

Father Benedict Francis

Father Benedict Francis was ordained in 1997 and joined St Thomas More in 2009, following on from Father John Bland. Previously he had served in Northcote, Orewa and Ellerslie. He was the Parish Priest for six years. Low in stature but big on smiles he soon gained a reputation as the Energizer Bunny; always 'on the go'...always with a smile. When asked about highlights of his time at STM Father Ben talked of two things – new priestly ordinations and parties!

Father was grateful for the experience to walk alongside three seminarians during the latter part of their journeys to priesthood. The parish, and Father Ben, were privileged to be a part of three ordinations; Tongan, Fr Maliu Tofu, Fr Brian Lange the boatbuilder and Fr Carlos Guleng, the Filipino Design Engineer. Father Ben enjoyed living with each priest and celebrating their new vocation.

Parties and gatherings were always important to Father Ben. "I was constantly looking for an excuse for the parish to 'gather' – not just in ethnic groups but all mixed up! It is all about community". The New Year's Eve party was his initiative and the evening Mass on the 31st was always timed so the party could commence afterwards.

Father Ben was in favour of a new and larger crucifix for the sanctuary and during his tenure money was denoted for this \$30,000+ project. The cause was oversubscribed and the leftover funds enabled the single large screen that was sometimes hard to view to be replaced by two television monitors which offer greater viewer clarity.

After a couple of years at Howick, Fr Benedict is now Parish Priest in the large and diverse parish of Christ the King in Owairaka. This parish experienced many physical changes due to the construction of the new motorway extension. Since joining this parish in February 2017 he appreciates the many new buildings that now make up the parish centre along with a brand new, well-appointed home.

Helen Ellis, January 2017