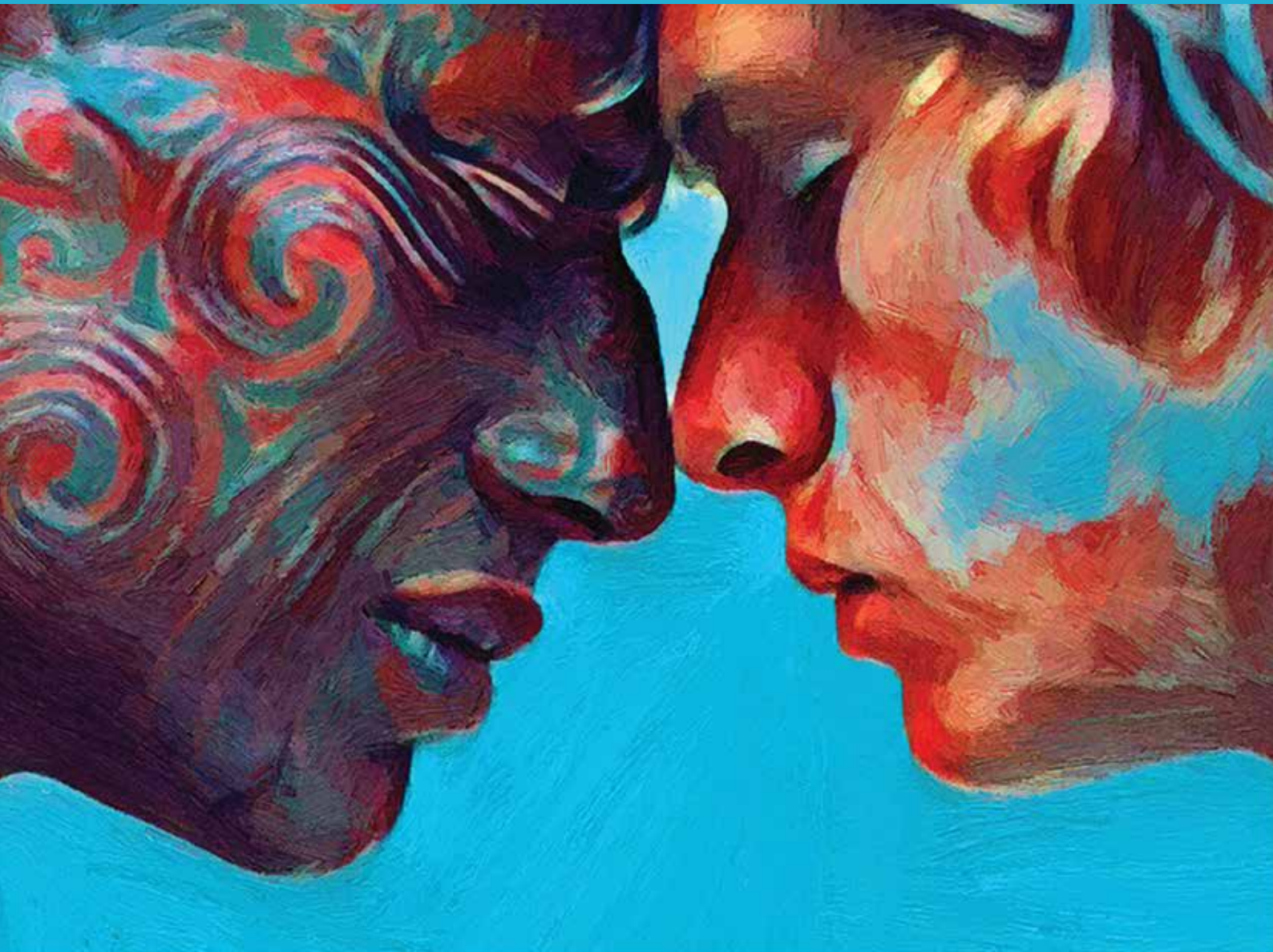


# TUI MOTU

InterIslands

Issue 262 August 2021 \$7



## Better Politics for All

### Whakahaere Tohatoha

PATRICK SNEDDEN, ADRIENNE GALLIE & BRIDGET TAUMOEPEAU  
consider our personal politics

NICHOLAS THOMPSON & MASSIMO FAGGIOLI  
discuss Church and State relationships

and DANIEL O'LEARY on growing more contemplative

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## EDITORIAL

### Vision Needed for Better Politics



Crisis can bring out the best in us. We become supportive, generous and confidence-inspiring. We saw this in the recent floods, when the emergency services were strengthened by established groups, like the Red Cross and St Vincent de Paul, as well as little armies of people who rolled up their sleeves and helped out.

It's in the aftermath of an immediate crisis, when the helpers have gone back to their homes and media attention has shifted elsewhere, that feelings of isolation and fatigue can overwhelm us. We can fall into disgruntlement — after all, we had no say in the disruption that nature visited on us and yet we are left to deal with it.

This is the time when we need the attention of our political systems — the mayor and local council, churches and community groups, government departments — to advocate for, unify and spread encouragement and hope among us. We need them to live up to their roles and vocations and to support us. We need them to demonstrate that those suffering are not alone.

This is why politics that intentionally divide the community — as shown by US former President Trump's and Samoa's former Prime Minister Tuila'epa Sailele Malielegaoi's resistance to their countries' election results — express a loss of vision, integrity and efficacy in governing for the common good. In the Church, it's when major diocesan decisions which affect all members — such as amalgamating parishes and closing parishes — are made by the bishop and clergy without allowing members to be part of that decision-making. Personally, as Patrick Snedden explains, it's when we're unaware of our racism towards other community members and continue to limit their access to citizenship.

Working for better politics, whether at the individual, community or national level, means sharing a vision of love, justice and the common good. That means we need to talk to one another about it more. Pope Francis is calling for better politics in Church governance and has initiated a synod which will happen probably in 2023. He is asking every bishop to consult with the people of their dioceses — to listen to and understand what parishioners are saying — before they go to Rome. In our country the government is making changes to legislation to better protect people and Earth. These have included a law change to stop the trafficking of people in Aotearoa and regulations introduced to stop the pollution of water.

Politics that benefit all the community rely on a shared vision. We thank the contributors to this 262nd issue for encouraging our conversations through their reflections, research, art and craft.

And as is our custom, our last words are of encouragement and blessing. ★





# SPACE IS NOT A PLAYGROUND

**O**n 20 July 1969, humans set foot on the moon for the first time. It was an iconic achievement of the 20th century. Almost 52 years to the day later, two billionaires raced to be the first to launch themselves into space — a forgettable moment in this century.

The competition between the world's richest man Jeff Bezos and Virgin founder Richard Branson may seem trivial at first glance. But it raises questions about how far we have really come in understanding humans' impact on space in the last five decades.

The original 1960s space race was a culmination of human effort. It was spurred on by a contest of distinct ideologies, but it was ultimately a defining moment for humanity.

In a decade crammed with the Cold War, the Vietnam War and the Cuban Missile Crisis, and marred by nuclear armament, chemical warfare and political assassinations, the moon landing and the Space Age inspired unity and agreement about valuing space.

As it has for millennia, the grandness and scale of space caused awe and reflection. It reminded humanity of the preciousness and fragility of Earth, the importance of safeguarding it for future generations,

and the need to treat those who live in Earth with more kindness.

It is more difficult to derive value from this second race. The competition to send uber-rich men to space derives more from ego and greed than anything else. It is a vanity project for the world's wealthiest and a promotional stunt to generate profits for their enterprises.

The modern pursuit of space travel is the antithesis of the historic one. For all the talk of visiting the moon or colonising Mars, the participants are driven ultimately by a corporate ethos. The competition to get there first is like a petty squabble among individuals preoccupied with themselves. The rest of us are merely their audience.

Rather than reconsider the value of the world we inhabit or strive to redress the issues that endanger it, the plan to conquer space speaks of a need to escape. With a pandemic and climate change in full swing, there are good reasons to think we might need a plan B.

But it's hard to stomach that billionaires like Bezos, who have profited by exploiting Earth and its resources, give nothing in return. Wielding resources that overshadow the GNP of many countries, these men could do far more for the well-being of

people today.

It appears that they are intent on making things worse. For example, both Bezos and Elon Musk are planning to launch tens of thousands of new satellites into low-orbit gravity. Both are quick to point out the faults in the other's plans, but neither can admit those in their own.

Critics say their business could endanger future space travel as their junk collects in orbit and can potentially collide with future launches. Astronomers warn their clutter could interfere with our ability to stargaze from Earth.

Neither man wants to slow down, consider the threats or mitigate the risks. They are focusing on their own achievements with no consideration for the greater good. As a result, they risk leaving the wrong legacy altogether.

At this time, 50 years on from the original space race, Branson and Bezos need to pause and reflect seriously, lest they do irreparable damage in our part of the universe. ★

Photo by Alexyz3d/Shutterstock.com

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# Better Personal Politics around Race

**PATRICK SNEDDEN** describes how Pākehā racism impacts others in society and suggests steps towards conversion.

**L**ilo was painting the wardrobe in our bedroom when she casually mentioned that her brother had been racially profiled in a supermarket — again. In the lineup of people leaving the checkout it was only her brother — the only brown person — who was asked at the exit to produce his receipts. Lilo says this isn't a rare occurrence, and nor is the casual and frequent trailing by supermarket staff of her other *aiga* (family) members, the staff feigning rearrangement of stock as they observed the brown shoppers.

## Trevor's Take

Lilo's painting followed the clever and precise handiwork of Trevor, who had done a beautiful job in the construction of the wardrobe frame. On the day he finished, Trevor warned us off going into Grey Lynn that afternoon because the gangs were clogging the streets in support of a funeral in the Catholic church for one of their members. The turnout was high. The gang member had died while in police custody.

My wife said she thought a death in police custody warranted looking into, but for Trevor it was enough

that it was a gang member who died. Probably a drug dealer. We didn't need to know anything else about him. Case closed.

The guy who died was close to Lilo's brother. She reflected that the high turnout of gang members was a tribute to the unifying nature of the deceased, whom her brother had said was respected across gang divisions. He was a man who brought people together for common cause.

The coincidence of these clanging alternative reflections speaks volumes about our claim to citizenship and challenges us to do better.



## Get on Top of Racism

As Pākehā, we have to get on top of this reflexive racism. Trevor assumed he was in safe company when he made his remarks. He took for granted that we would share his diminished view of those not like us. We don't. And Lilo has had enough.

She explains the pressure of being the subject of racial profiling. Her *aiga* has been living in Grey Lynn for many years, long before the supermarket opened. Under what moral authority does the supermarket come into her area, impose its rules and then decide if her family can "pass the test" to shop there?

Lilo says this routine discrediting her people is yet another manifestation of the "shit" she experiences as a daily occurrence. She and her *aiga* are New Zealand citizens whose lives are blighted by a power bias that is Pākehā driven and controlled, and mostly denied. This experience of racism of a routine variety is almost never experienced in Aotearoa if you are white.

## Pākehā Treated Better

Now more than ever I understand the value of friendships that cross racial boundaries. These have been part of my rich 66 years of living, sewn into the fabric of everyday rituals and routine.

My friendship at Ngāti Whātua o Ōrakei has helped me a lot up to this day. Getting arrested with Joe Hawke and his whānau in 1982 as they were defending their right to their own whenua on Bastion Point gave me a close up experience of the racism of differential treatment.

I was in my late 20s then, sitting alone in a cell listening to my fellow Māori protestors being beaten up by police in the cells either side of me. The fright I experienced as I anticipated being "next" for this treatment still resonates.

But the beating never came because when the senior policeman in charge worked out I managed *Zealandia*, the Catholic weekly newspaper, I was treated in an exemplary fashion.

So while the people with the greatest moral right to their stance got smashed about for their insolence

in taking on the instrumentation of injustice, the white guy with access to the powerful punch of an editorial machine with a Catholic audience got the soft shuffle.

## Education Results Stark

This experience makes Lilo's point even more emphatic. What little Pākehā risk when they step out of line to back indigenous rights, as I did, is as nothing compared to the constant stress Lilo experiences living with the tension of Pākehā suspicion of the brown other. Differential treatment reduces the citizens of one colour to fair and lawful access to the rights that should belong to all of us.

*As Pākehā we need to get this conversation about racism out of the wardrobe and into our living rooms.*

This reduction of our fellow citizen is institutional. Who among us would not worry when Minister of Education Hekia Parata announced in 2013 that Pākehā were second in the world in PISA ranking (OECD Programme for International Student Assessment) for secondary level achievement and Māori were 32nd and Pasific students 40th? These are NZ citizens differentiated by performance – and this is not accidental.

Māori and Pacific kids are not thick. For several decades the funding resources necessary to encourage the highest of learning in the poorest of populations has not eventuated. Nor have staff with the best skills been attracted to the most challenging learning environments because the task is often hard. Learning in a context of poverty is dreadfully challenging. It needs a special teaching wairua with high moral purpose, an understanding of the science of performance shift in the classroom and a lifetime of commitment to tackle this. Most of all we need to pay the full price to fund this shift – and we never do.

## Health Outcomes Shameful

*Wai 2575* from the Waitangi Tribunal found that in the two decades up to 2020 over \$200 billion has been spent on the health of the population and life expectancy moved positively for Pākehā but remained stagnant for Māori. The uncomfortable truth is that our health system, designed to serve us all, routinely fails Māori. The data tells this story, the patients tell this story, the practitioners admit to this deficiency yet it takes a whole-of-system reform to finally own this issue. This new Health NZ reform is hugely positive and a very long time coming. But many lives have been blighted in the interim and the problem is not yet solved.

## We Can Influence Change

As Pākehā we need to get this conversation about racism out of the wardrobe and into our living rooms. This is not a problem that governments will solve, although they can certainly help. We need to solve it. We need to live out personal politics that create the environment for brave political action.

Much of the change begins with hearing the experience of those who aren't Pākehā.

It means accepting a simple discipline that requires active respect for those who don't look or sound like us.

It means calling out examples of blatant prejudice and bias and taking on other Pākehā if we can be brave enough.

It means supporting positive actions to share power, like voting for Māori wards and encouraging te reo in our homes and workplaces.

The most powerful change moment comes when we decide to talk with others like us to address attitudes that demean the "other". This is where a little courage makes a world of difference. ★

Painting: *Uenuku (the rainbow) and the Storytellers* by Darcy Nicholas © Used with permission [www.darcynicholas.co.nz](http://www.darcynicholas.co.nz)

Patrick Snedden is the inaugural Chair of Manaiaikalani Education Trust. He was economic advisor for Ngati Whatua ki Orakei and author of *Pākehā and the Treaty*.





# CHURCH RELATING WITH STATE

**NICHOLAS THOMPSON** traces the history of the Church's responses and reactions to governments.

In 2018 the American Attorney General Jeff Sessions delivered an address defending his government's policy of separating children from parents who had tried to enter the United States without documentation. Apparently nettled by public scrutiny, the Attorney General grasped for an ally in: "... the Apostle Paul and his clear and wise command in Romans 13: [1], to obey the laws of the government because God has ordained the government for his purposes." Questioning government policy, he seemed to suggest, was tantamount to questioning God.

Unsurprisingly, Christians who opposed the policy of separation criticised Sessions for shallow, even cynical proof-texting. Some of them tried to offer an alternative, more rounded, account of Christian

obedience, for example by reminding Christians of their duty to welcome strangers like the migrants at the southern border.

However, my aim here isn't to relitigate that controversy. Suffice it to say that I think that Sessions was wrong, and his critics were mostly right. But where I think his Christian critics over-egged the pudding was in suggesting that there's a single and self-evident biblical alternative to Sessions' view of the case. In fact, I don't think there has ever been a completely stable consensus on what the Christian attitude towards the government should be.

## **Christian Attitudes towards the State**

When governments have been favourable, Christians — or at least

the Christians the government favoured — have viewed the authorities as akin to a David or Solomon: anointed by God, though often in need of the Church's prophetic counsel and prodding.

US Evangelicals with enough insight to acknowledge Trump's transactional view of Christianity, have sometimes justified their support for him by invoking Cyrus of Persia as an exemplar. Trump, in other words, may be a heathen bully, but he's our heathen bully, appointed by God to free his people from bondage in Babylon (whatever these Evangelicals take "Babylon" to be).

On the other hand, when governments have been unfavourable, Christians have taken solace in the apocalyptic texts that promise God will one day put a definitive end to bad governments. In some cases, this has led Christians to withdraw from society and wait patiently for vindication. In other cases, they have borne the



consequences of public protest. In yet other cases, Christians have tried to help the apocalyptic timetable along by winnowing and destroying the chaff of injustice themselves. Here they've turned for inspiration to the apocalyptic promise that the saints will reign with Christ. Or, if when they were less sure that the end was nigh, Christians could turn for inspiration to those Old Testament texts that sanction rebellion against rulers who betrayed God's trust.

Thus, over two millennia, Christians close to the centres of power, as well as those far from them, have used these biblical prototypes like a hand of cards, which they've played more or less fortuitously against those in power.

In the case of Catholicism, the Church has added further precedents that it claimed to have found in the natural order of things — from natural law, in other words.

### **Catholic Church Critical of Liberal Democracy**

You could argue that this repertoire of responses has helped the Church adapt to changing political circumstances. That may be true, but the repertoire's variety also gives the Church a variety of ways in which to misread the circumstances and respond ineffectively.

I was born in 1965, a few months before the close of the Second Vatican Council, and for this reason it never occurred to me until I began to read modern Church history that the Catholic Church might have regarded a liberal democracy like New Zealand as anything other than adequate — praiseworthy even. In fact, the Church's ability to recognise anything positive in liberal democracy is only a few years older than I am.

For at least the preceding century, the papacy treated talk of political freedoms, equality and human rights as a recipe for religious indifference and moral squalor.

During the 19th century, and well into the 20th, papal statements on government evinced a nostalgia for the medieval alliance of throne and altar. Because the ballot box and the free exchange of ideas did

not need the Church's ratification or guidance, the Church felt unable to recognise them as a legitimate basis for government.

In fairness to the Church, political liberalism's record wasn't untarnished. The French Revolution, launched in the name of freedom, equality and solidarity, quickly became an efficient killer of its own citizens.

Some liberal regimes, like the Mexican Republic refounded in 1917, treated the Church as a threat to human freedom, and brutally tried to exclude it from the public sphere.

Political liberalism's bedfellow, capitalism, also produced grotesque economic inequalities, confirming the papacy's view that liberal individualism corroded any sense of the common good.

### **Church Supportive of Authoritarian Regimes**

Even so, the remorselessly critical eye that the Church cast on political liberalism (and, of course, on social democracy, socialism and communism) was far less acute or critical when it came to authoritarian regimes.

Provided that dictatorships like Spain or Portugal (prior to the 1970s) gave the Church a leading or protected role in society they could be assured of Catholic acquiescence and even support.

The same was true of quasi-fascist regimes in inter-war and wartime Hungary and Croatia.

### **Christianity Playing Ambiguous Role**

The future of liberal democracy, which seemed so assured after the collapse of communism in the early 1990s, is now under question in a way that it probably has not been since the 1930s.

Here again, global Christianity is playing an ambiguous role. Would-be authoritarians, like Trump and Bolsonaro, would not have made it into power without the support of Evangelical Protestants — Pentecostals in particular.

In Russia, Putin seems largely to have secured the Russian Orthodox Church's acquiescence for his brand of authoritarian nationalism.

By claiming to support the "family" while scapegoating LGBT people, illiberal governments in Poland and Hungary seem to have ensured that the Catholic Church will remain silent as the governments attack the independence of the judiciary and of the media.

None of this should be taken to suggest that liberal democracy represents a heavenly Jerusalem worthy of exemption from the Church's critique.

If there's one *fairly* stable element in Christianity's fluctuating attitude towards government, it's the conviction that no government of limited, fallible humans can bring the perfect society into being. That insight should apply to liberal democracy as much as any other form of government.

### **Church to Consider Common Good of All**

Even so, it seems to me that the Catholic Church will always benefit from a sober assessment of its own patchy record in negotiating the relationship between Church and State. Its attempts to speak prophetically have not always been easy to distinguish from the voices of the reactionary, the demagogue and the bully.

I recognise that the Church doesn't have an easy task in reading the signs of complicated times and formulating appropriate responses. But — perhaps because I am a baby of Vatican II — it seems to me that the Church addresses government most authentically when it places itself alongside other humans (not just those within the Catholic tribe) and embraces its mission: "to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgement, to serve and not to be served" (*Gaudium et Spes*, par 3). ★

Painting: *The Coronation of Charlemagne* by Friedrich Kaulbach (1822-1903 CE). The painting shows the crowning of Charlemagne (742–814 CE) as Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III (r 795-816 CE) on Christmas day 800 CE.

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# TRAPS *of* DEBT

ADRIENNE GALLIE outlines how the Credit Contracts and Consumers Finance Act safeguards against debt overload and explains how lenders are exploiting legislative loopholes.

“Bitter for a free person the bondage of debt,” the wise ancient said. I have been working in budgeting and mentoring in financial capability for some years and know well how debt can burden a family. We are finding in Aotearoa New Zealand that debt is a form of enslavement of some.

## NO SAVINGS TO DRAW ON

The COVID-19-induced Lockdown shone a light on the inability of many

Aotearoa households, as well as small and large businesses, to draw on a rainy-day fund to get them through the first week or two of the Lockdown. The uptake of the Government Wage Subsidy was swift and people in every income stream reached out to government welfare and community groups in ways they never imagined.

Like everyone else, lenders were encouraged to be kind. They were asked to streamline hardship processes; place

holds on interest charges; waive debts; defer mortgage repayments and refrain from sending debt in arrears to debt collection.

MoneyTalks, the government-funded free financial helpline, received expansion funding to handle the expected increased need. People who called came from a diverse range of situations, many finding themselves trying to access state welfare assistance for the first time and being frustrated by many obstacles and a strained online system. These people found themselves empathising, in a way they never had before, with those already receiving government assistance.

## LEGISLATION CHANGES TO STOP DEBT OVERLOAD

The Credit Contracts and Consumer Finance Act (CCCFA) was amended in 2015, leaving room for lenders to self-regulate. But they didn't. Only after sustained lobbying from the building financial capability sector were significant changes to the CCCFA being introduced from 2019 to 2022. There is a concerted effort underway to reduce the level of harm debt overload is doing to our households and communities.

## LEGISLATION CONTROLS

The amended CCCFA includes some important changes.

Short-term, high interest loans (commonly referred to as payday loans and those charging 50 per cent and above per annum interest rates) are now capped at 292 per cent per annum. Previously, interest rates had been as high as 500 to 800 percent per annum.

The concept of “total debt balance” has been introduced. This means that the total debt (including interest and fees) cannot exceed 100 per cent of the original amount



borrowed. And the maximum cost of borrowing the lender can recover must not exceed the amount of the first advance, where the borrower returns for additional short-term loans.

Associated restrictions include a ban on compound interest, and the number of loans approved for a borrower at one time.

This restraint has seen short-term high-cost lenders leave the market and others change their model by offering loans at 49.95 per cent per annum. One Australian payday lender, after an investigation by the Commerce Commission, was obliged to waive all debt balances owing and leave New Zealand.

Greater responsibility is being placed on banks, finance companies and store credit card companies to ensure that all lending will not put borrowers into hardship.

A more rigorous standard is being set for lenders when assessing affordability. The staggered introduction of the updated Responsible Lending Code, particularly Chapter 12 expanding guidance on how to assist people when they cannot pay, gives lenders time to reassess and alter their practices.

Hard evidence must be gathered and produced when asked for by the borrower themselves, or by a financial mentor assisting a borrower in a case of suspected irresponsible lending, or as part of a disputes resolution scheme, or at the request of the Commerce Commission, in the event of an investigation.

### EXPLOITING A LOOPHOLE

Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) schemes have mushroomed recently. Because interest is not charged on the purchase price these loans wriggle outside the CCCFA, giving no protection to consumers. The schemes make money through merchant fees and late payment fees if consumers do not meet the four-, six-, or 12-week continuous payments.

It is common for financial mentors to see people with multiple BNPL arrangements in place at one time. BNPL schemes lack a robust affordability assessment at the time of purchase and direct debits are

deducted from wages, salaries or benefits, often before rent, food, power and fuel have been paid.

Like bank and store credit cards they are a trap for the unsuspecting. Retailers have embraced BNPL schemes to move their merchandise and get their money upfront — customers are passed to the BNPL company as a borrower as soon as the purchase is made.

## Lockdown shone a light on the inability of many Aotearoa households ... to draw on a rainy-day fund to get them through the first week or two of the Lockdown.

### TRAPS FOR CONSUMERS

The capping of interest rates and cost of borrowing only applies to a small portion of consumer lending. Consumers continue to be crippled by interest rates below the 50 per cent cap: borrowing from second tier lenders, particularly where the credit facility revolves, and extra credit is offered when purchasing retail goods. Some describe themselves as high-risk lenders — a questionable phrase in the current economic climate, particularly those specialising in personal loans for cars.

### WHAT WE CAN DO

We can help one another by talking more freely and openly about our finances.

When we're borrowing money, we can have someone look over the paperwork before we sign anything — ideally someone like a financial mentor.

Knowing our consumer rights is vital. No debt should be accepted without an understanding of what the debt is, detailed paperwork and an agreement that the debt is indeed owed. Debts can be returned to the original creditor for negotiation after they have been placed with a debt collector. Often these debts are the result of irresponsible lending through

poor affordability assessment at the beginning.

We need to change our “blame the borrower” mindset and recognise the power imbalance at play to address the real source of this enslavement — a finance industry which places profit before people.

We need to be vigilant about the hazard of borrowing without robust consumer protection. New financial products like BNPL schemes pop up and skirt current laws.

We need to shift our thinking around landlords' expectations of rental property investment.

And we need to rethink the essential services industries eg, energy and telecommunications. Though they may generate profits, we need to see them first and foremost as utilities which serve our communities by providing the access needed for our health, well-being and social participation.

### CHANGING THIS TOGETHER

My deep hope is that our experience of COVID-19 will lead us to embrace private and public conversations about the sort of economy we want to live within.

Do we want to continue with one that makes profit on the back of others' misery, one that allows ever-widening gaps between the under-resourced and the over-resourced, one that promotes and encourages instant gratification, and one that enslaves?

Or do we want an economy that meaningfully promotes the common good, one that understands basic human rights, one that can weave empathy and compassion into all decision making and one that values fullness of life for the whole ecosystem? ★

Painting: *Burdens Seen and Unseen*  
by Brian Kershnik © Used with permission  
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# Understanding MENTAL HEALTH

**BRIDGET TAUMOEPEAU** explains current thinking about mental health and mental illness and its treatment.

**W**e use “mental health” in different ways — often more in relation to mental illness than to mental well-being. Usually the term “mental health” refers to disorders of the mind or emotions, including disorders of thinking and the way we experience the world around us.

We can be quite good at understanding “physical health” or “physical illness” — at locating the cause of our symptoms with a problem in, say, our heart, lungs or digestion. With mental health, though, our symptoms are often viewed as unusual behaviours without realising what lies behind them.

Mental health issues are common. It is estimated that about

one in four of us will have a lifetime chance of exhibiting some signs or symptoms that would benefit from treatment.

## **Changes in Classifying Mental Illness**

Mental illness has been classified differently over time. An old classification was to divide the disorders into “psychotic” and “neurotic” illnesses. This led to the idea of “serious mental illnesses” as opposed to more “minor illnesses”, a distinction that completely ignored the distress that any of these conditions can cause the sufferer.

Another way was to look at the illnesses from the point of view of their origins — to describe mental

illness in terms of the cause, whether genetic, or due to a chemical imbalance, or a response to current stress or past trauma.

A more useful way is to see the person behind the distress and to explore how their mental illness is affecting their lives — what may have caused it, how things could improve and what will need to change to enable the person to function at their best. It is vital to acknowledge that mental distress is real; that it presents in many different ways and that it merits understanding and treatment.

## **Te Whare Tapa Whā Model**

The Whare Tapa Whā model, developed by Professor Sir Mason



Durie, offers a holistic approach to health. The **whare** or house is the person and the **tapa whā**, or four walls, are **te taha tinana** (physical health); **te taha hinengaro** (mental health); **te taha wairua** (spiritual health) and **taha whānau** (family or other significant supports for the person). Each “wall” must be strong and healthy for the “house” to stand and be secure. This model allows us to assess what may be going wrong for the person, and also the best way to help them regain good health.

How can people be helped if they are experiencing some sort of emotional or psychological distress? Firstly, we need to accept that the person requires assistance, not judgement. Their symptoms may affect the way they interact with their family and friends; their ability to go to work; their pattern of eating and sleeping; their concentration; their enjoyment from things they would normally like to do. Mental distress is not about being lazy, or silly, or due to not being a good person. We can be very judgemental about people who are mentally unwell. We may think they have brought it on themselves; that they should manage their life better; that they should “toughen up”.

### Thinking of the Whole Person

The Whare Tapa Whā aims to consider the whole person. For instance, a young man presents with experiences of hearing voices and feeling that some force is against him and influencing the way he thinks. It transpires that he has been smoking increasing amounts of cannabis. This illustrates the link between physical effects on the brain and mental health symptoms. He has strong family support who have encouraged him to seek help and he holds spiritual beliefs about his value as a beloved child of God. He is able to recognise that he is unwell and is willing to take advice about how to keep himself safe by reducing his cannabis use and to take medication to control his current symptoms.

In another situation a young woman presents with depression

and distress feeling that her life is not worth living. It transpires that she suffered sexual abuse as a child within her family setting, although she has other members of her family who are very supportive and will offer her a safe place to stay. As a result of her abuse, she has harmed herself. She has, however, found friends in the Tai Chi group that she attends — where she also finds a degree of calm and peace. So, she needs physical care for the harm she has done herself, as well as possible medication to assist with her distress; counselling to address her abuse; education of her family about how they can help and understanding from her friends.

A middle-aged woman has suddenly presented with a recurrence of elevated mood. She has demonstrated disinhibited behaviour and has no understanding of how

**Mental distress is not about being lazy, or silly, or due to not being a good person. We can be very judgemental about people who are mentally unwell. We may think they have brought it on themselves; that they should manage their life better; that they should “toughen up”.**

unsafe she has been. She is vociferous in her opposition to treatment. Her family know that she has had effective treatment before for bipolar disorder. She has children who may be at risk if she does not improve. Her husband has requested that she be assessed for a period of compulsory treatment. Arrangements are in place to support her family if she is admitted to hospital.

For a few people their illness may become chronic. The middle-aged man who developed schizophrenia as a teenager has had recurrences requiring hospital treatment. He has never been able to hold a steady job and could not complete training. He managed well when he worked at the Porirua Dump Recycling Shop. Unfortunately, the DHB withdrew its support for that venture and he now has nothing to do all day. He wanders the streets asking for cigarettes, as his landlady does not want him home

between 9am and 4pm. He receives support for his physical and mental health from the Mental Health Team and continues to attend the hospital chapel. He has lost touch with his family who are from Hawkes Bay.

These personal stories illustrate the range of ways that people may demonstrate mental illness symptoms, as well as possible treatments and support. These fall under the general headings of physical treatments, mainly medication; psychological treatments, including various types of therapy and counselling; supportive care of family and patient, including providing a safe place to be and possible care within the home setting; and spiritual support and understanding.

### Promoting Mental Well-being

In addition, preventive measures

are very important. Programmes assisting parents with raising their families; addiction prevention and treatment programmes; education about mental wellness; early intervention when someone becomes unwell, are all helpful. Importantly, society must address its attitudes towards mental illness, being as supportive as we would be to those with a physical illness. After all, any of us could fall into the 25 per cent who will need some mental healing at some time in our lives. Imagining ourselves in that situation may make us more compassionate towards those whose mental health is fragile. ★

**Bridget Taumoepeau** is a retired psychiatrist, who now works voluntarily for vulnerable children and their families.





# THE CHURCH BETWEEN “GLOBAL WEST” AND “GLOBAL CATHOLIC”

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI discusses different ways to  
assess the sins of the past.

**T**he world is burning. And sometimes the Church is burning quite literally.

Take Canada, for instance, where recently unmarked graves have been found on the sites of former residential schools for indigenous children. Many of these were Church-run institutions which has created another wave of anger. And Canada is not the only country where the Church's co-responsibility

for the colonial, anti-indigenous features in boarding schools is an issue that is being raised.

At least six church buildings on First Nations lands in western Canada have been badly damaged or completely destroyed by arson.

A group of Indigenous people who survived the abuse in Canada's schools will go to Rome in December for

a meeting they requested with Pope Francis. We can assume that survivors of Catholic-run residential schools in other countries may also seek an encounter with the pope.

## Church's Reputation in Flames

At times, it is “only” the Church's reputation that is on fire.

In Italy, where the Parliament is debating an anti-homophobia bill, the Vatican made a rare diplomatic intervention to warn state authorities that the proposed legislation would infringe the Church's freedom to express its views on issues such as marriage and gender.

Looking at the reactions, it seems that the Italian tradition of *laicità* (secularism) and sovereignty of Parliament vis-à-vis the Church is alive after all.

But it is also a reminder that Pope Francis's personal reputation cannot provide the institutional Church with unlimited credit.

## Others See Church as a "Moral Authority"

Then there is President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine who on 30 June invited the pope to visit his country, appealing to the Catholic Church's "moral authority".

And there was the 1 July summit of Lebanon's Christian leaders who gathered around Francis in the Vatican for a day of prayer and reflection "to implore the gift of peace and stability" in that troubled Middle Eastern nation.

The following day Francis held a private meeting with the Prime Minister of Iraq. It came four months after the historic papal trip to that country, part of the Holy See's efforts to promote peace in the region.

Finally, there is the new cardinal-prefect at the Congregation for the Clergy, South Korean Lazzaro Archbishop You Heung-sik. His appointment has fuelled hopes for a papal trip to North Korea in another effort to bring peace to the peninsula.

## It's All a Matter of Perspective

So, which Catholic Church is it? The Church that must apologise for participating in its role in colonialism, as in North America? Or the Church that is the voice of the liberation from colonial and oppressive systems, old and new, in places like Eastern Europe, the Middle East and East Asia?



It is certainly a matter of different stories in different areas of the world. In these last few centuries, the role of the Church during the conquest and settlement by white European Christians in North America has been different from the role of the Catholic minorities in areas "East of Suez," to use Rudyard Kipling's expression that the British military and political colonial tradition adopted.

But it's also a matter of different political options and cultural narratives.

### "Global West" vs "Global Catholic"

On the one side there is the view that Catholicism belongs to the "global West" and therefore has to apologise for its uniquely sinful participation in the white supremacist, colonialist project.

This view tends to dominate in the global West, wherever secularisation is still underway and a constitutionally (or socially and culturally) established Christianity is coming to an end.

On the other side, there is the "global Catholic" narrative according to which the Church is the best interpreter of the crisis of civilisation in the last century.

This is the narrative that dominates among those who read Catholicism as the voice of resistance against neo-colonial forms of oppression or against majoritarian systems that relegate Catholics to second-class citizens or targets of persecution.

### A Church Tied Too Closely to the West or a Church Liberated?

These two narratives often coexist but they represent two different historical and theological ideas about Catholicism in the current disruption of globalisation.

On the one side, there is something like a progressive preferential option for identifying the Church with the West and its sins.

This is the flipside of those neo-conservatives who say the Catholic Church must survive to serve as the pillar for Western civilisation — against the dangers of secularisation, Islam, anarchy, etc.

On the other side there is the narrative of those who think that the global turn of Catholicism (Exhibit A: Pope Francis's trips to mostly non-European countries) has already liberated the Church from the burden of the sins of the West.

This translates into the tendency to preserve a certain theological and institutional status quo: the traditional model of Church government, of clerical leadership, etc. that do not need to be inculturated and updated.

### Perspectives Based on Political Expediency

This clash of narratives is a symptom of the political conflict around the role of the Catholic Church in the world of today. But it's also the symptom of a historical and theological crisis.

There is no question that the Catholic Church has been a willing participant in the colonial project of Western powers and that there must be a process of conversion and atonement.

However, it's also ideological to state that there is a particular and exceptional Christian and Catholic proclivity towards discrimination, racism and sexism.

Christianity and white supremacy have cooperated in a particular way, but there is a longer, global history of racism in which Christian and Catholic racism must be located.

The 21st century has inaugurated a new phase in the turn of Catholicism towards a global identity that is no longer dominated by its European, Western and colonial roots. This requires a global approach to all the complicated and tragic chapters of Church history.

### The Persistent "Global West" Interpretation

But opposed to this approach there is still a "global West" interpretation of the sins of the Church. This gives voice to justified moral outrage, but reflects also an intra-Catholic, parochial concern — even when it comes from progressive voices both in the Church and in politics.

Some of the explanations of the abuse crisis in the Catholic Church — both on the progressive and on the

conservative side of the spectrum — unconsciously express strikingly ecclesiocentric concerns.

More than by a will to understand the phenomenon, they are often dictated by reasons of Church politics or culture war strategy. For instance, there is no question that an inadequate theology of sexuality is one of the causes for a tragically late awakening of the institutional Church to the sexual abuse of children.

But it is important to remember that it is only in November 1989 that the General Assembly of the United Nations approved a "Convention on the Rights of the Child" that mentioned the commitment for member states to protect the child from any sexual exploitation or violence.

This is to say that a focus on the responsibilities of the Church in a way that isolates its history from the history of mentalities and non-Catholic institutions could lead to serious interpretive errors of perspective and might not necessarily serve the cause of the victims.

Understanding the history and the sins of the Church goes beyond the understandable horror that every person feels in front of abuse, whether that has to do with sex, race or class.

History goes beyond denunciation or justification, condemnation or acquittal. It seeks to understand certain historical processes.

Studying the past from a global perspective means learning the history of other empires, other cruel systems of forced labour, other types of racial and social discrimination.

We must do so without the continuous moralisation that is typical of much of today's Western scholarship. Otherwise, we will remain stuck in a narrow "global West" perspective. ★

Full article in *La Croix International*  
6 July 2021.

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# THE MINISTRY OF THE READER

**THOMAS O'LOUGHLIN says that Pope Francis's move to include women officially in the ministry of lector is a step along a synodal way for the Church.**

"Jack! Jack!" the presider shouted just a minute or so before a celebration of the Eucharist was due to begin. "Whoever was on the readers' rota hasn't turned up. Would you do the readings?" Jack said: "You'd be quicker yourself, Father!" The priest, now almost out the sacristy door and into the sanctuary, said: "Ah yes, but it's Sunday and it's good for people to see a lay person involved in the parish!" Jack, knowing that this bit of hassle was part of some bigger strategy of the parish priest, now agreed. "OK, Father. Leave it to me, I'll read it!" And moments later he pronounced the words: "A reading from the Book of Deuteronomy".

This scene took place — in my hearing — in late 2019, but it is typical of similar scenes in churches around the world.

## **Lay Readers Introduced after Vatican II**

Lay readers first made their appearance in the 1970s. They were welcomed with varying degrees of enthusiasm. "Reading" was just one more job for which willing helpers had to be recruited. But it was more high profile because the reader had to stand up in front of people and speak in public. For many it was a fearful prospect. Then there were all those weird names to pronounce, like "Nebuchadnezzar". So recruiting readers was harder than recruiting people to cut the grass — but it was seen as just "a task to be done" nonetheless. Most clergy thought of lay readers in terms of "involvement" — a way to include people and encourage "active participation". It was also an instance of the pastoral

wisdom that people who are engaged actively within a parish give far more attention to the parish and its needs.

## **Canon Law Includes Women as Lectors**

It is against this background that we have to view the lukewarm response to Pope Francis's recent *motu proprio*, *Spiritus Domini*, which amends Canon Law to open the permanent ministry of lector to women, as well as men.

The fundamental question is this: Are readers "doing a job" or "sharing their skill with the assembled Church"?

Since the rise of the *Missa privata* (later first millennium) until 1970, anyone other than a priest who did anything at the liturgy was simply "doing a job". It was the priest's Mass and he said his Mass for himself and on behalf of the congregation.



The vision of the liturgy at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) sought to bring our worship into harmony with our theology of the incarnation and our vision of who we are as the baptised.

We, as the community, gather to celebrate eucharistically. It is our thanksgiving and each of us brings something to the assembly.

## Liturgy of the Word

Among those things we do when we gather is that we celebrate, perform, enact our memory which is contained in those books to which we give special respect: the Scriptures. This means that marks on paper have to be turned into living sounds. And these living sounds have to resound among us so that we greet them when we hear them and say: "Thanks be to God."

The reader turns the marks on the page of a book into sound. At every gathering we celebrate our basic common memory — the memory of God's covenant with Israel, the coming of the Christ, and the memory of the first disciples. And we call it the Liturgy of the Word.

We are not dealing with just "readings", but something much more significant. It is a performance of our recollection of who we are, who we should be and of what is our hope.

The lectern is not a podium or a book stand, but a place for performing our common memory. It is the table of the word from which we are fed.

To call reading at the Eucharist simply a "job" not only demeans this ministry but fails to understand the gift we have received in coming into a covenant relationship with God.

We need to recall the covenant; we need to affirm the covenant; and we need to act out of the covenant. By doing this we benefit from one another and the particular person who is the lector. This is why it should be understood as a ministry — and given due recognition as such.

## Qualities for Reading Ministry

But let's return to Jack. He is retired but had been a sergeant in the army — and his voice has not changed. When he barks out: "Response" during the psalm, he expects the same reaction

that he got when he shouted: "Halt!" When he reads 1 Cor 13 — on love — it sounds the same as his instructions for moving cars that block the entrance to the parking lot, another of his jobs on Sunday mornings.

To be a lector, a person not only needs skills, but also a certain temperament. Not everyone has a bedside manner. Not everyone can explain and teach. Not everyone can turn ancient documents into living memories!

**This means that marks on paper have to be turned into living sounds. And these living sounds have to resound among us so that we greet them when we hear them and say: "Thanks be to God."**

**The reader turns the marks on the page of a book into sound.**

The early Church knew this distribution of ministerial skills well: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone" (1 Cor 12:4-6).

We need to find the right people among the community of the baptised for this ministry of performing our memory.

Clearly the lector has to be more involved than someone who is just doing a job, such as taking up the collection.

This reading ministry involves natural skills such as a clear voice and some skills that are learned, such as how to read at the right pace and use the right tone of voice.

It also requires commitment. One of the least understood elements of Christian faith today is what we mean by "the Bible". I have a book that is described as "the bible for using the internet". I know what they

mean, but equally the Bible is not the bible for being a disciple. God has not sent an instruction manual. Jesus never wrote a book. And even before there was a book, there was a community with memories — some of which ended up in a book.

We are all so tempted to confuse the world of fixed information (preferably found printed in hardbound books) with the wisdom and breath of the Holy Spirit. Often without realising it, we replace the living Creator of the universe with a product of the Gutenberg Galaxy. The lector has to be sensitive to such problems.

Likewise, the lector has to be sensitive to the fact that what we read is often not what is heard. No ministry can take place outside the fact that it is part of that lector's own discipleship and life of prayer.

## And in Your Parish?

Pope Francis is calling for a significant liturgical revolution in altering just a couple of lines in Canon Law.

*Spiritus Domini* appeared in January 2021, but what has happened since then? In most places nothing. Partly it is laziness and partly it is a view of readers as just a new form of altar servers and a lack of appreciation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

Partly it is also a push-back against the pope for disturbing the clerical vision of the Church and partly it is an awareness it will require much work and resources to implement this *motu proprio*.

But if we are going to talk about "a synodal Church" — where women and men, clergy and pope are walking together in mission — of having "a vision of synodality" and "a synodal model of ministry", then we should probably start with lectors. Choosing and instituting lectors in every community is surely a first step along the synodal way. ★

Thomas O'Loughlin is a priest and Professor-Emeritus of Historical Theology at the University of Nottingham. His latest book is *Eating Together, Becoming One* (Liturgical Press, 2019).





## The Aramoana Christ

Angel nor saint have I seen,  
But I have heard  
The roar of the surf.  
And quiet at harbour  
Rests the isle of my heart.

Salt tears still fall  
Loud lament of the gulls,  
Till justice roll down,  
Till the earth is clothed,  
Till creation is restored.

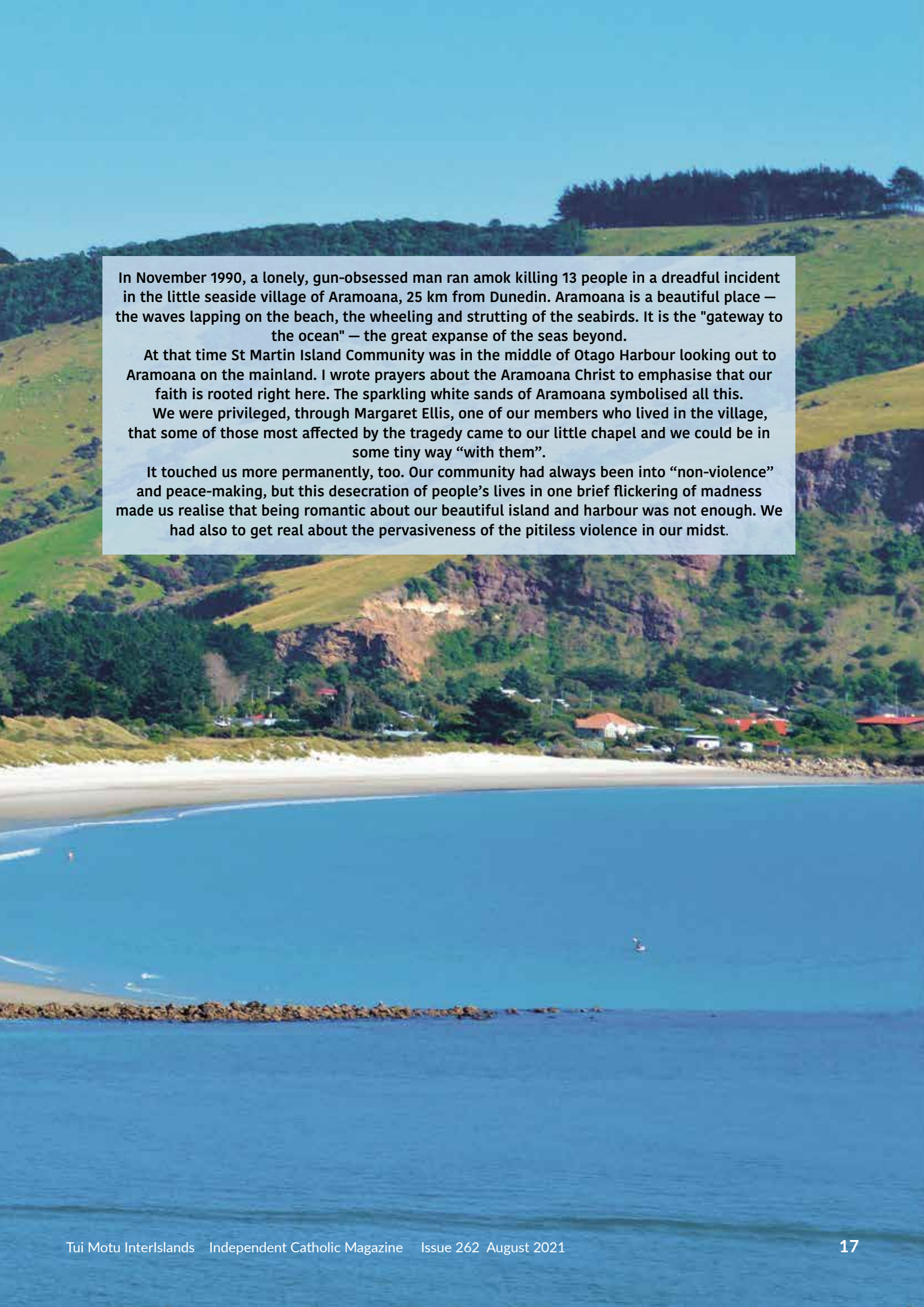
Jesus, healer and friend,  
You walk these sands  
Through sea-mist and sun;  
Touch the folk of this land  
With the vision of joy.

Waters swirl and tides flow  
Generations rise and fall;  
Love is our Alpha and Omega  
Our flag in the wind  
Our taproot in the soil.

*by Peter Matheson*

*(After Columcille, 6th-century Irish  
abbot and missionary)*





In November 1990, a lonely, gun-obsessed man ran amok killing 13 people in a dreadful incident in the little seaside village of Aramoana, 25 km from Dunedin. Aramoana is a beautiful place — the waves lapping on the beach, the wheeling and strutting of the seabirds. It is the "gateway to the ocean" — the great expanse of the seas beyond.

At that time St Martin Island Community was in the middle of Otago Harbour looking out to Aramoana on the mainland. I wrote prayers about the Aramoana Christ to emphasise that our faith is rooted right here. The sparkling white sands of Aramoana symbolised all this.

We were privileged, through Margaret Ellis, one of our members who lived in the village, that some of those most affected by the tragedy came to our little chapel and we could be in some tiny way "with them".

It touched us more permanently, too. Our community had always been into "non-violence" and peace-making, but this desecration of people's lives in one brief flickering of madness made us realise that being romantic about our beautiful island and harbour was not enough. We had also to get real about the pervasiveness of the pitiless violence in our midst.



**M**ary Helen MacKillop is now

known as Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop or Saint Mary MacKillop. She was the cofounder of the Sisters of St Joseph and a teacher, innovator and influential woman. Mary started a new religious order in Australia to have the capacity to meet the needs of the Church in rural areas. Her Congregation actively took the Church to the people and lived among them, often in twos and threes. Mary's approach was viewed as unorthodox by some bishops and priests and she faced many obstacles. Nevertheless, her belief in the authenticity of her "call" and the support of many in the Church, as well as others, helped her persevere.

Mary MacKillop was canonised on the 17 October 2010, making her the first Australian-born saint. Her canonisation was the recognition of an extraordinary, faith-filled life. The New Zealand bishops wrote in their pastoral letter at the time: "Mary MacKillop is truly a woman for our time. Her holiness, powered by her deep love of God, together with her streetwise philosophy, make her a model of hope for all who grapple with doubt, misunderstanding and injustice."



**Audrea Warner** is a wife, mum and a Professional Teaching Fellow at the University of Auckland, where she helps shape the business leaders of tomorrow.



## Inspirational MARY MACKILLOP

**AUDREA WARNER introduces Australia's saint Mary MacKillop whose feast day is 8 August and who had strong relationships in New Zealand.**

She brings us the gift of hope."

### Early Life

Mary's parents, Alexander MacKillop and Flora McDonald, were Scottish Catholics who emigrated to Australia where they met and married. Mary was born on 15 January 1842 in the Fitzroy suburb of Melbourne, Victoria. She was the first of eight children.

Mary's education was mixed — she attended a private school and was taught by her father. Her father saw education as an important part of his children's lives. However, Alexander was unsuccessful in his business dealings and did not provide well for his family. This meant that Flora and the children were often without a home and reliant on the generosity of family and friends to survive.

As the eldest, Mary was aware of responsibility and hardship, and this undoubtedly influenced her later decision to dedicate her life to helping others. At the age of 14 she began working as a clerk for a stationer in Melbourne to help support her family, and by the time she was 16 she had begun working as a governess to the children of her aunt and uncle, Alexander and Margaret Cameron, who lived in Penola, South Australia.

It was during her time in Penola that Mary met Father Julian Tenison Woods. He became her friend and mentor and shared his vision for Catholic education in the rural areas. Mary began a little Catholic school in a renovated stable in Penola in 1866. Shortly after, when she was 25, Mary took her vows as a Religious Sister and became



known as Sister Mary.

Other women joined her and they became the "Sisters of Saint Joseph". The primary focus of the new Sisters was to educate children, especially in rural areas where there was no access to Catholic education.

From Penola, Mary moved to Adelaide and set up schools as other women joined her. The Sisters also established homes for children and seniors who had no other support.

### **Sisters of St Joseph in Temuka**

The New Zealand connection began with Louis Fauvel, a French Marist priest who was the parish priest of Temuka in the South Island. Fauvel had met Julian Tenison Woods in

Perthville in New South Wales, and had already settled in Whanganui in the North Island. The Whanganui Sisters were a distinct group being under the authority of the Bishop not Mary MacKillop.

In 1883, three Sisters, Calasancius, Raymond and Immaculata, arrived from Adelaide by ship to Lyttelton and by train to Temuka.

One writer described the arrival of the Sisters in Temuka, wryly noting: "A French priest beseeches Mother Mary MacKillop, an Australian nun of Scottish descent, to allow Australian Sisters, some of whom came from Ireland, to educate the children of a country community in South Canterbury of mainly English heritage."

**Through perseverance and leadership she left a legacy that has been inspirational for many: "Never see a need without doing something about it."**

Sydney in the 1870s and heard about the Josephite Sisters.

He wrote to Mother Mary 15 times requesting Sisters for his parish. "I write pretty long in advance to give you time to get the Sisters ready for St Joseph of Temuka. When our new church is opened, the present one will be transformed into a school. There is an acre and a half of good ground at the disposal of the Sisters. The actual presbytery (a 7-roomed house) will be sufficient, I suppose, to accommodate for a time our little battalion of St Joseph. [He requested at least five Sisters.] Trusting, Reverend Mother, that ... you will favourably incline your good heart towards my petition and grant it."

New Zealand had experienced an influx of immigrants of different social classes, Christian denominations and cultures. For many money was scarce, yet they yearned for a better life with purpose. Many English and Irish had settled on the farming land of the Canterbury Plains and Fauvel was keen to provide Catholic education.

Mary MacKillop's Sisters were not the first Sisters of St Joseph to come to New Zealand. A few years earlier a little group had arrived from

### **Mary MacKillop in New Zealand**

Mary did not come to Aotearoa herself until 1894. She stayed for over a year, travelling to the 11 small Josephite communities in the North and South Islands, most of them in country areas. She visited New Zealand two later times.

Mary often worked alongside the Sisters and the communities who were supporting them. She negotiated with priests and bishops, keeping the Rule of the Sisters and the ministry of faith education at the forefront. It was not always easy for a woman to stand up to the clergy who had a different idea of how women Religious should conduct their lives. Even with these pressures, Mary found time to make connections — she was known to write to the children she met and joined in the concerts and parish picnics.

### **Mary's Spirit Lives On**

Mary MacKillop was loved by her Sisters and respected by many in Church and society whose lives she touched. She lived her belief: "We must teach more by example than by words". She began with little more than a vision and hope, faith and

courage. But through perseverance and leadership she left a legacy that has been inspirational for many:

"Never see a need without doing something about it." She saw a need, and with Julian Woods and the early Sisters created the Josephites.

I have been inspired by her life. We need more love, trust, kindness and education in our world, especially in this time of pandemic, and we can ask Saint Mary MacKillop to encourage us in doing our bit to increase love and the inclusion of all people in our neighbourhoods, country and world.

Mary MacKillop died in Sydney on 8 August 1909. Her tomb is a pilgrim site in the Mary MacKillop Memorial Chapel in North Sydney. ★

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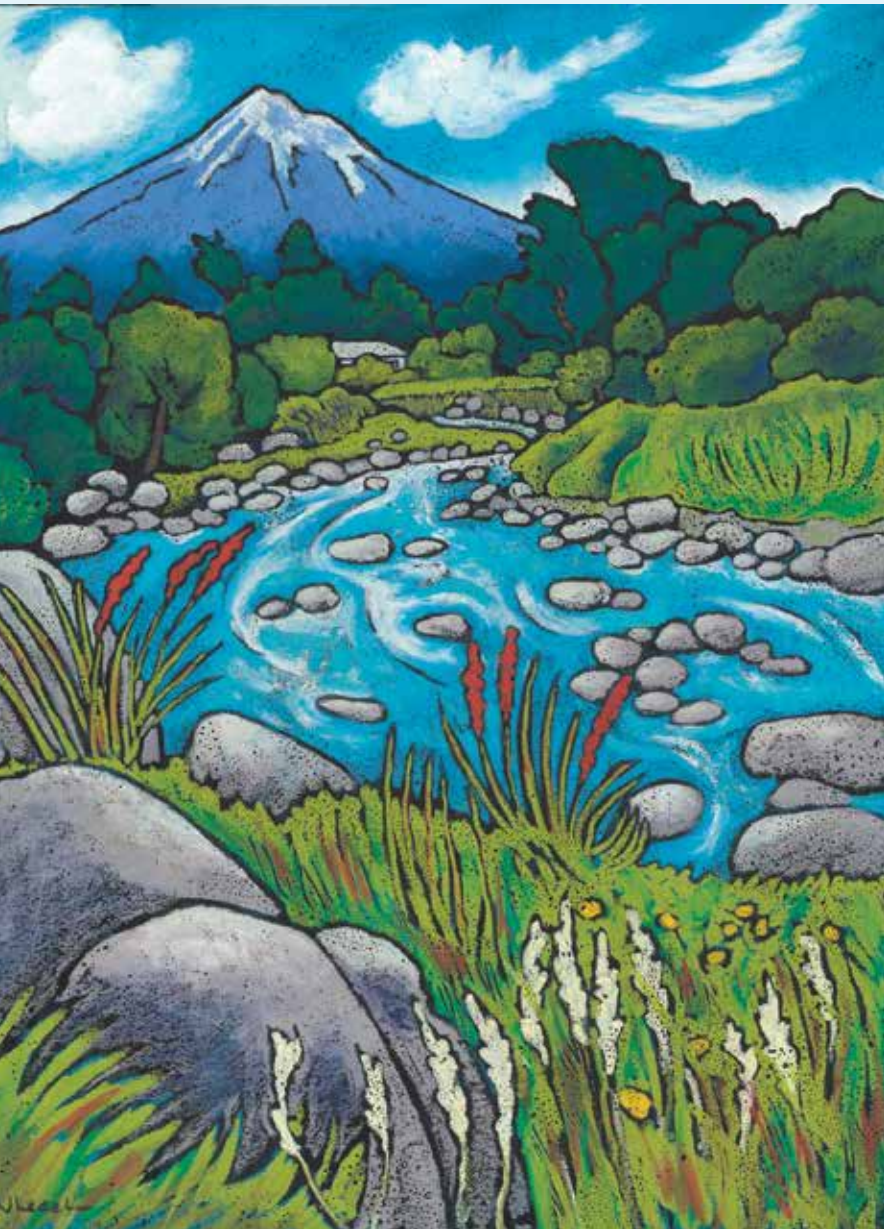
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Enquiries to: Helen 021 133 5132

*Lyndall Brown is a Sister of St Joseph who has spent many years in the ministry of Spirituality. Her spirituality draws on a growing consciousness of the Sacred at the heart of our lives and in relationship with one another and Earth.*

# “Oh, What Are You Doing with



DANIEL O'LEARY encourages us to grow more contemplative and ethical for the sake of all life.

*“Environmental education has broadened its goals ... it seeks to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, with God. It should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning” (LS, par 210).*



**Daniel O'Leary** died 21 January 2019. His book *Horizons of Hope: Unpublished Fragments of Love* has been published posthumously this year.

Pope Francis is forever trying to take us below the routine of things, urging us to pause and reflect on the more profound meaning of our lives. For him there is no other way to become more truly human, more “in harmony with ourselves, with others, with nature and with God”. This depth and “magnanimity” lie at the heart of his understanding of contemplation and education. The vision he seeks is always within rather than without.

Richard Rohr puts it so wonderfully well in one of his Daily Meditations that we wish to repeat it: “Material reality is the hiding place of God. It is the place of revelation. But we must go deep to see that. What makes a thing sacred or profane is precisely whether we live on the surface of things or not. Everything is profane if you live on the surface of it; everything is sacred if you go to the depths of it, even your sin. So, the division for the mystic, is not between sacred and secular things, but between superficial things and things at their depth — what Karl Rahner called ‘the mysticism of life.’”

This awareness-in-depth of the current ecological crisis will persuade us to begin adopting new habits. Deep education leading to a growth in responsibility, solidarity and compassionate care is urgently needed to give ecological ethics its deepest meaning. Are we, for instance, seriously concerned about “the common good” — or do we just pray and pay lip service to it? Are we worried about the kind of community and world that our children will inherit? What was, and is our response to the migrant/refugee crisis? What actually did we do to mitigate this global disaster?

We are in an age of individualism and we are all infected; we profess to be community-minded but so often we are utterly selfish, self-protective. Pope Francis has little time for those who seek spiritual enlightenment for their own contentment and fulfilment, without any commitment to make our world a better place to live. Only a sense of a sacred universe, and the underlying connectedness of everything in it, will sensitise our conscience to the hidden sin in many of our careless lifestyles, and to the selfishness in much of our prayer life.

We have not been helped in the past to be sensitive to these pressing issues about our destruction of Earth and the terrible consequences, especially for the people and places of poverty. The world was not created for our wilful exploitation of it. Lord Rees, astronomer royal, writes: “An anthropocentric focus is too narrow; biodiversity — life — on its own has intrinsic value.” Ecologist E.O. Wilson notes: “If our despoliation of nature causes mass extinctions, it is the action that future



# Your One Wild and Precious Life?"

generations will least forgive us for."

We're mindful that we are among seven billion anxious passengers crowded on "spaceship Earth", whose fate depends on humanity's actions during this century.

The Pope reminds us that the current global situation engenders a feeling of instability and uncertainty which becomes "a seedbed for collective selfishness". Self-centred and enclosed, people's greed increases. No harvest will happen in a desert. "The emptier a person's heart is," the Pope says, "the more he or she needs things to buy, own, consume." And retail therapy carries no lasting healing. This refrain, this request, these demanding reminders run, like an underground river, throughout *Laudato Si'*.

"We are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other ... in the rejection of self-interest and self-absorption ... we need to be attuned to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us ... If we can overcome individualism we will be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society" (LS, par 208).

Pope Francis calls on our inner strengths. True to Incarnation, he is a great believer in the grace at the depth of things, the resurrection that will not be thwarted, the "invincible spring in the depths of the earth that is invincible". Grace is stronger than the destruction in our hearts. He writes that "human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning ... embarking on new paths of authentic freedom".

The Pope clearly believes, as he wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*, in the invincibility of the human spirit and its "inner authority" (EG 21, 26, 27). We too must believe, with God's help, in the possibility of such a transcending of our old ways: "Behold I make all things new; I will make the rivers flow in the desert; I will put flesh on those dry bones." During these anxious, urgent days of Earth's illness he wants to touch something eternal in our hearts. "In the middle of my winter," wrote Albert Camus, "I discovered an invincible summer".

How do we make that "transcendent leap into deepest meaning" suggested by the Pope? How do we work towards achieving his vision? How do we begin to nourish the old seeds of faith in us into new blossoms, to restore a lost vision of Creation, to recover a vibrant hope and expectancy regarding the emerging vision of an evolution-centred spirituality?

Diarmuid O'Murchu in *Evolutionary Faith* offers a starting point, a heartfelt prayer, for a graced beginning. He says: "It is time to embrace

- the grandeur, complexity and paradox that characterise evolution at every stage, a story that continues to unfold under the mysterious wisdom of our co-creative God, whose strategies always have, and always will, outwit our human and religious desire for neat, predictable outcomes;
- that wild, erotic power for creativity, embedded in the heart of the universe from time immemorial, evoking and sustaining life in a multifarious range of

possibilities, revealing a depth of wisdom and purpose that we humans have scarcely begun to acknowledge or appreciate ...

- the inspirited and relational God, who impregnates creation from the very beginning, the divine life-force we have known, loved and served long before formal religion was ever instituted, a God who reveals to us unlimited potentials for engagement, relationality and enduring hope ...
- horizons that stretch our minds and hearts to their very limits, trusting that the creative Spirit, who breaks down all boundaries and barriers, will spearhead a new relationality in which we and every other organism will rediscover its true cosmic and planetary identity ...
- the planetary and cosmic context within which our life story and the story of all life unfolds. We belong to a reality greater than ourselves, and it is within that enlarged context that we will rediscover the benign and generic mystery within which everything is endowed with purpose and meaning." ★

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VINCENT LONG VAN NGUYEN outlines why we need a Church where lay people have co-responsibility with the ordained.

**M**artin Luther King Jr famously said that the arc of history is bent toward justice. The parallel statement I want to make is that the arc of the Church is bent towards co-responsibility or synodality. Let me explain.

The way of being Church has evolved over the centuries. When, after the early centuries of persecution, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the early tradition of egalitarianism gave way to a more clerical and hierarchical governance system that actually took on many features of the Empire. Throughout the long reign of Christendom and up to the Second Vatican Council, the Church often understood itself predominantly as a perfect society. Its institutional functions and dynamics were steeped in clericalism.

Ministries gradually became the domain of the ordained. They were all subsumed under a very cultic priesthood (set apart for the sacraments). Even the ancient ministry of deacon became a casualty of the process known as the "*cursus honorum*". This means that no one could begin "the course of honour" unless he is destined and qualified for the priesthood (no married and certainly not women!). The shift towards the celibate priesthood as the normative form of ministry effectively deprived the Church of the richness of ministries as attested by the New Testament.

At the Second Vatican Council, there was a shift in the Church's self-understanding. The dominant metaphor of a "*societas perfecta*" gave way to a more biblical image of a pilgrim people. The priesthood of faithful was rediscovered along with the affirmation that the working of the Holy Spirit was granted not to the ordained only but to all baptised. Ecclesial ministries were understood in such a way as to fully honour what Paul says, "everyone is given the grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ".



Vincent Long Van Nguyen is Bishop of the Parramatta Diocese of New South Wales. He came to Australia as a refugee from Vietnam.

Pope Paul VI accordingly suppressed the minor orders and opened some of these ministries to the lay faithful. Now some 60 years later (talk about the glacial speed of change in the Church), Pope Francis took a step further with two recent important decisions. In January this year, he opened to women the "installed" lay ministries of lector and acolyte, previously restricted to men. Then just a few weeks ago, he responded to an idea that sat untouched since the Council and established the installed ministry of catechist. The Pope called for "men and women of deep faith and human maturity, active participants in the life of the Christian community, capable of welcoming others, being generous and living a life of fraternal communion."

Pope Francis affirms that "this path of synodality" is precisely what "God expects of the Church of the third millennium." He gave new impetus to the doctrine of the *sensus fidei fidelium*, stating that the path of synodality represents an indispensable prerequisite for infusing the Church with a renewed missionary impulse: all the members of the Church are called to be active subjects of evangelisation and "missionary disciples".

The Church has entered a new era that is characterised by a crisis of a top-down centralised ecclesiology. With Vatican II, the *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* led to a more biblical paradigm of a pilgrim People of God, called to be the sacrament of the Kingdom and the prophetic witness in the world. The emphasis on the superiority of the ordained gave way to an ecclesial communion based on common baptism.

Pope Francis has applied a critical lens through which the Church is renewed for the sake of its mission for the poor. The Church is helped to decentralise and impelled towards the peripheries. The Church, the People of God, should walk together, sharing the burdens of humanity, listening to the cry of the poor, reforming itself and its own action, first by listening to the voice of the humble, the *anawim* of the Hebrew Scriptures, who were at the heart of Jesus's public ministry. ★

From: 2021 Helder Camara Lecture. Full text available: *Catholic Outlook* "My Hope for the Plenary Council."





# CHARITY IS OUR SPIRITUALITY

JIM CONSEDINE reflects on  
the spirituality of the  
St Vincent de Paul Society.

**T**he central command of Jesus “to love God and love our neighbour” leads to our understanding as Vincentians that charity and justice form the component parts of love. We cannot love our poor neighbours properly (charity) without also seeking to heal the social situations that keep them poor (justice). This is fundamental in Vincentian spirituality.

Spirituality is simply a way of being, a way of living our lives. And there is not just one way of doing so. While different spiritualities will have differing emphases, all authentic Christian spiritualities share the imprint of the sacred Scriptures underpinning their evolving traditions. For Vincentians, Christ is the beating heart of our spirituality. Our arms, legs, tongues, brains and actions embody Christ in our time. It is as if Christ is relying on us to act — with love.

Pope Francis speaks specifically of charity in his latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, which essentially is about living a conscious spirituality for our time. In addressing all people of faiths — Christian and other traditions — he spells out how charity needs to be practised in relation to others, in the spirit of what he calls “fraternity” — brotherhood/sisterhood. Francis says: “Only the closeness that makes us friends can enable us to appreciate the poor today, their legitimate desires and their own manner of living their faith. The ‘option for the poor’ should lead us to friendship with the poor” (*FT* par 234).

When we live the belief that the heart of Christ is at the heart of the cosmos, we will find that it is constantly expanding our hearts and deepening our faith and love. As our love grows within us we experience also the love growing around us — our kinship.

Our image of God is changing from a “manageable” God to a Creator Spirit, beyond our managing or taming. God is love within the cosmos with its billions of galaxies. Though humanity is merely a tiny life in a tiny planet in the cosmos, God as love is ever creating, ever caring about us and all creation. God’s love is calling us to a greater practice of love, compassion, justice and mercy. It is in the practice of charity and justice that our hearts expand joining God’s love in the amazing, wonderful cosmos in which all life is related as kin.

Though our physical hearts are the size of a small pudding, they keep us alive. Our emotional and spiritual hearts are not limited by size and the love produced contributes to the life of the world. As Vincentians we forgo what could shrivel our hearts — bitterness, lack of

forgiveness, unresolved grief or anger, judgementalism. We recognise the influence of those whose capacity to love, to forgive, to care about poor people and to do justice has inspired us. I think of our Vincentian founder Frédéric Ozanam, Mother Teresa, Desmond Tutu, Dorothy Day, the mosque shooting survivor Farid Ahmed, Pauline O’Regan, Suzanne Aubert, my own parents and many other people I’ve known. As Jesus said: “By their fruit you will know them” (Mat 7: 20).

We are called daily to expand our hearts. A key to growing our spirituality is to respond authentically, even if it calls for personal sacrifice. Being judgemental and showing coldness is not the way of St Vincent de Paul charity. Ours is to give a personal response, to keep reaching out and growing in spirit. We practise this individually and as a Vincent de Paul community.

Paradoxically, the more we engage lovingly with the poor, “our people”, the more we will understand the Cross. As we empathise with our people, understand their burdens and walk with them, we can expand our horizon to include not just the love and protection of poor people but also the poverty widespread on Earth. We are called to give our lives to love and justice in relationships of sisters and brothers in the local, regional and cosmic communities.

We know that love can be hard work — especially in the Vincent de Paul work we engage in. It is hands-on and front-line — and despite all our efforts it seems not to get less. Charity is our practical expression of love, day after day in our shops, in our visiting, in our encounters. It’s our love drawing strength from the Love of Christ at the heart of the universe.

Our Vincentian spirituality challenges us to expand our hearts to be more inclusive, more compassionate, less judgemental, more tender, more Christ-like, more kinship-making.

As Vincentians, we are privileged to be in close touch with poor people, to be able to relieve some of their immediate needs, to be brothers and sisters together and to join with that Divine Love which holds us all. ★

**Jim Consedine** is a priest of the Christchurch diocese with long standing involvement in social justice and is the editor of *The Common Good*.





# Gifts of Earth

KATHLEEN RUSHTON discusses how Jesus uses the imagery of bread and the grapevine in John 6:35-51 and 15:1-5 to highlight God's gifts — of Jesus and creation.

The environmental activist and writer Wendell Berry said: "I don't think it is enough appreciated how much an outdoor book the Bible is ... It is best read and understood outdoors, and the farther outdoors the better ... This is because outdoors we are confronted everywhere with wonders; we see that the miraculous is not extraordinary but the common mode of existence. It is our daily bread ... We forget the greater and still continuing miracle by which water (with soil and sunlight) is turned into grapes." We experience God's gifts of creation through our five senses.

## I AM

Some of us in cities and towns may feel disconnected from nature, but

those who first heard Jesus say: "I am the bread of life (Jn 6:35, 41, 48, 51) and "I am the vine" (Jn 15:1, 5) were embedded in the natural world and experienced an interdependent relationship between human life and all creation. Wine, bread and olive oil were the three main food groups of the Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean world. The three are often linked, as in "wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart" (Ps 104:15).

In his "I am" statements, Jesus calls on nature and the five senses to help disciples understand him. His saying "I am" (*egō eimi*) which concerns his unity with God is prevalent in the Gospel of John: "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58 cf. 8:24; 8:28; 18:5). This evokes Isaiah 43:10 where God calls on people to be witnesses so that all may "know and believe and understand that I AM."

## I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

In proclaiming: "I am the bread of

life" and "I am the living bread," Jesus grounds the Eucharist in the realities of daily living. Bread, a staple food of people through the ages, takes on further symbolic dimensions to reveal Jesus, the Word made flesh.

Jesus claims: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes *into* me will never be thirsty." "Believing *into*" Jesus means that we are to become like him and do what he does. With him, we are to cross boundaries by reaching out to those on the fringes of society and religion (Jn 7:49); the physically marginalised (the sick man by the pool, Jn 5:1-15; the beggar born blind, Jn 9:1-41); and the geographically marginalised (the official, Jn 4:46-54; the woman of Samaria, Jn 4:4-42).

Significant shifts happen as Jesus continues to evoke biblical manna and wisdom traditions. The crowd attribute to Moses the feeding with the manna during the Exodus wandering. Jesus points out that God gave their ancestors "bread from



Kathleen Rushton RSM is author of *The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor: Hearing Justice in John's Gospel* (SCM Press 2020).



heaven to eat.” By declaring: “I am the bread of life”, Jesus claims to be the manna and, also, Wisdom *Sophia* who gathers friends to “eat of my bread and drink of my wine.” “I am the bread of life” parallels “I am the true vine.” “Abiding” is found in both passages.

## I AM THE VINE

When Jesus says: “I am the vine, you are the branches”, he bases our whole being in a spiritual reality that transcends physical reality. This does not mean that we remove ourselves from the material natural world. We are not isolated, autonomous but organic beings and abiding together and nourished by Jesus as the vine and tended by a loving vintner, God. The vine offers a rich and developing view of Christian life in Earth experienced as joy through our senses.

Of all the terms related to plants and agriculture in the Bible, those associated with grapevines and wine are the most prominent (88 Hebrew terms are used 810 times in the OT; 36 Greek terms used 169 times in the NT).

The vine image suggests both joy

and suffering. Joy, in the fruitfulness, the work of nature in which living organisms produce fruit; and suffering, in the growing in stony soils and on steep hillsides, and the pruning required to produce new life. And for the vines to be most productive, they are wired to poles — the wires like the structures and rules

contemplative time in nature — is a way to rediscover that the gifts of “I am” are best read and understood outdoors through our senses. When we’re outside we notice things in a sensory way: a cool wind, salt air, even our muscles straining as we climb uphill.

We can consciously use our

## The “I am” sayings are not just about Jesus but more about what Jesus brings uniquely to the world, how he benefits the world.

in a community that guide, support and give stability to our common life.

### BEST READ AND UNDERSTOOD OUTDOORS

We can be unaware of God’s gifts to us or we can regard them as ours by right — as part of the “standard equipment” of a fully human being. We can be unaware, too, that the “I am” sayings are not just about Jesus but more about what Jesus brings uniquely to the world, how he benefits the world.

Taking a walk of praise and thanksgiving — a consciously

senses: ask ourselves what we are seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting — and in doing so experience the gift of our senses. We may not have all our senses, or even use those we have, but we can become aware of ourselves being alive in nature, the fruit of Creation.

“Believing *into*” Jesus requires that we dedicate our lives to Christ and work with him to complete the boundary-crossing works of God by hearing both the cry of Earth and the cry of the marginalised. ★

1 August: John 6:24-35

8 August: John 6:41-51



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# REVISING PRIORITIES



I am proud when I get a good grade in an assignment and upset when I do less well. Then I realise that this is part of my embodying a Western worldview that celebrates achievements — career advancement, awards — and possessions — property, vehicles, clothing. We struggle to recognise our privilege, and to see what we have as gifts to be treasured and used for things greater than us.

Indigenous and non-Western worldviews are often more holistic. So is the Bible. One whakataukī (Māori proverb) dictates that people are the most important thing, not land or possessions or wealth. The Gospels tell that Jesus and his disciples chose ministry over wealth or status, crossing tribal boundaries and turning exclusive traditions on their heads. This is almost the opposite to how our society runs today.

I have been well indoctrinated by the Western, individualist mindset. I value myself in terms of grades and awards. I look for a job with money and prestige. I do not know many of my neighbours. I believe I deserve the food I eat because I paid for it. I don't recognise the sun, Earth, water and labour that brought it to me. I forget the generations of privilege, education and globalisation that allowed me to travel widely in my 21 years, to have the free time to adventure and to be able to afford quality tertiary study. Yet my achievements and privilege never feel like enough. Is this what the commandment not to honour false idols means?

How would things change if I focused more on what God sees as important? If I could value people and place over power and prestige, I think I would be more content, more fulfilled and less exhausted. I see many of my peers and friends challenged by mental illness and cannot help feeling it's because we're damaged by individualist capitalism. If we left those behind, we would be more equal and happier.



**Shar Mathias** enjoys reading, running, tramping, music and a lot of other things. She studies ecology and lives in Dunedin.

I am impressed by a university friend who does her assignments and tests, putting in enough effort to do fairly well, but letting that be enough. She leaves time for church, friends and rest. She always has wise advice and an inner peace that comes, I reckon, from her ability to prioritise the right things. Another friend has chosen to volunteer in India rather than get a degree in Australia. He could achieve in academia, but knows that at the moment, study is not his vocation. As I try far too hard at the things that are right for my success in our world but not necessarily for God's kingdom, I am challenged by what it means to change my priorities.

I am learning to value myself as a whole person, to focus on my studies because that's where I'm at in life right now, but not investing overly in my identity as "an educated woman who is going to get a great job". My value is who I am as a child of God. When I feel that I am not enough, I remember my value as a friend, a daughter, a sister. When I want to make more of myself, I spend time with children who are only interested in whether I can listen to them, not what I've done. I improve at resting, seeing it as a gift, rather than laziness that will not allow my career to progress. I stop to make my sick flatmate a cup of tea and send my classmates some notes they need even though I have an essay due. As I get better at this, I think about how I can use what I've been given in life — education, connections, privilege — for God's kingdom, not my own advancement. It is all a process that I often fail at. That's all right too, because I don't need to be the best. God is. ★



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## The Dark Is Light Enough: Ralph Hotere: A Biographical Portrait

by Vincent O'Sullivan

Published by Penguin, 2020

Reviewed by Mike Riddell

We are fortunate to have a writer of Vincent O'Sullivan's calibre reflecting on the life and work of Ralph (Rau) Hotere. This book flows from an enduring friendship between the two, and a request from the artist for O'Sullivan to pen his biography.

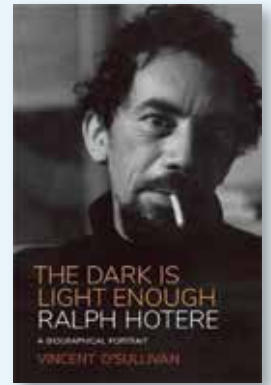
What we have in this award-winning tribute is a tender and insightful account worthy of the somewhat recalcitrant Hotere. There is great respect for the whānau in Mitimiti who gave the painter both life and voice, and bookended

his wonderful creative exploration.

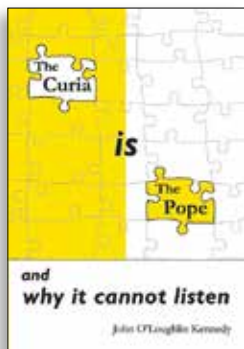
The honest tribute in this work reveals an artist who is restlessly creative, culturally incisive, generous, convivial, deeply private and at the apex of his craft. He neither cares for nor explains his work, content to relentlessly push the boundaries of a burning vision and social conscience.

The elephant in the room is the lack of Hotere's work in the book, which is akin to the blind men describing such elephants. In order to make sense of this glaring omission, it's necessary to read Mike White's article (*Stuff* 15 Nov 2020) regarding O'Sullivan's difficulties in dealing with the Hotere Foundation Trust.

Nevertheless, this is a soaring tribute to a cultural taonga, one which moved me deeply. ★



John O'Loughlin Kennedy is an economist and co-founder of international relief and development organisation Concern Worldwide. *The Curia Is the Pope* is his slightly repetitive reflection on Church History, in which he posits that bureaucracies, while appearing to serve organisations, exist only for their own power and control.



The bureaucracy of the Roman Empire took over the management of the Church in 313CE. The Curia's control increased over centuries, with a hierarchical priesthood demanding secrecy, obedience and punishment of any who questioned it. At Vatican Council I it proclaimed infallibility as a key to blocking power sharing and the healing of Church divisions.

When John XXIII proclaimed the Second Vatican Council, to renew a

## The Curia Is the Pope: and Why It Cannot Listen

by John O'Loughlin Kennedy

Published by Mount Salus Press, 2020

Reviewed by Anna Holmes

Synodal Church, the Curia was quick to silence and eject those who supported change. This rejection of change continued under the next two popes.

Pope Francis is now attempting to renew the Church and there have been energetic attempts to discredit him. He also threatens the Curia by calling a 2022 World Synod of Bishops, who must all first consult their lay members.

I recommend this exposure of Curial manipulation and control of the Church by deceit, poor scholarship and coercion to all who wonder why the Church is so out of touch with its people. ★

## 99 Names of God

by David Steindl-Rast

Published by Orbis Books, 2021

Reviewed by Katie O'Connor

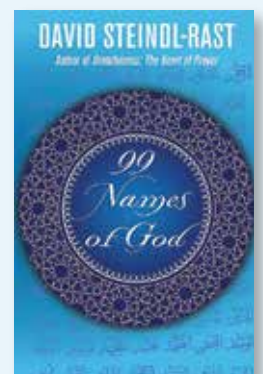
In *99 Names of God*, David Steindl-Rast offers reflections on the 99 names of God found in the Islamic Creed. The book is lovely in its simplicity with each Divine name rendered in its original Arabic by master calligrapher Shams Anwari-Alhosseyeni.

The reflections offer a fresh way of thinking about the meaning of the words we use when we try to describe and name God. Many are beautiful, like "the Most Gracious" and "the Knower of the Impulses of the Heart".

Some are familiar: "the Almighty" and "the Creator". Others I found more challenging, like: "the Withholder", "the Reducer", "the Bringer of Death". With each name, David helps us to look more deeply and prayerfully into what he calls the Great Mystery.

In the Introduction David writes: "This book is dedicated to the people – of any and all religious denominations – who dare to pass through the gates of the many different names of God into the one nameless Mystery that unites us all."

I found meditating on the 99 names nourishing and thought-provoking. This book is a little gem that deserves its place on the bedside table. ★





## DAYS OF THE BAGNOLD SUMMER

Directed by Simon Bird  
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

**T**his warm-hearted but clear-eyed film about family relationships is pitch perfect, and is (I hope) destined to become a classic of its kind. Its origins as a graphic novel are generally well-hidden, but break through in the odd cartoon-like scenario, such as the scene where a professional-sounding heavy metal band is revealed to consist of a trio of 9-year-olds.

The film canvasses a situation that must be familiar to many parents and children. Sue Bagnold, a single mum in her early 50s, is destined to spend the summer holidays alone with her sullen, resentful, unmotivated son, Daniel. The plot and premise are simple. His plans to spend six weeks in Florida with his dad having fallen through, Daniel, aged 15, pasty-faced and adorned with a mop of long, lank hair and Metallica t-shirts, is going to have to spend the summer with Mum. Sue is a dowdy, unconfident, bespectacled librarian, permanently clad in a beige sweater — perhaps a too easy stereotype?

The pair's early interactions are predictably painful — variations on the

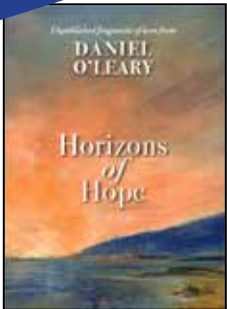
same thwarted verbal exchanges and put-downs that reveal frustrations on both sides. What makes these "conversations" especially poignant is, first, the sheer skill of the acting, directing and cinematography and, second, the sparkly dialogue that scores one well-directed hit after another. Of course, things are going to change, and they do — although this very British film is most definitely not the kind of "feel-good" movie where the upbeat outcome is a foregone conclusion.

Change begins following the death of a beloved family pet, when Daniel and Sue begin to bond spontaneously. It's a revelation when we see Daniel smile for the first time — it's as if he's become a different person.

After having her romantic hopes dashed by a smooth-talking poseur, Sue begins to change, taking up Pilates and beginning to venture out socially. Daniel, too, is becoming more confident and outgoing.

While Earl Cave and Monica Dolan (both actors new to me) play the perfect mismatched couple, *Days of the Bagnold Summer* is not just an engaging two-hander, and supporting roles are delightfully realised by Elliot Speller-Gillott (Daniel's friend Ky), Tamsin Greig (Ky's mother Astrid), Rob Brydon (Daniel's history teacher and Sue's would-be seducer Douglas Porter) and Alice Lowe (Sue's sister Carol), adding both subtlety and humour to a film that many readers will have little difficulty relating to. ★


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by Mary Betz

## Breaking Norms

We have been horrified to learn of the abuses in state and faith-based care in Aotearoa, and in former Canadian First Nation residential schools. Our social statistics point to causes. Our rate of youth suicide is second highest in the developed world, and higher for Māori (followed by Pasifika). Our youth mental health ranks 38th of 42 wealthy countries, again with Māori more likely to suffer mental ill-health. And we have high figures for families in damp, mouldy homes and emergency accommodation, violence in Oranga Tamariki, and persistent poorer outcomes for Māori in the housing, health, education, justice and corrections sectors. How do we break with this legacy of colonisation and inequality?

Some of the co-governance structures suggested in He Puapua ("breaking the norms"), the recent report commissioned by Te Puni Kōkiri, the Ministry of Māori Development, may cause us to hesitate. But now is te wā for Aotearoa to have a full conversation on the partnership Te Tiriti calls for, its implications for institutions and individuals, and our obligations under the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As Christians who understand covenant relationships, we are impelled to seek justice. ★

## Interfaith Learnings

The Auckland Interfaith Council recently hosted "Faith Perspectives on Preserving our Environment" among members of the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, Christian (Anglican and Roman Catholic) and Interspiritual faith communities. Those gathered soon realised it was common practice to call our planet "Mother Earth". Buddhism teaches that the metaphor reveals the innate nature of Earth — bringing all beings to life, sustaining us and enabling us to thrive. In return, we owe her our admiration, respect and gentleness. Other common understandings were the interconnectedness of all things and the need for healing in our relationship with Earth.

Hinduism teaches respect for creation by seeing divinity in each being, and practising good deeds (*karma*) and nonviolence (*ahimsa*).

Sikhism teaches that God is one: that one Light is in everyone and in all creation.

The Anglican, Catholic, Buddhist and Interspiritual speakers all noted the changing perspective from considering humanity as separate and above other creatures to recognising all creatures as members of our ecological community.

## Church and Dualism

Ongoing tension between left and right in both US politics and the US Catholic Church was the impetus for a talk by Franciscan Richard Rohr. Rohr drew on the work of social scientist René Girard who wrote about the "scapegoat mechanism", a way in which individuals, groups and cultures project their inner hatred and fear onto others, and attach it there,

refusing to see what Jesus referred to as the "log" in their own eyes.

This pattern of blame and accusation is a result of thinking dualistically. We think dualistically when we are young in order to learn clarity, and distinguish right and wrong. But we need to learn to think non-dualistically as we mature. Not learning leads to righteous negativity and blaming — instead of repenting and changing ourselves. The institutional Church — through legalism, clericalism and peripheral concerns with church attendance and "bedroom" issues — has encouraged dualistic, first-half-of-life thinking, rather than modelling compassion and self-knowledge. What a different world it would be if the Church taught us how to live with mystery, uncertainty, ambiguity and the unknown — and to hold the tensions of this world of good and evil!



**TUI MOTU InterIslands**  
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

Tui Motu magazine provides Catholic as well as ecumenical and inter-faith perspectives and discussion on current issues in church and society. It focuses particularly on issues affecting Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific. Its intent is to promote the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, engaging faith and the world through informed, thoughtful comment and discussion for a general readership. The magazine publishes 11 issues per year in print and regular digital postings on social media.

The magazine invites contributions from writers of Catholic and other Christian traditions or faith backgrounds, who can offer our readers insights which resonate with the Gospel as it affects us today. We value diversity and seek contributions which are representative of our church and our society: Maori, Pakeha, Pasifika, other cultures, a range of ages and genders, lay and ordained. We offer feature articles, interviews, reviews, poetry, comment and opinion on theology, spirituality and history, as well as on social justice and ecology.

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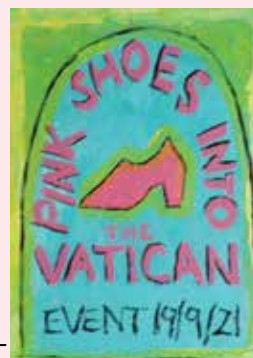
## SEND US YOUR WORN OUT SHOES

*Be the Change, Catholic Church, Aotearoa* is a group working for gender equality in the leadership of the Catholic Church.

**EVENT: 19 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**PINK SHOES INTO THE VATICAN**

*Trail of shoes from Te Hā O Hine Suffrage Place – formerly Lower Khartoum Place near High Street – to St Patrick's Cathedral.*



## SEND US YOUR SHOES OR STORY

Attach a tag to the shoes with your first name and a line or two about YOU and your journey with the Church. Anyone can participate. No spare shoes? Just post your story.

We need the shoes by **31 AUGUST**. Post to:

**Pink Shoes into the Vatican Project**  
449 Ruakura Rd  
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[www.bethechangecatholicchurchootearoa.wordpress.com](http://www.bethechangecatholicchurchootearoa.wordpress.com)





We welcome letters of comment, discussion, response, affirmation or argument of up to 200 words.

The editor reserves the right to abridge longer letters while keeping the meaning.

## GRATITUDE FOR OUR MOTHERS AND THE SISTERS

As I reflected on the "Women of Spirit" articles (TM Issue 260 June) it made me think of the many, many women of spirit I've encountered who have influenced my generation. I think of my mother both in the home, supporting the extended family and the community of our neighbourhood as needed. She lived faith at home, in the community and Church by seeing, discerning and acting faith every day. I think, too, of the Mission Sisters in our Addington school and parish and the Josephite Sisters in Bishopdale demonstrating faith in many ways. These women lived faith daily – seeing, judging, or in today's word discerning, and acting their faith in many ways. We have many women of faith, like our mothers, in all areas of life.

**Shona Lowson**

## FARMERS ALSO DEDICATED TO ENVIRONMENT

Mike Riddell opens his article (TM Issue 261 July) with the statement: "I live in a divided community. The majority of people in my valley are farmers of one sort or another, and I'm an environmentalist." I sincerely hope that with his many skills, and positions of responsibility, Mike can move beyond such a dualistic and unhelpful attitude. Indeed his article includes comments on "polarisation" and on "building trust and friendship." I personally know many farmers who are committed and dedicated to the environment, and who work tirelessly to increase their knowledge and skills to nurture and respect Mother Earth. One brother plants 10 new trees for every single one that is felled. Farmers notice the scandalous harm to the environment caused by city dwellers. We are all in this together Mike. I am not sure that it is helpful to lambast the farmers!

**Helen McEwen**

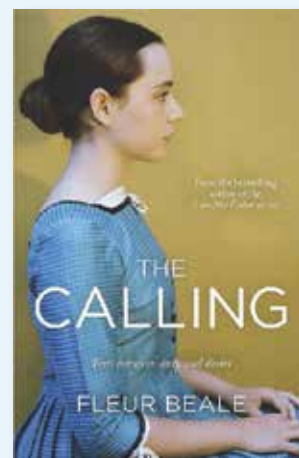
## The Calling: Torn between Duty and Desire

by Fleur Beale

Published by Penguin, 2021

Reviewed by Caitlyn Mills. (Year 11, St Mary's College, Wellington)

**T**he *Calling* is beautifully written and creatively articulates how hard it was to be a young woman 100 years ago. As we follow our protagonist, Molly Conway, we watch her struggle with hardship after hardship as she journeys her way down the path God has set her on. I particularly enjoyed seeing her come to terms with the fact that she was living out her mother's dream and not her own and how that affected her life's path. Molly is a brave young woman and seeing her choose the right over the easy, time and time again, is empowering. I wish we could have had more from the point of view of her brothers. It would have been interesting to have more detail about what they were thinking through all the conflict between Molly and her father. *The Calling* is a brilliant book and a great read. When Fleur Beale came to my school and read us the first chapter, I was really excited to see the way Molly's story would play out – and I can confidently say that I wasn't disappointed. I believe that this is a book many teenagers would enjoy and I'm delighted that I got to read it so soon after its publication. ★



## Remote Sympathy

by Catherine Chidgey

Published by Victoria University Press, 2021

Reviewed by Meryn Gates

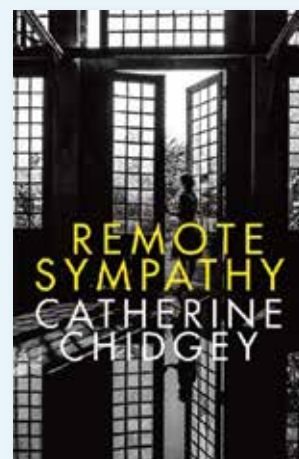
**I**n 1930s Germany, Doktor Lenard Weber is convinced he can cure cancer with a machine that transmits electricity through the body, using the body's circulatory system to locate and destroy cancerous tumours.

By the 1940s Lenard knows the machine does not work but he must pretend it does to stay alive. Weber has been arrested and taken to a concentration camp where the camp administrator is desperate to save his wife, who has been diagnosed with incurable cancer.

Chidgey weaves together the perspectives of Lenard, as he treats Greta and tries to stay alive while maintaining his humanity; Dietrich, as he reflects back on his role as a camp administrator when interviewed as part of a prosecution for war crimes; Greta, who wonders whether the cancer is a punishment for knowing the crime that is being perpetrated by her husband and that she does nothing to prevent; and the anonymised voice of the citizens of Weimar, the town adjacent to the camp.

This beautifully crafted novel calls us to question the extent to which we can ignore crimes against humanity occurring around the world. Our connection to each other makes us complicit.

I recommend *Remote Sympathy* to anyone who enjoys a well-written, thought-provoking story. ★





## Looking OUT and IN

I think the mere mention of converts or conversion makes us suspicious today. We think of conversion therapy, or weird cults where people get a new name and never speak to their parents again, or paternalistic colonial missionaries.

There's a suggestion of being radicalised, too, of taking an extreme position that separates you from your previous life, and the lives of others.

I'm preparing to become Catholic, which I suppose makes me a convert, too. It's less dramatic than it sounds. I've two children in a Catholic school, receiving the sacraments; I work at *Tui Motu*. It doesn't feel like I'm renouncing my old life and beginning anew. It feels like I'm inching along, making tiny, incremental decisions that I believe in. It's taken me years to get even this far — I'm a spiritual snail!

Is this poor parenting? You're supposed to lead from the front, be a model adult. I've been modelling being a middle-aged woman who has experienced major life failures and has proved incapable of making definite statements about belief — about anything, really. By one interpretation this models hesitancy, indecision, vagueness, tardiness, lack of drive.

I am my own apologist: I choose another interpretation — one that, perhaps by no coincidence, is more generous. I think I am also modelling that "old people" (from the vantage of my children, everyone 35+) do not know everything, are not sure of everything, are subject to change, development and education in much the same way as the young. That while I have much to teach them, I have also learned much from them. And that absolute certainty (which, alas, eludes me) is not a prerequisite for participation.



And, further, that there is a measure of courage, when your inner car radio has not proved tuned to epiphanic signals, in acting anyway. I'm choosing to join a church at a time when traditional denominations are losing traction

and when the Catholic Church in particular has been at the centre of local and global scandals. I hope my children recognise on some subliminal level that this is living out my belief that *doing a right thing* is better than *aspiring to do the perfect thing*.

I have been evangelised by a school and a workplace. I think of Lynne Taylor writing in *Tui Motu* about evangelising being more successful when based on "indwelling" via relationships — recognising and experiencing the goodness of Christian life by being in its midst — than the "come to Jesus" that often springs to mind (TM Oct 2017). And I remember Mike Riddell's

comment on the kind of doctrinal details that could be seen to pose an obstacle for the convert: "I glanced them in my peripheral vision as one does when noticing a flattened possum on the tarmac" (TM July 2018).

The most holy moment I have experienced in any church — whether the Presbyterian of my childhood or the Anglican chapel of school — came a couple of Sundays ago, when a parishioner cheered my nervous son for altar serving at short notice and by himself for the first time, just as another approached to congratulate me as the proud mother. These things seem insignificant, but to people like me they are manifestations of the invitation to welcome — the outstretched hand — to which the Church lays claim.

So I am choosing to interpret positively the slightly odd optics of my situation: crossing arms for a blessing with my 7-year-old while my 9-year-old serves at the altar. In a world which sometimes seems focused on individuality at all costs, we are growing more like each other, and more like others, too. ★

Ann Hassan is Assistant Editor and Administrator of *Tui Motu*. She has two young boys and loves reading and op shopping.



### Holy Spirit

release our streams of love, generosity and support  
to flow into the ground of community  
and grow politics that flower  
in just, inclusive and effective governance.

From the *Tui Motu* team