

# NEW ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH

## Blessing by Cardinal tomorrow

The magnificent new St. Joseph's Church, which has changed the skyline of New Plymouth, represents a landmark in the history and development of the Catholic Church in the city.

Tomorrow afternoon an opening and blessing ceremony will climax a programme of celebrations which is being attended by Cardinal McKeefry, Catholic Archbishop of Wellington and Metropolitan of New Zealand.

This is Cardinal McKeefry's first visit to New Plymouth since he was made a Prince of the Church.

Almost another architectural feature is incorporated in the church, which has a total area of 12,000 sq ft and is a most interesting structure.

"This is a city church, and city buildings tend to be rectangular. We tried to get away from that," said the architect in charge of the project, Mr. D. W. Robinson.

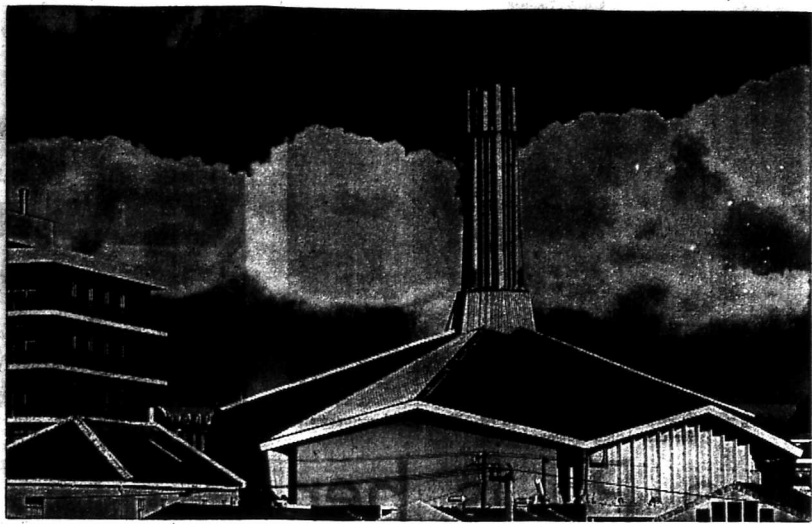
"We had to evolve a shape which would suit the liturgical requirements of the church, and hand in hand with that, the optimum setting out of the seating in relation to the altar."

"The seats lead inwards and converge on the altar."

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### Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross in the new St. Joseph's Church are the work of New Plymouth artist and sculptor Mr. Michael Smith. They are a series of 14 scenes or images representing the closing stages of the Passion of Christ.

The Stations of the Cross represent the condemnation by Pilate; the reception of the Cross; Christ's first fall; the meeting with his mother; Simon of Cyrene carrying the Cross; Veronica wiping the face of Jesus; the second fall; the exhaustion of the women of Jerusalem; the third fall; the stripping of the clothes; the Crucifixion; the death; the descent from the Cross; and the burial.

The Stations are used by Catholics to recall Christ's Passion. The person or group normally moves from Station to Station, meditating and praying at each. The practice was started by Franciscan monks.

When the commissioning of Mr. Smith's Stations was announced, the parish administrator, Father H. F. Doogan, said he was aware that the decision might not be understood or welcomed by some of the parishioners. It was a difficult decision to make, in the light of the controversial nature of some of Mr. Smith's work.

After Mr. Smith's Stations were completed, Father Doogan told the Taranaki Herald he was quite happy with them.

## Unusual features

The entire roof of the 1,000 sq ft St. Joseph's Church rests on a single east-west, multi-plate-bearing in the center.

"I haven't heard of another bearing like this anywhere else," said the architect in charge of the building project, Mr. D. W. Robinson.

"It was the best answer to the design problem."

The bearing sits in the junction of the six 124ft steel spans which make up the roof. The bearing allows movement on six sides.

Mr. Robinson said the roof concept was reminiscent of Liverpool Cathedral, but there was no real relationship beyond a kind of superficial affinity.

At one stage of construction, a temporary structure supported the eight-ton stamp of the lantern tower. But on January 17 this year the temporary structure was partly dismantled and re-erected on top of the stump to form the upper part of the tower.

To allow movement in the church's walls through wind force, earth tremors or the natural contraction and expansion of materials due to variations in temperature, the walls are hinged at the second storey level by stainless steel joints.

THE STRIKING SHAPE of St. Joseph's Church provides a new feature for the New Plymouth skyline, to help offset the loss of the Old Post Office building and clock tower. This photograph was taken from Short Lane, looking south. On the left is the corner of the Atkinson Building.

### A varied programme

A varied programme of celebrations was arranged for the opening of the new St. Joseph's Church in New Plymouth.

On Thursday a choral, organ and orchestral concert and the morality play "Shirley Jack Rabbits" were presented in the church.

Yesterday an opening ball was held in St. Joseph's youth centre. This included a reception and welcome to Cardinal McKeefry, Catholic Archbishop of Wellington and Metropolitan of New Zealand.

Today's programme included a young people's party and dance.

Tomorrow the church's altar will be consecrated and the Stations of the Cross will be formally erected during a service beginning at 10.30 a.m.

At 7 p.m. the opening and blessing ceremony will begin. An address will follow, then at 2.45 p.m. the opening Mass will be celebrated. At 7 p.m. an evening Mass will be held.

A combined ecumenical service will be held on Monday.

The annual golf tournament organised by the Taranaki Catholic clergy will be held at the Ngatutu links on Monday.



FATHER H. F. DOOGAN, St. Joseph's parish administrator, in the new St. Joseph's Church at final touches are made for the opening and blessing ceremony tomorrow. Father Doogan, who has been in New Plymouth for the past 10 years, studied for the priesthood in Proprietary College, Rome, from 1951-58. He was ordained in 1954 and did his doctorate in canon law in 1955 before returning to New Zealand and took up a temporary position in Dannevirke before coming to New Plymouth. The cross behind Father Doogan is made of solid iron. The figure of Christ was taken from the old church.

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# Catholic Church's development in Taranaki

A succession of hard-working priests served the Catholics in Taranaki during the second half of the 19th Century. Their efforts and the generosity of the parishioners in New Plymouth led to the erection in 1864 and 1895 of the "old" St Joseph's Church — then an impressive building which was said to be an asset to the town.

However, the story of the Catholic Church's development in Taranaki begins slowly, haltingly. Because of the absence of a priest, more than one Catholic family who came to Taranaki with the early settlers soon left for New South Wales for the sake of their children's religious education.

Father Pezant was the first priest to visit the district. He travelled on foot between Wanganui and New Plymouth, through very rough country which at that time was inhabited only by Maoris.

### Mission

In 1855 the Government made a grant to the Catholic mission of the town section at the east end of New Plymouth. This was supplemented when a merchant, Mr Richard Brown, gave four sections adjoining it.

After what was reported to be "a native disturbance" about 1856, one or two companies of the 65th Regiment were sent from Auckland to New Plymouth.

A number of Catholics were among the men, and a collection was made not only in Taranaki but in Wellington and other places. From the funds so obtained, a small chapel was erected on the mission land in Courtenay St, New Plymouth.

This building was so small that no more than 20 or 30 people could be seated in it. In the building a visiting priest used to celebrate Mass.

### Troops

Eventually, when a large number of British troops were stationed in the town, they were brought to him, but ran with the rest of us forward against the enemy's position.

"As soon as any man dropped he was by his side, he did not ask 'Are you a Catholic?' or 'Are you a Protestant?' but prayed for his last words."

"What Protestant on that expedition could have felt fear when he saw Father Rolloid by his side, smiling at death?" What Catholic could have but felt proud of being a Catholic on that day of Father Rolloid's account?

Father Rolloid

Marched cheerfully and manfully, ever ready with a kind word, a playful sentence to any man who passed him.

### FORWARD!

"And when at last in the clearing of Te Ngutu-o-Te Manu the storm of bullets burst upon us he did not wait in the rear for men

New Plymouth, a permanent priest, Father Treasallet, was appointed to the district. In 1862 an acre of ground was bought in a more central spot and on a fine elevated situation in Devon St West, and the Courtenay St chapel was removed.

In 1863 Father Pertuis was sent to relieve Father Treasallet. Two years later, Father Rolloid took charge of the parish. The area he served ranged from New Plymouth to Paerau.

In February 1868 Father Rolloid bought the site of New Plymouth land and a house.

Later he procured land at Koru, about 10 miles from town, where he erected a house as a monastery. At one time he had 12 novices there, some employed in cultivating the land and others in instruction of boys who were sent from various parts of the colony to be educated.

With a view to collecting subscriptions and getting help to carry out his project, Father Rolloid obtained permission from His Lordship Dr Viard, the Archbishop of Wellington, to go on a three months mission to the West Coast of the South Island, visiting Greytown and Hokitika and goldfields settlements.

Father Binfield took Father Rolloid's place in Taranaki until his return in March 1870. Two months later Father Lampilla arrived, enabling Father Rolloid to go on another mission to the goldfields.

Father Lampilla began building a chapel which was completed in 1874. On September 21, 1875, Dr Redwood, Bishop of Wellington, blessed the chapel.

At the beginning of 1879 Father Berkler relieved Father Lampilla. Father Berkler remained one year, and then for eight months there was no parish priest. However, Father Grogan, who was stationed at Haverly, visited New Plymouth monthly.

### Convent

Father Chastagnon was in charge in New Plymouth from 1880 until 1884, the year that he effected the Ordre des Religieuses de Notre Dame des Missions to erect a convent in New Plymouth. The convent was des-

cribed at the time as "a handsome three-storey building, costing over £2000, which was built on the chapel site, the land of which was made over to the sisters."

Father Cassidy's term in New Plymouth lasted from 1884 to 1889. He was succeeded by Father McKenna, who started a fund for building a church.

Subscriptions were very liberal considering the

artificial heating and amplification of sound in the new church should be unnecessary.

The ceiling materials were selected for acoustic response," said the architect in charge of the project, Mr D. W. Robinson. "We hope the sight and sound lines will be such that artificial amplification will not be necessary."

The ceiling is heat-insulated, and we hope this will make artificial heating of the church unnecessary too."

The parish administrator, Father H. F. Doogan, said the only practical method of artificial heating would have involved the expensive installation of under-floor heating equipment.

In New Plymouth's very temperate climate, artificial heating of even conventionally designed churches was required on only three or four Sundays of the year at the most, said Father Doogan.

There is no regular pattern in this stone-work—the masons on the job made up the design as they went.

Stone from the old church has also been used to form the support for the altar slab in the new church, the floor recess for the font and the base of the font itself.

**126ft to the top**

The new St Joseph's Church is surmounted by a 34ft steel cross, which was placed on the tower on February 17 this year.

The top of the cross is 126ft above the street.

The site for the new church was marginal, said the architect, Mr D. W. Robinson. "Piles had to be driven to support the Atkinson Building," he said. "But for the church we excavated enough of the soil from our site to equate the weight of the building — in other words, if the stratum underneath would carry the soil, it would carry the building."

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THE ARCHITECT in charge of the project, Mr D. W. Robinson, watches the progress of work inside St Joseph's Church. Above him, the wood-framed girders converge towards the base of the tower.

## 'A man without fear'

Father Rolloid—an important figure in the history of the Catholic Church in Taranaki—gave his name to the Rolloid Hall, which was demolished in 1867 when construction began for the new St Joseph's building project.

Just over 100 years ago, Father Rolloid distinguished himself by his courage and devotion to duty while attending to the wounded and dying in an engagement between Pahia and Mania at Te Ngutu-o-Te Manu in South Taranaki.

Father Rolloid accompanied a column of men who attacked Te Ngutu-o-Te Manu in revenge for an earlier attack by Maoris on the Turuturu-mokai, re-

UNARMED "On that grey and rainy morning," wrote Major Von Tempsky, a Protestant soldier, "when the morning waters of the Waingango were muttering of blood and fury to come, when our 300 mustered silently in column on the parade ground, one man made his appearance who at once drew all eyes upon him with slight wonder."

"His garb was most peculiar, scant but long skirts shrouded his nether garments, and an old waterproof sheet hung loosely over his shoulders. Weapons he had none, but there was a warlike look in the position of his broad-brimmed old felt, and a self-confidence in the attitude in which he leaned on his walking-stick, that said 'Here stands a man without fear.'"



THE HEXAGONAL DESIGN of the church's floor is shown here as composition material laid by Mr Eddie MacMahon, Sydney (left) and a colleague.

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"The new materials are brought on to the site, where the composition is made up and laid."

"Sample pieces have been laid on floor areas at the church for about six weeks. Mr MacMahon said he had known of this type of flooring for about 40 years. The reason it had not been used in New Zealand before might be due to the difficulty of obtaining authority to import the materials."

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