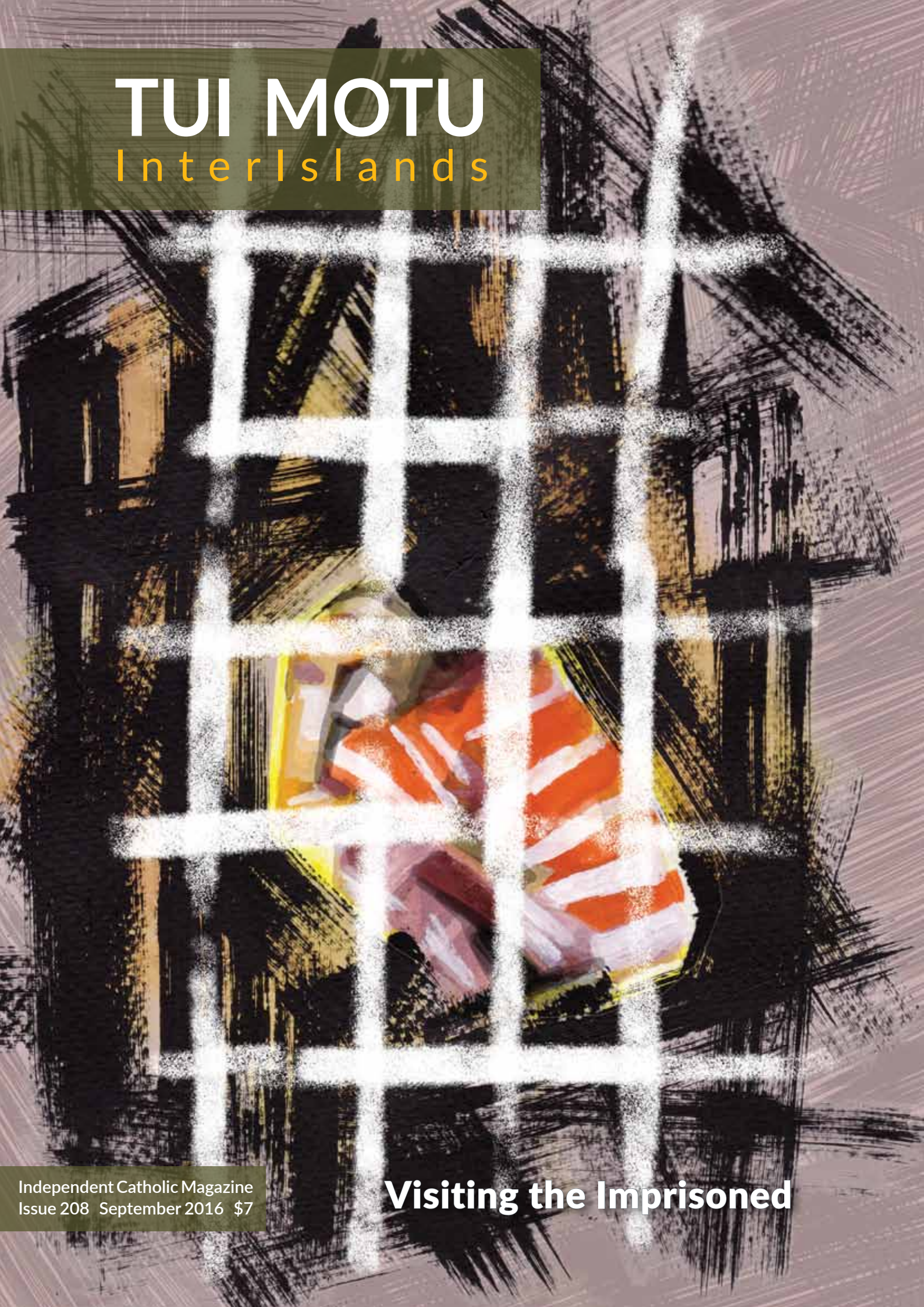
TUI MOTU
InterIslands



Independent Catholic Magazine
Issue 208 September 2016 $7

Visiting the Imprisoned

CONTENTS

FEATURES

COMMENT

COLUMNS

SCRIPTURE

REFLECTION

REVIEWS

LETTERS

Cover painting:
In Jail
by Anna Vignet
www.annavignet.com
Used with permission.

TuiMotuInterIslands Tuimotumag

Website: www.tuimotu.org

EDITORIAL

Practising Community

The work of mercy, "visiting the imprisoned", professes our value of keeping the relationship of the prisoner with the community alive and strong. It underscores that though the separation is enforced and temporary, it must not detract from the person's place and responsibility in the community. There are children, partners and parents who need the person in their lives.

Our writers tell of the difficulties around visiting the imprisoned. Apart from the security issues of getting into a prison, the facilities themselves are usually located in rural areas and prisoners are not housed in the jail closest to their families. This present day "transportation" creates another layer of separation of inmates from their families. Without ready transport and accommodation, parents, partners and children are unable to visit and their bonds with the inmate can suffer. Annie McGuire and Verna McFelin outline the services they offer families to maintain the relationship with their members in prison and a place in the community when they are released.

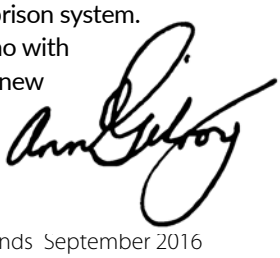
While the writers agree that prison is necessary for some, they are also critical of our system of mass incarceration. Jim Consedine describes it as "warehousing" the poor — offenders whose mental illness, addictions, psychological and medical conditions cause them to accept prison as a way of life. Mary Thorne, Tim Workman and Andrew Becroft explain the efforts made to keep offenders, particularly teenagers, from being sucked into the prison system. Their focus is on supporting them to get their lives in order.

This focus on rehabilitation — offenders committing to be responsible family and community members — is in contrast to the focus on punishment. English theologian Timothy Gorringe, said that a distorted understanding of St Anselm's satisfaction theology of redemption led 19th century Christians to accept that punishment in some way expiated crime. It was like thinking that because Jesus suffered and died to satisfy God's honour, offended by humanity's sinfulness, every time a new crime was committed it caused Jesus further suffering. If the offender accepted the punishment and repented, God would be merciful to them. This spiritualisation of punishment for crime blinded good Christians to the systemic causes of crime and led them to preach a disciplinarian God.

With what we now know about the interconnected relationship of all creation and the Spirit's empowering love drawing all people and things into communion, we cannot accept the deliberate separation and disconnection of members from society. We cannot accept that punishment for crime is rehabilitating, or that God has ordained the prison system.

We are grateful to all our contributors who with word, art, craft, reflection and insight offer a new look at "visiting the imprisoned" in this issue.

As is our custom the last word is a blessing. ■



Nauru and Manus Island Detention Centres MUST GO

"The majority of asylum seekers on Nauru and Manus Island have now been proved to be refugees. They are not going to accept cheques to go back home and face renewed persecution. That's why they fled in the first place."

I joined Robert Manne, Tim Costello and John Menadue in calling for an end to the limbo imposed on proven refugees on Nauru and Manus Island. I think this can be done while keeping the boats stopped. I think it ought be done.

The majority of asylum seekers on Nauru and Manus Island have now been proved to be refugees. They are not going to accept cheques to go back home and face renewed persecution. That's why they fled in the first place. Most of these people have had their lives on hold, in appalling circumstances, for over three years. It's time to act. Ongoing inaction will send a green light to desperate people to do desperate things.

While respecting those refugee advocates and their supporters who cannot countenance stopping the boats coming from Indonesia, I think it is time to see if we can design a way of getting the asylum seekers off Nauru and Manus Island "in such a way that we don't restart boats", ensuring that we continue to send a red light to people smugglers in Java.

To set a new direction, we have first to put aside the undesirable and unworkable aspects of the present policy settings. Are not our military and intelligence services (in cooperation with Indonesian officials) sufficiently on the job that they can stop people smugglers in their tracks, stopping boats from being filled, stopping boats from setting out and turning back any that set out, regardless of whether proven refugees on Nauru and Manus Island are resettled elsewhere (even ultimately in Australia)?

The suggestion that those camps need to remain filled in order to send a message to people smugglers is not only morally unacceptable; it is strategically questionable. Those proven to be refugees should be resettled as quickly as practicable, and that includes taking up New Zealand's offer of 150 places a year — just as John Howard did when he accepted New Zealand's offer to take 131 from the *Tampa*.

In 2012, Angus Houston proposed a resurrected Pacific solution to the Gillard government for two purposes only. He saw it as a temporary circuit breaker until the boats could be stopped and turned back lawfully and safely. His expert panel did not propose it as a permanent precondition for being able to stop boats and turn them back.

Secondly, he saw the maintenance of the offshore processing centres once the boats had stopped as a necessary part of the jigsaw in designing a regional solution for the protection, processing and resettlement of refugees in South East Asia. Given that there has been no continuing flow of irregular maritime arrivals (IMAs), Houston saw no warrant for keeping proven refugees on Nauru or Manus Island for years on end, without any end in prospect.

Given that there has been no "ongoing flow of IMAs to Australia", the only case for maintaining processing facilities on Nauru and Manus Island, in line with the Houston recommendations, would be as part of "an integrated regional framework for the processing of asylum claims". To date, the Abbott and Turnbull governments have done NOTHING to establish that framework. Nauru and Manus Island no longer perform any credible, morally coherent, or useful task in securing Australia's borders.

Even talk of sending signals is misplaced. The main signal is being sent to Australian voters, not to asylum seekers waiting in Java whose attempts to commission people smugglers have been thwarted by Indonesian officials and Australian intelligence, and whose boats would be turned back in any event.

If the government is unable to resettle the proven refugees elsewhere in countries like New Zealand and Canada by the end of the year, the refugees should be resettled in Australia. If there are still asylum seekers awaiting determination of their claims by the end of the year, they should be brought to Christmas Island for processing.

The stakes are very high, and not just for those proven refugees we continue to punish so publicly and so unapologetically, pretending that we are treating them decently. The Government has no mandate to make these people suffer more, in our name, for no appreciable benefit to anybody.

To keep them on hold any longer in such circumstances will be to send a green light to desperate, trapped people doing desperate things beyond the control of the governments and service providers paid with Australian tax dollars to keep them out of sight and out of mind. It's time for our politicians to agree to defuse the ticking time bombs of Nauru and Manus Island. ■

Printed with permission of *Eureka Street*.

Frank Brennan SJ is Professor of Law at Australian Catholic University and Adjunct Professor at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture.

CRIME, PUNISHMENT *and a* NEW START

Jim Consedine explains why the modern prison system is warehousing the poor and urges that we take a fresh approach to dealing with those who offend.

Widespread use of imprisonment for crime is a reasonably recent phenomenon. Christians, notably the Quakers, promoted prisons in the late 18th century as a merciful reform of the excessive punishments that were being inflicted on offenders. The imprisonment of the worst offenders was intended to be a more humane way of dealing with criminals. The "prison" was modelled on a medieval monk's cell. There the offender was expected to meditate on the crime and be reformed through solitude, work and penance, thus the name "penitentiary".

Before the reform, local magistrates or JPs could impose on an offender any sentence they thought fit. The emphasis was on human suffering and public humiliation. Torture, whippings, the workhouse, the stocks, mutilation, transportation and the gallows were inflicted for even the smallest infractions of perceived good order. Prisons were kept mainly for debtors or used as holding cells.

This regime of punishment was brutal and the poor and the working classes suffered disproportionately. For example, in 1823 my 21-year-old great-great grandfather, Thomas Sweeney, was arrested with three others for the arson of an absentee English landlord's house in Tipperary and sentenced to death, later commuted to transportation to Australia. In the same week a mother of six was sentenced to be "whipped through the town" for stealing food, three 11-13-year-old children were ordered to be whipped for stealing, and three men were sentenced to death for cattle rustling.

Prison as an Industry

At the beginning of the 20th century attempts were made to focus penitentiaries on the rehabilitation of the inmates but the efforts were too half-hearted to succeed. Instead mass incarceration in prison-industrial complexes mushroomed and has now become one of the biggest industries in the world. For example, in the USA, there are 2.3 million sentenced people in prison, while a further 11 million churn through jail for short periods each year. Prisons have become a massive self-perpetuating industry.

Today more than 9 million people are in prisons around the world. In May 2016 New Zealand had 9,500 men and women imprisoned, higher per capita than either Australia or Britain.

There are huge vested interests in maintaining the prison system, including profit-seeking corporations with thousands of employees now involved in running them. They need crime to keep them operative. And the corporate media feeds the fear and insecurity of the public by sensationalising crime and profiling particular groups as criminally disposed and/or scapegoats. This approach sells papers, gains TV ratings and feeds an insatiable public appetite.

Prisons worldwide now reflect a monumental failure of social policy. The marginalised people the Christian reformers sought to help have ended up being penalised even more. What started as a reform has turned into a system that Pope John Paul 11 described in 1988 as a "structure of sin".

Imprisoning the Vulnerable

The poor continue to be over-represented in prison populations. The profile of New Zealand inmates is male and mid-twenties. Three quarters of them are single, divorced or separated, two-thirds are beneficiaries and three-quarters are unemployed. Half the population has severe alcohol and/or drug problems and many have had a psychiatric assessment. Half of them are from dysfunctional homes. A fifth of them are functionally illiterate and only a tenth have formal educational qualifications. Just under a

half are Pakeha and the others are mainly Māori and Pacific Islander. New Zealand spends $90,000-95,000 per year, per prisoner. This money mainly is spent on security, not the education, healing and rehabilitation of the inmates. Furthermore, this imprisonment has collateral consequences on their families, their children and the wider community.

Restorative Justice Alternatives to Prison

While those who have committed heinous crimes need to be imprisoned, many others do not. There are at least five alternative non-violent processes available. If they were better resourced and promoted properly they could reduce re-offending, help offenders take responsibility for their behaviour, produce healing for victims, make our communities safer and would be significantly less expensive. No tax dollar is wasted more easily and spent with less accountability than the prison dollar.

Alternative programmes include diversion, which diverts those arrested from the court and works with them to take up options like apology and restitution for the offence. Diversion is geared to stop the person becoming involved further in crime. Many more of those arrested in NZ could be diverted but the process should be in lay hands, not with the police.

Habilitation Centres were established first by the Government following an Enquiry in 1988. Named from the Latin word, *habilitare*, meaning to empower or enable, Habilitation Centres recognise that the majority of offenders need to deal with their anti-social issues — aggression, sexual aberration, drug, gambling, alcohol addictions — if they are to live useful, crime-free futures. However, Habilitation Centres need greater resources and more political muscle behind them.

Community Panels can deal successfully with many offenders who are willing to appear before them, face their charges and have them dealt with by a lay panel of three community representatives. The panel has the power to reach agreement with the offender as to sanctions. These can include seeking certain behavioural changes, reparation and apology.

New Zealand has had Restorative Justice conferencing (with some exceptions) for its juvenile offenders since 1989 and for adults since 2002. The process involves a skilled facilitator inviting victims and offenders to face one another. Both victims and offenders are encouraged to bring family and friends in support. The process requires the offender to acknowledge the victim, offer apology, answer their questions and to offer restitution where applicable. The victims have the opportunity to express how the offending affected them and make suggestions about sanctions.

The secret of Restorative Conferencing lies in its "carrot and stick" approach. All have a stake in a successful outcome. Ideally it should provide a win-win outcome for all.

Usually a consensus is reached about the recommendation to be referred to a judge. The offender signs a contract and the court monitors the progress. The secret of Restorative Justice conferencing lies in its "carrot and stick" approach. Everyone has a stake in a successful outcome. Ideally it should provide a win-win outcome for all.

Transformative Justice processes recognise that the roots of much crime lie in the socio-economic, family and social backgrounds of the offenders. A Transformative Conference creates the opportunity to begin to address those wider issues including inter-generational abuse, unemployment, domestic violence, family dysfunction, addictions and poverty.

Huge Overhaul Needed

Our understanding of crime — what it is and who does it — needs to undergo a paradigm shift. We can no longer settle for a punitive 19th century understanding to help us cope with 21st century advances, which reveal the fundamental interconnection of all life on our planet and our relationships with one another.

Is it not time that we recognised that the prison system does not protect us from the gravest crimes, nor from some of the greatest criminals? For example, those who profit from environmental crime that threatens the life of the planet. The giant polluters of the oceans, rivers and the air. The corporations driving de-forestation which is systematically killing our planet's lungs. And the major beneficiaries of global neo-liberal capitalism, which Pope Francis has condemned as exploitative and gravely sinful.

We have worldwide poverty and racism and sexism endemic in some countries, illegal mass detentions, widespread corruption among governments, ongoing wars and the armament transnationals that profit from them. Is this not systemic criminality? Who is held accountable? Who goes to prison? Who even defines such actions as criminal, much less as crimes against humanity?

We usually turn a blind eye to those crimes and focus instead on those we have always targeted — the poor and the marginalised. This is not to minimise serious crimes in our own society, but to place them in a wider context of criminality and sin.

Now is the Time

We need an enormous effort now in New Zealand to change our criminal justice system. It is time for courage to grapple with the complex social and global issues around crime and address offenders with more merciful, effective and transformative options than what is being offered now.

If the Church is prepared to proclaim Christ's prophetic word and healing ministry, then we have a vital role to play. We need to revisit our biblical roots and Catholic social justice teachings. Then review prisons through a fresh lens. ■

Former prison chaplain **Jim Consedine** is a priest of the Christchurch Diocese and lives at the Thomas Merton Catholic Worker house in Christchurch.

VISITING THE MĀORI IMPRISONED

Kim Workman writes about how the Churches can be more involved in supporting Māori prisoners to stay out of jail.

One of the best known scripture passages about prison visiting is Matthew 25:34–40 whereJesus makes a connection between caring for prisoners now and the outcome of the Final Judgement. Jesus identifies himself with those in jail, so that those who care for prisoners actually encounter the anonymous presence of Christ. Lee Griffith in his book, *The Fall of the Prison*, says:

"What Jesus was telling his disciples is that, if you want to meet God face to face, the nearest you are going to come to it on this planet is to look into the faces of your brothers and sisters — and especially your sisters and brothers who have been declared unrighteous, unclean, unacceptable. It is not that we find God there; it is that God finds us there. That is where our faith is nurtured and bears fruit. There where we expect to meet monsters, we meet God instead. The opportunity to serve God lies there among the prisoners who have been reckoned to be least deserving of any service at all."

If prison is indeed the place where the state contains the least, the lost and the lonely, it is also true that Māori are disproportionately represented in that group. The crisis of Māori imprisonment is sustained and embedded. In 1936, Māori prisoners were 11.1 per cent of the total prison population; by 1944 that percentage had increased to 26.4 per cent. Today, Māori make up 15 per cent of New Zealand's population but represent nearly 56 per cent of the prison population.

My experience is that in the prison context, cultural, gender or age differences between a visitor and prisoner are of little moment. What matters to the prisoner is that another human being has made the effort to be part of their lives; that sacrifice is treasured as significant, is valued and is respected.

Mass Imprisonment of Māori

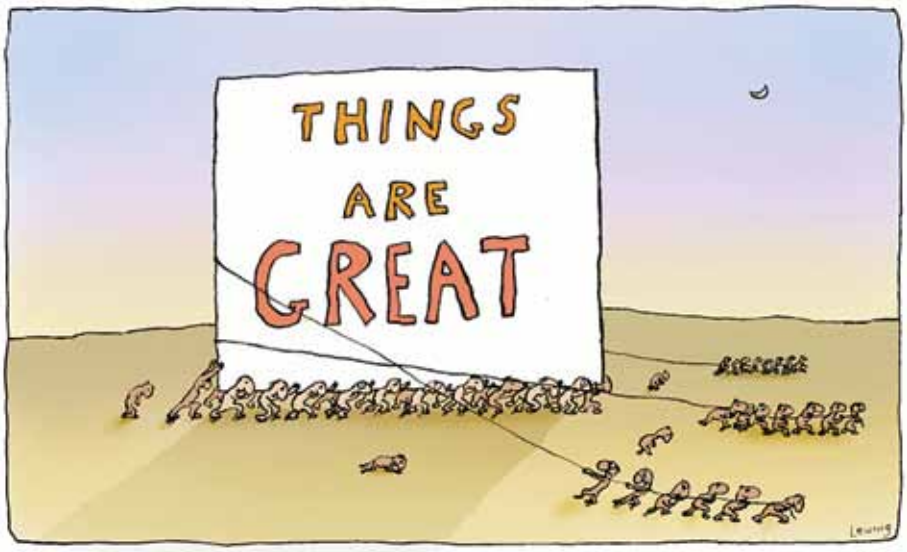
Mass incarceration in New Zealand is Māori incarceration. Mass incarceration can be said to occur when the rates of incarceration impact negatively on sectors of society who share similar ethnic and socio-economic characteristics; characteristics which create the conditions for cumulative and inter-generational disadvantage. Mass incarceration impacts not only those who are behind the wire but also the whānau and communities they come from.

Causes of Māori Imprisonment

The causes of disproportionality within the criminal justice system are complex. Some contend that higher Māori offending is the product of certain developmental pathways. They argue that Māori are particularly vulnerable to adverse early-life family and environmental factors which are closely linked to socio-economic status, marginalisation and structural and institutional racism which may contribute to subsequent offending behaviour.

To understand better the statistical gulf that exists between Māori and Pākehā, Māori researchers contend the figures must be interpreted in the broader context of colonisation, dispossession of land, Māori urbanisation, the imposition of the Western system of common law, cultural assimilation and the undermining of *tikanga* and traditional forms of Māori social control.

The Māori experience of colonisation is paralleled by struggles of indigenous peoples in other settler states, who have also been systematically brutalised and marginalised by state policies and practices and where they continue to be over-represented in prison populations.



Michael Leunig www.leunig.com.au Used with permission.

Visiting Prison

Why should all this matter to the average Christian prison visitor? It is important to be prepared; to know what to expect. About 40 per cent of Māori male prisoners are under 30 years of age, 50 per cent will have been unemployed at the time of sentencing, 47 per cent have a

Photo: Kim Workman

It is not that we find God there; it is that God finds us there.

diagnosed chronic disease and over 20 per cent will have a history of severe head injury.

Māori prisoners may initially treat you with suspicion — and for good reason. Only about 15 per cent of Māori prisoners receive regular visits from *whānau* and many have never been visited at all. A visit from a stranger will be a new and daunting experience for some. For many, gang affiliation — as a "patched" member, as an associate, or as a family member — contributes to their contemporary Māori prison identity. The gang is the only *whānau* they have known. It provides necessary security, love and sustenance. For the prison authorities, however, gang membership represents something else — rejection of mainstream values and an act of dissent and resistance.

Visiting for the Imprisoned Person

What can make a difference to the lives of Māori prisoners? There has been a great deal of publicity about the value of *tikanga Māori* programmes in prison. In reality, what has emerged over the last 20 years is a corrections-led approach to the reduction of Māori re-offending, which has been largely ineffective and alien to Māori thinking. The pairing of *tikanga Māori* with Western cognitive behavioural approaches has not made any significant difference to Māori over-representation and has been resisted by Māori. Generally, programmes and approaches that work for prisoners, work less well for Māori.

That is why the presence of community and church-based volunteers is so important. Through the simple act of sharing their life and love with a prisoner, visitors serve to present a whole new paradigm. They often come to be regarded by prisoners as pro-social role models; someone to trust, with whom to share their challenges, successes and deepest thoughts.

Prison visitors contribute in other ways. They serve to neutralise the tension that often exists between prison staff and prisoners and to normalise the prison environment. As a result, prisoners will often come to regard the visitor as the kind of person they want to be.

My experience is that in the prison context, cultural, gender or age differences between a visitor and prisoner are of little moment. What matters to the prisoner is that another human being has made the effort to be part of their lives; that sacrifice is treasured as significant, is valued and is respected.

At an organisational level, international research shows that where there is a regular presence of volunteers, the level of corruption within the prison reduces. While some prison staff consider that an increase in outside visitors to a prison might increase the likelihood of illegal activity, the reverse is true.

Becoming a Visitor

The present challenge is to be able to get permission to visit prisoners on a regular basis. Over the last decade it has become increasingly difficult to do so. Prison visiting times for visitors and whānau are heavily restricted and often occur during normal working hours. Recently, prison chaplains have been forbidden to have ongoing contact with prisoners once they are released — an extraordinary decision, given the evidence that supports continuation of care and social contact.

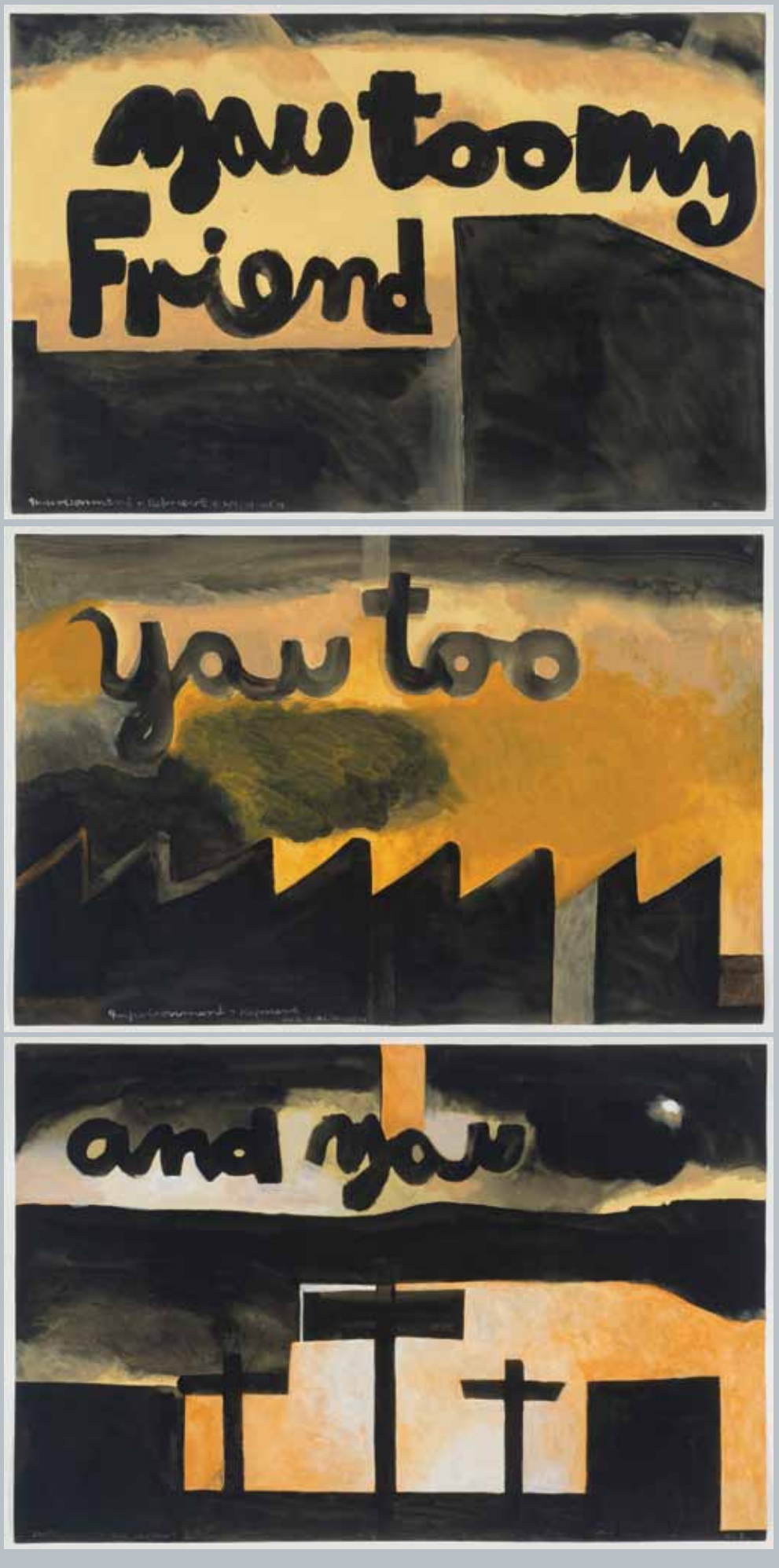
Sponsored weekend leaves or church paroles are strictly rationed and volunteers in some prisons report that they do not feel valued or welcome by prison authorities. Despite that, there are about 2,500 prison visitors overcoming those barriers, about 85 per cent of whom are church based. It is worth the effort. You will not find God in prison — God will find you.

One last word — and it comes from theologian Dr Chris Marshall, in an address to the 2002 Prison Fellowship Conference:

"If we are to take the Bible's consistently negative valuation of prisons seriously, it is imperative that Christians match their practical concern for those in jail with a vocal critique of society's increasing reliance on prison as a strategy for social control. Even if we cannot subscribe to a complete prison abolitionist agenda, the direction of biblical teaching and the logic of God's self-revelation as the One who sets prisoners free, should surely drive all Christians to stand against every attempt to expand the prison system." ■

Dr Kim Workman is Adjunct Research Associate, Institute of Criminology, Victoria University. He was the Director of Prison Fellowship NZ 2000–2008.

THESE ARE OUR PEOPLE



Colin McCahon, *Imprisonment and Reprieve*, 1978-1979. Acrylic on paper. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1980. Reproduced courtesy of the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust.

Overlooking the East River in Brooklyn Bridge Park, New York City, a new and thought-provoking eight-metre tall sculpture by British artist Martin Creed has been installed for the summer. It is made up of individual steel letters, outlined in ruby red neon light, which spell out the familiar word UNDERSTANDING. The sculpture rotates, sometimes slowly, sometimes faster, so that at times the word is clear and at other times puzzling and difficult to discern. The constantly changing perspective on this poignant word encourages reflection that understanding can be hard work. It requires our thinking to be stretched and reconfigured. Occasionally, as new understanding dawns, some habitual ways of thinking might have to be relinquished.

I've been thinking about the Jubilee Year of Mercy in the light of this sculpture. Understanding is a vital component of mercy. *Tui Motu* readers have been engaging with works of mercy this year and in the February issue, as we began to open the door, our editor suggested that this may involve "opening our minds, rearranging the priorities of our hearts, softening our judgements, dropping our carefully cooked resentments, reassessing our certainties, chipping away at our rigidity."

Difficulties in Visiting Prisons

Maybe the most challenging merciful work is visiting the imprisoned. There are many reasons for this. Partly it is because

the general public knows little about prisoners or life inside our prisons. The majority of people in our communities do not have first-hand experience of incarceration. Those who break the law can be sentenced to places out of sight and out of mind so we don't think about them much. It is possible that fear-inducing news about crime numbs our inclination to examine critically the harsh, punitive rhetoric of those in society represented by the Sensible Sentencing Trust. These voices focus on law and order, they urge us to crack down on crime, impose longer sentences and declare a war on drugs; they are voices that complain prisons are too soft, the food is too good, prisons resemble holiday camps, too many released prisoners want to return to this easy life. I don't believe these voices are helpful.

It can be difficult to actually visit the imprisoned. It is impractical for large numbers of people to go into prisons as volunteer visitors. The Department of Corrections' security demands an involved process of application, approval and induction and numbers of volunteers approved to come on site are limited. But, as a society, we can revisit imprisonment as an important issue in our thinking about the well-being of our country and allow that understanding to be stretched and grow.

These are our People

The late Celia Lashlie commented once that our society will have come of age when people do not say about a proposed correction facility: "Not in my neighbourhood" but instead say: "Let us be part of their restoration and rehabilitation, for these are our people".

In 2015 a new, 1,000-bed men's prison was opened in South Auckland to help cope with the growing prison population. In the last decade in New Zealand it has been our practice to incarcerate larger numbers of those who break our laws for increasingly long periods of time and to give little consideration to the underlying reasons for their problematic behaviour.

Statistics indicate that Māori are disproportionately represented; 51 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women in prison are Māori. Alcohol and drug addiction is a factor in as much as 80 per cent of all offending in New Zealand. Mental health issues are common, as are disrupted educational histories and turbulent, abusive, violent childhoods. A growing consensus of informed comment is now making it plain that imprisonment, as a method of reducing crime, does not work. There are, however, some exciting initiatives to rehabilitate more effectively men and women whose lives have spiralled into such disorder that they come before the courts charged with crimes.

Alternatives to Prison

In November 2012, *Te Whare Whakapiki Wairua* (The House that Uplifts the Spirit) or Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court (AODTC) began as a five-year pilot in the Auckland and Waitakere District Courts. Judges Lisa Tremewan and Ema Aitken established AODTC based on the successful US Drug Court model. In this model a person whose offending has been driven by an alcohol or drug dependency and whose offence would otherwise incur at least a three-year prison sentence, must plead guilty to the charges and be willing to enter into an intensive treatment programme under the close supervision of the AODTC. When the main business of a court is not proving the innocence or guilt of an offender, time and attention can focus on WHY the crime has been committed and what comprehensive treatment programmes and rehabilitative support services can be put in place to achieve lasting change in the lives of individuals and their families.

Victims of crime are largely supportive of the approach taken by AODTC. They often feel relief that the offender's issues are being dealt with and they have greater hope that there will be no offending in the future. The Restorative Justice process is put in place wherever appropriate.

AODTC is no soft option. Participants must submit to frequent drug testing and some wear an alcohol detection device. They attend court on a weekly or fortnightly basis to ensure that they are undergoing treatment as directed and are participating in community work. The AODTC operates as a collaborative team comprising Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and Police, together with drug treatment workers and social workers to create the best possible opportunities to address addiction and related issues.

To date the pilot programme appears to be achieving its goal of reducing recidivism and there is some optimism that it may be expanded to provide wider access to this urgently needed help.

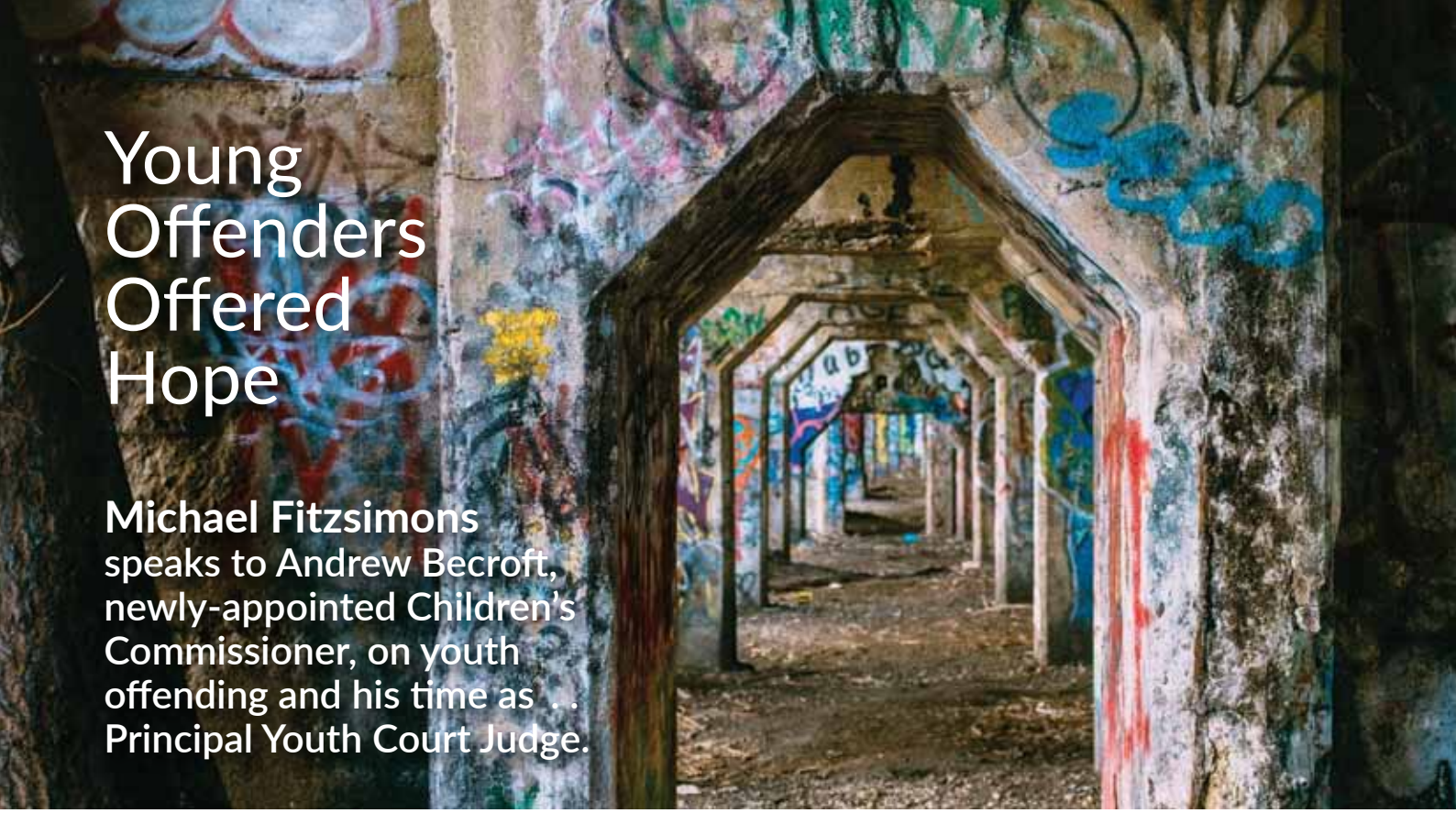
One way we can effectively revisit the issue of imprisonment is to question our parliamentary candidates regarding their party's policy on extending the availability of AODTC in other centres. It is an initiative that has transformative potential for our communities.

Early Intervention and Prevention

Another positive project is being undertaken by Associate Professor Tracey McIntosh, a sociologist from Auckland University, of Tuhoe descent, who is doing important research into violence in our society. Integral to Tracey's research team are men and women who have convictions for violent crimes, some of whom are presently in prison. Tracy says: "For me, the crime-punishment paradigm is often not useful in creating real possibilities of social change. What we need to do is address social harm — to find ways of prevention and early intervention."

The Christian tradition has always been concerned for the well-being of the imprisoned. These people are human beings made by God in God's own image, full of dignity and beauty and potential for good, who, like us, fail at times and act destructively rather than creatively. Compassionate encounters such as those with *Te Whare Whakapiki Wairua* and Tracy McIntosh foster a shared sense of the value of our humanness and begin to enable imprisoned women and men to manage their own lives with dignity and courage. Understanding is Mercy's on-going challenge to us if we are to keep alive our humanity and become a compassionate people. ■

Mary Thorne has been a parishioner of St Mary's Catholic parish in Papakura for 36 years. She works with imprisoned women.



Young Offenders Offered Hope

Michael Fitzsimons speaks to Andrew Becroft, newly-appointed Children's Commissioner, on youth offending and his time as … Principal Youth Court Judge.

Everyone has a worldview. For Andrew Becroft, former Principal Youth Court Judge, that worldview is Christian. He quotes C. S. Lewis: "I believe in Christ as I believe in the sun, not because I see it but because by it I see everything else."

"My perspective is that of a Christian, it shapes my worldview. I am a man who realises that there but for the grace of God go I. As a Youth Court Judge, I was always very aware that the people we were dealing with (youth offenders) face challenges that not many of us do. I hope I acted with integrity and care but of course Christians don't have a mortgage on that approach by any means."

A tall, lean, highly articulate Andrew Becroft sits in a small corner office in the heart of the Wellington bureaucracy. He has been Children's Commissioner for 22 days and is brimming with enthusiasm about his new role as advocate for the 1.12 million New Zealanders under the age of 18 — 24 per cent of the population — whom he describes as " largely voiceless and disenfranchised".

He brings to his new job 15 years' experience as Principal Youth Court Judge. That job "gave me a front row seat in the grandstand, seeing up close the problems of youth offending and its consequences. I've been in that sense an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. My new role is an opportunity to erect some fences at the top of the cliff."

Formative Years Critical

"We know from the Youth Court that so much offending goes back to experiences in early childhood. As St Ignatius of Loyola said: 'Give me a child until the age of seven and I'll give you the adult.' All the science tells us how true that is. The early years are the formative years. In the Youth Court we were undoing the damage. Now I have the chance to try and prevent it."

New Process for Youth

New Zealand's Youth Justice System involves an entirely different process from the adult justice system and is widely regarded as a world leader. The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act (CYPTFA), introduced in 1989, signalled a shift to justice administered in the context of family and community, away from the courts whenever possible.

"The two key principles are accountability and addressing underlying causes," says Andrew Becroft. "The Youth Justice System doesn't send a message that young offenders won't be held to account because they will.

"But the hope the Youth Justice System provides is that by addressing the underlying causes, we can get them out of a life of crime, out of the criminal justice pipeline. We don't charge them unless the public interest demands it and there is no other course of action."

Police Cooperation

Andrew Becroft is quick to acknowledge the pivotal role the Police play in this new approach.

"This was the first time that a statute has said to the Police: 'Don't charge.' And the Police have bought into this approach spectacularly well. So about 80 per cent of youth offenders are not charged, aren't brought to court but are dealt with individually in the context of the community. That's worked really well.

"Almost all teenage offenders offend only as teenagers. With good, prompt, community-based intervention, they can be helped out of a life of crime very quickly."

Two hundred and fifty Police Youth Aid are at the centre of this community-based system, which might involve family conferences, home visits, putting in place reparation, apology letters, community work and counselling.

"For the 80 per cent of youth offenders who are not charged, this system works incredibly well. About 80 per cent of these young offenders

never offend again. It's a system that operates under the radar; its great strengths are not well known."

Process is Working

The statistics tell a surprising story, totally at odds with impressions gained from media headlines. In 2015, the number of children (10–13) and young people (14–16) charged in court was the lowest in over a decade and had decreased by 41 per cent since 2011.

The system works so well that it should be extended to include 17-year-olds, says Andrew Becroft.

"Sadly it stops at a person's 17th birthday. It should include 17-year-olds; most of the world does. It's the right thing to do. We've signed up to it and it wouldn't mean that 17-year-old serious offenders would escape. They would still get prison sentences but for the moderate-to-minor offenders, we would have the chance of using non-court processes to get them out of the system."

The Young are Works in Progress

What we have to appreciate is that young people are "a work in progress", says Andrew Becroft. Literally, their frontal lobe is still developing, the part of the brain that deals with commonsense, impulse control, wired decision-making under pressure. Development doesn't finish until the early 20s.

"So teenagers make some spectacularly silly, sometimes reckless, sometimes tragic decisions. But all the research is that when the frontal lobe work is completed, they'll probably leave that offending behind. So the fundamental approach of the Youth Court is that we are just about dealing with a different species of human being and we need a quite different approach."

There are those of course who think the Youth Justice System is a soft touch. This is not true, he insists. Serious young offenders are held to account before the Court. The striking thing though is that the number of these serious offenders is very small — 1,801 last year. In the case of these offenders, the Court has a number of options open to it but seldom are they sent to prison. Only 15 were sent to prison last year.

The fact that the number is very small is encouraging because prisons are not great at rehabilitation.

Hope for Rehabilitation

"I think we all know that while this side of heaven prisons are necessary, segregating our most serious offenders and aggregating them together in a semi-concrete warehouse is not a recipe for enduring rehabilitation and success. The stats show the reoffending rate for those who go to prison is about 50 per cent — which tells its own story."

Andrew Becroft believes rehabilitation is always possible.

"I am committed to that: we believe all young people can change. A youth worker speaking recently at a training session for youth court judges, commented that 'young people need people who can model hope. You have to be merchants of hope.'

"Judges have to provide hope. In our decisions, we have to make clear that change is possible. We never know who in the group we are dealing with will be able to make the changes. Even among the tough group, we know 35 per cent won't reoffend again and another 15–20 per cent will age and grow out of it gradually."

Churches to be Involved

There's a huge opportunity for Churches to get involved in the rehabilitation of young people, says Andrew Becroft. Young people need good adult role models. Churches can get these young people involved in community and youth activities and working bees.

"There's a sign outside Blenheim airport that says: 'A kid in sport stays out of court'. There's more than a grain of truth in that. It might be a youth group, a church group, a *kapa haka* group, an outdoor adventure group. These young people need good adult role models and the chance to be part of a group and develop self-confidence.

"Police run a programme called 'big brother, big sister' and are always looking for mentors. You are never too old to be a mentor. The youth justice system is all about harnessing community resources and faith groups have enormous resources."

Andrew Becroft

Used with permission of the Office of the Children's Commissioner

Andrew Becroft's new job will be a difficult balancing act. He needs to be a fearless public advocate for the rights of children and at the same time collaborate effectively with government agencies behind the scenes to bring about change. To be successful, he needs to keep faith with the public and with government.

"I need a lot of advice and help and I hope that good community people, including your readers, will be telling me if I'm getting it wrong. That's an invitation." ■

Michael Fitzsimons is a professional writer and Director of FitzBeck Creative. He lives in Worser Bay, Wellington and particularly enjoys walking long distances and wine-tasting.

To A Friend

We thrived in any season, scrambling down the rocks at Waiwhakaiho to surf juggernaut mid-winter swells while the wind blew colder than the 10 degree water. We floated for hours in the height of summer. We loaded three boards and six boys into a granny car with the boot up and boosted it when the cops rolled past. Talking shite, getting hit. Never staying out of trouble. Narrating our own video game till the vibrating controller was too hard to hold.

But our boys-of-summer narrative has no happy ending. One by one we fall into the void.

I was always the devil's advocate, a reasonable voice preaching caution and concern amongst a string of misdemeanours, minor and major. I was the worrier. I was uncertain in foot and heart. My friends smashed windows, got drunk, stole cars, snuck out at night to see girls. They dipped through the streets on scooters, a sustained loss of traction on car tyres and lives.

I was the Donatello in our band of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The kid suggesting we just go home. But my friends knew me better and pushed me to my limits. I appreciated that — someone telling me I was worth something. Some might call them a bad influence. Some might be right. But we take the good with the bad.

You took me with you and for that I owe you forever.

I think I knew things weren't right. That you stayed out so late to avoid going home, that talking tough was meant to cover scars accumulated behind your gate. Broken bones are easier than broken homes and I hate myself for saying that — but it's true. So I said nothing and tagged along in each caper. In and out of abandoned houses, egging drunk people and jumping fences. Running wild from disturbed suburban streets to the breakwater where I lost my virginity. Watching a bottle explode across your back. Watching blood cover your back as you kerb stomped your attacker. Desperately beautiful, desperately naive humans dancing above the void. Expiry dates glistening on our skinny chests.

This was us.

Looking back I see the milestones of borrowed time glaring at me like photoshopped additions in my memories. It was inevitable things would spill over.

Then in 2011 — everything gave way and we hit the bottom. I can pinpoint it. You fought your step-dad and got kicked out of home. You fought the teachers and got kicked out of school. I spiralled down a rabbit hole of depression. Us all turning to substance abuse.

Alcohol. Weed. Synthetics. Prescriptions. Mum and Dad put the fear of God and hidings into me about drugs. But you sampled the smorgasbord with great abandon, like the Chinese buffet in town. Cinder blocks around your limbs. Sink to the seafloor and stay there.

By 2013 I had overcome my parents' warnings and drowned myself in panadol, paracetamol, panic. One swallow of water — 10, 12, 14 pills. Perhaps my headaches are worse but maybe they'll insulate me from undiagnosed anxiety. Each swallow was skirting closer to an unseen precipice in a darkened room.

What does one do after almost accidentally killing oneself? We were mentally embalmed. Close, but no sarcophagus. Dead boys walking.

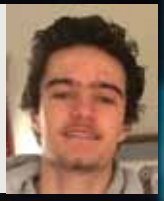
You became familiar with the bottom. Swirling and tumbling, fighting the undertow metres apart but miles away in a murky ocean. Occasionally rising to the top to gasp for air. Then being thrown back down, through the turbid waters to the rock bottom of Waiwhakaiho. I couldn't reach you. You were out of arm's reach, unrecognisable in the mire of a deceased mind.

We knew we lived, by the pain we felt. But if we passed in the night could we tell the difference?

Then when I heard of you first in eight months, you were in the cells. Later I heard you were working for your real Dad. Then I heard you were hitting the crack pipe. Then you went to jail. I don't know where. I didn't try to find out. I didn't make the effort to visit. I didn't try to reach you. It was as if the unforgiving minutes and hours spent trying to stay alive meant nothing to me.

But you made the effort. You came to Wellington, or life took you here. Your grin let me in. We knew what we did last summer and the summer before that and every season of each other's lives. You made my friends uncomfortable. But there is no shame between friends.

So I hope I see you again. I hope I see you between waves. I hope I see you out, redeeming a wasted weekend. I'll make the effort. ■



Cavaan Wild from New Plymouth is studying law and arts at Victoria University. He enjoys writing, boxing, cooking and is trying to read more.

GETTING to PRISON for the VISIT

Annie McGuire tells about providing families with transport to prison.

Fifteen years ago I began as a family support worker at Prison Transport Group Incorporated in Brisbane. At that time there were six prisons in the State. Now there are 13 prisons in Queensland and I manage the transport so families can visit. Some years ago the term prison or jail was replaced with "Correctional Centre", a more palatable name perhaps but the reality of the incarcerated inmates remained unchanged.

Our organisation aims to provide transport and other support services to the families of prisoners in Queensland in order to facilitate family contact. We arrange transport and advice to family members so they can get to a two-hour visit session once a week at a Correctional Centre.

Prison Transport Group started in 1978 when a small group of volunteers could see how hard it was for visitors (mostly women with small children) to get to a prison and they began taking them in their own cars. Now almost 40 years later we deliver visitors to and from 10 of the 13 Centres in the State, servicing over 65 visit sessions per week. We carry over 7,500 visitors per year. Prisons are not built near public transport and 95 per cent of the families we convey do not have access to a car.

We receive some government funding because the government recognises that family contact is vital for rehabilitation.

I see mercy in action every day. For example, every Saturday Mary Jones and her three children will board a train at 5.30am on the Sunshine Coast for Roma St rail/bus interchange in the Brisbane CBD. There she will meet our bus and drive with us to Palen Creek Correctional Centre for her weekly, two-hour visit with her husband. She'll get back home about 7.00pm after a round trip of almost 400kms with her three children under 12 years of age. Dad will phone the family from the Correctional Centre four times during the week. He can do this because Mary has put some money into his prison bank account. Mary has told the school principal about the children's father and the school is supportive of the family. The kids seem to be managing well. They know Dad "did something wrong" and can't come home for a while. Our organisation is also providing Mary with weekly food vouchers until she is more able to manage, as she lost her part-time job several months ago. She has a few wonderful friends who give her emotional and practical support.

Then there is the example of Tony and Alma. They'll be staying in Maryborough tonight. Alma contacted me over 12 months ago and during our conversation I learnt that she and Tony, both in their 70s, drive 300kms from Brisbane to Maryborough every month to visit their 48-year-old, only son Peter, who is serving a long sentence in Maryborough Correctional Centre. He does not receive any other visitors. We assist Tony and Alma with overnight accommodation now so they no longer have to sleep in their car.

Ninety per cent of prisoners are men. So many young men are lost in the revolving door of the prison system. Many are dads and for their own and their children's sake we need to intervene at the "front end" — before the path leads to the prison door. The populist, simplistic solution to "build more prisons" to lock offenders away, in order to protect the community, is neither helpful nor effective. While I don't have answers to the great questions of prevention and rehabilitation, I know that children must not become the collateral damage of imprisonment. They deserve the best foundation for a productive life. And we need to support parents and carers in their parenting role and commit to children being in safe home environments.

Every day our work calls for mercy in providing our services with respect, kindness, patience and humour. Prison chaplains do a great job in the Centres, giving the men a listening ear and spiritual guidance. But our greatest challenge is to promote self-belief and a sense of value and belonging. These are bedrock for just living. And belonging is key. Many prisoners are isolated from their families, who in some cases have "had enough" and don't want any more contact.

We've found that men and women who leave prison will adjust to the outside better if they feel they belong, even a little. So we endeavour to nurture those fragile threads of belonging by transporting their loved ones — mostly mums and children — and keeping the connections alive. Mercy also insists that we acknowledge the people who are victims of crime. Many have been through a heart-shattering experience. Listening to the stories is a way of dealing with people's fear of prisoners. Listening to the story of a prisoner helps break down the barriers between the person coming out of prison and the wider community. ■

Annie McGuire RSJ is the Manager of Prison Transport Group Inc in Brisbane. She has worked in the community sector for over 20 years.

Family and the Invisible Sentence

Verna McFelin shares her experience of being left when her husband went to prison and how it prompted her to begin a support group for parents and children with family members in jail.

Thirty years ago my husband was arrested and sent to prison. I was left with four children aged from 12 years to just six weeks old. It was raining the night he was arrested and we were all in bed. About six police detectives came into the house. They took my husband into the bathroom and when they brought him out they handcuffed him in front of our children. My eldest daughter started screaming: "Don't take my Daddy away." My other daughter hid under the bed as they searched our house. My three-year-old son was wide-eyed and the baby was asleep.

They brought a female police officer with them to look after my children while they took me to the police station to be interviewed. After the interview they told me that my husband wasn't coming home. I went into shock so the lawyer drove me home and on the way he crashed my car. That was just the beginning of a series of "crashes" about to happen to my family.

Coping Alone

The days and weeks that followed could be described only as a living death. Our loving father, husband and provider was gone and I felt alone and lost. There was no time to grieve, just lots to do.

The crime had been breaking news in our town and one of my children was studying the crime as a project at school. It was embarrassing for my daughter and the school when they found out her father was involved. The project was stopped.

We had always worked to provide for our family. Now I found myself forced to line up for social welfare. Our home was sold to pay legal bills and though I can run things on the smell of an oily rag, it was really hard to make ends meet. I could get "hand outs" like food parcels or clothes from the charities that offered these; but there seemed to be no support to cope effectively with the situation and move forward with added strength.

Sentence Delivered

My children and I sat in court during my husband's trial as his lawyer said it would help. He was found guilty and sent away to another prison. I was so angry with him but we packed our bags and moved to be near him: to support him through his sentence. We wanted to be a family and my children had a right to a relationship with their father.

Visiting the Prison

It was hard trying to maintain meaningful contact with my husband in prison. We sat at a long table with a high barrier down the middle. Dads were on one side and Mums and kids on the other. We weren't allowed to touch. We needed to talk about things like legal matters, care of the children, financial issues. It was hard.

After he was sentenced my husband tried to use his small allowance from working in the prison to buy sweets for the children when they visited. Prison visiting back then was not at all family-friendly. The children were often scared of the guards, the heavy doors and locks. Sitting on the hard seats for two hours was not easy for small children.

Turning Point

One night I called out to God in absolute desperation. I got a clear message — if I needed this kind of practical support for my family then I would need to establish it. I got together with other women I had met, whose partners were in prison and we talked until the small hours of the morning. At last we had a safe place to talk about our situations and help one another. It felt good.

We talked about what we now call the "invisible sentence" — the sentence that is served outside of the wire by the families left behind. We talked about the effects on our children — from trauma at arrest through to being called a "jail bird" in the school yard.
We worried about our children going down the wrong path and ending up in prison themselves and we didn't want that for them.

We started to get a clear picture of what was needed for families like ours. We would develop a framework of support and we would find the funding for it. We would advocate for the rights of children to have safe and meaningful contact with their parent in prison and to be properly supported and cared for in their parent's absence. We would reduce the harm caused by stigma of a situation that our children had absolutely no say in. This is how the charity *Pillars* was born.

Homegrown Support

In 2013 *Pillars* celebrated 25 years of service to the community. We have helped over 7,000 families in that time. We provide mentoring for children and family support for their caregivers. We advocate for safer policies around arrests when children are present. We have helped establish more family-friendly prison visiting arrangements to keep family relationships alive.

The Department of Corrections has a goal to reduce reoffending

Mentors act as trusted guides and provide positive role models to children of prisoners on the *Pillars* programme.

and we are working with them to strengthen family relationships between the person in prison and their families. Prisoners who have strong ties to their family, particularly their children, are more motivated to live crime-free lives after release — so it works for everybody.

Most importantly *Pillars* is the only charity in New Zealand dedicated to supporting the 20,000 children of prisoners and their family/caregivers. Without help these children are nine times more likely to go to prison as adults — nobody wants that. Even the imprisoned parent does not want their children following their footsteps into prison.

Mentoring Children

In Christchurch and South Auckland we have a home-based family wrap-around service that supports caregivers of prisoners' children to make good decisions for their care.

Our mentoring programme matches a volunteer mentor with the child of a prisoner for one year as a positive and stable role model. Our volunteer mentors are everyday heroes to our children and make a real difference in their lives. They give them opportunities that open new doors in their lives.

Right now there are about 5,000 children in South Auckland associated with one of the five prisons in the region. As we are a charity reliant on public funds, we can manage to mentor only 50 of these children a year. But we have set a strategic target to increase mentoring to 500 children over the next five years. We want to make a real impact on that community and stop the next generation of children from going to prison.

Along with the wrap-around and the mentoring programme, *Pillars* also provides information to help prisoners' families in all New Zealand prisons: a dedicated helpline for people caring for children and support groups.

In 2009-2010 *Pillars* undertook large-scale research about children and families of prisoners in New Zealand. This research underpins and guides our practice, including our resources for the community to help them better support children of prisoners.

Imprisonment is growing in New Zealand and by the end of the year nearly 10,000 people will be incarcerated, many of whom are parents. When I hear these statistics, my thoughts are not the financial cost of buildings and staffing new penal institutions. I grieve for the human cost borne by the thousands of children, some not even born, whose parents will be doing time in prison.

My main role in *Pillars* today is to encourage our wider community to partner with us in this important work. We rely on individuals and communities to step up and help. Stopping children from going to prison in the first place makes much better sense than locking people up at the tax-payers' expense. We want positive futures for our children and that doesn't involve a prison sentence.

And as for my husband — he got sentenced on our 13th wedding anniversary and released on our 20th anniversary. I strongly believe that being able to see us in person and remaining connected to his family throughout the sentence, even though the odds were against us, was what got us all through that time —that, and our faith that God had a purpose through all of this. We have been married for 46 years and have a wonderful life. Our children and grandchildren have gone on to contribute to their world. They did not become prison statistics. And we work to stop the vicious cycle of crime in its tracks. ■

Verna McFelin, MNZM is the Founder and Chief Executive of *Pillars*. See www.pillars.org.nz and her Ted Talk.

THE PRISON CELL

It is possible…
It is possible at least sometimes…
It is possible especially now
To ride a horse
Inside a prison cell
And run away…

It is possible for prison walls
To disappear,
For the cell to become a distant land
Without frontiers:

What did you do with the walls?
I gave them back to the rocks.
And what did you do with the ceiling?
I turned it into a saddle.
And your chain?
I turned it into a pencil.

The prison guard got angry.
He put an end to my dialogue.
He said he didn't care for poetry,
And bolted the door of my cell.

He came back to see me
In the morning,
He shouted at me:

Where did all this water come from?
I brought it from the Nile.
And the trees?
From the orchards of Damascus.
And the music?
From my heartbeat.

The prison guard got mad;
He put an end to my dialogue.
He said he didn't like my poetry,
And bolted the door of my cell.

But he returned in the evening:

Where did this moon come from?
From the nights of Baghdad.
And the wine?
From the vineyards of Algiers.
And this freedom?
From the chain you tied me with last night.

The prison guard grew so sad . . .
He begged me to give him back
His freedom.

Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008 Palestinian)
www.poemHunter.com

Will You

KATHERINE: This is her first prison visit, and she is uncomfortable with the rules. She is not the criminal. It's one thing proving identity and then putting bag, umbrella, car keys in a locker; but having to take off jacket and shoes to go through security screening is another. The other visitors talk and laugh as though they feel at home. Maybe they are at home. But Katherine feels powerless, out of place.

She follows a woman with two small children, across a courtyard to a building where a guard stands by a door. "That's the visiting room," the woman explains. Katherine doesn't answer but wonders why young children are brought to a place like this. "My daughter's kids," says the woman. "You don't need permission for kids."

AUDREY: So cousin Kath had filled in the permission form to visit. Why? Curiosity? Good works? They've never been close, not even as children, although Audrey liked visiting Kath's house because they had nice things like crystal glasses and a grandfather clock by the front door. Uncle and Aunty, though, had tight faces and Kath was a bit like that. Neat, polite, never laughed at Audrey's jokes, never went off the rails, married some big bug property developer and had one perfect son who wanted to be a doctor.

It's at least 12 years since Audrey has seen her cousin.

KATHERINE: It's a big room with clusters of four plastic chairs around a little table. She sits in a brown chair. A guard tells her brown is for the prisoner, so she shifts to a green chair, then looks around the room.

There's too much noise, people laughing, kids shouting and jumping up and down. It feels very strange. She's reminded of that time in India when she and Douglas were surrounded by men who didn't speak English.

She doesn't want people to think she's staring but she guesses the prisoners are the women in dark coloured pants and T-shirts. Her cousin hasn't arrived. Did the guards tell Audrey she had a visitor?

AUDREY: That's her, all right, sitting straight, hands folded in lap, dressed like she's going to a school reunion. Hair greyer than Audrey remembers but still cut the same way. Audrey holds out her arms: "Good old Kath! How are you? You look like a box of fluffy ducks."

Kath stands and gives a quick hug, patting Audrey's back. They both sit. Kath's smile is bright and fixed and she says through it: "Aud, I was so sorry to hear about, you know, your sentence . . ."

Audrey shrugs: "It could have been worse, Kath. I did a deal with the police and pleaded guilty. Three years."

Kath's smile disappears and she gasps: "Three years for changing some accounts!"

"They call it theft," says Audrey. "I should be eligible for parole next year."

KATHERINE: The sadness Kath feels for her cousin is making her tearful. Audrey had always been wild, one of those untidy girls who forgot about rules and time, but Kath had never dreamed she would become a convicted criminal. Now Aud is talking about the conviction as though it was some stock market failure. She makes it sound so ordinary.

Kath wants to hear a reason such as huge debt, or some man who persuaded Aud to defraud the company.

Aud just laughs. "Grow up, Kath!" she says.

That makes Kath angry. She says: "You're intelligent, for goodness sake! You know the difference between right and wrong. Did you ever give a thought for the family?"

Come Again?

AUDREY: All right, they've come down to the wire. It was going to happen. She wants to point out that Kath has always lived in luxury. Her cousin's entire history has been money. Cruises with mummy and daddy! A car for her 21st birthday and then the marriage of the year!

Audrey wants to let Kath know what her life has been like — a basic wage and a cold, old flat with a leaky roof and dead mice under the stove. But she stops when she sees Kath on the point of meltdown.

Time to change the subject. "How's your Dougie?" she asks. "And Tony - isn't that your son? What's he doing? Nice kid, bright as a button. Still at medical school?"

KATHERINE: She knows it was a mistake to come here. On the far side of the visiting room is a playground for children with their mothers. The noise is overwhelming.

"They're both fine, thank you," she says, and Aud immediately wants to know more. "Dougie-boy still as busy as ever?"

Kath gives her a quick look but is sure she doesn't know. "Oh yes," she tells her. "He's always been the workaholic. What about you, Aud? Have you thought what you want to do when you get back in the real world?"

Audrey smiles. "Kath, this is the real world. Take a look. Everyone here is real. No one in this place is pretending to be someone else."

AUDREY: From the wounded expression, Aud realises she's put her foot in it. She says quickly: "Not many job offers when I get out. I could work for your Dougie. Would you put in a good word for me?"

But Kath doesn't answer. She looks away and twists her hands together, then after a long silence says: "Douglas lives in Perth. With someone else. We divorced two years ago."

Aud looks down and notices the bare finger on her cousin's left hand. "Oh, hell, Kath! I didn't know! Was that awful for you?"

But Kath's face is bright again. "No, no! I have this beautiful apartment overlooking the Botanic Gardens. I play *mah-jong* every week. Lots of friends. It's all — all very wonderful!"

"And your son? Tony?" asks Aud.

"Yes, well he's in Perth too — managing his father's business."

Kath looks at her watch and stands: "Sorry, I need to go. Apologies, Aud. It's a wretched dental appointment." She gives her that same quick hug and Aud asks: "Will you come again?"

"Yes, of course," Kath says. "I do get terribly busy, but some time . . ." She smiles. "*Arrivederci*, my dear." ■

NZ writer **Joy Cowley** is a wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and retreat facilitator. She lives in Featherston with her husband Terry Coles.

READ THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Daniel O'Leary writes that many people feel hopeless in the face of disaster after disaster, from the recent killing of British MP, Jo Cox, to the slaughter of innocents in Nice, France. But amid the chaos, there is space for hope.

"It feels as though someone has torn out my heart." A parent who lost his son in Nice's Bastille Day massacre could only whisper these words of grief. It seems that we hear stories like this every day.

The abyss of loss, the irredeemable ache of helpless anger and sorrow, the tyranny of fear — how much desolation can these innocent victims of hatred bear? And what is happening to our own human spirit when we are bombarded daily with terrible news about our inhumanity to one another? What invisible spiritual underpinning is being corroded under the constant impact of unbearable human destruction? How often will we wake up to a world where nothing is spared, nothing is sacred — from the life of the small child to the future of the planet she will never inhabit? The continuing assaults on the fragile human spirit are relentless. They drag us all into dark places. How long can the centre hold? Are we approaching a tipping point of unimaginable magnitude? "The last thing to collapse," wrote Albert Einstein, "is the surface."

From where will the healing come? Does the notion of a God, a faith, a common good, serve as a protection, as an explanation? "We still believe in together", declared the online petition sent out the day after the murder of MP Jo Cox, by Hope not Hate, the charity she supported. Her untimely and violent murder shocked the nation and caused us to take stock of what was happening not only in British politics, but at a much deeper level, to our culture, our very psyche. That fateful day for Jo and her family had such an impact because of what became apparent when we learned how Jo had lived her short, but very rich life.

The values she held, the ethics that guided her politics, the compassion she exuded to each person she encountered spoke to the best of us as individuals and as a nation. The witness of her life was held before us like a mirror, forcing us to question what we are in danger of becoming, and how we are conducting ourselves as a nation, as communities, as individuals. The trust we need to live out our lives in society, and the sense of safety without which our daily lives

Irish-born **Daniel O'Leary** is a priest of the Diocese of Leeds UK, a writer and teacher. He is an award-winning author of 12 books. His website is www.djoleary.com

cannot be lived in freedom, are being eroded with each new, confusing and unpredictable turn of events.

With the unexpected result of the Brexit referendum, a deep split was disclosed within our nation between those with opportunity and those without. Deeper and more desperate divisions and intrigues are revealed in the daily destruction played out on the streets of European and North American cities.

The Turkish military coup has been savagely ended and the situation in Syria and Iraq sows continuing confusion and seeds of revolution. The slaughter and drownings of the hundreds of thousands of those fleeing war, hardship and starvation from African countries is a continuing crime that cries to heaven. Are we all, unknowingly perhaps, colluding in these atrocities? Are we all less civilised, less religious, less human then we pretend to be?

More than ever, we need a theology that engages with the issues of our time, that embraces the vision of the ultimate unity of the human race, and that proclaims and sustains a confidence in the enduring love and compassion at the heart of our ongoing story.

Against this background, how do we find firm ground on which to stand? How do we read these signs of our times and search for that which gives meaning, that grounds us and sustains us? More than ever, we need a theology that engages with the issues of our time, that embraces the vision of the ultimate unity of the human race, and that proclaims and sustains a confidence in the enduring love and compassion at the heart of our ongoing story.

We need a spirituality that discloses the presence of the incarnate God in the midst of this seeming chaos, a language that gives hope, that helps us see and recognise moments that resonate and gives us glimpses of eternal and universal truth. We need radically new ways of being Church to encourage our communities to survive these changing, challenging times.

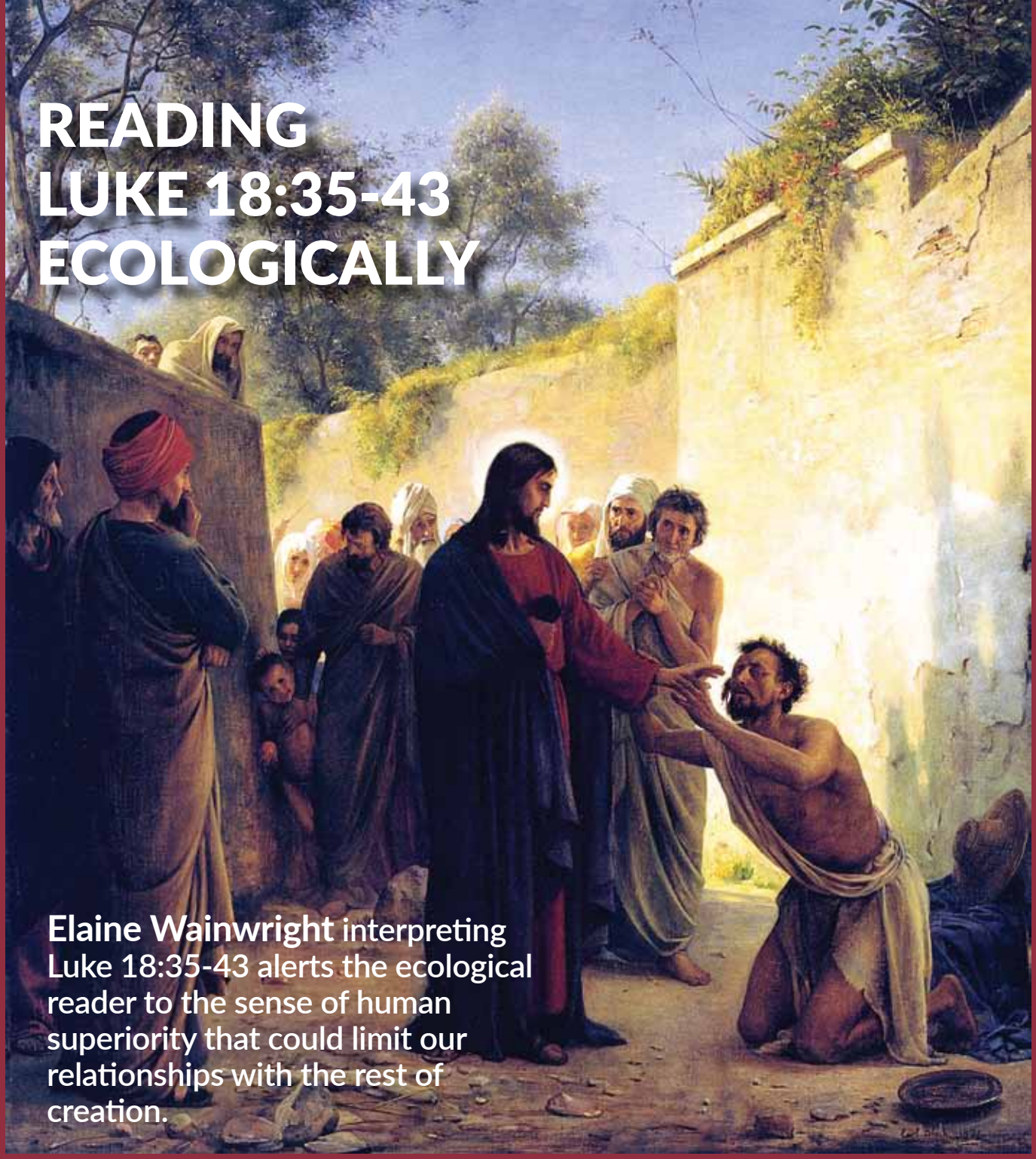
Is there a Catholic spirituality that touches us both personally and as a community at a time of extraordinary and increasing tragedies and crises? In his recent encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis proclaims his universal message about the wholeness and holiness of the earth and its people — that all creation and its evolving story is one precious communion in God, that our world is permeated with a healing energy, and that, in the end, the human love that is the incarnate God will invincibly prevail.

We are in liminal times, on the threshold of breakdown or breakthrough, so that something new can and will emerge. How can the danger of a fearful fanaticism be tempered by a Christian vision of trust, by a Franciscan horizon of wholeness, by an unwavering belief in the human presence of an incarnate God? Professor Celia Deane-Drummond believes that "the specific contribution of Catholic Social Teaching, and its call for ecological solidarity and world peace, have the potential to make a local and global impact that is vital in working out an adequate global response both for present and future generations."

At a personal level, maybe we are urgently called to a courageous commitment to action, contemplation and prophecy — to be present to each human being, and to connect with, and be a light for the innocent millions caught up in this reign of evil. Fr Tom Cullinan wrote: "In scripture, prophecy was not disengaged criticism ... It was rather a demand from God, usually an unwelcome and painful demand, to lay bare the truth of the present, to energise creative alternatives, to insist that God will fulfil God's story and to warn that God will not do as we expect." Jo Cox's life and death witnessed to these words. ■

Published in *The Tablet* 13 August 2016.
Used with permission.

READING LUKE 18:35-43 ECOLOGICALLY



Elaine Wainwright interpreting Luke 18:35-43 alerts the ecological reader to the sense of human superiority that could limit our relationships with the rest of creation.

Luke 18:35 As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. 36 When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. 37 They told him: "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." 38 Then he shouted: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly: "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him: 41 "What do you want me to do for you?" He said: "Lord, let me see again." 42 Jesus said to him: "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you." 43 Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

Habitat, Human and Holy is the title I gave to my new book in which I undertook an eco-rhetorical reading of the Gospel of Matthew. The three aspects — habitat, human and holy — are intimately intertwined in the fabric of living and being as are the "cry of the earth" and the "cry of the poor" to which *Laudato Si'* draws our attention. There is a shift in human consciousness, or what we might call a growing ecological awareness emerging amongst us. It is enabling us to read our gospel story anew. This new reading in its turn, deepens our ecological awareness. Our monthly readings are drawing us into this spiralling process.

In the opening verse of the narrative of the blind beggar of Jericho

(Luke 18:35–43), the reader will notice interconnectedness networked into the story. In the four previous verses, Jesus had reminded his disciples that they were "going up to Jerusalem" with him where he would face suffering and death (Lk 18:31–34). However life would prevail. Death and life, always profoundly intertwined for all earth creatures, are explicitly spoken of about Jesus. In the opening words of Lk 18:35 Jesus is said to be approaching Jericho *en route* to Jerusalem.

Oasis of Jericho

Jericho is a built-up environment, reminding readers of the places and spaces where we live and where the interconnections between habitat, human and holy are enacted in our lives.

For first-century readers, reference to Jericho would have evoked the oasis, with its abundance of water and mild climate. Together with its proximity to Jerusalem, these aspects made it a favoured wintering place for wealthy Jerusalemites. Not surprisingly, Jericho did not escape the notice of Herod who built his winter palace complexes there — a hippodrome, gymnasium and theatre. Those travelling the road to Jerusalem, like Jesus and the disciples in this story, would have been confronted by these Herodian symbols of power and wealth.

Lost Sight Isolates

Both the built and natural environments are in tension in the first-century Jericho. This tension is evoked in the Lucan story of a blind man sitting by the roadside begging. Initially the reader encounters a man "sitting by the roadside" — sitting on the ground at the edge of the road. He is out of place, as the road is a medium of travel for the movement of crowds.

The man's blindness alerts readers to the physical sense of sight that he has lost. He is not able to engage visually with any of the material and tangible elements around him: the road itself, perhaps the palace, a glimpse of the oasis and presumably the crowd. His plight reminds readers that the senses are the medium through which material beings — members of the human and animal communities — process their relationships with all else that is material.

The man's begging at the roadside alerts readers to the social aspects of his blindness. It is impossible for him to earn a living in his own right. It seems that his family and friends are unable to support him and that he must rely on the generosity of others. So the failure of his sense of sight renders him extremely vulnerable, physically and socially.

It is a second sense, that of hearing, that alerts the man to the "crowd going by". His sensing that something is happening invites readers to be attentive to what our senses can tell us about our habitat and the human and holy that are inseparable from it.

Does the blind man sense in the name, Jesus of Nazareth, that the holy is present and that this holiness can function interactively with habitat and the human to bring about change, healing and restoration?

Hearing Prompts Cry for Healing

The blind man receives/hears the words of the crowd: "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by". These words trigger a strong reaction from him. He shouts out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" What is it that might constitute this encounter and response? Does the blind man sense in the name, Jesus of Nazareth, that the holy is present and that this holiness can function interactively with habitat and the human to bring about change, healing and restoration?

The man's cry to Jesus as "son of David" is not one commonly used in healing narratives in Luke's gospel as it is in Matthew's gospel. The blind beggar's cry is the only time "son of David" is used as a cry for healing in Luke's gospel. Similarly the plea to "have mercy" is used only one other time — by the lepers (Lk 17:13). Both are repeated as cries. They rise up from the depths of the brokenness in the material body of the man and from the marred socio-cultural and material relationships in which he is embedded. Each cries out for healing and restoration.

Some in the human community seek to block this restoration — the restoring of right relationships. They want to silence the man's voice, ordering him to be quiet. But he cannot be silenced and shouts out even more loudly.

Jesus, on the other hand, asks what it is that the man seeks. The man responds that it is the restoration of his sight: "Let me see again" (Lk 18:41).

Restoration Heals Relationships

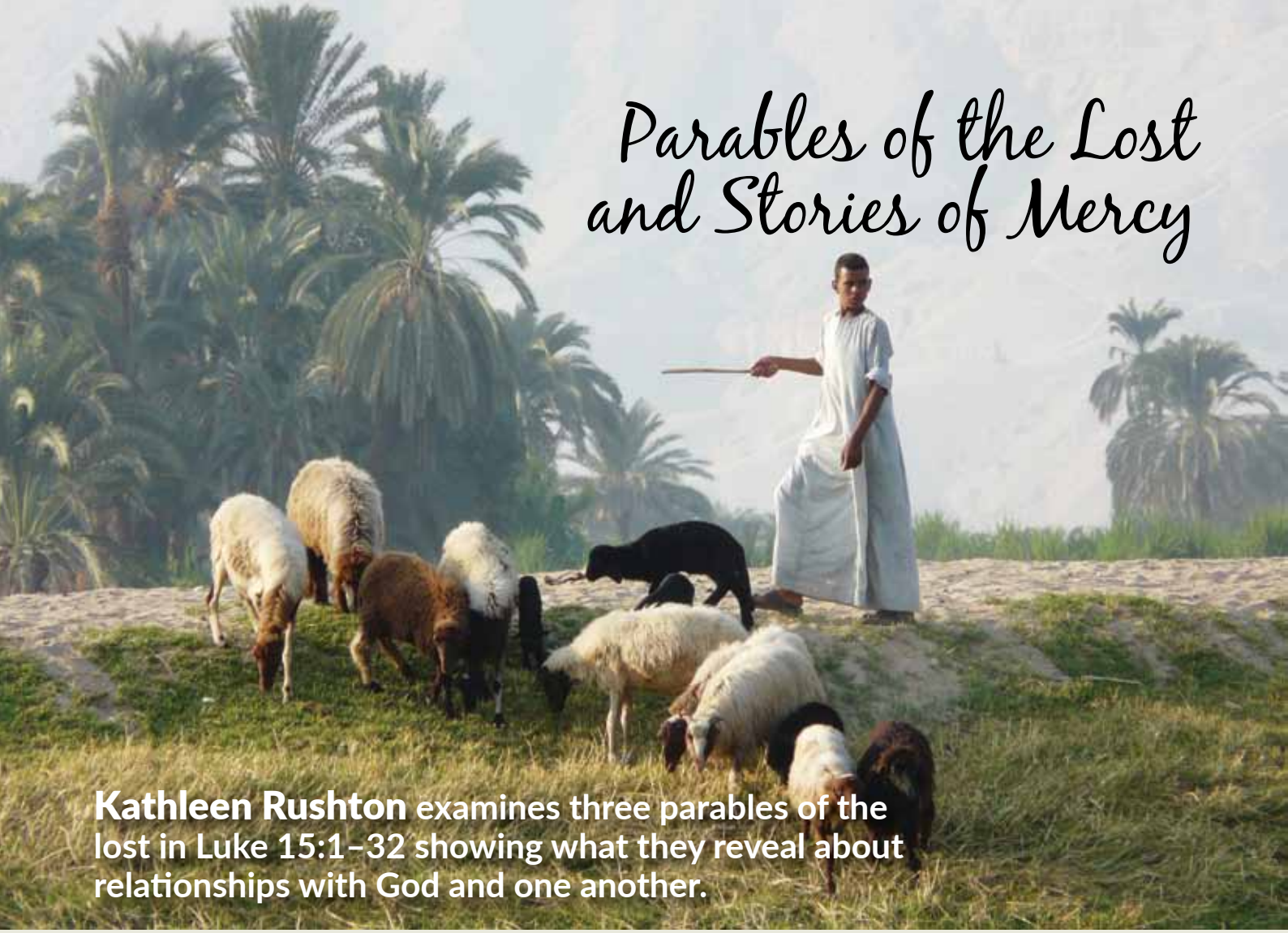
The man's restoration is material and corporeal, taking place in his body. It catches up elements of habitat, human and holy. The man's sight is restored and re-establishes right relationships in his human body. It is the man's recognition of the power of the holy in his restoration, named in the gospel narrative as "faith", that brings this about.

His "faith" is expressed in the story's conclusion. Habitat, human and holy come together. There has been a change in the man's body as he regains his sight. And so his habitat is able to change. He is no longer confined to the edge of the road but is able to "follow" Jesus — a gospel term that designates discipleship. The holy is revealed through the healed man's response that ripples out and includes that much wider group called "the people". ■

Painting: *Healing of the Blind Man by Jesus Christ*, by Carl Heinrich Bloch. [Public domain/commons.wikipedia.org]

Elaine Wainwright RSM is the Executive Director of Mission and Ministry for the Mercy Sisters in Australia and Papua New Guinea. She is an international biblical scholar.

Parables of the Lost and Stories of Mercy



Kathleen Rushton examines three parables of the lost in Luke 15:1–32 showing what they reveal about relationships with God and one another.

Luke 15:1–2 is the framework for understanding three parables of action and words of mercy — the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Sons. The Pharisees and scribes grumble: "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." To welcome (*dechomai)* implies hospitality and being host at a meal. An invitation to a meal suggests persons are accepted by the host for who they are. "All tax collectors and sinners" represent the social and religious outsiders. These people ate with Jesus and were "coming near to listen to him." Previously, a division began between the rich and powerful and the poor and outcast about their attitudes to John's baptism and the justice of God (Lk 7:29–30).

Humanity and God

Jesus pulls out all the stops when talking to these furious leaders who are critical of his table companions. Patterns ring out which reinforce Jesus' words. The first two parables begin with a question, one centred on a man and the other on a woman. Jesus invites these leaders to consider their response. The parable characters would have been offensive to the Pharisees.

Shepherds worked in a despised occupation. Jesus is direct: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one . . . ?" His audience would have been shocked to have been addressed as if one of them was a lowly shepherd. Although Psalm 23 uses the shepherd as an image for God, the scriptures also evoke harsh criticism against "the shepherds of Israel" who did not care for the people (Ezekiel 34:1–24). Then Jesus expects the leaders to learn from a woman! They would have seen the behaviour of both shepherd and woman as foolish and over-the-top.

Each parable tells something about humanity and about God. The first and third begin: "Which one (*anthropos*) of you . . ." (Lk 15:4) and "There was a man (*anthropos*) who had two sons . . ." (Lk 15:11) *Anthropos*, meaning the human person, suggests the human condition. Framed by these two parables, and still about humanity, is one concerning a woman's experience (Lk 15:8).

The setting is likely to be a village or rural location. We are invited into the context of each parable and in the hard realities we glimpse images of God. These parables are addressed explicitly (Lk 15:4, 8) and implicitly (Lk 15:11) to the well-to-do and, maybe, absentee landlords and owners of peasant tenants and flocks. Different social and economic circumstances are presented. We see the poverty of the woman; the life of a probably not so poor shepherd; and life on a farm — which seems prosperous compared to the other two situations.

Five-Part Structure

Each parable is structured in five parts. They begin with an introduction or context followed by a search for the lost. Then the centre of the parable gathers the household

24th Sunday Ordinary Time, 11 September

to rejoice. A celebration follows, which ends with an expression of God's joy (first two parables) or the joy of the whole household (third parable).

The Lost Sheep

A flock of a hundred sheep would have belonged to a clan rather than to an individual. Several members would be tending a flock of that size. If someone lost a sheep that person would be accountable to the extended family. They would have been able to go off looking for the lost one without putting the rest of the flock into jeopardy. When the lost sheep was found, the whole family could celebrate.

The shepherd lifts the sheep and carries it back to the flock. I know from my childhood on a South Canterbury hill-country farm that sheep that had separated from the flock would often be distressed and refused to move. They would need to carried back to the flock.

The Lost Coin

By lamplight the woman searched for a drachma in her window-less house. This coin had the same value as a denarius, which was the usual daily wage of the vineyard labourers (Matthew 20:9). A drachma represented one two-hundredth of the annual amount required for a person to subsist at the poverty level. It paid barely for two days of provisions and other needs. Like a denarius, a drachma symbolised the money for daily bread.

Ancient sources tell us that the economic survival of families then, as today, depended on the additional paid labour of women. Then, as now, women were paid half as much as men. The woman is searching for a drachma which took her twice as long to earn. An interesting nuance is that the terms for her "friends and neighbours" are female in Lk 15:6 in contrast to male terms for "friends and neighbours" in Lk 15:9. Women celebrated with women and men with men.

The Lost Sons

For the third parable it is difficult to give a title which does not obscure the triangular relationship of father and his two sons. The younger son's request for his inheritance is culturally offensive. Seeking to use his inheritance while his father is still living, is like regarding his father as dead. He views his inheritance as his due, not as a gift.

Agriculture was hazardous as the land was dry and subject to famine. In a foreign land the son is hired to feed pigs. He is taken on as a day-labourer, unlike slaves or servants who were part of an extended family. He eats carob pods — the food of animals and of the poor. While he is with the other–than-human creatures he experiences "coming to himself" (Lk 15:17), a Greek expression suggesting self-knowledge and an experience of realism. He resolves to go to his father.

There is a threefold pattern. First is an implied description of need. The father saw the son coming from afar. He knew the returning one was in a danger. In failing to "honour father and mother", his son had severed communal relationships and was risking the villagers' anger. Second, the father is described as "having had a heart moved with compassion" (*splagchnizomai* cf. Lk 10:33). This expression, meaning being moved from the depths of one's being, echoes womb-compassion (*rahamim*) which comes from the Hebrew word for womb (*rehem*).

Third, something must be done to address the heartfelt need. Throwing dignity aside the father runs towards his son and receives him home. The welcome is extravagant in all its details. Many companions join the father at the celebratory table as suggested by the killing of the fattened calf.

However the elder son is bitter and alienated over having "slaved for you" and his relationship with the younger son is not restored. The tragedy of the elder son is that he does not see his position of privilege, blessing and relationship.

The pattern of hospitality in these "lost" parables evoking God's mercy is given flesh by Jesus' insistence that the poor and outcast are welcome as his table companions. Australian biblical scholar, Francis Moloney, in *A Body Broken for Broken People*, outlines the Eucharistic practice of the early Church. He shows that the early Church believed that Jesus gave the Eucharist in a context of weakness, betrayal and denial — his body is broken for a broken people. When revising his book in 2015, Moloney added the subtitle, *Divorce, Remarriage, and the Eucharist*. In it he suggests we need a responsible examination of the Church's pastoral practices around who is invited to be Jesus' table companions. ■

Kathleen Rushton RSM tends her vegetable garden, walks in the hope her feet will allow her to tramp again and delights in learning about Scripture.

a GEN-Y perspective

THE NEW RACISM

When we think of racism we may have images of overt, violent and dangerous behaviours such as police brutality against African Americans in the United States, using offensive language to describe someone's race, or the harrowing history of Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 40s. What we often don't understand is that racism plays out in many settings in our everyday lives. This is known as the New Racism and while seemingly harmless behaviours such as race-based jokes may appear negligible in comparison to stark displays of racism, these day-to-day expressions are dangerous. They serve to normalise and perpetuate racist attitudes and behaviours.

New Zealand has people of a wide demographic of cultures who call this land home and many interesting and varied immigration narratives are woven through our history. We have everything from the early settlement of the Chinese in Otago in the 1860s to the post WWII Pacific migration to New Zealand. Our dialogue around racism is very important as our cultural landscape continues to change and be shaped in many different ways.

One of the ways that this New Racism plays out in the context of our multi-cultural country is in the questions we ask about a person's identity. Whenever a person of colour in New Zealand is asked: "So where are you from? Oh no, I meant where are you really from?" it is inferring that the person cannot be a New Zealander because they don't match the right profile. This is despite the fact that their family may have been living here for generations.

As a Pākehā person, I have never had my "true origins" questioned, as it is always assumed that I have an inherent sense of belonging here. Never once when I've declared myself a New Zealander has anybody asked me to clarify where I "really come from". Even though my maternal grandparents moved to New Zealand from South Africa in the early 1960s.

Our sense of home is a deeply personal thing and inferring that somebody is not a New Zealander in the truest sense because of their ethnicity, can be a very "othering" experience.

This notion of identity politics also plays out in academic settings. I recently watched a short documentary series that a dear friend of mine worked on called "I, too, am Auckland". It offers insight into the experiences of covert racism suffered by Pacific and Māori students during their education at Auckland University. Many of the students interviewed talked about the assumptions that people make about them based on their culture. These include that they will drop out before they finish their degree and that they gained entrance to University only through some kind of Māori/Pacific scholarship.

One woman interviewed discussed how deeply offended she was when someone said: "You have a really wide vocabulary for a Samoan," implying that all Pacific Islanders have only basic literacy. The video series (which you can view on YouTube) serves to bring Māori and Pacific voices to the forefront in discussing and challenging experiences of everyday racism. Sadly, academic staff also cause the subtle racism experienced by Māori and Pacifica students. Māori and Pacific statistics are often used to highlight negative trends, particularly in fields such as health and law. And they reinforce existing stereotypes. We see this trend also in the mainstream media.

A slam poet I saw performing at Hamilton Youth Week a few months ago summed it up perfectly in one sentence: "When we commit crimes, we are called Māori and Pacific; when we represent New Zealand on the international sporting stage we are called New Zealanders."

The subtle nature of New Racism means that we may not be aware of it, whether we are the person affected, or the person in the position of privilege. Being open to the conversation and actively listening to people's experiences, can transform our way of approaching people who are of a culture different from our own. ■

Louise Carr-Neil, an Auckland native living in Hamilton, is passionate about gender equality and human rights. In her spare time she enjoys running and vegetarian cooking.

Grim Compulsory Conscription

The border separating South Korea from its northern neighbour is little more than a line of bricks jutting out of the dirt in the Joint Security Area. In fact, it would be physically unremarkable if it were not for the myriad of armed soliders on patrol, the real minefields protecting it and the kilometres of barbed wire that fortify it.

On either side of this line is the buffer area known as the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), stretching four kilometres on either side of the 38th parallel. Ironically it is the most heavily militarised border in the world.

The border, and the *status quo* it represents, is an unavoidable reality that dwarfs everything else. The real threat of provocation from the North has meant that one of South Korea's foremost concerns lies with its defense — a commitment it satisfies with the conscription of its young men.

I met some of these young soldiers during my stay in their military camp. They are ensnared in a diplomatic battleground with no end in sight.

Their own individual lives are entangled irretrievably with the collective nation and by extension, its allies and enemies on either side. Korea has been caught since World War II in a post-Cold War era tug-of-war between the world's superpowers.

With the obvious exception of the North Korean people, whom South Koreans rightly call their countrymen, today the worst collateral damage on the southern side takes the form of those involuntarily enlisted.

National conscription means that all South Korean men must take a leave of absence from their studies or work. For one year and nine months all they know is the inside of a barracks and the everyday routine that shapes citizens into soldiers. Most report for duty within the first few years of graduating high school and will become the living organisms within one of the thousands of military bases that line the southern side of the 38th parallel.

When they enlist everything that was part of their lives before falls by the wayside. With just four weeks' leave during their entire tenure with the army, it is an inevitable conclusion.

Their every day is regimented and disciplined.

All males, with very few exemptions, must serve. There are no discriminatory policies; men who do not fill the physical requirements are placed on administrative duties. If they are living abroad, as many are, they must return to serve or forfeit their Korean citizenship. Given the strong sense of Korean nationalism, it is not surprising that most return to serve their enlistment.

I met many who had lived overseas for years — in Canada, Bangladesh, the USA and Japan; there was even one from Rotorua, New Zealand. They were like all young men, despite the appearance of khakis and wary discipline in front of their superiors.

Many had put their studies on hold, quit their jobs and returned to their country. Many were not particularly pleased to have done so, and recalled with restrained frustration, their exact time remaining.

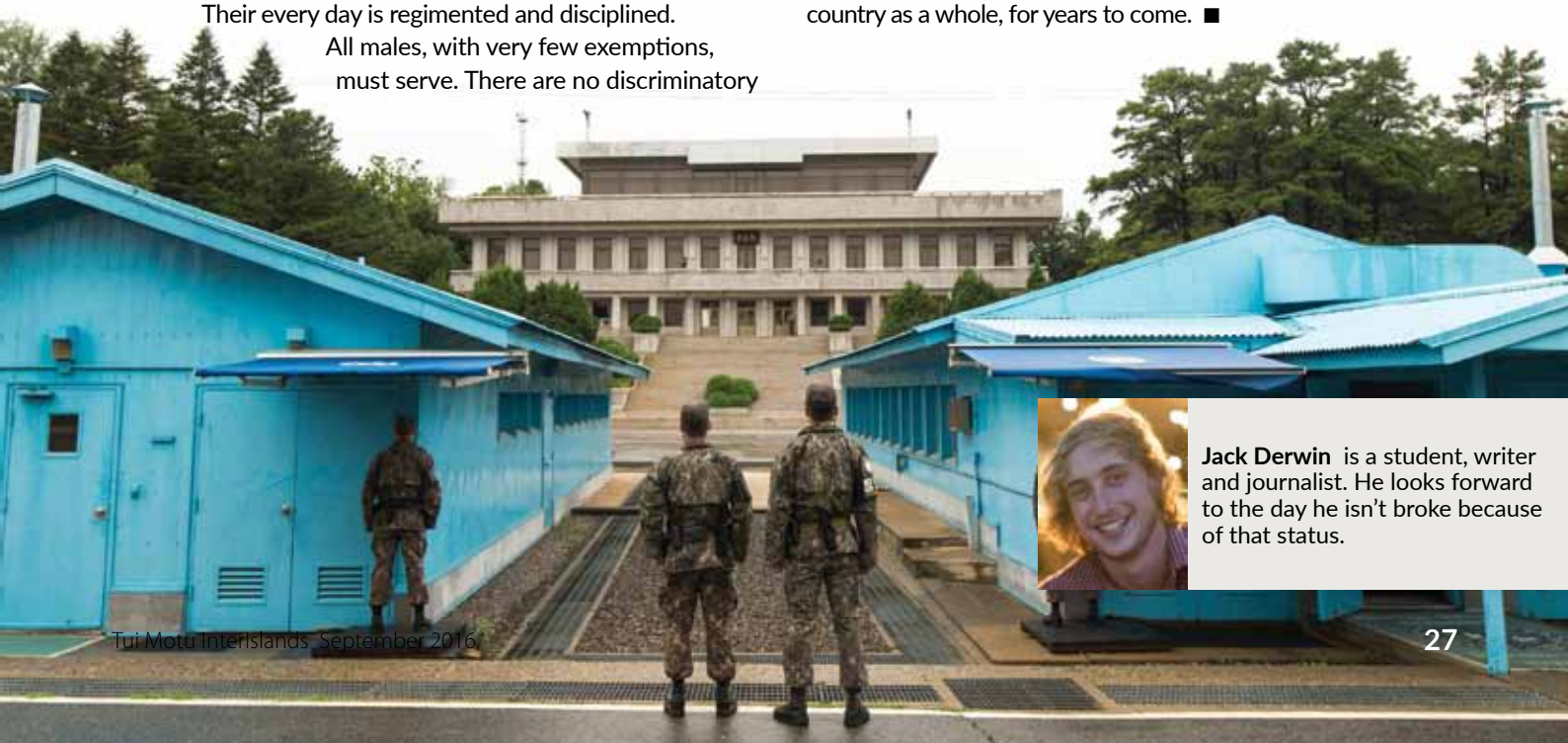
I wondered how I might fare given the same ultimatum and was thankful that for me it remains hypothetical.

It is a difficult predicament to resolve. Conscription started in 1965 with three years. Since then the time has been reduced and conditions have slowly improved. But it is still a difficult ask of an entire nation of young men. The implications are both clear and unknown. The absence of an entire generation of young men from society for a period must have far-reaching implications.

Moreover, it is a situation unlike any other in the world. These two countries have not been involved in conflict since signing an armistice in 1953. However the North's commitment to the development of missile testing, its numerous provocations in recent memory and general unpredictability, have resulted in the South's real need to defend against the possibility of war.

All understand the implications if the North decides to attack or successfully launches a missile. And in the case of total war being declared, all those men of an appropriate age and fitness who have previously served, will be required to return again to fight.

With no foreseeable resolution, it is a Mexican stand-off of extraordinary international proportions. It will continue to embroil South Korea's young men, and by extension the country as a whole, for years to come. ■



Jack Derwin is a student, writer and journalist. He looks forward to the day he isn't broke because of that status.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

By Bryan Stevenson
Scribe Publications 2015
Reviewed by Pat Hick

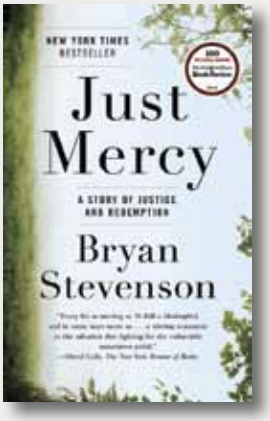
This true story of justice and redemption echoes well in this Year of Mercy. It is a very powerful story about the potential for mercy to redeem us. Author Bryan Stevenson, an African American lawyer, founded the Equal Justice Initiative which was a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need. These included poor people, the wrongly condemned and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of the American justice system.

One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillan, a young man who was sentenced to die for a murder he insisted he had not committed. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination and legal brinkmanship. At the same time it transformed forever his understanding of mercy and justice.

Bryan also addressed the age-old issues of deep-seated racial tensions in many parts of America. His deep compassion and courage arise from his refusal to sit quietly and countenance the horrors of unjust convictions — particularly those leading to incarceration on death row.

I found this book to be written with compassion and humility. It inspired me, upset me and yet left me hopeful. I was hopeful that evil can be overcome and a difference can be made. And perhaps I need to look more deeply at my own judgemental attitudes towards "the other".

I found this quote from the book



inspiring: "The power of mercy is that it belongs to the undeserving — it's when mercy is least expected that it's most potent — strong enough to break the cycle of victimisation and victimhood, retribution and suffering. It has the power to heal the psychic harm and injuries that lead to aggression and violence, abuse of power and incarceration."

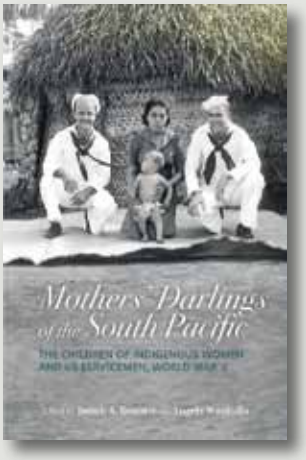
I recommend this book to all people of conscience who care passionately about mercy and justice. ■

Mothers' Darlings of the South Pacific:

The Children of Indigenous Women and US Servicemen, World War II

Edited by Judith A Bennett and Angela Wanhalla
Published by Otago University Press
Reviewed by Ruth Mather

During World War II two million US servicemen served in the South Pacific. *Mothers' Darlings of the South Pacific* tells the story of the children born to some of these men by indigenous women. As the introduction says: "In *Mothers' Darlings*, indigenous mothers and children, almost absent from written histories of military battles and victories, have broken out of the common conspiracy of silence of the military and colonial archives and often their own societies during disturbing yet exciting times."



US immigration prevented mixed marriages between white and non-white and this policy extended to Pacific countries. Most servicemen were unable to marry their sweethearts, and "GI babies" were brought up by the mothers and their families. In this respect their story is a different story from other parts of the world like Japan and Korea, where "GI babies" were brought up in institutions. Even so, some children were subjected to shaming and mocking. Others grew up not knowing their father was an American. Many had tried to find out about their fathers, which was challenging given that the US authorities were reluctant to disclose information for fear they would be forced to provide compensation.

Each of the eleven chapters tells the story of women in different Pacific islands. There are stories of Māori women in New Zealand along with those of women of Bora Bora, Samoa, New Caledonia, New Hebrides, Wallis (Uvea) Island, Tonga, Fiji, the Solomons, Cook Islands and the Gilbert Islands. Each chapter gives a brief history of the island placing it in the context of WWII. The full stories of women made for compelling reading but not all women knew and could tell complete stories.

History is usually written from the perspective of the victors and through the lens of men with the major roles. But this book offers the perspective of simple, sometimes very isolated rural women, who helped the war effort by providing touches of humanity, love and warmth. They made their own impact on a global war.

I found this book unexpectedly interesting. It was part romance, war-story, detective novel and was full of stories of poignancy and sometimes tragedy. It was certainly not the long, (300+ pages) academic read it appeared when I picked it up. It will interest a wide audience — in fact anyone who identifies as a person of the Pacific. ■

I, Daniel Blake

Directed by Ken Loach
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

In my day job as a copy-editor, I've been working on a book about coping strategies used by people in developing countries to make ends meet. *I, Daniel Blake*, the latest film by socially committed British director Ken Loach, is about just that — but it's set in the supposed First World, in the city of Newcastle in the north-east of England.

Recovering from a heart attack – and the loss of his wife — Dan (Dave Johns) is looking to resume work as a carpenter. However, in dealing with the Department for Work and Pensions, he finds himself caught in a Catch 22 situation whereby he must simultaneously prove that he is well enough to seek work, but sick enough to stay on a benefit in the interim. Dan finds himself trapped in a welfare bureaucracy that operates according to inflexible rules that take little account of an individual's needs and circumstances. The action is punctuated by the chilling refrain: "You will be contacted by the decision-maker."

Dan's basic humanity sees him join forces with another struggler, solo mum Katie and her two young children, who have been pressured into leaving their digs in London (a hostel for the homeless) to rent a flat in the north-east. It proves to be a shocker and the practical Dan finds himself drawn into their lives as he becomes an invaluable friend and support.

A comedic foil to their interlocking story is provided by Dan's neighbours, a pair of likely lads who have devised a moneymaker that involves importing high-quality sneakers from China and selling them locally at a discount. Their scheme may be a little dodgy, but they are beating the system and having a few laughs along the way. Other sympathetic characters include the volunteers at the local food bank and Ann, a job centre worker. They provide flashes of humanity in a bleak urban wasteland where it seems "the powers that be" are happy for the poor to rot.

I, Daniel Blake is one of the most powerful films I've seen in a long time. The cast, especially Hayley Squires as Katie, inhabit their roles so fully that the film seems like a documentary. By using little-known actors to play all-too-real people Loach has created something that is the antithesis of Hollywood and all it stands for. Put it at the top of your "must see" list. But beware — it might just inspire you to action. ■

CROSSCURRENTS

Jim Elliston

United States Imperialism

When George W Bush decided to invade Iraq without international approval he knew he had the backing of the sycophantic Tony Blair. The Chilcot report's scathing indictment of Blair's action lays bare Britain's contribution to the current Middle-Eastern mayhem and devastation.

Bush's action is an example of so-called American exceptionalism. While it is common for people to regard their country as superior to others, the neo-liberal version of American hubris justifies the US imposing democracy on others. Bush refused to meet with Pope John-Paul's emissary on the matter. Barak Obama, one of the few opponents among prominent politicians from either party, was left to clean up the mess in the face of denial by most of Congress. In New Zealand the then opposition leader, John Key criticised Prime Minister Helen Clark for refusing to join "our traditional allies". Some business leaders urged involvement as a means of gaining a more favourable climate for trade with the US.

There is hope that after Bernie Sanders' emergence as a credible influence on Democratic Party policy, Hillary Clinton's interventionist tendencies will be curtailed.

"Truthicity"

Can we trust our news-media to tell us the truth? It seems great caution is required. The increasing use of algorithms (a mathematical device) that track and analyse our on-line activities, enables editors to select items of particular interest to us.

An essay by Katharine Viner, editor of *The Guardian*, recently featured on Radio NZ's *Media Watch* programme. She warned of the malign influence of Facebook and the tabloids in this regard. They use these algorithms to create a sort of feedback loop by not exposing readers to divergent views. Another ruse used is to provide links to unrelated items for political reasons, eg, from "refugees" to "immigration", aiming to blur the distinction.

Gavin Ellis, former editor of the *NZ Herald*, has also noted signs of manipulative behaviour in our press. One commentator has described the outcome as "truthicity", meaning that it only looks like the truth.

Protestant Papal Voice

Pope Francis, trying to quell attempts to use his words to legitimise factional interests in his own country, has stated several times that he has no spokesperson in Argentina. But now in a surprise move he announced that he had appointed a long-time media collaborator from Argentina, Protestant theologian Marcelo Figueroa, to exercise that role.

Third Party Infiltration

An insidious seed planted in the US body politic many years back, emerged again about a decade ago. According to Jane Mayer, author of *Dark Money*, it has spread to an alarming degree. She outlined in a recent Radio NZ interview how engineer, Fred Koch, invented a better way of refining crude oil and laid the foundations of his multi-billion oil, coal and gas empire. First he re-organised Stalinist USSR's refineries and then those of Hitler's Germany.

Two of his sons, Charles and David, have continued his activity. They devised an engineering-based system designed to subvert the democratic process. They secretly fund people who are anti-conservationists to elective positions at all levels, ranging from librarians, district attorneys and judges through to national politicians. These officials are able to influence public opinion without people knowing they are being manipulated. Charles and David have a group of about four hundred wealthy people helping to fund their brilliant strategy.

"Reality is not a problem unless you take it seriously!" ■

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

Tui Motu – InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge, and contribute to its discussion of spiritual, social and ecological 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.

ISSM 1174-8931
Issue number 208

Address:
Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd,
52 Union Street, Dunedin North, 9054
P O Box 6404, Dunedin North, 9059

Phone: (03) 477 1449

Email: editor@tuimotu.org

Email for subscriptions: admin@tuimotu.org

Editor: Ann L Gilroy RSJ

Assistant editor: Elizabeth Mackie OP

Design & layout: Greg Hings

Printers: Southern Colour Print, 1 Turakina Road, Dunedin South, 9012

Board Directors: Neil Darragh (chair), Rita Cahill RSJ, Philip Casey, David Mullin, Paul Ferris, Cathrine Harrison, Agnes Hermans, Judith McGinley OP, Kevin Toomey OP

Honorary Members: Pauline O'Regan RSM, Frank Hoffmann, Elizabeth Mackie OP

We welcome letters of comment, discussion, response, affirmation or argument of up to 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge longer letters, while keeping the meaning.

We do not publish anonymous letters except in exceptional circumstances.

STRIKING A CHORD

I thought Mike Riddell's article (*TM* June) was deep and very insightful. I have been very blessed to travel the journey over many decades from "affliction to gift" that Mike includes in his material. Great profound article!

I thoroughly concur with Marian Hobbs' article. Some of us really struggle to find the words to express our appreciation adequately. I remember early one morning sitting in my Lazyboy (more comfortable than lying in the bed) and a friend on the way to work called to drop something off in a nice, pink, girlie-type-bag with a satin ribbon. I sat looking at that bag for quite some time. The friend was unaware that I was unwell.

Michele Lafferty's: "Your spirituality is what you bring of your relationship with God. You don't need to be anyone but yourself and people feed off that. It lifts their spirits", describes the truth so well.

I'm delighted you found writers who wrote from personal experience — it's just so much more real and the accord, so much more meaningful, profound.

I believe Walt Whitman wrote: "We are the same when we die as when we are born, except for two things. The people that we meet (or was it 'our experiences'?) and the books (read 'magazines'!) that we read."

Congratulations on a great issue.

John Rutten, New Plymouth (Abridged)

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

What a coincidence that Elaine Wainwright should follow Peter Murnane's insightful article in the August *Tui Motu*. For a number of years I have used the midday break to visit a bush-covered area to contemplate nature, eat my lunch. I tune an old transistor radio to the RNZ Concert. Immediately two large *kerukeru* (tree pigeons) must pick up the decibels from high up in the tops and gradually work their way closer, eating berries, shrieking and pushing each other till I turn the radio up more loudly. They stop as if to say: "Thank you" and come close enough almost to have eye contact when they seem to doze. I feel they are my friends and they trust me as they don't move when I talk to them, go for a short walk or get something from the car.

June Swain, Wellington.

TAILORING THE PLANET

Terry and I love the cover of the August *Tui Motu*. It reminds me of that Hasidic story that there are 30 tailors in this world constantly stitching up the damage that people do to the planet. It is a lovely parable of prayer. Thank you for making *Tui Motu* the 31st tailor.

Joy Cowley, Featherston

MARRIED PRIESTS

In *TM* June, Ann Gilroy wrote on women deacons in the church. I think if the Catholic Church wants to remain strong we have to bring back married priests. We've had sexual scandals ever since the Borgia Popes got rid of married priests. In all religions or cultures where men have

insisted on keeping men and women from meeting and greeting there have been sexual problems as history shows. The Catholic Church has been doing a push lately for young men to consider the priesthood. At one Mass I attended a young man said: "I want a wife and family; otherwise I might consider it." We have young Asian men coming forward and I wonder why? The Vatican has to get into the 21st century. The Church is one of the most wealthy corporations in the world and I think it is about time they started putting money into the many Catholic countries who are desperate, rely on drug money to exist, and have barely a meal at night — let alone a glass of wine.

Susan Lawrence, Auckland

Looking **OUT** *and* **IN**

Lumbering, a bear emerging from hibernation, I head out the door shaggy with rain trousers, raincoat, motorbike helmet and backpack. The skies are scowling and based on the last four weeks of daily deluges, it's reasonable to dress for rain. Stumping along the muddy path — I'll have to drive one-hour downhill to get to The City for Meetings. I teeter on a narrow concrete strip to avoid the muddy puddle, first raindrops skittering on my hood.

Fifteen minutes later the sky has opened to release a cataract and it's all falling on me. As I drive my scooter down a steep hill, a stream spanning the whole road races furiously downhill with me. The skirt of water swirls high on the corner and then splashes around, dancing flamenco. The bank above me has become a 2-D waterfall — ferns and plants buffeted by the sheets of falling water.

Now onto flat tarseal, I spray though a thousand raindrops, dancing prickles on the black skin of the road. I swish past bevies of school children hovering under ineffectual umbrellas and pedestrians looking out from shop canopies. Though drenched already, I am perversely smug. I'm out in the thrumming rain, not cowering. I'm a surfer out in the wild spray and in the big water. I'm invincible.

I go very slowly and carefully actually. Of course. My papers and laptop are wrapped like a pass-the-parcel package in layers of crackly plastic bags. As well I'm wearing three raincoats and double rain trousers. I am already soaked to the skin, but it's not that cold. It's India, not New Zealand, and I have packed a change of clothes. Even underwear.

My mother emails from Auckland suggesting I don't ride my scooter during heavy rain. Work colleagues say I should just arrive late for meetings after waiting for when the rain has eased. That's what they all do. My husband waves me off and says: "Have fun!"

No mental shopping lists today. No conversations replayed in my mind. No oboe concertos on my iPod. Not even a Kim Hill interview. Today's journey down to Dehradun city is just about staying on the road and celebrating this lush, lashing, splashing rain. Scootering in this drubbing dumberdash is today's prayer. ■

Kaaren Mathias lives in north India and works in community mental health in Uttarakhand state and for the NGO Emmanuel Hospital Association.

Blessing

With love and freedom
dismantle our barriers to communion.
Visit us with inclusion
compassion
and conversion
Merciful God

From the Tui Motu *team*