

# NZ Catholic

The newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of Auckland

ISSUE 1 - APRIL 2025

## Welcome – Communications Update

Welcome to the first edition of our Catholic Diocese of Auckland newsletter. This is a collaboration with the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference communications team. It will be published monthly, with a mix of national and local news.

With the decision last year to discontinue printing *NZ Catholic*, we also chose to cease production of *CDA Connect*. This enabled the diocese to explore opportunities to enhance communications and to collaborate on communications.

As a result, we now enjoy *CathNews* twice a week. While *CathNews* aims to provide information and commentary relating to the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond to Catholics across the country, this newsletter provides the framework for more targeted local story-telling and an opportunity to promote regional events.

Diocesan communications is far more than this newsletter. Our website offers a range of resources and information. For example, from the front page you can access the details of Holy Week services across the diocese.

The diocese continues to grow its presence on social media platforms including Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. There you can access such initiatives as the Lenten reflection series, where members of the diocesan team ponder the Word and share their insights each Wednesday and Friday during Lent.

We also upload the Mass recorded for Shine TV each Saturday evening. Shine TV continues to broadcast Sunday Mass at 2pm on free-to-air channel 25 and Sky channel 201. This is a significant outreach to the housebound. Many hundreds of people gain spiritual sustenance and a sense of belonging by tuning in.

Our shepherd, Bishop Steve, wants to engage with the entire diocese through his short reflections posted each Sunday. There is a special playlist on YouTube so that you can dip into his wisdom and insight at any time.

The hope for this newsletter is that we may continue to build a sense of community within the diocese, creating belonging and unity, enabling all to feel connected and engaged with the diocese and its activities. By providing information about diocesan life, the hope is to encourage active participation and involvement in church.

Happy reading.

## Standing for Justice

The Justice and Peace Commission of the Auckland Diocese plays a crucial role in promoting justice, peace and the dignity of every human person in accordance with Catholic social teaching.

In this capacity, Loraine Elliott (Vicar for Social Impact), Manuel Beazley (Vicar for Māori) and Kathleen Card (Commission Executive Secretary) recently made an oral presentation to the select committee on the Treaty of Waitangi Principles Bill.

Speaking against the Bill, they argued that it distorts the true meaning of Te Tiriti o Waitangi by reducing the Treaty's mana to a series of legal principles, thereby undermining Māori sovereignty and the spirit of partnership intended by the Treaty.

The submission emphasised Catholic Social Teaching principles such as human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity and the preferential option for the poor, arguing that the Bill fails to uphold these principles, especially Māori rights.

It said the Bill's claim that Crown governance is absolute undermines Māori tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and negates the intention of the Treaty to establish a cooperative relationship, without relinquishing Māori sovereignty.

Ultimately, there was a need expressed for more meaningful engagement with the Treaty, promoting justice, mutual respect and the empowerment of Māori.



## UPCOMING Events

8 & 30 APRIL 10 MAY	Safeguarding Workshops	7.00pm - 8.30pm	Online
13 APRIL	NZSL Mass <i>followed by shared lunch</i>	12 Noon	Poynton Room Pompallier Diocesan Centre
18 APRIL	Palm Sunday Holy Week Timetables <a href="http://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/holy-week">www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/holy-week</a>		
18 APRIL	Stations of the Cross	9.00am - 2.00pm	Start Albert Park, walk through city
10 MAY	Ethnic Chaplaincies Finance Committee Formation	9.30am - 12.30pm	Poynton Room Pompallier Diocesan Centre
17 MAY	Role and Function of the Parish Pastoral Council	10.00am - 12.30pm	Poynton Room Pompallier Diocesan Centre





## National Seminary Welcomes 14 First-Year Students

Fourteen men recently started their first year of formal studies for the priesthood at Holy Cross Seminary in Auckland.

The men range in age from 19 to 33, and they are preparing for eventual ministry across five of the country's six dioceses.

Of the 14 in the first-year group, eight are from Vietnam, three are from New Zealand and the others are from Samoa, Argentina and the Philippines.

The human formator at the seminary, Fr Thanh Tran, said he is thrilled at the number of seminarians this year. Overall, there are 26 men in formation for the priesthood at Holy Cross, with two of these on pastoral placement this year.

"It is wonderful to have so many seminarians this year," Fr Tran said.

"For me, being the human formator

here, I get to see 14 first-year seminarians weekly, one-on-one. It is time-consuming, but it is a wonderful problem."

Fr Tran said the large number of seminarians has meant the liturgies at Holy Cross are even more vibrant than in past years.

And he is hopeful that there will be similar numbers in the 2026 first-year intake.

In the 2025 first-year group, there are many different stories of how God has brought them to enter the seminary.

### Peter Khoa

When Peter Khoa arrived in New Zealand from Vietnam in 2022, he could not speak any English.

He has spent two years learning the language before entering the

seminary to prepare for ministry as a priest of the Auckland Diocese.

"The first six months were very difficult for me," he said.

Peter, 31, grew up in a Catholic family in Vietnam, and attended a traditional parish.

"The priest there was really holy and wise and humble, and I wanted to follow a life like him."

But when he finished school, he did not gain sufficient marks in a seminary entrance exam, so he went to university and worked as a graphic designer.

Eventually, the call came to prepare for priesthood in New Zealand.

"To be honest, the first time I did not know anything about New Zealand, but [it was] what I wanted to do, and what I was waiting for was the call from God."

Peter believed that he had inherited a faith that came to Vietnam through missionaries from places like Portugal and France, so why shouldn't he follow God's call to be a priest overseas?

### Jack Fraser-Jones

The youngest of the first-year group is 19-year-old Jack Fraser-Jones. He is studying for the Hamilton Diocese.

After finishing high school and spending a year at university doing business studies, he wasn't sure he was on the right path.

He perceived that many of the good things in his life were gifts from God, and he loved his involvement

## Jubilee 2025

Dioceses across New Zealand have celebrated the opening of the Church's Year of Jubilee 2025, for which Pope Francis chose the theme "*Pilgrims of Hope*".

In addition to local celebrations, which will include visits to key pilgrimage sites around the country, the six bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand committed to two major pilgrimages in 2025.

The first took place in January, with the pilgrimage concluding when they joined hundreds of other pilgrims at Totara Point to celebrate the anniversary of the first Mass on New Zealand shores in 1838.

On August 15, the bishops will gather at the National Shrine to Our Lady at St Mary of the Angels in Wellington. It was at that first Mass in 1838 that Bishop Jean-Baptiste Pompallier placed New Zealand under the patronage of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven.

Find out more about local Jubilee Year celebrations at [catholic.org.nz](http://catholic.org.nz)



with the Church. He said that he had sensed the joy that comes from a “life lived with Christ”.

With so many people feeling discouraged at present, Jack wants to help people get on board with something that can lead in a more positive direction.

### Dyester Abo-abo

Dyester Abo-abo, 33, a seminarian for Wellington Archdiocese, was first attracted to the priesthood when he was a child in the Philippines.

The qualities of the priests in his parish, and the faith and witness of his parents in their involvement with the parish, helped cultivate a sense of vocation.

“I met a lot of priests and religious, and I saw that they were happy. I thought to myself, that is probably a good thing to do, but life happened.”

Dyester went to university, gained his degree and did post-graduate studies. He lectured at the university and worked as a psychologist.

Being at a Jesuit university, there was a strong sense of discernment around, so the idea of a vocation never left him.

“It is like music that is being played so softly that it takes a certain type of listening in order to hear it,” he said.

Dyester came to New Zealand in early 2024 to continue his discernment journey locally. He spent the year living in the presbytery in Island Bay.

In the seminary, Dyester is “taking it one step at a time”.

“The seminary is a house of discernment. So, I am hoping that, in every step of the way, God will lead me where he wants me to go.”

***The other first-year seminarians, with the diocese for which they are studying, their age, country of origin, and previous occupations are:***

Mateo Andrews, Auckland, 23, Argentina, trainer; Philip Malaitai, Auckland, 27, Samoa, builder; Joseph Marr, Auckland, 26, New Zealand, IT worker; Paul Nguyen, Auckland, 33, Vietnam, teaching assistant; Anthony Nguyen, Auckland, 31, Vietnam, IT worker; Tuan Nguyen, Auckland, 27, Vietnam, farmer; Hung Ha, Hamilton, 27, Vietnam, manufacturing engineer; Sam Turnbull, Hamilton, 26, New Zealand, IT worker; Sy Nguyen, Palmerston North, 23, Vietnam, teacher; Kham Nguyen, Wellington, 26, Vietnam, student; Pho Vo, Christchurch, 30, Vietnam, electrical engineer.

## Bishops Conference Launches New CathNews Ministry

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference is excited to launch CathNews New Zealand, a ministry designed to share the news, life and impact of the Catholic Church in this country.

The Bishops Conference recently reached an agreement with the Society of Mary to take on the CathNews name. Church Resources, a subsidiary of the Society of Mary, had managed CathNews since 2011.

The new CathNews will retain many

of the characteristics of the previous project. Its primary focus will be sharing news about the Church, its people and its ministries. It will also explore issues of importance for New Zealand society and culture.

CathNews New Zealand editor Gavin Abraham said providing a Catholic perspective on those issues will help form and inform readers.

“The Church, inspired by the Gospel, has an important voice in our society. Helping share that voice and amplify

it within the Catholic community and beyond will be central to our mission at CathNews,” he said.

Content will come from a range of sources, including mainstream media, Catholic, Christian and other faith-based media, as well as original content from the Bishops Conference.

“We are pleased to welcome thousands of subscribers, including many who had previously received CathNews,” Mr Abraham said.

“We are also encouraged to have hundreds of new people sign up for this ministry.”

Newsletters featuring nine stories will be sent to subscribers each Tuesday and Friday morning, with some exceptions due to public holidays. The website, at [cathnewsnz.com](http://cathnewsnz.com), will be updated to coincide with the newsletter schedule.

People wishing to share content for consideration can email: [cathnews@nzcbc.org.nz](mailto:cathnews@nzcbc.org.nz)  
Other enquiries can be sent to [communications@nzcbc.org.nz](mailto:communications@nzcbc.org.nz)



## Cherishing our Stories

In the corner of the Pompallier Diocesan Centre, the Archives can be found. Archives collects and preserves documents and artifacts that reflect the history and activities of the diocese. This helps maintain a record of the Church's past achievements and undertakings. Archives curates records of sacraments, parish histories and hold other important documents.

The role of the archivist is more than collecting dusty documents; it is also about cherishing and sharing our stories. Recently, our Archivist Keith Stuart discovered a letter regarding a bequest to the diocese of a handwritten sermon by Bishop Selwyn, the first Anglican Bishop of New Zealand. After tracking down the sermon and having an expert compare the writing against known examples of Bishop Selwyn's handwriting, it was confirmed that this was genuinely written by Bishop Selwyn and could be a copy that he gave to the Church Mission Press so that it could be typeset and printed.



*Bishop Steve blesses the newly erected gravestone of Ronald Morris, who died in the 1923 fire at St Joseph's Orphanage, Takapuna*



*Bishop Steve hands Bishop Selwyn's handwritten sermon notes to Bishop Ross Bay at this year's ecumenical service for Ash Wednesday*

At the recent Combined Service of the Ashes with Bishop Steve and Anglican Bishop Ross Bay at Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral, Bishop Steve quoted from this sermon. Then, having gained the support of the executor of the original benefactor, the restored sermon was returned to the Anglican community.

Searching archives can sometimes uncover sad memories and traces of those marginalised in society. It is a function of archives to ensure those people are not forgotten.

One of our stories is of the fire at the Takapuna orphanage in 1923 which resulted in the death of nine-year-old Ronald Morris. The coronial inquiry verdict was of accidental death with no blame being attached to anyone.

Ronald did not have anyone to purchase a gravestone, so until recently his plot was unmarked. But, a century on, this has changed. Due to the sharing of story by our Archives and thanks to the generosity of Bishop Steve, Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand and two private donors, Ronald Morris now rests in a marked grave.

## Rite of Election at the Cathedral



*In a full Cathedral on the first Sunday of Lent, more than 340 people ritualised the final step in their journey towards Baptism or full communion at Easter. We continue to pray and celebrate with them.*

**Tony Alonso**

Join Tony Alonso, a Grammy nominated composer of sacred music and a scholar whose work responds to the diverse realities of contemporary culture.

- An Evening with Tony Alonso**  
Thursday 29 May 6.30pm  
St Francis Xavier Church, Park Ave, Whangarei  
Koha \$10.00
- A Conversation with Tony Alonso**  
Friday 30 May 6.00pm  
Pompallier Diocesan Centre with drinks and nibbles  
\$20.00
- Workshop with Tony Alonso**  
Saturday 31 May 1.30 - 4.00pm  
Baradene College Auditorium, Victoria St.  
Koha \$10
- A Concert with Tony Alonso**  
Saturday 31 May 6.30pm  
Baradene College Auditorium, Victoria St.  
\$10.00

Book Now @  
[www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz](http://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz)

