



Tongan Celebration 2010

On Sunday April 25, the Tongan Catholic Community in Mildura came together to celebrate their patronal feast day recognising St Peter Chanel a *missionary, priest, and martyr* of Oceania (the South Pacific).

Chanel was born 12 July 1803 in Cuet, near *Belley, France*. His piety and intelligence attracted the attention of the local priest, and he was put into church-sponsored education. He followed this with *seminary* training and was ordained priest in *1827*. Among his first assignments was a run-down parish, which he revitalized in three years. In *1831*, he joined the new *Society of Mary* (the Marists), who concentrated on missionary work. Instead of being selected as a missionary, however, the Marists used his talents as a professor at the Seminary of Belley, where he stayed for five years. In *1836*, the Marists were allowed to send missionaries to the territory of the South West Pacific. Chanel was made the superior of a band of Marist missionaries and they set out on 24 December *1836* from Le Havre. They were accompanied by *Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier* who was to become the first *Bishop of New Zealand*. Pompallier had been appointed by the Pope to care for the Vicariate Apostolic of Western Oceania.

The group was initially well received by the island's king, Niuliki. Once the missionaries learned the local language and began preaching directly to the people, the king grew restive. He believed that *Christianity* would take away his prerogatives as high priest and king. When the king's son, Meitala sought to be *baptized*, the king sent a favoured warrior, Musumusu to "do whatever was necessary" to resolve the problem. Musumusu initially went to Meitala and the two fought. Musumusu, injured in the fracas went to Peter Chanel feigning need of medical attention. While Peter tended him a group of others ransacked his house. Musumusu took an axe and clubbed Peter on the head. Peter died that day, April 28, 1841.

Chanel was declared a martyr and beatified in 1889. He was canonised in 1954 by *Pope Pius XII*. He is the *patron saint* of "*Oceania*," and his *feast day* is *April 28*.

Fathers Neville Stanislaus and Frank Monaghan concelebrated the Mass where the Tongan Choir under the direction of Leki Mataele helped to raise our hearts to God with their harmonious singing in both Tongan and English.



Some members of the Tongan Choir Under the direction of Leki Mataele



Colourful leis presented to the priests and altar servers at the offertory

Some Tongan lads in their national costume



Fr Frank, Fr Neville, reader and altar servers



After Mass all parishioners were invited to Sacred Heart Hall for a Tongan Feast which was appreciated by all in attendance.



Tongan Youth present our gifts at the Offertory



A Banquet was prepared



Carving the roasted pig