Dear friends

On January 25, 1959, in the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, Pope John XXIII announced his intention to convoke an ecumenical council. It was at the closing ceremony for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been a formal cooperative work involving the Holy See and the World Council of Churches since 1958. Times of prayer for Christian Unity date back to the 1700s.

The Week of Prayer takes place in Aotearoa New Zealand between Ascension Sunday and Pentecost Sunday (29 May-5 June). The theme this year is “We saw his star in the east, and we came to worship him”, from Matthew’s account of the Magi visiting the infant Jesus.

The star of Bethlehem has meaning beyond Christmas. It is a sign that God calls his people to unity, walks with them, feels their pain, hears their cries, and shows them compassion. It reassures us that though circumstances change and terrible disasters may happen, God’s faithfulness is unfailing.

I ask you to pray this week for Christian unity, even for just a few minutes, so that the witness of all those who follow Christ may be a star, a light for the world. You will find resources to help your prayer on your diocesan website and on <https://catholic.org.nz/>.

Cardinal John A Dew

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