Voices of Oceania carried from Fiji and Wellington to Pope Leo XIV in Rome

A woven mat carrying the stories, reflections and hopes of communities across Oceania has travelled from Fiji through Wellington to the Vatican, where it was presented to Pope Leo XIV by Caritas Australia CEO Kirsten Sayers.

The mat was created during *Threads of Witness: A Pacific Climate Justice Talanoa*, a Caritas Oceania event held as part of the Pacific Pre-COP gathering in Fiji in October.

Led by Archbishop of Suva Peter Loy Chong, the gathering brought together Pacific Church leaders, young people and community representatives around a woven Pacific mat to share their experiences, hopes and calls for climate justice.

Participants placed witness cards, testimonies, reports and reflections onto the mat as a collective expression of the realities facing communities across Oceania and the future they hope to build.

The mat then travelled to Wellington for the Caritas Oceania Regional Forum and Synodal Conversation on the Ocean, where further messages were added as Church and community representatives reflected on the Pacific as a "sacred ocean" and the inseparable dignity of people and creation.

Its journey culminated in Rome, where Kirsten Sayers presented the mat and the witness it carries to Pope Leo XIV during a meeting hosted by Caritas Internationalis.

The meeting marked the 75th anniversary of Caritas Internationalis, which is today made up of 162 member organisations operating in almost every country and territory in the world.

Kirsten Sayers said the moment reflected the Catholic Church's responsibility to accompany communities and help ensure their voices are heard.

"Across Oceania and particularly the Pacific, the Church walks alongside communities already living with rising seas, increasingly severe disasters, water insecurity and changing livelihoods. This mat carries some of their stories, prayers, hopes and experiences. To bring that witness from communities across Oceania to the Holy Father was an incredibly special moment."

Threads of Witness was created as a prayerful and relational space grounded in Pacific wisdom and lived experience, recognising that climate discussions ultimately concern people, communities and the futures they are working to build.

The journey from Fiji to Wellington and ultimately Rome has allowed the mat to become a continuing expression of witness: gathering voices from across Oceania and carrying them from local communities to the heart of the global Church.

Kirsten Sayers said the moment was ultimately one of solidarity and hope.

"Pacific communities are not simply vulnerable to climate change. They are already adapting, responding and leading. Our role is to listen to that leadership, stand alongside them and make sure their voices remain at the centre of the conversations shaping their future" she concluded.

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