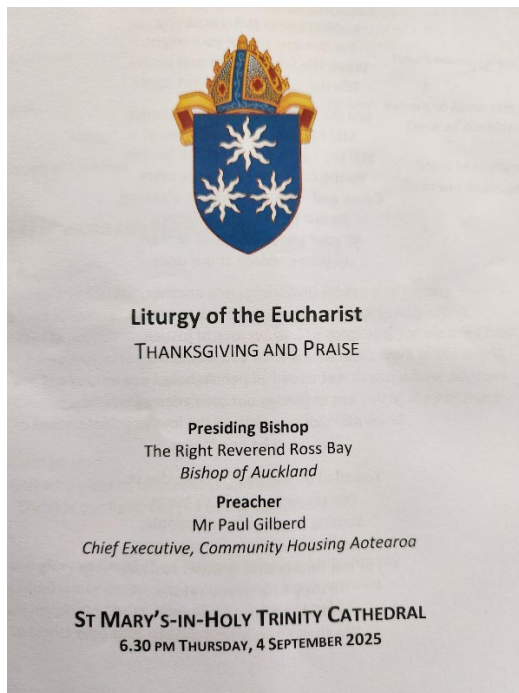


Diocese of Auckland

St Mary's Parnell 4th September 2025 Opening Eucharist

On the occasion of the first session of the 58<sup>th</sup> Synod

Presiding Bishop The Right Reverend Ross Bay



Preacher: Mr Paul Gilbert.

[Begins]

Te mea tuatahi, Kia whakakorōriatia ki Te Atua i runga rawa

Kia mau te rongo ki runga ki te whenua

We give thanks for this beautiful day.

Here we are, gathered together in this place, this beautiful church, this land.

We are grateful to stand upon this magnificent and precious whenua, overseen by the many maunga, and the lakes and rivers and towns, from the Coromandel Peninsular across to the mighty west coast and all the way up through Te Taitokerau to Cape Reinga.

We come together here this evening, and over the next few days in this sacred place acknowledging mana whenua here in Tamaki Makarau, and throughout the diocese of Auckland.

We come together as the Synod of the diocese of Auckland under the blessing and at the invitation of Ruatara who invited and welcomed the gospel and Marsden to this place. Let us not forget that the founding place of our nation sits in the heart of this diocese. And it is nothing but a sign of deep love and mutual respect that Henry William's likeness is carved into the pou whenua in the heart of Te Ti Marae. Wherein he is holding the bible.

In this place a binding partnership, based on love, mutual respect and the word of God, was founded.

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Gathered together here today we acknowledge those who have gone before us. Ka mate, ka mate, ka ora, ka ora. We acknowledge those who have passed away recently. We also acknowledge their deeds be they good or bad. We pray to be filled with the knowledge of God's will. We pray such that our actions as individuals and as the collective of this church, may bear fruit and rescue us from the power of darkness.

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In my work I have the privilege of serving amongst those many community groups across the country who are providing homes for our most vulnerable people. I also work as a volunteer at the Auckland City Mission and in my broader work I work with a team supporting over 100 charitable housing organisations from Kaitia to Rakiura, and everywhere in between. Many of you gathered here do similar work, important work, in your communities.

I am sorry to report that there is a lot of pain and suffering out there. But you know this, you have seen it with your own eyes. If we have been saving for a rainy day, then we must acknowledge that for many of our siblings our brothers and sisters - it is raining.

Poverty and persistent unmet housing needs have grown and continue to do so in every part of our region and our nation. To our homeless we say "you are us, and we are you."

Many of us are but one life event away from homelessness. **He waka eke noa – we are in this life, this precious time, together.**

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I was moved to tears in a recent meeting when a housing provider shared an account of two separate people who are having their regular dialysis treatments in their cars because the hospital cannot deliver the equipment to them in their homes, because they are homeless.

It begs the question for all of us to ask ourselves - **What does the victory of the Lord look like when we see it?**

Dialysis in the carpark? It is not that.

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As a society, and as a Church I am asking that we consider if in our efforts to protect and build upon the wealth we have been blessed with, have we become overly focused on purely financial return? – at the expense of positive social and environmental impact?

Have we fallen into patterns of making decisions from a place of fear, fear of loss, fear of loss of control, rather than faith?

As people of faith, Can we recommit **to put out into the deep water together** ? and to resetting our nets?

A number of you and representatives of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia had the privilege of gathering together all day today at St John's college. We were gathered at the invitation of our 3 archbishops with all our church's various trusts and asset holding entities – to discuss our church response and direction as it relates to ethical and mission aligned investment.

I had the privilege of spending some time there in the Kinder library reading records of previous Auckland Synods and Bishops' charges, like the one Bishop Ross will deliver later this evening. In particular I referenced the time around 1990 when our church decided in an effort to recognise the importance of the Treaty of Waitangi to separate into the three Tikanga of Maori, Pacific and Pakeha. In reflecting on this I wonder if that structure is still fit for purpose. It seems, on occasions, to segregate us more than it unites us in Te Tiriti partnership.

I ask, in this context – what is our prophetic plan as a church, as a diocese?

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The expected social and environmental benefits and the “trickle down” of wealth promised from our neoliberal economic reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s have, on the whole, ***failed to materialise.***

I suggest that as a nation we have lost our way -becoming a country whose economy has become a residential housing market with some other bits tacked on.

The great divide of property owners and those without, is tearing the very fabric of our society apart.

**Is this the victory of the Lord?**

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Thirty years of chronic underinvestment in environmental and social infrastructure is now evidenced in greater inequality than has ever been seen before on these shores.

Yet there is hope -in the form of restorative justice. But to realise that hope, takes courage and direction. It takes trust and power sharing. We need not invent or even reinvent the pathways to a better future for all our people and creation – it sits beautifully expressed in the 5 fold mission of the church.

Is it not the service of others that brings our greatest joy? That service and the joy it brings is hard wired into our core as humans as is our innate capacity to be together and to work together. Te Kotahitanga.

This is a meeting engaging the whole body of the church.

As agents of the coming Kingdom there is purpose to this gathering.

We now have the opportunity to rediscover and recover the prophetic aspects of asset usage for the Mission of the Church... and in doing so, stop playing “catchup” with the world, and **lead by example**. This approach promises the greatest of rewards – furthering the rapid establishment of the Kingdom of God here on Earth.

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Maori gifted immense tracts of land to the Church. And today it is the Church who has amassed billions of dollars, and Maori are over-represented on the bottom rung of every socio-economic index. **Should we see this as a sad irony? Or a startlingly clear call to action?**

God has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption.

I am inviting you all to move beyond hope and into boldness, and courageous action. Into restorative justice and the five-fold mission of our church.

I am inviting you, over these next few days – together- to consider what your collective and individual prophetic actions will be. And **I invite you to recast your net and to leap in faith!**

I will close with Te Karakia o Te Tāpui Atawhai – the prayer of the Auckland City Mission

Here our spirits stand united  
Let the strength flow to all of our loved ones  
Let us be zealous in uplifting all that we do  
With honesty, with sincerity and clear understanding  
You are I and I am you  
Let the winds invigorate strength within our hearts  
The breath, the life force,  
To the world of light  
Our collective energy is bound as one