

ORATION DELIVERED AT THE FUNERAL
OF THE VERY REV. FATHER FOREST, S.M.

THE following is a verbatim report of the funeral sermon preached by the Very Rev. Father Sauzeau, S.M., in St. Mary's Church, Napier, on Wednesday, October 1, in connection with the obsequies of the late Very Rev. Father Forest, S.M., who died at Napier on Sunday, 28th September, in the 80th year of his age. The report has been kindly furnished to this journal by Mr. John W. McDougall, of the *Hawke's Bay Herald* staff:—

"As my Father hath sent me, I also send you." Here, my dear brethren, in the midst of us, in this decorated church—a church that has been many times adorned by the zeal and virtues of the late Rev. Father Forest—lies his mortal body in this coffin. His last remains lie where he worked in life, and are but waiting to be carried to their last abode. They are surrounded and covered with flowers fit emblems of his virtue, and testimonies also of the gratitude, love, and respect of all his spiritual children and of so many others to whom that term does not apply. Chateaubriand, my dear brethren, a great French writer, says, "Come and see a great man and a Christian dying." Now I say to you, "Come and see a great man first live, and then die in the midst of you; a Christian man, a holy priest, and a most zealous supporter of the Church." Our Lord said to his disciples "As my Father hath sent me, I also send you." Every one of us has a vocation. From the moment we are born we are destined for some certain work in this world. Let us see, my dear brethren, how your late reverend pastor was called to the ministry; how also he had fulfilled the duties of the priesthood among you; how also he has finished his career on earth. The late Rev. Father Forest was born near Lyons, in France, on the 31st of October, 1804. He was born of a patriarchal family living in the neighbourhood of Lyons, more favoured with grace and with Christian virtues than with fortune, although they enjoyed sufficient prosperity to enable them to bring up their children properly. Being brought up by a Christian father and mother, he had before his eyes examples of virtue, and received lessons which still further led him in the paths of virtue. Soon, like David, he was sent to watch over the flock belonging to the family, and then, by degrees, the vocation Almighty God had called him to, was rooted, germinated, and went on to perfection. The youth Jean Forest, after receiving lessons of virtue from his parents, was sent to a primary school, as a preparation for the Christian seminary. There, my dear brethren, he began at once to show himself what he has been ever since through life—firm and determined in the way of duty. He shunned always all those of his companions who were less disposed to virtue than he was, and who otherwise might perhaps have misled him, by their example and conversation. After being for some time in this school, a model and example for all his companions, he was sent to the seminary. There he prepared himself by the study of theology and philosophy for the discharge of his priestly duties, and there also, my dear brethren, he learned that solidity of doctrine, that soundness and clearness of spirituality which have been many times admired in him by you, his people. The late Father Forest, as is known to you, always preached with soundness and solidity of doctrine, and that is seen best by the state of the people here who knew him, and were brought up by him, and who as a result know so well their religious duties. By this you will know that the late Father Forest when he was yet in the seminary, and before the priesthood, prepared himself by the practice of virtue to afterwards fulfil the duties of his vocation. He was ordained priest at last on the 6th of June, 1830, by the Archbishop of Lyons. He had prepared himself for this great dignity, and then, my dear brethren, when he received the grace of ordination, he heard the words that our Saviour said to His Apostles, "As my Father hath sent me, I also send you." The late Father Forest undertook the duties of the priesthood with generous zeal. He was at first sent for some time to a small parish, where he fulfilled his vocation with zeal and energetic conscientiousness. He well looked after the charge entrusted to his care, and worked zealously to lead his people under the guidance of their parish priest to heaven. He also undertook the work of catechist, a duty which he fulfilled with zeal and success till the end of his life. After having worked for a few years in this part of the vineyard in which Almighty God had placed him, he heard the voice of God saying, "Go and preach to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." The field in which he was too narrow, too small for his zeal. Gregory 16th, looking on the map of the world, saw that most of the nations of the earth had already received the good news of the Gospel. But he saw that the people of the lands on the map of Oceania had never had the faith preached to them there, so he sent priests to preach to these people the good news. The Society of Mary, to which the late Reverend Forest belonged—which, in fact, he was one of the founders of, and in which he made his profession—had entrusted to it these missions in the South seas, and Father Viard and others had been already sent to these shores to preach the Gospel. At the end of the year 1841 the late Father Forest was sent by his superiors of the Society of Mary, with the Reverend Father Bequier, Father Lampila (not then a priest), Father Grange, Father Chanel and others. Father Chanel was killed at Futuna shortly after his arrival in Oceania, and so reaped the crown of martyrdom at the beginning of the mission. Father Forest landed at Wellington in April, 1842, after being many months at sea. Navigation was not then so easy and so certain as it is now, and a proof of the difference will be gathered from the fact, that the party, though bound for Nelson, had to call in at Wellington to find out the way where they wanted to go to. The party afterwards directed their course to Auckland, the voyage to that place lasting many days, owing to the boisterous weather encountered. Upon arrival at Auckland the party were received with great kindness by the handful of Catholics already there. Father Forest was anxious to place himself under the guidance and direction of Bishop Viard, who was then residing at the Bay of Islands, and there they went, remaining here about 15 months. Great were their privations and

sufferings. Before leaving for New Zealand the party placed a sum of money in a London Bank. The bank failed, and of course their money was lost, and for months these poor priests had to submit to great privation and suffering. Our life, my dear brethren, is like a river. Sometimes it flows on smoothly through rich and level places, and at other times through rocky and precipitous country. So it was with the late Father Forest. Sometimes he experienced ease and facility in the discharge of his ministry, and at other times he suffered great privations. When they were in Auckland, or rather in the Bay of Islands, these poor priests had great trouble and difficulty in providing for themselves a miserable existence. So they took advice given by Father Forest, and dispersed themselves throughout the islands, in order that they might do more good, and also find for themselves means of subsistence. Father Forest's lot was Auckland, he being entrusted with the mission there. Great difficulty was experienced for some time. The priests were poor, having hardly any means at all, and they spoke the English language very imperfectly, and they also had many other obstacles thrown in their way. For some time they were compelled to cook their scanty provisions in a small bell, which they used to fix up over a few stones for a fireplace; and yet, my dear brethren, the work commenced under such difficulty was greatly blessed by Almighty God. Never, my dear brethren, pay much regard to work that is commenced all at once, as it were, or that is commenced without tribulation. By tribulation Almighty God shows us that the ultimate success of a work is his own, and not His minister's work. Before Father Forest had been long in Auckland, and as soon as an effort could be made, he looked around, and saw the children running in the streets without education. He remembered that our Lord, when one day the little children were brought to Him by their mothers, blessed and caressed them with great delight—partly because of their purity, and partly because they would be, as it were, the support of the Church in after days. And so Father Forest, as soon as possible, erected schools, and afterwards convents, where the children were given a good, sound, and religious education. Then he erected in Auckland what was for some time a temporary Church. But, my dear brethren, the late Rev. Father Forest was devoted, as it were, with zeal for the house of God, and, of course, could not think of having a house to enjoy for himself whilst his Lord and Master was, so to speak, homeless in the place. Soon Father Forest infused the fire of his own zeal into the breasts of his people, and soon was laid in Auckland the foundation of the present St. Patrick's Cathedral, the first church dedicated to the great Apostle of Ireland that has been built in this Colony. When the church was being built, and as means were limited, Father Forest himself laboured as a workman, until, when he was one day lifting a stone, he hurt himself so seriously that he was given up for a long time, and it was thought that he would never recover at all. By the blessing of Almighty God, however, he recovered, and returned to his priestly duties. For many years Father Forest remained in charge of the city of Auckland, and now that he is dead, the people of Auckland, by a telegram sent through their head priest, testified their sweet remembrance of his holy memory. The telegram referred to the misfortune sustained by Napier in the taking away of Father Forest, and was a tribute to his memory and his usefulness. After staying some years in Auckland, Father Forest went to Wellington when that new diocese was formed by the Holy See. It was found that to aid the faith and to implant it in the South Island, it was necessary that a diocese should be formed at Wellington—the late Dr. Viard afterwards bishop of the Wellington diocese, being sent there to administer it. A few miles from Wellington there is a small place in a beautiful little valley, and called the Hutt. In that place the Hon. Mr. Petre had settled, and had gathered around him a number of Catholics. For a long time Mass used to be celebrated at this little settlement by Father O'Reilly, of Wellington, but a resident priest was petitioned for, and Father Forest was sent in response to the application. As soon as he found himself at the head of a new parish he begged of Almighty God to help him to lead his people in the right way of salvation. He worked there as he had done everywhere, and fulfilled his duties as priest with the greatest regularity. Always, when he was in good health, he rose early in the morning, and made his meditation and prayer, and every day of his life, unless prevented by sickness, he celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to call down the blessing of Almighty God upon himself, his works, and his spiritual children. Oh! my dear brethren, how many times he has knelt down before the holy altar of God, there to commend all his people, and especially to commend poor sinners, that they might see their wretched state, and, like the prodigal son, return to their heavenly Father, and beg mercy and forgiveness. A short time after Father Forest came to the Hutt, he opened a school there for the benefit of the children. He knew well that without the school, humbly speaking, the church was not much good, because unless the schools are near the church, and the children are brought up in the rudiments of religion, they will not be of much use to the Church afterwards. So he, of course, considered that the schools were as necessary as the church itself, so to speak, and the school was built. Then before long a beautiful little church was erected, where divine service was celebrated every Sunday and holiday, and Mass every day of the year. The people who had the happiness of being under the spiritual guidance of Father Forest testified to his zeal and to his great care and prudence, and admired him for his counsel and advice to those under his direction. He was always in the church on Saturday and on the days before festivals to hear the confessions of his people, to prepare them for the worthy celebration of the festivals. In the discharge of his priestly duties he did not spare himself at all. Like a good pastor he was ready to lay down his life for his flock. Our Master Himself laid down His life for us all, and many of His faithful priests, sent by Him, have not spared their lives, but have reckoned them, as it were, nothing at all. These priests are those who are only satisfied so that they may procure the salvation of the souls entrusted to their care. Father Forest was one of these. Now the Hutt, though a beautiful place, is rather damp, and there the late Father contracted a serious illness which obliged him to abandon