



WelCom

Newsletter of the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington, New Zealand

ISSUE 12 - July 2026

Abiding in love: Cardinal John Dew reflects on 50 years of ministry

It's safe to say the future Cardinal John Dew never thought he'd one day help elect the Pope, which he did when taking part in the Conclave in 2025 that elected Robert Prevost as Pope Leo XIV.

"My experience of priests had always been in little country towns, and that's what I thought priests were," he says.

But the "boy from the Hawke's Bay" has come a long way since his ordination in 1976, including as a parish priest at St Anne's near Wellington Hospital, serving in the Cook Islands, helping young men in seminary, Archbishop of Wellington, and of course as a cardinal, which he became in 2015 "completely out of the blue." Along the way, he's shaken hands with no fewer than four popes (John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis and Leo XIV), and recently given countless talks on his Conclave experience.

Yet he's remained committed to the Archdiocese of Wellington, and Aotearoa New Zealand, for all that time, continuing to serve as Archbishop Emeritus and regularly visiting parishes across the Archdiocese and the wider motu.

In fact, Cardinal John celebrated

50 years since his ordination in early May. Delivering a homily while celebrating Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral, he spoke of the great gift that is priesthood, and how spiritually fulfilling such a life can be.

"None of us who are called to priestly ministry can do this by ourselves," he said, adding: "The Gospel also calls us to be advocates in our communities, wherever we live – especially where there is injustice."

At the Mass, Cardinal John wore the same vestments and used the same chalice as when he was ordained. It was a reminder, he said, how God's grace overflows, and our lives are cups for God's blessings to fill.

While Cardinal John is thankful for the support and blessings he's received over the years, he says they're things others can have, too. He says God is still calling young men to ministry, and for people to take up vocations, including to priesthood.

Cardinal John says if you have a feeling that you're being called, it's especially important to pray. Being with Christ is to have a relationship with Him, Cardinal John explains, and that relationship needs to be nourished and fed through prayer life.



His half-century of priesthood also means he has plenty of wisdom to impart about what it means to serve God and help look after His flock and grow His earthly kingdom. Priesthood, Cardinal John explains, is about serving people first.

"It's not about a title. You have to earn people's respect."

Cardinal John adds there are things lay people can do to help those who feel they are being called. A big thing, he says, is to offer support, and encourage them to listen to what the Lord might be telling them.

But the support can make a tremendous difference; he says his own time in ministry is proof. As he said during his homily in May, being able to serve others is a privilege.

"When we experience the God of infinite generosity, all we can do is say, 'thank you.'"

Regardless of one's calling, Cardinal John says the Gospel is full of wisdom for us to live by. He especially cites John 15:4: "Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me."

He also points to John 15:9, which says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love."



(left) Cardinal John used the same chalice from his priestly ordination Mass to celebrate 50 years as a priest



From Archbishop Paul

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ

A number of our parishes are being asked to reflect on their properties, churches and parish structures. It isn't easy to do this as we are all attached to what we know and love.

Fr Dennis Nacorda from the parish of the Wairarapa has produced a reflection document for his parish as they enter this process. I think it would be good for all of us to reflect on our situations in light of this.

When the Synod on Synodality's Final Document states that a Church isn't just *a* mission but *is* mission, it represents a profound theological shift. We can also infer that the Church's basic unit is the parish.

Historically, we have treated the parish like a "place" – a physical destination where people go to "consume" religious services. In that old setup, "mission" was just a secondary activity; it was a box you ticked by donating money to the collections every weekend or having a specific committee.

The Synod completely upends this. It defines the parish not as a location, but as a community of missionary disciples sent out into a specific territory. The document makes it clear that the parish is the vehicle of Christ's presence in that area.

To clarify this "radical reframing", let's consider the three core transformations the Synod calls for at the parish level. These transformations reshape not just what we do, but how we understand our identity as Church:

From "Maintenance" to "Proclamation"

For decades, parish councils and finance committees have spent the bulk of their energy on institutional maintenance: fixing roofs, managing budgets and preserving existing Mass schedules. The Final Document warns that a Church turned inward on its own survival quickly stagnates.

The Reframing: The Synod demands that our primary question change from "How do we keep the doors open?" to "How do we bring the hospitality and healing love of Jesus outside these doors?"

The Shift: Success is no longer measured by how full the pews are on Sunday, but by how effectively the parish acts as a leaven in the wider civic community.

From "Passenger" to "Protagonist"

In a traditional parish model, the priest acts as the primary driver, while the laity are often treated as passive passengers. The Synod uses the theology of Baptism to obliterate this hierarchy. Because you are baptised, you are not a consumer of the parish; you are the parish.

The Reframing: The text highlights differentiated co-responsibility. The ordained priesthood has its unique, irreplaceable sacramental role, but the laity are the "protagonists" of the mission in the secular world.

The Shift: The parish's job is to discover, form and activate the unique spiritual gifts (charisms) of its people. A synodal parish is an incubator that prepares the laity to go out into their workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods as missionaries.

From "Static Bureaucracy" to "Agile Outreach"

If a parish *has* a mission, it fits the mission into its rigid, existing structures. If a parish *is* a mission, those structures must bend, adapt or be entirely remade to serve that mission.

The Reframing: The Synod explicitly calls for "structural agility" and "participatory decision-making". It asks local churches to evaluate whether their current setups help or hinder the spread of the Gospel.

The Shift: If keeping an old administrative framework or an underutilised property drains all the community's time, money and evangelical energy, a synodal parish has the courage to let it go.

For our parish, the ultimate synodal filter is: "Does the current parish structure exist to preserve our comfort, or does it exist to facilitate our sending out?" This

“The final takeaway is simple: parish structures must exist to send people out, not to protect comfort.”

question exposes the tension at the heart of every parish discernment process. It forces us to choose between institutional survival and evangelical vitality.

When the Synod on Synodality's Final Document demands that structures serve the mission, it challenges us to dismantle what Pope Francis called a “culture of preservation”. The final takeaway is simple: parish structures must exist to send people out, not to protect comfort.

Let's examine more deeply what this filter reveals and how it can reshape the way a community plans for its future. By contrasting the two mindsets below, we can better understand the stakes and the opportunities before us:

The Anatomy of “Preserving Our Comfort”

In a parish context, “comfort” rarely means luxury or laziness. Usually, it looks like nostalgia, habit and emotional safety. When a parish structure exists primarily to preserve comfort, it manifests in specific ways:

The “My Church” Mentality: We protect our specific building, our specific pew or our historical town identity at all costs, even if maintaining that building completely exhausts the parish's financial and human resources.

Clinging to the Mass Schedule: We treat Mass times as unchangeable monuments. We demand that a priest rush between multiple towns to say sparsely attended Masses, prioritising our preferred time over his well-being or the quality of the liturgy.

Inward-Facing Energy: Meeting after meeting is spent discussing property maintenance, finance management and internal roster disputes, while virtually no time is spent discussing how to reach the unchurched, the lonely or the youth in the local area.

The Trap: A parish focused on comfort slowly transforms into a pious museum. It looks beautiful and honours the past, but it lacks the living, adaptive energy required to cultivate new faith.

The Anatomy of “Facilitating Our Sending Out”

When a parish structure exists to “facilitate our sending out”, the entire infrastructure is treated as a launchpad. The parish acknowledges that the liturgy ends with the words “Ite, missa est” (Go, you are sent). When a parish

chooses this missionary path, its structures look radically different:

Structural Agility: If a building or an administrative setup is an anchor dragging the community down, the parish has the courage to repurpose, sell or centralise it. The funds and energy are redirected into youth ministry, family formation or regional outreach.

Prioritising Formation over Maintenance: Instead of just filling rosters to keep the doors open, the parish invests heavily in forming lay people. It teaches parishioners how to pray, how to share their faith and how to minister to the broken, so they feel equipped when they step out into their workplaces and neighbourhoods.

Co-Responsible Decentralisation: The parish sets up structures that don't bottleneck at the priest. It empowers local leadership teams to care for their neighbourhoods, ensuring that the Church's presence is felt throughout the region, not just where the parish priest happens to be standing.

The Synod reminds us that letting go of comfortable structures is not a sign of failure; it is an act of profound faith. The Gospel story of Jesus sending out the disciples, instructing them to travel light, illustrates this principle: heavy baggage – be it physical or institutional – prevents rapid movement and fresh engagement with the world.

I think this parish consultation calls us to embrace a radical shift – to make our parish not a static institution but a vibrant, missionary community. This means moving from maintenance to proclamation, from passive attendance to active participation and from rigid structures to agile outreach. It challenges us to let go of comfort and nostalgia in favour of a courageous, Spirit-led mission that sends us out to transform our neighbourhoods and the world.

Only by stepping beyond what is familiar can we truly become the Church that Christ intends – one that exists not for its own preservation, but for the life and hope of those it is sent to serve.

Nga mihi nui

+ P. B. MarL'sen

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!

MissionNZ director meets Pope Leo

Fr Michael Pui, the national director of MissionNZ (the Pontifical Mission Societies in New Zealand), has had a second meeting with Pope Leo XIV in Rome.

Fr Pui's meeting with the Holy Father took place at a private audience last month involving national directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies, who were attending their 2026 general assembly. Fr Pui thought it was fitting to

bring the Pope a gift; he gave him an All Blacks cap.

Fr Pui also reiterated the invitation for Pope Leo to visit Aotearoa New Zealand – something he had proposed at his first meeting with the new Pope last year. Bishop Steve Lowe, on behalf of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, has also invited Pope Leo to visit New Zealand.

This year marks 40 years since St John Paul II visited this country. It also marks the 100th year of celebrating Mission Sunday.

In his message for the centenary, Pope Leo said: "Following the Jubilee Year, I wish to encourage the whole Church to continue its missionary journey with joy and zeal in the Holy Spirit.

"This requires hearts united in Christ, reconciled communities and, in everyone, a willingness to cooperate with generosity and trust."

Find out more about the work of MissionNZ at <https://mission.nz/>



Journey to Church prepared CEC director for her role

Carly Mulqueen says her experience of doubts, prayer, suffering and joy has been a good preparation for her role as director of the Catholic Enquiry Centre.

In an interview on the *Catholic Kiwi Podcast*, Mrs Mulqueen spoke about her current role and her faith journey, which included periods in other churches in other countries.

Coming to faith while studying and working in Japan, Mrs Mulqueen joined a Protestant, Bible-believing church and was exposed to many arguments against Catholicism. But she had many faith questions and went to various churches and studied at a Bible college in New Zealand.

Her husband, Wayne, who worked for Focus on the Family at the time, was drawn to the Catholic Faith and wanted his wife to be open to the idea. She had many reservations, but at the suggestion of a priest, they attended the Order of Christian

Initiation of Adults (OCIA) together.

"When Wayne said, 'let's become Catholic', I was like, 'yeah, right'. I realised I had pushed anyone Catholic away from me," Mrs Mulqueen said to Joanna Kearney on the podcast.

Somebody told Mrs Mulqueen about the Catholic Enquiry Centre; Fr Neil Vaney SM, the director at the time, "sent me booklets with a lovely letter and we corresponded a bit. I went through all the booklets and I underlined all of the things I didn't understand or couldn't quite get the gist of. It was so great to have somebody on the other end to kind of work through some of these questions.

"It really blows my mind that now it has gone full circle and I am working at the Catholic Enquiry Centre. It is so wonderful, because I know what it feels like to be searching, asking questions . . . full of doubts, concerns, curiosity."

"We are right here for people who are asking questions at any stage of the journey," Mrs Mulqueen said.

Among other topics she spoke about on the podcast was her battle with breast cancer, which meant she had to give up her position as pastoral worker at the Catholic parish in Waimakariri. But she and her husband experienced the "power of the community wrapping around us and the prayer, feeling held and carried by other people's prayer, and the intercession of the saints".

Search "Catholic Kiwi Podcast" on YouTube or Spotify to find this and other episodes.

*"I know what it feels like to be searching,
asking questions...full of doubts, concerns, curiosity."*



US liturgist set to visit New Zealand

Liturgist Fr Paul Turner, a consultant to the Vatican and several international groups, will visit New Zealand's six dioceses this winter to share his expertise with clergy and the lay faithful.

A priest of the Diocese of Kansas City-St Joseph, Missouri in the United States, Fr Turner will begin his national tour in Hamilton Diocese on July 21 and conclude in Christchurch on August 8.

The focus of the talks he will give is *ars celebrandi*, the art of celebrating Mass.

"I hope to give everyone a deeper appreciation of the richness of our liturgy," Fr Turner said.

While the task of leading the celebration of Mass falls to the priest, Fr Turner said the laity are deeply engaged in the sacred event.

"I think lay people have always had an interest in the liturgy," he said.

"The focus of their interest may change from time to time, but everyone has experiences and memories they treasure and hopes for which they aspire."

Asked what advice he would offer clergy, and the laity, in supporting a profound experience at Mass, he offered the same answer.

"Pay attention to everything that happens," he suggested, adding that one of the priest's tasks is to "help people engage in the mystery".

Living in an era when there has been major liturgical change in people's lifetimes, especially through the reforms of Vatican II, is not all that common in the Church's history.



But that has created opportunities, Fr Turner said.

"The Second Vatican Council paved a way for us to treasure our tradition and to be open to its development in keeping with the times," he said.

"We stand on the wisdom of the past, which helps us adapt to the present."

Bishop Steve Lowe, president of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, said as a member of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy he has seen Fr Turner's love for and knowledge of the Church's liturgy.

"The Bishops Conference is delighted Fr Turner accepted our invitation to speak in New Zealand. His visit is a response to Pope Francis' apostolic letter *Desiderio Desideravi*, which invites us to contemplate the beauty and truth of Christian celebration.

We hope his visit will strengthen the faithful's understanding of the liturgy and advise our priests on how to celebrate the Mass in ways that enhance the faith of all," Bishop Lowe said.

"The Mass is the greatest prayer we have, and the Eucharist is our source and summit. I encourage people to take this opportunity to deepen our connection with these treasures of our faith."

Fr Turner has written several books on the liturgy and won several awards, including from the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions and the Catholic Media Association.

In addition to his liturgical focus, Fr Turner's priestly vocation has also included prison ministry, supporting the homeless and multicultural chaplaincy.





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Ars Celebrandi Workshop with Fr Paul Turner

Saturday, 1 August, 9.30am-2pm

Connolly Hall

Guildford Terrace, Thorndon

Cathedral Mass at 8.30am

Particularly helpful for those who are on Liturgy Committees or are active in the preparation of Parish and School Masses.

**SCAN TO
REGISTER**



Sacred Heart, Takaka opening update

Takaka's historic marble church seismic strengthening is continuing – and getting closer to completion.

The altar and sacristy are next to finish. There are also the windows to tidy and repaint, and the wooden floor to be fixed in places. Electrics, lighting and heating investigations are also underway to identify the best options.

The St John Paul II Parish wishes to especially thank Byrne Builders for their support under the guidance of Bill Andrew of AMK Engineering

with Kees Brinkman, a Golden Bay parishioner, as project manager.

It is with great prayerful anticipation that the community looks forward to the official opening.

Generous donations have already been received, and the fundraising team is extremely grateful for any further support.

Donations can be sent to the
Sacred Heart Takaka Trust
Bank Acc # 03 1354 0630610 00.



Ordination of Deacon Emilio Capin in September

Deacon Emilio Capin will be ordained as a priest at 11am Saturday, September 5 at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Wellington. Everyone is invited to witness this special moment.

Deacon Emilio has completed his formation at Holy Cross Seminary, and was welcomed at Masses at Holy Trinity Parish in early July.

Emilio is from the Philippines. He started his seminary formation in 2020 and was ordained to the diaconate in September 2025.

Please pray for Emilio as he takes this next step in his faith journey and takes up God's call. And let us also pray that more young men may take up the call to priesthood.



**Catholic Archdiocese
of Wellington**

is pleased to announce the

**ORDINATION TO THE
PRIESTHOOD**

of

**Reverend Deacon
EMILIO CAPIN**

 **5th September 2026**

 **11:00 AM**

 **Metropolitan Cathedral
of the Sacred Heart**
40 Hill St, Thorndon, Wellington



Taizé prayer evening at St Francis of Assisi Ohariu

A Taizé prayer evening was held at the Parish of St Francis of Assisi Ohariu on June 20 as part of its celebration of the Jubilee of St Francis of Assisi this year. It was a wonderful evening of meditative prayer and singing to the chants of Taizé, complemented by fellowship over warm mulled wine and a variety of canapés and nibbles.

Assistant parish priest Fr Alfred Tong led the congregation in the singing with his beautiful resonant voice and piano virtuoso, while Msgr Gerry Burns brought a deeper meaning to the event with his sharing of the history of Taizé and the Jubilee celebration.

The event is one of many being celebrated by the parish for the Jubilee year. The most recent was the seven-day "Retreat in Daily Life" held in May graced by Sr Judith Moroney RSM and Fr Chris Skinner SM.



Formation in the Archdiocese of Wellington

by Lucienne Hensel

It is easy nowadays, with endless Catholic resources at the touch of a button, to overlook the difference between *information* and *formation*. There is always more we can learn about our faith, but understanding alone does not form disciples. An inner transformation is needed – a work of the Holy Spirit that leads to a growing relationship with a living God within the experience of community.

Pope Leo, in his recent encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, spoke of the importance of being able to ask profound questions about meaning, of incorporating silence and reflection, of learning to discern and find direction in life. For this same reason, the Synod on Synodality called for a formation that is "integral, ongoing and shared ... aimed not only at acquiring theoretical knowledge but also at promoting the capacity

for openness and encounter, sharing and collaboration, reflection and discernment in common".

Formation is a priority for the Archdiocesan Church Mission Team. From couples preparing for marriage and parents accompanying children through the Sacraments of Initiation to parish pastoral councils, leadership teams and lay people who are simply looking for more, we strive to provide something for everyone.

In recent weeks, our pastoral councils gathered for formation in synodal approaches to leadership. The evening focused on the importance of reflection, conversation and listening. Late last year, more than 70 year 12 students prepared for the roles as leaders this year by participating in the 22nd annual Young Catholic Leader

programme in Otaki. Earlier this year, parish office staff gathered for their annual Secretaries' Day, which included formation in synodality, privacy and more. Around 30 engaged couples have attended marriage courses so far, with two more courses in the coming months. In the meantime, 25 participants from 13 parishes are meeting regularly, in person and online, for this year's Called & Equipped formation programme. Fifteen from last year's cohort have gone on to further their learning through the new Mission Leaders course.

Pope Francis and now Pope Leo have been calling all Catholics to grow and become fully engaged in their faith. If you wish to deepen your faith, grow in service and experience the joy of praying, learning and sharing with others, consider joining our Called & Equipped programme in 2027.

If your parish is looking for formation opportunities, get in touch and find out more. We are available to offer formation on a number of topics that pertain to discipleship and parish life.



Contact Lucienne Hensel at
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Pope Leo on artificial intelligence: Remember we are human

by Jim McAloon, Archdiocese of Wellington Ecology, Justice and Peace Commission Chair



Pope Leo's first encyclical was published on 25 May. With the Latin title *Magnifica Humanitas*, the subtitle "on safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence" offers an insight into the document's key theme.

The Pope recalls the fundamentals of Catholic social thinking: we are made in God's image and that – not their wealth or position – is the basis of each person's dignity. There is therefore a radical equality among all people, in contrast to ideologies that base people's value on what they achieve or produce.

The common good means that everyone should be able to flourish and that means concentration of wealth and power is undesirable. Subsidiarity means shared responsibility, while participation and solidarity mean that we are all connected. Social justice requires particular attention to the poor, the vulnerable and the excluded.

In light of these principles, Pope Leo explains that the concentrated power and wealth of big tech, which "monopolises expertise, data and decision-making authority, involves companies and platforms that define conditions for access, rules of visibility, forms of interaction, and even economic opportunities" is a real problem (71).

We know that technology has always been part of human history and has done much to improve lives. But technological innovation is never neutral. Does it "truly help individuals and peoples to become more humane and fraternal, while respecting our common home and future generations?", Pope Leo asks (85). Is it encouraging participation or exclusion? Does it protect or does it exploit? The enormous amounts of energy and water AI data centres require is a significant concern.

The Holy Father calls for a "measured and vigilant approach" because machines "do not undergo experiences, do not possess a body, do not feel joy or pain, do not mature through relationships and do not know from within what love, work, friendship or responsibility mean. Nor do they have a moral conscience" (99).

Leo warns that handing over "important and sensitive decisions – concerning employment, credit, access to public services" to "automated systems" is a dangerous step (102). Here in New Zealand, in the same week the encyclical was published, the government supported legislation to allow a significant expansion of automated decision-making in the area of social welfare benefits and payments. At the very least, great care is needed.

Recently, too, significant reductions in the public sector workforce have been foreshadowed. Again, ministers have enthused – without any concrete detail – about the potential of AI to replace these workers. The Pope notes that "it is essential that the use of AI, especially when it touches on public goods and fundamental rights, be guided by clear criteria and effective oversight, grounded in participation and subsidiarity" (108).

In Catholic social thinking, work is fundamental to human dignity. Pope Leo notes that while technology can make work easier, "the protection of employment opportunities and the irreplaceable role of the individual must remain the general rule" (152). If progress eliminates some jobs, those affected must be supported in the transition.

Let us, the Pope urges, remember what it is to be human. "No computational system, however sophisticated, can create a heart that gives itself, or a conscience that discerns good from evil" (233).



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