

To Father Mark, parish priest, and all Members of the Parish Council:

With the possibility that the catholic church might be abandoning central Tauranga for a Pyes Pa Rd site, I was faced with the unpalatable fact that I'm not going to be able drive there. This was foremost in my mind when I first heard the news. And possibly I may not be alone. When you get older the faster more numerous traffic out of Tauranga city becomes a little unnerving and quite a lot stressful.

In injunction with this fact, I believe that a city the size of a growing Tauranga needs its central catholic church, however this may be done - a new church on the present site with underground parking - a new church on some other central city site - however it may be accomplished. I believe it needs to be done.

I have every sympathy with Father Mark fearing the coming years as clergy numbers fall away, when he may find himself the lone survivor at the helm. Talking with Father Michael in Wairoa, he told me of a priest currently handling 11 masses, so this problem is widespread. This situation has already reached Holland, where the breakaway branch of the church has women priests officiating, while the main church has pre-blessed wafers for parishes where a priest cannot attend, or attends on a rota system. In his absence prominent parishioners take a prayer service. No doubt other countries have similar solutions for the moment.

But people actually have to have a church they can get to, and first and foremost is that central church in the heart of a city. I hope somehow we can achieve this.

JILLI ANDRE