

NZCatholic

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Catholic Caring Foundation Caring Mass - Celebrating Communities That Care

When the need has never been greater, caring for those in need takes on even greater urgency. With one in seven children in New Zealand living in material hardship, Bishop Steve Lowe, patron of the Catholic Caring Foundation, is encouraging people to respond with compassion, generosity and practical support to those in need.

At the Auckland Catholic Caring Foundation's annual Caring Mass, more than 1,000 people gathered with Bishop Steve at Christ the King Church in Owairaka to give thanks for those who care for people in need and to continue to build a community that cares.

Students from almost 50 Catholic schools across the Auckland Diocese, together with their teachers

and whānau, joined supporters of the Foundation and representatives from social service agencies that have received funding from the Caring Foundation and the Tindall Foundation.

The Caring Foundation plays an important role in responding to hardship in the community. Through encouraging a culture of giving, it supports initiatives that care for people experiencing poverty, disadvantage and vulnerability. The Foundation provides grants to agencies delivering vital social services, helping organisations make a practical difference in the lives of individuals, children and families who need support.

Bishop Steve reminded the congregation that everyone has

something to give. Just like the boy with the five loaves and two fishes, small acts of care can inspire others to do the same.

He also said that we need people with the heart of Jesus, who see the challenges facing our society and want to do something about them, even when they may have only a little to give.

The Caring Mass celebrated that shared commitment: a community that has the heart of Christ, and the understanding that we are called to imitate Jesus' heart for the poor, a willingness to give and a desire to make sure no one is left without care and support.

To find out more about the Catholic Caring Foundation visit www.caringfoundation.org.nz



Feast of Mary's Assumption Celebrated in Hokianga

New Zealand's patronal feast day – the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary into heaven – was a special occasion for the Church of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven in Motukaraka, Hokianga. It is under that title that Bishop Pompallier entrusted New Zealand to Mary's protection.

Fr Vu Nguyen MSC (Panguru) and Fr Peter Hendriks MSC (visiting from the Australian Province), Deacon Ben Pomare from Motuti and Vicar for Maori Manuel Beazley joined local parishioners and guests for the celebration of Mass on the important day.

A long-time parishioner and kuia, Barbara, welcome everyone and thanked Bishop Steve for the permission to celebrate the feast on the actual day, August 15, while it had been transferred to Sunday for the rest of New Zealand.

Manuel picked up on this in his kōrero, noting that Motukaraka had always been "ahead of times" – including by dedicating the new whare karakia to Our Lady Assumed into Heaven in 1910, while the actual dogma was proclaimed only some 40 years later.

Keeping with the "timeline" of events, Fr Peter in his homily spoke – among other things – about the beautiful icon Te Ara a Maria, commissioned by the NZCBC in 2021, which had visited Motukaraka Church when on a hikoi around Aotearoa, before being permanently installed at St Mary of the Angels Church in Wellington.

Fr Peter quoted: "Loving God, united as your people, we unite ourselves with the 'yes' of your mother Mary, the first disciple ... Keep us faithful in our response to your love with Mary,



patroness of our land."

Fr Peter is visiting from Australia and supporting the three Vietnamese MSC priests stationed in the Far North – Fr Bang, Fr Hoang and Fr Vu – as they care for and look after the pastoral needs of the Mid-North parishes.

After the miha and a photo on the steps of the church, everyone was invited to a traditional and sumptuous kai at the marae. The lavish hospitality and the fellowship of the local whanau were as great as ever.



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Social Justice Week Focuses on Belonging to God



The Catholic Agency for Justice, Peace & Development

In the lead-up to Social Justice Week 2026, New Zealand's Catholic bishops are urging people to recognise the dignity and worth of every person in a world increasingly shaped by conflict, displacement, misinformation and exclusion.

In a statement launching this year's observance, which runs from September 6-12, the bishops said the theme, "You belong to God | Nā te Atua anō koe", is a reminder that every person has inherent value and deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

This year's Social Justice Week marks the beginning of a three-year focus on the theme of "Belonging". The 2026 programme explores humanity's relationship with God, with future years set to consider belonging with one another and belonging within creation.

"We believe God has created everyone for relationship," the bishops said.

"In his new encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo writes, 'Created for relationship, every human person is planned and willed by God to enter into communion with him, with others and with creation' (#50). Our lives are woven together by growing in these essential relationships to our being."



"May we work together to defend and protect human dignity wherever we see it undermined or ignored."

The bishops noted that there is often "little regard for the weak, small and most vulnerable among us", including people experiencing poverty, homelessness, disability, illness and exclusion.

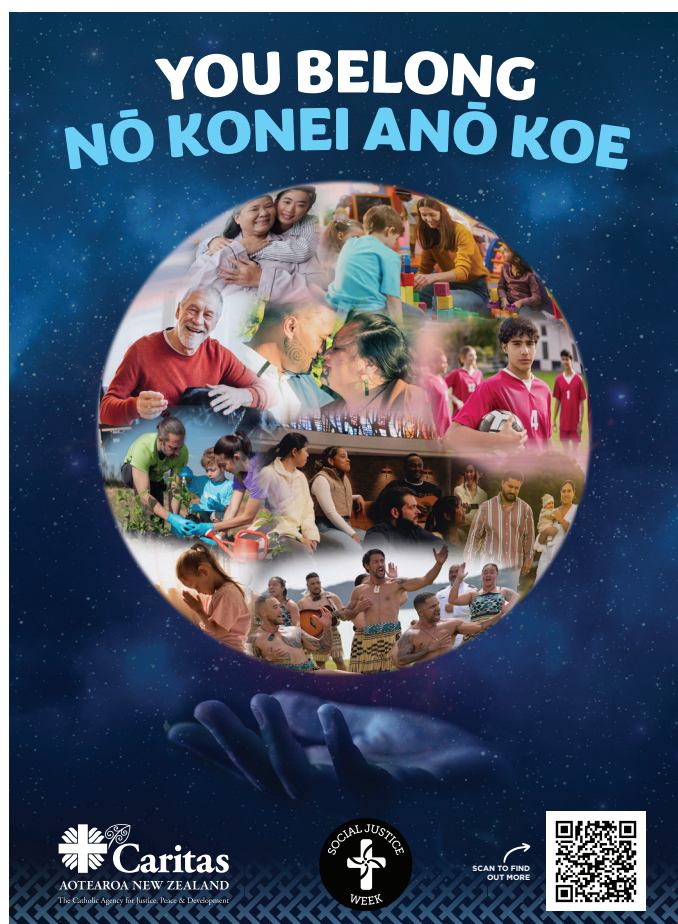
Beyond its religious dimension, the bishops' statement also highlights social challenges familiar to many societies, including the impact of disinformation, the erosion of respect for others and hostility towards people perceived as different.

"Social Justice Week this year invites you and us to recognise and affirm the God-given dignity of ourselves and all others. . . . May we work together to defend and protect human dignity wherever we see it undermined or ignored," the bishops said.

In a video for Social Justice Week, NZCBC president and Bishop of Auckland Steve Lowe said these days are "a week of journey, a week of belonging or reflecting on belonging in a new, deeper way to deepen our much longer journey of life".

Bishop Lowe noted the thinking of early Church fathers who spoke about being called into God's likeness.

"And I think [this is an] interesting concept for us to reflect on particularly as we come into Social Justice Week . . . is how am I growing in the likeness of God and do I reflect God's attitude towards me, his love of me, do I reflect that to other people because that's part of belonging to God – that we become like God in the ways we speak and in the ways we act," Bishop Lowe said.



Diocesan Leaders Gather to Assess Progress on Reshaping

On August 8, members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, Diocesan Administrative Council and Council for Priests gathered for an update on the Diocese of Auckland's Reshaping process.

The day began with a presentation on the Eastern Bays Reshaping process, led by Msgr Bernard Kiely and Manuel Beazley. Over recent months, parishioners from across the Eastern Bays have participated in a series of spiritual conversations centred on the question: "What does my faith mean to me and how do I hope it will shape the future of our parishes?"

Through feedback from 25 small group conversations, four key

themes emerged:

- **Faith** – As the foundation of life and the source of hope.
- **Community** – The relationships, support and connection found within parish life.
- **Diversity** – As a strength of the parish community.
- **Youth** – Concern for young people and future generations.

The presentation also highlighted a strong desire for collaboration between parishes, greater welcome to those on the margins of our communities and a shared commitment to building a mission-ready future for the Church in the Eastern Bays.

Bishop Steve Lowe then reflected on the wider vision of Reshaping and its connection to the Church's synodal journey. He emphasised that Reshaping is not simply a structural exercise, but a call to become "a missionary Church where all of us participate in the communion of the one Body of Christ".

The gathering concluded with discussion on how Council members and parish leaders can support the next chapter of Reshaping. Participants were encouraged to see the process as an opportunity to strengthen communion, encourage greater participation and renew the Church's missionary focus as communities discern their future together.

Record Crowd Gathers for WYD Auckland

World Youth Day Auckland brought together a record 2,141 young people, youth leaders and clergy from across the Diocese on August 1. As Auckland's largest annual diocesan youth gathering, this full-day event offered opportunities for friendship, formation, celebration and prayer.

This year's theme, "WITNESS", was inspired by the Scripture chosen for the 40th World Youth Day: "You also are my witnesses, because you have been with me" (Jn 15:27).

The day was structured around three main sessions. The first encouraged young people to fix their gaze on Jesus amid the distractions and challenges of modern life. We were delighted to welcome Zac

Parnell from the Diocese of Lismore, Australia, whose keynote address challenged participants to turn away from distractions and place Jesus at the centre of their lives.

The second session explored the theme of witness in a practical way through separate youth and young adult breakouts. Participants heard from Sr Anastasia and Sr Susanna, two Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia,

along with members of the Young Vinnies and Auckland NET Team.

The third session focused on being a courageous witness of Christ. Zac Parnell delivered a second powerful keynote, followed by a time of Eucharistic Adoration. A particular highlight was the closing call to action, where more than 2,000 young people stood with hands raised, committing themselves to be courageous witnesses of Christ.

The day concluded with Mass celebrated by Bishop Steve Lowe, joined by priests from across the Diocese. Participants were sent forth as witnesses, to live and share their faith in their schools, parishes and communities.

