Tui Motu

InterIslands

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Contents

Cover picture: A 14th Century German mural of the Blessed Trinity, depicting the Holy Spirit as a female figure emanating from and connecting Father and Son.
Printed courtesy of KNA, the German Catholic News Agency, Bonn.

Burdening the young with debt

A thread running through this *June* issue of *Tui Motu* is the need we have for the grace of being able to change at each of those threshold moments in everyone's life: adolescence, mid-life or whenever *(see pages 18-19, 26)*. However, our principal focus falls somewhere between – on young adults, especially those at University.

Student life is inevitably self-centred. The world is at one's feet, and while the choice of and preparation for a career is important, education for life is far more so. Many of us look back on those precious years as an oasis of freedom and delight: a selfish time perhaps, but a privileged space between childhood and the onset of responsibility. For it to work well there has to be a framework of genuine freedom.

And that is precisely what present day students are being denied. Instead they are subjected to constant pressure to achieve, by a world which measures everything in terms of status and material possession; and they are made to pay in advance for the privilege, to an extent that no generation previously suffered. The theory seems to be that they will walk straight into high-flying jobs which will pay off their debts in a trice. The fact is few will do this easily: most face years of crushing debt, limiting their ability to establish a home or even to offer themselves for any form of voluntary service.

Most serious of all, the fear they have of not getting the right job can sway the choice of courses away from what best suits the gifts and needs of each student. It is the classic utilitarian bogeyman beleaguering education since the time of the so-called Enlightenment.

John Henry Newman, 150 years ago, wrote: "*I will show you how a liberal education is truly and fully useful, though it be not a professional education. 'Good' indeed means one thing and 'useful' means another; though the useful is not always good, the good is always useful. Good is not only good, but reproductive of good... If then the intellect is so excellent, it must be useful to the possessor and to all around: not useful in any low, mechanical, mercantile sense, but as diffusing good, or as a blessing, or a gift, or a power, or a treasure, first to the owner, then through him to the world. I say then, if a liberal education be good, it must necessarily be useful too*" (Idea of a University VII, 5).

What sort of society have we evolved which pours unprecedented wealth into the pockets of self-serving business and professional people, at the same time impoverishing the very group on which the future well-being of the country most depends? We intend that this focus on young people will be the beginning of an ongoing series in *Tui Motu*.

Birthday gift

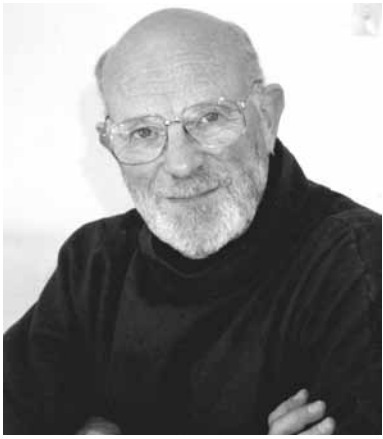
Pentecost is the birthday of the church. Recently we kept the Pope's 80th birthday: he has been celebrating it with a burst of enviable vigour, teaching the world by example lessons of repentance and reconciliation. No one could ever accuse him of lapsing into quiet retirement.

But there is one major area of reconciliation which he – and church leadership generally – seems to be avoiding: the status of women. Canon Paul Oestreicher writes with feeling (*opposite*) of the paramount need for the church to publicly repent its patriarchal past and repudiate its patriarchal present: a change of mind encompassing theology and spirituality as well as law. A group of women theologians in the United States has recently issued a powerful statement in the same vein (*page 31*).

If Pope John Paul were to respond to these calls with the vigour he has shown towards the Jews and Muslims, what a Jubilee gesture that would be!

M.H.

Imagining God's Gender



a reflection for Pentecost

The Jewish and therefore also the Christian story says that humanity is made in God's image. We are mysteriously cloned from a divine model. We are not God but – though flawed – we are like God. On that assumption Christians have been able to build a composite picture of God, modelled on the human race. If we are like God, then God must be something like us.

The Jewish satirist, E.Y. Harburg, saw the problem. Does God make us, or do we make God?

Poems are made by fools like me
But only God can make a tree;
And only God who makes the tree
Also makes the fools like me.
But only fools like me, you see,
Can make a God, who makes a tree.

Jewish spirituality began the process of imagining God by creating a father figure. However, the Jews were strictly forbidden to make images of God. No picture, no sculpture. Christians abandoned this reasonable constraint, as the art in many churches and galleries proves. There are flesh and blood father reproductions in abundance – mostly more like grandfather.

To bridge the chasm between the Father-Creator and the real world, the Christian story takes Judaism a step further and brings God down to earth in the person of the young rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth. God is still God, but now also fully human, doing away with our need to re-create him by an act of the imagination. Jesus is real: a brother, both human and divine, son of God and ***the*** son of man, prototype of perfect humanity.

But how do you assure people that both the Father and the Son are ever-present? By the affirmation that their Spirit permanently sustains the whole creation. So, the Christian deity comes to be worshipped in three forms, Father, Son and Spirit: the Holy Trinity. The Church was not truly constituted until the followers of Jesus were Spirit filled. The Feast of Pentecost celebrates God's ever-present and enlivening soul.

Folk religion in the Western world now hangs on a very thin thread. Christmas survives, largely thanks to its mass commercialisation. Easter hangs on with its barely remembered message of death and resurrection. But Pentecost, as a secular holiday, has gone. Clearly God needs to be rehabilitated, if Christian faith is to have a future.

Hitherto, the image-makers have virtually all been men. Like much of our culture, church history is patriarchal. That needs to change. If humanity is made in God's image, then surely God must be both male and female. The Father and Son images are too deeply engrained through their biblical context to be credibly complemented with Mother and Sister images.

But there simply isn't any excuse for going on worshipping a male Holy Spirit. She, as the wisdom of God, ***Sophia***, constantly revitalises all that is. And if, as tradition has it, her presence is symbolised by the descent of a white dove, why, O why, a male dove? Simple: the patriarchs could not admit that women, not men, personify so much that is best in life: beauty, grace and love.

But at least some great medieval artists dared to break the mould. Michelangelo's wonderful image of the Father, stretching out his hand to create man, has a beautiful woman at the Father's shoulder, inspiring him. And in 1923 an enchanting mural emerged in the Bavarian village church of Urschalling (*see cover picture*). Painted around 1400, it was probably whitewashed over after the harsh decrees of the Council of Trent.

A woman cleaner made the discovery, as some of the covering paint began to peel off: a beautiful depiction of the Holy Trinity, Father and Son embracing, between them, a young woman, the Holy Spirit. And – so that there be no mistake – the unknown artist added, at the feet of the Trinity where their cloaks meet, the unambiguous image of her labia, the ▷▷

Tui Motu-InterIslands

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Tui Motu-InterIslands *is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed. The name* **Tui Motu** *was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.*

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Let's hear from our bishops

Stout defences by Tom Cloher and Pat Snedden in *Tui Motu* notwithstanding, I still think that the public statements on abortion and contraception made by Bishop Dunn recently were too brief and fragmentary to raise more than a news flash.

What I find disconcerting though, as a paid-up member of a Catholic congregation attending regularly to hear (among other things) what our bishops have to say on matters of vital concern to modern humankind, is that I must also monitor closely TV, radio and the press to get even this kind of glimmer of what they have in mind.

Donald Lamont, Gore

Christian Muslim relations – 1

I found your recent articles on Christian-Muslim relations very worthwhile.

About five or six years ago, during a visit to Wanganui Prison, I came across an Algerian man aged about 30. I'm not certain what he was 'in' for, but he had a several-years' sentence. He had a quiet dignity and kept somewhat aloof from the other men in his unit. He regularly prayed the five-times-a-day Muslim prayers – he had a prayer-mat – and observed Ramadan. For this last I had confirmation from the prison officers. They generally could not make him out, but they respected his practices. Because prison meals were at 8am, noon and 4.30pm, the Ramadan rule that food cannot be eaten between sunrise and sunset, meant that this man had to pick up at 4.30pm and take back to his cell the evening meal for that night, and his breakfast for the next morning.

And most Catholics have a problem with a bit of Lenten self-denial!

Brian Quin SM, Otaki

Christian Muslim relations – 2

I was delighted to read in the May issue of *Tui Motu* the large article on Christians and Muslims. Three years ago *Pax Christi* launched in Auckland the Council of Christians and Muslims. At present it has been most successful and is helping to break stereotypes, and provides a learning and interactive group for both members.

Your article might help people in other areas of Aotearoa/New Zealand to explore the possibility of setting up such a group in their area, and we would be pleased to assist if necessary.

David Wakim, Auckland
(Chairperson Pax Christi Trust, committee of Council of Christians and Muslims)

P.S. The map on pp 16-17 had Israel enclosing all the Palestinian territory. This is particularly hurtful to both Christian and Muslim Palestinians. In future the land should be referred to as *Israel/Palestine* or at least have the occupied Palestinian Territory listed as such.

letters

▷▷ entrance to the womb... the mysterious source of life, the very quality that terrifies the male psyche: creative, female power.

Could the Trinity really embrace sexuality? Never, never, declared the Church. But it had to redress its male image to satisfy popular piety, so it declared Mary, the mother of Jesus, to be the immaculate, sexless Queen of Heaven, to be adored, but not worshipped, not on equality with her Son. Popular Orthodox and Catholic piety ignored the fine distinction, but the theologians decreed that Mary was neither god nor priest. These were male preserves.

Mary, the ever virgin Queen, poses no sexual threat to male control. Immaculate, the "Mother of God" is robbed of flesh and blood. But today we are reminded by inspired medieval mystics like Hildegard of Bingen and Mechthild of Magdeburg – in fashion as never before – of the imaginative power of feminine holiness. That the Son – the radical rabbi who counter-culturally never married but publicly treated women with exceptional respect – may, just may have been gay (as Bishop Montefiore once tentatively suggested to widespread horror) – would further broaden our vision of an all-embracing, universal God.

With art and poetry coming to the rescue, this God may yet have a popular future in our culture, a God who reflects our total human condition, male and female, a God who personifies justice, freedom and peace, casting every esoteric sect into sentimental irrelevance. Such a God may yet rekindle

Paul Oestreicher is Canon Emeritus and International Consultant, Coventry Cathedral, England

Easter

Before us gone
to Galilee?

But we
have never heard
of Galilee?
It's not on the charts we've
read.

God, I vote
Out!
Out into this hunting wind
amongst dervish dancing trees
whose delirious sound
sings that here, they have seen
Him –
For all that is living, as
sun, moon, and star,
brilliant resounds with
His own profound
laughter –
So too here we
ultimately must
by Him be found.

Generation X? The 'me' generation? What nickname suits the present generation of students? Tui Motu *took a stroll around the University campus and asked some questions.*

What it discovered was Generation Z: young people who still have a zest for life, but who are being steadily ground down by savage burdens of debt and the unreal expectations of a materialistic, adult world

Love, life and laughter – and debt – in Scarfieland

Tui Motu's office lies in the heart of studentland. There are student flats to right and to left. This *June* issue is being put together to the accompaniment of the drummerboy next door. It's an area full of life, tucked between the campus and the coffee-house culture in North Dunedin. So *Tui Motu* decided to try to take its spiritual pulse.

We spoke to students, to parents, to a Professor and a College Warden, to chaplains and to parents: those at the centre of this strange, artificial, yet exhilarating life and those watching and supporting from the edge.

Professor Colin Gibson has recently given up the Chair of English after more than 30 years immersed in teaching Otago students. "But," says Colin, "the human animal hasn't changed. It's much as it always was – except there is more sobriety these days. Less dash, less willingness to be the bizarre individual; and less willingness to individually challenge the system.

"One reason for this is the oppressive effect of debt and a nagging anxiety about their capacity to see through their courses – and whether there will be anything for them at the end of it all. There's a kind of grim determination to get to the end. Some students are taking courses they don't want to do, just because they think these are the ones which will produce the jobs. There are of course always those who choose deliberately and outrageously to do what they want to do – but relatively, they are small in number.

"Meanwhile the University is under its own pressures. It has to 'perform'. It has to woo enough students here to keep it running at a viable level. Such pressures are unhelpful. On the other hand I think the University has greatly improved in the work it does to help and support students: there are student services which didn't exist years ago.

"Alas! for the majority of students the desirable world of freedom doesn't exist. Some will have three part-time jobs. They come along to us, and they're worn out. They haven't got the energy to study effectively, let alone to live in a liberated sort of manner. In the Arts we const-antly tell the students that it's the whole deal that matters. Employers are looking for people with a whole range of developed skills – but they find it difficult to believe us! They delude ▷▷


Professor Colin Gibson

▷▷ run that way. 'If this is what my society measures me by' they say, 'can I match it? Am I good enough?' This is a real loss of vision."

Does that mean there is even less interest in faith or outward religion? Not necessarily, it seems. Fr Mark detects a genuine hunger for God in this generation. "What we see is a spiritual thirst: a real interest in self-motivation and trying to understand what it entails to be a Christian and a Catholic. The students are strongly aware of the secular environment: they are living in a highly competitive world, so they have to ask themselves 'what is really important?'. Once upon a time they'd simply come to Varsity and go with the flow."

"Also," notes Sr Leona, "in their age group are people who are depressed, who may have attempted suicide: they are their peers – and so that too makes them wonder what life is about. In a harsh way it makes them look at the deeper questions: they have to grow up a whole lot quicker.

"In the days when CathSoc flourished there were more social things going on, but I don't think they were as spiritually orientated as many are today. They are more spiritually hungry. The weekly Eucharists are well attended, especially the early morning time. There are meditation groups and Scripture groups.

"Quite are few are 'fundamentalist' in their attitudes – but then that's often their age. They are still looking for black and white solutions. They come in and they demand answers – especially when it comes to interpreting Scripture or ethical questions. Our job is to support them where they are now, and enable them to move on in their own time. We try to help them find a personal relationship with God, so they begin to see that all these other questions lead them to God – not the other way round!"

Colin Gibson sees a high survival rate for those "whose religion has closed down hard, and have a firm understanding of what the Bible teaches. The fundamentalists are surviving in this tough world. These are relatively stable.

"Not so easy," he reckons, "for those with an openness to other spiritualities, those willing to think courageously; those we used to call liberals. They've found a cold, hard wind blowing. These are drifting.

"And there are huge numbers who


Hugh McCafferty, Warden of Selwyn

Others will come out with burdens of debt which are simply crippling – leaving them with no capacity to get themselves into a house or a practice. They have huge debts. Some take on these loans and spend their money unwisely, so making things worse. They suffer a constant anxiety how much it's going to cost next year – books, fees, rents – a worry, a malaise that was non-existent in the 60s.

On top of which the material expectations are higher – to own a car, to have a computer. And there are huge inequalities between those who have them and those who haven't and never are not interested in any formalised religion. Religion has nothing to do with 'success'; it doesn't achieve the goals they have set themselves. So why bother? Unfortunately there is a lot of bad press from some religious advocates – intolerance, hard line views as well as international conflicts – which turns these young people off religion altogether.

"What I do see is a number of older people, mostly women, coming into the University who often have a strong interest in religion – in a much more open, searching way. They have ridden the storm. They have achieved some of the goals of personal security and direction – and they lap up these continuing education courses. They are the light of our lives: they aren't constantly harassed by the problems of debt and anxiety about future jobs.

"There are still those among the young who hang on and have that fire and brilliance: the human animal doesn't change. They are still around – and they are more creative than say 40 years back, because there are more opportunities for them. They're a precious minority.

"For instance, I see an openness to try different kinds of spirituality. There is still an undimmed thirst for something: often they don't know what! You see it in their creative writing – and they are still open. They're not 'shut down' people. Numbed and bruised – but willing to have a go. For others, however, the worry and the pressures closes them up. Whereas 40 years ago we emerged from University with a sense of an open world before us, now I see a sort of hardening, which easily leads to cynicism and scepticism."

There is little doubt that one huge difference to the ethos and morale of today's student generation is the burden of debt. Colin Gibson again: "The burden of debt has had a very serious effect. Some realise after a year that they are not going to have enough resources – so they crash out! Others cope by taking on more work than they can really manage.

themselves that it's one or two essential skills which will get them to that vital job at the other end. And for so many of them this turns out to be an enormous disappointment. Either the courses are too rigorous and tough for them – or when they get out they can't find a job.

"One view is there are simply too many students who ought not to be here: they haven't got the IQ to cope. I disagree: I think it's good that so many more now have the chance. But unfortunately I think that the New Zealand educational system does not prepare them for this level of learning. Lecturers are constantly complaining of the number of students coming in who need all manner of remedial work. Their lack of cultural background as well as a lack of language skills handicaps them gravely."

Fr Mark Chamberlain and Sr Leonie Garchow are the Catholic Tertiary chaplains at Otago. They too note the change in University climate. "Before the big fees came in, students could come up and choose the subjects they enjoyed. They had the freedom to change courses, to fail and to come back again. They had


Sr Leona Garchow RSM

But he too finds that life is too much overshadowed by financial worry. "Their lives these days are dominated by their student debts. They are forced into a sense of financial responsibility early in life, and this probably makes them more conservative than their predecessors. They are career-orientated: a career which will secure them a good position in society and pay off their debts quickly. Business courses continue to be popular; nevertheless there are still plenty at Selwyn who opt for Arts courses."

choose or to change. Whereas now they have to aim at 'the job which will pay the most money so that I can get rid of my debt'.

"It is also an important social development time. But, now their life is much more pressured, they can't afford to spend time growing up. Their social life has changed. They no longer have the time to do all those other things.

"Once upon a time we would have


Fr Mark Chamberlain

We asked Professor Gibson if he thought the students had lost their idealism. "The revolutionary spark," he says somewhat wistfully, "glows dimly in this present generation. Their ideals have shrunk and contracted to *personal* ideals rather than attempts to change the world."

Sr Leona comments: "I think the students see social issues as a luxury in their lives, because they are so caught up in having to perform well and make sure their marks are satisfactory – simply coping with life – that they have become very insular.

"Once upon a time *Amnesty International* groups flourished on campus – but I haven't heard of any for a long time. In the *Year of Jubilee* those topics should be so relevant – but they aren't. They are simply not as alert to these issues as were an earlier generation. They're preoccupied with their own debt. After they finish they are often driven overseas to find work well enough paid so that they can pay off their debts."

Colin Gibson says the students are

student conferences, retreats, camps and times away. Now the focus is so much more on study: they haven't space for these extracurricular things. The semester system imposes exams twice a year, and internal assessment keeps the pressure on. While it's good for sorting out the ones who crammed everything at the end, it means that the balance has gone too far the other way.

"The chaplaincy, therefore, has had to adapt its style to a much busier schedule. At the present we are running a *Retreat in Everyday Life* – which takes place alongside their working program. They don't have to take time off: a two-hour session on a Sunday instead of the whole weekend; and meeting for half an hour three or four times during the working week."

Hugh McCafferty used to be the ecumenical chaplain on campus, but last year he became Warden of Selwyn College, an old-established Hall with an Anglican foundation. Hugh finds the students very highly motivated as regards their studies.

"But they also put energy into College activities, such as the annual competition against Knox Hall which many are busily engaged in at the present time even though the mid-semester exams are in the offing. The students take a pride in getting their cultural contributions 'right': such as their *haka* as a challenge to the Knox students."

one difference to the morale of today's student is the burden of debt

inevitably influenced by today's prevailing culture. "The ambition to equip themselves to live comfortably in the modern world seems to be the prevalent ideal. Materialism percolates down: success, that is, in material terms. They have taken it on board, even if once upon a time they would have been the ones to scoff at it! It's very hard to stand against a system when the social world they are going to move into is ▷▷

Third year physiotherapy students Ryan Monastra and Carla Melvill

▷▷ "It has led to a generation of parents who have let their kids go free. You can tell the kids who have had a completely free rein, open to trying absolutely anything that comes in their path. Some wealthy parents' lives revolve around their job and their money; their kids are a by-product. The kids pick that up, and then they go and do whatever they want.

"Some parents are caring, but they themselves were subject to too much discipline so they won't discipline their own kids at all. So the kids run amok.

"I think kids need to be told what is right and what is wrong. It can't be imposed – but at least they should be told. If you are not brought up with discipline, then you're not going to care later on what your parents think, and you're not going to listen if you are suddenly jumped upon. I still phone my parents," says Carla, "if I'm not sure if I should be doing something."

What about churchgoing? They both agree: "It's been easier here. Peer pressure is no longer an issue. People are quite happy to accept you whether you go to church or not. Because you are surrounded by people who are not church-going, it's easy to look at their lives and look at their actions which reflect what their priorities are. So you say, 'what do I want to be? Where should my priorities fall?' If I were not a Christian I would have no qualms about looking after myself first. But Christians are the way they are because they value life. It's a created thing. People are precious because your faith tells you so."

So what has been their experience of student debt?

"In the first year," says Ryan, " it was a huge problem. I couldn't handle the idea of being $6000 in debt – with three or four years to go and absolutely no means of paying it back. Especially if your parents can't afford to dish out cash! If you aim at getting a degree and a good job so as to support a family, then you are going to get yourself into debt. You have to get yourself to a stage where you choose not to dwell on it. Now it's getting on for $30,000."

Carla says: "I'm grateful for the loan system because it has enabled me to go to University (which I could not have done in South Africa.) I borrow every cent I can. I intend to pay it off as quickly as possible: I aim to head over to England because the pay for Physios is so much better there than here."

Ryan says: "Our ceiling salary here is very low compared with the cost of our training. So it's going to affect whether I can afford to buy a house. I have to count every cent now. I choose to live in a place which is basic, but it's warm and comfortable. We go to the cinema. I'd think twice about going to the theatre, but I do go. You can't just sit there and wallow in the fact that you've got no money and choose never to spend a cent. Most dentists finish with a debt of over $100,000.

"When you come here at 18 you have no concept of a debt of $60,000! When I finish I would love to go abroad and give a year of my life to helping other people. But then I would come back and find the debt had grown astronomical because of the interest."

"I think the present system at the moment focuses your attention on yourself. It promotes self: '*I* got through this hard degree course. *I* supported myself the whole way through with *my* loan and jobs. The focus is on *me*.' But if the government paid our fees then we could go and help other people."

What did they think of the state of Christianity on campus?

Says Ryan: "In as much as Varsity breeds someone who is open-minded to new things, many people are still closed to the things of God. The mention of God in a conversation can be a *no-no*. I'm not sure why. I think when you come to University you either fall away from God or you become much stronger and try to get to know God better. I was in a Christian Hall my first year and I'm sure that helped."

"We started a Christian group among the Physio-therapy students," says Carla. "It's grown. We have talks; we pray; we do things together; we go and talk to the prisoners. It's about learning more about faith and God, looking at biblical teaching, getting a wider perspective. Most of the members have a Christian background of some kind – not all."

what do I want to be? Where should my priorities fall?

Here were two young people who knew where they were going, even if they were not too sure about the values of the great majority or where they were heading. The burden of living with ever-growing debt oppresses these young people, and robs them of the precious freedom of youth. For some, tragically, it ingrains the materialism of the society which imposes the debt upon them. ■

will be able to afford them."

After talking to the teachers and carers we turned to the students themselves. The opinions we quote may not be typical, but they represent those who have a Christian sense of care for the world – and, in particular, for the University world they find themselves in.

Ryan Monastra and Carla Melvill are both third year Physiotherapy students. Ryan is from Wellington, the second of four children in a Catholic family. Carla is South African but her family moved to Hawera in Taranaki when she was 15. She is a member of the Apostolic church.

Ryan is critical of much of the University teaching style. Carla agrees: "You are taught critical thinking at Varsity. You are taught to think broadly, think for yourself. It's an adult way – but it loses the idea of community, of trusting the ideas of others. Critical thinking has the potential to be anti-community. If people are very self-minded, they are only interested in their own ideas and are overcritical of others.

"If you have the community at heart one can still be critical. We look to others to support us, to the community. Those of us who don't mix can become very depressed. The Halls do help us to look after each other, but because there are so many, some get lost and disappear in the crowd.

"Here at Varsity there's a broad social experience: you are free to express your opinions. Even as regards religion people are so much more open. They don't care who you are. At school, peer pressure was higher. Here we have choices.

"There are some who are so bright, they seem to lose the ability to take in other people's reasoning. They have everything taped: they cannot entertain ideas outside their square. That type of debating can close people down. Debaters debate – they can't stop debating! They have to win the conversation – so you can't just discuss.

"On the other hand you find others who are quite happy to accept what people say – and think about it. They are interested in causes if it affects them. Few would get involved in an issue of principle unless it affected them directly."

Their assessment of themselves is disarmingly honest: "We're a selfish and materialistic generation. Our parents come from the 60s generation when people rebelled against controls and went for themselves. That's where it started: a rejection of traditional values and against discipline.

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Justice, Jubilee and World Debt

Catherine Wood (above) traces the origins of Third World debts – and challenges the wealthy nations to act in the spirit of Jubilee

Programmes (SAPs).

SAPs are imposed primarily by the IMF as a condition of poor countries being able to refinance their loans. Many heavily indebted countries have had to take out new loans in order to be able to service the old ones, further compounding their poverty. Through debt servicing, the poorest countries of the world are literally being robbed to further enrich the most powerful nations – predominently those of the G7.

Alongside the Levitical laws of Jubilee is the Biblical injunction against usury. In the past few hundred years it has been as thoroughly ignored as the Jubilee laws themselves. Exploitation by means of high interest rates is just one way in which the dominant economic system works for and benefits the rich; yet for heavily indebted countries it is a critical factor in ensuring that they remain economically and socially crushed. For example, Mauritania, with an estimated total debt $2.6 billion, has averaged $116 million annually in debt repayment, while spending just $17 million on health, and $51million on education. Tanzania spends more on debt repayment than on health and education combined.

The most recent and increasingly questionable attempt to relieve the debt burden has been the *Highly Indebted Poor Countries* initiative – HIPC, which was approved by the World Bank and IMF in 1996. Initially it seemed hopeful, but debt relief under this scheme is snared in a complex web of eligibility conditions locking countries' economics into the global free-market.

At the G7 meeting in Cologne last year, yet another condition was added – the *Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility* (PRGF) whereby funds freed by debt relief are put into poverty reduction programmes. In reality this further undermines poor countries' sovereignty and delays debt relief until this new condition is met. So far, only four of the 41 countries included in HIPC have received any relief, and even that still leaves them with burdensome repayments.

At the annual meeting of the G7/8 countries in Birmingham in 1998, 70,000 people formed a human chain around the leaders' meeting place while many similar actions happened around the world. At their meeting last year in Cologne, a revision of HIPC was announced, speeding up the process and allowing more countries to qualify and more debt to be relieved.

But the Cologne terms have been described as offering "a drop of reduction in an ocean of debts since the new reduction only amounts to, at most, 2.6 percent of developing country debt". More significant have been the unilateral debt cancellations by the US and UK. Although multilateral deals could reduce a greater amount of debt, the US and UK have given a powerful political signal to the other G8 countries, some of which are much more reticent about debt cancellation.

As an international campaign, *Jubilee 2000* in the rich countries of the North needs to follow Canada's lead in taking the position that future work must be done in dialogue with *Jubilee South*. In New Zealand, *Christian World Service* has been in the forefront of the Jubilee 2000 campaign along with *Caritas*, the Catholic aid and development agency.

Just as it was the people, rather than religious or political leaders who recognised and valued Jesus and identified with his message of liberation and hope, so now it is networks of people who are supporting one another in the struggle, not only for debt relief, but to dismember the whole exploitative monstrosity that the global economic system has become.

In a world where the 226 wealthiest multi-billionaires have more money and assets between them than the 47 poorest countries, people everywhere are finally shouting, "enough!" Where two or more (and it's thousands more) are gathered in the name of the justice and compassion that is of God, there God is in the midst – the heart, fire and strength of what is now an unstoppable movement for Jubilee liberation. ■

An African woman took her two children to a Zambian consultant. One was three years old, the other, 13. Both were very sick. The doctor prescribed treatment for which she thanked him and left. When he saw her some time later and asked how the children were, she told him that the younger one had died. She had not had enough money to pay for treatment for both children, so with much pain she had decided to pay for the older child's medicine. He had got better quickly, but she had had to watch her younger child die.

"Debt is tearing down schools, clinics and hospitals, and the effects are no less devastating than war", says Dr Adabayo Adedeji, former Under-Secretary-General for the U.N. Of the world's poorest countries, 52 – many in Africa – owe the rich part of the world an estimated US$355 billion. Annual repayments are approximately $23.4 billion, most of this from countries where people have less than $1 a day to live on. The effects have been catastrophic as countries have spent anywhere up to 70 percent of their annual incomes on debt servicing, while their people lack not only health and education, but absolute necessities such as uncontaminated drinking water.

The debt falls into three main categories:
• ***multilateral*** (35 percent of total debt) – owed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the regional development banks;
• ***bilateral*** (50 percent) – owed to national governments;
• ***private or commercial*** debt (15 percent) – owed to commercial banks

Since the mid-1990s, Third World debt has become a major international issue. *Jubilee 2000* began as a British-based group, and has now become an international movement campaigning for the cancellation of all unpayable debt by the end of this year. That goal has given the movement inspiration and a quite specific focus.

Jubilee 2000 is rooted in the Levitical laws of Jubilee (*Lev.25*), which form one of the most radical mandates for social justice and restoration ever conceived. In her powerful book *Proclaim Jubilee*, Maria Harris sees the primary theme of Jubilee as being liberation, and its core teachings as:
• *You shall let the land lie fallow, ie you shall practice Sabbath;*
• *You shall forgive debts, letting forgiveness in;*
• *You shall free captives and proclaim liberty;*
• *You shall find out what belongs to whom and give it back;*
• *You shall hold a great feast, learning to sing the canticle of 'Jubilate'.*

Central to Jubilee is the acknowledgement that people can claim nothing as of right. Everything that supports life – indeed life itself – is a gift from God; everything belongs to God. The Testament reverberates with thunderous calls for justice: *no one should live at others' expense; no one should rob others of freedom, livelihood, dignity, or the capacity to live fruitfully and creatively. The passion of God's love for everyone and everything overflows with such exuberant generosity that there is abundance for all. It is abhorrent to God that greed, mean-spiritedness and fear should disrupt the flow of her/his life-giving love.*

Vital also to the spirit of Jubilee are gratitude and celebration. God is the source of life and all that nurtures it. Such all-embracing, overflowing love brings joy and celebration – justice goes hand in hand with feasting and song. "In the end", says Walter Brueggemann, "Jubilee is the liberty of gratitude, and jubilation its final expression."

The situation faced by the poorest, most debt-ravaged countries of the world is the ultimate antithesis to the vision of Jubilee. The present level of crisis can be traced back to the dramatic oil-price rises of the 1970s. The oil-producing countries deposited the revenue in Western banks on which interest had to be paid. The banks had to lend the money out quickly in order to avoid a financial crisis.

They turned to the Third World and made lavish loans, initially at minimal rates of interest. Often, the banks lent indiscriminately, with no concern for how the money would be spent. In the end, little of it ever helped the poor. Much of it was used to arm and reinforce dictatorships that oppressed their own people, or for inappropriate development programmes recommended by the World Bank. These often left the most vulnerable people even worse off.

Many poor countries have been kept dependent on raw materials and cash crops for their income. As their debts mounted, market prices for their goods fell dramatically, while the interest rates on their debts skyrocketed. The gap between what they earn and what they have to pay in debt servicing has widened to an all-consuming chasm. Each year they fall deeper and deeper into debt. The original amounts borrowed have been repaid over and over again, but because of the iniquity of compound interest rates, the amount they are 'said' to owe keeps growing.

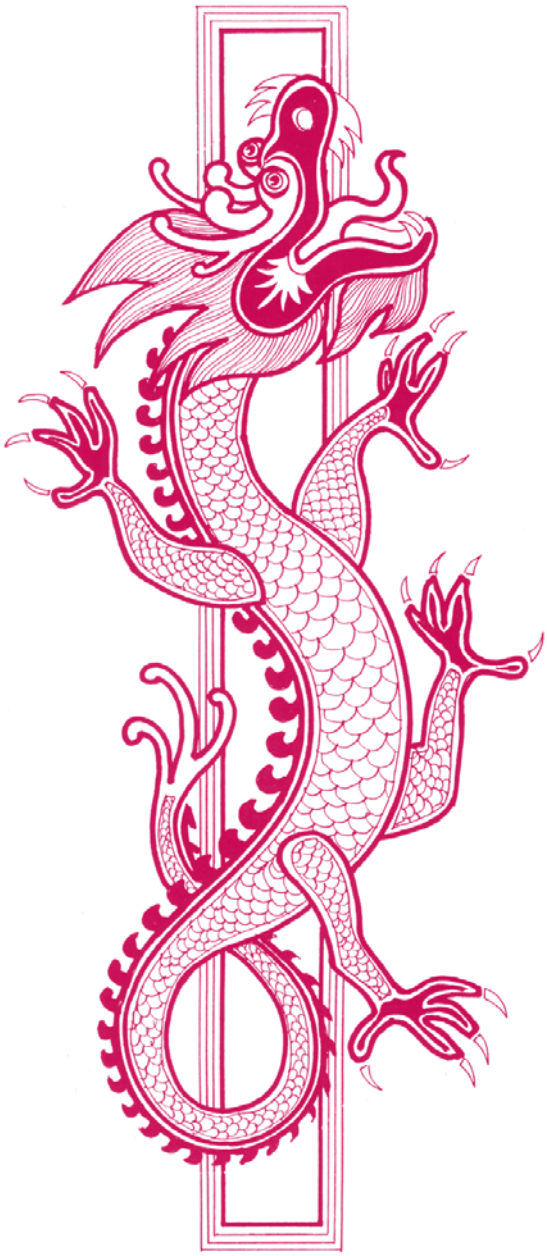
The concept of 'forgiving' Third World debt is odiously patronising. The rich Western countries have benefited for so long at the poorest of people's expense. In essence, Third World debt is not about money. Every day, at least $1.4 trillion washes through the world's computers in the virtual reality world of financial speculation. The amount that poor countries owe is a pittance in comparison

The central issue is control. Despite countries having gained their independence, they remain just as effectively colonised. Instead of plunderimg their wealth and resources, rich countries now use debt servicing and the control process known as *Structural Adjustment*

Catherine Wood is Northern fieldworker for Christian World

The Year of the Dragon – Chinese New Year Vietnam-style

Celebrating New Year in Vietnam prompted Kevin Toomey OP to reflect on Jubilee and inculturation



obligation. The plane on which we flew into *Ho Chi Minh* City from Hong Kong was chock-a-block with people, young and old, coming for the Tet festival. For many of them, it would be the fulfilment of many years dreaming about returning to their country to celebrate this profound feast.

On the vigil of this first day, Fr Pablo and I were in the town of *Dong Dang*, 20 kms from *Lang Son*. To be part of a family as it celebrated this vigil meal was an unforgettable experience. A delicious rice cake, ban chung, made of sticky rice and filled with some pork meat, is eaten on this day. Other meat dishes will be eaten, something most unusual for most Vietnamese families who cannot afford this luxury. Beer and *sake* (rice wine) are drunk freely, and many noisy toasts are offered. At ten o'clock that night we went with this family to Mass, traditionally offered for peace. The church itself was liberally decorated with spring flowers and, as in every church we visited, with either a branch of cherry blossom or a complete cherry tree. The colours red and yellow predominate. The priests' vestments are yellow as well.

The bishop celebrated Mass in the tiny church in *Lang Son*. Formerly a classroom and still looking every inch the same from the outside, it now serves as his cathedral. The old cathedral has been absorbed and is now invisible as part of the regional party headquarters, only 100 yards away – same basic idea, very different owners! You can sense the indignity the Catholic people feel as they recount this fact to you.

In his homily (translated for us), the Bishop prayed for three things: for peace everywhere in the world, for the

the crow flies.

It was my first visit north of the 17th parallel, the dividing line between North and South established by the 1954 Geneva Convention. The church in the northern part of Vietnam is still much more strictly controlled than in the south. The diocese of *Lang Son* is small, some 5,000 Catholics spread in small pockets and in only a few parishes over a large area. A new bishop, an urbane man of 48, educated in the south of Vietnam and in Paris, has been here for just six months. He considers his role to be missionary.

And you understand why when you find out that the only other priest in the diocese is 106 years old, frail but alert, who still celebrates Mass in his own parish. The Dominican Sisters' Congregation established here many years ago has only around six sisters living here. The remaining 70 or so sisters, mainly young, are in the South, in *Ho Chi Minh City*. They await government permission to return to the North.

New Year celebrations

The celebration of Tet itself takes place over three days, which are public holidays. The first is the day when members of the family will come to pay their respects to their parents. On the eve of this day they share a truly festive meal with their parents, like none other in the year. Children will go to great lengths and travel great distances to ensure that they can fulfil this filial

Tet, Chinese or Lunar New Year, is the most important time of the year in Vietnam. It is the feast of the family par excellence, and derives from Buddhist tradition. However, for the Catholic faithful of Vietnam, here is a tradition so deeply imbedded in their culture for more than a thousand years that this enormously meaningful feast is to them very much as Christmas is now for the majority of non-churched people in the West.

Not many Westerners have a good idea any more of the deep reasons why we give gifts on Christmas Day, nor why family groupings, wherever possible, will come together to celebrate this great feast with the best food and wine. It is the same for most Vietnamese people. They get into the swing of things vigorously without thinking too deeply about its religious origins.

In the days before the feast, the people are busy getting ready for this celebration. Spring is in the air. Shops in Vietnam, always close to the road, at this time spill their goods crazily out on to the pavement. Red, the ancient Chinese symbol of life and happiness, and gold, the colour of spring, are the colours of the season. It is impossible to miss the red tins of sweets and biscuits, so sought after as gifts. You must purchase the many different types of red and gold decorations and bunting which are hung everywhere – inside your house, in the streets, over the faces of buildings, and along the roads. On the front of many houses, and certainly on every public building of any size, whether church, school, government office, or business, hangs a large red banner with gold letters which read, *Chuc mung nam moi*: "Happy New Year". Some are huge.

All the young men this year are sporting new jackets which proclaim the fact that they are followers of *Fila, Nike, the Chicago Bulls, Adidas,* even *Manchester United* (red, of course!). It is obligatory to have new clothes. Not even the poorest people would be seen dead on the first day of Tet unless they were sporting something identifiably new. In many places on the roads and in the public gardens, you may purchase cherry blossom and yellow-flowering trees. Yellow blossom and flowers of every kind, especially orchids, are for sale in superabundance. Everyone will try to have at least a branch of cherry blossom in their house, and often a whole tree (somewhat like our Christmas tree). Some of these floral decorations are small trees which have been trained into various shapes.

This year they are in the form of dragons, it being the year of the dragon. For Vietnamese this is a lucky year, as the dragon for them is a symbol of prosperity and wealth. St. George would be mortified to find out that in Asian culture dragons are friendly and loving animals! Here there is nothing evil in them to conquer! You may spend delightful hours just looking at the many flowers and trees on show for sale at this springtime.

As in metropolises everywhere (not just in *Ho Chi Minh City*) there are signs of urban untidiness everywhere you look, dust, rubbish and the evidence of pollution. At this time in all of Vietnam, the streets of the cities and towns are clean; the millions of farmlets in the countryside have been spruced up to look dazzlingly bright.

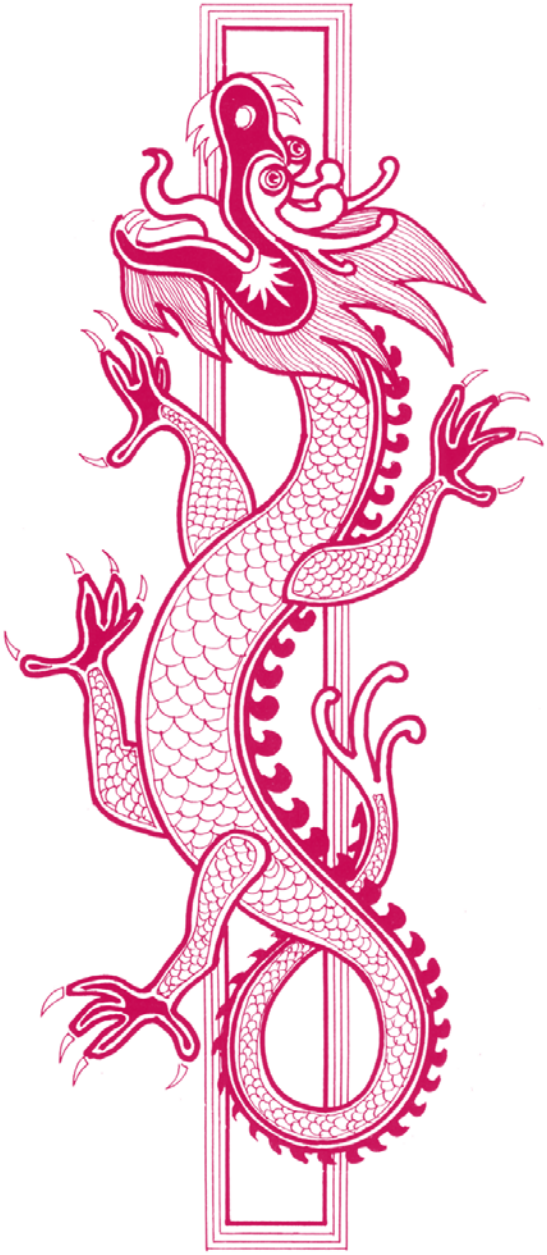
A comparison

Each Tet is like the Jubilee year we Christians are happy to celebrate this year. We take up the biblical idea (*Leviticus 25*) which stresses that everything is indeed the gift of God, rather than being in the ultimate control of us human beings, and we must give preference and dominion to God's gift rather than our own puny graspings. We are proud as Christians to be following this tradition, asking for the remission of world debt for the poorer countries of the world, including Vietnam!

For us, however, the Jubilee happens every 50 years, or a little more often if the Pope thinks it opportune! And then we talk in rather a low key about how things will be restored to that primitive and first peaceful state. But for all who celebrate Chinese New Year, this restoration occurs each year. It is as if heaven and earth meet. The physical environment is renewed, family relationships are deepened, new things (especially clothes) are bought, and great conviviality is expressed.

In the north of Vietnam

This year I had the privilege, with another Dominican brother, Pablo [illegible] of being in Vietnam over the



period of New Year, Tet. We were in the very north of Vietnam in the province of Lang Son. This province borders China for some hundreds of kilometres, and the provincial capital, *Lang Son*, where we stayed, is less than ten kilometres from China as ▷▷

▷▷ This country is one of the major exporters of rice to the world at present.

On this day everyone will pay visits to their more distant relatives and friends - again to express the love and extended solidarity which comes from being part of the community of a family. As we drove back to *Hanoi*, we saw literally thousands of young people on their motorcycles (Vietnam is known as the 'land of Honda') - going off to visit their relatives and friends. Some, also, would visit their teachers to show the great respect they hold for them.

Over the next ten days, people continue to greet one another and to visit as many relatives and friends as they can. You can still hear everywhere the Happy New Year greeting, and see small gifts of candy and rice cake being given. Towards the end of this festive season people seem glad to be back to their old work routines, but are still happy to exchange greetings with a friend they

in these first 60 seconds of the New Year, earth and heaven are joined

tradition of the same Church. Sadly the Nestorians have died out in all but a few places around Turkey and Syria.

To add to this, we know now also that many of our wonderful Easter traditions with fire and light (also at the time of a new moon!) come from much more ancient cultures and religious understandings than Christianity. It is important that we take time to look at religious and cultural traditions. Perhaps we have made quick and prejudicial judgments. I admire those historians and liturgists who have the patience to labour at helping us understand such things. Otherwise our own prejudices and lack of faith may stifle or stymie our ability to appreciate the breadth and depth of the common human desire to praise an Almighty and Benevolent God.

I was happy to take part in this year's joyous religious and cultural celebration have not seen since Tet began.

It is fascinating to see that a local Buddhist tradition dating back nearly two thousand years in Vietnamese society has been accepted, with some changes, within the Catholic framework and dispensation. The three days of going to Mass for peace, for the dead, and for full employment are clearly taken from Buddhist ideas, but fit very easily into our Catholic religious framework.

However, I heard strong criticism from a non-Vietnamese Catholic that this is simply the adding of a Christian veneer to Buddhist tradition. He did not use the word, but this is what we commonly know as 'syncretism'. This opinion stunned me, especially when I saw how clearly the Catholic people themselves accept these ceremonies.

In part, I sense the criticism stems from some fear that the 'purity' of our faith and liturgical traditions may be defiled or weakened by this weaving together with other liturgical forms or traditions which reflect the culture of that place. Perhaps it implied a certain cultural superiority on the part of our Western tradition.

This encounter left me with the question: *what indeed is the difference between inculturation and syncretism indeed?* I still do not have a full answer. But without doubt it remains an urgent matter to make Christianity seem less like a 'foreign' religion, and more at home with the cultural norms in each place: in art, design, architecture, music and thought (poetry and prose). John Paul II proclaims this often, and it is a priority underlined in *Ecclesia in Asia* – the document that flowed from the recent Synod on Asia (*nos. 20, 22*).

As well I have seen wonderful, if isolated, examples of this in many places. But against this, in some places (e.g., in southern India where the traditions attributed to St. Thomas are strong), I have listened to people, including priests, who strongly resist this inculturation: "We

Some reflections

do not wish to become just like those others from whom we parted company hundreds of years ago." For some, it seems like going backward, a loss of what they now treasure; for others, it would be becoming just another 'part of the local mob'.

Where is our distinctiveness? What will become of the traditions that came to us from the missionaries? There lies the problem. How is it possible to change the treasured 'foreign' (often read Roman,) traditions that came with the missionaries, without losing the distinctiveness which characterizes Catholicity? This is the urgent work of the next generations of Asian Christians: to put on the Asian face of Christ.

In Vietnam, there seems to be little problem at least concerning Tet traditions. Buddhists, followers of animist beliefs and Vietnamese Catholics are able to find common cultural or religious elements and to celebrate them in quite distinctive ways during this time of Chinese New Year.

This reinforces an idea that I personally am coming to appreciate more. I think that many religious traditions stemming supposedly from completely different roots, may indeed have more in common than we give credit for – or understand. Would this be syncretism?

Recently, for example, I have learnt that some seemingly distinctive Islamic traditions, like using a prayer mat and kneeling facing east to make the daily prostrations, were in fact taken from early Syrian Nestorian Christian prayer traditions. And that the prayer niche placed in every mosque which faces the east, takes its origin from another▷▷

Christian Art in Asia

Julanne Clarke Morris and Michael Wallace recently returned to Dunedin after two years teaching English in Japan. While there they were able to pursue their passion for Asian Christian art. They first met through being members of the Student Christian Movement in Dunedin. Both studied for the Bachelor of Theology degree. They were married in 1997.

Michael was brought up in Christchurch, of Anglican parents. He has always been musical and sang in the Cathedral choir. "I joined SCM when I came to Varsity; it made me analyse my faith. I started to look closely at what I had always taken for granted. Prior to that it was the music and the atmosphere of worship that had held me".

Julanne came down from Hamilton to study Art at Dunedin Polytechnic and became involved in SCM. She went to a month-long conference in Sri Lanka organised by SCM as a New Zealand delegate. "I met people living their faith in difficult circumstances, and that," Julanne says, "inspired in me a sort of conversion process" She too embarked on the Bachelor of Theology course.

In 1997 they went to Japan and also visited Korea, China, Indonesia and India. They joined the *Asian Christian Art Association*, and started making a collection of works. Inculturation of Christian art is widespread, although in India they thought it depended on caste. "There seems to be inculturated Christian art among the intelligentsia, in seminaries etc. But in parishes and schools we saw predominantly Western imported art forms."

Overleaf is a sample of their collection with comments. ▷▷

▷▷families of the nation and their good, and finally for the faith of the people themselves, that they continue to be converted to God. His message was clearly appreciated by the 200 faithful present, mainly peasant farmers with their wives and children. Afterwards, there was much fun and good-natured teasing, especially among the teenagers, as we waited for midnight.

Twelve o'clock brought great rejoicing. New Year's greetings were given and returned, and the Bishop, as the most respected person here, gave *li xi*, which means "lucky money", to all the children present. This lucky money consists of a spanking new 1000 *dong* note, worth about 10 cents NZ (5 cents US). This brings its own special sense of joy on the face of each child. Not only is it a little money to spend, which they never have. It is a sign of the love the bishop has for each one. They experience it most clearly in this simple act.

Midnight is also the most precious moment of the year. In the tradition this moment is imbued with the idea that in these first 60 seconds of the New Year earth and heaven are joined. Somehow, the souls of their dead become quite present to them. For Christian people it is a wonderful expression of the Communion of Saints when all, whether in heaven or on earth, are symbolized together.

The second day is the day for the ancestors, when prayers are said and offerings made for the parents (or brothers and sisters), and older relatives of previous generations. The Catholics, of course, went, first thing in the morning, to a special Mass offered for all their dead. But the temples are also full on this day, when most non-Catholic people (and I suspect even some Catholics) go to make offerings for their dead relatives.

On this day we were taken to a very small temple in a cave on the side of a sheer mountain-cliff close to this town and the Chinese border. Here there are no statues of the Buddha and his two associate deities, as you usually see in a Buddhist temple; only three empty shrines, to symbolize the presence of the ancestors. People were coming constantly to offer incense in their accustomed way, to make a monetary offering, and to kneel to pray for their dead. This time-old ritual is known to every Vietnamese, of whatever persuasion or none. While we were present, an officer in the Army (therefore a Communist Party member, and by definition atheist!) came with his wife to make their ritual offering for their family ancestors.

On the third and last day of Tet, Mass was again offered, as is Vietnamese Catholic tradition, for sufficient work and employment for the people. This need is clear when you see people out of work, and some beggars in the streets. Mercifully over the past few years the agriculture of Vietnam has blossomed.

Kevin Toomey OP, a member of the Dominican Curia, has a responsibility for the Asia-Pacific

Christian a

Julanne Clarke Morris and Michael Wallace (see page 15) *are commenting here on some examples of Asian Christian art from their own collection. They met the three artists while overseas.*

Fan Pu, from China, learned her art at Sunday School. During the Cultural Revolution she switched to papercuts of Chairman Mao and communist subjects, but in 1980 she was able to resume her Christian art work. Her passionate commitment to socialism is quite coherent with her equal commitment to the Gospel. For her there was no ideological shift: she could meld the two.

In *The Last Supper* (below) Christ's Body becomes the table: he is offering himself. Some of the figures are contemporary; women are present, and at the bottom she is herself depicted in a state of wonderment – alongside Judas making off with the loot!

The thorns of Christ have taken on the appearance of barbed wire: significant, coming from a totalitarian society which has denied human rights.

The Last Supper, Fan Pu, (Chinese papercut – a traditional folk art.)

Christ the Pilgrim, Jyoti Sahi, India, 19
four ages of Jesus (Boy, Pilgrim, Teache

Jyoti Sahi is a Christian artist and
art ashram near Bangalore, India.
Hindu and Christian symbolism.

Christ is the field, and his body is
surrounded by grain. This is conne
of the *Green Man* – representing th
life. Indian pilgrims carry food on th
and ritual significance as well as
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grains of wheat.

Art in Asia

998, Oil Painting, is the second of the
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He is a leader in the synthesis of

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cted with the ancient Aryan belief
he spirit of vegetation and of new
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on their heads. Christ's Body is
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five loaves and two fishes, from
ltitude. On the palms of Christ's
yes or stigmata, but are probably

He dances in fire and in cloud – from Exodus, 1996-1997, Evelyna Liang Kan, Hong Kong, Bamboo painting

A good example of a synthesis between Western self-expression and Chinese form. It is mixed media, using both Chinese ink and acrylic. The artist had an idea of what she wanted to achieve – and yet she did not! The result emerged out of the strokes she was making as well as out of her ideas.

Bamboo painting Julanne and Michael first came across this in Japan. Julanne describes this: "You paint four flowers – like the four seasons: bamboo, orchid, camellia and plum. You start on bamboo, repeating the brush strokes and images over and over again. The idea is not to express yourself in art but to become connected to the tradition. It is a meditative process rather than a means of self-expression. You repeat it over and over until its subtlety, its depth and its richness become apparent to you. You take the tradition and embed it in your own experience. I experienced the meditative power of this method while practising the bamboo painting at home. After a while we ceased because we found the regimentation of the process quite stifling. Japanese people spend thousands of hours repeating the characters of their language over and over again – to attain precision and correctness. I think that is why Japanese students may lack analytical skills: they are preoccupied with correctness and precision."

Julanne and Michael are members of the Asian Christian Art Association. They recommend that anyone interested join it and receive the beautifully illustrated quarterly magazine, *Image*. (Annual sub US10) Perum Duta Wacana No.2, Jatimulyo, RT 05/RW02, Yogyakarta 55242, Indonesia Tel (62-274)586465, Fax (62 274) 513235, Email: <acaajudo@indosat.net.id>

Two score and ten: Christian maturity in later mid-life

Dr Tony Russell looks at the human journey through mid-life and how Christian faith can transform people

Mary Stanley, one of our early poets, wrote in *Starveling Year*, at the beginning of last century: *We are what we have been;*
the human face, bears like grain of wood its tale of good and evil years.
The face is schooled by daily argument of pain
To find disguises for the private wound.
Who knows what country lies under the shut skull ...

We are indeed what we have been; our faces tells our tale. And those we meet are what they have been, and we guess much about them from their faces.

We are all adroit at adapting our behaviour and response according to how we read the age of the person we meet: the young shop assistant, the child crying on the bus that draws the attention of all, young people in the vigour of early adulthood laughing in the streets, the serene face of a more mature person, the pain and laughter we meet in the face of an individual, the solemnity on the face of the dying person going on the last step of the journey. In a word, we read age very readily from external appearances, and often draw rapid and correct conclusions from the exteriority of a person. The grain of their face is a measure for the way we interact with them.

Mary Stanley also asks: *Who knows what country lies under the shut skull?* The interiority of a person, the territory of experience hidden in the heart and mind of a person, is not so easily scanned. The course of a human life may mark us externally with the lineaments of age; what has gone on inside, in the heart of the traveller, is often another matter.

Human life itself has been described in many ways, for example: "nasty, brutish and short" (a philosopher), "a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage" (the Poet), and "the sojourn of a stranger in a strange land" (the pagan philosopher-emperor).

We Christians too typify life in many ways: as journey, as pilgrimage, as a time of trial and testing, as a phase that precedes another type of existence. Whatever way we label human or Christianised life, the definition is rarely of something static. Rather, like people of all cultures and times we regard life as dynamic, a time of growth, of progress, maturation, and moving through.

...their interior a desolate place

the nurture they had as a child, the relationships they have had in life, the essential vigour of their created spirit, the very calibre of their given soul. Yet one is still left questioning why it is that some people are transformed by the events of life, whereas other folk are absolutely cast down, even destroyed, by the same or similar events.

As life comes to the fullness of its journey - not just in old age, but in the emergence of the fully matured person in later middle age - it is interesting to see what 50 or 60 years of human and Christian journey have actually produced in the human being.

Some mature folk we meet are entrancing. We find in them a spirit which is lively, engaging, insightful, generous, compassionate, wise, intelligent, witty, great-hearted, full of laughter. Behind the grained face lies a rich interior.

Other times we meet folk – equally grown in years - who are angry, bitter, disappointed, scarred by life, prejudiced, small of heart, thin on kindliness, mean in spirit, with a scant harvest of love in their life. Their interior is a desolate place.

We could conclude that it is the events of life which render us what we are in mature adulthood. In some ways this is true. We do meet people who have had it rough and tough, against whom every circumstance seems to have conspired, upon whom a world of ills seems to have come down year after year. Their passage has been a hard one, and they end up bitter and disillusioned.

However, we can meet people who have been through exactly the same mill, as it were, and who have emerged weathered and battered, but triumph-ant; they are serene after storms, full of life and hope, full of awareness of what it means to be alive.

Why the difference? You could put it down to genetic endowment, or

Christian life is essentially about transformation, even metamorphosis. It is about the transposition of the entire human being or personality. To enter into the Christian life is to enter into a dynamic which does indeed have a framework for all human experience. That framework is essentially the human life of Christ Jesus, and the record of how he encountered people, daily living, loving, suffering and the events and relationships of his life. Above all else, it is a framework which gives us a measure of what it means to love, and to be transformed by loving as human beings.

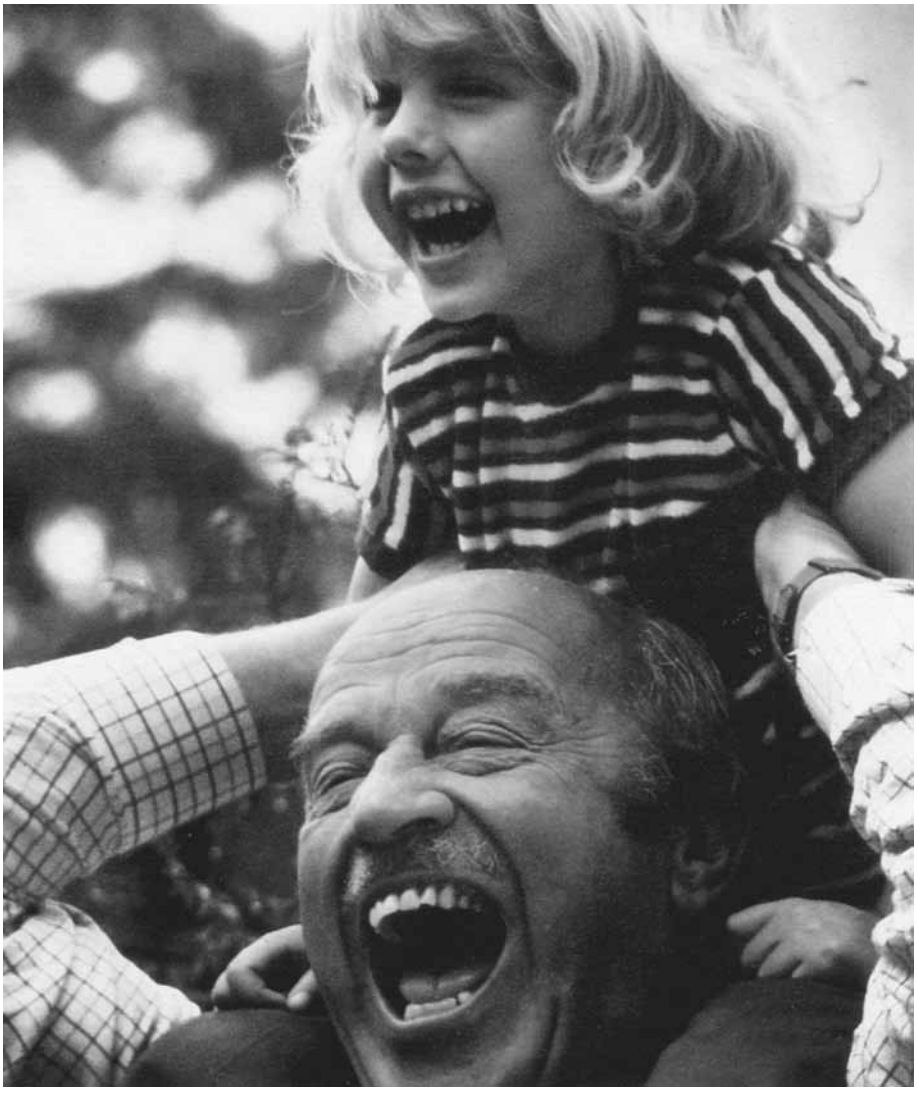
Christian life involves us in dynamic growth, maturation and in the endless challenge to grow in love. This last - growing in love - is the talisman of Christian maturation, the litmus test of what is going on in the Christian life. If it is not going on, especially for long periods of time, then we may be faced with a dormant, even deceased, Christian!

In a word, Christian life can and does transform us by its challenge of love: loving well, loving wisely, loving as God loves. St Paul's hymn to love in *1 Corinthians* tells us exactly how God loves:

God is patient and kind, God is not jealous or boastful; God is not arrogant or rude .. irritable or resentful, .. God does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right … God bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things and so on.

Matured Christians are meant to be loving in this same way. *1 Corinthians* gives us our assessment sheet, our exam paper, our performance criteria!

Mature Christians, those who have emerged into the fullness of two score and ten, even three score, can be fairly interrogated about their lives, and the transformation that has - or sadly - has not taken place in them. The matured Christian is meant to be a gift to the world, a centre of calm for those in storm, wisdom in the face of unknowing, abiding large-heartedness in the face of prejudice and narrow minds.



...a spirit generous, lively, great-hearted, full of laughter

The mature Christian is meant to be a truly transformed human being. Like their God they are "slow to anger, rich in love". Mature Christians have no place in them for thinking or living "small", for being captured in frameworks which are prejudicial, limited, unimaginative, for anger or resentment. Rather the mature Christian encounters everyone who comes their way with the embrace of the transformed human personality, with largesse of spirit, with - in a word: greatness of soul.

In the last 20 years of our life we are essentially writing our own epitaphs. Unless we are particularly famous or outstanding the first 40 years of our life will have been much the same as other people. In mature middle age we come to what we have been and will be, as it were. We arrive at the transformed us. Our epitaph, as Christians, can only read *Transformed By Loving*. This can be the only just report on the life of those who live in Christ.

St Paul described all this in Galatians 5, where, reflecting on what it means to have lived one's life in Christ he says that the Christian will be marked by love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, big-heartedness, serene self- possession and such things. Challenging outcomes or performance criteria indeed! But, if our faces are to tell a tale of good years, years of being transformed by Christian loving, then all this is a realistic goal for those whose journey is marked by faith in Jesus Christ.

At 50 or 60 we should be well on the way to justifying a good Christian epitaph. We have not come to a stage where transformation of our personality, our being, has ceased. Rather we have reached that point where we are putting the finishing touches to a life rich in loving and in faith. Our faces should be grained with the alacrity of kindliness, and marked with that rich harvest of charity which gives loving welcome to everyone we meet. ■

Come to the waters... the urgent summons of Mark

This month the Sunday readings take up again the Gospel of Mark. Drasko Dizdar and friends discuss Mark, its baptismal character and its 'no nonsense' call to change one's life

Paul: the context of Baptism. an incorporation into the ist. The Gospel began life in y which was receiving into mbers. These new members ry strong challenge: *do you or not? Or are you also going* (like the women at the end el)?

Drasko: mply, in today's very stic climate we lose the which this Gospel was first interpretation becomes because it is not respecting t if we treat the text as an speaks to us from its own n this creates a relationship. spel speaks to us of the ture of faith. It's not about s'. If it were, I would have g ago. Take the rich young e runs away because he is own, isolated. He cannot that leap beyond what rsonally possesses. Jesus nges him to sell it, to give it e poor and to *Come, follow e.* He is inviting us into a circle, into a community.

Paul: We are living in such n atomised society in the est. Do you think we can ver recover a corporate olidarity.

Drasko: It's not so much a *our* 'recovering it'. What

event offers us is a gift. We can't... but God can. That's the promise of Pentecost. These people of the First Century were challenged to leave their élite group and join another. *We are Jews; you are mere Gentiles. We are Romans; you are just slaves!* They were called to move outside their boundaries. And we too have boundaries, equally isolating and alienating.

John's Gospel is in a sense complementary to *Mark*. *Mark* is broad brush, while *John's* is a more detailed and personalised call, revealing to me how deeply ingrained my prejudices are. *Mark* says "change your mind!" – and *John* says "this is how you do it".

Mark is about Jesus – and Jesus crucified. The immediacy of *Mark* propels us into the crucified Christ. The Resurrection is left us as an option, an opportunity. "Will you – or won't you?" *John* says to us, "now that you have... let's see what happens. Let the Spirit lead you to the complete truth".

Frances: Are you saying *Mark* challenges us – but does not set us free?

Draško: Yes. *Mark* leads us down into the baptismal water. It is *John* who brings us out again – to the altar, to Eucharist. *Mark* is a profound exploration of the nature of Baptism. Tearing things away or ripping things away is important in *Mark* – the tearing away of the Old Dispensation. I think Jesus' saying about sewing new cloth onto old is often misinterpreted. You see, that's precisely what Jesus does. He sews on the new so as to tear apart the old. He puts new wine into old wineskins in order to burst them. If you look at the context you find that both before and after he is doing exactly that: tearing the cloth and bursting the skins – the precise thing he says you cannot do!

Paul: It's a paradox isn't it. Jesus appears to be saying one thing – but in fact he is saying another.

Drasko: That kind of rhetorical device is consistent with "changing our minds". If Jesus is setting out to change our minds, then the way he teaches will be puzzling and paradoxical. It is when he provokes us to think that he changes our minds. Therefore, if we allegorise one of Jesus' parables, we may not be violating the meaning, but we are losing the text's rhetorical power – to change us. This is true of any of Jesus' parables. For instance, unless we realise how the Jews regarded the Samaritans, the parable of *Good Samaritan* is just a good story. We need to substitute "Nazi" for the word "Samaritan", to get the point. It's like putting the story in Auschwitz.

Paul: Why does Jesus go to so much trouble to prevent people using those titles of him – *Christ* and *Son of God*?

Drasko: That is part of the drama of *Mark*. The Gospel is not a biography or a history – it's a baptismal liturgy, a drama. And within the drama Jesus says "no" to being disclosed. Because nothing discloses him as *Christ* or as *Son of God* except his Crucifixion. It is the ultimate 'parable' of *Mark*.

When Jesus asks the disciples *who do people say that I am?* – and Peter comes out with the right answer, Jesus pushes him and shows him he doesn't understand. *You haven't understood – so keep it quiet*. If even the disciples do not understand, how can one trust the demons.

Nothing makes sense until the Crucifixion, because that is when God is revealed and the Old Dispensation is torn apart. The veil of the Holy of Holies is ripped *from top to bottom*. It is the executioner who finally says it: *Truly, this was the Son of God!*

What irony! And this text in *Mark* is first being heard by people living in mortal fear of Roman centurions. At any moment they could be arrested and the same fate would be theirs.

You can't prove this Gospel was written in the context of the first persecutions when Peter and Paul were martyred – but to read it that way makes a lot of sense. Tradition – going right back to the Second Century – has always associated *Mark*'s Gospel with Peter. Not only does it make us warm to Peter who depicts himself so badly – but it underlines his Jewishness. It's a truly Old Testament way of stating the case: *We've failed. We are the worst of nations*.

Frances: Can you talk now about the women not going into the tomb.

Drasko: In *Mark* the women stay at the door of the tomb. What they see is a young man *seated on the right hand side, dressed in a white robe*. He is on the other side of the baptismal font, having been baptised and being robed in white. He is the messenger of the Good News.

The women have arrived at the door; they have come to the threshold of faith. They receive the message and run away because they are afraid. But, in Old Testament spirituality, fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We don't have to see their action as failure or betrayal. A true change of mind begins with awe and trembling.

The question then is "where will it go from here? Will you also run away?" But we would not be here reading this Gospel if the women had really failed. So it's not so negative. It's not a dismissal of the women to depict their fear. The whole of our lives is an immersion into Christ. Baptism doesn't stop at the font! We are invited into a relationship: we are not simply being given; we are invited to receive.

Paul: That is in contrast with our culture where *grasping* is held as a prime value. But the disciples are invited to *receive*.

Drasko: We think so much in terms of achievement that we bring that language into our faith. "How do I advance in my prayer?" Today's culture of self-help is an obstacle to our progress rather than a means. The best metaphor we have is our own bodies. We start as a single cell, and we grow through some mystery called life. It is not just me: it is a whole world which cooperates to enable me to be and to grow.

Being reducesd to an individual is a ▷▷

▷▷ process – through *grasping*. In order to grasp, I have to believe I am separate from what I'm grabbing: whether it's another human being, or a thing or an idea. But if, instead, I *receive* what is offered me and accept it into myself, then I am enriched. That action is grace: it's cooperation.

Paul: Reading through *Mark* it seems Jesus' miracles depend upon the faith of the people. He wasn't just a wonderworker. What he was really doing was awakening the people to the power of their own spiritual resources. At Nazareth he couldn't do any miracles, because faith was lacking.

Drasko: Jesus does not '"perform miracles". When he is expected to "perform" he refuses and says *no sign will be given to this generation*. Jesus does not "do magic". Magic is "mastery over" – a power thing. Jesus' power is never mastery (except over evil). It is achieved always by the cooperation of faith. What is unusual about Jesus is not that he heals, but that he does not claim the power for himself: *It is your faith that makes you whole*.

In the story of the healing of the demoniac at Gerasa, the man is healed and brought back into the community. Jesus empowers this human being to cease participating in his own alienation.

Jesus' power is over all those things which dominate us as humans. He does it by empowering those who are being disempowered. In the healing of the leper in Chapter One the leper is alienated from the community. Jesus associates with the alienated and thus shares in the alienation: he incurs the curse.

Mark points out how Jesus accepts the lot of those with whom he associates – the marginalised. He belongs "on the edge". The messenger in the Tomb says to the women: *He is not here.* (...not in the centre, Jerusalem, Judea, God's own land, not in the Temple where God dwells: the centre) *You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified* (alienated, cursed). *He is not here. He is going before you into Galilee* (to the edge, where he always was, where "nothing good comes from").

Likewise *John* 's Gospel ends in Galilee – on the edge of the lake. That is where Jesus is to be found: on the edge, on the water's edge. Peter throws himself into the water naked – in order to find faith.

Paul: Miracles are a stumbling block for many people, who see them as works of power that are happening "out there somewhere", but the real miracle is happening within themselves. He is drawing out of them a power they already have.

Draško: Jesus never says to them "you have this power", but "it is your faith". He is not saying "You have the magic"; he is saying, "There is no magic!" Not my power, not yours; it is *faith*, which is a relationship with God; that is the only real power.

Frances: Can I ask you about the teaching aspect. *Mark* isn't a teaching Gospel: there are no long discourses. What is that telling us?

Draško: *Mark*'s focus is always this Baptismal challenge. The Gospel omits the parts not necessary to its Baptismal context. It has a different purpose from the other Gospels, even though the sources were similar.

Matthew is rewriting the Torah: he's writing Scripture. Jesus is the lawgiver, the new Moses. *Luke* is wanting to put in order what others have already written. But *Mark* is simply remembering Jesus in the way that people in those days thought: not what we nowadays would call a logical order.

Paul: There appears to be a two-tier system of teaching in *Mark*'s Gospel. Jesus speaks to the people in general; but then there seems to be special teaching for the disciples – and they often don't understand it.

Draško: What Jesus says to the crowd is quite reasonable. It is Torah. But what he says to the disciples is unreasonable; what he invites them to is even more unreasonable. He invites them to follow him to the Cross. The crowd is not invited to that, nor to discipleship. He chooses his disciples carefully like any Jewish Rabbi. He chooses them so as to train them to do what he is doing – to disrupt, to tear apart the Old Dispensation. Love, compassion, faith, hope: these are the realities revealed by entering into the Lord's suffering, caused by power exercised over and against others. Jesus enters fully into the mystery of evil as it is encountered in our world. That is what he calls his disciples into.

While he is still with them they don't understand. When he goes to Jerusalem and confronts the powers of evil, the crowd (whom he calls to Torah) turn against him; and the disciples (whom he calls to Gospel) abandon him and run away. In accepting this he reveals to us the utter commitment of God to humanity. God does not abandon us. *We may be unfaithful; God is always faithful.* The Temple veil is ripped; faith becomes possible – and there the story ends.

How can we apply this two-tier system to our times? One way, which is a mistake, is to say there are "professional" Christians – and there are the rest. That's dangerous from both points of view: the élite seeing themselves as an élite. And the rest saying "we can't do that, but *you* can; and we expect you to".

The disciples saw themselves as an élite – and in a sense they were: they had been intimate with Jesus. At the pivotal moment when Jesus asks who people say that he is and he reveals the Passion, then the disciples bicker about who is the greatest! For Jesus, to be élite means to be last, the servant of all. It means to welcome a little child, because that little child is a nobody.

The charism of being a leader is a gift. The uniqueness of any charism in the community is never given to someone to possess – but to give and use for the community's good. It is a gift as long as it is being given away, and not possessed. Paradox is at the heart of the Gospel of Jesus – especially *Mark*. ■

Draško Dizdar is Director of Holy Cross Formation Centre, Mosgiel. His special expertise is Scripture and Spirituality

Tui Motu *columnist, Tom Cloher, talks with Auckland Criminal Lawyer, Helen Bowen. Helen is a mother of three (pictured with son Nicholas) and is an enthusiastic advocate of Restorative Justice*

Restorative Justice no easy ride for the offender

Helen, I know that your father is a lawyer too. Did you feel committed to becoming one?
Not really: I did an arts year at Auckland University after leaving Westlake High School – English, Education and Sociology. The following year I left for Otago university lured by a boarding bursary and the fact that quite a number of my friends were already there. I enrolled in the law school because I wanted to know more about it. Only gradually did I become more interested and committed to it.

How did this occur?
Information in the first place: studying legal systems enlarged my view of the place of law in society, and doing family law conveyed its potential for practical application to social problems. I also found jurisprudence (the philosophy of law) fascinating as it indicated how and why laws were changed. At age 21 this was a challenging and rather disconcerting possibility. Martial law was introduced in Germany for example by the Nazi party to 'justify' some of its conduct. This was of particular interest to me as my uncle on my father's side spent four years in a concentration camp, because he had a Jewish name his normal rights of citizenship were suspended. I suspect that this injustice spurred my father's inclination to side with the less fortunate.

How did your practice of the law begin?
Only gradually: after three years in Dunedin I returned to Auckland where I completed my law subjects while working part-time in my father's firm. He specialised in accident compensation claims prior to the 1974 Accident Compen-sation Act, and his concern for people with these difficulties was probably my first exposure to the contribution law practice could make to human rights.

In 1981 I married and my husband Richard took up a position in Tauranga. I was able there to work with a law practice that had many rural clients. This gave me some insight into the world of the farmer and the orchardist and the contracts they needed to secure their livelihoods. These years – 1981-84 – also enabled me to work for three years in the law which meant that I could then practice on my own account. In 1984 we decided to travel as we had not been overseas. ▷▷

▷▷ *You ended up in Washington DC – tell us about that*
Richard's brother was stationed there with the NZ Navy. Richard obtained work with the NZ Embassy and this enabled me to pursue employment too. A woman lawyer who was just completing a post graduate degree and about to leave a Washington law firm suggested that I apply for her job. I did so, successfully. The firm specialised in environmental law and for the following two years I was immersed in a fascinating test case. The Federal Government was prosecuting a Local Body for allowing housing to be developed on a site that was contaminated by hazardous and toxic substances (so badly that some children were afflicted with deformities). In turn the Local Body was suing the very wealthy chemical firms that dumped the toxic substances of landfill there in the 60s; it had taken about 20 years for the awful consequences to become 'other child'.

It is a demanding but necessary and hopeful alternative to traditional justice processes. The latter responds to legislation which is specific, formal, and usually inflexible. The human situation is complex and many sided. Restorative justice responds to this; victim and offender are respected, space is created for a variety of views in an informal setting, apology and reparation can emerge. It can frequently deliver better outcomes than the courts.

If Restorative Justice is as good as this why is it not being adopted more widely and more quickly?
Relative to the rate of change typical of the legal culture, it is actually moving quite quickly, but resistance from the community and the judiciary seems to stem from a perception that restorative justice is an 'easy out' for the criminal. It's normally quite the opposite. The offender in a restorative justice conference has nowhere to hide. The offender must admit guilt, express sorrow, and demonstrate how amends will be made. In the court setting the victim and the offender are kept apart. They seldom come to terms with a relationship that may never be resolved.

Stephen Hooper, Jim Boyack, Helen Bowen (co-authors *Restorative Justice Manual*), Fr Jim Consedine, Matt Robson (Minister for Dept of Corrections), speakers at the launching of the *Manual*

In any case traditional systems of judgment and punishment yield woeful statistics. Increased rates of imprisonment and increasing rates of return to prison are pitiful outcomes and unsustainable in the long run. We must deliver a better model.

Helen, when many of your generation have shifted away from Christian faith and practice you have decided to embrace it. How has this come to pass?
By degrees: the spiritual aspect of life has always intrigued me. It was never formalised for me as my parents were not able to agree how it should occur (my mother being an Anglican and father Jewish). I went to the occasional Bible camp and enjoyed them, and I recall going to a Billy Graham Crusade when I was about nine, 'distinguishing' myself by not walking up to testify when many of my friends did. At a more mature stage, having children spurred me to think about religious conviction and practice.

I met an elderly lady (nearly 80) in 1990 on the North Shore who taught my daughter music. She was a very versatile and talented person who had been a teacher at Steiner schools in Germany as well as New Zealand. Over a period of two years she helped me to appreciate the Steiner presentation, including especially its emphasis upon Christianity; I also participated in Scripture readings, discussion and reflection. We shifted across the harbour so that the children could enrol in the school which all three now attend.

In 1995 I was a speaker at a conference of the Criminal Bar Association. So was Fr Jim Consedine from Lyttelton. In him there was an evident commitment to Christianity and to restorative justice. We have been friends ever since. We have collaborated in writing a book called *Restorative Justice* and he recommended a range of books that stimulated my journey towards religious commitment. This culminated with my baptism at All Saints Anglican church community at Ponsonby last year. Fr Jim continues to be my mentor and my rock!

Final question Helen: you must have read quite a number of spiritual books to fuel this meditation habit. What is your current favourite and why?
My current favourites are *Living in the Breath of the Spirit: reflections in prayer* and *The Fire in these Ashes*, both by Joan Chittister OSB. The following quote from the latter might convey why this Benedictine religious speaks so clearly to me. *"Spirituality is theology walking. Spirituality is what we do because of what we say we believe. What we dogmatise in the creeds, spirituality enfleshes and what we enflesh is what we really believe. If, for instance, we believe that the Incarnation made all of humanity holy, then we must squarely be on the side of the undervalued, the denigrated, or derided. If we believe in the eucharistic community, then we must share the bread of our lives with those who are truly hungry and the wine of our days with those whose hearts lack the joy of life."* ■

The healing touch

This homily was prea
by Fr Tony Davies IC f
second Sunday of Ea

When we're feeling good we enjoy the company of others; we're happy to let people come near us. But when we're in pain we tend to cut ourselves off. We don't want our wounds exposed. We prefer to be left alone. So Thomas, in his distress, cut himself off from the rest. Jesus shows us in this gospel that healing comes, not through isolating ourselves from the community but through touching and being touched.

A few years ago a priest travelling from the States to Latin America, was sitting on the plane next to a woman from Peru. The woman told him she was returning home with her mother who had had undergone three operations.

"How's your mother feeling now," he asked.
"She's much better, she's feeling great," the woman replied. "All the family will be waiting at the airport to welcome her back."

Then the woman asked him why he was going south. He told her he was a priest and was going to do missionary work. She leaned over, took him by the arm, and whispered in an agonised voice, "My mother has cancer and there's no hope for her".

So why did the woman pretend at first that all was well? Why did she hide not only the fatal illness of her mother, but her own emotional wounds as well? Wounds caused by her love for her mother were not things to be ashamed of. It was only when she discovered that the man beside her was a priest – someone from whom she might expect understanding and sympathy, that she came out with the truth, allowing herself to touch and be touched.

Thomas had resisted the company of the other apostles to be alone to grieve for Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. So he missed the appearance of the risen Lord. When he heard about it, he returned, hoping against hope, and Jesus came back for his sake.

The first thing Jesus did was to show him his own wounds. Jesus felt no need to hide them, they were proof of his love for Thomas and he invited Thomas to touch them. It was Thomas now who was the wounded one, wounded by grief, loneliness, doubt and despair. In his pain he had wanted to hide in isolation. His wounds were not visible like Christ's, but they were very real. Jesus could see them.

As Thomas touched Jesus' wounds, Jesus touched Thomas' and made him whole and well again. It was by touching and being touched that Thomas was healed of his unbelief as well as all his other wounds.

It is by showing our wounds, touching and being touched by Jesus, that we are healed and are able to experience the delights of Easter life. We all know through our own experience the human heart is healed by the presence of another human being who understands human pain. The world today is full of doubting Thomases, who will not come to believe unless they can touch Jesus' wounds and see the radiance of his face.

Priest psychotherapist, Paul Andrews, *examines the impact on a parent of the dawning sexuality of her adolescent daughter. The awareness of sexual drives, of being looked at with interest by the other sex, and of seeing them with new eyes: time was when young people discovered this gradually, in one another's company. Now sexual awareness is thrust on them by the visual media long before it has a meaning in their inner experience.*

To the Shocked Mother of Jane

Quite by accident you heard your fifteen-year-old tell a friend how she had been in bed with a boy. It is hard to handle your feelings about it, much less know how to deal with the situation.

What are all the feelings? Fury at the boy, who you feel seduced Jane, and who was committing a crime? Panic that Jane may be pregnant? Fear for what she may do next, now that she has started? Disgust that all your efforts to rear her have come to this? Anguish as to whether you should get her onto the pill? Bewilderment that she should have gone this way? Grief that she is now hiding so much of her life from you that you never suspected what was happening? Hopelessness in face of the tidal wave of sex that sweeps our children? Fear that when your husband hears of it, he may turn violent against either Jane or the boy?

A combination of all these feelings are present, and when such a rush of emotion is on you, reason goes out the window. This discovery, in a daughter who has seemed a child up to now, has parallels in many encounters with your teenage children, when as parents you are so overwhelmed with anxiety or anger that you tend to burst out with a rush of words, and say things you regret later. You may feel you have to moralise, and stand up for the Christian viewpoint. For a close look at this viewpoint, let me point you to its origins.

In *St John*'s Gospel we read how a ring of slavering, vindictive Pharisees surround a woman taken in the act of adultery. They are hungry for her blood, but want at the same time to trap Jesus by putting him in a dilemma: between the demands of the Mosaic law on the one side, sentencing such a woman to death by stoning, and the call for forgiveness and mercy on the other side.

The emotion is running high, and any words will be seized on and turned into a raging quarrel. Jesus stoops and writes in the sand. Nobody knows what he wrote.

The effect was to leave the truth some space to surface. Jesus had time to find his own answer; *Let the one among you who is sinless be the first to throw a stone at her*. There is help there for you in your dilemma: be slow to judge. How you wish you could find a curtain-line like Jesus does: *Go away and from this moment sin no more*.

The first remark is crucial. In your anger you want to punish, to impose a final solution. You are inclined to say: 'That's it. You're grounded for a month', or 'I never liked those friends anyway. And I suspect you have been drinking' or something of that sort. Your strong feelings threaten to swamp you, so you cut off conversation, impose your decision, and discourage Jane from explaining herself or sorting out where she is.

When she was seven you knew what Jane was feeling, and could read her face and her body. Now at 15 you find yourself afraid of what she is feeling, and you do not want to listen in case it confirms your fears.

As a mother you can still be useful here. Jane had probably been drinking, had been under pressure from the boy, had listened to the group's talk about 'going the whole way'. Now that she has gone the whole way she too is overwhelmed by feelings she cannot sort out: shame at her behaviour, disgust at giving in to pressure, fears for her future relationship with the boy in question, and with other boys, and perhaps an underlying hunger to try it again.

Some mothers in this dilemma invade their daughter's room and rummage in her private diary, rather than listen to what the girl may tell them. This is the end of honesty. You cannot expect her to be honest with you if you pry behind her back like that.

You will help Jane and keep the love flowing only if she knows that you are on her side. For that you must be able to listen to her. No listening will take place unless your first remark is one that keeps communication open. Jesus did by saying nothing, doodling in the sand. Whatever words you use when tackling this charged encounter, they must mean: 'I am interested, I love you, and I am ready to listen if you want to talk'. ▷▷

Who Makes Eucharist? – asks Desmond Smith

In a recent television discussion, Bishop Pat Dunn of Auckland was challenged by the interviewer that the average age of the priests in his diocese was sixty. While the detail might not have been statistically exact, the point was a telling one. And this is for the most populated diocese in the country.

Almost every Catholic in New Zealand must, at some time, have had experience of a pastor who was well past the 'best used by' date; one who was less than enthusiastic in his approach to all the facets of parish life; who was perhaps more dogmatic than consultative; who preached more competently than he listened. Yet such men are expected to carry on their ministry as if they were 30 years younger, while all the laity does is simply bemoan the inconvenience of Mass schedules.

A Christchurch pair, one a priest and the other a sister, have just published a book called: *Parish: for people in the pews*, and it affirms strongly the role and the rights of the ordinary lay person... roles and rights conferred by Baptism, not by ecclesiastical decree. The trouble is that most of us take Jesus' command at the end of Matthew's Gospel as applying to the apostles and their successors, the ordained priests, while he was surely speaking to us all. As a priest-reviewer of the book on *Parish* observed, no one person can provide all that is required, our laity need encouragement, and parishes may be ideally conducted by a team of leaders.

On the negative side of things, how often has it been the case that certain well-functioning sides of parish life have been downgraded soon after a change of priest for the place? Or further, how often do we hear the 'yes father, no father, three bags full father' approach to what goes on in the parish community? An awful lot of parishioners are under the impression that there is no redress against the decisions of a pastor. And, unfortunately, if some priests are challenged on their actions, they start quoting Canon Law as an alternative to reasonable discussion, as if all parts of Canon Law were reasonable!

All too frequently it is a case of lay people unwittingly surrendering their power when it comes to a clash of clerical and lay opinions. There might also be a suspicion of some parish priests holding a community to ransom: "What will you do if I leave?" sort of thing. Certainly, there is no doubt that many priests over 65 years of age are resentful of what is expected of them, or are very tired indeed with trying to maintain a fulltime schedule. What other vocation in the world expects its adherents to carry on as if age didn't matter?

Well, what would happen if all priests over the age of 65 had compulsory retirement? As a first step, we would have to do with far fewer Masses on a Sunday, and they certainly wouldn't be so conveniently situated for most people. Secondly, we would have to review our belief that the Eucharist is central to all Catholic worship and to the other Sacraments. If it were decided that the Eucharist is truly a *sine qua non*, then perhaps we might review the conditions under which we bring about a Eucharistic celebration.

One of the slightly obnoxious terms arising over the last generation is 'back to basics', so when we talk about looking back to early Christian times, we might call it remembering our roots. Sounds much more *tangata whenua*. If we recall the roots of our faith in apostolic times, it is obvious that the Christian communities were so scattered that it was impossible for the apostles to service them all on a regular basis. Hence, in each place, elders were appointed, people who dwelt in that town, who were expected to conduct the worship of the Lord's Supper. Does it have to be so much different today? Are there no worthy people in every Christian community who could well carry out this task?

When we come down to it, according to Vatican II, it is the people coming together who create the milieu in which Eucharist can occur. Is one of their number such an impossible choice as presiding minister? ■

Desmond Smith is a retired dentist, living in Auckland. He has a special interest in liturgy

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▷▷ This leaves many issues to be tackled, about drinking, going with the gang, what you think of her friends, sexual behaviour, and the like. You will not tackle any of them unless conversation takes place. It is small comfort to exchange high sentiments with your husband if Jane is not in touch with either of you. After a discovery such as this the first exchange can easily be an explosion, in which you vent your own feelings and fears, but leave no space for Jane's.

The other way grows out of quiet prayer, and considers these priorities. What is Jane feeling? What are your own feelings and worries? How can you help Jane? By information, practical and emotional support, discussing values and setting limits. A conversation that *begins* with you setting limits and passing judgment, is likely to leave both sides fuming and all communication pushed underground. Remember Jesus in that highly charged scene, faced with accusing men – he does nothing to aggravate the situation or cut off communication, but helps the truth to surface. ■

A conversation with Mike Riddell

I'm a frustrated poet", says Dunedin novelist Mike Riddell with a wry smile. "I enjoy language; I like playing with words. Some people appreciate this aspect of my writing, others don't. They say I'm overindulgent with metaphors and imagery – but I'm unrepentant". The infectious grin returns.

Riddell confesses to being a visual person. Places are important to him, and he likes to imagine each scene in his mind's eye. In his first novel *The Insatiable Moon* he tried to recapture the Bohemian atmosphere of Ponsonby as it was when he first knew it and when James K Baxter strolled its streets. ...before it became the fashionable inner city suburb it is today, although those social pressures brought about by urban renewal and moving upmarket are part of the background of the novel's plot.

Cinema has also been a strong formative influence on Riddell's literary style. He writes in 'pericopes' – not unlike the gospel writers! The scenes pile up on top of each other like the dislocated experiences of someone on a journey. But then the connections start to develop between the various threads. That, for him, is the most natural way to write.

Riddell draws his characters from people he has met. 'Arthur', the central figure in *The Insatiable Moon* was a real person. Was it a coincidence that there was a similar type of character in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*? Riddell says he didn't read that story until after he had completed *The Insatiable Moon* – but acknowledges the similarity.

He was simply exploring in the character of Arthur the real good he has seen in people who are social outcasts. Riddell believes in the good in people, just as he regards religion as being an integral part of human existence. In that sense he says all his writing is 'theological'

His second work of fiction, launched last month, is of a totally different character. It is an exploration of the evil in human nature rather than the good. "I nearly didn't finish it," he says. "It stayed half written for six months. I felt I'd opened up situations which I didn't know how to resolve."

But his editor stepped in and insisted. Perhaps he needed that sort of affirmation; so he knuckled down and finished the book. When the muse is on him Riddell writes very fast: two to three thousand words a day is not unusual.

Whereas *The Insatiable Moon* treats of grace, *Masks and Shadows* deals with the dark side of the human spirit. It tells a story of struggle: the human soul in the face of evil. The story probably germinated inside Riddell when many years ago he visited the infamous concentration camp at Dachau, in Bavaria. The experience caused him to look more closely at issues of culpability and guilt. He asked himself: *how could the human spirit continue to live with the horror of such infamous acts?*

More recently a lawyer friend told him about receiving a letter from someone in prison insisting on their innocence of a rape charge. That set Riddell reflecting again how people can cope with the memory of terrible deeds. Do they somehow have the ability to shut the memory out? Do these memories continue to linger on in some private vault which is too awful to be revisited? Are they 'forgotten memories'? Riddell is of the opinion that healing can only take place if and when such memories are recovered, and revisited and repented.

Masks and Shadows, therefore, is an attempt to explore the psychology of evil. "I would not expect people to enjoy it," says Riddell. "Indeed, I would be disturbed if anyone *did* enjoy it!"

One influence which perhaps helped

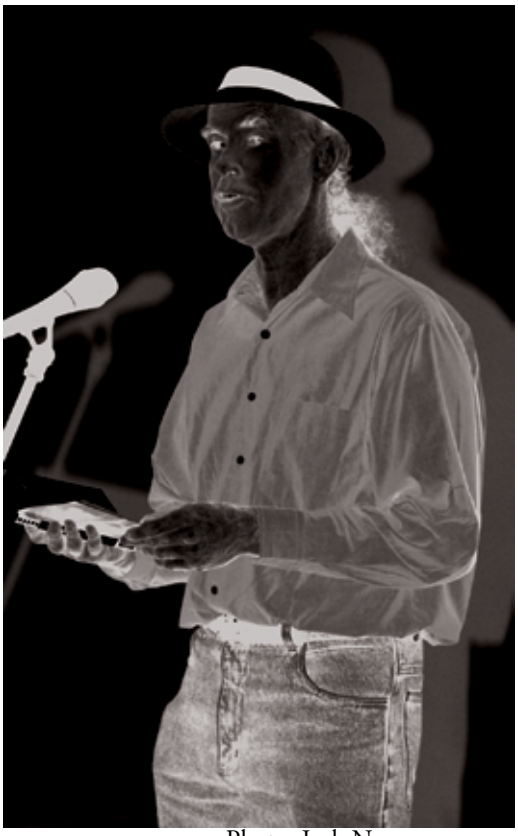

Photo: Josh Newman

him write it has been Scott Peck's *People of the Lie*. What other writers have influenced him? Graham Greene, certainly. Baxter of course. "And I enjoy Morris West. He has the gift of writing a strong plot – and with depth and subtlety. When he talks about faith, it's credible – because it's real".

One person who has helped his writing style has been the Australian author Tim Winton. "I always found prose writing difficult – but Tim Winton showed me how to write in the present tense".

His first novel, *The Insatiable Moon*, sold well although the label he has of being a 'religious writer' has presented a problem in getting his books out into the general market. Mike Riddell smiles with the contentment of one who has just given birth to another piece of art. He gazes whimsically into the middle distance over the ever-changing Pacific Ocean which his St Clair home looks out upon. Lots more scenes are jostling before his mind's eye awaiting the vigorous brush strokes of his nimble and creative pen. ■

Michael Hill

Exploring the world of evil

Masks and Shadows
by Mike Riddell
Flamingo, *an imprint of* Harper Collins *Publishers*, *NZ*
Price: $24.95
Review: Mike Crowl

A couple of years ago I read Mike Riddell's *The Insatiable Moon.* It seemed to radiate sunlight, as well as expressing God's grace most winningly. Mike's newest novel is almost at the opposite pole. *Masks and Shadows* is unrelenting in its picture of a dark world struggling to make sense of things without God.

There's sunlight in it, of course, but the sunlight is always accompanied by shadows. Literal and metaphorical shadows pervade the book. Grace is almost invisible, and is replaced by the Law – in its Old Testament sense. (One of the characters, Joe, a man who's lived more inside prisons than out of them, epitomises the Law, because for him it's a way to order his universe.)

Instead of a revitalised Ponsonby in Auckland, we have a revamped Stoke Newington in London. But the former darkness of Stoke Newington lingers on, and permeates the lives of the characters. Riddell reminds us that Daniel Defoe once lived in this suburb and wrote a book there called *The Political History of the Devil.* The Devil – Evil – is alive and thriving in this place.

Furthermore, this book has none of the delightful humour of the earlier story. No one laughs, at least not after the first few pages, when a couple and their young daughter play while picnicking on Hampstead Heath. A world without God is apparently a world without humour, too.

In spite of the darkness, the sombre tone, the book is an absorbing read. I took it in almost at one gulp, and though I struggled at first to come to terms with the shifting time frames (we slide back and forth between what's happening and what's about to happen), and with the lack of knowledge as to who all the voices belonged to, I was caught up in the story – and not just because I wanted to find out who was behind the horrible act of a rape and murder of a young child.

God isn't invisible in the story, but neither is God easy for these characters to see. Only the young child asks true theological questions that the adults avoid. And the clergyman at the centre of the story uses God's words, (very effectively), but more as a performer than a believer. Once the horror has struck and the adults are left to pick up the pieces, they turn their backs on God completely, and move further and further away.

One of the strong themes throughout the book is that no one will take responsibility for their actions. Almost all the main characters blame someone else: the murderer blames his inner uncontrollable self, denying even that he's the same person. The mother of the murdered child blames her husband for the child's death and her own ensuing alcoholism. Even the minor character of the choirmaster blames his wife for his own sexual misbehaviour. Only Joe, the prisoner, puts the blame squarely where it lies – but with ugly results.

Riddell has taken a huge risk in refusing to give us any easy 'out' at the end of the book. In the last page he turns his eye on the reader again, as he did at the beginning, and suggests that he or she look at themselves before judging the characters. Jesus' words, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone" confront us at this point.

And Riddell takes a risk in allowing God to be thrust to the edge, to be ignored or seen as helpless. In the scene between Joe and the murderer that comes toward the end it seems that finally we have an explanation for the evil that's occurred. But when we look at it again, it's twisted somehow; as though the truth has been warped.

There may be controversies in Christian quarters over this book as there were over *The Insatiable Moon*. But one of Riddell's strengths is his willingness to write outside the pale, to tackle issues that Christians seldom deal with in their creative work – or even in their daily lives. And as difficult as the issues may be, I believe he's tacked them with great integrity. ■

Waitara, the police and public confidence

Crosscurrents

by John Honoré

The death of Steve Wallace, from gunshot wounds inflicted by a policeman, has brought to the surface questions of racism and police protocol. These remain to be solved. More fundamental problems are the role of the police in a changing society, their need for a more positive identity and the necessity of the public to support their activities.

Underlying this shooting is the fact that New Zealand's society has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. The use of drugs, the availability of weapons and an escalating crime rate have increased the likelihood of incidents and accidents involving firearms. The violence which we see every day on TV, is now part of real life. The police also have had to change and to carry arms in defence. Historically, New Zealand police have been loath to shoot, but is there now a tendency to shoot too soon? Do they shoot to protect life or destroy it? It is no longer an "unarmed force". Police weapons have gone from army surplus *.303* rifles to *9mm.17 shot Glock* semi-automatic pistols.

This incident has highlighted the necessity for more communication between the public and the police in order to determine the precise guidelines for the use of firearms. There should be more informed public debate on issues of police procedure and their policy regarding firearms.

Less rhetoric and more analysis are needed. Any police force is only as good as the society in which it operates. But its officers, rank and file, are entitled to the support of an informed public which is responsible for, and is only as good as, its keepers of law and order.

The police work hard in areas such as Waitara. Taranaki suffers from the closure of industries which used to support a labour force. These towns are dying just as tragically as Steve Wallace died, and whose death symbolises the sense of hopelessness and powerlessness of the underprivileged. The unemployed, the young and the disaffected are the victims of our society, and it is with these whom the police must deal. Prime Minister Helen Clark describes these people as "landless in their own province".

Under these conditions, there is a danger of the police becoming case-hardened and cynical – fertile conditions for violent reactions. The police take the flak for society's ills when they face miscreants, but only a few policemen have to deal with the likes of Steve Wallace.

Given the nature of the changes in society today, police killings will no doubt increase, which will fuel more public resentment. Will this lead to the media and politicians determining whether any particular shooting by the police is justified ?

There is now a gap between what is legally justifiable and what is publicly acceptable, because there is so little information available on police operations, particularly in the field of firearms. The police must improve their public image and take the public into their confidence. They belong not to a private army, but to a civil body.

Chaos and killing in Africa

The African Continent is a basket-case. Last month Zimbabwe: now the unrest in Sierra Leone adds to the impression that Africa is becoming the tragedy of our age. In 1998, it was estimated that one third of Africa below the Sahara was involved in international or civil wars and was reverting to the violence and instability of the mid-19th century. The most serious example was Rwanda.

The partition of Africa took place in the 19th century. All European powers sought African land which they then pillaged. It was called colonization. When most African countries became independent, in the 20th century, hereditary kings and chiefs disappeared. Their places were taken by army commanders and senior bureaucrats who lined their own pockets and those of their relations.

The most fundamental problems in Africa during the 1990s were the relentless demographic explosion of growing populations and the inability to feed them. Most African capitals doubled their populations every ten years, with the consequent pressure on services, schools and health facilities. These cities were the areas most affected by Aids, which became as great a killer in Africa as malaria had been formerly. As a result, the handicaps of poor government and growing poverty, hostilities, drought, famine and disease reduce Africa to a continent which is unattractive to foreign investment. Globalisation does not have a place for "losers". Africa seems abandoned.

The barbarism of Foday Sankoh's rebel forces in Sierra Leone is news today, but consider also the civil wars and unrest in Angola, the Sudan, Zaire and Nigeria. Added to this chaos is a weak United Nations which seems incapable of controlling ethnic troubles anywhere, let alone in Africa.

One definition of tragedy involves the loss of security and happiness from an ongoing sequence of events which have no promise of resolution. This is anathema to Christianity,

The Madeleva Manifesto: *A Message of Hope and Courage*

On the feast of St. Catherine of Siena, lay woman, Doctor of the Church, (April 29) 16 women theologians who had in previous years given the annual memorial lecture at Notre Dame University, Indiana, released the *St Mary's charter for women of faith in the new millennium*:

In the tradition of Sr Madeleva Wolff, CSC, we 16 Madeleva lecturers have been invited to speak a message of hope and courage to women in the church:

• To women in ministry and theological studies we say: re-imagine what it means to be the whole body of Christ. The way things are now is not the design of God.

• To young women looking for models of prophetic leadership, we say: walk with us as we seek to follow the way of Jesus Christ, who inspires our hope and guides our concerns. The Spirit calls us to a gospel feminism that respects the human dignity of all, and who inspires us to be faithful disciples, to stay in the struggle to overcome oppression of all kinds whether based on gender, sexual orientation, race, or class.

• To women who are tempted by the demons of despair and indifference, we say: re-imagine what it means to be a full human being made in the image of God, and to live and speak this truth in our daily lives.

• To women who suffer the cost of discipleship we say: you are not alone. We remember those who have gone before us, who first held up for us the pearl of great price, the richness of Catholic thought and spirituality. We give thanks to those who continue to mentor us.

• To the young women of the church we say: carry forward the cause of gospel feminism. We will be with you along the way, sharing what we have learned about the freedom, joy and power of con-templative intimacy with God. We ask you to join us in a commitment to far-reaching transformation of church and society in non-violent ways.

We deplore, and hold ourselves morally bound, to protest and resist, in church and society, all actions, customs, laws and structures that treat women or men as less than fully human. We pledge ourselves to carry forth the heritage of biblical justice which mandates that all persons share in right relationship with each other, with the cosmos, and with the Creator.

We hold ourselves responsible to look for the holy in unexpected places and persons, and pledge ourselves to continued energetic dialogue about issues of freedom and responsibility for women. We invite others of all traditions to join us in imagining the great shalom of God.

St Mary's College, Centre for Spirituality, Notre Dame, Indiana

Signed by the Madeleva Lecturers in Spirituality, 1985-2001:
Monika Hellwig, Sandra Schneiders, Mary Collins, Maria Harris, Elizabeth Dreyer, Joan Chittister, Dolores Leckey, Lisa Sowe Cahill, Elizabeth Johnson, Gail Porter Mandell, Diana Hayes, Jeannete Rodriguez, Mary Boys, Kathleen Norris, Denise Carmody, Mary Catherine Hilkert. ■

Fiji a victim of colonial greed

George Speight and his cohorts are not the only villains responsible for the present imbroglio in Fiji – the seeds of trouble were planted much earlier.

European adventurers in the 1870s saw in the island with its rich soil and tropical climate the opportunity to make a packet of money growing sugar. The indigenous Melanesian population refused to buckle down to the hard slog needed to produce the crop, so from 1879 (about the same time my own grandparents migrated to New Zealand) they enticed poverty-stricken Indians to come to Fiji as indentured labourers (wage slaves).

There they stayed, proving industrious, intelligent and fertile. With no prospect of ever returning to India, they carved out a new life for themselves, in the process helping to build a modern economy for the benefit of all.

Nothing though could conceal the physical, cultural, religious and linguistic differences between the indigenous Fijians and the newcomers. Assimilation never got started, and the cultural gap seems as wide today as it ever was. Fiji's 800,000 people are almost equally divided between them, and the tension, largely over land, has yet again resulted in a coup.

Sitiveni Rabuka must take some responsibility for this latest coup – he showed them how in 1987. Speight says grandly he has nothing against his Indian brothers and sisters but they must not have any political part in future government.

Does Speight imagine the modern world would tolerate a country in which half the population is disenfranchised? If he gets away with it, Fiji will be in for a period of extreme unrest, impoverishment and isolation – a pariah nation. His action has let loose hoodlum elements which, moved by ignorance, prejudice and lawlessness, have looted and burned shops, terrorised innocent people, sent peaceful and productive citizens packing and set back economic growth by decades.

Somehow they must struggle to do justice to both ethnic groups, inextricably bound together by both history and geography, and equally wronged by their original colonial exploiters. ■

Selwyn Dawson

(When this postscript was written the Fijian crisis was still far from resolved)

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