

## ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF A GROWING TAURANGA CATHOLIC COMMUNITY.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address Fr. Mark's report circulated on Sunday 12 March.

Father Mark states "The current facilities, as they are, are not adequate to meet the needs of a growing Catholic community". The hard reality is that we have a continuing population growth in the city of Tauranga which shows no signs of easing.

In 20 years or so we may have only two priests in the Western Bay of Plenty, one in Tauranga and the other at the Mount.

This clearly indicates that we will require a large church twice the size of the current Church, with room for expansion. Outlying churches will need to close even possibly Katikati and Te Puke, centralising Catholic community life and worship.

St. Mary Immaculate Church is already inadequate and it is questionable whether it could be extended on its present site. To build upwards with a loft or mezzanine floor is a short term option and would not overcome other problems.

The Lovekinlock and Prendoes reports indicate notable failings in weather tightness and building practices which would require extensive remedial works. Although no costs accompany these reports it clearly shows the building is beyond its "economic life". There is no seismic report on the building.

To build on the current Cameron Rd/Elizabeth St. site may not accommodate the expanding Catholic community or the configuration of a modern Catholic Church and would exacerbate the problem of suitable parking. The architectural plan does nothing to address this problem. Shuffling a few rooms about would be expensive and adds little to the need for expansion.

There are a number of reasons for moving to a more expansive site not the least being suitable parking.

The purchase of a group of residential homes within the city would be expensive but offset by the sale of the present site

To move to Aquinas College would leave room perhaps for the re-building of a smaller Church at the Cameron Road/Elizabeth St. site but could only be used for weekday Masses or funerals. Public transport to Aquinas on Sundays could create a problem for the elderly.

With a large Church there would be a presbytery, offices and service centre to accommodate the priest and wider Catholic community.

This would not be a precedent.

I endorse most of Monsignor Trevor Murray's comments but somewhat puzzled by his observation that the Celebrant would not connect with back pews. This may apply to the architectural plan provided. A future Church would surely be semi-circular bringing us closer to the altar, allowing for joyful worship.

We need to pray that God will lead us on this particular journey and that the new Church will reach out to all of us regardless of where it is situated.

Tony Fuller

