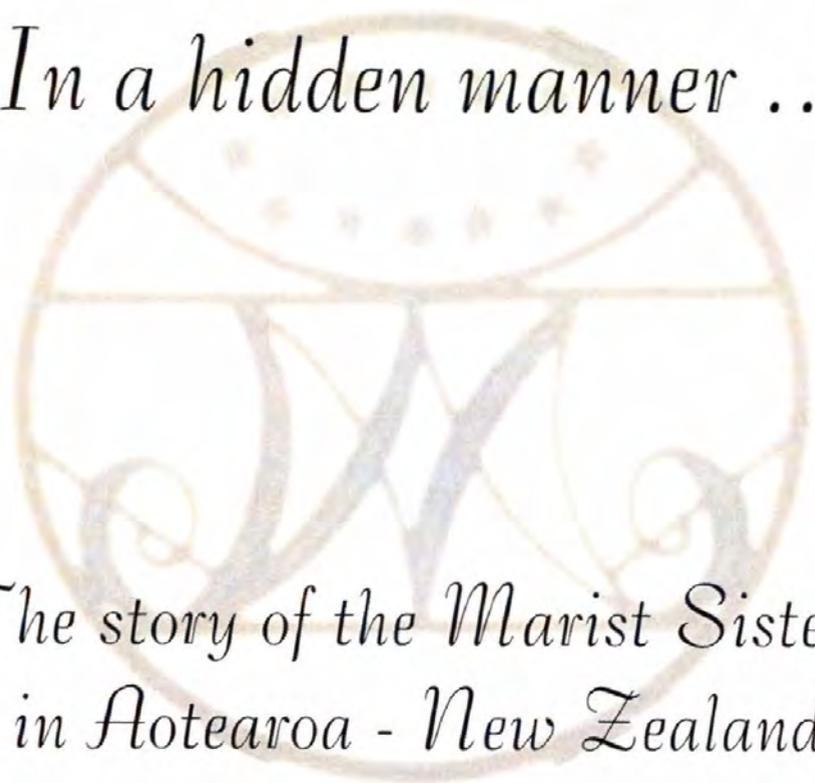


*In a hidden manner ...*



*The story of the Marist Sisters  
in Aotearoa - New Zealand*



*Sr. Karin Christieson sm*

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### **The Marist Family in the Pacific**

Marist Father (sm)

Marist Brothers (fms)

Marist Sisters (sm)

Marist Missionary Sisters (smsm)

Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth (csn – Bougainville)

Daughters of Mary Immaculate (dmi – Solomon Islands)

Petites Filles de Marie (pfm – New Caledonia)

Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth (soln – Fiji, Tonga, Samoa)

Marist Laity

Marist Sisters of NZ Trust Board  
45 Allenby Rd  
Papatoetoe  
Auckland 2025

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First published 2011

*(Front Cover)*

Mother Bernard, Fr Gondringer and Standards 5 and 6, 1927.

## INTRODUCTION

To our early Sisters in Belley (France) in the 1830's and 40's Oceania and New Zealand were familiar names. They learned about missionary life in New Zealand from Bishop Épalle sent by Bishop Pompallier to obtain further resources for his mission in 1842. Though unable to come themselves, the Sisters would have felt themselves part of this Marist enterprise involving many of the Fathers and Brothers known to them.

Later difficulties with Bishop Pompallier led to the departure of the Marist Fathers from the North and from Auckland in 1850 and it was not until 1924 that they returned to this area at the invitation of Bishop Cleary. At the request of one of these Marists, Fr. Gondringer, the Sisters were invited to his parish of Mt Albert to work in the school being built there in 1926. The Sisters arrived in 1927 and neither they nor Fr. Gondringer could have foreseen how, from these modest beginnings, the work of the sisters would expand as they accepted requests from the bishops that would lead them North to Waitaruke and then Te Huahua and south to Putaruru and Karori (Wellington) over the next two decades.

The story of the Marist Sisters in New Zealand is set in the context of the local and ecclesiastical history of each area. It covers the period 1927 to the 1980's. Due to the consequences of the Second Vatican Council and the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975, religious life and the ministries in which the sisters were engaged underwent significant changes. These are indicated in the epilogue which broadly covers and summarises the developments since the 1980's.

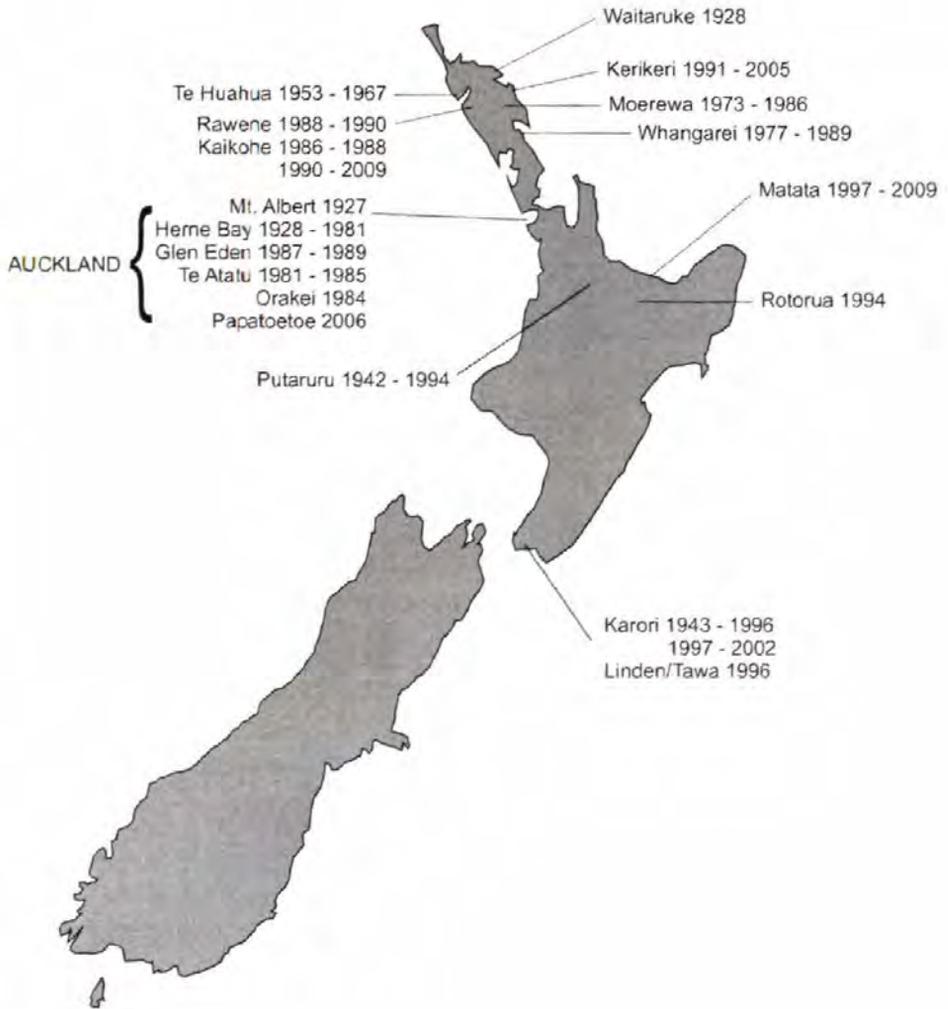
It is a story that needs to be told in order to acknowledge the contribution of all the sisters who have lived and worked in New Zealand – those locally born and those from Ireland, France, England, Australia, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga who have joined us. Their courage and their efforts have made possible our growth and development over the years. This work is dedicated to them, to

those who have worked alongside us in ministry and those who have supported our work in so many ways, to express our gratitude for their efforts on our behalf.

I offer my sincere thanks to those who have encouraged me in the writing of this history: Sisters Joan McBride, Juliana, and Francine and especially Lorraine whose support and practical help was invaluable.

Sr. Karin Christieson sm

# Communities of the Marist Sisters in New Zealand



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## 1. *BEGINNINGS*

### *Maori settlement - missionary challenges*

The thirteenth century witnessed widespread Polynesian ocean voyages in the area of the South Pacific. In the course of one of these voyages New Zealand was discovered. Its coastline was subsequently settled by members of later canoe voyages. The descendents of these early immigrants were the New Zealand Maori. Though this region of the South Pacific was explored and mapped to some degree by Europeans as early as the seventeenth century, its inhabitants were left in possession of its islands until the end of the eighteenth century. It was then whalers and sealers began to work its waters and traders followed, setting up ports for watering and provisioning their vessels and for trading with local Maori.

Contact with these men, many of whom were wild and lawless, may have brought some trading benefits but also introduced standards inimical to their cultural values. Later, liquor and firearms would exacerbate their inter-tribal conflicts. Europeans also lived and worked among the Maori tribes, sometimes marrying into them.

December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1814 marked a significant development in this situation when Samuel Marsden and a small band of helpers from the Church of England's Church Missionary Society arrived in the Bay of Islands to establish a mission. Their aim was to bring the gospel to the Maori people and share with them farming skills to improve their temporal situation. Mission stations were established in the Bay of Islands and had spread as far as Wellington by 1839. Each station was protected by powerful Maori chiefs who hoped to gain material benefits for their tribe from the presence of the missionaries. One benefit they did gain was literacy as the new missionaries taught the Maori to read and write in their own language.

Peter Dillon, was an Irish captain who had travelled extensively in the Pacific. Seeing the activity of the Protestant missionaries, he was anxious to have priests ministering to the small Catholic population of traders and timber workers and their Maori neighbours. While in France he contacted Fr. Henri de Solages who had expressed interest in evangelising the South Seas and was supported by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. In 1828 de Solages was appointed Prefect Apostolic of the South Seas. Complications arose when de Solages died before he was able to visit his vicariate, which in reduced form became the Vicariate Apostolic of Western Oceania and was finally entrusted to the Society of Mary. The missionaries would be led by Jean Baptiste Pompallier, an associate of the Society of Mary, who was appointed Vicar Apostolic. He set out with his missionary band of Marist Fathers and Brothers from Le Havre on Christmas Eve 1836 travelling to the Pacific via Valparaiso. They stopped en route at various islands and finally at Sydney where he met Bishop Polding. From there he set out for New Zealand.

He arrived with his companions Fr. Catherin Servant, sm and Br Michel Colombon, a Marist Brother, at Totara Point in the Hokianga on January 10<sup>th</sup> 1838 and was met by Thomas Poynton and other Catholics from the area. Until the arrival of the missionaries, these Catholics had looked to Australia for the support of their faith. The Poyntons had taken their children to Sydney for baptism making use of the vessels which sailed two or three times a week from the Hokianga. Other Catholic families had made similar journeys as is attested by Fr. Servant sm in his letter to a fellow priest in France:

Our Bishop has begun his holy ministry with the Catholics who live in Hokianga; for a long time they have been deprived of any religious help. However, we have been greatly edified to hear that some of them, every year, journeyed to Sydney to fulfil their Easter duties and to have their children baptised.

Mr. Poynton placed one of his houses at the disposal of Bishop Pompallier. The largest room was prepared as a temporary chapel

and Mass was celebrated for the first time on Saturday, January 13<sup>th</sup>. Again Fr. Servant provides the description:

You may well imagine, dear Father, that the Cathedral in New Zealand cannot be compared with the most beautiful churches in your town; an altar placed in the most convenient room of our house, decorated with some pictures and a statue of Our Lady, is our chapel or our basilica. It pleases our people very much. They are delighted with the ceremonies which they have never seen before and which they never tire watching. They love the singing which makes a deep impression on them. <sup>1</sup>



Whangape, Hokianga Harbour. Return of Bishop Pompallier's remains. Karel Lorier, 2001. Used with permission

The arrival in Hokianga of a further missionary group in 1838 – this time Catholics and from France – was far from pleasing to the Protestant missionaries already in the area and their hostility was passed on to their Maori converts. Moreover there were anti-Christian groups in North Hokianga hostile to Protestant and Catholic alike. Once it was established that the new missionaries were not intent on claiming extensive land areas to support their families as had the Protestant missionaries, things went more peaceably for

them. Nevertheless, land was acquired in the Hokianga and later in the Bay of Islands and in Whangaroa for the Catholic mission.

As European settlers increased and seemed set to continue increasing, the British Government was troubled by reports of the unruly seamen already settled in Kororareka, the difficulty of keeping order among warlike tribes and the rumours of American and French interest in New Zealand. Accordingly in 1840 they sent Captain William Hobson to New Zealand with authority to negotiate with the chiefs for sovereignty over some or all of the country and so impose order on what was clearly about to become a British settlement.

Many of the Maori chiefs were similarly concerned about the influx of European settlers and the resulting pressure for further land sales. Therefore, they were rendered more vulnerable to the arguments presented for ceding the governorship of their land to the Crown which would in future control the sale of land from Maori for resale to settlers. A number of the Maori chiefs who had embraced the Catholic faith, came to Bishop Pompallier asking whether or not they should sign the treaty that had been drawn up. Pompallier refused to become involved in what, for him, was a political issue, encouraging them to make their own decision on the matter.

However on February 6<sup>th</sup> the Bishop arrived in episcopal dress for the meeting of the chiefs at Waitangi presided over by Captain Hobson who accorded him 'a place of distinction'. He listened attentively to the reading of the treaty and the explanation provided but took no part in the speeches that followed. He was concerned about religious freedom which would offer equal protection to Protestant and Catholic and, on enquiring whether this freedom would be accorded in New Zealand, was assured by Captain Hobson that it would. With this assurance the Marists were encouraged to proceed with their missionary work. <sup>2</sup>

As the supply of Marist helpers increased the Bishop travelled

widely to gain some idea of the extent of the mission in New Zealand. Hokianga, the Bay of Islands, Whangaroa and the Kaipara area had already been visited and now the Bay of Plenty, Akaroa, Port Chalmers and Port Nicholson were also visited. Missionaries were left in Tauranga, Akaroa, Matamata, Maketu and Opotiki.

Pompallier intended to send Fr. Baty sm, who spoke English and Maori well, to Auckland, Hobson's newly-chosen capital for the colony. In 1841 the bishop applied for a grant of land. Meetings with Catholic laity, most of whom were Irish, were held to arrange for the building of a church to be named for St Patrick and St Joseph. A house was built for Fr. Baty and was used by Fr. Forest sm for a few months but Fr. Petitjean sm was its first official resident in October 1842. A chapel and school were opened in 1843. A further grant of land enabled the building of a 'select' school.

The Fencible settlements at Otahuhu, Howick, Onehunga and Panmure were established as a defence against anticipated Maori attacks from the south. These augmented the Catholic population of Auckland as the majority of the soldier-settlers were Irish Catholics. In each settlement grants for a Catholic church, cemetery and presbytery were made and assistance given in establishing schools so these areas became thriving Catholic parishes. Fr. Garin was given charge of Howick and Fr. Séon of Onehunga.

In 1845 Fr. Philippe Viard sm was consecrated in Sydney as co-adjutor bishop to Pompallier. Soon after their return, Pompallier went to Rome where he submitted to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda a plan to overcome some of the difficulties he had been experiencing because of the size of his mission and the conflict with Fr. Colin, the Superior General of his helpers.

As the missionary work in New Zealand had expanded since 1838 so had the need for finance and workers and both had been generously provided: the sum of over thirty thousand pounds by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and some forty men – including

some Brothers – by Fr. Colin. Problems arising from the Bishop's management of finance and a lack of clarity about the relative authority of the Bishop and the Superior General for Marists in New Zealand led to serious disagreement between Pompallier and Colin.<sup>3</sup>

Pompallier proposed to separate the Auckland area from the Marist mission which would in future comprise two dioceses: Tauranga and Port Nicholson. The final decision by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda in 1848 was that New Zealand should become two dioceses: Auckland to be administered by Pompallier and Port Nicholson to be administered by Viard. The Marists were henceforth withdrawn from the Auckland diocese in which they had worked so hard. On April 12<sup>th</sup> 1850 Viard and Pompallier signed an agreement setting the 39<sup>th</sup> parallel of latitude as the boundary between the two dioceses.

## 1. AUCKLAND

### *Ecclesiastical developments after 1850*

The Auckland area to which Bishop Pompallier returned in April 1850 had a European population of some 2,000 people of whom about a third were soldiers – many of them living in the pensioner settlements at Otahuhu, Howick, Onehunga and Panmure. The rest of the population was spread through the three bays around the Waitemata Harbour. The workers were found in Mechanics Bay, the officers and gentry-officials in Official Bay and shopkeepers in Commercial Bay

Pompallier brought with him a new band of workers for his diocese: eight Sisters of Mercy from Carlow, Ireland, two priests and ten seminarians. At this time there were fifteen Catholic mission stations throughout the diocese. Bishop Viard left priests at three of these until they could be replaced.

In the Auckland isthmus area in the early 1850's there were four manned stations: St Patrick's, North Shore, Onehunga and Howick. The North Shore College which had been established for the education of Maori boys now functioned also as a seminary and as a school for catechists. There was steady progress in this period marked by the opening of new churches in Panmure, Otahuhu and later in Ponsonby. In 1853 Pompallier bought a large property in Ponsonby. The house on this property, St Anne's, was to be used by the Sisters of Mercy as a convent and also for the education of Maori girls.

But if the work for European settlers expanded during the fifties it was at the expense of missionary work for the Maori people. The areas north of Auckland saw priests only rarely and though Opotiki-Whakatane and Rangiaowhia had resident priests, the Rotorua area was virtually abandoned at this time.

The land wars which were being fought between Maori and European in Taranaki since early in 1860 spread by 1863 to the Waikato area south of Auckland. After the wars the settlement of the Waikato by soldiers gradually expanded Auckland's hinterland. By 1865 Auckland was no longer the capital city.

The depression there in the late 1860's compounded Pompallier's financial problems so he decided on a further trip to Europe to raise money for the diocese leaving on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1868. When he sailed from New Zealand he left behind some twenty seven stations, twenty one churches, twenty eight priests, twenty five presbyteries and thirty schools – a very notable achievement. For some time he had had the idea of resigning as Bishop and the difficulty he encountered in raising funds in Europe, together with the need, as he saw it, for an English-speaking Bishop for Auckland, led him to tender his resignation in 1869 after thirty three years in New Zealand.

In the decades that followed further religious orders arrived to support the mission of the diocese and new parishes were formed. From one of these parishes, St Benedict's the Mt Albert district was designated as a new parish in 1924 and was offered to the Marist Fathers.

## **MT ALBERT**

### *The district*

This area is centred on an ancient volcano originally named Te Puke O Wairaka for the rebellious daughter of the Ngati Awa chief who arrived in New Zealand with the main Maori fleet about 1350. Wairaka is said to have led a section of her tribe from Whakatane in the Bay of Plenty to the hill on the Auckland isthmus named for her. During the peak time of Maori settlement in the Auckland area Owairaka was a heavily fortified pa site. Wars waged with tribes

to the north and the south of Auckland isthmus depopulated the area near Owairaka which was uninhabited when Samuel Marsden climbed the mountain in 1820.

European settlement began in this area in 1835 when a Sydney trader bought a large part of the Auckland isthmus. In 1841 it was included in land bought by the Crown. During the years that followed small amounts of land were sold for farms. By the 1860's local government was set up and by the 1870's the area boasted an



View of Alberton Ave from Mt. Albert 1926. Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Libraries, 1-W737. Used with permission.

Anglican church, two Methodist churches and later, in the 1880's, a post office and a public hall. A railway was built linking Mt Albert to the city as also did a horse-drawn bus service. By the end of the century larger properties were subdivided and more families moved into the area. In the new century the population grew rapidly increasing from 11,000 in 1921 to 17,000 in 1926 and buildings were going up at the fastest rate in New Zealand. <sup>4</sup>

### ***The Arrival of the Sisters and establishment of schools***

It was at this period of rapid development that the Catholic parish of Mt Albert was formed. In 1923 one and a half acres of land known as 'Brookdale' was purchased by the Rev. Dr Liston for two thousand pounds. A hall in Onehunga was obtained at the cost

of two hundred and fifty pounds and transferred to the site. For several months the parish continued to be served by the priests of St Benedict's<sup>5</sup>

The Marist priest who came to Mt Albert in April 1924 at the request of the Bishop was Fr. Bernard Gondringer sm. Born in Luxembourg, he came to New Zealand at the age of twenty two, gained a Master's Degree at the University of New Zealand and had been teaching at St Patrick's, the Marist Fathers' college in Wellington, for the past eighteen years. He had made a name for himself for his ability to defend the church in the public press and his reputation did not pass unnoticed by Bishop Cleary who was himself a brilliant journalist. It is thought that in inviting Fr. Gondringer into his diocese, the Bishop hoped for his assistance with his own newspaper, 'The Month'.<sup>6</sup>

Shortly after his arrival in Mt Albert Fr. Gondringer wrote to the Superior of the Marist Sisters in Sydney, Mother Marie Joseph, (Claudia Suchet) expressing his great desire to have Marist Sisters in his parish school, asking also that the Sisters visit the sick. It was this latter request that led to a refusal, probably because the sisters were considered semi-enclosed at this time. At the beginning of 1926 he repeated his request, this time without the condition of visits to the sick, and on April 30<sup>th</sup> he received a letter from Mother Marie Joseph granting his request. When the church committee of Mt Albert heard about the steps that had been taken to gain Marist Sisters for their Marist parish, it approved them enthusiastically. In June the Bishop's Council gave warm support to the project and also to the Bishop's plan to confide at least two other areas in the diocese to the Sisters.<sup>7</sup>

The parishioners of Mt Albert were neither very numerous nor very affluent. They had, nevertheless, held two very successful bazaars which together raised almost two thousand pounds to help pay off the expenses of the church land, the building of the presbytery and of the school. Moreover they were willing to build the latter by

voluntary labour during weekends. In the final weeks, so as to have the building completed in time, Fr. Gondringer brought in some paid workers. It remained to find accommodation for the Sisters. Fortunately a property alongside the church land was offered for sale. It consisted of three quarters of an acre on which there was a small four-roomed cottage. This property was purchased for one thousand two hundred and twenty pounds on December 24<sup>th</sup> 1926.

On the afternoon of January 24<sup>th</sup> 1927 the first Marist Sisters to work in New Zealand arrived from Fiji on the 'Tofua'. Mother Bernard (Mary Gorman) was born in County Sligo, Ireland, and educated by the Marist Sisters at Carrick-on-Shannon. After entering their novitiate in 1904 she made her religious profession in France in 1907. The following year, with four companions, she set out for Australia to establish the sisters in Sydney. She spent the next seventeen years in Woolwich, the first two teaching at the small parish primary school and the rest as Head Teacher of the newly-established secondary and boarding school. When in 1925 the sisters were asked by Bishop Nicholas of Fiji for sisters to teach in his new mission school at Lautoka, Mother Bernard was sent and from there she had now come to Auckland to begin a new foundation.

Sister Austin (Veronica Pearl Woodbury) her companion, was a young Australian from Spencer in the Hawkesbury River area of New South Wales. Her highly respected family gave four other religious to the church. She made her profession at Woolwich in 1924 and the following year went with Mother Bernard to the new foundation in Lautoka. Now she would pioneer this new work in Auckland.

The Sisters found waiting for them at the Princess Wharf their parish priest, Brother Borgia fms, a true friend of the sisters in Sydney, the Sisters of Mercy who were to be their hostesses until their new convent was ready, and a number of Mt Albert parishioners identified by their blue and white ribbons. Mr. Tom Daly and Mr.

Jack Foy helped the Sisters with their modest luggage. <sup>9</sup>

They set out with Fr. Gondringer for the Bishop's house where they were cordially received and three further foundations for the Marist Sisters in New Zealand were spoken of. <sup>10</sup> The Bishop showed them relics from the time of Bishop Pompallier and the early Marist Fathers. It may well have been on this occasion that he said, speaking of his predecessor and the early Marists, "Bishop Pompallier will no longer haunt me in my dreams as I have re-established the Marists in their rightful heritage." <sup>11</sup>

At 6 p.m. they went across the road to St Mary's convent. The Superior General, Mother Mary Josephine, having heard from Fr. Gondringer of the forthcoming arrival of the sisters, had written to Mother Bernard offering her a home at St Mary's until she was settled at Mt Albert and also help from her sisters in adjusting to the New Zealand school syllabus. <sup>12</sup> Both these assurances were to be realised in the days that followed.

The following day Mr. Tom Daly drove Fr. Gondringer and the sisters to Mt Albert to see their future home, showing them the church-hall which could seat 140 people and the fine presbytery, its grounds already laid out planted with trees and shrubs. Then they inspected the school with its two large rooms and cloakroom where workmen were still putting finishing touches. They admired the forty dual desks each donated by a family in the parish at a cost of two pounds ten shillings. <sup>13</sup>

The convent was also a scene of activity as parishioners strove to upgrade the small cottage. Its surroundings are graphically described by Mother Bernard:

It [the cottage] was hidden in bush and undergrowth so dense that neither sun nor sky could be seen from its weird precincts. There were no paths and the main entrance from

Alberton Avenue (the road facing the future convent) had never been made. The lower part of the property facing the main road consisted of a volcanic mound around which swept a stream of water which drained Edendale Terrace, a suburb of Auckland, and the water of which gave food and drink to the weeping willows whose graceful branches kissed the water-cress patches along the stream that entered one end of the property cutting away the soil from the foot of the mound and making its exit at the other end (of the property) on the same side thus forming a semi-circular course. <sup>14</sup>



View of Mt. Albert property from Alberton Ave c.1928.



Procession from Church to bless the convent 1927.

Sr. Dominic, Mother Bernard and Sr. Austin outside the cottage.

Sister Austin's comment was on a practical note:

It [the convent] was surrounded by trees of every description several of which were soon dealt their death blow to allow the sunlight to peep in." <sup>15</sup>

Many years later she would remind early parishioners:

When one looks at those lovely lawns in front of the convent today no-one would have guessed what lies beneath them – rubbish dumps, a disused old well, which, according to the amount of soil and stones it took to fill it, must have been twenty feet deep and even a creek had to be filled in – and rock blasted away for a tennis court. Even St John the Baptist, I feel sure, would have been pleased with the way you made the rough ways plain and filled up the valleys.”<sup>16</sup>

On Sunday, January 30<sup>th</sup> the new convent and school were officially blessed and opened by Bishop Cleary assisted by Fr. Gondringer who in the course of his sermon stated that, though the Marist Fathers were immensely proud of their “nieces”, they had taken ninety years to bring them to New Zealand. Every Catholic family from Mt Albert was represented, together with representatives of the local clergy and the Marist Brothers. Among the numerous congratulatory speeches were those from Archbishop Redwood sm, Archbishop O’Shea sm, Bishop Liston and the Provincials of the Marist Fathers and Marist Brothers.<sup>17</sup>

Mother Bernard asked that the Sisters take possession of their convent on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, so in the evening that day they arrived at their new home. Fr. Gondringer left them to examine its contents and invited them to breakfast at the presbytery next morning. A tin of biscuits provided by Mother Ethelbert (Gertrude Stork) from Lautoka, helped towards supper. As water had still not been connected, water from the school was needed for next morning’s ablutions. The stove was temporarily unusable, thus dinner was also eaten at the presbytery, the Dobson family providing a duck for the occasion. At 6 p.m. that evening they were able to prepare their first meal in the cottage.<sup>18</sup>

The next few days were devoted to the preparation of the classrooms for the start of classes. By Monday February 7<sup>th</sup> all was ready. As

over ninety pupils presented themselves, those from outside the Mt Albert parish were asked to return to their former schools as there was accommodation for only eighty pupils. Because these ranged from Standard 1 to Standard 6, a further teacher, Miss Jessie Nicholl, was engaged to look after Standards 1 and 2 enabling the other classes to be more easily taught. For some time the pupils could not go outside during school time because of the blasting of the rocks for the levelling of the playground.<sup>19</sup>

The arrival of Sister Dominic (Cecily Makinson) from Sydney in May took some of the burden of schoolwork and housework from the Sisters.

“During those early days the children proved themselves very helpful and daily used to vie with each other for the honour of putting on the vegetables for the Sisters’ dinner and returning to the washing up.”<sup>20</sup>

Finance was a problem. Mother Bernard notes that the Marist Sisters had failed to make any arrangements about finance with Fr. Gondringer. Bishop Cleary had promised them fifty two pounds a year but school fees brought in barely one pound a week. Even though the Mt Albert area boasted many fine homes, the Catholic population was not numerous and was struggling and had already made great efforts to support the school and the convent. Accordingly the Sisters looked elsewhere for extra finance – a few music lessons were given on a piano purchased by the sisters with the few pounds they had and some sewing was taken in, thanks to the generosity of a widow in the parish who provided a sewing machine. Each day their Irish milkman, Mr. Corcoran, gave them milk, butter, cheese and eggs; on Sundays he added meat. Household utensils were arriving at the new convent as a result of a list of needed articles posted in the church porch. Memorable among these was a parcel found on the front steps one morning with an accompanying note; ‘To Sisters Bernard and Austin from Bernard and Austin Bennett.’

Labour was also generously provided. Working bees were organised to clear the convent grounds, to provide a tennis court by filling in part of the stream flowing through the grounds, reserving the best pieces of rock for the stone wall to be erected along Alberton Avenue. Later lawns and a driveway took shape and young trees were planted.

In those early days, too, visits from Government Inspectors worried the Sisters even more than their poverty since they were still relatively unfamiliar with the syllabuses and legal requirements for New Zealand schools. Since the Education Amendment Act of 1921-2 all private schools – mainly Church schools – needed to be registered after a certain period of time and new schools, before opening, had to present a request for registration. This involved visits from inspectors checking locality, furnishings and the competence of the teachers. Once registered, the pupils of the school could travel free by tram to school if necessary and could present themselves for the Proficiency exam which marked the conclusion of primary schooling.

In October, Mr. Leslie, the inspector, declared himself so satisfied with the progress of the school that he promised it a report equal to the best school in the district – Gladstone School.<sup>22</sup> At the end of the year three pupils were presented for the Proficiency exam; two of these gained their Proficiency and the other a Certificate of Competence.

In order to reduce the considerable parish debt Fr. Gondringer asked the sisters if the Congregation would purchase the property the parish had bought for them and, having sought the necessary permission, the sisters agreed to do this. Fr. Gondringer had encouraged them to open a boarding school as soon as possible so further permissions were obtained to erect alongside the convent a small building where boarders could be accommodated. Towards the end of 1927 a two-storeyed building containing a classroom, dining room and a dormitory divided into cubicles was commenced.

The following year began with a three-day retreat preached by Fr. Kelleedy sm, and concluded with Benediction in the church on January 17<sup>th</sup> at which Sister Austin made perpetual vows in the presence of a large number of parishioners. Now that some of the boarding school would soon be available for the sisters, plans were made to set up a small chapel in one of the convent rooms. On January 29<sup>th</sup> Kathleen Mullen (Sister Ursula, later Sister Mary Mullen) arrived as the first postulant and after a few weeks went on to the novitiate in Woolwich, Sydney. Ena Sharkey (Sister Raymond) followed soon after.

The new building was still incomplete at the beginning of the school year, so only two boarders were accepted for 1928. Two more Sisters arrived from Sydney in February, Sister Alexius (Elizabeth Storck) and Sister Marie Eustelle (Gwendolen Loughnan). Then on March 11<sup>th</sup> the new building was blessed by Bishop Cleary and classes began in what was to become the nucleus of the secondary school.

### **TRINITY STREET, HERNE BAY**

In August 1928 Sister Kostka (Alma Dougherty) arrived from Sydney for a further foundation; this time in Auckland itself at Herne Bay where Bishop Cleary wished to open a primary school. The site for the school was determined by the fact that the Bishop owned a large area of land there adjacent to the Marist Brothers' sports ground. A church-school had been erected on the property with a sanctuary, a sacristy, three large classrooms divided by folding doors, a cloakroom, a small room for the use of the priest, a kitchenette and a corridor running the full length of the building. Shelter areas fitted neatly under the higher end of the building. A house in Trinity Street adjoining the school property was placed at the disposal of the sisters and a 'right of way' was made through the future convent grounds from Trinity Street to the school.



Trinity St.

The two sisters arrived with Mother Bernard on the afternoon of August 27<sup>th</sup>. As the workmen were seeing to repairs, they could not immediately explore their new convent so spent their time busily embroidering since the new foundation would surely need finance and, at this time, embroidery work could well be sold at the fetes which often provided necessary finances. Sister Austin adds her own vivid memory of that first day:

Later that evening a young man arrived at the back door of the convent with a parcel and the query:

“Would the Sisters like some fresh fish for their evening meal?”  
“Yes, thanks so much, the fish will be greatly appreciated but I wonder just how we can manage, for in what can we cook it?”

In less time than it takes to tell the boy was back again at the convent door with a frying-pan, dripping, butter, bread, jug of milk, teapot, and the question: “Mother says what else are you in need of?” ‘Mother’ was Mrs. Clifton who lived next door at Number 26 and who, from that day, was a fairy godmother to the sisters. “Those nuns haven’t even got a table.” And back was the lad with a table on his back. <sup>23</sup>

School opened on September 4<sup>th</sup> with just nine pupils – not surprising since Catholic parents were already sending their children to existing Catholic schools and would be unlikely to transfer them to a new Catholic school in the third term. A Form 2 pupil was refused since she was due to sit her Proficiency Exam in a few months and it was considered by the sisters that a change of school at this stage would endanger her chance. That girl, Patricia Casey, (Sister Regina) would later remind the Marist Sisters about the way they had initially refused to have her. From that first week, however, the numbers increased until at the end of the term little presents had to be found for thirty children singing carols around the Christmas Tree at the break-up party.

It appears that in building the church-school and offering the school to the Marist Sisters, Bishop Cleary had acted on his own initiative. Before the opening of the school he was involved in an accident and, as a result, spent months in the Mater Hospital. This created real problems for the sisters who were not known to either the local clergy or the local people in an area that had been associated with the Sisters of Mercy for so long. It was not until the following year that the Bishop was able to visit them. No financial arrangements had been made and in the meantime there were bills to be paid!

Mass was not celebrated in the church until the following year and this meant that the sisters had to climb the steep Pompallier Terrace each morning for Mass at Sacred Heart Church, Ponsonby, about a mile away. On Sundays they went instead to the Little Sisters of the Poor at Tweed Street where they were made to feel very welcome.

For the first few years the sisters at Trinity Street were considered a part of the Mt Albert community. Accordingly they joined the community there and the Waitaruke Sisters for the retreat at the end of the year and spent a good part of the holidays at Mt Albert. On returning to their house they were anxious to set up the chapel. At last on February 18<sup>th</sup> 1929 Mass was offered there for the first time

by Fr. O'Doherty, the Administrator of the parish.

1929 saw a big increase in the school roll so a lay teacher was engaged and a threefold division of the pupils was made. When permission was eventually given for Sunday Mass to be celebrated in the church-school, it was found that the school desks with their adjustable kneelers were insufficient for the congregation and needed to be supplemented by long, heavy church benches discarded from some city parish. These benches had to be carried in and out each weekend for the next twenty five years!

To supplement their slender finances the sisters gave music lessons for violin and piano – the latter were given on Mrs. Clifton's piano until a series of small bazaars allowed the sisters to purchase one of their own. Indeed every Saturday the sisters walked to Mt Albert so that Sister Kostka could give violin lessons to pupils there. This meant that housework and preparing the church for Sunday Mass had to be deferred till their return in the afternoon.

## 1. *GROWTH AND EXPANSION IN MT ALBERT AND HERNE BAY*

The death of Bishop Cleary towards the end of 1929 just as the sisters were seeking his approval of the secondary school they hoped to develop in Mt Albert left the sisters and their affairs in the hands of his successor, Bishop Liston. He assured Mother Marie Joseph of the value of the work of her sisters in Auckland, stating that he saw no good reason why their boarding school with higher classes should not continue its good work. <sup>24</sup>Accordingly Mother Bernard and Sister Alexius worked with the small group of pupils who fitted into one classroom. At the end of 1929 Fr. Gondringer was transferred to Hastings. His tragic death at the seminary at Greenmeadows in February 1931 at the time of the big Hawkes Bay earthquake came as a further sorrow to the Sisters and parishioners who owed so much to his efforts in developing the parish of Mt Albert.

In Trinity Street the arrival of Sister Anselm, (Flora Berg) in 1930 and of Sister Philibert in 1931 took some of the burden of work from Sisters Kostka and Austin, providing help in school, in the house and with music lessons.



New Convent 1934 and Extension 1946 with students dancing around Maypole.

Mother Bernard's departure from Mt Albert at the end of 1932 must have seemed to the sisters the end of an era. Now none of the original group that had come to Mt Albert early in 1927 was left. However the arrival of her successor, Mother Benedict (Marie Chassaigne) a Frenchwoman who had worked with Mother Bernard in Woolwich and in Lautoka, was to mark a new stage in the development of the Marist Sisters in Mt Albert. Sister Austin notes that, almost from her arrival she desired to replace the original cottage with a larger building more suitable for a growing community. So it was that further permissions were sought and plans prepared for the erection of a two-storey building on the site of the cottage and were presented to the Bishop in October. A temporary kitchen and sisters' dining room had to be installed on the lower veranda of the boarding school building. Then the cottage was uplifted and transported to the primary school playground near Alberton Avenue and its partitions removed to provide a classroom for the lower primer classes.

At the end of April, 1934 the new convent was blessed. As the number of boarders had increased, the veranda on the upper floor of the boarding school was glassed in to provide further accommodation. On the lower floor a sewing room, a commercial classroom and library were added at right angles to the main building.

In 1934 Trinity Street saw the departure of Sister Kostka, one of the foundation members of the community, but it also saw the arrival of Mother Therese (Bridget Scott) as its first resident superior. The house had, as it were, come of age. By 1939 plans were being made for a new convent and junior boarding school on land donated to the sisters by Bishop Liston. However the outbreak of war led Mother Marie Joseph to ask Mother Bernard to defer the building until later.

Early in 1944 with help from the Mt Albert Borough Council, a swimming pool was constructed in the presbytery grounds adjoining the primary school area providing a welcome amenity for both

primary and secondary pupils. That same year saw the foundation of the Marist Convent Old Girls' Association which would provide further support for the work of the sisters.

The main drive of the church's operation in the post-war period was to resume the building plans the war had interrupted. The goal of a place in a Catholic school for every Catholic child was still the aim and schools were built and extended throughout the diocese.<sup>25</sup>

This trend was certainly evident in the Auckland schools staffed by the Marist Sisters during the 1940's and early 1950's and led to the expansion of the boarding school in Mt Albert and the construction of the one planned earlier for Herne Bay. Mother Bernard was now back at Mt Albert and soon saw the need for further development. This would involve the construction of a building containing dormitories, classrooms, an assembly hall and domestic science rooms, all of which would be needed to obtain the registration she desired for the High School. Accordingly plans were drawn up and tenders were called for a brick and concrete building. Mother Bernard admits that their success in obtaining a permit during the war years when buildings and building materials were so tightly controlled puzzled many. However the sisters were persuaded that Fr. Colin obtained this favour for them. After all, the bulldozer arrived to begin the work on the anniversary of his death, November 15<sup>th</sup>, in 1944 and the contractor took away the last of his men on the same date the following year. It is not surprising, then, that the building became known as Colin House.<sup>26</sup>

Mother Bernard's contribution to education was also evident in her desire to provide the sisters with opportunities for further studies. For some, this meant going to university after their day in school and for others fulltime study at Loreto Hall, the Catholic Training College, to gain the basic teachers' certificate required at the time.

As the numbers in both primary and secondary schools continued to grow so did the number of the sisters so a new wing was added to the convent in 1948 and a further extension a little later. In order to extend the property, a house in Alberton Avenue next to the convent grounds was purchased and served for a time as a sewing and art area. A strip of land behind the convent and boarding school was eventually to provide space for further tennis courts since the original one was now occupied by prefabricated classrooms.

Until 1950 Mt Albert had taken both primary and secondary boarders but that year an application was made to the District Building Controller to build the convent and junior boarding school envisaged at Herne Bay before the war. Bulldozers moved in to hollow out the site and so it remained for some time. When schools were due to open in 1951 it became clear that the building would not be ready until at least halfway through the year because of the shortage of building materials. Rather than leave the junior boarders at Mt Albert where their places were not now readily available, Mother Bernard proposed to Mother Francesca at Mt Albert that she would take most of them to Trinity Street and 'with some adjustments' house them there. The 'adjustments' meant in practice finding accommodation for boarders in an area which



Children in bed Herne Bay attended by Sisters Clement and Sr Dolores ca 1960's.

had housed the community. Some sisters moved from the house to areas in the school, to an Army hut on the back lawn and to Mrs. Clifton's porch for their sleeping quarters. They had been busy the previous year teasing wool to fill mattresses and eiderdowns for the new arrivals. Mrs. Clifton's generosity in donating the use of a good part of her house and its facilities was to help considerably that year since continued difficulties with building supplies meant that it would not be until the following year that the sisters and their pupils could use the new building.

As early as 1957 plans were under way in Herne Bay to provide more rooms for the sisters on the upper floor and extend the chapel. A further adjustment would be made in 1964. In the following year a swimming pool was constructed in the convent grounds providing a welcome amenity for both boarders and school pupils.

Mt Albert acquired further land and, with increasing numbers of pupils, a new block, St Joseph's, containing additional science facilities and classrooms and a pavilion area at ground level was erected in 1962 as the eastern extension of the convent building. Despite such growth in the numbers of pupils and school facilities, the 1960's saw the first indications of decline in religious vocations and the departure of significant numbers from religious life, so that lay teachers augmented religious in the staffs of Catholic schools in numbers which would expand in the years ahead.

During term time in the 1950's and 1960's the sisters were fully occupied with their ministry in the classroom and in the boarding school. However, during the holidays another ministry emerged for some of them. In the Auckland area the Mill Hill Fathers organized catechism camps at Waitaruke, Knocknagree and in the Taupo region to prepare Maori children from outlying district for the Sacraments of Initiation. The Marist Fathers organized similar camps in the Wellington Archdiocese. Some sisters from all communities helped with these camps.



Catechism Camp-Sisters Damian, Joan, Isabelle and Juliana with the children at Knocknagree

After the Sisters first arrived in New Zealand official communications tended to come through Mother Bernard, or, in her absence in Fiji, Mother Therese and later through the Superior of Mt Albert. At the 1948 General Chapter a resolution to appoint a Regional Superior for Oceania was taken and Sr. Gerald (Alice Hawkins) was appointed the following year. The General Chapter of 1954 created the Province of Oceania comprising Australia, New Zealand and Fiji and this change was approved by the Holy See. At the General Chapter of 1960 permission was asked for Fiji to become a Delegation within the Province of Oceania and in 1969 New Zealand also became a Delegation with Sr. Xavier (Dorothy Dunne) as its first Delegation Superior. As he offered Sister his prayers and good wishes in her new office, Archbishop Liston was about to resign from his office and spend his final years in retirement at the Mater Hospital.

Since taking office in 1929 he had proved himself a friend, a confidant and a benefactor to the sisters and especially to Mother Bernard, who had consulted him on many occasions and who had died the previous year at Herne Bay. Archbishop Liston, for his part expressed his appreciation of the sisters stating that he valued "the lives and skills of the Marist Sisters and their affectionate

loyalty.”<sup>27</sup>

In 1977 and 1978 the communities celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the arrival of the sisters in Mt Albert and in Herne Bay. During those fifty years the number of sisters had grown considerably. This had made possible the sending of missionaries to Fiji from the 1930's when Sisters Sabina (Winifred Carmody), Geraldine (Eileen Keenan) and Regina were the forerunners of many New Zealand Sisters to support the work there. In New Zealand solid convents and boarding schools had been built. In Mt Albert in 1975, a further large block, St Anne's, had been added behind the extended convent and classroom block. An attached Intermediate consisting of Forms One and Two from the primary school began at the College in 1978.

However, the phasing out of boarders in Herne Bay in 1975 and in Mt Albert in 1978 was the result of the reduced number of vocations to religious life which the Marist Sisters, like the other religious orders of the diocese, were experiencing. Despite this when the call came to provide sisters for international communities, Sister Annette Ormerod travelled to Senegal in 1975, Sister Gemma



Sr. Shirley with the kindergarten children at El Pacer, Colombia 1989.

Wilson went to Brazil 1980 and in 1984 Sister Shirley Day joined the community in Colombia.

The reduction in the number of vocations inevitably had its effects on the Catholic school system which the church had struggled over the years to maintain. Schools were increasingly staffed by lay teachers and providing adequate salaries for these teachers increased the financial problems the church was already facing. The government made grants to Catholic schools for a proportion of these salaries but, even so, it was clear that the schools would not be able to continue much longer. Early in the 1970's the possibility of gradually integrating Independent schools into the State School system was explored by representatives of the Department of Education, Teachers' Associations, the Catholic Bishops and other independent schools. Sister Carmel (Dorothy Conran), working in the Catholic Education Office during this period, was active in this process. The proposals made at this stage for maintenance of schools and payment of staff salaries would lift a heavy burden from the Catholic community, while emphasis on 'special character' for Catholic schools would safeguard the values cherished by our schools. These proposals were formalised in the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act of 1975. Over the next few years the Catholic schools became Integrated Schools.

As owners of the College in Mt Albert the Marist Sisters were involved in negotiations for its integration which was effected in 1981. The land on which the College was built was integrated as well as the school buildings. As the existing convent building could not easily be separated from the classrooms and other school facilities which surrounded it, Sister Carmel as local superior, decided to build a new convent for the sisters, leaving the former convent to be used for school purposes. Accordingly in October 1981 the community moved to a spacious new house on Kitenui Avenue on land adjoining the school property.

1981 was a significant year for the Herne Bay community too. At

the end of the previous year the sisters had withdrawn from the school after more than fifty years of service there. The community was now much smaller and the house was no longer suitable for the sisters, so it was decided to sell it and move away. After consultation with the Bishop they looked for a house in the western suburbs of Auckland. By October 1981 they were ready to move to Te Atatu which served as a Regional House until a house in Hendon Avenue, Mt Albert was purchased at the end of 1985.

A further expansion in Auckland came about when Monsignor Cronin of Glen Eden expressed a wish to have a community of Sisters in his parish where he had no Catholic school and no Sisters. Sisters Mary Dore, Antonia (Margaret Avey) and Koleta Lui went there at the end of 1987 to support the work already being done in youth ministry, sacramental programmes, Marian Mothers groups, family centred programmes and groups for prayer and bible study.

In 1984 a new community was established in the Orakei Parish. A house on the Mt Albert property was resited on the parish property close to the church and school and Sisters Carmel, Borgia (Dulcie Hines) and Mary Frances Boyle moved there. In the years that followed the sisters were involved in the Catholic Education Office, in hospital chaplaincy, local catholic schools and in pastoral work in the parish.

## 1. *THE NORTH*

### WAITARUKE

#### *Missionary activity in the Whangaroa area*

When the Marist Sisters set out for Waitaruke in March 1928 their journey took them to the Whangaroa area north of the Bay of Islands. From pre European times there had been many pa round the coast and harbour and along waterways.

Captain James Cook anchored off the Cavelli Islands in 1769. Later European traders came seeking supplies. Many made mistakes dealing with Maori and some had tragic consequences. The destruction of the 'Boyd' and the killing of most of the crew and passengers in 1809 by local Maori in retaliation for what was seen as an insult to a young chief from the Kaeo district who was working on the ship, showed what could happen when cultural sensitivity was overlooked. Whangaroa Harbour, the site of the massacre, was to be the destination of the sisters.

In December 1814 the Reverend Samuel Marsden of the Church Missionary Society arrived with a missionary party and spent the night ashore at Matauri Bay with tribes from the Whangaroa area on his way to the Bay of Islands where he intended to establish a permanent mission station. By 1820 when the navy supply ship 'Dromedary' sailed into the harbour seeking kauri, timber, a good relationship with the Maori had been established. In the 1830's the intertribal wars had been settled and land redistributed, much of it controlled by one chief. Some European settlers came to Whangaroa and, by the time the Treaty was signed in 1840, some 115 land claims had been made in the area. A trading port was established for timber and produce.

The 1870's saw a rapid growth in the timber milling industry with

the establishment of three mills on the harbour and smaller ones operating in the surrounding areas. In the 1880's the area was prosperous and well populated. Settlers were lured by the kauri milling and the trade in kauri gum. Lane and Brown's mill at Totara North had a staff of about fifty and during the next forty years their shipyard produced over 120 large vessels from schooners to three masters. Rope-making and brick-making also emerged as local industries. Like most of the North at this time, the area was poorly served by roads. Travellers from the south came by stage coach to Ohaeawai near Kaikohe and then were driven in one of the local coaches to Whangaroa township. From there passengers could travel further north by boat.

By the late 1920's when the sisters arrived the logging was almost at an end and the hills around the harbour had been gradually denuded of trees. Some farming was carried on to supply the dairy factory but transport was still a problem. The once thriving towns around the harbour, except for Kaeo, were now represented by a few buildings.

The Christian faith had been introduced into the area by Marsden's



Piwanian - site of Pompallier's first Mass in the Whangaroa area. Karel Lorier, 2001. *Used with permission.*

missionaries from the Bay of Islands who paid regular visits. The Wesleyan missionaries settled at Kaeo in 1823 but they were forced to withdraw in 1827 when their mission station was attacked and burned down by a neighbouring tribe. The Anglicans came to Waitangi in 1838. Then in 1839 Bishop Pompallier visited Whangaroa and promised to send his priests there. He arranged for the purchase of land for a mission station near Totara North. The next year the mission was begun there on the Feast of the Epiphany and so the station received the local name, Piwania. Dominic Ferrari, a Genoese carpenter living in the area, offered the missionaries his house as a temporary residence.

Fr. Épalle, to whom the mission had been entrusted, gives this account of their arrival in Whangaroa:

The very day after my arrival at Kuaru with Fr. Petitjean, the great chief Ururoa came to see us with the intention of inducing us to return at once to the Bay of Islands; but, before reaching our house, God inspired him with better sentiments.... We began our work at Whangaroa on Saturday, January 4<sup>th</sup> the chapel had been made out of a storeroom; but with the help of Amato, a chief converted by a catechist, it was soon tastefully arranged and decorated with flowers and greenery. Sunday was a wet day, which prevented many from coming from far, but they made up for it during the week. At the request of the chiefs books and medals have been distributed among them. Morning and evening instructions are given and followed by prayers. The class for the little children of the tribe is also being attended with regularity. Already seven young men have asked to be allowed to remain with us. Among them is the son of a Methodist.<sup>28</sup>

In 1839 buildings were erected at Kuwaru Bay where Pompallier had purchased additional land. During the 1840's a wooden church and presbytery replaced the original raupo huts. Fr. Rozet joined Br Élie Regis in 1843 and Jean Yvert, a layman who specialised

in printing, came to Whangaroa when one of the printing presses from Kororareka was brought there for safety in 1845 during Hone Heke's war. Bishop Pompallier reports that 225 Maori were baptised in the area. From 1847 to 1849 Fr. Rozet and Jean Yvert began to train teachers for a Maori college later to be established on the North Shore in Auckland: these teachers included Jean Yvert and two of the early Sisters of Mercy. But Hone's war engendered bad feeling between Maori and Pakeha so that the missionaries were unable to make any further progress before they left the area when the Marists were withdrawn in 1850.

Between 1850 and the coming of the Mill Hill Fathers in 1895 Whangaroa received only occasional visits by secular priests, by Franciscans and by Benedictines. There is a church said to be built by the Franciscans at Waipuna Pinea near Waitaruke which was transported by barge to Waimahana in 1927. A Catholic church was completed in Whangaroa township across the harbour from the old mission in 1882 but seems to have been moved to another site in the thirties.

It was during Bishop Luck's episcopate that the Mill Hill Fathers were invited to come to New Zealand to work on the Maori Mission. Fr. James McDonald continued to look after the northern Maori until his death in 1890. About 1895 Dean Lightheart MHM, then Superior of the Mission took up residence in Waitaruke where he secured a permanent mission site. Fr. Bressers MHM was brought as curate to Whangaroa of which Waitaruke was an out station. He built a permanent church there and Waitaruke now became a main centre for mission work. From 1900 the Maori population which many had assumed was in decline, was increasing. They were still a rural people with a way of life that drew on traditions from both the Maori and pakeha way of life but their real standard of living had risen very little since the Europeans came to New Zealand. The greatest problem that their priests faced was to give the Maori people some self-respect in a world wholly dominated by Europeans.

In the first decade of the twentieth century there were only two Catholic schools north of Auckland; one in Whangarei and one in Dargaville; both staffed by the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. In 1918 another convent and a school were built for these Sisters in Punguru and in 1927 the Sisters of Mercy opened a school at Pawarenga.

### *A Marist Sisters' Mission among Maori*

In December 1926 Dean van Dijk, now Superior of the Mill Hill priests in New Zealand, wrote to Mother Peter Claver (Mary Cunningham) who was then in Sydney asking for Marist Sisters to teach in a Maori school to be founded in the Whangaroa district. His request was supported by Fr. Gondringer sm, who had recommended the sisters to him. A favourable reply was received as the sisters saw in this new school a good opportunity for missionary work for the Australian sisters. The three sisters who would begin this work were Mother Bernardine, (Agnes Cashin) an Englishwoman who came from Fulham, Sister Francesca, (Elisabeth Tegethoff) a German sister who had been working in Montanay, and Sister Philibert, (Anastasia Connor) an Australian from Sydney.

On March 16<sup>th</sup> 1928 they left Auckland accompanied by Mother Bernard and Fr. Gondringer and travelled North by train. Their route took them through Whangarei where the Marist Fathers had been sent four years previously by Bishop Cleary. Fathers Campbell and Carçenac met the sisters and offered them a cup of tea. Later in the afternoon they reached Otiria where they were met by their future parish priest, Fr. Callaghan, MHM. Next day after a journey of some three hours they arrived at Waitaruke. Here they were welcomed by the Maori people and taken to their new convent which had been built by Fr. Callaghan with the help of his companion, Fr. Spierings MHM and a local carpenter. A three-roomed school adjoined the convent and close by was the church built by Fr. Bressers MHM and now moved down from its site on the hill. A little further on there was a group of houses for catechists and their families and a

dozen new small houses where the schoolchildren would live during the week. The mission property on which these buildings stood covered about a hundred acres on low-lying land and on the slopes of a small hill on the western side of the Whangaroa Harbour.



A new convent for the North Auckland District. Opening day Waitaruke 1928.

The following day some 1500 people, European as well as Maori, gathered to celebrate the sisters' arrival. Dean van Dijk Fr. O'Callaghan and four other Mill Hill priests and Fr. Gondringer were present for the occasion. At 10.30 a.m. they processed to the convent and school for the blessing and then went on to one of the two immense marquees where Mass was celebrated with a sermon in Maori preached by Fr. Langerwerf MHM and one in English by Fr. Gondringer.

After Mass the convent was open for inspection by the public until late afternoon. In the evening the sisters were invited to the marquee where Mass had been celebrated, now transformed into a 'whare nui'. There they were welcomed formally and many speakers expressed their joy at the privilege of having religious to instruct their children.

The next day, March 19<sup>th</sup>, school commenced with 59 pupils from 5 to 14 years. The seven priests came to the classrooms to offer encouragement while a good number of parents came too, to see how the sisters would manage. By the end of the month the number of pupils had risen to 70.

During March Bishop Cleary was making a visitation of the North and March 27<sup>th</sup> found him in Waitaruke where he stayed for four days.

...[to]the convent and school in charge of the Marist Sisters and the newly-formed Native Settlement for children, of whom there are nearly seventy in regular attendance. School, convent and presbytery are provided with their own electric plant, supplied by the Bishop. Each morning the whole population (including infants in arms) assist at Mass, chanting the prayers in four-part harmony, and each evening they again assemble in the church for night prayers and four-part chants and hymns. <sup>29</sup>

Later there were visits from Inspectors, first one from the Department of Agriculture as the children were to devote four hours a week to gardening. Then there were visits from the Department of Education. On his last visit in December the Inspector declared himself very satisfied with the children's progress. Sister Bernardine was well qualified for her work with some thirty years of experience behind her. Outside the classroom she was kept busy distributing remedies for the many health problems suffered by her charges. She also visited the houses in the settlement to look after sick adults. Later, when there were four sisters, the workload would be easier but in the beginning they moved from teaching to cooking, housework and the cleaning of the church.

Procuring food was not a great problem. There were five cows on the property; twice a day Fr. O'Callaghan sent the sisters milk and butter. In time the children would take over the milking of the cows. In their garden Fr. O'Callaghan, helped by the children, planted cabbages, tomatoes, peas and spinach. The catechists and Maori from nearby settlements brought them potatoes and kumara and as much fish as they wanted. Bread and meat came twice a week from Mangonui.

Fr. Bruning MHM replaced Fr. O'Callaghan in 1931 and saw that

it would be preferable to offer full boarding facilities at Waitaruke. In the winter months especially the children from bush or coastal settlements could not easily return from weekends at home because of bad weather and so would fall behind with their schoolwork. In 1934 work began. Maori who had come to live in the settlement donated the timber from their coastal homes.<sup>30</sup> An old church at Taemaro was dismantled and the timber was transported to Waitaruke by pontoon. Br. Egbert MHM, helped by two local men, built two large dormitories, a bathroom and two washrooms, a kitchen, pantry and a dining room.

While the men were hammering away sisters and children got to work making mattresses and bolsters. Trips were made over the hill to gather hune for the mattresses. Hune is the downy seed of the raupo and is like kapok.....Every afternoon the girls were kept busy-under the supervision of a sister preparing meals for the following day.

But amid all this activity there were moments of relaxation. Sister Aloysia continues:

One day our German sister, (Sister Francesca) expressed a wish to visit Fr. Becker. She came from Westphalia and she wished to have a chat with him in their native tongue. So Fr. Bruning was only too pleased to take us. But Fr. Becker had forgotten his German! What distressed him more was the fact that he had no delicacies to offer his unexpected guests. But that great missionary, the late dearly-loved Fr. A. Hazelzet, MHM came to the rescue and in the twinkling of an eye had prepared a dinner worthy of a king. Pa Hoani Papita (Fr. Becker) was overjoyed and insisted on serving his visitor. A very happy day was spent together.<sup>31</sup>

Mother Bernardine left for Fiji in 1935 and was replaced as superior by Sr. Francesca. Sr. Aloysia (Catherine Carey) had replaced Sr. Philibert in 1931. Sr. Lucy (Margaret Rea) worked in Waitaruke

for two years until Sr. Marie Hervé (Jeanne le Parquer) arrived in 1934. They were joined in 1935 by sisters Austin and Hilarion (Genevieve Lyons). Sister Genevieve recalls the difficulties experienced in those early days in the hostel when water for baths had to be carried from the wash house copper and the lighting for two dormitories came from a single hurricane lamp placed between them until kerosene lamps were procured later. Many of the children spoke very little English.<sup>32</sup>

In 1939 Mother Tarcisius (Laurence Bouquet) replaced Mother Francesca and was unhappy with the contrast between the conditions she found in Waitaruke and those she had experienced in Fiji. The slates formerly used in school were replaced by exercise books, enamel basins were provided for the children to wash in and gradually iron bedsteads replaced the wooden bunks built by Br Egbert. Funding for these beds came from the sale of second-hand clothing to the people in the settlement. Cod liver oil was supplied to Maori schools by the Department of Education at this time, so, after Mass each morning Mother Tarcisius administered the appropriate dose to a line of children.<sup>33</sup>

## THE SISTERS OF MARY

As early as 1935 two Maori girls, Martha Tawio and Kare Peterson asked to be allowed to try their vocation. They took up special work of a charitable nature looking after small children in the Maori hostel. In their duties they acquitted themselves admirably.<sup>34</sup>

In November 1935 the local people made a novena to the newly-canonised Saints John Fisher and Thomas More for guidance about the request of the young women. Then Dean Alink MHM approached Bishop Liston and both wrote to Mother Marie Joseph asking for the help of the Marist Sisters to form the future candidates.<sup>35</sup> It seems that the Bishop may have envisaged two stages in the project: firstly a congregation for Maori women only, and, later, that they might join an established congregation. Mother Marie

Joseph's view coincided with his as seen in her response:

Would it not be wise to begin by a separate branch which will be organised according to the mentality of Maori girls? After experience and time, we will see what is best. <sup>36</sup>

Two sisters were offered to assist in the work, Sr. Anselm and Sister Thérèse (Marie Groslier) who had recently arrived from France. A site for the proposed novitiate was chosen on top of the hill and when school resumed in 1936 the children were able to see the start of the building. This was completed in November and opened by Fr. Becker on December 8<sup>th</sup>, the fortieth anniversary of the coming of the Mill Hill Fathers to New Zealand. <sup>37</sup>

The following year at a ceremony of reception Martha Tawio received a new name, Sister Scholastica, while Kare Peterson was to be known as Sister Dorothy. They were the first members of a Congregation to be called the Sisters of Mary which would be controlled by the bishop who would give permission for those entering and leaving the congregation and he would be regularly consulted by Sister Anselm on important decisions.



Sisters Dorothy and Scholastica as aspirants with Fr Becker MHM 1936.



Sisters of Mary as Marist novices: L to R Sisters Basil, Ethna Bernadette, Teresa of the Child Jesus, Euphrasia, Madeline Sophie, Dorothy.

The profession of Sisters Scholastica and Dorothy took place on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1940 and was followed by others in 1942, 1948 and 1950. Twenty one Maori women requested entry into the congregation but, for various reasons, departures outnumbered arrivals. The apostolic life of the sisters was limited to giving some help with the hostel and in the school. When the Marist Sisters were asked to begin a foundation in Te Huahua in the Hokianga in the 1950's the help of the Maori sisters there was seen as desirable.<sup>38</sup> At this time the bishop was suggesting to Mother Marie Joseph that perhaps the time had come for the Maori Sisters to have full membership in the Congregation of Mary as this would give them a wider role and ministry. If any of them wished to join another religious order they were free to apply.<sup>39</sup> However all the sisters asked to join the Marist Sisters. This request was made formally through the Apostolic Delegate in 1952 and arrangements were made for the sisters to transfer to the Marist Sisters' novitiate in Karori and join the novices there.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly five professed sisters and two novices from the Sisters of Mary set out for Wellington in 1953. Four of them made profession as Marist Sisters the following year: Sisters Dorothy, (Kare Peterson), Euphrasia (Rose Harris), Basil (Mary Gilbert) and Teresa of the Child Jesus (Margaret Peri).

### *Changes in focus at Waitaruke*

After the departure of the Maori Sisters the novitiate building was brought down from the hill to become a convent for the sisters while the former convent became part of the hostel accommodation. The work in school and hostel continued and numbers of boarders and day pupils fluctuated. Many of the local families left the area to seek work in the city, often sending their children back to Waitaruke for school. A visitor to the school in the early '60's found that the sixty two boarders aged from five to fourteen years came from all over the North and that of the seven teachers on the staff, three were Australian, three were New Zealanders and one was Irish. The children took an active part in the work involved in feeding them and in keeping the hostel, a 'frankly utilitarian building', clean and tidy.

In 1971 another visitor found eighty boarders from eighteen families at Waitaruke. Many of the pupils had had parents or grandparents at the school. There was stress on the experience in farm work offered to the boys and, of course, on Maori language as a first essential to keep Maori culture alive also through poi and action songs. The generosity of local people and doctors in giving donations of food and professional services was acknowledged. <sup>41</sup>

The New Year weekend in 1978 was set aside for celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the coming of the sisters to Waitaruke. A crowd of some 700 people attended the outdoor Mass with guests including Cardinal Delargey, Bishop Gaines, Mill Hill Fathers, Marist Sisters, Brothers and numerous ex-students. In his homily the Cardinal linked the Feast of Mary, Mother of God with the early Marist missionaries who had set up their churches in the lonely areas of Totara Point, Whangaroa and the surrounding areas so that the gospel could be spread. He spoke of the coming of the Marist Sisters making visible for the local people Mary's concern for them. The original group of three sisters had now grown to seven and the school roll had grown from seventy nine to ninety two pupils of whom sixty eight were boarding in the hostel.



Sisters Cecily, Rita and Makareta with the children in whanau groups at Waitaruke.

A fire in February 1981 destroyed two classrooms and part of the girls' dormitory together with valuable books and equipment. Local people took wet bedding and clothes to wash and dry and ladies came to wash crockery and cutlery and blackened and smoked windows and walls. The Kaeo Kiwanis Club helped in practical ways with working bees to clear debris. An appeal was launched and the response was heart-warming. In April work on a new dormitory was begun and part of the former girls' dormitory was rebuilt as a classroom.

For some years the future involvement of the sisters in Waitaruke had been discussed. Some sisters asked how much longer the work in Waitaruke could be carried on given the diminishing number of sisters available to work there. Doubts were expressed about the wisdom of educating Maori children from the city separately rather than enrolling them in their local Catholic schools, while others saw the need to help urban Maori parents transmit cultural pride to their children. The Waitaruke sisters believed that their students achieved better results studying in a Maori atmosphere, that for neglected children the sisters provided a secure environment but follow-up in Auckland was essential for the children's future. In 1982 a survey was conducted to seek help in discerning the future of the work at Waitaruke. The New Zealand bishops, the Mill Hill Fathers and Marist Sisters who had worked in Waitaruke, ex-students, parents, guardians and service groups that had helped the school over the years were all invited to respond. The Report issued to sum up the findings of the survey admitted that, although statistically, the responses were inconclusive, the feelings and reactions of the Maori people were now known, as was the value placed by the hierarchy, community groups and the educational authorities on the work done at Waitaruke. As a result of this survey proposals were made that the Marist Sisters continue their apostolate in Waitaruke which would be reviewed in 1988. This apostolate would be given a missionary status so that sisters would be invited to volunteer to work in Waitaruke. In dialogue with the diocese and the Maori people, a partnership for the full development of the Waitaruke apostolate should be sought.

In 1987 the running of the hostel was passed on to the local Maori people and the number of sisters was reduced to four. One of these, Sister Aloysia, provided a highlight for the year in the celebration of her hundredth birthday. She had lived and worked in Waitaruke since 1931 and in 1972 had been awarded the British Empire medal in recognition of this service. A festive day had been organised for this special birthday beginning with Mass and followed by a formal welcome and speeches on the marae. A hangi had been put down and a beautiful meal was served in a marquee tastefully decorated with fern fronds and tinsel. In May the following year Sister Aloysia died. She was given a full Maori ceremonial welcome at the marae and after her funeral Mass she was buried on the hill above the settlement among the people she had known and loved for so long.

## **TE HUAHUA**

### *An important area in New Zealand's history*

The Hokianga area which includes Te Huahua, had European settlers from the early nineteenth century. These set up mills to provide spars, fine deal planks and flax for the Sydney market. In this Maori-dominated area many of them had Maori wives. By the late 1840's the upper end of the harbour was the centre for social and commercial activity. The number of Maori was decreasing while pakeha numbers were growing. The 1860's saw a decline in timber milling as the more easily accessible timber was now gone, the demand for timber was lessening as steam replaced sailing boats and transport of goods was made more difficult because of lack of good roads. Many of the settlers exchanged their land for land elsewhere so only some of the older settlers remained. However during this period there was an improvement in milling techniques and this, together with gum digging which was now more profitable, provided an economic support. By the 1890's there was a considerable Dalmatian population working in the gumfields.

By 1900 a village community had been established at Motukaraka. The Te Huahua valley had been purchased for future settlement. The community hoped to supply fruit and vegetables to Auckland on a regular basis but the distance and the difficulty with transport – many ships were wrecked on the treacherous harbour bar – made this impracticable. When the timber export dwindled the district was saved by the foundation of a dairy factory in 1908 and it was this that enabled the district to survive the depression between the two world wars.

The Hokianga area was the first site of Catholic missionary activity in New Zealand. Mr. Thomas Poynton made land at Papakawa available to Bishop Pompallier and Fr. Servant for a mission station soon after their missionary band arrived. In 1839 Bishop Pompallier made Kororareka on the east coast the headquarters of his mission, seeing it as more likely to become an important centre in the future.

In the same year the remaining missionaries moved from Papakawa to Purakau Bay on the northern side of the Hokianga Harbour. Fr. Servant, writing to his parents in 1841 explains: “The place where we live is called in the native language ‘pu rakau’, that is ‘the place where there is only wood’ A tidal mill for grain and a vineyard were set up there. For many years this would be a centre from which missionaries would set out by boat or on horseback to the neighbouring villages; first the Marists, then the Franciscans, and Fr James McDonald, Vicar General of the Auckland diocese. After his death in 1890 the Mill Hill priests assumed responsibility for the North and Fr. Becker MHM lived at Purakau until 1915. By this time the Maori people had moved away from the area in search of work elsewhere so it was decided to make Rawene the central station for the area with Pawarenga, Punguru and Te Huahua as other Hokianga stations. Fr. Becker moved to Rawene in 1921 and remained there until his death.

In 1943 the Rawene parish was growing and was difficult to work

since it was divided by the Hokianga River. The Mill Hill Fathers looked for a new centre. As many of the Motukaraka people had moved to start farming in the Te Huahua valley, Fr. Hazelzet advised them to start a new parish there even though in the valley levelling for a church, presbytery and later for a school and convent would be costly. They decided to wait and see if the people remained in the area and try in the meantime to raise funds. Eventually a temporary church was built in 1948 and then a presbytery.

### *Life in the Te Huahua valley*

Early in 1950 Mother Bernard was asked by Bishop Liston to obtain permission for a further house in the North – this time in the Hokianga where a school for Catholic Maori children was needed. Having received a positive reply the Bishop informed the Superior General that “when we have secured the land, it will take time in this remote place to build a school and a convent. And so, I think it will be February 1952 before we can open the school.”<sup>42</sup> In actual fact it was in January 1953 that the first sisters arrived in Te Huahua. They had travelled from Waitaruke and were accompanied by the Waitaruke community, by the Sisters of Mary and by Fr. Hazelzet, the parish priest of Te Huahua. They were warmly welcomed by the local people and one of those who spoke on their behalf that day announced that the Marists had come back to the Hokianga - proof that the work of the early Marists there had lived on in the memory of the people. The parish church was at the top of the hill and a little further down, the presbytery. Beyond that on the slope was the site for the convent and, on the flat land on the valley floor, the school building ready for use.

The sisters were to live in the presbytery until their convent was completed, so Fr. Hazelzet moved to a small room attached to the church. The days that followed were busy as the sisters settled into their new life and learned about the area and its needs. They learned, too, about the generosity of the parishioners who sent offerings of milk, fruit and fish.

February 4<sup>th</sup> was the start of the school year, so after Mass some eighty children lined up to be sorted into classes. Parents stayed on to view the proceedings. Each morning as the sisters came down the hill to the school the children could be seen racing barefoot over the paddocks or arriving on horseback – sometimes three or four pupils per horse!! Fr. Hazelzet collected some youngsters from outlying areas so that they too could be included. In the classroom the children were friendly and well-behaved, keen on sport even on the hottest days, and excelling in poi and action songs.

On March 15<sup>th</sup> the new convent was officially opened and blessed by Bishop Liston. The following month the school was registered under the name of St John the Baptist in memory of Fr. John Baptist Becker MHM who was revered in the district.

Weekdays were busy with school and housework. On Sundays the sisters sometimes went riding on horses brought for them by the children who then accompanied them. Later Fr. Hazelzet brought a projector and showed films in the school on Sunday evenings. The entertainment began with night prayers recited by the audience!



Sisters Dosithee, Gerald (Regional Superior), Therese, and Hilarion with the children at Te Huahua

The first sisters eventually moved on. Sister Therese (Bridget Scott) left for Wellington in 1956. Then Sister Hilarion moved back to Waitaruke and finally Sister Dosithee (Ethel Trainor) moved to Putaruru. Both of the latter would return to Te Huahua in the years that followed. In the meantime their good work was continued. However by 1960 the school roll had dropped to sixty and by 1966 to forty pupils as families moved away from the area in search of work elsewhere. At the end of the year the school and convent were closed and it was with regret that the sisters moved out.<sup>43</sup> By 1980 the church was closed too but by then the school had become a well-used social centre.

Still the dream of a parish priest in a remote area for a Catholic school for his children had been realised and the Marist Sisters had been able to contribute to its fulfilment.

## **MOEREWA**

Moerewa stands on the site of the Otiria marae next to the junction of the former rail service to the North. There were two flax mills there in the nineteenth century. By 1874 a hall was moved there and served as a hospital in the 1919 influenza epidemic. In 1921 the Farmers Freezing Company was established there and in 1957 was joined by the Bay of Islands Dairy Company which became the centre for the manufacture of butter in the North. The presence in Moerewa of these companies ensured employment for the surrounding area.

Moerewa became a main centre for the Mill Hill mission in 1913. Later Kawakawa was added to it. By 1964 the parish of Moerewa extended from Kerikeri in the north to Hikurangi in the south. As the original church was on the main highway with no room to build a presbytery, a four-acre block was purchased elsewhere, the church was moved and a presbytery built. Given this situation, the Bishop asked for sisters to undertake a motor mission in the Bay of Islands and South Hokianga.

In responding to this request the Marist Sisters were venturing into what would be for them a new apostolate and a way of diversifying the ministry of the sisters in this country. Accordingly on February 6th 1973, Sisters Florence Mary McHugh and Marie Therese Ranum arrived in Moerewa to begin this motor mission which would work out from Moerewa to the surrounding area.

Sister Florence Mary wrote soon after her arrival: "We travel from Hukerenui to Pakaraka and Russell on the east coast, to Omapere, Waiwhatawhata and up the WekaWeka Gorge to the Waipoua Forest on the West Coast. There is plenty of work to be done here for help is needed both by practising Catholics and careless ones. We have also been invited into a number of non-Catholic homes."

The Bishop had emphasised the visiting of families to reconnect them to the church. The Sisters also helped organise CCD classes for the children and provided instructions for their teachers. Classes were held in Moerewa, Kaikohe, Kawakawa, Okaihau, Rawene and Paihia in a rotating pattern and involved mainly primary school children. There were also visits to eight other areas where, because of small numbers, there were no organised CCD classes. As well as the travelling involved in CCD work there were visits to the sick and elderly and parishes were assisted with their liturgy so, by 1983 a third sister was needed.

A new situation came about in 1986 as a response to a pastoral plan presented by the Tai Tokerau Regional Council. A team of Marist Brothers would work with the sisters throughout the area with Kaikohe as their centre. Accordingly the sisters left Moerewa and moved to Hillcrest Road in Kaikohe.

## WHANGAREI

### *Local and church history*

Samuel Marsden was an early visitor to this area in 1820. He found that the countryside inland showed evidence of warfare between the Ngati Whatua of Kaipara and the Ngapuhi further north. This warlike situation deterred Anglican missionaries from settling there in the 1820's since they saw that Whangarei lay on the border of these two conflicting powers so that the local natives were continually plundered by one party or the other and were driven further inland to seek shelter.

In 1839 European settlement began. However in 1845 Hone Heke and his followers threatened to ransack the settlement as they had recently done at Kororarareka. The European families fled by canoe with friendly Maori and were eventually picked up by a vessel sent from Auckland and taken there. It was not until 1847 that it was considered safe to return.

As the easiest and quickest way to travel was by water the settlers then traded along the coast and with Auckland in timber, flax, kauri gum, cattle and pigs. Later fruit-growing and dairy farming provided further exports. As time went on each of these products would contribute to the economy of the Whangarei area.

The first priest to visit Whangarei regularly was Fr. Garin, sm. From 1850 onwards Whangarei was seen as part of a large area in the North served from Puhoi whose priests made long journeys up the east coast to visit outlying districts. Land was donated for a church in Whangarei in 1879 and its first church, St Francis Xavier's, was built in 1880. In 1896 the parishioners of Whangarei sent a petition to the Bishop for a resident priest. In 1897 Fr. Smiers, MHM was appointed to open a mission station there which was to be the main centre for an area stretching from Kawakawa to Wellsford. When

an assistant priest came, a presbytery was built in 1898. By 1909 a new convent school was added and was staffed by the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart.

In 1923 the diocese of Auckland assumed responsibility for the parish and in the following year two Marist Fathers were appointed there – the first Marists to Auckland since the departure of the Society in 1850.

### *The Request for Marist Sisters*

As early as the 1960's there was a request for the Marist Sisters to staff a secondary school for girls in Whangarei. At this time it was felt that a large number of qualified Sisters would be needed in New Zealand before more secondary schools could be staffed.<sup>44</sup> The Marist Fathers had already in 1961 established Pompallier College for Catholic boys in the Maunu area and had purchased an adjacent property for farming to help finance the college. However there was still a great need for a Catholic secondary school for girls in the North.

By 1974 negotiations were under way to allow girls to be enrolled at the college which would then become the second co-educational Catholic secondary college in New Zealand. The Marist Sisters were then approached by the diocese and asked to supply two sisters for the staff. The diocese, with the help of the Whangarei parish, would see to the costs incurred in additional buildings and also to the accommodation of the sisters.<sup>45</sup>

The Marist Sisters agreed to provide two sisters for the college at first and gradually to increase the number to five. It was further agreed that at the beginning of 1977 third form girls would be enrolled at Pompallier College. In the meantime the parish priest, Fr. Beban, SM and the college staff would decide on the necessary extensions to provide additional classrooms and specialist rooms. Fr.

Wysocki, sm the principal of the college and Sister Carmel decided on a suitable uniform for the girls. Problems with underestimated costs and consequent shortfall of the government loan continued throughout 1976.

However in September of that year a meeting took place at Pompallier College involving Fr. Noel Delaney, sm the Marist Fathers' Provincial, Sister Carmel, the Sisters' Delegation Superior, Fr. Wysocki, sm and his staff and Sisters Patricia Bowley and Gemma Wilson who were to join the staff. At this meeting practical details regarding expected numbers of pupils for 1977, additional furniture for the new areas and the courses to be made available were discussed together with future building needs to accommodate the increase in the school roll entailed in this new arrangement. This meeting was followed by an orientation meeting in November giving parents and prospective third form pupils an opportunity to meet the sisters and the staff.



Whangarei - tree-planting (L to R) Sr. Florence Mary, Sr. Anne, Sr. Carmel, Sr. Patricia, Fr. J. Beban sm, Sr. Gemma, Fr. C. Taylor sm, Fr. P. Roberts sm.

The sisters were to live in the old white Logan Cameron house which had been the farmhouse for the land farmed for the College. When they arrived with Sister Carmel on the afternoon of January

27<sup>th</sup> 1977 they found a furnished house with well-filled cupboards and a garden with “instant petunias and marigolds, trees planted and lawns mowed.” as Sister Gemma noted. At 7.30 that evening nine Marist Fathers concelebrated Mass in the new chapel and the sisters were able to meet the people who had worked so hard to prepare the house and grounds for them. Next day at the College the Principal of Tikipunga High School spoke to the Pompallier staff about co-educational secondary schools.

It was decided that during the week in term time the sisters would join the Fathers for Morning Prayer and Mass at 6.45. On Saturdays there would be Mass in their chapel. On Sundays they would attend the parish Masses. Once school had begun the parish bulletin from St Francis Xavier’s Parish noted

“On Wednesday last 55 young ladies began their secondary education at the College. They have fitted in to the life of the College very well according to our reporter. Exciting new things are happening as the new Marist Sisters appear in the classrooms ranging from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> Forms, more of a surprise to the lads than to the Sisters! Both boys and girls are having a crack at ‘typing’ a marvellous innovation. We are all wondering what will happen to the boys when the sewing machines arrive for sewing class!”<sup>46</sup>

In the years that followed the community continued to be involved in the school and parish, and providing hospitality for sisters travelling north from Auckland or south from the Northern houses. However, from 1988 there were fewer sisters available for the College and at the end of the following year it was decided to withdraw the sisters from Whangarei.

## 5. WAR SPURS EXPANSION

### PUTARURU

#### *Forestry, farming and faith lead the way*

As part of the Patetere Plains which were inland and frosty the Putaruru area was unpopulated until a tribe of Moa hunters, the Kahupungapunga were driven inland by the Tainui tribes about 1300 A.D. These continued to snare birds and gather food from the forests. During the 1600's the Ngati Raukawa, a Tainui subtribe, made a concerted effort and the Ngati Kahupungapunga were finally driven from the area with few, if any survivors.

A further two hundred years would pass before Europeans would venture so far inland. A missionary party led by the Anglican Bishop Selwyn passed through in 1843 and an Austrian geologist, Ferdinand von Hochsteter visited the area in 1859. By this time many of the Ngati Raukawa had migrated south. Those who remained kept to their fortified pa but by 1870 some were prepared to sell large blocks of land for European settlement. The Selwyn Block in which Putaruru is situated was sold to a group of Auckland developers in 1881. The plan was to develop an estate centred on a town to be called Lichfield in honour of the Bishop's birthplace. This block was later purchased by the Thames Valley Land Company in 1883. However it was Putaruru rather than Lichfield that became the centre of this new area as railway, and later, timber milling developments focussed on this section of the block.

Frank Karl, the first European settler, arrived to take up land in 1892. By 1906 areas to the north and south of Putaruru had been subdivided for farming and village allotments with school and creamery sites, set aside. Difficulties in farming some of these areas were solved in the 1930's when the deficiency in trace elements in the soil was identified. Despite this deficiency, the poor land was used

successfully in the 1920's for the growth of *Pinus radiata* seedlings and so began the era of man-made forests. Putaruru became a valuable seed nursery to provide for the expanding industry.

This diversity of milling, afforestation and farming helped Putaruru through the Depression years, though farmers suffered as New Zealand exports slumped. Since both farming and forestry were seen as essential industries, World War II brought about further development in Putaruru's economy. By 1943 the population had grown to some 9,000 and new residential areas were being opened up in spite of wartime restrictions.

It was to this thriving community that the Marist Sisters had come early in 1942. At this time Putaruru was part of the Auckland diocese and shared its early history. Bishop Pompallier would have been relatively close to the area in 1840 when, at the invitation of the Maori, he travelled from Tauranga to Matamata where, through public instruction and long conversations, he helped the Maori there to a clearer idea of the Catholic faith so maligned by the other missionaries. Fr. Séon was sent to establish a mission station at Matamata the following year but the local people proved indifferent to their poor priest so he was eventually recalled. From 1844 Rangiaowhia further south became the headquarters of the Waikato mission and had great success. When the Marists were withdrawn from the Auckland diocese in 1850 Pompallier maintained Rangiaowhia despite his shortage of priests. During the land wars of the 1860's priests were withdrawn from this area. Rangiaowhia became the scene of one of the fiercest battles and by 1864 most of the population had fled south.

When the Mill Hill Fathers were appointed to look after the Maori south of Auckland in the 1880's they found that, though the visits of priests in recent years had been very rare, through the efforts of the Maori catechists Catholic prayers and catechism had survived in many parts.

In the early years of this century the Putaruru area was added to the Rotorua station and the priests took it in turns to travel to 'a nondescript place of scrub and tea tree called Putaruru.'<sup>47</sup> They used a farmhouse as their headquarters while visiting the Maori in the surrounding district. A section was purchased by the European settlers and the church built on it in 1911 was Putaruru's oldest church. It was dedicated to St Patrick and blessed and opened by Bishop Cleary. Present with him for the occasion was Dean Lighthart, MHM of Rotorua since Putaruru was attached to his parish. When it was made a separate parish in 1925 with Dean Alink as its first parish priest, an old classroom was transferred from Rotorua to serve as a presbytery.

In 1940 an agent approached Constable Cotter asking if he would be interested in buying a house in McKenzie Street. He found that the Church Committee were interested in buying the house as a future convent. Eventually the sale was confirmed and a policeman rented the house from the parish.

### *Evacuation to a new mission*

The following year Bishop Liston asked the Marist Sisters for a community for Putaruru as the parish priest and parishioners were eager to have a school and had purchased a house for their future community. If the request were granted, he would arrange for a school to be built so that it could be ready in 1941. Mother Louis Chanel (Celestine Robin) in her reply expressed gratitude for his offer but explained that the Apostolic Delegate had strongly recommended no new foundations be made until the end of the war. Perhaps then it would be possible to supply sisters.<sup>48</sup>

But this war which seemed to be an obstacle to the foundation then made it possible. At the end of 1941 Marist Sisters were evacuated from Tonga and a telegram was despatched to the Bishop asking if some of the sisters leaving Tonga could teach in Putaruru if the Apostolic Delegate gave approval. The approval was duly obtained

and in April 1942 Mother Ethelbert and Sister Christopher (Edith Horne) arrived in Putaruru. A letter to the Bishop describes their arrival and the first Mass in their chapel on May 7<sup>th</sup> assuring him that the people 'overwhelm us with kindness'.<sup>49</sup> The two sisters set to work teaching catechism, music and dressmaking. Later in the year Sister Lucy came from Karori to join the community.

Early in 1943 Mother Chanel wrote again to the Bishop informing him that, because of illness, she could not send sisters for Putaruru if school were to open at this time, that if the sisters could continue their present work, she should have sisters available for the following year.<sup>50</sup> Some time later Mother Ethelbert reported on useful material provided for schoolwork and kindness shown by the local headmaster.<sup>51</sup>

Building a school in a period of wartime restrictions was a daunting project yet this was undertaken by the parish. Mr. Raymond Crawford offered to build the school with the help of men from the parish. Mr. Cotter who was 'clerk of works' was contacted each evening and told how many men would be needed the following day. He then proceeded to find the required number. The school opened on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1944 with a roll of thirty eight pupils which grew to sixty seven by the beginning of the third term. Sisters Baptista



Students and Sisters Raymond, Angela, Patricia and Basil 1955.

(Mary Butler), Carmel and Cuthbert (Agnes Kelly) were to teach the primer classes, the middle classes and the seniors respectively. Sister Lucy remained as housekeeper and Mother Ethelbert and Sister Christopher moved back to Auckland.

By 1945 the European parishioners had so greatly increased that it was decided to assign a second priest to Putaruru to minister to the Maori people in the surrounding districts of the Waikato. In 1960 two primer rooms and a new two-storey block were added to the school. The following year a new presbytery was built and on November 28<sup>th</sup> 1965 the last service was held in the old St Patrick's church soon to be replaced by a fine new building.

The house bought by the parish for the sisters had already been added to in the 1950's but by 1976 it became clear that extensive renovation would be needed so it was proposed to demolish the old house and build a new convent on the site. The parish agreed to provide voluntary labour and help in other ways. On November 13<sup>th</sup> a team of men came to demolish the convent in such a way that it could be sold and reassembled as a woolshed and storeroom on a nearby farm. The sisters had been offered the use of a house while their old house was being removed and the new one built. Meanwhile many cartons of goods were to be stored in the presbytery. The new convent was blessed and opened in July 1977.

For some years there had been much discussion about the division of the Auckland diocese now with 105 parishes and over 200,000 Catholics. In 1980 the creation of the Hamilton diocese reduced the area and population of the Auckland diocese by two thirds. Putaruru and later Rotorua and Matata would continue the ministry in this new diocese.

## WELLINGTON

### *The growth of the capital and the church*

The Wellington region to which Colonel William Wakefield, representative of the New Zealand Company, came in 1839 seeking land for settlement had already been occupied since the fifteenth century by a succession of Maori tribes and sub tribes. The Atiawa and the Ngati Toa were in possession at the time and, since their alliance was an uneasy one, the Atiawa were ready to listen to the Company's proposals hoping thus to strengthen their position.

Wakefield had been instructed to purchase at least 110,000 acres of flat land within reach of a harbour and to be tactful with the Maori treating them frankly and fairly in paying for the land. Since the Petone/Hutt Valley area seemed to offer the most favourable site available, Wakefield purchased land there and the settlement received the name, Port Nicholson. In 1840 when a flooded Hutt River turned their site into a swamp, the settlers forced Wakefield to re-site the settlement across the harbour at the Te Aro and Thorndon areas already occupied by Maori. Despite his instructions Wakefield appears to have ridden rough-shod over Maori rights and interests even attempting to take over areas for which no claim or sale had been made. Later the Governor's commissioners would investigate these claims and the Company would be asked to pay Maori a satisfactory price for the land so gained. By then Port Nicholson would be known as Wellington.

There were no Maori living in the Karori area, an upland valley north-west of Wellington covered with forests of fine timber and within walking distance of the town. As early as 1840 settlers took up land there which was partly cleared and divided into large sections.

John Campbell who arrived in Port Nicholson on the sailing ship 'Lady Nugent' in 1841 was typical of these early settlers. He soon

ventured into the western hills and began to clear his land. His family were later to play an important part in the lives of local Catholics, as Marist missionaries on their way to Maori pa in the Makara valley and on the coast, visited their home so offering the settlers contact with the church in Wellington.

Farming began and a small rural community was formed. By 1843 a road was under construction. An Anglican church was begun in 1852. In 1891 Karori was created a borough. Street lighting and a small mail service were provided and by 1911 electric trams were running as far as Karori Park.

Bishop Pompallier, accompanied by Fr. Pézant, sm stayed in Wellington at the end of 1840. Writing about his visit he comments:

Port Nicholson is a vast bay on the north side of Cook's Strait about 80 leagues from Akaroa. We arrived in this port on Christmas Eve, 1840. There is a rising town of about a thousand five hundred Europeans, among whom are some hundreds of Irish Catholics who greatly desired to receive the succours of a legitimate consecrated minister. There are also at Port Nicholson and in its neighbourhood several populous tribes of natives.....

The day after my arrival I said Holy Mass in a house which the Catholic Magistrate lent me for that purpose. All the Catholics and a large number of Protestants assisted at it. I gave them an instruction in English. Several natives also came to witness the ceremonies of the Mother church .<sup>52</sup>

In April, 1842, the fifth missionary band consisting of Fathers Forest, Grange and Reignier stayed several days in Wellington. In a letter to Fr. Colin, Fr. Forest describes his experience there:

We arrived at Port Nicholson, New Zealand, on the sixth of April, 1842 at nine o'clock in the morning. .... Indeed Providence helped us in an admirable manner; we had five days to spend in that little town (of 2,000 souls it is said); we baptised a good number, confessed a few, performed one marriage, celebrated all the offices of the Sunday and visited a large number of Catholic families.....<sup>53</sup>

A Capuchin priest, Fr. J.J. O'Reily, became Wellington's first resident priest. He came at the end of January 1843 as chaplain to Henry Lord Petre to take charge of what Catholics might be found in the area. On February 5<sup>th</sup> he said Mass for them in a hotel room made available for the purpose. Later he would use a store on the beach for some two hundred parishioners as well as some Maori. By 1844 as a result of the work of a Catholic committee a church



The Roman Catholic Chapel, Boulcott Street, Wellington 1843 by Samuel Charles Brees. *MAW Marist Archives Wellington, New Zealand. Used with permission.*

was ready on Hinau Hill (now Boulcott Street) and blessed by Bishop Pompallier under the title 'Church of the Nativity of Our Lord'. The bishop left Fr. Comte to care for the Maori people as far north as Otaki which he made his base.

After the Holy See made its first division of the dioceses in New Zealand in 1848, Bishop Viard, co-adjutor to Bishop Pompallier, became Apostolic Administrator of Port Nicholson. He arrived there in May, 1850 with five Marist Fathers, ten brothers and some sisters whom he referred to as Marist Sisters. Three of these young women had been professed on March 19<sup>th</sup> and a fourth had been received as a novice. The brothers set about building a convent and a house for the bishop and the priests and brothers who were to remain in Wellington. A church was planned and the first stone was blessed on September 8<sup>th</sup>. That same day the convent was blessed.<sup>54</sup> The sisters received pupils in their convent until a day and boarding school for girls was ready in 1852. A Providence for Maori and half-caste girls was opened the same year and entrusted to the sisters. Health problems forced three of the sisters to return to their families and the fourth sister struggled on until her death in 1860. Bishop Viard wrote to Fr. Favre, Superior General of the Society of Mary, asking him to obtain sisters from France for his schools. Neither the Marist Sisters nor the newly-established Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions were able at that time to provide help so, with Bishop Pompallier's permission, Sisters of Mercy from the Auckland diocese came to Wellington in June 1861.<sup>55</sup> The coming of the Marist Sisters to Wellington was to be delayed for some eighty years.

Bishop Viard died in 1872 and was replaced by Francis Redwood, sm whose home in Waimea had been visited by Fr. J.J. O'Reily in 1844 and who had attended Fr. Garin's school in Nelson. He had studied for the priesthood in France, entered the Society of Mary there and later taught in Dublin. Now after an absence of twenty years he returned to New Zealand as Bishop of Wellington.

In 1887 the Christchurch area was separated from the Wellington diocese which now extended from the Hawkes Bay and Taranaki areas in the north to Nelson and Marlborough in the south. At this time Wellington was made the Metropolitan See of New Zealand, recognised as the most important diocese in the country.

At the turn of the century the Archdiocese of Wellington was well established. It had 26 parishes, 79 churches, 40 Marist priests, 14 secular priests, 34 Brothers, 236 nuns .....It was still very much of a Marist diocese with its bishop and three-quarters of its priests coming from that Order. <sup>56</sup>

As early as 1873 a church had been erected at Makara near the coast northwest of Wellington. This area had been cleared for farming since the 1840's and its population was augmented by a gold rush in the 1860's. The small Catholic community built their church from local material with local labour and local finance. Even so Masses were infrequent there for some years. In 1910 as the population in the western hills and valleys grew, churches were opened in Wadestown and Northland and in 1927 a church was built in Karori. In 1940 the Karori/Northland area formerly served from Thorndon, became a separate parish. It was to this newly-established parish that the Marist Sisters would be invited.

### *War time difficulties overcome*

Archbishop Redwood died in 1935 and was succeeded by his co-adjutor, Archbishop O'Shea sm. While attending the Eucharistic Congress held in Auckland for the centenary of the church in New Zealand in 1938, Archbishop O'Shea visited the Auckland houses of the Marist Sisters and told them of his intention of bringing the Marist Sisters to his diocese.

Later while visiting the Sisters in England, he encountered Mother Bernard who was staying at Richmond and they spoke again of his plans for the sisters. He then went on to visit the Superior General, Mother Marie Joseph, at St Prix, France, to ask for sisters, receiving from her the promise of sisters in two years' time. When in 1940 the Karori/Northland parish was formed, the Archbishop decided to make this the first home of the Marist Sisters in Wellington and wrote to Mother Therese to this effect in May, 1940 hoping the sisters would be available the following year. However the

difficulty of sending sisters from Europe during the war years, and the difficulty in communicating with the Superior General at this time, led Mother Chanel to propose that the foundation should be delayed till the end of the war.

In order to investigate possibilities, Mother Bernard and Mother Therese went to Wellington in August, 1941 to inspect the school and choose, if possible, a site for a convent. They found that there were in fact two schools, one in Northland and one in Karori, both staffed by the Sisters of Mercy who came each day from their convent in Thorndon. Karori seemed to the sisters a very promising foundation and, in spite of the difficulties, they hoped and prayed for an opening in 1942. As a prospective site for a convent they were interested in purchasing part of the Prendeville-Monaghan estate adjacent to the school, using the house on the property as their convent.

The answer to their prayers came on December 26<sup>th</sup>, when Bishop Liston called to tell them that, in view of the Japanese threat in the Pacific, the Tongan government had decided to send all the European Sisters there to New Zealand. The Marist Sisters from Tonga were already on their way. A series of letters and cables between Auckland and Wellington and between Auckland and Sydney resulted in permission being given both by Mother Chanel and the Apostolic Delegate to open a house in Karori

By late January the sisters for this foundation were named: Sisters Herman (Freda Heesh), Paulin (Hilda La Roche), Austin, and Joachim (Mary Catherine Gannon). On Friday, January 30<sup>th</sup> these sisters, accompanied by Mother Bernard and Mother Therese, left for Wellington. Sister Herman leaves her impressions:

We arrived in Wellington on the Saturday before school started and went to the Home of Compassion at Island Bay where the sisters had offered us hospitality until we found a home in Karori. The next day we called on Archbishop

O'Shea to receive his blessing. Fr. Herlihy called to take us to see our new school – the drive was very silent. Father told us afterwards he wondered what kind of birds we were – And we were wondering what our new parish priest was like. <sup>57</sup>



St. Teresa's School Karori

School opened the following Monday and the kindly Sisters of Compassion drove the sisters to Courtenay Place from where they could catch the Karori Park tram. Sisters Paulin and Joachim would alight at the Northland tunnel and Sisters Herman and Austin would travel on to Karori. Since the land and the house they were hoping to buy were not yet available, it was decided to use part of the school for their accommodation. Sister Herman recalls those first days:

An empty classroom was our dormitory; a kitchenette was both refectory and kitchen. When the table was put on the linoleum we were in the refectory and meals in silence; when the table was on the bare boards it was the kitchen and we could talk. How many times Sister Austin pulled the table into the kitchen and how we enjoyed the meal! <sup>58</sup>

Like the pioneers in Mt Albert, the sisters experienced great

kindness from the parishioners some of whom donated basic food items for some years. Mother Bernard testifies to the help given to the sisters by the Sisters of Mercy who had staffed the Karori and Northland schools and also by the Sisters of Compassion during those first two years. They appreciated the help of their parish priest who undertook to continue negotiations for the purchase of part of the Prendeville-Monaghan estate, a process which was to prove both difficult and lengthy. It was finally concluded early in 1943 when the sisters were able to buy some twenty two acres and the house with the price of one acre deducted at the request of Mrs. Monaghan.

The sisters now owned a house, it is true, but found themselves unable to move in as it was occupied by a large family for whom they would first have to find suitable accommodation. The following months were to show just how difficult this task was to prove. Correspondence was entered into with a number of government departments on the plight of 'the sisters from Tonga'. In each case sympathy was expressed but the difficulty of finding a State house of the size required, the lateness of the application from the tenants for a house, the shortage of manpower to continue the building project because of the needs of defence work were a continuing refrain. Mother Bernard gives her version of the conclusion of this saga:

The sisters' patience became exhausted at last and the Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser was approached. He asked one of the superiors to come down to Wellington and the visit was one to be remembered for, while the Mothers were sitting in the Prime Minister's office, Mr. X, the tenant, was rung by Mr. Jeffries, Mr. Fraser's private secretary, and told to call that very day for the key of a house which had been allotted to him at Trentham - and moreover the family were to be out of the sisters' house by the following Tuesday. <sup>59</sup>

Finally on December 11<sup>th</sup> 1943 the sisters were able to enter their

house. Several days of cleaning followed and then necessary repairs and alterations were carried out by Mr. McArley, who had been released from war work for the purpose. In April of that year Mother Chanel had asked permission of the Apostolic Delegate in Sydney for a novitiate in New Zealand and had been granted this initially for the duration of the war. She then wrote to Archbishop O'Shea asking that the novitiate be established in Karori. The Archbishop readily agreed to this <sup>60</sup> so, the following year saw further building on the property as the novitiate was built and the chapel enlarged.



Novitiate group - Maureen O'Meara, Philippa Mahoney, Patricia Bowley, Mother Therese, Joan Allen and Noreen Kerins.

Mother Therese was appointed novice mistress and she and three postulants came to Karori in 1944. The novitiate was blessed early in 1945 and the Profession of its first novices, Sisters Margarita (Rose Bourke) and Xavier took place at the beginning of 1946. The novitiate remained in Karori until early in 1954 after the profession of the Sisters of Mary as Marist Sisters. There was a promise to re-open the novitiate later if numbers should warrant it. In accepting this decision Archbishop McKeefry urged the sisters to begin another house in Wellington. A foundation in Taita had already been declined in 1949 because it was considered unlikely that further sisters from Europe would augment the numbers in

New Zealand now that the North American province had begun. In 1956 Northland was created a separate parish and by 1958 the two upper classes of the school there were coming to St Teresa's in Karori so that St Vincent de Paul's in Northland was now a two teacher school again. By 1963 the Provincial, Sister Sabina, was asking to withdraw the sisters from Northland in view of the continuing shortage of sisters.<sup>61</sup> This withdrawal took effect from the beginning of 1965 when the Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth agreed to take over the school, staying with the sisters in Karori until their convent in Northland was ready.

With the passing years the large area of land purchased by Mother Bernard decreased in size. Some was gifted to the school; other areas were sold and built on. The original house had been extended by incorporating the novitiate building after 1954. Repairs and alterations were carried out but, despite this, by the early 1980's the community learned that further alterations would be uneconomical. The sisters were concerned about the cost of a new building, so representatives of the parish council undertook to finance the building of a new convent in return for the transfer to the parish of the land and buildings belonging to the sisters. Surplus land and the old convent would be sold to provide the necessary finance. Over a period of some four years negotiations between the Finance Committee of the Karori parish and the Marist Sisters fine-tuned the proposal. Finally during 1986 a new convent was built and was blessed on December 7<sup>th</sup>. In 1987 the novitiate building was demolished. The surplus land was subdivided and sold and a series of houses built there.

## 6 EPILOGUE

### *'The work of Mary' in a new age*

By the late 1980's the work of the sisters in New Zealand was moving into a new phase. There was still the ongoing commitment to 'the work of Mary' but this would be carried out in new ways and in new areas. The documents of Vatican II suggested new ways of working not only with the faith community but also with those of other faiths and with the local community. The prescriptions of the Integration of Catholic schools within the State system and the aging of the sisters meant that the ministry of Catholic education would in future involve fewer sisters. Those still in school tended to work in areas of greater need such as West and South Auckland, leaving Marist College, Marist Primary and Marist Herne Bay in competent lay hands. The gifting of the proprietorship of Marist College to the Bishop of Auckland in 2001 marked the end of a direct governance of the College for the Sisters. Some involvement remained through participation in the Board of Trustees and support of the staff through the presentation of Marist spirituality programmes.

In Auckland the Marist Sisters could still be found in Mt Albert, Orakei and Glen Eden. This latter community moved out in the 1990's as opportunities for ministry there changed. There were new ministries such as hospital chaplaincy, parish work, music therapy and work with migrants and refugees.

The first Regional House at Herne Bay had soon moved to Te Atatu, then to Hendon Avenue, Mt Albert, thence to Royal Road, Massey. Finally the Regional House moved to an enlarged Orakei house. When New Zealand became an independent Province in 1994 this became the Provincial house.

As early as 1978 the representatives of the four branches of the

Marist family met to discuss the establishment of a Pastoral Institute at Marcellin Hall (Auckland) to provide residential courses for the personal and spiritual renewal of religious and clergy and support for lay teachers in Catholic schools in New Zealand and in the Pacific. Brother Richard fms, was appointed first Director and Sister Doreen McOscar was a member of the core community. During 1979 the first courses were given. However, over the years difficulties in obtaining finance and in providing suitable staff led to the decision to conclude the project in 1994 at which time Sister Marie Challacombe, was the Director.

In the North the Waitaruke community had decreased in number when they no longer had responsibility for the hostel. The school, too, had declined in numbers and would eventually be under lay headship. Sister Isabelle (Barbara Harding) as Co-Ordinator of Religious Education in the North did valuable work for the Walk By Faith Programme, and supported the sacramental programmes. The Sisters transformed the former hostel into pleasant accommodation for visiting groups. A Kohunga Reo was set up by the local people for preschoolers.

The Pastoral Plan that was to involve the Moerewa Sisters with the Marist Brothers did not work out in practice and it was proposed by the diocese that the sisters move from Kaikohe to Rawene where the need for their presence was great. However the house provided was unsuitable for them and for their ministry. Efforts to find a more suitable house or to buy land and build a house funded by the Congregation, were unsuccessful. Finally in January 1991 the sisters moved back to Kaikohe, this time to Tui Street where they were part of a cluster community of the North with the sisters in Waitaruke and Kerikeri. They were also involved in activities with the local community.

The house in Kerikeri was opened in 1991 when the Bishop asked the sisters to work there. Two sisters began the work of supporting CCD programmes, visiting families and the elderly in their homes

and in rest homes.

In 2003 Bishop Patrick Dunn wrote a pastoral letter to the parishes of Kerikeri, Waitaruke, South Hokianga and Kaikohe asking them to investigate the possibility of all the parishes forming one pastoral area which would operate from 2004 onwards. The resulting Mid North Pastoral Area involved sisters from each part of our Northern community and the Marist Fathers moving around the area offering opportunities for Mass and the sacraments to its scattered communities.

A new era began for St Mary's school, Putaruru with the appointment of its first lay principal, Mr. Pat Rhodes in 1990. By this time the number of sisters on the staff was very much reduced until by the end of 1993, the last Marist Sister on the staff was transferred. The community now numbered just three sisters one of whom was already teaching at John Paul College in Rotorua. After a special Mass of Thanksgiving in 1994 for the fifty two years of Marist presence and ministry in Putaruru, the sisters moved to Rotorua seeking there new opportunities for further ministry. A sister continued to teach at John Paul College and her companions found a ministry in supporting the small local parish of St Joseph, visiting the elderly in their homes and in rest homes, working with CWL and St Vincent de Paul and taking part in local community activities.

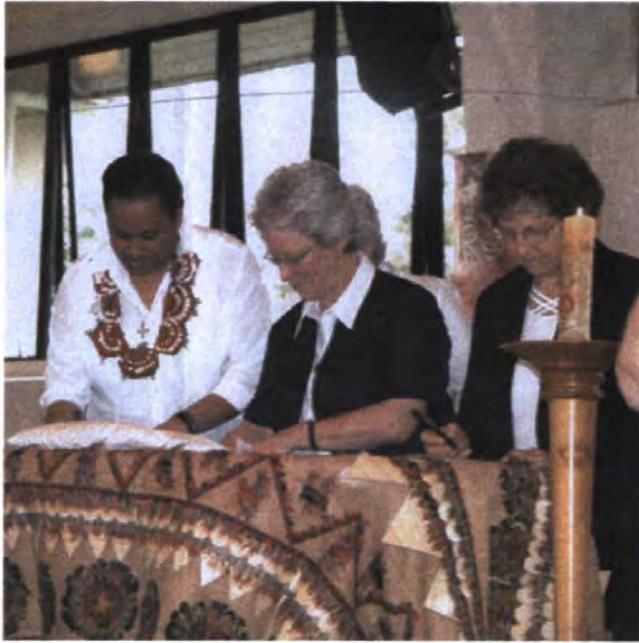
From 1997 they were part of a cluster community with the two sisters at Matata in the Bay of Plenty. This house was begun because of the need for a pastoral worker in the Matata/Edgecumbe/Kawerau area. Accordingly two sisters moved to a rented house in St John's Road, Matata in September; one to see to the pastoral work and the other to be her companion. In 2002 the sisters moved to Mair Street, the former convent of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart who had been the first sisters there in the time of Mary MacKillop. Their convent had been used as a presbytery until the pastoral area was reorganized. The original pastoral work throughout the area was

followed by a ministry in St Joseph's school and to the local Maori women nurturing their spirituality and helping those in need.

From the late 1980's the Karori community continued its ministry in school with some parish visitation by the older sisters. In the early 1990's the community included a sister studying at the nearby Wellington College of Education. A Marist sister continued as Principal of the school until the end of 1992. By 1996 the Karori house was sold and the two remaining sisters moved to Handyside Street in Tawa at the request of the Cardinal, and in the following year to Beauchamp Street, Linden. They quickly became involved in parish and local area activities. When in 1997 Sister Maryanne Harford obtained a position as Director of Religious Studies (DRS) at St Teresa's Karori, a community of three was set up in Fiona Grove, Karori West. Later that year they moved to Karori Road and became part of a cluster community with the Linden sisters. The two communities finally combined in 2002 and moved to Redwood, Tawa.

Our contribution to international communities continued in the 1990's when Sisters Xavier and Margaret Cross spent time in the Brazilian communities and Sister Analulu Tanuvasa moved to the Gambia and later to the Philippines. Sister Marie Therese Ranum became part of the first community providing a Marist presence in Slavutich (Ukraine) in 2005 and Sister Kathleen Bright joined the new Regional community at Kanosia, Papua New Guinea in 2009.

From 2000 to 2004 a house in Richardson Road, Owairaka, served as an Interprovincial Novitiate, an initiative of LOOMS, the group of Provincials of Oceania working together for a number of projects to which each Province contributed. The novitiate closed in 2004 when the last novice moved to Australia to complete her novitiate.



Sr. Seini Fatai Perpetual Profession 2008 with Sr. Jane O'Carroll Regional Leader Asia-Pacific, Sr. Francine - Sector leader Aotearoa-New Zealand.

## *Conclusion*

From its beginnings in the North in 1838 the church in New Zealand has had a Marist presence. At first this was provided by the Fathers and Brothers who acted as their helpers - working as catechists, builders, cooks and whatever other roles were needed. It was not until 1876 that they began to set up schools here. With the arrival of the Marist Sisters in 1927 three branches of the Marist Family were represented in New Zealand responding to the needs of the areas in which they found themselves.

For the Sisters these needs were at first Catholic education and mission work in the North. They expanded their ministry to new areas over the years as their numbers grew, moving into Wellington and Putaruru in the 1940's, to the Hokianga in the 1950's, beginning a motor mission in Moerewa and working in Pompallier College, Whangarei in the 1970's. The late 1980's saw the closing of our houses in Herne Bay, Whangarei and Glen Eden as the numbers of Sisters decreased and this trend continued in the 1990's with the closing of our houses in Putaruru and Karori. However this time the sisters were moving to new localities to respond to other calls for ministry.

Since 2006 we have been part of the Region of Asia Pacific within the Congregation. This region consists of Aotearoa-New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea calling us to a sense of solidarity with countries beyond our own. We bring to the Region the experience of cultural diversity we now experience in our communities and our ministries and we gain from our bonds greater insights into the living of our Marist charism.



Visit of the Superior General Sr. Monica O'Brien 2003.

*Back Row: (L to R) Rose, Margaret Cross, Shirley, Lavinia, Iulia*

*Second Row: Catherine, Maryanne, Margaret Therese, Mary, Patricia Bowley*

*Third Row: Karin, Marie Therese, Judith, Jane, Juliana*

*Fourth Row: Marie, Isabelle, Patricia Sarju, Makareta, Noreen, Margaret Vaney*

*Front: Lorraine, Noela, Antonia, Margarita, Francine, Monica*

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

The Marist Sisters were founded in France in 1817 and received formal recognition by the Holy See by a Decree of Praise given by Pope Pius IX on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1864 and again on October 29<sup>th</sup> 1884. In 1931, Pius XI approved and confirmed the Constitutions the Sisters had lived by since the early days of the Congregation.

When the first Marist Sisters arrived in Fiji in 1892, the Congregation was administered according to Constitutions not yet definitively approved. According to these Constitutions (Art. 353) the Superior General residing in France was the sole administrative authority.

From 1912 there was a Regional Superior resident in Oceania. Her authority, however, was subject directly to the Superior General. This was the situation when the Marist Sisters first came to New Zealand in 1927. The Constitutions as approved in 1931 made provision officially for a Regional Superior to be appointed "in order the better to provide for the government of the houses too far distant from the Mother House." (Art. 413)

In New Zealand at this period, official communications tended to come through Mother Bernard, or in her absence in Fiji, Mother Therese and later through the Superior of Mt Albert.

World War II prevented the holding of General Chapters where further changes of legislation could be initiated, as the General House of the Congregation was in occupied France. As communication with France became impossible, a provisional Regional Council was set up in Australia by Mother Louis Chanel with the approval

of the Apostolic Delegate, to look after the urgent affairs of Oceania. Permissions normally sought from the Superior General were now requested and obtained from the Apostolic Delegate. When the war ended and communication was resumed between France and Oceania, the Regional Council remained as an advisory body. The Superior General still had direct administrative power.

At the 1948 General Chapter a resolution to appoint a Regional Superior for Oceania was taken and Sister Gerald was appointed in 1949. The next General Chapter of 1954 created the Province of Oceania and the change was approved by the Holy See in 1958. So in 1959 the first Provincial of Oceania, Sister Sabina, was appointed. However, the following General Chapter in 1960 passed a resolution to ask permission from the Holy See for Fiji to become a Delegation, having a Delegation Superior and two councillors. Sister Borromeo was appointed Delegation Superior. The Special General Chapter of 1969 made a similar provision for New Zealand and Sister Xavier became Delegation Superior.

The Provincial Chapter of 1984 voted for the erection of the two Delegations into Regions. Australia was to become a Province in its own right maintaining some responsibility for the two Regions now on a much more autonomous footing. The decision was confirmed by the Superior General in her letter to the Provincial of Oceania on August 16<sup>th</sup> 1984. Sister Margaret Cross, who was the Delegation Superior at the time, was the first Regional Superior of New Zealand

The Regional Chapter of Election in 1986 elected Sister Rose Harris as Regional Superior. The first New Zealand Regional Chapter was held in December 1988.

Becoming fully autonomous as a Province had for many years been the desire of many Sisters in New Zealand. In 1993 a consultation was held and the General Administration was approached for the necessary approval. This was granted and the Province of Aotearoa-

New Zealand became a reality on May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1994 with the then Regional Superior, Sister Jane Frances becoming the first Provincial Superior of New Zealand. When, at the General Chapter that year, Sister was appointed to the General Council, Sister Juliana Massey was elected as Provincial.

Further changes were put in train at the General Chapter of 2001 when the new General Administration was given the mandate “to be courageous in promoting new forms of structures and/or collaboration which would make the best use of the energy and skills in the Congregation in order to facilitate its mission.”

Pursuing this mandate the general Administration proposed to the members of the Plenary General Council meeting in Mexico in 2005, that the Congregation no longer be divided into Provinces, of which there were then eight as well as two Regions. A new resolution was passed at this meeting which proposed that the Congregation be divided into three Regions which embraced the previous Provinces and Regions.

The Provinces of Australia, Fiji and New Zealand with the inclusion of the Philippines and later of Papua New Guinea became the Asia Pacific Region with administrative responsibility in the hands of a Regional Leader and her two Councillors. Each of the member countries became a Sector with a Sector Leader and her Assistant (s) having delegated authority from the Regional Leader. The new administrative structure became operative from February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006 with Sister Jane Frances as Regional and Sisters Julie Brand and Rita Raikuna as her Councillors. Sister Lorraine Campbell became our first Sector leader with Sister Francine McGovern as her Assistant.

## **DELEGATION, REGIONAL/PROVINCIAL LEADERS**

### **Delegation Leaders**

Sr Xavier Dunne 1970-1974

Sr Carmel Conran 1975-1981

Sr Margaret Cross 1981-1984

### **Regional Leaders**

Sr Margaret Cross 1984-1986

Sr Rose Harris 1987-1992

Sr Jane Frances O Carroll 1993-1994

### **Provincial Superiors**

Sr Juliana Massey 1994-2000

Sr Marie Challacombe 2000-2003

Sr Lorraine Campbell 2004-2006

## APPENDIX II

### SISTERS WHO HAVE LIVED/WORKED IN NEW ZEALAND

Date of first profession

An asterisk indicates that the sister is deceased

- \*Alexius Storck 1928 (Fiji)
- \*Alphonsus Lodge 1946 (NZ)
- \*Aloysia Carey 1931 (Aust)
- \*Aloysius Sutherland 1940 (Ire)
- Analulu Tanuvasa 1977 (Samoa)
- \*Andre Monjaret 1934 (Fr)
- Angela Scala 1944 (Aust)
- Anne David 1956 (Aust)
- Anne Saunders 1966 (Aust)
- Annette Ormerod 1964 (Matthew) (NZ)
- \*Anselm Berg 1934 (Aust)
- Antonia Avey 1943 (NZ)
- Augusta Thornton 1956 (Ire)
- \*Austin Woodbury 1924 (Aust)
  
- \*Baptista Butler 1935 (Aust)
- \*Benedict Chassaigne 1903 (Fr)
- \*Bernard Gorman 1907 (Ire)
- \*Bernardine Cashen 1900 (Eng)
- \*Borgia Hynes 1932 (NZ)
  
- Campion Higgins 1961 (NZ)
- \*Carmel Conran 1940 (Aust)

- Carroll McDonald 1968 (Hongkong)
- Catherine Casey 1965 (NZ)
- Catherine Lacey 1967 (Aust)
- Catherine Lawson 1974 (NZ)
- \*Cecilia Peters 1950 (NZ)
- \*Cecily Pedemont 1933 (Aust)
- \*Celine Sinclair 1953 (Fiji)
- \*Christopher Horne 1922 (Aust)
- Clare Francis 1947 (Aust)
- \*Colette Conroy 1929 (Aust)
- \*Columba Crowe 1929 (Ire)
- \*Columcille Dalton 1936 (Ire)
- \*Concepta McCarthy 1941 (Ire)
- Consolata Dore 1959 (Ire)
- \*Cuthbert Kelly 1914 (Eng)
- \*Damian Dolan 1932 (Ire)
- \*David Fitzmaurice 1932 (Gibraltar)
- Daniel Reynolds 1972 (NZ)
- \*Dominic Makinson 1915 Aust)
- Dominica Lonergan 1947 (NZ)
- Doreen McCoscar 1937 (Aust)
- Dorothea White 1947 (Aust)
- \*Dosithee Trainor 1923 (Aust)
- Elizabeth Therese Moylan 1948 (Paschal) (Aust)
- \*Emilian Gerethy 1954 (Aust)
- \*Ethelbert Stork 1912 (Eng)
- Fidelis Mc Teigue 1962 (Ire)

- \*Fides Kennedy 1932 (Aust)
- \*Florence Mary McHugh 1934 (de Pazzi) (Aust)
- Francine McGovern 1963 (NZ)
- \*Francesca Tegethoff 1916 (Ger)

Gabriel Foster 1944 (Aust)

- \*Gabriel Mary Dowd 1962 (NZ)
- Gemma Pearson 1964 (Aust)
- Gemma Wilson 1961 (Stephen) (NZ)
- \*Genevieve Laxton 1949 (Robert) (Aust)
- \*Genevieve Lyons 1933 (Hilarion) (Aust)
- \*Gerald Hawkins 1929 (Aust)
- \*Geraldine Keenan 1936 (NZ)

\*Herman Heesh 1926 (Aust)

- \*Irene Frost 1931 (Aust)
- \*Irene Kilgour 1966 (NZ)
- Isabelle Harding 1952 (NZ)
- Iulia Pua 1988 (Samoa)
- Iutita La'ulu 1983 (Samoa)

Jane Frances O'Carroll 1966 (NZ)

- \*Jerome Kennedy 1929 (Ire)
- \*Joachim Gannon 1933 (Mary Catherine) (Ire)
- \*Joan Madden 1945 (Aust)
- Joanne Malcolm 1966 (NZ)
- \*John Berchmans 1934 (Aust)
- \*John Gualbert Lyndsay 1935 (Fiji)
- \*Josephine Henaghan 1940 (NZ)

- Jude Harris 1965 (Aust)
- Judith O'Donnell 1947 (NZ)
- Juliana Massey 1953 (NZ)
- \*Julienne Vincent 1945 (Aust)
- 
- \*Kare Peterson 1954 (Dorothy) (NZ)
- Karin Christieson 1951 (NZ)
- Kathleen Bright 1959 (Marie Lucy) (NZ)
- Kathleen Daly 1949 (Gonzaga) (Aust)
- \*Kathleen Jennings 1940 (Mary Malachy) (Ire)
- \*Kathleen O'Neill 1921 (Marie Dolores) (NZ)
- Koleta Lui 1983 (Am Samoa)
- \*Kostka Dougherty 1928 (Aust)
- 
- \*Laurence Ulberg 1959 (Samoa)
- \*Leonie Rohr 1934 (Aust)
- \*Liguori Bonnet 1923 (Fr)
- \*Linus Power 1939 (Aust)
- \*Loretto Slattery 1955 (NZ)
- Lorraine Campbell 1977 (NZ)
- \*Louise Nelson 1934 (Aust)
- Loyola Grehan 1939 (Ire)
- Lucia Allen 1948 (NZ)
- \*Lucy Rea 1913 (Ire)
- 
- Makareta Gilbert 1954 (Basil) (NZ)
- \*Marcella Somerville 1937 (Aust)
- \*Maree Urwin 1961 (Dominic Savio) (NZ)
- Margaret Cross 1962 (Martin de Porres) (NZ)
- Margaret Crossan 1989 (NZ)

Margaret Cummins 1942 (Domitilla) (Aust)  
 Margaret Vaney 1960 (Andrew) (NZ)  
 Margaret Therese Kerins 1955 (Patrick) (NZ)  
 Margarita Bourke 1946 (NZ)  
 \*Marie Bernarde Madigan 1954 (Aust)  
 Marie Challacombe 1954 (Marie de la Croix) (Eng)  
 \*Marie Eustelle Loughnan 1917 (Aust)  
 \*Marie Hervé le Parquer 1927 (Fr)  
 \*Marie Laurentia Hahn 1922 (Aust)  
 \*Marie Noellie Perrin 1937 (Aust)  
 Marie O'Reilly (1965) (Ire)  
 Marie Patricia Toomey 1947 (Benigna) (Aust)  
 Marie Therese Ranum 1962 (Marie Bede) (NZ)  
 \*Martha Drummond 1949 (Aust)  
 \*Martin Kennedy 1934 (Aust)  
 Maryanne Harford 1977 (Aust)  
 Mary Brennan 1954 (Eusebius) (Ire)  
 Mary Cleophas Crane 1938 (Aust)  
 Mary Dore 1956 (Senan) (Ire)  
 Mary Frances Boyle 1969 (Ire)  
 \*Mary Josephine Murphy 1932 (Osmund) (Aust)  
 \*Mary McCarrick 1947 (Roger) (Ire)  
 \*Mary Mullen 1930 (Ursula) (NZ)  
 Mary Presentation Gorman 1939 (Ire)  
 \*Maur Woodbury 1945 (Aust)  
 Maura Hennessy 1957 (Cannera) (Ire)  
 \*Michael Sullivan 1943 (Aust)  
 Moira Ryan 1955 (Redempta) (Ire)  
 Monica Vailea 1956 (Tonga)  
 \*Muriel Austin 1939 (Stephanie) (Aust)

- Noela Iosefa 1995 (Samoa)  
 Noelene Simmons 1978 (Aust)  
 \*Nolasco Storek 1935 (Fiji)  
 Norma Wood 1948 (Evangelist) (Aust)
- \*Odilon Johnson 1931 (Aust)
- Patricia Bartley 1954 (Christine) (Aust)  
 Patricia Bowley 1949 (Cyril) (NZ)  
 Patricia Sarju 1962 (Fiji)  
 \*Paulin La Roche 1925 (Eng)  
 Pauline Darragh 1965 (Kevin) (NZ)  
 \*Pelagia Murphy 1931 (Aust)  
 \*Philibert Connor 1928 (Aust)  
 \*Philippa Mahoney 1949 (NZ)  
 Philomena Hall 1949 (Aust)
- \*Raymond Sharkey 1931 (NZ)  
 \*Regina Casey 1936 (NZ)  
 Regis Smith 1950 (NZ)  
 \*Rita Gardiner 1935 (Ire)  
 Rita Raikuna 1977 (Fiji)  
 \*Romanus Fitzmaurice 1937 (Gibraltar)  
 Rose Harris 1954 (Euphrasia) (NZ)  
 \*Rose O'Meara 1949 (NZ)  
 Rose Shields 1951 (Stanislaus) (Aust)  
 Rosemary Simon 1971 (Fiji)  
 \*Rosina Stenson 1932 (Ire)  
 Ruth Davis 1977 (Aust)

- \*Sabina Carmody 1936 (NZ)
- \*Scholastica Conroy 1928 (Aust)
- Shirley Day 1952 (Catherine) (NZ)
- Suzanne Green (1974 (Aust)
  
- \*Tarcisius Bouquet 1925 (Fr)
- Teresa Moran 1954 (Honorius) (Ire)
- \*Thérèse Groslier 1928 (Fr)
- \*Therese Scott 1924 (Ire)
  
- Veronica Lum 1964 (Fiji)
- \*Veronica McColgan 1929 (Aust)
- \*Xavier Dunne 1946 (NZ)

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## ENDNOTES

### Abbreviations Used

ASM-GA	Archives of the General Administration of the Marist Sisters
AMSPANZ	Archives of the Marist Sisters Province of Aotearoa New Zealand
ACDA	Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Auckland.
AAW	Archives of the Archdiocese of Wellington

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- 1 Servant. L. sm to Fr Theolier, St Chamond, from Annales des Missions d'Océanie, Vol 1 p.1 in McKeefry & Pompallier (1938), p.23
- 2 Simmons, E.R.,(1982) p.45
- 3 Pompallier, J.B.F. (1888), pp.62-3
- 4 Scott, D.,(1983), p.16
- 5 St Mary's Parish, Mt Albert (1997), p.3
- 6 Gobillot, P., sm (1930), p.947
- 7 Gobillot, P., sm (1930), p.948
- 8 Gobillot, P., sm (1930), p.949
- 9 Bernard sm AMSPANZ Personal Papers MS1/3
- 10 Gobillot, P., (1930), p.950
- 11 Bernard sm, AMSPANZ personal Papers MS 1/3
- 12 Josephine rsm, AMSPANZ Letter to Mother Bernard, 9.10.26
- 13 Austin sm, AMSPANZ Personal Papers MS 2/1
- 14 Bernard sm, AMSPANZ Personal Papers MS 1/3
- 15 Austin sm, AMSPANZ Personal Papers MS 2/1
- 16 Ibid MS 2/4
- 17 The Month, 15.2.1927
- 18 Austin sm, AMSPANZ Personal Papers MS 2/1
- 19 Austin sm, AMSPANZ Personal Papers MS 2/1
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- 29 Simmons, E.R., (1982), p.234
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- 31 Aloysia sm, AMSPANZ Personal Papers MS1
- 32 Genevieive sm, AMSPANZ Taped account of early days in Waitaruke
- 33 Florence Mary sm, AMSPANZ ibid
- 34 Zealandia 17.12.36
- 35 Alink/Liston ASM – GA OC 20/73A Letter to Mother Marie Joseph 30.1.36 and 6.2.36
- 36 Marie Joseph sm, ACDA Lis 136-1 Letter to Bishop Liston 17.3.36
- 37 Zealandia, 17.12.36
- 38 Bernard sm, ACDA Lis 136-2 Letter to Bishop Liston 19.1.50
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- 40 Liston, J., ACDA Lis 109 Letter Apostolic Delegate 2.4.52
- 41 A School that is largely a Family Affair, *The New Zealand Weekly News*, 19.4.71
- 42 Liston, J., ACDA Lis 1 Letter to Mother Marie Joseph 28.2.50
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- 44 Sabina sm, AMSPANZ Letter to Sister Damian 5.3.62
- 45 Wysocki B., sm AMSPANZ Letter to Fr Beban sm 20.8.76
- 46 Parish Bulletin – St Francis Xavier Parish, Whangarei, February 77
- 47 Mill Hill, (1966)
- 48 Chanel sm, ACDA Lis 1 Letter to Bishop Liston 11.11.41
- 49 Ethelbert sm, ACDA Lis 1 Letter to Bishop Liston 3.5.42
- 50 Chanel sm, ACDA Lis 1 Letter to Bishop Liston 25.2.43
- 51 Ethelbert sm, ACDA Lis 1 Letter to Bishop Liston 30.7.43
- 52 Pompallier J.B.F., (1888), p.72-3
- 53 Forest, J., sm, Letter to J.C. Colin from the Bay of Islands, 1842, *Annales des Missions d'Océanie*, Vol 1 pp 134-7 translated in Goulter (1957) p.59
- 54 Keyes, L., (1968) p.135
- 55 Simmons, E.R., (1978), p.57
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- 57 Herman sm, AMSPANZ Personal Papers MS 4/1

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- 59 Bernard sm, AMSPANZ Personal Papers MS M 1/6
- 60 O'Shea, T. sm, AAW Letter from Archbishop O'Shea sm to Mother Bernard 1.5.43
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