



St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception

Catholic Parish, 2134 Great North Road, Avondale, Auckland 0600

Vision/Tirohanga

Growing in Faith Together

Oranga i roto i te Whakapono

Goal/Whainga

To Grow in Awareness as One Parish Family

Kokiritia te Oranga Kotahitanga o te Whanau Whakapono

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT ~ 22nd March 2026

Readings: Ezekiel 37: 12-14 | Ps. 130 | Romans 8: 8-11 | John 11: 1-45

Gospel Reflection

Our Gospel on this day, the fifth Sunday of Lent, is again taken from the Gospel according to John. The reading from John continues the break from Cycle A's focus on the Gospel of Matthew. Today's Gospel reading recounts another sign, or miracle, found in John's Gospel, the raising of Lazarus. As catechumens move closer to the celebration of their Baptisms at the Triduum, today's reading invites us to reflect upon what it means to call Jesus the Resurrection and the Life.

The context for the story of the raising of Lazarus is the Jewish leaders' growing animosity toward Jesus. Jesus has been in Jerusalem, taking part in the feast of the Dedication, which we have come to know as Hanukkah. The people have been pressing Him to declare plainly whether He is the Messiah. Jesus tells them to look to His works, which testify to His coming from God. Many do not believe Jesus, however, and some try to stone Him for blasphemy.

Into this scene of confrontation, Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, send word to Jesus that His friend is ill. Jesus is said to love Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, but He delays His journey for two days. The delay heightens the drama and shows Jesus' obedience to God, who is to be glorified through Lazarus's resurrection. When Jesus finally declares that He will journey to Bethany, His disciples fear for his life. Thomas declares that he and the other disciples should prepare to die with Jesus.

The scene described at Bethany is a sad one. Martha meets Jesus weeping and saying that if Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died. Yet she remains confident that God will do whatever Jesus asks. Martha affirms her belief that there will be a resurrection of the dead in the last days. Then Martha's sister, Mary, comes to Jesus with the same confidence, saying that Jesus could have cured Lazarus. Jesus asks to be brought to Lazarus's tomb where He prays and calls Lazarus out from the tomb. At this sign, many come to believe in Jesus, but others take word of the miracle to the Jewish authorities, who begin their plans for Jesus' death.

Set against the backdrop of Jesus' impending death, many elements of the raising of Lazarus foreshadow the good news of Jesus' own Resurrection. Jesus, facing the conflict with the Jewish authorities, acts in complete obedience to God. In raising Lazarus, Jesus shows His power over death so that when Jesus dies, those who believe in Him might remember that and take hope. Just as Jesus calls for the stone to be rolled away from Lazarus's tomb, so too will the disciples find the stone rolled away from Jesus' tomb.

With catechumens preparing for their Baptism at Easter, the Gospel today calls us to reflect on Baptism as a dying and rising with Jesus. In Baptism we die to sin's power over us, rising as children of God. In Baptism we join ourselves with Christ, who conquered death once and for all so that we who believe in Him may have eternal life. With Martha and Mary, we are called to profess our belief that Jesus is indeed the Resurrection and the Life.

~ News and Updates from the Parish ~

A word from Fr Andrew...

Easter Reconciliation Times: Reconciliation will be held on **Thursday 26th March at 7:00pm** at both Christ the King Church, Owairaka and Holy Cross Church, Henderson.

Easter Masses: We are hoping to celebrate two outdoor Masses in the school courtyard on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday mornings at 10.00am, weather permitting. Please keep these days in your prayers, asking God to bless us with fine weather.

Easter Triduum: Unfortunately, we are unable to celebrate the Easter Triduum this year. Some parishioners have asked about a Good Friday service, but this is not possible. The Triduum – Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil – is the heart of the Church's liturgy. The Easter Triduum consists of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil, forming the central liturgy of the Church. As a parish, we ordinarily celebrate all three: Holy Thursday begins with the Eucharist and Adoration. Good Friday includes the reading of the Passion and the Veneration of the Cross. The Easter Vigil culminates in the lighting of the new fire and Paschal Candle, the blessing of water, and the celebration of baptisms, confirmations, and the Eucharist. While we can't gather for these Holy Days this year, they remain at the centre of our faith.

General Building News: We are making steady progress with our insurance claim. We are expecting to be fully resolved within the next week or so... Once this is finalised, the Bishop intends to call a meeting for all those interested in the future of St Mary's Parish. Details of the meeting will be advertised soon.

In the meantime, plans are being developed to renovate the old hall as our temporary church. We have received initial quotes for the renovation work. Our aim is to make the old Hall a fitting place of worship as soon as possible, so that we may be able resume our usual parish timetable.

A Word of Encouragement: St Paul encourages us "*not to grow weary in doing good and never give up*" (Galatians 6:9). Let us take his advice to heart, remembering that all we do is for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Fr Danko and I wish you all a happy and holy Easter.

Parish Pledge Giving via Online Banking: Due to our current situation and many of our parishioners having to attend Mass elsewhere, some have asked about our Parish Pledge Giving. If you would like to continue with your regular contributions, we encourage you to change from using Pledge Envelopes to Online Banking instead. That way it doesn't matter where you attend Sunday Mass, your regular contributions will continue for our parish of St. Mary's Avondale, and we will still be able to issue a tax receipt to you at the end of the current financial year. If you would like to change to online banking, please contact the Parish Office.

The St Mary's Education Grant has been providing financial assistance to poor students in our local St Mary's School and Overseas, especially in our Pacific neighbourhood. The grant was started twenty-one years ago in November 2003. We urgently need new donors. Can you please help with a monthly contribution of just \$10? Yes, just \$10 a month can help to make a difference in some student's life. You can set up an Automatic Payment to the Parish Bank Account 02-0108-0706996-000 through your bank. Please include the following details: **Reference:** Educ Grant | **Code:** your phone number | **Particulars:** your surname and initials. You can set this up yourself through internet banking or take an Automatic Payment form from the table in the foyer. All donations are added together with your other donations to St Mary's Church and so they qualify for the usual tax deduction claim. For more information contact Tony Rea (email: tonirea@xtra.co.nz), Sumit Luis (sumit.luis@gmail.com) or Joe James (joejamesnz@yahoo.com).



Prayer to St Joseph

O Saint Joseph, do assist us by
your powerful intercession
and obtain for us our parish
Church.

And thus, having experienced
your heavenly power here
below may we praise God our
Father in Heaven. Amen

~ News and Updates from around the Diocese ~

Prayer Retreat for Women: Prayer and the Interior Life' Friday 17th April 6pm to Sunday 19th April 3pm 2026 - with time for Holy Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, Reconciliation, Personal Prayer and Spiritual Direction. Location: Hillsborough, Auckland. Early bird registration: www.stfrancisretreatcentre.org.nz

Rise up and Shine Festival: Taste the World, Celebrate the Culture! 30th May, 2026. Starts at 10am with Thanks giving Mass. Followed by Social Entertainment until 3pm. Music, Zumba, Food stalls and Cultural Show. Join us at the Migrant Chaplaincy Rise Up & Shine Festival, where every bite tells a story and every dance spark joy.

2026 Theology of the Body Courses and Prayer Retreats - Registration OPEN for 2026 Course 2: NEW Beginners TOB course – Called to Holiness - LIVE – 4-talk series. **Sat 28 March** (ONE DAY only). All adults 20 years + are welcome. To register please visit: theologyofthebody.nz

Wings.Nga Parirau this Lent – an invitation to know your faith and grow your relationship with Jesus. Are you interested but cannot make face-to-face meetings? Try Zoom! First Year Programme of 'Wings', Modules One and Two, on Zoom, 7-7.40pm, all Thursdays in Lent'. We will be reflecting on the Catholic Faith and our personal Faith journey. Sunday Gospels of Lent provide a framework for our Scripture reflection, on Zoom, all Saturdays in Lent 7-7.40pm. Church Teaching through the writings of Pope Leo XIV, reflect together, all Wednesdays in Lent, on Zoom, 7-7.40pm. Come and pray silently with others, be present with Jesus each morning, on Zoom, 6.15 – 6.45am. Is Meditation new for you? 'Come and See!' Contact Dianna Fouhy: diannaf@cda.org.nz

The Gift of Dreams: On Saturday 28th March, 10am to 2pm at Orewa Catholic church, the Auckland Christian Meditation Community is hosting a presentation by Tay-Marie Yorston. Dreams tell our stories; they anchor and deepen our faith in seasons of transition, anxiety, stress, grief and loss. For more details, visit christianmeditationnz.org.nz/community-days-retreats

Bishops Lenten Appeal: The New Zealand Bishops are encouraging the Catholic community to prayerfully consider how they can contribute to the annual Lenten Appeal. The appeal supports the work of Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand, which through its global network serves some of our world's most vulnerable and needy communities. The Bishops explain that acts of Christian charity can change the lives of those who benefit from that charity, but also can transform those who give with generosity — according to their own circumstances. Find out more at www.caritas.org.nz/lent

LENT 2026 with FOOD FOR FAITH: Visit www.foodforfaith.org.nz and sign up to receive daily email encouragements from Fr. John O'Connor. Prepared especially for those seeking greater maturity of faith.

Divine Mercy Feast
Sunday 12th April 5:30pm
St Benedict's Church
1 St Benedict's Street, Newton

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction.
❖ Blessing of Images,
❖ Holy Mass,
Veneration of St Faustina's Relic.

Bring your Divine Mercy Images and Artefacts to be Blessed

Free parking is available at Wilson Carpark, including free street parking on Sundays

“ My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter ”
Diary of Saint Faustina

All Welcome

~ News and Updates from around the Diocese ~

REGISTRATION IS OPEN

Chevalier Cyril John

CHARIS INTERNATIONAL INTERCESSION COMMISSION




Cyril will be in NZ
for two days.
Teaching and Training on
**Prophetic
Intercession**

Date 11th and 12th May 2026
Times Monday 11th: 6 pm to 9 pm
Tuesday 12th: 10 am to 9:30 pm

Venue Christ the King Church
Mt Roskill
Auckland

Amazing opportunity for all.



For enquiries contact Vanessa Nathan
021 143 3703 or email
maranatha.jvz@gmail.com

Registration \$20.00

Safeguarding is making a safe space for all
our people




Who is Safeguarding for?


- ✓ Volunteers
- ✓ Tamariki
- ✓ Clergy
- ✓ Elderly
- ✓ EVERYONE!

SAFE PARISH – SAFE GUARDING

As Catholics we believe that every person is created in the likeness and image of God. Therefore, we continue to ensure that our parish is a place where everyone is treated with respect and dignity. We foster an environment which is welcoming, and in which all our parish whanau, including our tamariki, rangatahi, kuia and kaumatua, feel safe. If you have any complaints or concerns, our Safeguarding Co-ordinator is Tania Starr and you can contact her via email: safeguardingrep@avondalecatholic.org.nz. You may also contact the National Office for Professional Standards 0800 114 662. You may also contact the Police 111.



"Didn't I tell you that you
would see God's glory
if you believe?"
John 11: 3-45

How is God inviting you to
trust Him more deeply at
this moment? 

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND MIGRANT CHAPLAINCIES

Rise Up & Shine Festival

Saturday 30th May 2026 | 10:00am – 3:00 pm

At Malaeola Community Centre, 16 Waokauri Place, Mangere

Starts: 10:00am - Thanksgiving Mass
Followed by: Social Entertainments till 3pm.
Music, Zumba, Food Stalls and Cultural Shows

KEEP OUR SPIRITS UP.
CELEBRATE OUR
ONENESS IN
CHRIST

Parish Priest: Fr. Andrew Matthew | **Assistant Priest:** Fr. Danko Bizjak
Email: ppriest@avondalecatholic.org.nz
Parish Secretary: Gwendoline Jessop Helg
Email: office@avondalecatholic.org.nz
Website: www.avondalecatholic.org.nz
Facebook: www.facebook.com/stmarysavondale
School Principal: Kathryn Hira
Email: principal@stmarysavondale.school.nz

Parish Office:
Phone: (09) 828 9309
Tue – Fri: 9.30am – 3.30pm
Monday: Closed
School Office:
Phone: (09) 828 5599

Pledge Giving Account Number: 02-0108-0706996-000
Mass Offering Account Number: 02-0108-0706996-001
SMACC Building Fund Account Number: 02-0108-0706996-004