

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

**24 March 2017**

**Dear Father Mark,**

Please find my comments and responses to the discussion on this issue. Thank you for giving parishioners the opportunity to participate in this issue of the changing needs of Tauranga's Catholic community. I have been a parishioner of St Mary's (St Thomas Aquinas) since 2003 and have been a parishioner in seven other NZ Catholic parish communities in the past.

### **Option 3**

To support the needs of a growing Catholic community, the Parish vision of loving God and joyful worship, active ministry and community outreach, I wish to support Option 3, with some development medium term. I conclude that there is a need to build a new church and centre at Pyes Pa Road, over a period, to hopefully enable the management of the parish financial capability. The rapid development of Pyes Pa and Tariko housing estates will likely require another Parish site to be developed within 10 years. We are blessed with a wide range of capable people who may wish to contribute to the running of another site, although shortage of Priests is a very relevant issue.

Perhaps as a temporary short to mid-term measure for the Pyes Pa site, one of the unused Hamilton churches (or from elsewhere) may be transported by a heavy haulage firm to this site. (I attended St Joseph's Brent Road, Rotorua where the 'church' was a former cook house/hall from Taupo- it was hired out to a children's play group during the week. This served the community well for many years and did not hang an enormous financial burden around parishioners' necks).

### **Elizabeth Street site**

I support option 3 because Elizabeth Street is centrally situated for local parishioners, visitors, tourists, seamen, and potentially Polytechnic and University students (tertiary development in the next block) and is well known by the local community. The site could be developed into a greater multi-purpose centre, including administration.

As other people have said, the Elizabeth Street site has precious and strong emotional ties for many parishioners and others. To continue to utilize and enhance this site I agree with Patricia Brooks that it could offer Parish office, a way-side chapel, a drop-in hospitality centre, a St Vincent de Paul shop and meeting rooms. It would be an ideal place to further offer Catholic Social Services and community work (e.g. groups for the mentally unwell, older people, new parishioners). A shop would be best facing 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, where more street parking is available, and greater accessibility as opposed to Elizabeth Street or Cameron Road access. Such Community Centre facilities would require paid staff. St Peter's, a block away have just developed a new complex like this.

I agree with the comment that the site lacks aesthetic proportionality between the size of the building and its environs, perhaps the garage can be replaced by outside seating/green space as it may not be needed in the future. I am wondering if lift access could be provided (e.g. for funerals) on the northeast side, rather than vehicle access totally around the church as has been suggested. The perceived distance to back pew on the plan may not be a barrier if the overhead projections are well positioned, as they are now.

The Artic plan appears to indicate a large foyer, which is conducive to community building, participation, inclusion and welcoming, although the meeting room appears small in comparison to

the larger kitchen area, which is less likely to be used for the same periods of time, the meeting rooms may be used.

### **Parking and access**

In my observation, parking is adequate for the 90% of practising Catholics on Sunday, as has been identified, this is the largest group of church goers. I know parking during the working week is more difficult, but there are two parking buildings within a block of this site. I have always felt the driveway outside the two-main entrance/exit doors have created a barrier to community 'conversations' and community outreach, as people exit into a vehicle traffic area. Further these are also on the 'cold side' of the church, which again does not encourage people to linger. One access issue is also the height of the tread on the steps up from Cameron Road, which may not comply with Health & Safety regulations and create access barriers especially for older people.

### **Conclusion**

It is pleasing that an eco-systems perspective has been considered along with theological and liturgical principles coupled with emotional attachment, historical and cultural factors are being considered, although I have no idea about the financial implications for each option offered, nor the cost of repairs required to our Elizabeth Street church.

Yours sincerely

Trish Hanlen