**Labourers in the Field**

**The beginnings of a history . . .**

*Please find below a ‘work in progress.’*

The parish at 1866 was a large geographical area and Mass centre included Rangiriri*,*and records name Ohinewai as a boundary line (accepting boundaries were fluid.)This stretches the parish into the current Hamilton Diocese.  Nevertheless the story is not that of one parish, as at today but of four, Waiuku, Tuakau and Papakura, as realistically a true history must be a cooperative history, beacuse it is not about Pukekohe as town.

Very little has been written, other than dates and biographies of priests, and names of certain families, especially from Waipipi, Maketu and so forth.  There are many stories buried in ther cemetery in Pukekohe, Pratt Road, and Waipipi to begin with.

What was ‘life’ like for Catholics in relation to Maori, other settlers like the Chinese market gardners and Protestants etc.  Attitudes to ‘mixed-marriages’ etc.

Later arrivals from Holland, Croatia etc., leading up to recent immigrant groups.

Mons. Bernard told me his great-grand parents, Clarke’s are buried in the cemetary, and were publicans.  As such a place of fellowship for Catholic men.

What has it been like to be Catholic in Pukekohe, but elsewhere.

The history includes Papakura and Drury, but at a minimum perhaps should be a cooperative ‘Franklin’ history (even the Waiuku history that was recently written has little on Waipipi.)

*Phillip Hadley*

  ***Labourers in the Field***
  *DRAFT: compiled by Phillip Hadley*
**Cultivating the Spiritual Resource of Pukekohe and District**

                     "They sowed fields and planted potatoes and onions that yielded a plentiful harvest;"

paraphrase Psalm 107:37

I found the treasure in the field

 That neither death nor life could steal.

 I will sell what I have, give all that I am,

To hold this treasure as my own.

I found a treasure: Carey Landry (cf. Mt 13:44)

It is first ‘right and just’ to recognise that the land on which we stand today as a parish was first the land of Nga-ti Te Ata and Nga-ti Tamaoho.

We also honour the Hogan settler family that transferred land to the parish, on which the parish plant is built today.

*Quam dilecta tabernacula tua*

The above inscription was etched on the baldachin that hung above the sanctuary in the church that preceded the new St. Patrick’s parish centre. An exact baldachin hung over the sanctuary in Auckland Cathedral of St. Patrick and St. Joseph (the two patrons also of Pukekohe) from the time of the celebration of the centenary of Bishop Pompallier’s arrival, in 1938.  It is translated as ‘how lovely are thy dwellings’ and is fitting for the new complex as well. (While Ss. Patrick and Joseph have long been Pukekohe’s patrons, government encyclopedic references from 1902 refer to the parish as that of St. James.)

The parish of Pukekohe was initially part of the Otahuhu parish leading down to Pukekohe, and Onehunga parish down through the Manakau harbour to Waipipi and the first priest (initially as a seminarian) to take on the mission, in what became Pukekohe parish,  was Fr. McEntigart.  In 1865 Fr. McEntigart moved to Tuimati near the Opaheke block, west of Ramarama (then Maketu), thus making it hard to date the beginnings of the parish, but traditionally it has been understood to have been 1866 when the first baptism is recorded.

The parish stretched from Drury (Papakura) to Ohinewai and from Waipipi to beyond Ararimu.

The first church, St. Lawrence’s at Waipipi was consecrated by Bishop Pompallier in 1867, on his last public journey as bishop of the diocese. Prior to the beginning of the parish Waipipi had been served from Onehunga on occasion as well at Whiri Whiri and Maiora.  Initially Waipipi had two Masses on one Sunday of each month; and in favourable weather people rode there from Whiri Whiri and Maiora.

Nearer Tuimati was Maketu and St. Bridget’s was opened in 1869, and there was a Catholic school there from around this period.  In the late 1870's the school closed for a period, but then reopened, continuing into the 1900's. The church fell into disuse by 1968 and was ‘gifted’ by Archbishop Listen to Raventhorpe Hospital in 1970, and later the church was moved to Selwyn  Oaks, Papakura, and renamed St. Martin’s in the Oaks.

Over time church buildings would be erected in various other places including Mercer, Patumahoe, and Drury.  Drury was consecrated in 1872 as the number of Catholics at the edge of the parish increased.  There is now seemingly no record of the church of St. Thomas Aquinas, other than in name.  Drury became part of Papakura parish in 1927 but the church is no longer there, and not currently part of the collective memory. Waiuku and Tuakau also early in the new century became separate parishes.  Other land was over the years purchased or more often donated for church building, including at Clarks Beach, but with increased access to transport, new developments were not taken up.  Patumahoe, the last additional Mass Centre was closed on October 19, 2003 and the building was sold to another Christian community.  While change can be hard, adaptation seems inevitable, while progress is a combined effort of all witnessing to God’s timing which is not always ours.

The ‘mother’ Church of the parish (the second at Waipipi) was dismantled in the 1960's (then under the oversight of the Waiuku parish).

Pukekohe’s (West) first church was on the site of the current cemetery (there is also a Catholic cemetery on Pratt Road close to where the Ramarama church was).  In 1880 the parish church was built on the current site, and was extended in 1912 by Fr. Malloy within months of his arrival and also around 1952 again under Fr.  Molloy’s oversight.  Fr. Malloy also built the current presbytery in 1914, far removed from the thatch ‘whare’ that Fr. McDonald (third parish priest) lived in near the waterfall at Ramarama.

Fr. Malloy died still serving Pukekohe in 1957, and the parish still uses, on occasion, the Chalice he was given on 18 June 1930 to mark 25 years of priesthood.

The main altar in the new church seems to have been placed in the previous Church around the time of the extensions in 1952, but was not consecrated till 1968, by Archbishop Liston.

In 1966, on February 13th, Archbishop Liston came to Pukekohe for the parish centenary (as Bishop Pat would come on February 13, 2011, to bless the new complex).  The *Zealandia*at the time noted that the Mass was outside and the people stood to receive communion, which even though this was after the Second Vatican Council, was still not too common*.*

Much changed after the Council, and while liturgical change is most notable, other changes also happened.  There was greater cooperation between resident priests and the parishioners and the people were encouraged to full and active participation not only in liturgy but in all fields of parish life.  For a time during Fr. Bolland’s and Fr. Wilkinson’s time in the parish there was also a pastoral worker, Monica Bryce, who empowered the parish community to take ownership of increasing aspects of parish life.

Still the focus of the Eucharist remained strong, and the sanctuary was extended in the church by Fr. Neville Browne, with a new Reconciliation Room, and a simple Table, Jesus having used a Table, became the centre of the Eucharistic celebration.  Later as time progressed Fr. Brien Wilkinson again developed the sanctuary area by moving the marble altar forward to the centre of the sanctuary.  (The wooden altar/table would be used during the building of the new church, while Eucharist was celebrated in the hall).

While the Catholic Women’s League continued to serve the community and St. Vincent de Paul (along with the later formed Caring Group) sought to serve the needy in the wider community, and groups such as Marian Mothers would be formed, but other groups were to be supplanted, such as the Holy Name Society, Children of Mary, Confraternity of the Sacred Heart, Legion of Mary, Altar Society and Catholic Youth Movement.  Over time also such groups such as St. Joseph’s Scouts would be disestablished.  Prior to the building project, Indoor Bowls and a card playing group, under the auspices of St. Patrick’s, regularly used the hall, and other community groups made valued use of parish facilities.  Initiatives such as the work of the Catholic Enquiry Centre would continue to be supported, but the previous Hibernian Society and Credit Union, seem to have wound up around the time of the financial changes that occurred in the general society from the mid 1980's.

Music became an essential aspect of parish life, and the piano so wonderfully played at the time by Stella Bohi a teacher from the parish school, was replaced by an organ purchased by the Balle family, and played by various people initially including Joanne Balle (Allen), Rita O’Connor, Sr. Mary Richard rndm and Br. Felix fms.  Later the current organ was purchased by Mary Loveday, in memory of her late husband.  In addition the parish is now blessed with a range of musicians with various instruments.  The musical ensemble has enabled a contemporary expression to be voiced, as the parish has sought to do as the psalmist implored:  “sing a new song.”

Words and tunes were not all that made up the music that was used in liturgy, but were given life by voices that were raised in song.  Many have done so valiantly and tirelessly in the service of the worshipping community and the God who blessed them with melodious vocal chords.

Those giving in such a way, were the likes of Kees van Duin, singing regularly for Sunday Eucharist, funerals, and other liturgical gatherings, such as Anointing for the Sick.  Kees also composed a number of pieces of music, especially a Mass setting, which sought to bring together aspects of old and new words and Eucharistic understandings.  These Mass parts are part of the liturgical taonga of the parish, and will be prized even through the next advent of the liturgical movement, that is currently beginning.

As a community, understandings of Eucharist, Scripture, Church history and life, continued to be formed.  This was done through the homily at Eucharist, through reflection groups such as the RENEW programmes that ran throughout New Zealand, and also in deeper ways through input from such as presenters of the Catholic Institute of Theology.  Such input and community based learning took the place of the previous occasional visits of Passionist or Redemptorist missioners for instance.  The Chanel Institute produced the Family Living magazine, and the back cover regularly had a catechetical song composed by Sr. Cecily Sheehy OP, which often came to be sung in school assemblies and school liturgies, be it First Friday Mass or special occasions.  These songs also allowed celebrations like First Communion to be child centred. The Sisters of Our Lady the Missions made the music come alive on piano, organ and guitar - a young Sr. Carmel Cole rndm even played a twelve-stringed guitar.  Later on in the parish, and elsewhere in the diocese, the sacrament of Confirmation would be linked to First Eucharist, as part of a developed understanding of the Sacraments of Initiation.  First Reconciliation would be celebrated using the communal Rite II, and the communal celebration would become part of the community life of faith during Advent and Lent.

Sunday remained the Day of the Lord.  The obligation to attend Mass on January 1st (Solemnity of the Mary, Mother of God), Ascension Thursday and other previous Holy Days of Obligation was set aside, except for Christmas and the patronal feast of New Zealand the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

As English language translation sought to dynamically give rendition to the Hebrew and Greek of the Biblical testaments, new scripture translations came into use.  This was most noticeable in the Lord’s Prayer.  Prayer forms would change and previous public devotions like Stations of the Cross, Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament,  and Rosary, waned.  For a time the Prayer of the Church was claimed by the faithful of the parish and prayed prior to Eucharist on weekdays.  Fr. Peter Gray has fostered Contemplative Prayer.

The continuing truth of the words of Latin hymn, part of the ritual of Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament, Tantum Ergo would sound true, for a new generation: ‘Et antiquum documentum, Novo cedat ritui (ancient rites have long departed newer rites of grace prevail).’

Eucharist came to be understood in many and varied ways drawing on theological insights that parishioners were presented with.  Brien Wilkinson challenged the congregation to take heed of the meaning of the Greek words of the gospels, and not so much piously consume, but masticate - really chew - the bread that was to ‘stick to our bones’ in Jesus’ memory.  In this way more authentic unleavened bread was baked by locals to celebrate the Paschal Mystery during Holy Week.  Likewise we were to drink ‘deeply’ of the Cup of Christ.  Communion “under both kinds” while having been common, for a short period, on weekdays, was established by Fr. Brien as the norm at Sunday Eucharist, and the reception of the Blood of Christ was recommended for the ‘spiritual thirst’ of all who approached the Table of the Lord for communion.  Also children, as well as others, came forward for a blessing from the priest or Eucharistic minister.  For the children this was often after a specifically focused liturgy of the Word, joining the whole congregation at the Preparation of Gifts.  Through liturgical leadership various local customs evolved - some for a time, some longer lasting, and others adapting and developed through the outpouring of the charisms that visitors blessed the parish with.  Often ‘new wine’ would burst ‘old wine skins,’ and like any similar story the parish has been a place of furthering understanding, servant leadership, and, when there was the potential for division, the spirit  Pope John XXIII abided - in essentials unity, but the recognition that in all else diversity, and above all charity.

For a short number of years, the Agape that is linked with Eucharist in the New Testament would also be celebrated with other Christians (often in the Town Hall), in the form of a Seder Meal, as Jesus would have celebrated at Passover.  Parishioners would also work with other Christians in teaching the Christian Education Commission ‘Bible in Schools’ programme in government primary schools, and with others in the community at the Family Support Centre, Foodbank at Puna te Ora, and for a number of years in the Christian Bookshop and café which was run cooperatively by local Christian churches.  There was also ecumenical participation in the Ministers Fraternal.  Parishioners were also prominently involved for the benefit of the community in agriculture, horticulture and business, and others in the human services such as Dr. Bill Smith as a medical practitioner and Graeme Jackson as an optometrist.

It is also ‘right and just’ to recognise the long line of religious that have served faithfully, especially the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions.  The Marist Brothers also, while part of the Tuakau parish, influenced greatly the parish especially into the 1980's through Br. Felix, both musically and due to Br. Felix’s cake baking skills.

Over the years, items such as the roman collar, and religious garb, for the most part, have been divested of, but the habit of service has continued.  Vestments for liturgy have taken on a humbler style.

While in earlier years it would have been unlikely that Fr. Malloy would have been known as Fr. James, now it is more common to address priests using their first name.  Similarly, those in consecrated life, have become known by their baptismal name,rather than by their “name in religion.”

Today also the parish is blessed to have within our boundaries the Tyburn Monastery, a place to come away awhile as Jesus himself did.  The Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Montmartre bless the parish by their contemplative presence and are an outreach of prayer for the whole community.  The Mercer church would be transported to Bombay, and would be rededicated under the patronage of St. James.  (Some records recall that the Mercer church was originally dedicated to St. Thomas.)

Many parishioners over the years have gone out into the harvest to labour.  The parish has sent out priests - both diocesan and religious - brothers and sisters.  Today the parish still can take claim to a number in consecrated life, but also to others of those who went out and now live their Christian vocation in other forms.

Pukekohe has obviously been served by many priests, either as parish priests or assistants, and though there is an official list, many names have been lost, because early on records were not kept in the same manner as would be done today, and in recent years Pukekohe has had many visiting priests for various reasons.

Those who are still in active ministry, retired or in other works are Patrick Keane (Ngaruawahia/Huntly), Bill Fletcher (Wellsford), Neville Browne (Emeritus Meadowbank), Bruce Bolland (John Vianney House, Ponsonby), Frank Roach (Panmure), Martin Bugler (in residence at Milford).  Those who died, in the period these priests represent, were Mons. W. Sheely and Frs. Bevan Smith and Michael Daly (interred at Ohaupo), Jude McCarthy (interred at Panmure), Brien Wilkinson (who rests in the parish cemetery watching (as he said before he died) those who passed by, in the hope they would visit Jesus’ Eucharistic presence reserved in the Tabernacle).  Another who spent significant time in the parish was Denis Bunbury, who works for Lifeline Auckland today.  In similar ways John McAlpine ordained in Pukekohe in 1968 works in spiritual direction, pastoral education, and as Vicar of St. Peter’s Onehunga, and Chris Farrelly ordained in the 1970's is now contributing to health care provision in  Whangarei.

Sacerdotal priestly ministry has also been fostered in other ways, as the parish has supported Fr. Francis Poon, Fr. James Mulligan, Fr. John O’Connor of the Christchurch diocese and Colin Heeney.

Visiting priests of memory include those from the Marist community at Manurewa such as Graeme Connelly SM.  Others have included Fr. Pat Abbott SM, Fr. Albert Williams OFM, Fr. Humphery O’Leary CssR, Fr. Jordan Perry OP (who served the parish for an extended period on two separate occasions), and Fr. Peter Dunn among others.  The parish also had association with the priests at Tuakau and Waiuku, and to some extent Papakura.  Frs. Daly, Roach and Bugler would all engage in pastoral ministry in Waiuku as well as Pukekohe, and Fr. Peter Gray served previously in Papakura.  Priests from neighbouring areas and from throughout the diocese would often assist at Reconciliation liturgies during Advent and Lent, and priests such as Fr. Mark Walls SM would be welcomed in the parish during the Easter and Christmas liturgical seasons.

During Fr. Martin Bugler’s time in the parish Tuakau was administered, for a brief while, from Pukekohe, and at the edges of all the surrounding parishes, there are many ‘cross border’ associations and times when, because of situations of time and place, Eucharist is celebrated by parishioners in different communities.   As an example, some families in Karaka attend regularly in Pukekohe, but others in Papakura, and in the past might have attended in Patumahoe.  With increased accessibility to transport parish boundaries would become more of a ‘moveable feast.’  Parishioners would also bring back inspiration from other communities throughout the country, and from overseas.  Immigrant communities would share their expressions faith, which enriched parish celebrations and life in general.

A parish history, especially in brief, is not a history of buildings, but of people; men, women and children.

Women have faithfully served the parish since its initial days, often giving care and sustenance to priests and religious.  They have worked tirelessly in education, and have taken up varying ministries since the Council, in many forms, including as lector and Eucharistic ministers.  The participation of our children and teenagers has also been a source of growth and greater involvement, meaning that the whole parish has been called to claim the baptismal commission to be ‘prophets, priests and kings.’  Occasionally various members of the community have led liturgies of the Word and Communion on weekdays, and at different times lay people have been called upon to preach, including on Sunday.  The role of altar server has continued, and is now a role taken up by boys and girls.  The first ‘Altar Girl’ who filled the role, did so during the first Anglican-Catholic joint Sunday service, that occurred in the previous St. Patrick’s church, in the 1980's.  It was not till some time later that girls took up this responsibility during Eucharist, but the parish would come to realise the words of scripture that there is no distinction between male and female - all are one in Christ Jesus.  This is an understanding that is still coming to maturity in the parish, diocese, and wider church.

Currently Fr. Peter Gray serves the parish, and recently through the building effort was supported by Fr. Ikenasio Vitaliano (now Mt. Wellington). The parish also continues to gather faithfully around the eleventh Bishop of Auckland, Pat Dunn.  Pukekohe also remembers the heartfelt pastoral care of Bishop Denis Browne (now Bishop of Hamilton), who ministered so faithfully and personally at the time of the death of Brien Wilkinson.  Pukekohe as a parish has been blessed to have been a parish under every Bishop of Auckland since Pompallier, bishops who have enabled faithful pastors to service the parish throughout.

In writing a snap-shot of the parish, it is impossible to include everything.  Perhaps Fr. Malloy on horseback to Waipipi from Pukekohe, or those who walked from Bombay to Pukekohe for Mass.  It also leaves out so much more yet to be written, and much for the tilling.  It forgets there has been much silent prayer and entreaty over the years by those who have passed through for a short time, or whose names have simply been forgotten.

There have been big events along the way: the visit of John Paul II at Auckland Domain, the year of Jubilee at the beginning of the new millennium, the relics of Teresa of Lisieux and John Baptiste Pompallier at the Tyburn Monastery, and the pilgrimage of the Cross and Icon in preparation for World Youth Day in Sydney and the visit of young Canadian pilgrims.  Lent 2010 saw a stirring Passion Play performed for the community in the school grounds, to give witness to the historical moment when Jesus surrendered his life.

Ministry among youth over the years has taken on many forms, especially when the sacrament of Confirmation was received during the teenage years.  For a period camps at Knocknagree were a regular summer event, and Catholic secondary schooling was significant; for girls perhaps at the Secondary School run by the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions (closed in 1964) or boarding school either in Auckland or perhaps Hamilton, and boarding school for boys perhaps at Sacred Heart College in Ponsonby and later Glen Innes.

Catholic schooling was understood as an obligation prior to the Council and the years immediately following.  In later years Catholic schooling, while no longer an obligation, was for many parents still the preferred option for their children at the parish school, and continuing at boarding school, or daily by public transport into Auckland, in the secondary years.  At varying stages their has been the hope for a Catholic secondary school in closer proximity.  Much hope was placed on plans for a school at Drury, while others proposed Takinini.  The changing nature, and delivery of education, will inform future intiatives.

The process of Integration and ‘Tomorrows Schools’ changed in aspects the relationship of the parish school with the parish. The school still honours the charism of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, and maintains a strong association with the Sisters. While the school still provided Religious Education, sacramental preparation was taken on by the parish.

Further on, for teenagers there was active involvement with the Diocesan Youth Ministry, led initially by (Mons.) David Tonks, first at Loreto Hall, and then Herne Bay.  Regular attendance at the monthly diocesan youth Mass and regional youth activities was enabled by committed adults and the transport they provided.  Like the surges of youth, parish youth groups have had varying impact, as sport and academic commitments among others also had sway.

Any true history can not ignore that which was most noticeable, but also must seek out that which is hidden.  Parish gatherings like picnics, sports days (the Daly Cup for netball and rugby between Pukekohe and Waiuku having been a focus), barbeques and St. Patrick’s Day celebrations have at times had greater or lesser prominence in the life of the community.  There were cleaners of church, hall and presbytery, flower arrangers, washers of church linen, those who cooked meals for resident priests, parish secretaries, gardners, and in earlier times house keepers and drivers.  There were those whose faithfulness in so many indeterminable ways will go unnoticed.

The parish is today the faith community for many new faces.  Younger generations of long established families increasingly moving away. Young families also participate in parish life.  However, like the general society it would appear the parish has a changing demographic. As part of the building project, over the recent period, retirement units were build adjacent to the presbytery and church complex.   Giving expression to the faith of varying generations can be difficult, as the young embrace those aspects of the tradition that speak, and those of an older generation let go of attachments that offered certainty.  Pukekohe has over the decades since the Second Vatican Council, developed an understanding of the *sensus fidelium,*and many have been called forth in various liturgical ministries.  With the changing shape of the  presbyterate, which in now spread thinly within the diocese, the ‘faithful’ of the parish continue to be formed, by good shepherding, to assume the animation of the communal life of faith, as what it is to be an Eucharistic community in the third millennium of the Christian Era takes on new focus and new meaning.  This renewal is however not the possession of the gathering community, but is evangelistic in its outreach to the community and goes beyond the geographical area of Pukekohe to outlying areas that have been part of the community story of faith, and is by right extended to those who have in recent years become distant from the parish community.

As we gather, as we pray, as we seek to continue in the field of the harvest that is Pukekohe and environs, and seek to continue forth, as we continue to compile the memory of our collective story, may we go forth, as our forebears did to renew in the world what Christ has done.

Ours is a story of offering anew, giving birth to Resurrection, and this comes to each of our lives individually and communally, and in every generation.

Our new church complex should not be seen as a monument, or the sign of an eternal city; it is but the sign of building yet to be continued especially in the lives of all we pass by.  Our is not a passive journey.  We walk with Jesus, sometimes we stumble and fall, we die so that we may rise, not for ourselves but for others.

There is much to be done - outreach to the community, joining hands ecumenically in prayer with other local Christian communities and in oneness of outreach to the community so that despair becomes hope. We must commit to continuing to build a sense of community that “goes out to all the world” (cf. Mk 16:15), regardless of diversity of age, ethnicity, spirituality and so forth.   We do this so that together, as the People of God, we can “speak in new tongues” (Mk 16:17) joining our voices with those whose words are now less audible, when we gather at the Table of the Lord where we are nourished for the journey and the harvest:

*O God, we give ourselves today with this pure host to thee,
the selfsame gift which thy dear Son gave once on Calvary.*

*Jesus, Lord of the harvest, have mercy on us*
*Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us*
*St. Patrick, pray us*
*All holy men and women, who have lived among us, pray for us*