

# Auckland Diocesan Pastoral Council Newsletter

Report from the meeting of the Diocesan Pastoral Council held 10 June 2023.



## Notes from Bishop Steve

Bishop Steve commented on matters occurring in the diocese.

## A new way of Listening

The Council listened to diocesan communities in a synodal way.

## The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community

Bishop Steve gave a presentation on the 2022 document *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelising Mission of the Church*.

## How to engage people in conversations about change

Members of the Council consider advice and guidance to Bishop Steve difficult conversations about change of diocesan structures.

## Notes from Bishop Steve

Bishop Steve made a number of comments during the meeting and gave a short report on key elements of diocesan pastoral life.

Bishop Steve talked about the Totara Point Mass which was moved to Motukaraka [Mary Assumed into Heaven] due to the weather and lack of facilities at the site. As move towards the 200 year anniversary of the first Mass in 2038 there is a need to look at facilities at the Totara point site to include a covered area for Mass and other gatherings and suitable restrooms such as eco-toilets.

The priest appointments process changed last year. Clergy were asked what they wanted to do and were visited by a member of Appointments committee. It was a successful process that priests were happy with. Changes were out by 6 December.

Bishop Steve was asked when the Precious Blood could be reintroduced at Mass. He referred people to the letter sent 15 September 2022 lifting Covid restrictions at Mass. It was noted that some communities offered it for the first time post-Covid at the Mass of the Lord's Supper. It is at the discretion of the local priest in consultation with the local community.

There is some concern about the inordinate amount that priests are paid for funerals which put people in debt and requests to support priests coming to diocese for health matters. No special collections are permitted without the permission of Bishop Steve.

## Continuing the Synodal Process

A short presentation on the process of spiritual conversations was given at the start of the meeting. This is the process by which reports from across the diocese will be listened to.

Following the input members spent time prayerfully reflecting on the reports. Breaking into listening groups, the Council used the method to hear what the diocese had reported. In the third round of the process, they compiled a short summary statement to submit to Bishop Steve.

## A constantly changing Church.

Bishop Steve shared a snapshot of the Bishops who had shepherded the Church of Auckland in the last 175 years. Then unpacked *The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church*. This set the context of looking at structural change in the diocese.

This was tied into the synodal journey within the reality of people loving their parish but needing to constantly be thinking about how they read the signs of the times and adapt to the needs of people and societal changes. We need to look to the future with courage so that the Church (faith community) might thrive.

## Considering the process

The Council reflected in groups around how the process of considering changes to the diocese might occur. Of importance would be:

- Recognising the emotions involved in places in people's lives.
- Give the facts. Context and why process is happening.
- Map the whole process first so can see process.
- Invite into real dialogue not approve what is going to happen.

## Life in the diocese.

Headlines, themes, commonalities from reports presented by delegates.



After listening to the diocese through the submitted reports the council reflected to Bishop Steve.

### *Pastoral Councils*

Importance of Pastoral Council as a conjunct between priest and parish and for the promotion of faith. There are a significant number of parishes that do not have such a council.

### *Youth*

Young people are the cornerstone for reenergizing of Church. Therefore, need to encourage their involvement in all aspects of Church life. Youth groups are important aspects of engagement. Young people need mentoring and resources.

### *Mass attendance*

Numbers attending Church after Easter were generally not as high as during Holy Week. A few parishes report return to pre-Covid numbers.

There is a need to renew understanding of why we come to Mass so not just about funeral, weddings, baptism, and main celebrations.

### *Evangelization and Welcome*

Parishes are doing what they can to activate faith and grow involvement. They are aware of the need to go out into the communities so can bring back people to the worshipping community and strengthen the parish.

A big challenge is to activate volunteers across the community so not always same people doing things. Priest and people are both responsible for this.