

## New video reflects Suzanne Aubert's example

To coincide with Celebration Sunday, the Sisters have produced a short video featuring comments and reflections from everyday New Zealanders on what Suzanne Aubert means to them and why she is such an inspiration. The contributors include kaumatua, students from several schools, friends and supporters of the Sisters, pastors and interested parties from non-Catholic groups and staff. There are many inspiring statements:



"One thing about her was her bravery. She travelled half way across the world when she was only 25." – Aine



"She's the Mother Teresa of New Zealand." – Eric



"I cannot think of a more remarkable New Zealand woman, full stop." – Jo-Anne



"If we did as much as she did for everyone, our world would be so different." – Alex



"Her absolute commitment to live the Gospel had a big personal cost in her life, but that never stopped her." – John



"She saw something beautiful in every person, no matter what." – Linda



"She felt the call of our Māori people." – Kory



"A grace like Suzanne's has neither beginning nor end." – Marco



"She became us, she became a Māori." – Shane



"She wasn't afraid of who was the head. If she knew that something was important, she went straight to the top." – Katy

The video will be played in many churches around the country on Sunday October 6 and can also be seen on the website [www.suzanneaubert.co.nz](http://www.suzanneaubert.co.nz).

If you would like a copy to show others, please contact Kerry ([kerry@suzanneaubert.co.nz](mailto:kerry@suzanneaubert.co.nz))

And watch out for the opportunity to make your own video reflections and have them posted on the new page being developed on the website.

### Keep in touch

Would you like to receive regular updates and news by email? If so please give us your email address. You can do this by registering on-line or by emailing [kerry@suzanneaubert.co.nz](mailto:kerry@suzanneaubert.co.nz)

### Great resources available

The Sisters have a number of wonderful resources. You can also 'journey' with Suzanne Aubert by following the interactive map that traces her footsteps and special places through Aotearoa New Zealand. More details on the website: [www.suzanneaubert.co.nz](http://www.suzanneaubert.co.nz)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postal Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

- Please keep me informed of progress  
 Please send me information on resources available  
 I would like to make a donation to Sisters of Compassion

Please send to: Sisters of Compassion, PO Box 1474, Wellington or scan and email to: [info@compassion.org.nz](mailto:info@compassion.org.nz)

For more information please visit: [www.suzanneaubert.co.nz](http://www.suzanneaubert.co.nz) [sistersofcompassion](https://www.facebook.com/sistersofcompassion)

## Suzanne Aubert: A Missionary who made NZ her home

"Let us have a big heart..."

As New Zealand takes pride in the great strides it is making as a welcoming and tolerant community, we need to acknowledge the great example set by Venerable Suzanne Aubert who, as a missionary, answered God's call to leave her homeland and bring the gospel to people on the other side of the world. In doing so, she offered us a blueprint for action.

And New Zealand is the better for that.

When she left France in 1860,

an adventure began that would absorb and excite her for the rest of her life. Besides the many spiritual and medical books in her luggage, Suzanne brought to New Zealand an inherent goodness, a strong Catholic faith inherited from her parents, and, in addition, a love of the poor instilled in her by her grandmother and a strong sense of justice.

Suzanne Aubert's mission was to do God's will, bringing the love of Christ to all people. She wrote, **"Let us have a big heart and great courage so that while we are doing the work of God, He does His own in us"**. Suzanne believed that all people were equal before God, a belief that led her to respect people of all religions or none.

She quickly learnt the Māori language and customs. She befriended Peata who became her mentor in all things Māori, and who helped her in the study of rongoa. It was during the Māori wars, in the company of Peata,



Suzanne (right) and Peata (left) sitting with their pupils

that she visited Māori villages around Auckland and further afield, gaining the friendship and trust of all she met.

As a missionary Suzanne moved often, to where there was most need. After living in Auckland for 11 years she shifted to Hawke's

Bay where she became a tower of strength to the Marist Fathers with whom she worked. The Church at Pakipaki, Hawke's Bay, was built in 1880 with encouragement and personal financial support from Suzanne Aubert. The Church still stands and efforts are being made to restore it to its former glory.

Suzanne was then called to Hiruhārama/Jerusalem, on the Whanganui river, where she lived and worked with the Māori community. It was there in 1892 that she founded the Sisters of Compassion.

Arriving in Wellington in the late 1890s at the invitation of priests and doctors, Suzanne soon set to work caring for permanently disabled people and visiting people in need.

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For more information please visit our website: [www.suzanneaubert.co.nz](http://www.suzanneaubert.co.nz)

## Suzanne Aubert: a Missionary woman for our time

The celebration of Missionaries during the month of October 2019 is an occasion of joy.

It is also a special month for the Sisters of Compassion as they recall Suzanne Aubert's death on 1 October. Suzanne Aubert's response to God's love was to be a missionary. It was her desire to witness to the love of God and to share it with all people.

Suzanne Aubert is an inspiration for young missionaries today. She persevered. Her faith was strong despite failure, obstacles and disappointments. She was gifted with courage and the knowledge that if the work was of God it would succeed.

St Jean Marie Vianney affirmed her. As her spiritual mentor, he made some predictions that would mirror her life. This gave her confidence in difficult times. There were many occasions when she could have given up and returned to France. If this had occurred, her family would have rejoiced. They missed her so much and she missed them. She wrote many times about being homesick.



Recently I met with a person who is considering a missionary call. She wants to respond to Pope Francis' call "Go forth and reach out to all people at the margins of society!" She shared with me her concerns. "I would struggle with getting a visa. Do I really want to leave home? Would there be access to the Internet? I would need to learn a language and adjust to a new culture. I am not sure if I would cope." These are very real concerns. Let us pray for aspiring missionaries and encourage them to talk it over with a mentor and even to ask Suzanne Aubert to intercede for God's grace and guidance.

As Suzanne wrote encouragingly:

*"What does it matter if we are but feeble reeds, provided we bend only under the breath of the Holy Spirit? We have nothing to fear, and we can even promote the glory of God."*

Thank you for supporting the Cause of Venerable Suzanne Aubert/ Meri Hōhepa through your prayer and making her better known to all New Zealanders.  
by Sr Margaret Anne

## Island Bay continues to attract Pilgrims

More and more schools are going on pilgrimage to places significant in Suzanne's life and work. Recently, 59 Year 13 St Peter's College students went on pilgrimage. Over two days, students visited St Mary of the Angels, the church where Suzanne's funeral was held, the Compassion Soup Kitchen, founded by Suzanne and serving meals continuously since 1901, the Historic Crèche, one of New Zealand's earliest crèches for single working mothers, and St Joseph's church, where a side chapel is dedicated to Suzanne Aubert to acknowledge her care for the "sick poor" in Te Aro. An evening and morning at the Home of Compassion provided an opportunity to reflect on the insights that Suzanne's life and work provides for ways to be in the world.



St Peter's College Palmerston North pilgrimage

## Cause Update

The Sisters of Compassion continue to be encouraged by the progress on the Cause for Beatification of Venerable Suzanne Aubert. In March this year, a formal inquiry was held in the Christchurch diocese to investigate an alleged miracle through the intercession of Suzanne Aubert.

Following the Inquiry, the documentation was sent to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome and subsequently accepted for further examination. This will take place once the appropriate medical documents have been translated into Italian, which is currently under way.

This is important as we move towards the hoped for Beatification and eventual Canonisation. During October, the New Zealand Bishops will be visiting Rome for their 5-yearly *ad limina* meeting with Pope Francis. During this time they will also meet with Cardinal Becciu and members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. They will discuss progress on Venerable Suzanne Aubert's Cause. Let us pray for a fruitful meeting.

In the meantime, efforts continue here in New Zealand and elsewhere to promote awareness of and devotion to Meri Hōhepa/Suzanne Aubert.

Please continue to pray that through Suzanne's intercession a miracle may be recognised, thus opening the way for her Beatification, hopefully in the not too distant future.



Sr Margaret Anne personally handing Pope Francis material about Venerable Suzanne Aubert

## Make your own pilgrimage

The Home of Compassion is best experienced in person as the wairua (spirit) of place is one that touches people. Pilgrims and visitors are finding their way to the Home of Compassion in increasing numbers to discover more about Suzanne Aubert and to take time out to reflect and pray. When you are visiting Wellington, you are invited to make the short trip to Island Bay and explore the Heritage Centre exhibitions, the Chapel and Resting Place of Suzanne Aubert, the cafe, gift shop and grounds. Accommodation is often available in the retreat house. The public spaces will be open between Christmas and New Year. For more information contact Deirdre Hanlon, Visitor Experience Manager, [heritagecentre@compassion.org.nz](mailto:heritagecentre@compassion.org.nz) (04) 282 1953.

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Suzanne opened a Soup Kitchen and a crèche. In 1907 she opened a large home for children at Island Bay. A section of this building was later converted into a surgical hospital for the training of her sisters as registered nurses. She was a pioneer of New Zealand's health and welfare system and a friend to all.

Suzanne Aubert died in Wellington on 1 October 1926. Her funeral is remembered as the largest ever given to a woman. When New Zealanders think of goodness they think of Suzanne Aubert. She was a person who loved God and all people but with a special preference for the needy and marginalised. The light of her compassion and the sharpness of her vision are remembered to this day. Her goodness presents us with a challenge to live the gospel today in our own way.