

# Giving light to all - our challenge for Lent 2012

Ngā mihi atawhai - greetings to all in mercy! 'Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works.' With this quote, from the Letter to the Hebrews, Pope Benedict begins his Lenten message for this year, inviting Christians around the world to recognise that they are bound in solidarity with the world's needy, and to overcome by deeds of love the 'spiritual anaesthesia' which can numb us to their suffering.

The fact is that no matter how burdened we may feel, there is always someone worse off. It's by responding to their needs, especially during Lent, that we shed a light that by Easter spells new life – for ourselves as well as for a world that waits to be set free.

In good time for this Lent, Sr Anna Nicholls and two young friends, Nicole Smit and Jess Orpwood, have launched a project to raise funds for the education ventures of the Sisters of Mercy in Samoa and Tonga. The trio have returned to Christchurch after working at Paul VI College in Samoa, aware that even a small amount of funding goes a long way. They have decorated candles with messages for Lent and Easter, selling them under the title 'Giving Light' which picks up on a phrase of Catherine McAuley's in her Retreat Instructions, where she recommends that our prayerful reflection should make us like lamps "kindled with the fire of divine love, sharing and giving light to all."

Sr Anna explains that Nicole and Jess whom she had taught at Villa Maria College joined her as volunteers in Samoa while she was there teaching in 2010. They visited areas that had been badly affected by the tsunami that struck Samoa in September 2009. "After the earthquake in Christchurch, we all realized that despite the horrendous situation we faced, we were still better off than families in Samoa living in poverty. Within a day of the earthquake, portaloos began to line the streets, but we knew that clean water and adequate sanitation was not a reality for many Samoan families, even before the tsunami."

She says that the earthquake has spurred the three of them in many ways. She was in the centre of the city when the quake struck last February, and walked out through crumbling buildings. Marian College, where she currently works as Director of Religious Education, was severely dam-

## Imaging Mercy Today



Sr Anna Nicholls (left) with former pupils Nicole Smit and Jess Orpwood who served with her as volunteers at Paul VI College in Samoa and are now helping her to make candles to sell as a fund-raiser for the sisters' work in Samoa and Tonga. 'Start small, and improve the world,' Anna advises.

aged in the quake, and the school operated on an afternoon shift at St Bede's College before moving in December to a new temporary site (for the next two to five years), close to the Catholic cathedral. Jess and Nicole, who are currently studying engineering and nursing, have experienced huge disruption to study and work, as well as challenges at home. "But we were so lucky," says Sr Anna.

"'Giving Light' is a small way we can help to keep hope alive for the future generations of Samoa and Tonga," she says. "Education is a key step to developmental progress. A small contribution to the work the Sisters of Mercy are doing there can make a difference. Our encouragement to others, especially to young people, is to start small and improve the world!"

Questions for all of us, as the journey to Easter continues, are: "For whom have we been a light this Lent? Which lives have been changed by our little deeds of love?" How else will the alleluias of new life sound? - Dennis Horton

### Walking in newness of light

'Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works.' (Hebrews 10:24)

Father of all, in this holy season of Lent we hear your call, inviting hardened hearts to reach beyond the 'spiritual anaesthesia' that numbs us to the sufferings of others, to see the little and lowly who wait for our love.

Stir within each of us a response in love and good works, using the gifts and skills with which you have richly blessed us. Let us grow as members of a single body, till the light of dawn grows to the full day.

Produced by Pou Atawhai Centre for Mission, Auckland © March 2012



GIVING LIGHT: This Easter candle has been produced by Christchurch Sister of Mercy Anna Nicholls and two colleagues, as part of a fund-raising project to support the Congregation's education ventures in Samoa and Tonga. The 150mm-high candles come in two designs, for the seasons of Lent and Easter. The Lenten version bears the call from the prophet Joel, inviting people to return to God with full hearts; the Easter candle announces with alleluias that Christ is risen. The candles are available for \$20 each, plus \$4 postage, from Giving Light, 1/672 Ferry Road, Woolston, Christchurch 8023; or by email from [orders@givinglight.co.nz](mailto:orders@givinglight.co.nz).