

# Tui Motu

InterIslands

March 2003 \$4



*Take up your cross. . .*

# Vox populi vox Dei

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**Cover:** *Take up your cross...*  
The seventh of Mary Barker's Scripture  
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Photo: Paul

As might befit the season of Lent the first articles in the March *Tui Motu* are sombre and serious: the impending war in Iraq which may be a reality before our April issue – and a focus on the paedophile priest scandal afflicting the Catholic church. This section of the paper is bracketed by Lenten reflections from two of our finest regular writers, Irish Jesuit Paul Andrews (opposite) and the late Selwyn Dawson (*page 11*).

Bush's threatened assault on Iraq is becoming the most unpopular single international initiative of modern times. Millions are marching against war across the globe. Pundits like John Howard dismiss these demonstrations as 'mob' reactions. Commentators from the right confidently predict that when the Anglo-American blitzkrieg is translated into dazzling triumph, public opinion will swing, since 'nothing succeeds like success' – a cynical, amoral judgment.

People are not out on the streets because they are anti-American or pro-Hussein. They demonstrate because they know this war is wrong. They are outraged because what the US and its allies are doing is an exercise in naked power which no amount of propaganda can camouflage. The voice of the people grows louder by the hour. Bush and Blair are fools not to pay heed.

The paedophilia articles are an attempt to get behind press exposé campaigns to the questions which haunt most decent Christian people. How can this happen? How can one ordained to serve, offend

in this way? Is there no cognisance of the terrible damage suffered by victims? And why the cover-ups?

Hand-wringing and finger-pointing solve nothing. These scandals afflict us because there is something fundamentally wrong at the heart of our governance. The voice of the people is demanding a say in the way the church is ruled, the way it chooses its leaders, especially its bishops, the way it disposes its resources, the way it deals with scandals when they occur – as occur they must, because the church is human.

The key dogmatic statement of Vatican II, the Constitution on the church *Lumen Gentium*, made two foundational statements. First, it defined the church as the People of God. Note – not Pope and clergy guiding a submissive laity, but a pilgrim people of believers, equal before God. Secondly, it affirmed that "the body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief" (*L.G.2*).

Forty years on, the Catholic church is still governed exclusively by a male, celibate clerical caste. But how many of the abuse scandals would have occurred if the Vatican II vision of co-responsibility had really happened, if women had had an equal voice in decision-making. Women would never have tolerated the cover-ups that have occurred.

This time surely, the whole institution,  
*M.H.*



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

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## The Cross

All through the year we fight against evil and suffering. We strive for happiness by our nature. Shalom means wholeness. When we face pain, the loss of friends, failure, we fight it with medicine, and every human ingenuity, as Jesus did. In his active life he fought sickness, death, hunger, squabbles and bitterness.

But a stage comes when we cannot beat it: the old person who feels the mark of a wasting disease in her body. Then we turn to the Cross. My friend who works in Zambia quoted an African to me: *The Gospel story of Jesus, with the parables and miracles, is beautiful. But the real meat of the Gospel is at the end, in the Passion. The Gospel is the Passion story with a long introduction. We can manage most of life on our own. But we cannot make sense of suffering or death without Jesus on the Cross.*

We too easily see Jesus as an icon, someone who has arrived and succeeded. But he was human like us, and tasted failure. Some of his own relations thought him mad. The people of Nazareth, his home town, turned against him. He wept over Jerusalem, the holy city, because its people would not listen.

He chose Peter as the chief of his followers, only to see Peter deny him. He chose Judas as treasurer of the apostles, only to see Judas betray him with a kiss. He chose James and John for the inner core of the apostles, only to find them squabbling over who would be the biggest boss in the Kingdom that they expected. Again and again he felt the Apostles had no notion of what he was saying: *Do you still not understand what I am telling you?*

He loved the rich young man who had lived a good life, and came asking to be a follower of Jesus. But when Jesus told him to give up his riches, and the man turned away, Jesus accepted that he was powerless

to force him. And in the end he faced total rejection by his people. He was keenly aware of human limitations, of our pride, sensuality, self-centredness. He knew what it felt like to fail and be betrayed by friends.

We say the Rosary round the events of Jesus' life. It is easy to imagine Mary reflecting on those mysteries, lingering on her memories of the angel Gabriel, of her visit to Elizabeth, of the birth in Bethlehem, of Jesus as a child. I suspect she would have found it hard to turn to the sorrowful mysteries, to the events of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Some memories are so painful, we try to avoid them. But if we have areas of our past that we cannot revisit, they become a sore point in our minds. We need to see where God was in them.

By sorrowful mysteries, I mean the sicknesses – of ourselves or our loved ones – the betrayals, the failures. We show so much of ourselves by the way we respond to failure. Some people cannot leave it alone. I think of a friend who failed an important exam, failed the repeat, took unsuccessful legal action against the examiners and gradually used up her finances and prospects in a vain effort to undo what had happened. She could not walk away from it.

Another friend had a row with her son's school, pulled the boy out of the school, but could not leave it alone. She was determined to prove the school wrong, and plagued the Principal, the Board, the Department, and every authority in sight to justify herself. Part of her imagined she could undo the past. She kept repeating: *It should not have happened.*

Quite right: it should not have happened. But we will not find God if we go burrowing in the past. He can only reach us in the present. There is evil in this world. It is not Utopia. God's work is never done under ideal conditions. Real success does not consist in getting it right all the time. Success is what

we do with our failures. When we look at Jesus on the Cross, we see the greatest, bitterest failure; yet the church calls it a happy failure, *felix culpa*. As it was a source of blessings, so can our own crosses be.

I remember one event that cast a cloud over six years of my own life. The darkness was there when I woke up in the morning, and it overshadowed my sleeping. There was not a day or an hour in those years that it did not weigh down my heart. It cleared five years ago – I remember the day and the hour. I can see now that God was there, teaching me. I learned from it in a way that I could never have learned otherwise. But at the time I could see no good in it.

Our Lord said: *Take up your cross*. It is not something you go looking for in faraway places. Sooner or later the Lord hands us a cross, and our job is to recognise it. For each of us there are events that made a difference. Our sorrowful mysteries will be different for each reader. Maybe it was a meeting with a friend, a lover or an enemy. Maybe it was a sickness, or a triumph. We are trying to see our life through the eyes of faith, with a confidence that God in his Providence can draw good out of the most awful and unwelcome happenings. It is not that we have all the answers, but we have enough to sustain our faith and love. *Faith is the fruit of love, that is, of darkness*. It is based on God's faithfulness.

This is true wisdom, to find a faith that can carry us through darkness, doubt, and suffering. They call it the mystical phase of religious development, and many of you readers are there. In the Sacred Heart of Jesus we see the possibility of a love that survives darkness and suffering.

Paul Andrews SJ

# A century of Iraqs

*Auckland counsellor Des Casey reviews American 'invasions' of the territory of other countries during the past century – and recalls what a US military commander said to him in 1972*

Last century the United States justified interference and invasions of other countries on the grounds of the Communist threat. This century it has latched onto another screen behind which to hide its insidious intentions. Replace threat of terrorism with oil interests abroad and need for an economic boost at home.

The 20th Century is littered with examples of history reflecting back on United States action and saying: "That was not a good idea". The list is extensive. Among them, assisted *coups d'état* in Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), Indonesia (1953), Chile (1973); direct invasions in the Dominican Republic (1916), Lebanon (1958), Bay of Pigs (1961), Cambodia (1970), Korea and Vietnam.

History has a way of presenting a very different perspective on motive. Key among United States' justifications through the 1950s into the '70s was Communist threat, domino theories and the need to protect a free world. In hindsight, 'free world' meant the maintenance of an economic and political control which was free or not free, according to whose interests were being served. Certainly, history does not argue pursuit of freedom when it now considers Chile, Vietnam or Nicaragua.

Washington set the trend early last century with a flourish, and seems set to continue the same road this new one. In 1912 United States marines landed in Nicaragua to suppress a rebellion following earlier United States support of an insurrection against the liberal reform of Jose Zelaya. Nicaragua quickly became a financial and political ward of United States' interests, so the marines stayed on until 1933 "to

protect American lives and property". Cesar Sandino emerged as leader of the peasants and workers, who considered the marines to be invaders rather than protectors. This resulted in America's first guerrilla war.

By 1933 the process of 'Nicaraguanisation' had been set up, protected by the Guardia Nacional, a military trained and equipped by the United States and headed by Anastasio Somoza, who held a job with the Rockefeller Foundation. Somoza began 42 years of oppressive military control. History sometimes refers to Nicaragua as 'America's First Vietnam'.

Might Iraq be the 'First Vietnam of the New Century'? How is it that this nation, so emphatic about its call for democracy, freedom and humanity, be accomplice to so many killing fields, so much displacement and degradation? How can a nation court corporate greed and freedom with such belligerence, and deviously draw Christianity's founder into its orbit of approval. The religious fanaticism that could produce a Twin Towers is no worse than the political and religious fanaticism of George Bush.

Not that Saddam Hussein is to be defended. History may well consider him in scathing terms, and clearly not in the same league as an Allende or a Sandino. But the step from loathing to invasion is a very big step indeed. What is so alarming is that 'national interest' has come to mean a rationale to invade anywhere at anytime.

In 1972, as visiting chaplain sitting with the head of the United States command in the officer's lounge at McMurdo Base, Antarctica, I was asked what I thought

of President Nixon's decision to withdraw troops from Vietnam. I said I thought it was a good idea. Whenever I hear of another United States planned invasion, that officer's response comes back to me as chilling today as the day he spoke it: "Well, we are a military economy, and if we're not fighting Vietnam we will have to fight someone else, or sell arms for others to have a war. Either that – or we go under."

I said I hoped New Zealand would not be next. He said that we were friends and thought it a good idea if we stayed that way. Recent events indicate that those who see invasion of Iraq as an option have not moved on from Nicaragua, Chile or Vietnam. Still we have not comprehended the horrendous human suffering and environmental destruction resulting from last century's killings, take-overs and invasions, many of them orchestrated by the self-proclaimed defender of a free world. Nor have we comprehended the evil intent that motivated them. ■

## *Mandela on Bush & Iraq*

It's a tragedy what is happening, what Bush is doing. All Bush wants is Iraqi oil... Bush is now undermining the United Nations...

"What I am condemning is that one power, with a President who has no foresight, who cannot think properly, is now wanting to plunge the world into a holocaust. I am happy that the people of the world – especially those of the United States of America – are standing up and opposing their own President... "I only hope that the people of the United States will make Bush aware that he has made a big mistake to want to surpass the global body, the United Nations, whose ideals are to bring peace and eradicate wars."

*(Speech on 29 January)*





Photo: Paul Sorrell

On Saturday 15 February millions marched for peace in 600 cities all over the world.

Shown here, flowers being laid as part of a memorial service for 408 people killed in the Al Aameriyah shelter in Baghdad during the Gulf War.

## American church leaders meet Blair

On Tuesday 18 February, the prime minister of Great Britain, Tony Blair, met with five American church leaders (Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist leaders, led by Jim Wallis, of Sojourners) about the decision to go to war with Iraq.

The meeting at 10 Downing Street lasted a full 50 minutes.

**Jim Wallis reports:** We shared with Tony Blair how American church bodies have never before in our history been more united in their opposition to a war. While American and British leaders point out how terrible the regime of Saddam Hussein is (and rightly so), the churches want also to remind the world (and our political leaders) how terrible war is.

In moving personal statements, the church leaders testified to our conviction that war is not the answer to the real threats posed by Saddam Hussein. The unintended and unpredictable consequences of war make it far too dangerous and destructive an option. We told the Prime Minister that the answer to a brutal, threatening dictator must not be the bombing of Baghdad's children.

The British people and their Prime Minister are in a position to influence the decision about a war with Iraq more than any other people or leader in the world. The issue of Iraq, with all its possible consequences, must be decided by the world community, in the Security Council of the United Nations, and not by the unilateral decision-making of the world's last remaining superpower.

The critical need for a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also figured prominently in our discussions. The Bishop of Jerusalem, Bishop Riah, spoke with great authority and clarity and told Prime Minister Blair: "The road to Baghdad leads through Jerusalem."

From Sojourners

## Not in Our Name: the Pledge of Resistance

We believe that as people living in the United States it is our responsibility to resist the injustices done by our government, in our names.

*Not in our name* will you wage endless war.

*There can be no more deaths, no more transfusions of blood for oil.*

*Not in our name* will you invade countries, bomb civilians, kill more children, letting history take its course over the graves of the nameless.

*Not in our name* will you erode the very freedoms you have claimed to fight for.

*Not by our hands* will we supply weapons and funding for the annihilation of families on foreign soil.

*Not by our mouths* will we let fear silence us.

*Not by our hearts* will we allow whole peoples or countries to be deemed evil.

*Not by our will – and not in our name.*

*We pledge resistance.*

*We pledge alliance* with those who have come under attack for voicing opposition to the war or for their religion or ethnicity.

*We pledge to make common cause* with the people of the world to bring about justice, freedom and peace.

*Another world is possible and we pledge to make it real.*

*(The Not in Our Name Pledge of Resistance was created collectively by artists and activists in April 2002. It has become the anti-war slogan used in demonstrations against War in Iraq across the U.S.)*

# The paedophile personality and priesthood

*Behind last year's scandals over the harm caused by clerical sex abusers is a question few have tried to answer: why might a paedophile find the priesthood attractive?*

*Desmond O'Donnell, Oblate priest and registered clinical psychologist, searches into the causes of deviance.*

*We have sought the response of three psychotherapists*

There is no psychological reason why a priest should become a paedophile, but there are reasons why a paedophile could want to become a priest – especially a priest of the old school.

But first, some facts to counter some myths. Priests are less likely to be paedophiles than lay people, and paedophilia has no connection with a celibate life chosen for transcendent motives. In the United States, where the casual reader of newspapers could have an impression that the Catholic priesthood is packed with paedophiles, in fact only 1.5 per cent of 46,000 priests have been accused or convicted of sex abuse of minors. This is a lower percentage than is found in the general population.

But why are there clerical sex abusers of minors at all? Why would a paedophile seek ordination?

Some suggest a priest's accessibility to children as a possible motive for a vocation. But the prospective paedophile would be unlikely to plan and endure six years in a seminary in order to gain this access. Teaching or any youth work would give access to children more quickly.

A paedophile is not just a promiscuous person. Indeed sexuality is not his central problem. His deviant behaviour is not the result of a strong sex drive, nor is it merely a matter of low impulse control, but goes much deeper. The paedophile is not a distinct and definable psychological type, but has personality traits which are well-known to psychologists.

The paedophile believes himself to be deeply inadequate. Feeling powerless over his own life, one of the ways he expresses his need to have control over others is through his behaviour. But unlike other inadequate people, the paedophile's experience of intrapersonal powerlessness is expressed in sexual domination of helpless children. There is still very limited scientific consensus about why some inadequate people choose to express their immature psychosexual development through sexual abuse of minors. But we know it is about power, which can be exercised even by putting child pornography on the internet.

This is why some paedophiles are consciously or unconsciously attracted to priesthood. Traditionally, priesthood gives a sense of control, a feeling of power which does not have to be earned. Of course, since the introduction of parish councils and finance committees, priests have much less formal power, and must share both their work and their responsibility.



These developments, which have been welcomed by most priests, are ignored by the inadequate young man with paedophile tendencies who will continue to see priesthood as a source of power. Once ordained he will experience great discomfort with parish councils and with priestly pastoral co-operation. He may also express his insecure need for power in an obsessive defence of orthodoxy and in the sexual abuse of children.

Because he feels so inadequate, the insecure person also has an intense need to prove himself to others and to himself. He has to be seen as successful. Putting on a black suit and clerical collar can make an inadequate person feel that he has achieved something without being tested beyond the keeping of rules and passing of examinations. For the inadequate person, in other words, priesthood will be seen as a destination reached rather than a journey begun.

Priesthood should be a life of service, but a paedophile will see it in terms of success. A bishop or religious superior would be well advised, therefore, to ask what an applicant has already done in selfless service rather than to ask what he promises to do in the future. If, prior to his application for entry to the seminary, a man has no record of apostolic or other service, he is less likely to travel the extra mile after his ordination. A paedophile is more likely to opt for maintenance rather than for mission.

In pursuit of inauthentic success, a paedophile can be ruthless in the use of any power he can muster. He can manipulate, bribe, threaten, seduce or simply cheat others on his way to pseudo-self-assertion. He will use these mechanisms of defence while sexually abusing a child and in his day-to-day interaction with adults. The more intelligent he is, the more devious will be his defences.

This ruthlessness functions best in a way of life where one cannot easily be challenged, and in most countries religious castes offer precisely this

protection for the inadequate potential paedophile, who can accept accountability only on the surface. Priests have traditionally enjoyed great trust from their bishops, superiors and people; they have been left to live a prayerful life, to prepare their homilies well, to deliver them with sincerity, to listen to their people and to visit them generously. As long as they performed their duties, priests have not traditionally had to answer to parishioners or even to bishops. Until recently, they have seldom been called to account. Canon law still makes it very difficult for a bishop or religious superior to laicise even a proven paedophile.

### *the paedophile believes himself to be deeply inadequate*

If a young man has had a sexually abusive father and a parish priest who is concerned primarily with his own comfort, his 'vocation' would be motivated by these role models. The 'good Catholic family' package is, therefore, a poor guarantee. Many years ago in another country I was part of a team helping a family of four children whose father had sexually abused them regularly. He was a model Mass-goer and was prominent in parish activities. The equally devoted mother refused to believe her children when they complained about their father.

The fact that a seminary applicant comes from 'a good Catholic family' is in itself a very inadequate reason to accept him for priestly training. It certainly is not a substitute for an in-depth assessment by a professional diagnostician.

Like fears, paedophiles grow best in dark corners. A paedophile hates to be revealed, not because he might be seen or caught but because in that case he would have to give up his self-affirming behaviour. Offending fathers always threaten or bribe their victims to stop them telling their mother; mothers often fail to believe a child who speaks out about a father's damaging behaviour. In the past, entry into priesthood was entry into a misty

zone in which one could be fairly confident that hints of wrong behaviour or actual accusations – especially by a child – would not be believed. Whisperings there might be, but accusations were difficult to pursue or to prove. A paedophile could feel that he might be safe in what seemed to him to be a fairly impenetrable clerical capsule.

Because of their deep sense of inadequacy, paedophiles have very low ego-strength. Their capacity to endure stress is very limited and their resilience under pressure is low. Priesthood conscientiously lived is a stressful lifestyle: pressure of work depends on the priest's conscientious choice, and as anyone who has given stress management courses to clergy knows, many priests are, in fact, *over*-conscientious. But to the outsider, priesthood as traditionally exercised can appear to be a soft lifestyle with minimal stress. Weekends apart, a priest's schedule is defined by his concern for his people; there is an assured salary even if little work is done; even promotion is automatically on the horizon, if one is reasonably careful.

A time-and-motion study of how priests spend their week would show that many priests are vastly unrewarded for their long hours and beyond-duty work; it would also show that some are over-rewarded and highly irresponsible in their use of time. This latter image attracts men who will seek self-oriented success by using others rather than by selfless apostolic concern for them. The potential paedophile could therefore seek priesthood as a comfortable escape from pressure on his inadequate personality, as a place to nurture his own inadequacies or to assuage them by child abuse.

His reasons for choosing celibacy are also skewed. The paedophile has often been himself abused and as a result has a significantly confused psychosexual experience. The journey to adult intimacy in marriage would not be attractive to the paedophile; a good marriage relationship would certainly not be sustainable either –

▷▷

▷▷

which is one reason why so much child abuse occurs within families. For the paedophile, immature egocentric sexual responses with children – directly or on the internet – will always be attractive. These become moments of felt power to an inadequate personality, and move the paedophile away from the challenge of adult intimacy towards the immaturity of permanent egocentrism.

The profound shock most people feel at the harm done by paedophiles is in profound contrast to the lack of guilt which paedophiles themselves feel. A paedophile has what is known as a “sociopathic personality”. The sociopath experiences little or no guilt when he acts irresponsibly, even if he knows that what

he is doing is evil. Only when caught or convicted does he show regret – but this is often for show. A man who lacks an adult conscience, as a sociopath does,

*the paedophile  
experiences little guilt  
when he acts irresponsibly  
even if he knows what he  
is doing is evil*

hides behind priestly status. Consistent irresponsibility in failing to do one’s duty or in doing evil is a form of sociopathy. The paedophile does not experience the healthy guilt that helps most of us to try harder next time.

*Can paedophile personalities be  
Reprinted with permission The Tablet, London*

diagnosed or paedophile activities psychologically predicted? There is no diagnostic instrument that can discover this illness directly, but there are tests and techniques which in the hands of an experienced psychologist can predict the likelihood of child abuse.

If a psychological report notes personal inadequacy, excessive egocentrism, defective interpersonal ability, low energy for service and a lack of psychosexual integration, a bishop or religious superior should be on the alert. But an effective selection system will never be enough on its own to end clerical sex abuse. For that, we also need a renewed priesthood of service, properly lived out. ■

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### THE TABLET

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## Responses

I see the essence of paedophilia as being a sexually mature person interfering with a sexually immature person for the gratification of the perpetrator. Where the victim is adolescent I think the phenomenon and motivation is different, and I would term it ephebophilia.

Going on the SAVI Report (2002: Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland), victims of paedophile priests are male/female in equal numbers. I do not see a link between paedophilia and homosexuality, although there clearly is such a link with ephebophilia where the victim is a male. Paedophilia is an abuse of power – like rape to that extent – though it is normally by seduction and gentle rather than violent. I have seen some victims contemplating suicide.

On Irish figures given in the SAVI report, paedophilia by ministers of religion (which includes Catholic and all other clergy - it’s an ecumenical problem), constitutes less than two percent of all paedophilia. Over 98 percent of it is by non-celibates. Significantly more victims have been abused by their own fathers than by clergy; and clearly in those cases the

betrayal of sacred trust is even greater than with priests.

It is not a ‘churchy’ problem, though the media in Ireland latch on to that aspect. Some anger is vented on bishops for not stopping the 1.6 percent perpetrated by clergymen. On occasion, the bishops deserve it. In fairness, the same concern should attach to those who are aware of sexual abuse by other groups, but fail to raise their voice: groups such as fathers of families, stepfathers, big brothers, uncles, baby-sitters. The SAVI Report details the likelihood of these and other categories. All of them form higher-risk categories than clergy. In many cases, as any worker with children knows, somebody in the family is aware of the abuse, but for various, sometimes complex reasons, fails to stop it.

If our focus is on protecting children rather than venting anger, there is a large area of concern here. Why do victims go for the church rather than their own fathers or neighbours? Is it because they see the church as more likely to pay compensation than their fathers, uncles, baby-sitters or neighbours would?



**P**aedophilia is categorised under Sexual and Gender Disorders. It is described as “sexual activity with a pre-pubescent child (generally 13 years or younger)”. It is generally reported more frequently with girls in the 8-10 age group than with boys, who tend to be preferred when slightly older. Paedophiles may be attracted to either boys or girls or both sexes, and this proclivity does not necessarily rule out a capacity for sexual relationships with adults (incest is a subtype of the disorder).

Paedophilic sexual acts range from minimal touching and looking to anal or vaginal intercourse. The sexual activity is often justified as being “educational”, “giving pleasure” or in response to the child’s “seductiveness”.

The disorder usually begins in adolescence, but also less frequently in middle age. It is regarded clinically as a chronic condition, especially for those preferring males and is increased by stress. Sexual orientation is not linked statistically to this disorder.

Paedophiles do not generally approach a therapist for help. My experience of this disorder is through work with victims rather than offenders, and indeed one of their most frequent complaints is that their lives have been wrecked whilst the paedophile

continues to be a successful and respected member of society. This evokes a great sense of injustice and outrage.

When clergy are involved, the subsequent loss of the previously idealised view of the priesthood and the church is, I think, akin to the impact of incest. I refer here to the sense of having been betrayed by the very adults who are responsible for the safety and protection of the child. This is a shattering blow to the child’s basic trust and faith in themselves and God. A previously reliable world of expectable behaviour towards oneself is lost.

Anger is a common response to loss and the insistence on retribution can be understood as an expression of the depth of distress (including guilt) which victims may feel increasingly over many years, in secret and alone. Suicidal or homicidal thinking is not uncommon and is justified as a way of ending the emotional pain (the former) or protecting other potential victims (the latter).

The Catholic church, with its insistence on clerical celibacy, has provoked widespread guilt and distress amongst its lay members by the inflexibility of its pronouncements on sexual matters. It should not, therefore, be surprised at the intensity of media interest and the derogatory response of the secular world to recent events.

**M**y mother was down-to-earth, and wise. “Don’t be too trusting with priests,” she advised me when I was a young woman. “They’re no better than anyone else.” Catholic people have been enormously trusting of their priests, believing in their utter secrecy in the confessional, their power to make Christ present in the Eucharist, to judge and forgive sin, to handle the most sacred moment of life – birth, marriage, death.

The thought of this power is staggering. Staggering too has been the impact of learning that some priests have sexually abused children. It is hard to take in, and there is still a great amount of denial around. Many parts of the church have found it easier to defend the clergy and priesthood than to take in fully the damage done to a child by a person who was invested with such trust, personally, professionally and spiritually. When a criminal invades someone’s home, this is felt to be a violation of a space that we want to believe is our own, safe and inviolable. It evokes greater anger and is punished as a worse crime than other forms of robbery and attack.

Sexual abuse invades not just a person’s body, but their inner being, the

sacredness and inviolability of a person. As abuse within the family invades the home of foundational love and trust, abuse within the church invades the home of the sacred, the spirit and faith. In both cases the damage is painful, confusing, tormenting.

A recent New Zealand study on the causes of youth suicide showed statistically that a young person who has been sexually abused is more likely to take their own life. Those of us who work with the survivors of such abuse understand this, as well as the enormous courage it takes to face and overcome the damage.

Desmond O’Donnell does us a service by helping us to think about why paedophiles might be drawn to priesthood. A prestigious role may attract those who wish to hide their inner self. Celibacy may attract those who wish to avoid their sexuality. Power is very likely to draw those who wish to deny their sense of shameful inadequacy.

On a wider scale the church’s failure to embrace sexuality as truly a part of the holy, and a widespread denial and fear of both homosexuality and female

sexuality have fed a broader inability to deal healthily with sexual realities. There are some who still equate homosexuality with paedophilia, a dangerous and untrue assumption that deepens prejudice and concealment. It is interesting to speculate whether the priesthood’s image of power would be affected, were women and married persons to be priests.

A North American professional working with groups in New Zealand recently told me that when she asked a group how many people had an alcoholic in their family, she was told by her New Zealand co-leader: “That’s a very risky thing to do in New Zealand. Here we are not used to admitting that in public as you do in your country.”

When we can acknowledge painful, damaging realities in our lives, we have made a major step towards healing ourselves of their impact. When the church community can acknowledge that paedophiles exist and act, even within their church, we will have made it easier to avoid further damage and for those who are hurt to seek and receive help. ■

# The resignation of Cardinal Law

The American bishops have always had a significant influence on US governments. But, in November, when they spoke out against President Bush's policy on Iraq, few listened. The scandal of clerical sexual abuse had destroyed their credibility and, within a month, the most powerful of them would be forced to resign.

Cardinal Bernard Law headed the nation's wealthiest and most prominent diocese, Boston. He is the first and the most highly ranked bishop forced to resign, not because he was personally involved in abuse, but because of his mishandling of the problem in his Archdiocese. Like many other bishops, ignoring advice he moved abusive priests from parish to parish and covered up for them. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were secretly paid to victims of abuse, often as 'hush money'.

The exposure of the scandals has shaken the church in America to its foundations. The bishops have lost the trust of priests and laity alike. What is wrong? What sort of culture and practice among so many of the hierarchy allows the sinful and criminal behaviour of some of its clergy to be covered up and go unpunished? Why do the fierce words of Jesus about those who harm children appear to have fallen on deaf ears?

*the system for appointing bishops is kept secretive by Rome*

This right of the local church was gradually whittled away, until today it has been taken over by the Roman Congregations. Now laity and clergy in the US are demanding a say. They want bishops who will be as loyal to their people as they are to the Vatican. They are suspicious that the present unknown criteria for naming bishops eliminates the very priests best qualified to be leaders.

Catholics are demanding more openness on how bishops are appointed and how they are answerable to their people. At present there is no system of accountability. Pleas for Cardinal Law and others to take action were brushed aside and, eventually, it was only through exposure by the secular press that they were forced into accountability. They then blamed the media!

The system for appointing bishops is deliberately kept secretive by Rome. To take a local example: recently people in the Dunedin diocese were told that their suggestions about the appointment of a new bishop would be welcomed. "Send your thoughts to the Nuncio about the qualities you would like in the new man", we were told, "but don't specify individual names". Now, most thinking Catholics would agree on the spiritual, intellectual and personal qualities required in their bishop. Surely the value in any suggestion is to identify priests who, we believe, have these qualities and would appear to be good 'bishop material'. And... to name those we think are not suitable. Otherwise, isn't the whole exercise pointless?

In New Zealand, compared with many parts of the world, our present bishops, thankfully, are on a 'good wavelength' with the clergy and their parishioners. But, think of the people of Boston who will be denied any say in Cardinal Law's replacement. They want a say. They have seen the 'trickle down' Vatican-to-laity model of the church fail. Unbending loyalty to Rome and its teachings was the standard by which Law governed for 18 years. He could deal more severely with a priest who acknowledged doubts about the Vatican's teaching on birth control, than with a predatory priest; he could worry more about such a priest being 'found out' than about the enormous harm that man had inflicted on a young girl or boy.

This present crisis is not about doctrine or faith – it's about human administration of the Institution, which has put its own image ahead of concern for innocent victims. In the first millennium of Christianity, the laity and clergy of a diocese elected their bishop.

*this crisis is about human administration, not doctrine or faith*

There are no indications that the Curia has learned anything from the scandals. They have blamed the media, gays and theologians – anything to protect their own male clerical caste. They give the impression of operating in a culture and a tradition that automatically places the reputation of the church above the pain of the victims. Bernard Law remains a Cardinal and still has strong influence in the church by being on several Vatican congregations.

Across the United States the current crisis is bringing about a real change in the traditional relationships between laity and their parish priests and bishops. The spirit of automatic deference and unquestioning obedience is disappearing. People know that if they had been made aware of the scandal at the beginning, their clergy would never have succeeded in scarring so many young lives.

As the full extent of clerical abuse is exposed in other countries, Catholics, motivated by love for their Church, will demand that those 'at the top' agree to an open debate about related questions such as the role of the laity, the selection and training of clergy, the wisdom of mandatory celibacy for diocesan priests and the place of women in ministry.

Is it too optimistic to hope that commentators of the future may look back on this crisis at the dawn of the third millennium as a turning point in the modern Catholic church? ■

*Jim Neilan*

## One flickering candle

For me, and I suspect for many, the greatest obstacle to faith has not been secularism or science but suffering. Abstract arguments can be bandied about, but suffering – one's own toothache or a spouse's cancer – cannot so easily be fended off. Add to suffering, which seems to be unevenly dispensed by a crazy impersonal lottery, the fact of evil, not so much suffered as inflicted, and you have an Everest-sized mountain to be scaled before you can arrive at the summit of faith.

The problems of suffering and evil are ambiguous. They cannot be solved by argument or explanation, but only by an act of choice – and a continuous one at that. This ambiguity can be expressed in various ways. Which is fundamental – good or evil? Are they delicately poised in even balance? (Zoroastrianism) Or is evil only the dark underside of goodness, the shadow under the lamp? Is God good or evil – or indifferent? These are more fundamental questions than *Does God exist?*

Heinz Zahrnt has said, "The question of God is not a question of some remote infinite being but of the possibility of hope". Hope has always seemed to me like some invisible oxygen of the soul, without which we cannot breathe and function. When we ask the question of God we are exploring vital, not peripheral, areas and the question must always be not only *Is there a God?*, but *What kind of God?*

I have a good deal of respect for those who after an agony of questioning, answer "No", and proceed to live courageously and positively, choosing and creating their own values as they go. Sartre and Bertrand Russell are cases in point. I have little respect for those who sit comfortably in an armchair and say "Prove to me that God exists" – and when we fail, as fail we must, they reply, "There you are; I can remain uncommitted with a clear conscience. I choose the role of spectator munching chocolate in the stands, while others battle for their lives in the arena."

The dilemma of faith or no faith is not equally acute for all. Why should a soulless, mechanistic universe be expected to take cognisance of a shattered hope or a broken heart? But it is otherwise for anyone who stands within the Christian tradition.

Put bluntly, how can we believe in a loving heavenly Father in a world like this? The question may be urgently posed by some crushing personal burden – pain, illness, bereavement, the spite of one's enemies, the neglect of one's friends, sheer bad luck in one's temporal affairs, the prospect of death for oneself and those one loves; how can we square these things with a God of love?

Others can sustain personal burdens without grievance, can even find gleams of gold in the shattered quartz, as they discover new strength, new virtues, new resources. They are likely to find it harder to accept what happens to others. On the grand scale, it may be Hitler's holocaust or African famine that

provides the chief obstacle to faith; it may be the latest report of a raped old lady, or a battered child. It may be the random cruelty of arthritis, cot death or Huntingdon's Chorea. Even the most devout are not likely to get far without sometimes being cross with God – witness the psalmist whose tirades, challenges and pleas crop up among the passages of assurance and faith like briars among the orchids.

Outrage scepticism and doubt would win hands down, if it were not for another factor – the balancing phenomena of goodness, decency, dependability, quiet happiness, not always hitting the headlines, but existing sufficiently to maintain the fabric of a world still, on balance, worth living in. Those who depict the world in dark, unrelieved colours have some explaining to do on the other side. Hitler is balanced by Bonhoeffer; Torquemada by St Francis; Idi Amin by Kaunda and Desmond Tutu; Ilse Koch by Mother Theresa. The question is still open, and susceptible to resolution only by some leap of faith.

Some forms of religion, even some claiming to be Christian, try to evade the issue, dwelling on 'the power of positive thinking', assuring us that bliss on the other side will outweigh suffering in this. No minister who is also a pastor can adopt such glib subterfuges. He has to work too close to the cliff-face of life as it is, and not as we would like it to be, to take refuge in such Pollyanna-isms. Whether he likes it or not, the Christian will not be able to escape very far from the Cross with all that symbolises.

Perhaps this strange anomaly explains the survival of the church. At its beginnings, many were put off by the scandal of the Cross, and "walked no more with Him". Who would want to worship at the shrine of a hanged man? Yet by clinging to the ugly story of the Crucifixion – even when balanced by the Resurrection – the church ensured that it would never become irrelevant so long as human beings bleed and die.

We have no easy answers to suffering and evil. We have one flickering candle to guide us through our darkness. If "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself", then God himself is somehow involved, not as a beekeeper surveys his swarming hive, but as a father or mother brood over their family; not a spectator but in some deep sense, a participant.

The longer I live, the less I am prepared to listen to the soft options and easy answers of those ersatz religions and philosophies which gloss over or trivialise suffering and evil. Christians have a Saviour. We meet under a Cross. *"Surely he hath borne our sins and carried our sorrows."*

Selwyn Dawson

*(The first of three unpublished articles by the late, celebrated Methodist pastor, Selwyn Dawson, given to Tui Motu by his widow, Edith)*





*Peter Murnane OP assembles a formidable case based on Scripture, biological science and the common good against the release of GM organisms.*

*Is Helen Clark listening?*

## Figs from Thistles? Genetic modification and the gospel

**H**ow will genetically modified (GM) organisms be released into the environment of Aotearoa New Zealand? This world-changing question faces every adult in this country. In October, the government that represents us may begin permitting such release on our behalf. Can we accept what they decide?

Some time back we humans made the enormous assumption that it is acceptable to change the genetics of organisms, forming something like new species. This may seem at first sight a reasonable assumption, because our Scriptures – and traditions deriving from them – declare that all creation, including our inventive powers, is made by God and therefore good. **God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.** (Gen 1:31)

But the same Scriptures charge us to be responsible stewards of our small, vulnerable planet. Some GM experiments – eg when bacteria are mutated to produce insulin – have provided significant benefits to the health of many. Just because a procedure ‘succeeds’, however, does not make it unquestionably ‘good’, morally or ecologically. Can we accept experiments that harm human subjects, no matter how much they benefit the world at large?

To breed and release GM organisms into the environment is vastly different from merely forming them in the laboratory. This applies to all GM foods and even outdoor medical experiments involving plants and animals. Many GM organisms have been released already. Nearly 100 GM food crops are available. A

large part of the world’s soya beans is now GM. But it is not too late to say “no” to their wider spread. If we do not, genetic modifications will eventually interpenetrate the biosphere without limit. We have to ask ourselves: “Are we creating uncontrollable monsters?”

Jesus often used ridiculous examples to awaken us to the absurdity of some of the ways we act. If we think we cannot stop doing wrong with our hand or eye, he suggested, then we should cut it off or pluck it out. (Mark 9: 43-47) On the written page, we miss the belly-laughs that must have echoed around the hills where Jesus spoke.

Genetic modification calls to mind one of his absurd but penetrating questions: **Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?** (Matt 7:16) It is absurd



to think that, physically, the good can come from the bad. But when we consider the cross-species alterations already being experimented with, and the horrendous implications of possible effects as yet unimagined, Jesus' proverb echoes uncomfortably.

Already genes are being grafted from one species, mammals for example, into others widely separated by nature, like fish. It is thought worthwhile to graft human and other mammal growth-genes into salmon to make them grow bigger; or a bacterium's gene into tomatoes to keep them fresh longer. The possible permutations are endless, even among food species. They will excite or terrify us, depending perhaps on the extent of our vision.

These monstrous creatures could wreak havoc with the ecosystem when they are released or – as they inevitably will – escape into the wild. A bigger salmon may 'breed out' natural salmon, and even conquer other fish species. Genes from genetically modified crops can spread from plants into other creatures, even – as recent research shows – affecting people.

The questions associated with this are so enormous that we need urgently to measure them against our deepest values derived from the gospel. How do the motives of those who wish to release genetic engineering into the environment measure up to these values? For instance, the values of **wisdom** and its opposite, **folly**; **greed** as opposed to **the common good**; **life** versus **death**; **truth** versus **deceit**?

### Wisdom or folly?

In 1999, 457 scientists from 56 countries called on all world governments and international forums to ask them to delay all environmental releases of genetically modified organisms on the basis of the precautionary principle. These scientists gave as their first reason for delay, that "genetically modified organisms damage bio-diversity, food safety, human and animal health". If we put at serious risk the only network

supporting our life – and not just by one risk, but by millions of unforeseen risky permutations that will go on multiplying – then we can hardly be called "wise".

Releasing GM foods into the countryside is also unwise for many particular reasons. They will inevitably cross-breed with other species. They already have! It is ludicrous to think the prescribed 50 metre 'boundary' will contain them. English oil seed crops have cross-pollinated at 200 m beyond! Are bees and birds going to obey bureaucratic regulations? Crops modified to produce their own pest-icides or resist herbicides are already cross-breeding with weeds, and there are fears of the resistant 'super weeds' that are appearing.

### Greed or the Common Good?

**What will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?** (Mark 8:36) Another reason the scientists gave was that genetically modified organisms prevent the shift to sustainable agriculture, which is essential if the world is to have food security and health.

This touches on the vast question of how destructive are current agricultural practices. For the sake of bigger profits, farms are being replaced by huge monocultures with thousands of acres of the one crop or species. These methods rapidly destroy soil and the water-table. They lessen the quality of the mass-produced food. They waste energy, and deprive of their livelihood those millions of people who for centuries had been growing their own food.

Another objection by those 457 scientists is that GM organisms "intensify corporate monopoly, so worsening inequality in the world". GM research robs small farmers of power, handing it to a small élite of biotech company executives. These, then, make decisions affecting millions of farmers, especially in poorer countries. Most GM research is not for the common good of the people of the earth, but for entrepreneurs' profit.

An example is cassava, a staple food for at least 300 million Africans. No biotechnology company ever bothered trying to improve its crop yield until cassava was found to be useful for the expanding pig industry in the US. Then four companies began research!

There is increasing public protest against transgenic crops in Europe and Australia, but the US government is using political muscle to save the financial interests of its biotechnology companies. It recently threatened New Zealand with withdrawal of bilateral trade agreements if we dared to insist on approving each genetically-engineered crop case by case.

### Truth or deceit?

**...the truth will make you free.** (Jn 8:32) Even more than in war, truth is quickly a casualty when commercial groups defend their interests. The makers of profitable chemicals always claim they are safe: think of DDT, Agent Orange, fluorocarbons, thalidomide and the deadly PCBs.

The world's commonest herbicide Roundup is advertised as a 'safe' partner to GM crops. Yet its active agent, glyphosate, is a poison dangerous to human health. It has been statistically linked to significant increased risk of developing non-Hodgkins lymphoma, birth defects and nerve-growth (attention deficit) disorders. In mice it can severely reduce production of hormones, testosterone and sperm and interfere with brain development. It affects immune system function and may cause loss or gain of weight. When this poison is banned, like other poisons mentioned above, what will we do with the widespread crops genetically modified to depend on it?

Transnational companies and even government agencies swear that GM organisms are 'safe', and even refuse to demand that they be labelled. Yet GM potato, fed to rats, has caused damage to internal organs and the immune system, and altered their growth. On the basis of such research, some suggest thaall >>

food having GM soya bean derivatives should be considered harmful to health.

Despite frequent, dishonest claims, GM is not at all like natural cross-breeding. It introduces alien genes from one species to another completely different species interfering deeply with their natural structure.

## Life or death?

The gospels are about life. **I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.** (Jn 10:10)

In many respects Genetic Modification is an attack on life. For instance, promoters claim that GM crops that resist Roundup will allow farmers to apply poisons "more effectively", wiping out all weeds at one hit. They fail to notice – or admit – that this kills the valuable diversity of plant species that feed birds such as the skylark, especially in winter. And not only skylarks. Herbicide poisons also kill beneficial mites and spiders which themselves destroy insect 'pests'. If we poison these

helpful mites en masse, then much more pesticide will be needed to kill the 'pests' they currently control.

GM experiments so far released have already damaged the complex web of life. Crops 'fitted' with their own insecticide have caused insects to become resistant to them. Pollen from these crops kill the caterpillars of the monarch butterfly.

Are they good, even, for human life? The new, invasive genetic structures result in unpredictable new proteins and enzymes within our complex body-processes. The possible combinations are so numerous that we cannot even guess what allergies or carcinogens may result. Even our own, human genetic structure may be affected, for genes from GM crops have been observed to spread into other species' genetic structure.

Are GM crops really an improvement on nature? There are serious doubts. Despite a few success stories, their crop-yields have generally not been that

great. A transgenic tomato failed badly in the USA in 1994, because customers did not want it. GM cotton was not immune to boll weevil, and growers in 1996 suffered huge losses.

This writer believes that the release of GM organisms, judged against gospel values, presents a grave and irreversible threat to the common good. Those pushing us to accept GM foods are doing so basically for their own profit. Many thoughtful people worldwide are strongly and increasingly resisting such release.

Greed and deceit in such matters are an affront to the deepest life-values in the gospel. Catholic theology teaches that we have the right – and even the duty – actively to oppose such threats. The conscience of many is telling them that if other means fail, it will be justifiable to destroy GM crops to prevent much greater, irreversible harm to the common good. ■

*Fr Peter Murnane is Catholic chaplain at Auckland university. He has a special interest in environmental concerns. The Labour Coalition government is due to lift the ban on GM material being released outside the laboratory in October 2003*

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# Good neighbours. . .

Ron Sharp

**T**ui Motu's article (Feb 2003) on the Nicholson family's pioneering change from conventional to organic farming in Gore was great reading. It brought to mind our own journey in the 'top of the South'. In 1987 my wife Edith and I decided to engage in a mutually beneficial relationship with our small holding of 7000 sq.m, north of Motueka.

Within a year our sign *Organically Grown Vegetables* was erected, and we soon began to feel the reaction: 'who do these upstarts think they are, coming here with their smart ideas?' – from the established orchardists and growers. We had decided we would simply go ahead and do things our way without 'knocking' the predominant conventional methods. There would be no shoving it down others' throats. We resolved to be friendly to all.

Thus we came to an amicable agreement with the orchardist whose apples flanked one side of our property. We talked to each other, and agreed to understand each other's process of earning our family incomes. He would always tell us when he was about to spray and wait until the usual sea breeze rose up after 11 am. This meant that the drift would be away from us. We also, with his permission, replaced his willow shelter belt with a plantation of wider, denser, evergreen tree lucerne.

In our transitional years I canvassed local growers for any waste products for our compost. Each moon month I collected waste and engaged in friendly exchange of ideas. It was interesting at a one-to-one level to meet with open-minded neighbours. However, I soon discovered how skin-deep attitudes could be. Whenever I encountered two or more together the macho would come out: "And how are all these b....y organic growers?" Furtive whispers and loony glances were exchanged in groups. Our signage 'disappeared' five times in those early years. We found one of our signs in a

drain 300 m down the road. We simply replaced them each time without complaining to the authorities.

Things came to a head at the local primary school, where our children were pupils. Some new parents objected to spray drifting across the school grounds. They demanded that their children be allowed to phone home to get picked up if they heard sprayers during school hours. There were some overcrowded meetings of the school Board of Trustees with both sides getting very heated. There was a scramble and fierce lobbying for places on the Board.

Partisans on both sides were really not listening to each other. There were the fundamentalists, the prophets, the peacemakers and those who simply couldn't understand what all the fuss was about. A wise chairperson negotiated a compromise by getting the neighbouring orchardist to spray areas adjacent to the school grounds before or after school hours.

That was between 1991 and 1994 when the 'market forces' philosophy was at its height, and alternative life-stylers were vulnerable and deserving of no support or place in society. If you couldn't make it economically – then, too bad! The small orchardist next door was forced by the bank to sell his family property. He had to accept a poor offer from a big grower, who swallowed up what were once four orchards in our neighbourhood.

The climate has changed. It has taken more than a decade. The manager next door recently stopped by to have a chat. He remarked to me that work had been taken out of horticulture. "We sit on tractors all day. We have lost touch with the earth." Slowly, 'organically grown' is becoming one of the choices available to the consumers. People are becoming good neighbours even in their deepest convictions.

## Through The Whirlwind

Disability, Spirituality and Faith Conference  
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*The journey of disability and spirituality is one that is not often heard. This conference is an exciting forum where the many facets of that journey can be made known.*

**Queries to the co-ordinator:**

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banners

# Praising God through

poetry

music & timbrel

drama

clowning



Prayer Dance by Mary Jones,  
founder of CDFA

Through a friend in the Papakura Presbyterian community Ana ter Huurne, a parishioner of St Mary's Catholic parish, heard about a conference last year of the *Christian Dance Fellowship of Australia* (CDFA), in Perth, WA. Ana had for some time been interested in the use of mime and movement in liturgy and Bible teaching, so she resolved to go.

CDFA was founded 20 years ago by Mary Jones (pictured left) with the aim of using the creative arts, especially movement, to celebrate Christian faith. It is an interdenominational movement and is now international. The conference took place over a week at Penrose College, south of Perth city, and was attended by 150 people. Ana was the only New Zealander.



As well as formal lectures there was a wide range of options to choose from: workshops on mime, mask, timbrel, Israeli dance, funk and stomp, banners, choreo-graphy, classical technique. There were morning worship sessions and concerts by outside groups.

Ana took as a main elective "Art, Poetry and Dance" given by American Cynthia Newland. Her group explored poetry and movement as inspired by landscape paintings. They first worked individually, then together, putting their ideas of movement and verse to music. The creativity of each group was on show for all to enjoy on the final night of the conference.



(above) Israeli Dance  
following an Old  
Testament reading

(left) Another banner  
dance by *The Living  
Word*





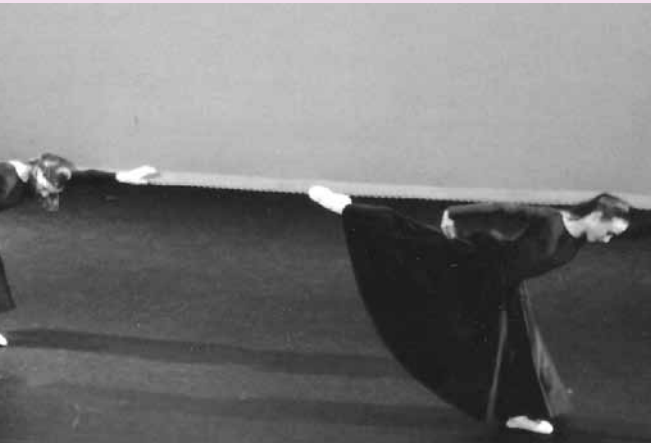
# gh the creative Arts

song

mime and movement

collage

liturgical dance



(left) Performance at the Christian Dance Conference in Perth by a Western Australian dance troupe



(right) The Living Word this group often performs in prisons. Note the use of timbrel and banner

A highlight for me,” says Ana, “was a worship service in which a young woman read from *Isaiah 53* the passage starting ‘.. a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief’ (53, 3-12). She gave a testimony of her own life, some circumstances of which had been tragic. She then proceeded to dance her story with two other dancers. She wore black and the music and movements were desperate... this climaxed in a cry, which to me was like the cry of Christ from the Cross.

“Then the music changed as the gentleness of Christ’s love and light touched her. She was then swathed in a white banner with red stains as she came to the foot of the Cross.

“Many people were deeply touched by this dance. I felt it united us as Christians in our love.”

Ana reflected, as a Catholic, how the Mass would lend itself to such use of movement, colour, symbolism and sign language: the use of banners in procession; music and timbrel; liturgical dance at the Offertory or after Communion. It is a way of enabling people to contribute to worship together.

Returning home, Ana wanted to share what she had learned and experienced. She was able to do this at her home parish of St Mary’s – at the Christmas Vigil Mass. Also, at an ecumenical Advent service at St Andrew’s Anglican church, she organised a simple, two minute dance involving dancers from each church. (see below)



A banner presented at the Conference representing one of the Australian States



# *In the footsteps of Sir Ed*

*“How do you fancy going to Nepal”, Dr John Heydon was asked one day, and a few weeks’ later he and his family were living and working at 13,000 feet*

In 1979 John and Sue Heydon left their native England to work in Papua New Guinea. John is a doctor in general practice with an interest in occupational health. While they were there they came to New Zealand on holiday, and decided to settle. One day a medical colleague in Dunedin told John that the Himalayan Trust, founded by Sir Edmund Hillary, was advertising for a doctor for the clinic at Kunde. Usually a New Zealander and a Canadian were appointed alternately for a two year stint, and it was the ‘Kiwi’ turn. John went home and said to Sue: “How do you fancy going to Nepal?”

It seemed like a good time for them to launch on another adventure because their children were at an age when they too would benefit from the experience without detriment to their education. They were ‘portable’, says John! Tropical medicine is his love – ‘tropical’ in the sense of medicine in developing countries. Nepal has an immense topographical range from genuinely tropical at a few hundred metres above sea level to where the clinic is at nearly



13,000 feet – and of course up to the top of Everest! The health issues in Nepal are those of poor countries everywhere. TB for instance will be found there, just as it will inflict tramps sleeping under a viaduct in London.

John’s love has always been to do medicine in remote places even in New Zealand. The Heydons worked in Kaeo in Northland where there is a high Maori population and where you are well removed from the support systems of a city. So Nepal seemed to be just the place for them. In fact the Heydons went to Nepal as volunteers for the Himalayan Trust, which covers health, forestry, education as well as liaison with the considerable numbers of tourists.

So while John was the local doctor, Sue wore the other hats. The school was located in another village 20 minutes’ walk away. When Sir Ed started the Trust 40 years ago he asked the locals what they wanted and the first thing they asked for was education. Hence the building of schools. Even though the government eventually took the schools over, the Trust continues to support the teachers and gives grants for further education.

The clinic was started in 1966, again a result of a request from the community which was approved by the Nepalese government. The clinic has always been staffed by volunteers. Now, however, they have the first Nepalese doctor, Kami, who was an assistant with the Heydons and has since been trained in Fiji. This is the fulfilment of Hillary’s dream, that the people should eventually be able to take charge themselves.

The local school is like a District High School in New Zealand, covering all levels. Kami, when he was a lad, had to walk three hours each way to get to school! The impact of good education has been huge in Sherpa society. Because the Sherpas are now well educated,





View of the Himalayan peaks from Kunde hospital

they are able to run the tourist lodges and facilities themselves, even the local airline. They have shown themselves to be good business people.

To get to Kunde, you fly into Kathmandu, then take a small plane into Lukla, the nearest airstrip, which is at 2800 metres above sea level. Then you have to walk up another 1000 metres to Kunde. Half way up the track (which took them a couple of days to walk) John was hijacked off to a mountain hut to help in the delivery of a baby – in a tiny attic room full of smoke from the cottage fire and assisted by grandma. But all went well, in spite of the language barrier and unusual situation.

Since it was during the monsoon, they arrived finally in Kunde in a thick mist, not having a clue where they were. The nearest road is about seven days' walk away. It's too high for horses which don't thrive at that height. The yaks are the beasts of burden, but you can't ride them. Just before the Heydons arrived, Kunde got electricity and the telephone – and within the space of a year they had gone practically from 'pigeon post' to using e-mail.

The hospital has 15 beds, although the Sherpas don't like staying overnight. Usually the only people who stay are those who have no-one to stay with locally or have come from a great distance or who are very seriously sick. The hospital, therefore, functions primarily as an out-patient clinic. The people often have a horror of hospitals because people die there. Even if

someone is dying the relatives want them to die at home.

The Sherpas are Buddhists and believe in a range of spirits. The hospital is situated at the foot of a mountain which is the home of the regional god. It is a sacred mountain. So you are practising Western medicine in a context of a totally different belief system, to which you have to be very sensitive. If you try to ride roughshod over what they believe, they will simply vote with their feet and stay away.

John and Sue found the two medical assistants to be immensely helpful in guiding them through the cultural minefield! They were Sherpas embedded in their own culture. Yet they had got totally used to the nuances of Western ways. They were wonderfully faithful, staying at the hospital from morn till night. They seemed amazingly adept at living perfectly comfortably with total strangers. They became part of the Heydon family and vice versa. John says: "It was several months before we realised that Mingma was

interpreting for us, not just medically but also culturally. The story he might be told was that the patient had been 'poisoned'. In English, Mingma would say: 'he's had indigestion for a long time'. They would constantly advise us on treatment, especially what not to do! We learnt that the simpler the routine of medicine dosage the better. For instance, an epileptic patient was found in a coma on the track because he'd taken a whole month's supply of medicine at one go!"

With the newly-born it was essential for a baby to be strong, because life for the people is so rugged. There are no resources for long-term nursing of a sick animal or a sick baby. A sick yak is left to die. Parents had to be reassured that their baby was "good" so that they would look after the newly born.

Sue and John found they were taken into the heart of the villagers' lives. There are lots of tourists coming through, but they would never get as close to the Sherpas. If there were social events in the village the family was expected to be there.

**S**ir Edmund Hillary's way has never been 'agenda driven'. He would offer the people what was available from the West without imposing it. A lot of aid from the West can be too laden with Western values. Once a senior US aid official arrived to ask what was needed. Later, when the material arrived it was accompanied with an admonition that 'such-and-such a programme should be followed' which he deemed appropriate. He had simply not listened. Someone



Gathering for a feast the school hall at Khumjung





turned up one day and arrogantly told the people the water supply was wrong and 'this way' was the way to fix it. So often these well-meaning people would give the impression that always they 'knew better'. The way the Heydons learnt to operate at Kunde was to work together, not imposing a new solution because it came from the West and therefore, must be superior! Hillary's dictum has been that the Sherpa is his friend, and you don't impose things on your friend.

In the early days Sir Ed was as much a part of the building team as anyone else. Now he cannot stay at that altitude for long, so he was able to come and see them only once during their stay. But the Sherpas have an enormous love and respect for him. The Sherpas themselves are very egalitarian, so Ed's way fits in well with them.

Obviously they have been affected by Western influence – 'corrupted' one might say – but they have fundamentally retained Sherpa values and the Sherpa way of life. They haven't been swamped. They are never servile, nor are they aggressive. They are "beautifully friendly, very jovial people" says Sue.

In contrast to what you commonly find in much of Asia, the women are very much 'equal'. They can be very forceful. Marriage appears an equal relationship, with as many hen-pecked husbands as oppressed wives! Their society appears to be strong enough that when outsiders turn up they seem to be able to absorb what they want, reject what they don't want – and march on. So Hillary and the Kiwi way seems to have been a 'happy marriage' which has worked well.

Another huge difference is privacy. The worst thing you can do to Sherpas is to isolate them. They cannot stand being on their own. If someone was in bed in the clinic all the family would want to be there too!

### The children

The Heydon children seemed to take the whole adventure in their stride. And this

is where the family discovered the merits of the Correspondence School. The three children were at different stages. The resources always arrived, always highly organised. The parents are there to supervise, not to teach. Christopher had had only a year's schooling so he needed most guidance. And of course there is no TV, so fewer distractions and they had good access to books. At the same time it was very maturing for them. They mixed freely with the people. Thirteen-year-old Emma would often take visitors on a tour of the hospital. They shared the whole experience.

Once Emma enjoyed an unusual adventure at the time when the World Health Organisation was carrying out its campaign to try to eradicate polio in that part of Asia by immunising every



Emma giving anti polio vaccine to a tiny Sherpa

child. Sue was the co-ordinator in the area surrounding Kunde. Teachers and health workers were mobilised to carry this out and reach the hundreds of children, some living in remote villages. In one village no-one was available to do it, so they organised Emma to go. She had been helping with the oral dosing in the clinic, so off she went in the snow with

### Emma's memories

Emma Heydon was just 12 when the family left for Nepal. "I had never even heard of Nepal!" says Emma. "We talked about it. I was attracted by the snow and the mountains. I like skiing. Christopher had heard that there were elephants. I think I was keenest to go. I didn't fully understand what we were going to."

Initially she only had her two brothers for young company, but after a few weeks the Sherpa girls began to be friendly. "It was an interesting relationship", says Emma, "because neither of us spoke much of each other's languages, so we communicated in a mix of English, Nepali and hand-signals. You couldn't have conversations but we played lots of games together. I loved it."

"My years on correspondence – Forms 3 to 5 – was more of an advantage I felt than a disadvantage because it taught me work habits. On correspondence you have to answer every question yourself. That gives you better skills. It certainly helped with homework because I have been used to organising my own learning.

"I really loved being part of the close-knit community, and at the same time I loved the freedom. Edward, Christopher and I were able to go up to visit friends at Thame which is about four hours' walk away up another valley. We could go off like that

on our own but there was no worry. The whole cultural experience, taking part in the festivals, was fun. Pungi for instance took place over four or five days. Everyone gathered in one house. There was lots of food, card playing and dancing in the evenings. I was the same height as most of the women, so they took me in as a friend."

"I helped around the clinic especially on the monthly vaccination days. I was a sort of nurse-aid when there was a delivery, and I used to keep the hospital statistics. I have always wanted to be a doctor since I was very young, and being at Kunde strengthened my desire. I hope to go back. I also did my bronze Duke of Edinburgh award while there, studying traditional farming methods – learning how to cut grass with a sickle and stack it – skills which have been forgotten back here. My 'expedition' took 21 days, and involved crossing some high passes. The highest we camped was at 5,200 metres – every step requires you to stop and have a breath at that height.

"It was the kind of experience of living which either brings a family together or would drive them apart. It brought us close together, so now I feel very close to my two brothers. I do a lot more with them than perhaps others of my age do. I like it that way.



the cook's sister as her guide on a three hour walk to this village. The next day they didn't return, nor the following day. The Heydons were quite confident that 'no news is good news'. It turned out that Emma's guide had relatives further up the valley, so when they had finished their task she said to Emma, 'let's go touring' – and off they went. Emma even had a personal guided tour of the local monastery.

The children missed out on sport and on social contact with their peers in New Zealand. But the gains were enormous.

**Physical problems:** At 3840 metres above sea level – higher than the summit of Mount Cook – the oxygen concentration is a lot lower than New Zealanders are used to so physical effort is much harder. It took six months to become properly acclimatised. Tourists can never acclimatise like that.

Even so, you still feel tired and need more sleep. Traumas like abrasions take a lot longer to heal, and diarrhoea is a regular problem.

The diet was pretty monotonous. There is a limit to the number of ways you can serve up potatoes. There was practically no fruit and no green vegetables. Vitamin deficiency can be a problem although the natives don't appear to suffer. The family lived there for two and a half years with only a two week break. "We found that although the basic diet was adequate," says Sue, "it was important to have 'treats'. An occasional bottle of wine was very welcome. The Sherpas drink Chang, which is a fermented liquor obtained from rice, and it is very palatable."

"It was very hard work", says John, "especially the second year, after Kami had gone off to study. I worked 360 days probably, so I was very tired at the end. It's a wonderful experience – but no holiday camp."

So what did it do for John and Sue? "You see your own culture," says John, "when you step out of your own culture. For the Sherpas their spirit-uality is an integral part of

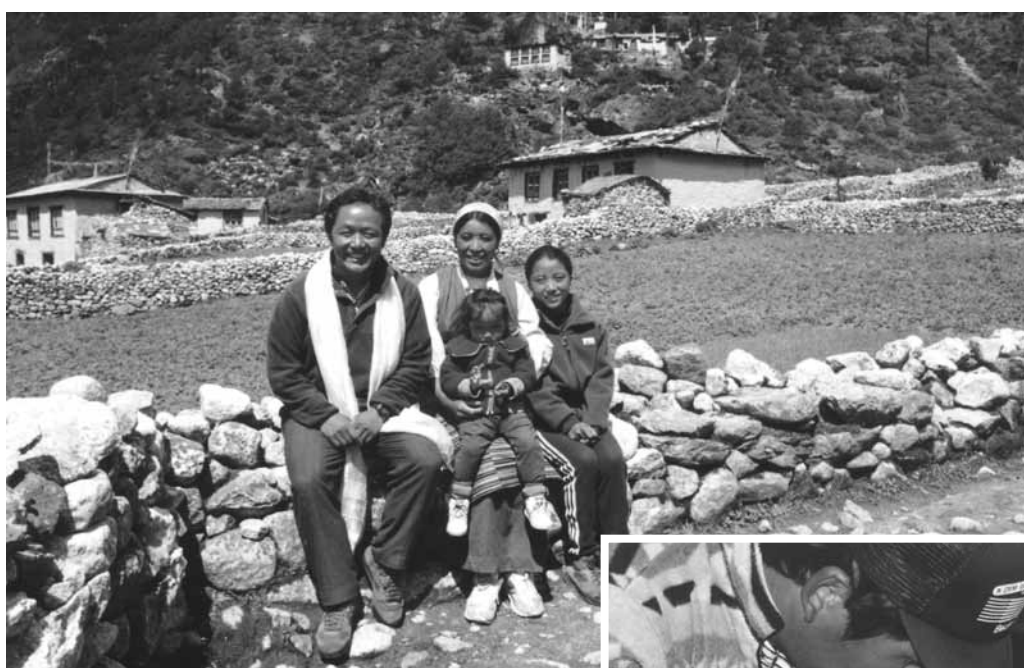
everyday life. Every hut has a religious picture, a Buddha."

"But," insists Sue, "there is no holier-than-thou attitude. Their prayer is simply part of their living. They enjoy life to the full. They would happily include us in their religious feasts. We were never excluded."

When they all came back to New Zealand, the children noted how short Mass was! They'd got used to religious ceremonies which went on literally for days! There were breaks of course, cups of tea and biscuits. Western

neighbours next door, you still have to live alongside them and socialise with them. You learn tolerance, born if you like, out of necessity. You have to find a way to work through differences. Even in the hospital you have to find a way of using your medical skills and blend them with the Sherpa way.

"They face death with equanimity because they expect to be re-incarnated in a better way. They are not keen on dying, but it was very much part of their lives. Death isn't hidden away.



Now in charge, Dr Kami with his family (above); stitching up a patient after a bear attack (right)

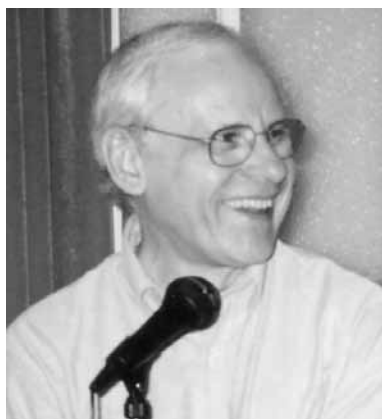


Christian services are terribly serious by comparison. For the Sherpas life is a continuum, with their religion being totally integrated. They don't try to live in two separate worlds, as we do.

John said wistfully: "We do miss their culture. By comparison our society is materialistic, selfish and egotistical, and seems to lack something of life's basic humanness. The Sherpas 'live' their religion in a way that we don't. Our lives are compartmentalised, and religion is relegated to one of the compartments. With them it is totally different – the same people you live with, you also work with and play with. And that breeds tolerance. If you don't like your

"When we went back to Kunde last year to do a locum for two months, we felt it was like going home. We carried on as if we had never been away." Emma (now a medical student) has already booked to go and work there to do her elective.

"We went up the mountain and looked down on Kunde – and we were home. It is not Shangri La! It is just too tough. Yet we will always feel it as our 'patch' on earth." ■



Professor Robert Wuthnow

# The Future of Christianity in the West

*Are the churches in terminal decline? Albert Moore found signs of hope at a recent Otago University conference*

There's an elephant lurking in this room..." Not a conundrum to entertain a crowd of party-goers but a question posed at the conclusion of an Otago University Theology conference in December 2002. Professor Robert Wuthnow, a guest speaker from Princeton University USA, threw out this challenge at the concluding dinner.

The 'elephant' is something we may scarcely notice in the course of our workaday lives, a presence which is silently there but getting little conscious attention until it moves to cause damage or disarray. Once, in America it was the threat of world Communism; today perhaps it is Islamic terrorism. So what, asked our guest, is our 'elephant', here in New Zealand? Perhaps, I thought, it is the hovering presence of the USA!

The purpose of this Conference was to study and debate the future of Christianity in the West. In an earlier keynote speech Wuthnow had focused on *secularisation*. For much of the 20th Century sociologists observed that religion was in decline and would be increasingly replaced by a secular world view. Statistics of declining church attendance were cited as evidence. Under Soviet Communism the received doctrine of atheist humanism awaited the entire eclipse of religion.

In the event this did not happen, and indeed religious concerns have taken on a new lease of life on the world scene. Some institutions have suffered

loss of support and influence, yet there remains considerable interest in and practice of religious faith, often in new forms. In the USA, which Professor Wuthnow analysed in specific detail, statistics do not follow the European trend of decline. Religious participation in America continues in much the same proportions as 60 years ago (40-50 percent of the population actively involved).

Wuthnow warned, therefore, against a presumption that religion in the West is in inexorable decline. Religious belief and commitment continue, but increasingly in new forms (pluralism). The arrival of new immigrant groups often prompts a renewed religious vitality. 'Secularisation' signifies change – but not necessarily loss of belief. Rather, it leads to changed ways of expressing religion and of responding to other faiths.

There is no doubt that both the USA and the world at large face increasing religious pluralism. Wuthnow helpfully distinguished three ways of responding to pluralism within the Christian churches:

- the *exclusivist* group seeks to protect its brand of Christianity by drawing strict boundaries against intrusions from outside.
- the *inclusivist* group is open to listening and participating with other religions. This can be risky, but it can also be based on a thoughtful and robust faith.

- the *pluralist* group believes in 'shopping around'; this is commoner among younger, educated searchers rather than in committed church members.

Pluralism thus challenges all to live alongside diversity in religion. The lesson for the churches is to give this new situation sustained reflection and engage in some contact, rather than ignoring others from a safe contentment within one's own congregation.

## The New Zealand situation

Statistics here certainly indicate a much lower church attendance than in the USA. Only about ten percent of New Zealanders attend church weekly. But change and diversity are also much in evidence. For instance, one conference speaker, Kevin Ward, related that his own research in the sociology of religion revealed many believers to be detached from institutional commitment.

The last 20 years has seen a marked decline in support for most voluntary organisations in New Zealand, more so even than in the churches. There has been among young people a "retreat from belonging", accompanied in many cases by a loss of upbringing in Christian education and worship. The nature and strength of religious belief have changed.

But this does not mean that belief and practice have disappeared. Sixty-one percent of the population still call themselves 'Christian', and there is still a spirituality of non-churchgoers. Kevin Ward suggests that this "believing

# What being a Catholic means to me

*Seventeen-year-old Catriona Arnot, of Motueka, expresses  
the heart of her faith*

Speak to us of religion, and he said: *“Is not religion all deeds and all reflection? And that which is neither deed nor reflection but a wonder and a surprise ever springing in the soul, even while the hands hew the stone or tend the loom. Who can spare his faith from his actions, or his belief from his occupations?”*

Kahil Gibran

**T**his, to me, is what it means to be Catholic – God and faith and love influencing every aspect of my life. Yet after five years’ secondary education in a large state school, amidst various denominations of believers and non-believers, answers have been hard to find. What does this identity mean to me? Am I different from everyone else? The definition of my Catholic identity seems ambiguous, and I need to spend a little time reflecting upon and exploring this question.

The worship of God for me means participating in the Mass, which is the cornerstone of religious Catholic practice and observance. The Mass informs my living and influences my life choices. In this respect Catholicism differs from many other beliefs. It is steeped in ancient traditions richly illustrating the grandeur of God. Sacredness combines with the humility of silent reverence.

Two years ago I visited the monastery of Montserrat in Spain, a place symbolic in itself of the power and wonder of God’s creation. It is such a holy place, seemingly far removed from modern life, a sanctuary nestled amidst mountain pinnacles, far above the busy world below. As a Catholic I felt a connection with the history of the place – the temporal with the spiritual world.

Yet this would all be of little value to the identity of a Catholic if the essence of worship were not carried home and into the

experience of the everyday routines and adventures of life. The ethics of Catholicism must be put into use in my attitudes to life, to God, to other people and to myself. My attitudes and relationships should be filled with love, faith, honesty and hope. My Catholic belief and way of life should inform me, and makes me aware and responsible to question social injustices. This is all part of what makes me a Catholic, even though such consistency in a life of faith seems impossible to achieve.

To be really Catholic, then, is to try in earnest – and often fail – to learn from my mistakes and perhaps emerge with some greater wisdom, incorporating this wisdom into my uniqueness and identity. To be Catholic is to be on a journey, its roots planted in love and faith. It is to learn from patches of doubt and error. It is said: “there is no road to peace, peace is the road”. This applies to my Catholicism – from its worship to the everyday, to my journey and my development.

Faith development seems at a most critical and fragile stage during the self-importance of youth. At this time of self-realisation, religious belief now becomes part of my identity. From the patterning and modelling of childhood behaviour in religious practice and a church culture towards a conscious commitment as a young adult – this is my journey of faith. Faith becomes simply part of every aspect of life and the foundation of all my decision-making.

*“And if you would know God, be not therefore a solver of riddles. Rather look about you and you shall see Him playing with your children. And look into space; you shall see Him walking in the cloud, outstretching His arms in the lightning and descending in rain. You shall see Him smiling in flowers, then rising and waving His hands in trees.”* Kahil Gibran

distrust of institutional forms which perpetuate a bygone Christendom, with its hierarchical structures. These Christians focus on interior upbuilding rather than outward concerns.

## Conclusions

I would like to offer three considerations which arise out of the Conference theme.

**Firstly**, at the level of local church belonging, members could gain much encouragement from sharing their experiences of the things they value

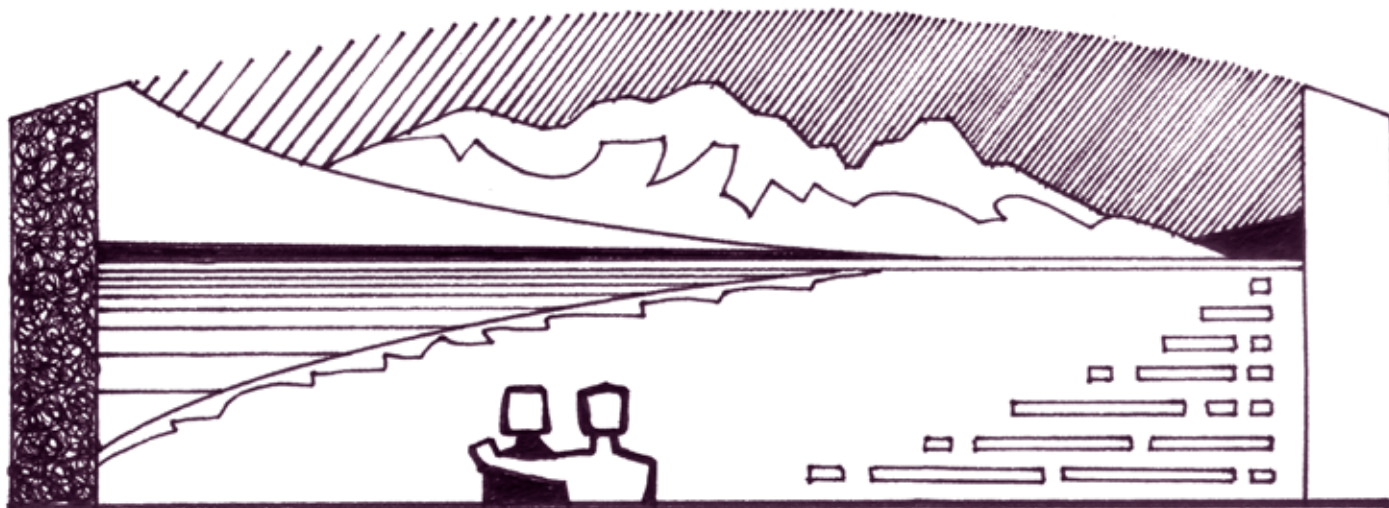
and enjoy in church life, thus learning to communicate these in a vital and outgoing way. Good parish communities need to be celebrated.

**Secondly**, we need to meet with and seek to understand the diversity of religious expression in our society, while retaining a thoughtful grasp on our own traditions. A review of a recent book on *The Future of Christianity* uses the phrase the ‘McDonaldisation’ of religion – “Burger, fries and God to go, thanks”,

which does not imply much stability! In times of change, there is clearly a need for a sense of tradition and structure in faith.

**Thirdly**, the Conference theme was “Christianity in the West”. But we have to keep in mind the increasing millions of Christians in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We can no longer assume that Europe and North America will remain the dominating centres of Christendom in the 21st Century. World Christianity demands a broader vision. ■





## I love... I am loved... Therefore I am

*Gazing over a beautiful S Island lake communing with a friend,  
John Hunt finds the reason for living and believing*

Coming away from worship, I notice the shopping mall carpark full. I ask myself, “What’s going on here?” Surely this is something more than people simply getting hold of things. Maybe a need once met by attending worship is now being attended to at this mall.

Recently I had occasion to visit the mall myself. I needed to purchase a microwave oven. I checked the various appliance retailers and consulted the salespeople. I decided on a particular model which would meet our need. I knew I had the funds in the bank. I made the purchase. On my way home with the microwave in its box in the back, I felt great. I reflected: my good feeling comes not just from becoming the proud owner of a microwave. My contentment comes from the process of buying.

In a ‘consumer society’ a citizen’s value is measured by what he or she can consume. Employment and welfare benefits serve not only the individual, but the functioning of the economy.

Engaging in this consumerism, buying something, affirms a person’s existence and identity.

### Subject, verb, object

At the beginning of a seminar everyone was given a card with some string to hang it around our neck. On it we had to write how we identify ourselves. I remember one woman had written “Doctor’s wife”. Her identity was in her husband’s occupation. We have always felt some unease regarding our own existence, certainly concerning our own identity and our own worth.

The sentence – *subject, verb, object* – captures something of reality. If the subject of the sentence is the personal pronoun, the verb and the object are very important. The verb, the acting, affirms the existence of the ‘I’. The existence of the object in turn confirms the existence of the ‘I’.

### I shop, therefore I am

Descartes’ formula *Cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) came out of

his quest to isolate a reality of which he could be certain. By a process of elimination, exploring the limitations of perception etc, he concluded there is one reality of which there can be no doubt – that he is thinking. He concluded triumphantly: “I think, therefore I am”.

I would like to offer another dimension. In isolating the existence of a reality, an object of which he could be certain, he also affirmed his own existence, indeed his identity. It is surely no accident that a philosopher concluded with the significance of thinking!

People have verified their own existence in a variety of ways, for example, with reference to their family, their school, their parenting, their occupation, their money, their power. I recall seeing written on a hospital toilet wall, “Coitus ergo sum”! It should, therefore, be no surprise that on Sunday morning people are shopping. It’s in purchasing that people reassure themselves that they are *somebody*. “I shop, therefore I am”.



My good feeling having purchased the microwave, however, soon passed. Happily for the economist, manufacturer and retailer, the satisfaction in buying something is short-lived. If we look to affirm our existence by shopping, we need to repeat the process again and again.

### Engagement with God

I'm on holiday. I write overlooking Lake Alexandrina in the Mackenzie Country. The water is rippling in the gentle breeze. Beyond are the Southern Alps, their snow-capped peaks glistening in the morning sun. It's a great feeling. In my engagement with the natural world, I am somehow affirmed.

I have been having a cup of coffee with my friend. It also is a great feeling. As my friend and I relate, my existence and identity is acknowledged. As we talk and listen, we are affirmed as people. My interest in Celtic Spirituality has alerted me to knowing the Creator in the creation and knowing the Christ in a friend and a stranger.

### The Immanence and Incarnation of God

If we know God in the world around us (*immanence*) and if we know God in our humanity (*incarnation*), then we can relate to God as object. In our engagement with the earth and with people, our own existence and identity is affirmed.

The scene before me – the lake, the Alps, the sky – also acts upon me. The landscape lifts up my eyes and heart, refreshes my spirit and fills me with wonder. Not only am I (subject) engaging (verb) with the natural world (object): the natural world (subject) is acting (verb) on me (object). When I come to this place, as I swim in the lake and take in the environment, I sense the water embracing me and the hills enfolding me.

As my friend and I talk and listen and laugh together, we are acknowledging each other and affirming each other. In the landscape and in a friend, I

experience the love of God and I am affirmed.

### I am loved, therefore I am

The focus of society has moved away from community and family to the individual. The push is away from co-operation toward competition. If the disease of Jesus' time was leprosy, today it is loneliness.

In our worship, we are alerted to God's love around us everywhere, in our neighbour at our side, in our own heart. We are filled with wonder and we respond with thankfulness and offering. The elemental spirituality is a sense of wonder. In wonder, subject, verb and object come together. In declaring "I am loved, therefore I am" – and its partner "I love, therefore I am" – we have our identity and our dignity as a person.

Rather than go to the shopping mall, people might walk in the park or visit a friend. That engagement with God will bring a lasting affirmation and

## LIGHTING THE FIRES

*Womens Study/ Research Project*

**There is money available for women within Aotearoa New Zealand who are wanting to undertake a research study or project that fits within the following guidelines:**

- ◆ empowering women to challenge oppressive structures in the global community, their country and their church;
- ◆ affirming women, through shared leadership and decision-making, theology and spirituality, in their decisive contributions to communities and church;
- ◆ giving visibility to women's perspectives and actions in the struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creation;
- ◆ enabling churches to free themselves from racism, sexism, and classism, from teachings and practices that discriminate against women;
- ◆ enabling the churches to take actions in solidarity with women.

*Applicants need to provide:*

- ◆ evidence of appropriate research skills and background experience
- ◆ a 500 word description of the research study or project
- ◆ names and contact information of two referees
- ◆ a proposed budget and timeline

*To apply or for further information, write to*

**Lighting the Fires, Womens Study Project  
PO Box 173, OTEPOTI/DUNEDIN**

### *Hymn of the month*

#### **Forgive, forgive us, holy God!**

Forgive, forgive us, holy God!  
Your children call on you to hear!  
Our blood is on each other's hands,  
we die from hunger, lies and fear.

Forgive us that our souls are numb  
to scenes of terror, screams of pain;  
that while we pray "Your kingdom come",  
our world is still a battle plain.

Forgive the minds no longer shocked  
by homeless poor, by lives abused,  
forgive us that the earth is stacked  
with weapons waiting to be used.

Forgive us that our household gods  
are self and safety, private need,  
forgive us all our fitful prayers,  
the token gift, the token deed.

Give us this day the bread of peace,  
the hands to share a common good,  
the hearts to ache for justice' sake,  
the will to stand where Jesus stood.

*Shirley*

**#20 FAITH FOREVER SINGING**  
*The NZ Hymnbook Trust*

# The prayer of Tom Bathgate

It was towards the end of the evening service that we heard the noise. A low rhythmic rumble. Discreetly, without being seen to be looking, attention turned to Mr Bathgate. Like the rest of us he was kneeling in prayer. Yet unlike the rest of us his head was slumped forward onto the pew in front, and he was snoring.

While we can make all sorts of jokes about sleep-inducing prayers, to say nothing of sermons, and feel empathetic towards Mr Bathgate, there is a serious theological question to consider: *do you have to be awake to pray? Or, put another way, does prayer have to be an activity of the mind?*

I have a friend who walks. Beaches are her favourites. The longer the better. She walks out for hours at a time. Sometimes she talks as she walks. Sometimes she thinks. Sometimes she doesn't think at all. Her body walks, feeling the sand, the sea, the air and the ions. She returns restored. Spiritually renewed.

Does prayer happen just when she verbally addresses God? What about when she listens? Are concerned thoughts prayers? Are musings prayers? Is the physical act of strolling itself a prayer? Is feeling the breeze on your face, filling the sails in your heart, a prayer?

You can't divide her walk up, you can't divide prayer up, and you can't divide her up.

Which brings me back to Mr Bathgate. He likes the old evening service with words he's heard most of his life. He comes into the shadowy, aged, holy space of the parish church. He smells the stained wood, ingrained with generations of prayers. He feels the ambience of candlelight, beautiful glass, crafted wood, and quiet music. Without saying a word or thinking a thought he feels the presence of God permeating his pores. Just to be present is to pray.

Personally I have this thing about fire. I like it. From the open fires and camps of my youth, to the power of ritually lighting candles before a service, fire invites me into God. Many religions and ancient rituals use fire. Associations

Glynn Cardy

with warmth, hope, and the continuance of life, abound. But the power of fire is, thank God, beyond words. It invites me simply to enter into the flame of it and, often, into the darkness around.

Many of us live constantly bombarded with words. From the moment I get out of bed, from remembering and making decisions regarding children to clearing the overnight e-mails, from reading the columnists to meditating on the Scriptures, from organizing with staff to listening carefully to the person sitting in my office – my brain is in overdrive. I feel frequently flayed by information and demands. The volume of noise is tremendous. My experience is a very common one in our community.

Is God, is prayer, (being on-line to god@heaven.co.nz) just another noise? Another demand?

Jamie likes to dive, anytime, any boat. Any way. On a recent expedition to the Poor Knights Islands he spent at least six hours under and on the water, swimming and floating in this wonderful marine reserve. He enjoyed the colourful, uncontaminated subterranean life. He enjoyed exploring, each patch of sea life being a little different from the last. He enjoyed the effect of the sun filtering down into the water. But most of all it was the six satisfying hours of being in a near noiseless zone. He returned home spiritually renewed.

There are a variety of renewing experiences that can happen every day: when one pulls open the curtains and inhales the rays of the morning sun; when one runs, cycles, or swims, and feels the body quiver with pleasure; when one sips and smells the aroma emanating from the cup; when the stirrings of rage against injustice pulsate through the bloodstream; when the warm wash of empathy floods over us. Each of these experiences connects us with the God who flows through us and beyond us.

They are prayer.

A church building is in essence a holy place. It has been made for, and over the years imbued with, prayer. It's in the walls as much as in any words. It's in the activity and the inactivity, the music and the quiet. It's in the mother trying to delicately negotiate some reasonable silence with her two-year-old. It's in the enthusiastic server blowing candle-wax over the altar cloth. It's in the smile that one parishioner offers another. When the knees bend or the hands outstretch, when we listen or laugh, eat or drink – we eat and drink of God. The totality of church is a prayer, and it has the potential to cradle and hold us no matter where we are in life.

Priests and parishes can do a lot of weird and whacky things. If you have the opportunity to travel around a number of churches you'll know what I mean. Each place has it's own colour and culture. Sometimes you feel you've just touched down in Outer Mongolia. It's called 'the wonderful diversity of Anglicanism'. Yet there are some limits to that diversity. One such limit I believe is when a church is no longer a place where people can touch with the God who touches them. Places where prayer is defined too narrowly, or where there is too much noise from engorged egos, or where the demands are too severe.

When it came to church Tom Bathgate was a different man. On any other day of the week he was a talker. He talked an awful lot. To anyone and everyone, regardless of whether they were listening. He would talk to strangers, friends, people pushing supermarket trolleys, and guys having a smoke outside the TAB. They all knew him and felt part of his world. Interestingly though, when it came to church, he would sit there quietly, not talking to God but soaking in the silence. His wife wished he would pray more often. ■

Glynn Cardy is Anglican priest of St Andrew's, Epsom, Auckland

## (Two) mega movies which stretch the boundaries of fantasy and delight

*Potter & The Lord Of The Rings* **Review:**  
**Mike Crowl**

The wait was over. Last December, the two most anticipated 'sequels' in movie history arrived at our cinemas within a single fortnight: *Harry Potter and The Chamber of Secrets*, and *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. Those who knew the books carped and quibbled; those who didn't enjoyed the movies for what they were.

I've been re-reading *Harry Potter and The Chamber of Secrets*; it's interesting to compare the strengths of the book with the strengths of the movie. J K Rowling delights in humour, detailed plotting, quirky ambience, and in leading us up the garden path. The movie naturally expands scenes that make a major visual impact (the flying car; the wand-duel, the Quidditch match, and of course, the climax), but for all its length still doesn't have enough room for Rowling's detailed plotting, her verbal humour, or the subtleties of her characterizations. Several of the characters familiar from the previous movie, for instance, seem to make little impact here. On the other hand, sinister elements are far more sinister – the climax is pretty horrific for smaller children. Somehow Rowling manages not to make evil overwhelming in her storytelling – though it must be admitted that book four was grimmer than the previous three – but in the movie, nasty things are really nasty.

On the plus side, the young actors have all grown in stature and ability (I especially enjoy Rupert Grint in the part of Ron); the special effects are superb (the Whomping Tree, the giant spiders, and the Basilisk, for instance); and the bigger budget is constantly evident in the surroundings: the detail in the *mise en scène* is magnificent.

*The Two Towers*, though still fantasy, presents a totally different world.

This episode is even more serious in tone than its predecessor, and Peter Jackson has inserted some much-needed low-key humour into it. Furthermore, he's expanded the relatively short description of the final battle at Helm's Deep (around a dozen pages in the book) into a half-hour climax that must rank as one of the most wonderfully filmed battles in movie history.

Jackson constantly shows his utter film-making genius. From the sudden crashing right through the snow-capped mountains at the opening (where he picks up and completes an event that occurred in the first episode) to the overwhelming climax with its apparent cast of thousands, he's never out of control. And one of his major achievements is the character of Gollum, computer-generated but integrated seamlessly with his human counterparts. (The actor who played the role, Andy Serkis, is now hidden beneath the animated personality,

but his considerable acting skills still shine through.)

The complexity of juggling the adventures of three separate groups is handled with aplomb, as is the introduction of a number of new characters who play major roles in the separate strands of the story. The actors are never lost in all this: in particular Elijah Wood as Frodo and Viggo Mortensen as Aragorn seize opportunities to widen the depth and emotional range of their characters. These are not flat, one-note heroes, but people increasing in strength and maturity.

New Zealand's scenery again plays a major part in the visual aspect of the movie, working hand-in-hand with the computer-created and studio worlds. Special effects abound, yet we're often only just aware of them. I watched *The Fellowship of the Rings* again on DVD the night after I saw *The Two Towers*. It had lost none of its impact, and increased in interest through its connections with the newer film. The completion of Jackson's trilogy next year must surely confirm him as one of the world's true cinematic geniuses. ■

### New CWS Videos

2003 is the third year of the *Decade to Overcome Violence* and Christian World Service is continuing reflection on the various aspects of peace-making.

*Making Change*: The absence of war does not necessarily mean peace, and since the end of their ten-year civil war in 1989, the people of Nicaragua have been struggling for a life of peace with justice, free of the violence of poverty. The video *Making Change* introduces the economic aspect of the theme and in particular the consequences of unfair trading patterns. In Nicaragua's case the collapse of the raw coffee price has literally put thousands of families on the streets.

This video is accompanied by study material, which marks the start of a CWS fair trade campaign. The resource is an aid to discussion and suggests positive action which all of us can take to support the struggle for a just and violence-free world.

*Make Peace, the NSCC Serving all God's People*: One of Christian World Service's partners in the thick of the struggle for peace is the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC). Its programmes to assist the people of Southern Sudan who are victims of war, and in particular its People-to-People Peace initiative, are bringing some hope to a seemingly hopeless situation. Its story is told in this video, while the study material provides more of the background to its work.

To order this material contact CWS, PO Box 22-652, Christchurch email: [cws@cws.org.nz](mailto:cws@cws.org.nz) giving your name, physical address and phone number and stating when you would like to borrow each of the videos, if possible providing alternative dates.



## NZ in the 80s – economic guinea pig

*The Dirty Decade*

by Stephen Stratford

Tandem Press

Price: \$34.95, 144 pages

Review: Jim Elliston

This well-written work, which eloquently evokes the spirit of New Zealand in the 1980s, is in A4 format with numerous photos and sidebars scattered throughout. In the course of outlining some of the most significant economic, social and political events in the decade, it sketches the cultural changes taking place, including NZ music and literature awards, best sellers for each year, and culinary and fashion trends. The chapter headings are indicative: *Muldoon's Last Stand*, *Jolly Roger*, *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Stephen Stratford is a journalist, and his thesis is that New Zealand emerged into adolescence after the fall in 1985 of Robert Muldoon, the populist leader whose scathing tongue finally alienated too many of his supporters. Muldoon attempted to preserve the past with a plethora of controls, stifling freedom and creating legal loopholes that the unscrupulous exploited. In the words of Richard Prebble: "He was the dark side, but it was our dark side. His fears were our fears. He was a very frightened man".

The Lange Labour Cabinet were young, tertiary-educated, internationally-minded liberals (on both domestic and foreign policy issues), so a major social change was inevitable. Contentious issues such as homosexual and abortion law reform, nuclear-free policy, relations with apartheid-divided South Africa and a consequent recognition of past mistreatment of Maori, were immediately confronted.

But while this upheaval was taking place a much more fundamental revolution was being imposed. Not only were Muldoon's economic controls dis-

mantled at breathtaking speed, but many others too. The country was in serious economic disarray, and remedial action was essential. Muldoon's post-election unconstitutional behaviour brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy and provided the excuse to go 'cold-turkey'.

Roger Douglas had made no secret of his economic philosophy, but it had gone unnoticed. Journalists, with a few honourable exceptions, were economic-ally illiterate. Many were easily manipulated by some business leaders to bolster share value, and large numbers of ordinary families were conned into investing – and losing – their life savings. Although Sir Robert Jones' recent boast of such successful manipulation has brought denials, the brazen claim in itself speaks volumes.

Douglas placed New Right believers in key positions so that if Labour – as the Cabinet mistakenly expected – lost in 1988, the revolution would be difficult to undo. In the event, the Richardson-Shipley faction of National ensured it would continue during the '90s. The Douglas mantra 'no pain, no gain' was effective propaganda, but in the same period Australia showed that it is possible to reform the economy in a more humane way.

The religious, moral and philosophical vacuum that had developed over the previous 30 years was highlighted by a proliferation of self-improvement fads and pseudo-spiritual movements, along with the growth of 'rights' – demands (with no thought of corresponding duties) – with profligate consumption and pretentiousness rife among the 'wannabees'. A significant segment of the population eagerly embraced a philosophy that individual freedom was the greatest value. Those who took advantage of the Douglas reforms

to prosper at the expense of lesser mortals used the new philosophy as a justification.

The idea that the State is a key player in the economy had been deeply embedded in the New Zealand psyche. The Douglas-initiated revolution loosened but didn't eradicate this. Just as the Richardson-Shipley approach has been rejected, so too a return to a pre-1984 type government has also been rejected. Cultural change is best accomplished by working from within, not by imposing. And such a change takes time.

This book is studded with reminiscences from both observers and participants, little asides and snippets of information putting flesh on a narrative that in itself is clear and informative. Stratford likens it to a road to the past: "Each time you take that road, you follow a different route".

This book is one route. ■

**AD at Rogan  
McIndoes – see  
Stephen**

# Silence, scandal and the need for straight talking

*Sacred Silence: Denial and the Crisis in the Church*

Donald Cozzens

Collegeville Minnesota, John Garratt Publishing, 2002

Review: Margaret Ryan

American Fr Donald Cozzens teaches religious studies at John Carroll University. Previously he was Vicar General for religious and rector of his diocesan seminary. His first book *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, examined priesthood and the incidence of homosexuality among priests, arguing that these challenges and issues need to be addressed.

This book has been written in response to the recent and expanding clergy sexual abuse scandal particularly in the US. "Silence" refers to the human and institutional tendency to deny and minimise

challenging topics, for reasons such as some bishops' sense of loyalty, their vision of responsibility and desire for institutional harmony and tranquillity, and the sliding scale between "official" and "common" truth.

Cozzens explores the forms of denial and examines the conscious and unconscious dynamics that sustain the church's culture. He probes the tensions in authentic religious obedience; the Church's tendency to exclude the voices of women from the conversation that shapes its self-understanding; pastoral care and prophetic mission; the vocational crisis in religious and priestly life; and the problem of clericalism.

He examines the faces of denial with regard to the abuse of "our children"; the pastoral and financial implications; the issue of some homosexually-oriented

men in the priesthood; and how the scandal is "unmasking a structural crisis that threatens the current lines of power that have gone unchallenged for centuries".

Cozzens believes the Church is in a transition time. The scale and intensity of American Catholic anger, directed primarily at bishops and the Church's culture of secrecy and control, suggest the Church may never again be quite the same. Failure to engage in honest and respectful dialogue can only deepen the present crisis engulfing the Church, threatening the integrity and credibility of many bishops and the very mission of the Church.

Fr Cozzens is a passionate man, loving God, priesthood and his Church. He writes warmly of the majority of priests and agrees forcefully and hopefully that after grieving the good and holy in "the old order", honest conversation will allow movement from denial to reality, from despair to possibility. ■

Reprinted with permission, *Catholic Voice*, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

## No stone unturned

*Breaking Faith: the Pope, the People and the Fate of Catholicism*

by John Cornwell

Viking Books 2002

Review: Michael Hill IC

Catholic journalist John Cornwell has earned a reputation for full and frank exposé writing in his earlier works *Hitler's Pope* (Pius XII) and *Like a Thief in the Night* (the death of John Paul I). His new book is a severe indictment of the present state of the Catholic church. Relentlessly he catalogues the alleged calamities and sins afflicting contemporary Catholicism – impoverished liturgy, wishywashy catechetics, contraception, an ageing and disillusioned priesthood, the claims of feminism, Vatican witch-hunting, collegiality unachieved – right up to the paedophilia scandals which currently afflict us. No stone is unturned, no scandal dodged.

The overall picture he paints is of a church heading towards schism: a large, progressive wing demanding a greater say for the laity and more accommodation

with the modern world – in pitched battle with the reactionary wing, whose voice prevails in Rome.

None of it makes comfortable reading for the loyal Catholic. I have no doubt it's an accurate picture – but is it a fair one? Would a historian come to such a jaundiced conclusion? The history of 20 centuries of Catholicism is a succession of crises, many of which are just as serious as anything we experience.

In an early chapter Cornwell describes a church in Covent Garden, London, where he has worshipped over the years. He describes the sort of post-Vatican II middle-of-the-road liturgy which you may find in many, if not most, Catholic churches: ordinary people finding God in prayer and sacrament, seeking the mystical in the midst of the buzz of modern living, not too worried about theological or liturgical debate. In such an atmosphere any of us can drink in the riches of an age-old Catholic tradition.

I recommend Cornwell's book, but I suggest you keep alongside a copy of the article *God the Optimist*, by Pat Maloney, from the Christmas issue of *Tui Motu*. ■

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## US sabre-rattling devalues the political process

*Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable*  
(George Orwell)

Last month, Nelson Mandela accused George W. Bush of having no foresight and wanting to plunge the world into a holocaust. Bush puts it differently: "In the name of peace, US will lead a coalition of the willing to disarm Iraq". Bush's rhetoric borders on fundamentalism, but it is language which supports John Pilger's idea that Bush has been "captured by a clique whose fanaticism and ambitions of 'endless war' and 'full spectrum dominance' are a matter of record".

Consider the words of Daniel Goure, a military analyst at the Lexington Institute and now Deputy Secretary of Defence. When he speaks of war, "The real war, the shooting war, will start at night. A thousand sorties. It will be like the first night of the Gulf War, but now we can do five times the damage with one-quarter of the planes". He speaks enthusiastically of America's new bombs:

- The GBU-28, a bunker-buster designed to blow up underground facilities by detonating a 1000 pounds of explosive.
- Thermobaric bombs which penetrate indoor spaces and then set off a blast of heat and pressure intense enough to obliterate all human life and material.
- Microwave bombs which explode in mid-air and release pulses of electromagnetic energy to destroy antennae and computers. Then American forces will head to Baghdad, having defeated the Iraqi forces. "They're toast. They become the speed bumps on the road to Baghdad", says Goure. "This is it – the Roman legions, the German panzers. Truly unstoppable. It will be a shock wave, a ten on the Richter scale, in its effect on that region."

Consider the strategy known as 'Shock and Awe' at the National Defence

### Crossroads

John Honor

University in Washington. The military strategist, Harlan Ullman explains, "you have this simultaneous effect – rather like the nuclear weapons at Hiroshima – not taking days or weeks but minutes. You also 'take the city down' (Baghdad). By that I mean you get rid of the power and water. In two, three, four, five days they are physically, emotionally and psychologically exhausted."

These are the men who advise the President. They have no need to convince Republicans like Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Cheney who have always been committed to war with Iraq. In any other context Goure and Ullman would be described as psychopaths.

Politicians currently are not highly regarded anywhere in the world because many of them are perceived as self-serving and devious. They lose touch with their community and do not listen to the voice of their electorate. The current crisis in the Middle East highlights the huge gap between government policy and public opinion. US continues to prepare for a war in Iraq that virtually the entire world opposes.

the world is at unprecedented levels even before the war has started. The rift is weakening not only international relations but also organisations such as NATO.

Public opinion polls confirm this anti-war sentiment even in countries which support Bush, such as England, Spain, Italy and Australia. The latest figures available to me were all over 70percent against war, yet political leaders such as Tony Blair, John Howard and the leaders of Italy and Spain persist in their support of action by US. If the nations' leaders do not listen to their people, the very essence of democracy is imperilled, let alone their own political future.

Self-serving propaganda no longer has the same impact on people. Thanks to the internet, anyone can now obtain verification from a myriad of independent sources. Information is instantly available and this international exchange is being used more and more for humanitarian purposes. War, at all levels, is considered repugnant. It is to be resisted and resorted to only when all else fails. The US is becoming fixated on war with Iraq and ignores this growing dissent at its peril. Now the Vatican has made it clear that an attack on Iraq would not be considered a 'just war'. It would be unprovoked and immoral. When will politicians listen to their people?

### Selective ban on dangerous animals

The dog that savaged 7-year-old Carolina Anderson is dead. Now, politicians will act to amend legislation of a decade ago which was based on the supposed inalienable right of the individual to own whatever kind of dog he wanted. So pit-bulls came into the country. Right of choice must be allied to the common good and the inherent responsibility in that choice.

All the dogs I ever owned must be twitching in their graves in sympathy

for the child. The cocker-spaniel, the basset hound, the curly-coated retriever, the labrador and the English setter were a boy's best friend, a man's companion and a family pet. They were genetically far removed from pit-bull terriers, dobermann pinschers and rottweilers whose purpose in a domestic setting I fail to see. These animals were bred to fight and kill. They only massage the inferiority complex of their owners. Such dogs should be banned totally. ■



## Thoughts and possibilities for second marriages

The call from New Zealand and other bishops attending the 1999 Oceania Synod for a review of the laws on re-admitting invalidly married people to the sacraments fell on deaf ears. A year later the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith issued a letter re-affirming the position already stated by the Congregation in 1994, namely, that those who have entered a second marriage when the preceding marriage was valid cannot receive communion as long as the situation persists.

One could debate the whole basis of official policy and argue the case that the re-married may be allowed to receive the sacraments if the earlier valid marriage can truly be considered to have died, however unfortunate that might be. But let me confine myself to working from principles that are not contentious, though some would say my conclusions are.

The Church affirms that a second marriage is legitimate and can be recognised if appropriate examination reveals that the first marriage was not valid. It has set up marriage tribunals to adjudicate cases. The problem is that the system is not working.

In my earlier years, working in the rural Philippines, I encountered Catholics

who had a water-tight case for an annulment, but who lived in dioceses with up to 50,000 parishioners in one-priest parishes, with an equivalent lack of personnel to operate a tribunal system. No way could such folk meet the requirement that they obtain an annulment from an ecclesiastical tribunal prior to entering a second marriage.

The Church's moral theology has a solution to this problem. The requirement that the nullity of a previous marriage be recognised in a particular way, through a tribunal system, is what is termed a positive law of the Church. Such laws do not bind if they are unrealistic or the cost of observing them is excessive. The parallel case is that of a sick person who, though bound by the positive law of the church to attend Sunday Mass, is certainly right in remaining at home in bed until well again.

Provided that an honest and adequate but quite unofficial enquiry showed that the first marriage was null, Filipinos such as those I encountered could be considered entitled to enter a second marriage which was in reality their first.

I used to think that such inability to

secure a tribunal ruling of nullity was a Third World problem. It is not. It is present in New Zealand. I know that a tribunal official has recently advised a priest not to encourage folk to approach the tribunal. There are not the tribunal personnel available to process cases except after considerable delay. Examination of fresh petitions within a reasonable time is not possible.

The only conclusion I can draw is that at this present moment there are folk in our country not bound to undertake the tribunal process. Furthermore, if a priest is understandably shy of conducting a wedding for them given the absence of official church documentation as to their freedom, they are exempted from the requirement that their marriage be witnessed by a priest, and a marriage undertaken before another celebrant would be a valid and sacramental one.

I appreciate that those who labour valiantly in marriage tribunals to process as many cases as possible might not agree with me. I appreciate that the complexity of the procedures and the consequent bottleneck is not of their making. But I cannot see how in the light of the theology of our Church

*Humphrey O'Leary*

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## Holocaust in the Australian capital

Your common-or-garden Canberran is rather touchy at the best of times about the soulless tag. It may have been true once, who knows. It hasn't been true for some considerable time. It isn't true now in the aftermath of an event that left four people dead, more than 500 homes destroyed, many others damaged, and a searing wound in the psyche of every resident.

Today, nearly a month after the fires swept through suburban Duffy, Chapman and Kambah, 370 volunteers have put their hands up to spend the weekend helping to clean up the home sites in those areas. Donations to the major bushfire appeal, as well as to smaller ones such as that run by the St Vincent de Paul Society, are still flowing in. Churches and local service organisations continue to provide the support they are so skilled at giving.

Traditionally, we Canberrans seem to have less to do with our neighbours than one would expect. The fires brought neighbourhoods together in a way that perhaps only disasters do. It is, after all, a little hard to be too blasé about the man next door if he helped save your house, as many did, or even just gave you a hand to clear away the backyard rubbish.

The truth is that the Bush Capital is still hurting deeply; not just those who lost everything bar their lives and some unfortunate few who even lost loved ones.

When the 18 January fires swept through, the surrounds of the main artery from the southern suburbs to the city centre was already scarred from bushfires a year before that had cut a swathe through pine forests and had endangered homes. Now, the landscape is lunar. Somewhat more hidden,

the historic Stromlo observatory, the Tidbinbilla nature reserve, the Cotter recreation area – all favourite weekend destinations of Canberran families – have been all but wiped out.

All but the hardy would have shed a tear at such destruction of their environment, yet it is even worse in the suburbs where house after house, street after street throws up scenes akin to the aftermath of a bombing raid, as the parish priest of the worst hit parishes observed.

Yes, Canberra has changed in many ways. Only time will tell if the change has been cosmetic. The gut feeling is that it is not. The new feeling of vulnerability in a world that already feels ill at ease is uncomfortable and challenging. The city that gets blamed in newspaper headlines for all the bad things federal government heaps upon the nation has a soul ... and a heart. ■

*Geoff Orchison*

Geoff Orchison is editor of the *Catholic Voice*, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

## Music of Taizé

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