

Reflection on Ohariu Parish into the future.

I do not have a blue print for the future of our parish buildings. I believe this is a role for a property specialist group.

I do though have suggestions for what needs to be in place for good decisions to be made about our buildings.

1 We need to be a community explicitly praying for discernment and wisdom as we go forward. Through prayerful agreement we need to be certain that we are following God's will for our parish. It is my experience that when we base everything on prayer and follow the direction God has given us that He will pay for everything He orders. It is a journey of faith, of discernment of total trust in divine providence.

2 Our governance/ management structure for the years ahead needs to be clarified. Our current arrangement runs out towards the end of this year. To date there has been no parish consultation/agreement as to what the structure will be in 2022 and onwards. We cannot make a decision about property without this structure being in place to own and direct this decision. It is like building a house without anyone being responsible for the building let alone knowing the plan for the building.

Our Parish is called to mission. To take the love and teachings of Jesus out into the community. Any decision that is made about property has to be undergirded by this call to mission; to be salt and light in our community.

How do we do this? I suggest this mission is not dependent on churches; on maintaining what we have, or reducing the number, or by building a super church.

It is dependent upon building local communities; neighbourhood communities-basic ecclesiastical communities, house churches or as has been developed in our parish, little churches. Regardless of name the concept is the same. Gathering people together in a local geographic area; meeting together in prayer, worship, reflection on scripture, communion.

Two important principles in this concept. The first is that these neighbourhood churches are led by a person, persons, a couple who are trained for this role. They are the equivalent of the lay catechist ministry that the pope as reported in the latest Welcom is calling to be established in every parish world wide.

The second principle is that these little churches are open to others in the community, and being especially mindful of non practising catholics, the sick, the bereaved, the lonely in their area and reaching out to them. The little churches are a wonderful springboard for mission.

Training/support is an essential element for the success of this concept and this training needs to be happening now.

4 The population of our parish is growing. There is ongoing development to the north of Newlands, Grenada village and Churton park. We cannot close our eyes to the reality that thousands more people will live in our area. This is not a time for retrenchment of our parish. We must be in a position to reach out to all the newcomers in our area. Little churches and trained lay people are essential in this development.

5 This takes me to my final point. It may be that the number of big church centres are reduced —I have no concept as to how all this will be shaped up. But I do know this. That the larger communities that make up our parish( Churton Park, Newlands, Johnsonville, Khandallah/Ngaio ) need a focal point-a place where they can gather for liturgies, prayer, meetings and similar . Such places are our spiritual marae; our turangawaewae-our spiritual standing place. I am strongly in favour that each of the larger areas has a chapel with which they can identify especially if the area has lost its church. Can I add that having a physical building in an area dedicated to God, open to the community is in itself a witness to God. It is a tangible witness to the presence in the area of faith filled disciples of Christ.

Underneath all the above is our complete and utter dependence on God express through prayer/attitude/action to guide us.

“Trust in the Lord with all thy heart and lean not on thy own understandings. In all thy ways acknowlege Him and He will direct thy paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6