

Celebration Sunday 2026



Celebrating the legacy of
Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert

SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER 2026

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OUR RESOURCES

We hope you find this pack useful. Please print the pages you need or the complete booklet. If you require physical copies, contact us: islandbay@compassion.org.nz.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The Sisters of Compassion would like to express their gratitude to the contributors to these resources:

Prayer to Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert: written by *Father James Lyons*
Resources written by *Rebecca Taylor-Hunt*

Welcome to our Celebration Sunday Parish Resources for 2026. In this special centennial year, 100 years since the death of Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert, Celebration Sunday falls on **4 October**.

Nau mau, haere mai, kia tau te rangimārie ki a koutou katoa – May peace be with you all!

These resources are provided to help parishes mark Celebration Sunday for Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert, designed specifically for this centennial year of her death.

Celebration Sunday honours the life and legacy of Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert, whose kindness, wisdom and compassion continue to shape lives throughout Aotearoa New Zealand through the work of the Sisters of Compassion and the wider Compassion whānau.

On this day, we remember Meri Hōhepa's legacy of practical compassion and continue to pray for her beatification.

READINGS FOR THE 27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME:

First Reading: Isaiah 5:1-7

'Let me sing to my friend the song of his love for his vineyard.'

Psalm 79:9, 12-16, 19-20 Isaiah 5:7

'The vineyard of the Lord is the House of Israel.'

Second Reading: Philippians 4:6-9

'Keep on doing these things, and the God of peace will be with you.'

Alleluia verse: John 15:16

'I have chosen you from the world, says the Lord, to go and bear fruit that will last.'

Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

'We are merely servants.'

Rau Tau Pūaroa | Celebrate Compassion 2026

This year, we mark the centenary of the death of Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert as **Rau Tau Pūaroa | Celebrate Compassion 2026**. One hundred years after her death in Wellington on 1 October 1926, her life continues to inspire us to see Christ in those who are poor, sick, lonely or overlooked.

Her funeral at St Mary of the Angels was reported as the largest ever held for a woman in Aotearoa New Zealand, a sign of the deep love and respect held for this remarkable woman who served people of all creeds or none. We give thanks for Meri Hōhepa's witness and pray that these resources will help us carry forward her spirit of practical compassion, courageous faith and loving service. When we follow her example, we strive to make compassion visible in our own time and place.

You are invited to mark Celebration Sunday for Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert in a variety of ways. We have provided a newsletter notice, a prayer of the faithful, a new centenary prayer written by Fr James Lyons, and a reflection. You will also find children's activities and a closing prayer. A National Centenary Mass is being held at 2pm at St Mary of the Angels, Wellington, with the Sisters, compassion whānau, and the Catholic Bishops of New Zealand. Let us all pray for the beatification of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert as one.

On behalf of Sister Margaret Anne Mills, Congregational Leader, the Sisters of Compassion, and the wider whānau of Te Pūaroa Compassion, we thank you for your ongoing support and wish you a very happy Celebration Sunday!

PRAYER FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF SUZANNE AUBERT

Lord Jesus Christ,

You taught us that as often as we show compassion to the least of our brothers and sisters, we show it to you.

Hear our prayer that Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert, who came to Aotearoa New Zealand to be with Māori, and dedicated her life to caring for those in poverty and in need, may soon be recognised by the Church as a saint.

Amen.

HE ĪNOI MŌ TE HĀTOTANGA O MERI HŌHEPA

E te Ariki e Hēhu Karaiti,

Nāu mātou i whakaako mēnā ka puaki atu mātou i te pūaroa mō te iti, arā, ngā tēina, ngā tuākana, ngā tuāhine me ngā tungāne, kātahi ka whakaatu mātou i te pūaroa ki ā koe.

Whakarongo mai ki ā mātou ĭnoi mō Te Kahurangi nei a Meri Hōhepa, i haere mai ia ki Aotearoa, ki te iwi Māori, ā, i whakatapua tōna oranga ki te hunga rawakore me te hunga whai oranga, nā kia whakamanatia ia e te Hāhi hei hāto.

Āmene.



Leaving Our Lady's Home of Compassion

NEWSLETTER NOTICE:

CELEBRATION SUNDAY

Rau Tau Pūaroa | Celebrate Compassion 2026

"Let us have kindness and compassion for one another, let us mutually pardon as God pardons us." -Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert

On 4th October at our Masses, we join with the Sisters of Compassion, the Bishops, and all the peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand, to celebrate the life of Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert. Following her example, on this centenary of her death, let us be aware of the presence of God in our life's journey, and see Jesus in all who we encounter along the way.



Her casket is carried from St Mary of the Angels

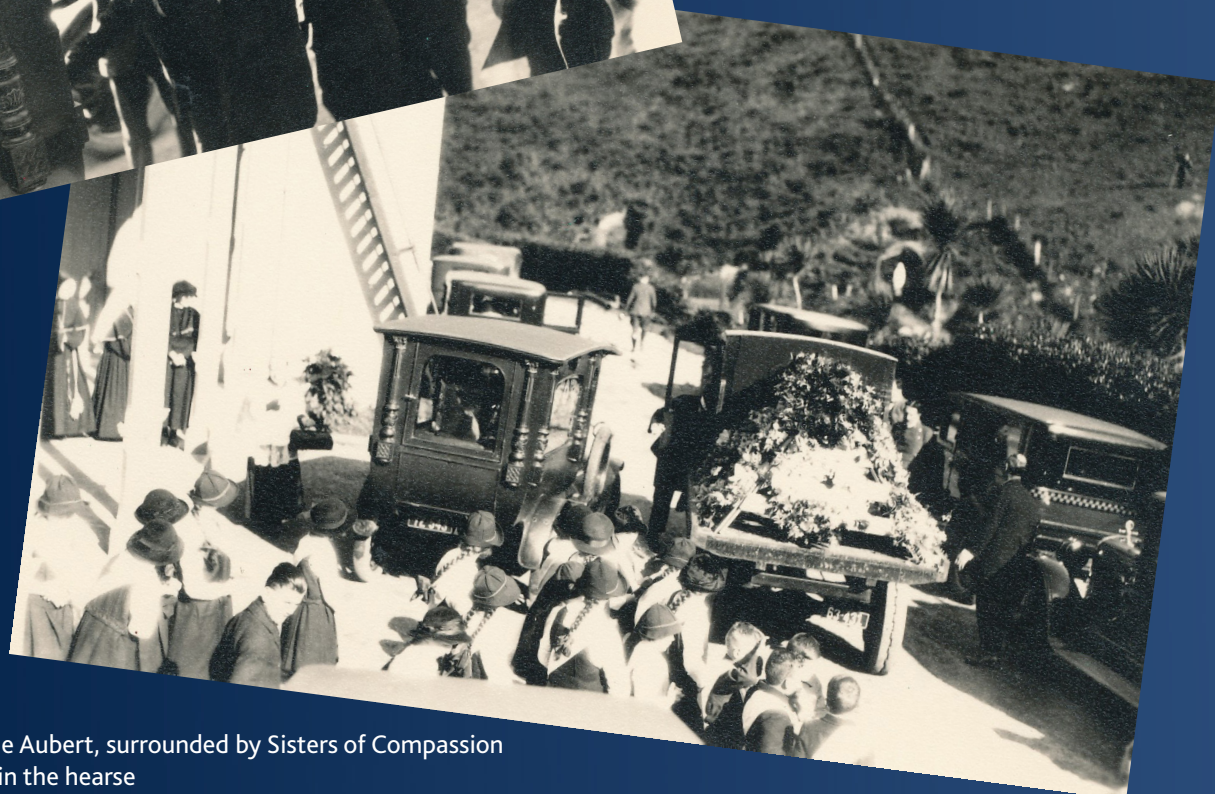
PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

E te Atua o te Pūaroa - God of Compassion

As we unite in prayer across Aotearoa New Zealand on this Celebration Sunday, 100 years since her death, we pray in thanksgiving for the life of Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert.

We pray that her faith, her courage, and compassionate love will live on in us all.

E te Ariki: Whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou.



Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert, surrounded by Sisters of Compassion
 The casket is placed in the hearse
 The funeral procession leaves the Home of Compassion

Reflection: Welcomed Home

This poem by Eileen Duggan invites us to stand at the threshold between grief and hope.

Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert is pictured not simply as dying but being received, by Mary, Joseph, and the child Jesus, into the joy of God's household. The Holy Family come to her as representatives of all those she served: women, men, and children, especially those who were poor, vulnerable, or without shelter.

Let us allow this poem to become a place of prayer - a scene in which a life of compassion is gathered up and welcomed home.

Eileen Duggan has described the tenderness of welcome: the open doorway, the hand extended, and the child leading Suzanne through the gate of joy.

These images can draw us toward the hope that death is not abandonment, but *encounter* with Christ, with the communion of saints, and with the love that has shaped a life of service.

**Where do I recognise Christ coming to meet me
in weariness, service, or grief?**

**Who has found shelter through my words or my
presence?**

**What might Mary, Joseph, or the child Jesus say
to Suzanne? What might they say to me?**

**How does this poem invite me to see death
through the lens of Christian hope?**

Mother Mary Aubert

by Eileen Duggan

Hush, O Hiruhārama!
Beat not the breast, nor weep,
A weary old woman who loved you
has fallen asleep.

Her years were heavy upon her;
They dimmed the light of her eyes.
They beat the grace of her body,
She sleeps but soon will rise.

And who will be coming to meet her,
Where stars like lilacs blow?
An old grey man and woman,
And a child with head aglow.

"In the name of the women" - thus Mary,
"You saved from sorrow and sin;
In the name of the women you sheltered,
Come in, dear heart, come in."

"In the name of the men" - thus Joseph,
"Kind old woman in blue,
For the sake of your open doorway,
The hand of a man to you."

"In the name of the little children" -
Ah, thus the shining boy,
And hand in hers, he'll draw her
Within the gate of joy.

Ah, Whanganui-a-Tara,
Let not your heart be torn,
She walks 'neath an arch of rainbow
Where morning lights are born.



Prayer

by Fr James Lyons

With great gentleness you call us
Into your service, Loving God,
To be your pathway into our world.
Your still, small voice is ever patient,
Waiting a response, ready to welcome,
To encourage and to send.

Here I am, Lord. Send me.

You gift each of us
With a touch of your beauty,
That together we might present
A portrait of your love.
Only as we love one another
Can you be known and believed.

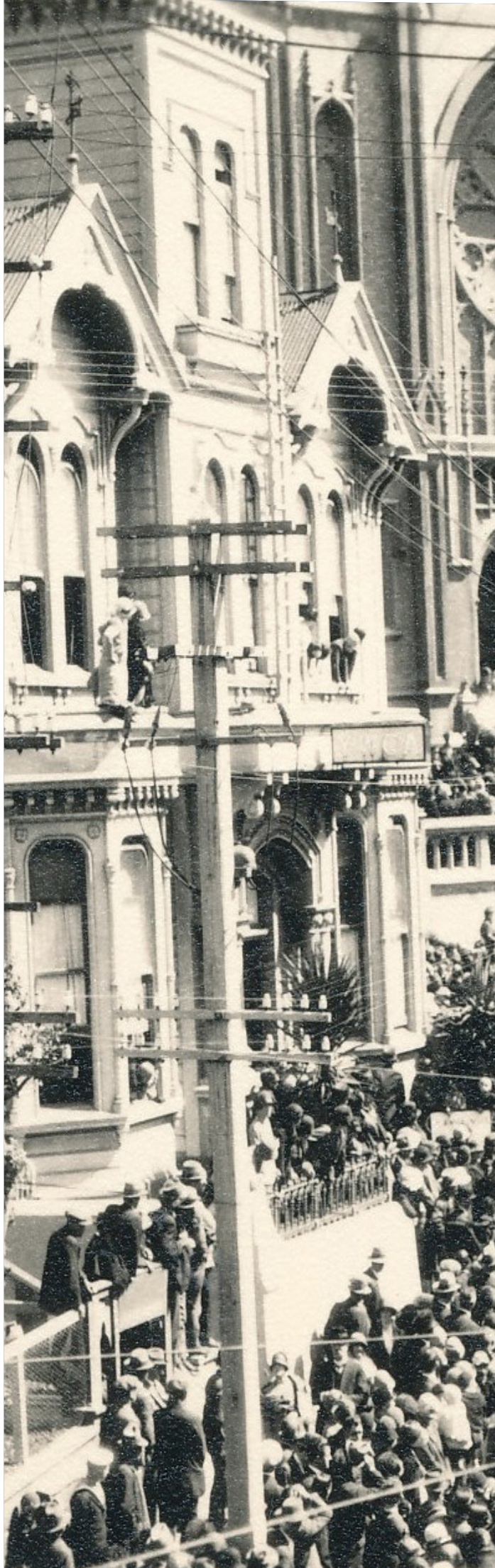
Here I am, Lord. Send me.

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert
Answered your call,
Living your life of service
In Aotearoa New Zealand,
Gifting herself to all in need
Whether they believed in you or not.

Here I am, Lord. Send me.

With praise and thanksgiving
We honour her memory,
Grateful for the seeds of compassion
She sowed in her mission
To the poor and needy,
May the same generosity colour our lives.

**Mā te Karaiti tō mātou Ariki.
Amene**





The crowds outside St Mary of the Angels,
Wellington

A Guide for Children's Liturgy & Youth Groups

A Letter of Compassion

During this centenary year, marking 100 years since the passing of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert, we are celebrating compassion in a number of ways. One of these ways is through this resource, which encourages tamariki to think about compassion and how they experience it in their everyday lives.

The resource is a letter from the Compassion Whānau to the young people of Aotearoa New Zealand. **The Compassion Whānau includes the Sisters of Compassion, along with lay people who support the mission of compassion and the enduring legacy of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert.**

We would dearly love for young people to write a letter in response, and send it to us.

These could be sent to us either by post or via email. If we receive enough letters, we hope to compile them into a booklet for future use. Please reassure tamariki that we would only use first names in any publication in order to protect their privacy.

Before sharing the letter with the young people in your care, you may wish to try some of the following activities:

- Show an image of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert and explore how much students already know about her.
- Watch this YouTube video together:
<https://youtu.be/fkV6ufsBtoY?si=Ux8JsVwU4Z9f9VHF> (Please note: the Sisters of Compassion website address is now www.compassion.org.nz.)
- Discuss letter writing and how it was a primary form of communication before email and digital media. Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert wrote hundreds of letters, and these provide valuable insight into her life, values and beliefs.

You will find two versions of the letter provided. Please use the version that is most suitable for your group.

Kia ora e ngā tamariki o Aotearoa,

**We are writing to you to tell you about a special person named
Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert!**

This year marks 100 years since she died, but we still remember her because she showed aroha and kindness to everyone.

Suzanne Aubert cared for people who were sick, lonely, abandoned or poor when nobody else would look after them. She believed in helping others and treating everyone with respect.

She once said, **"Love one another and help each other as much as you can."**

We invite you to write back to us and tell us what compassion, te pūaroa, means to you. You could tell us how you show kindness every day. How has someone treated you with compassion recently?

There is no right or wrong answer – your ideas are important! Some letters may be shared in the future to inspire others. Maybe your letter will help someone be kind?

Ngā mihi,

The Compassion Whānau



Kia ora e ngā tamariki o Aotearoa,
Tēnā koutou katoa,

We are writing to you with an important story to share. This year marks 100 years since the passing of **Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert**, a remarkable woman who lived in Aotearoa New Zealand and dedicated her life to caring for others.

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert was born in France, but she chose Aotearoa as her home and founded a religious congregation called **The Sisters of Compassion**. She lived and worked alongside Māori, learning te reo and honouring tikanga. Suzanne Aubert cared for all people who were poor, sick, abandoned, or forgotten. She believed deeply in **aroha, manaakitanga, and pūaroa**.

Suzanne once said: "Love one another and help each other as much as you can." For her, compassion was not just a feeling — it was something you did. She showed compassion by listening, by healing, by welcoming people, and by treating everyone with dignity and respect.

What is compassion?

As we remember Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert 100 years on, we want to **celebrate compassion**. Compassion can mean:

- noticing when someone is hurting,
- caring about how others feel,
- choosing kindness, even when it is hard,
- standing up for people who are left out.

He mahi tuhituhi - Your turn!

We invite you to write a letter back to us - we would love to hear your whakaaro! In your reply, you might like to tell us:

- What do you think compassion is?
- Who has shown compassion to you?
- How can you show compassion at school, at home, or in your community?
- How can you live with aroha for others every day?

There is no single right answer — your ideas and experiences are important!

A special invitation

Your letter will help keep Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert's legacy alive. Some letters may even be shared or published in the future, so **your words could inspire others to choose kindness, too**.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou for taking the time to think, write, and share.

With aroha and gratitude,

The Compassion Whānau





CLOSING PRAYER

Kia ĭnoi tātou, Let us pray:

God of Compassion, may we be lead by you, and the
example of the life of Venerable Meri
Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert,
Take us to the ones who hurt,
May we see you in every face,
May we hear you in every voice,
May we welcome you in each relationship,
May we give freely with true generosity,
May we look upon ourselves with love and with a belief
that we too need tending and care.
Loving God, move through us, that we may know
the strength that comes from living united in your
compassionate love.
We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord,
Amen.



The procession passing Willis Street

"Let us have a heart like an artichoke, and such a big one that everyone can have a leaf of it."

"In the next world, it will be the poor who will open the door to their benefactors."

"Let us serve Jesus Himself in the children confided to our care."

- Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert



Connect with us to find out more about
Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert

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compassion
te pūaroa