Tui Motu
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Contents

show me god

The poet said to the almond tree: "Show me God" – and the tree blossomed. For many of us the appreciation of beauty is one of the most compelling experiences of the divine. Plato equated beauty with goodness, and many Christians see natural beauty as a transcendental experience leading them to God. In music or poetry, in art or in nature, they find an aid to prayer.

We should never be afraid to enjoy beauty – of nature or of art. Autumn is a special time and few places in the world can equal Central Otago for magnificence of colour and scenery at this time of year. Our cover pays due tribute to this – and the quotation from John Hunt (*below*) makes a poignant connection with the autumnal phase of life's journey.

Meanwhile, over a 100,000 New Zealanders have made the pilgrimage to Te Papa in Wellington to relish the genius of Monet. His delight was to represent nature with the greatest fidelity to colour, shade and light. Kathleen Doherty reports her experience for us (*pp 16-17*).

It is always an astonishment to me that scientists who study the harmonies of the natural world are not automatically drawn into a sense of reverence for the loving hand of the Creator. We have chosen in this issue to remember the double jubilee of Charles Darwin (*pp 10-14*). There is simply no conflict between what he proposed and the *Genesis* account of Creation. Indeed the theory of Evolution should serve to help people understand better the providence of the Creator and the beauty of the natural world and its laws.

inclusiveness

Our other jubilarian is St Paul. Mike Riddell continues his series with a commentary on Paul's doctrine of inclusiveness (*p 15*), in Galatians. How hard it has been for even zealous Christians to practise it. The key is good communication. To listen to the concerns of another is the first essential step towards empathy; then to extend the hand of friendship; and then to seek to understand.

In a South Brisbane parish there is a major standoff between a pastor and his Archbishop, and opposite we publish a report from Alan Austin. We make no judgment – except to wonder how communication could have broken down so disastrously.

Sadly, the churches often give great scandal by a seeming lack of sympathy to the most afflicted. A 9-year-old rape victim is excommunicated by her bishop because of the mindless application of a law. Meanwhile the Vatican is making every concession to woo back into communion those estranged Catholics who openly opposed the reforms of Vatican II and were viciously scornful of Paul VI.

You wonder what St Paul would say to these 'Romans', if he tore such strips off the poor Galatians!

M.H.

Cover: autumn in central otago (Photo: David Wall)

"Autumn is a time when trees shed their leaves before facing the demands of winter. For the Celts, winter is a time of letting go things we don't need to carry.

"I think about my life coming to an end... If our dying is the winter time of our life, then autumn is the time of gathering in everything beautiful and good. I can gather into myself the autumn colours. I can gather into myself family and friends, for talking and listening, for loving and laughter. I can gather in happy memories. I can gather in good words from the Scripture, stories, poems and prayers, good words from the lips of people who love me."

(From *We Well People: A Celtic Spirituality of the senses, of awe and wonder and delight,* by John Hunt)

why st mary's conflict had to happen

alan austin

St Mary's Catholic parish, South Brisbane, has been rocked by controversy. The pastor, Fr Peter Kennedy has been suspended. What is going on?

'*L'affaire* Peter Kennedy' – in St Mary's parish, South Brisbane – has made headlines in Europe. It has been depicted as a dispute over blessing gay couples and allowing women to preach. But at the heart of the story is the matter of church authority.

Some reports compare the saga with the 2005 case of Father Franz Sabo in Switzerland. From the pulpit and in the media the Röschenz parish priest condemned the Catholic Church for being out of touch on marriage and homosexuality. He described his superior, Bishop Kurt Koch of Basel, as "heartless". The bishop then felt obliged to sack him. In defiance of the hierarchy but with overwhelming parish support, Sabo stayed put. Resolution was finally achieved last September after extensive private negotiations. Sabo retained his position, but has agreed to a form of words acknowledging the church's authority.

Peter Kennedy's removal by Archbishop John Bathersby is set to take effect on 20 April, when the church keys are to be handed in. Kennedy's congregation plans to meet 'in exile' nearby. Most reportage abroad, as in Australia, interprets the events as embarrassing for the Catholic hierarchy and a setback for the wider church. More has been lost than one congregation's use of its buildings.

Two questions arise from the experiences in Basel and South Brisbane. Why do radical Christian ministries to the disadvantaged so frequently arouse the ire of conservatives for their departures from orthodoxy? And why do leaders of these ministries so often find themselves in bitter contention with their superiors?

It was so when Jesus attacked the Scribes and Pharisees for their insistence on orthodoxy and adherence to rules over freedom and love. It seems to have been so ever since. Florence Nightingale was as passionate about her faith as she was about health policy. She fought the church just as ferociously for women's rights and a more liberal theology as she fought the government over hospital conditions.

France's most famous priest, Abbé Pierre, is regarded as a saint for his tireless care for the poor. Continually at loggerheads with the church until his death in 2007, he openly opposed Vatican teaching on contraception, male-only priests and celibacy. He condemned Pope John Paul II for his lavish lifestyle and urged him to retire at 75. He once told his bishop of his duty to him of *l'insolence mesurée* – measured insolence.

In Australia, the local churches engaging most visibly with social outcasts have been radical Protestants like *God's Squad* motorcycle club in Melbourne or the *Urban Neighbours of Hope* communities, in Brisbane and elsewhere. All these have adopted alternative approaches to worship, church practice and leadership, including fresh expressions of theological truth. They appear to have found from experience that reaching out to addicts, sex workers, outlaw gangs and others outside straight society cannot succeed with traditional ecclesiastical models.

Many leaders of these programmes, as with Peter Kennedy, Franz Sabo and Abbé Pierre, have encountered serious problems with church authority. Brisbane's *House of Freedom* in the 1970s and '80s was a classic example.

Founder of the *House of Freedom* and later the *House of the Gentle*, Bunyip in Melbourne, Professor Athol Gill, was twice sacked by Baptist church authorities for departures from orthodoxy, first in Queensland in 1972 and then in Victoria in 1984. The latter decision was dramatically reversed after an enthralling heresy show trial.

Why this pattern of insolence towards hierarchies among workers with the disadvantaged? Is it because all powerful institutions – government, corporate and ecclesiastical – inevitably

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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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hurt poor people? Is it that those who identify with outcasts have seen that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely (to paraphrase Lord Acton – writing, incidentally, to a bishop)? And hence all institutions are inherently to be resisted?

Will anything good emerge from the saga of St Mary's? It is positive that the matters at the heart of the dispute, such as questions of the divinity of Christ and of what is essential to being a Catholic, are being explored. Vigorous debates are underway with many contrasting views claiming legitimacy. These discussions may lead to acceptance of a greater diversity of views.

What happens next with Peter Kennedy – *le prêtre australien iconoclaste* – will be watched with fascination across the world. Freed from hierarchical control, will his church flourish and become an even greater refuge for the marginalised? Or, denied formal church status, will it wither? Will the Australian Catholic community be richer or poorer for his departure? Will other parishes that have modified unhelpful traditions now come under pressure to conform?

Finally, is there still time for a Basel-style compromise? Yes, there is time. But is there the inclination? ■

Alan Austin is an Australian religious affairs journalist currently based in Nîmes, France. Kindly reprinted from Eureka Street

precariousness of religious freedom

trevor shaw

The recent G20 Summit gathering reveals a major shift in the World Order. It is less centred on the USA. French President Nicholas Sarkozy said: "the page had turned on the Anglo-Saxon model of free markets." Also it is to be noted that now China particularly, and other developing economies, would be given a greater say in the management of the world economy.

Recently in China, as if in a public relation coup just prior to the Summit, a number of Catholic churches have been built and opened to the public. What has not been publicised is that many minority groups and other churches are repressed, and continue to suffer severe persecution from the Chinese Government. This includes members of the underground Roman Catholic Church.

Today, International Christian Concern (ICC) reports that in Eritrea, under the Communist regime, around 2000 Christians have been brutally tortured and many killed since 2002, because they were simply not members of one of the approved Christian churches in that country: the Roman Catholic Church, the Eritrean Orthodox Church and the Eritrean Lutheran Orthodox Church.

It is also of concern to read some time ago of the controversial new law on religion in France. In 2001, the French Senate adopted a law unanimously approved by France's National Assembly stating the intention to restrict activities of religious cults deemed 'dangerous'. The law specified five-year jail terms and $75,000 fines for those who use "manipulation" to encourage conversions.

At a glance, it appears a useful deterrent to discourage harmful cults establishing themselves in France. When examined more closely, however, it refers to smaller religious groups, which include Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses and the Church of Scientology.

Bishops of the French Roman Catholic Church were reported to be divided over the law. Many in France and the United States criticised the law for its potentially stifling effect on religion, especially towards Evangelicals committed to sharing their Christian faith with others. Seytre, general secretary of the *Protestant Federation of France* stated: "we sense there is a danger... Politicians know nothing – or very, very little – of religion." However, he continues: "the past record of French judges provides hope that the future will not be too repressive."

We should call to mind the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, part of the US *Bill of Rights*. It expressly prohibits Congress from making laws "respecting an establishment of religion". This is generally understood to mean (1) it prohibits the establishment of a 'National' religion, or (2) it expressly prohibited the preference of one religion over another. The First Amendment and Bill of Rights gives citizens "free exercise of religion(s)".

Many Catholics had fled to the New World to escape the bitter persecution of Queen Elizabeth. Earlier, Protestants fled the wrath of "bloody Mary". This is what lay behind the writing of the US First Amendment. Pope Benedict, brilliant academic and Master of history that he is, spoke at World Youth Day, last year in Sydney, of 'unity with diversity'.

Jesus bade us to love our enemies, which is good counsel in dealing with those who disagree with us or wish to follow 'other gods'. In *Matthew 13* he warns "not to try and root out the tares, (heretics) lest you, at the same time, root out the wheat! But to leave all the 'rooting out' to the Angels, at the end of the age."

Past Catholic history might have been somewhat different, had we taken the Master's advice. The message is to beware intolerance and foster religious freedom. ■

faith and the financial crisis

jim elliston

I think Alan Rodgers-Smith's article (*TM March '09*) was very important because it articulates widespread attitudes. He makes some valid observations, but his somewhat scatter-gun approach blurs the focus, and he confuses the differing roles of the Church as teacher and as active participant in the world.

Different economic systems have developed throughout the ages. There is generally a high degree of interchange between any system and its host culture. *A natural consequence is that the system appears to be 'normal'*. Not so obvious is that a particular economic system is a human creation. Unlike physics it does not have immutable laws, nor can it have human attributes; it is merely an instrument.

The operational parameters of an economics system can be adjusted and so it is open to judgement as to whether it is beneficial only for a privileged minority or otherwise.

Capitalism has taken many forms over the ages. Because it is based on a defective understanding of freedom, the currently predominant form known as 'economic rationalism' encourages greed and fraud; its rejection of external regulation facilitates such activity.

Paul VI explained the twofold role of the Church as follows:

"*It is up to the Christian communities to analyse with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgement and directions for action from the social teaching of the Church*." Octogesima Adveniens (§4), 14 May 1971.

The Church, through its revealed teaching, can enunciate basic principles from the outside; it must also work through its members at a local level to implement those principles, but this differs from 'handing down' a universal economic system.

A practical example of the principle endorsed by Paul VI is provided by the Grameen Bank, whose creator is a Muslim.

Situation: In 1976 Bangladesh had a subsistence economy with a corresponding social structure that ensured the majority, without special help, would remain poor and exploited by moneylenders. Professor Muhammad Yunus, Head of the Rural Economics Programme at the University of Chittagong, launched an action-research project to counter this. Requirements included avoidance of waste through ignorance, incompetence and corruption, and practical education to effect the necessary minimum level of independence.

Solution: Yunus devised a rigorous system to implement basic economic principles in a motivated core of the population, women. After a thorough indoctrination into the philosophy and function of the bank, five women from a neighbourhood can join forces to form a basic-level group.

A group member is more that just a borrower; she is a member of the Bank, and is a client, not an aid recipient. The overall structure ensures transparency in the selection and investigation of borrowers and accountability for loan repayments; it also minimizes the normally high costs of credit checks.

Implementation: He trialled the project in a few villages for three years. In October 1983 it became an independent Bank. In 1984, at a national workshop of 'centre' heads (all women), a kind of 'social charter' with 16 tenets was formulated. Some have universal application; most are culture-specific (*a very important principle*).

By 1995 the income of members had increased 43 percent more than that of non-members, and they were able to spend 74 percent more on health-care. Although the interest rate was 20 percent, the mechanics are such that by 1995 90 percent of the Grameen Bank belonged to the poor, landless women, 10 percent to the Government.

Although it differs greatly from the complex systems of the industrialized nations, and is culture specific, I suggest the example is helpful in illustrating the issues. ■

third rite of reconciliation

letter to the editor ✍

It is surprising that in the recent timely *Tui Motu* discussion about the three rites of confession, the old theological friend – ***Sensus fidelium*** – has not been invoked.

It has two powerful contributions to make. First, whole communities have voted with their feet apropos auricular confession. There is a strong sense that it is an inappropriate pastoral option. Where once streams of penitents presented week by week, it is now a struggle to gather a few dozen at Christmas and Easter. This is serious negative feedback that the official church can ignore at its peril.

On the positive side Rite Three employing general absolution has been welcomed and manifestly preferred by the people. Yet strangely this popular return to penitential practice seems an unwelcome development as far as the pastoral planners from on high are concerned.

This tendency to ration the stream of grace and prevent the revival of penitential practice is strangely at odds with the 'sense of the faithful'. *Charles P. Beddgood,* Bay of Plenty

journey to easter

For Jacquie Lambert the paschal mystery this year started early. A friend dies suddenly. She finds herself totally caught up with the grieving of the widow and her family. Will Easter ever come again?

Easter came early this year and is staying late. Having said that, I must confess to a personal lack of attendance at a single Easter service. This has not been about church and yet it has been everything about church.

I sense furrowed brows on both counts. What on earth am I talking about? This year Easter of course arose in the eminently comfortable mid-cycle slot between its earliest and latest possible calendar incarnations; not too early, not too late. Except it didn't, well not in my life anyway. This year Easter for me began in February and it has yet to finish.

It was in early February that the husband of a very good friend of mine was tragically killed at 48 leaving behind a devastated family: two teenage children and an adoring wife. I got the call at 3 pm. The sky turned black, the ground shook, the veil was torn asunder in a family I knew, in a house close to my heart.

So when I was asked to consider writing an Easter reflection piece my mind could not go past this experience. For me it has been about as 'Easter' as you can get. For what is Easter if not the passage through promise and hope, devastating loss, faith and lack of it, interminable waiting through darkness, and the eventual rebirth of hope once more.

It has also highlighted one of the most important lessons Easter teaches us, though perhaps not the most obvious one – the fundamental role of 'attendance'. Attendance to our feelings, to our faith, to the process itself: Mary's attendance to her son at the cross; her witness to his life and death; her supporters' attendance at her side; the attendance of many at the tomb; our ongoing attendance to what is to come. Interminable, attentive waiting. And patience. Perhaps patience above all.

what is easter if not the passage through hope, devastating loss, waiting through darkness, and the eventual rebirth of hope?

passiontide

There is a sense in the Easter experience of the mockery of time. As with the news my friend received that day, time stops momentarily only to splutter and restart in a different dimension where minutes, hours and days have no meaning. They drag, each second a blistering, painful reminder of a wounding absence. Or they fly, a blur of faces, flowers, condolences and preparations no one has the stomach for.

To be in attendance at the side of such grief is to be in attendance at a sorrowful dance that has no end. It is to be tossed around in two worlds, that of one's own family still intact, its laughter and busyness standing in absurd stark contrast to another family torn apart in loss. A foot in two worlds that brings the unpredictable reality of life and the difficult questions of faith that ensue, into sharp focus. It is to feel thankful, to feel guilty, to feel useless, to feel overwhelmed, to feel hopeless and on top of that to feel self -indulgent for making any of it about me or my feelings. I still get to go home to a husband, to a father.

We talk for hours. For hours and hours. It is an Easter liturgy of the word in its truest sense. We attend to a spectrum of feelings with honesty, black humour, wailing and ultimately silence. For my friend it is a passiontide without doubt.

The talk acts like balm on a burn. It exhausts and by exhausting it soothes, but only temporarily. The efficacy is lost in minutes or hours, the pain resurfacing unappeased. Nothing is solved, nothing is ever said enough, and ultimately nothing truly helps. Skin regrows at its own pace and all we can do is weather the time, all we can do is attend to the dressing and redressing of the wound, to sit alongside and edge the dressing cover off,

allow it to be exposed, clean it, and dry the tears that accompany the pain.

palm sunday

My friend talks of the hope and promises shared between the two of them before he was killed. Of a life and relationship that had come into its own surviving the challenges of children and all other comers. Getting ready for a life beyond teenagers, one of choice and possibility, of fun and time as a couple.

I listen and am reminded of another time of hope and promise, one that arrived on a carpet of palms. The jubilation. The expectation that accompanied the man's arrival. Surely this was it. And the devastation only days later when all was apparently lost.

Like that man's arrival, perhaps all good marriages also reach their destination on a donkey. There is nothing flashy or thoroughbred about a good marriage. It won't bear fruit from temperamental ostentation. It gets there by attendance, by solid work, determination, humility and servanthood on both sides. And when children leave home there is a valid sense of entitlement to reaping the rewards of all that hard work and the accompanying devastation when that promise is stolen.

maundy thursday

I listen and listen, so many words and no single response adequate to the pain. I hold my friend, painfully aware that he should be in my place, that I am a poor substitute in what will become a poignant absence of physicality in my friend's life. She also talks on this. We cry. Feet are washed and dried. A communion of sorts.

I have an image of a wing stretched above her, sheltering her. I help hold it in place for now, support the weight. It is a partnership. I know I am inadequate to the task. I also know this is no excuse. I look on my friend and am taught a lesson in strength and courage. My attendance pales beside her journey.

black friday

The point of death is a fluid experience for those left behind. It has no set moment in time. It is lived and relived as many times as is necessary. We watch as loved ones sit at the foot of the cross and refuse to believe, waiting for the smallest breath, the one thing to prove the lie. Details are pulled apart, put under microscopes. Heads shake, dreams lie. The body fasts, no stomach for food.

What were his last words? What did he feel? The last meal they shared, the last supper. Clothing issues forth tears, the whiff of aftershave turns a head, a voice message is coveted more precious than gold, the empty space in a too big, too cold bed. In attendance, we can do nothing but stand alongside, helpless. We stay as long as needed. We must fend off those who would drag them away, waving truth in their faces. We share the story as many times as required and will for years. We stay as long as needed. We sit at the foot of the cross and stroke hair. No bells are rung. The world beyond has nothing to say.

the vigil

The world moves and the fresh agony of grief shuffles to a deeper sense of melancholy, a quieter prison. Rites are survived, funerals attended. A monarch butterfly graces the planning. It symbolises a visit from the soul of a loved one, my friend is told. We watch for monarch butterflies. They come.

Activity slows. A numb disconnection. My friend marvels at how the sun still rises, her world caught in some twilight nightmare, half alive. We sit beside the stone. She sits behind the stone, caught in the dark of the burial chamber where it is always three o'clock in the morning. She lives in the dark, goes to work in the dark and wakes at night. She stands vigil at his side, at her own grief, at her children's loss, each day bringing some new reminder of what has been lost, each day holding tight to faith. The world turns but behind the stone time moves more slowly and the darkness heightens every sense.

I stand outside and we talk through the stone. I cannot roll it away for her. I cannot determine the time. And so we talk and wait. We wait for the slightest shift of stone on dirt, the smallest crack. We wait for the light. ■

easter time

Anna Holmes

This reflection was going to be about hospitality but somehow time took over, and I realised that they were linked. When we are hospitable to another person we give them the gift of our time and our attention as well as welcoming them into our space.

In ordinary secular time the days, hours and minutes are numbered and fleeting. Humans have been measuring this kind of time with ever increasing accuracy for thousands of years. Calendars based on the moon appear to have been used 30 thousand years ago.

The Sumerians, living 4000 years ago in what is now Iraq, were responsible for the division of hours into 60 minutes, days and nights divided into 12 hours, and the year divided into 12 months and approximately 360 days. The Romans fiddled with this and produced the Julian Calendar which was modified again by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 to take into account the odd minutes which had to be adjusted. That was when we got leap years.

Sun dials were the earliest way of measuring daytime, originating about 1500 BC in Egypt. Water clocks that could measure both day and night time date from about the same era. Hour-glasses filled with sand were also used to measure minutes and hours and seem to have been used from 3 AD in Alexandria. They continue to be used today as egg timers.

Mechanical clocks were invented in the 11th century in the Arab world and developed over the intervening centuries to ever greater accuracy and portability. The marine chronometer invented in the 18th century was accurate enough to be used for finding the longitude position of a ship at sea, enabling long voyages out of sight of land to be made. This allowed the global economy to develop.

Watches were first developed in the 16th century, originally as pendant or pocket watches. Only in the 20th century were wristwatches produced. Most of these are no longer mechanical but have movements controlled by quartz crystals. Atomic clocks, introduced in 1955, now measure time with exquisite accuracy, to within 1 second in 200 million years. Yet, in the preliterate societies today most people still measure time by the sun and the seasons.

The need to measure time is both economic and human. Measuring time gives the illusion of controlling our lives and economy. Even in first century Palestine, hours were measured and noted – for slaves and slave drivers alike.

The human need to measure time is about our mortality. We are born to die, so measuring our amount of time reassures us we have survived this amount of time at least. Achieving what we consider important within our allotted span is a way of having human meaning.

Modern life is overwhelmed by time. We measure it in infinitesimal amounts. It is costed, constrained and marked by almost every piece of electronic equipment. Ovens, microwaves and even dishwashers all have clocks, as do mobile phones, computers, MP3s, GPS systems, televisions and DVD recorders.

easter time

In a world where time is money, there is never enough time and we are continually rushing against 'deadlines' – an interesting word. Time becomes a burden that we struggle under. We are all challenged by Jesus' question: ***Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?***

In fact we live in two sorts of time. As well as secular time, we also live in eternal time. Easter time is eternal time, sacred time – *kairos* or Holy time. It is outside and different from secular or ordinary time. How then is it possible to be aware of Eternal time?

The answer came in some research I have been doing. I was not looking at time. The research was considering spiritual understanding and asking people to name spiritual experiences. Their replies sent me straight back to having to think about time.

A number of the participants talk about being "in a different world", "outside time" or having to collect themselves and "return to the present moment". They talked about "time standing still" and having to "reconnect with the present". They talked too about being in the "right place at the right time". They remarked how the experience of being "outside time" and being "in a different world" remained with them. They could not forget it.

They spoke of the need for solitude in order to connect with their deepest selves and with the transcendent.

They spoke movingly about their relationships with other people. Many experienced their highest moments in the natural world, contemplating beautiful scenes and especially mountains. Some talked about being connected with and touched by God.

the spirituality of time

What they were talking about is Easter time. That amazing time, described in the Gospels, when the disciples, slowly and painfully realised they lived in eternal time. When they were able to understand what "Christ with us" really meant.

We celebrate Easter time when we offer hospitality to another person. When we are truly present, and really listen with compassion, and are vulnerable to their needs. When we take time to be and stop all the trivial doing that takes over our lives and allow ourselves the opportunity to be. When we contemplate the wonder and beauty of this country, planet, universe we also make time to be at one with creation and Creator.

the time the disciples slowly and painfully realised what 'Christ with us' really meant

We connect with Easter time when we contemplate a child, for children put us in touch with both the potential and the vulnerability of human beings. They, unlike adults, are unguarded and open to the wonders and dangers of this life. They have not, before they go to school, learned about the enslavement and limits secular time can bring.

Living in the present moment is the way saints and small children exist. They are not focussed on the tasks to be done or the problems that have been. They give thanks and are joyful in the present moment. Interesting, isn't it, that 'present' also means gift.

Watching squadrons of shags flying up Otago Harbour, each skein reflected in the water below, Happy Easter time to you all. ■

Anna Holmes is a Catholic doctor and author, resident in Dunedin

The Lord is risen indeed

Rosalie Sugrue

My name is Mary, wife of Cleopas, and I want to give my testimony. Cleopas and I had walked to Jerusalem many times. Our village of Emmaus is only seven miles from the city. We usually manage to be there for Passover. For us Passover is an important ritual as well as a time of celebration and remembering who we are and from whence we came.

Usually the walk home is made with light steps. But this year our hearts had never been so heavy. We had witnessed dreadful things, terrible things. We saw Jesus the Christ whipped and humiliated. How could they be so cruel to anyone, let alone this good man? We knew Jesus as the healer who preached a way of love and respect for all. He went about doing good.

Goodness is a powerful thing, too powerful for the Romans, they felt threatened. To them he was a political rebel. The lies and wild accusations were incredible but Jesus remained dignified throughout. It was too much for our men. They couldn't bear it, but we women stayed to the very end. Even on that hideous cross his concern was for his mother.

Well, as I said, we were journeying home. I was telling Cleopas the last words we women heard Jesus speak and explaining how the end came, when we were joined on the road by a stranger. He asked us what we were discussing. His question was so surprising we stopped still in amazement. Cleopas said, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

He wanted to know what things. So we told him how Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet who had been crucified, that hideous form of execution, favoured by the Romans. Although his body had been put in a decent tomb it had vanished and we were sad, sad, sad. This wonderful man, whom we had thought of as Lord, was dead and now his teachings would die. His teaching had given us such hope. In essence they were simple beliefs based more on hospitality and caring than on following rules.

But we soon discovered our companion was no ordinary man. He knew the Hebrew Scriptures and he expounded them to us as we walked along. He also knew of the way of Jesus. The way he talked brought warmth to our heavy hearts. When we arrived at our village it was nearing evening. We urged the stranger to come and have a meal with us.

It didn't take me long to rustle up a simple meal. I didn't even feel tired. When we sat at table the stranger took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to us. At that moment we saw Jesus in the man. The revelation was so powerful we were quite stunned. By the time we had recovered the Jesus man had gone.

It was a moment of epiphany for both of us. We realised the death of Jesus Christ was not the end of Christianity – if the ritual of the fellowship meal could continue, why not the teachings? We were so excited that as soon as we had eaten we went straight back to Jerusalem. We found the eleven disciples together and they were celebrating. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed."

(Luke 24:13-35; John 19:25)

Rosalie Sugrue is a Methodist laypreacher, active in the Wellington district. She is past President of the NZ Laypreachers Association

charles darwin's jubilee year

Darwin and the Theory of Evolution have been stumbling blocks for many Christians since 1859. Much of the criticism from the churches has been unfair. In fact Darwin has much to tell us on our faith journey

In 1842 London Zoo acquired an exciting new inhabitant, Jenny the Orang Utan. One person who went to visit her was the youthful Queen Victoria. The Queen was not amused! She found Jenny "frightfully and painfully and disagreeably human". By coincidence, in the very same year Jenny was visited by the young naturalist, Charles Darwin. Darwin commented: "Man in his arrogance thinks himself a great work. More humble – and I believe true – to consider him created from animals".

Darwin was born in 1809 and published his most important work, *The Origin of Species*, in 1859. This year therefore is a double jubilee, being 200 years since his birth and the 150th anniversary of the *Origin*.

Although his reputation as a scientist has never diminished, Darwin has often been viewed as an enemy of Christianity, responsible for many scientists and many other educated Westerners lapsing into agnosticism. His achievement as the great protagonist of Evolution has been demonised especially by fundamentalist Christians in the United States, who demand that school curricula include the teaching of Creationism alongside – or in place of – courses in biology which teach Darwinian evolution.

The assumption is that what Darwin held is incompatible with belief in a Creator God and with the *Genesis* account of the origins of life, in particular the creation of the human species.

Another commonly held 'myth' is that Darwin did all his discovering and theorising when he was a young man; but then, such a storm broke out about evolution – especially the *Descent of Man* – that he retired into obscurity and even underwent a deathbed repentance for his 'blasphemy'. This is nonsense. It is true that the famous voyage of the *Beagle,* which provided much of the evidence for evolution, took place when he was in his early 20s. He was the naturalist on board, and the voyage took nearly five years of his life (1831-36).

In 1839 he married Emma Wedgwood (one of the famous Wedgwood clan who were also his near relatives) and settled down to a happy, sedate and stable family life, living close to London in Kent. He never left Britain again. Yet for the next 40 years he continued unwearyingly as a practical naturalist, and his discoveries led to many weighty publications.

Even if he had never written the *Origin* or dreamt up the theory of natural selection, he would still be celebrated for the astonishing variety of these discoveries. For instance, he wrote what is still the standard work on barnacles. He investigated in immense detail the ways in which plants pollinate. He discovered – long before anyone knew about plant hormones – how plants move. He was a pioneer of soil science and demonstrated the immense contribution of the lowly earthworm to soil health and fertility. And much besides.

why was the idea of evolution so shocking?

Darwin didn't invent the theory of evolution. The notion that species might change had been floating around

H.M.S Beagle, the survey ship on which Charles Darwin was naturalist for its five year voyage (*1831-6*)

among scientists for generations. The science of geology had advanced rapidly during the early years of the 19th century. The geologist Sir Charles Lyell brought together a host of field observations into a unified scheme of the succession of sedimentary rocks.

It was clear that the process of development of the landscape had taken thousands, if not millions of years – far far longer than the supposed 6000 years since the date of Creation, according to a timetable proposed in 1650 by the Anglican Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher. Moreover, field geologists had unearthed a huge array of fossilised remains of animals and plants mostly extinct. Darwin read Lyell's book on board the *Beagle*, and after his return to England they became close friends.

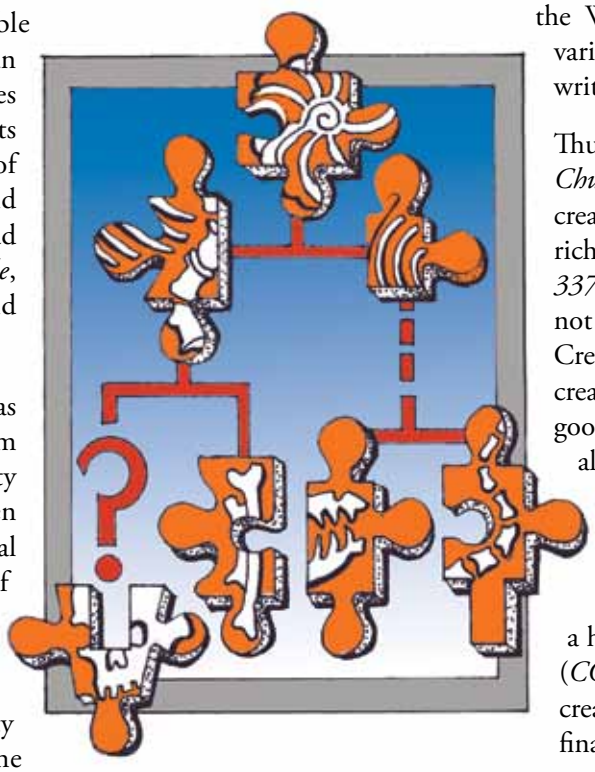
What Charles Darwin did was to bring all this evidence – from rocks and fossils, from the variety of species, from embryology, even from the way plant and animal breeders developed new strains of stock – together into a single, coherent theory. Eventually, it also included his own speculation – at that time based on scanty evidence – of the origins of the human race. His thesis was that all living forms are related and have a common primeval origin.

Darwin also proposed a mechanism, ***natural selection***, whereby the evolution of new species had taken place. In some respects this was – and still is – the most contested part of this theory. If new species evolve out of old ones purely through competition for survival – ***the survival of the fittest*** – it all appeared very brutal and impersonal. It seemed as if the Creator God was being relegated further and further from our world.

what darwin achieved

Charles Darwin's crowning achievement, scientifically, was to transform 'natural history' into a science – and into a single science with many interrelated branches.

Imagine a jigsaw puzzle with lots of pieces and no accompanying picture. This was the challenge facing 19th Century biologists at the time of Darwin. You could say that Darwin guessed what the picture might look like, and then set about placing as many pieces as he could find to fit. He left plenty of gaps – "missing links", as his opponents called them.



That his picture of the 'puzzle' was right has never been more certain than today. Literally thousands of those links have been unearthed in the fossil record – many of which trace a complex web of origin for hominids and the precursors of modern *Homo Sapiens.* In recent times a fascinating source of evidence has been provided by examining the DNA of different species, which clearly confirms which are closely related and which are distant.

evolution and *Genesis*

Where does all this leave the Seven Days of Creation described in *Genesis 1* and the story of Adam and Eve? Every civilisation has developed its myths to help people understand where they fit in the scheme of creation, and how they relate to the earth itself. We have to accept that the *Genesis* account is simply one of these myths, even though it contains much theological truth.

Catholic theology has no major difficulty in accepting this. The documents of Pope Pius XII, and subsequent Popes, on Biblical scholarship have encouraged Catholic scholars and commentators to use all available resources to help illuminate the Word of God. Recognising the various genres in which the Bible is written is one of those resources.

Thus the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states simply that "God created the visible world in all its richness, diversity and order" (*CCC 337*); "nothing exists which does not owe its existence to God the Creator" (*CCC 338*); that "each creature possesses its own particular goodness..." (*CCC 339*); and that all creatures are interdependent (*CCC 340*). The *Catechism* also asserts the beauty of the Universe (*CCC 341*) and that the 'six days' of *Genesis* describe a hierarchy in the order of creation (*CCC 342*) culminating in the creation of human beings on the final day (*CCC 343*).

The 'six days' therefore present a sequence which is quite compatible ▷▷

In speaking of life as an evolutionary adventure, Darwin affirmed that no static perfection is possible. Change, development – hopefully progress, but often regression – is woven into every part of nature...
Darwin helped free the church from slavish obedience to a literal understanding of the Biblical text. He thereby helped the church realise the essentially life-giving meaning of texts that had been seriously misinterpreted by the church.
(*Keith Rowe, in* **Touchstone,** *April*

▷▷ with the idea that the living world as we know it has developed gradually over millions of years from very simple origins to the complexity of species we know today. Human beings are part of this picture. It was the genius of Darwin to compile the evidence for the evolution of species and to propose a mechanism.

our debt to darwin

Before Darwin it was easy enough for believers to envisage God as like a divine clockmaker who fashioned the Universe, gave it precise laws and left it to proceed under its own steam with just the occasional miraculous intervention. This is a totally static, uninspiring picture, and for the most part it relegates God to a distant presence – like the author of a book.

The Darwinian view introduces us to a natural world which is quite different. There is no need to postulate divine intervention for the evolution of each new species. Darwin showed that the natural variations found within any species, the isolation of populations and the need for species to adapt to their environment would provide the causality necessary for a new species to evolve.

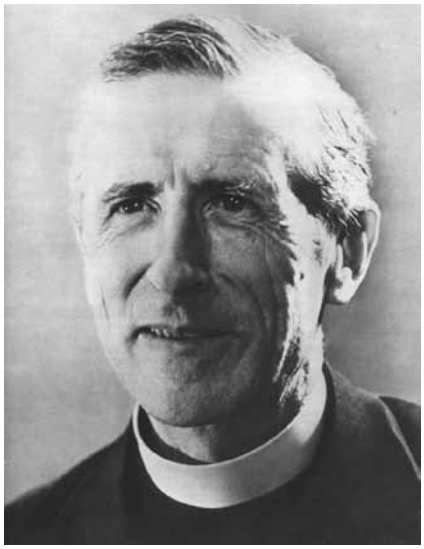
It is a wonderful picture that the great naturalist presents to us. Indeed the beauty and complexity of the story are far more compelling reasons for believing in God than the static view that it replaces. God is no longer remote, but is totally within the process. It readily prompts in us a sense of wonder and awe. Darwin furnished abundant evidence to support a comprehensive belief in divine providence.

Darwinism helps us return to the more Biblical image of God as present within all of life. God is within the evolutionary process, not outside like a director conducting from afar...

Why should kinship with the rest of the animal world be offensive? To describe humans as made in the image of God is to recognise we are conscious of the evolutionary adventure and by our actions to help shape the future.
(*Keith Rowe, in* Touchstone, *April '09).*

after darwin

Darwin was a consummate observer, but also a highly intuitive thinker. It is this combination which elevates



Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955)

him to the pantheon of the great. The 20th Century Jesuit scholar and palaeontologist, Teilhard de Chardin, is of the same ilk. Teilhard spent much of his life in China, investigating the fossil remains of primitive hominids, in particular the discovery and investigation of *Sinanthropus*, the so-called 'Peking man'. Like Darwin, he reflected and wrote prolifically on what he had seen in the field.

He suggests in *L'Avenir de l'homme* that there is a direction and divine purpose in evolution. Cosmic evolution reaches its peak in the development of the human person. Within human history the coming of Christianity is central. The ultimate goal of the development of the cosmos is what he calls 'Christogenesis'. What Teilhard is doing is to bring together organic evolution and St Paul's doctrine that all things are brought to their ultimate fruition in Christ.

The Vatican was bewildered by the profundity of Teilhard's speculations, and in 1962 issued a *monitum* warning the faithful not to accept his theories uncritically. Cardinal Feltin of Paris however applauded Teilhard for his "global vision of the universe wherein matter and spirit, body and soul, nature and supernature, science and faith find their unity in Christ."

thomas berry

Another priest who has a similar global vision is the American Passionist Thomas Berry. Berry carries Teilhard's vision a step further. (He also notes one serious limitation of Teilhard: that he fails to take note of the destructive impact on our modern world of industrial civilisation. But then who did, in the 1930s?)

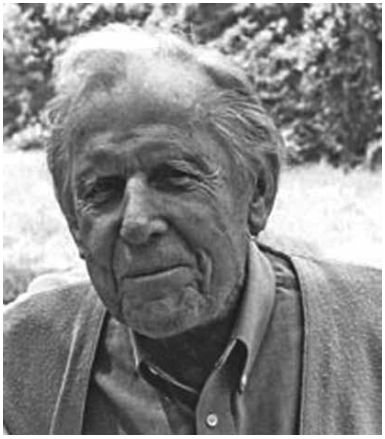
In Berry's eyes the primary sacred community is the Universe itself. Every being and every community becomes sacred by participating in that basic community. Humans today are a geological force in their own right, so much so that the Earth community has arrived now at a pivotal moment in planetary evolution. But let Berry tell this for himself (*see interview opposite, with Ram Dass*).

We may see this modern consciousness of the supreme importance of ecology and the fatal impact of modern civilisation as the ultimate fruit of Darwinism. Darwin taught us to take account of the evolving natural world. Modern thinkers like Teilhard and Thomas Berry have extended this horizon to encompass the whole physical world. There is a world soul with which we must learn to live in harmony. The whole earth is a sacred place. The whole cosmos is the dwelling of God. Humans must learn to become sacred by living in harmony with this world – or they will self destruct. ■

M.H.

groping toward our ecozoic future

thomas berry, in dialogue with ram dass



Thomas Berry

Ram Dass: When I started to read your writings, I came across the term "dysfunctional cosmology". It was such an apt phrase for the way in which I'm experiencing the world in which I live.

Thomas Berry: Well, most peoples have their life patterns and their norms of action, their ideals and their values rooted in some kind of a cosmology. It's a story of how things came to be in the beginning and how they come to be now – the direction in which human affairs should go. And as long as the cosmology functions well, there is a basis for dealing with human situations. But when there is a disassociation from the cosmology, then the whole basis of meaning begins to change.

Ram Dass: The universe *is* the revelation. In other words, this is a living Bible and we just have to learn how to read it. But we not only have to learn how to read it, we are part of the Bible itself. We've got to read ourselves.

Thomas Berry: We must understand the earth as a sacred reality: the trees as sacred, the rivers, the mountains. We live – everything lives – in everything else. Every atom lives in every other atom. I think that's one of the wonderful discoveries that we have now from science.

You see we are at the terminal phase of the Cenozoic, the last 65 million years. We're not just passing into another historical period, or another cultural modification: we are changing the chemistry of the planet. We are changing the biosystems. We're changing the geosystems of the planet on a scale of hundreds of millions of years. But more specifically, we're terminating the last 65 million years of life development.

So where do we go from here? To my mind we go from the terminal phase, if we survive it, into a really sustainable world. We will be passing from the terminal Cenozoic into what I call the *Ecozoic*. We have to learn that the universe (and in particular planet Earth) is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.

All the beauty of the universe we see about us came into being without human consultation. But it will never again function the way it functioned previously in the Cenozoic period, the last 65 million years, because during the 65 million years in which wave-on-wave of life expansion took place, humans had nothing to say about it. In the future, whereas the humans cannot make a blade of grass, there's liable not to *be* a blade of grass unless humans accept it, protect it and foster it.

Humans will have to provide a support system for many of the living forms that prior to our times made it on their own. Now the ideal should be that we should enable them to be on their own, that we should withdraw the human interference as much as possible.

Ram Dass: The changes that humans are bringing about are a breakdown of the present system. It's a transformation but also a breakdown, a loss.

Thomas Berry: We have lost our rapport with these governing forces of the planet. Now we are into what I would consider an unworkable industrial plundering society that is at a dead end. Industrial society, industrialisation can be done once; it cannot be maintained, nor can it ever be done again – for three reasons:

• first, psychic energy. When we put all this up, we were fascinated with the bright side of things. We saw only the benefits. We didn't see the disadvantages.

• second, finance. We couldn't even begin to build the New York subway system now. Our roads are breaking up faster than we can repair them. We've taken on ourselves an enormous burden. Right now, the whole industrial world is bankrupt. We can't do anything now because of our three trillion dollar debt, going fast up to four trillion dollars. I can remember when in 1928 the US national debt was eight billion dollars. (NOTE: this was written in 1991, not 2009)

• third, the diminishment of natural resources. The oil is running out. Everything we do now is dependent on oil. Our food, our clothing, our instruments, our transportation, everything. We are at an impasse and that we can't cure this by more technology in the sense of genetic engineering, refinement of computers and all that.

Ram Dass: The Technozoic Age isn't going to work.

Thomas Berry: It is *not* going to work. So we need to move into the Ecozoic. We need to accept life on the conditions that it is granted us. In the Asian world, and particularly India, they deal with life by strengthening the inner world, not by conquering the outer world. We try to deal with life by conquering the outer world, and so the inner world is weakened.

The basic principle has to be a self-limiting use of resources as regards resources, habitat and population. America particularly has to begin to limit consumption.

It *is* going to happen. We can't avoid a population now of ten billion people. But we are already consuming 40 percent

▷▷

of the gross earth product. If we double that and take 80 percent, then the whole biosystem of the planet will cease to function effectively. There will be a biological collapse.

However, a lot of wonderful things have happened in the last several years. I was much darker ten years ago than I am now.

Ram Dass: What kind of things?

Thomas Berry: There is now a consciousness that nothing is going to work any more unless it claims to be environmentally oriented. The whole ecological disaster is beginning to dawn on people. For example, the Chitco Movement where women went out and stopped the coating of the trees; they realised that their destiny and the destiny of the trees go together.

There is just a fantastic number of people recognising that clothing has to be ecologically made. And everything else, like food. So beginnings have been made. Maybe it's one percent, but beginnings are of that nature.

As soon as we begin to understand the universe in its sacred dimension, then we develop a sense of reverence and concern and identity and sympathy and compassion. There are two ultimate categories for me. One is creativity and the other is celebration. The universe I consider is a single multiform celebratory event. The role of the human is to enter into that celebratory process in a special mode of conscious self-awareness.

Ram Dass: So one is to be a celebratory participant. And that allows you to be peaceful even in the presence of the way in which the human mind has worked thus far. So that is the celebration. What is the other one?

Thomas Berry: Creation. Creativity.

Ram Dass: Well, in a celebratory act, every moment is a creative act, isn't it? The whole thing is creative, there's no stopping creation.

Thomas Berry: The creative is the most important. The geneticist Dubchompsky says, as regards creation being determined or random, "It's neither; it's creative." And creativity is like a person making a poem. You don't know what it is until it hits you – like a melody. I describe it as a melody. To use Teilhard's word, we are presently *groping* toward what I call the Ecozoic Period.

I think we are being guided toward a creative response to what has already taken place, that can bring about a lot of healing, and can bring about a new and brilliant phase that will be available for future generations.

Hanuman Foundation.

If you would like to know more about Thomas Berry see www.ecocontemplative.org

the inclusiveness of st paul

letter to the galatians

Beware the zeal of the reformed smoker! Long before the nicotine lining has gone from their lungs, they're despising their former inhalers. Waving their arms furiously and coughing conspicuously at the merest hint of stray smoke, they possess the angry righteousness of new conquerors of the high moral ground. Hell hath no fury like a habit scorned.

As James K. Baxter wrote: "The plague of convertitis; let it be far from me". There's no worse sinner than the one you used to be. In order to understand strong perspectives, it can be helpful to know what preceded them. It's part of the human condition to denounce most strongly the darkness which has threatened our own souls, and which we feel the need to save others from.

Paul had been a Pharisee, and the son of Pharisees, according to *Acts 23*. This means that his life was governed by the Torah and its divine authority. It was part of Pharisaic orthodoxy that obedience to the law would hasten the arrival of the Messiah among the Jewish people. Paul was a zealous Pharisee, wanting to establish the rule of God by purging Israel of those who demeaned the Torah through their words and deeds.

Before his dramatic conversion, he understood both authority and segregation. The law ordered life in a way which made pursuit of God straightforward if not easy. It allowed for certainty, in that the standards for salvation were objective and measurable. Not surprisingly, those who strove to maintain the requirements of the law considered themselves to be superior – not only to Gentiles but to their fellow Jews who were less stringent.

When he was unhorsed and converted, Paul went through a revolutionary life change. As zealous as he'd been as a Pharisee, he now was as a follower of Christ. Because of his history and training, he came to his new faith with a passion and understanding for what lay at the heart of it. Reacting against his own past, he became a proponent for what he understood to be at the core of the gospel – freedom.

Nowhere is this more clearly spelled out than in his fiery *letter to the Galatians*. Probably written within 20 years of the death of Jesus, it represents an early and insightful theological reflection on the seismic shift which Christianity has brought about. The letter castigates the Galatian believers for flirting with a return to that which they've been saved from.

In the heart of it all comes a statement which not only encapsulates Paul's message, but is arguably a refrain with greater resonance and significance than the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. In the simple elegance of 30 words, he proclaims a manifesto which has become the yeast of history: ***There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus*** (3,28).

In this one sentence the great apostle has undercut human authority and social convention, and announced the way forward for all people in Christ. The context of the passage is authority and captivity. Paul's message to the Galatians and to us all is that true liberation is already granted in Christ, a fact which needs only to be realised to be made apparent. This is, I would argue, the most subversive statement in the whole of Scripture.

Through 2000 years of subsequent history, we have watched as these words have done their slow work by changing the consciousness of people who find themselves oppressed by social forces. Religious freedom, the abolition of slavery and the fight against sexism can all legitimately be traced back to the sentiments expressed by Paul. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech was a brilliant articulation of the freedom announced in Galatians.

Paul's manifesto is indicative rather than exhaustive. We can extend his categories without distorting his message. To do so may recapture some of the radical nature of his theology. In our own epoch he may well have said: *There is neither Christian nor Muslim, there is no longer believer nor unbeliever, there is no longer gay nor straight; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus*.

What he calls us to is the relinquishment of all our human means of classifying and judging, by which we seek to order and rule the world. He wants us to relinquish our need for certainty and replace it with a love born of radical dependence on the guidance of the Spirit. There may be many years yet before we unpack what it means to be free in Christ.

Mike Riddell

Monet in

Monet and the Impressionists

Impressionism was a movement in painting 'born' in Paris in 1874, led by two young artists, Claude Monet (1840-1926) and Auguste Renoir (1841-1919).

"Monet's style," writes Sr Wendy Beckett, "was characterised by a light, colourful palette, and he often applied unmixed paints directly onto a canvas prepared with a pure white coating. This bright surface enhanced the luminosity of each colour and increased the broken, disharmonious appearance of the picture.

Wordsworth saved the rest of us from searching for the right words when he wrote of his daffodils, years after seeing them, that "they flash upon that inward eye/Which is the bliss of solitude".

With Wordsworth it was "a host of golden daffodils", with me it was – well – let's just say that in the past month my "inward eye" has returned, more frequently than I could ever have imagined possible, to two paintings in the exhibition *Monet and the Impressionists* which is nearing the end of its three-months at Te Papa.

In that time thousands of visitors have braved the jangling experience that is Te Papa to enter the relative calm of the gallery on the fourth floor and find another world. Even the jostling for position of the dozens who thought, as did we, that 10 a.m. on a Monday would be a quiet time, could not detract from the serenity of the vision of the Impressionists.

Meadow with poplars (1875), from Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

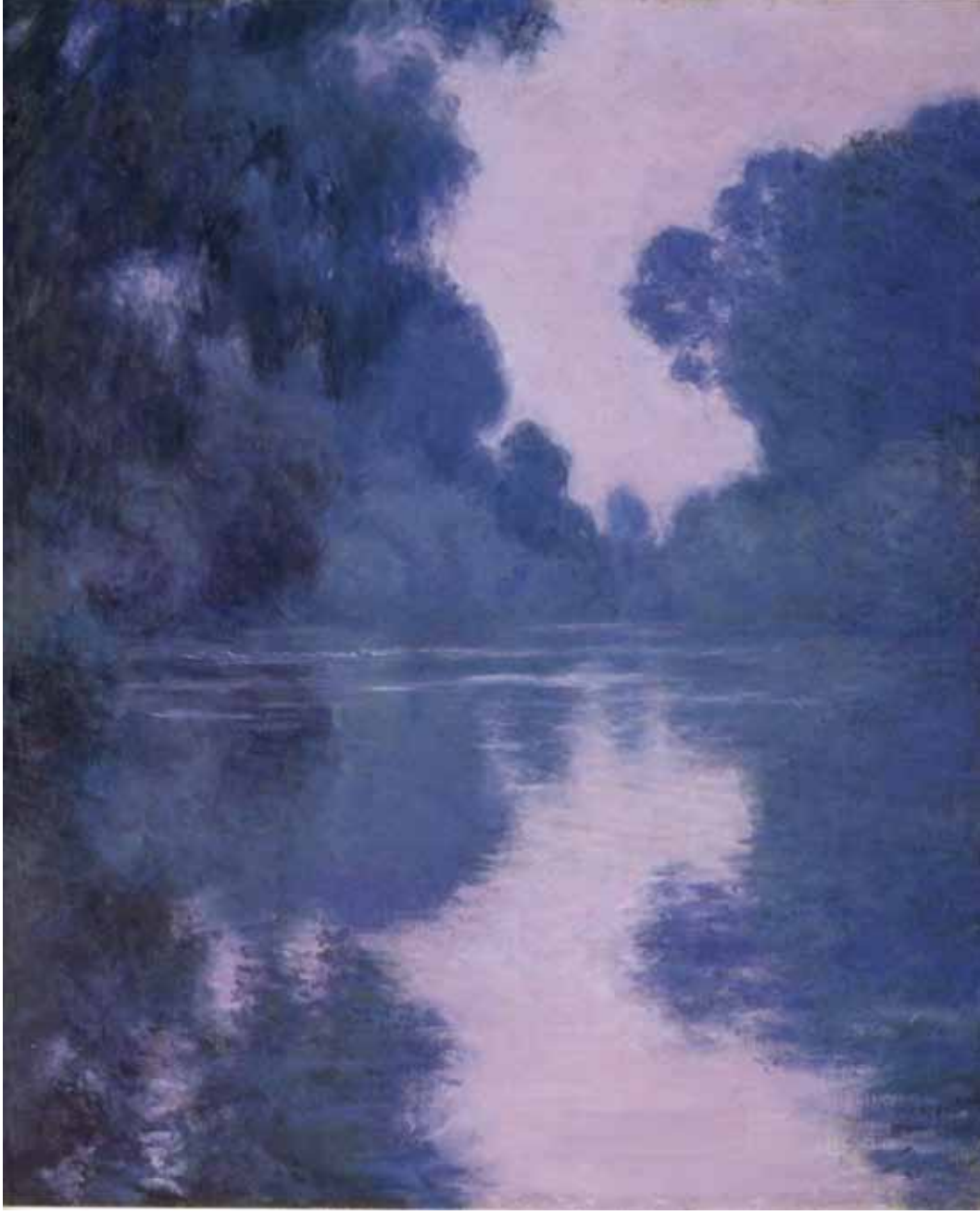
The works of Claude Monet were, of course, the draw card. The painters who inspired him are represented, as are many of his fellow-Impressionists, making a collection of 56 paintings and two small bronze sculptures, drawn mainly from the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Boston, but the 27 Monets have a luminosity which acts like a magnet. It was so easy to stand (or even to sit in the tiny post-lunch lull) and be absorbed into the world of this painter of light.

Monet's work is appreciated for many reasons, not least being that it is so accessible and sensual. The paintings of snowy streets almost made one shiver: a class of tiny girls in immaculate blue dresses, who sat cross-legged on the floor while a skilled Te Papa guide turned them into art lovers, certainly thought so – I saw several of them hugging themselves and rubbing their arms as they gazed.

The leaves rustled in *Meadow with poplars* (1875), ***(above)*** the heat of the late afternoon sun and the smell of stubble were palpable in *Haystacks, midday,* (1890) and the sole representative of the waterlilies series was so familiar from the cover of the catalogue, the publicity material – and even a tea towel in the Te Papa shop – that one was in danger of passing it by as having been seen already before becoming aware that

Wellington

Kathleen Doherty



Morning on the Seine, near Giverny (1897), from Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

this was the original and deserving of time.

Monet was fascinated by light and the changes it wrought. He wrote: "For me, a landscape does not exist in its own right, since its appearance changes at every moment; but the surrounding atmosphere brings it to life – the light and the air which vary continually."

He delighted in painting the same scene at different times of the day – two of exactly the same scene *Ravine of the Petit Creuse* and *Valley of the Petit Creuse* show the difference the time of day and consequently the light can make on the mood of a place. It was these two paintings which had the man beside me observing to his companion that he didn't realise that Monet had visited Central Otago! I have a feeling he might have been serious – indeed the similarity between this scene in central France and favourite corners of Central Otago was startling.

And so to the delights of my "inward eye" – one each from two series of subjects at different times of the day. Both are early morning scenes: is this the ultimate in vicarious living by someone for whom the early morning is a time to be endured rather than enjoyed?

Morning on the Seine, near Giverny (1897) is a poem in misty mauve-blue-green ***(above)***. It takes little imagination to feel a slight breeze, to smell the freshness of early morning air, to feel a lifting of the spirit at the possibilities of a new day. Dr Albert Moore, who died in January this year (tributes to him were in the *March TM*), liked his *Phenomenology of Religion* class to reflect and write on "a numinous experience". I wish I could have updated my effort of 25 years ago and told him of the experience of standing in front of *Morning on the Seine* – it could well be as close as I will ever get to an art-inspired numinous experience.

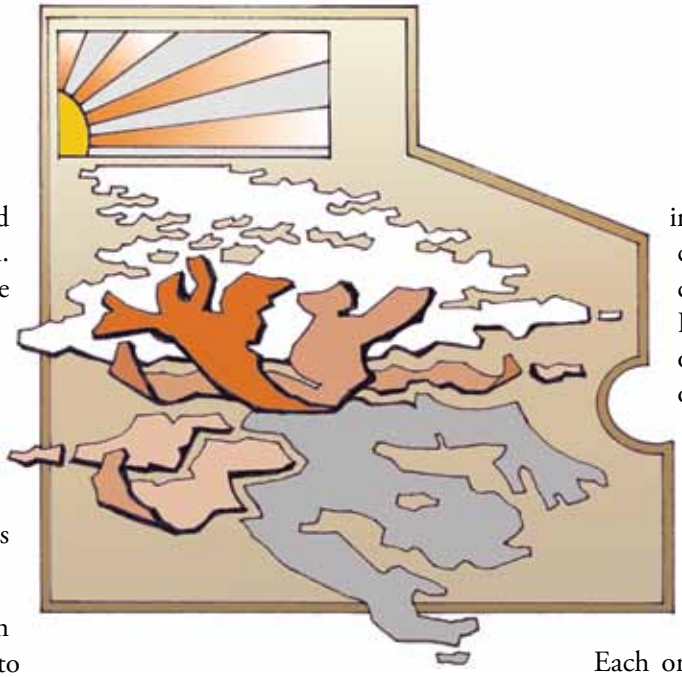
Very close by hung *Rouen Cathedral façade and Tour d'Albane (morning effect)* one of a series of 31 paintings of this Gothic cathedral which Monet executed between 1892 and 1894. The books tell us that he worked on several canvases at the one time, using the conditions of light and atmosphere as they presented themselves. The version in this exhibition has the early morning light just starting to gild the tower, while the bulk of the cathedral is still in the blue of early morning shade. It is solemn and sombre – a reaction which is entirely subjective. Monet himself wrote of this series to a friend: "I have always observed what the world showed to me, only to give testimony of it in my paintings."

Perhaps his gift to us, in addition to the paintings, is the idea that in observing, life can be enormously enriched, and the familiar can be transformed. It is a valuable legacy. ■

This is the first of a series of articles entitled "Building Communities of Hope in a Chaotic World", sponsored by the Dominicans.

Each one of us has a thirst to belong and our spiritual as well as mental health depends on how that thirst is satisfied. Mike Noonan looks at fundamental spiritual needs of today

the hunger for spirituality



Her answer is seared deep in my soul. Over the years since I heard her words, I have thought long and hard about the nature of spirituality. She said: "Mike, if for one moment, when I'm in someone's arms, I can believe that I am loved – it is worth it."

Anita was a woman whom we wanted to welcome into our l'Arche community in Liverpool. As a very young child she had been abandoned and left on a doorstep. When found, every bone in her face had been broken. She had had any number of diseases associated with being undernourished and on the street. She had had rickets and scabies. Our community met her after she had lived her childhood and teenage years in every institution in Liverpool.

She had survived by raw grit and rebelliousness. No institution had been able to cope with her, and she had been shunted from institution to institution. When we went to collect her, she had disappeared and no one knew where. After a number of days of searching, she was eventually found. She had been taken by the pimps to a house near the docks and kept under lock and key to be used by the sailors when they came into port.

When she lived with us, she lived in the half light. Part of her was drawn to the life of community that we shared with her and part of her was drawn to the night and to the night life in Liverpool. She had a disarming mix of innocence and of knowing. She was extraordinarily challenging to live with. She was probably more emotionally disabled than intellectually disabled and her 'street smartness' and her survival instinct meant that she strongly challenged the assistants of the community towards integrity. Her intelligence meant that she occupied a place that was not quite with the assistants of the community, but nor was she part of the group of people with intellectual disabilities.

Anita had a steady succession of 'boyfriends'. Each one, from her perspective, was 'the one' who would save her and take her away from everything that was difficult in her life. Often her boyfriends would prove abusive and hurt her. She became pregnant to one of her boyfriends. The professionals involved with her advised a variety of 'solutions' ranging from abortion to taking the child into care immediately at birth.

The community did not know what to do, but knew that condemning her and sending her away from the community would only deepen the profound pattern of rejection that she had already experienced in her life. We said to her that we would support her and always be there for her. When

she was eight months pregnant she jumped on a bus and went down to London to join an anti-abortion rally. She told her story to anyone who would listen in support of the purpose of the rally.

She decided to keep her baby and for three years she raised her child with the full support of the community. It was not easy for her, nor was it easy for the community. Anita's sharp tongue and her ambivalence to the ties of parenthood, presented the community with many dilemmas. In addition, her steady stream of boyfriends was a constant source of difficulty. Some would be violent to her.

One day I couldn't stand it any longer. Her latest boy friend had turned violent and had taken a hammer to her face. With her eye purple, her jaw broken and her face swollen, I asked her "*Why?* Why do you do this, Anita?" That was when she answered: "Mike, if for one moment, when I'm in someone's arms, I can believe that I am loved – it is worth it."

yearning to belong

The yearning that Anita expressed lies deep within each of us. We each spend our lives hoping to find a heart that is big enough to accept us completely, that is roomy enough to offer us a place of belonging and tender enough to smile on us with eyes that shine with love for our very uniqueness. One of the psalms (*Ps. 63*) expresses it thus: *My soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

Our parched, cracked and dry inner landscapes need rivulets of spirit-reviving water to survive, and in our urgent search for the water that will satisfy our thirst, each of us takes desperate measures and many of us have been damaged when we have compromised with the purity of the water.

Perhaps, more than in any other age, that metaphor of a parched and cracked landscape in desperate need of water expresses a truth about our human condition.

While we long for plenty, we know that we are entering a time of scarcity. Our financial institutions are in free fall; many of the sources of energy that have sustained our modern way of life are now revealed to be destructive of our planet. In the second half of the last century, the blistering white heat of technological revolution took humankind to the moon. The view of our planet from outer space served for some to see the awe-inspiring beauty of our home in the universe; for others a chill cosmic wind blew across their consciousness, and the sight served only to underline the insignificance of humanity in an insignificant little world.

Politically, our world is fragmented, with terror and coercion often used as the weapons of choice. The two world wars in the last century, the possibility of an end to all life in a nuclear holocaust and our experience in this century of suicide attacks and televised beheadings has written a message deep in our hearts and psyches that we are disposable people and, therefore, of no account. The world religions remain cautious of one another, and spend more energy on asserting the rightness of their path to God than on seeking relief for the thirst that is common to all humanity.

In our homes the restless search for the perfect and fulfilling relationship has a terrifying consequence. Families break up, and the message that individual family members derive from the breakage is that there probably is no reliable sanctuary, no place of safety where you can be loved and accepted for who you are. Children live their lives across the breakage of their parents' relationship; while many survive, many experience breakage in their hearts. Fear takes root because another breakage may be just around the corner and prenuptial agreements become a vital part of modern life.

The impact of our being disposable people in a disposable world reaches beyond us to our children and our children's children. Research shows that without receiving love from our human parents, our biology is rewritten to our disadvantage and to the disadvantage of our children. The story of Anita, with which I began this article, is a story of a woman who did not receive any affection from her parents. Where we seek refreshment will determine whether our thirst is quenched or whether, like Anita, we will always be searching for that transforming moment when our tears will be wiped away and our heart's desire will be met.

the separation of religion and spirituality

In recognition of the Spirit of God's activity beyond its church walls, just after the midway point of the last century, some 2,450 churchmen from the Roman Catholic church along with a number of invited observers from other Christian traditions met in council at the Vatican. The Council approved a *Pastoral Constitution* for their church which began with the following words:

"The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father's kingdom."(*GS 1*)

They are beautiful words, and they were needed at that particular point in history. Human experience is now considered by the church to be a focal point and the ground of our spirituality. At the beginning of the 20th century, the American philosopher and psychologist, William James, launched an experiential examination of religion in his book *Varieties of Religious Experience*. He

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▷▷ was able to differentiate between the elements of institutional or organised religion and an individual's personal experience in relation to their God.

From that point on, while never effecting a total divorce, religion and spirituality began to be separated out from each other. The impact today has been that there can be a tendency in modern spirituality to crown the inner world as the pathway to all that is good and all that is God. Removing religion from the public realm and assigning it to personal idiosyncrasy has had the effect of elevating the individual's choice such that "whatever works for me" and "whatever works for you" are equally valid.

Regardless of the assertions of Islam and the Catholic Church to the contrary, all cultural, artistic and moral values are perceived as radically relative because there are no discernible norms that hold across all times and all cultures. All this means that within family and within the wider society, authority is being questioned and scrutinised in ways unimaginable to previous generations. Human rationality is under great suspicion and not to be trusted. Science and technology have turned against us, all transcendence is denied and God is dead or at the very least is suspected of breaking his covenant and allowing a holocaust to occur in which six million of his chosen people, men, women and children, were gassed.

Paul, in his *Letter to the Romans*, speaks of the Spirit groaning in sighs too deep for words. The post-modern church is struggling to give utterance to the Gospel in our age. The whole of humanity – not just individuals – has been traumatised by the history of war, violence against the person and what appears to be our worthless insignificance. We cannot turn back from this knowledge. We need a spirituality that can sustain us in this parched and cracked landscape.

hunger for authenticity

One of the rivulets bringing relief in desert places has been a growing hunger for authenticity, a positive desire to find and give expression to the real 'me'. Sadly, along with the life-giving water in this we have yet to clear away the sludge. In seeking to calm our fears about whether we have any meaning or significance in our world and in seeking to calm our fears about the safety of the ground upon which we stand, we have generated a pop culture which delights in creating celebrities and exposing hypocrisy.

Perhaps this is the flip side of the quest for authenticity – or it may be a stunted spiritual response to the circumstances humanity finds itself in. In the blurring between what is public and private, internet tools such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* encourage a confessional stream of consciousness to emanate from individuals, such that we now build an 'ambient consciousness' becoming intimately aware of the minutiae of the lives of people who in a previous era would be strangers to us. The boundaries that Freud posited as existing between what is conscious and what is repressed into unconsciousness are being redrawn in the internet and mass media age.

Jesus often spoke of hypocrisy when speaking of the religious leaders of his age. Our public religious and political discourse is conducted under the hostile, cynical and often salacious gaze of the media. Hypocrisy occurs in a person when their publicly held ideals fail to be lived up to in their private life. Organised religion in our day has been subjected to that hostile and cynical gaze particularly in relation to the scandal of sexual abuse and the perceived forked tongue with which an abusive church pontificates on sexual morals.

the pressure to conform

What we are less alert to in our day and age is something just as insidious as hypocrisy. Increasingly, through the media, we are pressurised to conform

to whatever is understood to be acceptable to the majority. Political correctness, the sexualisation of the body, consumerism, fashion, the desire to succeed, media interrogation and the demand for lifelong consistency in politicians (regardless of the changing circumstances they may find themselves in!) can exert a profound influence on the choices which people allow themselves to make. Both this tendency and hypocrisy are symptomatic of an inner reality imprisoned by and in opposition to an outward 'seeming'. Donning straitjackets in response to what we dimly perceive to have gained the assent of the majority leads to a profound deadening of the spirit.

Anita's compulsive search for someone who could make her feel special is akin to the creation of celebrities through reality television. Reality TV glorifies in a synthetic or 'set up' lived experience and creates celebrities thereby. The reaction to Susan Boyle – the latest, if unexpected, discovery on *Britain's Got Talent* – has provided further pause for thought about what is it that we do when we engage in the creation of celebrity. What values are hidden in the judgments we make? Creating celebrities is easy, it demands no commitment on our part, it involves only a feel-good moment of warmth. Our commitment can be reversed when someone newer comes on the scene or when the existing celebrity has been turned on and savaged in the media.

Likewise, Anita's boyfriends never fulfilled her dream of being special long-term to someone, nor engaged with the reality of Anita's search for authenticity in her everyday life. The prophet Isaiah was particularly aware of the need of his people to understand that they are chosen and are special. *Do not be afraid, I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name... you are precious in my eyes and I love you (43,1-4).* What Isaiah could not have understood is that all people have this need hard-wired into their brains, written deep into their biology. The dry weary land without water has a biological basis.

We need to hear that we are loved – not only for a moment. We need to know that we can rely on the permanence of love. Our spirituality, our yearning for meaning, our restless desire to matter to someone, is protective of us in our being and it protects the generation to come. Jesus freed people to "sin no more", not by turning a cynical and hostile gaze upon them, nor by turning them into celebrities soon to be tossed aside by the fickleness of fashion, but by looking at them with eyes of love which expressed a deep and ongoing commitment.

conclusion

The subtitle to this series of articles is *Creating Communities of Hope in a Chaotic World*. Who are the people who have captured the popular yearning for spiritual depth and experience? I want to mention three people who seem to have stood for something beyond themselves and who have captured the spiritual imagination of the age. Each in their own way has challenged that spirit-corroding notion that we are disposable people.

(1) The outpouring of grief at Princess Diana's death was often cited as an example of spirituality that remained untouched and untapped by 'organised religion'. Diana was a woman of beauty, wealth and status. At a time when many people were fearful of AIDS and AIDS sufferers were rapidly becoming the new untouchables, Diana could be found (and photographed) sitting with and touching a sufferer. At the time of her death when Tony Blair branded her "the people's Princess", I believe that he recognised her leadership in shaping the attitudes of many people who had been sidelined by their society.

(2) The day on which Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as president of South Africa was the culmination of a long personal journey by a man who had refused to be imprisoned by a prison. In a wonderful way, his spirit became a beacon of hope to people across the world in his refusal to be broken by an unjust and racist system of government. His refusal to seek revenge and his desire to forge a rainbow coalition where difference was welcomed and respected, appeared to release living water in a very dry and weary land.

(3) The picture of two young women, one black, the other white, was beautiful; both had eyes which were shining with joy and open faces which were fully alive. They were part of the crowd gathered in Washington DC to witness the inauguration of Barak Obama. Regardless of what happens during his presidency, nothing will ever take away the moment when after centuries of enslavement and oppression of black people, America elected its first black president.

I believe that these three prophets have prophesied in non-religious terms. Each of these can speak with authority because their words do not simply come from their intellects but because they were formed from their often painful lived experience. Their message can readily be expressed in religious terms and is about deeply valuing people who have been cast aside by their society as having little or no value.

A credible spirituality that can answer both the desperation and the traumatised apathy of our world today must be about undoing the locks that imprison our hearts and about the raising up of people who have been brutalised, sidelined, humiliated and rejected.

In this seemingly insurmountable endeavour, what is particularly beautiful is that the Spirit wants to help us. ■

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spirituality...

the missing link of age care

Dennis Horton

Spirituality is a critical issue for people as they grow older, says old-age psychiatrist Dr Chris Perkins. But it continues to be neglected, despite a Government health policy that endorses holistic care.

The one-time GP now divides her time between her practice as an aged-care psychiatrist in South Auckland and the *Selwyn Centre for Ageing and Spirituality*, where she has worked as director since September last year. The centre was established by the Selwyn Foundation to promote education and research and to advocate on behalf of older people in terms of spirituality and belief.

"Looking after spiritual needs is well down on the list of our nation's health priorities," says Chris Perkins. "Yet it seems a very important area for people who are getting older and facing loss and disability, and ultimately death."

Her interest in old age comes partly from her experience as a GP, treating patients as whole people, tending to psycho-social as well as physical needs. But her interest also springs from having had "an amazingly lovely grandmother." Older people are enriching to know. "As an old-age psychiatrist, I get to hear people's stories. I hear about their lives and their losses. It's a privilege to learn how they have come through the crises and problems they've faced."

She took the Selwyn Centre job "because I see the deficits in the care that older people are receiving and the huge need they have for much broader support." Residents in many New Zealand rest homes "are mostly OK from a physical point of view, but their psychological, social and spiritual needs are often not met." Nor do older people living in their own homes often fare much better. "The current talk is about ageing in place. But for many, it's ageing in isolation and loneliness" says Chris.

One of her concerns is about how the medical model on which our health system is based prevents doctors, nurses and care-givers from acknowledging spiritual issues. "There's a pressure that if something is not scientific, not measurable, then it doesn't count.

"There's also a feeling that to talk about spiritual issues is to step beyond the boundaries. You're not allowed to ask people about what's important to them, what gives meaning to their lives. It's as though this might get into something that's too difficult, which health professionals don't have the skills to handle.

"Until recently, I never asked people about spirituality or religion. I now wonder how I could have done this for all those years – never asking patients about what was important to them or what helped to get them through. People were depressed, developing Alzheimer's disease, facing their own deaths, and I never asked them!"

Chris Perkins says this is changing. "If you look at recent research, patients are saying they want their doctors to know about these things. They want to be able to tell their doctors about what gives their lives meaning. Someone has called spirituality the 'new black' – it's now more fashionable to talk about faith. Maybe it's the result of the baby boomers starting to ask if this is all there is."

The interest in spirituality may also reflect New Zealand's increasingly multiethnic society. "South Africans who come here are much stronger in their religious views than we've tended to be. There are lots of Hindu shrines in the homes I visit in South Auckland. People tell you how these things help them through difficult times; it's a great way to start a conversation."

The driving force behind the *Selwyn Centre for Ageing and Spirituality* is Selwyn Foundation chief executive and Anglican priest, Duncan Macdonald. He is passionate about advocating for older people and their spiritual needs, says Chris Perkins.

"I suspect one of the issues he sees is that residents in the growing number of for-profit aged care organisations may miss out on having their spiritual needs met. Because they are for profit and everyone is so busy, physical needs are being attended to but other services are cut back. Aged care is very tightly funded, and to make any profit is quite difficult.

"Yet there's good evidence to show that people whose spiritual needs are met are healthier. This might mean that in the long run aged care could prove cheaper if facilities looked after these needs."

gender, culture and care

Later this year the Selwyn Centre will host an international conference on ageing and spirituality. With its theme of *Gender, Culture and Care,* the four-day event will feature international speakers as well as local research. Around a dozen papers from New Zealand are scheduled, which Chris Perkins describes as exciting. "I've read some of the abstracts as they've come in. I'm actually amazed at how much is happening on the local scene."

One of the papers looks at Maori issues, another at Pacific peoples. "Often the focus on spirituality is only part of a much broader piece of research into other aspects of life. A major paper looks at the religious faith of people over 65, on how they use their beliefs and how they pray; it's huge by New Zealand standards."

Chris Perkins

A biennial event, the international conference has been held in Scotland and Australia, and this year a US venue was planned. "For some reason this couldn't happen, so Duncan Macdonald put up his hand and offered to hold it here."

Overseas presenters include US professor of psychiatry Jeff Levin from Duke University; theology professor and former mental-health nurse John Swinton from Aberdeen University; Rev Malcolm Goldsmith, a dementia researcher from Scotland; and Australian priest and nurse Elizabeth Mackinlay who heads the *Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies* in Canberra.

Chris Perkins is currently enrolled at the Canberra centre, completing a *Diploma in Ageing and Pastoral Studies*, and has hopes of going on to do a Master's with some research of her own, "in the big scheme of things".

personal odyssey

Her own spiritual path has continued to evolve. Brought up an Anglican, she joined a born-again Christian community in the US in the '70s and continued to count herself as a Christian until struck by a sudden bout of atheism.

"It was at the time George Bush was leading the US to war against Iraq" she says. "I wondered how this could be happening to a bunch of so-called Christian people. I suddenly felt this was all bollocks. The feeling had been rumbling away for a while, I think. But I'm obviously prone to sudden conversions.

"After a while though, it does leave a bit of a gap. You have to wonder if this is all there is. And I do believe there is more to life than just the material. So I started reading about spirituality in a broader way. I guess it comes down to what Elizabeth Mackinlay names as whatever brings meaning to your life, whatever helps you to transcend your difficulties. It's especially in relationships and in the world of nature that I find meaning. That may sound vague, but it sits OK with me."

Chris Perkins has recently run trial seminars for aged care staff employed by the Selwyn Foundation, helping them to talk about their own spirituality. "One of the things I've found in talking to staff is their discomfort in speaking about spiritual issues. It's been beaten out of them by the medical model, which is so scientific.

"What we're hoping to do is to allow aged care staff to talk about spirituality again, to reclaim it as part of their own lives – which is what they have to do before they can do it for anyone else. In a secular society that devalues old age and dismisses the non-material elements of life, a new focus on spirituality may make a world of difference." ■

Dennis Horton is Catholic representative on the advisory board of the Selwyn Centre for Ageing and Spirituality. His work for the Sisters of Mercy in Auckland includes responsibility for mission and values in their aged care facilities.

self-love, self-belief, and a burning desire for freedom

Glynn Cardy

My understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus is in part shaped by the motif of freedom. Jesus was a free man. Free in his mind and spirit. Those affronted by freedom killed him. The resurrection celebrates that freedom actually can't be killed. When freedom is repressed it goes underground only to emerge later in the lives and actions of others. The spirit of freedom is more powerful than all the machinations and weapons of human control and repression.

What are called 'The Appearance Stories', those post-Easter encounters that Mary, Peter, Thomas and other disciples had with a form of Jesus, address primarily the issue of fear. The form of Jesus that the disciples and Paul encountered was not a resuscitated corpse. It was a representation of the power of God's freedom overcoming the bondage of oppression's fear. This 're-present Jesus' engaged with disciples like Mary, Peter, and Thomas calling them into the spirit of freedom (their 'resurrection') and out of fear (their 'tomb'). Another way of talking about this – and a point where conservatives and I can use a similar metaphorical language – is that 'Jesus' lived on in his followers, and continues to do so today.

The hope of Easter therefore is not in the revivification of dead people in some sort of afterlife but in the irrepressible spirit of freedom, as revealed in Jesus, that triumphs over self-serving religious and political systems of domination. St Paul encouraged his Galatian converts to abide in their Easter faith when he said, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherein Christ has made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" *(Gal 5:1)*.

The question then arises, 'How?' How do we 'stand fast? How do we encourage ourselves and others into freedom? My response at this moment hinges around three words: love, believe, and rebel.

You've heard it said by the church to 'Love God and love your neighbour'. How often have you been told to love your self? Indeed the notion of self love has been so derided by the church it has become a euphemism for egotism.

The seeds of freedom are planted every time you encourage someone or thank someone. They are planted every time you tell someone they are a wonderful, beautiful human being worthy of respect, dignity, and praise. They are planted every time you encourage someone to be proud of who they are.

Pride is another one of those words derided by the church. Yet pride in one's self and one's achievements is very important, as hopefully every parent and school teacher knows. Every movement of liberation has started with pride – black pride, gay pride – pride in the wonderful person you are.

For freedom to flower and thrive we need to nurture people's sense of self worth. We also need to love and care for our selves. We need to be kind to

our selves. We need to look in the mirror and give thanks for all that we are – for we are a precious part of God's body.

You have heard it said by the church to 'Believe in God, believe in Jesus'. How often have you been told to believe in your self? Time and again the church has put down and derided humanity – 'the flesh', 'the world' – as sinful, corrupt, or evil. Time and again the church has told people they are worthless and in its liturgies told people to recite the same. Time and again the church has devalued the human body and the natural environment which is its home.

Enough! It has gone on long enough. We have had enough – more than enough! We are sick and tired of hearing our humanity devalued.

Believe in your humanity. At its best the doctrine of the Incarnation is not about an external saviour coming to earth to rescue us but about the presence of God being in our humanity. We have life-giving strands, threads of hope and grace, woven into our DNA. These are God threads. We are God-enriched, God-infused. Jesus said in effect, 'Here I am, no different from you, a human being who is aware of God in and through me'. The Incarnation is an affirmation of divinity being indivisible from humanity.

We don't need to believe in saviours from outer space, nor in the dictates of an unaccountable king-God, neither in that God's self-appointed messengers who want our minds and usually our money. We can instead believe in our own self and trust in our own self, the same one in whom God already dwells, believes and trusts in. Then we can use our self-belief to create the conditions for others' self-belief to emerge and be emboldened.

You have heard it sung by the church, "Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus". How often have you been told to disobey and rebel?

If you are older than 20 and have received a Sunday School education you will in all likelihood have been raised to obey. Religious education used to involve writing down from the blackboard all the things your teacher told you. 'God is our Father' you would write. You were meant to believe this, not to question it. Questioning was seen as a sign of disobedience.

I remember in the 1970s one of the trainee priests at St John's Theological College was dismissed by his bishop because he had the temerity to question the appropriateness of his accommodation. The bishop, when asked about this, said he did not want argumentative priests.

When I was involved in protests at Waitangi in the 1980s the Bishop of Wellington sent a letter to all his theological students telling them not to associate with me. He saw me as a rebellious anarchist. Depending on your definitions the Bishop was probably right.

On a gloomy day I am tempted to think that the whole purpose of religious education is to tame, to control, and to quench the fiery unpredictable Spirit of God. When J.K. Baxter says the Spirit "blows inside and outside the fences" the institution's response is to build a bigger fence and try to ignore what's beyond it.

I long for a day when all are taught not only to question our teachers and institutions but to practise disobedience. I long for the day when students are rewarded for courage of thought and deed. I long for the day when we are taught about all our rebellious forebears who dreamed and wrote and marched and suffered. I long for the day when prayer will not be thought of as a bow-your-head-to-the-boss recite-what-you-are-told exercise but a preparatory discipline for the unleashing of love/justice infested change.

In the meantime these three remain: self-love, self-belief, and a burning desire for freedom. ■

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"be raised up"

Kath Rushton explores this phrase in Mark's Gospel whose meaning is often blurred in translation

During my holiday in January a friend introduced me to the books of the Australian writer, Tim Winton. My favourite was his award-winning novel, *Dirt Music*. I have to admit to being disappointed with its ending. I went back into the novel searching for clues I might have missed and savouring again what at times is sheer poetry.

Like Winton's novel, the author of the gospel according to *Mark*, from which the Sunday gospel readings of this liturgical year are taken, ends astonishingly: *So they (the women) went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid* (*16:8*). This ending found in the earliest, best manuscripts of *Mark* must have been deemed so unsatisfactory, and even shocking, that in some later manuscripts an extra 12 verses, the so called "longer ending", were added to tidy it up!

The great Catholic biblical scholar Raymond Brown suggests that those for whom *Mark* wrote must have included Christians who had suffered and failed. For these, this Gospel offered hope since it tells that Jesus himself did not want to drink the cup and even his closest disciples failed. Its Passion story would have special meaning for those who seek to follow Jesus but find the cross they carry too heavy – those who cry out from the bottom of their hearts his last words on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Jesus is portrayed as more alone and abandoned than in the other Gospels.

Perhaps, then, in the light of all that, Mark's communities needed to be assured that Jesus, who had been raised, was not only risen among them but raised them up too. As I went back over Winton's novel in the light of its ending, I thought perhaps the original stark ending of *Mark* was designed to send us to look for clues we might have missed in its unfolding story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We are used to applying to Jesus the words "he was *raised up*" from suffering and death, but not to others and certainly not to our own lives.

At the end of *Mark*, we are told Jesus *has been raised* (*egeiro*). The same Greek word is applied to the mother-in-law of Peter, the paralytic, the man with the withered hand, the daughter of a synagogue official and Bartimaeus. These characters evoke the mystery of the risen Jesus in the suffering of their lives. It gets lost in translation in their stories, as it does in ours.

the mother-in-law of peter (1:29-34)

In the first half of *Mark*, Jesus is often in, or near, a house (*oikos*). For early Christians, this probably evoked their local church community because for the first 300 years Christians met in houses for worship and prayer. In the first house mentioned in this gospel, that of Peter and Andrew, Jesus heals and *raises up* the mother-in-law of Peter. Then she serves (*diakoneo*) them. That Greek verb is used of Jesus (*10:45*) and becomes a standard term for Christian ministry (*Acts 6:2*). In the Gospels, women exemplify this ministry (*Mk 15:41; Lk 10:40; Jn 12:2*).

the paralytic (2:1-12)

Jesus returned to Capernaum and when it became known that he was at home (*oikos*), four men brought a

paralytic to him in an unexpected way. Because of the crowds they unroofed the roof above him and digging through let the man down on a mat at the feet of Jesus. Jesus *raised him up* (*2:9, 11, 12*) and sent him to serve, in that he told him to go home (*oikos*). So in the second house, we find the same threefold pattern which calls the Christian community to heal, to be *raised up* and to serve.

the man with the withered hand (3:1-6)

By this stage of *Mark*, there has been a series of controversies around Jesus' declaration that he is the Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus enters the synagogue on the Sabbath. There, the presence of a man with a withered hand, instead of being the focus of their compassion, becomes an opportunity for the Pharisees to bring a legal charge against Jesus.

In full public view, Jesus takes the initiative. He says to the man: "Be *raised up* here before us." Jesus not only heals the withered hand but brings about in this case, and in all his healing, a restoration to fullness of life and wellbeing. Sickness or deformity of any kind was regarded in the time of Jesus as punishment for sin. Such a one experienced shame and often was excluded from the community.

the daughter of the synagogue official (5:35-43)

Only Peter, James and John, the inner circle of the disciples are with Jesus in the house of synagogue official, as they will be at the Transfiguration, on the Mount of Olives and at the agony in Gethsemane. Their presence signals a key event is about to happen. Just as he had done for the mother-in-law of Peter, Jesus takes the daughter of the synagogue official by the hand and speaks with authority: "Little girl, I say to you, *be raised up*." Once again the same word used for Jesus' Resurrection appears in this healing, surely foreshadowing his final victory over sickness, death and all effects of sin.

bartimaeus (10:46-52)

In *Mark*, Jesus' journey to Jerusalem was preceded by the gradual healing of the blind man (*8:22-26*) and ended before the city with an instantaneous and complete healing of the blind Bartimaeus. *Mark* has framed this journey thus because 'on the way' Jesus has been teaching, but the disciples only 'see partially'. They do not grasp who Jesus is and what it means to follow him for only after the Resurrection will their eyes be opened fully.

One of the promises associated with the coming of the Messiah was the opening of the eyes of the blind. Bartimaeus sat by the wayside calling out. Jesus tells those around him: "Call him." They reassure the blind man and say to him: "Take heart; *be raised up*, he is calling you." Jesus says: "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Then, Bartimaeus follows Jesus 'on the way' of discipleship.

lost in translation

Attention to how *Mark* uses a particular word which weaves throughout the Gospel shows connections between Jesus *being raised up* and certain characters too *being raised up*. More often than not this is lost in translation from the original ancient language to English. We today face a translation task, a task we must not lose or obscure in translation for the *raised up* Jesus comes among us yet again this Easter season, invites us *to be raised up* and as local church to *raise up* those we meet each day. ■

My Weak God

My God is not a God who is hard, unreachable, insensible, stoical, incapable of suffering.

My God is weak. He is a member of my race, and I of His.

My God experienced human joy, friendship, the delights of earth and everything in it.

My God was hungry, tired and sleepy. My God felt things.

He was nursed at the breast of His mother and felt and drank in all the tenderness of a woman.

My God loved everything human: things and people, bread and wine, saints and sinners.

My God was a person of His time. He dressed like everyone else. He spoke the language of His native land. He worked with His hands.

He died young because He was sincere. They killed Him because, in their eyes, He was betraying the truth.

But my God died without hating anyone. He died excusing His killers, which is even greater than forgiving them.

My God is weak but He conquered death, and from His hands sprang a new flower – the Resurrection.

So many people find it hard to accept my weak God, my God who weeps, my God who does not defend Himself.

It is hard for them to accept my God, abandoned by God; my God who had to die in order to triumph; my God who made a thief, a criminal, the first canonised saint of His church, my young God who died accused of being a political agitator.

It is difficult to accept my weak God; my God who suffered the sting of temptation; my God who sweated blood before accepting His Father's will.

My weak God is difficult to accept for those who go on dreaming of a God who is not like humankind. In fact, you cannot understand my God at all unless you understand

LOVE.

Juan Arias

a provocative book on christian feminism

Maid in God's Image: In Search of the Unruly Woman
Verena Wright
Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 2008.
Review: Sandra Winton

At the time of the last election I spoke with a number of women who were shocked by the vehemence with which men spoke to them of their hatred of our last Prime Minister – because she was a woman. It seemed at times as if legislation which I think would not have had the same impact under a male leader, was experienced as intolerable female (maternal) control. The male responses seemed released from a deep place of anger and fear.

In this book Verena Wright explores the fear of the female on which patriarchy is based. She sees it as essentially related to the fear of female menstruation with its power, mystery and polluting quality. She explores this through re-reading, through feminist eyes, an interesting array of texts. Some are secular, notable Stephen King's *Carrie* and its film version, *Jane Eyre*, Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ,* and the book and film versions of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. She also brings to bear the same perspective on church texts ancient and modern, art and ceremony. We may not always agree with her conclusions but she provokes thought.

In the latter part of the book she moves on to look at positive female archetypes as potential sources of life and energy for the church. Her basic thesis is that the very female power that is feared by patriarchy could, if received openly and valued, be a positive source of life for both church and planet.

This is a worthy conclusion and one that I cannot argue with. While there was quite a lot to interest me in this book, there were places where I found the argument not tight. I would also have liked to see more convincing examples of the power and value of 'unruly women': the Scriptures, history and life are full of their stories.

Verena Wright teaches a module on the *Unruly Woman* at Portsmouth, and I can see this material being very stimulating as part of such a course. It is also thought-provoking in book form. Wright's eclecticism suggests a mind looking widely at art, literature and church at the same time as it contributes to a sense of a 'bitsy' argument, sometimes lacking intellectual rigour.

It is unlikely to convince a reader hostile to feminism; it will be less satisfying to those who have read some of the great feminist thinkers; it may best appeal for use by a discussion group or to readers less exposed to feminist thinking – of which today there are sadly many. ■

a refreshing text on christian apologetics

The Reason for God: belief in an age of scepticism
Timothy Keller
Dutton (Penguin Group USA) Inc. 2008
Approx $49.99 (hbk)
Review: Mike Crowl

Back in 2005, in an article entitled, *One University under God?*, the prominent academic, Stanley Fish, wrote: "When Jacques Derrida died I was called by a reporter who wanted to know what would succeed high theory and the triumvirate of race, gender and class as the centre of intellectual energy in the academy. I answered like a shot: religion."

Fish is quoted by Keller in the Introduction to his 2008 book on apologetics. But this is unlike any apologetics book you might have previously read, just as Keller himself is a quite unusual Presbyterian minister. Highly educated, he nevertheless says he learned most from his nine years ministering at a small town parish in Virginia. They taught him to be 'clear'.

From there he went to Manhattan, a place supposedly more secular than any in the country, and started a church ten years ago which, rather than failing dismally, has so flourished that some 6,000 people attend five services on an average Sunday. Furthermore, the church hosts a number of daughter churches, and is planting other new churches in various large cities around the world.

As Keller says: "Even as more and more people identify themselves as 'having no religious preference,' certain churches with supposedly obsolete beliefs in an infallible Bible and miracles are growing in the United States and exploding in Africa, Latin America, and Asia."

Keller's book is simply structured. He gives an overview of his own background and of the current state of religious life today, then follows this with two long sections entitled, respectively, *The Leap of Doubt* and *The Reasons for Faith*. There is a short 'Intermission' in between. The first section looks at typical questions asked by people searching for the truth, but it's the answers that are different. Not that Keller is any way unorthodox. Rather, he relates the questions to the world these people live in and argues within the post-modern, secular, scientific and even anti-God climate that prevails. His answers are the most refreshing I've read in an apologetics book in a long time.

Throughout the book, Keller tackles the well-known names who argue against religion and finds many of them wanting. But he invariably treats them with respect, and understands that most of them are also on a search to understand what the Universe is all about. ▷

two novels backgrounding the childhood and the call of Jesus

Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt
Author: Anne Rice
Christ the Lord: The Road to Cana
Publisher: Chatto & Windus
Review: Elisabeth Nicholson

A few months ago I grabbed a book off the fiction shelves in the local library simply because the title *Christ the Lord Out of Egypt* caught my eye. Being in a hurry, I didn't stop to explore the book further and I knew nothing of the author. This proved to be a blessing because had I realised that the book was a novel about the early life of Jesus written as autobiography, and that the author was best known as a writer of horror novels, I would certainly have returned the book to its shelf, possibly tearing my garments and crying 'blasphemy'! In fact the book proved a delight, as did the sequel, *The Road to Cana*, which I requested as soon as it was published last year, and which deals with the life of Jesus up to the beginning of his public ministry.

How did an author specialising in the field of vampires and the like come to write such books, on such a subject? Anne Rice, was born in the 1940s into a fervent and traditional Catholic household. She was a devout child, but, exposed to the wild world of the '60s at university, she became an atheist. She sees her horror novels as a form of mourning for her lost faith and her quest for meaning in a world without God. Writing them involved her more and more deeply in historical research, reaching back to the first century and beyond.

In 1998 she returned to her Catholic faith, (a journey she has chronicled in a spiritual odyssey entitled *Out of Darkness*). In 2002 she decided to put aside everything else to write the book she most deeply wanted to write, the life of Jesus Christ. This meant several years of study, of the Bible, of the work of Scripture scholars of all persuasions, and of Jewish history.

What of the books themselves? *Out of Egypt* takes the reader into a child's world; a world of large extended families, different generations living in close proximity, often under the same roof (very different from the nuclear family situation I had always imagined for Jesus). A happy rural world, on the whole, despite political disturbances and Roman overlords. Above all, a Jewish world, where religion was paramount, its laws and its feasts permeating the whole of life, where the psalms were sung as naturally as pop songs today.

It is in this setting that the child Jesus begins the journey we all must make, the journey to discover who we are and what is the purpose of our life. But his journey is far greater – a child both human and divine – so much to understand, to learn, so much to grow into.

The Road to Cana takes up the story in the winter before the beginning of the public ministry. Jesus is a man of 30, middle-aged by the standards of his time. Most of his contemporaries, and even his juniors are married now, the fathers of families – and still he waits, living quietly, working as a carpenter. He is more and more certain of who he is but still waiting for his Father to show him how his mission is to be fulfilled. This is an adult world we enter now, darker and more complex: a world still filled with relatives and acquaintances, a world where it is hard for a man to be alone. The story takes us to the Jordan and the baptism by John, out into the desert, and finally to Cana and the loving response to his mother's plea.

These books are novels, just stories, though the fruit of much prayer and research. But sometimes truth is more powerfully conveyed by fable and story than by cold fact. Someone once wrote "all truth is shadow except the last truth". The shadow truths in Anne Rice's books have deepened my faith and understanding of the last, the ultimate truth, the truth who is a person – Christ the Lord. ■

▷ The second section of the book argues for God, and also lays out the Gospel in a way that will make sense to people brought up in a secular environment. For me, a practising Christian for most of my life, this section elucidated elements of the Gospel in a way that was quite eye-opening.

This probably isn't a book to give to someone who is unaware of the big debates, or who needs some straightforward answers to help them step into the Kingdom. This is a book that expects people will have thought long and hard about the great issues of life and who have not yet found an answer that satisfies. ■

when does debt become dangerous – and what's the cure?

Crosscurrents
John Honoré

This column has often commented about the convoluted language used by economists who invent expressions like toxic debt, nonliquid assets and unsubordinated notes to describe the problem of debt. So it was a delightful change to delve into Margaret Atwood's intriguing book, *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth.* Delightful because Atwood, a celebrated novelist and poet, suggests that such language hides the reality of the growing problem of Western capitalism based on debt.

Debt used to be something to be avoided and considered as potentially dangerous. Now it is viewed as the instrument of wealth creation, using cheap credit that enables investment banks to profit. Being in debt has come to be seen as entirely normal to the point of extending credit to people who have no hope of repaying – the beginning of the credit crunch. Debts have become complex financial instruments barely understood by borrowers. Ironically, government spending is based on debt, so that society can in effect borrow itself out of bankruptcy. A logic hard to explain when one remembers that high borrowing helped bring about the Great Depression.

Implicit in Atwood's view is the idea that thrift and saving may become (or must become) the new policy as against the urge to borrow more, helped by reducing the cost of borrowing to near zero. If this does not happen, people could find their wealth shrinking as the value of their savings is reduced and retirement becomes an impossible dream. This situation is the seedbed of discontent and trust in government diminishes.

Atwood extrapolates her argument to the necessity of repaying debt that is associated with the exploitation of the planet's dwindling resources. She suggests that there must eventually be a reckoning. If society is unwilling or unable to pay back its debts then the planet will be unforgiving. Her language is clear and convincing. It is a reminder that all great truths are simple and need not be couched in incomprehensible jargon that only masks the problem of our reliance and belief in unending debt.

reading versus I.T.

Are books being superseded by the computer screen? The younger generation now use the screen with a digital skill that is astonishing. The search machines like *Google* supply facts, games and enjoyment which make light of doing school projects and assignments. The submitted work is accompanied with pictures and graphs and the end result is a neat dossier-type document, visually appealing. But does it have the depth of knowledge acquired by reading a book?

The once loved book is being replaced by information technology. Books no longer have pride of place in the home. The computer however is constantly in use particularly among the young. It is becoming indispensable for information. It rewards participation and quickly gives access to the subject but it does not engender contemplation. Internet use undermines the reading habit which is becoming an increasingly arcane hobby. "Read in order to live" wrote Flaubert, but reading books for pleasure, or otherwise, is on the decline.

Advocates of this extraordinary new technology already speak of replacing rather than supplementing the printed word. In regard to knowledge, there is now a marked divide between those who get information from the screen and those who rely on the book. If you belong to the former category, instead of a reader, you become a user, almost going on line to avoid reading. The tactile experience of a book, the feel, the weight, the form is being lost, let alone the knowledge.

One can sense an impatience among the young towards books and an unwillingness to grapple with difficult texts. They are now surrounded by cell phones, iPods and text messaging to the detriment of 'close reading'. The computer supplies information, the book supplies wisdom. Surely books, on which all learning is built, are not to be phased out in favour of the screen.

who are the real racists?

The Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's address to the United Nations conference in Geneva, on racism and ways to combat the problem, created the expected furore. The conference had already been weakened by the Israeli supporters' boycott, fearing that Israel would be singled out for racism. The Israeli stranglehold on the West Bank and Gaza will continue. All UN edicts will again be ignored.

New Zealand dutifully toed the line, with no regard for the true purpose of the conference – to discuss the problem, whether it applied to Israel or any other nation state. Foreign Minister Murray McCully bowed to US pressure and frankly stated that the conference may be used for 'anti-Israel' views. Green Party spokesman, Keith Locke, responded, "Pulling out of the conference is an unacceptable insult to the UN, just when our former Prime Minister Helen Clark is taking up a major UN post."

Once again, the old imperialist states of Europe, the US and now Australia and New Zealand ignore the injustices being perpetrated on Palestine. Is there any doubt that Israel could be accused of being a racist state comparable to apartheid South Africa? The Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, spoke the truth that the British, European and American apologists for racism dare not not utter. ■

global warming – the moral implications

Climate change has been responsible for the emergence of what is arguably the most significant moral issue of the 21st Century. There is a need to recognise what human beings have done unwisely in the past and to determine what changes in our way of acting need to be made planet-wide.

Recognising the moral imperatives of global warming does not give us the usual satisfaction of judging ourselves to be morally superior to the offenders responsible for an unacceptable state of affairs. We readers of *Tui Motu* normally criticise folk such as obstinate Lefebvrists or wrongheaded exercisers of authority in the Vatican. The truth is that in the climate change crisis we ourselves are as much offenders as anyone else. Oil company CEOs and world leaders of the past are not the only ones to blame.

Our offences are of course much smaller in scale. But we have cheerfully burned up in our cars a slice of the unrenewable oil resources of the planet. We have had the heating on in our homes at times when the weather was quite mild. We have made unnecessary journeys by plane. Seemingly unimportant actions in themselves, when combined with the actions of others they are part of a contribution to the global warming phenomenon that humankind is now realising it must deal with.

Is there indeed a global warming phenomenon? There have been dissident voices claiming that global warming is not a serious issue. But they have become a rapidly shrinking set of voices. The scientific community is virtually unanimous that global warming is a massive and imminent threat.

If by the end of this century no significant remedy is found, 600 million people will have been forced out by rising sea levels from where they currently live in such places as the deltas of the Irrawaddy in Myanmar and the Ganges in Bangladesh. Others will have been driven by drought from vast areas of farmland in sub-Saharan Africa. These human beings and their offspring will be looking for new homes.

From a purely selfish point of view, think of the threat this constitutes to New Zealand. By world standards our country is thinly populated. Tens of millions of folk will push their way in and the way of life here will be radically altered – humanly speaking for the worse.

But as Christians we cannot view the threat merely in selfish terms. We are bound by our faith to care for our neighbour, for those with whom we share this planet. Global warming puts us face to face with massive moral responsibilities. What can we do? As individuals, maybe very little. As responsible citizens, quite a lot.

A major meeting for setting world-wide policies will be held in Copenhagen in December. New Zealand is a major emitter of greenhouse gases, through the enteric methane produced by farm animals. The killers to be found on our farmlands are, believe it or not, not wolves but sheep and cattle. No way has yet been found to reduce the enteric methane produced by farm animals once it reaches the atmosphere. There are a series of interesting ideas in the labs. But nothing that is commercially available. The world community will be asking at Copenhagen can it afford to let us New Zealanders have 40 million woolly companions with us on our two islands.

At Copenhagen, Tim Groser, our Climate Change Minister, will be called on to make on behalf of our nation various brave and costly commitments. Let us see that, whatever party we voted for at the last election, he has our unselfish support. ■

Humphrey O'Leary

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

A Mothers Journal . . .

Kaaren Mathias

A cup of tea with Christine... It involves tea leaves, a tea pot, a small milk jug and usually a rather delicious snack on a plate too. There is talking, laughing and sitting still briefly (interjected with jumping up to extract the baby who has backed herself under the sofa and a bit later, to find the scissors for a 6-year-old's cutting-out-project). Afternoon tea with Christine means no reheating with a microwave and no packets of biscuits shipped from across the oceans or mass produced in a factory that also processes nuts and milk solids. It tastes better than my usual squeezed tea bag version slurped on the run. It takes time – it tastes good.

A visit to Hinewai Reserve near Akaroa... It involves walking down from the car park to the Visitors' Centre with little feet sliding and scampering on the grassy path. A sign cautions that fossil fuel powered vehicles are no part of the concept of this place where New Zealand native bush regenerates from scrubby farmland with minimal human intervention. Over the last 20 years 1000 acres of paddock and gorse have turned into a rich network of streams, kanuka and young podocarps. It has involved lots of possum trapping and working for love. The beautiful birdsong, many birds and young, bright-eyed kahikatea tell a story that I hope inspires many borderline NZ farmlands to be allowed to return to bush. It's a slow business. It takes time. It is good.

Going to a play with Great Granny... It involves leaving 15 minutes sooner than we normally would. The box of popcorn gets left behind in the scurry getting ready. We walk very slowly inside – my usual half-run tethered to the shuffle of two walking sticks. Impatient children get frustrated and complain about how annoying it is taking slow Granny on our outings. I wonder how to pass on the idea that most of us one day will need to go very slowly. How do we teach empathy and kindness? Everyone enjoys the play. It is good.

We gather around the flickering candles... and icons at the altar of St Mary's in Addington, Christchurch. Once a month we meet for a Taizé service with chanting and songs, prayer and silence. It is a balm, a pond of reflection and an offering. My nine-year-old reads and keeps the baby entertained at the back. "I've never been in such a quiet church," she whispers. It is slow and quiet. It is good.

God's love is around us. God moves slowly and gently. Tea, totaras, twilight years and Taizé infusing, life giving – the warm tang of a cup of tea. ■