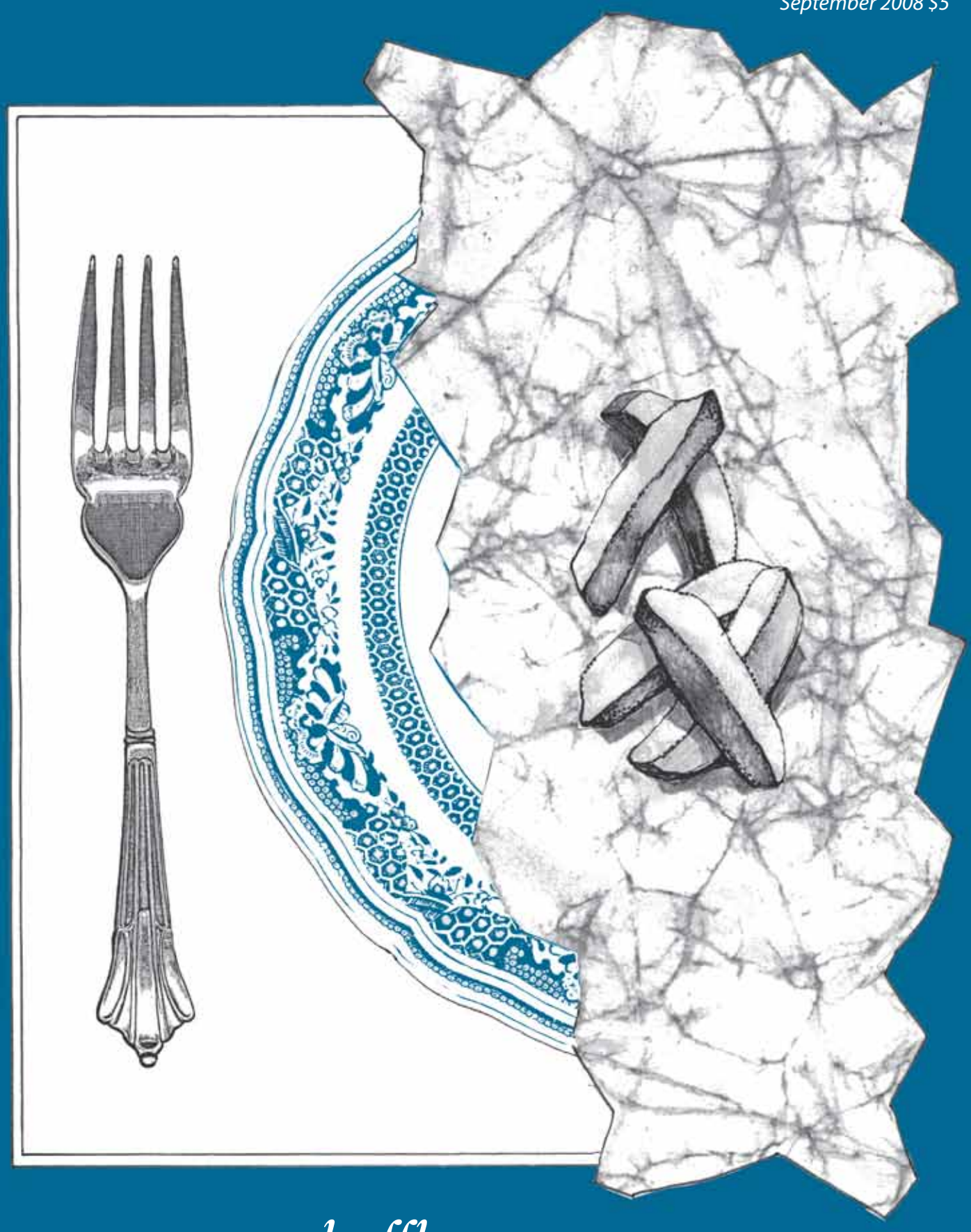
Tui Motu

InterIslands

Independent Catholic Magazine

September 2008 $5



poverty amid affluence

Poverty amid affluence

Contents

2-3 *editorial*
3 ***in memoriam***
4 ***letters***
5 The globalisation myth *Pat MacMullen*
6-7 The gospel of the poor *Kevin Barr*
7-8 Poverty and young people *Mary Betz*
9-10 In God's image *John Fuellenbach*
11-13 **By their fruits**: lay movements in the Catholic Church – *Part 1*
14-15 Lazarus at Lambeth *Glynn Cardy*
16-17 Men for all seasons *Neil &Margaret Ann Howard*
18-19 When the soul dances *Daniel O'Leary*
20-21 God and parents *Paul Andrews*
21 Mother's journal *Kaaren Mathias*
22-23 The important road out of Rome *Jim Elliston*
23-24 Power and control in the church *Bridget Taumoepeau*
25 Year of Paul in Dallington art of *Norah Southorn*
26 The women of Philippi *Susan Smith*
27-28 Body, mind and spirit – part 2 ***interview*** with *Thomas Ryan*
28-29 *Films and books* *Paul Sorrell, Michael Hill*
30 ***Crosscurrents*** *John Honoré*
31 Humanae Vitae 40 years on *Humphrey O'Leary*
32 ***Postscript:*** Our lost children *Michael Holman*
poetry *Joy Cowley*

One of our promoters likes to describe *Tui Motu* as a 'smorgasbord', referring to the variety of fare each issue presents. We hope this one will not disappoint. There are articles on poverty to coincide with the theme chosen by *Caritas* for their **Social Justice Week** (14-20 September); the first part of a study on lay movements in the Catholic Church; a look at the recent Anglican Lambeth Conference; as well as the usual mix of spirituality, social and political comment, art commentary and reviews.

We make no apologies for returning again to the poverty theme. If one phrase has characterised the social action of the Catholic Church since Vatican II it has been 'option for the poor'. The intention could not be closer to the spirit of the Gospels – yet we have to question our success and sincerity as Christians in carrying it out. In terms of public witness, Catholics would have to acknowledge that our Anglican brethren put us to shame.

Four articles explore aspects of world and local poverty. Columban missionary priest Pat MacMullen (*p5*) looks again at globalisation. The plight of the most impoverished is made daily worse by skyrocketing food and oil prices and the effects of climate change. The global market simply exacerbates the plight of the 'poor outside the gate'.

At home the scandal of child poverty, especially among immigrant and Maori communities, clamours for the attention of the politicians, who need to cease slanging each other and focus on the real issues. The Labour Party can plead some success from the *Working for Families* package, improvement in the supply of state housing and lower unemployment. So far, Messrs Key and English have offered precisely nothing.

However, neither of the main parties seems to be addressing the fundamental causes of social inequality:

• *the greed of the wealthy*. In a free society economic power is concentrated in the hands of the managerial class, who consistently award themselves larger and larger hunks of the cake. Politicians support this by competing to give tax cuts. Since we have consumption taxes (GST) which bear on rich and poor equally and a relatively flat personal income tax regime, tax cuts do nothing for the very poor while rewarding the wealthy. Those who scream that their skills are better rewarded in Australia should be assisted to go there!

• *education*. Nothing perpetuates poverty more successfully than mediocre education. New Zealand is among the top five OECD countries as regards its educational system – but it also has one of the longest 'tails'. Children in low decile areas, who underachieve at school and drop out of full-time education early, are destined to become members of a disaffected and marginalised group. Better education in the poorest areas, therefore, must be everyone's priority. ■

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.

Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd, P O Box 6404, Dunedin North, Dunedin 9059
Phone: 03 477 1449: Fax: 03 477 8149: email: tuimotu@earthlight.co.nz: website: www.tuimotu.org
Editor: Michael Hill IC; *Assistant Editor:* Frances Skelton; *Illustrator:* Don Moorhead
Directors: Rita Cahill RSJ, Philip Casey, Tom Cloher, Robin Kearns, Chris Loughnan OP, Elizabeth Mackie OP, Katie O'Connor (Chair), Kathleen Rushton RSM

Lay movements in the church

This month we start a two-part series on lay movements in the Catholic Church. The first (*pp11-13*) looks at examples in the universal church. Next month we will focus our attention closer to home.

From the very earliest times Christianity has regularly spawned new movements of people seeking to live the life of the Gospel in a specially dedicated way. The Second Vatican Council laid special emphasis on the lay vocation, so it is not surprising that the last 40 years has seen many such movements.

Some movements have started spontaneously out of what might simply be called a prayer group: people gathering regularly to pray together. But then they looked about them and found a need – to pray about and to actively help. This can be called a 'bottom up' movement.

In contrast, there are other very successful new groups which tend to have a more formal structure and more clerical involvement. *Opus Dei* is the most famous of these. Many lay men and women have found their spiritual lives enriched by being members of *Opus Dei*, or similar.

There have been criticisms of this second type:

- they can appear secretive;
- they can be divisive. Within a parish they may seem to be, and act, elitist;
- they attract the well-to-do and those who are conservative, politically and religiously;
- they seem to lack the social outreach of the 'bottom up' movements.

It is also true that in recent years especially these groups have often received support from the hierarchy. They are seen as 'the Pope's men'. That, of course, may be a virtue!

Obviously the universal church rejoices in having had a rich variety of such movements over its long history. But not all have been beneficial. The Jansenists in the 17th Century are an interesting example. No one could doubt the zeal of their followers, but eventually the church had to step in and suppress them. The criterion seems to be how closely they follow a Gospel model. A church of sinners does not easily tolerate groups which in the course of time become elitist.

M.H.

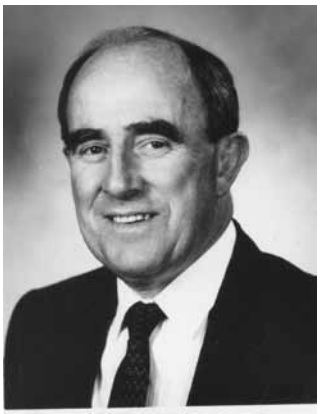
In memoriam

Edward Patrick (Pat) Hoult (1923-2008)

Pat Hoult and Brian McKee both died on 24 May. These two Wellingtonians were outstanding in their labours for Catholic education. They were a part of the team who successfully negotiated the Integration process, thus safeguarding the Catholic schools system as we know it today.

Pat Hoult was a teacher and schools inspector who in 1976 became the first executive Director of the *National Catholic Education office*, set up by the bishops to oversee these negotiations. Brian McKee was a Lower Hutt accountant and Catholic parent, who worked long and hard to support the schools where his children were educated.

In the early '70s McKee became involved in negotiations with successive governments to obtain state aid for Catholic schools. However, this process was transformed by the Labour Government's proposal of 'conditional integration'. A working party was set up in June 1973, of which McKee was one of the Catholic negotiators. By 1974 the hard grind of drafting the Integration Bill started, and at this point Pat Hoult joined the team, bringing with him an unrivalled experience of both the State and the Catholic systems. The Bill became law in the dying hours of the Labour Government (1975). It was accepted by the incoming National administration under Rob Muldoon.



Brian Gregory McKee (1930-2008)

The long and tedious process of integrating the whole Catholic system school by school is the undying testament to the patience and skill of Pat Hoult and his team. Brian McKee continued to be involved in negotiations to increase state aid, but his main field of action after 1975 was with the Sacred Heart College (Lower Hutt) Board of Governors, which he chaired for a number of years.

The Catholic church in New Zealand – and in particular the Catholic schools system – owes an undying debt of gratitude to these two men, and not just for the long hours and late nights they put in. They skilfully negotiated what has been called a "just and fair solution" to the vexed question of state support of private – and specifically Catholic – schools.

We offer our condolences to Mrs Teresa McKee and to the surviving families of Brian and Pat.

May they rest in peace

Clerical sexual abuse

The moving finger of the reforming arm of the Catholic Church moves at glacial speed when it comes to dealing with clerical sexual abuse within its ranks! It is one thing to make verbal apologies and payments, but quite another thing to set up effective structures to try to eliminate this insidious evil in the church and to prevent future infiltration.

The lead in this matter must of course come directly from the Vatican, where a *Special Clerical Abuse Ministry* should be set up. Mandatory reporting of clerical sexual abuse to this body should be laid fairly and squarely on those in the positions of pastoral and administrative power in the offending areas of the church. Lay input would be encouraged directly to this body, if satisfaction is not obtained at a lower level.

The Special Ministry would supply an Annual Global Report to the Catholic laity on their stewardship: a report to be subject to an independent audit. The written Audit Report would accompany the Special Ministry Report. It is important that the Catholic Church is open with the general public about this appalling situation and what it is trying to do to remedy it. Accordingly the Reports referred to above should be available to the general public. A problem as big and serious as this calls for draconian measures which should be undertaken with the utmost haste!

John Vincent, Dunedin

letters to the editor ✍

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

Hans Küng at 80

John Wilkins describes Fr Küng as a 'prophet on fire': all I can say is that he is an inconsistent prophet.

In 1981 my late wife and I attended his lecture at the University of Zimbabwe and he made only passing reference to his problems with Rome; the main thrust of his talk was that, with Vatican II, the Catholic Church had moved away from the 400-year polemic with Protestants to face the problems of the modern age, and it was about time Protestants should do the same.

We now are told by him that "the reforms of Vatican II were stifled" and "our parishes are crumbling", quoting his Swiss home parish as proof. Having lived for 48 years in Africa, I can assure him that the Catholic Church there is growing at twice the rate of population growth. Seminaries are full: Chishawasha in Harare was doubled in size in 1990 and a new seminary was built in Bulawayo in 2000 to cope with the flood of applicants.

Two million Polish immigrants to UK since 2004 and hundreds of Polish priests have changed the face of the church there.

In my ten years in St Mark's Parish, Pakuranga, it has grown to a mass count of 1700, with over 100 special ministers of communion, 50 ministers of the Word, two Legion of Mary praesidia and 45 Chinese bible study groups – in spite of a loss of parishioners to the new St Luke's Community at Sancta Maria College campus, served by one active and another retired priest. The Flat Bush suburb it serves will grow from zero in 2000 to an expected 40,000 by 2020.

Fr Kung seems to be quite active at 80: why doesn't he work as pastor of his home parish instead of giving talks to Anglican bishops in London, interesting as that may be?

Derek Blackburn, Pakuranga

Mistaken identity

Free Church of Tonga

Basilica of St Anthony of Padua

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of Mary

In the *July '08* issue, we printed an article by Michael McBryde entitled *Observing the sabbath in Tonga*. Three prominent churches on the island were used as illustrations. Unfortunately, the captions of these three buildings were interchanged, and we apologise to our Tongan readers especially – and also to the author – for this muddle. The churches are illustrated above, this time (we sincerely hope) with their correct titles.

The globalisation myth

During the 1990s ***globalisation*** emerged not only as a popular word but as a significant economic and political process. Pope John Paul II viewed the process with a cautious realism stating that "globalisation gives rise to new hope", adding however that there was an urgent need for "a globalisation without marginalisation", governed by the principle of solidarity and focused on just distribution of resources, the protection of human rights, free access to new technologies and scientific knowledge.

Pope John Paul challenges us not to allow globalisation to be reduced to mere economics, but to be aware of our collective responsibilities to those countries and populations excluded from its benefits.

Globalisation - a failed project

As the first decade of the 21st century draws to a close, globalisation is looking like an increasingly tattered and forlorn project. The hype and promises of the 1990s have given way to wars of aggression, increased religious tension, structural poverty, food shortages and deepening environmental crisis.

Significantly, globalisation is increasingly spoken about as economic globalisation – a codeword for policies that promote the privatisation of public assets such as water and electricity and entrench social deprivation through cutbacks in welfare and access to healthcare, housing and food. A majority of adherents to the Catholic Church – in Asia, Latin America and Africa (perhaps more than 70 percent of all the baptised) – are amongst these marginalised populations. The church now finds its identity on the global periphery.

Within the tight strictures imposed by globalisation, people are no longer defined as people but as consumers. Their self worth is identified with their buying power and levels of consumption. Those who have little buying power are marginalised: lacking economic significance they lack political significance.

As a recent UNDP Report (2007) notes: "Between 1990 and 2004, the share of national consumption by the poorest fifth of the population in developing regions decreased from 4.6 to 3.9 per cent... Widening income inequality is of particular concern in Eastern Asia, where the share of consumption among the poorest people declined dramatically during this period. Still, inequality remains the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean and in sub-Saharan Africa, where the poorest fifth of the people account for only about 3 per cent of national consumption (or income)."

The church, on the other hand, defines people as children of God. Baptism confers on every believer the right and privilege to participate in the community. Put simply, the right to sit in any pew is defined by neither wealth nor prestige nor power.

Uniformity or catholicity

The forces of globalisation tend to reduce the democratic process to an exercise in electing detached managers of the economy, who enforce international legal frameworks such as *Free Trade Agreements* (FTAs) and the rules of the *World Trade Organisation* (WTO). Whereas the Vatican II vision which locates authority in the People of God and desires a catholicity in which "each individual part contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole church. Through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase." (*Lumen Gentium 13*).

The church's missionary task is to promote this "fullness in unity" by embracing and affirming the rich diversity of the children of God. The happens when the missionary strives to learn another's language and culture. Not only does a missionary learn of the wisdom of the host culture and its understanding of God, but is privileged to be able to pray and celebrate the Eucharist in that culture as well. The missionary becomes involved in the hopes and dreams of people.

Globalisation places local communities in competition. Communities are forced to create optimal conditions such as tax breaks to attract investment capital. This capital often comes at the expense of human and environmental rights. There is a stark contrast between the restrictions increasingly being placed on migrants and the unfettered movement of capital in and out of local economies. While the barriers for money have gone down, the barriers to people appear to be getting higher.

The disembodied measure of this process are those seemingly innocuous graphs on the nightly TV news showing the rise and fall of the share market and exchange rate. Human and environmental costs are hardly ever linked or reported. The missionary church, on the other hand, is challenged to touch the wounds of our world and name those wounds for what they are, the results of greed and indifference. This prophetic naming puts flesh on those graphs so that communities can become conscious of the consequences of their economic and political decisions.

Conclusion

Is John Paul just another 'voice crying in the wilderness'? We have to ask how the church itself fits into the process of globalisation? The answers will begin to emerge as the church's ecclesial identity is rediscovered. Essential to that task is understanding that the church speaks to the globalising world sacramentally. Recovery of the political and economic dimensions of baptism is thus urgent and unavoidable. Baptism is the gateway to understanding the church's identity and mission under the impact of globalisation. ■

Pat McMullen

Pat McMullen is a Columban priest, working in Korea

The gospel of the poor

the prayer of the kingdom

Kevin J. Barr

Luke's gospel is sometimes referred to as the gospel for the poor. It contains many quite radical or revolutionary statements about God's special love and concern for the poor and judgment on the excessively wealthy whose riches have become their god. Thus *Luke* is very relevant for our discussion on the negative effects of economic globalisation – poverty, greed, selfish individualism, inequality and exclusion. Here are the key passages:

- *Luke 12:13-21* relates Jesus' parable about the rich fool who kept constructing bigger and bigger barns to house his personal greed;
- *Luke 16:19-31* also gives us Jesus' parable about the rich man living in abundance and luxury who is condemned to eternal punishment for no other reason than that he refused to share his wealth with a poor man Lazarus begging at his doorstep;
- *Luke 6:20ff* tells us not only of Jesus' blessing on the poor but his strong warnings to the rich – "Blessed are you who are poor… but woe to you who are rich!"
- At the beginning of his gospel *Luke 1:52-53* puts on Mary's lips words about God that are starkly revolutionary but symbolic of the reversals that are needed for the emergence of God's Kingdom:

He will pull down the mighty from
their positions of power,
and raise up the lowly;
He will feed the hungry with good food
but send the rich away empty
handed with nothing to eat.

But it is *Luke 11:1-4* who also records for us the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples, the prayer we call the 'Lord's prayer' or 'Our Father'. Perhaps we have become so accustomed to it that will fail to realise how revolutionary it actually is and how it gets to the roots of so many of the problems that continually confront our world. So let us consider a few of its phrases in turn:

Our Father

Not only are we invited to call God by the intimate term *Abba* (as Jesus did), but we call him ***our*** Father – thus pulling down the barriers which divide us and identifying ourselves as brothers and sisters in the one family of God despite race, religion or class differences.

William Barclay, in his commentary on the Lord's prayer (*p157*), remarks that the opening words settle once and for all not only the desired intimacy of our relationship with God but also our relationship with others. If God is our Father then our fellow human beings are our brothers and sisters. As he sees it, all racism, all discrimination and all exploitation stand condemned by those two simple words which begin the prayer.

Your Kingdom Come

We pledge ourselves to the vision of the Kingdom as preached by Jesus with its demand that we change ourselves and strive to transform our world with the values of the Kingdom. As Albert Nolan (1986) remarks: "To be moved by the Spirit of Jesus is to be motivated by an all absorbing concern for the coming of God's Kingdom. We become critical of the world we live in and begin to hope for and strive for God's reign of justice, love and freedom."

Your will be done

God's will is expressed in Jesus' vision of the Kingdom; yet under economic globalisation we are often told to accept things as 'God's will' which are quite contrary to the Kingdom – low wages, exploitation, poverty, domination by Western culture, inequality and exclusion. God's will is not for us to accept the status quo and live in fatalistic hopelessness. The vision of the Kingdom urges us to challenge and change our world to be the place God wants it to be. It offers us hope for a better world – "a new world is possible".

Give us this day our daily bread

We acknowledge our need for nourishment from the hand of God and commit ourselves to share what we have so that nobody will go hungry. The request is for our daily bread. As some have translated the phrase it would read: "Give us today

the bread that we need for tomorrow." It is not about building up resources and great wealth. It is a humble request for daily needs and speaks of simplicity of lifestyle.

Forgive us as we forgive those who offend against us

Jesus' parables speak about the need to forgive, and he tells Peter not to set limits to forgiving – "not seven times but seventy seven times". God's willingness to forgive us provides the model for us in forgiving others. If only we can learn to forgive as God forgives us there would be no more hatred, no more fighting, no more war.

Lead us not into temptation

In the desert (*Luke 4:1-13*) Jesus was tempted to pride, power, wealth and prestige. Is he suggesting in his prayer that these are the things we also must pray for the strength to avoid? They are certainly at the root of much disharmony and inequality in our world. They stand in contradiction to the Kingdom.

Deliver us from evil

We ask that God's loving care will keep us clear of the mighty forces of evil which the structures of sin have let loose in our world due to the desire for uncontrolled wealth, pleasure and power.

The prayer which Jesus teaches us is certainly a radical prayer because it goes to the root causes of so much human suffering – racism, greed, poverty, hatred, power and selfishness because:

- if we see ourselves as members of one family of God, there can be no more racism, discrimination, exploitation, poverty and exclusion;
- if we share our bread, nobody will go hungry;
- if we learn to forgive, there will be no more hatred or war;
- if we accept the vision and values of the Kingdom we will seek to build a better world where justice, peace and compassion prevail.

As John Fuellenbach states: "The Lord's prayer is a summary of Jesus' Kingdom message". As such, it should challenge us every time we use it to fight against the negative effects of economic globalisation. ■

Fr Kevin Barr is an advocate for peace and justice and is based in Fiji.
He has recently been conducting Social Analysis workshops in Wellington and Palmerston North

Poverty and young people in Aotearoa

Illustration: Ben Caldwell

The lives of others continually spill over into mine: in what I think, say, do and achieve. And conversely, my life spills over into that of others: for better and for worse.

Benedict XVI: *Spe Salvi, 2007*

In July, *Tui Motu* explored poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. This theme is also examined in this year's ***Social Justice Week*** (14-20 September), which challenges us to look at our own society with fresh eyes. *Caritas* has produced various resources around its social justice booklet *Look and look again: Poverty in an affluent society, to help New Zealanders reflect on poverty in our own land* – where 15 percent of New Zealanders have very low living standards.

As part of the project, *Caritas* asked young people – and Catholic agencies that work with them – ***what does poverty look like through their eyes?*** In the comments below, the views of young New Zealanders are in italics.

When I was young I was sick a lot… I was always in and out of hospital with asthma. We had a couple of families living in our house in the Council flats – six rooms. There was no heating and it was really cold in winter. I didn't know about heaters until I went to school.

The recent Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) report, *Left Behind*, notes that "the single most important determinant of health is income. A child growing up in poverty is three times more likely to be sick than a child growing up in a higher income household. Poor nutrition, a stressful environment and substandard housing are factors that diminish a child's ability to fight infection."

As well as causing poor physical health, "poverty affects people's self esteem," says Del Soti, the St Vinnies Youth Coordinator for Auckland. "It causes deep shame. The hardest thing is for a family to have to live in someone else's garage or spare bedroom."

Then there are the stresses of having too little money, time and hope for the future:

Poverty caused Mum and Dad to be stressing out at home. We were worried and scared because Dad had a short fuse… It's the same for the people I work with. The dad's not home because he's working or drinking with his mates.

"I asked them, 'how do you cope?'" says Jen Martinez, of LOGOS, a Marist-inspired agency working with young people. "They said: *want to explode... smoking marijuana... drugs... tagging... gangs.* I asked why, and they said: *There's nothing else to do.*"

"Where basic needs like food, shelter, family, community aren't met," says Sam Drumm (Christian Brothers' Edmund Rice Justice), "the gangs offer that. The gangs also offer common experience… when young people are exposed to family violence as a norm, it affects their whole understanding of the world, they have no sense of safety in family."

All the insecurities that poverty brings affect young people's abilities to cope with school. Judith McGinley OP (*Challenge 2000*), says young people from poor backgrounds often have difficulty concentrating at school. "If someone has had a bad night at home, his/her mind will be totally unable to cope with ordinary relationships or schoolwork in the next days."

I missed a lot of school… I struggled with reading and writing… and that affected my confidence. At college you had to put your hand up in order to learn. At home you had to sit down, shut up and listen. Most of the teachers took from the way I was that I didn't want to learn. Only one or two realised I really did.

Del Soti agrees: "poverty and loss of self-esteem affect youth academically. It's not intelligence that is the problem, it's confidence. They don't have the confidence to speak up in class. They don't want to because they are going through hard times."

"Some of these difficulties are of their own making. Most are not," says Kitty McKinley (*Challenge 2000*). "We see every day the cost of failure. Failure of our economic system to treat all people equally, failure of our educational system to include those who struggle, failure of our social system to provide the care these young people need and are entitled to. Failure of family, community or church networks to be the safety net they require…

"In desperation I think it would be so much easier to be somewhere else less secure and with less worry. Then I see the success and development of a young person who chooses life rather than death and a job instead of crime. Success and hope mostly balance out the despair." ■

Mary Betz

Mary Betz is Auckland Regional Coordinator for Caritas*, and produced 'Young People and Poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand', a youth CD resource. More information on Social Justice Week 2008 is available at www.caritas.org.nz*

Child poverty in NZ

New Zealand has gone from being one of the best places in the world to be a child to one of the worst.

A recent report by Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) shows that, despite good economic growth in the early 2000s, the situation for many children has become worse.

In the decades following World War II child poverty was all but eliminated in New Zealand and the nation ranked alongside the Scandinavian countries for overall well-being.

However, by 2001, New Zealand ranked near the bottom of the rich nations' index for measuring infant mortality, children's'health and safety, teenage pregnancy and immunisation. The nation ranked at the bottom for the percentage of 15 to 19-year-olds in full or part-time education and for the number of child deaths from accidents and injuries.

Left Behind – issued by CPAG

In God's Image

John Fuellenbach SVD toured New Zealand recently. In his lectures he analyses the 'image' of Jesus and his message gleaned from reading and praying the Gospels

The reason why the Gospel of Jesus is such good news is that the Gospel gives us two compelling and overwhelmingly beautiful images – of *God* as Jesus experiences God; and of the *community* God desires us to become. The key words which occur over and over again in Jesus' preaching are *abba*, 'loving father' and *basileia*, 'reign' or 'kingdom'.

Jesus paints for us a picture of a God who loves us with a personal, unconditional love and seeks to reign in our hearts in such a way that we come to love one another as God loves us. And Jesus does more than simply preach this message: he *is* the message. He reveals himself as Son of God, as God made flesh, as God come down to earth to be God-with-us.

What does Jesus mean by 'reign of God'?

The descriptive words most commonly used for God in the Gospels are 'life', 'love' and 'joy'. When God touches our lives, joy is a typical human response. It is a simple word expressing precisely what a human being feels. Joy is a kingdom value. God is penetrating us with the divine life and transforming us from within.

Jesus conveys this overwhelming sense of joy to his disciples. He then sends them out to heal, to set people free, to give life. The life he wishes to give people is especially described by him in the parables of the kingdom.

These stories depict God as loving with unconditional love, demonstrating that humans are infinitely loved and infinitely precious in God's sight. This is also the basic theme of Pope Benedict's first encyclical *Deus caritas est*.

God's passionate love for his people – for humanity – is at the same time a forgiving love. It is so great that it turns God against himself, his love against his justice. (Deus caritas est: 10)

In the Old Testament there is of course another image of God – as 'God of justice and vengeance'. But this steadily gives way in Jewish writings to the compassionate God we find especially in *Isaiah*. This new image reaches its climax in the *abba* teaching of Jesus, especially in stories like the Prodigal Son and the Lost Sheep. Jesus shows it in action in his treatment of the woman caught in adultery. God is seen in Jesus Christ to be non-judgmental and compassionate.

In the Cross of Jesus we behold the infinity of God's love: Jesus takes on himself all hatred and violence. It is as if God is saying to us: 'in justice I should punish you – but now I simply can't!'

The last action of Jesus in the Gospels is to heal Malchus' ear (which Peter cut off) – just before he was arrested, condemned and crucified. The Jesus of the Gospels was an utter failure in human terms. Yet in terms of compassion he was successful, to the very last.

Judgment

Our final judgment will be to answer whether we truly accepted God's overwhelming love. Have we striven to follow Christ and imitate him? Have we renounced the values of this world: its competitiveness and reckless pursuit of success?

Are we compassionate as Jesus was compassionate? Even Chairman Mao, Hitler and Slobodan Milosevic are infinitely loveable in the sight of God: none is beyond redemption. The Gospel teaches us to love *all* our neighbours 'as ourselves' because we ourselves are infinitely loved, not because our neighbours are particularly attractive people.

This is the meaning of the parable of the treasure in the field. The ploughman finds it: it is something he never dreamt of – that even *he* is infinitely loved by God! A psychiatrist

Footnote: The word ***abba*** occurs 254 times in the New Testament. It is a masculine term, whereas in the Old Testament the image of a loving God is more often feminine: eg. *Isaiah*: "Can a mother forget her children?" God's love is presented as like the love of a mother for the child in her womb. Jesus uses ***basileia*** ('kingdom of God') 92 times to describe the people of God. He uses the word ***church*** only twice. The *First Vatican Council* never used the term ***kingdom of God***. *Vatican II* uses it 75 times.

discovered that the root cause of most human disorders is precisely the opposite of this: sick people are convinced they are not acceptable and become riddled by imaginary guilt.

When we die, the first thing we shall experience is this overwhelming love God has for us. We shall see the pattern of our whole lives laid out, and the judgment will be *what we pronounce upon ourselves*. In *Romans* Paul says that in that instant the dross will be burnt off us and what will be left will be pure gold.

Forgiveness

It is unreal to say "forgive and forget". When we are deeply hurt we cannot forget, but we can still be healed. Another message Jesus constantly teaches is *forgiveness* ("70 times seven"). Healing is a process which needs to go on through life, so that when we are old we have grown to become reconciled to our personal past.

True compassion

In German there is a saying which translates literally *I suffer you*, meaning *I put up with your faults*. Compassion does not mean ignoring what is wrong. St Paul says (*Phil*) "I put up with what I cannot change". The murderer's mother does not condone what her son has done, nor does she seek clemency for him. Yet she still loves him as her son – and her faith in God is to believe in the father of the prodigal, as described in the parable.

True compassion means seeing through the wounded exterior of a human being to the child within whom God loves. In this spirit we come to live contentedly with those we have not chosen. We learn to put up with one another – and in time to love each other compassionately. (See *Phil.2:1-3*)

If we are highly successful people in this life but not compassionate, we are failures as human beings. If Christianity turns its back on the poor, it has nothing to say. One danger of our time is 'compassion fatigue'. We see and hear of so much pain, we become numbed.

The final act of the compassionate life is to grow to have compassion on ourselves, to accept our own faults. St Paul prayed to God to have his faults removed, but God preferred him as he was, warts and all! God said: "My grace is sufficient for you".

The process of mellowing with age consists in coming to know and bear our own faults. This way, we more easily come to tolerate the faults of others. It is so much better in mature age to become compassionate with others than to become embittered.

Suffering

God does not take our suffering away from us. God comes down on earth and helps us bear our suffering. We must learn to trust God – so that whatever happens, God will be there. God is not going to put an end to all the deformities and tragedies of life.

De Mello teaches that we should *complain* to God in our prayer when we suffer – and let God complain about us; then listen to what God says to us – and then, calm down! Many of the Psalms read just like that.

Conclusion

What Jesus did during his life on earth was to present us with an authentic image of God. He broke the mould of a vindictive and punishing judge and substituted instead the portrait of a loving father who (in the words of the hymn *Amazing Grace*) "loves a wretch like me".

As believing Christians we must use this criterion for interpreting every verse of the Bible: how does this doctrine or notion square with the 'centre'? How does it resonate with the image of *abba,* the loving, forgiving, compassionate God whom Jesus shows us?

God loves each of us personally and not just collectively. Therefore we must live full of hope, not in fear. The aim of the church in all its apostolic work is to lead people to the fullness of life.

I came that they may have life and have it to the full. (*John 10:10*) ■

Sister Lucia

Lucia was a nun working in a leper colony. She appeared compassionate and gentle to all the lepers: she was a 'saint'.

A visitor remarked on this to one of Lucia's community, who snorted: "You should have known her 15 years ago". Apparently, then she was a martinet and harsh on everyone.

The visitor made bold to question Sr Lucia about this. "Yes", she said. "One day I woke up and looked at myself in the mirror, and knew I had to change". She then allowed God to heal her.

Morning prayer

Lord, I thank you for this new day. I know the most important reality of my life is that you love me and that you look at me this moment with such tenderness and love as no one ever could: I am your only child.

You desire to forgive me and to heal me where I need healing, so that this day will be a brand new beginning with a 'future full of hope'.

Whatever I have to face today, one thing I know – you will be there as my best friend, helping, consoling, strengthening, healing and guiding me. There is absolutely nothing I have to be afraid of.

All this I know because your son has told us so. Amen

(Then get up – and full of gratitude make yourself a nice cup of tea)

By their fruits . . .

Lay movements in the Catholic Church

The lay vocation was given great emphasis at Vatican II. This article looks at some lay movements since the Council

The history of Christianity is full of examples of ordinary men and women who are inspired by the Gospel to launch something new or attract like-minded people to act for the common good. Often enough in earlier times these initiatives resulted in people moving into a different way of life and founding new religious congregations.

These initiatives may have arisen because of the demands of society itself. For instance, the orders of Friars came into being in the 13th Century because of the development of towns and the need for a new form of evangelisation – and possibly in response to the burgeoning commercialism of the times. In modern times a vast number of new religious congregations were founded in the 19th Century in response to the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of Europe opening up new mission fields. Many of these specialised as teaching or nursing orders.

Outside the Catholic Church there have been analogous movements such as Methodism, Pentecostalism, as well as new entities created to meet a specific social need, like the various temperance societies. The Salvation Army itself came into being in response to the huge problems created by poverty in modern industrialised society.

Although none of these was originally an official arm of the established church as such, many came under the direct control of bishops and therefore can be seen as 'official' or 'regular' bodies. But there are other movements, some of which have lasted for many decades, which are totally lay and have developed their own characteristic spirituality. The official church will support them without necessarily controlling their activities.

Lay movements 'from the bottom up'

Typical of organisations which are lay founded would be the *Society of St Vincent de Paul*. Founded by a French layman, Frédéric Ozanam in Paris in 1833 to undertake practical works of charity among poor people, the movement has spread throughout the world so that there are conferences of the Society in parishes in practically every country where the Catholic Church is established.

Since the Second Vatican Council lay movements have multiplied. Indeed one of the unique fruits of the Council was the affirmation of the lay vocation. No previous Council had ever produced anything like the Pastoral Constitution: *The Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes*).

It is not surprising therefore that during the past 40 or 50 years there has been a flowering throughout the world of these lay initiatives. Some have been targeted at a specific social need, such as Jean Vanier's *L'Arche*. Others are primarily spiritual and prayer based.

One very interesting example is the ***Community of Sant'Egidio***:

Dusk in the Piazza of Santa Maria in Trastevere (in the slummiest part of Rome) sees the recommencement of a 40-year-old ritual as hundreds of worshipers filter into the basilica to pray together. Every evening members of a Catholic lay organisation, the *Community of Sant'Egidio*, sing prayers in unison, praying for peace, for the poor, for the sick. For most of the service no one officiates – the congregation instead faces a Russian icon of Jesus' placid face.

Today, there are community members in more than 70 countries, numbering roughly 50,000, and ranging in age from the very young to the very old. They represent a wide range of professions among their ranks, including students, professors, physicians and journalists. They pair prayer with public service, spirituality with day jobs. None is paid for work they do on the community's behalf; none pays membership dues.

And yet members have marshalled resources from governments, philanthropic organisations and private individuals to broker peace accords in war-ravaged countries, pressure the United Nations to pass a world-wide moratorium on the death penalty and run one of the most successful anti-AIDS programs in sub-Saharan Africa.

Such world-wide influence was hardly the goal or even the wild utopian dream when a small clutch of high school students led by the 18-year-old Andrea Riccardi began meeting to pray and read the Gospel together in Rome in 1968. The membership numbered about four in the first few meetings; the students shared the not-that-modest goal of puzzling out what Jesus could possibly want from them. The answer they settled upon was ***service***, and they began seeking out the poor – not terribly difficult in Rome then or now – to ask how to help.

It was the early days after Vatican II. Public service and liberal politics were in the air, and as word spread through Roman high schools of this curious attempt to live spirituality and service

simultaneously, the group gathered more young members. It wasn't until five years later that they found a permanent place to pray, in the abandoned church of Sant'Egidio *(Italian for 'St Giles')* from which they now take their name. By 1986, the Holy See had recognised them as an international public association of lay people.

It was awareness of "a Third World outside our homes", as community members describe it, that led the young Romans to the poor peripheries of their city to do what little they could. In the early days, this meant simply visiting and helping children with homework. Not earth-shattering stuff, to be sure, but facing the tragic challenge of world-wide poverty had to begin with a focus on the possible. "Our desire was to change the world, but our world was Rome, so first we had to change Rome," Riccardi said.

The Sant'Egidio community never intended to do much more than this – ministering to the poor in their midst. "We had never decided to grow beyond Italy or even Rome," recalls Mario Marazziti, one of its early members. Yet today, a third to half the community's membership resides in Africa, and this presence, which inspired the group's work in conflict resolution and AIDS treatment, can be traced back to a personal connection.

It began when a Mozambican bishop, in Rome seeking counsel about the civil war raging at home, passed by the evening prayer in Rome's Trastevere neighbourhood and made contact with members, eventually going on to establish a community in Mozambique. When two members of the Mozambique community died in the civil war that had raged there since 1977, the Roman community stepped in. The result, after two years of negotiations, was a peace deal, signed in Rome in 1992.

Sant'Egidio mediators have since done similar work toward peace in Burundi, Kosovo and Sudan. Writing in the Catholic publication *Avvenire* on the occasion of the Mozambique peace accords, founder Andrea Riccardi explained that the community had come to recognise peacemaking as yet another facet of caring for the poor: ***who is poorer than those who lack even peace?*** (*National Catholic Reporter*)

We have chosen this long extract to give the flavour of a community which seems to come close to the essence of what Vatican II was on about. Another post-Vatican II initiative, especially in parts of South America and Africa, have been the so-called 'base communities'. The following example is taken from El Salvador in Central America:

It's Saturday night in the sprawling industrial suburb of Soyopango, where grimy factories and dirt-poor neighbourhoods lie close together in the desolate urban landscape of modern Latin America. Halfway up a narrow street on a shadowy hill, the door of Teresa Rivas' humble home is open because the people gathered there don't all fit inside. They tumble out into the street, as does the sound of singing. Inside there are candles and a small cross placed on a table shoved up against a wall under a large portrait of Rafael Palacios, a priest who in 1983 was machined-gunned and run over by a tank in Santa Tecla, a neighbourhood on the other side of San Salvador.

Palacios dominates the room, but he doesn't look subversive. Neither do the women, men and youth gathered on cheap plastic chairs in front of his portrait, their hymnals and Bibles at the ready, discussing tomorrow's Scripture lesson. Yet for many in the Roman Catholic church, not to mention in far-off Rome, these humble folks represent a challenge to what the church is all about.

They are a Christian base community, one of 53 such groups in the Santa Cruz Parish. They meet twice a week, Tuesdays and Saturday nights, to sing and pray, to share the Gospel and their lives. "We're an extended family. The problems of one become the problems of the group, and we all look for solutions. We're all sinners, but we look for perfection together, sharing love and the word of God as did the early Christian communities," says a 17-year-old group member. "We leave behind television but our compensation is a chance to live out the Gospel, to share the word of God, to share bread, to feel part of a family, to feel useful to the society through the community."

Base communities were originally conceived as a way to extend the ministry of a professional clergy spread too thin. "Jesus always walked with the poor, hand in hand, and we try to help our neighbourhoods understand that we're not alone, that Jesus walks beside each of us no matter what kind of sinner we are. Jesus presents himself to us in the most needy, in the vulnerable, in the one who suffers, who is prostituted, who is disabled or poor. We don't have to go looking for Jesus in some far-off place. We have him here with us every day," says Rivas, the group's co-ordinator.

Pope John Paul II repeatedly praised small Christian communities, but most of the episcopal appointments he made resulted in bishops who have been more conservative than their predecessors. Sometimes a conservative may arrive in a diocese and, shocked by the poverty or repression, is converted by the people. Such was Oscar Romero. Mostly, however, the base communities seem to threaten the church authorities as well as the conservative theology of these bishops. They are ignored or suppressed.

Because they have been seen as too political, base communities have declined. On the other hands there are major new movements in the church which have received much support from Rome in recent times.

Lay movements with strong clerical input

Opus Dei, founded in Madrid in 1928, is a notable example. Its founder was a Spanish priest Fr José María Escrivá de Balaguer, canonised by Pope John Paul in 2000. In its early years especially, its close association with Franco's Fascist regime gave *Opus Dei* a somewhat dubious reputation for secrecy, elitism and politically right wing sympathies. It was lampooned in Dan Brown's somewhat scurrilous novel *The Da Vinci Code.*

John Allen, a highly esteemed Catholic journalist, has sought to give a more balanced view in his recent book, titled simply *Opus Dei.* Readers will find a full review by Msgr John Broadbent in the Feb. 2006 issue of *Tui Motu*.

The review says: Long before Vatican II he (Escrivá) saw the need for a strong lay movement not under clerical domination, which would provide a theological training for its lay members. They would go about their ordinary professions... but have a background of community aiding their spiritual needs and giving them guidance. Allen confirms that it is a conservative movement: because of its discipline and the fact it has unswerving loyalty to the Holy See and church teaching, it attracts mainly conservative people.

Another more recent movement which is finding favour in Rome these days is the *Neo-Catechumenate.* The 'Neo-Catechumenal Way' was founded in the early 1960s in the slums of Madrid, by an artist named Kiko Arguello. He together with a small group of companions set about restoring the ancient catechumenate, or process of adult Christian initiation, developed by the early church to bring adult converts to Christ. Today it claims to number nearly 17,000 communities in 105 countries around the world.

The Neo-Catechumenate exists within the parish structure. Its followers organise themselves into a group of 30 or 40 people within an existing congregation. The focus of the group – put very simply – is to work towards deepening and maturing in the faith. That process of faith development proceeds by stages of instruction and initiation that can continue over several years, during which time the group places a high degree of importance on mutual support and loyalty.

In other words, neo-Catechumens aspire to be a sort of seed group within the parish community which will work towards the spiritual renewal, first of themselves, then of the whole parish. That seems on the face of it to be a worthy enough aim. However, a closer look at the way this movement has developed over the years gives pause for a more critical appraisal. For instance the neo-Catechumens now have their own priests and even their own separate seminaries in some parts of the world.

Although the movement has not yet come to New Zealand it is strong in some parts of Australia. In the Perth Archdiocese they have opened a brand new seminary. Where they are present in a parish they try to have their own weekend Mass on a Saturday evening. It is easy to see how the neo-Catechumens have been accused of being elitist and forming a "church within a church; a parish within the parish". When new parishioners come to a parish where the movement is established, they find themselves either 'in or out'. In theory the neo-Catechumens are there in support of the local church. In practice, as one priest described it, their presence is "sad and divisive".

In England the neo-Catechumenate is strong in some areas, although in Clifton diocese in the South West their activities were eventually suspended by the bishop. A parishioner from Clifton describes his experience as follows:

We moved to a parish in Bristol in 1987 and that was where we met the neo-Catechumenate. This movement had been in the parish since 1980. I had never heard of them before, but immediately we sensed something odd about the parish. To start with, because we arrived with a swag of children some people assumed we were another of these 'catechumenal' families – and they avoided us.

I discovered there was a lot of bitterness; it was a divided parish. I felt a 'sense of the sinister'. Some parishioners had already written to the Bishop and asked him if he would sort the situation out. The priest was himself a member of the neo-Catechumenate, and the Bishop and he were great friends – so the Bishop did nothing.

They had become dominant in the parish. They had set up three or four communities, each having 20 or so members. Each community was led by a leader, known as a 'responsible'. The parish priest belonged, but he was not a 'responsible'. So the power of leadership in the parish had been transferred from the parish priest to the 'responsible' in his community...

Neo-Catechumens often tend to have plenty of money. They are people with 'clout' and they use it. "If you don't go along with us, we will withdraw our financial support". Yet they are not all well-to-do. When the community meets they pass round the hat, and the wealthy ones will make up for the less so. I call them 'the poor man's Opus Dei'.

Like Opus Dei they are exclusive. It's a secret church. The groups met in secret. You had to become a member before you could attend one of their meetings or Eucharists. They said: "If you want to know about us, join us". Their challenge was *Are you for Christ or against Christ?* The implication is: if you reject the neo-Catechumenal way you are rejecting Christ.
(*Tui Motu* June 2004 pp 18-19)

Paul Collins, a prominent Australian Catholic author, comments: (The Neo-Catechumenate) is an essential denial of what the Catholic Church is about. The Catholic Church, throughout its history, has been about dialogue with the community around it. It certainly has to offer a critique of modern life and modern values, but that does not mean that it turns itself away; people will hear your critique, and engage with your critique, if you engage with them in a form of dialogue.

But they won't hear it if you simply turn away from them and condemn them with some type of megaphone from within your own fortress. That's the problem, I think, that outfits like the 'Neocats' have: they go on as though the only way to deal with the contemporary world is to insulate yourself somehow or other from that world. ■

So far we have looked at some of the major lay movements across the Catholic world. Some seem to have arisen spontaneously out of a perceived need and are truly lay driven. They exist to serve the local parish or community. Opus Dei and the Neo-Catechumenate, however, are more clerically driven. To date they have had little impact in New Zealand. Next month, in Part 2, we will look at some of the lay movements that have flourished here especially since Vatican II.

Lazarus At Lambeth

(Luke 16:19-31)

All the Christian world watched with baited breath
the recent Lambeth Conference, expecting there to be a schism.
Glynn Cardy explains why schism did not happen –
but suggests at what price unity was bought

The once-in-a-decade Lambeth conference of Anglican bishops is over. It has gone far better than the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams or even the most optimistic observers could have imagined. There has been no formal schism. No one made a show of walking out. There have been no angry public speeches, accusations, hissing and booing. This episcopal banquet was satisfying and successful. Some 670 bishops and their spouses, lobbyists, and journalists can now all go home and the Church can return to normal.

Actually the Anglican Church never left normal. For contrary to what many think, and what a number of Lambeth Conference attendees want them to think, bishops do not set policy or rule the Church. Even in England and central Africa the Church is hesitant to ascribe sole decision-making power to the episcopate. Any and every Lambeth resolution has to be adopted in each individual province before it has authority, and most never make it.

One of the cultural and theological divides between England's Anglicanism and New Zealand's is that of authority. Generally speaking the English model, shaped by their monarchical legacy, is of bishops discerning the will of God and telling the people what it is. They are rulers. They are therefore to be respected and shown due deference.

New Zealanders on the other hand have a history of 'discriminating irreverence' towards authority. We corporately discern the will of God. Elected members make up a majority of the General Synod who rule our Church. The role of our bishops is to articulate the vision, spur us to think, and empower us to act. Respect is earned, and deference unusual.

These and other cultural and theological understandings of authority converge at Lambeth and add some tension to the menu. Lambeth 2008 was what it has been since 1867: an opportunity to confer, discuss, encourage, get to know each other and talk about differences.

Discussion in small groups

Compared with 1998 this conference though saw some notable changes. Gone were the copious piles of papers, motions, amendments, votes, and statements. As the Archbishop of Canterbury wryly noted producing resolutions does not have a direct correlation to acting upon them.

In their place there were small discussion groups called *indaba* (a Zulu word). The formula was simple: in small diverse groups they listened, built trust and encouraged each other in the tasks of leading mission. They talked too about differences between them and the pain it caused. Friendships developed. The result was a rich collegial feast.

And there were no resolutions. There were no resolutions condemning the homophobia of Nigerian, Ugandan and Sudanese bishops. There were no resolutions condemning the many gay bishops in the Church either. There were no resolutions advocating a return to 'biblical principles' (a catch

cry of fundamentalists). There were no resolutions promoting justice grounded in self-giving love.

No wonder the evangelical Bishop of Nelson is reported as saying that it was all an expensive waste of time. There was nothing saying black is black, white is white, right is right, and Rowan is wrong. For the media the conference had all the colour and consistency of porridge, served of course in beautiful Canterbury china.

Lambeth 2008 had a long-term strategy. The majority of Western societies now accept that homosexuality is not a disease, a deviance or even an evil. Although it is not plainly talked about lest it sound patronising, there is a widespread liberal belief amongst the majority of bishops that slowly in time other societies that currently don't share this view will become more tolerant and accepting of the human rights of gay and lesbian people, which includes the right not to be discriminated against. The Church, though, by its nature is a conserving and conservative organisation. It is slow to change. But eventually it will.

Lazarus at the gate

Rowan Williams' task at this point in history is to try and hold everyone together, reproving those who have embraced change too quickly, comforting those who find it repulsive, and encouraging all to pray and read the Bible together, as slowly the majority of the Anglican Communion drifts towards change. It might take decades but eventually the Church will get there.

This is why so many fundamentalist Anglicans boycotted the conference: they knew that this tacit 'revisionist' agenda would be present. As Theo Hobson writing in the Guardian says: "The whole event is an incredibly delicate exercise in long-distance liberalism." It is also an exercise that extols, nay venerates, unity.

Outside the gates of Lambeth sat one uninvited bishop, Gene Robinson. His election was, unlike the election of English bishops, the popular choice of the parishioners and clergy of his diocese. Unlike English bishops his election was also confirmed by his province's General Assembly, the majority of whom were democratically elected. His crime though in the eyes of Rowan Williams was that he dared not only to publicly declare his sexual orientation but also his commitment to his same-gender partner, Mark.

for the media, Lambeth had the colour and consistency of porridge – served in beautiful Canterbury china

Robinson's diocese and the General Assembly knew this. He is an honest man who is paying a big price for honesty. He was shut out of Lambeth, out of the collegiality, out of the *indaba* huddles, and out of the rich banquet of interchange and fellowship. In the Bible there is a story of a poor man, Lazarus, sitting, excluded, at a rich man's gate. Bishop Robinson was the Lazarus of Lambeth.

Unity before justice

The message to the world was that for the Church unity comes before the inclusion of gay and lesbian Anglicans. And the world got the message. There was also another message: that the wellbeing of the institutional church comes before the wellbeing of its mission in Western societies.

Archbishop Williams believes that the global Anglican Communion is something sacred given by God. It is a precious vessel and his task is to care for it. He believes that the divisive issues that seek to crack and splinter that vessel need to be moderated. Although he knows it is unjust, at the end of the Lambeth Conference Williams spoke supporting moratoria on gay blessings and bishops. He seems to believe that justice for gay and lesbian Anglicans needs to be delayed and denied in order that unity is preserved. The value called *unity* takes precedence over the value called *justice.*

The Anglican Church however is not intrinsically sacred. Like other institutions – marriage, democracy – much good has been done through it, but so has much harm. It is a vessel but it's the quality of its contents that matter. At its best the contents of the vessel called the Anglican Communion are the concrete manifestations of the unconditional love and justice of Jesus.

By focusing on unity, a theme that Jesus said little about, the mission of the Church to include the excluded, which Jesus said and did a lot about, is diminished. The longer the Church maintains its prejudicial views and policies towards gays and lesbians the more irrelevant and less credible it becomes. The priority of *unity* compromises our priority for mission.

While the tenor of Lambeth 2008 and its *indaba* process is worthy of support, it was seriously and fatally compromised before it began. By excluding bishops – and here I include not only Gene Robinson but also those of an ultra-conservative hue – it sent out a clear message that this was not 'an open table'.

Only the select could commune. Gays need to wait outside and be grateful for any crumbs. Inside, the bishops might have felt good about being there, feasting up large like the rich man's guests, but they were seemingly ignoring the Lazarus cost of structural exclusivity. That cost is credibility. And the hell awaiting them is irrelevance to the majority in the secular Western world. ■

Glynn Cardy is vicar of St Matthew-in-the-City, Auckland and Archdeacon of the Anglican diocese of Auckland

Sir Thomas More – *Hans Holbein*

Henry VIII – *Han*

Men for

Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543), the great portrait artist, has given historians a gallery of the important characters in the momentous years from 1520. The portraits of Sir Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher of Rochester brought together here symbolise their shared views on the dramatic political and religious events linked with Henry VIII and their sentence of death from that unforgiving monarch, whose portrait is also shown.

Henry VIII (1491-1547), it is said, could behead ministers and divorce wives with comparative impunity, because the individual was less important than the state and that the isolation of his position fostered a detachment from ordinary virtues and compassion.

This era was one of great opportunities, great men and great events. More and Fisher were leading figures in the secular, scholarly and religious worlds. What set these two apart was that they were also men of God and that was the fundamental truth for them. It was to lead them to a fatal clash with the king.

There is much popular knowledge about Thomas More (1478 -1535): the richness of his mind, the width and depth of his writing, his close friendship with the other Christian humanists of Europe, his worldly success as Speaker of the House of Commons, diplomat and Lord Chancellor (1529-31), the first non-cleric or non-aristocrat to hold that office.

John Fisher (1469-1535) is less well known. Ordained in 1491, he soon showed himself as a fine scholar, preacher and administrator. Lady Margaret Beaufort, the mother of King Henry VII, appointed him her confessor in 1497. His influence with her greatly enriched the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford where she established readerships in divinity in 1503, and in 1505 founded Christ's College in Cambridge. After she died in 1509, following her wishes and with his own persistence and generosity, Fisher founded St John's College in 1511. In 1504 he was made Bishop of Rochester and Chancellor of Cambridge University, offices he held for 30 years. He was the most dedicated bishop in England.

1520 saw the first of the books Fisher wrote against Lutheranism. Henry VIII in 1521 followed with his own *Defence of the Seven Sacraments*. He was helped by More, who also in 1523 writing as Gulielmus Rooseus published Vindicatio Henry VIII in response to Luther's attack on the King. Pope Clement gave Henry the title *Defender of the Faith* for his efforts. Fisher also defended Henry in writing and preached widely on the heresy confirming his reputation in Europe as a theologian.

Henry VIII's divorce

The matter of the king's divorce involved Fisher directly and More indirectly. Fisher was consulted by both Cardinal Wolsey and the king, and after much study gave the opinion that the king need not be concerned for the validity of his marriage. In 1529 when the case was heard by Cardinal Wolsey and Cardinal Campeggio he boldly championed Queen Catherine's cause, the defence was later published

Hans Holbein

Hans Holbein, born in Augsburg where his father was a well known artist at a time when the invention of printing led to a wider dissemination of new thought. Trained in the new art techniques and dissatisfied with Basle, he arrived on More's doorstep, armed with an introduction from Erasmus.

More responded, "Your painter, dear Erasmus, is a wonderful artist… I will do my best to ensure that his visit is not a complete waste of time."

16th Century portraits in the naturalistic tradition provided a face to correspondence for those separated by distance, eg that between Erasmus and More. The use of black and

s Holbein

all seasons

and Fisher preached on the rights of the Queen. This angered the king but he was even more incensed when the bishop, in the House of Lords, opposed giving Henry the title: Head of the Church and Clergy of England, in 1531. He lost but succeeded in having included: "as far as the law of Christ allows..."

Meantime, as Lord Chancellor Thomas More proved himself to be accessible to all, truly impartial and a friend to the needy. He had been allowed a conscience escape by the King on the matter of the royal divorce but it caused resentment. When the clergy finally capitulated in May 1532 and accepted the Royal Supremacy, More resigned as Lord Chancellor the very next day, pleading ill health. This move made him into a poor man, but he was ready to lead a quiet life.

More and Fisher represented two important people not in step with the King, and More soon found himself tussling over various charges with Thomas Cromwell, the King's powerful agent. In March 1534 all subjects were required to take an oath accepting the succession of Elizabeth, daughter of Ann Boleyn, but also repudiating papal supremacy. Both could have accepted the succession, but not the second clause. They were imprisoned in the Tower on April 17 1534.

Neil and Margaret Ann Howard

the Younger

coloured chalk (red, yellow and brown) enabled Holbein to render detail with immense feeling as demonstrated in these preliminary sketches – the concern of Fisher, the humanistic calm of More and self-absorption of Henry. The slightly earlier life-size study of More is on white paper in chalk alone. Also More's was the only one where 'pouncing' (pricking through for outline) was used. Black ink was used for enhancing detail with Fisher and Henry VIII, whose studies are warmed with rose coloured paper.
In the words of Nicholas Bourbon : "Stranger, you wish to see pictures that perfectly resemble life? Behold this work by Holbein's noble hand."

Martyrdom of More and Fisher

At the end of that year the Act of Supremacy was passed together with an Act of Treason which made it high treason to "maliciously" deny the King his title. The determination of both these royal victims was to preserve the right to silence, but this was negated by trickery and perjury. Their affirmations that they had never said anything "maliciously" were swept aside by the examining commissioners. Fisher was beheaded on 22 June 1535 and More on 6 July. His famous final words have echoed down the centuries: "I am the king's good servant, but God's first." They were both canonised in 1935.

There is a startling contrast between the humanistic way of life of Fisher and More and the barbarism of the tyrannical king. Chambers, More's biographer, writes, "It was left for men who were not engaged in the pursuit of wealth – More, Fisher, the Carthusians – to stand as the champions of liberty of conscience in the darkest day of English freedom. With More perished all that was wisest in England; with him, Fisher and the Carthusians, all that was holiest."

The great truth about these two men was that they could take a lonely stand without any idea of attracting support because each felt they had been given a chance to prepare for a death that was certain. Each was calm, beyond the reach of threats, blandishments, appeals from friends or relatives to give way. This did not prevent them from revealing the weaknesses of the charges against them by their accusers towards whom they felt no bitterness. ■

Bishop John Fisher – *Hans Holbein*

When the Soul Dances

Instead of being drugged and drained by relentless routine, we should sway to the present music of each new day and reconnect with the essence that we all share together

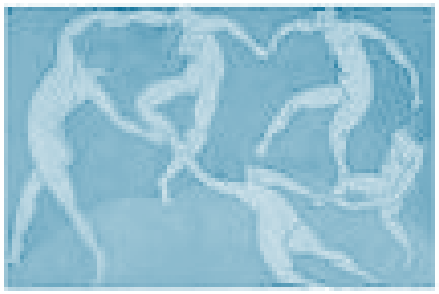
It is a great darkness when the graced light of a fresh start is threatened. That deliberate darkness, whether from within or without, is a definition of sin – whatever obscures and obstructs the flow, fling and flight of the Holy Spirit who loves to blow away from our heart everything that threatens its holy beating. We meditate early in the morning so as to allow the rhythmic Presence to freely move through our cluttered minds, still confused by the shadows of the night.

Each daybreak there is a timing and a balance to find as we set out again into another episode of the mystery of our lives. What happened to me that morning wasn't exactly the ideal way to step out into another glad day. It was a blocking, a stopping, a closing down, as though the source of my energy had been switched off. I began to realise more acutely how delicate a thing it is, the flickering light we carry.

Writing about how we begin the dance of the new day, the poet David Whyte writes: "We should apprentice ourselves to coming awake, treat it as a form of mastery. The threshold of waking, the entry to the day, is the musician's foot lifted to begin the beat. Miss that beat and you will have to come to a stop and start again. The dash and flair of the day comes from that foot hitting the floor after the correct, restful anticipation."

It seems to me that for our lives to be vibrant and healthy, the shadow and light in us, the demons and angels we carry, must all be allowed their shindig in the spaces of our souls. It is good for us to jump at the chance to dance.

I had finished a pint of Guinness in Westport and was seriously and prayerfully considering having another one. At that instant of indecision I was suddenly swept off the barstool and on to the floor of a set-dance. I had just been to a week's conference and had little difficulty in letting go into the swing and sway of the rhythm. At regular intervals a whirling-around with three or four others took place, arms about each other's waists in a circle, to the beat of the music.



This was a light and easy moment, effortless and flowing. It was the kind of holy way you want to live your life. You don't actually have to do anything. You just allow yourself to be swept into something bigger than yourself. And it is always a surprise. After such an experience Oscar Wilde wrote: "One can live for years without living at all; and then all life comes crowding into one single hour."

That "single hour" may well take the shape of what we call "the present moment", or "the ever-present now". It is when two central, and often conflicting, strands in our lives harmoniously move together. Unfortunately, this rarely happens. A dominant part of us exists in the strand of compulsions and fixations, of shallow and rushed repetition, of useless or even damaging thinking, of being drugged and drained by the relentless routine of our days. The other strand lives and loves at a more grace-filled level of being, in a more eternal kind of climate.

In his last three books, *The Power of Now*, *Stillness Speaks* and *A New Earth*, Eckhart Tolle writes about getting true within us the measured pulse between our deeper selves and our more superficial selves. He refers to an all-pervading consciousness that is our true home. It is the throbbing place of power and wisdom but we rarely resonate with it. Instead we are distracted by the passing dissonance of each day; we drain our energies into the imperatives of our work, we over-invest our resources in the immediate claims and pressures of what is necessary but transitory. Tolle does not deny the stark realities and exigencies of our lives; he works towards the space where we can recover a lost inner tempo, where we can flow more surely in our true element, where we can dance to a deeper reality.

"The collective disease of humanity", he

writes, "is that people are so engrossed in what happens, so hypnotised by the world of fluctuating forms, so absorbed in the content of their lives, they have forgotten the essence, that which is beyond content, beyond thought. They are so consumed by time that they have forgotten their essence – eternity." As long as you are unaware of "being" you will seek meaning only within the dimension of doing and of time – a costly deception. Only when you align yourself to the timelessness of the present moment do you allow the greatest power to have access to you, and through you, to the world. We ourselves have little to do with it. We simply allow something to happen. And we are suddenly surprised by joy.

only when you align yourself to the timelessness of the present moment do you allow the greatest power to have access to you

"So be true to life", Tolle continues, "by being true to your inner purpose. As you become present and thereby total in what you do, your actions become charged with spiritual power.

The arising of that Presence, that unifying field of awareness within and between humans, is the most essential factor in relationships on the new earth."

The dance of alignment between outer and inner purpose is called "awakened doing". The constant interruption and fragmentation of this graced state is caused by the tyranny of mindless thinking. We cannot think and be aware at the same time. In the present moment we can only be aware. The dance of life demands our full presence.

There is a Christian way of expressing all of this. The Franciscan priest Richard Rohr speaks of God's dance in us. The Church Fathers used the term *perichoresis* in their efforts to explain the movement in the heart of the indwelling Trinity. It simply means dancing – probably circle-dancing. Whatever is going on in God is a dance, they believed, and God is the dance itself. We are all, without exception, invited to join the Trinitarian dance – to make a fourth, so to speak – drawn into it, like I was, by the three friends in Westport.

Rohr, too, describes sin as the refusal to participate, resisting mutuality, staying stuck in self, spoiling love. Our alienation, apathy and inertia comes from deciding to remain outside the dance, engrossed in our egos, disconnected from the flow of loving Being. Tolle and Rohr believe that all we have to do, for the paradigm shift of our lives, is to listen to, recognise and obey the faint but persistent cadence within that calls to us like a far wave. And when that happens, we cannot resist it.

In Mark Strand's prose poem *Make Believe Ballroom Time* we read:

"Judging from his suit, which was excessively drab but expensive, and his speech which was uninflected and precise, I guessed he was a banker, perhaps a lawyer, even a professor in one of the larger, better universities. It never occurred to me that he might be something else until, during a lull in our conversation, he suddenly got up and began dancing. The others at the party, plainly disturbed by this, affected a more intense involvement in their conversations than was necessary. They spoke loudly, rapidly. But the man continued dancing. And because I recognised what calling, what distant music he obeyed, I envied him." ■

Daniel O'Leary, a priest of Leeds Diocese

Pain, Truth and Love

I asked to be free of pain but Wisdom told me, No.
She said that without tension no living thing could grow.
She told me I should enter this wretched pain of mine
and one day I would see it not as evil but divine.
Whenever a cry of pain is heard,
comes Mary pregnant with the Word.

God spoke into my heart a truth I could not share.
I thought that I'd be rejected by people everywhere.
But Wisdom gently said, "You have no cause for fear.
God provides the voice and the listening ear."
Whenever the voice of truth is heard,
comes Mary pregnant with the Word.

Love held out a begging bowl. I didn't know what to say.
What would there be left for me if I gave my wealth away?
"Give," said Wisdom. "Give and give. Hesitation makes you poor.
God is love and limitless. He takes to give you more.
Whenever a song of love is heard,
comes Mary pregnant with the Word.

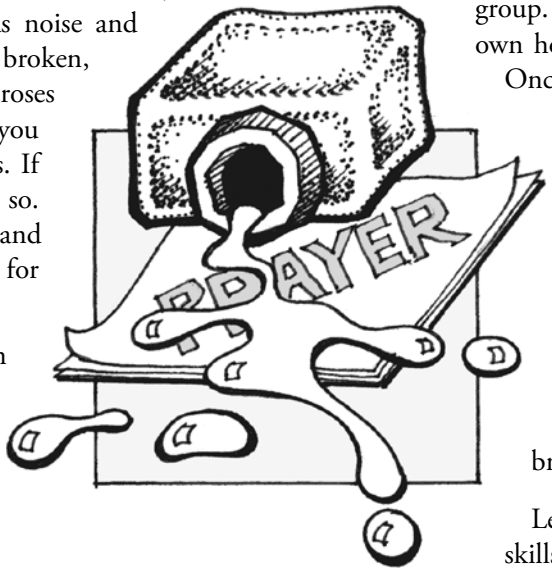
Joy Cowley

God and parents

Paul Andrews

Do parents come closer to God through their children? St Thomas Aquinas was asked a similar question at a time when nuns and monks were linking schools with their convents or monasteries. Is caring for children compatible with the search for God?

The monks thought of religious life as requiring quiet, the peace of the monstery garden, the opportunity to pray without being interrupted. When children arrived, the peace was shattered. There was noise and constant movement. Things were broken, ink was spilled. Children, unlike roses or cabbages, did not stay where you planted them or follow instructions. If they didn't like you they told you so. They demanded so much energy and thought that there was little left for 'religious duties'.



Aquinas considered the question fairly, and his answer made an impact. Educating children was a work of mercy, a giving of oneself. Even if prayer and peace of soul suffered, it was a work of God.

What teachers go through is nothing compared with the experience of parents. The mother of a newborn simply cannot give thought or energy to anything except her child, and the demands on her husband are nearly as great, if he is ready to meet them. A 'retreat' on one's own, such as Religious enjoy, would be an unthinkable luxury for a young mother. If God is to reach such people, who are carrying out *the* most important job in our society, it cannot be through 'spiritual duties', but in other ways.

God touches parents through their children, and in ways that change drastically as the children grow. At first it is a touch that fills you. Kate draws out of you an energy, responsiveness, and love that you did not imagine yourself capable of. She fills your life, changes it. You invest hugely in her, and she rewards you, from the first smile to the day when you stand beside her as a bride or graduate or whatever. She fills your conversation, hangs out of you, wants into your bed in the morning, needs you to think of her body, sleep, food, warmth, clothes, dangers. For her you are larger than life, immortal. You must survive, never get sick. You are the universe for her.

How that changes as she grows into her teens! She reduces you to life-size, then cuts you down still further, takes you off your pedestal. She grows tall, sexy, quick-witted, in touch, feels she can take on the world, doesn't want to know about bedtime, claims she can plan her own life, take her own risks, spar with her friends, share their passions, spurn your advice but quote the same message with awe when it is uttered by some young idiot in her group. She starts to earn money, plan her own holidays, pull away from the family. Once you could do everything for her, now she seems to need you for nothing except bed and board.

Here is the emptying that St Paul placed at the heart of the Christian life. Mary faced it when she found Jesus in the Temple and heard his *Did you not know I must be about my father's business?* She pondered the words as parents still brood on their daughter's words.

Letting go, finding joy in her new skills and independence while holding the limits. Not sharing Kate's grandiose notions of her own power and wisdom, yet neither treating her as a child. Allowing her to make you feel fuddy-duddy, Victorian, three-piece-suited, antediluvian, slow-witted, redundant, *old*, yet remaining what she needs, a parenthood of presence rather than power, setting limits even if they are defied, not living through her, not trumpeting her triumphs or misdemeanours to your friends. She needs to know that you have a life of your own without her. Now that she needs you less, she does not want to find that you need her more.

When Jesus spoke of *losing your life in order to find it,* he was not talking about exotic martyrdoms, but about the daily life of teenagers' parents. They are asked to love without sensing a return of love, to forgive when they feel their forgiveness is being taken for granted, taken advantage of.

Here is a reversal of the joy that young parents feel when they have created a cocoon of love and security for their little ones. Now the cocoon is broken, the umbilical cord is painfully cut, and parents may feel a grief like that of Jesus when the rich young man spurned his invitation

and turned away, or even the betrayal as he felt the kiss of Judas on his cheek. In these moments of pain God still touches you.

Sad, disillusioned adults can pray too. Those whose style of prayer has not matured with their years are like businessmen who still rely on piggy-banks. Nobody can put the words or silence of prayer into our hearts except God, who is touching us even when prayer seems impossible.

Some of the concerns of a parent find voice in these lines from a nameless father for his son:

I pray that I may let my child live his own life,
and not the one I wish I had lived.
Therefore, guard me against burdening him
with doing what I failed to do.

Help me to see his mis-steps today in perspective
against the long road he must travel,
and grant me the grace to be patient
with his slow pace.

Give me the wisdom to know when to smile at the
small mischiefs of his age,
and when to show firmness against the impulses
he fears and cannot handle.

Help me to hear the anguish in his heart
through the din of angry words,
or across the gulf of brooding silence;
and having heard,
grant me the ability
to bridge the gap between us
with understanding.

I pray that I may raise my voice
more in joy at what he is
than in vexation at what he is not,
so that each day he may grow
in sureness of himself.

Help me to regard him with genuine affection,
so that he will feel affection for others.
Then give me strength, O Lord, to free him
so that he can move strongly on his way.

Fr Paul Andrews is a Jesuit priest resident in Dublin – but spent time supplying in Otago and Southland early this year – and catching fish in the Mataura river

A Mother's Journal

Kaaren Mathias

Mornings. Dawn (less often). I am nearly always glad about. Mornings feel like a new chance, a new opportunity and invitation to get things right, to pick up the unraveling threads of yesterday. To have another go at being patient, thoughtful, kind, just.

I've been an inpatient at Christchurch Women's hospital for most of the last six weeks.... Impatient inpatient. It's felt interminable at times. Between the moments of action and threats of an urgent Caesarean section (with a Too Little Baby) are long puddles of time and inaction. Watching my swelling belly, everting belly button, waiting. It's a lonely time.

It has also been a rare opportunity to sit still, read, think, potter, embroider, pray, wonder. From the eyrie where I'm perched on the Fifth Floor, the window faces East. I can welcome each new day. Some mornings the day's light plods on stage, foot dragging and surly, washing over grey and surly winter skies. Other mornings, like this morning, the clear frosty blues and oranges of sunrise dance on early, baskets spilling with promises of sun, colour and warmth.

John O'Donohue (Author of *Anam Cara* and *Benedictus*) says:
The liturgy of dawn signals the wonder for the arriving day. The magic of darkness breaking through into colour and light is such a promise of invitation and possibility… A new day is an intricate and subtle matrix; written into its mystery are the happenings sent to awaken and challenge us.

I'm surprised how grateful I feel much of the time here in hospital. And also how ungrateful I have been at times when fully healthy and 'free' with access to vast resources and opportunities. For now I am blessed with a baby growing inside me, vivacious children who spray paint noise and fun into the ward several times a week, a gentle, kind husband who supports us all, loving friends, family, one of the best healthcare services in the world, good books and a bed with a view to The East.

I pray I can keep watching, and welcoming the dawn (or at least the morning) each day once I'm back on The Ground, far from East Facing Windows on the Fifth Floor of Christchurch Womens.

The most important road out of Rome

*Jim Elliston compares the revolutionary change implicit in Vatican II with that early gathering in Jerusalem (*Acts 15*), when the Apostle Paul led the other Apostles a truly 'catholic' universal vision*

When St Paul first arrived in Rome he found a city surrounded by walls. Entry or exit was by way of several huge gates. One of these opened onto the road to Rome's port, Ostia. According to tradition the Basilica of *St Paul Outside the Walls* marks the spot on that road where Paul was buried. It seems fitting that the great missionary should be buried on the main road joining Rome to the outside world.

On 25 January 1959, the Feast of the Conversion of Paul, newly elected Pope John XXIII left his Vatican headquarters and went out along the road to Ostia to St Paul's Basilica to preside over Mass in the presence of all available cardinals and some key officials. When 77-year-old Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was elected three months earlier, many of us who were students in Rome were quite depressed at the news, having hoped for a 'progressive' like Suenens or Lercaro. Instead, it seemed we got an 'aged caretaker'.

How wrong we were! At the end of Mass on that overcast Sunday morning, ignoring the remonstrations of the senior Vatican Cardinals, John launched the church on a journey that, as his officials warned, he would be unable to control – but which definitively changed the Catholic Church.

We students read all about it the next day in the *Osservatore Romano*. In summary, the Pope announced he would do three things:

- he would call a **Synod** to update the structure and procedures of the Diocese of Rome;
- establish a **Commission** to revise Church Law;
- and convoke an **Ecumenical Council** to review how effectively the church was carrying out its mission to bring Christ to the world.

John XXIII was an outsider. Between the ages of 44 and 72 he was the Vatican's representative in Bulgaria, Turkey and France. He was then appointed Patriarch of Venice. He never held a position at the centre of church governance; in Rome he was literally a 'Johnny-come-lately'.

Control was a significant mark of the Pre-Vatican II Catholic Church. Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, head of what is now called the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* (thus a predecessor of Cardinal Ratzinger), had dominated church governance during the ailing Pius XII's last few years. Ottaviani led a rearguard action against reform. To obviate any fundamental change, he and his cohorts managed to skew the agenda for the first session of Pope John's Council (in October1962), aiming to repeat past concilar practice of issuing a series of condemnations of doctrinal errors.

But a significant group of the assembled bishops led by Cardinal Frings of Cologne reacted strongly against this. Frings pointed out that it was for the Council itself to decide its agenda, not the Roman Curia. Moreover, since a number of the curial cardinals – including Ottaviani – were not bishops, they should withdraw. Cardinal Frings' adviser in this was a young priest named Joseph Ratzinger. Pope John pacified the curial cardinals by ordaining them bishops so that they could continue to attend. But the die was cast. By the end of the first session John's vision for a renewed church had begun to take off.

A parallel with the life of Paul

There is a parallel here with an event in the life of St Paul. During the years following Christ's death the church was based in Jerusalem. It was led by pious, law-observing Jews, many of them Pharisees, who had known Jesus and some had been his disciples. They still retained their basic Hebrew mindset. Membership of the Chosen People was mainly through birth, and all adult males were to be circumcised.

Paul too was a pious Pharisee, but he had never known Jesus during his life. Moreover, Paul was recruiting large numbers of gentile converts who, he argued, were not bound by Jewish law. This was at odds with the Jerusalem leaders' lifelong beliefs and practices.

Jesus himself had never addressed this issue, but a council was called in Jerusalem – which Paul attended – to discuss and pronounce on it. This is sometimes called the *Council of Jerusalem*. The Apostles and others who attended came to accept that Christ's overall teachings and Scripture showed Paul to be correct. This is described for us in Chapter 15 of *Acts*. The outcome of Vatican II was similar to that at Jerusalem in AD 50. A new framework appeared. It was not a matter of seeing some new thing, but rather of seeing all things anew.

In effect Vatican II examined the church's 'core competencies'. In recent times there have been arguments over whether the Council was merely a

continuation of – or a break from – the church of the past. The reality is that an enormous amount of development had already taken place, thanks in part to the encouragement given by Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) to Catholic scholars to adopt modern historical methods of study.

The church's internal role is to form the baptised in both spiritual and practical ways to be missionaries, beginning in their immediate neighbourhood. Their mission is to work, individually and collectively, both to respond to the needs of all and to address the underlying causes of those needs. This is to be done in a manner that reveals the love of Christ to all and offers them the opportunity to respond freely to it. This is a constitutive element of evangelisation. "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity", says Paul VI, words echoed by the present Pope.

Over the years since that January day in 1959 I have witnessed enormous changes in the Catholic Church – and also quite large pockets of resistance. The connection between ecumenism, work for social justice and evangelisation, with the parish as the training ground for mission, is still a mystery for many Catholics. I have seen many apostolic laity drift from the church through lack of support at the parish level, and seen many potential apostles lost because simple structures to provide basic formation have been lacking. It was – and often still is – 'business as usual', except for liturgy in the vernacular.

John XXIII inherited a self-satisfied, intransigent, fortress church. He bequeathed a church that was rediscovering its 'servant', missionary calling – to present Christ to the world in language the world could understand, to be a source of life and hope. Perhaps in this *Year of Paul* we could finally begin to reap the benefits both of his insights and the decisive change brought about by Vatican II. The most important road in Rome still is that which connects it to the outside world. ■

Power and control in the church

Bridget Taumoepeau

For a long time I have been pondering on this topic. My concern has been that the church is over-controlling and has slipped back into conservatism since the heady days of Vatican II.

Recently I had an experience that made me give this even more thought. I visited one of our cities and attended early morning Sunday Mass. Rather to my surprise the parish priest exhorted the congregation to use the forms of *The Creed* and *The Lord's Prayer* that are laid down in the Diocese. The main points were the use of '*we*' instead of '*I*' in the Creed and the use of the modern version of the Lord's Prayer. The rationale was that we should be praying as a community united, and that the inclusive '*we*', rather than the exclusive '*i*', encouraged this.

My first reaction was surprise, particularly as I could not quite recall the older version of The Lord's prayer and because I had never given the use of '*we*' in the Creed a second thought. I was, however, struck by the distress that had been engendered in the parish over this issue. What was shocking, though, was that despite this very reasonable request, someone in the congregation not only persisted with the outdated forms of the prayers, but did so in a loud and very divisive way. The issue of control came immediately to mind.

Control is an interesting subject. I look at it from a developmental point of view, although I acknowledge that there are important sociological issues as well. I am certainly not advocating anarchy, and, indeed, am a firm believer in boundaries, standards and expectations, which, of course, fit with my understanding of developmental stages.

The beginnings of separation of the individual start at birth. A baby is initially entirely dependent on adults, but rapidly gains skills to become independent. A child should have a safe environment and be exposed to a belief system to feel secure and to absorb values and a philosophy of life. There should be consistency in the way the child is directed and responded to.

Adolescence is a time of transition; of questioning; of emerging individuation. All parents will talk of the challenges of this time, but many will also speak of their admiration for their adolescent children. They are honest; they can smell hypocrisy from a long way off; they have a refreshing idealism; they want to put the world to rights. Thank goodness for this enthusiasm and energy. If it were not for this, many wonderful movements for change would never have seen the light of day.

And so the adolescent reaches maturity. The parents relinquish many of their controls and look at their children taking on the role of guiding the young, and the cycle repeats itself. All stages of separation and individuation and maturity can only thrive and be achieved in an atmosphere of love.

Maturity is not just a developmental stage of individuals, but also of institutions including the church. Nothing stands still. Over the centuries there have been so many changes – one has only to watch any ▷▷

programmes about the time of Henry VIII that seem popular at present, to realise that the Catholic Church of that time is almost unrecognisable to modern-day Catholics. The power of the church must have been terrifying and the attitude to capital punishment has mercifully completely changed.

The gap between laity and the priesthood has now narrowed and with it the role of both has changed. Gone are the days when only the priests were educated and literate, and, therefore, the only ones who read the Scriptures and interpreted them. The laity is mature, but their 'adolescence' has been stifled.

When that happens there can be various reactions – some will be loyal and unquestioning. They will take on all the duties that are laid on them, in the guise of a more democratic approach to the running of the church, but surely greatly influenced by the shortage of priests. Others will rebel and reject the paternalistic approach of the church, feeling unheard or even intimidated. Others will find it hard to respect an institution that pays them little heed, and seems to exercise control by refusing to discuss, by shutting down any dissent and by becoming increasingly rigid.

the laity is mature, but their 'adolescence' has been stifled

I became a Catholic in the 1960s at the time of Vatican II. I was excited by the reforms, eagerly joining groups that discussed the Vatican II documents. I came with no baggage, other than my Protestantism, and accepted the modernisation of the church as a normal and healthy process. I had a great affection for John XXIII – Good Pope John.

I am saddened by the retreat of the church into conservatism again. I suppose, like an adolescent, I do not see the reason for the excessive control; the lack of vision; the attitude to women; the increasing centralisation; the lack of acceptance of diversity. The way the church has handled the scandal of paedophilia has often been shameful. The incongruity of insisting on lifetime celibacy for priests, while accepting some of the Eastern Rites that allow married priests, has always seemed startling.

The refusal to look at changes to the priesthood has seemed stubborn. (I would have thought it would be sensible to allow men to be priests for a period of their lives and then return to the laity, rather as Buddhists monks can do.) I do not understand how the ordination of women could be seen as a threat. Rather, I feel it would be a glorious revitalisation of the church. (The Protestant churches that have women ministers do not seem to have gone to the devil, quite the opposite.) And so it goes on. Many reading this will say that I cannot continue in the Catholic Church if I hold such views, and indeed that has been something with which I have wrestled.

I appreciate that no institution is perfect. I look forward to change and reform, although I doubt it will be in my lifetime. I hope that the social teaching of the church will triumph over the current attitudes. I have profound respect for the many in the church who walk in the ways of Christ. They do so with great faith and are an example to us all. In my older age I look back and reflect. I hope I am able to admire as well as criticise, and that I personally remain open to new ways of looking at the world. There is more time for prayer. I have become more interested in the contemplative tradition of the church.

Power and control bring with them grave responsibility. I can only hope the church will exercise them with faith, hope and love – remembering that the greatest of these is love. ■

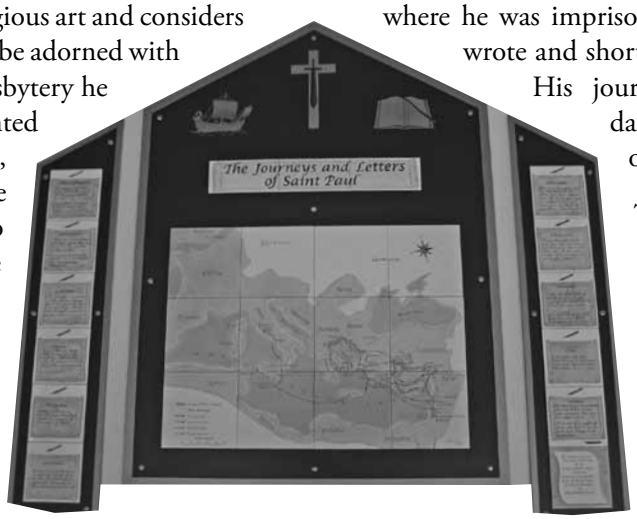

Norah Southorn

Year of Paul celebrated at Dallington

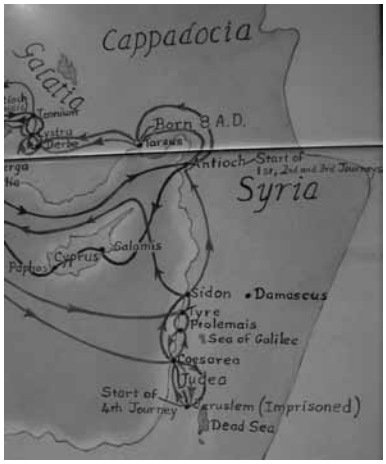
To celebrate the Year of St Paul, artist Norah Southorn has created a display of the great Apostle's journeys and writings

St Paul's in Dallington is the only parish church in the Catholic diocese of Christchurch dedicated to St Paul. The parish priest, Fr Miles O'Malley, who admits to have always had a soft spot for the great apostle, determined that the *Year of Paul* declared by Pope Benedict should be properly celebrated in the parish.

Fr Miles is also a devotee of religious art and considers that religious buildings need to be adorned with worthy works of art. In his presbytery he has an oil painting of St Paul painted by the modern Australian artist, Michael Galovic. He had a large poster made of this painting to hang in the sanctuary of the church during the whole of the Pauline year.



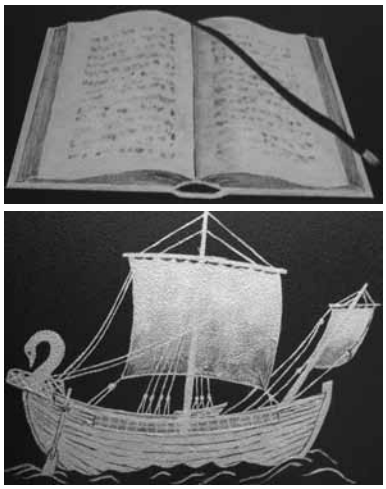
St Paul's has a spacious, modern foyer. The space opposite the entrance has been adorned for some years by a Celtic embroidered roundel, which had faded with the years and, providentially, fell off the wall some time before the beginning of the 'year'. Norah Southorn, a parishioner who works in ceramic tiles, volunteered to create a permanent memorial to replace the roundel, and Fr Miles was delighted to accept. Bishop Barry Jones launched the *Year of Paul* in the diocese by celebrating Mass at Dallington on the Feast of Ss Peter and Paul, when he duly blessed Norah's completed work.



The work is made up of 27 tiles which she painted and fired to produce an elegant map of St Paul's journeys, flanked by quotes from New Testament letters attributed to the apostle. Norah's husband Graeme mounted them on three panels.

Norah says: "The work tells us essential and important facts about Paul – where and when he was born and died, the place of his conversion, the missionary journeys he made, where he was imprisoned, shipwrecked, the letters he wrote and short texts from each of those letters. His journeys were long, arduous and dangerous and he suffered all kinds of deprivations."

The work took about 200 hours' labour and the kiln had to be fired more than 50 times. "I'm sure St Paul has been with us throughout our journey" added Norah. "We hope this work will remain in the church for many, many years, that it will touch thousands of people who gather there, and be a source of inspiration and learning for young and old alike. It is a short but suitable history of St Paul, our patron, on the occasion of his 2000th birthday."



(centre) whole work of mounted tiles

(left) detail of map

(right) motifs

The women of Philippi

(Acts 16)

Susan Smith

In our story, Paul and Timothy have journeyed to Philippi, a leading city in Macedonia. Luke writes that "on the Sabbath day, we (Paul and Timothy) went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke with the women who had gathered there" (*Acts 16:13*). One of these women, Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, emerges as a founder of the church at Philippi.

Paul's letter to the Philippians reveals his great love and admiration for this community, in which women exercised important roles in the community. Paul refers to Euodia and Synteche, two women "who struggled beside me in the work of the gospel" (*Phil 4:2*). In *Acts*, Lydia and Paul emerge as people prepared to transgress social barriers for the sake of the gospel. Paul arrives at the river bank and sits down with the women, presumably Gentile women, while Lydia later invites him into her home.

Acts 16:11-40 provides a story about another woman who was 'quadruply marginalised.' A young slave was an outsider by virtue of her gender (woman), status (slave), her possession by a spirit of divination, and linked to this last-named, economically exploited by her owners as a fortune-teller. According to the narrative, she attempted to assist Paul and Timothy in their proclamation of the good news by following them around, and announcing that "these men are slaves of the Most High God [and] proclaim to you a way of salvation" (*Acts 16:17*).

Paul does not seem to have appreciated her assistance, because "very much annoyed", he turned and ordered the spirit to come out of her. The unnamed slave woman disappears from the narrative, which once again focuses attention on Paul and Timothy who have been arrested. The magistrate orders them to be flogged. However this adversity serves to further the spread of the good news. After their release the two apostles return to Lydia's house where they remain with the community before departing for Thessalonica.

From its origins therefore we can see that women were important figures in the life of the Philippian community. Historians suggest that in the western part of the Roman Empire women enjoyed a higher status than happened in the more eastern parts, and this may explain the prominence given to women such as Lydia. This may also explain why letters to the Ephesian and Colossian communities in Turkey restrict women's role to the household.

Obviously then culture plays an important role in the life of the church, and cultural *mores* often determine the nature of church life in a particular place. One of the problems facing the Catholic Church in New Zealand is that it is required to honour two different cultures – that of New Zealand where gender equality is a social and legal requirement, and a universal church culture which does not value gender equality in quite the same way. ■

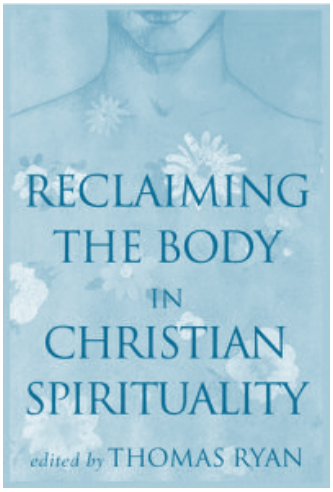
Susan Smith is a Sister of Our Lady of the Missions and teaches in her congregation's Asian provinces

Body, mind and spirit – *Part II*

In the first part of an interview between Gerry McCarthy and author Thomas Ryan (see August *TM*), they discussed grief, sexuality and the way our bodily selves connect with humanity in general. In the final section they focus on two basic human needs: letting go and sabbath.

The paschal mystery – letting go

Gerry McCarthy: In the book you write this: "By making sought-after idols of riches and glowing health, it's easy to lose sight of how illness and economic hardship can be circumstances of life-giving grace by making us more aware of our radical dependency upon God for everything." You offer many stories in that chapter about people who've struggled with illness – and deepened their spirituality.



But this isn't an easy thing for many people is it? For example: trying to accept our ageing bodies is countercultural today. Can you speak to me a bit more about this?

Thomas Ryan: The subject you've opened is a very rich one. If you want more powerful stories on how God uses our ageing, our limitations and experience of sickness, then see my book that preceded *Reclaiming The Body in Christian Spirituality,* which is entitled *Four Steps To Spiritual Freedom* (2004). When I arrived toward the end of working on that manuscript – for which I interviewed a lot of people whose stories had drawn me – I looked at those stories and said: "Almost all of these are stories of hardship and suffering". It was never my intention to gather a collection of such stories together, but rather to gather stories of how people demonstrated in their living spiritual freedom.

When I looked at what it was in their stories that had been so liberating for these people, I saw a pattern. The pattern was that wisdom, new life and new insight flowed into their lives precisely from their experience of letting go, that is, from the little spiritual deaths that are involved in accepting our limitations, sickness, handicaps, break up with a lover, seeing one's child leave home for the first time, the loss of a job, retirement, disability or maybe just moving house. All of these little dyings or 'letting-gos' – represented in their various stories and embraced in faith and hope – were the doorway for a deep and liberating wisdom for them.

I came to take that as confirmation of the real truth of what Christian faith calls the *Paschal Mystery*. The Paschal Mystery refers to Jesus passing through death to new life – through the death of the cross through new life in the resurrection. The affirmation of Christian faith (subsequent to that) is that every experience of new life comes to us only through an experience of letting go. And every letting go is a little dying – a kind of dress rehearsal for the ultimate letting go which is our death.

But there is a wisdom that comes from suffering, sickness, vulnerability and the experience of our limits and finitude, when it is responded to in hope and faith as a reflection of the mystery of the cross and resurrection at work in real ways in our lives. It's as though each time that happens (and we think we're in front of a dead end) and we embrace it in confidence and trust, the experience that people witnessed to was that it opened outward again in new and surprising ways to a richer and even deeper experience of life. It's as if God said: "See I told you so. I've written it into the very nature of things. When will you learn to trust it? Dying gives way to new life".

One of the retreats that I've begun giving once or twice a year is called *Savouring Life by Facing our Mortality*. I've found this to be a rich retreat theme to unpack with people, because there is so little in our culture that supports us in facing our mortality.

There is so much that supports us in thinking that if we get enough sun, take the right vitamins and exercise regularly, then we'll live forever. But facing our mortality can be such a liberating and integrative experience, sending us back to the life we have to live here and now with much greater sharpness of appetite and appreciation for the gift of each day that is given. And as we face the little dyings and letting go's that accompany ageing, we can do so with less fear in approaching the big letting go, because it's not the end game. It is simply yet another doorway into a richer and fuller experience of life.

The loss of sabbath in modern living

GM: In the book you explain that: "we can do almost anything with material space: fill it, change it, paint it, cover it, reinforce it, tear it down. But put us in front of an hour of uncharted, unprogrammed time – and we go

▷▷

A Sweet, Frothy Midwinter Treat

Mamma Mia!
Film Review: Paul Sorrell

I read somewhere in a magazine article that everyone needs six things to maintain a healthy, balanced life. Apart from the obvious ones – close friends, meaningful work – the list included sheer, mindless fun; activity with no other motivation than simple relaxation. *Mamma Mia*! fits that bill perfectly.

Based on the hit musical stage play of the same name, the film is set around a wedding which is about to take place on a Greek island where Donna's daughter Sophie is about to be married. Donna (Meryl Streep) is struggling to maintain a run-down guesthouse and Sophie's upcoming wedding is only adding to her stress levels. Unbeknownst to her mother, Sophie has been reading her mother's diary from the 1980s and, on the basis of some revelatory entries, has invited each of the three men who might be her father to attend the nuptials. The fun starts when all three middle-aged gents (Pierce Brosnan, Colin Firth and Stellan Skarsgård) take up the invitation and arrive together on the island.

Based on this highly improbable scenario, *Mamma Mia*! is really no more than a vehicle for lively renditions of Abba's Greatest Hits, plus a number of their songs I'd never heard before. These are delivered – with great enthusiasm and creativity – as the slender plotline unfolds. The music is joyful and uninhibited and the big production numbers are impressive and hilarious at the same time.

It scarcely matters that the plot has so many holes that you could sail a Mediterranean cruise liner through it. However, the film does have some sense of shape. Donna and her two gal pals (Christine Baranski and Julie Walters in fine form) match the three 'fathers', and the movie skims along on the dramatic tension provided by a number of unanswered questions – who will turn out to be Sophie's real dad and what will happen at the wedding, where all three candidates expect to be the one to give her away?

Neither does it matter that the three male leads can't sing for olive pits – after all, this is an Abba musical and it is gloriously camp from beginning to end. (By contrast, Meryl Streep has a beautiful voice.)

Despite the fact that *Mamma Mia*! is a 24-carat chick flick and – going by the highly entertained audience at the weekday afternoon session I attended – I am not the target demographic, I found it the ideal tonic for a cold, wet winter's day in Dunedin. ■

▷▷ catatonic or become spastic. Creative non-doing, genuine sabbath time, is the greatest challenge of all. But it too is part of the body language of faith."

Why is this creative non-doing such a challenge for us today?

TR: One major reason is our work ethic. Americans are famous throughout the world for how intensely they work. Here in New York City where I live and work, people routinely work 60, 80 and 100 hour weeks. They are in the office by eight o'clock in the morning, and they leave at seven or eight o'clock in the evening. Even when they go on holidays they feel tied to their work and compelled to check e-mail and voice messages. They just take it as par for the course.

There is so much emphasis in our culture upon efficiency and productivity. We find ourselves constantly judged according to those two criteria. Simply taking a day of creative non-doing to regenerate our inner spirit is something that is hard for North Americans to do – and something for which we receive little support in the culture. Witness the fact that all the stores are open on traditional days of Sabbath inviting us to come and shop, buy and get more things done on our little checklist of tasks for the week. Again turning everything into functionality.

This makes it extremely difficult for us to conjugate not the verb of *wanting* (which relates to our consumerism) or the verb of *having* (which relates to our materialism) or the verb of *doing* (which relates to our activism), but to conjugate the verb of *being*. It makes it so difficult for us to live with a Sabbath rhythm by taking a day each week to simply delight in all that is given: life, health, family, friendship, the arts and nature. And to know that it's not only okay, but doing so comes as a commandment of God at Sinai.

The culminating climax of God's work in the *Genesis* story of creation was the seventh day – the act of stopping to rest and to appreciate and find meaning in all that had been done. And we, who are created in God's image, are commanded to imitate God by doing the same thing. ■

Gerry McCarthy is Editor of The Social Edge

Tragic lives

Exiles
Ron Hansen
Farrar, Straus and Giroux New York 2008
Review: Michael Hill

Away in the loveable west,
On a pastoral forehead of Wales,
I was under a roof here, I was at rest,
And they the prey of the gales;
She to the black-about air, to the breaker, the thickly
Falling flakes, to the throng that catches and quails
Was calling "O Christ, Christ, come quickly":
The cross to her she calls Christ to her, christens her wild-worst Best.

In stark, mordant verse Gerard Manley Hopkins briefly sketches an event which moved him deeply in his young life and launched him on his hidden career as a poet. It was the birth in time of one of the great wordsmiths of the English language.

Hopkins was a Jesuit scholastic completing his studies for the priesthood at St Beuno's in North Wales. Sitting in comfort in the common room one December day, snow showers fluttering outside the solid casement windows, Hopkins reads the account in the *Times* of the wreck of the *SS Deutschland*, driven by a howling gale a few days earlier onto a sandbank at the mouth of the river Thames. A quarter of those on board, en route from Bremen in Germany to New York, were drowned or died of exposure, including a group of five young Franciscan nuns, emigrating to found a hospital in Missouri.

The young man is touched to the quick by the vivid accounts of the wreck, especially by the ironic counterpoint of his own situation in the comfortable, fortress-like security of St Beuno's while five young religious are being frozen to death exposed to the frenzied force of icy winds and crashing seas on the other side of the island. The Jesuit Rector notices the anguish of his young student and mutters: "Perhaps someone should write a poem on the subject."

This extraordinary story by American novelist Ron Hansen, beautifully captures the double tragedy, interweaving the appalling deaths of the young nuns and their companions aboard the *Deutschland* with the seemingly unfulfilled life of the young poet. It imaginatively sketches the early lives of the five nuns – and their deaths – in fascinating detail.

Hopkins is described accurately and sensitively. He was seen as something of an oddity by his superiors and many of his fellow Jesuits, even though much loved by them. And no one, even his closest friends, appreciated this extraordinary poetic genius lurking inside his eccentric personality.

Hansen penetrates the depths of these young lives and the sequence of events bringing Hopkins and the five German women together. The writing style is reminiscent of *The Vintner's Luck*, Elizabeth Knox's best seller of a few years ago: the reader is carried with equal skill into the heart of the action and of the hearts and minds of the characters.

It is not only the nuns who are *exiles* – the book's title – driven from their homeland by Bismarck's 'cultural revolution'. Their horrific deaths are stark tragedy, yet they bring to rebirth the genius of the young poet. Hopkins had renounced his creative writing and burnt his corpus of poems in a fit of sacrificial zeal on entering the Jesuits – and now he is prompted to take up his pen again.

The great poem *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, which Hopkins crafts over succeeding weeks, is doomed to be misunderstood and ignored. Even his friend and executor, Robert Bridges, is completely perplexed by it. It is not published until nearly 30 years after his death in 1889. Reproduced in full at the end of the novel, it is still a difficult composition. The majestic climax of shipwreck and death of the nuns is preceded by ten verses which seem unrelated: they are Hopkins' own very personal act of faith.

Hansen may not have intended to write a religious book. Yet this tale of death and resurrection makes an enormous impact. It skilfully reveals the hand of God in the midst of stark disaster and tragedy. I found my sympathies aroused and touched in a way that few lives of saints have ever done for me. I cannot overpraise this remarkable novel. I don't think you will be disappointed by *Exiles*. ■

Naught for your comfort

Why standest thou afar off, O Lord
Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?
(Psalm 10)

Last month winter struck in New Zealand with weeks of cold temperatures and grey skies that seemed to me to be the nadir so far in a year in which we have witnessed tragedy on a huge scale. The earthquake in China estimated to have killed more than 50 thousand people, a cyclone in Myanmar responsible for the death of 100 thousand people and ongoing disasters in Darfur and Africa make one think that the Christian concept of heaven is needed simply to make sense of human suffering.

A mood of despondency in the contemplation of life led me to the poets, but perhaps I started with the wrong poem. Keats' *Ode To A Nightingale* opens, "My heart aches, and a dreary numbness pains/ My sense..." He seeks solace through the song and the flight of this "immortal" bird which seems to represent for Keats a transcendence to another realm, where the poet longs to be. It is not that he wishes to leave the flesh behind but to transfigure human existence, "where men sit and hear each other groan", into a more just society without the suffering that brings thoughts of "easeful death" to him.

Keats' poem leads to that classic difficulty of how to justify the existence of suffering with belief in a God who created us and who providentially manages the world. It is in itself a mystery that I could not begin to unravel. The quest for truth and explanation is not new. It is mirrored in the many moods of the Psalms – angry, grateful, praising and lamenting. In this poetry the psalmist speaks of suffering, the longing for God to smite the enemy and the feeling of being abandoned by the Lord.

Like all great poetry concerning suffering and change, the psalms depict the physical details of life in the face of humanity's insignificance before the power of the unknown. This is the ultimate mystery with which we must cope as surely as we all must cope with death. However, Psalm 37 consoles us, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him".

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

An evil conflict

As of this writing, a conflict simmers between Russia and Georgia that has resulted in thousands of deaths among the civilian population of South Ossetia and rendered even more thousands homeless. South Ossetians have become refugees in North Ossetia, while politicians and warmongering leaders ferment further chaos on their citizens in order to further their ambitions for economic and political power. The laws governing war have changed. It is now the ordinary innocent people who suffer in any war while their leaders are untouched.

The hostilities in Georgia are a result of a geopolitical struggle for energy, natural gas and oil reserves, coming from the Caspian Sea. Georgia has the only route for pipelines that does not go through Russia, therefore remaining accessible to Western powers hungry to maintain their dwindling energy resources. For this purpose US supplies arms and military equipment to Georgia and supports its so-called democracy in order to protect US supply lines. The price of this Western idea of democracy is the decimation of civilian populations, called collateral damage. It is the 21st. Century's version of barbarism.

Today, war is waged in order to obtain or to maintain natural resources, with no regard for the inhabitants of any country. There are many obvious contemporary examples: Georgia threatens to swell the list. Wars used to be fought by armies of men from each side, supplied with all the necessary equipment to kill each other. Wars are now waged with impersonal sophisticated weaponry such as air power that can deliver massive destruction over a wide area. Cluster bombs kill people indiscriminately for years. Artillery, tractors and bulldozers raze whole townships and embargoes starve populations. If war continues in this fashion and is allowed to proceed, it will destroy society's well-being and ultimately society itself.

On with the game(s)

The Beijing Olympic Games have aroused as much competition among political pundits seeking to score points against China for abuse of human rights as among the contestants vying for glory in the stadiums. But the achievements of China in the opening ceremony and in the general staging of the games dazzle the imagination.

Since being awarded the 2008 Games, Beijing has laboured tirelessly to endow the city with facilities that would generate amazement in Western minds. The Bird's Nest stadium is truly an architectural wonder and the Swimming Cube, the venue for water events, has no equal in the world. China is showing its strength as an economic and political power.

The demonstrations against the torch bearing, the Tibetan exiles rightly seeking redress and the feelings of resentment towards China's record in human rights have all been aired as subjects not to be forgotten before applauding China's achievements. Politics and sport are forever intermingled. Who will win the most gold medals, America or China?

But let China have its day of glory. Remember the incredible feats of the athletes who compete for the love of sport in the true spirit of the original Olympic Games. ■

The encyclical Humanae Vitae forty years on

The 40th anniversary of the issue of most papal documents passes unnoticed. Not so the 40th anniversary of Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae*. Furthermore, it is remembered, not for the many universally respected teachings that it contains, but for one position that remains unacceptable to many. Paul had the option of stating that artificial means of controlling conception were legitimate or were illegitimate. He opted for the latter position. Not all believe he made the right choice.

The widely respected journal, *The Tablet*, recently commissioned a professionally conducted survey of the attitude of UK Catholics towards sex and marriage. Among other findings was the fact that a large proportion of otherwise faithful Catholics in that country simply do not accept Pope Paul's position regarding contraception to be true and do not adhere to it in practice.

There is little doubt that the same is true here. Family sizes are smaller among members of the Catholic Church than they used to be. While natural family planning is employed by some, use of contraceptives seems to be the most frequent means of limiting family size.

Teachings of the Church need more than to be enunciated by the hierarchy. They need to be embraced by the body of the faithful. Remember that we are not dealing here with a matter of divine revelation. In the case of family planning, the Church is making a statement of what it believes to be a correct understanding of the natural law.

When a substantial body of the married faithful of childbearing age do not consider it wrong to use contraception, are we seeing a manifestation of the *sensus fidelium* – the 'sense' of the faithful – the body of believers being led by the Holy Spirit to believe what is really true?

If support for contraception is alleged a matter of self-interest on the part of the laity, the refusal to consider that a change should be made could be an equal act of self-interest on the part of a central church leadership that hates to admit it has been wrong, as the Galileo case exemplified.

More 50 Catholic organisations recently sponsored an advertisement-style, paid-for page in an Italian publication which called for a change in the Catholic Church's stand regarding contraception. Fr Lombardi SJ speaking on *Vatican Radio*, attacked the letter, saying that it was a matter of interested parties using their funds for the spreading of dissident views. I was almost tempted to contact the priest and ask for an address to which I could appeal for financial remuneration should I decide to go public in support of a change in the Church's teaching.

Two years ago, I thought of expressing in *Tui Motu* the hesitations I have about the correctness of Pope Paul's stand. But just at that time our New Zealand bishops issued a letter entitled ***What is the Church?*** saying today about marriage and marriage difficulties? It was a lengthy letter containing many excellent things. Regarding contraception it was loyal to the position of Pope Paul VI. But its coverage of the matter was at same time nuanced and pastorally sensitive.

I felt that to write at that time in the vein of these present paragraphs would be confrontational and disrespectful, something I had no wish to be. So I have held off until now. But I feel that the world-wide unease about the correctness of Paul's position needs to be reflected upon. I cannot free myself of the suspicion that some bishops, here and elsewhere, at times wonder whether Paul made the right choice 40 years ago. ■

Humphrey O'Leary

Humphrey O'Leary is a canon lawyer and Rector of the Redemptorist community in Auckland

Our lost children

Michael Holman

Violent crimes by teenagers cause inevitable headlines and claims that harsher punishments will solve the problem. But this approach ignores the true cause – that young people are being failed by a society that has lost its nerve

This year, 16-year-old Jimmy Mizen was stabbed to death by a shard of glass during an altercation, not of his making, in a baker's shop. Jimmy was the 13th teenager to die violently on London's streets since January.

There have been many theories put forward about what can be done about such violence, particularly knife crime among the young. Jimmy Mizen's parents got to the heart of the problem when they spoke a few weeks ago, after a memorial service for their son at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Lee, where Jimmy was baptised and served as an altar boy.

"It does not have to be like this," said Barry Mizen. "People are saying something must be done. I just wonder how futile it is, with more and more legislation and laws. Perhaps we all need to look to ourselves and look to the values we would like and our responses to situations in our life."

Indeed, we can ban knives, increase penalties and purchase metal detectors, but they are superficial solutions to a deeper malaise that in many ways our society is reluctant to address. This is not just about young people and the way some of them are drawn to violence. This is about the nature of our society, the foundation of our prosperity, the way we live now and its consequences for young people's happiness and for family life.

In February 2007 the United Nations Children's Fund published research reporting that British young people suffer greater deprivation, worse relationships with their parents and are exposed to more risks from alcohol, drugs and unsafe sex than those in any other wealthy country in the world. Many parents need to work long hours and many jobs are held on short-term contracts, making for instability, and the culture of 'short-term-ism' means it is very difficult to enter into family life, let alone sustain it.

Children grow up best within a clear framework of values and virtues, and in all the trouble and difficulty of teaching them, young people instinctively understand that they are loved and that they matter. It can be extremely difficult to communicate these values given the extent to which schools are submerged under a sea of targets and objectives. But what about the kind of people they themselves are becoming: what about an awareness of the importance of service to others? The generosity of so many young people indicates how powerful a message of service would be.

Society today seems to be losing its nerve about how to convey values and virtues and what those values and virtues are. There are strong voices advocating a value-free secular space. There are undoubtedly teachers working in non-faith schools who are concerned about educating children within a framework of virtues and values, but a faith school can impart its values supported by a way of life. Somehow the qualities of all our young people and how they are shaped through schooling need to be raised higher on the public agenda. The Catholic Church has much to contribute.

Young people are good barometers of how well a society is doing. Our young people suggest that all is not well in Britain. A dialogue is urgently needed about how we can offer the next generation more hope and the opportunity for fulfilment. ■

Michael Holman SJ is Provincial of the Jesuits in Britain. He was head teacher of Wimbledon College comprehensive school for boys from 1995 until 2004.

Permission The Tablet,
http://www.thetablet.co.uk