



A Church Responsive to the Cry of the Poor

A pastoral letter from the Catholic Bishops of New Zealand

World Day of the Poor | November 16, 2025

In hearing the cry of the poor, we are asked to enter into the heart of God, who is always concerned for the needs of his children, especially those in greatest need. – Dilexi Te, 8

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the Church marks the World Day of the Poor, it is timely for us to stop and reflect on the Christian imperative to listen for and respond to those in need.

In his recent apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi Te*, Pope Leo powerfully outlines that the case for caring for those in poverty dates back thousands of years. Drawing on the prophets, the example of the saints, recent Church documents and most especially the life and teaching of Jesus, the Holy Father makes it clear that the preferential option for the poor is essential to “the burning heart of the Church’s mission”.

He reminds us that we are always at risk of replacing the truth of the Gospel with the so-called wisdom of this world – one that can sanctify greed and excess.

We, the Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand, stand with Pope Leo in encouraging everyone to consider how we can each make care for the poor an integral part of our faith lived with authenticity and zeal.

A significant aspect of Pope Leo’s exhortation speaks to the reality of a Church – that is, the People of God – with that long and deep history of Christian charity. He is inviting us to regain that spirit of generosity, and particularly the practice of almsgiving.

In our own national context, the Church has three primary organisations that strive to be the loving and compassionate face of Jesus to the poor in their everyday work.

Caritas is the Catholic Church’s international aid agency. It is the second-largest humanitarian network in the world. It works globally to overcome poverty, protect lives and relieve suffering. Caritas runs an annual Lenten appeal. It receives donations to support communities affected by disasters around the world. It is an official agency of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference.

MissioNZ is part of the global Pontifical Mission Societies, which is the Pope’s own charity. MissioNZ supports the Holy Father in reaching out to communities and young

churches through a network of charity. Each year we raise funds for these Societies, including on Mission Sunday in October.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul is embedded in the life of the Church. It is one of the most well-known Catholic outreach ministries. It carries out important work that is responsive to the needs of the poor in our communities.

We are mindful of the many demands of modern life and the challenges of our current economy. We offer today an invitation for each person to consider how their own context can be shaped by a spirit of Christian charity.

- Might you give an hour of your time each week to support your local Vinnies group, maybe delivering food parcels to families in need?
- Might you donate an hour of your week's wages to support the Church's charitable works?
- Might you become a local promoter or member of a Catholic group that responds to the needs of the poor?
- Might you include in your weekly shop something for the local food bank?

We encourage you to think of ways in which your giving can have a true sense of sacrifice; that you are forgoing time or money that could be used in other ways, to care for our brothers and sisters in need.

As Pope Leo reminded us, “Love for the poor – whatever the form their poverty may take – is the evangelical hallmark of a Church faithful to the heart of God.”

St Francis of Assisi, **PRAY FOR US**

St Vincent de Paul, **PRAY FOR US**

Venerable Suzanne Aubert, **PRAY FOR US**

✠ Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Auckland, NZCBC President

✠ Michael Dooley, Bishop of Dunedin, NZCBC Vice President

✠ Paul Martin SM, Archbishop of Wellington, NZCBC Secretary

✠ Michael Gielen, Bishop of Christchurch

✠ John Adams, Bishop of Palmerston North

✠ Richard Laurenson, Bishop of Hamilton