


# OUR Faith OUR Future



A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE FAITHFUL  
OF THE CHRISTCHURCH DIOCESE  
Pentecost Sunday, 9th June 2019





“Today, then, let us learn what to do when we are in NEED OF REAL CHANGE. And who among us does not need a change? Particularly when we are downcast, wearied by life’s burdens, oppressed by our own weakness, at those times when it is hard to keep going and loving seems impossible. In those moments, we need a powerful “jolt”: the Holy Spirit, THE POWER OF GOD. In the Creed we profess that He is the “GIVER OF LIFE”. How good it would be for us each day to feel this jolt of life! To say when we wake up each morning:

*“Come, Holy Spirit, come into my heart,  
come*





## *Dear sisters and brothers, disciples of Jesus Christ.*

*Tēna koutou, tēnā koutou, tēna koutou  
katoa e ngā iwi o mātou rohe,  
te rangimārie o te Atua ki a koutou.*

*Whakarongo tō mātou moemoeā mo ngā  
Whare Karakia o tātou rohe.*

*Ngā mihi aroha ki a koutou.*

### **PENTECOST IS THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH**

On this great feast of Pentecost, the birth of the church, let us consider this life-changing event. Fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus his disciples were gathered in one room because they were filled with fear. They had suffered and struggled. Yes, they were beginning to understand that Jesus was with them in a new and even more powerful way, but their faith and their future felt uncertain. Much that they had relied on in the old order of their religion and their lives had been passed away, but now something new was happening.

When they realised that the risen Jesus was with them their fear was transformed into confidence and enthusiasm for new life. Their faith was born and their future

found new hope. In this experience they were transformed from apprehensive followers of Jesus into his disciples; passionate people who were able to hear, to listen and to follow the way of living in a new dimension beyond fear-fuelled pre-occupations with earthly anxieties, worries and occupations.

They knew that they were not alone. Jesus Christ was God-with-them.

Pentecost heralded in this little group of disciples of Jesus a new passion for working together with the Spirit of Jesus motivating them to live in new ways. Indeed the old order had passed away and something new was happening.

Today we are the disciples of Jesus. Perhaps we still have a lot in common with the timid followers of Jesus before the Pentecost event? In our Diocese of Christchurch we have lost a great deal in recent years with earthquakes, the terrorist attack, and the vulnerability in our own families and friendships.

Naturally these human vulnerabilities are reflected in the structures of our diocesan family, in parishes, schools, chaplaincies and communities.

**See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?**

**Isaiah 43:19**

*into my day"*

- Pope Francis, Pentecost Homily 2018

# Reflections

## ON MY FIRST YEAR AS YOUR BISHOP



As your bishop many of you have trusted me with a privileged insight into your lives. Even when we meet for a moment or two at Mass, at a function or in the street, you tell me of your hopes and anxieties in your family and work, parish, school and in the life of our diocese. I receive emails with details of your concerns, opinions and advice. I have discovered that the life of a bishop is one of continual consultation with every conversation providing information and insight and every day I take what I hear, see and perceive to prayer for you and for those you love.

At Pentecost the disciples of Jesus became apostles and in a privileged way a bishop (already with every Christian a disciple) is also appointed to be an apostle. This is a responsibility I take very seriously and at my ordination 16 months ago I publicly said yes to this responsibility of leadership in this local church of the Diocese of Christchurch.

Today I hear priests saying they want to be priests of Jesus Christ focused on their first calling as doctors of the soul, giving their time not to building maintenance and financial administration but to the celebration of Mass and the sacraments, living among the people with time to visit and chat. They want to provide in their parish churches a refuge, a sanctuary of peace and prayer for busy parishioners and for those who might drop in. This is consistent with what I hear from the people of the diocese. You want your priests to be good priests and you know that there are many aspects of parish and diocesan administration that is rightly your competence and your mission.

The most common concern that parishioners address to me is for their children and grandchildren who may have little contact with the church and little sense of the love of God for them. I am aware too that while many grandparents have also drifted from the practice of their faith, there is new life emerging among young people who are seeking a relationship with God in Jesus. People of faith want to be with others who know that life on earth can only be lived fully in relationship with Jesus.





## CURRENTLY IN THE DIOCESE THERE ARE:

- 21 incardinated<sup>1</sup> priests under the age of 75
- 7 priests from overseas
- 2 religious orders staffing two parishes

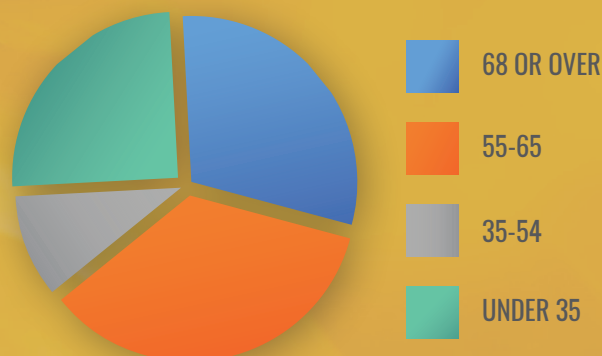
## IN TEN YEARS TIME:

- 12 incardinated priests under the age of 75 plus any new ordinations

It is clear to me that people who seek this life of relationship have rediscovered the heart of Pentecost faith. People today are weary of maintaining old structures (social, workplace or diocese) simply because they have inherited them. But these same people desire to discover the heart of human existence which people of faith have found in Jesus Christ. Where our structures serve this goal we do all we can to preserve them. Where new forms are needed we are not afraid. As our ancestors in faith did before us, we hear and listen to where God is leading us and we have the courage to follow.

One factor that has been part of my reflecting is the age and capabilities of our priests. We are blessed in the priests we have in the diocese. Their dedication and willingness to go the extra mile for their people reflects the ideal of what a

## AGE RANGE OF ACTIVE INCARDINATED PRIESTS



“Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” - Matthew 9:14-17

priest is called to. We are fortunate to have priests on loan from overseas working in our parishes and two religious orders staffing two parishes, but their presence cannot be guaranteed into the future. The number and age of our clergy does not allow us to maintain the current structures.

This situation requires immediate response to ensure that the pattern of growth which has been our experience in the past endures into the future.

## A NEW *Vision* TOGETHER

“Where there is no vision, the people perish” Proverbs 29:19

My own best teachers are people of all ages who are my family, friends, those I have worked with in parishes and taught alongside in schools. Every one of these groups knows that to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often. In your families and workplaces, your communities and your businesses, you have often had to make difficult decisions embracing new ways of working together to ensure wise management of resources. Such restructuring is at times essential and must be carefully considered. While changes are difficult we know that this growth is a part of healthy human living: our bodies change and even the natural world around reflects this pattern as summer passes into autumn and winter before new life can emerge in spring.

The courage I see in your lives as you embrace change, living in love through the pain of family and work transitions, gives me courage as your bishop to face necessary diocesan pastoral restructuring decisions.

Healthy families and organisations need good leadership, not simply a co-ordination of views and opinions. A diocesan bishop is appointed to be much more than the facilitator of ministries. A bishop is called to be a leader, knowing and understanding the treasure that is Catholic Faith, and ensuring that this faith is communicated as the person of Jesus Christ who is the answer to every human need and the purpose of every diocesan and parish project. I am committed to doing my best to serve you in this way.

<sup>1</sup> Every priest must belong to a diocese or a religious order. A diocesan priest is ordained for a particular diocese, in this case Christchurch, and whoever is the Bishop will be his ordinary.

# Hope

## SPRINGING ETERNAL

The decade following 1960 is widely held to be the time that marked the most significant change not only in New Zealand but throughout the world. In these years the post-war generation reached adulthood and the easy accessibility of unprecedented technology and travel made different ways of living and believing more easily available. In the 1950's the church sensed this change was imminent and the popular Saint Pope John XXIII called a consultation of the entire church which met over a three-year period in the Second Vatican Council of the early 1960's.

I hear many of you speaking enthusiastically of this new era in the church, and I invite us all to renew our commitment to the challenges given to us by this Council.

Many of the effects of the following half-century were predicted by a young Fr. Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) in a 1969 interview. He did not fear the changes ahead when he reflected:

“A great power will flow from a more spiritualized and simplified Church. People in a totally planned world will find themselves unspeakably lonely. If they have completely lost sight of God, they will feel the whole horror of their poverty. Then they will discover the little flock of believers as something wholly new. They will discover it as a hope that is meant for them, an answer for which they have always been searching in secret.

So it seems certain to me that the Church is facing very hard times. The real crisis has scarcely begun. We will have to count on terrific upheavals. But I am equally certain about what will remain at the end: not the Church of the political cult, which is dead already, but the Church of faith. She may well no longer be the dominant social power to the extent that she was until recently; but she will enjoy a fresh blossoming and be seen as man's home, where he will find life and hope beyond death.”

*“We are not living an era of change  
but a change of era.”*

Pope Francis to the Church of Italy November 2015



## DECADES OF

# preparation

You may be aware that last year I put a hold on any further building projects and programmes in Christchurch City. I did this because I wanted to make sure that we have the appropriate structures in place to serve our needs into the future.

The Parish of St. Francis of Assisi Mairehau were only a couple of weeks out from laying the foundation for their beautiful new church and I am grateful to St. Francis' parishioners for their generosity and understanding. It is essential that we make the most of this opportunity, thinking and working and praying for the good of the entire local church of the diocese.

Many of the parishes outside of Christchurch City have experienced significant change in their parish structures seeing parish communities amalgamated to meet the changing needs of more mobile parishioners. As populations in farming areas decline there have been rural churches closed and fewer priests have been needed to serve smaller Catholic populations. This is especially evident in South and North Canterbury, the West Coast and the Chatham Islands.

The changes I am now proposing for Christchurch City are required because our current parish structures are not serving the mission we are called to as effectively as we want. Pope Francis has asked us to be a church "permanently on mission". Our mission as Christians is to go out and share with the world the good news that we are loved unconditionally by God and that a relationship with Jesus Christ is the best way to a fulfilled life. Our mission is to help our friends, family and our community to rediscover the heart of the Pentecost faith. Often too much parish energy and resources goes into maintaining parish plant that was built for, and appropriate to, an earlier era. This has meant that less time and money is available to be spent on

the primary mission of the church and as a result too many of our family and friends are struggling to encounter Jesus Christ within the Catholic Church.

Our Catholic ancestors thought little of travelling considerable distances at great inconvenience to take part in the Sunday Mass and other parish activities. In Christchurch City today many parishioners have a choice of a dozen Sunday Masses within relatively close proximity.

We pray for our churches to be full for Sunday Mass. In some parts of the city this is happening already and it is evident that full churches where the liturgy is celebrated well become a magnet for people.

We know too that many parishes in the world have more parishioners than in our largest city parishes and in these places people and priests work together in vibrant communities of faith. This is not too dissimilar from the early years of last century when there were fewer priests than we have in the diocese today ministering among people. This led to the most rapid years of growth in the history of our diocese.



## AN OPPORTUNITY FOR

# rebirth

Now is the time to reconsider the structure of the parishes in the greater Christchurch area which includes 17 of the 26 parishes in the Diocese, in order to serve our mission. There may be some smaller changes in rural areas in the future too, but now is the opportunity for the people of Christchurch, encouraged by the entire diocese, to embrace a new beginning.

While the focus of the structural change is in Christchurch City and the greater Christchurch area, my vision for vibrant parishes is for the whole diocese.

In these parishes people and priests work together in vibrant communities of faith, people have a personal faith relationship with Jesus Christ, people are welcomed, loved and cared for, and feel a part of a community that nourishes and supports their faith at every phase and stage of life. Flourishing parishes are filled with young people and young families. Lay people are given the opportunity to use their talents and gifts and priests too are given the opportunity to work out of their strengths and experience the joy of working where they are gifted. In these communities every member has a strong

commitment to social justice and to the poor. These parishes are permanently on mission, places so attractive, that people from the wider community are drawn to them and experience there, the welcome and love that Christ offers them.

Sunday Mass is absolutely foundational for our faith life. I also want us to consider what we are doing from Monday to Saturday to support the faith life of people and help those with the struggles and joys of their lives. How might we provide greater support for young families, the elderly and young people?

My desire too is that all parishes will be led by a parish team, made up of priests and lay pastoral workers. There will be a parish priest, assistant priests, lay pastoral workers and parish administration staff. This will enable a shared sense of mission and the ability to allocate roles according to skills and gifts.

My hope is that we will have a diocesan and parish structure that is sustainable, well resourced, that will help us to grow and develop into the future.

When, in the life of our communities, we experience a certain “listlessness”, when we prefer peace and quiet to the newness of God, it is a bad sign. It means that we are trying to find shelter from the wind of the Spirit. When we live for self-preservation and keep close to home, it is not a good sign. The Spirit blows, but we lower our sails. And yet, how often have we seen him work wonders! Frequently, even in the bleakest of times, the Spirit has raised up the most outstanding holiness! Because he is the soul of the Church, who constantly enlivens her with RENEWED HOPE, fills her with JOY, makes her FRUITFUL, and causes new life to blossom...Time and time again he gives new birth. He revives our first love. The Spirit reminds the Church that, for all her centuries of history, she is always the youthful bride with whom the Lord is madly in love. LET US NEVER TIRE OF WELCOMING THE SPIRIT INTO OUR LIVES, of invoking him before everything we do:

*“Come, Holy Spirit!”*

Pope Francis, Pentecost 2018



# I INVITE YOU TO PRAYERFULLY CONSIDER WHAT I PROPOSE IN THIS LETTER

We are blessed in our diocese with faith-filled people: parishioners, pastoral leaders, school teachers, Religious sisters and brothers and priests. It is your faith that gives me the desire to listen anew to the Holy Spirit speaking among us, and the courage to follow together without fear.

Therefore I am proposing a reduction in the number of parishes in Christchurch City from the existing twelve to five new parishes, with teams of two to four priests living and ministering together in these newly formed parishes.

The proposed new Christchurch parishes will be formed by amalgamating all city parishes and creating new, larger, better resourced and more vibrant parishes. I am proposing that these new parishes come into being at Pentecost 2020, initially using current parish sites and with our co-operation with God's grace, achieving the new structures of parishes as soon as is practical. This new structure will mean that any buildings not needed in the proposal will be closed.

## THE NEW PARISHES I PROPOSE ARE:

**CHRISTCHURCH NORTH** with a new church to be built at the St Joseph's Papanui site on Main North Road, amalgamated from the existing Mairehau, Burnside and Papanui Parishes.

**CHRISTCHURCH WEST** with an expanded church at the Our Lady of Victories Sockburn site on Main South Road, amalgamated from the existing Riccarton, Sockburn and Hornby Parishes<sup>3</sup>. (The re-modelled Hornby church will continue to be used as a Mass centre)

**CHRISTCHURCH EAST** at the St Anne's, Woolston site on Ferry Road, amalgamated from the existing Christchurch East and Ferrymead Parishes. (The new church at New Brighton will continue to be used as a Mass centre)

**CHRISTCHURCH SOUTH** with a new church at the Our Lady of the Assumption Hoon Hay site on Hoon Hay Road, amalgamated from the existing Addington-Beckenham and Hoon Hay-Halswell parishes.

**CHRISTCHURCH CENTRAL - CATHEDRAL** at either Barbadoes Street or on a new site, amalgamated from the existing Bryndwr and St Mary's Pro-Cathedral Parishes as well as the Te Rangimarie Maori community.

<sup>3</sup> Hornby-Darfield (currently one parish) will be split.



A number of new pastoral centres and presbyteries will also be built. Extensive feasibility studies have been undertaken in the development of this proposal to ensure that what is proposed is indeed able to be put in place.

These proposed changes will result in some of our Catholic primary schools being at a distance from their parish church. I will ensure that every school that is not alongside a parish church has a Chapel with the Blessed Sacrament reserved for prayer and class Masses and sacramental celebrations. I want our young people to know and experience the gift of a church as a place of prayer and celebration.

Selwyn and North Canterbury are also included in this plan because of their proximity to the city.

The **SELWYN** region would become a new parish amalgamated from the existing Akaroa, Lincoln, Leeston and Darfield Parishes. The churches will be retained in each place and a new church and school built at Rolleston.

I am also considering options for **NORTH CANTERBURY**. One possibility is to keep the current parishes of Waimakariri and Hurunui while another option is to amalgamate these parishes into one new North Canterbury Parish.

We are blessed and enriched in this diocese with many active and vibrant ethnic communities. We value their immense contribution to the life of the church in this place and I want to reassure them that their particular needs will be catered for and I welcome their feedback on this proposal.

The process that has brought us to this point has been a journey of many decades. In the 1980's our diocese began a new stage of pastoral planning with consideration of population trends and patterns of growth within the cities and regions of the diocese. We have watched with interest similar projects and processes in dioceses throughout the world noting patterns and causes of growth and decline

Jesus said:

I have come that you might have

**LIFE** and have it in

**ABUNDANCE**

John 10:10





## PRAYING FOR

# our future



Over the past decade in Christchurch the earthquakes and the demolition of 13 churches has brought a new urgency to our planning and an unprecedented opportunity to get things right as we move into the future.

This weekend's celebration of Pentecost, the birth of the church, is an opportunity for us to experience again the newness, the beauty and the adventure that is relationship with Jesus Christ lived within the Catholic Church in this Diocese of Christchurch.

While the changes I have proposed are significant and will surface many concerns and questions in you, it is essential that the life that God is building in us is not primarily about church buildings and parish boundaries. The buildings and parishes are essential, but they are at the service of the prime mission of the church.

I know that for many of you this proposed restructuring will mean a loss of much of what you have built up and been a part of in your existing parishes. I hope you will also be excited that we are stepping into a new era of bridging the distance that many of your children and grandchildren, family and friends feel between themselves and the church.

I know that many young people who are looking for an adventure will see in what I propose an opportunity to be involved in the life of a renewing and vital community of faith that is the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Christchurch.

I ask you to pray about the future of our Church in this place, to listen deeply to the Spirit and share with me how you feel the Spirit is directing you and your community. You have much collective wisdom and a great breadth of knowledge about your local area. I want your feedback on this proposed plan, particularly on how it would affect you in your area and how you would suggest we move forward to achieve a more vibrant and active church. There is additional supporting material on the diocesan website [www.chchcatholic.nz](http://www.chchcatholic.nz). An electronic feedback

form will be available on the website and a hard copy from your parish or school on June 22nd. I would ask that you allow yourself these couple of weeks to just sit with the proposal and think and pray and then contribute the comments that you consider will help us to move forward.

I would like to receive the responses by Friday 30th August 2019. I do want to hear what you think and I look forward to receiving your feedback. Once I have reviewed all of your feedback I intend to respond on the First Sunday of Advent, Sunday 1st December.

Keep in mind that the time is past when we can be satisfied with maintaining current structures and styles of ministry. This Pentecost we realise anew that Jesus Christ is forever wanting to work among us in ways that carry our Tradition and traditions. This is the treasure received from God to people who are open to experiencing the power and abundance of God's life now and into eternity.

We are stepping ahead on the pathway to life that has been the journey of 2000 years of Catholic Christians throughout the world. Their example and their prayer gives us courage. We know too that when we turn to God with dependant faith, God does not miss the opportunity to work powerfully in us. I ask you to pray with me the ancient ***Prayer to the Holy Spirit*** which has traditionally been prayed by any person or community knowing their need for the power of God in their life. Please carry it with you on the prayer cards distributed today, learn it by heart. Pray it to begin and end your day, together at various gatherings and whenever you need to know that you are not alone.

My blessing and prayers for you all

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads '+ P. B. Martin SM'.

+ Paul Martin SM  
Bishop of Christchurch



# Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit,  
fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit,  
did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit  
we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations,

Through Christ Our Lord,

Amen.

## TIMEFRAME AND KEY DATES SUMMARY

### SUNDAY 9TH JUNE - PENTECOST SUNDAY

Bishop's pastoral letter released

Information relating to this proposal is now online  
at [www.chchcatholic.nz](http://www.chchcatholic.nz)

### SATURDAY 22ND JUNE 2019

Feedback process opens

Feedback online [www.chchcatholic.nz](http://www.chchcatholic.nz)  
or with hard copies available at parish  
and school offices

We encourage feedback online as it  
assists with ease of collation

Feedback is welcome from individuals or groups

### JULY 2019

Bishop Paul to hold meetings in Christchurch  
(North, South, East, West, Central, Selwyn and Waimakariri)

### FRIDAY 30TH AUGUST 2019

Feedback process concludes

### SUNDAY 1ST DECEMBER 2019

#### - FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Subject to feedback received, Bishop Paul's intention to  
announce the outcome of feedback

### PENTECOST 2020

Proposed new parishes come into being



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