



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

Auxiliary Bishop of Auckland

Pompallier Diocesan Centre, 30 New Street, Saint Marys Bay, Auckland 1011
Private Bag 47904, Ponsonby, Auckland 1144
Telephone +64-9-360 3002

Email: auxbish@cda.org.nz Website: www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz

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Dear brothers and sisters of Auckland Diocese

On 7 March 2019, one week before Covid sent us into lock us down, I was ordained an auxiliary Bishop for our Diocese. It was an unforgettable occasion that reflected the many faces and cultures of our wonderful Diocese.

At the end of the ordination, I spoke of having travelled in my waka from Hamilton to my new home, Tamaki Makaurau. You, the Church of Auckland - priests, religious and people, have truly helped me feel at home. Bishop Pat said to me at the ordination "be yourself". Thank you for your patience, encouragement and forgiveness - you have all helped me grow into this role.

One biblical image has remained with me over the last two years, especially as we rode the uncertain seas of the Covid crisis, and that is of Jesus calming the storm (Mk 4:35 - 41). While the storm raged and the disciples fought to keep from drowning, Jesus slept. The disciples, struggling for their lives, woke him and asked: "do you not care?" It is the selfless response of the people of this Diocese that has shown me "Jesus does care". There have been so many stories of people giving their time and resources for others - food banks, financial assistance, prayer vigils, care for the lonely, student outreach, and online prayer groups and Masses. As Pope Francis recently reflected: "we have realised that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, each of us in need of comforting the other."

Another enduring memory for me is of encountering you, God's people, praying, celebrating, grieving, whether it be in parishes, schools, our many communities, or the Diocesan Centre. I will never forget the awe I felt standing at Motuti where Bishop Pompallier celebrated the first Mass in New Zealand, or of journeying with people online at Masses and Alpha retreats, or of the many opportunities to interact with our school communities. Your generosity of faith is inspiring. A special thanks to Bishop Pat, and more recently Bishop Steve, for your guidance and encouragement, and to my brother priests for your welcome.

When asked to leave and join the Christchurch Diocese, I was speechless, struggling to comprehend what this would mean. In the uncertainty of what was being asked of me I sensed the presence of Mary, who in her times of uncertainty responded "let it be done".

I took her “yes” as the motto for my episcopal ordination – *Totus Tuus: all is yours*. May her example and intercession strengthen all of us as we respond to wherever God is calling us.

Thank you for welcoming me on your waka. I will never forget you, my Auckland whanau. I will always look back with fondness on my time as your Auxiliary Bishop.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read '+ M Gielen'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

✠ **Michael Gielen**
Bishop of Christchurch