Tui Motu

InterIslands

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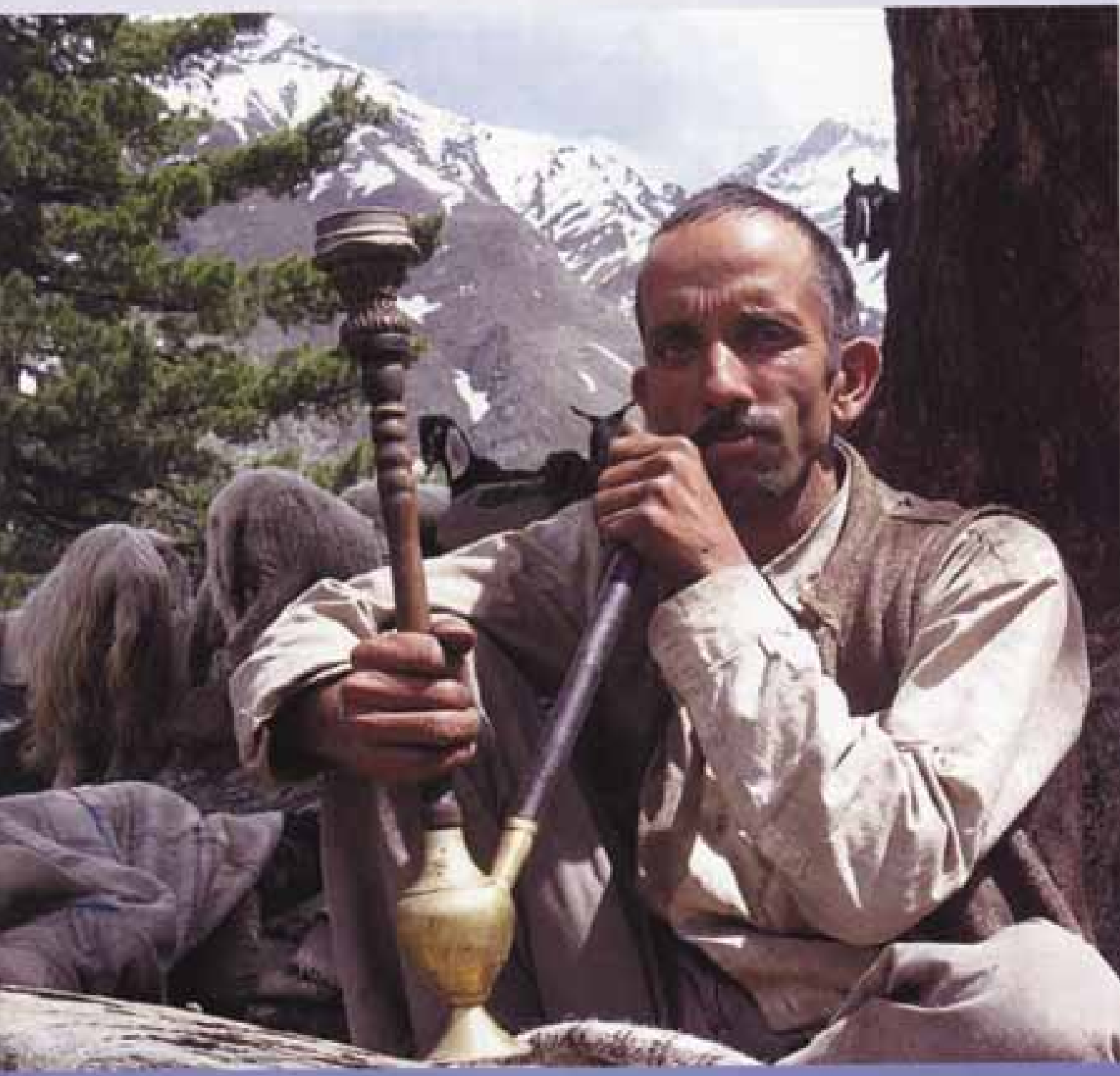

where men and mountains meet

contents

cover: photo by Jeph Mathias taken in Himalayan India

celebrating the building of life

The feast of the Assumption is a mid–year reminder of the awesome mystery of resurrection life. We celebrate this gift in Mary; that she has reached the fullness of her humanity, going ahead of each of us to enjoy the complete gift that life holds. I hope you enjoy as much as I did looking at the pictures which accompany Joy Cowley and Kath Rushton's articles on the Assumption. Mary's strength and gentleness shine brightly.

In a remarkable short piece, Brother Peter Bray reflects on the difficulties of life in Palestine. Yet despite these, and they are many, he is able to see the hope which the Bethlehem University holds for the building of that nation, and to celebrate this.

In another celebration of life, Jeph Mathias looks at a day in the life of a doctor in the rural clinic of Madgram. The throbbing life of a mountain valley is delicately depicted. In doing so, Jeph is sifting the life of Himalayan India and seeing beyond the traditional life that is slowly being changed as the demands of modernity trickle into these stupendous valleys. He can see both positives and negatives flowing from this inevitable march of time, lamenting the good that will be lost and saluting the gains.

On a different line, Tony Watkins reflects on human creativity in the building of life. He looks at the way in which power has been distributed over the centuries through the use of architecture, and contrasts the way of the monasteries to the way of the cities. He opts for the slow and careful growth which comes from the example of the monasteries; and places this over and against the piecemeal and hurried way in which we modern "efficiency" experts build – with too little thought for future consequences.

To show a good example of what Tony talks about from New Zealand, Peter Stuart has highlighted the beginning of the rebuilding of the Kopua Monastery. The monks have just begun to build their permanent monastery after a period of being in New Zealand for well over 50 years. By way of their charity, and faithful to their rule, it is the guesthouse that has been built first - the giving of hospitality being the first obligation of a Cistercian monk. We see displayed here what Tony Watkins is saying: careful choice of building materials, brilliant use of light, simplicity in all. And we await the next period of who knows how many years when the monastery itself will be built – a testament to the slow growth of beauty.

Michael Hill shows another side of careful, visionary building of a place of beauty. What he refers to as an 'architectural Disneyland', Portmeiron. It took Clough William–Ellis all of his very long life to bring this to completion. And it remains as testament to one human being's desire to bring pleasure.

These four articles are some of a dazzling array of reflections on the celebration of life which the Assumption symbolizes so clearly. Happy reading. KT

open letter from chair of tui motu foundation

Dear *Tui Motu* Readers,

With this issue of *Tui Motu,* readers will receive a leaflet which explains the work of the *Tui Motu* Foundation. I draw this to your attention and invite you to respond to it if you can.

The *Tui Motu* Foundation has been established as a Charitable Trust, distinct from the *Tui Motu* magazine itself, but designed to support *Tui Motu's* continued life and growth. For while *Tui Motu* pays its way month by month through subscriptions, it is still not able to cover increased salary costs in the changes that have had to be made since the retirement of Father Michael Hill. Interest from the Foundation is used to cover the shortfall.

The Foundation is growing slowly and steadily, but is still a long way from achieving the target of one million dollars, which the trustees consider to be a realistic investment to meet the needs of the magazine.

We are over half way towards our goal, and the Foundation's trustees are very grateful to our faithful supporters. We can assure all of you that the funds are well managed and that repayment dates are clearly recorded, with funds available to debenture holders at the end of each period they have specified.

If you are already supporting the Foundation, we thank you most sincerely. Perhaps you know of someone else who could be interested. If so, please pass the Foundation leaflet on to them. If you have not yet considered a debenture or a donation to the Foundation, we would like to ask you to think about doing so. If you need additional information, please contact us. Any of the trustees will be happy to assist you.

Although ordinary wisdom would say that this is not the time to be investing money or inviting others to do so, we believe that *Tui Motu* has been from its beginning an act of faith rather than a logical business proposition. Thirteen years on, we still believe that. We therefore commend to all of you the needs of the Foundation and trust in your continued support for this magazine of which we can all be so proud.

Elizabeth Mackie OP
For the *Tui Motu* Foundation

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Tui Motu-InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed. The name *Tui Motu* was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.
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a vital missing link

I believe something vital was missing from the moral debate between Bishop Peter Cullinane and Fr Peter Murnane. I have no doubt the trio of activists believe that the Waihopai base is implicated in doing real harm.Their beliefs however are not proof of anything and clearly that is not what their trial was about.

I am equally persuaded that no action can be considered moral that is not based on a just relationship between the means and the ends involved. The question that remains is whether or not the 'Waihopai spy base' is linked in any direct way to injustices and harms being done by the US government.

Though the investigations by Owen Wilkes and others would lend support to the assumptions of the activists, no one can say with any certainty what information is being gathered or how it is used. Even less clear is their assumption that their actions actually saved lives – anywhere.

Given the uncertainty involved perhaps the appropriate target for the activist trio, indeed for all New Zealanders, is a government that continues to allow the base to operate autonomously. What assurances do any of us have that the activists are wrong? What control or oversight does our government have over the information gathered or how it is used?

Like most New Zealanders I take great pride in our stance against the entry into our ports of nuclear armed ships of the US Navy. Why then should we be content to allow the US to enter our country and gather information that is beyond our control?

Paul Green, Palmerston North

letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words.

The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not changing the meaning.

Response articles (up to a page) are welcome - but please, by negotiation.

to advance the love of christ

Father Murnane needs to take thought about the effect his "stunts" have upon the public image of the Church. There are enough people making their views known as to the reality of what humanity is doing to our planet and the populace without his antics which do little to advance the love of Christ in our present day world with its many problems.

Maurice McGreal, Hillcrest

for us all

I received a copy of the commentary on the new liturgy on Sunday and am concerned to see that the Creed still contains the words "For us men and for our salvation". This is an incorrect translation from the latin *propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem*. *"Homines"* is the accusative plural of "*homo"*, which means mankind or human kind. It does not mean man. The latin for "man" is "*vir*". In my experience in recent years, many congregations have omitted the word "man" when reciting the Creed and simply recite "for us and for our salvation".

When the English version of the Creed came to prominence at the time of the abolition of the Latin Mass, there was some justification for translating *"homines"* as "men", as man was then an inclusive word. That is not the case today. To include women in the meaning of "men" is to use sexist language. This should not be tolerated in the Church's liturgy. If *homines* needs to be translated at all, it should be as "mankind" or "humankind". But how about 'for us all and for our salvation'? Is it too late to change?

David J More, Dunedin

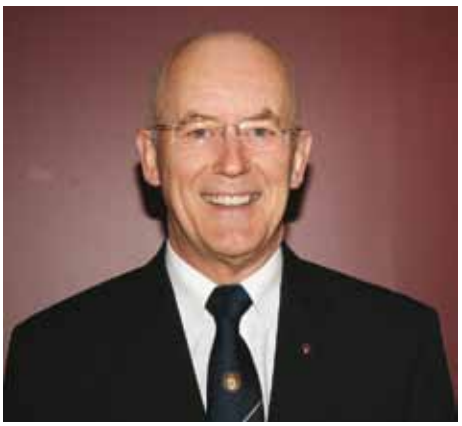
the dream of god

I am a very occasional reader of Tui Motu. In the April issue I read the letter headed "The Dream of God" and I was saddened by the bitterness that I saw in that letter. The more I read it, the more I saw a group of women who are so discontented that it made me wonder why they were still in the church. If they see that church as "patriarchal and oppressive", why do they not leave it and go and join another church which does not have such qualities? Why do they stay inside this overpowering body and snipe at it from inside? Perhaps they cannot find such another church. Such actions lead only to disunity and there has been enough disunity since the Reformation.

Only now are we coming to grips with the damage caused by one person who sought to go off on his own tangent. I rather feel that the idea of the one church mooted by Jesus was just that - one church, not several thousand all putting their own personal viewpoint. Compromise is often better than challenge. And we should always remember that it is God's church, not ours! We waste so much time attempting to reshape God's way into our way instead of shaping our way to God's. I am a firm believer in the theory of "If you don't get what you want, then want what you've got".

Tony de Joux, Wellington

hope for palestine



Brother Peter Bray is a well-known New Zealand educationalist who last year volunteered to become the Vice-Chancellor of the Bethlehem University, Palestine. Here he reflects on his first year's work.

In early July we finally celebrated the graduation of 656 students and so brought to an end the academic year which was the first time Bethlehem University had more than 3000 students. Those graduates pushed our total number of graduates to over 12,000. Many of these are making a significant contribution to building Palestine into a workable nation. The graduation was a wonderful occasion. I found I was enthralled watching these wonderful young people so joyful and satisfied that they had reached this goal. Seeing them with their families and friends celebrating on campus made up for some of the challenges we faced during the course of this academic year. There are some wonderful young people here who show such resilience and courage. Some of them have had to put up with so much just getting to Bethlehem University that it was such an achievement actually to graduate.

That ceremony brought to a close my first full academic year. It was one in which I learned a great deal and was faced with challenges both internally and externally. It was a year in which I was on a great learning curve but also one with much satisfaction. I have never worked in a place where it is so obvious that what we are doing here at Bethlehem University is worthwhile and enriching for students who come here.

In the time I have been here, however, I am very aware that the restrictions imposed by the Israelis are increasing. In recent months it is more difficult to get through the checkpoint and some of the checkpoints have been closed to Palestinians and foreigners – these are now only available to the settlers who are on confiscated Palestinian land. It is also getting more difficult for students to get permits to go to places of pilgrimage or interest in Israel. We have tried to take some of our students to Jaffa, Nazareth and the Galilee but they could not get permits. Many of them have never visited these places even though they have grown up here in Bethlehem. In the short time I have been here I have seen more of this country than some of the students who have lived here their whole lives.

When I see the students, faculty and staff coping with these and many more restrictions, I am amazed at the attitude they take and the resilience they show in getting on with life. It is surprising for some of our visitors to hear so much laughter on campus. These visitors become aware of the restrictions and can't believe the way the Palestinians just get on with life and cope.

I have been greatly inspired by listening to the stories some of the Palestinians tell about their experiences in being restricted, humiliated and verbally abused and how they deal with all that. One student told me recently that he has begun his degree over again because he had started and was then taken in the middle of the night and put in prison for eighteen months. He was never charged, never tried or convicted of anything and still has not been given any reason for why he was detained. In spite of that he has come back to Bethlehem University determined to make the most of the opportunity here and is very positive about life.

It is difficult to see where things are really heading. The flotilla disaster is being trumpeted in Israel as a victory for Israel and something the Prime Minister says he will not apologise for because it is Israel's right to defend itself. The so-called 'peace process' is far from achieving what it says. In some ways, however, it is almost as if Israel is imploding. Yet in the midst of all this uncertainty it was very supportive when we were in Rome to hear education in schools and universities – with our mandates to promote justice and peace – being talked about as "the greatest investment of the Church" in the Middle East. These words resonate in a particular way for us at Bethlehem University where our work is nothing short of education in the service of nation-building.

So, yes, there are many challenges facing Bethlehem University but there is also an amazing amount of good will and an incredible resilience amongst the students, faculty, and staff. When I reflect back over the time I have been at Bethlehem University and see the way the restrictions have been increased, I cannot see a way for peace to come. There seem too many obstacles in the way. However, if I was writing some thirty years ago I would have said exactly the same thing about Northern Ireland, about South Africa, about Germany. Somehow, beyond my understanding, peace did come to those places. This is the hope I hold on to now, that somehow, beyond my present understanding of how it can happen, peace will come. When it does come what we will need are educated, resourceful and creative Palestinians who will build the new Palestine.

Bethlehem University is making a huge contribution to create that pool of people who will be responsible for making this new Palestine. I have great faith in God's Spirit at work in the people in Bethlehem, the place where the Word became flesh and where we continue to seek to live out the Gospel to which Jesus called us. What is truly the source of our strength is this growing awareness that we are doing God's work and that we dare to believe God's spirit is guiding us. ■

If you wish to support students and the work and development of Bethlehem University, donations can be made through *Caritas Aotearoa* New Zealand. Contact Director Mike Smith; Ph 0800 22 10 22 or email for more information: michael.smith@caritas.org.nz Tax receipts for donations received will be provided.

the assumption

Kathleen Rushton

We hear of the woman clothed with the sun in the first reading for the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Revelation 11:19, 12:1-5, 10*). The seven verses are best approached by applying some basic principles of biblical interpretation.

literary genre

What is the genre or literary style of the book from which our reading is taken? Apocalypsis, the first word of the *Book of Revelation* means 'unveiling' and is translated usually as 'revelation'. This book has its roots in the prophets and in the Jewish-Christian literature of apocalypses. The writer, known as John, mediates visions or dreams 'unveiled' by a divine being or an angel. Contrary to popular understanding, biblical apocalypses and prophets are concerned with the present and with particular historical situations.

the historical situation

What is the historical situation of *Revelation* and how does the writer address this? At that time, it was most unlikely the Christian community faced any systematic Roman persecution. Rather, the writer's concern was that Christians then – people living ordinary lives as we are today – would be tempted to succumb to the values of the Empire. Rather than living God's way, they would make compromises to its way of life. The writer asserts again and again that God rules this world *(11:15)*. Yet, this world is still ruled by evil powers. Throughout *Revelation,* there is an interplay of three words. One, 'affliction' (*thlipsis)*, belongs to the domain of trouble, hardship, pain and suffering (*2:22*). Another, 'reign' *(basileia*), belongs to the domain of power or rule. The third, 'consistent resistance' (*huyomone*) translated often as endurance, is for *John* the active quality of standing up to evil. This is one of the works of the faithful. An apocalypse can present paradoxes. Life is simultaneously *thlipsis* and *basileia*. We can look behind the veil of ordinary experience (the unredeemed affliction) and see the true order of life (God's reign). Life in God's reign provides the power to live the consistent resistance which is essential in the time of affliction (*2:2-3; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12*).

placing the part in the whole

What difference does it make to place the seven verses of this reading within the context of the *Book of Revelation?* The woman, clothed with the sun surrounded by the moon and stars, is probably the best known of visions of Revelation. In highly symbolic language, full of scriptural imagery, John describes the vision of a sign in heaven which contains a woman, her child and a dragon. The narrative of *Revelation 12* assures us of the ultimate victory of God's faithful ones. Throughout history, the symbol of the woman has had many interpretations. Most scholars accept that the primary meaning of the woman is corporate: the people of God, whether Israel, the Church of Christ, or both. In the narrative of *Revelation*, the complete picture of the woman is found at the end of the book when Christ's Church becomes the New Jerusalem (*21:1-3*). The actual afflictions of the author's community are placed within the frame of cosmic history as a whole which is an ongoing struggle between God's faithful ones and those who oppose them, between good and evil.

Given this primary ecclesial (church) interpretation of this vision, is it still possible to find a secondary reference to Mary? The woman is described as the mother of the "male child who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron," a citation from *Psalm 2* which is also applied to the Messiah as well as to the faithful people of God. Patristic writers link this vision with the mother of Jesus. Throughout the canon of Scripture different images intertwine. More explicit interpretations, both individual and corporate, of *Revelations 12*, illuminate the role of Mary and the Church in the ultimate victory of the Messiah.

scripture and ancient tradition

Catholic teaching on Mary and particularly the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and

the quiet of mary

Hail Mary, chosen of God. You were little more than a child, an empty room filled with sunlight, lacking in self-awareness, sensing only the tidal pull of the universe drawing you to a place and time. Even then, you did not notice that the sun stood still, burning up all shadow, and the voice that spoke had the depth of ages. You looked down at your feet jewelled with dust, and said, "Whatever it is, let it be done to me." And God became your guest, furnishing the empty room with wisdom.

Thank you, Mary, for the gift of simplicity.

Hail Mary, mother of Jesus. You gave God human form, and for nine months you held that newness, feeling within you movements of the life that would change history. This was the treasure you held in your heart. When he was born, you looked into his eyes, seeing eternity, and you knew what all mothers know, that all babies come into the world with angel song.

Thank you, Mary, for being the mother of all mothers and all newborn.

Hail Mary, woman of hospitality. It was a fine wedding party, music, dance, food, and then the wine ran out. You felt responsible for the guests; but your son was not yet ready for the huge commitment that lay ahead. He argued. You insisted. For years you had been his teacher, helping him to take first steps, and you knew now was the time for him to take the step that would establish his mission. So water in jars became the wine of celebration, and a symbol of all that was to come.

Thank you, Mary, for making the blessing of marriage, the first miracle.

Hail Mary at the Cross. When you gathered all those treasures in your heart, did you know the nature of the sword that would drive through them? That day, the world went black with a grief so much bigger than you. You felt the pain of every mother's child who had been tortured and killed. And you were every mother who had lost a child. Your only solace was the thin voice of wisdom that threaded itself through the darkness to remind you that all crucifixions have resurrections.

Thank you, Mary, for being with us at times of great loss.

Hail Mary, mother of the Church. No one told us about your leaving. We see a quiet room filled with light and wisdom. We see work-worn hands and a life nearing the end of the steep path of blessing. When your boy came for you, what did you say? Did you ask him where you were going? I think you already knew what was to be, and gladly you took his hand, he now guiding you, to that wider place of presence beyond words.

So now we sit with you and Jesus in the same quiet way, knowing but unknowing, aware of the tidal pull on our hearts and the voice asking the question. We feel the same bewilderment that you did, but now you are here, and here is your Son, so we are able to whisper, "Let it be done to me."

Thank you, Mary, for the emptiness that receives.

Joy Cowley

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the Assumption (1950) were identified as problems in Catholic-Anglican unity. After years of study, ARCIC commissioned *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (2004). The Commission found these teachings are quite consonant with Scripture and part of the ancient common tradition of the early Church. Those involved speak of "the ARCIC method" of going behind entrenched positions to find again what was held in common. It was often when they breathed with what the theologian Yves Congar called two lungs: the lung of the East with its insights into spirituality, icons, contemplation and liturgy that the lung of the divided West was able to re-receive the place of Mary in the Christian faith.

an image

The image of Mary as a mature older woman is in St Mary's Church, New Brighton. In 1983-84, a parishioner, Christchurch artist, Ria Bancroft, created this sculpture in consultation with the parishioners when the church was redesigned. Mary points to the open Bible while she faces towards the altar of the church. Her gestures highlight the Word and Sacrament of her Son. In addition, the sculpture symbolises unity for it is a composite of materials, basically Oamaru stone collected from the restoration of Christchurch's two cathedrals, Anglican and Catholic. ■

where **men** and mountains **meet**

Every doctor faces challenges in their career. But when New Zealand doctor, Jeph Mathias, chose to practise in the Himalayas, he found all kinds of new hills to climb

Bainhelu peak looks down on us, puny people scurrying at her feet. And sauntering along without a care for humanity, the green-grey Chennab river sings its own songs of freedom. This evening Madgram villagers are burrowing away on their little strip of arable land between the upthrusted schist and gouging river. A man with an ox-drawn plough scratches furrows in the dark dirt, and women wheeling behind him swoop on the unearthed potatoes. They're making ready for when Nature pulls her winter woollens close over her exposed skin.

Preparations for those six white months are already well along: women twisting supple willow twigs into baskets or carrying sackfuls of autumn-gold grass shorn off steep hillsides as winter fodder for their cow or sheep; and men lovingly watching barley whisky drip, drop by milky drop, into earthenware pots from their improvised stills. In a month they'll all be hunkered around tandoors warming their hands, drinking chai or whiskey and talking softly of days past and those to come.

When the green tide finally rolls back it will bring another cycle of sowing and reaping, making and mending. I'm on my balcony, the sun's turning pink and I have space to think over a day in Madgram where, close to the soil and their animals, people dance to the rhythm of the seasons.

Here in remote Lahaul, high in the Indian Himalayas, we're at humanity's ragged edge, my wife Kaaren, our four children and I, working on community health where few medical services exist. Health, in New Zealand and Lahaul, is determined more by the relationship of people to each other and the land that sustains them than medical services. Therefore, though we do some traditional doctor-patient medicine, our role is more like socio-anthropology. To offer locally sustainable health alternatives we first have to get a feeling for the place and understand its underlying determinants of health. That's a delight – here, life is not sophisticated or elegant, just cast in tradition, uncomplicated and beautiful like the antique jewellery hanging on the women.

Faces around us are open and welcoming, creased like the mountains which mould them, and people dress in earthy

(left) Jeph and family
(top) Karen shares a light moment with a local woman;
Jeph crosses the Chennab in a jhula;
sowing and reaping – a man demonstrates the pierced goatskin he uses to winnow the barley

woollen fabrics with traditional handwoven motifs. When we arrived a neighbour invited us to her village ceremony to welcome in the spring festival of hariyal. We're always asked to sit and sip milky chai, and yesterday we came home with bund gobi (cabbage) casually uprooted and given by a villager as we passed. In a system perfected over time, irrigation ditches and wooden sluices bring water from the unseen glaciers. It's seldom said, but deeply understood, that those massive solid dams are what sustain us.

Intricate social arrangements, also fine-tuned over generations, determine which channel is opened and which blocked by a slab of slate; which family group gets water each day.

I like the simplicity of this raw, wholesome life. If modernity is Lycra-smooth then Madgram's material is rougher; homespun and frayed by the mountains over which it is draped.

This morning I visited a health worker in Ritholi, crouching in a jhula (kind of flying fox) to whizz halfway across the Chennab and then hauling myself up the final 40m, eyeing the ravenous water below. A 10-year-old girl got in as I got out, unfazed by a 15-litre milk can that almost matched her body weight. I enjoy hurtling across one of Asia's great rivers and auscultating chests with my stethoscope as part of the same job. Even when I am a clinical doctor, soaring ridges and deep winters are always close. Every patient is a story to be listened to, a textbook chapter on human physiology, anatomy or psychology impacted by mountains, severe weather and extreme isolation.

Treating patients here offers me challenges. Ingenuity often has to augment our limited equipment and limited skills. Once in Pangi, a very sick eight-year-old girl arrived on foot over a 5000-metre pass from Kashmir with a liver full of hydatids. She let us examine an abdomen lumpy with cysts, discovering what she and her mother surely already knew: surgery was her last chance. The mountains around us and her family's meagre resources walled off all her other options – and ours. The doctor with me suggested making a hydatid trocar and we operated under general anaesthetic using my improvised cut-down syringe to drain 13 cysts. It was enormously satisfying.

Returning from community health in the Ritholi government pre-school, bearing gifts of food given to me along the way, I find the village carpenter waiting. Kaaren had removed the local bone-setter's cast – an egg yolk-soaked bandage – to reveal a broken arm, dislocated elbow and ominously dusky, pulseless hand. It was compartment syndrome, a dreaded emergency. It requires immediate surgery – one I'd never done.

"I have to operate". I said. "Even now it may be too late. You may lose the use of your arm." He shrugged and held

the limb towards me. " I couldn't sleep last night for the pain. Open it, get the badness out. If not I can still drive my ox." Deep stoicism is always found where men and mountains meet.

My next responsibility – groceries – starts with a 3km mountain-bike ride. Everyone knows everything about us so there is no quick trip to Udaipur. In an hour I'd got my mail, retrieved three shoes and bought vegetables, but also interacted gently with people living before food miles, Wars on Terror, traffic jams, carbon footprints, or other modern constructs.

I was home in time for our local cook, Divyanti's, dhal and rice with sliced cucumber. It is good food shared by our family and the others in our small health team out of the midday sun's reach.

Usha arrives just after lunch. She's the young woman from Naamu who helps with our conversational Hindi. She is part way through masters-level English in Lahaul's only university. Everything is in Hindi. Rather than formal lessons she corrects us as we talk around a topic of interest, today negotiating a path through village life as an educated but low-caste woman. While correcting my pronunciation she tells me about discrimination, ostracism by other students, jobs and opportunities closed to her.

Deep stoicism is always found where men and mountains meet

"Doesn't caste seem wrong?" I venture. She smiles. "Wrong? It's tradition, it's my life here."

The expectation is that she'll soon be married to a Naamu boy from her caste, milk the cow daily, and cut and carry its grass. Like glacial water running through Madgram to join the Chennab her life runs in an intricate system of pre-determined channels and slate grey doors that others open and close.

My Hindi lesson lets me lift the veneer, and look at the local culture through Usha's eyes. This view of village life isn't so idyllic. Modernity didn't bring discrimination, social control and exploitation – they were already here. Maybe development increases the scale of injustice, pollution, weapons stockpiles and skewed trade, but for some of us it also affords freedoms and opportunities that Usha will never enjoy.

After a full day's work, I think back to my mountain bike ride early this morning on a road etched into a rocky gorge with the Miyaar river running and shouting way below. The river's far bank looked as untouched and inaccessible as anywhere on Earth.

Lahaul has many such places. But this morning in the Miyaar I saw that the Earth's most secret fold is not sacrosanct. Just beyond the snowy gully, I came upon men in overalls hungrily grubbing the ground with a drill like a metal proboscis. A little sign described an Indo-German private/public partnership that will generate so many megawatts of hydro electricity. My wild brown water is their liquid gold. Locals can't read the sign but welcome 'progress' – some for the road which come as collateral, and others for the possibility of a 40-hour-week and regular wages rather than another season of planting peas or herding sheep on high ridges.

On other rides I have seen little 'notifications' in English regarding various dams of the 14 projected for our little stretch of Chennab. It seems wrong to shackle untamed waters into a chain gang of hydro lakes, slaves to Punjab's burgeoning factories. Wrong? New Zealand did it long ago, Indian women need electric washing machines more than my New Zealand family does, and the voracious production provides employment to millions. The steep gorges here at least mean that there will be no displacements and little loss of arable land. What can I say? development is a two-edged sword to which there is no defence.

I wonder what will be gained and what will be lost when this world unravels (as it surely will) and is rewoven into modernity's uniform fabric. Some day the road will be sealed for tourists who drive over Rothang and meander across bridges over the Chennab. In Udaipur cafes they will sip filtered coffee, check emails and buy a stem of gladioli cultivated with tractors. I'll be glad when Lahauli fields are not tilled by orphans of neo-liberalism, modernity overthrows the traditions of caste, opportunity is not restricted by gender and Pangi children have basic medical care.

I'll be sad though when the bears are gone and the glaciers are retreating behind them. I hope there's never a hotel up where we met a shepherd smoking in the sun after crossing ice in rubber sandals. One day only the old people will remember to welcome the spring festival of hariyal, and there will be no free chai in quaint Udaipur. As modern doctors in a remote valley we're completely involved, the scimitar of progress in our hands too. All we can hope is that what little we may do might deflect the development trajectory slightly so that what evolves is something gentler to the Earth and other humans than our other world across the mountains has chosen.

As evening comes, I sit deep in shadow down on my balcony at the skirt of our virgin mountain, Bainhelu. Up on the snowy tops a long, low ray lingers. A truth hits me: regardless of mountains men are men, capable of immense beauty and terrible violation wherever they are. Untouched by humans, Bainhelu is blushing deep pink now with the sun's last kiss. It's magical. ■

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divine beauty

John O'Donohue

We live between the act of awakening and the act of surrender. Each morning we awaken to the light and the invitation to a new day in the world of time; each night we surrender to the dark to be taken to play in the world of dreams where time is no more. At birth we were awakened and emerged to become visible in the world. At death we will surrender again to the dark to become invisible. Awakening and surrender: They frame each day and each life; between them is the journey where anything can happen, the beauty and the frailty.

The human soul is hungry for beauty; we seek it everywhere – in landscape, music, art, buildings, clothes, furniture, gardening, companionship, love, religion, and in ourselves. When we experience the beautiful, there is a sense of homecoming. We feel most alive in the presence of the beautiful, for it meets the needs of our soul. For a while the strain of struggle and endurance are relieved and our frailty becomes illuminated by a different light in which we come to glimpse behind the shutter of appearances the sure form of things.

In the experience of beauty we awaken and surrender in the same act. We find that we slip into the beautiful with the same ease as we slip into the seamless embrace of water; something ancient within us already trusts that this embrace will hold us.

These times are riven with anxiety and uncertainty. In the hearts of people some natural ease has been broken. Our trust in the future has lost its innocence. We know now that anything can happen, from one minute to the next. Politics, religion, economics, and the institutions of family and community, all have become abruptly unsure. At first, it sounds completely naive to suggest that now might be the time to invoke and awaken beauty. Why? Because there is nowhere else to turn and we are desperate; furthermore, it is because we have so disastrously neglected the beautiful that we now find ourselves in such terrible crisis.

In a sense, all the contemporary crises can be reduced to a crisis about the nature of beauty. When we address difficulty in terms of the call to beauty, new invitations come alive. Perhaps, for the first time, we gain a clear view of how much ugliness we endure and allow. The media generate relentless images of mediocrity and ugliness in their talk shows, tapestries of smothered language and frenetic gratification. Beauty is mostly forgotten and made to seem naive and romantic.

The blindness of development creates rooms, buildings, and suburbs that lack grace and mystery. Socially, this influences the atmosphere in the workplace, the schoolroom, the boardroom, and the community. We are turning more and more of our beautiful earth into a wasteland. Much of the stress and emptiness that haunt us can be traced back to our lack of attention to beauty. Internally the mind becomes coarse and dull if it remains unvisited by images and thoughts that hold the radiance of beauty.

Sadly, whether from resentment, fear, or blindness, beauty is often refused, repudiated, or cut down to the size of our timid perceptions. The tragedy is that what we refuse to attend to cannot reach us. In turning away from beauty, we turn away from all that is wholesome and true, and deliver ourselves into an exile where the vulgar and artificial dull and deaden the human spirit. In their vicinity we are unable to feel or think with any refinement. They cannot truly engage us because of their emptiness; they pound our minds and feelings because they lack the coherence to embrace the inner form of the soul. They are not a presence but rather an absence that evicts and vacates.

Architecture is one of the most public and permanent stages on which a culture displays its understanding of beauty. Much of our sense of the beauty of an ancient culture derives from the ruins of their architecture. In its Greek roots, the word 'architecture' literally means 'weaving of a higher order'.

When architecture manages to mirror the inner order of nature, the result is frequently beautiful. We respond intuitively to the order, harmony, proportion and rhythm that great architecture incarnates. Goethe said: 'A noble philosopher described architecture as frozen music... we believe this beautiful idea cannot be more aptly resurrected than by calling architecture music that has merged into silence.' Beauty is the secret sound of the deepest thereness of things.

To recognize and celebrate beauty is to recognize the ultimate sacredness of experience, to glimpse the subtle embrace of belonging where we are wed to the divine, the beauty of every moment, of every thing. ■

creativity for holiness

The author argues that we mimic medieval development. Our urban culture concentrates power in itself, whereas he is in favour of us looking again at distributing power, as the monasteries did – to find an alternative, more hopeful solution

Tony Watkins

In 1000 AD the world population was around 275,000,000, and fairly stable. By 2000 AD the world population was around 6,000,000,000 and rising rapidly. In broad terms you could say that there are now 22 times the number of people who were alive during the mediaeval period. As a wild approximation we might expect now to find the equivalent of 22 Chartres cathedrals or 22 Le Thoronet monasteries.

For all the talk of 'economic recovery' anyone taking a long, hard look at New Zealand, or the rest of western civilization for that matter, would be forced to conclude that in comparison with the medieval period our 'human creativity' is a basket-case. Something has gone seriously wrong. Most tourists wandering around Europe are overwhelmed by so much medieval built-environment excellence that it becomes almost boring, and they need to take a break in any one of the superb medieval hill-towns. A tourist wandering around New Zealand needs a guide book to find any built-environment excellence, and even then the urban context is dismal.

Why is our human creativity at such a low ebb, and what might we do about it? Instead of throwing around the fashionable clichés about how much better our drains are to justify our failure, it is worth asking what we might learn from how things were done in mediaeval times.

In a sweeping overview of history we could think of 600-800AD as the golden age for Ireland. Most of what we know about Greek or Roman civilization was rescued for us by the Irish monasteries. They saved the books, and they copied them, so that eventually they were passed down to us. The Roman Empire had never taken over Ireland. The Irish were Celtic, nomadic, tribal and fiercely independent.

As the monasteries became more powerful they were able to challenge the bishops. The monasteries were autonomous, independent, and rural. The Irish monasteries followed the tradition of the first monasteries, which began when individuals went out into the desert to search for God. These individuals wanted to be alone, but others sought them out to learn from their holiness. Even today a monastery creates an environment within which an individual can seek out God.

The bishops in contrast had picked up on Roman ideas. Power was focused in cities like Carthage or Ephesus. Paul kept his finger on the pulse. Today we follow this same concept of hierarchy. A concentration of power rather than a distribution of power.

The Irish monks set out to convert Europe.

My theory is that they found a ready acceptance among the nomadic people who had moved into Europe as the Roman Empire crumbled. They talked the same language and had the same values. This was not unlike Pompallier in the Hokianga. He took *Te Reo* for granted 150 years before Rome thought it might be a good idea. At the heart of the medieval distribution of power was the concept that searching for God was a personal spiritual journey. Others could guide you or make suggestions, but finally you had to work it out for yourself.

There has always been a close link between power and architecture. Urban design is a direct reflection of attitudes to power. In the medieval rural countryside a complex network of villages offered an infinite array of possibilities. In the Cotswalds, for example, you can still set out on your bicycle and move comfortably from village to village until you finally return home by a different route. The next day you can follow a completely different pathway.

A Roman road, in contrast, got the army to where it was needed. Our motorways take us to nowhere in particular because we miss out on making a journey when everything in-between is a nuisance rather than something to be discovered.

Life is a journey not a conclusion. In medieval times every building was a journey rather than a conclusion. There was no rush to get anywhere. If a building took 400 years that was not a problem, because it was the personal spiritual journey of everyone who worked on the building which was important. Love made the difference.

Through the process of building, individuals found not only themselves but also their way to God. Medieval buildings are quirky and eccentric, just like the people who built them. In a monastery you grew your own cabbages. You fell in love with your place and began to understand it. You learnt how to hew stone. By the time you got to the serious part of building you were lost in love.

Architects who imagine they can 'design' a monastery miss the point. When seen like this it is no wonder that our economy-driven society is a creativity basket-case. A materialistic society sees buildings as objects and people as 'human resources'. Individuals are reduced to boredom and frustration. Grafitti is not the problem. Our built environment is the problem. It is a direct reflection of how we go about building. No one is going anywhere.

Individuals are only supporting a power-structure which makes it possible for the super-rich to indulge in even more useless activity. Personal creativity is the foundation on which the creativity of a society is built. A distribution of power is an essential first move to make this possible. Only when every individual is on a journey will it be possible for our whole society to be going somewhere. Along the way war, conflict, inequality and all those other results of concentrations of power could be left behind. Everyone would be too busy getting on with life. Individuals would suddenly have the opportunity to do something which needed to be done.

As a beginning, perhaps, everyone could build their own house. Not so that they will end up with an object, but rather so that they will discover themselves and God along the way. ■

Tony Watkins is an Auckland architect, planner and urban designer, and former lecturer in architecture, who has a passion for what he calls vernacular architecture

warning sign for birds

Never let
land here any bird,
pray none fall.
Delusory the fair
seeming shimmer underneath.
Rather may exhaustion
claim the heart
than a death so slow,
subtle and bizarre,
from this gleaming, calm
oil slick far below

Beatrice Hoffmann

building kopua monastery

Peter Stuart

In the countryside of southern Hawkes Bay, at Kopua near Norsewood, there lives a small Cistercian monastic community in decidedly unpretentious buildings. The simplicity of the buildings would no doubt delight the original Cistercians, who were 11th and 12th century French monks seeking to return to the purity of the Rule of St Benedict.

However, Kopua's new guest-house, designed by the architect Hugh Tennent, has paradoxically received a New Zealand Institute of Architects' award. The paradox is worth exploring, because over the centuries the beauty of Cistercian architecture in place after place has come to be much admired. Yet this has happened in spite of the founders' deliberate suspicion of the pursuit of beauty.

Their instinct was to eliminate both the ostentatious and the superfluous, producing an architecture which was functionalist and minimalist long before those terms were invented. Colour, sculpture, paintings, elaboration of liturgy, and sacramentals like rich vestments – all were severely disciplined or frequently dispensed with altogether. The Protestant iconoclasts of the Continental (and sometimes English) Reformation also followed this path but, as often as not, only succeeded in producing sterility in their whitewashed churches, and replaced the visual noisiness of medieval images with a verbal noisiness of texts on walls and a clutter of ill-thoughtout and ill-placed furniture.

By contrast, the Cistercians produced a classic simplicity in many of their buildings, rooted as they were in the simplicity of a life given to contemplative prayer and worship. And the beauty of that simplicity can be stunning. (I think here of worshipping a couple of years ago in the Abbey church at Aiguebelle in the Rhone Valley, where the Cistercian life has been lived for nearly nine centuries.)

The simplicity of spirit in Cistercian architecture arises from several motivations. The most important of these is the ascetic; it is one expression of a life of poverty and renunciation and discipline. Another is the clear functional mandate given to the builders by St Bernard of Clairvaux in the great age of Cistercian expansion. And a third arises from a social justice conscience. Bernard wrote:

O vanity of vanities, but more vain than foolish! The walls of the church are ablaze with riches, while the poor go hungry; its stones are covered in gold and its children go naked; the money for feeding the poor is spent on embellishments to charm the eyes of the rich. . . What relation can there be between all this and the poor, the monks, the men of God?

He would be saddened by the sight of the great and opulent Baroque Cistercian monasteries of Central Europe, loyally shaped in accordance with the Counter-Reformation response to Protestant iconoclasm. He would, however, no doubt be reassured by Kopua's simplicity even in its award-winning guest-house. It is in all probability the most comfortable of the monastery buildings. It is not for the monks themselves, and hospitality to the guest as Christ is a primary monastic practice.

Other buildings in the same style will follow, until the whole monastery is rebuilt in permanent form within a unified plan. While very comfortable, the guest-house has a severe simplicity of colour and line and furnishing. There is a serenity in the simplicity, much of which comes from the handling of light.

Leroux-Dhuys writes:

Cistercian light . . . was white thanks to a colourless glass that the architects of the Cistercian churches cut into simple stylized shape. . . The brightness of the white light was augmented by reflection from the white-washed stone walls.

He goes on to note:

The General Chapter fought successfully throughout the twelfth century against the introduction of colour, but gradually the Cistercian abbeys succumbed to the temptation. The thirteenth-century stained glass makers ended up by seducing them just as they had seduced the canons in charge of the cathedral works.

For his part, Le Corbusier in the 20th century believed that captured light should be seen, like shadows, as another form of material, noting that *Cistercian architecture is the intelligent, correct and magnificent interplay of volumes assembled under light.*

It is interesting, and by no means irrelevant, that the architect, Hugh Tennent, has Buddhist affiliations. Cistercian contemplative simplicity, Japanese minimalism, and a Buddhist sensitivity to meditation flow together into a profoundly satisfying building. At first sight it is deceptive because of its simplicity and because, at present, it sits uneasily alone on a cow paddock at the edge of the monastic enclosure. But inside, it works at a very deep level.

The full completion of the monastic building project at Kopua could produce an exciting architectural creation – which is not, of course, the objective of the monks. ■

Peter Stuart is the editor of Art and Christianity

Grant me your sense of timing

O God of all seasons and senses
grant me your sense of timing
to submit gracefully
and rejoice quietly
in the turn of the seasons.

In this season of short days and long nights
of grey and white and cold
teach me the lessons of waiting
of the snow joining the mystery
of the hunkered-down seeds
growing in their sleep
watched over by gnarled-limbed grandparent trees
resting from autumn's staggering energy
of the silent, whirling earth
circling to race back home to the sun.

O God, grant me your sense of timing.

In this season of short days and long nights,
grey and white and cold
teach me the lessons of endings
children growing, friends leaving
job concluding, stages finishing
grieving over, grudges over
blaming over, excuses over.

O God, grant me your sense of timing

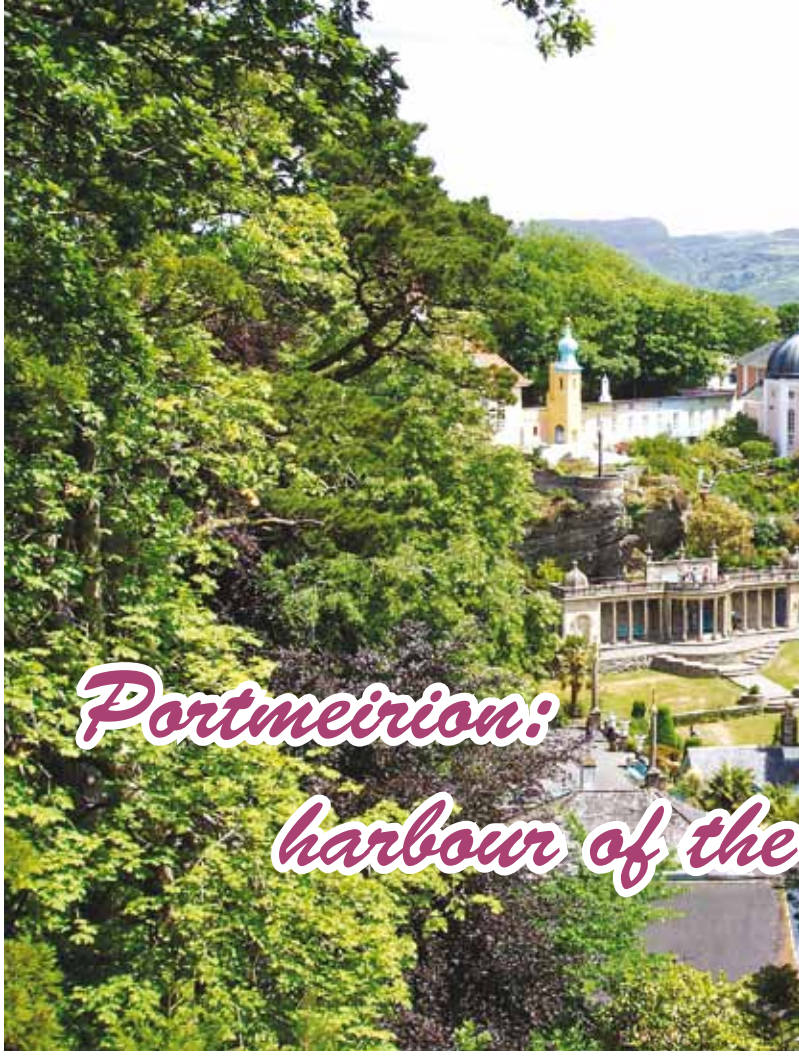
In this season of short days and long nights
of grey and white and cold
teach me the lessons of beginnings
that such waitings and endings
may be a starting place,
a planting of seeds
which bring to birth
what is ready to be born –
something right and just and different
a new song
a deeper relationship
a fuller love
in the fullness of your time.

O God, grant me your sense of timing

Ted Loder

There are many gifted people who have bright ideas, but there are not many who have either the money or the opportunity to put them into practice. If we are thinking of a grand architectural scheme, then there are very few who live to see their dream come to fruition.

Such a person was the 20th Century Welsh architect Clough Williams-Ellis. The fantasy village called Portmeirion is his creation and was visited recently by Michael Hill



Portmeirion: harbour of the

View from the gardens above Portmeirion, showing t

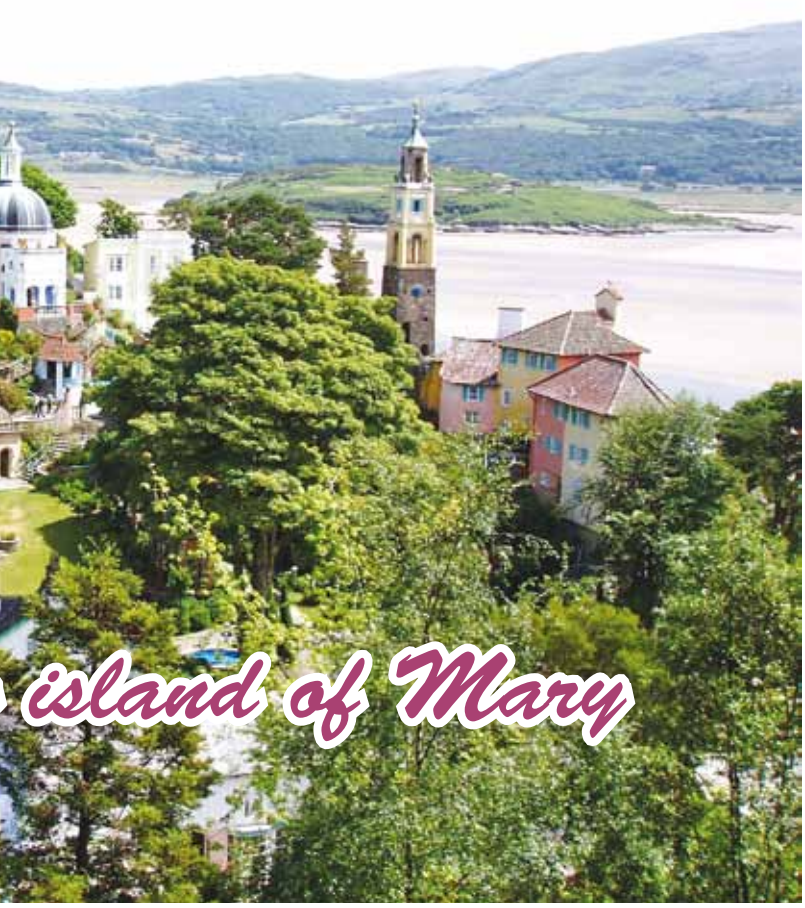
Campanile (1928). Ellis built this first (1928) as a 'statement' that something was happening.

Portmeirion can be aptly described as an architectural Disneyland. It is probably the most popular tourist destination in Wales – and with good reason. Clough Ellis was born in 1883 and lived well into his 90s. He had a dream early in life of creating the ideal 'village'; he seized his opportunity in 1925 when a derelict property came on the market, on a beautiful sheltered spot by the sea. Ellis was a man of private means, so he snapped up the property, including land up the hill behind the house.

His first act was to rename the site. Its original name was *Aber Ia* – 'glacial estuary'. His chosen name was *Portmeirion*: the 'harbour of the island of Mary'. The Welsh county name *Merioneth* comes from the same root.

Ellis was also financially shrewd, and he knew that to realise his dream it would need to become self-funding, so he restored the house and opened it up as a hotel. It quickly flourished, because the location is so romantic and attractive. Within a few years he was able to start building the village behind the hotel up a steep slope. Some existing buildings were converted into rental accommodation. By 1928 he had built a *campanile*, or bell tower, which was, and still is, an eye-catching feature.

This was followed progressively by buildings in a variety of styles. Sometimes he employed imported features, such as colonnades, statuary, and even whole buildings. The 'Town Hall' erected in 1938 is substantially the remains of Emral Hall, a Welsh stately home scheduled for demolition – until Ellis intervened and purchased most of it. He had it taken apart, brought across the country and rebuilt it stone by stone on a commanding site facing



he classical colonnade (built 1760), transported stone by stone from Bristol.

the piazza, the focal point of the whole village.

A portico was brought from Bath in the South-West, Corinthian columns from Hooten Hall in Cheshire, as well as a Victorian statue of Hercules holding up the earth: this he found in Aberdeen in Scotland and brought it on the back of a truck all the way south to Portmeirion, in 1960. Clough called his rapidly rising village "a home for fallen buildings"!

He employed various artists to embellish his creations. There was his near neighbour, Welsh sculptor Jonah Jones; a painter who came from Germany, Hans Feibusch; and there was even his own daughter Susan, herself no mean artist. It was Susan who with her husband started a business in 1960 making Portmeirion pottery. The pottery continues to be widely sold: there are two shops in the village itself.

Portmeirion attracted other famous figures. Noel Coward came to stay in 1941 and wrote the highly successful play *Blithe Spirit* there. Ellis built an artist's studio and tried to lure the sculptor Augustus John to use it – unsuccessfully. And, of course, Portmeirion became the locale for the cult TV series *The Prisoner*, starring Patrick McGoohan.

Clough's long labours were effectively completed in 1973 with the erection of the Tollgate at the entrance. It had been a labour of love over 50 years.

By this time he was 90 years of age, but still full of vigour as is evident from a very charming video, which plays continuously for the entertainment of visitors. It consists of a succession of beautiful shots of every angle of the village, punctuated by a commentary by Ellis himself, stalking around his creation in knee breeches and bright yellow stockings making quirky comments.

Reading this account you might well imagine that Ellis simply created a glorious hotchpotch. What is he trying to achieve in Portmeirion? In his own words, he is making a statement against the "aridity" of modern architecture and style. His aim is primarily to give pleasure, and he succeeds. It is not so much the extraordinary variety of styles and decors – but that everything blends together into a glorious, harmonious whole.

Ellis had a vision and each feature fits into it precisely like pieces in a jigsaw. For instance the colour scheme is totally consistent: nothing ever seems to clash. And everything is to perfect scale. His miniature 'city' can be compassed on foot in just a few minutes. ▷▷

Pantheon or Dome (built 1960). Used not as a church but for displays

View of Portmeirion from waterside with the old hotel building in the foreground

▷▷ Another golden opportunity occurred for him in 1941. Ellis was able to purchase the gardens and woods surrounding Portmeirion, and he later worked with his daughter Susan to develop this woodland paradise as a fit setting for the jewel of his village.

Portmeirion is unique. No one who comes to see it can go away without a sense that it is still possible to create a beautiful and harmonious urban environment, even if not quite as extravagant as this. Most of his buildings are quite practical – dwellings, shops, offices – but all enhanced by delicious ornamentation.

His message to our modern pragmatic world is that there is no need for people to dwell in ugly, brutal surroundings. The motto of Clough Williams-Ellis was *Cherish the Past, Adorn the Present, Construct for the Future*. All his life he strove for beauty, which he described as "that strange necessity". To visit this idyllic place is to be strangely challenged and to have one's sensibilities forever enriched. ■

'Unicorn' (1964) – an elaborate Georgian style house, used for accommodation

'Chantry" (1937) – built on the highest point, and containing an artist's studio intended for Augustus John

pastoral care of teachers

Paul Andrews

At a time when nuns and monks were opening schools that linked with their convents or monasteries, St Thomas Aquinas was asked if caring for children was compatible with the search for God. The monks thought of religious life as requiring quiet, the peace of the monastery garden, the opportunity to pray without being interrupted.

They contrasted teaching with farming. You knew the pedigree of vegetables, and when you planted them, they stayed in place, and could be watered, manured and in due time, harvested. When children arrived, the peace was shattered. There was noise and constant movement. Things were broken. Ink was spilled. Children, unlike cabbages or roses, had unknown pedigrees. They did not stay where you planted them, or followed instructions. If they didn't like you, they told you so. They demanded so much energy and thought that there was little left for 'religious' duties.

Aquinas considered the question fairly, and his answer made an impact. Educating children was a work of mercy, a giving of oneself, instructing the ignorant, counselling the mixed-up, keeping the peace, encouraging those in despair, bearing with the troublesome and immature, forgiving the rebels, praying for them and their families. Even if prayer and peace of soul suffered, it was a work of God.

Today's classroom poses much greater threats to one's prayer and peace of soul. The pressure of examinations, the intrusive oversight by departmental heads and management boards, the limitless paperwork, the demands of parents, and often a level of resistance and indiscipline by pupils, would wear down the most high-minded teacher.

Add to that the impact on the classroom of mobile phones and the worldwide web. While teacher is talking, students may be deep in a texting conversation with one another, carried on under the desk by blind but ingenious thumbs and fingers that can tap out a message on their mobile and send it, while its owner keeps her gaze fixed on teacher. And teacher's voice is in competition with the thousand voices of *Youtube*, *Facebook*, and the other seductive websites that beckon outside school hours.

So my friend Fionnuala is not convinced that she is doing the work of God. Now in her forties, she is well trained and experienced, and teaches young children in what would be seen as a good national school. But the end of the week finds her exhausted and dispirited. She hates herself for raising her voice, even, she says, screaming at the children. Her spontaneity as a teacher is tamed and dampened by the official requirement to divide the day into subjects, and submit a plan for each week's work, and then an account of how the plan was executed.

The signs of wear on teachers appear in the take-up of redundancy offers. So many teachers at the height of their career are planning to take early retirement with the best financial deal they can contrive. They become discouraged when they should be – and often are – at their peak.

If you ask them why, they speak of absence of recognition, of facing growing and basically unachievable demands from school authorities and from parents, as well as from public opinion and the media. They feel nobody approves of them, that they cannot satisfy any of those to whom they are accountable. Many of those who start teaching as a vocation, decline into a sense of routine, of putting in their week, drawing their pay, and seeking their satisfaction outside their daily work. Where this decline happens, schools are in trouble.

Schools have put energy and imagination into pastoral care of pupils, making allowance for special needs, adopting policies to combat bullying, offering career guidance and other counselling. The last 40 years have also seen an outreach to parents, involving them as partners in many ways.

Teachers need pastoral care for themselves. Their daily work, especially in second-level schools, exposes them to a merciless manipulation of their weaknesses by sharp-eyed and clever teenagers. Yet they succeed. What other managers can show a record of 90 percent attendance by workers (i.e. the pupils) without the incentive either of pay, promotion, or corporal punishment? Where else do you find predominantly female managers controlling large groups of males who often surpass the manager in strength, energy and even brains – and who not merely control them, but motivate them to work which is difficult, often boring to the pupils, and demands sustained and sedentary concentration at an age when they want to be active?

Teachers keep them working not merely through the class-day, but also for hours in the evening when they could be playing, dancing or watching TV. Teachers could claim to be the most successful managers and motivators in the country.

But they themselves need to be stroked, to be made to feel good, not to be taken for granted. The Principal obviously has the key responsibility here. In a good family, parents examine their conscience every night to ask have they stroked and blessed their children more, or criticized them more. It is approval, not blame, that fuels their children's motivation and self-esteem. For school principals, a similar scrutiny of their day would be a useful routine.

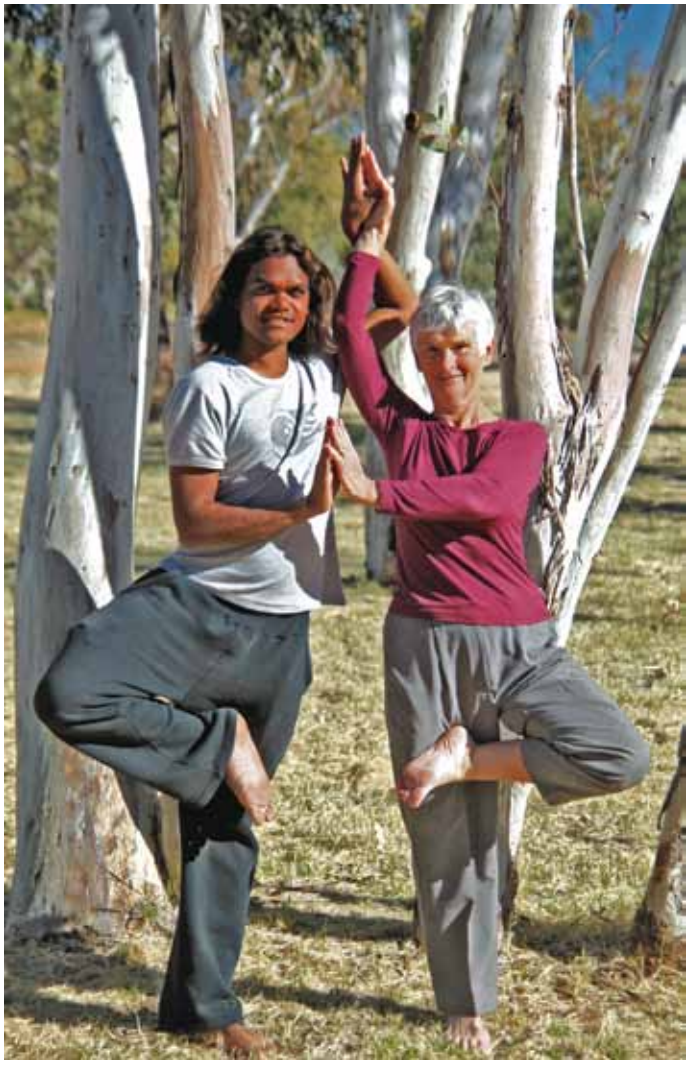
Teachers, like children, need recognition. In the best scenario, they receive it from their pupils in the form of cooperation; and from parents in the form of consultation and expressed gratitude; and from one another in the shape of a lively and supportive staffroom, where they can let their hair down safely and seek help when they need it; and from the Principal in the form of a perceptive eye and an encouraging attitude. Of all the ways of improving a school, possibly the cheapest and most effective for those who run it is the pastoral care of its teachers. ■

an illumination: yoga and catholicism

Nicky Chapman

"... love of self, of others, and of God ... 'though obviously different, yet so amazingly dovetail into one another that not only is each found in all and all in each, but where you have one there you have all, and should one fail, all fail.'" (Aelred of Rievaulx)

I read this passage not long after talking with Barbara Whitehouse in her cottage garden at Aramoana, near Port Chalmers. Barbara is a fellow parishioner, and a very popular, knowledgeable and down-to-earth yoga teacher. Her life and thoughts seem to me to be living embodiments of what the twelfth century writer was celebrating.



"I grew up Catholic in the North-West of England. If you've got a central core of security it's a most precious gift. I went to a Sacred Heart school and we were taught the practice of love and forgiveness, and the joy and the privilege of our faith. I feel desperate compassion for people with no faith – and admiration too – they don't believe in God and *Wow!* they're being good all by themselves!"

How did you become interested in yoga?

"I went abroad as a governess to one of the great French families. The father of the motherless girl I was governess to felt his daughter was pretty immature, so he thought yoga was the answer.

"There was just something about the presence of her yoga teacher. He was a quiet, modest-appearing person – but the sort of person who would stand out in a crowd although you wouldn't know why. I never actually spoke to him but I bought a book with pictures of yoga postures and found I could do quite a lot of them.

"We're talking 1967 or thereabouts, and the French were far more interested in wellbeing physically and spiritually than the English were then. The English found it a bit odd to be interested in your own wellbeing.

"After I came back to England I was just practicing my own yoga using books, and working in a school for maladjusted boys. I didn't like the staff room where people smoked so that you could hardly see across the coffee table. Instead I would do yoga in the laundry room by myself, and then other staff members followed me. Eventually there were so many of us we had to move from the laundry room, then we had evening sessions, and eventually the villagers got interested so we held our yoga class in the village hall. After that I started training as an official yoga teacher.

"I have been fortunate to learn with many teachers of yoga, some really good and some suspect and most in between. But everything that I took on board helped my Catholicism."

How has it?

"Well, take putting your hands together to pray. I've done that since I can remember. It's the whole energy of your body and the attitude. If you put your hands together at your heart centre it is a message to people on the outside that you are calm and introverted, and, more importantly, reinforcing your own intent to bring your awareness inwardly and protectively, and enlarging your own intention to pray from your heart. I think of the times we have told the little darlings at school 'Hands together, eyes closed,' not realising the power of that simple gesture."

And meditation? What about the concerns some people might have with focussing on nothingness, when Christianity is all about a loving relationship with God?

"I think the idea of trying to achieve an emptiness is misconstrued. What you try to do is withdraw your responses to outside influences – you are drawing your awareness inwards.

"You can focus to wherever you want. It becomes powerful so you have to make sure that you are focusing on something wholesome and good. If you have some kind of idea of God then you can choose to focus on that – and God will answer to all His names."

You suggest that in our yoga classes.

"Yes, because as important as my Catholicism is for me, I'm not there to preach. I'm taking a yoga class and yoga is not a religion. I'm quite wary of saying 'Focus on the name of Jesus' because immediately some doors will slam, but you can use the virtues that will lead people exactly to God. Yoga is about finding your way to God; it is just one of the many paths.

"I've got quite a few Catholics in the class and I'm sure where they'll be focused. However, I feel it is appropriate just to guide people to find the best in themselves to focus upon.

"Thousands of years ago meditation would be the only kind of yoga to do. It was meditation to be at one with yourself, with others, and ultimately, with God. A lot of the postures have only come in gradually. Many Westerners find that the concentration necessary for postures helps prepare them for stillness in meditation.

"One of the yoga symbols is the horse, the chariot and the driver. The body is the chariot. The horses are the emotions and they will run wild unless the driver takes hold. Meditation is to help you focus on the inner truth which is God. The everlasting soul is encased in a body, which is given to us as the instrument to live in until we get back to God.

"You know, there's a lovely idea – we are actually spirits struggling to be human."

So you find as a Catholic that the insights of the ancient Eastern teachers were still about God?

"Oh yes, absolutely. One of the ways for me of thinking about God is not from a theological but a simple human viewpoint. Imagine God at the top of the hill. You might live where there is snow or where there is sunshine or where there is forest. To get to the top of the hill, you use the method that is appropriate.

"In my early days of my yoga teaching I was reassured by nuns who ran the cancer hospice and they practiced yoga – even though it meant they had to change from their full nun rig-out to leotards! If you think of the whole being – if you want to live and love and serve – keeping yourself healthy is one way of helping. OK, it might be in God's plan for you to be totally crippled or paraplegic or whatever, that's another way, but it's almost an insult to the creator to let your body go to waste.

"I had such a lovely loving grounding in my faith that through the ups and downs of life so far, thank God, it hasn't been shaken. And then discovering yoga brought me from beyond my own purely selfish joy in my religion to feeling more at one with everyone else."

How have you shared your yoga?

"I've taught in a lot of places: schools, prisons, further education, yoga for both physically and intellectually handicapped, for people on heavy medication for depression, elderly people in rest homes, on yoga 'holidays'.

"Mostly people come to yoga to do physical exercises but they also relax together, and have one or two little ideas fed into them about the lovingness that they are. That means that they can go out and be more loving to others. I don't propose yoga instead of church but it is a way of moving people back to realising a sense of community.

"Sister Pauline O'Regan, in a lovely article in *Tui Motu,* talks about observing children, to learn what Christ meant when he said to become like little children. Her findings are that it is a matter of being in the moment, which is very much a yoga philosophy.

"It is easier to live for the moment when you haven't got to rush out to work and feed your family. One of the privileges of growing old in the East was to devote yourself to the spiritual life. Our elderly in rest homes are stuck in front of tellies all day long. What good is that to their spiritual life?

"We all get flashes of oneness – when we look at a little baby, or starlight or a sunset, for example. Without thinking, for that flash, we totally identify, there is unity. We create, expand and hold that unity in the stillness of meditation.

"For me, yoga illuminates and expands my Catholicism."

Nicky Chapman is a mother, writer, and editor living in Port Chalmers, Dunedin.

Photo of Barbara and young tour guide in the desert, Australia, taken by Raymond Hawkins – see his website http://www.intotheblue.com.au/tours for information on the Gentle Desert Yoga program and other tours

creation made flesh

Pope John Paul II wrote of the Mass as a cosmic event, with its fearful darkness and irresistible brightness. The Eucharist is indeed a reminder that all are God's body by virtue of Creation, a fact finally revealed in the Incarnation

Daniel O'Leary

"But what's the point any more?" We hear the question too often. It is regularly asked by disillusioned Catholics who no longer go to Mass. And by many who do. At a precarious time for the Church, thoughtful young people want wider windows of wonder to capture their imagination, to strengthen their faith on a Sunday morning.

In recent discussions, liturgists and believing scientists have been considering how the intrinsic connection between the Mass and the world itself can be explored and expressed in our worship. Put another way, how can the Mass be understood as a cosmic moment? Will this touch something deep in all of us and transform our hearts? And will the imminent "new translation" help or hinder this vision?

For a start, a truly incarnational theology of liturgy insists that our ritual acts of worship must never be seen as isolated interventions of grace into our 'merely' secular lives and world. Rather are they the symbolic expressions of the holiness of Creation itself. This is hugely significant and takes some explaining.

The Incarnation of God did not only happen in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. The Incarnation actually began 14 billion years ago with a moment we now call *The Big Bang*. Two thousand years ago, the human Incarnation of God in Jesus happened, but before that, in the original incarnation of the amazing story of evolution, God had already begun the mysterious process of becoming flesh by first becoming Creation itself.

St Bonaventure and Blessed John Duns Scotus held that the whole of Creation was the necessary preparation for the divine Incarnation in Jesus, the Human One. The fleshing of God was not a later rescue attempt to put the original, failed plan back on track. Fall or no fall, it was lovingly willed from the very beginning.

the Incarnation of God did not only happen 2,000 years ago... it began 14 billion years ago with a moment we now call The Big Bang

"Creation", wrote St Thomas Aquinas, "is the primary and most perfect revelation of the Divine... If we do not understand Creation correctly, we cannot hope to understand God correctly." Neither will we grasp the quintessence of eucharistic celebration. "The only real fall of humanity," wrote Alexander Schmemann, "is its non-eucharistic life in a non-eucharistic world."

The story can be told like this. An eternally self-giving Parent-God, already incarnate in Creation, had waited for billions of years to achieve self-consciousness in the human heart and mind. In the words of Julian Huxley, quoted by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "... humanity discovers that it is nothing else than (holy) evolution become conscious of itself." And, at the appointed time, after this long infancy, the Human One was born.

Moving beyond the destructive doctrines of atonement-centred theologies, cosmologist and cultural historian Thomas Berry points out that Jesus did not come into the world, added on later, so to speak, as a necessary afterthought; he came into a world that was made originally in and through himself as the creative context of all existence.

Against this horizon, we are invited to understand the Mass as the sacramental moment of an astonishing revelation – the revelation of the love and meaning hidden in the first moment of Creation; the revelation of the burning presence of God warming and preparing the earth as a cradle of welcome for Christ; the revelation that the history of evolution is the genealogy of the Baby. In receiving Holy Communion, we experience the soul of the earth.

The Eucharist encapsulates forever this astonishing song of love at the core of the cosmos. In the sacramental mode, Fr Berry holds, with bread and wine, the world is acknowledging and celebrating its very being as flowing from the womb of God at the beginning of time, and in each passing moment moving inevitably towards its divine fulfilment in Christ.

He identifies the Christ story with the story of the universe.

The Eucharist carries sublime significance when understood as the deepest symbol of the hidden secrets already buried and burning in the core of Creation. It is the liturgical expression of the living river of love that streamed out at the beginning of time and now flows everywhere.

That love sustains the cosmos of our hearts and the heart of our cosmos, "groaning in (their) one great act of giving birth", in their long journey home. That is why the physical world itself is the incarnate body of God and will enjoy the same future as we will.

Theologian Professor John Macquarrie explains that this profound understanding of salvation is repeated, clarified, purified and celebrated at every true eucharistic gathering "with a directness and an intensity like that of (Creation and) the Incarnation itself". The mighty mystery of universal existence is encapsulated in one ordinary, daily sacramental moment. Every Mass is a cosmic event.

"Yes, cosmic!" John Paul II exclaims in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. "Because even when the Eucharist is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, it is always, in some way, celebrated on the altar of the world. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces, permeates and celebrates all Creation." In his Feast of Faith, he explains why "Christian liturgy must be cosmic liturgy, why it must, as it were, orchestrate the mystery of Christ with all the voices of Creation."

At every moment, somewhere across our planet, the eternal words of disclosure are spoken: "This is my Body." They sound around the earth and they echo among the stars. They were whispered by our loving Mother-God when the terrible beauty of the first fiery atoms shattered the infinite darkness with unimaginable flame and light. "This is my Body." It is God-become-atom, become-galaxy, become-star, become-universe, become-earth, become-human, speaking these words of wonder to the whole of Creation in our own voice.

In his poetic, eucharistic reflections, especially in his *Le Milieu Divin*, priest-scientist de Chardin sees the sacramental species as formed by the totality of the world. And he perceives the duration of Creation, "the growth of the world borne ever onwards", as the time needed for its consecration.

The unfolding of the secrets of the phenomenon called life, in all its personal, earthly and cosmic dimensions, with its fearful darkness and irresistible brightness, is the bread and wine of God's universal becoming. Without the Mass, we would surely forget that our beautiful God is very incarnate indeed! ■

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do this in memory of me

Marilyn Elliston laments the shortcomings of the new Roman Missal and how they may affect our attention, understanding and prayer

The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows.
(§10 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)

Language is important to human beings (cf. a person who has lost speech as a result of a stroke, for example). We use it to communicate meaning – to ourselves and to others. It reflects the soul. Sometimes we struggle to find exactly the right words to convey what we intend. And each language has its own internal and recognised structure, both verbally and in writing. Our world view changes over time with increased knowledge, words fade from use, and new ones evolve to express a new reality or assume increased importance. Language requires relevance and credibility.

I have relied primarily on a website set up by the American Bishops' Conference to look at the full text of the 'new' Mass. To me there is little for the better either theologically or language-wise. This translation requires a return to a literal equivalence of the Latin rather than a dynamic version which aspires to convey the inherent meaning in the vernacular. In some instances that sacrifices intelligibility for rigid formalism, it is awkward, and lacks flow.

Latin is a language of subordinate clauses and commas that result in lengthy complex sentence structures. Often the present order of words has been changed to reflect Latin structure without any change to the existing meaning in current English anyway. So we end up speaking 'Latin in English!' What is the point? English (and how many recognisable versions of that are there?) at its best is simple, straightforward and to the point – which does not contradict the expression and spirit of the poetic. St Jerome was a precise translator within our history, but not a literalist. "If I translate word by word, it sounds absurd," he said.

It all seems like a return to the past for the past's sake. There is legitimate authority and there is authoritarianism. There is change undertaken to improve things and change that can make things worse.

While Rome for many years has paid lip-service to Vatican II and its conclusions, it basically ignores them and continues to claw back what the incumbent men there see as authority, and what I regrettably often see as authoritarianism (ICEL's 1998 version was rejected by Rome). The Constitution on Liturgy (§40) gave to the bishops of each region the authority to produce local liturgical translations, subject to Vatican approval. That has since been ignored, like so much else.

It goes without saying that there is a need for consistency in the celebration of the Eucharist, but that does not mean that each individual word or expression will be used in the same way throughout every language or culture. What are we about in liturgy other than, communally, conveying and celebrating the reality of the risen, living, Son of God among us?

Liturgy is source and summit. It is also ultimately pastoral. It should reflect the experience of, and be able to be owned by, the culture of which it is part. It should be all that speaks to the heart and nature of human beings – lifting them to consecrate the life of day-to-day with all that is encompassed within, and yet beyond, this horizon. Often when I am at Mass it seems to me that the catechesis that is required is to guide people to acknowledge, recognize, and understand that, because somewhere along the way some of us seem to have lost sight of why we are there and what we are doing. Introducing a new literal translation of Latin is not going to enlighten understanding.

Given the freedom to act with their due authority, I would have trusted the New Zealand Bishops' Conference to come up with an amended (where necessary) local version of the Mass. I can't help wondering whether the current text is what they would have chosen. I do not expect it to count for anything, but I protest:

- that power is being misused to walk us back into a long-ago past (and a different world view) rather than allowing expression that is meaningful at the 'summit and fountain' in this day of ours;
- that increasing centralized authority runs counter to all the inspiration and vision of Vatican II (the teaching magisterium of the Pope and the world's bishops);
- that literally translating Latin into English is somehow thought to be what is required to 're-spiritualize' the Mass.

The Liturgy Constitution (§7) describes the Mass as "the great work of giving perfect praise to God and making (men) holy" – "a sacred action surpassing all others." This new text is a grossly retrograde step in how we do that. I live in (dented) hope! ■

a passionate, if flawed, tribute to tolstoy

The Last Station
Film Review: Paul Sorrell

I came to this historical drama – billed as an exploration of the tempestuous relationship between Count Leo Tolstoy and his wife, Countess Sofya – with a real sense of expectation. I have long admired Tolstoy (without knowing a great deal about him), and relished the opportunity to see two mature actors, Christopher Plummer and Dame Helen Mirren, at the top of their form.

While the film certainly delivers as a passionate love story, with plenty of obstacles thrown in the lovers' path, it could have been a far richer film, even a great one. The problem is that the love story unfolds against a very shadowy historical backdrop. The depth and richness of Tolstoy's life and thought are only hinted at. We are told that the socialist movement he founded was dedicated to passive resistance, but there is not a Tsarist oppressor in sight, and we never get even a glimpse of a Bolshevik, despite the year being 1910. The only workers we see are well-heeled young communards playing at being peasants, scything crops and cutting wood.

For me, the film is like a gem without a setting. But what a gem it is. Plummer excels in his portrayal of Tolstoy as an unworldly but warm-hearted bear of a man about to sign over his inherited wealth to the movement he has founded. Alarmed at this prospect, and deeply suspicious of the motives of her husband's inner circle, Mirren's countess pulls off one histrionic stunt after another in an attempt to protect the ancient aristocratic family to which she has devoted her life.

If their relationship is troubled and turbulent, it can also be also loving and intimate. In one wonderful bedroom scene, the pair bounce around the room imitating the calls of rooster and hen. And at the end of the film, as Tolstoy lies dying at the railway station at Astapovo, we are given a glimpse of the love and tenderness she has nurtured for him in the depths of her heart.

The action is seen through the eyes of Tolstoy's naive young secretary, Valentin, and the volatile romance that develops between him and fellow communard Masha provides a deftly handled foil to the relationship between the main characters. Masha is also a practical foil to his dewy-eyed idealism: "I've never met the human race", she says, "but I have known many individual men and women."

Despite its shortcomings, *The Last Station* is in many ways a fine centenary tribute to one of the world's great novelists and a Christian thinker who strove to live out the heart of the Gospel. ■

two outstanding documentaries

The Choir
Michael Davie, National Geographic Films/Australia Essential Viewing co-production
This Way of Life,
Tom & Barbara Burstyn,
Cloud South Films, NZ
Reviews: Patricia Kane

The first of these two films, *The Choir*, shows the redeeming power of music among a group of prisoners in a South African jail, a place where men are locked for 16 hours in cells with up to 40 others, violence and rape are endemic, and only the toughest can survive. We follow an older man, Coleman, over a number of years as he chooses and trains a disparate crew in the art of choral singing. He is not gentle with them, but he gives them a sense of purpose and self worth. Jabulani, the 19-year-old, whose story is also told, is caught selling drugs, so is promptly dropped until he can show his remorse and willingness to change. We become involved with the men, willing them to succeed at the nation-wide annual contest for choirs from both men's and women's prisons.

The evident pride and enthusiasm among the gaily dressed prisoners is infectious, and we hold our breath as the choir sings *Panis Angelicus* (music by César Franck, words by Thomas Aquinas) – we sang this at our school on special occasions! We get some insight into the lives of Coleman and Jabulani as they leave prison to look for work or try to pick up family connections, with all the difficulties imposed by their prison record. There is hope at the end for these two, and one or two others, helped by sympathetic prison staff and a woman counsellor, who bravely relates her story of being raped to the inmates. It demonstrates what is needed to turn criminals back into human beings and fellow citizens. Is anyone listening in government or Corrections in this country?

The second film, *This Way of Life*, was filmed over four years by the Burstyns. It is set in the back country of the North Island and shows us episodes from the life of Peter and Colleen Karena and their six young children, who live from the land, hunting pig and deer for food, and training and selling wild horses to survive. They live at the margins of what most of us consider a normal life, yet they radiate a sense of enjoyment and what I can only describe as goodness. The children are captivating in their complete unselfconsciousness and affinity with the horses and their natural surroundings. Life is not all smooth – there are some unexplained nasty occurrences seemingly connected to a family feud on the part of one of the older relatives, but the complete acceptance and lack of bitterness by the husband and wife are extraordinary.

Their values are deeply Christian, to be admired by those of us who pay only lip service in good times to what we claim to profess.

I urge you to go to these films, (available on DVD), for an experience of what good people can achieve in our fractured world. ■

Printed permission Art & Christianity

Chris Hegan interviewd author William Dalrymple when he was in Auckland recently for the Readers and Writers festival

William Dalrymple is the consummate aristocratic author package. Cultivated but unaffected diction, strong nose and chin beneath a high, rounded brow; laughter lines flank clear blue eyes. No loafing on his plentiful laurels for this prolific aristocrat though, and plentiful they are – a prodigious output in radio, lectures and essays as well as a fair swag of books for his 45 years. Every one of his works has collected at least one major award.

"I was born into what you could call a fundamentalist Catholic family. My parents went, and still go, to Mass most days. My uncle is a priest, my brother is a priest, my great-uncle would have become a priest had he not been killed in WWI. I grew up in a world seen through religious spectacles."

I have to ask the 'Brideshead question'. "Was there a chapel in your house?"

Laughter. "Oh no, the family was well away on the downward slope by the time I was born. I was brought up in a modern bungalow. But there was a chapel in the house my father grew up in.

"I was lucky enough to have the almost ideal liberal Catholic education at Ampleforth College, a boarding school in the post-Vatican II Cardinal Hume tradition, taught by Benedictine monks from the Abbey, marvellous libraries, all that sort of thing.

"I wouldn't have had nearly as good a run if I'd been interested in science, astrophysics and biochemistry. But in history, medieval history, archaeology and literature and so forth I received as good an education as you could have hoped for. Many of the things I write about today have their roots in the classes I was taught there at 16 and 17."

I suggest that many of our era who have this kind of upbringing end up rejecting it, but Dalrymple has stayed with it.

"I've just about stayed with it," he corrects, to my surprise if not consternation. After all, I am here hoping to interview a more or less exemplary Catholic.

"Don't get me wrong – I have never been an atheist and am certainly not one now. I would say I have moved from being a questioning Catholic to a questioning agnostic. And I'm quite open to swinging back. Religion is one of the major railway tracks along which life runs. And whenever I travel to a new country I find myself looking at this aspect of the people's lives, whether it's in Bali and I see the farmers placing litle rice offerings at the end of their paddies, or in the Carribean and I see the cargo cults and voodoo. I see people in Barbados starting their election campaigns in graveyards!"

I wonder aloud what has led him in latter years to slip the reins of the faith to some extent. Dalrymple swings back:

"Did I say that?" only to confirm: "India has done that to me. I came out to work with Mother Teresa of Calcutta, aged 18, having been brought up in a post-Vatican II, intellectualised, very liberal Catholic tradition at Ampleforth.

"Suddenly there I was in a completely old school, Vatican I, authoritarian, to my mind superstitious setting. Part of that was the old belief that if you hadn't acknowledged Jesus Christ as your Saviour you were destined for the eternal fire.

"There was a lot of that in the Mother Teresa Centre. In part, the poor were being brought in so they might have some chance of salvation before they died. And yes, of course they were given what was available in comfort, respect and dignity.

"I felt very uncomfortable with that militant form of the church. It caused me quite a shock. And on the other hand there was this absolute panoply of other religions, all practised with devotion, having all these followers and so forth. I simply had to face the question: Can it really be the case that we're right and they are all simply wrong? And if they're not all wrong, what's the next step from that?

"This is the dilemma which I faced as a young Catholic aged 18, and which is exactly the dilemma faced by Islamic preachers. Do you just go and destroy all the idols, just assume this is a heretical religion, or do you follow the path taken by the Sufi mystics – do you look for truth in disguise?

"I'm a lot less overtly religious than I was 20 years ago, and if I go to church at all it is often because of my wife and children bringing me. In fact, our children are just now being confirmed.

"But what remains, often to my own surprise, is the degree to which I study the world through religious spectacles. And it's remarkable how many people I end up working with have similar ▷

faith stories ancient and modern

Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India
William Dalrymple
Publisher: Bloomsbury, 2009
Review: Kathleen Doherty

William Dalrymple fell in love with India when he first visited as a teenage backpacker. Subsequent visits and longer periods of residence have led to lively and witty travel books – *City of Djinns* (1993) and *The Age of Kali* (1998) and two histories – *White Mughals* (2002) and *The Last Moghal* (2006).

Now 25 years of exploring India has resulted in *Nine Lives: in Search of the Sacred in Modern India*, which takes the reader into worlds which are scarcely imaginable. In his account of the lives and experiences of nine individuals William Dalrymple explores, as he puts it, "the extraordinary persistence of faith and ritual in a fast-changing landscape."

The nine people whose lives are revealed all live on the fringes of Indian society, all are on a spiritual quest making enormous demands of them, in some cases demanding their death as the ultimate sacrifice required to let them reach their goal. Their stories are at odds with the increasingly Western-style success stories of modern India; in some cases the proximity of the ancient spiritual to the modern is incongruous.

The author writes that the idea for the book came from an encounter he had on a trek to the Himalayan temple of Kedarnath, believed by Hindus to be one of the principal homes of Lord Shiva. He fell into conversation with a young ash-smeared and completely naked *sadhu* (holy man) who, it transpired, had been a *sanyasi* (wanderer) for four years: before that he was a sales manager for *Kelvinator*, and had done an MBA at Patna University. "But one day I decided I could not spend the rest of my life marketing fans and fridges. So I just left… rubbed ash on my body and found a monastery."

An equally incongruous story, told briefly in the introduction, is that of a celebrated Tantric, found preparing a sacrifice for the goddess Kali, who had been been a feeder of skulls in his youth, summoning the spirits of their dead owners. He would not talk about that now – his two sons were successful ophthalmologists in New Jersey and had given him specific orders not to talk about what he did, lest it damage their successful East Coast practice.

The interviews for the book were conducted in eight different languages, and from Dharamsala in the north to Kannur in the south, with four women and five men, Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Muslim.

They tell of the *Dalit* (he would formerly have been referred to as 'untouchable') prison guard and digger of wells who for two months of the year is transformed into the god Vishnu – the men who queue to kiss his feet include those who would not allow him to drink from the wells he has dug on their properties.

And there is a chilling account of a woman living with many other ash-smeared Tantrics on a cremation ground at Tarapith in Bengal, seeking skulls to drink from or use to decorate their houses, worshipping the goddess Tara. Her account of her life and her beliefs is punctuated by updates from her partner of the latest cricket scores – the normality of the domestic scene is a startling contrast with the mysterious Tantric rites.

Two narratives in particular are moving. One is the story of the Jain nun who, at the age of 38, embarked on the process of *sallekhana,* the ritualised giving up of all food and sustenance resulting in death from starvation, regarded by Jains not as suicide but as the ultimate form of detachment. Her decision followed the death, by the same method, of the nun who for 20 years had been her companion in the search for spiritual liberation.

The second is the story of the Buddhist monk now living near the Dalai Lama's residence in Dharamsala, who had entered a monastery in Tibet at the age of 15, but renounced his vows to take up arms against the Chinese when they invaded Tibet in the 1950s. Now, in his late 70s, he has donned his monastic robes again and spends his time atoning for the killings he carried out by printing exquisite prayer flags, and reciting the mantras of repentance in an effort to remove the bad karma.

This is not a book to be read quickly. The stories are too exotic and challenging to be skimmed over. Dalrymple has intruded little in their telling, letting the nine speak freely. He makes no judgement as to the value or otherwise of their chosen lifestyles, but provides historical and social context, without which the reader would be left floundering. The result is a totally absorbing read. ■

▷ backgrounds and stories. For instance, Rosemary Dawson, the very talented director of this big Radio Four 24-part series on mysticism that we did, was the fairly lapsed daughter of an Anglican bishop.

"It seems you can put it aside, you can even strive to shake it off and actively get rid of it, but even if you become obsessed with rejecting a religious upbringing it remains there as the thing you're obsessed with.

"Personally, I carry on now out of habit and the conviction that there is good in the tradition I was brought up in and it is better to have a faith than none." ■

Printed permission NZ Catholic

prayer is god's work in us

Original Prayer: Themes from the Christian Tradition
by Lavinia Byrne
Orbis B ooks, 2008
Price: US$16
Review: Judith Anne O'Sullivan

This book captivated me from the very beginning when I read in the Introduction that Prayer is not our work. It is something the Holy Spirit does in us. Now you may say this is obvious yet we can 'work' at prayer as though it all depends on us. Having laid this foundation the author continues in the rest of the writing to validate her premise.

As a Spiritual Director reading this book I am led to reflect on all the techniques which have been part of my journey. I find it so refreshing to be reminded again that our relationship with God does not have to be negotiated, it is a given. There is a place for methods of prayer yet always with the reminder that it is God who gives the gift. It was her relationship with God that turned Teresa's life around. Once she stopped trying so hard God could take over. We can be so imbued with the work ethic that it can permeate our prayer life as well as our daily life.

I love the way the author has chosen four very different Saints from the Tradition to speak about the different ways of praying. As someone who teaches Myers Briggs personality type I find these Saints exemplify the findings of Carl Jung. This book reminds us that it is from the essence of our being that we will relate to God and indeed to any human being. The important thing is to be true to who we really are and to pray in a way that honours the gift of our God-given personality.

It is great to be given the opportunity to read in just a few pages the history and family stories of Teresa, Francis, Benedict and Ignatius and to become aware of how these stories impinged on their life choices and their relationship with God. The author has a great ability to convey in a simple and concise way the essence of each person she is writing about. Obviously the model each one presents to us is influenced by their nature, nurture and above all their spirituality and theology.

There is much to recommend this book and I ask myself what touched me the most? I think it would have to be the chapter on prayer and art. Chapter eight entitled *And the Word became flesh* illustrates so well that beyond words music and art open our imaginations to the sacred and the divine, to God the first musician and artist. The visual and auditory are part of our Spiritual experience.

All this may be true for the Christian but what about Judaism and Islam? Here the author poses many questions which require the reader to have an open mind. Can anything created represent the Godhead? And how does one pray with an icon? These questions and many more will provoke your thinking as you read the chapter about art and religion. In the presence of great art we are exposed to the transcendent and become more than ourselves. Lavinia called me beyond myself in this book.

The chapter on *Prayer in cyberspace* I found fascinating. Is the Internet a friend or enemy of the gospel? You could spend your days visiting the various websites the author gives us and still not be satisfied.

The last word in this book the author commits to prayer when you are ill. The best way to deal with prayer when we are ill is to know what we understand by prayer when we are well. Personally I did not find this chapter so inspiring. Perhaps that is because much of what is spoken about has not been my experience. The final question though for all of us is *How do I prepare myself to face Eternal Life?*

The subtitle of this book is *Themes from the Christian Tradition.* For me the overall theme is, as I mentioned in the opening paragraph, is that prayer is God's gift to us and our response is to remain open and available for the gift. In other words we are invited to put God at the centre of everything. The *Jesus* prayer and *Taize* are also part of the Tradition and have their own chapter.

The theme that is lacking for me is *Meditation*. I would love to have seen a chapter on this topic. However this book is a very nourishing read to ponder, reflect and live. Life is a school of prayer reminding us that it is in God we live and move and have our being. ■

christian faith through a young atheist's eyes

I Sold My Soul on eBay – viewing faith through an atheist's eyes
Hermant Mehta
Published by Waterbrook Press 2007
NZ price $27.99
Review: Mike Crowl

Mehta became a self-proclaimed atheist at the age of 14, after rejecting his family's belief in Jainism, an ancient Indian religion that prescribes a path of non-violence towards all living beings. Focusing on reason, he decided that he could be just as moral as the next man in spite of having no belief in God, or gods.

Nevertheless, Mehta has remained a man who thinks a good deal about religion and spirituality. Still only in his twenties, he continues to think seriously about truth.

In 2006 he hit upon a novel way of testing out religious belief. He offered himself as a prize on eBay: he would visit any church, temple, mosque or other religious building for an hour each week for every $10 he received in his auction. To his surprise he became something of a celebrity, and his auction finally closed at just over $500.

The person who 'bought' Mehta, Jim Henderson, was a Christian minister who suggested that rather than go to the same church every Sunday for the next year, he could go as a kind of 'secret shopper' to some 15 churches in the surrounding region. He would fill out a report and write about his visits on Henderson's website.

Henderson wasn't out to convert Mehta; in fact, he often paid people to visit his own church to see how, from an outsider's point of view, things could be improved for those curious enough to attend. Mehta went to small, large and mega churches. He was invited to spend one weekend discussing his point of view with another minister in a large evangelical church. And ultimately he wrote this book which is published by a Christian publishing house.

Unlike many of the 'new atheists' who write vitriolic diatribes against Christianity, Mehta is fair: critical where necessary, praising frequently. He puzzles over Christians who come to church late seemingly in order to miss the music; he expresses hurt that many Christians have a them/us mentality; he sees many rituals as pointless mostly because those doing them don't seem to have any heart for them; he finds it strange that there doesn't seem to be a way of asking questions after the service in order to clarify issues.

He meets more than a few ministers who impress him greatly with their preaching, or in face-to-face encounters.

Throughout he maintains an evenness of tone, carefully avoiding mention of the darker side of atheism (the Dawkins, Hitchens, Sam Harris school, for example); the innumerable atheist blogs that mock Christianity; the secularist and often amoral attitude that prevails in many countries (perhaps not so much in North America). He's an atheist with good morals, a sense of social justice, and a concern for those worse off than he is. But by promoting reason and science as his guiding lights, he downplays the possibilities of faith.

The section of the book that I found most interesting is where he discusses in some detail his visits to the various churches. His insight in these chapters is clear and sharp. In other parts of the book there's an occasional naiveté not so much about what he's seen, but about life in general. It's a young man's book; it would be interesting to see how he viewed some things in another decade or two. He blogs at *friendlyatheist.com* ■

reality

Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

About 15 years ago Prime Minister Jim Bolger was criticised for declaring that NZ was 'part of Asia'. In his 15 March column in the Dominion Post, veteran political commentator Colin James analysed "east Asia's growing indispensability to our Polynesian and British outlier nation".

He points out that China is our second largest export recipient and may well become a major source of investment here. But China has links with Korea and Japan. India also comes into play. We won't be able to compete in labour-intensive industries. Consequently New Zealand will need to develop stronger relationships with all these countries. James explains that because "real relationships are not those between heads of government, ministers and diplomats but those between people, it will also require the re-education of our education system."

Asian studies covering history, art, culture and intensive language programmes to teach Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean will have to be introduced at secondary school level if NZ is to be able to survive in the future. Business people engaged in China, for example, all stress the need to understand the cultural milieu.

mission begins here

In a move acknowledging the Church's failure, Benedict XVI is to establish a new Vatican body, the 'Pontifical Council for New Evangelization'. Its purpose is to assist the (western) Church to engage 'in respectful dialogue' with secularism. The hope is to re-evangelise the western world, which regards the church as irrelevant.

A major factor in the drift from the church in recent times stems from a post Vatican II 'business as usual', paternalistic and clericalist approach. Relatively superficial tinkering can't outweigh the continuation of a 'we have the truth, come and join us' attitude. There are many exceptions, notably among women Religious, but the pervasive culture of the old ways still prevails. To regard missionary activity as restricted to foreign lands is a hangover from colonial times.

St Paul has a lesson for us. He not only realised that the life and teachings of Jesus were the culmination of Judaism, fulfilling the old order, but his genius lay in recognising that it was the beginning of a new order: to preach the Gospel unencumbered by Jewish Law. This brought him into conflict with some influential 'followers of the Way' for whom the idea was anathema. It is a common human trait to take refuge in the traditional ways of acting, and a kind of ghetto mentality comes easily.

In the business world, where survival depends on making sales, customer orientation is vital. Having a worthwhile product is not enough. Some common barriers are: adopting a 'we know best' mentality; giving precedence to personal priorities; laying blame elsewhere when the customer does not respond; not accepting change e.g. circumstances which may no longer be favourable to a particular approach; unwillingness to make the upfront investment; insufficient attention to detail.

an encouraging beginning

On becoming bishop of Honolulu in 2005, Larry Silva began drawing up a strategic plan. Over the next two years he and two assistants hosted open meetings that included dozens of lay leaders at every parish. The 66 parishes each created a fact sheet, a written list of goals, and concrete steps to implement them. The only restriction was a limit of three to six priorities. Disenfranchised Catholics were sought out for focus groups to listen to their concerns and to incorporate their views into the planning process.

This information was combined with demographic data, input from numerous diocesan bodies and other stakeholders. The strategic planning committee relied on outside professionals on an as-needed basis for certain aspects of the planning, including contributions from non-Catholic experts.

In 2008, a five-year strategic plan was published. Six actions were emphasised: leadership development (lay and clerical); youth and young adult programmes; faith formation (all ages); homelessness issues; facilities management and land assets.

The diocesan staff have been reorganized around the six goals. Every parish budget and annual report is now oriented to the specific parish goals in the context of the plan. There is a high level of engagement both at parish and diocesan levels, stemming from widespread initial participation in the formulation of the pastoral plan priorities. A fundraising target of $30 million resulted in pledges of over $57 million.

beating unemployment.

Finance Minister Bill English recently told business leaders that Corrections is set to become the largest government Department within two or three years. There are currently 7,184 staff, 9,131 beds catering for about 8,400 prisoners, forecast to rise to 12,500 by 2018. He said: "Every time you call for harsher penalties the ($M400) shortfall gets bigger (by $90,000 a year, plus $250,000 capital expenditure)."

Meanwhile, Corrections Minister Judith Collins proclaims the positive effects of the new 960-bed prison in South Auckland: 1,900 jobs plus $1.2b in economic benefits over 30 years. Perhaps every town should have one. ■

ascension thursday

Have you ever made a good public mistake? I did recently when I discovered that Ascension Thursday was now on a Sunday. I am not very good at dates and times in the liturgy as I forgot to buy a Columban calendar. On Thursday I was up North at meetings in the morning and travelling in the evening so knew I could not go to Mass. However, on Sunday I was flummoxed to find that the Ascension was now changed to a Sunday. I gather this is not new but I was overseas for a few previous years. I grew up knowing deep inside that Jesus ascended on a Thursday and it takes a lot of rethinking to have it happen on a Sunday. It is like being told that Easter Sunday was really a Monday.

Some things are not worth fighting for but Jesus ascending on a Sunday was surely of some concern to people! It was also the start of the week of prayer for Christian Unity. Sometimes I wonder why we bother, as Christian disunity is the norm. People of my generation seem comfortable with the divide. Interestingly, the students among whom I work are not as comfortable. They are very free to visit different churches. What attracts them is a variety of things: the atmosphere, the music, the preaching. Things that repel me, such as very long services, are not a consideration. I wonder whether church unity might happen because a younger generation stops worrying about authority and linear apostolic succession.

I remember reading Thomas Merton: "How dare we pray for unity when it has been given as a gift of the spirit." I thought I was one of the few who really cared and then I realised that other people, more important than me cared as well. When Pope Paul VI, a great man, met Archbishop Michael Ramsay at St Paul Outside the Walls, it was a historic moment. This, the first meeting of Pope and an Archbishop of Canterbury since the reformation, was highly scripted, down to the rather stiff embraces. At the end of the meeting, and to the consternation of his advisers, Paul VI took his own bishop's ring, and gave it to Archbishop Ramsay. Catholic ecumenists still try to explain it away but in a highly sacramental church this is a significant act.

In the medieval Church, and still today, the ring is a sign of the bishop's authority. The former Anglican Bishop of Dunedin, George Connor, was also proud of the bishop's ring given to him by John Paul II. I started to wonder if people at the very top of the Catholic Church were also unhappy with disunity. I found out that Cardinal Ratzinger, before becoming Pope, pointed out to the Anglican Bishop of London, Bishop Leonard, who wanted to join the Catholic Church, that he wrote to him using the form of address he would use to a Catholic Bishop.

Perhaps finding out that Jesus ascended on a Sunday was not the end of the world, but realising that others, much higher up the tree than I am, are also concerned about Christian disunity, was an inspiration.

We have a lot to learn from our young people who are not worried about ascending on a Thursday or a Sunday. Perhaps our desire to be right and to be the 'better' or 'true' church compared to other churches is just another manifestation of the public display made by the two disciples who asked Jesus if they could sit one on each side in the kingdom. Jesus was disappointed in their request and I wonder if he would be similarly disappointed in us if we are jockeying for positions. ■

Peter Norris

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

A Mothers Journal...

Kaaren Mathias

Keeping myself company is a slowly growing art. Two decades ago as a medical student in Dunedin I discovered solitary walks, bike rides and yellow-eyed penguins on the Peninsula. But the last ten years with children have provided few opportunities to savour my own company. It does feel luxurious when it happens though, like my day last week stuck in a tent.

It had started with me impatiently stamping around in pre-dawn tussock imagining a clear sky and stars when all I could see were thick clouds. Hoping to cross a high pass I felt impatient and irritated. Plans spoiled, I had nothing to do for a day and imagined all the jobs I could be doing at home and thought "What a waste!".

"Be still!" was what I heard.

Back in the tent, a rare sleep-in was enhanced by the light patter of rain and snow on the tent fly. Later, warm mid-morning sun on rocks led me to write a love song, something I haven't done for far too long. At noon I roamed around, took photos and wondered at the technicolour lichens and the tenacity of tiny alpine plants. Then I had energy to sit still in my Himalayan eerie and pray for friends and family in India, New Zealand, Thailand, and Cambodia.

After lunch it was snowing again – back to the tent. All I had was a Hindi New Testament. Glad I knew the gospel stories I read slowly and carefully. I wrote down new vocabulary like 'plead' 'robe' 'power' and 'to fall at his feet'. Next time to look in detail at maps of this wild and beautiful area. I schemed routes to walk with the family and made geographical connections of rivers, ridges and rain shadows clearer in my head. Maps are always a source of joy.

Late afternoon. I wrote another song, borrowing a favourite Eric Clapton tune. This one's for my little Jalori:
She hears the first song
Of birds calling on the dawn
So climbs into my bed
Trailing books and toys…

That evening I meandered up the valley under clearing skies. Sang some more… Thought some more... Prayed some more… Scoped out the next days' route….and realised that should tomorrow bring more snow and mist, I wouldn't mind at all.

Kaaren and Jeph, with their four children, live and work in health and community development in North India

OUR PLACE IN THE FUTURE CHURCH

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What changes will we make to get there?

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Knox Centre, Bealey Avenue
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DUNEDIN
St Patrick's Parish Centre, Macandrew Road
Sunday 15 August 2010, 9.30am to 3.30pm

INVERCARGILL
St Patrick's Parish Room, South Invercargill
Saturday 21 August 2010, 9.30am to 3.30pm

OAMARU
Catholic Parish Centre, Reed Street
Sunday 22 August 2010, 10.45am to 4.30pm

PALMERSTON NORTH
Diocesan Centre, 33 Amesbury Street
Saturday 4 September 2010, 9.30am to 3.30pm

WELLINGTON
Connolly Hall, Guilford Terrace
Sunday 5 September 2010, 11am to 4.30pm

Please bring your own lunch – Tea, coffee and morning/afternoon teas will be provided
Admission $10 or Koha
For further information please contact dominicandn@xtra.co.nz or (03) 477 7577