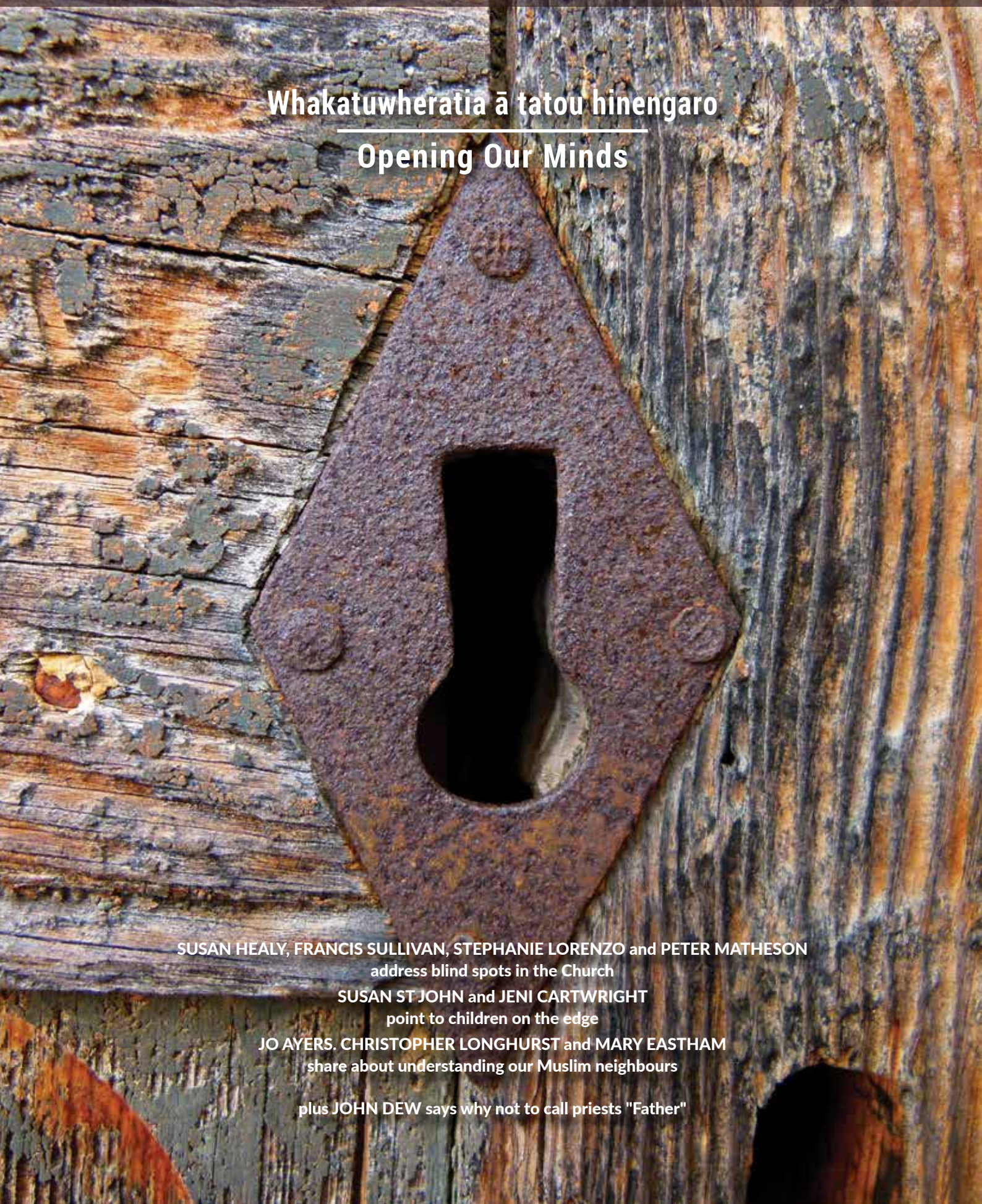
TUI MOTU InterIslands

Independent Catholic Magazine CELEBRATING 22 YEARS 1997–2019 Issue 237 May 2019 $7



Whakatuwheratia ā tatou hinengaro

Opening Our Minds

SUSAN HEALY, FRANCIS SULLIVAN, STEPHANIE LORENZO and PETER MATHESON address blind spots in the Church

SUSAN ST JOHN and JENI CARTWRIGHT point to children on the edge

JO AYERS. CHRISTOPHER LONGHURST and MARY EASTHAM share about understanding our Muslim neighbours

plus JOHN DEW says why not to call priests "Father"

CONTENTS

FEATURES

COMMENT

SCRIPTURE

REFLECTION

REVIEWS

LETTERS

Cover Photo:
by Marc Pascual from Pixabay

Tuimotumag TuiMotuInterIslands Tuimotu

EDITORIAL

Journeying with an Open Mind

We're in the Emmaus season, that time between Easter and Pentecost when one gospel story after another tells of the mind-blowing experience of the disciples. We read how women and men, traumatised by the death of Jesus, are confronted with the inconceivable experience of risen life, resulting in an explosion of their questions, delight and love.

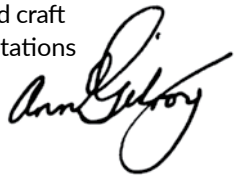
And ever since, the contemplation of the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Christ has shaped, confirmed and challenged the disciples beliefs, values and relationships — personally, as Church, as societies, as Earth community. The risen Christ in the mission of God is at the heart of what animates and integrates our lives.

Like the first disciples of the gospels, we encourage one another to live fully with open hearts and minds participating in and building the common good in our own time. As Vatican II reminded us: "The joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of all people ... especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts" (*Gaudium et Spes*). So, all that happens around us — the killing of people at prayer, the growth of dangerous ideologies, the revelation of scandals in the Church, the welcoming of migrant families, the offering of medical services, the care of children — are matters for us to discuss and respond to with pro-life fullness in our own Emmaus journey at this time.

The articles in this 237th issue invite such discussion and offer new questions, perspectives and information. For example, how many of us will stop calling and referring to priests as "father" for the sake of our Church community? John Dew's article invites us to try. What friend or local person do we know who honours the wisdom of our indigenous people? Susan Healy outlines how much we are missing by not having that relationship ourselves. How many of us judge those receiving government benefits as not making an effort? An article in this issue offers a different perspective. How many of us have learned more about our Kiwi Muslim people since the Christchurch killings? Jo Ayers, Mary Eastham and others offer further encouragement in this. And how many of us feel that the institutional Church is unresponsive to pressing concerns within? Francis Sullivan and Stephanie Lorenzo suggest steps forward. And there's much more.

We thank all our contributors to the May magazine. Their reflection, faith, experience, research, art and craft challenge us to go beyond our self-set limitations and to be open to different perspectives.

And, as is our custom our last word is of blessing and encouragement.



Call me "John" not "Father"

When I was doing formation work at our national seminary, I often used to say to the students that when ordained, they would be privileged to be called “father" by the people. But I also used to say that they had to earn the privilege of being called “father” because of the way they were living their lives — serving the people of God in such a way that they were bringing life and hope.

Recently I read an article by French priest, Jean-Pierre Roche, titled: *Stop Calling Me "Father"!* Like him, I now wonder why we priests continue to be called "father".

Last August Pope Francis wrote to us all to take action against “clericalism” which he sees as the source of abuse perpetrated by priests and bishops.

Jean-Pierre Roche says that we may be able to make some small changes to overcome clericalism by priests not expecting to be called "father" — to be called by their baptismal name. He gave three reasons why it is a good place to start.

The first is found in Matthew's Gospel when Jesus is speaking to the disciples — to us disciples today: “You are not to be called ‘Master’ — you have but one Master, and you are all brothers and sisters. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father', for you have but one Father who is in heaven” (Mt 23:8-9). The meaning of the words is clear. Jean-Pierre Roche says that to be called "father" is to usurp the place of God. It becomes even more serious if a priest begins to play "god" — which happens with clericalism.

Second, when people call the priest “father” it creates a children and parent relationship — priest the parent and people the children. It is not possible to have equal relationships among adults who are "brothers and sisters" if one of them is called “father". We all share the dignity of the daughters and sons of God. If we want the Church to be a real community in which we care for and look after one another we need to practise equality in relationships. As we were reminded by Vatican Council II: "Even though some, by the will of Christ, are made doctors and pastors for the good of others, in terms of the dignity and activities of all the faithful in the edification of the Body of Christ, there is true equality among all" (*Lumen Gentium* 32).

Third, Roche says that the practice of calling priests “father” can be unhealthy because it becomes an expression of dependence which is based on a false and unreal idea of obedience.

Being called “father” may seem important to some priests — but it is more important that we live, act and relate in a way that makes it clear that we are all daughters and sons of God.

For each priest to make the choice to ask the people he serves to stop calling him "father" (and for me “Your Eminence” or “Cardinal”) might seem a small thing to do but it will not be an easy custom to overcome — requiring practise by priest and people equally. We will all need to get over the initial awkwardness of entering into a new relationship of equality.

But this little beginning may be a spark of the reform in the Church which Pope Francis is asking for. It's a new practice that highlights the fundamental truth that through baptism we are all sisters and brothers of Christ — using our baptismal names highlights this — and God is our focus and centre.

Painting: ***The Risen Lord*** by He Qi © Used with permission www.heqiart.com

For Jean-Pierre Roche's article see: https://international.la-croix.com/news/stop-calling-me-father/9779

John Dew is bishop of the Archdiocese of Wellington and was made a cardinal in 2015. His personal motto is “Peace through Integrity”.

LEARNING OUR BLINDSPOT

SUSAN HEALY shares how our coloniser forebears believed that Christianity was superior and remained ignorant of Māori beliefs, to our spiritual loss.

Ko Waitakere te pae maunga
Ko Te Whau te awa
Nō Airani taku pāpā, nō
Ingarangi taku māmā
Ko Ihu Karaiti te tangata.

I grew up gazing out to the Waitakere ranges and near the Te Whau river, and in this pepeha I speak as a Pākehā Christian.

Like many others, I had the privilege of taking part in Henare Tate's (Pā Henare's) courses in Māori theology. There was a great depth to what he shared with us, often illustrated through stories poignant and humorous. While we Pākehā felt a bit lost at times — knowing we needed more Māori language to appreciate all Pā was saying — the courses brought us joy and satisfaction. Our minds and hearts were opened to the beliefs and practices of the indigenous people of our country. We found, too, a theology that intuitively made sense, grounded in human experience and at the same time profoundly spiritual.

I think we will have difficulty in appreciating Māori spirituality if our religious outlook is based in a rupture between the spiritual and the human — a rupture shown in much 19th-century European Christianity.

When writing about William Yate (1802-1877), Judith Binney makes a telling observation: "Like most missionaries, Yate's expressed feelings about the Maoris varied according to the point of view he wished to establish: as an emissary of Christianity he saw them as cruel, licentious, lacking in human affection, lazy, superstitious and proficient in cant; as a man he recognised that they could be kind, loving, brave, industrious (for 'natives'), intelligent and sincere in their beliefs."

Prejudice Passed Down

To us, this may seem a sad travesty: a person's Christian beliefs actively prejudicing them against the good in another culture. But, as descendants of settlers, we must ask whether remnants of this prejudice still abide in our communities.

Further, does an over-thought-out approach to our faith continue to prevent us from being in touch with what our humanity is telling us? Theory seems to have become the new god in so much education. Does this emphasis mean we are in danger of losing sight of the value in traditions that are rooted in the earthed experience of generations?

Not Listening to Māori

While we probably abhor the overt racism carried by many of the colonisers, we might not be aware of the harmful ignorance that derives from simply not listening to what Māori have to say.

This non-listening was typical of the early European evangelisation in this country as James Cowan (1870–1943) pointed out:

"Few of the excellent men who pioneered the Churches in New Zealand took the trouble to investigate the system of beliefs they were supplanting. It was but natural that they should decline to study the faiths and practices that appeared to them nothing but 'idolatrous abominations' . . . The missionary . . . quite failed to grasp the sublimity and beauty underlying the old Māori religion."

Cowan recognised the value of Māori religion because he was a fluent speaker of the Māori language and spent time speaking with Māori and learning from them. Maybe Cowan teaches us that gaining an appreciation of another people's spirituality takes time, discipline and a willingness to be moved from the suppositions we grew up with.

Cowan's reflection reminds me of what I learnt from a 1980s study of New Zealand's theological colleges and their relationship to Māori. I came to the conclusion that worse than the negative prejudices carried by some was the fact that, at that time, the colleges largely had little or no place for the Māori world, the indigenous culture of our country.

It struck me that when we are negative about another culture or person, at least we are acknowledging they exist. To ignore them is a terrible denial of their being.

Christianity Confused with Civilisation

In his use of the word "supplant", Cowan points to the ultimate harm in the colonising project, which in effect was a drive to replace the religion, economy and politics of the indigenous people with Western institutions. A powerful justifier for this drive lay in the colonisers' notion of civilisation, closely tied to that of Christianity. As the historian, Professor Keith Sorrenson, put it: "Christianity, the religion of civilisation . . . was a phrase that would reverberate through the mission records." This is evident in the words of Samuel Marsden, a man who knew Māori as friends but, like others, did not inquire into their culture and beliefs.

> ***"Our culture is based on relationships with everything and everyone in Te Ao Mārama [the world of light, the physical world] as creatures that whakapapa [trace connection] to the source of that creation, the creator of the cosmos, Io."***

"It may be requisite to state that the New Zealanders [Māori] have derived no advantages hitherto either from commerce or the arts of civilization; and must, therefore, be in heathen darkness and ignorance [even though] they appear to be a very superior people in point of mental capacity."

Clearly, Marsden's "civilisation" is that of Europe, seen as the epitome of human development.

Learn from Māori Wisdom

The equation of civilisation with Westernisation reverberates in much scholarship today, and probably affects us more than we realise. It has been strongly reinforced by the theory of social evolution, which classifies societies according to their progress along a continuum from the primitive to the advanced. This linear view of history is used to support the superiority of the West and creates a block to our fully recognising the worth of indigenous peoples and their spiritualities.

Rightly or wrongly, I see the influence of this sort of theory in the argument that we are evolving into a new era of ecological consciousness, where the "we" implies all humanity. I find myself murmuring in irritation: "But can't you see, that is such a Eurocentric statement! Indigenous peoples, as peoples, have continuously seen themselves as deeply linked to the Earth." What is more, these linear views of development, taken to their logical conclusion, mean that we are cutting ourselves off from our ancestors and their wisdom—an unthinkable position for indigenous peoples.

A careful reading of the evidence given by Māori to the Waitangi Tribunal shows their belief in the interconnectedness of all being, over space and time. To quote Ngāpuhi scholar, Hone Sadler: "the worldview of Māori . . . is that everything is interrelated from the sky to the land." Another Ngāpuhi elder, Pereme Porter, emphasised to the Waitangi Tribunal that to understand Māori culture is to recognise that it is a culture of relationships: "Our culture is based on relationships with everything and everyone in Te Ao Mārama [the world of light, the physical world] as creatures that whakapapa [trace connection] to the source of that creation, the creator of the cosmos, Io."

All this fits with what we learnt from Pa Henare's classes: that, in the Māori theological framework, respect for the divine, for people and for the land is fundamental. They belong together. This is wisdom we of settler descent need to be open to, both to overcome the damaging blindness from our colonial past and to face the challenges of our time.

Photo: *Window, St Faith Anglican Church, Ohinemutu Village, Rotorua* Charles O Cecil / Alamy Stock Photo © Used with permission

Susan Healy has a PhD in Maori Studies and edited *Listening to the People of the Land: Christianity, Colonisation and the Need for Redemption*, launched in February.

Let the SPIRIT Animate Us Again

FRANCIS SULLIVAN writes that Catholic people need to help the Church change in seven essential areas.

Many have asked, especially in Australia, whether the Catholic Church can survive the shock of the conviction of Cardinal George Pell and the impact on its credibility, even utility. Yet to assume that the institution is exclusively the Church is to miss the point: Cardinal Pell has been sentenced, not Australia's Catholics.

Believers and those who identify with the Catholic faith tradition are the real Church. The institution is but an organised mechanism to give expression to some of that believing community's social and practical activities.

So, for the Church to survive, its members need to take responsibility for their future. Now is the time for lay Catholics to be actively engaged in the governance of the institution.

The clerical caste has failed us in its mismanagement of the abuse scandal. The protectionism and "closed shop" mentality that comes with clericalism is a curse for my Church. Too many clerics have been too self-interested to seek the health of the Church above their own sense of entitlement and advancement. Organisationally, they hold all the cards.

What should be done now?

Accountability

The Australian bishops must act. They are accountable only to the Pope and he is struggling to get on top of the issue. They should voluntarily subject themselves to a transparent, accountable mechanism that is not run by clerics. They must not use Canon Law as an excuse to avoid being accountable to both the Catholic and wider communities.

Governance

It is time for an independent body, perhaps an ombudsman model, to oversee the cultural reform of the Australian Church and the performance of bishops. This body needs to be separate from the hierarchy, conducted under accepted public service principles and staffed by experts in fields of governance, cultural anthropology and ecclesiology.

Equality

The bishops have instigated a Church-wide future directions dialogue within the Catholic community. Known as a Plenary Council, it is an important initiative but risks being clouded by perceptions of overt clerical control. To date, only bishops chair the important forums and only bishops and male clergy have full voting rights. In the interests of better engagement with the Catholic community, there should be a woman immediately appointed to co-chair the formal decision-making meetings. Anywhere else in society this would be a "no-brainer". The medieval patriarchy of the institution is starkly out of touch. The lay community deserve a potent say and a mechanism for being heard.

Lay Appointments

Serious proposals for innovated governance that provides mutual roles for lay and clerical appointments must be placed on the table. This is best practice in our society and the institution should reflect what is increasingly seen as common sense.

Openness

Urgent pastoral aspirations of Catholics, like access to communion for the divorced and meaningful ministry to the LGBTI community, must no longer be quashed by legalisms. Too often the Church has presented itself as a bulwark against changes in society and in turn become judgemental to the point of ostracising decent people of good will.

Modernise

An expansion of formal ministry roles, such a women deacons and married clergy, needs open and genuine discussion. Bolstering declining vocations to the priesthood using men from the developing world is a far from satisfactory solution for a cosmopolitan, diverse society such as our own.

We need to build an Australian Catholic Church that reflects our culture, social mores and lifestyles. Parishioners must have a direct say in the merit appointments of priests and bishops. Directors of diocesan boards and trustees of Church assets must include equal numbers of lay and clergy. This will instil better accountabilities and less opaque processes and protocols. The veto decisions taken by bishops over a range of financial and human resourcing issues must be transparently reported.

Believers and those who identify with the Catholic faith tradition are the real Church. The institution is but an organised mechanism to give expression to some of that believing community's social and practical activities.

Relevant

None of this is "rocket science". But for too long it has been resisted by the bishops as if these changes somehow threaten the tenets of the faith. In fact, they may well infuse the practice of the faith and make it more relevant and vibrant. The upshot has seen a steady decline in Mass attendances and a growing indifference by the young to formalised Catholic practice. Not great KPIs for any organisation.

Perhaps most pressing is raising the voice of the institution. So many Catholics have become disillusioned—even disaffected to the point of disinterest.

If the bishops insist on speaking then maybe they should talk less about sexual morality and more about social and corporate ethics. And if they wish to be heard, they should lead by example!

Impact on Catholic Parishioners

Like most Catholics I was shocked by the Pell verdict. I still feel its impact on me as a declared Catholic with a deep commitment to my Church. This gives rise to tensions that I struggle with and I know that I am not alone in this.

At the same time, I have hope. This is not some kind of romantic avoidance of reality but the opposite. My hope is based on a confidence that to be Catholic means to be a part of a community that continually seeks to give personal faith a way to articulate with reason and understanding. A set of life skills in a way. A disposition that helps me embrace life, its challenges and joys and make sense of things in confused moments.

This is the dynamism of being involved in a faith community steeped in a tradition of spiritual and intellectual discernment. It is not an ideological or merely doctrinal straightjacket. Rather it is more akin to an impassioned search that involves a belief that life has a transcendent purpose, that the rational is not always sufficient and that mystery is a window into the depths of human consciousness that leaves residues of wonder, surprise and enlightenment.

It is this spirit that animates being a Church. It is the foundation for an institution and for those who lead and work in it. It nurtures believers and seekers alike. It enables wisdom to come to the fore, especially through crisis.

Painting: *The Baptism of The Holy Spirit* by Rebecca Brogan © Used with permission www.jtbarts.com

Francis Sullivan was the CEO of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council of the Australia Church from 2012-2018.

NO FUTURE in SILENCING WOMEN

STEPHANIE LORENZO advocates for women being appointed to decision-making roles and leadership in the Church.

If you asked me a year ago about the role religion and faith play in my life as a 32-year-old, I would have laughed it off and likely told you about my parents' daily prayers that I find a husband. My devout Catholic parents, who you'll find in the front row at Mass every Sunday, migrated to Australia from the Philippines in the 1980s. They wanted to give their three daughters the best possible opportunities in what they heard was a safe, stable and beautiful country.

My dad studied at TAFE, got a building licence and built houses for a living so that he could earn enough to send his three daughters to a private Catholic school and then to university. I realise how lucky I am to have my education paid for. Seeing my parents work so hard every day instilled in me a work ethic that led to a solid career throughout my 20s.

Women's Prescribed Roles

So forgive me if I find it a little ironic that as soon as 30 kicked in for me, the youngest Lorenzo girl, my parents' prayers changed from "we pray she finds a good job, does well in her studies and finds the right house to buy" to "please God let her find a husband and settle down".

I chuckle, and then ask myself, should I blame them? Isn't this what most societies, irrespective of their culture and outlook, seem to agree on — that a woman's role is to bear children, stay at home and raise them?

Now before you roll your eyes and turn the page, I'll admit that my 33-year-old self without a doubt wants to have children and I'd like to be able to stay home with them in their early years. However, I can't help but wonder and even fear what the major changes of having children will mean for my career and my ability to continue on my professional trajectory.

I think about what roles will be available to me when I am ready to go back to the workforce. Will the workplace understand my needs as a parent? Will it allow me flexibility, support in training and skill development and help to build my confidence so that one day I might lead the ranks? More than likely not — although I'll give credit to the governments and businesses who have acknowledged this real conundrum for many women.

There are still too few examples of it working in practice to allow for equality on the work playing field. And there is still a gender gap of women at the top.

Women's Role in Church

And what about the Catholic Church? Why is the issue of women's participation in leadership and decision-making roles within this institution such a blind spot? Is it because of the narrow view that has been painted for us over the centuries, a view that's been embedded into societal and cultural norms?

Please don't misunderstand my point. I am definitely not trying to diminish or undervalue the role of motherhood. I simply want to know that leadership roles are a possibility for me after I have kids and that my career will actually continue — not stall — if I am willing to work for it.

For a Church that values motherhood so highly, I hope we would realise the new perspectives, skills and

understanding that women's life-giving experience could bring to Church leadership and decision-making.

So when can we start to question the set norms for women? What are the possibilities to expand women's roles in Church? And how can we better form them for the next generation?

Clericalism and Collusion

I realised the full force of gender inequality in the leadership of the Catholic Church only when I started working for *Voices of Faith*, a global initiative focused on empowering and advocating for all women — lay and religious — to have a seat at the decision-making table of their Church.

Theoretically, there are roles open to women today, but they are almost impossible to access. This is because of the clerical culture of the Church, a brotherhood that protects its own — even to the point of evading justice when crimes have been committed. This brotherhood fears change and a loss of their power.

But before I lay blame on one group alone, I must look in the mirror. There are millions of lay Catholics — women and men — conforming to patriarchy and remaining silent when they should be speaking up.

History shows how easily power structures that are cut from the same cloth — that are unchallenged, have no transparency, accountability or diversity in thought, perspective and skill set — become corrupted. It's not a matter of if, but when.

Over the last decade we have been absolutely shocked as revelations unravelled of Church leaders who enabled a global sexual abuse crisis. The hierarchy aided sex-offending priests and covered their crimes which resulted in thousands of innocent lives being broken. The moral authority that the Church once stood for, defended and preached, was exposed as hypocrisy at its finest.

The Neglect of Women

Did you know that nuns, who outnumber brothers almost 10 to one globally and whose female superiors have the same canonical status as male superiors, do not have the right to vote at synods convened by Pope Francis because of their gender?

Did you know that women make up less than 3 per cent of leadership roles in the Roman Curia?

Did you know that there is nothing in canon law to stop Pope Francis from naming a female cardinal?

Women now make up over 60 per cent of Church membership and, statistically speaking, they are more likely to bring their children up in the faith. It is their volunteering hours that keep parishes alive. But in 2019, women are still not welcome to sit at the decision-making table with male leaders even when the decisions directly affect them. Clearly, women's opinions, education, expertise, perspectives and experience do not matter to Church leaders.

There has to be some positive action from the hierarchy showing that Church leadership does value women and that they will give up male power so that women may join the table.

It makes no sense when making decisions that affect the whole Church that we listen only to men, and over half of the Church is kept silent.

By excluding female voices from decision-making the communion of the people of God is negated.

Action for Change

So where do we even start to effect change?

Voices of Faith has begun an on-line campaign called "Overcoming Silence". The first step is to target the millions of Catholics worldwide and raise awareness about gender inequality in our Church. The campaign invites browsers to upload a photo of themselves and write a short message to Church leaders about the need to take women seriously in the Church. The hope is that by International Women's Day 2020 this visual petition will have collected thousands, even millions, of messages to present to Pope Francis and Curia leaders.

Everyone can support the "Overcoming Silence" campaign. Scrolling through the photos we see women and men, lay and religious, priests and bishops, young and old, people from every continent — all asking for women to become part of the decision-making and leadership of our Church.

The website also offers educational and group resources. I know that women aware of the Church's gender exclusion often feel isolated in their local areas. The photographic campaign gives encouragement in reminding us we are not alone.

I fall into the camp of thousands of disaffected "cradle-Catholics" whose allegiance to institutional Church is weak. We go to Mass every so often, tick the Catholic box on the census form and use formal prayers only in times of crisis. "Church" hardly touches most of our lives or the real substance of our faith.

I wonder how we can recover relevance, interest, discernment, dialogue, morality and most of all hope, in our lives?

How do we convince women that their perspectives, expertise and faith are crucial to the Church? How do we touch young people hovering over ticking the atheist box?

There has to be some positive action from the hierarchy showing that Church leadership does value women and that they will give up male power so that women may join the table.

Painting by Adela Tavares © Used with permission www.adelatavares.com

Stephanie Lorenzo is the Communications Director of *Voices of Faith* in Sydney. She founded the charity "Project Futures" for victims and survivors of human trafficking.

GET OUR CHILDREN OUT OF POVERTY

SUSAN ST JOHN **and** JENI CARTWRIGHT **share their contribution to the Government's new agenda to tackle child poverty.**

It's been almost three decades since the 1991 "mother of all budgets" slashed welfare spending and set New Zealand on the path of high and persistent levels of child poverty.

The subsequent neglect of policies to reduce inequality combined with an increasingly casualised labour market has created an environment in which many families subsist in precarious situations. They must adapt to an uncertain income, week on week, year on year. Under current policy settings many of our worst-off families cannot realistically expect to escape poverty without massive policy reform.

The children of these families have known nothing other than having less than their peers, being cold, hungry and unable to focus well at school. As a result of poverty, their life outcomes may be severely impaired and many face long-term mental and physical health issues.

Housing and Poverty

A shortage of affordable housing options underpins and reinforces poor outcomes for low-income families. Despite rudimentary attempts by the Government to ameliorate the situation with improved spending on the accommodation supplement and family tax credits in the Families Package there is no end in sight to the stresses too many families encounter daily.

The official statistics released by Government on 2 April show that 30 percent of all children are living in households that have less than 60 percent of the median (equivalised) household income after housing costs.

Of those 341,000 children, as many as one half of that number are living below the very stringent 40 percent line. Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) would class these 175,000 children to be living with severe income poverty. These children are largely in families who rely on the welfare system. Their families are likely to need to make continuous applications for complex hardship top-ups, along with visits to food banks and private charities just to have their basic needs covered.

Benefits Are Inadequate

Some research by CPAG has shown that if a family has income from just a core benefit such as the Sole Parent Support or JobSeeker Support topped up with an Accommodation Supplement, they can be well below the 40 per cent line.

Rules Are Punitive and Encourage Dependence

The rules for earning extra income are punitive even if suitable work is available. In practical terms, many adults on these benefits are too sick, or have a full load already looking after family, to be able to work at all. The need to supplement with other top-ups and food banks is time-consuming, demeaning and emotionally stressful.

On top of this, small infringements can result in benefit sanctions that punish rather than achieve any meaningful objective. Even where there are dependent children, benefits may be cut in half, often for trivial reasons. A punitive attitude to relationships helps keep many sole parents on edge, in fear of breaking the rules and losing their independent income.

Impacts of Poverty Are Cumulative

One of the disturbing features of the Child Poverty

statistics is that the impacts of poverty are cumulative. We are now nearly three decades after the 1991 Budget and over that time low-income families have seen their balance sheets erode significantly. The run-down in assets and growth in debt through the daily struggle to survive will mean it could take many years — even if there is radical change — to restore any semblance of financial health.

These families don't have their own home or any prospect of one. If they have a car, it is likely to be old, encumbered with debt and expensive to maintain. They don't have KiwiSaver to provide for their older years,

and many have debts that have grown exponentially with crippling rates of interest.

Broken System Breaking Children

So, in three decades, a system once designed to support people when they needed it, and to provide them and their children a decent standard of living, has been pared back to one that is woefully inadequate, punitive, degrading and unreasonably complicated.

Consultation for Renewed Welfare System

Since last year, a Government-appointed Expert Advisory Group (WEAG) has been consulting with the entire country on what should be prioritised in an overhaul of the Welfare System. That report has been delivered to the Government, and it is due to be made public very soon.

The policy changes the WEAG recommend are likely to be radical if they are to reverse the damage done to the lives of our families and whānau.

CPAG has spent years researching the causes and consequences of poverty. The result is a series of practical recommendations that will improve the lives of thousands of children whose families are reliant upon the welfare system to meet their basic needs. We have submitted our recommendations to the WEAG, and we are hoping to see many of the policies reflected in the WEAG report soon to be released.

Our recommendations include, but are not limited to:

- Lifting core benefits by at least 30 percent;
- Reducing reliance on the Accommodation Supplement;
- Removing the hours of paid work criteria from the WFF In-Work Tax Credit, and extending it to all low-income families;
- Removing all sanctions;
- Ensuring that all benefits and all parts of Working for Families (WFF) are indexed annually to prices and wages;
- Ensuring adults in the benefit system are treated as individuals without penalising them for being in a partnership;
- Allowing adults to earn more from paid work before their welfare assistance is reduced; allow adults to have more savings so that they can pay for emergency costs; and
- Ensuring that applicants receive all the assistance to which they are entitled.

Must Seize the New Opportunity

We will be looking to the Government to have a plan for implementing the recommendations of WEAG swiftly regardless of whether the changes are unpopular and whether there is an election year looming. Changes that merely tinker around the edges of poverty reduction are not acceptable. Our families and whānau have been waiting far too long and this opportunity to transform their lives must not be missed.

For more information visit www.cpag.org.nz

Photo by Xavi Cabrera on Unsplash

Jeni Cartwright is CPAG's Communications Advisor. Her experiences as a parent and exposure to low-decile education have shaped her concern for the well-being of all children.

Susan St John is an Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Auckland and works as an economics policy analyst and spokesperson for CPAG.

BUILDING COMMON GROUND

JO AYERS tells the story of long-standing friendship between two families, Kiwi Catholic and Afghan Muslim.

One late February evening in 1984 my husband Pat rang to say he was bringing a guest home for tea — an engineer from Afghanistan who had a story to tell. I remember thinking: "I hope he's adaptable." We had three boys aged two, four and six and a three-week-old baby. There had been no time to organise a special meal or indeed to even clear a decent path from the front door!

I need not have worried as our boys broke the ice with a barrage of questions, especially four-year-old Sam who demanded that Samadi read him a chapter from *Winnie the Pooh.* Samadi struggled, saying: "I can read the words, but I don't understand what they mean!" Sam confided loudly to me: "He's not very good." Samadi still retells this story with much laughter and affection. We had met on common ground.

We discovered that Samadi, then a father of six children, loved being swept up into the Snedden boys' activity and it set the tone for our enduring relationship for the next 35 years.

Asylum in New Zealand

Samadi had come to New Zealand as a representative of the Afghanistan Liquid Fuels Board. The political situation in Afghanistan was so dangerous and unstable that he and his wife agreed that if possible he would defect and claim asylum in New Zealand. They arranged a telephone call code for him to tell her that he was successful and then she, Golbibi, would take the family to Pakistan. This much had happened.

Golbibi had left Afghanistan with the children. Samadi had no knowledge of where his family was or how they were faring.

We were astounded at their bravery and the realisation of how bad conditions must be for them to take such risks.

Samadi talked about his family: his wife Golbibi; his three daughters and three sons, close in age to our own; and also a seventh child, probably born by now. He didn't know if the baby had arrived or if it was a boy or a girl. We learnt eventually that she was a girl, Angila, born three days after our own baby daughter and destined to become her preschool companion.

I remember so well being starkly aware of sitting safe and secure in my home in my peaceful country, with my baby asleep in my arms, while this man's family were vulnerable and in danger. Confronted by their plight, the suffering of refugees and migrants became a reality for us, no longer an idea.

Family Reunited

Samadi became part of our lives. He lived with other friends and through the ensuing year we followed his journey of finding his family and bringing them to New Zealand. We were part of the sponsoring group who found them accommodation and furniture.

The family arrived in Auckland with seven children and a suitcase each, nothing else. Golbibi looked exhausted and empty of emotion, the older girls apprehensive and the little boys excited and ready for adventure. The sponsoring group, too, were apprehensive. We had no real idea of how they would manage living in New Zealand and what support they would need.

The morning after their arrival, I overheard a fellow sponsor saying: "The mother cooked them a meal on the stove." I realised how little we knew about each other.

Settling into Friendship

Time and again the children moved us on. They had no apprehensions and saw only possibilities. They had playcentre and school and cricket in common — and these activities kept our families connected. We shared birthday parties, outings and celebrations — Christmas and Ede, the end of Ramadan.

Golbibi and I went to playcentre with our girls. We often had lunch together afterwards when she shared her wonderful food, stories of her homeland and her love of the natural environment now so devastated by war. These conversations were overshadowed by the unspoken knowledge that she may never return — always for me a stark contrast to my protected life.

There were differences. In latter years, weddings where the men and women celebrated in separate rooms. Finding a Halal butcher. Struggling with marriage and relationships that were not Afghani or even Muslim. We treasured the privilege of deep cross-cultural experiences where we were able to challenge our friends about New Zealand cultural practice. They showed superb capability to adapt to these new conditions with courage and generosity.

We stand together against this abomination. But it must be more than words. We must seek the commonality that we share — look for the good in one another. We need to show kindness and bravery, to take a chance on friendship.

Hate of Massacre Rejected

The events of 15 March highlighted the truth that our experience was not that of the killer's experience. When he murdered people in the mosques he was representing a cohort of hate and "otherness" to which we have never subscribed. The audacity that this white man claimed, that he was somehow speaking for us and acting in our interests, enraged us as a Pākehā family. But in the following days we saw the outpouring of love for the Muslim community and felt a New Zealand much more attuned to our values and instincts.

Certainly that was the reaction from Samadi and his family. They were in deep grief for the loss of fellow Muslims and a best friend but there was profound generosity for the welcome that they had received in coming to Aotearoa and the opportunities this country had provided for their family.

New Unity Developing

Aotearoa is changing. When Abdul Fatah Samadi turned up on our doorstep he was among the first of the Afghan migrants to this country. A generation later that community

numbers in its thousands.

When Golbibi and the children first arrived there was one mosque in Auckland. These Muslim children went to Catholic schools and attended the mosque. Now there is a proliferation of places to pray and come together.

The killer holds to a fiction that these Muslim migrants have taken something from us, consumed our resources and left white New Zealanders diminished, struggling and impoverished. It is not true.

We are all migrants. Our founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, gives us all our right to be here. Whether we are a citizen of 10 years standing or have whakapapa dating back centuries, we are all embraced. The killer's violent attempt to diminish any of us is a challenge to us all.

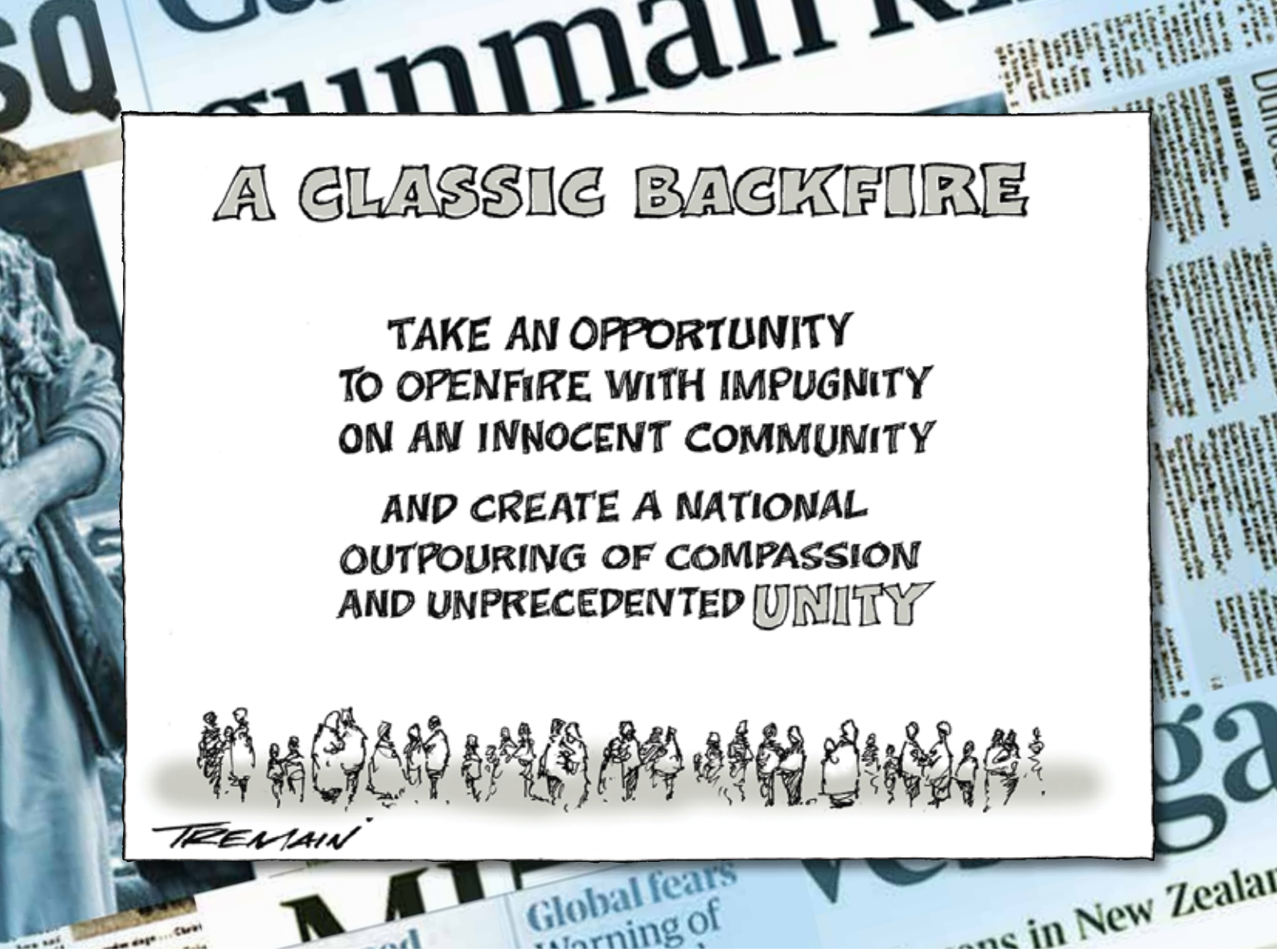
A week after the shootings I fell into conversation with a Muslim woman waiting outside a cafe. She was wearing the hijab. I remarked how pleased I was to see that she was so confidently dressed, marking her religious and cultural identity. Her response was insightful: "Today I feel safer than I did before the shootings. Now I am visible. Before I was invisible."

So we stand together against this abomination. But it must be more than words. We must seek the commonality that we share — look for the good in one another. We need to show kindness and bravery, to take a chance on friendship. It is hard to reach out to the unknown — we're not sure that we will be understood or accepted.

We are them and they are us.

Photos. Opposite top by Mihai Surdu on Unsplash
This page by Amber Clay from Pixabay

Jo Ayers has a long involvement teaching, writing and practising liturgy and ritual. She and husband Pat Snedden and family live in Auckland.



Encountering New Neighbours

MARY EASTHAM shares how our response to the terrorist attacks in Christchurch engaged us in interfaith action and conversation.

"I feel like I have lost members of my family," Sister Bertha Hurley wrote after the Christchurch terrorist attack. Over nine years Bertha had come to know the Muslim community as her brothers and sisters in her work as the Bishops' representative on the Christchurch Interfaith Council. When she heard that the Imam's wife had been shot in the arm she went immediately to their home to offer her support and to weep with them at the violent loss of 50 innocent people kneeling before God in prayer. Such was the relationship she had established with her Muslim family.

Since 2009 the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Committee for Interfaith Relations has provided a platform for Catholic people in Aotearoa New Zealand to engage with people of other Faiths in trust, understanding and mutual respect.

The committee was established in the spirit of Vatican II's document *Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (1965). Our contemporary society in New Zealand is multi-cultural and multi-faith. This situation could offer many opportunities for interfaith conversations. But does dialogue happen and does it engender trust, understanding and mutual respect? Or, do we allow our differences to breed fear, prejudice and intolerance? The terrorist attack in our city indicates that hate has been allowed to grow unchecked, but the overwhelming response of our country has shown that this is not the sort of people or country we want to be.

Engaging in Four Strands of Dialogue

Even before 15 March the interfaith committee promoted four distinct but related aspects of interfaith dialogue: multi-faith prayer, theological exchange, sharing the joys and sorrows of life and action on behalf of the common good.

In response to our national tragedy we experienced each of the strands almost spontaneously. People came together in thousands to mourn the victims of the massacre and pray

for peace and healing in multi-faith vigils held around the country.

Christians and Jews shared with Muslims messages of love and mercy from the God of Abraham — in Arabic Allah — an example of theological exchange. We witnessed the ideals of Islam from grief-stricken people — a wounded man in a wheelchair speaking of forgiveness and healing; a Syrian woman a recent refugee, widowed by the shooting and thanking people for their kindness and support; a survivor whose wife was killed after rescuing children saying he will not hate the shooter because he does not want a heart "boiling like a volcano, which has anger, fury and rage"; the Imam thanking the people for their collective support, love and compassion saying that the Prophet teaches that we can never truly show gratitude to the almighty God if we are incapable of thanking our fellow human beings.

We've shared *the sorrows and joys of our lives.* In floral tributes and personal visits to the mosques we've seen compassion and hope for resilience and healing.

And many, many people have been involved in *action on behalf of the common good.* So many have contributed to "care packages" for affected families; fundraising; driving lessons; language learning. As well as the realisation that for lasting social and political change we need to tackle racism and ban assault weapons, white supremacy and similar ideology.

Interfaith Dialogue in Daily Life

The terrorist attack revealed racism fueled by white supremacist ideology. Liberation theologians uncovered links between white supremacy, colonisation and Christianity, particularly in relationships with indigenous peoples, in their structural analysis of society. Interfaith dialogue can be a spiritual and moral force in recognising and healing this deep-rooted damage of colonisation, racism and white supremacy.

When we befriend people of a religion and culture different from ours we will hear their stories of suffering and oppression which caused them to leave their homelands. For example, the current Arab/ Israeli crisis has its roots in the Sykes-Picot agreement after World War I which divided the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces (not including the Arabian Peninsula) into English and French spheres of influence. They drew a line across the map of the Middle East, totally neglecting the different ethnic, linguistic and religious communities that inhabited the regions. This agreement helped frame the contours of modern nation states in a region where none existed before — which has had devastating effects.

Then the 1917 Balfour Declaration promised British support for a Jewish "national home" in Palestine despite, and without consulting the indigenous Palestinian people who had lived in the land for centuries.

> ***Interfaith dialogue can be a spiritual and moral force in recognising and healing the deep-rooted damage of colonisation, racism and white supremacy.***

And the Jewish people who survived World War II Nazi Germany and the Holocaust yearned for the safety of the "promised land" for themselves and their descendants.

Interfaith dialogue is about hearing the feelings and hearing the pain behind the words. The most sensitive interfaith conversations are with families who have been victimised by violence. Such storytelling will take place only when deep trust has been established. It takes time.

Understanding as "Standing Under"

We can think of coming to understand someone from another Faith and culture as "standing under" the world as they experience it — which requires empathy and sensitivity.

In 2015 Dr Sami Awad, a Christian from Palestine, gave the annual Peace Lecture in Dunedin. He met for a conversation with a group of people including the Dunedin Abrahamic Group and the Chaplaincy of the University of Otago, who had established an emotional closeness through their working together for many years. They could hear the pain behind the words of Awad as he shared the stories of people traumatised by the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. Such sensitive conversations involve trust and the ability to stand under the other's horizon of intelligibility.

The work of the Dunedin Abrahamic Group and the University Chaplaincy over many years has led to the commissioning of two Muslim chaplains at Otago University for the pastoral care of the Muslim students and staff.

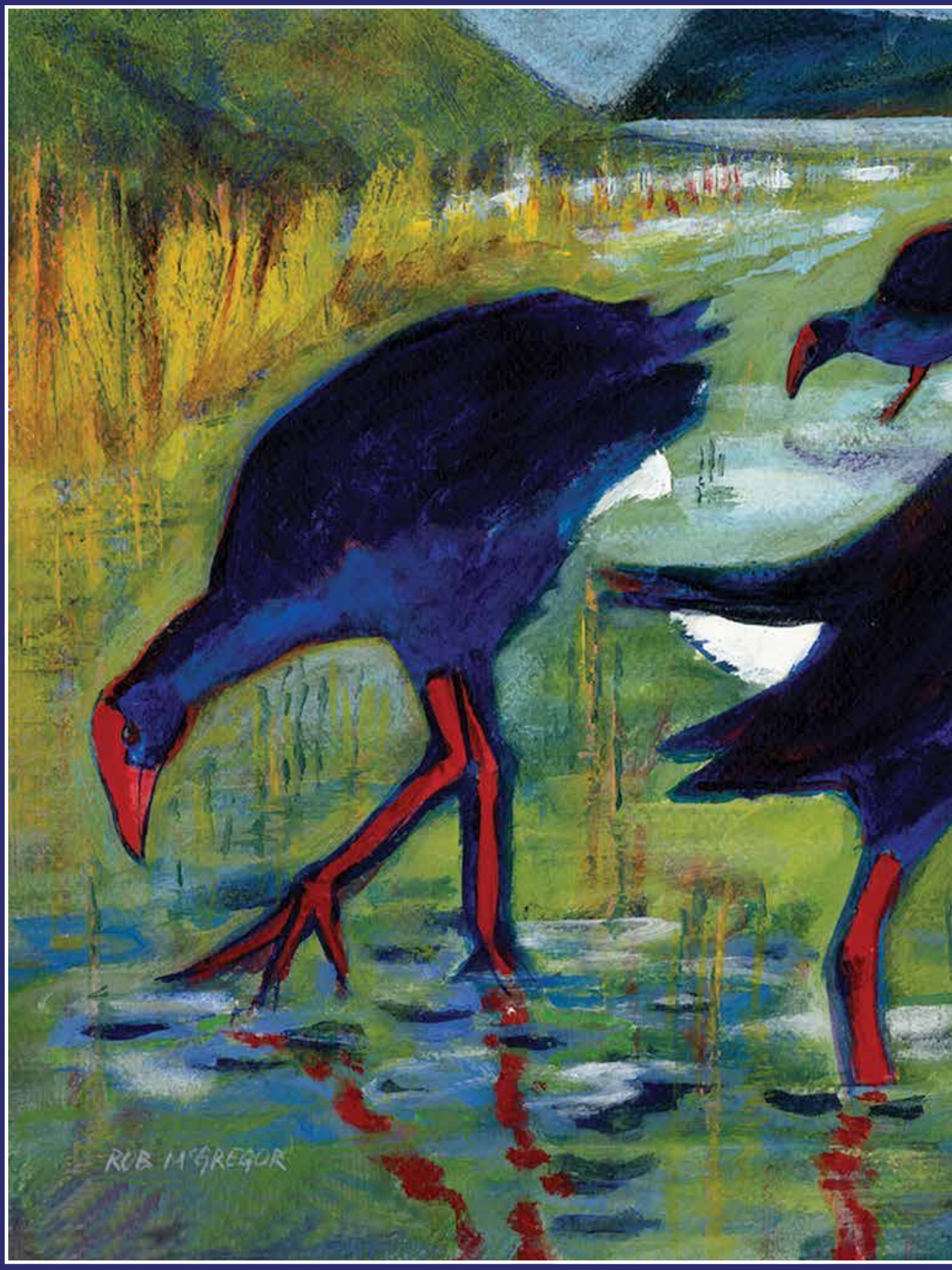
Reestablish Wisdom, Justice and Love

Earlier this year Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Ashar met in Abu Dhabi and affirmed that: "Authentic teachings of religions invite us to remain rooted in the values of peace; to defend the values of mutual understanding, human fraternity and harmonious coexistence; to re-establish wisdom, justice and love; and to reawaken religious awareness among young people so that future generations may be protected from the realm of materialistic thinking and from dangerous policies of unbridled greed and indifference that are based on the law of force and not on the force of law." (*A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, 2019.)

Our forced focus on the people of Muslim faith in our country by the shootings in Christchurch has given us all the opportunity to engage in dialogue with them. It also highlights how in sharing our sorrows and joys we open a doorway to deeper trust, empathy and cooperation.

Cartoon by Garrick Tremain © Used with permission www.garrick-tremain.squarespace.com

Mary Eastham is Bishop Charles Drennan's representative on the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Committee for Interfaith Relations and coordinates the Palmerston North interfaith group.


ROB M'GREGOR

Pointing the Finger

The finger of land
points into the lake
questioning you.
What's this season in your life for?
What's the colour and shape
of all this deliciousness?
A lone pūkeko pokes in the wet grass
simply being pūkeko
in an unchanging season of foraging.
Out into the lake
points the finger of land.
Once more
you set out into the deep.

— *Anne Powell*

From: *The Edge of Things*.
The Cuba Press, 2018: 54

Painting: ***Pūkekos*** by Rob McGregor © Used with permission www.robmcgregor-art.com

FACE OUR PAST and BE COURAGEOUS NOW

PETER MATHESON writes about the destructive intolerance in our Christian past and how we can create an inclusive, loving society.

Of late I've been boning up on the neglected story of the 16th-century Anabaptists. One of them, Michael Sattler, championed non-violence. "No Christian should ever take up the sword," he said. Church and State were both horrified and, to ban such loose talk, he was burnt at the stake. But before that happened the executioner cut out his living tongue and repeatedly ripped at his body with red-hot irons.

It's just one example, I fear, of our Christian Church in cahoots with authoritarian political régimes who can't be doing with pluralism and dissent. As a Christian historian I hang my head in shame when I read of such collusion.

Roots and Threads of Christian Hatred

Then there are the Crusades. And eight years ago the massacre of 69 Norwegian teenagers on the island of Utøya. The cold-blooded assassin of these kids, Anders Breivik, modelled himself on the Crusaders. He wanted to save Christian civilization from Islamists, he declared. So he ruthlessly ignored the girls' and boys' desperate cries for mercy. "The aim was to kill the party leaders of tomorrow." The young people were members of the Labour Party's youth section. Not pleasant work, he agreed, "but in the end it's the big picture that matters". In his defence he insisted he was an executioner not a killer (Asne Seierstad, *The Story of Anders Breivik*).

Like many *Tui Motu* readers I have pilgrimed to Dachau and Maydanek and other sites of Nazi atrocities and read up about them. Now we know that the ideology behind the concentration camps was that of Himmler, Rosenberg and Hitler — all ferociously anti-Christian in thought and action.

Yet I have struggled throughout my life as a theologian with the knowledge that for centuries anti-Semitism was a red thread through the Church's history. For example, towards the end of his life Martin Luther wrote one sickening tract after another about the "Jews and their Lies", calling for synagogues to be destroyed and Jews to be expelled for their blasphemies against Christ.

The Nazis exploited this thinking. During the Third Reich, the Churches — Catholic and Protestant alike — were silent about the escalating vilification and murderous actions against the Jews. Not every one — there were some marvellous exceptions. But it is shameful.

I'm not encouraging self-flagellation about this dark side in our past by these references to religious persecution, to the Crusades and to the Third Reich. That achieves nothing. In the Church we are, after all, the proud inheritors of a wondrous tradition of

prophetic and apostolic outspokenness. But here's the rub. We can only access it if first we acknowledge the reality of the dark side.

Hatred Shown Today

Today we live in strange and terrible times. White supremacists are on the rise. So-called Evangelicals in the USA support every ethnocentric cause. In continental Europe waves of populism sweep France, Poland, Hungary, Italy, Austria, Russia and to a lesser degree, Germany and the United Kingdom. The problem for these "know nothing" politicians is not global warming or social injustice but real and imaginary waves of migrants — people with different skin colour, different habits, different beliefs. It's as if our populists want to cut out the living tongues of these migrants and silence them forever.

Resisting the Ideology of Hatred

Fear is driving all this. How very moving it was to experience the resolute determination of our New Zealand leaders, citizens and students in resisting such hysteria. But how can we strengthen this still largely emotional dismay at white supremacist culture, at the murder of innocent Muslim men and women at

prayer? Warm thoughts and compassionate actions can all too easily dissipate.

My hunch is that we in the Christian Churches have a major role to play. I think of Richard Jones's hymn:

"Bring your traditions' richest store
your hymns and rites and cherished creeds
explore your visions, pray for more,
since God delights to meet fresh needs."

Our insights are desperately needed by the wider society. We have two millennia of experience in facing the dark side, and New Zealand society as a whole could profit from the experiences we can and do draw on every time we meet for worship and for outreach.

As a young lecturer in Edinburgh in the 1960s I was appalled by *The Black Book*, a compilation of the dark sides to the Church's history. It listed the pogroms against the Jews, the Crusades against the Muslims, the witch craze against women, the Religious Wars of Christians against Christians—all the usual suspects. It really flattened me until my mentor Professor Alec Cheyne reminded me of the need to keep a sense of balance. Sure, there are terrible episodes. But that is not the whole story.

He was right. We need to keep in mind all the saints and scholars, the martyrs and reformers, the innovators, women and men, young and old—all those who fought against social injustice, ignorance, prejudice. And not only the famous ones, but those we know ourselves, those who nurtured us in the faith—teachers, parents, neighbours, soul-friends, visionaries.

Hearing Our Prophets

We don't deny the dark side. Quite the opposite. When we feel young in heart and robust in faith we can face anything. The prophets have always faced the music. One of the most remarkable features of our Judaeo-Christian tradition is that it kept alive the memory of unrelenting hard-talkers like Jeremiah and Amos. It would have been much easier to consign them to forgetfulness. But no, they are in the heart of Scripture, blotting the copybook of God's Chosen People with their mordant criticisms!

The Gospels, too, are remarkable for the way that they point out so relentlessly the failings of the disciples. Holy people (which I was taught on Iona means "whole" people) never shirk the dark side.

> *From our tradition we can help the wider society to go deeper. We know there are no short cuts to integrity. We are not afraid, in our better moments, to talk about the need for disciplined un-learning.*

Offering Our Riches to Create a New Society

From our tradition we can help the wider society to go deeper. We know there are no short cuts to integrity. We are not afraid, in our better moments, to talk about the need for disciplined un-learning.

Before the Berlin Wall came down, East German Churches had spent 10 years in peacemaking. In little groups they hammered out the biblical and theological basis for peace and justice. They did it all on the smell of an oily rag. Cheap cyclostyled study books, prayers, and reflection on non-violent symbols and protests. All their efforts swung into action in 1989 and prevented the mayhem which could well have ensued in a highly militarised state.

We know of similar turn-arounds in the Philippines, in South Africa and also of course nearer home with the New Zealand Peace Movement in the 1980s. With the right allies the Churches helped society to dig deeper.

If we can get our act together we can do it again. This is no time for us to be circling the waggons! We have a critical contribution to make. Let's get out there.

Cartoon by Garrick Tremain © Used with permission
www.garrick-tremain.squarespace.com

Peter Matheson is a peace activist, a Church historian, Emeritus Professor of Knox Theological College, Dunedin and author.

Modern-day Martyrdom *in Christianity and Islam*

CHRISTOPHER LONGHURST

explains how Christian and Islamic teachings on martyrdom have changed.

The concept of martyrdom is important to both Christianity and Islam. The meaning of martrydom is uniquely situated in each religion, but there are striking similarities with the way the term is understood. And our mutual understanding of "martyrdom" hasn't remained static, but has shifted over time. What it means to be a martyr today differs from the traditional sense expressed in past Christian and Muslim writings.

Muslim Teachings about Martyrdom

In Islam, the concept of martyrdom is intimately linked to the notions of *shahada*, which is the Muslim profession of faith and first Pillar of Islam, and *jihad*, the holy struggle. Both terms are frequently used in the Qur'an in relation to martyrdom and within the broader context regarding Islam's meaning as "surrender to" and "peace in" the will and law of Allah. This implies that in Islam there is no martyrdom without struggle in the cause of Allah — a notion which Muslims call *al-jihad fi sabil Allaha* (striving in the path of Allah).

The Arabic word *shahid* is used in many places in the Qur'an in ways similar to how the Greek term *mártys* is used is the Bible. Both terms, shahid and *mártys*, mean "witness".The roots of the word *shahada* mean to "see", to "witness" and "to "testify". Therefore, a martyr in Islam is *al-shahid*, someone who sees and witnesses to Allah's will and law in the Qur'an. In Islam, this witnessing comprises fulfilling the Five Pillars of Islam, namely: *Shahada* (declaration of faith); *Ṣalāh* (ritual prayer); *Zakāt* (almsgiving); *Sawm* (fasting); and *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). Martyrdom in Islam essentially means surrendering in the course of peaceful submission to the will and law of Allah through observing Islam's Five Pillars. The ultimate surrender is when the Muslim dies in this peaceful and loving surrender.

Christian Teachings about Martyrdom

Similarities in Christianity are rooted in the meaning of the Greek term *mártys* (witness), used throughout the Bible and in early Christian writings. The uniqueness of

Christianity's version of martyrdom lies in how closely it is linked with the life, passion and death of Jesus. As Jesus surrendered his will to the will of his heavenly father (Luke 22:42), Christians are called to do the same, at moments presented to them throughout their lives, to bear witness to Jesus. As the ultimate surrender of Jesus was his death on the cross, Christians who die for witnessing to Jesus are considered martyrs. Recent examples are the Christians killed in churches across Kaduna State, Nigeria, and the Coptic Christian men who were massacred on a Libyan shore in 2015. They were persecuted for being Christian and died a martyr's death.

Beliefs about Eternal Life

Historically, martyrdom in both Christianity and Islam is today informed by two major beliefs. The first belief is in eternal life. The Qur'an states: "Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live" (Q.3:169). And the Bible says: "do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul" (Matthew 10:28).

A Muslim in the act of dying *al-jihad fi sabil Allaha* overcomes death because he knows that his life proceeds from Allah and that when he dies, he returns to Allah: "To Allah we belong and to Allah is our return" (Q.2:156).

Like the Muslim martyr, the Christian martyr also overcomes death by "dying in the Lord"—in faithful witness to God's will and law given through Jesus. The Christian recognises that "whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord" (Romans 14:8), and "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Beliefs about Giving Life in Witness

The second belief is about rewards for the sacrifice of our lives in faithful witness. The Qur'an states: "Those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah, and are then slain or die; on them will Allah bestow verily a goodly Provision" (Q.22:58). A hadith reports that: "if any of my followers dies worshipping none along with Allah, he will enter Paradise" (Sahih Bukhari).

Similarly, Jesus taught that "whoever loses their life for me will find it" (Mt.16:25) and "blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you . . . Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Mt.5:11-12).

These offers of reward in both the Qur'an and the Bible emphasise the high place martyrdom has in salvation history for both Christians and Muslims. It confirms that to die a martyr's death is considered a great honour in both traditions.

The Arabic word for martyrdom is *istishhad*. While this term emphasises heroism in the act of witness rather than victimisation for defence of practising our religion, today we tend to think of a martyr more as someone killed for the practice of their faith rather than killed while defending their faith.

But in practical terms, martyrdom by being murdered while practising our faith is very similar to heroic self-sacrifice. The spiritual consequences are the same. Despite the ugliness of such a brutal death, to die for our religious beliefs becomes spiritually beautiful because of the rewards, or the value of the death. Both Christians and Muslims believe such martyrdom is more noble and more desirable than any other righteous act (Q.3:169-170 and Phil 1:21).

Believers Not to Be Violent

Raising a sword to attack, however, has no place in martyrdom. Both religions view murder as a crime and serious sin. The Qur'an says: "Do not kill one another, for God is indeed merciful unto you" (Q.4:29). The Bible says: "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13).

Bloodshed and the loss of life are not the goals of any good Muslim or Christian. There is no offensive battle recommended in Christian or Islamic teachings on martyrdom. Only faithful witness. No one goes to the mosque or to church expecting to be killed.

Herein lies martyrdom's modern meaning, which marks a shift away from the sense of "standing firm" in the face of death, to suffering death in the practice of faith. Martyrdom is today not so much the positive willingness to die, but the dying in faithful witness.

We witnessed this new kind of passive martyrdom or martyrdom as religious victimisation at the Christchurch mosques. Our Muslim brothers and sisters were shot and wounded while performing *ṣalāh*. A Muslim killed while performing *ṣalāh* at the mosque is a martyr *al-shahid*, as the Prophet Mohammad said: "He who is killed in the way of Allah is *al-shahid*" (Musnad Ahmad).

Today, in our multicultural society, Christians and Muslims are more in agreement over what it means to be a martyr. We don't think of martyrdom as religious persecution on account of religious difference, but as persecution for practising our religions.

One of the ways to avoid this persecution especially in our own society is by expanding our interfaith dialogue. We need more people of diverse faith traditions, as well as those claiming no religious affiliation, to come together to learn about the similarities and differences among us. Without interfaith communication, ignorance and hate can lead to religious persecution.

The ultimate persecution is martyrdom. However, over the last weeks we have witnessed a wllingness in our country to get to know the religious "other" and to reject attitudes and behaviours that lead to persecution.

Photo: Mustafa Boztas, 21, and Farid Ahmed (right) hug at the Call to Prayer service in Hagley Park, across the street from the Al Noor mosque in Christchurch 22 March.. Ahmed, a paraplegic, lost his wife Husna Ahmed in the shooting. Boztas was shot in the leg as he fled. Credit: PJ Heller/ZUMA Wire/ Alamy Live News

Christopher Longhurst is a theologian specialising in the comparative study of theology; a member of the Wellington Interfaith Council and the NZCBC's Interfaith Committee.

Love One Another – Our Work

KATHLEEN RUSHTON **traces Jesus's words and actions in John 13:31-35 showing him bringing a new unity among people through love.**

The season of Easter focuses on the risen Jesus who empowers the people of God every day of the year. The Sunday gospel readings for this period (Year C) are from John. Unlike the gospel characters, who did not have this Gospel in written form, the early Christian communities, from which this Gospel arose probably in the 90s, knew and experienced the risen Jesus. The post-Easter gospel readings show two ways in which people came into the family of faith after the resurrection. The first is *through the Holy Spirit* (eg, Jn 20:21-22; 14:23-29). And the second way is *through the work of the disciples* (Jn 21:1-19), which we will reflect on in John 13:31-35.

"That they may be one" (Jn 17:21)

In late first century following the disaster of the Roman War and destruction of the Temple, groups of Jews sought various solutions for their situation and these groups are reflected in John's Gospel.

In the first half of the gospel, Jesus moved among representatives of some of these groups who were in conflict with one another. His barrier-crossing ministry of reconciliation focused on finishing the works of God by creating a new community. In action, he sought to bring into practice what he was to pray later: "that they may be one" (Jn 17:21).

The first representative of a "solution" group was the nationalist Nathanael, the "true Israelite" who was searching for a new "King of Israel" (Jn 1:47). Both terms implied he was among those who sought a nationalist and political liberator to free them from Roman domination.

Jesus then moved to Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a "ruler of the Jews" and "the teacher of Israel" who came to him "by night" (Jn 3:1-21). He was from a group of secret believers.

Next we see Jesus with the woman of Samaria. Her despised people had long expected the Messiah (Jn 4:7-26).

Then Jesus is with the royal official of Herod the Tetrarch, the representative of those who put their heads down and colluded with Roman rule (Jn 4:46).

Kathleen Rushton RSM lives in Ōtautahi Christchurch where, in the sight of the Southern Alps and the hills, she continues to delight in learning and writing about Scripture.

19 May Fifth Sunday After Easter: John 13:31-35

"Whatever the father does, the son does" (Jn 5:19)

Against the background of the Genesis creation story, this Gospel places great emphasis on God as ongoing creator and sustainer of all life. Kinship also permeates the context of the time of Jesus. A father provided all that was needed for life. In this context the image of father unfolds as an image for God as creator and sustainer of life. This Johannine Gospel's father-son relationship was influenced by and embedded in first-century social conventions. The total dependence of a son on a father socially, economically and culturally led to the understanding that a son was the most suitable agent to attend to the father's business. This is captured in a hidden parable which gives a glimpse of a son apprenticed to his father's trade (Jn 5:19-20a). The son watches his father working and imitates him. Crafts were hereditary and passed down from father to son. Jesus was a carpenter and a carpenter's son.

"To finish the works of God" (Jn 4:34)

The images of God working and Jesus working abound. The works of Jesus testify that he is sent by God (Jn 5:37-38). He is to *"finish the works of God"* (Jn 5:36), which include healing the marginalised. The works of God are to come to completion in Jesus. This is especially so as his death approaches (Jn 19:28) and in his last words on the cross: *"It is finished"* (Jn 19.30). Jesus's food is to *finish* the works of God (Jn 4.34). Jesus speaks of God doing works through him (Jn 14:10) and of how those who believe in him "will do the works that I do and, in fact, greater works than I do" (Jn 14.12).

"Good works" and "evil works" were not general expressions at this time. According to Jose Miranda they were "a precise technical term referring to helping those in need".

"I am with you only a little longer" (Jn 13:33)

Judas went out. It was night (Jn 13:30). Jesus was with his disciples—although their weakness would soon be revealed, they intended to remain true and loyal. The departure of Judas began the movement towards the death of Jesus.

Throughout John, Jesus spoke of his death-resurrection in many images. Some are taken from creation or daily life such as the grain of wheat and the shepherd laying down his life for his sheep. Other images are abstract such as "glorification" which indicated that his death-resurrection was underway. There are five references in Jn 13:31-32 to the mutual glorification of God and Jesus which span the past, the present and the future in ways which are hard to unravel. In the biblical tradition, "glorify" is associated with the unseen presence of God in the saving event of the Exodus. While Jesus's glorification is being brought about by betrayal and execution, the heart of "glory" or "glorify" centres on the revelation of God in the person and life of Jesus.

The intimacy and love which exists between Jesus and his disciples is expressed by the endearing term, "little children" (Jn 13:33). And the repetition of phrases such as "only a little longer" and "I am going" suggest a sense of loss and grief. Jesus was returning to God. The disciples cannot follow and experience his absence keenly. As the discourse unfolds we learn what will be done to meet this new situation.

"Just as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34)

Jesus gives the disciples a new commandment of love (Jn 13:34-35). The loss of the love of the physical presence of Jesus is to be compensated by the love they are to have for one another. Jesus had given them loving action as a paradigm for how they are to love—he washed their feet (Jn 13:1-17). Disciples are to do likewise.

The commandment of love was already in place (Lev 19:18). What was new is that after Jesus's departure the disciples are to live love to such a degree that "everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35). The measure of this love is new: "just as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34). This is in direct continuity with the love that they have received from Jesus. He has spoken repeatedly about finishing the works of God. Disciples are to continue this work by their love for one another.

We face a new time in Aotearoa New Zealand. At the national memorial service for victims of the Christchurch massacre, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said: "We each hold the power [to combat hate], in our words and our actions, in daily acts of kindness. Let that be the legacy of 15 March." Survivor Farid Ahmed said: "I want a heart that is full of love and care, and full of mercy, a heart that will forgive lavishly." In our new time we are to move on to finish the works of God by creating new ways in word and action to "love one another just as I have loved you".

Painting: *The Washing of the Feet* by John August Swanson © Used with permission www.johnaugustswanson.com

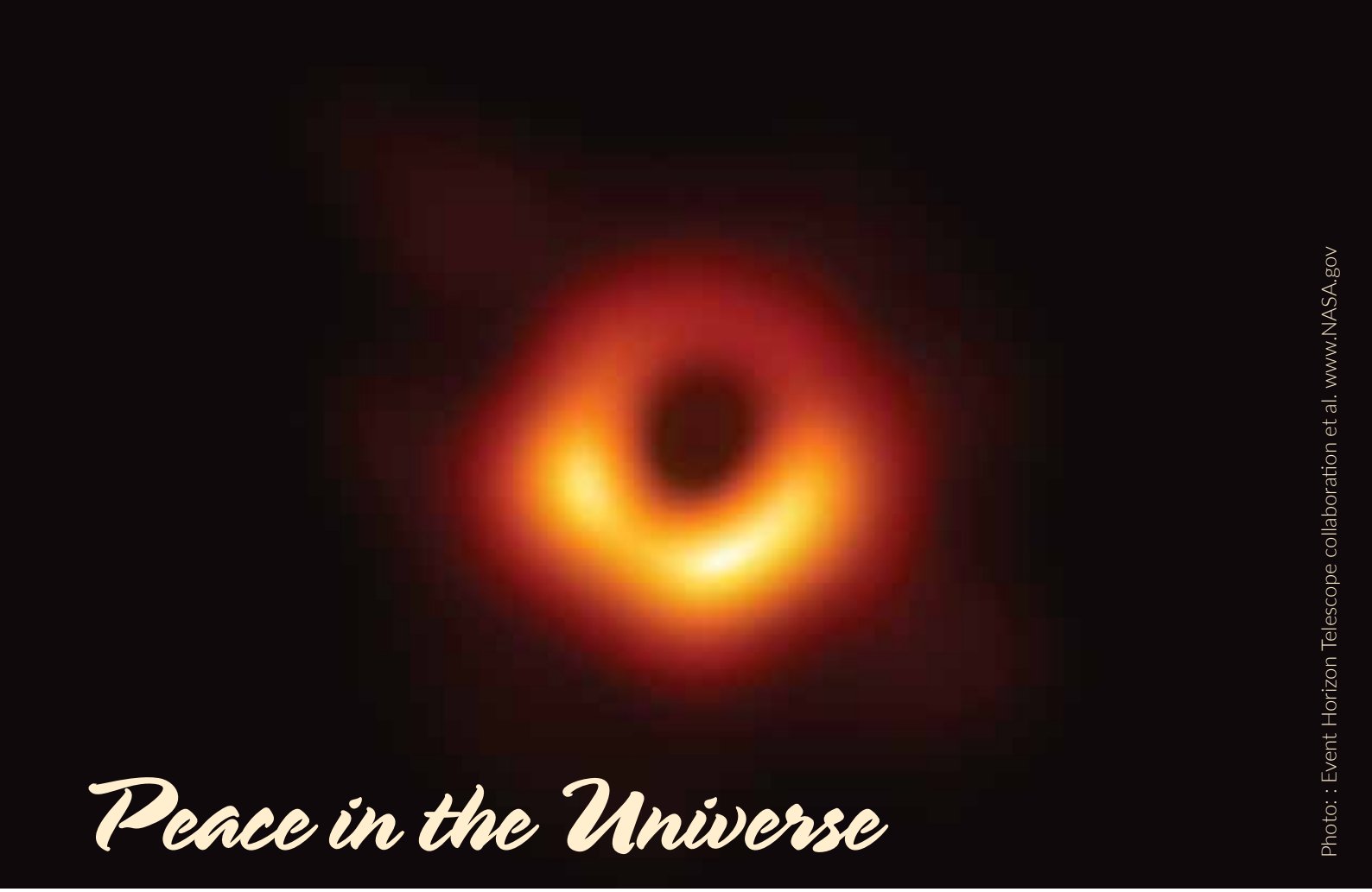


Photo: : Event Horizon Telescope collaboration et al. www.NASA.gov

Peace in the Universe

John 14:23-29 Jesus answered Judas (not Iscariot): "Those who love me will keep my word, and the Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

25 "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. 28 You heard me say to you: 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe."

Elaine Wainwright is a biblical scholar specialising in eco-feminist interpretation and is currently writing a Wisdom Commentary on Matthew's Gospel.

ELAINE WAINWRIGHT **suggests that the latest space discoveries invite us to read John 14:23-29 with a whole new apprecation of love and relationship in the cosmos.**

At this time of year we ponder more explicitly the extraordinary moments of death and life that weave their way through our experience. These moments are always with us, but at Easter our faith communities invite us to attend to this rhythm of life and death even more intimately.

With attentiveness we can expand our horizons with growing ecological awareness. We recognise that these patterns are woven not just in the human community but in the fabric of the entire universe.

While I was composing this reflection an article by Dennis Overbye arrived in my inbox called "Darkness Visible, Finally: Astronomers Capture First Ever Image of a Black Hole". It opened a whole new appreciation of John's text for me.

As the title suggests, Overbyte recognises an extraordinarily new phenomenon — an *image* of the unobservable. A black hole — a cosmic abyss so deep and dense that not even light can escape it.

What could this revelation about the story of the cosmos mean for us enlightened by resurrection?

As we undertake these journeys deep into the cosmos, we are reminded of the relational quality evoked by the

words of the Johannine text: "love me", "love them", "make our home with them".

We have tended to read these texts as being directed to humans only. But an ecological reading goes further. In dialogue with Denis Edwards' work last month (*TM* April 2019), I wrote about our engagement with resurrection as including the "inner meaning of creation". I think that Overbye's discussion of the Black Hole can extend the meaning even further when he notes that "supermassive black holes can be the most luminous objects in the universe". It now seems to me that we are being invited to a new way of reading — to a "universal" as well as "ecological" way.

The Johannine text (Jn 14:23-29) names the recipients of Jesus's words as "disciples". How might this text be expanded if we understand the recipients/disciples to be not only humans but all other-than-human — including the universal?

This means that they, too, are addressed as caught up in the network of right relationships (love) that includes divinity as well as the human Jesus. It is in this new context that disciples are reminded of all that Jesus has taught them. This includes the new ecological perspectives into which disciples are being instructed.

In the Johannine text this new perspective is named peace: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives" (Jn 14:27).

The text recognises that this peace differs from that of "the world" — of the human community. We can now read this text as that peace which includes the ecological and the universal — a peace far beyond what the world can give.

My Passion in Social Justice

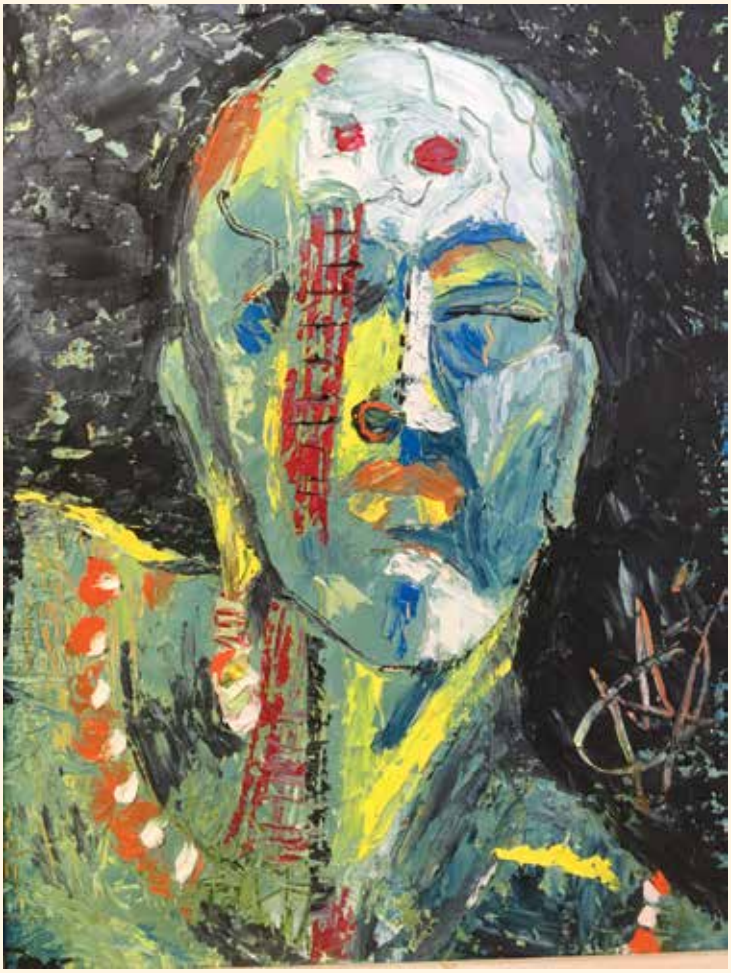
I am passionate about awareness of mental health issues in New Zealand and what we can do to help. I believe this is important because of the huge number who experience depression and suicide in our community.

The reason I am so passionate is because of my own struggles with my anxiety. I also have friends and family who are held down by their mental health issues and I know that people are uncomfortable talking about it. That's why I believe it's important to raise awareness so that it becomes normal to discuss mental health in groups of supportive people.

To help address this topic and initiate discussions about mental health, my goal is to hold an event where we are all free to discuss ourselves and our friends and family. Another idea is to simply discuss mental health because the first step to overcoming mental health issues is to talk about them with family and friends. If everyone was to open up about our issues around mental health, then people wouldn't hide this part of themselves away. I believe that talking about it with others is the first step.

Caitlin Smith is in Year 12 at Verdon College, Invercargill.

POLICIES MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Whether we're conscious of it or not, we come into contact with addiction in some form every day. We often trivialise it, belittle it, ignore it or accept it depending on what exactly we're talking about. It's reflected in our language.

We don't think of "getting hooked" on sugar, TV and social media, being a gym-junkie or a shopaholic as addiction. We just think of these everyday predilections as part of being human. We even turn a blind eye to problematic behaviours such as drinking or gambling to excess — in part because they're legal.

But when the substance or behaviour moves from the fringes and those affected are unable to cope in society, our attitudes can drastically change.

Our language and tone becomes judgemental and we label people as addicts, junkies and druggies. Without thinking, we strip the "addict" of humanity as we explain their existence away with a few select words.

It's frightening how quickly we can disregard our fellow human beings, shooing them from our lives like human clutter. We perhaps justify our behaviour with the presumption that drug users are invariably synonymous with "criminals" and "degenerates". Not at all like us.

Are we so different? Did we simply make better decisions than that person on the street asking for a buck? Did we just say no? Were we brought up in a better home? Did we avoid the wrong crowd? Were we smarter? More ethical?

It would be too easy to assume that was true and move on. But that is far from true. Instead we'll find that there's not a single demographic immune to addiction.

Equally, there are plenty of people who fit the criteria of addiction who are not criminals. A failed "war on drugs" has provided all the evidence we need to see that criminalisation is an exercise in futility.

Instead of offering treatment and opportunities for recovery, we criminalised addicts — and to what end? People don't just say "No" when told to. Nor is punishment — even jail time — sufficient to deter people from risky behaviours and substances.

We can look to the USA for ample evidence of this. That country has just five per cent of the world's population but nearly 25 per cent of the world's incarcerated people locked up in their prisons. And an astounding fifth of its 2.3 million prisoners are behind bars on drug charges. Many are imprisoned merely for the possession of drugs.

Portugal has taken a different approach. In the 1990s the country was wracked by a drug epidemic which led to significant drug-fuelled violence and death. In 2001 Portugal decriminalised all drugs. The outcome was that drug use actually decreased, deaths by overdose plummeted by 80 per cent, and new HIV infections among drug users fell from 52 per cent to seven per cent.

We shouldn't be surprised by these results. Portugal began dealing with addiction as a health problem. The substances remained illegal but possession of small quantities ceased to be. People are now referred to professional medical services rather than to police stations and courtrooms. Portugal wants its citizens to recover and has taken action to support recovery rather than following a punitive approach.

In Sydney a "safe injection" room facility has operated for nearly 20 years. It follows the same principle of harm reduction. While the drugs themselves are still illegal, with the provision of this safe space and clean needles there has been not a single overdose or infection.

It's undeniable that the way we treat people — all colours, creeds, persuasions, and lifestyles — matters.

The way we choose to treat our most vulnerable and dependent people matters even more. Policies made with compassion and well-researched information save lives and safeguard the humanity of each person. We can all learn from this.

Jack Derwin is an Australian journalist currently working for Channel Nine in Sydney. He grew up in Orange NSW and has a long-standing passion for social justice.

Painting: ***Blue People*** by Mariam Qureshi © Used with permission www.artsy.net/gallery-mariam and www.lotus-gallery.com

ASKING QUESTIONS WELL

I watched my friend faint. We were at her flat one evening, chatting and drinking; a big group of us, exhilarated by the night. She was sitting on the couch and then she wasn't. She'd been telling me about having endometriosis for a while, and I knew that her periods could be heavy and cause devastating pain. But until I saw her roll off the couch unconscious, I knew I hadn't understood the implications of her condition. She opened her eyes after a few moments, picked herself up and after we'd ascertained that she was okay, we got on with the night.

Later I started to ask her questions. I felt awkward at first because I didn't really know what to say or what to ask. I was ashamed by the depth of my ignorance. But friendship is stronger than shame, and part of being a friend is sharing the messy bits of our lives.

I find it frustrating when I don't understand other people; when their values, ideas, priorities — or their concept of what constitutes a decent vegetarian option — differ from mine. I get frustrated by a friend who cancels plans because her chronic fatigue makes her too tired; by my flatmate who waters my plants when I was going to do it; by those who waste perfectly good food. But asking questions and actually listening to the answers — instead of thinking about how to respond so that I seem intelligent and informed — is the best way I know to be reminded that most people are pretty similar.

Last year I had an epiphany while falling asleep and I quickly typed it into my phone before succumbing to oblivion. The next day I tried to decipher what I had written: "Jesus was a journalist; Jesus was the best journalist." Pretty garbled stuff. I don't remember what prompted it, but pondering it, I recalled how Jesus questioned those he met. Like the best journalists, he asked questions that stayed with people, that invited them to interrogate themselves.

Jesus asks his disciples: "Where is your faith?" and calms the storm. Jesus asks the woman at the well to give him a drink and ignites a whole conversation about who she is and who he is, inviting her into relationship beyond thirst. And, in a slightly meta-encounter, Jesus asks the rich man why he is asking Jesus to tell him what is good, inviting him to recognise Jesus's divinity. And Jesus answers other people's questions with grace, assurance and openness.

Okay — so the metaphor doesn't entirely work. But I still want to get better at asking questions. When I ask questions, I am acknowledging that people are different from me, and that I can learn from them and about them. I want to get better at understanding people who are different from me — literally everyone on the planet! Jesus had conversations with people within and beyond his social circles. Even with the disciples, he didn't make assumptions but kept asking questions, acknowledging that they could change and become different.

I am good at explaining how I've changed, but I find it difficult to extend that grace to others, because once I think I know who someone is, that's the impression that sticks with me.

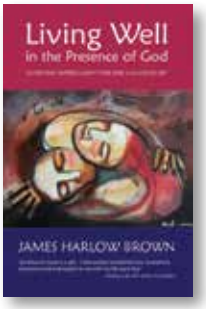
When I think about the devastating Christchurch attacks and the climate change crisis — two issues which have been dominating much of my headspace — I am filled with questions about difference. I'm trying to keep asking these questions, even when they hurt, even when they implicate me. Perhaps, in asking more questions more gently, I can become a little more Christ-like.

Shanti Mathias is at Victoria University, Wellington, enjoying using long words and immersing herself in the intricacies of media, politics and literature.

Living Well in the Presence of God: Everyday Spirituality for the 21st Century

by James Harlow Brown
Published by Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018
Reviewed by Eleanor Capper

BOOK



This clearly written, absorbing little book provides an approach to prayer that encapsulates an understanding of what it means to face the challenges of life in the 21st century while living in the presence of God.

Building on his own experiences, Brown provides insights and a practical guide for Christians today who desire to know that God is interested in us, enjoys our company, takes the initiative and answers prayers from the heart. Brown contrasts the modern mindset with the Christian mindset and explains this in detail. The book lends itself to slow reading to absorb and practise the method of praying aimed at entering the heart of a personal relationship with God.

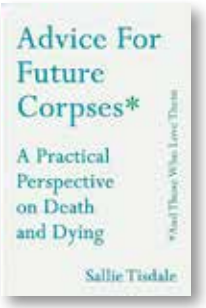
In the final two chapters Brown demonstrates how God gives us the gift of wisdom showing us the "big picture of life". He says Christians are given a special transformational task of reintroducing God as the foundational context of everything in life. The role of the Holy Spirit works through individuals to transform large institutions including the Church.

This book will appeal to all those who are interested in prayer.

Advice for Future Corpses (and Those Who Love Them): A Practical Perspective on Death and Dying

by Sallie Tisdale
Published by Allen & Unwin, 2018
Reviewed by Sande Ramage

BOOK



Sallie Tisdale grabbed my attention by highlighting the Buddha's suggestion that meditating on a decaying corpse can help us take a realistic approach to death. In her helpful but discomforting book, *Advice for Future Corpses*, Tisdale nails the dissonance between death as a medical event, and death as a psychological, emotional and spiritual event.

Tisdale draws on her extensive experience as a palliative nurse — she offers a wealth of down-to-earth, practical ways to be terminally ill or to walk someone into death. This book is worth reading now if you find yourself in either of these situations.

However, it was the discussion of how we contemplate dying that most engaged me. I know from my own chaplaincy experience how easily spiritual meaning-making is sidelined through focusing on medical care only.

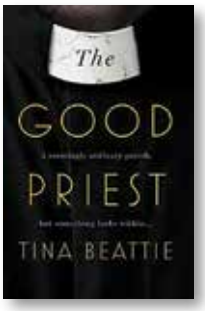
As I read this book through Lent I reflected on the goldmine of ritual opportunities we have to help us contemplate death through the Easter season. Sadly, they make little sense to those unfamiliar with the Christian system. But, as Tisdale suggests, we could together reshape these stories and rituals to give life and sense to suffering and death in our time and place.

This book is well worth reading and absorbing for future reference.

The Good Priest

by Tina Beattie
Published by Troubadour Publishing, 2019
Reviewed by Ann Gilroy

NOVEL



Murder mysteries are my thing so I was eager to read this book. The good priest is English Father John, parish priest of Our Lady of Sorrows in Westonville and the story happens in Lent. John is attentive to his parishioners, prepares his homilies, occasionally shelters a homeless person, appreciates his family, has close friends and loves his cat. However, his past, particularly an experience from when he was studying in Rome, haunts him as the murders of young women are discovered in the district, one each Friday, and the evidence points to the perpetrator as a priest. While innocent himself, John gradually realises that he has information which could help the police but his own complicated situation means he cannot disclose it. The tension builds as Good Friday approaches.

The Good Priest is a good read — although I could have shaken the good man at times. Was the characterisation believable? I'm not sure. But I think there are enough loose threads for a sequel — "The Better Priest"? For those who relish a good murder, especially when the main character discusses theology — this book is for you.

Woman at War

Directed by Benedikt Erlingsson
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

FILM

Deftly interweaving the political and the personal, this quirky Icelandic film is a love song to the bleak but beautiful topography of this tiny island nation at the top of the world.

Halla loves the land around her with a physical intimacy bordering on the passionate. We see her burying her face in the mossy turf of the uplands, hiding in its crevices and floating spreadeagled in a geothermal spring. And hide she must, as for most of the film she is on the run from the authorities, fleeing on foot across vast open landscapes. In her persona of Mountain Woman, eco-warrior and self-described "economic saboteur", she has set herself the task of liberating Iceland from the environmental threat posed by a giant aluminium smelter by sabotaging power cables and blowing up pylons.

But this is by no means a grim-faced investigation of the sins of corporate industry and multinational investment in a small country blessed with outstanding natural values. Interwoven with the story of Halla as Mountain Woman is the story of Halla the 40-something singleton who is seeking to adopt a four-year-old orphan girl from the Ukraine. Halla has a twin sister, Ása (both are played by Halldóra Geirharðsdóttir), who is in many ways her polar opposite — a yoga teacher about to leave for a two-year meditation retreat on an Indian ashram. "You need to change yourself before you can change the world," Ása admonishes her activist sister.

Then there's the music that permeates the film. In her down time, Halla conducts an a cappella choir, and whenever music plays on the film's soundtrack, the camera moves back to reveal its source — either an Icelandic oompah band (keyboard, drums and tuba) or a trio of female singers in traditional Ukrainian dress, usually fully integrated into the *mise en scène*. (At moments of heightened tension or emotion, we are treated to both.)

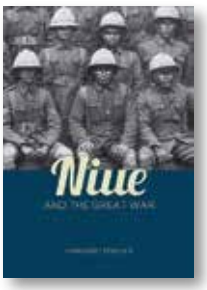
So what at first appears to be a political thriller is leavened with a fair bit of common humanity and outright fantasy, not to mention a strong dose of absurdist humour. And there's a stunning denouement that will leave you both smiling and thinking about the issues the film raises in a new way. I don't think it's giving too much away to say that it involves being an identical twin!

Niue and the Great War

by Margaret Pointer
Published by Otago University Press, 2018
Reviewed by Mike Gourley

BOOK

If you ever wondered why the tiny island nation of Niue gave up its sons and a lot of money to the British in World War I, Margaret Pointer's *Niue and the Great War* provides the answer. Pointer, a historian, researcher and teacher, writes about the impact of the war effort on Niue's life and people. In a highly engaging style she relates how Niue, softened up by British missionaries, was eager to join the British Empire — ready to do its bit. But Niue lost many of its finest men, mown down by machine guns, blown up by bombs or killed by diseases for which they lacked immunity. And Niue was not rewarded by independence. Indeed, colonisation was deepened and extended by New Zealand. Pointer brings the story of the men and their families to life through personal anecdotes, newspaper commentary and photographs. I found the book absorbing and poignant as the stories of many of the people directly involved had not been passed on in their families. This book recovers them. I would recommend this book to students and everyone interested in the South Pacific and its relations with New Zealand.



CROSS CURRENTS

by Susan Smith

Clericalism

Every day we hear about the Church and paedophilia. It is difficult to feel anything other than shame, anger and frustration when learning about the efforts of religious authorities to cover up sexual abuse. But one ray of hope is that Pope Francis is linking such criminality to clericalism. But why does Francis link clericalism to the cover-up of paedophilia?

I remember catechism classes from long ago when we were taught that through ordination priests became ontologically different from lay people. Matthew's injunction, "call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father — the one in heaven" (Mt 23:9), was never heeded, and father/children, pastor/sheep language determined how lay people understood their role and place and the Church. It was all "Pray, pay and obey" and "Father always knows best". At school I did not know what ontological meant but realised as I grew older that in effect it meant something analogous to the "divine right" of monarchs, which vanished in the early 20th century. "Divine right" of popes, bishops and priests is still alive and well in some quarters.

Clericalism manifests itself in different ways. As Francis wrote on 20 August 2018: "to say 'no' to abuse is to say an emphatic 'no' to all forms of clericalism." For Francis, "Church" is more than "priests and bishops", who all too often are happy to ignore or minimise the God-given grace and talents of the laity. This prioritizing of priests over laity is demonstrated in Aotearoa when the so-called shortages of priests is addressed by inviting in foreign priests, or in two dioceses by the creation of the permanent diaconate. Some of these ontologically different men are indeed good ministers but at an institutional level, it is concerning that bishops see such moves as key in resolving the issue of priestly shortage.

Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Report (December 2018) concluded that "clericalism is at the centre of a tightly interconnected cluster of contributing factors" of abuse within the Catholic Church.

"Clericalism is linked to a sense of entitlement, superiority and exclusion, and abuse of power," the report said.

In the 16th century the Protestant Reformers argued no special ministerial power was conferred through priestly ordination, and although the Council of Trent acknowledged the priesthood of all believers, affirming and promoting it did not figure on its agenda. It was much more concerned with the ordained priesthood, a situation that still persists. Even *Lumen Gentium* ("Dogmatic Constitution on the Church") teaches that the sacramental priesthood of ordination in essence and degree differs from the priesthood of the baptised (*LG* 11).

The indulgence crisis triggered off the Protestant and Catholic Counter Reformations in the 16th century. Perhaps the closely related crises of sexual abuse and clericalism will trigger off another reformation which will result in lay people having a real — not a token — voice about the future of their Church.

Tourism (Again)

In 2008 John Key appointed himself Minister of Tourism, and subsequent decision-making demonstrates the influence of his background as a foreign exchange dealer. Making money very quickly without thinking about long-term consequences was his style. Tourism became our largest export earner and employs one in seven New Zealanders, many of whom work in service industries for notoriously low wages. The ecological costs of tourism are mind-blowing, as is DoC's status as a support department for the tourist industry. The lack of adequate infrastructure to provide for those who visit is dismaying both citizens and tourists. Unfortunately, the words "public toilets" have taken on a whole new meaning. God invites us to care for creation, not exploit it for the sake of profit. In Bhutan tourists pay a tax of US$200 per day. Quality, not quantity, is their aim. What if we adopted such a policy?

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

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

ISSM 1174-8931
Issue number 236

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

Phone: (03) 477 1449

Email: editor@tuimotu.org

Email for subscriptions: admin@tuimotu.org

Editor: Ann L Gilroy RSJ

Assistant Editor: Ann Hassan

Design & layout: Greg Hings

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

Board Directors: Neil Darragh (chair), Rita Cahill RSJ, Philip Casey, Cathrine Harrison, Agnes Hermans, Judith McGinley OP, Chris Loughnan OP.

Honorary Directors:
Pauline O'Regan RSM, Elizabeth Mackie OP,

Bank: BNZ 02-0929-0277471-00

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.

CLERICALISM OPPRESSES

It is a pity that Marcus Francis needs to quote law to justify his exclusive right to control who presents homilies and who recites the Eucharistic prayer at Mass. His letter (*TM* Feb 2019) is written in the style of his preaching—presenting definitive close-ended facts do no more than expose ego and give me no cause to remember what is said. When, however, a homily presents open-ended questions I am gifted with an encouragement for my relational prayer life with God. I am compelled with an inner desire to listen to God speak through the Word and I take the homily home to savour.

As for the Eucharistic prayer. I don't know or for that matter expect theology or canon law to have caught up with my relevant "stage of life" prayer style. If they have I don't expect Marcus to be able to show me. The transubstantiations I experience at Mass happen in my heart in the place reserved for God alone. In these times of the exposure of power abuse by clericalism what a cleric does and says during the Eucharistic prayer is in the process of being reduced to its former rightful place in the order of things. The good and holy priests you often refer to in *TM* know this.

Dave McCann, Feilding

WELCOME STEP

Congratulations to John Dew for directing his clergy to drop titles (Father, Cardinal, your Eminence (*Newsletter* Issue 196, 4 April & *TM* May 2019) — a very small but welcome step in the battle to eradicate clericalism. I understand the title "father" was originally reserved for bishops (*papa*), then its use was restricted to the Bishop of Rome only (in English, "pope"). It began to be used for priests only in modern times, in Ireland. Because of Irish immigration the custom spread to many English-speaking countries.

John cited a French priest as the catalyst for his awakening. However, biblical scholar Sandra Schneiders — forbidden to speak in one particular NZ diocese — raised the issue in the late 1980s. I have continued to raise it, most recently in my "Dear Kate" letter (*TM* November 2018). "Call no man your father" (Mt 23:8-10) is part of Matthew's bitter denunciation of the scribes' and Pharisees' leadership but addressed to the disciples themselves. Earlier (Mt 23:4-7), Matthew is scathing in his criticism of the trappings of power — wearing special insignia, claiming privileged positions and seeking public honour. For Matthew all members are to be "servants" to one another (Mt 23:11). Priests are to be servants. They have good models in our bishops.

PS Schneiders should have known her request wouldn't be heeded. At the Easter Vigil, our most important feast liturgically, we heard Luke's resurrection account. Guess what? The male disciples refused to believe the women!

Elizabeth Julian, Wellington

TAKING ACTION

Concelebration is confined to rare occasions like the blessing of church buildings, the ordination and funerals of brother priests and the annual Chrism Mass in Holy Week. Concelebration begins with the procession of the priests through the church to kiss the altar. This "grand parade" is the finest hour of clericalism. Is it necessary? Not in the slightest! And yet, is there one bishop in the whole world who would dare to abolish this clerical frippery? A very brave bishop indeed is he.

Max Palmer, Southern Star Abbey

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

Just occasionally it catches me out. The way that my children are no longer toddlers, simultaneously biddable and irascible. The way my twin daughters are their own people and know things that I don't know and listen to music I have never heard. The way my son turned from being a waddling toddler with a downy head of hair to a broad-shouldered basketball player who eats five meals a day and opines on politics. The way it seemed like we had pre-schoolers in nappies forever, and then it seemed like they grew up in a flash. How does this happen?

Our children change, grow and become new and different people. I am an intrigued observer, often perplexed, but happily surprised at who and how our children are. Their bodies, their minds, their emotions. They're in marvellous flux. They keep becoming. Sharon Olds condenses my thoughts in her poem, "My Son the Man":

Suddenly his shoulders get a lot wider,
the way Houdini would expand his body
while people were putting him in chains. It seems
no time since I would help him to put on his sleeper,
guide his calves into the gold interior,
zip him up and toss him up and
catch his weight. I cannot imagine him
no longer a child, and I know I must get ready,
get over my fear of men now my son
is going to be one. This was not
what I had in mind when he pressed up through me like a
sealed trunk through the ice of the Hudson,
snapped the padlock, unsnaked the chains,
and appeared in my arms. Now he looks at me
the way Houdini studied a box
to learn the way out, then smiled and let himself be manacled.

Lent has been a poignant season this year. Spangled with red flowers on rhododendron trees, while the forest floor is a confetti of humble-earnest violets. This year the green fuse of spring has offered all of us generous armloads of grace (warmth, sunshine and blue skies) after the long and cold winter. Some years spring seems too voluptuous altogether for Lent. But if Lent is about being attentive to God's creativity and presence in the world, then spring in these muscular hills must be one of the best places to spend these 40 days. The invitation for me is to turn from my busy thoughts and earnest striving, and instead to rest on my back, trusting the pillows of grace that are underneath, beside and around me. Denise Levertov, another wonderful woman poet, distils these thoughts in "The Avowal". May I be, may we all be, as hawks resting upon air:

As swimmers dare
to lie face to the sky
and water bears them,
as hawks rest upon air
and air sustains them,
so would I learn to attain
freefall, and float
into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,
knowing no effort earns
that all-surrounding grace.

Kaaren Mathias lives with her husband, children, a cat and a dog, in a small town in North India and works in mental health.

Let your light
reach into our minds
transforming our blindspots
into places of understanding and love
Risen Christ

From the *Tui Motu* team