Go, you are sent… to deepen our bicultural relationship

"Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace which binds you together."

EPHESIANS 4:3

Maōri are the first peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand, the tangata whenua (people of the land). When Europeans first came here there was interaction, dialogue, trade, conflict and misunderstanding and war. Christian missionaries came, initially from England and, two decades later, the Catholic mission from France. That mission was first to Māori.

When the British Crown decided to establish formal relations with the Māori of Aotearoa, it did so on the basis of a Declaration of Independence sent to England in 1835, referred to in the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840. Aotearoa's first Catholic bishop, Bishop Pompallier, requested equal treatment for all Christian denominations and Māori custom from Captain Hobson.

While the first Marist priests came for Māori they soon became drawn away by the growing number of settler Catholics. The New Zealand wars meant most Catholic missionaries withdrew from work among Māori. When that work, known as the 'Māori mission', was restored it became the work of specialist clergy and sisters, separate from pastoral work among the European population.

From the 1970s three factors have coincided: the reality of a mostly urbanized Māori presence and cultural revival, a growing recognition of the lack of Crown fidelity to commitments made in the Treaty of Waitangi, the diminishing numbers of clergy and religious available to work among Māori.

Since the 1970s the official policy of the Archdiocese has been one of integration of various communities rather than assimilation. Consistent with this approach, both the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference and Archdiocesan synods since 1988-89 have committed themselves to a bi-cultural Church'.

1. **What does recognition of Māori and commitment to biculturalism in the life and mission of the Church mean for today?**

2. **How can the whole Archdiocese deepen its relationship with Māori today?**

"Mā te whakakitea mai e te Wairua Tapu, mā te aru i a Hēhu Karaiti, ka mōhio rawa te iwi Māori ki te Atua, ka matau ki a ia, ka aroha ki a ia, ā, ka kauhau i te Rongo Pai o te Atua. (That, in Christ and through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Māori people come to a deeper knowledge and love of God and proclaim God's kingdom.)"

PĪHOPA TAKUIRA MARIU, SM AND TE KAHUI O TE ARIKI (MĀORI PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS), PLAN FOR MĀORI PASTORAL CARE, 1988.

"A rich culture already existed in your country before the arrival of the Church or many immigrants: the culture of the Māori people. This culture has in turn been strengthened by the uplifting and purifying power of the Gospel. I wish to extend special greetings to you, the Māori people of Aotearoa … As you rightly treasure your culture, let the Gospel of Christ continue to penetrate and permeate it, confirming your sense of identity as a unique part of God's household. It is as Māori that the Lord calls you; it is as Māori that you belong to the Church, the one body of Christ."

POPE JOHN PAUL II, MASS AT AUCKLAND DOMAIN 1986

"It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values."

LAUDATO SI 146