



Sunday, 28 September 2025

Te Rangimārie Chaplaincy
360 Gloucester Street
Linwood
Christchurch 8013

Tēnā koutou katoa,

Kia tau te rangimārie ki a koutou – peace be with you.

In September 2023, I commenced the consultation process regarding the location of a new cathedral for the Diocese of Christchurch. The first group I approached was the Katorika mana whenua—the Māori Catholic community. From this engagement, a compelling historical narrative emerged, which became a significant factor in the decision to establish the new cathedral on the Barbadoes Street site.

The eastern boundary of this site was historically one of many important travel routes connecting Māori settlements in the city to the Ōpawaho (Heathcote River) and the adjoining Ihutai (Avon-Heathcote Estuary). These locations hold deep cultural significance, having long been associated with the gathering of shellfish, eels, fish, plants, and birds. Furthermore, this site is notable as the place where Aperahama Te Aika, a respected kaumatua of Tuahiwi, was confirmed in the Catholic faith in the late 19th century.

Following the public announcement of the cathedral's location in April 2024, I initiated further consultation concerning a suitable name. In August 2024, the name *Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament – Te Hāhi Matua o te Hākarameta Tapu Rawa* was formally adopted. Subsequently, in November 2024, I extended an invitation for the Te Rangimārie Chaplaincy to be based at the new cathedral site. This proposal was considered at a hui that same month, at which our respected kaumatua, Bob Te Miha, was present. The proposal was warmly accepted by the community.

This hui also expressed a clear mandate for the Chaplaincy to explore alternative venues for the celebration of Miha Māori during the interim period before the cathedral's construction is completed. After a thorough discernment process, including the presentation of several options and robust discussion at a hui in May 2025, three preferred locations were submitted to me for final consideration. I am therefore pleased to announce that, beginning Sunday, 7 December 2025, Miha Māori will be celebrated at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral until the new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament is completed.

The concept of hīkoi, or journey, is deeply embedded in the experience of the Māori community in Ōtautahi, and indeed in the story of God's people. Abraham was called by God to leave his homeland and journey to a land prepared for him. Moses led the Israelites through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Mary, upon receiving the news of her divine calling, travelled immediately to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Our ancestors traversed the lands surrounding the cathedral site to sustain themselves and their whānau. In this same spirit, as your shepherd and pīhopa, I now invite the Te Rangimārie Chaplaincy to undertake another journey—one that will lead us to our new spiritual home.

A final Miha Māori and whakanoa ceremony will be held at the Te Rangimārie Centre on Sunday, 30 November 2025 at 11:00 am. In accordance with Canon Law, all sacred objects, furnishings, and taonga will be respectfully removed for use in other sacred spaces or placed in ecclesiastical custody. Parish registers will be transferred to the Catholic Cathedral Parish. The future of the land and the Te Rangimārie Centre remain under discernment and will be determined through consultation with mana whenua and my advisory groups.

In this time of transition, let us follow the wisdom of our tūpuna: whaia te Whaea—follow the Mother. As we do so, we turn to our ancestors in faith, the angels and saints, and seek their intercession for our hīkoi:

St John the Baptist, pray for us.

St Mary MacKillop, pray for us.

St John Paul II, pray for us.

Venerable Suzanne Aubert, pray for us.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read '+ Michael Gielen'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+Michael Gielen
Bishop of Christchurch