

Auckland Diocesan Pastoral Council Newsletter

Report from the meeting of the Diocesan Pastoral Council held 20 August 2022.



Notes from Bishop Steve

Bishop Steve made a number of comments during the meeting and gave a short report on key elements of diocesan pastoral life in the diocese.

Notes from Bishop Steve

Bishop Steve presented a short reflection on what is happening in the diocese from his perspective.

Meeting of the consultative bodies

The DPC was joined by members of the Diocesan Administration Council and Council of priests for their first combined meeting since 2019.

Life in the diocese

Delegates presented their reports noting what communities are proud of as well as challenges they face. **The delegates are deeply appreciative of those who respond to requests for reports.**

- Big change since last meeting is departure of Bishop Michael. We will have Bishop Peter Brown in retirement in Auckland next year to help.
- Due to having Covid Bishop Steve was unable to attend *International Commission on the Liturgy* in Washington.
- Royal commission is still in progress. Requests from the commission have a very short turnover time which is problematic.
- Reorganization of the Bishop's Office. Expanding work of the Bishop's PA so divided in two and restructured into
 - Executive Assistant | E-mails, correspondence
 - Chancellor | Trouble shooter, high level of engagement, keep things moving in times of change.
- Need to expand the Māori vicariate personnel so that we can continue as a diocese to build bridges.
- Concern that there is a lack of priests with competency to say Mass in Te Reo.

Meeting of the Consultative Bodies

The Council reflected on what they heard and experienced at the combined meeting of the consultative bodies. It was noted |

- That it was good to be with the other consultative bodies and be able to meet their members.
- Served as a reminder that we are all members of faith families where rather than placing blame on those who are absent we have the opportunity to evangelize.
- It was a mutual conversation.

The combined meeting was an opportunity for James van Schie General Manager of the Diocese to present the annual report narrating the life of the diocese in 2021. This can be downloaded from <https://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/services/annual-report/>

Bishop Steve spoke to the meeting about the need to do things differently. To seriously look at parish and diocesan structures to meet the pastoral and fiscal needs of the diocese. Using examples from his experience as priest and in his role of bishop he explored the challenges.

This is not unique to Auckland or even Aotearoa. Pope Francis is speaking about the importance of "creativity", meaning "seeking new ways", that is "seeking how best to proclaim the Gospel" in today's world with today's realities. The theme of the presentation was that In order for the journey of the Word to continue, the Christian community must make a determined missionary decision "capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation" (EG 27) (5)

Life in the diocese.

Headlines, themes, commonalities from reports presented by delegates.



Faith communities were asked to report on what made them proud of their parishes and what the challenges were.

- There is a need to find creative ways to encourage participation in community life after individuals or their children have received the sacraments.
- Several parishes are utilizing Alpha as an evangelical tool sometimes alongside preparation for Confirmation and first Eucharist.
 - This is a great tool, but Pacifica communities feel isolated because there is a lack of their faces in the presentations.
- A possible reason for falling numbers of children attending Catholic primary schools might be the perceived barrier of attendance dues which many families feel unable to pay.

Bishop Steve was asked: Are we looking at closing some churches in the diocese soon? And he responded around:

- having to be honest, realistic and make tough choices.
- Many houses for priests would fail Healthy Homes standards. This is the minimum; we have responsibility to help parishes accommodate their pastors.
- Won't be priest in every place. Parishes may be merged, or collaborative parishes established.
- Seeing the diocese as a community of communities and looking beyond our patch will be required.
- Look to create community hubs of parish and schools.
- Need to look at doing things differently.