



**Te Huinga o ngā Pihopa  
Katorika o Aotearoa**

*New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference*

NEW ZEALAND CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

# National Synod





# NEW ZEALAND CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE NATIONAL SYNTHESIS

## A Message from the Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand

*In his opening address to the Synod of Bishops on Young People in October 2018, Pope Francis told participants that “humility in listening must correspond to courage in speaking”. He invited the participants to speak with courage and frankness (parrhesia).*

*His words were taken to heart in our dioceses during the diocesan pre-Synodal process over the last year. Our people have spoken with frankness and humility about their shared journey as the People of God. We may not agree with everything they have said, but we want their voices to be heard. As Pope Francis said to the Synod on Young People “only dialogue can help us grow”.*

*We thank Pope Francis for this unique and amazing opportunity to participate in the Synodal process in this way.*

- ✠ John Dew, Cardinal Archbishop of Wellington, Apostolic Administrator of Palmerston North and NZCBC President
- ✠ Michael Dooley, Bishop of Dunedin
- ✠ Michael Gielen, Bishop of Christchurch
- ✠ Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Auckland, Apostolic Administrator of Hamilton and NZCBC Secretary
- ✠ Paul Martin SM, Coadjutor Archbishop of Wellington.

## INTRODUCTION

1. When Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council on 11 October 1962, he said in his opening address: “Illuminated by the light of this Council, the Church—we confidently trust—will become greater in spiritual riches and, gaining the strength of new energies therefrom, she will look to the future without fear”. Now, sixty years later, Pope Francis has invited us, the People of God, all the baptised, to take further steps in being a Vatican II church - to gain “the strength of new energies” - by participating in the Synodal process.
2. In Aotearoa New Zealand many people who took part in the Synodal process expressed their great appreciation of this opportunity to reflect on our journey together. They spoke positively and with love about the place the Church has in their lives. They want the Church to be a life-giving and active presence in the world, an outward-looking servant Church; a welcoming, inclusive and transformative presence for individuals and communities. They see the synodal process itself being as important as the outcome, because in listening to one another the Holy Spirit is present. This was tangible in the love and joy that was experienced in many of the groups which took part across the country.
3. For some people, especially those participating as individuals rather than in groups, the process provided an opportunity to express anger, cynicism, hurt and rejection of the Church due to past experiences. The Church was named as a place of alienation, and irrelevant, especially in its teaching on human sexuality. The responses from those who feel ignored, excluded or who have been deeply hurt made painful reading, but their desire to be part of a welcoming Catholic community was clear. Their responses are valued and we are learning from them.
4. For most people there was excitement about the Synod process and joy in taking part. Many participants spoke of a sense of privilege and relief that they could speak of their experience of Church and share their dreams of how the Church might journey forward. Diocesan Pre-Synodal Gatherings were times of solidarity and engagement, and the National Pre-Synodal Gathering was remarkable for its energy and excitement. Amid the excitement there were some concerns about whether lay people would be listened to, especially at the global level of the church.
5. Aotearoa New Zealand is unique in that the Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840 between the British Crown and Rangatira (chiefs) of the indigenous Māori people is the founding document defining relationships between indigenous tribal groups and settler populations. The Church recognizes the breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the racism and injustices suffered by Māori since colonisation. The bishops have many times reaffirmed the Church's commitment to promote bicultural relationships in our multicultural society. Dioceses put great effort into encouraging participation by Māori, and Māori who took part

provided very significant insights. The Synod process overwhelmingly echoed our collective desire to deepen our commitment to bi-culturalism and address the injustices experienced by Māori.

6. Migrants are a great gift to the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand. The influx of migrants into Aotearoa New Zealand since the 1960s is reflected in parishes, with Pacific and Asian peoples, especially Filipinos, being present in significant numbers. Pacific and Asian peoples participated in the Synod process in large numbers in some places, especially Auckland. Efforts were made to engage other migrant groups in the process, but their engagement was not always in proportion to their numbers.
7. All dioceses were affected by the pandemic, with the Diocese of Auckland having Covid-19 restrictions on gathering during several months of the diocesan phase. The time extension given by the Synod Office was very welcome. Being able to use Zoom and other forms of virtual gathering helped, but highlighted the benefits of gathering in person. Some communities do not have easy access to the required technology.
8. The Synod process took place in Aotearoa New Zealand while a multi-year Royal Commission into Abuse in State and Faith-based Care was also in progress, with much adverse publicity for the Church and other institutions. The Synod process gave people an opportunity to share together, many for the first

time, how the revelations of abuse by Church personnel have affected them.

9. The Diocesan Coordinators and their teams played a major role in the Synod process. For most of the process, three (later two) of the six dioceses did not have Ordinaries, so lay leadership and promotion of the Synod process was very important. The people were encouraged to discern in groups using the Ignatian-inspired Spiritual Conversation process. The Spiritual Conversation process and its emphasis on discernment were new experiences for many. The group process of listening, prayer and silence was cherished, and people want it to become a normal way of working together. The desire to journey together synodally is very strong and discernment processes such as Spiritual Conversation are seen as essential if that goal is to be achieved. The dioceses also provided online access for individuals and encouraged the use of an individual discernment process.
10. Because the questions asked how we might grow in our journeying together, people tended to focus on their concerns, but the process was more like a collective and prayerful Examen rather than being a negative response. People spoke about having much to celebrate, and much good happening. They care very deeply about the Church, their diocese, and especially their local parish. There was much gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the Synodal process in this way.

## OUR THEMES

11. There were six strong themes in the diocesan syntheses and in the National Pre-Synodal Gathering – Inclusion, Gathering, Leadership, Education and Formation, Mission, and Synodality and Change. There were also three cross-cutting themes – the role of women, biculturalism, and abuse in the Church.

### INCLUSION

- ***We want the Church to be a non-judgmental and safe place of welcome and belonging.***
- ***Church teaching which excludes some people from the Eucharist is causing pain and hurt.***
- ***Awareness of those who feel marginalised or excluded can lead to new attitudes and action.***
- ***Action on inclusion must be part of our synodal journey.***

### ***A place of belonging***

12. Participants from all dioceses spoke of their yearning for a more inclusive Church. Their own love for the

Church has led to grief and sadness when they perceive that they or those they love, or particular groups of people, have been marginalised or judged and as a result have walked away from the Church. Many people spoke of the importance of the Church being a place where all are welcome and not judged, a place of belonging and dignity. The Māori concept of *tūrangawaewae* captures this belonging, not just for Māori, but for many others as well. *Tūrangawaewae* is often translated as ‘a place to stand’, a sacred or special place where people can be themselves and are most connected. Participants want the Church to be *tūrangawaewae* – home, a place of welcome - for them personally and for others.

### ***Those who are missing***

13. People are very conscious of those who are missing because pain from past experiences with the Church keeps them away. Participants urged honesty, humility and openness in dealing with survivors of abuse. They want anyone with concerns and complaints welcomed, so that “*the light of truth and humility shines into the dark places of our Church*”.

14. There were a variety of views around aspects of Church teaching which are perceived to lead to exclusion. Some wanted these teachings explained more clearly; others questioned how Catholics can journey with everyone when these same teachings imply some people are unwelcome. It hurts to see family members and friends leaving the Church because they feel they are unacceptable because of gender issues, being divorced and remarried, or in a same-sex relationship. Some participants, including young people, expressed deep personal hurt caused by their perception of being excluded because of their sexual identity or that of a friend or family member. Some people expressed a desire that the Church support and bless relationships where people commit to love one another irrespective of their gender, or marital status. Other aspects of the Church's teaching on sexuality have also led some people to walk away. From the Synod participants there was a cry for engagement with those who feel marginalised or excluded by Church teaching, and a desire to find solutions which are Gospel-based. There was acknowledgment that listening and journeying together amid the complexities of relationships is challenging.
  15. Many expressed hurt and confusion because the divorced and remarried are denied communion. Some shared painful stories of marriages ending through domestic violence, and the children being bitter about the Church's response. In some cases an annulment was not possible, and the support of the Church was lost when it was most needed.
  16. Some were sad that other Christians cannot receive the Eucharist. One young boy wrote of his non-Catholic father not being able to go to communion when the family went to Mass together, and the anguish he felt.
  17. Men and women spoke often about women being excluded from full participation in sacramental and governance roles. Women voiced frustration at being "on the margins" despite the work they do in parishes. They often feel their voices are sidelined.
  18. The first Catholic missionaries came to Aotearoa New Zealand to journey with Māori. Māori who engaged with the Synod process are concerned that Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural partnership is often not reflected in our congregations, worship, or leadership.
  19. Although our parishes are blessed by cultural diversity, it is a struggle to hear the voices of all the ethnic groups and bring them together to worship. Often minority ethnicities feel themselves on the margins of the New Zealand church and find it hard to feel at home.
  20. A group of prison chaplains asked parishes to welcome released prisoners. Other participants noted that people who are on the margins of society are not often present in our parish communities.
  21. The disabled felt that little attention is given to their needs and thus the church sends them an unwelcoming message. They considered that our buildings could be more welcoming to them. There was a strong plea for wider availability of the Mass and sacraments in New Zealand Sign Language.
- Journeying synodally and inclusion***
22. How to become more inclusive was a key question for all participants, at all levels, in the synodal process. They considered that it must be addressed if we are to journey together in a synodal way. Participants felt the synodal process should continue with inclusion as a priority in each community - "*simple manageable steps*", with the first step being a Spiritual Conversation about inclusion.
  23. The recognition of people's gifts and skills, and more opportunities to exercise them, were seen as ways of including those who feel they are on the margins. More effort is needed to establish connections with new migrant groups so that the parish and its church become their tūrangawaewae, their home. The call for action on marginalisation and exclusion is strong. Some areas in need of change are unable to be responded to fully on the local level and require addressing by the whole Church.

## **GATHERING**

- ***There is great love for the Mass, but also concerns about inclusion and lay participation.***
- ***A new English translation of the Roman Missal is needed.***
- ***Homilies must help people to encounter Jesus in the reality of their lives.***
- ***If lay people are allowed to give homilies, they must have good formation.***
- ***Small groups for prayer, formation, scripture study, and mission build community.***

### ***The Mass***

24. Many people want to journey towards greater lay participation in the preparation and celebration of liturgy, with recognition of people's gifts and skills and more opportunities for them to be used. Some feel the exclusion of women and married men from priesthood very keenly. There is a call for more lay people to be trained to lead Liturgies of Word and Communion especially in isolated rural areas. There is great love for the Mass, but a common concern that the Mass does not resonate with many in the wider

Church family. COVID-19 and online Masses have raised many questions about the Mass.

25. Inclusion and welcome to the Eucharistic table matter to many participants who would like other Christians, LGBTQ couples and divorced and remarried Catholics to be able to receive the Eucharist.
26. Regret was expressed by participants, not just Māori, at the lack of te reo (the Māori language) and Māori culture in our liturgy and buildings, which leads to a sense of exclusion. There is a need for education for the whole Catholic community in Aotearoa New Zealand in a bi-cultural way of being Church.
27. The diversity of the cultures in the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand is not always obvious in the liturgy. There was a desire that liturgies reflect both biculturalism and our diversity of cultures.
28. There was concern about divisions in parishes between age groups, and those who want different styles of worship. The younger participants find the parish Mass at odds with their need for informality, familiarity, belonging, relevance and authenticity. Older people and migrants seem more comfortable at Mass than younger New Zealand Europeans. The voice of those who prefer the Tridentine Mass and feel marginalised was also heard.

### **Language**

29. There was a desire for *“liturgical language that is welcoming, inclusive, less misogynistic, and hierarchical, and more consonant with contemporary theology”, “language that includes, builds up, heals wounds, and affirms”*. The language of the current English translation of the Missal was described as *“flat”*. The use of non-inclusive language in the liturgy is a cause of pain for both men and women, with liturgical language being described as *“masculine, exclusive, and even offensive”*. There is a desire that the liturgy truly reflect the New Zealand community, with inclusive language and greater use of the Māori language (te reo Māori).

### **Homilies**

30. Some comments on homilies were appreciative, but many voiced concern. There was a longing for homilies to be more informed and relevant to people’s lives, as well as being informed by good Scripture scholarship and theology. The search for spiritual nourishment was very evident – *“We need reflections that are relevant to everyday life and address the struggles of grief, unemployment, aging, anxiety, depression...”*. The greatest desire is for homilies which help people to encounter Jesus in their lives.
31. The issue of lay people, women and men, being allowed to give homilies came up often, with a desire for lay people to be permitted to give homilies at

times. If lay people are to give homilies, people want them to be *“formed”, and “competent and trustworthy”*.

### **Community**

32. People understand that we are called to journey together in community, but for many the celebration of Mass remains more a personal than communal experience. *“Catholics’ faith is individualistic”*. There was acknowledgement that *“Catholics don’t fellowship well”* and that other churches often do this better.
33. Catholics have traditionally been very “Mass-focused” and gathering for other reasons (possibly excluding various devotions) can be seen by some as almost unnecessary. However, those who participate in small prayer groups and other gatherings see them as being crucial in their faith development. *“We need to focus first and foremost on being a Christian community. We need to recapture some of the spirit of the early Christian communities, sharing more of our time, talents, and resources; to become known for our active love, sharing, and service of others; to challenge the growing individualism of our times.”*
34. There was a yearning for a vibrant faith community which nurtures spiritual growth and mission. As one person commented, *“We all struggle one way or another on our journey and need to find ways outside of Mass and other formal liturgies to discern what the Holy Spirit is asking of us...”*. There was a call for *“a richer parish life”* including more small group gatherings for prayer, formation, scripture study, mission and building community. During the pandemic some enjoyed online liturgies as a means of private reflection, but many more longed for physical community - vibrant, music-filled celebrations, hospitality, and small groups.

### **LEADERSHIP**

- ***Collaborative ministry becomes the norm, with greater sacramental involvement for lay people***
- ***Co-responsible leadership with barriers to lay participation in decision-making removed, is part of our synodal journey***
- ***Women participate equally in decision-making, and have greater participation in liturgical roles.***

### **Collaborative ministry**

35. People spoke of the pool of talent and skill available among lay people in their parishes, including people highly educated in theology, spirituality and pastoral ministry. The Catholic tertiary education institution (Te Kupenga-Catholic Leadership Institute) provides qualifications in theology and pastoral ministry.

36. Collaborative ministry involves lay people and ordained ministers working together and sharing their gifts in pastoral ministry. Some people considered that our communities would be better served by priests who are “*sacramental and pastoral chaplains*” collaborating with lay people who are formed in pastoral leadership and skilled in community building. This form of collaborative ministry is in place in some dioceses, although not extensively. The model would be helped by greater use of the Ordinary’s power to allow suitably trained lay pastoral ministers to baptise and conduct funerals in parishes, and changes to Canon Law to allow lay pastoral ministers and lay hospital chaplains to anoint the sick.

37. There were some participants who had negative impressions of priests, but who also recognised just how difficult the priest’s role is. Most people love their priests and have experienced and appreciated their pastoral presence in times of personal or family difficulty. The priest’s involvement in times of celebration such as weddings and baptisms is also highly valued. The wellbeing of priests concerns parishioners, and collaborative ministry is seen as enabling priests and lay pastoral ministers to share pastoral insights and gifts in a mutually supportive relationship. It is also seen as a way of lightening the workload for older priests and those with very large parishes.

#### ***Co-responsible leadership and decision-making***

38. In the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand lay people, including women, have been appointed to significant national and diocesan roles for many years, and exercise leadership in those roles. However, concern centred around the advisory role Canon Law gives to lay people in key areas, with governance and decision-making being reserved to bishops and priests. Strong feelings were expressed about Catholic leadership emphasising the ordained at the expense of lay people in decision-making.

39. There was a consistent call for less clerical dominance, and more lay leadership. The lack of lay participation allowed in decision-making, and in some cases, little consultation with laity when decisions are being made at parish, diocesan and global levels, have led to a sense of injustice and frustration. Many used the word “*hierarchical*” about the church, and for this reason feel alienated from its structures which are seen as rigid, without room for co-responsibility, transparency, and accountability. The word “*clericalism*” was used in relation to clerical domination of decision-making, with some priests believing they are entitled to make decisions on their own because of their priestly status. It was

also noted that some lay people enable clericalism, and exhibit clericalism themselves.

40. To truly journey in a synodal way, there is a need to “*move beyond these hierarchical decision-making structures which tend to put immense pressure on the ordained while disempowering the laity*”. People are looking for a parish and diocesan structure where responsibility for decisions is shared by lay and ordained, even where their roles differ.

41. In the parish, there were issues relating to parish councils and leadership teams - ‘*This is our parish not Father’s parish*’. People wanted to work in ways that involve the priest but ‘*do not depend on him for a final say*’.

42. At the diocesan level, there was a desire for decision-making bodies which include lay women and men, not just in an advisory role, but with the authority to make decisions together with the bishop. It was also considered that the selection of local bishops should involve the lay people of the local Church far more extensively than the current process allows.

43. The current leadership, governance and decision-making structures are seen as a major impediment to journeying together synodally. As one person said: “*The Spirit is calling us to be a church in which leadership and governance are shared, but with lay people having equal voices – a truly co-responsible church at parish, diocesan and global levels.*”

#### ***The role of women***

44. The role and status of women inevitably concerned many people. Social expectations have changed and women hold key leadership roles on the national and world stage. It was felt strongly that the Church needs to pay heed to their wisdom, insight, and leadership skills by granting them equal participation in key decision-making and liturgical roles. “*As a woman I pay a very high price in remaining Catholic.*”

45. Both men and women spoke often about women being denied full participation in sacramental and governance roles. Many were aware of new opportunities to serve as acolytes, lectors, and catechists, but said it is not enough. There was support for women being included in the diaconate, and for their ordination as priests. This lack of equality for women within the Church is seen as a stumbling block for the Church in the modern world. There is a collective feeling that the institutional Church has failed to recognise the level of alienation of women that has taken place.

## MISSION

- **Formation is needed for mission, and help with engaging in mission collectively.**
- **Ecumenical activity and interfaith dialogue need to be embraced as part of mission.**
- **Shame related to abuse in the Church makes evangelisation difficult.**
- **Prophetic leadership is needed in the community on social justice, ecological and bicultural issues.**
- **The only public voice of the Church for many is on euthanasia and human sexuality.**

### **Difficulties with mission**

46. Many people want to be involved - *“evangelisation and mission rather than just self-preservation”* - but are unsure how to go about this, with shyness often holding them back. Some people are confused about mission and unsure about how to live that mission. Participants spoke of being active in mission individually but expressed uncertainty about how to do so collectively. They want to work with others and with purpose. One person commented: *“I am willing but don’t know how to do it on my own. I want to be a part of a group.”* Some felt they lack formation for mission.
48. A group of prison chaplains spoke strongly about parishes becoming supportive communities for prisoners. *“If there is a prison within a parish area the prison is part of the parish and all the people in it are parishioners.”* The prison chaplains’ proposal was challenging and attracted a lot of attention as an example of mission.
47. Participants understand that evangelization and mission must flow out of a personal relationship with God, and felt that they missed out when their parish did not put energy into nurturing prayer and spirituality. The connection between an ongoing personal encounter with Jesus Christ and mission was obvious to many but not all.

### **Ecumenism and interfaith relations**

49. There was awareness that working for Christian unity and dialogue with other faiths are an essential part of the Church’s mission. For some ecumenism was a long-standing part of their parish or diocese’s activity; for others there appeared to be a *“loss of ecumenical spirit within the Church”*.
50. Some parishes have enriching and enjoyable services with other denominations on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and in Advent, and there was a desire that they be more frequent. Some feel sadness that they can’t share the Eucharist with other denominations on these occasions. The trauma of the 2019 Christchurch

mosque attacks, and working with Anglicans on refugee resettlement have deepened collaboration. Others with little ecumenical activity in their community want to reach out to other churches. *“We are called to journey with other Christians, but our churches often work as if in separate silos. We must find new ways of collaborating and praying together”*.

### **Evangelisation**

51. For many people it is a struggle to share their faith with those who find the Church, faith, religion and Jesus Christ himself irrelevant or incomprehensible. Some see evangelisation as *“The goodness of the quiet ministry of people, involving simple encounters with one another – a loving presence”*. Others see it as *“living the Good News in our lives and being open to explaining it to others”*. There is a desire to overcome reticence and embrace evangelisation - *“We want to get better at sharing the love of Jesus with others. We want to get better at noticing others and giving gentle invitations. We need to take every opportunity to explain our faith to others. How do we say what is important to us as Catholics?”*

### **Credibility**

52. It was significant that this synodal process took place at the same time the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith-based Care is being held in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Church and its people have suffered greatly through the abuse and failure to act by some Church personnel. This has been an extremely painful experience for many Catholics. During the synodal process horror was expressed at the scope of the abuse, the damage done to people, and shame and embarrassment at being associated with an institution with this history. People feel their Catholic voice has been silenced in society by the abuse cases, and the Church lacks credibility. Many feel ashamed and are not confident to share with others that they are Catholic. Others are not proud to be Catholic, feel spiritually lost and without the confidence to evangelise. There was hope that the experience will make us *“a vulnerable, humble Church of the People of God who know of God’s constant unconditional love”*, safe for everyone and better at listening and journeying with others.

### **Prophetic leadership**

53. Participants want to see the Church providing prophetic leadership and action, especially in relation to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. There is real urgency in their concern that the Church speaks up on the climate emergency, following the lead of Pope Francis. Participants consider that, apart from statements from the Bishops’ Conference, the wider Catholic community is largely silent on social justice, economics and peace. People wanted boldness – *“Would Christ stand in front of a Russian (or NATO)”*



*tank?*". There were also calls for the Church to "step up" in relation to biculturalism and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and to remedy injustice. Scripture, Church documents on mission, social justice and our common home are seen as valuable resources for mission.

54. The only public voice of the Church for many is on euthanasia, birth control, abortion, homosexuality and other aspects of human sexuality. Some want the teaching on sexuality reconsidered. Others were pleased that the Church has not been swayed by secular attitudes. On social and bioethical issues, many feel appropriate laity should be able to contribute more to discussions at the episcopal and global level.

## EDUCATION AND FORMATION

- ***Further formation is needed for both lay people and clergy in discernment and synodality.***
- ***There is a need for catechesis in Church teaching.***
- ***Education and formation in safeguarding is essential for both lay people and clergy.***
- ***Seminarians' formation should involve more community engagement, and include biculturalism and cultural sensitivity.***
- ***Both clergy and laity need formation in collaborative ministry and co-responsible leadership.***

### ***Formation in discernment, prayer and spirituality***

55. The synodality process has been a formation experience for many people, and they value the way discernment in small groups "enlarges one's faith and sense of community". It is clear that many people long for nourishment in their faith. The group discernment process has the potential to transform communities, but further formation is needed for both lay people and clergy to grow in discernment and synodality.

### ***Education in faith***

56. There is a need for adult education rooted in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. A lack of understanding of their faith leads many to avoid questions or speaking out, including when engaging with other Christian denominations and other faiths. There is a desire to better understand Catholic teaching which is often more nuanced than people realise. The conversation around issues such as the ordination of women, clericalism, and how to welcome LGBTQI+ and divorced persons, reveals a need for discernment by the universal Church on these issues.

57. Young people in particular seek answers to deep questions in life. Our response to this must connect to their world, and help them develop a personal relationship with Christ as his disciples. Religious education that does not form disciples short-changes our young people and impoverishes our Church. *"Our young people may be catechised, but they are not necessarily evangelised."*

58. Education in faith must be accessible and not necessarily related to getting qualifications. People would like to see greater use of technology to make online faith learning very accessible.

### ***Formation for leadership***

59. Lay formation for leadership and ministry is essential if the Church is to have a pool of lay people formed for pastoral leadership. Formation for leadership must be accessible to all, and not reserved to those who are financially secure.

60. In recent years the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand has been working hard on inculcating a culture of safeguarding. There is appreciation of what is being done and awareness that more can be done, and that good leadership, lay and clerical, is needed together with constant vigilance and retraining. The safeguarding education and formation work is bringing hope of a better future.

### ***Formation of priests***

61. There were proposals that the formation of seminarians be more community based, with greater emphasis on pastoral work and community engagement, and experience in teamwork as many lay people have in their employment. *"What training are priests given in how to do all of this; arrive, take stock, work with what is good and change what needs to change?"*

62. A "scaffolding for the formation of clerics" was proposed which focuses on pastoral responsibilities, reflects local needs including biculturalism and cultural sensitivity, and includes formation in collaborative ministry and co-responsible leadership.

### ***Catholic Schools***

63. There was wide acknowledgement of the faith education and sense of community provided by Catholic schools. Schools were considered welcoming, inclusive, and supportive, often more so than parishes. It was noted that schools are led by lay people and there is often good cooperation between laity and clergy.

64. The younger participants credited their understanding of the faith to their school. Catholic school staff testified to students living out Jesus' teachings and Gospel values at school and being active

in mission. Schools were described as “agents for change”, providing opportunities for evangelisation of families. For many students, teachers, and families, the Catholic school is their tūrangawaewae, their place of belonging, but concern was expressed over what happens when young people finish their Catholic schooling.

65. In many cases the school provides the primary introduction to the faith for a family, but Catholic schools are seen as not being strongly linked to parishes, and students and their families are not usually well integrated into the parish. The pressure schools are under to strengthen students’ faith, often without support, was highlighted. There was a desire to better connect parish and school communities.

### SYNODALITY AND CHANGE

- ***The Synod process is exciting and transformative.***
- ***We want to bring back those who are missing.***
- ***Synodality and discernment can help us change while holding on to what is central to our faith.***
- ***We want to learn to journey together in a synodal way.***

#### ***Continuing the synodal journey***

66. Synodality was one of the themes about which people were most passionate. It captures people’s desire for the Church to be the People of God journeying together, rediscovering the priesthood of all the baptised. Pope Francis’s vision and actions to renew the Church through this process were enthusiastically welcomed. A few participants were unconvinced about synodality, but a few also expressed anger that some parish leaders, including clergy, were dismissive of the Synod.
67. Those who participated in the Spiritual Conversation process found it a safe space that encouraged depth in sharing and a life-giving experience of a faith community. Many commented that they had never had such a deep and personal experience of prayer with others. *“I came away from the evening with a sense of hope I had not experienced in years.” “The Synod process has been an integrative tool; friendships emerging, becoming community. Deep listening opening us to the bigger picture.”*
68. Participants in group discernment sessions spoke of the solidarity they experienced in simply hearing that others feel the same way they do. The responses from groups reflected the joy of journeying together, the experience of pain on the journey, and hope for the

future. The group process of listening and silence was cherished as a wonderful gift, and the love and joy experienced was tangible. The desire to make Spiritual Conversation and other discernment processes the norm in parishes and dioceses is strong. Māori can help the Church grow in synodality. As one person said: *“We’re used to synodality as Māori, because we hui a lot”*. Hui is often translated as ‘meeting’, hui is more than a meeting, and would fit well with synodality.

69. Overall the synod process in parishes was received with enthusiasm and hope that we are moving towards a more open, welcoming, and inclusive Church – a true outworking of Vatican II. However, this was often dampened by a feeling of powerlessness in the face of a hierarchical system: *“But will they listen to us anyway?”*.

#### ***The missing ones***

70. Some participants had engaged in conversations with family members who have left the Church; friends who because of gender orientation or family situation feel excluded or judged; and people from different faith backgrounds. These conversations added to the richness of the Synod submissions.
71. A recurring concern for groups was the absence of so many young people in the life of the Church. *“We do not know how to walk side-by-side with the younger generation. How can we connect with them? They have a spirituality they live out of, whereas the older generation were taught to obey the rules.”*

72. Participants both mourned those who seem to be missing; and offered suggestions as to how Catholics can journey together better and bring them back.

#### ***Change***

73. People taking part in this synodal journey expressed a passionate love for the Church, and an urgent plea for change while holding on to what is central to our faith. They noted that we change not to “fit in” with society but rather to remain relevant to future generations in a world that is ever-changing.
74. Some saw the synodal journey as rekindling the promise of Vatican II. The Council is seen as a transformative event from which *“a new vision of Church”* emerged, *“filled with challenges and alive with expectation”*. Grief was expressed for the lost opportunities of Vatican II.
75. At the National Synodal Gathering there was excitement and even impatience. Participants see spiritual conversation and discernment as our future *tikanga*, or way of living and working together, as a synodal community. Many were excited and hopeful that the synodal process will be ongoing and

transformative. It was acknowledged that we need personal change, but structural change and change in how the Church operates is even more important. It was recognised that we don't need to wait for the conclusion of the synodal process next year, that local change can begin immediately.

76. Amid the overwhelming calls for change, there were some who said that the Church is “currently driving away devout Catholics” by “discarding tradition” and that “the more conservative of us feel ignored.” A group

expressed concern that the Synod promises only a “watered down Catholicism”. For some there was a struggle in balancing change with obedience to Church hierarchy and doctrine.

However, many see the fact that this process is taking place as a reason for hope. People have been unsettled by it, but being disturbed reveals opportunities for growth. Growth requires change and we must “avoid letting our history limit our future”. There is a will to stay with the Church on the journey.

## CONCLUSION

77. Many actions can be taken at the local level, in our own timeframe. There is a strong desire to learn to journey together synodally – listening carefully, discerning prayerfully, and journeying together. These are some of the actions we can take locally, in our parishes and dioceses:

78. **Embed synodality and discernment as our tikanga, our way of working together**

- Establish discernment processes, including Spiritual Conversation, as normal processes used in our parishes
- Use a discernment process to help us determine how to act on inclusivity
- Provide further formation about synodality and discernment in parishes.

79. **Listen further to those who feel marginalised:**

- Seek to understand the real needs of the disabled, including the deaf, in our communities
- Be more sensitive to the LGBTQI+ members of our communities and their experiences of exclusion
- Ensure our liturgical celebrations reflect the cultural diversity within our communities
- Help young people feel that the Church is their tūrangawaewae – their home, where they belong
- Acknowledge the gifts of women and ensure they have an equitable presence in Church structures.

80. **Deepen our understanding of the bicultural nature of the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand:**

- Expand the confident use of te reo Māori (the Māori language) in the liturgy, including the Mass.
- Work together to ensure Māori voices are heard and Māori culture is reflected in our churches

- Provide education for the Catholic community so that together we become a truly bicultural Church.

81. **Learn to journey together in a synodal way:**

- Share decision-making, with clergy with decision-making power listening carefully to lay people
- Encourage greater use of the Ordinary's power to mandate lay pastoral ministers to baptise and conduct funerals in parishes.

82. **Focus on mission:**

- Acknowledge that there is confusion about what mission involves, and find ways to provide clarity
- Use discernment processes in parishes to identify particular forms of mission locally
- Reinvigorate our approach to social justice, focusing on the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor
- Build up our local ecumenical relationships
- Find ways to move forward from the abuse crisis to engage in mission.

## MATTERS REQUIRING DISCERNMENT BY THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

83. The Synod Office asked in its document “Suggestions for Dioceses and Episcopal Conferences on the Preparation of the Synthesis” that in the Conclusion “in particular those points regarding which it is considered important to solicit the further discernment of the Church” be highlighted. During our synodal processes, matters emerged that, as we seek to journey together in a fully synodal way, require further discernment by the universal Church. These are:

84. **Remove barriers to journeying together in a synodal way:**
- Enable co-responsible leadership, with decision-making shared by priests, bishops and lay people
  - Remove barriers to collaborative ministry involving clergy and laity
  - Allow the local Ordinary to mandate lay people to anoint the sick as part of collaborative ministry
  - Allow the local Ordinary to mandate lay people to routinely give homilies in his diocese.
  - Ensure active and transparent involvement of the local Church in the selection of their bishops.
85. **Promote inclusion:**
- Accept intercommunion between Christians of different denominations
  - Welcome LGBTQI+ people without restrictions
  - Welcome with compassion divorced and remarried Catholics to the Eucharistic table
  - Change the language of Church teaching and catechesis to be fully inclusive and sensitively worded
- Support and bless committed loving relationships, irrespective of gender or marital status
  - Reform liturgical language so that it is welcoming and inclusive of all.
86. **Carry out discernment with open minds and involving the whole Church on these issues:**
- The possibility of optional celibacy for priests
  - The possibility of the ordination of women to the priesthood or at least diaconate, to extend the many ways in which women participate in their local Church.
  - The Church's sexual moral teaching, taking into account contemporary scientific understanding and the lived experience of the People of God (*sensus fidelium*).
87. **Review the formation of priests:**
- Provide more community engagement in the formation of seminarians
  - Form seminarians in co-responsibility and synodality.
88. **Revitalise our liturgy:**
- Entrust liturgical reform (at least to a limited degree) to local bishops' conferences
  - Initiate a new English translation of the Roman Missal.

# NATIONAL SYNTHESIS: APPENDIX

## *The Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand*

### **Demographics**

There are almost half a million Catholic affiliated people living in Aotearoa New Zealand, 10% of the total population. The Catholic Church is the largest Christian denomination and largest faith. Those reporting affiliation with the Catholic Church has declined from 12.6% in 2006.

The population of New Zealand is increasingly diverse, with a large migrant population. Māori, the indigenous population, make up 16.5% of people, with the Asian population 15.1% and Pacific peoples 8.1%.

New Zealand is an increasingly secular country, in the last Census undertaken in 2018, almost half of all people in New Zealand stated they had no religion (48.6%), versus 34.6% in 2006.

There are six dioceses in New Zealand. The Archdiocese of Wellington is the metropolitan diocese in New Zealand. The Catholic Church in New Zealand also consists of many Catholic religious orders and lay organisations, some that are sizeable and undertaking significant ministry in New Zealand.



	%	2018 Census Catholic Affiliation
Dunedin	6%	30,267
Christchurch	14%	65,844
Wellington	15%	69,555
Palmerston North	11%	51,345
Hamilton	14%	64,539
Auckland	40%	189,366
All NZ		470,916

*Source/s: Statistics New Zealand*

### **Biculturalism**

The unique identity of the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand within the global Church flows as it always has, from the presence of Māori as the indigenous of New Zealand, who have been part of the Church since the time of Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier. When Bishop Pompallier arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1838 he set about establishing mission stations among Māori in both Te Ika-a-Māui and Te Waipounamu (the North and South Islands). In time, Māori priests were ordained, and worked among their people alongside missionaries from other countries.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) was signed between the British Crown and Māori in 1840. Bishop Pompallier was at Waitangi when the Treaty was signed and asked Lieutenant-Governor Hobson for his promise to protect the Catholic faith. This pledge is sometimes referred to as the unwritten "fourth article" of the Treaty, and is said to protect and recognise not only major western religions, but also Māori custom.

There is a Māori-language version of the Treaty (Te Tiriti), which most Māori signed, and an English-language version. The meaning of the English version was not exactly the same as the meaning of the Māori translation. Even though not all chiefs signed the treaty, the British government decided it placed all Māori under British authority. It did not take long for conflicts to arise between Māori and European settlers who wanted more land. The government often ignored

the protections the treaty was supposed to give Māori. Today Te Tiriti is widely accepted to be a constitutional document that establishes and guides the relationship between the Crown in New Zealand (embodied by our government) and Māori. It is common now to refer to the intention, spirit or principles of the Treaty.

In 1988, Pā Max Takuira Māriu SM DD CNZM was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Hamilton, fulfilling a long held desire of Māori and the whole Catholic people for a bishop who was Māori. When Bishop Māriu died in 2005 at the age of 53 his loss was felt deeply by Māori and the wider Church in Aotearoa New Zealand, iwi, hapu, whānau and by the other bishops.

On the 155th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1995, the Catholic Bishops wrote 'justice has not been done and that the partnership, signified by the two languages at Waitangi, has not been honoured. Confiscated or appropriated land continues to be a cause of conflict in parts of the country; tino rangatiratanga has not been recognised; frustration at the lack of progress has deepened.'

In the same statement, the bishops reaffirmed the Church's commitment to promote bicultural relationships in our multicultural society. This work continues today.

*Source/s: catholic.org.nz, nzhistory.govt.nz, teara.govt.nz*

### ***Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions (Royal Commission)***

The Royal Commission was established in 2018 by the Crown, to hear from survivors of abuse in state and faith-based institutions and ensure lessons are learnt for the future. An interim report with recommendations was released by the Commission late 2021, and a final report with recommendations to the Governor-General is due in 2023. These recommendations will advise how New Zealand can better care for children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

When first announced by the Government, only abuse in state care was to be investigated. The Catholic Church was part of a group that sought to be included in the Royal Commission. The Bishops and Congregational Leaders strongly support the aims of the Royal Commission and are actively co-operating with it.

To date, the Royal Commission has asked the Church for a wide variety of information covering historical and contemporary matters. Tens of thousands of documents have been provided by Catholic dioceses and religious congregations, collated by Te Rōpū Tautoko, the umbrella group coordinating Catholic Church engagement with the Royal Commission, and given to the Commission. Church leaders have been listening to the accounts of survivors and reviewing interim recommendations from the Royal Commission, to continue to make changes to the way they engage with survivors and to improve safeguarding. Additionally, the Holy Father's Motu Proprio Vos Estis Lux Mundi and related canon law changes, have been implemented in New Zealand.

### ***Catholic Education***

Catholic education has historically had a significant role in the education of primary and secondary age children in New Zealand and continues to do so today. Many schools were originally established and staffed by religious congregations. In 1975, an Act of Parliament enabled Catholic primary and secondary students to become part of the state school system, this was significant for the funding of Catholic schools to allow them to sit within the state sector and offer a Catholic faith option for Catholic families.

There are 236 Catholic schools throughout New Zealand, with 66,635 primary and secondary students representing 8.1% of all primary and secondary students. Bishops and religious orders control the schools and own the property as Proprietors, but operating costs are met by the government. Proprietors continue to retain control of Principal and teaching appointments, the religious education curriculum, student enrolments, and other matters related to the Catholic character of Catholic schools.