

Atawhaingia ō tātau kāinga **Show Mercy wherever we dwell**

13 -15 December 2026

Rutherford House, Wellington



Atawhaingia ō tātau kāinga Show Mercy wherever we dwell

Atawhaingia ō tātau kāinga — Show Mercy wherever we dwell — is both an invitation and a calling. It speaks to a shared responsibility to embody mercy across the many spaces we inhabit: our communities, our organisations, our relationships, and our world.

This hui is inspired by the 200th anniversary of Catherine McAuley opening the first House of Mercy in Dublin - a legacy that has been carried forward across generations and the world. This gathering celebrates the past while looking ahead to how religious legacies must continue to evolve. It recognises that charisms, such as Mercy, are not bound by geography, role, or status — they offer a shared calling open to all.

The symposium will explore the impact of religion across education, healthcare, and social services, with a thematic lens grounded in Catherine McAuley's own intention: "To serve God faithfully."

Whakapono, the faith that is at the heart of this calling, is not only belief, but lived practice: expressed through service, through relationships, and through a deep commitment to the dignity of people and the wellbeing of our common home. In this way, contemporary religious entities can offer a spiritual foundation and an active response to the needs of our time.

This symposium brings together diverse voices connected by a common purpose — to reflect, to challenge, and to act with compassion and justice. We acknowledge that we each come from, and belong to, multiple places — physical, cultural, spiritual — all of which shape who we are and how we serve.

The symposium also resonates strongly with indigenous worldviews across Aotearoa, Australia, and beyond, where connection to whenua (the land) and responsibility to future generations are central. In bringing these perspectives into dialogue with Mercy and faith traditions, we create space for deeper understanding, shared learning, and collective action.

Atawhaingia ō tātau kāinga is therefore more than a theme — it is a call to gather, to reflect, and to lead with mercy and faith in every place we stand.



Te Whanganui-a-Tara - Wellington



200th

ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FOUNDING OF
Catherine McAuley's
FIRST HOUSE OF MERCY

This symposium is inspired by Catherine McAuley's action, 200 years ago, to open a House of Mercy in Dublin to meet the needs of women experiencing poverty and inadequate education.

Symposium co-hosts



WHĀNAU
MERCY
MINISTRIES

Whānau Mercy Ministries was established to carry forward the rich legacy of the Sisters of Mercy, serving communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Founded by Catherine McAuley in 19th-century Dublin and guided by her teachings and the same spirit of mercy, justice, and love, Whānau Mercy Ministries seeks to serve all people with deep compassion, especially those in great need.

Grounded in core values of aroha, manaakitanga, and kaitiakitanga, Whānau Mercy Ministries is dedicated to transforming lives and weaving a future filled with hope.



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA
NEW ZEALAND

The Study of Religion at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington offers expansive, critical, and rigorous engagement with the world's diverse religious traditions and spiritual practices.

One of the largest of its kind in Australasia, the programme has a particular focus on how religion is understood, and what makes it relevant, today - exploring what it means to be religious, as well as to eschew religion, and how people live their traditions in practice.

Another key focus concerns how religion intersects with global geopolitical realities, and other dimensions of politics, society, and culture including morality and ethics and the shaping of human imagination and experience.

Programme (draft)

Sunday 13 December 2026

Metropolitan Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Hill St, Thorndon

- 2.30pm Registration
- 3.00pm Mihi Whakatau/welcome and opening prayer
- 3.30pm Refreshments
- 4.00pm Keynote 1
- 5.00pm Panel Discussion
- 6.00pm Opening Function in St Mary's College Hall
- 8.00pm Closing

Monday 14 December 2026

Rutherford House, 23 Lambton Quay, Pipitea

- 8.30am Registration
- 8.45am Opening Prayer
- 9.00am Keynote 2
- 10.00am Morning tea
- 10.30am Papers/Workshops 1
- 11.45am Keynote 3
- 1.00pm Lunch
- 2.00pm Papers/Workshops 2
- 3.15 pm Afternoon tea
- 3.45 pm Papers/Workshops 3
- 5.00 pm Conclude sessions
- 6.30 pm Symposium Dinner in the Banquet Hall, Parliament

Tuesday 15 December 2026

Rutherford House, 23 Lambton Quay, Pipitea

- 8.30am Registration
- 8.45am Opening Prayer
- 9.00am Keynote 4
- 10.00am Morning tea
- 10.30am Workshops 4
- 11.45am Keynote 5
- 1.00pm Lunch
- 2.00pm Workshops 5
- 3.00 pm Afternoon tea
- 3.30 pm Keynote 6
- 4.30 pm Whakamutanga/Ritual of Farewell
- 5.00 pm Closure

Details of keynotes, workshops and papers will be progressively added to the symposium webpage (whanaumercy.nz/catherine-mcauley-symposium/) and a final schedule sent to registered participants in October 2026.

Student Programme

Please note that the heavily-subsidised student programme is most suited to those aged 16-25 and will run concurrently to the main programme with some overlap of presenters.

Due to space in the lecture theatres, some keynotes may not be available to those enrolled in the student programme.

Please note that student registrations do not include the Symposium dinner.

Registration

Earlybird Registration (until 24 September 2026)

Earlybird registrations are \$275.00 inc GST.

This covers participation in the listed programme activities for all three days of the symposium, and includes the Symposium dinner in the Banquet Hall in the Beehive.

Other Registration

Registrations received after 24 September 2026 are \$325.00 inc GST and dependent on available spaces.

This covers participation in the activities for all three days of the conference, and includes the Symposium dinner in the Banquet Hall at Parliament.

Student Registration

Students aged 16 are invited to register for \$50.00 for the dedicated student programme which will run on the same timetable and include some cross-over activities with the main programme. Please note that the student registration does not include the Symposium dinner.

All registrations are non-refundable but can be transferred to another participant. To register visit this link: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/LBu1zhjHE4>

Locations

All locations are within easy walking distance.

Rutherford House is located at the main bus station and adjacent to the train station.

The Symposium dinner will be held in the Beehive, the home of the New Zealand Government.



Accommodation



WQ Hotel

A group booking for conference accommodation has been secured at WQ Hotel which is a 8 minute walk from the conference venue.

The cost is \$175.00 per night per person and includes breakfast.

A double or twin room (limited availability) is \$205.00 per night for two people and includes breakfast.

Accommodation bookings (until the allocation is exhausted) can be made through the registration form.

Other accommodation

Wellington has excellent public transport options. The conference venue is situated at the central bus and train station for Wellington, allowing direct accessibility for participants to stay in other parts of the city, including the Hutt Valley and the Kapiti Coast.

Airport Transfers

An airport bus travels directly between the airport and symposium venue, departing approximately every 15 minutes.

Symposium Presenters



Dr Tricia C. Bruce is a sociologist of religion whose books include *Faithful Revolution*, *Parish and Place*, *American Parishes*, *Polarization in the US Catholic Church*, and *Our Lives*. She is President-Elect of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Past-President of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, a Senior Research Fellow with the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies, and was a papal-appointed consultant to the Synod on Synodality.



Dr Mathew Guest is Professor in the Sociology of Religion within the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University in the UK. His recent research has focused on religion in higher education contexts and the appropriation of neoliberal assumptions into religious identities across the globe. His most recent book is *Neoliberal Religion: Faith and Power in the 21st Century*.



Dr Mary Pat Garvin rsm is an educator, consultant, and facilitator for religious congregations worldwide. She received a doctorate in psychology from the Gregorian University where she also served on the faculty for eight years. In 2025, Mary Pat received the Outstanding Leadership Award from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Her research interest is the interplay of spirituality and psychology in the promotion of a healthy and holy living of religious life.



Dr Geoff Troughton is an Associate Professor in the Study of Religion at Victoria University of Wellington. His broad-ranging research focuses on religion in New Zealand, the history of modern Christianity, and contemporary religious change.



Philip Alexander-Crawford (Te Whiu, Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Rēhia, Ngāpuhi) is CEO of Hango-Ara-Rau. Highly experienced leader of transformation. Has held senior leadership roles in the vocational education sector, including Chief Executive of Te Matarau Education Trust, General Manager Education for the Ngāti wai Trust Board and Director of Development for Tai Tokerau Wānanga (NorthTec). He is a current board member of Whānau Mercy Ministries Trust.



Anna Nicholls rsm is studying toward a PhD at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington. She is leaning into her experiences working in Mercy organisations to explore the changing image of Catherine McAuley over time.

Dr Michael Belgrave is an award-winning New Zealand historian who has published on many aspects of New Zealand's history, much of it since the 1980s connected with the work of the Waitangi Tribunal since. His latest book is a general history of Aotearoa New Zealand, but one of his most enjoyable books was a history of Mercy Hospital, Auckland, to mark the hospital's centenary in 2000.



Dr Philip Fountain is an Associate Professor in the Study of Religion at Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington. An anthropologist, his research focuses on transnational Christian humanitarianism and community development. His most recent book, *The Service of Faith*, is an ethnographic study of the Mennonite Central Committee.



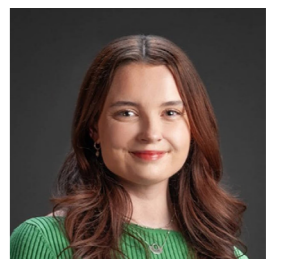
Dr Amy R. Whitehead is a Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology at Massey University. A scholar of the Study of Religions/Anthropology of Religion, her research interests concern the material and performance cultures of religions, and religion and ecology; and she has conducted extensive research at Marian shrines in Spain, England and Cuba.



Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear is a Peruvian Catholic theologian and Lecturer in Systematic Theology at the Catholic Theological College in Auckland. She holds a doctorate from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Her current research focuses on theological and pastoral responses to Church sexual and spiritual abuse.



Dr Michaela Richards is a Teaching Fellow in the Study of Religion programme at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington. Michaela's research investigates the intersections of religion and the environment, particularly focusing on conservation in Aotearoa, and how religious 'nones' form meaning through connection with the land.



Dr John Kleinsman is the Kaitohu / Director of the Nathaniel Centre for Bioethics. His background includes working in the drug rehabilitation and disability sectors. He serves on a number of advisory committees. John's doctoral research used the notion of 'gift' to focus on and frame the ethical issues generated at the interface between technology and human reproduction.



Dr Kathleen Sprows Cummings is the John A. O'Brien Collegiate Professor of American Studies and History at the University of Notre Dame, where she is also a concurrent faculty member in Gender Studies, Italian Studies, and the Nanovic Institute for European Studies. She is a fellow of the Keough Institute for Irish Studies and the Ansari Institute for Global Religious Engagement. She serves as the Director of the Provost Office's Global Catholic Research Initiative.



Call for papers

Other workshop and paper presenters will be finalised in the coming months.

If you are interested in presenting a paper or workshop, please follow this link: [Symposium – Call for Papers](#)

Potential change of format

Due to uncertainty in the current global political and transport environment, circumstances may arise that affect the accessibility for some participants to attend the symposium.

At present, the symposium is planned as an in-person event only. The Symposium Committee will review the situation by **Friday 2 October** and reserves the right to convert the event to a hybrid in-person/online format at that time, if deemed necessary.

In the event of a change to a hybrid format a communication will be sent to all event sponsors and participants to review their method of participation.

The symposium will not be considered cancelled solely due to a change in delivery format.

Thank you to our sponsors

We are grateful to the following sponsors who have already pledged generous support for the Symposium.

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Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart

Other Support

Presentation Sisters New Zealand
Metropolitan Cathedral of the Sacred Heart
St Mary's College

Sponsorship Packages

Sponsorship packages are still available.
If you are able to support the symposium through financial or other forms of support please contact Anna at anna.nicholls@vuw.ac.nz





Wellington Cable Car