

NORTH TARANAKI PASTORAL AREA
BOX 32
Taranaki Mail Centre
NEW PLYMOUTH

9 January 2014

Dear brothers and sisters,

I'm writing to you about the events, which unfolded on Monday afternoon. I know many of you will be struggling with what has happened and like myself, are experiencing a range of emotions including shock, sadness, anger and disbelief. At the same time, I have a profound sense of relief that no one was injured or died.

I also have a deep feeling of gratitude towards the emergency services including the fire service and police. I was touched by their professionalism and kindness. They were very aware that our church is a sacred place and they went out of their way to help us recover the Tabernacle and Blessed Sacrament and other sacred objects as soon as it was safe to do so.

Lastly, I feel grateful for the strong community spirit, which exists in our parish and school communities and which was so evident, both at the time of the fire and over the past few days.

I think it's fair to say that what we have experienced is like a death and we are in the middle of a kind of grief. Despite this, we need to move forward and the wheels began turning very quickly. The same evening of the tragedy saw our Diocesan Manager, Tony Murphy break from his holiday to liaise with our insurer and advise us about how to proceed.

Given the suspicious nature of the fire, the police, fire service and our insurers began an investigation the next day. This work continues and I invite you to pray for all involved in this process.

Despite the outward appearance, an initial assessment of the church indicates significant structural and internal damage.

As you may well be aware the insurance company has already taken control of the building. The first thing they did was to appoint an assessor to identify the extent of damage and likely costs involved. This process involves a comprehensive engineering report and, given that it's holiday time, may take up to four weeks.

Once we have this information, we will then be in a position to enter into a process of consultation with ourselves, the parish, the diocese and the wider Pastoral Area about how to proceed.

Bishop Charles is coming to New Plymouth next weekend and wants to celebrate Mass and meet with us over a cup of tea. This Mass will be a St Philomena's Mass, at St Joseph's at 10.30am Sunday 19 January and ministries at this Mass will be provided by St Philomena's parishioners.

May our good God bless you and your family at this time.

Kind regards,



Fr Craig Butler
North Taranaki Pastoral Area

