

Venerable Suzanne Aubert: A missionary who made NZ her home

At the beginning of the extraordinary month of Mission called by Pope Francis, we remember one of the great missionaries who came to New Zealand 150 years ago. Venerable Suzanne Aubert was just 25 when she responded to Christ's call to leave her native country of France and travel to New Zealand. Her mission was to answer God's call to bring the love of Christ to all people in Aotearoa New Zealand. She had a particular calling to serve Māori, and she became known to the *tangata whenua* as Meri Hohepa. She established the first soup kitchen in New Zealand still serving thousands of meals a year, homes for abandoned children and the severely disabled and a hospital to care for the sick and dying. Suzanne died here in Aotearoa New Zealand 94 years ago this week. For 66 years of her life she sought to reflect the compassionate face of Jesus to all she encountered.

Venerable Suzanne has already reached the second of four steps on her journey to sainthood. The findings of an inquiry held earlier this year to investigate an alleged miracle through her intercession are currently being examined in Rome. If Rome accepts that the miracle occurred through Suzanne's intercession, she can be beatified, and thus universally acclaimed as a true and humble follower of Jesus, inspiring us on our own journey or *hiko* of faith.