



21 May 2022

Pope Francis appoints Bishop Michael Gielen as Bishop of Christchurch

Pope Francis has appointed Bishop Michael Gielen as the new Bishop of Christchurch.

Bishop Gielen has been the Auxiliary Bishop of Auckland since March 2020.

He will be installed in his new Christchurch role by July to replace the former Bishop of Christchurch, Paul Martin, who was appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Wellington in January 2021.

Bishop Gielen's Christchurch appointment was announced in Rome at 10pm New Zealand time tonight, Saturday 21 May.

The Diocese of Christchurch has 18 parishes, 35 primary and secondary schools and 65,646 of New Zealand's 470,000 Catholics, or 14 per cent.

Bishop Gielen says he is "humbled and honoured" by the appointment.

"I have a deep respect for the people of Christchurch, borne from their displays of resilience and generosity in the face of great adversity," he says. "I am grateful for Archbishop Paul Martin's leadership and vision. He leaves behind a courageous legacy.

"I am also very indebted to the people of Auckland and Hamilton, for all they have given me over my 25 years of ministry.

"I look forward to the new challenge that my appointment brings and meeting the people of Christchurch over the coming months."

Born in Cambridge, Waikato, Bishop Gielen (50) is the son of Henk and Maureen Gielen of Mount Maunganui, and is the eldest of six children. He is a keen sportsman.

Ordained as a priest in 1997, he served parishes in Gisborne, Hamilton and the western Bay of Plenty before becoming Director of Formation at the Holy Cross Seminary in Auckland in 2014, helping to train new priests until becoming Auxiliary Bishop to Bishop Patrick Dunn. Bishop Dunn retired recently and was replaced by Bishop Stephen Lowe, formerly Bishop of Hamilton.

Bishops of the Catholic Church are appointed by the Pope. Bishop Gielen's Christchurch appointment means two dioceses – Hamilton and Palmerston North – are without bishops pending Pope Francis making appointments there.