Tui Motu

InterIslands

August 2004 Price $5

all creation
is a symphony of joy

(Hildegard of Bingen)

Seasons of Grace

Contents

Correction: In the plan of the new Southern Star Abbey, Kopua in the July issue (pages 16-17), the church was placed to the left of the cloister instead of to the right.

Last month, two magnificent celebrations took place in Dunedin, occasions of grace to brighten the southern winter. First, Sisters of Mercy gathered from all parts and after 150 years of distinguished but segregated service of the church in this country, they declared themselves to be one. It was a time of tears, of laughter and of faith. The North Islanders came clad in their thermals and armed with hotties: but in the event the sun shone endlessly and God put on his best winter smile for the occasion.

No less splendid and even more colourful was the ordination of Colin Campbell as Dunedin's sixth Catholic bishop. The Town Hall was packed, the music appropriate, the symbolism powerful, and the interior blazed with reds and scarlets invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit. Such family celebrations leave you with a sense of having been 'graced', visited by the presence of God who makes all things new and fills the faithful with joy.

This month, fittingly, our principle theme is the grace of God. It balances last month's reflection on the nature of evil and sin. There is no more Christian concept. When asked what he thought was unique about Christian faith, C.S.Lewis at once replied, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace." No other word or notion quite captures the overflowing goodness of God who accepts each of us without examination, who heals without charge, and who is continually "making all things new".

A new bishop for this diocese after 21 years ushers in the sense of a new beginning, a new hopefulness. Changes of leadership are in the air: we might even expect a change of Pope. So what sort of leadership do we need, do we want? Cardinal Tom Williams placed some possibilities before Bishop Colin at his installation: he is called to be a pastor, a prophet, a holy man, one with special jurisdiction.

However, there is one aspect of leadership especially demanded today, treated in Andrew Greeley's article (*pp 11-13*) and the readers' discussion (*pp14-15*): ***how do the churches get their message across***, not merely to their own, but to society generally? The printed discussion was provoked by Cardinal Williams' recent public statement, which contained many things needing to be said. Yet it largely fell on deaf ears or was rubbished: only the faithful applauded. And if our Cardinal failed to make an impact on a secular audience, the Vatican, says Greeley, fails even to dialogue effectively with its most faithful adherents.

The gift I pray for primarily for our leaders is wisdom. It is a special charism of the Holy Spirit. It is not acquired quickly or easily. It prompts us to hold our tongue more than speak out. It shows us how to choose the moment and the occasion. It guides our words and actions, so that God's work is done and not obstructed. Our leaders, our bishops, need this gift perhaps before all else. May it be our prayer for Bishop Colin.

Another occasion for celebration is *Tui Motu*'s seventh birthday, which happens to coincide with our 75th issue. A Presbyterian reader serendipitously sent us the letter printed opposite. We wondered, when we read it, if she had posted it to the wrong address. However, we are happy to give it a special place – as something to live up to.

On a personal note, it is no mean achievement to have more issues under the belt than years in the bank, for which I thank God and all of you. The other ambition of one's mature years is to beat one's age at golf. To achieve that, I would have to neglect *Tui Motu*. That will never happen.

Happy Birthday Tui Motu!

Tui Motu no. 75

Seventh birthday issue

letters

Breath of fresh air

Since a dear Catholic friend introduced me to your magazine last year and began lending me copies, I became hooked and decided I must have my own subscription. As I read it from cover to cover I find so much food for thought, and I feel like Oliver Twist and just want more!

The way in which contributors are prepared to honestly face, seek and tease out our spiritual and social issues – and even to question church practices in the light of the gospel – is quite inspiring. It is a lesson to us all of any denomination. We should continue to value honest self-examination and spiritual growth, both as individuals and as church. To any who say that the church is dying, I would say "no way", not while we have communication and dialogue of this calibre.

But it isn't about issues: it's about people sharing their knowledge and understanding, their perceptions, their dreams, their poetry and their lives. Real people in a real world who care and who speak across both time and the denominational barriers that men have erected. Your magazine is like a breath of fresh air and a marvellous sign of life in the church, and of God with us. When I open the magazine I am never sure where to start because I want to read it all at once. And then when I have read it all, I can't wait for the next edition.

I am not fond of denominational labels, but as a Presbyterian Christian I congratulate all who contribute, all who put it together and all who make it work and mail it out. May you all be encouraged, and please keep it going.

Lesley Lumsden, Mosgiel

June Tui Motu

From my point of view this is a remarkable issue. In fact for me it is a crucial one, one that should herald a turning point.

It is an issue that should prompt all those lay people who are in an advanced state of 'clerification', resolutely to work for Vatican III. And for the rest of us, it should make us intensify our work in the name of truth, life and the pursuit of the kingdom of God in the spirit of an open civil society 'without frontiers', active in discerning and identifying failures in social justice in our treatment of people by people and institutions.

In particular, I applaud the Editor for the cover page which reflects with such vivid and simple imagery and reality, the age-old questions from which all the philosophical yearnings of humans can be said to originate.

Philippe Nallétamby, Hamilton

Church reform – now!

Thank you for the Luke Johnson article that has appeared in the June edition of *Tui Motu*. What a thought provoking piece in light of the happenings over recent years in the international and domestic church.

The church is a church in deep crisis and one has to ask what is the hierarchy doing about it (hiding their head in the sand like they have done for centuries), especially to protect the community at large and the priests that serve in it.

I am particularly bothered that the door in Rome seems to be tightly closed especially on celibacy, the ordination of women (not that I want to be one) and divorce. I do believe that we as a community need to be challenging the hierarchy as well as showing concern and voicing our opinion loudly in a hope that we may be heard and change may eventually come.

The church desperately needs to look how it implements its practices and processes as Johnson's suggests. It needs to give recognition to women by giving them an equal place in the church, which will allow it a more human face and help overcome the many mistakes that are already well established and documented in its history going back centuries.

Our Catholic Church must trust in the Holy Spirit and remember that God created man and women in his own image, which indicates equality. Now is the time to let women become full members of the church and be allowed to begin to put right some of these dreadful wrongdoings with a feminine face. I also hope that men within the ordained ministry of the church should have the opportunity to reach full potential as humans and be in keeping with the sacred scripture and the practices of a healthy society.

As a member of the church I urge

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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ISSN 1174-8931

the Catholic bishops of New Zealand to take the lead, and be our strong voice to the Vatican and work towards reform and change, especially on celibacy, divorce and women priests. As Johnson puts it: "hope lies in a more coherent sexual teaching and reform of structures of authority"

What a healthier church we might be!

Stephanie Harris-Stevens, Lower Hutt

Home birthing

I read with interest in your *June* issue Sophie Style's article describing her feelings on home birthing. Having had four of my five children at home, I can attest to the intense satisfaction and profound spiritual experience of giving birth to a family member in the presence of its father and siblings and without medical intervention. However, I was most disturbed by two impressions I gained from her article.

The first was the implication that doctors only have interests in controlling delivery and early life in the hospital environment rather than the joyful and spiritual aspects of a birth. While it should be true that most pregnancies and births will occur naturally, my very limited training in the area has made it clear to me that unforseen problems can, and frequently do happen.

Ms Style's denouncement of the medical profession rankles because the current practice of obstetrics grew from the wish of doctors to improve obstetric outcomes (and it has been very successful in this), not to 'bewilder' with 'technical apparatus'. At heart, doctors care for their patients, and many will try to support their patients' wishes, but only to the extent that they feel that the health of mother or child would not be at risk.

The attitude of some other health practitioners towards doctors can rub off on the patient (and here I also speak from my experience in oncology and palliative care), who is at risk of being swayed by emotive arguments and case reports rather than good evidence of effectiveness of a given approach, sometimes towards a detrimental outcome. Perhaps the best outcome can be obtained by all practitioners having respect for each other and a willingness to accept that each may have a positive contribution to make.

The second impression I received was of the apparent lack of male input in her account of childbirth. While traditionally childbirth has been in the female arena, I'm sure she would agree that willing males should not these days continue to be excluded. Sophie Style's article made disparaging allusions to male doctors and comments on a patriarchal belief system where "the male is superior and normalised, whereas the female is ultimately lacking and abnormal". The father, and men in general, are so important to the family and society.

I will continue to look to *Tui Motu* for balanced articles which avoid the denigration of any 'minority' group – feminist, doctors or males.

Dr Karen Pronk Nambour, Q'land

Ceoliacs & communion

Dear Jesus,

I have been under a misapprehension for the last 45 years. I thought you said, at the Last Supper with your disciples, "Take this all of you and eat it", when you broke the bread and distributed it. I didn't hear you say: 'take this all of you and eat it, except for those of you who suffer from coeliac disease.' If indeed you meant this, why didn't you make it very plain and say so.

Since this 'problem' came to my attention I have been searching – in vain – through the Scriptures for your definitive recipe for the bread. I thought you just grabbed what was on the table and used what was there. If you did it this way then what I want to know is, "Why do we not use the same bread now that you used?" I'm sure that what we are told is the 'real' communion 'bread' bears no resemblance to that which was used by you.

I read an article the other day written by one of your priests. It was rather tongue-in-cheek – I hope. I don't think that he really believed what he wrote. Myself I couldn't believe what I was reading. For the sake of some Vatican legalistic interpretation the Church in New Zealand is prepared to sacrifice the membership of a group of sincere believers. Marie Antoinette is reputed to have said: "Let them eat cake". Here is a priest saying: "let them drink your blood only". Funny, Jesus, I thought you wanted everybody to partake fully in the sacrifice of your life and death and resurrection.

Now comes the crunch. As you know I have been a Catholic for 45 years. Not because I was born in the church but because I thought you chose me to join up all those years ago. In that time I have married, had five wonderful children, and now have the gift of 15 beautiful grandchildren. By a quirk of fate one of our daughters has received an unwanted gift through the gene bank. She has coeliac disease.

What I want to know Jesus is this, "If you were alive to-day (and I believe that you are) what would you do about prescribing the appropriate 'bread' for my daughter?" You see, if she can't receive Communion fully, then I can't either. You won't just be missing her at Mass but me as well.

I can't stand the legalism which your church now uses as a synonym for belief.

Don Keene, Geraldine

Tui Motu's future

Some months ago (*Feb '04*) Tom Cloher wrote about the need to secure the future of this excellent magazine. The main concern seems to be having someone in the wings ready and able to take over the editorship, even in the short term, when it inevitably becomes necessary.

I suggest publicising *Tui Motu* more, the resulting finance enabling a more lucrative and tempting offer to be made. Some parishes seem not to know *Tui Motu* at all. We are lucky that we have a most persuasive parishioner who monthly ensures that there is an excellent readership here.

His example could be followed by a volunteer in every parish to publicise this great publication. We can't lose it!

E.M. Wall, St Helier's Bay

Non-nuclear New Zealand 20 years on

Robert G. Patman

Twenty years ago, New Zealand elected its fourth Labour government and implemented a commitment to make the country "nuclear free". The policy included prohibiting port entry by any ships either under nuclear power or carrying nuclear weapons. In January 1985 David Lange's government denied a United States request for a visit by the *USS Buchanan.* That decision led ultimately to US suspension of its defence commitments to New Zealand under the ANZUS alliance treaty and a breach in political relations between the two countries, yet to be fully mended.

The establishment of the non-nuclear policy was the crowning achievement of the country's anti-nuclear peace movement. It was also criticised as a frivolous moral exercise indulging vocal anti-nuclear activists while needlessly jeopardizing New Zealand's national interests and sacrificing its ANZUS alliance relationship with the USA. Much of this criticism was rooted in the realist conviction that a small or a medium-sized state could only find relative security by enlisting the protection of a larger state's power. The nuclear age, it was argued, had not fundamentally changed this logic.

But, 20 years on, New Zealand's nuclear-free defence policy has survived. In fact, the consistently high level of domestic support for this policy has surprised both its realist critics and its most ardent advocates. Since 1990, a political consensus within the country has helped to sustain the non-nuclear approach. The National Party, under the new leadership of Don Brash, recently flirted with the idea of amending it, but backed off when it became apparent there was little popular support for change.

Why has the non-nuclear strategy proven so resilient? In many ways it became a symbolic demonstration of New Zealand's national resolve to forge a distinctive foreign policy after Britain finally joined the EU in January 1973. David Lange's political leadership was crucial in this regard. If he initially saw the non-nuclear approach as part of a pragmatic political trade-off for the adoption of Rogernomics, his forceful and articulate advocacy of a 'nuclear free' New Zealand in government helped to generate a 'David and Goliath' style confrontation with the Reagan administration in 1985, which elevated anti-nuclearism to the status of a defining national interest.

In the era of globalization, New Zealand has continued to support multilateralism and shown a presence on the international stage that is out of all proportion to its size. New Zealand's refusal to abandon its non-nuclear stance in the face of US pressure contributed to this. In 1993, New Zealand acceded to one of the non-permanent seats on the UN Security Council; Don McKinnon, former New Zealand Foreign Minister, was appointed to the position of Secretary General of the Commonwealth; and former PM Mike Moore, won a 3-year 'split term' as Director General of the World Trade Organisation.

New Zealand has also established an international reputation for its active and effective contribution to UN peacekeeping. In 2003, for example, it had over 800 military personnel serving in 13 UN-authorised peace support or humanitarian missions around the globe. It has worked closely with Australia and the US in places such as the Persian Gulf War of 1990-1, Somalia in 1992-93, East Timor in 1999-2000 and the Solomons in 2003-4.

But the absence of working together within the ANZUS framework has helped to generate different strategic outlooks between non-nuclear New Zealand on the one hand, and Australia and the US on the other. These differences surfaced after the election of the Labour-Alliance coalition in 1999, when the Helen Clark-led government announced it was scrapping New Zealand's air combat and strike capability, downsizing the navy, and allocating the bulk of government expenditure, some NZ$700 million, to strengthening the army. This new defence policy angered and alarmed Canberra and, to a lesser extent, Washington. It was seen as a serious degradation of New Zealand's military capabilities. The Howard government expressed its displeasure by concluding a free trade agreement with the US in 2003 that excluded New Zealand.

But the economic price should not be exaggerated. First, there are signs that the US-Australian free trade agreement will not live up to Australian expectations in the key area of agriculture. Second, the Clark government could argue that New Zealand's capacity to take an independent stance on key international issues such as nuclear weapons should not be compromised for hypothetical economic or political benefits.

Certainly, the mixture of idealism and realism that shaped New Zealand's non-nuclear stance can be found in the Clark government's support for the US-led war on terror after the events of September 11. New Zealand has made a substantial contribution to the military effort, including SAS deployments in Afghanistan and naval deployments in the Gulf. Such support did not extend to backing a US-led invasion of Iraq without UN Security Council authorisation. Here, New Zealand parted company with two traditional allies, Australia and Britain.

In the last two decades, New Zealand's non-nuclear security policy has been linked with profound changes in the country's national identity and its foreign policy. Far from being sidelined by this experience, New Zealand seems to have gained the political confidence to believe that a small state can make a difference in an increasingly interconnected world.

Robert Patman is Associate Professor of Political Studies, at Otago University. This article first appeared in the Otago Daily Times

Amazing grace

Grace, as identified in the Christian tradition, is monstrously unjust – says Dunedin Catholic writer, Mike Riddell.

This article complements his piece on human evil in the July issue. The bad news is we are a sin-sodden lot; the good news – the 'gospel' – is God still loves us and forgives us.

God walked into heaven and discovered that everyone was there. This didn't seem fair, as some of those gathered had done terrible things in life. So everyone was summoned before God, where an angel read the Ten Commandments. When the first commandment was read, God said, "Everyone who has broken this commandment will have to leave." The same happened with each of the other commandments. By the time the angel had finished reading the 7th, there was hardly anyone left.

God looked up, and saw a small group of thin-lipped and self-righteous ascetics remaining in heaven. They seemed rather pleased with themselves and their lifelong fastidious obedience. For a few moments, God considered the prospect of spending eternity in the company of these puritans. Then he raised his voice and shouted to the ends of the universe, "Alright everyone, come back!" The crowds returned with great happiness, but the religious minority were furious, saying, 'We've wasted our lives.'

As James K. Baxter once said, such jokes and fables provide a dramatised theology which cuts right to the bone. The preceding story seems innocent enough, but it entirely subverts what many regard as the natural moral and religious order. It points up the dangerous aspect of what is sometimes

regarded as an innocuous notion: the idea of grace. Just as sin has been diluted to insipid levels, the popular contemporary understanding of grace is no longer anything worthy of crucifixion. Familiarity has misled us into thinking of it as something with the consistency of candy floss: sweet but insubstantial. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Grace is easily enough defined. It is simply love overcoming judgement. Another story might provide some insight. It seems that every soul is connected to God by an invisible string. Whenever someone turns their back on their Maker and commits a sin, that string is broken. The only thing to be done is for God to repair the connection by tying a knot in the string. Unfortunately this makes it a little bit shorter. Some people sin a great deal, and God is always having to tie knots in their cord. That's why great sinners end up a lot closer to God.

That small story, is I think, both beautiful and perceptive. It is also slightly scandalous to people who have lived their lives trying to do what is right, many of whom are good church folk. They quite rightly feel that this view of life undervalues discipline and virtue, and promotes both indolence and loose living. What, after all, is the point in doing what is good, when those who live wantonly seem to be rewarded equally? Why strive for righteousness if the profligate masses can do as they please and find favour with an indiscriminate God?

Grace is monstrously unjust, in that it severs the inevitable connection between deed and consequence, which is the foundation of both morality and law. Furthermore, as the contemporaries of Jesus understood only too well, it destroys the religious impulse which posits a connection between earthly conduct and eternal reward. The story of the Prodigal Son, as an example, incites not just intimacy but anarchy. The much maligned elder brother is the one who has the clearest perspective on this, and is justifiably angry. He represents all of us who have a stakeholding in the ecclesiastical status quo.

When love overcomes judgment, those who have built their house upon jurisprudence find themselves homeless. The choices open to them are stark: they can welcome the grace which promises freedom, or they can resist it for the sake of preserving their special status as the 'good' people. The foundational events of Christian faith, which culminated in Golgotha, demonstrate the lengths to which we all might go in order to guard the gates of salvation. It is helpful to remember this whenever we might be tempted to regard grace as something akin to polite liberalism.

If, as I have argued previously, sin is a given in the human condition rather than the individual indiscretions of a reprobate minority, then any suggested division between the enlightened faithful and ignorant barbarians is not only arbitrary but ill-founded. The apostle Paul understood precisely the implications of Jesus' teaching, declaring that we are all in the same boat when it comes to sin. None of us is in a good position to petition God for justice to be given us rather than love. We all need grace. Unfortunately some of us are tempted, dangerously, to think we've outgrown it.

Paradoxically, it may be those who consider themselves 'saved' who are most resistant to grace, while those who know themselves to be 'sinners' are thirsty for it. Why? Because people who do well in life like to think that they 'deserve' their success, while those whose lives are chaotic and fractured prefer to see their tragedies as unearned. There is a clash of theologies at work in our society, which is not limited to the people who know what theology is. Like sin, grace is a quality which touches all human life, and not just the people who can name it.

The contrasting theologies have been expressed quite clearly in New Zealand society through recent advertising campaigns. One, which we might describe as the theology of grace, is illustrated in the highly entertaining '*Bugger!*' commercials. In these, life for humans and animals alike is shown to be something beset with unintended disasters. In short, things go wrong for people in all sorts of unexpected ways. This doesn't mean that they are bad people. There is a very loose connection between goodness and outcome.

In the face of this, the appropriate theological response is '*Bugger!*' It's a rough declaration of the graced life – one in which there is space for things to turn bad without it necessarily being anyone's fault. The causal link between the way we live and the consequences has been cut. As an approach to life, many might find this overly casual and haphazard. But it does allow the category of the unmerited; creating space not only for tragedy, but for good things to drop on us with all the excitement of a tree stump demolishing a dunny.

The contrary perspective was spelled out in a series of banking commercials which advanced the proposition that 'Luck has nothing to do with it'. This is the theology of power, or what Walter Brueggemann has termed 'the ➥

Grace and sacramentality

In the Catholic theology of Eucharist you physically experience grace in the actions of eating and drinking. All you have to do is to find your way to the front of the queue and receive! You are nourished there and then. I'm constantly fascinated by this line of people – all shapes and sizes with no one measuring them with a ruler – stumbling towards the front to receive the Eucharist.

This is in stark contrast to Evangelical theology where there is a sense in which faith has to be worked at and felt. The evangelical wing of Protestantism places less emphasis on Eucharist: the communion elements have become little more than signs. There is an implicit expectation that a person has to 'measure up' in order to be worthy to receive. Indeed I have been in Protestant churches where quite explicit statements are made to ensure that only the worthy come forward. The subconscious message is that grace has to be earned. The distinction is subtle, yet fundamental.

As regards confession, the more liturgical forms of Protestantism will have a corporate form of confession. But in the Baptist tradition there was seldom any such process or ritual: it was left to a person's individual conscience. If you were 'saved', then that was it!

Protestantism grew up in the modern era, so that belief became a rational process, a decision of the mind and will to appropriate faith; whereas the sacramental view seems to me that one can receive grace, whether one fully understands it or not. There is a strong sense of communities as a whole responding to God's call.

The best theology of reconciliation, to my mind, does not see confession as a cataloguing of sins, but rather as a turning inwards and acknowledging one's sinful nature and need for God's healing. It opens the heart to the reception of grace.

The rite celebrates the fact that God has already forgiven us. It is a communal and participatory event. Both spiritually and psychologically the whole reconciliation process is very important, allowing people to deal with the things thrown up during life instead of feeling guilty and suppressing them. It allows them to bring grace back into the areas of living where damage has happened.

In Catholicism I have discovered the importance and availability of ritual which works at a deeper level than a purely rational approach.

M.R.

royal consciousness'. It maintains a very tight connection between what people do and what happens to them. If people are poor, it is their own fault – and, naturally, if they are wealthy it is due to their own moral superiority. This pervasive philosophy is a kind of secular Pharisaism which regards human effort as capable of twisting the arm of fate.

Alain de Botton, in his masterpiece *Status Anxiety,* has revealed the sentiment as the undergirding ideology of a meritocracy which has become orthodox in Western society. It stems from the meditation of the rich. Why are they in positions of privilege and power? Because they deserve them. Why do they deserve them? Because they are better people than their social inferiors. Those who have done well in life have no wish to regard their rewards as arbitrary rather than earned.

Despite New Zealand's vibrant counter-ideology of black-singleted subversive humour, the theology of power holds sway in our market economy. Under the iron rule of meritocracy, we all of us are only as good as we can prove ourselves to be. Little wonder then that people are working longer hours and enduring greater pressures in the unrelenting struggle to demonstrate their value. We have created a perverse form of social Darwinism in which only the winners win, and all others are losers of one form or another.

In a previous era people wrestled with the question of their salvation, seeking to know what they could do to secure it. Our culture has people desperate simply to be noticed, and willing to sacrifice whatever is necessary to achieve this. Both religious and secular forms of self-improvement end up in life-denying futility, attempting that which is unattainable. Neither salvation nor self-worth can be manufactured through our own agency. Ironically, that which people bruise their souls to achieve is available freely if they will only open themselves to it.

Knowledge of sin, and the humility to admit it, is not something which should cause us to break our teeth in despair. It is simply the corridor which leads us to the door of grace. To that place where we are prepared to give up on manipulations and performances intended to win favour, recognising our good deeds to be as inadequate as our bad in the quest for acceptance. It is only then and there that we are able to understand that there is nothing to be won; that we are already accepted and loved, and nothing will change that.

Grace is applied love; love which has become more than an abstract concept; love which is received and known. With this knowledge comes the freedom to be human. The paradox of our existence is that the more we strive for acceptance, the further it retreats from us. Only when we know ourselves to be already cherished, simply by virtue of our existence, do we have the space in which to grow into the life which is ours alone to live. It is grace which is the kernel of the gospel, and the gift which holds me in the faith through all those experiences which seem to deny it.

Christianity has never been a set of moral principles. It is inevitably distorted when presented as such, and we must judge the experiment of Christendom to have been a failure from which we are all still recovering. It is, in many ways, the end of morality – if we understand morality as a human striving to do what is right. Any goodness which ensues from those who have given themselves to Christ is a by-product of the love which sustains them. Augustine understood this perfectly when he gave the ethical advice to 'love God and do as you please'.

The institution of the church has great difficulty in upholding the tenets of grace. This is nowhere more lucidly expounded than in Dostoevsky's parable of The Grand Inquisitor in *The Brotheres Karamazov*. This describes the return of Jesus to Seville in Spain during the Inquisition of the 16th century. The Grand Inquisitor sees

Rich and poor

The Gospel 'pearl of great price' is good news to the poor and bad news to the rich, because of what one has to divest oneself of. It is the *love of* money which is the root of evil, how much one's life is bound up with one's possessions. The whole of life is a process of learning how to let go – up to the final 'letting go' at death.

For those who have great wealth their lives become bound up with their goods. The Gospel requires an opening of oneself to God which is a 'liberation', but for the wealthy it becomes the opposite, something to hide from, because it threatens one's material security. The challenge of the gospel is: you either have your security in the kingdom of God or you forge your own.

I don't think people set out to develop a theology which protects their own situation. But the temptation is there. They become attached to the *form* of religion while neglecting the essence. The outward trappings become all-important. I have often said that the best place to hide from God is inside the church. You can concern yourself with all manner of ecclesiastical concerns without ever encountering God.

There has been an ongoing battle in the history of Christianity to define who is 'in' and who is 'outside' the pale. It becomes a covert way of exerting control and judging people, implying that 'I'm in and you're not'. Whereas James K Baxter, and many before him, pointed to a humanism in the Christian faith which recognises the working of God in every person, inside or outside the church. Baxter observed the power of the gospel working especially among the poor in the community. Since the poor have less to lose, they tend therefore to be more open to the movements of the spirit.

M.R.

Who Let The Dogs In?

A reflection on Matt 15:21-28 and Acts 10

In the household of faith, for the early Christians, who was 'in' and who was 'out'? Glynn Cardy seeks a New Testament answer and applies it to today's exclusion issues

In *Matthew 15:21ff* we read of the exchange between Jesus and the Canaanite woman who wanted her daughter healed. Initially Jesus responds to her pleas by not answering. He tells his disciples that he was "sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel". The woman continues to plead. Jesus tells her: "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." She responds: "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall under their master's table."

The dominant metaphor in this exchange is the household. Jesus is within the house of Judaism, ministering to its children. The woman, Justa, as the 3rd and 4th century Pseudo-Clementine homilies call her, is outside the house. She is a Gentile, a dog. Jesus is an insider. Justa is an outsider.

In the world of male honour, Justa bests Jesus in the argument. By losing to a woman he is shamed. Yet in the eyes of the early faith communities who talked out this story before it was committed to text, Jesus manifests the greater virtue of hospitality by responding positively to the challenge to open wide the doors of his metaphor.

Justa brings to the words "house" and "children", the words "table" and "food". This was the primary site of conflict for the early church. As Luke Timothy Johnson says, "We are obsessed (today) by the sexual dimension of the body. The first-century Mediterranean world was obsessed by the social implications of food and table fellowship." To let the dogs in 'as is' was unscriptural, ritually unhygienic, and contrary to culture.

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him in the street, recognises him, and locks him in prison before he can do any harm. As a wily old theologian, the Inquisitor knows the danger which Jesus presents to his religion.

Later he visits his Saviour in prison, and chastises him for the impossible mess that he left behind – one which the church has been forced to tidy up. He accuses Jesus in these terms: ***Instead of seizing men's freedom, You gave them even more of it! Have You forgotten that peace, and even death, is more attractive to man than the freedom of choice that derives from the knowledge of good and evil?... You wanted to gain man's love so that he would follow You of his own free will, fascinated and captivated by You. In place of the clear and rigid ancient law, You made man decide about good and evil for himself, with no other guidance than Your example... think now, was that the best that You could offer them?***

Our brave new world, of course, has replaced religious law with the equally rigorous demands of performance evaluation. It is not so much those who trespass, but those who fail to measure up who are punished in our culture. The Grand Inquisitor has been internalised, and now directs his programme of torture in the halls of our self-esteem. If grace is love overcoming judgment, then often it is self-loathing which provides the fiercest resistance.

Puritanism dies hard. We are constantly tempted back to carping and moralising and trying harder, unaware of the existential tangle we are creating for ourselves. Like serial dieters, we are trapped in cycles of excess and restraint. While we might be inclined to relinquish our bad intentions, we feel less inclined to surrender even the good as a way of becoming free. But the path of grace asks that we come to an end of our striving, and cast ourselves on the mercy of God. Only then may true goodness burst unexpectedly within us like a spring bulb cracking winter's crust.

People who stumble across the sublime gift of God's grace do not stop sinning. But they do become free from sin. They break the iron shackles of consequence, and are able to live fully without fear. To be human, as created in the image of God, is a marvellous and beautiful thing. That possibility has already been given to each of us to possess, through the eternal and limitless grace of God.■

Mike Riddell is a novelist and religious author living in Dunedin

Justa the Gentile takes the household metaphor of eating and widens it in order that both children and dogs are fed from the same table. She believes that the table of faith in the God of Jesus can sustain both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus for his part opens his mind to her truth, and grants her request.

Hospitality requires more than simply inviting others to dine with us. It requires a hospitable heart and a generous mind. It requires us to accept that the others, the 'Gentiles', are different from us and may never believe or act exactly the same as us. Therefore the table we will sit at together will feel less like our table. The table, though familiar, will now feel somewhat strange and foreign. Maybe this is the power of the words: "It is the Lord's table." It's not ours.

Contrary to the accepted understanding of Torah, Jesus would preach and live out a table fellowship where pure and impure, male and female, Jew and Gentile, insiders and outsiders, would dine together. Not always comfortably, as Acts and the Epistles show, but together.

Today in the Anglican world – and not only there – gays and lesbians can be thought of as the outsiders challenging those of us who are comfortable with the heterosexual norm to revision our household of faith. A new table fellowship, like in the early church, will not come easily. We will never all agree or should agree. The vision is not for sameness. Rather it is for mutual respect and the acknowledgement that there is more than one way to be Christian.

Acts 10 is the pivotal point of the *Book of Acts*. Until chapter 10 the gospel had been preached only to Jews. Admittedly it had been preached to those who, though Jews, were considered contaminated – the detested Samaritans (*Acts 8:4-25*) and the sexually 'other' Ethiopian (*8:26-40*). But it is still firmly within the Jewish house. It is not a religion for Gentiles. In chapter 10, however, Peter moves ethnically to the edge, and takes a dangerous step across a threshold that would demand the most fundamental reinterpretation for the emergent church.

Peter falls into a sleep and sees a large sheet coming down from the heavens. In it are all manner of animals – the clean and unclean, the ones a Jew could eat and the ones a Jew couldn't. "Then he heard a voice say, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "By no means... for I have never eaten anything unclean." The voice said to him again... "What God has made clean you must not call profane" (*10:13-15*).

Luke Timothy Johnson writes: "Please remember the stakes. The Gentiles were considered 'by nature' unclean, and were 'by practice' polluted by idolatry. The decision to let the Gentiles in 'as is' (not requiring their conversion to Judaism) came into direct conflict with the accepted interpretation of Torah and what God wanted of humans." (*Scripture and Discernment: Decision-making in the Church*, Abingdon : Nashville, 1983, p.147)

Peter's vision leads him to respond to an invitation to intimate fellowship with an impure Gentile's household (Cornelius's) – whom he baptises once he sees evidence that the Spirit is at work among them as it was among the original Jewish disciples. Peter then has the problem of justifying his actions to his colleagues in Jerusalem.

Luke, unlike Matthew and Mark, does not represent Jesus as having dismissed the issue of food purity (*Mt 15:1-20; Mk 7:1-23*), but on the contrary presents the early disciples as keeping to a very high standard of purity. Thus, the addition of true Gentiles to the community created a serious problem about the relationship of believers to one another in terms of purity of their food. Luke acknowledges the seriousness of problem by repeating the incident in full in *Acts 11*. If the Jerusalem Council found in favour of Peter with Cornelius' household, then faithful Jewish Christians would inevitably be compromised. There was no way for a win-win solution here.

The deck is stacked against Peter. Scripture as Peter understands it opposes his action. Deuteronomy does not permit the People of God to mix with foreigners. Tradition is against him – the Maccabean Wars against foreign influences are in his people's recent history. The only argument in his favour is that there is something experientially remarkable about the work of Jesus in people's lives. To their great credit, the apostles and elders in Jerusalem knew the Spirit of Jesus well enough to discern that God was doing a new thing.

Bishop Sisk of New York writes: "I cast my vote with those bishops who chose to confirm Gene Robinson's election. I did so (because there is) clear evidence that God has blessed the vocation and witness of gay and lesbian priests within the life of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. Lives have been changed, faith in God as revealed in Jesus has been embraced. We are a strong and growing diocese, and gay and lesbian priests and lay people are important elements in that vitality. As Scripture reassures us: "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit." (*NRSV, Lk 6:43-44*)

It was the faithfulness of Cornelius and his household, and the way the Spirit was with them, that convinced Peter that this enormous theological shift was of God. Similarly for Bishop Sisk at this time in our church. Similarly for me. When faced with the faithfulness of homosexual Christians many of us find it difficult to deny the workings of God. ■

Glynn Cardy is an Auckland Anglican priest.
He is due to become Pastor of St Matthew-in-the-City this month

A church failing to communicate properly

Sociologist and theologian Andrew Greeley looks at the way the Vatican is currently communicating the Catholic Church's message to the world – and finds it wanting. In Part One (of two) Greeley poses at the problem

The Catholic Church stretches to the ends of the earth and is now responsible for the religious life of at least 1.2 billion people in a world of jet transportation and almost instant communication. Yet despite fax machines and computers, the institutional organization of the Vatican has not changed appreciably since the late 18th century. Moreover, the modest reforms of Vatican II quite unintentionally destabilized the structures of the church and thus diminished the credibility of its leadership.

To a relative Vatican outsider like myself, the church's need for organizational change seems self-evident. Yet few bishops comprehend that decision making is shaped by the information available to the decision makers, and that, in the absence of good information, serious mistakes are made.

In this article I will develop a Social Science critique of the internal organization of the Catholic Church. In Part 2 I will offer tentative recommendations for reform. My thesis is that many of the problems facing the church today flow not from theological error, bad will, or malice, but from inadequate information. A reorganization of the church will not by itself heal the polarization between those who enthusiastically support the Second Vatican Council and those who want to reverse it, but without an open flow of information healing is not possible.

Many contend that the church does not need Social Science or apply to itself its own principle of *subsidiarity* (which means: nothing should be done at a higher and larger level that can be done at a lower and smaller level). Such reasoning, based on simplistic faith and even more simplistic theology in effect regards the church as purely divine and thus unaffected by the problems that beset other human institutions.

'Don't worry about the poverty of leadership', pious folk (including cardinals) tell me, 'God will not desert his church.' Does that also mean God was responsible for all the errors and mistakes the church has made?

This erroneous perspective must be dismissed out of hand, for the church is subject to the same organizational dynamics as other human institutions. If the church is to function effectively it needs to follow the same principles of subsidiarity any other human institution must.

Subsidiarity opens the way for the maximum input from the Spirit. There may be some sense in which subsidiarity does not apply to the church, but there must be some sense in which it does – at least when it comes to organizational management. John XXIII said that it does apply to the church; John Paul II says it does not. I am prepared to agree with both.

A church too centralised

Should the present strongly centralized organisation of the church continue? The truth is it doesn't work very

well because the current structure is 'flat'. There is in practice no ordered hierarchy leading down from the pope to the local bishops and no reliable flow of information coming up from the local church.

For example, the pope must supervise several thousand bishops. Yet corporate theory suggests that an executive should supervise no more than seven subordinates. True, the pope exercises control with the help of the heads of the various curial congregations, but these men specialize in subject matter (liturgy, making bishops etc.), not in regions of the world or specific countries.

The pope's task is therefore impossible. The available sources of information – either through the papal nuncios in the various countries (men who do not remain in a country long and whose competence may vary greatly) or through the various curial departments (who collect their information mostly from negative complaints) – are bound to be thin and often contradictory. The leadership structure of the church has changed little since it supervised Europe primarily and communicated by stagecoach over the Alps.

For example, we routinely hear of Rome's solemn concern for the problems affecting the American church. Yet the truth is the Vatican is largely clueless, not simply because of its anti-American bias or because of stupidity (though one must not exclude those factors), but because there is no way for the Roman Curia to acquire adequate information about the United States or any other country. Thus the pope was, through no fault of his own, apparently not aware of the seriousness of the sexual-abuse problem. How was he to know, if no one told him? One Roman official attributed clerical sexual abuse to the "hypersexuality of American culture."

In the absence of better information Curial officials fall back on vague generalizations that are often little more than uninformed clichés. They do so not because they are malicious, but because they are ignorant. Inadequate information leads to bad decisions. That inevitably happens in a 'flat' organization. Whoever the next pope is, he must open up communication within the church and transform its flatness.

Collaborative government

Another mark of good management is the ability to govern collaboratively. In every organization someone is ultimately responsible for making decisions. Successful managers listen very carefully to subordinates, however, and take into account their advice and recommendations.

Since the bishops went home at the end of the Second Vatican Council there has been little collaborative governance in the church. Neither Paul VI nor John Paul II has taken the triennial synod of bishops very seriously. Bishops have no control of the agenda. While bishops may speak they do not engage in active debate, and the proposals that emerge often do not reflect what was said, much less the emphasis with which it was said.

When Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco suggested more dialogue with the laity on birth control might be appropriate, he was promptly put down by Curial representatives. There is no serious collaboration and little tolerance for new thinking. In fact, as one Roman cleric said to me, the present pope cannot work collaboratively. The dream of collegiality that emerged from the council has died.

Historically, of course, collaborative work at the highest levels of the church has been rare. But we desperately need it now. Some will complain that this is nothing more than an argument for making doctrinal decisions by majority vote. That is not my goal. My proposal seeks only to involve as many people as possible in collaborative efforts so that the final decision will be based on the best possible information and the wisest possible insights. If that happens, the final decision will have more influence rather then less. And Rome will speak with greater authority.

One of the primary roles of any bishop, including the bishop of Rome, is the discernment of spirits: which voices must be listened to and which not. Without collaboration and subsidiarity, however, most voices are not going to get a hearing, much less contribute to the church's discernment.

In fact, in present-day Rome the only discernment that takes place is at the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, which judges theologies and theologians and seeks only to prevent dangerous heresies. Virtually all other insights, intuitions, suggestions, or experiences that may be pertinent to the life of the church and the welfare of its people are ignored.

It is an iron law of corporate bodies, however, that he who does not listen cannot communicate. Subsidiarity and collaboration are not options, they are necessities. When a pope speaks today, the whole world hears him, not just bishops and priests. The style and the substance of what he says must show that he respects his audience.

Three illustrations

1. Marital relations

Much of the world believes that the church hates gays, women, and marital sex. I don't believe these perceptions are accurate. In a striking turn away from St. Augustine, John Paul II, at the beginning of his papacy, praised marital love in a series of addresses, albeit in the abstract rhetoric of his phenomenological philosophy. At the same time, though, he renewed the birth-control prohibition and argued that artificial contraception interferes with the total self-giving of spouses in marital love.

This argument does not convince most Catholic married people. Their standard reply is: "How does he know?" The pope's knowledge comes from philosophical deduction, not

personal experience. Married Catholics are not likely to be swayed by this sort of argument. In fact, the pope's approach merely confirms suspicions that a church run by elderly celibate men cannot understand the role of sex in the married lives of the laity.

It is my impression that some prelates still consider marital sex if not exactly sinful, then messy and somehow less than appropriate. The human sciences, which the church always endorses but almost always ignores, tell us that what is unique about human sexuality, as compared to that of the other higher primates, is its bonding power. Human couples make love far more often than do other primates because their nature inclines them to such behaviour. Lovemaking is part of the complex choreography that binds couples together through the tensions and strains and conflict and frictions of the common life.

I have yet to encounter any church leaders who understand the role sexual companionship plays in healthy marriages. Certainly no Vatican documents grasp it. Paul VI had the input of laity on his birth-control commission, but then ignored it. John Paul II, with his highly abstract theory of "mutual giving," only dug the hole deeper. The laity all over the world did not listen and continue not to listen.

I am not entering the argument about the morality of birth control. I am rather asserting that the laity feels that church leadership does not know what it is talking about. The pope himself has said that because of the charism of the sacrament of matrimony, the laity have a unique and indispensable contribution to make to the church's understanding of sexuality. This contribution cannot be made if there are no recognized channels for the laity to communicate the knowledge gained from their experience.

A parallel problem exists concerning certain developments in biotechnology, such as the church's teaching on in vitro fertilization (IVF). Laypeople simply cannot understand why a church that promotes life in all its phases forbids infertile couples from using IVF. With their usual sense of tact and consolation, some Roman officials have responded that no one has the "right to have children."

My sociological argument here is not concerned with the moral theology of the issue, but with the Vatican's insensitive and clueless use of language. When the leadership of a church of more than a billion people acts as if it has a monopoly on God's Spirit, it will inevitably offend the moral sensibilities of those it is trying to teach.

2. Women in the church

A similar situation exists when the hierarchy tries to communicate with women. To many Catholic women, especially younger women, the church's leaders, from the pope down to the local pastor, seem tone-deaf. When talking about women, the leadership often chooses a rhetoric that is reminiscent of 19th-century Romanticism – a glorification of the 'feminine' that seems designed to keep women in their place. Whenever the leadership chooses a woman to represent the church on the subject, it almost always chooses someone who will simply repeat the party line. All others are dismissed as 'radical feminists.'

In fact, many, many Catholic women who are devout and active in their parishes think church leaders hate women, and they respond in kind. 'The pope just doesn't get it', they say. Neither, I would add, does anyone else in a leadership position in the church. If they do, they keep their mouths shut.

3. Homosexual people

Finally, Vatican documents that describe homosexuality as an "objective disorder" and a "grave detriment to the common good" seem unduly harsh. Vatican warnings to Catholic politicians about approving legislation that grants legal recognition to same-sex relationships (or worse, gay marriage) seem based on an almost obsessive fear that lesbians and gays are a threat to heterosexual marriage, a threat assumed rather than demonstrated.

There seems to be little awareness in Rome that the tone and style of these denunciations offend not only gays but also their relatives, who love them no matter what their sexual orientation, as the church itself ought to, and as the God who created them certainly does. Moreover, the CDF's recent statement that for gay couples to adopt children is to do "violence" to those children, a charge for which no evidence was offered, appears to be motivated by little more than homophobia.

Gay men and women are deserving of the same loving concern as all other human beings. I doubt that anyone in the top leadership in Rome has ever seriously listened to gays, lesbians, or members of their families. In fact, the absence of sensitivity and love in the church's public statements and comments creates the strong impression that the church hates homosexuals. In a world in which a Vatican statement is reduced to a 90-second clip on television or a 750-word newspaper article, the church often looks monumentally insensitive, much more so than it really is.

In conclusion

I am not suggesting that the church should change its position on birth control, the role of women, or homosexuality. I am arguing, rather, that the church's rhetoric is counterproductive and defeats its purpose. Instead of influencing its intended audience, Vatican pronouncements turn them off. Whether greater collaboration and the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity may cause a further development of the church's teachings on these matters is beyond the scope of these reflections. ■

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Published courtesy of Commonweal magazine

The voice of the church before the world

Recently, Cardinal Williams spoke out against the liberal policies of recent governments. Tui Motu *asked four readers – Jim Neilan, Colin Gibson, Anna and John Holmes – why they thought the Cardinal's statement generally received a hostile reception*

What about immediate reactions?

Jim: When Cardinal Williams spoke, it was wide open for people to point out that the church itself has not been going too well – and in particular the way that the hierarchy have sometimes covered up serious moral deficiencies. Perhaps he would have done better to start from that precise point. As Mike Riddell wrote in the July *Tui Motu*, all humans are flawed. If you start by admitting that we all have problems, you can say: *let's work together to try to solve them*. And hopefully people might listen.

Anna Holmes

Anna: The language church leaders use is extremely important. In the past it may have been appropriate to 'sermonise', but in the present state of things people tend to switch off if they feel they are being lectured at. It's important to use 'open' rather than 'closed' language.

An 'open' statement is one which invites discussion and respects the other person's point of view. I think the negative reaction to the Cardinal's statement was because he appeared to close the options – that's the only way things can be.

Jim: I think many people would agree with the Cardinal if he were to say, for instance, that many have been hurt by the operation of market forces. That's a point worth debating.

Colin: The message of Christianity will only be got across by living it rather than just talking it. The image of the black-clad preacher standing up and telling everybody that they are going to hell – which once might have sent shivers of fear through his listeners – nowadays has become an object of scorn and mockery. So the image the church often has is that it has a limited set of moral statements, and once those have been spoken it has nothing more to say. That's closed language.

And that's a tragedy, because the wisdom of the church is very deep and very ancient: it can speak with the knowledge of the generations that have gone before. Rarely do modern speakers for the church reflect that long tradition of wisdom and experience which goes back to Biblical times.

The church often fails to understand the importance of language – indeed the importance of using contemporary language as well as the kind of words and images which will get your message across. Church people need to acquire good communication skills.

Sadly, the church's spokesmen – and they are usually males – often appear to be to be out of touch. They may spend their lives dealing with church business, but that doesn't equip them to touch the lives and needs of the mass of the population. The higher up they are in the church's hierarchy, the more remote they tend to become.

What sort of people do communicate well?

Anna: Pope John XXIII held the attention of the world by not speaking aggressively. He talked about 'love', 'inclusion' 'enablement' and he came across as a very gentle person.

Jim Neilan

Jim: Many country parishes priests in my experience can do a lot of good as leaders because they have earned the respect of the whole community by their lives. Words without example are hollow. That's why the American church particularly has lost its whole credibility.

Colin: The ordinary pastor or parish priest who is dealing every day with people's needs and problems, can address his congregation on a Sunday in their language and at a level they are familiar with. It becomes a conversation. And that is the model the church needs to follow. The church's spokespeople need to be able to communicate regularly.

John: Archbishop Vercoe has spoken out recently on homosexuality, but it also produced a negative response because people no longer expect the church to speak out openly like that. The media also tends be selective or to distort what is said by the church.

Is the media part of the problem, then?

Anna: It is uncommon to read 'good news' stories in the newspapers, especially regarding the churches. Yet there are wonderful things happening. In every city in New Zealand the community's needs are being regularly met by voluntary agencies. It would have been good if the media had focussed on such aspects as a response to the Cardinal's challenge.

John Holmes

John: Also, what the Cardinal said doesn't fit the current media style. If a story on radio or TV does not fit into a short sound bite of 30 seconds, it doesn't get broadcast. We are not well served in New Zealand by media giving us in-depth coverage of issues.

What style then will get across to people?

Anna: Cardinal Hume managed to hold people's attention because he came across as being a wise person. He wasn't telling everyone what to do; rather he was entering into dialogue and enabling people to see that there is a broader viewpoint and understand that some relationships are good and some are damaging.

Wisdom is not the prerogative of any one religion. Wisdom arises from the spirituality of human beings, how people relate to God. The wise seem to see a picture which is a bit more 'whole' rather than focussing on one little bit of it. The wise communicator avoids triviality and superficiality.

Jim: But how do you get a message across to people who don't reflect – whose world is limited by what they are going to do tonight or on their next day off? They may have recourse to tarot cards and beads – but how do you persuade them that there is a loving God?

Anna: Sometimes when people come to my surgery in some distress, I try to enable them to see how body, mind and spirit work as one. People will say 'yes' because they have an awareness of the spiritual, although they may not have the language to express it. One key is to use stories.

Traditionally, Methodists have been great communicators, haven't they?

Colin: Two people formed in the Methodist tradition who certainly have possessed the gift of touching the hearts and lives of ordinary people are Selwyn Dawson and David Lange. Selwyn was a lifelong communicator. Since he spoke and wrote week in and week out, he developed a style which was both simple and profound. He himself was gentle, yet he communicated with a quiet passion.

David Lange came from the fringes of New Zealand society, in south Auckland, but he too, especially in his early years, spoke with power and conviction in a way that touched people.

Anna: I think the church's voice also needs to be humble; humility is not about breast-beating but about acknowledging your limitations and forgiving other people theirs. There is so much in human life which is not easily explained. Therefore, it is vital the church enters into dialogue with the modern world – and one prerequisite is to listen. The church cannot speak without first listening, or its message will simply be rejected. ■

Finding hope in our liberal world

Reading Cardinal Williams' recent essay on 'The spiritual bankruptcy of liberalism', with its image of well-dressed barbarians hell-bent on tearing at the fabric of our society, one may be forgiven for seeing this as a very pessimistic view for an apostle of hope to take.

Without needing to argue that liberalism has been an unqualified blessing, in New Zealand today human rights are more widely respected, personal choices more freely available and the lives of individuals and communities more empowered for change than in times past.

The effects of colonialism have been recognised if not reversed, and Maori are experiencing a renaissance of culture and population growth; racism has been broadly tackled both here and overseas.

At the same time, our nation continues to become increasingly multicultural and a steady flow of migrants includes refugees excluded by our less generous trans-Tasman neighbours. We remain nuclear-free, and while New Zealand plays its role in keeping peace and tackling terrorism, we have kept clear of wars that lack UN sanction.

Yes, the trend to easier abortion and 'mercy killing' is worrying; yet these are seldom choices that are, deep down, freely sought, and are never simply explained by people taking the easy option. Statistics on sexual abuse, domestic violence and marriage break-up are also troubling; yet there is less likelihood of women being locked into abusive relationships from which there is no escape.

Sundays have, as the Cardinal says, become "secularised"; but most New Zealanders still enjoy the equivalent of a weekend off work, and recent legislation on holidays and parental leave has enhanced time for family and friends, rather than diminished it.

And yes, increasingly the family unit is becoming more varied than it used to be; today same-sex couples are parents, gay partners may witness to long-term fidelity, and civil unions will soon stand alongside more conventional marriages. Yet the strength and goodness of the latter will never be undermined just because new lifestyles flourish.

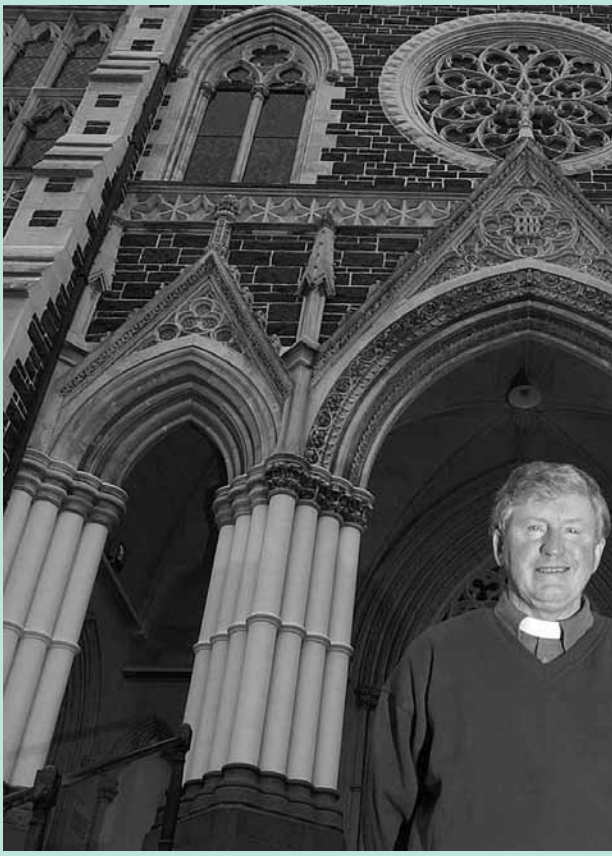
As church attendances wane, we have to look again at what it is in our faith that gives us cause for hope. In *Being Pakeha Now,* the late Michael King takes heart in the power of nature to recover from the depredations of logging, mining and burn-off.

It is in this healing process that he apprehends what he would now call God – not the image from childhood of an old man in the sky with a long beard, but a God "who is infused in the host of good and honest men and women who make up the underlying fabric that holds communities like ours together, and in the regenerative power of the natural world."

It's that sense of needing to find new hope for the future which has inspired the Sisters of Mercy in New Zealand to seek unity among their four Congregations, working to counter today's climate of fear with a gospel of peace and reconciliation. Our Earth is too small to allow us the luxury of division; for the process of healing to succeed, we must start with ourselves.

Dennis Horton

A new bishop for the deep south



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Top centre: Newly ordained bishop of Dunedin, Colin Campbell, framed in the doorway of St Joseph's Cathedral (photo courtesy of the Otago Daily Times).
1. Scenes inside the Town Hall (10 July, at the Ordination of Bishop Colin Campbell: (*above*) some of the 2000 congregation. (*below*) 2. assembled bishops and clergy.
3: 'Handing on the baton': receiving the bishop's crook from his predecessor, Bishop Len Boyle.
4. *Outside the Cathedral*: Bishop Colin with Cardinal Williams(l) and Bishop Boyle (r).
5. *Inside*: Sr Leona Garchow rsm welcomes the new bishop on behalf of religious of the diocese
6. Afterwards Bishop Colin with Fr Malo Tun Yoon (Papatoetoe) and (l to r) Gabrielle and Maggie Tupu with Mrs Vise Mackinlay.
7. Bishop Colin with his ordination classmates: Tom Sherry (Taihape); Terry Montgomery (Otahuhu); David Nolan (Takapuna).

(*photographs 1-7: Jim Neilan*)

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Cardinal Williams' homily, at the installation in St Joseph's Cathedral

Normally, in the minds of a congregation at the Mass in which a newly-ordained bishop takes possession of his Cathedral Church, there is the blunt question :"What sort of bishop will he be?" Maybe Bishop Colin Campbell is asking himself the same question. But neither you nor he can see into the future. The answer, therefore, lies with God.

What you do know is that in Colin Campbell you have one who will strive with mind and heart and will to be a bishop according to the mind of Christ and his church, expressed in the Gospel, in the documents of the Vatican Council and in the lives of those bishops of our own and past times who have proven themselves true shepherds after the example and by the grace of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

We bishops cannot help but be painfully aware of our limitations and defects. How could we not be! Bishop Colin, I daresay, will be equally conscious of the magnitude of his episcopal responsibilities and the inadequacy of personal abilities and aptitudes. Bishop Colin, fear and trembling have no place in the life of a diocesan Bishop. Your faith and trust are supported by Jesus' words to the apostles at the Last Supper recorded in John's Gospel.

You have the loyal backing of your priests who will, day after day, commend you to God by name each time they pray the Eucharistic Prayer. You can be sure of the committed collaboration of the people of your diocese: men and women, young and old, lay and religious and clergy.

You have the guidance of a remarkable Pope, the Council, Synods, magisterial documents, as well as your own diocesan council of priests and pastoral council. And you have received from Bishop Len Boyle a precious heritage.

➥

The faith of the Catholics of Southland and Otago is legendary and they have the joyful right of claiming you as one of their own.

Bishop Colin, the episcopacy is not a frozen entity, a changeless state. It never was. The Church's apostolic ministry, from 1st century Jerusalem to 21st century Dunedin is a story of change: different models, varying emphases, new ways of serving.We have experienced

- the jurisdictional model, where the bishop holds the plenitude of ecclesial power, where to teach is to impose authoritative doctrine as a matter of obedience;
- the cultic model, where the bishop is primarily the performer of sacred mysteries;
- the monastic model, where the bishop is the holy man withdrawn from the world and its vanities;
- the prophetic model, where the bishop is predominantly proclaimer of God's word, and calls to conversion;
- the pastoral model, where the bishop is community leader, brings his people together, and activates their charisms for the benefit of all.

Oh yes, core functions are constant: to preach the word, to build the community, to serve, to preside at worship. But the way this is done, where the stress falls... this changes. It can never be static. Why? Because the church's ministry is a function of the church's mission. And the church's mission is not to abstract humanity, but to a concrete world, to a pulsing people, to their loves and their hates, their sins and their needs, their frustrations and their emptiness.

NZ 'Tablet' cover photo, May 12 1972. A young Colin Campbell pushing the 'wheelchair priest', Leo Close, in an anti-Vietnam War demonstration 1972. Standing left: Fr Stuart Sellar

As the Second Vatican Council told us, the church must constantly scrutinise "the signs of the times", interpret them in the light of the gospel, and show how the gospel speaks to the hopes and aspirations, the anxieties and concerns of each generation.

Mention of the Second Vatican Council prompts the thought that here in New Zealand a bishop has much unfinished conciliar agenda yet to accomplish. Some we shepherd feel that the Council's teaching is no longer relevant, that both church and society have moved beyond it. They are ready for Vatican III. Others seems to be committed to a "restoration" of what things were before the Council.They would turn the clock back.

Still others, perhaps the majority, really do not know or fully understand the Council's teaching and so fail to see the relevance of it to their lives. It takes more than a generation or two to assimilate fully the teaching of an ecumenical council. Therefore, we bishops have to continually recommit ourselves to the task of implementing the teaching of Vatican II.

We are challenged to provide the pastoral leadership and energise our people so that together

– we may always be faithful to our Catholic heritage;

– we may be an evangelising Church, continually renewing ourselves and reaching out to others, especially to the unchurched and alienated;

– we may be a prayerful people, entering more closely into relationship with the Lord;

– we be a source of unity and reconciliation, helping to bring people together, not fearful of the cost, not impatient with slow progress, not discouraged by prophets of doom, not intimidated by those who wish to perpetuate division;

– we may speak clearly and persuasively about the many life issues rooted in the God-given dignity of every person and central to the well-being of the human family;

– we may recognise, encourage and support all ministries, in particular vocations to priesthood and religious life;

– we may nourish, energise and encourage those we are called to shepherd in working for a more just and compassionate society.

Let me finish, then, with three brief tributes:

First I want to express profound gratitude to Bishop Boyle for his wonderfully dedicated leadership of the diocese of Dunedin during his 22 year episcopate. All of us are wholly in admiration of the heroic way he continued to pastor the Diocese during the long interval between his resignation and the appointment of his successor.

Secondly, I want to congratulate you on the ordination of your new Bishop, Colin Campbell. You have a gifted, capable and deeply spiritual leader to guide, teach, nourish and shepherd you through the years ahead.

And thirdly, I want to congratulate most warmly the new bishop himself. On behalf of all the bishops I express our joy in having you sharing in the privileged task of serving our New Zealand Province. There is a prayer for Ordination Masses. A sentence within it reads :

Fill the hearts of your bishop and people with love, that the shepherd may have a faithful people and the people a loving shepherd.

That prayer is surely fulfilled in this diocese of Dunedin. ■

Co-responsibility: whatever happened to it?

Tui Motu *recently interviewed Pat McGloin and Pauline O'Regan, two survivors of post-Vatican II attempts to institute new lay structures in the Christchurch diocese*

After Bishop Ashby returned to Christchurch diocese from the Second Vatican Council he set up a Laity Commission. For two years a group of elected lay people from all over the diocese gathered monthly, and Bishop Ashby stated he would accept its findings.

Submissions came in from all over the place and these were discussed. Eventually it was suggested that a Diocesan Pastoral Council be set up as a permanent body. Pat McGloin was a lay member of this group: "Over those two years, Bishop Ashby formed us for this new task," says Pat.

So, 30 years ago, the laity of the Christchurch diocese finally had a voice. Then, in 1972, Mercy Sister Pauline O'Regan was co-opted onto the steering committee of this new diocesan body. There were three laymen on the committee (Pat McGloin, Peter Leeming and John Small), three religious and three priests. The bishop usually attended the meetings.

"We conceived this plan to create a truly collegial body", says Pauline, "but it was an unreal expectation. One night we met with the intention of making collegiality our topic. The atmosphere was fraught! We religious were inclined to pussyfoot around, but the lay people were adamant.

"And Bishop Ashby would not agree, because he saw it as signing away his authority. The climax came when the bishop stood up and was about to storm out. But John Small, who was even taller than Bishop Ashby, stood in the doorway and would not let him leave!

"I think we were asking too much too soon", reflects Pauline. "Bishop Ashby was prepared to listen to us, but he was not prepared to share his authority. He was also under a lot of pressure from his own clergy not to yield. And some of his fellow bishops, including Cardinal McKeefry, may have exerted another kind of pressure. I think Bishop Ashby was as open as was possible 30 years ago. We were too far ahead of ourselves to expect any more at that time".

So a Diocesan Pastoral Council was set up, but it was not truly collegial. There was no power to bind the bishop. It was a purely consultative body, but at the time that itself was something. The lay voice now had its place and the bishop heard it. He may or may not have acted on what he heard. But without such a body there was no place for the laity to go.

Bishop Ashby also initiated conversations with other churches. These seem to have ceased after Bishop Meeking came. "I feel there has been a strong antagonism against anything new," says Pat McGloin. "The clergy have been largely conservative. And when there is no such body as a functioning pastoral council, then the clerical arm of the church simply moves further away. Nowadays the DPC seems to be an invisible body."

Collegiality at parish level

Meanwhile, in places there was a real attempt at the parish level to implement the mandate of Vatican II. Sr Pauline thinks this was at its best in the Burwood parish, in Christchurch. That parish became a true community. "I think that in such a co-responsible situation the true priesthood of the pastor is enhanced. It becomes clear that the parish priest is not a manager or a social worker: he is a pastor and a teacher. He presides at the sacred functions. He is still the leader. The personality of the priest is important. This style of leadership demands a lot of maturity.

"I think that what prevents this happening among priests in general is fear – fear of the laity in general and women in particular. The fear is that if you let go, you lose everything. You lose your position as ordained leader.

"Meanwhile our bishops are looking two ways at once. They have one eye on their diocese and the other eye on Rome. They, too, are afraid. And diocesan priests fear what the bishop may think or what their fellow priests may say. A priest who follows the collegial way can become very isolated."

Pat McGloin regrets a lack of vision he sees in the Catholic church today. The Anglicans and Presbyterians have expanded their social services because they are lay run. But the Catholic church seems to be intent only on selling property to pay its debts. If a group of lay people had been allowed to run these activities, Pat thinks it could have been a lot different.

"Nevertheless," says Pauline, " I feel there are many signs of hope. The Holy Spirit is at work. People are seeking an authentic faith and a spiritual life – but not necessarily within the institutional church. There is so much good that is happening that we could respond to. But the Catholic Church seems to be so hamstrung by its laws. No wonder Jesus cried out about legalism!

"The church at the present time seems to take so much from the 'right' and accommodate it – but one move from the 'left' and the walls come down. However, there is a lot of healthy growth among the small groups, and it may be the non-functioning of the institutional structures enables these small groups to flourish providentially. I'm often astonished how profound their thinking is. I think these groups contain the seeds of the future church". ■

Pilgrimage. . .

Tantur

At 92, Kitty O'Brien is still travelling on her journey of faith. This year it was a trip to Jerusalem, an experience which left her with an abiding sadness

Tom Cloher

My friend's mother spent Easter in the Holy Land" Jan said as we were walking out from Sunday Mass. "That was enterprising of her" I responded. "You're quite right, she's only 92!" was Jan's response. It was enough to set me seeking Kitty O'Brien, Remuera parishioner now, and formerly long-term parishioner of St Benedict's, Auckland.

She was welcoming though perhaps a little puzzled as to why she should be an item of interest. After all, going to the Holy Land was a very Christian thing to do if an opportunity arose, and one way or another, it had arisen four times for her – in 1983,'87,'95, and 2004. To be able to walk on the land "once blessed by the presence of Our Lord and his Mother is such a special privilege". Its very atmosphere invited prayer and reflection.

On her most recent visit she stayed at Tantur, the Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies that was initiated by Pope Paul VI in 1966. It was to be a neutral venue where scholars and students of all Christian denominations and other world religions could seek better understanding of sacred Scripture and theology. Visitors are welcome too. Kitty found the atmosphere very inviting, and while not enrolled in a formal course, she appreciated the conversations at meal times that traversed religion, culture and the arts, as well as organised visits to special places. The community was certainly ecumenical and international. She participated in an ecumenical service prepared by Lutherans and celebrated on the roof of the hilltop building. After 11 days she parted somewhat reluctantly with Tantur and its associates.

However, an abiding sadness characterises all of her visits to Israel. On her first visit to Israeli soldiers questioned her about a bus journey she wanted to make from Jerusalem to Cairo. Had she packed her own bags? And why in any case would she want to go there? "Because my husband is buried there," she responded. (Desmond O'Brien was a New Zealand army surgeon who lost his life in the Middle East in 1945.)

The arrogance of the questioning remains etched upon her memory after the passage of 21 years. Sadly she believes the Israeli military presence is even more arrogant and intimidating today. "You don't need to ask the Palestinians how they feel. You can see it in their faces."

She encountered numerous delays at checkpoints. Queues of traffic being delayed for long periods for no other apparent reason than to frustrate people; on Palm Sunday a worker was held up for two hours all the while with hands upraised against a wall because he did not have the expected identification papers even though his employers with similar

papers were prepared to identify him. Being awakened at one o'clock in the morning by an explosion to be told that would mean another Palestinian home had been destroyed because that was the appointed time for that to be done. Awakening to the sound of a hectic storm during the night to have explained this was a dust storm caused by despoliation of Palestinian plantations by Israelis in the name of security; a nearby farmer had lost 180 olive trees for the same reason – his entire livelihood. A final delay on the evening before a departure at a checkpoint found her arriving back to Tantur so late that she was unable to say good bye to the friends she had made.

Home again in placid Remuera, Kitty recounts her observations with clarity and purpose but with no suggestion that she had done anything out of the ordinary. Most of us, were we to live that long, would be happy to make it to Sydney. It prompted me to explore another question: how does life fashion anyone to be such a participant in life in a tenth decade? What kind of life prepares one to be this kind of person?

Kitty Smyth met Desmond O'Brien, her husband-to-be at a London hospital in December 1933. He was a New Zealander completing his fellowship in surgery while she was an Irish woman from Tipperary training to become as a masseuse (physiotherapist in today's terminology). Their relationship obviously flourished as marriage was proposed and accepted. Desmond was offered a partnership in London, but he had promised the Bishop (Liston) that he would return to practice in Auckland. His first offer of work in New Zealand was to deputise for the Medical Superintendent at Kawakawa Hospital in late 1937 for a year, a stipulation being that it was an appointment for a single man. So it was decided that Kitty would follow him out later. She arrived in 1939, and they were married at St Patrick's Cathedral.

They were to have three years of married life before Desmond joined the New Zealand Army Medical Corps as a surgeon, serving first in the Pacific, and then in the Middle East. He lost his life in 1945, leaving his widow with two young children. This was not the best time for Kitty to discover that her physiotherapy qualification did not cover fully the curriculum requirements for professional registration in New Zealand.

Kitty at the Palm Sunday procession at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The dome of Dormition church behind

There seemed no option but go back to London with the children in 1947 for another year's study to satisfy the registration requirements. Accommodation in post-war London was sparse, virtually impossible for children. Eventually she was able to place them in the Mt Sackville Cluny Convent in Dublin for a limited time. For herself she managed to team up with a teenage student enrolled at RADA, daughter of an Auckland doctor, Shona Smale. They shared an attic. As Kitty quietly observed on reflection "you don't know what you are taking on sometimes".

Her student acquaintance Shona was to become a lifelong friend, and it was Shona who lobbied the British Medical Association with great tenacity to solve the next challenge. The accommodation for the children in Ireland had run its course, so arrangements for them became an issue again. The Medical Association of Switzerland had offered three months' holidays for children whose doctor-fathers had lost their lives during the war. Thanks mainly to Shona's advocacy, Kitty believes, the children were accepted and taken to Switzerland, thus providing critical breathing space for her studies.

Getting the children back to England again was another minor saga as a French railway strike impeded their return. Finally, the Secretary of the BMA was deputed to fly to Switzerland to accompany the eight children involved, but his pregnant wife persuaded him that such a mission was too dangerous (flying was rated a risky business in the late 40s). As Kitty had now completed her examinations she was invited to take his place. "The Holy Spirit guides you when things get really tough," she muses.

Back in Auckland by the end of 1948 accommodation and a job became challenges once more. Eventually the accommodation problem was solved when a state house became available in 1949 at Mt Roskill "on the feast of

St. Anthony – I had been tormenting him for sometime". Into the bargain the newly-minted physiotherapist was now informed that no part-time jobs were available.

During this period and later Kitty pays special tribute to the religious orders for support they provided in difficult times; the Sisters of the Sacred Heart at Baradene, the Marist Brothers both at St Paul's and at Sacred Heart, and the Mercy Sisters at Monte Cecilia and at the Mater Hospital. The Mater had earlier solved one particular problem: while her husband Desmond was home on leave from the Pacific, he received marching orders again, this time for the Middle East, and he wanted her to accompany him to Wellington where embarkation was scheduled. The Mater Sisters undertook the care of the children for the week.

It was 1956 before Kitty was able to undertake full-time work in an administrative capacity with Kerridge, improving her weekly pension income by £1 in doing so. Professional opportunity was slow in coming, but when the Cerebral Palsy School advertised for a physiotherapist she applied for the position and was successful. She confesses to being astounded when told that her annual salary was to be £600 per year, resources beyond her dreams after lean times.

The sixteen and a half years Kitty spent with the School proved to be professionally fulfilling. Not having worked with children afflicted by cerebral palsy she proceeded to acquire specialist knowledge of the condition by reading extensively in physiotherapy, medical and scientific journals, and participating in conferences in Australia. She also returned to England for a three-month course in the Bobath method of treating cerebral palsy. She believes that this treatment has been very effective in New Zealand and rejoices that training for Bobath therapists is now available here. She was elected an honorary member of the New Zealand Bobath Association in 1999.

(Does this short biography entitle Kitty to be classified as a genuine pilgrim? I think so, don't you?)

"Would you like to return to the Holy Land, Kitty?"

"I'd love to. Not primarily for my sake but for the sake of the Palestinian people. They thank you in a heartfelt way for coming. They need visitors for employment and encouragement. They feel that the world has forgotten them as they get gradually squeezed out of their homeland. The Franciscan Foundation is doing its best to help them by building apartments for some of those who have lost their homes, and by providing scholarships for students.

"There is also the matter of our traditional access to the Holy Places. Should matters continue to drift they could become lost to Christendom. A steady stream of visitors advances the hopes of both causes." ■

CENACLE MINI SABBATICAL

4 March 2005 – 14 April 2005

In Mark 6:30 Jesus said:

"Come away to some quiet place all by yourselves and rest for a while."

A Sabbatical gives time set apart –

* *For remembering the holiness of life*
* *For personal renewal and refreshment*
* *To regain a new enthusiasm for life, ministry and community!*
* *Time to slow down and renew your vision!*

The mini sabbatical allows opportunity for a loosely-structured program, offering a six-day retreat, a seminar on the Enneagram and Spirituality, and a two-day reflection on Jesus and His Land. Time to pray, relax, read, share with others, read and reflect, on the beautiful shores of Moreton Bay 55 minutes from the city of Brisbane – in an area noted for the koala population and native bird life.

For further information:

Sr Pat Clouston, Cenacle Retreat House,
267 Wellington Street, Ormiston, Q.4160, Australia
Tel (07) 3286-4011 Fax (07) 3821-3788

Joyce Rupp visits New Zealand

Those of you who have read books of the well known spiritual writer, Joyce Rupp, will welcome the news that she is to visit New Zealand in November of this year.

A retreat day entitled ***"THE LIBERATED HEART"*** *with Joyce Rupp will be an opportunity to grow and to become clearer about one's purpose in life. Retreat days are being offered in the following centres during November 2004:*

Auckland: Saturday 13 November, 9.30am – 3.30pm
St Mary's College, Ponsonby.
Registration: Rita Vessey, Ph 09 638 6238
mercycentreauckland@xtra co.nz

Wellington: Saturday 20 November, 9am – 3.30pm
Mercy Centre
Registration: Marcellin Wilson rsm, Ph/Fax 04 473 0095
Marcellinrsm@xtra.co.nz

Christchurch: Saturday 27 November, 9.30am – 4pm
Bishop Julius Hall
Registration: Adult Education Trust, Ph 03 348 3912
lynkevg@xtra.co.nz

For further details of the retreat days refer to the Adult Education Trust
website: http://homepages.paradise.net.nz/aet

Registration for each of these retreat days is essential

Love Waits

This reflection was given by Fr Jim Lyons to the girls of Sacred Heart College, Lower Hutt, in June

There's a movement spreading through colleges and schools in the U.S. called Love Waits. Young people are making a decision to love more responsibly. They want to have more control over their emotions and are rejecting the manipulation of their personal feelings by those seeking nothing but their own pleasure or profit. *Love waits!*

Many teenagers, including many of you, have a sense that much of what's presented today as pleasurable comes at enormous human cost. Binge drinking and casual sex, the high number of teenage pregnancies and abortions for children as young as 11 years, drug abuse, acute depression and a sense of betrayal at having been used. I'm hearing from young people that they've had enough of being victims of powerful messages selling false promises of happiness and fulfillment through unrestrained freedom of expression. *If it feels good, do it!* Is that really sound advice?

Love Waits says that love is too important to be rushed, to be taken lightly or to be treated as a quick fix. Love waits because love needs to get to know its purpose, to find its place in your life. Love waits because love is patient. It waits out the pain of waiting, and rides over the urge not to wait. Love waits because love wants nothing more than to be faithful and loyal and true – those qualities that ripen into friendship, but only after the test of time.

Waiting's not easy for anyone, probably worst of all when you're young. We live in a time when everything's *now, instant!* The idea of playing a waiting game with love may appear very unrealistic. Nobody likes waiting. We hate queues and get impatient at traffic lights! Yet there's something about *Love Waits* that suggests we take another look.

Our Catholic tradition honours the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the theme of shepherding. A good shepherd is a person not afraid of waiting, sitting out the grazing routine of the flock, patiently caring at lambing time, knowing just when to begin shearing, and always on the watch for the sheep in trouble, the hurt ones, and the stragglers. *Love Waits* is a motto of good shepherding.

The shepherd image identifies our God as one who waits for us, and waits with us. As we grapple with the desire to want everything at once, or to be an instant success, our Shepherd-God feels our torment, and offers signs for us to ease our way through our impatience and frustration.

So, *love waits* when a friend stays with you even when you've shown yourself unworthy of friendship. *Love waits,* when you've made a mess of things but you're still given another chance. *Love is waiting* when you're hurting, feeling lost or even acting tough – because love knows the real you is worth waiting for and, deep down, you know it too.

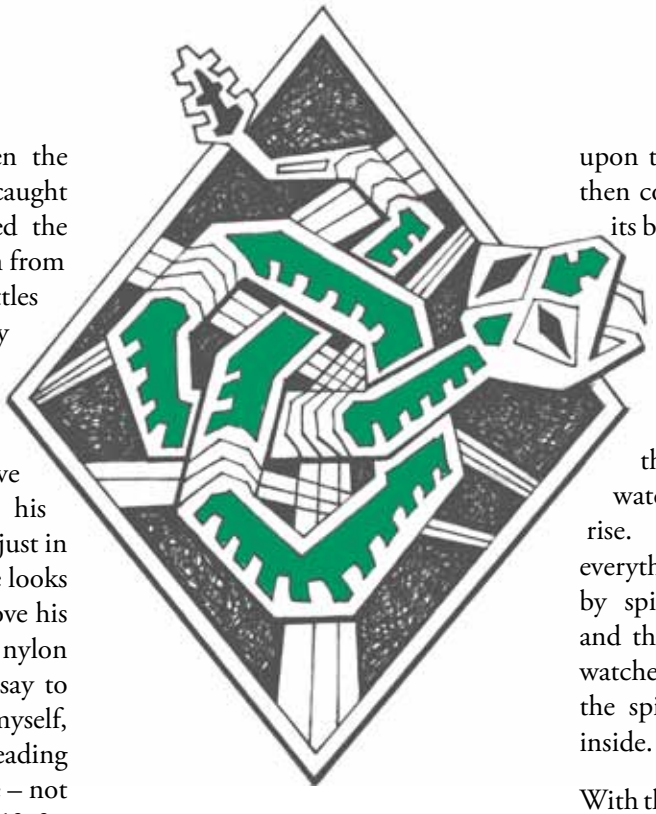
Sacred Heart College is named for the heart of Jesus, the Shepherd-God who loves to wait, knowing that seeing human life flourish is worth the wait. And knowing that there is someone waiting for you, can motivate you to thrive, to be the best you can be. As girls of the Sacred Heart don't allow yourselves to become victims of the power hungry or pleasure greedy. Believe that you – each of you – is already greatly loved by a love that waits to be loved in return.

You have a model for loving in the Shepherd-God already so much a part of your Christian faith. This model leads you to love because you know the value of the one you love. Respect that value; treasure it. Use your gift of love to heal, not harm; to stand alongside, not to dominate or pressure; to set free, not imprison. Love can wait, and when you wait with love you really do walk with God. ■

Fr Jim Lyons is Parish Priest of SS Peter an d Paul, Lower Hutt

The eye of the snake

Diane Pendola



At the hermitage, between the two planter boxes, caught in the net I had covered the strawberries with to protect them from browsing deer, a rattlesnake rattles as I walk past. He is completely entangled in the webbing, or at least the front half of his body. The back half is free to rattle, but the thin black lines of netting have been twisted so tightly against his body that they cut into him, not just in one place, but over and over. He looks me in the eye. But he cannot move his head, immobilized by the vicious nylon thread. "Oh, I'm so sorry…" I say to him, I mumble over and over to myself, like a chant, like some deep pleading with the powers of life for release – not only for him, but also for myself, for the one who inadvertently laid this death trap upon his native ground.

In my hand I hold the long red handle of the brush-cutters I have been using to snap off the roots of poison oak, the bodies of blackberry brambles. I attempt to cut the threads away from the snake's body, speaking gently to him, "let me see… let me see if I can help you…" Looking me in the eye he ceases to rattle. Hope rises. Perhaps I can free him. He can't strike at me. I could work at freeing his body. But the cutters are too dull for this fine work. The threads are wound so tight that some are buried in the snake's flesh. The snake continues to look me in the eye. Again he rattles.

I know he won't survive. I could leave him to linger in this life-and-death struggle where death is sure to win. I could turn my back now and walk away. "I'm so sorry," I say softly again. "I'm so sorry," I say as I open the mouth of the cutter blade, my hands on the long red handles. The cold metal shears find the base of his diamond shaped head, hold the thumb-sized cord of his life in their open vortex that I now snap closed. The snake's mouth opens; exposing fangs and an instinct for life that struggles even while the severed body coils and rattles, coils and rattles.

I leave to go to the house, fetch a shovel and my smudge stick. I have adopted this Native American ritual: lighting sage, releasing pungent smoke into the air, evidence of life and breath dissolving into life and breath. I return with these and a pair of tin snips. I easily cut the main part of the webbing away from the snake and then carefully go to work on snipping each wound thread free of the body. I do not risk working near the head – those fangs still looking for a final resting place. The body, grotesquely headless, spreads itself upon the ground as if to slither away, then coils, attempts to rattle and raise its bloody stump as though to strike.

I light the smudge stick; let myself pray in words that have no meaning for human ears to hear. I allow the smoke to float over the length of the snake's body, watching the smoke rise, the spirit rise. Everything is connected to everything else. Everything is inhabited by spirit, by breath that moves in and through and all around us. As I watched the smoke my mind touched the spirit of snake. I felt him come inside. I wonder, can you feel him?

With the shovel I dug into the red earth. I buried the head of the snake. It's a good thing to do. There is still venom in those fangs. I left the body wrapped round the rock I placed as a marker. The body was still moving when I left. Perhaps, last evening he became nourishment for fox. Perhaps now he's the strength in the hawk's wing.

Recently, in the news, there was a story about a whale, caught in a strong and unforgiving net off the east coast of the United States. The whale was a right whale (so named because it was the "right" whale to kill during whaling times, ranging in size from 45 to 60 feet and weighing up to 80 tons). This was a juvenile member of an endangered species, with fewer than 350 North Atlantic right whales remaining today. The polypropylene line that was wrapped around the body was gradually burning through skin, blubber and muscle. The rescuers were not giving it much hope for survival,

but even so, teams of people were giving their time, sometimes at the risk of their own lives, to attempt to free the suffering animal.

My encounter with the snake reminded me of this story. It reminded me of all the unintentional ways, unconscious ways, that we do harm. I could speak of the many right whales, not to mention humpbacks and sperm whales, dolphins and porpoises, that are entangled, wounded and often killed each year by fixed lines extending from fishing equipment like nets or lobster pots. I could speak of countless examples of the devastating consequences of our human behavior on the other-than-human members of our earth community. Or I could speak about the over-whelm of too much bad news concerning our human impact on our planet, not to mention the desperate state of our inter-human affairs.

But I want to speak of something else. I want to speak of what touches my heart. I want to speak of the kindness that unlatches some locked door in me. I want to speak of the human kindness of strangers who become friends in a common effort to serve life; to save life. And I want to speak of the bond that connects us to other-than-human life forms in this world.

In researching the whale story, I read about a man off the coast of New Zealand who had successfully rescued an entangled humpback whale. Swimming out to the whale in his scuba gear he made eye contact to let the whale know he was there. "As I swam up I could see it drop its head and thought it was going to dive, but what it did was to lift its tail and lie dead still while I cut off the float and the last of the rope. After the whale was freed, it came up right beside the boat, where it stayed for a few moments, before lifting its tail and slowly swimming away".
This is what I want to speak of to you, to myself. I want to speak of that loving kindness of which we humans are so impeccably capable. This is what I want to know. This is what I want to see. This is what I want to serve. I want to speak of this thread that has woven me so intricately into its love that the eye of the whale and the human eye are conduits of the Light from which we both derive our life.

I want to speak of the fireman who risked his life to save a mother cat that had re-entered the burning building not once, or twice but four times, as evidenced by her burned, but surviving, kittens.

I want to speak of the drowning scuba-diver, cramping in the cold waters of the sea, who sent out his call into the Great Unknown for help and felt a nudge at his side as a dolphin appeared and proceeded to carry him safely to shore.

I want to speak of the gorilla, oblivious to the horror of the people who have just witnessed a small child fall into her cage, gently taking the child into her great arms and tenderly carrying him to the door of her pen where a zookeeper would soon appear.

I want to speak of the armies of volunteers cleaning up miles of oil soaked coastline, patiently tending to each tar-laden sea bird, hearts opened by the pleading in a gentle seal's gaze.

I want to speak of those watching and waiting beside the beached whales, bathing them through the night in cool water, with the hope beyond hope that when the tide rises they will be carried back to sea.

We hear so much these days that defeats us, angers us, grieves us. But what moves us is love. What unlocks the door to our heart is our sense of connection, our ancient bond to the Light that shines in the eyes of every creature. In this Light we are kin. I hope beyond hope, that the tide of light is rising, the undertow of darkness is receding, and that the wave of loving kindness is building towards a great awakening on dawn-lit shores. ■

Diane Pendola, with Teresa Hahn, is co-founder and co-director of Skyline Harvest, an eco Contemplative Center in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in Northern California

Who is this Son of Man?

Jesus as revealed in the Gospel of Mark

Professor Richard Hays, in the Otago University Burns lectures, insists that the Gospels can only be fully understood in the context of the whole Bible

The Gospels should primarily be regarded as written by Jewish authors who are continuing the story of Israel. Yet few Christians see them in this way. Rather, they assume that the basic Christian texts, in telling the story of Jesus Christ, are saying something so radically new as to be scarcely related to anything which went before.

In the first article (*Tui Motu* July pp 24-26), we saw a very good instance of this in Luke 25 where two disciples meet the Risen Christ on the road to Emmaus. They can make no sense of the death of Jesus nor of the reports of an empty tomb until Jesus himself appears to them and places the events into the context of their rich and familiar Old Testament culture. And we too, if we are to fully understand the gospel of Jesus, must hear it in that same Jewish context.

Repent and be baptised

The Gospel of Mark, in Chapter 1, plunges us straight into the basic Christian challenge to change one's life. When Jesus emerges from the waters of baptism, he saw the heavens "torn open" and the Spirit "come down" upon him like a dove. The allusion is to Isaiah 64 which uses identical words – "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down .." This first appearance of Jesus, the opening of his ministry, is a direct response to this cry of Isaiah to God to intervene and save his people.

Yet in spite of this hugely dramatic beginning the Gospel of Mark constantly presents the self-revelation

of Jesus as being mysterious and elusive. Characteristically, Jesus preaches to the people in parables. When the disciples ask what these stories mean (4:11), Jesus enigmatically replies that the secrets are to be revealed only to believers. And even these only really begin to get the message after Jesus has risen from the dead. Throughout the Gospel the disciples are presented as uncomprehending – to the point that Jesus becomes exasperated with them: "Do you still not understand?" (8:21), he cries.

Son of Man

Yet there are clear hints in both his words and actions that Jesus is the Messiah, sent by God. Jesus refers to himself as Son of Man. This title comes from Daniel (7:13-14): "Behold, there came one like a son of man and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom .."

Jesus works miracles and heals. He stills the great storm on the lake with a word, so that the disciples ask: "Who then is this that even wind and sea obey him?" (4:40). The answer is to be found in Psalm 107:23-30: "They cried to the Lord in their distress .. the Lord made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed."

Finally at the trial before Caiaphas, the high priest demands: "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus unequivocally replies: "I AM, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven" (14:61-62). Jesus claims to be the long-awaited Messiah, and it seals his fate.

In spite of these hints and allusions there remains a clear distinction between Jesus and the Yahweh of the Old Testament. In Gethsemane Jesus seems to echo the plight of Israel itself: full of doubts, yet submissive to the divine will. Finally, on the Cross he cries out in the words of Psalm 22: "My God, why have you abandoned me?"

For the disciples the mystery remains. Jesus is the heir to the legacy of David. He speaks and acts with the authority of God. Yet how can the one, unique God of Israel become identified with a frail human being. How can God die on the Cross? This mystery continues in the early church until the great councils of Nicea and Chalcedon define the oneness of the divine Nature but distinguish between the Three Persons. The veiled 'Father-Son' language of the Gospels is explained. In spite of these ingenious explanations the reality remains to us, as to Mark, a mystery of faith. Mark simply presents the two strands to us: a mystery better understood if we clearly see the Jewish context in which the original revealing words and actions occurred. ■

Reflecting on Luke

Luke 16:16-31 – Luke teaches about poverty and riches

Susan Smith

Our narrative begins with Luke's telling description of the Pharisees – they loved money. Four verses later, Jesus begins his powerful parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Earlier in 14:7-24, Jesus has stressed the importance of hospitality to the outcasts and the poor, a teaching that the Pharisees rejected. They believed it was against the law to associate with the poor, with sinners, with outcasts, let alone to offer them hospitality.

The hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees is ironic. The Pharisees believe that Jesus' tableship with outcasts and sinners transgresses the purity laws. Jesus argues that their anger about Jesus' table fellowship with sinners transgresses the greater ethical law of love of neighbour.

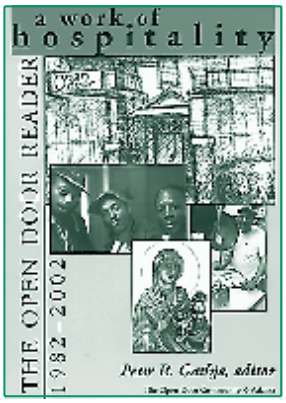
In our parable, Jesus is addressing the intolerable situation of most Jewish people given Palestine's agrarian economy. In the OT, God had gifted all the people of Israel with land. In the 1300 years that had elapsed since Joshua lead the Hebrews into Canaan, fewer and fewer people owned more and more of the land, while the number of landless labourers and peasants with small holdings increased dramatically. Lazarus represents all who no longer have land, no longer have the health to work for others, and who are expendable in the eyes of those with land and resources and therefore with power. The parable brings together two characters from the opposite ends of Palestine's socio-economic structure.

It is a parable that speaks powerfully to our contemporary reality in Aotearoa New Zealand, where power and influence are increasingly concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people. It also speaks to events that occur at the international level. For example, recently Brazil along with other 'third world' cotton-producing countries protested at President Bush's US$3 billion subsidies to American cotton farmers. These subsidies mean appalling poverty for 'third world' cotton producers because their governments cannot afford such generous subsidies. The World Trade Organisation has decided in favour of third world cotton producers, and surprise, surprise, the American administration has said it will appeal this decision. So much for American rhetoric about the benefits of free trade, and so much too for our politicians who believe that free trade and military alliances with the United States are the way into the future.

The letter to the Hebrews teaches that "the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword". Luke's word in this parable is certainly living and active, and more importantly it calls us to action too on behalf of those who are sinned against by the rich and powerful whether they live in the Africa or in New Zealand. ■

An open door to people in need

A Work of Hospitality
The Open Door Reader 1982-2002
Editor: Peter R. Gathje
Reviewer: Joan M Morris smsm



The *N.Z. Herald* recently carried headlines about "Homeless people – Regional Growth creates more homeless..." "City Missioner calls for more services and accessible housing..."

These headlines could be found in every newspaper in New Zealand – and in every city in the world at this time. Homelessness, growing poverty, lost people of all ages, races, religious groups, are endemic.

What can be done? What has been done? What should be done? What will be done?

The *Open Door Reader* gives some answers in the series of articles about the Work of Hospitality based on the activities of the Open Door Community, Atlanta during the last twenty years.

The roots of this movement go even deeper into the work commenced by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in 1930 and continue a great tradition of respecting the individual human whatever the status or problem. There is a prophetic passion emanating from every article. Beware – the book is stimulating and at the same time induces anger at injustice accepted as the normal way of life in many places.

If this is a new field of exploration for the reader, I predict it will bring about deep change and deep challenge to the person.

The articles come into six divisions or topics. *The Early Days of Beginnings; Hospitality to the Homeless; Hospitality to the Imprisoned; The Sacraments of Hospitality; Saints and Martyrs; the Theology of Hospitality.*

There are 350 pages of text plus various indices, references, reading lists to assist further study. All over the world there are people in need of succour. Here we hear from people who know what it means to meet and serve Christ in the guise of persons who are homeless, imprisoned, or on death row.

Atlanta, a dream city of the South in the USA, has its share of people in need – graphic examples haunt us long after the reading – like S.A. who crept each night into a dumpster with his sheet of cardboard for a bed, or any of the ex-prisoners turned loose from over-crowded prisons with $2.00 to speed them away, or the young refugees without education or job skills.

Open Door is a Christian Community, inspired by the Presbyterian Ministry, with a definite theology of Hospitality. The members consider it a privilege to reach out to others and in doing this they are fulfilling their own needs to serve and love others – to follow the servant Christ at whatever the cost.

The theme is developed in the section on The Sacraments of Hospitality. One contributor says: "We are an experiment with truth – 'we make the road by walking it'." The hospitality shown in the Gospels comes to life in this chapter about the work at Open Door. For me the third section devoted to Hospitality to the Imprisoned was one of the most moving and fiercely appealing for justice. Here are people who can see the desperate need of others and go to all lengths to meet those needs. Even when thwarted by the State's disregard of the humanity of people in prison they plod on, using all means to befriend and help those even on death row.

This is not a comforting book to read but it brings hope in a way to know that there are some people who are prepared to follow Christ in caring for the anawim of our times at whatever cost to their own comfort.

Well written and well presented even though disquieting in content. ■

Wonderful, grace-filled stories

What's so amazing about grace?
by Philip Yancey
Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1997
Price:
Review: Michael Hill

Any reader who was really engaged by Mike Riddell's leading article this month and wants to read further, should seek out this book. It is by the author of the best-selling modern life of Christ: The Jesus I never knew. This work too won the US Christian Bookseller's 'Book of the Year' award.

Yancey could be described as a 'born again Evangelical'. His personal journey of faith, springing from the strictest American Protestant background, led him to understand that the essence of being a good Christian was not passing judgment on others but seeking forgiveness and in being forgiving.

Yancey is a storyteller. His books are a tissue of personal yarns and tales from literature, especially from the broad stream of Christian and other religious traditions. I don't think I would like to meet him personally lest I might turn up later in one of his books!

As its title suggests, this is all about grace. He quotes the great Protestant theologian Karl Barth, who said that Jesus' gift of forgiveness was for him far more astonishing than any of the gospel miracles. But it is no systematic tract of theology. It simply follows a somewhat disconnected series of themes, each being illuminated by good human stories. For the preacher there is easily a year's supply in this slim volume.

Obviously the Gospels provide a prime source. The parable of the Prodigal Son he retells in contemporary dress, stripping it down to its essential truth – that until you have no virtue left to hide behind, you can never fully understand or receive the overwhelming love of God.

Yancey spends one whole chapter retelling Babette's Feast, the famous film on Eucharist. A servant woman, who in a previous existence was a celebrated Parisian chef, by chance wins the first prize in a lottery. Instead of buying her freedom from service she spends the whole sum on preparing a magnificent banquet for her mistresses and their whole village community. The event transforms the lives of many of the inhabitants, previously locked in ancient animosities. The story is a graphic portrayal of grace in action.

A couple of gems. There is a quote from C.S.Lewis, who asked what was the essence of the Christian message, replied that if you stripped away all the great dogmas of faith, you would eventually be left with the notion of grace as the foundational truth. And the response of a Mississippi preacher in the 1960s who, asked to express the gospel in under ten words, replied: "We're all bastards, but God loves us anyway." He still had two words to spare! ■

Songs of the Spirit

Habel Hymns: Songs to Celebrate with Creation (Volume 1)
Norman C. Habel
Willow Connections Pty Ltd
Review: Cecily Sheehy, OP

From the first page of this book, I felt a kinship with author Norman Habel. The preface itself is a prayer. The introduction and write-up on the background of each song is a 'homily' on the need for us to realise our intimate connection with that which we are part of at a cellular level – the cosmos: earth, air, fire, water and spirit – Spirit which enlivens everything, and is the consciousness behind everything.

Habel explains in the introduction how he has frequently used "traditional melodies from known songs to facilitate immediate use in worship and retreats". There are a number of choices with old and new melodies. The only time this doesn't work, in my mind, is in an instance of hymn No.14 which has themes of Resurrection, but the melody is *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*. I think it would always be wise to use Carol melodies with Christmas themes.

The music is generally well written, with a few glitches where solo melodies occur. These are technicalities involved in using music programmes that need not be spelled out here. However, some of the solo melodies could have been written with accompaniments, because they are well known hymns.

Each of the 21 songs in this book sits happily in a scriptural frame-work. Habel uses images such as: *bread like manna; Creator Spirit; Sophia, symbol of wisdom; breath of God; travelling as pilgrims,* etc. At other times he speaks of God. For example in one title *The creatures of the sand*, he asks if we can "fathom the wisdom instilled in their minds to live without water, sun or man".

This A4 sized book of songs is filled with images of light and dark, wisdom and grief, but mostly joy in celebrating the gift of God in and on this wondrous earth. We are invited to sing for joy, to be always aware of what is happening and take great care, and to 'be still and feel the presence of God... pulsing, pulsing through Earth' (No.9). ■

Direct purchase: nhabel@esc.net.au

Another 'Rwanda' in the Sudan

Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn!
(Robert Burns)

The war that has ravaged the three states of Darfur in western Sudan since the beginning of last year, has created a major humanitarian disaster. The death toll is in the tens of thousands. The war has displaced over a million people and many thousands of these have become refugees in neighbouring Chad. Every day, thousands of people are dying of starvation and from the deadly diseases of cholera, dysentery and malaria.

This genocidal war being waged by Khartoum and its brutal Arab militia allies is destroying African populations by burning their agricultural resources, by rape and murder and mass executions. Yet, to the shame of all peoples, nothing effective is being done. No humanitarian intervention can be agreed upon and no great world power seems willing to act while all eyes are fixed on the shambles in Iraq.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, after a recent visit to Darfur, stated that the situation "bordered on ethnic cleansing". US Secretary of State Colin Powell also paid a visit to Darfur, but avoided the label of genocide. A UN Security Council resolution on Darfur imposes an embargo only on the militia, but not on the regime. It is useless. Because of the sheer brutality of the militia towards outsiders, aid agencies are limited in their response.

In some awful way the visit of these two men, Kofi Annan and Colin Powell, arguably the people most capable of doing something to alleviate this horrific war, only brings into focus the unwillingness of the international community to respond to the crisis. What has the world come to? Is not intervention to halt genocidal destruction in Africa more important than futile conflicts in the Middle East? Are the lives of Africans of less importance than those of Europeans or Americans? With the awful example of Rwanda acting as a reminder of the inaction of the world community and the ineffectiveness of the UN is genocide in Africa still acceptable?

A recent report by the International Crisis Group recommends a new round of negotiations between the Sudanese government and the armed opposition groups together with the EU, the US and the UN. One can only be pessimistic about the outcome. What started as a political problem with underlying ethnic tensions has developed into a major catastrophe. Have we learned nothing?

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

Tariana Turia

Tariana Turia returns to the Beehive as the elected member of the new Maori Party. Her victory at the by-election in the Te Tai Hauauru electorate was a foregone conclusion.

Nevertheless, the formation of a new Maori Party, with representation in parliament, presents an intriguing framework in the political context of MMP.

Turia's mandate is fragile, but demonstrates Maori dissatisfaction both with the Labour Government and its under-performing Maori MPs. She has an enormous task to present a fully functional political identity before next year's general election. She must continue to voice Maori concerns about the foreshore and seabed issue, which triggered her resignation from the Labour Party, but she must not appear fixated with the more strident Maori who seek an independent political identity at any cost.

The implications of her victory are interesting. It spells the end of the free ride for ineffectual Maori MPs, as well as for the Labour Party taking its Maori seats for granted. The days of Maori elders preaching to the young on maraes, about how to vote and what to do, are over. Turia's success could be seen as the rise of the urban, educated Maori and the decline of the Ratana Church's influence in Maori politics.

The Labour Party has a problem, as does NZ First, because their share of the Maori vote could haemorrhage away. If Turia lasts the distance, she could hold the balance of power. So, what do the incumbent Maori MPs do – stay, or join Turia?

Brownlee the chauvinist

At last month's National Party conference, Gerry Brownlee staged an insulting attack on Prime Minister Helen Clark and, by association, on all women. It highlighted not only Brownlee's total lack of propriety and political nous, but also how women are still subject to gender discrimination by the male-dominated language used against them.

Derogatory terms for women are often overtly sexual. Readers aware of Brownlee's address will have no difficulty recalling what he alluded to. Don Brash excused his deputy by saying that the speech was being addressed to party faithful only – a strange explanation indeed. Perhaps the discomfort men suffer in contemplating, more or less unconsciously, the sexuality of women is traceable to guilt feelings on their part. Men who heap ridicule on women merely emphasise their own inadequacies.

One can draw two conclusions from this unfortunate episode. Firstly, despite progress having been made towards women being treated equally in a male dominated society, there are still traces of male chauvinism in the language used by men in positions of power. Secondly, Brash will have to decide whether Brownlee is an asset or a liability to the National Party. This should not be a problem for an ex-banker. ■

The Cardinal's condom

Participants in the recent international conference in Bangkok on the AIDS crisis are likely to have come away with two pet hates: the drug companies, reluctant to forgo their earnings on patented anti-viral drugs; and the Catholic Church, with its rigorous exclusion of condoms, the use of which is seen by those fighting the AIDS epidemic as a vital strategy to limit the spread of infection.

Particularly, a target of criticism would be Cardinal Trujillo, head of the Pontifical Council for the Family. He has not merely strongly maintained that the Church's teaching outlaws in all circumstances the use of condoms, but has contended that since the AIDS virus is so much smaller than spermatozoa, a rubber sheath that can block the passage of sperm is not capable of preventing the passage of the infecting virus. This contention has been strongly opposed as not scientifically well founded.

Not all Catholic voices sing to the same tune as the cardinal. The South African bishop, Kevin Dowling CSsR, faced day-in-and-day-out with tragic cases of infection, has been a vocal, though at first almost solitary, episcopal contender that the use of condoms is not merely legitimate but in many circumstances morally obligatory. If a husband is infected, that does not stop him wishing to have relations with his wife, nor does it take away her need to have the intimacy of her marriage celebrated by sexual relations with her spouse. Yet unless condoms are used, the only way she can be protected from infection is by perpetual abstinence, a sacrifice that cannot be expected of married couples.

Recently Cardinal Danneels of Louvain, Belgium, widely regarded to be one of the leading candidates for future election as Pope, has indicated he thinks along the same lines as the South African bishop.

What is the justification that can be offered for use of condoms to prevent the transmission of the AIDS virus? Of course if one believes that contraception is at times morally acceptable, there is no problem. That is, in fact, a belief more widely held among the Catholic faithful than the Roman authorities wish were the case. However, let us leave for another occasion discussing the legitimacy or otherwise of contraception itself.

The basis on which Catholic defenders of the legitimacy of condom use rest their case is less controverted. Notably it is the principle of the double effect. 'Double effect' is long acknowledged in Catholic moral theology. One may legitimately perform an action that has an immoral effect if at the same time it produces a proportionately important good effect that is not achieved through the immoral outcome. One may heavily sedate a terminally ill patient in order to secure their comfort and freedom from pain even if the sedation is likely to advance the coming of their death. This is not euthanasia, but legitimate application of the principle of double effect.

How does the principle of double effect apply here? The condom prevents the passage of sperm, a bad effect (at least in the prevailing official Catholic view). But it equally prevents the passage of the AIDS virus, such prevention being a highly legitimate goal that, it is contended, justifies the use of the condom.

This position leaves aside determination of the legitimacy or otherwise of contraception. It is based on an utterly traditional principle. The AIDS pandemic has devastated sub-Saharan Africa and now threatens other parts of the globe. It would be tragic if a highly debatable rigorist interpretation of Catholic doctrine hindered the task of containing that devastation. ■

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

Mercy Jamboree

At the end of June, Sisters of Mercy gathered from all over New Zealand at St Margaret's College, Dunedin, for their very first national assembly. The Aucklanders arrived with their thermals, for many their very first sally to the wintry deep South. In the event the sun shone every day – and this was a symbol of a very graced event

Sr Pauline Engel writes:

We went South with mixed feelings. The preparations had been long. Years and years really, but the doubts and fears refused to go away, despite all our prayers to Te Atua hoa hikoi, the God of our Journey.

Our regional identities had been built up from our foundations in Settler New Zealand and notwithstanding our common Mercy rule and constitutions and our Federation of over 36 years, we had acquired distinctly Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin subcultures. Perhaps we reflected the stereotypes of our regions. Did those Southern women think of us as Jaffas?

But there we were, some 220 Mercy Sisters with our feisty Australian facilitator, Maureen Cleary, gathered in our Dunedin conference venue on a journey to create a new congregation "for mission" from the existing four provincial ones. We engaged in prayer and ritual with the theme of "Weaving the Strands". Working together, talking together, reflecting together – and the "I" became "We".

Various task groups had been set up over the previous year to work on the main topics for the Assembly: the Vision Statement, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Leadership and Governance, Canonical issues, new membership. During the next three days these groups gave their presentations and looked for amendments and endorsements around the issues and principles involved.

Each evening we exchanged stories of our 'heroic women', our ways of celebrating, our special community songs. There were yelps of laughter as anecdotes were exchanged, experiences shared. Each session progressed our common purpose and brought us closer to the climactic vote.

When it came to day four: did we wish to proceed to a formal canonical vote to become one, the readiness was palpable. The unanimous flourish of green (yes) voting cards proclaimed that indeed we did. There was a moment of silence broken by one quiet voice saying "We've done it!" – and the whole assembly simply exploded with joy. It was truly a most powerful experience of the presence of the Spirit in this moment.

Our Assembly prayer to the God of our Journey had been answered. The Spirit of God had "inspired our hearts so that we joyfully moved to become one as Mercy Aotearoa." ■

Housing hope just a dream for many

The fading dream of home ownership and families forced to live in substandard accommodation are just two of the problems highlighted in a report released by the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services on the future of housing.

The New Zealand that most of us want is where our kids have safe, healthy and affordable housing.

The Government needs to hear this clearly from as many New Zealanders as possible, said council spokesperson, Major Campbell Roberts. Low-income Kiwi families once dreamed of owning their own house. Now, being able to even afford the rent is a nightmare for increasing numbers of families.

"If low income people in this generation are to realise the traditional dream of owning a bit of dirt and a house then urgent action is required to make homeownership possible" said Major Campbell Roberts.

The Council's report highlights the falling rate of home ownership, which is expected to drop to 62% by 2011, compared to 73% in 1986. Maori and Pacific people's rates of home ownership are especially low at 44% and 35.5% respectively.

The Council is also concerned that the high cost of housing is forcing some families to live in substandard conditions.

In 1988 16% of households with incomes in the lowest fifth of incomes spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs, but by 2001 this reached 42% of households. Major Campbell Roberts said that unless there is a major effort to improve housing affordability then an increasing number of New Zealand families will miss out on decent housing and this will have flow-on effects throughout our communities.