



St Pope John Paul II visits New Zealand

Pope John Paul II has been the only Pope to have visited New Zealand so far. As the first visit by the Bishop of Rome, successor of the Apostle Peter, it was an occasion of great significance for the Catholic people of New Zealand. But interest in Pope John Paul, both as chief pastor of the Catholic Church and as a recognised and honoured world figure, was intense throughout the country from the moment his visit was announced.

At that time he had made more than 30 international visits since becoming pope in 1978, taking in nearly 70 countries.

He had addressed the United Nations General Assembly and mediated international disputes.

Wherever he went, he spoke about peace, expressing his profound conviction that “Peace of heart is the heart of peace”, and “Peace is a value with no frontiers – a value that responds to the hopes and aspirations of all people and of all nations, of young and old, and of all men and women of goodwill.” The theme for his visit, “Peace: the Message of the Gospel” reflected this concern for peace and the expectation of Jesus that his followers would be messengers of peace.

Auckland

The Pope, travelling on an Alitalia flight with his entourage, set foot on New Zealand soil in Auckland at 2.05 pm on Saturday November 22, 1986. He knelt and kissed the ground in his traditional gesture of honour to a new country. At the airport he received a State Welcome from the Governor General, Sir Paul Reeves, and the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon David Lange. Crowds lined the route from Mangere Airport as he travelled to the Auckland Domain in a specially-made Popemobile. The Bishops of Auckland and Hamilton, Denis Browne and Edward Gaines travelled with him.

On arrival at the Domain he received a traditional Maori welcome.

Crowds packed the Domain as the Pope completed a full circle of the Domain ring road. After vesting, he celebrated what was New Zealand’s biggest open air Mass, along with the bishops of New Zealand, the clergy of the Auckland and Hamilton Dioceses and the many thousands who were gathered.

At the conclusion of Mass the Pope mounted a specially-constructed stage for the Youth Rally, at which he addressed and prayed with the thousands of assembled young people.

At 8.30pm, he boarded a RNZAF aircraft to travel to Wellington.

Wellington

The Pope arrived at Wellington Airport at 9.40pm. He stepped into a waiting limousine and was driven to the Apostolic Nunciature in Lyall Bay accompanied by the Archbishop of Wellington, Cardinal Thomas Williams, and the Bishop of Palmerston North, Bishop Peter Cullinane. The rest of the evening was free from official engagements.

At the Nunciature on Sunday, at 8.05am, he was introduced to members of the Diplomatic Corps, and spent some time in a private meeting with Prime Minister David Lange.

At 10am he left for Government House for a meeting with the Governor General, Sir Paul Reeves, followed by the drive to Athletic Park which was the venue for the Wellington Mass. On arrival he drove a circuit of the Park in the Popemobile, after which he vested for Mass, and processed to the front of the grandstand to a specially-constructed sanctuary. Mass commenced at 11.30am and concluded at 2pm. Shortly thereafter he made the 20-minute drive to the Nunciature.

At 4.30pm he left the Nunciature and was driven to the Wellington Show & Sports Centre in John Street, Newtown for the Liturgy of the Anointing of the Sick. He departed from the Centre in the Popemobile at 6.40pm driving to the Nunciature for a 7pm meeting with all the bishops of New Zealand, and dined with them at 8pm. He stayed overnight at the Nunciature.

On Monday 24 November he left the Nunciature and boarded the RNZAF Boeing for the journey to Christchurch for the third day of his New Zealand visit.

Christchurch

On arrival at Christchurch Airport at 9.05am, the Pope was greeted by civic and religious leaders. His motorcade then departed for the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament to join with leaders of other Churches for an hour-long ecumenical liturgy.

At 10.25am he drove in the Popemobile from the Cathedral to Lancaster Park, accompanied by the Bishops of Christchurch and Dunedin, Denis Hanrahan and Leonard Boyle. After completing a circuit of the grounds, he vested for Mass and processed to the sanctuary for the Papal Mass which commenced at 10.45am.

At the conclusion of Mass at 1.15pm His Holiness left Lancaster Park for Christchurch Airport where he was accorded a State Farewell. Attending were the Governor General, Sir Paul Reeves, the Prime Minister David Lange, Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, the Bishops of New Zealand and civic leaders.

At 2pm his Air New Zealand aircraft left Christchurch en route for Canberra, Australia.

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