

Tui Motu

InterIslands

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goodness and the common good

Up and down New Zealand, indeed all over the world in these days, there has been a series of inter-faith church services to mark the 25th anniversary of Pope John Paul's visit to Assisi. We were praying for peace and remembering all the places in the world where this precious commodity is in short supply. There is no other way of looking at our wounded world but through the pursuit of a world peace that comes from justice, reconciliation, love and forgiveness. How well this ties in with the principal articles highlighted in this month's magazine.

We deal with that great November theme, the communion of saints, and the goodness and holiness they represent, from the perspective of the Abrahamic faiths — Jewish, Muslim and Christian. Our writers talk in ways that bring joy to our hearts: Dr Najib's emphasis on "faith without good deeds is meaningless," and that "good deeds without faith are baseless" reminds

us of a continuing Christian debate. Similarly, Rabbi Green's sense that the Torah demands in our living that a good human being go beyond the letter of the law brings into play common religious themes. Sister Helen talks of a sense of community sparked from and tapping into our innate goodness in three specific ways. These common themes coming from three differing faith perspectives spur us to a unifying hope for a more harmonious and peaceful future.

November also brings New Zealanders to a General Election. Pat Snedden's fine piece calls on us to commit to *communitas* through fairness, looking after one another, a political value that he rightly sees is "being abandoned in the singular pursuit of economic growth." We need much greater shared responsibility across the spectrum of rich and poor if we are to have a fair society. Inequality in New Zealand society has risen so dramatically over the last 20 years. There are two excellent

New Zealand church documents just released which give clear support to Pat's challenge (the NZ Catholic Bishops' statement; and the Church leaders' call for shared responsibility towards a fair society). As well, clarion calls from unexpected sources like Warren Buffett — to get the richest to pay their proportionate share of taxes — tie in well with the "Occupy Wall St" protestors' sense of frustration that the banking system, largely privately controlled, is not facing up to its responsibility to help the international economic system in its present crisis. If you get the opportunity, read the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace document ("Towards reforming the international financial and monetary systems in the context of the global public authority") just issued from the Vatican. It asks for a new world economic order based on an ethic of fairness. Its strongest idea, the creation of a global political authority to manage the global economy, may well be its weakest point. But what a

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grace it would be to have consensus among the countries of the world in bringing to birth an effective global authority? Back on the NZ electoral scene, how are the poorest and most vulnerable faring? How can I vote in such a way that our country's benefits are shared as fairly as possible with all? Good voting!

There is a fine sense of synchronicity in the article on spiritual direction from the Cenacle Sisters and that of Father Donagh O'Shea on contemplation. Both encourage us to experience God where we are. To do this we need to sink deeply into the God-given goodness that is at the heart of each of us. And Father Michael's obituary reminds us that Tom Cloher lived this out. It is only right to acknowledge our *kaumatua* and the clarity and goodness of his life, especially in relation to us here at *Tui Motu*. Thank you, Tom, may you rest in peace. ■ **KT**

A STUNNING GIFT FOR CHRISTMAS

A recent comment to editorial staff was: "*Tui Motu* is so good I want to share it with my children." *Tui Motu* is truly a great and useful Christmas gift: for your children to bring another perspective to their lives; for a friend who may enjoy reading *Tui Motu* occasionally, and who would be delighted by a year's subscription; for a kiwi overseas who would be enriched by this magazine.

As in past years, we want to offer you discounted Christmas gift subscriptions: within New Zealand: \$50 for a full year, and \$25 for five issues; \$65 for Australia and the South Pacific, and \$70 for the rest of the world.

To help make this very easy, in this month's issue only you will find an insert. For the early birds

among you, who like to deal with Christmas cards and gifts early, we decided to place this insert in the November magazine rather than in December's.

The right hand part is a Christmas gift card that you may fill out, sign and send to your chosen loved one or friend. The left hand side of the insert contains instructions and the subscription form that you will send back to us. All you have to do is to follow the instructions given, and return the form to us at our **freepost** address.

We hope that you will take advantage of this Christmas gift offer. ■

Elizabeth Mackie OP

TUI MOTU FOUNDATION

Recently I have been on a fund raising venture for the Foundation in Palmerston North, Waikanae and Paraparaumu. I had the great pleasure of visiting Keitha Stockman, 100 years young, at the Met Life in Palmerston North. Keitha had set the scene for my mission with a very generous donation. It was a delight to speak with her for half an hour of her early life experiences and may she

have many more years enjoying *Tui Motu*. She is a delightful lady, full of fun and an avid reader and supporter of *Tui Motu*. During my time in the area I met over 30 subscribers of the magazine and the positive feedback I received augurs well for the future of *Tui Motu*. Thank you for all the giving of your time to meet with me and the pledges of your support for the Foundation.

Also my sincere thanks to those who generously gave hospitality and accommodation. The Foundation continues its appeal in these hard economic times to sustain the future of the magazine. Donations may be sent to: The Tui Motu Foundation, PO Box 6404 Dunedin North 9059.

Let a Paraparaumu subscriber have the last word, "*Tui Motu* is a beacon of hope for God's children." ■

Brian Rea



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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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a ray of hope

Grateful congratulations to Bishop Colin Campbell (*Tui Motu*, October) for his honesty and courage. If only such a consultation with people had been carried out nationally, more weight would have been added to Bishop Campbell's presentation to Rome in December: an opportunity lost.

But any ray of hope is welcome. Liturgical change is not the issue; the farcical process occurring over many years, and the resulting fiasco of Latin in bad English takes my breath away. (The result is not, as claimed by some, addressing God in a special language!)

Maybe the end draws near — or maybe the horizon holds a new (and sane) beginning!

Marilyn Elliston, *Orewa*

a way ahead?

Three cheers for Bishop Colin Campbell of Dunedin! His comments (*Tui Motu*, October) on the new translation of the Missal, based on his survey of parishioners, are timely and courageous. Many writers to the *London Tablet* (where Bishop Colin's article was given a full page), suggest that any bishop in the English-speaking world would probably get the same response from the majority of his people. Reactions will be even more negative when the full impact of the new texts for the prefaces and Eucharistic prayers come into use in Advent.

Do we have to accept this situation which is making Sunday Mass a distraction rather than a celebration? I don't think so, and I would like to think that Pope Benedict would back me up. In 2007 he granted a tiny minority of Catholics, who refused to accept the Vatican Council's teaching on liturgy, the right to celebrate the Mass in a way different from the rest of the church, using the old 'Tridentine' rite. Justifying his decision to bishops who asked why they had not been consulted, Benedict explained, "... it became

apparent that a good number of people remained strongly attached to the old familiar rite...what earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful." He explained that his decision was aimed at reconciliation and unity between two groups of Catholics who had differing views about the celebration of Mass.

Are we not in the same position today, only now, it's the vast majority of English speakers who "remain strongly attached" to the old familiar translation? So, in the cause of unity, surely their wishes should be respected.

New Zealand bishops have gained wide respect in past *ad limina* visits to Rome for the way they presented the needs and views of their people. This is surely at the heart of a bishop's vocation. We should be grateful to Bishop Colin for carrying on this tradition.

Jim Neilan, *Dunedin*

church of the holy spirit

I read with interest Br. Kieran Fenn's excellent essay (*Tui Motu*, August, 2011) questioning whether we have Mary's place in the church properly defined. It set me wondering why we need either a Petrine church or a Marial church.

If your starting point is that the Petrine model is questionable then Mary seems to be a fair proposition. Anything could be seen to be better than the male dominant, power hungry, sexually compromised, my way or the highway, clericalism that the Petrine model has spawned. However, is that reason enough to ignore the true heart of the Christ's legacy?

At this point someone will be reaching for their concordance to refresh their memory as to where exactly Jesus says: "Thou art Peter and on this rock I will build my church." (Mt 16:18) End of argument, game over.

letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not changing the meaning. Response articles (up to a page) are welcome — but please, by negotiation.

But when I look at the Jesus revealed in scripture I do not find someone who would accept "male dominance, hunger for power, etc" at the heart of the congregation of the *anawim* he loved so much. He had seen that model in the leadership of the Jewish religion and he was scathing of it.

What did he offer as an alternative? John 14:15-27 plainly sets out his last will and testament. We are the church of the Holy Spirit without doubt.

There may be a place for a Peter-like figure but not the overwhelming model we have now. There is a place for recognising the place of Mary in the redemption narrative. But popular piety can get out of hand. When I see the excesses of the Marian Movement for Priests I wonder why God is not good enough for well-intentioned people who want to do the right thing.

I know I am incredibly blessed to carry, in the depth of my being, the holy Spirit of the living God. Enough of the pale imitations! If you want to know how to live a life in accord with God's will for you then develop a personal relationship with God's Spirit dwelling within. Your path will be different from mine and everyone else's. Only God can reveal that path to you in any detail. It takes prayer, time and effort but the reward is heavenly.

Phil Wilkinson, *Whanganui*

Thomas Patrick Cloher (1929-2011)

Michael Hill IC

Tom Cloher's sudden death has caused great sadness not only to his family and many friends, but especially to the *Tui Motu* 'family,' as he liked to call it. Tom can justly be called its co-founder and *kaumatua*.

Tom was born and bred in the small West Coast town of Hokitika, and although he lived most of his life in cities, he always retained a sort of rugged directness characteristic of the genuine 'Coaster.' His origins also helped give him a deep and loyal Catholicism and a simple unpretentious piety.

Tom spent nearly 20 years as a priest in the Christchurch diocese. In his mind he never 'left' the priesthood, because he always considered himself a priest. It was this priestly dedication, which moved him to serve his fellow human beings in many roles and especially to become an ardent and selfless devotee of the Catholic press.

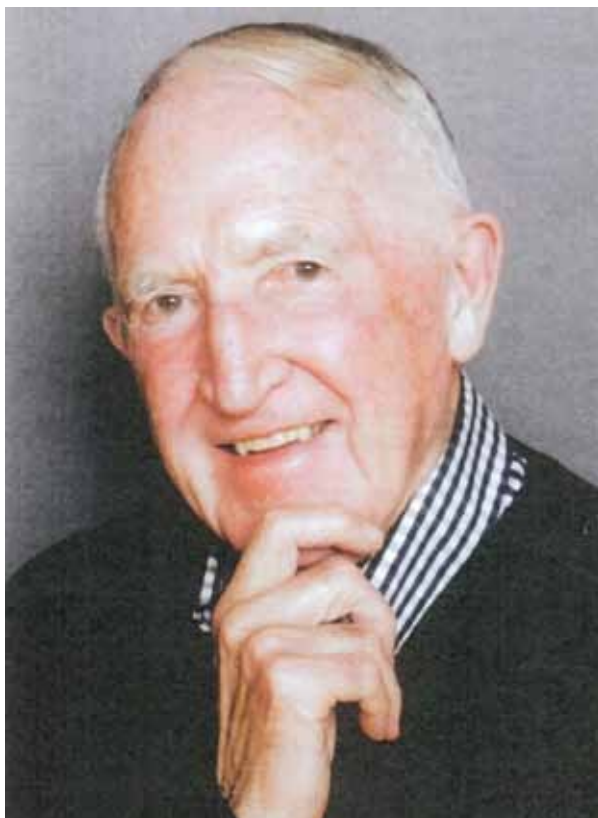
He ceased to serve as a priest simply because he met Dorothy, and they decided to marry. It was a sadness to him that he could no longer celebrate Mass, and it is a sadness for the church that the ranks of her priests are so impoverished by the imposed discipline of celibacy.

Tom and Dorothy spent the best part of their lives in Australia. Tom had a career in hospital administration and both of them distinguished themselves academically. Their daughter Jennifer noted in her funeral address that one of the strengths of their marriage was the mutual support they gave each other. "We rejoiced in each other's successes," Tom wrote.

They returned to New Zealand when Dorothy accepted an academic post at Auckland University. Soon, Tom made the offer to support the *New Zealand Tablet*, and his first contacts with the editorial team quickly grew into firm friendship. When the *Tablet* was threatened with closure he came to Dunedin off his own bat to challenge the *Tablet* Board as to the wisdom of their decision. In vain. However, out of the ashes of the *Tablet* blossomed *Tui Motu*.

Tom took over the chair of the Board, and his advice, wisdom and leadership helped to ensure its successful growth. He became its ambassador in Auckland and through the North Island, even at press gatherings in Australia. There were few parishes that he did not visit to promote the magazine. For his labours he never sought any material return.

At the funeral Jennifer spoke of his passion for



social justice, for the care of the earth and for peace. All these were echoed in the magazine. He wrote frequently himself and was responsible for finding some of its best regular writers, such as the late Fr Humphrey O'Leary and Glynn Cardy, whose pen continues to grace its pages.

He also had the wisdom to know when to pass on his post as chairman to a successor. He was happy to step down — and, I think, even happier to receive the accolade from the Board of permanent membership.

Sadly, shortly after retirement both he and Dorothy became sick, and their final years became severely restricted. They were fortunate, however, to be supported by friends especially in the St Heliers parish — and by their ever-loving daughter who spent a lot of time away from her work in Australia to support them.

We are grateful for the life and love of Tom Cloher. He helped to shape the philosophy of *Tui Motu*. He contributed hugely to its uniqueness and its success. He was a tower of strength in difficult times and was ever generous with his time and gifts. We offer Jennifer and Dorothy our heartfelt sympathy and prayers. A great man has gone to God. ■

feel free to raise my taxes, if you commit to fairness

Pat Snedden

This month New Zealand goes to the polls in a General Election. Over preceding months, we have published a variety of 'religion and politics' articles. Here the writer takes an overall view, a 'state of the nation' approach, challenging us to look again from a Christian perspective at the underlying issues which the nation faces.

There's a kind of New Zealand that is familiar and we love it. It has been on show through this Rugby World Cup (RWC). It is embracing, confident, joyful and expansive in its hospitality. This is not a nostalgic throwback, this is lived experience located in our cultural DNA and it is what others see of us.

So how come we have the poor children who are not fed, the outbreak of infectious diseases like meningococcal disease in the poor communities in the north? Why is it we find youngsters unable to find work even at the basic rates at the supermarket?

What is functioning between the experiences of these two worlds, both core to our experience of self but so contrasting as to the equitable outcomes for us all?

status quo or fair society?

If this election is about anything it is about this kind of difference and whether we wish to accept the status quo or to reposition ourselves as the fair society, not the richest society or the Australian society but the fair society.

This is a debate that has nearly been extinguished in our community. Its genesis was the Labour restructuring of the 1980s. Necessary medicine we had to take to recover our



Pat Snedden

competitiveness in the hostile world we were advised. Indeed the advocates would point to the success of the dairy industry as proof positive it has worked. And indeed that is true. We are in a dairy boom but the benefit of that boom is not distributed in a way that takes us all with it.

The balance of our economy that generates the jobs for the many has been gutted. We are leaving the unemployed stranded, maligned and under acute public pressure. This pressuring of the poor is today classically represented in our health system. At the top end we have one of the classiest public health delivery systems in the world; the smartest, brightest people working for us and the healthiest population. In the

large and moderately well off middle class we have unparalleled access to effective health services.

For nearly two thirds of New Zealanders with this level of access to a fundamental public good, life is manageable and aspirational.

For nearly four in ten of our fellow New Zealanders our current public trajectory looks very bleak. Our health policy illustrates a key shift. We no longer focus on inequality in health outcomes as a matter of the highest public importance to be mitigated. It has now officially disappeared from existence from any documents about the focus of health service delivery. More operations for more New Zealanders do not translate into better service for the poor.

public delivery system

Any public delivery system inexorably favours the educated, the informed and the networked unless it is programmed to do otherwise. Our health system is being de-programmed to exclude inequality as a measure of access. The results are emerging as the incidence of poverty diseases rapidly increases.

As a privileged New Zealander who has benefited for over forty years from a great education, good wages and access to networks of power and influence I am tempted to say my experience is the norm. But it

isn't and we are right now in a crisis in this country. It's not a crisis of budget deficit, which is crook but recoverable. It is not a crisis of public service collapse, which is stable, but requiring attention.

crisis of *communitas*

It is a crisis of *communitas*. A failure to recognize that a whole society is uplifted when we explicitly care for each, so that no one is abandoned as life becomes communally difficult.

Right now our sense of fairness is being abandoned in the singular pursuit of economic growth. Instead of supporting one another when times are toughest we are choosing to turn a blind eye to those who are being jettisoned. As we seek to be more competitive, more wealthy, more admirable within this 'success rubric,' we directly challenge the sense of collective *wairua* that makes this country great.

a concept of fairness

So what is fairness? Fairness simply knows that your neighbour can be fed and clothed, live with warmth when it is cold outside, have the purpose provided by work and companions. Fairness knows when you turn up for a job you don't get pigeonholed because of the way you look or speak. Fairness is paying people so they have the honour and capacity of managing their household and their children in a way that dignifies their citizenship.

Fairness is not everybody having the same but ensuring that no one has so much that those who suffer cannot be released from their suffering. In short, where too few have too much then too many will have too little. We are there now in New Zealand.

This is not my perception. This is a measured reality.

The *manaakitanga* so much on show to visitors in this RWC that so impressed them on opening night is not so visible in our public policy and our economic management.

a turning point ?

We can change this. This election could be at start. It is not as easy as determining which party to vote for. Ascribe what you want to one or other of the parties on show and make it their responsibility. This crisis is profoundly deeper than that. In theological terms this is about a turning point in the substance of our public discourse. Who do we listen to in public policy terms about the morally defensible way forward that sufficiently resonates with the public ear?

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reality.

In this world cup we talked of a stadium of four million people. A trite marketing ploy or a brilliantly simple statement that says for this to work we all need to be in it together. And you know what, as the grounds filled up, as the fans everywhere celebrated and we got out to support the strangers, we have discovered this works, this is a binding experience. The unselfish embracing of the stranger is enriching us in ways unimaginable.

space for the least capable

The learning experience is remarkable. When we make space to adopt the least capable of the rugby-playing minnows we make space for joy in the experience as only unselfish outreach can produce.

My capacity to add value as a New Zealander is not one iota related to our comparison with Australia. It was because I was born into a family that nurtured me, a public education system that trained me and I have benefited from a health system that is reliable and accessible. Whatever good I have managed has no relation

to my tax rate. It is because this environment has stimulated me to achieve what I thought was worthy. I understand that we have slipped in wealth internationally to the bottom of the first quarter of all countries. This makes our country still positioned in the wealthiest 25% of all people in the world. Where we have slipped further is in care for one another in the public policy area.

face our truth together

It is nonsense to say we cannot provide for one another. We have our own truth to face however. We must balance our budget because it is irresponsible to live beyond our means.

But fairness means that to balance we take disproportionately from those like me who can contribute and least from those who can't. It means we invest systematically and enthusiastically to improve the lives of the four in ten New Zealanders who live a bleak existence, showing a complete disrespect for the maxim that Australia is our comparator.

Let's make this an election that pivots on fairness: an election that decides that the benchmark will be how well we include everybody in the experience of the bounty that NZ provides and demonstrates the way that financial risks can be shared in proportion to ability to respond and cope. That would be an election that pivots on hope.

that all participate

How about we make it possible that not only everybody can get to the stadium of life on the public transport of economic benefit but that the range of tickets in the stadium can be as broad as the temporary seating to the corporate box and we all can participate.

Now that's a rugby world cup winning country. ■

Pat Snedden is a treaty negotiator and company director, living in Auckland.

goodness, holiness and virtue in islam

Najibullah Lafraie

The Muslim faith has clear guidelines on how to follow the path of goodness and virtue. There is a silence on the word 'holiness', however, since this is attributed only to God, and not to any human being.

“**G**oodness does not consist in turning your faces towards East or West. The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets; who give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it, to their relatives, to orphans, the needy, travellers and beggars, and to liberate those in bondage; those who keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; who keep pledges whenever they make them; who are steadfast in misfortune, adversity, and times of danger. These are the ones who are true, and it is they who are aware of God” (The Quran, 2: 177).

a book of guidance

The Holy Quran introduces itself as a book of guidance; and true to its claim, it provides guidance to the path of goodness and virtue, as it does in other aspects of life. The above verse is an example of hundreds of verses in the Quran that refer to goodness and righteousness. Looking closely at this verse, we notice that it first rejects association of goodness with ritual deeds (turning faces towards east or west), afterwards it establishes a sound foundation for goodness (belief in God), and then it enumerates some of its manifestation (compassion and kindness, generosity, devotion,

sincerity and faithfulness, patience and perseverance, truthfulness, and God-consciousness).

It is important to emphasise that in Islam good deeds without faith is baseless. The Quran considers as “the greatest losers” those “whose efforts in this world are misguided, even when they think they are doing good work. It is those who disbelieve in their Lord’s messages and deny that they will meet Him. Their deeds come to nothing: on the Day of Resurrection [God] shall give them no weight” (Q 18: 103-106). Likewise, faith without good deeds is meaningless. Even acts of worship would not count if they do not affect a person’s character, instilling in them goodness and virtue: “So woe to those who pray but are heedless of their prayer; those who are all show and forbid common kindnesses” (Q 107: 5-7). This is why almost everywhere in the Quran (in more than 70 instances) references to “those who believe” are followed by the phrase “and do righteous deeds.”

other components

In addition to those mentioned in the verse quoted above, other components of goodness that have been emphasised in the Quran include:

- Being good to parents: “Your Lord has commanded that you should ... be kind to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say no

word that shows impatience with them, and do not be harsh with them, but speak to them respectfully (Q 17: 23).

- Being fair, equitable and just: “You who believe, be steadfast in your devotion to God and bear witness impartially: do not let hatred of others lead you away from justice, but adhere to justice, for that is closer to awareness of God (Q 5: 8).
- Responding to evil with good: “Good and evil cannot be equal. Repel evil with what is better and your enemy will become



Dr Najibullah Lafraie

as close as an old and valued friend” (Q 41: 34).

- Being gentle (Q 3: 159), being courteous and humble (Q 8: 47), being tolerant (Q 7: 199), restraining anger (Q 3: 134), forgiveness (Q 3: 134), speaking good words to people (Q 2: 83), and modesty and chastity (Q 24: 30-31).

innate goodness

According to Islam, the goodness prescribed by the Quran is innate in human nature (along with evil tendencies). Islam does not recognise “original sin,” and many Muslim scholars “believe in the intrinsic goodness given to humans at birth,” based on the following verse of the Quran: “stand firm and true in your devotion to the religion. This is the natural disposition God instilled in mankind ... and this is the right religion, though most people do not realize it” (30: 30). The Prophet Muhammad also tells us that every child is born in a state of *fitra* (the natural disposition) and underscores the role of parents in the way a person is brought up. This is why parents are responsible for bolstering goodness and virtue in their children by constantly reminding them from an early age.

The Quran also introduces the Prophet Muhammad as “an excellent model” (33: 21); thus, telling stories from the life of the Prophet and his companions is another way to instil goodness and virtue in children.

three stories

Stories of past goodness abound in Muslim societies. Looking around us in today’s world too, we can see plenty of examples of the goodness to which Muslims aspire. Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens), who has dedicated his life to humanitarian work and is a model of peace and serenity, can be a prime example. The big changes in the life style of the new Kiwi convert, Sonny Bill

Williams, can be another example.

Three stories reported in Western media provide specific examples of such goodness. According to AP, in June 2009 a bat wielding man stormed into Muhammad Suhil’s convenience store in Long Island, New York. When Suhil raised the gun he kept near the counter, the man dropped the bat and started crying, asking him not to report to the police and claimed that he was committing the crime to feed his starving family. Hearing this, Suhil offered the robber some cash, obtained his promise not to commit crimes in the future, and informed the police only when the robber had run away.

Another story, reported in *Mail Online* in January 2010, also happened in New York. An Italian grandmother, who was visiting her relatives for Christmas, left her hand-bag containing US\$21,000 on the backseat of a taxi belonging to a Bangladeshi driver, Mukul Asaduzzaman. When Asaduzzaman discovered an address in the lady’s handbag, he drove 100 kilometres to return the money, but found no one home. But he left his cell phone number and a note that said: “Don’t worry, Felicia... I’ll keep it safe.” He drove back to the house when he received a phone call the next day — altogether driving more than 385 kilometres to deliver a large sum of money that he could have easily kept for himself!

The third story was reported by the BBC in July 2011. In the aftermath of 9/11, Mark Stroman savagely attacked Rais Bhuyian at his Texas petrol station shop, as ‘revenge’ against ‘Arabs.’ Bhuyian was severely wounded, underwent surgery a number of times and was blinded in one eye. Now Stroman is on death row for killing two others in a similar hate crime and Bhuyian is leading a campaign to save his life. He is quoted saying, “This campaign is all about passion, forgiveness, tolerance and healing.

We should not stay in the past, we must move forward.”

holiness

Finally a few words on ‘holiness’ are in order. Certainly we can find some kind of holiness in the examples mentioned above, and undoubtedly many Muslims consider some spiritual leaders as holy men. It is interesting to make two observations in the Quran, though. Firstly, in contrast to the high frequency of words implying goodness and virtue (*birr, taqwa, ihsan, amal salih*), the word implying holiness (*quds*) has been mentioned only half a dozen times in the Quran. Secondly, holiness in the Quran is attributed to God, to certain angels and to certain places; but nowhere to a person. We can only speculate on possible reasons. One reason may be to discourage us from attributing holiness to anyone, setting the person above others. In Islam all ‘children of Adam’ are equal. The only differentiating factor is piety and God-consciousness, and only God can judge that. ■

NB: The translations of the Quran used in this article are from Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *The Qur’an* (Oxford World Classics).

Dr. Najibullah Lafraie is Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Otago, and a member of the Muslim community in Dunedin. He is married and has four grown-up children.



honouring the holiness of community

Helen Bergin

*The author takes three different examples of ways
in which Christian communities can be places
where goodness flourishes,
and reflects on them.*

Perhaps, if watching *Good Sorts* on Sunday evening TV, you have been struck by the ongoing goodness of many New Zealanders. Many wonderful people are able to encourage others to participate in short or long-term projects which bring hope, joy or companionship to others locally. Often, these innovators begin a project, the results of which they cannot imagine and when interviewed they respond that they are simply doing something that brings them happiness!

This reflection focuses on holiness as a communal experience. Very often, holiness is 'officially' attributed to individuals. Yet, holiness is always linked with the Holy Spirit who may be described as "God's Loving" and loving, especially God's, is relational. So, even when individual saints are

honoured, others will also have contributed to the recognition of the individual.

challenges in daily living

I wish to reflect, therefore, on the challenge of communal holiness as glimpsed in ordinary daily loving. For many, the following of Christ and the living out of their call to holiness occurs through day-by-day building of relationships — whether in the home, neighbourhood, factory, business, school or sports field. Three New Testament readings can offer insights about holiness as lived out in homes and communities. The readings speak of freedom, wholeness and empowerment of others.

agent of freedom

Paul in his letter to the Galatians depicts the Holy Spirit as the agent of Freedom. He chides the Galatians as "stupid!" for renouncing the freedom they had previously experienced through believing in Jesus and listening to the Spirit. During Paul's absence from the community, the Galatians had regressed into a meticulous following of laws and customs. (Perhaps a form of legalism was easier and more secure than following the free-Spirited Jesus)

However, on his return, Paul invites the community to recommit to the freedom they formerly experienced in knowing Jesus. He impertinently says that should they wish to become slaves, they might "through love become slaves to

one another." (Gal. 5:13) He then extols fruits of the Spirit such as love, joy and patience which can assist individuals to be a community of the Spirit, and advises that should anyone desert the group, others might try to re-engage that person with the community where true freedom can be exercised. For Paul, the living out of freedom is not easy but it can be done with the support of community.

communal holiness present

A second sign of holiness and of God's Spirit is the presence of wholeness within a community. Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians, chapters 12-14, offers one example of wholeness. There is disunity as the Christians gather to celebrate Eucharist. Little attention is being paid to eating together and there is competition over the Spirit's gifts to each. Paul offers a graphic image of the human body functioning well when each organ works individually yet always in relationship to other organs. He links this image to the Christian community which through baptism is already one body through each having received the same Spirit.

Paul coaxes the Corinthians to co-operate and to avoid competition since each person's gifts have originated from one Spirit and have been given "as the Spirit chooses." (1 Cor. 12:10) He asserts that each person contributes to the good of the whole body — including those whose gifts appear less worthy.



Helen Bergin

The climax comes when Paul claims that of all gifts, love is pre-eminent. He refers to a future when love will suffice. He exhorts the community “Let all be done for building up” (I Cor 14:26) or, in other words, for the integrity of the community. For Paul, an indicator of holiness is that individuals, out of love, support the growth of the whole.

the empowerer

A third ‘holy-making’ gift refers to the Holy Spirit as the empowerer. This is apparent in Acts, chapters 10-11, where Luke describes Cornelius and his Gentile friends together with Peter and his Christian friends being challenged by the Spirit to see others in a new way. In so doing, they take risks. Cornelius, a faith-filled centurion, and all his household fear God. Prompted by an angel, Cornelius invites Peter to visit. At the same time, Peter, at prayer, is shocked when told in a three-fold vision of a sheet filled with living creatures “to get up, kill and eat.” As a Jew, he refuses to comply. He does not eat unclean food.

While puzzling about the vision Peter is advised by the Spirit to welcome visitors at the door and to respond. The next day Peter, with his cohort of “believers from Joppa,” travel to Cornelius’ home. On arrival, Peter is uneasy about consorting with profane Gentiles. Eventually, the four-day visit by Peter and his believer friends to Cornelius and his Gentile friends, results in the acceptance into the Christian community of a community previously shunned by the Jews. Peter’s preaching about Jesus whom “God [had] anointed . . . with the Holy Spirit and with power,” as well as the “falling” of the Holy Spirit on those in the host’s household “who heard the word” ultimately lead Peter to offer the Gentiles baptism by water

communities empowered

In the above account, several faith-filled communities are empowered by the Spirit through praying and risking something new. Both communities move from well-entrenched separation into welcoming the ‘foreign’ other. Each community experiences conversion through the Spirit. At the same time, each community experiences growing levels of freedom whereby restrictive religious attitudes and customs give way to liberation of minds, lifting of rules around social engagement and expansion of religious beliefs. In each case, the Spirit invites and assists in the change.

The willingness of workplace members, communities and families to consider new ways of thinking and acting often leads to more creative living for all. The gospel invitation is always towards abundance of life.

When at this time of year, we think about holiness and about saints it is beneficial to consider the holiness that might be growing or diminishing within our families, communities and work environments. These are the places where most of us will respond to God’s invitation to become the saintly human beings we can be. And, sometimes, these places are the most challenging.

canterbury earthquakes

In February this year, many of us witnessed people in and beyond Canterbury offering local Christchurch people gifts of water, food, sanitation, cleaning,

entertainment, hospitality, wisdom and emotional support. We saw the power of hundreds of ordinary citizens responding to crises which might have been more overwhelming were it not that they as families, neighbours, students and experts offered to work with those who had been badly traumatised. Such witness revealed the innate connections among human beings and this event tapped into the inner goodness of many. The challenge of such immediate generosity might be that New Zealanders strive over the years to ensure the continuation of such support. Holiness is an ongoing journey.

towards abundance of life

Relationships built in homes, workplaces and communities often create environments which enable all members to experience the freedom of really being themselves. Encouragement given in homes, workplaces and communities honours the gifts and skills of each member and thus contributes to the body’s unity.

The willingness of workplace members, communities and families to consider new ways of thinking and acting often leads to more creative living for all. The gospel invitation is always towards abundance of life. It is especially pertinent today to recognise the importance of many communities who often reveal amazing fruits of holiness. ■

Helen Bergin is a Dominican Sister who teaches theology at the Catholic Institute of Theology, Auckland



judaism and “the good”

Arthur Green

Starting from the key belief that human beings are made in the image of God, the author explores the role of law and of mysticism in the Jewish understanding of goodness.

Our Torah begins with goodness. God the Creator speaks the world into existence. Once each day, as being in its infinite variety continues to unfold, God sees that it is good. Six times the narrative of Creation is punctuated with the expression *va yar' elohim ki tov* (“God saw that it was good”).

in god's image

The Bible insists that the human being is created in God's very own image and likeness. I believe this to be the most important moral statement in the Jewish tradition, the basis of our concept of human decency and the single most clear guide to proper behaviour that Judaism offers. We define human decency as treating the other, every other, as the image of God, and therefore as an embodiment of holiness. Our task, as the only ones of God's creatures who are reflections of the divine self in this way, is to increase the image of God in this world. We do so by propagating the species, fulfilling the first commandment, but also by living, acting and treating one another as images of God's own self.

But what does the divine image have to do with goodness? Here we must recall some of the range of meanings attached to the divine likeness. We are creatures who bear moral choice, the only ones of God's creatures who were tempted (or some would say: destined) to eat of the Tree of Good and Evil. With moral choice goes responsibility, hence the possibility of being judged either good or evil, according to our deeds.



Rabbi Arthur Green

co-creators

The divine image also means that we are possessed of imagination and the spark of further creativity, the only creatures with the power to continue and participate in God's own creative act. Here too the question of moral culpability will loom large: we humans are responsible for what we create. Our human struggle for goodness is not ours alone, but our way of participating in God's own search for a perfect universe, one in which shalom, peace and wholeness, will reign throughout. We do this by following the way of Torah. That is the best measure of goodness we have as we are to realize it in ordinary day-to-day human life.

“And now, o Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you?” (Dt 10:12) is the root-question posed, and supposedly answered,

by religions of revelation. God has spoken. This is the key claim of classical Judaism.

the law

While philosophers, mystics, and their teachings have come and gone, the Jewish legal tradition, continuing to build and grow with each succeeding generation, has been interested precisely in the content of revelation. It is this tradition, that of halakhah, the way or the path, that has shaped the contours of the classical Jewish community, including its ability to confront an ongoing array of new circumstances in every phase of its existence.

As is well known, Torah contains two bodies of teaching: the written law and the oral law. The written Torah contains, according to a count first found in Talmudic sources, 613 commandments,

divided between 248 positive commands and 365 prohibitions.

observance

This has been the Judaism of the people as well as the rabbis. For a very long time the Jews defined themselves as a community of praxis rather than one of particular faith or doctrine. The tradition that “membership in good standing” within the community of Israel is defined by religious practice (symbolized particularly by observance of the Sabbath) is still the case within today’s observant community. Jewish courts will accept the word of a witness who is known to be observant of the Sabbath; they will not ask him what he thinks is the nature of God or how he understands revelation.

Therefore we ask: “What does the Lord your God demand of you?” The Scripture here answers quite clearly: “Only this: to revere the Lord your God, to walk only in his paths, to love him and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, keeping the commandments of the Lord which I command you this day, for your good.” The “good” here is the reward Israel is to receive in return for living in accord with the divine commandments.

It would appear, then, that classical Judaism’s vision of the good life is at once very clear and almost infinitely complex. “To do good” is to live out all the commandments as the sages have interpreted them over the generations, combined with an attitude of piety and a loving acceptance of this rule of law. This is the most ancient and “native” response to this question implanted by the tradition in those who follow its ways, reflecting life as lived by those considered “religious” within the Jewish community.

beyond the letter of the law

As detailed as the law seemed to be, in itself it could not fully shape one into being a “good person”. Thus the Torah contains certain passages that themselves demand that one go beyond the letter of the law. The Torah goes on in

a general way to say that in all matters we should do what is right and good, including compromise and going beyond the letter of the law. There are situations when the right thing is for one to do other than assert one’s full legal rights, and the decent person is to know when those times are.

the lover of God

The hasid or lover of God is defined by the Talmud as one who lives doing and giving more than the law demands, both to God and to one’s fellow. It is the heart’s sensibility, trained, to be sure by a lifetime of living within the law, that tells such a hasid when to do more. Just as the doors of inner prayer come to be more readily opened by a life of regular fixed prayer, so do the inner instincts of caring and generosity of spirit come to be more highly attuned by a life of daily concern for demands of the moral law. The constant training of that moral sensitivity is central to what Judaism views as piety or hasidut.

abraham as model

The figure of Abraham and his religious life was especially inspiring to Hasidic masters, who saw in him a model for their own “spiritual” fulfillment of the commandments. In addition to living in accord with the ways of the law, they wanted to find the inner root of each divine command, which they were quite sure also collectively made up the inner root of the human soul. By devotion to the commandments in a spiritually aware way, they would come to do what they saw Abraham as having done. They would discover the entire Torah as it is inscribed within their own souls and would thus come to know the commandments as a deep inner map of the spiritual journey that God has given to those who truly seek. This emphasis on the “inner commandments”, accompanying and enriching their outward fulfillment, is a highly characteristic path within the Jewish mystical tradition.

wise disciple

What kind of person is it the tradition is trying to create? What is its vision of the good life as it is to be lived by Jews who follow it? We have had a glimpse of Abraham, the ideal type of the hasid, loving God and always ready to do more than the law demands. We should join to him the figure of Moses, teacher and prophet, for the rabbis the idea of the original sage and master. If the Abraham-ideal is one of pastoral simplicity, the image of Moses is one of student-scholar-teacher, the talmid-hakham or wise disciple as leader of the people. It was such scholar sages of the law whom traditional Jewish society most came to venerate over the centuries, people about whom countless tales were told to show that in every detail of their lives they embodied the way of Torah, especially in its ethical ramifications.

based in humility

This work, and much of the religious living that goes with it, can only be achieved in humility, a virtue not much spoken of in our contemporary world. Ultimately I believe the prophet Micah was most right: he was the one who reduced the commandments to three: “Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before your God.” This statement of virtue is one that preserves the best of the ancient Hebrew moralistic tradition. Its ancient roots in Judaism are widely seen in the Psalter, whence it also came to have a key role in the teachings of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount. I would like to see it take the place it deserves in the encounter among our three sister-faiths and in the activities undertaken in the spirit of such encounter. ■

(This article is an abridgement of a longer article by Rabbi Green first published in ‘Theoria ⇄ Praxis.’)

Rabbi Arthur Green is an educator and a scholar of Jewish mysticism, living in Boston USA. He has played an influential role in bringing the language of spirituality into mainstream American Jewish life.

'groping for god'

The world is awash with advisers, coaches, counselors and psychologists. What is the place of spiritual direction. And where do spiritual guides fit in? Michael Fitzsimons seeks an answer from two Cenacle Sisters.

I arrive at the Cenacle community in Johnsonville on a drizzly Monday with everything in order for a shift to the beach area in Waikanae. There's no chaos, just a tasty morning tea. We're here to talk about the spiritual direction enterprise.

There's a genuine sadness in leaving Johnsonville but new things are always evolving, says Sister Anne Powell, an award-winning poet and one of a community of four which includes Sisters Mary Jackson Kay, Clare O'Connor and Kathleen Ryan.

"Moving to Waikanae is another shift for us, another step in the journey," says Anne. "The gift of all this journeying comes from our passion to share this charism with everyone."

The passion to share the spiritual journey lies at the heart of the Cenacle charism and obviously still inflames the lives of these two animated women I am interviewing this morning. So what exactly is spiritual direction?

"I'd call it a ministry of accompanying another person in their search for freedom and meaning, especially from a faith perspective," says Anne.

Mary likes the description from the Cenacle Sisters' North American website: 'Contemporary spiritual direction presumes that God connects through ordinary human experience... and in that experience are found God's invitations, urgings and confirmations.'

"I've always liked the image of a spiritual director as a midwife — we stand beside the person but it's not our journey. We assist but don't take over."

The spiritual journey has always seemed a little mysterious and elusive to me, which I guess is why we find it

so hard to talk about, even at Church. We love to fill the silences with words, songs, cups of tea. But these women seem to have made of it something solid and down-to-earth, something enduring. A lifetime of dedication to retreats and spiritual direction has given them an enviable clarity of focus.

"My message for people is to believe in the goodness in yourself and the goodness in others. I think this is a great starting point."

— Mary J. Kay

Says Anne: "I don't think it's such a mysterious field. It's one of the roles of the spiritual guide to demystify God — we try to enable people to discover God in the everyday. The spiritual writer Kevin O'Shea used to talk about 'backyard mystics'. People often don't think they've encountered God in their lives, but then you get them talking and then they realise their lives are full of these amazing moments of real grace.

"I think we do have a difficulty identifying the presence of God — we need a new language to talk about God, the old language doesn't always work and make sense for us today. I'm a poet. I think some of this new language is through music, art and poetry.

"We recently had a wonderful experience with a Cook Island guy who was working at our place. He talked about going white-baiting in Waikanae with his Nana, and later

told me he didn't know what to think about God or whether he believed in God. I asked him what it was like to return to the same beach with his children. He said it was wonderful and acknowledged that he'd never expanded his idea of God to include something like the joy he had taking his children to the beach. This conversation was such a blessing as it was the first exchange I'd had with anyone in our new house, as we stood in the kitchen."

So who gets to benefit from spiritual direction? Is it still the preserve of monks and mystics, religious professionals?

"I'd say it's for anyone", says Anne. "Anyone who is looking for the unnameable God. In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul talks about the Greeks 'groping for God.' But in fact, God isn't far from any one of us, because in God 'we live and move and have our being.' Spiritual direction is for anyone who is groping."

This belief underpins the *Retreats in Daily Life* initiative which the Cenacle Sisters have championed in parishes around New Zealand. These retreats empower people to find a place and time for God in the midst of a busy, everyday life. People commit to 30 minutes prayer each day and meet with a prayer guide daily as well. Group sessions begin and end the retreat.

The *Retreats in Daily Life* are an adaptation of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola who taught people how to notice what was life-giving in their life and what took life away. It was a discernment process that enabled people to discover God in all things.

Being awake to the goodness of life is the fruit of spiritual endeavour. Says

Mary: “Our founder, Saint Therese Couderc, in 1866 had this experience of consolation where she had a sense of the goodness of God. She saw the word ‘goodness’ written in golden letters upon every created thing. This has certainly shaped me.

“My message for people is to believe in the goodness in yourself and the goodness in others. I think this is a great starting point.

“I find that with people who come for spiritual direction often the challenge isn’t to make them take a lot of time out to pray but to create simple habits that will allow them to breathe throughout their day, to notice a blossom they’re passing, to savour the goodness.”

Says Mary: “Our experience is that a lot more meaning comes to people through spirituality, with religious questions coming second. Many people find they need prayer, contemplation and meditation, and not always institutional church.

“There is certainly a message here for the Church — when I was younger I was a crusader to change it. Now I prefer to put my energy into people who are working for peace and transformation.”

“I’ve had enough tragedy in my life to believe I only get one go at it,” says Mary. “I’m choosing to put my energy into what brings the fruit of life, I’m not so worried about institution. I’m encouraged by people who seek goodness and transformation in this world, people who still believe goodness can overcome despair.”

“I would say that the spiritual journey is worth pursuing, because it has the potential to change your life and once one life is changed, it will overflow,” says Anne.

The world is awash with advisers, coaches, counselors, psychologists. Often the catalyst is a problem, a brick wall, but in the spiritual direction context, it may also be the pursuit of joy and wonderment.

“I think psychologists are sometimes more problem-centred than spiritual directors,” says Anne. People



On the move to the Kapiti Coast – the Cenacle Sisters community, from left: Anne Powell, Clare O’Connor (back), Kathleen Ryan and Mary Kay.

that we meet are often bringing really joyful experiences that they want to unfold.”

“The difference between us and a psychologist sometimes depends on the starting point,” says Mary. “Years ago I worked at a drug treatment centre in Auckland and initially I felt totally out of my depth. It was a whole different world. I discovered there how to help people search through their life for an ‘aha’ moment. They were all men. It would be something like a sunset, or the birth of a baby, and if you could get them to remember the feelings that surrounded those moments, you had something to work with. That essential goodness was the starting point.”

There’s a lot at stake in the spiritual quest, say the Sisters, and we’re missing out hugely if we’re not tuned into it.

“I simply lose energy if I don’t attend to the spiritual quest,” says Mary. “I become scattered and my relationships become frayed. Everything becomes chaotic.”

Anne says: “I think not attending to your spiritual journey can lead to a lack of purpose in your life. Your life may be driven in some ways but ultimately remains without meaning.

“St Augustine says ‘our hearts are restless until they rest in God’. If that’s part of our genes and if we don’t properly attend to that longing, then we’re not really whole people.” ■

GOODNESS

Goodness has oo inside it.
It can catch my breath and whisk me away.
The oo can open me to “aha” moments —
points of stillness, holy drama
or ordinariness
when God in Go(o)dness leaps into the world
again and again.

The rhythm of goodness
beats at the heart of the door of the world.
The rhythm of goodness

smiles
moves
graces places
and I move with its easy air.

— Anne Powell

HOLINES

in unexpected

four of the Gospel of St John. Dr Prakai Nontawasee of Thailand says of this event that it enabled the woman to see her own worth. The blindness caused by inferiority and arrogance between the two races was wiped away.

The actions of Jesus were quite astonishing to his disciples. The Jewish religious code stated that men were not allowed to speak to women in public and the cultic holiness code said they were not permitted to drink or eat from a non-Jewish vessel. Jesus broke these rules because human need took priority over the religious rules and codes of the time. Doing good was more important than obeying cultural norms.

This story has a very special appeal to people in Asia where village country women still go to the well each morning to gather water and hear the local gossip. The Samaritan woman had to visit the well alone, because her life style alienated her from the other women in the village.

Not surprisingly, Asian Christian artists are absorbed by this story. Some of the more prominent artists have made several portrayals of the same event and



Surprisingly, this painting is by a Buddhist priest from Sri Lanka, the Ven Hatigammana Uttarananda. Influenced by a Catholic theologian, Fr Aloysius Pieris SJ, he decided to study Christian scriptures and was fascinated by the story of the Samaritan woman. He has used this painting to help Buddhists in his home country understand the imposed barriers of uncleanness and ethnicity and the need for the liberation of women in religion and society.

Holiness and goodness are often discovered in unexpected places. An outcast woman from a despised Samaritan village meets a strange foreigner at the well where she goes to draw water and is amazed when he asks her for water. The story is one of many great symbolic moments in the life of Jesus. The event is a simple one but obviously important because it is described in great detail in chapter

S ted places

RON O'GRADY

the Asian Christian Art Association has a large collection of images of the encounter between the woman and Jesus.

The story of the Samaritan woman speaks to our contemporary attitudes. If you or I had met her in a similar circumstance we would be unlikely to see the hidden beauty in this loose-living woman. Our tradition has been to honour the rich and prominent people for their contribution to society and if we wanted to find an especially good and virtuous person as a symbol of godliness we would probably choose a person in religious dress. Perhaps we are missing the point of Jesus' teaching.

Even a cursory look at the gospels shows how Jesus challenges our standards. Those who encounter Jesus include outcasts, foreigners, beggars, criminals, prostitutes and thieves. Not your usual regular companions even though every one of these same people can be found in the suburbs of New Zealand cities. While we try to avoid it, at some time in our lives almost all of us have been face to face with individuals or groups of such people living on the fringes of society.

Is it possible that holiness is actually

measured by the way we relate to these people – the outcasts of our society? We are accustomed to thinking of the holy life as solely related to praying and singing hymns and reading holy books. While all of these are deeply enriching to us as individuals, it could be that our encounters with people on the fringe of society will be the best place for us to find the deepest meaning of holiness. ■

Ron O'Grady is a minister in a Union parish in Auckland. He is the author of several books on art and human rights



Yu Jiade, China, *The Woman of Samaria*, 2001, Chinese ink and wash on hand-made paper

This art work is by well-known Chinese artist, Yu Jiade, who became fascinated by Christian art and was so absorbed by the story of the Samaritan woman that he painted this event a number of times. Chinese art is quite distinctive and has its basis in Chinese calligraphy. This means that the “line” is all important. This powerful portrayal of the Samaritan woman is described by theologian C S Song as “a moment of compassion and ecstasy.”

sense of heaven

Daniel O'Leary

As the drives and energies of life's morning slip away with the coming of the afternoon, one realises that to be honest and transparent is more important than to be successful or respected; that it is more blessed to be truly human and spiritual than religious or clerical.

Moved recently by the brooding presence of autumn, I revisited Richmond Park in south-west London, where I used to jog daily when I worked at St Mary's University College, Twickenham. As I made my way from gate to gate — Roehampton, Richmond, Kingston, Robin Hood — the memories came crowding in with unexpected clarity.

I walked around it twice. The first time I reflected on the first half of my life; the second time on my journey since. I was at full stretch in those early years. Nothing was too much to do, no challenge too difficult, no mountain too high.

I said "yes" to everything. Upwardly mobile and ambitious, I did further studies in theology, learning how to write, how to teach (if such gifts can ever be learned). These were decades of hard graft, of traumas and anxieties, of successes and excesses. There was much plotting, planning and persuading, many aspirations and failures, all the necessary pre-midlife experiences.

It was during the first half of my life that I was sent by the bishop to the newly opened Corpus Christi College in Notting Hill Gate, west London. That was a year of wonder — maybe more delighted shock than wonder. The veils were parted there, the doors flung open, the imagination set free.

Vatican II had just brought an astonishing and life-giving summer into our lives. A new passion for the possible was firing us up as we listened to the visiting prophets of that time. God's love was unconditional. The Church was the protecting mother of Jesus' dream for the world.

Liturgy was the purifying celebration of the divinity of our daily lives. Catechesis was about liberating our hearts for miracles. Contemplation was the moment of intimacy between lovers. Our imagination and senses were angels of grace. And we moved to the rhythms of the Incarnation.

Before it reached its tenth birthday, on a winter's day, the college door was suddenly locked. Looking back now, I wonder if we lock out too many voices — those of the Vatican Council, of



Father Daniel O'Leary

our best theologians, of the poor, of the earth and of women — all prophets of our salvation. Why does the first Crucifixion still go on?

During the second half of my life, I am learning to grow by subtraction. These are the decades of the inner work. We move into another place, the afternoon of our life, which cannot be lived by the drives and energies of life's morning. "What is a normal goal to a young person, becomes a neurotic hindrance in old age," wrote Carl Jung.

At this time of life, one learns that to be transparent and honest is more important than to be successful or respected; that it is more blessed to be truly human and spiritual than religious or clerical. "When we are only victorious over small things, it leaves us feeling small," wrote Rainer Maria Rilke.

I'm learning that one can become old without becoming aged. Libby Purves wrote recently about an aged agelessness. "There can be a sort of lightness, a sense of having seen and suffered much, but accepting that you can be rich in what you have lost."

Bette Davis reminded us that “old age is not for sissies.” She was right. Without a certain discipline and purpose of mind, the shadows of bitterness, cynicism or despair can easily begin their deadly work in us. We are right to be concerned about poverty and pensions, about dementia and care. But we must also, from time to time, sit back in wonder at our lives, savour the flavour of many graced experiences, of those unexpected moments of love that still fill us with gratitude and hope.

**At this time of life, one learns
that to be transparent and
honest is more important than to
be successful or respected.**

Part of that wonder, for me, is the reassurance that the complexities of my life are not mine alone; that in spite of peculiarities, extremes and failures, I am no different from others in their eccentricities, pathological desires and secrets. I am not out of step with other normal human beings, walking around inside their own human skin. Everyone is wounded; everyone is hurting; everyone is imperfect. All are sinners.

“The Scriptures are filled with stories of people close to God, even as their own lives are often fraught with mess, confusion, frustration, betrayal, infidelity and sin,” writer and theologian Ronald Rolheiser reminds us. “There are no simple human beings, immune to the psychological, sexual and relational complexities that beset us all.”

Also, during these later years, if we are lucky, a clearer self-awareness of our place in the grand scheme of things may be revealed. After many decades, a pattern of our consistent contribution emerges, the abiding melody that runs through the mix and mess and mystery of our life’s decisions and choices.

Blessed John Henry Newman wrote about the importance of being able, one day, to name and nourish that incarnate gift, that enduring song, entrusted to us — and to nobody else.

Irish novelist Colm Tóibín recently wrote about his transition into the second half of life. He does not think at all about his many literary achievements. But he does reflect on the parable of the talents. “I think I was given one talent,” he wrote, “as minor as it may be, and I just work hard at it and try to be as truthful to it as I possibly can.”

The gradual harvesting of our lives brings many revelations. I have noticed, for instance, how often our pet beliefs, our commitment to rules and

rubrics, to this or that certainty, seem to lose their influence over us. This usually happens when we finally surrender to the embrace of a God who is utterly different from anything we ever imagined. Once you have experienced even a hint of such a beautiful lover, there is no going back.

In his Confessions, St Augustine wrote: “You were within, but I was without. You were with me but I was not with you. So you called, you shouted, you broke my deafness, you flared, blazed, and banished my blindness. You lavished your fragrance — and I gasped.”

These contemplative years, then, are never meant to be a slow and slumbering slide into terminal places. They may, in fact, contain epiphanies of a vital presence, when we hold ourselves still, “quivering with each moment”, as the mystic Rumi wrote, “like a drop of mercury”. Such vibrant attentiveness, uniquely in later life, is what the mystics call “the sense of heaven”. ■

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Christmas Catalogue 2011



Many people and families in recent years have preferred to give a Christmas Gift to people who are in need rather than acquire more things for themselves.

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three spheres of faith

Joy Cowley

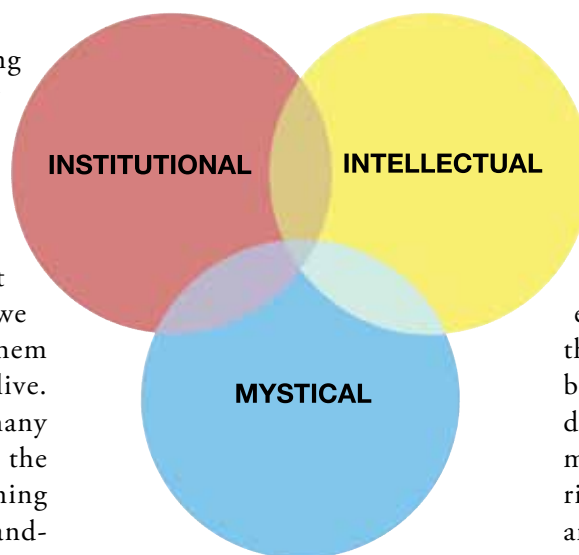
When American theologian Barbara Brown Taylor visited New Zealand in 2010, she demonstrated a model of functional Christianity that contained a valuable insight. She said the model was not hers, nor she did know its origin; but it represented a truth of discipleship that she wanted to build into her workshop. For those who did not have the pleasure of attending her talk, a description of the three spheres of faith has been adapted here, in the hope they will affirm our understanding of the movement of Christian journey.

The three intersecting circles are in play: they represent the institutional aspect of faith, the intellectual approach, and the mystical. All the spheres are important, and even though at times they may be in conflict, we do not shrink from any of them because they keep each other alive.

In personal faith journey, many of us tend to move around the spheres from the left, beginning with an institutional understanding of Scripture and Church teaching. Our faith depends on external instruction and we can feel uncomfortable with new ideas, new modes of worship, new language to describe God. But there is a natural progression that takes us to an intellectual unwrapping of institutional instruction. We go deeper. The words of institutional worship are keys to the doors of wisdom that are already within us. Our faith becomes internalised.

Yet there is more. Once those doors within us are opened, the Spirit takes us deeper still and we come to the mystical stage, a realm of inner prayer that is without language.

In the Gospels, we find key figures representing each of these spheres. Peter represents the



institutional; Paul represents the intellectual; John and Mary are the mystical.

Where are we? Each of us tends towards one of the spheres, depending on a number of factors: our personality type, our age, our experience of the faith journey. The important thing to remember is that these spheres are not static states. They represent the movement of the Holy Spirit, inviting us to a sacred dance, and eventually the dance will take us to the centre where all the spheres intersect. I call this the Jesus place.

The danger always is that we can resist movement and get stuck in one sphere. If the institutional

becomes dominant, a form of fundamentalism will evolve: words and structure become the objects of our worship. When the intellectual sphere is dominant, there is a tendency to a freeze-dried faith; everything is intellectualised and there is no room for experience beyond rational explanation. A dominant mystical sphere can mean dependence on direct experience: this results in subjectivity and sentimentality, a “faith without bones.”

So how do we move to eventually dance in the centre, the Jesus place? The answer surely is prayer, all kinds of prayer: liturgical, personal, sacramental, domestic, talking, listening, so that there is constant awareness of God’s presence in every experience. Then we are caught up by the movement, and we know it as the sacred dance of love. ■

Joy Cowley, one of New Zealand’s best loved writers, has recently been awarded the Maryann Manning Award for Outstanding Literary Scholars by the University of Alabama, USA.

a rhinoceros he doth make

Glynn Cardy

One of the things I do to relax is read *The Church Times*. This most British of church newspapers invariably puts a smile on my face.

Like the cleric from Basingstoke who amused himself making Lego cathedrals. The Lego Company, pleased to have a collared disciple, made organ pipes specially.

Like the numerous clergy who have love affairs with trains. My theory is that things that go where you plan them to go are very appealing to those whose day-to-day experience is the opposite.

And then, on page seven, there is the cleric with his rhinoceros. The parish priest of Dalton-in-Furness had created a fiberglass five-foot-long rhinoceros using wood and carpet rolls. He intended it to be a mould for future models that would be displayed around the town.

Why rhinos in Dalton-in-Furness? The explanation must surely be a spiritual treatise, or at the least a fundraiser to repair the church roof. Yet no such justification is forthcoming. Simply, the rhino defies reason.

And that is the point. There is no reason. Attracting people to church, feeding the poor, or changing the world, does not motivate the rhino's creator. He made it because he just made it.

What I enjoy about this story is visualizing the priest, Allan Mitchell, working away in his vicarage parlour on something totally disconnected from normal church life. There he crafts a horny statue that has seemingly no point.

One of the wise little sayings about the Anglican Church is that at its best it tries not to be a club for the like-minded but a symbol that all can



and do belong. Fr Mitchell is such a symbol. His counter-cultural love of rhinoceros, making them, and not seeing any conflict between this and his priestly vocation, is a wonderful reminder that in the ecology of God there is a place for us all.

Sometimes the kiwi Christianity in which I'm immersed frightens me. Leadership is hailed and hallowed as professional, educated, pastorally competent, and hard working. These are the values that silently predominate even as we preach a gospel of inclusion. Where is there room for the oddball, the maverick, and the rhino lover? Eccentricity needs to be valued otherwise we might lose it.

Mind you eccentricity is also hard work. Ask any bishop or archdeacon

who has received complaints, placated disgruntled parishioners, or mediated between warring parties. It is hard work dealing with the wondrous and wacky ways of clerics, and the expectations of those they labour amongst.

Similarly there are parishes that seem to specialize in attracting the strange and the bizarre among their clientele. Such folk brighten and enliven the otherwise dull blend of Anglican homogeneity. Yet make no mistake, such parishes are hard work. For inevitably it seems some people talk well beyond what tolerant listeners can endure, many of their actions are inappropriate or misunderstood, and facilitating any meaningful communication between the

colours in the parish mosaic can be a task worthy of Van Gogh.

Yet, at the end of the day, this uncontrollable spectrum of vibrancy and variance is what makes church communities so interesting and unforgettable. I've worshipped with a giant trapped in a woman's body, with a time-traveler from the 16th century, with Jesus Christ's aunt, as well as many of more mundane pedigree. I've worshipped too with criminals and cops, with animals and those less well behaved, and with the harried and the harassed.

It is truly a privilege to open

one's arms wide and say without any hesitation that all are welcome. All are welcome to enter, participate, and commune. All are part of God's ecology.

For, as some places say quite starkly, Jesus is the host and we are his guests. That's why I will continue to oppose the conditional welcome to receive communion. "It's only for the baptized," I'm told. Or "for the committed," another tells me. "You have to believe to belong." Club-think.

Well, I do believe. I believe that God's love is not restricted to those who we think are acceptable. I believe

that the love called God is so broad that it has no boundaries or conditions. God deals with the dissenters and doubters by welcoming them. God welcomes the Lego makers, the train enthusiasts, the rhino crafters, and the time travellers.

This is immensely encouraging and hopeful. For it means, even when I acknowledge all my foibles and failings, all my beliefs or lack of them, God still welcomes even me. ■

Glynn Cardy is vicar of St. Matthews-in-the-City, Auckland.

seeking the holy of holies

Donagh O'Shea

The author has recently been in New Zealand giving retreats. Here he outlines what contemplation is, and reminds us that we are God's temple, the ordinary place where God dwells.

Asked what contemplation was, a great teacher replied: "Intimacy." Contemplation is about being intimate or fully present to experience. We all manage this in moments of surprise or delight, but we soon return to our habitual tracks: thinking about what happened, or talking about it, or planning to talk about it later. During the moments when we are fully present to something we have no words. The event that brought us to silence does not have to be a cataclysmic one; next time you knock over a mug of coffee take time to notice what was going on in you in that moment. Such moments may not be the stuff of history, but they are seeds of contemplation.

'Seeds of contemplation' bring Thomas Merton to mind. A monk from his monastery visited our priory in Cork, and I apologised to him for the many steps (exactly a hundred, as it happens) as we

climbed the flights of stairs. "There are many steps in Gethsemani abbey, too," he replied. Then he added, "I always count them as I climb..." I asked how many there were, and to my surprise he said, "I don't know!" As I wondered silently what form of dementia this indicated he continued: "This is how I count them: one, one, one..." The mind can count until it tires of it, but the heart can count only as far as one. This was one of the most profound and practical teachings I have ever received.

In the spiritual life it is always the beginning. The mind likes to run ahead; it is already on the top step as my foot is on the first. It also likes to count and quantify everything; I knew, for example, that there were exactly one hundred steps in that priory. But his way of counting was different: there was no accumulation and no projection into the future; everything was here



Donagh O'Shea

and now. The monastic life that shaped Thomas Merton had shaped his brother too.

Contemplation has the name of being airy and unreal. Yeats wrote of

*Levelled lawns and gravelled ways
Where slipped Contemplation
finds his ease.*

The temptation to escape from ordinary experience is almost overpowering at times (those lines from Yeats occur in a poem about civil

war). But contemplation is not an escape; instead it is a deeper and more intimate experience of our ordinary lives, whether these are difficult and painful or as simple as climbing a stairs. Nor do we have to enter a monastery to find it. We can find it where we are; in fact we can find it nowhere else.

different kinds of knowing

There are different kinds of knowing. They contrast with one another and yet do not exclude one another. There is factual knowledge, there is theoretical knowledge, and there is intimate knowledge. To illustrate this: unless you had some training as an archivist or historian you could not write a satisfactory biography of your mother; yet in another way you know her more intimately than any historian or archivist ever could, whose knowledge was just factual.

As for theoretical knowledge, it would scarcely touch your mother at all: it is about mothers in general. But intimate knowledge is not usually able to give a fluent account of itself, and so to the other kinds of knowledge it appears very simple and poor: no footnotes, no bibliography, no historical background, little or no relationship to contemporary events. An historian would dismiss it at once. But to your intimate knowledge the historian's knowledge looks cold, impersonal and abstract.

contemplation

There is a special kind of intimate knowledge that Christians call contemplation. It is poorer, Meister Eckhart said, than factual and theoretical knowledge — poorer and yet richer. “Anyone who would see God must be blind.... God is ‘a light that shines in the darkness’.... The blinding of the soul means that she knows nothing.” He is not alone among mystics in using this kind of language. Mystics through the ages speak of darkness, emptiness, nothingness, the void. These

are words that may well frighten one away from the very thought of contemplation. But they only mean that in this kind of knowledge there is nothing between us and God: no images, no theories, no stories.... The innermost part of the Jerusalem temple was called the Holy of Holies; it was “the place of meeting with God.” By the time of Jesus it was completely empty. This has become an abiding reassurance to Jews and Christians who seek to enter the heart of contemplation. The Holy of Holies is empty. There is nothing in it, or rather no thing; there is only God.

A less challenging word would be ‘presence’, but it has to mean full presence, intimate presence to the One who is not a ‘thing’. The temple in Jerusalem no longer exists; we are now the Holy of Holies. “You are God’s temple,” St Paul wrote (1 Cor 3:16,17) — meaning the Holy of Holies. There are many teachers in the Church whose Holy of Holies is lined with books: books of theology and canon law. These books may be good, but they are in the wrong place. Their place is in an area of the temple known as the Holy Place, between the Holy of Holies and the outer courts. Books and lectures may help guide us to the Holy of Holies, but only we can go inside. Nobody is learned in the Holy of Holies; all learning is left outside and the one who enters “knows nothing.”

me a contemplative?

Since we don’t have to be learned to enter there, everyone has an equal chance. God gives the supreme gift of Divine Presence to the ignorant and even to scoundrels, Eckhart said, to show that everything is gift. This means that none of our excuses for turning away from contemplation is of any account. We don’t have to be monks or nuns to do it; we don’t have to be learned or respectable; we don’t have to go anywhere. We ourselves are God’s temple, and so it is nearer to

us than we are to our own selves. We often settle for less; we settle down in the outer courts, buying and selling — not only material objects but everything — trading even with God. Jesus threw the buyers and sellers out of the temple, Eckhart said, because God does not trade with us; God insists on giving “freely and for nothing.”

renewed interest

There is a world-wide interest in contemplation today (or meditation, as it is more usually called). It crosses all divides of age and race and religious affiliation. It is evidence of a great hunger for deeper life in God. Millions are finding their way to the Holy of Holies, even when given little or no help or encouragement by their own religious leaders. Only those who have experienced this intimate knowledge will think it worth mentioning. But the crowd is swelling. “Many peoples shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob’” (Isaiah 2:2). ■

Donagh O’Shea is an Irish Dominican preacher who lives at Tallaght, Co Dublin. He was recently in New Zealand to give retreats. He invites you to look at his website: www.goodnews.ie

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petrobras and east cape oil exploration

Michelle Hughey

While there has been some publicity about East Cape oil exploration, a significant part of the country is in some ignorance of what is planned and of its implications. Local people, including local iwi, are deeply concerned. Young people have been trying to express this concern through their own study and local newspapers.

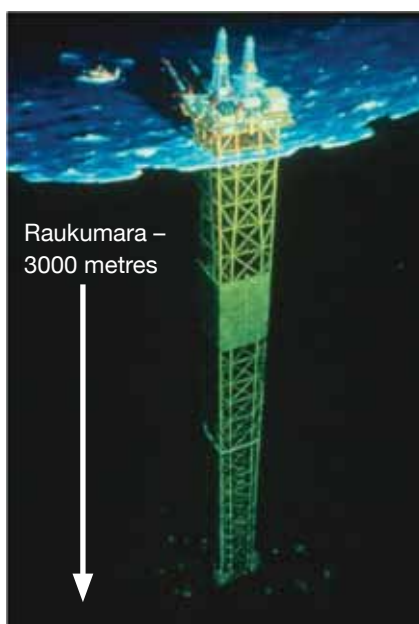
In 1991 the NZ Government assumed ownership rights to petroleum, gold, silver, and uranium under the Crown Minerals Act 1991. Any minerals or precious metals found in New Zealand were assumed to belong to the NZ Government, regardless of tribal, customary or private property rights.

In 1998 the NZ Government opened a block in the Raukumara Basin, off East Cape for companies to bid for an oil exploration permit.

On 2 June 2010 the Brazilian company Petrobras was awarded a permit from the New Zealand Government giving them oil and gas exploration rights to conduct seismic testing for 12,330 square kilometres within the Raukumara basin, an area extending from four kilometres to 110 kilometres from the coast of the East Cape for five years. This was just 42 days after the 'Deepwater Horizon' oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and 44 days prior to the damaged well being capped. There was, however, no consultation with the NZ public, nor with the local iwi, *Te Whanau-a-Apanui*.

Petrobras is one the largest oil companies in the world. It is a multi-billion dollar company owned by the Brazilian Government. It is a public company with a percentage of private stakeholders.

Even as we wait to see how Petrobras will proceed, the *Rena* disaster is unfolding.



accountability

The lack of consultation with *Te Whanau-a-Apanui* reflects the NZ Government's poor commitment to their relationship with Tangata Whenua and the Treaty of Waitangi. *Te Whanau-a-Apanui* have said "NO" to oil exploration in the Raukumara Basin and in the Raukumara Ranges and they have been working to spread their message.

In April a flotilla sailed out into the Raukumara Basin and protested by engaging in customary fishing in the area that Petrobras wanted to conduct seismic testing. The NZ Police, Navy and Airforce were sent in and members of *Te Whanau-a-Apanui* were arrested. At the time of writing, their charges still stand. The question

begs, whose rights are the NZ Police, Navy and Airforce meant to protect? Those of foreign multinational companies like Petrobras, or those of the people of New Zealand? In this instance, the decision was made to uphold the rights of Petrobras.

areas of concern

The other major area of concern was the non-requirement by the NZ Government for Petrobras to carry out any assessment of the impact of its seismic testing and oil/gas exploration.

a. seismic testing

As searching for oil becomes increasingly difficult, Petrobras has intensified its search for oil in deeper water, ultra deep water and pre-salt depths. The permit given to Petrobras allows them to drill at a depth of up to 3,000 metres, double the depth at which Deepwater Horizon's oil rig was drilling in the Gulf of Mexico.

Even if there is no 'oil spill', the coastal marine area will be permanently changed by the activity of an exploration well. Most oil companies use a method called hydraulic fracturing, commonly known as "fracking". Each well uses millions of litres of fresh water mixed with chemicals applied with extraordinary pressure to fracture rock deep in the ground, in order to extract oil and gas. The combination of chemicals and waste material could potentially destroy

the livelihood of the fishing industry as well as the coastal towns and communities who rely on the ocean and kaimoana for their way of life.

b. effect on environment of oil and/or gas exploration

The *Rena* disaster has shown that New Zealand is poorly equipped to deal with a relatively small oil spill, let alone a major one from a deep sea oil rig.

The devastating oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico was caused by a failure to the Blowout Preventer, which caused the pipes on the oil exploration well to break and leak in at least three separate places. Deepwater Horizon's oil rig was an exploration well. This is what Petrobras has permission to build in the Raukumara Basin, if they decide to do this. What precautions have been taken by the government to ensure that Petrobras will be responsible for the complete cost of any disaster that may occur?

Prior to *Rena*, the Acting Minister for Energy and Resources, Hekia Parata, stated there were 400 people in New Zealand available to respond in the event of an oil spill and three oil recovery vessels, provided by Maritime New Zealand, available to cope with an oil spill. These boats are designed to operate in sheltered waters, not where there is deep water drilling. In the Gulf of Mexico disaster they needed 6,000 ocean going vessels and nearly 50,000 people. New Zealand is more isolated and situated further away from available resources to help with an oil spill, placing the environment at greater risk in the event of an actual oil spill. Given these details and the recent *Rena* oil-spill, will the Government attempt now to make Petrobras more accountable for the terms of its exploration permit?

As well, it seems that any environmental disaster or side-effects caused by Petrobras will be picked up by the New Zealand taxpayer and the burden will likely fall on local communities living on the East Coast of

New Zealand. However, the concern is not just for the environment. In the *Rena* disaster hundreds, if not thousands of concerned people, went to the beaches without protective clothing or gear to help clean up. Mums and dads, children and grandparents were exposed to the toxic thick oil and its fumes as well as the controversial dispersant COREXIT 9500, which was first sprayed onto the leaking oil within 48 hours of the initial leak.

With a major oil spill, *Te Whanau-a-Apanui* and other iwi will no doubt lose their access to traditional customary fishing and other kaimoana. All New Zealanders will suffer a loss of natural habitat, lifestyle, health and cultural identity. This kind of cost simply does not have a price.

c. earthquakes

The Raukumara Basin is an area of New Zealand which lies on a major fault line. It is the epicentre for most of the earthquakes around the East Coast. This is the same area where Petrobras plan to conduct oil and gas exploration. Has the NZ Government considered the likely impact of earthquakes on the activities of Petrobras, and has it considered

whether Petrobras' activities might trigger further earthquakes along this fault line?

petrobras

Petrobras have won an easy deal with the NZ Government. They don't have to be accountable for the harm they do to our waters or coastal marine life.

The economic system promoted by our successive governments encourages multinational corporations such as Petrobras to continue to increase their extravagant wealth at the expense of ordinary people.

People around the East Cape are afraid the government may make further changes to the Crown Minerals Act in order to speed up the process of deep sea oil exploration in New Zealand and to promote competitive search for oil not only in the Raukumara Basin, but in the East Coast Basin, the Taranaki and Reinga Basins and the Canterbury Basin. ■

Sister Michelle Hughey RSJ is a teacher at Campion College Gisborne, where the topic of oil exploration has excited much student comment.

The questions around oil exploration off the east coast of New Zealand are constantly growing. People are wanting answers from our government; they want to know what decisions have been made and what decisions are still to be made. The East Coast iwi, *Te Whanau a Apanui*, are concerned about the effect oil drilling will have on our environment. They want to sustain a clean green image of New Zealand and not have it ruined by our government not thinking before they make irrational decisions.

They are also concerned about the impact it will have on the kaimoana in the surrounding waters, as this is what has sustained them for many generations and they want it to be

around for the future generations. Mr Key has said "The government needed to balance any risks to the environment with economic gains." No one is arguing that there are not economic issues to consider. He wants New Zealanders to have better jobs and better incomes and by the oil drilling going ahead he thinks there is a real opportunity in this area of nationalised minerals. In my opinion the effects on the environment would be massive. If Petrobras goes ahead and drills the 3000m well off our coastline it would affect the beaches and sea life; but if the government stops it from going ahead our nation would survive and still have a clean green image around the world.

Rhythm Veall-Dunn

(Student at Campion College, Gisborne)

the works of mercy

Matthew 25: 1-13 The Last Judgment
(Feast of Christ the King – 20 November)

*“Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked
or in prison, and did not minister to you?”*

Kathleen Rushton



Food to the hungry



Drink to the thirsty

On the Kraanlei in the Belgian city of Ghent are two impressive late 17th century baroque style houses with richly decorated upper façades. One is called the Seven Works of Mercy House. Six relief panels depict the corporeal Works of Mercy: give shelter to the homeless, visit those in prison, clothe the naked, give drink to the thirsty, give food to the hungry, care for the sick. Where is the seventh? The story handed down is that the seventh work is not depicted because it is lived out in the house. Today, stories still abound about the house. Sold from its ground floor is Temmerman confectionary, an institution in Ghent, which its maker claims is the eighth work of mercy!

the works of mercy

Stories about the house aside, the Works of Mercy depicted are taken directly from one of the

parables of Jesus in what is called his Eschatological Sermon. He is recorded as giving this long talk when “as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?’” (Mt 24:3).

jesus’ shocking presence

Jesus’ shocking identification of himself with the needy and the least ones whom he calls his sisters and brothers (25:40) gives a new twist to the theme of being prepared for the unknown time of Jesus’ final coming, as explored in Matthew 24-25. In this sense, Jesus is not really absent at all but present in the needy and the least whom they, and we today, help or ignore: “Truly, I tell you, just as you did (or did not do) to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did (or did not do) to me” (vv. 40,

45). Jesus’ presence with the needy and the least is part of Matthew’s vision of life infused by the presence of Emmanuel “God with us” (1:23) in the community that gathers in Jesus’ name for worship (18:20) and with the Risen One until the end of time (28:20).

Jesus is absent where one expects him to be present (for example, in 7:23, “prophesy in your name,” “cast out demons,” “do deeds of power”). He is present where he is not expected in the needy and least ones. Thus, one’s conduct here in this life is of overriding importance. Time and eternity are linked.

jesus’ solidarity

Matthew stresses the surprise of both those who are accused and those who are blessed because during their lifetime they did not realise that Jesus is touched by their actions to their neighbours. This is a far-reaching

solidarity but not a total identification, with his brothers and sisters. Their suffering affects him. In other words, Jesus is telling us in this parable: "I appear over and over again. I am present over and over again." Yet, he has not been recognised not just by evil doers but by the righteous because of mercy done or refused.

the word 'mission'

The central significance to the following of Jesus in recognising him in the needy and least is found in the word Matthew uses to sum up all the actions. Jesus said: "They also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or in prison, and did not minister (*diakoneo*) to you?" (v.44). Some bible translations have "take care of you." However, there is one word minister (*diakoneo*) for all the actions. This is the verb which sums up the mission of Jesus "who came not to be ministered to but to minister" (20:28). It describes the action done to Jesus by the angels who minister to him when he is tempted in the desert (4:11) and also by the women disciples who minister to him and the disciples (8:15, 27:55). Its noun form "servant" (*diakonos*) is applied to the disciples using a term of the marginal and low of status ("whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant": 20:26, 23:11).

Study of classical and early Christian use of *diakoneo* and words derived from it is enlightening. The basic idea is "an activity of an in-between kind" and is associated generally with one who is called to represent and speak on behalf of another. This word was not part of everyday language. It is found only in formal classical literature in passages of a profoundly religious nature. It would seem earliest Christianity adapted this term in a special way. In our parable, it is used to name the mission of mercy among the dispossessed (25:31-46).

'god with us' framework

The six areas would describe the needs of the majority in a city such as Antioch where, most likely, Matthew's gospel was written: crowded living conditions, lack of sanitation, inadequate and uneven food supply, sewage problems, epidemics and disease, general poverty, need and debt. In Matthew, the "God with us" framework of God's forgiving, saving, creating and expanding presence encountered in Jesus shapes the identity and way of living of Matthew's community.

The six "Works of Mercy" — the criterion of the Son of Man, the king-judge — is the way one meets the neighbour in need. Six areas are named but these are not exhaustive. All help, spiritual and temporal, is contained within these. The needs of the age shape their expression. In the Dublin of the 1830s, which is compared to Calcutta today, the Venerable Catherine McAuley built the House of Mercy to shelter poor young servant women at risk. She did not stop there. She also analysed some of the causes of their predicament. Along with shelter, she set up schools for education in faith and life skills.

a contemporary blueprint

A century later across the Atlantic, Dorothy Day founded the Catholic Worker houses which feed the poor. Her analysis that the cause of poverty was the exorbitant spending of public money on the military led to her radical pacifism. In the 1960s, the Aotearoa New Zealand poet, James K. Baxter in his *Jerusalem Daybook* challenged and disturbed us with not only his written version of the Works of Mercy but his radical living out of these tenets of the Gospel of Jesus.

The blueprint is there in this gospel proclaimed in our parish churches on the last Sunday of this liturgical year, the Feast of Christ the King. Many shy away from the trappings which this title carries. However, Jesus is the judge-king of the parable. We ignore him in the most needy and the least of our times at our peril. He is present to us in them our brothers and sisters. May we be graced to recognise him and not miss him by confessing: "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or in prison, and did not minister (*diakoneo*) to you?" ■

Kathleen Rushton RSM of Christchurch is currently at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium.

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Photo credit: Cordaid

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a good read

The Bridge

Jane Higgins.

Publisher: Text Publishing.

Winner of the Text Prize 2011.

Available at bookstores. Price 25.99

Reviewer: Sandra Winton OP

The *Bridge* is Jane Higgins' first novel. It is written for young adults. It is a long time since I was a young adult but, like much young adult fiction, this novel is a good read for the not so young also.

The Bridge is set in a fictional future city that is divided in two by a river. Southside, the hostiles live, crowded, ignorant and dangerous. They are a constant threat to privileged Cityside, where Nik and his friends are in their final year at Tornmoor Academy. The novel opens on the day when ISIS visits the school to select from the graduating class those who will be taken into its ranks of elite security and intelligence personnel. Nik, one of the top students of the year, is not chosen. What is the meaning of this?

That night Tornmoor is bombed and the staff killed along



with some students, among them the brother of Nik's friend, Fyffe. When her young brother, Sol, is captured by the hostiles, Nik and Fyffe head across the bridge Southside to find him.

This is a lively, fast-moving story that never flags. Its world is not the magical one of Hogwarts. It feels closer to reality as we know it. War is ugly. People die, even characters we love. Orphan Nik is faced with finding out about his parentage and where he belongs. Both young people have to take in a new view of the enemy and the situation that underlies the war — much more complex than they were taught at

school. They meet real people who do not fit the stereotypes. Even Southsiders can be moral, courageous and wise — and sometimes hard to trust also.

In this process they are faced with complex choices, ethical, political and personal. Where does the right lie? Which side speaks the truth? How mixed are just actions and deceitful ones? Do the ends justify the means? Where does a person stand when the world is not black and white? Is there a way through and out of war? In a compromised situation, where can you stand?

This is sophisticated stuff yet these are the kind of things that young people struggle with. Do they stay with the truth as they have learned it? How do they deal with reality that is more grey, more mixed, less simple? War, injustice, poverty, identity, friendship, trust... these are crucial to young people. Jane Higgins respects her young readers enough to trust them to enter this sophisticated world and engage with it. Underneath its story lies a strong ethical and moral, even Christian position. But this is not promulgated. Rather the questions are wrestled with by the young characters. Dealing with the questions thrown up in *The Bridge* is not something for young people alone, but for all of us. People of all ages are not content with the over-simplified depictions of 'terrorists', 'extremists', refugees and 'Islamists' that we have been fed by the exponents of war. We all face the challenge of seeing real people and their real struggles. For the young this challenge is particularly urgent. It is they who go to war. It is they who inherit inequality. It is their earth that is being scorched.

Jane Higgins' novel is intelligent, exciting, with a taut narrative voice by a smart, funny, wry and sometimes grim narrator. It is a great read. Give it to a teenager for Christmas. Read it yourself. ■

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a deathly triangle

The Larnachs

Owen Marshall

Publisher: Vintage, 2011 \$39.99

Reviewer: Jim Neilan

News item from the *Otago Witness*, 5 February, 1891: 'The Wellington Post reports that the nuptials of the Hon. W.J.M. Larnach, C.M.G. and Miss Constance de Bathe Brandon, daughter of the late Hon. Alfred de Brandon, M.L.C., was solemnised in St. Paul's Pro-cathedral this afternoon (January 27)'.

Seven years later, the same paper reported: A most painful occurrence happened in J. Committee room at the Parliamentary Buildings this afternoon when the body of the Hon. W.J.M. Larnach, member for Tuapeka, was found with a six-chambered revolver in its right hand, one chamber of which had been discharged. The bullet entered the head almost in the centre of the forehead and slightly over the left eye. He was found sitting in a chair at the head of the table, and was quite dead.

What happened in those intervening years is the subject of Owen Marshall's latest novel. It is written in the first person with the voices of Conny, the bride, and William's youngest son, Douglas (Dougie), providing the narrative in alternate chapters — a clever device to avoid William Larnach taking centre stage, as he had done all his life.

William came to Dunedin in 1867 as a banker and it was not long before he was a leading businessman and property owner. His wife, Eliza and their children followed in 1874. In 1875 he was elected to parliament and for over 20 years had a big influence in Dunedin and Wellington. He had more than his share of personal tragedy. Although the death of Eliza in 1880 left him shattered, he married her half-sister two years later.



She died in 1887. Then, just after he married Constance, his favourite daughter Kate died of typhoid.

Marshall skilfully relates these historical facts about Larnach through the voices of his wife and son.

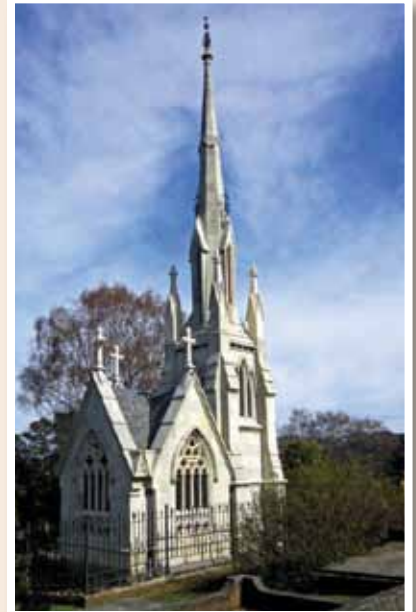
The de Bathe Brandons were well known in Wellington's legal and political circles. As head of the family after the father's death, Conny's brother, Alfred, did not approve of his 35 year old sister marrying the 'rather more common' Larnach who was 57. Conny was determined to be a good wife to William and, initially, he was very responsive and devoted to her. We are given a fine insight into New Zealand's privileged class of the late 19th century as William proudly presents his new bride to leading politicians and businessmen. But the gradual erosion of his wealth and status brings mood swings and depression which take their toll on the marriage.

Dougie's half of the narrative provides the reader with a background to the Larnach family history. With William spending much time in Wellington, the Dunedin side of business affairs was eventually left to Dougie but financial and political worries resulted in William constantly criticising and humiliating him.

In this atmosphere, wife and stepson grew closer to each other and eventually became lovers. Marshall uses great delicacy in

describing what he calls 'one of the oldest and most persistent plots in life and literature — the relationship triangle.' The reader feels the sense of living on the edge. "When can we next be alone — are the staff gossiping — does William suspect anything?" And then, the ultimate question: did William receive the letter from his son, written against Conny's wishes, owning up to the romance? Was this the reason for his suicide?

As a novel, this is a hard-to-put-down book. Knowing the story is based on real characters, during an interesting period of New Zealand's history, adds to its merit. Owen Marshall is to be congratulated on his first historical novel. ■



In Dunedin's Northern Cemetery is another example of William Larnach's grandiose ideas. This is the mausoleum built as a memorial to his first wife, Eliza Jane Guise. The chapel, with its 17m spire dominates the tombs of other well known Dunedin families. Over the years it has been vandalised and desecrated, but it has now been restored and visitors can once again admire the stained glass, wooden doors, finials and crosses – all replicas of the originals.

Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

Forty-two?

A central tenet of scientific belief since Einstein holds that matter cannot travel faster than the speed of light; hence the claim by scientists to have observed such a phenomenon is the cause of excitement as well as scepticism. If verified, scientists will have to re-interpret their beliefs.

The search for understanding in various disciplines has progressed in steps: known facts are subsumed into a theory that leads to new insights, which in turn lead to new knowledge that can't be explained by the accepted theory. Hence a new theory is formed; a new perspective takes account of both the 'old' understanding and the 'new' facts.

This has also happened in the Church's teaching over the centuries. A small number of fundamental teachings have been re-interpreted from age to age in the light of prevailing circumstances and insights. The reality doesn't change but our collective insights lead us to interpret it more broadly.

Scientists have been trying to develop a theory that unifies the four physical forces, (electromagnetic, gravitational, strong and weak nuclear forces); perhaps this latest observation will prove to be another step towards that goal.

Some believe it will be the 'theory of everything'. In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, hapless human Arthur Dent asked the supercomputer for the answer to 'life, the universe and everything'. The answer eventually arrived: '42' — which probably is as near as science will ever get to answering Arthur's question.

Business and Social Responsibility

Two recent items in the *Business Herald* have an interesting angle — helping to solve social problems while making a profit. A new class of investments

('impact investments') is designed to yield both a profit and a benefit to society. One example: an investment in a South African firm providing life insurance to people with Aids and HIV, subject only to the condition that they submit to regular blood tests to prove they are taking their drugs. Its backers include philanthropists, banks, reinsurers, and pensioner funds.

The other item describes a Wellington firm that has created a technology "clinically proven to rehabilitate people who have suffered stroke, brain injury or neurological disorder." Although it addresses health problems, its focus is on making a profit too.

Maori Economics

In *The History of Onewhanga* Janice Mogford explains how a flourishing Maori farming enterprise was closed, with the land being confiscated by the Government. The reason? Manukau Maori refused to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown imposed on them because the authorities feared they could join with Waikato tribes who were resisting forced confiscation of their land. This is a relatively minor episode compared to what happened elsewhere. Treaty settlements are small in relation to the original losses of what we recognise as revenue-generating capital.

Economic writers are now suggesting that Maori finances, greatly increased from the original compensation through wise administration, can be a significant source of investment in NZ's economy. The myth that Maori are incapable of looking after themselves is seen to be just that. Even Tainui, who had a rocky start, have recovered and now are outperforming Ngai Tahu. Some are hoping that Maori interests will invest in the proposed part-privatization of SOEs — a way

to lessen the chances of ultimate foreign takeover of basic assets.

Forty Years On

On November 30th 1971 the Synod of Bishops on *Justice in the World* issued the results of their meeting. They commented on current trends and warned of the dire consequences for humanity if they were not counteracted.

Some major points: the arms race; industry and technology favouring the concentration of wealth; power and decision making in the hands of a few; the high rates of consumption and pollution of air and water, along with other resources causing irreparable damage; how economic injustice and lack of social participation keep people from attaining their basic human and civil rights. This results in great numbers of 'marginal' people, ill-fed, inhumanly housed, illiterate and deprived of political power, as well as the means of acquiring responsibility and moral dignity.

Some conclusions: "Unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the world, it will only with difficulty gain credibility with the people of our times." (§34) "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation." (§6) An essential component is "education that comes through action, participation and vital contact with the reality of injustice." (§53)

"This examination of conscience we have made together regarding the Church's involvement in action for justice, will remain ineffective if it is not given flesh in the life of our local Churches at all their levels." (§72) ■

god's presence among us

Peter Norris

The Rugby World Cup (RWC) seems far removed from Henry VIII but the IRB has remarkable similarities to the monarch. When Henry VIII travelled, his court travelled with him and the host paid for everything. There was a fine line between having the monarch as your guest, in which case you may get future favours for you or your family, and losing all your money. It was a fine line between ego and practical finance. Most of the Lords knew that only three groups got direct financial benefits. These were: the people who supplied food to the manor, the local taverns, and the prostitutes. The Lords did not benefit directly but hoped for future recognition and they also hoped that other Lords, who did not host the monarch, might be jealous.

It has cost much money to host the Rugby World Cup. Many countries competed for the honour but I suspect some were happy not to win as they could not have afforded the cost. Our Government has "invested billions" as they believe it is good advertising for our country and the local cities, my own included, have invested millions. Like the aristocracy

at the time of Henry VIII they hope that some of the monarch's glory will make everyone happy. After all, everyone likes a pageant. For people who do not like the monarch they hope that they might get carried along by the excitement and stop doing their own private cost benefit analysis.

What does this mean for us? I presume as a church, rather than a sect, we are represented in all three of the benefiting groups. We are also represented among those who hope for future benefits and we are also represented among those who are doing a more immediate cost-benefit analysis. We are also well represented among those who celebrate life. Even those among us who are not rugby devotees enjoy seeing people relax.

Coming from the Jewish Anglo-Catholic tradition we realise that people are good, that we are held in the palms of God's hand, and that even though we fail, we are still loved. I think people would have had the same consciousness at the time of Henry VIII. They may have been appalled at the behaviour of some courtiers, they may not have approved of the morals of some nobles, including the king, but somehow they

would have said that "God is here."

The dress, the pageantry, the music, would have all communicated happiness. Like the RWC, rain would have dampened enthusiasm but if the sun was shining everyone would have been happy. Liturgy, or "the work of the people," is not just rules and rubrics but should communicate and reflect people's lives; and many aspects of the RWC were a secular liturgy.

Our country has been hit by the Canterbury earthquakes, by the West Coast mine disaster, and by the effects of a global economic downturn, so a little bit of "good" news is welcome. Recently I was the celebrant at a Mass full of green clad Irish supporters who vastly outnumbered a small number of Italian supporters. The rugby supporters joined with children anticipating St Francis Day by a blessing of pets, along with two first communicants. It was a Mass of difference, or contrasts and complementarities. It was a real celebration of God's presence among us. ■

Father Peter Norris is the Master of St Margaret's College, University of Otago

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a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

Six mothers in old, thin saris sit with me on the compact dirt under the tree. Skinny small children climb on them, pull at their torn blouses for a breast feed... flies crawling across their smeared faces. Meanwhile our community health team gives a talk to the village men seated up on a platform. Their faces and clothes are also torn, old and tired. Lukash, the health project manager, asks with the megaphone, "Who has a toilet here? Raise your hands so we can count."

Not a hand is raised.

Lukash explains about the government subsidy scheme for building toilets in villages: how they can get access to funding for cement and the latrine itself; what the community must contribute (labour, walls and roof); how our health project team can support.

Under the hot sun the earth is baked hard. Digging holes for toilets seems too much like hard work even to me. This year's monsoon was ample but this area has had droughts for the last eight years. Most of the families will leave after Diwali to work in brick kilns and factories on the margins of big cities. Their kids can work there too. No school for six months...

I sit and talk with the group of women later. They tell me that children are only given first weaning foods by 12 or 15 months. By then they are all underweight and severely stunted. Breast is best – but after six months others foods must be added. These pre-schoolers have desperately thin legs and arms. They have skin sores, thin bleached hair and no buttocks — all the signs of malnutrition.

As I bounce away in the jeep I can only feel deeply sad. Our project has been working in this district for more than a decade but it seems to have barely touched the poverty, social exclusion, illiteracy and disempowered lives. Today I don't even feel angry at the injustice, at the affluent lifestyles and wealth of countries like New Zealand, at the huge and often oppressive forces of globalisation, at myself and my privilege.

I just feel despairing.

I know there are thousands and thousands more communities as poor, as thin, as hungry, as overwhelmingly short of options... and for all the different government programmes... and development officers... and NGOs... and funding agencies... and even prayers — the poor are still with us.

And I hardly know what I can do. I hardly know where is God. ■



Kaaren and Jeph, with their four children, live in North India and work in health and community development.



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