



The History of  
**St MARY'S**  
Catholic Parish Wanganui N.Z.



**A Century And A Half Since 1851**

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(Editor: George Abbott  
for the Parish Pastoral Council)

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'THE TIME HAS COME ....'  
**MESSAGE FROM  
PARISH LEADER**

Dear Parishioners of St Mary's,

Tena Koutou, Tena Koutou, Tena Koutou Katoa.

It is a special year for all the Catholic people of Wanganui as we celebrate 150 years since the formal establishment of the parish of St Mary's, and it is a special time to be here with you all.

We can pause, look back in thanksgiving, celebrate together and renew our vision for the future.

**I am particularly conscious that at the end of this year the Marist Society relinquishes pastoral responsibility for St Mary's and next year Diocesan priests will be here with you.**

The Society of Mary was approved by Pope Gregory XVI in 1836 and given responsibility for the Church's missionary outreach to our part of the world, Western Oceania. In New Zealand and particularly here in Wanganui, in Maori Mission, education and pastoral care members of the Marist family have been significant in the growth and life of our Church. We now see three parish structures and a Catholic Maori Community within this pastoral area.

Today the Society of Mary is trying to be true to its missionary nature, and to ask the hard questions as to what it means to be missionary in present — day New Zealand. In some way this will entail moving away from well established church communities to work among people who are not yet so secure in faith.

**It is in this context that the decision was made by our Provincial Administration that the time had come to move away from Wanganui. I am sure that there are mixed feelings for all of us at this time.**

It is easier to remain with the familiar and to avoid the opportunities that change provides.

## FR SMYTH CONTINUES:

I am sure that all Marists who have been here in Wanganui would like to express appreciation for the support, friendship and loyalty that we have experienced over the past 150 years.

At the beginning of this year Pope John Paul II took the words **PUT OUT INTO THE DEEP** (Luke 5:4) as a focus for the beginning of the new millennium. He said that these words invite us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever". (Heb 13:8).

Another image of the Church today would be like the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Like them we are on the road and many of our expectations have been unsettled. But the gift of the Lord's presence, the power of the Spirit, is ours to receive, and the Lord is in our midst, as companion on the journey, as guide and, especially, in the Blessing and Breaking of the Eucharistic Bread.

I pray that the Lord will be with you, the Catholic people of Wanganui, as you look to the future, responding in faith to the promptings of the Spirit of God.

**May Mary, Mother of the Lord, first disciple and Mother of the Church, under whose name and care we have lived, be for each of you a loving mother and continuing sign of hope.**

---

Ma te Atua koutou e manaaki e tiaki hoki i nga wa katoa.

Rodney Smyth, S.M.  
Marist Community Leader and Parish Priest



**PARISH LEADER Fr Rodney Smyth S.M. (centre) caught with parishioner Sue Seconi's lens. On left, Fr Phil King-Turner, S.M., and on right Fr Frank Twiss, S.M.**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wanganui's Parish Pastoral Council is indeed grateful for the in-depth research and penmanship devoted to preparing this sesquicentennial document — 150 years of St Mary's Parish.

Particularly appreciated was all the dedicated research undertaken by archivists, the Rev Sisters Genevieve and, Crompton, by Mary Gullery and collagues, diarist Ken Mahoney, Bro Gerard, and other Marists in the Wellington libraries, our own photographer Sue Seconi, our proof checker Joan Egan, and others.

Thank you all — George Abbott (Editor)

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# FOREWORD

**A**niversaries and jubilees are holy times. We take time out from our routines to reflect on where we have come from and where we are heading. We need to know both in order to “walk tall” in the present.

Those who handed down to us our Catholic faith did so out of personal choices they made coming of their own faith and generosity. We have received from them our reason for believing that life really is worthwhile, even in spite of its difficult moments.

So we have every reason to be grateful to those who formed the community of faith called St Mary's Parish, Wanganui.

Hopefully, others coming after us will have the same reason to be grateful to us. That depends on personal choices that are made.

I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the priests and parishioners of St Mary's for what they are doing to nurture, live and hand on a wonderful heritage.

P J Cullinane  
Bishop of Palmerston North

## AN EDITORIAL NOTE.

St Mary's sesquicentennial:

One of the great frustrations about compiling any kind of history is that however wide one may cast one's net to gather material, or how carefully one may check and cross-check facts and figures, as soon as a document leaves the printers, people will be spurred to rush in with suggested corrections to hitherto accepted facts!

Yet this is but part of the process of recording history. Our researchers for this 'update' about St Mary's have done exceedingly well. And hopefully, the newly-printed narrative not only will instruct and entertain but will inspire our younger parishoners to cope with the changes and note the examples set by their elders at St Mary's.

It is appropriate to capture the sentiments of Cardinal Thomas Williams when he discoursed some time back on parish histories.

The real history of a parish is not to be found in a flood of figures or a deluge of dates, he said, rather it is found in its impact on the lives of those who have celebrated the Mass and Sacraments, planned and toiled, sung and socialised, served and sacrificed, as a community of Christ's faithful.

The histories already written in our senior parishes will tell something of that impact. It honours the pioneering families and those who succeeded them.

But the greatest honour we can pay them is to continue their work by taking up anew the task of making the parish even more dynamic in discipleship, even more committed to evangelisation ....

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"Anglicans 42 - Catholics 32!: No, this isn't the result of a match at the new Stadium; it's merely the number of churches throughout New Zealand which are called simply 'ST MARY'S'. Throughout this year a Marian banner will travel the length of the country in a wonderful ecumenical tribute to Our Lady, says a light-hearted fragment from Wanganui St Mary's Parish Weekly bulletin, the Marian.

# A MARIST BEACH-HEAD IN PETRETOWN

(By Sr. Genevieve, SM)

The town of Wanganui, originally known as Petre, was the second of the New Zealand Company's settlements and was negotiated by Edward Jerningham Wakefield. The first settlers arrived on 27 February 1841.

Many who followed were Irish immigrants in search of a better life than their own country afforded at the time.

Much of the now urban area of Wanganui was then either swamp or bushland. It took some years to create the semblance of a township and to begin cultivating the hinterland. Added to these difficulties was the constant threat of unfriendly tribes from Taranaki.

In 1849, Father Le Comte S.M., visited Wanganui to minister to the spiritual needs of the settlers and the two Imperial regiments garrisoned in the town.

However, the real foundations of the Catholic Church in Wanganui are attributed to two French Marists - Frs Stephen Pezant and Lampila who arrived in 1851.

They established the small chapel and residence in Taupo Quay. Fr Lampila set to work to evangelize the people of the river and set up several mission stations.

Fr Pezant concentrated on the settlers and the Catholic soldiers of the 57<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> Imperial regiments. He had early help from one Brother Bernard who in turn was assigned two Marist Brothers as assistants — Bros Elias Regis Maria and Euloge Chabnay, the latter losing his life tragically upriver in the infamous Battle of Moutoa. That was in 1865.

## A VAST PARISH

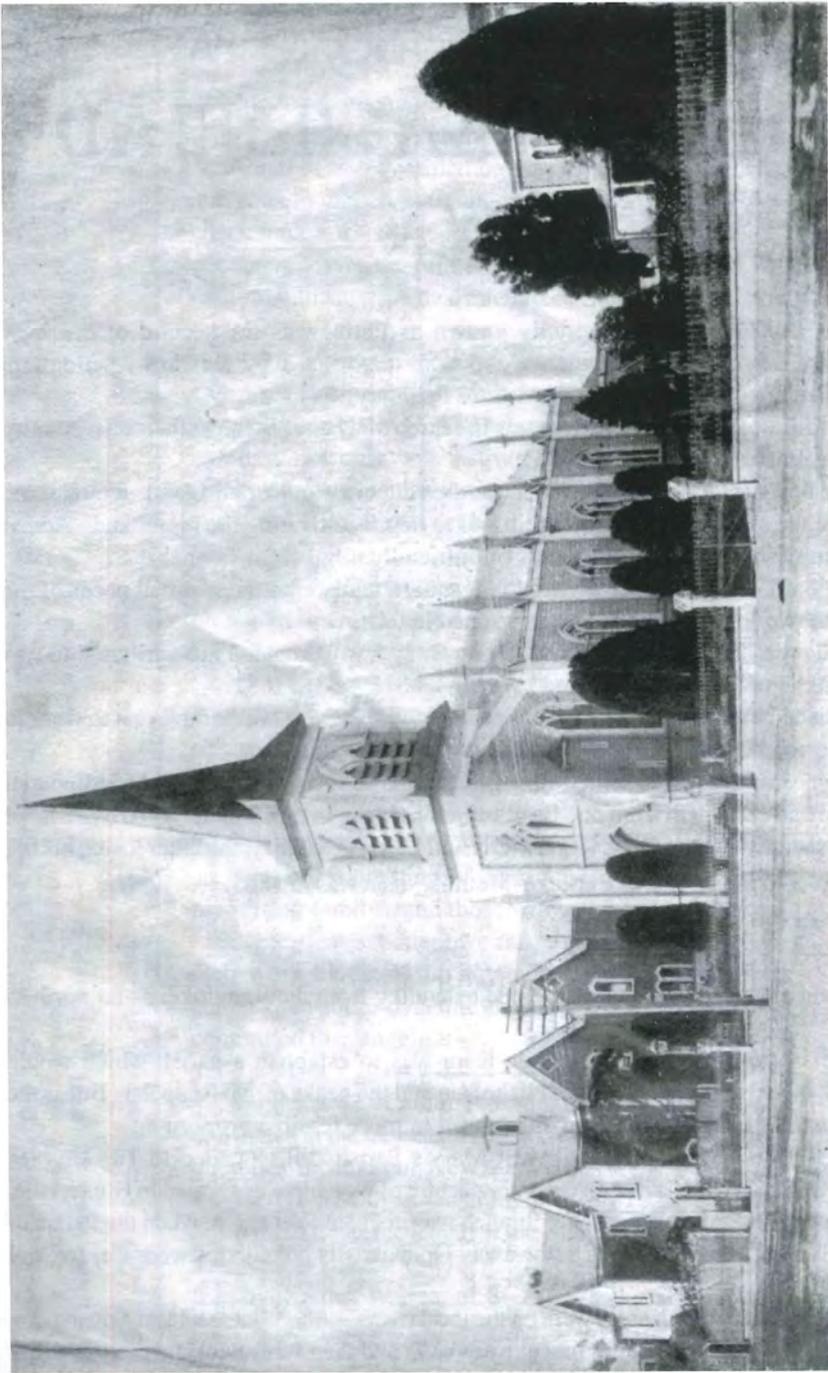
Father Pezant's parish was a very large one extending from the Rangitikei as far north as Taranaki.

The Bishop's brief to the Pezant-Comte team was to establish a parish which would encompass all the territory between Port Nicholson and the peaks of Mt Ruapehu. But as the territory was settled this Wanganui parish reduced to more feasible proportions.

Towards the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, St Mary's Parish still extended to Turakina (St Joseph's) and Bulls (St Mary's), and yet another centre of worship was formed in Hunterville.

North along the Taranaki coast, another branch was in Patea. Yet again, when the Parish of Our Lady of the Sea was established at far-away Opunake, its boundaries were Kai Iwi and New Plymouth!

The really significant growth areas were on the local rivers — the Whangaehu at Kauangaroa beyond Fordell, and the Whanganui, first at Kaiwhaiki and then Jerusalem and progressively down through the years, river communities in between.



IMPOSING VICTORIA AVENUE LINEUP —

Sacred Heart Convent (left), St Mary's Church (Centre) and the Presbytery, partly obscured by trees on right. The convent moved to St John's Hill in 1912. The Church dedicated to the Virgin Mary moved from a lesser Taupo Quay site in the 1870's.

## “UNTIRING ZEAL”

The book “WANGANUI” (Chapple & Veitch) records that Fr Pezant “was a man of such untiring zeal that, far from neglecting any of his own parishioners, he found time during the war years to devote attention to the wounded and dying soldiers in the field”.

In 1868 he transferred to Blenheim and the people of Wanganui, all denominations, expressed their genuine regret.

The local paper reported: “In all weathers, day and night, Fr Pezant was constantly on the move, travelling from house to house on errands of mercy. We admire the integrity, the zeal and self-dedication of the man. Surely he will have his reward. He has lived poorly and worked hard. To give him money for his own comforts was useless.

“All he got went straight to the poor, though very few lived more poorly than he”.

But back to Wanganui, Fr Pezant's labours had been recognised. Through the good offices of Governor Grey a grant of land in Victoria Avenue was obtained and soon the Catholic settlers had a more fitting place of worship and their pastor a separate presbytery.

On August 15, 1857, this first church was blessed and opened with great ceremony by the Right Rev Dr Viard S.M., Bishop of New Zealand. It was consecrated the Church of the Sacred Heart of Mary — a name later shortened to St Mary's as it remains to this day, a century and a half later.

## FIRST COLONISTS

The first Catholic colonists turned to Australia for spiritual leadership, but the initial strong messages still had to come from France, spearheaded, it transpired, by Lyons' Archbishop de Pins.

That was in the 1830's. And the first missionary despatched to New Zealand, this outpost of Western Oceania, was Jean Baptiste Francois Pompallier.

The Bishop's land-breaking team arrived with the express intention of evangelising the Maori people.

## TIRELESS

Wanganui's first Marists were indeed tireless trail-blazers. Fr Pezant, from the original mission station at Otaki, worked diligently to establish the foundations of St Mary's. Yet he found time, at least once a year, to trek overland to the fledging settlement of New Plymouth, there to minister to his growing flock.

Then when he was replaced at Wanganui by Fr Lampila, he went walkabout in a big way, ranging from Russell to the south's Kaikoura. This occupied him for some 45 years!

In Kaikoura he established the Church's first South Island mission station. He passed away while serving his flock in Picton where ultimately two trainloads of mourners attended his interment at Picton Cemetery.

Back to Fr Lampila's residency, up river at Kaiwhaiki: He established the orchards and grain crops which serviced the chain of flourmills Sir George Grey had built along the river. From Wanganui he finally transferred to New Plymouth. That was in 1875.

## 'NO SCHOOLS'

In those early days Fr Pezant was vitally interested in education. Writing to his superiors in 1860 he reported:

"There are no schools yet because of lack of funds. Brothers and Sisters would be needed for this work. We have esteem and encouragement of the protestants here".

A report six years later noted that a school had been built in church grounds in Victoria Avenue where a sound English education was being provided.

Instruction was also being offered in Greek, Latin, French and geometry under the guidance of Mr M J O'Callaghan. Such was the demand for education that a night school also operated three nights a week from 7 to 9 pm at the same premises.

In 1873 the school was placed under the control of the Education Board of the Province of Wellington, but assistance from that source was discontinued with the passing of the Abolition of the Provinces Act, followed closely by the 1877 Education Act.

The school reverted completely to the control of the Catholic settlers. Meanwhile enrolment numbers continued to grow and the staff increased to four.

## DEAN KIRK LIKewise NEVER RESTED

With the colourful Pezant-Lampila pioneering eras at the end, Ireland supplied St Mary's with a new priest, the Rev Dean Charles Kirk, SM. He toiled at St Mary's 29 long years.

Dean Kirk supervised the construction of the first St Mary's Church, then in the span of a few short years, he blueprinted (and oversaw construction) of a trim two-storey presbytery on the eastern side of the new church, the first St Mary's convent school (western side of the church) and Wanganui's first Marist Brothers' School.

Dean Kirk never rested. The parish by this time extended to Marton, Bulls and Hunterville. Fr Kirk was a regular visitor to all three settlements.

Dean Kirk hailed from County Monaghan. He came to New Zealand as a Society of Mary novice (after training for three years in Sydney).

In a eulogy delivered at his requiem, Archbishop Redwood had said: "The Society of Mary sorrows over the loss of a very distinguished, zealous and devoted member....I have lost a trusted and wise adviser").



**Parish builder — the Rev Dean Kirk.**

## THE PIONEERING JOSEPHITES

From the beginning in Wanganui Fr (later Dean) Kirk was recognised as an ardent educationist. It was he who negotiated to bring religious sisters from Australia to teach in the parish's first school. He persuaded Bishop Redwood to invite the Sisters to establish a convent and school in the growing settlement. Meantime he made practical plans for their coming. A site for the new convent was blessed and dedicated by the Bishop on the occasion of his visit to bless the new church.

The first four sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth who pioneered convent school teaching in Wanganui were Mother Hyacinth (Quinlan), Srs Teresa (Schmidt), Joseph (Kinsella) and Clare (Rubie). The quartette hailed from the Order's Bathurst mother house and were sent across the Tasman to Wanganui by the community's founder, Fr Tenison Woods.

### ALL BEGAN IN NSW

This extraordinary community, or communities was established in New South Wales in the 1870's by an English migrant, Fr Tenison Woods who was a journalist working with the prestigious London Times before migrating to Australia.

He entered the Priesthood at a Jesuit College at Sevenhills, NSW. And his parish became a vast mind-boggling one of 22,000 sq miles of outback, dotted by remote cattle stations.

And there, in the Penola settlement, was born the order, founded on the principles of poverty and simplicity. Fr Woods recruited the first young women to attend to the religious care and instruction of the people, essentially the schooling needs. Two orders of nuns eventuated - the Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth (the "Black Josephites"), and the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart ("The Brown Josephites").

## JERUSALEM VILLAGE WAS THE TARGET

When they eventually crossed the Tasman, the four Sisters moved into the "old" Wanganui Presbytery and the convent, the primary school and later the boarding school. Then tentatively an orphanage was established. The Sisters' expertise was quickly recognised and more and more youngsters sought to be enrolled in the school, the Sisters being endeared to parents and youngsters alike.

The Wellington Diocesan branch of the Black Sisters of St Joseph was formalised and the Sisters penetrated up-river as the threat of the Hauhauism waned after the Battle of Moutoa.

The Jerusalem mission was established, and thrived until the arrival on the West Coast of Mother Mary Aubert and the emergence of her Sisters of Compassion, when the Josephites withdrew. But their pioneering ventures in other districts accelerated around the turn of the century. The Sisters strengthened the Maori mission centre at Otaki, and in the brief seven year span established convent schools in Hawera, Hastings and Waipawa, then at Manaia, Patea, Feilding, Waverley and Taihape.

# THE SCHOOLS MARCH ON: FIRST ST RITA'S THEN THE BIG CONVENT



Sister Rita

Sister Rita's Holy Infancy Convent School at Aramoho materialised right on the turn of the century, and the Sisters' greatest triumph, the mother house of Sacred Heart on Wanganui's St John's Hill, opened a decade later. It was "acclaimed one of the most efficient high schools for girls in the Southern Hemisphere."

Sisters of St Josephs of Nazareth provincial centres then were operating in Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Wellington and Auckland. A Catechetical centre was opened in Taupo and a Scholasticate in Wellington.

In 1980, a centennial booklet claimed there were then nearly 900 Black Josephites working throughout New Zealand, Australia, Tasmania and New Guinea.

Booklet editor Mary Gullery clearly wrote from the heart: "This book is lovingly dedicated to the valiant women of the Sisters

of St Joseph of Nazareth who have inspired and enriched New Zealand education for 100 years and now commence their second century in the same spirit of vision and courage with which the early Sisters first encountered a new world."

The Wanganui Chronicle of April, 1880, described the fine two-storied building, designed by Dean Kirk, which was awaiting the Sisters.

However, for a few days the Sisters occupied the old presbytery and were looked after by the priest's housekeeper until the following Sunday, April 25, when the solemn blessing and formal opening of the convent took place. For the remainder of the day ladies of the parish came bringing cooking utensils, furniture, linen, supplies of all kinds.

So, far from being in a primitive border settlement "in a faraway country overrun by savage tribes", the Sisters found themselves in a substantial and handsome convent in a well-organised growing township.

That was their first surprise. The next was to find that they were expected to take boarding pupils (several had already been enrolled by the Dean) and to teach pupils in both select and parish schools, providing tuition in such subjects as vocal and instrumental music, drawing and painting, plain and ornamental needlework, as well as the basic reading, writing and arithmetic.

# NEXT: AN ORPHANAGE!

The Sisters of Nazareth also were expected to set up and take charge of an orphanage. A formidable task indeed for four unsuspecting Sisters!

True, Dean Kirk has also arranged for three young local women to join the Sisters as postulants.

Later, recalling those early days, Sr Clare wrote:

"All this was a big innovation as, up to now, the Sisters had kept strictly to the teaching of poorer children in parish schools. No extra classes were given outside school hours. Four simple sisters indeed, were faced with a problem!"

Dean Kirk, anxious to support the success of the work, had organised a committee of "splendid ladies" who gave professional help until the new institute was firmly established.

## "THE ENORMITY..."

But, as Sister Clare went on, "the enormity of the work, all so new, left us humanly speaking, with heavy hearts, but still determined to carry on and trust in God alone. Nobody could understand the difficulties we had to overcome".

The first convent schools were officially opened on May 3, 1880 with a combined roll of 200. Numbers were further increased when boarders were accepted on June 28. The Sisters had not expected to cater for boarding pupils nor to teach music and art, but they quickly adapted to try to meet the needs of the pupils.

At the same time any spare hours they had were used in the further apostolate of visiting families in need and assisting in welfare work among the wider community.

## THE PARISH IN 1892

A Wellington Diocesan statement of 1892 listed Wanganui Catholic churches as St Mary's (Wanganui), St Joseph's (Turakina), St Mary's (Bulls), plus "a church under construction in Hunterville."

Just two priests were listed — the Very Rev Chas H Kirk, SM, (rector) and the Rev Peter Broussard, SM, (Assistant-in-charge of the Maori Mission). The Maori mission stations were Kauangaroa and Rangitikei. Sodalities operating within St Mary's parish were the League of the Sacred Heart and the League of the Rosary combined (130 members), and the Children of Mary (54).

## MOTHER MARY AUBERT

In 1883 there was a further call on the Sisters when the Bishop requested that Mother Hyacinth assign two sisters to accompany the then Mary Joseph Aubert up-river. This was to re-establish the mission station at Jerusalem and set up a school.

After some hard pioneering work at several river localities, they withdrew when aspirants for Mother Aubert's newly-projected order,

the Sisters of Our Lady of Compassion, came to join her.

Then the Marist Brothers came to Wanganui, primarily to help teach the older boys attending the parish school.

Those first Brothers were Bros. Alfred, Edmund and Coleman who taught in a newly-erected classroom at the rear of the convent. Their monastery was nearby.

## THE EYE ON OAKLAND AVENUE

Historian Sr Genevieve narrates further about Dean Kirk. He purchased a substantial area of land on St John's Hill, which had lain idle until 1910 when Mother Columba began looking for a site, and amid much criticism and dire predictions decided on the Hill as offering the best possibilities.

Church authorities agreed to pass over this area to the Order and plans were drawn up for a combined convent, boarding school and school on Oakland Avenue.

In 1911 the foundation stone was laid by Archbishop Redwood and one year later, on May 12, 1912, the new three-storied brick building was blessed and opened in the presence of several thousand onlookers, every point of vantage being occupied early.

The Chronicle contained a full account of the ceremony. It also recorded the convent and school in it unfurnished state had cost 20,000 pounds with the price of the land being an extra 3,000 pounds.

## FOR BOARDERS, A MANSION!

By the mid-1900's the demand for places at the Sacred Heart boarding school were such that more floorspace was needed. Then the former doctor's residence - 'Hutchinson's Folly' - was acquired and some boarders moved in. It continued as a school for decades, finally as St Augustines College!

(The Dublin Street establishment taken over by the teaching Brothers remained until the long-planned move to Gonville's Totara Street was achieved. At that point the Dublin Street property became St Mary's Convent and School)

But much earlier the Church opened a Junior School at Aramoho, on the fringe of "Poverty Flat." This school has survived under various names and undergone many metamorphoses from then until the present — Holy Infancy, Sr Rita's School, St Joseph's and currently St Mary's.

It was in 1907 that the foundation stone of St Joseph's Church, Aramoho was laid.

## A WORTHIER CHAPEL

It soon became apparent the area allocated for a chapel at Sacred Heart was inadequate for the worshippers, the Sisters, the boarders and layfolk.

So a decision was taken to build a separate chapel linked to the existing convent. The foundation stone was laid in 1918. That same year the Wharenui homestead, once the gracious home of the Alexander family on the corner of Wicksteed and Ingestre Streets, came on the market and was purchased by Church authorities for 12,500 pounds (\$25,000).

This then became the town convent and home for the sisters who taught in the primary school.

The former stables of this grand old house were converted and used to provide classrooms for Standard five and six, thus relieving the pressure further down the road at St Josephs Hall where the top storey was now declared officially out of bounds!

That year, and the following too, there were extra demands on the sisters' time and energy when the 'flu epidemic and its ravages struck the town.

### ST VINCENT'S

In 1918 St Vincent's Church had been opened at Castlecliff, and the following year school began with an enrolment of 54 pupils. The sisters travelled daily from Sacred Heart by bus and tram. This school continued until 1947 when falling numbers made its future impractical.

## AN ERA OF BRILLIANCE

Sr. Genevieve continues -

At Sacred Heart College growing numbers in the 1920's meant various additions were necessary. A large recreation and assembly hall was built in 1921. This has been extensively altered and added to over the years. The school baths, also subjected to much remodelling and updating, were a welcome addition in 1929.

In 1926 arrangements were made to purchase the adjoining Watts property. The house on two-and-a-half acres, had belonged to a Mr Holcroft whose daughters, Maud and Gertie, were among the first pupils enrolled when the Sacred Heart Convent / School opened in the Avenue in 1880!

The year 1925 saw the opening of St Anthony's Church in Gonville and commencement of the school there, again staffed from Sacred Heart, until the Sisters began to reside there in 1961.

In 1927 primary classes experienced another move across town to Hurworth, a property in Grey Street, formerly a private Anglican boys' school which had amalgamated with a similar establishment in Hawkes Bay.

This move had the effect of bringing primary classes together on one property. For a short time, junior boy boarders were also accepted. At the same time junior classes from new entrants to standard two continued at the Villa under the tutorship of Sr Ligouri.

The Hurworth school was still officially St Mary's convent, but St Joseph's Convent.

Nevertheless the name Hurworth stuck. The Villa continued to operate as a junior school into the 1940's when it was required for a boys' secondary school - St Augustine's.

Then the "Villa Kids" as they were affectionately known, were relocated in a new building, St Monica's on the north side of the Presbytery.

Here, new entrants to standard two from the city area, Putiki and Durie Hill were educated until 1963 when the building was required for parochial use.

St Mary's, Wicksteed Street, was then in operation so most of the pupils went to swell the numbers there.

## HURWORTH VANISHES

In 1962 the Hurworth lease expired and the Sisters and the school were again on the move, this time back to more familiar territory, to the Marist Brothers' recently vacated property at No. 272 Wicksteed Street.

The Brothers had moved to a new monastery and school on a much bigger site at Tawhero.

By 1960 the Brothers were finding that buildings and grounds in Wicksteed Street were too restrictive for a boys' school and the site had been empty for some months.

So the buildings were adapted and renovated to serve as the city convent and primary school.

Here the sisters lived and school continued on the spot until 1988, when, after some years of uncertainty and indecision, a new primary school was built on the old Holy Infancy site at Tay Street.

This school (now St Mary's) was blessed and opened on July 17, 1988, the entire ceremony having to be held in the nearby St Augustine's assembly hall because of the atrocious weather.

In 1942 there was growing demand for a school in the expanding area of Wanganui East, so a large old house at the corner of Kawakawa and Nixon Streets was acquired, altered and added to so as to provide a Mass centre for that area and a junior school.

The Catholic population of this area has continued to grow and now boasts a fine new church and a full primary school set in spacious grounds.

# PARISH ACHIEVEMENTS

From its beginning Sacred Heart Convent/College had catered for primary as well as secondary pupils, boys being enrolled up to standard two level. In 1948 the raising of the school leaving age resulted in an urgent need for more classroom space. So from that date Sacred Heart became purely a post-primary school.

In 1938 a new wing was added to the main building - three classrooms on the ground floor and further dormitory accommodation above.

In 1962 amid much lamentation, the Fernery was cut down and the present St John Baptist building was blessed and opened on June 24.

In 1973 a further wing was added to this building - three science labs on the top floor with two classrooms and a large staffroom below.

After the demolition of the original three-storey brick building was ordered, in 1982, Tenison House provided temporary accommodation for the library and one teaching area until the building of the next addition to S.H.C. - a large library, named in honour of Mother Columba, plus a theatrette, a multi-purpose classroom and music suite. This was completed in 1986 and blessed and opened on November 2 of that year.

## THE VATICAN SPEAKS

**In light of directives from Vatican II to religious congregations to re-look at their ministries in the original spirit of their founders, the Sisters spent much time from the 1970's on doing that very thing - discerning current realities and looking at possible future needs, as well as considering lessening numbers.**

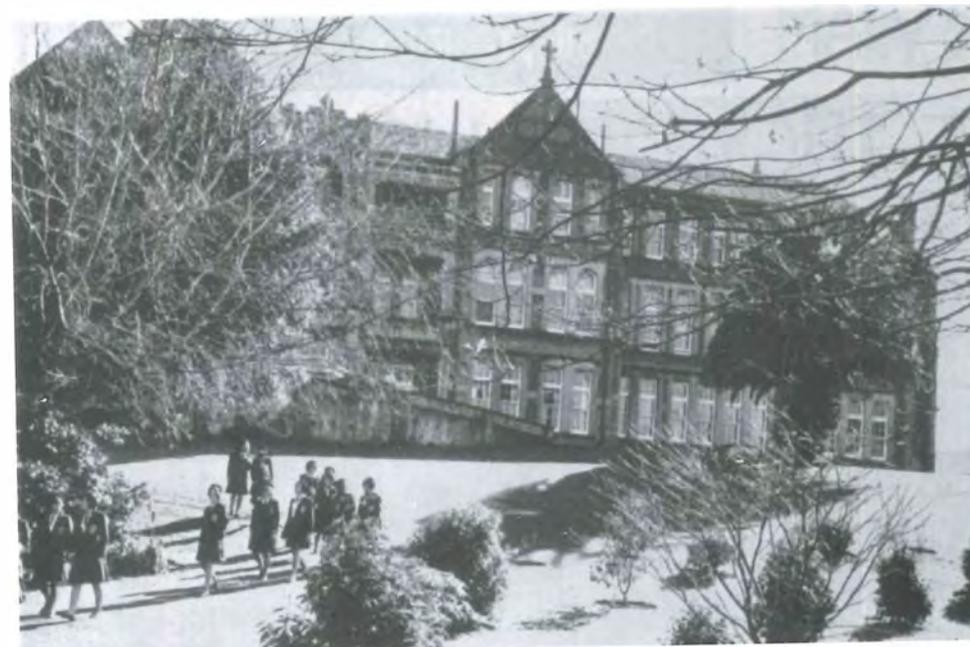
An increasing number of qualified and dedicated lay teachers were coming forward to take positions in the schools and the introduction of integration offered the hope of easing the financial burden.

This had the effect of freeing sisters to offer their skills and services in other areas of need. So from the 1980's on, many sisters have undertaken other ministries in the wider community, working alongside others in ecumenical enterprises, in social work and in chaplaincy positions. Today there are only a handful of sisters actually in the teaching service.

After the demolition of Sacred Heart, Nazareth was built as a home for the sisters, but in 1987 after consideration of its under-use, many of the sisters retired from teaching preferring to remain in branch convents rather than coming to Wanganui, it was opened to the public as a rest home. This was an eminently successful decision and Nazareth has continued to grow and expand - an additional wing and a large lounge was added in 1989 and it is now a fully accredited 40-bed home.

In 1983 Mount St Joseph which has been the novitiate since 1949 was renamed as the Generalate of the Congregation. Since then it has been extensively enlarge to offer conference facilities and is also widely used by many local groups as a convenient and well-appointed meeting place.

**As we move into the new millennium after 120 years apostolate in the Wanganui and beyond, we are mindful of the charism bequeathed to us by our founders, Julian Tenison Woods and Mary McKillop and our pioneer sisters, and we strive to meet the needs especially of the under-privileged in an increasingly complex society.**



A PARISH showplace built 90 years back - Sacred Heart Convent which replaced the original in mid-Victoria Avenue.



Sr. Geneviene, convent archivist who researched the material thus far printed.

## A THOUSAND WORSHIPPERS



Parish records say the seating plan for the original St Mary's "could be said to seat 600, but between 1,000 and 1,100 have been assessed on really big occasions, when both the choir loft and the rear 'upstairs' loft were in use."

St Mary's continued to be used for all Masses until January, 1973.

St Mary's original foundation stone - the dedication to the Virgin Mary - was blessed and laid by the Most Rev Lord Francis, Bishop of Wellington, "in the presence of a gathering of faithful laity on the Feast of Our Lady, Mediatrix of all Graces, in the year 1876."

## THE TREASURES OF ST. MARY'S

(Mary Gullery)

A small boy in another land grew up with a life-long love of Church art, after being taken as a child to a wonderful old cathedral. Looking through the coloured windows he concluded "A Saint is a man that the light shines through".

He was ultimately to design the first four stained glass windows of St. Mary's in Wanganui, New Zealand. The light that he captured there still shines through our Church life today, transferred to a new building.

The boy was Charles Henry Kirk, born at Scotland's Monaghan where he attended the diocesan seminary. He was educated partly in England and partly in Dublin, studying at St. Mary's, Leeson Street, Dublin, where he was prefect and later at the Catholic University.

Ordained a priest in 1870, he went out as a curate to St. Patrick's, Sydney. After three years there he came to Wellington and was shortly after, appointed as Parish Priest to St. Mary's, Wanganui.

Dean Kirk's first difficult task was to build a much needed new church, which he commenced with enthusiasm in 1875.

When it opened in 1876 this enormously-gifted man had supplied the entire building plan, right down to windows, altars and kauri seating.

In following years he went on to seeing almost the whole of the Catholic church buildings erected in the vicinity, acting as architect for the Convent, the Presbytery, and the Marist Brothers' School.

As well, he imbued the entire pioneer parish with his great enthusiasm and vigour. His long apostolate in St. Mary's ended with his death in 1904, but in the 2000's we can still look around and be reminded of his endeavours.



Parish historian Mary Gullery

## GO THE QUIETITUDE

Consider a visit to the old church. You needed to take only a few steps from the centre of the city to slip into this church, where you were instantly enclosed in Gothic quietude and peace. At the altar the blue lamb, symbol of eternal vigil, was always alight.

The altar ornately carved was set into a central alcove, surmounted by a crucifix in a further inset, and enclosed by two double stained glass windows.

Under these stood life-sized angel statues, holding candelabra. Side altars, also in alcoves, contained statues of Our Lord and Our Lady, while above the entire altar section stood St. Joseph and St. Peter Chanel.

The Good Shepherd was stationed above the main confessional, and altars on either side of the Church featured Christ the King and the Pieta Group.

# MAGNIFICENT WINDOWS

The stained glass windows of St Mary's have been restored and installed in the new church. The late Mr. Brendan O'Shea spent endless painstaking hours preserving and strengthening them in 1972.

In the Avenue a double-stained glass window over the right-hand door way was inscribed "Pray for Antony Mayer".

Antony Mayer was a Swiss, known to the parents of Mr C. Burnett whom he lived near in Blackfrairs Road, London. He worked at Lowden's shop as a watchmaker in 1851. He



**MEMORIAL WINDOW honouring the builder of the first St Mary's, Rev. Dean Kirk.**

came to New Zealand in the late 1850's and opened a shop in Taupo Quay. He was burnt out in Taylor and Watt's fire in 1861. He then shifted to Victoria Avenue near the New Zealand Clothing Factory, being a tenant of Mr Burnett Snr. who resided nearby. He went home to Switzerland, returning in 1873 with his wife, and established a business at the corner of Maria Place and the Avenue, and later moved next to the Catholic Presbytery where he resided until his death on August 11, 1892, aged 69. Two years before he died he entrusted his work to Mr R. Springman who took over the business. Mr Harry Crysell bought the business from Mr Springman in 1908.

# MORE ABOUT WINDOWS:

Mr Mayer was a quiet man and much respected in the district. Requiem Mass at St Mary's Church was conducted by Father Kirk, and there was a large cortege. He is buried in the old Catholic cemetery, Heads Road. A marble cross bears his inscription and also that of his wife, Frances Mary, who died in 1914, aged 80.

Another window commemorates Doctor Patrick Joseph Connolly, leading surgeon in the township at the turn of the century, and held in very high esteem by all.

Notes supplied by his nephew, Chas. McDermott: "L. M. 1868, L.R.C.S. Ireland 1868. Practised as a surgeon in St. Hill Street, Wanganui in 1882. Married Miss O'Brien in Auckland 1887. Their son became a doctor and died in Auckland in 1957. A daughter, who became a nun died in 1968. Doctor Connolly lived on the corner of Wicksteed Street and Ingestre Street, and is said to have brought the first fox-hounds to New Zealand. He was a pioneer member of the Jockey Club.

Because of ill health he set out on a sea trip in 1904. He died and was buried at sea a few days out of Tenerife.

The citizens of Wanganui erected a monument to his memory in the old Catholic Cemetery in Heads Road. The windows were given as a district memorial.

The O'Halloran Family stained glass windows: John O'Halloran donated the windows to St. Mary's about 1927-28 in memory of his parents, brother and sister. He had intended to donate a monstrance but one had just been given at that time.

Then we have windows donated by the family of: Johanna Mullins, died 1884, and Anthony Mullins, died 1899.

And four magnificent windows donated by: Father Kirk, the Children of Mary, Offerings obtained by the Sisters and "The Gift of Four Persons".

Some of this information was obtained from Brendan's notes, some from Catholic cemetery of Heads Road, and further from the archives of the Public Museum and from Wanganui Herald, August 13-15, 1892.

# LUNDON PLAQUE:

Mr. David Lundon erected at the rear of the Church a brass plaque to the memory of his wife Annie who died on February 10, 1892. David Lundon and Annie Martin were married in Auckland in 1848. Annie, born 1833, was the daughter of Robert Martin and his wife Ann (nee Halpin).

With demolition of the Church the brass plaque was placed in the custody of the Wanganui Public Museum.

# VINTAGE ORGAN ENDURES!

Mary Gullery writes on:

**T**he organ is quite capable of telling its own story today as it is proudly played in the new St. Mary's. It has always played a very large part in the church in its active lifetime, since it came as the result of early pioneer sacrifices and the inspired insights of the man in-charge.

In 1890 when the long-awaited instrument arrived from London, commissioned and specially built by Bishop & Son over a period of two years, and costing fourteen hundred pounds, it was greeted with delight not only by the parishioners, but also other denominations.

The organ was driven by a water engine. Along the left-hand side of the church ran a narrow right-of-way, and near the sacristy was a deep pit where the engine was placed.

There it was attached to the town water supply and the pressure of this water drove the engine pumping air directly to the organ loft to work the bellows.

Outside the water could be heard running the machine, but it was not heard inside the church.

A century after its original arrival the organ has been given a radical facelift - a complicated procedure not without its difficulties and delays. It is understood an electric solid-state system has replaced water power and retains the pride and dignity of its former condition.

## BORDER IN COMMAND

**B**uilt by the Rev. Dean Kirk back in 1876, St Mary's multi-spired church served the Wanganui Catholic community until the day demolition crews moved in, in 1973.

"Old" St Mary's had been constructed in timber and showed signs of decay everywhere, just as its predecessor had a century earlier, including the memorable Sunday in 1875 when the chapel's pinewood flooring collapsed under the weight of Mass-goers in a cloud of borer-dust!

## PEN-PICTURE

**T**he Encyclopaedia of New Zealand had back in 1908 published this word-picture of St Mary's Parish.-

"There is a convent of 27 sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth. A high school for young ladies is attached, and is attended by 100 scholars including 40 boarders, and there is a division for boys with about 35 scholars."

"The property of the Roman Catholic Church in Wanganui also includes a two-storey building used as an orphanage and partially as a parish school (with about 120 scholars), a mixed infants' school at Aramoho (with 60 scholars) and a Marist Brothers School with 90 scholars."

"Attached to the Church are the associations of the Sacred Heart with 500 members, a branch of the Sodality of the Children of Mary with 100 members, a branch of "The Living Rosary", a Catholic Club with about 300 members."

The present Presbytery was built under Fr Holley (1911 - 1922). Then came Fr J. O'Connell, during whose term St Vincent's was built in Gonville. (Father Gilbert came in 1922 and Fr. Hoare in 1930).

# BELL, CRIB, ALL WERE CHERISHED

**S**t Mary's bell, weighing three hundredweight and cast in the J. Murphy Foundry in Dunedin in 1870. spoke with a nearly-human voice from its central city position.

After the demolition of the old church the parish bell spent ten years on loan to Hato Paora College in Parorangi and returned in time to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the new church.

When it calls us now to Mass we are following in the same family footsteps that the ancestors trod, answering the very same summons they heard.

**THE CRIB:** To be a child at Christmas-time, to kneel beside the Crib in its own important recess beneath the choir loft, one seemed to be in a blue-lighted cavern, with a close view of Our Lady's face, the exotic kings, St. Joseph and the rather strange shepherds. Carved by a Belgian or Italian master sculptor, the plaster reproductions owned an unusual but now rather vague story. Who may know it?

**MASS BOOKS:** When the Second Vatican Council opened in 1962, it reviewed the Church's position in relation to the modern world. While changes tended to be gradual, Mass was not said in English rather than Latin, by priests who stood facing the people. The new prayers and hymns began "arriving".

Clear divisions between the clergy and the laity became less marked. Remembering the great heavy Missal which was used at the altar, mothers of former altar boys still recall their anxiety as they watched the "helper" transferring it from one side of the altar to another for the officiating priest.

The duties of altar boys were quite complicated compared to requirements today. They had to memorise the whole of the Mass in Latin and know when to make the right response!

**VESTMENTS:** From the 17th Century, ecclesiastical embroidery blossomed into an important artistic medium and designers and embroiderers in England created a range as masters of the art.

Known as Opus Anglicanum, or English work, the embroidery was revered throughout Europe, the Church being among the main patrons of the art. A wide range of work also originated from France.

Whatever its origin the forebears spared no effort to donate funds, and St. Mary's imported specially chosen items. Some of these earliest treasures are cared for in the Wanganui Museum, their condition quite timeworn, but still indicating their former beauty.

Trish Nugent, a conservation officer, looks after a collection of banners and vestments from the church deposited there, and one instantly remembers them from long ago.

Present-day gold work has a low content of precious metal, whereas the threads used until the mid-18th Century were in a different class, and this seems to indicate that some of the vestments dated to very early in the history of St. Mary's.

The background materials such as cloth of gold heavy Italian damask also dated the older vestments.

# ORNATE BRAIDS, PRECIOUS THREADS

Russian threads, fine wirework and ornate braids of some qualities have been unavailable for at least a century, but you will see a cloth of gold chasuble, a cope, two ornate dalmatics, banners in raised work as well as oil-painted examples, two tabbards, stoles, two chalice, veils, two burses, one of gold, and other assorted items.

There is also the Missale Romanum, which is of a type used from 1590 to mid-1960, and the St. John's Missal for Everyday Use.

**THE CHURCH PROCESSIONS:** An old-time Sunday night Procession at St Mary's took place once a month at the Benediction service, and proceeded from the large front porch to the Altar. First came specially chosen small school children strewing rose petals along the aisles in the direction the priest would take.

Father would bear the Monstrance containing the Sacred Host, over him a large silk-fringed white canopy borne on solid gold and white poles. It was the time-honoured practice for these to be carried aloft by men of the Hibernian Society, wearing white gloves and gold fringed Lodge collars over their dark suits.

Other men's groups would follow with their appropriate ribbons and streamers carried by separate bearers — St. Vincent De Paul, the Holy Name Society.

Old Wanganui family names come in here — Benefield, Borich, Carmody, Luxford and many more.

After all these passed came the Children of Mary with white veils over blue mantles, candlelight gleaming on their oval silver medals.

Finally, the school children in their various groups, and to accompany the procession many old hymns. See an old fashioned hymn book for these if it is possible now to locate such an item. It seems as if even modern hymn books now are becoming an endangered species!

## A MOST IMPRESSIVE HOUSE

Back in 1877 Bishop Francis Redwood hailed St Mary's as one of the most impressive houses of worship on the coast.

St Mary's was packed for the opening Mass, and again with representative citizens for an evening Mass.

It had been designed by one Mr Robert Turnbull who introduced archways which effectively formed two chapels under a singular roof — dedicated respectively to the Virgin Mary and St Joseph.

By custom, kindred denominations in the township donated the fittings.

The Altar Society had a tabernacle built in Australia. The basic altar structure was gifted by "a lady in Sydney", numerous other features were donated by local parishioners.

The opening ceremonies were arranged by the then current president of the local Hibernian Society, Joseph Purcell, with assistance from womenfolk of the Altar Society.

Banner-bearers for the respective processions around the new edifice were named as Miss Bridget Malone, the Misses Leydon and Tracey, plus Messrs C. O'Leary and Mark Hall. Choirmaster for the great day was Mr G. F. Allen.

# CENTURY OLD STONE IS UNEARTHED



The century-old foundation stone is recovered from the St Mary's church rubble. What had been an upper block of smoothly trowelled concrete featured five inscribed Greek crosses. And from the lower block, a group of curious workmen and Parish Priest Fr C. Feehly extracted a squat bottle sealed with a plug of Kauri timber and containing some papers.

One was a document hand-written by Dean Kirk, conceivably on the Feast of Our Lady ("Our Lady of Grace")

The bottle also contained copies of the Wanganui Chronicle and Herald recording Bishop Redwood journeying to Wanganui aboard the steamer Manawatu, being met at the Town Wharf and then being conveyed to the stone-laying ceremony "by carriage to the Parsonage". The bottle also carried sample coins of the Realm. Parishioners attended masses in St Joseph's Hall until the new church was built.

# "NEVER ANOTHER MASS HERE!"

(Mary Gullery continues:)

“What time is the next Mass?” asked the young stranger of the large crowd leaving St. Mary’s Church in the centre of Wanganui’s busiest street after the 7 pm service on the New Year’s Day, 1973.

Came the reply “There will never be another Mass here!”

For the site of the old “borer castle”, as the newspapers had called it, was sold to a business concern planning a large furniture shop and offices there. Busy shoppers would not longer be able to duck in for a quiet visit, and demolition would be completed within a month.

Normal seating could stretch to accommodate 600 but at the last Mass it was estimated 1,100 were crammed into every nook and cranny. Even the back rooms opening off the choir loft and the disused rear upstairs quarters were called on and the church didn’t collapse as had often been predicted. A truly inspired choir sang that night.

In a moving sermon, the Parish Priest Father Christopher Feehly, said Our Lord would “stay quietly with some very good friends of mine” until at the following weekend renovation would be complete on old St. Joseph’s Hall, which was to be used as a temporary church until a new one had been built.

## MILITARY PRECISION

A shift took place early next day with the well-planned precision of a military manoeuvre. Fr. Feehly, consistent with his Air Force chaplaincy in the Solomons during the war, (he held the rank of Squadron Leader), now directed an army of parish helpers in what he called “Operation Transplant”.

Over 30 “Volunteers” removed statues, windows, wrought-iron work and various treasures into safe storage. They were carefully chosen carpenters, plumbers, electricians, carriers and drivers.

Team leaders were Ross Graham, Pat Bullock, Peter Lewis, and John Detering. Ted Walsh was named as Father’s valued helper in working out the plan and briefing. The stained glass windows were under the special care of Mr. Brendan O’Shea, who later supervised their re-installation. The great bell was lowered with considerable difficulty, pronounced to be in excellent order, engraved with its maker’s name - “J. Murphy, founder, Dublin, 1870”.

For the first time in local church history, parishioners had been polled as to preferred Mass times, and preferences for the sitting of the new Church.

The most popular choice was the site on which stood the old Villa Maria, a Victorian building of much distinction.

## LOFTY SPIRE TOPPLES

The central Avenue has been the site of large churches of several denominations, St. Mary’s being the only survivor before it too fell to make way for commercial progress.

The 100-foot-high steeple presented scary problems to the demolition gang because of the proximity to other buildings, (not to mention hordes of sightseers always watching).

The 9-foot iron cross was first brought down and it was in such demand, it was to put up for auction!

# BOARD BY BOARD, OLD CHURCH IS CARRIED AWAY

Every inch of St. Mary’s kauri flooring was sold and carried away. A very old disused christening font was discovered in a loft and promptly sold to a third-generation parishioner from afar. All remaining windows were soon spoken for - your risk if they broke.

You would think that nothing remained to be discovered, but a final surprise was in store:

Two mysterious connected stones came to light beneath the entrance to an aisle leading to the main altar.

From one century to the next, it is usually the stone masons who have the last word.

## THEY DREW LOTSI

One altar was destined to be a bar. The carved wooden alcoves where statues had stood were to become fantastic bed-heads, and the Gothic structure around the main altar — “Well”, said the boss, “you’re really going to have to pay for that, or my wife gets it for a fancy letter-box — ten dollars or else”. Guess who bought it, fast!

Two little old ladies enthusiastically “ordered” some small plain glass red and blue windows, but were in for a disappointment according to the same down-to-earth character, as the glassware could not be successfully prised loose from their surrounds. “Hot out of luck!” was how he put it.

Any interesting finds under the ancient timbers? “Well” volunteered a worker, “Just the old cats”, and here were some in a neat state of perfect mummification brought about by dehydration on the sandy soil, with a complete lack of air!

## FINAL NUPTIAL

The last Nuptial Mass said in Latin at St Mary’s Church, Victoria Avenue, was officiated by Father T. J. Fitzpatrick on Dec 2, 1967.

The wedding was that of Ken and Moira McGifford (nee Punch). Brother Gonzaga (now Desmond) trained the boys from the Marist School to sing during the service.

At the end of the Mass, the couple received a Papal Blessing.

Archbishop Redwood speaking at Dean Kirk’s Requiem so many years before:

“He worked in the midst of you parishioners for 29 years, worked! You can tell his zeal, his devotion.”

“See what he did around you. See the marks of that zeal in the work he had done.”

“See this noble church which he built. See the convent that has been raised, see what he has done for your schools, and what property he has acquired.”

“Now zeal, my dear brethren, is the mark of a good priest. A good priest is another Jesus Christ!”



**DEMOLITION** men administer last rites to the 19th Century, St Mary's on Victoria Avenue back in 1973. This main street shrine was cleared away to make room for today's department store, and peeping through in extreme upper right are facades of the Regional Museum and Sarjeant Gallery.

*(John Souter photo)*

**Chapter Three**

*"Jewel on a hilltop"*

**MAGNIFICENT ST MARY'S HELD OF WORLD CLASS**



**The Third Wanganui Catholic Church dedicated to St. Mary. It's architect was Wanganui born Ron Lamont, a life-long parishioner of St Mary's. The edifice was built almost a quarter century ago, cost \$270,000 and can accommodate 550 worshippers. Architecturally, and finished in such warm glass colours, it is clearly in world class.**

# HISTORY REPEATS ONCE MORE

In 1976 Parish history was to repeat itself — the “old” St Mary’s, borer-riddled and deemed unsafe for Holy Day crowds, had to go to be replaced by “the new” concept.

Church opinion in Wanganui and in Wellington held that St Mary’s no longer needed to occupy a site on the city’s top shopping/business block; there had to be another adequate site close at hand.

And of course there was the promontory at the western end of Queen’s Park, already occupied by a convent school, the Presbytery, old “St Jo’s” Hall and the quaint (though teetering in high winds) Villa Maria.

And this site surely was central enough, two short blocks from the century-old St Mary’s one parishioner reasoned that all roads already led to Queen’s Park ...

Parish Priest, genial Rev Fr Paddy Kinsella, SM, did not need any coaxing.

“Our new St Mary’s will go into the city’s cultural heart. It will be an inspiration to many to raise their minds and hearts to Almighty God ...”

But the price undeniably was high. St Joseph’s Hall would have to go (after it was utilised as a Mass centre only while the new church was being built). The Presbytery would need to be up-graded and the Villa Maria was due to be demolished.

The Parish, however, barely caught its breath as the figures came out. But redundant church properties parish-wide were to be realised upon and finally matters fiscal were in place, apart from a shortfall of \$100,000.

## EVEN PARISH PRIEST WAS BRUSH HAND

As the new St Mary’s moved towards completion volunteer parishioners, and the parish priest Fr Kinsella, attended to the paintwork.

Mr Rod Stein donated the sound system and the late Mr Brendon O’Shea installed the magnificent and historic stained glass windows salvaged from Old St Mary’s. The project spanned five years from inception to completion.

A later Parish Priest, Rev Fr David Gledhill, wrote: “The Church of St Mary’s reflects the mature faith of the people in this magnificent building on the site of old St Augustine’s.” “The new church, brilliant in concept and hard on the heels of Vatican II, remains forever young. Well-travelled people describe it as among the most sensitively beautiful they have seen anywhere in the world.”

At a later anniversary of this new St Mary’s (in the mid-1990’s), the Rev Bishop O. J. Doland, coadjutor Bishop of Palmerston North, commented: “For so many reasons, St Mary’s Church is an anchor of faith for the Catholic people of this city.”

And the Provincial of the Society of Mary of NZ, the Rev Fr Stuart O’Connell, commented: “I am always impressed by the bicultural spirit which so enhances this peaceful house of prayer ...”

# ST MARY’S DESIGNED TO REMAIN AGLOW!

A design which was colourful and spacious with an exterior which would glow in the sunshine and be aglow with colour at night — that was the criterion local architect Mr Ron Lamont set himself for the new St Mary’s.

“Father Paddy Kinsella wanted a building which would not only meet the needs of the modern liturgy, but would comfortably seat a large number of people on the main floor, with room for 30 in the choir loft” he said at the time.

“It was agreed that the 100-year old stained glass windows from the former church, as well as the organ and baptismal font, be incorporated in the new edifice.”

“Given an elevated site which was visible from all sides it seemed that such a church should have no strong axis, hence the basically octagonal form with the eight gabled roof.”

“The glazed entry pyramids, the conical roofed circular shrines and the hipped roof confessionals, project from the basic octagonal at a level which doesn’t interfere with the form of the main roof, but which provides variety and interest both inside and out”, he said.

“The main roof is formed with eight gables which diminish to the centre and a more steeply pitched octagonal lantern light over it.

“The sanctuary and altar is at the northern end opposite the entrance. One enters the church under the choir loft, access to which is gained by a circular concrete stair from the small cry room.

“The walls and floors are all in reinforced concrete, as are the eight large buttresses that support the roof. The main roof and glazed entry are steel framed and the mullions to the gable windows are steel.”



**Wanganui visionary Mr Ron Lamont, chosen to blueprint the new St Mary’s.**

# DESIGN COMBATS WEATHER RAVAGES

The building is glazed in clear glass with coloured perspex and the stained glass windows are set in between the gabled mullions 10cm back from the exterior glazing.

Immediately under the aluminium tray sheet roofing there is a 7cm fibre glass blanket to insulate the building and deaden the sound of heavy rain or hail.

To reduce glare from the northern sky the northern three gables are fully panelled with coloured perspex 10cm inside the outer glass. The remaining gables also have coloured perspex, but in random panels to permit the entry of more light from the south.

Apart from a small amount of timber-window and door joinery — the only materials exposed to the ravages of the weather are glass, aluminium and unpainted concrete.

The speakers set into the space between the valley rafters are connected to microphones in the lectern and altar through an amplifier which can also be used for playing recorded music.

Mr Lamont also designed the pews and furniture for the new church. The pews were constructed and installed by T.W. Toy and Co, while the altar and furniture was done by Carter Merchants Ltd and the primary contractors were Angus Construction Ltd, and site foremen, Messrs Brian Joyce and Bernie Holly.

Bullock and Co carried out site formation plus the main carpark loop road.

## A VISION .....

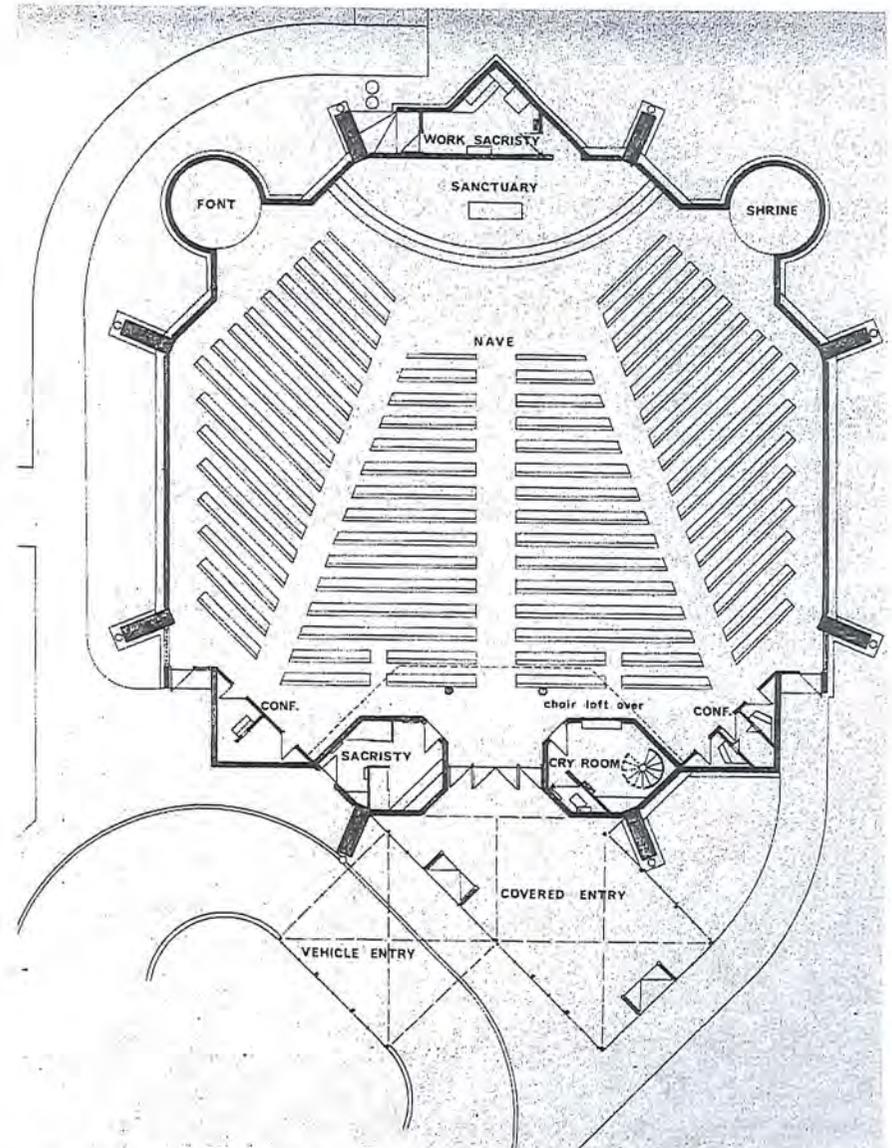
For the new church, a well planned public appeal was quickly launched for which different sections of the community agreed to subscribe.

The new church basically was to be a "simple structure and one of dignity". Ron Lamont recorded at the time that he sought to comply with Fr Kinsella's brief: "To design a structure that would evoke feelings of joy and peace, using the elements of transparency, translucency, opacity, colour, texture, and space."

And it went on record as the hilltop edifice "that will supply the needs of the Parish for many years to come, and meet guidelines for the modern liturgy".

The site had been well cleared. The old Villa Maria and outbuildings had been demolished in 1974.

# ST MARY'S AN OCTAGON



Reflecting the guidelines for Catholicism's modern liturgy, the Ron Lamont floorplan plots out an octagon. A quarter century later this River City's superb house of worship still wins acclaim from visitors from afar.

# UNIQUE CARVING



**P**arish Priest in the 80's, Fr Terry Fitzpatrick, SM, was "guardian angel" of St Mary's when it was under construction in the 70's and here he poses proudly at the Maori peoples' keynote carving gifted to the parish.

As it went up just behind the altar (on Waitangi Day, 1983) Fr Kinsella was empathic: "This is a clear sign to everyone that the church is a singular community of Maori and Pakeha in Wanganui."

Part of a group of five, it was designed and carved by Mr Kiwa Waipara and family of Wanganui, assisted by Father David Gledhill.

Mr Malcolm Russell and family assisted in the preparation of the wood and the background and with the finishing work of the carving.

The carving is made of kauri salvaged from the seats of the former St Mary's in Victoria Avenue.

The tukutuku surrounding the carving was done by Mesdames Rangi Takarangi, Ema Hipango, Wai Abraham, Sis Potaka, Tamehana, Maudie Reweti and helpers of Putiki.

The work was financed from a bequest made by Mrs Hera Wells in 1973 in memory of her ancestor Kereti te Hiwitahi, a catechist with Brother Euloge and with whom he was killed in the battle of Moutoa Island.

The carving took four years to plan and nearly a year to execute.

# KIWA'S WORK



Wanganui's accomplished wood carver Kiwa Waipara poses in the 1980's Wanganui Chronicle newspaper with some of St Mary's magnificent renditions, all fashioned in kauri salvaged from the old St Mary's.

## A GLEAMING NEW INSPIRATION ....

**T**his was how Parish Priest Paddy J. Kinsella, SM, saw the St Mary's scene when the present-day Church was transformed from blueprint to reality in 1976.-

"As we look back over the history of St Mary's, we marvel at the great faith and sacrifice of our forebears who accomplished so much. Now it is our turn to take a great step forward.

"It is my privilege to serve St Mary's Parish at this time, with a wonderful band of fellow priests and with such generous and self-sacrificing parishioners.

We are the living stones joined to Christ the cornerstone, building up a living temple of praise to God and love for our fellow men. May our new church inspire us to be a vital community of faith and service."

# PRICELESS WINDOWS

**F**rom dusty storage, a magnificent stained glass window was restored and installed in the new St Mary's. Indeed, five of them had been in storage many years.

The feature windows (next page) depicts the Virgin Mary as portrayed in the book of the Apocalypse. Made from 360 pieces of glass, it was produced by the firm of Atkinson Brothers, Newcastle on Tyne, and occupied a prime spot in the former St Mary's.

The old St Mary's was noted for the quality of its windows. In all 19 were made by the English works, four were French, and two were made at the Bavarian Glass Works in Munich, Germany.

There were seldom so many stained glass windows in a provincial church, Mr O'Shea said. This reflected the commercial power of Wanganui last century.

## PAINSTAKING

There was a colossal amount of handwork involved in making them.

Many colours were difficult and expensive to produce. Other effects were achieved by painting powdered glass on to coloured glass, which was refired to 1250 degrees, fusing the picture.

Getting the windows into shape for installation in the new church was not easy. Mr O'Shea, a retired panelbeater, estimated he spent more than 550 hours working on them over 12 years. "It's time well spent to retain these beautiful links with our past and our Christian heritage."



THE NEW St Mary's in Queen's Park inherited this magnificent masterpiece honouring the Virgin Mary and assembled in Britain's Coventry area in the 18th Century. Stained glass works of art were commissioned for the Wanganui Church in Germany and France — 19 pieces in all. This window faces east and is mounted just to the right of the main altar. It was presented to St Mary's by descendants of the O'Halloran Family.

## Chapter Four

### MARISTS IN COMMAND:

# 27 PARISH PRIESTS!

Twenty-seven very special River City priests are listed rotationally as St Mary's top pastors in this historical record, spanning a century and a half — Marists all.

These administrators served fairly uniform terms of five or six years each, with the remarkable exception of the cleric from Ireland — Dean Charles Kirk. He put in 29 years through the turn of the century, believably because the Bishop did not want his record disturbed. Dean Kirk established a series of suburban sub-branches in Wanganui, consolidating the Maori missions, opening convent schools and homes for the clergy, for the Marist Brothers and the Sisters of Nazareth!

Rev Fr J Pezant	(1851 - 68)
Rev Fr J Lampila	(1868 - 72)
Rev Fr M Tresallet	(1872 - 75)
Rev Dean Kirk	(1875 - 1904)
Rev Dean Grogan	(1904 - 11)
Rev Dean Holley	(1911 - 17)
Rev Fr J O'Connell	(1917 - 22)
Rev Fr G Mahoney	(1922 - 28)
Rev Fr T Gilbert	(1928 - 29)
Rev Fr R Hoare	(1929 - 36)
Rev Fr C Outtrim	(1937 - 42)
Rev Fr M Burke	(1943 - 49)
Rev Fr S O'Connor	(1949 - 55)
Rev Fr A Ward	(1955 - 61)
Rev Fr J Hendren	(1961 - 67)
Rev Fr L Spring	(1967 - 68)
Rev Fr C Feehly	(1968 - 69)
Rev Fr J Kingan	(1969 - 70)
Rev Fr C Feehly	(1970 - 73)
Rev Fr P Kinsella	(1973 - 77)
Rev Fr T Fitzpatrick	(1978 - 83)
Rev Fr D Gledhill	(1983 - 90)
Rev Fr M Cosgriff	(1991 - 96)
Rev Fr J Craddock	(1997)
Rev Fr P Head	(1997)
Rev Fr M Beban	(1998 - 2000)
Rev Fr R Smyth	(2000 - )

# DEAN KIRK BUILDER OF A PARISH

The Very Rev Dean Kirk truly was the architect of St Mary's Parish, following the first parish priests Frs Pezant, Lampila and Tresallet. Dean Kirk was the parish leader for 29 years from 1875 until his death in 1904.

He was assigned to the River City by Archbishop Redwood, who paid an impressive tribute to him at his Requiem, fully covered in the local papers.

The Archbishop told a packed St Mary's, "He worked in your midst 29 years. Worked! Who can tell of his zeal, of his devotedness! See what he has done around you. See the marks of that zeal in the work he has done. See this noble church which he built and enlarged on the ruins of the Church he founded here. See the Convent that has been raised. And see what he has done for your schools, and what property he has acquired. Look at the Brothers' School, for instance! What a fine property that is. Now, zeal, is the fire of love; it is the flame of charity. These few words, my dear brethren, are sufficient to make us realise our loss, and at the same time realise how we have gained in a certain way, too, by a soul so noble and a life of self-sacrifice and charity, and of every priestly, every social and every personal virtue.

"Has he not been a model amongst you? It there any virtue he did not set you an example of? What a glory it is to have a good priest. What a wonderful thing a good priest is.

"Father Kirk had a frail constitution. He was kept back for two years from his religious preparation on account of health. Yet he never spared himself. Two masses every Sunday, besides confessions, etc. I say this indicates wonderful force of soul. There is the moral: devotedness to duty at any cost. Sometimes Father Kirk was merely a walking skeleton, yet he was faithful to duty. He had made up his mind never to give in, but to fight on to the very last; so long as he could crawl he would be in your midst, and when reduced by that paralysis to almost a corpse he never failed to be here on Sundays.

"He only missed one Sunday in that 18 months of sickness, but what determination to do his duty, to spend and be spent for you, for no earthly reward - for simply a desire to do good to you, to produce Jesus Christ to your souls, to make you fit for a better life in the other world, and more fit for life in this world."

Reported the Chronicle: "After the congregation left St Mary's the funeral procession formed, extending over a quarter of a mile. As the procession moved up the Avenue, the majority of the shopkeepers shut the doors of their premises, thus testifying to the respect in which they held the late Dean Kirk."

**FOOTNOTE:** Dean Grogan, successor to Dean Kirk, was later appointed Parish Priest, Hawera, an early parish that extended almost from Wanganui to New Plymouth. That was in 1883.

# YOUNG WANGANUI TALENT FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

The pride of Wanganui — 34 priests who have had links with the River City over the years. Either they were born and/or had some schooling here, or were Wanganui-ordained.

The list was compiled for this historical document by the Rev Fr Peter Kiley, SM, archivist at the Wellington Provincial House of the Society of Mary, and Rev Sr M. de Pores of the Wellington Diocesan Archives. The Rev. Fathers (Marists unless otherwise stated) —

BEARSLEY, P: Ordained at Tawa.

BERRY, J (Diocesan) Parish Priest at Sacred Heart Basilica.

BIRD, F. T.: Ordained at St Mary's, 2000

BYERS, P. D: Ordained at St Mary's, 2000

BOURKE, S. J: Ordained Mount Saint Mary's, Greenmeadows

BOYLE, T. J: Ordained Greenmeadows, 1922

CAHILL, J.A: Ordained Greenmeadows, 1939

CARDE, John: Ordained Wanganui, 1965

CONNOLLY, G.J: Ordained Wanganui, 1959

CROTTY, E. F: Ordained Wanganui, 1958

FAITH, A. J: Ordained Otaki, 1959 (then Diocesan) Parish Priest Grey Lynn.

FLETCHER, W (1971)

GOODMAN, B.B. (1975): Ordained Paraparaumu

HEAGNEY, P.E. (1936): Ordained at Mount Saint Mary's, Greenmeadows, now deceased.

(Next page)

Continues .....

KILEY, P. L (1977): Ordained at Saint Martin de Porres, Hutt Valley  
LANDER, P

LARKIN, M. J (1967), Ordained in Wellington

LOFT, A. J. (1950): Ordained Greenmeadows, left priesthood 1963

LOFT, G. F. (1958): Ordained Sacred Heart Basilica, Ordained 1984 Bishop of Auki,  
Solomon Islands

LOFT, J.B. (1954): Ordained Sacred Heart Basilica, Wellington

LOFT, P: Ordained Cistercian, now a Diocesan at Our Lady of Lourdes, Palmerston North

McAFEE, P. F, (1959): Ordained at Wanganui

McDONALD, A. E. B (1938): Ordained at Wanganui

McGOWAN (1973): Ordained at Palmerston North, left priesthood.

MALONE, D.T. (1893), Born Wanganui, Ordained St. Joseph's Buckle St, Wellington

MATHER I. J (1941), Went to school at Aramoho Convent, and Wanganui Collegiate.

Ordained Mount Saint Mary's Greenmeadows.

O'LEARY C. T. (1939), Ordained Mount Saint Mary's Greenmeadows.

O'LEARY T. M. (1979), Ordained Saint Mary's Wanganui.

O'NEILL J. M. S. (1956), Born in Wanganui, Ordained in New Plymouth.

PERVAN, M. J (1975), Ordained Saint Mary's. Left priesthood.

READER, D. A (1943), Ordained Mount Saint Mary's Greenmeadows.

VINE, D.

WALSH, P.A. (1962), St Augustine's College 1945. Ordained Whangarei.

WATKINS, P With Blessed Sacrament Fathers, Sydney.

## Fr John Berry remembers .....

He was born in Wanganui in 1938 and attended Holy Infancy School (Sister Rita's) at Aramoho, then progressively was at Marist Brothers School (Dublin St) and St Augustine's College.

Fr Berry made his first Holy Communion at St Joseph's Aramoho and was confirm by Archbishop McKeefry at St Mary's. he was altar boy at St Anne's Wanganui East and while at St Augustine's sung in the choir of St Mary's (Fr Alex Ward conductor).

Fr Berry was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Thomas Williams in 1991 at the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Wellington, was appointed assistant priest at St Teresa's Karori, then St Joseph's (Upper Hutt), then became Parish Priest at St Francis Xavier's (Stokes Valley) and since 1997, has been Parish Priest at the Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Two sisters (Anne Lawrence and Mary Bryan) still live in Wanganui, and his mother, Eileen Berry, is a resident in Nazareth Rest Home, St John's Hill.

Another young Wanganui man who aspired to the Priesthood was V. Carmody, who died tragically when a student at Greenmeadows Seminary. He lost his life in the 1931 Napier Earthquake.

# TWO CLERICS WHO HELPED LAUNCH THE NEW ST. MARY'S

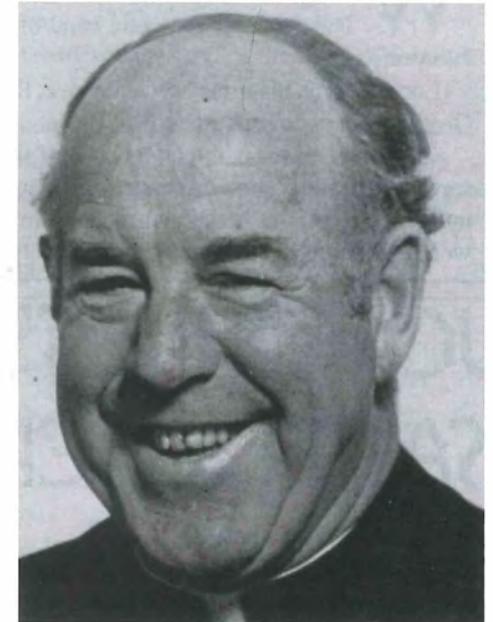
Of Wanganui's latter-day Parish Priests, two shone out for their roles launching the new St Mary's — Rev Frs Paddy Kinsella and Terry Fitzpatrick. Fr Kinsella steered the fund-raising which made the new church a reality and Fr Fitzpatrick which made the new church a reality and Fr Fitzpatrick was on station in the early 1980's when the new chapel developed its true contemporary parish role.

Parish historian Mary Gullery placed it on the record in 1976 that the ambitious blueprint for the new St Mary's required that the edifice was required to incorporate the magnificent stained memorial windows, the old organ the baptismal front, sacred vessels and vestments from the Victoria Avenue church.

Fr Kinsella served for four busy years to 1977, and was then succeeded by Fr Fitzpatrick (1978 - 83) who was at the helm

when so much of the Maori art work was executed and installed.

Fr Fitzpatrick moved on after building an impressive profile in the Catholic Youth Movement at St Mary's and helping out with the chaplaincy at Wanganui Prison.



GOVIAL FR. PADDY KINSELLA



Fr Terry Fitzpatrick with Archbishop Williams at the Sacred Heart centenary celebrations.

**FOOTNOTE:** Fathers and Brothers of the Society of Mary finally have spread throughout the Pacific (apart from Australia) into the North and South Solomons, to Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna, the Cooks and Niue. In addition to becoming entrenched on the eastern and western seaboard of the United States, the society also is active in Brazil, Peru and Venezuela, the Philippines in Japan, and of course throughout Western Europe.

THE SISTERS:

# PROUD PLACE IN WANGANUI HISTORY

**W**anganui enjoys an exceedingly proud place in the history of New Zealand religious. It remains the national headquarters of the Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth, an energetic band of pioneer teachers who migrated to Wanganui 120 years ago.

(Local Church historian Sr. Genevieve, RSJ, traced the remarkable achievements of her Order earlier in this document.)

And likewise it was the home base of the Sisters of Our Lady of Compassion which spread from old Victoria Avenue to be Pacific-wide and remains today to be NZ's only indigenous religious order, thanks in no small part to the zeal of Mother Mary Aubert who won national respect and fame over a century ago.

# JOSEPHITES' MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH

(Sr Kathleen Crompton, RSJ)

**O**ver the years, many young women have trained as Josephites. Some came, and shared their lives with us for shorter or longer periods of time; others went on to fulfil a longer life commitment, while a few others died as relatively young women.

In the late 60's and early 70's, it was decided to move the novices and junior professed sisters to Wellington for closer ties with theological and educational facilities.

Mt. St. Joseph then became the administration/hospitality centre and remains so today. Some sisters live on site acting as course and house hostesses. The financial administration and secretarial work is ably carried out by very capable women.

Now, conference facilities have been upgraded and made available for use by the wider community of Wanganui city and environs. Courses promoted by the Sisters centre on prayer, theology, spiritual and personal growth and issues of justice. The conference room also is in high demand by organisations such as NZ Police, Kindergarten Association, other main stream churches, the local Catholic colleges, the Faith and Light group, and others.

The Sisters of St. Joseph are alive and well in Wanganui, as they have been since 1880.

# THE NAZARETH SISTERS

**S**isters of St Joseph of Nazareth launched their first teaching convent in Wanganui last century then established more around the community and further afield, and built one of the city's architectural gems — Sacred Heart Convent on Oakland Avenue.

Novice and Junior professed sisters studied there but later moved to Wellington.

The Order has since established its home base at Mount Saint Joseph (former Peat Family homestead on Hillside Terrace) and has broadened the services provided at Nazareth Rest Home nearby.

The Nazareth Sisters now count their order among no fewer than 39 around New Zealand, many inspired by the Nazareth movement itself.

Today only about half the Nazareth sisters live in Wanganui. In this city they are sprinkled around several suburban addresses and have expanded into many callings, from health education, to social work, to counselling.

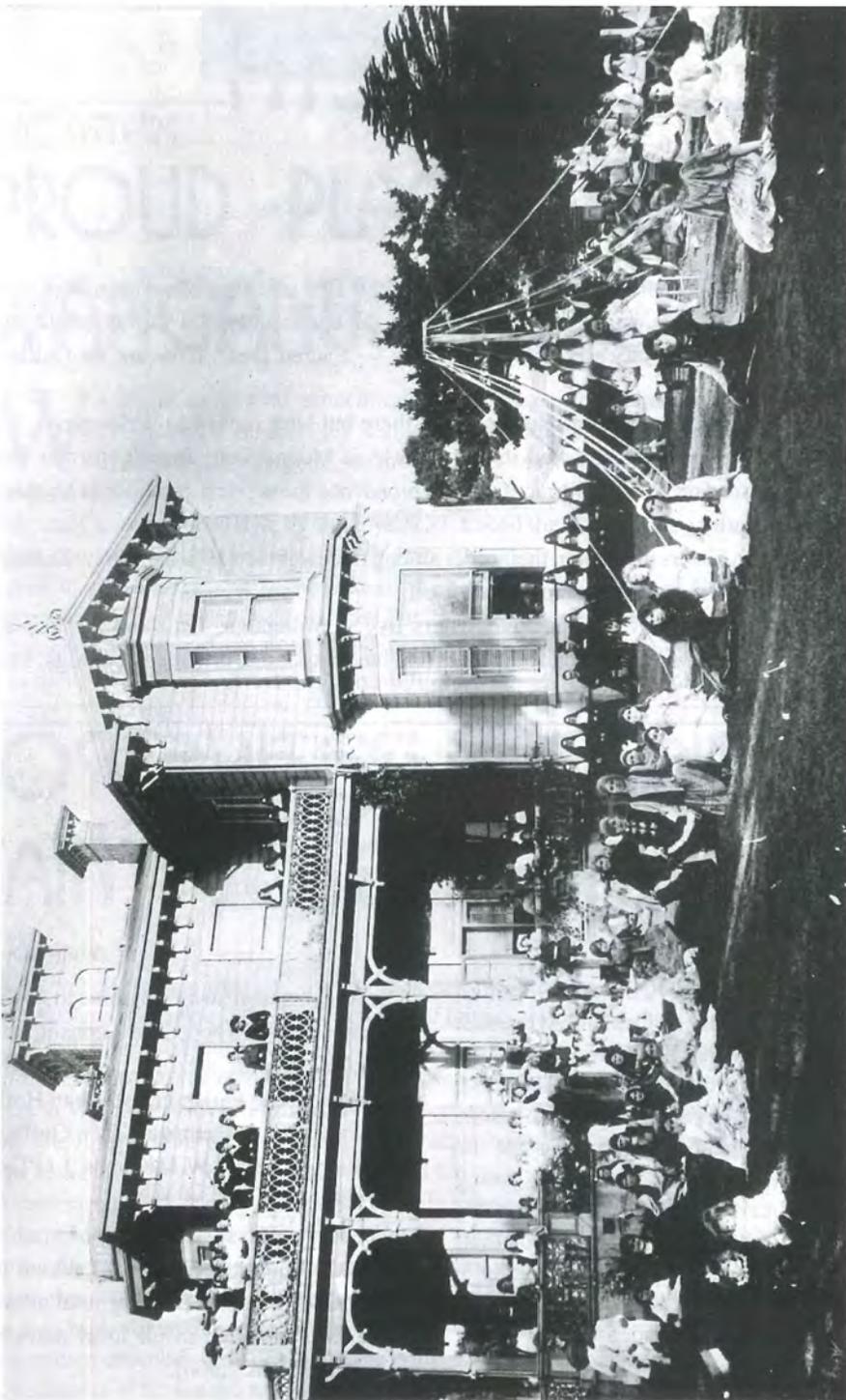
# THE MAGNIFICENT CONVENT

**S**acred Heart Convent opened magnificently on Oakland Avenue, St John's Hill, just before World War One, in 1913. The Rt Rev Dr Francis Redwood, SM, by then elevated to Archbishop, officiated at dedication ceremonies for the Sisters of St Joseph and the parish, noting how Catholics "of this fair Dominion are determined at any price to secure for their children a thorough and complete Catholic education."

His Eminence also lauded the growth of the Order of St Joseph. In 36 years in the archdiocese, he said, the number of sisters

of St Joseph had grown from three to 80. The convent complex opened for a consideration of 23,000 pounds sterling. The building committee: The Parish Priest, Dean Holley, D. P. Cullinane, J. Dempsey, T. G. Guffaney, D. Gellatly, T. Lloyd, W. McTubbs, J. O'Leary and E. Wilson.

An early parish document listed the convent's student roll at 90 of which just under 30 were boarders. (The total number of students enrolled in all local parochial schools then was 2,900).



When the sisters, and the youngsters said their farewell to Villa Maria ...

# THE VERY FIRST FOUR



Original group of Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth who crossed the Tasman to settle in the River City, following negotiations between their Superior in New South Wales and the Rev Dean Kirk of St Mary's. Reading from left: Sister Hyacinth Quinlan, Sister Teresa Schmidt, Sister Joseph Kinsella and (in front) Sister Clare Rubie. The sisters made their move in April 1880.

# FROM 1988, NEW DIRECTION

Sr. Crompton writes on:

**A**s a result of the 1987/88 General Chapter of the Sisters (a kind of a.g.m. but held every four to six years), a distinctly new direction was mapped out. One of the means of implementing this new way was to explore new forms of membership, actively encouraging co-membership and networking with other groups.

Interest was triggered when, early in 1988, Sisters shared their mission statement with Sunday congregations in the parishes in which they then resided. A framed copy of the statement was formally presented to the parish priest for display in the parish church.

In Wanganui, a number of men and women expressed a keen interest in this 'new direction' and so paved the way for Sister Yvonne Munro to bring the first co-members' group together, in 1989.

This group now called Friends of the Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth, had completed ten years of life. (In reading a letter written by Yvonne at the end of 1989, It was noted that she began 'Dear Friends' so even thought the title of the group has changed from co-members to associates and now to friends, the word 'friend' has been there since the beginning).

## NEW DRIVE

**M**embership has risen and receded over time but with Ms Kitty Moore as co-ordinator and the writer as the Sisters' liaison person, there has been a drive for new members and a concerted effort to make the four or five meeting nights really vital and rewarding.

There is still a solid core of original members and their continued presence bears testimony that each has found value and reward in being part of a non-threatening, supportive group.

Prayer is at the heart of the organisation and, in addition to the six weekly Thursday meetings, liturgies are held on the fifth Sundays of May, July and October. The finale of each year is always a great Christmas liturgy and pot luck meal at the home of Les and Ann Lunny!

The principal involvement with the Sisters' ministry has been at Nazareth Rest Home where a number of friends form a substantial part of the Nazareth Volunteers group.

## THE REAL CHALLENGE

**A**s we enter a new century and a new millenium we have taken up the challenge of the Church to make the year 2000 a real Jubilee one, by reflecting on what it really means by Jubilee in the biblical sense — seeking reconciliation between alienated groups, forgiving debts, allowing new beginnings.

The Friends of the Sisters of St Joseph will hopefully continue to push the boundaries of society and take opportunities to work for justice, peace and reconciliation, locally and globally.

# NAZARETH: AN ORDER WITH REST HOME, PLUS FRIENDS

(Sr Kathleen Crompton RSJ)

**T**he Sisters of St Joseph celebrated their Centennial in 1980, and very soon after faced the decision to demolish the main building at Sacred Heart Convent. The building had been certified unsafe by structural reports. After much heartache, the decision was made to build a house for the elderly and sick Sisters, as well as some of those involved in local ministry on land owned in Hillside Terrace.

Building got under way, and Nazareth was opened by the Parish Priest, Fr Terry Fitzpatrick SM, on October 24th, 1982.

The architect was J. M. KcKeefrey of Lower Hutt, and the builders were Wight Construction of Wanganui. The building had ten rooms on the ground floor, and ten on the upper floor. The Chapel, placed just inside the entrance, faced the north-east, giving a view of the river, hills and valleys, with the suburbs of Aramoho and Wanganui East in the foreground.

It was hoped that this positioning would encourage the Sisters in residence to feel part of the local community.

Rooms were spacious and warm, and the Sisters settled in well. However, as time went on it became obvious that the number of Sisters wishing to retire to Nazareth was not growing. Sisters needing nursing care often had to be transferred to another facility.

By 1987, after much research and discussion with qualified personnel, the Sisters decided to open Nazareth to the wider community as a private Rest Home. This would mean better use of the resource by local people, and a staff qualified in the necessary care.

Mrs Kim Krs was the first nurse manager appointed by the Nazareth Board, and with her youth and vitality she set up staff and policies, and admitted the first residents. The official opening was performed by the mayor, Mr Chas Poynter, on April 25th 1987.

## OPEN TO ALL

**T**he philosophy of the Home right from the beginning was to have the community open to all people — any denomination, gender, race, and to have the ten Sister residents already in the home there on the same footing as all other residents. A Sister from the Congregation was appointed full-time chaplain.

By 1989 there was need for extra accommodation, and another wing was added, providing a further 10 bedrooms to bring the total to 41 beds. This has been scaled back to an official 37 beds, as several rooms are for married couples. A large leisure lounge and extra bedroom facilities were part of the additional new wing.

In the years to follow there have been smaller additions and alterations made to the Home, and increased landscaping of the grounds has enhanced its beauty.

From 1987 onwards, Nazareth has been blessed by the number and quality of its volunteers. These local people give freely of their time and talents to share in, and facilitate various activities and outings for the residents. By their presence, and the services of a full time diversional therapist, Nazareth residents enjoy a full and active life.

# QUINLAN COURT — ANOTHER TRIUMPH

(Helen Doyle)

Believing that housing needs of older people with limited resources and some degree of frailty was not being addressed by Government and local authorities, the Sisters of St Joseph responded in Wanganui by planning and building Quinlan Court. The complex incorporates residential suites for 15 people linked to shared facilities.

As well as providing accommodation for retired Sisters, the complex meets the individual need in the wider community for affordable, quality, safe living for older people living alone. Within easy walking distance of the city, residents remain actively involved in the community.

The project began in 1995 and included market research undertaken by the Wanganui Economic Development Corporation which established the need for such a facility. The services of Southcombe McLean-Architects were then contracted. They created a design that reflects the independence and individuality of the residents.

There are three wings of separated but connected units, each having a lounge, kitchenette and bedroom with an ensuite.

Central to the three wings are the common areas — two lounges, kitchen, dining room, sun room and office. The units are connected to the common areas with interior passages, walkways and courtyards creating an apartment style environment.

The combination of common areas and separate units ensures that residents are able to enjoy each others' company but also have total privacy when it is required. The distinctive circular entrance hall, the large atrium and the several small interior planted courtyards dispel any idea of institutional living.

Quinlan Court opened in January 1998, and all units have been full since.

There is a waiting list for those thinking to the future. Residents are interviewed and selected on grounds of their independence, their desire to live in a close knit-community and their compatibility and co-operation. All units are on a rental basis.



# THREE SISTERS GIVE 180 YEARS!

Early in this Jubilee Year, three Sisters of Joseph of Nazareth between them passed a remarkable milestone — a total 180 years of service and devotion to the Order.

Sister Carmel (Brady), now resident at Nazareth Rest Home, celebrated 70 years as a professed Sister.

She was a teacher for 49 years, teaching at Sacred Heart College and at Tenison College in Hawke's Bay (with some time there as principal).

Her later years were spent visiting in the community in Ohakune and Hawera, and she is still taking an active part in life at Nazareth.

Sister Isabel (Hepburn) of Ponsonby, Auckland celebrated 60 years. She spent 21

years as a teacher, was the novice mistress for 14 years and spent some time at Marcellin Hall in Auckland.

She has written a book about Father Julian Tenison Woods, the founder — *No Ordinary Man*.

Sister Oline (Nielsen) residing at Quinlan Court in Wanganui, celebrated 50 years. Her teaching service spanned 30 years and was mainly in primary schools around the North Island.

She still takes an active part in community life in Wanganui, where she helps out at the St Vincent de Paul shop, the Hearing Association and Foundation for the Blind.

The trio featured on the front page of the Wanganui Chronicle's Midweek newspaper.

# DEDICATION TO WOMENFOLK

(Mary Bryan)

Now, 120 years down the way, the Order Of St Joseph has 57 members, 34 of whom live in Wanganui while the remaining 23 live between Wellington and Wellsford, Northland.

And whereas the original work of the sisters was in education, the needs of the late 20th century see them now working in far more diverse areas.

At Wellsford, for instance, the sisters run a small organic farm in partnership with MP Sue Bradford and her husband Bill. On the site there is the Kotare Centre, which reflects the Sisters' belief in the need for an ecological and cosmic view of life for all people, particularly the Christian Church.

The sisters' commitment to women and

families in particular from 1987 onwards has seen them move into state housing areas to live and to minister.

They also use their educational skills in prisons and the state educational system.

Some have retrained as counsellors or prison, hospital and industrial chaplains. One sister is a registered psychotherapist with a practice in Wellington.

Many work voluntarily for community groups such as Foundation for the Blind, Hearing Association, Birthright, Alzheimer's, Arthritis and Cancer societies and Age Concern.

The work they do today is not too dissimilar to that done by some sisters of early years.

# THE AUBERT SAGA. — TINY FRENCH BATTLER LURED TO RIVER

(Mary Gullery)

When Jean Baptiste Pompallier as New Zealand's first Bishop revisited France in 1859 to recruit helpers for his Missions, Suzanne Aubert de Laye, (born 1835), was a volunteer. She embarked with 23 other young people at Le Havre in the whaling ship "General Teste" for New Zealand.



**MOTHER MARY AUBERT, the young Suzanne Aubert from Lyon, France, and later known as Meri Hopepa to the grateful Maori folk on the Wanganui River.**

The journey was a terrible test of endurance: the permeating smell of stale whale oil was to affect the health of the passengers.

However, the volunteers were young and idealistic; the four-month journey was an opportunity to perfect their English and to learn the Maori language.

They must have breathed a sigh of relief when they sailed into Waitemata Harbour to a tumultuous welcome.

The effects of an early childhood accident had left Suzanne Aubert with an extraordinary life-long affinity with the handicapped, the crippled and the sick and she believed she had inherited her love-in-action towards the poor from her pious grandmother. Conviction and practicality characterised her entire life, and she learned trust in prayer from a very young age when petitions had been offered for her own recovery "at every shrine in France".

## FIRST, TO SISTERS OF MARY

Mary Gully writes on:

Notable family connections included contacts with the French Foreign Missions and from this influence, arose Suzanne's deep interest in the foreign field.

With a background including practical nursing experience, university studies in medicine, and in the arts, Suzanne, now in New Zealand was called Sister Joseph.

She was put to work teaching French, music, art and needlework at the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy in Auckland.

Soon, together with a Maori Sister, Reata, she was visiting nearby pas and studying the life-style, traditions, craft and music and she was earning affection and respect, as well as caring for Maori girls at the Nazareth Institute.

We follow her to Meeanee Hawkes Bay, where she spent the next 12 years as an assistant in the Marist Brothers Mission there.

Sister Joseph was recognised as the first district nurse in Hawkes Bay, if not in New Zealand itself. She travelled on foot, covering an enormous mileage, visiting the sick and the needy.

There were only two doctors in Napier, and they were very supportive of her. She called her humble quarters "The Red Shed", the biggest area of which contained her surgery and dispensary, and she lived simply on the premises, setting out from it every day on her visitations.

Sister Joseph compiled a French-Maori dictionary of a thousand words for the use of Marist Missioners and edited a Catechism and Prayer Book in Maori. Her mana became recognised throughout the province, and even travelled as far afield as into the dense bush country on the upper reaches of the Wanganui River.

Early Marist Missioners had laboriously planted the seeds of Catholicity among the Maori tribes there, but this now spiritually lonely area had been left in ruins following the HauHau invasions and upheavals.

Many years after this serious setback Fathers Soulas and Lacroix were trying to establish a mission headquarters and native school, but the tasks was formidable and help was needed.

Look at Wanganui during the Depression. The country suffered a series of these slumps early on, so it's hard to distinguish if this was the 'big' one or not. Conditions were bad and steadily getting worse. There was no kind of social security as we know it; the plight of many old and sick people was pitiful. Orphaned and abandoned children were in desperate straits, late-Victorian society had little tolerance for the illegitimate.

## LEGISLATIVE INTOLERANCE

An excerpt from the Neglected and Criminal Children's Act of 1867, and still current at that time, explains something of the climate ... what was meant by 'neglected children':

(1) Any child found begging or receiving alms, or being in any street or public place for the begging or, receiving of alms.

(2) Any child who shall be found wandering about or frequenting any street, thoroughfare, tavern, or place of public resort, or sleeping in the open air, and who shall not have any home or place of abode, or any visible means of subsistence.

(3) Any child who shall reside in any brothel, or associate or dwell with any person known or reputed to be a thief, prostitute or habitual drunkard, or with any person convicted of vagrancy under any Act or Ordinance now or hereafter to be in force ....

# MAGICAL MEDICINES

(Mary Gullery)

Cast back 120 years and imagine Sister Joseph coming to town in 1884 from her upriver convent and orphanage, perhaps for the marketing of her medicines for which she has now received Church permission. The medicines have become popular, and sales will help keep the upriver mission afloat.

So who is this small, cheerful, vital woman, dressed simply in blue robes, with white peasant coif and veil, and the serviceable footwear of one who tramps the country roads?

A poet said of her that no one would ever be able to put her into a book, and indeed it seems a daunting task. But many have ably recorded her life. She would laugh at the very idea, and she loves a good laugh ..

You laugh with her. She springs out of the printed page without any effort, right into your consciousness, with the same impact that impressed those she met in her lifetime. Yes, she arrives! What is her age? Forty eight? Short of stature but tall, with what is called “presence” — one of those rare people that you feel you must have known forever. It would not be hard to down tools and follow her “up the river” where service to mankind is as natural as breathing.

How would you travel? The first five miles by coach then at Upokongaro you would gingerly board canoes paddled by Maori. Proceeding along the river, fierce rapids would necessitate going ashore and clambering through dense bush — Sister Joseph, a wonderful travelling companion calming fears by her lighthearted attitude. Further on, Maori would have dragged the canoes, waiting for you to join them again. Overnights, you would be lucky to get any sleep in an abandoned whare, trying to keep warm.

Never a European face all the way. Forget the discomforts, and there’s a three-day trip condensed to a sentence or two, and you do get to Hiruharama as they call Jerusalem.

Now your diet could be wild pork (if anyone brought some) wild potatoes, coffee made from tawa berries, tea from scented manuka (or with the garden flourishing, tea from sage, pennyroyal and verbena, known as “queer” tea) but even sometimes on a Sunday, wonderful real tea, and unleavened bread after the concoction of an oven.



Where the devout Sisters of Mercy were just that, back in the 1880’s — Jerusalem, or as the Maori knew it, Hauharama.

# THE AFFLICTED STILL IN PLIGHT

In 1898 the basic patterns of the Welfare State were introduced with the advent of Seddon’s Old Age Pension Bill and the Public Health Act, granting seven shillings a week to those elderly who were adjudged needy. (The first pension of its kind in the world!)

Yet amelioration of the plight of the afflicted and homes for orphans and destitute children still remained dependent on private assistance.

Made aware for some time of the destitution in the poorer areas of Wellington, appealed to by doctors and priests there, and concerned increasingly for the need for her congregation to be established closer to a city, Mother Aubert — made Wellington her goal.

She left with four of her sisters, in about 1899, hoping to establish a nursing centre in the Capital and confident her Jerusalem mission was now operating well.

The Sisters arrived unannounced in their new Wellington territory with half a crown in pocket. There they found that the cottage allotted to them consisted of two rooms, a scullery, and two attic rooms, bedding on hand, but no beds!

Packing cases had to become tables and chairs, as at a picnic, and Mother Aubert used that one coin on a broom, scrubbing brush, matches and soap.

“Poverty is a lady who is generous to a fault,” she suggested, for courage was the special gift that she shared in difficult circumstances.

No Government aid in those days, but people soon got behind the effort, and she was ready to receive the first “downs and outs”.

Wellington took the Sisters to their hearts. The foundations of the work there were laid not with silver and gold only, but with faith and work help from all denominations enabling the Buckle Street house to be opened as a Home for Incurables. In 1902 the Home was extended. In 1907 a move was made to a more spacious accommodation at Island Bay.

Mother Aubert became a foundation member of the Plunket Society.

## OFF TO ROME

Now to have her rapidly growing Order canonically recognised, Mother Aubert went right to the top. She set out for Rome. While it was being made official, Mother Aubert was delayed by the First World War beginning. She was soon in the thick of the action, first by a serious earthquake in Avezzano resulting in hundreds of the wounded being brought to Rome for nursing care.

She immediately offered her services. She was enrolled in the Italian Red Cross for active service after Italy entered the war and workers were again needed.

**The setting up of soup kitchens and relief depots were just like old times to her. But at the same time she was writing an immense work called the Directory which was a detailed set of instructions to her Sisters!**

Then she found the purpose of her visit was crowned with success. For in 1917 Pope Benedict conferred a Pontifical Decree on the Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion, with Suzanne Aubert as Mother General.

# RURE AND HENARE REMEMBERED

**T**hat Aubert funeral has passed into fable now: the day Wellington closed down and stood still and all work was suspended and the streets so crowded that traffic could not pass for hours.

In the far distance Jerusalem, the early cradle of her endeavours for mankind, mourned her. And one of her boys was among the pallbearers — Rure, grown into an expert catechist, and always a devoted helper. His father, Kereemeneta, was one of the Jerusalem Maoris who paddled Mother Aubert upriver from Wanganui in August, 1884. Rure himself was born in the year of the Battle of Moutoa, and had been baptised at the reopening of the fruitful Jerusalem Mission.

He and his brother Henare would bring the daily fresh milk to the Sisters and then serve Mass for Father Soulas in the early mornings. Rure was proud of having been depended on by Mother Aubert.

In Wellington, the funeral cortege passed, over a mile long, and in its wake many wonders of the past were related, from them new facets of humanitarian goodness in action.

Once more Suzanne laughs and emerges again as a very human being, (“a person of great joy”) perhaps attended by one or another of her favourite animals.

Say the scruffy white “Prince” who had the ability to lead her to situations where she was most needed, or the equally un-pedigreed “Azor”, or the unnamed Newfoundland champion who materialised to guard her just when she needed help herself. He resided at the Presbytery so she obviously knew him well.

Next page:

# MOTHER JOSEPH NOW A BLURR ...

**A**t Jerusalem Sister Joseph becomes nurse, interpreter, teacher. By 1897, 45 orphan children were under her care, most of them brought from town, and she was now Mother Joseph.

After the Sisters of St. Joseph who had originally accompanied her had returned to their own community, permission had been granted for the receiving of postulants for the Third Order Regular of Mary at Jerusalem.

The first three of these who joined her (Sisters Anne, Bridget and Carmel) were known as the A.B.C. of the new order, which would ultimately become the first religious order to be established in New Zealand and named the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion.

The new Maori Mission struggled financially, the “staff” kept multiplying, the orphans kept increasing, and larger quarters were urgently needed. This being the most progressing need, Mother Aubert and a travelling companion travelled, mostly on foot, through her old territory of Hawkes Bay, on a lengthy fund-raising campaign. Together with the sales of herbal remedies, the building fund took shape.

In 1892 the Evening Post described the “chief proprietary medicine of New Zealand” and said the estimated monthly sales were 4,000 bottles.

The medicines were: Karana, considered superior to quinine in the treatment of atonic maladies of the stomach, rendered of service in cases of anaemia, debility and prolonged diarrhoea. (This may have used tutu, ti, pohutakawa, Rata B, Hutuwai, etc).

Murupa, excellent in maladies of the chest and bronchial troubles, taken in light syrup. From Manuka, kohekohe, marupa and tawa.

Paramo, used for maladies of the liver, a laxative and purgative. Flax, kowhai, tawhero or tutu liquor may have been used.

Nata Nata, for treatment of chronic diseases of the stomach. Probably from kawakawa, tawa, miro, karamu, kowhai.

Eucalyptus, (not native to New Zealand, but from old gum trees planted along the river), an antifebrifuge for diseases of the throat. Contained gum, manuka, kohekohe, horopito, mako-mako wine, kowhai B.

As well, there were the ointments Whanana, Hapeeti, Ramino and Kekako which was a plaster.

## ACRES IN ORCHARD!

**T**he Sisters constructed their own chairs and tables in their out-of-the-way spot. Their herb gardens flourished, and they planted an enormous orchard with imported cherry trees, pears, apples, chestnuts, walnuts, plums, quinces, filberts, gooseberries, strawberries.

When the upriver steamer service started up, the fruit produced a source of revenue, needed for the orphans and the several old people suffering from incurable diseases who were now being cared for.

# "YOU MUST HAVE SOMETHING CHEERFUL AS WELL!"

(Mary Gulley:)

**Y**es, smiles always spread around Suzanne Aubert. Once when she was sick in Napier a rather serious visiting priest gave her "Pickwick Papers". She said "That book cured me. I laughed so much I was soon well again". She warned about too much spirituality for the sick. "One spiritual book, and that not too heavy. You must have something cheerful as well."

Now you know anyone who knew anyone who knew M.A. in her lifetime? Yes, but they're dead now too!

I knew Pat Lawlor, the writer, who knew John Barr, the poet, who would wander into the old kitchen in Buckle Street, just to talk to M.A. as she worked.

He said he liked to think he had a hand in her "holy pies". He wrote about her a great deal. It was he who said no one would ever be able to put her into a book.

After her death he suggested that she may have been able to take that old kitchen along to heaven with her, and that someday he and Pat would meet with her there again!

Another poet, Will Lawson, who came into the Faith months before his death, and who had long been a friend and champion of Mother Aubert, should be there with them too. And the gentle poet, Eileen Duggan, her loved companion and chronicler, writing as "Pippa", and Nell Scanlan, who also wrote of her.

And poet James Baxter should be around, for though not of M.A.'s time, his commune at Jerusalem certainly came under the influence of the Sisters and her spirit would have reached out to him there. In fact, if it's possible to write one's way into Heaven, there might be room for a few latter-day lesser poets and all.

## THE FIRST HOME ....

**T**hen five years on from the funeral ... (August 6th, 1931), a small group of Sisters left Island Bay for Wanganui to establish the first new Home of Compassion.

An old house there had been extensively renovated, and a loving welcome was extended to the Sisters who seemed like old friends returning.

Father Hoare was Parish Priest at the time. The house on a half acre section provided room for six Sisters and 12 patients.

And there is a lovely story about the purchase of the property: Miss Mary Connolly worked as housekeeper for Frank Moore at Bushy Park, a large historic Kai Iwi homestead. During her long years of service she had not spent any of her salary, letting it accumulate. She had a dream too, and after her death it was revealed that it was left as a legacy to the Sisters if they would commence their work in the city.

It appears that the Sisters arrived while the extensive renovations and preparations were still in progress. A busy working bee faced the onerous task of trying to convert the sandy section into a garden, while inside a ladies' committee was engaged in cleaning preparatory to laying flooring and putting up curtains. This groups of helpers included Mesdames Heydon, Winstone, Barry, Sharland, Meehan, Misses Wood, Kennedy and Jean Souter.

Sister Gabriel of the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Mary's in Grey Street gave the Sister hospitality until the house preparations were finalised. Fathers Hoare and Ainsworth helped transform an empty room into a chapel and Father Venning said the first Mass. Bishop O'Shea blessed and officially opened the Home.

# CITY DOCTORS PITCH IN

**T**he following week the first patients were received. Dr. Adams was the first medico to attend the Home. The British Medical Association had decided to attend the Home free of charge, and each doctor worked a month in alphabetical order.

Foods and gifts came in freely, and stories abound of the care of St. Joseph for the new Home. The people of Wanganui themselves weathering the Depression, were unfailingly supportive.

A soup kitchen was set up to provide refreshments for the unemployed of the city. Meanwhile, the Sisters went out sick-visiting every day. Soup was often taken to patients, who had been discharged from the hospital before they were really fit enough to look after themselves.

At one time 19 families were receiving soup.

When the Wanganui Mayor heard about the pressure on the Home of Compassion soup kitchen, he allotted one pound's worth (\$2.00) of meat and cereals, for the soup every week.

These activities resulted in many admissions to the Home: in fact the majority of the male patients were not Catholic. It was this action that soon broke down much of the religious prejudice, especially when their own ministers were able to come and see them frequently.

The arrival of the Sisters' first care (the "Blue Bird") came as a great surprise to them. An old friend of Wellington days, Mr. John Fagan, introduced Mr and Mrs Jack McDermott to the Sisters. They wanted to make a present of the car to them. Laurie McWilliams, another great friend, erected a garage for it, and was the only driver for a long time!

Farmers and others were most generous in supplying vegetables to the Home, and despite the Depression, the Home was well catered for.

Early in December, Mr Kitchen, who was known to the Sisters as the "fairy god-mother", published her Christmas appeal for one shilling on behalf of the Home, to which the people responded most generously in goods and in cash for very many years.

With the need to provide care for the elderly always increasing, it became evident that a larger Home was required. In 1961 the home of A.C. Hatrick on Virginia Road was purchased. The residence was converted into a Convent for the Sisters and a new Home for the Aged was built. The Home for the Aged took three years to complete and it was officially opened and blessed by Archbishop McKeefrey on April 19, 1964. Sisters and patients alike, now in modern surroundings, enjoying the benefits of up-to-date technology.

## FLASHBACK: 1973

**D**uring all this time, how are things faring with the very first foundation 'up the river'? Checking up in 1973, one finds two completely dedicated people, their existence devoted to serving the Maori people of the region: Sisters Mark and Dennis of the Home of Compassion, with headquarters at Jerusalem.

## THE RIVER ROAD

**"T**he road narrowed to a one-car-width in many places, and it wound and turned back on itself interminably like a hairpin specially manufactured for a Fuzzy-Wuzzy. This was river country. Maori country. The road climbed to some of the most beautiful views in New Zealand.

# WHEN YOU WEREN'T ON MAP!

“Here and there in the clearings, groups of Maori children rush out to wave as the car passes. Sister, with her eyes carefully on the road, waves a sort of detached Royal greeting, or toots the horn.

And finally, before nightfall, you’ve arrived on the page that is missing from the atlas — suddenly you are home in Jerusalem!

Everything has a special newness and oldness that can be felt but not to be put into words. (Mother Aubert 90 years ago, standing in the ring of the hills, knew the feeling of having come at last to the place she had set out for long before ....)

Mother Aubert once wrote: “Never forget the Maori village was the cradle of our institute; as the Maori race fuses with the white have always a place in your homes, and in your hearts for the Maori”.

And now, her dream has come to fruition. The priest, Fr. Te Awhitu, who cares for the little flock here is New Zealand’s first Maori priest.

The welcome is tremendous — “Our Sisters are back! Our nuns!”

There is no doubt that the Sisters are “family” to the Maori of the river. “The joy is so real it nearly knocks you over” says Sister Mark.

For the weekend they are at home where the hours are full - Maori women’s retreats, special gatherings, live-in training weekends for first Communion children, helping with Maori camps, trying to find time to prepare next week’s lessons, write up records ...

With a total seemingly mounting up to 100 work hours per week, and a low estimate of

250 miles travelling, even the spare-time pursuits of these two women benefit those they serve.

Sister Dennis is interested in history and music, and Sister Mark in handcrafts of all kinds, the making of a pin-up not being beyond her scope.”

## SR. DENNIS IN FLAX ....

“This native skirt starts out as long green strips of flax.

Sister tells ruefully that she estimated about 100 strips would do the job, but found later that she needed 200 to go round her!

The flax is broken into inch-wide strips before placing on the pattern to cut lightly across the green flesh at each marking. Sister went through a lot of strips before she acquired the Maori ‘knack’.

The flesh is then stripped off with a shell between the cuts, exposing the coarse fibres which will then take the dye and form the design.

Sister admits the end result is “pretty good”, and now she is costuming a Maori doll in genuine piu-piu, bodice and tipare (head-band), the taniko weaving for the top, something like tapestry, being complicated work!”

# ‘HEMI’ IS RECALLED

“The commune founded by Hemi (James) Baxter is centred at Jerusalem, and people still come to get their lives back into perspective.

A commune member: “There are places like this — you just seem to belong to them.”

Greg Chalmers is now the nominal head. The members keep a large garden, and some go out to farm work and pool their wages. And within the nucleus of the permanent group, there is a strong spirit of prayer.

The Rosary is said each night, and vespers in the Church once a week.

Masses are well attended, and members frequently visit the church they helped to restore and paint. Local Maoris do not seem to be usurped or disturbed in any way, as the commune has become just another family living in the pa, where Hemi hoped they would eventually find acceptance.

Night and day, the background sounds of the river weave through sleep and consciousness, yet over everything you seem to hear the audible hush in a place where time stands still.

Monday morning comes, and the little car sets out on the river road to Pipiriki where the Sisters visit and teacher ... and down back again to Matahiwi ... and every third Monday to a pre-school at Ranana ... lunch at a Maori home ... on to Parakino.

Everywhere there is that spontaneous loving welcome. The parents will do anything to get their children to the Sisters’ classes, where religious instruction will take them to Form 2 level.

## A WELCOME MAT, ALWAYS

“There is a great rush wherever the nuns appear; they are escorted from the car and doors are open and shut with the utmost ceremony and delight by beautiful smiling little ones.

So what scholastic future for these Maori children of remoteness?

If of average standard, and likely to stay at secondary school for a few years, they automatically qualify for full boarding allowance and the equivalent of free place for the length of their secondary education.

The parents are keen for their children to take advantage of this undoubted opportunity. They realise its importance to their families, as already benefits are evident as some progress to good careers, others coming back as leaders to their communities.

Now it is Monday night, when the Sisters get into Wanganui town to conduct C.C.D. classes for the Maoris at Castlecliff.

On Tuesday they will travel back as far as Upokongaro School and also to home visiting in this area, periodically meeting with Father Caulfield of the Maori Mission.

Further teaching follows at two homes in Aramoho, then one nun goes to Putiki and the other to Durie Hill.

Tuesday night, nominally “free”, is frequently filled in with teachers’ or parents’ meetings.

Sister Dennis is the area supervisor for teacher-training for C.C.D. and is called on to help teachers with lessons and lesson plans. She exudes vitality or imagination or the message that “God is Love”.

# GARDEN PARTY!

“A very successful garden party is held annually at St John’s Hill, drawing large numbers of people from around the area, devoted groups of workers supporting the annual fund-raising.

Never forgotten for their efforts are the later Dr. Leo McCarthy, a friend to all at the Home who rejoiced when he received the honour of being invested as Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great, bestowed by Pope John Paul II in recognition of his outstanding qualities to the church and community.

Also remembered are Miss May Tuffin, secretary of the Gala Committee for many years, and Neil Collins, past president of the gala committee.

## HOME RE-VISITED

Sister Helena, Mission Co-ordinator, reports the recent “re-opening” of the Home, since it transferred back from temporary accommodation at Jubilee Hospital in Aramoho.

It is 1999. Sister tells us “so much has happened during our absence — ceilings lowered, floors carpeted, double rooms converted to single, three new wings built on at the rear of the Home, sprinkler system and smoke detectors installed and courtyards tiled — just to mention a few of the changes made by the contracting firm, Mainzeal.

And accommodation now for 59 residents. This was an exciting time for everybody — lots of changes, yes, but there was still much of the familiar throughout that made us feel quite at home.

Spacious bedrooms and the en suites make such a difference and give more privacy. With the lounge windows lowered there is an even better view of the river and surroundings.

From the rest home upstairs there is easy access to the garden and grounds where residents and their visitors can sit and stroll.

Through the generosity and hard work of the gala committee and the local community, we now have a wheelchair mobility van — a wonderful asset! And the residents really appreciate the outings and excursions which come their way very regularly.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the tremendous support and help we have been given throughout many years. “May God bless each one of you”.

## SCIENCE AWARD

“Just as we go into the new Millennium newspapers report: “Mother Aubert given Science Award” (Wanganui Chronicle, June 29, 1999).

“Wellington — A dead French nun and the unnamed Maori herabilists who helped her use native plants as medicines a century ago today won a science award.”

“The Biotechnology Association yesterday awarded its 1999 heritage award for the contribution of New Zealanders to

that field of biotechnology to Suzanne Aubert, who as Mother Mary Joseph, founded the New Zealand religious order of the Daughters of Compassion and a number of Homes of Compassion.”

“Mother Aubert became involved in Maori communities up the Wanganui River, and in Hawkes Bay after settling in New Zealand in 1860. She had a significant Western education in botany and chemistry, nursing and medicine, and at the same time had a rich knowledge of Maori medicine.”

## MARY GULLERY CLOSES.

“Now in the new Century we can look back and see the spread of the Order, with the establishment of the river schools and centres, and over the wider area north, south and overseas, with convents, orphanages and mission centres, relief centres, ministries, soup kitchens, home for incurables, child care centres, nurseries, a hospital training school, special schools for the handicapped, pastoral care, hospital and prison chaplaincy.

Beyond this country the Compassionist Order has spread out to centres in Australia, including the Aborigine Mission, to Fiji and to the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mother Aubert’s spirit reaches through all these channels as her Sisters, faithful to her principles, spend their lives for others.

The future? In such good hands!”

## “500 COMPANIES IN THIS AREA ....”

“During the 1890’s Mother Aubert manufactured and sold a commercial range of remedies made from New Zealand native plants under the names Karana, Marupa, Paramo, Natanata, Wanena, Hapete, Romino and Kekako.

The manufacture was assisted by Maori, primarily from Auckland, Napier and Jerusalem on the Whanganui river.

The award was announced at the annual conference in Wellington.

It said Mother Aubert was the first person

to successfully combine Maori and western medicines into products.

The first person to commercially extract native plants, the first woman to launch a commercial biotechnology process in New Zealand, and the first exporter of a New Zealand biotechnology product.

The association said there had been a resurgence of interest in making natural products in New Zealand, with more than 500 companies working in this area.

The sector was estimated to earn the country about \$120 million a year.

# DAUGHTERS FROM WANGANUI

Sisters of Compassion who entered the Congregation from Wanganui and now reside in the Aubert Home of Compassion in their home city are the following. —

**Patricia Cahill** (known as Sr M. Casmir), educated by the Sisters of St Joseph at Wanganui and professed March 19, 1942.

**Lorraine Mary Walsh** (known as Sister M. Martin), also educated by the Sisters of St Joseph in Wanganui; professed September 15, 1950.

DECEASED SISTERS OF COMPASSION, Entered from Wanganui. —

**Jean Souter** (known as Sr. Barbara), professed 15/09/36, died 03/12/42.

**Eileen McDonald** (Sr. M. Xavier), professed 19/03/38, died 18/06/70.

**Stella Ward** (Sr. M. Bernadine), professed 15/09/43, died 29/11/86.

**Christine Dowdall** (Sr. M. Liguori), professed 15/9/34, died 16/01/87

**Catherine (Kitty) Coe** (Sr. Luke), professed 15/09/43, died 28/07/88

**Molly Henry** (Sr. M. Gabriel), professed 19/03/35, died 16/09/90.

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Moreover, there are three Wanganui Sisters now resident of the St Joseph's Home of Compassion at Silverstream, Wellington. —

**Theresa Eileen Birchall** (Sr. Christopher), educated at St Anthony's School; entered the Sisters of Compassion September 1943.

**Mary Catherine Heagney** (Sr Alexis), educated Villa Maria, then St Mary's Convent School at Hurworth; entered the Sisters of Compassion 1934 (along with Sr. Souter).

**Kathleen Mary McKernan** (Sr Mary McKernan), went to school at Wanganui Holy Infancy, then St Anne's School, Hurworth Convent and Sacred Heart; professed with the Sisters of Compassion September 1968.

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A Wanganui sister with the Sisters of Mercy at the Star of Sea, Seatoun, Wellington — Sr Joan Manson, RSM. Attended Sacred Heart Convent and professed in January 1954.

## THE SUBURBAN PARISHES

Geographically, St Mary's Parish has changed markedly since the turn of the century, and since the parish completed its first 50 years.

Until 1891, the parish encompassed Patea when St Patrick's was proclaimed a separate entity ... until 1899 when Taihape became separate, until 1903 when St Francis of Marton became separate; until 1908 when the Ohakune area broke away as St Joseph's.

By which time, the Aramoho district (also named St Joseph's) stood apart.

St Vincent's Church at beach-side Castlecliff was dedicated in the early 1920's, and likewise St Anthony's — the Gonville parish centre came on stream in 1924.

Wanganui East had a convent school before its own parish church, and not until 1999 did a "purpose-built" new chapel appear in the suburb — St Anne's, matching the rebuilt St Anne's School.

Meanwhile, back in the west, St Vincent's Church dropped in congregation size and likewise, St Anthony's eventually sold to the traditionalist Pius X Society, and since then has been rebuilt for loyal parishioners as part of the born-again parish. And named Holy Family.

Much of the more recent re-organisations were planned to cope with the falling number of Marist priests available.

With a Catholic following briskly mobile on Sundays, attendances in the suburban churches was fluid and unpredictable.

But the master plan of suburban parish re-arrangement, drafted by Bishop Peter Cullinane of Palmerston North, eventually fell into place.

The newest sub-parish blueprint has reduced Wanganui Mass centres to only three — St Mary's, St Anne's and Holy Family, plus the once a week ceremony at Aramoho's venerable St. Joseph's.

# THE WARMTH OF OLD ST. JOSEPH'S...

Parishioners of venerable, ancient St Joseph's Church in Aramoho were eager to pen their memories when this St Mary's Parish history was planned.

At that particular point in the chapel's history — the crossroads, when it was first being pondered whether it would be preserved as a Catholic college facility or surrendered to the demolisher's axe — St Joseph's quietly stepped into the record as a revered memory of Mass-goers from all over the city ("Did you go to Aramoho on Sunday?")

## FIRST OF OUTREACH CHAPELS

St Joseph's was consecrated just after the turn of the century in 1907.

It was in fact the first of the outreach suburban chapels built by St Mary's parish.

Archbishop O'Shea officiated at the laying of the foundation stone for St Joseph's in 1907.

The public turnout was spectacular - a fully representative procession from Sister Rita's convent school in Russell Street, and Archbishop Redwood rode up in state in a vintage carriage.

Six months later the church was finished and duly consecrated.

The church site as every parishioner knew had been owned by a staunch Methodist who stoutly refused to sell! Today's record discloses no names, but in the final analysis the site changed hands into those of a Catholic who then transferred the title to the Parish!

At no stage did St Joseph's have a resident priest. All those who celebrated Mass there came "from town" — from the Presbytery in Campbell Street.

## A NEW LOOK CHAPEL



The refurbishment of old St Joseph's (above) a quarter-century ago is remembered by long-time parishioner Judy O'Hara who cast her memory back:

"When I arrived in Wanganui in the late 1970's and made my home in Aramoho, the nearest church was St Joseph's. I loved the atmosphere of things gone by but lots needed to be done to preserve the work and prayers of other generations."

"So my family became a part of the St Joseph's special congregation.

"I am not a classical musician but recognised in the parish a need for an organist to enable Joan Whelan to go to St Mary's. So I offered to play at St Joseph's; at this stage the harmonium was in the choir loft. I learnt to pedal fast and play a few hymns. As the years went by my skills improved and my repertoire expanded, to the relief of the congregation, I am sure."

"We celebrated the 75th anniversary in 1982 with a late morning Mass and a dinner at St Augustine's College Hall. It became increasingly obvious we needed to do some renovations."

## MORE RECENT NAMES

Bishop Peter Cullinane was the celebrant when St Joseph's passed its 80th year. The parishioners who helped out at Mass that spring morning in 1982 included: Richard Hillgrove (commentator), Judy O'Hara (organist), Maurice Provost (first reader), Marianne Hay (second reader), Stephen Kenny and Christopher Hay (altar boys), Peter Lewis and Blair Gleeson (ushers), Miss Maisie Burr, Tom Teasdale, Ted Fairman, Sister M. Adrian, Pat Osborne and Sister Pauline Oliver (Prayers of the Faithful), and Ted Foley, plus Elizabeth and John Boyle, Juliet O'Hara, Anthony Hay and Dixie Budd (Procession of the Gifts).

(Judy O'Hara continued...)

## FLAT KEY WAS WINNER!

St Joseph's finance committee could not accommodate the cost of organ repairs so the new organ had to be returned.

I then asked the finance committee to the Mass next Sunday and played the old organ without making allowances for its faults. We got our new organ!

Having tackled these jobs we then decided the inside of the church needed painting with new rites being introduced into church life.

We were instructed to take down the angels from our beautiful big ornate altar and instal an altar approx. 75cm x 50cm in its place!

This did not go down very well at all with the congregation, but we accepted it until there was a change in Parish Priest. Within days we changed back to one of the side altars still there. The small altar became the table for the tabernacle at the side of the church.

So over the years the sacristy was painted and carpet put in the old box confessional which became a room. Our candle sticks went to St Mary's. (What? They are still there!)

We were lucky enough to obtain stained glass windows from the old Sisters of Mercy Convent in Marton. Our resident expert on stained glass was Brendan O'Shea. He installed the windows and was meticulous.

Many personalities were involved in all facets of work done: Peter Linklater, Cath Trillo, Lucy Alderton, Russell and Margaret Haddock.

## STRONG SUPPORTERS

St Joseph's Church community had a strong gathering. Ted and Pat Fairman, John and Elizabeth Boyle, the O'Keefe family, Kevin Corney and Ted Foley, all worked painstakingly in the running of the Church. In earlier times our outstanding organist, sacristan, cleaner of the brass and altar clothes, arranger of flowers and much more, was the amazing Maisie Burr, a legend.

Photographs of her Easter and Christmas altars were truly magnificent.

The St Joseph's organ had an interesting history. We obtained the electric organ from St Mary's when the pipe organ became operative again, but it was worn. When the time came to do something about replacement I went to a music store and asked about a suitable organ when of course they had one.

Then Father Gledhill engaged Mr Southcombe, an architect, to plan a new porch and present a new image for the church. Father Cosgriff organised the painting of the interior: we were very pleased with the result.

I always felt St Joseph's had a sense of ancestry of those who had gone before us. Their prayers and their spirit seeped through the walls. I remember one occasion on Mother's Day, the Mass was so prayerful, when we were asked to come to the altar for a blessing there were so many tears and sniffles to be heard.

But the changing times have caught up with us. It was a great wrench for us all when Sunday Mass was cancelled. It took many months to settle into a new way. But we have been supported by St Mary's congregation.

God Bless all who have prayed in our special congregation of St Joseph's, Aramoho.

## STAR IN THE EAST RISES IN RAINE STREET



Wanganui East's contemporary St. Anne's Church, with its sparkling stained glass steeple, materialised in 1999.

It took almost 20 years for Wanganui East (once called Eastbrook) to open a contemporary chapel - St Anne's).

The best part of two decades in the planning, the new St Anne's materialised only in early 1999, featuring tiered seating and a unique stained glass steeple.

Yet the suburb had a Mass Centre opened by Archbishop McKeefry in 1950. St Anne's first parish priest was Fr Steve O'Connor. One of his successors, Fr O'Sullivan, got a drive under way for a new church building, but it took time to get the church designed, part-funded then built.

In the final analysis, St Anne's was blueprinted by Southcombe and McLean of Wanganui, and built on Raine Street (the original chapel was sited on Kawakawa Street) by Wells and Wadsworth.

The new St Anne's was blessed and dedicated by Bishop Peter Cullinane in May 1999. It had soldiered along mainly without any resident priest, being nurtured by members of the team from St Mary's.

# HOLY FAMILY: A NEW NAME, NEW MASS CENTRE

Holy Family Church and hub of the new parish of Gonville-Castlecliff, was unveiled and blessed by Bishop Cullinane in October 1991.

The event was the culmination of many community discussions and studies about the long — range future of the neighbouring parishes in Wanganui west.

At the time, Fr John Kavanagh, explained: “There was a need to plan for the pastoral requirement of people during the next 20 years and beyond; a need to dispose of surplus land and to relocate on a site more central to both parishes and where it would be of greater benefit to the pupils and staff of Marcellin School.”

“Amalgamating smaller parishes was a logical way of responding to the downturn in the number of priests available.”

“With the sale of the old St Anthony’s Church presbytery and adjacent sections (where the former St Anthony’s School was sited) proceeding with the project became a priority.”

“In February 1990, a building committee comprising members of St Vincent’s and St Anthony’s parishes began consulting with the communities to determine what was needed.”

“The priority was to provide a place where the community could worship, and enjoy daily devotional practices.”

“Naturally, there was a bottom line. A limit of half a million dollars was set from a feasibility study and evaluation of the parish’s ability to service a loan from the Diocesan Development Fund.”

“The resulting concept for the church and parish centre is somewhat different from a traditional church building.”



THE TRIM new Mass centre in central Gonville — Holy Family.

# A MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT

A factor supporting the development was the awareness that it would be an injustice to spend about \$400,000 for a church which would only be used for about eight to 10 hours a week.

Fr Kavanagh continued ... “So, it was decided to build a multi-purpose building. The main use for the building will be the celebrations of the community’s worship, but it will also be used for school assemblies, concerts, youth activities and social events.”

“To cater for daily devotional practice, a small chapel is incorporated in the complex.”

“As the church and centre is built on unserviced land, and the cost of providing the road and services would have greatly increased the cost of the project, it was decided to subdivide the surplus land.

“The capital to fund this development is beyond our means so the residual land is to be developed. Some 14 sections will be sold in the area adjacent to the new church and centre.”

“Naming the church and centre generated a lot of discussion and finally two names emerged as the top contenders: The Holy Family and St Peter Chanel.”

“The Church of the Holy Family gained the most support; the amalgamated parish will be the only one in the Palmerston North Diocese to bear the title.”

“Some people have difficulty in coping with changes but hopefully they will see the new Church and centre as home and the focal point of parish workshop and life.” Fr Kavanagh reasoned.

**FOOTNOTE:** The new \$½ million Church and Parish Centre near Marcellin School was supervised by a building committee representative of both old parishes.

They were: Brian Simmonds, Rita Walker, Greg Day, Paul Blewman (St Anthony’s), Denis Price, Paul Dawes, Michael Murphy and Alison Bennett (St Vincent’s).

Brian Alexander (legal) and John McLean (building) were specialist consultants on the committee.

**Photo right:** A feature of the complex is its rose window designed by Wanganui’s Joanna Paul. It is crafted from German, American and Japanese Glass.



## PARISH COUNCIL — THE ULTIMATE FORUM

(Patrick O'Leary, Chairman)

**P**arish Pastoral Councils are a very recent development within the Church. They grew out of insights of the Second Vatican Council and quickly became a forum for the average parishioner to become involved at the grass roots level. Elections were held, committees formed and the people became involved in social issues in the name of the Church.

At a meeting of parishioners in the "Villa Maria" on Sunday evening, August 25, 1968, Father Leo Spring presided over Messrs: R Lamont, G Gullery, P Herbert, P Tuohy, H Collins, J Dyke, L McCarthy, M Provost, J Gibbs, T C Drumm, E Foley, J Heagney, W McInteer and E J Crotty.

In opening, Fr Spring SM said he had called the meeting for the express purpose of exploring ways and means of setting up a Parish Council, and he asked those present to put forward ideas and suggestions for the formation of same. So said the minutes ( next page).



**THE ST MARY'S Parish Pastoral Council — Standing from left, Messrs Paul Coe, J Murphy, Mike O'Sullivan and Mary Fowler. And seated from left, secretary Esther Teasdale, and chairman, Patrick O'Leary.**

(Absent, Joe Crane, Sr. John Bosco and Helen Moyes) — *Photo by Sue Seconi*

## MATTERS MATERIAL

**R**ecords are vague and it was not until 1973, during the time of Fr Paddy Kinsella, SM, as parish priest, that detailed records were kept.

It is quite clear from topics that were discussed and actions taken that early days of St Mary's Council dealt with the more material things, rather than spiritual or welfare and social concerns of parishioners. In the early 1970's we were dealing with the building and furnishing of the new church and also changes were being introduced as a result of the Second Vatican Council.

June 14, 1973, topics included: traffic problems around the temporary church, and an approach for assistance with signage.

Sign of Peace: If parishioners were unsure what to say it was suggested they resort to: "Peace be with you". This has stood the test of time.

August 28, 1973. —

Deanery report from Mrs M O'Sullivan on the suggested format for receiving Communion in the hand. The Council followed the rather tentative approach of the wider Church, as the resulting decision was that the receiving communion in the hand should be reserved for nuptial Masses, house Masses and where the attendance was small.

Also in 1973 the Council was taking the first steps into social issues by conducting a parish survey, supporting the Protection for the Unborn Child and promoting house meetings.

## PLANNED GIVING

**T**he first comprehensive planned giving programme ever launched by St Mary's Parish was begun in 1962 under the chairmanship of city businessman Cliff Chainey (Dr Leo Sefton was executive chairman).

Names of the initial programme team will evoke memories: Messrs J S Campbell, J Chasemore James, W G Clayton, N Collins, E Crotty, T C Drumm, J S Dyke, A Fromont, A Gudsell, J Gullery, A Hensen, W Kerslake, J Kershaw, M A Kitchen, L McCarthy (Mr and Mrs), J McLaughlan, G D Madden, H R Morgan, A & T O'Leary, Mrs W Pervan, F G Repton, P J Smith, R W Spencer and L J Williams.

## PASTORAL COUNCIL DIARY (Continued ...)

December 18, 1973. — Council members were: Fr P J Kinsella SM, R Lamont, T Conder, R Curry, P Stiles, Mrs M Gullery and Mrs M O'Sullivan.

In mid 1974 new people were being welcomed on to the council and appointed to committees of responsibility — Liturgy, Education, Apostolic and Social. Mr Tony Conder was elected chairman for 1974/75.

1975 developed a more formal approach and so did activities of the council. Mr Bernie Thomas was in the chair with Mrs Patricia Hocquard secretary. A council of ten was S Morahan, A Binnie, W Walding, B Kennedy, G Repton, T O'Leary, Mrs J Kane, Mrs J Curry, Mrs O'Sullivan and Sister Benedicta.

**A development in 1976 was the greater role taken by representatives from the religious orders with Sr Peter from the Home of Compassion and Srs Anne Bourke and Sr John Bosco for the Sisters of St Joseph being added to the council. This association has continued up to the present day.**

The biggest leap forward was taken with the arrival of Fr Terry Fitzpatrick, SM, as parish priest in 1978. Ministeries were established to promote activities under the names of Ministry of Worship, Evangelization and Service. Finance was separate in its own right.

## DAYS ACTIVE AND FULL

The late 1970's to early 80's appear to be the most active and full time of the council's history. Under chairmanship of Mrs Barabra Vine a very full council plunged into many and varied activities. I made my first appearance on the council about this time. Letters were sent to new parishioners, house masses were very common, another Parish census was run.

In July 1980 approval was given to appoint a Parish Manager part time for 24 hours per week. Mr Noel Martin was the first appointment.

Attention was given to donations to the Hikurangi Home gala, supporting a programme called Family Time, plus sponsoring a Vietnamese refugee family.

September 16, 1980 was the first hosting of a visit from the river Maori community. Fr Gledhill reported that the people of the river were very appreciative.

## FURTHER MILESTONES

On December 16, 1980, the Council was quite large with 24 members, consisting of Fr Fitzpatrick, Br Brian, B Vine (chairperson), R Stein (secretary) J Tasker, R Hillgrove, B O'Shea, P O'Leary, S Bailey, G Bressington, J O'Hara, M Hay, V Carroll, M Donaghy, D Coon, M Brown, J Fabian, R Osborne, P Stiles, M Eaton, Sr J Bosco, Sr Aquinas & Fr Wilson. The programme included a Parish Renewal Programme, a Christian Action Week, a Lenten programme, a mission plus the Holy Week and Easter ceremonies. The large council was split into very active working groups under the titles of Ministry of Worship, Service and Evangelization which enabled all these activities to be carried out with such good results.

In March 1981 Patrick O'Leary was elected chairman with Margaret Thomas as secretary. Chairmen were: Rod Stein, (Evangelization) Ray Osborne (Service) and Vivian Carroll (Worship). These five with the Parish Priest formed the steering committee.

A special meeting on 13th December 1981 approved the plan for the 75th Jubilee of St Joseph's Church which was held on Sunday March 14th, 1982.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The Parish printing press was installed in the basement of the Presbytery. Parishoners were trained in its operation, including Rod Stein, Michael Coleman and Dennis Jones supported by Anne Bartley, Dianne Newton and Bev Travers who looked after the typing. This team produced a large number of publications including the weekly parish newsletter, the Marian. The press operation continued until the computer and photocopier replaced it.

March 1982 elections saw Marianne Hay replace Margaret Thomas who retired as secretary.

July 4, 1982 saw the first meeting held to form the Te Ahi Ka Trust. Present were Bishop Peter Cullinane, Fr D Gledhill, Hoani Hipango, John Peina, Gerald Fouhy and Noel Martin. Apologies were received from: Mr Ron Russell (Mayor) Mark Gray, Richard Mareikura and Graham Takarangi. This trust was formed to develop a meeting centre for the Maori people of the river and city, this development eventually leading to the combined complex Parish Centre that we have today within the church grounds, of St Joseph's Hall and the Te Rau Oriwa Marae.

## LEADER CHANGES

In March, 1983 Geoff Lott replaced O'Leary as chairman and Sylvia Gallie replaced Marianne Hay as secretary.

The council was not devoid of controversy in time and mind, and 1983 was no exception. It was very apparent that certain things were sacrosanct to parishoners and Mass times were one. It is a brave council or Parish Priest who embarks on any changes to the mass times. It is almost as if everything else in the world is governed by change except "Mass Times".

The Council debated this time about cancelling the 7am Mass on Sunday. This brought an abundance of correspondence and some heated discussion.

It is pleasing to see that the members of St Mary's Parish felt sufficiently empowered to write very strongly worded and supportive letters on many issues pertaining to their parish.

In February, 1984 Fr Fitzpatrick was replaced by Fr David Gledhill, who was no stranger to the Parish, having served on the teaching staff of St Augustine's and also on the Maori Mission staff.

The council was listed as G Lott, (chairman), S Gallie (secretary), Fr Gledhill, A MacLean, T Teasdale, N Martin, A Capes, F Carroll, B Wilson, Huia Hipango, A Campbell, Sr Genevieve, S Thompson, V Carroll and J Phillips (YCW). Kevin McKersey and Luke Akapita were added to the council at their next meeting.

Great progress and discussion was taking place about the new parish complex. Negotiations were taking place with the community at Hato Paora College for the return of the bell that once was housed in the spire of the old St Mary's Church in Victoria Avenue. It appears from the correspondence that when the time came for the return of the bell, some very delicate negotiations were needed to achieve the desired result.

Parish Council elections of November, 1985 saw some more changes in personnel leadership. The council was listed as: Kevin McKersey (chairman), Irene Back (secretary), Noel Martin, Huia Hipango, Frances Jones, Terry Heffernan, Joan Kane, Sr Laboure, Patricia Hocquard, Peter Linklater, John Rivers, Felicity Rivers, John Smillie, Jean Edmonds, Nick O'Neil and Les Coleman (YCW).

# STAYING IN TAY STREET

In 1985 Bishop Peter Cullinane advised that St Mary's School would be rebuilt on the Tay Street site. This decision was received with great relief by the whole parish as the only way the school could be saved. With the population drift from the central city area, the school role was dropping and it was only a matter of time before they dropped to a non-operative level.

One feature with the Parish Council format were the training programmes undertaken to inform the Parish councillors of their role and place in the Church community. Mention was often made of the planning and in-service training.

The August 1988 minutes list the following members of the council as: Angela Capes (chair), Sr Francis, Tony Conder, Joan Kane, Jason Hope, Virginia Hillgrove, Kitty Moore, Valmai Nugent, Mirian Stoddart, Liam Graves and Fr D Gledhill.

# FAMILY GROUPINGS

In 1988 mention was made of development plans for forming a branch of the Passionist Family Group Movement in Wanganui. It is still very active in the Parish today.

The parish pastoral council was a constituted body required to be the eyes and ears of the community. It has the very important task of making sure that all the programmes that are necessary for the health and wellbeing of the faith community are maintained, and if not then why not?

During the 1990's, parish life struggled, as it has for all main line churches. Although the Marist priests have maintained a presence in St Mary's, the decline of priestly vocations had started to impact on parish life. While the first part of the 1990's was fairly stable, with Fr Matt Cosgriff as the Parish Priest, the latter years were in continual turmoil with many changes in staff. From 1997 onwards we had three parish priests — Fr Peter Head, Fr Mark Beban and Fr Rodney Smyth, and one acting parish priest, Fr John Craddock. These changes resulted from the poor health of Fathers Head and Beban. This continual movement has tended to bring about changes in style and emphasis or direction that has been unsettling on the parish community.

The Parish Council elected at the end of 1999: the writer, Patrick O'Leary as chairman, Michael O'Sullivan (deputy chairman), Esther Teasdale (secretary), Jim Murphy, Fay Cawley, Paul Coe, Maurice Woods, Mary Fowler, Tiahuaia Abraham, Terri Wilson, John Crane, Helen Noyer and Sr John Bosco, They have embarked on a number of projects in an attempt to lift the life of the parish to a new level. The Parish Planning Group was formed to outline a five-year plan for the community.

The "Outreach" newsletter was born as a medium for the parish community to have a forum in the wider community, at the same time allowing the council, along with other groups within the parish, to expand on news items. An Evangelization group has been formed to reach out to our people who no longer come to church in an attempt to show that we really do care about them. And greater involvement has been initiated with our parish school and the Catholic secondary schools in the city.

St Mary's Parish is a wonderful parish that has a generous heart, and now has 150 years of history to draw on as assistance when focussing for the future.

## OTHER LANDMARKS:

# PRESBYTERY SINCE 1913

St Mary's trim, two-storey Presbytery was commissioned during World War One, and thus is approaching 90 years of age.

Its foundation stone bearing a suitable inscription in Latin was blessed by Archbishop Francis Redwood on July 27, 1913. The NZ Tablet reported the following month: "The new building, His Grace stated, was evidence of the future progress in Catholic life.

"The present occasion brought to his mind the small beginnings of the Catholic Church in Wanganui. He remembered the first little presbytery, also the first portion to be built by Dean Kirk."

"His Grace then told of the new church, one of the great beauty, and of its enlargements, of the beginnings of the new convent and the erection of the new Marist Brothers' School.

"And further about the new presbytery, His Grace dwelt on the pressing use for a new and commodious residence for the clergy, and the many useful purposes to the Parish which would be served by the new presbytery.

"The architect is Mr John D. Swan of Wellington, and the builders are Messrs W. Husband and Son."



**So, St Mary's Presbytery stands today in the shadow of the new Church on Campbell Street (foundation excavations foreground). The Presbytery was built in the day of the formidable builder-Parish Priest, the Rev Dean Holley, in 1913. The new St Mary's Church went up in the day of Parish Priest Fr Paddy Kinsella, in 1975-6.**

## VILLA MARIA:



(Mary Gullery)

**A PRIM Victorian gentleman's resident known to townspeople as "Hutchinson's Folly" grew into St Mary's Villa Maria (it's creaky loft dismantled for safety's sake — see inset). And 30 years ago the edifice was totally removed to make way for the futuristic, new parish church. (The Presbytery building to the left, in background serves on).**

A sheltering house — St Mary's renowned Villa Maria until it was demolished to make way for the new church — nurtured many key parish groups for over 90 years.

The old Villa housed many tales about its resident "ghost", (it's founder) and clearly his Christian name had to be George — owner George Hutchinson.

He was only 30 years old when he built his dream house. A restless extrovert with brilliant possibilities, he had come to New Zealand at age 20, a Scot educated at English public schools, a journalist who later turned to law, and politics.

Wanganui then was still only one step from pot-stirring days, but prosperity was beckoning from around the proverbial corner, and the whole world appeared to be in front of those with the ambition and the talent to claim it.

George Hutchinson married the daughter of a Wanganui clergyman, the Rev. D. Hogg. George was now a lawyer, making a future in politics, but too independent and colourful for the times.

He commuted between Wellington and Wanganui, often taking on cases which would not be handled by other lawyers. And later in Parliament, he introduced the first bill to give the accused right to give evidence in their own defence.

And the dream that he had! No ordinary existing dwelling could house it, so he had to build. That was in 1876.

He acquired a little hill of his own beside the Queen's Park, and here his building went up to dominate the skyline, from all four sides.

Timber was cheap, master craftsmen earning ten pence an hour; and apart from that, money seemingly was no object.

A deep concrete verandah with iron scroll-worked railing and heavy wooden balustrade followed the contours of two sides of the ground floor. The huge timber house had two sets of wide access steps. (Next page)

## VIEWING BALCONIES

On the upper floor long windows and French doors opened from bedrooms to a wide wooden balcony extending around three sides of the house. The edifice presented a view of the settlement, the hills, the mountains.

The entrance hall led to several spacious reception rooms with high ceilings, tall windows and French doors.

A large wine cellar was housed under the main staircase which wound upwards from the hallway to the bedrooms and towers. From the kitchen and pantry on this lower floor rose another steeper, narrower staircase leading to the servants' quarters!

In the main reception rooms massive crystal chandeliers hung from tinted and ornately plastered ceilings, and fireplaces in these rooms, and the big bedroom directly above, had imported tile and marble surrounds.

Many architects and builders studied the magnificent parquet floors, that of the entrance lobby was in English woods, and in the main hall of fancy timbers, including ebony, honeysuckle, oak, totara and red pine.

At the foot of a gentle slope of the site, the stables housed "horses, carriages, and stable-servants of the owner".

George became one of the first Mayors in Wanganui. His Victorian reception rooms became the scene of some of the most spectacular parties in the country. Many important people with political leanings would be taken up to the tower to look out at the coast, the river, and mountains in the distance.

The Wanganui people, looking from outside, were not always sympathetic. When they referred to the big house as "Hutchinson's Folly" it had a distinctively derisive ring.

Some of them waited in frank glee for the high tower to fall down in an earthquake. They were convinced it would if it did not crumble in the high winds.

## AWAY TO AFRICA

It might have been a disappointment in politics, it is recorded, or perhaps just a plain sense of adventure, but whatever it was, Hutchinson threw up his career, a comfortable home and brilliant future, and went to South Africa during the Boer War with the New Zealand Force.

Hutchinson liked South Africa and began to later practise law there. Moving his family, he rented "Hutchinson's Folly" to a Dr Saunders, a physician and surgeon. He lived there for a number of years, and so the locals re-named it "The Wedding Cake".

After the death of Dr Saunders the property was sold to the Catholic Church. That was in 1898, and now it became the "Villa Maria", serving as sleeping quarters for boarders from Sacred Heart Convent (until they transferred to their new building on St Johns Hill, which was in 1911.)

MARY GULLERY CONTINUES:

# HOW VILLA CAPTURED SISTER LIGUORI

In the end the big room at the base of the Villa Maria tower was used as a music room for Convent pupils and several organisations also took up quarters there, including the Maori Mission, the St. Vincent de Paul Society (founded by Father C. Venning in 1910), leaders in spiritual and corporal works, and teachers of catechism.

From 1927 on, a small infant school was conducted there under the guidance of the late Sister Liguori and her assistants. She later wrote: “The children enjoyed their life in the big house. They liked nothing more than to be allowed out on to the balconies, and to climb the small one outside the top tower room ... the tinkling prisms of the beautiful chandeliers and the big cellar situated underneath the main stairway provided endless amusement and interest.”

## EVEN THE BELL WAS MUTE

“They were well behaved children”, Sisters recorded, “I never had to use a bell to call them in for classes”.

“A child’s education conditions him early to living life on two storeys, in the “other world” among the clouds.

“You could achieve a certain perspective in that place, where the classrooms were the grand reception rooms of an another age, clear light from the bay windows filtering through the chandeliers.

“The children loved to plant their feet firmly on the “Salve”, in the patterns of tessellated phantasy underfoot.”

Sister Liguori would enumerate her students who went on to eminent positions in professions or industry — a film director, a doctor, priests, nuns, architects, a lawyer, pushers of the pen. They all owe some influence to the unique surroundings and the woman herself.

## INFANTS TO ST MONICA’S

When eventually the infant school was re-located nearby (to be known as St. Monica’s) the big house drew itself together again, as little disturbed as by the chirping of sparrows.

The Villa Maria roll in 1935 included Margaret Steele, Patricia Tuffin, Noelene Tuffin, John O’Neill, James Campbell, Maurice Urlich, Owen Watt, Maurice Jeffery, Ursula Jeffery, Margaret Bousfield, Verna Doyle, Pahi Hatherley, Patricia Clayton, Noeline Byers, Peggy Byers, Patricia Byers, Eric Urlich, Tahu Hatherley, Allan O’Neill, Paul Murray.

MARY GULLERY DIGS ON:

# ...WHERE ELSE BUT THE VILLA?

Who remembers the busy whirring of old treadle sewing machines and the carefree chatter of women who worked not for money but for missions in their own purely operational workrooms, reached via the former “servants” quarters?

The Mission Circle, one of the earliest sub groups of the Catholic Women’s League which began in 1945 and chronicled elsewhere ...

Synonymous with the work achieved comes the name of Doris Singleton, gifted with creative hands. She and all her early helpers are long dead. In the Pacific Islands and in the Maori Missions many Priests and Sisters benefitted by their work with gratitude.

In another room off the Villa’s “grand staircase”, another happy group of mature women, dressed for the occasion formally, complete with gloves, furs and hats, met regularly for card games and afternoon tea. More leisurely you might think, but their purpose, too, was money — raising for the Missions — The Card Circle was a very popular one, and successful in its aim.

## THE HOME MAKERS

Later on in time, the Homemakers’ Circle held some gatherings in the Villa, others in their own homes. The busy young mothers met in the evenings.

Blessed in the happy appointments of spiritual directors of their groups, they thrived. They too supported Missioners in

the Islands, and locally, the Home of Compassion Sisters, by raising funds for them.

The chief effort, when not baking for, or minding each other’s children, was spiritual. When the group disbanded eventually, it never really became a group of the past. As still today as grandmothers and great-grandmothers we meet together as a family again. But — eternal question — who did actually win the title of Fastest Runner at the Homemakers’ Picnic?

## “RE-CHRISTIANISING”

The Christian Youth Movement, Young Christian Students, and Young Christian Workers: Described as a rechristianising of Society — a revolution against the forces of inaction, inertia and indifference in the world.

An essential mark of a CYM leader was a concern for the welfare of other human beings, especially for the welfare of other young people. It gave thousands of young Catholics a better knowledge of their church and prepared them for Christian adulthood. Stemming from a 1938 meeting in Auckland, Father Fitzpatrick is remembered as a most active chaplain in Wanganui.

The Christian Family Movement and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, together with other Catholic organisations, offered Christian formation to many groups of parishioners, and the Sacred Heart Old Girls’ Association, and many sports groups, all met from time to time also in the Villa.

# WHEN THE YEARS ROLL BY

Getting to 1972, possibly the final official group to arrive on the Villa scene was St. Mary's newly formed Pastoral Council.

Fancy a winter night meeting in the once grand dining room to consider committee matters! Now gaunt and draughty, derelict "easy" chairs huddling under the garishly painted plaster roses of the ceiling, marble fireplaces as cold as marble can be.

In the lower strata of the atmosphere some dusty heaters clock up the parish power bill, windrattling the tall windows ... All of a sudden on the adjacent staircase an ominous creaking — footsteps for sure, the dining room door swings slowly open. The Minutes of course did not record it. But the ghastly white figure that appeared in the doorway was only Elizabeth Noble's Dalmatian dog, investigating while his owner worked away in the temporary Parish Office upstairs!

## PRECIOUS MEMORIES

The need for many of the groups mentioned here has now passed, with the changing times, and a new crop of Circles and organisations to replace them, but it is good to have earlier endeavours noted before they slip from living memory.

Among the colourful stories concerning the Villa is that of a squatter living secretly there, couching up in the high tower, which at another stage had been used for the keeping of bees.

His bed was a pile of fur coats, a contrast between poverty and luxury as in a Russian drama. He must have felt as powerful as

George Hutchinson himself possessing the mountains.

"Where are our fur coats going to?" the ladies of St. Mary's Drama Group would cry dramatically over the diminishing hoard of props in their upstairs room.

They worked hard to entertain their fellow Christians during dark days (just add your own tales of their capers here) and no implication of temperamental eruptions suggested! Anyway, came the day when the intruder was apprehended as he hopped down the fire escape ...

Even still, the old house hardly seemed to have lost heart. Sometimes the voices were real ones in the ancient rooms. Even then some hippies tried to take up temporary residence, giving the building a glimpse of "high" life in modern times.

And finally, the newspapers moved in with colourful comments, "BIG YELLOW HOUSE AWAITS ITS TURN ON DEATH ROW".

The desirable site had been selected for the building of a new edifice. And the new name for the new building — one we were to be proud of for 150 years — ST MARY'S.

## ST JOSEPH'S HALL

# 'SEE YOU SATURDAY NIGHT, AT ST JOE'S HOP!'

The venerable old parish hall had its beginning in the 1880's as a two-storey schoolhouse. When the school moved out, St Joseph's assumed a more social role as a parish venue, then as a dance hall.

The Hibernian Society met there. They ran card games as fundraisers.

But the public dance role was the hall's primary function. St Joe's hosted St Augustine's College get-togethers, even Catholic debutante charity balls and others. Formal dress-up dances, even rock-and-roll jamborees, when these became the vogue, were held in St Joseph's.

Generations of young-at-heart parishioners would fondly remember "St Joe's Saturday night", Gay Gordons to waltzes to fox trots, to spotlight numbers ... They all raged on until supper time sounded and the trestle tables were dragged out on to the dancefloor.

Joss Waitai's jazz band was all the rage, and Don Ball's Orchestra. For years jovial and loud Constable Charlie Dudley was regular master of ceremonies, and the echelons of doorkeepers were headed by "Pop" Tony Borich.

The new St Augustine's Boys' High School (before being classified a college) used the hall for functions, and the basement as a storeroom.

St Mary's Bowling Club convened there, the St Mary's Table Tennis Club, the Boys' Gymnasium Club and the parish's well-established sodalities.

Then into the 1970's St Joe's principal role was as a temporary church. The Avenue's

## LAST TANGO IN PARISH!



**HILARIOUS** parishoners Dorothy Hackett and Jack Kaveney trip the light fantastic at St Joe's last dance before the demolition crews moved in (May 1989). Almost 500 people crammed the hall, some coming from distant places throughout the North Island.

church was to be demolished, the property sold, and the new St Mary's erected on what originally had been — the Villa Maria.

But when St Joe's finally bowed out, it did so with a fanfare: In its place immediately arose the parish's \$½ million bicultural complex — Te Ahi-Ka — the colourful urban marae which saluted St Mary's dedication to 130 years of Maori mission activity. And of course there also arose the new St Joseph's Community Centre.

# AND THEN, HALL TUMBLES DOWN!



(Wanganui Chronicle Photo)

## THE NIGHT BEFORE

A Memorable “Last Tango” preceded the demolition axes falling on St Joseph’s Hall. This was on a winter’s night in 1989. Instrumentalists who performed at “St Joe’s” back in the 1940’s turned up for the last time — Joss Waitai, Pete Larkin, Butch Taiaroa, Graham Chambers, Harry Manson, and Dee Ackrill. And Putiki’s Te Maramatanga Club appeared, as did St Vincent’s Catholic Maori Club, supported by Patrick and Danny O’Leary. And the MC that final night was Barry Samuel.

## FINAL MESSAGE: —

“The families of Wanganui share a splendid inheritance, the gift of being able to gather together in surroundings which reflect the best values of those who have gone before us.”

“We wish to extend this inheritance to our children by providing a suitable gathering place for the people of this community.”

“We mourn the passing of the old St Jo’s Hall which provided for people in the past. We look forward to a new building sitting in its place.”

“The Maori people have worked tirelessly for many years to provide a place of rest for the community in the middle of the city.”

“Te Ahi Ka Trust is the guardian of this dream. We are proud to present this combined community project to you and we ask for your support ....”

# RECOLLECTIONS “RITES OF PASSAGE”: THE CONVENT DAYS

I was born in 1929 into a family who lived in St Mary’s Parish and we always sat in the same seats on the left side of St Mary’s because my maternal grandmother and aunt had each donated a seat at the time the church was built. They were much shorter than the middle aisle seats. Whether the size indicated the amount of the donation, I don’t know!

Of course we attended the Parish schools — firstly Villa Maria. Then I went to St. Mary’s Convent in Grey Street, and my brother progressed to Marist Brothers’ in Dublin Street. We prepared for our First Confession and Communion while at the Villa, sited where our present St. Mary’s is situated.

The Sisters, members of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Nazareth, put a great deal of effort into our preparation, but no one prepared me enough for the terror I experienced making my First Confession! We were walked crocodile fashion from school to church, seated in the front pew, right next to the life-size statue of Our Lady nursing the dead body of her Son. The statues looked very real to a seven year old girl, but that red velvet curtain across the entrance to the confessional could have been a curtain of flames! We had a rehearsal, but the real event was awesome in anticipation. One by one, the other kids went behind the red velvet curtain, and came out unchanged. Then it was my turn. I still don’t like being alone in the dark. Having said my “Bless me Father” bit, and the priest



**MARY KAVENEY, author of this memoir.**

eventually saying “Go in Peace”, I walked out of the cubicle, feeling greatly relieved. But I did not feel holy, and that was a great disappointment.

The next ritual was First Holy Communion. It meant a new white dress, veil, shoes and prayer book. I do recall being the centre of attention in the family, but I cannot remember how I really felt. But I do know I loved the breakfast afterwards — jelly, cream puffs and orange soft drink!

A major privilege bestowed on we girls, was being sent by the Sisters to collect flowers for the decoration of the altar. Firstly, we collected from nearby homes armfuls of lilies, camellias, lilac and spring flowers. But once we could ride a bicycle, we were sent further afield with cartons tied onto our carriers.

The Sisters decorated the church altars every Friday afternoon. For special occasions each tier on the main altar had two or three brass vases, which meant almost a wall of flowers interspersed with high brass candlesticks and candelabra. The side altars weren't neglected — Our Lady always received special attention on her Feast Days. The Sisters must have looked forward to Lent, as all of the statues in the Church were covered with purple cloth, as was the central Crucifix. And there were no flowers. I still don't know who cleaned the church.

My other flower memory is of being a "Flower Girl". Once a month at 10.30 am, we had a High Mass. All in Latin of course, and the priest was accompanied by the Choir of St. Mary's. This was followed by Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. During the rest of the day, we all made visits to the Church. At 7 pm there was Benediction followed by a Procession. A Procession was an event. Firstly came one of the senior altar boys carrying aloft a brass crucifix; the younger boys, then the girls of the Sodality of the Sacred Heart in red cloaks and white veils, followed by the Children of Mary in pale blue cloaks and white veils. And they were followed by the men of the Holy Name Society. Then came the "flower girls". Each girl had a small basket filled with flower petals suspended with white ribbon from around her neck. Of course she would be in the white dress and veil.

When all were assembled two by two around the church, the organ would burst forth and we would walk and sing our way around the church. The flower girls would scatter petals over the floor for the priest, carrying the Monstrance, to walk right on. He walked under a velvet canopy carried by four men from the Hibernian Society, and everyone sang "Faith of Our Fathers", "Sweet Sacrament" or "Ave Maria" in full voice. The priest, dressed in cape and cope, was preceded by boys carrying candles and the older boys swinging the incense.

## Everyone sang .....

I suppose in hindsight, it was only our mothers and younger siblings who remained in the seats. Anyway, everyone sang. The organ played and the smell of incense permeated the entire church. Benediction followed the "Litanies" with the singing of "Adoramus o Salutaris" and "Tantum Ergo", and the ceremonies usually ended with the final hymn being "Hail Queen of Heaven". Of course the evening didn't end then, because our parents usually stood outside chatting, and sometimes two or three family groups would walk home together.

Because our school was the parish school, our choir was often called on to sing at a Requiem Mass. "Eternal Rest" was the favourite hymn, and because St. Mary's Church was in Victoria Avenue, there were always people about as the coffin was put in the hearse.

Of course the bells tolled and the passing traffic stopped to allow the mourners to pass by. The "Cake Kitchen" shop was next door to the Church, and nothing smelt as wonderful as its meat pies being baked on Friday morning as we left a Requiem Mass!

# THOSE FIRST FRIDAYS!

Now there was a ritual known as the "First Fridays". We were to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion on the first Friday in nine consecutive months, and gain a Plenary Indulgence. Mid-Week Mass was at 6.30 am. I used to set the family alarm clock, so that I had time to cycle to the church. I never did make nine. Something always went wrong at each attempt, usually at month seven or eight the alarm wouldn't go off, or I would forget.

The girls and boys of the Parish were encouraged to join Parish groups. For the girls there was the Sodality of the Sacred Heart (red cloaks), and at fifteenish we were invited to become a Child of Mary (blue cloaks).

The boys during the 40's went to the Parish Gym, then eventually into the Holy Name Society.

We played tennis at St. Mary's Tennis Club; netball for St. Mary's. Some joined St. Mary's Drama Club; the boys played rugby for Marist and the highlight of our social life (when we were considered old enough), was the Parish dance at "St. Joe's". On Saturday night the girls and boys would arrive in separate groups, and if a boy walked a girl home, he usually wheeled his bike. If she lived in the suburbs she would sit "side saddle" on the bar of his cycle.

## THE SUPPER SERVING

The girls were expected to take a turn at serving the supper and washing the dishes. The boys, even then, didn't do much. We were very well supervised by the adults, who knew us all and of course they also knew our parents. A lot of my generation met their future marriage partners at St. Joe's Saturday Night Dance.

By the time I was being prepared for Confirmation, I became aware of the importance of religion in our lives. I definitely knew what was right and what was wrong, because we had "The Mission" every couple of years to reinforce the day to day instructions from parents and school.

The Missioner walking with great aplomb across the Sanctuary, wearing his black biretta, black soutane, with a large crucifix tucked into a wide purple sash, and the great purple cape billowing around him.

## SERMONS EXCITING!

He would preach from a high pulpit, constructed to project his voice and increase the sound of his hand thumping it, to make us all jump. Even to wake some of the older congregation.

None of us knew anyone who had killed anyone, and we certainly didn't know much about adultery, but those sermons were exciting. Once again the new white dress and veil. The boys wore red sashes with their white shirts and navy shorts. The girls had a female sponsor and the boys a male. They were a well known couple in the Parish community.

Another major Parish event in the lives of the girls was the Charity Ball held every couple of years, at which 30 to 40 of us "came out". I am not sure whether it meant out of childhood, or out into "Society".

# FIRST COMMUNION, 1935



**FIRST COMMUNION, VILLA MARIA SCHOOL, WANGANUI, 1935, Left to right:**  
**Back Row: John Cornwell, John Crowley, Desmond Deere, Victor Croton, Anthony Davis, Trevor Toffin.**  
**Front Row: Loma Smith, Kathleen Payne, Nano Cornwall, Margaret Philips, Margaret Bousfield, Yvonne Scanlon, Mary Bergin, Mary Crowley.**

# FOR MASS, "BEST CLOTHES"

There have been remarkable changes in the fashions. Everyone wore their "best clothes" to Mass. Shoes were highly polished and hats were worn by men as well as women. Some of the ladies wore beautiful hats, some were even known by their hats!

The men removed their Trilby's on entering the church and hung them on hooks at the back of the church. Women always wore gloves, and in the winter everyone wore scarves and warm overcoats. We needed them as the church wasn't heated.

Anzac Day Masses were another annual event. The Returned Servicemen and Women marched down Victoria Avenue, led by a band. It seems now that the big church was half full of returned personnel. We had all known someone who had been to the "Wars". It was always a solemn occasion with the school cadets, in khaki uniforms, presenting arms during the Roll Call and when the bugler played the "Last Post" the tears came.

The priests came, and the priests went, each one influencing my/our attitudes and my/our beliefs.

The ones who performed the quickest Mass, and gave the shortest sermons were always very popular with the younger members of the congregation. Their visits into our homes were always special. The entire family was called together to receive a blessing before the priest departed. Sometimes they would accept hospitality, but they were pretty remote individuals to us children. As we grew older we realized how concerned some of the priests were for us "kids". When I commenced my training at the Public Hospital, the Parish Priest warned me that I was moving into a "den of iniquity". That Parish Priest was quite wrong.

## THE COMMITTAL

By the time I reached the fifth sacrament, I was definitely committed to being a Catholic, as was my future husband. The "Church" and some of the parishioners were pretty tough on "non-Catholics". In my early years, I/we really believed that only "good Catholics" would go to "Heaven".

Our parents, our families and our friends were part of our marriage ceremony and since then, of our own family life.

Of course, I had yet another white dress and veil. The Sisters were still doing the flowers, and the church, in spite of the bare wooden floor, hard seats and kneelers, and the layers of dust in the high places, was very friendly and familiar. The Nuptial Mass ceremony allowed the bride to be on the altar, which was a special privilege, as women were never ever allowed on the altar during the ceremonies. (But they were allowed to clean the brass, arrange the flowers, and do the cleaning!)

At this time I have not personally experienced the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, now known as the "Anointing of the Sick", but I have witnessed it being administered to family members, usually as they were near to death.

During my childhood, my bedroom was cleared of furniture following a death, and I was moved into my brother's room so that the "body" could lie in state. Six tall candlesticks were arranged around the coffin and people called, drank tea, viewed the body, said a few prayers and left.

Always after the funeral, family and friends would return to our home and more tea was served and the men would have a "spot" and the women a sherry. — (Mary Kaveney).

# ST. MARY'S IN MY LIFE

(Margaret Joyce Repton)

Francis and Myrtle Burkett came to live in Wanganui in 1926 with their three boys Alfred, John and Eldon. They had been married in New Plymouth where Alf and John were born and baptised. Eldon was born in Waverley before moving to Wanganui. I was born in 1931 and baptized by Father Lacroix, an early French Priest who is buried in Heads Road cemetery.

We lived in Wanganui East but my memories began when my Father had a garage in Guyton Street on what is now the entrance to the car park.

My brothers went to Villa Maria before going to the Marist Brothers' School. Because of the car battery business which featured largely in my father's mechanical interests, we were involved with supply and repairs to vehicles and batteries used by the priests and Home of Compassion.

**Until electricity reached Jerusalem up the River in 1960 my father supplied and cared for the batteries in house lighting sets. We sometimes went to Jerusalem with him to check the generator and sets when problems arose.**

## DEAR SISTER BERTHILDE

I began school in the Villa Maria in 1936 in a small room adjacent to the original St. Joseph's Hall. Sister Berthilde was our teacher — a bright, caring person. She explained our catechism to my Mother who became a Catholic when I was five. The slope from the Villa to the Hall was very steep and many foot races were run downhill. There was a ticket box at the back of the hall which was a hazard to be avoided. In my case I was once unable to stop and crashed head first!

My father's cousin, John Gorinski, was ordained in 1935 and spent a short time at St. Mary's and often visited us. The friendship with Father John continues. He is now the oldest Marist priest (in April 2000).

When father moved into Victoria Avenue at the bottom of St. Johns Hill, I attended St. Mary's School, Hurworth, in Grey Street. There was a convent, chapel, music rooms, and classrooms for Standard Three to Form Two. Primers were in another building below the main house. St. Mary's tennis courts were on the same grounds. The annual garden party was a great affair and parishioners gave it tremendous support.

St. Mary's Parish was a very close and caring community with various groups and sodalities keeping prayer and social life alive. Father Outram was the parish priest when I made my First Communion in October 1939. He rode a bicycle around Wanganui to visit his parishioners; we used to watch for him coming along the Avenue.

Father Maloney was chaplain for the Sisters of St Joseph at Sacred Heart Convent. Our house became a rest and refreshment stop for Father and the Sisters when they had been to town. It was a long walk up the hill in summer.

Father Gupwell was a strong preacher; his pronunciation of Aramoho was the first correction of Maori place names that I heard!



Joyce Repton

# ARCHBISHOP O'SHEA OCCASION

Archbishop O'Shea visited the schools several times. He was a popular figure with all St. Mary's children and as he was of small stature, when the children crowded around as he sat outside he could not be seen! Most visits ended with early afternoon closing.

On Thursday mornings all the school children went to St. Mary's church for the children's Mass. Some parishioners would be present as the weekday Mass was at 6.30am and mothers would be unable to attend at that hour.

Those receiving Communion would buy breakfast at the Cake Kitchen next door to the church and enjoy it, walking to their various schools.

Sisters Bernadette and Cecilia were the music teachers and lessons on the piano began at 8 am. After walking or cycling to school in the winter, hands would be frozen and a fire was welcome to thaw before lessons.

We learnt of the Old Testament through Bible Stories and the teachings of Christ with Catechism and discussions on each section that was studied.

In 1942 my young brother, Raymond, was born. I was delighted to tell my news at school which was received with disbelief by teachers and children as I was ten years old and it had been a well-kept secret from relatives and friends.

On June 10, 1945, I was Confirmed by Archbishop O'Shea at St. Mary's. To me the church was a wonderful place where the door was open every day to visit and pray in front of the Tabernacle. Being in the centre of the shopping area, there was rarely a time that no one was praying. It was a place of rest, peace and comfort for many. At Christmas the room containing the nativity scene was opened. It was unique in its construction with the cave opening at the back to show Bethlehem in the distance.

The scene had a sheet of glass which reflected angels in the sky over the town. The angels were painted on the back of the wall and when the light was switched on the reflection shone in the glass. The cave was of plaster painted in pastel shades on the rough walls. Jesus, Mary and Joseph were of metal and came from Germany. The other figures were of plaster. The two half animals were arranged in a stall. It has been my privilege and joy to repaint and repair the figures several times until ten years ago.

# SCHOOLING IN OLD BRICK BUILDING

My secondary schooling was at Sacred Heart College where we had classrooms in the old brick building. I was a boarder although my home was close. My father's garage moved to Ridgway Street but we continued our association with Jerusalem, the priests and sisters of Compassion as well as the Sisters of St Joseph and the Marist Brothers.

# SUNG LATIN MASS

Once a month High Mass was celebrated with sung Latin Mass. Mr Stokes was the organist and the music was supreme. The congregation was large and uplifting. The English translation in the Missal explained the liturgy for those not familiar with Latin. With the great feasts of the church and processions it was also involving the children and was anticipated with excitement.

During a severe illness with three months in hospital, I was visited often by the priests and religious who also gave great support to our family. Father J. Cullinane gave me the Sacrament for the dying and stayed, giving comfort to my parents. (The following year he was a special guest at my 21st Birthday!)

# PRIESTLY SUPPORT

During my nursing training at Wanganui Hospital, St. Mary's priests were constantly called to the sick and dying, giving courage and support to the patients.

Father Alex Ward looked after the choir at this time, Marj Missen was the organist and the choir practices were weekly. After the practice we would meet and sometimes had outings.

During my absence with the Sisters of Mercy in Auckland my parents kept me up to date with news of our parish, and the Home of Compassion, especially Jerusalem and the excitement when the power went through to the settlements. They spoke of the Maori Mission priests and their work. Fathers King-Turner and Prenderville were mentioned in the letters. After further illnesses I returned to my Parish with some misgiving but received much support and help to adjust from friends and religious in our parish. Father Hendren was our Parish Priest. Once more the choir became a big part of my life with Marj Missen at the organ and the choirmaster asking for help in copying music for parts. The music was changing with the Mass in English but it was beautiful.

# THE CATHOLIC BOOKSHOP ...

My involvement with the parish grew when working at the Catholic bookshop run by Gerry Repton. We were married at St. Mary's in 1967 with Fathers Gorinski and Fitzpatrick as the celebrants.

Father Prenderville was with my father when he died at home, but my mother died in hospital so we did not know who saw her.

Our two children were baptised in old St. Mary's by Father R. Smyth. Our family celebrations were shared with our parish community, and often lunch was shared among several families after 10am Mass. It was a simple meal of bread and cheeses and the children joined in games. About six families would meet at each others' homes. Friendships with adults and children grew and strengthened.

Besides teaching for some time St. Mary's Standard Two classes, I was a reader and Eucharistic Minister for about eight. Our son Bernard received his First Communion in 1977. During his illness with cancer over the next 12 months we were kept going by prayers and concern of our parish.

Bernard was Confirmed by Father Kinsella at a home Mass the night before going to Wellington Hospital for partial removal of a brain tumour. Teresa received her First Communion at home in June 1978, before Bernard returned to Wellington hospital for diagnosis of extensive bone cancer. He went to the Home of Compassion for a 'holiday' of two weeks and went back to the Home until his death in November 1978. Father Fitzpatrick was a constant visitor during that year, bringing Mass and Communion to our home.

Bernard died about 15 minutes after receiving Communion. The following years have seen the same caring from the parish community and our Marist priests. My life indeed has been intertwined with the life of our St. Mary's Parish.

# PRESENTATION BALL, 1967



## Catholic Presentation Ball in Memorial Hall on May 26, 1967

Back Row: (from left) Pauline Oliver, Maureen Kennedy, Marie Burton, Marie Clayton, Glenis Bourne, Susan Hyland, Janice Armit, Caron Touhy, Lynda Spillane, Damian de Lacy, Sandra Howat, Monica O'Leary.  
 Middle Row: (from left) Shirley Paddison, Patricia Managh, Josephine O'Leary, Rewa Anderson, Gaye Dennon, Helene Wallace, Josephine Boland, Julie Roydhouse, Karen Crafar, Jennifer Fromont, Anne Pudsey, Janice Paddison.  
 Front Row: (from left) Jenny Ahern, Margaret Hackett, Catherine Muir, Carol Fifield, Anne Foley, Cushia Foley, Noeleen Haddock, Ellen O'Leary, Mary Carmody, Adrienne Benefield.  
 Guests in Front: Mr M. Maxwell, Fr Fouhy, Mrs Andrews, Fr Simpson, Mrs Sefton, Archbishop McKeefrey, Mrs Mary Kaveney, Fr Spring, Mrs Maxwell, Mayor Mr Andrews.

Photo per courtesy Mary Kaveney.

# TWO DECADES AGO: CITY DOCTOR HONOURED BY POPE PAUL



Unquestionably one of the most distinguished parishioners of St Mary's, Wanganui, would be the late Dr Leo Charles McCarthy, M.C, M.B., Ch. B, FRCS, FRACS. In 1982 Pope John Paul II named him a Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great (Civil Division), recognising his outstanding qualities as a Catholic, and doctor of medicine.

Officiating at the Wanganui investiture was Bishop Peter Cullinane of Palmerston North.

Dr McCarthy was active in many roles in the parish from the time he came to Wanganui in the late 1940's.

Born in Hawera, he was educated at Catholic schools there and at Wellington and studied medicine at Otago University. He was a hospital surgeon at Thames until he joined the Army and left with reinforcements to serve as a captain and medical officer in the Middle East.

He was awarded the Military Cross for his work with casualties and inspiring conduct during the attack on Miteiriya Ridge in 1942.

Later he was surgical registrar at New Plymouth and then went overseas again to extend his studies, becoming a Fellow of both the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

He established a practice in Wanganui about 1951 and began a long association with the Hospital Board, initially as surgeon and later as an elected member. He was a director of Belverdale Private Hospital, which he helped establish.

In addition to his work for the Cancer Society, he was involved with the Home of

Compassion, Rotary, SPUC and the Jockey Club.

Dr McCarthy died in Wanganui in February 1983.

Dr McCarthy's memory is perpetuated in the NZ Cancer Society's Leo McCarthy Centre on Carlton Avenue, adjacent to the Public Hospital grounds where he served.

The facility is the society's Wanganui-Rangitikei-Waimarino Service Centre.

## UNITY IN 1981

The Catholic Church initiated a church unity movement in Wanganui city in 1981.

That year, some one thousand church-goers — Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist — gathered in the Wanganui Boys' College assembly hall to hear a 90-minute dissertation on the subject by Bishop Peter Cullinane ("We have to go back at least 400 years to develop the original church values, to find a basis for unity").

There then began interdenominational services at Pentecost and Christmas Festival time.

## THE FELLOWSHIPS

# ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY HAS SERVED WANGANUI 90 YEARS

(Mary Gullery)

The first Wanganui Conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul was founded on March 12, 1910 at the instigation and encouragement of Rev Fr Charles Venning SM. He also was responsible for the mushroom growth of the Society throughout the country.

At this time members of the Conference were male. The charitable works included helping the poor of the district with the limited funds available, mostly from their own pockets.

Later, Poor Boxes were installed at St Joseph's Church, and Aramoho Hotel! The average donated each week varied from 3/6 to 5/-. Allowing for inflation at today's rates, this is more than St Mary's Poor Box yields today! Money was raised from jumble sales, retiring collections, dances, euchre evenings and concerts. This was necessary, as without money those in need couldn't be assisted.

Women were welcomed as members of the Society, but met separately from the men. Their assistance was in visiting the sick, knitting garments, arranged or providing venues for concerts, as well as opening their homes for the teaching of Catechism was invaluable.

People mentioned in those 1910 days and later were Bros Benefield, Provost, Dowling, Murphy, Ahern, Brady, Russell, Bourke, Coe, O'Meara, Marshall, Wilson, Luxford, Louisson, Meachen, Fromont, Geoghan, Kirkwood, Tyler, Riordon, Seldon, Wisnewski, O'Leary, Sloan, O'Flaherty, Cowan, Strobent, McDonald, Hartshorn, Haggie, Treanor, Louis, Lynch, Higgins, Burke, Greenlees, Haywood, Howard, Richardson.

Priests stationed then at St Mary's were Dean Holly, Frs Mahony, Outrim, Kimbell, Power, Maynard, Duncan, Brady, Malone, Dowling, Mulligan, Guerlaine, and Meachem. A Conference was also established downtown at St Mary's, and a Ladies' Auxilary was established later.

Women named in these early days included Cullinane, Koorey, O'Boyle, Malfor, Waters, Thompson, Seldon, McDonald, Ellis, McNair, Stewart, Brosnahan, Richardson, Orange, Melody, Pettis, and Corliss.

Members of the Conference met on Sunday evenings in an old shed at the back of the St Joseph's Church. Each member was allocated persons to visit and help where necessary and they reported back at the next meeting.

Jubilee Hospital was visited weekly when the Rosary was recited with the Catholic patients. A quote from the minutes: "Secretary Br Provost was instructed to bring three plugs of tobacco to the meeting on the 2nd Sunday of the month for distribution by Brothers visiting Jubilee Home".

Sr Rita's School had a very close association with the Society and often called on it. A room at the school was available for jumble sales.

## TWO DOLLAR DONATION

A minute from 1912: Donation of £1 to St Mary's Conference, and in September 1914, Mass offered for Pope Pius 10th. And on November 9, 1915. Presentation of Rosaries to Messrs Murphy, Treanor and Ahern who were joining the Expeditionary Forces. December 13, 1916: Donation of £5.50 for prisoners of war.

Police and Press gave donations. Many people were generous in their giving, realising that Society members both men and women were doing their best to relieve the poverty, particularly of the unemployed. Invalid chairs were provided for some but until 1915, chairs did not have pneumatic tyres so one can imagine the hard ride!

In May 1913, Conference members started Sunday School at Makirikiri, a forerunner of others to be established.

Catholic Truth Society bookcases were erected at all churches and members did all possible to disseminate Catholic literature. Visiting hospitals and charitable institutions was a regular outreach to the community.

## JUNIORS FROM 1923

A Boys' Conference was formed in 1923. Part of their work consisted in accompanying older members in hospital and institution visitation. Two boys accompanied older members to Wellington to celebrate Archbishop Redwood's Jubilee in 1924. Bro Bourke was instrumental in getting electric heaters installed at Jubilee Home. Funding was always a problem in the early days of the Society; there were no Opportunity Shops.

The public were generous as people realised the needs of the poor. However, people sometimes had to be referred to the Charitable Aid Board because of a lack of funds in the Society. Many people had relief work two or three days a week but had no money coming into their homes the rest of the week. As unemployment was very high there were many cases of dire poverty.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

Society members devoted their Sunday afternoons to teaching in Sunday Schools, at Makirikiri, Wanganui East, Papaiti, Brunswick, Westmere, East Town, Okoia, Kaiwhaiki and Mosstown. Transport was by horse and cart, bicycle and later by car. Money was provided to transport children to the nearest Mass centre where possible.

The main thrust of Society members was to bring the Catholic Faith mostly to Maori children who in many cases knew nothing of the Faith. Classes were held on a regular basis and adults and children were prepared for First Confession and Holy Communion. Society members were of tremendous assistance to the priests who also provided as much assistance as they could. When a Mission was held the Society provided transport — a big undertaking in those days.

# ONLY WANGANUI OUTSIDE MAIN CENTRES

In 1930 there were only five Particular Councils in New Zealand, in Wellington, Auckland, Wanganui, Christchurch and Dunedin. And in 1932, Fr Geraldine was appointed the first Spiritual Director to the St Joseph's Conference, and that same year a Ladies' Auxiliary was officially formed to work in their own right.

A letter from the President of the Superior Council in Wellington asked whether the Wanganui Particular Council could contact isolated Conferences in New Plymouth and Palmerston North. Wanganui replied in the affirmative.

At the Annual Meeting of the Society in 1992, which coincidentally was the Diamond Jubilee of the now National Council, a historical Booklet noted. —

## FR VENNING PASSES

“The work of the Society received a serious set-back, first of all through the lamented tragic death of Rev. Father Charles Venning S.M. as a result of a motor bicycle accident. The Marist Year Book for 1927 makes the following comment: - In 1910 the “Apostle of St Vincent de Paul” the late Father Charles Venning established the Wanganui Conference of that Society. This brief record would not be complete without special reference to these lay Apostles. The Conference thus established in 1910 has flourished and continues to be a blessing to the Parish. The Brothers of St. Vincent have been leaders in the performance of the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. For many years they taught Catechism in the out-districts. In some cases this teaching was the beginning of what are now established Church Centres.”

Also in 1932 the Society in New Zealand was officially set up as a Superior Council in its own right, having previously been under the jurisdiction of the Australian Council. Archbishop Redwood presided over the meeting which was attended by several hundred people. Wanganui representatives were Bros J. Carmody and W. M. Luxford.

### FOOTNOTE:

On August 30, 1899, the Wanganui Chronicle said: “We understand that Mr W. M Luxford late of Pipiriki, has bought out Mr Marc Neil's Aramoho store. Mr Luxford is well known in the district by reputation and we wish him every success in his new enterprise.”

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Wanganui purchased goods for the needy from this store.

## MORE HAPPENINGS ...

Mr James Pedley gave the use of his barn for Sunday School at Mosstown. Mrs Trillo of Westmere provided the use of her home for same. In July 1924, thirteen children at Kaiwhaiki made their First Holy Communion at a Mass attended by over 200 people. This was followed by a great feast. At Parakino young men and women had never had instructed in the Faith or received the Sacraments. Members decided to visit there once a month.

At the close of 1930, at Kaiwhaiki prizes and presents were placed at the foot of a Christmas Tree. There were enough of all present, both children and adults. Those attending showed their appreciation to the Society by a presentation to Br. President.

## MAKIRIKIRI FESTIVITY

At Makirikiri on September 1931 six children made their First Holy Communion at a Mass celebrated by Fr Gerlaine, followed by a breakfast and the distribution of prizes.

At the same venue a week later at the First Communion there were two priests, one Seminarian and 150 people present. Fr Venning celebrated a field Mass after which a procession carrying the Holy Child, and a choir singing hymns in Maori and English moved around. The ceremonies concluded, there was an elaborate breakfast for visitors and the distribution of prizes.

Society members assisted the Home of Compassion in Guyton Street by providing six Working Bees in 1931.

Early records of the St. Vincent de Paul Society's work in Wanganui (beginning in Aramoho) are still preserved in the Society's shop in mid-Victoria Avenue, Wanganui.

The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand noted 80 years ago: “Apostles of this St Vincent de Paul Society have been leaders in spiritual and corporal works of mercy. By teaching the Catechism in the out-districts, they have prepared the way for the establishment of new church centres.”

# CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE

(Joan Sullivan)

The Catholic Women's League was founded in England in 1906 by Margaret Fletcher with the aim of helping Catholic women become more aware of the contribution they could make to the social, intellectual and spiritual life of the Church.

It came to New Zealand in 1931, and to Wanganui in 1945 and it arrived under the guidance of Bishop James Liston, of Auckland, to fulfil the need of voluntary social work during the depression.

It flourished nationwide with the chosen motto of "Faith and Service" and provided recognition for women outside the confines of their homes.

St. Margaret Clitherow is the Patron Saint of the C.W.L. She lived in the 16th Century and was a fearless and outspoken English Catholic who died for her faith. In 1970 she was canonized as St. Margaret of York and became known as the Pearl of York.

The Wanganui branch of the League was established in 1945 after Fr. Isaac Gupwell met parishioners to discuss the formation of the League.

The foundation committee was: President, Miss Olive Graham; Secretary, Mrs. Nora Luxford; Committee, Margaret Coakley, Rita McCartney, Mary Kurta, Anne McCulloch, Alberta Bousfield, and Mesdames Downey, Laird and Miers.

An open evening organised for September 13, 1945, with Rev. Dr. Gasgoine as guest speaker, was followed by Old Time dances interspersed with musical items.

A catered buffet supper was served — Admission six pence. The response was overwhelming with more than 200 attending.

Subsequent meetings were very popular; for example in December that year, 400 women attended. Whether these numbers continued is unclear, however, in October 1947, 250 membership cards were issued and there was some discussion on age eligibility as there were too many young members!

From its inception it was clear the League was meant to be an action group, working for the spiritual development and welfare of women as well as being a Catholic presence in the community.

Members were fortunate in having had the support of many fine Chaplains. Their spiritual welfare, has been met with kindness and generosity of time. Retreats were at the Cenacle, the Friary in Palmerston North, Days of Recollection at Jerusalem with the River Sisters, and at local venues, the many and varied talks, especially at time of Vatican II, and in recent years which were marked with the mid-day Masses.

Masses offered for deceased members and members' intentions, together with regular spiritual readings helped to focus on the desire to love God as well as thy Neighbour.

The 'service' aspect knew no bounds; it was never difficult to find a worthwhile cause.

In the 1940's an eagerness to provide assistance for war-torn Europe meant food parcels and financial assistance were dispatched regularly to France, Italy and Britain.

# PACKAGES OF GOODWILL

In April 1949, a letter from Dame Gertrude Oliver, of the Abbey of St. Nicholas in France, expressed heartfelt thanks to League members. Parcels of used clothing were sent to Europe and the Pacific, as well as to refugee camps for Polish children here in New Zealand. Many hours were spent preparing and packaging goods. Increasing freight charges ultimately curtailed this assistance.

Eventually, the mission group was formed in 1951 to support priests and sisters already working in the Pacific.

In 1953 a beautiful set of vestments were made and dispatched to a needy priest. Imagine the delight of the recipient!

Over the years many bales of goods and clothing as well as many thousands of dollars have been sent to the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Korea, Samoa and Fiji.

Requests for aid were often quite beyond the means of the Mission Circle, but some contribution was always forthcoming. When a deep freeze unit was needed in New Caledonia in 1969, \$200 was sent.

In 1975 an irrigation system needed installing so \$600 was raised and sent. When a petroleum refrigerator was needed by the River Sisters of Jerusalem in 1961, \$250 was raised and when an electric generator was needed there practical help came from the Ohakea Air Base and members' husbands.

An appeal for a water filter system for Urandi, Brazil, was part of an international appeal, and \$100 was given. No matter what the request, consideration was always favourable.

Goods and money were always acknowledged but often correspondence had to be translated, especially from French New Caledonia. In recent times all money for Pacific Mission stations had been sent to the Marist Centre in Wellington to be forwarded to the designated recipients. Currently, the League's allocated Mission Station is Tavenui, Fiji.

## "AT HOME" MISSION

The 'At Home' Mission is the Home of Compassion. Years of dedication and financial help has been willingly given. As well as street appeals in the 50's, 60's and 70's, assistance with their annual garden party, on stalls, baking and sewing and providing morning and afternoon teas have all had a wonderful spirit of co-operation.

Members had a roster for helping in the laundry with ironing and folding, until 1992, and continue with bottling fruit in season, as required.

From the late 1960's until 1994, grocery parcels and petrol cheques were sent to the Sisters at Jerusalem. More recently, the League has supported Te Pekerangi, (Castlecliff), helping to finance new deep freeze and storage facilities.

As for there being a Catholic presence in the local and wider community, as early as 1946 the League was represented on the National Council of Women, with some holding executive positions and attending national conferences.

As well, there was a commitment to the Lay Tuberculosis Association, the Health Stamp campaign, Poppy Day, Red Cross, and the War Memorial Hall Appeal.

# THE BENEFITS WERE MANIFOLD

Support for Hurworth School Garden Party (1947), St. Monica's School Picnic (1948), donating bed linen to Hato Paora College (1947), fundraising for the Highden Rebuilding Project (1956), as well as catering for innumerable parish functions proves that these CWL women were remarkably versatile and had endless energy.

The most popular raffle at this time was a cord of firewood at six pence a ticket and at each monthly meeting a bring-and-buy stall helped to supplement funds.

Floral decorations were always provided for the Church, parish functions, ordinations, presentation balls, civic receptions and many horticultural functions.

At least three floral carpets were made, the most notable being for the visit of the Queen Mother in April 1966. Sisters Antoinette and Labore designed it and league members completed many hours of intricate work, covering an area in front of the main stage upstairs in the Memorial Hall.

With the very strong membership in the 1950's, groups known as Circles were formed to cater for the special interests and needs of members.

This had the effect of increasing membership and a wonderful spirit of co-operation and community developed.

The first was the Carmelite Support in August 1950. Members offered prayer support and regular financial contributions.

In 1952, The Cabrini Circle began, based on the work of Mother Cabrini of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, who at the end of last century founded homes for the aged and infirm, established hospitals and orphanage schools. Members of this group visited and cared for the sick in hospital and their homes, offered help where necessary and spiritual support.

The discussion group began in 1953. It offered a challenge to those who wished to understand more deeply the changes in the Church, the legislation of the day, Women in Public Life (a new and radical view!) and later on, the Abortion debate.

Many interesting panel discussions were organised with well qualified and notable participants. Later groups were the Garden Circle, Bridge and Sewing Circles, the Home Makers' Circle and the Drama Circle which entertained often at meetings and performed with some distinction at local Drama Festivals.

The Homemakers Circle was a wonderful meeting place for younger Catholic women who were generally housebound with young families. Emphasis was placed on the vocation of marriage, education and care of young children, home management and budgeting skills.

They produced a recipe book, raised money for the missions and in 1964 formed a choir under the leadership of Joan Whelan, which entertained regularly. They had their own Spiritual Director who fostered a knowledge of the Faith, and as a result many life-long friendships were made.

In 1954, the Catholic Resettlement Commission began to establish European families in New Zealand communities. As part of the New Settlers Programme in 1957, the League assisted two Hungarian families who came to Wanganui. Then Taiwanese families.

# CWL ROLL OF HONOUR 1945 - 2000

## **PRESIDENTS:**

Miss Olive Graham (1945), Mrs Nora Luxford (1946-49), Mrs Evelyn Bellringer (1949-51), Miss Elizabeth Roche (1951-58), Mrs Mavis Jarrett (1958-59), Mrs Fay Clayton (1959-62), Mrs L. J. Mahar (1962), Mrs Alice Robinson (1962-65), Mrs Perina Pervan (1965-68), Mrs Elizabeth Boyle (1968-71), Mrs Nance Farrell (1971-75), Mrs Helen O'Neill (1975-78), Mrs Mary Gullery (1978-81), Mrs Jo Broad (1981-84), Mrs Patricia Hocquard (1984-85), Mrs Joan Kane (1985-87), Mrs Frances Huijs (1987-91), Mrs Joan Lucas (1991-96), Mrs Frances Huijs (1996).

## **SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS:**

Fr. I. Gupwell (1945), Fr. J. Kingan (1947), Fr. S. O'Connor (1950), Fr. A. Ward (1956), Fr. Stapleton (1962), Fr. P. Abbott (1963), Fr. C. F. Feehly (1964), Fr. P. Butler (1972), Fr. P. Kinsella (1973), Fr. G. Duggan (1978), Fr. T. Fitzpatrick (1980), Fr. Kiley (1985), Fr. J. Allardyce (1986), Fr. J. Palmer (1989), Fr. M. Cosgriff (1991), Fr. J. Aitken (1993), Fr. D. P. Levins (1997).

**CWL SECRETARIES HAVE BEEN:** Nora Luxford, Thelma Cleeve, Mrs. M. Hurley, Miss Alberta Bousfield - (for 18 consecutive years!), Loretto Daws, Alice Robinson, Akenehi Dawson, Jean Fromont - (16 years, different terms), Mary Gullery, Sister Carmel, Olive Harman and Joan Sullivan.

**TREASURERS HAVE BEEN:** Mary Kurta, Ngaire Watt, Kitty Nielsen, Bridie McLaughlan, May Tuffin, Eleanor Williams, Jean Fromont, Marion Dorgan, Betty Hos, Frances Huijs, Val Dawson, Margaret Walsh, Norine Cameron, Joan Sullivan, Margaret Walsh (second term).

## LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Life membership of the CWL has not been given lightly. The first was bestowed upon Elizabeth Roche in recognition of 13 years' dedication to the League from its formation in 1945 to 1958. Others to have received the honour are Olive Graham, Alberta Bousfield, Elizabeth Boyle, Loretto Daws, Perina Pervan, Nance Farrell, Jean Fromont and Joan Whelan.

Since its heyday, when the majority of women were mothers and housewives, lifestyle in New Zealand has changed markedly. From the mid 70's, more and more women have pursued careers and family finances have dictated the necessity for both parents to join the workforce, and few women can avail themselves of the type of fellowship and social contact that the League provided a generation ago.

We are living in a different era — our membership is now 43. We still meet monthly, still fundraise for the missions, are still interested in social issues, and still share our faith.

## HOLY NAME SOCIETY

The Holy Name Society was holding monthly socials after Benediction in the Church, with guest speakers and discussions, from about 1936.

The Society had been inaugurated by Pope Gregory in the 13th century, and had won Royal patronage and become widespread throughout the Catholic world. The primary objects were to pay reverence to the names of God and of Jesus Christ, and oppose all blasphemy, obscene speech and perjury.

Bishop Liston introduced the movement to Auckland in 1926.

A general lack of interest was beginning to be noticed after World War II in some of the Church organisations, not only locally, but throughout New Zealand, and finally this Society was one which ceased to function.

## CHILDREN OF MARY

The Children of Mary sodality in Wanganui likewise harkens back to the early days of the 20th century. By 1912 its local membership reached 120.

The movement was approved by Rome in 1584 and officially recognised by Pope Pius IV in 1847. Its aims were to give greater glory to God by worshipping Him in common: to honour Jesus Christ as the Child of Mary; to seek the motherly protection of the Immaculate Mother of God; to imitate Our Lady by the personal practice of her favourite virtues of purity, humility, obedience and charity, and to gain a harvest of indulgences with which the Association was favoured.

The blue cloak and white veil worn at Church gatherings honoured the appearance of Our Lady to St. Catherine Laboure in similar dress.

In Wanganui The Society of the Sacred Heart was introduced into the Parish by Father Kirk and had a similar number of members, and the Branch of the Living Rosary could count on 300 members.

The Legion of Mary with full ecclesiastical approval and commendation by several Popes, was established in many countries since 1921, and in New Zealand since 1936. The Legion was ready for every form of social service and Catholic action. The required weekly apostolic work carried out by members was selected by the Parish Priest, such as visiting hospitals and prisons, and conducting study and discussion groups.

## MORE MARY GULLERY'S RESEARCH:

### THE HIBERNANIANS

One of the colourful St Mary's groups who regarded the Villa Maria as home was the Hibernian Catholic Benefit Society. It had its origin in Australia, where people were banded together for a common purpose — to make contributions to a general fund from which the needy could draw. The first branch in New Zealand was established in 1874. It opened in Wanganui in 1911 with Father La Croix as chaplain.

Among its great social occasions from early days was St. Patrick's Feastday (March 17), commencing with a special Mass, then a day of light-hearted events organized by the Hibernians in full regalia including the gold-fringed velvet collar, tasseled and embroidered.

The "Land of Saints and Scholars" was traditionally celebrated by the young with a school holiday and usually a school picnic at Aramoho Park — some claim a school picnic on St. Johns Hill - and in the evening a vigorous Irish concert.

Here again earlier survivors claim it was in the Oddfellows' Hall. Whatever, the rehearsals which took place in the Villa are still remembered with laughter.

Over the years changes were made to the benefits given by the Society. After the introduction of Social Security the earlier prominence of the group began to decrease.

### THIRD ORDER OF MARY

The Third Order of Mary, set up for the spiritual advancement of lay people, commenced activities in Wanganui in 1932 and for a number of years was a feature of the devotional life of the Parish. Something more than a society, it was an integral part of the Society of Mary itself.

It had been established in France in 1852, and offered "an opportunity for those who moved about in the busy world to practise the devotions and religious virtues available in the orders of priests, nuns and brothers who comprise the Marist family".

As its name and practices imply, the Marist Third Order is founded on a special devotion to Our Lady. Tertiaries are urged to have a special love for the Blessed Virgin because God and Our Lord Jesus Christ have a very great love for Her.

Those wishing to become members were first received as postulants, and after a probationary period were received as full members.

There can be no doubt the Marist Third Order was a veritable spiritual powerhouse over the years.

## MUSIC AND LITURGY IN THE 40'S & 50'S

Aileen Croasdale writes about the music and liturgy of St. Mary's in the "olden days", so some recollections are of the 40's and 50's. —

In those days the choir was an integral part of most Catholic churches and the choir master/mistress had a heavy responsibility. We had to learn and teach a wide repertoire of Masses, motets and anthems — all in Latin and all in four-part harmony. Because of this heavy programme at St. Mary's, we had choir practice every Wednesday night, with just a short break after Christmas and Easter.

On the first Sunday of the month there was solemn High Mass. The church would be packed, the altar a blaze of light and colour with candles and flowers. The organist would start playing, the choir singing lustily and the procession would start down the aisle — cross-bearer, acolytes, sub-deacon, deacon, Master of Ceremonies and then the celebrant, all very splendid. However, it was not just a spectacle. We felt that this was one way we could pay homage to our God by offering the best we had of beauty, song and praise.

There was no congregational singing at any Mass but every Sunday night there was Benediction where the people enjoyed singing well known hymns such as "Holy God" and "Faith of our Fathers" hymns to the Sacred Heart and to Our Lady.

And again, on the first Sunday of the month, we would have Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. After the singing of the "O Salutaris" there would be a stir. The acolytes would gather together, the thurible bearer swinging clouds of incense into the air, little girls in white clutching baskets of flower petals and four men with Hibernian sashes and white gloves holding a canopy over priest and monstrance. Then the procession would move slowly around the church to the singing of Eucharist hymns, and the scattering of flowers petals by the little girls.

As I look back over the years two memories come to the surface: One is of the Good Friday Mass of the Pre-Sanctified. Three priests would be in the sanctuary to sing the Gospel — Fr. Gupwell always singing the words of Christ. Father would stand on the top of the three steps in a chasuble of black velvet, richly embroidered in gold thread. His magnificent voice filled every corner of the huge St. Mary's. His dignified bearing and the solemnity of the occasion would so affect the congregation that not a sound would be heard, not even the shuffle of feet. An occasion to treasure.



MUSIC MASTER Mrs Aileen Croasdale.

## THE ANZAC MOMENT

Another vivid memory is of St Mary's Anzac Day Masses. The church was always packed for the war was still close to us. No one was unaffected. In the porch, cadets from St. Augustine's would be gathered. Then, just before Consecration, we would hear the officer-in-charge give the command, "Honour Guard, shoulder arms. Honour Guard, slow march".

Then, to the beat of a single drum these young men would march slowly until they were in front of the Sanctuary where they would form a guard of honour for their Lord. This was always a poignant moment for we remembered those who did not return.

I will never forget the colour and pageantry of the "old days" of the pre-Vatican II church. I do admit to a certain amount of nostalgia but man does need beauty and mystery in his life. If our worship is going to be grey and functional like a good part of our lives, many will just walk out the church doors. We can thank God that the new St. Mary's is such a beautiful, colourful and warm building and that its people are equally warm, kindly and beautiful.

— Aileen Croasdale.

## GRIEF SUPPORT

St Mary's has a Grief Support Group whose members send a card on behalf of the Parish assuring the family of a person who dies that the Parish Family are remembering them in the thoughts and prayers. A few weeks later the group personally calls on the family to reaffirm that they are still in its prayers and to assure them of any help or support the group is able to give, or suggest to them.

The group always is willing to call again on any parishioner especially those who have no family living in Wanganui.

## ALL ABOUT VALUES

The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child was formed in Auckland in 1970.

The founders were Dr. Patrick Dunn, a well-known obstetrician and gynaecologist, Sir William Lilley, Research Professor in Perinatal Physiology at the Auckland Postgraduate School of Obstetrics, and Mr. Leo Mannings, a prominent member of the Jewish community.

Dr. Lilley at that time was recognized worldwide as an expert in the field of foetology, a developing new science in the growth of the human form from conception until birth.

Within two years the society had 28 branches and by 1975 it had grown to more than 40,000 members in 56 branches throughout New Zealand. Dr. Dunn and Sir William came to Wanganui to awaken enthusiasm for a branch, and church members from many denominations worked enthusiastically to foster an awareness of the Unborn Child. Sadly, records of those early times have been lost.

The primary objective of the Society is to uphold and promote the intrinsic value of human life under God, the Author of Life, and members have worked tirelessly for this.

They have organized seminars, completed submissions for Parliamentary select committees, have joined Lifechains and collected signatures for petitions, maintained displays at the A&P Shows for years, and have organized prayer vigils and afternoons of Reflection. To this end, St. Mary's parish family has always given strong support to the S.P.U.C. as have other Christian congregations in Wanganui.

For nearly 10 years, a group led by Ted Downs has met every Monday evening at St. Mary's to pray the Rosary for the Protection of the Unborn Child.

“(Every child is a blessing from God” — Mother Teresa of Calcutta)

The St Mary's Baptism team consists of Iolie Murphy, Janet Fawcett, Anita Mars and Michael O'Sullivan. They have been together for 18 months and over that time have developed the preparation session into what they consider is a welcoming experience with a mixture of reflection, personal experience and prayer.

The team starts with a welcome and then explore what Baptism means to each individual, not only through the eyes of a Catholic parent but also from the perspective of the non-Catholic partner. Discussion is encouraged on why Catholics want their children to be baptized, and reflect on what responsibilities parents have as a result.

“From there they move on to the joys and challenges of parenthood and then the future to explore the hopes and dreams as well as the apprehensions that parents have for our children and the society within which they will live.

“As the discussion progresses, it is soon evident that there is a pattern to life. It is a pattern of dying in order to live, and is present right from the start of our lives.

“The moment of birth itself is a passing over from life within the womb to a life independent of our mother.

“For us as Christians this is a Holy pattern and is embodied in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism then, gives our children the opportunity to become part of our Christian and Catholic community, so that they are then able to draw on our own experiences to enable them to share in this understanding of human life and the promise and hope that it holds.

“For the parish community, the most noticeable change in recent months has been the inclusion of the baptism ceremony within our Sunday Mass.

“This is seen as important because Baptism is a ceremony of initiation, along with the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Confirmation.

“Baptism then is that start of a life-long journey through faith, with the whole parish community having an ongoing responsibility to ensure that the child receives encouragement, love, prayer, and support.

“It is our hope that as a result, many of the families that come through our programme will be inspired to keep returning to Mass. For those who have previously lost contact with the Church, this may well be the catalyst to once again take an active part within our parish community, and in doing so provide their children with the opportunity to know and appreciate the wonderful faith that we have.”

## SUNFLOWER COMMUNITY

**F**aith and Light is an international Christian movement founded by Jean Vanier and Marie Helen Mathieu in France 25 years ago. Although initially Catholic the organization has now become ecumenical and has communities in 70 countries worldwide.

At the heart of each community is the person with intellectual disability surrounded by their family and friends. The movement is spiritually based and elements of fun and support are vital ingredients. Besides the regular gatherings the community grows together through holidays, pilgrimages, retreats and weekends.

Faith and Light is founded on the belief that each person with an intellectual disability is fully a person with all the rights of a human being — above all the right to be loved and respected. They are unique and have a mysterious value. “God has chosen the weak to confound the strong” (1 Cor 1:27).

The Sunflower Community was founded in 1994 and officially recognized as a Faith and Light community the following year. It began in a small way but now has a community of over 30 members.

Each community is required to have equal numbers of people with intellectual disability (the heart people), parents and supporting people. It meets monthly for a time of prayer, sharing and celebration — the three ingredients necessary for a recognized Faith and Light community. During the times in between it is encouraged to interact with the other members of the community by visits, telephone calls, prayer and outings, thus creating strong bonds within the community.



## WIDE MEMBERSHIP

Although as a community it is required to have a link with a particular parish. It has members of various Wanganui church communities belonging to the local Faith and Light Group.

At each gathering there are the three parts — Prayer, Sharing and Celebration.

**Prayer:** in the form of spiritual input prepared and presented by the chaplain and based on guidelines put out by the zone. (That is the communities in the Pacific-Australia, New Zealand). Some aspect of scripture is shared in a form that is relevant to the people present. It may involve drama, an activity-art work sharing, and music. The whole emphasis is so that the heart people are involved and that they are “doing with and not doing for”.

**Sharing:** happens all the time, especially if the members have not seen each other for a whole month!

**Celebration:** is usually afternoon tea and also includes birthday greetings. Music is included and the group has its own clown who appears for special occasions. It also celebrated the Faith and Light anniversary and on a wider level celebrated the 25th birthday of the International Faith and Light family in 1996.

The Wanganui gatherings are generally held at the same venue but it also meets at places such as Bason Reserve, a Mowhanau Beach house in summer and occasionally at a local trust home for the intellectually disabled. It also interacts with a new group formed in Palmerston North. This community was founded by a family of Rwandan refugees with a son intellectually disabled and involved with Faith and Light in Rwanda.

The heart members of the Wanganui community come from IHC homes, or some live at home with their families. All value their connection with Faith and Light and eagerly look forward to each gathering.

## FAITH AND LIGHT IS INTERNATIONAL

One of the most exciting things about Faith and Light is both the national and international interaction. There are ten communities throughout New Zealand, all interacting on a regular basis. Zone meetings are held every two years with Australia and international meetings are held every four years. New Zealand in the Southern Cross zone is twinned with a community in Australia — the Billabong community in Sydney. A representative from Wanganui was fortunate enough to attend the international meeting in Quebec, Canada, in July 1998.

Wanganui also hosted a national meeting in February 1997. Further proof of ecumenism is the fact that the conference was held at the Friends Settlement Quaker Acres. A group from Auckland travelled down with several heart members, each accompanied by a support person.

This Sunflower Community, together with the other 1300 throughout the world, are essentially places of acceptance and belonging, particularly for people with intellectual disabilities, their families and friends.

Contacts for Sunflower Community in the evenings include:

Sr Maricenne Waite (coordinator)

Ph 344 7917 and

Elaine Martin

Ph 345 2179



**TWO BUSY PEOPLE** charged with keeping tabs on affiliated organizations — Parish secretary Mrs Esther Teasdale (left) and Mrs Adrienne Smith, treasurer.

# CATHOLIC SCHOOLS: CORNERSTONE OF THE PARISH

St. Mary's Parish for decades shouldered responsibility for five primary schools — St Mary's, St. Anne's, St Joseph's, St Anthony's, and Marist Brothers.

A study group within the Wanganui Catholic Primary Education Committee decided Marist could go co-ed, that St Anthony's could be rebuilt; that St Mary's and its 'junior division' (St. Joseph's) could be merged and rebuilt as a facility for the central city.

A footnote to the study group report: "We are a united church. Let us not be divided in planning better education facilities for Wanganui's Catholic children."

In the early 1980's Wanganui parishioners had launched the primary school committee which in short order reported: -

"The Committee has studied and formulated proposals thought to be ones that will be of most benefit to most children in the future: -

- (1) Conversion of Marist School to a co-ed for all children Std 4 to Form 2.
- (2) Replace St. Anthony's School by a new building on part of Totara Street site - (co-ed P1-Std3).
- (3) Amalgamation of St. Mary's and St. Joseph's (Junior division at St. Mary's site for the immediate future but a new school to serve the central City to be built later (co-ed P1-Std3).
- (4) St Anne's School to continue as it is at present, but to cater for boys and girls from P1 to Std3.

"We, as parents, of today, benefit from the

foresight and sacrifice of our ancestors in establishing Catholic Schools. Let us not be found wanting in building for future generations so that they will benefit from our efforts.

The Catholic Education scenario grew with advocates proclaiming last year. —

"We see exciting times ahead with St Anne's and St Mary's joining St Marcellin in offering primary and intermediate growth. Growth at St Marcellin in the teaching of intermediate children with the provision of quality programmes has proven how successful Catholic education at this level can be.

"With support and encouragement from our Catholic communities, we see St Anne's and St Mary's moving in this direction, offering seamless, quality education in all areas of the city."

The local group stressed seven core values —

- Live by Catholic values
- Value and respect for others
- Strong partnerships with school, family and church
- Foster personal responsibility
- A secure environment which encourages independence
- Meet individual needs of each child
- Quality teaching and learning

# MEMORIES FLOOD BACK — 'ST JOSEPH'S, 1915!

Parishioner Stella Coe has a fabulous memory which, when she penned this piece, took her back to year 1915. "At about five — began at the old two-storey St Joseph's School."

"It had staircases on the outside — rather steep and frightening for a rather small, timid child ... but admittedly, not much of a worry for the small ones were taught on the ground floor."

Mrs Coe wrote on:

The much loved teachers of the primers were Sister Cletus and Sister Fidelis. I believe Sr Rosalie was there at one time as was Sr Laurence, blood sister of Sr Rita of the Aramoho School.

Srs Borgia, Clement and Charles taught in the upper part of the building which incidentally, used to sway quite badly in strong winds!

Sister Charles had a magnificent singing voice and could hold a part of her own against the whole church congregation.

The playground alongside St Joseph's was rather small, but we used to play in a large paddock over the road from the school where the municipal car park, Museum and other buildings are now situated.

I recall one or more ponies belonging to country folk tethered in that paddock. Our play area was limited because house properties extended along that part of Wicksteed Street and around the corner into Guyton Street, where St Mary's car park is sited.



Stella Coe

I remember during the first World War peering into the dark foundations of our school building looking for Germans! We really believed some might be there.

I well remember the Queen's Park school over the road from St Joseph's and not far from today's Public Library. The nickname we gave them was "Queen Park Sausages"! We, of course, were known as "Cattledogs". One day the Queen's Park school went up in flames and there was great excitement at St Joseph's. I recall Mrs Bourke, wife of the police sergeant, coming to collect her small son, now Fr Simon Bourke SM, of Pacific Island missions, when the fire was at its peak.

Mrs Coe Continues:

## THE VILLA MARIA

### ST. MONICA'S

Just after I reached the standards, we were transferred to the Villa Maria — that picturesque old building which was later St Augustine's. The Villa, which had been used as a private school for girls (I think the Sisters lived there, too) had closed and their pupils, quite a number of whom were not Catholics, joined us, too.

The primers were taught in a large room downstairs by dear little Sr Casimir, and the older pupils used other parts of the building. Standards five and six had moved up to the corner of Wicksteed Street and Ingestre Street where the Sisters had taken over a beautiful old property of the Alexander Estate, extending right through to Victoria Avenue, where the Regent theatre was later built.

A school room was added for the fifth and sixth form girls and the seventh form girls were taught in a room in the convent. Sister Charles controlled these girls; 'control' certainly did!

About that time the top storey was removed from St Joseph's and a room built at the end where small children were taught. This little school was named St Monica's. Later, these children moved across to a small school built on the presbytery hill, opposite the first Wanganui Home of Compassion.

At the end of St Joseph's was a room converted into the St Christopher's Boys' group directed by Fr Bergin and assisted by Pat Koorey. The main hall was used for meetings, concerts and last but not least, very popular dances and presentation Balls some of which I attended.

I pay tribute to the loved Marist Fathers and wonderful Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth who have gone to their reward. I know they are smiling on us as we thank them for their care and direction of so many of our generation .....

## THE MARIST BROTHERS

(Mary Gullery)

The legend says: "A Teacher Affects Eternity"

The first Marist Brothers were youthful apostles trying to combat evils left in the wake of the French Revolution in the hamlets and villages around Lavalla, France.

Their leader was Marcellin Champagnat, born 1789, who grew up on one of the local farms, devoting his life to the cause of education and to combatting the general ignorance of religion that abounded.

# “THEM MARIST KIDS” BACK IN 1902!



**Third Standard at Wanganui's Marist Brothers' Primary School a century back, dated 1902.**

**Reading left to right —**

**Back Row: W. Gordon, W. Roche, F. Briggs, G. Mahoney, H. Jarvis, W. Hodson, H. Jury, J. Smithies, M. O'Brien, S. Stafford, F. Kinnaird.**

**Front Row: W. Briggs, E. Stafford, M. Grogan, F. Adams, N. Bond, R. Flynn, R. Kieley, K. Reid, J. Richardson, L. Loftus.**

## BUT FIRST, LITTLE BROTHERS OF MARY

**M**arcellin Champagnat was a priest of the Society of Mary and Superior, and Founder of its Little Brothers of Mary at the early age of 27, an apostle to youth and an example of very practical Christianity.

Among random thoughts from Brother Basilio Rueda, F.M.S.: ‘He knew how to train his disciples, to form teachers who seem naturally talented.’

“Great spiritual artist that he was, Marcellin knew how to sound hearts and read with clear vision the whispered message of God in the souls of young people, to turn them into collaborators in his exciting adventure.”

Marcellin died at 51. Rome canonised him.

The Brothers' association with New Zealand dates back to 1838. When Bishop Pompallier arrived in New Zealand in that year, he was accompanied by two missionaries, Brother Michael, F.M.S. and Father Servant, S.M.

During the following decade many other Brothers left their familiar surroundings in Lyons, France, to sacrifice their lives in the missions of this, a little known of country, first having to learn two unfamiliar tongues — English and Maori, in the expectation of catechising the natives.

However, such was the poverty of the NZ Mission, most of their energies were taken up providing the basic necessities of life for themselves and for the Marist Fathers for whom they worked. They grew food, built boats, constructed shelters, made clothing, looked after livestock.

Among those now arriving as general handymen for the pioneering Marist Fathers, there were men such as Claude-Marie who spent 52 years in his adopted country with Father Garin, at Nelson, and Brother Florentin who worked, dying at 97.

## BROTHER EULOGE

But others died at earlier ages of accidents, sickness and drownings. Brother Euloge met his death while tending to wounded of both sides during the Battle of Moutoa. Other worthy young men continued to arrive over the years to help build up the early church.

In 1876 a group of Marist Brothers came to Wellington, New Zealand, specifically to open a school there. Negotiations had been going on for many years for Brothers to conduct boys' schools, even before the crisis in Catholic education which followed the passing of the Education Bill in 1877.

Bishop Redwood was the first of many to succeed in his quest, and built a Marist Brothers School in Boulcott Street. This rapidly became also the centre of Catholic life in Wellington, by night the venue for meetings, concert and gatherings of parents. Movable partitions provided for daytime classrooms.

The Brothers had opened seven more schools around the country — Napier, Auckland, Christchurch, Timaru, Greymouth, Invercargill and Wanganui.

# LLOYD & O'ROURKE PARTNERSHIP

Here in Wanganui a boys' school had been conducted by Messrs. Lloyd and O'Rourke, until the arrival of the Brothers in 1894.

The Very Rev. Father Kirk had campaigned vigorously and long to secure their services, and now he warmly welcomed Brother Alfred, the Superior, and Brothers Edmund and Coleman.

They expressed gratitude for the hard work taken to ensure their wellbeing in providing "such a commodious schoolroom and monastery".

These first quarters were in Victoria Avenue. Later on, the school site was shifted to the corner of Wicksteed and Dublin Street. There a quarter of an acre used by a Chinaman for growing vegetables was acquired. A wooden building was erected and served as a school and a residence for 60 odd years. In 1961 a final assembly of pupils was held there, photographs taken, desks cleared, the last bell rung, and goodbyes said.

A new Marist school had been built on a 12-acre tract on Gonville's Totara Street — the first totally new Catholic School to have been opened in Wanganui for 50 years.

In a complete contrast to their former quarters, pupils and teachers could now move along a connecting corridor from classroom to classroom, without having to go outside in all weathers!

Verandahs and floor-to-ceiling windows allowed for maximum of natural lighting and fresh air. The need for electric lighting became almost negligible. Administration of the large bright classrooms made use of many modern features. The seven bedroom two-storey home for the Brothers was on the same site as the school, on a rise from neighbouring areas. It became a landmark.

The roll on opening day was 210, with maximum accommodation available for 40 more pupils.

Extensive play areas and sports fields soon took shape, the land being laboriously but willingly cleared during many now-famous 'working bees'.



NEW SCHOOL ON OLD SITE

The Totara St frontage which for years housed the Marist primary school before it was supported by St Marcellin Primary School.

# 'A BADGE OF DISTINCTION'

(Mary Gullery writes on)

Under the ideal conditions Marist pupils continued to thrive scholastically, as well as in the sports arena as they had done over eighty five years.

To be a Marist boy conferred a duty as well as a distinction. Sadly, in 1979, the Marist Brothers announced their departure from Wanganui.

The 'Marian': "Naturally we are sorry. For 85 years they have educated the Catholic boys here. What of the future generations? We are aware of the wonderful work and of the thanks we owe to many Brothers .....

"Our community could indulge in self pity and close our school. But we accept the challenge. We will continue what the Brothers have established, with dedicated and able lay teachers.

"Catholic Schools began in New Zealand with lay teachers. Religious teachers came to the rescue from the British Isles when the 1877 Secular Education Act deprived our schools of their just right to support. The Catholic Community could not afford to pay lay people. Religious came to live 'in spirit and truth' their vow of poverty.

"With the present decline in vocations and today's desire to answer the greatest needs of the Church and mankind, religious have had to reassess and redirect their members and their apostolates. Brothers show a dedicated concern for the needs of the developing Pacific nations and their people.

"We are called in Vatican II to maturity or faith, to take our responsibilities to heart, to bear the burden of concern for our community and our needs. We are called to be men and women grown up in the love and generosity of Jesus. We are challenged to find men and women worthy to continue the great tradition of the Marist Brothers."

The reasons for the Marist Brothers' withdrawal decided by the Provincial and his Council were a lack of personnel, increasing emphasis on the Brothers' responsibilities in other areas of Catholic education besides schools ...

To thank the Marist Brothers, a special Mass in St. Mary's was followed by a dinner at St. Augustine's, and a further Mass and luncheon took place at the Marist school, where many former pupils marked the end of an era.

**The start of the 1980 school year signalled the beginning of a new era at Marcellin School - (formerly Marist Brothers).**

**St. Joseph's School having closed, 118 girls and 122 boys from Standard four to Form two meant the need for more classrooms, and a new block was planned to cope with these and further expected increases.**

Thus a different Phoenix rises. But memories of the old Marist days and ways, unquestionably, live on.

## NOW SAINT MARCELLIN

St Marcellin School became known as such, after the canonisation of its namesake Marcellin Champagnat on April 18 1999, in St Peters Church in Rome.

# SACRED HEART BEGAN ON THE AVENUE — MAY 3, 1880!

(Sr. M. Burke, SM)

Sacred Heart School as it was then called, was opened in 1880, as part of the Convent built to accommodate the newly arrived Sisters of St Joseph.

The solemn blessing of the Convent, the new schoolrooms and the dormitories for boarders had taken place on Sunday April 25th, the day after the arrival of the Sisters. The building was sited in the main Street in Victoria Avenue, next door to St Mary's Parish Church, and described as a "handsome and substantial convent, the grounds adjoining having been tastefully laid out".

The school offered a good English education, together with vocal and instrumental music, drawing, flowermaking, and plain and ornamental needlework. The Sisters faced a difficulty in teaching both select and parish schools as previously they had kept strictly to the teaching of the poorer classes in parish schools. However, a committee of "splendid ladies" had been organised by Father Kirk who gave professional help until the sisters were able to manage.

By the end of the first year, the school passed a close inspection by Fr Kirk (later Dean) and several other notable identities, and later held its first "school exhibition and distribution of prizes". The Hon. J Ballance, Premier was among the guests.

In 1889, the senior boarders were transferred to Cameron Terrace, to "Villa Maria" or as it had been known, "Hutchinson's Folly". (This building later became in turn, a primary day school, and in 1944, the new St Augustine's College).

The next major step was taken when the foundation stone of the new Sacred Heart Convent and College was laid by Archbishop Redwood in 1911 on the present site in Oakland Avenue.

Recorded the Chronicle" —

"The Marist School Cadets acted as a guard of honour. Despite the great crowd, everything passed off smoothly, a fact upon which Mr. F. D. Gaffaney, who acted as Master of Ceremonies, must be congratulated."

A collection taken up at the opening of the new Convent realised £194.

(Sacred Heart's capital cost was 20,000 pounds (\$40,000), and the substantial site cost 3,000 pounds (\$6,000).

The architects were Swan and Swan, and the builders Campbell and Burke of Wellington. That this project came about was due mainly to the foresight of Sister Columba, who against much opposition saw the wisdom of moving to the suburbs rather than rebuilding in the centre of the town.

The following year the new three storey brick convent and large secondary boarding and day school were opened.

In 1919 the beautiful chapel was added.

A large recreation and assembly hall was built in 1921, extensively altered and added to over the years. The school baths, also subjected to much remodelling and updating, were a welcome addition in 1929.

# A REMODELLING JOB BACK IN 1925

In 1925 arrangements were made to purchase the adjoining Watts property. The house, on a two and half acre section, had belonged to a Mr Holcroft, whose daughters, Maud and Gertie, were among the first day pupils enrolled when Sacred Heart had opened in 1880.

This building was remodelled to provide classrooms for senior primary classes, and for space for cookery and sewing rooms. In 1948 this building was dismantled and rebuilt to the left of the main entrance to the college grounds, providing extra teaching space for a science room, dressmaking and music. A further remodelling prior to integration saw the same building converted into the administrative centre of the College. Some of the original fittings, notably the small stained glass windows featuring native birds are still visible.



**IMPOSING Sacred Heart Convent edifice re-located on St John's Hill from Victoria Avenue back in 1912. (On left Convent chapel.)**

# A CLAMOUR FOR MORE S-P-A-C-E!

In 1938 a new wing was added to the main building providing extra boarding accommodation above, and on the ground floor three classrooms.

By 1948 with the raising of the school leaving age, an urgent need for more classroom space was evident, so from that date on Sacred Heart became a purely secondary school and was officially known as Sacred Heart College. An extra room was added to the reconstituted Watts building but still the need continued. So in 1961 the fernery was sacrificed to the need for progress, and on 24 June 1962 a two-storey building dedicated to John the Baptist was blessed and opened. In 1973, a further wing was added to this building with two large classrooms and staff room on the bottom floor, and three science laboratories above.

The College grew rapidly in those early years and mirrored the development of Catholic colleges and schools throughout New Zealand as it endeavoured to provide a first class Catholic education to its pupils while operating on the barest financial resources.

Pupils were grounded in basic subjects, while the College rapidly gained a reputation for music and singing. Musical productions, many of them of a religious nature, featured prominently in early reports and photographs. Leadership of the College was very closely tied to the leadership of the Sisters, and the superior was also principal until the 1950's. From then on Sisters Lucy, Genevieve, Catherine Ryan, and Marie Skidmore led the school community as principals.

**In its time, Sacred Heart Convent housed up to 60 Sisters and 120 boarders. In 1974, boarders were given a choice of full-time or weekly boarding, and full-time boarding was phased out by the end of 1975.**

# INTEGRATION ONE YEAR — A QUAKE RISK THE NEXT!

In 1980, Sacred Heart became integrated into the State System, along with other Catholic primary and secondary schools.

The same year, a report on the building designated it as an earth quake risk. There followed much soul-searching and discussion among and between the Sisters and the College community. The cost of reinforcing the building to current standards and fire requirements would have been prohibitive. Nor would the building meet the regulations that were being set for integration of Catholic Schools into the State System at the time. The Sisters, because of having to rehouse themselves at the time, were in no position to finance a boarding facility.

Parents committed to keeping a boarding facility at Sacred Heart College took up the challenge, forming a hostel trust committee and raising loans to finance the venture. They were not able to fund-raise officially as the Archdiocesan Common Fund was struggling at that time to meet the needs of school building and upgrading!

The Sisters supplied the land, the present kitchen and dining room building, much of the equipment and furniture.

“Villa Maria” was officially opened by Bishop Peter Cullinane on February 27th, 1983. The builders were Mason and Murchie of Wanganui.

**The four unit blocks of the complex, designed by Orgias, Earles and Co, were named after each of the founding Sisters of St Joseph who had arrived in Wanganui in 1880 — Hyacinth, Teresa, Joseph and Clare.**

The opening roll was 70, whereas the hostel had been built for 60, so bunks were added to accommodate the extra. For many of the early years the Hostel was full to capacity, with a waiting list, but as needs changed the roll fell. The first matron was Sister Catherine Woodcock. After five years she was followed by Mrs Irene Back, whose tenure was from 1988 to 1994. Mrs Barbara Hay then took over till 1999, when the present matron, Mrs Jane Love, began.

After the demolition of the original brick building in 1982, Tenison House, now the centre for Maori Studies, provided limited accommodation for the library, and one teaching area. This was until the building of the next addition — a large library, a theatrette, AV Room, multi-purpose classroom and music suite. This was completed and blessed on November 2, 1986. The building was dedicated to Sister Columba.

**The first full-time woman lay staff member began in 1967. In 1972, the first male teachers began and in 1976 the College had a male deputy principal. In the 1980's the first exchanges with Sisters from the Australian branches of the Congregation took place.**

By 1980 the roll was 314, and when a situation arose of a lack of a science teacher at Sacred Heart, and a need for an accountancy teacher at St Augustine's, the decision was made to exchange pupils for classes at the senior level. This provided a more viable system of options for senior pupils, and the interaction grew over the years.

# ST AUGUSTINE'S — ALMOST 60 YEARS OF SERVICE

St Augustine's College now is deeply engraved in Wanganui's education history. It is almost 60 years since the college opened, and 33 years since it relocated from the parish centre to Peat Street.

It was during the early years of World War II when St Mary's Parish priest, Fr Michael Joseph Burke, SM, had the vision of a Catholic Boys' high school, or college, as he rambled through the creaky halls of the parish's Villa Maria.

When Father Burke was appointed parish priest in 1943, the original committee of the Boys' Club wasted no time in making a deputation to him, and it was revealed that his particular College dream coincided with theirs.

He gave his approval emphatically, but the provision also was emphatic, that it would be the responsibility of the committee to arrange finance. He stated that when the first five hundred pounds had been raised he would give his full blessing and co-operation.

Times were difficult, but generosity and support were waiting and the speedy money-raising began. The men returned to Fr. Burke with the assurance that funds would be available for St Augustine's, and he suggested that the Villa Maria could be used as the new College, which would be staffed by Marist Fathers.

Difficulties were overcome by a series of miracles, and school opened for business in February, 1944, the first Rector being Father John Mannix, S.M.

Never forgotten for their dedicated groundwork were: Messrs R. Campion, J. O'Neill, C. D. Corliss, J. McCulloch, C&J Crowley, R. J. McDonald, P. Luxford, J. Quin, M. Fisher, M. O'Connor, P. Benefield, E. Provost, B. R. Dobbs, J. D. Roche, E. Healy, D. Cresswell and J. Heagney.

Mr D. Burke of Feilding, a retired building contractor and father of Father Burke, had been able to give his son invaluable advice and help in the formative stages of adapting the Villa Maria to become St. Augustine's.

# INITIAL ROLL : 26 BOYS!

Then Fr John Mannix, SM, was named the rector of the new school. Twenty-six youngsters were enrolled when the doors opened for the first time on February 2, 1944. And as one historian noted, Catholic parents began to believe their boys should have four years secondary schooling, not just two (mostly at the then Wanganui Technical college, or at Wellington's Silverstream) if the fees could be afforded.



**FR. JOHN ALOYSIUS Mannix, SM, first rector at St Augustines (1944 - 1946).**

Early in the piece, a gymnasium was built at the rear of St. Joseph's Hall, largely due to the effort of Father G. McHardy. A tennis court was laid out necessitating the removal of the old stables once used by the Fathers at the nearby Presbytery for their horses!

Concrete steps were built and the drive was paved and trees planted by Father Gupwell and Father Gill along the Campbell Street boundary and Cameron Terrace.

Inside the big house the first alterations since it was first built now began. The large original kitchen became the necessary library. A tuckshop was built under the stairs with a counter opening onto the back steps.

In 1955 a Chapel was built mainly through efforts of the then Rector Father Scully and voluntary tradesmen. This was made by closing in a verandah at the top end of the assembly hall so that the whole school could

by the operation of folding doors attend Mass and Benediction. The altar and furniture in the sanctuary was made by Mr Brian Haywood, an old boy of the College.

In memory of his parents, Father Mannix presented a leadlight on the northern wall, and two fine stained glass windows were placed on the eastern side on either side of the altar. One of these windows, that of St. Peter Chanel, was donated by the Old Boys, and the other of the patron of the College, St. Augustine, was donated in memory of their brother, by Mary and Nora Burke, sisters of the founder of the College.



**Another face from St Augustine's past — Fr Basil Alexander Blake, SM, the College's second rector — second now in a lineage of 13. The principals since 1944: -**

Rev John Mannix, SM	1944-46
Rev Basil Blake	1947-49
Rev Gerald Gill	1950-52
Rev Maurice Scully	1953-54
Rev Bernard Bourke	1955-62
Rev Philip Roberts	1963-73
Rev Frederick Bliss	1974
Rev Noel Delaney	1974
Rev James Dooley	1975-80
Rev Christopher Austin	1981-86
Rev David Benton	1986-89
Mr Dennis Fahey	1990-1996
Mr Bernie Kelly	1997 -

# ST. AUGUSTINE'S ON OPEN DAY, 1944



## FOUNDERS OF THE COLLEGE

Back Row: I. J. Wallace, A. Hume, K.D. Voltz, V.P. O'Loughlin, R.P. Smyth, B.O. Rowlands, M.G. Allardyce and B. Bourke.

Middle Row: D. Bergin, J.A.J. Kelly, D. R. Collingwood, B.A. Benefield, K.C.P. Hounslow, I. McFadyen, W.B. Boyd, G. O'Donnell, B.J. Haywood and B.A. Downey.

Front Row: D.F. Turfin, M.J. Heagney, R.B. Laird, W.J. McGonagle, Father M.J. Burke, SM (Parish Priest), Father J.A. Mannix, SM (Rector), Father Stapleton, SM, T.J. Carew, M. H. Ayre, A. I. Vodanovich and M. T. Murphy.

*(Wanganui Chronicle Photo)*

# MILESTONES FLASH BY

St Augustine's roll grew quickly with more fourth-formers available than could be crammed into the designated classroom. They spilled into the assembly hall.

In 1948 the school's Parents' and Friends' Association was formed — an ongoing measure of maturity. In 1957, and Old Boys' Association was formed.

The roll topped the 100-mark, and that of the city's Marist Brothers' School likewise grew since it was being recognised as a 'feeder school' for St Augustine's.

In 1962 school authorities secured the new site in Peat Park, adjacent to the city's Christie's Hill deer park. And on site after classes in Campbell Street there were eager hands, and young muscles to build fences and dig drains.

The college mounted a fundraising campaign in the late 1950's to buy the Peat Street site. Campaigners explained their goals.

"Wanganui has always been recognised as an educational centre. For many years we Catholics of Wanganui have had a Girls College ranking among the best in the Dominion. Why not the same for the boys? The boys of this parish were severely handicapped in this respect for nearly 50 years, until the Rev. Fr. Michael Burke established St Augustine's, but he himself knew that the present building would meet requirements only temporarily. Already it is inadequate for the ever increasing number of pupils.

"St Patrick's College and St Bede's are beyond the means of nearly all Wanganui parents, and in addition, these colleges already have long waiting lists. Let us have our own college, even though smaller, yet ranking equal in prestige with the larger colleges. The Old Boys of St. Augustine's would then receive recognition in any walk of life. This College would be a great blessing from God to the parish, but God does not force his gifts on us. Remember that both prayer and generous giving are equally necessary for this venture to be successful".

# THE RELOCATION TO PEAT STREET



When the new school opened in 1963 moves were initiated to link tutoring with the girls of Sacred Heart Convent, only a kilometre away on the hilltop. This was continued into the 1970's with combined senior classes arranged at both venues. St Augustine's roll peaked at 250, with old boys noting that St Augustine's "smallness" was aiding friendships at all levels of the college.

But the pressure remained to broaden the college curriculum. The Father Johnson gymnasium opened, the art suite was developed, a second science laboratory and a workshop craft area started, and the graphics room and the music rooms remodelled.

## THREE LANGUAGES

In the languages department, the boys were offered a choice of three — Maori, French and Japanese.

And in 1990, the college engaged its very first lay principal, Mr Dennis B Fahey, B.A.

The college's golden jubilee drew old boys from distant parts of the world in the midwinter of 1994.

In a jubilee dinner speech, Mr Fahey noted St Augustine's had "never been just about students coming to class, then returning home again, but about the combined involvement of parents, teachers, the old boys, the students and supporters working together for the betterment of our standards".

"This support network has created a family spirit which is an essential part of St Augustine's. The whole village is participating in the education of our students".

**Footnote:** The jubilee celebration attended by some 400 past-students, was organised by this jubilee committee: Rev Fr E. F. Crotty, SM and Messrs, P.C. Hoskins, B.F. Connors, H.T. O'Leary, P.S. Coe, P B Stiles, R. W Osborne, R.A. Lamont, K. P. Foley, M.J. O'Connell, P.J. O'Leary, B. L. Simmonds, B. Sheridan and J Cvitanovich.

# IN THE WINGS OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S

St Augustine's by the Jubilee Year 2,000 supplied the church with nine priests — the Rev Frs Earl Crotty (1958), Grahame J Connolly (1959), Andrew J Faith (1959), Peter Walsh (1962), William Fletcher (1971), Thige O'Leary (1979), Peter McAfee (1989), John Berry (1991), Philip Watkins (1993).

Additionally, the college proudly lists as other old boys professed religious: Revs Graeme Clisby (1967), Brian Clisby (1967), John Koorey (1970), Reginald Wills (1980), and more recently Fs. Francis Bird and Paul Byers (1993).

## THE SCHOOL BOARD

When St Augustine's had vacated Campbell Street and moved into its brand new complex in Peat Street, its first Board of Governors was formed. Then when the Tomorrow's Schools legislation took effect, the board was re-constituted as a board of trustees.

College chairmen since 1968 - Messrs D.F. Ahern (1968-72), J.F. Quin (1973-79), E.J. Holland (1980-83), L.W. Hocquard (1984-86), D.R. Hoskin (1987-97) and David Martin (since 1997).

## OLD BOYS

Old Boys Association Chairmen —

P. J. Haywood (1959-63), J. T. Healy (1964), J. F. McDonald (1965), T. R. Coxon (1966), B. P. Holland (1967), R. A. Lamont (1968-69), E. A. Crotty (1970-72), C. F. Currie (1973-74), B. P. Vaughan (1975-76), B. M. Carey (1977-78), P.A. O'Leary (1979-80), M. J. Bullock (1984-92), K. P. Foley (since 1993).

## PARENTS, FRIENDS

Parents and Friends' Association Chairmen —

D. F. Ahern (1963-66), C. A. McCrossin (1967-68), R. W. Spencer (1969), F. H. Matthews (1970), B. J. Sanders (1971-72), N. R. O'Connell (1973), W. R. Stevenson (1974-78), L. W. Hocquard (1979-82), A. W. Herbert (1983), G. W. Bird (1984-86), K. B. Edmonds (1987-88), P. A. Dunlop (1989), A. M. Aspinall (1990-1994), P.C. Hesketh, (1995-97), R.F. Smith (1998), E. S. McNeil (since 1999), Elizabeth O'Neill, Rose Smith.

# HONOURS BOARD

Through its half-century, St Augustine's has endeavoured to monitor the academic careers of past students through universities and other academies, but basically through degrees, with honours. The list now has grown to around 200, and follows—

ABBOTT, C.J. - LLB.  
 ADAMS, C.D. - Dip Wool.  
 ALEXANDER, R. - B.Sc., Dip Sc.  
 ALLISON, N.R. - BP Law (Hons)  
 ARCHER, J.H., - BA.  
 ASPINALL, G.J. - BBS Hum Res Mgmt

BARNES, M.J. - BBS Int Bus.  
 BARNES, W.J. - MA (Hons).  
 BARRY, J.K. - BA, MBE.  
 BARRY, R.J. - LLB.  
 BIRD, C.W. - BBS.  
 BIRD, W.G. - B Sc.  
 BENEFIELD, J.T. - Dip Hort FP.  
 BENEFIELD, M.D. - LLB.  
 BENSEMANN, J.R. - B Ed (Hons) M Ed.  
 BERRY, J.E. - B. Theol.  
 BOWDEN, G.B. - BA  
 BOYACK, P.J. - BBS  
 BROAD, A.J. - MB, ChB.  
 BROWN, A.R. - BCA  
 BROWN-SHARPE - BG, Dip. Mgt.  
 BULLOCK, M.J. - LLB  
 BULLOCK, M.A. - BA, Soc Sc  
 BULLOCK, M.T. - B Hort Sc.  
 BULLOCK, R.P. - BE.

CAMPBELL, B.P. - BB Sac. DBS Tax  
 CAMPBELL, G.J. - BA, BSW  
 CAMERON, A.J. - Dip Arts  
 CARROLL, P.R. - BBS  
 CARTER, M.J. Dip Health  
 CHRISTIE, G.F. - DBS  
 CHUMKO, W. - BComm.  
 CLAPHAM, J.P. - LLB  
 CLARK, G.J. - APANZ, BComm, Dip Ed.  
 CLISBY, B.E. - FMS, BA.

COE, P.S. - LLB  
 COLEMAN, A.G. - BA  
 CONDER, J.L. - BBS  
 CONDER, R.A. - BBS  
 CONDER, R.A. - Dip Sp St.  
 CONNOLLY, G.J. - SM, DD  
 CORLISS, R.C. - B Sc.  
 CORNEY, J.P. - BCA  
 COUPE, P.J. - Dip Ag.  
 CRANWELL, P.D. - M Ag Sc, MASM  
 CRONIN, J.M. - ARANZ  
 CROTTY, E.A. - BA, M.Ed.

DEERE, B.E. - BA  
 DEERE, B.J. - BSc.  
 DEVLIN, J.H. - APNNZ, ARANZ  
 DEVLIN, M.H. - BA.  
 DYERBERG, J.R. - BRP

EDMONDS, K.J. - BCA  
 EDMONDS, M.K. - BSc.  
 EDWARDS, R.W. - Dip Bus Ad.  
 EGAN, Joe G. - B Hort Sc.  
 EGAN, J.G. - BA  
 EGAN, P.G. - BA

FALCONER, T.G. - ARANZ  
 FISHER, B.C. - Dip Ag  
 FORE, K.R. - BBS

GALLOP, D.J. - MSc (Hons), ANZIC  
 GALLAGHER, G.M. - BCA  
 GASKIN, A.L. - B AgSc  
 GLAZEWSKI, M.J. - LLB  
 GULLERY, H.D. - BA Soc Sci  
 GUTHRIE, B C - B. Tech  
 GREVILLE, P.T. - BDS

HARVEY, M.B. - BA  
 HAGENAARS, P.T. - Dip Meat Tech.  
 HARTLEY, A.D. - BCA  
 HAY, C.M. - BA Dip Bus Stud.  
 HEALEY, J.T. - BComm, ARANZ  
 HILLGROVE, R.J. - BA, Dip Tchg  
 HILLGROVE, R.J. Jnr - BA  
 HOARE, C.P. - BBS  
 HOARE, P.J. - Dip Bus Stud.  
 HOGAN, D.J. - ARANZ  
 HOCQUARD, C.J. - LLB  
 HOULT, J.A. - BA, Dip Soc Sc  
 HOULT, P.P. - MA (Hons), Dip Ed.  
 HULL, D.N. - BBS

JACKSON, P.L. - BCA  
 JONES, C.G. - BBS  
 JONES, P.E. - BCA

KANE, A.J. - BA (Hons) MA  
 KANE, F.J. - B Sc (Hons)  
 KANE, K.M. - B Sc  
 KANE, P.J. - BCa  
 KEATING, A.C. - BDS  
 KENDRICK, M.P. - BBS  
 KENNY, B.A. - BA, (Soc Sec)  
 KILLALEA, B.J. - LLB  
 KONING, S.M. - B Surv.

LAFHEY, T.P. - MA  
 LAMONT, I.D. - Dip Ag.  
 LAMONT, R.A. - Dip Arch. ARIBA, ANZIA  
 LELIEVELD, M.A. - BSc  
 LISSAMAN, M.A. - BE  
 LOADER, T.M. - BSc (Hons)  
 LOTT, A.D. - BA (Soc Sc)  
 LOTT, G.W. - BA  
 LUXFORD, K.B. - B Sc, BE  
 LYNCH, C.J. - BE, ED (Hons), Dip Ed.  
 LYNSKEY, M.T. - BSc (Hons), M Bc  
 LYNSKEY, J.V. - BCM

MARTIN, A.D. - BCA (Hons)  
 MARTIN, M.J. - MA (Hons)

MAFI, M - MB, BCh B.  
 MATTHEWS, A.S. - BSc  
 MATTHEWS, F.P. - BE (Hons)  
 MATTHEWS, M.W. - Dip Ag  
 McAFFEE, P.D. - BRP  
 McCASHIN, K.M. - KM, B Sc  
 McCAWE, G.M - MA (Hons), Dip Tch, Dip Ed.  
 McCAWE, P.D. - BCA (Hons), MBA  
 McCULLOCH, A - MPS, PhC  
 MacDONALD, I.J. - BRA (Hons)  
 McKENZIE, P.J. - BCA  
 McKENZIE, P.L. - BA, LLM  
 McLEAN, G.A. - BA (Hons)  
 MELVILLE, P.S. - BCM  
 MORAHAN, N.J. - BRP  
 MORGAN, J - Dip Bus Stud.  
 MORIARTY, B.D. - B Tech.  
 MOKRZECKI, J. - BArch  
 MURPHY, J - BE

NOTT, C.G. - B Comm

O'CONNELL, S.P. - BA  
 O'DONNELL, A.M. - B Tech Sci  
 O'DONNELL, G.F. - BA G  
 O'HARA, D.P. - BBS  
 O'HARA, S.T. - BBS  
 O'LEARY, A.J. - BE, PhD  
 O'LEARY, P.D. - B Ag Ec  
 O'LEARY, P.J. - BBS Ac.  
 O'LEARY, T.M. - SM, BSc, STB Med.  
 O'MALLEY, M.P. - MA, Dip Ed.  
 ORANGE, P.D. - BE.  
 O'SULLIVAN, S.M. - LLB

PARRIS, W.F. - BBS  
 PEDDIE, D.J. - B Comm  
 PENWARDEN, P.D. - B Hort Sc  
 POWELL, R.W. - BE  
 PROUDE, J.L. - Dip Beg Sci

QUIN, G.J. - BDS  
 QUIN, B.J. - Dip Bs.

RAMSAY, P.S. - BBS  
RANKIN, R.J. - B Sc  
RAYNER, M.J. - BBS Bus Law  
RENDALL, P.N. - BA.  
RENNIE, L.T. - BA  
RYAN, C.L. - LL

SANDERS, L.P. - BA (Hons), MA  
SEFTON, D.J. - BSc  
SHORE, K.B. - NZCE Dip Tehg  
SIMMONDS, B.I. - BE (Hons)  
SIRIWARDENA, I.C. - BSc  
SKACEL, MO - Dip Bus St Dip Av.  
SMITH, C B - BCA  
SMITH, J.F. - MA (Hons)  
SMITH, J.E. - BA  
SMITH, M.J. - BCA, AGA  
SMITH, M.J.B. - BCA  
SMITH, P.D. - LLB  
SMITHIES, P.A. - BBS  
SPRIGGENS, N.A. - B.Ed.

SOUTER, R.J. - B Sc, MBA  
STRICHEN, P.F. - B Sc  
SUMMERS, M.A. - BP, R Mgt.

TAIURU, M.R. - B Sc  
TeHIKO, D.C. - BE.  
TeHIKO, M.G. - Dip Health Ad. MBA  
TILLICK, S.B. - BComm  
TUOHY, M.P. - Dip Ag Sc, M Phil.

VAVASOUR, B.J. - Dip Ag.

WALKER, P.M. - BA  
WHELAN, A.J. - BBS  
WHELAN, B.M. - Dip Bus Sc  
WHELAN, J.P. - BBS  
WHELAN, T.M. - Dip Ag, Dip Farm Mngmt  
WHITE, M.K. - BA  
WILLIAMS, B.A. - B Med Sci  
WILLIAMS, M.G. - B Surv  
WILLIAMS, J.M. - BA (Hum)  
WILLIAMS, P.M. - BBS

# BIG SCHOOLS MERGE IN YEAR 2003

St Augustine's Board of Trustees broke the news about the proposed college merger in mid-1997. It was announced that the colleges would "come together to form a co-ed college on the St Augustine's site, in 2003".

This follows a number of meetings and consultations and was seen by the Catholic Education authorities as the best "way forward for Catholic secondary education in Wanganui".

"The boards of Sacred Heart and St Augustine's are committed towards providing the best possible facilities ...."

Wanganui district's new co-ed Catholic College perpetuates the name of Bishop Peter Cullinane who became Bishop of Palmerston North when that diocese was established in 1980. He had already studied in Rome, gaining a licentiate in theology at the Angelicum. Later he gained his Master of Theology at the University of Otago.

# LEGENDS ON THE RIVER

St Mary's pastors whose names became legend as Maori missionaries down through the decades are listed below. But documentation, for many reasons, is loose and has gaps as has the mission history itself, stretching back a century and a half.

Most of the clerics appointed were Marist priests, the earliest mainly of French descent. But Marist brothers also served, including one who lost his life in the Battle of Moutoa, Bro Euloge Chabnay. The known missionaries; all under the umbrella of St Mary's. —

1852	Fr Bernard
1852-67	Frs Lampila and Pertius, Bros. Elias, Regis Maria and Euloge Chabnay.
1883-1906	Fr Soulas
1889-1918	Bro McMullan
1906-1909	(and again, 1914-18: Fr J Maillard)
1910-13	Fr Vibeaud
1918-20	Fr Ginisty
1921-36	Fr Dynan and Venning
1924-30	Fr JJ Riordan
1936-41	Fr Cullinane
1937	Frs Dynan and Wall
1938	Fr Fuohy
1941-51	Frs Fuohy and Cullinane
1948-53	Fr J Durning
1954-56	Fr P Cleary
1957-74	Fr M Caulfield
1968-75	Fr W Te Awhitu
1974-79	Fr I Gupwell
1979-83	Fr D Gledhill (Fr Gledhill was designated Director of Maori Missions in the river region)

## VIBRANT MISSIONS

Enquiring Maori, fascinated by Bible stories, the French tongue and the colourful English vestment garb, were quick to embrace the missionaries who penetrated the river valley in the earliest colonist days.

Vibrant mission stations sprung up quickly but some sagged and were ready to be revitalised when the Marist Sisters emerged. This initial resurgence was dated around 1880.

Then quickly, lines of mission communication spread further and became virtually permanent.

For decades get-togethers continued, linking Wanganui-Kaiwhaiki-Parikino-Ranana-Jerusalem-Pipiriki-Taumararui and even Taihape!

Hui aranga became a regular religious festival at Easter-time, frequently bringing together a thousand or more Maori people.

# MOTHER MARY JOSEPH AUBERT

Mother Mary Aubert was the star who shone so superbly on the Wanganui River from its early mission developments.

Suzanne Aubert was born in Lyons, eastern France, in 1835, the daughter of a high profile family. (Her family before marriage was Dame Claire Perier; her father rose to become chairman of the Lyons' Chamber of Deputies ...

But Suzanne did not have a comfortable beginning. Her arms and legs were in braces and one eye impaired — the result of her near-drowning in a frozen swamp where, at age two, she attempted to scamper after a fleeing pet.

So her education came slowly, yet in her 20's she already had qualified in branches of medicine and then served as a nurse with the Sisters of Charity in the Crimean War ...

And her family constantly rubbed shoulders with distinguished churchmen, including with missionary Bishop Pompallier who visited France from distant New Zealand in the 1860's.

The Bishop inspired Suzanne to come to the colony. She sailed eventually in company with several missionary sisters, plus Antoine Pompallier, the Bishop's nephew.

**With the Third Order of Mary's congregations, she sought charitable work with the Maori in Auckland, Hawkes' Bay, Wanganui and Wellington where she died in 1926.**

She had become an accomplished Maori linguist, studied botany to the point that she marketed herbal remedies and though dint of hard promotional work, actually developed the tiny river settlement of Jerusalem into a significant mission station which served for almost a century.

(In Auckland, Suzanne Aubert became known as Sister Joseph, or Sister Meri (Mary) to many Maori people). The early history of the Jerusalem mission school (from 1873) had been pockmarked by repeated closures resulting from periods of Maori disinterest and difficulties in securing fees to keep the first convent school operating.

Sister Joseph coming from the east coast at that time, had led a canoe expedition to Jerusalem in 1892, and from then on, the settlement took on a new lease on life. At one point it was calculated some 600 Maori people had settled in the neighbourhood.

## THE BATTLES WITH OFFICIALDOM

For Mother Aubert, river life continued to be nothing but an uphill battle with officialdom to achieve status for her burgeoning institutions, or indeed to keep them fiscally head above water.

Even at the height of her Jerusalem triumphs she spent a full year travelling around the colony raising funds for her river mission.

Then in 1907 church authorities deemed it prudent to transfer her Jerusalem founding children's home to a more central, convenient location — Wellington.

But the Jerusalem convent and school forged ahead, plus the other school which Mother Aubert had established at Ranana (Maori for London). It likewise progressed under the young Sisters Mother Aubert herself had trained.

At Jerusalem, music classes were launched when Mother Aubert contrived to finance a piano for the growing school roll.

# SISTERS GO SOUTH

The Sisters of Compassion quietly dug in in the Capital with fewer homeless children being assigned by Magisterial court order to Jerusalem. The Sisters in Wellington also began catering for more of the chronically sick adults — the frail homeless of the city who needed clothes and sustenance “and preparation for a Christian death.”

The initial care centre was developed in Buckle Street and then, in the 1920's, the Island Bay Home of Compassion opened.

By then, Mother Aubert was ailing after her lifelong battle caring for the unfortunates. She passed away in 1926, aged 91, by which time the Order had homes apart from Jerusalem: Buckle Street and Island Bay, in Wanganui's Guyton Street (adjacent to the present-day Belverdale Hospital) and also institutions in Auckland, Timaru, Carterton, plus activities in Fiji and at least three separate localities in Australia!

Back to Wanganui: The Guyton St. Home of Compassion opened almost half a century after Mother Aubert's ground-breaking arrival in Jerusalem. Guyton St opened for 16 patients. The new home was commissioned on St John's Hill another 30 years later, in 1964, with a complement of over 50 long-term and chronic patients.

# BISHOP HELPS

Two French Marist priests, the Rev Frs Pertuis and Soulas, helped immeasurably with Jerusalem, and Fr Soulas had been instrumental in having the first young Maori postulants accepted into the Jerusalem Convent.

Bishop Redwood was supportive in the background. He also saw to Sister Joseph's elevation to the post of Superior General of her order.

Jerusalem had a thriving church, convent and school when Suzanne Aubert became known as the Very Rev Mother Mary Joseph Aubert of her own Congregation of Our Lady of Compassion.

Dr Kennedy Elliott, a noted orthopaedic surgeon speaking at the opening of the Carterton home for handicapped girls in 1956, was emphatic: “There is only one place in New Zealand where a handicapped child can go — into the care of the Sisters of Compassion ...”

“No other body possesses the dedication, the qualifications for looking after and treating the handicapped ...”

“No other woman in New Zealand has contributed so much to all classes and creeds from the cradle to the grave as Mother Aubert ...”

“The spirit of no other New Zealanders has inspired so many other women to dedicate their lives to the gratuitous care of the poor, the afflicted, the abandoned. Mother Aubert is New Zealand's greatest woman”

# MAORI YOUTH CLUBS

Catholic Maori Youth clubs flourished, some assemblies featuring the top names in the Wanganui mission.

One notable assembly at Otaki in 1950 drew Maori people from Dannevirke to Waitara and was directed by Fr Venning. (The youngsters from Kaiwhaiki won the action song competition).

Another year, a thousand Maori people turned up in Normanby.

And in 1969, the Catholic Maori Clubs Federation forgathered on the relatively new Wanganui War Memorial forecourt.

Fr. Reardon, in the early 1950's just back from Europe, brought a rather special message of encouragement to the river Maori from the Pope.

River assembly points for many gatherings were the designated “native schools”, linking Parakino, Ranana, Jerusalem and Pipiriki.

Sadly, the schools at Jerusalem and Ranana closed down because of falling rolls. But the Jerusalem mission forged on with the Sisters continuing welfare and catechetical work, clear through to Taumarunui and Taihape.

# “PA HEMI”

“Pa Hemi”, one of the most revered figures on the colonised Wanganui river, was the Greenmeadows-trained Rev Fr James Durning, S.M.

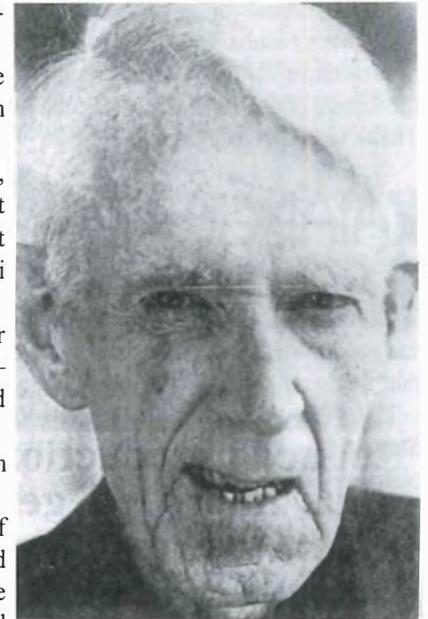
Scottish-born, he was half a century in the priesthood, and 40 years-plus in the Maori Mission field.

Fr Jim was badly injured in the Napier earthquake, in Greenmeadows, but recovered to go teaching at St Bede's College, and then do a term at Wellington's St Mary of the Angels Parish before joining the Maori Mission at Otaki.

For years, Fr Durning was on the Wanganui river and in Hawke's Bay. He excelled in languages — French and Maori — and in the latter field was rated one of the country's top Maori linguists.

While stationed in Wanganui he said one Latin Mass each month at St Joseph's at Aramoho.

Fr Durning passed away at age 89, at the Home of Compassion in Wanganui. Fittingly, his remains laid in state on the Te Rau Oriwa marae in Wanganui before being moved to his beloved Otaki for a Requiem and burial.



## IN RANANA:

# CHURCH BUILT IN ANGER!

A curious twist of community opinion gave Ranana (London), just downstream from Jerusalem, its Catholic chapel over a century back.

The church was built by the Maori people on land given by Te Metera and another chief, Raihania Takapa. They, with others contributed generously towards the cost.

The church stands on a commanding site — a bluff overlooking the Wanganui River.

**It was built by the Maoris in protest against the burning of the church at Jerusalem in November 1888, by a disgruntled European!**

The Maoris refused to contribute towards its rebuilding. According to their code of justice, the Pakeha had burnt it down and they should replace it.

So they proceeded to build Sacred Heart Church at Ranana, four miles away!

The official opening was described in an article thought to have been written by Father Soulas for a French missionary magazine.

An English translation survives in the archives at Our Lady's Home of Compassion in Wellington and it is in Mother Aubert's writing.

It reads: "This church, built by the general contributions of the Maoris, especially by the energetic endeavours of the old chief, Te Metera, and his son Neri, was opened by its architect, the Rev Father Soulas, on April 11, 1889, in the presence of a large concourse of Maoris."

"The reverend father was assisted by his collaborator, the Rev Father Maillard, who came lately from France."

"The choir, for the church is replenished with the luxury of a harmonium, was conducted by the Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Mary, who had come from Jerusalem for the occasion. Thank God for His mercies."

## KAIANGAROA: MIXED FORTUNES

At Kaiangaroa, identified in the Fordell district, the trim little chapel of St Anne's was erected in 1888 under the direction of the Rev. Fr. Me'lu from Jerusalem. Fr Soulas had assigned him take care of the lower Whangaehu River where he had visited and reported back that the local Maori "aren't saying any prayers".

That year, primarily with the help of European settlers, Fr Me'lu raised the contract price of St Anne's — precisely 110 pounds, two shillings and two pence. It was consecrated in due course by Bishop Redwood.

St Anne's was erected near the old pa site of Toe Tapu but down through the decades its fortunes varied. As the number of parishioners languished it was quietly taken over by Protestant groups from Presbyterians to Wesleyans and finally by members of the Ratana faith.

When the little church was finally demolished in the 1950's, its bell was moved to Ratana.

# CATHOLIC MISSION CENTENARY

The centenary of the reception of the Faith was celebrated by the Catholic Maori people of the River at Kaiwhiki over an Easter. Hundreds from all over the archdiocese attended the Seventh Hui Aranga, and competitions which had become a feature of Maori life in Wellington province since the gatherings were first begun in 1946.

Thousands of people, Maori and pakeha, lined the newly erected marae fence as the two canoes, one carrying his Lordship Bishop O'Neill and Very Rev. Father Kennedy, S.M. (Provincial of the Marist Fathers), and the other bearing Mother Veronica and Sister Melchior, of the Sisters of Compassion, swept round a bend in the river and with paddles flashing in the bright sun swiftly approached the shore.

The guests were greeted at the river bank by the clergy and Maori elders, and on reaching the road level passed through a guard of honour formed by boys of Hato Paora College. Challenged at the gates of the marae, the Bishop made the traditional gesture of friendship, and proceeded to the marae to the accompaniment of thunderous hakas and action songs of welcome.

Following a welcome from Rev. Father P. Cleary, S.M., Mother Veronica and Rev. Father Venning, S.M., spoke and they were followed by Very Rev. Father Kennedy, S.M., and finally by Bishop O'Neill. Mr. K. Puohotau was master of ceremonies. The official party was then entertained at dinner.

## PUTIKI SETTLEMENT EVANGELISED IN '42

(Patricia Hocquard)

The important Maori settlement of Putiki within the boundaries of St Mary's Parish was evangelised by the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England from 1842. The Society established a Mission Station and built a school and a Church and baptised most of the families there.

However, over the years members of Catholic Maori families from Whanganui River settlements have married Putiki people and made their homes there.

Maudie Ruaka Reweti's family is one of these. She recalls that from long before the Second World War Catholic Maori Mission priests celebrated Mass in the Maori language first in the Anglican Church Parish Hall and later and until recently in the home of a very esteemed citizen, Mrs Rangitamou Takarangi, known as Auntie Rangi. These Masses were attended by Pakeha Parishioners as well.

Prominent Catholics of Putiki in recent times have included Mrs Takarangi, Mrs Wiki Pumipi and Mr Matt Te Tana. Uncle Matt was a daily Mass attender and a one time catechist who cycled over the City Bridge each day in his black suit and acted as altar server at the twelve o'clock masses.

Mr Hemi Bailey, until his death played a large part in any bi-cultural religious celebrations in St Mary's Parish.

Putiki had been remarkable for the spirit of co-operation between Catholic and Anglican Church members.

# PARIKINO CHURCH, FROM 1888



## MORE DURNING OBSERVATIONS

When the Wanganui Chronicle interviewed Fr Durning in the 1980's he said: "Years ago the situation was different from what it is today, since there were very few Maoris in the towns.

"The Maori was also very different; he wasn't in the public eye or mind, and nobody thought or talked of a Maori problem.

"The Maori's urbanisation which brought him into European society must have been something of a catalyst for the new understanding of himself, and of the handicaps he laboured under in New Zealand society.

"Speaking in regard to Catholic Maoris, I can say they didn't readily find a niche in the parish situation like the Islanders, Tongans and Samoans particularly who seemed to have no great difficulty in doing so.

**Among the Maori mission outposts on the historic Wanganui River is this church of Parikino, built on the marae of the Ngati Turea and Ngati Hinearō. The church is known as that of St Madeline Sophie, named after the patron saint of the founder of the Sisters of Sacred Heart.**

"So a specialised kind of work has continued among the Maoris, with a very slow move towards parochialisation.

"This has been forced rather by the nature of the situation and the tardiness of the people to accept the parish, than by any theoretical considerations ..."

Maori mission activity had been intense until well after World War II.

Frs. Caulfield and Cullinane supervised this Wanganui Maori Mission from Jerusalem.

At that time it was hailed as one of the largest Maori missions in the country, encompassing the entire river territory south from Taumarunui and across to Taihape.

# TE RAU ORIWA MARAE

**B**ishop Peter Cullinane put it all so succinctly when he presided at the opening of St Mary's sparkling new Te Rau Oriwa Marae and its born-again St Joseph's community centre in the early summer of 1990. —

"The Community Centre and marae complex stands for more than its practical value. Although that too will be considerable, it stands as a symbol of people pulling together.

"The challenge facing Aotearoa New Zealand is to be truly united while accepting our difference. Differences can be enriching, but only for those who come close to each other. May this complex be an on-going living proof that it can happen".



**St Mary's contemporary leadership team: Frs. Frank Twiss, Parish Priest Rodney Smyth and Phil King-Turner in front of the Te Rau Marae.**

A memorial stone taken from an equally-historic spot on the Wanganui River has been placed in the earth before Te Rau Oriwa's portal. The stone, described by Maori as the Mauri, was selected from the site of an old marae and Catholic Church at Kauaeroa, between Ranana and Jerusalem. In essence, the memorial comes from an area where the battle of Moutoa Island was fought more than a century back. It was solemnly positioned before the city marae by the Maori Missioner, Fr Mel Caulfield, SM.

# HISTORIC RIVER'S KOROWAI MAHAU

By Sue Seconi (nee Hoey)

There have been many bi-cultural events bringing together St Mary's parishioners and the families of the River over the years. But the occasion that was to touch me the most and whose spirit still lives on within me, was the Korowai Mahau: "the sheltering cloak" He ra pono. (A day of faith).

It was an invitation from the Maori people to the Pakehas to share something special of their spirituality with us — an offer to partake in the giftedness of God in His Creation through the natural resource of the Wanganui River. The Marian explained that those wanting to attend had to assemble behind the boatshed opposite Moutoa Gardens at 6am, on that day in 1996.

I am very passionate about the River and as a born-and-bred Wanganui-ite, the River has always been in my life.

As I approached the gathering place, I spotted immediately the silhouette of Father Hemi Hekeria S.M. and I knew I was at the right place. Then Father Waretini arrived, tailed by Joe and John, then Anne and Bill. In no time there were over 100 of us together.

Then the prayers, songs and reflections began. To listen to the tangata whenua of the Catholic faith, as the day's sun began to rise from behind the Parapara Hills tell of their connection and relationship with the River as food supply, recreation, transportation. A reminder of home when one is away made not only my own fondness of the River seem quite superficial, but I was about to depth my own relationship with the River. Then the Sisters of the Home of Compassion and St Joseph of Nazareth voiced the part the River played, when their congregations established their charisms in an early and young Wanganui City.

We were then invited to 'touch' the waters of the River.

As I stooped down from the rowing pontoon, the water felt so crisp. Then something tremendously unforgettable happened: I was overcome with a holy sense of a powerful God-force within me. But how could I explain this moment, when the experience itself would not be nailed down with words? A sort of knowing God's presence without having to believe it perhaps .....

From the River we all walked up Bell Street on to Te Rau Oriwa Marae. After the welcome, the hongi, shoes coming off at the door, we entered into the meeting room. After speeches, we then moved to St Mary's for the Mass of Celebration. Father Hemi was the main celebrant. We were 'ritualizing' our time down at the river and on the Marae. (Next page).

# SECONI'S THESIS CONTINUES...

During Mass, my mind coasted back to the Wanganui Pastoral Deanery meeting several years previously when as the then secretary, I was privileged to hear Father Henare Tate present TE KAUPAPA MO TE IWI MAORI KATORIKI (the Maori Pastoral Care plan), on the Maungarongo Marae beneath Mount Ruapehu. I felt the same spirit especially during the prayers of Consecration. Those same burning questions that I had asked Father Tate in the presence of Bishop Peter Cullinane on this marae surfaced again. What does it really and truly mean to be called God's children, to be His People, and to express and celebrate culturally the Church?

**I realized that Baptism into the Christian Mystery of Redemption is multinational and multicultural. Each culture has the right to experience Christianity without the domination of another culture. Baptism is not just for Kiwi Pakehas.**

For the Catholic Church in this River City, it is necessary today that from 150 years of faith, we now enter into this contemporary and pressing issue of Inculturation. We need to grasp its spirit and explore its meaning because we are the manuhiri. (Manu means bird and hiri means a longing for flight. Manuhiri is the word given for 'visitors'. They stay with the hosts, the tangata whenua for awhile then fly back to their own country). By being open and receptive to the indigenous authenticity to Maori spirituality, we Catholic Pakehas can mature from a colonized mentality into a bicultural theology, and that in the Person of the Lord we will be both connected and separate.

Of course, this is what this day was all about. With this group of people who responded to the invitation, we had made a start to slowly and carefully unpack what it means to discover a oneness not in conformity, but through diversity.

I thanked God for the many graces and blessings I had received through that tangata whenua in 1996. I had gone beyond 'reverencing' God in His Creation to 'feeling' His Spirit within the great Wanganui River, and this gift of His Presence speaks even more powerfully now.



Sue Seconi, whose thinkpiece on biculturalism in St Mary's Parish appropriately rounds off this document in its final chapter, devoted to Maoridom. (Ed).

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