

WelCom

Newsletter of the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington, New Zealand

Relic of St Carlo Acutis visits Wellington

Sunlight filtered in through stained-glass windows and Sacred Heart Cathedral was alive with joyous singing the morning of Sunday, June 7. The occasion was not just a regular morning Mass; it was the first Mass during an Aotearoa New Zealand tour of a relic of St Carlo Acutis.

The church was full for the Mass, which also celebrated First Communion for several young people.

Saintly relics do not come on pilgrimage to New Zealand often. As Archbishop Paul said in his homily, the relic is a reminder that holiness is not reserved for another age from centuries ago, but is possible today, and for everyone.

He also spoke of St Carlo's love of the Eucharist, which can be a model for our lives and challenges us to truly believe what we say about the Eucharist.

"The Eucharist is not one part of our faith," he said. "It's the very heart of our faith."

That the relic was in Wellington was fitting, Archbishop Paul said, because it was also Corpus Christi – the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.

"Christ does not leave us alone. He feeds us with the bread of life."

Archbishop Paul concluded his homily with words of advice, drawing on St Carlo's own comments.

"May the Eucharist become for us, as it was for him, our 'highway to Heaven'."

The relic of St Carlo was a piece of his pericardium. The pericardium is the membrane that surrounds the heart. It has great physical importance in protecting the heart, but also deep spiritual meaning as the site of people's sentiments and actions.

St Carlo Acutis (1991-2006) used the internet to promote eucharistic devotion. He taught himself programming and web design, created a website of eucharistic miracles and helped his parish and school with digital projects. Beatified in 2020, he officially became a saint in 2025.

The first millennial to become a saint, Carlo is sometimes called "God's influencer" and, because of his love for video games, the "gamer saint."

The relic remained in Wellington until June 9, when it continued its tour of Aotearoa New Zealand by heading to Palmerston North.



“The Eucharist is not one part of our faith. It's the very heart of our faith.”



A photograph of Archbishop Paul, wearing a white cassock and a pink zucchetto, speaking at a podium. The background shows a church interior with white columns and a floral arrangement.

From Archbishop Paul

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ

It has been a month since Pope Leo's first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, was published. It has had a significant amount of coverage throughout the world for its focus on the nature and impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on our society and the world.

When a Pope writes an encyclical he is writing to us, as Catholic people, but also to "those of good will". He is writing to anyone who is open to considering the matters with which he is dealing. This tells us something important about the relationship of the Church to the world.

“Progress at the expense of human dignity, including providing meaningful employment for people, is a threat to the stability and cohesion of our society.”

As Christian people, we are immersed in the world. We are not just sitting in a waiting room on earth, preparing for heaven. We have a responsibility to work to bring about the kingdom of God now.

And what does that look like? It is a world where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, it is where there is justice for all, it is where all are cared for and protected.

And why? Because we are brothers and sisters because of our creation by God. Each of us has dignity as God's creatures and so we have an intrinsic responsibility to care for one another.

This has shaped Catholic life and has been why Popes in the last 135 years have written explicitly on the demands for social justice in the world. This encyclical is another piece in that history, dealing with the realities of our current age and the very real challenges that we are facing with AI.

In the encyclical, Pope Leo begins by outlining the various encyclicals dealing with the call for justice in our societies, beginning with *Rerum Novarum* by his namesake Leo XIII in 1891. These give an insight into the issues of the times and of the

Church's teaching over these years.

The Pope goes on to develop the theology of the dignity of the human person, which lies at the heart of our social teaching. He also explains the importance of living together in community and what that means and how that shapes our relationships to one another. He then examines how AI raises real concerns about where the power lies in societies now, and especially that the control of AI rests in the hands of very few, and usually not in the hands of governments.

In a world which has become full of polemics, where discourse is

becoming difficult and people are not willing to listen to one another, the Pope is calling us all to examine carefully where we are heading with the use of technology. He is not anti-technology. But he is cautioning us to think carefully about what its impact is, and will be, for humanity.

These are very real issues in our own country as our leaders try and work out how to manage our economy and how to use technology in that process. Progress at the expense of human dignity, including providing meaningful employment for people, is a threat to the stability and cohesion of our society. Ensuring that all people are treated fairly and with justice is a responsibility we are called to uphold as Christian people. It is what we must demand from those who lead us as a nation.

I encourage you to read the encyclical; simply search for *Magnifica Humanitas* online. Our Pope has written to us and to our world, and we should know what he is saying and allow that to help form our understanding and appreciation of what it means to be Christian people in the 21st century.

Nga mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ P. B. Martin SM".

+ Paul Martin SM
Archbishop of Wellington

Restoration of statues and painting at St Mary's Church, Nelson

The statues of Sts Peter & Paul at St Mary's Church in Nelson have been restored.

Peter Palmer painstakingly researched the colours needed and created a new hand and sword for the statues, replacing the ones that had become broken and missing over the years.

The statues are now back in place and ready to welcome visitors to the newly repainted church, which is part of the new St John Paul II parish.



St Francis de Sales celebrates 60 years

The Catholic Parish of Wellington South thanks everyone who participated in and helped organise the weekend of April 18-19 that celebrated 60 years since the opening of the St Francis de Sales Church.

The weekend also marked 120 years of Catholic education in Island Bay and 100 years since the opening of the St Madeleine Sophie primary

school, the forerunner of the St Francis de Sales School.

The first Catholic church, St Francis de Sales Church, Island Bay, was built in 1906. The current church was blessed and opened on April 17, 1966.

They also acknowledged the support from Ninness Funeral Home, Harbour City and Wilson Funeral Homes, Maxim Financial Markets and The White Room.



Nominations open for the 2026 Delargey Awards

Nominations are now open for the 2026 Delargey Awards, recognising significant and outstanding ministry with young people in the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The awards, which have been made every two years since 2004, are named for Cardinal Reginald Delargey, who served as Bishop of Auckland and Archbishop of Wellington and was well known for his ministry with young Catholics.

In addition to honouring those who receive recognition for their own efforts, the awards also serve to shine a light on the Church's important work with young people and raise its profile.

"Through our parishes, schools and agencies, the faith that has inspired generations of Catholic Kiwis is being passed along and is shaping our homes and communities," said Nick Wilson, the chair of the National Council for Young People.

"Much of that work is being carried out in selfless and unsung ways. The Delargey Awards are an opportunity to acknowledge the commitment and dedication of these magnificent contributors to young church."

Bishop John Adams, who represents the bishops on the National Council for Young People, encouraged people

to consider those who are helping nurture the faith of teenagers and young adults in local communities.

"Past recipients include people who have had major national or diocesan roles, as well as people who have humbly and faithfully toiled away in a parish or other local ministry," he said.

"We would love to hear stories from throughout New Zealand of such dedication and mission."

Find out more about the Delargey Awards and the nomination process at bit.ly/Delargey2026



Cardinal Reginald Delargey

“an opportunity to acknowledge the commitment and dedication of these magnificent contributors to young church”

Bishop Lowe elected to second term as NZCBC president

Auckland Bishop Steve Lowe was elected to a second term as president of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference in Hamilton recently, during the NZCBC's quarterly meeting.

The president and vice-president of the NZCBC are appointed to three-year terms. Bishop Michael Dooley of Dunedin was elected to a second term as vice-president, with Archbishop Paul Martin SM reappointed as the Conference's general secretary.

Bishop Lowe said the New Zealand bishops work very collaboratively, which is a source of comfort for him as president.

"There are some tasks that I am required to undertake as president of the Conference, but I am grateful for the

constant support that my brother bishops offer in our shared ministry of leadership," he said.

Bishop Lowe said the NZCBC meeting examined some key issues for the Church in New Zealand, including the recent increase in people becoming Catholic, the work of key national agencies and initiatives to engage with the wider community.

"Each meeting of the Bishops Conference provides us a chance to assess how the mission of the Church is being carried out through our country, and that is a source of joy and pride," he said.

"But we also look at ways in which we can better serve our people – laity, priests and consecrated – and contribute to the national debate."

NZ bishop: Leo places AI at service of common good

A New Zealand bishop says Pope Leo's encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* provides society with guidelines that can help ensure artificial intelligence is directed towards the common good.

Pope Leo's first encyclical was published on May 25, taking the subtitle "on safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence".

Hamilton Bishop Richard Laurenson said while there has been an explosion in the availability of various forms of AI in recent years, the trajectory to today was set decades ago.

Bishop Laurenson said artificial intelligence's impact on humanity has been pondered since at least 1949, and the place of computers in society has been critiqued in literature and films, including *1984*, *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *The Terminator*.

"Now, in his first worldwide letter, Pope Leo offers us a vision by which we can navigate this new thing – a thing that promises a revolution – without fear and with hope," he explained.

Bishop Laurenson said "this new technology we are calling AI" offers great opportunities, but also some caution.

"All technology comes with risks and gifts," he said. "It is up to the human community to mitigate AI risks, and focus the gifts for the good of all people."

"Because of our fallen human nature, the negative side of new tech can be exploited quickly with damaging results. This letter from Pope Leo provides us

with a set of criteria where we can focus this new tech for the common good. This is true for individuals, families, communities and countries."

Julianne Hickey, an advisor to the Archdiocese of Wellington who participated in a major AI conference at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome last year, said Pope Leo posed important questions at that event.

"Pope Leo addressed our gathering and asked us to consider who we are

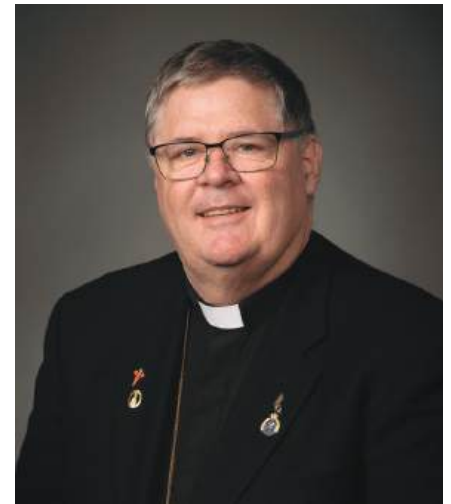
"It is up to the human community to mitigate AI risks, and focus the gifts for the good of all people."

becoming through the technologies we build," she said.

"As a mother who is involved with AI across several sectors of our economy, I am thinking deeply on how we design and create – and what it will mean for future generations."

Mrs Hickey continued: "In this encyclical, Pope Leo calls on us to imagine, to build a world where all people can thrive. That challenges me and those working ethically in the field of AI to be intentional now, so that future generations flourish. We all have a part to play in building the future we want."

James Bergin, who has worked as a technology leader for more than two decades and has advised the Church in a range of digital ministries, said the Church has led many ethical conversations about AI in recent years.



"Back in 2020, the Rome Call for AI ethics was created at the Vatican, with signatories from some of the world's largest tech companies, urging moral decision-making at a time when such morals can be elusive," Mr Bergin said.

"Many popes have spoken about the opportunities and risks of technology, and Francis and Leo have made AI a significant focus in their papacies.

"In doing so, they remind Catholics and the world that responsible use of technology that places humans at the heart is a great gift. But they are unafraid when it comes to naming the harms that come when technology is devoid of morality.

"Pope Leo in *Magnifica Humanitas* carefully exposes the duality of current technology and urges us to avoid simply sleepwalking into the future," Mr Bergin said.

the Catholic Kiwi Podcast

Te Huinga o ngā Pihopa Katorika o Aotearoa
New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

Listen to a Kiwi Catholic technologist's take on AI



Blessing of neophytes

It was a special Pentecost on Sunday, May 24 at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Wellington as Archbishop Paul blessed those newly baptised into the Church at Easter, known as neophytes.

We pray for our brothers and sisters as they join our faith community and for those who continue to seek Christ and His Church.

St Thomas More Church set to close

St Thomas More Church in Wilton will be closing in August.

Following a letter from Archbishop Paul requiring the two churches of Ōtari Parish to become one worshipping community, the difficult decision has been made to close St Thomas More Church. The church community wishes to celebrate its history from 1969 to the present. A number of events have been planned for all those with links to St Thomas More Church. The programme is as follows:



FRI JULY 17
6PM

Near the close of the season of Matariki, there will be a Memorial Liturgy to remember and give thanks for those from the St Thomas More community who have died. This will be followed by a pot luck/BYO meal. Tea and coffee will be provided.

SAT AUG 29
11AM-5PM

All are invited to the church for a time of quiet reflection. Tea and coffee will be available in the lounge, along with an opportunity for conversation while you view photos and memorabilia. From 3pm, there will be an organised time to share and listen to stories.

SUN AUG 30
4PM

Final Mass celebrated by Archbishop Paul.

For contributions of photos or memorabilia, or for any enquiries, please contact organising committee members Estelle Henrys at ev.henrys@gmail.com or Carolyn Tait at cftait6051@gmail.com

Marist St Pat's RFC annual Mass

Coinciding with the feast of the Holy Trinity, Fr Barry Scannell SM celebrated the Marist St Pat's rugby annual Mass at the club's Hataitai clubrooms on Sunday, May 31.

Fr Barry combines his parish responsibilities with his chaplaincy for this popular Wellington rugby club.

"I support the players, administrators and supporters of Marist St Pat's, a club which has such a long and rich tradition," he said.

As a past player for St Pat's, Fr Barry reconnected with the club after several years away from the capital.

The annual Mass helps to ensure that all those involved with senior and junior rugby and netball sporting teams – coaches, managers, players and supporters – reflect the club's Catholic ethos.

Those present also remembered in their prayers recently deceased club members and supporters.



The club's president, John Duignan, also says that the club works hard to maintain its Catholic character.

"There is a good culture and obviously it's one that we hope to sustain," he said. "The Catholic connection is strong, and we try to keep that alive."

The club maintains strong links with Marist schools, such as St Patrick's College in Kilbirnie and Silverstream.

In addition to Fr Barry's role as chaplain, Archbishop Paul is the patron of the club.

Catholic Social Services planning day

Our Catholic Social Services (CSS) team held a planning day on May 27 at the Home of Compassion in Island Bay. It was a wonderful way for the team to all get together and brainstorm ways to help people in the community, and to reflect on the importance of this mahi.

If you're keen to support CSS (or volunteer), check them out. Help is always welcome. Find out more about CSS on our new website at <https://cadw.nz>



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!

A Saint for Today – St Francis of Assisi

by Fr Alfred Tong

The impact of conflict and war on the other side of the world from Aotearoa New Zealand has meant that fuel prices have spiked, which then has flow-on effects to the transportation and costs of food and consumer goods.

Closer to home, the recent intention by the Government to consider “move-on” orders for those who are homeless and vulnerable has put the spotlight back on the issue of human dignity and poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand and around the world. How are we, as a just and equitable society, to encounter and interact with our brothers and sisters as relational and fraternal beings, seeing the image of God in one another?

“The call for the responsible care and stewardship of all humanity and creation, in the spirit of St Francis of Assisi, rests on the language of the heart.”

It is 800 years since the death of St Francis of Assisi. He was known for being able to “talk to the animals”. However, whether or not, as in the Leslie Bricusse song from *Doctor Dolittle*, Francis actually had “an animal degree” or actually studied “elephant and eagle, buffalo and beagle, alligator, guinea pig and flea” is rather dubious.

Less known is his ability and courage to accomplish dialogue even across usual enemy lines. When Crusader and Muslim forces were fighting on a battlefield in Damietta in 1219, Francis put his life on the line by being taken by the Muslim forces to meet Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil. Whether surrounded by artillery fire or not, Francis found it more important to fraternise with al-Kamil.

This is in such stark contrast to the often-perceived attitude in war that enemies are to be eradicated. True peace can only be a fruit of the Holy



Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and is a state that any individual in humanity cannot achieve alone.

St Francis encountered the world around him and the individuals he

met with the lens of appreciating them as equals in creation, as a “brother” or “sister”. He preached the Gospel not through understanding the foreign language of animal gobbledegook, but with the intimate language of the heart – of acceptance, of connection, of invitation, to another. He “tradited” or “handed over” the Gospel to others that allowed the Holy Spirit, rather than himself, to speak.

Francis was one to acknowledge a long time ago that the wider natural environment and ecosystem of all peoples is never separate from one another. However, acknowledgement and awareness of this consciousness is still at risk of being denied today. In 2025, members of the Ecology, Justice and Peace Commission (EJP) of the Archdiocese took part in a penitential liturgy at Spicer Landfill, Porirua, to acknowledge the hurts generated by waste to

livelihoods and the environment when consumerism and progress are the only indicators of human advancement.

The EJP, through the Integral Ecology Committee, began this year scrutinising the ecological impacts of the Natural Environment and Planning Bills in a parliamentary submission to the Environment Select Committee.

The EJP questioned the intention of both Bills to prioritise individual economic growth and unregulated short-term development at the expense of the Catholic social tenets of participation, the common good and stewardship of all people and the environment.

Some potential actions that are in the pipeline include facilitating pilgrimages to local sewage outfalls or waterways modified by urban development. Along with the 2026 theme for the Season of Creation, “Immersion in Living Water”, drawn from Ezekiel 47, the Jubilee of St Francis offers an opportunity for all of us to realise that the call for the responsible care and stewardship of all humanity and creation, in the spirit of St Francis of Assisi, rests on the language of the heart.

