Tui Motu

InterIslands

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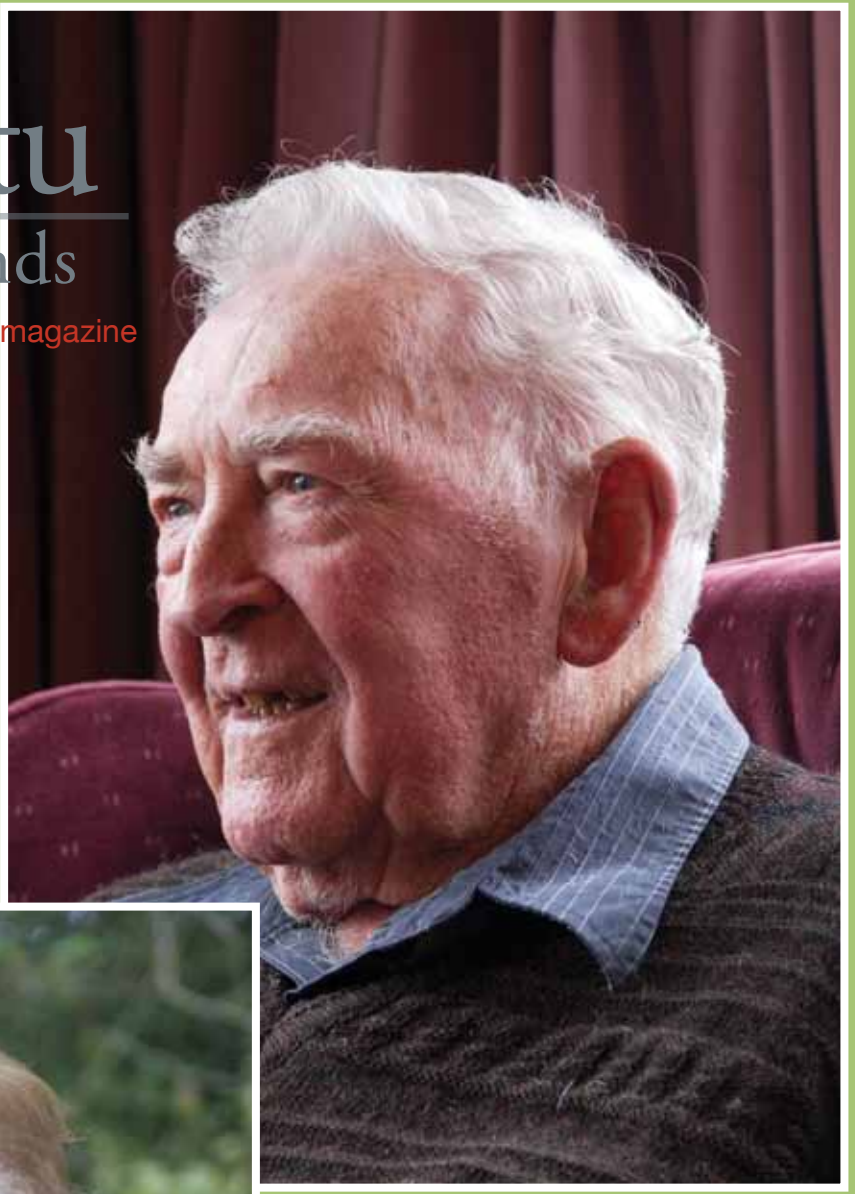

There's a time for every season under heaven...

ageing and dementia

There is a fine saying about preferring to be seventy years young than forty years old! What is most striking in Sister Pauline O'Regan's and Patricia Lainchbury's articles is the youth and vitality of their thought and writing. These two women know the idea of the proverb in spades — and they can give all seventy year olds a year or two! There is a feistiness and deep love undergirding all that they say, and their wisdom and humour are uplifting.

No less is the courage needed for all of us who face the mystery of dementia. For those who suffer the ravages of this disease, time tends to stand still or return to a more youthful and easier place, while we are left to battle with the full effects of this disease. It may cripple us, too, as we seek tentatively to find the best ways of approaching our suffering relatives and friends. Reading the articles on dementia by Clare House staff and Dr Jill McIlraith, and how they look after dementia patients with gentle humour and a full measure of love, cannot but give us hope and consolation. The articles also demonstrate how important the dynamics of expert care are; moreover and above that, how professionals often are drawn deeper in their ways of caring, simply because they have the great gift of being able to relate more closely. For carers, these patients become like family.

the general election

We are well and truly into the lead-up to the November general election, though its importance is overshadowed by the Rugby World Cup. One subject that needs careful attention is that of prisons. Kim Workman's take on how our Aotearoan culture had developed historically helps explain the nation's fearfulness when dealing with those who are different from us. Having played constantly on this fear as a vote-catcher, politicians of all stripes have now to work out how to deal with the cost of prisons. They are crippling our small economy. The Finance Minister's recent admission that growth in prisons and our prison numbers "represents a moral and fiscal failure" is crucial in looking at other credible ways of dealing with these questions. Rt Hon John Battle's article (*Tui Motu*, February) deserves rereading. It opens up good alternatives. The setting up of half-way houses would have the aim of reconnecting those released back to a strong community support base — as Jacqui Ryan reminds us serendipitously in her article, where she speaks of her positive experiences in this regard. Closely allied with this, the setting up of drug and alcohol clinics, for those caught in the re-offending cycle (to pay for their drug and alcohol problems), could bring long sought after social change, as well as significant cost savings.

Nicky Chapman's discussion of the problems of the huge lignite deposits in Southland has yet to hit the election radar. While this is fundamentally an environmental problem, she highlights holes in our legislative process which need to be attended to as well. The consultation process of allowing people to understand first and then react is an indispensable part of our democratic process. That takes time, however, and recent governments, both Labour and National, seem to prefer bypassing the drawn-out nature of the participative process in favour of the quick fix. As she says, we need the time to talk first.

Feistiness is a wonderful quality. May our faith-filled dealing with election issues be infused with a Spirit-given feistiness. ■ KT

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birth of a new nation

Several years ago the churches in New Zealand hosted a delegation from the New Sudan Council of Churches, representing all the churches in South Sudan. At the time of their visit Sudan was torn by a vicious civil war, in which the south was being attacked and controlled by the forces of the north. Other subsidiary conflicts further terrorized the population.

One member of the delegation was a wonderful Catholic Bishop, Paride Taban, who had co-founded the council of churches in the South. With simplicity and grace he spoke of the urgent need for peace and of his deep longing for reconciliation. He urged churches throughout our country to join the Sudanese in prayer for a lasting peace after almost half a century of conflict, in which over two million lives had been lost.

Now retired from the Diocese of Torit, Bishop Taban heads an ecumenical village, established in a remote area under the name of Trinity Peace Village Kuron. There he continues to express in very practical ways the longing for peace which was his constant message during his time in New Zealand.

Bishop Taban, along with all the Catholic Bishops of South Sudan, is calling on the church throughout the world to join in a novena of prayer around the date of 9 July 2011. On that day, South Sudan will declare its independence from the Republic of Sudan in the north and will emerge as the world's newest nation, the Republic of South Sudan. In a referendum held in January this year as part of a six-year peace agreement with the north, an overwhelming 98.83 percent of South Sudanese voted for independence. On 9 July, that vote will be ratified. But there is no certainty that independence will lead to peace. The oil resources of the South have always been contested and new conflicts are occurring, even as the new state is about to be born.

Let's share with the South Sudanese as they face a new future. Perhaps we can use the prayer prepared for this event by the South Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference. ■

Prayer For The Republic Of South Sudan

God of Mercies,
we thank you for your great love for us.
We ask you to guide all our leaders in the process of nation building.
Grant them your wisdom, compassion and fortitude.

Loving God,
give us courage to reject ethnic resentment as well as ethnic conflicts.

Through the intercession of St Josephine Bakhita,
help us to overcome hurt, hostility and bitterness in our hearts
so that we become reconciled citizens in our new nation.

Renew in us the will for honest and hard work
and bring us closer to you in the spirit of service,
unity and lasting peace.

Loving God, we pray for our heroes, our martyrs and all innocent people who died during the long years of war.

We pray in thanksgiving for all those who stood with us in solidarity to bring about peace.

Unite us from every tribe, tongue and people.
Send your holy Spirit upon us
and may your will be done in us.
God, bless our new nation:
bless the Republic of South Sudan;
bless also the Republic of Sudan.
In Jesus' name. Amen

Tui Motu InterIslands

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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the skelligs

Thank you for the great cover and article on the Skellig monastery. I grew up on the mainland in full view of the Skellig Islands. To look out during the magic hour of sunset over the Atlantic at the Skelligs was to know and feel the presence of God.

The beehive dwellings of the monks have lasted since the 7th century. They are identical in shape and size, but not materials, to those of the Coptic monks in Egypt. The Skelligs buildings are composed simply of stone resting on stone, with no mortar of any sort to hold them together.

Fr Max Palmer OSCO, *Takapau*

coming closer to God

Mike Riddell's letter (TM, June) reminded me of my anger at the reversion in the mass and prayers to versions insulting to truth. For example, one version of the creed says Jesus "+descended into hell". But in scripture, the story of Lazarus resting in heaven with Abraham says that God had fixed a gulf "and no one" can pass between heaven and hell. This refutes the possibility that Jesus "descended into hell."

The prime function of the Church is to bring people closer to God. The re-introduction of Shakespearian language in the Our Father is designed to prevent people coming closer to God. Scripture says, "unless you become as little children you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven." The freakish coldness of Shakespearian English blocks the special relationship we strive for, with "Abba Father", a relationship best achieved in the vernacular. Note that it is only the English speaking minority in the world that addresses God in such a way.

Surely no one can mean what he/she says with the words "and lead us not into temptation", as God is incapable of leading us into sin, which is directly implied by that dreadful translation.

Ray Watembach, *Waitara*

☞ letters to the editor

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

Your Hands (for Heather)

It's your hands I miss the most,
hands that led me
to small details: tapestries of sand and leaves.

It's your hands I miss,
seeing them stitch seams together
weaving patterns from, well,

not quite nothing
but almost — scraps of cloth left over,
saved for rainy days.

It's your hands —
busy, open, uncomplaining, kept busy
far from highland glens.

Then your hands tight in arthritic grip,
holding on to life as days ran out —
holding on above the dark abyss...

It's your hands I see — clearer than your face
and they are still. And I am at a loss — for words,
for empty hands.

– Robin Kearns

the dalai lama in christchurch

Jim Consedine

The recent visit by the Dalai Lama to Christchurch set me thinking. How is it that a humble, 75 year old celibate monk, with a simple message of peace, love and harmony can be treated like a rock star in an age that worships wealth, sexual licence and social status?

For indeed that is how he was treated. There was a buzz in Christchurch about his visit. Despite the fact that he was ignored by the Christchurch City Council and the Government because of the China issue, he spoke at a lunchtime gathering to more than 5000 people of all ages. They gave him an enthusiastic welcome — equal to any that Bob Dylan or Leonard Cohen could expect.

It was a crowd hungry for a spiritual experience.

Yet there was nothing new in his message. In fact, one might say it was decidedly old hat. It was a message that people of all faiths and none could relate to. Yet it is also a message that all major faiths share to a greater or lesser degree — Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism. They all teach us to acknowledge our Creator with awe and wonder, treat everyone with respect as a child of God, and love our neighbour as ourselves. It is a holistic message suited to our age.

It was all so traditional. Yet coming from the mouth of the Dalai Lama it sounded almost a new message. He made it sound radical again. The crowd applauded him when he reiterated these age-old teachings and gave him a standing ovation at the conclusion.

Why was that, I wondered? What did this old man have that others who teach these same teachings week in, week out, in our churches, synagogues and temples don't have?

One thing stood out. The Dalai Lama practises what he teaches. I think we all sensed that. And he doesn't preach as much as teach. There is a difference. People have traditionally sat at the feet of spiritual teachers and learned from them. They have treated them as wise and treated them with reverence. And so their teachings genuinely influence the pupils.

That is something we often miss in our churches where congregations too often are preached at.

Everyone present recognized him as a holy man, a man of the Spirit, a man close to the God he acknowledges as Creator and principal guide in life. His message struck a chord with everyone present. He didn't cajole or bombast his audience. He spoke from the heart, used humour when appropriate and kept the message simple. It was uplifting to quake affected listeners — and hope filled.

Another feature. He gave no sign that he thought himself better in any way. He didn't come across as a know-all or as superior to his listeners. He placed himself at the same level. He was a pilgrim like each of us. He found a crowd hungry for hope, hungry for a way forward that would satisfy their deepest needs.

Now, there are more ways than one of skinning a cat — and of imparting a message. The way of the Dalai Lama is not the only way, nor are his teachings the only teachings. From my own tradition of Church social teachings and biblical studies I know there is a depth and a vision that he didn't capture. There is a political, economic and social analysis that his talk didn't touch upon. I am sure he would be the first to agree

that he didn't attempt to. But the fact remains that 5000 plus Christchurch people, hungry for a spiritual message in a time of great need, went home encouraged and satisfied with what they had heard and experienced.

What struck me as interesting was that all this happened in the Easter season of the Church when our message is one of joy and hope. Jesus has overcome the power of death and opened up new ways of living and being.

Which begs the question — what is it about our institutionalized and ritualized way of presenting the Gospel that hasn't appealed to a large portion of those who attended the Dalai Lama's meeting? Is it that we don't really believe what we hear? Or live what we teach about the divine presence being able to transform our very essence?

Or is it that like a flame from Pentecost, the Dalai Lama travels light and his solidarity, his presence, his humility and compassion speak for themselves? ■

gentling with the years…

Pauline O'Regan

Last month, on the Vigil of my beloved patron, Saint Paul, I turned 89. I'm resisting the temptation to say that I'm now in my 90th year. I'm doing that because I can remember that when I was nine years old I liked to tell people that I was going on for ten. When you get to my age, you have to be very careful not to provide any evidence that could suggest that a second childhood is imminent. So, I'm 89.

When I turned 80, I wrote a book about old age. At that time I was firmly convinced that I knew everything that could possibly be known about the ageing process. I could not have been more wrong. In the past nine years, I have learned more than in any of my previous decades. And I have changed.

To give one example: when I was 80 I was clinging to my independence and I thought it was important for old people to do so. I still do, but with considerable modification. At 80 I was quite prickly about receiving offers of help. In many cases I suspected that I was being patronised because I was old. Maybe I was right in that, but I was also wrong.

Pauline O'Regan

Now, at 89, I hear only the kindness in the voice, the concern for my well-being, the reaching out to make life easier for me, the generous motivation behind the words. For the giver it is selflessness, a concern for the other; for me it is dependence, an acceptance of reality, an opportunity to be gracious. For both it is a source of grace. What Shakespeare once wrote about mercy is equally true of dependence:

it is twice blessed,
it blesseth him that gives
and him that takes…

Adjust the gender and you have it.

Perhaps if I give a few examples it will clarify what I am talking about. Some of the following arise from an ongoing loss of sight, some from an ongoing loss of hearing, some from an equally ongoing loss of height, some from physical disability. All come from old age. All have happened to me.

"Pauline, you have some stains on the front of your jersey" — community sister.

"Would you like a wheel chair when we land?" — air hostess.

"Could I hang those clothes on the line for you?" — neighbour.

"Let me reach down that packet for you" — stranger.

"Madam, you have given me $10 too much" — taxi driver.

"Pauline, your chin needs waxing" — community sister.

"I think this is more your colour than the one you have there" — shop assistant.

"Have you got your hearing aids in?" — community sister.

"Would you like my arm?" — all the above.

I could go on, but you get the drift. I say the words 'thank you' hundreds of times each day because the only fitting response to dependency is gratitude.

> "In the past nine years, I have learned more than in any of my previous decades. And I have changed."

Not all the learning of the past nine years has been new. Some of it has been in a process of development over many years, but one of these has become deeper and more acute as I come closer to death. I am speaking of my sense of sin. I try not to look back on my early years when I went to weekly Confession. I would rather forget that last-minute, anxious scrabbling about in my conscience to get together and accurately number my sins. They were virtually always the same in both quality and quantity. After all, there's a limit to how often in a given week you can speak uncharitably, have impure thoughts, omit prescribed prayers… all the unfortunate result of being a human being.

The aim was to become perfect. The outcome was unwittingly to open that dangerous door to pride and complacency and a secret sense of superiority. Thank God I am not as the rest of humankind… The process, well intentioned as it was, had a deeply unfortunate effect on most of us. We lost our sense of sin.

I can't help feeling that sin was a lot simpler in those inward-looking days when things like greed and inequality and injustice passed me by. My present state is far more

uncomfortable. I now have to acknowledge that I am an integral part of a system that causes all these things and makes no apology for them. I am part of a deeply sinful system, complex and fiercely protective of itself, called capitalism.

Years ago, I heard that incomparable man, priest and prophet, John Curnow say: "How can I confess world hunger?" How indeed! I am old and I am sinful and time is short. I live in a world where millions of children are dying of hunger every day, where consequently no women live to my age because of lack of food, lack of health services, of basic education, all of which have been readily available to me. I live in a world where women spend their entire day carrying water for the survival of their family. And my system tolerates these things. More than that, it deliberately promotes them.

I live in a world where the minority are obscenely rich and the majority are obscenely poor. Have I enough sorrow to repent such sin? And do I do what little I can to show true repentance? I still have a voice, do I speak out for justice? I can still walk, do I march for justice? I have access to money, do I direct credit it to those groups which are committed to justice? Do I, as the old poster used to read, live simply so that others can simply live?

There's no use my saying it's all too complex. I have the perfect roadmap left to us by Jesus. It is all there in Scripture for the practising — if only it had a different ending. Jesus was crucified for confronting the sinfulness of his systems in both church and state. I want to die in my bed, preferably in comfort. Oh, I nearly forgot. The cross was not the ending. The ending is the resurrection in joy and forgiveness.

I need to remember that. ■

Sister Pauline O'Regan RSM is a member of the Aranui Mercy community in Christchurch. She is the writer of many books and articles.

Cosmic Rhythm

Be wary of the mountains you clear
the earth you displace,
the sky, the sea
you pursue for wealth
not health and living in means.

All is connected
will respond in due course,
the least we can do
is stop and reflect our place of being,
propriety ours now
this moment,
this time,
in space grace
tempo
not to be tampered with.

Reflect in your space
your place in the universe
for your own well being
and the earth's.

For we have strayed
far from home
the balance of everything
held together
in universal rhythm,
ocean rolling in
tide receding
earth speeding
around the sun
in cosmic rhythm.

Reflect and wonder,
a moment in being
plant gently
walk softly
reflect often
your place in the universe.
Allow Wisdom to penetrate your living and dying.

— Bridie Southall

death, dementia and doctors

Jill McIlraith

A Dunedin general practitioner gives a hope-filled and compassionate view of how she deals with the difficult subjects of death and dementia.

In the last weeks of her life, Ethel (not her real name) could not remember how to eat even when the food was gently placed, spoonful-by-spoonful, into her mouth. Her carers had to show her how to chew and swallow, mimicking so she could mimic what she needed to do, as she sat immobile, not recognising them.

Such is the agony of dementia — it can rob us not only of our ability to think and remember, but also of most basic survival instincts like how to eat and being able to interact with family.

Watching someone die little by little is agonising. It is a small consolation that the sufferers often display no insight into their mental state.

> As a doctor, I do not attend the funeral of every one of my patients who dies. But there are some I do attend, for my own sake, not just the family's.

a doctor's viewpoint

Standing on the sidelines as her doctor, it was impossible not to be moved by the distress of her family as Ethel's brain died in her still strong body. Having the mind fail so completely that it starved the body, felt like a betrayal. The prospect of tube feeding her to keep her alive was just as cruel.

In the end, after much tearful discussion, she slipped away silently after several days of "comfort cares".

grieving for patients

Dealing with death is part of what doctors do but we underestimate how much we too grieve for patients. Medicine seems very inadequate when confronted with the inexorable decline of dementia. But if we let such feelings overwhelm us as doctors, we would not be much use to the patients nor to their families – there is a tightrope to be walked between being a caring professional and caring support.

basic human right

Ethel's family were loving but pragmatic. They wanted what was best for her and did not want her to suffer. Increasingly, palliative care is being recognised worldwide as a basic human right not just for cancer patients but for those with other terminal conditions.

We are fortunate to live in a country that recognises end-of-life care as important, unlike countries such as Ukraine which has been the focus of recent television documentaries.

need for humane response

The reluctance to deal humanely with dementia and terminal pain was highlighted at the recent 12th Congress of the European Association for Palliative Care in Lisbon. It is estimated that tens of thousands of Ukraine cancer patients continue to be deprived of drugs and left to die each year, distressed and in pain, due to very restrictive drug policies.

The care of dementia patients in many other countries is not much better, caught between outmoded ideas of not using potentially addictive drugs and a heavy reliance on psychotropic drugs to make agitated patients easier to care for. Fear that using opioid-based drugs may lead to addiction often stymied successful pain treatment in the past but increasingly most doctors have come to understand that addiction is very unlikely as pain receptors rapidly mop up opioids and that it is unnecessary — and cruel — to deprive patients of the most effective pain relief.

two perspectives

No one wants to think of themselves or a loved one dying with dementia — it maims rather than kills. It is as if the brain has betrayed the body as the heart keepings beating, the kidneys keep filtering and the lungs keep breathing.

Other patients, like those with advanced cancer or motor neurone disease, feel the opposite — as if their body has betrayed their mind, often remaining alert but trapped in a frailer and frailer physical shell.

Because of the lack of treatment and uncertainty about how long the process will take, it is much harder for families and doctors to talk about dementia; everyone feels helpless, everyone just does the best they can, everyone copes one day at a time.

groping for words

As a doctor, I too grope to find the words to support the patient whose husband had taken to going through neighbours' rubbish bins to bring her presents of discarded cans and scraps of food. I can only commiserate with how sad it is to see someone they love reduced to this mockery of the generous husband he once was. Trying to hold onto the memory of what her husband was, while caring for him and loving him as he is now, is a very difficult path for a spouse to tread.

gift of humour

Sometimes gentle humour can help; other times pragmatic solutions like giving her permission to lock the garden gate, or to tell the neighbours, is needed. Letting families express feelings of guilt, anger, frustration, sadness and resentment can lessen the burden.

As a doctor, I do not attend the funeral of every one of my patients who dies. But there are some I do attend, for my own sake, not just the family's. It is very healing to hear stories of what patients were like when they were young, to see the wedding photos and hear of their working and family lives before their minds were robbed of their mindfulness.

Sometimes we need to acknowledge that we still cared greatly for this person as a patient, even if we were unable to change the outcome. What defines that patient is not the ending, but the journey they took. And what defines us as carers is how we accompanied them on that journey, even though we do not determine the destination. ■

Dr. Jill McIlraith is a Dunedin general practitioner. She is specially aware of those suffering from dementia.

love and respect in dementia care

Staff members Chris Hill and Gail Harper share their experiences of working in the dementia unit of Clare House in Invercargill.

The elderly man was restless and agitated. He wandered from room to room, clearly upset and confused. The carers tried their usual methods, offering cups of tea or a few minutes chat, but to no avail. Finally another staff person remembered that this particular old man had had a lifelong passion for trains. Armed with a book on railways and trains of every dimension, the carer spent some time talking with the man about something very familiar to him. His agitation ceased, he became animated and happy as he looked at the pictures of trains.

plan of life

This tiny incident, which could be passed over in the course of a day's work in the dementia unit of Clare House in Invercargill, is actually very significant. The staff person with the train book was familiar with the lifestyle plan drawn up by the staff team, with assistance from friends and relatives, when the elderly man was first received into the unit. A similar plan is recorded for each resident. Individual interests, likes and dislikes, skills and previous work situations are described in detail. Numbers of children and grandchildren, familiar music, food preferences, the way in which each one likes to be addressed, relationships with a church or faith community — all form part of the highly individualised lifestyle plan.

> "I feel very rewarded when I go home each day and know that loved family members are getting well looked after."

a full past life

As far as possible, staff draw on this knowledge of a full past life, as they deal lovingly and respectfully with each person in their present condition of dementia. For many of the residents "living in the now is not real. They are much younger in their present world."

deep respect

In talking with carers, seeing their work and reading their own reflections on what they do, the deep respect shown for the whole person was striking. One staff member spoke of the joy and satisfaction she feels when she sees residents well dressed and well groomed, secure and at home in the warm atmosphere created by all who work or visit. This is one of the greatest rewards of her daily work. "It all comes down to respect. The residents will pick up respect in our voices and attitudes. They know what they need and want, even if they cannot always express it. We respect each one as the adult person she or he is, not as children to be humoured." Another wrote of the importance of "ensuring trust, respect and cultural empathy."

skills required

What are the skills required to work in the field of dementia? "Staff need to be people who can cope with anything and use their wits very quickly. They need to be flexible and to have a great sense of humour. They need to be people who can work well in a team, willing to learn from others, to seek help when necessary and to rely on one another. Dementia work is not for everyone, but the rewards are great."

reactions of family and friends

Family members and friends deal in a variety of ways with the new situation of their loved one. Some become upset when they are not recognized

by a parent or close friend. Some relate easily and are comforted by the obvious care the resident is receiving. Others find acceptance harder and need lots of information and reassurance. Some few find visiting too hard and come very seldom. But contact with families is vitally important and is maintained by selections of family photographs, which are a regular talking point for residents and staff. "They often talk about their children, whose childhood is very real to them. We probably know more about those children than they do themselves. And the stories are accompanied by so much laughter." Care is taken to ensure that those who have few visitors are regularly included in various outings, to shops, meals in restaurants, visits to parks or gardens and other places of interest.

deep spirituality

"It is an absolute delight to hear residents speak about their own spirituality. For instance, one resident, although suffering dementia, has so much to give. Her deep spirituality comes through and others pick up on her vibes. They will often follow her lead and she creates calm. I have seen her go off to her room and sit for long periods of time, holding her crucifix. The values of her whole life shine through." Staff spoke of their attentiveness to the spiritual and cultural needs of each resident, eager to provide for each opportunities to express deep values in familiar ways. This may be as simple as allowing space for someone to bless food at meal time or may demand that staff learn at some depth the specific values of a resident of Asian or Pacific heritage.

challenging behaviours

Asked how she dealt with challenging behaviours, one staff person replied "I love challenging behaviours!" She went on to describe one resident who had always been an early riser. She would often attempt to get up to start her day in the middle of the night. This might include wandering into the room of another resident, perhaps turning on lights and generally making it clear that night was over for her. The carer said that she entered into a "contract" with the resident. If she would return to bed for a while longer, the carer would assist her to dress earlier than the others, so that she could follow her life-long habit of early rising.

levels of illness

Staff acknowledged that dementia manifests itself at a variety of levels. Where the illness is far advanced and when behaviour becomes a problem of well-being and safety it may not be possible for Clare House staff to continue to provide care and it may be necessary to transfer a resident to a more specialized unit. But for many, Clare House is the last home they will know on their life's journey. Some will actually die there, in the loving care of familiar staff, family and friends.

conclusion

It became obvious from staff responses that rewards far outweighed challenges. "The residents often have a calm serenity, a deep acceptance of their situation. They have much to give and much to offer. That is why I love coming to work and why my preference is to work with residents in the dementia unit." "I look forward to coming to work every day and enjoy my work and the fun times. I feel very rewarded when I go home each day and know that loved family members are getting well looked after. We are very fortunate at Clare House to be given by families the privilege of looking after their loved ones." ■

Tui Motu thanks Clare House staff members, Chris Hill and Gail Harper, for agreeing to be interviewed. Photos were provided by another staff person, Mary Pearce

thank you for listening

There is something of value to be learned from listening to the story of a long life, which may offer insight into a spirituality of ageing and wisdom. Tui Motu staff interviewed Patricia Lainchbury to hear her story.

Patricia Lainchbury's kitchen is a lot like her: warm, welcoming, with signs that she has been on the go for some time already. At 9 am, Trish is cooking batch after batch of pikelets: some for us, some for others, to take with her later in her day's journey. She talks easily — with wit, skipping from one subject to another as the train of thought takes her. When asked about what it means to grow old, she says immediately, "I am growing old gracefully and with challenge!" And her wisdom mantra for that is: "Live every day as if it was your last and one day you will be right!"

new and old wisdom

Asking Trish about her present lived wisdom immediately took us back to her past. She was born and grew up in Whataroa on the West Coast. This was the time of the great Depression. The Coast was still frontier country "and a place for strong men." This emphasis runs through Trish's story. Her Mum died when she was three, so her Dad was "mother and father to me." She grew up in the McBride household of 7 brothers and a sister. She knew she was much loved by them all, but not their equal. She worked as the woman in the house, doing the practical things, like scrubbing and cleaning! Little wonder that she describes herself as a 'feisty' woman. She never had secondary education, and remembered hearing her father's companions telling him, "Tom, you'll regret it one of these days. She'll know she's bright." But at that time she was not disappointed. Only later did she realize "that education would be an opening into the classics and books, and everything that was wonderful."

nursing

Her father sent her to Hokitika to do nursing when she was 18, then she graduated as a midwife and a Plunket nurse. It was during her Plunket stint that she met her husband-to-be, George. They had two children, Jan and John. Geordie died early of cancer. She nursed him lovingly throughout his long illness. Only after death, she realized "you find how much you were loved. You are so busy loving the person, you've got no idea how they loved you. That was quite a revelation for me." And it is clearly one that she cherishes still.

a university degree

Along with a busy family life, Trish had a number of voluntary jobs, culminating in tutoring for the Correspondence school. It was here, tutoring in learning development and early childhood studies, that she realized that if she were to give her students the best, she herself needed to learn more. Spurred on by friends, she began university study, and graduated in 1991 with a degree in social anthropology. "This opened up a whole new vision." Language expanded, basic ideas changed, and her way of looking at God and religion also developed.

> "I have come to know that God is in everything, in every plant, in every interaction with every neighbour, in every smile from a stranger."

Looking back on all this now she continues to see it in a different light. She understood that "learning has no sex [gender], and that it is addressed to the human being whether man or woman." This continues to be an enlightenment. Trish had grown up steeped in maleness. Her father often said, "Patsy, you are worth ten of these boys." Later she realized that she was being compared always to men. "This was not seeing me for who I am." Men were the favoured ones! "This meant that everything read has to be read in the proper way, and, if necessary, to change the gender. I am conscious of this all the time, and it is a wonderful thing."

ideas of god

Asked how her idea of God had changed over the years, Trish said "I was hoping that you wouldn't ask me that! I had grown up with an idea of God as a bearded man, somewhat like my father, quite stern... a person whom I had to respect a lot." After a long struggle, she says "I have come to know that God is in everything, in every plant, in every interaction with every neighbour, in every smile from a stranger. It's all

part of what God is..." "God is the interconnectedness of love in everything, throughout the universe". Her daily prayer has changed and simplified: "I watch the stars each night, and say, Good night God, thanks for a great day; and at the dawning of the day, good morning God, here's hoping for another good day." She emphasized that no matter how her ideas had changed, including realizing how male-centred the church's liturgy is — something she continues to find difficult — she would never give up the practice of her faith. If she did she would give up her identity. "That's who I am."

loyalty and faith

Ideas changed, but her commitment remains constant, as she remembered the time when she was three and her father taught her to kneel by her bed and make the sign of the cross. Here, you sense the wisdom learned as a loyalty and deep faith won at the knees of her father, but open to transformation through the crucible of life.

life in the valley

Another part of the wisdom of experience that she has integrated deeply throughout her life is her current life in the Leith Valley. All the good learnings of her early life in Whataroa are here too. She says it gives her joy to live in Leith Valley where everyone is her friend; where she can poke her head out the door, and talk freely to her neighbours; where you can go and ask for something and know you will not be knocked back. "It is a beautiful, loving community." Recently a couple have come who have made their home environment more beautiful. She told them, "You have enhanced our neighbourhood." Trish enjoys not just the valley community, but her close family, and her friends. She says, "Having good friends is as powerful as your family."

listening

Perhaps Trish's most striking wisdom in ageing is the gift of "listening; just listening to people, not proferring any advice and not trying to fix it, or fade it, or make it go away. It is their's... Once I would have tried to fix it, I would have had some answer. Now I've got no words." She tells the story of a young student who came to talk with her. She listened at length, and at the end gave him a greenstone carving as a sign of her letting-him-be with the carving. Two years later he came and gave the greenstone back to her. She says she will not be surprised if one day she hears from him again.

Other gems of wisdom included: "Ageing teaches you not to moan and not to keep reminding people that once you had bare feet and that times were hard." This underlines the fact that suffering has been a full part of her journey.

"I'm slightly too busy to be involved with [my own] dying at the present!"

"Sometimes your happiness is an affront to other people. They expect you to be a sad widow, and you're not because you've been loved and nothing can change that."

"Unless you are ready for a tough road, don't go there," referring to hospitality.

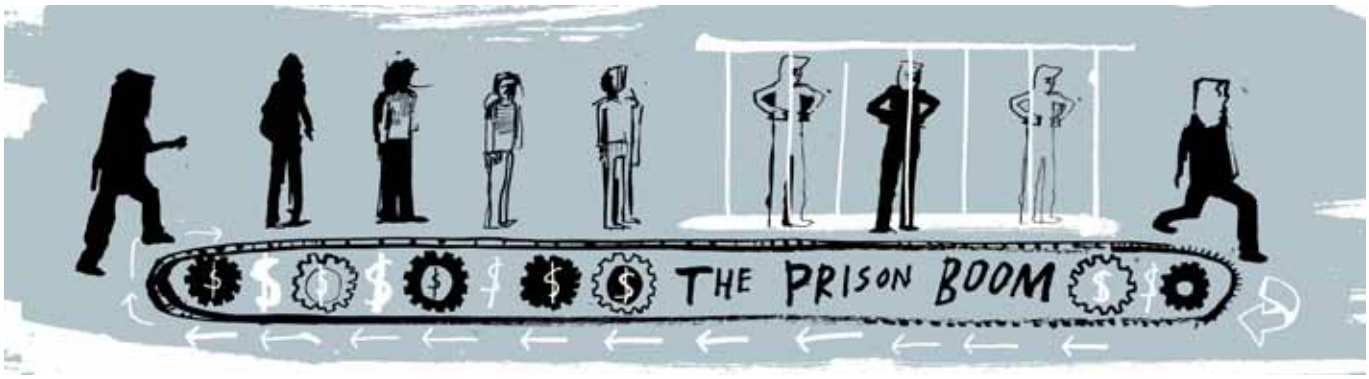
"Hospitality? It's simple really. You've just got to open the door."

open door

It is clear from Trish's stories that her door is always open. Recently old friends from Christchurch have come for respite from the earthquakes. It seems there is hardly a time when this spritely woman does not have people staying with her. This is the generosity and service which we saw when we entered the house. The mountains of hot pikelets were a symbol of that giving, and also a symbol of thanks for a life full of wisdom and far from over. ■

prisons under seige

The criminal justice system is failing too many, costing too much and helping too few, but it's never been more popular. Criminal justice reformer Kim Workman tells Michael Fitzsimons why our passion for prisons can't continue.



Some unpalatable facts in recessionary times: we incarcerate 300 more people in New Zealand each year. Every time we put someone in prison, it costs the taxpayer $94,000 a year to maintain them. We have grown the prison population by about 50 percent in the last eight years, giving us the second highest rates of imprisonment in the western world, well ahead of the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. It costs the taxpayer about half a billion dollars for each new prison and a cool one billion a year to run the Corrections Department.

The escalating financial burden of putting so many people in prison is beginning to trigger some fresh thinking internationally, says Kim Workman, Executive Director of the Robson Hanan Trust.

"Especially in the United States, there's strong evidence of a change in their appetite for imprisoning as many people as they can and the main reason is money — they can no longer afford it. In some States, they are spending more on prisons than they are on tertiary education. There finally comes a point when you say 'what are we doing here?'

In the United States 745 people per 100,000 are in prison. In New Zealand the number is 210 per 100,000 but that is still very high by international standards, nearly double Canada's imprisonment rate and higher than Australia or the United Kingdom.

> "[Imprisonment] is an expensive way of making bad people worse."

New Zealand's penchant for imprisoning people goes back a long way, says Kim Workman. Our pioneering, egalitarian instincts have been matched by a "huge intolerance of anyone who steps outside the norm. Our history shows people who were different or expressed themselves differently were quite harshly treated — for example, our treatment of conscientious objectors in the two World Wars was much more savage than comparable nations. We were the last nation to introduce homosexual law reform. Our treatment of the idle and disorderly, of prostitutes and vagrants and 'bludgers' was harsh and often resulted in imprisonment. And there is also evidence in our history that Maori have been imprisoned at high levels, not because they offended, but because they behaved differently."

According to Kim Workman, other factors impinging on New Zealand's high imprisonment rates are the shift in our values system that went with the 1980s market reforms and the 'tough on crime' stance popularised by politicians more recently. Alongside that has been the emergence of the movement to do more for victims, "which is a good thing but somehow ignores the fact that there is a whole collection of people living in our poor communities who are victims one day and offenders the next, or both at the same time. Fifty percent of all victims come from 5 percent of the community and that 5 percent of the community houses the offenders."

Kim Workman is well versed on criminal matters, with much broader experience than most people who wring their hands at our escalating crime rate. He was in the police force for 16 years and Head of Prisons from 1989–93. More recently he has worked in the Prison Fellowship Ministry for nearly a decade before heading the Robson Hanan Trust which is trying to get New Zealand to rethink its attitudes towards crime and punishment.

Rethinking our approach is crucial

because the current system clearly doesn't work. In a rare admission from a senior government politician, Minister of Finance Bill English told an audience recently that the growth in our prisons and prisoner numbers "represents a moral and fiscal failure."

It's a failure on many counts, says Kim. Prisons are schools for crime, with all the evidence showing that imprisonment is more likely to increase rather than deter criminal behaviour. For those serving short sentences, it is an introduction to the world of hardened criminals. And the longer the sentence that prisoners are serving, the more likely they are to reoffend. In the words of the Robson Hanan Trust's latest report, *Doing Good Justice in Bad Times: Towards a Fiscally Responsible Criminal Justice Strategy*: "[Imprisonment] is an expensive way of making bad people worse."

The evidence also shows that intensive supervision on probation does not work either. Surveillance, without meaningful rehabilitation efforts, is unlikely to reduce crime and according to the Trust's report, "in New Zealand, intensive supervision without treatment or support is standard practice."

These arguments have been around for a long time but so far have failed to win the day. Well-researched, objective debate on the topic has been hard to come by.

"We have to get the universities more engaged in this discussion," says Kim. "One of the features of the hardening of attitudes [about crime] has been that the Ministry of Justice and Corrections stopped talking to criminologists and social scientists and have been taking their advice from the media and the general public. If you ran the economy that way, you would be in deep trouble."

Finally, however, against a background of large-scale runaway expenditure, the ground is beginning to shift. Prison punishment on the scale that New Zealand is embracing it, is becoming unsustainable. In this new fiscally constrained environment, effectiveness becomes the critical factor, says Kim. What works best at reducing crime? What's the best investment?

Kim Workman

The Robson Hanan Trust's report outlines six ideas that could be implemented now to improve outcomes. These are pragmatic ideas that actually work, based on international evidence, says Kim. They include tackling low-level, repeat offending at a community level and expanding community sentencing options.

"The most direct way of reducing prison numbers is by enabling courts to impose credible and effective community orders as alternatives to prison sentences," says the Report. Specifically there needs to be a greater range of sentencing options, a greater role for the judiciary beyond just imposing a sentence, and closer links between community groups and offenders who work within the community.

Says Kim: "I think a community-based sentence would be much more effective if it was run by community organisations."

There also needs to be a comprehensive prisoner reintegration scheme, adds Kim. "Currently there are almost no systems of State support to provide adequate housing or work for ex-prisoners. It is almost as though disadvantaged ex-prisoners who face additional handicaps and lack systems of support do not deserve assistance, and should be left to their own devices. The consequence is they commit crime to survive."

The Trust Report calls for more research into Maori over-representation in the criminal justice system and is also supportive of the Drivers of Crime initiative which seeks to address the underlying causes of crime.

Kim Workman is under no illusion that it will be an uphill battle to turn public opinion around on such a volatile election issue. There's no shortage of politicians wanting to get tough on crime, says Kim, but the reality is dangerous criminals and career criminals make up around only 5 percent of the total prison population. "There has to be a better way of dealing with the other 95 percent." ■

For a copy of the full report, *'Doing Good Justice in Bad Times'*, see www.rethinking.org.nz

THE CITY

Every Christian is on a journey. We are nomads. It could be said that living sustainably comes naturally to a Christian. We have every reason to live frugal lives and to touch the earth lightly. Rather than being driven by any guilt-fuelled need to make sacrifices to overcome problems such as the loss of species or climate change, Christians understand that too much baggage gets in the way of their journey. It seems strange then that we should often become weighed down by materialistic lives going nowhere.

Camping comes naturally to New Zealanders. We do not even think that there is anything special about heading off to the beach or the bush, to spend time in a tent or a bach. Traditionally this journey was also a spiritual journey. We left behind the materialism which was getting in our way, to purify our souls. We listened to the birds and the music of pure streams tumbling over polished rocks. We felt the rain running over our skin and were refreshed by it.

The ritual we once had of an entire country closing down for a couple of weeks of spiritual meditation was unique. However we were told it did not make economic sense, and somehow we forgot that ritual is more important than economics. Saving the planet does not make economic sense either, while destroying it apparently does. The eighth day.

"We need to travel more slowly rather th
be able to meet peop

The nomad rolls out a sleeping bag and watches the stars, while listening to the call of the ruru. The materialist builds a bedroom and insulates it to keep out the cold so that it will meet the comfort standards of some anonymous person, notable only for being more dead than alive.

Having a right attitude is more important than any extreme specific solution. Balance and diversity can then be achieved. People who lack balance become either bureaucrats or planners, and spend their time foisting their narrow materialistic values onto the rest of us. They create a world which comes between us and God.

Worship in a bush cathedral

Urban traffic cong

Y DE GOD

Tony Watkins

han more quickly because then we will le along the way,"

Our present obsession with transport, for example, is based on the premise that everyone wants to get somewhere. In contrast, a nomadic Christian presumes that it is the journey which is important. How we live is more important than how we die. We need to travel more slowly rather than more quickly because then we will be able to meet people along the way, discover who we are, and incidentally smell the roses.

estion

An extreme view would be to suggest that if most people worked from home for five days each week, and spent only two days travelling, all our transport problems could be solved overnight without spending a single dollar. We would need of course to rethink how we work, but in doing that other problems might be overcome. For example our houses are, in very broad terms, four times as large as those of our grandparents. The houses themselves are twice the size and the occupancy rate has been halved. Most of the time they are empty. Even a thinking economist would concede that our urban form is so inefficient as to not make sense.

There is a global competition at the moment to build a house for US$300. The house also needs to be self-sufficient so that there is no need for any additional infrastructure costs. This figure has been set as that which could lift the entire world above the poverty line. Impossible? Not if you think of a house in the same way that we thought of an iPod or a cell-phone. A change in attitude is needed before the technical problems can be looked at. In theory a New Zealand Christian should win this competition. A person with the right mind-set.

Living in a tent does not mean doing without.

More than half of the world's population now lives in cities. If the design of those cities is an obstacle to finding God we need to begin asking the right questions, not the typical ones currently drifting around in Christchurch, Auckland, or especially Wellington. Nomads can have cities. It is just that they know this is not where they belong. ■

When you really belong in place your buildings belong too: Otago huts in their hills

creation just got better

Daniel O'Leary

In revealing more about the universe we live in, scientists are also revealing more and more about the mystery of God. In stimulating curiosity about the worlds around people, scientists are also preparing people for a unique and astonishing understanding of God

When we were small the nuns closed the church every day at 9 p.m. As we walked the short distance home in the dark of a Kerry winter's evening, the stars were often shining through the clouds. "There must be a God!" we would hear my mother murmuring, as she lifted her head from the worries of the day.

We are made for mystery. The vastness of the sky, the sweeping stretch of the sea, the turning of the seasons, the tidal pull of our own hearts, all touch something infinite within us. The immensity and precision of creation never fail to move us.

There is an eternal connection between the spiritual workings of our hearts revealed in silence, and the cosmic workings of the planets revealed in scientific research. St Paul tells us that "all was created through Christ and for him ... and he holds all things together". Blessed John Paul II wrote movingly about the cosmic embrace of the cosmic Christ in a cosmic Mass.

In a recent letter to *The Times* Professor Lionel Tarassenko of the University of Oxford reminded us that James Clerk Maxwell, one of the greatest scientists of the last 200 years, had Psalm 111:2 engraved over the entrance to the Cavendish Laboratory at the University of Cambridge: "Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them."

About ten years ago the Templeton Foundation shifted the focus of its search for excellence to include science and "the quest for progress in humanity's efforts to comprehend the many and diverse manifestations of the Divine". This year their award went to Lord Rees.

"In his research," *The Times* reported, "Lord Rees has spent decades investigating cosmological issues such as the early history of the universe, the behaviour of black holes and the spectacular phenomenon of gamma-ray bursts that send vast amounts of energy across intergalactic space."

Rees's exciting work, and that of other scientists

and physicists, remind us that our galaxy is one of many, perhaps an infinite number, that other stars have planets circling around them too, that there may have been many Big Bangs issuing, perhaps, in intelligent life, and that we can only wonder at "how much more there is beyond the domain that astronomers can see".

"Theologians may need some contortions to accommodate such findings," Rees surmised in a recent interview. "Religion stresses the centrality of humanity, but in reality we are at an intermediate stage." He is suspicious of "any claim to have achieved more than a very incomplete and metaphorical insight into any profound aspect of our existence".

In revealing something of the beautiful mystery of the universe, Rees is, at the same time, unknowingly, revealing for believers something of the beautiful mystery we call God. In stimulating people's curiosity about the origin and structure of the universe, is he not also opening and preparing people's minds and souls for a unique and astonishing understanding of the Christian God?

How would a conversation go, we might wonder, between Lord Rees, Jesuit scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and philosopher and theologian Karl Rahner? Both priests struggled with the same questions of creative energy, of its alpha and omega, of its magic and beauty, and of its deep darkness. They both recognised that it is not just humanity but the whole of creation that is transformed.

We can only wonder at "how much more there is beyond the domain that astronomers can see"

There is astonishment, for Christians, in the revelations of cosmology, of what is known as the New Story. It encourages us to reflect again on St Thomas Aquinas' reminder that "Revelation comes bound in two volumes — the book of Creation and the book of Scripture". Creation was the first bible!

In New York City, 1980, physicist Dr Brian Swimme was having a conversation with American priest and eco-theologian, Thomas Berry, SJ. Fr Berry suddenly said: "You scientists have this new and stupendous story of the universe. But you fail to appreciate its significance. You fail to hear its music. That's what the spiritual traditions can provide. Tell the story, but tell it with a feel for its music."

At Pentecost Sunday's Mass we will ask the Holy Spirit to "open the horizons of our minds by the flame of your wisdom". Could this prayer be an encouragement for us to see the New Story as God's story too, a "work of human hands", already holy, to be completed by the Gospel of Incarnation, and celebrated at each cosmic Mass, as Blessed John Paul II reminded us?

Does it urge us to understand the work of Lord Rees and his colleagues, and the presentations of such as the particle physicist Brian Cox, as contemporary gospels of the imaginative artistry and creative presence of the incarnate God? The Christian theology of creation will only be enriched by, for instance, the next revelations of the Large Hadron Collider. The more we discover about the mystery of life, the richer our theology, the more profound our worship.

And as with the heart of the cosmos, so too with the cosmos of the heart. When Kate Middleton and Prince William married a few weeks ago, how many viewers saw the magnificent moment transcending their individualities? Bishop Richard Chartres quoted St Catherine of Siena when he encouraged the couple to "set the world on fire" with the intensity of their love.

Something stirred in a million hearts at that moment of the famous "kiss" on the balcony of Buckingham Palace. Maybe something happened in all of creation too! Love is personal but also universal. We are finite beings with infinite capacities.

Moreover, the mystery holds whether that true love is expressed between two people in a lofty cathedral or the local cafe. Whether we believe it or not, Christian faith insists we have all been chosen and kissed by the God of all kings and queens; we have all been signed and sealed as princes and princesses from the beginning; someone fell in love with all of us before the stars were born.

One summer's evening, winding her way home through southern valleys, down to the Atlantic, artist Aine Moynihan was keenly conscious of a pressing presence. There are echoes of finite place and cosmic space in the final lines of her "Driving to Dun Chaoin":

I crest the hill — below me
the Blaskets, moody blue, familiar,
float on a silver sea —
marvelling how, out there,
nothing really changes but the light.

Fr Daniel is a priest of the Diocese of Leeds.
His website is www.djoleary.com

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are there two halves of life?

Edwina Gateley

The writer looks again at a common understanding of our lifelong spiritual journey. She sees us treading a full circle of mystery in our journey to God, and relates the phases of our human development to our experience of God

Recently I was asked to write an article on "The Two Halves of Life" which, I was given to understand, was all about how we move from youthfulness/adulthood into age and wisdom.

As I pondered on this it occurred to me that there weren't two halves of life, but, more accurately, we are all on a journey during which certain tendencies and characteristics are carried over from past experiences. As we age we respond to these from a deeper consciousness and awareness. I would like to focus here on the religious/spiritual perspective of this experience and how our relationship with God changes as we deepen into age.

Edwina Gately

I remember, for instance, my childhood and early years when, in the freedom and exuberance of youth I experienced God as my Playmate – one of those special "mystery friends" that some children create in their penchant for fantasy and intimacy. God and I had a lot of fun. I shared with God, in whispered delight, all sorts of stories, secrets and dreams. Children do that sort of thing. It is a magic time. God is Magic!

But as we move into young adulthood, the real world impinges more deeply onto our divine playground. God becomes a more serious business as we learn about commandments, catechism, rites, rituals, responsibilities and, especially, SIN! We come to realize that we are, after all, not playmates of the Divine and a benign and friendly God, but a bunch of sinners who must be about the business of behaving ourselves and obeying codes of conduct which will keep us in line — and divine favor.

As we move into this second phase of our lives, God is Father, Lord, Judge and even King. We are subjects and followers. There are no more secrets and no more giggling in church. The "burden" of discipleship is embraced as we move into adulthood.

Now we are engaged in the serious business of picking up our cross and following Jesus. The journey is often intense — and so are we. We want to do our best, we want to be good and faithful servants, we want to make a difference in our world, and we want to see results! So we set off with mission zeal and fervor!

It is not long before we realize that the world does not seem to want to be saved — or

redeemed — or changed. Everyone is busy taking care of themselves, or simply struggling to survive. We begin to question God. We begin to entertain doubts about our call and the life investment we have made as disciples of Christ.

We wonder (secretly) why God can't do a better job. (We also may feel that we could do a better job if we were God…!)

In this space we are often hurt, lonely and bereft. But, being mature adults and realizing that life is, after all, a huge challenge, we become stoic and brave. We must pray harder and trust more. Spiritual direction is very important at this stage.

But still people fight and hate one another. The gap between the rich and poor continues to widen. We lament the awful state of the world as we also experience violent weather patterns, droughts, famines, earthquakes, floods and climate change. Wars are endless. Now we are not so sure at all that we can change the world. We slow down and feel a bit of a failure.

As we age and grow into a deeper, darker phase of our journey, we begin to tread more gently and softly upon our ravaged earth.

We can no longer define God…nor our own roles for that matter. We now look with compassion on those we had so longed to change. Now begins the great letting-go of our desire to leave our mark on the world, and now is born a deep longing simply to be faithful and authentic to whatever it is we are called to do and be in our world — leaving the rest to God.

Here — in this latter stage of our journey, the well battered and bruised ego loses its power. The true self, the child of God, comes into deeper consciousness. We come to understand that we are not here to save the world, but to love the world and to love it deeply. Now we begin to see that God lives at the heart of our chaos – God is in all and connected to all. We are to embrace our world and to walk upon it in compassion and trust knowing only that all is held in God's embrace.

We now embrace — not so much the Mission — but the Mystery.

God is God and, in the well-known words of St Julian of Norwich:

"All will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of things will be well".

This is the Good News. And so we must celebrate, and we are, again, playmates of the Divine, rejoicing in the mystery and coming full circle on our journey. ■

Edwina Gateley is a celebrated English retreat director and spiritual writer, who lives in the United States.

democracy, climate change and southland lignite

Nicky Chapman

The author opens up the issue of possible lignite mining in Southland. She explores some of the relationships between the political, environmental, social and financial issues involved, and asks what are the implications for our democratic process. How is faith involved here?

Mention climate change, and eyes glaze (or tear) over. Get onto the Resource Management Act (RMA) and follow it up with the emissions trading scheme (ETS), selling state-owned enterprises, peak oil, dairying, mining and catching up with Australia, and most listeners will blanch and leave.

Yet somehow we have to have these conversations. Understanding the intricacies is not important. Knowing the basics is, because there are six billion "recoverable" tonnes of lignite in Otago and Southland, three billion under the fertile paddocks of Eastern Southland alone. The government proposes to "develop" this "resource", creating millions of tonnes of the greenhouse gas (GHG), carbon dioxide (CO2), and irrevocably changing landscapes and communities.

Some simple summaries:

- **Current climate change is caused by humans putting Greenhouse Gases (GHG) into the air, mainly through burning fossil fuels.** The gases trap heat, which causes extreme weather and raises sea levels. GHG also make the oceans more acidic. Without concerted human effort, climate change is likely to become unstoppable.
- **The Resource Management Act (RMA) is a law designed to involve communities in decisions about their resources.** But now the government can say some proposals are too important, and send them straight to the government-appointed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- **An Emissions Trading Scheme is supposed to encourage businesses to reduce GHG.**
- The rest is over to you… But they are related issues.

implications for democracy

Democracy is always hard work. Now the overriding context of increasingly dangerous climate change reframes many decisions as urgent moral ones. As Pope Benedict XVI has said, "Preservation of the environment, promotion of sustainable development, and particular attention to climate change are matters of grave concern for the entire human family. No nation or business sector can ignore the ethical implications present in all economic and social development."

making choices

We have two choices – playing our part in reducing GHG, or not. But as a country, we're trying to have a bob each way. The Draft Energy Strategy 2010 sets a goal of reducing our current GHG emissions by 50 per cent compared to 1990 by 2050, but its focus is on extracting fossil fuels. Following this strategy, Solid Energy posits that Eastern Southland lignite could be used, along with gas, as "New Zealand's insurance policy" as oil prices inevitably rise.

This strategy goes in exactly the opposite direction to that proposed by Pope Benedict, and climate scientists. Dr James Hansen, Director of the NASA Goddard Centre for Space Studies and professor at Columbia University, says that if we are to have any hope of stabilising the climate, we have to phase out burning coal by 2030.

solid energies proposals

Solid Energy's proposals are to convert lignite to briquettes, diesel, and urea. Because lignite is a low-quality fuel, the conversion process itself emits a lot of CO2, as well as the end products.

The first project is a pilot $25 million lignite-to-briquette plant, to be built next year. It will operate round the clock, annually processing about 150,000 tonnes of lignite to produce 90,000 tonnes of briquettes.

Greg Visser, General Manager Lignite Conversion, says that, given commercial viability, further lignite to briquette plants would be built in two to three years, lignite to urea by about 2016 and lignite to diesel by about 2019.

Solid Energy has said it will take responsibility for all CO2 emissions for its larger projects. However, when asked about mitigating CO2 emissions from this first plant, Greg Visser mentions no methods for offsetting the emissions apart from "investigating biofeedstock options" — and running the mining equipment on biodiesel.

This first project has already upset many because of the lack of consultation, as was clear in Gore's three-hundred-plus meeting with Dr

Hansen in May. Solid Energy sought resource consents without public notification from both the Gore District Council and Environment Southland. Gore District Council has already given consent, and Environment Southland officials say they see few problems with the plant.

council's opinion

The Council's Director of Resource Management, Warren Tuckey, says that that the plant's environmental impacts would be minor. The council did acknowledge the high level of public interest, but decided "...the public concern centred around coal mining and greenhouse gas emissions, and the Resource Management Act specifically excludes consideration of the effects of air discharges on climate change."

This undercuts democracy. It pre-empts what the public concerns might be — and many would argue that the plant's effects are not minor. Mataura Landcare Group chairman Mike Dumbar's farm adjoins the area, and he says noise from the nearby Dongwha fibreboard plant is already excessive, and his life would be unbearable with the extra noise.

The decision also takes too narrow a view of the RMA. The 2004 amendments to this law have not removed the requirement to look at the overall environmental effects of proposed activities. The Green MP, Kennedy Graham, has carried out research which shows that climate change issues have been successfully used in court cases since 2004. For example, in a ruling on Meridian's West Wind Project in 2007, the Environment Court held that climate change and renewable energy considerations are very powerful, and granted resource consents for 66 of the 70 proposed wind turbines.

So much for democracy on this first project. What of the larger-scale proposals?

larger scale proposals

Given their scale, the government may well declare them to be "of national interest" and shoot them straight through to the EPA. This would make getting local input into decision-making even tougher, despite its critical importance.

The mayor of Gore, Tracy Hicks, believes that "We have a resource that has huge potential for development, and for good or bad in the way that it is handled." He is concerned about the community coping with influxes of newcomers, as well as the competition for land, water, and employees. "A major shift in any one direction could have unforeseen consequences to the industries already here. For example, the meat industry is already struggling for employees."

Robina-Lee Johnston, who farms near Croydon, and many of whose neighbours have already sold to Solid Energy, is clear about the potential for bad. Her immediate concerns with the briquetting plant are the ongoing noise, traffic and pollution, and she has still graver fears about the larger projects. "This is about the generations. Once mining is over, there's no form of income off that land ever again. Here it's not feasible to put land back on. Even at Edendale the lignite is up to 500 metres deep. You can't rebuild that at all. And it affects the aquifers. There are already pollutants at Nightcaps."

Terry Nicholas of the Hokonui Runanga is more positive about the resource consent process. "One thing most organisations do know is that we will protect our taonga species and cultural values." However he adds that resource consents haven't protected Southland water. "It will take hundreds of years to get the Mataura back to what it was."

conclusion

Democracy is about information and participation. It also has to work on shared values. We can let our eyes and our hearts glaze over at complexities which challenge us. Or we can open our hearts in the belief that all current realities summon us to explore a right path, in the spirit of Jesus. We all want a future for our children. What we do in Southland matters not only to us but the rest of the planet.

We need to talk. ■

Nicky Chapman is a mother, writer and editor living at Port Chalmers

restorative justice in california

Jacqui Ryan

Innovative programmes are being undertaken by the Catholic Church in California. The author looks at the restorative justice methods, and the social justice principles used

At the conclusion of an internship with the Dominican Sisters' NGO office at the United Nations, New York, I visited a friend with whom I shared a sabbatical in 2001. Sister Mary Sean Hodges is a Mission San Jose Dominican and founder/resettlement coordinator of a prison related ministry: PREP — *the Partnership for Re-Entry Programme*. For three days I joined Mary Sean in her ministry.

When one thinks of Los Angeles the following come to mind: Disneyland, Universal Studios, the Hollywood sign, Academy Awards, plush mansions and sprawling motorways. It would be safe to say that for the average New Zealand visitor, prisons are not the focus. Fewer still view Los Angeles from the passenger seat of a furniture rental truck. With Mary Sean at the wheel, and a carload of PREP parolees as our labour force, we traversed the city picking up goods to furnish the homes used for PREP resettlement. One pick-up was at a property directly beneath the famous Hollywood sign. Further collections took us to Long Beach and Pales Verdes, up-market parts of the city. Such was my introduction to PREP.

beginnings

PREP began nine years ago, to provide support to inmates in their efforts toward re-entering community. The programme sits within the overall mission of the Los Angeles Archdiocesan Office of Restorative Justice, offering a model of restorative justice which assists parolees to wholeness and productive roles in society. In particular, Mary Sean and her co-workers support male prisoners who have been incarcerated for a minimum of 25 years, often longer, reflecting the large number of offenders who receive the "25 years to life" sentence available to Californian Courts. Prison terms in the USA can be very harsh. I reflected on the groups wanting harsher sentences here in New Zealand and wondered whether, as a nation, we really want to go down the Californian track.

PREP [offers] a model of restorative justice which assists parolees to wholeness and productive roles in society.

first steps

How do inmates access PREP? The relationship begins in prison with contact through the Catholic chaplain who explains what PREP is about and invites the inmate to apply. The next step is either a prison visit or frequent correspondence with the coordinator. At this time a mentor forms a relationship with the inmate. It is hoped that this becomes a lasting relationship as parolee and mentor journey together, always with a focus on recovery.

Faith-sharing becomes an integral part of the time together, as both parties grow more deeply in the realization that God is the source of love and life. Upon release, the mentor accompanies the parolee to the many necessary re-entry appointments. In preparation for release, inmates participate in *Turning Point,* a programme of self-help/development modules focussing on transition to community. *Turning Point* was written by Lifers.

after release from gaol

Once released, parolees are placed in a community living environment at one of the four 'Francisco Homes'. The three houses I visited each had eight parolees. The men share duties necessary to keep a house functional — shopping, cooking, cleaning, mowing lawns, etc. Like any group of individuals living together difficulties are bound to arise. These are attended to through weekly house meetings, facilitated by the house leader who is a parolee himself. In turn, house leaders meet monthly with Mary Sean and case manager, Julia Chavez. There they discuss what is working, or not, in each community house, and share ideas about how situations can be improved. I was fortunate to observe one such monthly meeting where all manner of issues were discussed.

The Office of Restorative Justice is situated upstairs in a building unprepossessing from the outside. The steel front door could be the entry to any warehouse. The locale reminded me of a slightly rundown area where industry had once been abuzz but had shifted on.

other programmes

In addition to PREP, several other programmes are based there: *Families of the Incarcerated; Victims' Ministry*; Chaplains; *California People of Faith Working Against the Death Penalty* (CPF); *Criminals and Gangmembers Anonymous Inc.* (CGA) — a 12-step recovery program for anyone who

Mary Sean (middle of the photo) with some of the men at Francisco House, Leighton.

is willing to be sincere about their inability to stop committing crimes regardless of age, ethnic group, gender, social circle or professional status.

Amalia Molina, the Family Advocate, helps families wanting to visit their incarcerated loved ones. Amalia is also involved with *Get on the Bus* (GOTB), an annual event which brings 40 bus loads of children and their guardians/caregivers from all over California to visit their mothers and fathers in prison. It offers free transportation for the children and their caregivers to the prison, travel bags for the children, comfort care bags for the caregivers, a photo of each child with his/her parent, meals for the day — all at no cost to the children's family.

Following a four-hour visit, each child receives a teddy bear with a letter from their parent and post-event counselling. A GOTB brochure quotes Natasha (age 9): "I noticed things about my mother — she was pretty and she looked like me… all the children on the bus have a mother in prison too."

new zealand connections

It was a pleasure to talk with Javier Stauring, Co-Director of the Office of Restorative Justice. Javier has been involved in faith and justice-seeking initiatives all his life. He was keen to make the New Zealand connection, speaking appreciatively of meeting Father Jim Consedine at a conference on Restorative Justice and the significance of these principles in the work Javier was doing. Javier also commented on the fact that New Zealand was second only to the USA in its incarceration rates and how contradictory this seemed, given that as a nation leading restorative justice initiatives, our justice/legislative system appeared so punitive. What could I say in reply?

welcome for parolees

Back to PREP and the parolees. On the day of my departure to New Zealand, PREP held a Ritual of Welcome and Re-entry for four parolees who had recently joined the Francisco House communities. Forty house members were present, along with representatives of funding organisations and PREP staff. The ritual included 'smudging', a Native American ritual of exorcising evil/negative spirits, a poem, singing, the presentation of a Dream-Catcher and a prayer for recovery. (Mary Sean had taught me how to make the dream-catchers the night before!). As we mingled over the BBQ which followed, I engaged with several of the parolees. An Afro-American parolee told me he had gone to prison as a young 21 year old and was paroled having served 40 years. I wondered how this person, or any person for that matter, could spend 40 years incarcerated and be so gently spoken and mild mannered. He was clearly proud of his efforts at recovery and re-entry. One of those welcomed through the ritual into the Francisco community that evening was an 85 year old with the beginnings of dementia. I wondered if he had been paroled because of an advancing mental illness. As I left for the airport, Sr Teresa Groth (PREP staff) moved among the men asking for details of trade or professional skills each possessed, in the hope of finding employment opportunities.

the future

On the day I left the USA, the Supreme Court ordered 33,000 prisoners be released from Californian prisons over the next 18 months. PREP is likely to be very busy in the months ahead! ■

Sister Jacqui Ryan is a Dominican Sister living in Auckland and working for Christian World Service

matthew 13 – parables of eschatological and ecological hope

Kathleen Rushton

These are reflections on the gospel passages given for Sundays 15-17 of Ordinary Time – 10, 17, 24 July.

Jesus sat beside the sea (13:1) and crowds gathered. He got into a boat. From there, he told the crowds many things in seven parables which drew on everyday realities: the sower and the seed (vv. 1-23), a series of parables beginning "The kingdom of heaven is like… the wheat and the darnel, the mustard seed, the yeast (vv. 24-43)… the treasure in a field, the fine pearls, and a dragnet cast into the sea… (vv.44-52).

Matthew 13 is Jesus' third major teaching unit — the previous ones being chs 5-7 and 10. In my reflection on the Sermon on the Mount (chs 5-7 in February *Tui Motu*), I invited readers to imagine the large crowd which gathered then. Most likely very similar people listened to Jesus this time. For them, a sower sowing seeds was a familiar scene on surrounding lakeside land and hillsides. Many would have sown seeds. Some would have known the joy and security a good harvest brings. Some would have endured the disappointment and hardship of crop failure.

Rocky ground, choked crops, birds feeding on the scattered seeds and scorching sun in a hot dry climate are the stated hardships in the parable. Unrecorded, but very real for Jesus' listeners, and for many today especially in countries of the South, would be the troubling concerns of a family to support, seed for next year's crop, rent, tithes, tolls and taxes. In addition, failed crops meant borrowed money, debts, loan default, land loss and the real possibility of virtual slavery as a labourer.

So we have deepened our sense of hope in the created universe,... because it relates the total beauty of the universe to a future when God is all in all.

Data on traditional cropping systems in Jesus' time suggests that a cropping yield would average about seven to eleven fold. If correct, the "some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" yields are unusually abundant crops anticipating the yield of God's just reign (*basileia*) which will give abundance for all and end the relentless cycle of poverty.

If Matthew's gospel is read from its beginning, the reader will have discovered quite a lot about "kingdom (*basileia*) of God" or the "kingdom (*basileia*) of the heavens" in the 12 previous chapters. Primarily, it is God's gracious gift made present in the words and actions of Jesus. It resists and contrasts with the way of Rome's *basileia* — the same word was used for the Roman Empire. Some welcome the *basileia* of God while others, in particular the elites, resist it.

Life is not the same for those who encounter the *basileia* of God. It is disruptive and disturbing of the way things are. The gospel pages tell us of commitments reversed, of priorities examined and changed, of a new way of life emerging which counters many of society's values. It conflicts with, and challenges, the way of the Evil One. We are told about, and we see, the *basileia* of God present in part. Nevertheless, for most people then and now, fail to live the change they are called to. Life will be complete only when God's reign is established over all.

Matthew 13, in which the word basileia is found twelve times, endorses these understandings. Here again in chapter 13 we can see the divisive impact of the *basileia* of God. There are choices to be made or rejected, new paths to be taken or not taken.

Hope is the fundamental virtue of the *basileia* of God evoked in the pastoral imagery of these parables. The promise of the future is already

latent in the glories of the natural world.

Hope is inextricably at the core of what in Christian terms is called eschatology. Its wider and original sense was concerned with "what we hope for" which is as expansive as God's promise made present in the universe.

Hope also brings eschatology ("what we hope for") and ecology together. So we have deepened our sense of hope in the created universe, something that we have recently begun to understand more explicitly and called "ecology", because it relates the total beauty of the universe to a future when God is all in all.

In the last few months, I have experienced estrangement from aspects of the natural world. At home I have a vegetable garden where I potter and delight in the exquisite taste of the home-grown. My hands have not been in the soil since early January. The pot of herbs sitting on the fridge in my studio does not quite do the trick. In my walks, I rejoice in the promise found in small vegetable garden allotments which replace the cobblestones at the fringes of this small city of Leuven.

In these parables, then, we learn of God's *basileia* through the natural world as promise. Such images are realistic, tolerant of limitation and finitude. Such images acknowledge ugliness and unresolved cruelty, fragility and perishability — for example, crops fail with disastrous consequences. Therefore, they are about hope rather than perfection. Hope, the fundamental virtue of eschatology and ecology is about the promise of "what we hope for" expanded yet defined by God's *basileia*. ■

Kathleen Rushton RSM of Christchurch is currently at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium.

immersed in the virtual world

Catfish

Directed by Ariel Schulman and Henry Joost

Reviewer: Paul Sorrell

The conventional wisdom about this movie is "the less you know, the better" — code for "don't give away the plot!" Since absolute discretion is impossible in a film review, I will let on… but only up to a point.

Presented as an amateur production, with plenty of handheld camcorders in evidence, this unusual and compelling film deals with some very contemporary themes — identity, illusion and desire, and how the advanced interactive technology we all have at our fingertips in the twenty-first century can create virtual worlds that we explore at our peril. Cellphones, emails, instant messaging, vidcams, sat-nav and, above all, social networking websites form the background to the film, and are also the fabric from which it is woven.

The film's basic story line is very simple. Yaniv (Nev) Schulman is a personable young New York photographer who takes an unremarkable picture of a ballet scene which is reproduced in a local newspaper. A few days later, he receives a parcel in the post containing an amateurish painting of his photograph by Abby, an eight-year-old girl living with her family in a small town in Michigan. Intrigued by this response further parcels follow. Nev begins a relationship with Abby and her family, conducted via Facebook and cellphone, and soon falls for her attractive older sister, Megan. Intrigued by the situation, with its growing element of mystery and the unexplained, Nev's two filmmaker buddies (one, his brother Ariel, is also a co-producer of *Catfish*) decide to make a record of events as they unfold.

And unfold they do, as the three friends make the decision to travel halfway across the continent and discover the truth for themselves. By this time, the film has generated an accelerating level of tension, and we become aware that what purports to be a homegrown effort is in fact a skillfully shot and edited production. As the action progresses, the film-within-the-film — initially distinguished by its grainy texture — melds seamlessly into the film we are watching.

One measure of the success of *Catfish*, and the skill that informs it, was the animated discussion that broke out after watching the film with a few friends. Was it a documentary or a mockumentary, in which the roles of "real" people had been (most convincingly) acted? The film itself proffers websites where viewers can follow up various aspects of the story – and others can easily be discovered — but does this really answer the deeper questions posed by *Catfish*? Once we have dipped our toes in the uncertain waters of the virtual world, we may well emerge as very different people. ■

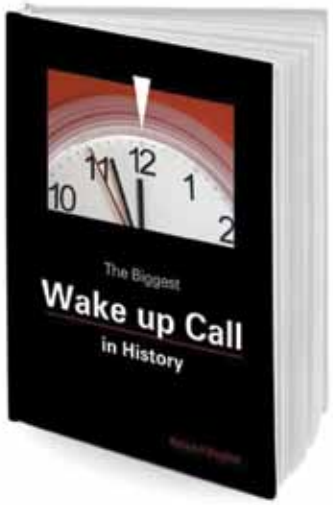
another look at present global forces

The Biggest Wake up Call in History

Richard A Slaughter

Foresight International,
Australia, 2010.
$40

Reviewer: Peter Healy sm



This is the most arresting title I have seen given to a book in a long while. I was compelled to read it. Richard A Slaughter has in my opinion written an important book here. It is about the "civilisational moment" we find ourselves in at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Slaughter is a futures and foresight practitioner and this book is a pertinent piece of writing that shows the usefulness of this field when applied to our contemporary global challenges of climate change, global warming and peak oil. The author is clear about the challenge we face when he says, "Humanity has become a global force in its own right and one that is degrading the global commons at a frightening rate." He notes that part of our wake up call will involve revising our favoured cultural assumptions: first that we are in control, secondly that the environment is a set of resources awaiting human use, thirdly that energy will continue to be available and affordable, fourthly that growth can continue without any limits, and finally that technology will secure our collective futures on Earth.

What I enjoyed most of all about this readable book is the emphasis he places on the need for individual interior change. The civilisational challenge we face is ourselves: namely our perceptions, our values and our worldviews. The source of our pathologies is inside us and the solutions to these pathologies also lie within us. We need courage to face what we know and the energy and capacity to act. Slaughter makes considerable use of the Ken Wilber integral development/vision map. He elaborates on the different domains of this map: our internal experiences, our collective cultures, our external behaviours and our social systems and institutions. Slaughter sees this map as an aid in finding the necessary reserves for the civilisational challenge ahead.

This map, in particular the individual interior domain, is one place where "courage, energy and capacity" can be found and climate research is only beginning to attend to these interior realities. He reviews the current literature on climate change and finds much of it wanting in the domain of individual interior life where we have our morals, our values, our spirituality and our interpersonal and aesthetic potentials. This inner world of individuals he calls, "the hidden landscape of human identity, purpose and motivation".

Slaughter makes it clear we are in the midst of a planetary emergency. He talks about a "perfect storm" bearing down on humanity. Only open and prepared minds can see the dangers ahead. Slaughter talks about "social foresight" now being a structural necessity. We all have the capacity for it. Such foresight will enable us to see that we are much closer to the very brink than most of us realise.

Slaughter invites the reader to go beyond collapse to a new narrative. He thinks we still have time to design pathways that will lead to a civilisational escape route. We need to wake up to the fact that we are applying old solutions to new situations with decreasing success. We also tend to see ourselves as "masters of creation" with nothing but the laws of physics standing in our way. We take ourselves "out of history" seeing ourselves as exempt from the trajectory of collapse. Slaughter calls for a new narrative around "descent" knowing that this is a new way of being and acting that is currently outside the frame of most people's thinking.

As we race towards our massively carbon producing/polluting rugby world cup I cannot recommend this book highly enough. It is a "wake up call" about what is really important for our world and where we need to go to find the solutions for the civilisational moment we are all present to. You might also consider getting your local library to purchase this book. ■

a primer on friendship

Friending: real relationships in a virtual world

Lynne Baab

InterVarsity Press, April 2011. US$10.20 on Amazon (plus postage). £9.15 on Book Depository UK (free postage worldwide)

Reviewer: Mike Crowl

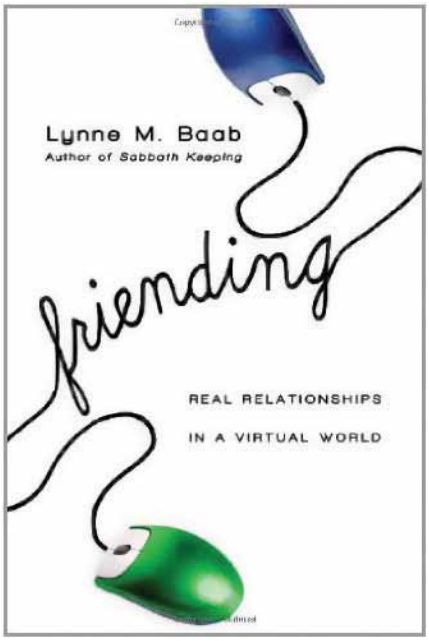
Lynne Baab, who has a PhD in Communication, is an American writer currently working in Otago University's Theology Department. She's the author of several books published by the Alban Institute that focus mostly on congregational life, and of books and bible studies (published by IVP) relating to spiritual life, such as the areas of fasting and keeping Sabbath.

This new book comes in the latter category, and, in spite of its subtitle, is perhaps more of a primer on friendship itself than one that focuses only on friendship in the modern digital world. While its discussion of the ways in which we use email, texting and Facebook (amongst other means) is valuable, I found its discussion of how we make friends and how we nurture those friendships to be, for me, the core of the book.

Lynne has been thinking about friendship as a subject for many years, partly as a result of having moved cities a number of times while growing up, and even more so now that she's moved to New Zealand after being established in a community for some three decades in Seattle.

The book is loosely divided into two halves: the first discusses the impact of technology on friendship (including an instrument that now seems very 'normal': the telephone). The second half looks at the ways in which we make and maintain friendships. The first half is useful in thoroughly counteracting the oft-held notion that technological means of keeping up friendships are inferior and do little to enable the growth of friendships. The second half is the one that teaches the real value of friendships, what they can be, how we can best hold onto them, and even how we sometimes need to let them go.

Friendships seldom arise of their own accord. Sometimes two people will hit it off in a surprising fashion, but without an ongoing intentionality of maintaining that initial spark, the friendship will wither. Lynne's discussion of the ways we need to 'work' at maintaining friendship, whether it's in using all kinds of ongoing contact (and this is where texting and Facebook and the like come into their own), or learning how to listen, or being gracious in the bumpy patches, or learning when to make time for other people and when to give them space, is full of insights that help us think about how we function in our own world of friendships — or lack of them!



Throughout the book there are extracts from other people's emails, letters and conversations on the subject of friendship. Many of these state positively that, in spite of the difficulties, friendships are still a prime need in our lives, and that it's essential to foster them. Lynne's book is a great encouragement to do so, and is very helpful in its suggestions and recommendations of ways to do this. ■

Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

Nature Strikes Back.

Does the Gaia hypothesis — that the earth has an inbuilt self-balancing mechanism — have some validity? A discovery 25 years ago seems to indicate this.

Enormous numbers of microscopic entities fill the upper levels of oceans, forming the basis of the marine food chain. They also account for roughly half the photosynthesis on the Earth, remove nearly as much carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as all plants, and supply about three-quarters of the oxygen we breathe.

One such microbe, called *Prochlorococcus*, was discovered 25 years ago. It is one two-hundredth of the width of a human hair and contains a type of chlorophyll that permits it to absorb carbon dioxide from seawater, retain its carbon and release the oxygen. It exists in such huge numbers it may be the most common creature in the entire world and it produces about one-fifth of the world's oxygen. It lives in warm, nutrient-poor seas, situated roughly between 40 degrees north and 40 degrees south. It thrives in warmer seas, so global climate change seems to increase its habitat and thus its productivity.

If there really is an inbuilt self-balancing mechanism, as the Gaia hypothesis holds, there would be an eventual neutralization of human induced environmental damage. If the damage became unmanageable the elimination of humanity would appear logical.

Mixed Messages?

A large ministerial task force is to produce a plan, based on the 2011 Working Party report, to fix the broken welfare system — "if you can work, you must work". Depending on the beneficiary's real-life context, and the Government's social philosophy, 'can' has many possible meanings.

The Treasury Secretary had earlier announced a new framework for ensuring our stocks of financial, human, social, and natural capital are managed in a manner that maximises current living standards while not disadvantaging future generations. Treasury advises on all significant policy issues.

The framework is comprised of four 'capital stocks' based on five elements. These elements can be summed up as follows: material and non-material things affecting living standards; individual freedoms and capabilities; variations in living standards between different groups (society suffers if sections of it are disadvantaged but everyone's rights must be safeguarded); and measuring living standards directly, using self-assessed subjective measures of well-being — this provides a useful cross-check of what is important for people's living standards.

The four 'capital stocks' are:

- Financial or physical — the broad area of economic wealth.
- Human — people's knowledge, skills and capabilities, and their health status.
- Social — the degree of trust in a society and the ability of people to work together for common purpose. They include individual rights and freedoms and public institutions.
- Natural — the Earth's natural resources and the ecological systems that provide life-support and other services to society. Natural capital is a key input into economic production and wealth creation, as well as a direct contributor to wellbeing.

This is an encouraging step; the trick is to get the politicians on board to ensure resources are directed in the right direction.

A thought: if taxpayers pay to repair environmental damage caused by a business, is that business not a welfare recipient?

Affordable Food.

Oxfam is beginning a four-year progranmne to pressure governments and corporations to make staple foods more affordable; the world's poorest spend about 80% of their income in food. Oxfam reports that 90% of global grain trading happened between just three firms, all of which have made substantial profits because of price fluctuations since the 2008 food crisis.

Belief and Human Nature.

The past 50 years have seen a concerted drive to relegate religious belief to the purely private sphere. The laudable intent to avoid an emotional cause of civil conflict has degenerated into a drive to propagate a purely materialistic philosophy of life. In communist-controlled countries the attack was overt, but, particularly in the West, there has been a much more insidious drive to eradicate any exhibition of personal belief.

A three-year Oxford-based research project found widespread belief in some kind of afterlife and an instinctive tendency to suggest that natural phenomena happen for a purpose. Over forty different studies by dozens of researchers looking at countries from China to Poland, the United States to Micronesia came up with similar findings. 'Children in particular found it very easy to think in religious ways, such as believing in God's omniscience', said co-director Professor Roger Trigg. But the study found adults also jumped first for explanations that implied an unseen agent at work in the world.

Although the results don't prove the existence of God, believers could argue that the universality of religious inclination serves God's purpose. As a common human attribute it has serious implications for religious freedom. It also points to the void that can be filled through proper evangelization.

[Then again, we obviously missed being 'raptured' in May, so why bother!] ■

fragments of belief

Robert Consedine

As I advance towards the end of my seventh decade I am increasingly aware that a significant number of my Catholic contemporaries have left the Church. Many have also ceased to believe in a creator God. Many are theologically literate and have played an active role in parish communities. Some are former priests and seminarians well-trained in the minutiae of Catholic teaching.

I have learnt that the choices they have made to leave the Church are mostly well thought out and rational. Often the initial trigger to leave the Church was disgust at the corruption, intellectual dishonesty and the evil of clericalism.

I respect and understand these choices. They are based on another way of trusting life. However, I choose differently!

These friends and colleagues have continued to live exemplary lives committed to social justice, feeding the hungry, campaigning for the environment, in short following the teachings of Jesus.

Astrophysics calculates that the world was created more than 13.7 billion years ago with the 'big bang.' Modern human beings originated about 150,000 years ago in Africa. The bible began to emerge 3,500 years ago. Christianity emerged less than 2000 years ago. The enlightenment, which sought to understand the world solely on the basis of reason based on evidence and proof, emerged a mere 300 years ago.

I recently acquired a photo of the planet earth taken by the Cassini-Juygens probe when it arrived at the ring of Saturn. This mind-blowing photo shows the earth as a speck of dust! Only 4% of the universe is known. What we know is a drop – the unknown is an ocean.

In times of doubt I have often wondered if the idea of God is simply a projection of a human need. Millions of human beings have felt this need for thousands of years, and acted accordingly. This in itself could be enough.

Until the Middle Ages the meaning and purpose of life was assumed to be the glory of God. All cultures have historically created some religious belief. The discarding of one belief is normally replaced with another: new age, the market, the rational, Marxism, fascism, astrology, science, politics. Are these other forms of projection?

Faith in a creator God has to be intellectually satisfying and credible. It cannot ultimately depend on the contemporary state of any institution including the Catholic Church! It also has to satisfy me emotionally, spiritually, intuitively and above all, experientially. It has to be reasonable. The rational by itself is far too limiting.

As my life journey has evolved, no matter how chaotic or traumatic, I have always had a trust in people and their inherent goodness. This sense of the divine permeating all of life was embedded in me from a very early age – family, church, school. Some of the most faith-filled people I have met were working in third world slums, war zones, prisons and ghettos.

Living with doubt is an important element of the journey. My shadow side remains a constant challenge.

Why stay with the Church? Because this precious gift called faith has to be constantly nurtured, maintained, developed and connected to the life of Jesus!

If we consider the time line of 'big bang,' the emergence of modern human beings, the 'enlightenment' was only yesterday and Christianity the day before. The only thing we know is how little we know!

Divine creation through evolution continues to unfold! ■

Robert Consedine
Robert@waitangi.co.nz

a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

Curbing, snipping, constricting, blocking. Some days with children I feel my life is smaller, less risk-taking, blander and less adventurous. This week my long-planned and much-needed break away was voted against by three older kids who really want just to hang out at home and relax in the first week of their school holidays. It's not that our family works entirely on full democratic principles (otherwise I guess we'd eat ice-cream for breakfast every day), but in making decisions like family holidays we try to use consensus to come up with a plan that fills the needs for most of us. This time NOT going away won the day.

How do I carry this decision graciously? How do I free mental space/relax and enjoy a family holiday at home when all around are reminders of work that needs to be done? How do I stop this change in plan from quietly gathering into a tally of resentment about the many ways my plans are thwarted by small people?

On Pentecost Sunday we shared a family discussion about the Holy Spirit. How she enables me, enables us to be bigger, better and maybe more God-like versions of ourselves. I talked about how my natural levels of patience are scant but that the gift of children has given some occasion to practice patience. With the help of generous dousings of Holy Spirit grace, I can be kind and patient in surprising ways. (My children and husband would also confirm that I can also still be impatient in surprising ways!)

So this new week Being At Home offers a new opportunity. For inaction. For rest. For crafts and making things. For a smaller scale life with children's detailed focus and dallying in distraction. Those hills, mountains and alpine flowers I was hoping to hang out with are also waiting patiently. They simply have no plans.

Leunig's word for me falls out of his book:

Dear God,
We loosen our grip.
We open our hand.
We are accepting.
In our empty hand
We feel the shape
Of simple eternity.
It nestles there.
We hold it gently.
We are accepting.
Amen.

Veni, sancte Spiritus. Come, Holy Spirit. ■

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