

Pompallier

Bishop Pompallier 1801 - 1871

Jean Baptiste Francis Pompallier was born in France in 1801. He worked in the silk trade before entering the seminary.

He became a priest in 1829 and in 1836 he was made a bishop. He arrived in New Zealand at Hokianga in 1838 (unable to speak English or Maori) and was our first Catholic Bishop.

It is hearsay that he said the first Christmas Mass on the beach.

Pompallier had great empathy for the Maori people and advised Maori leaders about the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. In that discussion Pompallier and an Anglican Missionary asked that an oral clause be added to the Treaty which gives us religious freedom in New Zealand today.

Pompallier died in France but in 2002 his relics were returned to New Zealand. After a pilgrimage through the country his body was interred at Motuti's Hata Maria Church in the Hokianga.