



Te Reo o te Pūaroha

The Voice of Compassion

Supporters and Friends news
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 compassion te pūaroha

Tēnā koutou katoa,

At the beginning of this year, I had the opportunity to share in a pilgrimage with Linda Swayn. We traced the footsteps of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert in Hawke's Bay. She travelled to Napier in 1871 and spent 12 years in this area. Meri Hōhepa came to know the local Māori chiefs and gained their trust, visiting families in their villages. Meri Hōhepa, always the missionary, inevitably used her medical skills when needed. It is interesting to note that she vaccinated many people against smallpox. In a letter to Isa Outhwaite in 1872 Meri Hōhepa wrote: "Here everybody is panicking and wants to be vaccinated. There are not many doctors about. Also, it looks as if the fever is raging pretty strongly among the Māori. It's a time of distress and suffering ... I am very pushed for time today, as I have to go and get some vaccine". As I reflect on her life, she inspires me to have courage on the journey.

As you read the articles that follow you will read stories of courage and hope. We read about the visitation of Mother Teresa, acknowledgements, jubilees, and a Final Profession along with giving thanks for the lives of Sisters Michael Sioani and Sheila McGrath.

We note the generosity of many Wellingtonians to the Compassion Soup Kitchen by providing gifts and volunteer hours. I thank the teams that have enabled the meal service to continue during the "Red-Light" period.

Young people and students continue to become part of the heartbeat of our Home of Compassion through activities, school visits, and assistance for their tertiary studies with the Suzanne Aubert scholarship.



Thank you for your generosity, your prayers and support in many ways, especially the gifts of food at Christmas time. I pray that you, your family, and friends receive many blessings throughout 2022.

Mā te Atua koutou e manaaki, e tiaki hoki.
May God bless you and also protect you.

Sister Margaret Anne Mills

Sister Margaret Anne Mills
Congregational Leader

"Confidence in God enables us never to be discouraged in spite of the worst opposition, under the blows of the most unexpected and worst eventualities."

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert

Unforgettable memories

49 years ago Mother Teresa spent two nights with the Sisters at Our Lady's Home of Compassion

In a warm February of 1973, Mother Teresa of Calcutta landed in Wellington on a short visit to Aotearoa. While in the capital, she stayed with the Sisters at Our Lady's Home of Compassion in Island Bay, where she left unforgettable memories.

"We felt honoured and privileged to have her stay with us", said Sister Josephine Gorman, who remembers what happened 49 years ago.

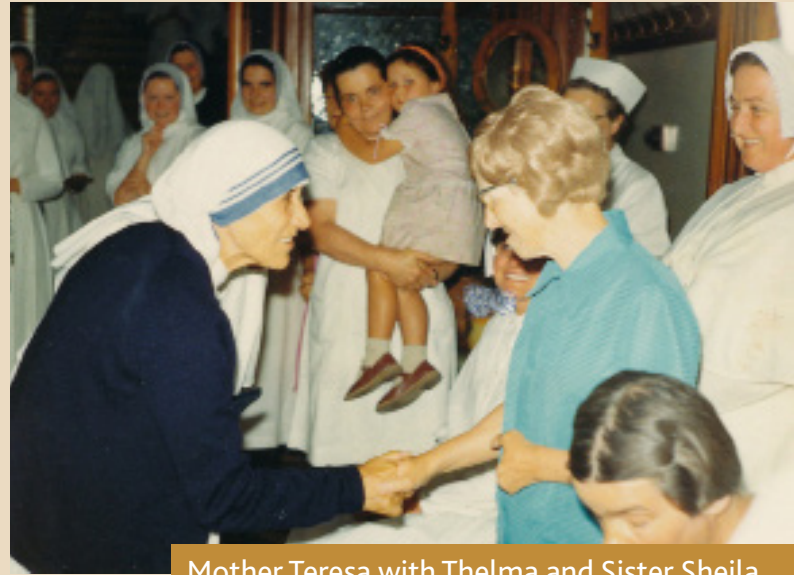
"She arrived, she wore a sari, and she had another one in a small case. While she stayed with us, one of our Sisters washed her sari and hung it up outside. We all wanted to look and touch it".

She spent the two nights with the Sisters. "Not many people knew she was actually staying at the Home of Compassion", said Sister Josephine.

Sister highlighted that Mother Teresa "was just so natural with us", she remembered Mother attending Mass in our Chapel. "She just sat among us, and I thought how prayerful she was".

Sister Josephine reflected that they felt Mother's spirit was so like our own, and "she reminded our senior Sisters of Suzanne Aubert, many of whom knew her".

Mother Teresa, who came from Australia invited by the Catholic Doctors Guild, participated in different activities in the capital, including a lunchtime



Mother Teresa with Thelma and Sister Sheila



Sister Loyola, Mother Teresa, Sister Edmond, Sister Camillus, with Children at Our Lady's Home of Compassion in Island Bay

public reception at the Wellington Town Hall with Mayor Sir Frank Kitts, where thousands of people packed the hall, half of them schoolchildren.

"The day she left, she met everybody, especially the children, and we took photos of her".

Sister Josephine adds, "we were all impressed with her willingness to talk to each one of us", commenting that "she spoke in English with us, we could understand her, she spoke really well".



Sister Bernadine welcoming Mother Teresa at the Wellington airport

School visits

Students from Putāruru learn about the life of mother Suzanne Aubert

Students from St Mary's Catholic School in Putāruru recently visited Our Lady's Home of Compassion in Island Bay where they learnt about the life of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert, who is going through the process of being the first New Zealand Saint.

The 35 year 7 and 8 students read about the life story of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert and learned about the way she cared for people.



Students visiting the Resting Place of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert

Mariya and Eva, two of the students present, said the visit was "a very inspiring and insightful experience for us and a great addition to our busy and exciting senior camp. We explored the Heritage Centre to find answers to questions about Suzanne Aubert's life. We enjoyed the walk up the hill to the reservoir, with the beautiful scenery and quiet time to reflect and connect with nature. Another notable moment was when we all sat around Mother Aubert's resting place, admiring the beautiful area; this was an excellent reflecting time for us all".

They highlighted the quote of Suzanne Aubert "Gratitude is the most beautiful ornament of the human heart", saying that the quote "has stayed with us".

Suzanne Aubert Tertiary Scholarship

Five students have been awarded the Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert Tertiary Scholarship to assist them in completing their studies in 2022.

We thank the Home of Compassion Trust Board and a benefactor who make this possible. The Sisters of Compassion congratulate the following students on their successful applications.



Mackenzie Batchelor is studying Education, Health and Māori studies at Victoria University of Wellington and aspires to be a primary school teacher. She strives to prevent children's disadvantages from becoming a barrier to their future success.



James Cowan is a student at Victoria University of Wellington and studies Law and Commerce. In the future, he will use his qualification to advocate for vulnerable people and is looking forward to doing this in national and international contexts.



Keiran Baird is studying towards a Bachelor of Design, with a major in Visual Communication Design. He contributes to his community as a Residential Assistant at Massey University Halls, where he supports first-year university students living out of home for the first time.



Mateusz Mendrun is in his third year of studying towards a Bachelor of Music with a double major in Classical Performance and Music Composition, a passionate pursuit inspired by being selected for the New Zealand Secondary Students Choir in 2017.



Baylee O'Donnell-Martin is studying towards a degree in Biomedical Science, majoring in Human Genetics and Molecular Pathology. Had Baylee graduated earlier, she pictured herself as working on the frontline of the current pandemic.

Awards and celebrations

Sisters of Compassion celebrate important milestones and recognition

The Benemerenti Medal

Sisters Josefa Tikoisolomone and Telesia 'Iva 'Afungia were honoured last November with the Benemerenti medal, awarded by Pope Francis for services to the Catholic Church.

The sisters received the medal from Cardinal John Dew, who spoke about their achievements.

Both sisters are currently working at the Compassion Soup Kitchen, which has been operating for 120 years in Wellington.

It was a very special day, full of gratitude and love for Sisters Josefa and Telesia and for what they had achieved as daughters of Suzanne Aubert.



Sister Josefa and Sister Telesia with their Benemerenti medal

Sister Barbara King celebrated her Platinum Jubilee

An important milestone was reached in September last year by Sister Barbara King who celebrated her Platinum Jubilee after seventy years as a Sister of Compassion.

Following the Covid-19 Protection Framework, Sister Barbara was celebrated in a jubilee Mass with twenty guests in the Chapel and an afternoon tea after the ceremony, provided by the Rules Club.

All the guests enjoyed the outing, the music and the service celebrated by Father Cyprian.



Sister Barbara with guests

Sister Ruth made her Final Profession as a Sister of Compassion

Sisters of Compassion and friends were privileged to witness the Final Profession of Ruth Pickering as a Sister of Compassion.

A very spiritual, quiet and joyous occasion, the ceremony was celebrated last November by Father O'Hagan, Father Rous and Father Arms, and was the perfect moment to mention that religious life is also an act of service.

In his homily, Father O'Hagan said that the call to religious life was to love God and our response to God's love.



Sister Ruth

In our memories



Sister Sheila McGrath, 1941 - 2021

Sister Sheila Catherine McGrath grew up within a loving whānau in Greymouth. She joined the Sisters of Compassion in February 1959. Sheila did her Teacher Training at Loreto Hall in Auckland, a diploma in Catechism and Theology and a BA degree at Massey University, majoring in Māori studies.

Sheila's poetic mind and heart often gave perspective and lightness to many situations, gifted with far-reaching insights. When you think of Sheila, what comes to mind is her fantastic handcraft. Despite Sheila's impaired vision, she has left numerous taonga – with all her creativity, including knitting and x-stitch.

The last 10 years of Sheila's life was within the care of the Berhampore Vincentian Home where she received loving care. Just as we held Sister Sheila in our hearts, she also held us; and in the midst of her increasing silence and solitude, her prayer was inclusive of her wider circle of family, friends and community.

Sister Michael was born in Suva, Fiji, on 28 March 1930. She was named Philomena, called Filo.

When Filo was about eight or nine, she went to the Marist Sisters boarding school in Nadi. With World War II, she returned home and went to Suva to attend the school of St Anne's. At age 15, she went on holiday to the Island of Molokai where the SMSM Sisters looked after lepers.

Philomena Sioani was the first woman from the Pacific to enter the Sisters of Compassion in February 1953 and was given the name Sister Michael.

In the following 66 years, she lived and worked in many places; she taught young children, cared for aged residents, looked after the chapel and helped with music. She was very good at pastoral care.

Sister Michael had a very generous spirit. She loved the Lord and the people who cared for her and every person



Sister Michael Sioani, 1930 - 2021

who came her way. Life was not easy for her, but she never complained. RIP Sister Michael, we will miss you.



The Heart beats on...

During Advent and into Christmas, we had a Christmas tree in our Chapel at Island Bay, with an invitation to place your name on it – acknowledging that "you are part of the heartbeat of our Home of Compassion".

It was a lovely sight and an even better reminder of all those we know, and don't know, and those with whom we are connected, who are a blessing to us all at the Home of Compassion, at Island Bay.

In these uncertain times, the heart beats on ...

Whānau Christmas at Soup Kitchen

Guests enjoyed a wonderful kai in a great atmosphere



Compassion Soup Kitchen staff and volunteers



Gift bags and Christmas presents for the whānau

As 'their best Christmas ever', some assistants described the recent Whānau Christmas event held on 18th December at the Compassion Soup Kitchen.

The magnificent sunny day in the capital and the live music provided by Gen, Paul, Chrissy, and their waiata group helped create a wonderful Christmas atmosphere to share and enjoy the food, refreshments and dessert supplied and served by LT McGuinness.

The Embassy of Ireland mobilised the Wellington Irish Community to put together gift bags and Christmas presents for the whānau to give to their children and grandchildren, blessed with this beautiful extra touch of Christmas kindness.

Scott Tynan, Volunteer Coordinator, said that all "went amazingly well with several of the whānau coming up to me and telling me this was, 'the best Christmas event the Soup Kitchen has ever provided'. A lot of credit for this goes to those who worked with us to help make this happen".

How to donate

Banks have phased out cheques, here are other ways you can support our work.

Website - Visit compassion.org.nz/support-us/donate. There you can make a secure one-off donation, or set up an ongoing gift using your credit card.

Phone - Call us on (04) 383 7769 to make a secure donation over the phone.

Donation Slip - Fill in your debit or credit card details on the donation slip attached to the order form that came with this newsletter and post it back to us.

Internet Banking - In your internet banking payee box, type 'Sisters of Compassion' (official name - The Mother Aubert Home of Compassion Trust Board) and our account details will appear. You can also make a donation using our bank account number: **BNZ 02-0500-0017474-00**. Please enter your name and supporter number (if known) in the reference fields.

Automatic Payment - You can set up an automatic payment through internet banking or at your local branch.

At your Bank - Your bank can help you with different donation options. Visit your local branch or check their website.

