Tui Motu

InterIslands

monthly independent Catholic magazine

October 2015 | $7

learning from children

Felim was standing by the altar and looking at me: "Is Jesus coming today?" he asked. In all his fourness he wanted to make sure that if Jesus turned up at his great-grandfather's funeral he wasn't going to miss seeing him. "Jesus is here now." 'Where?" he asked, looking around. "He's everywhere with us." But I'd disappointed him. It wasn't a satisfying answer.

Sofia, nine, talking about spirituality said she wanted to be a vegetarian: "I love animals and so I don't like killing them." But it was a struggle for her: "When I go to my grandfather's and smell the chops on the barbeque I can't resist them."

Amal, eight, was describing what he thought happened when you die: "You go to heaven and there's sunshine and lots of fountains of sweet water there."

Leva, three, pulling a crucifix out of a packing case, held it up and asked: "Is this a sword?"

A mother lifted her toddler introducing the characters and stories in the windows of the chapel. The sunset streaming through the stained-glass swathed them in a communion of colour.

In moments like these we see our children extending their worlds — in the openness of questions, the discovery of connections and the voicing of their hopes. And it is also apparent how often our words are insufficient in conveying the depth of an experience and the faith within it. We grapple with how to share in a way that's understandable without losing the invitation into reflection and mystery. We have to sink into innocence and join children in the spirituality of the moment.

Children and young people, their well-being and spirituality, are a theme in this issue. Ruby Duncan outlines the dismal findings of the report on our children in state care and highlights the urgent need to remedy our provision and love for the most vulnerable members of New Zealand.

Bruce Drysdale, writing about school liturgies, discusses his approaches to preparation so that young people, will be engaged, participating and sharing together in an experience of divine presence.

Petelo Esekielu describes how his sense of service motivates his work for children and young people, involving them in music, theatre, dance and art. Both Bruce and Petelo illustrate the kind of serving, or ministry, described as "radical discipleship" in Kathleen Rushton's scriptural article.

Sarah Hill discovers when interviewing her mother, that it was Fiona's experience of being undervalued in childhood that led her to focus her art on developing children's imaginations and identity.

And Jane Higgins offers a thoughtful exploration of the kind of hope that we would want our young people to have and how that might appear in young adult fiction.

Other articles in this issue are about social justice, spirituality and scripture — and we have the third part in Patrick Snedden's series on housing. Together our writers, columnists, reviewers, artists and photographers have contributed to the October issue and we thank them. We hope that bubbles of the joy of the children on the cover escape into your lives this month. And as you'll see, the last word is of blessing. ■

contents

Cover: Photograph by Zak Holland.

We apologise to Sandy Leiatua for omitting to credit her design of the September centrespread.

let's not fail our children

Ruby Duncan

As you woke up this morning nearly 5,000 children in New Zealand also woke up but in homes where they had been placed to keep them safe from their own parents. They will probably experience enormous emotional confusion. They may love the safety, warmth and good food in their new situation. At the same time they may have huge questions about why this has happened. Are they to blame in some way? Are they odd and different from "normal" children?

To be in state care means inevitably they have witnessed and experienced things that no child should have to deal with. Maybe it was violence and fear or the daily uncertainty about whether there would be an adult around to provide food and comfort. It means too that they have no blood relatives able or willing to care for them. So usually they are cut off from familiarity, family and friends.

It is an enormous societal responsibility to care for these children with enough security to allow them to grow into healthy, well-functioning adults. Many children don't find that path. Our research tells us that the longer children are in state care the less likely they are to have positive outcomes.

The *State of Care 2015* report from the office of the Children's Commissioner into how well Child, Youth and Family is providing for these children makes sobering reading. We are failing many badly. The children's voices in the report are powerfully strong with their disappointment and powerlessness. They say their opinions are seldom sought and when they are, they sense there is no follow-up. Their futures are uncertain.

The Child, Youth and Family Services responsible for these children are struggling. While staff members are passionate and well-intentioned, they are overloaded with the demands from the "front door". With over 65,000 calls a year about possible situations of abuse or neglect, their focus is drawn to those investigations and initial responses. Even when a child is placed in care there is little time for ongoing support or for planning for their future. There is an over-emphasis on incidents that highlight concerns about the children. There is a lack of consideration of the underlying issues the children have faced for some time and of how they might navigate their way to healing and wholeness.

Children in state care are invisible to us now. But later they will come to our attention in the statistics — teen-pregnancy rates, youth crime, imprisonment (the majority of inmates have been children in care or dislocated from parents during childhood), and they will join the cycles of violence and child abuse. Then the government will be forced to spend enormous amounts to manage the outcomes of a system that failed children.

The *State of Care* report says that we are not a child-centred society. We don't listen to children's voices or attend to the deep, emotional challenges they face. We are a society that prioritises the views of adults rather than making decisions based on children's real needs and keeping them informed about their own futures.

Children in state care are in our schools and hanging out in our streets. We might notice their struggles and be ready to judge them. But also, we could look afresh at who they are and even acknowledge and listen to them. We might even be able to offer a home. Certainly we can extend interest and compassion. And we can urge our government to resource state care generously. ■

Ruby Duncan is a Community Ministries Team Leader for the Baptist Union of New Zealand.

Tui Motu InterIslands

ISSM 1174-8931
Issue number 198

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, 52 Union Street, Dunedin North, 9054
P O Box 6404, Dunedin North, 9059
phone: (03) 477 1449
email: editor@tuimotu.org
email for subscriptions: admin@tuimotu.org
website: www.tuimotu.org
TuiMotuInterIslands tuimotumag
editor: Ann L Gilroy RSJ
assistant editor: Elizabeth Mackie OP
typesetting and layout: Greg Hings
printers: Southern Colour Print, 1 Turakina Road, Dunedin South, 9012
board directors: Neil Darragh (chair), Rita Cahill RSJ, Philip Casey, Paul Ferris, Cathy Harrison, Agnes Hermans, Elizabeth Mackie OP, David Mullin, Kevin Toomey OP
honorary directors: Pauline O'Regan RSM, Frank Hoffmann

Tui Motu for Pope Francis

In the September issue celebrating *Laudato Si'* there were references to opposition to Pope Francis from vested interests. As a worthy expression of support for him, have you thought of sending him a copy of the September issue?

Bishop Peter Cullinane, *Palmerston North*

Good idea, Bishop Peter. We've sent copies to Pope Francis. **Editor**

overstocking people on earth

I've attempted to follow the commentaries on *Laudato Si'* and especially those in the September issue of *Tui Motu*. I've been involved with farming all my life including the past 30 years since retirement. One thing I've learnt the hard way is about the stocking rate of land. In farming livestock, if you overstock you soon pay the penalty — depleted pastures, skinny, unhealthy stock, untimely deaths, spread of diseases, and the farmer's inability to cope with the normal ups and downs.

Maybe I missed something in the encyclical. I'm referring to the human stocking rate on Earth. I look on the earth in the same way as I look on my farm — too many people and they suffer as do my sheep and cattle. Because these sufferers are human we have emotive words to describe their condition — malnutrition, contagious diseases, premature death, etc.

I can't quote figures but I bet that if Earth's human population continues increasing as it has since my birth (1926), then in the future it will be dangerously overstocked.

Come on, Pope Francis, come out in favour of conception control for humans.

Des McSweeney, *Akaraoa.* (abridged)

family planning

In her article "Our biggest environmental challenge" *Tui Motu* Sept 2015, Jeanette Fitzsimons said that the encyclical *Laudato Si'* "could be a game changer for our relationship with the planet." Yet she also criticised Pope Francis with her comment "If the Vatican could ... lift its embargo on family planning it could make a huge contribution to a just and sustainable world."

Ms Fitzsimons appears to think that the Catholic Church has a ban on family planning. It does not! The Church promotes responsible procreation and natural family planning. Natural methods of fertility regulation are effective, inexpensive and in harmony with the human body.

We can infer that Ms Fitzsimons meant artificial contraception when she mentioned family planning. If this is true, she must understand that artificial contraception involves the ingestion of synthetic hormones (the oral contraceptive pill), the injection of long-acting drugs (Depo-Provera), and the pollution of waterways from discarded insoluble latex (condoms). These facts clash with Ms Fitzsimons's advocacy for the natural environment.

If we accept the article's call for "ecological conversion and structural change" it's imperative that we also honour the natural ecology of the female and male body.

Catherine Hallagan, *Wellington*

an encyclical for architects.

When we look at what Pope Francis called "the spiral of self destruction" the built environment is more to blame than anything else. It was good that *Tui Motu* invited an architect to comment on *Laudato Si'*. Pope Francis had a great deal to say about architecture. "If architecture reflects the spirit of an age, our megastructures and drab apartment blocks express the spirit of globalised technology, where a constant flood of new products coexists with a tedious monotony." He went to the core of modern architecture when he said: "Modernity has been marked by an excessive anthropocentrism."

In noting that "everything is interconnected" Pope Francis echoed the *Declaration of Interdependence* signed by New Zealand architects in Chicago in 1993. He also supported vernacular architecture. "The disappearance of a culture can be just as serious, or even more serious, than the disappearance of a species of plant or animal." Urban designers were warned: "There is a need to protect those common areas, visual landmarks and urban landscapes which increase our sense of belonging, of rootedness, of 'feeling at home'." Francis even supported owner-building, in the tradition of the great monasteries. "Seeing manual labour as spiritually meaningful proved revolutionary." There is much more. Every architect would profit from reading the full text.

Tony Watkins, *Auckland*

book for our times

I was delighted to read Margaret O'Connor's review of *Being Mortal* in *Tui Motu*.

A few weeks ago I purchased a copy of this book from our local book store and yes, like Margaret, I found it a really riveting read — an essential and insightful book for our times.

I am not part of the medical system, but who knows when I will require their services so I appreciated the options the author Atul Gawande offers.

I highly recommend this book to all discerning readers.

Patricia Hick, *Cambridge*

☞ letters to the editor

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

it's all mine

Zella Horrell

The world has become dependent on the minerals we extract from the ground. Cobalt, copper, nickel, silver, gold, vanadium, titanium, manganese and other rare earth elements are the invisible ingredients of our comfort. Add fossil fuels to that mix and we have an expensive list for a damaging treasure hunt.

We give unspoken consent to mining because we value and need the products made from mines: batteries, flat screen tvs, surgical instruments, etc. and energy. We know that every mining activity damages the environment and many people.

Mines can burrow kilometres into the earth, remove the tops of mountains, consume 5,000-year-old archaeological sites, displace millions of people and extract minerals from the bottom of the sea. Mining is rife in our geographic area.

Deep-sea mining is the latest craze of what Dr Seuss's Once-ler might call "biggering". Canadian mining company Nautilus Minerals is planning for deep-sea mining in the Bismarck Sea, within the coastal waters of Papua New Guinea.

The Bismarck Sea is at further risk from the Ramu NiCo nickel mine, which is pumping highly reactive waste into the sea along the coast of the Madang province. Marine biologists warn of the danger, claiming that this oceanic ecosystem has the highest diversity of corals, fish, crustaceans, molluscs and marine plant species in the world. The sea also offers 30,000 local fishermen a way of life.

Mining companies are after coal in Kalimantan (Borneo), where timber resources have already been exploited. Coal Mines in South Kalimantan release hazardous waste into streams and rivers. One-third of South Kalimantan is allocated to coal mining and approximately 3,000 kilometres of its rivers — almost 45 per cent — are located downstream from coal mines. This exposes communities

to contaminated water. Coal-mining operations in Asam-Asam left a barren, desolate landscape indicative of desertification.

Australia is awash with mining activity but the Carmichael Mine proposed for the Galilee Basin in western Queensland is particularly noxious. The Adani Mining conglomerate plans to extract 60 million tonnes of coal annually, equating to 128 million tonnes of carbon dioxide — and this for 90 years. The mine would drink 10 billion litres of water, sprawl across 44,700 hectares of land, then leave its stain at the coal terminals of Abbot Point located in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Recently the Federal Court overturned the Abbott government's approval for the mine because it threatens the habitats of the rare yakka skink and the ornamental snake. While the financial backers for the mine are wavering, Adani has not surrendered.

The New Zealand government granted permission to Bathurst Resources to mine for coal on the Denniston Plateau, despite years of persistent protest from Forest and Bird. The area is a nationally-significant upland coal-measure ecosystem on public conservation land. While the habitat was destroyed immediately, mining stopped because of the global slump in coal prices. Now mining executives declare they don't have money to fix all the problems they had agreed to in their contract.

Many Kiwis have an affinity with the earth and a strong will to reject some mining projects. Trans-Tasman Resources spent $60 million investigating the possibility of mining undersea iron ore deposits off the North Island. Their application was rejected by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). The EPA also denied consent to Chatham Rock Phosphate to mine phosphate on the Chatham Rise.

Each of these mining projects is being watched and battled against by groups of informed volunteers. Finance, even the economy, may belong to corporations and governments but Earth is our common home, shared with all creation. As our responsibility to God we need to reject strongly and persistently all that will damage our planet — especially mining. ■

Zella Horrell lives in Southland and teaches at St Peter's College, Gore.

it's about presence

Creating rituals and liturgies that really engage our young people is challenging and life-giving. Bruce Drysdale, a creative liturgist, passes on some guiding principles for successful liturgies.

Bruce Drysdale

I have spent a good portion of my adult life, in terms of time, effort, creativity (and yes, stress and satisfaction) in the study, planning, preparation and celebration of liturgy. I'm often asked how I prepare liturgies, especially those for the young. I have found that the guiding principles for preparing all liturgies (regardless of the make-up of the congregation) are much the same. Some aspects need more emphasis when being prepared for young people, though giving such emphasis often highlights the importance these aspects have in all liturgy. An example of this would be participation. In *Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC)*, the Vatican II document on the liturgy, we find: "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy … this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit" (*SC*: 14).

active participation

I suggest strongly that "fully conscious and active participation" is much more than reciting the Mass responses, however earnestly they are said or sung. In preparing liturgy I am always striving for maximum participation. For young people this means participation that requires them to get out of their seats and become physically involved. Ritual (a vital aspect of all liturgy) by its very nature, nearly always requires action and so gives endless opportunities for active participation through movement, music, dance, drama and interaction with symbols.

communally active

The document continues: "It is to be stressed that whenever rites, according to their specific nature, make provision for communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, this way of celebrating them is to be preferred, so far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and quasi-private" (*SC*: 27).

As a teacher I know young people learn better communally in today's classrooms. We encourage "student centred learning" — seldom achieved by someone standing at the front and instructing. Liturgy is also a valuable learning (evangelising) experience especially among young people. Augustine's words: "Good liturgy builds faith and bad liturgy destroys it" (*SC*) is usually ringing in my ears as I prepare liturgy — ensuring the Divine is experienced rather than merely spoken about.

symbol & ritual that engage

This brings us to another valuable, yet problematic, liturgical instruction: "Before people can come to the liturgy they must be called to faith and to conversion" (*SC*: 9).

The instruction has implications for liturgies with young people, especially in schools, as they are at many and various stages of faith and conversion. While a congregation of "practising" Catholics will recognise without explanation the deep meaning of symbols, actions and words used in liturgy, it is rarely the case in schools today. Therefore symbols, etc. need to include those drawn from "secular" experience and we will need to reveal their innate spiritual connection. For example, recently, a simple globe became for us a sacred symbol of reverence for

the Earth when we were exploring liturgically the message of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

Experiences of ritual are most often absent in young people's lives, so liturgical ritual needs to be fairly obvious, simple, and engaging. In order to have meaning it needs to link the experience of liturgy to what else is going on in young people's lives. It must employ movement, colour, symbols, and images of study, sport, family, friendship, success and failure. Teenagers are particularly aware of being included and excluded — being "in" or "connected" is of vital importance. We see this demonstrated daily by their dependence on social media technology. While necessary in all liturgies, it is even more important in liturgies for young people, to enable the sense of belonging, inclusion and identity. This is enabled or disabled by language which includes or excludes respectively.

starting with scripture

In preparing liturgies, especially Mass, the sacred scripture to be used is an obvious starting point. While the message of the scriptures is received primarily as the Word is proclaimed, it can also be transmitted through: the way the Word (Book) is presented to the congregation; a danced or dramatised response to it; and a careful enhancement of the actual proclamation.

The importance of the Word is further demonstrated by presenting an appropriate balance of Word and Eucharist — lectern and altar. I must admit to discomfort in hearing people describe the Mass to young people as "Word and Sacrament". While it may be correct terminology, it can suggest also that the proclamation of the scripture is not sacramental. Surely Christ is just as present to us in the Word of God, properly proclaimed and received, as in the sacred Body and Blood that we share.

presence

This leads me to the most essential element in preparing liturgy — presence.

While in the Catholic Church our principal liturgies are built around the seven sacraments, I believe all good liturgies are sacramental in that they enable us to experience the presence of God. Maybe an actual, visceral experience of that presence is most obvious in the Liturgy (Mass), in terms of our sharing in communion, but all "successful" liturgies will enable us to be aware of, open to, and moved by the presence of God.

Liturgists use the term *anamnesis* to describe the way Christ is present in the Eucharistic celebration. Medically this concept means simply a remembering or recalling. However, in the original Greek used to impart Jesus' instruction at the Last Supper (Lk 22:19) anamnesis defines a remembering by which the Christian can enter actually into the Paschal mystery, not simply a passive process of recalling. By collective faith we are really present to the experience of those first disciples gathered to celebrate the Passover with Jesus.

This presence begins to be real as the first few people enter the sacred space — "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" Mt 18:20. But it needs to be nurtured carefully by everything mentioned above. If we wish to enable an experience of "real presence" (i.e. the way we describe the Body and Blood of Christ) then we need to ensure and prepare for (as far as possible) that everything else is real. This includes the warmth of the welcome, the recognition of the equality of the participants, the connection to others, the Earth, the poor — right down to the music and the flowers! Good liturgy is about presence — real presence.

I've studied liturgy in New Zealand and overseas. Yet, although these privileged times have been helpful and interesting, they have not extended me or, indeed "taught" me, as much as the hands-on involvement in preparing and celebrating liturgy. I wonder if that is because, while the academic study of it requires us to be aware of, and attentive to liturgy, the preparation and celebration require us to be present to it. ■

Bruce Drysdale is the Director of Religious Studies at St Dominics Catholic College, Auckland. He is also a Wedding & Funeral Celebrant.

All photos used with permission.

to be of service

Petelo Esekielu is the coordinator of Te Oro*, the community centre for young people in Glen Innes, Auckland. Ann Gilroy talks with him about his commitment to community and the importance of* Te Oro *for local young people.*

Ann L Gilroy

A tui among pigeons — *Te Oro*, curved and sculptured in wood and glass, is a resplendent, humming, state-of-the-art community centre sitting among the utilitarian buildings of the Glen Innes township. It's been the dream of the local community for 20-30 years. Petelo Esekielu, the facility co-ordinator, reflected: "I was in form 3 when I heard the idea. Now I'm 32 and we've finally got it." He runs operations day-to-day, ensuring the centre is inviting for the young people of Glen Innes. "This centre is the first time Auckland Council has ventured to offer all the arts — we've got theatre, visual arts, a dance studio, music studios — so all creative art forms can be taught here." It takes talent, vision, passion and commitment to design, build and develop a successful community centre and Petelo has been with the project from design to opening.

family influences

"I was born and raised in Glen Innes, a local boy. St Pius X was my primary school and Sacred Heart College up the road. What brought me here (to *Te Oro*) were the unintentional things like the 1997 *Design Street*. I remember my two sisters talking about it as something that would help the community, that wasn't related to sports. Then in 2005 my sister wrote a research paper and was involved in a household survey. I was one of the surveyors. I was about 24 and thought I was just helping my sister out. That's how I got directly involved.

aligning skills

"I'm an architecture graduate and I have a design degree as well. In 2012 I was selected as one of the lead artists on the design team for the *Te Oro* project. I was lead artist with another artist, a De La Salle boy, and we came up with the design of the building."

"My present role of coordinator is not as creative as design. I got the coordinator's role a month before the building opened and trying to finish the building job on time was greater than the stress of the day-to-day. It was a baptism of fire.

mentoring to aspire

"*Te Oro*'s about like-minded people getting together. We're trying to foster the culture of mentorship, helping one another out and showing examples of

excellence the kids can aim towards. We have top musicians coming in and doing jams. When the kids hear them they want to aspire to that and they make connections in the industry — entrepreneurship as well.

"Most children who use this place are of Pacific or Maori backgrounds. We saw the kids start as hesitant. Now we see them coming and using the building and seeing it as their own. They play off the talent — some of the kids you wouldn't pick as musicians, you find them playing the instruments and singing too.

"Some kids will try only things they know. We're doing a hip hop class and the tutor is an old Sacred Heart boy and as well, we have Justin Haiu, a contemporary dancer. So we've told the kids that it's 'hip hop contemporary'. We're giving them the licence to try hip hop but we're subtly pushing their boundaries. (It's funny, whenever I mention Sacred Heart and De La Salle someone will find a connection back to those schools. Our network is quite extensive.)

doing it differently

"The original intention was that *Te Oro* was for young people from 12-24 years but we've found we're getting children from eight years old coming to use the building and doing the art classes. We get the whole range really ,with young kids coming to the dance classes and just hanging out, to a class on 'beats and pieces' where they have to make their own sound. Most of the people in that class were over 24. We're getting more than our range. The original intention was this little wedge in the community but we're ending up getting half the pie.

"I'm not surprised because we know from studies that our community is predominantly Pacific Island and what you find is that you can't exclude the younger kids from the older kids. I remember growing up and having to look after my younger cousins or my older cousins looking after me. If we were to go by the letter of the Charter, then we would have to exclude some of the kids. What we're found is the family approach is better so we welcome families in — we have something for everyone.

"During the day we work with groups and at 4.00pm we have the big rush of kids coming in. Most of the courses are free or low cost and to do that we have targets we need to hit. When the kids are not in workshops the spaces are for hire so whatever revenue we can get we push onto programming, which means the kids get free programmes — or close to free.

post-migration generation

"I'm first generation New Zealand Samoan. We have some Chinese through my father — so we're Samoan Chinese. A lot of Samoans are that mix. We moved to GI in the early 80s when Dad was working in the railways and we grew up in GI. The Holy Faith Sisters had an influence on my family. They helped my parents buy their first house. My parents were struggling in the early 80s and the sisters helped save the money. They said: 'We'll save your money — just give it to us and we'll save it for you.' They helped my parents save for a bond for the house. My parents are always grateful to the Sisters for that.

"I heard that I had to learn English when I came to school but I'm not too sure because all of our families are much the same — our first language is Samoan. I kind of lost it in College but have regained it again. We're trying to teach my nieces and nephews the language now. My niece at McAuley College is learning Samoan and not just conversation Samoan, so I think that language is safe if they're learning it through College.

"I've been to Samoa a few times. It's weird — before we came to New Zealand we'd been there generations and I'd visited it in my head. The first time I went there I was 12 and it was good to see all the places that Dad had talked about. It's a different place. Auckland and GI are more my home but some things about Samoa I have connection with.

choosing to serve

"My days are often from 8am to 7or 8pm. The belief in what we're doing keeps me going. The young people give me energy as well — seeing them try something different, seeing them connect with positive people in their lives. There is a Samoan saying: 'The greatest thing in life is to be of service' and this is my philosophy and that of a lot of Samoans. I didn't learn the saying until about 3 years ago but it is actually something my parents, the Sisters and teachers instilled in us.

A strong Samoan philosophy is working together, not leaving people behind. I could easily take a 9-5 job in the city but I'm actually enjoying my work with young people and working in the community. ■

Ann L Gilroy rsj is the editor of Tui Motu InterIslands *magazine.*
Te Oro *website: http://www.teoro.org.nz*

Photos: Left, *Te Oro* centre and above, Petelo Esekielu.

letting children be children

Sarah Hill talks to her mother, New Zealand artist Fiona Whyte, about her childhood and how it has influenced her current project that promotes children's imaginations and healthy attitudes towards their bodies.

Sarah Hill

Fiona Whyte studied art at Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts and then spent over 20 years producing and exhibiting paintings, sculpture and jewellery. Her style, described as "cheerful, naive and vital", captures an essence and connectedness within the sea-scapes and cityscapes she favoured. Her art pours from a spirit that understands suffering, joyfully communicates in the language of an artist and endures in hope. Recently Fiona moved to New South Wales and is developing her art in a new direction — her passion for children.

growing up

"I have always been passionate about children. I believe that the way we treat our children will shape the world. Children are filled with natural joy and a love of life and I want to keep kids, kids.

"My mum loved to say 'no'. She loved me passionately but was very afraid of the world. So she would say 'no' to everything and was very critical of everyone. My father was of the old-fashioned view that boys were more important than girls. Although my father loved me, he saw my younger brother as the hero in the family. I grew up believing I could never get what I wanted in life.

> "I aimed to teach my children to love and value themselves, to know that each one of them individually was important and special and to celebrate who they were."

"It wasn't until I was 33 sitting by my father's hospital bed when he was dying that I realised I was completely undervalued as an intelligent, creative human being. Dad looked at me with surprise in his vivid, blue eyes and said: 'Fiona, do you realise that your mother is actually really intelligent?' It had taken him 38 years to discover that. (At that time my marriage was in a terrible state and six months later we separated.) I knew then that I had internalised his belief about women and was carrying it with me through my life. I still work hard to let go of these limiting beliefs.

learning to parent

"As a mother I decided to do things differently — to try consciously to parent my children. Of course some of my own childhood training still came up. I will be the first to admit that I am an over-protective mum. However I aimed to teach my children to love and value themselves, to know that each one of them individually was important and special and to celebrate who they were. I believed that my children have just as much wisdom to share with me as I have to share with them. Because of this we have a love and mutual respect for one another.

"My first husband and the father of my first four children struggled with depression throughout his life. He was concerned about what others thought of him and of his family. Because of this he put a lot of pressure on our children to look good and be thin.

"He was a very mixed bag though. He was amazing at telling our children to think differently, that they were so talented that they could achieve anything they dreamed of. And at the same time he could manage to communicate to them that

they were not good enough. Much of the struggle the children had with their father came from his inability to value and love himself. And sadly this inability to know his own worth and love himself led him to take his own life just before Christmas last year.

"This legacy of both parents carrying their childhood wounds into adult life and parenthood has given my children a strong drive to do things differently. They want to help other parents and children to know their value and love themselves.

taking a new direction

"I think that we need to be aware of the messages we are giving our children and that these messages are given in many different forms — from the way we speak to our children, the way we speak about ourselves, the toys we give them to play with and the books and TV they watch — to name a few.

"My move into working with children was a natural progression. Throughout my art career I always stayed connected to children and taught special art programmes at many schools throughout New Zealand. I am also the mother of five children and am now a grandmother. After years of doing paintings, sculpture and jewellery for adults I am loving my journey now of creating art and stories for children.

"My two daughters share my dream and together we started the new project called *Beetle Bottoms* bringing to life an imaginary world. We think of *Beetle Bottoms* as tiny people who live in gardens and parks all over the world. They're like you and me only they are the size of an apple pip. So every child will have these tiny people living in their garden.

valuing childhood

"The idea behind *Beetle Bottoms* is to keep kids, kids. It's about getting children outside into the garden, using their imaginations, exploring and creating childhood magic. We want children to grow up knowing that they are amazing being exactly who they are and that all of their unique quirks are what make them so special. I think that if we each knew how important we are and celebrated our differences, things like bullying would become a thing of the past.

"We've designed and written a series of books, as well as character dolls, wall decals and children's games — all celebrating childhood. I think it is vitally important and encouraging for children to see characters and dolls with bodies that look like theirs. So we're steering away from the current trend of sexy, skinny dolls and characters. We're promoting healthy, robust, natural-looking children's bodies.

realistic body image

"When we started to design our character dolls we decided to find out what adults thought their childhood dolls had taught them about life. Over and over the men and women we talked to told us they had thought their perfect dolls showed 'normal' bodies. They felt pressured to try to look like their dolls — with tiny, skinny bodies and sexy make-up or the buff action-man bodies.

"Most dolls are marketed to young, pre-pubescent children who are still developing their sense of self and are vulnerable to the pressure of conforming to body ideals. Unfortunately often children don't understand that their trendy dolls' bodies are physically impossible to obtain and certainly are not an average shape. As well, most dolls do not look like children of the various ethnic groups in our society. So from a very early age we can set children on a losing battle of trying to reach unrealistic body images.

"I wanted to break that mould and create natural-looking child dolls that communicate to children that it is normal and healthy to look like a child.

following my calling

"I feel called to this mission to help create amazing childhoods and to help children grow up loving themselves and believing in themselves. I am so blessed to be sharing this adventure with my two daughters and the rest of our family. Childhood is a magical time and children have so much to offer the world." ■

Sarah Hill is the co-founder of Beetle Bottoms *and holds a BA in Psychology and a Diploma in Yoga teaching.*

Photos used with permission.

hope is orienting the heart

Jane Higgins reflects on hope in young people's lives and the way books can help them discover their people, their gifts, joy and the ability to recover and make a new start.

Jane Higgins

Remember *The Hunger Games*, the *Divergent* series, *The Fault in Our Stars*, and *If I Stay*? If you are a teen, or there are teens in your household, chances are you know about these stories. They are best-selling young adult novels, made into blockbuster movies. And, like a lot of young adult fiction, they are dark, dealing with dystopia, sickness and death.

Periodically, darkness in young adult fiction is hauled out into the light and examined by people who are concerned that these stories are too obsessed with sadness and bleak futures. Sides are taken. Arguments ensue.

Young people often come to these arguments defending their favourite reads. Parents often worry about how grim these stories can be. I'm not going to take sides here. I'm more interested in the way these disagreements are commonly settled, namely, with appeals to hope.

more than a happy ending

Sickness and death are an important part of life, the reasoning goes, so it's good for young people to read about them, as long as hope is in the mix as well. But here's the problem: appeals to hope are often tacked onto these discussions like an unconvincing happy ending, as though what we mean by hope is obvious. I don't think it is obvious.

In thinking about this debate, I decided to look for a concept of hope that was more than a facile happy ending. We need a concept that's robust and sinewy, that has the heft to cope with the darkness that's found not only in stories for young people, but in many of their lives as well.

an orientation of the heart

I found what I was looking for in the writings of Vaclav Hável, writer, dissident, sometime political prisoner in Cold War eastern Europe, and the first president of the Czech Republic.

Hável writes powerfully about hope in a series of interviews collected in *Disturbing the Peace: a Conversation with Karel Hvízdala*. There he argues that hope is "not the same as joy that things are going well", and it's not the same as optimism either — "the conviction that something will turn out well". Hável contests the commonly held notion that hope is a forecast of good times to come, or an expectation that things will turn out all right in the end.

Instead he proposes something more complex. "The kind of hope I often think about," he writes, "especially in situations that are particularly hopeless, such as prison, I understand above all as a state of mind, not a state of the world." Hope is, he says, "an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart." It is "an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed."

This kind of hope is probably not something we can easily intuit when we're young, especially when popular culture pushes so hard for the quick fix and the happy ending. Hável's concept of hope is more likely to be discovered and learned over time. So, are young people finding such powerful ideas about hope in their fiction? Or from anywhere else?

working for something good

When I began to write this piece, I thought that surely one place to find a strong comment on hope would be *Laudato Si' (LS)*, the latest encyclical

from Pope Francis. *Laudato Si'* directly addresses the dire challenges our young people will face in the coming century — challenges my generation never dreamt of in our youth. And he knows how overwhelming these challenges seem to be. He even says "people no longer seem to believe in a happy future; they no longer have blind trust in a better tomorrow based on the present state of the world ..." *(LS,* par 113). Young people especially, perhaps. Think of all those young adult dystopias that head the best-seller lists.

Initially I was surprised, even a little shocked, to discover how rarely the word hope appears in this document — a handful of times, no more. Then I realised I had fallen into the very trap I was arguing against. Francis has no quick fix when it comes to being positive about the future. But in Hável's terms, where hope is an orientation of the heart and the capacity to work for something because it is good, *Laudato Si'* is a profoundly hopeful document.

Hope is there in the document's recognition that we all have the ability to work together in building our common home; that we are capable of rising above a consumerist lifestyle that shuts out the marginalised; that no system can completely suppress our openness to what is good and true and beautiful.

This is all well and good, but young people are more likely to be picking up the latest best-seller than the writings of a pope. So can ideas like this, in which hope is present in people's openness to possibility and connection, be found in young adult fiction? It turns out that they can. Picking some books off my shelves, (not quite) at random, this is what I found.

> We need a concept of hope that's robust and sinewy, that has the heft to cope with the darkness that's found not only in stories for young people, but in many of their lives as well . . .
>
> Hope . . . "an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed."

discovering your people

Hope is about discovering your people. There's Min (*All I Ever Wanted* by Vikki Wakefield), whose desperation to escape her family of small-time crooks prompts her to formulate Rule Number One — "I will not turn out like my mother" — until she discovers that the scary Mrs Tkautz next door, and her own mother, have always looked out for her in ways she had never noticed.

discovering your gift

Hope is about discovering your gift. There's Mack (*Stay with Me* by Paul Griffin), in prison for a murder he really did commit, discovering that through his ability to work with dogs — and, crucially, with the recognition of that gift by prison staff — he can create a pathway towards a meaningful future.

discovering joy

Hope is about discovering joy. There's Joe Maloney (David Almond's *Secret Heart*) bullied and truanting, to the despair of his mother who can barely scrape a living for the two of them, discovering that the strange circus people, odd and marginalised, can make a joyful world that the bullies cannot understand.

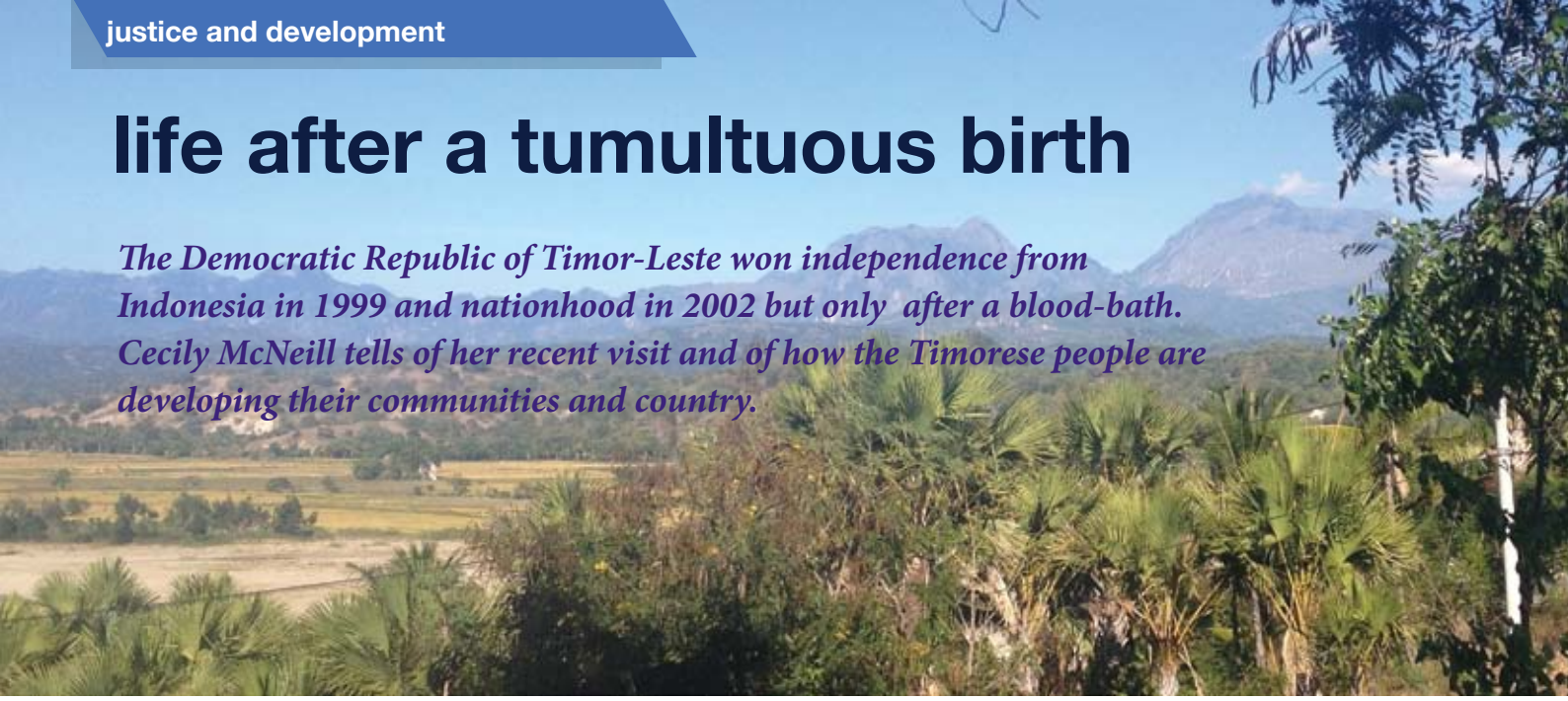
seeing clearly at last

Hope is about seeing clearly at last. There's Timna, in Geraldine McCaughrean's *Not the End of the World*, a remarkable retelling of the story of The Flood, who discovers, through her own courage and compassion, that she doesn't have to march to the beat of the loudest drum.

Hope is sometimes about a happy ending, but not always. What it is always about, as Francis observes (*LS*, par 205), is recognising that we human beings are capable of rising above ourselves, of choosing again what is good, and making a new start. ■

Jane Higgins is a researcher in youth studies, and the author of two young adult novels, The Bridge *and* Havoc, *published by Text Publishing, Melbourne.*

life after a tumultuous birth



The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste won independence from Indonesia in 1999 and nationhood in 2002 but only after a blood-bath. Cecily McNeill tells of her recent visit and of how the Timorese people are developing their communities and country.

Maria Olivia (Meta) de Jesus Sousa's law studies were interrupted by the conflict of 2006 in Timor-Leste but now, a decade on, her brief has grown.

As the wife of the leader of the village of Samalari in Timor-Leste's Baucau subdistrict, she runs a programme for mothers and children called "The Village loves Mothers and Children" (SHIO). It is an Alola Foundation programme that helps mothers get to hospital to give birth or to take their sick children. All the vehicles in the 443-person village are on a register so that they can be available for transport to the hospital.

Education about child health is important for this village, as it is for the young nation of slightly more than one million people, whose infant mortality statistics are symptomatic of its traumatic birth. An estimated 58 per cent of under five-year-olds suffer from malnutrition, rising to 73 per cent in the Bobonaro district in the north-west.

beginnings

East Timor is likely to have been settled by Chinese and Malay people but was first colonised by the Portuguese 450 years ago. When crisis struck Portugal in 1974 they pulled out of Timor without instituting any systems for self-governance. Within a few months neighbouring Indonesia had invaded, killing a third of the population. For the next 25 years East Timor existed under the Indonesian repressive regime. Numbers of its young people formed a resistance force and used their knowledge of the land's rugged terrain to combat the invader's tanks.

During this time the world turned a blind eye to what was happening in Timor, no doubt aided by the secrecy imposed by Indonesia. In 1999 Indonesia's new president, Yusuf Habibie, agreed to allow the East Timorese a referendum. It resulted in an overwhelming vote for independence. In the last 15 years Timor-Leste has been getting back on its feet after Indonesia's brutal withdrawal.

developing local governance

The present government is spending $300 million (the country has adopted US currency) over eight years as part of a process of decentralisation to involve its 442 villages in self-governance and development.

This plan is modelled on similar schemes in Uganda, Indonesia and the Philippines. Timor-Leste is implementing it in three phases — the first 149 villages were completed in 2013 and the remainder will be finished by 2017. Each village gets from $40,000 to $70,000 annually to develop systems for growing its assets. The amount is reckoned according to the village's proximity to the heart of the sub-district and the degree of poverty.

local implementation

Meta's husband and Samalari village leader, Rui Sequera, has established a water collection and distribution plant which makes the most of the climate's six-month-long rainy season. He has planted vegetables in raised beds, which are hand-watered through a central vertical pipe stuffed with rocks.

In consultation with a representative group, Rui is working also to develop industry in the village, using the carpentry and mechanics skills of its people. Tourism is a strong possibility, given the country's rich history.

Meanwhile Meta continues her legal studies through the national university in the capital, Dili, while raising their three children and organising the SHIO.

struggle over oil resources

The Timorese people welcome visits from the Australian friendship groups, a network of shire-based groups to which they are connected

through village or district groups. But at the diplomatic level friendship with Australia is strained by Australia's refusal to give Timor-Leste an equal share of the oil fields under the Timor sea. Australia negotiated with Indonesia to share governance of this stretch of water. When Timor gained independence it also began negotiations with Australia. The latter refused to relinquish its hold on the deep trench to the south, which critics say should be in Timor's hands. The current oil reserve is believed to have a limited life of perhaps just 10 years more.

This diplomatic sore festers through continued protests in Timor-Leste's capital and in Australia's main cities where many Timorese fled during the war with Indonesia. Numerous references to the Timorese fighting alongside Australian troops against the Japanese during World War II seem lost in Australia's determination to deny its poorer neighbour a more just share of the oil.

grinding poverty

What Timor-Leste earns from its oil assets is clearly going into the country's development but the nation is far behind in its growth. There are examples of desperate poverty everywhere a visitor looks.

Tourism could become a vital industry but few hotels outside Dili offer a standard most visitors expect. The service in restaurants is often slow and menu offerings fail to deliver. Clean drinking water is available only in bottles.

The roading system is another difficulty for the tourist. Road-building expertise is challenged by the rugged environment and many roads are undermined in the rains. On the plus side, engineers are exploring ways to stabilise the land during the rainy season by building deep cement trenches beside major roads around Dili to direct rainwater away from the tarmac. In the limestone-rich Baucau region, the roads appear less prone to the potholes ubiquitous in other areas.

jobs are scarce

The lack of Industry shows in high unemployment statistics. A proposal to build a cement factory to capitalise on the high quality limestone around Baucau promises to lift that region out of poverty. It will allow for training in Australia for about 500 people and eventually result in about 1,000 industry jobs. Some local concern about appropriate environmental protection could scupper a possible deal. However the Western Australian Buckeridge Group of Companies says its surveys show 95 percent of the local population are in favour.

hospitality

One thing is clear to the visitor — this tiny nation may be materially poor but its heart is large and open. When a boat-load of asylum seekers destined for Australia washed up on Timor-Leste shores they were invited to stay. But they moved on when they saw that they would add to the poverty. Timor-Leste is a nation of resilient people. Meta and Rui and their village represent the strength of spirit and ingenuity that hauled the nation to independence after centuries of neglect and massacre.

There is much to be done but with the best that democracy, communal vision and ingenuity can offer they may well achieve a nationhood the rest of the world can admire. ■

Cecily McNeill visited Timor-Leste with representatives of the Melbourne Friends of Baucau, Friends of Vemasse and Friends of Ossuale — all linked to local councils. These groups fundraise but their main interest is in being good neighbours and getting to know Timorese on a personal level.

Photos by Cecily McNeill

Kindergarten Kid

The kids at the kindergarten
don't argue or sulk. They don't think.

They dowse the flames in the sandpit.
They spear the dragon.

Two of them share a butterfly kiss.
Another lies like a lizard in the sun.

Sylvie, a leaf of a girl with almond eyes,
is not afraid of strangers.

She bakes a playdough cake,
warning me not to eat it.

Don't be silly, she says. It's disgusting.
She hops away to blow bubbles.

She wears a bright pink shirt over her jeans,
a beautiful fairy in green sneakers.

She asks what I want to be.
I want to be just like her.

– Michael Fitzsimons

Photograph by Zak Holland.

the art of telling a story

Merrilyn George has created the story of Suzanne Aubert's life in textile art and exhibited the collection around New Zealand. Merrilyn spoke to Michael Fizsimons about her art and Suzanne's influence on her.

Michael Fitzsimons

Ohakune quilter Merrilyn George (above) has created a remarkable exhibition of more than 20 large-scale quilts, called *Set Apart*. Over the last year, this striking collection of quilts and cloaks has been exhibited in Whanganui, Wellington, Christchurch and Palmerston North for the *National Quilt Symposium.*

The plan now is to organise a pilgrimage to France and host the exhibition near the town where Suzanne Aubert was born, Saint-Symphorien-de-Lay.

"We want to do it in October next year, hopefully to coincide with 1 October, the anniversary of her death. The local bishop, Cardinal Barbarin, is very enthusiastic about it and I'm getting great support from this end as well."

suzanne - inspiring woman

Suzanne Aubert (1835-1926), also known as Mother Mary Aubert, was a Frenchwoman who led a life of heroic service and compassion, mostly in New Zealand. She was a remarkable woman — social welfare pioneer, champion of disadvantaged children, advocate for the poor and sick "of all creeds and none", friend to Māori and expert in their language. She was also the founder of New Zealand's only indigenous religious order, the Sisters of Compassion.

When she died in 1925, at the age of 91, *The Evening Post* said of her: Suzanne Aubert "may rightly be described as one of the greatest women in public effort and loving self-sacrifice New Zealand has known." Her Cause is currently being considered by Rome and, if successful, she will become New Zealand's first saint.

setting off creative juices

Merrilyn's creative exploration of the life of Suzanne began in 2011 when a full-size icon of Jean Vianney, the Curé d'Ars, came to Ohakune as part of a tour of New Zealand parishes to mark the Year of Priests.

"The icon came to Ohakune from Jerusalem, and I'd prepared the church for it. I saw it in there, and I thought, 'I can't leave him in here by himself'. So I went home, collected all my materials that I'd just dyed, took them over, and I was inspired right there and then to do what turned out to be one of the first quilts. I maintained a vigil through the night, and reflected and read about Suzanne. It just came to me, this idea of doing a series of quilts based on her life.

"Once I began I couldn't stop. I just had to keep going. You know, once you do one work, another one comes into your head before you finish. I just carried on, and followed her life through. It has been the main focus of my quilting in recent years."

quilt exhibition

There are four parts to the exhibition, each representing a different part of Suzanne's journey. The first part, *Set Apart*, depicts early influences in France including the prophecy of St John Vianney and her mission in Auckland when she arrived. The second section is called *The Red Shed* which was where she started making her medicines in Hawke's Bay. This section has three big quilts carrying the red shed motif and two small *kete,* a reference to her carrying the medicines around and visiting the sick in their homes. She was like a travelling GP or district nurse. It was recorded that she saw something like 1300 people in a year. Suzanne later said this was the happiest time in her life, without the pressures she had had in Auckland and would

have in the future as her compassion enterprise grew.

The next section is bold and colourful, entitled *The River Calls*. This covers her extraordinarily fruitful time in Jerusalem/*Hiruhārama* where she began her care for vulnerable children, expanded her healing ministry through the large-scale manufacture of her medicines, and founded the Congregation of the Daughters of Compassion. The final section of the exhibition is entitled *The Wind Has Changed*, a phrase Suzanne used in one of her letters. This covers significant events in her journey and includes works that explore the great spiritual energies that powered her life.

Suzanne's close association with Māori from when she first arrived in Auckland and made friends with Peata is reflected in many of the works, "just there as part of the story," says Merrilyn.

stretching art categories

Merrilyn George is an innovative rather than a traditional textile artist. She uses a wide range of materials and techniques, words and images, and is not afraid to try new things.

"I like telling stories — I've written a few of them — and I like sewing. The two seem to fit together. I use two mediums to tell my stories. For me it's about using your time well, and it needs to be useful. Telling a story is useful."

Telling the story of Suzanne Aubert has been particularly useful because "if I think of my life as a teacher and a person in the community, I can't get a better role model. She's looking after the under-privileged and she's particularly looking after Māori. She's watching out for people of all faiths and she's looking after the dignity of all people. She didn't believe in smacking children, she was way ahead of her time. 'Smack your own impatience', she said. Love, love, love was her message."

art as vocation

Merrilyn lives in Ohakune with husband Ken and has taught at Ruapehu College in Ohakune since 1966. These days she teaches technology textiles and has taught "just about everything" in her teaching career. She taught art at Hato Paora for a number of years — a fabulous job to have — and home economics at Ruapehu. "Food and nutrition is another passion of mine."

But it's the artistic vocation that seems to drive her the most: "I find sewing a prayer. If I haven't done it for a few days, I'm ratty."

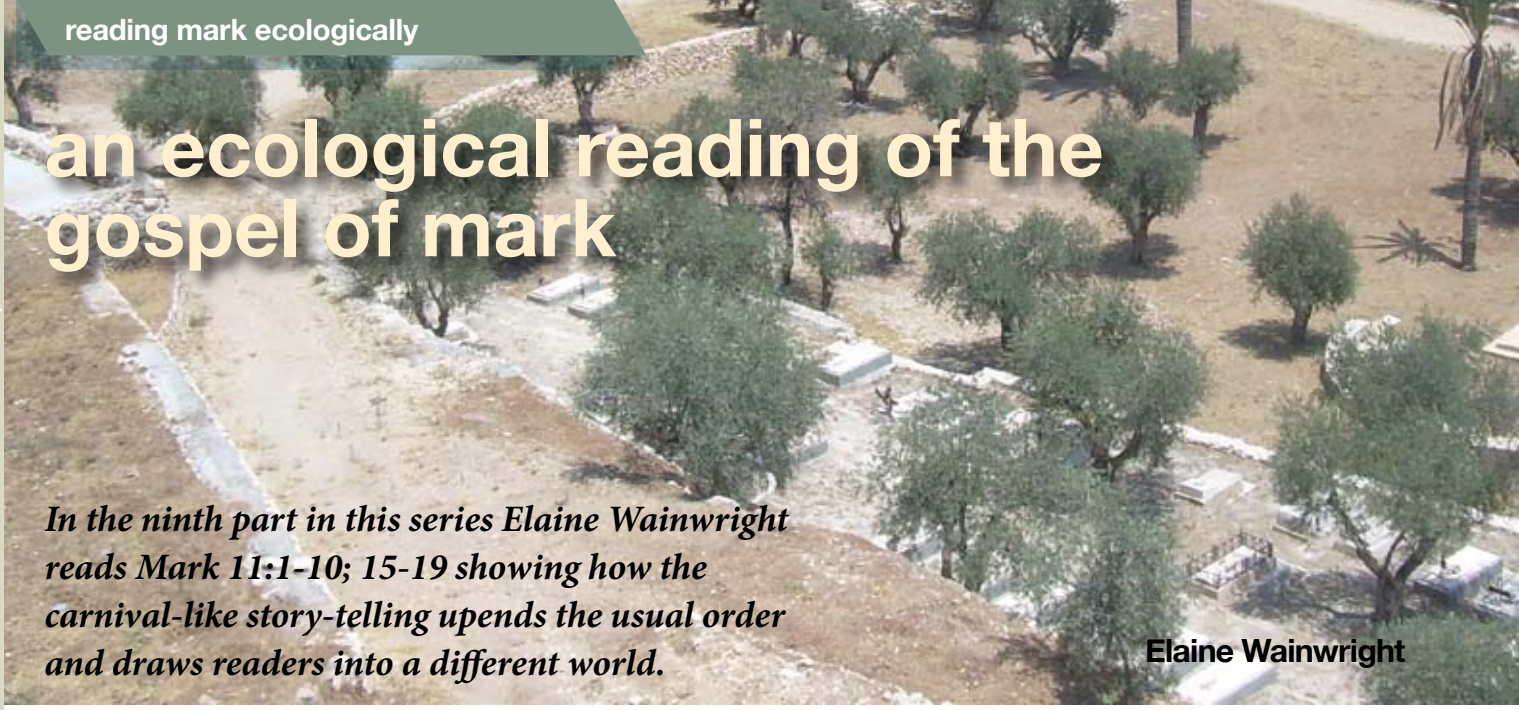
"When people say they are not creative I say 'You have to be, you're made in God's image.'" She is particularly grateful for a *Letter to Artists* written by Pope John Paul II which emphasises the value of the artistic vocation.

"When you're working on art, you can be made to feel like it's not important, and I think that was how I felt in my early years," says Merrilyn. "I felt like it was a hobby, like it's not something you do if there's other work to do. But Pope John Paul's *Letter to Artists* made me feel like it was important work to do. That really helped me to get artistic work done, to tell stories. Expressing ourselves through art, in whatever form, is not a peripheral activity. It's an integral part of evangelisation." ■

Michael Fitzsimons lives in Wellington and is a project manager, publisher and writer for FitzBeck Creative.

Photos: Gail Imhoff

an ecological reading of the gospel of mark



In the ninth part in this series Elaine Wainwright reads Mark 11:1-10; 15-19 showing how the carnival-like story-telling upends the usual order and draws readers into a different world.

Elaine Wainwright

Ched Myers says that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in Mark 11:1-10 resembles "carefully choreographed street theatre". It turns the world upside down in ways that upset or disturb, especially those with political, economic or social power. We can extend this claim of the carnivalesque, or upturning of worlds, to Mark 11:15-19 — Jesus' "cleansing" of the temple. We participate in such upturning of worlds, decentring the human and attending to the other-than-human — place, space, animals and built environments that abound in these texts when we read ecologically. We discover habitat, human and holy as profoundly intertwined. Our way of seeing needs to be turned upside-down though so that we learn to attend to habitat.

In the opening verse Mark (11:1), grounds the story and us as readers in location, calling our attention to habitat. We can imagine the dusty and well-worn path that brings those travelling from Jericho to Jerusalem "near to the Mount of Olives". As its name suggests, this eastern ridge reached before entering the city would have been covered with fruit-bearing olive trees. The text draws the ecological reader even more profoundly into the material locations: at Bethphage and Bethany. Both were small villages or built environments, alive with human and other-than-human inhabitants engaged in life.

colt not war-horse

An element of the carnivalesque emerges as Jesus seems to send the disciples on their errand to secure a colt from both villages — from Bethphage and from Bethany. The atmosphere builds with Jesus assuming the right to use the colt which he does not own.

An ecological reader, perhaps like Mark's original readers, will be tantalised by the reference to the "colt" in this story. The Greek word *pólos* can designate the young of any animal. When it stands alone, as it does in this narrative, it generally refers to the colt of a horse but other possibilities play in the ecological texture of this passage.

In the first century Graeco-Roman world and its centres of power, the war-horse carried a victorious king, emperor or general triumphantly into a city to claim it as his prize. The carnivalesque is at work when Jesus chooses a colt that no one had ever ridden, so still quite young, rather than a full-grown war horse. However the enactment of carnival does not obscure the materiality of the animal. Both function together in this text read ecologically and invite readers to reflect on the human-animal interrelationship. Both are full and active players in the unfolding drama of life.

upending the expected order

The carnival enactment reaches its climax in Mk 11:7-8. This is made possible through the extraordinary agency of the material elements in this story. The disciples bring the colt to Jesus and put their garments on it, mirroring the

splendid blankets on the horse of the triumphant Roman general or king as he entered his city. Other material elements are also out of place. The crowds spread cloaks or clothing on the road and take leafy branches from trees and lay them on the road. The world is being turned upside down. This continues as the crowds that go before and follow Jesus cry out with "hymns and acclamations" in a way that mimics the triumphant entry accompanying a king or a general. Multiple material elements participate with the human actors in this drama that parodies the religious and political powers residing in Jerusalem who will be aligned against Jesus as the narrative unfolds rapidly.

bodies and habitat

We find elements of the carnival in Mk 11:15-19 as Jesus' actions on the temple mount continue to upturn the prevailing world. Readers see Jesus entering the temple mount and creating mayhem, acting in ways he was not authorised to in the prevailing order of the religious and cultural society. This text is characterised by bodies "in-place" and "out-of-place". It opens into a network of time and space in which the human, in particular the character Jesus in all his bodiliness, and habitat are woven together in complex ways in the text.

The first evidence of this is that the word "temple" occurs three times within the first two verses of the scene, drawing the reader into the material setting. It evokes the temple built of massive Jerusalem stone, constructed as part of Herod's grandiose building programme in Jerusalem. It was the domain of ritual or cultic practices presided over by Jerusalem's priestly aristocracy, predominantly the high priest, chief priests and Sadducees. These formed the Jewish elite who controlled the temple and also occupied the wealthy houses that archaeologists have uncovered on the western slope opposite the temple. Political and religious power finds expression in the material elements encoded in the narrative. The lone Jesus confronts this privilege — indeed overturns it.

different world possible

We find ourselves as readers of Mk 11:15-16 in the midst of bodies and birds, tables and stools. Jesus casts out those named as "buying and selling" in the temple just as he cast out demons — so adding to the carnival. Human bodies are caught up in this melee that Jesus is creating with the money-changers' material tables and the stools or seats of those selling doves (the fate of the doves themselves is not visible in the text). This is indeed carnival. Through these actions Jesus is re-ordering the economic, socio-political, religious and material relationships embodied in the temple. This is the hope of those who enter into carnival or "street theatre" as Ched Myers calls it. Momentarily the world is turned upside down and participants are invited into a different world.

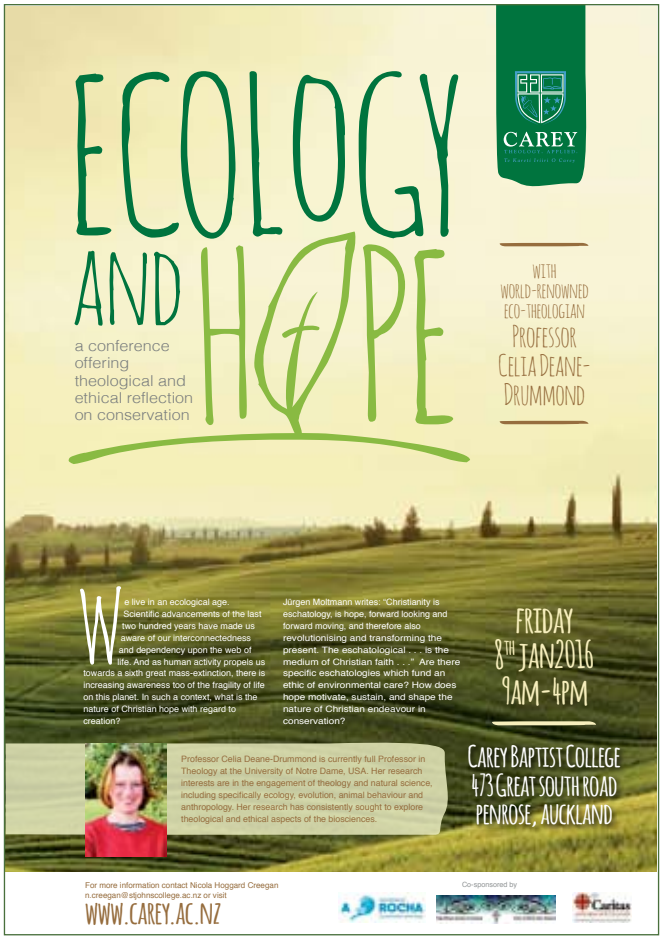
Mk 11:17 creatively intertwines two biblical texts, Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. It contrasts the "ideal" temple that Jesus' actions are symbolically enacting and the temple evoked in pious words that are accompanied by profound injustices in the lives of the people and their leaders. In this verse Jesus' challenge is to the leaders and to those trading in the temple — all those using this space inappropriately.

This invites the ecological reader into the world opening up in front of the text. It is a world in which contemporary readers are challenged to ask about space and its relationship to economic, socio-cultural and religious activities — where they might intersect and where they must diverge. This is not to suggest a retreat into a dualism of sacred and secular space but rather a much richer exploration of material space (habitat) and its relation to the human and the holy that this text evokes.

As the Markan gospel continues to unfold, readers are drawn into the poignancy of this time in the life of Jesus. And the street theatre or carnival, turning of the world upside down, takes readers to the heart of the experience. We know that Planet Earth and all its in-habitants are, like Jesus, at a poignant moment. One invitation to us, the human community, is to learn the way of carnival, to turn our current world upside down so that the other-than-human might demand our attention and our care. ■

Elaine Wainwright RSM is Professor Emeritus of Theology at The University of Auckland and an independent biblical scholar.

Photo: Mount of Olives
Painting: *Christ Driving the Money Lenders from the Temple* by Michael Smither. wwww.michael-smither.co.nz. Used with permission.



Dear Pope Francis . . .

After reading your encyclical *Laudato Si'* I had a dream. Before I tell you about it, may I thank you on behalf of millions who are finding new hope in your redeeming leadership. You are parting the veils for us, allowing us glimpses into the meaning of mystery, liberating us by the beauty of your vision.

Your word for this way of seeing and of being is "magnanimous" — the bigness of God in whose image our hearts were first created. "Let yours be great souls," you wrote. Because of their failure of imagination, small souls struggle to comprehend a great God.

This open magnanimity is at the heart of your current agenda. A significant theme at the October marriage synod concerns the possibility of extending a warm welcome back to the Table of the Lord to those for whom the table was first set. The "Year of Mercy" begins in December with the opening of doors, a wonderful gesture of unconditional acceptance and belonging. And your encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, reminds all people that they are priests, prophets and protectors of Creation and Incarnation.

Which brings me to my dream, *caro Papa*. In it you were proposing One Big Day for the whole world. One Big Day of Love for all humanity, a day that would offer energy and inspiration to all who are anxious to share and to ground your passionate dream for the Earth. In the smallest parish, the greatest cathedral, the public places of faiths and cultures, it would be another Pentecost day to combine the power of ideas, the conviction of emotion and the authenticity of human experience. And hearts across the planet would catch fire.

For you, the poor are the sacrament of God's presence, the bloodied face of Christ's pain. You look at them and you see the point of your pontificate. In your *Evangelii Gaudium*, published in November 2013, you wrote about your "one dogmatic certainty — the presence of God everywhere". Everything you do, write and say is utterly infused with that incarnational compassion. It would be a Day of Grace then, a unique day when people would commit to a radical, exciting and courageous transformation in their everyday lives through a renewed dedication to study, prayer and imaginative discussion.

It would be a Day of Big Mercy. In my dream you quoted from your *Misericordiae Vultus:* "Without a witness to mercy, life becomes sterile ... Mercy is the force that reawakens us to a new life." Is not this the *kairos* time to proclaim unconditional amnesty for the millions of crippled hearts who wait for one merciful word of welcome and belonging? All humanity, as you know, is always forgiven for everything, for ever. This day would be the moment when God's People everywhere — 7 billion of them on this planet alone — would again celebrate that once-and-for-all Passover into a true inner freedom.

You remind us that only God is big enough to do magnanimous, extravagant, unconditional love. You have written so beautifully about *creatio ex amore*: "God's love is the fundamental moving force in all created things." Would the heavens fall on us, then, if we Christians recognised and delighted in the incarnate divine love equally at home in all people, in all creation? Would fire and brimstone burn the table of love if we invited all hungry people to share the food on it, as Jesus did? Or if members of God's same-sex children were allowed to celebrate their love in their Father's house?

Or, since God lovingly chose a woman, Mary, for his intimate enfleshment in the world, and since Jesus adored his mother with a son's devotion, would they both be angry if our sisters stood with our brothers at the family altar of creative love and divine mercy? Dear tango-loving Papa,

do we dance to the beat of the divine heart, or struggle in the straitjacket of an institution? Can we look at these issues with uncluttered "beginner's mind", with the mind of Christ? I'm only asking.

As in your encyclical, and again in my dream, you passionately revealed your love for our living, breathing Mother Earth — the body of our Mother God. It would be a Day of Reverence then for the deepening mystery of our evolving universe, a cosmic day of wonder reaching out into the darkness of uncharted space. It would be a Beautiful Day, celebrating creation in all its expanding mysteries as it celebrates the scientists who discovered them. "Only beauty will save the world," said Simone Weil. And the Church.

When suddenly shocked at the task of saving the Earth, of co-creating the unfolding future with God, concerned human beings are quickly discovering a new perspective. You are calling to us for an immense personal and communal awakening, a focusing on more worthy and soul-sized commitment, a new sense of serious purpose. Beyond religious and cultural mindsets, a new consciousness of a spiritual energy, a universal, mystical intimacy is beginning to pervade the human community.

As caretakers of the Earth up to now, we have been disappointing God. You paint a grim picture of our "filthy" world. You repeatedly try to motivate us in tenderness and compassion towards restoring its beauty. Maybe on this special day many will feel called to realise the dream, to work the vision, to transform the evil. And to suffer for it.

Dear Papa, have patience with my naivety — I'm only dreaming.

Daniel ■

Irish-born Daniel O'Leary is a priest, author & teacher of the Diocese of Leeds UK.
This article (abridged) is republished courtesy of The Tablet. www.thetablet.co.uk

like a sacrament

Sandra Winton

Labour Weekend. I'm planting potatoes. Main crop. I collect the tubers from where I laid them out to sprout towards the sun.

As I hoe a drill, it is my father's hands I see, awkward hands, fingers crimped from an old car accident, hands that could never thread a needle or even hold the ends of a sheet for my mother to pull before ironing, stiff hands that seemed to need to be forced to wrestle the wires into an electric plug. But with potatoes it is different. There's joy. His fingers lift each one with delicacy, turning it in his palm, minding each frail shoot. I watch as his hands place each seed in the dark soil, exactly right, settling it in. Then he rakes the soil over, softly, precisely, with calm sureness as a man might pull a blanket over a sleeping child. When the green pokes through it's like a new morning.

At harvest time it's a liturgy of marvels. Each shaw is lifted seriously, the hanging white globes shaken off. Then there's the search for strays. The shovel slides in like a knife and is lifted. There's a jiggle and a shimmy as the soil turns and tips, revealing potatoes hiding like nuggets. White and red ovals laid on the green lawn. My mother is called out from the house and comes with soapy hands to witness. They'll see us through the winter. The man's providing. There's a sense of satisfaction, of completeness, bounty. My child's eyes watch. My hands remember.

When he was dying, in the hours I sat with him, I asked my father about his childhood. Who was your mother's favourite? "Ron." And your father's? A coy, boy's smile: "Me. I did the garden with him."

I picture them together, father and youngest son. It's being passed on, how to provide, how to care. Lessons taken in as they dig together, examine tubers, handle small plants. The sun is shining on them both. The First World War's going on, the boy too young, the man too old to fight.

My friend, half a generation older, speaks of her father. Back from the war, he won't go to Mass any more. There's a shadow over him. He's seen too much. He's down in the garden of a Sunday, rooting out, digging in, burying it all. But with potatoes it's the same meticulous, observant rite.
Seventy years later she can see it still. "It was like a sacrament," she says.

And she's right. A man providing for his family. A man negotiating with soil and nature.

This year, as I rake the soft soil over, burying for resurrection, I wonder if he laid down the bodies of comrades in the mud, arranging their limbs, straightening a tunic, folding hands. For him there was no resurrection in those muddy fields. Their deadness sticks to him like clay. Back home he's feeding the children, grown in his absence into these tall, incomprehensible girls. The potatoes anchor him to what it is to be a man, a husband, a father. Something's the same. His sacrament is soil-bound, his resurrection in dark leaves emerging, his communion the white spuds on the round plates. ■

Sandra Winton OP, a former teacher, is a pyschotherapist in Dunedin.

doing housing together

In his third article on housing Patrick Snedden describes how two collectives of first-home buyers were squeezed out by land prices. Undaunted, they look to the future and to what the Tamaki Redevelopment Corporation may offer.

Patrick Snedden

I began this series of three articles in late May with "There's a stretch of green in central Auckland that's for sale. Under the new Unitary Plan it might be possible to build 10 houses on it. Each of these houses might manage a footprint of 150 square metres. They would be two storeys high with 120 square metres of internal living area including two to three bedrooms." I laid out the funding required for a house and land package of $700,000 and described why this was impossible for more than three out of four Aucklanders. As if to underline the point the average house price in Auckland is now $786,000. I have been arguing for a disruption in that market.

experiment one

In May I invited a group of potential first-home buyers to meet at my house with a number of sympathetic property professionals, to construct a plan to enter the housing market. Our intention was to test the difference that a coherent collective could make to increasing the chances of first-home buyers to be housed.

The "stretch of green" referred to was next door to our house. It was 1700 square metres. We formed a collective to bid for that land and take on the process of end-to-end development from raw land to turnkey. Typically the development process has four elements that drive the cost: the land purchase price, the consenting and subdivision costs related to preparing the land for title issue, actual building cost and finally, profit and risk.

We asked the question: "What might happen if a collective of first-home buyers formed a partnership supported by property professionals and took on the project and devolved the profit and risk element back into a lower purchase price? Could we reduce the final cost of the housing package by the first-home buyers doing it themselves?" Enthusiastically we submitted our tender at $3.2m ($1880 per square metre). The land sold for $4.1m ($2470 per square metre).

experiment two

We were undaunted. The group had become energised into taking action on its own behalf. A second piece of land became available in West Auckland. It was 7000 sq metres — capable of housing 41 families. We widened the base of those interested and the group doubled in size and we also attracted investors prepared to be back-up in case we didn't get the numbers for the bigger project. We also agreed explicitly to the rules of the collective. In effect nobody would get housed until everybody was housed.

Now the proposition was becoming more refined and it contained a ten per cent social housing component making it attractive to Community Housing Providers and Housing New Zealand as potential investors.

The land we were chasing had been purchased for $3.7m and settled in April 2015. The vendors were now wanting in excess of $7m six months later.

Our limit per household was the Kiwisaver threshold for a house and land package of $550,000 in Auckland. This was the maximum price that a person with Kiwisaver could pay to receive the greatest support from the State. We reworked the sums but with the land at that price we could not make the whole house package work, whereas at under $7m we might have been able to manage with significant downward pressure on other costs.

profiteering

This experience starkly illustrated the dilemma. The vendor wanted to double his money in six months. Save for capital gains tax there are no market controls that impede this kind of profiteering. Without control over land even a coherent collective forming a partnership with purchasing power and a bankable project with a sound and professional project implementation team in support could not deliver the required outcomes.

The message was clear. In Auckland today all power lies with the landholder. What's more, the only significant competition to the unbridled profiteering of the landholder is the Crown's own land deposits and the regulatory powers that they are extremely reluctant to use.

In the last year the Crown has made two regulatory policy adjustments that impact on housing. The first is to

put a two-year minimum time-frame on house ownership lest it attract capital gains tax on sale. The second is for overseas buyers or non-residents to have an IRD number in order that the State can gather data and track taxable activity on who is investing in the market from off-shore.

Neither of these measures addresses the "super profits" demonstrated in the West Auckland example described above. In fact, it is treated as business as usual.

Yet this kind of profiteering represents a financial premium to be extracted for the already well-off that directly reduces the future housing capability of the next generation. It runs counter to the notion of a widespread social stability that has underpinned our nationhood. It is today a dilemma for Auckland but as these prices for land drive out everybody but the privileged from home ownership in our major city the aggregation of financial power to the elites will accelerate.

experiment three on horizon

There is one encouraging counter-offensive driven by Crown policy. This is the Tamaki Redevelopment Corporation (TRC) that will in April 2016 inherit all the land currently owned by Housing NZ in Point England, Panmure and Glen Innes. In its current form it amounts to 2600 properties. However it will be capable of being built to 7500 or more with changes in rules to density. Here it may be possible for the Crown, through the sheer weight of its own land holdings, to influence the market in favour of the first-home buyer.

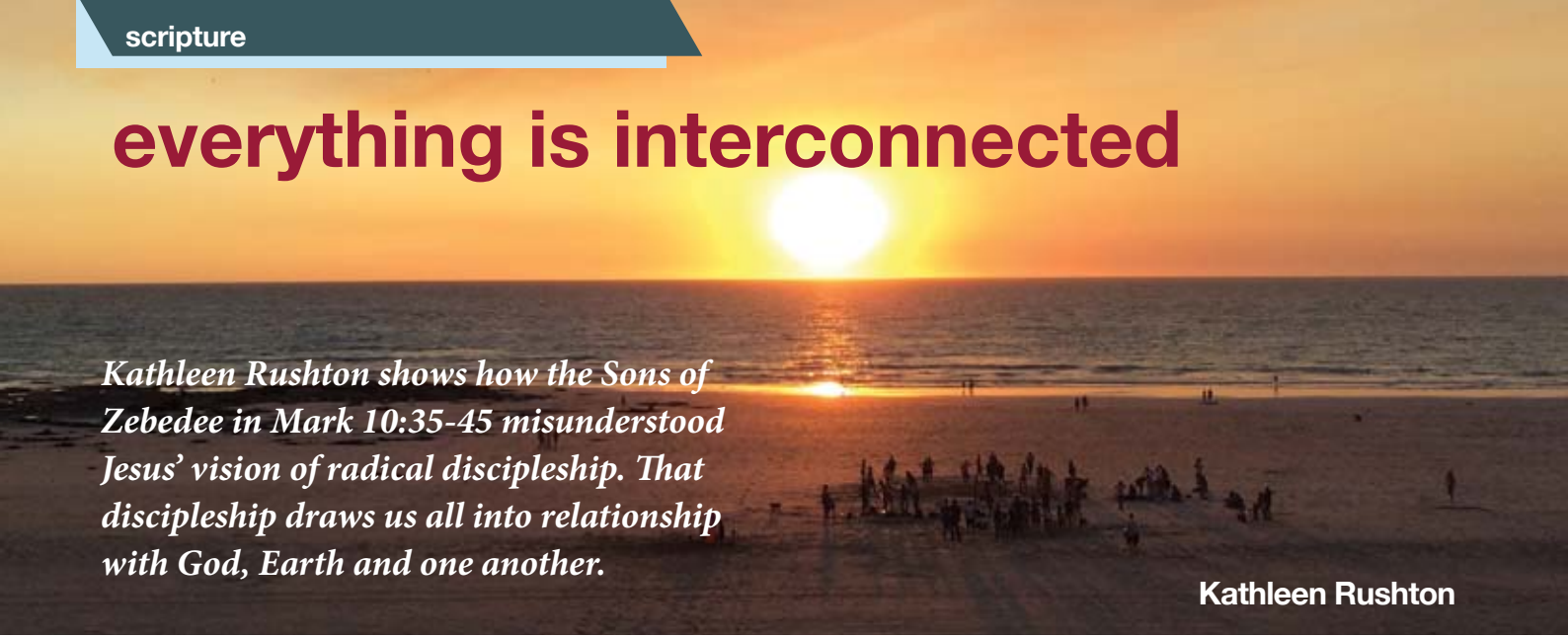
The challenge TRC faces is formidable but has been given a wide-ranging mandate to effect positive change. It will of course have to fund the mix of its activities from shrewd management of its capital stock of houses. It won't be able to make available affordable housing unless it also benefits from the proceeds of the sale of more expensive housing. It also will need to experiment with new housing typology that will be new to the area and will provide affordable price and have small footprints. A lot hangs on its success because there is much Crown land distributed throughout Auckland that, if utilised well, could provide real alternatives to the property profiteering which is constraining the market.

Our new collective will certainly be responding to the expression of interest just released by TRC. We will keep you posted as to how we get on. ■

Patrick Snedden is a former chair of Housing New Zealand and works as a company director in Auckland.

Painting: *Shotgun Houses by Lamplight* by Jax Frey. [www.artbyjax.com] Used wth permission.

everything is interconnected



Kathleen Rushton shows how the Sons of Zebedee in Mark 10:35-45 misunderstood Jesus' vision of radical discipleship. That discipleship draws us all into relationship with God, Earth and one another.

Kathleen Rushton

One of the main themes running through *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* is that everything is interconnected. Pope Francis constantly refers to "three fundamental and closely entwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself" (par 66). Attention to these three interconnected relationships enables a reading of the story of the sons of Zebedee (Mk 10:35-45) for *whakawhanaungatanga* (making right relationships) with *Atua* (God), *tāngata* (people) and *whenua* (land).

The Scriptures are the framework and substructure of the gospel according to Mark which inserts Jesus, son of God, in his humanity and materiality, into the three interconnected relationships with God, with people and with the Earth. Mark sets out a triad of beginnings. The gospel's first word is the noun, "beginning" (*arche)* evoking the creation story of Genesis in which God creates in wisdom. The *whakapapa* (genealogy) of Jesus begins, therefore, with his connection to creation and to the God who saves: "Beginning of the good news of Jesus the Christ (the anointed one), the Son of God" (Mk 1:1). The second beginning is the return to "the beginning of creation" in Mk 10:6. This follows the transfiguration and introduces the radical teachings of Jesus on poverty, powerlessness and child-likeness, which is the immediate context of the story of the sons of Zebedee.

on the way

The radical teaching of Jesus in Mark 10 is part of a central section, which focuses on the formation of the disciples (Mk 8:31-10:52). What it means to follow Jesus is set over time in the context of a journey. There is much tripping around in a variety of landscapes. The journey begins after the healing of a man who is blind in the seafront town of Bethsaida (Mk 8:22). Peter declares Jesus is the Messiah as they are "on the way" to the villages of Caesarea Philippi about 50 kms north (Mk 8:27). Six days later, Jesus is transfigured "up a high mountain apart," traditionally considered to be Mt Tabor in the south of Galilee. They "went on from there and passed through Galilee" to the fishing town of Capernaum, eventually journeying through the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan to Jericho, about 160 kms away. In that oasis town, this section ends with the second healing of one who was blind. Bartimaeus regained his sight and followed Jesus "on the way." Between these two stories of the recovery of physical sight, Jesus speaks three times of his rejection, suffering, death and resurrection. The disciples stumble around blind. They do not get what Jesus is teaching them.

wanting preference

Particularly ironic is the request of the sons of Zebedee. James and John begin by treating Jesus as their servant: "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you" (Mk 10:35). Jesus replies as he so often does with a question: "What is it you want me to do for you?" They want to sit "one at your right hand and one at your left, in

your glory." They want to be the equivalent of the prime minister and minister of finance in what they perceive will be the *basileia* (reign) of God. There is immense irony. The reader, familiar with Mark's story of Jesus, knows the only other mention of right and left is: "And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left" (Mk 15:27).

The ten are angry with James and John. Jesus called them and said: "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognise as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them" (Mk 10:42). The disciples knew this from experience. By this stage of Mark's narrative, they had been in fishing villages surrounding the Sea of Galilee. They had tramped past countryside estates and small farms. They could well have passed the Fortress of Alexandrium. In contrast to those who lord it over them and to their internal problem of striving for honour and power, Jesus continues his radical teaching. In word and deed he incarnates a radical relationship of serving or ministering (*diakonein*).

diakonein – to serve, minister

Prior to the James and John story, Jesus was teaching the disciples about an essential part of the meaning of discipleship. Serving will lead to death and resurrection (Mk 9:31). At that time, "on the way", the twelve were arguing about who was the greatest among them. Later when they came to Capernaum, the disciples did not answer Jesus when he asked them what they were arguing about. So he explained to them: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant (*diakonos*) of all." He put among them a little child. Later, concerning James and John's request, Mark uses *diakonein* of Jesus as a model for the disciples: "whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant (*diakonos*) … "For the Son of Man came not to be served (*diakonēthēnai)* but to serve (*diakonēsai*) and to give his life a ransom for many."

Mark also uses *diakonein* at the beginning of Jesus' ministry when the angels served him in the desert (Mk 1.13). For the mother-in-law of Peter, the appropriate response to the experience of Jesus' healing power is to spend oneself in service (*diakonein*) to him and the community. Women exemplify this ministry (Mk 15.41). This Greek verb, from which comes the word deacon, later became a standard term for Christian ministry (Acts 6:2-4). The verb, and words derived from it, was not part of everyday language. It occurred only in formal classical Greek literature in passages of a profoundly religious nature. It would seem that early Christians adopted this term to use mainly in the context of messages from heaven, or between churches or of commissions within churches. Implied is the notion of mandated authority from God, an apostle or church.

right relationship with everything

Pope Francis reminds us about the interconnection of right relationship with people and the Earth: "When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities … it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected. Once the human being declares independence from reality and behaves with absolute dominion, the very foundations of our life begin to crumble" (*Laudato Si'*, par 117). Instead of serving/ministering to the Earth: "We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will" (*LS*, par 2).

To return to the triad of beginnings. The third beginning is in Mark 16, when at the point of what looks like the end, is found the images of the new day and the return to Galilee. It is the place of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus and subsequently that of the disciples who are commissioned to: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15). ■

Kathleen Rushton RSM is a scripture scholar and adult educator.

Gospel reading for 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time (18 October).

Photo lower left: Sculpture, University of Berkeley, taken by Kathleen Rushton. Used with permission.

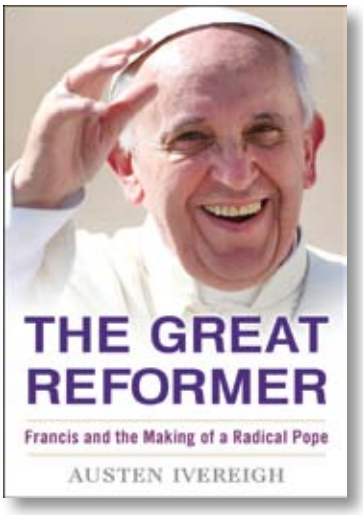
francis's story

The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope.

By Austen Ivereigh

Pubished by Picador

Reviewed by Pat McGettigan



This is a comprehensive biography of the life of Jorge Bergoglio, now Pope Francis. The author has done an enormous amount of research within South America, Germany and Rome and follows the present Pope from his growing up days in Buenos Aires, to his ordination as a young Jesuit, to Archbishop and Cardinal in Buenos Aires and to being chosen as Pope Francis after the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI. It would seem from the author's perspective that all his positions — being chosen as a young Jesuit Provincial, becoming the Archbishop of Buenos Aires and finally being chosen as the successor to Pope Benedict — came unexpectedly and surprised many of his contemporaries.

This is by far the most comprehensive biography I have read on the life of Jorge Bergoglio and is full of delightful stories of acts of heroic compassion and kindness shown to God's little people. The book gives an insight into the historical context of Argentina that shaped and forged Pope Francis into the marvellous person he is today. He has known deep physical and emotional sufferings and always has attracted both admirers and detractors. He has remained consistent as a courageous and prophetic witness, living the gospel message by word and action whether as a humble priest or seated on the chair of Peter.

As I read the stories of Pope Francis's achievements as a Jesuit provincial, as the Cardinal of Buenos Aires and now as Pope, I felt lost for words in my admiration for him as a man. I feel how privileged we are today to have him at the barque of St Peter. I couldn't help likening him to the former Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero, with his depths of spirituality, his joy in being with the faithful people of God, his being a confidante and advocate for the poorest of the poor and being their voice when they had no voice.

This book makes a compelling case for presenting Pope Francis as a reformer — first in the Jesuit Province of Argentina, then in the Diocese of Buenos Aires and in the Latin American Church when he drafted the final document at Aparecida in Brazil for CELAM (Latin American Episcopal Conference). Now he is tackling the reform of the whole Catholic Church as its head.

I recommend this book to anyone who wants to know the spiritual and intellectual depths of Pope Francis, a man of vision who includes peoples of all religions and of no religion, people who are his friends and enemies and above all he includes those forgotten and discarded. ■

doing funera

Earthed in Hope: Dying, Death and Funerals – A Pakeha Anglican Perspective

By Alister G. Hendery

Published by Philip Garside Publishing Ltd

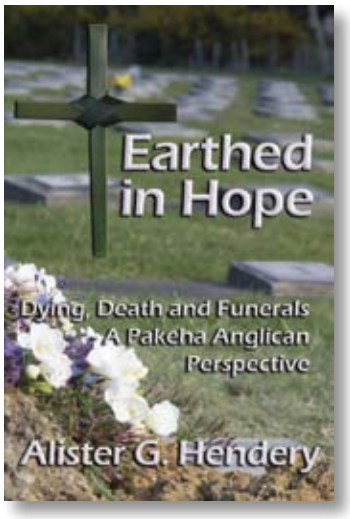
Reviewed by Anne Priestley

A quick scan of death notices in a newspaper reveals the fading influence of Christian faith in this country. Many funerals now are held at a crematorium or a funeral director's chapel. Some of these funerals will be taken by a minister of religion; but increasingly funeral directors and celebrants have taken over the traditional roles of a minister of the church. We live in a world where there are multiple views on "what comes next" after death, mostly at variance with the theological witness of scripture. Even church funerals often celebrate the life which has ended, rather than proclaiming Christian hope in the midst of grief and death.

This is the terrain surveyed by Hendery, a Pakeha Anglican priest. His writing is marked deeply by his trust and hope in God's grace and equally by his long pastoral experience.

He begins with sociology and theology, chapters which are most lively when earthed in contemporary New Zealand practice. The second half of this book has a strong practical bent, as Hendery discusses pastoral and liturgical issues in journeying with the dying person and in the stages before, during and after the funeral service. He includes thoughtful commentary on the rich resources of *A New Zealand Prayer Book /He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*, the Anglican prayer book (this material, valuable for Anglican

als well



ministers, will be less useful to others). Here, as elsewhere, he provides ideas from a wide range of religious and cultural sources.

Hendery pays attention to the complexities arising from a death by suicide and to special questions concerning children and death. He is not afraid to criticise the Church for less than helpful theology and practice, both past and present.

Hendery's theological commitments and generous pastoral instincts stand in unresolved tension — the tension of God beyond and God within. For me, this reflects a great challenge of funeral ministry: how to speak the language of the bereaved, in our changed and changing world, and also to proclaim faithfully the good news of God.

I also appreciated Hendery's determination to be blunt. To say the words "die", "death", "coffin". To face the fact of one's own death. To accept that, facing death, we do not know everything.

This wise and wonderfully comprehensive book about funeral ministry in Aotearoa is not a quick read, but will benefit many who carry pastoral responsibilities. ■

exposing bare bottoms

The Emperor's New Clothes

Directed by Michael Winterbottom

Reviewed by Mike Riddell

Russell Brand is a polarising figure. He's either an egotistical rich prat with a foul mouth and a childish chip on his shoulder, or he's an impish prophet who acts out an incisive and defining spiritual perspective on life. In *The Emperor's New Clothes*, director Michael Winterbottom combines with Brand to offer a documentary critique of the consequences of neo-liberalism.

It's a case of the prankster versus the banksters. In homage to Michael Moore, Brand takes the case against criminal corruption and massive filching of money into the lobbies of many of the big-name banks. Unsurprisingly, the villains of the piece never front — leaving it to their low-paid security guards to escort the ever-cheeky Brand off the premises.

It's worth the price of admission to hear Rupert Murdoch described as a "liver-spotted tarantula". But whether the film succeeds or not can be gauged only in terms of its agenda. To anyone who reads more deeply than the mainstream media, nothing here is particularly new. Western inequality is growing, the banks and financial institutions are uniformly corrupt, and governments don't care.

There are better and more detailed critiques than the populist slogans offered by Brand. But this project is not aimed at closet intellectuals or listless university professors. It's a cry to the heartland of those damaged by a relentless economic ideology. The film seeks to go straight to the reality of the people suffering directly from heartless policies.

Brand is at his best when hanging out with the stoic underclass savaged by Britain's selective austerity. He's easily at home among those who do "shit work" for wages that don't quite meet the costs of staying alive. The most moving and dignified scenes of the film have Brand chatting with a young black woman who has found her way to employment despite advanced cerebral palsy.

Like all good documentary work, this is where the soul is — the inescapable confrontation with the human face of the rigid death-dealing dogma that is neo-liberalism. Brand resists it not with ideas (though there are some good practical suggestions at the end), but with a bit of a laugh and a compassionate prodding as to whether life might be more than all this.

The title is well chosen. Brand is the child in a parade of adults, giggling at their unrecognised nakedness. Will the film change anything? I doubt it. But I have new-found respect for Brand as he carries a guttering flame of hope in the midst of a hurricane of structured oppression. I hope his dimly-burning wick is never extinguished. ■

Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

interfaith dialogue not easy

Commonweal reported on a recent conference at Georgetown University which was devoted to the Vatican II's opening up to other faiths, especially Judaism and Islam.

Abdulaziz Sachedina, a veteran of the Muslim-Catholic dialogue, declared: "Vatican II deserves to be emulated by other exclusionary faith communities." However "religious communities have not come to terms with the demand that their own traditions should be regarded as one among many … I can still hear clear and loud anti-pluralist sentiments coming from almost all monotheistic traditions in the (Middle East) region."

Regarding Muslim-Christian dialogue, he said the "civil atmosphere of dialogue" has quietly excluded some hard questions as outside the bounds of "dialogical conversations". For Christians "the religious validity of the prophet-hood of Muhammad and the Qur'an as the revealed message of God … are real thorny issues which have blocked chances for better inter-communal relations in the poor countries of Africa, South Asia and the Far East." Professor Sachedina said Muslim full engagement is held back by "a sense of superiority and to an extent self-righteousness engendered by the doctrine of 'the best community' ever to come forth on this earth."

He noted that even among modern educated Muslims "there are those who shun the idea of interfaith relations and co-existence on the basis of this self-proclaimed uniqueness and perfection".

About Christians: "It is clear to me that for any Christian leader to say there is some validity to a faith other than Christianity . . . would require enormous wisdom and courage."

Professor Jonathan Ray argued that as much as Catholics may want to put the history of Christian anti-Semitism behind them, Jews cannot do that. Jewish identity continues to be rooted in a history of persecution, discrimination and victimization. He predicted "a legacy of shadows" will continue to haunt Jewish-Christian relations for the foreseeable future.

A major impediment to progress is the internal anxieties afflicting the Jewish community today over inter-marriage and continuing world-wide persecution. These worries affect all communities of Jews.

Even more difficult, Ray observed, is the increasing internal tension between the growing Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox communities and more liberal Conservative, Reform and secular Jews. Liberal Jews don't communicate with the Orthodox and the Orthodox have very little desire to relate to them.

Another contributor made the case that formal dialogues between religious bodies have "not yet penetrated Jewish society. Rabbinical schools offer very little by way of preparation for interreligious work and the lay Jewish community remains largely unaware and unaffected by dialogue."

justice takes a beating

Three newspaper items caught my attention. One pointed out that the draft *Workers' Safety Bill* rated worm farms riskier than dairy farming. This is National's bungled attempt to avoid unionisation on farms. Another, that some managers of Charter Schools were paying themselves exorbitant remuneration at the expense of pupils. And the third, that the "same house sells four times in three months, increase $84,000". These are all examples of "the market" at work.

In *Populorum Progressio* (1968) Paul VI wrote: "When we fight poverty and oppose the unfair conditions of the present, we are not just promoting human well-being; we are also furthering women's and men's spiritual and moral development, and hence we are benefiting the whole human race. For peace is not simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among all people."

What are our government's values really?

francis on fig trees

The *NZ Herald* has run a series on candidates for the *Pride of NZ* competition. Similarly TV One has had a weekly *Good Sorts* programme — people in local communities who quietly do remarkable things for others over long periods of time. I am impressed constantly by the number of good people in our country who contribute to the building of their local communities. While I suspect some are imbued with faith, no doubt many have no particular religious beliefs.

I thought of this when I read Pope Francis saying authentic faith is open to others and forgives. Such faith urges God to help Christians and the Church to avoid a selfish, sterile and profiteering type of religion. Using Jesus' image of the fig tree that produces no fruit, Francis said the fig tree symbolises a sterile life that is unable to give anything or be good to others.

"It lives for itself, calm, selfish, it doesn't want any problems. And Jesus curses the fig tree because it's sterile, because it has not given of itself to produce fruit. It symbolises a person who does nothing to help others, who always lives for him or herself, as long as nothing is lacking." ■

in our own language

Robert Consedine

More than 60 years ago my day would often begin in the local parish church as an altar boy serving at morning Mass — in Latin. The fact that the priest, the altar boy and the small congregation had a limited idea of what they were saying was accepted. The articulation of the Mass by all parties was a repetitive exercise and the performance was led by a powerful clergy. The people were spectators.

Why were we praying in Latin given that the miracle at Pentecost was that no interpreters were needed for everyone to hear in their own language the same message? "For they heard them praising God in their own language" Acts 10:44-46.

Jesus preached his powerful message of love in Aramaic. Sometime after his brutal death his followers decided to make a written record of his life and message. This was written in Greek and became known as the New Testament. The Old Testament had been written in Hebrew.

The Latin Mass was authorised by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and it identified the Church with just the "educated" hierarchy.

Although for centuries in Europe Latin was used by governments and Christians it was because at that time "universal" meant only "Europe". Later French replaced Latin as the language of international diplomacy.

By the 1960s most of the Bishops at Vatican II did not understand Latin. Cardinal Cushing of Boston offered to pay for United Nations-style simultaneous translation. It didn't happen. He went home after the second session. Some Curia officials used the Bishops' inability to speak and understand Latin to try and undermine the Council decisions. For them Latin was the language of dogma.

Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI supported the return of the Latin Mass as part of a wider effort to roll back the radical reforms of Vatican II.

Latin became the language of authority and exclusion. Catholic historian Gary Wills said: "It is about clerical privilege and power. It excludes the laity. It is intentionally elitist … a secret code of the elect." Latin can promote clericalism strongly condemned by Pope Francis.

Earlier Pope Paul VI had described attempts to reintroduce the Latin Mass as "a symbol of the condemnation of the Council ... I will not accept under any circumstances the condemnation of the Council through a symbol. Should this exception to the liturgy of Vatican II have its way, the entire Council would be shaken." Paul knew that permitting the old form would call the entire Council into doubt and that would be "a sin against the Holy Spirit".

Pope Francis describes the Mass celebrated in the local language of the people as "a courageous move by the Church to get closer to the people of God".

When the Mass changed from Latin to English it took the Eucharist from the altar and placed it amongst the people.

Through the liturgy the Church defines itself. Latin reflects a worldview that is incompatible with the Council. "The long, hard, hopeless endeavour to lock up the word of God in a language in which it was not written, was ending."

Vatican II placed renewed emphasis on the Church as the people of God. The Eucharist is the action of a whole congregation — laity and clergy — because the Church itself includes all the baptised. ■

Robert Consedine is a workshop leader in Waitangi Associates Ltd and lives in Christchurch.

a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

Few people would describe me as a still kind of person. I like getting up early in the morning. I do exercise every day. I love going to new places. I prefer walking, cycling and tramping holidays versus sitting on a beach. Four lively school-aged children, busy work responsibilities, study which requires travel and living far away from New Zealand make stillness an even more remote concept. The art of stillness however is a discipline and perhaps a lens — a way of looking at things — that I am keen to bring further into my daily rhythms.

I've had more opportunity than usual to be still after a significant operation to repair knee ligaments that I broke playing basketball. I've been parked on the sofa at home with some very slow crutches. The involuntary stillness after knee surgery has meant I've relished friends coming to our house to visit. I've sat and listened to the kids' stories after school instead of half-listening as I make dinner in the kitchen. I haven't been as good at embracing it as I hoped.

Stillness intersects with both solitude and silence but is still separate. It is an end in itself but also a pathway that permits other things to happen.

Stillness somehow implies time-space. The novelist Pico Iyer writes a lot about stillness. He describes his idea of luxury as a large swathe of time without schedules or pre-made plans. This underlines the importance of mental space to allow for thoughtful writing and opportunity for unscheduled events, like table tennis with friends and chatting. He tries to keep many weeks each year without appointments or schedule. He appreciates a quiet Benedictine monastery which he visits often as a place with a translucent stillness that is a tonic for him.

I've recently been trying to set up my working week to make space for mental stillness. By bundling all my meetings and workshops back to back on two or three days a week, I can keep at least one working day without meetings and phone calls, which gives me still space to think and write. Those days I stay still — I don't leave my work space/ office.

Stillness is also an attitude that allows attentiveness and room for reflection. Part of this is trying to avoid my mind's getting busy with unnecessary dross. Choosing not to access TV and regular daily news — no newspaper, radio or internet news — is one way to keep my head less busy and tangled. I get enough perspective on important current events with a weekly browse of national and international events — thanks to our church friend who shares his *Guardian Weekly*. I completely miss a few major news stories and nothing bad seems to come of it.

Stillness for me is definitely facilitated by material simplicity. Our choice to have no petrol-powered family vehicle means most weekends we go only as far as our legs can take us — and back. We go to the homes of friends, a favourite *prantha* (spicy *roti*) shop, grocery and vegetable shops that are all in a radius of a few kilometres from our house. Maybe that helps us be still. Sometimes things are a little boring or repetitive. We seem to get by. We are at home often. ■

Kaaren Mathias is a Public Health doctor and the programme manager for Mental Health in the Emmanuel Hospital Association in North India where she lives with her family.

Blessing

Whenever we see or hear a child
may joy spring in us
and protection issue from us.
May selflessness engage us
and love draw us deeper into the mystery of God.

— from the Tui Motu team