

---

# Jean Vanier - The Wisdom of Tenderness

*Br Mark O'Connor*



*“Open my eyes to what is really important; all those delicate movements of Your presence that go unnoticed by me,”* wrote English mystic Evelyn Underhill.

In the contemporary Church there are few better spiritual guides for a Lenten journey than the French Canadian layman (and many believe living saint), Jean Vanier.

We live in a culture and a Church too often brimming over with aggression and even worse ‘passive-aggressiveness’. Many people sadly succumb, all too often, to the ‘sweet’ temptation of inner resentment and hostility. Vanier stands out in our Church as a free man, a close friend of Jesus – the One whose power is shown forth in vulnerability and weakness.

Jean Vanier was born on 10 September 1928. His father was Governor General of Canada. Jean trained at the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth. After serving as an officer in the Royal Canadian Navy, he left active service in 1950. For the next six years he lived in the lay Community L’Eau Vive, near Paris. He spent a year at the Trappist monastery at Bellefontaine in France, a year on a farm and two years in Fatima, Portugal. He was working to become a doctor of philosophy. After that he taught theology and philosophy at the University of Toronto for a



short time. In 1964 a Dominican priest, Père Thomas Philippe, invited Jean to live at Trosly-Breuil, north of Paris.



Vanier met many people with learning disabilities who lived in institutions. He was very moved by the difficult lives they lived. He bought a small house in Trosly-Breuil. He had decided to arrange a home for the sort of people he had met. Vanier welcomed Raphael Simi and Philippe Seux. They were the first members of L’Arche. With Vanier they created a home where they could learn to live together as friends. They called their little Community L’Arche, French for ‘The Ark’. The ark was Noah’s boat of salvation.

The new little community was simple and poor but it soon attracted support. Other people came to help. Some of them came from abroad. More people with learning disabilities came and made it their home. The idea inspired other people and new houses opened and new communities set up. New countries were included. L’Arche now has 130 Communities in 30 countries around the world.

---

One of the best ways to come to understand Vanier is to read his wonderful autobiography, *Our Life Together: A Memoir in Letters*.



There are many aspects to Vanier's greatness. Shining through these letters is an inspiring love, peace, humility, integrity and passion for justice.

Vanier was a close friend of Pope John Paul II, and in these letters, many written during his annual retreats and on planes, we also meet his other friends and heroes: Jesus, Francis of Assisi, Charles de Foucauld, the Little Sisters and Brothers of Jesus, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Etty Hillesum, Dom Helder Camara, Oscar Romero, Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, Brother Roger of Taizé, Archbishop Rowan Williams. And countless little people – Catholics, the Good Samaritans, Pentecostals, Buddhists, whoever – who practise selfless love to serve the helpless, the poor and the oppressed.

Here is a man of God who opens our eyes to what is *really* important.

*“My experience today is much more the discovery of how vulnerable God is. You see, God is so respectful of our freedom. ... So, if God is love, it means that God is terribly vulnerable. And God doesn't want to enter into a relationship where He's obliging or She is obliging us to do something. The beautiful text in the Apocalypse, the Book of Revelation: 'I stand at the door and I knock. If somebody hears Me and opens the door, then I will enter.' What touches me there is God knocking at the door, not kicking the door down, but waiting. Do you, will you, open? Do you hear Me? Because we're in a world where there's so much going on in our heads and our hearts and anxiety and projects that we don't hear God knocking at the door of our hearts. So I'd say that what touches me the deepest, maybe because I'm becoming myself more vulnerable, is the discovery of the vulnerability of God, who doesn't oblige.” –*

Jean Vanier

*. Article by Br. Mark O'Connor, fms.*



---

*'I'm sure Karkom is the real mountain of God,' Prof. Emmanuel Anati declares. 'Israel should be proud.'*

It has taken him more than a decade, but Italian-Israeli archeologist Prof. Emmanuel Anati now believes his controversial view that the biblical Mount Sinai is in Israel's Negev desert rather than Egypt's Sinai Peninsula will soon be adopted by the Vatican.

On Friday, he presented his theory in the form of a new book at a seminar at the Theological Seminary in the northeastern Italian city of Vicenza.



**Karkom - Negev desert**

"Actually it's not a theory, it's a reality. I'm sure of it, Anati told The Jerusalem Post by telephone from his home in Capo di Ponte. "My archeological discoveries at Har Karkom over many years and my close reading of the Bible leave me with no doubt that it is the real Mount Sinai. I'm now sure that Karkom is the real mountain of God."

In 2001, Anati published the English edition of a book that was first issued in Italian two years earlier and titled *The Riddle of Mount Sinai – Archaeological Discoveries at Har Karkom*. In the book, he postulated that Karkom, 25 km. from the Ramon Crater, was probably the peak at which Moses received the Ten

Commandments – and not the summit in southern Sinai where Santa Catarina (Saint Catherine's Monastery) stands.

"I know this is revolutionary," he conceded. "I'm not only changing the location, but I'm moving Mount Sinai to Israel, and I'm sure it will anger the Egyptians. But Israel should be proud of this. The Negev is empty and should be developed."

"I'm also changing the date of the Exodus from Egypt to some 1,000 years earlier than previously thought," he added. "I know this will drive everyone crazy. But I am right. I'm sure of it."

Anati reasoned that if the account in the Book of Exodus was historically accurate, it must refer to the third millennium BCE – and more precisely to the period between 2200 and 2000 BCE.

Jewish tradition puts the Exodus around the year 1313 BCE. According to Catholic tradition, Helena of Constantinople – the mother of Emperor Constantine credited with finding the relics of Jesus's cross – determined the location of Mount Sinai and ordered the construction of a chapel at the site (sometimes referred to as the Chapel of Saint Helen) in about 330 CE.

According to Anati, however, an abundance of archeological evidence showed that Mount Karkom had been a holy place for all desert peoples, and not just the Jews, which substantiated his case.

He said more than 1,200 finds at Karkom – including sanctuaries, altars, rock paintings and a large tablet resembling the Ten Commandments – indicated that it had been considered a sacred mountain in the Middle

---

Bronze Age. In addition, he said, the topography of its plateau perfectly reflected that of the biblical Mount Sinai.

Finally, he concluded, the biblical tale clearly backed up his geographic argument.

“When the Children of Israel left Egypt, they reached the Arava. They couldn’t have been in Santa [Catarina], because it says in the Bible that they reached Nahal Tzin, and moved on to Hebron,” Anati said. “The whole story of receiving the Torah must have taken place in the Negev. The Children of Israel wandered in the north and not the south, in the Negev and not the Sinai.”

He was just as certain that the Holy See would officially sanction his stance, and that millions of Catholic pilgrims could soon be visiting Mount Karkom instead of Mount Sinai.

“Actually, they have already accepted my theory,” he said. “They are already organizing pilgrimages. There is already a plan, and I have meetings scheduled with theologians and others, including the Vatican pilgrimage office. They want to start pilgrimages to Karkom as soon as next year.”

Anati said he was aware that he had his detractors, especially among archeologists in Israel, several of whom were interviewed refuting his claims on a Channel 1 Mabat Sheni documentary aired on Wednesday night.

“I know there are all kinds of people – including professors – who resist my theory, and it’s natural that this occurs,” he said. “I urge them all to read my book and study the evidence before criticizing me.”

Tel Aviv University’s Prof. Israel Finkelstein, a world-renowned expert on the subject, said he could not accept Anati’s hypothesis.

“I do not see any connection between the third millennium BCE finds at Har Karkom and the Exodus story. The latter was put in writing not before the 7th or 6th centuries BCE, and as such depicts realities which are many centuries later than the finds of Har Karkom,” Finkelstein told the Post. “Roaming the desert with the Bible in one hand and the spade in the other is a 19th-century endeavor which has no place in modern scholarship.”

Anati said it had taken the Catholic Church several years to be persuaded by his argument, and recognition had been a slow process.

“About three-and-a-half years ago, I had a telephone call from the Vatican that a priest of high standing wanted to meet with me, and he arrived here with a driver. I live 500 km. from Rome, and he sat with me for a whole day and asked me a lot of questions,” Anati recalled.

“Then he disappeared, and after about a year, a group of theologians from the Catholic Church appeared and wanted to investigate the matter more deeply. Seven theologians sat here for the whole day, and I later met with them four times.

“Six months ago they spent four days with me at Karkom, and as a result of this, the Vatican publisher – Edizioni Messaggero Padova – asked me to write up my findings. I revised and updated my book, and they have now published it in Italian, changing the title to *The Rediscovery of Mount Sinai*.”

“Twenty years ago, I had a hunch that Har Karkom was the real Mount Sinai,” Anati said. “Three years ago I was convinced I was correct. Today I know I’m right.”

There was no official Vatican response to Anati’s claims, nor was there an immediate reaction from the Egyptians.

**The Jerusalem Post - June 11, 2010**

---

# A Turkish Experience

*Br Harry Prout*

Crossing and driving through the fertile plains of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers was a rich reminder of the earlier life of our Hebrew forebears in Turkey. Visiting sites of possible community life of Abram and of his tribal clan and seeing evidence of civilizations before Roman imperialism brought an awareness to me of the richness of history of this land of Turkey.

Current strife and tension along the borders of Iran and Syria and the presence of the Kurdish separatist group who still conduct raids in those areas speak of a people still affected by borders not described by generations of land possession and tribal location but by political decisions.

Obvious tension along the border with Georgia reminds travellers of the cruel genocide of the Christian Armenians, now rarely spoken about.



Turkey is a land generations have travelled through as traders, conquerors and as seekers. To be able to visit sites of the early establishment of the Christian communities and to be led in that by scholars such as Marcus Borg and Dominic Crossan and as tour guide, the Head of Archaeology from the University of Istanbul, was a treat.

The voice of the influence of Paul is rich in my awareness now. Even to see modern day tents, still used by many and based on those of generations before, reminds one of similar tents made and repaired by Paul whose trade, it is

easy to see, could put him in touch with "God fearers/seekers" on the edges of many Jewish communities of his day.



The west of Turkey is modern, lively and fast moving and becoming very European. Large cities built on and around ancient monuments tell of generations past. I found, to my agreement, that systems - transport, postage, communications - in Turkey work very well and efficiently.

In the east many have to work hard in manual labour and with environments that seem demanding. Hilly and rock slopes are cultivated as intensively as fertile river plains and valleys. Where irrigation is available much land produces four crops a year.

Throughout the country, as I travelled for a month in small tour groups, I was met with hospitality, welcome and a desire to please. High priority was given to the welfare of the guest. Many were keen to speak English and there were delightful moments with school children on excursion during their last month of the school year.



My final visit was to Gallipoli where I was moved by the now peacefulness and beauty of the place. It seemed like I was not visiting for the first time: the place has a familiar feel. I was surprised by the relatively small size of the area that took so many lives and I became strikingly aware of the difficulties faced by the Australian and New Zealand men, not only by the landscape, blunder of landing and presence of Ottoman troops, but also by the extreme heat. I was there at the end of May and it was uncomfortably hot.

As I travel I am aware of the privilege of the opportunity and offer thanks and blessings for all who have enabled and allowed this time of rest, learning and regeneration of spirit.



---

# *The Healing Power of Forgiveness*

Br Mark O'Connor, fms.

**“Hope for a great sea - change on the far side of revenge. Believe that a further shore is reachable from here. Believe in miracles and cures and healing wells.” Seamus Heaney**

One is struck at times at how much anger and resentment there exists today in the Church and society, at so many levels. The tragedy is that if we do not forgive those who hurt us - we actually destroy ourselves and are paralysed - unable to move forward in discipleship.

But forgiveness and healing are possible! I was reminded of this a few years back, when in 2008, a brief but moving report about a "tragic terrible accident" featured in the Sydney Morning Herald .

It concerned the forgiveness extended by a Samoan family to a young man who had gotten into a fatal fight with their son outside a Sydney pub.

In an extraordinary scene inside the King Street court complex following an 'accidental death' verdict, the family of the dead man - wept and embraced the young accused rugby player, in an expression of forgiveness, some kissing his cheek. One female relative who did not want to be named told him after kissing him that she hoped his life would change for the good: "You will always be in our prayers."

The accused young man shed tears as he embraced the deceased's sisters and nieces and a

nephew who had travelled from Samoa and New Zealand for the trial that ran for seven days.

These Samoan relatives also embraced and kissed the Australian defendant's parents and relatives, who were weeping as the jury brought in their verdict. Both families were like two sporting teams leaving a playing field, embracing, hugging, weeping and kissing.

The Sydney Detective Sergeant investigating the matter throughout said of the Samoan family: "They are simply the nicest family I have ever encountered. "They are a deeply religious and loving family who have heard the evidence - who had prayed constantly throughout the trial for not only the defendant, but his family the judge, jury, the legal counsels and police.

"I have never seen anything like this in my career as a police officer. The ability of people to accept and forgive," he said.

Before leaving the court, the family joined hands in a room and held a collective prayer for the young man who accidentally killed their son.

How is such forgiveness really possible ? It defies belief at one level, given the human desire for revenge, which is so deep in all of us. Clearly, the remarkable love and compassion of this Samoan family can only have come from a divine source.

---

It was the late Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt who once said that Jesus of Nazareth introduced forgiveness into the human condition. For Arendt, the power to forgive constitutes the true content of Jesus' miracles. So often Jesus proclaimed : 'Your sins are forgiven - get up !'

A blessing of our Catholic Tradition is that forgiveness, healing and mercy are readily accessible in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We also need to understand the importance of community reconciliation as families and groups. The Samoan family forgave both individually and as a family. John Paul II also acted for all Catholics when he led our entire Church in asking for forgiveness and reconciliation for errors and sins Christians have done over the centuries - disfiguring both humanity and the Body of Christ.

In that regard Bishop Willie Walsh, an Irish bishop, is particularly inspiring. His story is recounted in a wonderful book : *Facing Forgiveness*. Bishop Willie modelled a unique way of attempting to concretely foster reconciliation in the wake of the sexual abuse scandal. In December 1999 - in preparation for the new millennium - he made a "Pilgrimage of Reconciliation" across the diocese in an attempt to begin a process of reconciliation and healing, and to beg pardon not only for the sins of sexual abuse committed by those acting in the name of God and of the Church, but also for all the hurts that people had experienced in and from the Church and its leaders.

His journey lasted three weeks and wound its way through forty towns and villages. Bishop Willie, who was in his mid-sixties at the time of this pilgrimage, walked from church to church in the diocese in the cold, rainy December Irish weather. He took no umbrella and simply carried a plain wooden pastoral staff, the symbol of his role as shepherd. The members of the

parish where he had just presided over a healing and reconciliation liturgy would accompany him half way to the next parish, where he would be met by members of the parish where he was next going. They would then begin the journey of penance with him to their parish. When he arrived at the parish he would celebrate a sacramental reconciliation service.

A poignant moment in this pilgrimage is recounted. One of the priests of the diocese had been erroneously accused of sexual abuse. During the Sunday liturgy at which the falsely accused was re-installed, Bishop Willie stopped in the middle of his homily, set aside his prepared text, and said to the congregation, "How difficult it is to be a priest today". At that point he began to cry, and a young teenage girl emerged from the congregation with a tissue in hand to dry his tears. Bishop Willie Walsh is one of the most human and compassionate bishops in our Church.

May we too in our own journeys follow the witness of these fellow Christian disciples - for there is no more powerful witness to the Good News than to see divine forgiveness and compassion gracing human hearts.

### **Recommended Reading**

#### ***Facing Forgiveness: A Catholic's Guide to Letting Go of Anger and Welcoming Reconciliation***

by Loughlan Sofield, Carroll Juliano and Gregory Auymond (Ave Maria Press, 2007)



---

# GOOD NEWS FROM PAILIN, CAMBODIA

*Brothers Brian, Francis and Bernhard*



On Wednesday 31st March the Marist Brothers in Pailin moved from the house that they had been renting for 12 months to the new Catholic Church Pastoral Building in the Village of Ou Ta Puk on the outskirts of Pailin Town. This was accomplished with the help of the extended Catholic community in Pailin.

The church building itself does not yet have electricity and the water comes from a 6000 litre tank behind the house. Water comes in a truck pumped from a nearby river at roughly \$5 for 5000 litres.



Work is being undertaken in clearing the land around the new church here in Pailin. Large machines moved in, boulders were moved and large areas overgrown with tall grass were cleared. The result is that the shape of the church compound is now clear. The next stage involves the building of an ornamental pond in front of the church and the supply of electricity to the church.



### **Planting corn**

**Br Francis preparing the ground for the corn seed with the help of local children. They come from very poor families and enjoyed the chance of a hearty meal of rice and pork and the end of the morning.**



**Students and teachers from the Collège Saint Laurent de Langy sur Marne in France visiting the Marist learning centre in Pailin. They brought gifts for the children and a donation of money to help the continuation of the programs being run at the learning centre.**



## *Year 10's cope with exams*

**Q.** Explain one of the processes by which water can be made safe to drink.

**A.** Filtration makes water safe to drink because it removes large pollutants like grit, sand, dead sheep and canoeists.

**Q.** What are steroids?

**A.** Things for keeping carpets still on the stairs

**Q.** Name a major disease associated with cigarettes

**A.** Premature death

**Q.** What is a seizure?

**A.** A Roman Emperor - Julius Seizure,

**Q.** Use the word 'judicious' in a sentence to show you understand its meaning.

**A.** Hands that judicious can be soft as your face.

**Q.** What does the word 'benign' mean?

**A.** Benign is what you will be after you been eight.

**Q.** What is a turbine?

**A.** Something an Arab or Shreik wears on his head.

**Q.** Give an example of a fungus. What is a characteristic feature?

**A.** Mushrooms. They always grow in damp places and they look like umbrellas.

**Q.** What is a terminal illness?

**A.** When you are sick at the airport.

**Q.** Give the meaning of the term 'Caesarean section'.

**A.** The caesarean section is a district in Rome.

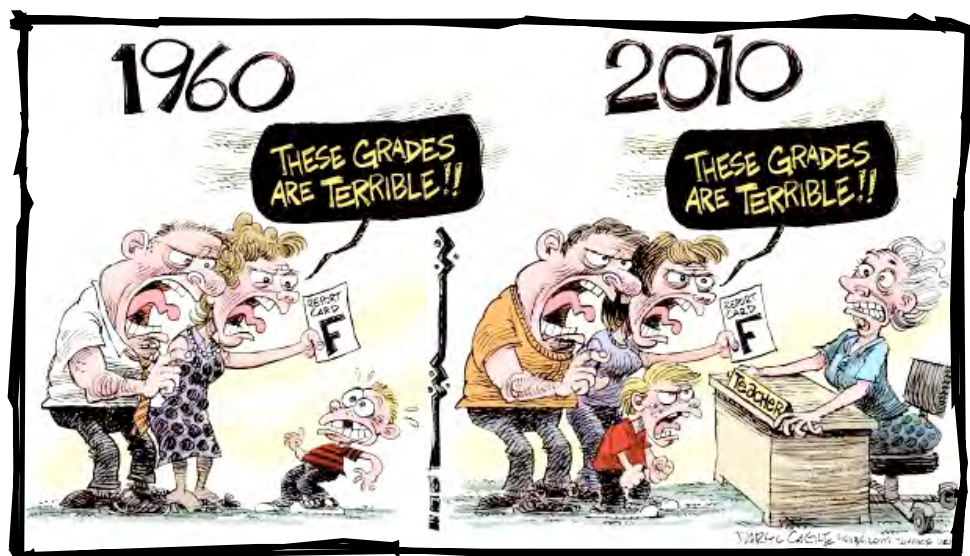


A bloke walks into a Glasgow library and says to the prim librarian,

'Excuse me Miss, dey ye hiv ony books on suicide?'

To which she stops doing her tasks, looks at him over the top of her glasses and says,

'Boogar off, ye'll no bring it back!'





An elderly man on a Moped, looking about 100 years old, pulls up next to a doctor at a street light.

The old man looks over at the sleek shiny car and asks, 'What kind of car ya got there, sonny?'

The doctor replies, 'A Ferrari GTO. It cost half a million dollars!'

'That's a lot of money,' says the old man.

'Why does it cost so much?'

'Because this car can do up to 320 miles an hour!' states the doctor proudly.

The Moped driver asks, 'Mind if I take a look inside?'

'No problem,' replies the doctor.

So the old man pokes his head in the window and looks around.



Then, sitting back on his Moped, the old man says, 'That's a pretty nice car, all right... but I'll stick with my Moped!'

Just then the light changes, so the doctor decides to show the old man just what his car can do. He floors it, and within 30 seconds the speedometer reads 160 mph.

Suddenly, he notices a dot in his rear-view mirror. It seems to be getting closer! He slows

down to see what it could be and, suddenly, WHOOOSSSHHH! Something whips by him going much faster! 'What on earth could be going faster than my Ferrari?' the doctor asks himself.

He presses harder on the accelerator and takes the Ferrari up to 250 mph. Then, up ahead of him, he sees that it's the old man on the Moped!

Amazed that the Moped could pass his Ferrari, he gives it more gas and passes the Moped at 275 mph, and he's feeling pretty good until he looks in his mirror and sees the old man gaining on him AGAIN!

Astounded by the speed of this old guy, he floors the gas pedal and takes the Ferrari all the way up to 320 mph.

Not ten seconds later, he sees the moped bearing down on him again!

The Ferrari is flat out, and there's nothing he can do!

Suddenly, the Moped plows into the back of his Ferrari, demolishing the rear end.

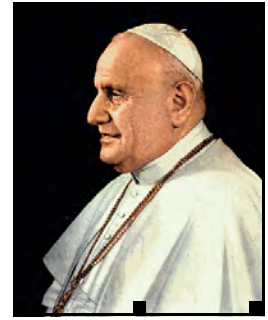
The doctor stops and jumps out and, unbelievably, the old man is still alive.

He runs up to the banged-up old guy and says, 'I'm a doctor.... Is there anything I can do for you?'

The old man whispers, 'Unhook my braces from your side view mirror!'

# Tips for Living a Better Life ....

From Pope John XXIII



1. Only for today, I will seek to live the livelong day positively without wishing to solve the problems of my life all at once.
2. Only for today, I will take the greatest care of my appearance: I will dress modestly; I will not raise my voice; I will be courteous in my behaviour; I will not criticise anyone; I will not claim to improve or to discipline anyone except myself.
3. Only for today, I will be happy in the certainty that I was created to be happy, not only in the other world but also in this one.
4. Only for today, I will adapt to circumstances, without requiring all circumstances to be adapted to my own wishes.
5. Only for today, I will devote 10 minutes of my time to some good reading, remembering that just as food is necessary to the life of the body, so good reading is necessary to the life of the soul.
6. Only for today, I will do one good deed and not tell anyone about it.
7. Only for today, I will do at least one thing I do not like doing; and if my feelings are hurt, I will make sure that no one notices.
8. Only for today, I will make a plan for myself: I may not follow it to the letter, but I will make it. And I will be on guard against two evils: hastiness and indecision.
9. Only for today, I will firmly believe, despite appearances, that the good Providence of God cares for me as no one else who exists in this world.
10. Only for today, I will have no fears. In particular, I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful and to believe in goodness. Indeed, for 12 hours I can certainly do what might cause me consternation were I to believe I had to do it all my life.

*Huffington Post in the Religion section.  
Gretchen Rubin • Writer, The Happiness  
Project • Posted: June 14, 2010*

## PROVINCE STAFF APPOINTMENTS

**Rex Cambrey** will take on the role of Province Bursar and will reduce his workload to three days a week. Although understood in Church circles, the title "Bursar" can be sometimes misunderstood in the commercial world. Hence, Rex's new title will be **Director of Business**.

**Mr John Greaves** has been appointed the **Manager of Finance and Administration** for the Province.

John has been Business Manager for the Sisters of Mercy Melbourne Congregation and comes with a wealth of experience and understanding of the needs for financial management of Religious Orders and of investment.

He will take up the position in early August.

**Wayne Kerr** has been appointed as **Property and Schools Administrator**.

Proposed changes at North Fitzroy, Coburg, Bulleen and Traralgon will mean significant time needs to be allocated for these property developments. Moreover, during these difficult financial times, there is a continuous need to be in touch with schools, their current operation, their ICT and their Capital Planning.

## SANTA TERESA COMMUNITY

Please note the new postal address for the Santa Teresa Community:

Marist Brothers  
Santa Teresa Catholic Church  
PMB 216  
Alice Springs NT 0871



Our deceased and their families

- **Mrs Dympna Smyth**, mother of Tom Smyth. Died 9/6/'10.
- **Fr Boniface Mannes**, died June 25 at 99 years of age. Three of his brothers were Marist Brothers - Augustine, Paul and Sylvester

For those who are unwell ...

- **Brother Kevin Hogan**, Netley.

And also for ...

- Blessings on all our **Jubilarians** on this significant milestone in their religious lives.
- Success of the **Marist Oceania Partnership 20/20 Vision Conference** to be held in Brisbane July 4 - 8.





Volume 41 \* Number 6 \* July 2010

CONTENTS

**PAGE**

- 3 From our Provincial
- 4 Province News
- 7 Traralgon Parish Farewell
- 11. Journey from Madang - Br Bill McCarthy
- 18. Jean Vanier - Br Mark O'Connor
- 20. Search for the true Mt Sinai
- 22. A Turkish Experience - Br Harry Prout
- 24 The Healing Powers of Forgiveness - Br Mark O'Connor
- 26. Good News from Pailin, Cambodia
- 30. Tips for Better Living - Pope John XXIII
- 31. *Please Pray for ...*

