

YEAR OF JUBILEE

Dioceesan Art Trail

ST MARY'S CHURCH

51 HUIA STREET, CONCORDIA HILL, TAIHAPE

A MODERNIST MASTERPIECE ON CONCORDIA HILL

Perched atop Concordia Hill, St Mary's Church has stood as a spiritual and architectural landmark in Taihape since its completion in 1954. Designed by renowned Austrian émigré architect Ernst Plischke, the church replaced the town's original Catholic church, which had served the community since 1904 but had fallen into disrepair.

Constructed primarily from reinforced concrete, St Mary's is a striking example of Modernist architecture in New Zealand. Plischke, a key figure in introducing the Modern Movement to the country after World War II, sought to express the essence of the Catholic Mass through form, light, and space. The result is a building that is both spiritually resonant and architecturally significant.

Inside, sculptural concrete walls shape a contemplative space, while coloured glass windows bathe the interior in light, drawing the eye toward the altar—the spiritual heart of the church. Ornamentation is minimal, ensuring that nothing distracts from the sacred focus of the Mass.



The church was officially opened in 1954 by Archbishop McKeefry, with the entire cost generously covered by parishioners Maud and John Bartosh. It served the Taihape parish faithfully for decades, with thoughtful updates made over time: in 1993, the entrance was modified for wheelchair access, and in 1998, a new porch was added. This addition incorporated two stained glass windows from the original 1904 church, preserving a tangible link to the past.

Today, St Mary's Church is celebrated by architects and historians alike as a rare example of Plischke's ecclesiastical work and a powerful embodiment of Modernist ideals. It continues to inspire students and scholars from around the world, standing as a testament to faith, vision, and design.

History sourced from www.heritage.org.nz



Round windows flood the interior with coloured light, drawing the eye toward the altar. Ornamentation is deliberately minimal, ensuring that attention remains focused on this sacred centrepiece.



St Mary's church is open every Friday for Mass at 10.30am. If you wish to visit outside of these hours, it is open on request. Please contact the office:

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ARTWORKS BY MARTIN ROESTENBURG AT ST MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, TAIHAPE

Martin Roestenburg (1915–1966)

Born in Woensel (Eindhoven), Netherlands, Martin Roestenburg studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. In 1951, he arrived in New Zealand, commissioned to create works for St Mary's Catholic Church in Taihape.

His contributions to the church include:

- Crucified Christ in the Wheel Window (1952) – prominently displayed on the church's front façade
- Crucifix Mosaic Above the Altar (1952) – located in the main body of the church
- Mosaic of St Joseph (1959) – found in the church foyer (donated by Holy Name Society)
- Nativity Figures – designed by Roestenburg and painted by local parishioner Miss Donovan

History sourced from <https://publicart.nz/>



CRUCIFIED CHRIST IN THE WHEEL WINDOW
BY MARTIN ROESTENBURGT

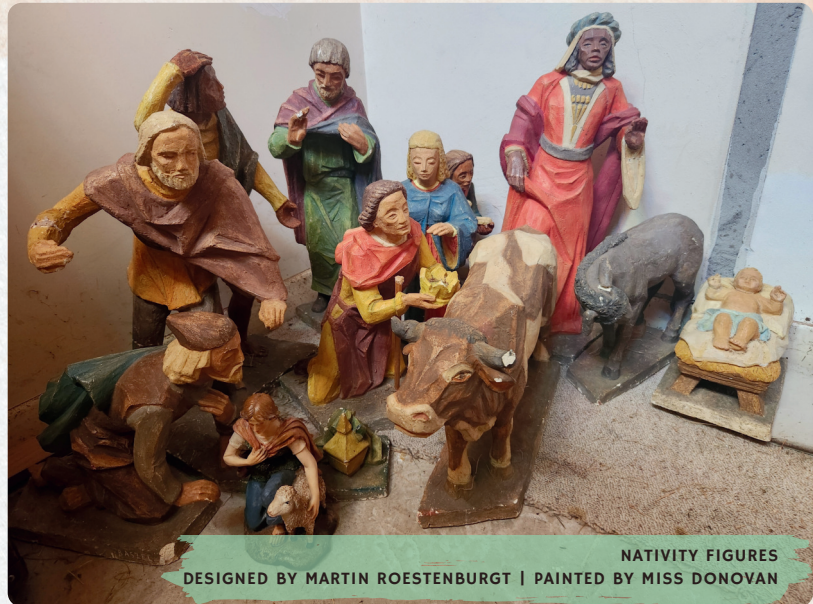


CRUCIFIX MOSAIC ABOVE THE ALTAR
BY MARTIN ROESTENBURGT

Martin Roestenburg settled in Taihape with his family and became a significant figure in New Zealand's religious art scene. His works include Our Lady of Lourdes (1958) in Paraparaumu, along with leadlight windows, murals, and statues in churches across the country. In 1966, he was appointed curator of the Palmerston North Art Gallery—the same year he passed away.



MOSAIC OF ST JOSEPH
BY MARTIN ROESTENBURGT



NATIVITY FIGURES
DESIGNED BY MARTIN ROESTENBURGT | PAINTED BY MISS DONOVAN

ILLUMINATING THE PAST: MATAROA CHURCH WINDOWS AT ST MARY'S



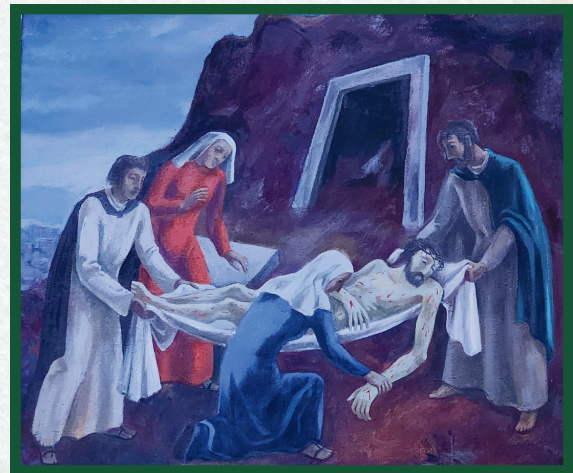
The stained glass windows, originally from *Mataroa Church* (built in 1913 and closed on 6 February 1994), now find their home in the front entrance of St Mary's Catholic Church. These windows add a rich layer of history and beauty to the space, connecting past and present through vibrant light and sacred artistry.



STUNNING NATIVITY QUILT - QUILTER UNKNOWN



STATIONS OF THE CROSS



Commissioned by Martin Roestenburg, the Stations of the Cross at St Mary's were painted by an Austrian artist who was a Professor of Art at a university in Austria. Each of the 14 paintings was funded by a group of 13 parishioners, reflecting a deep communal commitment to the church's sacred art.



BAPTISMAL FONT

The baptismal font at St Mary's was generously donated by Mr Richard Healey, a gesture that continues to bless the parish community through the sacrament of Baptism.



BLESSING FONT



Loving God,
We thank You for this sacred space,
a place of peace, prayer, and presence.
May all who enter St Mary's feel Your light,
hear Your voice, and know Your love.
Bless this church, its people, and its purpose—
that it may always be a home of faith,
a refuge of hope, and a wellspring of grace.
Amen.

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MORE INFORMATION

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or scan the QR code

