

Cardinal Reginald Delargey Biography



Born in Timaru in 1914, Reginald Delargey went to school in Lawrence, Patea, Napier and then to college at Sacred Heart in Auckland.

On completion of his secondary education, he entered Holy Cross Seminary, Mosgiel, before being asked to complete his study in Rome where he was ordained in 1938.

Back in New Zealand, Father Delargey was appointed Director of the Catholic Youth Movement (CYM) in 1942 and later introduced the work of the Young Christian Students (YCS) into New Zealand Catholic secondary schools.

He had witnessed Catholic Action first hand during his time in Rome and was impressed by the then relatively novel methods of this movement in working with young students and workers. He applied the lessons learned then throughout his life, and many young New Zealanders benefited from the inspirational leadership he brought to the CYM.

In 1957 he represented New Zealand at the Congresses of Young Christian Workers and the Lay Apostolate in Rome. The dominant theme was the role of the laity in the social change needed to transform the world order, and Father Delargey returned with even more enthusiasm for lay participation in the Church.

On 27 February 1958 he was consecrated Auxiliary Bishop to Archbishop James Liston of Auckland and proved to be an inspiring and effective leader of lay people. In 1962 he went to the Second Vatican Council in Rome and on return, began to put its ideas and principles (such as the parish and diocesan pastoral council) into practice.

In 1970, Bishop Delargey, as the newly appointed Bishop of Auckland, set up a team to work with him - the forerunner of today's Diocesan departments.

Approval of his efforts was evident in the decision to appoint him Archbishop of Wellington on 16 July 1974, and in his elevation to Cardinal almost two years later. Uncertain of his reception among priests and people who did not know him, Cardinal Delargey soon won them over by his constant availability and patent sincerity.

Cardinal Delargey died in Auckland's Mater Misericordiae Hospital on 29 January 1979 and is remembered fondly for his work with young people of the Catholic Youth Movement and all Catholic people of New Zealand.