



Discerning our nation's future through a Gospel lens

A statement of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops for the 2026 General Election



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As our nation prepares for the 2026 General Election, we, the Catholic bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand, offer this statement to assist Catholics – and all people of goodwill – to reflect prayerfully and practically on the kind of society we are called to build.

Voting should amount to something more than simply a personal preference. It is a moral and civic responsibility; it is a concrete way that we can pursue the common good. It deserves serious thought and reflection.

In line with our rich social justice tradition, which emphasises that justice must be embodied in our societal structures and laws, we affirm that faith leaders are required to speak clearly about how politics – and politicians – can serve people.

We never intend to endorse any political party or candidate. It is unlikely that any candidates or political parties embody a vision that fully aligns with the Gospel.

What we seek to do is encourage you to exercise careful discernment in the light of the Gospel and the Church's social teaching: the dignity of every human person from conception until natural death; a preferential love for those who are poor or excluded; solidarity; empowerment of families and communities; care for creation; the pursuit of peace and justice; an economy that allows all to have the chance to prosper.

In our New Zealand context and in our Catholic context, these commitments require us to honour *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* – an invitation to unity and walking together as one people.

As bishops, we are concerned not only with particular policies, but also with the social fabric of our nation. A key indicator of any society's maturity is its citizens' ability to speak truthfully, listen respectfully and promote the dignity of every person.

We call on voters to resist the temptation of focusing on short-term concerns and self-interest. We invite you to consider the lived experience of families and communities, and to consider how proposed policies affect the marginalised and most vulnerable: children, our elders, migrants and refugees, those who are unwell, people with disabilities and those who struggle to find secure housing, meaningful work and belonging.

We must also consider how current policies are likely to impact on the well-being of future generations and the sacrifices that their future may require of us now.

Despite the efforts of successive governments to address significant challenges, many of these problems appear to be getting worse.

We are particularly concerned by the increasing number of abortions, reports of record levels of homelessness, efforts to extend euthanasia provisions, growing rates of unemployment, inadequate support for people with disabilities and entrenched poverty within families, including among those who are employed.

To that end, we encourage you to review the stated positions of local candidates and parties through the lens of the following critical issues, and to ask these important questions:



The Dignity of the Human Person

- To what extent do policies incorporate respect for every human person, from conception until natural death?
- How are all people, regardless of their ability or strength, supported to live life to the fullest?

Solidarity with Our Brothers and Sisters

- How do economic and social structures support those who are most in need?
- How do economic policies allow individuals and families to live with safety and security?
- How do immigration settings honour the nation's history as a country of indigenous people and migrants, living as one, while always open to welcoming refugees?
- How is a relatively prosperous country like New Zealand contributing to the welfare of our neighbours, especially in the Pacific?

Rights of Religious Freedom and Conscience

- How do policies protect the right of people to hold firm to sincerely-held beliefs and to live by them?
- How well can people express these beliefs in everyday life, not just in their houses of worship and homes?
- Are our Catholic schools, social service agencies and other ministries able to serve communities in fidelity to the Church's teachings?

Preserving Human Faces and Voices

- In a world that is increasingly digitalised and automated, how do we ensure that people retain their autonomy, safety and freedom?
- How is the dignity of work supported and enhanced in a world influenced so heavily by artificial intelligence?

Care for Our Common Home

- How attentive are policies to the wellbeing of our land, skies and waterways?
- How are people affected by the impacts of changing climate patterns being supported?

As each one of us considers how to cast our votes, we sincerely hope that discernment is grounded in truth and respect, and always directed towards the common good. Your discernment might also benefit from a review of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference's 2023 document *Te Kahu o te Ora – A Consistent Ethic of Life*.

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.

We encourage you to pray the prayer below for our country and for our political leaders, and those who aspire to lead. May God continue to bless our nation and its people.

In Christ,

✧ Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Auckland
✧ Michael Dooley, Bishop of Dunedin
✧ Paul Martin SM, Archbishop of Wellington

✧ Michael Gielen, Bishop of Christchurch
✧ John Adams, Bishop of Palmerston North
✧ Richard Laurenson, Bishop of Hamilton

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.***

*The Church actively participates in the processes by which
society grows and is organised, and she offers her own contribution
to the creation of a more just and fraternal society.*

Pope Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 19



**Te Huinga o ngā Pīhopa
Katorika o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

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