WelCom

Newsletter of the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington, New Zealand

ISSUE 15 - October 2026

Diaconate Ordination of Gerson Badayos

Wellington seminarian Gerson Badayos was ordained to the transitional diaconate by Archbishop Paul on October 2. The ordination took place at Sacred Heart Church in Auckland's Ponsonby, followed by a reception at neighbouring Holy Cross Seminary.

Gerson is originally from the Philippines. He started his seminary formation in 2021 and has served in several parishes while on pastoral placement.

In his homily, Archbishop Paul encouraged Gerson to embrace the diaconate as a "school of service", and to trust in the grace of God, who has called him to this ministry.

Please pray for Deacon Gerson as he continues his journey towards priesthood.

Multicultural Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral

Wet weather didn't deter more than 350 parishioners from across the Archdiocese who gathered at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Wellington on September 27 for the annual Multicultural Mass.

The liturgy was a joyful expression of the Church's rich cultural diversity, with communities from Kiribati, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Uganda, Ireland, South Sudan, Germany, Venezuela, Nigeria, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Vietnam coming together in prayer and worship.

The uplifting music, led by the Filipino Karori Choir together with African, Fijian, Samoan and Vietnamese choirs, filled the Cathedral with joy and reverence.

The diversity was also on display during Archbishop Paul's homily, which was signed by Angela Murray for the deaf/mute communities.

The celebration continued with a lively fellowship featuring cultural performances, delicious food, warm conversations and plenty of laughter. As people shared songs, dances, stories and hospitality, the many cultures of our Church came together as one family in Christ.

Thanks to everyone who was there and those who helped put the Mass together.

WelCom *Something happening in your parish? An event, celebration or call for volunteers?*

Please let us know! Info can be sent to *b.mack@cadw.nz*

We look forward to hearing from you!

From Archbishop Paul

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ

Recently I met with two faith communities to discuss their futures. As you can imagine this was not an easy conversation for anyone.

There was a call from the people for me to really listen to them. I also placed that same call to them at the end of the meeting in terms of their own prayer and reflection on what had been discussed.

Often we look at what we know and like and we don't want it to change. This is very understandable. We also can find it hard to look to the bigger factors that might be a part of any decision. This is what we are called to do when we try and discern something. What is God saying to us in a situation? What is the Holy Spirit guiding us towards? It is one of the key aspects of the spiritual conversation process that is being used more and more in Church life, especially as we try to become more synodal in our way of operating.

Most of us find it difficult to look beyond our current circumstances. But as a Church we are called to do so, especially in terms of our mission to spread the Gospel. Sometimes we have to give up something that is good and worthwhile for something greater, which can mean real sacrifice. This can include the communities in which we worship.

All around the world people are coming to terms with the need to address current worshipping communities. We need to examine the use of our resources – human, spiritual, financial – and how we support those who are most in need. There are hard decisions to be made, and they do need to be made.

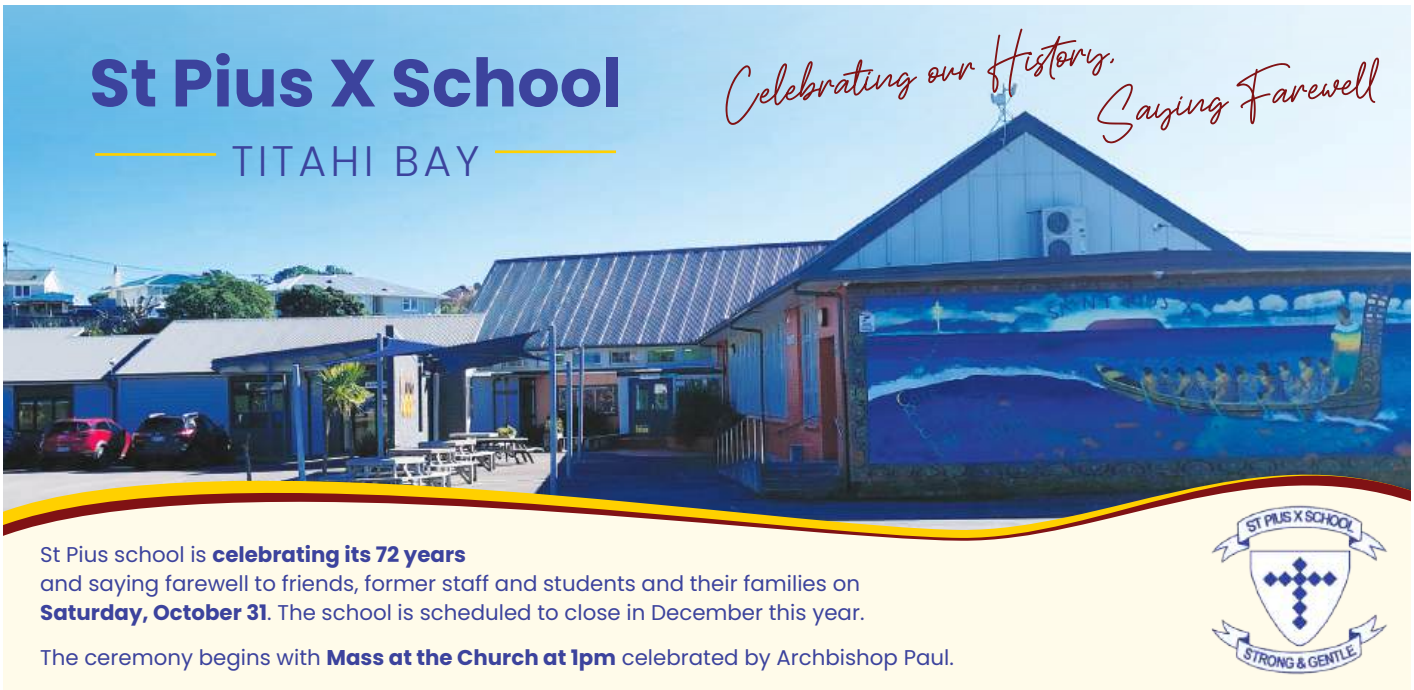
We gather for Mass each Sunday firstly to praise and worship God. Where we do that will vary. When we are away from home we join the local church community where we happen to be. We also gather to be fed by the Word and the Eucharist. This nourishes our lives for the week ahead and supports the prayer life we have for the other six days of the week. We also gather to support our brothers and sisters in faith, by our presence, our participation in the liturgy and in the social dimensions of church life.

I wonder if we focus on the last dimension as the most important when it comes to our church community? It is important to have a sense of belonging, but that isn't the first reason for being at Mass. We can become very comfortable in our communities, which is good, but if it is stopping us from being able to see the greater call and mission of the Church and parish then we have to ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit to see what is the right thing for the future.

I understand the love people have for their church communities but I also appreciate those who are willing to change for the sake of something greater, and in response to the call of the Gospel now. It is easy to agree with this when you aren't being asked to close your church or change communities, but I think we all need to pray for the disposition to be truly free to hear God's call and to answer with faith and trust.

Earlier in the month I celebrated the Mass to open our World Youth Day preparations for Seoul next year. World Youth Day is a chance for Catholic young people, aged between 18-35, to experience the power of gathering with others in faith and to pray, learn and celebrate what it is to be a member of the Catholic community. I am hoping that we will have a good number of people attend with our Archdiocesan group.

Having WYD in Seoul makes it more accessible for us in terms of costs and time. If you know people who may benefit from attending please encourage them to sign up. The cost is $5,800. Perhaps you are to support a young person financially. It would be a very worthy gift to help our young people have a deeper experience of faith and belonging. The Archdiocesan website has more details about all of this.



St Pius school is **celebrating its 72 years** and saying farewell to friends, former staff and students and their families on **Saturday, October 31**. The school is scheduled to close in December this year.

The ceremony begins with **Mass at the Church at 1pm** celebrated by Archbishop Paul.

Blessing our Catholic schools

Upgrades and refurbishments at two schools in our Archdiocese were blessed by Archbishop Paul in September.

On September 24, Archbishop Paul blessed the completion of the Block A upgrade at St Joseph's in Upper Hutt. The complete upgrade includes a new roof, cladding, windows, interior fit out, decks and a new STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Math) room.

The following day, Archbishop Paul blessed the refurbishment of D Block at St Brendan's in Heretaunga. The work completed includes a new roof, cladding, windows and interior.

We give thanks for the gift that is our Catholic schools, and pray that our children may thrive and mature into faithful followers of Christ.

Celebration of 200 years of the Cenacle at Our Lady of Kāpiti Church

To celebrate the bicentenary of the founding of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Cenacle in La Louvesc, France, parishioners, friends and ministry colleagues gathered in Te Whaea Tapu o Kapiti, Our Lady of Kapiti parish church on September 26.

The celebration of the Eucharist, led by Archbishop Paul, took place on the Feast Day of their foundress, St Thérèse Couderc.

The Mass was livestreamed, enabling the international Congregation of Cenacle Sisters and overseas friends and families to participate.

Following the celebration, everyone joined in supper, which included refreshments with a French flavour.

Gratitude, joy and the lively sharing of memories and hopes marked the occasion.

Catholic Social Services Annual Appeal: help us help people feel belonging!

This has been a challenging year for many, especially the poor and vulnerable among us. These challenges have caused many people to feel a loss of connection to one another, and even to God.

This is why the Catholic Social Services Annual Appeal is so important. Your ongoing support helps us connect to those in need.

Running from November 1-30, the Annual Appeal asks for community support so Catholic Social Services can continue supporting people and their whānau who need help.

Over the last year, Catholic Social Services has helped in a variety of ways:

Refugee House set-ups

24 Households settled

72 Children & adults supported

Soup Kitchen Project

150+ Meal sittings

50+ Guests received tailored social work assistance

Social Work

16 Individuals & families supported

25 Community engagements & referrals to other agencies

Game On!

4 Programmes

9 Men graduated

Seasons for Growth

6 Facilitator Training sessions

20 New Companions

111 Individuals

17 Children/ Young People

7 Programmes, Adult programmes & Seminars

56 Attendees

Your gift today could mean:

$25 helps a dad attend a full parenting session and connect with others who understand.

$60 supports someone through a grief and loss group, so they don't face it in silence.

$120 funds practical casework – housing, benefits, immigration support – for someone in crisis

$200 helps us reach an isolated person and welcome them back into community

Will you help make sure no one we serve has to face their hardest days alone?

SUPPORT THE ANNUAL APPEAL

Donations can be made online at *cadw.nz/our-work/catholic-social-services/donate*

Another way to support the Annual Appeal is through internet banking. Details are:

Account Number: Catholic Social Services
Account Number: 02-0560-0213864-000
Particulars: your surname & initials
Reference: your phone number
CODE: CSS – 2026

For more information contact Catholic Social Services *reception@cadw.nz* or phone 04 385 8642

STORIES OF BELONGING

Here are some stories of belonging made possible thanks to Catholic Social Services (CSS) supporters.

The power of belonging: Bronwyn and Seasons for Growth

Bronwyn is very much part of the Seasons for Growth Companion community. Seasons for Growth is a peer support programme that helps children, young people and adults through times of grief, loss and change. Companions are the trained facilitators who guide the groups.

Her journey began when she was a school nurse in Porirua East. One morning she arrived at school to find two distraught children in the principal's office. Their mother had died suddenly. The principal asked her: "What can we do for these children?" That question, 20 years ago, is how Bronwyn found Seasons for Growth.

Once trained, her first group was eight children grieving the loss of parents or grandparents. "The children loved the programme, their journals and the songs, and I found the Companion's Manual so helpful," she says.

After retiring, Bronwyn chose to continue as a volunteer Companion with CSS. "I just love this programme. I receive great support, and it is always a pleasure to facilitate a group of children going through a difficult time."

Belonging as a dad again: Michael's* Game On! story

Game On! is our parenting programme for dads and male carers. It gives dads the time and space to really dig into parenting topics and learn from each other so they can make real changes at home that make a positive difference for their kids and in their relationships.

Michael attended a programme in 2024. "It helped me to identify the toxic cycle of communication in my co-parenting relationship. I learnt that my ex and I needed to create some distance from each other. So, we put in place a system of written communication.

"This has helped me manage my feelings and behaviours and means my child isn't being directly exposed to the conflict between us. I knew the tense atmosphere was not healthy for my child. Without this realisation I would have continued to get into arguments in front of my child. Now I ensure that I stay out of 'the box' when I have my child. This helps to maximise my time with them."

The programme also had a personal impact for Michael, who has joined CSS as a volunteer facilitator of the Game On! programme.

"Since I started facilitating the programme I have enjoyed working with dads to assist them in bringing out the amazing dad that is already inside them. Game On! is an excellent parenting course for dads."

** name changed for privacy*

Belonging starts with being present: Compassion Soup Kitchen

Catholic Social Services partners with Compassion Soup Kitchen by having one of the team on board to support breakfast service.

From about 7.15 each morning, Monday to Thursday, you'll find DJ, our social worker, greeting guests at the Compassion Soup Kitchen, checking in on how they're doing and offering a hand where it's needed. DJ knows what it's like to be without a place to call home and to be making it on your own, and that experience shapes how he shows up.

His role is to back the soup kitchen mahi in whatever way is needed, from washing dishes and handing out takeaway meals, to the most important job of all: being present. That might mean friendship and company, helping someone settle when they're distressed, or giving practical help.

For many guests, belonging starts with having someone beside them. Guests come to the soup kitchen carrying worries about housing, health, Work and Income, legal matters and the everyday pressures of getting by. Often what begins as a simple chat becomes a chance to listen and build trust. From there, DJ can walk alongside them, help them understand their options, link them with community services and advocate for them.

Sam Johnson, Compassion Soup Kitchen manager, says: "It's great to have Catholic Social Services based here in our building and working alongside us at the soup kitchen. Having their social worker DJ support our breakfast means they can build genuine relationships with our whānau, connect people with other support agencies and help build a welcoming environment."

DJ's presence at the Soup Kitchen is only possible because of people like you. A gift of $150 helps fund a morning of support, connection and practical help for guests who need it most.

Celebration marks centenary of Suzanne Aubert's death

The enduring legacy of Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert was celebrated at a full St Mary of the Angels in Wellington on October 4 – almost 100 years to the day since crowds packed the city's streets to farewell her.

New Zealand's bishops joined the Sisters of Compassion and members of the wider community for the Mass as part of Rau Tau Pūaroha | Celebrate Compassion 2026, a year-long programme marking the centenary of Mother Aubert's death.

In his homily, Archbishop Paul said the impact of the French-born religious sister who came to serve the people of New Zealand extends beyond the Church.

"Meri Hōhepa belongs to the story of the Church in this land and, increasingly, to the story of Aotearoa New Zealand itself," he said.

Reflecting on her life of service, he said Mother Aubert understood that "faith wasn't something to be kept within the walls of a church" but was shown in the way people treat those who are poor, vulnerable and on the margins.

He highlighted her close relationship with Māori communities, noting that she learned te reo Māori, lived among Māori and built relationships of trust and friendship.

"Her life reminds us that Christian mission is not simply about bringing something to people. It is also about receiving, listening, learning, becoming a neighbour, and recognising the presence of God already at work in another culture and among another people," he said.

Archbishop Paul also paid tribute to the Sisters of Compassion for carrying forward Aubert's charism for more than 130 years.

Sr Margaret Anne Mills, the congregational leader of the Sisters of Compassion, noted that Meri Hōhepa's "large-hearted neighbourliness and upholding of the dignity of all people" is part of her inspiring legacy that lives with people now and in the future.

Archbishop Paul said Suzanne Aubert's example remains highly relevant in a society where many people still experience poverty, loneliness, illness and exclusion.

"The best way to honour Suzanne Aubert is not simply to remember her; it is to continue what she began," he said.

"May the next chapter of her story be written not only in books and commemorations, but in the lives of people who choose to live the same Gospel of compassion."

The Mass in Wellington marked the conclusion of a four-day haerenga tapu (pilgrimage), which included Masses, prayers and recollections of Suzanne Aubert's impact in Māhia, Wairoa and Pakipaki.

The pilgrimage group arrived at the Home of Compassion at Island Bay for a pōwhiri on the Sunday morning, about three hours before the national centennial Mass at St Mary of the Angels.

Bishops hope 'Gospel lens' will guide people's votes

New Zealand's Catholic bishops have used their 2026 election statement to promote voting as a moral and civic responsibility, not simply an expression of personal preference.

In ***Discerning our nation's future through a Gospel lens***, the bishops note that the Church does not endorse any political party or candidate. Instead, they encourage voters to carefully examine parties, candidates and policies through the lens of the Gospel and Catholic social teaching.

In the document, the bishops call on voters to think seriously about the kind of society New Zealand is building and to consider how their electoral choices can contribute to the good of the broader community.

"Voting should amount to something more than simply a personal preference," the bishops write.

"It is a moral and civic responsibility; it is a concrete way that we can pursue the common good."

That goal can be pursued, the bishops write, by looking beyond short-term concerns and individual self-interest and instead reflecting on the struggles many are facing.

"We invite you to consider the lived experience of families and communities, and to consider how proposed policies affect the marginalised and most vulnerable," the statement explains.

The bishops' document highlights five key areas for voters to consider as they assess political parties and local candidates:

- The dignity of the human person, including respect for every person from conception until natural death;
- Solidarity with one's brothers and sisters, including economic and social support for people in need, immigration and refugee policies, and New Zealand's responsibilities towards its Pacific neighbours;
- Rights of religious freedom and conscience, including the ability of individuals and Catholic organisations to live and serve according to sincerely held beliefs;
- Preserving human faces and voices, particularly safeguarding human autonomy and the dignity of work in a society increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence and automation;
- Care for our common home, including the wellbeing of New Zealand's land, skies and waterways, as well as support for communities affected by changing climate patterns.

The bishops express concern about significant challenges facing the country, pointing to abortion, homelessness, euthanasia, unemployment, inadequate support for people with disabilities and entrenched poverty as examples.

Concern is also raised about the way political discourse is undertaken, as part of building – or undermining – New Zealand's "social fabric".

"A key indicator of any society's maturity is its citizens' ability to speak truthfully, listen respectfully and promote the dignity of every person," the bishops write.

The bishops conclude their statement by expressing the hope that voters' discernment will be grounded in truth and respect and directed towards the common good.

"May this election be an opportunity to renew our commitment to one another, so that our communities become places where every person can belong and flourish."

The bishops also propose a prayer for people to use in the weeks leading up to the election on November 7.

Read the full election statement at:
https://bit.ly/NZCBCElection26

A Prayer for Aotearoa New Zealand

God of mercy and justice, source of all life and giver of every good gift, we place before you our nation, Aotearoa New Zealand, as we prepare to choose those who will serve in public office.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us, that we may discern well. Form in us hearts that seek to build a society where every person can belong and flourish. Guide our political leaders, candidates and voters with wisdom, humility and courage.

Lord Jesus, you drew near to the forgotten and lifted up the lowly. Open our eyes to the needs of all. May our votes, our voices and our actions help shape our nation as a people of compassion, hope and shared responsibility.

We make this prayer in your name, ***Amen***.

Mary, Mother of the Church, ***pray for us***.

St Joseph, protector of families and workers, ***pray for us***.

St Thomas More, patron saint of politicians, ***pray for us***.

Holy men and women of God who have walked this land in faith and service, ***pray for us***.

Housing Election Forum 2026

Church leaders, community voices and representatives from several political parties came together on September 23 at Wellington Cathedral of St Paul for a unique forum discussing housing in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The evening was co-hosted by Archbishop Paul, Anglican Archbishop Justin Duckworth and Community Housing Aotearoa chief executive Paul Gilberd. Politicians who participated included Tama Potaka of the National Party, Kieran McAnulty from the Labour Party, Julie Anne Genter from the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, Aperahama Edwards from Te Pāti Māori and Bob Mason from The Opportunities Party.

As Archbishop Paul said on the evening: "We need to continue to see with fresh eyes the dignity of every person who is suffering, every person who is our neighbour for whom individually and as a society, together, we are called to show care and concern."

He also said: "For us as Christians, we remember Jesus never judged people for their circumstances. And neither should we."

Let us work together to ensure we all have safe, warm and dry homes, that we may see the shared humanity and dignity in one another, and pray that our leaders may act for the good of people, especially the marginalised, and be part of the solution to ensuring all people can have a home.

A recap of the livestream of the evening is available at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KNO3vzFBfVo

Soup and Toast warms winter in Te Awakairangi

Every Wednesday from June to August, a team of Te Awakairangi parishioners, joined by students from Sacred Heart College, serve soup and toast at lunchtime in a welcoming space that is open to all. This long hard winter has seen an increase in numbers with 30 people on average attending weekly. People come for a range of reasons and the only question asked is which of the three delicious homemade soups you would prefer.

Soup and Toast started in 2021 when members of the Te Awakairangi Church community asked "Where do these people we see living on the streets eat?"

Five years in, the team has Soup and Toast down to a fine art, and part of that art is keeping things simple. From April, a roster of helpers and soup-makers is drawn up. There is a small budget from local donations to top up supplies when needed, but much of the food is also donated, including after-dinner chocolates.

Each Wednesday morning, one of the team visits local food banks and invites people to come. A flag on the driveway lets people know what's happening. People from the community are joined by parishioners after Mass and everyone gets to mix in the lineup for soup and at the tables that have been set with care. The room fills with smiles and chatter and people enjoy each other's company. For the Soup and Toast team, there is a warm feeling that comes from seeing everyone come together and making someone's day better.

Have you got a story to share of community outreach in your parish? Contact Deirdre Meskill at *d.meskill@cadw.nz*

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