

Auckland Diocesan Synod
Thursday 4 September 2014
Cophorne Hotel, Waitangi, Bay of Islands
1830 hrs
The Rt Rev'd Te Kitohi Pikaahu

Ruatara, Te Ara mo te Rongopai – The Gateway for the Gospel

Lections

Lesson Isaiah 41:8-10 *From the Ends of the Earth*

Psalm 22:22-31 *The Fear of the Lord*

Epistle Hebrews 11:8-16 *Living in Faith*

Gospel John 1:1-9 *The True Light*

I runga i te ingoa o te Matua, te Tama me te Wairua Tapu.
Amine.

Te Hari a Nga Puhi - The Dance of Nga Puhi

Ka nukunuku, ka nekeneke.
Ka nukunuku, ka nekeneke
Titiro ki nga wai o Tokerau e hora nei
Me he pipiwharaua ki tua
Takoto te pai, takoto te pai.
Whiti, whiti, tata, tata.
Whiti, whiti, tata, tata.
He ra taua ki tua,
Takoto te pai, takoto te pai.

³ Nana nga mea katoa i hanga; kahore hoki tetahi mea i kore te hanga e ia o nga mea i hanga. ⁴ I a ia te ora; ko te ora te marama mo nga tangata. *Hoani 1,3-4*

³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being

in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.
John 1.3-4

I have, this week, as we once used to say in the Prayer of Confession from the BCP [Book of Common Prayer], "*done those things I ought not to have done.*"

I never thought I would succumb to a temptation I had no interest in or the slightest desire to do.

Earlier this week I accepted the Ice Bucket Challenge. In fact it ended up being three buckets of quite a sizable amount of extremely cold water. It included the one I was standing in which my wife Lynnore informed me was part of the deal.

I immediately informed my friend from the U.K. the one game enough to publically name me, that I had duly responded to his challenge, and that I in turn had no one to challenge. I ended my post by saying, 'that's me. I'm done!' In other words, there's no way on earth I'll do it again!

I now think, perhaps, I am a bit slow in that I should have challenged my brother bishops, Bishop Ross and Bishop Jim to do likewise.

Suffice to say, I resisted that urge recalling part of the confessional prayer again, with added emphasis of course, "*I have left undone those things which I ought to have done;*" as I want to remain their good friends for a long while to come.

Actually, I thought Bishop Jim was issuing an unofficial challenge to travel up with him in his new convertible; with one condition, that I wear a mitre. I'm pleased that didn't eventuate. The weather definitely posed a challenge.

But, one challenge Bishop Ross and I did accept within the first months of his episcopate was to come north to attend the second Waitangi Tribunal Hearing on the long awaited Nga Puhi Waitangi claims. That gathering was held just across the Waitangi river at Te Tii Marae in 2010.

Bishop Ross and I were urged by representatives of iwi, hapu and hahi to come to Waitangi to 'front up' on behalf of the Church, and in a manner of speaking, 'face the music.'

We were both aware that as Church leaders, we should expect a good deal of criticism to be levelled at the Church, and by virtue of our office as bishops to us individually, and collectively.

Our Church that day put its hand up. It stood up, to be made accountable, to accept responsibility, for our past in the Church's dealings with Maori that resulted in alienation of land impacting greatly on Maori throughout Aotearoa.

We do that for two reasons: because we can, and because we must.

The challenge was to hear the stories from the perspective of the claimants. I suppose you can call that, a glimpse of, 'Nga Puhi Unplugged.'

An independent report, entitled '*Nga Puhi Speaks*' was published following the hearings.

It makes for interesting reading. The only similarity to Nicky Hager's book, 'Dirty Politics' is that a good number of people applauded its contents and welcomed its subsequent release.

It has been discussed in every part of Nga Puhi, in homes, on marae, in hui.

The strongly held view in the hui and what the report makes clear is that Nga Puhi did not cede their mana, their sovereignty to anyone, let alone the crown.

What I found most enlightening is the manner in which Ruatara is treated and the high regard he is held when kaumatua spoke about the Christian mission in the Bay of Islands.

The extent to which Ruatara is mentioned is a revelation. Previously, it appeared that Ruatara was known and respected more by Pakeha than Maori since his life story is told and re-told predominantly by Christians.

What interests me is that his name has found its way into the meta narrative of Nga Puhi history.

In saying that, the contribution of the Christian Ruatara is now being given its rightful place.

Ruatara – Te Ara mo te Rongopai - *The Gateway for the Gospel* whom we celebrate this evening went out to find and claim the ultimate challenge.

He had a mind for his people, their status and their future.

As a young person, Ruatara stands out as a - *giant among men*.

His appearance is noted here by J.L. Nicholas;

“Ruatara is a man, in the full bloom of his youth...of tall and commanding stature, great muscular strength and marked expression of countenance.”

This description is of a man not too dissimilar to the one standing before you now in that I am a man as well, but that is where any further similarity ends.

This is a single character whose remarkable contribution to the preparation, the journey, the arrival, and the generous reception extended on behalf of and to the missionaries at Oihi on and before Christmas Day 1814, is well documented.

In a relatively short space of time in a life lived by any man of his generation, he had experienced more than most could conceive.

The challenges he was prepared to accept, to grab hold of, and face 'head on' amount to what is best described as extraordinary.

It would be accurate to suggest that Ruatara was a man driven by a combination of a strong will and extreme fortitude.

His was a formidable spirit fuelled by a power that sustained him in all his tribulations and his victories of which there were a number. That power is where his trust *and hope* lay.

Like Abraham who set out by faith not knowing where he was going, Ruatara's curiosity pushed him onwards from his own world, the world that he knew only too well, to uncharted territory, to the other side of the world known by pakeha and a small handful of Maori.

His hunger and thirst for adventure pushed him beyond the world of the Bay of Islands to perhaps a world that fit his idea of opportunity and possibility.

That other world though must have offered more than adventure for Ruatara.

After all, he was something of an entrepreneur.

We know that he was a person of immense vision and ability.

Ngati Torehina tradition in '*Ngapuhi Speaks*' recounts that:

"Captain Cook came ashore near Mataka (the range above Oihi) in 1769 for food and water."

Local historian, kaumatua and chief, Hugh Rihari says, "We gifted and traded resources readily available to us, fresh water, fish, kumara, and flax; and later we were renowned for growing and supplying potatoes."

Ruatara was the 'Sam Morgan of 'Trade Me' fame, his people were the entrepreneurs of the late 18th and early 19th Century in the Bay of Islands.

"When Governor King visited Ngati Torehina in 1793 the Kawana [Governor] presented us with gifts of axes, tools, nails, pigs and potatoes, which became crucial in ensuring ongoing trade. Ngati Torehina established production for trade and export."

"Subsequent to this visit, we established mahinga kai within our rohe for 'trading'. These were vastly different to the ancient gardens and were used to cultivate 'fast' crops of potatoes specifically for trade with passing ships. We had almost three times the number of trading gardens than those used for our own kai."

"In 1814, Ngati Torehina wanted to solidify their relations with the outside world and agreed to allow Marsden to establish a permanent settlement at Oihi. They had visited Marsden in Sydney to participate in his agricultural ventures, and decided to cultivate wheat commercially."

"Ruatara and the other rangatira saw the potential for development and were keen to trade internationally."

According to Hugh, his ancestor's attitude toward trade with the Europeans is explained in this way:

"We have much to offer and learn from one another. They had knowledge our tupuna wanted, and we had much to share to make that happen.

"Our tupuna built up a relationship of trust and confidence with the CMS Missionaries, particularly Samuel Marsden, from around the turn of the nineteenth century and welcomed their arrival.

"The tupuna saw the missionaries' status as both rangatira and tohunga to be a blessing. The Church mediated and pervaded all relations with the crown and played a crucial role in the development of our relationship with the British prior to Te Tiriti."

"The hope was that the philosophy of 'awhi mai, awhi atu' would continue to bear fruit for generations to come."

It is this notion of 'awhi mai, awhi atu' that I find intriguing.

At the core of this concept of 'awhi mai, awhi atu' is the making and forging of a healthy and lasting relationship between tangata whenua and tauwiwi; more to the point, it describes a bi-cultural partnership.

Literally, it means a mutual embrace for Maori and Pakeha.

It is the coming together of two worlds – Te Ao Maori (the Maori world), and Te Ao Pakeha (the Pakeha world).

Ruatara was the sole person to bridge the two world views together. He was a person who knew enough to survive in both worlds, embracing the tension and new challenges that emerged.

When you think about the Nga Puhi story, it is a partnership built on truth - pono, on tika - righteousness, on honour - mana, on trust -whirinaki.

It implies duty and responsibility toward one's neighbour, as one would expect to see exist between a brother or sister, even more a brother or sister in Christ.

I am continually inspired from what Hoterene Keretene is essentially describing in detail as Ruatara's conversion experience in 1809 when he was found destitute and violently ill by Marsden in London.

Ruatara's faith came out of a position of ultimate vulnerability. He was not a stranger to adversity, not by any means. He was though exposed to Christian generosity, kindness and compassion.

As a direct result of Marsden's sympathy toward Ruatara, Keretene observes that at this point; 'Christ was born in the Maori heart - ka whanau te Karaiti ki roto ki te ngakau Maori.'

This is for Ruatara is an invitation to life in Christ.

What Ruatara has experienced is this invitation to life. That Christ was born into his ngakau, his heart, was quite literally for him a coming into life in Christ. This is simply and purely, salvation in whatever way we choose to understand it.

For Ruatara, it was instantaneous.

It was life-giving, life-transforming and life-sustaining.

As the prologue to John's gospel indicates, the Word was with God and was God. The Word was unknown to humanity, yet life and light was in the world.

In the Word, life has come into being, that life is the light of the world. These two themes go together, life and light.

In the First Testament, the Word of God is his Word of power. God's word is God's deed, and his deed is his word: that is he acts through his word, and he speaks in his action.

There is darkness, but the good news is that the light overcomes it. The light shines on despite darkness in the world.

It is important to consider deeply here this question of the Word present in creation but unrecognised. The fundamental point remains: God has always been present from before the time of creation.

There is only one true light, and its range is universal, 'it enlightens every human being.'

Ruatara encountered the living Christ, the light of the world.

He was transformed by the power of God's love, life and light.

That transforming power of God enabled him to make space in his world, in his life and in his heart for the love and light of Christ to find a dwelling place. In doing so, the kingdom of God was established - takoto te pai. The righteousness of God was established - takoto te pai. The peace of God was established - takoto te pai.

Rejoice and be glad, for Christ is resurrection, reconciliation for all the human race.

We shall all be one in Christ, one in our life together.

Praise to God who has created us, praise to God who has accepted us, praise to God who sends us into the world.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.