

New Zealand went into lockdown on March 15, 2020 because of the coronavirus. Attendance at Mass, funerals, weddings or gatherings was banned. The church doors were locked permanently. On Palm Sunday, blessed palms were left outside the church for parishioners to pick up. Parishioners were able to observe Mass in programmes on TV on Sundays.

With only two days notice our school went into Level 4 lockdown on March 25. The school's two weeks, first term holidays then went into effect. Teachers used this time to prepare for teaching on line which began on April 15. The entire school of 220 were able to be reached by the use of home computers and laptops with only about 10 pupils needing to borrow laptops from the school. Teachers and many pupils were already accustomed to this method of learning, so throughout the lockdown it was very successful. On April 29 we went into level 3 and 13 pupils of parents who had to return work came to school, while the rest continued to be taught at home. On May 18 we went to level 2 and 95% of pupils returned to school. A strict regimen of hygiene and cleaning was introduced and school gates were locked from 9am – 2.50pm daily. This was to limit the number of visitors on the site.

On April 27, the lockdown was eased as we moved to Level 3, but social distancing was continued. Because of public demand, up to 10 people were then allowed to attend a funeral or a wedding. After May 13 this number was extended to up to 50, again through public pressure. On May 28 this number was further extended to 100 for all gatherings with social distancing and the Bishops then allowed Masses to begin again. There were no deaths in the parish during this lockdown. When we went to level 2 on May 18 any ten people were permitted to group, so St Ignatius was then opened for parishioners to make private church visits during the day.

The first daily, morning Masses began at St. Ignatius on June 1 and a number of parishioners were advised the first public Sunday Mass would be on June 7. About 75 attended, all had to sign in, use hand sanitizer and keep social distancing. Mass was not an obligation during lockdown and attendance at a week day Mass was fulfilment for any feeling of obligation.

On June 9 we went from level 2 to level 1, meaning living was returned to normal for New Zealanders except for strict controls on the Country's borders.

OUR NEW BISHOP'S PARISH VISIT CANCELLED BY SECOND LOCKDOWN

On August 15, 2020 Bishop Michael Gielen was coming to St. Ignatius Parish to confirm 35 parishioners, but his visit was stopped by the Lockdown. In recent times we had learned Bishop Dunn had serious problems due to fading eyesight so the appointment of an Auxiliary Bishop in January was good news. Michael Gielen was born in 1971, brought up in Tokaraa and ordained in 1997. He served in many parishes in Hamilton Diocese and studied in Rome 2014 -2019.



On March 7 Michael Gielen was ordained Bishop by Bishop Dunn before 3000 in the Vodaphone Events Centre. In the first Lockdown Bishop Gielen became more widely known because he was one of those who said Mass on the Shine TV station.

After our June 28 Mass at which three of our adult Tongan parishioners were confirmed, a party of about 20 Tongans performed three liturgical dances.

The parish house at 10 Kotiri St. took on a new role in February 2020. Formerly a convent, a presbytery, a temporary home for the priests from Glendowie and latterly a tenanted home for families, it became a specialist Government registered school for students with additional educational learning needs. Beautifully painted inside, the elderly building was cleverly adapted to accommodate at least 26 full time students, 15 part time, and 8 staff. Managed by two parishioners, the school is a completely separate institution from the parish.

On February 13, our parishioners packed into the larger church at Glendowie for the Requiem Mass for the much loved 99 year-old Mary Dunn, Mother of Father John, our parish priest for the past 17 years.

In early April parishioners were delighted to learn the charges against Cardinal Pell were quashed by all seven judges in the highest court in Australia. The Cardinal was immediately released from prison.