



Te Huinga o ngā Pihopa Katorika o Aotearoa

New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

Summary of NZCBC Meeting, April 2026 | Hamilton

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference met in Hamilton from April 27-30. Te Rōpū Māori, the bishops' advisory group on matters of particular pastoral interest to Katorika Māori, met on April 28 and joined the bishops for discussions on April 29.

The bishops celebrated the daily 8am Mass at the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Gábor Pintér, addressed the bishops on the opening morning of the meeting, reflecting on the nature of episcopal ministry in a synodal Church, with particular reference to contemporary New Zealand society.

The bishops held in-person or video discussions with a number of NZCBC staff or leaders of related entities, including from: Te Kupenga – Catholic Leadership Institute; Holy Cross Seminary; Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand; the New Zealand Catholic Education Office; the Nathaniel Centre for Bioethics.

On the afternoon designated for a pastoral conversation, the bishops discussed evangelisation efforts in dioceses, as well as how the Church can respond to the recent and ongoing trend of increased interest from adults in becoming Catholic. They also considered how priests can be supported with ongoing formation.

Key agenda items during the meeting included:

- The election and appointment of officers for the NZCBC. Bishop Steve Lowe was elected to a second term as president, with Bishop Michael Dooley also re-elected to the role of vice-president. Archbishop Paul Martin SM was appointed as the NZCBC's general secretary.
- Preparations for upcoming documents that the NZCBC will issue, including a statement ahead of the November general election and resources for Support Life Sunday.
- A review of the recent International Conference on Catholic Indigenous Ministry, which New Zealand hosted in March. Delegates who attended the gathering offered their reflections on the value of the event, which included presentations from the four member countries on their context and work to promote healing and reconciliation, where possible. A pilgrimage to Northland allowed participants to explore early New Zealand Catholic history, including the interaction of priests and religious with Māori.
- Review of a paper prepared for the bishops on the dignified care of bodily remains, including questions about the use of aquamation (also called water cremation). Some guidance is expected to be published in coming months.

- It was noted that a new document on the Catholic understanding on death and dying would be a worthy project to pursue.
- A report on the exploratory trip to South Korea to support New Zealand's preparation for World Youth Day in 2027. Bishop John Adams was part of that delegation, along with Fr Thomas Park (Auckland) and Sam Brebner, who works in young adult ministry in Auckland Diocese and is a member of the National Council for Young People.
- An increase in the number of students at Te Kupenga – Catholic Theological College
- A report from the Pastoral Research Advisory Group, which was established to consider how Church entities can collaborate on research initiatives, including in light of the cessation of the New Zealand Census.
- The development of resources to support commemorations of Matariki that respect Catholic prayer and theology, as well as Te Ao Māori.