITS FOCUS ON MERCY values and on social justice," she says. "Looking back, I'm really grateful that I went to a Mercy school. It's incredibly important to get that option of thinking about the world in a different way."

"When I was 14, we had a German exchange student living with us for a year; she was really interested in social justice issues. Her constant questioning of the world made me think beyond my secure North Shore life," Loren recalls.

These days she teaches English to students aged between 10 and 18, with seven classes between 7.15 and 4pm. In the evenings and every second weekend, she looks after 11 babies, all under four, with a 20-day old about to arrive any day now.

She works as a volunteer for Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (Our Little Brothers and Sisters), founded by US priest Father William Wasson, who loved to say that "we may not be able to change the world, but we can change the world for one child."

At home in New Zealand, Loren has both parents, two sisters (one in Year 10 at Carmel) and a brother. "When I told my older sister that I was going to Honduras, she cried and said my parents would not be happy. I didn't tell them until two weeks before

I left, not wanting them to spend months worrying about me and trying to dissuade me when my mind was already set."

"Quite unexpectedly, they were amazing. OK, my dad didn't speak to me for a few days; but after the initial shock, they've been incredibly supportive."

After completing her Grad Dip in Teaching at Auckland University at the end of 2012, Loren was searching for a teaching position. "I knew I would be happy teaching in New Zealand, but I also had the feeling that this was the right moment to pursue my interest in social justice."

"Latin America had always been one of my dreams, since watching Che Guevara in *The Motorcycle Diaries*. Late one night I saw a video about a child called Alber from NPH Honduras. I remember bursting into tears, feeling that this was what I was being called to do."

Loren said that NPH sounded like a great fit for her. "They were looking for volunteers with all different specialties – teachers and nurses, therapists and tutors, with positions in nine different Latin American countries. I chose Honduras because the teaching

position suited me best – teaching English to children from 10 to 18. Having specialised in French and German and with a love of Spanish, I was excited about working in a language classroom."

Loren's typical day begins at 6am when she heads for a breakfast of beans and rice, walks to school past a herd of cows and students calling to her "Kiwi". She teaches from 7.30 to 4pm, with classes ranging from Special Ed pupils to advanced Year 11 students.

"At lunchtime, we teachers are in charge of serving students their food and eating with them in a large auditorium. We don't get much downtime away from the kids, but this has been a good way to build relationships and to learn Spanish quickly!

"I do have some free periods in which to prepare classes, but from the moment I step into my classroom at 7.15am, I'm working every minute of that day. It's a full-on job."

"Between 4 and 6pm I have a break, when I usually make myself some tortillas with peanut butter. Then at 6, we volunteers go to hogar (our home), where we work at nights and every second weekend."

Loren says there are rewarding moments that make each day worthwhile. "When a youngster who never cared about English

suddenly starts paying attention in class. Or when another comes up and gives me a hug saying, 'How beautiful, teacher Kiwi!' Or when I hug my babies at night and give them big kisses before they go to bed."

There are challenges, says Loren. "Many of the kids have suffered incredible trauma through losing family members, being physically or emotionally abused, malnourished or neglected. Many have low self-confidence and learning difficulties."

"Working past these defeatist attitudes, trying to show them that they can learn, and that they should aspire for great things in their lives, is my constant, everyday battle."

Loren's initial contract was for 13 months, with the possibility of an extension.

She admits the first year was challenging, as she got used to the system, language, culture and students.

"My second year has been just as challenging, as I try to build on the relationships I've established to persuade these youngsters to change their attitudes and hearts."

(continued over page)



LOREN O'Sullivan checks a learning resource with a group of students. She teaches English as a second language to 10 – 18 year-olds, from 7.30 to 4pm each day.



We can all change the world for someone else

(continued from page 3)

"Working in a small school has meant that I have a close connection with the school's Director and have the freedom to try and influence decisions. But I'm always the foreigner, so when it comes to cultural differences (like the importance of teachers wearing uniforms), I've already lost the battle!"

"It may sound like a cliché", says Loren, "but New Zealanders don't know how lucky they are. To be honest, I don't know if lucky is the right word. Perhaps privileged is better. As a result of the current global economic system, I've grown up in a country where we aren't so aware of the injustices that exist elsewhere."

"Living near Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, I can see those injustices so clearly. Old women begging on the streets, men sniffing glue on every corner, children asking for money, garbage filling the streets."

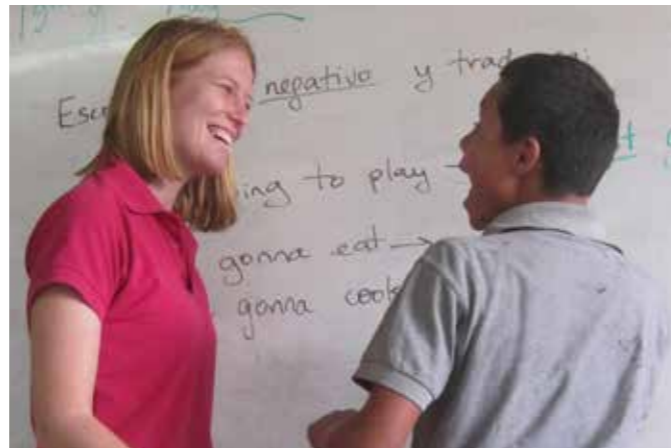
"I'm thankful for everything I've been given in New Zealand. I guess that's the least we can do. But we need to be aware that we're not living a normal life. Normal for Hondurans and for billions in the Third World is not having enough money for food, medicine, schooling and housing. Normal is not having clean water, garbage disposal system, or electricity. Normal is expecting not to find a job when you finish school, being scared of violence."

"Poverty is more 'normal' in our world than wealth, and that's very clear in Honduras, where the rich stick to their gated suburbs and spend their time in secure, clean malls."

"I was getting ready to tell one of my students off for not doing her homework, when she told me that she doesn't have electricity and by the time she gets home it's already dark. I can't say I'll hear anything like that in New Zealand."

"Another of my students, who lives in a neighbouring village, lost her mum a few years ago and now lives with her grandmother in a small two-roomed wooden house with dirt floors. She told me that her grandma suffers from chronic pain and is unable to afford the medicine she needs."

"I used to get upset as a kid that my parents couldn't afford a holiday overseas. Now I feel ridiculous about this when I hear of the difficult lives of these 'normal' people, and realise that this is how most of the world lives."



HELPING youngsters with low self-esteem to realise that they can learn 'is my constant everyday battle' says Loren. TOP: 'My babies' – Loren currently looks after 11 children under four.

Loren has no hesitation in recommending that other Mercy students follow in her steps. "I think it's really important for everyone to understand the world a little better – to see that we are living with many privileges that we shouldn't take for granted."

"Spending a service year abroad with NPH or a similar organisation is a great way to give something back, while learning a lot for yourself."

She agrees that it's tempting to think that the world's problems are so big and impossible to solve that it's easy to give up and do nothing about them. "Something I've learnt from my time at NPH is Fr Wasson's saying that "while we might not be able to change the world, we can change it for one child."

"We all need to be good role models for these children", says Loren, and "work at changing their hearts, if we want any hope of the world being a better, more just place."

For more information about Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos, go to www.nph-nz.org

As part of her commitment to care for the environment, Sister of Mercy Bridget Crisp teaches a group of women who come to Te Waipuna Puawai Mercy Oasis in Ellerslie for classes in gardening and cooking. One of them, Joanne Ponds, tells why she finds the 'food of families' programme exciting....

God means us to have green fingers

Joanne Ponds learnt about the 'food for families' programme from her daughter, who was attending courses at Te Waipuna Puawai, the Mercy community development centre in Ellerslie, next door to where Bridget Crisp tends her garden at Papatuanuku ki Taurangi Earth Promise Centre.

"I SAW A BOOKLET THAT OUTLINED OPTIONS FOR THE YEAR, AND decided to take this one. At the time I was prevented by illness from working, and I thought this course was something I could do."

"The course has actually helped me through some of my troubles. Gardening and cooking are so soothing. That's how I met Sr Bridget, and I fell in love with her whole approach."

"Caring for plants in your garden flows over into caring for your family. Ideally the whole family should get involved. Although teenagers are inclined to say 'Oh no; gardening is not my type of thing'."

Joanne says her home-grown veggies taste much better than any she can buy from shops or markets. "I take pride in growing my own, especially veggies I haven't tried before. It took me a while to get used to the flavour of bok choy, but now I think it's delicious and a quick crop to grow."

"It tastes beautiful in stir-fries, and I'm starting to teach my grand-daughter to enjoy it."

"And of course, the herbs. There's nothing like having fresh herbs, rather than dried herbs from packets. I've got parsley, sage, thyme (my favourite), basil and mint."

Joanne struggles with arthritis in her spine and osteoporosis in her joints. "But if you want to get something done, you've got to have determination," she says. "And to be honest, I don't let my health problems get me down. I can't walk so far now, and I'm waiting for operations on my knees. But I do what I can."

"I've learnt to respect the way plants grow, acknowledging that each of them has its own way. And I love trees. I came here for a couple of lessons and then found that Sr Bridget and Teresa were growing kowhai trees from seed."

"I was lucky enough to be given a tree so that I could bury the afterbirth of my two grand-daughters here in the garden. It was so beautiful. We had a family gathering. And though the tree is not even a year old, it has already bloomed. It's beautiful, just at the front as you drive in."

Joanne's tribal links are Ngati Porou. The Māori word for land, whenua, also means placenta. In Māori tradition, all life is seen to come from the womb of Papatuanuku, Mother Earth. The whenua of new-born babies is buried in significant places, as a way of establishing a sacred link between the land and the child.

Joanne is excited about the gardening she is doing. "It's as though something had been missing from my life. All I'd ever done before was weeding. This is a new challenge – to have a garden during winter-time. I'm very happy to get all these ideas from Sr Bridget – they bring a balance into my home."

"When people come to your home, you want them to feel welcome. The garden helps to make the house more homely."

Gardening is not without its problems. "The most disappointing plant so far has been the pumpkin. Perhaps I had it in too shady a position. It may have needed more sun. I'll give it another go next summer."



WHENUA: Joanne Ponds with Sr Bridget Crisp, admiring the young Kowhai tree, grown from seed, under which the placenta of Joanne's two grand-children is now buried.

And the worm-farm has been difficult. "I found that flies and bugs had been getting in; perhaps someone else had left the lid off. So I decided to start again. I texted Sr Bridget last night, and she told me what to do."

Bridget has a scheme for cheap worm-farms using polystyrene boxes with lids, discarded by the local supermarket. "All you need do is to insert a plastic tap, make some holes near the top for ventilation; prepare the bedding and add the worms, and you're away!"

Bridget believes that if we see where our food is coming from and how vibrant Mother Earth is, we are on the way to understanding the relationship God means all of us to have with our environment.

She takes heart from the joint statement issued by Pope Francis and Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew in Jerusalem this May.

"It was a powerful statement, noting that humanity is wasteful of resources and has not treated the environment well."

"So if we try to reduce waste and excessive consumption, we'll be back to a better balance and will go a long way to restoring our relationship with Mother Earth. Our 'food for families' project aims to do just that!"



IN MAY YEAR 11 PUPILS AT CARMEL COLLEGE, MILFORD, PARTICIPATED IN AN RE INTENSIVE DAY. DESIGNED TO PUT INTO action the core value chosen for 2014 – service, the day saw 150 students take to the streets to support a national appeal for hospices. Sister of Mercy Anna Nicholls, currently the school's Director of Religious Studies and Director of Student Learning and Engagement, describes how the day unfolded....

Encountering Christ in homeless people

As a teacher in several Mercy colleges, Anna Nicholls has found that at the end of each year, there's usually one image or event that stands out as really significant. This year, though, she feels that big event has already happened.

"IT'S A PHOTO THAT SHOWS CARMEL College students who have just completed a couple of hours on a street collection for Mercy Hospice, and are about to head into lunchtime Mass.

"Their location is outside St Patrick's Cathedral in Auckland, close to where Mother Cecilia Maher first began the work of mercy in New Zealand. What delight she would have had in seeing these young women, 164 years later, engaged in practical service for another Mercy organisation, and grounding their service in prayer."

The Year 11 students from Carmel spent their service day as a practical way of creating links with another Mercy ministry, and learning more about end-of-life care, Anna Nicholls explains.

"They began by collecting in the Annual Street Appeal in Takapuna, Milford, Devonport, Ponsonby and the central city, raising funds for North Shore Hospice and Mercy Hospice Auckland.

"They met at the cathedral for Mass, before heading to Mercy Hospice, where they had a tour and listened to stories from hospice staff about the work that is done there. At St Mary's Convent nearby, the students also listened to a talk on managing grief in their own lives."

Anna notes that Catherine McAuley built her House of Mercy in Baggot Street,

an affluent area of Dublin, because she wanted the poor to be in front of those who were more affluent. "At the end of their service day, even though it had met our specific aims, the students were impressed by the variety of people they had met.

"While young people learn a lot these

those homeless people had found a few coins to put in the hospice collection bucket.

"Like the widow we read about in Luke's gospel (21:1-4), this homeless man put in so much when he had so little. This was in contrast to the many who went out of their way to ignore our students, not making eye contact so they could avoid giving anything.

"Other people stopped as they searched through their pockets for a donation, sharing stories with our students about the wonderful care that had been shown by hospice to a family member or friend."

Anna recalls that the Catholic bishops in New Zealand recently produced a document that discusses Catholic education and

that highlights the important role which schools play in enabling students to encounter Christ.

"On that sunny Friday in May, that's what our students did," says Anna. "They met Christ in the scruffy homeless man who shared his fortune; they met Christ at the cathedral in celebrating the Eucharist together.

"And hopefully, as they saw themselves reflected in the shop windows as they stood outside to collect for hospice, they saw Christ in themselves, as they too served others through their actions."



WITH their hospice appeal buckets handy, Year 11 students from Carmel College wait outside St Patrick's Cathedral in Auckland for midday Mass. The girls raised over \$3000 for Mercy Hospice Auckland on their service day venture.

days about others in need, they are often protected from seeing them physically or engaging with them, focusing instead on raising money through a mufti day or an activity aimed at 'sending funds to the poor'.

"The Service Day was different; because as Catherine had walked the streets of Dublin, our students had an opportunity to meet many characters on the streets of Auckland.

"One had great delight in telling me that she had seen homeless people! For her, this was a new experience. But what was more significant was that one of



FROM LEFT: Ella Simpkin with Kate Shoebridge, and Meen Treewattanasuwan with Nagisa Tatsuoka on the job as hospice collectors. In the courtyard of Mercy Hospice Auckland, students listen to a hospice staff member explaining their work.

Principal shares in service day venture

Carmel College principal Mrs Chris Allen, who had the privilege of participating in the Year 11 Service Day, described her own impressions in the school's newsletter soon after.

SHE WAS FULL OF PRAISE FOR SISTER ANNA NICHOLLS, FOR ensuring that the 150 students were dropped off and picked up from various locations around the city and the North Shore, complete with buckets, stickers, vests and the correct ratio of adults.

Students got to experience 'real' service and 'real' learning. "They'd been trained up with a 'script' to approach passers-by. One student noted how many walked past, deliberately trying to avoid eye-contact.

"Yet when she politely asked if they wanted to give a donation, they would pull out their wallets and purses and drop notes into her bucket. She learned that all you had to do was to ask! Others discovered that with some people, it's better not to ask!"

After sharing Eucharist together at the cathedral, students spent the afternoon at Mercy Hospice in Ponsonby – "again, a 'real' learning opportunity for many of our students. We were

given a tour of the hospice, and experienced the serenity and beauty of this environment, with its art works and soft colours.

"Hospice staff explained how this organisation works and why the work of volunteers – more than 550 of them – is so important. One speaker informed girls that there are hospice shops on the North Shore in Takapuna, Birkenhead and Browns Bay, and suggested that they may like to offer their services once a month on a Saturday to help out.

"The questions asked by the girls were quite insightful. Some didn't know what a terminal illness was or what palliative care meant. This was something that was discussed further back in the classroom.

"Asked how it felt to be collecting, one student responded that many people seemed to avoid them. Her response was quite challenging: 'So what are you going to do next time you see someone collecting for a good cause – avoid or respond?'"

Carmel girls help the larger Mercy world

By REBECCA WILLIAMS, Fundraising Community & Database Mercy Hospice Auckland

EACH YEAR, HOSPICES THROUGHOUT NEW ZEALAND raise both awareness and funds for their service during the second week in May. This year, Carmel College very generously offered the support of Year 11 students at Carmel College to collect on the Friday of Appeal Week, for both Mercy Hospice Auckland and Hospice North Shore.

When accepting this kind initiative, we also wanted to offer something back to the school and its students. A talk on caring for self and friends in grief, as well as a tour of the hospice were suggested to create a Service Day, in which the students not only served their community, but also learnt about the impact they would have.

On Friday 16 May, 150 Carmel College students were out on the streets, collecting much needed donations for the two hospices. Their friendly smiles worked wonders and the girls who collected for Mercy Hospice Auckland raised an astounding \$3755!

After attending Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, the students came up to Mercy Hospice in Ponsonby. The girls were split into groups, each of which had a tour of the hospice, watched a video on our 'Opening Doors' day respite programme, listened to a presentation on our work,

and to a talk from a member of our family support team, on caring for self and friends in grief.

We truly appreciate the students' efforts in collecting donations; we know it can be a very difficult job. We hope that the Carmel girls went away with a new understanding of what this hospice does – that we are not just a building, but an organisation entrusted by the Sisters of Mercy to care for those with life-limiting illness and their families.

We hope they understand that we aim to enable our patients to live each day, where possible, without pain and other symptoms, just as they would like to live. We also hope that they learnt some tools for looking after themselves and their friends in times of grief.

The students' hard work will enable us to continue to meet an ever-increasing need; we have more patients than ever, and support like this is invaluable. We would like to extend a huge thank-you to Sr Anna for organising the day; to the teachers and others who helped, and to all of the students. We truly value the connections we have through Mercy, and hope to continue and extend experiences like this one.

After 56 years, the Sisters of Mercy have reached the decision to leave Rotorua. But the spirit of Catherine McAuley is likely to remain in the parish and school where they have served and taught for over half a century...

Spirit of Mercy set to endure in Rotorua

The first Sisters of Mercy arrived in the Bay of Plenty town of Rotorua in 1958 at the invitation of Bishop Liston, to found St Michael's School. Neither their classrooms nor their convent were ready at the start of the school year, so the community of five – four of them newly arrived from Ireland – stayed in the neighbouring St Mary's Convent with the Sisters of St Joseph while the buildings were completed.

STUDENTS FROM THOSE EARLY YEARS REMEMBER BRINGING FOOD to fill the sisters' larder, as they were unpaid teachers. Some also went to the convent each week for music lessons, providing sisters with a source of income, augmented each autumn by an annual fete.

In time, administration of St Michael's passed to the diocese, with a lay principal and lay teachers assuming responsibility for the school, with a current roll of 180. But two Sisters of Mercy have continued to live in the parish, supporting the faith community with pastoral assistance and nurturing its Social Justice group.

One of the pair, Agnes Browne, remembers how the parish has valued their presence over the years. "It was my privilege to witness the countless tributes paid in recent weeks to the many Sisters of Mercy who had given themselves wholeheartedly to the mission in Rotorua.

"The parish celebration acknowledged the tangible legacy left by the sisters' presence over the past 56 years. It is heartening to know that the Mercy spirit is very alive, and the inspiration of Catherine McAuley will continue to flourish in the hands of generously committed lay people in the parish and school community.

"I have been in Rotorua for the past five years and had the privilege of working here as pastoral assistant. The hospitality and strong faith of the people are treasures I carry with me as I return to Auckland."

Her comments were endorsed by Teresa Anderson, a Sister of Mercy who visited St Michael's School recently as a mission advisor. "The staff of the school hold the taonga of Mercy very dearly," she said. "While they are anxious about their ability to keep the founding spirit alive as the sisters leave the parish, I have no doubt that this will happen.

"Mercy is evident as you walk into reception, and I could feel it as I visited each classroom. I sensed it too as I worked with staff to unpack the legacy of Catherine McAuley and to explore their school's motto, 'Striving for Excellence'."

Visits to junior classes included teaching a mantra about Mercy. "Through this song, children could see how they might reflect this value in the playground or the classroom," Teresa explained.

"The middle classes were keen to share their knowledge about the sisters who were leaving Rotorua, and how they themselves would now be the ones to keep mercy alive in their school.

"Senior classes shared ideas about how mercy looks and sounds in their school. After an overview of Mercy in other parts of New Zealand and the Pacific, they explored a website of Mercy-founded primary schools, and can't wait to see their own school featuring on this!"

The school has just opened a new facility, to be known as the Mercy Hall. The hall was blessed by parish priest Fr Mark Field, and Srs Agnes Browne and Monica Costello cut the ribbon to open the hall, before a liturgy and morning tea, with items by the school



SRS Agnes Browne and Monica Costello, in front of the carved Mercy cross which commemorates 56 years of service by Mercy Sisters in the Rotorua parish.

choir and Kapa Haka group.

The school also participated in a Mass of Thanksgiving in the church, where a memorial to the Sisters of Mercy was unveiled. The memorial is a Mercy cross, carved in kauri by master carver James Rickard. The cross is flanked by a pair of manaia, mythical creatures with paua eyes, whose task is to hold the cross in esteem. The carving has been donated by the New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute, to commemorate "the presence and ministry of the Sisters of Mercy in Rotorua."

The Mass was followed by a farewell dinner, attended by Hamilton's Bishop Denis Browne and a large number of special guests, including Katrina Fabish rsm, representing the Congregation's leadership team.

"It was a wonderful occasion," said Katrina. "There were around 30 sisters present to enjoy what proved a rich experience of warmth and hospitality. We were delighted to celebrate with Agnes and Monica, and to see the quality of Mercy shared and received."

Messages were received from many of the sisters who had taught at Rotorua, including one from Sr Mary Anne, who was in the first group to teach in 1958. "Don't ever forget us, as we shall always remember you," she wrote from Ireland.



THE Mercy cross, carved in kauri by master carver James Rickard with support from student Ben Rikiti, and presented by the New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute to St Michael's Church, to commemorate the presence and ministry of the Sister of Mercy in Rotorua.

Mercy students dance before new cathedral is opened

Catholic colleges from throughout Samoa were invited to provide the entertainment for guests-of-honour before the opening of the new Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in Apia at the end of May.

PAUL VI COLLEGE WAS INVITED TO LEAD THE ENTERTAINMENT with the performance of a Sāsā, created and choreographed especially for the occasion. Students gave a stellar performance with new dance uniforms, perfect synchronisation and original flair.

Samoa Language teacher, Filimaua Sagapolutele, gave the lauga (speech) to introduce the item and many talked later of how brilliantly he had spoken. He recalled that Paul VI College was named after the pope who visited Samoa in 1970 and had celebrated Mass in the village of Leulumoega where people from throughout Samoa had gathered, and that it was fitting that Paul VI College should be chosen to lead the entertainment. The college could be proud of their role in the opening of the new cathedral, he said.

Tragically, Filimaua died the next morning. He leaves the college a legacy of huge pride in the Samoan language and culture, which were two of his outstanding gifts to family, school and country. We pray that God will welcome him into eternal life. Ia mapu atu lona agaga i le filemu e faavavau. May he rest in peace.



STUDENTS of Paul VI College dance the Sāsā in ceremonies before the opening of the new Catholic cathedral in Apia on May 30.

Mercies join with SMSMs to celebrate 150 years

The Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM) last month celebrated 150 years of service in Samoa. Sisters, former students and friends from around the world joined in a pilgrimage to some of their historical sites, including St Joan of Arc Primary School in the parish of Leulumoega.

THE SCHOOL WAS FOUNDED IN 1892 BY THE SMSM SISTERS; responsibility for the school's administration passed to the Sisters of Mercy in 1976. In 1908, the SMSM Sisters also established St Theresa's School in Fusi, Savai'i, later staffed by Sisters of the Mission and lay staff, but taken over by the Sisters of Mercy in 2003.

To celebrate the 150 years, St Joan of Arc School provided hospitality to the visitors, with a warm welcoming speech from Sister of Mercy Marieta Ifopo. Bright posters and large welcoming banners were displayed outside the classrooms around the school. Palm leaves and teuila decorations made for a very festive occasion.

The host school's community danced to the song 'Jubilee' as guests arrived in three buses and supporting cars. Srs Frances and Tulili and four students from St Theresa's School in Fusi came especially from Savai'i to share in the celebrations.

The joyful occasion was very moving for all involved, especially as students of St Joan of Arc School sang their farewell song, 'Goodbye my friends'. Light refreshments were provided before all went to the parish church for Mass. The principal, Lusua La'ulu Tanuvasa, expressed thanks to the SMSM sisters for their contribution over the years, and for returning to celebrate with our school.



JOAN of Arc principal, Lusua La'ulu Tanuvasa (right) with Sister of Mercy Marieta Ifopo... celebrating SMSM Sisters' 150 years in Samoa.

Fairy-tale theme for English Day event

Pupils of St Joan of Arc School in Leulumoega, Samoa, celebrated their annual English Day last month, competing with items in English language. The day began with a lovely prayer recited by Sr Marieta Ifopo.

A WELCOMING ITEM WAS PERFORMED BY CHILDREN IN THE Pre-School, stealing the hearts of parents and visitors alike. The rest of the students performed plays based on fairy tales, and there were some very creative expressions of these.

Years 4 to 6 had a 'Retelling of Cinderella' section in the competition, with a number of pupils dressed as the heroine in beautiful ball gowns, confidently reciting the story of Cinderella – the long version, with no details omitted.

Srs Edwina and Natalie from New Zealand were delighted to attend the day, and gave a few words of thanks to the principal, teachers and students for their preparation for the day. The principal thanked the sisters for their presence, the parents for their support, and all students and teachers for their hard work.

Last month, Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby expressed their horror at the scourge of human trafficking. The pope singled out for praise 'the network of action against trafficking in women created by a number of women's religious institutes.' Sisters of Mercy around the world are active in this field, as this page reports.

Human trafficking – a Mercy issue for our time

Sisters of Mercy from around the world joined up early last month, using an Adobe Connect link, to discuss their Congregation's opposition to human trafficking. The group included New Zealander Anna Nicholls.

THE WORLD'S MEDIA HAVE REPORTED ON INCIDENTS, ESPECIALLY on pornography that involves children. Recent focus has also highlighted slave labour in some countries, specifically around sporting events such as the construction of stadia for World Cup soccer events in both Brazil and Qatar, where migrant workers have been forced to live and work in appalling slave-like conditions.

Questions being explored by Sisters of Mercy include how best to maximise the collective efforts of Mercy Global Action (MGA) in opposing the crimes of human trafficking, and how to address the problem's root causes.

MGA's director in New York, Áine O'Connor notes that despite the diversity of the problem in different areas, there are common threads emerging which point to the value of worldwide networking. This is especially true of legislative advocacy and resource sharing.

In New Zealand, the focus has been mainly on slave-labour, whilst in Ireland the focus on human trafficking relates primarily to sexual exploitation.

Anna Nicholls is New Zealand contact person within the Congregation for issues related to the topic, and catches up every couple of months with her counterparts in other countries through a video conference.

"I suspect the issue of trafficking is much bigger in New Zealand than we imagine," she says. "We have the impression that human trafficking is big in countries like those in Europe, where the borders are easy to cross, and we think that because we are so isolated that it's not such an issue for us.

"But trafficking in New Zealand is especially about the



MEMBERS of the Sisters of Mercy working group on Opposing Human Trafficking link up for their global conference last month. Among them is Anna Nicholls rsm (lower left).

exploitation of migrant workers, and for workers who come here expecting something different from what they experience when they get here. So it's trafficking under a different name, really."

As to whether Sisters of Mercy should be concerned about this issue, Anna Nicholls is in no doubt. "Catherine McAuley was a woman of the gospel who heard the call of Jesus to help those in need. And that's what we are called to do, responding to the needs of our time.

"Trafficking is so much one of the needs of our time. Evidence tells us there are more slaves now than ever. In terms of Mercy, there are so many people who are being trafficked that need the touch of Mercy. A large number of these are women and young girls, which form Catherine's focus."

Trafficking in focus at local meeting

Two Sisters of Mercy attended a conference in Porirua last month, when human trafficking was a key theme. Organised by Immigration New Zealand, the New Zealand Police and the Salvation Army, the two-day conference was entitled 'Exploitation – a fair go for everyone'.

AMONG PARTICIPANTS WERE SISTERS CECILY FINUCANE OF Palmerston North and Jacqui Miles of Auckland. Jacqui is also a member of the Aotearoa NZ Religious against Trafficking of Humans (ANZRATH).

Key themes over the two days revolved around the three Ps of prevention, partnership and protection. A fourth P linked to them all was prosecution of offenders.

Protection highlighted the education and support offered to new migrants and their employers. Migrants often come from a background of fear and great mistrust of those in authority. One young woman to speak at the conference acts as an interpreter for Indonesian fishermen on boats that visit our ports. She told stories of squalid living conditions.

Two speakers from Immigration NZ spoke of the seasonal workers programme which recruits migrants working short-term

in dairy, construction and fruit-picking. The agency has produced useful resources for both employees and employers.

A Police website – Online Child Exploitation across NZ (OCEANZ) – has been developed to protect children. Two detectives spoke of children as young as seven being groomed by predators on some websites, and of the growing, almost unstoppable distribution of pornographic material.

On prevention, the message was that New Zealanders need to be more proactive in victim identification. In the words of one speaker, "the virtue of courage is needed to take us to uncomfortable areas."

The conference offered a strong message of hope, the two Sisters of Mercy agreed. "By awareness raising and working together, we can create change for migrants and help restore dignity to the most vulnerable – true mercy work."

Mission – when memory and imagination meet

A series of mission induction leaflets is being developed, one for each ministry of Tiaki Manatu Mercy Ministries Trust, designed to tell its story to new staff, board members and volunteers.

THE LEAFLET OUTLINES THE MINISTRY'S key purpose and its links to the Sisters of Mercy. It traces the reasons why the sisters established the ministry in the first place and indicates how they are currently involved.

Creating the leaflets is the task of Dennis Horton, a member of Tiaki Manatu's mission team. "But it's important to engage each ministry's principal or manager, and to secure the involvement of someone they nominate who can help to access relevant information from local archives, histories or promotional material," he explains.

"Another key issue is to identify the ways each ministry keeps its Mercy story alive. What are the special days or events through which a ministry names and celebrates its links with Mercy?"

"What are the signs and symbols a ministry uses to tell its story? What processes are in place to help staff to know and identify with its core values? Does a ministry have a distinctive logo or crest? If so, how does this help to tell the Mercy story?"

The leaflets are intended primarily for new staff and volunteers, aimed at providing them with a sense of the ministry's mission. "But they may also be a useful reference for those enquiring about the Sisters of Mercy and their apostolic works today," Dennis Horton explains.

"Some of our ministries are lucky enough to have a Sister



of Mercy still working as a member of staff. In some cases they are providing pastoral care or mission roles; in one case, a sister is part of the clinical nursing team. There are still sisters engaged on most of our boards of governance.

"But increasingly, work on the ground is being done by lay managers and staff. In an age of rapid change, an understanding of

the founding stories is critical if our organisations are to remain true to the Mercy spirit which led to their establishment.

"One of my favourite quotes is from US Jesuit Fr Thomas Clarke who wrote that every venture that loses 'its living contact with the story that generated it will eventually lose the power to shape its life constructively'.

"The flip side of that quote is that keeping our founding stories alive is crucial to our staying faithful to our original mission, especially in times of organisational change. Several of our ministries have developed excellent display boards which help to tell their story.

"Others have logos and symbols that tell the story, or dates when key events are recalled and celebrated. This is not nostalgia, but a determination to see that the future is shaped by the values which got us going in the first place.

"New staff come on board with their own imagination and vision for the future. Mission is what happens when memory and imagination meet together in creative ways."

Comings and goings

Newly appointed as executive officer of the Finance Services of the Sisters of Mercy New Zealand is Erin Olsen, who has spent more than 10 years as finance manager for several companies in Palmerston North.



Erin Olsen

SHE RECENTLY MOVED FROM KIMBOLTON in the Manawatu to live on Waiheke Island. "The new climate is a welcome change, after living 500 metres above sea level," Erin said. "I am delighted to be involved with McAuley Trust and the Sisters of Mercy, and look forward to building positive relationships in the time ahead."

Erin fills the vacancy left by Frances Smith, who served in that role for 10 years. Frances, who has taken a position in the Philippines with the East Asian Pastoral Institute, was farewelled at St Mary's Convent, Ponsonby, on June 6.

At a ceremony before a special afternoon tea, a presentation was made by Reuben O'Neill on behalf of Tiaki Manatu Mercy Ministries. Thanks were expressed on behalf of the Congregation's leadership team by Katrina Fabish rsm. The leader of Mercy's mission team, Gabrielle Huria, led a prayer.



Frances Smith

Queen's Birthday honour

Kathleen Petrie, a former principal of Carmel College Milford who now works as a member of Tiaki Manatu's mission team, received a Queen's Service Medal for services to education in this year's Queen's Birthday honours, announced last month.

KATH JOINS THE RANKS OF OTHER CARMEL PAST principals who have been honoured with similar awards, Sr Mary Justine Gillies MBE, Dame Sr Pauline Engel DBE, CBE and Mrs Collene Roche ONZM.

Students from Room 4 at St Michael's School in Rotorua, (clockwise from top left) Anaiah Thompson, Lee Butler, Olivia Hopson and Quinn Kelly add their impressions to decorate the Mercy Hall at their school, as they say goodbye last month to the last Sisters of Mercy to serve in their parish. (See story, page 8)



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