

Sr Ruth Coleman – speech at Rally against Racism and Fascism Saturday 19 May,

**Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou katoa**

God created us to be different to each other. We are not meant to be the same. We are meant to look different to each other, to speak in many languages, to sing a wide variety of songs, and to celebrate life and death in our many diverse and colourful ways. The diversity of humanity is one of God's gifts to us.

Catholic social teaching recognizes that racism is not just a personal sin or failing. It is an attack on human life itself. It results when people's individual preferences and biases get embedded in structures of society.

Racism also results from distorted views about our brothers and sisters. We need to spend more time with each other and listen to each other. We need to find what we share in common and work together to understand each other's differences. It is unacceptable that people feel increasingly empowered to speak openly, and to act on racist views, that some people are more valuable than others just because of the colour of their skin or their ethnic background. Telling the truth about ourselves and our world is necessary. In Aotearoa New Zealand we need to address the historic injustices that result from colonization.

We are different but we have become united in grief because of the attacks on people praying in places that should have been a sanctuary for them – mosques in Christchurch, churches in Sri Lanka, synagogues in the United States

We are also united in grief because of other attacks and discrimination against people because of differences, which may not always hit the headlines, especially when those differences are based on ethnicity and culture.

Catholic Christians are followers of a man from the Middle East who still invites everyone to eat at his table. He challenged his followers to love everyone while at the same time, not necessarily accepting all of their actions. We need to allow people to be different and not feel threatened by the differences.

Together with the people of the Book, Muslims, and Jews, we worship the God of Abraham who we know by different names. Together with other faith traditions we encounter the unknowable God who created us. Together with all people of goodwill, we work for that peace on earth that acknowledges the diversity of humankind.

Today we reject racism, and we work for the unity of our wonderfully diverse human family. May God bless this rally and all who are here as we work together.

**Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou katoa**