



Fr Denis James Whelan CSsR

Born	23 March 1930
Professed	02 February 1953
Ordained	08 March 1959
Died	14 April 2021

Denis was born at Matamata, a picturesque town, 60kms east of Hamilton, New Zealand, the second child of Albert and Evaline Whelan. Their first child died shortly after birth. Denis has two brothers, David, who lives in Hamilton, and Barry, who lives in Auckland. Denis' father was a school principal and throughout his childhood, the family moved regularly around the North Island between Thames on the Hauraki Plains to Norsewood. He was educated by the Marist Brothers and matriculated with distinction in English, Latin, Maths and Chemistry.

Denis was nearly 20 when he left for the Juvenate in Galong, NSW where he met fellow Kiwi, Frank Blewman, already in Galong since 1948. The new arrivals in 1950 included Bernard Clinton, Brian Quillinan, Des Murphy, Frank Pidgeon and Peter O'Donnell. He entered the Novitiate in Galong in 1952 and professed his first vows in February 1953. He continued his seminary studies in Ballarat and was ordained by Bishop O'Collins on 8th March, 1959 alongside Pat Coughlan and PJ O'Neill. In 1960, he was appointed to the Juvenate in Galong as a lecturer, and thence to Kew and Brisbane in 1961 and then appointed to the Auckland community in 1962 as a 2nd Consultor. He was also asked to prepare himself to set up a New Zealand Juvenate.

Denis was sent for studies at the University of Auckland for three years and graduated with his B.A. The establishment of a Juvenate in New Zealand did not eventuate, and he was appointed assistant priest in Glendowie in 1965, and following Vatican II, he was sent for further study at Corpus Christi College in London in 1966. He came back to Auckland in 1967 and was appointed to Galong as prefect to the Brothers in 1968.

In 1969, he was appointed the Parish Priest of Glendowie and while in that role for the next 9 years, he built the present church. In 1978, he was appointed superior of the community in Wellington and twice in Christchurch. He was reappointed parish priest of Glendowie in 1997 after the death of Fr Pat Dobbs and remained involved in the parish for the rest of his life, alternating leadership with Fr Bruce McGill and always connected to his people. In 1998, Denis underwent a triple by-pass heart operation which was expected to lead to an early retirement, but he convalesced well and returned to Glendowie, his energy undiminished.

Denis was competent in many areas, notably in leadership and in designing church buildings, but he is especially remembered for his ability to relate easily and warmly with everyone. He had a fantastic memory for people's names and their connections in the parish and wider community. He treasured his time to converse with those he knew in Auckland, especially his beloved and loyal parishioners as well as the many friends he made with those

in Religious Life and the Diocese of Auckland. As he aged, he was deeply at peace with himself. He loved his vocation and his life in community as a Redemptorist and gave himself to the confreres wholeheartedly. He was still mobile and independent until this year when he entered Grace Joel Retirement Village in St Heliers.

Denis suffered a major stroke on the morning of 14 April 2021 and died within a couple of minutes. He had been visited by family and confreres just a day prior.

Denis was a faithful, committed, kind-hearted and relational man, grounded in mission and spiritually insightful. He accepted leadership at an early age, and continued offering that gift all his life. His bright and cheery smile, gentle humour and warmth will be fondly remembered.

We lift up our brother Denis to the Lord: May the intercession of Mary, Mother of Perpetual Help and the prayers of Alphonsus and all our saints and blessed accompany him into paradise. May the face of Jesus the Redeemer hold him in eternal joy!

We offer our condolences to his family, friends and parishioners in New Zealand. We especially remember his confreres in Auckland and across the Province who deeply mourn this parting. Thank you God for giving him to us. Thank you Denis for your life given so generously in service of others. Rest in peace.

John Hodgson CSsR.



Front row L-R: Bruce McGill, Denis Whelan, John Airey, Frank Blewman

Back row: Joy Thottankara, Glenn de Cruz, Edmond Nixon, Felise Lemi,
Jobin Vanniamparambil, Ihor Kolysnik, Manoj Kunnath (2015)