

Memories about Fr John Bland...

"I always remember Fr John as being quietly so giving and thoughtful and also amazingly capable.

He would see a problem or a need and quietly, with no fuss, connect A with B and something great would occur and an issue would be resolved.

Additionally there wasn't much Fr John couldn't do...sewing, cooking, preserving, DIY of every flavour, tour director for visiting Rosminians and new IT technology was never a problem for him. It gave a group of us great joy to stage a surprise farewell "This is your life" show at Rosmini College. Hundreds were there...and he had no idea! – he thought he was attending a Farewell Showcase Concert."

Helen Ellis, Oct 2017

"When planning our wedding, which took place at St Thomas More on the first day of 2007, we asked Father John to officiate. At first he was unimpressed with the short notice but when he heard us discussing whether it was 24 or 25 years that we had known one another, he readily agreed to waive the marriage preparation course. As well as being a shorter ceremony than the Nuptial Mass in Southland when I was just twenty, it was a personalised and memorable occasion"

Mary Anne Clark, 2017

"I used to organise the collection counters and Fr John told me that the Rosmini fathers first week in the parish was a steep learning curve as they thought that the priests did everything in the parish. He said that after 5.30 Mass there was panic when they couldn't find the collection at the altar before someone told them that it had been put away in the safe; then there was surprise on Sunday afternoon to find that the collections had already been counted; then panic again on Monday when looking to do the banking to find no money in the safe (Emmett Maloney had already banked the money)."

Dennis Lyons, Nov 17

"In 2009 when Father John Bland announced he would be leaving St Thomas More and returning to the U.K. it was the end of an era. Glenfield had been his Rosmini community home for 10 years. Prior to that he had taught and lived at Rosmini College for 30 years. That was 40 years' service to the Catholic Diocese of Auckland.

The move was huge for him – saying goodbye to so many friends: he had spent most of his adult life in New Zealand. A group of us felt this event deserved a little recognition.

First a special Mass was celebrated by Bishop Patrick Dunn when Fr Benedict Francis was welcomed.

The following weekend, Sunday 26 April, we organized what we called a Showcase Concert at Rosmini College. We often held these sorts of concerts and Fr John thought it was a lovely



idea. We asked him who he would especially like to see perform and his response was the Tongan choir.

What he, and most of the parish did not know was that we weren't having a Showcase Concert...we were actually hosting a "This is your Life" show. We copied the format of previous television shows when unexpectedly an important person in the audience becomes the celebrity of a show and special friends and family, who are hiding in the wings, are brought on stage to talk about the guest. The show started with a big surprise – Father John's brother from England came on the screen on a video and 'broke the news' to the whole auditorium. Father John was brought on stage and from then on a string of old friends and acquaintances were brought out and they all reminisced about old times...and for sure the Tongan choir performed with all their wonderful energy.

Father John was presented with a small version of the Holy Family Icon written by Michael Pervan from the Studio of John the Baptist. We also put together a clear file filled with messages from parishioners. Amazingly, the event was a surprise to Father John which was quite an achievement as not much passed him by! We gave him a great send off and he appreciated that. He still retains contact by email and skype with many parishioners."



Helen Ellis, Feb 2018