

Diocese of Rarotonga
Bishop's Office
Rarotonga, Cook Islands



16th December, 2016.

I have just rushed out to buy Christmas cards. None available. Not too sure that means Cook Islanders do not send cards or that I went looking too late and they are sold out. This sheet is my attempt to make contact with you at Christmas.

2016, in general has been a solid year for the church. The year of Mercy theme set by Pope Francis was well picked up by our people and there were many efforts to put it into practice. It was something they have worked away at the whole year. Hopefully the diocese has developed.



Priests and Sisters gathering - 2016. As you will observe we are not a big diocese.

An event that took place recently that will go into the history book of the Diocese was the passing of Fr John Rovers. Fr. John from the Netherlands worked for 59 years in the Diocese and died on his island, where he had worked for most of those years, Mauke. Fr. John was a very outgoing person – known by all and considered the good friend of all who knew him both inside and outside of our church. The diocese is fortunate still to have one member of the Picpus priests still residing in the diocese, Fr Damian Marinus. Fr Damian arrived on the same boat as Fr John in 1957. So Fr. Damian's history will be even longer.

Many of you are aware that the catholic Secondary school lost half of its buildings to an arsonist attack in 2013. Since then we have not been able to rebuild as the lease expired at the end of 2014 and the courts have been slow to determine just who the land owners are. The college has struggled on - in fact that is not the right way to put it as it has increased its roll. Last week it was announced at the college prize giving that the government will "warrant" (taking over the land) the land for educational purposes . This is a major move for the government as there will be winners and losers. I am waiting for the dust to settle, and then will see if we have an agreement that is sticking. On another piece of church land where

negotiations had been going on for 10 years to renew, we finally reached an agreement – had the feast with the landowners and then in the final court sitting one persons stood up and objected. So back to discussions with nothing signed.

Thank you for your support and interest during 2016 in the Diocese of Rarotonga. And too for all the generosity shown to me personally. I am blessed and supported and with this help continue confidently into 2017.

A happy and holy Christmas to you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. P. Donoghue". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+ Bishop Paul Donoghue, S.M.

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