

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER PARISH



The 50th Anniversary Celebrations
Sunday 11th November 2012

Acknowledgements should be made to parishioners Lyn Burt, Margaret Lanigan and Terry O'Brien for their hard work and research in obtaining information and articles that made this booklet possible.

For the Golden Jubilee celebration there will be a 9:30am Mass on the 11th November 2012 which will be officiated by the Archbishop John Dew, Archbishop of Wellington.



Together with our Moderator Father David Dowling and a number of past Parish Priests as well as Father Stephen Berezcz who grew up in Stokes Valley.

WE RECALL

"Reference: Article SPARTAN 1980 Page 10"

S.V. ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH PROPERTY

The First plan of the Hutt Valley, prepared by S.C. Brees in 1843, shows Stokes Valley divided into 10 sections, Section 68 extended from Richard Grove to Evans Street and the western side of Stokes Valley Road, and under a New Zealand Company land order was selected by a Mr. Alzdorf, apparently as an agent. In 1864, Commissioner David Lewis, who had been appointed to hear and decide land claims, granted Section 68 to A. and A. Short.

In 1874 the section was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. John Walker who already owned Section 69 which was from Evans Street to opposite Kennedy Grove. On the death of the Walkers, the properties came into the hands of their daughter, Mrs. Mary Gardner, as did a further area to the south of Section 69, which had belonged to a Mr. Whiteman, a relative of the Walkers. Most of this block was sold to the Rev. Francis Sherriff in 1896.

At a later stage, Section 68 was sold to George Winders and was purchased from him in 1910 by Dr Prendergast Knight who farmed a large portion of Stokes Valley under the name of "Fontenaye". In 1920 he sold the farm to Mr. S. D. Thomson who decided to subdivide, and by 1927 Section 68 had been divided into 10 blocks and the area which is now the property of the Roman Catholic Church was purchased by Cecil and Nancy Petherick who built the house which is now the old Presbytery. They also established a small poultry farm on the land.

While their house was being built, Mrs. Petherick was establishing a flower garden and for this purpose travelled from Wellington by train to Haywards – now Manor Park – and waded across the river. She eventually had a very beautiful garden that was her pride and joy and had the admiration of her neighbours. Some years after her death of her husband Mrs. Petherick sold the property and left with her son to reside at Melling.

During the early part of the Petherick's occupancy, on the roadside of the present Church site, were the letter boxes of the Stokes Valley residents, there being no delivery past that point. The new owners were Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Small. Ralph travelled daily to his work in Wellington and they farmed a few fowls. In 1946 I painted the house for Mr. Small and I noticed that as the old Presbytery it has again been repainted. In 1949 Mr. and Mrs. Small sold the property to the Roman Catholic Church and moved to Auckland.

A Church hall was constructed by voluntary labour on the present site and was opened by Archbishop McKeefrey on 4th October 1959. In 1975 the hall was moved to the rear of the property and the present Church, St. Francis Xavier was built, being dedicated and blessed by Archbishop Delargey on 30 November 1975.

If Nancy Petherick could return to Stokes Valley today she would find her little home tucked away among Church buildings, and her beautiful garden under concrete.

Within the last few years the Roman Catholic Church has made part of the land available for pensioner flats and the S. V. Urban Marae.

The Parish History

The parish of St. Francis Xavier was established on the 19th January 1962. Prior to that it was formerly part of St. Peter & Paul's parish lower Hutt.

The first Mass was celebrated by Father Summers in early January 1947 in the sitting room of the home of Mr. & Mrs. Small. This home was situated where the Catholic Presbytery now sits. From the 27th March 1947, Mass was celebrated in the Koroanui Hall, on the 4th Sunday of every month, with the average attendance was about 10 people. As the numbers increased Mass was celebrated twice a month. The hall was on the site of the fire station.

In 1951 Father Summers negotiated the purchase of the land where the present church and Koroanui Marae now occupy. The big step forward in establishing the parish was when the St. Francis Xavier Hall was built. This was built by voluntary labour, under the guidance of Monsignor Fletcher, the Parish Priest of Lower Hutt. The Hall was blessed and opened by the late Cardinal McKeefry in September 1960. Our first Parish Priest was the late Father Michael Faherty. This church hall served the parish for the next 15 years and is a credit to all who had a hand in its construction.

The growing number of families in the parish attending Mass necessitated the removal of the hall to its present site, at the back of the property to make way for the building of the new more spacious church. The hall will not be forgotten. It is used as part of the Marae for its educational programme, and it stands as a memorial to the pioneers who helped build this Catholic Community here in Stokes Valley.

Francis Xavier, born **Francisco de Jasso y Azpilicueta** (7 April 1506 –

3 December 1552). The life of St. Francis Xavier is an epic of supernatural proportions. He was born 7 April 1506 at the family castle of Xavier, in the Kingdom of Navarre, North Western Spain. He was born to an aristocratic family of the Kingdom of Navarre, the youngest son of Juan de Jaso, privy counsellor to King John III of Navarre (Jean d'Albret), and Doña Maria de Azpilcueta y Aznárez, sole heiress of two noble Navarrese families.



The castle of the Xavier family was later acquired by the Company of Jesus.

When nineteen, he met St. Ignatius at the University of Paris and became one of the first members of the Society of Jesus. In 1525, Francis went to study at the Collège Sainte-Barbe in Paris. Together with Ignatius of Loyola and five others, he founded the Society of Jesus: on 15 August 1534, in a small chapel in Montmartre, they made vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and also vowed to convert the Muslims in the Middle East (or, failing this, carry out the wishes of the Pope).

He was ordained in 1537 and shortly afterwards, he was selected by St. Ignatius to pioneer new missionary fields in the Far East. He left Lisbon on 7 April 1541 along with two other Jesuits and the new Viceroy Martim Afonso de Sousa, on board the *Santiago*. From August until March 1542 he remained in Mozambique, having reached Goa, then capital of Portuguese India's on 6 May 1542, and also visiting Vasai. There he was invited to head Saint Paul's College, a pioneer seminary for the education of secular priests that became the first Jesuit headquarters in Asia, but soon departed, having spent the following three years in India.

In 1542, he left for his first missionary activity among the Paravars, katesar/kadaiyar Pattamkattiyars(head of fishery coast) and mukkuvars, pearl fishers along the east coast of southern India, North of Cape Comorin (or *Sup Santaz*). He built nearly 40 churches along the coast with the fund of local headmen and king, out of this St. Stephen's Church

Fired with an extraordinary zeal, he blazed the trail of the gospel far across the sub-continent of India to the Fishery coast, then down to the East Indies and on to Malacca and the Moluccas and up the Empire of Japan, which he reached in 1549.

His missionary life was one of incredible hardships borne with an unfaltering faith. Nowhere is the tale more graphically told than in his letters, several of which are given here. On the 3rd December 1552, while waiting permission to enter China, he fell victim to a malignant fever and died on the island Shangchuan, off Canton.

He was first buried on a beach at Shangchuan Island. His incorrupt body was taken from the island in February 1553 and was temporarily buried in St. Paul's church in Malacca on 22nd March 1553. An open grave in the church now marks the place of Xavier's burial. On 11th December 1553, Xavier's body was shipped to Goa. The body is now in the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, where it was placed in a glass container encased in a silver casket on 2nd December 1637.

Francis Xavier is a Catholic saint. He was beatified by Paul V on 25th October 1619, and was canonized by Gregory XV on 12 March 1622, at the same time as Ignatius Loyola. He is considered to be a patron saint of Roman Catholic missionaries in foreign lands. His feast day is the 3rd December.

The feast of Saint Francis Xavier is celebrated on 8th December, although it is celebrated sometimes on 3rd December.

Within weeks his body was disinterred and found to be incorrupt. St. Francis was finally and fittingly buried at the scene of his first labours, Goa. He was proclaimed Patron of all Catholic missions by Pope St. Pius X.

“A more detailed account of his St. Francis's life and works can be found at this website”
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Xavier

ST.FRANCIS XAVIER LETTER 1549

“There are two things which support me against all the threats and preparations of the devil, who is already threatening hostilities and letting us know clearly enough that he means war to the knife, in order to frighten us from our course. The first of these is, as I have just said, the conviction that God knows with perfect clearness the rectitude of my intentions in undertaking the voyage. The second is, the most certain knowledge of the entire and absolute dominion of the will of God over all created things, so that no one of them can do anything at all except by the permission of God. And that his law binds the devils themselves, and that, however much they may wish to hurt anyone, they cannot do so unless they first obtain leave from God, is clearly seen in the history of Job. The Sacred Scriptures bears witness, that his most savage enemy Satan could not in the slightest degree harm that holy man without the assent and pleasure of God.”

The Pilgrimage of Poppy and Milton Watts

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

"Reference: An article taken from the SPARTAN November 1984 written by Poppy & Milton Watts"

Three weeks ago Poppy and I climbed the steps to the top of St. Paul's Hill in the historic city of Malacca, in Malaysia. In front of the ruined St. Paul's church is the statue of St. Francis Xavier, one of the most famous names connected with the city. As we stood before the statue, I felt that the story of this Saint would be of interest to more than our Catholic brethren who attend the St. Francis Xavier Church in Stokes Valley.

St. Francis Xavier's name and influence have survived the ravages of time. He is venerated in a thousand different places throughout the world, and in innumerable institutions of charity and learnings named after him. On a plaque attached to the statue is engraved this inscription: *"This statue was donated by the then Bishop of Malacca on behalf of all the Catholics of Malaya on the occasion of the fourth centenary celebrations held from March 12th to March 22nd 1953"*. It was erected by the Malacca Historical Society in March, 1954.

St. Francis Xavier's birth coincided with the emergence of a new era in world affairs. His missionary journeys extended over eleven years, from his time in Lisbon in 1541 to his death in 1552. In that time he travelled a total of 38,000 mile to spread Christianity from Malacca to Indonesia, Moloccus Islands, Philippines, Japan and China.

When he died his body was temporarily buried in St. Paul's Church, where he had first preached in 1545. Some nine months later it was sent to the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, India, where it remains to this day. There is an open grave inside the ruins of St. Paul's Church, Malacca to mark where the Saint was first buried.

Today Xavier is revered in Malacca, more than 400 years after he lived and worked there, not only by Catholics of Malacca but also by the thousands of tourists who visit his one time tomb on St. Paul's Hill. On the 3rd December if it is a Sunday, or, if it is a weekday, on the succeeding Sunday, every year large crowds gather on St. Paul's Hill to renew their veneration to the saintly man.

PRIESTS WHO HAVE SERVED THE PARISH OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

1962 – 1966	Father Michael Faherty	Parish Priest
1965 – 1967	Father Michael Madden	Assistant
1965	Father Brian Carruthers	Locum Tenes
1967 – 1977	Father Hugh McHale	Parish Priest
1968 – 1977	Father James Davis	Assistant
1968	Father Warren Fowler	Administrator
1968	Father Matthew Griffin	Assistant
1978 – 1980	Father Owen Dolan	Parish Priest
1978	Father John Roberts	Deacon
1981 – 1986	Father Raymond Stachurski	Parish Priest
Feb – May 1987	Father Francis Whittaker	Parish Priest
June 1987 – 1995	Father Joseph Keegan	Parish Priest
Oct – Dec 1990	Monsignor Bernard Tottman	Administrator
Jan – April 1991	Father Michael McCabe	Locum Tenes
1996	Father John Berry	Parish Priest
1997	Father John Greally	Parish Priest
1998 – 2007	Father Desmond Moosman	Parish Priest
2008 – Dec 2011	Father Mike Miers	Parish Priest
2012	Father David Dowling	Parish Priest

FATHER MICHAEL FAHERTY



Father Michael Faherty, was our first Parish Priest and was appointed to Stokes Valley when we were declared an independent parish in February 1962. Father was ordained in Tuam, Ireland in 1953 and came to New Zealand the following year. Father worked in Newtown and Waipawa before coming to Stokes Valley.

He experienced some ill health when he first arrived in New Zealand, so it was a big challenge to take on the development of a new parish in a new community.

Father Michael developed a new planned giving programme to enable him to plan for the future of the parish.

Father Michael left Stokes Valley in 1966, he then was working in America, before returning to Tuam, Ireland.

He died in the late 1990's.

FATHER MICHAEL MADDEN



Father Michael Madden was born in Kenmare, Ireland in 1938.

He attended St. Brendan's College, then St Patrick's College, Seminar in Thurles, Ireland where he was ordained in Holy Cross Church, Kenmare June 1963. He came to New Zealand about 1964, served first in Christchurch then came to Stokes Valley in 1965. He was a very keen sportsman, especially hand-ball, fishing and golf. While at St. Brendan's College he was the area champion.

He was assistant to Father Faherty and then to Father McHale. He returned to Ireland to visit his family in 1967, and when he returned he served in Takapau, Waipawa and then Wairoa.

After serving in New Zealand for 32 years, he returned to his family in Ireland in April 1995 and then died a month later. At his funeral his coffin was draped by a Maori Chiefs cloak, which had been presented to him by the Maori people of Wairoa. This showed the high esteem he was held in by the people of that district.

FATHER HUGH McHALE

Father
Hugh P. McHale



Father Hugh McHale was born in County Mayo, Ireland. He later lived for some years in Dublin. He was ordained at All-Hallows College Drumcondra, Dublin, which was a Missionary College in 1949.

He came to New Zealand in 1949 and was appointed at Lower Hutt as an assistant. He was later appointed in turn to Miramar, Wairoa, Pungarehu (Taranaki), Seddon, Waitara, Stokes Valley and finally to Upper Hutt. It was while he was at Lower Hutt, that he first celebrated Mass in Stokes Valley. At that time Mass was held in the old Koraunui Hall which was next to the fire station. During this time Stokes Valley was part of the Lower Hutt Parish, and he used to alternate with Fathers J.J. Fletcher – later to become Rt. Rev. Monsignor, and with Father K. Hyland.

Father Mc.Hale had a gift of understanding those who had any sort of psychological problem, and would spend hour after hour with such people helping them with delicate understanding. He was, of course, a deeply religious, sincere and spiritual man. Many will have seen him pacing alongside the old church hall, each week-day morning, summer and winter, saying his rosary prior to celebrating 6.30 am Mass. In the summer – early morning sunshine – in the winter the darkness and gloom.

He followed Father Faherty as parish priest, and was to serve 11 years. His assistant for 7 of those years was Father Jim Davis. It was during this time of service, that the present church was built, and opened by Archbishop Delargy on 30.11.1975. It must be looked upon as a massive goal for the new parish. He was also perhaps responsible during his term, in initiating a greater church community understanding between the other denominations in the district.

He celebrated his Silver Jubilee of Ordination in 1974. His Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated in the Community Hall, followed by an evening at the Stokes Valley Motor Lodge organized by the parishioners. His sister and her husband attended, having come over from Ireland.

Father McHale will be remembered by many in Stokes Valley for the good he did. He arrived in the district during difficult times in the establishment of a new parish, and he did not have an easy road to travel. In keeping with his office, he did much good.

A card which was displayed near his office desk read – ‘BE REASONABLE AND DO IT MY WAY’.

F. J. Tindall

FATHER JAMES DAVIS

Father Jim was born in Northern Ireland in 1943.

Father Jim arrived in Stokes Valley in January 1968. He had been appointed to another parish then plans got changed and he was sent to Stokes Valley. On his first morning after Mass, he was directed to go and help the men at the working bee. Father didn't know what a working bee was. It was the first day of the painting the interior and exterior of the Church. Father was handed a paint brush and shown where to work. No one knew who he was or where he had come from. The men thought he was a kind soul who had come to help. He later told us that back in Ireland, the Priest's weren't expected to have to paint their own Churches. After four weekends of this, Father certainly fitted into our community.

Father Jim was a talented singer and during his time here, we had both an adults and a children's choir. We also had many enjoyable social events, where Father would entertain us with his singing. These were also fundraising events for our new Church.

As plans for the new Church progressed, Father Jim had become interested in Maori culture and carving. Being self-taught he started on making the various pieces of furniture and art works that adorn our Church. His first piece was the Tabernacle, followed by the Sanctuary Lamp and Easter Candle stands, the Lectern, Baptismal Font, St. Francis Xavier's picture and the Stations of the Cross. Father was ably assisted by the many talented members of our parish.

Father Jim left our parish in 1977, when he was appointed to Wairoa where he did more carvings as they re-furbished a building for the parish there. After Wairoa he served in Motueka where he celebrated his Silver Jubilee of Ordination.

BISHOP OWEN DOLAN



Bishop Owen Dolan was born in Palmerston North on 30th September 1928. He was educated at St. Joseph's Primary School in Hawera, St. Patrick's College, Silverstream, and Hawera High School. He entered the Holy Name Seminary, Christchurch to begin his priesthood and then to Holy Cross College, Mosgiel. He was ordained in Hawera on the 21st July 1954.

His first appointment was to 1955 – 59 Sacred Heart Parish, Petone, 1960 – 61 St. Peter's Parish, Wairoa, 1962 – 62 St. Patrick's Parish, Patea, 1964 St. Joseph's Parish, New Plymouth, 1965 Sacred Heart Parish, Inglewood, 1966 Our Lady, Help of Christians, Fitzroy, 1967 St. Brigid's Parish, Fielding, 1968 St. Joseph's Parish, Upper Hutt and 1970 - 72 St. Joseph's Parish, Waitara. Served as a Missionary in Lima and Arequipa, Peru from 1973 to 1977. On returning to New Zealand, he came to Stokes Valley in 1978 to 1980.

He really missed the life in Peru and found life here very quiet. After working with the native people in Peru, he had a deep understanding of the under-privileged people in our community.

Father Owen left Stokes Valley in January 1980 and he was appointed to the position of Vicar General to the Archdiocese of Wellington and was based at St. Joseph Parish, Wellington until 1991. In 1991 until 1996, he became National Director of Pontifical Mission Societies.

On 10th December 1995, he was ordained Coadjutor Bishop for Palmerston North at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Palmerston North.

In 2003 Bishop Dolan retired, but still helps out in other parishes.

FATHER RAYMOND STACHURSKI



Father Ray was born and grew up rural Taranaki in 1934. He was educated in Taranaki and the St. Patrick's College, Silverstream. He started his training for the priesthood at the Holy Name Seminary, Christchurch and the Holy Cross College, Mosgiel.

After ordination Father Ray served in the Fielding Parish His intention had been to work as a Parish Priest but while in his first parish he received an approach from the Archbishop for appointment as Army Chaplain, which he accepted. He was with the army for 9 years and after working at Waiouru and at Burnham, Father Ray was posted to Terendak Camp, Malaya, for two years. He requested a tour of duty in Vietnam which he served attached to Headquarters at Nui Dat base, although he moved around widely among the different units and worked alongside other Army Chaplains

before going with the forces to Malaysia and then to Vietnam before returning to Burnham.

In 1972, after he had decided to leave the Army, he was posted to Palmerston North where his duties included Linton Camp.

He was appointed to St. Patrick's, Palmerston North, then in 1974 Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Stoke, Nelson before coming to Stokes Valley in 1981.

While he was serving in Stokes Valley he was instrumental in developing the Marriage Encounter Movement and courses for engaged couples.

In 1987 Father Ray was appointed to Wellington Hospital as Chaplain where he is still serving today.

Father Ray celebrated his Golden Jubilee July 2009.

FATHER JOSEPH KEEGAN



Father Joe was born in Taranaki in June 1950, the second of three sons of Agnes and Athol Keegan.

His primary schooling was at a country school in the Stratford district and his secondary schooling was at St. Francis Douglas College in New Plymouth. He worked for some time for the NZED, on linking the cables on the power pylons. He left this dangerous job to enter Holy Name Seminary in Christchurch and then Holy Cross College in Mosgiel. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1976.

He served in Upper Hutt and Westport before coming to Stokes Valley in June 1987. He was known as the "Bikie" priest as his favourite mode of transport was his "Harley Davidson" motor bike. Through this he had great rapport with those on the fringe of society and did great work with those in the wider community.

One afternoon in September 1990 after enjoying an afternoon riding quad-bikes with a friend, on the way home on the Haywards Hill, his bike hit some loose gravel on road works. This accident resulted in him losing his right leg and multiple abrasions. He was unconscious for a month in intensive care, first in Wellington Hospital and then in Hutt Hospital. During this time, members of the wider Stokes Valley community met in the church every night to pray for Fr. Joe's recovery. Even his cat Strippie, joined the congregation. Father credits his amazing recovery to the power of these prayers, along with the amazing medical staff at both Hospitals. After a month he started to improve, but still had to face many operations of plastic surgery to repair the many abrasions. Father finally left hospital in December and returned to the parish in time for Christmas.

While Father Joe was in hospital, Monsignor Bernard Tottman looked after the parish and then Father Michael McCabe assisted here until April 1991, when Father Joe was able to take over the parish again.

Once Father was home he was busy planning the transformation of the remains of his bike into a trike. This he did very successfully and enjoyed having that sense of freedom again. Also he was soon back on the golf course again, competing in the priests golf tournaments.

Father left Stokes Valley in January 1996, he was appointed to Saint Joseph's Parish, Picton where he is still serving today.

FATHER DESMOND MOOSMAN



Father Des Moosman was born in Taranaki in 1937. He was educated at St. Joseph's Primary School in Stratford, Stratford Memorial College, St. Kevin's College, Oamaru, Holy Name Seminary, Christchurch and the at Holy Cross College, Mosgiel.

He was ordained at the Basilica in Wellington on the 29th June 1962, by Bishop Kavanagh. He celebrated his first Mass at St. Joseph's Church in Stratford.

Before coming to Stokes Valley in 1998, he was stationed in Our Lady of the Rosary, Waiwhetu, St. Anne's, Wanganui East, Catholic Church, Hataitai, St. Joseph's, Levin and St. Patrick's, Kilbirnie.

Father Des worked very hard to clear our crippling debt. An appeal went throughout the Catholic Community of New Zealand and finally we were debt free and able to plan for the future.

Father Des left Stokes Valley in January 2008, when he was appointed to Parish Priest at Titahi Bay's, St. Pius X parish where he is still serving today.

He celebrated his Golden Jubilee on Sunday 8 July at a 9.30am Mass at St Pius X Church, Titahi Bay.

FATHER DAVID DOWLING



Father David was raised in Kingston, Wellington and received his primary education with the Marist Brothers in Newtown. His secondary education was at St Patrick's College, Kilbirnie.

For 18 years after leaving school David worked in the New Zealand Customs Service.

David entered Holy Cross Seminary in Auckland in 2001 and was ordained to the priesthood in Sacred Heart Cathedral, Wellington on 1 September 2007.

Father David's first appointment was to St Mary's in Blenheim. In February 2010 Father David was appointed Parish Priest of Our Lady of Grace Parish, Heretaunga. He was appointed Moderator of St Francis Xavier Parish in December 2011, while remaining as Parish Priest at Heretaunga.