



New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Committee for Interfaith Relations

13 March 2021

Tēnā tātou sisters and brothers in Aotearoa,

In a spirit of peace and prayer we reach out at this time to those who live in this land, and especially the Muslim community of New Zealand. We continue to pray and work for rich dialogue with, and warm welcome to, those of diverse beliefs and cultures. We acknowledge that intolerant and violent attitudes and behaviours still exist in Aotearoa, but we believe that the united power of love, lived out as neighbours and friends, has the capacity to re-create our society.

As Catholic people of faith, who share an ancient relationship especially with our Muslim and Jewish brothers and sisters through our shared connection to Abraham, we acknowledge the presence of God in this mahi. We give thanks for the diversity of deeply held religious beliefs which draw people to embrace one another with compassion, healing and hope. While many may hold that religious beliefs are the cause of violence, we know from our rich relationships with those of many faiths, that the choice to cause harm to others is grounded not in the divine but in other attitudes such as selfishness or fear. We pray to our loving God, that all violence may cease, and that diversity of faith may be seen as opportunity for dialogue through which all may be blessed. We join this prayer with those of the interfaith community of Aotearoa.

As Pope Francis and Ahmed Al-Tayyeb captured so powerfully in their shared document on *Human Fraternity*, “Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved.” This is how we choose to respond. Brother, sister – welcome.

Peace, Salaam,

Colin MacLeod

On behalf of committee members:

+Michael Dooley, Adele Churchman, Mary Eastham, Teresa Fernandez, Paul Flanagan (interim with Teresa), Matthew Gardner, Daniel Kleinsman, Christopher Longhurst, Beate Matthies and Colin MacLeod (chair)