

TUI MOTU

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Clothing the Naked

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EDITORIAL

Dressing with Love

“Try it on!” My eight-year-old’s anticipation shimmied as I slipped into my new dress. With a mouthful of pins Mum scanned her work and I transformed into a princess.

Dressing was fairly simple when I was a child. We had everyday clothes, school uniforms and “best” clothes, which we changed out of as soon as we arrived home from Sunday Mass. Hand-me-down was standard family practice. But having Mum choose a particular colour and style because it suited me made that garment precious and me cherished. Thinking now of that lemon dress I can appreciate a childhood packed with thousands of little nuances of love promoting individuality, value and security.

We’re practised at interpreting the world around in reference to dress. We’re concerned when dishevelment exposes a friend’s illness, or find a child shivering in thin clothes. We’re ashamed to hear of Muslim women ridiculed for their dress and young people discriminated against for their style. We’ve learned of the appropriateness of clothes for an occasion and appreciate the effort made.

We’re the only species in creation to dress and this is primarily for comfort but also signifies our belonging in particular cultures and communities. Getting dressed is a ritual that acknowledges the season of the year, the time of day and the activity we’re to engage in. We dress differently for work, for sport, for school, for gardening, for tramping, for surfing, for relaxing. Dressing can celebrate and reverence our bodies, support our confidence and wrap us in gratitude for life. Not having clothes strips us of the outward signs and the inner security and confidence of belonging.

This 207th issue gives perspectives on the work of mercy of clothing the naked as a way of including all in community. Susan Smith and Gillian Southey describe how clothing can come at too high a cost. We can’t let fashion veil us to the trafficking and slavery in manufacturing factories in poor countries — off-shore and out-of-sight. We can’t let mountains of our cast-off clothes turn toxic in land-fills. And we can’t dictate in the name of religion what others should wear.

We also offer articles on a range of volunteer groups who recycle clothing in a number of ways. Vinnies and the Hospice shops sell clothing to finance their works. The Auckland City Mission provides street people with clothes. Other volunteers dress women for the workplace. And a clutch of knitters and sew-ers swaddle babies in wool, warmth and welcome. All express the giving and receiving of mercy in terms of being in relationship especially with those struggling, having a heart for social justice, sharing wisdom learned in dark times and loving our neighbour.

We are grateful for the insight, reflection, the questions and challenges our writers, artists and craftspeople provide in this issue.

And as is our custom — the last word is a blessing. ■

An Unjust Devastating War

We were right! The one and half million people who marched against the war in Iraq in London in 2003 and the millions who did the same all around the world were right. Our intuition and skepticism about the hawkish and alarmist talk of both Tony Blair and George W Bush have been vindicated by the *Chilcot Report*. The *Report* took seven years to complete and it will be the definitive text on the Iraq war for years to come.

Chilcot is very clear. There were no substantive or legal justifications for Tony Blair or George Bush to embroil the UK and other Nato allies in the most disastrous war of the modern era. It was the first opposed invasion and occupation of a nation state since WWII.

In addition to the direct deaths and destruction of the war itself, the lingering after-effects have generated national, regional and global catastrophe. The Blair/Bush vision of forced regime change to generate a democratic Middle East has bred national and regional instability and intensified political violence in Syria, Libya and Afghanistan. It has resulted in the displacement of millions and created unimaginable suffering for the peoples of the Middle East. It has provided a justification for organised Islamic resistance to Western Occupation and undoubtedly fuelled the expansion of networked and “lone wolf” terrorism all around the world. It was a complete disaster. While *Chilcot* is very careful not to assign criminal liability to Tony Blair he does establish Blair’s culpability for the decision to go to war that flew in the face of considerable advice and legal opposition inside and outside his government.

The *Report* argues that the UK went to war before peaceful options were exhausted and that military action was “not the last resort”. Those opposed to war wanted to give more time to Hans Blix and UN Weapons inspectors to determine whether the Hussein administration had an active weapons development programme. There was no clear UN Security Council Resolution identifying Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction or Saddam Hussein’s political intentions as a “clear and present danger” to regional peace and global stability.

Chilcot’s report argues unequivocally that both Blair and Bush deliberately inflated the threat from Saddam Hussein in order to create a climate of fear within which they could persuade skeptical populations, on both sides of the Atlantic, that war against Saddam Hussein and Iraq was a necessity rather than a matter of choice.

Inflating the threat from weapons of mass destruction was the first deception highlighted in the report. *Chilcot* argues it was based on “flawed intelligence and assessments” that went unchallenged by an arrogant political elite seeking to maintain Britain’s dwindling international power in a dependent relationship with the United States.

Eight months before the invasion Blair told Bush: “I will be with you whatever”. This was scarcely the statement of a leader engaged in serious consultation with officials, experts and parliamentary colleagues. In a six-page memo in July 2002 marked “secret and personal”, Blair told Bush that the removal of Saddam Hussein would “free up the region” even if Iraqis may “feel ambivalent about being invaded”. It was one

of 29 letters Blair sent to Bush in the run-up to the Iraq war.

Chilcot says that the threat posed by Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction was “presented with a certainty that was not justified” and Blair’s recent assertions that his decision for action was made “in good faith” sound as hollow now as his promises did then. Blair’s assumption of “full responsibility for any mistakes” is 13 years too late for the unimaginable and continuing suffering throughout the Middle East.



The United States and British governments also deliberately overrode official anxieties about post-war planning occupation, reconstruction and transformation. Blair overrode his own defence officials’ advice that the UK military was unprepared for invasion and occupation. *Chilcot* said: “We do not agree that hindsight is required. The risks of internal strife in Iraq, active Iranian pursuit of its interests, regional instability, and Al Qaeda activity in Iraq, were each explicitly identified before the invasion.”

Chilcot outlines in chilling detail the systemic and personal failures of the UK government and Tony Blair to weigh intelligence, prepare for war, plan for post-war occupation and achieve any of their strategic or political objectives. By 2009 when UK forces were pulling out, Iraq was gripped by “deep sectarian divisions”. There was a fragile situation in Basra, rows over oil revenues and rampant corruption inside Iraqi government ministries. Downing Street was facing strategic failure. There were no positive outcomes from the war at all.

The *Chilcot Report*, while vindicating the Global Peace Movement, is not helpful to the millions who have been displaced from their homes by this invasion, or the millions who have been killed, injured and tortured afterwards. It is they who are suffering the long-term consequences of these unjustifiable decisions.

The *Report* gives us a moment to reflect on the failure of violence, militarism and war and to look for 21st century solutions that involve none of these things. ■



Kevin Clements is Professor and Director of the New Zealand National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago and Secretary General of the International Peace Research Association.



I was Naked and You Gave me Clothing

Susan Smith reflects on issues around the production, distribution and recycling of clothes in light of the work of mercy of clothing the naked.

Conversations around clothing or lack of it, are fraught. Cultural perceptions have much to do with the way in which we think about clothing. When I was living in Papua New Guinea one of the priests teaching at the seminary showed me a photo that the members of his Congregation had taken on their arrival in Papua New Guinea in the 1880s. It showed the indigenous people on the beach virtually naked and gazing in some amazement at the scene unfolding before them. He then showed me a second photo. It was exactly the same scene and people — but they were clothed. The original photo had been edited carefully by priests back at their headhouse in France. (Photoshopping is not peculiar to the 21st century.) Was this an example of fulfilling the corporal work of mercy in Matt 25:36: “I was naked and you gave me clothing”? Or was it a serious cultural transgression, given that the local people on the beach were living on the equator?

Considering that each handler — factory, distributor, retailer — makes a profit when it is sold to us, it is easy to deduce that the person who actually made the garment must have earned a minimal amount.

Religious teachings around the body and sexuality have influenced our attitudes toward clothing. A quick look at Google alerts the intending visitor to the Vatican, the Dome of the Rock and other significant places, to the dress requirements for men and women. Public places such as restaurants have dress codes. While watching the popular *Britain's Got Talent* show the other night, it was clear the norm for participants and judges was less was

best, particularly in women's dress. In such public contexts, clothing the naked doesn't seem such a bad idea. Especially where there is concern about the sexual exploitation of women. Is it that near nudity sells and that's what counts?

Political points-gaining, also known as combating the risk of terrorism, is one explanation for the decision by the French government to forbid Muslim women to appear in public with their faces covered. In 2011, New Zealand First MP Trevor Prosser also wanted legislation which would require that Muslim women should not have their faces covered in public places here.

Suitable Clothing

Ignorance about the conditions in which other people live, their cultural and religious beliefs and what suits them best in respect of dress, can cause difficulties. I was in Bangladesh after a devastating cyclone when bales of clothing, suitable for the severe

wintery conditions of North America, arrived in that hot and humid country. And that was not an isolated case. This has caused the development agencies to ask people to stop sending used clothing to places affected by natural disaster. More often than not it is unsuitable and creates rather than solves problems. Donating money is more appropriate.

Injustice in the Clothing Industry

Perhaps most importantly the economics of clothing is emerging as significant in our consumer-driven society. Sports and the clothing industry are linked in an unholy alliance that benefits a few and harms the majority. Brand clothes and shoes certainly sell here and around the world. For example many who share vicariously in the fame and prestige accorded to the All Blacks want to be “look-alikes” in All Black shirts and jerseys.

However the demand for brand gear and the high prices paid for them do not benefit those who make it. Clothing companies contract their work out to garment factories in poor countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam or the Philippines. It can be easy to disregard the fact that brand and other garments are manufactured in situations where child labour, forced overtime and sexual harassment are known to be rampant. This can be true too for clothes manufactured overseas and sold very cheaply here.

Considering that each handler — factory, distributor, retailer — makes a profit when it is sold to us, it is easy to deduce that the person who actually made the garment must have earned a minimal amount. If the Trans-Pacific Partnership is eventually signed off, these situations will increase. More manufacturing will move off-shore and more clothing produced in garment factories in the poorest parts of Asia will be imported.

Increase of Clothing Op Shops

One of the interesting off-shoots of the over-production of clothes is the proliferation of second-hand clothing shops in our cities and towns. And they are well-patronised. Isn't there something wrong with a society in which one group's cast-offs become important for another and numerically much larger group?

Reflecting on the Parable

So what did Jesus mean when in the famous parable of the Last Judgement (Matt 25:31-46) he exhorts his followers to clothe the naked? This parable merits careful and prayerful reflection. The different acts of mercy identified in it reflect traditional Jewish teachings about the obligation to care for those in need — the sick, the homeless, the thirsty, the hungry, those who mourn, and those in need of clothing. Mercy in this sense transcends cultural and religious values and financial profits.

To respond positively to these teachings of Jesus is to reveal God's saving presence in an oppressive world. Matthew was most probably writing his gospel for the people of Antioch, a large city in which the majority of the people lived in unsanitary and over-crowded neighbourhoods, with limited sewage disposal and oppressive regulations.

Today in New Zealand we have an increasing number of people living in unsanitary and over-crowded conditions. Realities of New Zealand life that many of us take for granted such as buying school uniforms, getting a new outfit for the new season, washing and drying our clothes, are unattainable for some. When people are reduced to living in their cars or on the street, the washing and drying of clothes becomes problematic. Often using the local laundromat can be beyond their budget or geographical reach.

Matthew's parable is addressed to all nations (see Matt 25:32) which indicates that none of us is excluded from the mercy of clothing the naked. But how can we do that in our contemporary society? We could research how and where our own clothing purchases have been manufactured; see if we need new clothes as distinct from wanting new clothes; donate money saved by not buying new clothes to organisations who know what is needed in places overwhelmed by natural disaster or war; or address responsibly the needs of those who have inadequate or unsuitable clothing, as happened recently when people were asked to donate money to buy warm pyjamas for children to wear in the winter months.

If we can begin to alter our understanding of clothing then the words of Jesus to the righteous in the parable of the Last Judgement, will be the words of Jesus to us: “the righteous [will enter] into everlasting life” (see Matt 25:46). ■



Susan Smith RNDM lives out of Whangarei where she is involved in her local landcare group, in gardening, researching and writing. Susan likes walking, listening to music and reading.



Nicholas Thompson tells the stories of two saints who clothed the naked in Christian history and asks what we can learn from their example.

A few years ago a friend posted a clip on Facebook showing an American cardinal who, for reasons best known to himself, had revived the *cappa magna*. This garment — it means “big cloak” in Latin — trailed a good four metres behind his eminence, lending him the appearance of someone who had been attacked by a fully laden washing line but lived to tell the tale.

St Martin's Cloak

At the same time as I saw this I was getting ready for an undergraduate course I teach on the church in the Middle Ages. I had been reading about another *cappa*: the cloak of the fourth century bishop, Saint Martin of Tours, which became a sacred relic of the Frankish nation.

This truncated garment, known affectionately as the “little cloak” or *capella*, was so precious to the Franks that they built a shrine to house it at Aachen or Aix-la-Chapelle. Gradually this shrine took on the name of its relic and, equally gradually, *capella* became the name of any place of worship that was not a parish church, minster or cathedral. If you have ever entered a “chapel,” you have, maybe unwittingly, made your own connection with Saint Martin's little cloak.

The size of the garment was an important factor in Martin's reputation for holiness. He was born into a military family and when he turned 15, was obliged to join an elite unit of the Roman army. Martin's biographer, Sulpicius Severus, records that one bitter winter when Martin was 18, his unit passed a beggar at the gates of Ambianum (Amiens in modern France). Martin noticed that others

were ignoring the beggar as they entered the city. Having nothing with him save his weapons and his uniform, Martin took out his sword, cut his *chlamys* (a military cloak) in two and gave half to the beggar. The sight of Martin in his ruined cloak made some of the bystanders laugh (though, according to Sulpicius, others felt embarrassed at their own lack of generosity).

The next night Martin had a dream. Jesus wearing the other half of his cloak and with the angels stood before him. Still a catechumen, Martin took this as a sign of his acceptance by Jesus and sought baptism. He went on to become an ascetic, a worker of miracles and exorcisms and finally the bishop of Tours.

Martin's story seems to have appealed to the heavily militarised barbarian kingdoms that replaced the Roman Empire in Western Europe. Sulpicius Severus's story of the soldier who had renounced the trappings of power for the sake of a beggar entered popular culture.

St Francis's Cloak

Thomas of Celano, the biographer of Francis of Assisi, recorded that Francis, while still a wealthy merchant's son, had given his own fine cloak to a poor and barely clothed soldier. This time the soldier was on the receiving end of a saint's charity, but Thomas of Celano delighted in what he saw as a kind of holy symmetry in the disrobing of the two saints.

It is significant that the fourteenth century basilica built to honour Saint Francis at Assisi includes a Chapel of Saint Martin painted with scenes of the earlier saint's life, including the dividing of his cloak.

Not Self-Righteous Fervour

The moral of this story might seem to be that the *capella* of Saint Martin offers a better example of Christian living than the *cappa magna*. At one level it's hard to resist that conclusion; Saint Francis's more radical disciples certainly didn't. The later Middle Ages were replete with unflattering contrasts between the luxurious lives of the church's prelates and the poverty of Jesus and the apostles.

But I would like to push back gently against this almost reflexive response. Flamboyant displays of wealth and power are certainly unedifying, but there is always a fine line between a critique of these and a joyless puritanism (anyone who is following the "Faith" sub-plot in the current season of *Game of Thrones* will have some inkling of what I mean).

Over the centuries, Christian women in particular have often been on the receiving end of grim diatribes about the degeneracy of their dress, makeup, hairstyles and jewellery. Saint Cyprian of Carthage, for example, lashes out at a member of his third century congregation because she has spent so much money on cosmetics that she hasn't contributed enough to the offertory. In general terms, perhaps he has a point, but the fathers of the Church seem far too ready to reach for the misogynistic lexicon when offering rebukes of this kind.

A corrective, I think, can be found in the thought of another Martin: Martin Luther. It's well known that Luther did not mince words when criticising the hierarchy of the



Church, but what's less well recognised is that he thought their wealth, and even their moral lives, were finally beside the point. This became clear when some of his more single-minded supporters tried to purify Christianity on the basis, both of the prophetic critique of wealth and power, and of the apostolic simplicity that they found in Scripture.

For Luther this development was as dangerous as the religious pageantry of the traditional church. It was not that he disagreed with the radical simplicity these followers advocated. But he also feared that radical simplicity enforced with a self-righteous fervour would become every bit as much an obstacle to the Gospel of God's mercy as the ritual hoop-jumping required by the pope. God's love, Luther argued, does not fixate on outward things like clothes or status. Clerical vestments guarantee no one a place in heaven, but neither does the sanctimony of the self-anointed beggar and man of the people.

It's for this reason that Luther's order of the Mass retained liturgical vestments. Luther thought that liturgical ritual was a bit silly. He compared it to child's play. But, as with child's play, he thought the silliness sometimes had a point: to embellish the proclamation that God's mercy depends on nothing we can offer in return, but, through Jesus' saving work, is offered to us freely and without condition.

For this reason, Luther responded irritably to liturgical fusspots who sought his views. When representatives of Joachim II of Brandenburg wrote asking if the clergy were allowed to wear chasubles, Luther replied:

"... go along in God's name, and carry a silver or gold cross and wear a cope or alb of velvet, silk or linen. And if one cope or alb is not enough for your lord the elector, wear three of them... Only do not let such things be regarded as necessary for salvation and thus bind the consciences of men. How I would rejoice if I could persuade the pope and the papists of this! If the pope gave me the freedom to go about and preach, and commanded me... to hitch on only a pair of trousers, I should be glad to do him the favour of wearing them."

If asked to hitch on the big cloak (or the little one) I suspect Luther's answer would have been the same. ■



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THE NEEDS OF THE DAY



Helen Robinson describes the difficulties faced by people living on the street in Auckland trying to keep clothed and clean and find somewhere to store their possessions.

Twice a day, each day of the year at the Auckland City Mission, there is a queue of people waiting for clothing and bedding. Once in the morning and once in the evening, people gather at the top of a short hallway requesting particular items which are then distributed by the staff of the Mission. The numbers of people can vary each day, but is usually between 5–15 people asking for shoes and socks, clothes, underwear, towels, blankets, pillows and bed rolls. In winter there is high demand for all the things that keep us warm and dry — socks, shoes, gloves, scarves, hats, jackets, blankets and sleeping bags.

There are no questions asked when distributing this clothing. No assessment or qualification of need is required. The request itself is enough.

Increase in Street Sleepers

On the night of 22nd May 2016, a “street count” was conducted by *The Auckland Rough Sleepers Initiative*. Starting at 6pm and going through to about midnight, a group of people walked the area located within a 3km radius of the Sky Tower in Auckland city seeking to identify positively the number of people who were sleeping rough that night. The count found 177 people sleeping rough in the count area. A further 51 people who might otherwise have slept rough were located in temporary accommodation at James Liston Hostel or were patients at Auckland Hospital. By combining the two figures, 228 people can be said to have been homeless on the night of the count. This number is a significant increase on the 147 rough sleepers positively identified in the last Street Count of October 2014.

Nowhere to Keep Things

Part of the reality of being a rough sleeper in Auckland Central is that there is literally nowhere to store clothes, bedding or any other personal effects. Nowhere to place a blanket or sleeping bag once daylight comes, nowhere to put medication, or clothes not worn that day, nowhere to store important documents like birth certificates or bank cards, nowhere. There is just nowhere.

Recent years have seen the densification of the Auckland CBD and its space. There is no real “empty” or vacated space in the CBD anymore. Public spaces are in high demand and guarded with care. Once a suitcase or sleeping bag could be tucked away out of sight. Now, however, the high level of scrutiny means no such thing can occur anymore.

Given this reality rough sleepers really have no viable options. I am also aware that property owners and those managing our public spaces also have limited options themselves. The personal property of many a rough sleeper in Auckland ends up in the rubbish bin.

Showering is a Problem

Added to this lack of storage space is a lack of free or low cost showers available in the Central City area. James Liston Hostel, the one emergency accommodation provider in the Auckland CBD, opens its showers up for a couple of hours every day Monday-Friday to those rough sleeping wanting a shower. Beyond this, however, there is no public shower facility. And finally, there are very few places to wash and dry your clothes in the CBD. And those that do exist incur a significant expense to access.

Queuing for Daily Supplies

Given these realities — hundreds sleeping on the street, no storage available, very limited showers and very limited washing facilities — those requesting the most basic of clothing return, day after day needing the same kind of stuff.

Issues for Women

Women face particular issues, getting appropriate underwear and bras to fit. Women with access to



resources struggle with the same reality: however for the rough sleeper requesting clothing support it means making do with the nearest size and shape the staff member can find on the day. Menstruating while rough sleeping poses some big challenges. The cost of essential sanitary products is prohibitive. These items are requested regularly at the Mission.

Feet Problems

A common complaint from many rough sleepers is sore and swollen feet. Finding suitable socks and shoes can be a challenge. People sometimes come in asking for clothes for a special occasion — regularly that special occasion is to attend church and people want to dress appropriately. Sometimes the request for clothes is for a job interview or an important appointment.

Like the rest of the population, rough sleepers do not come in one body size either. Some people are tall, others short, some thin or fat, some have upper bodies smaller or bigger than their lower bodies. Getting something to fit is, if you will excuse the pun, at times a mission.

I have been part of this distribution process hundreds of times now over a three-year period, and to meet such genuine and desperate need is both confronting and sobering. On a good day, the right kind of item, in the right size is

available and what joy it brings to all involved! In this very human and even intimate moment there is a range of responses. I see and experience the gratefulness of people, the relief, the genuine thank you, the longing for something that we cannot provide, the frustration, the dismissal, the loss, the embarrassment, the defensiveness. I try to tread with care and respect in the exchange.

Seeing bare, swollen feet and having to say we do not have shoes that fit, is disturbing. A friend of mine volunteering at the Mission Centre literally wanted to take off his own nice, warm jacket and give it to someone who was sleeping on the streets. I didn't know what to say to him. I knew it would help and I knew it wasn't the answer. Being part of this process challenges all kinds of things within me. Most especially how I take for granted the access I have. The power I have to choose.

Clothing Gives Dignity

The distribution of clothing is a response to a very human, visceral, bodily need — to be covered and thus protected. I am aware that with clothing, clothing that fits, that is clean and looks nice, comes dignity. Clothing becomes more than just clothing.

Giving a pair of shoes to someone is not a hard task. Nor is it difficult to hand over a blanket or clean socks and underwear. Or a warm jacket.

It is really hard though, knowing that tomorrow there will be another queue of people wanting clothes — in the morning and again in the evening. And in the queue there may be even the person who was here today. It's hard knowing that raising the collective will and associated funds for showers and toilets, storage and washing facilities in the central city seems to be a near impossible task. The lack of dignity we afford one another is disturbing and confronting in its own right.

This is not the whole story of course. All clothes and bedding that we distribute are due to the generosity of the greater Auckland public. And it is not unusual for brand-new items to be given to us to distribute to those who need it. It is the existence of the need itself that poses the real challenge to us all.

St. John Chrysostom is quoted as saying: "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity: When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice." ■



Wellingtonian **Helen Robinson** is the Crisis Care Team Leader at Auckland City Mission and is committed to society's most vulnerable at both a structural and personal level.

Turning **SECOND HAND GOODS** into **FIRST CLASS CARE**



Hadley Brown tells how the Mercy Hospice shops sell recycled clothing and other goods to support hospice care.

Mercy Hospice opened its first shop, a converted poultry store, on Ponsonby Road on 5 December 2005 with the inspired tagline: “Turning second hand goods into first class care” – a phrase that is still being used by Mercy and other hospice shop chains throughout New Zealand.

Jim Hamilton, one of the driving forces behind Mercy’s foray into retail, remembers the flood of donated stock that arrived prior to the opening. It filled the chapel at the Mater Misericordiae hospital and overflowed into other spaces. The notion of a charity shop thriving among the elite designer stores lining Ponsonby Road is testimony to Mercy’s winning formula of providing a fresh, boutique-like shopping experience that offers a community vibe and connectedness. It gets no rental concessions for being a charity shop but pays the same market rate as its upmarket neighbours.

The decision to open the shop at Ponsonby and Mercy’s seven other shops came down to the need to diversify Mercy’s fundraising and find new and sustainable income streams at a time when government funding was struggling to keep up with the demand for hospice services. Today the shops

sell close to 330,000 items each year raising around \$1.3 million towards the Hospice’s annual operating costs.

However it’s more than just the money – the hospice shops provide a valuable community hub. Mercy’s retail managers and volunteers rightly regard the shops as the Hospice’s bridge as they are often at the frontline for people seeking solace from the grief of losing a loved one. Many of the volunteers have experienced personal loss themselves and helping others to discuss such matters comfortably is something that really resonates with them. Somehow this openness to talking about a sensitive topic like death creates a community connectedness that is wholly unique and paradoxically uplifting.

That the volunteers understand and apply a broader vision of service to their community is in large part due to Julie Reid, Mercy’s long-serving volunteer coordinator. Julie wryly refers to the volunteer induction process as “Mercyfication” where new volunteers hear the story of the Sisters of Mercy’s journey to New Zealand from Ireland and how their special form of charisma led to the establishment of the Hospice in Auckland and then later the shops. Julie’s ability to thread compelling and richly layered stories, metaphors and anecdotes through the induction ensures every volunteer leaves with a keen sense of personal mission that extends well beyond retail.

Mercy has consciously avoided

large, industrial stores in preference for a smaller, more intimate format where customers really do count. Stores’ locations are carefully chosen based on close-knit communities. Each shop is staffed and stocked by its immediate area and there is no central warehousing. The shop managers and volunteers pride themselves on the attention they give to their customers and to building sustained relationships with their communities and shoppers.

Consumer research conducted by Mercy shows that its retail chain caters mainly for middle-aged women but this understates the diversity of its market. Men can be found in the shops fossicking through the piles of tools, gadgets, books and CDs. Teens and young professionals forage through the colour-coordinated clothing racks looking for vintage chic, ball attire or that barely worn suit.

Annie Hurley, responsible for the running of the Mercy shop chain, compares and contrasts her previous experience as a mainstream luxury goods retailer with the hustle and bustle of the Mercy op shops: “There are of course similarities between the two, particularly in maintaining high levels of customer service but it’s the unpredictability of op shops. You just can’t predict what stock you’re going to get on any given day. We get donated everything and anything. And what makes it special is knowing that everything we sell goes toward supporting the Hospice.” ■

Hadley Brown is the Business Development Officer at Mercy Hospice Auckland





Michael Hanrahan explains how the Vinnies op-shops are a particular way of responding to the gospel imperative to care for the vulnerable in society through the works of mercy.

Most people see the opportunity shops operated by the Society of St Vincent de Paul as the face of the Society and maybe don't think about why these and other similar charity shops exist.

The Society's founders in 1833 discussed if the organisation was simply a means of giving welfare to the poor. They recognised that their primary goal was not just charity but the spiritual growth of the members. This spirituality helps Society members to consider the needs of people through the lens of the Gospel. In a sense Vincentians express their response to the Gospel in their care for the vulnerable.

The Rule of the Society says: "The vocation of members is to follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to his compassionate and liberating love. Members show their commitment through person to person contact". The Vincentian Charity Cross has on its face, surrounding the figure of Christ, the words from Matthew's gospel: "Whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters you did for me". On the back individual figures depict the corporal works of mercy. This cross sums up the work of the Society. The Rule also states: "No work of charity is foreign to the Society" and at times throughout New Zealand all the corporal works of mercy are actioned by Vincentians.

It is possible to carry out some of the Society's work, such as visiting the sick and housebound, without the need for money but in today's world the level of need has



expanded well past the practices of former days which simply involved passing donated goods to the needy. The shops, now numbering 62 and rising, have come about as the major fundraising work of the Society.

The Society's shops operate entirely by selling donated goods — furniture, household goods, clothing and other items. Donations of items such as food and firewood are accepted and given directly to those in need.

In the main, teams of volunteers receive donated goods, sort them, dispose of what cannot be used, price the remainder and put them on display for sale. Donated clothing is often brought straight to a shop or placed in collection bins.

The emphasis is on selling good quality goods at a reasonable price. The aim is to give people on a low income the opportunity to obtain items they need at a price they can afford. We are also able to provide goods to people in real need at no cost when necessary. Some shops carry packs of clothing, bedding and household goods to be given out quickly in the event of an emergency, such as a house fire.

We recognise that we live in a throwaway society and this is the case in particular with clothing. Large retail

chains sell new clothing at very low prices and opportunity shops then have to compete at even lower price levels while maintaining quality. The emphasis is on raising the funds necessary to be able to meet the ever-increasing needs that exist in society today.

Once, supplying a small amount of food to a family may have been all that was necessary. Today there are many more people in material need and their needs are greater and more varied. While there are differences in the way the society works in different areas, supplying food is still a mainstay. Paying bills such as medical, educational, utilities and clothing can also be a big part of the service.

There are varied challenges in operating the shops. Maintaining the quality of stock, disposing of unwanted material and maintaining a volunteer workforce all need attention. The shops help the Society to raise sufficient funds to carry out its mission. The Society is always grateful to receive donations of good, clean, used clothing and household goods. ■



Michael Hanrahan is a member of Holy Name SVdP conference, Ashburton, and is a former national president of the Society.



Labouring for the Label

Gillian Southey outlines the conditions of workers in the garment manufacturing industry in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and the gains that activism against injustice can make.

Sivadharshini sits in front of a sewing machine. Her head is bent. Her hands move quickly as she feeds fabric through the machine. There is no time to look up as she sews seam after seam. Her job — to sew the side seam on a shirt, hundreds of shirts in a brutal industry demanding many seams for little pay. It is a job she does for ten hours a day, six days a week with a break for lunch and a race to the toilet. Sometimes the hours are longer if there is a big export order to fill or there have been problems on the line — and she is not usually paid overtime for her extra labour. In a good month in the factory in south Sri Lanka, she earns \$186NZ, enough to cover expenses and send a little back to her family in Sri Lanka's war-damaged north.

Sivadharshini is one of millions of factory workers making the clothes we wear and toss when they are worn or out of date. While other household expenses have become more expensive, clothes cost a lot less than they did ten years ago. But cheap clothes and new fashion come at a price. This is a cost that we, living in a country with only a small sewing industry remaining and where most clothes say: "Made in China", do not

have to pay. Wherever clothes are manufactured, some things remain the same: workers are paid very low wages for working long days, factory conditions are often unsafe and women face regular harassment and violence. The workers are captive to their bosses, are compelled to do boring, repetitive tasks and have to tolerate whatever comes their way.

Deathtraps

The collapse of Bangladesh's Rana Plaza factory building in April 2013 pushed clothing production into the international spotlight. In the worst accident to hit the industry 1,134 people were killed, two thousand injured and many children orphaned. Until the five workshops on eight storeys crumbled, more than 3,000 people made millions of items which were sold under 29 different global brands, including The Gap and Bonmarché. In Bangladesh 4 million people, 85 per cent of whom are women, make clothes. Their output is second only to China's.

It was a wake-up call for international brands relying on contractors to deliver garments at a minimal cost. The collapse gave momentum to local workers'

campaigns demanding safe conditions and decent pay. The National Garment Workers Federation organised practical support for families affected and intensified its campaign for fair pay and decent working conditions in Bangladesh's factories. Linking with trade unions and the Clean Clothes campaign, they pressed international brands to pay compensation through a fund set up by the International Labour Organisation and for local factories to join the Fire and Building Safety Accord, allowing for independent assessment of a building's safety.

A new Fashion for Ethical Clothing

Concern about where clothing was made hit the fashion market. April 24 has become Fashion Revolution Day and is supported by companies with better employment practices. Wearing clothes inside out to display compliant labels and sending messages to manufacturers asking: "Who made my clothes?" raise awareness of some of the issues.

Back in Sri Lanka, Anton Marcus, a patron of the Women's Centre and joint secretary of the Free Trade Zones and General Service Employees Union, said the ethical clothing market is also having an impact but largely as a

public relations exercise. Brands can manufacture under an ethical label in one country and at the same time manufacture more cheaply in another country. He said the only way to change the global clothing industry is for consumers and trade unions to work together to demand fair pay and safe conditions. Clothing brands can hire people to inspect a factory. On the day of the inspectors' visit everything in the factory can be in order but the day after is an altogether different story. The workers in the factories know what is happening and this information can be shared across the union movement to get an accurate picture of the industry.

Working for Women Workers

In the 1980s the Sri Lankan government established free trade zones, or factory parks, to encourage foreign investment. The factories employed young women from the country's poorest rural communities on low rates of pay and without access to trade unions. In 1992 the government declared the whole country a free trade zone, granting more concessions to factory owners. Income from the garment sector increased by 18.5 per cent each year and accounts for about 30 per cent of the country's export earnings.

The Women's Centre has become a focal point for women employed in Sri Lanka's free trade zones. Set up in Ja-Ela in 1982 to protect the rights of women and women workers, the Women's Centre has expanded its presence to four other sites. Decades later they can point to some real successes for women workers. They have won better conditions and higher wages in some factories. At the different Centres they offer opportunities for workers to meet, use the library and computers, access healthcare and information on reproduction, find legal support and childcare, campaign for women's rights, participate in the Street Drama Troupe and other cultural activities. They publish a newspaper for workers, *Shramika*.

The exploitation does not end when the workday is done. In the boarding houses where most women

lived dormitory-style, sharing tiny outside kitchens and a single water tap, the Centre supported young women to demand improvements and stop unwanted sexual advances. When the 1994 South Asia tsunami destroyed homes on the coast, they raised funds to build some of the best post-tsunami houses available for poor communities. During the country's bitter civil war, they organised trips from the factories to meet Tamils in the north and east. When the war ended with the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in 2009, they visited Tamils interned in government camps and then helped them establish livelihoods when they were allowed to return home.



Photo from Christian World Service.

For the young Sivadharshini there were no employment opportunities in the north so in 2013 she came south to Wathupitiwala, determined to help her family left impoverished after the war. At the Eviden Timex factory she found a job sewing high-end fashion. Unable to speak the Sinhala language she had no choice but to agree to the demands of her manager. When she returned to the boarding house, she locked herself in her room. However things changed when she met Renu, a Women's Centre activist.

Joining the Women's Centre, Sivadharshini began to learn Sinhala and like other new arrivals participated in the Centre's training programmes. With her new

knowledge and support she has now found the confidence to speak out. Now aged 20 years Sivadharshini is seen as a leader by the other Tamil women workers and the factory managers. She takes the women's issues to the management and explains to her co-workers new targets and problems from the managers.

Factory owners discriminate against Tamil women, paying lower wages and poorer conditions than to Sinhala women. Factory managers employ Tamil women on short-term contracts, pay them less and make them work harder. Where Sinhala workers are sometimes given food, the Tamils have to provide their own

and are subject to much harsher abuse and racial threats. Most Tamil women are made to work even on Sundays and have little time for themselves. Landlords also charge them higher rents. The Women's Centre has been quick to see what is happening and is retracing its campaign work, this time with Tamil workers.

The price of new, ethically "clean" clothes is vigilance. ■



Gillian Southey is the Communications Coordinator for Christian World Service.

THE RIGHT CLOTHES FOR THE JOB



Lyndsay Freer describes the situation of women looking for work and not having suitable clothing, confidence or support and how groups of volunteers around the country are offering women the service of dressing them for the workplace.

Many of us, especially we women, are conscious that our appearance can be important in helping us achieve success in our chosen jobs or careers and we do what we can according to our resources — time and income — to look our best and make a good impression.

Is this vanity? I think not. I remember the time when I felt (and looked) terrible after suffering a major bereavement. I decided that rather than fret and take the advice I was given to rest up and take some time off, I would spruce up, put on make-up and my nicest clothes and with some real effort get on with my usual routine, albeit a bit more slowly. The difference it made to my confidence and a sense of wellbeing was amazing. The saying “clothes maketh the man or woman” does indeed carry some grain of truth.

Shakespeare knew this. In *Hamlet*, the courtier Polonius advised his son: “. . . the apparel oft proclaims the

man.” His son was going to France and needed to dress appropriately because he would be judged according to his appearance, implying that in France appearances were everything.

Jesus mentioned clothing more than once. “Why are you anxious about clothing?” he asked. “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They don’t toil, neither do they spin” Matthew 6:28.

Yet on another occasion, in outlining what we describe as the corporal works of mercy, he said: “I was naked and you clothed me” Matt 25:36.

If we understand what Jesus was saying on these occasions we realise that there is no contradiction. Firstly we are to rely upon God’s mercy for all that we need and secondly we will be judged on how we extend that same mercy to others.

Dressing for the Occasion

Organisations like *Dress for Success* are modern interpretations of

mercy expressed by clothing low-income and unemployed women suitably for the workplace. Their mission is “to empower women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire and the development tools to help women thrive in work and in life.” The women who come to *Dress for Success* are all referred by Work and Income, Citizens Advice or other agencies.

They assist women to feel their best for job interviews and during the first few weeks of their new employment. Their volunteers assist women who are looking for work to help them choose an interview outfit. But it doesn’t just stop there. They also provide guidance and support for the upcoming interviews. The purpose is to offer long-lasting solutions that enable women to break the cycle of poverty for them and their families.

Getting Families out of Poverty

Dress for Success is part of a global movement for change, empowering women to obtain safer and better futures. The Auckland group alone dresses around 1,500 women a year, the Wellington group between 400-600 women and with other groups in Northland, Hamilton, Rotorua, New Plymouth and Christchurch, this service to women is extensive.

They provide each client with suitable attire to secure employment and then once the women have jobs, provide a second fitting for clothes which they can mix and match and have enough variation to wear at least for a week at work. But it is much more than simply a new outfit. Besides physically equipping the woman with apparel and accessories, their programmes furnish her with a confidence that she carries forever, and the knowledge that she can actively define her life, the direction she takes and what success means to her and her family. As one volunteer said: "Each woman we help will have about six people in her life who are also affected by the change in her."

Supporting Women in Work

Looking for employment can be a frustrating experience especially when a string of refusals brings disappointment upon disappointment. And a woman who has been away from the workforce for some time, can feel daunted presenting herself to a prospective employer who is often dealing with younger, smarter people with more recent experience.

Once employed the women are given opportunities to meet regularly to support and encourage one another in building confidence, networking and discussing workplace-related topics. Programmes like the *Breakfast Club* run by the Wellington group, help women to prepare their CVs, apply for jobs, practise for interviews and share ideas and views on how best to stay positive. Post employment programmes also help with developing work discipline, managing children while working and budgeting.

Volunteers Make it Happen

I interviewed Michelle who has been a volunteer stylist at *Dress for*



*You can see the difference
in the women in an hour.
They walk differently –
head high, shoulders back
and a smile. It's what keeps
me coming back here in
between my own work
contracts.*

Success. Her role was to help women choose clothes and accessories that suited them and the kind of employment they were seeking. She had many stories of the value of her volunteering work.

She tells the story of one client, Marjory (not her real name). While realising she had skills and background that would be suitable for a job in publishing, Marjory did not have the income or the confidence to present herself to a prospective employer. She had not worked in nine years while her children were young and during that time she had become a solo parent. Her income was very limited and her usual attire was the jeans and two tracksuits that virtually constituted her entire wardrobe.

She was soon given opportunities for interviews in the work that she was suited to. She was given advice about interview techniques, an attractive, modern outfit and accessories and advice on hair style and makeup, all of which really boosted her confidence.

Now she is in charge of a department in a small organisation, managing a staff of ten. Michelle said: "It has been life-changing for Marjory. Having this work that she really loves, has meant that her kids didn't have to do without most of the things their friends enjoy. They even had a holiday together – the first time since her husband left the marriage seven years earlier."

The generosity of the volunteers keeps this service to women going. In the different branches around New Zealand you'll find volunteers sorting the donated clothing, shoes and accessories, ironing and mending clothing, helping to dress clients and engaging in fundraising projects. They're mavericks too in being able to put together outfits that will fit different body shapes and sizes, different ages and with sensitivity to cultural preferences. Irene, a volunteer in Wellington who dressed 96 women last year, said that the best part was seeing the women leave after an hour or so of fitting. "You can see the difference in the women in an hour. They walk differently – head high, shoulders back and a smile. It's what keeps me coming back here in between my own work contracts."

Each branch of the organisation has a range of fundraising activities that help support the work. Volunteer Corinne, in Wellington, assists with running the stall at the Frank Kitt Market some Saturdays where they sell donated good-quality designer and quirky clothing which is not suitable for the workplace but brings in funds.

And generosity is also showered on this ministry to women in the form of donations of clothing, makeup and accessories. It is always the unexpected kindness that touches the heart and heightens our awareness of mercy and compassion. The Christchurch branch posted this message on Facebook: "Today we received a cool orange handbag from a woman who donated it. Inside the handbag was tucked a note:

'To the lady who ends up with this bag. The twenty dollars is for you to buy your first lunch on your first day on your job.

Well done you. Enjoy. The best is yet to be.'

Thank you to that lovely woman, a truly magic gesture." ■



Dame Lyndsay Freer is media spokesperson for the Catholic Diocese of Auckland. She brings to this role many years of experience in Catholic communications.

On the Swag

His body doubled
under the pack
that sprawls untidily
on his old back
the cold wet dead-beat
plods up the track.

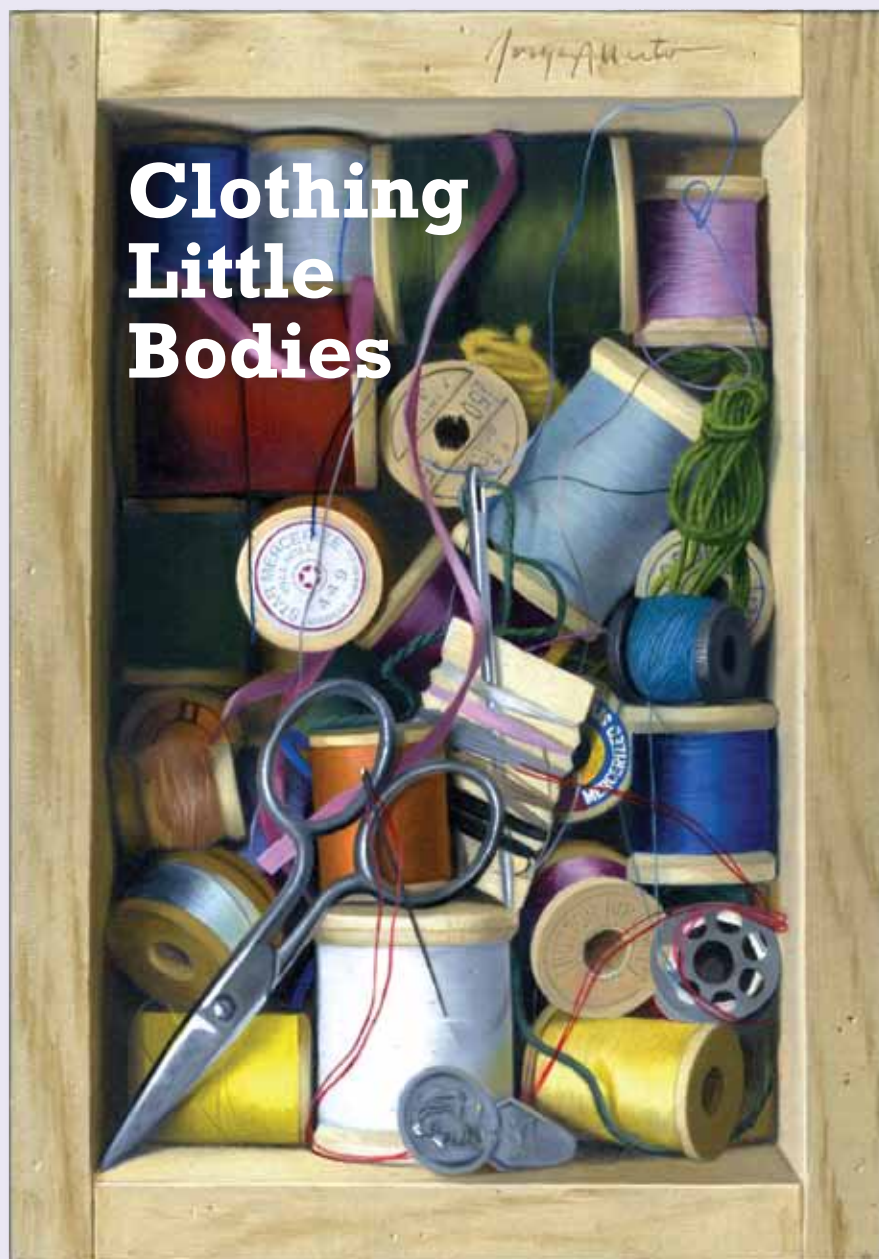
The cook peers out:
"oh curse that old lag –
here again
with his clumsy swag
made of a dirty old
turnip bag."

"Bring him in cook
from the grey level sleet
put silk on his body
slippers on his feet,
give him fire
and bread and meat.

Let the fruit be plucked
and the cake be iced,
the bed be snug
and the wine be spiced
in the old cove's night-cap:
for this is Christ."

— R A K Mason
(Printed with permission of
the Hocken Library)





Ann Gilroy surveys groups who make, collect and distribute baby clothes and discovers them wrapping little bodies in mercy, warmth and love.

We know babies grow like mushrooms, wearing at least seven sizes of clothes in their first two years. And sometimes they might wear an article only once or twice before it's too small. Prematurely-born babies grow through even more sizes. So clothing babies can be expensive and strain family resources. While many families benefit from baby clothes passed on from family and friends, other parents do not have the means to dress their babies adequately. Then there are little stillborn babies where dressing the small body helps

parents to express their heartache and love. I found that around New Zealand there are individuals and organisations who specialise in the work of mercy of clothing little bodies.

Mercy is infectious I discovered on hearing the stories of the people who ministered to parents and babies through clothing. Their motivation often came from a personal experience of the birth or loss of a baby, or seeing new mothers without suitable baby clothing, or being swamped with the baby clothes their babies had outgrown, or finding where their skill in sewing

and knitting and their time matched a need. Baby clothing organisations are staffed mostly by volunteers who sort, categorise, parcel up and distribute donated and new goods. They pride themselves on getting the goods to the mothers, babies and young children who need them and they facilitate this by networking with maternity hospitals and clinics, government and council agencies, local churches and groups. Some organisations like *Little Sprouts*, confine their operations to a local geographical area, while others like *Pregnancy Help* provide national coverage.

Recycling Baby Clothes

Jo at *Little Sprouts* said they give about three baby packs per week to vulnerable families in Wellington — mums escaping violence, families in need with sick or premature babies, struggling single parents, pregnant teens, refugee families and families living in poverty. They design their packs “to make a practical and significant difference to the life of each baby” and include cotton and woollen clothes, hats and booties, swaddles, a merino sleeping bag, safe nightwear and cot sheets. Each pack has handmade pieces because they say: “We want these families and babies to know that they are cared for and valued.” And it's two-way Jo says: “Every day I have the absolute privilege of shedding ‘happy tears’ because of the unbelievable generosity and spirit of New Zealanders, because of the amazing work that so many people do to support others and because of the impact our packs are having on those that need it.”

Laura Howard established *Littlemore*, an organisation in Auckland and the Waikato, after hearing from her midwife that some babies born in Auckland's Middlemore Hospital were being sent home in baby-sized hospital gowns because their families had no clothes for them. A mum of a new-born daughter herself, she said: “My heart was touched and I couldn't forget that conversation.”

She tapped into the goodwill of parents wondering what to do with the mountains of baby clothes and other gear their babies had outgrown and set up the charity to recycle the clothes for babies in need.

Littlemore specialises in baby clothing prem (size 00000) to age 1 (size 1) and requires that donated items, particularly sleeping wear, comply with safety standards and are freshly laundered. Their guide is: "We only pass on baby gear that we would use for our own children."

A staff member in the Middlemore maternity ward said: "I wish you could be a little birdie on my shoulder when I hand items to families and see their genuine appreciation. It's as if instantly this great big load has been lifted from their shoulders."

Knitted and Crotched Baby Clothes

New mother Kelly wrote to *Beanies for Babies*: "My baby was born two weeks ago at Palmerston North hospital and we were given one of your donated singlets as I was in ICU from complications and my baby couldn't regulate his body temperature. Thank you so much!"

Her gratitude was to an organisation of knitters around New Zealand, coordinated by Elizabeth Morton in Palmerston North, whose needles create hats, booties, singlets, vests and blankets for newborn babies. While wool is the warmest and safest material for newborns and can help prevent the baby's temperature from dropping too low, wool can also be out of range of some family budgets. *Beanies for Babies* does their bit to ensure the new generation has a good start.

Environmental-Friendly Family Support

Among other services, such as providing maternity and baby clothing, the 30-year-old national organisation *Pregnancy Help* offers a Nappy Bank, giving reusable nappies to parents concerned about environmental sustainability and waste minimisation. Their December newsletter said: "We provided families with 9,222 reusable nappies. If every one of those nappies was used just 100 times, that would have saved 922,200 disposable nappies going into landfills." The Dunedin branch has provided families with 23,790 items of baby and children's clothing over the last 11 months.

Personal Clothes

Most children have parents and families who choose suitable clothing, toys and personal items for them. *Foster Hope* was born from the concern that many of the over 5,000 children in foster care in NZ arrived at their new placements with nothing but the clothes on their backs, or with their belongings in a black rubbish bag. They decided to make up a backpack and a carry-all bag to give to each baby and child when they are removed from their homes. In them are age and gender specific items — knitted clothes and toys for the under two-year-olds and toiletries, new underwear, socks, PJs and personal items for the older children. As well, they give each baby and child their own handmade knitted blanket or patchwork quilt to keep. One young person wrote: "No one ever thought so much of me that they gave me something that they done themselves."

Clothes for Stillborn Babies

Rosemary Westley remembers the appalling experience in 1986 of her still-born daughter "being given to me in a paper

shawl not unlike the paper towels that are found in public toilets." She started *SANDS*, a parent-run organisation which supports parents who have lost a baby, including providing special clothing. Parents whose baby is stillborn or dies before term are often unaware in their grief that they can hold and dress their babies. Midwives, parents who lost a child and others are promoting this care as significant in parenting, in acknowledging the identity of their baby and its place in the family: "We're talking about the last time that parents hold their baby and what they're giving their baby. It's those last personal acts as a parent, those last things you do for your child."

I found Sister Marie in her retirement sewing beautiful, tiny bed-like envelopes in which the staff in the local maternity ward could wrap babies born dead before term. "Parents can hold their baby comfortably in these wraps. The delicate, little bodies are often difficult to handle otherwise. The nurses call me when their stock is getting low," she said, indicating the growing pile she'd sewn.

And those at *Angels Gowns NZ* sew tiny garments and wraps out of donated wedding gowns in which parents can dress their stillborn and babies who die early in infancy.

By clothing little dead bodies with love and reverence, these people are showing that even the littlest life has value in a family and identity in the communion of God. ■



After living around New Zealand and beyond Ann L Gilroy RSJ has landed in Dunedin as editor of *Tui Motu* magazine. She's rediscovering domestic arts, loves reading, and is on for adventure.



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The Art of Dressing Appropriately

Erin Griffey describes how Mary Magdalene's clothing in medieval and renaissance paintings portrays the beliefs about her at the time.

Saints and biblical figures proliferate in medieval paintings, typically resplendent against gold-leaf backgrounds, richly dressed in the finest silk garments, redolent with haloes. Their holiness is materialised in richness, of actual materials used (gold leaf, expensive pigments), represented fabrics (luxurious silks) and symbolism (haloes). When gold leaf was largely abandoned with the advent of oil painting in the Renaissance, holy figures were dressed as decorum dictated, appropriately, typically in fine, elegantly draped silks that materially reflected their inner, spiritual glory.

Depictions of Mary Magdalene... represent the inherent contradictions for an elite audience who wanted to reconcile material richness with their spiritual piety – consumption with charity.

But there is a paradox at work here: while such features were used to mirror the holiness of the sacred figures, these rich materials are contrary to Christian virtues that eschew the acquisition and parading of luxury goods in favour of offering charity and living simply.

Artists and church theorists could justify such magnificence in their representations of saints as appropriate for their pious status. And important patrons, benefactors and church leaders, rather than being divested of their wealth, may have wanted their own finery reinforced by being depicted on holy figures.

It is no coincidence that artists

tended to populate biblical scenes with figures in the fashionable dress of their day, in what may have been an attempt to engage in a reflective dialogue with the faithful.

Female saints and biblical figures are typically represented in opulent outfits. Naturally the Virgin Mary's traditional blue robes were painted in the most expensive blue pigment available: lapis lazuli. As such, she is physically clothed in God's glory as a signifier of her inner virtue.

Images of the Virgin and female saints and biblical subjects present a striking contrast to Christ's typical appearance in simple garb as a baby on his mother's lap or in a modest shroud in crucifixion scenes. St Francis of Assisi, extremely popular in later medieval art, followed Christ's example in modesty of clothing being depicted in a rough brown garment tied with rope.

Paradox of Mary Magdalene

If there is no ambivalence in portrayals of St Francis, there is one female saint who embodies the contradiction of luxury and modesty particularly vividly: Mary Magdalene. She figures as something of a paradox – the person now known as Mary Magdalene is a composite of several female figures found in the gospels as well as a product of church fathers and the medieval *Golden Legend*.

She is identified as being present at a number of central Gospel events such as the crucifixion, the burial of Jesus and the resurrection.

There is no scriptural reference to her as a prostitute. It was only in the sixth century that Pope Gregory the Great provided this characterisation. Furthermore, it was in the *Golden Legend* that the myth was born that she retired to a solitary ascetic life in the wilderness.



The medieval association with prostitution seems to have impacted on the way Mary Magdalene was portrayed in Western art. She is usually shown in one of two “types”: dressed in rich silks, with a jar of perfume, referencing her association with the sinful woman who anoints Christ's feet; or undressed, with her long hair used to cover her nakedness, as a penitent in the wilderness.

Magdalene Dressed with Hair

The earliest known painting of the life of Magdalene, made in the late thirteenth century (fig. 1), shows her purported journey from sinner to penitent charted in the scenes surrounding the central image. We see her clothing change from a red garment to a covering solely from her long, dark brown hair. The hair as an ascetic “cloak” is like St Francis's brown

tunic also widely represented by artists at this time. It may well have been intended to have this association.

Magdalene Dressed as a Mistress

Images of Mary Magdalene are, moreover, highly tactile, with clothing, hair and flesh foregrounded, both as a way to identify the subject with a former life of the flesh and to underscore her later repentance. The Italian Renaissance painter Carlo Crivelli's *Mary Magdalene* (fig. 2) is a ravishingly beautiful woman in highly fashionable, very expensive clothing and ornate jewellery. With her plucked forehead, alabaster skin and blonde hair, she conforms to the Renaissance ideal of beauty. Her striking outfit is akin to that worn by the richest women at the Italian courts. She wears a series of layers of the finest textiles, starting with a light lace-trimmed linen smock topped with a crimson velvet stomacher, a rich gold-hued bodice adorned with thick gold trimming and buttons, a blue brocade skirt, a gold-buckled embroidered belt and a red robe lined in green fabric, again



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lavishly trimmed. This was an outfit of staggering expense and exquisite style.

Her jewellery suggests a woman who is betrothed or married, with pendants set in her hair, hanging from what appears to be a coral necklace and an ornamental design on her shoulder. Perhaps this is a reference to her association with Jesus and her devotion to him. Her gold box refers to her supposed anointing of him, and her luscious long hair, with its stylised tendrils and golden highlights, also references this biblical event. Moreover, this is not an image of a prostitute, but in the subject's sheer material seductiveness and physical beauty, Magdalene exemplifies the ideal courtly wife—or mistress. For Renaissance viewers, her beauty and material finery were appropriate as they mirrored the saint's inner piety. And since she dressed as exquisitely as the elite, they could see themselves reflected in her.

Magdalene Almost Naked

The other main type of depiction of Mary Magdalene portrays her as a penitent in the wilderness. This type conflates Mary Magdalene with Mary of Egypt (ca. 344-ca. 421). She was a former prostitute who after becoming Christian retired to an eremitical life. She is traditionally depicted naked except for her hair or with a simple cloak. Her story seems also to have informed images of the Magdalene as a penitent. In such images, Magdalene is shown with bare breasts, sometimes partially covered by her long hair. In one of Titian's versions of the subject (fig. 3), her breasts are covered with a simple linen smock, which manages both to preserve some modesty but also, in the way it clings to the curves of her body and drapes down, suggests a sinful past. Hair serves, like clothing, decorative, practical and symbolic purposes. With eyes red from crying, her prayer book open, she looks up as if imploring God to forgive her sins. This image is as much to commemorate Mary Magdalene as it is an enjoinder to viewers to consider their own sins.

Patrons Excusing Themselves

Clothing seems to have defined Mary Magdalene because of the association,



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albeit apocryphal, with prostitution. The covering and uncovering of her body was essential to her story and her significance. But she occupied an impossible position, as both an historical figure and as a subject for art. Luxury and/or sexuality never seem far from images of the Magdalene and these aspects co-exist with the theme of penitence she so perfectly embodies. As such she offered patrons and viewers a timely figure: a sinner associated with luxury goods and a penitent who disavows them.

For artists she was appealing in inviting the rendering of lush flesh, luxuriant long hair, richly draped silk fabrics and exquisite ornamentation.

In this jubilee year of mercy it is worth reflecting on how the figure of Mary Magdalene embodies these values. But she also represents the inherent contradictions for an elite audience who wanted to reconcile material richness with their spiritual piety — consumption with charity. ■

Fig. 1 Master of the Magdalene (Italian, active 1265-1295). *St. Mary Magdalene Penitent and Eight Stories of her Life*, c. 1280-1290, Tempera on panel. Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia.

Fig. 2 Carlo Crivelli (Italian, c. 1435-c.1495) *Mary Magdalene*, c. 1480, Tempera on panel. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 3 Titian (Tiziano Vecellio) (Italian, about 1487 - 1576). *The Penitent Magdalene*, 1555 - 1565, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



Erin Griffey is an art historian, senior lecturer at The University of Auckland and an author.

OBSERVE

the BIRDS and the LILIES



Elaine Wainwright reads Luke 12:22–31 and alerts the ecological reader to the sense of human superiority that could limit our relationships with the rest of creation.

Luke 12:22–31 He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And

can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into

the oven, how much more will God clothe you—you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰ For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, strive for God’s kin[g]dom, and these things will be given to you as well.

While I was working on the text for this month the July issue of *Tui Motu* arrived with Peter Murnane’s moving article, “At Home with the Birds”. From his experience of encounter with a number of birds during recuperation in Canberra, Peter drew attention to Matt 6:26 with its invitation to “look at the birds of the air”. I propose to take up the Lucan parallel to Matt 6:25–34 which Peter used.

For many this text (often called

the “Birds of the Air and Lilies of the Field”), whether in the gospel of Matthew or Luke, is considered to be the ecological text *par excellence* in the gospels. Indeed it is a very significant text for the ecological reader. I want, though, to sound a note of caution. It is important that we read the section as a whole, bringing to it a prophetic critique as well as prophetic reclamation since both are needed to facilitate ecological readings.

Context of Story

This text (Lk 12:22–31) is situated on the long journey to Jerusalem that Jesus makes with his disciples—he set his face to go to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51). It finds its place among a significant collection of Jesus’ teachings (Lk 11–14). Jesus draws a number of Earth elements into his preaching, which constitute the ecological texture of the text: light and lamp (Lk 11:33), eye and body (Lk 11:34), cup and dish (Lk 11:39), mint, rue and

herbs of all kinds (Lk 11:42) to alert us to just a few. In Lk 12:22-31 it is the ravens and other birds, the lilies and grass of the field that contribute to the ecological weave of this segment of the gospel.

The texture is understood by reading the biblical text and also dialoguing with insights from contemporary ecological thinkers.

For this Lucan reading, I have chosen to dialogue with Anne Primavesi who develops the concept of “gift” in her book, *Sacred Gaia* (2000). She supplies a significant intertext for reading ecologically when she notes that: “life is . . . ultimately characterised by dependence. It is continually constituted by prior and present gifts . . . which presuppose and involve us in relationships with other people and with other organisms; with the air we breathe and the land we walk; with the food we eat and the love, joy and understanding we receive from others. Some of these gifts we hand on in modified energy exchanges. Some remain with us, becoming constitutive of bone and blood, of health or disease...we act as givers/receivers in relation to...other living entities” (pp 156-157).

The Lucan text can be heard to speak to the dependence/inter-dependence that Primavesi identifies. At the heart of the text is the exhortation not to be anxious—the verb *merimnaein* is used to warn against worry three times (Lk 12:22, 25, 26) and a parallel term is used in Lk 12:29.

Indeed the opening verse Lk 12:22 takes us into two key areas in which the other-than-human and human are caught up in relationships: food and clothing. In both instances, the other-than-human “remain with us” the human ones, providing sustenance and covering/protection for bodies. The ecological reader is caught up in a gift-exchange process but one that in our day is precarious as a result of climate change. The human community has broken down right relationships with the other-than-human.

Galilean Peasants’ Loss of Land

For many of the first-century listeners inscribed in this text,

the gift-exchange processes were likewise precarious or broken down. Many of the Galilean peasant recipients of Jesus’ teaching had been deprived of their land as a result of high taxes imposed within the Roman Empire, and forced to become day labourers on the estates acquired by Roman entrepreneurs.

Their sowing and reaping was taken out of their control. They were the vulnerable poor who did not know from day to day if they would have food for tomorrow. For them the basics of life and its foundational gift-exchange, namely food and clothing, were most at risk.

The human is constructed in the text as of much more value than the birds or the plants. The ecological reader must read against the grain of such anthropocentric superiority.

Observe the Birds and Lilies

Attentive to life and life’s processes, Jesus the wisdom teacher, invites his listeners to “observe” the ravens (Lk 12:24), to be attentive, not only to the birds generally (this is so at the end of Lk 12:24), but also to each group of birds in their specificity.

Just as Peter Murnane observed the magpies, the parrots, the currawongs and others in their specificity, so too the Lucan text singles out the ravens. They were perhaps the most common bird in first-century Galilee. God’s care for each of these most common of birds is indicative, therefore, of God’s care for the most vulnerable poor inscribed in the ecological texture of this text.

Verse Lk 12:27 parallels Lk 12:24 when Jesus invites listeners

to consider, to observe, the lilies of the field. They are not described in any detail but the reader can imagine their beauty, delicate texture, colour and in some instances, their fragility. The tasks that cannot be ascribed to these flowers of the field are those of toiling hard and spinning.

While hard toil might be ascribed to men and women, especially among the Galilean peasants inscribed in this text, spinning is a woman’s task. Both male and female work is therefore evoked, contributing to an ecological reading that is attentive to right relationships in the human arena as well as in the other-than-human.

Read Suspiciously

However there is a need for a hermeneutics of suspicion in relation to this text as it values the human over the other-than-human. In Lk 12:24b Jesus asks: “Of how much *more* value are you than the birds!” And in Lk 12:28b readers encounter the question: “How much *more* will God clothe you?” (in comparison to the “grass of the field”). The human is constructed in the text as of much more value than the birds or the plants.

The ecological reader must read against the grain of such anthropocentric superiority. Once this has been done, it is possible to reclaim the text.

In the gift exchange of God’s *basileia* — of what God desires for the Earth community — right relationships in the entire more-than-human community will be key characteristics. The invitation to *consider*, to look at or pay attention to in a reflective manner, a contemplative manner, is at the heart of this gospel invitation. If we embrace it prophetically we can participate in the shaping of a new ecological consciousness. We can become, in the words of Primavesi: “givers/receivers in relation to...other living entities”. ■



Elaine Wainwright RSM is the Executive Director of Mission and Ministry for the Mercy Sisters in Australia and Papua New Guinea. She is an international biblical scholar.



Learning from the Line of Women

Kathleen Rushton situates the visit of Mary to Elizabeth, Luke 1:39–56, within the story of biblical foremothers and points to the similarities and differences of their relationships.

*Feast of Assumption
(14 August – transferred)*

The actions and language of mercy permeate the opening chapter of the gospel according to Luke and surround the story of mercy known as The Visitation. Two women, Mary and Elizabeth, stand in the biblical tradition of mercy. Mary proclaims that God's mercy (*eleos*) is from generation to generation (Lk 1:50) and that God's care and faithfulness to Israel flow from God's mercy (*eleos*) (Lk 1:54). Later in this infancy narrative, Zechariah declares that God "has shown the mercy (*eleos*) promised to our ancestors, and has remembered God's holy covenant" (Lk 1:72).

Songs of Mary's Female Ancestors

The noun *eleos* meaning mercy, pity and compassion is used in relation to God. This Greek word is used frequently for the Hebrew word *hesed*, as for example, in Exodus 15:13: "In your steadfast love (*hesed*) you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode." This verse is from the song of Ex 1:1-18 which many biblical scholars understand to have been sung and led by Miriam. Luke's Mary, *Miryam* in Hebrew, has the same name as Moses's sister. Both women have significant roles in the biblical story and celebrate God's faithfulness. The many parallels between their songs include recalling what God has done for them personally, naming the powerful deeds done by God's right arm, exalting in the mercy and steadfast love of God, celebrating that God casts down those who oppose God's ways, relating how God has helped Israel and understanding God's reign as continuing forever.

Further, in the biblical mosaic of Mary's song of praise almost every line is patterned on the canticle of praise Hannah sang after the conception and birth of Samuel (1 Sam 2:1-10). Hannah and Samuel's story is woven throughout Luke's infancy narrative. When Hannah brought Samuel to the sanctuary to present him to God, they were greeted by the aged Eli. When Mary presents Jesus at the sanctuary of the Temple the aged Simeon and Anna greet them. Both Samuel and Jesus are described as growing in divine and human favour.

Mary's Song

Mary's reference to "generation after generation" and the promise God "made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants" includes not only the promise of descendants but of the land. Mary walks on the very land promised to her ancestors.

Her pregnant body is sustained by the Earth pregnant, too, with life. Mary journeys southward from Nazareth in Galilee over hills, through valleys and varied landscapes to a southern village in Judea about 160 kilometres away. It would have taken a week or more to arrive at this village about eight kilometres west of Jerusalem. It was identified later in Christian tradition as Ain Karem. Mary's body was sustained by the food grown in fields through which she passed. Her thirst was quenched by the water from streams and wells. She breathed deeply the life-giving air.

Mary describes herself as God's servant (*doile*, literally a female slave). The image of one who responds like a slave or servant has been negative in reinforcing women as passive. On the other hand Mary's song of mercy proclaims a radical song of reversal. God has "looked with favour" on her lowliness. She is young in a world that values age, female in a world ruled by males, poor and from a remote village in a stratified society. God favours one from the margins not from the centre of power. God's action for the poor, wounded and vulnerable is proclaimed: God "has lifted up the lowly ... filled the hungry with good things ... helped God's child (*paidos* masculine, singular) Israel". In contrast God "scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts ... has brought down the powerful from their thrones and sent the rich away empty". Lucy D'Souza's painting of these women wearing colours of Earth and sky suggests the connection between the rejoicing Mary and Elizabeth and the abundant life-producing Earth and air. God's promise of mercy from generation to generation includes Earth and air, whose abundance and vitality are made poor through exploitation and pollution.

Bodiliness

In a close reading of Lk 1:39-56 we will discover some surprises. The opening words of Mary's hymn are translated usually as: "My soul (*psychē*) magnifies the Lord, and my spirit (*pneuma*) rejoices in God my Saviour" (Lk 1:47-48). The Greek *psychē*, translated from the Hebrew word *nepes*, means the whole living person not just what we understand as "the soul". And *pneuma* suggests an aspect of the self that is able to receive the Spirit. The dualism of thinking of soul and body as separate was introduced by Greek thought after Jesus' time and it is prominent still in Western cultures. But that distinction was not known in Jewish thought or elsewhere at that time. The gospel meanings of *psychē* and *pneuma* are very close and scarcely distinguishable. Scripture scholar Barbara Reid says both terms cover all that is meant by the personal pronoun "I."

When the Spirit-filled Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting she offers the first of many blessings found in the gospel. She blesses Mary in her own person first, in her own right. She then blesses the fruit of Mary's womb, her childbearing (Lk 1:43). Both women recognise God's action in their bodiliness, conception and the new life growing within them. Unlike stories of their biblical foremothers who rival each other, for example, Sarah and Hagar (Gen 16, 21) or Leah and Rachel (Gen 29-31), Mary and Elizabeth are supportive and understanding of each other. In their encounter we find a rare happening in scripture — a conversation between two women and an example of the wisdom and care that older women can offer younger women.

Recognising what God has Done for Her

Luke identifies the extraordinary character, Elizabeth, by her tribal origin. She is from the tribe of Aaron (Lk 1:5) and with her husband, Zachariah, is described as "righteous before God." After she becomes pregnant, her life-long relationship with God enables her to work out and know what God has done for her. Luke gives us access to her thoughts (Lk 1:24). In this she is singular among Luke's many characters who, having had a religious experience, do not reflect on it, or retell it inaccurately or without understanding (Lk 2:44; 3:15; 7:39; 11:17; 12:17; 12:19; 18:4; 19:11; 24:37).

Barbara Reid said of Mary and Elizabeth's meeting: "This scene invites those contemporary believers who mistrust women's ability to interpret God's word to accept that women as well as men know God's ways and reliably communicate them. It particularly encourages women to accept the companionship of other women as spiritual guides, theologians, confessors, retreat directors, teachers and preachers in their faith journeys." ■

Image: "Maria und Elisabeth" aus dem MISEREOR-Hungertuch "Biblische Frauengestalten – Wegweiser zum Reich Gottes" von Lucy D'Souza-Krone © MVG Medienproduktion, 1990



Kathleen Rushton RSM tends her vegetable garden, walks in the hope her feet will allow her to tramp again and delights in learning about Scripture.



YEAR OF MERCY

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a GEN-Y perspective

A Very Honest Account of Grief



On the 6th of August 2015, my kind, caring, witty and intelligent Dad died after a long illness. As I approach his first anniversary I'm reflecting on the intense experience of grieving for this person I love.

Loss and change are part of the human experience but it's become apparent to me over the past year that grief isn't something that we talk about a lot. In fact, grief can be incredibly awkward for people to be confronted with.

The pain of losing someone you love is almost indescribable and I have spent hours formulating suitable metaphors for the intensity of the loss to people who are lucky enough to have never had the experience. One that has resonated early on is the image of someone reaching their hand into my chest, physically taking a piece of my heart, while all I can do is stand in the middle of a room and bleed with grief and grow more and more tired from the pain. Another image I have ruminated on is that of sitting at the family table

with the seat next to me painfully vacant. It always used to be filled with someone who offered good humoured, intelligent and engaging conversation.

A very wise friend said recently that when we lose someone we love, we not only lose them as an important person in our present lives, we also lose all of our future plans and dreams with them and it changes all of our past memories of them too. This simple yet insightful statement helped me to gain a sense of how deeply grief can run.

While I don't subscribe to a particular model of the stages of grief I have recognised different steps in processing emotions — from anger at not feeling supported in the initial period after Dad died, to overwhelming feelings of unfairness, to hours spent on hypothetical bargaining. Before I experienced grief first hand, I couldn't understand the concept of bargaining as part of the grief experience as it seemed futile to come up with scenarios in which you could have that person back. I now know that it's often a lot more nuanced than this and can be triggered by seemingly small things. While tramping the Abel Tasman earlier this year we happened across a woman of my own age walking with her father. This spiked an unexpected and incredible rush of jealousy. And then my friend listened patiently while I went through the list of things I would give up just to have my Dad back in full health and for the two of us to go on a five-day tramp. While I never thought this would actually happen, that was something that surprised me and which I fixated on for a long time.

The most valuable thing I can pass on to someone who is new to grief is to tell people what you need. Losing a parent in my mid-twenties has been

challenging in the sense that very few of my peers have first-hand experience of this kind of loss. I now recognise that people can refer only to the worst loss that they have experienced in trying to understand what someone else is going through. However at the time it was very isolating to be trying to convey the depth of pain of losing a parent to someone whose worst experience was going through a break-up.

I realise now that friends often don't know how to help even though they want to, or they need permission to offer help and to be assured that they aren't being invasive. It's also a natural urge to seek out people who have had a similar experience of grief and this has been the most valuable thing for me.

Three months after Dad died a new flatmate moved in whose father had also died some years earlier. We spent hours of walking, chatting and telling Dad stories because we knew the sharpness of the pain. We were supports for each other on hard days. It was simply invaluable and I have unending gratitude for that aspect of our friendship.

A person going through an intense period of grief often won't know how to ask for help, or will feel so isolated by the grief and won't want to bother other people with it. The best thing for me was people making themselves emotionally available for "grief chats", gently checking in and patiently listening. Offering solutions or pointing out silver linings is just irritating. But simply supporting by listening is more helpful than anything. It's also important to recognise that the person will carry the grief for the rest of their lives so support can be needed far past the initial period of shock.

While I feel like I am mere metres into the metaphorical journey of grieving, I can see more clearly that grief is a strong testament to the love you have for the person you lost and a marker of the bond that you shared with them. I am also starting to recognise my Dad in more and more aspects of myself, giving the sense that he is always with me.

Grief, though difficult and awful in many ways, also deepens our compassion for others going through those painful phases of the human experience. ■

Louise Carr-Neil, an Auckland native living in Hamilton, is passionate about gender equality and human rights. In her spare time she enjoys running and vegetarian cooking.



The Paradox of Mother Teresa



In between snatches of sleep Father John Curnow and I took turns killing cockroaches with our shoes, as they crawled up the walls of our cramped hotel room. In the intense heat outside, the streets of Calcutta were beset with sleeping bodies.

When we emerged to attend early Mass at the Missionaries of Charity headquarters in 54a Lower Circular Road, we stepped across the footpath and over the silent bodies of those not yet awake and others dead. The combination of the heat and the stench of humans and animals, was putrid.

Further down the road the cart had started its early morning rounds to check the bodies. Dead and dying bodies would be loaded onto the cart and taken either to the Missionaries' headquarters for burial, or to the home for the dying to be ministered to physically and spiritually.

When we entered the home for the dying we took every step in reverence. There was a calm silence broken only by the clink of a soup bowl or a cup. It was a beautiful, sacred, radiant scene. We could feel and smell the divine presence as we observed rows and rows of human beings in their last moments. Outside was chaotic as tens of thousands began to gather for the morning food distribution. This was the home and work of Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity that the

world had come to know and admire.

Who is this woman whose humility and devotion has inspired millions around the world?

Agnes Bojaxhiu was born into a turbulent political environment in Skopje, Albania, on 26 August 1910. She was the third child of Nikola and Dranfile. Her family was middle-class, prosperous and well-educated. Helping the poor and attending daily Mass were part of the family culture. They often discussed missionary activity in distant lands, including India, in the house. But Skopje at that time "was a violent and brutal place, with brigandage on the road, vendettas in the mountains, unstable leadership and unsettled future". The colonisation of Albania by the Serbs made leaving Albania an attractive proposition.

Mother Teresa started the Missionaries of Charity in 1950 and had raised US\$100 million before 1980. The Congregation now has over 600 missions in 123 countries. Their projects are sponsored by groups such as the Bank of India and they have become a tourist attraction now. Mother Teresa herself had grown "adept at dealing with world leaders, including dictators, with a canny instinct for publicity; a skilled exponent of late 20th century marketing techniques from the brand management of her blue-bordered white saris to the sound-bite quotes she utters."

Mother Teresa appears to be a mass of contradictions. She refused to renew her Congregation after Vatican II. Many criticised her methods, including some in the medical profession, other religious orders running hospices and the Vatican. She would not have her sisters educated, trained in medicine, nursing or social work. She was unsympathetic to feminism, women's ordination, contraception and the empowerment of women. She fed the poor but would not discuss the causes of poverty. In contrast to Vatican II theology she believed that we must suffer here in order to be rewarded in heaven.

And this was at a time when it was shown widely that the empowerment of women is the key to tackling the causes of poverty.

Mother Teresa's message to New Zealanders during her visit in 1973 was explicit. When we asked her what we could do to help she challenged us to respond to the poverty and the loneliness in our own neighbourhoods: "Your India is your street". Her message was local and universal.

Mother Teresa will be canonised in September 2016. ■

Image: Mutter Teresa von Kalkutta
[<https://commons.wikimedia.org>]



Robert Consedine: "My Irish revolutionary ancestors and my Catholic experience taught me justice. I have always been surrounded by love and wisdom and trust the invisible world."

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A Maryknoll Book of Poetry: Beauty, Truth, and Goodness from Around the World

Edited by Michael Leach, Doris Goodnough and Helen Phillips

Published by Orbis Books

Reviewed by Peter Healy SM

This is a diverse and warm-hearted collection of poems. They express encounters with issues of justice and peace, cosmology, creation and the great mysteries. In the preface the editors say: "Poetry is theology that stirs the soul. Poetry evokes what is wonderful, it imagines the unimaginable, describes the indefinable and points to what cannot be known. It is theology leaping out of the file cabinet and into the heart. It is the Word made words that sing."

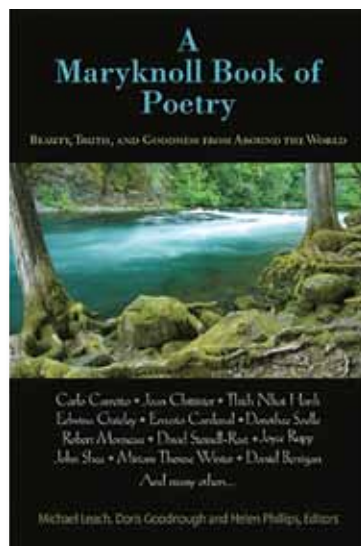
The poets in this collection include Maryknoll missionaries and associates as well as others. Joan Chittister, Joyce Rupp, Miriam Therese Winter, Diarmuid O'Murchu, Edwina Gateley and Dan Berrigan are some of the contributors familiar to us Downunder.

Dom Helda Camara opens the collection with a poem *Water, My Sister Water*. Echoing St Francis he praises water in all its forms and seeks its forgiveness. "Yes, you are beautiful/ in the stillness of lakes,/in the flowing of rivers/in glittering cascades,/in the oceans that leave in us/the lingering images of/the Infinite."

Thich Nhat Hanh in *Interbeing* writes: "there has not been a moment/when we do not interpenetrate . . . therefore you know/that as long as you continue to breathe/ I continue to be in you."

If Ever by Julia Prinz talks of letting go in this way: "Isn't it all/worthwhile/ to throw one's life/into the whirlpool world/not knowing when/or where or if ever/it will come out again/no imbursement/just gift."

Deidre Cornell's *Prayer Grows a Body* explores the making of rosaries. "My body is stringing holiness/cell by cell, precious bone/ by precious bone . . . the child



someday asks, wailing, "Why was I/ ever born?"/You were born to become a rosary,/a thread that ties us from one world to the next."

Sheila Cassidy's poem *The Kingdom of Heaven* envisions the Kingdom as inside us, outside us, invisible, here and now. She likens it to everyday experiences and "to a great whale swimming in the sea/ It is vast, mysterious, scary,/ wild and untameable, too free by far/ to be contained in even the largest net." On this Kingdom journey she says we end up in the belly of the whale where a twisted rope "that is not a fetter but a life-line . . . and the twisted rope/ which beats like a great artery/ is the mystical cord by which we are linked/ to the heart of the Eternal God."

The Christ of Maryknoll by Michael Leach completes the collection. It ends with: "Come to me here or in Africa, Asia, Latin America/ and know!/ You can never leave me/ Because where you go, I am."

The 76 poets contributing to this collection gift the reader with insights of the beauty, truth and goodness of our world in all its blessed brokenness. ■

Labyrinth of Lies

Directed by Giulio Ricciarelli

Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

Set in Frankfurt in 1958, this German film deals with the thorny issues surrounding the prosecution of Nazi war criminals in postwar West Germany. Although it is based on true events, protagonist Johann Radmann, a young lawyer in the Frankfurt Prosecutor's Office, appears to be an invented character.

When the office is told that a local schoolteacher is an ex-Auschwitz guard, Radmann, full of youthful enthusiasm bolstered by a strong personal sense of justice, is determined to prosecute. However, his efforts are met with indifference, even hostility, from his colleagues, and it becomes clear that West Germans would rather forget about their Nazi past. If the older generation wishes to ignore it, younger Germans have not even heard of Auschwitz. The Nazi leaders convicted at the Nuremberg Trials in 1945 are deemed to have carried the full weight of the nation's guilt.

Radmann is told that, once he starts scratching at this still raw wound, he will find that "every son in Germany will learn that he had a Party member for a father" — a taunt that will come to have the ring of bitter personal irony.



In a way reminiscent of *Spotlight* (reviewed *Tui Motu* March 2016), Radmann gathers an investigative team which combs through confiscated Nazi archives maintained by the US occupation authorities and thousands of local phone books. In this herculean task he is supported by his boss Fritz Bauer, a returned German Jewish refugee whose phlegmatic gravitas provides a foil to the younger man's volatility and naivety. They are successful enough to come close to nabbing major war criminals like Adolf Eichmann and Josef Mengele, who was visiting West Germany with impunity in the 1950s. Their efforts culminated in the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials of 1963-65, where 18 former guards and other camp personnel were convicted of murdering prisoners.

While the film treats these complex issues well, it is less successful in its attempt to merge the forensic drama with Radmann's personal and social life, which at times seems improbable (his social circle includes both a Jewish Auschwitz survivor and a crusading journalist who was a guard at the camp) or merely distracting (his turbulent romantic life). However, in the wake of the Chilcot report into the invasion of Iraq, and the ongoing horrors of the war in Syria, *Labyrinth of Lies* contains much that is deeply relevant for today's world. ■



Made for Love: Spiritual Reflections for Couples

by Joy Cowley

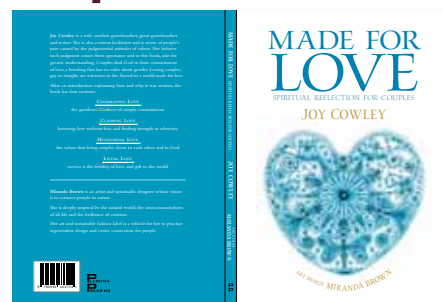
Publisher by Pleroma Press

Reviewed by Philippa Mulqueen

Joy Cowley started *Made for Love* tentatively in response to a request for a book of spiritual reflections for gay men and women. Happily it became something bigger, something more holistic. This is not a book which sees the love gay people share as something separate. Instead it is a book which sees love as something to delight in, to honour and celebrate rather than something to fear. Ultimately in reminding us that love is a "path that leads to God" many couples will find aspects of their lives captured in these reflections.

The book is divided into four parts. Firstly there is *Celebrating Love* which sensitively and beautifully reminds us of the beauty and gift of desire in lines such as "my fingers walk the landscape of your body" or "You put your hand on my arm. At once my heart starts racing . . ." or descriptions of the "wild hurricane of love" when God "kindly looked the other way".

The next section *Claiming Love* speaks powerfully to all those couples who have ever felt others judging their love. I found myself thinking not just of gay couples like Judith and me but also of those who find love after divorce, couples where all others can see is an older woman with a younger man,



couples who do not fit society's or the church's vision of love. The inclusive nature of Joy's language means that many couples can find themselves in the acknowledgment of the courage it takes "to accept winter in the eyes of another" and the affirmation that love is a place that "is not divided" and does not have "set paths" or "fences".

The third section, *Honouring Love*, reminds us to live in awareness of love and the way "gentle words, kind deeds, a smile, a touch, some sacrifice of time" are the daily gifts of love. The final section, *Living Love*, celebrates the way loving and being loved impel us to reach out to others and to see love, give love, be grateful for love, and respect love wherever we find it since "It's all about your love, isn't it, God?"

Miranda Brown's designs lift the spirit and draw readers into these reflections which deserve a wide readership. This book is a welcome resource which honours the journey of all couples who long for words that reflect their sense of God's joy in their love for each other. ■

Made for Love

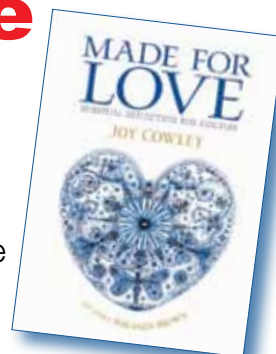
Spiritual Reflection for Couples

by Joy Cowley

A beautiful book of reflections for those in committed relationships.

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Changing Times

"I want to die while the Church is still Catholic." This was the cry of anguish 50 years ago from an old priest on hearing about the Vatican Council II, which in effect taught that the Church (and thus the parish) is not a place of refuge from the world. It is a place of support for members while we engage with society trying to reveal Christ's message.

I had a similar reaction on reading recent articles about impending technological and consequent societal changes. The need for planning by our political parties and leaders is obvious, as is the need to encourage critical thinking at all levels of society.

The big obstacle to effective planning for the Church in NZ is that a large number of people are still resistant to the attitudinal change demanded by what John XXIII termed "updating" the Church. An anomaly I have often observed is that many critical of their priests want things done differently but are impervious to the need for change from "maintenance" to "mission".

People Power

June saw the emergence of undercurrents of dissatisfaction regarding basic social justice matters. There is a growing realisation that planning is essential, that housing, health and education are interconnected.

Examples of leadership are provided in a report by Ines San Martin in the May issue of *Crux* about the Plenary Session of the International Union of Women Superiors General (UISG). It covered inter-congregational activities concerning forced migration, modern day slavery and war.

One example from Southern Sudan illustrated the success of their missionary activities. Over 3,000 new nurses have been trained in the last 8 years, 250 new teachers graduated from one of their projects, and their workshops of



Mary Magdalen announcing the Resurrection to the Apostles. Artist unknown, c 1123. St Albans Psalter, St Godehard's Church, Hildesheim.

formation for pastoral leaders have reached every diocese in the country. Some aspects of the report illustrate the professional approach taken. A clear understanding exists of the international nature of the problems and recognition of how vital a coordinated plan is. There is an acceptance that each Congregation has its own charism and the Union acts as a loose umbrella rather than a micro-managing overseer. The 1970s slogan of "think global, act local" comes to mind.

Papal Time-Bomb

John the Baptist was the last of the prophets. He exhorted people to repent and prepare for the imminent coming of the Messiah. He was also the first of the apostles. When Jesus arrived at the Jordan river John indicated he was the Anointed One. Jesus called the twelve. When they were in hiding after the crucifixion a woman disciple called Mary came and told them she had seen and spoken with Jesus. After Pentecost the eleven appointed a replacement for Judas. Later Saul, the persecutor of Christians, had a revelation and was accepted as Paul, apostle to the gentiles.

In June Pope Francis, explaining that early tradition, identified the woman as Mary Magdalen, declared her to be "Apostle to the Apostles" and delegated local Bishops' Conferences to insert their own translations of the new wording into the Canon of the Mass.

I think the implications of elevating a woman to that rank and inserting the change in the central act of worship will effect a radical cultural change in the Church. Francis is a radical conservative. ■



TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

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

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We welcome letters of comment, discussion, response, affirmation or argument of up to 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge longer letters, while keeping the meaning.

We do not publish anonymous letters except in exceptional circumstances.

SOME LEARNED WOMEN

Ann Gilroy asked in *TM* June 2016, p3: "When was the last time we saw a woman theologian or scripture scholar cited in a Papal or Episcopal letter?" Surely the women Doctors of the Church are part of the Church's permanent *magisterium*: St Catherine of Siena, St Teresa of Jesus. The recent doctorate awarded to Hildegard of Bingen? Pope Benedict's Wednesday audiences had a number of talks of at least 17 holy women teachers/saints e.g February 14, 2007.

There is the continuing widespread influence of St Therese of the Child Jesus [one of Pope Francis's favourite saints], a recent Doctor of the Universal Church, especially among young people? The visit of her relics to NZ brought hope to many. St Therese has the first reference in Part 4 on *Prayer* in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. We have at least four women scholars teaching seminarians at Good Shepherd College, all encouraged by our NZ bishops.

Carl Telford SM, Whangarei

An Inner Music

by Craig Larkin SM

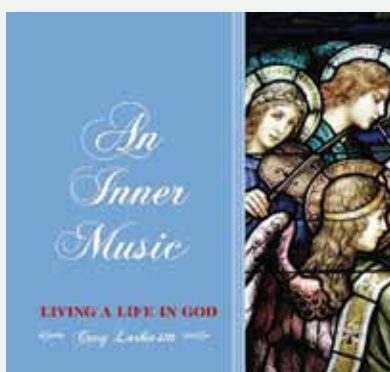
Published by Fitzbeck Publishing

Reviewed by Kevin Toomey

This is a thoughtful book, easy to read and full of fine insights into the spiritual life that we can apply to ourselves.

Craig has taken 20 outstanding mystics or spiritual writers spread over the centuries from the Psalmist, many centuries before Jesus, to the twentieth century. In doing this he has spread his vision to people from ten countries mainly in Europe and from the Middle East. The overall effect is to present an harmonious patchwork quilt. He has woven 20 different patches into a stunning whole, which shows the style, colour and variation among these writers and the richness of the Church's spiritual life over time. Craig's hope is that we are open to hearing the inner music within each of us and to shrug off a vision of a God whom we fear. For this he shows us faith-filled people who have come to know God as setting them free of unnecessary fear and giving light and joy in their lives.

Craig's way of working is illuminating. First he places each mystic within their historical and spiritual context and outlines the influences touching their writing. He ensures that we get to know their weaknesses and the difficulties they faced, while also showing their openness to God as a



friend who loves them and desires only their good. He provides a simple paragraph or two of their writings containing a rich metaphor or image central to their teaching about a loving God. Finally he offers his own reflections with apt stories that make their point well. He treats each writer in

the space of eight pages.

The effect of working in this way is cumulative. It is easy to find at least one writer who appeals. I found John Tauler, Origen and Caryl Houselander spoke clearly to me. I had only one reservation. It would have been helpful to have more examples from women and from mystics of Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Americas.

The book is well designed and richly illustrated with photos of the stained glass windows in St Mary of the Angels, Wellington — a homely touch from the church where Craig was ordained priest.

This book is a sterling testament to Craig and his masterly work over many decades in the field of spirituality. I recommend it. ■

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Looking OUT and IN

We are the parents of a Mary (-Rose) and a Joseph. This was deliberate after a long struggle to get pregnant in the first place. Endless novenas to Mary, Joseph and Anne were an essential part of our journey to become parents. But the hard part of getting pregnant has paled in comparison to being a parent. I can summarise our parenting strategies in three simple words – justly, tenderly, humbly. These words were at the forefront of our minds recently when our eight-week-old baby was admitted to Starship Children's Hospital for five days with rotovirus – a seeming injustice as he had been vaccinated against it.

Having the gastro bug and being so little meant Joseph couldn't regulate his fluid intake so he needed help to feed with a nasal tube. It didn't make it any easier when he caught bronchilitis while he was

in there. Up until this point we were fairly certain God was giving us a "Job" experience after two horrendous months trying to survive a colicky newborn who appeared allergic to sleep. And especially as our newly turned two-year-old had taken on the role of Satan's life-coach the moment we brought Joseph home. But we were wrong. It was spending nearly a week in Starship that helped us remember our gratitude for the daily grind of having children.

I discovered justice in sleep deprivation. My husband had to go home each night to look after Mary-Rose while I stayed with Joseph since I was his food supply. Too terrified to sleep I maintained a vigil over his bedside. It's very hard to be rational or even nice when you have had no sleep. It was abundantly apparent that there was no justice in being the one confined to a room *sans* bathroom, microwave – everything. Luckily (for

my husband) he softened his arrival with coffee and I felt grateful that I had someone with whom to share this revolting little journey.

Staring out over the lights of the hospital to the sleeping city, I experienced solidarity with other the parents on the ward quite palpably. We were all there sharing bathrooms and dashing for cups of tea in between bouts of our children's sleeping. Night times were the most terrifying – being alone in the room, knowing my baby was very sick and being responsible for keeping watch. I experienced tenderness through the kindness of the nurses and the efficiency of the doctors which seeped through my desperation at my poor baby's sickness.

After so many years of longing to be a mum it was humbling now to find I could give my screaming baby most comfort. Even though I had no idea what I was doing, it didn't actually matter. To him the warmth of my embrace was all he needed to know he was not alone. And it was an immense relief for me when I felt most alone to be able to turn to Mary and Joseph as I paced the room praying the Rosary. As parents they too must have had feelings of helplessness. Parenting is hard work but it is proving to be the most worthwhile, most humbling and the most precious experience I've had. Walking the parenting road justly, tenderly and humbly with God has taken on a new significance for me. ■

Photo (supplied): Veronica and family



Veronica Fouhy Mullin is an at-home Mum in Auckland. She's from a family of teachers and is now in the business of creating more herself.

Blessing

*May Gracious Mercy
wrap us in silken aprons
to practise tenderness wherever we are.*

From the Tui Motu team