

Our beautiful taonga. Artwork guide.



Students from St Patrick's College (Wellington) and St Catherine's unveil our new taonga (treasure) at St Mary of the Angels.

Name: Ko Hāta Maria, te Matua Wahine o te Atua
Translation: Holy Mary, Mother of God
Artist: Damien Walker (Studio of Saint Philomena, Rangiora)
Māori advisor: Anthony Kemp

Introduction



To celebrate the rededication of Aotearoa New Zealand to Mary, Mother of God, Assumed into Heaven, our Bishops commissioned a new piece of art.

They wanted a depiction of Mary that connects her to our

country. The piece challenges us to see her as a woman of incredible strength and the place she holds in our hearts and our community today.

Concept

Damian Walker worked with Anthony Kemp to develop a piece that highlighted the journey of the Catholic faith to the Māori, via the first French missionaries.

The image presents the fusion between a traditional Māori outlook, built around marae, whanau, whakapapa and kaitiaki, and the Catholic faith, centered on the whanau of God, with its own marae, whakapapa and kaitiaki.

The duo wanted to capture and share the theme of unity. The artwork itself aims to encourage a shared desire for us all to live in harmony together.

The Overarching Marae

For the tangata whenua, the marae is our home – it is where we belong.

It is where our whakapapa is, our past, present and future.

It is an expression of our whole being and a fulfilment of our journey, bringing us back to our whanau as a whole.

By framing the image within a marae, with the Holy Spirit at the top, and the evangelists on the side, we are reminded of the deep truth that our ultimate spiritual home is the house of God, expressing the depths of our being and our radical connection to all in the whanau of God across history.

The four evangelists, are the enduring witnesses of the Good News of Jesus, and here they are seen as stylised kaitiaki, the traditional carvings of guardians and protectors, for they guard the truths of faith and point us toward the heart of the mysteries of God.

The four creatures that symbolise the four gospels are taken from the book of Revelation.

They are four spotlights on the mystery of Christ: the Lion, shows Christ's victory of love on the cross; the Ox evokes his sacrifice; the face reveals the merciful gaze of Christ incarnate; and the soaring eagle portrays Christ's contemplation of the Father. The Evangelists are depicted here in a ghostly light. They are ever ancient and yet shine anew in every age, thanks to the mysterious 'holy breath' of the Holy Spirit.



The lion one of the four kaitiaki

The Four Whare Rūnanga

At the base of the painting there are depictions of four locations, represented by four houses of meeting or whare rūnanga.



Four whare rūnanga

The first is The Papal Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican showing the unity of the universal Church, where Christ is the cornerstone and Peter the rock on which the Church is built. This spot also marks the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul, who have pride of place in the whakapapa of the Church at the beginning of her mission.

The second is the basilica of Our Lady of Fourvière in Lyon, from where Bishop Pompallier, Saint Peter Chanel and the early Marist missionaries dedicated their mission to Oceania.

Mother Aubert, whose mother was healed at this shrine, would join Pompallier in a later journey and dedicate her life to the same mission.

The third location is Te Tii Waitangi, where Bishop Pompallier would insist upon the rights of Māori to remain Māori in their religious freedom, and not have to adopt a religion in order to be in partnership with the Queen.

We also see the chapel of Motuti, where Bishop Pompallier set up the first mission and where his remains now rest.

The Central Figures

The central figures, Mary and Jesus occupy the foreground.

Mary is honoured with a great korowai, in the magnificent colour of the pukeko, reflecting also the great oceans that were traversed by those who settled in New Zealand.

Her cloak is rimmed with the Poutama, the ascending pathway to heavenly knowledge, for she is the seat of wisdom, leading us to Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

The golden band at the top of her korowai represents the flax that was traditionally used as the base of these cloaks. It reflects the fact that she is overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, wrapped in charity as one 'clothed in the sun.'

For this same reason, her dress is a royal red. It is decorated by the fleur-de-lis, a French royal symbol, which is one of the oldest representations of the Virgin Mary, and also reminiscent of the Holy Trinity who dwells in her.



Korowai and fleur-de-lys

This symbol has been stylised to evoke the koru, which commonly represents New Zealand. The pattern on Mary's belt mixes the traditional weaving pattern that represents family, with twelve smaller triangles inside the central diamond, to show the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

As Queen of the Apostles, she holds a twelve-pronged fern in her hand. Hanging from her belt is the mere, next to the rosary, which is the spiritual weapon she offers her children in the battle against evil. She also wears a tiki, a symbol of her divine motherhood, for she conceived the Word within her womb and her heart, and brought Him to birth.

Jesus is wearing the very rare kahu kiwi, or kiwi-feathered cloak, to show his unique mana. He is the eternal Word, which is symbolised by the lectionary He carries, whose cover is based on Pompallier's own prayerbook.

Manakitanga

Mary stands in front of the central marae, calling us on. Her karanga and her hand raised in wiriwiri, beckon us to approach Christ her Son. Her penetrating gaze is unashamedly fixed on the viewer. Each person entering this marae by contemplating this painting is her child and invited to personally encounter her divine Son.

Christ's hand is raised in blessing, with His two fingers indicating His two natures: divine and human, and the other three showing the Holy Trinity. His gesture is one of haere mai, welcoming us into the heart of His divine life, in which we find our true home.

Te Hikoī Wairua mo Te Ara a Maria

Ko Hāta Maria, te Matua Wahine o te Atua (Holy Mary, Mother of God) was unveiled in Wellington on Sunday 15 August. The artwork is now touring New Zealand as part of Te Hikoī Wairua mo Te Ara a Maria.

At the conclusion of the tour the artwork will be permanently housed in a shrine which will be created at St Marys of the Angels (on Boulcott Street) in Wellington.

The shrine will be accessible to the public. It will make an excellent destination for anyone contemplating a pilgrimage of New Zealand.



Mary holds a fern while Jesus hugs Pompallier's prayer book