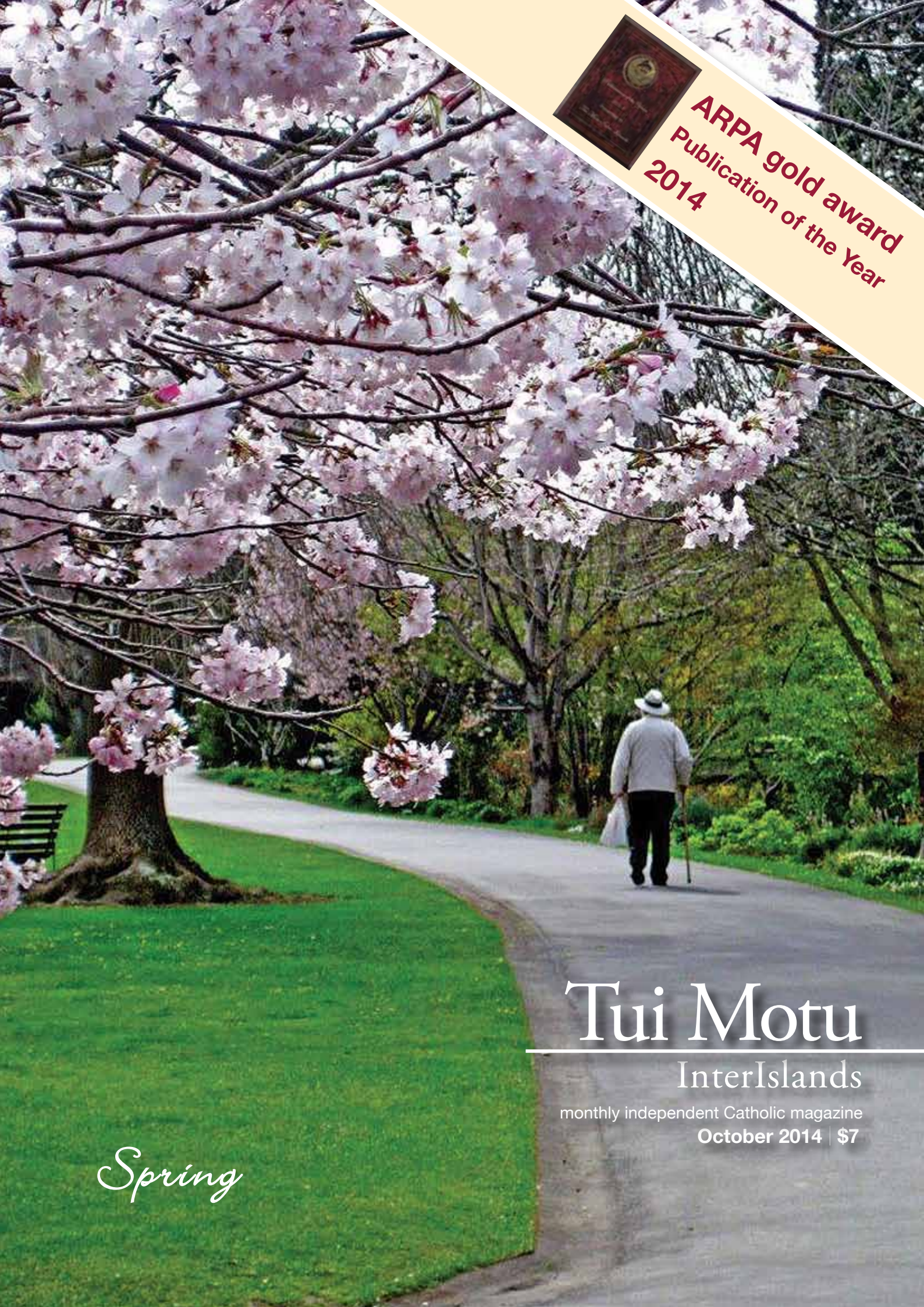




**ARPA gold award**  
Publication of the Year  
**2014**



# Tui Motu

InterIslands

monthly independent Catholic magazine

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*Spring*



# a new moment?

It is good to pick up *Evangelii Gaudium* and read (#16) that Pope Francis is conscious of the need to promote a 'sound decentralization' of the Church — that 'it is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local Bishops in the discernment of every issue that affects the Church and the world.' Further, in talking to Latin American Bishops after World Youth Day in Brazil, Francis challenged the bishops to give the laity 'the freedom to continue discerning, in a way befitting their growth as disciples, the mission which the Lord has entrusted to them? Do we support them and accompany them, overcoming the temptation to manipulate them or infantilize them?'

There has been considerable frustration expressed at all levels of the Church that the forthcoming Synod on the Family will not allow either the Bishops or laity present to express in a collegial and forward thinking manner their ideas on how together they may take the mission

of the Church. Moreover, in reading both Pat Lythe and Jim Neilan in this issue you will see pertinent questions and their desires for a more collegial style in which both bishops and laity participate. If there is to be a new moment in the Church, Pope Francis will need to address this question in some way either at this first extraordinary meeting or when the full synod meets in 2015.

Some of the expressed expectations for the extraordinary synod are unreal; and this synod may not go as far as we would like in giving us fresh statements, nor in involving the laity at the level they deserve. But fruitful conversations must begin. Doors have already been opened and new voices are beginning to be heard. So there is good reason to hope that another wider door will be opened, and that by the time the full Synod meets next year a more representative group of laity would be present and able to speak their truth on a subject about which clearly they are the experts.

It is also very heartening to read

the statement of our own Bishops concerning the New Zealand responses asked for by the Pope. This well thought-out statement is printed here. That our Bishops are taking seriously the situation of many people and will work on the frustrations they feel is another reason for hope that something new will come about; and that, despite limitations, we can together carry the synodal process forward at local level as well.

Sitting alongside synod material are fascinating articles on religious life by Susan Smith and Shaun Davison. An article on young people working away at local level is neatly complemented by a short story from our ACPA prize-winning young writer, Cavaan Wild. These add depth to an edition that is looking at the laity in so many facets.

Finally, Father David Kennerley and Bill Kilgallon update us on how the crucial issue of sexual abuse can gently be seen to be in progress within the Church.

Good reading!

KT

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Cover: *Dunedin Botanic Gardens* by Jim Neilan

# welcoming sr ann as our new editor



It gives me great pleasure to inform our readers that the Board of *Tui Motu InterIslands* has appointed Sister Ann Gilroy RSJ as editor of the magazine from the beginning of 2015. She brings to this role a strong background in education and teaching at all levels, a great love of literature and theology, a passion for community and a gift with administration. Her interest in ecumenism has been well honed over the years, and will serve the ethos of the magazine well.

Ann is one of a family of eight sisters and a brother. Her mother, in her early nineties, still lives by herself at Gore Bay, near Christchurch. After early education in Christchurch, Ann entered the Sisters of St Joseph, and began primary school teaching 'at the exciting time of the reforms of Vatican II.' She worked as principal of four Catholic schools over a period of 11 years, and then as a religious education adviser for the Wellington Archdiocese.

This life-long focus on education saw a change of direction when Ann undertook further study in education and theology in the USA and England, culminating in her graduation from Cambridge University with a doctorate in Theology. Since then she has taught at the Catholic Institute of Theology and in the School of Theology at the University of Auckland, where she was Dean of undergraduate studies for a number of years.

Sister Ann has just completed

six years as a member of the Leadership Team of the Sisters of St Joseph, resident in North Sydney. During this time Mary McKillop was canonised in Rome, and World Youth Day celebrated in Sydney.

Presently Ann is on a short sabbatical, following one of her passions, being a pilgrim. With her sister, Margie, she is in the middle of walking the Camino de Santiago in northern Spain. She has also managed to fit in a short course on journalism in London.

Ann has written many articles and been involved most recently in the publication of a number of books for the Josephite sisters' formation programme and their congregational liturgy.

Ann will bring to the magazine new eyes, a fresh energy, a keen interest in technology and — above all — a commitment to the written word as an instrument of the Gospel. ■

**Philip Casey, Chair**



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

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

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## beauty is love is god

It is sad that we are compelled to recite the old English form of the Lord's Prayer with the phrase 'Lead us not into temptation'. Surely the devil was the one credited with leading us into temptation, not our loving Father!

What is the meaning of this mysterious petition 'save us from the time of trial' as we used to say, or 'do not let us fall into temptation' as another translation would have it?

Jesus came to proclaim the good news of the reign of God and the style of God's reign was that of love. God's reign of love and mercy is already here. It is up to God's children to accept and live it out. The greatest temptation that Jesus encountered was no longer to believe that his Father could be trusted, that God's reign was one of love. The agony in the garden is witness to this — that no matter what rejection, physical and mental suffering he might encounter, the Father was still loving him and could be trusted. 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me' or 'Father into your hands I commend my spirit'. His prayer was heard.

As we take up our cross, or witness the crosses that others carry, or witness the immense suffering of God's children in our world is this not our greatest test — that we do not have a loving

God, that God cannot be trusted to be loving us through all this?

So our plea is not to be free of temptation or testing, but for the Father's help to avoid falling into the trap of thinking that God has ceased loving us when the going gets tough either for ourselves or for others.

Followers of the way of Jesus have this insight and can pray with him 'save us in the time of trial' (my version). 'Beauty will save the world' (Dostoevsky). The greatest Beauty is Love is God.

Jim Vercoe Austing, *Dannevirke*

## presence not absence

Reference to inequality is usually associated with a lack of sufficient money and the lack of related opportunity. This is a focus on absence — of a material and artificial commodity, which can usually be rectified only by an external impetus that may occur some time in the future.

A focus on presence — of a spiritual and real commodity, which already exists and requires no external impetus — is a more inviting prospect. True equality is measured in terms of time. Every person has 24 hours in every day — time is the common denominator which everyone uses at the same rate. No one can 'save' it. We are all 'doing something' every moment of every day.

## letters to the editor

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

Money is important in a material sense, but has no relevance in a spiritual sense. It is worth remembering that 100 years of human existence is equivalent to a mere 4 seconds when compared with the length of time since the 'big bang'. Less than it took to write this sentence! Importantly, 'man does not live by bread alone ...' (Dt 8:3).

A change to a present-oriented focus requires a radical change of approach both in terms of thinking, and in terms of living.

Kevin McCormick, *Wellington*



We are proud to have been honoured this year by the Australasian Religious Press Association with their annual **Gold Trophy Award** for

## *Publication of the Year*

The citation reads:

'Editorially excellent, topically relevant, engaging writing, and judicious use of imagery. It is a publication that draws you in. It is also an example of 'less is more' when it comes to the editorial use of graphics and photography to serve the story.'

*Further awards on page 19*

# understanding the middle east

Jean Jacques Pérennès

**P**rofound changes have occurred in the Middle East in recent years: authoritarian regimes challenged by the 'Arab Spring'; States left weakened by the fall of the Ottoman empire after World War 1; the rise of international jihadism; internal conflicts within Islam between fundamentalist religious movements and openings to modernity. To understand these changes, let's recall some background.

Dramatic events marked **Summer 2014**: first, the Israeli military operation against the Gaza Strip, which killed 2,000, injured thousands without solving real problems that are the despair of Gazans and that motivate supporters of terrorism. Meanwhile, Libya imploded. Then we witnessed the spectacular advance of ISIS (existing Islamist groups from Syria) seizing an important part of Iraqi territory. The main victims were Iraqi Christians who had a few hours to leave Mosul and villages on the Nineveh Plain, threatened with death unless they converted to Islam; also hunted were the Yezidis, a Zoroastrian sect long discounted by local Muslims and Christians.

Why this outburst of violence?

The background to this conflict is **an age-old conflict** between the mainstream Sunni Muslims and the Shiites representing about 10 percent of Muslims, who are very powerful in countries like Iran. The origin of this split goes back to a dispute over succession to Muhammad. Four caliphs — chiefs of the Muslim community — succeeded the prophet, but one line was marginalised when Ali, the fourth caliph, was assassinated, together with his son and 72 companions. This political event remains an incurable wound in Shiite memory. They have lived over the centuries with a feeling of humiliation and have sometimes been violently repressed. Today, we have two powerful, heavily armed blocks facing each other:

Saudi Arabia and Egypt on the Sunni side; and Iran on the Shiite side. Current conflicts in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq are partly linked to this old competition.

Another key to understanding the current drama is the rupture of the fragile reorganisation of the region which occurred at the end of WW1. The vast Ottoman Empire over several centuries had managed to hold together many different populations, each one retaining some autonomy. But in 1915, France and England had begun negotiating in secret the **Sykes-Picot agreement**, which was signed in May 1916 and which created a new destiny for the remains of the Ottoman Empire. France had interests in Lebanon and Syria; England was more interested in Mesopotamia, securing access to the Indian empire and the regions where oil was being discovered. The people and leaders of these regions were barely consulted. By drawing the borders of the region according to their immediate interests, Western countries created complicated situations like Iraq where Shiites, Sunnis, Christians and Kurds must live together, despite historical antagonism. Worse, the 40 million Kurds — the largest people without a country — are spread over four countries where they are not really welcome (Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria). The Sykes-Picot agreement is now breaking up and nobody knows how the region can be reshaped.

The current initiative for an Islamic state was **dreamed** up by Musaad Abu al Zarqawi, a Jordanian jihadist who organised persistent attacks against the American forces occupying Iraq after Saddam's fall. His violence became so harsh that even al Qaeda refused to recognize him. When al Zarqawi was killed in 2006, his successor, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, undertook to restructure the network and to internationalise it. He cleverly manipulated the people's

bitterness at the casualties caused by the armies of occupation and also their weariness with the refusal of Shiites to share power in Iraq. As a result, both international jihadists and Sunni former supporters of Saddam Hussein have started to join forces. This explains their lightning advance on Iraqi territory. Their goal is to restore a caliphate, in other words, a territory where Islam reigns completely, according to a model nostalgically based on the memory of the first companions of the Prophet Muhammad.

**What can we do?** First, we can learn. The West has very little understanding of these great questions. Then, of course, we can express solidarity with Iraqi refugees, Christians and Yezidis, driven from their homes by the tens of thousands, living in precarious conditions in Kurdistan or Turkey.

Christians must, without doubt, pray for them, but also need to receive as the fruit of grace this beautiful testimony given by Iraqi Christians, who prefer to lose everything rather than betray and renounce their faith. Finally, it is important that the international community rejects this claim of an 'Islamic state'. Even Muslim countries deny this claim but they do not know how to overcome it. Military action, which may be necessary, is not without danger, because it may well recreate animosity against the interventionist West. Diplomacy is often too slow. The ideal would be to support and assist overtures from within the Muslim world and the growing recognition that the spread of fundamentalist Islam is a disaster. To do this will require a lot of mutual listening, patience and generosity. ■

*Jean Jacques Pérennès is a Dominican friar, and the Director of IDEO, the Dominican research library in Cairo, Egypt.*



# challenges facing families

*Late last year, Catholics worldwide were invited to express their views on aspects of Church teaching regarding marriage. This month, a Synod of 150 bishops is meeting in Rome to discuss the challenges facing modern families. To what extent will the input from lay people influence the outcome of this meeting?*

Jim Neilan

The announcement in October last year that all Catholics were invited to have an input into the Synod was seen as a positive result of Pope Francis's willingness to listen to the concerns of ordinary people. But enthusiasm waned when the document asking for people's views was distributed to bishops on 5 November. An unrealistic deadline of just over three weeks, plus the obscure wording and the tone of the document raised concerns about the genuineness of the offer to consult.

## invitation to re-examine?

I expressed my concerns in a submission, *'The document is hardly a discussion starter: it seems merely to state the traditional biblical and Church teachings as dogmas, with no invitation to examine the merits of theologians and biblical scholars who offer new evaluation of past teachings. It's tempting to be cynical when one reads the authors' list of negatives they say have caused people to abandon faith and trust in the Church, and find not one mention of the Church's own sins — no mea culpas for hypocrisy, scandals or treatment of dissenting voices. Interesting, too, that one of their listed bad influences is 'forms of feminism hostile to the Church.' But no mention of the influence of 'masculinism' which has done such immense harm to the Church through the centuries. I'm afraid this exercise will contribute little to finding solutions to the many*

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Observer status is not enough. The subject is married life and married people should be full participants in the discussions and decision making.

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*negative forces doing harm to family life today. As I read it, it is saying, "the Church already has the answers. Here they are. Now tell us why people are rejecting them so that we can educate them properly"'*

From the summaries sent to Rome by each country's bishops, a working document (*Instrumentum Laboris*) was compiled and circulated by the Vatican as 'an aid for the Synod fathers'.

## hopes for synod

Interested Catholics hoped to see an agenda for frank and open dialogue about matters that were already widely and vigorously discussed, such as sacraments for the divorced and re-married, homosexuality and same sex partnerships. And as well, the original subject of interest — the one that has caused so many Catholics, (laity and clergy) to lose faith in the Church as a moral guide in matters of marriage and sexuality — contraception. Since Pope Paul's 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* most married couples (often with the blessings

of their priests), have rejected Church teaching and followed their consciences regarding practices to ensure responsible parenthood.

However, the man in charge, Cardinal Baldisseri, announced that the Synod will not be discussing doctrine, but only possible changes to pastoral approaches. So it's still, 'we already have the answers, we just need to use better means of convincing these poorly instructed married men and women who have a selfish, contraceptive mentality, are anti-authority and materialistic'.

The Church's teaching on birth control is based on 'natural law' arguments, but even the authors of the *Instrumentum* seem confused when they try to explain it. Take this quote: #21. 'to many of the faithful the concept of natural law today is highly problematic, if not completely incomprehensible ... many bishops' conferences, in many different places, say that, although the spousal aspect of the relationship between man and woman might be generally accepted as an experiential reality, this idea is not interpreted according to a universally given law. Very few responses and observations demonstrated an adequate, popular understanding of the natural law.' Got that???

## getting the reverse process?

There is this huge gap between 'Vatican-speak' and reality. On the one hand we have the authors, (men who have chosen not to marry and



## Synod on the Family 2014-2015

This detail from *Song of Songs 3* (1960) by Marc Chagall is used (in part) as the logo for the synod

have families) who appear to think that responsible married couples using artificial contraceptives are some sort of sexual deviants destroying the sacredness of their marriage. On the other hand is the lived reality of women and men who experience daily the often complex ups and downs of a loving, enduring marital relationship. Surely, common sense demands that if a Synod dealing with married life is to have any credibility, it must include representatives of the laity. Imagine if the whole procedure were reversed — that 150 lay women and men hold a synod on ‘Celibacy and the Clerical Life’. No clergy will have a part in the decision making, but they will be obliged to live by the decisions of the Synod, especially with regard to what happens in their bedrooms.

### repeating the ‘68 experience?

There is danger of a repetition of what happened 50 years ago. In 1968 Pope Paul, who had prevented the world’s bishops debating the question of birth control at the Vatican Council, set up a commission (including married people) to examine the Church’s teaching. The majority decided that previous arguments based on scripture and natural law did not stand up in the light of new knowledge, and the

Church should therefore modify its ban on artificial contraception.

Pope Paul, on the advice of some conservative members of the Roman Curia, refused to accept this majority decision. His reasoning was that if he reversed the policy it would cause the faithful to lose trust in the moral authority of papal teaching. As we know, the resulting encyclical *Humanae Vitae* had exactly the opposite effect: it had disastrous consequences for the credibility of any Church teaching about marriage and sexuality. Many stopped looking to the Church for guidance on any matters.

There is still time to stop further damage occurring. This month’s meeting in Rome is only the first step. Its findings will be discussed at a General Synod in October 2015. This will include a wider representation of diocesan bishops from around the world. At some stage the bishops will have to insist on the importance of laity taking part. Cardinal Baldisseri has said that there will be 23 lay observers at next year’s Synod and one married couple will be allowed to ‘render its testimony’ to the meeting. This is most unsatisfactory. Observer status is not enough. The subject is married life and married people should be full participants in the discussions and decision making.

It’s also important that the choosing of representatives should not be left to those who have prepared the agenda. This leaves it open to the suspicion that only those who agree with the ‘party line’ are eligible.

### debating real needs

In 1962 at the beginning of the Vatican Council the participating bishops were presented with an agenda prepared by officials in Rome. The vast majority of them voted to have it thrown out and replaced by one that gave the opportunity to debate openly the real needs of the contemporary world. Is it hoping for too much that the same thing could happen here — that bishops in their various regions will exercise their collegial right and make sure that the views of their people are not smothered by those who are afraid of having their curial power undermined?

The bishops are to gather for the Synod on 5 October. The Gospel for their Mass the next morning is the parable of the Good Samaritan. A good time to think about those who are wounded and disregarded on the edge of the road today. We pray that churchmen, this time, will not pass by on the other side. ■

*Jim Neilan is a parishioner of Sacred Heart parish, Dunedin.*

# onward and upward or backward and forward?

*How much of a voice do lay people have in the development of doctrine and decision-making within the Catholic Church? The writer, with long experience of the Church's work with laity, can see a greater place for lay people in the running of the Church.*

Pat Lythe

Vatican II heralded a new era in the life of the Church for laity. The Church was described as the People of God, each baptised person equally made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ (LG, 31) They 'are called upon as living members, to expend all their energy for the growth of the church and its continuous sanctification. The lay apostolate is a participation in the saving mission of the church itself. Every lay [person] is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the church herself.' The document on the laity also echoed this mission.

Following Vatican II, the Pontifical Council for the Laity was set up to deal with the issues concerning laity. It was designated to 'encourage the laity to participate in the Church's life and mission, both as members of associations for the apostolate and as individual Christians'; to evaluate guide and foster lay initiatives in society; to foster active participation by the laity in such fields as catechetics and liturgy; and encourage lay people to take part in pastoral councils at parish or diocesan level.

## new zealand involvement

In 1986 the Pontifical Council convened an Oceania Lay Congress in Auckland, and invited lay representatives from around Oceania. Several Vatican officials who attended were suitably impressed with the level of knowledge and commitment of those present. This resulted in four Kiwis

being invited to attend the 1987 pre-synod consultation at Rocco di Papa in the Roman hills before the general synod on the laity. We engaged in serious, intensive discussion in language groups for three weeks. I facilitated one of the English language groups with people from Africa, UK, North America, India, Oceania and a bishop or two. Each group had at least one bishop, so that when the Synod itself began, they could present our views. Much of what we said was finally represented in the document *Christifideles Laici* (On the Vocation and mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the world) issued at the end of 1988.

In 1981 *Familiaris Consortio* had spelled out the role of the Christian Family. Both this and *Christifideles Laici* are post-synodal exhortations, meaning that they were issued after synods (assemblies of bishops) convened on these topics. Did the laity have any input into these synods? Yes, we did. Prior to the 1980 synod on the family, a *lineamenta* was issued, just as the questionnaire was sent out before this year's synod. Our NZ bishops consulted widely — I was on the national Lay Commission at the time and we sent out the questions to all the bodies in the dioceses (including some Diocesan Pastoral Councils), collated the many responses and sent them back to Rome, where they were put into the '*instrumentum laboris*', the working document for the synod of bishops. We wised up our representative bishop who was fully aware

of the NZ responses and was able to make his 3-5 minute 'intervention' based on those responses.

However, I discovered during the 1980s that the Pontifical Council for the Laity engages mainly with lay people belonging to lay ecclesial 'movements', such as Focolare, Legion of Mary, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Cursillo, Worldwide Marriage Encounter. The Pontifical Council approved the principles, practices and protocols of each of these groups, which thus became officially recognised bodies — with a known charism, regime of prayer and certain practices to provide good formation. Central 'control' if you like was present.

## fifty years on

Now 50 years later with a far more educated laity, the proliferation of schools of theology where lay people earn degrees, adult formation courses of all kinds, e-conferences, that thinking is no longer relevant. Lay people have embraced roles on parish and diocesan pastoral councils and advisory bodies, are the prime source of the teachers in Catholic schools, have taken on ministry roles in parishes, vicariate and departmental head roles in dioceses, and in many countries have fully taken on decision-making roles within the local church. This would have been unthinkable before Vatican II. They still technically, however, act in a consultative role to the hierarchy and depend on the receptivity of the hierarchy to that advice.





Delegates from the Cook islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Tahiti, at the 1986 Oceania Lay Congress

**L to R:** Ron Pirola, Rosina Ellacott (Tahiti), Mavis Pirola and Samuel Ellacott. Ron and Mavis are the Australian couple that Pope Francis has invited to be observers at this year's Synod on the Family. They have been heavily involved in lay ministry with families for decades, and are very aware of NZ and Pacific concerns.



Twenty-six years after *Christifideles Laici*, the Vatican system is still sending out a *lineamenta* questionnaire to bishops about pastoral concerns about the family. Pope Francis's hand in the last questionnaire — actually addressing issues of concern — was obvious. Our bishops consulted widely as per usual, some overseas bishops didn't; lay people got hold of the questionnaire themselves and circulated it, courtesy of the internet; the working document has come back. But still the synod is for bishops only. And the Pontifical Council continues to convene mainly groups of laity in the authorised movements — the next one is in November this year.

## questions

Can't we be trusted to be participants ourselves in assemblies/synods? How about equal numbers of bishops and lay people? Or better still one bishop with one man and one woman from each country? Or in the same proportion as synod attendance is presently

chosen. However, from my observation and in discussion with several bishops, the synod structure itself is tightly controlled by the Vatican officials, with the post-synodal document almost written before the synod begins. The bishops express their collective views but the Pope makes the final decision. The bishops too are only 'consulted.'

Would we want to be part of that system? Will Pope Francis make a difference? Shouldn't we have a system whereby the local churches, clergy & laity, are given more autonomy over certain decisions? Why can't local Conferences of bishops after consulting with their people, both clergy and laity, nominate bishops to fill vacancies, instead of waiting 18 months for Rome to make a call? Should we perhaps choose a model like the Anglican synodal process? These national synods make decisions for the Anglican church in their country — hence you can have women bishops in New Zealand but only recently in England; or permission to bless gay marriages in Canada but not in Africa. Even in those synods,

however, the house of bishops or the house of clergy can overrule the laity. The Catholic Church is a universal church and the decisions about doctrine or structures have to apply to the whole Church — I can't see the Anglican synodal process working universally. No, rejig the current Catholic synodal procedures, include lay people in the process, meet for longer (as at Vatican II) and allow the Holy Spirit, not officials, to set the parameters.

## another thought

I think we have all missed the boat, myself included. Our major role as lay people is in the 'temporal' (Vatican-speak) or secular world. We have been so busy claiming a role within the church we have forgotten our major role? We have been very poor at supporting, forming and promoting that charism. We teach the principles of social justice in our schools and form many young adults who live by those principles. But where is the connection between our parish life and our mission in the world? Where are the Catholic professional groups who gave support to one another? We used to have Catholic action groups who came together to share how to live their faith in their daily lives of work and leisure. There are many Catholics in community and NGO roles but where is the support for them in their parishes? How are they affirmed? We give medals to long serving organists, catechists, sacristans ... but how often do we praise the Catholic person who is working in adult literacy, at the Community Advice Bureau, in victim support, who is the leaven in this increasingly secular world. No wonder there is a disconnect. We actually need to step up to the plate and take a major role in the development of our society, not our Church, and we need to make decisions together about how we do that. ■

*Pat Lythe is the Leader of Parish and Pastoral services for the Diocese of Auckland. She has worked with lay and ecumenical groups within the diocese and nationwide since 1975.*

# aotearoa bishops' pastoral letter

*The Aotearoa New Zealand Bishops have written  
a pastoral letter on the Responses to the Preparatory Document  
for the III Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops  
which will be held in Rome from 5-19 October.*

**D**ear sisters and brothers in Christ,  
*E te iwi whakapono, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.*

Next month an Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will take place in Rome.

The Preparatory Document for the Assembly, *Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelisation*, was received in October 2013, and included a list of questions. We decided to make the Document and the questions available in two ways: the usual way through national, diocesan and parish channels, and for the first time, online with the opportunity to provide an online response.

The questions were not the easiest to understand, and frustrated many respondents. However, people persevered and gave us information which was often personal and painful to recount, and always heartfelt. We feel humble and blessed by the openness and honesty with which people responded to the questions. The responses provided us with some profound insights into how we Catholics think about and practise the faith, and we are grateful that so many of you chose to share your thoughts and experiences with us.

Themes emerged which were common to all the questions:

Respondents recognized that the Church's teaching on marriage, divorce and adultery is **the teaching of Jesus** as found in scripture.

**A strong sense of exclusion and hurt** is felt by many people who are living in situations not in accord with Church teaching in areas such as divorce and re-marriage, cohabitation, contraception and same sex unions. This sense of exclusion and hurt is also felt by their family and friends, and by those in the wider community who see what they consider to be the exclusion of others.

The sense of exclusion can come from one or all of the following:

- The existence of the teaching itself, which on its own is seen to exclude those who can't match the ideal.
- Hard-line un-pastoral presentation of the teaching, in a few cases by priests, but mostly by organizations or individuals who 'police' the 'rules'.

- The attitudes of some parishioners which are perceived to be, or actually are, judgmental in relation to the life situation of others.
- A strong personal sense of failure, of 'not meeting the ideal' set by the Church, and therefore a feeling of not being accepted in the Church community.

There are a number of Catholics struggling to stay in their faith community who have been deeply wounded by the judgmental and sometimes righteous attitudes of individuals and groups who see themselves as upholding or policing the Church's teaching.

At the same time those who feel excluded and hurt, or unable to 'live up to the teaching' as they described it, also have **a deep sense of connection to the Church**. They spoke of 'hanging on' to their faith in Jesus Christ while trying to deal with painful feelings of being excluded from the Church. Supportive individuals (priests, parishioners and relatives) emerged as the best catalysts for strengthening their sense of belonging to the Church.

Many respondents considered that the Church's **definition of family** implicit in the questions lacks understanding of the diverse nature of modern families. The emphasis on the family as mother, father and children has led many other family groupings to feel that in the Church's eyes (or in the view of their faith community) their families are inferior; for example, grandparents



Archbishop John Dew, who will be attending the Synod of Bishops on behalf of the New Zealand church.



... the responses show “much suffering, especially by those who feel excluded or abandoned by the Church because they find themselves in a state of life that does not correspond to the Church’s doctrine and discipline”.

bringing up grandchildren, parents bringing up children alone, families resulting from second marriages, and culturally-sanctioned adoptions within extended families.

Respondents to the questions indicated strongly that **sexual abuse by clergy has undermined their faith in priests and bishops as teachers in matters of sexual morality**. Many questioned the right of celibate men to ‘prescribe’ what is right or wrong for married couples.

In both online and other submissions, gratitude and appreciation were expressed for the opportunity to contribute. A number of people were courageous in sharing personal stories which were difficult and painful, or the difficulties they have with various aspects of the Church’s teaching. Others expressed their support for the teaching and wrote about how they tried to be faithful to it in their families. **We were deeply impressed by the way in which people are striving to live according to the gospel**, whatever the circumstances of their lives.

In the responses there was a strong undercurrent of hope that those whose lives are in conflict with Church teaching would again feel at home in the Church, and that those who feel burdened by Church teaching might have their load lessened in some way.

We have taken very seriously the task of conveying your thoughts to the Holy See, and have been anxious to know if what people across the world are saying is truly being heard by those who will organise the Synod Assembly. Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri is the Secretary-General of the Synod of Bishops, and it is his office which is responsible for analysing the submissions on the Preparatory Document.

He said in an interview that the responses show ‘much suffering, especially by those who feel excluded or abandoned by the Church because they find themselves in a state of life that does not correspond to the Church’s doctrine and discipline’.

The results compiled by the bishops’ conferences, he said, show ‘the urgency of recognising the lived reality of the people and of beginning a pastoral dialogue with those who have distanced themselves from the Church for various reasons’.

There is a huge responsibility resting on Pope Francis and those who take part in both the Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod this year and the Ordinary Assembly next year. The Synod needs the support of sustained prayer, something we can all participate in, individually and in our parishes. Please pray also for Archbishop John Dew who will represent us at the Synod Assembly.

The responses received to the Synod questions challenge us all to do some things now, here in Aotearoa New Zealand, without waiting for the Extraordinary Assembly and the



Assembly to follow in 2015. The responses to the questions revealed that in our parishes we are hurting one another, and beyond our parishes there are people who have left because they felt like second-class Catholics due to their particular situation. Pope Francis has spoken often about judging others. He continually encourages us to focus on God’s mercy and love, forgiveness, reconciliation, and acceptance of one another with all our faults.

‘What kind of love do we bring to others? Is it the love of Jesus that shares, that forgives, that accompanies? What are the relationships like in our parishes, in our communities? Do we treat one another like brothers and sisters? Or do we judge one another, do we speak evil of one another, do we just tend our own vegetable patch? Or do we care for one another? These are the questions of charity!’ (*Pope Francis, General Audience, 23 October 2013*)

This is where we must start now, in all of our interactions with one another, here in our own communities. We do not have to wait for the Synod Assembly in order to start bringing about change.

*Yours sincerely in Christ*

✠ **John Dew**

Archbishop of Wellington  
President, NZCBC

✠ **Patrick Dunn**

Bishop of Auckland  
Secretary, NZCBC

✠ **Denis Browne**

Bishop of Hamilton

✠ **Colin Campbell**

Bishop of Dunedin

✠ **Charles Drennan**

Bishop of Palmerston North

✠ **Barry Jones**

Bishop of Christchurch

✠ **Peter Cullinane**

Emeritus Bishop of  
Palmerston North ■

**Note:** a summary of the responses is available from [communications@nzcbc.org.nz](mailto:communications@nzcbc.org.nz), or from the NZCBC Communications Adviser, P O Box 1937, Wellington 6140.

# the laity in a post-vatican church

*Where's the emphasis in our Catholic Church: is it on an active group of the baptised who are served by the hierarchy? Or have we a hierarchy who serve a passive laity? The writer gives us a clear sense of a vibrant, collaborative Church searching its way into the uncharted waters of a strong future.*

Veronica Aislabie

Like many Catholics born on the cusp of Vatican II, I had little knowledge of the Church prior to this time. My faltering understanding was that the Mass had changed from Latin, with the host now received in the hand while standing, and that we could receive from the chalice. At the same time, it became more acceptable to marry a non-Catholic, and Vatican II was the reason that religious sisters now wore less restrictive habits. However, it was only after doing some study about Vatican II and what it meant that I realised that the way we experience the Catholic Church affects our understanding of Church and how we participate in its life and mission. If we see the Catholic Church solely as an institution, we might well struggle with the call made at Vatican II for lay people to fulfil their baptismal vows and to participate fully in the Church as contributing parts of the Body of Christ.

Prior to Vatican II, the institutional model was the primary concept of Church for Catholics. It was no wonder then that the laity saw their role as passive. They expected to be told what to believe and do, had a genuine loyalty and respect for the hierarchy of the Church, which largely precluded any disagreement or genuine discussion. The priest was seen as the person who administered the sacraments,

'said' Mass for us, and explained the teachings of the Church to the faithful. This contrasts with US Archbishop Pilarczk's contention that the Church is essentially an organisation of lay people who are served by the hierarchy.

*The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* describes the nature and source of the vocation of the laity — who 'through their baptism and confirmation ... are commissioned by Christ and are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them it can become the salt of the earth.' (LG33)

## example of early church

In the early Church the mark of holiness was baptism, not ordination. Members of the laity functioned at the highest level of participation. Through their involvement some rose to leadership levels and were role models within the Church. Over centuries these leadership positions gradually developed into the form of hierarchy within the Church that we recognise today; those with special roles and skills — the ordained, and those who followed. The laity became somewhat invisible within the Church; they became the rank and file who made up the numbers.

In 1906, Pope Pius X, when referring to the structure of the Church wrote, 'It follows that the



Veronica Aislabie

Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful ... the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors.' (*Vehementer Nos*, 8)

And so it largely remained until Vatican II, when there was a shift away from identifying Church with the hierarchy and towards recognising that to be laity is to be Church.

This redefinition of laity comes with enormous responsibility. What is the easier path, to be led like sheep or work together as one? The Vatican II understanding, as explained in *The Dogmatic*



*Constitution on the Church*, not only encourages laity to participate more fully in bringing about the Kingdom of God, it has huge implications. We are called by virtue of baptism, no less than the clergy, to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ, and to do this as non-office bearers. Moreover, by our efforts, alongside those of the clergy, the world is sanctified (LG 31).

### responsibility of laity

As laity we have a responsibility to evangelise and sanctify. Our role is to be parent educators; catechise and support local, diocesan and national initiatives financially and physically. We must support and advise pastors and bishops, assist the community in liturgy when required, and be the light of Christ in the secular world, making the Church present to unbelievers. *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* makes particular mention of the need for laity to eradicate from the world all forms of discrimination (GS 60, 67). In our ordinary, everyday lives we must concern ourselves with bringing about the Kingdom of God.

Yves Congar, a French Dominican theologian, suggests that we should stop talking about laypeople and clergy and talk instead of different ministries. The challenge in the Church today is for the hierarchical Church to accept that these different ministries will involve the laity undertaking some of the roles formally exclusive to the clergy. There needs to be an acceptance that the laity have become more critical thinkers and expect, along with service to the world and the Church, also to take a lead in decision-making when appropriate.

This perhaps unexpected outcome of the redefining of the roles of laity possibly means that the Church needs to 'catch up' with developments that have taken place within the world of the laity. No longer are we sheep to be led, but this is not always what the Church wants! The recent Vatican Council has laid down the challenge and I'm not sure the hierarchy is always entirely happy with the outcome. For much of the Church's history the theology of orders has overshadowed the theology of baptism.

### practical challenges

The challenge for Catholics today is to reinstate the understanding of the early Church, the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, where everyone was part of the *laos* or people of God, where we are all Christians who fulfil ministries best suited to our vocations. This means some will work as leaven within the world and others will focus more on life within the Church. We will all work collaboratively

recognising the strengths and difficulties each encounters daily. None will be 'above' the other; we will rely on one another, enhancing the Church with our particular gifts.

### theological formation

An important factor in success for the future will be that laity must be formed theologically. After hundreds of years of passive involvement, education and formation will be the deciding factor in developing the faith community and encouraging people to take on the challenges of the future Church.

Change is inevitable. Vocations to the priesthood as we know it are declining and there is no evidence that this will reverse. A vibrant, confident and capable laity is essential to ensuring that *Tē Waka o Te Hahi Katorika*/Catholic Church can navigate her way through uncharted waters into the future, as she has managed to do throughout the ages under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Never before in the history of the Church have the laity been more challenged to meet the needs of the times. We have 2,000 years of experience to call on to establish a new concept of Church that will inevitably come. The laity will be instrumental in bringing this about. ■

*Veronica Aislabie is a teacher  
at John Paul College, Rotorua.*



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# where faith is in action

*In a straightforward way, a teacher at John Paul College in Rotorua outlines how a culture of faith-in-action at local level has begun and is being well developed by young people.*

Veronica Aislabie

Some say Social Justice is a well kept secret of the Catholic Church. Not so in Rotorua. Since 2008, every Tuesday and Wednesday evening the St Vincent de Paul 'Fulfil' van leaves St Michael's Church loaded with healthy sandwiches, fruit, soup and milo. The van travels to two areas in the city where for many, the budget just doesn't stretch until payday, and children experience hunger.

## getting ready

Parishioners prepare the food and drive the van. Rotorua's John Paul College senior students distribute the food to the children, who eagerly anticipate its arrival in their street every Tuesday and Wednesday evening. The enthusiasm and genuine empathy of these young people has had a ripple effect. There is now a support group at John Paul College which undertakes to fundraise for the van to keep it on the road all year long. This is no small task.

A previous student of John Paul College, Nicole Stevenson, began what has become her legacy by deciding to help on the van. She gathered a group of senior students around her and the vision began. John Paul College would become a school where faith is seen in action.

This year the students have combined with the Social Justice group in Rotorua to raise awareness and gain support from the wider parish community. It has been valuable for the students to make links with the parish through engagement with the parishioners on the van and through meeting with the Parish Social Justice group. The students have been



present at every Mass in Social Justice Week, handing out envelopes and asking the parish to support them in this venture.

## learning well

Formation is an important aspect of Social Justice, so being able to

connect with the Parish and put their faith in action at the grass-roots level, is an integral part of understanding the social justice principle of having a preferential option for the poor.

These same students have also formed a roster and every morning they arrive at Sunset Primary School, to prepare breakfast for students who come to school hungry.

The 2014 Coordinator for the students who are involved with both projects is Louise Woolhouse. Louise is ably supported by a willing team of helpers, in both Years 12 and 13. There is already a willing and enthusiastic group of Year 11 students eagerly awaiting their opportunity to be involved next year.

When interviewed earlier this year on her involvement in the project, Louise said, 'A highlight for me is seeing the happiness that this brings to the children. We see the same students every week so we get to build a relationship with them. It is also the same children who attend the breakfast club.'

Damendeep Basra, the school's Lasallian Captain, explained in the same interview, 'Being a Catholic and at a Lasallian School we are taught that we are all made in God's image and are equal, so we should all be treated with the same dignity and respect. By providing this service, we give them that dignity and respect.'

During Social Justice Week these students are focussing on the Social Justice principles of preferential option for the poor and participation, in order to put their faith into action. ■



# alcatraz

## A short story

Cavaan Wild

Alcatraz isn't a penitentiary,  
but his dad might be in one.

He's a boy from Marfell who doesn't talk to strangers  
and has an eye infection.

Wise not to talk to strangers, he shouldn't trust  
people. He's right not to. Has a right not to.

Alcatraz is wary because he needs to be. Quick on  
his feet, dodging puddles barefeet amidst the mid-  
winter, a heavy hand or two. Who's judging?

I don't know if Alcatraz daydreams much. This isn't a  
reflection of a lack of imagination, rather if your real-  
ity is real enough to warrant never closing an eye till  
you're in class or you're bleary, teary-eyed and hungry,  
losing focus isn't worth it. His lunch would probably  
be stolen anyway, assuming he has some today. But I  
can't back up all this talking, because Alcatraz never  
talked to strangers. Avoids them. Sensible. But it's  
breakfast time. He has no breakfast, so he's at school.

It is truly heartbreaking to see kids as young as five at  
eight in the morning with frowns on their faces. The  
day is ruined, and it's only gonna get worse. But my  
guilt never helped anybody, and it's not going to help  
Alcatraz.

I gave him jam toast in a silent transaction. Breakfast  
In Schools because we won't give these kids anything  
else but Weetbix and white bread. He doesn't trust  
my smile. He doesn't trust the food. I'm inadequate.  
Weighed, measured, and found wanting because  
what I have he won't ever get. One eyed, seeing one  
side of people.

Anger was in the other eye. I chose not to ask why.

Alcatraz has an eye infection because his mum had  
to choose between taking him to the doctor, buying  
groceries or filling the car. That's one hell of a decision  
to be faced with. Got to make it though.

I don't know what she chose, but Alcatraz's eye was  
swollen shut, weeping and raw when I saw him.

If one was to keep both eyes open on a June drive  
down Alcatraz's street, it would be hard to miss him.  
Barefooted amongst mini-lakes. A barelegged boy for  
all seasons.

But would they want to see him anyway? Would they  
lift their eyes above a little stranger?

See the bare feet, brown skin, swallow, hard and  
avert their eyes to a phone screen, or a windscreen,  
or a computer screen, transition lenses to shield their  
pupils from that childish emotion of guilt.

Would they love a sniffing boy with a weeping eye?

They don't know. They won't tell me when I ask. It's a  
strange concept to them.

I wonder if Alcatraz knows the choice his mum had  
to make.

She knows all about it.

I doubt he knows his dad.

I wonder if he realises these might be the happiest  
days of his life, and I worry that with that eye he won't  
see them anyway.

He wouldn't tell me if I asked. He doesn't talk to  
strangers. ■

*Cavaan Wild is a student at Victoria University of  
Wellington. He was winner of the Best Mission Article at  
the 2014 ACPA awards ceremony this September.*

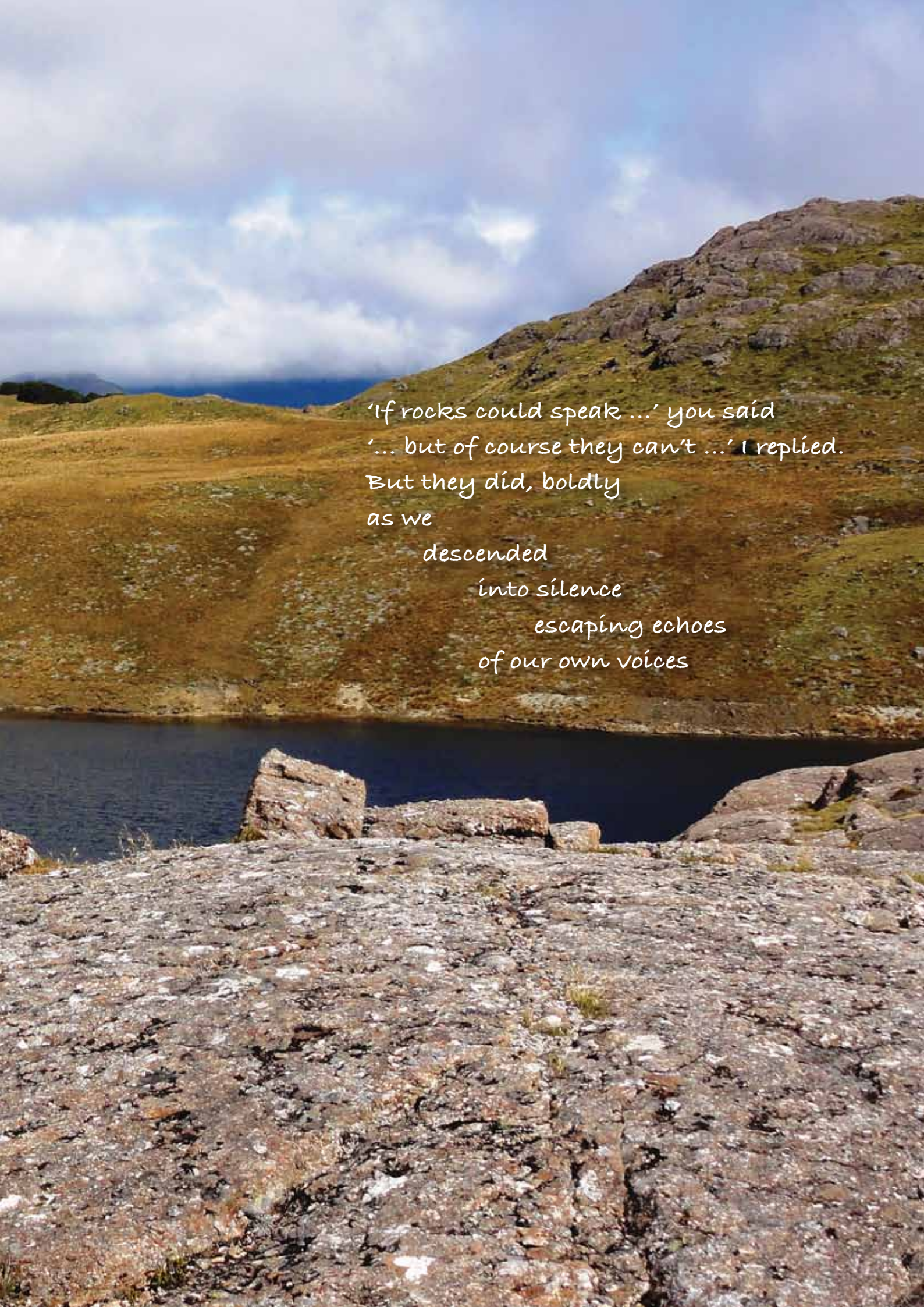


# At Sylvester Lake

Poem and photo by Robin Kearns







'if rocks could speak ...' you said  
'... but of course they can't ...' I replied.  
But they did, boldly  
as we  
    descended  
        into silence  
            escaping echoes  
            of our own voices



# let us love one another

*At the heart of our relationship with God is the commitment of two people to each other. When couples fall in love, God is moved and the universe quickens on its way. When they answer 'I do' to the question about lifelong commitment, it is a moment of divine incarnation.*

Daniel O'Leary

Often people ask, 'why does almost everyone choose the fourth finger of the left hand for the wedding ring?' Perhaps because in the past it was (inaccurately) believed that a certain vein, *vena amoris* — literally, the vein of love — ran directly from this finger to the heart, thus the fourth finger was closest to the seat of love. In *The Sacrament of Love*, the theologian Paul Evdokimov enriches the story further. The ring, he writes, 'placed on the altar table touches the mystery of the Kingdom, the symbol of a new destiny'.

Infinite love in a finite ring; human love has eternal connections. There is a cerebral and sombre tone to the preparatory documents for the October Synod on the Family. Perhaps this is a good point to mention the Christian vision of the mystical core of marriage. Is not the heart of love the heart of God? When people fall in love, God is moved too, and the whole universe quickens on its way.

Theologian Sallie McFague, in her *Models of God*, writes, 'Our love for one another is the language of a passionate God ... It is desire that spins us round, desire that sends the blood through our veins, desire that draws us into each other's arms and onward in the lifelong search for God's face. And in the love of one another we see that face — in the touch of each other's hands we feel God's presence.' Most of the time these sublime dimensions of marriage are not explicitly known or acknowledged yet somehow, somewhere deep

within us, we have a stirring sense of an innate reverence and wonder before love's mystery.

St Bernard of Clairvaux describes the Incarnation as a divine-human kiss — 'Happy kiss ... in which God is united with his creatures'. Mechtilde of Magdeburg, the thirteenth century mystic, wrote, 'I am in you and you are in me. We could not be any closer. We are two fused into one, poured into a single mould.' An emphasis on the beauty of marriage can save the world. Why is this? It is the smithy of self-transcendence, the nursery of God's way of painfully perfecting human growth, a pivotal point at the core of human becoming.

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**'In the early Christian community, parents were called "the priests of the domestic church"'**

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Where else on this planet can human beings find the conditions for loving radically, for growing in healing and wholeness, for learning how to flow together creating small new springs to nourish the river of life? It is also a kind of symbol or climax of the hidden holy attraction, begun in creation, that makes evolution and incarnation possible, that drives the long and loving universe story to the end of time when God will be 'all in all'.

Catholic teaching has always emphasised the divine presence beating in the hearts of spouses. 'God

created people for love, inscribed in them the capacity to love,' wrote Pope John Paul II, 'and love is therefore the innate substance of every human being.' This love is mostly evident in normal family routine: 'I have come to realise,' reflected a mother, 'that everything that serves the life of our home is holy — the daily baths, the messy meals, responding to calls for a drink of water in the middle of the night, the laundry, the bills, the hurting, the forgiving.'

All the precious moments of love and marriage are places of encountering God. Think of the astonishing experience of falling in love, or of truly loving someone. The occasion when two people answer 'I do' to the question about lifelong commitment, despite possible diminishment in health or faithfulness, is utterly a moment of divine incarnation. And so is the moment of the birth of the first baby, when parents become co-creators with God. Pope Francis surprised many when he said, 'I have only one dogmatic certainty — God lives in every person.'

In the early Christian community, parents were called 'the priests of the domestic church' consecrating the daily bread, the nightly tears, the constant sacrifice — these informal, raw and messy sacraments of the home. 'The family is where one learns to love,' Pope Francis recently wrote, 'made up of actual faces and bodies of people that love and talk, that sacrifice for each other, especially the most fragile, the weakest'. Holiness in the family takes on a very ordinary appearance.



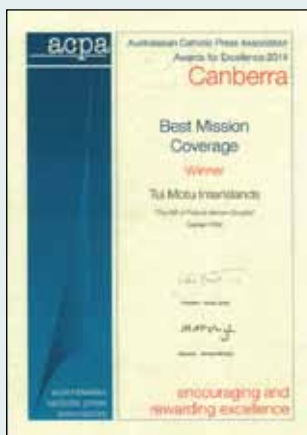
The encyclical *Familiaris Consortio* (1982) traces the calvary/resurrection seasons of the spouses — the winters of doubt, of humdrum existence, of breakdown, of despair, of self-sacrifice; the springs of growing, of forgiving, of renewed love, of new beginnings; the summers of happiness, of family joy, of completeness; the autumns of loss, of children leaving, of love changing, of old age approaching, of fresh challenges and new thresholds. These are the seasons of God's life too as parents continue the Incarnation in the most human and tangible of ways.

Through marriage and family, couples hope to reach their fullest potential. There is often no happy ending. Partners save or destroy each other to the extent that they draw out the true self in each other, or not. The greatest place of intensity of human love is the place of the profoundest divine presence. Marriage is the potential locus of a mutual, painful, healing self-transcendence into an eternal reality. The individual ego has to die. If you dare to love, be prepared to grieve.

As priests, we may never have changed a nappy, but we do experience something of the sublime and powerful radiance of love when couples publicly create new depths of human commitment in the world. And we feel the sadness of a terrible destruction when that very love disintegrates into darkness, and a lovely light is extinguished. St Basil the Great explained that 'through the Spirit, in every gesture of true love we acquire likeness to God; indeed, we attain what is beyond our most sublime aspirations — we become God.' ■

*Fr Daniel O'Leary's website is [www.djoleary.com](http://www.djoleary.com). Father O'Leary is a priest of the Diocese of Leeds, England. This article is published with kind permission of The Tablet [www.thetablet.co.uk](http://www.thetablet.co.uk)*

## Australasian Catholic Press Association awards 2014



### BEST MISSION COVERAGE

#### Winner

**Cavaan Wild**

**"The Gift of Francis Vernon Douglas"**

(October 2013)

Beautifully written in a poetic reflective style. The author communicates an understanding of mission which changes and develops through time. The language is fresh and vivid, and the theology applicable today.

### BEST ORIGINAL ARTWORK

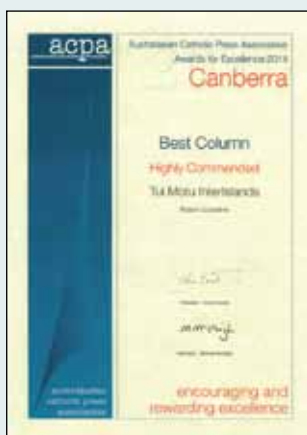
#### Highly Commended

**Sr Mary Horn OP**

**"Wise Women"**

(February 2014)

Mary's series of Wise Women that explore the cultural and religious concepts of women are a brilliant example of thoughtful and creative excellence. Impeccable technique and a brilliant concept make her series an important and well deserved entry into this category.



### BEST COLUMN

#### Highly Commended

**Robert Consedine**

**"The heroes in our midst"**

(March 2014)

Robert Consedine for *Tui Motu* was in a similar vein to the Winner. His columns were personal and relevant, no doubt striking a chord with his audience. It is important to make theology relevant to the reader, or the message is lost.

### BEST ARTICLE ON CATECHESIS

#### Highly Commended

**Fr Kevin Toomey OP**

**Editorial: "Let's Talk"**

(August 2013)

This article tackles the issue of gay marriage from different perspectives with openness and frankness. Clearly written, it is not afraid to challenge the reader to consider differing views and ask new questions. It meets its purpose very well of opening up this controversial topic for discussion.



# catholic sisters - what's happening?

*The opportunity to teach a module on leadership for religious sisters who come from Asia and Africa leads to some very pertinent reflections on the nature of religious life for women now, and the ways in which consumer materialism is having a deleterious effect on Christian life in every part of the world.*

Susan Smith

In May this year, I had a wonderful opportunity to work with some African and Asian women religious who were either in leadership positions or moving into them. Duquesne University in Pittsburgh was offering its Masters' programme on leadership in Manila, and I had been asked to assume responsibility for a module on leadership in missionary congregations.

## preparation for teaching

As I prepared for my seven days' module I wondered what would be the commonalities and differences with religious life as it lived here in contemporary New Zealand. I thought I would be meeting with sisters who were not faced by the problems of aging membership and

decline in vocations characteristic of religious life in New Zealand. These two realities mean that just prior to Vatican II in New Zealand, there were around 350 members in our province, and today we have around 90. Our median age is well in the 70s. What would I find when I worked with African and Asian Sisters from 14 different congregations? Would we have anything in common, or would their realities be very different from mine?

## significant commonalities

Surprisingly there were important commonalities and like their Western counterparts, sisters from Asian congregations — India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Philippines, Taiwan — were experiencing a significant drop

in the numbers of young women seeking to join them. Some of the congregations were still wearing traditional habits while others were wearing secular dress, but what they wore seemed to make little difference — young women were no longer knocking on convent doors. Nor did the apostolic works in which congregations were involved seem to have a significant influence on membership. The sisters' ministries ranged from teaching in high-fee paying schools, health work, social work to advocacy for indigenous peoples whose ownership of ancestral lands was threatened by government-sanctioned mining exploration.

Although none of the participants belonged to the Little Sisters of Jesus, whose ministries involve them in living among the poor and sharing their lives in a very radical way such as working in factories with local people, anecdotal evidence indicated that even such radical living was not attracting women in Asia either. As always, the decline in vocations was accompanied by a rise in the median age. One provincial superior of an international congregation with over 4,000 members told me that the median age in the Philippines province was 70, not appreciably lower than the median age in my province.

## subversive effects

The sisters also identified as problematic an undiscerning use of TV, of personal computers and the myriad entertainment possibilities that the internet now offered, and the never-ending updated versions of smart



A group of Asian sisters photographed at the Leadership Programme in Manila, Philippines. The author, Sr Susan Smith RNDM, is third from the left.

phones that were readily available. The effects of globalisation, secularisation and consumerism were proving just as subversive of gospel values in Asia as they are in New Zealand.

### **financial sustainability**

Another shared challenge is that it is increasingly difficult to achieve some sort of financial sustainability. Some sisters were members of diocesan congregations, that is they were founded before Vatican II by missionary bishops or priests who had ready access to overseas funding. The rapid indigenisation of former missionary churches means that foreign priests and bishops are a vanishing species and local bishops do not have such ready access to overseas funding, or if they do, there seems to be a reluctance to provide adequately for the sisters belonging to diocesan congregations. Nor is the situation of sisters who are members of international congregations founded in Europe or North America appreciably better. In the 19th century, these congregations were part of the missionary movement into Africa and Asia. It was European or American money that resourced this missionary work but that source is also diminishing as median ages rise and congregations' income-generating capacities diminish in the West.

Pope Francis speaks often and eloquently about the need for the church to be a church of the poor, for disciples of Jesus to be with the poor but this can be easier said than done. This is because it is institutional works such as hospitals or schools that provide a good and steady income. Achieving the right balance between a reliable income and an outreach to the poor, which produces little or no income for the sisters to live on, is difficult. The de-institutionalisation track means that congregations can involve their members in ministries that address the environmental and socio-economic issues of our age, but it creates significant financial problems. All congregations indicated

that as their median age climbed, so did the number of older sisters who needed care and this in countries where there is nothing comparable to New Zealand's superannuation provisions. The situation in Africa seems a little different although I suspect that it is only a matter of time before African sisters are encountering problems similar to those in Asia.

### **ecclesiological development**

Another interesting development for me was what I call 'the disappearing priest phenomenon'. In pre-Vatican II religious life the centrality of the priest in the spiritual life of the sisters was very apparent — daily mass, weekly confession, weekly benediction, annual eight day and three day retreats directed by priests, a weekly lecture from a priest, spiritual direction from priests. That has certainly changed. Fewer priests means fewer sisters have daily mass; weekly confession is no longer the norm for many; while retreats and spiritual direction are increasingly the responsibility of sisters professionally trained for such tasks. But this diminishment of the priest in the spiritual life of the sisters should not be equated with a reduced interest in the spiritual life. *Lectio Divina* is important in communities, and sisters speak of the need to complement the devotional spirituality of a pre-Vatican II church with biblical, liberationist and eco-spiritualities that sustain them in their different ministries. I was struck by the time sisters spent in daily prayer in the chapel. Their ministry and community situations are rapidly evolving but their relationship with the Triune God seems strong and committed and ultimately that is what counts.

There is little doubt that sisters in both continents are better educated theologically and professionally than was the case before Vatican II and therefore they are more than ready to assume responsibility for the future well being of religious life in their different countries.

The 11 hour plane trip from

Hong Kong to Auckland meant time to reflect on religious life as I had learnt about it from sisters in contexts very different from my own. I had left New Zealand thinking that differences would be qualitative. But my time in Manila had demonstrated that globalisation, secularisation and consumerism — challenges we may think of as belonging to the western world and to western apostolic religious life — are challenges for religious life everywhere.

I also suspect that religious life whether in Asia or in New Zealand reflects what is happening in the wider ecclesial community. The challenges religious women are facing are challenges confronting the church — aging membership, the negative impact of a secular, consumerist society and the mass media that constantly extols the wonders of such a society. The important reality about women's congregations, as perhaps distinct from other groups in the church, is that they seem to be taking time to consider what their responses should be to what is sometimes named as a 'MacDonaldised' society.

Many years ago I read a history of the Catholic Church in which the author argued that the faith life of Catholics was more likely to be subverted and threatened by consumer materialism than by Marxist materialism. The latter is fast disappearing, but the former is becoming more and more of a threat to the faith life of the community. Lay people, whether single, married or religious, and priests, whether in Asia or New Zealand, need to witness by word and action that lives lived according to the gospel are about turning to God and our brothers and sisters in need. It not about worshipping in the temple of Mammon. ■

*Susan Smith is a Mission sister living in the hills of Whangarei, and working with community groups.*



# ‘... I would, if god ever asked me’

*This interview by Shaun Davison complements well the material concerning religious sisters published elsewhere in this issue. This young Marist deacon shows the way in which one young New Zealander, with his own unique background, has made strong and lasting connections with the mission of the Society of Mary.*

On December 13, students from Pompallier Catholic College in Whangarei will travel to Auckland to attend a relatively rare event. They are attending the ordination to priesthood of Phil Bennenbroek SM. I was curious about what had made Phil decide to become a priest. This is what he told me:

“It’s been a long process really. I have been a Catholic all my life. In my later teens I got involved in youth groups and prayer groups and looking back I can see God’s hand in all of that.

## throwaway lines

‘I remember one priest saying to me, “Phil have you ever thought of being a priest?” I wasn’t prepared for it so I gave a throwaway line, something like, “Oh yes I would if God ever asked me.” It was a throwaway line but it was something that I began to think about. It scared me because I didn’t want to be a priest.

‘I went on with my life; I got a job in New Zealand and then worked overseas. I had a few girlfriends during that time but always there was the question, ‘Is this priesthood something that God wants me to do?’ Sometimes I thought I had dealt with it. At other times I would reflect and pray about it for a period of time and then I would think, ‘Na, it’s not for me — I can get on with my life!’

‘But it never really went away and I remember going to masses when the priest would talk about



Deacon Phil with students from Pompallier Catholic College, from left to right. Rana Gagnon, Sarah Atkinson, Holly Quaid, Kayley Crowe, Donna McGuire, Stephen Lofthouse, Daniel Schimanski, Caitlyn Comer.

vocations and starting to sweat thinking, ‘He is talking to me.’

“That continued on for some time and eventually I remember having a conversation with mum on the phone one afternoon. I said that I was wondering if God wanted me to do this priesthood thing and she said, “Why don’t you give the seminary a go for a year and see what happens?”

‘Having made the decision to try out the seminary for a year, I still didn’t want to be a priest but I did have a real sense of peace and joy — which surprised me. The few girlfriends I had were all great but none felt right, even those that I wanted to be right. It was just a gut feeling that I shouldn’t be in



that relationship. Whereas when I decided to enter the seminary I had a different gut feeling.

'I had lived in a lay community in London. There were five of us, we all had jobs and we would pray and have meals together. I had that experience of community life and I enjoyed it. When I was considering which seminary to try I couldn't imagine myself coming home to an empty house at night.

### **discernment**

'In terms of religious orders, the Marists are the biggest in New Zealand and I have devotion to Mary so I thought I'd give the Marists a go for a year. That was the limit of my discernment.

'I went and saw Fr Neil Vaney SM who 'accompanied' me for a year. It's a time of looking at what it actually entails to be a Marist. We would meet monthly and talk about any questions that I had about religious life. After that I felt in a much better place to make my decision.

'I remember the first day in the seminary was a big one for me. I had to let go of my own IT business, my car, a relationship. It was quite an emotional day but I knew it was the right thing to do. For several years I was still quite undecided but I never had a feeling that I should get out.

### **study years**

'In my first year I was the only New Zealander and we had four seminarians from Oceania, two Fijians and two from Papua New Guinea. It was quite a multicultural experience. I was studying a Bachelor of Theology and we did a little bit of pastoral work. In my second year I was off to novitiate in the Philippines. After novitiate I was back in New Zealand studying full-time. At the end of that I had my degree and I went to Wellington for a year of pastoral experience. I lived at Saint Mary of the Angels and I worked as part of

a chaplaincy team at Saint Patrick's College in Kilbirnie.

'When I came back from novitiate there were other kiwis — the most there had been for some time. We got along very well. It was something that people commented on that stayed; that there was a good camaraderie between us. We were a group of people who looked out for one another and enjoyed one another's company.

'Community life is one of the things that I love about being a Marist, but it's always a challenge to be available to the members of my community.

'In the seminary we got on in such a way that we could go to one another and say, 'Shall we go for a beer?' and a lot of things would get sorted. We supported one another during the tough times.

'This is my seventh year of training and I came up to Whangarei for final profession, diaconate and at the end of the year, ordination to priesthood. I actually had the opportunity to be finally professed last year but I decided to wait. A lot of things were still coming together for me so I decided to wait a few months. During that time I really put it to God, 'Is this what You want — if not then this is the time to get me out!'

'Indications are that I will remain in Whangarei for a few

years. I look forward to spending time with the people that I have made connections with up here.

### **call to youth work**

'After that it's anyone's guess where I'll be placed. While I feel a call to youth work I would also like to work in the missions overseas.

'I actually think that I am well suited to a life of celibacy — it's a special gift. There is always that ongoing struggle to want companionship but I think I suit that celibate lifestyle best.

'What renews me is my prayer life and the people I work with — especially youth. I am an introvert and I generally get my energy from times alone but I find that I am energised working with young people.

'I have often been asked, 'What made you decide to become a priest?' Ultimately the answer is that it's God's call. I remember when I was younger, people told me that and I thought it was a cop out. But it is the answer. What I have come to is that this call is a quiet continuous sense, over a long period of time, that God wants me to be a priest. At the beginning it wasn't what I wanted but after taking some steps into it, I came to have a real desire for it. I have a strong sense that this is what I should be doing and that God knows best.' ■

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# new hope for survivors of sexual abuse

*The provincial of the Society of Mary and the director of the National Office of Professional Standards write about some of the delicate questions surrounding sexual abuse and tell us that the Church is developing a more pro-active programme called the 'Safe Church' programme.*



Earlier this year the Society of Mary sponsored seminars for its priests and brothers in Napier, Wellington and Auckland, to present new understandings and developments in the area of sexual abuse.

They were led by American clinical psychologist, Monica Applewhite, who is regarded as one of the leading experts in this area in the English-speaking world. She has worked closely with a number of religious congregations, dioceses and the United States' Council of Catholic Bishops, as well as with the bishops of Ireland, and later this year with the bishops of Poland. This was Monica Applewhite's third visit to New Zealand. She came here in 2011 and 2012 to present seminars sponsored by the National Office for Professional Standards of the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference.

*Tui Motu* questioned Fr David Kennerley, Provincial of the Society of Mary, about the insights he received from these seminars.

**Q. What do you think was the most important thing you gained from the seminars?**

A. One of Monica Applewhite's strongest messages is that it is time for us to shift focus. In recent years we have become increasingly aware

of the pain and damage to those who have experienced sexual abuse from Church personnel. There are individuals, families and communities still broken because of the damage they endured and still carry.

Many bishops and religious orders now acknowledge that they did not act wisely or well at the time of the crisis, with too little understanding of the impact of such behaviour and too little care and support for survivors of abuse. That is why, not forgetting or diminishing the past, we all want to adopt measures both direct and indirect to address the issues, and to assist in the healing of both the individuals and the wider Church.

**Q. This raises the matter of how the wider Church community has been hurt by revelations of abuse.**

A. There was and still is deep hurt and a sense of betrayal among many Catholics in learning that those whom they trusted implicitly could have betrayed that sacred trust. In addition to the care that must be given to those directly affected by abuse, there is need to rebuild the trust and confidence in all the institutions of the Church.

The Catholic Church now has a major resource in the John Jay Report which has given us the tools

and understanding to address much more appropriately the sexual abuse of children within the Church context. This includes protocols and supervision regimes to restrain those whose ministries have been tainted by the blight of sexual abuse. We also have seen considerable tightening of Canon Law covering abuse matters in recent years.

**Q. Can you tell us something of the importance of the John Jay Report?**

A. This report by the prestigious College of Law in New York came out in 2004 after two years' work. It was commissioned by the American bishops, to cover all reported incidents of abuse over a 50-year period. It is the most comprehensive report ever conducted on this issue by a major global institution, and was designed to include wide consultation to ensure greater reliability and validity.

**Q. Can you give us some specific information about the report?**

A. While it deals specifically with the situation in the United States covering a 50-year period there is still much that we can identify with and learn from it. Without going into all the statistics it showed that offences involved about 4 percent of ordained men in the United States.



Of these, 52 percent of complaints involved a single individual and a single instance of abuse, and much of the offending occurred in a single decade. Since this time a deeper analysis of the results has enabled identification of different types of offenders, which has influenced such practices as selection and training of candidates for ministry, supporting those in religious life, and consistent and clear monitoring of those who have been found guilty of such violations.

*Q. From what you implied earlier, a great deal of the process for dealing with abuse concerns the care for survivors of sexual abuse.*

A. Emerging trends in this regard show that there is a growing awareness of those we call secondary and tertiary victims or survivors. They may be the children or siblings of survivors, even the communities or parishes where offenders lived and worked, not to mention the innocent families of the abusers themselves, who can often face hostility and even ostracism from former friends and parishioners. In some places, retreat days and support groups have been established as one area of healing.

*Q. In conclusion, can you outline the ways in which the Church community must have as its priority the protection of the young and vulnerable?*

A. It is so essential to make known to the whole community the processes that are followed and to make it easier for people to come forward with a complaint. This information must be readily accessed by the whole community. It is a priority that those in the Church community who deal with these matters - protocol committees and support teams - allow their work and identities to become known. In this way, sexual abuse will come to be treated not as an invisible cancer, but rather as a recognisable condition that we who are Church can name, confront and confine. ■



*Father David Kennerley SM, provincial of the Society of Mary in New Zealand, can be contacted by email on [kennerley@smnz.org.nz](mailto:kennerley@smnz.org.nz)*

## safe church

*The Director of the National Office for Professional Standards, Mr Bill Kilgallon, gives us hint of good steps to be taken which will help the Aotearoan Church in the future:*

Diarmuid Martin, as Archbishop of Dublin, has more experience than most of facing up to the enormous damage done to individuals, families, communities and the Church by priests and religious who sexually abused children. Reflecting on that experience at a recent conference in Rome he issued a challenge to the Church. His starting point was that 'what happened should never have happened in the Church of Jesus Christ.' It is not sufficient to say that sexual abuse happens right across society, or that the incidence of abuse is not significantly higher within the Catholic clergy than in society. Jesus set a different and higher standard. Archbishop Martin challenged us to make the Catholic Church a safe place for children — but not to be content with achieving that. The Church should become a place where survivors of abuse can encounter healing. Only then will the wounded Church be healed. 'The Church which talks about a preferential option for the poor must show unflinchingly a preferential option for those who have been victims of abuse within its fold.'

How does the Catholic Church in New Zealand measure up to the 'Martin challenge'? In 1998 the Bishops and leaders of religious orders in this country published *Te Houhanga Rongo — A Path to Healing*, policies and procedures for responding to complaints of abuse. Based on clear principles of seeking truth and justice *A Path to Healing* has proved to be a robust and positive way of responding to individual complaints.

This year the Church has developed a more pro-active approach by beginning the Safe Church Programme. Maria Noonan has been appointed to develop a training and awareness-raising programme about sexual abuse for priests, religious, staff and volunteers in the Church. This will also include measures to improve prevention of abuse. Once established this, with *A Path to Healing*, should provide the foundations for working towards a healing Church. ■

*Bill Kilgallon can be contacted at [prof.standards@nzcbc.org.nz](mailto:prof.standards@nzcbc.org.nz)*

# 'love your neighbour as yourself'

Matthew 22:34-40 – 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time – 26 October 2014

Kathleen Rushton

To find the grave of Great-Uncle Tom among the over 11,000 white upright grave stones in Tyne Cote Cemetery near Ypres, where there are more New Zealand First World War graves than any other cemetery, left me beyond words. He was 18 years old and one of some 600,000 killed in the Battle of Passchendaele. 'Killed in action' was what family said of the leaner soldier in colour-shaded photo of my grandfather and his younger brother. Nearly 80 years later, in 1994, I was the first of his relatives to visit his grave. I imagined how his parents would have longed to be where I stood then.

On that day of immense emotion, 'The Grieving Parents' faced me — in the nearby Vladslo War Cemetery which is the final resting place of some 25,638 young German soldiers. These life-size sculptures were created by Käthe Kollwitz in her sorrow and love for her 18 year old son, Pieter, whose name is among those on the nearest plain granite tiles. The father kneels upright with arms crossed. The mother is bowed in grief. Two 18 year olds, grieving parents and layer upon layer of grief caused by an imperial war — for King and Empire, for Kaiser and Empire. Another mother is bowed in grief for her son executed by a Governor and Empire.

## the great commandment

Jesus journeyed from Galilee to Jerusalem which he entered in a way not expected of the Messiah — on a donkey. The city was in turmoil asking: 'Who is this?' (Mt 21:10). He



'The Grieving Parents', Vladslo War Cemetery, Flanders.  
[Photo: Kathleen Rushton]

cleanses the temple. Conflict stories and parables of judgment follow (Mt 21:23-22:46). Opposition mounts. Pharisees gathered, a lawyer asks: 'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' Jesus replied: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

Love is an inward feeling of attachment along with outward behaviour. To love God is total attachment to God. 'Heart,' 'soul' and 'mind' are parallel terms for the whole of human existence (Dt 10:12-13; 30:10). Matthew uses the first two more times than it is possible to list here. 'Heart' denotes the centre of a person's willing, thinking, deciding and doing (Mt 5:8; 6:21 and at least 11 more times). 'Soul' suggests one's life or daily existence which is given

over to God or something else (2:20; 6:25 and at least seven more times). 'Mind' is used only here in Matthew.

The 'yourself' of 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' would not have been understood in terms of what we call self-love. Those Mediterranean people were group orientated and did not understand themselves in individualistic terms but as embedded in a family, clan or religious group. This instruction was given in a context of a particular community — for Jesus to his own people or for Matthew to his own community. That community was 'your neighbour.'

The coupling of these two commandments is found in the writings of many Jewish teachers. Jesus, too, underscores their unity and coherence. He kept the requirements of the



Torah (5:17-19). Jesus is presented as being concerned primarily with Israel (10:5-6; 15:24) yet that does not exclude all nations (2:1-12; 8:28-34; 15:21-28; 27:54; 28:19-20). This is consistent with the Torah. Contrary to misunderstandings common among Christians, Judaism did not have an exclusivist ethic, that is, Jews are to love only Jews, their own people. A universalistic moral attitude is found, for example, in the insistence that humanity is created in the image of God (Gn 1:27; 5:1-2; 9:6).

Jesus quotes Leviticus 19:18: 'You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself ...' This is not about a few acts of love but about a vision of society found repeatedly in Scripture. For example, Leviticus requires: respect for parents, those who are poor and the alien are to be provided with food, no stealing, dishonest deals, telling lies, profaning of God's name, those blind or deaf are to be respected, no unjust judgements, slander or vengeance (19:1-17). All is summed up in: 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself' (v.18). Love is the key for interpreting all other requirements of the Torah. Because Jesus proclaims an alternative empire (*basileia*), which Matthew calls the *basileia* of the heavens, the forces of the *basileia* of Rome and those who colluded with it crucified him.

### re-membering

'Re-membering' suggests Mary Rose D'Angelo, 'conveys together the ideas of bringing what has been hidden out of the shadows of history, of putting together what has been dismembered and of making someone a member of oneself, of a community or the tradition in a new way.' What voices help re-membering the over ten million young soldiers killed in battle in World War I and the twenty million more people killed by war-related injuries, illness and disease? I suspect Tom, Pieter and my Great-uncle

Gerald (killed at Gallipoli) would advocate listening to the voices of their World War I poet comrades. If I read 'The Soldier', by Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), with its idealised nationalistic notions and if I stopped there, my forebears would be troubled. They would be troubled, too, when uncritical idealising of their situation still occurs 100 years later, rather than war being named as the horrendous, unjust reality it was and continues to be.

I read on. A shift occurs in such as the searing 'Parable of the Old Man and the Young' where in Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) 'read' his own situation in the trenches. Abraham struggled to distinguish the voice of cultural beliefs from the authentic voice of God. Religious justification, however, for sacrificing a child of God was rejected. In contrast, Owen tells of the old men of Europe who refused to hear the voice of the angel of God and set aside imperial ambitions. The war to end all wars was not about democracy and freedom. It ended with the punitive Treaty of Versailles. Our empires so humiliated the vanquished Germans that seeds were sown for the rise of yet another empire - National Socialism and Hitler.

Re-membering Tom, Pieter and Gerald means re-membering, too, the grieving parents at home and those in war-torn regions then and now. Tom's parents, I am told, never spoke to each other again after one gave permission for him to volunteer. Eventually they lived apart. Sister Immaculata was in her late 80s when as a student I boarded with her Leuven community. Her mother would fill her little daughter's apron with fresh apples to take to New Zealand and Australian soldiers stationed near her village of Passchendaele. ■

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

## PARABLE OF THE OLD MAN AND THE YOUNG

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,  
And took the fire with him, and a knife.  
And as they sojourned both of them together,  
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,  
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,  
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?  
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,  
and builded parapets and trenches there,  
And stretchèd forth the knife to slay his son.  
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,  
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,  
Neither do anything to him. Behold,  
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;  
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.  
But the old man would not so, but slew his son,  
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

– Wilfred Owen



# the dismissal of a bishop

## Book: Benedict, Me and the Cardinals Three

by Bishop William Morris

Published by ATF Press, Hindmarsh, SA, 2014.

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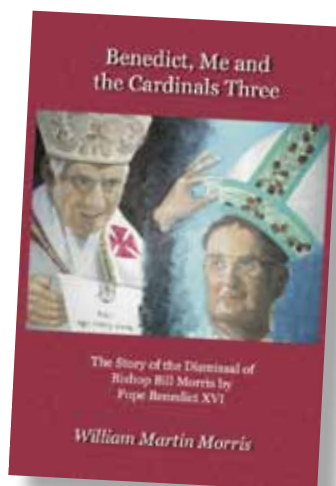
Reviewer: Fr Damian Wyn-Williams

In May 2011 William Morris retired as bishop of Toowoomba after serving there for over 18 years. He was still only 70. He was acknowledged to be committed and pious, generally held in high regard by his clergy and people. His retirement had been forced upon him by Rome. He was in effect dismissed.

This book is Morris's own account of how this came about. He lays out the sequence of events in a straightforward, restrained manner. Readers must surmise the real reasons why Cardinals Arinze, Re and Lavada were determined to make him resign. Copies of the correspondence between Morris and the various Roman offices and as well as Pope Benedict are in an appendix.

A brief outline of this tragic story risks over-simplifying the issues. Enough to say that many share the view expressed by the Hon. W. J. Carter, a retired Queensland Supreme Court Judge, whose review is included in an appendix. His conclusion is that the way in which Morris was removed from office was quite contrary to the principles of natural justice.

After years of difficult relations with Curial officials, the crucial point came in September 2007 when Morris received an unsigned memorandum from the Congregation of Bishops stating that he should resign. The memorandum listed a range of concerns, the most significant being the allegation that Morris in a recent pastoral letter had promoted ideas on priesthood contrary to the teaching of the Church. The



memorandum contained several inaccurate statements.

At this stage Morris had not been previously advised of the accusations levelled against him nor he been given the opportunity to defend himself. Yet clearly it had already been decided that he had to go.

The story that follows is one of Morris's repeated appeals for a fair hearing. He asked for a meeting with Pope Benedict but was told he must first resign. Eventually he was granted a fifteen minute interview with the Pope, but there was no real dialogue. He must resign, not for any moral failing but for 'doctrinal errors'. But for Morris to resign implied that he accepted that he had broken

communio with the Magisterium, something he strenuously denied. Finally, as an unconvincing compromise he agreed to retire at 70.

This book is a must-read because it exemplifies some of the problems still to be overcome in realising the notion of episcopal collegiality envisaged by the Second Vatican Council. In this affair the Australian Episcopal Conference was not consulted. Morris's treatment reveals a singular unwillingness on the part of 'Rome' to take seriously the pastoral realities in the vast diocese of Toowoomba (bigger than the whole of Germany) or the benefits experienced by the local church through the celebration of Reconciliation with General Absolution. Particularly disturbing is the way in which anonymous denunciations sent to Rome behind the bishop's back were taken so seriously by Curial officials. Disturbing too is the fact that, while Canon Law affords all other members of the church the protection of due process, bishops have no such right.

The only positive result from Morris's dismissal may be that, as in the case of many others denounced by Rome in the last century (eg. Marie-Joseph Lagrange, Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar), his experience may be a catalyst for change in years to come. ■

## Kiwi Christmas

by Joy Cowley



Stunningly illustrated by Bruce Potter, this is a contemporary look at the Christmas Story as if it happened today in Aotearoa NZ.

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# coming of age in america



## Film: Boyhood

**Director:** Richard Linklater

**Reviewer:** Paul Sorrell

**T**echnically, this movie is a *tour de force*, following a single family and their changing fortunes over a period of 11 years, using the same set of actors, with new scenes being shot once a year between 2002 and 2013. We are subject to the uncanny cinematic experience of seeing the young protagonist and his sister literally growing up from preschoolers into teenagers before our eyes over two and a half hours.

Although the title suggests that the focus is on Mason Evans Jr (Ellar Coltrane), Linklater follows the whole family cohort. Mason, sister Samantha (Lorelei Linklater) and mother Olivia (Patricia Arquette) form the inner circle; the next includes their separated dad, Mason Sr (Ethan Hawke), and grandparents; and the zone beyond that is occupied by a large cast of foster siblings, schoolmates, and so on. Scenes of family life in Texas are punctuated by events in the wider world including 9/11, the war in Iraq

and the Obama/McCain election.

*Boyhood* is very much a coming-of-age movie, ending as Mason leaves home and begins a new phase of his life at university (college), where he looks set to mature both as a person and as a budding art photographer.

Linklater chronicles the Evans family with a steady, clear-eyed realism, undergirded by a deep affection and respect for his subjects. This is a long way from the glibness, sentimentality and manufactured drama of the average American television sitcom. The normal ups and downs of family life make for engaging raw material here. Linklater's directorial hand is light; no-one — except perhaps for Olivia's two alcoholic husbands — is judged.

Olivia's tempestuous love life forms a backdrop to Mason's development through his boyhood and teen years. We wonder at times whether this, and the other knocks of adolescence, will derail him, but he weathers his personal storms to emerge as a thoughtful and sensitive young man. His absorption in his creative interests is sometimes

interpreted by his elders as laziness and lack of purpose — a response many teens will recognise.

With a running time of 164 minutes, the audience is in for a long stretch, but *Boyhood* possesses a cumulative power and impact. Although it is hard to identify a handful of episodes that stand out — the selection will be different for every viewer — that is in many ways the point of the film and a major part of its appeal. ■

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# Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

## rainbows and creation

When I look at a rainbow I see it on three levels. First, the magic and mystery still remain from childhood. Underlying that, I see the colours as varying wavelengths of electro-magnetic rays, ranging from the shortest (at the violet end) to the longest (at the red end). Together they make up the 'visible spectrum', or light. Finally, I see a tool employed by members of various disciplines who have collaborated to discover much about the structure and age of the universe — a discovery that disproved the former scientific dogma that our universe had no beginning and was unchanged from all eternity.

When astronomers began analyzing colour photos of light from various stars they found that the wavelengths of many of their colours were displaced, in varying degrees, towards the red end of the spectrum. In 1917 the American astronomer Vesto Slipher measured a number of stars in this way and suggested this displacement indicated some sort of movement away from earth. This was unacceptable because of the prevailing belief in a static universe.

In a 1927 article, the Belgian priest-astronomer Georges Lemaître showed how Slipher's work led to a law, derived from General Relativity, showing that the universe was expanding. Lemaître was the author of the 'big bang' theory. In 1929 another American, Erwin Hubble, updated Lemaître's work, now known as 'Hubble's Law'.

In 1950 I listened to the BBC Reith Lectures — entitled 'The Nature of the Universe' — given that year by Cambridge astronomer Fred Hoyle. I still have the book form, which I recently re-read to see how his theories have held up. Hoyle

originally discounted Lemaître's 'big bang' theory, arguing that matter was being continuously created to ensure that the density of interstellar matter remained constant. He confidently asserted that his theory would stand the test of time; he accepted he was in error on both counts before he died.

One valid point that he made was the following: '... in science it does not matter how strange an idea may seem, so long as it can be expressed in a precise form and so long as its consequences are found to be in agreement with observation'. He also said: 'It is not that role of science to explain where the matter comes from (as in 'continuous creation') — it just appears'. That is also correct: the question is a philosophical one. That is a very important distinction, with scientists proclaiming philosophical theories as if they were scientific ones and others, in the name of Faith denying scientifically valid positions.

God reveals himself through creation and Scripture. By using all of our human attributes we are able to deepen our understanding of both, discern their inter-connection, and stumble towards a clearer picture of our destiny.

## changes in synod process

'We want a frank, open, civilized discussion,' Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, the Secretary General of Synods said, outlining changes to the process. He gave the example of the relationship between a painting and its frame to explain these changes.

He said sometimes the frame is made first and then the painting follows, but has to accommodate itself to fit the frame. 'It is better to do the painting first and then create the frame to enhance it.'

The Synod on the Family will

include a dozen or more voting members named by the pope, three priests chosen by the Union of Superiors General, a dozen or more expert advisers, about a dozen representatives of other Christian churches and up to 30 observers, more than half comprised of married couples — who will be encouraged to address the assembly, the cardinal said.

He announced the following changes: voting members will be asked to submit their presentations in writing at least two weeks before the meeting opens. During the first week the bishops will give a 'three or four minute' summary, focusing only on one theme and, perhaps, including ideas or clarifications that have come from listening to their brother bishops. The report opening the synod will now be an initial summary of the bishops' submissions. This report will be progressively modified to reflect the discussion as the bishops address the assembly. At the end of the first week the revised report will be presented to the group. The second week of the synod will be taken up mainly by work in small groups organized according to language. These small groups will work, theme by theme, on amending the summary report. The result is likely to be used as the working document for the 2015 synod.

Participants will have to prepare more thoroughly and sharpen their focus. In return they will have greater opportunity to treat the subject matter more thoroughly. So, contrary to the fears of many, there is ample opportunity for bishops to speak out. This should lead to widespread involvement for the rest of us in preparation for the 2015 Synod. Very relevant is John Paul II's 1988 call to examine the effect of modern scientific findings on Church teaching. ■



# 'friendlink'

Peter Norris

I deal with students who are quite stressed each day. Sometimes this is difficult and sometimes I think I am stressed but when I realise the problems people have, my problems fade away. Each day I meet or talk with people who are worried about their grades and getting accepted into a preferred course, or simply just getting accepted to this College. I question the importance everyone places on these very temporary goals.

It is lovely to know that the education we offer is valued but it is hard when it affects well being. Students get really stressed about such things as acceptance into a professional course and they are often worried about disappointing parents. When I talk to parents they are normally concerned that their children are happy and are not as worried about the details of where.

In a lot of ways we are goal-oriented but the goals are transitory. I wonder whether we learn about transitory goals or lasting ones in churches. I would like to think the focus is on lasting goals but the transitory ones are much easier to manage and sort out.

On the other hand, I have just attended a concert run by students in this College. It is the sixteenth year we have run the concert and it is for people whose care is being managed by 'Friendlink,' an organisation that assists with living and care for people who in another age would have been in a psychiatric hospital. Most of the people would never be able to go to any concert downtown. Some are in wheelchairs and others are ambulatory. What always impresses me is the number of people who perform for the guests. The choir alone has seventy members. This is selfless and always amazes me. The students are good and they are performing solely for the guests. I feel that the students do have a wonderful value system and are being selfless.

I also see students helping to bring the guests in the disabled entrance and helping take people to the dining room afterwards and serving them supper. Sometimes I find that our students are familiar with caring because they do so at home for someone who is disabled.

Although charming, the College can be a little daunting. While we admire the Harry Potter-style

decorations in the dining room the whole room can be intimidating to strangers. Our students make certain that all the guests feel welcome and our students meet guests who will tell them about past concerts. This is sometimes the only concert people have ever attended and it makes a strong impression.

These students are the same people who are stressed about their acceptances and their exam results. There is a selflessness to their service. No matter how wonderful our students look, they always put service first and help the guests into and out of the College.

On the one hand our students get stressed about exams and success but on the other hand they are wonderful in serving those in need. There is something good about our education system if it produces such giving people. Sometimes there is a problem with transitory goals, but underneath everything these students have a wonderful value system. ■

*Father Peter Norris is the Master of St Margaret's College on the campus of the University of Otago*

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# a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

To be content whether I have plenty or little. To be glad with being here right now, yet always journeying on. To find rest in who I am — but still seeking to be the full person I was created to be. These are not small challenges.

I love this about where we live perched on this high hill which is yet just a footstool of the distant snow-capped high Himalayas.

That cicadas chirp raucously, rudely, joyfully every dawn and dusk. That the canvas of skies is always changing, often jubilantly colourful at sunset and enigmatic for the many months of monsoon (shoals of mist roll up, play, drop back). That there is a web of footpaths and trails across the hills, between houses and down to the bazaar — and after four years here I am still finding new cunning routes. That there is a great school for our kids and since July, we have reliable internet. That the Uttarakhand monsoon is intensely gleeful and verdant. That it is easy to live on locally grown seasonal fruit and vegetables, and only to go places by foot or bus.

I could keep this list going a long time yet.

Yet in so much good, I often battle with a perverse discontent — having it



too good: knowing how easy we have it compared to many I know here in India. The house we've moved to recently is a comfortable fit for a family of six and was generously made available to us by the organisation I work with. Yet rather than enjoying its bounty, I have found it too easy to feel apologetic for our four bedrooms and living room, when most people around us live in much smaller spaces. I feel somehow bad that we can dry our clothes under the tin roof of the attic while most families parry with the misty monsoon for days to get laundry dry. While we cycle out in crispy sun and rhododendrons in April, many of our friends in Delhi are sweating in front of fans. Why should I get it so good?

Of course, our four children were quite happy at our small apartment, and are equally happy in this bigger house, ie. they are blissfully free of angst either way. (It's hard to admit that there are so many ways my uncomplicated sunny six-year-old has life more sorted out than I do). So last week I talked about my angst

around our bigger new house to a wise spiritual guide who lives in Wellington, and she emailed me this excerpt from Frederick Buechner's *A Sacred Journey* ...

*If we listen with patience and hope,  
if we remember at all deeply and honestly,  
then I think we come to recognise, beyond  
all doubt, that, however faintly we may  
hear him,  
he is indeed speaking to us  
and that, however little we may under-  
stand it,  
his word to each of us is both recoverable  
and precious beyond telling.*

So I am invited to listen to my life, and to listen to that faint voice, suggesting this angst is nothing to do with social justice, speaking for greater equality or living simply. Really, if I am given abundant plenitude and yet apologise for it, I am ungrateful and little else.

Yet this word to me means also that all is not lost. The invitation is again to gratitude — and contentment whether I have much or little. When I am grateful, (and not apologetic) I am much more likely to be generous, hospitable and gracious. And maybe in contentment, I can still my chastising, critiquing self long enough to hear and recognise that ever louder voice that speaks through soupy mists, raucous cicadas and gaudy sunsets. ■

*Kaaren Mathias lives with her husband Jeph and four children in North India, where she works in community health and development. Her email address is: [kaarenmathias@gmail.com](mailto:kaarenmathias@gmail.com)*



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