

Ka pu te ruha, ka hao te rangatah.

That is a Maori proverb which means that the old net is being pulled in and replaced by a new net.

Old nets get a bit worn and harder to mend. New nets are supple and strong. But – and this is the point! – it is the same Christ who casts the one and the other. Otherwise, as we heard in today's Gospel; the disciples could work all night on a sea full of fish and catch nothing. In the event, there were two boats, both were filled, but only at Christ's word.

A less than truly Catholic understanding would envisage Jesus handing over to his disciples and charging them to do what he used to do. But a truly Catholic faith has it that Jesus has not handed over; he has not left off. *He is still doing* the things he used to do. As risen Christ, he continues his own ministry – in and through his apostles; in and through all who are the Body of Christ; in and through each succeeding generation of bishops.

And that is what puts the transition that we celebrate today in its true perspective. In the ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care entrusted to bishops, it is Christ who acts. We change; he is always the same.

Well, if that's the assurance our faith gives us, what's left to pray for, for bishops? This! That we who are called to act in his name might do so *in a manner that resembles his manner*. The manner of him who identified with his people, learned of their needs, and *then* ministered to them.

In today's first reading, the prophet Ezechiel, speaking for God, said "I myself shall be their shepherd... I shall bring them back.... I shall bandage the wounded...."

In the person of Jesus, God has fulfilled that promise. And still does so.

On other occasions, I have testified to how it has been the faith, love, hopes, struggles, sacrifices, sorrows and joys of the people that has inspired, nurtured and empowered me in my ministry to them. Today, I say "thank you for being Christ to me, so that I could be Christ to you."

Naturally enough, people have been asking how I have felt about letting go. Perhaps I should tell you how I felt on the evening of 22 February. The changeover was being announced in Rome at midday on 22 Feb, which was our midnight. At 8 o'clock that evening, it struck me that after nearly 22 years, I had only 4 hours to go. My playful kind remembered that guy in one of Jesus' parables who realized that he had better make himself a few friends while he was still in a position to do so before he lost his job. If I had gone down that track, I would have rung some of you up and said: "I'm still in charge until midnight; what can I do for you?"

Instead, I knelt before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and thanked him for the extraordinary privilege that has been mine to serve him and his people as a bishop. I renewed my sorrow for the times I had let him and his people down; I prayed again for all those who had ever been entrusted to my pastoral care, and I prayed for Charles. I experienced deep peace.

And now, I commend you, Charles, to the same loyalty and love that I have always received from the lovely, motley people of God. Sisters and brothers, we are all invited to the joy of the disciples. In a few weeks time we shall gather to experience the joy that was theirs on the morning of his resurrection. In the meantime, let us share the joy of those earliest disciples when they discovered that both boats were full – at Christ’s word. It’s all about *what Christ is doing*. In the second reading we heard that beautiful line: “the mystery is Christ among you”.

And so, let us bring on the new net – and all the more merrily because today it is 140 years to the day when Mass was celebrated for the first time in Palmerston North.

Ka put e ruha, ka hao te rangatahi.