



12 December 2018

E ngā mana, E ngā reo, E ngā karangarangatanga maha,
Ko koutou na kei te whakapumautanga o te Ariki,
Tena tatou katoa!

By now you may well have heard that at the end of January 2019 we will be farewelling Pa David Rawiri Gledhill and Pa David Moore as they leave our Diocese to take up new appointments in Ōtaki and Wairoa. Needless to say, an enormous debt of gratitude is owed them for their dedicated priestly mission and ministry particularly among the Catholic Māori people and communities throughout the Diocese. We pray God's blessings upon them and wish them well on the journey ahead.

At this time it is also appropriate to remember with deep gratitude and admiration the devoted service in the Diocese of Pa Hemi Hekiera. The 'dynamic duo', of Pa Hemi and Pa Rawiri, with 'tyres to the road' has inspired, served, nurtured and deepened the faith and life of generations of Catholic Māori. We are confident that their rich legacy, their gift to us, will continue to bear its fruit in the time to come.

It is fitting, too, that we acknowledge and thank the Society of Mary whose charism and missionary spirit has been present since the early growth of the Church in our Diocese. They were the first to bring the Catholic faith to the Diocese and the fruit of their labours are our own Pa Wiremu Te Awhitu and Pihopa Takuirā Mairu. Following the Marist Fathers, other courageous priests and men of faith arrived in the Mill Hill Fathers. Theirs too is a legacy deeply rooted in the soil of generations past, present and most surely will live on in generations to come. May the Lord continue to fill them with his blessings!

With the departure of the Marist Fathers the mission and ministry of Pastoral Care to Māori is now entrusted to us in the Diocese. To help facilitate this transition it has been envisaged that 2019 be set down as a 'fallow year'. In this way we can respect

this time of change and to use it to our advantage as we look to and plan for the future.

I have asked that next year, Pa Gerard Paterson, our Vicar for Māori, make connections with the various parishes and communities/whānau proximate to them, around the Diocese. I want the voice of Māori to be heard as we discern the best way forward in the midst of our changing and challenging times.

This year of reflection gives us the opportunity to look to the past with gratitude for our tūpuna in the faith, to embrace the present with a renewed enthusiasm and missionary zeal and to look forward to the future with confidence.

In the same way, the 'fallow year' will be for Pa Gerard a helpful preparation for when he takes on his new assignment within the Maori Pastorate in 2020 and will enable details and practicalities to grow and emerge.

In the meantime, practical ways of supporting, as much as possible, those faithful whānau ministered to by the Marist Fathers in recent years, is still being discerned. While there is much to be done and to learn, a reflective focus and pace ahead better serves our purposes at this time. Also vital is the ongoing support and participation of each and all as we move along, for ours is a shared endeavour and mission.

As we live through this graced time of change and possibility our hearts at present sense the Lord's approaching nearness as we look forward to celebrating once again the Christ-Child born to us. In Jesus, God has pitched his tent among us. Therefore, 'there is no need to be afraid.'

Let us continue to 'ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest', throughout the coming year and beyond.

I roto i te Karaiti,
Naku noa,

+ *Steve Lowe*,

✠ Steve Lowe
BISHOP OF HAMILTON