



Bishop of the Diocese of Palmerston North

13 February 2024

Dear Members of the Hawkes Bay Catholic Community. I wanted to write this message to you, as you prepare to commemorate this week the first anniversary of the devastating cyclone Gabriel. I wanted to let you know that the Catholic community of the wider Palmerston North Diocese stands with you in these coming days remembering particularly those who lost their lives a year ago. I recognize the tremendous efforts of those who, in the weeks and months following the cyclone have shown such courage and resilience in the face of such overwhelming destruction. I know that our Parishes, our schools and our Catholic agencies have strived to be beacons of hope during these times. I also know that words are easy to write and that only those who have had to live with the consequences of the cyclones damage can fully comprehend the pain that has been endured, but let's also concede that faith has consolation to offer us in times of great challenge. One thing every Christian can rely on is the reality that when we are suffering, Jesus himself has been there. For this reason, even in the darkness, we are not alone, despite the enormity of what can sometimes confront us. I have had reports that for some, the recovery process has been painfully slow, for others their journey back to normality has been less taxing. Wherever you find yourself at this time, I want to assure you of the ongoing support, both practical (we still have some diocesan funding available) and in prayer, from our diocesan team and parishes. I personally will offer my masses this coming weekend for a time of peace for you all this week of the anniversary.

This Wednesday is also Ash Wednesday – the beginning of our Lenten observances. The season of Lent is not a final destination. It is a time of preparation for the great and transforming event of the resurrection. I pray that during this Lent, despite any hardships you may still be enduring, you will also glimpse the first signs of this coming Easter when the all-powerful love of the risen Jesus promises to make everything new.

+John Adams Bishop of Palmerston North