

## **An Inauspicious Beginning - Martyrs and Hero's – History of the Catholic Church in Fiji 1844 - 1855**

On August 1, 1844 four French Catholic missionaries, all Marists, were brought to Fiji by their Bishop from Wallis Island. They were left on a small island in the Lau group on the eastern edge of the Fiji Archipelago far from the main islands and centers of population in Fiji. The missionaries were not part of the colonizing force nor did they come from a wealthy and powerful religious order. They had few resources, there were no guarantees as to their safety and from the moment they landed they were made aware that they were not welcome. Elsewhere in the world Catholicism flourished aimed pomp and ceremony but here, facing unknown dangers and hardships, the missionaries had more in common with the first followers of Jesus than with the nineteenth century Christians. Yet it was this small band of Marists that sowed the seeds of the Catholic Church we know today in Fiji. (Voyage of Faith, 1997)

### **The Worship of God's Mercy in Fiji**

The celebration of God's mercy in Fiji is always a significant celebration within the Archdiocese of Suva. Given the clear instructions on how to celebrate the feast of mercy is always enriching and uplifting in promoting the love and mercy of God. The parishes celebrate this feast in an extra-ordinary ways. The nine days novena that begins on Good Friday ends on the eve of mercy and lead up to the main celebration of the mass on the Divine Mercy Sunday in the respective parishes. In the central division within the main city of Suva as always would host a public march within the city of Suva beginning from the market place right up to the Cathedral of the Sacred heart with the image of Divine mercy accompanied with great singing and recitation of the rosary and the chaplet. Normally at 3pm the chaplet of mercy begins in the Cathedral and then followed by the celebration of the mass led by the Archbishop of Suva. The Mass included the blessings and the venerations of the image. The final part of the celebration would include refreshments and sharing of testimonies from church members on the Mercy and love of God. It's a celebration which all generations look forward to.





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