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

Letter to Catholic Schools and Parishes for Mission Sunday 100th Anniversary

3 September 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Every year, Mission Sunday is celebrated on the penultimate Sunday in October. This year, it falls on **18 October**, and we mark the 100th anniversary of Mission Sunday being established as a celebration for the whole Church. For this important occasion, Pope Leo XIV chose the theme, **"Missionaries of Hope Among All Peoples."**

For the past century, Catholics across the world have come together each Mission Sunday to pray for the Church's mission and to support, through their generosity, those who carry the Gospel to places where hope is fragile, where faith is young and where believers often face hardship or persecution. As we mark this 100th anniversary, we, the bishops of New Zealand, invite all those in leadership positions in our Catholic schools and parishes to renew your commitment to the Church's mission.

We in New Zealand have been blessed with a rich missionary heritage. Our priests, religious and lay people have served in many corners of the world, often quietly and sacrificially. Their witness continues today through missionaries who bring education, healthcare, dignity and the love of Christ to communities in great need.

Until recent times, "mission boxes" were a permanent fixture in classrooms for Kiwi children attending Catholic schools, supporting the Pope's missionary endeavours. In parishes, a Special Collection is made each year for Mission Sunday. This missionary spirit is something we need to strengthen or, if it has been lost, to recover or rediscover.

Your prayer, your generosity and your solidarity make a real difference. Every contribution — large or small — helps build churches, train catechists, support the formation of indigenous priests, support children's education and their healthcare, and strengthen communities of faith around the world that rely on us. Even if someone is unable to support the Pope's missionary efforts financially, they can still pray and motivate others to do the same, helping all people to embrace a missionary spirit just like St Thérèse of Lisieux, the patroness saint of the Mission, did within the confines of her monastery.

We encourage you to support the initiatives and promotions in the coming weeks organised by Fr Michael Pui, the national director of The Pontifical Mission Societies (TPMS). That will help to embed a missionary outlook in every Catholic this Mission Sunday and beyond.

Let us be One in Christ, United in Mission. May God bless you for your support and leadership.

In Christ,

+ Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Auckland
+ Paul Martin SM, Archbishop of Wellington
+ John Adams, Bishop of Palmerston North
+ Michael Dooley, Bishop of Dunedin
+ Michael Gielen, Bishop of Christchurch
+ Richard Laurenson, Bishop of Hamilton

Find out more about Mission Sunday and The Pontifical Mission Societies at: https://missio.nz/