



**You have spoken and continue to speak.
We are listening, and we have heard you.
We apologise and we are sorry.**

To victims and survivors of abuse and your whānau,

Many people asked for this Royal Commission to be established to give you, victims and survivors of abuse, a forum to be heard and acknowledged.

Today, recognising the importance of this moment, I apologise to you, on behalf of the bishops and congregational leaders of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand.

I also apologise to you on behalf of those who preceded us as bishops and congregational leaders.

We offer no excuses for their actions, or for ours, that have caused you harm.

We have heard the survivors who have spoken to the Royal Commission so far.

We acknowledge all those victims and survivors who have spoken over the years.

We acknowledge all victims and survivors who have not yet been able to speak or may never be able to. We hear you in the silence and through those who speak for you.

We thank you all for your bravery and courage.

You have spoken of abuse perpetrated by bishops, priests, brothers, sisters, and lay people in the Catholic Church. People you should have been able to trust.

We have heard you and acknowledge that we have caused you pain, hurt, and trauma, and that this continues to impact you.

I repeat what I have said before, any kind of abuse is unacceptable and indefensible.

We are deeply sorry.

We acknowledge that the systems and culture of the Church allowed abuse to occur.

These systems and culture failed you and must change.

We apologise for the times that we or our predecessors protected the Church and not you.

You have spoken of times when we, within the Church, failed to listen to you, to learn from you, and refused to hear what you were saying.

We acknowledge that this compounded the hurt and suffering, and acknowledge the ongoing physical, emotional, and spiritual trauma you experience.

We apologise for our inappropriate responses, for all we could have done but failed to do, and for the times you were dismissed, ignored, not believed, belittled, forgotten.

As leaders in the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand, we are committed to ensuring a safe Church. We are committed to putting you, victims and survivors of abuse and your whānau, first, rather than focusing on the Church's systems and culture.



We understand and appreciate the proposals from individuals and groups who are calling for an independent body to provide redress. We will listen to and work with all parties who are considering and developing these proposals and continue to work with the Commission as it deliberates.

We remain committed to listening, to learning, to acting on what we hear from you, and to doing all we can to address the harm that has been done to you.

Pope Francis has said:

“Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated.”
Letter to the People of God, 2018

I am committed to a Church that spares no effort to create a culture that prevents abuse and any possibility of cover-ups, to a Church that listens and learns from you, and then acts.

I personally apologise for when I have failed to listen, learn, and act in ways that would have put you first. I am profoundly sorry, and I am ashamed.

I commit to acting with you and your stories and experiences in mind.

John

John A. Cardinal Dew
Archbishop of Wellington

President, New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

On behalf of the bishops and congregational leaders of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand