Tui Motu

InterIslands

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occupy what?

Even as I sit down to write this editorial, members of the Occupy Movement in Auckland are continuing to register their protest. They are an infinitesimal part of that group of mainly younger people across the globe, who know that there is something wrong with a system where the hopes of a greater proportion of the earth's population are crushed, even as the '1%' who control the world's finances are rewarded to an even greater extent. The 'patient' is sick.

Young people want the opportunity for their point of view to be registered on the world stage, even if they don't have all the answers, or even any answer to what is a complex set of mind-boggling issues.

Garth Cant's article, dealing with the movement within the Methodist Church where its members recognized amongst themselves the importance of the Treaty of Waitangi, highlights an important path towards change. Within the Church, Maori voices were raised in a way that made the majority of the church uncomfortable. It was only their persistence that brought the Church to a new level of thinking and a new way of operating.

Moving governments to change requires that same raising of voices and persistence to see the injustice of a system and its crushing effects on human beings, and that there need to be new models of dealing with our economic systems. History teaches us that there is nothing inevitable about continuing to rely on our present free market model that bumps along from crisis to crisis. The depression of the 1920's, based on much the same problems as our world presently faces, was followed by change when the social indicators (such as family, education, and health) were included more clearly in the economic mix. And as Stewart Lansley points out in his article in this issue it is time to relook not just at the glaring inequality gap which is as important in New Zealand as it is in England, but at the lower wages-higher profits gap with a view to capping this. His conclusion is alarming: "a model of capitalism that fails to share the proceeds of growth evenly between different sections of society will eventually self-destruct."

Where, then, are the Arnold Nordmeyers and Walter Nash's of this decade? What can we do to envision a new system equivalent to and as vital as the welfare state was for its time? How can "every person exercise a moral claim to a dignified existence in our social community?"

As we begin a new year, there are signs that give us hope. First, the Vatican's 'Towards Reforming the International Financial and Monetary Systems in the Context of Global Public Authority' calls for a restructuring of our present ideology which maintains individual gain over the common good, and asks for the introduction of a Tobin tax on international financial transactions. More recently, the European Union Bishops (COMECE) have issued a 'Statement on Solidarity and

contents

Front Cover Illustration: Donald Moorhead

Responsibility' in looking at Europe's competitive social market economy. While this document focuses on the EU, its conclusions are relevant to the wider global picture: seeking to respect "the value of all human beings and affording particular protection to those who are the weakest."

Lansley identifies four practical areas for transformation:

"There is nothing inevitable about today's level of polarization. But achieving greater equality means a transformation on four fronts: the shaping of an alternative political and social climate that caps runaway greed at the top; a shift in today's primary business goal away from the maximization of short-term profits; a re-modelled tax system that claws back a higher proportion of top fortunes; and a global attack on tax avoidance. None of this will be easy, but there will rarely be a more opportune climate and a greater urgency for action."

Amen to that. ■ ***KT***

letter from bethlehem

Greetings from this holy place as we prepare for Christmas. I have not forgotten about your request, but as things unfolded over the past couple of months I have not had a chance to put anything together. I am disappointed about that because I feel a real loyalty to New Zealand and keeping people informed, and also to Tui Motu and the work you do to keep people aware.

There are many things I could have talked about in regard to developments and signs of new life in the midst of the oppression and occupation, but many things about the oppression and occupation have been what has prevented me from sitting down and writing. Among other things we are confronted at present with the arrest and detention of the president of our Student Senate. Recently the Israeli military went to his house at 1.00am and searched it until 4.00am. They then handcuffed him and took him away. His father does not know why he was arrested or where he is. I have been on to the Papal Nuncio, who happens to be the Chancellor of Bethlehem University, and he is trying to find out some information and seek the student's release to complete his exams which begin this coming Wednesday.

We are also in the midst of developing a plan for the contribution Bethlehem University can make to build this nation of Palestine. That has all sorts of implications and has taken a great deal of time. However, we do have a couple of deadlines we need to meet if it is going to go ahead, and, surprise of surprises, finance is one of the key factors! We are on the cusp of some really wonderful ways in which Bethlehem University can make a significant contribution to building this nation and I want it to be in the forefront of doing that.

I do regret not getting something to you for Christmas. It is a shame that the one day of the year when the focus of the Christian world is on this place I didn't have something available for my people in New Zealand!

However, I do wish you God's blessing and peace as you celebrate Christmas in your part of the world.

Peter Bray, Bethlehem

Editor's note

Brother Peter's letter arrived too late for inclusion in our Christmas issue. We publish it now without apology. It tells its own story. Those wishing to contribute to the building up of the Bethlehem University may do so by sending donations to **Caritas Aotearoa NZ, PO Box 12193 Thorndon, Wellington 6144,** clearly marked 'Bethlehem University'. Tax receipts for donations received will be provided.

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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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9/11 and cathedrals

I wish to comment on two articles from your October 2011 issue.

The first is from Peter Murnane OP, entitled "what has 9/11 taught us?" Mr Murnane writes: "To convince the USA to go to war, leaders demonized the Muslim 'enemy' to 'justify' violence. In the USA a surge of violence against Muslims followed."

This is untrue. American leaders repeatedly took pains to emphasise that Islam was not at fault. As for violence against Muslims, the overall response of the American population immediately following 9/11 was remarkably calm and non-violent towards Muslims.

Mr Murnane also writes (about the World Trade Centre): "Since burning jet-fuel cannot melt steel and has never caused a high building to collapse, these engineers suggest that only thermite, a military industrial compound could have melted the steel . . . "

Steel doesn't have to melt in order for a building to collapse. The Christchurch earthquake tell us that. The frame of a building only needs to be sufficiently weakened, and the weight of the building above the affected part will be sufficient to pancake the building, floor by floor. I suggest that a 300,000 pound airplane, loaded with jet fuel (and passengers), and travelling at 225 knots, combined with the effect of extreme heat on steel, would be sufficient to weaken the frame on the 79th floor, with the weight of the building above the damage collapsing the remaining structure floor by floor.

Robert Consedine, in his article 'A broken church', writes: "The structure of the major Churches . . . reflects another age and an outdated theology. The energy and resource which is expended in maintaining these structures needs to be re-focused on the mission of the Church. I believe they should not be re-built."

Any cathedral, built to honour God and inspire the faithful, embraces the virtue of magnificence.

Cathedrals do serve the mission of the church, both by inspiring the faithful, and by providing a structure worthy of praising and giving glory to God and His greatness. While Mr Consedine is sadly correct in writing that cathedrals reflect another age, the theology they reflect is certainly not outdated.

Felix Daniher, ***Tauranga (abridged)***

an alternative view

Your December issue has interesting items related to the Nativity. May I present a view alternative to Jim Consedine's about the commercial and secular nature of Christmas. I suggest that the majority of buying is for Christmas supplies and presents, maybe holidays. So what's wrong with that? People feel a need to celebrate, show regard for each other, and gift-giving is a time honoured custom. The sales and binge buying on Boxing Day is a different matter and unrelated to the feast itself.

It is wonderful to have celebrations at this time, to see the extended family having a barbeque and playing touch in the park. Relatives come together for renewing friendships. Children are given a special place in all this activity. In my opinion, these are genuine religious experiences, whether or not God is considered directly or even implicitly.

Psalm 149 has a special verse. God is saying "My delight is to be with the children of men," which of course means with people. Any genuine human activity honours the Creator, whether or not people are aware of it. In a past life, I used to remind students that at their games God was the most interested spectator enjoying their fair play and sportsmanship.

And see the checkout lass light up when you wish her a happy Christmas. Try greeting Indian people at Diwali festival, and the Chinese when their New Year comes up later in January. We Christians can celebrate Christ-with-us among people of all races, ages and religions.

Bro Michael Scanlan CFC, ***Auckland***

☞ letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not changing the meaning.
We do not publish anonymous letters otherwise than in exceptional circumstances.
Response articles (up to a page) are welcome — but please, by negotiation.

church of the holy spirit and…

I write in response to Phil Wilkinson's letter to the editor (TM, Oct). In *The Community of the Beloved Apostle,* R.E. Brown traces the dissolution of a Spirit-driven group that loses its authoritative and founding figure, the Beloved Disciple. Lacking its leader, competing groups claiming the direction of the Spirit ended up with the majority along the path to Gnosticism. The final chapter of the Gospel of John, a late addition, faces the need for the Petrine charism to unite and feed the people, bringing the remnant of the Johannine group back into the central church following.

A balance has to be struck between the Petrine ministry of uniting and feeding the community and the Spirit charism that animates it. My plea is for the presence of the Marial dimension that sees the work of the Spirit in the life of Mary. She is the example par excellence of a Spirit–filled life, of Spirit–driven ministry, of humble service of her Son as his first disciple. She is the model for every priest, for by her word the Word of God became flesh. Her life was for people as modelled in the Visitation. As Mother of

letters continued on page 19…

towards eliminating child poverty

Mike O'Brien

Poverty, especially child poverty was one of the focal issues in the 2011 election, with almost all parties giving it significant attention. Its importance has been reflected in the agreement between National and the Maori party to establish a Ministerial committee on poverty. Just this month, Jazmine Heka has received well warranted attention in her efforts to mobilise young people to take action to reduce poverty. The occupy movements in New Zealand and around the globe have drawn attention to the harms and excesses of income inequality and there is clearly growing disenchantment with the gaps between the top and bottom 10% of income levels in New Zealand, as in other similarly rich countries around the world.

Child poverty has received much more attention at a number of different levels than has been the case for some time. But, what are we referring to when we talk about child poverty? Child poverty happens when children live in households which do not have sufficient income to take part in the lives and opportunities regarded generally as necessary and appropriate for all New Zealand children.

Put a little simply, children living below the poverty line find themselves in homes with inadequate heating and frequently without enough to eat. They are much more likely to have serious health difficulties as a result of insufficient income. They will sometimes be unable to meet school costs for activities like school trips. They will have to give up sport and leisure activities because their parents cannot afford the costs. Despite being invited to other children's birthdays, they may not be able to attend because of the cost of a present or they won't have a birthday party of their own because their parents cannot afford the extra cost. The list can go on at some length.

Why does child poverty matter? It matters because children are unable to change their circumstances on their own — they rely on adults to care for them adequately and to provide for them. Second, it matters because children do not get a second opportunity to grow and develop. Health and education failures, for example, cannot be caught up on later in life. The damage is done. Indeed, paediatricians know that health difficulties in childhood can shorten life expectations and earnings as an adult. The effects of poverty can last a life time. Ensuring that children have the best possible opportunities matters to them as children. It also matters as they become adults and, therefore, is very significant as far as New Zealand's future economic and social wellbeing is concerned.

> No New Zealand child should live in poverty and we could take steps towards ensuring this happens if there is a willingness to do so.

Approximately 210,000 children in New Zealand (one in five) live below the generally accepted poverty line used internationally and by government advisors in this country. Many, but not all, of them are in homes where the main income earner is a beneficiary and most live in homes with a sole parent, usually their mother.

The basic reason for their poverty is simply that the home does not receive enough money to meet the children's needs. While a small number may not spend their money wisely (do we all?), this is not the reason for child poverty. Work helps improve family income, but not all are able to work. Wages in many jobs are low, jobs are not available to fit with commitments to children and for some children it is much more important that the mother be at home. Relying on paid work will not eliminate child poverty. Indeed, it will not even reduce it significantly. The In Work Tax Credit discriminates against children whose parent or carer doesn't have paid work.

As a society, New Zealand has done well in significantly reducing levels of poverty among older people. Our poverty rates for retired people are among the lowest in the OECD. We decided as a society that it is unacceptable for retired New Zealanders to live below the poverty line. We need the same commitment where children are concerned. Rightly, there is considerable concern about violence towards children; we all find that unacceptable. Importantly, commentators have noted that poverty represents a particular form of violence because of the way that it affects experiences, opportunities, health and wellbeing.

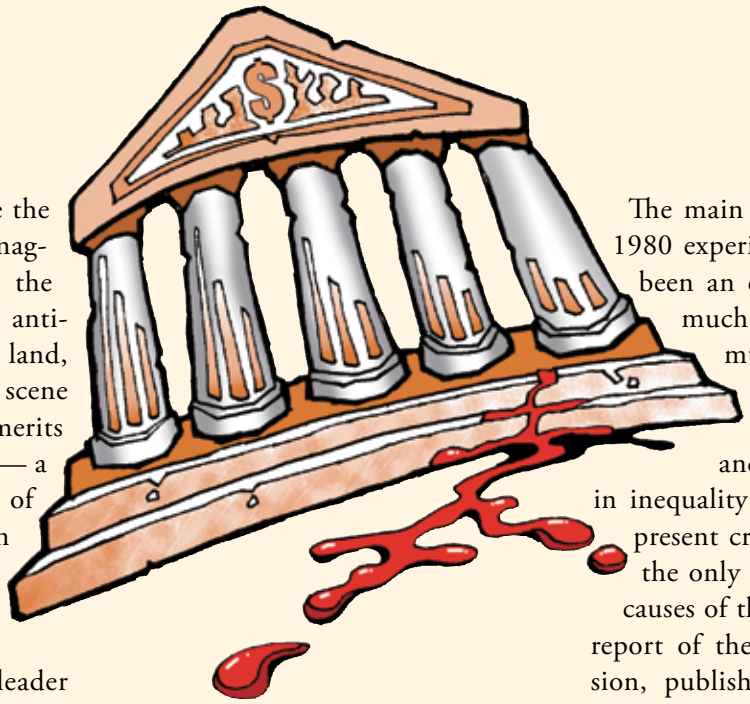
No New Zealand child should live in poverty and we could take steps towards ensuring this doesn't happen if there is a willingness to do so. It is an indictment on our country that we continue to allow it to happen. 2012 provides an opportunity to move forward significantly. Are we willing to pressure policy makers and politicians to make that choice? New Zealand's children deserve nothing less from all of us as adults. It is a responsibility which we all share. Parents and carers have a responsibility but they cannot meet that responsibility on their own. ■

Associate Professor Mike O'Brien
Co-convenor, Child Poverty Action Group

the rich get rich and the poor get laid off

In the 1920s and 1930s the wealthy were prospering amid economic upheaval. With the same happening today, a new study of inequality argues that gaps in wealth are the cause of instability and are deeply damaging as well as unjust.

Stewart Lansley



Over two years before the current most damaging recessions of the last century occupation by anti-capitalist protesters of nearby land, St Paul's Cathedral was the scene of another event about the merits of contemporary capitalism — a spirited debate on the role of the growing income gap in market-led economies.

Sharing a platform with canon theologian Nicholas Sagovsky and then deputy leader of the Liberal Democrats Vince Cable, the vice chairman of Goldman Sachs and a former adviser to Mrs Thatcher, Brian Griffiths, defended higher inequality "as the way to achieve greater prosperity for all".

Lord Griffiths was espousing one of the central claims of the still dominant free-market school: that the accumulation of large fortunes might bring a bigger divide, but, by encouraging business and wealth creation, it raises growth rates and makes everybody better off.

While recent years have seen several hard-hitting and hotly debated critiques of the growing divide, these have concentrated on issues of injustice. But another equally important, but largely ignored, issue is that of its impact on the way economies function.

do higher levels of inequality work?

Are Lord Griffiths and his co-believers right in claiming superior economic benefits from higher levels of inequality? The evidence suggests otherwise. The income gulf has soared, but without the promised pay-off of wider economic progress. On all measures of economic performance bar inflation, the post-1980 era of rising inequality has a much poorer record than the egalitarian post-war decades.

Since 1980, growth and productivity rates have both fallen sharply. Unemployment has been close to five times that of the two post-war decades. Financial crises have become much more frequent and more damaging, culminating in the crisis of the last four years.

The main outcome of the post-1980 experiment has, as a result, been an economy that is both much more polarised and much more fragile. So what does this tell us about cause and effect? Is the rise in inequality the real cause of the present crisis? No, according to the only official account of the causes of the 2008-09 crash. The report of the US official commission, published in January 2011, failed to mention "inequality" once in its mammoth 662-page report.

link inequality and instability

Yet, the historical evidence points to a clear link from inequality to instability. The two — in the 1930s and today — were both preceded by steep rises in inequality. In 1920s America, the share of national income taken by the top 1 per cent of the population increased from 14 to 24 per cent. From 1990 to 2007, there was a near-identical rise from 14.3 per cent to 22.8 per cent. In contrast, from the late-1930s to the mid-1970s — a period of much greater economic stability — the income gap narrowed sharply. There is thus a clear historical correlation between the concentration of income and economic stability.

Why is this? The evidence suggests that when the richest one

percent secure more than around a sixth of national income, the natural economic processes essential to stability cease to work properly. Essentially, a model of capitalism that fails to share the proceeds of growth evenly between different sections of society will eventually self-destruct.

In the last 30 years, the distribution of the economic pie between the workforce and business owners has become excessively skewed in favour of the latter. Profit levels and top fortunes have soared, the direct result of a sustained and deliberate squeeze on real wages. Since the millennium, economic output has been rising at almost twice the rate of real earnings in the United Kingdom. In the United States, pay has been falling even further behind the rise in the size of the economy.

effects of pay-output gap

The first crucial effect of a rising pay-output gap is to suck demand out of economies: purchasing power does not keep pace with the extra output being produced. If demand does not rise in line with the growth in economic potential enabled by productivity gains and business investment, consumer societies end up without the capacity to consume and simply seize up. In both the 1920s and the 2000s, the solution to this problem of a growing shortage of demand was a mix of cheap credit and an explosion of rising personal debt.

rising personal debt

In the 1920s rising debt became the means by which the workforce could pay for the increased output of cars, radios and the other new consumer goods of the time. The same process was at work from the late 1990s. Spiralling levels of personal debt funded everyday living costs — from clothes to utility bills — as well as a swollen demand for housing. Without this debt, the mass consumption on which the economy depended would not have been forthcoming. In neither case did this prevent recession, it just delayed it.

Secondly, allowing a small financial and business elite an increasing share of the pie eventually leads to asset-price bubbles. In 1920s America, a rapid process of enrichment at the top created an increasingly unsustainable five-year-long property and stock-market boom. In the build-up to 2008, the burgeoning levels of personal wealth that were the counterpart to the rising wage-output gap led to a giant mountain of global footloose capital. A tsunami of hot money raced around the world at speed, creating the asset bubbles — in property and business — that eventually brought the global economy to its knees.

Essentially, a model of capitalism that fails to share the proceeds of growth evenly between different sections of society will eventually self-destruct.

sustainable capitalist model?

The deepest economic crises of the last 100 years have occurred when wages have been decoupled from output. In the relatively stable post-war decades up to the end of the 1960s, wages and profits moved roughly in line with growing output. In the run-up to the crisis of the 1970s, wages began to take a rising share of economic output in the UK (and in most other rich nations) creating a profits squeeze that threatened the sustainability of the capitalist model.

In the 1920s and the post-1980s, a prolonged wage-squeeze and rising profits share merely brought a dangerous mix of demand deflation and asset appreciation, which ended in economic crisis. These lessons have yet to be learnt. Today, real wages are on a downward slide across the globe while personal fortunes are back to record levels. If we are to avoid a near-permanent slump, the rising income gap needs to be capped and reversed, just as it was from the 1930s.

"great levelling process"

In the post-war era, the "great levelling" process was achieved in two main ways. First, by the emergence — across rich nations — of a set of new social and political mores hostile to an excessive divide. Rewards at the top of business and finance became more modest, business accepted a greater sense of social responsibility and crucially allowed the workforce to share in the proceeds of rising prosperity. Second, by the introduction of a sharply progressive system of taxation.

inevitable polarisation?

There is nothing inevitable about today's level of polarisation. But achieving greater equality means a transformation on four fronts: the shaping of an alternative political and social climate that caps runaway greed at the top; a shift in today's primary business goal away from the maximisation of short-term profits; a re-modelled tax system that claws back a higher proportion of top fortunes; and a global attack on tax avoidance. None of this will be easy, but there will rarely be a more opportune climate and a greater urgency for action. ■

Stewart Lansley is the author of The Cost of Inequality: three decades of the super-rich and the economy *(Gibson Square Books)*

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what would 'love' do now?

Tui Motu sat down with one of the Occupy Octagon protestors to find out what they are doing and what impact their protest was having.

The Octagon is alive. It's midday, and many people are sauntering by. I receive a warm welcome from a man who introduces himself as Kieren Trass. As we sit down in the sun, another protestor, Tipene, is playing the Maori flute. What starts as a request for an interview, quickly turns into an interview itself. It's day 39 of the Occupy Octagon protest movement, one of some 2000 protests still continuing around the world. As we begin to talk, a passer-by drops off two large bags of Brumby's muffins and bread, and receives a cheery thank you. Much food has been donated and is still being given.

Kieren has just finished mowing the grass, after having shifted eight tents to ensure that the grass continues to grow. Destroying the green, grassy look of the Octagon has been one of the principal gripes of people opposed to the protest. Kieren tells me from Day two, the City Council sent a security guard to tell them that they are not welcome here. "We have had a trespass notice, but we are not camping or trespassing. We are exercising our rights under the NZ Bill of Rights."

difficulties about staying

The biggest difficulty the protestors have faced so far is the young drunks who come late at night from the many bars around the Octagon. "Misinformed by the media, including the *Otago Daily Times*, that we are defecating on the lawn and spoiling the grass of the Octagon, these young men get angry and attack us, both verbally and phsycially." The protestors have lost 12 tents this way. Violence, fuelled by alcohol, meets non-violent protest. Violence against them has been a reason why some protestors are no longer staying there.

Are you going to stay here? Yes, but it's got its problems. We can't sleep at night because of the noise. But we believe it is the right place to be. A whole bunch of those people who have been drinking at the Octagon bars have come here, sat down and talked. We get the possibility of answering questions about why we are here and what we are doing. After talking, many of them say we don't agree with what you are doing, but we kind of get the point.

Often the young ones only feel free enough to come here after they have had a few beers. Sometimes it is still to abuse us, and that makes it the worst place to be; sometimes it is to sit down and talk, and that makes it the best place to be. It is a real blessing to be able to talk with these young people of tomorrow's generation.

So the weekends are the time we look for. The other night, a guy came and after an hour's talking, he admitted that he had been here previously pulling up the pegs of our tents. He wanted to apologize for doing this, because he didn't understand what we were doing, and now he had some idea. He had gone from being angry and physically abusive to being a little more informed. For us that is a positive outcome. Convincing people of what is going on in the world is a slow process but it is worth it.

differing reasons among protestors

Why are you and your friends here? There's a whole raft of reasons. Some come out of big concerns for the global environment, or the Rena and Pike River disasters, and the failure of an adequate government response to these, especially the Christchurch earthquake situation. Others are here because they lack gainful work or they are some of the unemployed who can't get jobs because there are none to get. Students come because they want a better and fairer future for all, or because of the unbridgeable gap in resources between the rich and the poor.

the monetary system

My personal field is the monetary system, the very reason for the Occupy Wall St Movement. I've had 25 years in corporate banking, watching the transfer of money from the many to the few. I am seeking an alternate monetary system. Presently I am voicing my concern to parliamentarians and the media about a Reserve Bank policy document called "the open bank resolution." The Reserve Bank is arguing that if one major bank collapses, all banks collapse. It seems that the Reserve Bank is preparing us for a major bank collapse.

This is serious, and I think we need to bring the topic of bank collapse into the public arena, to discuss this and consider alternative options. I think our present fractional reserve banking system, is at the point of collapse. Most people don't know a thing about it nor understand it. But the banking system has collapsed before — when the Bank of New Zealand went under in 1991; and in the United States in 2008, when it had to be bailed out by the US Government. And there is huge pressure on the Euro and the banking system in Europe right now.

What are your aims and hopes? We are aiming for systemic change for the benefit of our environment; for change for the 230,000 kids that live below the poverty line in New Zealand; for change because of the Rena disaster — where the government seemed

The Occupy protest in the Octagon, Dunedin. [Photo courtesy Jim Neilan]

more interested in getting insurance from the shipowners than in actually doing the immediate work of cleaning, and ensuring that this doesn't happen again.

As a nation, we have built collective wealth in electricity assets worth 12 billion dollars. Now the Government wants to sell down electricity assets to private companies who will only move to triple our power charges, with corresponding disaster for people who can't afford that. We want to stop that.

some hopes around national issues

We are hoping for a more collective voice on the issues that affect the nation. We have debased the situation to ticking the boxes once every three years. That's about all we do. We want the right to have ongoing input into the key issues: I am not sure how this would work. Perhaps we could do it where lots of smaller communities meet to discuss and give back advice to government. It would be a feedback loop, and this is not impossible. We have the technology to do this now. This way we could get lots of unbiased information into the hands of those making decisions.

I personally want change in many things and occupying the Octagon was a way of communicating that. We can't get change addressed in and through the media, because this is controlled by the very business interests we want to change. We often know why we want change, but don't know the how. We need to revisit our whys.

Why am I here? When you answer that for yourself, the how becomes obvious. I have been a real estate adviser. When I knew the why of a potential investor it was always easy to work out the how. I helped lots of people make lots of money, and I made lots myself, with the usual porsches, houses, and signs of wealth. But I realized that these things are empty.

After my second wife left me, I had to stand back and look at myself. I was not adding any value to anyone's life, except money. And when my wife left me I realized how empty that was. I didn't know myself. That was five years ago. I took two years off, and travelled. And I found my God, whom I call 'love'. I don't belong to any organized religion though I know that love is at the heart of most religions. Often I ask myself the burning question: what would 'love' do now? And the answer often becomes apparent very quickly, and frequently it is quite the opposite from what I might have expected.

the enemy is ignorance

The situation of coming here to the Octagon was a case in point. We didn't know the how when we came here, but we knew why. We came and we know some things, some people have changed. Ultimately how I will be able to communicate all this I don't know. That will only become apparent as time goes on. Our biggest enemy is ignorance, and our chances of overcoming ignorance come by talking to one person at a time.

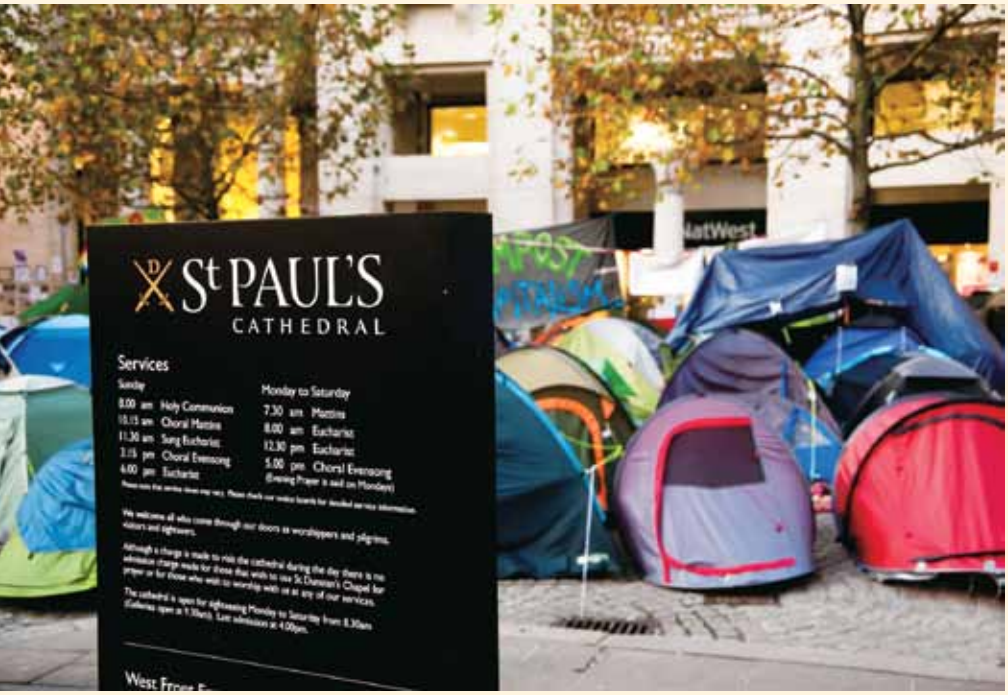
What would you really like to say to the wider public? I want a real transparency in government and in all decision-making, and alongside that, the overcoming of ignorance everywhere. Ignorance is blind, not bliss. And the truth is not to be blinkered. I would rather know the truth. Often I think that Kiwis don't want to know the truth. We just vote once every three years, and leave the rest to those in power. We kind of wash our hands of it all. What about when our grandkids will ask us: why didn't you do something about what's happening now when you could?

Tipene is still playing his flute. ■

london's remarkable occupation

Canon Paul describes the London Occupy St. Paul's closure of the Cathedral, the retraction of that closure by the Dean and Chapter, and draws out some implications of the challenge which the movement poses. In particular, the Anglican Church rediscovered an important role within the larger British society.

Paul Oestreicher



It is November 30. The public sectors of England's life have come close to a standstill. For the first time in nearly forty years the nation is strikebound. Schools are shut. Emergency services only in hospitals. No rubbish collections. Civil servants do not readily stop serving. It is a symbol of the crisis of 21st century capitalism. No work for young people, no decent care any longer for the old, child poverty on the increase as are the astronomical wages of the rich.

When the world-wide occupation of the centres of financial power reached London, the forecourt of today's Temple, the Stock Exchange, was secured by the guardians of law and order. Not in this sacred space! So they took their little tents to the base of the steps of London's iconic St Paul's Cathedral. This Cathedral, once at the heart of the world's greatest empire is embedded in the City, London's financial district, which by its transactions keeps the British economy precariously afloat. It almost symbolises the nation. Without the support of the Corporation of the City, the rich business club that holds the purse strings, the Cathedral would be hard put to make ends meet. The inherited wealth of the Church of England has been eaten by the locusts, by a century's inflation. The magnificence of the Church, symbolised by this, the grandest of Cathedrals, is close to being a fiction. It goes cap in hand to tourists and to the goodwill of the City.

So what to do with this hardy band of campers on its doorstep who have come to question the values of that City? As the police had protected the Stock Exchange and the Bank of England, they were now willing to protect the Cathedral. Something close to a miracle was then enacted. The duty priest that day, with no time to consult the Dean or his fellow Canons, sent the police away. "It is kind of you to offer your protection, but we don't need it. We can handle this. Let the campers stay!" From that moment, depending on which paper you read, Canon Fraser was either a fool or a hero. The nation was mesmerised.

The Dean and Chapter, along with the Corporation which owns part of the occupied land, were not amused. Behind the scenes Giles Fraser was carpeted. He had no right to do what he did. The powers that be were panicked into closing the Cathedral (only Hitler's bombers had ever done that before) on ostensible grounds of safety and hygiene and threatened to call the police back to recreate normality. On the grounds that that implied the use of violence against the campers, Giles Fraser resigned.

Now not a day passed without the story making front page headlines. Britain's most secular daily, The Guardian, accused the Cathedral of betraying the Christian faith. It was not just one paper. Public opinion swung massively behind the campers. People came from afar to offer their solidarity. The closed Cathedral became the symbol of a frightened church with nothing to say. Large numbers of Christians

promised to come and protect the camp from the police, if they were to move in.

A supporting preach-in was organised to address the campers and the Cathedral. An Imam preached, a Rabbi, a Reformed Pastor, a Roman Catholic representing Pax Christi, a leading Humanist, an articulate and impressive twelve year old who got the greatest applause. I was the Anglican in that line-up. The Dean and Chapter had not talked to the campers lest, they said, "that would appear to give the camp legitimacy". No one doubted where the Corporation stood. The conservative Bishop of London (who does not run the Cathedral) now hesitantly came down on the side of the Dean. I challenged Dean, Chapter and Bishop to come down the steps, and listen and talk to the campers on the ground. The next day they knew they had to do just that.

Things then moved very fast. It was announced that the Cathedral would reopen. There had been no good reason to close it. The camp had never blocked access to tourists or worshippers. People everywhere in pubs and clubs and homes were asking what religion is meant to be about. A national debate was under way. Eighteen bishops publicly questioned the effect of the Government's economic policy on the poor. The Church began to rediscover its role. In the face of all that, the Dean came down the steps and announced his resignation. He could no longer, he said, credibly remain as Dean.

Now the Cathedral did a total U-turn. The Acting Dean publicly apologised for what had gone before. The Cathedral would take no steps to remove the campers by force. Rather the Cathedral would enter into dialogue. The Bishop swung behind this decision and was happily photographed with the campers all around him. Giles Fraser had been vindicated.

This victory is something the campers had never envisaged. In

fact the Cathedral and the whole topic of religion had not been within their sights. They had chosen this spot simply because the space was there, the nearest to where they had planned to be. What happened was the law of unintended consequences. The Church had been taught a huge lesson and so, unintended too, had the campers. That they were at the heart of a national debate was largely the consequence of one cleric's sound Christian instincts and the inability of his colleagues to read the signs of the times.

Inevitably the Corporation of the City has been totally wrong footed. It felt compelled to go along with the Cathedral for a while and then, with no public backing from the Cathedral, announced that it would after all face the campers with a legal injunction. That has happened and the campers, backed by a top legal firm, are now challenging this injunction. It will turn into a long drawn-out process. The campers remain in good heart. The Cathedral, with cold weather impending, has now offered to debate the issues inside its hallowed space and even to allow a tent in, just maybe as a prelude to the campers moving on voluntarily.

This being England, the press were asking: why does the Archbishop of Canterbury remain silent? During the critical days he was in fact with the Pope in Assisi at a peace meeting of world religions. Hardly home, he chose his platform well: an article challenging the Government in the Financial Times, an article addressing the issues of economic injustice that make the camp so relevant. He was, without wanting to humiliate the Cathedral, glad of the challenge posed by the Occupation.

This story will run and run. Has it humiliated the Church? In part deservedly but with hindsight a Cathedral that so quickly publicly admitted its failure shows that being humbled is actually deeply Christian. A Dean who had the insight to resign on the back of his failure has done what no heads of failed banks would dream of doing. Their response is to give themselves another round of huge bonuses. In challenging that corrupt worship of mammon, the campers, whether they know it or not, are serving both God and the people. ■

Canon Paul Oestreicher is a former Director of the Centre for International Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral, England.

te tiriti speaks to the churches?

This article details the deliberate journey taken by members of the Methodist Church in Aotearoa New Zealand to move from having a purely pakeha governance base to one in which there is true shared governance according to the Treaty of Waitangi.

Garth Cant

Methodism is a bicultural church, embedded in Aotearoa New Zealand. Māori and non-Māori, Taha Māori and Tauiwi, share together in the governance of the church. The preamble to our mission statement puts it succinctly: Our Church's mission in Aotearoa/New Zealand is to reflect and proclaim the transforming love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and declared in the Scriptures. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve God in the world. The Treaty of Waitangi is the covenant establishing our nation on the basis of a power-sharing partnership and will guide how we undertake mission.

but where did it begin?

Did it begin at Methodist Conference in Napier in 1982? When Percy Rushton was President, and Brian and Te Rua Turner enabled us as we split up into working groups to look at evangelism and racism. One by one the groups reported back, and out of that came a determination to look at power-sharing. More work followed, and a year later Conference determined to work bi-culturally.

Did it begin in Mangungu when Hokianga Māori welcomed, nurtured, and accommodated the first Methodist mission station in 1827? Or did it begin with Methodist Māori inputs to the treaty debate at Waitangi on Feb 5th 1840? Or back in Mangungu seven days later when Hokianga rangatira and missionaries hosted the second Treaty gathering?

Or, did it begin in 1953 when the Methodist Church selected a young Māori minister to go to a World Conference of Christian Youth in Travencore, India? Or 17 years later, when the same Ruawai Rakena gave his address on "A Māori Response to the Gospel"? His words fell on fertile ground: within twelve months the Methodist Home and Māori Mission Department separated into two divisions: a Development Division under Barry Jones, and a Māori Division under Ruawai Rakena. Methodist Māori could order their life according to their own style of working, under their own leadership.

Since 1983, Methodists have travelled a bicultural journey: new structures have been worked out by the two partners, tested experimentally, and embedded into church life.

Methodism is connexional, which means that major decisions are made nationally by the annual Methodist Conference. We now work as two partners: major decisions are made by Conference on a consensus basis: if there is agreement between the Taha Māori and Tauiwi partners, a decision is made; if the partners are not in agreement, conversations continue. A connexional church, meeting once a year, has a lot of decisions to make. A typical Conference now makes some 300 to 400 decisions by consensus, struggles with five to ten decisions, eventually finds agreement on some of these, and sets some aside for future work.

what have been milestones?

There have been stresses and strains in the Methodist bicultural journey. Historically, power has been held by Pakeha, and most of the talking at Conference has been done by Pakeha. But now Pakeha are part of Tauiwi, sharing voices and forging an identity with the Tongan, Samoan, Fijian, and Asian strands of the Church. There was confusion between being bicultural and being multicultural. Progress was made when bicultural encounters took place between Māori and Tongan, Māori and Samoan, Māori and . . . A moving event, a cameo of many moving events, took place at Conference in November 1985 when Lani Tupu, a Samoan layman and leader, was elected Vice President. Lani came to the lectern and warmly and fluently greeted Taha Māori and Conference in te reo. The saints who hold us together as one Methodist family have been evenly spread across Māori, Samoan, Fijian, Tongan, Korean, and Pakeha. The skills are less evenly spread: Māori have two centuries of experience in working biculturally; and Tongan, Fijian, Samoan, Asian and African are much more multilingual than most Pakeha.

Guests arriving for the powhiri at Mangungu in 2010 (courtesy: *Touchstone* magazine)

Rev Diana Tana, the Methodist Tumuaki, leading prayers at Waitangi in 2009 (Courtesy: *Touchstone* magazine)

Treaty priorities have also been put in action at the grassroots. In 1994, for example, Whanganui Māori moved to reclaim their market place and landing place at Moutoa Gardens. The Churches were part of the public support for the extended protest. The Methodist Ministry team in Wanganui reconfigured and took on specific roles: Gary Clover, together with his Catholic and Anglican counterparts, Brian Quinn and John Anderson, took on a supportive and listening role at Pakaitore marae; David Pratt's task was to encourage the Wanganui City Council to remain in dialogue and avoid confrontation; Norma George continued to provide pastoral care for the three Methodist congregations — the depth of feeling meant that all members faced considerable pressures. Māori Methodist leadership visited and opened the way for Connexional leadership to visit Moutoa in solidarity.

Another important governance step was taken in 1994 when a Council of Conference was set up. There are ten members from Taha Māori and ten from Tauiwi. Both of the partners ensure that the Council involves a mix of men and women, lay and ordained, and includes young people as well as older members. The primary role of the Council of Conference is a visioning one, to reflect on the journey which the Methodists have travelled, and on the journey ahead, and to provide guidance for Conference and Connexion. A side product is that Council of Conference provides a nurturing ground and a testing ground for future Connexional leadership.

Looking ahead: challenge and response

The changes within Methodism, running parallel to changes within the Anglican and Catholic Churches, have been momentous. But in many cases, especially in rural areas and in the South Island, parishes have been detached from the Methodist bicultural journey. This detachment is intensified as the costs of attending Methodist Conference rise and fewer lay people from smaller parishes are able to attend. Counterbalancing this, is some cases, is a richness of national corporate life provided by Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand (the Forum of Cooperating Ventures), the Methodist Women's Fellowship, and smaller and larger gatherings of Methodist Youth.

Methodism faces the challenge of transferring knowledge, and memory, and personal commitment from generation to generation. Two sorts of memories: the events in the 1830s and 1840 that link us to the Treaty and our Methodist identity in Aotearoa; and the events of the 1980s and 1990s that have created our partnership-in-governance.

Annual events and historical commemorations are both important. Methodist Taha Māori have traditionally attended the annual Kingitanga celebrations at Ngaruawahia, the Ratana gathering each January, and the Treaty of Waitangi commemorations at Waitangi. The Methodist Taha Māori presence at these events is now enlarged to become a Methodist connexional presence.

On February 12th 2010, Methodists gathered at Mangungu to remember the Treaty signing, 170 years before. We remembered the 3000 who gathered there in 1840, and reflected on the logistics of feeding them. We remembered Patuone and Tamati Waka Nene who brokered the event, Captain Hobson who came with the Māori version of the Treaty, and Rev John Hobbs who interpreted. And we named and remembered the 29 Rangatira who signed the Treaty at Mangangungu.

That gathering in 2010 has become the prototype for training and equipping the next generation of Methodists. Te Aroha Rountree, herself descended from these Hokianga tupuna, teaches courses on Te Ao Tawhito (the ancient Māori world) and Te Ao Huruhuri (the contemporary Māori world). And each year, at the beginning of February, Trinity College holds a nine day teaching pilgrimage, which is taken by all candidates for ministry and leadership. The group moves to Waitangi for February 5 and 6, and Mangungu for February 12 and includes a mix of story telling, contextual theology, structural analysis, and Treaty education. Journals are kept, theological reflections are written, and a new cohort of leaders, Māori and Tauiwi, are bonded together, with each other, and with mentors from the generations before. ■

Garth Cant is a Methodist lay-person and a geographer, from Canterbury.

my euthanasia t-shirt would say 'it's not simple, stupid'

Elspeth McLean

I get a little impatient with those who would have us believe the euthanasia debate can be reduced to a slogan on a T-shirt. Nor do I have sympathy with those who say if we can euthanase a sick dog, why not people? Why stop there with the animal parallels? Perhaps we could start cutting off men's testicles without their consent as a contraceptive measure too. If I were to design a T-shirt to represent the issue it would say "It's not simple, stupid".

And before you rush to dismiss me as some insensitive nutter who knows nothing of the despair of terminal illness, think again.

There is nothing particularly attractive about seeing the love of your life and father of your four beloved sons die from bowel cancer at the age of 48. Almost 14 years on, even writing those words moves me to tears.

It makes me recall times when I felt helpless and abandoned trying to cope with an emaciated man I could not stop from vomiting; of sitting listening to that brave man grunting in pain at the hospital while a junior doctor seemed oblivious to the extremity of his discomfort, wasting time asking unnecessary questions instead of administering pain relief. I should have interrupted and insisted, instead of snapping at the nurse when the medication eventually turned up. The memory still makes me feel ashamed.

At the same time I was trying to care for four children ranging from seven to almost 16. As I have described before, some of my behaviour became a little mad.

But what I learned from that lovely man in his final days was that death, however it comes, is a part of life. It may not be nice, you may not choose it, but you have to deal with it. Of course it is not easy. But why do we imagine everything must be? If we could control everything about our lives, would we be richer for it?

It is a pity my husband cannot be here. I am sure he would explain it more eloquently than I. He knew he had no choice about having terminal cancer. But what he did control was how he dealt with it. If he had chosen to end his life early, I am sure he could have. He didn't, as it turned out. Nor did he ask me to, dying instead in the excellent care of the Otago Community Hospice.

I will never forget the day we arrived there. It was probably hard to tell who was the most exhausted. Once he was safely ensconced in bed, I was asked if I would like a cup of tea and a biscuit. That simple question almost made me weep. At first I thought it was a mistake. I wasn't the patient, after all.

Perhaps it is care that the debate should focus on. Care for the dying patient and care for the people who are looking after them.

Euthanasia is not just a matter of the dying person wanting to pop their clogs a bit early. It may appear simpler if the dying person is able to sort out their own death, but is it necessarily? What about the situation where family members or others might sneakily pressure dying ones into believing they are surplus to requirements and really they should be falling on their swords?

And in a climate where euthanasia was widely accepted, how would you stop family members from making oldies, people with disabilities, or others think they would be doing everyone a favour if they shuffled off? Never underestimate the awfulness of people, particularly where there could be personal gain. And if there are other people involved, how easy is it to tell if they are doing the dying one's bidding?

We might feel sympathetic to a highly articulate middle-class or upper-class person talking of fulfilling a parent's supposed wishes, but if a gang member was telling essentially the same story, in a more basic way, of slipping some illegal drugs to his old mum to haste her death, would we feel the same?

And, if we think it's OK to allow others to get involved in hastening the death of people with terminal illness, where do we draw the line? Should the parent of a child dying of cancer get to speed that up or do we want to give that right to medical professionals? If you were a health professional would you want that responsibility? Is it fair?

In recent years, we have become more adept at talking about grief. Maybe it's time to start talking seriously about our attitude to death itself? But let's do it without silly T-shirt slogans and the distraction of high-profile cases. I am not sure they are helpful. ■

Elspeth McLean is a Dunedin writer and columnist who has given permission for us to republish this article. It first appeared in the Otago Daily Times *on November 16, 2011.*

in my father's shoes

The writer reflects upon the ambiguities of life and the place of sacrifical love and self giving within ordinary family life

Roger Dowling

My father left school at the end of his primary years aged 12. Not in any way by choice as he was obviously a bright student. His teachers through his time at school were all Marist Brothers. As a result my father held the Marist Brothers in extravagant regard not because they were larger-than-life men or incredible teachers but in his words "they did it for me". Usually at meal time my father would speak about the dreadful conditions the Brothers lived under and how some poor Catholic people had no choice but to pay them with meals of stew or mince. With tears in his eyes he would conclude: "I was only a boy of 12 but they did it for me."

My father clearly understood sacrifice. His own life as father of a very large family delivered to him a central and ultimate understanding that you give your life. But no preacher ever connected this with his Catholic faith. Sunday Mass was an obligation. The diet was sin, unworthiness, guilt. My father met the requirements of his Catholicism but at a cost to his fullness of life.

Dad would have loved the John (the evangelist) image of taking Jesus into his boat. He was at sea as a marine engineer for years. He would have loved the liberating truth that the "Abba" Jesus talked about is a God of limitless love always coming towards him. Dad would have been chuffed to understand Jesus' ultimate giving of his life in terms of "love freely given". He would have been chuffed to be told that he, Bill Dowling, was matching Jesus in the ultimate giving of his life. Dad realised that love is sacrificial, for others, but I think he saw this as his cross, what he had unwittingly signed up for.

He could have gone to his faithful weekly Mass with his heart alive. Had someone told him he would have understood that he was part of the new covenant centred on Jesus. He would have understood that in the Jesus experience love is sacrificial and that the logic of this may be to give his life. As it was for Jesus and was daily for my father.

Young Pat Dawick aged 12 playing first-five for his school team "knows" that he is Dan Carter. He is devoted to the way Dan Carter plays and the way he does interviews. He identifies with Dan Carter, his hero, his demi-god, a man who can walk on water, vanquish our enemies, make us feel good. He has his picture on the wall. We know he is not Dan Carter but he is in the same league, the same channel, playing the same game. Young Pat Dawick is living a wholesome dream.

Dad would have been chuffed to think he was in the same team as Jesus not as a sinner but as someone who went about the ultimate things in the same way. If he had heard it articulated this way, Sunday by Sunday, my father could have committed himself to self-giving because he knew the price. Raising a big family was no cake walk. Caring for my mother in her later 20 years was nothing short of heroic and painful.

Bill Dowling, and hundreds like him, could easily have identified with the Jesus story because he understood sacrifice, how ultimate it is, how much it underpins the daily life of good people. Day by difficult day deep down this was where my father's heart was, and every Sunday he could have spread out the challenges and costs of his life before Jesus his messiah in our midst.

But he never heard this, in spite of a lifetime of about 2400 sermons. Instead at the age of 72 he asked me a question which still rings sad within me each time I think of it: "When are we allowed to stop going to Mass ?"

Brother Roger Dowling is a Marist brother, presently living in Ngaruawahia

SERVING

And what is more generous
than a window?

An open basket on the wall
ready to receive.

A vase of flowers
picked for the glory
of your room.

The cloth on a table
stitched in beauty.

It is true
something is always
serving something?

Silence
serves my being.

— Bridie Southall

Holy Name Church, Dunedin

PHOTOS: On 27 October last year, all over the world there were interfaith services which replicated that held at Assisi by Benedict XVI and the leaders of the major faith communities. In New Zealand, each Catholic Diocese arranged interfaith services. These photos show the variety of ways in which this was honoured in Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.Thank you to our photographers.

The Gift

This is the text of the address Rowan Williams, gave at Ass the second World Da

It is a great privilege to stand with you to celebrate the anniversary of the first Day of Prayer for Peace held here under the guidance and leadership of Blessed Pope John Paul II. The late pope believed passionately that the concerns of human beings in our age for justice and stability were matters that demanded a common witness from people of faith, without any compromise of our own particular convictions and traditions. The years since that first assembly have reinforced this belief most strongly. The challenges of our time are such that no one religious body can claim to have all the practical resources needed to confront them, even if we believe that we have all we need in the spiritual or doctrinal realm. So we are here not to affirm a minimum common ground of belief, but to speak out of the depth of our traditions in all their distinctiveness, so that the human family will be more fully aware of how much wisdom there is to draw upon in the struggle against the foolishness of a world still obsessed with fear and suspicion, still in love with the idea of a security based on defensive hostility, and still capable of tolerating or ignoring massive loss of life among the poorest through war and disease.

All such failures of the spirit have their roots largely in an inability to recognize strangers as sharing with us one and the same nature, one and the same personal dignity. Lasting peace begins when we see the neighbour as another self — and so begin to understand how and why we must love the neighbour as we love ourselves.

For the Christian, the heart of all this is the conviction that in Jesus of Nazareth God himself identifies with human nature, and thus with each and every human person. Every human face now looks different because of the fact that God has taken on a human face. What we recognize in our neighbour

# of Peace

the Archbishop of Canterbury, sisi on 27th October during y of Prayer for Peace.

is someone who not only bears the image of God by virtue of creation, but bears also the possibility of carrying the likeness of Jesus Christ by virtue of the new creation. And if this is so, we cannot ultimately be strangers. What makes for the life of any one person or community makes for the life of all.

All people of faith have in common the conviction that we are not ultimately strangers to each other. And if we are not strangers, we must sooner or later find a way to embody that mutual recognition in true and lasting relationships of friendship. We are here today to declare our will — or rather our passionate determination — to persuade our world that human beings do not have to be strangers, and that recognition is as possible as it is necessary because of our universal relation to God.

I end by quoting some lines from a great Christian poet of my own nation of Wales, Waldo Williams — a teacher, a man of deep prayer and an activist for peace throughout his adult life. He wrote a poem[1] called *What is Man?*, and these are the opening verses:

What is it to be alive? To dwell in a great hall
Between narrow walls.
What is it to recognize? To find a single root
Beneath all the branches.

What is it to have faith? To stay still at the hearth
Until we are ready to receive our guest.
What is it to forgive? To find a way through the thorns
To stand alongside our old enemy.
May God help us to answer such questions in such a way by means of our words and our witness.

+ Rowan Cantuar:

[1] *Pa beth yw Dyn?* (1952), Waldo Williams (1904–71)

At the Peace Bell in Hagley Park, Christchurch

Sacred Heart Cathedral, Wellington

while the leaves fall

The mood, the traditions, even the weather of the month of November often turn our thoughts to those whom we have lost. But death need not mean the loss of meaning – love and loss are forever inextricably linked.

Daniel O'Leary

November winds carry echoes of loss. It is the month of All Saints, All Souls and commemoration of the war dead when memories that bless and burn come back to haunt us. We sense anew the absence of the loves of our lives. But by now we have learned that love and loss go together. If you love, you are sure to suffer; if you do not love, you will suffer even more.

Most of us, in fact, in the fine resiliency of the human soul, are willing to try loving, again and again, though we understand how vulnerable that makes us to loss. But we cannot live without love and loss. They are written into our DNA; into the very nature of life itself.

One way or another, loss forever shadows the light of our lives. And the more we love people and things, and the more attached we are to our dreams and hopes, the more deeply we will feel their loss. Each of us has our own story of loves and losses, of coping with the raw joys and hurting edges they score into our soul.

It can suddenly ambush you, that sense of someone's absence brought on by a spring morning, an autumn sky, an empty chair.

The impact of loss is often unpredictable, and can be utterly poignant. It can suddenly ambush you, that aching sense of someone's absence brought on by a spring morning, a summer pathway, an autumn sky, an empty chair, the first Christmas carol you must listen to alone.

Long after she had died, the sight of some scribbled comments by my mother, tucked away in the pages of the book I was rereading, twisted my heart in a way impossible to describe.

Loving someone wraps invisible blankets of blessing around both people. The most beautiful and essential parts of us are entwined with those of the other. These invisible realities are often below consciousness. I remember a mother in my last parish telling me that she suddenly woke up one night with the shocking realisation that her son had just died.

This awareness came to her, I felt, not as any kind of sad news from the outside, so to speak: it came from within, a sense of the absence of an invisible bonding that was central to the throbbing substance of both their lives. It was not the arrival of something new that had come into her head; it was the death of something essential that had left her heart.

Spiritual writer Henri Nouwen reflected on the inescapable presence of loss. "There is a quality of sadness that pervades all the moments of life. It seems that there is no such thing as clear-cut pure joy; even in the happiest times we sense a tinge of loss . . . But this intimate experience of loss can point beyond the limits of our existence."

When our hearts are broken from bitter mourning, there is little comfort in Nouwen's words. Our mourning is not turned into dancing overnight. We can discern no hidden grace in grief and loss. We are like a seed buried in the darkness, alone and waiting.

It is only when the time is right, when the heart is ready, that loss, like a midwife, brings something very special and undreamt of into the emptiness of our lives. The moment of a new and slowly emerging reality will only come when we trust the possibility of such a resurrection, and open ourselves to it.

Our life, we discover, has not lost its meaning. Something in our soul forever senses possibility. In 'Love without Frontiers', Preston-born poet Phoebe Hesketh wrote:

A love without frontiers that sees without eyes,
Is present in absence and never denies
The unexplored country beyond.

Loss is like a teacher. Its value lies in the space it makes for something new to grow. "Loss makes vital clearance in the soul," wrote John O'Donohue. "Loss is the sister of discovery; it is vital to openness; though it certainly brings much pain."

Where the loss is caused by the death of a dearly loved friend or relation, that sense of loss may now begin to open the slow door to another way of being with that person. Unrestricted by time and place, a new intimacy becomes possible. Jesus was so conscious of that mysterious transition — the need to leave us so as to possess us more intimately.

The felt sting of death lessens; the reality of the love does not. No matter what subsequently happens, where love was once true, it will never be replaced. Part of you will always be a presence around the other, and from their unseen places, they will most certainly be minding us with the purest love.

This is the message of the angel of grief. We do not have to become stuck forever in the sands of sorrow. We step free beyond it. There is a wider and firmer space in which to move with the rhythm of life. It does not mean that we turn away from the person or place that we no longer experience as we once did. Nor does it mean that a new love replaces the old one. True love is not like that.

In 'The Unfilled Gap' (*Letters and Papers from Prison*), theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about the dynamic of space between those who have truly loved: "Nothing can fill the gap when we are away from those we love, and it would be wrong to try to find anything, since leaving the gap unfilled preserves the bond between us. It is nonsense to say that God fills the gap. He does not fill it but keeps it empty, so that communion with another may be kept alive even at the cost of pain."

There is a nourishing paradox in the way another peerless theologian, Karl Rahner, reflects on the unfilled gap. "There is no such thing in either the world or the heart as a vacuum," he said. "And wherever space is really left by death, by renunciation, by parting, by apparent emptiness, provided that the emptiness is not filled by the world, or activity, or noise, or the deadly grief of the world — there is God."

Those who have loved and lost, and grown through it all, have already tasted death and resurrection. They have followed their passion, they have risked for love; they have been devastated by loss. And because they loved and trusted life once, the final death will never be a fearful stranger. ■

Fr Daniel is a priest of the Leeds Diocese, England. His website is www.djoleary.com.

☞ letters to the editor

… continued from page 4

the Church she represents all that is best through the Spirit and in the institution.

There are many grudges against the institutional church today, but the Church cannot be Church without an institution, and from the very beginning it had certain structures. But these structures, if misunderstood or lived selfishly, could be the greatest obstacle to the internal life of the Church. The Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of the Church, spells this out in a devastating manner in chapter18. This chapter is addressed to our day, to our leadership, and to the 21st century as well as the first.

Br Kieran Fenn FMS ***Lower Hutt***

render unto caesar or god

In drawing on his reading of two recent books, the author shows us how effective good books can be to stimulate wider avenues of thought. He takes a scriptural lens and exposes some of the foibles of our time by drawing on similarities that cross the intervening 2,000 years.

Hugh O'Neill

Photo: Wikipedia

Santayana exhorts us to remember the past lest we repeat it. Perhaps one of the crucial lessons of history (as Shakespeare knew) is that people are no different — either in their basest motives or at their self-sacrificing best. The transition from Old Testament to New required an epochal shift from the philosophy of vengeance (an eye for an eye) to that of forgiveness (turn the other cheek). There are parallels between events of 50 years ago and those of 2,000 years ago. Though we hesitate to take the bible as literal truth, human nature can be examined. It is these self-evident human failings that devious men exploit in order to deceive and 'render unto Caesar'.

Why is it that business interests clamour for 'de-regulation' whilst demanding ever more curbs on the freedom of the individual? When Moses came down from the mountain, he brought Ten Commandments. By the time of Jesus, 'mitzvot' rules numbered 613. When challenged as to which was the most important, Jesus replied: "Love the neighbour as thyself" and freed his followers from the arcane minutiae to concentrate on the Ten. Law ought to be about protection of the weak from the strong. The balance has inverted such that now it is the strong protected from the weak.

Why was this long-haired peacenik carpenter called Jesus considered such a threat to the establishment? The Roman Empire sought to control the world for temporal gain and maximum exploitation of people and resources. The emperors after Augustus paid only lip service to the façade of democracy and the senators were puppets. In turn, the emperor held his power only until the praetorian guard decided that he no longer served their interests. Secrecy, spies, show trials, assassination and double-crossing were the modus operandi of both the Roman Empire and the Herodian dynasty.

(I once saw a clip for "Dynasty" on Italian TV. The announcer pronounced the word as "Die-Nasty." This could be truthfully said of Herod who died of Fournier's Gangrene). This was the same paranoid Herod who tried to trick the Magi into revealing the location of the infant Jesus. When thwarted, he ordered the massacre of the innocents.

Is there any resonance with the neo-con Bush dynasty, the CIA, Wall Street and Mossad? The house of Herod even had a monopoly on the extraction of asphalt from the Dead Sea — used then in boat-building (an erstwhile Halliburton?). Do we know of contemporary assassinations, massacres of innocents, show trials and spies? John the Baptist (that inconvenient herald of the truth and voice in the wilderness) had to be brought to heel. *[Mixed Metaphor] Memo to Herodias: we cannot have a free press to inform the people of our sins — who will rid me of this turbulent priest? Should governments control the media, Signor Berlusconi? (All roads lead to Rome).*

One of the most effective methods of controlling the masses is the deployment of fear. *Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) once said we have nothing*

to fear but fear itself. The lowly paid are compelled to violence despite having nothing to gain and everything to lose: *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori. (It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country)* When the crowd before Pontius Pilate shouted for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus, they were expertly manipulated by elements who felt threatened by Jesus' temporal power: he was interrogated, humiliated, tortured and executed by Roman soldiers. *(The CIA no longer deploys crucifixion).* It is significant that the notice pinned on the cross to mock Jesus — INRI — served as a warning lest others seek to challenge those in power.

But what of John Fitzgerald Kennedy (JFK), who in 1962 had stared into the abyss of hell a.k.a "Mutually Assured Destruction"? In a prescient speech before the American University of Washington in June 1963 he said:

"Our most basic common link is that we all inhabit the same small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

At great personal risk, JFK was preparing the ground to end the arms race. He wanted to rein in the power of the American military/industrial complex by challenging the Soviet Union to a "peace race". This speech went unreported in the American media, but was listened to throughout the Soviet Union many times. JFK had crossed his Rubicon: he had chosen the blessed role of peace-maker, and in doing so rendered himself unto God, redemption and salvation. Meanwhile the praetorian guard plotted his removal.

One of the presidential bodyguards scathingly recalled how JFK's hands shook so much during a speech on the morning of his assassination that he had to conceal them below the lectern. JFK was a 'profile in courage' in his Texan Gethsemane having faced death many times before — in illness and during the war in the Pacific. Did he suspect that this day was his last on earth and so feared for his family (not unfounded, since his brother Bobby met the same fate in 1968).

Much of the physical evidence post-assassination has been tampered with or 'disappeared' e.g. the president's brain is missing — since it would have shown that the fatal shot came from the grassy knoll in front (Golgotha?). When witnesses are ignored or testimonies altered, then truth is perjured. Orwell observed: who controls the present controls the past; who controls the past controls the future. JFK was assassinated not once, but many times since (witness the $30m 'hatchet job' TV series — sold for a mere $7m). It would seem that bearing false witness defines much of mainstream media. More than ever before, we must challenge the 'official version.'

'Rendering unto Caesar' has other unintended echoes: in slaughter-houses, carcasses are 'rendered' until their constituent parts are no longer. When Julius Caesar was assassinated he was first wounded in the neck (like JFK) and then butchered. (The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interr'd within their bones). The CIA transports people for torture by 'extraordinary rendition'.

Secular psychology and many religious philosophies endorse the view that everyone has potential for both good and evil — and that no one is totally beyond redemption. *Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.* The Christian view is that we were all created by a loving God, who is forever part of us and thus dignifies our sin-prone selves. This concept precedes secular human rights legislation and totally refutes those fascist notions of class or racial superiority which underpin the ruthlessness of both Wall Street and totalitarian states — whether capitalist or communist.

There is always hope: Judas Iscariot took his own life in remorse for having betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. He had sought to 'render Jesus unto Caesar' but instead rendered himself unto God. The thieves crucified on either side of Jesus had the chance of redemption and we have to make that same choice: Caesar or God? ■

This article was inspired by the clarity of James W. Douglass' 2008 book JFK and the Unspeakable *(Orbis Books, NY) and Cullen Murphy's 2007 book* Are We Rome? *(Mifflin Houghton, NY).*

Hugh O'Neill is a Dunedin marine pilot.

sifting the tradition anew

This is the first of a two-part article looking in a new way at what happened to Peter in Acts Chapter 10. The writer proposes that in this chapter we have a paradigm that helps us rethink what needs to happen within the church now. Acts 10 allows us to sift our tradition to look for clues to negotiate previously unknown situations.

Mike Riddell

We live in interesting times. The claim of Yeats that the centre cannot hold has become an all too literal reality for the citizens of Christchurch and Japan. Both in the recent history of Western thought and in the affairs of the church, we may suspect mere anarchy has been loosed upon the world.

All of us have our own mechanisms for responding to crisis. Some of us shut down, others opt for escapism, and a few brave souls confront the new situation head on. As a generalisation, institutions deny crisis.

The Angel appearing to the Centurion Cornelius. [School of Rembrandt]

But how about faith? How about the long and persistent interplay between humanity and the divine? What of the history of God in the world? I want to propose that Christianity is relatively unique in the history of religions in that it is a self-subverting tradition. That is to say, when the chips are down and the institution threatens to control what it perceives as danger to its own survival, the living spirit it carries in its belly ruptures the regulatory structures and enables a form of evolution.

There's a kind of IED — an improvised explosive device — buried within the Christian tradition. It's always present but seldom activated, for good reason. It requires a set of circumstances to arm the device; circumstances that generate a genuine crisis for the survival of the faith. In the history of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, we might look at situations such as the settlement of nomadic peoples in Palestine, the period of Babylonian exile, the inclusion of the Gentiles, the desecration of the Temple, and the abuses of medieval Catholicism as periods that generated explosive reform. Here I'm not talking about institutional reform, but a reconfiguring of self-understanding.

It's what might be described as theology *in extremis*. A kind of radical reframing that is normally locked behind glass with the warning: "In case of emergency only". My thesis is that we are in such an emergency situation currently in the West, where Christianity is crumbling with a haste not seen since the collapse of Russian communism. Of course the church could seek to hide from the crisis by ignoring its surrounding culture. It might indulge in some cheap escapism through Pentecostal smoke and mirrors. It might seek to manage the crisis as the Vatican does, desperately seeking a reverse gear.

None of these strategies are credible or sufficient in a world in which "there'll be nothing you can measure any more". It's time to break the glass and resort to crisis theology.

the future

Conservatism is a defensive position in relation to the future. It seeks to preserve what has proved useful and valuable in the past against forces that threaten to destroy it. When the barbarians are at the gate, it is perhaps time to guard the treasures against violations. And the great majority of us are conservationists if not conservatives when it comes to looking after natural resources.

The counter position to conservatism is, in my opinion, not liberalism but radicalism. This is a philosophy that while recognising the apparent dangers of the future, acknowledges that it presents an invitation to participate in something worthwhile. Radicalism is the sifting of an inherited tradition for clues to negotiating a previously unknown situation. This is a looking back not to preserve but to equip. Other generations have faced threats and despair before. How did they respond in such a way as to enter the so-called promised land of the future?

It will come as no surprise that I believe our present circumstances at the threshold of the twenty-first century call for radicalism rather than conservatism.

I believe in a God of the open future. It is the openness of an

uncreated future that provides hope for humanity. Whatever spiritual journey any of us may subscribe to, it is a journey of becoming — one that requires the element of possibility rather than blind fate. This understanding posits God as luring us into a future as yet uncreated and therefore unknown. I find this more in accord with my experience than a God who calls us to return to the past.

Given that all theology is a legitimation of experience, how might we reconcile this approach to the legacy we have inherited? Can we move forward with the wind of the Spirit at our backs? Can we make our exploration an act of radicalism rather than liberalism?

forbidden flesh

In reading Christian tradition from the perspective of contemporary Western society, I want to focus on what is arguably the single most subversive text in the entire canon of scripture.

It is the account of Peter's sojourn in Joppa, as described in chapter 10 of the book of Acts. On the surface it is the story of Cornelius, the Gentile. But in truth it is a conversion experience for Peter. To summarise for those of you who may not have an encyclopaedic knowledge of scripture, the chain of events starts with Cornelius. An earnest seeker after God, despite the fact that to the followers of Jesus he is an infidel, Cornelius receives a visit from the angels. Interesting enough so far, with the reminder that divine work extends far beyond whatever boundaries might be imposed upon it.

The angel instructs Cornelius to travel to the nearby village of Joppa, where at the house of a local tanner he will find Peter. The next day, in his lodgings in Joppa, Peter is praying on the roof of the house. Deep in contemplation, he nods off — as you do. In his dreaming state, he has a vision. A sheet descends from heaven, containing animals of various kinds. And then Peter hears a heavenly voice saying, "Rise Peter, kill and eat." But Peter, recognising the poisoned chalice, refuses on scriptural grounds. He knows that the food being offered is deemed unclean by the God-given law. But the voice insists: "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." This is repeated three times, lest the point should be missed.

And there you have the detonation of our IED. In one incident, the entire bedrock of scripture is relativised. What has been given as holy writ and observed faithfully, now turns out to be transitional. To the delight of Pentecostals everywhere, living experience of the voice of God trumps exegesis. In this exchange, Peter is the one exhibiting orthodoxy by championing the received tradition. Unfortunately he makes the mistake of seeking to correct God — somewhat like offering Eric Clapton a few tips on how to improve his guitar playing.

a subversive encounter

Of course there is a point to this deadly subversive encounter. While Peter is still struggling to make sense of it all, there's a knock on the door. He finds the gentile Cornelius eager to learn more. After a bit of storytelling Peter gets to witness the Holy Spirit descending on Cornelius and his entourage. Suddenly it all makes sense. That which was previously unclean is now clean. People who were previously excluded are now included. Eyes, minds and hearts that were previously shut are now open. The ongoing work of God in the world is moving on, and it's time for people to get with the programme.

watershed moments

Theology *in extremis*. At watershed moments in the history of humanity, the game changes. It had seemed to Peter that he knew what the rules were. Now he's forced to reconcile three things: his knowledge of scripture; the vision of God speaking; and his experience with Cornelius. In that nexus, something has to give. The result is the broadening of the seemingly fixed boundaries. From now on it's going to be recognised that what God is doing in the world through Jesus is a whole lot bigger and deeper and wider than had been thought. To stick with the movement requires a substantial rethinking of what's acceptable and what's not. ■

This series of two articles is a redaction of the Ferguson lectures first given at Auckland University last year. The second part of this article will appear in next month's Tui Motu.

Mike Riddell is a filmaker, writer, theologian and lecturer, living in Cambridge. With his wife, Rosemary, they successfully put out the film The Insatiable Moon.

the birth of a new sense of church

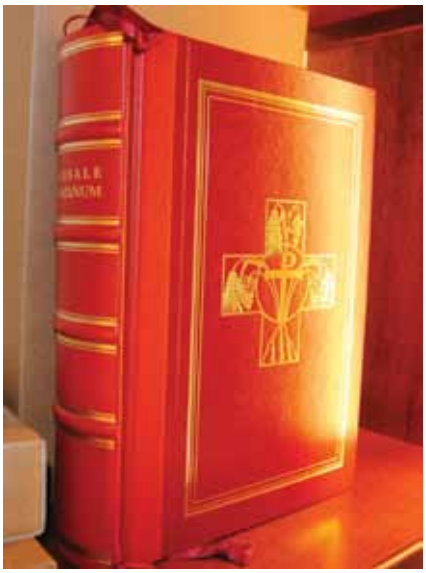
As Catholics live into the the new translation of the Roman rite of the Eucharist, the author looks behind the changes.

Joe Grayland

The recent ritual language changes in the Mass are receiving very mixed reviews from expert commentators and Sunday participants, both locally and internationally, exposing the growing divisions within the Catholic Church. The commentaries, both for and against the changes, seek to assess the reasons for the change and the processes used to implement it. While the immediate issue is the new translation itself, the wider context that has given rise to it has come under increasing scrutiny, as believers ask themselves what is really going on in the theo-politics of the church. In the end, I believe it must involve a scrutiny of our sense of church.

1960's new sense of church

The sense of church that gave the changes of the 1960s their momentum is found in the Council's major documents of which *Lumen Gentium*, the dogmatic constitution on the Church (November 21, 1964) is the most profound. *Lumen Gentium's* programme is ancient and modern, christological and anthropological, evangelical and sacramental. The church is engaged in the world as 'a sign and instrument' of humanity's communion with God in Christ, who 'is the light of the nations'. From such a overarching base, a new sense of church began to grow. As it did, Latin ritualism and rubrics were replaced by the "new" concept of liturgy facilitated by new words that gave greater meaning and deeper insight into the church's memory of salvation. As we came to understand liturgy we began to understand that "what we believe we pray", and "what we pray we take back into the world." Thus, through the study of liturgy, we began to see that liturgy seeks to take the believer (lay and cleric) further into the mystery of the relationship between their everyday lives and the church's sacramental engagement in the world as 'a sign and instrument' of humanity's communion with God in Christ, who 'is the light of the nations' (LG 1). As we came to see liturgy as essentially linked to salvation and that our participation in this service was critical, our sense of church began to evolve.



and 50 years on?

But this is not the sense of church we inhabit at this time of our history. The differing sense of church that underpins this present period of change from that which underpinned the reform period of the 1960s is, I believe, the single most important factor influencing our uninspiring reception of these new texts.

Since the 1960s many things have changed in Catholic life and society internationally and here in New Zealand that have altered our sense of church. Either in spite of the changes or because of them, the period since the reform of the Second Vatican Council has been one of both decline and blossoming. The decline in the numbers of religious, diocesan clergy and laity is all sad, but perhaps the inevitable result of change. Without doubt, the social and religious worlds of the contemporary Catholic are radically altered from the late 1960s. As others have pointed out, nothing in the church has been the same since *Humanae Vitae*. There is greater plurality in catholic thought and action. Sunday attendance at liturgy is no longer the hallmark of a faithful catholic and Catholic identity now is much more a personal expression than it is a corporate one. There is also a much greater sense of disheartenment with the machinery of church governance and in many areas with its theological reasoning than was evident 40 years ago. Catholics in New Zealand are more socially and culturally conscious. We are conscious of ourselves as a distinct nation of peoples and we are more ready to judge the value of the church's position on an issue than previous generations.

new questions

While all these elements offer me an insight into the present reaction to the ritual changes as well as an insight into the present health of the church, they leave me with more questions than answers. Are Catholics just tired of change, or are we disinterested in the church's need for change? Do we see the changes as ones that will build up and provide what is needed for faith-filled lives and faith-filled

families, or are these changes ones that place a heavier burden on to already burdened shoulders? Do the present muted responses from clergy, religious and laity indicate that something more fundamental is amiss? Are we being subjected to powerful theo-political power plays within the Church between opposing theological blocs that owe more to our human need to control than to any baptismal desire to advance the Kingdom of God? Where, now, is our sense of church?

reform of the reform

I believe that our sense of church engendered by the Second Vatican Council has been systematically and radically altered throughout the reign of Pope John Paul II and is continuing now during the reign of Pope Benedict XVI. This change has brought with it for many a sense of loss and for others a sense of contentment. But like all change, the "reform of the reform" comes at a price. We have experienced greater centralisation of church politics and liturgical control. This growth of centralised curial authority has been at the expense of local episcopal authority. With this growth in centralisation has come what others have described as a creeping infallibility of papal theological thought and a suppression of critical theological debate, both of which exemplified Pope John Paul's failed attempt to end the debate on woman's ordination.

For conservatives, centralisation corrects and regulates a wayward period of experimentation in pluralistic thinking that produced cultural adaptations in liturgical practice. For progressives, centralisation usurps the principle of subsidiary and frustrates the legitimate liturgical pluralism established through the Second Vatican Council, thereby calling the Council's theological vision into serious question.

pluralism in worship and language

The issue of pluralism in worship and language, encouraged by the theological teaching and vision of the Second Vatican Council, which contributed to the creation of a new sense of church has become the divisive issue through which we, as Church, have arrived at our present state of conflict. Indeed, the question is now rightly put: has the Church moved away from the theological vision of religious and liturgical pluralism of the Second Vatican Council and are we now in the process of, if not repudiating it, at least reforming it? The answer seems to be yes.

For me, the new sense of church is exemplified in specific Vatican actions such as the revision of the statutes of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) and the establishment of the Vox Clara committee, to represent the English-speaking Catholic world as an alternative source of advice to ICEL for the present translation; the corrective change of the liturgical translation tool from *Comme le Prevoit* (1969) with its emphaisis on dynamic equivalence to *Liturgiam authenticam* (2001), with its drive to create in each vernacular a sacred style proper to liturgical language. The reintroduction of the 1962 Roman Missal or "Tridentine" Mass in the Motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum* (2007) under the spurious notion that this was not suppressed with the promulgation of the 1969 Roman Missal, is a clear example that the sense of church engendered through the Vatican Council has been repudiated through the re-establishment of the rites it sought to replace.

changes — not renewal

In the end, the textual changes are just that, changes, not renewal, not reform, not re-growth. What is missing from them is a joyful and Spirit-laden sense of *Ecclesia semper reformanda est* — the church must always be reforming itself, a sense of *aggiornamento* — bringing up to date, a sense of resourcement — sources for wisdom and inspiration. In this period I see none of this. Perhaps I shouldn't expect it, if the purpose is corrective, rather than leadership?

It appears to me that we have reached the point, as a Church, where the theological and pastoral vision of the Second Vatican Council is itself the issue. We are being led to question the reliability of the Council's vision and its theological presumptions. ■

Joe Grayland is a presbyter of the Palmerston North Diocese He works in Professional Development and has post-graduate qualifications in NZ liturgical history and in theology.

raised up by jesus, healed and sent

Mark 2:1-12 – 7 Sunday of Ordinary Time (19 February)

Kathleen Rushton

Above a bookshelf, I have an aerial photograph of a house set among trees and farm buildings. It was my childhood home. The photograph is one of six restored copies of an original provided by my mother's estate and now in the homes of her six children. That house was home, family, being carried lovingly, possessions, a beautiful location with mountains views, a way of life that provided what we needed from the land we cared for and love. We were a household living together with an extended family. Cousins and aunts stayed. Farm-workers and home-help lived with us.

My childhood household helps me relate to the *oikos* of Mark's gospel which is translated as "house" rather than its more person-centred meaning of "household." Mark's gospel is thought to have been written some 40 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus to people undergoing severe testing and suffering. Over time and in different places in the Roman Empire, within a generation, the original story of Jesus was embraced by people in a non-Jewish, Gentile world. The teaching, values and key ideas associated with Jesus in his Jewish Palestinian environment were shaped by Mark to a Greco-Roman audience. One of these ideas was that of "household" which is found in the story of the man carried to Jesus.

three levels of household

Household may be looked at from three levels. The first is the household in the Palestine of the time of Jesus. The illustration shows a reconstruction made from ruins of a first century household in Capernaum on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. A household with an extended family and servants was the basic social unit. It gave identity, support, community, protection, status, well-being and honour. In Mark, Jesus forms the new household of God. All are welcome — lepers, sinners and other outcasts. The second level is that new household of God 40 years later in the Roman world where Christians gathered for worship in large houses (*domus*). The third level applies the first two to our living of the gospel message in our household(s) today.

Mosaic 6th Century Ravenna

carried by friends

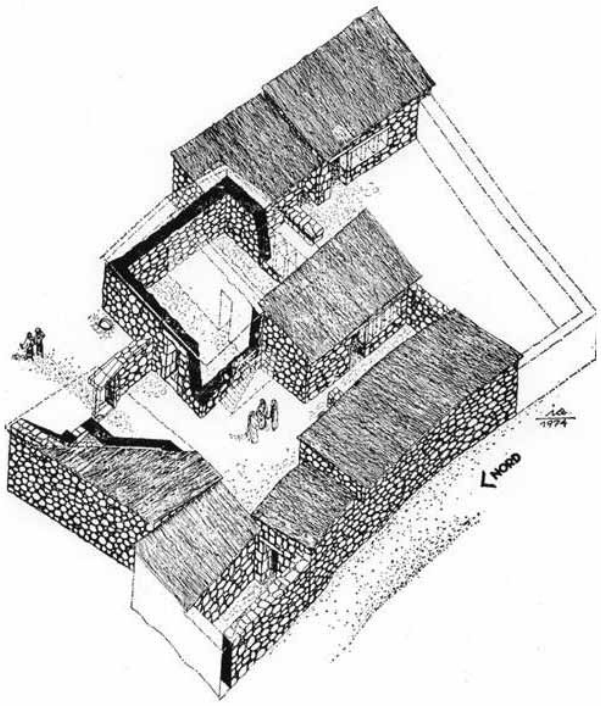
After preaching around Galilee (1:39), Jesus returns to his adopted hometown of Capernaum and was "at a household" where so many came to hear him talk "about the word" that there "was no longer room for them". As he was speaking, four men struggle through the crowd carrying their friend who was paralysed. Those who desire to come near to Jesus often have to overcome obstacles (7:27; 10:13, 48). Here this person not only needs to be carried but the crowd blocks his friends from getting near Jesus.

Ingeniously the four hoist their friend up on his mat to the flat roof which was made probably of beams covered with baked clay and thatch. Imagine the pieces falling on the crowd as the four were "unroofing the roof" and "digging through" above where Jesus was speaking in order to lower their friend down on his mat. Jesus sees their faith and reassures the man: "Child, your sins are forgiven."

This response goes to the source of a deeper interior paralysis of spirit. The link between illness and sin is a familiar biblical one. Illness which is against God's intention is one of the evils that afflict human persons

because of sin. Yet, this is not always so. As in the Psalms and the Book of Job the innocent also suffer. Jesus' word is what is called a "performative statement," a statement (like the "I do" in a wedding) that brings about what it says. Jesus is effecting forgiveness not just telling the man that God has forgiven him. This claim is not lost on the Scribes who knew that to forgive sins belongs to God alone. From then on, Jesus meets the disapproval of the religious authorities. This will end in a plot to kill him.

At the word of Jesus, the man "rose." This is the same word used for Jesus' resurrection (16:6). In a threefold action, the man "rose", was healed and sent on mission for Jesus tells him "to go to his own household". He began a new life as had the early Christians of Mark's time. We can be like this person unable to approach God relying on our own strength. We need others to carry us, and at times we carry another, to Jesus especially in times of spiritual darkness, confusion and weariness. We are raised up by Jesus, healed and sent in mission to our "own household".



Reconstruction of 1st Century house near Capernaum on the shore of Lake of Galilee.

the household of the common good

Who is our household? Certainly our family, parish and neighbourhood, yet, I suggest that in our ever new household of God, the Church, these familiar households are extended by two words derived from *oikos*, namely, economy and ecology. In this market-driven world, we hear much talk about "the economy". This word (through Latin from the Greek *oikonomia* meaning domestic management) according to my dictionary is "the complex of human activities concerned with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services." The word "ecology" (coined the German *oekologie* from *oikos*) reminds us of our relationships with the household of interconnected ecosystems. How are we raised up by Jesus, healed and sent for the common good of all in our global household? A big question! Yet, when paralysed in spirit and imagination, we are to be friends who carrying each other, "unroofing the roof" and "digging through", come near to Jesus. Then, raised by him and healed, we are sent to "go to our own household" to proclaim and live the good news. ■

Kath Rushton RSM has just returned from undertaking a fellowship in scripture at the Catholic University, Leuven, Belgium.

unlocking the primeval secrets of the human spirit

Cave of Forgotten Dreams

Director: Werner Herzog

Reviewer: Paul Sorrell

Any film fronted by veteran German director Werner Herzog is likely to be well worth seeing, and Cave of Forgotten Dreams, a documentary about the recently discovered paleolithic cave paintings in Chauvet in southern France, is no exception. Herzog's narration is personal, evocative, even reverential, and he does not shy away from the deeper questions raised by his fascinating subject.

Herzog is at pains to emphasize the fragility of the subterranean environment at Chauvet, and we learn that his small camera team had only a few hours to shoot their material and were confined to the narrow steel walkways that traverse the cave. These restrictions ensure that no-one will trample the soft cave floor, where the footprints of cavern bears abound and fragments of charcoal lie where they fell from the torches and painting sticks wielded by the ancient artists.

In one place, a wolf's paw prints are set alongside a boy's footprints. "Was the wolf stalking the boy, or were they perhaps companions?" muses Herzog. The walls are scored by the claws of stretching bears, whose skulls and bones litter the cave floor. The wonder and beauty of the spectacle is not confined to the images; the camera lingers on delicate networks of stalactites and stalagmites and fluted curtains of calcification. A thickly calcified bear's skull has been transformed into an object of extraordinary beauty.

As befits its mysterious subject, Herzog's narration is peppered by questions. Who were the people who created these paintings, the earliest yet discovered, and what is their larger human meaning? Curiously though, a number of obvious questions go unasked, from the mundane (apart from charcoal, what pigments were used?) to the profound — what was the function of this art?

Herzog is in no doubt that these depictions of the bison, deer, lions and rhinos that roamed this area 30,000 years ago constitute art. For him they are the beginning of painting, and even of cinema. He compares the repeated outlines of a bison's legs or a rhino's horn — surely a depiction of movement — to the frames in an animated film. Certainly these paintings are astonishingly assured and sophisticated, with images frequently laid over one another over thousands of years. Herzog makes the point that, unlike us, these paleolithic artists were unconstrained by history.

While there is plenty of technological wizardry on display to help us grasp the significance of Chauvet, pedagogy is leavened with humanity and humour. Herzog is clearly fascinated by one young archaeologist who was a circus performer in a former life, and in another scene a paleontologist with an Einstein moustache gives an impressive display of spear throwing. Although Herzog's candidly personal approach is less quirky here than in some of his previous films, I still can't work out the significance of the albino crocodile babies that appear at the end!

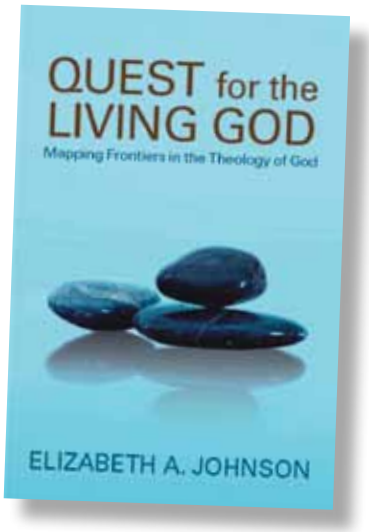
Cave of Forgotten Dreams succeeds in communicating the mystery of the world inhabited by our remote ancestors — so very different from our own, yet linked to us through the unquenchable resilience and creativity of the human spirit. ■

god is alive – and not boring

The Quest for the Living God

Elizabeth Johnson CSJ
Continuum, 2008.

Reviewer: Gerard Aynsley



One of my early theology lecturers would regularly bemoan that so much theological writing was boring. As he would note, "if you are writing about God, and it is boring, then your understanding of God must be defective." Elizabeth Johnson's highly regarded work, *Quest for the Living God*, would have pleased my theology lecturer greatly. Here is a theological work to be enjoyed. Two words from the title capture the thrust of Johnson's book: 'quest' and 'living'.

God, Elizabeth Johnson insists, is to be regarded as alive! Quoting the psalmist who prays, "My soul thirsts for God, the living God" (Ps 42:2), she explains that her book also seeks to summon up a sense of God "who is full of energy and spirit, alive with designs for liberation and healing, always approaching from the future to do something new."

Second, Elizabeth Johnson writes so lucidly and gracefully that one is inevitably caught up in the quest that she embarks upon. While Johnson explores important theological themes she avoids pretentious and complex language. The reader is not required to slowly ponder each paragraph, needing to reread sentences in order to understand what is being said. Instead, it is a work that is immediately engaging.

Like a number of works, it is written against a modern backdrop of unbelief and religious indifference. Rather than being threatened by these developments, Elizabeth Johnson takes seriously the challenges that arise in the modern era. She agrees that many (although, certainly not all) traditional conceptions of God are either unconvincing or — more importantly — fail to give life. She insists, however, that recent works in theology portray understandings of God that are much richer and more nuanced than is generally admitted by these modern critics of religion. The principal focus of Quest for the Living God is to provide an overview of some of the theological insights that have emerged in recent decades.

In Chapters 3–9 Elizabeth Johnson considers theologies written by those living their faith in the face of oppression, racism, sexism and other forms of injustice. She outlines how theology has contended with the question of human suffering and explores theological perspectives that have arisen from the ordinary faith lives of people of particular cultures. The question is asked how Christian theology is to regard the theological perspectives of other religions. There is also a chapter on how secular concerns for ecology have been accompanied by theological reflection. These recent developments in theology have not simply given rise to novel theologies that bear no relation to previous reflections. Rather, they are all theologies that arise amidst human experiences and with the assumption that one of the most foundational human experiences is "to ask a question" — a starting point championed by prominent 20th century theologian, Karl Rahner.

The final chapter is on the Trinity. Here Elizabeth Johnson treats the reader with a surprising and inspired reflection on the Trinity. She explains that the Trinity is essentially a doctrine that arose because early Christians came to experience God in this way. She proposes that once thinking about God becomes disconnected from experiences of faith then our doctrines become turgid and empty.

Some of the new theologies outlined by Elizabeth Johnson I found challenging and thought-provoking, some didn't resonate with me personally, many I found fascinating and inspiring. I find it intriguing, for example, that faith-filled insights into God arise from people whose first introduction to the God of Jesus Christ was from those who oppressed them and treated them unjustly; as was the case in the Americas. What are described in Quest for the Living God are theologies that have arisen from experience, reflection and prayer. It is a book that can, in turn, enrich our own experience and prayer. ■

Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

new political era?

Lasting change generally comes about through a series of incremental steps. That does not necessarily mean simply improving the effects of an underlying philosophical system; sometimes the accumulated changes lead to a re-evaluation of the hitherto accepted 'fundamentals'.

In his book *Capitalism as if the World Matters* environmentalist Jonathon Porritt (TM August 2006) criticized English Greens for their economic utopianism and made a strong case for capitalism as the only chance for economic and environmental sustainability in the foreseeable future. This is by "making growth consistent with sustainability".

In NZ the Greens are moving towards adopting a credible economic outlook. National has moved somewhat green-wards, but still wants to have its cake and eat it. Labour is regrouping: a younger generation is moving up the power pole. The Maori Party is at the crossroads and ACT is dead thanks to Don Brash, although there is room for a credible Liberal Party (provided they are limited to forcing Governments to think clearly on legislation).

a long spring

Spring is a time of hope, but the promised summer is usually delayed by wintry weather. So it has proved with the so-called 'Arab Spring'. Hopes of a quick resolution of deep-seated difficulties have faded; the rivalries of the complex sectarian, tribal, cultural and political alliances, exacerbated by Western interventions, are wreaking havoc. Although the tide is turning, many will suffer grievously before summer arrives.

precursor of change.

"Thursday 9th: I woke up at 6 with the bells of St Peter's ringing the most mournful toll I've ever heard, so I presumed the Pope had died. When I got down to the chapel the altar was stripped as for a solemn Requiem Mass, so I knew for certain. The bells kept up their mournful peeling for 9 days, knocking off only at night. I hadn't realized it was possible for bells to give such an atmosphere of desolation." That is an extract from my letter home in October 1958 which outlines the events surrounding the death of Pius XII and the election of John XXIII.

The Catholic Church is catholic; its membership reflects a wide spectrum of views on what are acceptable interpretations of belief and practice. This has often resulted in condemnations of people whose views are later acclaimed.

Pius (Latin for 'dutiful') has had a bad press in recent times, but his writings reflected insights developed by contemporary scholars into early Church teaching and practices. In 1968 Council 'progressive' Cardinal Augustine Bea wrote: "I have repeatedly stated that in many ways the Second Vatican Council would not have been possible without the long and fruitful doctrinal preparation provided by Pius XII . . ." He cited encyclicals on scripture, worship and the church that influenced bishops at the Council. (Papal encyclicals are usually collaborative affairs: the Pope sets the theme and tone and has editorial oversight, but much of the work is done by experts in the field. In this manner official guidance is given on particular interpretations of belief or practice).

It was the genius of John XXIII to gather the world's bishops to take stock of the pastoral responsibilities of the Church in the modern world, and to resist the conservatives wanting to make it simply an occasion to issue old doctrinal formulations in new garb. Because of Pius' teaching, conservative bishops were more easily persuaded that a deeper way of understanding traditional beliefs was being proposed — a development of existing doctrines rather than the creation of new ones.

On Christmas Day 1961 Pope John XXIII solemnly convoked the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and it began on 11 October 1962. Benedict has declared a Year of Faith beginning on the 50th anniversary this October and ending on the feast of Christ the King in November 2013.

something fishy?

Gareth Morgan and Geoff Simmons, in a December *NZ Herald* article, described how the Rogernomics–inspired Quota Management System, created in 1986, has been beneficial in preserving commercial fish stocks. There were many teething problems, including errors regarding regeneration times of some species, and fixed-catch quota instead of the more flexible proportional quota. A fundamental problem resulted from the government giving public property to private interests. Maori proved they had legal ownership rights.

From the purely economic point of view the system has been a great success, but from the broader perspective there are serious problems. Fishing to sustainable levels still has an impact on the whole ocean ecosystem, markedly reducing other species. Bottom trawling and by-catch of other species and sea-birds are other examples of environmental damage. It seems that recreational fishers also add to the problems.

The authors suggest no-take marine reserves of 10% of our coastal waters (currently 0.2%). Just as property owners on land pay rates, so fishing companies, who received a gift worth $4 billion, should pay the costs of creating the reserves and environmental monitoring. ■

my first sabbatical stop

Peter Norris

For the past few months I have had sabbatical leave and I would like to write about the first place I visited. I spent time with a former student who is the Senior Judge for Childrens' Courts in a large US city. This judge was the Student President in a Hall at the University of Notre Dame when I was Assistant Rector. I visited him and his family for about ten days.

Shortly before my arrival I received an email saying that he had forgotten that he was helping lead a weekend retreat when I arrived and did I want to go on retreat. Without thinking I wrote back saying that would be fine. Then, a few days later, after thinking more clearly, I wrote saying that I would arrive exhausted and it would be better to stay with the family and see him after the retreat. That seemed all arranged but when he picked me up I was taken straight to the retreat centre. His negotiation skills seemed to be as good as my own.

Apart from being jet lagged I was impressed with the retreat. About 15 men who had done the retreat in the past, led this retreat for 15 new people. The local priest came in and gave one short talk but the other talks were done by the men. I was very impressed with their commitment and their willingness to share. I was overcome one evening when we were all led into the chapel after an outdoor meditation, to find a few hundred people from the parish cheering us on. At the end of the retreat there was also a celebration at the parish Sunday Mass. The retreat seemed such a life giving event I was surprised that we did not seem to do them here in New Zealand. We may have done these but I had not been exposed to them.

The next week was equally exciting. I went to court one day and watched the good humoured way my friend dealt with students and parents and tried to keep them out of the main court system. A sense of humour is essential for working in this, or any such system and he and his colleagues treated everyone respectfully.

I found that the parish they belonged to was a poor parish but it ran a soup kitchen every evening. I helped the family once and I gather that they and others volunteered on a regular basis to help feed 200 people every night. I was pouring out water which seemed an easier job than most. One other day, from late afternoon until early evening the family was involved in a big sister/little sister and big brother/little brother programme they had started. They were driving young students to various meetings over the area and their children were joining the groups as well.

Apart from their dog trying to have a piece of me I found my whole stay rewarding and inspiring. My friend and his wife worked in jobs where they worked with "at risk" children. Their own children are also involved with helping others who are not as well off. I felt proud of being a very small part of my friend's education. I know that many people do much good for others but this was my opportunity to stay with them and see it happening. Starting with an enforced retreat I found my first sabbatical stop enriching. ■

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a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

"There they are! There they all are! Come and look! Quick! There's the big mound of Annapurna South, then the knob-like Hiunchuli. That's Machapuchre, the fishtail mountain in the middle. Mardi Peak is the little tent–like one in front of Fishtail . . . and see way to the right, that's Lamjung Himal!"

After two days, the haze and clouds of Pokhara (Nepal) had cleared and I had dragged Jeph and our four kids up on the roof of our hotel early in the morning. I could suddenly and happily, happily see these mountains I know so well.

Our family trip back to Nepal to where I lived, aged eight to 11 years, has been a 'plan' for at least a decade. This year though, the option to go there together for Christmas with my Mum made it take shape and here we are.

Driving up to Lamachaur, the village where we lived as children, I could barely recognise it. The road came through from a different direction, and buildings cover most of the land that was previously fields and sleeping buffaloes. I recognised the village centre by the two old banyan trees side by side rather than any buildings or other landmarks. The simple stone village house with a stone slate roof where we lived in is now a mirror–glass–covered and three storeyed building . . . The rattly cobbled stone path I walked to school is now a sealed road with motorbikes and buses zooming up and down (though admittedly only a single lane wide) and the single corner shop where we'd buy chillie sweets now has been joined by about 20 shops selling one–day chicks, momos, chowmein, chai, hairclips, milk, yoghurt, rice, sugar and brass pots. Is this really the Lamachaur which was frozen in my memories as a simple village as it was 30 years ago?

I have had several conversations with local men in their 40's coming to say "hi' and remembering how we would build dams together on the little stream. A shop owner smiled shyly and reminded me that he had enjoyed learning to ride a bike using my bicycle, before I crashed it careering down the Batlichaur hill. But many of our village friends have left here now — they're in Kathmandu or have moved to another village . . .

The first two days here, I felt really quite put out at all these changes and 'development'. But in the lack of recognition of places and people I have found great connection/sense of place and even solace in the unchanging horizons and shapes of the rivers, the mountains and hills.

The first evening we arrived, we went running with our four children to see the cliffs of the Seti Khola (the White river). She was running fast and cold as ever. The walk on Christmas Eve to a favourite old picnic spot — the Khali Khola (the Black river) showed the little gorge where we'd find deeper pools to jump in, was still deep and shaded. The river still ran clear and dappled as I remembered. The new suspension bridge crossing it hasn't managed to smudge the shape and coolness of that river.

Boxing Day we went up valley to another Wood family favourite walking spot — the forest around the Bhoti Khola. Again, the deep scars of that river and her ravines are as dark and strong as ever. The water still glittering with little fish and frogs. Ammaji starts some 'boat races' with sticks down the river and my eyes dance with joy to see my children playing the same boat races I enjoyed here decades ago.

Hovering above are still those unchanging shapes of mountains and hills.

Imprinted on to my soul so I can draw the outlines from memory, I can find their form and silhouettes in any corner of my heart. Their permanence feels deeply reassuring in the flux and shifting happening around human beings and our habitations in this place. I think of the Maori *mihimihi* where we can identify who we are and where we come from. I struggle to define my *moana* and my *waka*, and even my *iwi* — they are many. But these *awa* and these *maunga* are deep places of connection for me and I am deeply glad to share them with my life's love Jeph and our four children. ■

Kaaren and Jeph, with their four children, live in North India and work in health and community development.