



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

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Pentecost Sunday 2025

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On this day of Pentecost, we are invited to join the disciples in the closed room where they had been praying with Mary for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit came down upon them, they left their closed room and boldly went out to the world proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord. This proclamation to the world of the Good News is the heart of the life and mission of the Church.

A few weeks ago, Pope Leo XIV left the closed room of the conclave and, in his first address to the city of Rome and the world, he encouraged all of us to go out beyond what encloses us... *Together we must look for ways to be a missionary Church, a Church that builds bridges and encourages dialogue, a Church ever open to welcoming, like this Square with its open arms, all those who are in need of our charity, our presence, our readiness to dialogue, and our love.*

When the Diocese of Auckland was established in 1848, Auckland had fewer than 3000 people. Today, it has a population of 1.7 million. Over the years, parishes and schools were established in the city and throughout the Diocese, reflecting the needs of the growing Catholic community. As the shape of the Diocese has changed, so has the Church and society around us.

With this letter today, I wish to formally announce **Reshaping**, a synodal process of renewal and transformation for the Diocese of Auckland, a journey that we will take together in accordance with the teachings of Pope Francis and now Pope Leo.

Reshaping takes its name from the prophet Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house (Jer 18:1-5). Jeremiah noticed that at times the potter reshaped the pot being worked on into something new. As he noted this, God said to Jeremiah, "Like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in mine, House of Israel."

Now is the time for us to reflect on what needs to be reshaped within our Diocese. I invite all of you, clergy and laity alike, to be actively involved in this synodal process. Together we can discern and make decisions for our future. **Reshaping** will involve us working together in six key areas:

- By a process of discerning together, we will review our existing parishes in light of the changing needs of our Diocese. This may mean the rationalisation of churches or parishes. Your parish will be asked to meet with neighbouring parishes to discern together the future shape of your area with a focus on the Church's mission.

- Parishes will look to their structures - in particular, how priests and people work together in a co-responsible way. Each parish will be required to have a parish council and will be asked to review its infrastructure and organisation to ensure that it is mission oriented.
- Working as a co-responsible and synodal Church asks everyone to be open to changing. Formation will be provided for laity and clergy alike to develop our skills for working better together.
- Parishes and schools will be invited to develop the art of celebrating liturgy better. Various liturgical formation initiatives will be offered to assist with this.
- Parishes and schools will be invited to explore how we can more effectively welcome people, guide them on a journey of faith, and draw them into the heart of our communities.
- Parishes and schools will be asked to work on how we can better form missionary disciples for the life of the world.

Reshaping is not a plan. *Reshaping* is a process for the Diocese - for parishes, schools and communities; for myself, clergy and laity. The plans will arise and form from our speaking and listening to each other and discerning together where the Spirit is leading us as the Church on mission today.

No decisions about parish rationalisation have been made. While all parishes will be asked to be part of this discussion, I am asking the parishes of Meadowbank, Orakei, St Heliers, Glendowie, Glen Innes and Panmure to start their conversations now and look to how they might reshape the Church in their part of the city.

In the journey ahead, various resources will be made available to communities to facilitate conversations to assist them in the path of our reshaping.

Finally, let us turn to our Diocesan patron, St Patrick. In about the year 433 he defied King Laoghaire's ban on lighting any fire until the king lit his fire at the annual Tara pagan festival of Baal's fire. Undaunted, Patrick lit his Easter fire. The king's druids warned the king that if Patrick's fire was not extinguished, it would burn eternally.

We are the heirs of this Easter fire. May the light of Christ burn brightly in our Diocese as we seek to be reshaped by the Holy Spirit for Christ's mission and bearers of his light for the life of the world.

St Patrick, pray for us.

Yours sincerely in Christ the Good Shepherd

+ S. M. Lowe

✠ Stephen M Lowe
Bishop of Auckland



Reshaping
Diocese of Auckland

