

# Tui Motu

InterIslands

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# let's talk...

**A**ugust 19 will be a boundary-defining day for the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand. On that day the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013 comes into force. Aeroplanes and luxury restaurants are being chosen as some novel venues to celebrate this important societal change. For a majority of the nation perhaps, it will be a day of rejoicing. For others, it will bring its share of dismay and raise many questions.

Nor is Aotearoa alone in this change. Uruguay, France and Great Britain have all passed similar legislation in the last four months, bringing the number of countries accepting same-sex marriage to 14. Why the rush? What's happening? Discerning what God is saying is often not an easy business. Our global society is changing rapidly and dramatically as this recent legislation world-wide testifies. Rapid change often carries with it confusion and resistance to opening ourselves to new ideas. That notwithstanding, as Christians we believe that God is at work in our daily world disclosing, even if in an

obscure way, God's love and power for every human being.

Sacramental marriage between a woman and a man — lifelong, exclusive and open to children — is, and must remain, the foundation block of the Church's teaching on marriage. Our bishops' formal submission to the Parliamentary select committee was a magnificent statement of this, and we reprint it proudly. However, now that the Bill has become law, the gap between what is our legislated definition of marriage and what the Catholic Church teaches has widened.

## a broader view of the human

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (no 2358) asks us to deal with people whose sexual identity is different from the heterosexual majority "with respect, compassion and sensitivity". This would continue to be the motive force in future conversations and dialogue. In beginning a conversation now, would it not be good to bring to bear the benefits of modern scholarship among Catholic theologians who are arguing for a

different approach to the questions of sexual identity and human dignity? For example, the Church in recent years has mandated the use of the historical-critical method as a mode of teaching and interpretation of scripture. If we were to bring this method to bear on the passages in the scriptures that deal with homosexuality, what change might this bring about in our thinking? Would it not be good to search out and study some modern theological interpretations of natural law, apart from the 'physicalist' approach that has held sway since the 17th century? These would provide a much broader view of the human, and how we might approach questions of sexual identity and homosexuality.

Thirdly, LGBT (Lesbian/Bisexual/Gay/Transgendered) people are, in popular church parlance, still seen as 'deviant', with a disordered 'inclination' that is open to change if they choose. These ideas are no longer scientifically tenable. The best of recent scientific research should be invoked to look more broadly at such questions as identity, psychology and

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**Front cover:** The Brandenburg Gate's famous chariot, driven by Victoria the Roman Goddess of Victory, and drawn by horses (see article pp18-19). [Photo by Michael Fitzsimons]

emotional development. If we as a Church continue to hold only to a 'physicalist' approach to natural law and see LGBT persons as suffering from a disordered inclination, may we not risk calling into question the genuine humanity of people who are not heterosexual?

### a disconnect

As well, from the time the Marriage Bill began to be debated until its passing into law, other often hurtful questions relating to gender, homosexuality and sexual ethics were raised. As one example of some of this type of thoughtful conversation we print a short article we received recently (*see box at right*). It is a mother's articulate depiction of what is happening to her son — and many young Catholic people — and is echoed by committed parents whom I have met over the past few months. This portrays a situation regarded as one important reason young Catholic people find it difficult to involve themselves in liturgy and community. They hear one thing, and experience another. They find in the Church not acceptance, but rejection, of them or their friends, and consequently do not wish to be members of a faith community which shows such a disconnect.

Many faith-filled Catholics are aware of this disconnect, and worry about its implications for the future of the Church. The matter is like an

*... continued on page 4*

## one woman's story

Last year, at age 72, I decided to let my active role in the Church wind down — time to let the next generation pick up the baton and pioneer what it means to be Catholic women in the rapidly changing world of the 21st century. But it seems there is another chapter of my story still to be lived, and this time it may well be about more than just 'getting on with things' — a strong clear voice is needed in places where it won't be welcome.

I find myself standing shoulder to shoulder with other Catholic parents of gay adolescent and adult children and we can't remain silent. Made in the image and likeness of God as all children are, our much-loved sons and daughters have been baptised in Christ and gifted with the Holy Spirit at Confirmation. Then they grow up and discover that who they are is not okay.

As adolescents and adults they're perceived by their 'Christian community' as anything from an embarrassment to an abomination. Many are subtly,

or not so subtly, rejected for roles where they are seen — usually wrongly — as a threat. They are deeply hurt and insulted by the way Church leaders speak about them in public statements. Believe me, the Church's attitude and lack of understanding of what it means to be created gay is gutting for them and for their families.

Many of those born gay and Catholic have simply walked away from the Church, many more are too hurt, depressed or angry to take the battle any further. As a parent of a gay son I am hurt and angry too, and frustrated that after 50 years of hard work in the Church, my voice is still not worth listening to. And I'm concerned for so many Catholic parents who are finding it agonisingly difficult to reconcile their loyalty to their faith with support for their gay children. Many are afraid to speak openly to their Catholic friends.

There's work to be done to make it possible for gay Catholics to live their God-given lives with the blessing of Church and Christian community. ■

*— Judith Collins, Raglan*



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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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## investment in climate change

In response to Jonathan Boston's comments on climate change (*TM* July), there is much we can do to help care for this earth. One powerful way is to stop investing in the fossil fuel industry. For example, our ethically-based KiwiSaver provider has now pulled out of all its fossil fuel and related investments. The Church too needs to pull out of any such investments. As climate activist Bill McKibben noted recently in his Dunedin lecture, churches should not be investing in companies that are running creation backwards. See <http://gofossilfree.org/nz/>

A good way to take personal, family and/or parish action is to take the St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor and join the Catholic Climate Covenant. Go to <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/>

Nicola Chapman, *Port Chalmers*

## new ways of rulemaking

Some thoughts on the relationship between clergy and women in the Catholic Church.

I suggest that in the future, bishops and cardinals of the Catholic Church should be partnered for religious matters with either the head

of a women's order or a noted female theologian. The assignment is that these two persons — like many academics and business people today — develop a non-sexual relationship and learn to work together. They should talk over every problem or opportunity brought to either of them, and arrive at a joint way of deciding how to cope with the item. Every decision would be published under both names. If they cannot agree, they can postpone the decision or decide to take turns making decisions or have to announce that they cannot agree.

The basic rationale for this is that God designed male and female to be partners in life (Gn 2:18). Current rules for the clergy make that difficult if not impossible. But after all, clerical prohibition of marriage is only one thousand years old, not two, so it could be changed. Without waiting for another new millennium, we could proceed with this new concept as a reasonable alternative to the present practice. There should in general be a way to factor in the experience of other Christian groups in matters of rule-making.

Taking advantage of the experience of other Christian denominations where married clergy are the norm, the Catholic Church could by this experiment improve the pastoral care

## letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not changing the meaning.

We do not publish anonymous letters otherwise than in exceptional circumstances. Response articles (up to a page) are welcome — but please, by negotiation.

of Christians. It might be prudent for this new concept to be tried out in a single geographic area of the world or by some other demographic category, perhaps in California, which is usually thought to be an open society. Even in England, where all Anglican clergy may marry, ordained academics are often unmarried. So perhaps it could be for our priests a personal calling, as it is for them.

Professor emerita Dora P Crouch,  
*Troy, New York* (abridged)

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## editorial: let's talk . . .

... continued from page 3

'elephant in the room'. No one wishes to be the first to raise the question in public for fear of the consequences or that they will be shamed or shunned.

The question has, however, become too pressing for that. It is time to begin a conversation at all levels of the Church, taking the opportunity to hear, consult and reverence all of the people involved. In these moments, it would be good to debate anew the nature of what it means to be human in the light of the death and resurrection of Christ, the consequential meaning of our call to discipleship and find more adequate ways of expressing

our human sexuality and identity. A significant part of this dialogue would be to recognize that every human being has a right to intimacy and its expression in appropriate ways.

This editorial and the articles we publish are presented with a view to offering some conversation 'starters' for ongoing and deepening dialogue to overcome the important disconnect we have identified within our Church. Jim Wallis gives us balanced ways of looking at our society that reflects American society so much — especially on divorce, and the place of children; Geraldine and Gerald

Scanlan offer their story as a reflection on marriage now, while Amy and Paul Armstrong give their view of same-sex marriage. Tony Russell sets out the position of a moral theologian thinking from a modern liberationist perspective, while James Harding nuances well some difficult questions.

Michael Fitzsimons, Eleanor Capper and Catherine Shelton each give us views on the art of reconciliation.

In fact, the tone and content of this whole issue may well be called "an exercise in reconciliation." Some challenging, but hopefully enlightening reading! **KT**

# pledging lifelong faithful love

Jim Wallis

This year, reporters have asked me if I supported marriage equality. The answer is yes. But I believe it is important to start by saying how much I strongly support marriage — we have to begin there. Through this controversial debate, I deeply hope that our country can come together around a new conversation — about how we can all recommit ourselves to marriage and all that comes with it — monogamy, fidelity, and, for many of us, parenting. We are losing marriage in this society. While there are many single parents who do a wonderful job taking on the challenge, I believe that if we lose a critical mass of healthy marriages and two-parent families, we are in very serious trouble.

But the prospect and increasing reality of same-sex marriage is hardly to blame for the breakdown of marriage in our society. The nation's soaring divorce rate is a matter of deep concern — and the divorce rate among conservative Christians is comparable to that of non-Christians. A variety of other factors contribute to a society moving away from marriage: a culture that glorifies recreational instead of covenantal sexuality; a non-commitment culture; a society that especially turns women and girls into commodities; a justice system that leads to mass incarceration of young men of color and breaks apart families; an immigration system that doesn't protect family unity; and an economic system with too many jobs that don't pay a living family wage, just to name a few.

We need to stop blaming same-sex couples for the breakdown of the family. Heterosexual dysfunction, moral selfishness, sexual promiscuity, and economic injustices that pressure too many families' lives are to blame. It remains an irony that many of those who speak out so strongly for marriage and family values are also so strongly

against allowing gay and lesbian couples to get married and have a family. I wish I heard those same people speak as often or as strongly about Christian men who cheat or abuse their wives, or about too easy and convenient divorces, or about parents who don't make their children their first priority.

Gay and lesbian people are children of God, fellow human beings, and American citizens. I have long believed that our LGBT brothers and sisters should have equal rights and protections under the law. The public policy conversation on what this means has clearly evolved. Years ago, civil unions seemed like a common sense, common ground solution, but I am now convinced that civil marriage equality is the best way to ensure that the principle of equal protection under the law is applied.

Many young people with whom I work and admire have strong feelings on this issue, and I support their leadership on this. Young Christians are reaching political conclusions, others develop theological conclusions, and many others are still in process. It is also clear that Christians who disagree on the biblical or theological issues can still agree to civic equality for same-sex committed couples. It will be vitally important that faith communities and local congregations have absolute religious freedom and liberty to work out their commitments on these issues with their own biblical interpretations and theological discussions — on both sides of this question. We should uphold the biblical connection between sexual expression and covenantal love wherever possible. And we have to ask whether faith communities want to be known for blocking that civil right and commitment.

When two people are waiting in line to pledge lifelong faithful love to one another, I don't think we should be standing in their way.

Here are two deep issues that Christians must deal with. First, one of the biggest reasons that young people are leaving their churches — ditching their religious labels, or not being drawn to churches in the first place — is how they perceive the church's negative and even hateful attitudes toward LGBT people. Second, we must ask if Christians treat LGBT people the way Jesus would have. The honest answer to that question is a painful no, and that has to change. The love of Christ must motivate us on this issue, and, I believe, renewing our commitment to marriage could be the common ground for the common good that unites all sides on this issue. I am praying for that.

To my Christian brothers and sisters who might not agree with the approach I have taken: I encourage you to take the time really to hear the concerns and hearts of a younger generation. I do believe that sincere Christians who take the Bible seriously can disagree on this issue, that biblical Christians can reach different interpretations of how the scriptures apply to committed same-sex couples. I believe that we should always be open to what God is speaking to a new generation of Christians as they seek to be faithful to the call of Christ in their lives.

Right now, it is vital that we find common ground with those with whom we might not be in complete agreement, to make practical progress on the things we know are important and good for all — like a re-covenanting to marriage. ■

*Jim Wallis is the President/Editor-in-chief of Sojourners: Faith in Action for Social Justice*

*Permission to publish this article has been sought [www.sojo.net]*

# our bishops' statement to parliament

*We print the relevant part of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' formal submission on what is more commonly known as the Same-Sex Marriage Act, put to a Select Committee of the NZ Parliament on November 28 last year.*

*The Act will come into force on August 19 this year.*

*The submission is a clear, strong summary of Catholic teaching on the nature of marriage, situated within the context of the Catholic Church's place within Aotearoa society, and seen against the background of the wider debate on same-sex marriage and sexuality.*

## who we are

1. This submission on the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill ("the Bill") is made by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference. The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference is the national body for the Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand.

## introduction

2. We believe that the term 'marriage' signifies a particular reality; that of a public, committed, permanent and loving relationship between one man and one woman, a relationship which has a natural orientation towards the procreation of new human life.

3. We are seeking to protect the current legal understanding of the nature of marriage as being a union between one man and one woman.

4. The Catholic Church has long promoted marriage as a stable and loving environment for the nurture of family and children, and the consequent good of society. To this end we have supported the institution and practice of marriage through marriage preparation courses, counselling, support for married couples in difficulty, and accompaniment for those who suffer loss of a spouse through death or separation.

5. This is not a debate about homosexuality. Our stance on marriage is not a denigration of persons who are homosexual.

6. The Catholic Church is one voice in a pluralistic society. We have a right to participate in the debate and to be treated fairly and with respect, just as any other group in society.

## the nature of marriage

7. No church, faith community, or state invented marriage. Marriage is a basic human institution that existed before legal and religious constructs were put around it to formalise the institution in society.

8. Marriage derives from the nature of the human person; male and female are sexually different in ways which are complementary. Sexual difference affects all aspects of human existence — biologically, psychologically, genetically, and socially. Marriage is founded on sexual difference. The traditional definition of marriage reflects this fact.

9. Marriage is unique; it is a committed union between a man and a woman which has a natural orientation towards the procreation

of new human life, and which has the potential to result in children who are fully genetically connected to their parents. This uniqueness requires a name and definition which distinguishes marriage from any other form of relationship.

10. Marriage is not defined in the Marriage Act 1955 specifically as being between a man and a woman. This reflects the reality that people understand the sexual difference of man and woman to be integral to marriage, to the extent that it did not need legal definition in the Act. Prior to the changes made to the Marriage Act 1955 by the Civil Unions Act 2004, the "Forbidden Marriages" listed in Schedule 2 of the Marriage Act were solely between males and females, evidence of society's clear understanding of marriage.

## Individual choice

11. The case for redefining marriage is ultimately premised on an assumption that the individual has the 'right to choose', and that this 'right' is not limited by any prior given (other than what society, exercising its 'right to choose' has already determined).

12. There are givens, prior realities, which constitute boundaries within which we are entitled to make our choices.

13. The given or prior reality which exists in the case of marriage is the physical difference between the



partners. Neither individual choice, nor societal choice can make sexual differentiation irrelevant, which is what the proposed redefinition of marriage effectively seeks to do.

14. If the “right to choose” allows a given to be ignored, there is no limit to how marriage might be redefined from time to time.

### **‘rights, equality, discrimination’**

15. Catholic teaching acknowledges a “right of marriage” which no human law can abolish. The right of any person to enter into marriage depends upon fulfilling the criteria which characterise the true nature of marriage.

16. The sexual difference between man and woman makes marriage unique. Sexual activity involving a man and a woman has a natural orientation towards the procreation of children. No third party is needed to provide eggs, gestational carrier or sperm.

17. If a person desires to ‘marry’ someone of the same sex the relationship does not meet a defining requirement for marriage, i.e. the sexual difference essential to the complementarity which gives marriage its uniqueness.

18. Same-sex unions may meet the requirement for a loving, lifelong commitment which is essential for marriage. Same-sex unions cannot meet the defining requirement of marriage, the sexual difference and complementarity of the partners which is ordered to the procreation of children.

19. The union of a man and a woman in marriage is not the same as a same-sex union. It is not discrimination to treat different things differently.

20. Equality cannot be achieved by calling two things which are essentially different by the same name.

### **adult choice and children**

21. Marriage is the context for both the generation of new life and the nurture of children.



22. The Bill opens a pathway for homosexual couples to adopt the child of one of the partners or a child who is being placed for adoption. A child born to one of the partners and adopted by the couple will be deliberately deprived of the close parenting of either a mother or a father. A child placed for adoption with a homosexual couple will not experience the parenting of both an adoptive mother and an adoptive father.

23. Psychiatrists assure us that the love of the father and the mother are different, and contribute differently to a child’s development. Children need to experience the love of a mother and the love of a father, and their love for each other.

24. The loss of a child’s parent, precisely as father or as mother actively involved in parenting the child, is a loss to that child’s development and well-being.

25. However much children brought up by homosexual partners may be loved and cared for, no one has the right to intentionally deprive them of a father’s love or a mother’s love or the parenting of either a father or a mother.

26. Too often children suffer because of the ways adults pursue their own interests and desires. An adult’s claim to a “right to choose” inflicts a penalty on the child.

27. Marriage protects the right of the child to be raised, wherever possible, by his/her biological parents, and to fully experience the parenting of a mother and a father. Circumstances may mean this ideal is not always able to be met, but it should not be deliberately set aside in order to satisfy adult desires.

### **conclusion**

34. A same sex partnership can be loving and committed. It can never, however, meet the other essential and defining characteristic of marriage, the sexual difference and complementarity between the two partners that has a natural orientation towards the procreation of new human life.

35. Marriage as it is now protects the right of the child to be raised, wherever possible, by his/her biological parents, and to fully experience the parenting of a mother and a father.

36. The Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill presents the current understanding of marriage as discriminatory, and this as justification for the Bill. There are some similarities between marriage and same sex unions; nevertheless, marriage and same sex unions remain fundamentally different and therefore should not both be covered by the term ‘marriage’.

37. The sexual differentiation between the partners in marriage is why other faithful, caring, committed relationships are not termed marriage. Marriage has its origins in human nature and for this reason it is beyond the redefinition being proposed by the Bill. ■

*A complete copy of the bishops’ submission may be found on the NZ Catholic Bishops’ website:  
<http://www.catholic.org.nz/nzcbc>  
under “bishops’ statements”*



# one couple's experience of marriage

*The Scanlans offer us their story of a courtship, marriage, family, and empty-nest living. It is a celebration of sacramental marriage lived fully with the support of parish, family and friends; and challenged along the way to maintain and develop their unique relationship.*

Geraldine and Gerald Scanlan

We met on the job, so to speak. Gerald was helping to pioneer lay tertiary chaplaincy in Wellington, which involved organising a regular Sunday evening mass for students and others with a liberal disposition. Geraldine came along one evening, interested to see what it was like. We introduced ourselves at the sign of peace, and Gerald said: "With a name like that I've got to get to know you."

We found each other good company. Geraldine was a teacher, flattening in Petone. Gerald was a frequent visitor, seeking some space and a change of scene from the demands of chaplaincy. We shared a common age, faith, some interests and a desire for a life-long connection.

We also introduced each other to new experiences and people: bridge, running, swimming, golf, our respective families, meat-free dinners. Some of these came together in a trip down south for Geraldine and a teaching friend, when Gerald encouraged them to call in on his parents. After the initial awkwardness of meeting their son's new girlfriend for the first time after a knock on the door, they soon settled down to a game of cards by the fire. Clearly, this was going to work out just fine.

## finest and best

A bit over three years later, we were ready for our big day. We had a very strong sense of marrying each other, in the best sense of the sacrament. We made the day our own, from the quirky invitations to the unique vows. It was the hottest day of that



summer, an evening ceremony, and all the guests were hanging out for a cold drink. We had the full production in the Sacred Heart chapel, as James Lyons chose our wedding to film for a resource on Catholic marriage. There were two priests, both sets of parents, lots of family and friends and they were all there to cheer us on. Gerald promised Geraldine his finest and his best; Geraldine promised to be his lover, confidante and friend. As the sun set on a perfect day, we had an overwhelming sense of being blessed, by each other and by all those who had gathered to celebrate with us. Truly grace was at work.

## home and away

Our living together started in a flat in Lower Hutt. It was a time of

discovery, adjustment, sorting out. We had all the conventional aspirations to home ownership and starting a family, preferably in that order. Our first home was an ex-State house in Naenae, which we poured a lot of energy and much of our spare cash into, and learned some important lessons about renovation and each other's tastes.

Then Bridget came into our lives. Suddenly, we were a family of three. Joy and shock in equal measure. Another time of adjustment in our relationship, as we focused on our first child and muddled our way through Parenting 101. New words entered our vocabulary and new items dominated our grocery list: colic, Treasures, teething, rusks. Career and mortgage jostled with play group and Plunket. Our



centre of gravity decisively shifted, and our relationship had to fight for attention. From time to time, we reminded each other of our vows.

A particularly treasured time in our marriage came after our first son Ben was born, and Gerald took on full-time post-graduate study in Dunedin. This gave us a change of scene, regular contact with Gerald's parents and other Dunedin relations, the start of our time with Playcentre, and some memorable early family mini-holidays. We came to the important realisation that we can make home wherever we are.

### the children's journey

Life in Lower Hutt resumed after graduation, centred increasingly on our three children. The intervening years are a blur of Playcentre, school, sport, friends, activities, fundraising, school Board of Trustees and holidays. Parish was also a strong feature, as our children made their way through the familiar rites of initiation and we took on a range of responsibilities to support them and to contribute to parish life. We felt supported in our marriage and affirmed as parents, despite our struggles and misgivings.

Children create new possibilities for parents, and open doors to challenges and lessons that we would never have opened for ourselves. Being a parent tests endurance, self-belief and sometimes faith. There is a humility in allowing each child to shape their own life and in accepting that parenting must constantly adapt to their needs and personality. We found parenting a constant process of letting go one stage or approach and allowing the next one to emerge. Sometimes there was more growth for us than for them, although harder to mark against the chart.

A particular realisation came when Ben decided to pursue an overseas exchange in place of his final school year. At 16, he seemed too young to be heading to South America for a year, to be spent with two families in a completely unfamiliar setting. Yet he



thrived on the experience and came back brimming with confidence and a sense of his place in the world. They were the parents he needed that year.

### next minute

Suddenly, our three children are adults, each with their own life to lead and no longer at home. The empty nest is both a sign of success and a source of loss. We are often in touch and look forward to visits home, but we know that our family will never quite be the same again. We are excited about what the future holds for each one and we are confident that we have given them our finest and best, but now it is up to them.

So the circle closes and it's back to the two of us. The 'living together' starts again, as we take the time to rediscover each other and reinvigorate our relationship. At a time of life when many couples struggle to stay connected, we are determined to keep making the daily decision to love each other, and to find new depth and relevance in our marriage vows, said with such intensity, and innocence, 26 years ago.

We have always felt blessed by God in our marriage, and sustained by a powerful belief that our marriage is the way in which we truly realise who we are meant to be, and that we are better people together than we would be apart. ■

*Geraldine and Gerald Scanlan live in Lower Hutt.*

## Send forth your spirit

Lord send out your spirit  
to hands outstretched  
upraised  
to receive it  
passed hand to hand above heads  
in a darkened church  
the journey of your cross  
amongst your people on Good Friday  
their crosses touching yours  
mixed, imitated,  
accepted  
as you take them in your passion  
in your death  
and your life each Sunday  
of our lives  
transformed as our hands touched  
touch your cross  
your life in us  
spreading throughout the darkness  
on Easter Sunday  
on that Easter morning  
as the women ran shouting  
and we passed the light from the  
Easter  
fire, the flame  
heartbeat of community  
the mass of light  
spreading to the darkest recesses  
of minds afraid  
then and now  
of hearts that yearned  
yearn  
for you to recreate  
our lives  
in your passion  
and your resurrection

—Joanie Roberson



### *Amy speaks first:*

Same-sex marriage is not an issue we can ignore anymore, neither in the secular world nor the church. This issue has moved from out of the closet into centre stage western world politics. How will the church respond to the secular world's overwhelming support for same-sex marriage? Well, we can be sure there will be a diverse view among Catholics. Perhaps not in the hierarchy, but certainly from the pews.

I myself, a heterosexual married Catholic woman, instinctively feel we cannot deny this right to marry to the gay population. When I examine my conscience as to why this is true for me, this is what I come up with.

### **belief about marriage**

I believe marriage is about more than procreation. Yes, children are a beautiful part of marriage, but not the only part. There are heterosexual couples, who do not have children, some by choice and some through no choice of their own. Does this render their marriage invalid? I don't believe so. Many heterosexual couples do not, sometimes cannot, conceive children, while being fruitful in other ways. There are many other ways to offer love, commitment, and devotion to the world in generative ways.

I also do not believe the possible children of same-sex marriages are disadvantaged any more than children of heterosexual couples. Sure these children will have identity issues to work through, just like

all of us children of heterosexual couples who work through divorce, adoption, or generally not feeling understood by our parents. This is life, unavoidably real, messy, and sacred in all its forms.

### **grappling with teaching**

When it comes to the Church and its teachings, I've grappled with this too. Firstly the church teaches us to follow our own moral conscience. I believe this is very important if we are to have an adult faith, not a childish faith that merely follows the rules for rules' sake. I feel the real strength of our church lies in its spirituality and sacraments, not the rules. Rules change, and necessarily so. The Church once excommunicated a great scientist for teaching that the world is round. It was a radical and scary idea at the time. Change often is. The Church could not initially take in this new world-view.

Science is teaching us new truths all the time. We become more aware that things are not always as they seem. We are slowly coming to understand homosexuality better. If God created us each in God's image, how will we treat all of the sacred citizens of God? With equality and respect I hope. Can the Church open up the sacrament of marriage to same-sex couples? I'm not sure. I certainly don't have all the answers and don't expect the Church to either. But these are my thoughts as I honour instinctively the love and inclusiveness of Jesus, whom I believe acknowledged the sacredness of all humanity.

## the depths of

*Amy and Paul Armstrong, wife and husband, are facing the Church in real life concerning same-sex marriage. They have many questions, and*

### **our church's response?**

How will the church respond to the world's cry to be more open and inclusive? I'm sure slowly and carefully as always. My personal prayer is that the Church will be open enough to listen to the Spirit. And my great hope for this Church that I love is that it will not respond so slowly as to lose touch with many of its peoples who are crying out for her to respond with love and inclusiveness. Pope Francis himself has recently said, "We need to allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit, even if this leads us down new paths." What is the Spirit saying to the Church? And is the Church willing to listen?

We often talk about the Church needing to be strong to stand against the current of culture. But I wonder, I just wonder, if this time the secular world has something to teach the Church about love and inclusiveness? ■



# of god's love

*and husband, look at dilemmas  
facing the current situation  
of same-sex marriage.  
and the desire to dialogue about them.*

## **Then Paul speaks:**

**T**he topic of same-sex marriage is a treacherous one, one that is our current dilemma in human rights, at least in the western world. As we evolve our understanding of human nature, and in this case sexuality, we are asked more and more to change our entire preset historical ideas. Kings of England have been killed in the past over their homosexuality, modern day teens are beaten up at their high schools for it, and in places such as Brazil young men are killed by gangs because of their sexual orientation. Discrimination is rife, no matter how politely you package it. Our actions (not just our words) will reveal our deepest feelings about homosexuality. Compassion is what is being asked of those who are heterosexual, but just how far will that compassion go?



## **what would parents do?**

I guess it would be best displayed by the same-sex marriage question that a modern parent might be faced with one day if his or her daughter or son announced their desire to marry their long-term same-sex partner. It would be huge, but in the end the depth of love a parent has for their child would outweigh previous discriminations. Compassion, and a desire for love to be celebrated, would win the day (as it has in New Zealand law).

I have an uncle with three children: two sons and a daughter, all in their 30s. One son has had a marriage, and a divorce (through no fault of his own), and is in his second marriage with a second child. The other son has had two children with his long-term female partner, but has left this woman since. Finally, there is his daughter. She has the longest and most secure relationship of all, and she is a lesbian. She has an incredible partner, and their relationship is very stable. This is a very contemporary family. All of these children are adored by their parents, who want only the very best for them, and to see them live out their deepest desires and biggest dreams. Their parents would never deny marriage because of anything, for any one of them, so profound is their love.

## **god's love outweighs ours**

And the truth is God's love outweighs even these parents' love, to levels we simply cannot comprehend ... unconditional. God desires our deepest desires also, especially in love. For God nothing is impossible, so profound is God's tenderness and mercy, and compassion. As a heterosexual, who is

dumbfounded by the fear of some at same-sex marriage, and the 'threat' they perceive it to be to hetero-marriages, I only shake my head in despair and sadness. Sure these are challenging times of change. But if we do not change, we will die, and simply will not grow. The compassion of the Christ that I know would never, ever, deny love and its union in marriage. I believe this is true for same-sex marriage.

Yes, it is a broad vision, that is difficult for some to swallow, but we are faced with it this August in the fact that it will be civil law. How we will respond will decide the kind of people we are, and the level of compassion we are willing to have for the 'others' in our lives. I can only hope our responses will not widen the gulf in the 'them and us' attitude that pervades this topic in our world today. Yes, we are all different. But in the very, very end we are all equal in God's eyes. God asks that we live out this equality in our world today with action, not just words. The Spirit cannot be contained.

## **the spirit of truth**

Jesus said, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come ..." [Jn 16:12-13] Expect more to come! ■

*Amy Armstrong is a tutor in the Department of Anatomy, University of Otago. Paul is a carer. They live in Dunedin, where they are also part-time chaplains to the University and Polytechnic.*



# another look at difference

*The author's studies of liberation theologies and philosophies have involved looking at how churches can confront unjust political and social regimes. Applying this learning to gay marriage, he looks at how the churches may study their governance of the moral lives of their community members.*

Anthony J Russell

There have been furores recently over legislation allowing gay marriage (e.g. NZ, UK, France). A lot of these furores have been launched from religious foundations, as well as social, historical and cultural norms. Setting aside the term 'marriage' itself — some Nordic countries have simply opted for hetero- and homo-sexual couples to use either the term 'Marriage' or 'Registered Relationship' — here are some thoughts that might engage the churches on this whole matter.

The principal arguments of most churches against 'gay marriage' are founded on two foundations: 'natural law'; and male/female 'biological complementarity'. These are two primary arguments against GLBT relationships, temporary or long-lived.

## moral judgments

To have only the above foundations (natural law, bio-complementarity) for judging non-heterosexual relationships can be seen as a radical mistake, which has long bedevilled Christianity. Any in-depth analysis of the human species would set out as the primary marker of the species the intelligent capacity for moral judgments. No other species possesses this. Saying that natural law or bio-complementarity is the primary marker of the species is an indicator of a maimed, even a failed anthropology — a vision of humankind that is partial, prejudiced, and dishonours the foundational moral capacity of many individuals.



Churches have long deprived their members of their skill, capacity and essential obligation for being their own moral judges. Some churches — by creed, council, canon law, encyclicals etc — have taken over the moral role of individuals, and opted for a tutelage (sometimes dogmatic or even infallible) over the moral lives of their members. Guidance, good exposition, experience, would have been good mentors — not judges — particularly in the last 50 years, on matters such as birth-control, abortion, the ecclesial status of the divorced remarried, gay and lesbian rapports, and so on. Sadly many churches have opted for a top-down approach, and re-iterated moral codes and precepts that come both from a poor exploration or expansion of (Greek) natural law, and little to no cognisance of the actual genesis of psycho-sexual orientations.

It might be added that the moral tutelage approach, which can be termed pastoral, can do much harm. It is also called *epikeia* which speaks

of mercy and clemency (see what Thomas Aquinas says of this at <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3120.htm>). Incidentally, Greek orthodox theology gives vastly more space to *epikeia* than does the "Western schism". For all that *epikeia*, like much pastoral theology and canon law, indicates a degree of condescension, of stooping down to forgive or pardon the 'imperfect', those who cannot live according to the natural law, nor abide by the historical comprehensions and usages of marriage. It too can vitiate the moral autonomy of individuals.

## prudence needed

Churches are called to be prudent about gay/lesbian relationships. Prudence is a virtue both in the ancient Greek world (Aristotle's *phronesis*) and as one of the four cardinal virtues of the Catholic Church. Prudence does not imply caution or timidity. Rather it means using our reason to see or apprehend the truth of a situation, and acting in accordance with that truth. Apply this to psychosexual-orientation.

The first truth about GLBT psychosexual-orientation is that we simply do not know their 'ontogenesis' — we do not know with any or even near absolute certainty what gives rise to the being (ontogenesis) of these human realities. There are many origin theories — genetic, nurture, education, nature, psychological, chromosomic, life and social trigger situations, and so on. None of these is in any way absolutely certain or the total truth.

## being true to nature

Prudence commands that we treat with this situation in an intelligent, humane (rational) way, with complete respect for the dignity of the moral agent (person) who is of this psychosexual orientation. We believe, as we believe of heterosexual people, that they are capable of fidelity, growth within a relationship, love, intimacy, commitment and perseverance. They are not 'intrinsically immoral' but in fact living out human nature as it is manifested in them. They are being as true to their nature as it is commanded that all beings be.

It can be argued that ancient Greek philosophy had a dislike, even a fear of the non-normative, the novel. Their tendency was to 'universalise' everything, to put things and people into specific identifiable capacities and categories. In the encounter between Christianity and the Greek body of teaching which took place in the 3rd and 4th centuries, one of the things which rubbed off on Christianity was distaste for the non-normative, the different. Heresies, the visions of the mystics, the insights of theologians and philosophers since then, testify to this disallowance of the strange, the different.

## treatment of difference

Psychosexual orientations have had a similar treatment. Rather than being viewed as possible variants by a creative and novel-making God, they have been viewed as deviant, and the responsibility for them has been laid on those who express their difference about sexual attraction, affection, and relationships. A sad history about difference.

At a moment in the history of the world, when astronomers are just starting to peep out into the universe, postulate new theories about the planets, about the existence of further universes; at a moment when all the positive sciences (psychology, sociology etc) are starting to re-see and revisit their earlier doctrines; at a moment when IT is invading our lives in dramatic, most often beneficial, ways, then certitude, surety and dogma about what makes us us, what makes us function, deserve a new reverence, and a re-alignment about the moral dignity and intelligence of self-judging adults.

Churches which are unable to reach out and bless every manifestation of the human person, surely need to pause and rethink what being incapable of blessing human loving actually means — to them, and to those whose love they refuse to bless. ■

*Tony Russell has a doctorate in moral theology. He was Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Otago during 1995-96. He presently lives in Wellington.*

## letters to the editor

... continued from page 4

### pursuit of the common good

I was truly shocked on reading the National Party member Simon Power's article in *Tui Motu* (July 2013, p 10). How can one who writes nobly about the pursuit of the Common Good be also intending to vote in Parliament for 230 more pokey machines to be added to the Sky City Casino, knowing what human misery and degradation they will bring? The common good and promoting more pokey machines don't fit together into a normal healthy conscience, especially as the machines are the price for a convention hall, which does not increase the wellbeing of ordinary New Zealand citizens.

Joan C McIntosh, *Palmerston North*

### mass participation

Read with much interest 'Year of Faith' issued by Dunedin Diocese and could not help but notice the many references to 'participation'. Attending Mass in North America on many occasions over the last 40 odd years I must say that the simple act of extending one's hands out with elbows bent whilst praying The Lord's Prayer as the entire congregations there do has always given me a 'participating' feeling that is greater than that felt by just the reciting that wonderful prayer aloud. One cannot help but notice the way the welcome additions to our parish from the Philippines perform this simple 'active participation'. Question is: Why have we not adopted this simple action of enhanced 'participation' and what must be done to implement it?

Michael Fenton, *Invercargill*

### the commodity of electricity?

Electricity is a commodity which is essential to rich and poor alike. It has therefore been supplied at cost by responsible governments before the reform. Private investment was not needed because development cost was built into the price structure.

But this so called reform was designed to make electricity a lucrative commodity of the market. Millions spent on litigation to gain a lion share of the market have now to be recouped through excessive charges.

However, it is inconsistent to blame business for this because business has only been doing what it does best; maximising profits.

Too bad for the less affluent who are freezing in cold homes. Government intervention is condemned as attacking business.

We now have a spectacle of endless debate over dealing with the damaging consequences of the reform, which is a waste of time while the fundamental cause is staring us in the face while being studiously ignored.

Frank Hoffmann, *Auckland*

# marriage and the call to discipleship

James Harding

As the third reading of the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill approached in April this year, I was aware of my deeply conflicted emotions about what the Bill signified, the level of public debate around it, and what its implications might be.

## my background

The reasons behind these conflicting emotions are several. I am an Anglican priest, recently ordained, part of a church that is going through a period of immense uncertainty around its understanding of sex and marriage, and in particular the ordination and licensing of those in same-sex relationships; yet also bound to uphold the particular understanding of marriage defined in the formularies and canons of the Anglican church.

I am also a biblical scholar, concerned with how relationships akin to what we would term 'marriage' are treated in the biblical texts, in the historical contexts that lie behind them, and in the differences between those texts and contexts and our own context now. Additionally, I am a single man who, were he in a relationship, would more likely be with a man than a woman, yet I have, nonetheless, become troubled by some of the more cavalier attitudes to the authority of Scripture and the Church that we see today.

I had no idea what I would feel as I listened to the speeches on April 17 and waited for the vote to be taken. On the one hand, I felt, and feel, deeply that those who are in committed same-sex partnerships, particularly those raising children, deserve precisely the same legal rights as those in opposite-sex partnerships. The issue is surely the quality of the commitment of partners to each other and to those dependent on their love and care, not the ways in



which they happen to share each other's bodies. I have been astounded, again and again, by the reactionary ignorance of many of those who aired their views against Louisa Wall's bill.

## use of the term 'marriage'

But I was also uneasy. It was most unclear to me why an allegedly secular society needed two separate institutions, civil union and marriage, and why equality would be best served by extending marriage to same-sex partners, rather than amending the legislation around civil unions. I sensed an increasing vagueness and sentimentality in the use of the term 'marriage', as if the only criterion for a valid marriage were the love of two partners, which is not how either the Catholic Church, or the various constituent churches of the Anglican Communion, have traditionally defined it.

Somewhat to my surprise, the only emotions I felt as the result of the vote was announced were relief and elation, together with a sense that, as a society, we were becoming a fraction more fair. So what do I think now? The tensions (not to say contradictions) have not gone away, but rather than try and achieve a false resolution of these, I will, instead, sketch some of the problems and issues that I think need attention.

A key problem is the term 'marriage' itself. Both opponents and supporters of same-sex marriage have got unhelpfully hung up on the word 'marriage', highlighting a basic problem of language. In England, the Archbishop

of York has said that, "We must not torture the English language. Marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman and that's marriage." In New Zealand, in defence of the view that marriage is not simply a contract between loving couples but the "comprehensive union (mental and physical, emotional and sexual) between a man and a woman," Rex Ahdar has written that "Marriage has a true essence, a fundamental core; it is a real phenomenon, not just a human invention or convention ... States recognise marriage; they do not invent it."

## bringing an historical view

These slightly different claims misconstrue the relationship between words, things, and ideas about things, as well as evincing a troubling lack of historical perspective. To take examples from my own field, it is not clear to what extent the relationships between many of the opposite-sex couples in the Bible are analogous to modern opposite-sex couples who are legally 'married'. In the Old Testament, which hardly reflects an unusual society in cross-cultural terms, a man gives his daughter to another man as his woman or wife (e.g. 1 Sam 18:27), and a man takes a woman from another man (e.g. Dt 22:13), apparently in exchange for a brideprice (e.g. Ex 22:16–17). Key issues could include property, tribal affiliation, and the securing of progeny, and it was certainly possible for a man to have more than one woman. The fundamental relationships were arguably between men — namely, fathers-in-law and sons-in-law — not between men and women. Furthermore, while sexual unions between men and women appear frequently in the Old Testament (beginning in Gn 2:24; 4:1), a mental and emotional union is found more clearly between men



(e.g. David and Jonathan in 1 Sam 18-20; 23:15-18; 2 Sam 1:19-27). Which of these relationships, if any, is actually 'marriage'?

### implications of the new act

The fact is that when the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013 becomes law on August 19, the gender of the partners will be irrelevant to the legal definition of 'marriage' in New Zealand, notwithstanding the fact that our language, and much of what it purports to describe, will continue to evolve. That raises a difficult issue for the Church, because the Church's understanding of marriage will be profoundly at odds with that of the state. This does not, however, entail that the Church's views on 'marriage' — or anything else — should take their cue from the state. One thing this Act has made us reconsider is just what it means to confess Jesus Christ in an essentially secular state.

A great deal of work now needs to be done on what it means to talk about Christian 'marriage', the solution to which I cannot anticipate; but for now let me suggest that for Christians, this is not the fundamental issue. The fundamental issues for us are neither marriage, nor family values (a most troubling notion), but the nature of personhood in the light of Christ, and the meaning of our call to discipleship.

### our nature in christ

First of all, as human beings, we are created "male and female" in the image of God (Gn 1:26-28), yet as Christians we must discern what it means to live in Christ Jesus, in whom, in some sense, something has radically altered and there is no longer "male and female" (Gal 3:28). Now these are difficult and contested scriptures, but it seems to me that whatever physical and emotional differences lead to us being labelled 'men' or 'women', these are of no import for our Christian identity.

Second, Jesus' teaching on 'marriage' in fact belongs to his teaching on adultery (Mt 5:27-28), divorce (Mt 19:2-9; Mk 10:2-12), discipleship (Mt 10:37-38; Lk 14:26-27), the resurrection (Mt 22:23-33; Mk 12:18-27; Lk 20:27-40), and the kingdom of heaven. It has no independent significance apart from these themes. Indeed, to be married is arguably to be living a life that is less than ideal for a Christian disciple (Mt 19:10-12).

### celibacy and friendship

Finally, much of the opposition to same-sex relationships in general has reflected our peculiar preoccupation with sex. Two things have got lost here: the profound vocation of celibacy (cf. Mt 19:10-12; 1 Cor 7:1-40), which is not simply abstinence from sex; and the deep significance of committed friendship (regardless of the gender of the friends, and aside from the nature and degree of their sexual involvement), which, amongst other things, offers

us healing from our aloneness. We should recall that human aloneness is the first thing about God's creation that God finds "not good" (Genesis 2:18). Perhaps what we really need is to begin to recognise the manifold ways in which God allows our aloneness to be healed, rather than reducing them to just the first (Gn 2:21-25). ■

*Dr James Harding is priest assistant at All Saints Anglican Church, North Dunedin, and lecturer in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies at the University of Otago.*

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# Belief in

An old story, history to take your breath away,  
right here where we stand.

A gate, a wall, a garden without birds,  
the great city a flaming pyre.  
Oblivion so complete,  
it draws us here a lifetime later  
to feel its reverberations  
and wander like distant relatives  
through a maze of memorials.

How does it happen?  
Not despair, but its opposite,

a whole new story,  
unfolding over time.  
The spilling sun.  
The return of the birds.  
The heart recreated  
in some inexplicable fashion  
as we all go on.

— *Michael Fitzsimons*





# Berlin



This Reconciliation sculpture is located at the Berlin Wall Memorial at Bernauer Strasse. It was created in 1977 by Josefine de Vasconcellos and was originally conceived in the aftermath of World War II. Said de Vasconcellos: "Europe was in shock, people were stunned. I read in a newspaper about a woman who crossed Europe on foot to find her husband, and I was so moved that I made the sculpture. Then I thought that it wasn't only about the reunion of two people, but hopefully about a reunion of nations which had been fighting." Bronze casts of the sculpture have also been placed in Coventry Cathedral, the Hiroshima Peace Park in Japan and Stormont Castle in Belfast. [Michael Fitzsimons]



# soft-boiled eggs at the brandenberg gate

*Berlin is a modern city rebuilt in large part. Every step of the way there are reminders of the past. It is a past that cannot ever be forgotten if we are not bound to repeat the bigotry and prejudice which haunt humanity. Human dignity, democracy and the rule of law require to be defended in every generation.*

Michael Fitzsimons

It has taken nearly 60 years to get here, but finally we set foot in the legendary city of Berlin. Rose and I are en route to a family wedding in Poland, staying a stone's throw from Alexanderplatz — the rambling public square formerly located in the Eastern Bloc.

We arrive on a chilly afternoon with the weather closing in. We venture out but not for long. As night falls, the lights from the landmark TV Tower — *Fernsehturm* — illuminate the mist outside our hotel window.

The next day is a new day, sunny and glorious. Our favoured approach is to cover as much of a city on foot as possible. I ask the man on reception how far to the Brandenburg Gate. A long way. "Two hours," he says, and to walk through the Tiergarten another two hours. Undaunted we set out on foot at dawn.

## berlin's history

History is laid bare in Berlin, and everywhere evident. Just a few minutes into our walk and we are at Lustgarten where in February 1933, 200,000 people protested against the new Nazi party regime. A few years later Hitler addressed mass rallies of up to 1,000,000 people right here. Today it is a tranquil scene of gardens and fountains.

Outside the Lustgarten there is a public exhibition, called *Destroying Diversity*. It is one of many similar displays around the city, created to mark 80 years since the founding of the National Socialist Party. These large photographic displays are a vivid reminder of crimes of discrimination committed under the Nazi regime. They present profiles of Jewish writers, artists, film-makers and independent thinkers who were

exiled or murdered by the Nazi regime. It's a big public statement of where prejudice leads.

We make our way up the famous Unter den Linden Boulevard with its distinctive lime trees. In less than an hour we are enjoying soft boiled eggs, toast and coffee beside the triumphal Brandenburg Gate.

## sinti-roma memorial

On the far side of the gate, towards the Reichstag, there is a garden memorial to the 500,000 Sinti and Roma who were persecuted and butchered in World War II. In the other direction lies the Holocaust Memorial — 2,000 concrete slabs arranged in grid formation on a sloping city landscape. Walking through this grim memorial is like going down into the grave.

We emerge into the wonderful, green light of the Tiergarten. Strollers and bikers are everywhere in this vast inner-city park. Couples line the banks of the river, people are sun-bathing, there is not a breath of wind.

## inspired by chartres

We swing round the western end of the gardens and get lost for a while before coming across another kind of monument, the striking Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. The original Romanesque-style church was bombed in an air raid in 1943. Due to public pressure, the scorched spire of the old church has been left untouched and now sits alongside a modern octagonal chapel and tower, made of concrete, steel and glass. From the outside it is an incongruous



A recent garden memorial to Roma and Sinti executed by the Nazi regime. It is situated right beside the Reichstag in modern Berlin.



**Destroying Diversity** – 80 years after Hitler came to power, this exhibition presents the stories of some of the victims of exclusion and discrimination under the Nazi regime.

mix, from the inside the concrete honeycomb with its stunning blue stained glass panels is intensely beautiful. I am not surprised to read that the windows were inspired by



The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Chapel sits alongside the old church's scorched spire – left exactly as it was after an Allied air raid in 1943.

the magnificent blue windows of Chartres Cathedral. A resurrected Jesus is suspended above the altar.

### the berlin wall

The other great historic reality memorialised everywhere in Berlin is, in mayor Will Brandt's words, the 'Wall of Shame'. The Berlin Wall was finally overwhelmed in 1989 and only a few bits remain these days — including a touristy Checkpoint Charlie and a much more evocative and sombre memorial in Bernauer Strasse. This site was once lined with apartment blocks from which people leapt to death or freedom in the West. In all, 5000 people attempted escape from the East, with a death toll estimated at more than 600.

### never forgetting

This commitment to never forgetting, to wholehearted public confession, is a hallmark of modern Berlin. A Dutch couple we meet that evening in a bar think it is overdone but I am not so sure. Berlin's determination to keep shining a torch into the shadows, to keep before a society what individuals and societies are capable of, seems commendable vigilance against discrimination.

Next day, standing on the former 'death strip' of the Berlin Wall, and above the remains of bunkers from the Nazi regime, we

come across another public display. This one includes a rationale for all this raw honesty.

"The candid examination and analysis of Germany's past is one of the greatest achievements of our political culture and the basis for our self-image as a nation in a free Europe. In this context, the meaning of human dignity, democracy and the rule of law must always be emphasised and defended."

These days, Berlin is a world city of culture, politics, learning and science. The war generation has almost passed away. The integration of east and west continues at speed. The melting pot of modern Berlin continues to be stirred by competing and, at times, extreme political philosophies.

### battling bigotry always

On our last night in Berlin we go for a long walk, looking for a dinner that does not include a German sausage. My last memory of the city is of the two policemen we can see stationed outside the synagogues and Jewish buildings — a reminder that the battle against bigotry and prejudice never ends. Not in Berlin, not anywhere. ■

*Michael Fitzsimons is a freelance journalist, editor and partner in Fitzbeck Creative, a Wellington design and publishing house.*



St Mary of the Cross McKillop  
Foundress  
Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart

# fusion into a re

*In a remarkable journey of overcoming mis-  
congregations, both known as 'Josephites',  
charisms were recognizably those which St M  
and lovingly identified. Now the 'fusion' w  
Two sisters, one from each of the  
what this may*

Eleanor Capper

*Brown Josephite*

In a recent address to the participants of the International Union of Superiors General, Pope Francis welcomed them with these words:

"I am glad to meet you today and I wish to greet each one of you and thank you for all you do to ensure that the consecrated life is always a beacon on the Church's journey."

The beacon for the Congregations of the Sisters of St Joseph is the fact that after many years of separation, due to the issue of central government on the one hand and diocesan jurisdiction on the other, these differences in canonical status will, at last, be resolved.

The Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart have recently welcomed into their midst, through fusion, the Sisters of St Joseph from Tasmania and the Sisters of St Joseph from Goulburn. Indeed, the Whanganui Sisters of St Joseph are the third group to seek this change of canonical status.

Fusion, also called merger, occurs when one institute, generally a smaller one, joins another larger institute in such a way that the first is incorporated into the second, taking its name and constitutions. In reality, the religious members do not arrive empty-handed, but bring the gift of their charism with them, thus enriching the Institute with which they are merging.

Over the years it has not been a case of who was right and who was wrong, but a gradual, albeit painful, search for what is common to us all. Our unity is in our charism, not our structures. Saint Mary MacKillop wrote: "In our unity lies, under God, our strength." Unity thus becomes a powerful symbol and the various congregational documents reveal a common spirit and vision for mission. This has been born out in the lived experience of all Sisters of St. Joseph: living in small communities, the education of poor children in isolated areas, hardships of distance, prayer life, deprivation of Mass, simple living and a sense of poverty.

From the mid-1960s, when Vatican II called all religious to return to the original inspiration behind their religious institutes, the links were welded into a stronger chain through the deepening awareness of the history and spirit we hold in common.

Since then there have been numerous gatherings of leaders of Josephite Congregations to discuss ways of working together. In the 1990s joint seminars, retreats and other gatherings were organised, a Josephite newsletter was published, the first Josephite calendar was produced, possibilities for sharing ministries across all Josephite groups were discussed, and a combined novitiate

was formed. Furthermore, issues of social concern were raised and efforts made to meet the needs as they arose.

With the formalities almost over, the challenges that lie ahead will engage our combined energies. For the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, warm hearted acceptance of the merging groups in a spirit of hospitality and welcome must prevail. We have come so far on this journey and in the words of T.S. Eliot, "such a long journey: the ways deep and the weather sharp."

May we the Sisters of St Joseph, a merged Congregation, strive to centre our lives on Christ and on his Gospel as Pope Francis reminded all religious of their place in the Church when he stated:

"It is Christ who called you to follow him in the consecrated life and this means continuously making an "exodus" from yourselves in order to centre your life on Christ and on his Gospel. The exodus leads us on a journey of adoring the Lord and serving him in our brothers and sisters. To adore and to serve: two attitudes that cannot be separated, but must go hand in hand." ■

*Tui Motu offers prayerful support to the Sisters of St Joseph on this significant occasion, and is grateful for the role of the sisters in the ongoing life of the magazine.*



# newed charism

Understanding and separation, two religious  
will fuse on 24 August 2013. Their separate  
Mary of the Cross McKillop had painstakingly  
will enkindle Mary McKillop's dream anew.  
The fusing congregations, reflect on  
mean for them.

Fr Julian Tennison Woods  
Founder  
Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth

Catherine Shelton

*Black Josephite*

On the 24th August 2013, the Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth, Whanganui, celebrate publicly their *kiritahitanga* — fusion or merger with the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. They cease to be a separate congregation and let go of their deeply cherished constitutions, emblem and governance structure. So, what's to celebrate, you might ask. Their response: "Everything."

The separation of the 'diocesan' Sisters of St Joseph from the original Institute of Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart in 1876 resulted in fractured relationships, deep hurt, mutual mistrust and alienation that would last for decades. Mostly, it was about misunderstanding, and the key players in the drama doing their best to live out, albeit in irreconcilable ways at the time, the integrity of their personal convictions. Positively, the separation also resulted in the formation of six distinct congregations whose rich diversity has gifted Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond with uniquely 'flavoured' expressions of Gospel living that were, nevertheless, always recognisable as essentially 'Josephite.' The Whanganui congregation was one of these.

This is a story of home-coming — a 147 year pilgrimage — a slow, spiritual *te wā* or journey-in-time towards a profoundly life-changing decision,

impossible to force, rush or hold back. Many *kairos* or defining moments have peppered this meandering century-long pilgrimage until, in October 2012, we could finally say "*Kua tae ki te wā ... kua tutuki*" — the moment has arrived ... the time is now ... this sacred quest for unity, reconciliation and a new creation is, we trust, God's work for God's purposes; this is the right time to do the right thing.

Like all of creation, with which we are kin, Sisters of St Joseph are pilgrims on this Earth — in a constant evolutionary state of becoming. A largely unconscious journey at first, the pathway to unity over the years steadily gained conscious momentum, until first one, then two, then three Federation Congregations, yearning for the 'holy ground of home,' sought merger or fusion with the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. What gracious aroha, joy and warm hospitality met these requests, as Josephites around the world stood in awe of the work of the Spirit among us.

The Universe Story, within which we live our Josephite story, has inspired us in our own birth, death and rebirth story. Things build up, break down and fall apart. Life rises and falls. Stars come to birth as hydrogen atoms fuse to form helium — creating heat, light and huge outpourings of energy. Eventually,

they burn down and collapse to a pinpoint, all formerly defining features surrendered. This could be the end of the story, but out of nowhere, neutrinos, the tiniest particles of the universe, insert themselves into the minutest of spaces in this highly condensed mass and blow the star apart. The explosion generates all the elements necessary for new and diverse forms of creation.

We now anticipate a pouring forth of creative energy into new patterns of relatedness following upon our surrender of much of what has defined us and warm reception into the welcoming community of Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. If fusions are the source of energy in the universe, the newly configured Congregation will spill over with the generative energy of mutually enhancing relationships into a future full of hope and new life.

As pilgrims do, we shall travel lightly, leaving behind what we do not need, but taking with us what we have to offer, engaging the whole of ourselves in the journey. We have taken time to remember and celebrate the sacred events, places and persons that have brought us to this juncture on the road. Saint Mary of the Cross reminds us: "We are but travellers here." And so, we move on to continue our life's journey, the pilgrimage rekindled. ■



# interview with sr joan chittister osb

*The Benedictine sister, author, and international lecturer talks about evolutionary theology, contemplative prayer, and the greatest evil in today's world.*

Alicia von Stamwitz

Never mind that she has a dozen honorary doctorates and a dizzying number of international awards, nor that she lectures alongside some of our generation's spiritual supernovas, like the Dalai Lama. Joan Chittister, the globe-trotting Benedictine nun and prolific author from Erie, Pennsylvania, is worth watching for the same reason any serious Christian is worth watching. She's a transformed person, and transformed people have a habit of transforming other people.

Joan is a social psychologist with a doctorate in communications theory

and a contemplative's keen eye. To many, she is a beacon of hope. Be forewarned, though: this is not your grandma's holy-card kind of hope. Joan is pious — six decades in a convent will do that to you — but her piety is laced with the potent, wildly exciting insights of modern science.

Some will warn you to keep your distance from “that radical, feminist nun.” Don't mind them. Read her words and decide for yourself if this woman is dangerous or delightful. As Joan herself puts it, “We sisters are not radical. We are highly traditionalist. All of us. That's what got us where we are.

We are not where we are because we don't believe what we were taught. We are here because we do believe it.”

Joan was interviewed for *Tui Motu* via Skype from Benetvision, a resource and research center for contemporary spirituality in Erie that she founded and directs. She also serves as co-chair of the Global Peace Initiative of Women, a partner organization of the United Nations, and she is a regular columnist for the U.S. newspaper *National Catholic Reporter*.

**Q1 You've been speaking about theology and evolution lately. Can you tell us about that?**

Science has become one of the spiritual teachers of our era. We're living in a completely different world now from when I was a child. We have to ask ourselves, Who is God in an evolutionary world?

We have to get over our old ways of thinking about heaven, hell, and maturity. For example, you don't tell seven-year-olds, “You cannot sin.” You tell them to try not to sin, but you have to know that they will make mistakes because evolution is quite clear: mistakes are built right into the process of our growing. Mistakes are there so we can become more mature tomorrow than we are today. We need to have the wisdom to recognize that because of our failings, we have learned a great deal about life. We're called to take that learning and to become more and more grounded in the love of God and in the following of Jesus.

So we're moving, you see, from one world and the spirituality that it engendered — so much pain, and a very rigorous, even neurotic acceptance of asceticism — into a cosmos that is pure delight, all about possibility and



Sr Joan Chittister

development. In that new spirituality, creation is a work-in-progress and God shares responsibility for the work with the human race. Our job is to make the earth just like the “Our Father” says: as close to heaven as we can get it.

## **Q2 So you have hope for the future?**

Yes. But we have to stop thinking in terms of systems and begin to think in terms of ongoing creation. We’re all here as co-creators. God left the world unfinished so you and I could do our part. If we don’t step forward, there will be holes in this life. When we are one with God’s creative intention and activity, then we’re moving into holiness. That is sanctity. That is the beginning of union with God.

It’s a wonderful moment to be alive! But soon we’ll begin to see gaps between a theology of the past and a theology of the future. In the theology of the past, it’s all about me. It’s a kind of spiritual narcissism that places us at the center of the universe and describes God as a ‘gotcha’. God who waits for us to make a mess of things so we can be condemned to hell forever. But the theology of the future describes God as a summoning God who is saying, Grow! Grow! Follow me and grow! Find me. Come. I’m waiting for you. I’m right here. I’m with you. I’ll help you. You have nothing to fear. We’re in this together because you and I are going together now, creating this world.

## **Q3 If readers are moved by your words, where can they go to learn more?**

My monastery! Seriously, I believe religious communities have a lot to share. Many of them are taking in lay people now, and there’s such a nice movement between us. People visit monasteries and experience the depth of the spiritual life there, and then they take it out; they carry it back to their own parishes, their neighborhoods, their families. So my advice is: Find an intentional community near you. Find a group whose members are talking about technology and exploring the new demands being made by scientific

and social changes.

For example, when I was a little kid we were taught that you couldn’t go into somebody else’s church because that would be a mortal sin. Now, we are beginning to realize that we’re all in this together, and that our respect for one another is biblical. You and I have a lot to learn from the Jewish tradition, the Protestant tradition, the Buddhist tradition, and the Hindu tradition. We have much to learn about the Face of God from the many faces God has taken in this world.

Life is rich with God, thick with God, full of God. God is not here to terrify us, to drive us away, to destroy us, to ignore us, or to make us suffer. God says, “I have come that you may have life — and have it more abundantly.” That’s where it’s at. That’s where God is.

## **Q4 What is the role of religious life today?**

There’s something about religious life, especially religious life for women, that is yet to be completely understood. The role of religious life is always to live the gospel at the grassroots, to be where the people are, to be where the issues are, and to be more concerned about the gospel on the streets of the world than about the custody of institutions.

The liturgy of the church belongs to the church itself, and the sacraments of the church are priestly acts. But the role of religious is to be a bridge between the streets and the sacristies. To take the sacristy to the streets, and to bring the people in the streets to the sacristy. That is our spirituality.

## **Q5 How does your own Benedictine community reach out to people on the streets?**

When the murder rate began to rise in Erie, the Benedictine Sisters began a street liturgy in Erie called “Take Back the Site” to honor homicide victims and to “reconsecrate to life” the land where the bodies had been found. If your son was murdered on 9th and Ash, for example, the sisters went there with as many people as they could gather, and they held a prayer service,

a “living liturgy” of psalms, hymns and prayers for the family.

Now, hundreds of people come, and two other religious communities have joined us. Families look forward to it, because it is publicly comforting to them in the face of their public humiliation and pain.

## **Q6 Can you say more about prayer?**

All I know about prayer is that it gets deeper and more real every day. We Benedictines say that the contemplative is the person who sees the world the way God sees the world. Prayer comes through the eyes. What do you see when you look at the world? When you try to see the world as God sees the world, you open yourself to the movement of the spirit, the presence of God.

In the Scriptures, you see Jesus walking from Galilee to Jerusalem healing the sick, contending with the officials, and raising the dead. He did not allow despair to take over. He did not leave death in his path. He raised death every time he saw it. And he has not stopped. He has not stopped because he now functions in us. So when you see the world as God sees the world, when you see the trip from the temple to the street through the eyes of Jesus, then you’re very, very aware of the movement of the spirit, the presence of God. That is prayer.

## **Q7 In times of struggle, what helps you remain faithful?**

I really believe in the Holy Spirit, and I really believe in creation. I believe that some of us who are at turning points in history, moved by the spirit and committed to an ongoing creation, will suffer dearly for that commitment. Some will indeed be rejected and declaimed. I have no doubt about it, because that’s the nature of change.

But having said that, I do not think of us as a people of the cross. I think of us as a people of the empty tomb. Alleluia people. People who go through whatever you have to go through to be part of the salvation

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*continued on page 27 . . .*



# arius, the blessed heretic

*In the second of this ten-part guide to church history, we look at one of the most influential thinkers in the whole of Christian history. From Arius' musings about the person and nature of Jesus sprang the doctrine that Jesus is God, co-equal with the Father. It took the ecumenical council of Nicaea to settle this doctrine. Arius was its catalyst.*

*We remember this fact each time we recite the Nicene Creed.*

Dan Stollenwerk

*Hear O Israel!  
The LORD our God,  
the LORD is one.*

All good Jews recite daily this foundation of revelation. They teach it to their children. They put it as a sign on their hands, their brow, even their door. God is one. There is only one God. Monotheism. God alone!

Who, then, is Jesus? Arius asked. Is Jesus also God? Does that mean there are two gods?

Arius (256–336) was a devout, dynamic, intelligent, high standing priest in the church of Alexandria, one of the most vibrant cities of the Roman Empire about 300 years after the birth of Christ. It bothered Arius that the most fundamental of Judeo-Christian beliefs, the heart and soul of Judeo-Christianity, was being flouted by so many people. Even by his bishop — one Alexander of Alexandria — who in his homilies spoke of the equality of the Father and Son.

There is only one God, Arius insisted. St. Paul implied the same. In his letter to the Colossians the apostle to the Gentiles said that Jesus is the first born of all creation. If he was the first born, then — according to

Arius — “there was a time when the Son was not”.

In other words, Arius maintained, Jesus was created. He was the best of all creation, a perfect creation. None would surpass him. Call him Lord if



Ceiling mosaic of the Arian Baptistry, Ravenna, Italy.

you wish. Call him high priest, Lamb of God, even son of God. Such titles are most befitting of the first and perfect creation. But, according to Arius, Jesus must never be placed on a par with the uncreated Father. Christianity does not worship two Gods. Hear O Israel! The LORD our God the LORD is one.

What began as a dispute between priest and bishop in Alexandria soon spread throughout the empire. It would seem, in fact, that perhaps half the Christians in the empire were Arian.

If he cared at all, Emperor Constantine would probably have called himself Arian as well. But higher than personal belief was his obligation to maintain unity. He had earlier

come to the conclusion that it was no use persecuting Christians. They were growing too fast. From Milan, in 313, he had issued an edict that Christianity was now legal. If the empire could not unite under the Roman gods, perhaps it could under the Christian God.

But now these Christians were fighting amongst themselves as to whether, in fact, Jesus was God.

Constantine wanted none of this Christian quarrelling. He wanted unity. In 325 he assembled Arius, Alexander and some 300 Bishops from East and West in his summer palace in the small village of Nicaea in what is today north-western Turkey. The young deacon, Athanasius of Alexandria, also

*The Hitchhiker's Guide to*  
**CHURCH HISTORY**

in attendance, would ultimately voice the orthodox position. Constantine gave the instructions: Those assembled were to sit down, argue it out, rattle on as they pleased. What did he care? But they were to figure out the Christian position.

The result, of course, was the Nicene Creed which is recited at Sunday Mass and still binds together in common belief Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, and most Protestant denominations.

The creed declared that Jesus was begotten of the Father. That was true. But 'begat' did not mean 'created'. Jesus was not created. He was 'not made'. Like the Father he was uncreated. The Nicene Creed made it clear: Jesus is God.

After the council Arius was defrocked and exiled from Alexandria. He eventually made his peace with Emperor Constantine and even signed his agreement to the Nicene Creed — though some say those parts of the document he did not like he simply whited out. As fate would have it, on the night before he was to re-enter the Church and celebrate the Liturgy, he died in the most disconcerting of circumstances, while answering the call of nature.

Despite or because of its gritty history, the Nicene Creed remains a milestone for Christianity. Bishops in ecumenical council exercised their authority to interpret scripture. The New Testament writers may have used metaphor to describe the indescribable: Who is Jesus? But when Arius interpreted those metaphors literally, the Council of Nicaea called him to task.

Although Arius comes down in history as the greatest of heretics, his service to the Church should not be forgotten. Once he asked in precise philosophical language whether Jesus was created or uncreated, the Church had to respond in kind. Arius forced the Church to move from the metaphorical "picture language" of Jesus in Scripture to affirm what was true.

Later councils would further clarify the relationship of Jesus both to humanity and to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is one person with two natures — one human, one divine — that do not mix. But all that would come later. It was Nicaea that set the stage for the further development and it was ultimately Arius — heretic that he was — that forced the Church to clarify her position on the trinity. In the end — in accordance with that most fundamental of Judeo-Christian revelation — the Church would declare in creed: "We believe in one God." ■

*Dan Stollenwerk is the Head of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at St Peter's College, Auckland.*



## MESSAGE FROM HIROSHIMA

Survivors Shigeko Sasamori – 13 years  
Michimasa Hirata – 8 years old  
The sixth of August, nineteen forty-five, 8.15 am.

Sixty seven years later,  
Shigeko, eighty years, tiny, scar-scorched  
With a childlike joy for life  
Engages all who watch, transfixed, and  
Listen to the Searing testament of survival.

The hell of man-detonated atomic fission –  
A nuclear reality so far from  
The fun-filled fashion of anti-nuclear flag wavers.

On this day – Transfiguration – PIKA – white flash  
Black-irradiate; Dante's Inferno  
Reduces to shadows and fossils and living agony  
The persons and soul of Hiroshima, man and creation.  
A blight continuing  
Generation upon generation.

Yet  
The spirit of child wonder,  
Love of life for all – shining, so beautiful –  
As a candle of living hope,  
Divine in defiance,  
Transcending with the voice of a prophet  
Appealing for peace – NO MORE NUCLEAR.

– Bronwen Muir ofs (August 2012)



Two survivors of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, Shigeko Sasamori and Michimasa Hirata, toured New Zealand during July–August 2012. One of the organisers of this tour, Bronwen Muir, wrote poetically of this experience.





# the great reversal

22nd Sunday in Ordinary time – Luke 14:1, 7-14

Kathleen Rushton

Jesus is at yet another meal. It is the Sabbath. He is going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees. They were watching him closely. There comes a man with dropsy, a disease characterised by a build-up of fluids. In a story very like that of the healing of the woman who was bent over and unable to stand up (13:10-17), Jesus asks: “Is it lawful to cure people on the Sabbath, or not?” Silence. Jesus healed the man. Silence. This is strange because “to remain silent” was taken generally for consent in legal matters.

## jesus told a parable

Jesus was surely a great guest who enjoyed company and wine. Yet, his actions and his words portray him often as an uncomfortable guest I may well hesitate to invite to a meal. In his mission to bring about the reign of God, more often than not, Jesus upsets perceptions. He sees what is going on and what is within. Some guests chose the places of honour at the table. He told them a parable. Now, a parable signals there is more at stake here than advice about how to behave at banquets.

Jesus tells a story which is not a pleasant tale that upholds the status quo. Rather, a parable is a puzzling world-turning-upside-down-story with unexpected twists. There are no neat or easy conclusions. Situations from ordinary life niggles and tease the hearer to imagine God and the reign of God in profoundly radical new ways. Jesus disturbs. He taps into the well-known feelings and values of honour and shame which were so prevalent in ancient society.

The illumination of Jesus and the disciples at the Last Supper from the sixth century Rossano Gospels helps

us to imagine the dining table and the seating arrangements. These are far removed from the medieval depictions of Jesus seated at the centre of a long table and from the circular tables surrounded by chairs which we find at wedding meals these days. We take our places according to name cards which group the guests appropriately. None of us would dare seat ourselves uninvited at the bridal table.

## seating at ancient tables

In the ancient Mediterranean world the usual way of dining was to recline on couches or mats arranged in a horseshoe-shape around a table. The diners lie on their left side and support themselves on their left elbow. The right hand is then free to take food as shown, in the illumination, by the person reaching into bowl.

Let's suppose there were nine diners. Three of them would be placed on each of three couches or mats arranged around three sections of a table. The couch or mat in the middle section across the top of the horseshoe shape was regarded as

the most honourable place. Of the three places on a couch or mat, the one to the left was the more honourable place, then the place in the middle and then the place on the right. So the most honourable place at table was the left position of this middle section. This was the place of honour. It was given to the most honoured guest. On that couch, no one reclined behind this guest. The couch next in honour was the one on that person's left. The couch or mat on the right side was held in least esteem. There the host and his family sat.

When I matched this description with the sixth century depictions of the Last Supper from the Rossano Gospels (below) and from one in the Basilica of Sant' Apollinare Nuova in Ravenna, I was surprised or really should I have been? Where is Jesus? He is in the least honourable place, the right side of the couch on the right side of the table! He is the host. Ancient art, like the parable, turns upside down what I have imagined influenced by those medieval depictions that have Jesus in the centre of table in an assumed place of honour.



Illumination from the sixth century Byzantine Rossano Gospels illuminated manuscript, considered to be the earliest surviving illustrated New Testament. (6th century)



Jesus' parable tells of guests who have taken a higher place and then are asked by the host to move to a lower place. This would incur immense shame and loss of face in a culture arranged around the values of honour and shame. To be invited by the host to move to a place of greater honour, would increase one's honour.

### the great reversal

The parable recalls that great reversal which is at the heart of the reign of God. In the Magnificat, Mary proclaims that the lowly are lifted up and the mighty are cast down from their thrones (1:52–53). The Beatitudes (6:20–26), also, present the reign of God in this light.

Jesus follows up our parable by

saying (14:12–14) that when invitations to a banquet are sent out it is better not to invite your family or friends or rich neighbours who can return your hospitality. Instead invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind who cannot return the invitation or repay in any way. The one who offers such hospitality to them now will be welcomed into the everlasting hospitality of God.

Jesus was tapping again into his listeners' experience of their ordinary world. The patronage system was the oil on which the Greco-Roman world ran. The rich and the influential would curry favour with citizens in return for support, respect and to ensure obligations were fulfilled. To promote their influence, the well-to-do would invite notable dignitaries and lesser people to

a lavish banquet. There was a payback factor involved for such invitations ensured loyalty, mutual benefits and further invitations.

Jesus' parable questions and unsettles. What does it mean? How does one respond? Where is my place at table? What are our places at table? When we have places of honour, do we advocate for and speak on behalf of another? Or do we curry favour with elites, keep silent, comply and be complicit? Do we link the rich with the poor? Who do we invite to our banquet? Who is not at our table? ■

*Kathleen Rushton is a Sister of Mercy working in adult education in the Diocese of Christchurch.*

## interview with sr joan chittister osb

... continued from page 23

story. I believe that if your heart knows something is right, or your mind knows something is true, and you act out of love, refusing to attack anyone, in the end it will be right.

You start by assuming that everyone wants what you want, but others might see the way forward differently. And that's all right. We have fourteen Rites in the Roman Catholic Church, because we have forever recognized the fact that people often come to the same truth by different means.

### Q8 More personally, what do you, Joan, cling to in tough times?

The New Testament. The Jesus story and my real honest-to-God belief that there is a God, here present, with me, with you, in us, and leading us on. We're stumbling, we're making a terrible mess of things, we take one step forward and ten steps back — but I get up every morning to reclaim those steps I lost.

Oh, I get tired. I get weary. I get frustrated. But at the same time, every day of my life — well, not every day, but from a certain point in my life

when I became conscious of these things in a very personal way — I have never ceased to know the presence of God. And I know it partly because of my religious community. We always maintain that the strength of the Erie Benedictines is that we are never all down at the same time. There's always somebody "dragging us up" to where we were before!

### Q9 From a global perspective, what do you think is the most dangerous heresy or evil facing the world today?

I think the greatest evil starts with the suppression of any peoples. When any group feels that they have the right to destroy, enslave, suppress, or ignore any other part of the human race, God is not there.

I do a lot of work with women, and when you look around and realize what is happening to the women of the world because they are women — because someone, somewhere, has decided that women need less, want less, or deserve less — that has to be evil. That has to be wrong. I don't care what reason you give for it: once you

refuse to allow other human beings to develop to the fullness of themselves, that's the epitome of evil. And it is residual in every single society. You can call it by any name you want — racism, sexism, classism — that is the great evil that we perpetrate on one another. And if you and I sit back and say nothing about it, we're part of it.

### Q10 You've been described as a prophet and a mystic. I wonder what you think of that.

I believe that we're all called to union with God. I believe that we're all called to speak the word of God in ungodly places and to ungodly situations. So my answer is that we're all called to be prophets and mystics. The important thing is that you know who you are at all times. Be who you are at all times! Never let any words seduce or confuse you. Put the center of your heart in the hands of God and you will be fine. ■

*Alicia von Stammwitz lives in St. Louis, Missouri from where she works as a freelance author and editor mainly with the religious press.*

# not poverty – inequality is the problem

## Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis

Edited by Max Rashbrooke

Publisher: Bridget Williams Books,

2013. RRP: \$39-99

ISBN: 9781927131510

Reviewer: Eileen Brown

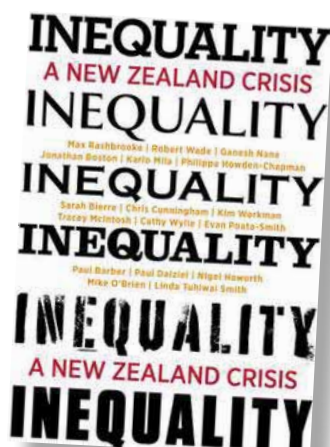
The launch of a book focusing on the growth of inequality in Aotearoa/New Zealand is particularly welcome given the significant level of interest in Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett's book, *The Spirit Level* (2009), which examined the growth of inequality at a global level.

While there is a growing debate about the growth of poverty in New Zealand, the growth of inequality has not shared the same attention. Reducing inequality is both more politically threatening and, for some, personally challenging.

The aim of this book is to examine the story behind New Zealand's huge growth in income inequality. Fifteen specialists in their own fields: journalists, academics and researchers have contributed chapters to this book in its four sections: a description of inequality, the context of inequality, the consequences and impacts of inequality and a final section with five authors outlining their views on how to achieve a more equal society in New Zealand.

Three introductory chapters set the scene and examine in depth the concentration of income and wealth in New Zealand and tell a story hitherto untold. Interwoven through the book are 15 vignettes. Many of them are interviews with people describing their experiences of poverty and life on the margins. Others are view points from the perspective of people seeing the direct impacts of poverty and inequality.

This book provides a mine of information and data about the current state of inequality and growth of poverty in New Zealand. Authors in the various



chapters provide the backstory in their own areas of expertise with very rich material from their own writings, research and reflections.

*Inequality: a New Zealand Crisis* is a book amenable to delving in and out of and does not require to be read in a start-to-finish sitting. Many readers will have familiarity with the issues and relate to the context in which it is set. A number of chapters sit well on their own for analysis and discussion with students, unions, community groups, book clubs and social justice groups.

I had expected that the book would conclude with a set of policy responses or actions. But it doesn't. In his introduction, Max Rashbrooke, the editor, articulates thoughtfully that this book does not attempt to have a single philosophical approach or a unifying and agreed set of conclusions. In his words — "it is a discussion starter". I think that was a good call. Not having an established set of solutions enables more space for this conversation.

This book provides information and background to start having more conversations and also to augment the work on inequality started by a number of social justice-focussed groups and people in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The book will initiate discussion, be challenging, increase awareness and can build energy and impetus to a better understanding of inequality, the effects of inequality and the steps needed to reduce inequality in Aotearoa/New Zealand. ■

*Eileen Brown is the policy analyst/  
programme organiser for the  
New Zealand Council of Trade Unions,  
Wellington.*

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A Conference presented by  
the Justice and Peace Commission, Catholic Diocese of Auckland  
Te Komihana Rongomau, Paetika, Te Taumata o te Hahi Katorika  
in partnership with Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand

**KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:** Mark Richards, Caritas Chair, and  
Kitty McKinley, Founder of Challenge 2000  
**MC/COMMENTATOR:** Mike Riddell, writer, director of *Insatiable Moon*

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# a study in black and white



## Film: White Lies

**Director:** Dana Rotberg

**Reviewer:** Paul Sorrell

**W**hite Lies is a powerful piece of cinema that, like a parable or fable, simplifies a complex reality to reveal the powerful spiritual and social forces underlying New Zealand society. Based on the novella *Medicine Woman* by Witi Ihimaera and set in the small Tuhoe community of Te Urewera in the 1920s, the story works by setting up multiple oppositions — Māori vs Pākehā, poverty vs wealth, spirituality vs materialism, community vs isolation, town vs marae.

Paraiti (Whirimako Black), a traditional Māori healer and midwife, is called on to perform an abortion on Rebecca Vickers (Antonia Prebble), a rich and haughty young white woman who lives in a big house with her Māori maid, Maraea (Rachel House). Both women live in fear of the imminent return of Mr Vickers, a man of power and influence, who knows nothing of his wife's unwanted pregnancy. After Paraiti's attempt to assist a pregnant young Māori woman, Aroha, was harshly rebuffed — mother and baby die in childbirth — she now sees an opportunity to 'right a wrong'. Paraiti agrees to perform the termination, but only on condition that she keeps the child, dead or alive.

As the story progresses, the three women become locked in a bitter battle of wills. With a minimal cast, and with the action unfolding in a series of static tableaux, director Dana Rotberg presents us with something more like a stage drama than a conventional film. The cinematography by Alun Bollinger lends a restrained lushness and luminosity to the most harrowing scene. When Rebecca's baby is delivered in an outhouse, the dramatic play of light and dark gives the action a biblical resonance.


In terms of plot, *White Lies* contains a procession of wrenching twists and revelations that hold us rivetted to the screen. Despite the racial oppositions set up — Pākehā are depicted as uniformly callous and contemptuous of Māori, whereas Māori are shown in

deep harmony with their culture and the land, except for those who betray their race — the theme of Māori connectedness to the earth through the very fact of birth (earth and placenta are signified by the same term, *whenua*) emerges strongly. Paraiti speaks of the womb as the primal void, the source of all creation. As she caresses the rounded bellies of both Aroha and Rebecca, she might be the Spirit brooding over the creation of the world.

It is this mystical element that draws *White Lies* into the realm of fable, even legend, and puts the crude racial and social stereotypes into perspective. Others may disagree and find the whole conception simplistic. Either way, people will be talking about this remarkable film for some time to come. ■

## Catholicism

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# Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

## economic sense

Japan has been in economic recession. Some economists judge Japanese economic resurgence advantageous for the world in general. Because consumer spending accounts for 60 percent of the economy it is considered essential to encourage private consumption. The *NZ Herald* quotes market economist, Toru Suehiro, "The challenge will be to open the wallets of the so-called enlightened generation who ... learned to save rather than buy things they don't need." Crazy? Yes, but logical in a world where "the market knows best".

## education

Words like education have different implications for different people. So do all manner of situations and events to which we attach meaning. This is because of the varying formative influences that begin from birth, continue throughout our lives and, for the most part, colour our outlook, often quite unconsciously. Our perspectives are influenced by our personal life journey.

Education is a lifelong process. It can be divided in various ways. One division is into 'liberal' and 'radical'. The former reinforces social structures, either directly or indirectly, insofar as it helps prop up the socio-economic system, whereas the latter works towards change in social structures. For example, because of my philosophical beliefs I might study how to maintain the economic system that has brought about prosperity for some in NZ at the expense of a rapid increase in social inequality during the past thirty years. Or, out of pure self-interest, I may study to better my standard of living. On the other hand, if I judge the NZ social situation as defective I may seek to understand underlying causes and how to make a change. Part of this process requires insight into how I make judgements.

Catholic social teaching falls into the radical category. It is about trying to bring about a society where, as Pope Francis wrote in his first message to the leaders of the economically powerful nations of the world, "Money and other political and economic means must serve, not rule. Concern for the fundamental material and spiritual welfare of every human person is the starting-point for every political and economic solution and the ultimate measure of its effectiveness and its ethical validity."

Many people regard education solely as something teachers do in school. The NZ schooling system is under strain. Years ago schools tended to be rather like factories, turning out workers for industry. That met a need, but current and future needs are for workers (and managers) who can think. Increasing numbers of teachers realise the importance of teaching pupils how to learn independently. Teachers generally need to see themselves, and be regarded by others, as professionals. This requires some attitudinal changes both on the part of teachers and of the public, not to mention the government.

There is ample evidence that all children like to learn if given innovative ways to do so. But this tends to be subversive because if, from an early age people are taught to think, to question, they are less likely to accept the propaganda served up about happiness being equated with consuming "things they don't need".

## leadership

There are various types of leadership. Most are unspectacular, but they form the foundations for a society that is productive in more than merely economic terms. One example: school principals who enable teachers to provide innovative ways for children to learn how to learn and think critically. Then we have Nelson Mandela. He spearheaded

the struggle for political freedom, and the consequent access to fundamental human rights, and suffered harsh punishment. Mandela then led his followers to forego revenge, instead working to bring about reconciliation. This was a complete reversal of the attitude of the society that had hitherto dominated his country — in the context of world affairs, an astonishing decision. Nelson Mandela said: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Leaders must ensure that the needs of the entity they are responsible for are met. This requires clear objectives, corresponding practical plans for implementation, and oversight. It follows that awareness of one's own weaknesses is important, as is delegation of responsibility to those with the requisite ability — the micro-management approach is destructive. Thus Pope Francis, "The reform of the Roman Curia is something that almost all the cardinals sought ... I can't do the reform myself, these matters of management ... but the cardinals of the commission are going to carry it forward."

Oversight is normally performed by checking performance against employment criteria at regular intervals, and by taking corrective action (including dismissal) when necessary. On occasion the leader must exercise detailed oversight of a delegated function because of suspected hidden problems. Hence Francis' recent appointment of a group of people "in whose integrity he has trust" (from the official announcement) to have full access to every aspect of the Vatican Bank (IOR).

In my lifetime I have seen many instances of good leadership, with fruitful results. I have also seen appalling waste of resources, financial and human, because people in positions of leadership have neglected those elementary rules. ■

# the death of our daughter

Robert Considine

Each year in New Zealand we witness unnecessary deaths of many young people. For families and communities the trauma is always devastating. Many never recover. Twenty years ago on 3 August 1993, our family received the shattering news that Suzanne (my eldest daughter) had been killed at Outward Bound.

To try and describe the impact of her death at the time is beyond words: disbelief, numbness, emptiness, a primal chasm. Our vibrant, talented, creative 22 year-old Radio New Zealand journalist daughter was dead. Trish and I were to experience the ultimate parental nightmare.

Fortunately we lived in a large extended family and a post-Vatican II Catholic parish where Suzanne had grown up. The people of the parish, also deeply shocked, rose as one. Our parish priest, Father Kevin Burns, sat quietly at the centre of this 'hurricane' and enabled hundreds of parishioners, wider family, friends and colleagues to carry us through the grieving process. Sister Pauline O'Regan captured Suzanne's life in a brilliant panegyric which she delivered at her funeral. Hospitality, an overnight vigil including playback theatre in the Parish Church, a Marae visit and a magnificent sung Mass emerged from the unconditional love of the people of God. We did nothing alone.

We are often asked as parents what it is like to bury a child. The experience has taught us that for those who have had the experience no explanation is necessary and for those who have not had the experience, no explanation is possible.

We will never be over it. We have learnt to live with Suzanne in a new way.

- At the time of her death we couldn't pray. However we know we were blessed with extraordinary

grace. As people of God we were never alone.

- We celebrated Suzanne's life abundantly.
- We dealt fully with the cause of her death.
- We continue to honour her life. We talk about her often.
- People share their experiences.
- We live every day fully and with gratitude.
- Suzanne remains part of our family at all celebrations. A candle is always lit, a memory shared, laughter and sometimes tears following.

We all had a deep spirituality formed from our birth. Twenty years later we are all quite sure Suzanne is not far away. In our family we still miss her every day and talk about her often. She is present at every family gathering. We still read her letters and we laugh and cry. We feel very close to her. We wonder what she might have looked like at the age of 42. We assume she would have been a great broadcaster.

Her death changed our lives in ways which are almost too hard to name.

In my work with the Treaty of Waitangi she inspired the vision for my Treaty book, *Healing Our History*. We had to learn how to heal our trauma and forgive those who shared responsibility for her 'preventable' death.

Our faith was tested. We had to forgive God for taking our beautiful Suzanne.

Recently Suzanne's end of year, head girl, school speech surfaced. As we read it we laughed out loud and cried tears of joy. Here's what she said:

'One of the challenges the school needs to face is in the area of bi-cultural development. At no stage during my time here have I been taught to recognize that Māori are the Tangata Whenua of Aotearoa/New Zealand or have been encouraged to learn the Māori culture and language ... I would [also] like to see a situation here at this school where equal time and opportunity is offered to boys and girls in the classroom. That has not always been my experience ...'

Go, Suzanne! ■

**Robert Considine**  
**Robert@waitangi.co.nz**

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# a Mother's Journal

by Theresa Vossen

"I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live."

— George Bernard Shaw

This quote is inspiration, and a benchmark for my life. It is taken from my dear church youth leader, Peter Paardekoooper of North Dunedin, who, before he died, lived it so well. Now I try to live it also.

I have never lived as mindfully, or as reflectively as now — in my mid-thirties, with children aged five and seven. Time hasn't slowed, my day starts earlier than ever and is full of tasks, but my sense of time has. While young children create busyness, once the first five years pass, the sheer physicality of parenting is replaced by an easier pleasure — supporting little minds to navigate school and socialising; helping little hearts to learn compassion and little spirits to know their Creator. When this delightful stage arrives, there is more time to stop, and to reflect.

For me, this milestone also begged new questions. "What now?" You see,

eight years ago there was a pivotal moment in my life, a memory I tuck away in my heart and smile at sometimes. Eight years ago I made a very personal decision to be a fulltime mum. Despite loving my job, I had another dream. Was it a moment of foolishness, or of faith? I like to think I knew myself well, felt the world was my oyster. However, despite many others successfully negotiating career and children, I knew that juggling too many balls was not for me. "God will have something else for me to do one day," I said with certainty. I have never once regretted my decision.

So, today in 2013, with children off to school ... what shall I do now, Lord? ... Having already been heavily involved, for three years, in children's liturgy on Sundays, a parish playgroup seemed a logical ministry to consider — servicing the large parish and school in the rapidly growing Gold Coast, Queensland. Having experienced moving to a new country, knowing nobody except husband and children, I knew firsthand the loneliness and need for community that exist in any city. With 200 Baptisms a year, this is a large busy parish, but people still need a personal encounter with Christ to feel they belong.

The timing seemed right — wonderful volunteers slowly came forward and a playgroup association was joined for support. My background

as a physiotherapist, coupled with years of taking children to church-run groups led to the formation of "Musical Playgroup @SCP". Thirty minutes of developmental music, a 'God' song, good coffee and home baking incorporated into each week! The group has flourished and was full within one term! I smile seeing previous strangers chatting voraciously as mothers do best, and realise my three passions of community, children and spirituality are at work here.

Learning to balance "doing and being" is the ongoing challenge, and caring for my own household is always a priority. But some weeks it's not pretty, rushing out the door to get to school, set up, and be ready with a full spirit to sing by 9am! I am learning fast — to expect varied commitment — to delegate — to breathe deeply and enjoy the children — never to judge others.

These lessons are vital. I do want to be "thoroughly used up when I die" but like poet Robert Frost, "I have miles to go before I sleep, miles to go before I sleep ..." ■

*Theresa Vossen is the Tui Motu Facebook page administrator, a parishioner of Southport Catholic parish Queensland, and proudly from Dunedin, Aotearoa/NZ*

(Kaaren Mathias is on a well-deserved holiday this month. Thanks to Theresa for standing in for Kaaren.)

