

## INTRODUCTION

### 'ALL WHO LIVE AND BELIEVE IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE'

at St. Patrick's Catholic Church on Sunday, 8th December 2016

The commission for an Icon for the newly build Our Lady of Kāpiti School was given to me by Martin Elms, Principal, on the day the land for the school was blessed.

The presentation and blessing of the finished icon took place on Sunday, 11th December 2016 at Mass in St. Patrick's. This introduction was presented at that Mass in abbreviated form.

### PREPARATIONS AND BORDER TEXTS

After several meetings with Martin we agreed to have 9 children contribute to the design of the icon. Over 3 afternoons I met with the children and we explored various ideas and issues they felt were important in an icon for their new school. Together we practised a number of creative activities that ultimately led to each child drawing an animal or person that I was to fit into the final design. The names of these children are seen at the left of the icon; Grace, Dominic, Alyssa, Kayla, Veroniqa, Unique, Kristina, Sienna, Meikah. On the right side we find the seven fruits of the Holy Spirit taken from the New Testament; Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Humility, Self-control.

At the base is a text in Latin ; 'HIC DOMVS DEI EST ET PORTA COELI' This translates in English as; 'THIS IS THE HOUSE OF THE LORD AND THE GATE TO HEAVEN', which text pertains to the Church which in this icon is represented by the Ark. This text is found in some of the early basilica in Rome and in subsequent ages in churches throughout the world.

### JHWH; GOD WHO IS LORD

Above the Ark, on left of the mast is a depiction of God; His Name appears in a gold leaf halo. The Hebrew letters from right to left are; 'yud-hei-waw-hei' ; JHWH, in English written as 'Jahweh'. He is having this name for example in Psalm 145-18; 'JHWH is close to all who call on Him, yes, to all who call on Him in truth'. We read in the Book of Genesis that God was 'moving over the waters ' of the earth. In the icon, His light touches the water, Maui and Noah. The distance between God and Maui and between God and Noah is the same; both witnessed the separation of earth and water and thus they each witnessed God at work in His created world, bringing habitat, life and hope to their people.



## MAUI AND HIS FISH

In the collective unconscious and in the oral and documented tradition of Māori lives the memory of the primary separation of water and land and its divine origin. Maui's waka is decorated for a rangatira's waka. His confidence and strength speaks of the power of the Creator acting in full command as He is bringing the earth into being.



## NOAH AND HIS DOVE

On the left side on the Ark we see the dove return to Noah with an olive branch in its beak; salvation has come for him, his family, the animals. Now he knows that death has been overcome; he has been a man of peace, of truth, of faith and now a life beyond death awaits him. With his right hand he welcomes the returning dove, with his left hand he wards off the snake that attempts to board the Ark but is unable to enter. A crab has climbed on Noah's back but this is not distracting him from his focus on both the dove and the snake.

Noah witnesses the second separation of water and land that God has determined to provide for those He has saved.

## THE ARK

The nine children of the school have drawn most of the animals and people on board; the flying fish could not make up its mind about flying or swimming and we needed it to fly and the shark in front of the Ark would have liked some animals coming over the side..... but we decided that should not happen. The woodpecker with typical interest in sitting on the mast was ultimately replaced by a butterfly.....much to Noah's pleasure.



In this icon as in many others the Ark is a metaphor of the Church and in and by means of it, God saves His people from sin and death. The snake represents Satan and the high waves indicate the challenges and dangers the Church faces. Up from the Ark rises the mast. It shows the Māori tukutuku pattern, 'Stairway to Heaven'. It signifies human effort that's required for us to ascend.

The meaning of the colours: White stands for purity which God requires us to aim for. St. Patrick's blue stands for teaching, both the teaching by church and

school but also the teachings we receive directly from the Wairua Tapu (Holy Spirit), both individually and collectively as a people of faith. Brown stands for our human nature; its needs, its inclinations, its challenges and its need for God's redemptive work.

As we move up along the Ark's mast, we need to be prepared to deal with what's required of us by God and be prepared to face ourselves and learn to trust God irrespective of our circumstances. In doing this we ascend along this vertical pathway towards Christ and end up IN HIM and by means of that, in his eternal Kingdom.

In other words, in order to grow spiritually, we need to come to terms with these requirements; to aim for purity of living; to confront our human nature and its inclinations; and to enter a life long learning process about both ourselves and 'the things of God'.

The Ark has no sails, rudders or anchors; this signifies that human skill is not essential in sailing the Ark because God is in charge of the Ark and of all who sail in her.

On the right some Hector dolphins are seen that remind us that animals are given to us to take care of and this is ordained by God. We are to take good care of the created world which is His.



#### THE BOAT OF ST PAUL –

One of the children expressed concern for her friends who were not Christians and not connected to the Church. We agreed to have this concern addressed in some form within the design for the icon; this is how this part of the Book of Acts entered the picture. We read there that this boat that transports Paul as a prisoner to Rome, became stuck on a sandbank off the coast of the island of Malta, which lays south of Sicily. The storm has the power to break up the boat and many inside look for ways to save their



lives. When in prayer God shows Paul that both he and all who sail with him will survive the shipwreck. In the icon we see 7 attitudes towards disaster and death. The Persian man on the right has taken first place in the line-up towards the beach; he expects to be saved first as he is wealthy and carries a sense of entitlement. Consequently, he sports a large ego; he feels he deserves a premium chance to survival. The man above him is Jewish and he has a sense of optimism. After all, he practices the Mosaic laws, is therefore a good man deserving good things to happen to him and has God on his side, so why worry?

On his left we see a Greek man in orators' robes being philosophical about the crisis; his psychological defence against fear and death is to subject his predicament to the power of reason and wisdom. By the time he is swept overboard he is still not quite finished with his deliberations. Below him we see a Roman soldier given to denial. To assist him in this attitude he has closed his eyes and stopped speaking, not allowing his senses to pick up the frightening reality of the impending disaster. This helps him feel that the crisis is not his but of the people around him. On his left is another soldier who realizes that this time it is not a prisoner but him who faces death and he is terrified. His mouth and eyes are bringing out his fear and he is exceedingly white. Above him standing is the Roman officer responsible for the securing of prisoners and of Paul whom he has identified as having unusual confidence and truthfulness. And he likes Paul for this. This officer has raised a golden model of the Egyptian sun god that he may have picked up when on a mission in Egypt, just to make sure to know what to do when in trouble. His prayer may have been something like: 'O Sun God of Egypt, when you rise in the morning, please, take me with you in your light of life'. He hides himself in this belief in the hope to be saved.

Paul also raises his arms and he stretches out his right hand to Jesus Whom he has met when he was a persecutor of Christians and his other hand is raised in blessing over the men who are with him in the boat. He intercedes and communicates with Jesus and with these men. And he is strong and confident because he has heard God's reassurance that ALL will make it safely to the beach.

The various reactions depicted here are also OUR reactions. We would respond similarly, at least initially. Ultimately, we learn to respond on the basis of what we have learned on our spiritual journey and be more like Paul.

## **THE SKY**

The colours of the sky in this icon show that it is evening. We do not know what the time is of Christ's return but we do know that we are no longer at the beginning of the history of humanity.

The dawn has passed and some of the signs that will precede Christ's return seem to be taking shape.

## **KĀPITI ISLAND AND THE LOGO**

The school's Logo with related colours and shamrock representative of the Holy Trinity is on the beach as the first object to be seen from afar.



## **SR. NANO NAGLE, SCHOOL MODEL AND THE TWO CHILDREN**

Nano is depicted here as a visionary and a missionary; she has passed onto the older child the lighted lantern as a symbol of the Light that came into the world, Jesus Christ. The older child is holding this Light and is eagerly awaiting what can be seen by this illumination. The younger child is largely unaware of this but is having her hand in sister's hand. This symbolizes attachment and emotional nurture that is provided as part of catholic education alongside cognitive development and awareness of self. Sr Nano is raising with her other



hand a model of the new school as she envisages the future that lays beyond her lifetime but that she has recognized in her vision. She presents this vision and this school to Jesus through the Holy Spirit Who are both before her. And in her intercession today she still nurtures and guides the Board, teachers, all staff and supporters and all the children.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

On the left of Sr Nano we see the gold leaf nimbus that surrounds the Holy Spirit who appears at Jesus' baptism in the form of a dove. The Spirit is placed between Christ and Sr Nano, signifying that His words, actions and counsel are applying all that Jesus has said and done for all those who believe. This Spirit is ever present to provide comfort and guidance to those who are actively applying their gifts and talents to their missions.

## **ST. PATRICK**

A visionary and missionary, he brings the faith, represents and plants the Church in Ireland where many sisters, including Sr Nano and the sisters who came after her, came from.

Fully vested to signify the fullness of his priesthood he is seen here offering the sacramental Sacrifice of Jesus Body and Blood. By this sacrament St Patrick indicates that Jesus' death on the cross is no longer just another execution on Golgotha but a sacrifice that atones for sins, saves from death and thus reconciles believers with God. This sacrifice is our New Testament, no longer in the blood of sacrificial animals but in the blood of Christ.



St. Patrick practises what Jesus wanted him to do: 'Do this to remember Me'.

## OUR LADY OF KĀPITI

The virgin Mary is depicted here as a young girl who is dressed as an engaged Jewish woman 2000 years ago. Her jewellery is three Egyptian blue glass beads, given to her by her fiancée. This suggests that she and Joseph are preparing for marriage. She opens her cloak in a receptive gesture of motherly availability to us, that is, to all the brothers and sisters of her Son. As we as believers have become brothers and sisters of Jesus, His mother has become our Mother. The colour of her



cloak is brown-red, which are the colours of the human heart. She welcomes us with motherly warmth and acceptance, interceding for us from her open heart. That is how she loves us. As the Mother of the Church she is seen reaching out with one hand to her Son, with the other to the Church, represented by St Patrick. As a woman holds a unique place standing between the man and the child, so stands between Jesus and us as God's children. And that makes her special in the eyes of the Church.

## JESUS WHO LIVES FOREVER

Jesus presents Himself here as the Lamb of God showing us that He has finished the work He came to do. In His hands and feet is the evidence of the wounds which signify His death and sacrifice that brought atonement for our sins and victory over death. God raised Him up from the grave and He is seated at the right hand of God where He lives forever. His undergarment is royal red in keeping with His divinity, His upper garment is white as described in the Book of Revelation. This Book also shows Him 'standing as the Lamb that was slain'. A gold leaf halo surrounds His head. His head



is crowned by angels with His saying in Māori; 'RATOU E ORA TONU ANA E WHAKAPONO ANA KIA AU E KORE MATE' that translates in English; 'ALL WHO LIVE AND BELIEVE IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE' which is a quotation taken from the story of the raising of Lazarus in the New Testament. This text is the title of this icon.