

YOU BELONG NŌ KONEI ANŌ KOE



 **Caritas**
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND
The Catholic Agency for Justice, Peace & Development



Social Justice Week 2026 Liturgy Guide
Te Aratohu Rārangi Karakia mō te Wiki
Whakaritenga Tika ā-Pāpori 2026

Published by Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand
PO Box 12193
Thorndon, Wellington, 6144

caritas@caritas.org.nz
www.caritas.org.nz

Writing and editing: Justine Delport and Michael Stewart
Te reo Māori translations: Piripi Walker
Contributions: Msgr Gerard Burns and Ata Burr
Design: Rose Miller (Kraftwork)

We acknowledge and thank all who have contributed their time, experience and expertise in the creation of this resource.



Table of Contents

Rārangi Ūpoko

What is Social Justice Week? 4

How to use this guide 5

Parish Newsletter/Notices 6

Posters and Reflection Booklet7

Celebration: Ideas for Mass 8

Prayers of the Faithful 9

Readings of the Day 11

Homily Notes 12

Liturgy of the Word with Children 14



What is Social Justice Week?

He aha tēnei mea te Wiki o te Whai Tika?

Social Justice Week | Te Wiki o te Whai Tika was established by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference (NZCBC) in 1997, as an ongoing commitment in the Catholic calendar to consider, reflect and take action on a particular current social justice issue in light of Catholic social teaching.

Social Justice Week 2026 focuses on human dignity – the truth that every person is made in the image and likeness of God and belongs to Him. It calls us to reject anything that makes people feel invisible, excluded, or unworthy, and to recognise that our worth is given by God, not earned or decided by others.



How to use this guide

Me pēhea te whakamahi i tēnei puka aratohu

This booklet is to help parish priests, parish leadership, and liturgy committees include the Social Justice Week theme in their Sunday celebration and activities during and beyond the week.

We understand that parishes may choose to use some ideas from this guide, adapt others, or develop new ones that suit their context. Ultimately, we hope each parish continues to share the gift of the Church's social teaching with their community – not only through formation, but more importantly through action.

We encourage you to use and read this Liturgy Guide in conjunction with the Reflection Booklet for Social Justice Week 2026. The Reflection Booklet provides in-depth resources to pray, consider and act on our understanding of belonging – to God, to one another, and to creation, beginning this year with the first and most important thread: *You Belong to God* | *Nā Te Atua anō koe*.

For more resources on the theme and on Catholic social teaching, please visit our website at www.caritas.org.nz/parishes/social-justice-week. These resources can be used for prayer, discussion groups, social justice groups, and personal use.



Parish Newsletter/Notices

Ngā Nūpepa Pārihi/Pānui

You may wish to use this text as a notice in your newsletter or bulletin:

Social Justice Week 2026 **6 – 12 September 2026**

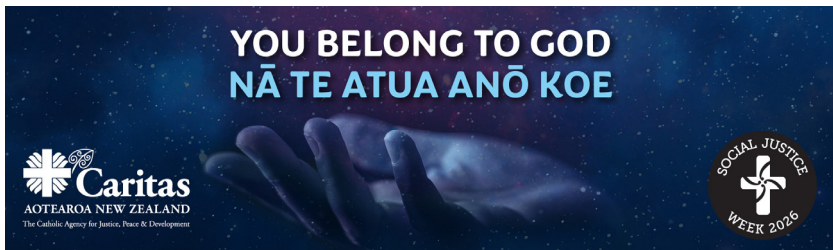
You Belong to God | Nā Te Atua anō koe

Every person carries an irreplaceable dignity – not earned, not given by others, but woven into us by the God who made us.

Pope Leo XIV

Each year, the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference lead us in Social Justice Week to consider an issue of social justice in Aotearoa. This year marks the beginning of a three-year journey exploring what it means to truly belong — to God, to one another, and to creation. We begin with the first and most important thread: we belong to God, made on purpose, fully known, and unconditionally loved. We hope people will begin this journey by reflecting on their own sense of belonging, and on the truth that every person's worth comes not from what they achieve, but from who made them.

For resources and more information visit
www.caritas.org.nz/parishes/social-justice-week.



Posters and Reflection Booklet

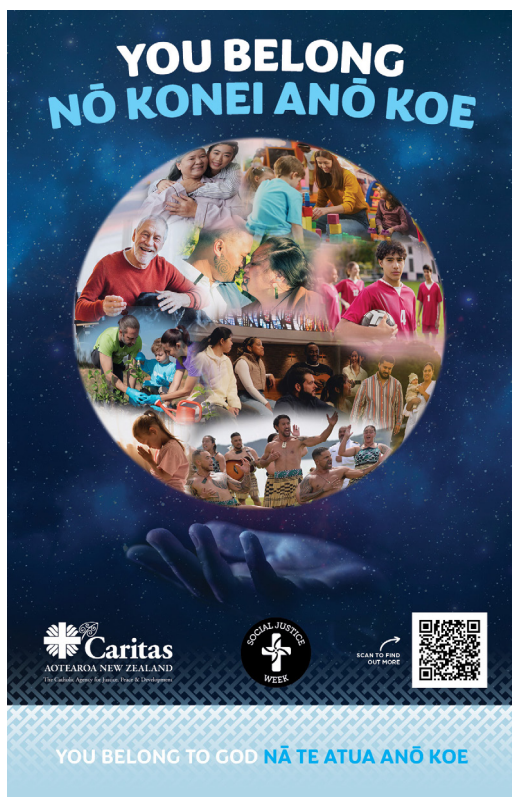
Ngā Pānui Whakaahua me

We invite you to put the SJW 2026 poster up two weeks before Social Justice Week, which takes place on 6–12 September this year.

We have supplied two sample copies of our Social Justice Week reflection booklet for use in your parish by individuals or groups.

More copies can be ordered by phone: 04 496 1742 or email: caritas@caritas.org.nz.

Digital copies can be downloaded from our website.



Celebration: Ideas for Mass

He Rā Whakanui: He Whakaaro mō te Miha

Social Justice Week Sunday – 6 September

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time | Year A

Welcome and Introduction

Mihimihi, Kupu Whakataki

Suggested text that the person welcoming people to Mass may wish to use:

Today marks the beginning of Social Justice Week, a time when the Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand ask us to reflect and act on a particular social issue in the light of Catholic social teaching. This year we begin a three-year journey exploring what it means to truly belong – to God, to one another, and to creation – starting with the first and most important thread: we belong to God, made on purpose, fully known, and unconditionally loved.

Pope Leo XIV reminds us that every person carries a dignity that is not earned and not given by others but woven into us by the God who made us. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this truth echoes in the idea of *tūrangawaewae* – a place to stand, a place to belong. Wherever we come from, whoever we are, we are held by a God who knows our name and calls us home.



Prayers of the Faithful

Ngā Īnoi a Te Hunga Whakapono

Feel free to choose any of the suggested intentions below. Adapt or supplement them to reflect the needs of your community.

Leader: Loving and compassionate God, you know each of us by name. We bring our prayers before you, trusting in your love for every person.

Speaker:

1. God who knows my name, Kei te mōhio te Atua ki tōku ingoa,
we pray for our Church – that it will be a community where every person's dignity is upheld and celebrated. May the Church be a place of radical welcome, where no one is made to feel unworthy of belonging.

E te Ariki

All: Whakarongo mai ra kia matou

2. God who knows my name, Kei te mōhio te Atua ki tōku ingoa,
we pray for the leaders of all nations – that they will govern with recognition of the innate dignity of every human person. May their policies and decisions protect the vulnerable and honour the image of God in every life.

E te Ariki

All: Whakarongo mai ra kia matou

3. God who knows my name, Kei te mōhio te Atua ki tōku ingoa,
we pray for all who experience marginalisation, exclusion, or loneliness – those who have been made to feel they do not belong. May they know their worth is rooted not in what others think of them, but in the God who made them.

E te Ariki

All: Whakarongo mai ra kia matou

4. God who knows my name, Kei te mōhio te Atua ki tōku ingoa,

we pray for our generation – that we will be people who create belonging for others. Give us eyes to see those who are unseen, and the courage to act when someone is excluded or diminished.

E te Ariki

All: Whakarongo mai ra kia matou

5. God who knows my name, Kei te mōhio te Atua ki tōku ingoa,

we pray for the people of Aotearoa New Zealand, in all their diversity – tangata whenua, Pacific peoples, migrants, and new settlers. May the dignity of every person be honoured and may the truth that we all bear God's image shape how we live together.

E te Ariki

All: Whakarongo mai ra kia matou

6. God who knows my name, Kei te mōhio te Atua ki tōku ingoa,

we pray for those who are sick, suffering, or dying. May they know they are held in your love – known completely and never forgotten.

E te Ariki

All: Whakarongo mai ra kia matou

7. God who knows my name, Kei te mōhio te Atua ki tōku ingoa,

we remember those who have died, especially those who were never given the dignity in life that was their birthright. May they rest in the fullness of your love, united with all the saints.

E te Ariki

All: Whakarongo mai ra kia matou

Leader: Loving God, you call us to see one another as you see us — fully known, fully loved, made in your image. Strengthen us to live that truth in our homes, our parishes, and our world. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings of the Day

Ngā Pānui o Te Rā

Social Justice Week Sunday – 6 September
23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time | Year A

- **First Reading: Ezekiel 33:7-9**
- **Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9**
- **Second Reading: Romans 13:8-10**
- **Alleluia: 2 Corinthians 5:19**
- **Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20**



Homily notes for Gospel and readings for Social Justice Week Sunday

He Tuhinga Whakaaro mō ngā pānui Rongopai me ngā pānuitanga mō te Rā Tapu o te Wiki Whakaritenga Tika ā-Pāpori

**Provided by Msgr Gerard Burns,
Vicar-General Archdiocese of Wellington**

Feel free to use the homily notes below in whatever way is helpful.



This Sunday's scriptures speak in different ways of God's love and care for His people. Of course, "God's people" includes everyone, as we see in the development of the Old and New Testaments, even when there are some severe-sounding warnings in the readings of this Sunday.

If all peoples and all creation have their origin in God, there is a sense in which we all belong to God – *You Belong to God* | *Nā Te Atua anō koe* – not as God's playthings but as His beloved ones. Because of that, God wants to ensure the best for us and that we – in turn – try to ensure the best for others.

- In the first reading from Ezekiel we are encouraged to strive to turn the evildoer from evil ways, that they may be saved, enjoy the fullness of life and not be lost.
- St Paul in the letter to the Romans continues this theme by repeating the commandment to love one another – a love which, elsewhere in Scripture, extends even to our enemies.

- The responsorial psalm (Psalm 95) tells us that the way to enjoy the fullness of God's grace is to listen to God's voice and not harden our hearts.
- The gospel reading picks up that theme of doing all we can to ensure that others – including members of our own Church community – do not lose the path to the fullness of life and salvation. Matthew records a step-by-step method of trying to bring people back into a way of truth and goodness.

Correction of others takes delicacy and discernment in any age, of course. Matthew's methodology reflects a desire to help people belong to a gospel-centred community, because that community belongs to God, to Christ the Lord. It involves a sensitivity to others, grounded in who we are as people created and loved by God – His choice and delight – both as individuals and as a human community.

The consequence of this is that if all creation – universe, galaxies, our Earth – belongs to God, then we have a responsibility to care for what we have been gifted: our fellow humans, our planet, the coming generations. Let us rejoice in these gifts.



Liturgy of the Word with Children

He Ritenga o te Kupu mā te Tamariki

Introduction

This Sunday marks the beginning of Social Justice Week, a special time when our Catholic Bishops ask us to think about something important and do something about it.

This year our theme is *You Belong to God*. That means something wonderful: God made you on purpose, God knows your name, and God loves you just as you are.

We gather here as one whānau, one family in Christ. Just like a family, we all belong together, and no one gets left out.

Sometimes people feel forgotten, or like they don't fit in. But God never forgets anyone. God sees each of us, knows each of us, and loves each of us – always.

Let us open our hearts now to hear God's Word and think about how we can help others feel like they belong too.

Opening prayer

E Hēhu Karaiti, Jesus,
You know each of our names. You know what makes us happy, and what makes us worried too – and you love us anyway, always.
Help us to remember your love today.

When we feel like we don't matter, remind us that we are made in your image.

When someone feels left out, help us to be brave and tell them:
You are known. You are seen. You matter.

You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

All: Āmene.

Gospel

Let us listen to the Holy Gospel according to Luke. *Read Luke 15:3-7.*

Gospel Reflection

In today's story, Jesus tells us about a shepherd who has one hundred sheep. One day, one sheep goes missing. So, what does the shepherd do?

He doesn't say, "Oh well, I still have ninety-nine." He goes looking for the one that is lost. He keeps looking until he finds it.

And when he finds it, he doesn't get cross. He doesn't ask where it's been. He picks it up gently, puts it on his shoulders, and carries it home. He is so happy to have found it!

This is how God loves each one of us. God doesn't love us because we've been good enough, or because we've earned it. God loves us because we belong to Him – always.

That is today's big message: **you belong to God.**

You were made on purpose. God knows you and loves you. God is happy when he thinks of you. And with God, you always have a place to belong.

Sometimes people think they have to be the best, or the fastest, or the most popular to matter. But Jesus shows us something different. We matter simply because God made us, and God loves us just the way we are.

Because we belong to God, we can help others feel like they belong too. Every person we meet is loved by God, just like we are. Everyone deserves to feel welcome.

Let's think about this:

- Have I ever felt left out, like the lost sheep?
- Is there someone I know who might be feeling left out or lonely?
- What is one kind thing I could do this week to help someone feel like they belong?

(Pause for quiet thinking)



Loving God, help us know that we belong to you. Help us be kind, so that others feel they belong too.

Closing prayer

Leader:

Thank you for making us and loving us. Thank you for showing us that we always belong to you.

As we go from this place, help us to be kind. Help us to notice people who feel left out and make them feel that they belong too.

Help us to be like Jesus – with kind hands, kind words, and kind hearts – at school, at home, and everywhere we go.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Āmene.





**Further prayers and
activities to help children
engage with Social Justice Week
are available at:**

**[www.caritas.org.nz/schools/
social-justice-week](http://www.caritas.org.nz/schools/social-justice-week)**



SCAN TO FIND
OUT MORE 



www.caritas.org.nz
Tel: 0800 22 10 22

