

News from St Michael's Community

December 2005
Volume 24

Services Timetable

Sunday Eucharist

8am & 10am

Saturday Vigil 5pm

Monday 7.15am Cluny Convent

Tuesday 7am

Wednesday 9am

Thursday 7am

Friday 12.05pm

Saturday 8am

Adoration of Blessed Sacrament

Friday 11am

Benediction

Friday 12 noon

Reconciliation

Friday 11.30am

Saturday 9.30am

Revelations

is produced for the friends and parishioners of St Michael's Parish
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Revelations



The Good News

Is this:

*that God loves us;
that He became man
to share our life
with us;*

*that therefore
we are not alone
for God is present
in our entire history*

*that of peoples and
that of individuals*

*and that He will bring us,
if we allow Him,
to an eternal happiness
beyond human expectation.*

Acknowledgement: Columban Calendar
December 2005

Unwrapping the Christmas Spirit!

Monsignor Arahill sheds light on some favourite Christmas traditions.

Celebrating Christmas on 25 December

Easter was THE Feast of the Church's Year in its very early days. But some time between 274 and 336 A.D. the Christian community in Rome chose 25 December to celebrate the birth of Christ, in order to counter the pagan feast of "Sol Invictus" or "the Unconquerable Sun", a feast which was officially instituted in 274 by the Emperor Aurelian. A treatise dating from the third or fourth century reads: "Now they call this day the Birthday of the Unconquerable! He is the Sun of Justice."

Christmas crib

In 1224 A.D. St Francis of Assisi erected a manger and acted out the first Christmas with characters that included real people and live animals. Francis, who popularised the tradition of the Christmas crib is also remembered as the father of caroling because he encouraged all church members to praise the Lord in song.

Christmas cards

A little over 120 years ago, a wallpaper designer, Louis Prang of Boston, put on sale the first Christmas cards, although the practice had been going on in England for at least 20 years before. The first engraved Christmas card showed up in London in 1842.

Christmas tree

A favourite medieval play was an Advent performance, or "paradise play" which centred around the garden of Eden story in Genesis, Chapter 1. Adam and Eve, symbols of all human beings, ate the forbidden fruit of the tree of good and evil. But the Christ of Christmas would, through the wood of the tree of the Cross, make it possible for all to have "new fruit". Decorating a Christmas tree with fruit, candy and nuts seems to have had its origin in Germany in the 16th century. Now we place gifts on, or under, the tree, as a reminder of God's gift of Christ.

Blessing over a Christmas tree

God of all creation, we praise you for this tree which brings beauty and memories, and the promise of life to our home.

May your blessing be upon all who gather around this tree.

We wait for the coming of the Christ who is our everlasting life and peace. AMEN



Blessing over a Christmas crib

God of Mary and Joseph, of shepherds and animals,
Bless us whenever we look at this crib.

Through the days of Christmas, fill our home with
Hospitality, joy, gentleness and thanksgiving.
Guide our steps in the ways of peace.

Grant this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

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Towards a Foundation for St Michael's parish

Contributed by Monsignor Arahill and Pat de Zoete on behalf of the parish and finance councils.

On 4 July 2003, the parish finance council commissioned a heritage architect (Dave Pearson) to carry out a survey of the church and to prepare a conservation plan. A quantity surveyor has been employed to cost the remedial work identified in the conservation report. The recent very successful gala fundraising dinner and auction was a first step in raising the funds needed to restore the stained glass windows – one of the many components of the identified restoration work.

The council had previously recognised the need to consider all the parish properties as a whole, and commissioned Speer & Associates to advise on the development of a piazza to enhance the parish properties. From consultations with the parish in October 2002, it emerged that a priority with parishioners was the provision of a gathering space in front of the church.

The St Michael's design group convened by Ron Seeto was formed and asked to explore the possibility of constructing a gathering space in front of the church and this was presented to the parish in August 2004. Brochures picturing the suggested design are still available from the parish office. The piazza and gathering space projects have come to be known as the jubilee project in recognition, in 2008, of the 75th anniversary of the opening of the church in 1933.

The diocese is aware of the jubilee project and that the parish is exploring options and indicative costing. Formal parish and diocesan approval is required prior to the commissioning of working drawings, and of course there will be further opportunities for parishioners to be consulted as the process unfolds and more definitive information is available on design and costing.

Donor Development Plan

Since October 1997, the finance council has employed the expertise of fundraising consultants (John Bergin and Patricia Wright) to advise on an overall donor development plan to fund parish activities. Strategies include:

regular planned support renewal
tapping into community funding (trusts and foundations);
promoting a bequest programme;
holding fundraising events

In addition, fundraising consultants are advising on the feasibility of the parish successfully holding a capital campaign to fund the jubilee project. Initial assessments have been completed, and the consultants are waiting for the green light to complete this process, which involves in depth interviewing of selected stakeholders. (The hold up is due to the complex nature of gathering space design, but sufficient information is expected soon to enable these

interviews to take place.)

Establishment of a Foundation

In light of the above, it has emerged that the establishment of a foundation to fund the conservation, restoration and enhancement of the parish properties would be a prudent step to take at this time. The parish finance council and the parish pastoral council have discussed the idea and support this initiative. It is felt that the model established by the St Patrick's Cathedral Heritage Foundation provides a good base for developing a foundation for St Michael's.

A small team of people is working to produce a draft trust deed and exploring some of the issues surrounding how a foundation could work at St Michael's.

What do you think of the idea?

Feedback to Monsignor Arahill either in person, or by phone 520 1226, fax 520 1956, or email bfarahill@clear.net.nz

Spreading the Good News in Cyber Space

St Michael's webmaster, Pat de Zoete reports.

Our parish website is now well and truly established! From rather tentative beginnings 5 or so years ago, we now have an extensive site that has developed a real presence on the web and is attracting a good following. Our best month ever (September 2005) recorded 9950 successful "hits" from 1,459 visitors, with the most active day ever being 11 September. The increasing number of "return visitors" is encouraging with around 150 people regularly checking in. Sundays are the most popular days, followed closely by Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The most downloaded files are an electronic version of our parish magazine Revelations, and Monsignor's

weekly homilies which attract a significant, loyal following. Parents wanting information about school enrolment and baptism are regular visitors, as are couples interested in celebrating their marriages at St Michael's.

From time to time we receive encouraging emails from around the world from people who have found the site and enjoyed browsing a selection of the pages (including a class from a St Michael's School in Ireland who

found us while researching St Michael).

To those of you who have never logged in, check it out and let us know what you think:

www.catholicremuera.org.nz We also welcome suggestions for topics you would like to see included.



Going to Mass: a very personal view

Elizabeth Connell shares her personal reflections.

As small children my brother and I often stayed in Taumarunui with our great aunt and uncle at a time when there was strict fasting before Mass which was very early in the morning.

Our great aunt warmed our shoes in the coal range so our feet would start off warm for the walk to the church where our parents had been married. I remember the frost crunching beneath our feet as we walked. Our great aunt often wore her fur coat, and one of my earliest recollections is of cuddling into it, and stroking the fur.

I remember little of the Mass itself, except the cadence of the Latin words and the surprise of seeing Father Conboy dressed in a long robe, when only the day before I had seen him in "ordinary" clothes going off to golf with great uncle Theodore.

There was no debate about going to Mass. All visiting the household would be included in the routine: walking to mass, participating (although my brother Bob and I did not understand the Latin words we knew when to sit (still and quiet!) stand, kneel, sing (I cannot actually remember singing, I probably couldn't read the words, and if I couldn't my younger brother certainly couldn't!), pray (keep your eyes closed!)), the grown ups greeting friends afterwards and then all of us walking home to a big breakfast cooked on the coal range.

When I started school, attending Mass changed. I began to understand more about the Mass. It became more than the cadence of sound, sitting, standing, kneeling, singing and praying. It all had some deep meaning. Understanding brought with it a higher level of participation.

On leaving school, and going out into the world as a young adult, Mass changed again. Mass attendance was my decision, not a parental direction. Sometimes I went, sometimes I didn't. Crunch time came when I was about 20. I decided that being a Catholic, and attending Mass was something that I really wanted in my life, and from then on I have attended Mass regularly (mostly!).

I met my husband at a Marist football party. Mass attendance was an important part of his life. I met his mother who, he told me, rode her bike to Mass (she lived in Christchurch), rode home, took her hat off with one hand, and with the other, put before him a breakfast of bacon, eggs, sausages, tomatoes, the works! I never lived up to this standard. I couldn't ride a bike!

After marriage, children started to arrive (five daughters!). Mass changed again. It changed for me personally, and later for the Catholic faith as a whole. The changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council meant among other things, a relaxation of the fasting rules. No longer did women dress for Mass in hats, gloves, or men in their best suits. Mass no longer had to be so early in the morning. Mass even began to be celebrated on Saturday evenings. No more very early morning starts.

Getting the children ready for Mass was often fraught with stress. Looking back now, I think that I should have been more relaxed and not worried that everything was just right and that everyone looked spit spot. My husband was known to fall asleep during a sermon. The girls and I would nudge him, none too gently, and ask for a hankie, a signal for him to wake up and listen. The girls devised a sign language of their own so that they could talk in Mass without actually talking. Sometimes I used to wonder if I was actually attending Mass or a family three-ringed circus.

There were highlights however. I still remember our eldest daughter Sarah Jane's First Communion, the stars in her eyes and my fervent prayer that the joy she felt that day would stay with her forever. Then the joy as each of her siblings made their First Communion, and my hopes and prayers for each of them.

My children remember the communion breakfasts! I remember vividly Mass at St Michael's for Baradene's end of the school year. The last Mass that Sarah Jane attended as a schoolgirl. For most of the year the seventh formers had worn mufti, and then she walked into the church in school uniform for the last time. A young woman ready to move into adulthood, and time to make Mass going decisions for herself, not just because it was a family expectation.

Over the years of going to Mass there have been times when I have felt that the priest has been speaking directly to me. There have been times when I have asked myself

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what is this all about? There have been times when I have gone just because that's what I do. There have been highlights, low times, more First Communions, Confirmations; and sadly funeral Masses.

Funeral masses, although sad, are also celebrations of the lives of those we love. Such was the funeral mass for the man whom I had met at the Marist football party, and with whom I shared a life for forty years. His beloved daughters carried him into the church for the last time, and participated at Mass together just as they had as children. A sad and yet joyous Mass.

Midnight Mass has always been a highlight. In the days when the children were young, I remember being so tired when we set off to Midnight Mass, but the feeling of joy, and the excitement of the children carried me through. As the girls left home one by one, all would come home for Christmas and midnight Mass.

I remember one year we all piled into my small Hillman Imp car for the short mirth-filled journey to the church on Waiheke Island. Afterwards my adult children asked for their after Mass treat. (This tradition started when they were very small. The after Mass treat was always a chocolate fish, if they had behaved themselves during Mass.) After Midnight Mass it was usually some chocolate from under the tree, thoughtfully left for the occasion by Father Christmas.

Last Christmas, my grandson Thomas came to Mass with his mother, father, some of his aunts and me. We went to the special children's Mass at St Mary of the Angels, the church where I had married his grandfather many years ago. I watched with joy and love, as my grandson joined all the other children invited to sit around the altar while the priest told the wonderful story of the birth of the Christ child. At the end of Mass Father invited all the children up onto the altar again, and gave them each a candy cane. My daughters asked for their after Mass treat.

My end of Mass "Thanks be to God" was heartfelt. I thought of all the years of going to Mass and the faith passed down from my Irish great grandmother who had worshipped at this church. I prayed that going to Mass would continue for this family for generations to come. I pray this too for your family.

Points for meditation in a technological age

(Thoughts as we approach the "busy" time of the year!)

We have taller building but shorter tempers,
wider motorways, but narrower viewpoints.
We spend more, but have less.
We buy more, but have less.
We have bigger houses and smaller families,
more conveniences, but less time.
We have more degrees but less sense,
more knowledge, but less judgement.
More experts, yet more problems, more medicine,
but less wellness.
We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too reck-
lessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry,
stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little,
watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.
We have multiplied our possessions,
but reduced our values.
We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.
We've learned to make a living, but not a life.
We've added years to life not life to years.
We've been all the way to the moon and back
But have trouble crossing the street
to meet a new neighbour.
We conquered outer space but not inner space.
We've done larger things, but not better things.
We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul.
We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice.
We write more, but learn less.
We plan more but accomplish less.
We've learned to rush, but not to wait.
We build more computers to hold more information,
to produce more copies than ever,
But we communicate less and less.
These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion,
big men and small character.
Steep profits and shallow relationships.
These are the days of two incomes but more divorce,
fancier houses, but broken homes.
These are the days of quick trips, disposable diapers,
throwaway morality, one night stands.
Overweight bodies and pills to do everything from
cheer, to quiet, to kill.
It is a time when there is much in the showroom window
and nothing in the stockroom.
*(George Carlin, quoted in "A Retreat with Henri Nouwen.
Reclaiming our Humanity." edited by Robert Durback.
Supplied by Monsignor Arahill)*

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Change: a different time?

From the parish priest, Monsignor Brian Arahill

We need to change the time of our “Becoming Church” programme, our programme for preparing children for Confirmation and First Holy Communion.

What have we done up to this?

We invite all parents to a preliminary meeting early in February to outline the programme:

1. Parents take their children through each topic.
2. We meet on a Monday evening at 7pm. After preliminary prayer (*coming to centre*) the children go in small groups to catechists who affirm what has been done at home.
3. Parents are taken through the next topic by Sister Francis (our parish religious education coordinator) or myself.
4. At 8pm we gather for a final prayer and sending out blessing.
5. During the following week parents take their children through the topic for that week.
6. Confirmation is celebrated on Pentecost Sunday (6 weeks after Easter) and Holy Communion on the Feast of the Body of Christ two weeks later.
7. Soon after the celebration of Holy Communion catechists meet for a debriefing.

Advantages of this approach

1. Parents are able to “brush up” on their own knowledge of the faith. Parents often mention this in the comments they write at the end of the programme.
2. Getting together with their children for the weekly preparation is a good way of “bonding”.

Disadvantages (according to parents)

1. Is 7pm on a Monday night the best time?
2. Often it is difficult to “fit in” time necessary to prepare.
3. There is often the conflict with school home work.

Disadvantages (according to catechists at their debriefing)

1. Often the work has not been done at home.
2. Parents are often very irregular at taking part in Sunday Mass *before* beginning the programme and continue to be irregular *during* the programme. This means the children are often

unfamiliar with the Mass. Some children do not know the basics, for example, how to make the Sign of the Cross.

All of this is discouraging for the catechists (and priest!) What makes it harder still is the alarmingly small number of parents and children who continue being part of the Church through participating in Sunday Mass when the celebrations of Confirmation and Communion are over. The catechists (and priest) naturally ask themselves - why do we spend so much time and energy?

As parish priest I find it difficult to ask people to be catechists when there is so little job satisfaction! After all, the catechists not only give up time to be there on the Monday evening. They also come to a preliminary meeting before the programme starts, and at the end of each session they remain behind as a group to review the topic for the following week.

Do we need a new approach? Perhaps a better approach?

Very soon I will invite the parents of the children around 7 or 8 to a meeting to discuss the above topics openly and squarely. Sister Francis, the catechists and I will suggest that the times for the weekly sessions begin at 9.40am

Parents will continue to spend time with their children at home going through the topic for the week, and this will be affirmed by catechists during the Sunday morning sessions.

A little more demanding? Yes, but then if “Becoming Church” is not a demanding commitment is it really worthwhile? Some would say if a programme is not demanding, then we don’t really take it seriously. Watch this space, as they say!



Monsignor Brian Arahill and Jo Augustine

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**St Michael's
Stained Glass Window Restoration
Gala Auction Evening
Friday 14 October 2005
at Ellerslie Racecourse**



Rose and John Dunn with Peter Wright



Seminary students



Catherine Everitt and Amanda Van Ryn

MILESTONES

Baptisms: the parish welcomes...

Daniel Roger **Hoekstra** son of Roger and Anne-Marie

Jonty William **Hoekstra** son of Roger and Anne-Marie

Hannah Kate **Wallace** daughter of Terence and Judith

Jack Matthew **Wallace** son of Terence and Judith

Amanda Lynn **Wotring** daughter of Gary and Laura

Sophie **Knight** daughter of Brian and Karen

Thomas **Knight** son of Brian and Karen

Kelly Anastasia **Kim** daughter of Jay

Sofia Guiliana **Lott** daughter of David and Stefania

James Pharo **Parton** son of Adrian and Nadeen

Maya Grace Anahera **Gibson** daughter of David and Geneve

Carter Leonard William **Lewis**, son of Rhys and Jo

Gwendolyn Louise **Macdonald** daughter of Bryce and Amy

Marriages: blessings on...

Kirsten Sarah **Bilkey** and Emlyn John **Lloyd**

Kei-Man **Lo** and Samuel Chun **Bong Wong**

Amanda Clare **Davis** and Craig Edward **Tolley**

Jodie Kim **James** and David Kenneth Charles **Watts**

Audrea Joshini **Anton** and Scott Ashton **Warner**

Deaths: we pray for...

Vernon **Tait**

Laurence Douglas **McKenna**

Michael **Raffol**

David Nicholas **Strang**

Frances Margaret **Young**

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“Go Teach All Nations” (Matthew 28:19)



Mission Sunday School/Parish Mass, 30 October 2005

The following countries are represented in this photo taken after Mass: Korea, Australia, Samoa, Croatia, Holland, Mexico, Scotland, India, Ireland, Malaysia, China, Philippines, Hungary, and New Zealand (represented by the two children in All Black jerseys!)



Originating from Boston this John Calcott Horsley first Christmas card design is about 120 years old (see article on page 2)



St Michael's Contacts

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Sister Francis Kelly

Caring Co-ordinator:

Kathryn Schollum

Youth Ministry:

Mara Bebich

Music Rosters:

Tony Vela

Secretary/Administration:

Pat de Zoete

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9am-1pm Monday-Friday
Telephone: 520 1226

Parish Council:

Monsignor Arahill, Anne Duffy, Mark Jeffaries, Neil Little (Chairperson), Christabelle Matthews, Alicia Murray, Giles Potter, Jessica Spencer and Peter Zink (Secretary)

Finance Council:

Monsignor Arahill, Phillip Bell, Kevin Pickworth, Bob Coombe, Carey Pearce, Noel Davies and Pat de Zoete

Liturgy Committee:

Monsignor Arahill, Margaret Garrett, Patricia Kessler, Jennifer Spencer, Catherine Everitt, Viki Cullen, Ruth Miller, and Peter Ravlich

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