TŪMANAKO
United in Hope • *I te Tūmanako o te Kotahitanga*
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Celebrations at Hiruhārama ahead of re-opening in April

Words by Compassion Communications. Photos: Kirsty Prentice

The Sisters of Compassion, in partnership with Ngāti Hau, hosted a blessing and service at the historic settlement of Hiruhārama on March 19, following renovations to the Old Convent and St Joseph's Church.

Over 100 people with links to Hiruhārama joined the celebrations. The proceedings began with a Pōhiri on to Patiarero Marae, followed by formal speeches on the Hiruhārama grounds. Bishop John Adams conducted the blessing of the convent and church, and led the Mass at the restored St Joseph's Church.

Sr Margaret Anne Mills and 'Alisi Tu'ipulotu planted a tree in honour of the legacy of Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert.

Reflecting on the special day, Sr Margaret Anne said: "This is the place that inspired Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert to build a community of women, Sisters of Compassion, to share in the call to live the Gospel. Today so many of you have embraced the call to share in the spirituality and example of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert. She is smiling upon us."

Ron Hough of Ngāti Hau, who is also a Trustee of the Sisters of Compassion Group, wove together the shared histories of his tūpuna and Mother Aubert in his whaikōrero, grounded in manaakitanga.

His words affirmed a legacy of care and service, carried on by his mokopuna and wider whānau through their stewardship of the Old Convent and Church, where Mīha continues and the spirit of Pūaroha Compassion lives on at Hiruhārama.

Hiruhārama was due to reopen to the public this month and is currently taking bookings.





Bronny and David Lea meet Pope Leo

Photo: supplied

David and Bronny Lea from St Brigid's Parish in Pahiatua travelled to Rome in March for a meeting at the Vatican and to attend an audience with Pope Leo XIV.

In 2008, as global leaders of Worldwide Marriage Encounter, David and Bronny attended a meeting in Rome to seek official recognition as a formal movement of the Church. The finalisation of this request was formally confirmed at the Vatican last month, in the presence of Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life.

On March 12, they participated in an audience with the Holy Father. They said meeting the leader of the Catholic Church face-to-face and speaking with him was a moment of deep privilege and humility. He was sincere, warm and friendly. They said the experience will remain with them always.





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.



Photography: Taila Burton

Content on this spread provided by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference



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 last month, 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.



Māori Apostolate Board reconvenes

Words by Dr Katarina Gray-Sharp. Photo: Supplied

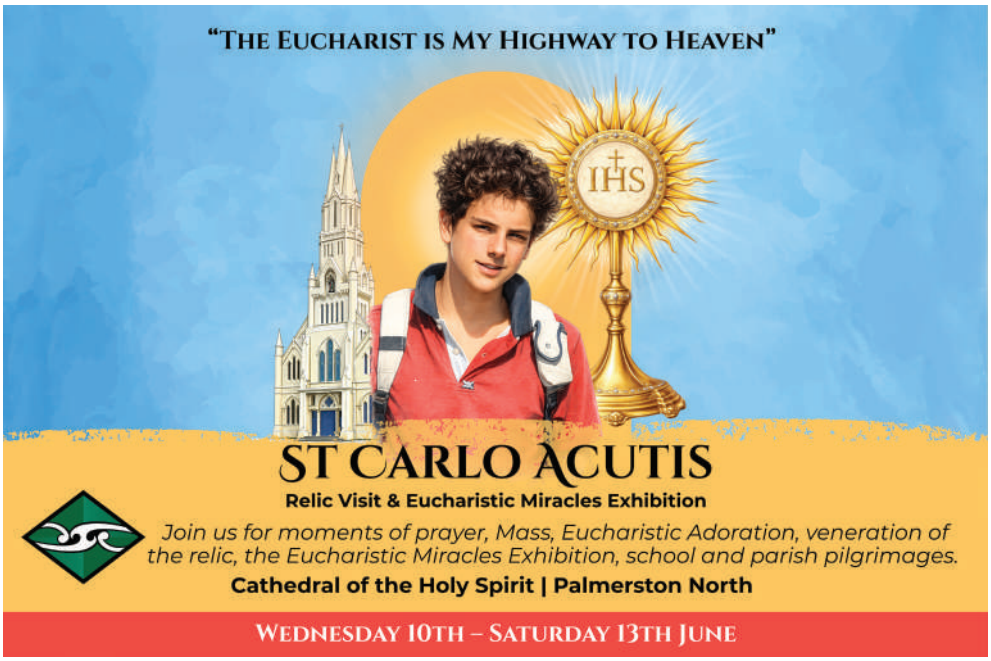
On March 21, Bishop John Adams joined other Māori Apostolate Board members for the first time at Te Rau Aroha.

The Māori Apostolate Board represents eucharistic communities across the Diocese of Palmerston North. Established by Bishop Peter Cullinane, the Board historically incorporates 20 communities "from Ngā Pekanga, Waitara in the west to Tāwhiti ā Maru, Wairoa in the east". The Board has 18 members, including the Bishop and Principals (or their delegates) of St Joseph's Māori Girls' (SJMGC) and Hato Pāora Colleges.

After pōwhiri, verbal reports were received from representatives of Te Wairoa, Manawatū, Waimarino, SJMGC and Pakipaki. The Board is considering new kura katekita (Māori catechists' training), a Missal Books review and updates to the Māori Catholic page.

Subsequent to celebrations at Hiruhārama/Jerusalem in March, a pilgrimage will be held "connecting Māori eucharistic communities and their Mēri Hōhepa [Suzanne Aubert] links". Bishop John addressed representatives before administrative matters were discussed. A shared evening meal was followed by the Bishop's first Miha Māori on March 22.

The group's second meeting of the year is planned for September.





A celebration at St Joseph's School Dannevirke

The whole community of St Joseph's School, Dannevirke, came together on March 13 to celebrate Sheryl Berry's 40 years of service as school secretary. Principal Megan Setter, along with other speakers, congratulated and thanked Sheryl for her loyal and dedicated service to the school, which is possibly the longest tenure of any Catholic school secretary in New Zealand. Sheryl is continuing in the role.

In the parish hall, pupils and staff entertained guests with lively singing and actions, including a specially composed song acknowledging Sheryl's many years of service.

Sheryl was presented with a Palmerston North Diocese Certificate of Recognition, awarded by Msgr Brian Walsh on behalf of Bishop John Adams. The celebration concluded with a prayer and blessing.

UPCOMING Events

SAVE THE DATES **DIOCESAN HUBS**

Saturday 30 or Sunday 31 May
12:30pm to 4:30pm
Manawatū-Whanganui/Taranaki

Saturday 15 or Sunday 16 August
12:30pm to 4:30pm
Manawatū-Whanganui/Hawkes Bay