

# NZ Catholic

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## A joyful 'yes': Celebrating the ordination of Fr Ryan Sy

The ordination of Fr Ryan Sy at St Luke's Parish, Flat Bush, gathered family, friends and parishioners from across Auckland to rejoice in God's fidelity and in Ryan's wholehearted "yes" to a life of service.

Born in Cebu, Philippines, Ryan first served others as a teacher after completing studies in psychology and education. Though the call to priesthood stirred in him from high school, he resisted it for nearly 20 years, discerning carefully what God was asking.

In 2015, he moved to New Zealand, training and working as a chef in Auckland. The kitchens became a place of growth and quiet listening, and the Lord's invitation only deepened. In 2020, Ryan entered Holy Cross Seminary to test that call more fully, forming habits of prayer, self-discipline and fraternity that would shape his heart for ministry.

At Fr Ryan's ordination Mass, Bishop Steve Lowe reminded the Church that every vocation begins with an encounter; before duties or titles come the Lord's words, "Follow me."

He encouraged Fr Ryan to serve with courage, humility and generous availability – to place God's people first and to embody Christ's sacrificial love in every parish, presbytery and pastoral visit.

As hands were laid and prayers rose, the many strands of Ryan's story – classroom and kitchen, questions and quiet consent – were woven into a priestly life offered for God's people. His journey from teacher to chef to priest is a witness to the patient grace of God and to the power of a steady, faithful response.

Fr Ryan's ordination is a gift to the Diocese of Auckland and a hopeful sign for our communities: the Lord continues to call, to form and to send shepherds after His own heart. May his priesthood be marked by joy,



humility and a love that always leads people to Christ.

As we celebrate Fr Ryan's ordination, we also hold in prayer all seminarians and those discerning a vocation. May they be strengthened by God's grace, supported by their communities and encouraged by the witness of priests who serve with faithfulness and love.



# Caritas launches Lent campaign in challenging times

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand has launched its annual Lent fundraising appeal at a time when humanitarian needs are rising in many parts of the world, but some countries are cutting aid.

Communities across the Pacific, Southeast Asia and conflict-affected regions are facing mounting pressure from climate change, violence and economic instability, Caritas said.

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand chief executive Mena Antonio said this year's six-week appeal comes at a difficult moment.

"We are seeing unprecedented hardship in many parts of the world," she said. "Climate pressures are deepening poverty in our own Pacific neighbourhood, while unprecedented humanitarian crises and displacement continue elsewhere.

"At the same time, funding for international aid has fallen. All of this creates a real gap for communities already under strain."

Funds raised through the Lent Appeal support Caritas' work with trusted local partners. Caritas provides improved food and water access, climate-resilient farming and other livelihood support to communities across the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

In the last year, it has also been called upon to respond to emergencies, such as the war in Gaza, the conflict in Ukraine, the Rohingya refugee emergency in Bangladesh, the Myanmar earthquake and the displacement caused by clashes on the Thai/Cambodian border.

Caritas helps about 620,000 people a year.

Last year also saw the US government gut USAID, which triggered a raft of cuts across the sector from other donor nations. These cuts are expected to affect humanitarian operations globally, including programmes supporting food security, protection and livelihoods.



Ms Antonio said Lent is a time when faith is expressed through practical solidarity.

"We walk with communities before, during and after emergencies," she said. "When people give this Lent, they are helping families stay safe and build a future in very difficult circumstances."

A central focus of this year's appeal highlights protection work with Rohingya refugee families in Bangladesh. More than 1.3 million Rohingya people remain confined to camps with limited rights and ongoing risks of violence, trafficking and exploitation. Caritas-supported community volunteers provide counselling, case work and referrals to safety for women and children facing abuse.

One Rohingya mother supported through the programme said access to a trained Caritas volunteer changed her situation after she fled violence in Myanmar.

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference has endorsed the appeal.

Donations to the Lent Appeal can be made online at [caritas.org.nz/lent](https://caritas.org.nz/lent)



# Vicar for Māori: Living the ‘word’ of Treaty would make NZ great



Auckland Diocese’s Vicar for Māori says a lived focus on the “word” that is Te Tiriti o Waitangi would help make Aotearoa New Zealand the greatest country on earth.

In a new episode of the Catholic Kiwi Podcast, Manuel Beazley said that the meaning of the words of Te Tiriti had been debated for the last 50 years or so.

“I think we can talk about the words and the meaning and the intent forever, and not really arrive at a common place,” Mr Beazley told podcast host James Bergin.

“One of the things I like [to say] when I speak about Te Tiriti is really focusing on the ‘word’ rather than the ‘words’. The ‘word’ is that two peoples in 1840 came together and they gave their word that they would work for the good of the other.

“So the Crown and Māori, through Te Tiriti o Waitangi, were giving their word to each other, that they would work for each other’s good,” he said.

“And if we can focus on that ‘word’ and get back to that ‘word’, we would be the greatest country on earth, where everyone gets to live the life they want to, where everyone gets to prosper.”

Mr Beazley suggested that the notion of the Treaty as

a “bi-cultural” agreement puts an unhelpful emphasis on ethnicity or race.

“In 2025, we still have the ‘bicultural’ relationship – the Māori side of the equation is to all intents and purposes still ethnically Māori, but the Crown side of it is [now]. . . ethnically diverse,” he said.

“So we have got to get to this understanding that Te Tiriti is about all of us. Every one of us becomes a Treaty partner, as it were. This idea of a ‘bicultural nation’ I think doesn’t help us.”

Referencing the work of AUT Professor Georgina Stewart, Mr Beazley said “the better term for us to be using is that we are inter-cultural, because each of us has something to give, but we also have got something to receive”.

Among the other topics discussed in the podcast were meeting Pope Francis, evangelisation and inculturation, the contribution of Bishop Pompallier in discussions leading up to the signing of the Treaty and how to celebrate Matariki as Catholics.

Search “Catholic Kiwi Podcast” on YouTube or Spotify to access the interview.

## Holy Cross Seminary makes pilgrimage to Christchurch

Seminarians and staff from Holy Cross Seminary completed a very busy schedule in Christchurch Diocese during their annual start-of-year pilgrimage.

There were six first-year students among the 31 seminarians who visited Christchurch from February 8-12. In the first-year group, one is in preparation for Palmerston North Diocese, one for Dunedin Diocese and two each for Christchurch Diocese and Wellington Archdiocese.

The 2026 hikoi started with the seminary students and staff joining Bishop Michael Gielen and parishioners for Mass at St Mary’s

Pro-Cathedral. Participants learned about the history of Christchurch Diocese in a talk at Nazareth House and visited Sacred Heart Basilica in Timaru and the St Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre in Temuka.

A prayerful time was spent at the Beatitudes Community in Leithfield, which was described as “a time to slow down, listen and be renewed in the Lord”.

At Akaroa, the hikoi participants learned about Bishop Pompallier and the first church in the South Island. On February 11, they visited the Carmelite Sisters and later gathered with 130 young people for dinner

before attending the Youth and Young Adults Encounter Night at St Mary’s Pro-Cathedral.

Sixth-year seminarian Gerson Badayos from Wellington said being on the hikoi this year was “a privilege and a blessing”. “I would like to mention the church in Timaru. It’s really beautiful. Being inside that church, you can really feel the Holy Spirit moving,” Mr Badayos said.

Another highlight for him was visiting the Beatitudes Community. “It’s just so nice seeing holy men and women responding to God’s call, and inspiring others to do the same...I’m very inspired to live a life of holiness and of service to others,” he said.

Another sixth-year seminarian, Tung Tran (Ignatius) from Christchurch, enjoyed the “companionship and brotherhood that I have shared with all my brothers in the last few days”.

Second-year seminarian Samuel Turnbull from Hamilton Diocese also enjoyed visiting the basilica in Timaru, adding that another hikoi highlight for him was “visiting the Carmelite Sisters and getting to talk with them, and asking them for their prayers”.



# Monthly Diocesan Youth Masses return to St Patrick's Cathedral

Since the 1970s, Diocesan Youth Masses at St Patrick's Cathedral have played a significant role in ministry to young people across the Diocese of Auckland. Originally inspired by the Second Vatican Council, these Masses sought to invite the full, conscious and active participation of young people in the Church's liturgy.

In more recent years, however, a combination of factors, particularly the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, led to the eventual pause of Diocesan Youth Masses in 2023. As parish youth ministries have rebuilt momentum since the pandemic, calls to re-establish Diocesan Youth Masses have steadily grown stronger.

These hopes were clearly voiced at the Youth Leaders' Hui in November 2025, where youth leaders expressed a desire for renewed Youth Masses that would:

- Role-model to young people what liturgy can be: sacred, beautiful and inviting full participation.

- Provide young people with liturgical formation, equipping them to contribute to liturgy in their own parishes.
- Contribute towards building up St Patrick's Cathedral as a vibrant hub of ministry to young people.

On February 22, young people from across the Diocese were excited to gather for the re-starting of monthly Diocesan Youth Masses at St Patrick's Cathedral. Moving forward, these Masses will take place at 4.30pm on the last Sunday of each month – a time chosen to improve accessibility for young people and their families.

The first Mass of 2026 was a joyful Commissioning Mass, where Msgr Bernard Kiely blessed and sent forth youth leaders for the year ahead. The atmosphere was one of celebration, unity and renewed hope as young people gathered once again in their cathedral.



## Local Youth Minister project strengthens pathways for discipleship

In 2025, the Diocese of Auckland launched a pilot initiative providing subsidy funding for paid Local Youth Ministers (LYMs) in secondary schools and parishes. The goal was to support these communities in offering young people meaningful opportunities to encounter Christ and grow in ongoing discipleship.

Our pilot LYM, Bridgette Carne, ministered in the community of St Ignatius College, Drury and St Patrick's Parish, Pukekohe. There she pioneered a model of youth ministry focused on discipleship small groups: gatherings of five to eight young people meeting weekly with one or two trained Catholic adult mentors.

This small-group approach, combined with larger monthly youth gatherings and inviting youth participation in

school and parish liturgies, proved particularly effective at ministering to the spiritual needs of young people. It also strengthened collaboration between school and parish, helping to build a shared culture of evangelisation and discipleship.

A distinctive feature of the LYM model is the structured support each minister receives. LYMs participate in intensive start-of-year training, followed by weekly mentoring, formation and practical ministry support from the diocesan youth ministry team.

Following the success of the pilot, the Diocese has expanded the project from one to five Local Youth Ministers in 2026. These LYMs will serve in the following communities:

- St Ignatius College, Drury & St Patrick's Parish, Pukekohe
- Pompallier College & St Francis Parish, Whangarei
- Sancta Maria College & St Luke's Parish, Flat Bush
- Good Shepherd Parish, Balmoral & St John Vianney Parish, Hillsborough
- Holy Cross Parish, Henderson

The five LYMs completed an intensive four-day initial training programme in January, covering youth discipleship, mentoring, prayer, safeguarding and strategies for building youth leadership teams. They were then welcomed into their communities at the start of term 1, being introduced at school assemblies and Sunday Masses.

These five ministers now begin their mission: to offer young people across the Diocese a consistent, relational and formation-focused pathway for ongoing discipleship.

