



## **Te Tiriti o Waitangi - The Treaty of Waitangi**

*"In the Treaty of Waitangi, we find the moral basis for our presence in Aotearoa New Zealand and a vision that sets this country apart."*

- New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference 1995

The Treaty of Waitangi is a covenant or agreement between representatives of the British Crown and Maori chiefs. It was signed by many northern Maori chiefs and Governor William Hobson on 6 February 1840, and was later signed by a number of chiefs from other parts of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Treaty has three articles. In the English version, Maori ceded the sovereignty of New Zealand to Britain; Maori gave the Crown an exclusive right to buy lands they wished to sell and, in return, were guaranteed full rights of ownership of their lands, forests, fisheries and other possessions; and Maori would have the rights and privileges of British subjects. The Treaty in Maori was deemed to convey the meaning of the English version, but there are important differences. Most significantly, in the Maori version the word "sovereignty" was translated as "kawanatanga" (governance). Some Maori believed that the governor would have authority over the settlers alone; others thought that they gave up the governance over their lands but retained the right to manage their own affairs. The English version guaranteed "undisturbed possession" of all properties, but the Maori version guaranteed "tino rangatiratanga" (full authority) over "taonga" (treasures, not necessarily those that are tangible). The precise nature of the exchange between the two parties to the Treaty of Waitangi is a matter of debate.

A fourth article was added to the Maori text of the Treaty signed at Waitangi, at the request of Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier. In Maori the fourth article said: "E mea ana te Kawana ko nga whakapono katoa o Ingarani, o nga Weteriana, o Roma, me te ritenga Maori hoki e tiakina ngatahitia e ia", which means "The Governor says that the several faiths (beliefs) of England, of the Wesleyans, of Rome and also of Maori custom shall alike be protected by him". This article guaranteed religious freedom for all in the new nation, including Maori.

## **Our Bicultural Commitment**

by Rev Henare Tate, Vicar for Maori, Diocese of Auckland

In 1989, for the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference issued a statement entitled, "A Commemoration Year for Aotearoa-New Zealand". They acknowledged that through the Treaty "this country was established as a bicultural state". They further acknowledged that the Treaty was "a covenant, and a taonga (sacred treasure)", thereby affirming the commitment of the Catholic Church to bicultural relationships in society and in the Church itself.

In a further statement in 1995, they strongly acknowledged Maori as the "indigenous people of our country", and the "first occupants" of the land. Through the Treaty, Maori "have the right to land, and political organisation which would allow them to preserve their cultural identity".

Our bicultural commitment requires that all Church agencies engage in partnership with Maori and fully support them in their right to cultural identity in the Church. Pope John Paul II emphasised this place of the Maori in the Church during his visit to Aotearoa in 1986: "It is as Maori that the Lord calls you, it is as Maori that you belong to the Church, the one Body of Christ".

Each diocese determines the myriad of ways in which it meets and expresses its bicultural commitment. At all levels in the life of the Church, not just those that have "official" sanction, the Church encourages New Zealand Catholics to make their response to its bicultural commitment.