



TŪMANAKO

United in Hope • I te Tūmanako o te Kotahitanga

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Formed for Service

The call to ordained ministry is a lifelong journey of formation, prayer and service, and there are encouraging signs of this journey taking place across the Palmerston North Diocese.

Recently, the Diocese welcomed 11 newly-ordained priests from around New Zealand for their annual programme of ongoing formation. Held each year in a different diocese, the gathering gives priests in their first five years of ministry an opportunity to step back from parish life, pray together, reflect on their experiences and learn from one another.

The programme included prayer and fellowship at Southern Star Abbey, Kopua, along with conversations with senior priests and diocesan leaders. Such opportunities recognise that formation does not end at ordination, but continues as priests grow in their ministry and respond to the needs of the people they serve.

Formation is also at the heart of the journey towards ordination. On August 30, Peter Dung Manh Phan took another significant step towards priesthood when he celebrated the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Holy Orders.

The brief rite is a formal public moment in which Peter was admitted as a candidate for Holy Orders. Having discerned his vocation and undertaken his formation, he publicly expressed his desire to offer himself to God and the Church, while

the Church formally accepted him as a candidate for ordination. The rite marks an important milestone as he continues towards ordination as a transitional deacon.

Peter, originally from Vietnam, has been a seminarian in the Palmerston North Diocese for several years. He will serve as a transitional deacon before being ordained to the priesthood.

Also preparing for ordination is Charles Ropitini, a catechist from Pakipaki who has spent around four years in formation and is preparing to be ordained as a permanent deacon.

As an ordained minister, a permanent deacon serves the Church through the ministry of the Word, the liturgy and charity. Deacons proclaim the Gospel and

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may preach at Mass, assist the priest at the altar and distribute Holy Communion. They can also baptise, witness marriages when authorised and preside at funerals and burial services. Their ministry extends beyond the church building, with deacons called to be a visible sign of Christ the Servant through their service to the community, particularly those who are



vulnerable or in need.

The Greek word *diakonia* means service, and service lies at the heart of the diaconate. Together, the journeys of Peter, Charles and the newly ordained priests remind us that formation is an ongoing process of growing in faith, deepening vocation and being equipped to serve God's people.

Mission Sunday hits 100-year milestone this October

Fr Michael Pui, director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in New Zealand, has called on Kiwis to respond to Pope Leo's call "to be one in Christ, united in mission".

Fr Pui's encouragement comes as the Church around the world prepares to celebrate the 100th Mission Sunday, to be marked this year on October 18.

When speaking with the directors of Pontifical Mission Societies from around the world, including Fr Pui, the Holy Father said Mission Sunday "invites all members of the Church to a deeper communion in Christ and to a fuller unity in his divine mission of love".

"These aspects," he continued, "call for a missionary renewal in the Church in the years ahead. I encourage you to live an authentic spirituality of missionary unity and communion centred on Christ, and to promote it among the faithful."

In New Zealand, the Pontifical Mission Societies operate under the names MissioNZ and Missio Aotearoa. Among its key tasks is the promotion of the work of the Pope's missionary entities through Catholic schools and parishes.

In recent decades, that promotion would often include the distribution of "mission boxes" to each student in a Catholic school, encouraging them to contribute to the annual Mission Sunday appeal.

Fr Pui has reintroduced the mission boxes to renew the sense of generosity, but also to raise awareness about the Church's missionary activity around the world.

Students across New Zealand were invited to submit possible designs for the boxes, with Vivian Nguyen, a student at St Joseph's School, Papanui, and Angel Siju from Sacred Heart College in Napier, winning the junior and senior sections respectively.

Fr Pui is also inviting schools to participate in the "Centenary Challenge", which is encouraging students to pray that people will hear the call to mission, to share that call with others and, if possible, to donate to the Pope's missionary effort.

The Four Pontifical Mission Societies

Propagation of the Faith

Propagation of the Faith enables missionaries to be more effective in their works of evangelisation. Spreading God's Word throughout the world. Caring for the Carers.

The Holy Childhood Association

The Holy Childhood Association supports the health and religious formation needs of children in the mission territories all over the world. Enables Children helping Children.

Society of St Peter the Apostle

The Society of St Peter the Apostle helps fund the formation of seminarians and religious nuns and brothers in the mission territories. Guarantees to assist the continuity of ministries in the Church.

Missionary Union

The Missionary Union advocates ongoing missionary formation, awareness and networking among religious, lay and priests.

Catholic schools are being challenged to raise the equivalent of a gold coin donation from each student. Fr Pui suggested that could be achieved through activities like mufti days, car washes and book sales. They can also capture the spirit of generosity and missionary zeal in a short video, with the winning school to win a Missio Rosary for every student.

Fr Pui said: "As we celebrate this milestone – 100 years of World Mission Sunday – Pope Leo's motto captures the heart of the moment: 'In the one Christ, we are one.'"

"His call is clear: To be one in Christ, united in mission; to enter more deeply into communion with Christ and with one another; and to renew our missionary commitment for the century ahead.

"We are called to support the Pope's missionary endeavours by praying for and donating to the Pontifical Mission Societies."

Material for schools and parishes to commemorate Mission Sunday are being distributed in the coming weeks.

Access Mission Sunday resources and donate at: <https://missio.nz>



Social Justice Week Focuses on Belonging to God



The Catholic Agency for Justice, Peace & Development

As the Church marked Social Justice Week 2026, New Zealand's Catholic bishops urged people to recognise the dignity and worth of every person in a world increasingly shaped by conflict, displacement, misinformation and exclusion.

In a statement launching this year's observance, which ran from September 6-12, the bishops said the theme, "You belong to God | Nā te Atua anō koe", was a reminder that every person has inherent value and deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

This year's Social Justice Week marks the beginning of a three-year focus on the theme of "Belonging". The 2026 programme explored humanity's relationship with God, with future years set to consider belonging with one another and belonging within creation.

"We believe God has created everyone for relationship," the bishops said. "In his new encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo writes, 'Created for relationship, every human person is planned and willed by God to enter into communion with him, with others and with creation' (#50). Our lives are woven together by growing in these essential relationships to our being."

The bishops noted that there is often "little regard for the weak, small and most vulnerable among us", including



"May we work together to defend and protect human dignity wherever we see it undermined or ignored."

people experiencing poverty, homelessness, disability, illness and exclusion.

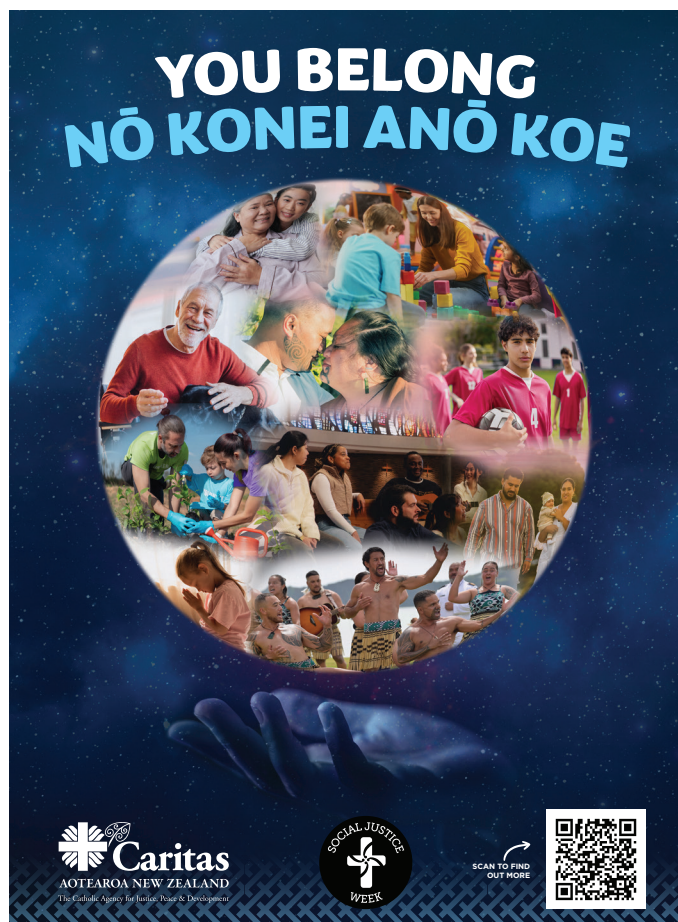
Beyond its religious dimension, the bishops' statement also highlighted social challenges familiar to many societies, including the impact of disinformation, the erosion of respect for others and hostility towards people perceived as different.

"Social Justice Week this year invites you and us to recognise and affirm the God-given dignity of ourselves and all others...May we work together to defend and protect human dignity wherever we see it undermined or ignored," the bishops said.

In a video for Social Justice Week, NZCBC president and Bishop of Auckland Steve Lowe said the time was "a week of journey, a week of belonging or reflecting on belonging in a new, deeper way to deepen our much longer journey of life".

Bishop Lowe noted the thinking of early Church fathers who spoke about being called into God's likeness.

"And I think [this is an] interesting concept for us to reflect on particularly as we come into Social Justice Week...is how am I growing in the likeness of God and do I reflect God's attitude towards me, his love of me, do I reflect that to other people because that's part of belonging to God – that we become like God in the ways we speak and in the ways we act," Bishop Lowe said.



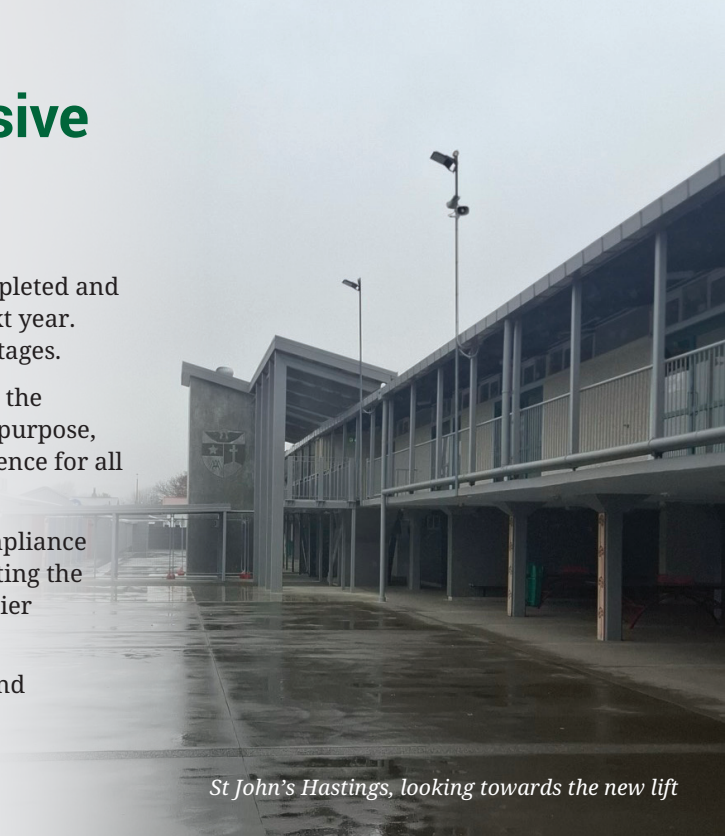
Building Accessible and Inclusive Learning Environments

This has been a busy year for school property, with 18 projects completed and several more under construction or scheduled to begin by early next year. Further projects are progressing through the planning and design stages.

School building projects require careful thought and preparation at the planning stage, to ensure that the buildings and facilities are fit for purpose, provide equitable access to learning and foster a sense of independence for all students.

Several of this year's projects have focused on accessibility and compliance improvements. The largest has been the installation of a lift connecting the two two-storey blocks at St John's College in Hastings, providing easier access to first-floor classrooms and the college library.

Other projects have included installation of ramps and handrails, and St Mary's School Palmerston North now has a dedicated universal bathroom facility for students with high needs.



St John's Hastings, looking towards the new lift

Funding Making a Difference in our Communities

The November 2026 Funding Round is still open. Parish groups, agencies and Church organisations that provide a helping hand by supporting families and social services are invited to apply for funding from the Catholic Charities Foundation of Palmerston North and the Tindall Foundation through the Diocesan Allocations group.

Recent grants have already supported a wide range of initiatives in 2026. Funding helped Legacy Housing deliver support services for residents in its Whānau Flats programme, while Palmerston North City Mission's SPACE Parenting Programme provided education and connection for new parents. Support was also provided to Palmerston North Street Van to assist with food and transport for people experiencing hardship, strengthening its long-standing work serving vulnerable members of the community.

Other funded projects included volunteer visitor programmes for socially isolated older people

through Age Concern, counselling and parenting support through Parentline Manawatū, fresh produce for the New Plymouth Community Foodbank and programmes for children and older people delivered by Supporting Families in Mental Illness.

Funding also contributed to community education initiatives, volunteer training, improved access to services, youth programmes, parish outreach activities and projects that strengthen organisational capability and resilience.

These examples highlight the diverse

ways funding helps organisations and parish communities respond to local needs and make a positive difference in people's lives.

Applications for the current funding round close on September 30, 2026. If your parish, agency or community organisation is undertaking work that aligns with diocesan priorities, we encourage you to apply.

Application forms and more details can be found by searching "2026 applications" on the diocesan website: <https://pndiocese.org.nz>

UPCOMING Events

THUR-FRI
OCT 22-23

ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL OPUNAKE 125TH JUBILEE

Details & registration: <https://www.trybooking.com/nz/event/20235>

FRI-SUN
OCT 23-25

ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL NEW PLYMOUTH CENTENARY

Details & registration: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61576850039718