

# NZ Catholic

The newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of Auckland

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## ‘Draw new maps of hope’, Bishop tells Catholic educators

On the evening of Shrove Tuesday, the diocesan Catholic schools community, along with Bishop Steve Lowe and priests from some of our Auckland Catholic schools, celebrated the annual Dedication Mass. This year’s celebration centred on the inspiring theme “Drawing New Maps of Hope”, drawn from Pope Leo’s encyclical letter.

Principals, teachers and directors of religious studies from early childhood education centres, primary schools and secondary schools filled Christ the King Church in Owairaka, reflecting the strength and diversity of Catholic education in Tāmaki Makaurau. Their presence highlighted a collective commitment to nurturing faith, aroha and hope in the lives of young people.

Bishop Steve presided over the Mass, offering a message that encouraged educators to be courageous cartographers of hope – people who guide students through a changing world with compassion, wisdom and faith. His words resonated strongly, setting up a reflective and uplifting tone at the start of Lent.

At the end of Mass, there was the presentation of certificates to acknowledge teachers for their outstanding contributions throughout the previous year. The awards recognised excellence in leadership, service, learning and dedication to Catholic character, celebrating the many ways educators continue to shape vibrant, faith-based learning communities.

The gathering served not only as a liturgical celebration



but also as a time of community, gratitude, tika, pono, aroha and reset. As the community stepped into Lent, the liturgy reaffirmed a shared mission: to continue drawing new maps of hope for our students, families and the wider Church in Tāmaki Makaurau and across the motu.

Students from Sacred Heart College stepped up to support the gathering, as they do each year – helping with catering and clean up. They are ready and willing to step into any role needed.

It is a blessing to come together at the beginning of every year to pray and start in Christ.

## Leading with purpose: Catholic governance in action

What does it mean to govern in a way that is deeply Catholic? That question sat at the heart of the “Fostering a Catholic Culture in Governance” seminar, which gathered around 90 leaders from diocesan bodies, religious orders and Catholic social agencies to pause, reflect and reconnect governance work with the heart of Catholic mission.

Opening the day, Bishop Steve Lowe reframed governance as ministry – a way the Church makes Christ visible in the world. Using the image of a waka navigating the ocean, he encouraged leaders to read “the signs and winds”, to listen deeply and to trust that Christ is with us in the work.

Australian priest Fr Brian Lucas returned Catholic governance to first principles, emphasising that God’s mission comes first.

Drawing on Scripture, Vatican II and Church teaching, attendees were encouraged not to see the Church as a static institution but as a living community of missionary disciples – people called into relationship with God and one another.

Participants then took part in a range of sessions with prayer and discernment being placed at the heart of Catholic governance, urging leaders to move beyond token gestures and allow faith to genuinely shape decision-making.

The seminars explored synodal governance through deep listening and shared discernment, alongside Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a living covenant aligned with Catholic Social Teaching. Canon law was presented as a practical foundation for good order and stewardship, while sessions on investing and emerging technologies showed how Gospel values can guide complex contemporary decisions by keeping human dignity, accountability and mission at the centre.

The seminar concluded with a sending prayer. Each person received a small, engraved stone as a reminder that governance is not only about what is decided, but also how and why things are decided – and whom those decisions ultimately serve. The stone can serve as a quiet prompt toward integrity, humility and hope.



## Youth ministry leaders inspired at Life Teen Convention

The Life Teen Aotearoa Leadership Convention 2026, held in partnership with the Diocese of Auckland, brought together 139 leaders of Catholic youth ministry from across New Zealand for a weekend of formation, connection and renewal.

The Life Teen Convention created a space for those involved in ministry to take a step back from the busyness of parish life and be inspired once again in their mission to lead teens closer to Christ. Through a mix of keynote sessions, practical breakouts and prayer, attendees were equipped with tools and ideas to invest in the lives and faith of young people.

Centred on the theme “Radiant Hope”, the convention invited participants to reflect on Christ as the source of enduring hope, Mary as an example of living with radiant hope and the call for youth ministers to be witnesses of that hope.

Keynote sessions explored ways youth ministry leaders can foster environments where young people encounter hope in Christ.

Practical breakout sessions covered a range of topics such as sharing the Gospel with young people, how to love Jesus deeply, the role of mission and vision in planning, and how to recruit, mentor and support younger leaders.

The event was supported by Life Teen International,

whose ongoing investment continues to strengthen local efforts. A highlight was having Randy Raus, president and CEO of Life Teen, sharing his heart for ministry during keynotes and breakouts.

Auckland Bishop Steve Lowe and 22 of the country’s seminarians joined the convention for Sunday Mass.

The Life Teen Aotearoa Leadership Convention, held every two years, is the largest national training event for those involved in Catholic youth ministry in New Zealand.

Participants spoke of the great benefit of the event in preparing them for their efforts at home.

“The time of prayer and praise, the workshops and keynotes all knitted together to create a wonderful, peaceful and enriching experience that has left me feeling invigorated in my youth ministry work,” said Emily Gorman.

“Youth ministry is a tough road, with ups and downs, but it’s so good to be reminded of why we do what we do and that we aren’t alone doing it.”

Dina Aziz conceded she was feeling somewhat “spiritually dry” ahead of the event, but she gained valuable insights in the sessions and felt God’s presence.

“After the convention I became on fire with the Holy Spirit and can’t wait to share it with our youth leaders and the youth,” she said.





## Shared indigenous experiences punctuate conference in NZ

Participants in the second International Conference on Catholic Indigenous were struck by the similar experiences and a common resilience across the four participating nations.

The conference, which was hosted in Auckland in early March, saw delegations from the United States, Canada and Australia join a New Zealand contingent.

Each country led one day of the proceedings, outlining significant suffering and traumatic practices and policies, but also sharing stories of resilience, faith and hope.

Graydon Nicholas, a member of the Tobique First Nation in Canada, was at the first gathering in Washington, DC in 2023. He said the second gathering took the important conversations to another level.

“This is another stage in the journey that we as indigenous Catholics are on to become more fully involved with our Catholic faith,” he said, something he has called a “spiritual quest”.

“Even though we’re all indigenous people from different parts of the world, there are a lot of common experiences, but there is also a lot of common good that is present.”

Mr Nicholas said among his highlights of the Auckland conference were the Masses that incorporated components of indigenous liturgy, culture and spirituality.

Manuel Beazley, who chairs Te Rōpū Māori, an advisory group to the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, said he also was struck by the similarities of the experiences of people across the different countries.

Mr Beazley said one of the lessons he will take from the conference is the importance of a consistent approach to supporting indigenous Catholics. He believes that could be improved across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Doreen Flanders, who serves as deputy chair of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council in Australia, spoke of the pōwhiri at Tūtahi Tonu marae on the opening day as a high point.

“The welcome to country was absolutely amazing,” Aunty Doreen said. “To be welcomed in the traditional way – I was looking forward to that, because it is such an important part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.”

She conceded that the stories of cultures lost, of people dispossessed and displaced, made for difficult listening, but stories of faith also shone through.

“It’s so easy to make the connections about some of the social injustice that has happened to indigenous people,” she said.

“The thing that’s pricked my ears up, and I have thoroughly enjoyed, is how those communities and



individual people, how they have incorporated and embraced Catholic identity, Catholic faith to themselves and their communities.”

Bishop John Folda of Fargo, in the US state of North Dakota, said identity – both as indigenous and as Catholics – was a strong thread through the conference.

“All are seeking recognition as not only part of society but also as integral members of the Church,” he said.

“I think we’re all looking in common for ways to serve our indigenous brothers and sisters and to support them in their lives – in the living out of their culture and the living out of their Catholic faith.”

While acknowledging the smaller populations of New Zealand and Australia, Bishop Folda said he was struck by how closely connected Māori and Aboriginal Catholic advisory bodies are with their bishops’ conferences.

The next International Conference on Catholic Indigenous will be hosted in Canada in 2028 or 2029.

# Auckland delegation attends world's largest RE event

Catholic Education Services sent three delegates to Los Angeles recently to participate in the 70th annual Religious Education Congress – the largest gathering of Catholic educators, catechists and ministry leaders in the world.

The trip provided a valuable opportunity for Margaret Fitzpatrick, John Hall and Kuilei Pulotu to engage in professional growth, spiritual renewal and international collaboration.

The Congress offered one inspiring keynote speaker who is one of the co-founders of the Hallow App, Alessandro DiSanto. It was a great experience to hear stories that connect delegates to their faith and their mahi. There were liturgies, workshops with well-informed faith-based speakers and exhibitions that catered for each participant.

The Auckland delegates were also able to engage with global pilgrimages in Catholic education, exploring new approaches to faith formation, pastoral care and community engagement. Workshops covered a wide range of topics, including digital evangelisation, intercultural ministry, youth engagement, education in rural areas and contemporary theological insights. Each



session encouraged participants to reflect deeply on their own practice and consider innovative ways to strengthen Catholic identity within local contexts.

One of the highlights of the Congress was the vibrant multilingual liturgies, which presented the diversity and unity of the global Church. The Auckland group found these celebrations particularly moving, as they offered a powerful reminder of the shared mission that connects Catholic communities across continents.

Beyond the planned sessions, the trip allowed the building of relationships with educators and ministry leaders from around the world. Conversations with peers from the United States, Australia, Asia and Europe provided fresh perspectives and practical ideas that can be adapted for use in schools and parishes across the Diocese and the motu.

Visits to places that are of significance to Catholics like San Juan Capistrano, the LA Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels and Christ Cathedral (the former Crystal Cathedral, now the Catholic Cathedral of the Diocese of Orange) were other highlights.

The group was able to return home inspired and energised, bringing new resources, strengthened networks and a renewed sense of love for their mahi.

Margaret, John and Kuilei said their participation in the Congress will contribute meaningfully to ongoing formation efforts and to the wider mission of Catholic education, parish ministry and ethnic chaplaincies in Aotearoa.



*Bishop Steve's Easter message will be available on the Diocesan website from Easter Sunday, April 5*

A graphic featuring a QR code on the left and a portrait of Bishop Steve on the right. The background is a dark, atmospheric scene with a cross on a hill under a sunset sky.

Scan the QR code to view his message  
<https://www.youtube.com/@AucklandCatholic>



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