

ST MERE'S OTAKI PUKEKARAKA NEWSLETTER



WELCOME BACK!

Dear Church Whanau

Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2026. Let every sunrise give you a new reason to smile in the coming year.

Our Sunday Miha Celebration is at 10 am

Fr Simi's reflection

From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

We heard last Sunday of John the Baptist's proclamation of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. It is He who was anointed with the Holy Spirit as the Messiah by God the Father as He got up out of the water.

In today's gospel, Jesus begins His public ministry in gentile territory that once was the tribal lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, which were the first two tribes of the kingdom of Israel to be lost during the invasion by the Assyrians in 732 BC. What was originally part of the kingdom of Israel is now part of the gentile nations.

These two tribes of the kingdom of Israel have been dwelling the longest in the darkness of sin and death. Just as Isaiah prophesied in today's first reading, it is to them that Jesus goes first and declares with His presence and preaching that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

Where the kingdom of Israel had fallen first, He announces the kingdom of heaven. Not only has He come to call to repent the lost members of the kingdom of Israel, but along with them, all the nations of the world, to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The King of Heaven has come down to all the nations. He has come to call us to repent and turn away from all the gods that all nations have worshiped and turn to Him and worship Him who is the King of all nations.

Peter, Andrew, James and John are the first four of the twelve apostles of the Kingdom of Heaven. They got up from the sea in Galilee of the Gentiles, left everything, and immediately followed the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Since then, we and people from all nations have been following the apostles in following the Lamb.

Priests, Office Administrator & Team Leaders

Fr Simi Volavola Fr Beni Bakatete	Parish Administrator Assistant Priest	pasimi.otaki@gmail.com pabenimsc.otaki@gmail.com
Stephanie Harris-Stevens	Office Administrator	pukekaraka1@gmail.com Ph 021 253 1080
Mike McAsey Phil McIntyre Mary Elizabeth Debbie McAsey	Ohu Whakahaere Ohu Manaaki Ohu Taiki Ohu Kura Ohu Arotake Hine, Marae Contact	Ph 021 503 403 Ph 022 1030 534 Ph 021 595 695 Ph 021 463 593 Ph Ph 021 144 3804
Urutakai Cooper	Kura Principal, St Peter Chanel	urutakai@spc.school.nz Ph 06 364 8017.

This Sunday's Roster

25th Jan	Proclaimers	Eucharistic Ministers	Greeters	Collectors	Linen for December
	Vyvien & Zac	Mary Elizabeth, Molly & Mike	Josie	Catherine & Phil	Christine

The Main Church Cleaner this week is Marie & Duncan, next week is Donna Ryan

Bank Account details for the following:

SAINTS MARY PARISH OF OTAKI in capital letters	The Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand	Caritas
6-0821-0701736-00	03 - 1532 - 0028658 - 000	03 - 0518 - 0211216 - 003

Mass & Liturgy Times

Monday & Tuesday, 10 am:
Liturgy & Communion.

Wednesday - Friday 10 am Mass

Miha Maori on the first Sunday
of the month

Reconciliation by appointment,
contact email Fr Simi or Beni, or
Stephanie 021 253 1080 or
Adam, office administrator in
Levin 027 511 2474

Exposition held on the last
Saturday of the month, 9 am - 11
am, organised by the Marist Frs.

***NB: On Monday, the 26th Jan,
the Mother Church will reopen
after replacing the roof and
repainting the exterior. She
looks stunning!***

Our Website

<http://www.pukekaraka.com/>

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above to view it.

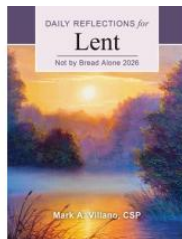
Local News



Fr. Simi will celebrate his 25th year of
Ordination this Tuesday, January 27th. We congratulate
him and send our love to him on this very special
occasion. We will organise a celebration for him, watch
this space.



Newly ordained priest Fr Hemi Ropata will
celebrate Miha for us on the first Sunday in February,.
He is related to the local iwi through the Ropata
whānau, who have their marae across the Ōtaki River
at Ngāti Huia of Katihiku.



When Gerry and I were up in Napier
during the week, we stopped at Pleroma, and I got a
copy of Daily Reflections for Lent, Not by Bread Alone
2026, written by Fr Mark Villano, a Paulist priest from
the States. It is an opportunity to Journey with Jesus in
Lent. It is an easy read offering, scripture, a reflection,
meditation & prayer each day. It will be available at
Mass this week, and I will take orders if anyone is
interested. Cost will be \$9.90

Safety & Health Matters

Please bring any concerns you have about the safety & health of the church buildings or
property to our attention. Contact Stephanie at 021 253 1080 or send an email to her.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK, AND THOSE WHO HAVE DIED RECENTLY

Please Pray for the Sick: Barbara Upham, Leonie Christian, Irene Mackle, Bryan Harold, Katrina Whittle, Jocelyn Bryant, Mark Bailey, Jill Randall, Tony Upham, Stephen Allport, Matthew Kerr, Ohole Taulanga, Fr David Orange, Geraldine Taylor, Kathleen Henry, Maurice Chaney, Rosalie Parsons, Fr David Gledhill and any parishioners who currently have Flu or COVID.

May they feel the love of the Lord and his comfort, and gain strength from him, during this time.



Okioki I runga I te rangimarie – We remember those who have died:

Rex Begley 21.1.26

Fr Tony Pitt, MSM 20.1.26

Bernard Story, 16.1.26

Bro Doug Darwick 12.1.25

John Jones 22.12.25

Rolly Raureti 18.12.26

“I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am, you may be too.” May they rest in Peace

WE REMEMBER THIS WEEK

Fr Bernie Atkins SM, who died on the 23rd January, 1994. After a horrific accident, he came to live in Otaki in 1982. He loved living here, as he credited Our Lady with his recovery.

He taught at a Marist College and was a master of discipline; his punishment for the boys was three Hail Marys. He was loved throughout Aotearoa.

He was buried on the Pukekaraka Hill with other Marist Priests who had ministered here. Men lined up at every turn on the path to carry his coffin. He was a priest and friend to all he met.

Until we meet again

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The New Zealand Catholic Medical Association provides community, support and chaplaincy for those involved in health care in Aotearoa. The association welcomes doctors, nurses, midwives, carers, pharmacists, physiotherapists, psychologists, dentists, health administrators, counsellors, social workers, chaplains, lawyers, and anyone in allied roles. The next nationwide event is a retreat and seminar at the St Francis Friary & Retreat Centre, Auckland on 20 and 21 March. For more information or to register, visit <https://bit.ly/NZCMA2026> or email newzealandcatholicmedical@gmail.com

Ongoing information

Lending each other a helping hand: At Pukekaraka, we can help if you need assistance with transport to Mass or if you need extra support because you are sick or housebound. Please contact Jill Watson at 021 127 4072 or pldjwatson@gmail.com to see how we may be able to support you.

Notices for the newsletter: Please send to Pukekaraka1@gmail.com before Thursday at 9 am each week to meet the deadline for Friday's newsletter. Thank you.

Meetings in the Faith Room: Please book your meetings by placing them on the calendar on the Faith Room door and then text or send an email to Stephanie so we don't double up, and she knows who is coming into the office. Thank you. email pukekaraka1@gmail.com or text 021 253 1080



Safeguarding: Is about promoting an environment within our faith community which respects and acknowledges the dignity of everyone, and where people feel valued and safe. If you have any concerns, please contact a member of the team - Paul Bayliss, Phil McIntyre & Stephanie. More information is on our notice board.

From the Archdiocese

Save the Date - St Valentine's Day Mass
2026: Saturday, 14 February 2026, Mass at 5.30 pm, Sacred Heart Cathedral in Hill Street - a special celebration for married couples.

The Archdiocesan Marriage Preparation – Love is a Decision & Commit - online registration available on the Archdiocesan website. Next course, consecutive **Sundays 1 & 8 March** 10.00 am-4.00 pm held at St Catherine's College, Kilbirnie. Register early (couples attend both Sundays together in person). See the Archdiocese's website for information about getting married overseas and the papers required. Any queries, contact: marriage@cadw.nz

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