

WelCom

Newsletter of the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington, New Zealand

ISSUE 13 - August 2026

Bridging faith and diplomacy: a conversation with the Apostolic Nuncio to New Zealand

Part 1 of an interview with Archbishop Gábor Pintér, Apostolic Nuncio to New Zealand, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Samoa and Vanuatu, and Apostolic Delegate to the Pacific Ocean.

Most Catholics know about the spiritual history of the Holy See. Not as many know about its diplomatic history.

His Excellency Archbishop Gábor Pintér, Apostolic Nuncio to New Zealand and several other Pacific nations including Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu, provides a quick lesson. The Holy See, he explains, has the world's oldest continuously-serving diplomatic corps, dating back more than 1,500 years!

An apostolic nuncio, he says, is the Pope's permanent diplomatic representative to a sovereign state or international organisation. He attends diplomatic functions with representatives from many countries, meets with government officials and civil society members (such as social organisations), and takes part in community events.

But he also attends Masses and other Catholic events throughout New Zealand and the Pacific, seated by the altar with fellow clergy. Ordained as a priest in 1988 – prior to his diplomatic career – he can deliver homilies, provide blessings and distribute the Precious Body and Blood of the Eucharist.

He's also the Titular Archbishop of Velebusdus, a community in present-day western Bulgaria, located in Europe between Greece, Turkey, Romania and the Black Sea.

These responsibilities mean he bridges faith and diplomacy. He says if he could describe his role in one word, it would be "coordination".

Archbishop Gábor explains an example of bridging faith and diplomacy is his work to help ensure the free functioning of the Catholic Church without government interference, so that Catholics can do things like attend Mass without being persecuted. While we have freedom to practise our Catholic faith in New Zealand, this hasn't always been the case in nations where he's served as a diplomat.

One example was his time as Apostolic Nuncio to Belarus. The Eastern European nation was formerly part of the Soviet Union. Today it is a close ally of Russia and has supported the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Yet Archbishop Gábor describes a "miracle" of Catholic faith in Belarus surviving the Soviet Union, a decades-long period that lasted much of the 20th century when atheism was enforced and Christians were openly mocked and persecuted by the government.



Grandparents who remembered a time before the Soviet Union would pass the faith on in secret to their grandchildren, at risk of imprisonment in gulags if they were caught. These grandchildren then passed faith on to their own descendants. Today, 35 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Archbishop Gábor says the Church in Belarus has grown from being at risk of extinction to an estimated two million Catholics – about 20 per cent of the total population.

Archbishop Gábor says a lesson we can learn from this is that everyday people can keep faith alive and nurture it. The nurturing of faith is also something he saw as Apostolic Nuncio to Honduras, his most recent role before being called to New Zealand in 2024, succeeding Archbishop Novatus Rugambwa.

Archbishop Gábor says it's a blessing to serve. He adds his roles have shown there's a real interest in the Church around the world.

Yet his career is also one he did not expect. He says that when he was in seminary in his home country of Hungary, he thought he'd only be a parish priest.

"God has a plan prepared for all of our lives."

Look for part 2 in the next issue of WelCom.



“The liturgical life of the Church is one of the great gifts we have and, when done well, it helps connect us to God who loves us and wants to share his life with us.”

From Archbishop Paul

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ

At the end of last month, Fr Paul Turner from Kansas City, Missouri spent time in our Archdiocese. Fr Paul was brought out at the invitation of the New Zealand bishops to spend time working with priests and groups of lay people on the celebration of the Mass. Fr Paul has spent much of his priestly life studying and helping others to understand the liturgy of the Church. He has written a number of books and has his own website: paulturner.org

When working with the priests, he went through the various parts of the Mass and explained what is written in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and how it prescribes Mass should be celebrated. It was an excellent opportunity for us to reflect on the reality that the Mass is the liturgy of the Church, and that we have a responsibility to celebrate it in the way the Church asks of us.

Sometimes we endeavour to change the Mass or other liturgies to make them “more relevant” to people, or to reflect who we are as New Zealanders. There are some elements of this which we do and they have become part of the liturgical life of our country and have been approved by the Bishops Conference. However, when individuals or liturgy teams decide to do things differently, they run the risk of a level of subjectivism and personal preference that can cause tension. Some people may “like” what is done, others will not. So who decides?

When we celebrate the liturgy as the Church intends, we are able to do so with the dignity and structure that reflects the mind of the Church. We have the revised *Roman Missal* of 2010 which we follow. The reminder to us as priests is that when we change words or actions because we think they are better, we are running the risk of making the liturgy our own, rather than that of the Church. The same is true for those who organise our liturgies in our parishes and schools. There is some flexibility in places, but it is important we understand where those places are and where we are able to do so. Fr Paul's presence and work with us helped to clarify that.

One of the important parts of the workshop was on the place of the people of God in the liturgy and what are the parts and responsibilities of the people. The document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* from the Second Vatican Council outlined it as follows in paragraph 14: “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.”

What does that participation look like? It involves preparing to celebrate the liturgy before arriving at church. It is good to have read the Scriptures of the day before they are proclaimed. It means responding intentionally to the dialogue parts of the Mass. It means joining in the praise of God in the hymns and parts of the Mass that are sung. It means those who have ministries in the Mass carry them out with reverence and respect. It means spending time in silence and prayer during the quiet times of the Mass. It means that we are thinking about what we are doing and making that our prayer to God.

The liturgical life of the Church is one of the great gifts we have and, when done well, it helps connect us to God who loves us and wants to share his life with us. I encourage you to reflect on your own participation in the liturgy of the Church, and in how you are prepared and disposed to celebrate Mass and other liturgical activities.

As priests, we will endeavour to ensure we prepare well and that we lead the Mass in a prayerful way, which respects the sanctity of what we are doing and supports the importance of being a community of prayer and faith who gather.

Nga mihi nui

+ P. B. MarL'sen

Papal award for Simon Manning

A papal award was presented by Archbishop Paul to Simon Manning during Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral on July 29. Simon was presented with the Benemerenti Medal – awarded by the Pope to members of the clergy and laity for service to the Catholic Church.

Nominated by the Clergy Trust Fund, Simon was awarded the medal for his many years of funeral services, particularly for Catholic clergy. Simon founded Harbour City Funeral Home in 1989 in Kilbirnie in Wellington. It has since grown to include locations in Upper and Lower Hutt and Kāpiti.



A particular focus of Simon and Harbour City is demystifying funerals and how they work. This includes open days that offer a look behind the scenes – one of the first funeral companies in New Zealand to offer this. They also host numerous educational seminars about funerals and the funeral process.

Congratulations on your recognition, Simon!

2026 Archdiocesan funding round open

Parish groups, agencies and Church organisations that provide a helping hand by supporting families and social services are now able to apply for the annual Tindall Funding through the Archdiocesan Allocation Committee.

The priority is to fund Catholic and community organisations that are working in areas identified as priorities by The Tindall Foundation and aligned with the Archdiocesan goals.

We are charged, by the Archbishop, with the funding support of groups committed to social, pastoral and charitable needs in our region. Applications are judged on the basis of need, resource availability and the fulfilment of set criteria.

Applications open September 3 and are due by Friday, October 2.

Application forms and more information can be found at www.cadw.nz/tindall, or contact Deirdre at tindall@cadw.nz or 04 496 1777.



Celebrating our clergy

The ministerial milestones of several of our clergy were celebrated at a Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral on July 29. Some of those milestones included:

Fr Frank Whitaker – 65 years; Fr David Gledhill SM – 60 years; Cardinal John Dew – 50 years; Fr Joe Keegan – 50 years; Fr Tom Rouse SSC – 50 years; Fr Simi Volavola MSC – 25 years.

In delivering his homily on a sunny winter's day, Cardinal John said God chooses his priests. This, he added, means there can be no doubt that it is a calling.

We thank God for the gift of clergy, and pray more young men may take up the call to serve his church.



WelCom

Have an event coming up in your parish? Something you're proud of, or would like to get the word out about? Need volunteers or help with something?

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

We look forward to hearing from you!



Plans for New Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament unveiled

Sixteen years after the first major earthquake, Christchurch Bishop Michael Gielen says there is a sense of joy and anticipation as plans for the new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament are unveiled.

Bishop Gielen wrote a pastoral letter that was read at Masses across the Diocese on July 26, marking the official launch of the campaign to build the new Cathedral.

In the letter, the 11th Bishop of Christchurch said the Catholic faithful

of today have the “responsibility” and “privilege” of building a Cathedral – something the first bishop carried more than 120 years ago.

“Our Catholic communities have changed in the decades since Bishop Grimes led our Diocese, but our desire for beauty, for welcome and for honouring God has not,” Bishop Gielen said.

During 2024, following periods of public consultation, Bishop Gielen announced that the Cathedral would

return to the Diocese’s traditional home on Barbadoes St and that it would retain the name Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament.

In the two years since, significant work has been undertaken to develop the Cathedral’s design, in partnership with architect Warren and Mahoney.

“When I arrived in the Diocese four years ago, one of the questions I was most often asked was, ‘What is happening with the Cathedral?’ That question revealed something profound: the deep love our people have for their Mother Church,” Bishop Gielen said.

“Over these past four years, through listening, prayer and discernment, that shared vision has taken shape. Today, I am proud to say: here is our Mother Church. The vision has become a reality. Now, together, we can bring it to life.”

Bishop Gielen believes people will see in the design “a Cathedral that glorifies God, that serves as a beacon of faith in our city, that responds to the realities of the present day”.

Continued on page 5



Tony Brazier, who is leading the Cathedral campaign, said a focus on financial prudence and sustainable building, alongside the aspiration for beauty and dignity, saw an \$80 million budget emerge for the project.

That will cover the 800-seat Cathedral, the attached Perpetual Adoration chapel and the Te Rangimarie community centre, which can hold 300 people.

Mr Brazier said about \$45 million of the funds needed to build the Cathedral will come from insurance proceeds and the sale of diocesan assets. Of the \$35 million required through fundraising, more than \$19 million has already been found.

"Bishop Michael is emulating what Bishop Grimes did – inviting every Catholic family to make a sacrificial offering to build our new Cathedral," he said, noting that each person's "sacrifice" would be determined by their situation.

Bishop Gielen and many of the priests of the Diocese have committed to making a weekly financial contribution for the next five years. Those will add up to a significant gift.

And while he is encouraging all the Catholic faithful in Canterbury and the West Coast to find ways to offer financial support, enthusiasm and pledges have come from afar.

"I have been struck by the generosity of people who recognise what a sign of hope our Cathedral will be for Christchurch and our region," he said. "That generosity has been seen around New Zealand and from people of other faith traditions."

More information about the new Cathedral project, including the design and ways to financially support, can be found at blessedsacrament.nz

Surge in enquiries about the Catholic faith

In the first six months of 2026, the Catholic Enquiry Centre received as many enquiries as it did in all of 2025.

The CEC received 354 enquiries in the six months from January to June this year, with 70 per cent coming from individuals. Last year, 322 enquiries were received, with 58 per cent being from individuals.

Many of the enquiries this year are from individuals personally searching for faith. People are reaching out to ask questions, explore Christianity, return to the Church or enquire about becoming Catholic, the CEC stated in a Facebook post.

Among the messages the CEC received through social media this week are, "I am wanting to return to the faith after 32-year absence"; "What version of the Bible do Catholics read from?"; "Is Catholicism a religion after Christ or during Christ?"; "I am a Protestant who is enquiring about the Catholic faith."; "Do you keep the Sabbath holy?"

The CEC said the rising number of enquiries is "exciting", but added "it also means there's plenty to do!"

"With so many resource orders to prepare and send, we've needed to recruit extra volunteers – and we are so grateful for their generous support."

The increasing number of individual enquiries suggests "growing awareness of the Catholic Enquiry Centre and increasing openness to the faith".

"Many practising Catholics also contact us seeking resources and support to help families, friends and others explore the Catholic faith."



Enquiry Statistics

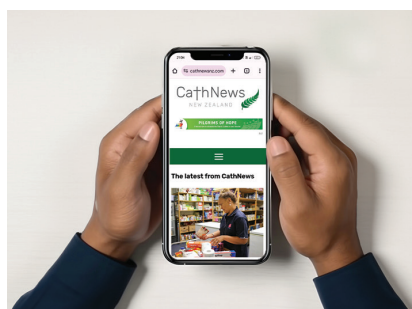
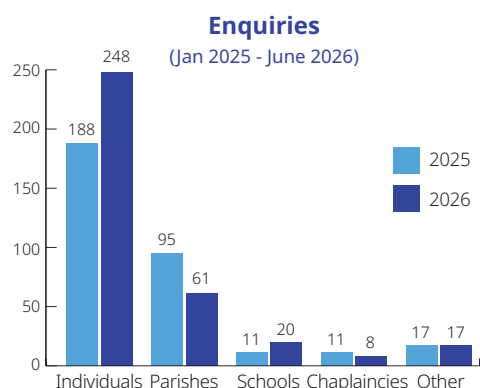
Individual enquiries are growing rapidly, with more people personally exploring faith, returning to the Church and seeking support.

2025

- 322 Enquiries received
- 188 (58%) from individuals

2026 (January-June)

- 354 enquiries already received
- More than the whole of 2025
- 248 (70%) from individuals



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News about the Catholic Church in New Zealand and beyond in your inbox every Tuesday and Friday

Sacred Heart Takaka restoration project progress update and music recital

The restoration work at Sacred Heart Marble Church is progressing well. The steel strengthening work is now complete and most of the interior scaffolding has been removed, giving a much clearer view of the church interior. The block sacristy addition has been demolished, revealing the original exterior church stone that had been hidden for many years.

The next stages of the restoration include:

- Electrical rewiring;
- New lighting and heating;
- Interior painting;
- New carpets;
- Restoration of the altar area and statues.

As soon as engineers give the sign-off, an open day will be held to give supporters and members of the community an opportunity to come inside and see the restoration work for themselves.

Keep watching this space. What a blessing to see our sacred spaces restored!

\$50,000 RAISED

of our \$200,000 restoration goal

We invite you to help preserve this place of faith, history and community. Donations can be made by internet banking:



Account Name: Sacred Heart Tākaka Trust
Account Number: 03 1354 0630610 00



Particulars: Your Name
Reference: "Marble Church"



Donations qualify for a tax rebate. If you would like an acknowledgement and/or receipt for your donation, please email your request to takakachurch@gmail.com

Thank you for your continued support of the restoration of our much-loved Sacred Heart Marble Church.



MUSIC RECITAL

Save the Date

Saturday 24 October
at 2pm

featuring Nelson's Rōnaki Quartet



Catholic Foundation Scholarships for 2027

Five scholarships worth \$4,000 each are available to young Catholic students attending a Catholic college or Catholic students at non-Catholic secondary schools who are entering tertiary study or vocational training.

The scholarships will pay \$2,000 in the first year of tertiary study or vocational training and subject to receiving a satisfactory report on the first year's study or training. A further \$2,000 will be paid for the second year.

Applications are open now, and close on October 31. Application forms available at www.catholicfoundation.org.nz



Wills and bequests

Our time here on earth is temporary, and as Catholics we live in anticipation of the wonderful, eternal life to come with God in Heaven.

By remembering the Church in your will or with a bequest, you are making a commitment to your parish, to future generations and to God.

When you give, you support real people and real needs.

This includes:

- The running of parish ministries;
- Pastoral care for people in need;
- Faith formation for laity;
- Maintenance of church buildings;
- Pastoral care for elderly priests;
- Looking after clergy and seminarians;
- Salaries for staff who keep parishes and the Archdiocese going.

Setting up a will or bequest

Setting up a will or bequest is a major decision – a decision you can't retroactively change from Heaven. Pray and speak with your family and loved ones about how you would like to support them and the Church.

If you would like to add a bequest to the Archdiocese of Wellington into your will, the Archdiocese can arrange a complimentary solicitor's appointment if you wish.

Visit cadw.nz/wills-and-bequests for more information, or call 04 496 5187.



THE CATHOLIC FOUNDATION

OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON

WHAT DOES THE CATHOLIC FOUNDATION DO?

Find out more - meet and interact with the Catholic Foundation Board Members and the various Heads of Ministry Departments of the Archdiocese of Wellington

Celebrate with the Catholic Foundation Annual Mass

Archbishop Martin presiding

St Joseph's Church
Brougham Street, Mt Victoria

Thursday 3 September
10.30am

Followed by light refreshments
and the Annual General Meeting
of the Foundation

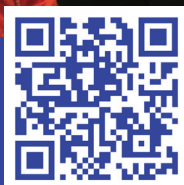
A legacy of

faith

A gift in your will can
nurture faith for generations to come



**Your faith. Your legacy.
Their future.**



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
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cadw.nz/wills-and-bequests

Called & Equipped mid-year retreat



Twenty-one participants from this year's Called & Equipped formation programme gathered at Magnificat Retreat Centre in Featherston in the Wairarapa from July 17-19 for their mid-year retreat. It was a beautiful weekend of prayer, sharing and fellowship. Fr Chris Skinner SM led the retreat.

Called & Equipped is an opportunity for lay people in parishes to deepen their faith, learn more about their place in the Church and equip themselves for service and mission.

Search for Called & Equipped on the archdiocesan website to find out more: <https://cadw.nz>

Night of thanksgiving, faith and community for Launch Out graduate

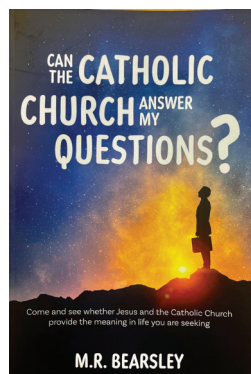
A Vigil Mass at St Anthony's Church in Seatoun on July 11 was a joyful celebration of gratitude as Margaret Bearsley marked the completion of her formation through the Te Hao Nui – Launch Out programme.

Surrounded by her Holy Trinity Parish community, family and Launch Out colleagues, Margaret gave thanks for this significant milestone in her faith journey. Among those present were her sister Cathy and niece Karen, who travelled from Tauranga to share in the celebration. The Mass was presided over by Fr Bill Warwick, with an inspiring homily by Deacon Emilio Capin. Fr Neil Vaney SM, Margaret's spiritual director, concelebrated.

Highlights of the evening included the unveiling of a beautiful Matariki wall hanging, created by Karen, and the soft launch of Margaret's book *Can The Catholic Church Answer My Questions?*

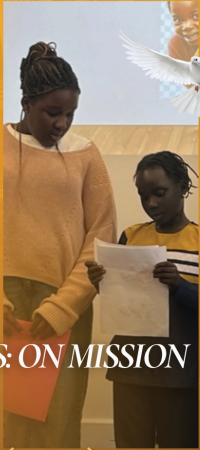
Inspired by her many years of involvement in the OCIA ministry at Holy Trinity Parish, the book is written for those searching for meaning and discerning whether the Catholic faith is for them.

Congratulations, Margaret, on this wonderful achievement and your ongoing ministry of accompaniment and evangelisation.





★★★★ MULTICULTURAL MASS ★★★★★



"ONE FAITH, MANY CULTURES: ON MISSION TOGETHER"

27 September 2026 (2pm)
Sacred Heart Cathedral
40 Hill St, Thorndon, Wellington



Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington
Level 2, 204 Thorndon Quay, Wellington 6011
PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140

04 496 1777 cadw.nz [catholicwellington](https://catholicwellington.org.nz)