Tui Motu

InterIs-

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Passionist Family Groups in NZ – having fun and building Christian community

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A place for Alex?

(Photo: *Next* Magazine)

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Building Community

At the end of this month is one of those ancient feasts, which we cannot ignore because these days we celebrate it on a Sunday. Saints Peter and Paul have been bracketed together for so many centuries that we easily forget what uneasy bedfellows they were. About the only time we read about them together in the New Testament they are having a monumental row. It was resolved because they met up and listened to each other, and a possible schism in the early church was avoided.

When the late and celebrated Scripture scholar, Raymond Brown, last lectured in New Zealand, he spoke of this tension and how important it was for the apostles to preserve the *koinonia*, that bond of communal faith and love which keeps a Christian community together. The word is variously translated 'community' or 'communion'. It suggests mutual fidelity and devotion: a group of people bound together by love.

This issue of *Tui Motu* concentrates especially on the communal aspect of Christian faith. Pope John Paul, in *Redemptor Hominis*, describes the church as the 'community of disciples'. We look at the work of the Passionist Family Group movement, whose aim specifically is to build community. In only eight years in New Zealand it has reached 100 Catholic parishes through the country – as well as other denominations; on average half the parishioners are actively involved. Its quiet but spectacular growth is surely a sign of the Spirit. Perhaps indeed, as Fr Brian Traynor suggests, we have here the model of the future church.

In more general terms Bishop Penny Jamieson (opposite) sees in Christian community the very antithesis of the rampant individualism in contemporary society: a society motivated more by the pursuit of selfish goals than by love. Succesive governments here and overseas have pandered to the cult of individualism and in particular the pursuit of economic gain as the primary civic virtue. Before an election it is good to demand of our leaders an account of their stewardship.

New Zealand's record with regard to the annexation and subjection of the people of East Timor is a disgrace, and Mr McKinnon especially should be challenged on the consistent way he and his colleagues have put trade and economic gain before justice for an oppressed minority. The NZ Army has helped train the Indonesian military who over the last 20 years have the deaths of 200,000 innocent people on their hands.

Being an 'accessory before the fact', condoning a manifest evil on some spurious grounds of non-interference with the internal affairs of another country: these are serious deficiencies on which to judge the performance of our leaders. The Government's record regarding the imbalance of world trade is little better. The Winebox affair was a classic case of a grubby cover-up of tax evasion on the part of wealthy New Zealand companies, with the Government playing the role of Pontius Pilate. Once again, being accessories before the fact.

I hope Mr McKinnon and Mrs Shipley – and indeed all our potential leaders – watch the much acclaimed documentary on the killing of New Zealander, Kamal Bamadhaj, in the Dili massacre (reviewed p 31). I hope they take their heads out of their economic textbooks, and seek instead to restore this nation's record as a champion of human rights. The fundamental challenge before all contenders at the forthcoming General Election is: *what are you proposing to do to build true community at home and promote peace and justice overseas?* ■

M.H.

Tui Motu-InterIslands

The name Tui Motu *was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together, connecting...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God.*

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Tui Motu-InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. We invite you into dialogue: responding, speaking out, questioning – identifying and deepening your beliefs
- bringing the gospel to life
- pushing out boundaries
- challenging the powerbrokers, affirming the

Tui Motu welcomes discussion of spiritual, theological and social issues, in the light of gospel values and in the interest of a more peaceful and just society. 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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Being and Belonging

Bishop Penny Jamieson

In the 1970s a dear friend of mine packed up her life and set off for Australia to join a religious community. She was home six months later – sadder and wiser. Perhaps the saddest thing she said to me as she was trying to understand what had happened, was that she felt that "*Community* should be a four-letter word". It was, she said, very, very hard.

Her words came back to me some ten years later when we were all confronted with Margaret Thatcher's statement: "There is no such thing as society". There always has been and always will be a real tension between individuals and the values that hold them in community with other individuals. It would seem that it is part of the self-protective instinct of humankind to hold a guard between their needs and interests and those of others – "this far I will go, and no further".

These tensions are greater now than at any time I can remember, and the challenge of individualism has penetrated right into our church cultures. We place an enormous emphasise on the *spirituality* of each individual; the word integrity is one that I often hear; people tell me they are *comfortable* in their ministry. Where I wonder is the giving that does not count the cost: the generosity of spirit on which community and the individuals who make it up, thrive?

All too often we find it too hard even to live with and relate to our families. I was recently tending a friend whose stepmother had died. The real tragedy, my friend told me, was that her stepmother had not known which family she belonged to and had more-or-less played one off against the other. The tension between the questions of being and those of belonging were too great for her. Families need loyal, committed and determined members just as everyone else does.

The deepening of my understanding of community was one of the spin-offs of the *Hikoi of Hope* which walked the length of these two long islands in the spring of last year. People stuck to it; they gave away ideals of personal comfort; they realised it was not necessary to agree on all things in order to get along; they welcomed newcomers and farewelled those who left – in good style. There was a losing of self, as, towards the end, people scarcely knew what they were doing, or why they were doing it. And there was, too, a finding of self that was really significant in the lives of many people.

These are qualities of interdependence and mutuality that are the building blocks of both 'community' in general and of the many communities that our lives touch and revolve around. They are qualities of both being and belonging. ■

letters

Living more simply

Some time ago I saw a Mini car with the following window-sticker:
Live simply so that others may simply live
I found this a challenge of great importance and depth. It touches on the slaveries of pollution, poverty, the interest-burden, gambling, other wasteful, detrimental and unnecessary spending, leading to the gradual enslavement of this nation to international financial manipulators.

So what can we do, if we believe in the possibility of a better New Zealand?

Whenever we have a choice between polluting and conserving, wasting and recycling, unnecessary spending and investing, careless financial management and thrift, we can choose the second option and live with it consciously and happily.

I know someone who deliberately chose a handmower over a motor mower and someone else who over the years repeatedly chose the most frugal and basic cars, although rich enough to spend luxuriously.

Is the above not the attitude which we should foster and develop and is it not the task of government to provide the fiscal incentives towards such attitude and practice?

Ecologist*(name and address supplied)*

Professionalism in sport

Many readers could affiliate with Mike Marshall's concerns (*TM May* issue) about the perils of professional football and with his nostalgia for the simpler arrangements of yesteryear. Many a Kiwi kid will have memories of the local park. Big memories can linger for small spaces.

We cannot cut something down to size, however, because that is how we might prefer it. All professionals pursue excellence and those who can't, derive vicarious pleasure from watching or listening to those who do. Witness the opera, ballet, symphony orchestras, and – yes – tennis players, cricketers, and even footballers! These are the stars we mere mortals can admire even if we can't emulate them.

As I write the good folks of the South Island (where by some strange chance both finalists for the Super 12 reside) are gearing up for the big game at Dunedin's famous (infamous) *House of Pain*; so are the rest of us – at clubrooms, private homes, but also at hospitals and nursing homes. Those fortunate souls at Carisbrook will not have it all to themselves. Hundreds of thousands more can say: "we were there!"

Whatever misgivings we might have about professional sport and media interests, would we really like to turn the clock back? Mike's appeal for proven values has much merit though... It's up to those of us who pay the piper to remind players, administrators and especially media barons that professionalism will thrive better if these values survive.

Tony Beddsgood, *Oheawai*

Promoter's Corner

Should you have 'missed' this column over the last two issues (pious hope?) I hasten to assure you that along with others I have been busy with promotion activities. I refer especially to regional gatherings of *Tui Motu* people, the first in Auckland, the other in Christchurch. Both were vibrant and discussed a range of issues affecting *TM*'s future, including increasing our circulation. Directors and editorial staff found them truly encouraging. Summary reports are being prepared to share with you, and other regional meetings are being planned.

At a somewhat more modest level I must share a letter from a senior reader. Sadly it announced – with regrets – that the subscription would not be renewed because of failing eyesight *but* that it would be taken out for the local library in the hope that its popularity would encourage the library to continue the subscription: A wonderfully apostolic gesture.

Without doubt *TM* has general appeal – (one reader told us that her husband reads it with great interest and he isn't even baptised!). Could you think about funding a subscription for the local library to ensure that other people in your locality get the good news? You would? Please go quickly to the subscription form on page 31 before you get distracted! A friendly visit to the head librarian to make the offer is the other necessary move. (Have you ever known a library to turn down an offer?)

If you have any questions about *TM* or suggestions please write direct to: 26 Hopkins Crescent, Auckland 5. I would be delighted to hear from you. ■

Congregation Leaders call for Moratorium

The Congregational Leaders' Conference of Aotearoa-New Zealand, has called for a Moratorium on genetic engineering in food.

In a statement issued to its members on 24 May, the Conference has specifically demanded:

- a Moratorium on the release or field trials of transgenic crops, animals or other organisms and on the approval of any further transgenic foods for sale in New Zealand
- all foods containing any genetically engineered produce to be clearly labelled
- NZ to be a "Genetic Engineering Free Zone"

Including Jimmy – a whole new ball game!

Jimmy was a disabled child at St Mary's Catholic Primary School. Every year the school used to enter sports teams in one of the local competitions, and year after year they would win the Large Ball Handling section. The day arrived once again, and this time the Principal proposed that Jimmy should be in the team – much to the chagrin of the coach who liked winning. The day dawned – and there was Jimmy totally involved with a smile as big as the whole of New Zealand. The rest of the children were running up and down cheering him on; they didn't appear to care less if they won or lost. They were just infected by Jimmy's delight and the pleasure of being able to help him. They were there to enjoy their mate.

"It happens again and again in schools where there is mainstreaming, and it convinces you inclusion is the right and normal thing to do."

Mainstreaming in schools

"Inclusion is a basic Gospel value.."

Michelle Rafferty (left) and Helen Johnston (right) have one thing in common: they are both passionate about making schools as inclusive as possible

It came on us overnight, says Michelle. "I was Principal of St Patrick's School in Masterton – and suddenly mainstreaming happened. The special schools closed, and we had to deal with these children with all manner of special needs and no experience of what to do with them.

"But the more I became involved in mainstreaming, the more passionate I became about the idea of inclusion as a Gospel value: through meeting the parents who had had such a struggle – and coming in contact with the children who proved to be such a gift in themselves. As I became more passionate I wanted to know more. I applied for a year's leave in 1996 so I could learn all about it".

Helen's background was as Special Needs resource teacher in an Intermediate School. For her too it was actually listening to parents of these children that persuaded her that this was a Human Rights issue. "In the new environment," she says, "we now have to justify *exclusion* rather than trying to justify *inclusion*."

Michelle describes the struggle that this radical change has entailed. The Government decreed that mainstreaming should take place. But they had to persuade the community. Boards and parents went along with it almost from the start.

"I have never had a parent coming up to me and saying: 'This is wrong; these children are taking up too much time'. So, once I had explained to the Board the philosophy of including children with disabilities, they were never anything but 100 percent behind me,

and resolved to provide the resources. And once a Board accepts it, the parents become 'educated' to the idea as well.

"Integration describes our Catholic schools as 'Christ-centred'. But you cannot say you are Christ-centred for one child but not for another. Inclusion happens because of what you have already stated as your belief. You can't accept this Gospel value while putting that one aside. Inclusion may not be easy – but that doesn't mean it shouldn't be happening."

Both Michelle and Helen did the full-time training course to equip themselves, and then set about 'marketing' the idea. They first had the practical experience. Now they have the theory too, and that gives them credibility. So, when they speak to an audience of teachers or parents, they know the theory. But what is important is that people see they are committed heart and soul to it. "When you talk to a Catholic organisation," says Michelle, "they know already that inclusion is a basic gospel value. The only problem is how to achieve it."

In Wellington Michelle, on behalf of the Catholic Education Centre, co-proposed a Professional Development Contract with the School of Special Education and the Wellington College of Education. This was a first for a Catholic body, but, as Michelle says, "we were putting our money where our mouth was!" Cardinal Williams was extremely supportive of the idea.

Helen has found that Catholic schools accept the notion of becoming inclusive more easily because of the basic gospel value on which they are founded. Sometimes, however, the problem is with more experienced teachers who are used to having 'experts' come in to take these children away – or that the children simply have not been there before. It demands a big change in their thinking – but most make that change and accept inclusion as a principle.

Parents of children who are disabled will often receive a negative response when they seek to enrol their child. "We haven't got the toileting facilities", a school says to them. The Principal's attitude is crucial. "You can imagine how a parent feels,' says Michelle, "toting their child round three or four schools and being told 'we haven't got the facilities'. Their child is being denied access to education on quite flimsy grounds: grounds which are now illegal.

"We need to say to these parents: 'your child has the same right as any other child to have their needs met. The fact that it may be more difficult to meet the needs of your child is not your problem: it's ours'.

"These parents have often had to fight every step of the way. They have had to come to terms with the fact of having a disabled child. Each transition in the child's life has been another fight. So if parents can find an oasis of willingness, having their child's needs met by the school just like any other child's, then they are thrilled. Nobody asked them if they had the resources available when their child was disabled. So the child should never have to suffer because the school says it hasn't got the facilities. It's not the child's fault. You only have to see the parents with their children to know they have rights the same as everyone else."

Once the disabled child is accepted in the school community, he or she becomes a *gift*. "As much as they get, they give," says Michelle. What's more, the other children accept a child with a disability more readily than do adults. "Nevertheless", insists Helen, "the adults must model the behaviour of total acceptance in order for the children to do the same. If the adults don't demonstrate the values of commitment and acceptance, the children may soon come to copy them. If the teacher behaves differently towards a child with special needs, the rest will pick it up."

What Helen and Michelle are doing is trying to persuade teachers that they already have the skills to succeed with these special needs children as well. An effective teacher can teach any child. But you still need to give these teachers strategies to develop the skills they already have.

Children with behavioural problems are the ones that teachers find most difficult to accept and 'include'. Yet such children are only going to learn normal behaviour in a situation when that is what everybody else does. Teachers need to be provided with strategies to cope with moderately disruptive cases. There will be situations where special intervention becomes necessary. Helen and Michelle insist that such cases are

'.. a normal little boy in a crippled body..."

Sacred Heart School, in Dunedin, has half a dozen special needs children. Principal Genny Hanning says, simply: "It's part of our Gospel values: God has asked us to care for these children." Genny has seen great benefits to the other pupils having to take responsibility, say, for a disabled or a diabetic child.

David Moroney is an eight-year-old with cerebral palsy and other major problems. He has made great progress at Sacred Heart. "He is gifted, is very musical and can write music," says Genny. "David talks with his eyes. The other children learn to speak to him. The children accept him as part of their normal school lives. In the playground there is always someone to look after him. He is just a normal little boy in a very crippled body."

Two years ago David won the Eli Lilly Youth Achievement Award for diabetics, for his courage in dealing with his disability.

Alex – and friends. Alex Snedden is a Downs' Syndrome child at St Michael's School, Remuera. He has a teacher's aid for two hours a day. Principal Craig McCarthny says the other children are very well accepting of him. Alex knows he is different, but does not feel disadvantaged. "It's an extra challenge," says Craig, "having special needs children. But each child is unique – and in that sense Alex is no different from any other." *(Photo:* Next *Magazine)*

quite rare.

Sometimes children may need a fresh start, so to change schools may be the best thing for them. What is unjust is simply to unload a problem child onto somebody else. Judging these extreme cases needs to be a decision by all parties concerned together.

The smaller, more rural communities have always practiced inclusion, simply because there was nowhere to unload the difficult cases! The problem arises more in secondary schools, and especially where there is a strongly competitive atmosphere between schools. "What happens," says Michelle, "is that so-called 'magnet' schools develop. They are the ones willing to take children with disabilities. So the other schools will tend to direct parents down the road to the school which is 'known to have the facilities which will best suit your child'.

"Parents will always want their children to attend a school which welcomes their child. Some schools are quite happy to welcome more children with special needs. Of course, they will always need the resources, and society has to provide these for schools. The danger is, though, that what you are doing is simply creating a new raft of special schools. The ideal would be for all schools to be 'magnet' schools!

"Inclusion will be much more difficult in the secondary system," thinks Helen, "simply because of the nature of the schools, where a student comes into regular contact with a much greater number of teachers." Nevertheless secondary schools will have to prepare themselves, because there is a whole generation of special needs children coming through who have been mainstreamed through the primary system.

A school is preparing a child for life. But society consists of people with all manner of different abilities and needs. The schools, therefore, have to adapt themselves to the needs of the child – and not the other way round. A serious question many secondary schools need to ask themselves is: *what about our policies regarding suspension and expulsion of difficult pupils*? How does this fit in with a philosophy of inclusion? Indeed, does it? "Inclusion has to be when it's hard as well as when it's easy," says Michelle. "There may be cases where a change of schools is going to be an answer: that is a 'negotiated exit' – but not a chucking out!

"I think Catholic schools should be the ones standing up and saying: *we accept everyone in our school, and we work with them until we find a way through.* The basic criterion for inclusion is breathing!" ■

M.H.

Community of disciples

In the New Testament Jesus came to preach the kingdom, or reign, of God. He also called together a band of followers – who formed a community of disciples growing to become the church of Christ

John Dunn

Back to the Scriptures! Whenever living a full Christian life becomes an issue, this seems to be the catch-cry. Go back to the first Christian disciples and their communities to find the ideal for Christians today, if we in our generation are to live the gospel to the full. So let us look at some Scripture themes which influence our understanding of church as the *community of disciples,* and see if they can throw any light on our being church today.

Jesus and his call

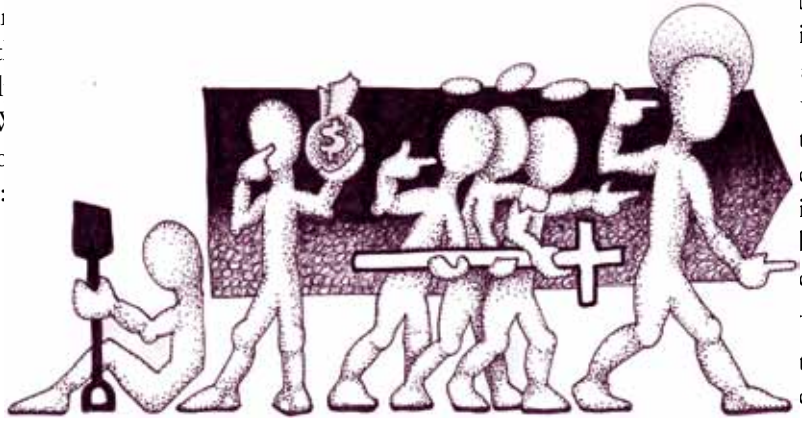
Jesus called some to *follow him* – such as Simon Peter, or the unnai who wanted to bury his fat the rich young man. Literall of Jesus mean: *go behind.* V goes the person is called tc *Mark* 8:33 Peter is corrected: "Get behind me, Satan!" That is, 'get back into your right relationship and follow me'. Then Jesus says: "If any want to be my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Following Jesus is a theme of discipleship unto and beyond death and resurrection.

Teacher (Rabbi) and disciples

Those who are called, become Jesus' disciples. A disciple is *one who learns.* Once again the stress is on the right relationship with the teacher. The company of Jesus' disciples includes the 12 and also the women who care for Jesus and go around with him (*Lk 8: 1-3*). They are called not merely to follow Jesus singly but to follow him *together.* They were each in their own way entranced by him, by his message and his mission, but then they faced the shared task of *learning to follow him together*. There may have been a common purse. Some even wanted the highest places! So, the first forms of common life – and thus of the church – began with the disciples in their life together with and around Jesus.

The kingdom or reign of God

The Jews dreamed of an anointed (*Messiah*) king, who would establish God's reign on earth. The coming of the reign of God was the central message of Jesus. "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near; repent



1: 15) The disciples saw him as the appointed Messiah, even if, perhaps, he did not claim to be.

They had to learn to cope with his disturbing actions when he broke the Sabbath laws, consorted with notorious sinners, allowed women to go around with him, and generally did things which were considered outlandish by the pious Jews of the day. There must have been many an intriguing conversation by night as they sought to comprehend this man they were following. They learnt too from the reactions of Israel: its leaders and its little folk, not to speak of the occasional non-Israelite. All these elements which they shared in common – Jesus' person, his mission, his actions, his teaching, the positive and negative effects of what he did and said – coalesced into a uniquely rich experience . The *kingdom – or reign – of God* attempts to name it.

The church

A French scholar, Loisy, wrote in 1903 that Jesus announced the kingdom – and what came was the church! There is a clear difference between the kingdom in its fullness and what we experience as church. At most the church can be the '[illegible]' or sign of the kingdom: its member-disciples live a form of 'kingdom life' which varies according to culture, place and circumstances. But what is the right relation between kingdom and church?

The Greek word used in the New Testament for church is *ekklesia.* The root meaning is to be 'called out'. To belong to the church is a calling or vocation. In the Old Testament the Jews had a similar expression, which is translated as the *people of God.* This phrase was singled out at the Vatican Council in the Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (Ch 2). The church is seen as the new Israel, the new, pilgrim people of God.

In *Acts* Luke uses the word *ekklesia* to designate the community of disciples in Jerusalem, or Antioch, or Ephesus. Paul uses it for the community of disciples who meet at a particular city or place. He sometimes sends a greeting to the

community who gather 'at the house of Prisca', or Philemon, or whoever. But he also uses the term for the universal church.

We may say, therefore, that *church* and *kingdom of God are indissolubly* linked since it is for the disciples to be like their master. The church exists, not for itself, but to bring about the reign of God. When the Christian community is not missionary, it is not church. It is not simply a matter of going out to preach to unbelievers; it is a transformation of our world. Francis Fiorenza says: "Justice is fundamentally a community-establishing behaviour". The church's social teachings and the ideal of relationships which should prevail within and outside the church, all draw inspiration from the fact that church exists to serve the kingdom of God which Jesus preached, and for which he lived and died.

The church exists, not for itself, but to bring about the reign of God. When the Christian community is not missionary, it is not church

Communion – *koinonia*

The Greek word *koinonia* is used in the Bible to describe fellowship, partici-pation, sharing in common. In *Acts* we read: "The disciples devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship (*koinonia)*, to the breaking of bread and to prayers" (2:42). This ideal of community life taken from the book of *Acts* has inspired many through the centuries.

In the writings of Paul the word *koinonia* often has a baptismal context. It implies sharing with Christ, his sufferings – with the Spirit, with the light, with God's glory. It also means communion and solidarity with the apostles, with other members of the community, and with others as well. At this level the touchstone of true *koinonia* is Eucharist. Paul writes: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a sharing (*koinonia*) in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing (*koinonia*) in the body of Christ?" (*1 Cor 10:16*).

When some of the Corinthian community eat while others go hungry, Paul says it is not the Lord's Supper they are eating. In other words the *koinonia* has been damaged to the point that the communion effected by Christ in his supper is absent. New Zealand scholar (the late) Fr Gerry Fitzgerald once argued that Anglican and Catholic bishops are similarly responsible for the integrity of the *koinonia*, and should be aware that because of separation their Eucharist risked suffering this judgment of Paul's! Thus, church is more truly Christ's church to the extent that it loves the kingdom of God and is in ecumenical solidarity and communion (*koinonia*) with other disciples, with other churches, with the human community.

The life of grace

Paul told Christian spouses in Corinth that they should not divorce their non-Christian spouses, because "the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy." (*1 Cor 1:17*). Thus the non-Christian spouses share in *koinonia*, the life of God, through their Christian partners.

The question, *What is the Spirit saying to the churches?* is timely for us in this season of Pentecost. Are we to look for new forms of church life? Are our parish structures, which support our common Christian life, to remain and be modified; or are they to collapse and be replaced by new models of church life, such as 'communities of disciples'?

In the light of these Scriptural explorations we can draw a few conclusions:

- belonging to some form of community is of the essence of church. We are disciples *together*, and in some way share life and learn to follow Christ together.
- we need to ensure that our priorities as church communities are themselves Christ-like – focussing, not inwards, but outwards towards helping the reign of God to come about.
- we need to see communities such as Passionist Family Groups in the context of a world-wide movement towards *basic Christian communities.* In Latin America these communities emerged as groups of people gathering to share their life and base it on their reflection on the Word of God.

The Philippines Bishops' Conference called them "the basic ecclesial unit of parish and diocesan communities... a concrete realisation of a renewed church, a community of disciples living in communion, participating in the mission of Christ, and the church of the poor." (1996) Not all such groups within the church see themselves as 'basic Christian communities'.

The imperative is that each such group have a care for the wider *koinonia*. Ecumenism is of first concern. So is the care for similar solidarity-building values in a world increasingly individualistic, adversarial, made up of winners and losers, rich and impover-ished; and in a world where nationalism sabotages most efforts at communion among nations. For Christians, who make up a quarter of the world's population, the link between *koinonia* and the reign of God for which Christ died, remains a gift and an insistent challenge.

In sum, Jesus, vocation, common discipleship and solidarity with all that is good – all these elements will be part of the shape of the church to come. ■

Fr John Dunn is parish priest of Beachhaven in Auckland. He lectures in theology at the Catholic Institute of Theology

Building parish communities

the Passionist Family Group Movement

Australian Fr Brian Traynor and New Zealander Mrs Lyn Hill, pictured left, spend many months of the year promoting a movement which is growing like the mustard seed throughout New Zealand parishes.
Brian, himself a Passionist priest, has been part of the Passionist Family Group movement since its beginnings. Lyn and her husband Rob are national organisers, and for Lyn it's a full time job. Tui Motu *interviewed them recently on their visit to the Deep South*

A typical Passionist Family Group is an extended family, says Brian Traynor. "In a parish you are going to have solo parents, singles, widows, young marrieds – along with the established families. In an ideal group they would all be respresented".

The Movement started in a Passionist parish in Sydney 25 years ago with a group of people who used to come together regularly for adult education weekends. They decided to meet more frequently and bring their families, and so the monthly family gatherings started. But it was ten years before the idea moved outside the first parish. That was 1982. It went to Brisbane the following year, spread steadily in Australia, and came to New Zealand in 1988. The first New Zealand parish to take it on was Paeroa, where Lyn Hill was a parishioner, so she too is a pioneer of the Movement.

Currently 101 parishes in New Zealand have Passionist Family Groups, predominantly Catholic but with seven from other denominations. In Australia there would be some 250 parishes, mostly on the East Coast and around Adelaide. Recently there have been beginnings in the US, Ireland and England. In New Zealand the northernmost parish where the movement is established is in Whangarei, the southernmost is in Invercargill.

"Parishes which already have a good sense of community", says Brian, "take it on because they want to enhance what they've already got." Says Lyn: "Sometimes at a parish council meeting someone will say 'we don't need this; we already know one another'. That's a presump-tion. It may be true for people who have been there for generations, but for somebody new in the parish, it can be very difficult for them to break in. That's especially true for younger people. They arrive in a parish and are overwhelmed by all these people they don't know." In a parish where there are low and high socio-economic groups, it "mixes them up: that brings its own gifts."

So what is the philosophy?

Says Brian: "It's a very simple way to get people to meet one another. This then deepens not only their sense of community but their whole understanding of what faith is. Some come to the movement thinking that

"Older people appreciate the contact with young families.." - celebrating a birthday in the family group

faith is simply about going to church and not about mixing with each other. They might see the movement as merely social – just having barbecue. The practical outcome is that people start to support each other and reach out to one another. And some will want to explore their faith further through adult education and formation. People need to see a parish as a little cluster of communities, and they have a responsibility to build that. The method is, very simply, getting to know people and building a sense of family.

" For older people," says Lyn, "they very much appreciate the contact with younger families and with children, because often their own families are far away." She notes how people who have got to know each other well in the Family Groups will often move into a parish programme or renewal group together. "Sometime a group will do a Lenten programme together. It all depends where each group is at. The move, for instance, to have a house Mass will happen when the people want it themselves, rather than being imposed on them from on top. It's growing from what is in their hearts. You've come so close to one another that you need to give expression to it."

Parish priests range from being fantastically supportive to adopting a 'hands off' approach. "Hopefully'" says Brian, "it will be a thing a priest will support and encourage. It's disappointing if the priest never meets with the leaders or visits the groups." Priests have also commented that where family group operate in the parish, they find less people knocking on their door saying: 'I need help, Father'. The parish priest can receive much support and affirmation from the groups. By attending the leaders' meetings periodically he can learn a lot about the pastoral realities in the parish.

How do you start?

In some parishes group membership will be as high as 70-80 percent; sometimes as low as 20-30 percent, but there would not be many parishes

"Not just a barbecue". The dads on cooking duty for Mothers' Day, in a St Mary's, Mosgiel, family group

where membership is under 50 percent of the active Catholic community. Lyn says that she would be disappointed in a new parish if they failed to get 60 percent to join up.

The run-up for a new parish takes about 6 weeks. An important feature is for members from other parishes to come in and share their experience. "The special appeal," thinks Lyn, "is that it is a very non-threatening type of activity and it's one of the very few things, in an interfaith marriage, that your partner can come to and belong to. Often people have said that joining the family group was the very first time they felt that both were involved in the church."

Lyn insists that as church we have a responsibility also towards the non-Catholic partners, and the movement really caters for that. Interestingly, perhaps 25 percent of the group leaders belong to that 'non-practical' category. Brian tells the story of one non-Catholic who has been a group leader for many years, who was received this year. He says that for years he has been getting up in Catholic churches and starting his spiel: "I am not a Catholic" – but now he's having to change his tune!

Training the leaders

Those in leadership meet regularly for training and consultation, and that gives them a much wider sense of church. Training of leaders consists of one weekend per year for parish coordinators and another weekend for all those in leadership, which would include anyone else in the groups who might be a potential leader. The trainers would be mostly Passionist priests. Occasionally there will be special 6-day training sessions in basic leadership skills, and people who have regional responsibility would normally be those who have done that programme.


"..a eucharistic community.."

Presently there are 19 'regions' in New Zealand and each year there are training programmes in each region. Initially a Passionist priest would be present every time the movement was set up in a parish and every time the leaders met together. Now the movement is more autonomous. It started first in the North Island. Then people from the North came down to start it in the South. And Christchurch leaders helped start the movement in Dunedin. It's been a good model of how lay people should work in the church - be formed, and then help train others.

Lyn Hill thinks that the movement makes the best possible use of the Passionist Fathers who come over regularly from Australia – for formation and for preaching parish missions. "That leaves us to do what we are good at doing. We train new people, and these new leaders have the experience in their turn to help in the training of others. So people are having formation – and then using it for others." Many of the present leaders have received formation in other ways, by having done *Walk By Faith* or through experience in *Marriage Encounter*.

"..a eucharistic community.."

Ray and Sharon Parker have been group leaders in the Mosgiel parish since the movement started there five years ago. When they first arrived in the parish as newly-marrieds they would come to the church on Sunday and "hardly knew a soul". That all changed when the family groups started. "Now we share with people who have common beliefs" says Ray. "The groups provide community and support. They have given the parish a sense of belonging. It's become a eucharistic community.

"Every couple of years there is a recruitment drive, and no one in the parish is excluded. At the moment we've got about 40 in our group of whom probably 30 are active and come regularly. There are some who don't come much, but they like to know what's going on."

And what is going on? The monthly meetings include potluck dinners, barbecues in the summer, a car rally, games evenings and a midwinter dinner. The children usually come to alternate meetings; and the venue – whoever offers. Leadership of the groups and the role of parish co-ordinator rotates every couple of years. Ray and Sharon think the Passionist groups are wonderful, especially for young families.

The Bishops have been very supportive in New Zealand. This seems to be a special advantage of being a small country. They will sometimes turn up when a diocesan training weekend is held. But essentially it is a lay movement, even though the Passionists initiated it and continue to serve it. All the directors now are lay people. "The Passionists are behind the movement," says Brian, "rather than in front: nurturing, forming, providing the spirit. It's a good model of the future church."

Some special cases

The Passionist family movement has started to spread into other churches as well. In New Plymouth many churches have family groups: Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and two Baptist parishes are involved. "The experience of those people in ecumenism" suggests Brian, "is quite different from what the theologians are talking about – they are actually doing it! The leaders get together and they have joint activities. Ideally the people you are mixing with in the groups will be the people you worship with. But where there are groups of differing denominations who do not normally worship together, the leaders will meet and there could occasionally be prayer and worship together." The New Plymouth experience has enabled the local ministers to co-operate more

and become very relaxed with one another.

For young people the groups provide a special support these days when for the most part their peers never darken the doors of a church. It can be a lonely ride for the young ones who stay within the worshipping community: being in the groups offers them special support. Then there are the ones in irregular relationships who may say: "The church doesn't want us". But there can be a place for them in a family group.

Another thing that experience has shown is that the family groups are like families, and anything that can happen in a family can also happen in the family group. Marriages may break up in the group, although examples where a break-up has been blamed on the group are extremely rare. But what does happen is that the partners who have broken up are supported by members of the group. Brian cited a case where the wife stayed in the group, but the men in the group made a point of meeting the husband regularly, until he was ready to move in a different direction. "I was impressed by that," said Brian. "The members of the group didn't take sides, but the wife and the children were still able to belong and be supported."

The profile of the group becomes very important if there are members who are a bit 'alone', such as very young adults. They need to have at least one other person in the group of their own vintage, and the group must ensure that they 'belong' and are looked after and that a good role model is provided for them to look up to. It doesn't work simply to put, say, all the young marrieds in the same group. It is essential that the groups are mixed young and old, married and single.

How are the groups chosen?

"You have to fix the groups," explains Brian, "so that although there is a mix there will always be someone of a similar age range. So for example if you have a family which has an eight-year-old girl and a four-year-old boy, you try to make sure there are matching families so that no child is left on his/her own. An older person wouldn't want to be in a group where they were all about 25. The young need the young – and so on."

Lyn thinks that one of the beauties of the system is that the groups are put together away from the parish. "Because we don't know the people we are not prejudiced. And it works!" The lists are run past the parish team to make sure there are no potential disasters being created. Often when people are persuaded to stay with a group where there is someone they think they cannot get on with, they in fact resolve it in the group. "We are going to have to work at this animosity, if we are going to belong together. After all," says Brian, "isn't that what Gospel is all about!"

During a period when Mass attendance is on the wane, belonging to a family group may be the only experience of church that a person has. And quite a number of non-Catholic partners have become Catholics through belonging to the group. What is vital in a family group is what is going on underneath: are they caring for one another, do they love one another? Brian Traynor maintains that if everyone in a parish were in functioning family groups, there would be no need for a lot of the other things that go on, because the family groups cater for so many ordinary pastoral needs. ■

M.H.

What is vital in a family group is what is going on underneath: are they caring for one another; do they love one another?

"..you cannot put a price on what it's done for our parish.."

John and Rosie Crawford are Dunedin district co-ordinators. "You simply cannot put a price on what the Passionist family Movement has done for our own parish," they say. "The parish has become 'bigger', because it now encompasses a whole lot of people who do not regularly go to church, such as non-Catholic partners. They now feel more comfortable as members of the church community.

"Sometimes we get asked, 'Does it get people back to church?' We say, it's not about 'bums on seats': but it alters people's perceptions of what church is all about, changing it into a living community. The kids love it, especially the 5 to 12-year-olds.

"Each group has its own 'personality'. And if you have a problem, like a bereavement or a family tragedy – then you have a ready-made support group for the person who's in need." ■

Some very important members of a St Bernadette's, Dunedin, family group

New Wineskins

a blueprint for the future church

Brian Traynor CP suggests that the Passionist Family Groups may be pointing the direction for a new Millennium

Most of those in family groups do not comprehend that they are involved in a revolutionary way of living and being church. Everywhere there are calls in the church for small groups. Few calls are for and yet that is what the church needs. For that is how the church began.

There is an increasing number of people calling for a change to compulsory priestly celibacy. Many people advocate women priests. We can't continue the structures we have without priests. Their solution is to seek more clerics. Is that really what we need? Hasn't Vatican II brought us to realise the role of the laity and a different vision of church life? Are we perhaps on the verge of discovering new structures and if so, new wine needs new wineskins.

In an article published some years ago called , Robert Banks spoke of the relevance of Paul's idea of community and the local church today. He pointed out that certain aspects of Paul's approach are irrelevant for us today because of changed cultural circumstances. On the other hand he suggested that Paul's approach possessed ongoing vitality because it sprang directly from the gospel.

Banks suggested that there are three aspects of Paul's community that are no longer relevant. The first is the within the church. T he first Christian churches were made up of converted, extended family households. These families included slaves and their dependents, friends and free people, old and single relatives. These people knew each other well. Some households were "divided", as Paul relates in Corinthians, by the fact that some relatives refused to take on this new Christian faith. Our churches today are made up of independent nuclear families and single people, of whom very few knew each other before they joined the church.

A second aspect that is different is the within the church. In the early church household, authority centred on the father or husband. Wives and slaves were generally precluded from having any leading responsibility. Paul commended those men and households who turned their positions of privilege into service.

The abolition of slavery and the movement for women's liberation, together with the availability of education and employment for all, has altered the balance of authority in our time. The separation of work from home life, of aged from their offspring and the diminished social gap between men and women, and between employers and employees, has altered the way authority is exercised. This allows for a varied approach to authority which has more potential than has in fact been realised. Despite these changes though, it seems apparent that, as in Paul's time, some people in the church have a more significant part to play than others.

A third obvious difference from Paul's time is the Bread and wine were basic food and drink in the first century, and the commencement and conclusion of a meal were generally marked by breaking the bread and drinking the wine. This meant that the Lord's Supper was an ordinary meal using common food and drink, but given special significance. It was not a separate ritual. This meal in Paul's time took place in homes, where local households gathered together. Our large gatherings in parish churches are far removed from this type of celebration, common in the early church.

Banks proposed three aspects of Paul's idea of community which are most in danger of being overlooked in modern life :-

• **Its family nature**. Many churches today talk about the church being a family, yet the members barely know one another. Paul regarded his communities as extended families. They contained people who were to become fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces, and cousins, to one another.

Paul intended people to have a real involvement in each other's lives, based on commitment to each other. When you join the church others are called to take care of you, and you are called to take care of others. We are called to be to one another what Christ is to us.

• **Its down-to-earth character.** Paul's letters contain many allusions to the need to recognise daily concerns. Whenever we pray, teach or have fellowship, we acknowledge that God is alive and present in those around us. This is incarnational theology: God is alive and in people.

• **Its unexpectedness.** Each local church should look after its own local

affairs and be ready for the unexpected to happen when they meet together. While meetings were to be orderly, there was a need to be open to the greatest needs, and be able to respond to them immediately. There were some people in each community who developed a special pastoral ability.

But no one person or group was in charge, led worship, preached, celebrated Eucharist or directed the church's life. There were significant people who had an itinerant ministry and who occasionally spent time with them. Their duty was to assist the community to become self-reliant.

There is much for the modern church to learn from this model. Clergy need not take upon themselves the many-faceted responsibilities of the community. Church members themselves need to direct the life of their community. This can only truly happen when they feel some sense of fellowship and responsibility. Paul's notion of us being called into a family comes directly from the gospel. Jesus' message of fellowship extends to all people, especially the 'outcast'. Many church members understand this call but feel powerless to achieve it, because structures do not exist in many local parishes to enable it to happen.

Robert Banks suggests there is only one satisfactory solution. "Develop within existing congregations and denominational frameworks, and make them the basic unit of church life." Banks says not small groups, because small groups are not fully church and rarely reflect the basic things in a local church's life; not , for they are limiting, and prevent contact with the real and practical world.

It is impossible to establish meaningful relationships in a group beyond a certain size. People want to close the yawning gap between their inner selves and their social roles and responsibilities. Traditional churches continue to lose members to smaller sects which offer fellowship and 'assured answers'.

'Passionist Family Groups create fellowship..." A group from Glenfield in Auckland doing precisely that.

Banks suggests that it is illusory to think that life can simply be added to what already exists. "We have to say farewell to some organisations that presently operate and encourage these new groups to replace them", he says. "Only as are made the basic unit of congregational life, will they actually fulfil their potential.

"The process should be allowed to grow in its own way and with its own resources. It means being content with small beginnings and being prepared to wait for others to catch the vision before proceeding further."

Twenty years ago a small group of people began the journey that led to the formation of such local churches. Over the next ten years these small groups grew to include new people. They experimented with different ways of establishing themselves and operating for the good of the whole parish. The Passionist Family Group Movement stands today as a pointer for a new direction. It is still early days, but many parishes are already discovering the potential for their parish to become what Robert Banks is calling for and which the church so badly needs.

Around Australia and in New Zealand parishes are discovering how they can create the fellowship which Jesus calls us to. Those elements of extended family life that are vital for a church, are the basis of every Family Group. It will take years for many to discover what we are doing. We are being church – and just maybe we have found a new wineskin! ■

"... a coat of – a very diverse, immigrant

A new type of community is being created in some parts of New Zealand. Immigrants, instead of coming from one country, can be of any and every race, hue and culture. Jackie Brown-Haysom *asks: How is the church facing up to this new challenge?*

Confirmation at St Thomas More's, Glenfield, reflecting the multiracial nature of the community. Candidates with Bishop Pat Dunne and parish priest, Fr John Bland

Stand on a hilltop in the parish of Glenfield on Auckland's North Shore and you will see a panorama of rooftops. Not long ago horses grazed these slopes and strawberries and apple trees grew in the valleys. The lines of houses that now take their place have a just-built look – the lawns a little threadbare and the trees still too small to soften the edges.

But inside these houses a new community is taking shape – one whose members lack a common language or culture, but share the experience of being strangers in a new land. The parish priest of St Thomas More's Catholic parish, Fr John Bland, serves a congregation where little more than a third of worshippers are Pakeha New Zealanders, and at least a dozen other ethnic groups are represented.

"We have 750 Mass-goers here," he says. "Of those perhaps 15 per cent are Iraqis, with a similar number of Tongans and Filipinos. Then there are Indians – from India and from Malaysia, Samoans, South Africans of all colours, Koreans, Chinese, Indonesians, a Brazilian and a family of Egyptians."

Many are new arrivals, still struggling with the language and culture of their adopted country. Some arrive with little more than the clothes they stand in. Others come with resources and qualifications that should ensure them ready employment, but often don't. Even the most fortunate among them often grapples with loneliness, social dislocation or the demands of adapting to a new system.

But for Fr Bland his diverse congregation is something to boast about rather than struggle with. "Down the back of the church at Mass it's like a market place," he says happily. "I was almost a bit frightened when I came here but they're people, like anyone else. As long as you respect their customs there are no problems. It's a great joy."

His appointment to St Thomas More's just over a year ago, was his first parish after years of teaching at Rosmini College, also on the North Shore. "One great asset is my inexperience. I don't come with a preconceived idea of how to run a parish."

He has been quick to realise, however, that it is important for the various groups to be able to express their faith in familiar ways. "We try to accept them in the community here without dragging them out of their own cultures. The Iraqis, for instance, touch and kiss the lectern, kiss the tabernacle, run their fingers down the lady statue and kiss them. Others like to put lots of flowers round the altar and the statue of Our Lady. The concerns come out (from other parishioners) that it is going to damage the carpet, but we've got to respect their culture. Some say they have to learn ours, but I say, 'No, sorry'. Mostly we're all very tolerant of one another."

Aspects of church life hold special significance for different groups. "I

community on Auckland's North Shore

often say that the Stations of the Cross would be a bit thin if we didn't have our Indians. And after Mass there are lots of different little devotions going on, nearly all involving the Rosary."

An enthusiastic Filipino choir has become a regular fixture at Saturday evening services, and other ethnic choirs take turns to sing at Sunday morning Mass. "It gives them a chance to do their own thing, and it's really appreciated by the rest of the congregation. They get applause, but no one would dream of clapping a European choir."

Retaining one's culture in an alien land presents some difficulties. The children quickly become young New Zealanders, more at home with the language and customs of their adopted country than with those of their country of birth. Glenfield's large Iraqi community has dealt with this problem by setting up weekend schools to teach language, culture and religion. Those from the Christian community meet on Saturdays, the Muslims on Sundays. But cultural practices do not always adapt happily to the New Zealand situation.

Pacific Island funerals, for example, are elaborate affairs in which the church and coffin are decked out with fine mats, a lengthy vigil is held at the coffin side and mourners share a traditional Polynesian feast.

It takes a lot of organisation, but while Palangis (European New Zealanders) would expect the deceased's immediate family to handle arrangements, Island culture places this responsibility with the community. In New Zealand this ethnic community is often not clearly defined, because its members live in different areas or worship in different churches and there can be real conflict between the traditional way and the Kiwi way. Arranged marriages are another issue. In Iraqi society this is normal practice, but Fr Bland admits to some anxiety when a bride arrives in the country only weeks before her wedding, speaking limited English, and encounters both her future husband and a completely unfamiliar culture for the first time.

Other families have had a clash between cultural tradition and Kiwi practice, with young people seeking to date non-Iraqis and choose their own marriage partners." Sometimes the fathers can be very hard. It's not done with malice, but cultural differences mean that women have less status than they do in our society. Their fathers can make things very difficult for them, and I think the church has a role in bridging this gap."

Traditional gender roles also create problems when immigrant families seek employment. "In many cultures a man must be seen as the bread-winner, even though the women are also

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For Shelley Ward of Glenfield (*back row, third from left*) this is a family photograph. Never mind that her 'family' includes ten nationalities, speaking eight different first languages. They have all become brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews in the Pass-ionist Family Movement. And Shelley's group, which includes Asians, Pacific Islanders, Australians, Iraqis, Dutch and El Salvadorans, is not unique. Born and bred Kiwis make up a minority of the 400 PFM members in Glenfield parish.

Local co-ordinator, Michael Pervan, says that, like many others, he and his wife Maree discovered the movement when they first moved to the area. "We were looking for a place to settle down and wanted to fit in," he says. "We were invited to belong to a family group. It's not a prayer group. It's not a gospel discussion group. It's a group of people who want to get to know one another and as such it is the best form of the gospel yet. When we joined it transformed Sunday Mass for us because immediately we knew five families.

"People write it off as just a social thing, but that's just the catalyst, the vehicle by which we become family. In our group now there are 15 families and only two of them are Kiwis. The nature of the parish is reflected in the family groups and even in the group leadership. We don't have an Iraqi leading a group yet, but that will happen soon.

"For new immigrants this is the perfect thing. And, in an area like Glenfield with its potpourri of ethnic groups, it makes for exciting stuff."

▷▷ profess-ionals. When they come here, the woman will go out and do a job to get money, even though it is well below her standing, but generally men won't. This causes a lot of friction in marriages. The men get despondent and depressed because they can't get work (of the sort they are qualified for), while the women do menial work and think the men just sit at home doing nothing. I saw a man the other day whom I hadn't seen for a while. When he first came here he stood up straight, but now he's starting to get round shoulders. I've seen it before – the men deflate, and the women get frustrated."

Fr Bland believes the problems stem from the immigration policy. "We get lots of professionals because you need so many 'brownie' points to get in, but they're hoodwinked on what to expect in New Zealand. They expect easy employment, but once they're here they can't go back. Most of them have no money, and what would they go back to? It is a particular problem for the Iraqis because they often come in family groups of two generations. The senior generation will be aged about 45 to 50, and that is not a time for a professional man with no New Zealand experience to get a job."

He lists dozens of examples – of surveyors, architects, university professors, doctors and other highly qualified people, many of them with excellent English, who now stock shelves in the local supermarket, or live off the dole. For many of Glenfield's immigrants an encounter with the benefit system is an early part of their New Zealand experience.

Helping the immigrants to settle in

It can be daunting, even for those with English as their first language, but Fr Bland speaks glowingly of the support offered by both the St Vincent de Paul Society and the parish's resident Josephite Sister, Denise Fitzgerald. "In theory Sr Denise is nothing to do with the parish but she gets a bit of money from us to show we appreciate what she does. Her work is cross-parish and cross-faith. There are a lot of Muslim immigrants, and she helps them as much as anyone else. She deals with very basic needs – child minding, shopping, taking them to doctor's appointments – and fulfils them very beautifully. She has her finger on the pulse."

Finding that pulse, when she first came in 1995, was a "dreadful" job, Sr Denise says. "At first I just used to wander round the streets, trying to meet people," she says. But within two months she was fully occupied. The Iraqi community was growing quickly and every family needed schools for its children, help with legal and business problems and information about such basic tasks as joining a library, finding a doctor or shopping for food.

"What does this say?" Sr Denise Fitzgerald RSJ, helping Kurdish immigrant children with homework, Sakar (aged 9) and Sana (7)

Today the jobs that take Sr Denise's time are as varied as the nationalities she works with. She lists 16 countries of origin for the people with whom she spends her days, but admits that she has probably left some out. A particular concern has been the parish's four St Vincent de Paul-sponsored refugee families from Sri Lanka, Kurdistan, Burundi and the Sudan. "The Kurdish ones I have a lot to do with. I take the children twice a week because there are three of them at school and their mum and dad don't speak English."

Teaching children to read and write at the same level as their classmates is a major focus, with after-school classes every day, a couple of early morning sessions and occasional weekend tutorials crammed in around the other demands on her time. Aucklanders, she says, are very accepting of their new cosmopolitan communities, and the immigrant families are now beginning to get work and settle down.

Sr Denise's workload is changing but not drying up. "You just think you're going to run out of work and somebody else rings up. For me the biggest reward is just seeing the delight in the faces of people when you do something for them or give them something or they learn something. It's helping them find their feet." ■

If there were no Tv...

In the April issue of Tui Motu, *Fr Paul Andrews talked about TV watching and the effect on children. A young reader,* Clare McLennan-Kissel, *sent in the text of her competition speech on the same subject*

You know, if there were no television, I wouldn't care. It wastes so much time, and as it is, I already know what it's like, because, Ladies and Gentlemen, (drum roll please), we don't have one.

People say "what do you do?", "do you have a radio?" Of course I do. I just couldn't live without my radio. When I'm listening to the radio I can do other things, whereas the TV has my full attention.

But I *will* tell you, I wouldn't want a TV. Why? Because I would watch it too much. I wouldn't do anything but watch it. I'd watch it and watch it and watch it until my eyes popped out. I've seen it happen to other people. But the point is, it wastes time, money and most of all, it rots the brain.

I heard from a teacher about a girl who was a perfect student. One day she started not concentrating. Her mind started wandering and she wasn't working. The teacher became concerned and rang the girl's mother. She discovered that the mother had been letting her daughter watch TV for an extra hour in the mornings, so she could have a sleep in. So you see, it *does* rot the brain.

It is also a bad influence, because sometimes people see things on TV then go out and do them. For example, in the movie *Child's Play,* a boy puts a doll onto the train tracks to kill it. Two boys saw the movie. They went out and kidnapped a three-year-old girl and tied her to the train tracks. Because she was so small the train driver didn't see her until it was too late.

To answer the question, "What do I do?", here are some extracts from a poem in Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory:*

"The most important thing we've learned
so far as children are concerned
is never, ***never, never*** *let*
them near your television set –
Or better still, just don't install
the idiotic thing at all.
It rots the senses in the head!
It kills imagination dead!
It clogs and clutters up the mind!
It makes a child so dull and blind!
Their brains become as soft as cheese!
Their powers of thinking rust and freeze!
They cannot think – they only see!
"All right!" you'll cry.
"All right!" you'll say,
"But if we take the set away,
what shall we do to entertain
our darling children! Please explain!"
We'll answer this by asking you,
"What used the darling ones to do?
THEY...USED...TO...READ!
They'd READ and READ,
AND READ and READ and then
proceed to READ some more.
Great Scott! Gadzooks!
One half of their lives was reading books!
So please, oh please, we beg,
we pray,
go throw your TV set away,
and in it's place you can install
a lovely bookshelf on the wall,
and later each and every kid
will love you more for what you did."

So that's what I do, I READ. In the last term of last year, I set myself a personal goal to read 100 books. And I *did* it! Because I don't have a TV, I have lots of time to read, listen to the radio and other music, go out with my friends, sew and just do 'STUFF'.

I don't know if Mum will ever buy a TV. But I hope she doesn't within the next five years while I'm at home, especially when I'm in the Sixth and Seventh Forms.

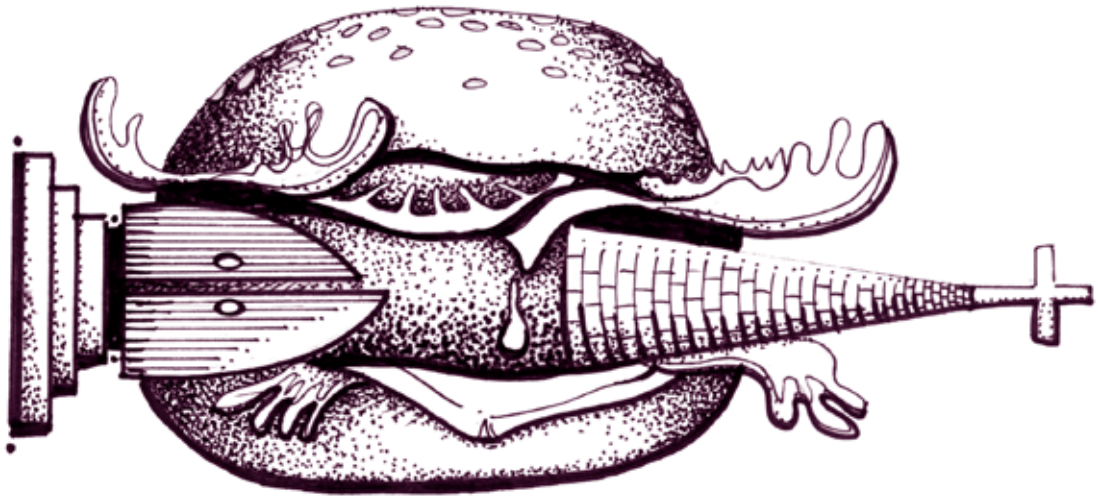
So I don't want a TV. But when I'm rich and famous, I'll probably have one. But... I can almost guarantee you I won't be watching it very much, not very much at all. I'll be just too busy... doing 'STUFF'. ■

Building bridges

Public actions to promote peace in Yugoslavia have been initiated by *Pax Christi Aotearoa-NZ*. These include a national petition, delegations to the US and British embassies (1 June) and a national fast day for peace (4 July).

A popular idea in America, being taken up in New Zealand, is a ***Bridge of Light*** prayer vigil. In the US candle light prayer vigils have been taking place on bridges since mid-May. These will continue weekly until the war ends.

Bridges have a special meaning for the Slavic peoples. They are seen as a link between heaven and earth, a link between those who would otherwise be separated by ethnicity, religion or race. To build a bridge is a great blessing; to destroy a bridge the greatest sin. In Yugoslavia also, people are gathering on bridges to pray for peace.



The burgerisation of religion

The Alpha programme designed in Britain by Nicky Gumbel, has spread like wildfire across the Anglican Church and is being adopted by many Catholic parishes. But is this 'fast food' style of evangelisation really the universal recipe, asks Pete Ward, *of the Anglican* Church Times*?*

The success of the *Alpha* course makes it one of the religious phenomena of the generation. In 1998, around 10,500 courses were run worldwide. Behind these quite staggering numbers are individual clergy, congregations and Christian people who, perhaps for the first time, have found in *Alpha* a hope of realistic and achievable evangelism in their local communities. For these reasons alone it seems fairly clear that God is at work in and through *Alpha*.

But to say that 'God is at work' does not preclude the possibility of cultural analysis of religious phenomena.

The McDonaldization of society

McDonaldization, according to one authority, is a process of rationalisation associated with the American fast-food company, McDonald's. The principles which lie behind McDonald's are spreading throughout the world and into every area of life. Thus, *McDonaldization* affects not only the restaurant business, but also education, work, health care, travel, leisure, dieting, politics, the family, and virtually every other aspect of society.

The similarities between *Alpha* and McDonald's extend a good way beyond the serving of meals. Both have achieved success by operating a franchising system. A similar relationship operates between churches who buy the *Alpha* materials and register it as an official course. *Alpha* is a recognisable 'product' with a strong brand label. The central organisation of *Alpha* maintains a fairly tight control over their product.

Alpha, like McDonald's, has ambitions to spread all around the world. The much trumpeted arrival of McDonald's in Russia is paralleled by the recent opening of the Moscow *Alpha* office. McDonald's is successful, it is argued, because it "... offers consumers, workers and managers efficiency, calculability, predictability and control".

Efficiency

In McDonald's, efficiency is achieved by the simplification of menus to offer a limited range of products. Tasks undertaken by the work force are similarly simplified. All processes associated with the production and serving of fast food have been separated into easy-to-follow steps and structured much like an assembly line. The net result is that the cost of producing food is reduced. Every McDonald's outlet benefits from a common look, product list and advertising strategy.

Alpha presents itself as a process of evangelism which has been tried and tested and shown to be successful. Churches have no need to develop their own evangelism courses. *Alpha* comes pre-packaged and with guarantees. In short, *Alpha* has done for evangelism what McDonald's has done for fast food.

This is the *McDonaldization* of religion. That is not to say, however, that the Christian gospel is necessarily misrepresented or offered cheaply (for, in my view, on the whole it is not). The point is that the success of *Alpha* can be seen to lie in a measure of simplification of religion. For the non-churchgoer in pursuit of answers to questions, the *Alpha* course has considerable advantages over regular church. *Alpha* cuts through ritual and theological complexity which characterises Sunday worship, and delivers to the non-churchgoer exactly what they are looking for.

Calculability

McDonaldization is driven by numbers. Efficiency is assessed by counting. *Alpha* also exhibits a predilection for numbers. "Thousands of people around the world are now taking part in *Alpha* courses," says Nicky Gumbel, "from 5000 churches in Britain. An invitation to the nation," says the front-page headline in *Alpha news* (March-June 1998). The figures charting the steady growth in the numbers of *Alpha* courses held worldwide are unfailingly displayed on *Alpha* publicity: 1991–4, 1992–5, 1993–200, 1994–750, 1995–2500, 1996–5000, 1997–6500, 1998–10,500 "so far". Religion affected by *McDonald-ization* measures both sin and salvation by numbers.

Predictability

For the consumer there is the reassurance that wherever you are in the world you can enter a McDonald's and know where you are. *Alpha* in a similar way offers a predictable experience of evangelism. This is particularly valuable to church leaders. The pre-packaged material, including videoed evangelistic talks, means that the uncertainties associated with Christian outreach are minimised. The uniform 'branding' of *Alpha* products, in particular the colourful cartoons of Charlie Mackesy, seeks to reassure. These images lend a bright, clean, fun and perhaps childlike image to the *Alpha* course. Ronald McDonald is not far away when we look at the *Alpha* logo of the figure carrying a question-mark. For the non-churchgoers this is experienced as non-threatening religion.

For those involved in evangelistic outreach for the first time, encounters with non-churchgoers can be unpredictable. What *Alpha* does is offer a context where this can be managed in a reassuringly predictable way.

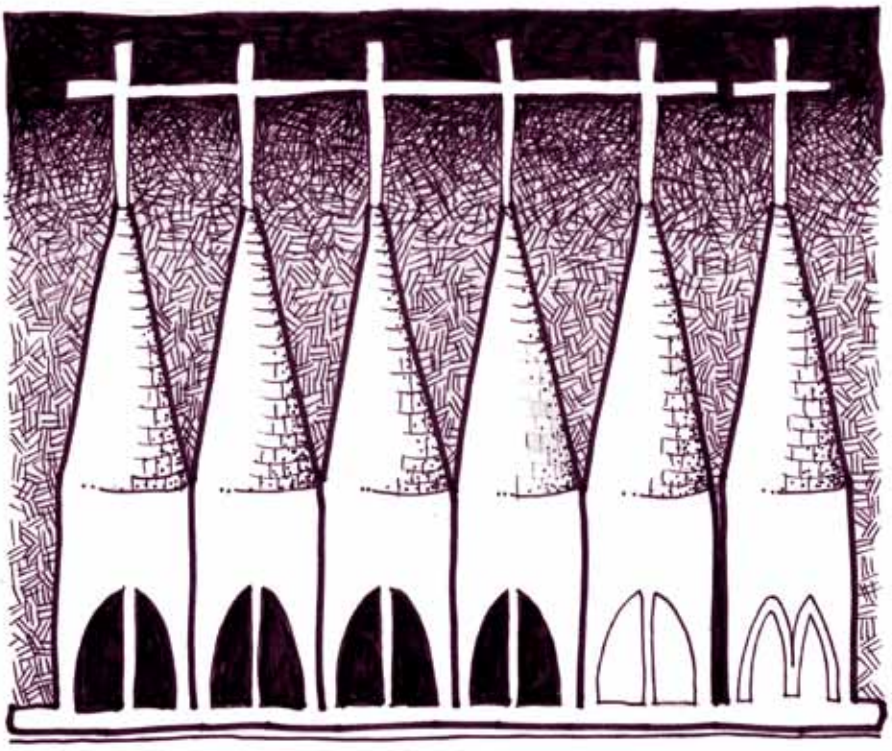
Control

McDonaldization, it is said, is finally characterised by the exercise of control. While nowhere near to McDonald's in the use of non-human technologies and the control of behaviours, *Alpha* does exhibit some of these characteristics.

The availability of the talks on video means that a good many churches bypass the need for a live speaker. Where talks are given by a local person, Nicky Gumbel sets out the format in some detail in *Questions of Life*. With worship material, training manuals, cookbook, and all the other resources made available through the central *Alpha* organisation, a pattern of control can be seen as taking shape. To buy into *Alpha* is to do it the *Alpha* way. *Alpha* thus becomes the cultural producer and creative force.

McDonaldization and Incarnation

An incarnational theology takes seriously not only the work of the spirit of God in mission, but also the cultural forms which the Church adopts. *Alpha* is a remarkable success and is clearly being used by God in significant ways all around the world. At a cultural level there are significant aspects of *McDonaldization*, which, when incorporated into religious culture, are very effective. I suspect that Nicky Gumbel and others have simply done what they found to be most 'effective', and in the current context that has led them to *McDonaldization*. This dynamic of cultural production and consumption is characteristic of many aspects of late capitalism. Alpha has stumbled across, or maybe they have been led, to use this dynamic to generate a movement of the people.



McDonaldization is a significant and not entirely unwelcome aspect of cultural lifein late capitalism. *Alpha* can therefore be seen to be a significant contextualisation of the methods of ▷▷

▷▷ evangelism and maybe of the gospel itself. Culture, however, is never neutral; it is always good and bad. The humanity of Christ may have been perfect, but the cultural activities of the Church are rarely so. The following are a number of points for concern which arise:-

• Simplification of religion
Christian theology is, to say the least, complex and varied. Alpha tends to flatten this reality. Just as the Big Mac and Fries are filling, they are also uniform and bland and, on their own, hardly a wholesome diet. The same could be said of *Alpha*, if it leads no further than its own version of the faith.

• The iron cage of *Alpha*
The classic critique of rationalisation is that it tends to create systems that bind people, stifle creativity, and from which they eventually try to escape. For many Christians the gospel is experienced as a call to creativity and quirky endeavour in the power of the Spirit. The *McDonaldization* of religion is in danger of suppressing that.

• Religious imperialism
Alpha's very positive desire to see everyone in the country reached by the gospel also contains within it a measure of domination. The spread of *Alpha* brings with it the spread of a uniform spirituality. In ignoring cultural distinctions, true contextualisation is possibly suppressed.

• The illusion of religion*McDonaldization* leads to an illusion of neatness and cleanness. Disneyworld is a good example of a McDonaldized total experience; glitzy, exciting, but essentially fake. *Alpha* may give people from outside of the Church an experience of the faith which has a measure of unreality.

Christian theology is complex and varied. Alpha tends to flatten this

Membership of a local church, regular Sunday worship and so on, are simply not like *Alpha*.

• Convenience mission
McDonaldization is designed for individuals on the move who are concerned to minimise commitments. Commitment to Christ, to the Church and to the evangelistic process is key to everything offered by the *Alpha* course, but Christian mission is a much broader and probably a significantly more costly endeavour than participation in an *Alpha* course. It is not terribly hard to see how evangelism and mission can so easily become reduced to running *Alpha*. In this scenario it has to be said that McDonaldised evangelism lacks a significant theology of the cross.

Alpha's exploitation of the culture of late capitalism is extremely important. *Alpha* is a work of God, but it is also a religious cultural industry offering product to consumers. Such an arrangement introduces significant new elements into the life of the Church of England. This is a dynamic where power has shifted away from episcopal hierarchies and bureaucratic synodical government towards the market. In the process, the nature of religious life has been changed.

McDonaldization is not by any means all bad, but it should not be baptised uncritically. The structures of the Church were not set up to deal with a dynamic of production and consumption. The movement to a market economy of religious life is a revolution of immense importance and it is one which bypasses all currently understood structural and ecclesiastical authority. The cultural significance of *Alpha* for the life of the Church is only just being realised. ■

Connecting

Kathleen Casey

They gazed at each other in delight – two little boys, about 2 1/2, one with spiky ginger hair and skin not yet freckled, and the other also fair, with a crop of curly hair and a face to draw the girls in later years.

One was standing on the seat in church looking back at the other. It seemed there'd been a sudden discovery, that here within reach was another mate the same size who likes the look of me. Their smiles, guileless and innocent, were not without a touch of what mischief could happen when two lads get together.

It happens on occasion... we meet another whose spirit greets ours. Instantaneously we understand each other, the person fills in my gaps. It's without doubt a flame of friendship; the signs need to be recognised and nurtured. At such a small age, these two little fellows had it: they liked the look of each other immediately, they picked up signals. I've watched the ginger one grow up from a baby in the front seat of the church and he's never been shy about his delight in people and how good they are to watch. But it's deeper than that.

One of my friends I met this way and though we don't meet often now, when we do it's the same slotting in to each other. Another friendship that could have developed the same way somehow got sidetracked through a small misunderstanding, and lost. I regret that because the instantaneous flame flared early on, and that's precious: it doesn't always happen. It's a converging of spirits that somehow dips into the divine, a meeting of hearts that isn't falling in love but a lifting out of the spiritual within us. It was intriguing to see it happening with these toddlers. ■

Poem for a chapel in Nicholson St

To the trinity of Woman, Mother and Earth

O womb of God
how comforting your arid walls
uncluttered by distraction
save the light of sanctuary
where the flickering lamp's
the heartbeat of the world.

O womb of god
your virgin darkness depths –
all carpeted and earthly warm –
draw me to the shadowed loss
of emptiness and pain
with no one there beside me.

O womb of God,
a father's death dares dispel
the tenderness of God long known
where I once some comfort
found, not having to explain
the heartbeat in the world.

O womb of God,
that heartbeat is my own
should I but listen to the friction:
dark and light and life and death
opposites all a season of
the heartbeat of the world.

O womb of God,
what sheer delight the chant
of fragile monks or fragrant oil:
against the din of traffic's search
empty and frenetic, I hear
the heartbeat of the world.

O womb of God,
you give me shelter with your hands,
cupped and pregnant with that light
which sears the earth in you and brings
our very soul to birth, our being
that heartbeat of the world.

Kevin Dobbyn, fms
Melbourne

Trinity

A sense of wonder and awe.
Thinking about Trinity confuses.
One in three, three in one.
Augustine and the hole in the sand.
The fish swimming in the water,
looking for the ocean,
St Catherine and her images –
table, food, waiter.
Each tells something about Trinity and mystery
but hides much more.

Creator, redeemer, sanctifier –
job descriptions –
helpful but not enough.
Father, Son and Spirit –
relational, beginning to have meaning,
but what about mother, daughter..?
We haven't the words to express the relationship.

Without relationships I am no one.

I struggle to find myself.
No longer just my father's daughter,
my mother's daughter,
my brother's sister,
my aunt's niece,
my friend's friend.

I strive to be separated and unique
only to find that without relationship
I am no one.
I yearn to be alone
yet to be connected.

As each relationship fails to satisfy
I realise, once again,
that the relationship I am seeking
is relationship with God.
The God of relationship – the Trinity –
reaches out in love
and creates, redeems, sanctifies,
calls into relationship.

This God, this Trinity,
calls me into relationship with Godself.

I am stunned.
I stop trying to work it all out
and just enjoy revisiting the realisation:
God calls me into relationship –
with other people,
with all of creation,
with myself
and with the Trinitarian God.

Margaret Butler, OP

Absolute Truth

Absolute Truth *is a BBC series of four programmes on the post-Vatican II Catholic Church. Although acclaimed across the world, it seems NZTV will not be showing it here.* Tui Motu *invited Jim Neilan to review the series from videos*

At the Vatican Council the deeds of ownership to the church were transferred: they left the Roman centre and passed to its people across the world. They will never be returned, no matter how jealously the Vatican guards its rights to a monopoly on absolute truth. So says Edward Stourton, the presenter. Not all Catholics will be comfortable with that!

The first programme concentrates on the two events seen as having the greatest impact on the church in the second half of the century: the Vatican Council and the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae*. Both are described as having been the subject of 'conspiracies' – the conservative wing of Vatican officialdom trying to dominate the content and procedure of Council discussions, and the same element overturning the majority finding of Pope Paul VI's Commission on Birth Control.

Cardinal Basil Hume and the retired Archbishop Denis Hurley, of Durban, are interviewed and both seem to agree with this contention. One who did not agree was Fr Gregory Winterton, an Oratorian Father from Birmingham, who described those who left the church over *Humanae Vitae* as "like disruptive children in a family: one is glad when they leave home". A new slant on the parable of the Prodigal Son!

The optimism and hope of those who saw the Spirit at work during the Council were shattered by the reiter-ation of the traditional ban on birth control. And thousands left. The church in the 70s was quiet– as though its energies had been sapped by the controversies of the previous decade.

Then, in 1978 came a new Pope. John Paul I was hailed as one who could repair the damage. "The spirit of openness behind the Vatican Council seemed to shine through the smile he showed the world, and the cardinals who chose him thought the church's future was secure". But within a month John Paul I was dead.

John Paul II and the fall of Communism

The election of Karol Wojtyla gave the church a leader from the heart of the Soviet Empire. The Vatican at once became a powerful factor in world politics. The cold war was at its height and Moscow discovered a threat from a quite unex-pected quarter.

Former US National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, when interviewed, clearly believes the KGB to have been behind the attempted assassination of the Pope by Ali Agca. Many of those interviewed – Polish leaders, Vatican officials and senior KGB staff of those years – attribute the collapse of the Communist regime in Poland and its subsequent collapse in other Eastern Europe regimes largely to the efforts of Pope John Paul. The Council had opened the way for the Vatican to be a player on the world scene.

Pope John Paul's contribution to change in the world is profound (Gorbachev)

John Paul grasped the opportunity and was highly successful. "His contribution to change in the world is profound", says Mikhail Gorbachev.

But when John Paul is shown returning to his native land on later visits, his mood has changed to disappointment and anger. Capitalism has transformed the Poland he once knew. The free market brought all the vices of secular society in its train. Traditional popular piety is seen as under threat.

The church's reaction to this changed society is illustrated by the case of a well-known Polish gynaecologist who, although he refused to perform abortions himself, insisted that there should be a legal choice for women in certain circumstances. He was publicly condemned by church authorities, and when he was later killed in a car accident, he was refused a Catholic burial. There was a public outcry: the

church which embraced all society, was seen to locking people out.

The second programme finishes with John Paul's visit to Cuba in 1998. His homilies concentrate on traditional teachings about contraception, abortion and popular devotions. Six months after his visit, people were shown as having heard only what they wanted to, with no intention of changing their ways.

The Catholic Church outside Europe

Programmes 3 and 4 focus on the church in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Running through both is the theme of the Vatican attempting to control an increasingly diverse church – a church bursting with new ideas sometimes appearing to challenge Rome's control. In the 70s and 80s the Catholic Church became identified with the struggle against political and social oppression across South America, a direct result of new energies generated by Vatican II. Catholicism was transformed into a champion of human rights in the region. Paul VI came to the gathering of S American bishops at Medellin and gave his blessing to the church's *option for the poor*. Liberation theology was born, and Paul told the people they had a right to participate not only in the fruits of their own society but also in its government.

The church backed the setting up of basic Christian communities, but this conflicted with the entrenched power of the landed aristocracies and politically Right Wing governments. The clergy who challenged social oppression were denounced as Marxists. In 1978 they looked to the new Pope for support, but he was busy combating Marxism in his own beloved Poland. They were to be bitterly disappointed.

A symbol of the church's struggle against civil injustice was the Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero, who was murdered because of his solidarity with the oppressed. The Vatican, in the person of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, assumed that the basic Christian Communities were communist inspired. One of the leading liberation theologians, Leonardo Boff, was summoned to Rome and "court-martialed" (in his own words). Bishops like Romero were progressively replaced by those with more orthodox views. Seminaries which taught progressive views were closed.

In Africa and Asia

In other parts of the world the struggle of the local churches with Rome was more over *inculturation*. Vatican II had re-energised the missionary thrust by attempting to shed the legacy of colonialism and respect local culture and aspirations. Here again, Rome is portrayed in the programme as unable to understand or to cope.

Sister Leonia, a Polish nun whose life has been devoted to nursing AIDS patients in sub-Saharan Africa, describes how she has been turned into a dissident by her own church's opposition to the use of condoms. "If someone was in the middle of these problems," she says, "they would never insist on this teaching. I hope God will not blame me."

In India a recent notorious case has been the condemnation of the Sri Lankan theologian, Tissa Balasuriya. In his book on Mary he attempts to present the mother of Jesus in a way that was relevant to his own people. There is no denying that some of his ideas are new and radical, but did they deserve to earn their author the ultimate sanction in the church's armoury, excommunication? This action shocked theologians throughout the world, even though not all agreed with what he had written. Such was the furore that the Vatican withdrew the sentence.

In an imposing Vatican office Cardinal Ratzinger is interviewed but turns aside all criticism. His memory of the trials seems to differ from the recollection of those who were summoned before his Congregation. Ratzinger belongs to the generation of conservative churchmen who are trying to regain the control their predecessors lost after Vatican II. Theologian Nicholas Lash comments: "The openness of 30 years ago has contracted to a mood of narrowness and nervousness."

One issue on which views are canvassed from various authorities is women's ordination. Cardinal Hume said he would welcome women priests if it could be shown that Christ was not against it. The Archbishop of Canterbury described women's ordination as "a necessary part of the development of priesthood. How can we expect half of humanity to represent the whole?" But Ratzinger insists that, whatever women's capabilities, "in the sacramental view, skills and ability are irrelevant."

Perhaps the final word should be given to Hans Kung, whose radical views have stung the Rome officials ever since the time of the Council. "Vatican II is an unfinished symphony. I don't think our church has a future as an autocratic, authoritarian and totalitarian church in the next millennium.

"But if we again have a Pope like John XXIII, who will open the windows and create a new atmosphere, a lot of things could be settled overnight. That was my experience with the Vatican Council, and I still hope for the same experience with another Pope and maybe another Council." ■

Kevin and Frank are disabled

Paul Andrews SJ talks about disabled children in families. There is, he says, "an obsessional side to all of us that wants to know in advance what is going to happen, and how we will handle it. We itch for a set of rules by which to manage the many crises and decisions of family life. What you need for raising your children is not a set of rules for new situations – but the **confidence to meet the unforeseen alongside your partner".**

Many years ago I worked with Kevin, who was expecting his first child. One autumn he came in to work glowing with happy pride. After a difficult birth, a handsome baby boy had arrived, and Kevin was the proudest of fathers, in love with his first son, who was to be called Kevin. As the weeks passed he became less exuberant. There were questions about little Kevin. He had suffered anoxia in a badly managed birth. After three months a red-eyed Kevin told me that his little son was brain-damaged and would probably never be able to speak.

The prediction of his handicap was correct, and Kevin devoted all his immense energy and ability to providing for his son's future. He enjoyed his later children, born healthy and bright, but he showed his strength most of all in the weeks after Kevin's birth, as joy turned to anxiety and then to horror.

I remember another parent, a mother, who felt trapped. Six-year-old Frank was not just slow, but incontinent and cranky. Since his birth, things had got worse between her and her husband Bill. He offered little support, and when I met her, she felt she was running out of steam and exhausted. Frank's demands seemed to grow and grow.

The loudest cry was from herself. Frank would have to be looked after, but his future depended on mother's survival, not just physically but emotionally. He needed mothering as much as – more than – the rest of us, because he would be dependent for longer than most of us. He needed fathering too, of course, and education. But for the moment most of his demands were focussed on mother.

A baby is born with brain damage. The mother is exhausted after a difficult birth. Suddenly she finds herself responsible for a mite who makes twice as many demands on her energy and concern as her other children – who are showing signs of neglect and resentment of the baby who has taken over their mother. But you cannot resent an intellectually disabled child, so they show their resentment in other ways, picking on Mum for her cooking, or kicking up at school, displacing their anger onto other targets.

Father is in the same spot. He cannot let himself feel angry with this baby who dirties the house, disturbs his sleep and exhausts his wife. So he does other things with his anger. He turns it on his wife, and blames her for incompetence in running the house. He turns cold and withdraws into himself; maybe withdraws all his emotional investment from the house and family and pours it into his work, or his golf, or his drinking.

I can think of a hundred families which did not handle it like this. Instead the father saw what his wife needed, came to terms with the anger and disappointment he felt and took his share in the enormous burden of work that such a baby brings. He was ready to live with the irrational guilt his wife felt. It was irrational not least because we are all imperfect, but do not show our wounds as obviously as the brain-damaged child.

Jean Vanier has built his *L'Arche* communities on the conviction that whether we are labelled healthy or intellectually disabled, we are all wounded healers. We all carry scars and need help; but also we all, including the Down's Syndrome and brain-damaged children, can help and heal.

What does a label say? Stigma arises out of the need of a particular group to isolate the deviant and retain its own image as pure. A label indicates some of the things that the disabled child does *not* know. But you do not know half of the things that Frank *does* know, or the language in which he might express them, or the feelings that stir in him, mostly unexpressed. Labels are always inadequate.

Meanwhile, his mother needs a husband to stroke and support her, and he has turned away. He might say he has not the skills to deal with Frank. That is not the problem. It is his wife he has to help. Before that he must – perhaps with the support of a sensitive and compassionate friend – face his own rage and disappointment, find out what he has done with it.

It is little use wasting energy on getting services for Frank until his father has done something to save his marriage, and help his wife to survive, physically and emotionally, through this period of extreme demand. No two cases of handicap are the same; but they have in common a strong mix of positive and negative emotions in both parents and in the other children. That mix, especially the hidden resentments, must be faced and sorted out if little Frank is to have a chance of growing up well.

Bruno Bettelheim, who knew what it was to cope with trials wrote: 'Children can learn to live with a disability. But they cannot live well without the conviction that their parents find them utterly and unconditionally lovable. If the parents knowing their child's defect, love her now, she can believe that others will love her in the future. With this conviction she can live well today and have faith in the years to come.' ■

A gem of a film

Life is Beautiful **Review: Nic McCloy**

By now, I hope that everybody has heard about this film, whether it's because of Roberto Benigni's sterling effort in writing, directing and starring in it, or just because of his exuberant award acceptance speeches. This is, without a doubt, an absolute gem of a film.

It is a film in two parts, the first part is the charming story of the blossoming romance between a young Italian couple just before World War Two. The second half of the film takes on a more tragic tone with the couple and their son struggling to survive in a concentration camp.

Life is Beautiful is a rare find. It deals with both the light-hearted and the serious and does so in such a way that leaves the viewer feeling uplifted. The laughs come thick and fast, and the first scene of the movie is one of the funniest things I have ever seen. It is rare indeed to see both humour and tragedy sit alongside each other so comfortably.Truth be told, I've seen it twice and enjoyed it more on the second screening. I don't often see films

twice but sometimes I just have to. The first viewing was ruined when the mobile phone belonging to the person along the row from me, rang. Worse, she answered it and had a conversation! In my fury I completely lost track of the film and had to see it again when I'd stopped seething. What made it that much worse was that the cinema (Wellington's gorgeous Embassy) had kindly screened a brilliant little ad asking people to please switch off their phones...what does it take? Bag searches??? What I recommend is that you take my approach and wait until the movie is over and then quietly suggest to the culprit that they give you ten bucks to see the movie again. That ought to get them thinking!

Anyway, I digress. Three pieces of advice:

• See *Life is Beautiful*. If you only see one film this year (apart from the new *Star Wars* film which is compulsory) make it this one.

• When you go, think of me and switch off your wretched phone.

• If you forget to switch it off and it rings, make sure you've got ten bucks on you. ■

Mixed bag of liturgical goodies

The Changing Face of the Church
Timothy Fitzgerald & Martin Connell
Liturgy Training Publications, Archdiocese of Chicago
Price: $48.60 approx
Review: J. Buckner

This book is a collection of some of the papers presented at the twenty-fifth pastoral liturgy conference at the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy in the summer of 1997. I found it to be of varying interest, partly because it quite naturally reflects the American situation, some of which is not relevant to us in N.Z., but also because I think the papers are of varying worth in themselves.

The first paper is by Bishop Donald W Trautman who was chair of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy from 1993 to 1996. I did find this interesting because it is a strong plea to resist the conservative backlash to the liturgical reforms since Vat II. Some who wish to reform the reform want to return totally to the pre Vat II situation. To quote the bishop, "I find these proposals alarming. They are indicative that the liturgical advances of Vatican II are in trouble – advances which the vast majority of Catholics have received positively". According to the bishop, what is needed is not a reform of the reform but a revitalisation of the reform.

What other things did I find of interest, just to mention a few?

• A very informative article on the Celtic Church – how it differed from the Roman Church, its organisation, spirituality, etc., with quotes from prayers, rites and credal statements.

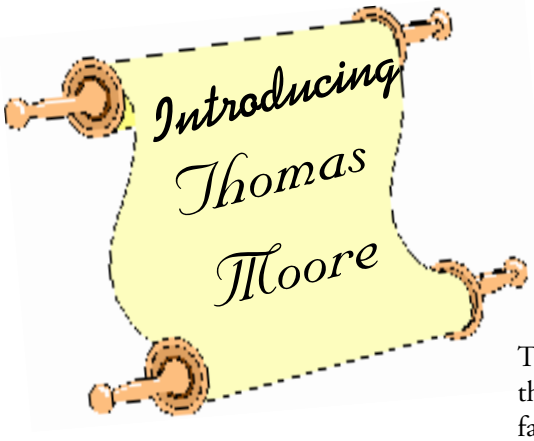
• The RCIA in a rural parish as opposed to an urban one, but again the American situation sometimes differs from ours.

• Healing the Past, Claiming the Future – treats of the inculturation of the liturgy. Could help those who find difficulty with the changes.

• Sunday Worship in the Absence of the Eucharist: Short-term Solution or Long-term Problem. This is a report on how the diocese of Rochester has faced up to not having enough priests to service their parishes. The next article deals with the same situation in the state of Kansas. Here the bishops in 1995 wrote, "...Holy Communion regularly received outside of Mass is a short-term solution that has all the making of becoming a long-term problem.. Such practice could well contribute to the erosion of our many-sided belief in the Eucharist. It is for this reason that we restrict such services to emergencies only."

• Some other papers deal with practical issues which most parishes have in achieving a vital, participatory liturgy.

Overall there is enough of value in this book to make it a worthwhile purchase for most parishes. ■



Therapist of the human soul

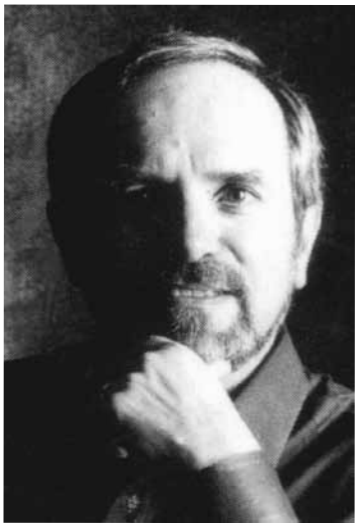
Care of the Soul: A guide for cultivating depth and sacredness in everyday life
by Thomas Moore
Harper Collins 1992; pbk 1994,
Price: NZ $29.95**Review: Albert C. Moore**

Who is this Thomas Moore? Not the saintly Thomas More renowned as author of *Utopia* in 1516. Again, not the early 19th century poet Thomas Moore whose poems became popular Victorian songs (*The Minstrel Boy, Oft in the stilly night, The last rose of summer).* Still, these songs have *soul*, which is a relevant point of beginning for us.

Our Thomas Moore is a phenomenon of late 20th century America. He is the author of some ten books and well known as a lecturer who appears on TV panels concerned with psychology, counselling and modern life and culture.

He lives in the New England countryside with his wife and two children. Born in 1940 in a family of strong Irish Catholic traditions, he spent 12 years in a Catholic religious order. He moved on to studies in philosophy, musicology and religion, then to work as a psychotherapist. He was influenced by the example of Thomas Merton as a 'monastic' in the wider world. Although Moore was never actually a priest, he recalls a hard-headed scientist once reminding him: "You will always do the work of a priest". He has found the fulfilment of his Catholic roots in his personal reformation and in the recovery of the religious tradition of the 'care of the soul'.

Thomas Moore's central concern is therefore with the soul. But the soul has fallen on evil days in the 20th century. Many people discard the concept of soul as an outmoded belief in a private 'religious' corner of one's personality. Psychologists, therefore, avoid the word and tend to treat the self as an ego project. This neglect or 'loss of soul' is the great malady of the 20th century,



says Moore at the beginning of his book; we have lost the wisdom of the soul, even our interest in it. We thus become driven people, subject to anxieties and the ceaseless demands of events upon us; then to entertainments imposed on us by the surrounding culture to occupy our time. We lose the sense of personal intimacy, depth and involvement. The trend has to be reversed, says Moore. Here he follows James Hillman and his Jungian 'archetypal psychology'. Hillman's searching book *Re-Visioning Psychology* (1975) developed the idea of 'soul-making' to write a modern psychology of the soul.

But what can be said positively about the soul? It is difficult to define precisely because 'soul' is not an objectifiable thing but rather: "a quality or dimension of experiencing life and ourselves. It has to do with depth, value, relatedness, heart and personal substance" (p.5). It connects with particular experiences in our lives – genuine friends, good food and conversation, music that has 'soul' for us, or a remarkable person who is soulful; these express attachment, love and intimacy. Here in his introduction Moore draws us into experiences of soul which we can recognise as deep and supremely valuable to us. Rather disarmingly, he describes his book as a sort of self-help manual, "a guide offering a philosophy of soulful living and techniques for dealing with everyday problems". His programme aims at bringing soul back into life.

So the phrase "care of the soul" is a torch which he picks up from the priest's care for the parish to illuminate the life of each person. We are each given the responsibility of caring for our own spirituality seriously in everyday life. "We can respond to our own soul as it winds its way through the maze of our life's unfolding".

The chapters of Moore's book take the reader through the diverse experiences of childhood and family, love and narcissism, depression and illness, creativity and failure. All these can lead to 'symptoms' through which we hear the voice of the soul. The aim is not to provide us with short-cut solutions which might spare us the pain of life's struggles. Rather, the path of the soul is a pilgrimage of many turns and twists. Its goal is to *feel existence*, to know life at first hand. Each of us *is* a soul, a unique individual wherever we are at this moment. On the journey we are more than just mind plus body; it is the soul in the middle which holds these two together, and its instrument is the imagination.

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'Wild animals'

The River Midnight
by Lilian Nattel
Hodder Headline Publishing
Price: $34.95 (current hardback)
Review: Mike Crowl

The River Midnight covers all manner of small scale events within the lives of the people in a tiny Jewish community, a shtetl, where conditions are harsh but not impossible, and where the people gossip freely, but also show great concern for each other. The village is situated in Poland, and the people are caught up in the seemingly endless political changes at the end of the 19th century.

Four women who were 'vilda hayas' (wild animals) as girls, are at the centre of the story. Hanna-Lea is now the childless wife of Hershel, the butcher, and we see the pain of her barrenness finally alleviated through a change in her husband's thinking. Faygela dreamt of being a teacher but has become the mother of five children instead. The false arrest of her oldest daughter for 'radical' political acts is one of the main points of the story. Zia-Sara has emigrated to America with her Torah-studying husband. Both die tragically in a factory fire, and their two children are left adrift between America's socialist culture and the tiny village's traditions. And Misha the midwife, (who has "more life in her than the whole of Russian Poland"), refusing to be bound by propriety or tradition, divorces her husband for no apparent reason. At the end of the book, however, she rather publicly gives birth to a 'fatherless' child on the very eve of Yom Kippur.

The book's structure is unusual, covering the same short period several times over. While it focuses on a single climactic year, it also extends out beyond that year both forwards and backwards to let us discover more and more about the characters.

Thus the first part of the book tells the story of the 'vilda hayas' and other women in the village, each section written from a particular individual's viewpoint, and each section adding to what we already know. Then it's the men's turn, and their stories give a quite different spin to what the women had thought about events – things that were barely mentioned in the women's stories can become highlights in the men's, and vice versa. And finally, Misha, who is in a sense the centre of the village and the story, has the last pages of the book to herself. Though we finally find out the answers to one or two secrets, this section mainly draws all the strands together, and climaxes with the birth we've been waiting for throughout the book.

Also woven throughout is a sense of the mystical – we're never quite sure whether angels appear, and perhaps they do in one or two scenes, disguised as unnamed strangers – and the mystical world is seen through the heightened eyes of not just the more 'spiritual' characters, but even through the eyes of those who wouldn't consider themselves spiritual in any degree. The inherent religious sense of the Jewish people pervades the book.

It's a remarkable debut novel from this Canadian Jewish writer, who has expended great effort in recreating a world now lost. But it's never a novel that emphasises its research – the things we learn about the village way of life are seamlessly incorporated. Even the frequent use of Yiddish words never becomes a stumbling block to the reader. Though there is a glossary at the back (as well as a very interesting bibliography), I found I seldom needed to use it.

The story is full of subtle clues that are easily missed first time round, so it would be worth a second reading. However, if you don't make it that far, read it once at least! ■

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To get into Moore's book you do not need to have studied psychology or academic works on philosophy and the arts (although these could all help later). You may start at various points in the book and feel drawn into its argument, because *you* are the subject of the book. Moore's writing appeals because he draws on relevant personal experiences from his own life and from the human dilemmas encountered in his counselling work. He uses evocative examples and quotations which help the reader to make personal linkages to the path of the soul.

The book became a best-seller when first published in 1992. This response is no doubt due to Moore's focus on a living issue in religion and life. The book is rightly concerned with the soul as a vital starting-point in our individual experience; the soul turns out, then, to be the key to much else in our culture. It leads on to two further books in Moore's trilogy which relate the soul to widening fields of love and relationship (*Soul Mates,* 1994), and then of nature and culture, where the soul's imagination may re-discover renewed sacredness in such things as food, books, ecology and politics (*The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life,* 1996). These will be the subject of reviews and concluding discussion in succeeding issues of *Tui Motu.* ■

Albert Moore was Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Otago

Community, families and good government

Crosscurrents
by Caliban

The word *community* has rarely been so used and abused as in the last decade. 'Consultation with the community' has been a government catch cry, an excuse for every bureaucratic blunder and delay – but a challenge to those who care about others and who wish to continue delivering help and guidance to their people.

Schools

Nowhere has the principle of consultation been advocated more strongly than in the administration of schools. Boards of Trustees were required to consult with a puzzled and sometimes unwilling community to decide upon a *mission statement* and then to formulate policies under which their schools could function. Trustee Boards up and down the country put hundreds of hours into carrying out these new responsibilities, attending courses run by the *School Trustees' Association* in helping them meet all these requirements, and finally learning the hard way that there was little help for a Board which made mistakes in the economic or employment areas. And as for running a school?... well, the result was more likely to have been an exercise in frustration at having to carry out the minor bureaucratic functions shed by a Ministry of Education rushing to devolution.

A Board of Trustees which found itself in the Employment Court defending its action against the Principal or one of its staff, learnt very quickly that it was on its own. The Ministry was quick to wash its hands of responsibility while the *School Trustees' Association* was revealed in all its weakness as yet another bureaucratic structure which lacked the ability to act. The Board was left to face the consequences alone, digging deep into its funds: money taken from the operational costs of the school. The *Education Review Office* monitors each Board's performance, ever ready to point an accusing finger if the 'community' is critical, for whatever reason, but unable to assist a Board in improving its performance. So, for the majority of our schools, the promised freedoms of *Tomorrow's Schools* are little more than a cynical reminder that for the bureau-crat, the word 'community' is a euph-mism for 'scapegoat'.

Strengthening the Family

In the minefield of social welfare administration another catch cry has been that of *Strengthening the Family*. This initiative was announced by Government as the linchpin to hold the community together, the corner stone to drive all government policy. Under this initiative Government Departments would co-operate with each other in dealing with a case. For example, the reasons behind youthful offending are multiple, involving educational, health and justice issues. How much better then if these agencies can work co-operatively in dealing with a case.

But the Government has not backed its initiative with funding, nor has it dignified the concept by changing the structures of the various agencies so that they can move outside their normal operational guidelines in order to work with each other. Nothing has been done that would allow the *Strengthening the Family* initiative to become a force in society by drawing the community together through appropriate co-operative action.

The curse of our age is the unwillingness to be part of a group: rights are pushed to extremes but responsibilities are not pursued with the same enthusiasm. One of the distinguishing features in our society over the last generation has been the predominance of service groups which have raised money or given physical help for worthwhile com-munity causes. How many hospital extras, hospices, community facilities and welfare groups have been given substantial help by these different groups. But as the cult of the individual has eroded this service and its group co-operation, so they are disappearing, kept alive by the middle-aged and the elderly. The way in which Government operates, lauding the success of the individual, devaluing the person who works for the community in a voluntary capacity, has altered the social balance.

Privacy and Secretiveness

The Privacy Act seems to inhibit the honesty and frankness of opinion which should exist in society and be used for the common good; it fudges the lines of normal responsibility. This century has suffered from too much secretiveness, too few revelations about dark deeds. The community, therefore, is dependent on the honesty of the individual, whether state servant or a company director, to speak out against Government folly or corporate acts of wickedness. One has only to recall the plea made by German officials that they had a professional obligation to keep silent about the death camps or by soldiers who murdered innocent people that they were merely carrying out orders, to remember where their silence led. Their plea was not recognised as a legal defence, because their secret knowledge should have been overriden by their duty as human beings, by their responsibility to God and humanity, to the truth and to the public good.

In this election year it is to be hoped that aspiring politicians will be reminded about the importance and place of 'community' in contemporary society. This must take precedence over political discretion and party loyalty, if the goal is to improve quality of life and toi deliver the greatest good to the greatest number. ■

Agony in East Timor

It is hard to escape international media debate over the current war in the Balkans. Should NATO be involved? Should New Zealand have a role? Is Kosovo a civil war or an international one?

All of these questions would have been asked had anyone bothered to do anything about the Indonesian invasion of Timor in 1974. Despite Indonesia's proximity, Australia, New Zealand and the international community have consistently failed to do anything about the persistent attrocities committed by the Indonesian government.

Punitive Damage, directed by Annie Goldson, is the story of a New Zealand woman whose son was killed in the 1991 Dili massacre in Timor. The film traces the events which led up to the massacre and the subsequent court case which Kamal Bamadhaj's mother won against the Indonesian officer who ordered the massacre.

This is a superb piece of high impact, low budget, documentary film-making. New Zealand documentary-making has suffered due to lack of money in the film industry and due to the tabloid approach of 'hard news' television. This film has restored my faith in the New Zealand documentary.

Punitive Damage is hard hitting without being sensationalist. It is tragic without being overworked and is sad without being sentimental. This is a film that deserves to be seen. Kamal's story is one that should be known and it is vital that, even 25 years too late, the Indonesian government be held to account for their atrocities against the people of Timor, West Papua and other territories which they have invaded and occupied.

One of the most disturbing things about this film was seeing current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Don McKinnon, saying that he didn't think the death of one New Zealander in Dili and the lack of information surrounding his death was worth risking New Zealand's trade with Indonesia. Trade which includes combined military exercises and the provision of 'humanitarian' aid. This from the same Don McKinnon who said that New Zealand's humanitarian role in Kosovo was all part of being a good international citizen. Check out the rubbish in your own backyard before you worry about anyone else's, Don.

Punitive Damage is not an entertaining or enjoyable film but it is informative, thought-provoking and extremely well made. It is a film that I think Kamal Bamadhaj would have been proud of.

Nicola McCloy

Punitive Damage is currently screening in Wellington and Auckland and is due to be shown in the South Island soon. Meanwhile video evidence shows that the reign of terror by the military has been intensified, in spite of denials from the Foreign Ministry in Jakarta.

The military have launched a campaign of intimidation in preparation for the referendum on the future of East Timor, which the Government has fixed for 8 August. In the town of Liquica about 20,000 people have been herded together in conditions which an American doctor describes as being "like a concentration camp... a perfect set-up for massive amounts of death". On 6 April militiamen stormed a Catholic church in Liquica and forced hundreds of refugees out into the open with tear gas. Some 57 were killed, hacked to death with machetes.

The forced relocation of people appears to be a stratagem of the military to create a bloc of voters who will support the government-sponsored referendum.

(from the Washington Post Foreign Service) ■

Light from seeming darkness

Quite by chance I arrived for Mass at a Christchurch parish church on a rather poignant morning. Discussion was to proceed about alleged offences of a sexual nature concerning its parish priest, and ways of dealing with this: a rather sombre situation holding the potential to upset many. For any social institution allegations of this kind regarding leadership are upsetting, but when community and ministry are involved it is clearly more traumatic.

What followed did church leadership great credit. The administrator provided a very authentic biblical setting to enable reflection upon the issue. The bishop outlined the matter with transparent honesty, appealing for prayers for everyone concerned with the alleged offences, appealing for justice to be served and healing effected. He mani-fested abundant compassion for all. The national director of Catholic Communications was on hand to assure parishioners that she would be in Christchurch for the following ten days to respond to media inquiries honestly and consistently as occasion demanded.

Those of us who have lived long enough cannot help but see in this a salvific transformation. There have been times when such situations were inclined to be hushed up (or transferred) rather than faced and worked through, providing for justice, compassion, and healing. What emerged on this occasion was a mature church prepared with protocols and attitudes, able and willing to face honestly the allegation put before it, prepared to listen, non-judgmental, concerned for all parties.

Paradox it might be but seeming failure is often the harbinger of better things. Whatever the outcome of the trial (and that is matter for the courts) the church has indicated its readiness to deal fairly and compassionately with all concerned. It was a truly gospel response. People at Mass left uplifted, not despondent, feeling (correctly) that they had been informed, provided with counselling options in the days ahead, and joined in prayer for a just conclusion.

In days when the church suffers considerable criticism for what it does or does not do, this sensitive and enlightened process was a compliment to its true character. ■

Tom Cloher