



Barbadoes Street

Returning to Our Roots, Embracing Our Future

20 April 2024

Tēnā koutou katoa,

For the past four months, in a time of prayerful discernment, the People of God have responded generously to my invitation to consider the future site of our new Catholic cathedral.

This decision was one on which I wanted the thoughts of our Catholic people, especially those living within our Diocese who have a deep desire for a permanent spiritual home.

That included our priests and religious, Catholic Māori, a range of technical experts and, over these past few months, the wider Church community. I am grateful to all those who have contributed to this process.

I can now announce that our new cathedral will be built on Barbadoes Street. We had 85 per cent of survey respondents express that location as their preference.

As I wrote in my December pastoral letter, Barbadoes Street is a place of rich Catholic history dating back more than 160 years. It is, of course, also the site of the former Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament.

This period of community engagement has highlighted several important matters for the Diocese to consider as we prepare for the upcoming phases, like the need for beauty, having a prominent presence in the city and the importance of financial prudence. Most were already part of our thinking, but some issues have encouraged deeper reflection about how we best serve our people.

This important decision allows us to prepare for the years-long journey towards the opening of a new cathedral. We understand the urgency many in the Diocese feel to have our new home built and we will proceed with urgency and with care.

The next step on this journey will be choosing the patron saint for our new cathedral. I will soon invite you to help me make that choice.

In coming months, we will also start the critical work of designing the new cathedral precinct on Barbadoes Street, which will include an early learning centre, parish and diocesan offices, cultural and community space, presbytery and ample parking. Catholic Cathedral College will remain on its current site and we will explore the possible relocation of St Mary's Primary School.

You, the people of the Christchurch Diocese, share my desire for a cathedral that glorifies God, brings our community together, serves as a source of unity and enhances worthy liturgical celebration.

It will be within that framework that the design of the cathedral itself will begin, guided by local experts across a range of areas.

I invite the Catholic community to keep praying for this missionary project – that it will continue to proceed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

St John the Baptist, patron of our Diocese, pray for us.

+ Michael Gielen
Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch