

Message from New Zealand:

We have been pleased to receive messages of support from our Brigidines following the horrific massacre in the mosques in Christchurch. Christchurch is still recovering from severe earthquakes and now this. As the mayor of Christchurch said the earthquakes were a natural disaster but this is motivated by hatred. The impact has hit us all and feels like a family bereavement. Newspaper headlines have captured the feelings well. Saturday's was *END OF INNOCENCE*. Yesterday's was *LIVES TORN APART BY HATRED; A NATION UNITED IN GRIEF*. Today's cartoon shows the ruined Christchurch Cathedral with the caption 'Sometimes a force or nature tries to tear us apart - We can't prevent this. But we can rebuild'. The next picture is of the mosque with the caption 'Sometimes it's man-made. We can prevent this **WITH LOVE**. WITH COMPASSION. **WITH SENSIBLE LAWS**. WITH THE COURAGE TO CALL OUT RACISM AND UTTERLY REJECT HATE.'



You have no doubt seen the images on TV - the anguished Muslim people; the shocked Kiwis who find it hard to believe such a thing could happen here in our safe haven. Right from the start our Prime Minister, Jacinda Adern, has said "This isn't us". Wearing a head-scarf, her face dragged with grief, she has comforted the Muslim people in Christchurch and has spoken to the New Zealand people several times giving us facts and figures as they came to hand. Several of her phrases have been used by others to express their own grief ie 'This is your home and you should have been safe here" and "They are us." The most frequently heard sentiment from commentators and the people interviewed was "Such hatred can only be overcome by love'.

Jacinda was steely when she addressed the attacker directly "You may have chosen us but we utterly reject and condemn you". She rejected Donald Trump's assertion that right wing extremism wasn't growing and when he asked how the US could help she replied "Sympathy and love for all Muslim communities".

The shooting began at 1.40 pm and at the Stations of the Cross that evening there was already a message from the NZ Catholic Bishops offering prayer and solidarity with the Muslim people. Thousands of people have rallied for vigils and prayer sessions to support the Muslim people of New Zealand and we all appreciate the support from around the world. Flowers have been brought to the mosques by family groups, young people, middle-aged and old. An endearing image was of a large Pacific Island man who put down his flowers and then knelt on the street to pray.

We really are a nation united in grief and in disbelief and we thank you all for supporting us.

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