



24 November 2018

Dear brothers,

1. It was good to gather with many of you and pray with you for our deceased clergy of the Diocese of Hamilton at Te Awamutu and Ohaupo cemetery earlier in the week and to join together for a BBQ at Webster Road. As I noted at the Mass, we remember many great men. In these days when there is a certain negativity about Catholic clergy let us remember that like Mary, the Almighty has done great things in and through us. The unjust persecution we experience is something the Lord experienced as noted in yesterday's Gospel, where the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people were seeking to put him to death. At present we can feel the burden of the criticism of association. However, like Jesus we remain focussed on the call to us, the call that is ultimately to the total gift of self.
2. The experience of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment was a fascinating process. There were some 100 lay people, religious and priests present with the 260 bishops and cardinals. The young people provided a wonderful dynamic and life to the Synod.

The final document has still not been released in English. It is an important document for those who have responsibilities in the area of forming of young people so it will be important to read and reflect upon it when it is released.

There are just a few points I would like to highlight.

a) The document takes the Emmaus story as its biblical icon. It repeats and draws out many of the themes of *With Hearts Burning*. Understanding where young people are today in the modern world, going out to them, listening to them, accompanying them, leading to the fullness of life in the Church and forming them as missionary disciples reflect the six themes of the *With Hearts Burning* modules.

b) In terms of those who accompany young people, there was a very strong theme on the formation of mentors and teachers. Young people at the Synod and in the international surveys and on-line questionnaires were insistent that formation for mentors and teachers was essential. This reflects a concern the New Zealand Bishops have about the formation of teachers for our Catholic schools and the availability of tertiary qualifications in theology and religious

education in New Zealand for lay pastoral roles in the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand. In the same way there was a real focus on mentors and teachers having a critical role in assisting young people develop a personal and maturing relationship with Jesus Christ and helping them develop a lively Catholic spiritual life.

c) The Synod also underlined the importance of young people being formed to mentor and evangelise their peers.

d) Another theme that came from the international consultation was the need to coordinate an integral formation of young people. Often we silo youth formation in terms of primary school, high school, youth group, parish, diocese, university chaplaincy, young adults group and there is no coordination between these silos. This needs to change.

e) A major theme was on migration of young people. An incredible number of bishops spoke passionately about this, not just in regards to refugees but also economic migration. Bishops from the home countries challenged bishops in the receiving countries to ensure full pastoral care for arriving migrants and especially young migrants.

f) The challenges and opportunities of the internet and social media was another important theme. To that end what Hayden Graham is doing with the series on praying the Mass and the sharing of faith testimonies is really important development of mission in the Diocese. The Diocesan video resources may be found at <https://www.proudtobecatholic.org.nz/video-resources>

g) The Synod called for a more synodal Church where young people are involved in leadership and responsibility at all levels of the Church - parish, diocesan, national and international. The Holy Father stated that the Synod is not a parliament. It is a privileged space where the Holy Spirit can act. In the case of the Synod the Spirit gave the (final) document through the work of the Holy Spirit acting in and through the Church, the young people, the bishops and priests. The Holy Father said that "the document has been given to us, and through us it is to be given to others." Using the synodal process it is to be prayed on, reflected on and enacted.

In the international meetings of bishops that I have attended I have been fascinated by the diversity of pastoral realities. What really interests me is that despite these diverse pastoral realities there was a consensus on the direction that the Church needs to take. So the points I have considered point us in the Diocese in the direction we need to take for the life of the Church on mission in Aotearoa New Zealand.

3. Returning from Rome I ended up in bed with the lurgy for a few days and then attended one of our five day Bishops' Conference meetings in Wellington.
4. Can I congratulate the Chanel Centre's Pastoral Team for their organisation of the Family Weekend based around the Cathedral on the weekend of the 9th to 11th of November. 200 people from around the Diocese attended and I was able

to spend the Friday night and Saturday with the families. It was great to have so many young families in attendance and the feedback has been incredibly positive. A highlights video is being prepared which will give you some idea of the event for next year. It is certainly worth promoting. Thanks to the priests who helped with confessions and to the parishes who subsidised families attending.

5. Can I also congratulate the Diocesan Team for their organisation of Regeneration for Year 8 students. Some 300 students from the Waikato area, Rotorua and Tauranga attended. Again the feedback was excellent. I had Confirmation a few days later in Cambridge and three parents came and told me how their child had come home and had talked at length as to how wonderful Regeneration was. These events are worth promoting. Thanks to the schools that sent students and staff. Can I ask that Regeneration be given a priority for Year 8 children.
6. This month I have celebrated Confirmation and First Holy Communion at Te Kuiti, Cambridge and Taupō. Tomorrow I have Confirmation and First Holy Communion at the Cathedral followed by Confirmation at Opotiki during the week and Rotorua next weekend.
7. Today our permanent deacons have had a formation day with Fr Richard Shortall SJ and tonight at the Cathedral Mass they renewed their promises. Can I take this opportunity to thank the deacons for the service of charity in the Diocese.
8. I am told the formation day with Virginia Noonan on safeguarding went very well. I hope to arrange a similar day next year for deacons, pastoral workers and anyone else who has ministry with children or vulnerable adults. It is important that those priests who were unable to attend the priests gathering attend this also. I will advise the dates in due course.
9. At our recent meeting of the Council of Priests we discussed whether, in the light of media coverage and overseas example, buildings should be named after living people. I am in agreement with the Council of Priests that this is not a good idea. In the same way I think there needs to be a certain time period after death, before a building is named after a deceased person. In the same way I think the use of names on building plaques be carefully considered. I will formulate a Diocesan policy in this regards but I would be interested in any comment you wish to make to me in this regard.
10. The Sisters of St Joseph have announced that Srs Margaret O'Neill and Margaret Mary Dwane are moving from Matata to Auckland. I take this opportunity to publicly thank them for their loving service in Matata. The Sisters have also advised that Sr Marie Therese Williams will move to Matata and St Adrienne Gallie will move to Gisborne
11. In the next few days you will receive notification of the Mass at Totara Point on 13 January 2019 that marks the anniversary of Bishop Pompallier celebrating the first Mass in New Zealand. This is a wonderful occasion and I encourage you to advertise it in your newsletters for those who might be in Northland during the holidays or for those who want to make a pilgrimage to it.

12. A parishioner has written to me suggesting that in the light of the challenges the Church faces these days the "Prayer of St Michael" be prayed at Mass. I do not want to suggest adding prayers to the Mass but if you and your Parish Council were to consider this in your parish my suggestion would be after the final hymn.
13. A reminder that next year the Rite of Election will be at the Cathedral on Sunday 10 March 2019 at the 10.30am Mass.
14. This weekend we celebrate the beautiful feast of Christ the King that was introduced to the universal calendar of the Church in 1925 by Pope Pius XI in the time after the Great War and in the face of the rise of communism and fascism. I was interested to read in Wikipedia, the source of all knowledge, that the Anglican, Lutheran, and many other Protestant churches adopted it along with the Revised Common Lectionary, occasionally referring to it as Christ the King Sunday!

In his encyclical *Quas Primas* Pope Pius XI once again restated that the manifold evils in the world were due to the fact that the majority of people had thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives. He exhorted people to look for the peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ.

In paragraph 7 he writes, It has long been a common custom to give to Christ the metaphorical title of "King," because of the high degree of perfection whereby he excels all creatures. So he is said to reign "in the hearts of men," both by reason of the keenness of his intellect and the extent of his knowledge, and also because he is very truth, and it is from him that truth must be obediently received by all mankind. He reigns, too, in the wills of men, for in him the human will was perfectly and entirely obedient to the Holy Will of God, and further by his grace and inspiration he so subjects our free-will as to incite us to the most noble endeavors. He is King of hearts, too, by reason of his "charity which exceedeth all knowledge." And his mercy and kindness which draw all men to him, for never has it been known, nor will it ever be, that man be loved so much and so universally as Jesus Christ. But if we ponder this matter more deeply, we cannot but see that the title and the power of King belongs to Christ as man in the strict and proper sense too. For it is only as man that he may be said to have received from the Father "power and glory and a kingdom," since the Word of God, as consubstantial with the Father, has all things in common with him, and therefore has necessarily supreme and absolute dominion over all things created.

In the light of our Government's decision to remove mention of Christ in the Parliamentary prayer to read what Pope Pius XI wrote in 1925 - *While nations insult the beloved name of our Redeemer by suppressing all mention of it in their conferences and parliaments, we must all the more loudly proclaim his kingly dignity and power, all the more universally affirm his rights.*

As we think back to the darkness over Europe at the end of the Great War in 1918 and the rising of the communism and fascism and as the world moved toward the Depression we can think of the parallels in our own time, especially as we see the rise of extreme right nationalism and extreme secularisation at the

other end of the political spectrum. Once again you and I are invited to turn towards Christ our King as our peace.

To do this perhaps we need to ask to what extent do I trust in Christ? Is he really my King in whom I hope and who I serve? It is so easy to say I do trust Christ, but it is so easy for that trust to become superficial in the midst of the demands of daily living. So perhaps we can take time in this last week of the Church's year to really reflect on our trust of Christ the King in the face of the challenges of our world and the daily demands of life and our encounters with events and people that turn our faith, hope and love to despair, stress and even cynicism and bitterness.

In the same way, as Christ the King came not to be served but to serve, we can ask ourselves whose interest do I serve? Do I see in me a radical self giving of self in love of Christ and his people or have I become simply functionary? How do the people entrusted to my care see me, especially those who think differently from me and that I find difficult and challenging? Do I reflect Christ the King in how I live out my office?

As we look towards a new Church year might I suggest that we make prayer our priority, our own personal prayer and developing the life of prayer in our community. Through this prayer may we find Christ the King in a new way and live the life of Christ the King in the way that we act and speak.

Yours fraternally in Christ the Good Shepherd

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Steve Lowe," with a plus sign at the beginning and a comma at the end.

✠ Steve Lowe
BISHOP OF HAMILTON