



The Blessed Sacrament

Our Source, Our Summit, Our Cathedral

4 August 2024

Tēnā koutou katoa

Over the past two months, we have walked a unique and privileged journey. As we prepare to build the first new Catholic cathedral in Aotearoa New Zealand in 120 years, we have thought and prayed about a patronal name for that cathedral.

I recently shared with you my desire and my prayer that our new cathedral name would be one fitting for this time and for this place. Supported by your hopes and your prayers, guided by a group of advisers and strengthened by my own prayer, this period of discernment has ended.

I can announce today that the name of our new cathedral will be: Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament – Te Hāhi Matua o te Hākarameta Tapu Rawa.

In recent weeks, people's voices have been raised in support of this choice. They spoke of a long and treasured history of churches and the cathedral of the same name, in which they and their forebears received the sacraments, professed their love for a spouse and farewelled loved ones.

People spoke of the pain of losing the previous cathedral after the Christchurch earthquakes, and how retaining the name would provide some comfort for them.

But in what might be the most compelling argument, people shared their love of the Blessed Sacrament as the source and summit of our faith, our bread for the journey of faith and the journey of life. They spoke of how the Eucharist sustained them in hard times and in good times.

In this time and in this place, the people of our Diocese have said we want a cathedral that is an icon in Christchurch to lead people to God; we want

a place where we can receive Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and be nourished by the Word of God; we want a place where we are welcomed into the arms of God's mercy.

I entered into this discernment to better understand the heart of the people. Your heart, expressed through a desire for the name Blessed Sacrament, has won my heart.

Through this journey of choosing a name, we have also learned about many saints – ancient and new – whose love of God should inspire us. They shared a hunger for the Eucharist. I am sure they would support our new name.

Our path towards a new cathedral will take many years, but this is another important milestone on our way. As discussions loom about the design of our cathedral, that work will have the Blessed Sacrament – that source and summit of our faith – at its centre.

Providentially, our Gospels for the next four Sundays are from the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, where Jesus uncovers the mysteries of the Eucharist, "the bread that came down from heaven". This chapter offers a wonderful meditation on this truth of our faith.

Let us pray that we will deepen our love for the Blessed Sacrament as we look forward to our new cathedral – the spiritual home of our diocese and the sign of our Church's history dating back to the time of Christ.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading '+ Michael Gielen'.

+ Michael Gielen
Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch