Tui Motu

InterIslands

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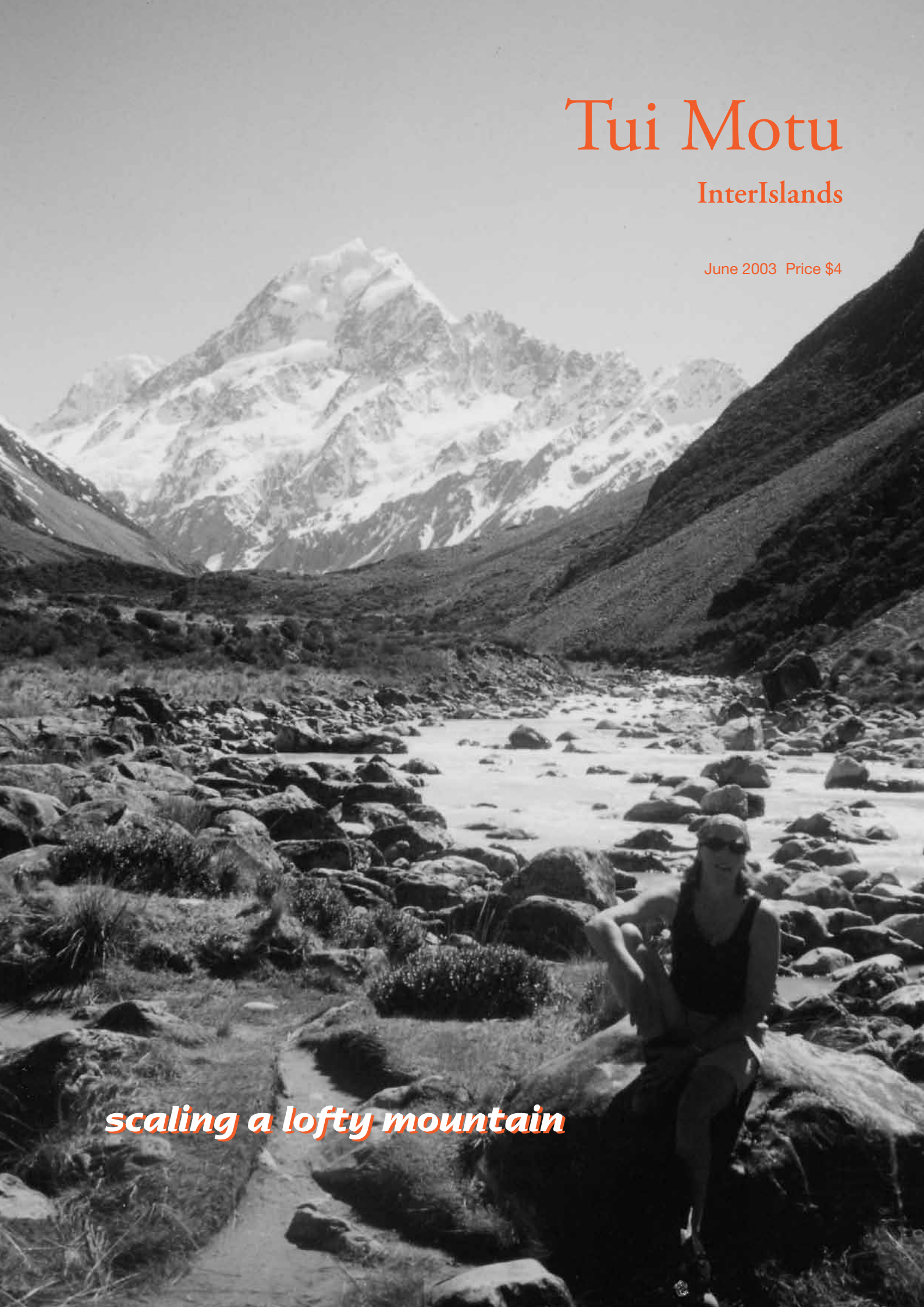

scaling a lofty mountain

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Supplement:
Index of major articles appearing in *Tui Motu* from the start, September 1997, to December 2002.

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Death with Dignity

Our focus this month is the Euthanasia Bill, presently before Parliament. We have invited contributions from a doctor with experience in palliative care, a priest specialist in bioethics and a widow who knows what it is like to see one's beloved suffer and die.

The Abortion Act of the 1970s is a good precedent to look at. That Act passed with all sorts of safeguards to ensure that abortions were only allowable in special circumstances. Those provisos went out the window within a few years, so that the present situation is virtually abortion on demand. The Euthanasia Bill opens up the prospect of yet another slippery slope towards absolute licence.

Behind all the arguments on the whys and wherefores of how far to go in relieving human suffering are basic questions on the meaning of life itself: on whether life just happens or whether it is God-given. The Christian ethic has for 2000 years provided our society with a basis for determining our moral foundations. No longer. That base has been largely undermined by the spread of secular humanism. Whether a medical intervention is justified or not is now more likely to be determined on utilitarian grounds than by recourse to an ethical tradition.

There is a real danger that public opinion over the next few months will be shaped and cajoled by pragmatic judgments with little reference to long term consequences, let alone ethical principles. "If we can put Fido out of his misery with a quick jab, why can't we do it to Grandma?" How do you answer an argument like that if the questioner neither believes in God nor sees any essential difference between grandma and the family pet?

We are reaping the whirlwind of a century of turning away from Christian belief and practice. Perhaps if the churches were to speak with one voice in defence of the sanctity of human life, people might take some notice in the way they did for the Hikoi of Hope. The future care and well-being of the sick and elderly in New Zealand depends on getting this one right. ■

Celebration at Blenheim

Catholic priests in the Western world are sometimes seen as an endangered species. Vocations have been on the decline for 30 or 40 years. Priestly celibacy and the exclusive maleness of the Catholic clergy are under attack, in the church as well as outside. Add to that the appalling scandals that have erupted across the English-speaking world, and you have a recipe for serious demoralisation.

Therefore, it was a happy decision on the part of the Catholic bishops to hold an assembly for all New Zealand diocesan clergy last month. And by all accounts it was a wonderful and enjoyable occasion for all who went. It is described by Alan Roberts on pages 6-7.

Our priests deserve nothing less. For the most part they are dedicated servants of their people and work hard. But the Catholic priesthood has inherited an unfortunate image of 'one set apart'. Jesus was certainly not 'set apart'. He socialised, he empathised, he identified with, he was always available. It was being so involved that made him vulnerable.

Priests too are vulnerable people. Theirs will always be a difficult and demanding vocation. That is why meetings such as the recent one in Blenheim where priests meet, celebrate and reflect on their calling, are so important – for them and for us.

M.H.

Dying – in the context of Christian faith

Dying is messy!

In asking whether assisted suicide is morally right or morally wrong it is very easy to lose sight of the people who are chronically and terminally ill – individuals just like us who once pursued careers, dreamed dreams, raised families and worked hard. As we go about our daily lives theirs are coming to an end. Many people fear that end.

Those who advocate physician-assisted suicide frequently limit their focus to the messiness of terminal illness and death to support their call for euthanasia. In the world of the sick there is the disintegration of bodily systems, isolation and vulnerability. In the world of the dying these distressing signs of decay coalesce and bring powerlessness, dependence and loss.

Increasingly, so the argument goes, when faced with terminal or chronic illness, people should have the right to strike pre-emptively at this suffering by choosing to 'die with dignity' by way of assistance from a physician or healthcare professional.

Dying is a challenge!

The care of the dying is all-consuming and emotional for patient, caregiver and family alike, because the reality of death confronts all with the ultimate questions in life. Nevertheless, precisely in this challenge lie very important possibilities of healing and integration for the patient and for their loved ones.

That is why effective palliative and hospice care combines the very best of medical science and nursing practice with the insights of an interdisciplinary team in order to enable the dying to bring healing to their life's journey as well as to their loved ones.

Dying is an encounter with community!

The act of euthanasia not only 'short-circuits' the possibility of a final maturation for the terminally ill and their caregivers, it also fundamentally separates the moment of death from what has gone before. Assisted suicide deeply harms the relationships that have integrated the individual into the community, such as family, role, friends, society, etc. To see death as meaningless is to fundamentally deny the relational quality of life and to fail to be fully aware of the implications of such relatedness.

Just as an individual's life can be a source of rich blessing for the community so can their death, but only when the community is fully present to the one who is dying. At its heart, the death of Jesus is such an encounter with community. He does not die alone – his mother and a few friends are fully present to his suffering.

Their presence gives him strength as he yields his spirit to the Father. Their compassionate presence also gives him strength to show compassion and forgiveness to those who have inflicted death upon him, as well as to those disciples who could not stay the distance of grief.

Dying is an encounter with Christ!

It takes time and wisdom to recognise that our life and our death and that of our brothers and sisters actually form a unity in Christ. In the unique witness of Christ we begin to see how life and death are not distinct but rather form a fundamental unity.

Indeed the unity and integrity of the Lord's life and death act as a model and exemplar because, in Christ, we can readily see how the decisions of his lifetime coalesce into his great gift of redemptive healing. At another level we can also see how, in the individual decisions and moments of healing in his life and ministry, his death was actually being rehearsed.

While the euthanasia debate challenges us to understand the wider culture it also calls us to deepen our understanding of death as the ultimate encounter with Christ.

Michael McCabe

Fr Michael McCabe is director of the Nathaniel Centre, the National bioethics centre, Wellington

Tui Motu-InterIslands

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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Training the church's leaders

I read Teresa Homan's letter in the May issue of *Tui Motu* with a mixture of delight and dismay.

Delight because of her inclusive model of parish/church. Yes, the role of the Baptised is for 'full and active participation'. Yes, we do want others to discover 'their own particular gifts or charisms and enable them to use them in the service of the Kingdom of God'. Yes, we need to 'foster small faith communities within all present parish communities, to support them and minister to one another'. Yes, we do not want leaders 'put on us from the outside'... and so on.

My dismay surfaced when I read 'training lay people with one foot in the camp of control, we still want to single out some for special tasks such as pastoral leaders'. The pastoral leaders in training in the *Launch Out* programme have all come from parishes. These people have not been singled out. Every person who has applied for *Launch Out* has been interviewed. Most are in the programme.

I do wonder how the writer understands 'leadership'. If it is perceived as power over, or power against, or totally hierarchical, then indeed we do have reason to be cautious. But the model of leadership promoted and encouraged is to enable, to nurture, to discern, to encourage, to enhance, to serve. It would seem to me we should welcome such leadership as we search for a community of leaders within each parish, and within each small faith community in the parish.

In the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus highlights a different order when James and John wanted places of privilege in the Kingdom. Jesus gives a stunning reversal of the normal cultural expectations. The leader is to play the role of servant – the community's agenda is the leader's agenda. God plays no favourites.

The training programme in this Archdiocese is still in its infancy. It will continue to evolve through a process of evaluation and critique. But we have started and go forward full of hope. Let us be creative, open, welcoming, adventurous, brave. Let us listen with our ears and not our fears.

Joan McFetridge, *Wellington*

Service in business class

Recently my wife and I enjoyed the benefits of an upgade to business class on a ten hour flight. The service was

letters

instant and magnificent, the allocated space seemed obscenely large, and the clouds and sky were definitely brighter and bluer than seen out of the windows in cattle class. This was also the first opportunity I had had to catch up on April's *Tui Motu*, and no, unfortunately, it wasn't part of the reading material supplied gratis.

Dr Cassidy's article on washing of the feet held my interest, especially the detail of the handicapped man who tenderly washed the feet of his carer. Ironically, in the same edition Paul Shannahan SM began his trip to China by experiencing the same luxury of a long haul flight upgrade.

As I observed the attention of the flight attendants around me it became almost too easy to make comparisons and judgments about service, both offered and received. This is business class after all – the clients pay to be pampered, the staff are paid to provide it. The frequently flying European businessman who's relaxed and familiar interaction with a member of the female cabin crew extended to casually resting his hand on her bottom, the woman who had the sleek look that only being bathed and buffed in money can bring... did they warrant that apparently small percentage more consideration than we were getting?

However I also became aware of the frequent care and concern the cabin crew offered to an elderly woman who could only move slowly and laboriously and presumably needed the extra space to provide some measure of comfort.

Judging and pidgeon-holing come very easily. Who knows what service each of these people – both crew and travellers – proffer in their daily lives?

Mike Marshall, *Christchurch*

Gandhi and women

You listed good works of Mahatma Gandhi as a peace worker (*Tui Motu* May). He may have advocated equality for women but what he did was exploit many many young women (often under 16) with his strange brahmacharya experiments. He would develop intense intimate emotional relationships concurrently and consecutively with these women/teenagers in his ashram, resulting in fierce jealousies and much heartbreak including in his wife who was present throughout. While he controlled his "responses", he nevertheless sexually abused a great many young women. He has been called a brahmacharya-style womaniser.

It seems to be common for charismatic leaders, who often do much good in the world, to sexually exploit women in one way or another; it is a given that men in power have additional sexual access to women. From Gandhi and Martin Luther King, who was also a clergy abuser, back throughout secular and religious history, these men including some who achieved sainthood, at most incur some remark that they are "flawed" as if they had a little snag in their coat sleeves.

But the denial or omission of the actual truth of their behaviour, let alone consequences in the lives of those they have abused, then does additional damage to the whole culture. The deep harm done to women somehow doesn't seem to count. Why would this be?

A M Woods, *Wellington*

Bible Society ad

A renewed threat of nuclear conflict

We have been considering for 50 years, and especially since 1989, the following question. Will we eliminate nuclear weapons, or will every capable nation seek to have its own? There are 35 countries in the world with significant nuclear energy programmes, but without nuclear weapons. If even a few of these become nuclear powers, the nuclear disarmament option would virtually vanish and the chances of nuclear weapon use would increase.

The present leadership of the United States is pursuing the development of small, "useable" nuclear weapons, and has publicly reserved the right to use them in such specific situations as "in the event of surprising military developments." The difference in the US approach to Iraq versus North Korea only strengthens the conviction of some nations that the only hope for independence lies in possession of nuclear weapons.

We stand today on the brink of hyper-proliferation and perhaps of repeating the third actual use of nuclear weapons. As the mayor of Hiroshima, I can assure you that the path we are walking leads to unspeakable violence and misery for us all. The United States, the prime mover in all things nuclear, relentlessly and blatantly intends to maintain, develop and even use these heinous, illegal weapons. Given US intransi-gence, other nuclear-weapon states cling to their weapons, and several non-nuclear-weapon states appear to be re-evaluating the need for such weapons.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon the rest of the world to stand up now and tell all of our military leaders that we refuse to be threatened or protected by nuclear weapons. We refuse to live in a world of continually recycled fear and hatred. We refuse to see each other as enemies. We demand immediate freedom from the nuclear threat. Nuclear weapons are heinous, cruel, inhumane weapons that threaten our entire species.

We demand here and now that, when the States Parties review the *Non-Proliferation Treaty* in 2005, you take that opportunity to pass a call for the immediate de-alerting of all nuclear weapons, for unequivocal action toward dismantling and destroying all nuclear weapons in accordance with a clearly stipulated timetable, and for negotiations on a universal Nuclear Weapons Convention establishing a verifiable and irreversible regime for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Our immediate target is nuclear weapons, but our long-term aim is a new world order. In this new world, no man is foolish enough to kill or be killed to defend his master's wealth or ego. We seek a world in which no man, woman or child goes to bed wondering whether he or she will live through the hunger, pestilence, or violence of the next day; a world in which we look around this room and see not murdering, thieving enemies against whom we have to defend ourselves but brothers and sisters on whom our own safety, security, survival and enjoyment depend.

Please support the campaign in any way you can. Let us work together for the sake of our children and grandchildren. Let us ban nuclear weapons in 2005. ■

Promoter's Corner: spreading the good word

We're always looking to increase sales for two critical reasons. First, the more people read TM, the greater its influence for good; second, sales generate the funds for survival and development. So any initiative likely to increase readership must be highly rated.

What do you think of this one? A reader who is already a convinced and committed reader is very likely to have family or friends who could well be too. To discover whether this is actually the case a potential reader needs some conversation, encouragement and an opportunity to become acquainted with TM. A person–to–person approach is needed. We know it works because there are some outstanding examples of it happening on record. Its virtue is its simplicity; no grandstanding, just approaching likely readers that you know. Would you like to do this for *Tui Motu*?

If you would, then we want to make it easy for you. For three months or six (your call) an extra copy of TM would be posted to your address with your customary copy. During the month following you would approach someone to talk about your own appreciation of TM, and if there is any sign of genuine interest, you would offer them your spare copy. At your discretion you would follow up later in the month and ask them their opinion of it. This would enable us to reach dozens more people throughout the country, giving them a chance to taste and see.

If this sounds like you, please write, right away, to *Tui Motu*, '*two for the price of one*', Freepost, 97 407, P.O. Box 6404 North Dunedin; and say: "*yes – for three/six months, please!*"

Tom Cloher

Timothy Radcliffe OP, principal speaker at the national assembly of priests in Blenheim

Scaling a lofty mountain

Alan Roberts reports on the assembly of Catholic priests and bishops, which took place in Blenheim in April.

All who attended returned home deeply satisfied by a unique and renewing experience

Ki te tuoho koe, me he maunga teitei
If you bow your head, let it be to a lofty mountain

Towards the end of April last, nearly 200 of the nation's priests gathered at Blenheim for five days. This gathering, the first of its kind in New Zealand's history, grew out of the bishops' desire to do something constructive for diocesan priests by way of education, affirmation and encouragement. All who attended would agree they achieved their goal.

The invited speaker was an English priest, Fr Timothy Ratcliffe, former Master General of the Dominicans. A speaker with extensive learning is always good. Such a speaker with worldwide experience is a bonus. When you add this to a speaker who is deeply spiritual and reflective, then you have a rare treasure. But combine these qualities with the gift of preaching and you have a lofty mountain.

Any doubts the priests had about what might come from Fr Tim's talks were soon dissolved. Soon after arrival, I picked up on some anxiety that we might not face the issues priests talk about in their presbyteries and smaller gatherings. It wasn't that Fr Tim addressed these issues specifically and provided solutions for them, but the quality of his reflective talks gave hope and a renewed way of looking at things.

Beginning by emphasising the priesthood as a call to holiness, a holiness expressed by being beside the people we serve, Fr Tim made it clear that the priest must be a person of joy, able to maintain this joy in the face of failure.

the priest must be a person of joy . . . able to maintain this joy in the face of failure

We're all well aware of the conflict resulting from the ideals the Church proposes, and the difficulty many in the Church have in responding. This forces the priest to stand between a rock and a hard place. It is not easy for the priest who must proclaim the teaching of the Church, when he knows this teaching is often ignored.

But, according to Fr Tim, the good priest is one who feels the pain. At the heart of our faith is the Word made flesh, and the preacher is the midwife. How can God's word be born here and now? That in fact has to be the question the priest asks himself day after day, and Fr Tim insisted on

the need for speaking the truth. But this must be a truth that breaks down hostility, reaching out to those who disagree. Truth brings suffering because people like to label us as conservative or liberal. Hence the temptation is to remain silent.

So there must be spaces created for telling the truth, and argument must not be a putting down of another. We argue only to arrive at truth, and we must never be afraid of being wrong. The Church has to be a place for truth. Heresy is the narrow and focussed view but orthodoxy takes the universal and wider view.

Relaxing on the water at Picton. Two Dunedin priests, Damian Wynn-Williams (l) and John Harrison (r) with Peter Brock (centre), Executive Officer of the National Commision for clergy life and ministry, Canberra

On the second day Fr Tim gave his reflections on the Last Supper: *This is My Body given for you.* We have to look at this event and capture its dynamism if we are to be relevant in our preaching, especially to the young. It means in effect that our Word becomes flesh and our flesh becomes Word.

Continually punctuating his preaching with humour, Fr Tim offered advice to preachers by saying we prepare best by entering silence and waiting for a Word. No doubt the skill is to be able to put flesh on this Word, but his advice was not to be afraid of the struggle. He then took his audience into the deep incomprehension present at the Last Supper, pointing out that each Mass we offer recalls the moment when hope was lost. But it celebrates hope rediscovered.

if we live with hope
we will make the church
young again

Bearing in mind the priests of New Zealand are by and large a greying lot, it would be understandable if someone found it difficult to believe the Church in our country still has a future. But I think each priest left with the gift of hope.

In the days of the assembly Fr Tim didn't avoid referring to the crisis the Church faces at present. But he was strong in emphasising that the Church grows through crisis and reminded us they have always been present in the Church. The challenge is to remain confident and remember that hope is wildly ambitious. If we live with hope we will make the Church young again, for the flavour of hope is youthfulness. But be warned, we will probably fail! And this calls for courage: courage to speak the truth, courage to die, courage to listen, courage to endure and hang on with joy.

Fr Tim certainly was a focal point at the gathering. But as the clock ticked over, a wonderful atmosphere emerged among the priests, the like of which I certainly have not experienced before. In the end, both Fr Tim and this atmosphere merged into one. The lofty mount-ain was no longer the speaker but the entire gathering. The speaker's words became flesh in the priests and the virtue of hope was rediscovered. To that, I happily bow. ■

Fr Alan Roberts is parish priest of Plimmerton, Wellington

Cenacle

Cenacle Spiritual Life Centre 2003

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Fr Tony King SM

21st-28th September – ***Spirituality of the Heart***
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Fr Bryan Montgomery SM
Sr Anne Powell r.c.

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Month of November set aside for Private Retreats, Directed Retreats, Quiet Time.

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Euthanasia – *A Good Death?*

The Death With Dignity *Bill is presently before Parliament. Anna Holmes looks at some implications in the light of medical ethics and present hospice practice*

When I was a newly graduated house surgeon, more than 30 years ago, a registrar ordered me to give a lethal dose of morphine to an old woman who was dying. I refused, saying that there was a great deal of difference between killing someone with a lethal dose of morphine and giving enough to make them comfortable. He was very angry with me, and stormed off and gave the injection anyway. She died.

Euthanasia has many meanings. It comes from the Greek '*eu*' meaning good, well, easy and '*thanatos*' meaning death. Its original use was in the good care of the dying, sometimes helped by adequate pain relief. Putting down pets is called euthanasia, and is widely practiced. More recently euthanasia has been linked with 'voluntary' – meaning performed of one's own free will, impulse or choice; not constrained, prompted or suggested by another. 'Voluntary euthanasia' is now used to justify the killing of someone who says they want to die. It is legal in the Netherlands, Oregon state and Belgium under very specific conditions.

Voluntary euthanasia is frequently a contradiction in terms. The patient is often unable to make the choice to die because they are too weak, unconscious or unable to do so. They are killed by another person, which certainly contradicts the meaning of 'voluntary'.

A recent poll showed that 39 out of 2600 New Zealand doctors already believed that euthanasia was occurring, and indeed acted as the registrar cited above acted, believing this is in the best interest of their patients. They did this without always discussing it with the patient, or family and friends of the patient. This report, by psychologist Kay Mitchell, suggests that there is little difference between withholding treatment that is not helping, increasing pain relief to control pain, or giving a lethal dose of a drug to bring about death. It lumps them together under 'a legal grey area'. There is an essential moral difference between good medical care, which may include withholding unhelpful treatment or increasing pain relief to the point where it may shorten life, and deliberately killing.

Good medical care of patients does not demand all possible treatments are given or that life must always be prolonged. There is always an ethical balance to be sought between what is medically possible and the comfort and wishes of the patient for treatment. There is such a thing as prolonging dying by persisting in heroic treatments when the patient wishes to be left to die in peace. It was well put by Arthur Clough, 19th century poet:

Thou shall not kill but needst not strive officiously to keep alive.

I now work in a hospice where all the patients are people on their last journey. Most come very anxious about what is in store for them. They are frightened of physical pain and disfigurement, of the humiliation of incontinence or vomiting, of mental confusion or incapacity. Many say, "I am not myself any more". Often they feel a burden to their families and carers and are distressed by the grief they cause and suffer. Sometimes they feel aban-doned by or distanced from family and friends who behave as if dying might be contagious.

Many years ago I worked in a renal dialysis unit. In those days patients were not well selected. Dialysis was very uncomfortable and hazardous. I vividly recall one man in his 70s who was being dialysed at the demand of his doctor, saying sadly: "I just want to die. I wish they would let me."

It is difficult for people to accept referral to the hospice. They see it as a death sentence, as loss of hope of a cure, or think people only go to hospices when they are about to die. They say "I'm not ready for that yet". Sometimes it is carers or other family members who resist the referral, thinking they ought to be more able to cope with all the care for this person they love, saying: "I want to be able to look after him" or "She doesn't like leaving home". Occasionally it is doctors who wish to give all the care and do not refer patients to the hospice.

Hospices are places where the focus of treatment is on care of the whole person, body, mind, and spirit and of their families and friends. In a hospice dying is a normal part of life; those dying are not different and marginalised. Most patients are seen or admitted for symptom treatment of pain, nausea, constipation or restlessness. This focusses on the comfort of patients so that they can live as well as possible until they die. A few patients choose to die in hospices because their treatment is impossible at home or their carers are not able to cope. Some choose to die at home with the family, supported by hospice staff and other health profess-ionals like district nurses and general practitioners.

I think that much of the resistance to going to hospices is about grief. Grief places blinkers on us all by focussing on the loss, shutting out the rest of life. Grief is an inevitable part of life. It is a resonating emotion arousing grief in those close to the sufferer. Some people cope well, facing grief and dealing with it; others do not.

Grief is like the rubbish in our lives – it accumulates until we deal with it. Those who are unable to deal with grief may get stuck in a particular stage of grief, anger or depression, or simply have a lifelong load of unresolved grief. Some years ago there was a wonderful play called *Paper Towers* about a couple who could not throw out any paper and lived in a house completely full of paper with tiny passages to walk through. There are people who negotiate their lives through the tiny passages left by all their unresolved grief. Their pain is such that they cry out for a quick end. They may be the patients with terminal disease, their relatives, friends or doctors who find the pain of the patient intolerable.

Facing grief means accepting the reality of loss. Ultimately it means accepting the fact that we are not in control of our lives, and being born brings with it the inevitability of death. For some doctors, death is equated with failure, with not being in control. For these, euthanasia is more acceptable than awaiting death with the patient. Taking charge of the time of death, one's own or another's, suggests that we can control the world. This illusion may be part of the attraction of voluntary euthanasia.

In response to this, it is a wonderful and humbling experience to see an anxious, distressed, patient and family come to a peaceful acceptance of death. They move from an anxious demand that the patient die quickly to an understanding of the unique gift of each day. They are freed to celebrate the life of the patient with them before they die.

The *Death with Dignity Bill,* at present before Parliament, proposes voluntary euthanasia will be available to all who request it and fulfil the statutory require-ments. Patients who are incapacitated can make advance directives for euthanasia through family or friends, with the attending doctor providing a lethal prescription. I am appalled by this proposal. All patient care is based on trust and a healing relationship depends on it. This would not be possible if doctors were death dealing as well as healing.

The other aspect of this Bill is that it focusses on the most vulnerable members of society, the demented, the physically and mentally incapacitated. The Bill specifically includes advance directives for euthanasia for those who become mentally or physically incapable. The costs of care of such people, both financial and emotional, are very high. There is a real risk that euthanasia could be seen as appropriate care for such people, whose quality of life is poor and who cause their families distress.

Jesus' mission was particularly to the poor, vulnerable, weak, unacceptable, people in the community. Can we, as his followers, do less?

Dr Anna Holmes in a general practitioner in Dunedin. In recent years she has had a special interest in geriatric and hospice care

Death with Dignity Bill (a sample)

Clause 5. Request for assistance to voluntarily terminate life.
(1) A patient who, in the course of either a terminal and/or incurable illness, is experiencing pain, suffering, or distress to an extent unacceptable to the patient, may request the patient's attending medical practitioner to assist the patient in ending that patient's life.

(2) A person who has made an advance directive and has duly appointed another person to represent his or her interests should he or she be rendered incapable may have those conditions of the advance directive rendered as a request under subsection (1).

(3) Any request under subsections (1) and (2) must be made in writing in the manner prescribed ... by either the patient or his or her duly appointed representative.

(4) The written request under subsection (3) must be signed and dated by the patient and witnessed by at least two individuals who, in the presence of the patient, must attest that to the best of their knowledge and belief the patient is capable, acting voluntarily and is not under any undue pressure or influence to make and sign the request.

(5) A witness referred to in subsection (4) must not (a) be a relative of the patient by blood, marriage or adoption; or (b) have a pecuniary interest in the will or estate of the patient: or (c) be an owner, operator, or employee of the health care facility where the patient is receiving medical treatment or residential care; or (d) be either the attending or consulting medical practitioner.

Saying *goodbye* – with dignity

Elspeth McClean was faced with the most terrible of all dilemmas – dealing with the premature death of her nearest and dearest. How attractive the euthanasia argument seemed then – but not now.

Euthanasia is such an emotive subject, I have been reluctant to write about it.

Why clog up an already emotive issue with some more emotion? Surely zealots on either side of the argument are providing enough of that. But, dammit, birth and death are emotive, messy, unpredictable events. Our desire to control their timing coolly and clinically says much about our arrogance to nature generally.

My husband knew he had terminal cancer for more than a year before he died. Because we had a relationship where no subject was sacrosanct, at some stage I said if ever he felt he could not bear living any more I would be prepared to help him die. He listened, but didn't say much. He knew it would never come to that.

In my woolly way I hadn't thought it through. How would I do it? With a pillow? The rolling pin? Drugs? How would I feel afterwards? Would I be racked with guilt? He would have thought of all that and the legal ramifications. But, more importantly, he knew that wasn't how he wanted to die.

There were to be no faith-healings, chasing miracle cures, overdosing on shark cartilage, vitamins, or herbal concoctions, for him. He didn't make himself miserable by giving up food he enjoyed and he continued to relish a fine single malt. True, I put broccoli on the menu more often, but he didn't mind that.

He felt death, even if cruelly premature, was part of life which should not be shirked. He felt he had had no choice in his illness, but he could choose how to deal with his death. He would do so matter-of-factly and with good humour.

That didn't stop him feeling immensely sad at times, knowing he would not see his four sons reach adulthood, or live with me into ripe old age, and that he was leaving his younger brother, his only surviving immediate family member. What he could do was love us while he was here. In the end, he felt love was all he could take and all he could leave.

His attitude didn't stop me thinking of euthanasia from time to time. Hearing this incredibly stoic man grunting in agony after hours of pain while a wet-behind-the-ears registrar asked him foolish questions instead of administering painkillers was one such occasion.

And there was the night, after several long days and nights, when his condition was not being managed well and anti-nausea suppositories would not work. He vomited constantly. It was hell watching retching rack this thin shadow of the body I had loved for 19 years, his once cherubic cheeks gaunt and his surgery-scarred belly with its protruding colostomy bag hovering above his no-longer shapely legs. I called the doctor and then cried pathetically.

"If love was worth anything", I said indignantly, knowing how much he believed in the power of love, "it would be able to stop you vomiting." Quick as a flash he said "Unfortunately, they haven't made it into a suppository yet – at least, not that sort".

That mind was not ready to depart. Next day he went to the Otago Community Hospice where he spent his last three weeks with excellent palliative care.

It's an odd thing to say about a 48-year-old facing his own demise, but he enjoyed much of that time. He shared the

joke that it was his last great procrastination; that he took longer to die than expected because he was enjoying his visitors' accolades so much.

In the lead-up to his death, this unassuming man had worried about his life being a waste of time. Now, a steady stream of people from all parts of his life were able to tell him how important he'd been. The man who'd cut his hair for 25 years did so for the last time; he made up with an old friend he'd fallen out with; kids he'd coached in sports came and sat with him, saying little and awkward, but wanting to be there all the same; friends, relatives and colleagues learned something of what it is to die well.

So what has this experience taught me, other than that death need not be frightening? – that if we legalise euthanasia to the extent proposed in the *Death with Dignity Bill* we need to be extremely careful that euthanasia is what the dying person wants; that they are not being pushed into it by unscrupulous spouses, relatives, friends or lovers or even people who think they are being helpful. I'm not certain this could be guaranteed by the Bill's counselling provisions. I am sure I could persuade a few counsellors that assisted death was my idea, even if it wasn't.

I find the advance directive provisions in Schedule 2 particularly concerning. This would allow a person who later became incompetent as a result of specified illnesses or conditions (including Alzheimer's, AIDS and serious brain damage) to appoint a representative to act on their behalf to seek assisted death. This person and the witnesses to the advance directive are not allowed to have any pecuniary interest in the estate of the person who is to die. Who, even at that distance, would want such a responsibility?

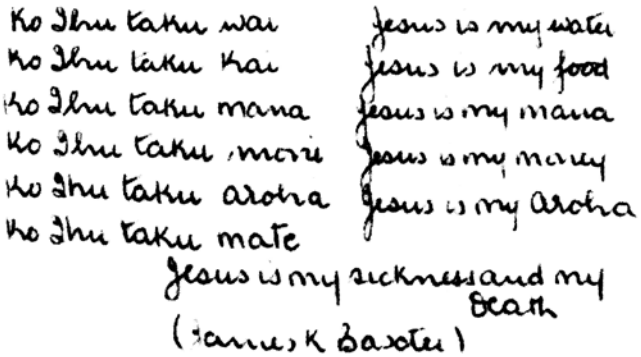
We might all consider now, when we have all our faculties, that there are situations where we would want to die. I believe I would hate to live without speech or other communication, although my family would relish it, I'm sure. But if it happened, would I feel the same way? Might I find incredible freedom inside my head where there would be no risk of me being misunderstood? Can we really make (excuse the jargon) fully-informed decisions about such things in advance?

How would the person required to invoke the assisted death procedure decide when the time was right to notify the attending medical practitioner? Can we make sensible judgments about someone else's quality of life? I worry that social pressure might be exerted on us all to fill out advance directives because it could be seen as a convenient way of getting rid of people who may be viewed as an expensive nuisance.

I would be disappointed if assisted death became the norm, like sending your car to the wreckers when it can no longer get a warrant. We need to remember that people, like my husband, die with dignity every day. Maybe we don't talk enough about that. ■

Elspeth McClean is a freelance columnist. This first appeared in the Otago Daily Times

The favourite prayer of an old lady approaching her death



This prayer of James K Baxter was written out by the late Gwynneth Jones, of Queenstown, and was a constant companion during her final years of life.

The prayer was used at her funeral in Easter week this year.

(With thanks to her daughter Catherine)

Adult Education Trust

http//homepages.paradise.net.nz/aet

Public Meeting

Death with Dignity Bill

Wed 18th June 7:30 pm

Performing Arts Centre, St Bedes College
Main North Rd, Christchurch

Speakers will be:

Dr Michael J McCabe, Director of The Nathaniel Centre, and Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Wellington. He completed his doctoral dissertation in moral theology and bioethics at the Accademia Alfonsiana in Rome in 1994. Dr McCabe has worked in bioethics with a wide range of groups, and was a member of the Wellington Regional Health Authority Ethics Committee 1996-2001.

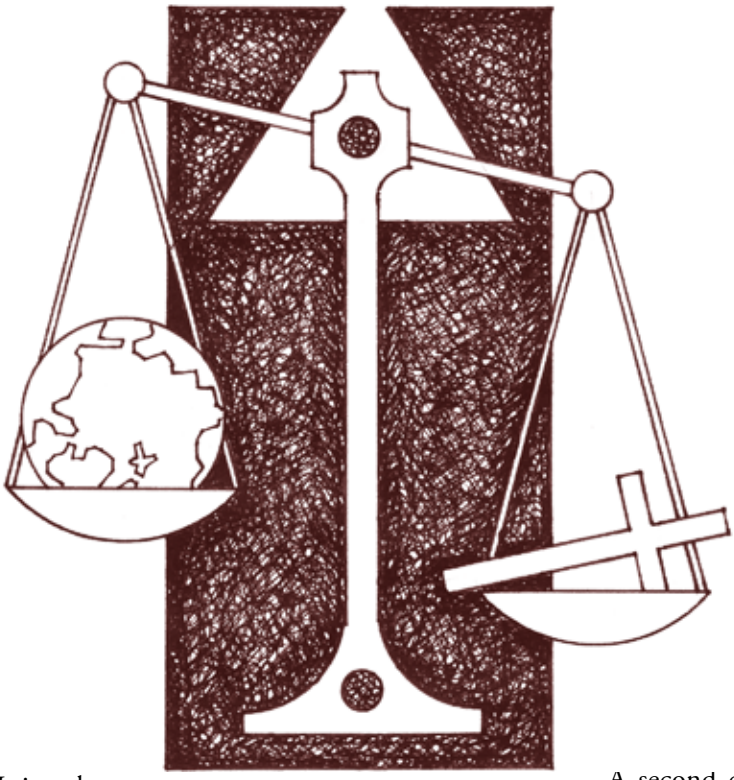
Dr John Thwaites – John has worked as Consultant Physician/Geriatrician in Christchurch for the last seven years. He is also involved in post-graduate training for junior doctors. John is also a member of the Catholic Health Advisory Group in Christchurch.

Contact: Trish, 03 942 7954

To assist with the cost of the evening a donation box will be available.

Where do we find reverence for planet earth in the books of the Bible?

Neil Darragh



Most people in New nowadays have concern about en mental issues. Most are prepared to do something a them even at some cost of t or money. As far as I can tell is as true of church members of anyone else. But the majorit of Christians seem to keep their environmental concerns and their Christian faith in separate compartments.

Certainly, not many Christi about environmental conce their churches. More com church we get the message loves human beings and tha need to care for one another. It is only when we get out of church that we notice the state of the planet getting worse, and we get the message that we should do something to care for it better. Yet all the while it is a very central belief of Christians, both in church and out of it, that God and no other is Creator of Earth and thereby loves it.

We have to put some of the fault for this compartmentalising I think on those who do biblical reflection in church contexts – such as preachers, teachers and Bible study leaders. You might want to argue in response that there isn't all that much about the environment in the Bible and that biblically based preaching isn't therefore going to have much about it either.

If we look at the New Testament, you could well argue, the passages about environmental concerns are quite scarce. Evidently Jesus was quite keen on birds and flowers, but pretty indifferent to fig trees and pigs. How is a preacher supposed to take great environmental messages out of the New Testament without gravely distorting the message or violating all the principles of interpretation and exegesis that we have learnt from recent Scripture scholarship?

Let us confine our considerations here to the New Testament. Most of us can probably point to passages concerning non-human creation in the Old Testament, but find it more difficult in the New. I would suggest that the single most important element in developing Christian attitudes towards the planet Earth is the alertness – or lack of it – which Christian preachers and teachers can bring to bear on the ecological stances taken in the New Testament.

Missing the cues

It is so often true, and true of the Bible as much as any other reading, that we see what we expect to see. And what we don't expect to see we altogether. We have been vironmental stances in the ment for some time now. e then that we have been in the wrong places or e wrong angles. The New ent writers simply do not the same environmental erns as we do. If we go ing there for attitudes on he ozone layer, or resource depletion, or pollution, we won't find them, and we could conclude that Christian faith has nothing o with ecology. We haven't hing because we've been the wrong things.

A second cause of missing the point because we're looking for the wrong things is that we may not have done an adequate analysis of what our own contemporary environmental problems really are. For example, our contemporary environmental crisis is not primarily a problem about the manage-ment of the environment. It is primarily a problem about the management of human behaviour. It is primarily about dealing with the destructiveness of human behaviour, especially when enhanced by powerful technology.

There may not be much about managing the environment in the New Testament. But there is a great deal about managing human behaviour, i.e. about the ethics of good and bad behaviour. This includes an ongoing concern for the limitations of the human place within God's creation and the religious limits to human power over, acquisition of, or arrogance towards God's loved creatures whether human or non-human. Hence some of the central ecological messages of the New

Testament are contained in the humility and poverty of the Beatitudes.

These are the attitudes – rather than those of domination, acquisitiveness, rising standards of living, competitiveness, or economic development – that are at the heart of an environmental ethics. In the New Testament they are not just about how we treat human beings, they are about how we respect God and how we combine both use of and respect for God's creatures.

Being alert to ecological stances in the New Testament

What kinds of alertness then do we need in order to ensure that our reading of the New Testament, and especially our preaching or teaching of the Christian message, is not just missing the point and looking in the wrong places?

In general there is a need for an alertness to how our past interpretations of the Bible have been too restrictive. Recent past interpretations have commonly seen only the implications for human beings and not for the whole of created being. The way we have understood the Beatitudes is an example of this as I have noted above. Another example is the way we have sometimes taken the kingdom of God/heaven texts to be about a kingdom of human beings only, even though many of these texts are clearly about a kingdom that is cosmic and well as social.

Let me try to be a little more specific here about some of the other forms this alertness needs to take:

• *Resurrection*

Firstly, all reading of the New Testament is done in the light of the Resurrection of Christ. I write this article during the season of Easter when we have just celebrated the Resurrection of Christ. I wonder if, in hearing or reading the Resurrection accounts, we took on board how much this central Christian belief commits us to the Earth. Resurrection is bodily. It is not about disembodied spirits, nor about escape outside the Earth to some other place. The Resurrection is about the risen Christ's continuing presence in the Earth and about the hope for our own resurrection within the Earth. This is the primary Christian ecological stance.

• *Cosmic dimensions*

A somewhat different kind of alertness is required for those New Testament passages that are fairly obviously to do with creation on a larger scale than just human beings. As well as the brief passage in *Romans* (*8:18-23*) which speaks of the whole of creation waiting with eagerness and groaning in labour pains, there are those passages concerning the 'cosmic' Christ in *Ephesians, Philippians* and *Colossians (Eph. 1:1-14; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-20)*.

Here Christ is the reconciler or source of unity not just of human beings but of a social-cosmic whole. It is not so likely that we would simply miss the cosmic dimensions of such passages. There is a danger though, for those of us trained in a human-centred mindset, that we just never quite get around to taking serious note of or preaching about the implications of such passages for the ecology of our planet.

In the light of the Old Testament

Another kind of alertness comes from reading New Testament texts in the light of the Old Testament. This sometimes brings out the ecological assumptions of the New Testament text that are not obvious to us without the help of Old Testament passages. An example of this is those passages which link or identify Jesus as ***Divine Wisdom*** found in early Christian hymns (the passages in Paul's letters noted above; also *1 Tim.3:16; 1 Pet. 3:18-22; Heb. 1:3; Jn 1:1-18)*.

Jesus and *Wisdom* are linked or identified in *1 Cor.1:22-24, 30-31; 8:6;* and several passages in *Luke* and *Matthew* (*Lk. 7:35; 10:21-24; 11:49; 13:34; Matt.11:19; 11:28-30)*. With an Old Testament under-standing of the role of wisdom not only in human affairs but also in the whole of creation, these presentations of Christ's identity become cosmic rather than just an affair of humans.

Lectionaries and seasons

Another form of alertness is that which relates lectionary readings to the seasons of the Earth – in fact a traditional form of liturgical reading of biblical texts. Lectionary readings, for example, for the season of Advent look forward with expectation to a coming reign of God. I have noted above the cosmic aspect of this kingdom.

A second aspect of Advent readings is their relationship to what is happening in the season outside the church. Because traditional seasonal interpretations of Advent and Christmas do not apply to the Southern Hemisphere, we have been inclined simply to abandon seasonal interpretations. But seasonal inter-pretations are legitimate and enlightening even in the Southern Hemisphere.

Advent here corresponds to Spring and the flowering of abundant life and colour as nature moves towards a climax of warmth and light in early Summer. In a Spring Advent this climax is reached in the birth of a human baby at Christmas. In this interpretation, Christmas is not, as in the Northern Hemisphere, a reversal, a rescue from increasing darkness, but a climactic unity of God's creative life-giving in nature and the birth of the Son of God.

Keeping it in perspective

I do not want to leave the impression in conclusion that I am in favour of one-idea preaching. Most of us have been worn down at one time or another by the one-idea preacher. The preacher who, for example, Sunday after Sunday sees social justice issues in the scripture readings whatever they are, or sees a message about healing personal relationships in everything that ever happens in the New Testament. There is a lot more in the New Testament than just ecology. And there are priorities at one time that are not so at another. My intention here has been simply to advocate alertness to ecological stances in the New Testament because we seem to have been missing them somehow for some time now. ■

Dr Neil Darragh is a parish priest in Auckland. He has a particular interest in environmental issues

Why women cannot be priests *– or can't they?*

Elizabeth Julian takes a critical look at a statement by Bishop Pat Dunn in North & South magazine. What exactly does the church mean when it insists on the equality of men and women before God?

According to the August 2002 issue of *North and South* magazine (p75) Bishop Pat Dunn, of Auckland, replied as follows when asked about the chances of women ever becoming priests:

I personally think not, no. In Catholic theology, the priest is, in some ways – especially in the Eucharist – called to speak in the person of Christ. That whole male-female symbolism is, I think quite profound – Christ is the bridegroom and, the church is his bride.

A lot of people will scoff at that. Even in society, the wider society in which we live, there is confusion about gender identity. I suppose the drift for the last ten or 20 years has been toward equality, meaning we're all the same. But I think there is beginning to be a re-examination.

What does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a woman? I don't see that the two roles are totally equivalent. We're both equal in dignity, but the differences are significant. I think that women can be very Christ-like, very holy. But for example, if you were going to make a movie about the life of Mother Teresa... it would be inappropriate to have a man playing the role of Mother Teresa. You wouldn't make a movie about Nelson Mandela with a woman playing Nelson Mandela.

I am encouraged by the fact that Bishop Dunn has offered a personal view in the secular press on such a forbidden topic since it invites comment in the public domain. Here then is a personal response.

The language of bridegroom and bride when applied to Christ and the Church is always symbolic. Neither Christ nor the Church is literally a bridegroom or bride. The spousal/nuptial imagery is beautiful when its primary purpose is to convey intimacy. However, often it conveys the active man and the passive woman. This ensures, of course, that men and women have unequal roles.

'bridegroom and bride' applied to the church ensures men and women have unequal roles

The official argument against women's ordination is that women do not bear a 'natural resemblance' to Christ. When Christ is identified exclusively with Jesus, the Jew from Nazareth, then a black man, an old man, a Pakeha man, that is, anyone one who is not a Jewish male, does not bear a 'natural resemblance' to Christ. Christ does not have to be imaged as a male any more than he has to be imaged as a Jew. Christ is not exclusively the glorified Jesus. Rather, Christ is the glorified Jesus animating his body which is the Church. Christ can be imaged by anyone who is baptised.

I hesitate to restrict being Christ-like for women to being 'very holy' and find Scripture and Tradition very helpful in this regard. For example: when Paul is asked: *Why do you persecute me?* (Acts 9:4), the 'me' is not the historic Jesus but rather the body of Christ, the Church which consists of both women and men.

The Catholic Church teaches (not always consistently) that women and men are equally made in the image of God; that women and men are equally one in Christ through baptism; that women and men can equally be images of Christ through martyrdom; and that women and men represent Christ's own love in Christian marriage. Furthermore the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*para.7*) makes it clear that Christ is present in the gathered community of both women and men; that when anyone baptises (woman and man) it is Christ who baptises.

The Church has never had much difficulty affirming that a piece of bread represents Christ, and actually becomes the Body of Christ. The problem is the difficulty many male clerics (ordination, not baptism, affords decision-making power) have had in following the argument through.

The male mind can affirm in faith that a humble piece of bread can be the Body of Christ, and can affirm all the other re-presentations of Christ noted above, but it cannot imagine how a woman priest could be a valid re-presentation of Christ.

The phrase 'equal in dignity' is problematic since the language of dignity is always fraught with difficulty. Derived from the Latin *dignitas* it belongs to the language of social status. It is a comparative term: I can have more or less dignity than someone else but I cannot be more equal than anyone else.

Church teaching, notably in the social documents of the past one hundred years, tries to combine both terms and runs into problems of contradiction because of the dualistic anthropology underlying them. This particular understanding of the human person usually results in the subordination of women, since it insists that there is human nature and then there is women's 'special nature'. Human nature, of course, is that which belongs to men.

The Church rightly insists that women have full and equal human rights and responsibilities – politically, economically, socially, culturally and ecclesially – because we are human. However, Church teaching always insists upon 'women's proper or special nature', which prevents women from realising these rights. Until Church teaching accepts a more holistic anthropology, women's rights will always be circumscribed by their 'nature' in a way that men's rights are never circumscribed by their 'nature'. Sadly, our baptism will never ensure our equality in terms of participation in the Church.

At the 1987 Synod of Bishops a request was made for 'a further study of the anthropological and theological bases that are needed in order to solve the problems that are connected with the meaning and dignity of being woman and man.' Pope John Paul II issued Mulieris Dignitatem: On the Dignity and Vocation of Women in 1988. Obviously being a woman is more of a problem than being a man, since there has been no corresponding document on the dignity and vocation of men. In a dualistic anthropology 'male' is the norm and therefore not a so-called problem.

In the Eucharist the priest is called to speak in the person of Christ. Historians of spirituality alert us to an interesting insight from the eucharistic spirituality of the Beguines. These14th century women were able to discover in the Eucharist something that made sense to them as women. Male clerics had to use ritual acts of submission and cross dressing in order to institutionalise ways they could reach God. These ritual acts enabled them to reverse what they had become, namely examples of social and ecclesial power.

Women, on the other hand, reached God not by reversing their social identities but by entering more fully into their own humanity. Women mystics could see clearly that women precisely as women, and not in spite of being women, were able to do what Christ did: bleed, feed, die and give life to others. Indeed, it was a woman, Mary of Nazareth, who was first able to say: *This is my body, this is my blood*. Out of extravagant love for humanity God freely chose to take up a home in the body of a woman. These theological truths are powerful aids for women struggling with issues of sacramental exclusion today.

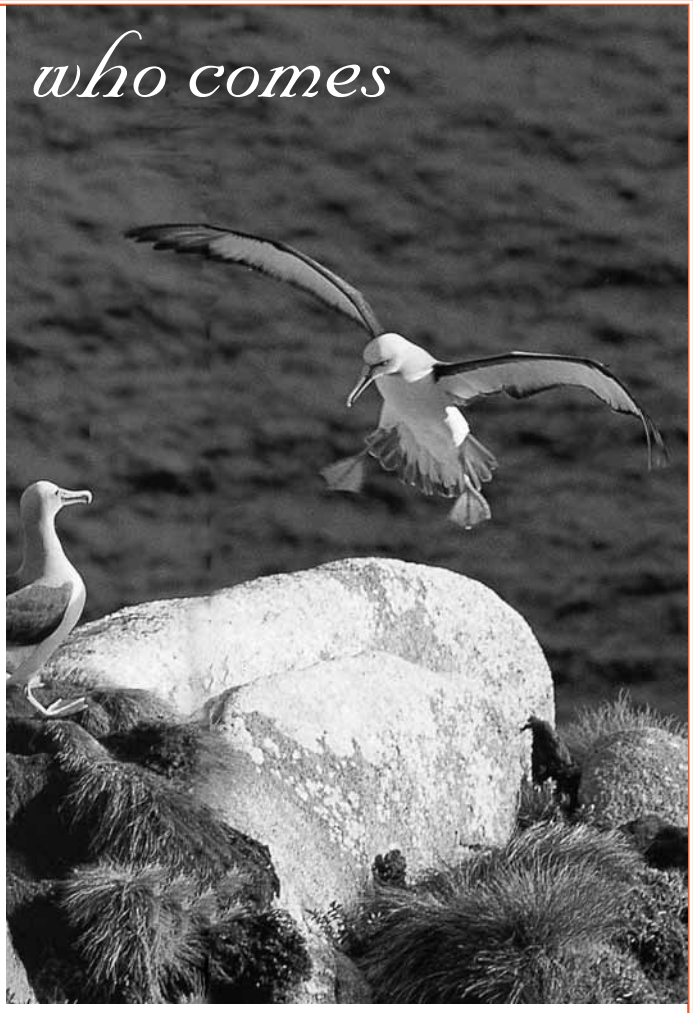
Perhaps the example about the inappropriateness of a woman playing the role of Nelson Mandela is in itself an inappropriate one in terms of current theology. Is the celebration of the Eucharist to be understood as a re-enactment of Christ's death and resurrection? Catholic Tradition is very clear on this point. The celebration of the Eucharist is not about role playing. It does not merely recall or re-enact Christ's death and resurrection – if it did the gender of the person acting the role of Christ would not really matter.

The Church teaches, however, that the Eucharist makes present or re-presents the original reality. Moreover, women do not want to play the role of Nelson Mandela. They do, however, want to experience justice as he eventually did.

Women like me will never leave the Church – our baptism calls us into it, and we love it too much. The issue of women's equal participation in the Church will not go away – not in this country where women have proved time and again that they can effect monumental change in the male imagination. Women like me are the inheritors of a tremendous sense of vision, passion, energy, initiative and hope that we would be foolish to forget. Kate Sheppard lives on in all of us! ■

Elisabeth Julian rsm is an adult educator and works from the Archdiocese of Wellington Catholic Education Centre

The God who comes



Brother Marty, SM

The God Who Comes. . . That's what's available for us – and that is, if we make the effort, to pray! Perhaps we may wake up from heavy slumber and find it rather difficult to return to sleep. There's nothing like pondering our Maker, our God. Even in the silence of the early morn, we can pray and enter into God's presence.

True! We may be overconcerned as to the day's events. Perhaps family, or a loved one who is very ill. I guess there are many things that we could mention to the "hidden deity". Daily chores, challenges, demands and family with a plethora of responsibilities, remove us from that all-important obligation: prayer.

And so, *what is prayer?* Prayer is the entering into a sharing-cum-conversation with the Lord. If we make the effort, God duly responds. But. . . not in the way we expect. A friend of mine recently put the question to me:
"What does the Lord say to you, Brother Marty?"

My response was: "I'm always aware of an inner peace". True... I mention daily my requests mixed with family and our troubled planet earth – or, rather, some of those who abuse it and are not all they should be. But, after a while, I return to the silence. The inner peace. And so I said to my friend:

Prayer is present to a presence . . .
Silent to a silence . . .
Still to a stillness . . .

We make the effort and remember: God is available 24 hours a day! God *does* respond to our orison in God's own unique way. If you have found the time today for some small amount of prayer, God will reply – to you!

Such is the depth and splendour of prayer for many of the contemplative Orders that they spend up to six hours a day in the chanting of the Divine Office, which is prayer and more prayer. These demanding "hours" are not asked of us! But we can go aside for a few minutes and pray to the *God Who Comes* (as Carlo Carretto says). He even goes further and says: ***To pray means to wait for the God who comes.***

In the Gospels Jesus exhorts the Apostles and his followers to pray and carry on unceasingly. This message is for us too!

To return to the contemplative prayer... We remain still and silent. And in time, the Holy Spirit permeates our inner and whole self. After a while there's no need for any words. Too true!

Some years ago, I was down at the Albatross Colony, Otago, at Tairoa Head. With a few friends we waited for up to an hour to view these majestic birds. As the minutes ticked by, we all became very impatient and frustrated. But as the 59th minute arrived, someone shouted pointing with his finger: "*There it is!*"

We all held our breath as this magnificent wonder, designed by God, swooped and glided down to a perfect landing. We were left speechless.

And this is what happens sometimes with our prayer. We wait and are perhaps impatient. But when the 'hidden deity' touches us with love and presence, we are left spellbound and in due awe. *The God Who Comes* has surfaced at whatever moment in the day or night. ■

Br Marty is a Brother in the Society of Mary, serving in the parish of St Mary's, Blenheim

The last amateurs

Paul Andrews

Priests watch marriages from the sidelines. We have been close to hundreds or thousands of marriages, but for most of us it is a view from the edge, like a landlubber admiring the life of sailors. It is easy for us to romanticise, to fail to allow for the effect of time: waking to the same face on the pillow, the same companion at breakfast, for the hundredth, the thousandth, the 20,000th time. It is expressed in a nice word with Latin overtones: diuturnity, the grind of the day-by-day, going on for ages.

I watched it as a child. My father was companionable, and if he made a new friend, he relished the chance to tell old stories. When in good form, my mother would listen and laugh appropriately. If she was tired, she might excuse herself or start a separate conversation while Daddy was in full flow. I glimpsed what it was like to try to respond freshly after hundreds of hearings.

In this spectacle I have had a good seat, a privileged postion on the sideline. For a while it was the view of a teacher, in some sense a partner of the parents. Like any partner you become aware of the other partner's strength and weakness, as they do of your strengths and weaknesses. Mary Doyle, watching her son Noel come home from school, knows accurately which teachers work for him, which of them corrects homework, prepares classes, is able to control the crowd; above all, which teachers like their pupils and which are really beyond it. And Noel's teachers, if they are awake, can have a precise sense of which children have a large place in their parents' minds, and which of them are just surviving almost unnoticed at home. The signs of it are in their dress, their hygiene, their bright or baggy eyes, their contentment. When parent and teacher are secure enough to trust one another, to expose their flanks and work together for Noel, the effects show quickly.

Then my seat was shifted, when I became a school principal. Now that is one tough job. The day-by-day pressures are intense and multiple. The pupils test you, to see are you really in touch, are you just (much more important than kindness in this job) and can you take a bit of aggro. The staff test you: can you distribute burdens fairly among them, control the school, and maintain an overall vision. The parents test you with demands for good results, competent teaching, no bullying, clean and warm conditions, and an eye to the individual pupil; and that you be accessible. On top of that there are demands from the Department of Education, or past pupils unions, or even outsiders like journalists and other pressure groups. As a seat from which to observe family life, it can be privileged but limited. You have an insider's view of many families. It is confidential information, to be used with the utmost discretion, and only in the children's interests.

It was a relief to move to a still better view of the family, that of a therapist. It happened by accident, first through the requests of parents to "work with" a troubled child; and that led me to undergo a thorough retraining some twenty-five years ago. It was an awesome experience to have parents invite you to take an intimate view of their children. This was not a matter of assessing them, or applying tests – I had done that for years as a psychologist – but of listening, and reaching a glimpse of what it was like to be Fiona or Michael, of their joys and fears and ambitions. If therapy worked, Fiona or Michael would emerge with a sense that they mattered, not for their looks or intelligence or achievements, but as little persons with a unique story to tell.

When I would meet Fiona's parents, they would expect to be told that her problems were really their fault. Are we worse than other nations in our tendency to point the finger and think somebody must be to blame? Just as teachers and parents are privy to one another's weaknesses, yet can be partners in the rearing of children, so parents can be enormously helped by working with an outsider like a therapist whom they have invited to a knowledge of their children – not to be scolded by him, but to reach a sense of their own importance.

To say that parents are important is not to say that they are to blame. Our national constitution insists that they are the primary educators – meaning what? That they teach us to read, choose a school for us, get to know the teachers, possibly work on boards of management? It goes way beyond that. Education is what remains when we have forgotten everything we learned at school. And that is the mark left on us by parents. They taught us by what they were, fallible and faulty, well-meaning but inconsistent, but all the time passionate about us: the only people to whom we as children were unique and irreplaceable. That is what matters, and all the books about parenting are useful only insofar as they start with that.

In present mediaspeak, people like police, teachers, actors, are often praised for being "true professionals". Professional has become an almost sacred word. There was a time when England's cricket team comprised two classes, gentlemen and players – the latter meaning that they were paid for playing. Now nearly all the players we watch in any sport are professionals. In the world of work, all the highly skilled jobs are paid and professional.

There is one last area of amateurism, and it is the most important of all: parenting. Parents are the world's last true amateurs, unpaid workers in a highly skilled job. And they are effective, and loved by us, not for their skills and professional expertise, but because they are amateurs, which means lovers. They work for love, not money – no wage would pay for the hours they put in, the tasks they undertake. ■

Fr Paul Anmdrews is a psychotherapist based in Dublin. He has visited and worked in New Zealand

Finding my son – a grief transformed

Marie Grünke is an Australian born Blessed Sacrament Sister.
As a young woman she bore a son who was adopted out.
Marie describes her long-hidden grief, being reunited with her son Michael,
and how this journey helped shape her philosophy of life

I grew up on a farm on the Darling Downs in Queensland, near Toowoomba, on beautiful rich black soil. My parents came from a strict, German Catholic background. Bringing up 13 children was very hard work for my mother. I think she hated the farm. But my father loved the land.

He was in love with the seasons. He would take me by the hand and go outside. He would describe the star formations in the sky, or he would take me out to enjoy a beautiful sunset. He taught us to enjoy the magic of nature, and from an early age I was enchanted by it.

I was sixth in the family. When I went to boarding school at 13, I was homesick for the landscape, for the paddocks of mallow grass, the pomegranate trees, the fig trees and the mulberries. I was nurtured by the awe and wonder of that mystical interaction between earth and sky and life. When eventually I left home I lived a normal teenage life and continued as a strict Catholic as I had been brought up. I went to daily Mass and prayed the Rosary.

My mother always wanted me to be a nun. At the age of six or seven I remember making three wishes in church. I think my three were to be a martyr, to be a nun and to be a saint –

in that order! The missionary priests, who in those days were the 'voice of God', assured me I had a vocation. But as a teenager I was still uncertain. There was a seed planted in me, yet I also wanted to be married and have about six children. I suspect my mother might have been wanting to spare me the pain of raising a big family, as she had done!

Eventually I came to New Zealand on a working holiday with a friend. I stayed two years. I fell in love for the first time and became engaged to be married. I became pregnant. The tragedy for me was that the relationship did not work out, and society and the church offered no alternative except to have the baby adopted. The priest I went to said to me that if I loved this child, then I had no choice but to enable it to have a secure family.

The loss of my baby was for me such a horrific experience that for a time I lost the will to live. I seemed to be in a place of total hopelessness. I had lost the man I loved, but more importantly I had lost my child. If he had died I might have been able to adjust more easily. I was like the Jews exiled in Babylon – there seemed to be no way out. I couldn't pray. I didn't want to go to church any more.

Years later, I was in a church in Australia and an aboriginal woman got up with her 16-year-old daughter beside her at the end of Mass. She put her arm round her daughter and invited us all to welcome new life into the community. "My daughter has just found out she's pregnant".

And we all clapped. The tears ran down my face. I thought: "we are learning from the people whom we put on the underside of life. They are our teachers. They are celebrating new life – and here we are caught up in passing judgment, making moral judgments from the head down". The circumstances may or may not have been a good thing, but she knows that new life has been conceived and that this is a sacred moment. "In the context of Eucharist, let's welcome it."

The loss of my child had a certain clinical brutality about it that had the blessing of the church. During that time I seemed to be enveloped in a blinding fog, emotionally numb. I was dying from the inside. The priest who had been advising me, invited me to attend the Forty Hours devotion in the parish church. I didn't want to go, but I was grateful to him because at least he never judged me.

So I did go along for the closing ceremony. He picked up the monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament and turned round for the blessing. In an instant the deadness in me melted, and I knew I was loved to the core of my being. The tears ran down my cheeks, and I came back to life. At least I could live again – in 'black and white'. My life didn't come back into full colour until 25 years later when I found Michael!

That experience in church lasted about ten minutes. I said to God: "Whoever you are, I want to spend the rest of my life searching for you." Then I thought: the only way to do that would be to become a nun. I remember wishing there were another option – to join a sort of 'bachelor women's society' that was religious! A single-minded commitment to search for God appealed to me immensely – but not the religious habit and all the trappings!

So the only thing for me to do was to become a contemplative nun. I took a job back in Australia. There I heard of this Order of contemplatives, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. I knew at once in my heart that that was where I had to go. The priest had told me not to tell the nuns about Michael! So I told no-one until I found him again, except my spiritual director when I needed to.

Another aspect of my early life which I think I learned first on the farm, was the reality of the invisible world. The two worlds are always interacting. I would be going around our snake-infested property, and would say three Hail Marys that I would be protected from snakebite! Because I believed it, I thought it worked!

I nourished this sense of God's presence by daily reading the *Imitation of Christ* and reading the lives of the saints. For instance St Margaret Mary Alocoque would do the most bizarre things out of love for God. I hated the things she did – but I loved her love. St Peter Julian Eymard, the founder of the Blessed Sacrament Sisters, taught 'love for love'. The essence of his spirituality is that we are so loved by God that the only response can be *our* love. That experience – 'love for love' – touched me profoundly. Living at that level there is very little that you can't work through. You are able to transcend pain, so that the very thing that is upsetting you can be made to work for you.

At that time there was no hope of finding my son again, so it was the image of 'spiritual motherhood' that sustained me. But many years later, I was on a bus in Sydney and I read in a magazine that the adoption laws in New Zealand were being changed to enable mothers to be able to find their children. I felt a rush of total excitement, along with great fear of all that would have to happen. In a flash I saw all the stages of the process. "Is he alive or dead? Could I face it if I discovered he had died?" It was the first step in my healing.

I sought out a therapist who would help me work through some of my grief and fears. I didn't want to be a total emotional mess when I found my son. When I was ready I wrote my first letter of inquiry to Wellington. My letter arrived in Wellington within days of Michael's letter inquiring about me! He was 25, and had just returned from two years in London.

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▷▷ While visiting one of our communities in Sydney, I received a phone call from the therapist. A letter had arrived from Wellington. He said: "It's news for you. Can you come and pick it up?" I said: "I can't wait. Will you open it and read it out to me."

The letter told me my son was alive, and that I could meet him. His name was Michael. Suddenly I had a name. I rushed out of the room and grabbed a pillow and choked back a sob. To have the name was like being given a miraculous connection. Three days later, with a trembling hand I wrote my first letter to my son. It was September 29. I wrote: "This is the feast of St Michael as I write my first letter to you."

It took some weeks before I received a long letter of reply from him. This was the beginning of a series of letters between us leading to our reunion. My emotions swung between ecstatic joy to bottomless grief, between needing to talk about what was happening and telling the relevant people, to going away for long periods of solitude.

Now I see Michael every day. I work with him. We are on a number of the same committees. Together we helped set up the *Natural Heritage Society* here, which now runs the Oamaru organic co-op and helps run the *New Zealand Organic Food and Wine Festival* each year. Michael was already on this path when I came back into his life, and naturally we have influenced each other.

My healing didn't take place at once. It is ongoing and in stages or levels. In a sense you remain incomplete, like the 4th Century desert hermits, with your raw edges always reaching up to heaven. A year after finding Michael I went overseas briefly to study with Miriam MacGillis (*Tui Motu* April 1999). I was in a church in Texas on the Mexican border, noted for its healings. I seemed to be stuck in endless grief, reliving my original loss. I felt like Rachel weeping for her children because they were no more (*Matt. 2,18*). I said to God: "You are the God of the stranger, the widow and the orphan. I'm a stranger; I'm widowed – and my son was an orphan. I *demand* my right to be healed." Another level of healing occurred.

The image I have of working through the painful events from the past is one of carrying a huge sack full of stones on my back. I trudge along with it. But these stones don't have to stay as a burden: they can now become building blocks or stepping stones. The stones are still there – but now I can make them work for me instead of against me. The very things that were my weaknesses have become my strength.

For me there is a link here with my passion for environmental healing. The aboriginal people in Australia helped me see that we are part of the seamless web of all creation. Thomas Berry writes that if we are to survive as a human community on earth, we have to take the next step: the need to come home. The great institutions of the West, he says, are largely pathological. It is the same church and the same society that removed children from natural families that has severed our links with the sacred ambience of the natural world. We have to halt our journey outward (the need to control) – and learn now to come home. Michael and I finding each other is symbolic of that homecoming.

This cottage he found for me is a symbol of my personal homecoming, where I can put my roots down close to the earth.

When I first entered the convent we were not allowed to look out the window at the flowers nor smell them as we walked in the garden. Food was basic sustenance: if it had too much flavour 'we might be tempted!' To enjoy food, to linger over it was wrong because it was too sensual. I knew intuitively that that theology was flawed.

I am convinced that if we were more sensual in the wholesome ways God has given us through our five senses, we would be less vulnerable in areas where people have sought sensual pleasures in sick ways. Perhaps if we had had a healthier appreciation then of the gift of our senses, we would not be suffering from the sort of crises the church is in today.

Recently I attended a workshop on Genetic Engineering and politics. We were told that the *Union of Concerned Scientists* in the U.S. are second only to *Greenpeace* in their challenge to G.E. food. Yet the churches are silent. Why is this? A young man attending the workshop made the point that G.E. is not only threatening everything we eat. It even attacks the central symbols of our Catholic faith tradition – the bread and wine, the water. But we don't seem to care. To me as a human being, as a mother and a grandmother – as a Blessed Sacrament Sister, this also concerns me greatly.

Women have a natural propensity, I think, for intuition. We have insights 'from the ground up', whereas our culture and religion so often teaches us to view things 'from the head down'. We need not merely to 'understand' what it means to be a Eucharistic community; we need to 'stand under' it. Our theology needs to come out of the soil, up through the heart into the hands and head. This integrates the whole of one's person to live sustainably with God's creation, which is a seamless web.

But so much of our philosophy and theology comes from the head down – and it stops at the heart and fails to reach the ground we stand on. The great virtue of mentors such as Thomas Berry or Walter Brüeggeman is that they put words onto what some of us have intuited for some time now. I live and work mainly with unchurched people, who are deeply

Marie Grünke's cottage in Oamaru

Some will choose not to come home, but to those who do, the ravages and destruction they see will evoke deep anger, which is the first stage of healing after we come out of denial. But, as St Augustine said, "hope has two lovely daughters – anger and courage". We need both of these in order to carry action through.

It was when I settled here in Oamaru that the G.E. food crisis came up. The government put a temporary moratorium on the release of G.E. in the fields. Here in my cottage, I have learned to live simply, without electricity, in harmony with the days and nights. Here one starts to do theology again 'from the earth up'. I have reclaimed the night as a time for reflection and rest. Also a time to be vigilant – to keep watch.

In the *Natural Heritage Society* we promote organic farming methods, appropriate technology, an organic produce market, the preservation of organic and cultural resources, socially sustainable employment which includes traditional arts and crafts. Under the inspiration of Thomas Berry we are endeavouring to reinvent community. Michael and his extended family moved to Oamaru in 1994. His bookbindery was the first 'appropriate' business to open in the precinct. Since then many other small alternative businesses have been attracted to the area, including artists and crafts people and an organic bakery.

We value the contemplative dimension of life. The opposite to violence is not ▷▷

concerned about the state of our world and the environment. These people see the church as irrelevant. Indeed we are seen as a counter-symbol because we are seen to be doing nothing to address the biggest issues facing humanity at this time. We must step out of our safety zones to become aware; we must come to our senses.

It was St Benedict who said that one's shovel and the tools of the soil were as sacred as the vessels which held the Blood of Christ. He drew no distinction: to be wholly engaged in working with our hands he saw as a holy task, a form of worship. So, when you come to Eucharist, it is the fulfilment of all you do with the rest of your life. We have such wonderful models to draw from in our tradition, and I think young people are starving for it.

Contemplation means to get out of our cocoons and observe what people – and the earth we are an integral part of – are saying and needing and doing. We have to listen with all our senses, and then reflect. IN-sight means to take our sight within. The seer – or 'see-er' – was the wise person. What we have to do is to reinterpret the great strands of wisdom in our Christian tradition in the light of today's world.

Walter Brüegemann wrote that Jeremiah, speaking from what he could see in his world, warned that if people didn't change they would lose everything (*Hopeful imagination: prophetic voices in exile*). And it happened. It was only when Israel had failed totally – they were in exile from their homeland – that the God of Ezechiel came and touched them and changed them. Like dry bones they rose from the dead! It is only when all human hope has gone that the God of Ezechiel can act.

That is the time of homecoming Isaiah speaks of. The heroic myth underlying so much of our religious and cultural thinking teaches us to go out and conquer. The myth of 'progress' is deeply embedded in us. Now is the time to return home – or we will destroy the earth itself. We can draw so much inspiration from that biblical positioning. The alternative is despair – to just give up. Any journey of healing seems to follow that track, through hopelessness and grief to a rebirth.

▷▷ so much non-violence as *awareness*: to be awake and to be present. For instance, how can we stop the release of G.E. into our food chain? An answer is: don't buy G.E. food. Only buy non-G.E. products. The key is to be aware and awake. If we as a society don't wake up, scientists warn us it will be too late for the next generation.

Waking up and changing direction would be to cut across a key factor of contemporary culture, which is the myth of *convenience*. The fast food outlet and the supermarket enslave us because they appear to be so convenient. Natural organic foods are dearer, people say. Why? Because the big corporations in effect subsidise supermarket products. They don't factor in the 'food-miles', the cost in fuel – which is finite and running out, as well as polluting – to get the product to the market.

In addition there is the cost to our health system which cannot now afford to maintain itself as hospital expenses escalate. To buy local, organic, non-G.E. food is also an investment in our local bio-region and in the future of the planet, an investment for our children's children. That extra expense is a small outlay on our part.

Our Catholic tradition has a long history of prayer and fasting, especially in times of grave peril. Perhaps we should expand our concept of fasting to include all that enslaves us, such as the 'convenience' of fast foods and products that are bad for the earth, and consequently bad for us.

Is this, for New Zealand, the *kairos* moment? The turning point? Let us grasp it with courage. We may not have the opportunity again. ■

Mercy Charities Conference 2003 (see below)

The theme for the event, says conference organiser Dennis Horton, has sprung from the commitment of Auckland's Sisters of Mercy to work at 'preserving the integrity of all creation'. The challenge is to see that the Sisters' resolve is mirrored in the organisations that operate in their name and on their behalf.

"I hope the conference will succeed in making a link between an Earth-centred spirituality and the principles of sustainable development, in ways that connect with the core business of our companies," says Mr Horton. "The ministries we provide are the time-honoured ones of teaching and healing. The challenge is to ensure that they are geared to the realities of tomorrow's world."

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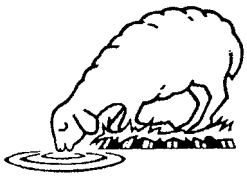

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Celia Lashlie describes herself as a 'recovering Catholic'. "I have a sense of God in my life," she says. "The elements of social justice are there for me. The nuns gave me a of belief in myself. But I had an alcoholic father, so I grew up with an experience of two worlds: the one people talk about and the one you don't talk about".

Celia spent 15 years working in the New Zealand prison service, including three as manager of Christchurch Women's Prison. Since she finished there in 1999 she has done a study on women offenders. And more recently her focus has been on 'at risk' children: where do we lose them? Is there a pattern?

She has recently launched a book entitled "The Journey to Prison". Katie O'Conner caught up with Celia in Gore, where she had been addressing the Catholic parish Social Justice group.

The journey to prison

The 'at risk' child

Negative factors can be present in any child's life. The factors generally spoken of are alcohol, drugs and sex. Society has had all ways of controlling the adolescent's path round these issues. They are part of the 'stuff of life'. But an additional factor now is the *instability* of some families. For example a mother may have split from the child's father and over the next three or four years she may have had a succession of partners, to whom the child was supposed to give allegiance or respect.

The movement in society of changing partners is very destabilising to children. This is right across the social spectrum. I am not blaming a solo mother for seeking companionship. But as a society we have become so 'mobile' and it has become acceptable to change partners. You move in quickly, then it blows up and you move out!

One mental health worker told me she believed there will be an 'epidemic' of schizophrenia, especially among young boys who are thrown into confusion by the 'revolving door' of adults moving in and out of their home. For the girls, the threat is often sexual abuse in these unstable relationships. What are we doing in our justice system about 'relationship management'?

How social services could help

The change I advocate is not so much in what we do but in *how* we do it. Our society is always producing programmes, especially from overseas, to fix a problem. But it is we who know our own people – *we* know the problem. Instead we constantly look for the overseas expert to give us a quick fix.

The *'how' we do it* involves us asking ourselves in the caring professions why we are here. Are we working to help others as an escape from the problems in our own lives? Or are we trying to feel good ourselves by going out to rescue others? Are we actually trying to empower people to change their lives – or just delivering a message: "this is how you should live your life because I say so".

How do we operate without attaching so many conditions to the help we offer that the person declines to accept help with so many strings. How do we learn to really *listen* to people and get alongside them?

Let us take an example. A client unburdens herself to you. She says it is easy for her to speak when someone listens – and you know how many agencies have already been involved in that person's life and problems. Don't *they* listen, I ask? "Hell no – they come simply to tell you what to do!"

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their children. So it isn't really about problems with alcohol or sex or drugs. It is about getting alongside these vulnerable women, who often come from shocking backgrounds, and listening to them and helping them.

White, middle-class New Zealanders once upon a time could leave their houses unlocked and their cars unlocked and live in the total freedom of that. But you can't do that any more, and this frightens people. So they demand longer prison sentences for offenders to make the streets safer. My response to them is: "Grow up. Recognise that the world is different. We cannot go back."

Turning a person's life around

People *can* change their own lives. They can do miracles with themselves when they have been empowered, so that they know that they too have a right to have been born and to live on this earth, and that they have a contribution to make. Most important – that it's *their* choice. When they choose for themselves, then they can 'walk on water'. I'm optimistic about this because I don't have to do it *for* them. I don't have to rescue them. I have to give them confidence, show them the footholds, so that they do it themselves.

Right through my life dealing with offenders I probably met and dealt with over two thousand. Among those I might have met half a dozen whom you would call 'irredeemable'. When we yield to pressure from the rednecks, what we are doing is driving our policies on the basis of that tiny minority – 0.25 percent!

I know some crimes are horrendous. As a mother myself I can imagine what it must feel like to be the parents of Kylie Jones: not only to know she is dead, but to imagine the horrific circumstances of the last hours of her life. I can imagine their anger. I can sympathise with them feeling that Kylie's killer should be 'hung, drawn and quartered'.

What in fact we are doing to Kylie's killer is to hold him in maximum security at a cost of $90,000 a year. No matter how long we hold him and tell him how worthless he is, it will never bring Kylie back. Treating the offender savagely will never return the victim to her parents.

That poor man was once a little boy growing up in this country – and we lost him. We collectively lost him. Even in his childhood the signs were there. So we have to go back to the five-year-old. There is no sign above his head reading "potential killer", but the circumstances of his life are a direct link to what he eventually did. The answer then is for us collectively to acknowledge that somehow we allowed that child to grow up to become a killer. He wasn't born evil. No child is born evil. They are all born pure.

The lesson is not simply to single out certain families and 'go after' them. People don't *choose* to go to prison. How often you hear people in public life saying: "I came from a terrible background – yet I made it". Then they add on ".. and so can you."

"I have never met a woman who does not want a better life for her kids"

I say that's totally destructive. People do drag themselves out of the mire, but to say that everyone is able to do it is to minimise the impact on a child's life of extremely negative influences. It is as if we are saying that everyone of us is on the same level pathway, and we get to a crossroads. Off to the left is family, love, happiness, marriage and money. And to right is prison, degradation, violence and lack of personal autonomy. And people stand at that crossroads and actively choose to turn right.

That is *not* my experience at all. My opinion is that it's what you absorb when you are little which will determine your path. Imagine a two-year-old standing in the family kitchen – and Dad and Grandad are getting into drugs. On the other side of town the same scenario – except Dad and Grandad are talking about the two-year-old growing up to go to Canterbury University. Both children are being predestined. It is true both children can choose *not* to go down that predetermined path.

We have to 'wrap around' those at risk families. We must get alongside them. And you can, because it does not matter how tough a woman is – how vicious she has become because of her addiction – I have never met one who does not want a better life for her kids. That is our way in.

There is no 'ultimate solution'. We are too keen on advocating simple solutions which won't disturb our complacency. What's needed is a multitude of solutions: a ten-year-plan to turn society around. That is difficult when there is a three-year election cycle. If the public were prepared to back a ten-year social justice strategy, you would, then, begin to break the cycle and get somewhere.

I visit a solo mother with three young children: a clean kitchen, fruit on the table, milk in the fridge, children well clad. But I know that when those kids become adolescents it could become a nightmare for her. The social agencies need to be alongside this woman building relationships with her, being there for her. When she gets into the difficult phase, she will have people able to help her. But at the moment she says: "I don't talk to the social agencies". "Why not?" "Because they wind me up". We are so busy judging a woman like that and putting conditions on her – instead of empowering her. We are setting those three children up for trouble. We – not her!

Why are young women now committing terrible crimes?

Socially young women are catching up on their male companions. Once they just used to go along and witness the boys committing violent crimes. Once upon a time the woman went with the young male criminal perhaps to prevent him using a gun. She was an accessory.

Now girls have the same social freedom that boys have. There are no longer the social restrictions placed on them as they grow up. They become socially mobile much earlier. The girls are affected by society's "disconnectedness" as much as the boys. But my instinct is that girls go deeper into dysfunctional behaviour because they have been sexually abused.

Young girls are more frequently abused bodily than they once were. Somehow we need to be 'wrapping around' these young children and protecting them from that abuse before it harms them deep down. We have to empower the key figures in their lives so that they are protected.

Young women who have been badly abused often appear to seek to come back to prison because for them it's a safer place than outside. So we are accused in the prison service of being 'too soft' on them! But I say, what a commentary on society if a person chooses prison as a refuge! That they should choose to lose their freedom and autonomy. And prisons too can be violent places.

But when the door closes on them at seven o'clock in the evening, for once those women know no one is going to come in and abuse them. A lot of their 'radar' has been to keep themselves safe, and their energy goes into that. Constantly they are asking themselves: "is he going to hit me tonight? Am I going to get raped again? Is Dad angry? Has he been drinking again?" They come into prison – and for once they can turn that radar off.

Young male offenders

Young males are different. They are often just boys in the bodies of men. They play tricks like youngsters do. They laugh a lot. They are not all inherently evil people. Women tend to link action and consequence at any age, whereas these immature males do not make that link, particularly through adolescence. Young males will focus on the here and now. "This is what I'm doing. We'll worry about the consequences later".

You cannot change that. It's part of the natural maturation process. But for the young offender, the process has been arrested. They need to have their education completed. Some of these boys have grown up in families where Dad and Grandad also went to prison. So they see prison as an inevitability. They simply wait for it to happen. Alcohol and drugs aggravates the lack of connection between what you do and the possible consequences.

If they see prison as something that is going to happen, why try and avoid it? Whereas a girl will say: "we can change that!" The boys have got to be persuaded that they too have choice. We can work with them to help them make that choice.

How do they get a sense of autonomy? Some of them have never sat down at a dinner table and talked to their parents! They sit in front of television, when they should be sitting down and telling their parents how the day went. They don't know how to talk things through.

Listening to their stories

My challenge to people who read this is: go back into your own life. Think of the things that influenced you as a child. Think of the moments of crisis – how they affected you. We find peace in telling a story about those things. When someone dies, say, the grieving process involves talking it over and over until it has become real for you. Story telling is the way in which people make sense of their lives.

But for these highly dysfunctional people, what we have to do is simply listen to their story. Once we dramatised this process at Christchurch Women's prison for people of the city, who were simply overcome by what they heard. The women themselves began to realise that it was all real for them too. When they think their stories have been heard and understood, it's a moment of pure magic.

And when a child tells that story to a teacher or a social worker or whoever, and the person looks straight back at that child and validates their experience and empathises with them... then healing starts. Reflective listening is really incredibly simple. And that is all that is needed. ■

Rogan McIndoe

The Magdalene Sisters
Review: Paul Sorrell

My heart sank when a friend offered to drag me off to see this film – yet another attack on the battered and scandal-struck body of the Church, I thought. And, in some ways, it confirmed all my fears. The film is set in Ireland in the 1960s, and almost all the action takes place in a fortress-like institution for 'wayward girls' run by the Sisters of Mercy. Here the girls drag out a bleak and regimented existence scrubbing, ironing and hanging out other people's clothes. At the end of the film we learn that 30,000 young women passed through these Magdalene homes-cum-laundries, the last of which did not close its doors until 1996.

The film focusses sharply on four of these unfortunate inmates – Margaret, a rape victim; Rose, who is forced to give up her ex-nuptial baby the day he is born; Crispina, a slightly subnormal girl who also has a child out of wedlock; and Bernadette, whose sin is to be pretty and flirtatious. All are victims of society who then become victims of the Church. The other star player is the hatchet-faced Reverend Mother (superbly played by Geraldine McEwan) whose idea of rehabilitation is to beat, starve and work the Devil out of her young charges. The religious and lay staff attached to the home are presented as either predatory, complacent or stupid. The Sisters themselves are depicted as abusive and corrupt. In a telling breakfast scene, the girls are marched in to chew on dry bread, while the Sisters dine on full plates of bacon, eggs and sausages, giggling and gossiping from behind a screened-off dais.

The pervading sense of oppression is lifted by the humanity of the girls themselves who offer one another what support they can. But even the rare sparks of humour are shaded by darker undertones – an abusive priest receives his come-uppance in a scene that is both hilarious and disturbing in its consequences.

One by one the girls are released – but this is hardly a celebration of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity. Despite its one-sided portrayal of the Church (it is apparently based on a true story), this is not a film to be missed. It is wonderfully acted and directed (by Irish newcomer Peter Mullan), with skilful but unobtrusive attention to period detail – a well-paced, intelligent, disturbing and surprisingly nuanced drama. ■

Action movie which asks the ultimate questions

*Matrix: Reloaded***Review: Glynn Cardy**

The religious movie of the year has just been plugged in to our cultural milieu. *Matrix: Reloaded* has arrived. In New Zealand more people will see this movie than have ever been to a church service.

It's not religion as we know it. Indeed the guardians of orthodoxy will quickly remind us that it is akin to the ancient heresy of Gnosticism. Gnosticism never developed a well-defined theology, but it portrays Jesus as the rescuer who saves humankind through gnosis, or higher knowledge. For Gnostics the physical world is not part of God's creation but a manifestation of a lower god in which humankind is trapped. Freedom is obtained through learning the higher knowledge about reality.

Philosophical playtime 101: *What is reality?*

It's a fun game. The problem comes when game crosses into real life. Where the withdrawn young male gets off from obliterating baddies on his Playstation and heads out into the school playground with a real gun. What is real? Well, pain, death, and murder are pretty real. Ahh, but not in the Matrix! The baddies are virtual reality machines.

If you want to be purist about it, I am skeptical of the religious value of any movie that seeks to justify violence. The problem is that most Hollywood movies, seeking to satiate (stimulate?) the public demand, do justify violence. So, like most of us, I attach my violence-filter, buy my chocolate-dipped ice cream, and try to absorb the good a movie offers.

Why are we on this planet? What is our purpose in life? Are we controlling our life or is it controlling us? Where is hope to be found? These are all deeply spiritual questions. In the movie they are not presented simplistically. Doubt and faith exist side by side, often in the same person. Each character has to find the answers for themselves. At best the Neo team give some pointers.

Philosophical playtime 102: *Do we control technology or does it control us?*

The Counsellor, read 'wise leader', reminds us that not only are the Matrix heroes fighting machines, they are also being sustained by machines that produce electricity, water, etc. Their relationship with technology is paradoxical. This is not a sci-fi theoretical discussion. Consider the health-funding debate. If the latest and greatest life-prolonging machine costs $X million where do we fund it from? What services do we cut in order to afford it? There is a strong psychic pull, which planners have to contend with, that insists on buying the latest no matter what the cost. Yet is low-tech medicine the way to go, even if public opinion supported it? The answer is not either/or or both/and. Likewise Reloaded doesn't give

Love like this is not for the faint hearted

Love In Hard Places
by D A Carson
Crossway Books
Price: $39.95
Review: Mike Crowl

Carson's book is a considerably expanded version of four lectures he gave in 2001. The focus of the first long section is on the less-than-Scriptural Western notion that love is something wishy-washy. As he points out in his introduction, 'love' (especially New Testament love) "soon embroils us in reflection on justice, revenge, war, the authority of the state, forgiveness, hate and much more".

Furthermore, for the good of the other party, love confronts. The Old Testament is full of pictures of God confronting his people, and Carson also spends some time in his last section showing how Paul was forced to bring Peter to heel in the course of the famous disagreement mentioned in *Galatians*. (I often think Peter is still smarting ever so slightly when he writes in his second letter that Paul's writings can be hard to understand. Carson shows why this might have been so!)

Equally, love isn't always a turning of the other cheek: while God says quite plainly in more than one place that he wants no one to perish, He often reminds us that the persistently wicked will be punished. Getting to grips with the breadth of God's love is one of Carson's aims in the early part of the book.

In another facet of his discussion, Carson says he won't have it that we can love in some sort of 'duty' way – love means having real affection, not claiming to love while failing to alter the relationship. Nor will he have it that 'loving our neighbour as ourselves' means we have to learn how to love ourselves first. He doesn't actually say so, but the implication is that we don't have a big problem loving ourselves.

The difficulty with loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, Carson says, is that the church is made up of 'natural enemies', people with whom we wouldn't necessarily associate. Our common life in Christ is what holds us together, but we still have to learn to love each other. Not for him the idea of the homogenous congregation: all middle-class, or all black, for instance. And he doesn' t have a lot of time for unity of the ecumenical kind either: he says Christians should love each other, but that doesn,t mean they have to agree on the way church should be done.

After a shortish introduction to the basics of forgiveness he works his argument out in two different areas: firstly in regard to racism,particularly the segregation of white and black within American churches. But there are implications for New Zealanders here too.

He notes: "I doubt that we shall improve much in Christian circles until the parties with the most power reflect a lot more than in the past on matters of justice, and the parties most victimized reflect a lot more than in the past on forgiveness." No one gets away easily in Carson's view.

In the second section on forgiveness, he deals with forgiving people such as bin Laden and other terrorists. You won't agree with everything he says, but he's more clear-headed on the matter than many other writers have been.

This is a detailed book that confronts the reader time and again, and demands a second reading to absorb its full impact. ■

▷▷ us easy answers. We live with the ambiguity and the pain of choices where the options are often between good and good or bad and bad, or a mix of everything imaginable.

What I love about Matrix: Reloaded is the passion. How it's portrayed and how it informs decision-making. The passion is focused on the relationship between the lead male, Neo, and the lead female, Trinity. The passion is portrayed not through an abundance of steamy scenes or seductive moves but through intensity. A two second kiss conveys enormous power.

Philosophical playtime 103: *What is choice?*
I like the scenes where Neo dialogues with Merovingian (a baddy) about causality, and the architect (another baddy) about casuistry. I could almost feel the audience in the Village theatre saying 'Huh?' 'Slow down a minute and explain that.' One thing though we know about Matrix is that it doesn't slow down for passengers.

Neo goes for choice. Could an American movie do anything else?? Yet his choice is not grounded in the greatest good for the greatest number, or in a sense of ultimate/divine providence, but in the passion he knows and, more importantly, feels. It is the existential power of love that informs his choice and, against all odds, brings life out of death.

Now that's a reality I can plug into! ■

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A scientist challenging the theologians

Christianity without God
by Lloyd Geering
Bridget Williams Books, Wellington
Price: $35 (157 pages)
Review: Richard Dowden

According to the *Listener* interview, Geering's title was *Christianity without Theism* but the publisher wanted a punchier title. Theism is first defined on p53, about a third of the way through the book. It is an advance on 'deism' in that a theist believes in a personal, unitarian God. This might do for Judaism and Islam, but Geering seems to see trinitarianism (not his word) and the Incarnational principle (God made humankind) as essential ingredients in his concept of God. He admits he is flying a kite and that his book is 'mingled with a bit of tongue-in-cheek comment' (p16).

Early in the book, Geering points out the absurdity of literal interpretation of the Bible starting with *Genesis* (how could there be three days and nights before the sun was created on the fourth day? Where did Cain's wife come from?) and continuing throughout the Old Testament portraying a God who is tired after six days of creating and needed a rest on the seventh, who angers and is set on destroying Sodom but is talked out of it, and so on. He sees this as partly the result of the Reformation which freed Protestants from the guidance (or dogmatism, if you prefer) of the Catholic Church but enslaved them to biblical literalism.

Geering discusses (p24ff) the meaning of faith and belief. Belief, and to some extent faith, have two meanings. One is mere accept-as-a-fact, the other involves trust, faithfulness, fidelity, etc. This is a message to all of us. When we recite the Creed, are we merely stating acceptance of God as facts or are we swearing allegiance? Even the Nicene Creed has statements which have a deep but not literal meaning such as 'seated at the right hand of God'.

Geering extends this into the New Testament about events which most Christians take literally, such Christ's descent into Sheol ('Hell' in the Nicene Creed) and ascension into Heaven. He goes further and claims that God and all theology are human inventions. On the divinity of Jesus he says (p119): "Intense biblical study has shown fairly convincingly that Jesus did not make any of these assertions about himself".

Much of this was the work of the Fellows of the *Jesus Seminar* who employed a simple voting procedure, the results of which were published in their book, *The Five Gospels, What did Jesus Really Say?* This book used a colour code: red for sayings of Jesus judged (by the Fellows) most likely to be genuine, pink for possibly genuine but maybe modified sayings, grey if unlikely sayings but perhaps related to something genuine, and black for sayings "which definitely did not originate with Jesus"(p121).

To me, as a scientist, this appears like a committee of like-minded (all creationists or all atheists) Fellows of the Royal Society classifying 3000 years of science into categories according to their preconceived notions. Here the Fellows of the Jesus Seminar know Jesus so well that they can distinguish the genuine sayings from the ungenuine. Curiously, Geering makes the same point (p9) when he ridicules the Arian Bishop Eunomius (4th Cent. AD) for saying: "I know God as well as he knows himself!"

Geering accepts only the sayings in red or pink for further consideration. This removes all the long discourses in St John's Gospel, particularly the long one at the Last Supper where Jesus makes his claim to divinity absolutely clear. What's left are the short aphorisms and the parables. Both have parallels in the Old Testament as Geering shows in the next five pages (pp121-125). So what's left?

Personally, I see the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus as described in the sixth chapter of St John's Gospel (no, not the Last Supper) as the essence of Christianity. I haven't seen the book *(The Five Gospels, What did Jesus Really Say?)*, but I expect this account didn't make it to the red or pink. What Jesus said was utterly shocking to the Jews. He didn't pull any punches but kept repeating it to ensure it was taken literally.

I'm not a biblical scholar but I am sure there were no parallels to eating the flesh of a prophet or rabbi or to drinking the blood of anything in the Old Testament. The Jews couldn't accept it, and left. Jesus turned to his own disciples and asked if they too wanted to go. If Jesus didn't really mean it (just testing their faith?), why didn't he mean it?

The whole concept of the Eucharist as ultimate love, with a parallel in sexual consummation, is too wonderful to not be real. It is the way humanity shares in the divinity of Jesus as God shares in the humanity of Jesus. Following Strauss following Hegel, Geering sees the Incarnation as "at one and the same time the humanisation of God and the divinisation of mankind" (p93), so why does he omit any mention of the Eucharist?

I must admit that literary criticism and research based on the opinions of people gone before leaves me unimpressed. Science is anchored in experiment and observation and so is long-term infallible – it comes right eventually. Despite that, I recommend this book to you. It is great food for thought but bad for you without deep thought. Even Geering said of it (p16): "Readers are encouraged to examine carefully what is written – and decide for themselves'. ■

Will 'Godot' come in Israel?

Finding A Way Out or *Waiting for Godot*

Dr Bernard Sabella

As a young undergraduate student in the US, I read Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs*. I could not figure out what the plays were all about and found it difficult to understand the wisdom of the Theatre of the Absurd to which both belong. But almost four decades later, judging from the current situation in our part of the world, I have come to the conclusion that *Waiting for Godot*, *The Chairs* and the *Theatre of the Absurd* make much more sense than what I have thought originally.

In the Palestinian Territories and Israel, we are all waiting for Godot but, the way we are both going, he/she/it will never show up! We also continue to play the Chairs, each side to its own interests and tunes – musical chairs one can say but without the music! Absurd and sad, one could describe our presentation to each other in daily life. But much more absurd and dramatic is the fact that there is not, at present, an exit from the stage that would invite relief, smiles and feelings of accomplishment.

Stuck on the stage, one could say that there is a need for a good producer/director to help us both out. The problem is not with a specific actor or actors but in the whole ensemble. Appropriately or not, those who drew the Road Map were thinking of an exit. If the Palestinian actors would only stop terror, the Israeli actors would hide the tanks under the Chairs. They may even pull back to the periphery of the stage and allow Palestinians to have the full stage, albeit surrounded by a stone wall. What is missing is Godot. He/She/It will not show up: something is wrong in the stage setup. The setup itself needs to be changed and not simply the actors. On another nearby stage, a Godot pretender or usurper, to use the harsher term, came and changed the setup or maybe he thought that he changed the setup. He came claiming liberation, human rights and similar sounding motives. His aim was to do away with the bad hero, the primary villain actor, and to replace him with new actors. A school teacher in a Palestinian village was asked by his 5th grade students if they could write to the White House asking for liberation, human rights and the similar sounding words. They, the children, would also like to see some new actors on the adversary's side. The teacher, however, cautioned his students not to be too optimistic and not to have too much hope. Perhaps the teacher, like the rest of us, is waiting for the genuine Godot. Godot pretenders, irrespective of the terms they use, are not good producers/directors.

So we are doomed to wait and wait for a lifetime till the authentic Godot comes. My father's generation has waited, they were praying for the magnanimity and fairness that Godot would bring with him/her/it but he/she/it never showed up. This saddened them to depression and to darkness experienced in life. They lived all their lives with a sense of victim-hood. Our adversaries also experienced the worst in Europe and Godot never showed up to comfort them. This left them with an undying sense of victimhood. My generation is waiting and my adversaries' generation is waiting but there is no exit.

Some say the children, the children are the hope: those who are not touched by terror and those who do not touch guns or mount tanks. They will have to wait for Godot and he/she/it will certainly show up for them because of their innocence and their pure hearts. I am not that certain that he/she/it would. The whole setup needs to be changed and the actors and the ensemble need to change. They all need to have new rules to guide their actions on stage.

But what does it take to make these changes happen: not one thing but all things. The American thing together with the British thing and the European thing and the Arab thing and the Israeli thing and the Palestinian thing, not to forget the UN and the other things, need to come all together on stage. They need to work out a new setup, not to leave the Palestinian and Israeli actors by themselves. By themselves these actors will not create a new setup. A change of heart in both Palestinians and Israelis may occur but in a different setup.
The set-up now is the problem as it does not have an exit. If there is to be an exit, those who are proposing it must come on stage. It is not enough to propose an exit from outside the stage. Would new actors join the Palestinian and Israeli actors on stage? There is doubt. Meanwhile, we continue to wait for Godot. Apparently, he/she/it remains our last hope to find an exit for all of us here. But will he/she/it come? ■

Dr Sabella is a Sociologist in Jerusalem working at the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, Middle East Council of Churches

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Three feisty females dominating the political stage

You have won rooms of your own in the house hitherto exclusively owned by men
Virginia Woolf

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

Punish France, ignore Germany and forgive Russia." These are the countries that opposed the US war with Iraq. That is what Condoleezza Rice, George W Bush's National Security Adviser, had to say in public – and it became the strategy adopted by the American President. The effect of these words was immediate. Referring to Jacques Chirac, Mr Bush told NBC, "I doubt he'll be coming to the ranch any time soon". It was a case of who is Gerhard Schrôder?

Meanwhile, Tony 'Poodle' Blair was despatched to Moscow to try and curry favour with Vladimir Putin. Unfortunately for 'Poodles', Putin asked the embarrassing question, "where are the weapons of mass destruction?" Oops! Blair was on the next plane back to London.

Who is this woman? The name Condoleezza comes from an Italian musical notation *con dolcezza*, to play 'with sweetness'. There are two sides to her, one of charm and social grace and the other the determination and ruthlessness evident in her right-wing approach brought to bear on foreign policy decisions. She is highly educated, Ph.D. from the University of Denver, Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a member of the boards of directors of many American corporations. She is the ideal adviser and confidante for a right wing Republican administration.

It seems astonishing that Condoleezza Rice, as a member of a marginalised group, black Americans, could achieve a dominant position in the world's most powerful inner circle. Her gender and ethnicity turn out to be an advantage for Bush. Despite coming from an oil-based Texan plutocracy, this makes him appear a champion of minorities, a man sympathetic to various feminist groups. This is far from the image of Bush as the macho cowboy who raves on about weapons of mass destruction because he cannot pronounce the word 'nuclear'.

This close political relationship between Bush and Rice is extraordinary. It demonstrates the ability of America to be able to test constantly the boundaries of political and social rules and to surprise us. It is a sign of a great democracy although, in this sad phase of American aggression and imperialism, Condoleezza Rice is beginning to make Margaret Thatcher look like Little Bo Peep.

I think the United Kingdom is making grave errors in providing cover for the US mistakes rather than helping... to honour international law and the authority of the United Nations", said Clare Short, a strongly opinionated woman at the other end of the political spectrum. She was the International Development Secretary who resigned from Tony Blair's Labour government. Tony Blair suffers another blow to his credibility.

Clare Short had threatened to resign earlier in the year but was persuaded by Blair to stay for the sake of party unity and his fealty to Bush for the war in Iraq. Clearly, she was given a promise of some kind by Blair to placate her and to buy her loyalty. It is obvious now, confirmed by the speed with which he has replaced Short with Valerie Amos, that Blair had no intention of honouring any commitment to Clare Short.

It appears that Short was demanding his support for a new UN resolution on aid to post-war Iraq and a new effort to secure a final settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. Her demands were ignored. Apart from more empty words which only served to cement his position as a partner to Bush's designs for Iraq, Blair continues down the path of alienating his party from its members and the UK from the European Union.

Clare Short has twice quit the front bench in protest at Labour policies, but this time she considers that Tony Blair has gone too far and become "increas-ingly obsessed by his place in history". She is to be admired for her courage and joins ex-Foreign Secretary Robin Cook in the growing criticism of Blair's performance as Prime Minister. In the light of this month's focus on women, it is interesting to note that Clare Short's successor is a Guyana-born black woman – the first to be honoured as a minister in UK.

While on the subject of women in positions of power, readers will be thrilled to learn that this *Tui Motu* columnist recently met the Prime Minister, Helen Clark. Obviously, I cannot divulge the state secrets which Helen (yes, on first name terms) confided, nor the advice I gave her, as this would be a breach of security! But, I can tell you that she had the best lunch of her life in Paris with my friend, Jacques Chirac.

On the mention of his name, we immediately struck up a rapport and I offered my services as interpreter for future lunches at the Elysée Palace. I attempted to give her a copy of *Tui Motu* but a security man thought I was reaching for something else and threw it out the window. However, I can assure readers that the Prime Minister is charming, I was *honoré*, and I felt New Zealand to be in good hands. ■

Take up your beads . . .

What stranger place to be exhorted to speak on the Rosary than at a Pentecostal Bible College? I used to spend a morning each year lecturing at a bible college. When I arrived one year, the principal assured me that as usual I was free to speak on anything I wished, but went on to say, "Don't fail to repeat what you said last year about the Rosary".

What had I said? My hearers were devoted to personal reading of the Bible. I had pointed out how recent a phenomenon was the facility to have one's own copy of the Scriptures. Printing was barely 500 years old, possession of personal copies of the Bible became possible only after the invention of mass production of paper barely 200 years ago.

But Catholics had many centuries earlier devised a way of contact with the Gospel story that did not depend on reading and literacy. This was the Rosary. Furthermore, one did not merely recall the facts of significant Gospel incidents. One did so prayerfully.

I led my class through the Mysteries of the Rosary, pointing out their utterly scriptural character. (I skated rather lightly over the last two Glorious mysteries.) When one student suggested that now that we had printing we no longer needed the Rosary, my response was that when a horse is running well, you do not shoot it.

The truth, however, has been that Catholics themselves, if they have not set a gun to its head, have at least in recent years put the Rosary out to pasture. It has had fierce competition from vernacular liturgy, scripture study, justice and peace involvement. Even those who were dedicated to daily Rosary in the past have found it an uphill task to be faithful to it today.

Recently I had the task of conducting a day retreat for a quite conservative group. I groped for a common topic around which I could centre the day. Pope John Paul's recent letter on the Rosary was the solution. Of all that we looked at that day, let me recall several points.

While the Rosary is a Marian activity, it is more basically a Christ-centred one. As John Paul reminds his readers repeatedly, the Rosary is a matter of contemplating Christ. "Contemplating the scenes of the Rosary in union with Mary is a means of learning from her to 'read' Christ, to discover his secrets and to understand his message."

He recalls the words of Paul VI: "Without contemplation, the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation runs the risk of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas. The recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord."

The addition of the *Luminous Mysteries* to the three traditional ones is a welcome and long overdue step. As previously practised, the Rosary neglected the years of active ministry. Now the revelation of the Kingdom in the person of Jesus becomes the object of prayerful rosary contemplation as never before.

The *Luminous Mysteries* have another lesson for Rosary users. One no longer need feel limited as to the Gospel events contemplated. The Joyful Mysteries can just as well draw on the first chapters of *Matthew* as on those of *Luke*. A wide range of incidents from the years of active ministry can be the subject of our contemplation.

Rosary reciters most of us once were. Is it time for some of us least to make a fresh start? ■

Humphrey O'Leary
Fr Humphrey O'Leary is Rector of the redemptorist community in Glendowie, Auckland

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Storm in a teacup

The media can never change things, only hands-on experience, a reader wrote in recently. I doubt if Rupert Murdoch would believe that – and for once *Tui Motu* finds itself in agreement with that illustrious gentleman. What we choose to read for mental nourishment not merely informs us: it can also motivate us. We are persuaded, attracted or shocked into a mind change. There is an essential moment of 'seeing' which precedes judging and acting, in Cardijn's classic trilogy.

These reflections were prompted by the latest media witchhunt – the fall from grace of rugby coach, Laurie Mains. You might think that with a war and a world crisis, with the spread of Sars, even with the threat of a power crisis, there might be other headlines to dominate the local press and radio talkback.

Not a bit! Accusations tumbled over counter-accusations, wounds were exposed and salt duly rubbed in. The discussion generated much heat and little light. So what were the facts? The Highlanders failed – by a whisker – to get into the Super 12 play-offs. A scapegoat had to be found. The coach was an obvious candidate.

Mains is possibly the best rugby coach of this generation, local and national. No one denies that he has been a stern taskmaster and bruised a few egos along the way. He is like an old-time schoolmaster: respected, feared, rarely loved. And he had done the decent thing and handed in his towel at season's end.

But he was not to be allowed to retire gracefully. At once recriminations erupted; the reporters licked their lips and sharpened their pencils, the radio hosts began to stir the porridge pot. Every snide comment or vicious slander was given maximum coverage. To what purpose? Who benefited? And what about the victim whose good name has been trailed in the mud? Where is the justice? Where is the truth?

The old penny catechism was useful in providing useful hooks to hang moral concepts on. Two words I learned very young were 'calumny' and 'detraction'. There are two ways of muddying a person's reputation: one by telling downright 'porkies', the other by revealing what should be left unsaid. Laurie Mains suffered both. His reputation has been diminished.

The media generally have a paramount function to raise issues which affect the common good and investigate them thoroughly. Sometimes that may justify what can look like a witchhunt. But that is not the same thing as peddling gossip or indulging in character assassination. We need to adopt an ethical filter whenever the latest media scandal erupts. And leave Laurie to rest on his well-merited laurels.

M.H.

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