

Dear Friend

What is it that makes New Zealand so very special? Visitors to our country are struck by the welcome they receive, the generous response to others needs, the instinct to open our hearts and homes when trouble strikes.

There is a special “Kiwi” spirit that springs from being part of this little country of ours at the bottom of the world. At the heart of our society beats a strong sense of community, a belief that everyone deserves a “fair go”, and a “can-do” attitude that draws people to work together for the wellbeing of others.

Right now we are living in difficult financial times, and I see and hear of many people in need in our neighbourhood – a family living in a garage, parents who skimp on food so their children can eat, fathers who are out of work, teens who feel isolated and alone.

I am also proud, and humbled, to see dedicated New Zealanders of all faiths and walks of life working together to combat this growing level of poverty and depression in our Diocese - in the Waikato, Bay of Plenty and King Country. Consider the people who helped make Paeroa the 2012 Community of the Year. How did the amazing Kia Kaha Kawerau event come about? Who keep the food banks running from Huntly to Taupo? Who drive the food vans that carry sandwiches and friendship to our poorest urban areas?

On “Caring Sunday” on 29 July you have an opportunity to become part of this wonderful network of support in our Diocese by making a gift to Catholic Care Foundation (CCF).

Through CCF you can make a real difference in your community. Will you join us?

As Christians we are called upon to love those on the fringes of our society - the outcast, the poor, the lowly – and to draw them in. “Whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for me.” You may find your own opportunities to give practical help or encouragement to others in the course of your daily life, but it can be difficult to reach out beyond our own small circle to embrace those we don’t know, but who really need us most. This is why our Catholic Care Foundation was established.

Catholic Care Foundation supports the grassroots organisations that serve those in our community who need the very basics of life – food, shelter and clothing – and to ensure children are given a strong foundation for the future.

Even the smallest gift will make a difference.

When Jesus accepted a gift of five loaves and two fish from a young boy and fed a multitude of 5000 people, he was sending a message that is as real today as it was then. Jesus showed us then, and still shows us today, that He can multiply our smallest gifts to reach out to everyone. The real miracle? Through Christ, one small gift transformed the crowd into a sharing community.

Christ still empowers each one of us to perform our own miracles of creating community when we give of what little we have, joyfully and gratefully, for the sake of others.

Christian giving is not an obligation but an act of love. It is our response to the enormity

of God's sacrifice and love for us. When we give freely to others we are giving to God. We are also opening our hearts to receive His limitless grace, joy and love. "Give and it will be given to you...pressed down, shaken together and running over..."

What an amazing promise. If we enrich others, we will be enriched even more ourselves.

The money that you give to CCF on Caring Sunday goes to alleviate poverty, distress and loneliness in your own community. Your gift means real practical help is on hand when and where it is most needed – a school lunch for the child without one, a car ride to the doctor, a bed for the night for the family that's just lost their home, a listening ear at the community centre or at the end of the telephone.

Thousands of children and families in our Diocese rely on the services supported by our Catholic Care Foundation. Many of these projects are manned by volunteers – food banks, emergency housing, community centres, family support work, hospital and prison chaplaincies, youth ministry – which means your money goes directly to those who most need it. Just a small gift keeps God's work and Word alive - the real miracle is the community you create.

You helped us with your generous gift last Caring Sunday, thank you! Will you consider helping us again in order to help those in need around you? With your help, the Catholic Care Foundation is able to be your ears, your eyes and your hands working for people in your community.

God bless you
Bishop Denis Browne