

# Tui Motu

InterIslands

monthly independent Catholic magazine

December 2010 | \$6



All our attention has been focussed in these days on the plight of 29 miners, their families and the community of the West Coast as they faced the tragedy of the River Pike Coal Mine. We have empathized with Peter Wittall and Commander Gary Knowles who have stood as valiant figures in their determination to do the best for both miners and rescuers. Their task is unenviable, and continues. At the same time, we have followed the devastation wrought in the murder of 59 Chaldean Christians in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Salvation, Baghdad, early in November. We have watched as TV shows the incomprehension and grief of their surviving sisters and brothers. They seek the protection and safety from an Iraqi government that seems unable or unwilling to give them even a little of what they are due.

These and similar tragedies are enough to test the faith and reason of us all. I see in the vulnerability and fragility so evident in a grieving Greymouth and a stunned Baghdad a reflection of the power of Christ's birth among us. Here is a child born to travelling parents rushed to find a place for the birth of their child. We have

a Mum and Dad forced to emigrate because this new-born is seen as a threat to a paranoid local ruler, who in revenge murders all the innocent under-ones to protect himself. Mary and Joseph's slow understanding of what happened to them belies what we later have built into a model of sweet peace and infinite power for their son.

We believe Christ to be true God, no doubt. But here is a God, one of us, whose best instincts are honed from childhood to understand that it is in human fragility and open companionship of all including those not much acceptable in society, or who are part of a minority, that life flourishes. We are sisters and brothers to one another, no matter what. God is to be found where people reach out, where grief is supported, where hope is opened up, and time given for healing of seemingly inconsolable wounds. This weak strength is the paradox of the Incarnation. We rely on it always amongst us, and respond spontaneously in this manner again and again, in tragedy above all. May we celebrate this vulnerable Christ with our sisters and brothers this Christmas.

K.T.

Working on my last issue of *Tui Motu* I can't help thinking that the process of producing the magazine is similar to making a loaf of bread – good ingredients, handling the dough with delicacy and gentleness, using a degree of strength and vigor when kneading; so too with editorial pruning. Then comes the 'rising' of the dough, leaving time for the yeast to work its magic.

In Chaucer's England one of the names for yeast was *goddisgoode* "because it cometh of the grete grace of God". Many a miracle takes place here during the magazine's 'fermenting' stage – the new idea that comes helping to bring it all together. That's the magical part I will miss.

Now it is time to express my grateful thanks to the countless people who have joined us on this wild dream and whose labours have made *Tui Motu* possible: board members, writers, volunteers, advertisers, sellers, donors, printers and of course our readers.

Listing names would be invidious; nevertheless, my personal gratitude to Christine who works here part-time sorting out our admin problems, and of course to Michael with whom I had the privilege of working for 13 years. His perception when editor was something I valued – he was quick to look, listen and discern what was dear to the heart of someone's experience and thinking, then offer an avenue of further fulfilment in the magazine. I also appreciated his ability to recognize that which had life and power to attract the eye and heart, and again he would find a way to implement reproduction in *Tui Motu*.

However, you will have already noticed the magazine has now lifted to another level under Michael's successor, Fr Kevin. My thanks to him too for his patience this year when I bossed him! Keep dreaming the dream Kevin. My best wishes and support as you take *Tui Motu* on this next phase of the journey.

Time now to put this 145<sup>th</sup> issue to bed!

F.S.

## contents

Editorial .....	2
Guest editorial .....	3
RT HON SIR ANAND SATYANAND	
From the chair: Christmas greetings .....	4
Celebrating St Mary .....	5
From Fear to Respect .....	6-7
Interview with Rt Hon John Battle	
An Evangelist's Journey .....	8-9
NEIL VANEY SM	
Poem .....	9
HAYDEN WILLIAMS	
The Chosen One .....	10-11
JOY COWLEY	
Open and Shut? .....	12-13
MIKE RIDDELL	
Poem .....	13
BRIDIE SOUTHALL	
A Christmas Story .....	14-15
SANDRA WINTON OP	
Annunciation; Massacre of the Innocents .....	16-17
RON O'GRADY	
Light Incarnate .....	18-19
2 Tui Motu InterIslands	

DANIEL O'LEARY	
Opening the Soul .....	20-21
GLYNN CARDY	
Collaborative Cuy Production .....	22-23
DOROTHY STEVENSON RSJ	
Jesus, Emmanuel .....	24
KATH RUSHTON	
Dorothy Day: a prophet of our times .....	25
JIM CONSEDINE	
DVD reviews .....	26-27
Some good 'reads' of 2010 .....	28-29
KATHLEEN DOHERTY	
Crosscurrents .....	30
JIM ELLISTON	
A call to charity .....	31
PETER NORRIS	
Mother's Journal .....	32
KAAREN MATHIAS	

front cover illustration by Donald Moorhead



Greetings in the languages of the realm of New Zealand: in English, Māori, Cook Island Māori, Niuean and Tokelauan:

*Kia Ora, Kia Orana, Fakalofa Lahi Atu and Taloha Ni.*

As Governor-General of New Zealand, it is with pleasure that I provide this guest editorial for the *Tui Motu* Christmas issue. Despite a tendency of commercial imperatives to overshadow this important date, Christmas remains a special time. For all New Zealanders, it is a time to reconnect with families and to look forward to a new year and new beginnings. For Christians, Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, whose powerful message of peace, love and salvation continues to resonate through our world more than 2,000 years later.

One who heard the call of Jesus was Mary MacKillop, the first Sister and Mother Superior of the Order of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart who was canonised by Pope Benedict XVI as St Mary of the Cross (MacKillop) in October 2010 thus becoming the first saint from this part of the world.

While St Mary was born in Victoria in 1842 and spent much of her life in Australia, she travelled widely and a number of maintained strong connections to New Zealand. In 1883, three nuns from Australia established the Order in Temuka in South Canterbury and soon after, there developed other communities in many parts of New Zealand. Mary visited a number of these on several occasions before her death in 1909.

More than a century after her death, the Order which Mary founded continues to be active in New Zealand, with a focus on addressing the social, pastoral and educational needs of the community, with a particular focus on children and families. I remember well as a youngster growing up in a Catholic family in Auckland seeing Sisters of the Order as they went about their work in their characteristic “brown joe” habits.

There are a number of messages that can be drawn from the new saint’s life and teachings. The first is the respect and dignity that should be shown for all humanity. She was a humble person with an innate respect for human dignity, which she regarded as more important than strict observance of rules. She never lost sight of her mission and that of her Order being to help the poor, unemployed and needy.

The second message is the transformative power of education. She saw in education the means to help the poor out of poverty and to change society more widely for the better. To that end, she established training colleges to ensure that her Sisters could provide their students with the best possible education. It reminds us all that the most important gift that a parent, a family, a community or a nation can give to its children and young people is a good education.

The third message that can be drawn from the MacKillop life is the importance of practical service to others, best summarised in her saying “never see a need without doing something about it.” Few of us receive the call to devote ourselves as selflessly to others as St Mary did. However, her life shows we can all make a difference through voluntary service to professional organisations, sporting and community groups, charitable organisations, schools and hospitals.

In conclusion, St Mary’s life remains an inspiration. While many Catholics will pray to her seeking intercession, her words which follow might be said to give the finest instruction to all seeking help. As she wrote in one of her last letters in 1909:

“Whatever troubles may be before you, accept them cheerfully, remembering whom you are trying to follow. Do not be afraid. Love one another, bear with one another, and let charity guide you in all your life.”

*No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, kia ora, kia kaha, tēnā koutou katoa.*

**Rt Hon Sir Anand Satyanand, GNZM, QSO**

*Governor-General of New Zealand*



**Tui Motu**  
InterIslands

ISSN 1174-8931  
Issue number 145

*Tui Motu-InterIslands* is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed.

The name *Tui Motu* was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means “stitching the islands together...”, bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

**address:** Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd,  
P O Box 6404, Dunedin North, 9059

**phone:** (03) 477 1449

**fax:** (03) 477 8149

**email:** tuimotu@earthlight.co.nz

**website:** www.tuimotu.org

**editor:** Kevin Toomey OP

**assistant editor:** Frances Skelton

**illustrator:** Don Moorhead

**directors:** Rita Cahill RSJ, Philip Casey, Tom Cloher, Robin Kearns, Elizabeth Mackie OP (interim chair), Peter Murnane OP, Mark Richards, Kathleen Rushton RSM

**design:** Alex Gilks

**printers:** Southern Colour Print, 1 Turakina Road, Dunedin South, 9012



The *Tui Motu* Board and editorial team wish all readers and supporters blessings of peace, joy and harmony on this Christmas feast. May the Millenium Development Goals find a home among us.



Dear friends,

### heartfelt thanks

Frances Skelton, who has served as sub-editor since *Tui Motu's* inception, is to retire at the end of December. She has brought to the magazine a particular combination of skills that is not likely to be repeated or matched: a great love of literature and an ability to use it wisely; an appreciation of art which is shown invariably in her creativity; an amazing instinct about a filler item that might complete a page, and the resources to find these. Add to these talents hardwork, enviable layout skills, superb editorial skills, and a love of hospitality. And then we are only some of the way towards recognizing the unique personality of Francie.

In May we honoured Michael Hill's great commitment to *Tui Motu* given so freely. Likewise, Francie has worked beyond the call of duty, gifting much of her time and skill. In fact, her commitment has the quality of a calling, a vocation to promote adult faith development. These qualities of giving and commitment to her faith are very precious.

Francie, I wish to thank you and honour you, and pray your retirement continues to bring out your creativity and giftedness – and gives you plenty of time to relax with Gary, your family and friends.

### gift subscription

It is important not just to bask in the awards deservedly given to *Tui Motu* earlier this year at the annual ACPA and ARPA conferences. Comments like "stand-out winner", "mature and intelligent contributor to Catholic media", "excellence in religious communication" speak for themselves.

We think that *Tui Motu* would make an ideal Christmas gift, especially for those family members in 'the difficult-to-shop-for' category. As well, giving a sub to one of your children or grandchildren may help in their faith development. It is a matter of 'sowing the seed', isn't it?

Recently we had a communication from a remote mission station in Bangladesh where someone who has worked there for 30 years was delighted to receive a gift subscription of our magazine. Think globally here, as well as amongst your immediate family or friends. There may be someone much further away who would rejoice in the good thing *Tui Motu* has to offer. We will be very happy to mail it to them.

*Elizabeth Mackie OP*  
Interim Chair

If you enjoy reading *Tui Motu* and find the articles enriching, you could share this experience with a family member or a friend. Simply fill in the coupon alongside and indicate below from whom the gift comes.

### A gift from:

.....  
.....

### Ideal Christmas Gift: subscription to *Tui Motu InterIslands*

Name .....

Address .....

Area code .....

☐ \$25 for five issues (unwaged \$22)

☐ \$50 for a one-year subscription  
11 issues (unwaged \$44)

#### OVERSEAS

Australia & S. Pacific .....\$65

All other regions .....\$70

☐ I am enclosing an additional donation to secure the future of *Tui Motu*

☐ I have included a cheque for \$.....

☐ or, please debit my credit card (Visa/Mastercard)

Card No:

Name on card .....

Signature .....

Expiry date .....

POST TO PO Box 6404 Dunedin North  
Dunedin 9059

email  
website

tui motu@earthlight.co.nz  
www.tuimotu.org



# celebrating st mary in arrowtown



Over the past month, people up and down New Zealand have “taken possession” of Saint Mary McKillop as a woman of our country and a saint

for our times.

On 6-7 November, hundreds enjoyed two days celebrating Mary of the Cross in Arrowtown through history, education, prayer and feasting, with a fine liturgy in the very church where St Mary used to worship.



This is an excerpt from the homily of Dunedin Diocese Bishop Colin Campbell at 7 November Mass:

**W**hen you look up on a starry night you see the Southern Cross constellation that is always there in our southern skies. Mary saw the Cross of Christ as always there, as essential to the Christian life. How many people today want a Cross-free life or a Cross-less spirituality and they can get very cross when troubles come and they begin to blame God ...

**O**ur first photo shows two 89-year-olds, Mary McBride and Jack Reid. They are icons of the education that the Josephite sisters provided in Arrowtown from 1897, when Mary MacKillop was diverted from her path to Port Chalmers to start a Catholic school in the goldfields of Central Otago.

At the age of five, Mary and Jack were together in the small classroom, still extant as the ‘Mary McKillop cottage’ and shown in our second photo, with local children (and the curator of the local museum as Saint Mary.) This cottage is honoured today as the heart of Mary’s gift to Arrowtown. Mary and Jack, like many, met for the first time in many years at this celebration. Jack, the last mayor of Arrowtown before it was merged into the Lakes District Council, testified that the Sisters gave him a fine start to his education.



“Whether it was the dry and dusty roads of South Australia or Queensland or those of central Otago, for Mary it was all part of following her Lord on his dusty road to Calvary. As Mary of the Cross she saw this as central to her faith and life and said, “Faith is the first essential if we are to cope with the cross in life... faith in God as a loving Father who (if you let him) will, in his Providence, use trials and sufferings for your greater good and his glory.” ■

# from fear to respect



*Tui Motu* talked with **Rt Hon John Battle** about his experiences, his faith and the principles that have undergirded his work as a Member of the English Parliament for the last 23 years.

**J**ohn Battle, until May this year the MP for Leeds West, has been in New Zealand to give lectures on the place of religion in the public square. In Dunedin, he also interacted with local MP's and those dealing with prison reform. He is a most engaging, humorous, people-focused person – in fact, a storyteller-preacher par excellence, and a man of action. Contrary to his name, he is a man of peace! A Labour Party MP, he crossed the House to vote against Tony Blair's decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003, and has worked consistently against the so-called war on terror since then.

## background

John is thankful for the fine education and pastoral training he received while training for Catholic priesthood. He was never ordained, and married Mary when at University. This was the time when the principles of Vatican II, and especially *Gaudium et Spes*, were being put into effect. Together with his interest in people and politics he was flung into the thick of local action (calling himself a 'left-over peacenik'). He was elected a Labour town councillor for Huntsley West at the age of 23, where he had success working on housing problems. These ten years were preparation for election to the UK Parliament in 1987. This is the poorest part of the city of Leeds, what John calls 'White-van-man-land', where many skilled and semi-skilled workers live, and women typically work in the service sector as cleaners. With people of 26 different cultures and a large immigration reception centre, it is home to a very transient population – one third live there less than a year before moving on, and another third lives from two to ten years. It has a remand prison containing 1067 men. As well, it has the lowest proportion of people going to university of any UK electorate, while the rate of people suffering from schizophrenia is 18

times the national average. All of this encompasses the fact that it is blessed to be home to every major faith tradition.

## envoy to interfaith communities

John was Foreign Minister in Tony Blair's government for two years until just prior to the 9/11 incident. Overnight he became Blair's special envoy to Britain's multi-faceted interfaith communities – to help these communities face the possible violent consequences of 9/11. Moreover, the four young men involved in 7 July 2005 bombing of the London subway and a double-decker bus, (known as the 7/7 bombers) were quickly found to be from John's electorate.

On that day, John rushed home from London to the Leeds sports centre expecting to find hundreds of people sheltered there – having been taken from their homes by the police in the face of a strong local bomb scare. Instead he found just 40 people present. Where were the others? Wonderfully, neighbours had taken them in. John was concerned for one of the district's characters, an elderly man called Arthur, who was always reefing off about people of other religions. When John found Arthur was not home, he went across the road to his Hindu neighbours to ask politely of Arthur's whereabouts. The mother of the house said, "He's here with us", and opened the front-room door to reveal Arthur and his dog pleasantly ensconced. When John told Arthur that the scare was over, and he could return home now, he said, "Do I have to? They are looking after me so well."

This story illustrates a point John made over and over again, that it is at the level of the neighbourhood, indeed street level, that we may find ways of helping communities of different faiths and races to face each other, with positive outcomes. He recalls a milestone



in his electorate when Muslim people crossed the road from their mosque to attend the ordination of an Anglican deacon. As well Muslim people hold open days for the local communities, inviting them to 'come and see'. Something that took longer was to get local councils to set up guidelines for the interaction of interfaith and local bodies: to make them see that without the interfaith connection the local body's work would be so much more difficult. These guidelines have worked well.

### **subsidiarity and solidarity**

John's sees that his experience and two ethical principles learnt from Catholic Social Teaching, subsidiarity and solidarity, go hand in hand. Which he learned first he's not sure; but the teaching reinforces his experience, and what he sees as a prophetic function of all the faiths: to go the extra mile, from justice to mercy, in looking after each other. Subsidiarity says: don't do at a higher level what can better be done below; solidarity says: don't only help neighbours you like (could you live beside a paedophile or a murderer?). Neighbours in poor districts like Leeds West often have no choice of where to live. And sometimes it may be only in going the extra mile that we can begin to know and understand one another at local level.

### **younger generation**

After the 7/7 bombing, the inter-faith debate changed. It needed to go to a deeper level, and to have a younger focus. The older people had basically understood what was needed. Now was the time for the younger generation to come together and talk. For instance, there was a "Vision of Leeds" group of under 25 year olds who started by looking at tough questions. The first was: the brewing corporates controlled the binge culture of the city. How would they tackle this? The Moslems wanted to look at an alternative music culture; the Jewish too; then the Christians had to say, we don't want binge drinking either. They are continuing to work on such questions together.

### **caritas in veritate**

There is much good ongoing multi-faith conversation in Britain. And Blair's 2001 instinct to create a special envoy to the multi-faith communities has paid off handsomely. John quotes Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate*: "Globalization has turned us into neighbours, but not yet into brothers and sisters." Here, he says, lies the ongoing challenge. ■



**Subsidiarity says: don't do at a higher level what can better be done below; solidarity says: don't only help neighbours you like.**

# an evangelist's journey: from drifting to gifting

Neil Vaney

This is the story of the faith conversion of a young woman and her desire to pass on to her peers the gift of faith she cherishes

Chatting to Stella I was very aware that in three days she would be heading down the Southern highway with her five companions. For the next three weeks a small grey van would be wheels, part-time home and conference centre for six young evangelists ranging between Rotorua and Dargaville. Quiet and modest, she still emanated energy and tension, her short blond hair and determined chin bobbing as she explained what she wanted to achieve during the many hours of skits, dramas, testimonies and teachings that they would be delivering in schools and church halls throughout the top half of the North Island.

"I want to be a witness for so many young people just like me. To show them what I have learned here. To help them experience something of Christ's love for them. I want to be honest – to talk about the struggles and pains of my life, to give them hope. I want to be passionate, and utterly honest."

As a principal I have come to take huge pride in the leaps of faith that many of our Catholic Discipleship College (CDC) students have made. Some have stepped up to religious life or seminary training – and not the ones I expected. Others have moved back into teacher training, the business world or to become speech therapists, just as St Paul went back to making tents to support himself as he preached the gospel. Stella had already surprised me by asking me to be one of her referees as she applied to be a member of a diocesan youth team in 2011, many miles away from her home town of Mt Maunganui.

I asked her why she had taken this step. "Young people need to hear," she insisted, "to hear from folk their own age. They need to get to know Jesus. I want to use what I have learned. And I know I can do that now." She smiles and laughs; "I would never have dreamed I could be saying this a year ago."

The remarkable fact is that Stella, at eighteen, has

been baptized just two years. She lightly described her family as 'festival Catholics', turning up for Easter and Christmas but with no sense of any meaning, engagement or stake in these strange rituals. For her, family life had been painful, with much tension and fear. A dramatic and unexpected family meeting with the local parish priest was the force seven earthquake that caused a shifting of their foundations and eventual conversion for both parents and then children. Before this time, Stella acknowledges, she had been deeply unhappy at school.

"I had no sense of who I was, what I wanted. I followed wherever my group led. I felt that no one really cared about me and tried to stay insignificant, hidden among my friends, scared to challenge them in any way. I looked up to a few heroes, especially my older brother, and did whatever they did, no matter how silly or destructive it was." But inside, deep down, she felt empty and hungry.

Stella's decision to seek baptism was the start of a huge sea-shift in her life. When she first came to CDC she still swung between great hope, moments of joy, and times when her old sense of unworthiness and lack of identity would overtake her. But now her year is almost over a quite new sense of self and vision of life have taken hold of her. Over many hours of prayer, much study of theology and scripture, sustained and sometimes painful sharing with her class mates, a granite-like conviction has slowly built up within her. This 'wonderful blessing', as she calls it, is the discovery of God's utter and boundless love for her. With this have come some delectable bonuses: a clear sense of her own uniqueness and acceptance of her own special gifts and talents. The first fruit of this has been a growing awareness of a capacity to find true and trusted friends with whom she can share herself and dare to be her true self.

As I talk with her I am filled with quiet delight at how different she is, how much she has blossomed



Many of the youth training programmes that I know of in New Zealand are strong on process, that is, how to communicate within the youth culture, as well as conveying a reasonable faith content. Where CDC goes further is to insist that such skills count for little without inner transformation and healing. And the only place for such healing is the furnace described by St Paul wherein “rooted and grounded on love, [you] may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and

Many of the youth training programmes that I know of in New Zealand are strong on process, that is, how to communicate within the youth culture, as well as conveying a reasonable faith content. Where CDC goes further is to insist that such skills count for little without inner transformation and healing.

depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God". (Eph 3:18-19). Without that, all else is but a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. Without that, all else is straw. ■

**Neil Vaney SM** is principal of the Catholic Discipleship College.  
He lives in Auckland

*PLAN BE*

Fear corrodes trust  
*stand up and walk*  
tears rust our dreams  
*leave all you have*  
hands lust for dust  
*let your light shine*  
sand seems supreme  
*sell all you own*  
needs appear real  
*come follow me*  
what seems must be  
*be passer by*  
must trust dust less  
*you are worth more*  
must free these hands  
*now is the day.*

## Hayden Williams

## Work in Progress...



Fr Bernie Donnelly S.J. (left) and Fr Tony Ryan S.J. (right), from Christchurch and Gisborne, were sent to India by the Australian Jesuit Mission during the 1950s, and they are still active there in 2010. They have since been joined by a number of young Indian Priests and Sisters. Thank you for supporting the mission during all these years, they couldn't have achieved so much without your support.

Please help them continue God's work.

**YES! I want to continue helping the Jesuit Missions conduct their vital works**

Mr/Mrs/Miss.....


Address:.....

I enclose \$ .....      ☐ cheque enclosed or    ☐ cash or    ☐ debit my credit card

☐ Visa    ☐ Master Card   

Card Holder Name: .....      TM DEC '10

Signature: .....      Expiry Date: .....

 Gifts are tax deductible

**Tom and Carole Ryan, New Zealand Jesuits in India  
PO Box 25922, St Heliers Bay, Auckland 1740**

## New Zealand Jesuits in India...Care for the Poorest of the Poor

# The Chosen One

## a short story

Joy Cowley

The wall between Heaven and Earth had grown thin and all created things shivered with expectation. The birth would be soon, and angels would pass through to the other side, to announce it with songs of rejoicing.

The angel chosen to be the fore-runner was summoned by one of the ancients. "The woman's time has come. You will now choose the one who will take them to the birthing place. Remember the qualities you seek. He has the light of Heaven in him. He will be strong, great of heart and empty of self-interest, one ready to give himself away without counting the cost."

The fore-runner was surprised. "You are describing the child who is to be born."

The senior angel replied: "It is true that the guide does echo some of the child's qualities. He is the one that the child has chosen."

"How will I recognize him?"

"You will know him as soon as you see him."

So the angel passed through the wall of light into the place of division called Earth, confident that it would immediately recognize a guide with such noble qualities. But apart from the man and the woman who were waiting for the divine child, there was no one. The angel discovered that even in the holy places, people were weak with ignorance, their hearts fearful. There was no emptiness in them, that the light of Heaven could fill.

The fore-runner searched and searched and then, weighed down by heavy earth-time and a sense of failure, it sat by the road to the city, watching the people hurry by. Roman soldiers galloped past on strong war-horses trained in the desert. Traders from Syria headed a camel caravan loaded with rugs, spices and sandalwood for Herod's palace. A group of fine-robed Pharisees walked past, their voices raised in an earnest discussion on the prophets. The angel

sighed. It seemed there was no option but to return to Heaven and say the guide could not be found.

But then, without warning, it happened. As the sun was setting, the great heart came down the road. The angel stood tall, sensing it long before it became visible, for it contained the light familiar to all angels. Eagerly, the fore-runner raced through the dust to meet the chosen guide.

But what was this? The angel stopped, bewildered.

A big man on a donkey, was cursing and beating his poor animal with a stick. The donkey plodded along, head down, ears twitching at the voice, skin flinching under the blows. The large man wasn't its only burden. Behind him, were two earthen jars of flour slung on a pannier. Whack! Whack! The stick hit the donkey's scarred neck. "Hurry, you useless animal! I'll be late for my supper."

The moment of confusion passed and the angel understood that it had been looking at the wrong creation. It was not the man who held the light of a great heart, but the donkey. This old donkey with all the emptiness of poverty, had been chosen to take the woman to the birthing place.

The fore-runner stepped out in front of the man and although the angel had earth disguise, its power could not be hidden. The man with the courage to beat a defenceless animal, was now greatly afraid, and his heart beat rapidly in his throat. "What do you want?"

"Your donkey is needed at the house of Joseph the carpenter," the angel replied.

Through his fear, the man sensed opportunity. "But – but I'm a poor man, Sir. I need this donkey for my trade. My wife, my children, they will starve." He licked his lips. "This donkey is extremely valuable."

"You will be well paid," the angel said, and was suddenly aware that the light in the donkey's heart had come into its eyes. The animal knew what this was all

about. It had always known. This indeed, was amazing! Heaven had revealed its secrets to a simple beast of burden.

Triumphantly, the fore-runner slipped through realities to report a successful mission to the ancient one. But there were also questions to be asked.

The senior angel told him, "Don't be surprised, Fore-runner. Earth is the place of learning and even an angel may discover something it didn't know. You did well. At this moment the donkey is with the carpenter who is feeding it and strapping covers to its back for the woman. She doesn't know it yet, but her labour will begin before they get to Bethlehem."

"I wish you'd told me it was a donkey I was looking for," the fore-runner muttered.

"You learned more because I didn't," the old angel replied. "But I can tell you this. When the child is a man, and his work is finished, you will go back to earth to find a donkey that will take him to Jerusalem

for his second birth." The fore-runner was still. Angels knew a lot about second births. Some were quick. Some were slow and painful. It was said that the divine child would experience the extreme suffering of sacrifice. Only now did the forerunner know that a donkey would take him there. Would the animal understand what the second birth involved?

The ancient one sensed a tender concern in the young angel. "Everything is as it should be," the old angel said. "Go, Fore-runner, to greet the child who will soon be born. Your song of rejoicing is needed."

"And the second birth?" the fore-runner asked. "Will there also be rejoicing?"

The old angel smiled. "That knowing already lies in the heart of the donkey. It is the song that will never end."

*Joy Cowley, whose memoir 'Navigation' has just been published, is the recipient of this year's Prime Minister's award for Literary Achievement in fiction. She lives in Wellington.*





# open and shut?

## a christmas reflection

Mike Riddell

Recently newspaper columnist Michael Laws criticised the parents of a four-year-old boy killed by a driver, because they had argued for the young man responsible not to be sentenced to jail. Laws argued it was letting down the cause of justice.

In reply, the grieving mother wrote that she and her husband were in the best position to make that choice. Against the charge that they had been ‘foolishly compassionate’, she wrote: “When we label someone, it enables us to separate them from us. It makes us feel safer: ‘I am not that person, therefore I could never be involved in something like that’... When we start to recognise ourselves, or our children, in someone, and remove the label, it changes our reaction to them.”

I sometimes think the default settings for life come down to two options: open or closed. In this binary view of existence, the forces behind the respective approaches are those of love or fear. The consequences are vulnerability or security.

Of course, that’s a massive generalisation, but may help us to understand our own motivations and choices as we grow and change. As human beings we are both shaped by, and are able to shape, the situations we find ourselves in. All of us stand on the frontier between that which is and that which is yet to be. It’s what gives us our dignity and our responsibility.

Open or closed; these are our orientations toward the world. The drive toward survival attracts us to the latter of these possibilities. To preserve ourselves and our existence, we are tempted to establish protective boundaries. When life or people hurt us, it is natural to form calluses on our souls. When ego or faith or lifestyles come under threat, withdrawal is a common response.

**I sometimes think the default settings for life come down to two options: open or closed. In this binary view of existence, the forces behind the respective approaches are those of love or fear. The consequences are vulnerability or security.**

In situations of conflict, it is not unusual to develop thick protective rinds to our lives. In times of uncertainty, we fall back on familiar beliefs and viewpoints that have guided us safely in the past. We easily adopt another of the binary traits, distinguishing between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

This option is a viable one, and not to be easily dismissed. It allows for survival, continuity, and perseverance. It clearly identifies threats and provides for a way to either avoid or counter them. If we were to express this as a philosophy of life, it might be something like ‘look after number one’ – with the assumption that ‘number one’ is me.

But there is another possibility: that of openness. This is as much a choice as the option for survival, but one that takes a radically different approach to life. It is the recognition that change and growth are only possible when that which is safe and familiar is transcended. We constantly stand on the cusp of new possibility, but only those who are willing to risk their security can experience it.

It contains an element of what Michael Laws describes as foolishness. To move out from one’s palisade is to enter uncertain territory, thereby facing personal danger. The consequence is vulnerability, and the possibility of further threat and even extinction. That which is open is often unprotected.

However, it is as much a possible response to life as its alternative. Only when what is ‘known’ is ventured beyond, does the wonder of the unknown find its way into our lives. Beyond seeming danger comes new life. If we were to encapsulate this in a philosophy, it might be something like ‘a seed must die to grow’.

A Christmas meditation might be to what degree our lives reflect one or other of these philosophies. There can be little doubt as to which is the way of God. Underneath the trivial accoutrements of our bankrupt festive celebrations, is the honouring of the incarnation – the recognition that God has left all security to become that most open and vulnerable of creatures – a baby.

Incarnation is a movement toward otherness. It’s a journey from a situation of belonging, familiarity and

certainty to one of estrangement, doubt, and vulnerability. As the best of Christmas hymns remind us, God has 'become one of us' in the most definitive way. In Jesus, divinity and humanity comeingle. This is our confession and our scandal.

It represents a fundamental crossing of boundaries, suggesting to us a way to live. The consequences for Jesus were rejection, misunderstanding, torture and crucifixion – extreme vulnerability. The motivation was a love that is devoted to the beloved. Somehow this seems demeaned by chocolate Santas and tinsel fairies.

If the meaning of the incarnation is a movement from God toward us, then the invitation contained by it is a movement from us to others. We are asked if we might be willing to join ourselves to the way of God, forgoing security and fear in the interests of love. Christmas is both gift and possibility. Once again we are able to choose between self-preservation and self-giving.

The loneliest time of the year for many people is 25 December. While those with families gather, those

who have no place of belonging are reminded afresh that they are unloved. We who have homes to go to are envied by those who do not.

The way of the incarnation might suggest an alternative to the private gatherings where we who have everything exchange gifts. Who knows what might happen if we were to disrupt the familiar and secure patterns of Christmas through our love for 'outsiders'. Such possibilities are not easy to consider, but they may well represent the path of God.

The parents of the four-year old who died will grieve all the more at their loss this year. But their great love means that the man responsible for their grief will be at liberty. It's all a kind of foolishness which confounds Michael Laws and offers the rest of us the hope that the way things have always been may not be our fate forever. God be with us all. ■

*Mike Riddell is a film maker and writer who lives in Cambridge. He and Rosemary, his wife, have just released the film 'The Insatiable Moon'.*

## vulnerable weeping in grace

Grace of weeping Cherry  
I am so glad to have  
you in my garden.

Vulnerability abounds  
In new growth  
mercy seeps in  
to tender the  
greening,  
protecting,  
inviting to  
strengthen  
In depth of green.

Grace of Weeping Cherry  
holding my tears in blossom,  
caught in strands of wind,  
'take care'  
vulnerable for now

green strengthens  
to deeper green  
as the softness of  
new growth  
confides – becomes  
stronger in new days.

Judgment, self doubt,  
I open to you  
in blossom pearl wisdom  
of soft pink

So glad to have you  
In my garden  
where the elements  
develop your greening  
In your vulnerable  
Weeping  
In grace.



Bridie Southall

# a christmas story

## a short story

Sandra Winton

In a long, brown envelope I have a set of papers, photocopied, clipped together. In them is a story. In some ways it is a Christmas story.

A woman is sitting in an interview room at the Family Court. She is alone. There is a long table with metal chairs around it. The sun comes through the curtains and the street noise is muffled. A secretary has brought in the papers requested. It is a small pile. The woman is looking at her own life but it feels strangely impersonal – affidavits, oaths, lawyers, signatures and dates. As she reads the dry, browning legal papers, the words open scenes in her mind, like the doors on an advent calendar.

First is an order of adoption, signed by the magistrate. His name is Bundle and the woman imagines him with Dickensian efficiency bundling off bundles of babyhood, dispatching them around the town like bonus bonds. His clerk of court has signed with a flourish – an illegible wave of the pen that looks like ‘Floob’ or ‘Sloob’. The final ‘b’, if that is what it is, sticks out like a fat man’s stomach. The woman pictures him in a legal gown, dashing in with the papers for the magistrate to sign.

On the papers familiar names appear, bringing back memories of the devout who filled the pews at St Patricks. The solicitor is called McAlevey, the Child Welfare Officer, Donnelly, the reference is signed by James P Delaney, the redoubtable priest, and witnessed by his parishioner, James J Marlow, Justice of the Peace. She fancies the Justice dropping around to the presbytery on his way home (‘Just need you to witness something, Jim’) and that after the signing was done the two had a whiskey and a chat about the horses.

Out of the envelope falls a piece of paper the size and shape of a cigarette packet. It is signed by K Rutt. The woman pictures her, a social worker perhaps. After waiting for the typewriter and scratching about for some paper (‘Economy, Miss Rutt!’) she quickly types ‘Reports favourable. Boyh applicants enjoy good health’. Over the ‘y’ (‘Damn’, said Miss Rutt) she has to type a ‘t’ using that nasty slip of white correcting paper that you can never find especially if you are in a



hurry. Miss Rutt signs with a small, very tidy signature, sloping slightly backwards.

The woman imagines her in a straight skirt and sensible shoes, very upright, with a big bosom that has her tilted ever so slightly back as she sweeps into a room. The sweeping in comes from the flourish she made of the R in her name, Rutt. It loops back around the K and then right around her name, tossing back with aplomb to cross the two t's. The name is followed by a full stop as if she has spoken with authority, and liked it. But lowly Miss Rutt had to take this note to the supervisor (the woman's guessing now) and he – more guessing – initials it and writes in a very neat but flowing hand, ‘Appointment may be made’. Miss Rutt is pleased and takes it away. Sadly he did not notice her new blouse.

The woman lifts another document. Mr McHugh, Inspector of Police, gives his advice to the Clerk of Court (is this the same Floob?) in seven numbered



statements. The adopting parents have been found to be of good moral character and sober habits (it was only later that the woman got giggly on ladies golf day and only once did the man roll home the worse for wear which caused the child to be hustled away so that she did not see her father like that). They have been convicted of no offence and the policeman concludes that 'the child, if adopted, should be well treated and cared for mentally, morally and physically'. Phew, thinks the woman. That was a big call.

The woman imagines him visiting the couple in their house. The wife has spent all the day before making the house right. She has scrubbed the back doorstep and the kitchen bench, polished the lino in the scullery and living room, shined the coal range with blacking, seen that the dusting was perfect and no wrinkles on the beds. She has had a bath and changed out of her old dress. Her hair is neatly rolled above her neck and she smells of *Three Flowers* talcum. She has made the man put on a clean shirt, though it is only Tuesday. Mr McHugh seems so big in the kitchen as he accepts a chair and the man engages him in chat. He is not the local policeman who keeps his bull in the next paddock, but a man from town. Serious.

The woman makes sure he sees her work and he adds a note after the list of seven to say that the male applicant has a good job and that the house 'occupied by he and his wife is well furnished, clean and tidy'. The woman reading, who has been a teacher, itches to take a red pen to the 'he' but imagines the inspector thinking it sounded more official than a plain old 'him'. What is it that Inspector McHugh notices as he sits on his chair drinking strong tea with milk? Is it the way the woman's hands pass over the child's hair and rest on her shoulders? Is it the way the man talks about the visits of his nephews and how he takes them rabbit shooting? Is it a look that passes? A soft expression? For the inspector writes number 2 on his list, between 'good moral character' and no convictions, 'They are fond of and kind to children'. The woman's eyes fill with tears. That he thought of that. The most important thing. That among all the requirements, the furniture and job, the moral character and sober habits, he knew that was what she would need, this small girl. That night Inspector McHugh goes home and tells his wife what he did that day and looks with particular gratitude and fondness on his four children.

The woman sits back a little and pauses. The sun is coming through another window and there are voices and footsteps going along the corridor. She resumes. An affidavit opens a door onto a more sombre scene. Another woman sits alone with a paper in front of

her. The windows are closed. Another solicitor waits. The paper is all typed. She has only to sign. Yes, she reads, she is the mother of the child. And all the other things she has to say yes to. Even to swearing that she understands 'well and truly... the nature of the consent to the adoption given by me' and 'the nature of her future relationship to the said child'.

The woman reading years later breathes deeply. What do we understand of anything, she thinks. How can we know the pain that will come, the hole that will not heal over? The signature – for the mother does sign – is clear and thin as if the pen were running out of ink. She was later to say it was the saddest day of her life.

The signing goes on. Before solicitors, before magistrates, before Justices of the Peace. The man and the woman also take a trip down the gravel roads in the man's work truck, to the farm of the Justice of the Peace, who watches as they sign to the grief that lies exposed on the paper prepared by the lawyer. It is all in black on white – 'There has been only one child issue of our said marriage. The child lived for only a few hours.' 'That I have had no children since the death of the child referred to.... My medical advisor ...advised me to adopt a child.' A baby born, a hurried baptism, a man left to arrange a burial, a tiny grave, a woman with empty arms. The years of hoping, waiting month by month. And nothing. Finally the visit to the doctor. He shakes his head at the woman weeping quietly in front of him, her handkerchief held to her face. He can not say why. Adopt. It is like the final nail. A giving up of hope. Next step.

The woman comes to the end of the papers. It is only then that she notices at the bottom of the final order the words, 'dated this 23rd day of December 1947'. So it is a Christmas story. A story of a child and parents, of choices and the lack of choices, of empty arms and full ones, of joy and a pierced heart, straw and dung, gold and myrrh, shepherds and kings – the whole human mix. The woman puts the papers into her bag and leaves.

As I write this and fold the papers away I give thanks for my parents, Arthur and May and for Sue. I pray for couples and women on their own. For those who are fond of children and kind to them. For the painful relinquishments. May all be blessed this Christmas.

*Sister Sandra Winton OP lives in Dunedin, where she practices psychotherapy.*

# the annunciation

This Christmas spare us from 'angels'. It is a travesty to enter the malls and see Father Christmas surrounded by his angels – lithe young girls with imitation wings and waving their magic wand. They are as much like real angels as an ant is like an elephant.

Real angels look and act different. Male angels can look as rough as a dusty stockman ending his round-up. Female angels can look haggard and worn-out from long hours of housework. But behind their appearance shines the strange and mystical certainty of a person in tune with God and willing to pass on a message that can change the life of the hearer.

Remember that this Christmas.

Thank God for the modern artists who are telling us the real truth about angels. I have collected more than a dozen recent art works of the annunciation – that wonderful moment when an innocent young peasant

girl was told by an angel that her womb would bear the coming Son of God. It is the angel, not the Mary, that I am looking for. And what a great surprise. Many modern Christian artists have begun showing the angel from a quite different perspective.

There are two that we share today. The first is by the famous contemporary Chinese artist He Qi. Actually he has been quite absorbed by the annunciation and has painted the same event at least three times over the years. The one illustrated is a recent one and what a fabulous image it is. Mary quietly combing her hair and the angel pops his/her head through the window and offers her a flower. That's a real annunciation!

The other image comes from Africa (Woelfel from Nigeria) and it is now quite well known. Its charm is its simplicity. A letter in an envelope contains the message from God and the angel understands that it is important so he/she removes the sandals.

And why should we think otherwise? Why should angels look like creatures from outer space? They are us. You and me and they come to us in the perfectly natural surroundings of our world.

A blessed Christmas to you all and may there be many angels visiting your home this year with a fabulous message from God. No! I will not tell you what the message is – listen to the angel.



**Left:**  
*The Annunciation* by Nigerian artist Woelfel

**Above:**  
Chinese artist He Qi's interpretation of *The Annunciation*



# massacre of the innocents

Once again this Christmas we will hear the joyful carols played in all our shopping malls – O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie. Once again images of peace and happiness will spring quickly to mind as we recall the birth of a little child. And once again many will forget that Christmas in Bethlehem had, and still has, another and darker side to it.

The birth of Jesus on the first Christmas was followed almost immediately by a most appalling slaughter. King Herod received a report that the Jewish Messiah had been born in the town of Bethlehem and, as the Bible records it, “Herod was infuriated and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under”. The brutality of this action must rank alongside the worst acts of genocide in history.

Fast forward two thousand years and Bethlehem remains a suffering city. Together with its neighbouring towns of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour it is still a city under siege. It has a Muslim majority but is also home to one of the largest Christian communities of Palestinians.

Last year the inhabitants of Bethlehem were confronted with yet another symbol of suffering. Along the border between Jerusalem and the Church of the Nativity a 25-foot high barrier wall has now been erected with armed guards and a huge steel gate

**"In a world where more and more borders are being opened up – to trade, to travel, to movement of peoples, to cultural exchanges – it is tragic to see walls still being erected", Benedict said.**



*The Massacre of the Innocents (2001) by Zaki Baboun, Palestine*

resembling those found on nuclear shelters. Watchtowers in the wall are manned by military personnel. Catholics will recall the image of Pope Benedict visiting Bethlehem this past year and standing silent beside this monstrosity of a wall. “In a world where more and more borders are being opened up – to trade, to travel, to movement of peoples, to cultural exchanges – it is tragic to see walls still being erected,” Benedict said.

One Christian who will still be in Bethlehem this year is Zaki Baboun. As a young man and a Palestinian Christian he grew up in the midst of political chaos and found refuge in painting. He paints almost entirely scenes from the Bible and his style follows that of the Impressionists. The little room where he used to do his painting was destroyed by an Israeli missile some years ago.

In the year 2000 I asked him to paint a work for the book *Christ for All People* and we agreed that the most appropriate theme for a Bethlehem artist would be The Massacre of the Innocents. His painting is a reminder not only of the past but also of the innocent children of today who are the victims of conflict.

At Christmas Zaki's art helps us remember Bethlehem – a city without hope. ■

*Ron O'Grady is a minister in a Union parish (Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Christ) in Auckland. He is a former Associate General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia and one of the founders of the Asian Christian Art Association. He is the author of several books on the topics of art and human rights.*



# light incarnate

Daniel O'Leary

A baby contains the mystery of the universe, consecrating all the day-to-day things that sustain us, while every Mass holds and celebrates the divinity of a million galaxies.

In J D Salinger's book *Franny and Zooey* there is a scene in which Franny, a 20-year-old theology student, has just come home from college a nervous wreck. Her concerned mother, Bessie, brings her a cup of chicken soup. Franny, unhappy and impatient, pushes the soup away.

Franny's brother Zooey is indignant. "I'll tell you one thing, Franny," he says, "if it's religious life you're studying, you ought to know that you are missing out on every single religious action that's going on in this house. You don't have enough sense to drink a cup of consecrated chicken soup, which is the only kind of chicken soup that Mom ever brings to anybody."

Zooey saw the kitchen as the church, his mother as a kind of priest, the soup as blessed, the welcome for Franny as God's greeting. Is he right? For the Christian, anything and everything we give in love is consecrated. Since the first Christmas, there is no longer any unconsecrated bread at the family table, no unconsecrated affection between true friends. Since Christmas there is nothing too big or too small in our blessed and broken humanity to be revealed every Sunday as Real Presence.

One day the celebrated violinist Yehudi Menuhin was walking down the corridor of a music academy and came across a young Irish student having his lunch. Not recognising the soda bread sandwich, he asked Liam what he was eating. "Bread, sir," the wee lad replied. "Me ma sent it."

The great man smiled and was moved to reflect on an Irish mother pouring her love into the dough she was kneading for her beloved son, away from home for the first time. He imagined her baking it, posting it overseas, and homesick Liam slicing it, buttering it – and eating it with great gusto.

Menuhin's imagination was sublimely sacramental and incarnational, yet inspired by something so commonplace – the bread of life wrapped in brown paper, tied with a piece of string and posted in Connemara! In this very ordinary, everyday moment, the musician

recognised the love hidden like yeast in the dough, the bread behind the bread, the horizon behind the horizon, the mystery of the whole world in the body of a baby, the unity of everything in God.

Christmas calls us to be God's spies as we penetrate the disguises all around us; to be water-diviners who detect the liquid of life beneath the desert of our days; persistent beachcombers who discover the glimmer of God's gold along the leaden shores of our lives. Without a vibrant sense of incarnate Presence, the human and divine will drift away from each other, and, as W.B. Yeats warned us, all evidence of Incarnation will be erased from the earth.

In an Advent reflection, Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022), saint and mystic, reminds us of that same evidence of God in our own physical bodies too: "We awaken in Christ's body as Christ awakens our bodies. And everything that is hurt, everything that is shameful, maimed, ugly, irreparably damaged, is in him transformed, recognised as whole, as lovely, and radiant in his light."

The startling news of Christmas is that Christ is not primarily in the heavens, in the Scriptures, in the doctrines of the Church, not primarily even in the Eucharist itself. For those who believe that our amazing God became common perishable flesh, Christ is primarily in our own experience, in the ordinariness of our lives and in the silence of our solitude.

In *Praying*, Mary Oliver catches a whisper of the Word that hides in silence:

*It doesn't have to be the blue iris,  
it could be weeds in a vacant lot,  
or a few small stones: just  
pay attention, then patch  
a few words together and don't try  
to make them elaborate; this isn't  
a contest but the doorway  
into thanks, and a silence  
in which another voice may speak.*

After Christmas, nothing is 'merely' natural or ordinary any more. All is now graced. Every human breath is an inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Incarnation is about that other voice – in the silence of the spheres as well as the silence of our souls. Like another Christmas, every Mass, with its fragments of bread and wine, catches and holds a million galaxies and celebrates their divinity on a table. The small crib, the small Host tell the same astonishing story. The mystery of Being itself, the source of life, is named and celebrated as God incarnate in the wonder of Christmas and Eucharist.

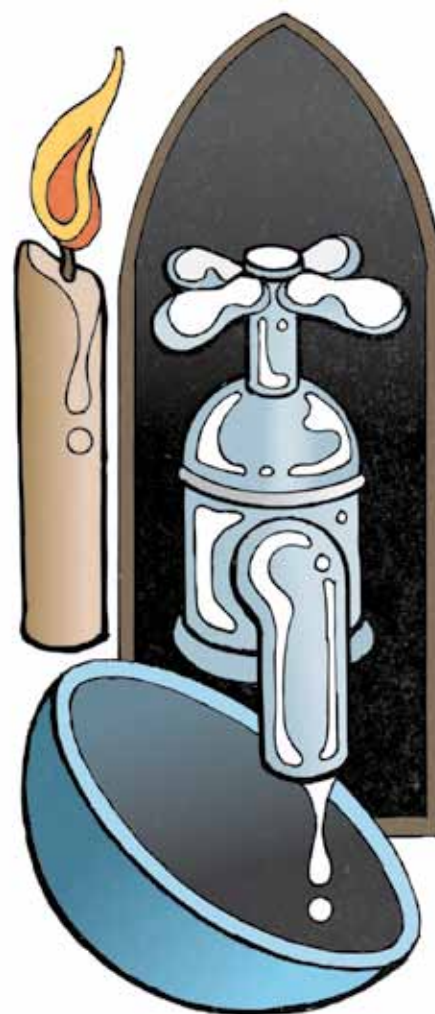
"Christmas", John Paul II wrote, signifies the taking up into unity with God not only human nature but, in a sense, everything that is flesh ... the Incarnation then has a cosmic significance, a cosmic dimension ... Even when the Eucharist is celebrated on the small table of a country church it is always celebrated on the altar of the world."

Orbiting the Moon on Christmas Eve 1968, the crew of Apollo 8 read the opening chapters of Genesis to a worldwide audience of millions, signing off with "Merry Christmas, and God bless all of you on the good Earth".

When negotiating the first human steps on the Moon, Buzz Aldrin brought a blessed wafer with him. "I ate the tiny Host," he wrote, "and swallowed the wine." One small sip for a human: one giant cosmic celebration for humanity. At this first Christmas Communion in the silence of space we hear, "You, beloved Sister Moon, are my consecrated Body too."

After Christmas, nothing is 'merely' natural or ordinary any more. All is now graced. Every human breath is an inspiration of the Holy Spirit; every heartbeat reverberates throughout eternity. We are afraid to believe this astonishing revelation of the divine potential everywhere lest our lives be utterly transformed by it. It is much safer to leave Christmas to the children – and to keep Jesus always a baby.

Every Sunday, the Eucharist repeatedly guarantees what the first Christmas and the first Easter revealed – that every real relationship on earth is sacred; that no bitter tear or heartfelt wish is ever wasted; that no



sin is ever left unredeemed; that nothing is lost; that everything, in the end, is harvest.

On the night before Christmas, theologian Karl Rahner hears God whispering to us: "When you celebrate tomorrow say to me, 'You are here. You have come. You have come into everything that exists, into everything that we are'. Say only that one thing. That is enough. It is Christmas. Light the candles. They have more right to exist than all the darkness. It is the Christmas that lasts forever."

And then, in that silent moment, the serious wonder of it strikes us: it is we ourselves, lit from within by the radiance of God, who are called to be those candles of hope, shining incarnate light on a world and a Church lost too often in the dark. ■

*Daniel O'Leary is a priest of the Leeds Diocese.  
Printed courtesy The Tablet.*

# opening the soul

Glynn Cardy

The word 'prayer' evokes a spoken request-based communication with one's understanding of the Divine. The phrase 'opening the soul' however evokes receptivity to the myriad of ways that sacredness permeates lives. Such openness can ignite beauty, generosity, and change.

There is an old story about a stranger who upon being welcomed by a small village teaches them the art of making fire. The villagers are keen to learn and soon master the techniques. The stranger has no wish to patent these techniques, or to profit from them, or to use them to exercise power. His delight is simply in seeing the light and warmth his knowledge has brought. In time the stranger simply disappears.

Some time later the stranger visits another village to teach them the same art of fire-making. In this village however the local elders see the stranger's skills as threatening. They think the stranger is competing for power and popularity. So, in the time-honoured tradition of weak leadership, they turn on him and kill him. The leaders then created a new religion out of his memory, while also making sure the villagers forgot the radical art of fire making that could bring light and warmth to all.

Though this story is a sober warning about the folly of pride and the failure of leadership, it also points to an anarchistic spirituality, symbolised by fire, that has the potential to touch people's lives whether they are inside or outside the boundaries of accepted religion.

Opening one's soul is similar to making a fire. There are some basic principles, and then a variety of ways to do it – as the plethora of global religions and spiritual disciplines point to. There is great potential for wellbeing, but also some danger for the unwary. The soul can suffer from burns. But more importantly opening the soul can invite a joy, passion, and meaning into one's life in ways that power, popularity, and their trap-pings cannot.

Fire-making requires the gathering of combustible materials. Opening the soul on the other hand requires a shedding of all that encumbers us. Fire-making requires choosing a suitable location. Opening the soul also requires finding the right space physically and mentally. Fire-making, before the advent of matches, required discipline and patience. Opening of the soul requires the discipline of and patience for stillness. A fire is only a friend if it benefits humanity. Similarly

spirituality without compassion is as dangerous as wildfire.

Edward Carpenter, a 19th century priest, poet, and political activist, wrote:

*Do not recklessly spill  
the waters of your mind  
in this direction and in that,  
lest you become like a  
spring lost and dissipated  
in the desert.*

*But draw them together  
into a little compass,  
and hold them still,  
so still;  
and let them become clear,  
so clear –  
so limpid, so mirror-like;*

*at last the mountains and the sky  
shall glass themselves in peaceful beauty,  
and the antelope shall descend to drink  
and to gaze at her reflected image,  
and the lion to quench his thirst,  
and Love... shall come and bend over  
and catch... [its] likeness in you.*

To be still one first has to let go of distractions, all those concerns, some good and some not so good, that crowd our life and disturb the waters of our minds. Pride, envy, greed, lust, and their sycophants pollute those waters, distracting our attention.

We need help to let go – like the help of friendship, the help of self-effacing humour, and the help of the this-moment-focus of young children. We need to switch off the aids of modern living so their buzzing demands are kept corralled.

One of the things that a priest shouldn't do in the midst of a church service is look at their watch. It could be though that he or she is tired, or bored, or hungry, or worried – not unlike others who are sitting in that service. Some congregants could be relieved that the priest is looking at the clock, hoping that the proceedings move faster, and that brevity might prevail.

In some churches there is a little ritual of the preacher, before the sermon begins, removing their watch from their wrist and placing it on the pulpit where it is more



visible. It's a worrying sign that the preacher needs this restraint – I would hope the congregation's lack of enthusiasm would be a better indicator of when to sit down and shut up. But as one of my heroes, Kurt Vonnegut, once said, "People don't come to church for the preaching... but to daydream about God".

The real reason that a clock shouldn't be in a church is that sacred time is not the same as chronological time. What's on your wrist moves at a different pace than what's in your heart. If the point of the service is to create the stillness whereby one's soul might be opened, then a watch can be as distracting as a car alarm. The soul needs time, its own time, without the disruptions of the ticking of time's demands.

Organised religions do not have a monopoly on spaces that are good for the soul, although many builders of churches, temples and mosques have created just that. They have created architectural beauties, acoustically pleasing, and have filled them with symbols and rituals of deep meaning. May their doors always be open for anyone to wander in and to wonder in.

Other physical soul spaces include mountains, the sea, forests, beaches, and deserts. They include the experiences of being blown by the wind, diving under the sea, exercising outdoors, looking at art, and listening to music. Vonnegut wanted his epitaph to read: "The only proof he needed for the existence of God was music."

**T**he soul is assisted in opening not only by stillness, time, and space, but also by exercising kindness and compassion. By opening our hearts to others we open our soul to that which is divine.

Mark was out for a pre-dawn walk with his dog when he saw him. He will never forget it. An unknown schoolboy was hanging, dead, from a kerbside tree.

The police, ambulance, and later the press, arrived. The street was cordoned off for half a day. By evening all the locals had heard.

The tree is in one of those comfortable, secure Auckland neighbourhoods where things like this aren't meant to happen. In this suburb folk smile at but know little about one another.

Mark was deeply affected by it and wrote a poem – a poem of grief, compassion, and remorse.

He then sent an invitation to every house in the street to gather one evening at the tree, to light a candle, and remember. He had no idea if anyone would come, if anyone even cared.

In the fading light a trickle of people emerged. The trickle grew. Out of the insulation and warmth of their

homes and into the cold street they came. The boy's parents, who hadn't been to the tree before, came too.

Grief, compassion, and remorse were all expressed. The boy's father spoke, and candles burned. A place of tragedy also became a sacred place. An insular community rocked by death found new warmth by opening their doors, coming out, and standing beside their neighbours.


The compassion of one, Mark, had ignited the compassion of many. In the weeks ahead it was as if that street had found it had a soul. The tree of suffering became also the tree of promise.

There is vulnerability in the opening of one's soul. There is potential to be hurt, and be scarred. Like with fire. There is also though great potential to find and give help, and in doing so experience the sacred. Like with fire.

The stranger who visited the villages sharing the art of fire-making did so for the purpose of sharing light and warmth. This is the purpose of opening the soul: to kindle and ignite kindness towards others, compassion to those in need, hospitality to strangers... and to illuminate the sacredness all around us in both the little and the grand. ■

*Glynn Cardy is the pastor of St Matthew-in-the-City, Auckland, and a well-known spiritual writer.*

# CARITAS GIFTS



Celebrate a special occasion by giving a gift that transforms your love into action by building community in a hurting world.

You have the choice of supporting Caritas projects through our Emergency, Green, Learning, Caring, Healing and Hope Hampers.

**Caritas**  
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

PO Box 12193  
Wellington 6144  
New Zealand

Email: [caritas@caritas.org.nz](mailto:caritas@caritas.org.nz)  
Website: [www.caritas.org.nz](http://www.caritas.org.nz)  
Tel: (+64 4) 496 1742  
Fax: (+64 4) 499 2519

**YES – please send me more information about giving a GIFT OF LOVE**

NAME

POSTAL ADDRESS

EMAIL



What would you dream a present-day follower of Mary McKillop could do to confront the needs of our time? Mary of the Cross consistently talked of doing “a new thing”, and following up seen needs as soon as you can. Would you dream of a 74-year-old Josephite sister in the back-blocks of Peru farming guinea pigs for food? This is what

**Sister Dorothy Stevenson** is presently undertaking – responding to an urgent need to provide income for rural women. We think St Mary would be proud of this Peruvian dreamer.

Sister Dorothy's life, since 1980, has been one of constantly adapting to the needs of women in the Peruvian Andes: first establishing a collective workshop for garment making in Lima; then

establishing a community kitchen in rural Huasihuasi (regional home of the humble potato!) so that local women could provide others with a midday meal through sharing their resources. It was here that the Josephite community came to the attention of the Sendero Luminoso Maoist guerillas.

One of her companions, Sister Irene McCormack, was rounded up with a group of the village leaders, and together they were massacred in the town plaza. Sister Dorothy survived, because she was away from the village at that time. She came back to NZ, until it was safe to go back.

On her return, Dorothy went to a neighbouring village, Tarma, a bus ride from Huasihuasi. Now she offers hospitality to people who come for medical treatment, and farms guinea pigs! At 74, she is active, still looking for ‘new’ ways of engaging with those she encounters.

## collaborative cuy production

**T**he cuy (kwi) or guinea pig is native to South America, especially the Andes region. Ancestrally it is part of domestic animal-rearing here, as with hens and pigs. Because of the cold, they were, and still are for many rural dwellers, kept in the kitchen where scraps are always available, supplemented by anything green outside. The kitchen is always warm and at night they cuddle up together under the wood stove.

Now, the cuy is valued even more for its lean meat. Exceedingly low in cholesterol, it outdoes the chicken as a provider of broth and meat for recuperation after illness. The cuy has gained much added status, and size too, from genetically conscious breeding programmes. It is served now in the best restaurants in Lima and

is becoming a valuable export item. The word is that there is a great deficit in supplying the demand, and that is how we got into the game. Not that we'll be exporting soon, but we went to the talks on cuy production and came away with a dream.

We've got the space around our house here in Tarma, so with help from the Josephite international fund-raising people, we have a cuy house where at this time there are 12 females pregnant or nursing, two males to keep the females in these conditions and 21 weaned growing to a 3-month-old weight and status so as to be promoted to producer rank. The new males will be sold for breeding elsewhere or for the table, as will any young females surplus to our requirements.

**Our objectives are for a collaborative enterprise that can give a group of women the possibility of a small addition to their income. For town-dwellers with no space, that means learning to trust each other in fulfilling the shared duties of care for the animals.**

Our first construction was a cage and not very suitable; one defect being the ease with which the new animals could fall out at feeding time. When this happened I had to shout for Patricia, the other half of our community, to come and help me corral them in the long weeds. Another miscalculation was that weaned and separated males ate a hole in the dividing wall between them and the females with incestuous results!

We had a pachamanca, that is the local name for a hangi, and ate the product of their adventures.

At present we are providing a better cage whose specifications include dividing walls that cannot be eaten through to join the opposite sex in their dormitories. To keep up the incentive, however, said walls are of wire mesh. So that will free up more compartments in the house for the breeding animals.

We grow most of the alfalfa that we need and supplement it with tall green oats from the market occasionally. They like corn stalks in season and I grow lovely silver beet for them too. I'm not a huge fan of that myself, but they are.

A great-grandmother Dori, and one of her granddaughters, Darling, have just recently produced a new litter each. The matriarch has three quite big young ones and Darling has 6! – smaller but very lively and handsome in their ensembles of brown and white.

Our objectives are for a collaborative enterprise that can give a group of women the possibility of a small addition to their income. For town-dwellers with no space, that means learning to trust each other in fulfilling the shared duties of care for the animals. It means that to maintain market standards a bit of study is necessary and faithful record keeping.

For example we have two females at present which have been with the male, and have become spread in the middle, but records have not been kept so we don't

know for sure when they should give birth. Now we all have doubts. Two of the ladies profess to know by feel if there are babies on board – and they have been known to be right. Still the doubt lingers. I asked one day for fun: Isn't there something you can get at the chemist to tell if pregnancy has occurred? The ladies looked at me, plainly ignorant of such a thing.

When they realized to what I was referring, there was a lot of laughter as their imaginations took over.

Working towards the success of such a project gives the women experience in something 'counter-cultural' so to speak, something collaborative instead of competitive; respect for each other's dignity and equality. It raises self esteem. These are important objectives because there are many more people in our time who are of little worth in the social economy. They expect no help from the powerful and usually poverty has taught them that few of their acquaintances can be relied on either. Trust in others is hard to give.

Poverty is like a comet: it has a long trail behind it of anti-values. ■





# Dorothy Day: Prophet of Our Time

Jim Consedine

“People say, ‘What good can one person do? What is the sense of our small effort?’ They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time. We can be responsible only for the one action of the present moment. But we can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that will vitalize and transform all our individual actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fishes.” (Dorothy Day)

This November marks the 30th anniversary of the death of Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement and arguably the most influential lay Catholic of the past century. Raised as a journalist with radical politics, she engaged in political activism during the 1920s, with an emphasis on reporting issues around poverty, the place of women, unemployment and peace. Finding herself pregnant to her common law partner, she decided that political action wasn't enough for the raising of her child, Tamar. She wanted moral guidance and community as well. After much searching and anguish, she was led to seek entry into the Catholic Church and baptism for herself and Tamar.

However, her passion for the poor remained and she continued to write about their struggles. Providentially in New York she met up with Peter Maurin, a wandering French peasant, who shared her radical commitment to the poor. She recognized that God's call to her involved journeying with this man as her mentor. She recognised that to write about the poor was one thing but the gospel demanded a more hands-on commitment than that. So she moved to a slum in New York with her young daughter, founded with Maurin a monthly newspaper *The Catholic Worker* in May 1933, and opened the first House of Hospitality which she shared with the homeless and the destitute. The Catholic Worker movement was born.

It was the height of the Great Depression when millions of workers were unemployed. She quickly appreciated that their voices needed to be heard and *The Catholic Worker* became a vehicle for their cries. Within a short time, she and Maurin had created a plan of social action for their new movement which

was growing in size by the day. The plan involved going to Church social teachings for analysis and to the Gospels, especially the Beatitudes and the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, for impetus – and en fleshing them within the society of the time. It was challenging stuff then – 75 years on, it remains so!

Among key points enshrined within their plan of action was a commitment to decentralized social structures, to farming communes where ‘workers and scholars could work together’, to pacifism and non-violence which had been practiced for three centuries by the early Christians, to commitment to a life of voluntary poverty so ‘to each their need not their greed’, and to the recognition of the divine dignity of each individual through the practice of personalism.

As her movement grew, so did the paper to a high point of 150,000 copies each month by the early 1940s. But it was never easy. She took a battering for her pacifist stance in the Spanish Civil War and during World War II and many left the Catholic Worker movement which was vilified as ‘unpatriotic’. Many houses were closed for lack of volunteers. Despite this huge loss in popularity, Dorothy Day stayed with her convictions and the original Catholic Worker programme.

For the next 40 years of her life she led the movement from her apartment on the Lower East Side of New York. By the time she died, 29 November 1980, she was an icon of American Catholicism in the way Mother Teresa, Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King have achieved iconic status. Steps have started which will lead to her eventual canonization.

Since her death the Catholic Worker movement has remained committed to the ideals of its founder and expanded its social commitment to include resistance to war making and to the promotion of many other non-violent forms of social change. There are now more than 100 houses in several countries around the world, all seeking to live the Gospel as radically and prophetically as Dorothy Day. These include several in New Zealand where CW farms exist in Whirinaki, Leeston and Otaki, and houses of hospitality in Opononi, Palmerston North and Christchurch, from where *The Common Good* quarterly is produced.

Dorothy Day would never have dreamed that her move to Catholicism would have resulted in such a dramatic life. All she wanted to do was give Tamar some moral guidance. Instead, she succeeded in morally guiding the whole Church. ■

# jesus, emmanuel — god with us (Matthew 1:23)

The backdrop to understanding Emmanuel – ‘God with us’ – is what some call universal or general revelation or others refer to as cosmic revelation. However named, preceding all humanity is able to know and the history of life on our small planet Earth that goes back about 3.7 billion years, is the ever unfolding and expanding universe stretching back in unfathomable beauty and wonder over about 13.7 billion years. The borderless distances of time, immensity and space are only glimpsed and can be imagined only faintly.

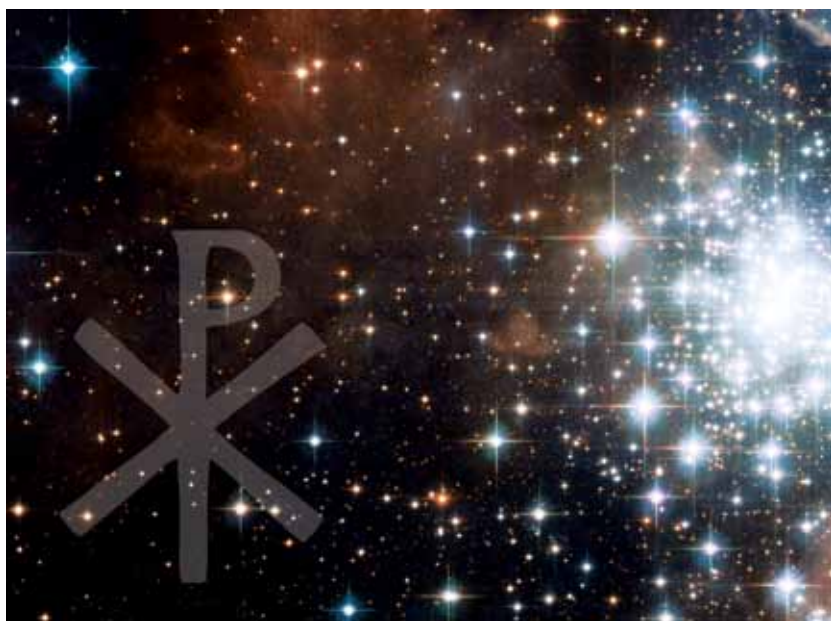
The experience of ‘the other,’ in the widest sense, throws up a pattern in life that cannot be overlooked. Theologian Dermot Lane speaks of fragments of meaning, splinters of beauty and hazy glimpses of truth disclosed, issuing a call, a summons to acknowledge an underlying ground, a source for beauty and an origin which invite a response of faith in a graciously near yet transcendent reality we call God.

Without this background of natural or universal or general or cosmic revelation, the special revelation of God in history – in the Old Testament and in Jesus Christ – is in danger of being isolated thereby appearing outside and unrelated to the single organic reality and the interconnection of the mainstream of life.

Every revelation of God contains at the same time concealment of God. God ‘is’ yet God ‘is not’. So, we see, yet, we do not see. So, we hear, yet, we do not hear. Our recognition of the revelation of God in experience cries out for imaginative interpretation in symbol, narrative and story.

*Matthew’s* gospel offers a vision of a life infused by the presence of Emmanuel which means ‘God with us’ (1:23). Beginning with God’s gracious dealings with Israel (1:1-17), God’s gracious initiative unfolds in Jesus, Emmanuel, ‘God with us’. We are summoned to read the rest of the gospel and, indeed, our own lives in this perspective. Further, we are helped to accept God’s perspective on the rest of the gospel story and our own individual, communal and cosmic life stories.

One part of Jesus’ divinely commissioned work is that of saving from sin (1:21). *Matthew* gives Jesus a further role: Jesus is to manifest God’s presence among human persons (1:23). The presence of God is woven into this gospel in words that are unique to *Matthew*. God’s presence is encountered in the community that gathers in Jesus’ name for worship (18:20), in its mission



Acknowledgement to NASA and STScI for main image from Hubblesite [hubblesite.org](http://hubblesite.org)

The borderless distances of time, immensity and space are only glimpsed and can be imagined only faintly.

of mercy among the dispossessed (25:31-46) and in its mission of teaching and ‘disciplining’ (the Greek is a verb) until the end of time (28:18-20). This ‘God with us’ framework of God’s forgiving, saving, creating and expanding presence encountered in Jesus shapes the identity and way of living of *Matthew’s* community and ours today.

And in the *adventure* of Advent seeking Emmanuel ‘God with us’ made one of us in Jesus, how do we read *Matthew’s* gospel aware that God, our humanity and Earth are interconnected with expanding, unfolding wonder beyond our imagining? There are pointers on the way. A star guided wise ones (2:9) to Jesus ‘God with us’ who throughout, and only, in *Matthew* refers to God’s dream for us as the Kingdom (*basileia*) of the Heavens. Then, yet again, the Liturgy of Christmas morning plunges us into Divine Mystery: “In the beginning was the Word ... in the beginning with God ... all things came into being through him...” (*John* 1:1-18)

*Kathleen Rushton* is a Sister of Mercy, scripture scholar and spiritual director, living in Christchurch

## an Irish tale of love and obsession for the land

### *The Field*

review: Paul Sorrell

"Without the land, we are like this", 'Bull' McCabe tells his son, blowing the seeds from a dandelion head. McCabe is a son of the Irish soil, a true indigene, and for him and his kind the land, and the ability to work it, is as precious as life itself. A film that dealt with a man's attachment to his patch of soil might be interesting enough, but could easily become little more than an anthropological tract. What gives *The Field* its power and almost macabre fascination is its portrait of a man who turns love for the land – something we can all affirm – into obsession, delusion and death.

McCabe (Richard Harris) and his son Tadgh (Sean Bean) have worked their rented field for years, feeding its stony bones with a rich seaweed mulch and transforming it into productive pastureland. They guard it jealously, even brutally – he is not called Bull for nothing. When the isolated young widow who owns the plot decides to leave the district and auction the field,

McCabe is determined to secure it. When a smartly dressed American – a developer and descendant of Irish migrants – turns up determined to buy the field himself, the stage is set for violent conflict.

Based on the celebrated play by John B. Keane, *The Field* is a rich and deeply complex film, engaging our attention on many levels. The Connemara landscape is always before us – a green and brown patchwork of pasture, bog and mist covered hills. We see people pursuing their everyday activities – stacking peat, driving cattle, relaxing in the village pub, going to mass. References to emigration and the Great Famine remind us that this land is soaked in suffering and deprivation.

The rich cast of characters includes a swag of roughandready farmers, the parish priest and an encampment of travellers. The tensions between the various groups work to carry the story forward. McCabe despises the tinkers because they are a nomadic folk, uprooted from the soil. The priest is suspect, not only because he is friends with the American interloper, but

because he has "a housekeeper to look after him and doesn't get his hands dirty". Much worse, he had refused to bury McCabe's other son, a suicide victim, in the churchyard.

As the action reaches its terrible climax, McCabe takes on the proportions of a Shakespearean tragic hero, a man of noble aspirations brought low by a self destructive obsession. Like King Lear, he has an elemental quality; but, like any force of nature, he risks extinction by the more powerful forces that surround him.

This is not the kind of lightweight offering that the Irish film industry has turned out over the last decade or so as part of a strategy to market the Celtic Tiger. It is no Waking Ned Devine, celebrating a tourist's Ireland of quirky characters and endless pints of Guinness. But now the tiger has become a quiet little moggy again, it may be time to take another look at an older film (1990) that opens a window not only on Ireland, but on human nature. ■



### If you really love reading your *Tui Motu*,

you might like to remember us in your will.

*Tui Motu InterIslands*  
P O Box 6404  
Dunedin North 9059

## WALK BY FAITH

### Walk by Faith will help you to:

- know and understand yourself better
- deepen your faith
- enrich your knowledge of Jesus Christ, the scriptures and the church
- learn with others participating in the course

For an enrolment form or further information contact your diocesan office or  
**NCRS, PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140**  
phone 04 496 1761 fax 04 496 1762  
email [ncrsnz@clear.net.nz](mailto:ncrsnz@clear.net.nz)



The programme is directed by the National Centre for Religious Studies on behalf of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

[www.ncrs.org.nz](http://www.ncrs.org.nz)



# a voyage of discovery

## *Water Whisperers / Tangaroa*

2010 WickCandle Film

Produced by Kathleen Gallagher & Michael Coughlan

DVD 78 minutes running time

review: **Michael Hill** ic.

This new production from Kathleen Gallagher's Christchurch stable could not be more timely. In New Zealand, NIWA has just brought out a report declaring that onethird of the country's lakes are seriously polluted – and the situation is getting worse.

Internationally, a new report on the waterways of the world is described by the Guardian as 'devastating'. Many great river systems are in serious decline – which means that the water is not merely unfit for human consumption but utterly destructive of aquatic life. In Europe some 90 per cent of the wetlands and floodplains have been removed, and this seriously interferes with river ecosystems.

As a result many species are endangered and some become extinct. Human activity is currently destroying species 1000 times faster than would be the normal 'death rate'. If we think this is something which only happens overseas, we need to think again. Recently the Manawatu River was officially declared to be one of the world's most polluted.

This DVD takes us on a voyage of discovery round our coasts and waterways. You will enjoy seeing the many recreational delights on show. At the same time a crowd of witnesses eloquently testify to the destructiveness of some human activities. A few quotes tell a sobering tale:

"If we damage our ecosystem we damage ourselves; we damage our sources; we damage the prospects for our children; (and) we damage other species."

"We can't keep abusing the river: we can't keep destroying it... river water is like the blood in our veins. It is the blood of mother earth. Damming a river is like applying a tourniquet: it stops the flow of blood..."

Of course, all this has been happening for a very long time. One observer notes: "Water was used by people in Victorian times as a way to rid the community of sewage, factory waste, effluent. Streams and rivers became simply conduits for getting rid of waste."

Two factors stand out. First, the deleterious effects of overirrigation. If too much water is taken for irrigation, then a river dries up and everything dies. Last year, for the first time in recorded history the mighty Rakaia river ceased for a time to empty into the sea. And we thought that only happened in Australia!

The second – the more evident one – is pollution of waterways: dumping factory waste and sewage and, more and more, the release of effluent from dairy farming. What we empty into our rivers also affects water quality along the coasts. And here another major factor is noted – overfishing. We might think that only happened in the North Sea or off the coast of Newfoundland. But it's happening right here.

Yet we all know that New Zealand is a supremely beautiful place to be – and it still is. You could play this film with the sound off, and it could be a prize winning travelogue. It is simply a visual delight. That is half the trouble:

because we don't see it, we don't know there's a problem.

Two or three excellent examples are given to show that it is by no means too late to take effective action. The Aorere River empties into Golden Bay. The cockle beds there were beginning to suffer badly from the effects of effluent from the dairying along the river. At first, local dairy farmers were in denial.

But a good process was set up, and locals were persuaded to fence off waterways and find other ways of watering the cattle than allowing them free access to streams. The farmers were cooperative – and the cockle farming recovered. (Did you know that when a cow gets its feet wet, it raises its tail and discharges faeces into the water? Instant pollution!)

About one per cent of our coastline is now given over to marine reserves, where no fishing is allowed. When fishing is prohibited, the abundance of fish that greeted Captain Cook 200 years ago, soon returns. Sanctuaries like the Poor Knights, off Northland, become a mecca for snorkellers. One shore dweller commented that if marine reserves were extended to 50 per cent of the shoreline, breeding grounds would be restored and our fisheries would recover totally.

So there are remedies for these disasters. What is often lacking is the will to achieve them. This excellent DVD should help educate people – from the very young to the political decision makers. The pictures are accompanied by haunting waiata. Indeed there is much wisdom shared by the indigenous peoples – our own Maori and visiting American Indians. ■

## some of the good 'reads' of 2010

Kathleen Doherty

It's been a year of small books packing powerful punches. They have made up for yet another failed attempt to make progress with *War and Peace*. I think I might save that up for Lent.

The first book of the year stopped me in my tracks and I had to make a real effort to move on from it. *Ransom* by David Malouf (Alfred A Knopf) is a gem of a novel. It is a re-telling of one of the most heart-wrenching stories in all literature, first told in Homer's *Iliad*, of Priam, King of Troy, leaving the relative safety of his besieged city to venture into the heart of the Greek camp to ransom the body of his most loved son, Hector, who has been killed by Achilles, greatest of the Greek warriors.

Priam, his wagon loaded with treasure, sets out on his perilous venture a king; thanks to the lessons along the way learned largely from his unlikely companion, a peasant carter who has also lost a son in the war, he returns a man, humbled yet greater in stature than the king who left. The meeting between Priam and Achilles is deeply moving, told in simple, lyrical prose which is a joy to read and re-read. And then read again.

This is a novel of a king setting aside accepted ways and trying something



new, appealing to his son's killer not as the king of the enemy but as a father, relying on his faith that Achilles will depart from his role as hero and accept the role of simply being a man. It is a risk, but it succeeds. In a truce which is an honour to the dead Hector his father and his killer share food, respect each other's dignity, accept that they have much in common. It is a poignant human encounter, made all the more poignant when we know what lies ahead for Troy, "solid and gleaming on its high hill".

From the first sentence of *Peace*, the short novel by Richard Bausch (Alfred A Knopf) the reader is in the middle of the story: "They went on anyway, putting one foot in front of the other...trying, in their misery and confusion – and their exhaustion – to remain watchful." It is Italy, near Cassino, in the bitter winter of 1944. On the fourth day of relentless freezing rain, the small group of weary American soldiers is on a reconnaissance mission.

They have witnessed, the day before, the death of comrades and the cold-blooded killing by one of the group of a prostitute found with a German

soldier. They are faced with moral dilemmas which are torturing them, trying to preserve humanity in a brutal situation, accompanied now by an elderly Italian who may, or may not, be an enemy informant.

In such conditions they are alone for much of the time with their thoughts, of home, of loved ones, of God. One of the group is a Catholic, he prays in snatches of half-remembered prayers. When there is a volley of rifle fire which signals the execution of partisans all he can say, over and over, is "deliver us from evil, deliver us from evil...". One is a Jew. His reaction to the execution is to say Kaddish, the mourner's prayer for the dead. He does not know what the Hebrew words mean, through his tears he manages to get out that they are the words you say when there are no words. The act of mercy which forms the last minute of the narrative shocks because it is so unexpected – it alone brings the sought-for interior peace.

This is a taut, gripping novel, a vignette of an episode which seems, in the light of the years of war, of little consequence: in this it carries hints of *All Quiet on the Western Front*. It is

### IN YOUR WILL REMEMBER NEW ZEALAND JESUITS IN INDIA

Please help continue their good work  
in the service of the poor.

For more information write to:

New Zealand Jesuits in India Trust Board



PO Box 25922  
St Heliers

Auckland 1740

Tel: (09) 575 5742

email: tom.ryan@xtra.co.nz

the sort of story which many veterans could tell, but most chose not to. The dedication to the author's father "who served bravely in Africa, Sicily and Italy" gives a hint that perhaps some tales were told.

Scandinavian angst permeates *I Curse the River of Time* (Graywolf Press) by the Norwegian writer Per Petterson whose third novel *Out Stealing Horses* won the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2007.

It is the story of the struggle for understanding and reconciliation between a 37-year-old man whose marriage is disintegrating, and his mother, who has just been diagnosed with terminal cancer. In spite of the grim situation, the layers of memory which form the basis of the narrative, the family history, the wry observations, give the story a life which is not all gloom. There is even wry humour: the narrator observes that all Danes think that all Norwegians are Swedes.

Set against the background of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of everything that the narrator believed in, this is a challenging novel of love and the ultimate solitude of people, and the desperate need to connect. While the relationship of mother and

son may be unsatisfactory and the struggle to change that doomed to failure because of their personalities, there is great beauty in the writing. The minutely observed descriptions of feelings and sensations and atmosphere lift this novel into the category of one I was glad to have found.

After reading Paula Byrne's (Harper Press) the logical next step is to go back to *Brideshead Revisited*, Evelyn Waugh's classic and much loved novel. And there it is, right at the beginning, the author's note:

*I am not I: thou art not he or she:  
they are not they*

— words which perhaps for the first time make sense.

The world of *Brideshead Revisited* is based on the world of Madresfield Court in Worcestershire, home since 1196, through 28 generations, of the Lygon family, inspiration for the Flytes of the novel.

Evelyn Waugh came into their world in the 1920's in Oxford when he met the two sons of the family. He paid his first visit to their 136-room moated house in 1931, by which time the father of the family, Lord Beauchamp was living abroad, having been given an ultimatum by his brother-in-law,

the Duke of Westminster, to leave the country or have his homosexual activities disclosed to all. His wife had left Madresfield Court, taking her youngest son with her. Left in residence at "Mad" as they called it, were the two older boys and their four sisters, along with a full quota of servants.

The parallels with the Flytes of *Brideshead* are numerous, but whereas there is redemption in the novel, there is little in the sad story of the Lygons. One daughter, picked as a possible royal bride, was scratched from the field when her father left the country in disgrace, two made disastrous marriages, one son became an alcoholic and died young. From this family of seven there were only two descendants, daughters born to the youngest son, one of whom now lives in the ancestral home.

Reading *Mad World* and *Brideshead Revisited* together enhances both books and confirms the artistry of Evelyn Waugh in his elegy to a home and a family and a way of life which he looked back on with love and sadness. ■

*Kathleen Doberty is a former journalist and has proof-read Tui Motu since its inception.*

**A3 Colour Poster**



**Pooh's Prayer**

*ideal Christmas gift for your grandchildren or the young at heart*

Price: \$2 each  
Package (cardboard cylinder) & postage: \$5 within NZ and Australia  
Each cylinder holds up to 10 posters

**Pleroma**  
Christian Supplies

**Christmas is coming!**

CDs, DVDs, Candles, Jewellery, Bibles, Christmas Cards, Nativity Sets starting at just \$4.99 & books galore!



CX8326 \$12.50  
STOCKING - Nativity Scene

**Free shipping on orders \$75.00+**

Visit us in person, on the website, phone or email us today.

Ph: 0508 988 988 email: [order@pleroma.org.nz](mailto:order@pleroma.org.nz)  
**[www.christiansupplies.co.nz](http://www.christiansupplies.co.nz)**



# Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

## it is god's world

In my youth I imagined God the Father and the Holy Spirit conversing: "Adam and Eve have ruined our plans. We'll have to send the Boy down to implement Plan B." But the Incarnation was the original plan.

The *Genesis* story was written to convey some fundamental truths about our relationship with the Creator. Human nature, though fundamentally good, is seriously flawed and in need of healing. Creation is the primary revelation of the Divine – *through [the Word] all things came to be*.

At an appropriate time in the evolution of Israelite selfconsciousness, *the Word was made flesh, he lived among us and we saw his glory*. That was a cosmic watershed: our understanding of the myriad implications is a still developing journey, with our stumbling searchings and faltering responses guided by the Spirit.

## and it is for all people

Research -based *The Spirit Level*, (reviewed *TM* Sept 09 and Oct 10) holds that fairer societies have fewer social problems, thus benefiting economically. A recent forum of academics and Treasury analysts examined the issue in the light of New Zealand data.

The conclusion was the book's claims appeared reasonably valid for NZ, but more research is needed. Ten per cent have about half of total wealth; the next 10 per cent have about a third, although income levels are not as unequal. Forum chair, Jonathon Boston, noted there was a lack of political consensus for policies to overcome inequality.

There is a general swing away from neo-liberal economics, which in NZ coincided with a sharp rise in income inequality. It appears the Labour Party is formulating a new kind of policy approach to address the inequality problem.

## engaging with society

During October a Synod took place of Bishops of the Middle Eastern Churches in communion with Rome. It was notable for several things: it was the first ever; it was addressed by senior clerics from Muslim (both Sunni and Shiite branches) and Jewish faiths; its members examined the role of the Church in the political, religious, and cultural future of the Middle East – to engage with their fellow citizens rather than keep their heads down within a ghetto. For example they recognized the need to work with others for a nontheocratic or secular (as against secularist) state – a necessary condition for eliminating the deaths, poverty and forced emigration that arise from the sectarian violence affecting all citizens.

Total Christian presence is about 5.6 per cent; Catholics represent 1.6 per cent of the population with membership spread over 16 countries. In addition to Latinrite members, there are 22 Eastern Catholic churches in union with Rome, six of which have their own independent governing structures.

The 5,000 word final declaration set out some broad policy decisions, acknowledging the sectarian attitude that had hitherto prevailed in the individual Catholic churches in the region, not only with respect to other Christians, Muslims and Jews, but even between themselves. Some excerpts:

"We are now at a turning point in our history... Here we want to affirm a fundamental principle: namely, God wants us to be Christians in and for our Middle Eastern societies... The second principle is we are an integral part of our societies. Our mission, based on our faith and our duty to our home countries, obliges us to contribute to the construction of our countries as fellow-citizens, Muslims, Jews and Christians alike... We must act in Communion and Witness together with the Orthodox

and Protestant Communion and enter into Cooperation and Dialogue with our fellowcitizens, the Jews... We say to our Muslim fellowcitizens we are brothers and sisters; God wishes us to be together, united by one faith in God and by the dual commandment of love of God and neighbour."

As Benedict XVI again emphasized in October, the mission of the Church "everywhere and always" is to evangelize (which "proposes, not imposes"), to preach the Gospel in the 'language' of the various cultures in which it exists. Evangelization entails being *a witness to speak for the Light*.

## christianity has its uses:

Birmingham is the local authority famous for replacing Christmas celebrations with a secular festival "Winterval". *Marketing Birmingham* recently reported that the papal visit in September, for former resident Cardinal Newman's beatification, generated an estimated £30.5 million in media coverage and the visit's overall economic benefit was estimated to be £12 million.

## st teresa of avila:

"Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world; yours are the feet with which he walks to do good; yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Christ has no body now but yours."

## mother teresa:

"No one thinks of the pen while reading the letter. They only want to know the mind of the person writing the letter. That's exactly what I am in God's hands – a little pencil." ■

# a call to charity

Peter Norris

Nearly 30 years ago I helped in a little parish of Edwardsburg, Michigan, in the Diocese of Kalamazoo.

It was not a typical parish as the major social event of the year was the parish pontoon party where various pontoons were lashed together and the engine worked on one so that a large number of the parish would happily party on their way across the lake. Health and Safety considerations went out the window as people enjoyed each other. Over the years people came to me and asked what you had to do to 'sign up', as it was such a fun group.

However, not everything was fun! I met a woman who had been going to Mass for over 30 years without going to communion. Because her husband refused to have the marriage in a Catholic Church she was classed as a sinner and was unable to receive communion. On her behalf I wrote to the local bishop for a "sanatio in radice", which was a recognition of the marriage and we received it by return mail. After all those years not going to the sacraments it seemed

too easy for her and I had to get a papal blessing for her and her husband to convince her it was real. All it took was a signature from the local bishop. While the outcome was great, the situation seemed obscene as someone was deprived of the sacraments for about 30 years because she had sinned, not against people, but against the institution.

I recently read the Lukan gospel of the sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair. For years commentators talked about her as a prostitute but the text does not say that. It is probably male commentators and the only basis for it would be that her hair was loose. She could easily have been a widow who refused to marry her late husband's brother. He would be marrying her in accord with the law. Imagine being classed as a public sinner because you did not want to marry your brother inlaw!

We can feel smug when we look at people like Simon the Pharisee and think that the attitude he exemplifies is terrible. However, to be successful at being smug we have to forget

the woman I mentioned at the start who waited 30 years for a bishop's signature to receive the sacraments. If we want to be really smug we cannot examine our attitude to other things. If we are happy with the gospel challenging us there are a few questions we must answer. What is our attitude to people who marry outside the church today? What is our attitude to people who are divorced and remarried? What is our attitude to people in lesbian and gay relationships?

The Council of Trent said that "the Eucharist is the primary sacrament for the forgiveness of sin." I remember being told this when I was studying in Graduate School. I even checked it out! Yet some of our institutional rules seem to exclude the people who need the sacraments the most from the very help they need. We do live in an odd world. That is why we read the scriptures at Mass each Sunday. No matter how messed up we or our church can be, the words of Jesus can still challenge us and call us to charity. ■

*Fr Peter Norris is Master of St Margaret's College, University of Otago.*

If you know a friend who might enjoy reading – and maybe subscribing to *Tui Motu* – fill in their details below and send it to us at:

Freepost 97407  
P O Box 6404  
Dunedin North  
DUNEDIN 9059

– and we will send them a free back copy

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Subscribe to *Tui Motu InterIslands*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Area code \_\_\_\_\_ Sub No \_\_\_\_\_

☐ \$28 for five issues (unwaged \$24)

☐ \$56 for a one-year subscription  
11 issues (unwaged \$48)

### OVERSEAS

Australia & S. Pacific \_\_\_\_\_ \$70

All other regions \_\_\_\_\_ \$75

☐ I am enclosing an additional donation to secure the future of *Tui Motu*

☐ I have included a cheque for \$.....

☐ or, please debit my credit card (Visa/Mastercard)

Card No:

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date \_\_\_\_\_

POST TO PO Box 6404 Dunedin North  
Dunedin 9059

email  
website

tui motu@earthlight.co.nz  
www.tuimotu.org



# a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

"Let's have a celebratory evening going to our favourite glen in the forest, make a campfire, eat some special food, and come home by torchlight," suggests Jeph, as a family outing for Friday night. Mum and Dad have both been away a bit recently. One way and another it's been a tough few weeks.

It was a great scheme. I packed our picnic dinner, matches, damper mixture and some yummy toppings into a backpack ... Jeph trots down the hill to collect the older girls from school. "Drama practice running full show. Finishing 6pm" he texts. Oh well, we can delay plans by half an hour. The rest of us gather up plates, water bottles and a rug for the crisp autumn evening. He texts again "Have to walk Alica home too – her Dad running late". Sure, I thought, it won't take too much longer.

The school gang eventually appears at 7pm, after the stars. At least it's a clear sky.

Never mind – we can do a late start. Grouchy little Jalori munches a handful of biscuits in the backpack as we set off. We walk along the black road under a fingernail moon and the frayed white light of an LED torch. It took only 4 minutes for the first tears and tiredness to surface. Shortly after, eight year old Rohan declares mutiny. Taking a big breath, I suggest we go

home and cook our damper with a fire on the concrete courtyard outside the kitchen. No-one dissents. It was not quite what we'd planned and hoped for. But, it was the best option at the time. We had fun. We went to bed.

Advent I guess is lots about flexibility, being prepared to lower and change expectations. Make the best of the situation. The Bethlehem hotel crisis catalysed creative solutions to baby cribs. I am sure it wasn't quite what Mary and Joseph had in mind ( 'Real' stables around us in India have a lot more dung than fluffy-strawed NZ church cribs!). But they lived through it and redefined gratefulness,

Roll on Advent

We're waiting.

Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

We're expectant.

And we expect things we don't expect.

And still we are thankful.

Amen.

*Kaaren Mathias and her husband Jeph live in the foothills of the Himalayas in Northern India, with their four children. They are working in health, development and building resilience to climate change.*

# share the care

## 65th Christmas appeal



**CWS**

ACTION AGAINST POVERTY

## DONATE TO LIFE NOW

[www.christmasappeal.org.nz](http://www.christmasappeal.org.nz) 0800 74 73 72