Tui Motu

InterIslands

July 2002 Price $4

A place to belong. . .

contents

Cover photo

Dale Harrison and his adopted son, Tyler.

***Tui Motu* focuses in the July issue on the work of Wellington charity, *Challenge 2000* – and those who work for it.**
It was at *Challenge* that Dale Harrison found a place to belong to.

Election 2002

The General Election has come early, which has prevented us offering the balanced series of interviews we had planned. We do not intend to advise people how to vote, only to say this:
• Christians *should* exercise their vote.
• In deciding, focus on those you judge best at promoting the common good.

Too many recent governments have been infected by economic rationalism and the subversive pressure of big business. This has succeeded in enriching the few and impoverishing the many. It has changed the face of our society for the worse. It has been wholly contrary to the common good. Let us heed the voices, therefore, of those who have the long term interests of our country and our world at heart.

The main focus of this issue examines an initiative in Wellington which taps into the idealism of the young and tries to pick up some of the victims of our flawed and greedy society. The section on Challenge 2000 is the first of a series on such schemes operating round the country which we judge to be truly the Good News coming to fruition.

The time has come

An Auckland Catholic at his office was confronted by the challenge: "what do you think of your priests preying on innocent kids?" He replied: "fathers too have been known to abuse their children". The accuser said: "priests should know better!"; to which the man replied: "so should fathers."

Sin happens, and from the time of Judas onwards priests and church leaders have sinned. Nothing can excuse these actions against innocent women and children, although the church clearly has a duty to look into causes. I do not believe that church leaders have ever been anything but horrified by these events. Sometimes, sadly, they have failed to act appropriately and have appeared to cover up the scandal rather than acting justly towards the victim.

This issue includes four pieces on priesthood. Paul Green asks the question of our bishops: *can you reassure New Zealand Catholics that everything possible is being done for victims and perpetrators and that nothing is being covered up that should be out in the open?*

One of the articles concerns the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, of Chicago. He himself was accused of sexually abusing a seminarian – falsely it turned out. Bernardin set up in Chicago a structure to deal with the issue: "a lay-dominated committee (including a victim or victim's relative), a non-clerical gatekeeper, and a publicised hotline". And when he was accused, he insisted on submitting to this process himself.

No one can say that the church has done nothing. Has it done enough? There are major questions demanding answers:
• Do priests and religious molest more than other males? Is the evil in some way linked to clerical culture?
• Is celibacy an issue? Is it a good thing that, these days especially, many parish priests live alone?
• Is the real problem a male-dominated, clerical culture which persists in the Catholic church? Is abuse of power – and non-accountability – the fundamental problem?
• And, does the inaction of the Vatican point to where the reform needs to start?

Historically, such crises are nothing new. But they have often found their healing through an ecumenical council. Our ultimate question is: ***Is this crisis showing us the imperative need for Vatican III?*** Indeed, the time has come.

M.H.

Are we voting for life – or death?

Peter Murnane

It is about other serious issues as well, but this historical moment is a unique ecological turning point. The choices we make on July 27 will have profound impacts on the future of our children and our planet.

Climate
In Antarctica a huge ice shelf twice the size of Stewart Island recently disintegrated unexpectedly. Our planet is warming up. There is much we do not understand about this, but we do know that the greenhouse gases we produce are one cause.

While climate change will bring suffering to millions, even self-interest warns us that it will damage Aotearoa New Zealand's vital primary industries by major temperature change, increased rainfall and rising sea levels.

The USA selfishly refuses to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and Australia is dithering. Does our small nation have the courage once again to influence the rest of the world? Ratifying now will cost businesses and each citizen a small amount. Have we the courage to tax the consumption of carbon fuels, so nudging us towards sustainable energy? When someone stands up for a principle that is true, everyone listens – even those who mock.

Needless destruction of species
In the Southern Ocean in the last five years 90,000 albatrosses have been killed by long-line fishing. Several species are close to extinction. Hectors Dolphins – also close to extinction – are dying in squid trawl nets. This tragic waste could be avoided simply through better fishing practices.

Genetic modification
More important even could be the enormous catastrophe following release of GM organisms in field trials or commercial crops. Cross contamination cannot be prevented. Two thirds of our rural sector believes the future of our farming is with organic production rather than with genetic engineering, which has already seriously damaged overseas agriculture.

If New Zealand lifts the moratorium next year, we might forever regret this as a huge mistake. Which of our politicians will resist powerful transnational seed and food companies to keep GM in the laboratory and our environment GM-Free?

Who profits from our water?
Two huge French transnational companies are causing deplorable suffering to the poor in Argentina by forcing up the price of water which they claim to 'own', sacking maintenance workers and delaying repairs. Already a French corporation 'owns' the water in Papakura, and many Auckland Councillors would like to sell off our central water supply.

Electric power
When California surrendered its power grid to private companies, massive power blackouts followed. Federal and State Governments had to step in when this 'competitive' market failed. Those who own New Zealand's power are wasting lake water in order to push up the price of power. Why not, if it's "economically rational"?

Waste
Will our next government stop building more landfills and encourage everyone to move towards recycling and reusing almost all our waste? Will it strengthen our inadequate legislation about toxic waste, and cut back our use of pesticide and agri-chemicals, and explore alternatives?

Everyone's responsibility
As indigenous peoples might put it, "for sordid profit, our mother, the earth, is being violated". Anger is a reasonable emotion to drive us towards better government. Will our next government help every child to learn about the serious ecological problems facing our planet: wisdom as important as reading and arithmetic?

Are we listening to all voices? Even to those who notice the folly and cruelty of factory farming? Do we value MMP, which lets more voices be heard? Will we defend MMP, and use it wisely? Can we move further away from the adversarial system, and learn more about consensus?

Global vision?
Our votes have global repercussions. As we vote, will we consider the whole picture and challenge the dominant philosophy of economic rationalism, which drives the darker side of globalisation? This claims that the free market is first of all a rational mechanism, to be kept free from 'irrational' interference by human emotions, the body's realities, compassion, Nature itself. Driven by it, the WTO strives to remove restrictions like environmental protection laws which might hinder free trade. Profits have become more important than people.

Will we consider those whom economic rationalism exploits: the sweat-shop labourers who make much of our clothing and electronics? Are we in solidarity with them, or will we allow the brand-name companies to continue working them like slaves? Will our new government encourage international unionism? Will it team up with other countries against exploiting poorer countries' forests while we save our own; or the international transfer and dumping of nuclear waste?
In short, will our vote increase and share life, or allow exploitation and death to multiply? ■

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Tui Motu-InterIslands
ISSN 1174-8931

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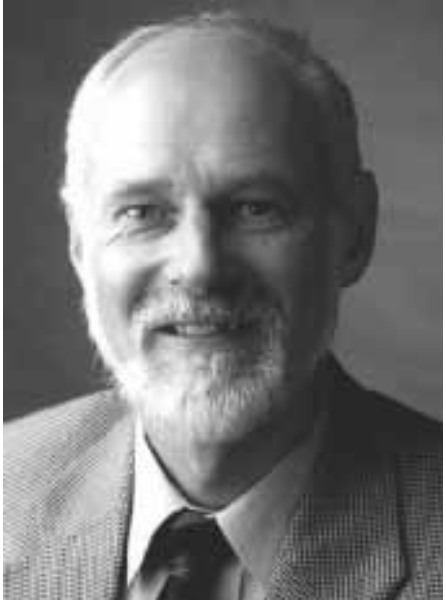
Printed by Rogan McIndoe Print Ltd

Labour view on *Green* issues

from Pete Hodgson MP



Where does the government stand on ratifying the Kyoto Protocol?

In principle, we have already ratified it, and for these reasons:

• good international citizenship. We are only a small player on the world scene and we have little 'clout'. There needs to be a global response on the green-house issue. You're either in or out – and we need to be 'in'.

• self-interest. We trade on our 'clean, green image'. Our products will need to carry the label: "*from a Kyoto country*" – and that will be a selling point.

• more efficient technology. Kyoto is not primarily about 'going without'. In New Zealand we are still extravagant users of energy, because energy is cheap and abundant. But it wastes money as well as resources. Waste is both unethical and uneconomic. Kyoto brings the two into one. Kyoto challenges us to become more efficient.

Our greenhouse problems in New Zealand are unique because over half our emissions come from farming – methane and nitrous oxide from live-stock. If you reduce methane emission from your stock you increase product-ivity. Methane is energy rich. It contains 20 times the 'greenhouse' potential of CO_2. Every molecule of methane we change into CO_2 removes 95 percent of its potential greenhouse potential. We need to research this aspect very seriously.

• climate. Ours is a mid-latitude, reliable, equable, island climate. We can rely on pasture growth, and we usually have steady rainfall. Climate change may well alter all that, bringing extreme droughts out east and extreme wetness on the west. To protect our climate we need Kyoto more than it needs us.

• economic gain. New Zealand would be a net 'seller' of carbon, not a buyer. Kyoto says that 'the polluter pays'. What Kyoto does is put a cap on world pollution. The more countries you bring under the cap, the more you are able to lower the cap, the quicker you attain a good environmental outcome. In the meantime, trading our credits could be worth $220 million a year initially.

You intend to allow the release of Genetically Modified organisms?

Up to 1995 scientists exercised their own controls. In 1995 the *Hazardous Substances and New Organisms* Act came into being. This introduced government control on the release of GM organisms or substances. After the last election we set up the Royal Commission. People should read at least Volume One of its Report. The Royal Commission rejects the two extreme positions: either no control or a total ban.

The Government judged the system we have had since 1995 to be working well. It is suitably precautionary, transparent and participatory, in the sense that anyone can insist on a hearing on specific innovations. The Government accepted the vast majority of the Royal Commission's recommendations.

One innovation they recommended and we accepted is a "conditional release category". In 1995 I argued against this. I was wrong. For example, if we plant new *pinus radiata* but with a sterility gene contained, then we will not get the sort of wildling pine infestations that happen now in Otago. The condition for release is that the sterility gene is present.

I agree with people in New Zealand who are hostile to Monsanto arriving here and insisting that Roundup Resistant Canola is planted here. We can decide to keep it out of New Zealand without inflicting such a ban on others. Many people say they do not want GE substances in our food. We say we must label food so that there is always choice. Is it proper that we should exclude dairy products genetically modified to remove allergens for those who are allergic to such products? Should we put an absolute ban on a method of producing pharmaceuticals which may be a thousand times cheaper?

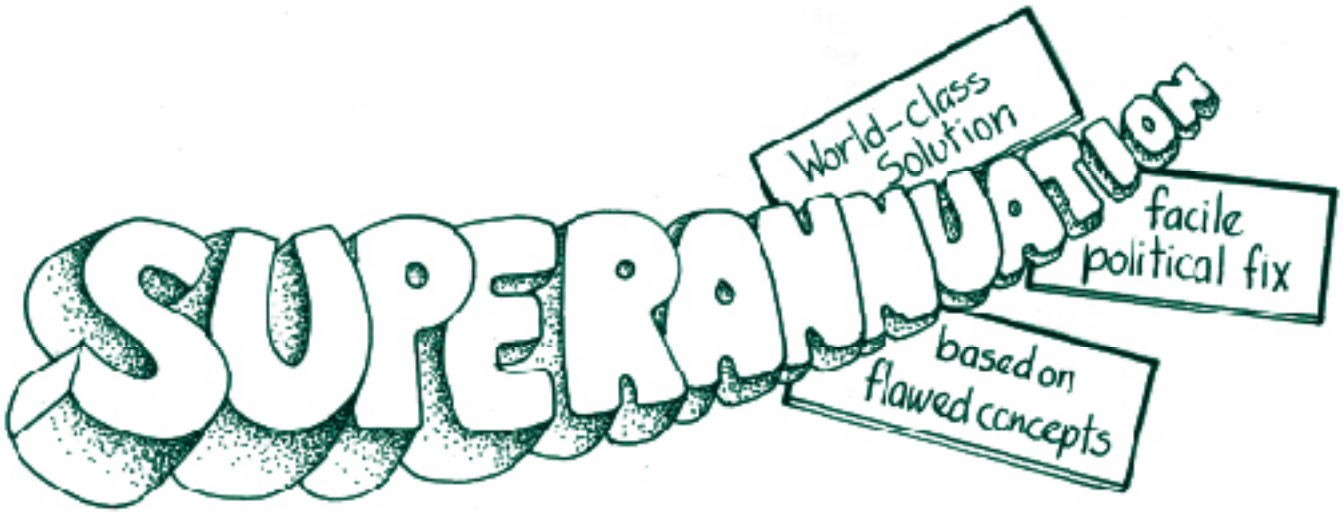
What we reject is any absolutist position. We intend to proceed with caution using the best regulatory, most transparent and most participatory system in the world. We do not intend to say a blanket '***no***', as the Greens insist. I reject their position as untenable.

It seems that government in New Zealand is becoming increasingly presidential?

This has been a trend ever since the TV era arrived. The media focus on the leaders, whether we like it or not. But within government the checks and balances are provided by caucus and, within MMP, by coalition partners. These are ways of preventing the Cabinet becoming unduly dominant.

Is the leader unduly dominant over Cabinet? In the Westminster system we rub shoulders with our leaders every day. Issues are freely debated, and on many occasions the PM will find herself on the losing side in Cabinet.

At present we have a very able Prime Minister. She is always well briefed. She is a 'policy wonk'. New Zealanders like their leaders to be pragmatic and capable, on top of the facts. She does not dodge the media. Helen Clark is seen to be unusually dominant because she happens to be unusually competent. ■



Social and theological commentator,
Jim Elliston, *puts Dr Cullen's Superannuation Scheme under the spotlight*

The situation

The Michael Cullen Super Fund is variously described as: "based on flawed concepts"; "a facile political fix"; "a world-class solution". Opinions of a respected economist and two Superannuation experts.

NZ First supports the scheme's introduction on condition a future change might require people to pay a dedicated part of their tax into individual accounts.

National maintains the current scheme is sustainable. *Alliance* agrees, but (because of public perception that it is not) supports the proposal.

ACT judges the present system unsustainable, because it encourages dependency. It should be replaced with a compulsory, privatised scheme, with a safety net for a targeted minority. It would kick in at 68 years old but be lower than 65 percent of the average wage.

The *Green Party* refuses support because it wants any surplus invested in New Zealand. They fear borrowing may be necessary in lean years to maintain the investments.

Are you confused? I certainly was. I ask myself what would a Catholic Social Justice perspective be on this matter?

Background

Since 1938 when Labour introduced a universal Old Age Pension scheme payable at age 60, what is now called National Super has been funded from current taxation. By 1993, voter discontent resulted in the *Superannuation Accord* entered into by all except *NZ First*. Payable at age 65, the rate would be 65-72 percent of the average wage, with provision for a reduction for higher earners through a surcharge or pro-gressive taxation.

In return for *NZ First* support, *National* in 1996 agreed to repeal the surcharge but to renege on the *Accord*. The resulting Peters scheme – essentially pre-funded, privatised but Government guaranteed – was overwhelmingly rejected in a 1997 referendum.

Pre-funding superannuation is a bit like preserving surplus food against a future famine. But economists tell us it is more akin to buying fertilizer (capital investment). All things being equal there will be a higher yield from crops.

Under any pension scheme people are supported from current production which is the result of past investments in economic development. There is a transfer of wealth produced by current output to those who have stopped producing. What pensioners consume becomes unavailable to people still working. It's a matter of sharing, and the pensioners' share can only come out of the total cake produced. If we have a reasonable rate of growth, the cake in a few years will be much bigger than it is now.

Money for pensions can be raised either by taxation or from capital investment. The latter can be either public (the Cullen scheme) or private. The most common private Super schemes have been the occupational pension ones, with contributions from workers and employers. For those on lower incomes, these offer the only realistic hope, the money going directly from the pay packet. But only 15 percent of workers in New Zealand were covered by such schemes in 2001.

Our social environment discourages saving. Our economic system continually pressures us to spend. We assume we will be looked after in old age.

Dr Cullen's scheme

Dr Cullen proposes a pre-funding scheme. Supporters quote figures showing there are now six workers to support each superannuitant whereas in 50 years time there will be only two. Opponents say that projections show the proportion of those actually employed to dependents would remain almost unchanged. For as the proportion of elderly rises, the proportion of dependent youngsters and working-aged falls, reducing the State's outlays on schools, prisons, health costs, unemployment etc.

The rationale behind Dr Cullen's scheme is that if nothing is done, future governments will face four equally ➤➤

➤➤ unpalatable options:
• cutting retirement income entitlements dramatically
• a large increase in the tax rate
• a harsh asset and income tax test on eligibility
• cutting other programmes, like health and education.

The scheme is a taxation-funded capital investment scheme. The investments (made overseas) "will be managed on a prudent commercial basis by an independent board not subject to political direction".

Criticisms fall under three main headings:
First, investment should be made in New Zealand.

Supporters counter that the investments we need either involve great risk, particularly for new export-oriented ventures, or don't provide the necessary monetary returns, for example education and health. Domestic financial investment opportunities are very limited and, compared with global opportunities, narrowly focused. If things go badly at home, the overseas investments will do better.

Second, tax surpluses should be eliminated because reduced taxation leads to increased investment in the productive sector.

Some commentators counter that people have not saved the tax cuts in the past. For example the 1998 tax cuts led to increased imports, increased overseas debt and higher interest rates. New Zealand companies pay a much higher proportion of profits in dividends than their US and OECD counterparts, which invest more in future production.

Third, any form of state provision creates dependency.

Critics of the scheme maintain that taxation surplus belongs to the taxpayer, that people know what sort of savings scheme suits them best, and individuals can make better investment decisions than the government. However, all parties accept that National Super, whatever its form, will only provide a minimum, and private savings will still be needed.

Dr Cullen has indicated that he favours work-related Superannuation schemes and will look at adjusting relevant tax rates in the 2003 Budget as an incentive. This would encourage a responsible attitude to providing for one's old age.

Active Ageing Policies

While many retired people actively contribute to our national life, many more could – and would – do so if given a little help. Super is more than an economic issue. How realistic are the Government's claims that its *Positive Ageing Strategy* measures up to the words of Professor Sik Hung Ng, a leading researcher in the field?
"Their (ageing people) capacity for productive work of all kinds, not necessarily for pay, is a national treasure... Their contribution to New Zealand society is and will continue to be immense. If they are ignored, undervalued, or otherwise excluded from society, New Zealand can hardly be competitive against other countries that have found a way of harnessing this immense resource."

the contribution of the ageing to society is immense

Church Social Teaching

Imagine political theories laid out on a continuous line; to the left there is increasing emphasis on the common good at the expense of individual freedom and responsibility; to the right, increasing focus on individual freedom and responsibility, with corresponding concentration on self-interest. If you imagine this line to be the equator, then in the polar regions the two extremes become indistinguishable, merging into a society where the few exploit the many. In between, near the 'equator', the two tendencies are in reasonable equilibrium.

Catholic Social teachings derive from the belief that the human person, made in the image of God and redeemed by Christ, is the basic value. "Insofar as you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me". Flowing from this belief are two principles, subsidiarity and solidarity.

Subsidiarity means allowing decisions to be made at the lowest practicable level. For example, the Government should not usurp my right to decide things for myself unless there is good reason. Solidarity means we bear responsibility for each other's well-being because we are interdependent. Subsidiarity pulls to the right; solidarity to the left.

To sum up, a Superannuation Scheme, in itself or part of a policy package, must satisfy:

• the Political requirements of clarity, certainty, general acceptance.
• the Social requirement of equity. This includes fairness, encouraging responsibility rather than dependence, and recognising that people have access as of right, not from 'charity'.
• the Economic requirement of sustainability.

On these counts, it seems to me, the Cullen scheme falls well within the 'tropical zone' of the Church's teaching guide outlined above. The needy are catered for on the same footing as everyone else, while the scheme itself encourages planning for the future.

Having a portion of each Budget set aside for the future highlights the situation, while it is being made clear that Super will only provide a minimum. Moreover, individual responsibility will be further encouraged if, as indicated, Dr Cullen next year adjusts taxation to encourage employers and employees to enter into work-related schemes.

Finally, if the Active Ageing policy is properly implemented, a gradual change of attitude will be possible and all will regard active participation of older people in society as normal. ■

A place to belong

Challenge 2000

It's hard to believe when you look at this ordinary Johnsonville bungalow that it's the hub of a venture touching the lives of many in such a powerful way. Challenge 2000 *is a community organisation which runs a diverse range of programmes, many for young people. At its heart is a woman with a vision and the will to make a difference.*
Tui Motu *interviews Kitty McKinley, founder and leader of* Challenge 2000*, about her work and her life. Today, 17-year-old 'Lucy'(not her real name) has just helped herself to Kitty's purse. But Kitty just smiles and shrugs. She'll certainly be having a word with 'Lucy' tomorrow. What's important is that 'Lucy'and young people like her get unconditional love and acceptance.*

Challenge 2000 is a community-based agency committed to responding to the gospel and assisting people in their search for social responsibility, social justice and personal dignity. We try to bring about personal change, family change, social change so as to make the community a better place to live and make society fairer and more equitable.

At the same time we try to create a *place* where people are at home, and are accepted no matter who they are, what they've done, or what their difficulties are or their gifts may be. I think one of the most unusual things about *Challenge 2000* is – when you walk in the door you can't tell whether someone is a judge, a lawyer, accountant, priest, criminal, rapist, or a person who has nowhere to live, or someone who is struggling, or a young offender. We have them all coming through the door and my hope is they're all treated exactly the same.

We try to be a bridge, a meeting point where diverse groups of society who wouldn't normally meet and who would normally be antagonistic or judgemental of each other, can meet and see each other as human beings. They can relate and learn from each other; then maybe – *maybe* – both take responsibility to make the community a better place for both.

The work of Challenge

About 70-75 percent of our time at *Challenge* is spent with young people 10-23 years of age. We offer a whole range of services. We have alternative education for young people who for a variety of reasons cannot fit into the mainstream school system. We also go into schools working with young people having difficulties at school. The school calls us in to run programmes focusing on self-image and personal develop-ment. Problems arise because of family violence, perhaps alcohol and drug abuse. We are trying to make these young people independent and safe.

But we also run what we call Community Personal Development groups. For instance, the *Compass* programme (Community Personal Aotearoa NZ Spirit Search) looks at young people in a holistic way and helps them develop and improve their relationships with ➤➤

family and each other, also to serve their community.

We have gender specific programmes: *Youth to Men* and *Youth to Women* looking at the needs of young people. We mentor young people at risk. We do justice work, working with young offenders through the Youth Court. We take them under our umbrella and stay with them as long as they need to be supported, cared for, nurtured.

We also care for kids overnight, run camps, holiday programmes, sporting activities. You name it – if it's to do with young people, we do it.

As well, we are very involved in Catholic Church Youth work. We run adolescent Confirmation programmes for about four parishes in this area. Twice a year we run social justice leadership programmes and from them we eventually get a lot of our youth workers. We run retreats for Catholic Colleges. We do a lot of leadership training for those assuming leadership roles in their churches.

Altogether *Challenge* works with about 2000 young people. We have 10 full-time staff, 4 or 5 social work students at any one time. Some come from Denmark or Germany – all round the world really. We're quite international! And we have 60 to 70 committed volunteers who spend a lot of time working with us, predominantly young people; they are absolutely amazing – they have the energy, enthusiasm and passion to make a difference. Sometimes I think we are the last of the great idealists!

As for money – we beg for it, we borrow it, we work for it, we haven't got round to stealing it... yet! We are a Charitable Trust and a social service. Social work sometimes implies 'fixing things'. We're actually trying to alter *people* so that our society, our community, our Church, our families are much stronger.

For our therapeutic, preventative type programmes, we get some funding from Government (the Child Youth and Family Service). And we receive funding from the Ministry of Education and from some of the schools we work in. But often we are drawn to poorer schools who haven't got the funds. So we just do it.

you name it – if it's to do with young people, we do it

We are very well supported by a number of Religious Orders – Cenacle Sisters, Dominican Sisters, Marist Fathers. A Dominican Sister works with us and the Cenacle Sisters give us a two-bedroom flat. The Marist Fathers are very supportive of our work with youth and fund some of those programmes quite heavily. We also have a Mission Sister as a volunteer working with us two days a week. A number of diocesan priests in this area give of their time to work on Retreats and leadership programmes and a number of other priests and religious mentor or give spiritual direction as well.

We get money from everywhere – we have Charity Dinners, Quiz Evenings, we sell firewood! It's a constant struggle. In the end I just believe God will provide – and she'll be right! If the money doesn't come, maybe we're not supposed to do it; so we just move on to something else. If anyone reading *Tui Motu* would like to give us half a million dollars, we'd be delighted!

History of Challenge

We began at the end of 1988. I set it up in response to the needs of young people. I'd been working for Catholic Social Services and left to work for myself. Some of the local people asked me to do something for their youngsters. I've always had a commitment to respond to people in need – especially if it's gospel-based. There was a young man in Catholic Youth Ministry who was available and looking for a job – I was doing consultancy work at that stage and told him that if he was prepared to risk it, I could probably afford to pay both of us. We called it *Challenge 89* because at that stage I didn't think it would go beyond 1989.

The parish priest at Johnsonville at that time was very supportive; he gave us his kitchen as an office and the parish gave us lots of support. Then 1990 came, and we thought – what are we going to call it now? So we decided on *Challenge 2000*, for the Millennium. It became a Charitable Trust because we didn't want to necessarily be part of the institutional system because we felt that would probably destroy us.

Simon Mareko is from a Samoan family in Newtown parish. He did the Challenge leadership programme and is now a regional youth worker.

"I help organise youth Masses and the Confirmation programme. We have 14 leaders for 30 young people in Johnsonville. The kids are happy – so we are happy! We help run the Youth Group for 13 to 15-year-olds. Altogether we may have 70-80 kids in each parish. The kids become interested because they are attracted to *Challenge*."

Simon also goes into a local prison and uses his music skills with the

Initially the focus was young people, then for a while it was young people and long-term offenders – we used to run a lot of Prison Programmes. We've always had a commitment at *Challenge* to providing services for the most marginalised, most difficult, most struggling people in our society. We are committed to taking the people that others won't take.

The people we work with now

About 75 percent of our time now is with young people, 20 percent individuals and families in the lower socio-economic group; and 5 percent people who fall through the cracks – people who have head injuries, psychiatric disabilities, are long-term offenders that no-one else wants. Our work is actually not really hard to do because we are very successful. It sounds trite, but I'll say it anyway – *love works*. Love and goodness and hope and positivity and optimism work, and I think they overcome the struggle, pain, desperation, hopelessness and despair – the awful things that some people have to live with, the abuse and the violence.

For instance, I've been involved with a 35-year-old woman and her family for nine months: it's the first time in her life that anyone has actually stuck with her, that anyone has believed in her enough to stay with her. It's like a little plant that you water and it grows, and you can see it happening in front of you. *Challenge* has had far more successes than failures. In a way, I don't know what a failure is. If someone is loved and they respond and they move ahead a little bit, then they haven't failed.

Probably ten to twelve thousand people have been touched by us. Some are in big groups. Twelve hundred or more individuals. We have people ➤➤

Three youth workers at Challenge

Love – Justice – Forever – ('Challenge *touches your life forever')*

That's how three young people involved with the work of Challenge 2000 describe it

prisoners. "I try to give them the music they like, but also to help them see God. We do a lot with music. They like to talk with us – questions about life, questions about God. We go there once a month. Music is a big thing for me. I speak through my music."

Natalie Hornyak (left) is a University student who works at Challenge 2-3 days a week.

"I wasn't keen to be a Catholic until *Challenge* helped me personalise my faith. I was invited to the leadership week. I found myself with a roomful of strangers – and now they are my friends! I learned a lot about myself.

"I'm now helping run the First Communion programme in the parish and with the prison ministry. *Challenge* is my way of surrounding myself with beautiful people. It has made the church relevant to me, because I've gained a personal relationship with God.

"'Church' I used to think was for old people. But *Challenge* is for the young. Kids find Mass boring. I never understood what was going on. But now I understand and I can appreciate the Mass. We need to let people know what it means. We need to explain the Gospel for the young people."

Megan Smith came to Challenge two years ago on placement while she was doing her social work training. She is working particularly on the schools programmes and acts as mentor for young people who have dropped out.

"You find kids who have been constantly ignored. So anything you do is better than what they have experienced. The most important aspect of *Challenge* for me is the sense of belonging it gives people. Some kids who come don't even feel they belong in their own homes. They belong nowhere – until they come here. Acceptance here is unconditional. You still care for kids even if they steal off you.

"This funny little old cottage in the middle of Johnsonville – it touches the lives of a thousand kids in a year. Where do they all fit? It's like the loaves and the fishes!"

These three all speak with huge enthusiasm about working alongside Kitty McKinley, the woman they say it's hard to say "no" to.

➤➤ who have now become parents, who now understand what love is because we supported them. We have young men from Youth Court who have now finished university degrees. I think: 'God! what have I done for them?' I certainly know what they've done for me and for my friends and for my extended family.

love works....love, goodness, hope, positivity and optimism work...

But it hasn't all been roses. There is an agony in not being able to do anything and seeing people waste their lives. Sometimes the struggle with the people we work for and the financial worries, the disappointment when people can't help you, the narrow-mindedness and the prejudice in some of the social systems, sitting in Court watching injustice being done: sometimes it's just awful. I don't skip home every night.

Two particular programmes I'd like to talk about are the *Alternative Education Programme* and the *Social Justice Leadership Training Programme.*

The Alternative Education Programme

We noticed more and more young people were being expelled from secondary schools. So we began to run a quasi-education programme for some of these to meet basic educational needs. We teach them literacy, numeracy and basic computer skills, and we offer relationship skills with people of their own ages. Basically it's a 'mini school', run along the lines of an ordinary school every day from 9 am to 3.30. Each class has a maximum of eight students.

The students don't fit into the mainstream school for a whole variety of reasons: alcohol and drug abuse, behavioural difficulties, medical conditions or specific psychological learning disabilities. At the moment we have five Maori students and three Europeans. We focus on education in the morning and on personal development and relationships in the afternoon: areas of sexuality, drug and alcohol use, experiential learning and employment. Each person has a buddy, who may work for *Challenge* or could be a volunteer, who supports them. We have a case worker who works with the family and looks at the holistic needs of the young person.

It's not just an education programme. We try and respond to all the needs of the young person. We help find employment or buy them rugby boots, help their family with food – anything really. It's intensive and time-consuming, but our success rate has been high.

Kitty McKinley

Young people who have never attended school start to turn up here every day. We do become their home, their family, their nest, so it's more than just education. We often give them breakfast and lunch. It succeeds because of the mentoring/buddy system and the young staff we have at *Challenge*. For the first time in their lives these youngsters are having role models of other young people who are prepared to help them. And the kids realise it and understand it. They speak each other's language, they work well together and that brings them to a stage of achievement where they can move on.

The Principal is Judith McGinley, a Dominican – coming here from the deep South was a bit of a shock for her! We have a teacher and two other youth workers/educators who are with the kids all the time.

The attention span of some is absolutely shocking. Success may be measured by the fact they've sat at their desk for half an hour. That is an achievement worth rewarding. We have quite a complex behaviour modification system, which gives the young people the idea that they're moving towards something successful, and they get rewarded for that. Some have just had punishment all their lives, so it's good to get them focused on succeeding rather than failing. We've had two young women and a young man who've gone back to mainstream schooling and done well there, getting excellent marks.

Social Justice Leadership Training

This is an 8-day leadership programme for 17-23-year-olds, where up to 16 young people basically 'go on a pilgrimage'. We start off in Wellington with a priest and two *Challenge* staff. We ask the young people to look at who they are so as to develop self-awareness; who other people in this country are – in relation to Maori and in relation to the multicultural nature of our society; and how you live with other people.

We live together, sleep together, work together the whole time. So there's self-other and self-in-relation-to-God. What is Christ asking of us today? What is it like to be church today? I think we're creating a new way of being church with these young people.

We spend a night at the local Catholic marae, looking at the history of that place and of Maori looking at the Treaty. We go up to Jerusalem on the Wanganui river next, and look at James K Baxter. We ask ourselves who he was and what was he saying. We use the Maori Jesus there as a reflection tool. We look at Suzanne Aubert and the story of a home- grown religious Congregation

of New Zealanders – we look at how would we be the James K Baxters and Suzanne Auberts today. And we talk a lot about river and the river of our life – where are we flowing from and where are we flowing to.

Then we usually go up to Taupo to Little Waihi, Bishop Max Mariu's home marae, to look at bicultural issues. We do some physical activity there putting some pressure on the young people. We might kayak across Lake Taupo, climb the mountain, or do something that is physically challenging and challenges them as a team or we might stay in the bush one night, doing a whole lot of community-building activities. Then they come back to be involved in some community service.

It challenges the young people to look at who they are, what it means to be a person of faith in this country. We become a travelling pilgrim church, which is very real and open and honest. Afterwards we usually have reunions, once a month, encouraging them to be in service and have mentors or have spiritual guides – directors whatever you want to call them – to keep up that development.

Challenge and Church

I believe young people are still incredibly idealistic, incredibly enthusiastic and are waiting for opportunities to be involved, to be of service, to make a difference, to simply be together in a meaningful sort of way. Most churches are saying: 'where are all our young people?' We don't have any problem at *Challenge* as to where our young Catholic people are, because they are with us. There is something practical they can do and there's excitement. Their energies are being harnessed in *their* way rather than telling them how to play whatever *we* want them to play. So it's an empowerment thing.

Adults are busy trying to encourage young people in ways irrelevant and meaningless to them. *Challenge 2000* is physical and it has energy of its own. It's not tired. I'm not tired. We're an alive, buzzing group of people. And we have lots of young people who are workers and leaders at *Challenge.* Young people attract young people.

the church should be a living fountain to which all the villagers go

Also, you can actually see what we do. So when young people want to go to the prison services, they go. They may be only 17 or 18, but they go into a prison. It now makes sense to them that one of the corporal works of mercy is visiting a prisoner. How many Catholics have ever actually visited prisoners?

I think John XXIII wrote that the church should not be an archaeological museum; the church should be a living fountain to which all the villagers go. I think there's a few more trickles of water coming out of *Challenge* than are coming out of parishes. I believe this is a model which could be picked up. It doesn't need a lot of special people. What it takes is a willingness and energy, and someone prepared to take risks – being prepared to let the people who come to experiment. I think it could be duplicated easily. Meanwhile I want to say how wonderful it is to be part of *Challenge 2000* and to be so supported by so many people.

The reason we keep going is because there are so many who have been prepared to help us and support us. They might not know how to, but when they're asked they always will, which is why I think the model could be duplicated. There are so many people of good will who just don't know the way to go about helping.

I think midwifing is something the church could do a whole lot more of – simply providing the opportunity for people to get together and act. ■ ➤➤

Kitty's story

I grew up in Napier in an ordinary – yet extraordinary – working class family. I had a family who cared about other people, who instilled in me a sense of justice, a sense of love and commitment to other people. Some of my teachers at school and priests in the parish helped me understand the international and national scene. So, very early on, I had this desire to save the world and make it a better place. I came down to Victoria University and went to Law School. I thought 'I don't belong here'. I saw people who seemed to be more concerned about litigation than justice issues. There were no Social Work degrees so I did an Arts Degree.

I was fortunate that at the end of my 2nd year at University I was guided to Catholic Social Services in Wellington and met people there doing what I'd always wanted to do – making a difference. They were trying to relate the reality of the gospel to people who were in need or were suffering. I thought: "This is it! This is it working!" So I became a volunteer for Catholic Social Services in my third year at University and did chaplaincy at the prison. I was thrown in at the deep end but swam, survived, learned all sorts of things.

I began as a Social Worker at Catholic Social Services in 1977 and for the next nine years I was a Social Worker, Senior Social Worker, Acting Principal Residential Facilities, prison chaplain, Training Officer, dogsbody and car cleaner at CSS in Wellington. It was a great preparation for being able to lead *Challenge*.

Social justice is a very interesting area in the church. I believe there's a very definite set of double standards. The dream versus the reality: it's still a challenge the church has yet to face. I think in the '60s with Vatican II and Pope John XXIII, the documents on social change were out there, up there. But I think we've lost courage – the church actually 'living' it – and with that has gone some of our credibility as well.

As I'm getting older, I'm getting more mellow about this. I'm not so much frustrated as disappointed. The gospels give me my sense of who I am and what I'm called to be. It was the church that formed me in that and somehow I kept on going with it. It seemed the church fell away. The message of Christ is actually a very good message for today's world. It has truth in it, it has hope, it has a way to belong, it has a way of social change, a way of people being happy and fulfilled that lots of other things don't have; and yet we can't seem to live that. We have a really good product and good message that people are needing now because society is disintegrating. Woody Allen said 98 percent of success is showing up. I think the church has to show up more.

Social justice and the church

At *Challenge* we are supported by the local church. But as a whole I think we've lost confidence in 'being church', lost confidence in proclaiming our message generally as a collective body. I believe it's to do with social pressure, economic pressure, the individualisation of society. People are so tied up in their own world, getting their education paid for, their mortgages, making their own little part of the universe work, that they are not outward-looking any more. Their faith is not extroverted.

I'm the sort of person who keeps on asking: "When is enough, enough?" If you're a Christian, how do you measure 'enough'? Enough is enough when you're dead – and crucified. That's the measure of 'enough'. I ask myself: do I see the institutional church hurting through that sort of crucifixion and giving in relation to social justice?

I think the church is hurting and crucified in relation to paedophilia and that sort of thing. But in terms of the message of the gospel and Christ, being anointed "to bring liberty to the captive, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, set the down-trodden free and proclaim the year of the Lord" – are we out there doing that? Some individuals are, but if you were to say "Catholic Church" to people, would *justice* jump into their minds immediately?

I'm passionate about the gospel, about people having hope, people having life and having it to the full, people being happy, people being alert to the opportunities in front of them, people being confident about their own ability, their own goodness, their own uniqueness. If you call all that 'social justice', I'm passionate about it.

I'm regarded as a bit of a strange person in some ways both within the church and outside. I've been called many things – a stirrer, a trouble-maker, a sinner, a saint, a prophet, a leader, a priest. I think I've gained some credibility because I've stuck it out, and most people my age haven't. Others have spat the dummy, and understandably so. But I'm still doing the same thing.

Young people and church

I don't think older people who leave the church are selfish. It's simply that at this stage of their journey they find the answers to their own deepest yearnings elsewhere. In his letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* Pope John Paul said: "Let's launch into the deep, be the face of Christ, see the face of Christ in all the people around you".

So let's do that! Let's look at different ways of being church, being creative. Let's look at different ways of celebrating liturgy, let's open up the doors. I think the church is afraid to launch into the deep.

On the other hand there's this move to restore what was. You can't have both. You can't have this move to restore the old church while you're telling the people to launch into the deep. The church has got a massive problem of tension. There are two completely different messages from Rome. To me the message of the gospel is really clear. And we'll happily keep on finding a way to be true to the Catholic Church in New Zealand at the same time – which isn't always easy.

How many parishes or churches have a sign saying 'We appreciate the earth'. What signs are there in a parish church in New Zealand that this is *Aotearoa New Zealand*, that we are on about helping our people, about saving our planet, about modelling ourselves on Christ. How would you know that in most parishes?

There are some really good things about the church but also a lot that's irrelevant, holding us back because we can't let go. Things that hold the church back at the moment would be the way we celebrate life liturgically, the form of the Mass, the structure. One of the reasons young people go to Elim Church for example is because there's an opportunity for them to participate.

We have a 'spectator liturgy' where somebody is there doing things. Whether that person wants to be doing it, or whether they are any good at it, it is the priest doing it. The people are willing or unwilling recipients and spectators. But we don't live in a spectator culture any more. We live in a participatory culture. We live in an active culture, and I think prayer and liturgy can be active and participative.

I think also that as we are becoming an older church we worry more about what we've got. We have got to make places more and more secure; we spend money on plant, on security systems, on sound systems, on doing things up physically. We even spend money on building new churches and increasing the size of churches. Yet the demographics suggest there are not going to be so many people in them. We are giving the wrong messages.

My faith commitment

In terms of being a Catholic, mine has been a very difficult journey. I try to establish an identity as a Catholic in this country with links to a multinational Rome as part of a universal church in this millennium. I love the Catholic Church and am loyal to it. It has given me opportunities.

The church gave me a lot of who I am, gave me a lot of wisdom and has supported and encouraged me and then when I just got to the point of knowing what I can do, then they want to rein me in – 'let's try and keep the rules'. But I do regard myself as a committed Catholic.

I am about to start doing a leadership programme for parishes for when parishes are clustered, and I think I'm going to find that really interesting.

The message of Christ is a wonderful message of change, adaptation, of dying, living. The church has got the understanding, it's got the wisdom, it's got the knowledge – but it can't seem to apply it to itself. "Unless a mustard seed dies..." So why are we so worried about launching into the deep and dying? ■

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Award for Local Writer

Dunedin religious writer, Mike Riddell, has recently won the Book-of-the-Year award for spirituality from the influential U.S. *Foreword* magazine.

The book which won the award for him was his first title published in America, *Sacred Journey: Spiritual Wisdom for Times of Transition* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press). *Sacred Journey* was reviewed by *Tui Motu* in May 2001.

Mike writes regularly for *Tui Motu* (see p32).

Tyler and Dale

One look at Dale Harrison's moko *would be enough to scare many people off. But, as the ex-Black Power member assured Katie O'Connor, he's warmly accepted by his whanau at* Challenge 2000 *and by people who see past the tattoos.*

He looks young as he sits with his face between his hands. His big black eyes tell a story of abuse and violence that most of us can't even begin to imagine. It's a story of survival and courage

Don't give up!

What was your own background?

I was born in 1963 in Taumaranui. My father was a criminal – a safe-cracker – one of the best in NZ! My mother was on the boats in those days – a ship's moll! My mother and father split up, and my twin brother Wade and I were given to a family who abused us, emotionally, sexually, physically. We knew there was something different because of the way we got treated, but we thought it was because we were twins.

We were there 11 years, then we were sent to separate foster homes. Wade and I both became sick with high fevers. The doctors couldn't figure out our problem, but when we were then brought back together, the fevers just went.

Then came another seven foster homes, the last one with a family who already had 12 children. Social Welfare stepped in and introduced us to our real father. It was going from one nightmare to another. Every day he and his wife would be at the pub and come home drunk. There was no sexual abuse, just physical. I couldn't understand why he hit us like he did because he'd had the the sort of life we'd had. There's no way I could lay hands on my kids after being through it myself.

Then we were sent to live with our real mother – we didn't know about her either! Our mother was really good to us, but by the time we got there, we were 'gone'. We were loose cannons – we just wanted to get out on the streets. The next years were spent in Social Welfare homes, Boys' Homes, Detention Training Centres, Corrective Training Centres, Borstal, then gaol.. gaol.. gaol.

...and the gangs – you found the gang to be rather like a family?

Yes. The strongest feeling I've had of family is belonging to a gang. When they have a Convention you have about 100 people standing with you, wearing the same thing you're wearing, and they're all called brothers. That feeling – even though it's not a reality family – the feeling is what we were looking for, belonging to a real family.

When did you first come across Challenge 2000?

My brother was the first client at *Challenge*. I was in prison at the time, and Wade bugged Sr Marie to get me on a programme when I was released. That was in early 1990 and that was the last time I was ever in gaol. I did a six-month programme, but then stayed on for another year and a half doing carvings for them.

Then my brother Wade was murdered – and that's when the *big* changes started happening. After that happened I went 'psycho'. I was suicidal and attempted to hang myself. I came to, with police and doctors around me. My friends were

relaying to Kitty what was going on with me, so she came to see me and asked me to go on Retreat. Out of respect for her and because of the years she had stuck with us, I went. And because I didn't know where the hell I was heading, I went.

Well, we were sitting in this circle and a lighted candle was passed around. You could only speak when you had the candle and it was passed to me. The question came from Kitty to me: *When are you going to sort yourself out, change your life? You have a lot to offer kids in schools, youth and Challenge 2000 and why don't you ask God to come into your life*.

I've been around Catholics all my life and I've heard about God all my life. But the people who were telling me about God were abusing me as well and that's where the non-trust came in with God. So I said to Kitty: *Until I get a message from God telling me where my twin brother is, whether there's a heaven or hell, or whether he's just lying under all that dirt – until I get that answer, there's no way I can lead a proper life, a God-life*.

The next morning we were shooting up to Little Waihi, driving past farms and hills in the distance. As we got closer to the hills I saw two water tanks. On one in large lettering was WADE and on the other, LORD. I just freaked out. On the way back I looked for them again because I wasn't sure if I was just seeing things. But again in large lettering were the words WADE and LORD.

When we got back to Kitty's place I told her and asked her to come back with me. She was the one person I trusted. So back we went – and then I saw what was actually on the tank: Wide Load!
"*I must have been seeing things",* I said to Kitty.
"*No, No, Dale – God only lets you see what He wants you to see*", said Kitty.

It was a life-changing event for me.

So what is it you tell the kids on retreats?
My role is to tell my life-story, telling the young people about gangs, drugs, alcohol and things like that. I do believe in God now and I do pray, and since then I've been confirmed and worked a lot in churches. Done things I've never done in my life before and that's what I tell these kids. I'm 38 and doing these things – *you* can do them now while you're young so you can relax when you're my age.

I put the hard word on the kids who are heading to the gangs. I tell them my brother was murdered right in front of me and he died in my arms. That's when all eyes are glued on me. I just throw it out to them. It's up to them whether they want to go down this road or that road, but for me I let them know that what's happened to me can easily happen to them.

The Principal of one school I went to told me of three kids selling dope after school. After telling my story these three kids were in tears. They never went back to gangs – the leader of the group went on to get School Certificate. I think they realise it's a real story, not a make-believe story and that's where it hits them.

Tell me about your own family.
My daughter is 17 years of age and goes to St Joseph's in Napier. I got custody of her when she was 12 because she was in an abusive family. A lot of the time Sharnie wasn't in class and she was going down the same path I'd been down. I got her into St Joseph's Maori Boarding School. The teaching, discipline and the girls' manners there were what I wanted for Sharnie.

Just recently I adopted my 10-year-old nephew, Tyler. He's my twin brother, Wade's son. Wade was murdered eight years ago. All Wade's children have left of their father is me.

For the first two years of his life, Wade and I brought him up. Because of all the abuse we suffered, we were both good with kids. The only way Tyler is going to know his father is through me. We were identical in everything, our voices, our laughter, everything we did, rugby, fighting.

What about your tattoos – did you get them when you were in a gang?
No, I got this when my brother died. This is all about him, our story. I've got tattoos on me of people 'in memory of' my friends. His tattoo is a special one. I don't add on to my *moko* until I feel I've achieved something.

Someone said to me recently, when you come into the pub you intimidate people with all those tattoos. I said – that's funny, when I go to church on Sundays, people aren't intimidated; and when I go to kindergartens, the children come up to me and touch my face.

Is it because we label and stereotype people with tattoos?
No, it's a misunderstanding. People see tattoos and think 'gang member'. I would have intimidated people when I was a gang member with chains and boots and things.

Challenge 2000 has changed me from that person into this person today. I say – if they can change me they can change anyone. I used to think there's no way I'm going to change.

Why is Kitty special to you?
She's what I imagine a mother to be like – I even call her 'Mum'. She's always there when I need someone. Sometimes I lose the plot on my brother's anniversary, and she just turns up and calms me down again. When you're a twin you never stop thinking about each other. Some say as time goes by it gets easier, but that hasn't happened.

Have you a message for kids who have had a life like yours?
My message is there's always someone out there to help you. Even if you don't trust your own family, there might be a teacher – or even a stranger. I'm where I am because that woman didn't give up on us. We would block our ears when she tried to change us. We'd go to gaol – and there she is again trying to help us. Because she never gave up, we succeeded.

My message is: ***don't give up***. There's always someone there to help you. ■

The Gre

The 'Green Man' – who was he? Niki Keehan writes a modern

We must wait for the Green Man, or we will never get across the road safely", my sister said in the busy Dublin traffic. "The Green Man" I said, "what's he doing here?" We laughed and pressed on with our sightseeing.

The Irish rain wet us through and the University Library where the Book of Kells is displayed was a dry haven. The famous book itself, small and insignificant, overshadowed by the story of its finding and safe keeping through the centuries. The pages photographed, enlarged and illuminated showed us creatures and people as fascinating as the carvings in English country churches and ancient cathedrals portraying our Celtic folk history.

We hadn't seen the Green Man in Irish churches; his cousins the leprechauns taking the predominant place in local tradition and story. Back at the B & B we talked a lot about the things we had seen and done that day and the lovely, warm, helpful people in the city. "You know", I said, "there's such a spiritual feel to this place, I'm sure it could have been the Green Man or one of his cousins helping us across the road. The signal seemed to change just for us".

"Nonsense. You've had too much wine, we'd better eat", said my sister.

What on earth has all this whimsical nonsense to do with our spirituality? Not very relevant in our urbanised society you may say, but here was a Green Man helping us across the road! The ordinary traffic sign of the green running man indicating safe crossing of the road – could it possibly be a modern symbol for this ancient benign sprite? A benign spirit that pre-dated Christianity, thought of affectionately by our forebears. The Fool, in some local Morris traditions, John Barleycorn, Robin Goodfellow and Puck some of his names. The ancient church wrote no encyclicals banning him, but lovingly incorporated the image into the ceilings and screens of countless country churches. Was he here in another relevant guise still helping people?

The Green Man and his contemporaries are as much part of our English/Celtic story as Rangi and Papa to the Maori. Rudyard Kipling has the sprite Puck (a relative of the Green Man) declaring "I'm as good a Christian as the next fellow!" Could this ancient sprite have been redeemed on the cross, and be subject to that great sacrifice?

A roof boss in the cloister of Canterbury Cathedral, England

The myth of the Green Man is historically connected with the shadowy figure of 'Jack o' the Green'. The mediaeval Green Man is dressed from head to foot in green boughs or foliage. He made his appearance at spring festivals. He symbolises the birth of new life from the 'death' of winter.
The Christian church seems to have taken over this myth and integrated it into the paschal mystery of the death and rising of Christ. The Green Man is described as an archetype representing the desire in all of us to grow to our fullest potential.

en man

A pagan or a Christian legend?
version of an old folk tale

Somehow over the last millennium the core of our spirituality has become very serious. Rightly so, perhaps, because it is open to so many abuses – the commercial world has picked up and run with the image of St Nicholas, Easter Eggs, St Valentine; and the negative spirituality of Hallo-ween is used by all and sundry for the benefit of the mighty dollar. We also see splashed on our TV screens pictures of exploitation of congregations by the leaders of many fringe sects and denominations; we have all heard of sadness in the lives of people brought about by the narrowness of religion.

Why shouldn't we smile at the possibility that this ancient symbol of being at one with nature and one with life still being there to help humanity through one of the most stressful aspects of our daily toil? The carvers and stone masons who used the symbol to decorate ancient churches certainly had a fondness for the tradition behind the image.

We don't know if he is an ancient fertility symbol or, like the evergreen wreath, a symbol of birth, life, death, decay, new life growing from that decay and the regeneration of all things. An expression of being at one with nature, at one with life, and at one with the earth. A concept understood well by those who have gone before us, one that we are now looking to for the survival of humankind on this planet Earth.

The Green Man is part of our spiritual history, as much part as the angels. We have a spiritual past history, older than two thousand years, and we have become so educated and busy we are largely unaware of God or spirit. Our sense of wonder in the natural has been dimmed by our fascination with technology and communication.

So, as for me I will grasp the link however tenuous and whimsical it might be: to seek the spiritual in ordinary every day signs and symbols. Next time I come to cross the road, be it in Cuba Street, Queen Street, or Hastings Street, Napier, I will wait patiently for the Green Man, and remember the images in the ancient holy places I saw in England and Ireland with family from New Zealand.

That fellowship and sharing is an important part of my spiritual life and faith journey. I hope I can pass on the riches of that essential Christian faith to my children and grandchildren, and be able to share in fellowship with friends and family the possibility of a spiritual life broad and rich encompassing nature and humanity in a completeness known by our ancestors in our faith. ■

Niki Keehan, a parishioner of St Mary's, Greenmeadows, is currently a Year 3 student in the Walk By Faith *programme*

Using nature for decoration. Mediaeval illustration and sculpture delighted in the use of natural forms – animal and human heads, often grotesquely carved – enveloped in foliage. These are found as early as the Lindisfarne Gospels (North Britain, 7th Century) as well as its Irish contemporary, the Book of Kells.
The Green Man is found in many civilisations: Dionysus or Bacchus in the Greeko-Roman period is a god of vegetation and fertility as well as of ecstasy. His role is trans-formative: making wine from grapes, perhaps anticipating Eucharist.

The letter M at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, Lindisfarne Gospels

The Legacy of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin

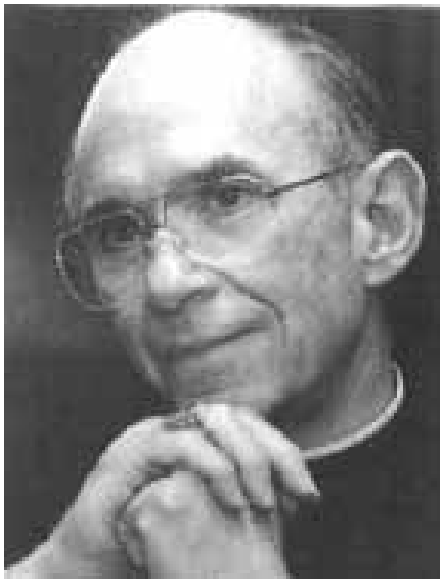
Joseph Bernardin was the outstanding US churchman in the 1980s and 90s. His story, told by Mary Eastham, is a pertinent comment on the current sex abuse crisis

At a time when the American Church has been deeply scarred by the criminal behaviour of paedophile priests, Catholics the world over can rejoice in the contribution of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin to the church and American society. His *consistent ethic of life* remains a permanent contribution to public philosophy and public theology. And he himself weathered an unjust accusation of sexual abuse and a losing battle with cancer.

What stands out in the way he handled both these personal crises was the public character of his Christian witness. Bernardin believed he must be held to the highest moral standard, because of the public nature of his role as a religious and national leader. His public witness to honesty, integrity and compassion was very much part of what he advocated in the seamless ethic of life – a life of wholeness and dignity from birth to death.

Origins

Joseph Louis Bernardin was born in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1928. The son of Italian immigrants, Bernardin learned early to cherish the values of life and family, for his father died of cancer when he was six years old leaving his mother to care for his sister and himself. His mother kept alive for him the memories of their home village in Italy. When, at 29, he finally visited



his ancestral village, he experienced a profound sense of having been there before. It brought home to him the spiritual interconnectedness of the human family.

After finishing high school he planned to study medicine. However, two young priests convinced him that his vocation to heal might in fact be a vocation to the priesthood. So he entered St. Mary's College in Kentucky. He was ordained priest in 1952 and soon began a meteoric rise in the church. From 1966-68, he served as Auxiliary Bishop of Atlanta. From 1968-1972, he was general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and its president from 1974-1977. He was named Archbishop of Chicago in 1982 and became Cardinal in 1983. As Archbishop of Chicago he developed his vision of the consistent ethic of life. Two months before he died of pancreatic cancer in 1996, he received the Medal of Freedom at the White House.

The spirit of Vatican II permeated his priesthood and his perception of the role of the church in the modern world. His published writings contain numerous references to the Pastoral Constitution: *The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes).*

Bernardin believed the dialogue between the church and the world was a two way conversation. The church had much to teach the world; likewise the world had much to teach the church. The church must speak out on moral and religious issues while respecting the legitimate achievements of secularity.

For Bernardin, both priest and bishop are the 'good shepherds' who reach out to people in the ordinary circumstances of their lives – their joys and sufferings, hopes and dreams. He believed that people truly experienced the power and love of God through authentic ministry. Thus a healing hand must be extended to everyone, as Jesus did, especially to those who hurt us. This cannot be sustained, however, without a deep and profound prayer life.

In his last work, *The Gift of Peace*, Bernardin confessed that the 'busyness' of his active ministry was an impedi-ment to his prayer life. He writes: "I have prayed and struggled constantly to be able to let go of things more willingly, to be free of everything that keeps the Lord from finding greater hospitality in my soul or interferes with my surrender to what God asks of me." (*The Gift of Peace*, p.6)

His spiritual dissonance was resolved by a conscious decision to give God the first hour of each day. We may take heart that Bernardin's growth in prayer was blocked by the petty concerns that plague most Christians: pride, ego, the desire to succeed and be seen as someone who is successful and 'in control'.

Not until the false accusation of sexual misconduct in 1993 coupled by the diagnosis of cancer in 1995, did Bernardin acquire real expertise in the art of 'letting go'. The calumnious charges of sexual misconduct shattered him to the core of his being. How could this Stephen Cook whom he did not even know, want to harm him in this way?

In *The Gift of Peace,* Bernardin scrupulously documents the year-long ordeal of being charged with sexually abusing a seminarian at the time he was Archbishop of Cincinnati. Bernardin never placed himself above the secular judicial process. He subjected himself to the most rigorous public scrutiny (a total of 14 press conferences). To probing questions about his "sex life", he responded that he had always been "chaste and celibate". (p. 29)

Bernardin had put in place the first comprehensive guidelines for dealing with sexual abuse charges against priests of the Archdiocese of Chicago. These procedures came to be widely adopted throughout the United States. When accused himself in 1993, his first action was to refer the charges against him to the review board that was part of the process.

Bernardin would not use any archdiocesan funds for his defence, lest parishioners use the case as a reason for ending their financial support to the church. Bernardin placed himself entirely in the hands of God and the generosity of those who believed in his innocence. Nor would he pursue a policy of countersuit, so as not to dissuade victims of sexual abuse from coming forward in good faith to accuse those who had violated them and to seek damages.

The review board discovered that Stephen Cook had already lodged a complaint to the Archdiocese of Cincinatti against a priest who was a faculty member at St. Gregory's seminary. The case against Bernardin centred on a book which Cook claimed Bernardin personally inscribed, a picture showing them together and the testimony of a hypnotist who helped Cook recall the memories of abuse.

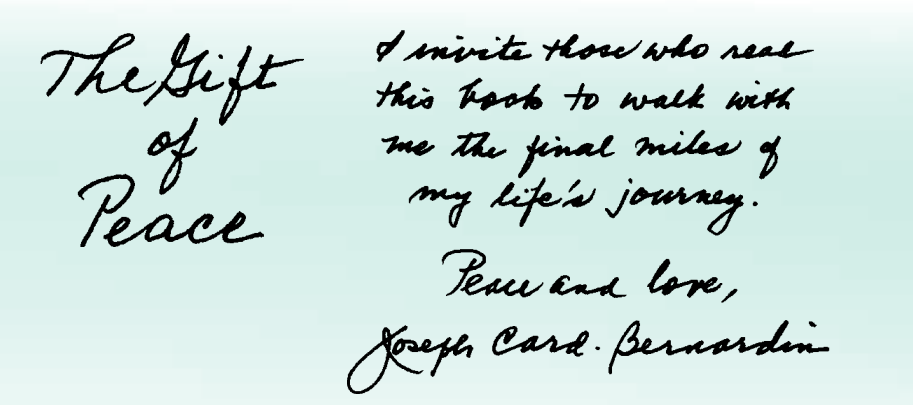
The case collapsed when it was discovered that the autographed book did not really bear Bernardin's signature, the picture was in fact a group photo taken at the seminary and included many others, and the inexperience of the hypnotist who had had only a few hours of training. (*The Gift of Peace,* pp. 30-32) On February 28 1994, Cook asked a judge at the federal court in Cincinatti to drop the charges against the Cardinal.

Cook had indeed been sexually abused by a priest he thought was his friend, but was not taken seriously by the authorities. This double violation triggered an intense period of alienation from the church and a lifestyle which resulted in his contracting AIDS. Even though Stephen initially was pursuing a case only against the priest in the seminary, another priest advised him to include Bernardin in the suit so that Stephen could "get back what he wanted from the church" (p.36). Bernardin documents his reconciliation with Stephen as a profound "manifestation of God's love, forgiveness and healing" (p.39). Stephen Cook died reconciled with the church on September 22 1995.

The immense experience of freedom and peace which followed this ordeal catalysed an intense desire in Bernardin to bear witness publicly to the issues near and dear to his heart. In 1995, he became co-founder and co-chair of the *Religious Alliance Against Pornography*, which was somewhat successful in raising public awareness about the horrible evil of child pornography.

Later that year Bernardin made a lecture tour in New Zealand and Australia. He spoke about the consistent ethic of life, the concerns of young people in the church, and outlined his vision of the church in the new millennium. A major thread running throughout was the church's responsibility to *listen* to the needs of people.

In 1995, Bernardin led a delegation of Catholics and Jews from Chicago to Israel. The trip celebrated 25 years of dialogue and increased understanding between the Catholic and Jewish communities in Chicago. By visiting together their common religious



origins, they hoped to model for others how Jews and Catholics should get along.

Bernardin's ebullience ended abruptly with the diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in 1995. He may have triumphed over the 'moral evil' of the unjust accusation, but he was not to defeat the evil of disease and death. He emptied himself totally in the service of others as long as his health permitted. He became the 'unofficial chaplain' to cancer patients at Loyola University Medical Centre in Chicago. Pulling his IV alongside his frail body, he spent hours visiting the sick and administering the sacraments to fellow cancer sufferers like himself.

His pastoral letter on health care emerged during this period. Entitled "A Sign of Hope", he linked his personal experience of illness with the public contribution of Catholic healthcare institutions whose mission and purpose is to heal as Jesus did.

Since countless people like himself had experienced holistic care from healthcare professionals in Catholic institutions, he stressed the importance of the not-for-profit status of Catholic healthcare and praised the dedication of the religious and laity who made this public service possible.

His final initiative was to establish the Catholic Common Ground Project in August 1996 which he hoped would be a "forum for Catholics to address creatively and faithfully" the questions vital to the church and society in the next millennium. To do this Catholics at every level must "move beyond the distrust, the polarisation, and the entrenched positions" that have weakened the response of the Church to the crucial issues of the day. (*The Gift of Peace,* pp. 129-130)

Joseph Bernardin died on 14 November 1996, 13 days after finishing *The Gift of Peace,* which overnight became a national best seller. Its message is simple and powerful: God's gift of peace, serenity, joy and courage is available to all who seek it. It is a free gift which enables us to deal with anything that comes our way – anything.

In many ways, he was a "man for all seasons", a person whose intelligence and professional success was equalled only by his integrity and deep spirituality. He endured suffering with a nobility of spirit that only great-souled people possess. And yet, he remained to the end a very approach-able and simple pastor and priest, whose first love was the Mass and whose mission was to bring people closer to Christ through the healing sacraments of the Church. ■

Mary Eastham is Catholic Chaplain at Massey University and is a public theologian.

In the next issue, she describes Bernardin's legacy to the Church: the Consistent Ethic of Life

The Desert

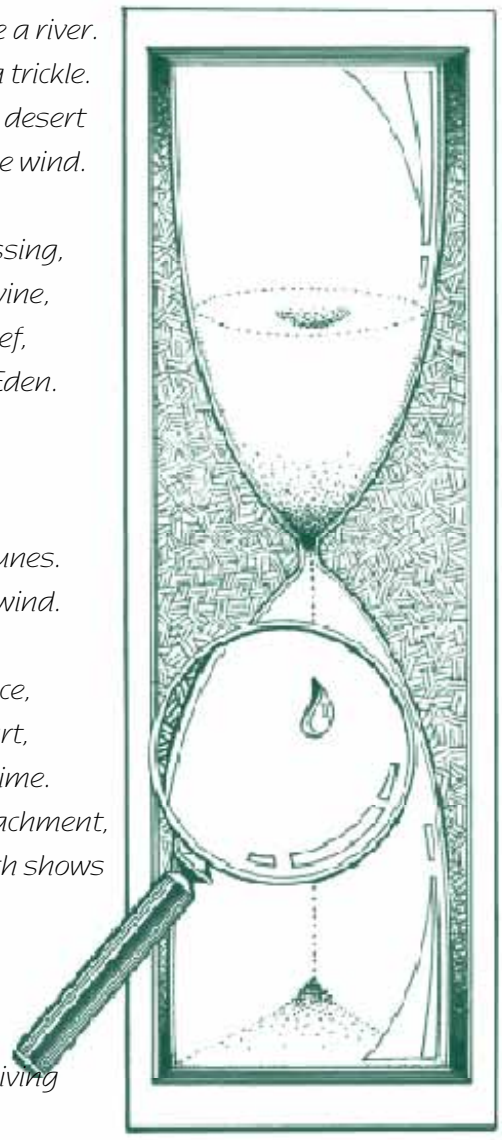
Prayer doesn't always flow like a river.
There are times when it's not a trickle.
My heart becomes as dry as a desert
and words blow like dust on the wind.

I remember past floods of blessing,
green growth and fruit on the vine,
and I become restless with grief,
as I search for a way back to Eden.

But if I sit still in the desert,
sit long enough to listen,
I find messages in the sand dunes.
I hear words on the hard dry wind.

The meaning of sand is patience,
waiting with a poor empty heart,
for the rain which will come in time.
The wind's voice speaks of detachment,
the distance from comfort which shows
miracles at work in dryness.

Slowly, so slowly, I've learned
the value of prayer in a desert,
and I have come to trust the giving
of all seasons of God.



Joy Cowley

Sexual abuse. . .

are we burying our heads in the sand?

Layman Paul Green calls on our bishops to reassure Catholics – and suggests another initiative

On an almost daily basis we are being confronted by horror stories about the Catholic Church: the sexual misbehaviour of its priests, official cover-ups, hush money paid to victims, denials and then humiliating admissions. After Sydney's Archbishop Pell firmly denied that hush money was paid to victims, we were greeted with evidence that contractual agreements *were* made requiring victims to remain silent. It appears now that in some Australian dioceses a policy of openness was not followed. In New Zealand we too need to know that our established policy of openness about priestly offenders and the protection of their victims is not being compromised by misguided attempts to protect the reputation of the church.

It is important also to protect the rights of the accused who may be the victim of a false accusation, but the right of victims to seek justice in the legal system must never be compromised by the promise of financial compensation. It is equally important to enable offenders and victims to be reconciled. Unless we pursue a restorative justice solution, our newly established policies may simply become a way to save the institutional church further embarrassment and expense.

It is worrying that New Zealand's bishops have been silent. What are they doing to reassure the faith community? Is there not a need here for a role for the laity more in keeping with the spirit of Vatican II? *Time* magazine asks the question "Can the Catholic Church save itself?" There are few known studies of sexual deviance in the Catholic Church, and if other studies have been done they have not been published.

According to the April edition of *Welcom*, an American study of the Chicago archdiocese found 1.8 percent of priests had been guilty of some form of sexual misconduct and that only one was a paedophile. Another American researcher, Philip Jenkins, claims that paedophiles are no more common among priests than among the ministers of other Christian churches. Yet such claims can only be based on the record of criminal convictions. If the church were guilty of hiding such offences as indicated, then official criminal records would be woefully inadequate.

Our New Zealand bishops have taken steps to establish procedures that would hopefully minimise the likelihood of hiding the offences of offending priests. It is not possible to guarantee sexual misconduct and abuse by our priests will not occur, but the issues have been addressed with sensitivity and an awareness of the kind of damage that can occur. Complainants are listened to and inter-viewed with compassion; however, it is not assumed that their complaints are necessarily true. The accused are presumed innocent until they have either confessed or been proved to be offenders, but they are immediately suspended from all pastoral duties.

As bishop's delegates, however, the investigating authorities have no statutory powers. They can only interview and investigate the facts with the consent of both parties. If com-plainant or accused prefers the court system, the church authorities must back off so as not to interfere in the police investigation. The document is called *Te Houhanga Rongo, A Path to Healing* and was reviewed as recently as 2001.

The process remains an adversarial one. In the absence of a confession, the delegated authorities must investigate and report back to the bishop. In other words, unless the parties have recourse to other agencies (e.g. the police, child protection agencies, Human Rights Commission or a canonical trial) the bishop retains the final responsibility. Selective perception or wishful thinking could sway a bishop who wants to rid himself of a predatory priest or alternatively save an otherwise effective transgressor. It is not evident that procedures will engender a healing process.

The possibility of holding a restorative justice conference is a process that could well be added to the procedural steps. After the delegated Abuse Committee has completed interviews with both parties and is satisfied that an offence has occurred, the parties could be invited to such a conference. It could offer the complainant/victim and accused/offender an opportunity to become reconciled in a way that is mutually beneficial and just.

Such a conference would normally involve victim and offender, their families and close friends and colleagues along with other relevant people. Most importantly, however, an independent facilitator must convene it. This process has a known potential to empower and heal victims of abuse and make the shamed offenders recognise the consequences of their actions. Trust can be restored in a church that is willing to promote an honest exchange of explanations, experiences and feelings.

The cumulative experience of restorative justice processes may help us understand ➤➤

Making the church accountable

Jim Wallis

Having a 3-and-a-half-year-old son has made the horrific revelations about the sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests even more abhorrent. His innocence and vulnerability has been my daily context as I listen to one awful story after another. It makes a person very angry.

Concern for the victims of abuse has to be our first and overriding concern. Where the church and its leaders have begun to fully repent of these terrible sins and make those who have been irreparably damaged its principal priority, it becomes the beginning of healing. But where concerns for the perpetrators, or the priesthood, or the institution, or the financial consequences have dominated the response, the original sin has been seriously compounded. Clearly, the path that must be followed now is to put the welfare of the victims over the protection of the system. Indeed, that is the only way to save and heal the system in the long run.

But what must be done? Celibacy is not the problem (though some reforms in how it might be implemented may be in order). And while I support both the ordination of women priests (my wife is an Episcopal cleric) and the welcoming of married priests, neither of these crucial church reforms would solve the problem either. Both paedophilia (the sexual abuse of children) and the abuse of power in sexual relations with post-pubescent young people are problems in many places, including other churches where women and married priests are accepted. Nor is the problem the prevalence of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood. Paedophilia is as much a heterosexual illness as a homosexual one. The underlying issue in this terrible church sex scandal is not – as the Left and the Right have variously asserted – celibacy, the lack of women priests or married priests, or the number of homosexuals in the priesthood.

The real problem here is a lack of accountability, and only radical reform that brings new and effective accountability to every aspect of the church's life will suffice as a solution. That solution is as possible as it is urgent. Bringing a new and institution-changing accountability to the church's life is something that can be done now, at occasions such as the all-important meeting of the American Catholic bishops in Dallas.

The bishops should institute far-reaching changes that would bring lay people (women and men) into virtually all the decision making at the core of the church's life and mission. That means substantial lay involvement in every aspect of the church's business and ministry – including decisions regarding management and administration, finances, grievances, and the crucial decisions about the evaluation and deployment of personnel, which are at the heart of this painful situation. The truth is that such substantial lay participation is already occurring in many parishes and dioceses around the country. And many of these issues were apparently raised during the April Vatican meetings with the American cardinals.

The result would be greatly increased accountability for the church, for priests, and for bishops that would, ultimately, be to everyone's benefit. Women and married people of both sexes don't need to be ordained to exercise significant and effective leadership in the church. Many Catholic women and parents have wise and healing gifts and experience to bring to this pivotal crisis in the church's history. This is the time to call upon their gifts. Accountability is the most basic reform that might transcend both conservative and liberal constituencies. And most important, accountability is the reform that could make the most difference. It is what must be done.

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➤➤ better the causes and circumstances that contribute to abuse and then devise more effective preventive measures. Offenders may be temporarily locked up but there is surely little hope that prison will do anything to transform or rehabilitate most of them. Prison chaplain Fr Jim Consedine has observed that simply locking people up does little or nothing to rehabilitate them.

I would like to end with a story by Jim Consedine: "The telephone call came early on the Saturday afternoon. It was Joanne. She was just ringing to say that she was still pleased that she had been reconciled with and had forgiven the man who, five years earlier, had murdered her mother and her mother's friend. For her, she said, it was the most important thing she had done in her adult life. I wished her good luck and God's blessing.

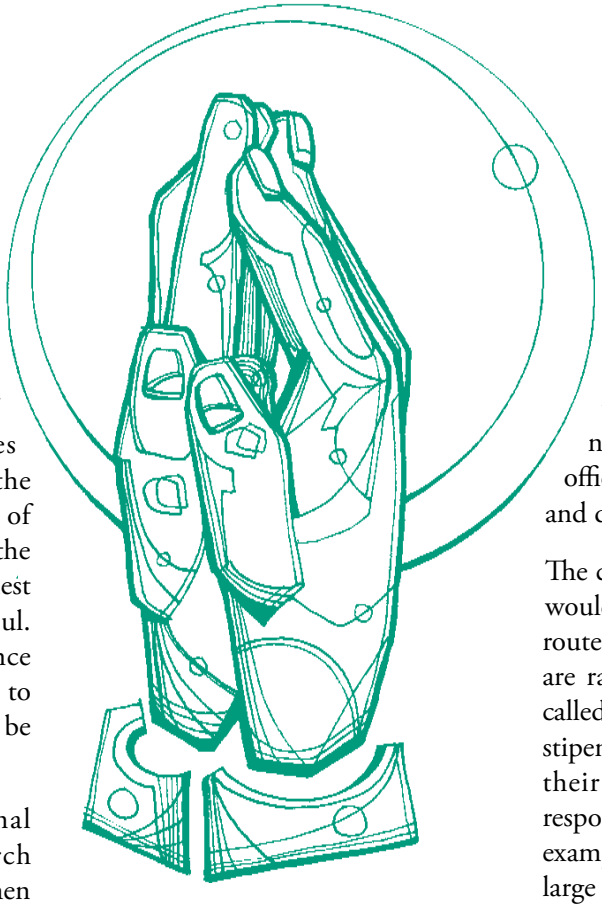
"Her call gave me new heart. It is so easy to put down new ideas and creative options with emotive details and worst-case scenarios of infamous crimes. The truth of the matter is that because of society's punitive attitudes, crime and punishment issues are getting worse not better. Some creative thinking is des-perately needed. Restorative justice proposals contain just that. Ask Joanne".

A church worth saving is one that is truly committed to healing and reconciliation. For Christ's sake, let's try his way. ■

Paul Green is a lecturer, consultant and house-husband in Palmerston North

A Crazy Calling

Glynn Cardy



I read this morning an article trying to equate the job of a priest with that of a doctor or bank manager. The writer, if I understood him correctly, sees priesthood as a function: where the doctor deals with the sensitivities of one's health and the banker with the sensitivities of one's finances, the priest deals with the sensitivities of one's soul. The writer believes the performance criteria and accountability applied to doctors and bankers could equally be applied to priests.

People who favour the functional approach usually find the church frustrating. What does it mean when the courts of the land hold that a priest's employer is God? Can God employ a person, pay him or her, and demand a level of performance and accountability? 'God' is a very slippery word, defying close definition.

I believe that the church, unlike medicine or banking, starts with who the person is rather than with what they do. It starts with vocation or 'calling'. If medicine began with vocation it would attempt to recruit those who are healers, or feel themselves 'called' to be healers, or whom the community wants to be their healers. The medical school would instruct, challenge and prepare them. After graduation the doctors would hopefully give expression to their vocation as healers.

Likewise with banking. Finance is intimately linked with the well-being of individuals and their communities. The tasks of a banker may involve calculating percentages and the like, but the vocation of a banker is about encouraging the best in people, supporting them, and building community well-being.

Vocation is hard to tie down into categories of pay, accountability and performance. Can you pay someone for who they are rather than for what they do? Can you ascertain fidelity to one's calling by the number of patients one sees, or applications one processes? Maybe the gentle word of doctor or banker is more potent than any medication or re-financing?

Medicine and banking have largely put these sort of questions in the 'too hard basket' and have used functional definitions. It would be a mistake though to imagine that the best doctor is the highest paid doctor, or the one with the most academic or work experience qualifications. Likewise it would be a mistake to imagine the best banker as necessarily being in a downtown office with significant respons-ibilities and drawing a larger income.

The church stubbornly (stupidly some would say), has refused the functional route. It does pay priests for who they are rather than for what they do. It's called a stipend or living allowance. The stipend remains fairly static throughout their years of service and differing responsibilities. The priest's parish, for example, may be a very small or very large one, a rich one or a poor one, but this is not significantly reflected in her or his income.

Realising that performance standards are important, the church has struggled to encourage due attention to outcomes without equating vocation to task. It has demanded of its clergy regular continuing education, supervision, and the like. It has tried to encourage clergy to utilise their particular gifts, and leave areas of parish life to others.

However, when a priest refuses to cooperate with such processes the church has been very reticent to fire him or her. In part, this is because the church sees itself as a community or family, and is reluctant to break familial bonds. In part, it is because it is really hard to do.

I suspect it also has something to do with vocation. What is the calling of a priest? And how is that calling related ➤➤

to the tasks of ministry? I was taught, shown, that the vocation of a priest is to pray. Full stop. No more, and no less.

One could imagine a black cassocked figure kneeling in church throughout the day, throughout the week, talking or silent in the presence of God. Each person in need, each committee meeting, every frivolous or fiery conversation, every educational event, ... being a distraction.

Although it sounds very other-worldly sometimes I think it is not a bad place to start. Who says being 'worldly' is where it's at? Who says that the more one does, the more one achieves, the more one influences others, the better priest one is? At heart the priestly vocation is counter-cultural. So, dressing in black cassock (the colour might be fashionable, though not the cut), on bended and sore knees, locates the priest as 'strange', 'different', and 'weird'.

The priest at prayer listens – not to a Hollywood voice booming from the Special FX team, nor especially to some 'quiet voice within'. The priest is listening to nothing, no thing. The priest is listening to 'God', a word without material substance or reference. The Australian cartoonist Michael Leunig likens prayer to a person kneeling in front of a duck. It defies logic. It is crazy.

Yet for those of us who walk that way of craziness there is something incredibly life-giving about prayer. Somehow through attending to ourselves, to those close to us, and those needing our concern, we attend to that which is 'more', 'beyond', and 'other'. In a sense we leave 'our world' by being more earthed in it. It sounds nonsensical.

When I say 'we leave' I am not referring to some out-of-body experience, some form of celestial or cyber tourism. Rather it is like plunging into the ordinary – beneath the waters, breaking the surface, splashing in the ordinary... crying, laughing, celebrating the godness of it all.

In the last paragraph I have used a water metaphor. It is difficult to talk about God and prayer without metaphors. Most world religions use water ritually and metaphorically. Water has certain properties and associations that lend it to metaphor. Water is life-giving. It affects us even when we are not aware of it. There are dangers associated with water – don't take it for granted! Water is also hard to grasp and hold. It can move. It can be elusive. Although we see ourselves in its reflection, water is separate from us.

I also used the word 'godness'. No, it wasn't a typo. It was God as an adjective. I think God has been kept as a noun for too long. Trapped as a noun. Nouns will always demand that we associate an object, a look, a form, with them. Nouns will want God to be a Father, a Mother, a Jesus, a 'Ground of Being', ... adjectives and verbs are not so fussy.

So we pray – listening, connecting – to the noun/adjective/verb God; to a fluid 'energy'; a force of healing and hope; Love... Someone once said, "God is the power of, and in, mutual relation". 'Mutual relation' is defined for Christians by the inclusive and confrontational life of Jesus, and by the church's attempts to hear it through the centuries. It's hard to say much more without getting into stories, for stories are how God is best talked about.

Some time ago most priests figuratively took off the black cassock and walked out the door. Observers thought this was great: "The church is finally meeting people where they are at!" Some of us became counsellors, some social workers, some social activists, some managers of parish corporations, some chaplains of conventional life. We became leaders, educators, managers, experts in worship. We felt useful and appreciated. "Gee, clergy do a lot," said some. "They really care," said others.

We also became very busy. Prayer became something we did during a scheduled service, or before a meeting, or for 15 minutes by ourselves or with our families. Prayer was like any other event in the diary. The more it appeared in the diary the better we felt, and the more pressured we became. We were on the treadmill – as if this was what real life was supposed to be about.

Many of us, however, tried hard not to join the treadmill. When we listened to people, we listened for God. When we read or wrote or spoke, we listened for God. When we walked or wondered or organised, we listened for God. When we listened to ourselves, we listened for God. We listened when we didn't know we were listening. And by listening, somehow, others were encouraged to listen too.

Sure there were things to be done. Sure we had to go to meetings, lead worship, care for people, preach, help build community. And usually these things were enjoyable and satisfying. Yet we worked hard not to confuse such things with listening. Rather we tried to absorb such things into the orbit of listening. Prayer is when we let the waves of life crash onto our beach, travel the sand, and then be sucked out again into the vastness of being. Such, I believe, is the crazy, counter-cultural, vocation of priesthood. ■

In the course of *Tui Motu*'s twice yearly Board of Directors meeting in May, the phrase 'community of ownership' cropped up. Could this be a way to describe an emerging vision of *Tui Motu*? In what ways might we all be part of a loosely stitched community claiming ownership of a renewed faith vision?

'Community' and 'ownership' are terms that demand consid-eration before they are linked. To own is not just to hold property rights to something. It also implies taking respons-ibility for, and it is in this sense that a 'community of ownership' is emerging.

But what of community? Community is constructed in relationship, and through our magazine we can be related in shared readership. We may not agree with every article, but we can share in the overall vision. We need each other to help reflect deeply. John Donne said: "no man is an island" and indeed, *Tui Motu-InterIslands* literally means 'stitching islands together'.

Some church-based communities have magazines which keep supporters in touch with developments at 'home base'. Examples might be *Common Ground*, published by the Catholic Workers in Christchurch, or *Sojourners* that comes from the ecumenical community of the same name in Washington DC. Ours reports from no particular community, but is actively building community. Rather than publishing writing from a place, it is finding a place in the homes and hearts of readers across these islands (and beyond).

Tui Motu is a meeting place for the expression of hope in (re) stitching our islands together. Its words are more enduring than the paper they are printed on. There are a number of groups who sustain the dialogue: dedicated workers in the editorial office, volunteers who help with office tasks, proof-read and package and mail each issue, parish sellers who get issues to new readers, faithful subscribers, and of course writers who fill the columns and give the magazine something to say. Groups overlap. For instance, there are no journalists. Our writers are simply a subset of our readers.

Last week I attended a theological discussion and thought I recognised the name of a fellow participant. Indeed he was a regular writer in *Tui Motu* whom I felt I knew already. The face was new to me, but his words were not! A little longer ago, I was in the town of my childhood and encountered a former teacher who came to me after Mass, saying how excited she was at the quality of the magazine. Reconnection within the conversation of *Tui Motu*! All readers will have stories of how the magazine joins us.

If we the directors, readers, writers, editors, promoters and volunteers in sum comprise the 'owners' of our magazine, what responsibilities come with such (metaphorical) ownership? If we own something (a house, a car, a pet), we look after it and care for it. To extend such stewardship and caring to a magazine may sound absurd. But this is not any 'news-today, fish-and-chip-wrapper-tomorrow' paper. You are holding a labour of love produced by people who are striving to envision the meaning of faith in 21st century Aotearoa and beyond.

To own *Tui Motu* is to care about it enough to tell a friend, share your copy, or give a gift subscription. To own also involves the freedom to give away! Perhaps even consider putting words on paper and add to the conversation in print. In whatever way you believe in the dream of a more questioning, challenging and reflective community of faith, remember that *Tui Motu* is owned by us all who bring life to the words on paper. ■

Robin Kearns is Associate Professor of Geography at Auckland University

letter to the editor

Failure of parish councils

Some years ago the Catholic community was encouraged to see that the model that the church had been working with was a pyramid model, that is – leadership came from the top and the greater Catholic community were passive recipients. We were challenged to change this model and participate in the life of the church rather than to be mere spectators and receivers of a ministry performed by the clergy. This was our baptismal right and responsibility. Over the next few years parish committees started to be formed. Parish pastoral councils and liturgy committees were the most noticeable.

The sad fact is this has had a greater negative effect on the people of God exercising their call to ministry than did the previous model. People serving on parish committees have no mandate to operate, they have no structure, no job description and no rights. Committees are formed at the discretion of the priests of parishes and serve the needs of the priest rather than the people's baptismal call to ministry.

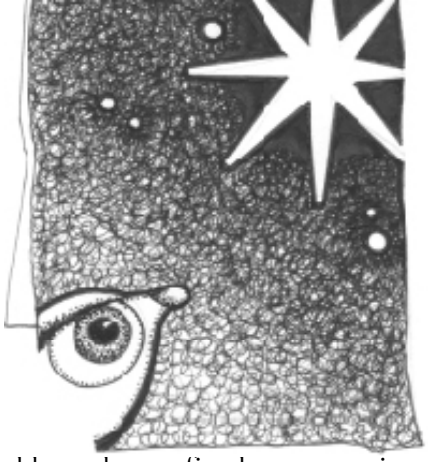
The result is to give only people approved of by the clergy a right to full and active participation in ministry and a misunderstanding to the people involved in these committees that they have a mandate to operate. They also exclude the full and active participation of all the other baptised members. Other parishioners see their duty in ministry as subordinate to these committees.

I believe these parish committees are open to abuse because they have no mandate or code of practice; they continue to support the pyramid structure that we were challenged to change. They have done serious damage to the renewal of the church and in some cases have been structures of oppression and abuse against their members.

In short they are a facade. (*abridged*)

Teresa Homan, Upper Hutt.

Star Wars – our deepest fears or secret longings?



Neil Vaney responds to questions posed by physicist Richard Dowden in the May issue

Five or six years ago I went to see the film "Independence Day". Once I had put my critical faculties into neutral, I quite enjoyed it. It provoked me to ask myself: ***are there other intelligent beings out there? Do they need to be saved by Christ?***

My first reflection was our great need as a species not to feel alone in the universe. The second was deep fear of our vulnerability. What a glow of comfort the film provided, that we could outsmart aliens so far technically superior to ourselves – yet rightly despise them because they were so repulsive and vicious.

Looking out on a clear winter's night through the luminous belt of the Milky Way to the galaxies stretching beyond the power of imagination, many of us have probably wondered if intelligent beings were scanning the heavens and also asking, ***is there anybody else out there?***

If our minds have a theological bent we possibly faced up to some of questions suggested by Professor Dowden. ***What is the meaning of that vast emptiness? Are there other spiritual beings? Do they feel the same longings, the same need to be loved, the same dread of death that we do? Do they too need a Christ to resolve these dilemmas?***

The most recent attempts to answer such questions come in the story lines of Star Trek and Star Wars. They have been shaping our imaginations from the 1970s. But before we can answer some of these theological dilemmas, our first task is to disentangle true questions from uncritical assumptions and fears.

Common Cosmic Fallacies

A common assumption is that these questions have only exercised human minds since the launching of the first sputnik in 1957. Great minds from Origen (c.185-254) to Karl Rahner (1904-84) have thought deeply on these issues. Their conclusions are as diverse as their different eras. Origen, for instance, believed that the pre-existent soul of Jesus had cosmic reach and power and took angelic form for the angels.

A Franciscan, Guillaume de Vaurouillon, in the 15th century affirmed that God could make an infinity of worlds better than this one. Since such worlds would not have inherited sin from Adam, they would not need redemption.

He did comment, however, on what would be needed if such extra-terrestrials (ETs) did sin. "As to the question whether Christ by dying on this earth could redeem the inhabitants of another world, I answer that he was able to do this not only for our world but for infinite worlds. But it would not be fitting for him to go to another world to die again."

More recently Joseph Pohle (1852-1922) a seminary professor who taught in both Germany and Washington, wrote: "No reason compels us to extend to other worlds our own sinfulness and to think of them as caught up in evil. But even when the evils of sin have infected these worlds it does not follow that an incarnation or redemption must have taken place. God has many other ways by which to remit guilt."

Karl Rahner, one of the pre-eminent Catholic theologians of the 20th century, concluded that biblical considerations can offer theologians no help in illuminating any relationship of Jesus to ETs, who may well exist without evil, suffering or sin. God, however, could not be confined to categories such as 'covenant','reign of God' or 'redemption'; there could be various ways of sharing in God's intimate life.

Some possible theological solutions

The question how Christ's redeeming life and death might relate to ETs yet to be discovered, has been answered by Christian thinkers in three different ways:

- Christ has died for all beings, including aliens.
- Other ET societies need not have fallen into sin. They have no need of redemption. (*C S Lewis's cosmic trilogy enshrines this idea.*)
- God has taken flesh in many places where intelligent creatures have fallen into sin.

Whereas some theologians such as Rahner have seen these questions as critical challenges to religious faith, others like Origen and St Thomas Aquinas had no such concerns. For Origen, free intelligent assent to God's grace was so exalted a possibility that it outranked innumerable possible galaxies. Aquinas maintained it was the role of science, not faith, to catalogue the diverse objects in the universe. He saw no inherent conflict between them.

The Changing Face of Scientific Paradigms

I now want to trace how the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence (SETI) has passed through various phases which suggest differing levels of confidence in scientific knowledge and its 'success' in making sense of our universe.

At the first SETI conference in 1961 various scientists – astrophysicists, biologists, geologists – attempted to

draw up the criteria essential for an intelligent society to arise and reach a point enabling it to make radio contact with Earth. They listed factors such as speed of star formation, probability of the birth of planets, criteria necessary for life – and intelligent life – to appear, and so on.

Working from such values, Frank Drake constructed a famous equation, now bearing his name, to estimate the number of planets that could be in radio contact with us. If an average civilisation lasted between a thousand and a million years, estimates for such dialogue partners varied between a thousand and a million, depending on how stringently the criteria were applied.

Since 1961 more than 70 SETI programmes have operated, using many of the largest and most powerful radio-telescopes on the globe. Given the huge rise in television, radio and other electromagnetic energy transmissions from the 1960s onwards, planet Earth has been making itself a very identifiable source and target. By now these messages will have penetrated about 40 light years into our galaxy, meaning that any of up to about a hundred thousand possible civilisations could have responded by now. Not one has.

This lack of response has led a number of researchers to re-evaluate critically the Drake equation. What they have realised is that the assumption which underlay the equation was that what has happened on earth was nothing special. As far as galactic civilisations go, we were very ordinary and typical. Such an assumption begs the question: it is precisely that which has to be proved.

What is now commanding more attention is the *Rare Earth* equation, the work of Peter Ward and Donald Brownlee from the University of Washington. Their arguments appeared in their 2000 work ***Rare Earth – Why Complex life is Uncommon in the Universe***. They introduced criteria such as the fraction of stars in a galaxy's habitable zone, the number of metal-rich planets and those with low numbers of mass extinction events. Their conclusion was: "It appears that Earth indeed may be extraordinarily rare".

A number of observations from different disciplines all point to just how fragile and unlikely are the birth and survival of intelligent life in our world. For instance, astronomy has underlined the critical role of Jupiter, a very large planet with an orbit far from the sun. Acting as a cosmic vacuum cleaner, it has sucked up numerous comet strikes that could have obliterated life on Earth.

Likewise we have come to understand the critical role of our moon, a satellite remarkably large as most moons go. It acts as a stablising anchor preventing Earth being pulled off its rotational axis by the attraction of Jupiter and the sun. It has also checked a runaway greenhouse effect as seen on some other planets.

Many biologists and palaeontologists now accept that the advent of life, especially intelligent life, did not have to happen. The emergence of mind seems to depend on a whole chain of remarkable coincidences beginning from an asteroid impact 65 million years ago and followed by an explosion of new species in the Cambrian period. Perhaps 50 billion species have appeared on our planet in the 3.8 billion years since its formation. Only one of these has developed intelligent self-consciousness.

John Davies, an avid researcher and thinker on ET life, offers three possibilities to explain intelligent life on Earth:
• it is just an extraordinary fluke.
• it points to presently unknown laws that make such life a cosmic imperative.
• it is a miracle, born of some higher intelligence. None of these answers is particularly attractive to many scientists.

What they indicate to me is that the existence of human life is wondrous and mysterious. In religious terms it is a gift. And I believe the possibility of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe is still very much in the balance. ■

Fr Neil Vaney SM teaches theology at Good Shepherd College, Auckland

Question Time for Bill English

In the *June* issue, Mr English claims he found the Benefit cutbacks (under *National*) 'very difficult'. An easy claim to make at this distance. No mention is made of the other *National* government 'economic imperatives': the *Employment Contracts Act*, the lowering of basic wage rates and the introduction of the youth rate. *National* also introduced market rents for *Housing New Zealand* properties.

Those who support the *National* Party – and this apparently includes some members of the *Tui Motu* editorial staff – are signalling they want to return to the policies of the '90s that caused so much misery for the disadvantaged people in our society.

J Urlich, New Lynn (*abridged*)

Tui Motu *seeks to present the opinions of people it interviews as faithfully as possible, but this does in any way not imply editorial endorsement of the views expressed.*

In the June *Tui Motu* , the Catholic Leader of the Opposition says: "You enter politics knowing you might have to compromise (your) strongly held principles". Would he mind telling us which strongly held principles he has already compromised? Also, what criteria has he for compromising, and how many principles would he be prepared to let go?

So he's promising to spend more on health and education and increase job opportunities, *and* reduce taxes. Nothing innovative there. All the politicians in the world are saying much the same thing to catch votes from both sides. In what ways would Bill English manage his team subsequently to pull *that* rabbit out of the hat in this thoroughly competition-driven world?

What my country – and this country – needs is people with God-given imagination to propose a new way of doing economy instead of see-sawing on the old ones.

Dorothy Stevenson, Lima, Perú.

A uniquely NZ solution to an 'intractable' problem

'A Fair and Just Solution'?
A history of the integration of private schools in New Zealand
By Rory Sweetman
published by Dunmore Press
Price: $34.95
Review: Brian McKee

Historian Rory Sweetman is to be complimented for his book *'A Fair and Just Solution'?* It records how the Private Schools Conditional Education Act of 1975 brought about a major change in education in New Zealand, removed a long standing injustice for Catholic schools. The early part of the book gives the reader a succinct resumé from the 1877 Education Act through to the rise of state in the 1960s.

Looking back now it is difficult to fully appreciate the acrimony and sectarian differences between the Catholic and Protestant churches which contributed greatly to the 1877 Act's national primary schools being secular. Education was divided between State schools, then seen by most as the schools for Protestant children and Private schools, the majority of which were Catholic schools. The injustice of little or no financial assistance for Catholic schools was a vexed issue between the Catholic church and successive Governments for nearly 100 years. Social changes of the post-war (1945) era slowly influenced new attitudes to religion, and perceptions of justice and fairness in society.

Two important organisations emerged in the 1960s. Catholic parents through their parent-teacher federations combined nationally to become an active force agitating for state aid, and the Interdenominational Committee for Independent Schools in 1963 targeting the political leaders brought the main Church schools together for the first time in this groundswell.

As more lay teachers were needed in Catholic schools their operating costs increased, the class sizes were large and calls for state aid became desperate. Some modest 'state aid cash grants' began during the 1960s, but failed to address the real financial problems besetting Catholic schools as their hardworking and meagrely remunerated religious were slowly being replaced by lay teachers receiving a salary.

In 1969 the Labour Opposition leader, Norman Kirk, recognising that the pupils in the poorer Catholic schools were seriously disadvantaged, made 'state aid' a front-line political issue for both the Labour and National Parties. Within one year of the 1969 election the Holyoake National Government agreed to grant private schools 20 percent of salaries cost. In the 1972 election campaign Labour again offered to consider integration but also 50 percent state aid.

The 1973 State Aid Conference was to be the watershed in the long struggle for justice and fairness for Catholic schools. Two Working Parties were set up, one to consider the 50 percent state aid question and the other the possibility of conditional integration. The Catholic Bishops were given the unenviable task of appointing Catholic negotiators for the integration working party. Sweetman records why the state aid working party failed and how the integration working party grappled with their difficult task, slowly overcoming their differences, suspic-ions and distrust of each side's motives and bias.

Sweetman's research has been carefully and meticulously carried out, resulting in a fair and penetrating view from all sides. He was given access to minutes and records of the Department of Education, the State school organ-isations (in particular the PPTA and the NZEI), Catholic records and those of the other organisations, committees and individuals involved. He was able to interview many of the participants in the state aid and integration process and others for and against. The historic bitterness and antagonism between State schools and Private schools comes through. As does the controversy, dissent and discord from some Catholic parents and educators who favoured state aid as the solution versus integration with its uncertain benefits or, at worst, potential to destroy Catholic schools.

The book recalls many of the politicians, educators, Church leaders, adversaries and supporters. There were the key politicians involved, in particular, those who straddled the critical 1969 to 1983 years – Norman Kirk, Phil Amos, Rob Muldoon, Les Gander and Merve Wellington. It records the work and patience of Ned Dobbs, Director-General of Education, who chaired the integration working party, bringing together State school and Catholic negotiators, keeping them focussed as they worked hard over 18 months to reach their fragile agreement. Of Bill Renwick, Bradshaw, Hinton and other officers of the Department who worked through the complex issues of implementing integration and dealing with unexpected difficulties. These are well told.

Key members of the integration working party on the State side were Ted Simmonds (NZEI) and Gunter Warner (PPTA). The six Catholic members included the dominant figure of Des Dalgety. It was remarkable that after 18 months work an amicable agreement was finally achieved in the form of the 'Blue Book' which was the basis of the *Private Schools Conditional Integration* legislation, passed by Parliament without dissent on 9 October 1975. Another member, Pat Hoult, was charged with the daunting task of overseeing the integration of some 260 Catholic schools, an herculean task fraught with frustrations and difficulties as the schools fought to survive economically. ➤

Companions for the final journey

Snapshots on the Journey – through death and remembrance
Poems selected by Rod MacLeod
Steele Roberts
123 pp. Hardcover $29.95

Into the Way of Peace – prayers for holding on while letting go
James B. Lyons
McCrimmon Publishing Co. Ltd.
59 pp. Soft cover $39.00

Review: Roger Prowd

Snapshots on the Journey is a beautifully presented book of poems and photographs, lovely to hold and read, selected by Wellington doctor Rod MacLeod, the director of palliative care at the Mary Potter Hospice. The book has been designed to provide emotional and spiritual insight into the worlds of the dying and the grieving. It can be dipped into thematically or deeply read. The poems are grouped in four sections: *Approaching Death, Time of Death, Mourning and Remembrance* and *Growing Through Grief*. Each section is preceded by an introduction which sensitively introduces themes, whilst still letting the poems speak for themselves and engage the reader at deep levels beyond the cognitive.

The poems span some five hundred years, from John Donne to the present, and include many New Zealand poets. The selection is characterised by its accessibility and freshness, yet above all by the beauty of language. This beauty accesses the joy and pain of living and dying in a way that leaves one deeply reflective and engaged with the mysterious communion of human life.

This is a lovely book, particularly valuable to sensitise people training or working in these areas. It is also a book to return to for renewal of purpose. How easy to think that one's emotions are unique and what a burden this can be. To recognise their timelessness does not diminish their power but overcomes the desolation of loneliness. In this overcoming one finds strength to accompany those making the great journey of the end of mortal life.

As MacLeod notes, "Being alone in a time of crisis is a terrible feeling". In John Donne's words : "As Sickness is the greatest misery, so the greatest misery of sickness is solitude ... Solitude is a torment which is not threatened in hell itself."

Into the Way of Peace by James Lyons, a senior parish priest of the Archdiocese of Wellington, covers similar themes but has been written with a different purpose. The author has sought to provide a structure of prayers and reflections that will help the dying and their loved ones to articulate personally their deep concerns. Lyons notes that (while he found) there were "volumes of formal prayers and rituals that related to the terminally ill, it was difficult to find prayers that truly spoke for the patient".

A much simpler book in content, it may well be something that a family or carer could use to open up areas of locked-in communication and feeling. It contains the author's own prayers and photo-graphs, as well as a selection of classical prayers and scripture references.

The book would seem to be more of 'a tool' to use in pastoral work; its deceptive simplicity may well yield surprising results, particularly working with people who are emotionally and physically exhausted. ■

Roger Prowd is Ecumenical Chaplain at Dunedin Public Hospital

➤ Throughout the 1960s and 1970s there was Bishop John Kavanagh, a man of vision, open to new ways, almost a stranger in his own Dunedin diocese. Always the enthusiast, the encourager, a wise council to the negotiators, a dedicated and hard worker for the Catholic school system.

I commend this book to educators, to schools and to parents. It's about overwhelming difficulties, challenges and persistence, a story about people working together, of solutions found, a uniquely New Zealand solution. It's well put together and a good read.

A fair and just solution? – yes. ■

Things to ponder as you go to the polls

Crosscurrents
John Honoré

This column will be published approximately a fortnight before the general election, an election which I believe has great significance for all New Zealanders. It is certainly not for me to advise readers for whom to vote, but I would point out the importance of registering a vote, and the significance of the MMP system which seems imperilled.

Democracy cannot be taken for granted. There are many examples worldwide, since the last general election where public apathy has resulted in questionable results. Low turnout of voters was responsible for the election of Bush in America, the rise of Le Pen in France and the election of Banks in Auckland. If you don't vote, you are not in a position to complain afterwards.

The reason for the early election is the Labour Party's dominant position in the polls and the collapse of the Alliance Party. Helen Clark is campaigning on "two ticks for Labour" and is denigrating the only possible coalition party, the Greens. Historically she has never supported MMP and wants a majority vote for Labour which would release her from the constraints of proportional representation. If this eventuates the small parties, which MMP has allowed into power, will disappear. Jim Anderton, who has accelerated the possible demise of MMP, has already been promised a cabinet post by Clark.

To govern alone, Labour needs 47 percent of the vote plus Anderton's successful election in Wigram which would add another one percent. Under the MMP system, a coalition must win about 48 percent to get a majority. At the time of writing this column, polls give Labour 52 percent, an obvious majority and a huge increase on the 39 percent received in 1999. Voters must be mindful of the possibility of Labour governing alone and the fact that MMP was adopted to curb the power of a one party government. They must consider the advantages of tactical voting, which are inherent in the MMP system, in order to maintain the presence of a minor party to act as a political counter-balance. Anderton does not fit this role. To all intents and purposes, he belongs to the Labour Party. So the voter has two things to consider in a fortnight – the obligation to vote and the implications of the MMP system.

Elections come and go, but what remains in New Zealand is the declining standard of living relative to that of OECD countries. This is having a deleterious effect, particularly on three crucial socio-economic concerns – education, health and superannuation. The decline has been accelerating for the last 20 years and is almost beyond politics to address. It is a fact of life. There has to be a consensus among all parties to rectify the student loan scheme and the whole sorry mess of tertiary education.

There has to be agreement among politicians on how to deal with the looming crisis between public health and the private health providers. There has to be a common accord, divorced from politicians' posturing, about how to cope with the increasing numbers of the elderly.

These are the questions voters must ask politicians.These are the problems that must be addressed by politicians during the current campaign, and they should not be avoided. All the rest is petty politics.

George W reaches for the gun

George W. Bush continues to disengage America from international agreement and protocols and is flouting international law at an alarmingly dangerous level. The subsidies on beef and steel, in order to protect inefficient US industries, make a mockery of his talk of free trade and assistance to the third world. The US is no longer a party to the International Criminal Court and has withdrawn from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. But now Bush goes one step further, to confirm his reputation as the most dangerous man on the planet.

After the events of September 11, the UN Security Council authorised US military retaliation under Article 51, arguing that the massive attacks on New York could be perceived as a declaration of intent to strike again. Bush has now carried this dubious logic one step further by claiming that the US has the right to make a preemptive strike at any nation which the US decides is developing weapons of mass destruction or supporting terrorism. Last month, in a speech delivered to Army Military personnel at West Point, he promised ; "all nations that decide for aggression and terror will pay a price". It is a unilateral declaration of war, when and where Bush decides, with no cognizance of allies or treaties. This sort of rhetoric from one of Bush's perceived "rogue states" would be universally condemned. When will Bush be called to account?

New Zealand's new government, to be elected this month, will have to confront the US with more forthrightness and less sycophancy than has been the case since Bush's election. It is no longer acceptable to support the US in this wanton destruction of international law. NZ must distance itself from the pathetic grovelling of our neighbour John Howard, photographed with a fly on his forehead, as he lauded all things American in a speech in New York. ■

A Land for Israel in perpetuity

The religious house to which I belong recently held a community meeting during which we shared something of our spiritual lives. We did this by having each of us name a psalm in the *Prayer of the Church* that appealed to us and say why it did so. The results were astounding and quite beautiful. Each spoke deeply and in utterly personal fashion about a psalm that expressed their own feelings. Trust in God, assurance of forgiveness, support in a journey through arid lands. Everyone had a psalm that expressed their own personal sentiments.

As might be expected from my life pattern, I was odd man out and completely on my own in the type of psalm that I told my confreres had caught my attention. My choice was not a psalm that spoke of my own inner journey, but one that highlighted an issue out there that preoccupies me. It was one of the many psalms recalling the election by God of the people of Israel and praying for divine safe-guarding of the land the Lord gifted to them. In stark form such psalms remind us of the intractable Arab-Israeli conflict. How does such a seemingly perpetual disposition square with the assertion that the Palestinian people have a right to a homeland?

I became preoccupied with the Palestinian issue late in 1999. At that time President Clinton was endea-vouring to write a triumphant closing chapter to his term of office by negotiating a settlement between Israeli and Palestinian. I committed myself at that time to praying for the success of any such peace moves and to calling on others to join in regular prayer for that intention. I cannot claim that I have been nearly as devoted to this campaign of intercession as I ought. But it is never far from my mind at times of prayer.

Gospel readings at Mass and the psalms have played a major part in keeping my eyes on the stage on which this drama is taking place. So often the Scriptures direct our attention towards a geograph-ical location in the Holy Land where a further tragic incident of Arab -Israeli confrontation has just taken place.

Many of the psalms in the *Prayer of the Church* highlight the apparently utterly irreconcilability of the two positions. The psalms reflect the promise of God, made first to Abraham, that this land should belong to his descendants for ever. How could a believing Jew, or any Jew with a sense of the history of his or her people, think otherwise?

In New Testament times Paul and others wrestled with this question and saw the fulfilment of God's promises in a new Israel and in a spiritual kingdom from which no one of any race was excluded. Such a view has been that of Christianity for 2000 years and has been taken over by the people of Islam. The Abramic promise is no longer to be interpreted in the material sense and as relating to a particular parcel of territory. But who is to blame an Israeli for not seeing things that way?

This is not the place to argue the case for the Palestinians or to point out the obvious injustices under which they currently labour. Enough to point out that one can hardly pray the psalms or read other Scriptures without being reminded of the Holy Land in which a bitter conflict is being fought out, whose peaceful resolution is most difficult and which is a very fit subject for our prayers of intercession. ■

Fr Humphrey O'Leary CSsR is rector of the Redemptorist community, Glendowie, Auckland

William the conqueror

It was an incongruous sight: the leader of the major conservative political party in the country entering the boxing ring. Wearing blue, naturally. He looked like a pretzel in pyjamas, a noodle in Nikes, a whitebait in bloomers. Frankly, among the likes of Tuigimala and Fatialofa he seemed out of place. He did at least share one thing with them on the night – defeat.

What was he doing there? We might have more easily envisaged Muldoon kneeing opponents in the groin, or Lange doing the soft-shoe-shuffle as he sledged in silky tones; but Bill English? His hearty Southland pragmatism might be appreciated when it came time to light the barbecue, but he's not the sort of bloke you'd ask to be bouncer for a school ball.

As I watched him standing there so pale and vulnerable, I felt the sort of cringe normally associated with that split second before a barrelling Zinzan Brooke smashed into a static first-five, or Ruth Richardson savaged a beneficiary. I had no idea how many lambs are slaughtered annually in Dipton, but I suspected their total was about to increase by one.

Suddenly the secret identity of the Psyclone didn't seem to matter anymore. It could have been Phil Goff, or even Jenny Shipley with a point to prove; I still feared for Bill. I'd seen that look in his eyes many a night on a country road, as my headlights picked out two shining blank discs. I wondered fleetingly who the deputy leader of the opposition was, and whether they'd prepared for a smooth transition.

The bell tolled ominously, and the first round did nothing to allay my concerns. It was like watching a bout between my father's cat and a plate of raw beef. Mercifully the rounds were only a minute long. But then, as the second of them began, I think I saw something remarkable happen.

A combination of southern stubborn pride and a sense of righteous cause flickered across his face. Suddenly there were no political motives, no votes to be won, no calculations of spin. There was, I suspect, the memory of his fifteen-year-old nephew who killed himself, and a determination to fight back against whatever strikes down young people and families in these troubled times.

And he did alright. He gave fair account of himself. For a few moments there, I think we all saw him as a good man, doing something ambiguous for the sake of others. We forgot he was a politician, and saw just a decent bloke. Whatever happens in his next big contest, I think our new-found respect for the man will abide.

Mike Riddell