Photo: Hiruhārama at dawn

ISSUE 61 | May 2026

VOICE OF COMPASSION

Te Reo o te Pūaroha

compassion
te pūaroha

100 YEAR ANNIVERSARY
Remembering
Meri Hōhepa
Suzanne Aubert

A century ago, morning newspapers announced the passing of Mother Aubert – Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert – calling her "One of New Zealand's Greatest Women." Today, her spirit and example remain vibrant. Her simple, inclusive, and uplifting wisdom continues to reach people through Spiritual Tonics, guiding hearts across Aotearoa and beyond.

As we mark 100 years since her death, we celebrate a woman whose influence has never dimmed. I warmly invite you to join the centennial events honouring her life and legacy.

"Let us imitate the little birds of God in their joy, their freedom, in their confidence for the morrow."

Sister Margaret Anne Mills

Sister Margaret Anne Mills
Congregational Leader

TE ANATAPU
GROTTO REFRESH

During this significant year, work is underway to replace the shelter beside the Grotto at Our Lady's Home of Compassion. Incorporating heritage bricks salvaged from the Old Convent at Hiruhārama the new space will provide a peaceful place for prayer and reflection.

We invite you to sponsor a Centenary Brick and ensure the work of Compassion continues for another 100 years. Your gift will live on as part of the new Grotto shelter, a lasting sign of generosity and community. Each brick is a tangible act of kindness, contributing to a safe and welcoming space for those most in need. Together we can continue to build a future of hope and compassion. To find out more email **info@compassion.org.nz**

TE MIHA I TOTARA HOKIANGA
MASS AT TŌTARA POINT

Celebrate Compassion 2026 events started in January, when the Centennial Candle was blessed by Bishop Stephen Lowe during the Annual Tōtara Point Mass at Hokianga, Northland. This ceremony commemorates the first Catholic Mass celebrated in Aotearoa on 13 January 1838 by Bishop Jean Baptiste François Pompallier, a moment that marked the beginning of Catholic presence in Aotearoa and the encounter with tangata whenua.

This connection for us is significant. It was Bishop Pompallier who, 22 years after that historic Mass, invited a young Suzanne Aubert to travel from France to Aotearoa to work alongside Māori communities, a decision that would ultimately lead to her founding the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion.

Starting our Centennial journey at Totara Point was fitting, linking the origins of Catholic life in Aotearoa New Zealand with Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert's remarkable contribution.

Top Image: Deacon Danny Karatea-Goddard and Bishop of Auckland, Most Reverend Stephen Lowe DD
Bottom Image: Vicar for Maori, Manuel Beazley (left) and Deacon Danny Karatea-Goddard.

Cloister Café

Tuesday:	9 AM - 3 PM
Wednesday:	9 AM - 3 PM
Thursday:	9 AM - 3 PM
Friday:	9 AM - 3 PM
Saturday:	9.30 AM - 2.30 PM
Sunday:	10 AM - 1.30 PM

Home of Compassion
2 Rhine Street, Island Bay

TE RĀ O WAITANGI, PŌNEKE
WAITANGI DAY, WELLINGTON

Rau Tau Pūaroha - Celebrate Compassion 2026, continued at St Mary's of the Angels on Waitangi Day with Sister Margaret Anne Mills carrying the Centenary candle with the help of Compassion Whānau members, Anne Sidwell and Alice Hoerara-Hunt.

A lovely touch was Anne placing a koromiko flower next to the candle, a reflection of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert's rongoā Māori practices and commitment to healing with natural remedies.

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert had a deep love for Tangata Whenua, tīkanga, and Te Reo Māori. As Pā Gerard Burns reminded us in his homily, Meri Hōhepa said "Never forget our order began in a Māori village."

Image: Compassion whānau members

TE HĪKOI KI HIRUHĀRAMA
HĪKOI TO HIRUHĀRAMA

More than a hundred people with close links to Hiruhārama gathered at the Whanganui River community in March to celebrate completion of the renovations to the convent and St Joseph's church. The day began with a pōhiri onto Patiarero Marae, followed by formal speeches and a warm welcome on the Hiruhārama grounds. Bishop John Adams of Palmerston North blessed the convent before leading Mass at the beautifully restored church.

Representing the Sisters of Compassion, Sisters Margaret-Anne Mills and 'Alisi Tu'ipulotu planted a tree in honour of Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert, whose legacy continues to shape the spirit of the place. Reflecting on the occasion, Sister Margaret-Anne shared, "This is the place that inspired Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert to build a community of women, the Sisters of Compassion, to share in the call to live the Gospel… She is smiling upon us."

Ron Hough of Ngāti Hau, a Director of the Sisters of Compassion Group, offered a moving whaikōrero that wove together the stories of his tūpuna and Mother Aubert. Grounded in manaakitanga, his words affirmed a legacy of care and service that continues through his mokopuna and wider whānau as they steward the Old Convent and Church—places where mīha is still celebrated and the spirit of Pūaroha Compassion remains strong.

The restoration work at Hiruhārama was completed and celebrated in April, with funding support from the Stout Trust and the JK Baxter Trust.

Named after the Biblical Jerusalem, Hiruhārama was once one of the largest settlements on the Whanganui River and has long been a centre of faith and community life. It was here in 1892 that Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert founded the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion, laying the foundations for a mission that would expand to Wellington, and which has endured for generations. Her legacy continues to be felt across Aotearoa, including through the Compassion Soup Kitchen, which marks 125 years of service this year.

Top Image: Sister 'Alisi Tu'ipulotu (Left), Sister Margaret Anne, Ron Hough, Bishop John Adams and Deacon Danny Karatea-Goddard during the tree planting ceremony.
Middle Image: Mass that was held inside St Joeseph's church
Bottom Image: St Joseph's Church.

TE KĪHINI HUPA KI CUBADUPA
COMPASSION KITCHEN AT CUBADUPA

Festival-goers at CubaDupa in Pōneke got a taste of Compassion Soup Kitchen's mahi at Te Aro Eats, the kai collective serving meals and treats for koha during the two-day festival in March.

Scott and Sam from the Soup Kitchen were on the frontline, dishing up fresh gazpacho alongside volunteers and kaimahi from Seeds to Feeds, Everybody Eats, The Free Store, Wellington Timebank, and Kaibosh Food Rescue. Their contribution brought a refreshing, autumn-ready flavour to the shared menu.

Compassion Soup Kitchen was proud to be part of the community-powered dining experience on Dixon Street, where Te Aro Eats invites Wellingtonians to share kai, connect with others, and pay what they can for a meal. Sam and Scott's chilled gazpacho — bright, simple, but made with care — added to the diverse line-up of dishes celebrating local food stories.

Top Image: Soup Kitchen deputy manager Scott (Left) and Soup Kitchen manager Sam (Right)

WHAKAATURANGA TOI
ART EXHIBITION

Our Lady's Home of Compassion is delighted to host Margaret Hansen's exhibition, Wimples, Crosses & Lepers: Women of Influence, a heartfelt tribute to two remarkable women — Margaret's aunts, Alice and Marie, Catholic Sisters whose lives of service continue to inspire. Alongside the exhibition, Margaret has also written a book of the same name, weaving together the story of her aunts with her own reflections on growing up Catholic.

While you're here, pop into Cloister Café for a coffee and something delicious to eat. The exhibition runs until early June 2026.

Alice: The Garden of Earthly Delights

NGĀ TAKUNETANGA
2026 UPCOMING EVENTS

- **20 June**
  Author Talk
  Join us for a special event where award-winning writer Jessie Munro will discuss the life and legacy of Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert. Register for this free event at Eventfinda.
  www.eventfinda.co.nz/2026/meri-hohepa-suzanne-aubert-an-afternoon-with-jessie-munro/wellington-region

- **14–21 September**
  Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori
  Celebration of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert's words. Launching the reprint of 'Spiritual Tonics' in Te Reo Māori.

- **02–03 October**
  Wairoa & Pakipaki Mass
  A celebratory Mass will be held at Wairoa on 2 October, the landscape that shaped Meri Hōhepa's early missionary work. The Wairoa Mass celebrations will continue on a Hikoi to Pakipaki, where her compassionate ministry with Māori flourished. A mass in Pakipaki will be held on 3 October.

- **04 October**
  100 Year Centenary Mass
  The Hawkes Bay Hikoi will end in Wellington for the celebratory Mass that marks 100 years since Meri Hohepa's passing. This will be held at St Mary of the Angels Church in Wellington at 2:00PM.

Visit our website to learn about our regular in-house retreats and for more information on the events above.
compassion.org.nz/events

Help support our May appeal

"Everyone just wants to be listened to. To share a worry, a story from their past or share their sadness"

— Diane Ngatai, Compassion Housing Nurse Addvocate

WAYS TO DONATE

Website: www.compassion.org.nz

Online Banking:
Account Name: The Mother Aubert Home of Compassion Trust Board

Account Number:
BNZ 02-0500-0017474-00