

Tui Motu

InterIslands

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The reality of global warming

inside:

- The theology of the Earth
- Edmund Rice Camps
- The Oberammergau Play
- Meet the Man: a new life of Jesus



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Cover: the photograph (also the photo on page 13) was taken during recent severe flooding in Bangladesh. Reproduced courtesy of Agence France Presse

Happy Birthday! Tui Motu

Tui Motu celebrates its third birthday with this issue. There is much to rejoice about.

It has been a spectacularly successful venture of the voluntary kind. Many articles are supplied free of charge, people give freely of their services to sell the magazine throughout the land, others work voluntarily at a variety of jobs at the *Tui Motu* office, and Board members donate their services. The editor, through the good offices of the Rosminian order, is the principal volunteer.

Together with the assistant editor, *Tui Motu* has a prize winning team (see page 4). To be classified as the most interesting and best produced Catholic magazine in Australasia in a given year is a truly remarkable achievement. We are obliged to rejoice.

An even better reason for rejoicing, though, is the magazine's fidelity to its character. It welcomes all sorts of news whether good news, doubtful news or bad news, wherever it surfaces, whether in church or in society.

There are times when it might seem more prudent (and more comfortable) not to name the issue or the problem. *Tui Motu* has consistently avoided that temptation.

This has been manifestly easier to do because of its independence. It is responsible neither to a religious order (although religious orders have been most supportive) nor to the dioceses (although all bishops have been tolerant – and most have been encouraging). The bishops, I suspect, are happy enough with such an arrangement. God knows they have enough to be responsible for.

This does not mean that *Tui Motu* is irresponsible! A glance at the make-up of its editorial Board should indicate that its members are all thoroughly baptised, have an enduring respect for the church and a reverence for its mission.

The paper's independence leaves *Tui Motu* free to print material critical of the status quo. Such a stance does not necessarily claim to be right, but it does claim the right to invite discussion and debate of the controversial – and even dream of what is yet to be. It is difficult to achieve this without editorial independence.

The secular press often proclaims the freedom of its columns, but try to get a letter published that contests prevailing editorial policy and see how far you get! Official religious magazines or newspapers have specific objectives and responsibilities, and there is reasonable expectation that such publications will respond to the intentions of their proprietors.

In this respect *Tui Motu* is different. Its independence gives it a distinctive freedom and willingness to publish viewpoints. Exercised responsibly, there are no limits to that.

Such freedom comes at a price. *Tui Motu* is as poor as the proverbial church mouse. Each issue still has to be subsidised. Is it worth it? Who will decide? Is it a question for 'the market' or the apostolate? We have a year or two to discover what the answer may be.

Tom Cloher

Tom Cloher is chairperson of the Tui Motu Board of Directors

Flood, famine and forest fires

Our cover picture depicts the ravaged face of a Bangladeshi woman during recent floods. Has she lost her home and all her possessions, perhaps her family? What hope has she? Who listens to her cries for help? Jubilee Year 2000 has been haunted by news of devastating forest fires in America and Europe, of famine once more in the horn of Africa, of catastrophic floods in Mozambique and now across the Indian sub-continent. The woman on the cover is just one more victim, one more human statistic.

What further proof do we need that the climate is changing – and changing fast? Last week an icebreaker visited the North Pole. It found open sea, something quite unprecedented in human history. Even the polar icecaps are melting. Global warming is now an established scientific fact. What is not established is how humans propose to deal with it.

In July the Australasian Theological Association held its annual meeting in Christchurch, and chose for its theme the Theology of the Earth: *ecothology*. We report it at length in this issue of *Tui Motu*, starting with some statistics and prognoses about global warming. Some of our readers will still be alive to see whether these frightening predictions turn out to be true.

What can theologians and church people do about it? First, we can work to change local attitudes including our

own. We report the reflections of two who minister to rural communities. We also report the two major events of the Conference. One was the lecture series of Scottish theologian Ruth Page. Her question is a deceptively simple one entirely relevant to our front cover: *what on earth is our loving Creator God doing about this mess?*

The other feature was the launch of the *Earth Bible*. Norman Habel is a Lutheran pastor from South Australia. He has spent years studying and speaking with the Aboriginal people. He has absorbed much of their sense of reverence for the Earth and for its creatures. The indigenous people of the planet have not been so spoiled by civilisation and the pursuit of affluence: we have to listen and learn from them.

Habel then looks penetratingly at the word of God. We need, “not a dusted down romanticism or a sanitised resource management exercise”, he says, “but to replace our dominating, patronising tradition with a sense of kinship”.

The books of the Bible have to be reread: passages which appear to advocate exploitation identified and put in their cultural context, in much the same way as is already being done with blatantly patriarchal passages. Scholars have to read between the lines to discover another, gentler and wiser message. The *Earth Bible Project* deserves our fullest support.

Who will listen? One nation clearly not listening is the United States of America. An Italian journalist on a recent visit observed that America seemed to be the one society where no one had noticed the huge leap in petrol prices. With dollars so plentiful and ‘gas’ so cheap, who cares? One way the Americans celebrate their runaway economic boom is to build bigger, flashier and greedier automobiles.

They have miserably failed to meet their agreed target for reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. They bribe the poorer nations and use their greenhouse ‘credits’ instead. Recent disastrous forest fires on their own doorstep should have been a wake-up call. But when presidential candidate Al Gore dared to plead a conservation warning, he was roundly derided as a ‘tree hugger’.

While it is quite legitimate to stigmatise the US as the chief culprit, are we any better? Not one local motorist interviewed about the recent petrol price hike suggested he or she might economise in the use of their car. Once we humans get used to easy living and the convenience of having wheels – guzzling unlimited ‘gas’ – nothing but personal disaster will wean us from our Gaderene, self-indulgent binge.

And so, the wealthy countries of the world go on squandering the resources of the earth as if there were no tomorrow. Unless we call a halt – right now, there will be no tomorrow.

M.H.



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

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Media Awards

New Zealand Catholic publications scored well in the annual ACPA (Australasian Catholic Press Association) awards, held in Brisbane in August.

Marist Messenger won the best editorial award.

The *NZ Catholic* won three awards: best feature story; best education coverage (highly commended); best newspaper layout and design.

Tui Motu also won three awards: best headline (highly commended); best magazine layout and design; and the Bishop Philip Kennedy Memorial Prize for Magazines.

Running concurrently with the ACPA, the Australasian

Religious Press Association (ARPA) gave awards to *Wel-Com* – best social justice story, with *NZ Catholic* (highly commended); *Marist Messenger* – best devotional article applying faith to life; and *NZ Catholic* – best editorial (highly commended).

At the NZ Christian Booksellers Association Conference the *NZ Bible Society* won the award for the Distributor of the Year for the third year running.

The Bishop Philip Kennedy Memorial Prize

This prize is the top ACPA magazine award for the year.

The criteria on which it is judged are:

size of operation (staff and resources) as related to the quality of product;

relevance of content to market; overall look of the publication;

quality of writing; photography and content generally; quality of printing.

The Bishop Kennedy Prize for newspapers went to the *Catholic Voice*, the newspaper of the Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese.

Ecotheology Conference

The annual conference of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools (ANZATS) took place in July in Christchurch. Its major topic was **Ecotheology** – the Theology of the Earth. About 100 delegates attended, mostly from Australia, although major theological schools of New Zealand were also well represented.

The climax of the conference was the launch of the **Earth Bible**, fruit of the work of primarily Southern Hemisphere scholars, but being published simultaneously in Britain, the United States as well as here. The principal guest speaker was Dr Ruth Page, of the University of Edinburgh: her series of evening lectures followed the theme of God and the web of creation.

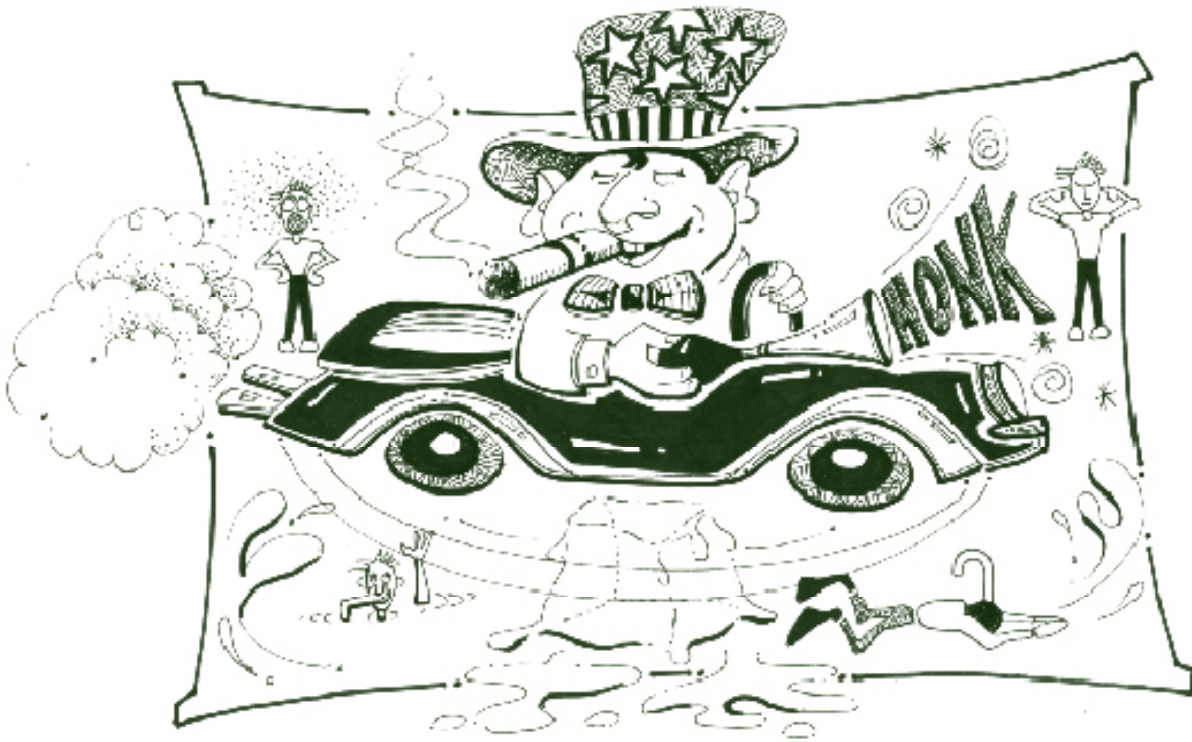
These themes from the Conference are summarised in the following pages:

- *page 5* – **Global Warming** (from a workshop conducted by meteorologist, Dr Jim Salinger)
- *pp 6-7* – **Eco-justice and Social Justice**. Anglican priest Rosemary Russell, of Oamaru, looks at the problems of water use in the Waitaki basin
- *pp 8-9* – **Launch of the Earth Bible**. An interview with Norman Habel, professorial Fellow at Flinders University of S Australia and the Adelaide

College of Divinity.

- *pp 10-11* – **Ecotheology and Rural Life**. Robyn McPhail is parish Minister at Methven, in rural mid-Canterbury
- *pp 12-14* – **God, Evolution and the Ecological crisis**. Dr Ruth Page, keynote speaker of the Conference, is Principal of New College, Edinburgh. The article is a summary of her four lectures.

In search of . . . a theology of the Earth



Global warming

The biosphere is that thin mantle of life around the Earth. Among its characteristics are the ‘greenhouse’ gases, in particular carbon dioxide. They allow radiant heat from the sun to pass through but reflect back much of the earth’s heat. The effect of greenhouse gases is to keep the surface of the planet 30°C warmer than it would be without them.

But increased use of fossil fuels and deforestation has increased carbon dioxide emissions, and this has triggered the current global warming which is increasing exponentially. The mean temperature of the Earth has increased by about 1°C during the 20th Century. At the present rate it will increase another 2°C during the 21st Century. This is directly linked to a steadily rising level of the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

This rise of 3°C in 200 years is unprecedented and described by climatologist Dr Jim Salinger as “catastrophic”. He emphasised that although the effects are reversible – by cutting down CO₂ emissions – the slow penetration of heat downwards in the oceans will act as a buffer prolonging the effects of the present profligate use of fossil fuels.

So what will happen?

- We are already experiencing the initial effects: calamitous droughts and forest fires, floods and mudslides engulfing whole populations, catastrophic cyclones. These climate extremes are likely to increase.
- Ocean levels will rise by about 50 cm by a.D. 2100. Pacific atolls like Kiribati and Tuvalu will be inundated, and fertile deltas (much of Bangladesh) rendered uninhabitable. By 2050 this could produce 150 million environmental refugees, driven inland or overseas by the swamping of their homelands.
- Fertile habitats for growing crops will move upwards to higher altitudes and to higher latitudes. Overall, areas suitable for cultivation will very likely reduce.
- Deforestation is also producing a spread of desert – observable already in the African Sahel.
- Nearly of this is the result of human waste of resources. But by the year 2045 at the present rate of increase, world human population will have doubled. ■

The river rules our life

Is a river a source of life – or a source of cash? ‘All that water running to waste’ – a saying often heard by Anglican priest, Rosemary Russell, working in a rural district

As I consider the region where I live, I wonder how its history, its social location and its songlines can all be considered and how we can learn to listen for the heartbeat of God pulsating through it. For most of my adult life, I have lived in the Bay of Plenty in the North Island. There, the contentious issue of the logging of native bush and the planting of exotic production timber brought social and environment concerns into conflict. The question of jobs versus conservation is how that issue is presented.

Since I moved to North Otago five years ago, I have discovered a region that shares with much of the eastern parts of Aotearoa New Zealand the problems of low rainfall and periodic droughts. Here, the contentious questions are about access to water, pollution levels and the effects on the life of our rivers and groundwater systems. Drought years are not new. They have been a regular feature in the recorded history of this district. As sheep stocking rates increased and farming became more intensive, the effects of recurring drought have been felt more keenly.

The last two years of drought have increased the concern among farmers, horticulturists and gardeners. The clamour for more irrigation has become louder and schemes to irrigate the dry-lands have resurfaced: *all that water going to waste!* I have heard that comment so often during the last two years. The water referred to is the Waitaki River, a wide, powerful river, fed by the snows and glaciers of the Southern Alps. It passes through several hydro-electric dams during its journey to the sea, providing electricity for much of the country. Now its potential

for further large-scale irrigation of the Upper and Lower Waitaki Valley is seen as the answer to many rural problems.

This river already provides irrigation to farmland on both sides of its course and sheep farming has often given way to dairying and horticulture. Now the plans are to extend irrigation to the downlands and to pump water over the hills into the next catchment, where the Kakanui River struggles to keep up with the demands made on it, even without a drought. It all sounds so positive, but the concept that the Waitaki river is running to waste if it is not used, worries me.

voicing disquiet about irrigation schemes sounds like treachery

Plans that take little apparent thought for the effect on the river, seem, at best, short-sighted. There is no guarantee that the river flow will be maintained in the future, especially if global warming continues unabated. The huge cost of setting up new and more ambitious irrigation schemes can only be recouped if diversification and intensified farming takes place and proceeds uninterrupted.

Farmers who urge the need to irrigate are well represented among our Christian congregations. Most would see themselves as good conservationists: they have learnt how best to conserve the natural resources that they use and to be efficient in their use. In order to remain on the land and to be able to pass it on to the next generation, irrigation seems to provide the only answer in today's world. To voice disquiet about large schemes with the capacity to develop life on the land – land that

becomes grey and dead in drought years – sounds like treachery, or at least, lack of compassion. Such development is needed to arrest rural depopulation.

What is fair and just in this situation? *What is fair and just for the river?* First we would have to listen to those who fish the river, for food or recreation; to the tourism operators who would not want a shrinking waterway; to health professionals, concerned about the growing pollution of the river from dairying and horticulture since the river is the major source of drinking water; to other recreational users; and then to those who enjoy the aesthetic values of the river in its present state. And what of the life of the river itself? So far, that question is not asked or if it is raised, it is brushed aside with a reminder that there are minimum flow requirements to deal with that sort of thing.

Harnessing the river, utilising the resource, are concepts that work from the assumption that the river is there for us, for human use and control. Maximising production and intensifying land use to justify outlay on irrigation, makes economic sense. But what if the starting point could be the selection of farming systems that better suit the dry climate, enhanced by water storage for times of drought.

One Otago Regional Councillor believes the time has come “when descendants of the European settlers should examine from a wider perspective what water means to us. We came to this country finding a resource that seemed to be quantity and quality assured. We are now learning that water or any other God-given resource cannot be taken for

granted... Rivers must have a minimum flow for the sake of the biota, wildlife, domestic dwelling priority and the general health of the river.”

C*an water itself be owned?* That is a question often debated. For Maori the answer is clear. Each river has its own spirit, its own *mauri*, ensuring all the species it accommodates are protected. For this reason, cross-mixing of waters by taking water from one catchment to another can have adverse effects on species and is therefore culturally unacceptable. Water cannot be owned nor traded as a commodity.

Vandana Shiva, a scientist writing about the vanishing waters of India, explains how in the past, her country’s indigenous systems used water storage and distribution based on nature’s logic and in harmony with nature’s cycles. Now, massive irrigation schemes create systems that work against the natural drainage. “Rivers instead of being seen as sources of life, become sources of cash.” The massive dams used to irrigate commodity crops like sugarcane, in her view, become anti-life, while women and children thirst for drinking water.

*the masculine mind
has forgotten how to
think like a river and flow
with the nature of water*

“The water flowing into the sea is not waste: it is a crucial link in the water cycle. With the link broken, the ecological balance of land and oceans, fresh water and sea water, also gets disrupted. Saline water starts intruding inwards, sea water starts swallowing the beaches and eroding the coast.” For Shiva, a return to the feminine principle is the answer. The masculine mind has forgotten how to ‘think like a river and to flow with the nature of water’.

Supremely, it was Rachel Carson who drew our attention to what we were doing to destroy our environment by pollution. “To assume that we must

resign ourselves to turning our waterways into rivers of death is to follow the counsel of despair and defeatism... when millions of tons of poisonous chemicals are applied to the surface of the land, it is inevitable that some of them will find their way into the ceaseless cycle of waters moving between land and sea.”

Carson, a marine biologist who died of cancer, saw the dangers both to the life of the waters and to humans who used them, in the indiscriminate use of carcinogenic chemicals. Her work in this area is being developed by the scientist, Sandra Steingraber. Much of her research concerns the Illinois River, where she was brought up and the presence of carcinogens in the river and groundwater, from which drinking water is drawn. The toll on women, as the rate of breast cancer increases, is, she believes, too high a price to pay, yet the local authorities refuse to act.

The rain, however, falls on the righteous and the unrighteous, the just and the unjust (*Matthew 5:45*). God does not single out the deserving from the undeserving when it comes to the resources of creation. But when acid rain falls as a result of pollution that could be avoided, then that becomes a justice issue. All who feel its effects on both forest life and human livelihood have a right to be heard, so that the situation can be confronted and the balance eventually restored.

As long as Christians maintain an instrumental attitude towards the environment – that it was created by God for our use, as the object of our stewardship for future human generations – there will be a dichotomy between social and environmental justice. One will continue to be pitted against the other and damaging compromises will ensue. I believe that, together and inseparably, they confront



us with the demands of the Kingdom.

Kwok Pui-lan, writing in *Ecology and the recycling of Christianity*, challenges the churches to move towards an ecological solidarity – a covenant with the land, the ocean, the forest, the rivers and the mountains. She writes: “Our covenant with nature is not based on fear and anxiety because nature is seriously polluted and its resources are limited. We need to renew our covenant with the planet earth out of joy, celebration and gratitude”.

Unless humanity can relinquish some of its arrogant anthropocentric moorings and learn to discover a joy in being part of the environment, both humanity and the environment will remain under threat. ■



Lutheran pastor and scholar, Norman Habel (left), draws an intimate link between the way we should read the Bible and being custodians of the Earth which the aboriginal people instinctively are.

Last month we interviewed him in Christchurch at the launch of the Earth Bible project.

I was born and bred on a farm so my sense of kinship with the land goes back a long way. I've always had a garden – and it is mark of my German heritage. My great grandfather was an extra-ordinary man and planted trees round the lake where he settled. The neighbours objected and said: *this isn't parkland. This is for sheep!* So he joined the local council and got his park built

Four years ago in Perth I gave a paper where I said that we had been misreading *Genesis 1* because we were not hearing the land story behind the text. The term *Earth Bible* came to me – and the people said to me: *What are you going to do about it?* I found no-one else was doing anything about this. A commitment of mine was that this project should have a significant

actual Earth Bible. We have the funding for the academic work – but not yet for the popular component. But the ideas are all there.

We started with *Genesis*. Volume 3 is on the *Wisdom* books. Four will be *Prophets and Psalms*. For example, one writer has drawn a parallel between God's relation to the land and a man to his battered

Prophet of the Earth

round the lake. He was an environmentalist long before his time. And I felt this is something I too must do.

About ten years ago I produced *Six Biblical Land Ideologies* at the University as a result of the Land Rights issue. I wanted to see how land was viewed in the Biblical tradition: I realised there were several ideologies of land. At the same time I was trying to understand the Aboriginal sense of the land. It was a short step from that to move into Ecojustice.

Southern hemisphere input into it. So we invited Australian, New Zealand, South African and indigenous writers. *Sheffield Press* agreed to publish it. It will be published in England as well as here.

There has been huge growth in three years. Perhaps it's a bit more academic than I originally intended – but that was the way it worked out. We are preparing five academic volumes. They will provide the foundation. But we hope that there will be ecoliturgies and Parish Bible Studies to go with the

wife! It's a most provocative article. Number Five will be New Testament. We are looking to indigenous people especially to contribute.

It is never sufficient to 'cherry pick', just selecting those passages which support your case. We have to be honest and face up to all those other passages as well. You can't just say: *those people didn't quite mean it that way – they were conditioned!* Like the violent verses in the psalms. The history of the text is one of 'both/and'. It is not unlike how we deal with

all the patriarchal texts. What we have to do is to retrieve the other strands as well – to get a total picture.

For example in *Genesis 1*, when you ask yourself where the Earth stands in this, you discover that the Earth was there under the waters waiting to be revealed. And that is the first day. The second day we have the sky, which is a sort of stage where the earth can be revealed. And on the third day God says: “Let the dry land *appear*”. The word *appear* is the same word used for the appearance of God. So what we have is the theophany of the Earth.

Then the text says: “Let the land bring forth...” The plants and the trees, even the animal and the birds, come out from the Earth. The Earth is a life-giving image. You start with new eyes – and you start to see new things. The hope is

that the other writers will have the same sort of experience right throughout the Bible. What will we make of: “I will destroy the land, and you will know that I am Yahweh”. We have to face up to the negative – and retrieve the other things. *Both/and*.

The six principles came from the decision not just to go in cold but that we must establish our principles. We had a conference in Adelaide three years ago with scientists present. We endorsed the project, and a team in Adelaide spent 12 months redrafting and revising the *Principles* until we arrived at a consensus. The importance is you can use these *Principles* in dialogue with scientists. So we have avoided too much ‘God language’. We find that many ecologists for instance reject the notion of treating the Earth an object: it has to be related to as a subject.

When we say: *we must listen to the Voice of the Earth*, it isn’t necessarily a human voice we are talking about. It’s more than just a metaphor. Aboriginal people have a kinship with the Earth, both biological and spiritual, going back thousands of years, like the Songlines. They will often have a kinship with certain creatures who they have to care for. They are custodians of that place and that creature that lives there.

Throughout the history of humanity people have experienced the Earth as being full of life, not a lifeless thing. We have to reaffirm that, and ask the question whether the *Voice of the Earth* is ever heard or expressed. We have chosen the word *Custodianship* to express our aims – it is better than ‘Stewardship’, which ignores the fact that we too are dependent on the Earth, with it rather than over it. ■

M.H.

The Earth Bible

The Earth Bible, said Dr Lloyd Geering at the official launch, “is a critique of the Bible from the point of view of the Earth”. The launch was the high point of a week-long Australasian Theological Symposium on Ecotheology held in Christchurch during July.

The scheme for an ‘Earth Bible’ is the brain child of Norman Habel, who is also chief editor. It sets out to:

- develop appropriate principles of ecojustice (*see right*) for interpreting the Bible
- publish these interpretations
- provide a forum for the voice of the Earth to be heard.

Five volumes of the Earth Bible, prepared by an international team of scholars, are due out during the next two years. They are to be published simultaneously in Australia, the US and Britain. They will be accompanied by suggestions for liturgy and study materials suitable for parish use.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in an introduction to the Earth Bible series, said:

I recommend you read the Earth Bible with a critical but empathetic eye. As a critical reader you will want to assess whether the writers make their case... As an empathetic reader you will need to identify with Earth and the suffering Earth community as you read the text. I hope that the promise of ‘peace on Earth’ will be advanced by this laudable project. ■

The Six Principles of Ecojustice

- **intrinsic worth** - the universe, Earth and all its components have intrinsic worth and value
- **interconnectedness** – Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival
- **voice** – Earth is a subject capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice
- **purpose** – the universe, Earth and all its components are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has its place in the overall goal of that design
- **mutual custodianship** – Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners with, rather than rulers over, Earth to sustain its balance and a diverse Earth community
- **resistance** – Earth and its components not only suffer from human injustices but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.



Pitchfork theology

*The core issue of rural life is **belonging** – with the land and with people. So perhaps ‘ecotheology’ may not be so out of place to the farming community, suggests rural minister, Robyn McPhail*

What would Jesus do? *Fancy phrase, that’s all that is*,” said the farmer who had just stepped in the door, dripping wet, a new-born lamb under each arm. He’d heard the words then spotted the minister at the table in deep conversation with his wife. *“No time for that here. Sorry, but if you want to be helpful, either save these lambs or get that boss of yours to give us a sunny day!”*

I remember a classic David Henshard cartoon that sums up this presumed separation between the real life of farming and what church is about. Again the minister is out visiting and finds the farmer in the yard. It appears to be one of those conversations about not coming to church. *“Would you rather I was in church thinking about the hay,”* asks the farmer, *“or in the hay paddock thinking about church?”*

Does theology have any relevance to life on the land? Do our churches in New Zealand have any ecotheology? In the mainstream very little, and that in itself is big mistake – a lost opportunity. If any church should spot eco-connections in human living it is a church in the

rural scene with its unavoidable ‘eco-context’. Think about it: rural talk about the weather is never ‘small talk’, for it’s at the core of one’s livelihood. And our communities are always small enough that we know one another, and we know we need one another; rural life is unavoidably interconnected.

However, rural ecotheology is not well known to the mainstream of the Pakeha church and theology, and it is even concealed from the local church. Traditional teaching has suggested that real Christian faith is only spoken in orthodox ‘believers’ language, and one must speak in this language for all talk to do with God. But – invite people of the land to speak about their life and what is important to them, with no language expectations, and a new view is gained. A theology of life is uncovered when people speak of God’s presence with them in particular events or tasks, in the dilemmas and decisions, the endings and the new beginnings that they face.

But these reflections remain well hidden, at the edges of church structures centred as they are in urban areas and

often worked out ecumenically (which is another marginal enterprise in the current ecclesial scene).

Nor do we think of our reflections as being sage academic work, because the immediate context of the speakers and listeners has called for a different language. But perhaps treating our reflections as less than theology stems from the same fault we identify in our churches – always being apologetic about ourselves because we do not measure up to the urban, denominational norm.

Rural livelihood requires close, constant attention to getting on with the job. Ideas and expertise are valued if they are ‘stuff that works’; so many rural people find it problematic when ideas are presented to them that take no account of their own input and use technical language even if that language fails to communicate. If theology is given to rural church people as a theory to be digested as is, it is sure to be rejected on the same grounds.

Theology by rights is not like this. Its task is to crystallise the faith expressed in everyday living and nurtured in faithful worship, to articulate practice so as to affirm it and challenge it. My claim is that, if one pursues this kind of theology in rural New Zealand, then it will be *ecotheology* by and large that one will find. For ecotheology is about connections. It is about synergy and discovering the delight of knowing one is an integral part of the whole – a ‘thread in the weave’ – who is therefore motivated to act for its well-being. It also means knowing the sobering experience of breaking the threads and turning back to reconnect. It is about



Photos: Mary Ann Bishop

the respect involved in recognising distinctiveness in others and therefore not needing to control others for one's own ends.

Richard Bawden, an Australian academic in the field of systemic development, speaks of the need for *synergism*. Change has hit rural life, yet we persist with inadequate ways of thinking and doing. We need a whole new systemic paradigm of life as an interconnected whole. Bawden's vision is for farming practices that are "as ethically defensible as they are technically effective, as aesthetically acceptable as they are financially viable, and as ecologically responsible as they are socially desirable".

Utopia, maybe, but utopia does have its place as a horizon of hope to look towards. And there is already some truth in it: anecdotal evidence shows a strong sense of connectedness with and for the land among rural church people. The core issue of rural life is *belonging* – with the land and with other people.

Parameters for success in that can therefore only be relational. Favourite Hymns and Bible texts, e.g. *Psalms 121* and *23*, *Ecclesiastes 3*, *Amos 5:24*, *Luke 12*, and all Jesus' agricultural parables evoke experiences of engagement and connectedness between things human and non-human. There is an incipient ecotheology here that needs to be brought out of hiding and encouraged.

For it's only a beginning. There are major gaps in our understanding of the web of creation and, until these gaps are addressed, we will continue to experience the disconnection of sin – that is, we and the web will together suffer the consequences. Disconnection between our farmers and the rural poor of the two-thirds World who oppose GATT; land connectedness for the non-land owning population of New Zealand; reconnection for the



tangata whenua. These are some of the many issues for ecotheology.

How can we obtain a socio-economic system that will produce a decent sufficiency for all, within a development model worked out with nature and not against it, and in which the idea of the common good will also involve the common environmental good, that of the air, seas and rivers, living beings, the whole environmental landscape? This is the greatest challenge raised by the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. ■

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Neil Darragh is a professional theologian. He teaches theology at the University of Auckland and is the Principal of the Catholic Institute of Theology. He is also Parish Priest of Glen Innes and a regular contributor to Tui Motu.

How Green is our God?

Scottish theologian, Dr Ruth Page, insists that to arrive at a coherent theology of Creation, we have to get rid of a 'human-centred' view – and temper a lyrical vision of our world with an honest acknowledgment of violence and destruction. Her solution is to propose the 'God of possibilities'



God and the web of creation

What sort of God is our 'Creator God'?

When we talk lyrically about creation as well as lustily singing hymns like *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, should we not also include mention of the tsetse fly, the embola microbe and the AIDS virus? And what an honest question was William Blake's when he asked of the tiger: *Did God who made the lamb make thee?* The fact of the matter is the creation story is not only green with abundant fertility: it is also red with blood and orchestrated by screams of anguish.

Threatened species on our planet are by no means a modern phenomenon. Animals and plants alike have constantly been threatened with extinction; even before the advent of that most supreme of all extinguishers, *homo sapiens*, over 90 percent of all created species had disappeared. If God creates, it seems equally that God deletes. We must ask ourselves: is God concerned to preserve the Black Robin, yet appears not to have cared less about the dinosaurs?

No coherent theology of creation or ecotheology can afford to ignore these

questions. The Providence of God appears always ambivalent. The flood which is a blessing to one species will curse another with potential extinction.

Christianity has concentrated too exclusively on the destiny of human beings, viewing the natural world merely as a backdrop. Of course we have had to face and explain the fact of human evil. Augustine in the 5th Century proposed that it was God's gift of free will which entailed the possibility of evil. God's power becomes restricted to enable us to say *Yes* to God freely – but also to say *No*, and so to choose moral evil.

It is surely a short step to extend this freedom back to the natural world as well. Animal, vegetable and mineral creation also has its freedoms – not free will in the human sense, but a freedom within their very way of being. A non-human creature has the freedom to be what is possible for it to be. Freedom also is part of the life of a volcano, and sometimes the volcano will exercise its freedom and cause the Tangiwai disaster. The tectonic plates in the earth's crust will grind together and destroy a Lisbon or a Napier.

We can start by answering one of these questions. God did not wilfully annihilate the dinosaurs by meteor strike. God gave freedom to creation to develop in its own way, and that included climate change and natural catastrophes. There is thus a parallel between these 'natural' evils and the moral evils caused by the misuse of human freedom.

The God of possibilities

But can we let God off the hook entirely? Even if we stand back and claim that whatever the disasters en route, the story of Creation will be all right in the end, what consolation is that to the woman who has AIDS now or the lamb being gobbled by the lion? That is why we should always feel uneasy with those who rhapsodise about God as cosmic painter or weaver.

So let's try another tack entirely. God creates – not the details, the particularities – but the *possibilities*. In the beginning there were no possibilities. And in the end there will be no tomorrow, which means we will have run out of possibilities. As humans we respond to the possibilities God offers

us. And so do the crocodiles and the chrysanthemums.

This may appear a very detached view of God the Creator. We may well be accused of deism. Let's draw a parallel. If we say 'God lets the world be', it's the sort of way parents behave toward their teenage children. Allowing them to *be* – for better or for worse. Yet by no means *letting them go* – in fact, still loving and being passionately concerned for them; simply, not *controlling*. God is trusting these others to respond. And creatures too show an appetite for this life of freedom: the 'higher' the creature, the greater the range of possibilities. It matters supremely to God how we humans use the possibilities given to us.

Evolution

Let's turn now to the way the natural world has developed in time. The language of evolution has been excessively anthropocentric. The museum label speaks, in military jargon, of the *Conquest of the Land* by the green plants. Evolution is described as an 'upward march', which implies that earlier, simpler creatures existed as mere stepping stones to something 'higher'. Humanity is seen as the pinnacle of a history of *progress* and the mechanism of evolution is termed the *survival of*

the fittest. Plato divided creation into *higher* and *lower* forms, a language we still commonly use. By seeing ourselves as the 'fittest' we are conditioned into looking down on the rest of creation as inferior.

In point of fact, survival is often the reward of the best adapted, sometimes of the least specialised. Simpler creatures may survive a catastrophe which will destroy the more complex. The dinosaurs shuffled off this mortal coil... the humble tuatara lived on!

And when a species is destroyed, it's an invitation for challengers to move into the empty niche. Often what has happened is purely a contingent event, and shows no evolutionary 'direction'. Changes occur as a result of 'unplanned' accidents, which may even entail the total loss of species. *Homo sapiens* may achieve so-called 'success' ahead of more nimbler or more agile competitors, but does that make us more important? In the food chain the mostly vital link may be the humblest, like plankton in the ocean. Size and complexity are no indicators of importance in a world of intertwined life: it can be truly said we are simply a twig on that tree.

And once again we may ask the question: *where is God in this whole*

process of evolution? Perhaps rather than pinning on God the responsibility for deleting the dinosaurs, we should once again speak in terms of *possibility*. God provided the possibility of what could and did happen. God is equally concerned with all creatures, not merely the apparently successful ones – but not down to the minutest detail. No creature is beyond God's care, and as each creature strives within the limits of its possibility, will not that be pleasing to a loving and caring God?

What of individual creatures?

What do we mean when we say: 'God be with you!?' How is God *with* us? We still mean that God holds off; God lets be – but also that God cares for, is present to, all creatures. Jesus revealed to us a God – *Abba!* – who is present and caring, not a mere distant onlooker. God is truly *with* us rather than *over* us.

Jesus revealed a caring God, not a mere distant onlooker

The Incarnation teaches us something quite different from a God of power: Jesus is with us and part of us, not *over* us. *Matthew* describes Jesus as Emmanuel – God *with* us. In the wilderness Jesus was tempted to use power, but declined. The Greek Orthodox speak of God's 'energies' rather than the power of God. This opens up the possibility of *synergy*: whereby we can share in God's power. The word 'synergy' suggests working together with – instead of in competition against – others.

And if that's possible for us, why not for all creatures? Jesus speaks of God caring for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. But this caring didn't begin only when human beings came along: it was there from the beginning. As Christians, holding the most anthropocentric of faiths, we surely need to develop a care for God's creatures quite independently of any advantage to us as humans. They too have a right to a place in the sun.



A young girl caught in the recent devastating floods in Bangladesh. An act of God – or are these climatic catastrophes evidence of global warming?

As humans we have to acknowledge our limitations. We will never see as the housefly sees. We will never know if *Tyrannosaurus Rex* could have felt the emotions of love! We do not know how animals or plants 'feel'. We certainly don't know if they have any apprehension of God. But God knows how they feel. God does not need us humans as mediators. We are not the channels whereby creatures are brought to God. God 'up there' is not waiting for us to tell him all about the beetles!

All these creatures are entitled to their life. They display an appetite for life. And then they die and make way for others. They are entitled to live fully and to die without excessive suffering. Clearly battery farms, cruel conditions of husbandry, mass extermination for our benefit, or for sport, is dubious if not downright evil. Do we really need to drain more wetlands for building sites? God crossed a gulf to be near to us. Why not the extra millimetre for the sake of the millipede?

And where, then, does Jesus Christ come in?

Much traditional theology implies that creation had to wait for the coming of Christ to be made whole. But are we implying that before the coming of Christ nature was out of joint? Did not God love and care for creation *before* the coming of Christ? Is it not rather that Christ presents us with the model of what God has always been doing towards creation: namely, *transforming* it.

The Jesus of the Gospels "shows an intimacy and familiarity with the variety of God's creatures and the processes of nature" (*Sean McDonagh*). The parables reveal him as embedded in the natural world. When the *Word was made flesh*, God in Jesus Christ entered into physical communion with the whole of creation. Christ is 'priest' of creation. You and I and Jesus breathed the same oxygen – and Jesus is Son of God. Just as Christ has become connected with the whole of creation by entering physically into the process, then so are we connected.

What the coming of Christ has brought to us is the possibility of *transformation*. And one consequence of this transformation is that we become the carers for creation, even the rescuers – but not the despoilers. Christ during his lifetime on earth lived neither as a controller nor a dominator of nature. He reveals to us what it is to enjoy right relations with God. He impels us towards right relations with our fellow humans and with our fellow creatures.

The *eschaton*, the end-times, will be the climax of this earth story when the whole 'struggle for life', as Darwin called it, will be seen as worthwhile. It will be the time of harvest (the *pleroma* of *Colossians 1*) both for ourselves as humans and for all creation. We shall enjoy heaven with them remembering also the joys of earth. ■

Some longer papers from the Christchurch conference on Ecotheology are available in the June issue of Pacifica magazine

Rainbow Spirit Theology

conversation with Norman Habel

Alongside his work leading up to the Earth Bible Project (see pages 8-9) Norman Habel has also been involved for many years working with Australian Aboriginal leaders in the genesis of a *Rainbow Spirit Theology*: listening and reflecting with them, then reading it back to them.

The *Bring Them Home* report three years ago has been a major impetus to racial reconciliation. The process of forcibly removing children from their parents happened as recently as 1970, yet few realised how ugly the process of assimilation was, its vicious dimension. 'We thought we were doing what was best for them.'

Habel has written seven rites of healing, to be used for specific places of pain and suffering. Each rite is done between white and Aboriginal people, using Aboriginal music and so on. Habel accepts an invitation to lead such a rite provided the local Aboriginal people are present.

The politicians, he says, are treading a tightrope. They want to say that they are doing something, but they do not want it to impact on the soul and conscience of the nation. The Howard Government refuses to go through a formal rite of apology. Howard himself seems to lack the personal openness of spirit to do this.

On 'Sorry' Day earlier this year the hope was that the Government would accept this Declaration. Prime Minister Howard said there was no need. Yet the people need to hear an apology for wounds to be healed.

A second stream consists of ordinary Australians. When the march over Sydney Harbour Bridge was announced there was only about ten days' notice; yet 50,000 people turned up! The bridge metaphor has come to the fore: all Australians have to cross this bridge to make the change and to bridge the gap of history and of relationships.

The churches have been ambivalent. First they were complicit with the Government in the destruction of culture and receiving the children removed by the police. But now some churches have acknowledged this and are seeking to make redress: to acknowledge the evil that was done and receive forgiveness at the hands of the Aboriginal people. The Uniting Church has been very prominent. In the Catholic Church the Social Justice groups have done many good things, but Habel suspects the average congregation still has a fair way to go. Each church congregation needs to go through an education and reconciliation process. ■



Life cycle

'Life-giver'

'Pain-bearer'

'Love-maker'

mountain pool

blood heat

streams

capillaries and arteries

over rock faces

smashed and smoothed

greywacke

mediates

the music of

base line tumbling

surface accidentals

polyphony in the body

teems with

and withholds life

holds

the power of life

and death

flood and drought

Sturm und Drang

intimacies

known only to fishermen

The Hurunui

gorges forth

just before the sea

freeing us

from pomposity

and splendid isolation

Jane Simpson

Warning Sign for Birds

Never let

land here any bird,

pray none fall.

Delusory the fair

seeming shimmer underneath.

Rather may exhaustion

claim the heart

than a death so slow,

subtle and bizarre,

from this gleaming, calm

oil slick far

below.

Beatrice Hoffman

Sunrise

From the hill top there is beauty in the sunrise.

The sky filled with soft colour bathes the earth with muted light,

rocks release whispered hues to be absorbed by the human eye,

the ageless green of grass promises sustenance

for the beasts of the field,

the morning air is peaceful and uncluttered by the noise and stress of

human activity.

The illusion is of a world bathed in peace and harmony.

Nevertheless, wherever the sun rises on the distant world,

it is liable to rise

on the refugee, homeless, stateless, without succour

and lost,

on the famine stricken, hungry with bodies wasted

and sick,

on the prisoners of conscience, tortured, imprisoned

and desolate,

on soldiers fighting hopeless wars, relentless and driven

but afraid.

It rises

on sleepless ones, restless, with minds heavy and too often laden

with worry or guilt,

on the humble aged sometimes cold, neglected and alone

but dependent,

on innocent children led astray, used, trampled on

and soiled,

on adolescents fighting to find a reason to live,

unguided,

on men and women driven by the need to succeed,

demented and unsuccessful,

on the voiceless ones, the broken, the sick, the deaf,

the blind and the lame, seeking relief,

on the earth itself, laid bare, wasted, misused

and polluted.

Only you, oh creator God, can change the hearts of humanity.

Show your truth to rulers of nations that they may move to stop

the downward spiral of devastation and destruction.

Release your Spirit within each one of us and

renew the face of the earth.

Only then will the sun rise on a world that is close to heaven!

Cathy Grant

Oberammergau

The Passion Play in the Bavarian village of Oberammergau has been performed at ten year intervals since the villagers in 1633 vowed to perform the drama in order to avert an epidemic of bubonic plague.

Some controversy has surrounded the 2000 production because of the alleged anti-Jewish sentiment contained in some earlier productions. The text has been carefully rewritten this time to avoid this. It is being performed four times every week, 95 times throughout its season. Altogether nearly half a million people will see the 2000 production.

Tui Motu talked to three New Zealanders, part of a group recently returned from Oberammergau and, afterwards, a visit to the Holy Land. For Brian and Suzanne Hannagan and Patricia McKewen it was a unique experience – “... and the Passion Play was the highlight...”



The town itself was captivating: the Alpine backdrop, the beautifully painted buildings – the whole atmosphere. It's simply the right place to hold it. The shops are groaning with displays of the local wood carving of exquisite quality, all done there in the village. I imagine few would leave without buying a piece as a memento.

“The Play is all done on a huge open stage. The auditorium is covered and seats about 5000. But the actual stage is in the open air, and if it rains they just keep going! You could see the doves flying about and twittering away in the background!

“The players wear no make-up. There are no microphones, no artificial wigs. They all wear their hair long. The men don't cut their hair or shave from Ash Wednesday of the previous year. You are not allowed to use cameras. It's old style theatre.

“But the costuming is absolutely fantastic this year. The chorus would process on and off wearing these beautiful gowns. The soloists are mixed in with them and they're professional singers – but the chorus are all local. There about 60 in the chorus – and probably the same number in the orchestra. The music was all specially composed for the Play about a hundred years ago.

“In between scenes they have these magnificent living *tableaux*. They mostly portray scenes from the Old Testament, like Moses and the Burning Bush. The actors



Passion Play

stay stock still for five minutes or more. In one there was this woman poised motionless – for all of five minutes, I suppose. I thought it must be a statue – but it wasn't. They were so colourful, you didn't want them to stop.

"The scenery and the background are so realistic, they make you feel you are really there; you become part of it. Each half of the Play is about three hours, but the concentration on the Play is total. No one moves; there are simply no distractions.

The crucifixion was the most rivetting moment. You could feel the pain in Christ's body. When you looked at him there – it was Christ!. The raising of those huge crosses; the breaking of the bones of the thieves; the cries of Jesus from the Cross.

"One amazing thing was the way they took Christ down from the Cross. I'd never thought of this

before. It was done by using a huge sheet. Someone climbed up and placed this sheet under his arms; then the nails were removed and his body was lowered to the ground.

"When we went on to Jerusalem afterwards, your imagination immediately started working again. We seemed to be reliving the scenes of the Play. On the *Via Dolorosa* we were nearly smothered by the crowds. It was a very frightening experience! Ten times worse than getting out of Carisbrook!

"But then we realised – this was how it would have been. Looking back, we were fortunate as pilgrims to have had that experience. It was so real. Jesus had to clamber up those narrow passage ways with huge crowds jostling and pressing on him. It would have been much the same.

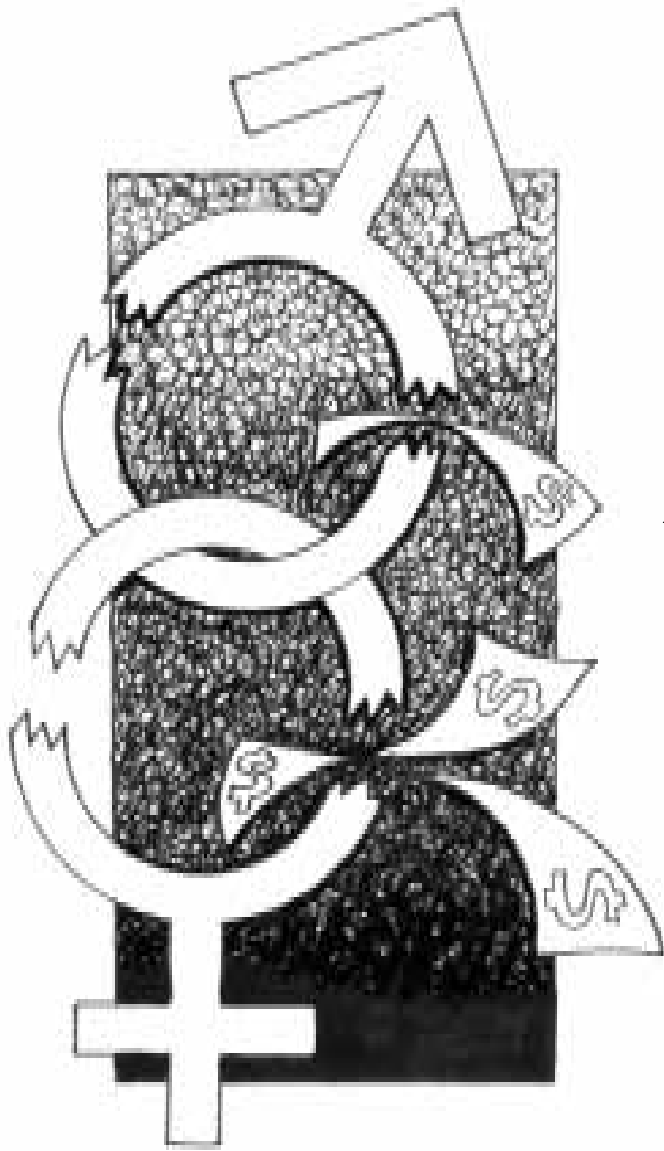
"After the Crucifixion the Play was very low key for a time. Then suddenly the curtain at the back parts – and the Risen Christ is standing there. His white gown seems to glow. The final scene is the encounter of the disciples with the Risen One. It's very brief. Mary Magdalen announces she has seen Him risen and heard His voice. And then the chorus comes in with the final *Alleluia*. They simply turn and slowly process out.

"At the end there is utter silence. You are emotionally drained. Yet the players do it day after day. It requires huge dedication: they have to believe in what they are doing.



And now we are back we carry that experience into the Mass – more than we did before. I understand better what Christ did for us. And I'm really looking forward to Easter next year; I'm sure the Passion and the Easter ceremonies will seem so much more to me.

"There's a picture in my mind which I never had before. Hearing the Passion read over and over again, it may lose some of its interest – but now I have the picture in front of me. And going to Jerusalem put the whole story into context. I think we are going to be awfully busy over Easter next year!" ■



How merciful is the Catholic Church?

*A Catholic pastor looks at how
the institutional church deals
with so many key pastoral
issues – and asks ‘is there not
a more Christ-like way?’*

Pat Maloney

A recent edition of the London *Tablet* (8.7.2000) featured a report on a conference about the future of marriage in the modern world. The writer, Tina Beattie, concluded with this observation “Perhaps we need to speak more in terms of forgiveness, healing and redemption, and less in terms of indissolubility and sacramental exclusion”. Yes, perhaps we had.

Her remarks reawakened in me a long felt concern that our Catholic church might not be approaching key pastoral problems in the right way. Priests are almost daily confronted with the pain caused by the breakup of the family unit. The reasons for marriage breakdown are well enough known – western individualism and selfish consumerism further complicated by the breakdown

of the old patriarchal model of marriage enshrining male domination and female submission. Add to this an obsession about sex and sexual fulfilment, and you have a potent formula for marriage disaster.

The official church’s response to the present crisis has lacked compassion, lacked wisdom. Alone among the churches she has promoted the annulment approach. If a marriage breaks down, church officials work through appropriate tribunals to see whether some defect might be found in the original marriage contract. The defect might be canonical, psychological or physical. After all, marriages usually break down for a reason. If a defect in the marriage is found to have been there from the beginning, the marriage can be declared null and void.

Though without doubt there is some need for such procedures, it’s an expensive, time-consuming and difficult process. In poorer countries hardly anybody can afford it. In other wealthy countries the process has been reduced at times to an ill-concealed form of easy divorce. It’s an approach to solving the problem of marriage breakdown born of a highly legalistic approach to human marriage. Any marriage – and especially Christian marriage – is more than a legal contract. It is above all else a relationship between the couple, as well as their dual relationship with Christ and his church.

What I suggest is a move away from this kind of thinking to one more rooted in Gospel thinking. I’m suggesting that in this matter, as well as several others, the

church must be ready to live with the less than perfect. That seems to me to be the mind of Jesus. We see it illustrated in his meeting with the Samaritan woman (*John 4:4-42*). She had a string of marriages and relationships behind her. I don't believe for a minute that the mess was all tidied up as soon as she returned to her village.

For his part, Jesus accepted her as she was. I doubt very much whether the crooked little taxman Matthew had all his wheeling and dealing tidied up before Jesus dined at his house (*Luke 5:27-32*). Nor did the woman taken in adultery cop a lecture on sexual morality (*John 8:1-11*). Given the criticism of Jesus for making sinners of all sorts his preferred company, it is clear that he wasn't making impossible demands on them. He was able to embrace them in their imperfection. He wanted some good will, the germ of a new beginning, a willingness to give it a go. Why then cannot his 'bride', the church, learn to think and act more in the same way?

I'm not suggesting that the church lower her ideals of Christian marriage. I suggest rather that, Christ-like, she accepts in a loving and accepting way those who from human frailty fall short. In the case of the divorced and remarried now living in stable, loving and life-giving relationships, surely we can accept such couples as full parish members and welcome them to the Communion table. I am not suggesting that they have a full sacramental marriage. But it cannot be denied that there may well be much that is good and holy in such a relationship.

Nor do I believe that Pope, bishop or priest has any right to say that such couples are necessarily in a state of sin and must be barred from the sacraments. Did not Jesus himself say when he gave us the Eucharist "Take and eat all of you". That included Judas! I'm reminded of the case of a Catholic prison officer in her second marriage. Every Sunday she had to escort to Mass a convicted child murderer serving a life sentence. He received Communion

every Sunday, but she was denied it. Is there not a hint here that something is wrong?

The Orthodox Churches have been able to accommodate such couples through what they call *oikonomia*, an approach made for the good ordering of the household. Particularly if there is an innocent party to a marriage split, that person can be remarried in church in a very low key service which is very carefully designated as a non-sacramental marriage. Even so, such a couple are allowed to play a full part in the church's life.

*Jesus was able to
embrace them...he
wanted some good
will, the germ of a new
beginning*

In a similar vein, I believe the Church has taken the wrong approach in regard to artificial contraception. I personally believe that the ideals put to us by Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* are correct. I also believe that for a very large percentage of couples today, those ideals are unattainable. They are imperfect people living in a very imperfect world. Good pastors ever since, to their great wisdom and credit, have been saying to couples: "Do your best. But if you can't manage, be at peace. We have to live with our weaknesses. The Lord still loves you. Keep close to him".

These days very few people even seek advice on the matter. There are, of course, plenty of far better theologians than me who simply say that the teaching is wrong or that it requires much further clarification. Certainly, by and large, the Catholic faithful around the world have not accepted the teaching. It is not and has not been proposed as infallible teaching. Could it not be that in its condemnation of all

forms of artificial contraception, or at least in the manner of its condemnation, the Church got it wrong?

What she has done in practice by her *no compromise* approach has been to alienate huge numbers of previously faithful Catholics from the fold and to diminish her teaching authority by insisting on a moral teaching that has been found by large segments of the faithful as unbelievable. Little wonder that the teaching church is now widely seen as irrelevant. How different it could have been had the Church been a little more merciful, a little less condemnatory.

I am saddened that in this Jubilee Year of release from burden my church has been unable to take any significant steps in lifting the painful burdens of her children. She urges others to forgive debts. Token visits are made to gaols. A poorly explained or understood Indulgence is announced. She couldn't even make concessions for the weak by allowing a temporary use of the Third Rite of Penance. If you pose to me the question "Is the church merciful today?", I would sadly and shamefacedly have to reply, "No, not very." ■

*Fr Pat Maloney DD, is parish priest of
Waverley, Dunedin*

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A tree is planted

Edmund Rice camps are one of those bright ideas which help everyone. They enable youngsters to have a holiday and some venture training; they are good for the parents who get a break and for the volunteers who help run the camps

Henry Shepherd, CFC

Jack and Ellen are just 9 and 13 and they've been through some tough times – redundancy at home, illness, the family income stretched to breaking point and beyond – everyone could do with a break.

And suddenly here is this great chance for Jack and Ellen to get away, enjoy a bit of space, have a lot of fun – at the same time create some space for the others at home. That's what the Edmund Rice Camps are all about.

Someone – parent, agency, caregiver – knows that a holiday like this will be beneficial for all. And we, the providers, go all out to provide as much safety and fun as we can squeeze into a week.

So how did it all begin?

Towards the end of 1990 a team of Christian Brothers hailing from the various Provinces of Australia and New Zealand came to Dunedin. Their task was to promote the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice amongst students, staff and parent groups in the schools the Brothers were involved in. They spoke to meetings of class levels and organised evening meetings for young people and for parents. A special day was arranged to work with senior management and another with the local brothers' community. At the latter two gatherings senior students and recent leavers were

invited to participate and contribute.

An obvious point of discussion centred round the relevance of 'Brothers' or the Brothers' way of life. At each of these two meetings the students/ex-students present were briefed by Br Denis Hernon from Queensland. Whatever it was he said set fire to these young people. They had already seen slides and heard accounts of initiatives being taken to respond to various needs of youth in Australia and became very enthusiastic to do something themselves.

As a direct result seven young people – five girls, two boys – accompanied me to Melbourne in January 1991 to participate in a movement called *Edmund Rice Camps*. This programme had begun some years earlier in Melbourne as a Sunday afternoon effort to provide fun and activities for migrant children. It grew quite quickly into week-long holiday Camps for children in need of a break. The great feature was that for every child there was a "big" person, not on a one-to-one basis, but six-to-six in 'teams'. The experience was powerful in every way, very tiring, enormously rewarding, clearly beneficial to the children, quite extraordinary. Our contingent had been split up between two Camps so between us we gathered a great deal of observation and experience. There was no time to

rest though, because the day after that Camp finished we were off in a 20-seater bus to Sydney. A fiercely hot day (42°C in Albury!) and by the time we reached Mulgoa in Western Sydney, we were tired, cranky and not too interested in new people. But we were swept up in the hype and enthusiasm and the next day we were into the preparation day for another Camp. The whole mass of emotions and experiences was repeated in a new setting with new children and new leaders and a great deal more was gained.

When the group came home, physically exhausted but filled with commitment and enthusiasm, they set to straight away to organise our first Camp in May 1991. Since then we have run 52 Camps averaging 24 children and 26 leaders on each one. There have been around 600 leaders involved over the years and at any given time there are about 150 on the mailing list. The formula which we copied from the Australian scene (which incidentally is flourishing now in most Australian States) goes on being successful. There is no need any longer for us to go seeking children. The Camps are sought after and often lead to waiting lists.

Recruiting new leaders hasn't been a big problem either because the energy and enthusiasm of the experienced people

is infectious and contagious; many a flat-mate has been drawn in because they want to know what all the excitement is about. Leaders range in age from 17-25. Most are students; being on Camp means loss of holidays and loss of earning opportunity but it doesn't stop them coming back for more. The whole experience too has triggered change in life-direction for many into people/child oriented professions.

The Camp

The camps cater for two age groups, 9-12 years and 13-14 years.

A typical Camp has two key figures, the 'Camp Captains' who meet together weeks before the time to map out an outline of activities and to sift through application forms for experienced people for team leaders. The captains and team leaders get together and spend many hours planning – then comes the ordering and buying and checking of equipment. Who will cook? What will be the menu? What materials will be needed for activities? Where can we get specialist instructors if we're to do abseiling or rock climbing? Who will be in which teams? Hats to be made

Trust at Berwick or Otago Scouts, Waiora).

There they are familiarised with rules and operating procedures necessary to protect themselves and the children – they play games to build team enthusiasm, get to know each other, role-play situations to learn how to deal with various scenarios. The next morning back to town to meet the children and get the bus back to Camp. Silly, noisy songs are shouted all the way to Camp and then activities alternate with meals and snacks for the next four and a half days.

Activities we've tried are many and varied, indoor and outdoor, sometimes weather dependent. Kayaking, confidence courses, initiative courses are fairly standard, also video-making, clay, picture-framing, newspaper fashion parade, concert discos – there've been all sorts of things on different occasions; yachting, horse-riding, mountain biking, archery, horizontal bungee, earthball, beach walks, hiking. Teams are distinguished by coloured hats, broad brim in summer, homemade polar-fleece in winter. The colour scheme, Red, Blue, Green and Yellow, continues in the plates we eat from and the mugs we drink from – it has even been known to extend to jelly and scones! Noise, hype, fun, good food and the week flies by.



or bought? Application forms for children to be processed and parents notified. Leaders come together in the Brothers' House the day before the children come, meet, get to know each other, load the van and cars and go off to the venue (usually Otago Youth Adventure



Br Henry Shepherd who keeps a paternal eye on the Dunedin Edmund Rice camps

Each evening, usually quite late, the leaders gather first in teams and then in the large group to go over the day and the way they are feeling and how the children seem to be coping and responding. The finale each night is a reflection – a quiet time to recover and listen.

Back to town and the children are returned to their caregivers – the leaders, nearly exhausted, unpack and store the gear, organise themselves to get home, shower and get back to the Brothers' House for an evening meal, writing affirmations of each other. Then the final reflection, invariably a moving and powerful time and a lovely culmination: after sharing so much together the group has become a close-knit unit reluctant to leave each other's company. At least there is still some party-time together. It is often hard to know which group receives the greater benefit, the children or the leaders – it's all part of the grace of the experience.

The Inspiration

The name of Edmund Rice has in recent years become connected to many different ventures round the world. Where once he was somewhat hidden within the family life of the Christian Brothers, he is now much more widely acknowledged as role model and patron. Recently (1996) recognised by the church as a good example of Christian



▷▷ living, he is more comfortably referred to as 'Eddie' than Blessed Edmund.

Much about his life story seems to resonate with our times – coming from an oppressed and deprived stratum of society, through a few fortunate circumstances he was able to be educated and even get into business. There in the Ships Chanding trade and in those days (1780s and 90s) the second busiest port of Europe, Waterford, he prospered greatly through substantial skill and acumen. Side by side with his growing wealth and gentleman status, he was strongly committed to his faith and unusually for the age, was a regular communicant and a devoted reader of the Bible where he highlighted many a text in reference to usury.

He had a great heart alert to the needs of others and compassion was a driving force to practical assistance. He was a regular visitor to the gaol and often provided his supporting presence to those condemned to death. His financial skills were often put to the protection of the assets of widows and those vulnerable to unscrupulous officialdom.

In his early 20s he married Mary Elliot about whom little is known apart from her early death soon after the birth of a handicapped daughter, also Mary. So, in his mid-20s, Edmund is left as a solo father with a daughter needing special care.

His life becomes even busier, his daughter, his business, his practical involvement with needs of others and a growing yearning and dissatisfaction. In his early 40s Edmund decides to settle up his life and retire to a Monastery in France. The timely intervention of a friend drew his attention to the feral Catholic street boys and challenged him to follow Nano Nagle's example and set about providing education for them.

Edmund took up the challenge and bought a place, set up a tailor and a baker on the premises and employed a couple of men to gather pupils and to teach them. They couldn't cope. Undaunted,

he took up the task himself and found that hidden within his well-established integrity was the skill to teach effectively and successfully, imbuing youngsters with a love of God and church and a love for learning. His quiet power drew others to share his commitment and the practice of their faith and so the embryonic Christian Brothers and Presentation Brothers were begun.

A favourite theme song used nearly every Camp to help set the mood at the first reflection on the night before the children arrive, is *He ain't heavy, he's my brother*. The words evoke and express the essential charism of Eddie and also coerce us into the wonder of the "long, long road, with many a winding turn" that is the path of history from Eddie to us on Camp. ■



Volunteer Deidre Brown of Mosgiel having fun at an Edmund Rice Camp (see below)

Looking for God

*I went on a camp
not looking for anything,
not expecting to find anything,
nor receive anything for me.*

*I went on a camp
and I found God;
not in a book, or prayer,
not even in a song.
But I found God,
living, laughing.*

*I saw God, in the smile of a child
who previously had nothing
to smile about.
I felt God, in the hug of a child
who had never put her arms
around someone before.
I talked with God,*

*when I heard the story
of a boy who gifted me with the
hardships of his life.
I heard God, in the cries and
laughter of children
experiencing another side of life,
one they'd never known.*

*Yes, I went on a camp
and I too experienced
a new side of life.
I did something of worth,
and gave back to God
a little of what I'd been given.
I found God, it was unexpected
it was not what I'd anticipated,
but I was blessed.*

Deirdre Brown

Forming School Leaders

The example of Edmund Rice is the inspiration behind a recent Retreat for head boys and girls

Daniel Stollenwerk

It's not often a High School Religious Education teacher is given the opportunity to speak to a willing, responsive group of bright, motivated, Catholic student leaders. But that's what happened when Br Paul Robertson asked me to give a talk on biblical leadership to the head boys and girls of all the Christian Brothers' schools in New Zealand and the Cook Islands. I decided to go for broke.

I spoke of Abraham and Sarah: the adventure of leaving one's secure home forever, of following a promise into the future. I mentioned Moses: the faith to do what one simply cannot do on one's own, to go beyond one's ability, to reach beyond mediocrity to greatness – but never to enter the promised land.

I brought up Jeremiah and second Isaiah: two great prophets of antiquity who 'failed' miserably but maintained their faithfulness to God. I spoke of Mary: in praise of Yahweh who casts down the mighty from their thrones and lifts up the lowly. Four figures of our Scriptural tradition, four qualities of Christian leadership: adventure, faith, failure, and poverty. And then I posed the question: *do you want to be Christian leaders?*

I couldn't help but admire the work of Br Robertson and the Christian Brothers. Some 17 students had gathered for five days in order to see the world through the eyes of Edmund Rice, himself a wealthy man whose daughter was born intellectually disabled and whose wife died from an equestrian accident.

On the first day the students worked with disabled and cerebral palsy children at Auckland's Starship hospital. They returned to their retreat house to reflect on the experience and during the remaining days discussed community, service and values. By the end of the retreat the students had come up with strategies for introducing their new insights into their school communities.

I discovered some days later that the students were taken aback by my talk. They had never heard such a message before. I was taken aback by their 'taken-abackedness'. Was not my message a very traditional, non-

controversial, core understanding of key biblical figures?

Nevertheless the Christian Brothers' retreat gave me great hope. These students were visibly moved. One said, there and then, that she wanted to dedicate her life to the intellectually disabled. They were introduced to the difficulties – and the community and joys – of the heroic Christian call. And some appeared to accept it. There was no doubt but that the weekend would influence these 17 students' understanding of who they were in the church and the world. May such a retreat become the standard with which to measure all our youth retreats. ■

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What is Prayer?

The first of a two-part series on Christian prayer, seen from an Asian perspective

Inshil Yoon

Almighty and invisible God invites us to live in his own loving company. Responding to this invitation by accepting it, is called faith. Out of faith, we communicate with God and this action is called prayer.

As faith is a gift of God, so is prayer. God thirsts first that we may thirst for him. Prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God's thirst and our thirsts are expressed in both tangible and intangible ways. We thirst for God with our whole person and we can express this thirst with all of our faculties, such as with our tongues, with our hands and with our eyes, but most often with our hearts. Some of these encounters are recorded in Scripture and in the biography of saints, but we know that abundant encounters which are not recognised by others are constantly made by ordinary people.

God wants us to meet him as often and as intimately as possible. Jesus described the desired intimacy between him and the faithful in the image of a vine in his last lesson to his disciples, before he went to the garden to be arrested. *I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5).

Through baptism we are connected to him and through the sacraments and prayer, both public and private, we stay in him, feeling his pulsation. By dwelling in him, we can love God, love ourselves and love others.

God called people to prayer

From the beginning, God has called people to prayer. Soon after his creation of human beings, we can recognise



God's thirst in his sorrowful call to his first children, Adam and Eve, after the fall: *"Where are you?... What is this that you have done?"* (Gen 3:9,13).

Genesis describes that Noah "walked with God". From this portrayal, we can say that he was leading a prayerful life because a life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the holy God and in communion with him.

In Abraham, prayer started to be revealed. Abraham was completely submissive to God's command. He obeyed God by setting out on a journey in his old age with complete trust in God, and leaving his homeland. At every stage of his journey, he made an altar to God. From this act, we can assume that he led a very intimate prayerful life. Abraham's first recorded prayer in words is a complaint reminding God of his promises:

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision "Do not be afraid... your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless... the Lord... brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars... So shall your descendants be." and he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness (Gen 15:1-6).

Moses' life is characterised as being a mediator between God and humanity and his prayers are classic example of intercessory prayer. Before coming down to his people to convey what the Lord had told him, Moses conversed with the Lord frequently and often at length. However, the way God communicated with him is also remarkable: this is described as "the Lord speaks to him face to face." God called Moses in an unprecedented way:

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up". When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here, I am." Then

he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground... I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God (Ex 3:1-6).

Moses' experience is characteristic of contemplative prayer. Here, the phrase, "face to face", does not mean that Moses saw the Lord's face but seems to emphasise the directness with which the encounter took place. This view is confirmed in the following account. When Moses asked the Lord *"Show me your glory, I pray". "But, he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live" (Ex 33:18-20).*

There were many distinguished people of prayer before the arrival of Jesus. King David's prayer of praise, trust and repentance, expressed in Psalm, is a model for the prayer of people. Elijah, the father of prophets, sought the face of God zealously and interceded for the people calling for a conversion of heart.

Jesus lived a full prayer life

The full prayer life is revealed in Jesus, the word made flesh who dwelled among us human beings. I will not discuss how Jesus taught his disciples to pray but describe how he prayed, concentrating on meditation and contemplation.

A dictionary defines the word *contemplate* as to "survey with the eyes or in the mind" and then, to *meditate*. In prayer life, meditation and contemplation are often used without much distinction. For example, in the instruction of the rosary, there is a sentence "Let's contemplate on the mystery of the Annunciation". We are invited to contemplate. But do we meditate or contemplate while saying the rosary? Or, do we do neither?

Meditation is a purposeful quest of mind such as seeking to understand how to live a Christian life in response to God's wish. Anyone who sets out to get a birthday present for a beloved one will understand how meditation works. I ponder not only the receiver's preference

but also my resources: how much time or money I can afford to spend to get the present which she would like to receive. Through reflection on the word of God and our lives we ask him, "What do you want me to do, Lord?" The required attentiveness in meditation for this kind of reflection can be intense and difficult to sustain.

Contemplation has been understood as reserved for enclosed orders. It has also often been connected with mysticism. But it is modern church teaching that we all are called to contemplation. I recall a priest in Korea about 30 years ago who was a bit boastful that he contemplates, not just reflects on his life! I said to myself: "I will learn this somehow, even if it is very difficult."

Contemplation can be, however, the simplest prayer and possible in any occasion. This resembles a close sharing between friends. Anyone who has had an experience of falling in love or having a crush on someone is capable of contemplative prayer. It is a gaze with

faith and a humble surrender to the loving God, whom we can see in Jesus. Although one cannot always meditate, one can always enter contemplation because this encounter is taking place in our heart. A peasant of Ars explained this prayer before the tabernacle to the holy parish priest, St John Vianney: *"I look at him and he looks at me"*. The Lord's gaze purifies our heart and guides us to see everything in the light of his compassion for all. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2715*).

These two types of prayers have common ground; they are silent yet intense time of prayer. They can last long or they can be brief. Although one started off with meditation, it can easily be switched to contemplation and, vice versa, one can use one's mind to seek God's will and then one's heart can easily be filled with love for God. ■

Inshil Yoon is a lecturer in the School of Asian Studies, Auckland University. She is also a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council representing the Korean Community.

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'All are Welcome'

The weaker sex

Priest psychotherapist Fr Paul Andrews looks at the problems of growing boys – and the importance of having a male role model

Since this is written from within a male skin, objectivity is limited. The battle of the sexes may be interesting in one-to-one combat, but it becomes tedious when generalisations are offered. We are not better or worse than the other sex, but different, and the differences have been well mapped by now.

What makes the issue topical is not merely the current preoccupation with sex in the media, but advances in genetic engineering and medical technology. Not only is it now a common option to know the baby's sex before birth, but there are clinics which offer to give parents the sex they desire, sometimes by the brutal expedient of killing unwanted boys or girls in the womb, recalling the primitive customs of tribes which abandoned or killed unwanted boys or (more often) girls after birth.

Sex differences obtrude on anyone working in a child guidance clinic. In the Western world, our clientele comprises three or four problem boys for every one girl. More boys are colour-blind, stutter, wet the bed, are seriously behind in reading, are disruptive in class and delinquent in their teens, than girls.

We males are a delicate sex. Nature produces more boys than girls because boys are more fragile in infancy, more likely to die, more vulnerable to the effects of traumatic events such as hospitalisation. Girls grow faster and at a more even rate than boys in infancy and again at puberty, though boys overtake them later. And of course women live significantly longer than men.

Through all the arguments about sex differences, some things have become clear from research. Girls talk sooner than boys, and use longer sentences. They learn to read sooner, spell better, and learn to count at an earlier age.

Boys are more aggressive than girls, and this seems to be linked with hormonal, physical differences, not just with what the adult world expects.

Boys as they grow older show greater mathematical abilities than girls, and girls as they grow older show greater verbal ability than boys, can converse more fluently and explain themselves better. Girls tend to be more consistent in their work than boys, performing as well as they can in all subjects, whereas boys tend to follow their interest and do better in subjects they like.

Why do boys throw up more problems? Is it simply a natural weakness? There is another explanation, which holds for most families. In the crucial years between two and six, children are learning at their fastest. Boys and girls are discovering that their sex is an important difference, something quite central to them, not just a bodily appendage which the boy has and the girl lacks. In these years, girls have endless opportunities to discover what it is to be a woman. They have their mother – or carer – in front of them most of the time. They watch a grown woman at work and at leisure and with her friends.

How much of that has a boy? How much does he see of his father at work? He may see him doing the odd job around the house, but many boys have no idea what their father is able to do. He may disappear in the morning to a mysterious place called the office or factory, but what he does there, what it is like, is unknown to the curious son.

When it comes to choosing a career, it is striking how much easier the choice is for boys who have seen their father at work than for the majority who can only guess what Daddy does after disappearing in the morning. This

is true even for the children of the unemployed. For young children – and the years between two and six are the most crucial here – a father exercising his skills is a working model, whether he has a 'job' outside the home or not.

In these years when he is unconsciously but continuously forming a mental map of what it is to be a boy or a man, most boys do not see enough of the one model who has overwhelming power for them, their father. Other models can help: uncles, friends, big brothers, even the shallow figures on the TV screen. But it is their father who travels with boys through life as an internal model, for better or worse.

In this sense there is no such thing as an absent father. The man who helped to make us is in our fantasy even if we have never known him. Charles Murray in his studies of the 'underclass' in the USA – that group which feels not merely poor but alienated from society – points to the horrific power of the absent father as a model for his sons. No matter how hard the single mother may work for them, their father remains as a potent exemplar of what it is to be a man, the guy who has his fun and vanishes, shirking personal responsibilities.

Obviously there are many and various patterns: the dead father, remembered with a mix of emotions; the absent, perhaps separated father; sometimes the unknown father, whose picture is filled out by the boy's fantasy. We find our sense of manhood where we can. It is evident how lucky are those boys who have a father close to them, affectionate, competent and interested, during those years from two to six or seven. It gives them the same sort of internal shape and direction that girls enjoy from their mothers. ■

'Mr Valiant for Truth' — Fr Tom Ryder (1912-2000)



Fr Tom with parishioners on the occasion of the celebration of 40 years of priesthood

Funerals are wonderful times for saying what is closest in our hearts, and both Bishop Mackey and Tony Molloy did a splendid job in weaving a tapestry of Fr Tom's life and faith: his intense love for God and for all God's people; his passion for history and scripture study; the joy he found in living, and the spark of energy and laughter that ignited so often when he engaged with us.

What was lacking, perhaps, in both the bishop's homily and in Tony's eulogy was the sense of Fr Tom's own struggle to break from the institutional bondage he lived through as a student and young priest, and of his untiring hope that the post-Vatican II church would never return to the atmosphere he had found so repressive and death-dealing in his youth.

One of the reasons that we enjoyed hearing him preach was that he was so fearless in speaking the truth as he saw it. He did not toe the party line, he was never an ecclesiastical yes-man. If he thought that the bishop or the pope was not reflecting the spirit of Jesus, he said so. He had his own views on divorce and remarriage, the place of women in the church, on inter-communion among Christians and dialogue with the other great religions of the world. And he was not slow to express his views, especially when it came to proclaiming the good news as he did, Sunday by Sunday, year in and year out, in the church where for ten years we shared that ministry together.

If he had one quibble with me, it was that I spent too much time writing, and not enough reading. "Writing maketh the exact man, reading maketh the full man," he liked to quote. Yet without the writers, his world would have been a much duller, less stimulating place for him to be!

Dennis Horton

There was quite a crowd at the graveside, leaving me standing at the back with my own thoughts. My mind went back more than 50 years to our first encounter. A friend had become curious about the Catholic faith and asked for help. To appreciate my dilemma one has to understand the stance of the Church many years ago, pre-Vatican II. By its threats and requirements of belief, there even lurked a hint of the medieval often resulting in emotional havoc amongst its adherents. The type of instruction commonly available then would have caused my friend to fly never to return. To find a priest who could keep to the essentials, and be dismissive of the inimical, was a fraught endeavour. But such a one was present in the person of Tom Ryder.

So a possible but dubious convert appeared at his study door and declared: "I do not, and will not believe that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church!" "Do sit down", said the gentleman equably, "I don't believe that either" – with the effect on her breath of missing a stair.

The background to that flamboyant statement had been in the workplace where a fellow staff member had declared with hand-wringing anguish "My brother will go to HELL!" (for marrying outside the Church). A wonderful woman, and yes he did marry her, and it was a very good thing. So the above interview with Father Ryder proceeded agreeably and productively. And for me it was the beginning of a friendship which lasted and intensified over the years.

For that time this was an impossible, well-nigh shocking circumstance. Father Tom's largeness of mind was found intolerable to the then hierarchy and later he suffered for it, banished from being University Chaplain to *Ultima Thule* down country, in shape of a rough logging town. On our visits we found – not surprisingly – that he had managed to turn that into a triumph by the same large-mindedness and sympathy always characteristic of him. People came before ordinances which change, as fashions do, if at the pace of continental drift. Father Tom was well and deservedly loved, surrounded by friends, to the end of his long, endlessly patient life.

Frank Hoffmann

Father Ryder

*You will be made free
of worlds as yet you have not dreamt.
Soul jocose, resilient –
Old age is merely
a shadow passing,
cloud across the sun,
splendour barely concealed
which then you will
at once perceive.*

Beatrice Hoffmann

Building bridges with the world around us

People of the Land: A Pacific Philosophy

By John Patterson

Dunmore Press

Price: \$34.95

Review: Albert C. Moore

This is a timely book about ecology and caring for the environment. Its special thrust can be explained through the title which refers to Maori people belonging to the Land (*tangata whenua*). But it is not about Maori land rights. Nor is its “Pacific” philosophy some Polynesian-wide system of thought; it is “pacific” in the sense of a peaceful and respectful approach to the life of our planet.

The author seeks to build bridges. His experience as senior lecturer in philosophy at Massey University includes knowledge of mathematics, logic and ethics. But this book shows his current focus on environmental ethics and Maori values. John Patterson has made the effort to think himself into traditional and living Maori attitudes to the environment, as shown in his interesting and recurring use of the basic Maori myth of origins from Rangī and Papa and Tāne. He explains the interrelated basic terms of kinship, life-force (*mauri*), *tapu* and especially *mana*. However, he is not seeking to impose this as a Maori spirituality binding on all right-thinking New Zealanders; he is aware of the scientifically-minded who might feel cagey and dismissive about such concepts. Patterson is concerned to show the surprising relevance of Maori environmental ideas once they are interpreted in terms of the science of ecology, the interdependence of all creatures and our sense of responsibility and fellowship in valuing the world around us.

For the past three decades ecology has been challenging the accepted “anthropocentric” view of ‘man’ as the centre of all things and the lord of creation to exploit its resources. Patterson

likewise rejects such arrogance and shows the wisdom of the Maori concern for balance and respect in dealing with the whole environment. He is careful to avoid romanticising or idealising Maori life and values here. Then, positively, he draws out two understandings of *mana* – the “hard mana” gained by warfare and competition between winners and losers, and the “soft mana” which creates relationships of reciprocity, harmony and mutual gain. By caring responsibly for the land and environment, *both* Maori and Pakeha can earn and maintain this *mana*, to become more truly people of this land.

It would be easy to agree with all this as “nice ideas from a philosopher” but still in the realm of ideals. Patterson is, however, concerned to lead on to actual practice by taking responsibility and thus learning to renew our connections with the natural world. “We can learn to see ourselves this way by actually bringing it about. This is as much a philosophy of action as of contemplation.” (p.128)

I recommend this book as a genuine work of bridge-building. It is a clear and thoughtful exposition of some issues important for our time; it could bring about changes of attitude in our New Zealand society. The author writes in a personal and interesting style as if engaged in discussion with a group. He listens to contrary views and offers helpful and down-to-earth arguments, examples and analogies. This makes it accessible to a wide range of readers interested in our political and economic future as well as in ecology and Maori values. It could be used for discussion in classes and in a variety of cultural groups in the community. The book is of modest length and attractive to handle, with its brown cover art by the Manawatu artist, John Bevan Ford. ■

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Dear Master: Letters on Spiritual Direction Inspired by St John of the Cross

by Susan Muto

Liguori Publications

Price: \$39

Review: Hilary Swanson, rsm

Dear Master is a companion text to and commentary on St John’s celebrated poem, *The Living Flame of Love*. Susan Muto, an internationally recognised author, teacher and speaker, has previously written on St John’s *Ascent*, the *Dark Night* and *The Precautions and Counsels* of St John of the Cross. She seems to me to be eminently qualified to enter into the heart and mind of St

Understanding John of the Cross’s poetry

John and so offer these spiritual letters of guidance from *The Living Flame*.

The commentary is told through an imaginative series of letters between St John of the Cross and Ana de Penalosa. It was for her that he wrote *The Living Flame of Love* and later, at her request, the commentary on the poem.

Susan Muto, in my opinion, has truly excelled in penning this unique and novel way of entering deeply into this beautiful poem on the mystical life. In each of the 16 chapters of letters, Susan Muto chooses a different form of address. Ana addresses John as “Dear Wise and Learned Master”,

to which he responds, “Dear Lover of God’s Way”.

Ana writes: “I am now dwelling on the third stanza of your poem. Its depths at once intrigue and baffle me. What are these Lamps of Fire.....?”

St John answers: “The best way I can explain this origin in my imagery is to consider what a lamp does.... it lights up a room, it gives warmth. My little lamp also gives me great comfort. It reminds me of the light that shines and burns in the Bride’s soul... And he signs off: “Rest now in the peace and joy of His Holy Presence”.

A straightforward retelling of the story of Jesus

*Meet the Man: Jesus of Nazareth
Who Became the Christ*

by Selwyn Dawson

Church Mouse Press

Price: \$20

Review: Judith McGinley, OP

Jesus...of Nazareth...? Yes,...I think I may have heard of him... For the first time in 150 years or so a significant number of people in our country have not heard the story of Jesus; a story that was fundamental to the formation of previous generations.

Selwyn Dawson's *Meet the Man* is a timely re-telling of the story of Jesus, ideal for the curious and student alike. It is a book, I would suggest, that could find its way onto the gift list and bookshelves of young people and grandparents – easily read, attractive and inexpensive. It is an ideal read for senior secondary and tertiary level students whether they come from a religious background or not and would be a worthwhile addition to school libraries and reading lists. Through Dawson's

scholarship and ordinariness we are invited to meet the man Jesus and to come to know him a little. It is easy to feel at home in the 'living room' of this book.

Resisting the temptation to interpret, to teach or to preach, the author simply tells the story of Jesus' life from birth through death to resurrection and the coming of the Spirit. The narrative is straight-forward, with enough background and detail to make sense of the context. Helpful explanations of significant words (parables, miracles, the Kingdom), place names (Nazareth, Galilee, Jerusalem) and the local culture of that time are woven through the text quite unobtrusively.

The serious reader would benefit from having the Bible at hand while reading *Meet the Man*. A distinct strength of the book is its use of Scripture references – enough to give the reader a 'taste' of the written sources of the

story, but not so much that one would feel overwhelmed.

Another strength is the author's knack of making the reader part of the story by suddenly pointing out similarities in people's responses to Jesus in his time – and our reactions to events today. The last few pages explore the concept of 'faith' in a helpful, open way – especially for the reader being introduced to Jesus for the first time.

A slim volume (170 pages) with eye-catching cover, easy-to-read print and good chapter and sub-headings, Selwyn Dawson's *Meet the Man* is an insightful contribution to the religious life of people of our time and place from the pen of one who is a faithful disciple and a master craftsman.

Thank you, Selwyn. ■

Judith McGinley is a religious educator who has taught Catechetical Studies at Dunedin College of Education for 9

In each letter Ana de Penalosa asks for further guidance and clarification on such phrases as: the wound of love; the inner wine cellar; sweet cautery; gentle Hand etc.

This publication brings with it an easier understanding and a new appreciation of the beauty of John's poetry. The format of the book makes it easily accessible to the reader. It is light to hold and very attractively presented.

This exchange between Ana and St John will surely lift the spirit and nourish the hearts of all who seek Union with God. The title of the book sums up the spiritual relationship Ana had for her "Dear Master". ■

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Became the Christ

Selwyn Dawson

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Russia under Putin – which way will it go?

The place of Russia in the global picture of the new century, makes a fascinating study. Winston Churchill once described Russia as “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma”. The man who rules this vast country is President Vladimir Putin. He is a figure at once bland and severe and is the personification of the unpredictability that is part of the Russian enigma. He speaks of the dreaded KGB with unambiguous pride and affection, and he is proud of the 17 years he spent with them. His desire to “make Russia strong”, by restoring a powerful state, continues the history of Russian leaders who instil fear and admiration among the people. He is a throwback to the psychology of the Soviet era. He says his task is to erect a liberal, stable and prosperous society on the ruins of a totalitarian state and create for Russia an identity which demands respect in the world. He has already distanced himself from Boris Yeltsin who presided over a chaotic Soviet economy and a falling population. He views the war in Chechnya, which brought worldwide condemnation, as fighting “international Islamic terrorism”.

Crosscurrents John Honoré

Islamism provides Putin with a convenient target to reassert Russian influence in Central Asia and keep the USA out. For this reason the Shanghai Forum, a strategic partnership with China, strengthens Russian dominance in a region which has huge oil and gas resources. It justifies

an authoritarian regime for which his KGB experience is invaluable. Under this aegis, powerful business tycoons are being investigated (and prosecuted) for corruption. But is this only a means of dealing with political foes?

Vladimir Gusinsky, head of a media group, is being targeted. Is this an attack on press freedom that signals the rise of a police regime? Modern Russia rests on the foundations of feudalism and communism. It is a vast country torn between the ideologies of East and West which form part and parcel of its cultural identity. Its leaders are forever divided between politics and the power of economics, both of which can so easily be corrupted. Sixty years later, Churchill's elusive description of Russia is still valid, with the inscrutable Vladimir Putin as President.

End of a supersonic dream

The crash of the French Concorde Supersonic saddened me for many reasons. To defy the laws of gravity and fly in any plane is a risk. This time more than a hundred people met their death. Not for the first time has a plane crashed, nor will it be the last. But it is the first time in over 30 years of service for this incredible aeroplane. It is an example of a beautiful machine, whether it is on the ground with its droop nose, or flying like a missile at twice the speed of sound. It is probably the closest any ordinary traveller will get to supersonic travel. This crash will no doubt halt any further dreams of passenger planes flying at such heights and such speed. It is a pity. The technological advances necessary in the conception of such a plane are extraordinary and are a tribute to the ingenuity and imagination of man. I know that the French, at the

time of its being built, had no illusions about the cost, nor any hope that it would be economically viable. That was not the point. The Concorde was an idea, a concept which captured the French imagination and made them press on, when the British were beginning to doubt the whole project. The French put faith in their imagination, and accepted the challenge of producing a marvel for the whole world to wonder at. It is not the first time they have done this and I hope it won't be the last. I remember saying a prayer at sixty-five thousand feet whilst gazing through a tiny Concorde window at the curvature of the earth. Was the prayer in thanksgiving, in wonder or just in the sheer joy of being alive?

Sleaze politics

Parliament and politics are falling into disrepute. Time and money are being wasted in New Zealand over petty squabbles and personality assassinations, to score cheap political points. The filibuster tactics which delayed the

passing of the new employment bill, together with the pathetic debate on the subject, have highlighted the inherent weakness of our system. There seems to be no possibility of reaching a middle ground for this important piece of legislation, or any other for that matter. The government has its version and the opposition immediately promises to rescind it. The government has a plan for a dedicated superannuation fund; the opposition says it will “plunder” the fund.

The Debating Chamber has now descended to personal denigration and the politics of sleaze. One has become inured to Richard Prebble's machinations but now it is open season for all. Murray McCully lams into the executive of the LGNZ and Jenny Shipley attacks Helen Clark. The role of elected government has descended to farce. It is costing the taxpayer thousands of dollars in wasted time, consultants, pay-outs, lawyers and poorly constructed legislation. We deserve better than this. ■

West Papua follows E Timor

Following moves towards independence in West Papua, Indonesian armed forces are moving towards a violent response, with the introduction of new Indonesian troops into West Papua and the arming of anti-independence militias. West Papuan leaders are calling on the international community to speak out against this militarisation.

In early June the Second Papuan People's Congress was held to discuss the issue of a transitional government for West Papua (the western half of the island of New Guinea, which has been occupied by Indonesia since the 1960s).

Over 3,000 West Papuans attended in the capital Jayapura (Port Numbay), including representatives from the central government and provincial administration, Papuan leaders living in exile, supporters of the OPM (Free Papua Movement) as well as observers from other parts of Indonesia.

The Congress issued a Declaration of Independence on 4 June 2000. Independence activists stressed West Papua has been independent since December 1961 and that the subsequent

Indonesian take over through the 1969 *Act of Free Choice* was illegal. Indonesia responded with a major military build up. The troops were deployed six hours after Indonesian President Wahid's statement to the Indonesian Parliament outlining his willingness to offer West Papua autonomy, but not independence.

On 8 August, Indonesia's MPR (Provisional Peoples Consultative Assembly) agreed to reject the West Papuan Congress demands for independence, and instead to grant autonomy to West Papua. Indonesian troops normally based in West Papua include several thousand regular and special forces (Kopassus) troops.

There are also plans, announced in July, to send 2,000 troops of the police mobile brigade (Brimob) from Jakarta. Already, the Indonesian military are supporting the creation of new anti-independence militias in West Papua, such as the pro-Jakarta Red and White Taskforce - the colours being those of the Indonesian flag.

In 1999, a similar tactic led to massive human rights violations in East Timor and the death of thousands. The OPM

(Free Papua Movement) fears that the Indonesian military is bringing guns from overseas to provoke West Papuans into responding with violence.

Senior church and NGO leaders in Jayapura have issued a statement this week seeking international support:

- The name Papua represents the cultural identity of the people of Papua land and the unfurling of the Papuan flag throughout the land is a symbol of the aspirations of the Papua people that were repressed during the New Order.

- We reject the proposal to amend Article 29 of the Indonesian Constitution, which would allow the state to interfere in people's religious freedom.

- We call on the government, both civilian as well as the TNI and police, and the regional government to respect the principle of dialogue. The government and the legislature should not open the way for the re-emergence of militarism in Indonesia. We therefore demand the immediate withdrawal of all the newly arrived non-organic troops. We are totally convinced that violence will never resolve our problem; on the contrary it will only bring new problems. ■

Peace Movement Aotearoa, Wellington

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Digital Divide

Digital Divide is the subject of the Catholic Church's this year (17-23 Sept). What is it?

I started doing some background research on the digital divide earlier in the year. When I talked to people about what I was doing, often their eyes would glaze over. The term was alien to them and I suspect they assumed it was some obscure science and technology thing that was totally irrelevant to them.

However, times are rapidly changing. Recently the issue has been given more of an airing in the press, and various government ministers, including the Prime Minister, have talked about addressing the digital divide in New Zealand. The issue has even come up at international forums such as the recent G8 Summit in Okinawa (while the pressing issue of third world debt was sidelined). Now when I talk to

people about the digital divide, I get a more animated response than I did six or seven months ago.

For those of you still in the dark, let me explain. The digital divide is the gulf between those who can access and make use of information technology (computers, email, the internet and so on), and those who cannot. While it is true that more and more people are gaining access to this kind of technology and are learning how to use IT, many are still being left behind. Here we might do well to remind ourselves of the struggle some people have to acquire even basic household technologies, let alone the new tools of the Information Age.

Why is this a social justice issue? The growing importance of information technology in our world means that those on the non-access side of the

divide risk losing out on the many benefits of the technology, and they may experience further marginalisation in society. Access to IT is becoming increasingly important for jobs, education, participation in civil society, keeping in touch with people, inclusion in social networks, and for a variety of other reasons.

There are initiatives either underway or in the process of being developed, at government and at grass roots level, that are aimed at closing the technology gap in this country. That is good to know. However, the most effective way of bridging the divide will be in working to eliminate poverty itself - the underlying issue.

Because poverty often means inferior or interrupted education. And those who miss out when they are young, often never catch up. We've got a way to go on eliminating poverty in our society. Let's keep chipping away. ■

Louise May
Caritas

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