Tui Motu

InterIslands

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the plight of our young

Contents

The Editor, who is on holiday in the UK, still found time to put pen to paper for this issue

The plight of children – a national disgrace

Our children are our most priceless asset. No country can afford to neglect them or allow them to be exploited. When we hear reports of child labour and effective slavery in countries of the Third World we are rightly shocked. We should be even more horrified by the speech of Professor Innes Asher, reported in this issue (pp 6-7), describing the plight of many New Zealand children.

Professor Asher states that one in three children in this country live in poverty – some 300,000. As an Auckland paediatrician she is daily working with the consequences. She is not simply thinking of the much-publicised incidence of meningococcal disease, but of a much wider spread among the young of the classic diseases of poverty. And it is getting worse.

The causes are well known. Low income means inadequate and overcrowded housing, poor diet, failure to access good health care, and the raising of a generation who miss out on the wonderful cultural and recreational facilities enjoyed by most young people. New Zealand deservedly has the reputation overseas as a wonderful country for raising a family. It still is – for some.

Professor Asher's article is backed by two interviews. The first (pp 10-12) deals with *Family Start,* a trust which provides support and intervention for problem families 'at the top of the cliff'. If such families can be reached and helped, then the next generation gets a much healthier start to life. The interview is with Nobby Clark, the Invercargill director of *Family Start.* He highlights the importance of good stable employment. Having a stable, worthwhile job gives anyone, parents especially, a healthy self-esteem. At the same time he notes how crucial are the early years of a child's life – when the developing personality needs love and a stable environment in order to grow healthily. Children who lack these factors in their first few years may be damaged for life.

The other interview (pp 8-9), with Fr Tom Keyes also of Invercargill, describes intervention at the cliff bottom. Fr Tom has laboured for 50 years with persistent male offenders, inside and outside state institutions. These men were invariably raised in poor or negligent surroundings. Often they were abused, poorly educated, unloved – and therefore they lacked self-esteem. Sometimes they are so unstable and unreliable as to be virtually unemployable.

Yet for Fr Tom they are "God's poor", just as much as the slum-dwellers of Calcutta cared for by Mother Teresa. He is adamant that for most of these men, locking them away in prison for years simply makes matters worse.

Unfortunately the national mood, echoed by the constant refrain of Dr Brash and Phil Goff, has become increasingly vindictive and punitive. "Lock'em up and throw away the key". No policy could be more destructive and unChristian. Prison should be a last resort, a place to segregate those who are a menace to themselves and to citizens at large. There can be no doubt that prison is no more than a

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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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finishing school in deprivation and demoralisation for those young people who have already suffered from a thoroughly deficient upbringing.

Fr Keyes's remarks about the causes of delinquency reminded me of a comment made 30 years ago by another southerner, Stewart Sellars, at that time Director of Catholic Social Services for the Dunedin diocese. He said that to find a solution for most of society's social evils it was essential to break the cycle of deprivation. In other words we have to somehow rescue the children of dysfunctional families and stop them offending, drifting into substance abuse, and generally wrecking their own lives and other people's. *Family Start* is a scheme that clearly offers hope and salvation for many of these.

The general situation, however, has hardly improved since Fr Sellars's time. It has almost certainly got worse. Yet Michael Cullen offers only crumbs for at-risk children in his recent budget. His superannuation fund is admirable: it is providing long-term for the aged and ageing. European countries such as France would be amazed and envious of such a far-sighted scheme. What this government is failing to provide is at the other end of life – for the one third of our children seriously at risk because of poverty and broken family relationships.

The child is mother of the woman and father of the man. Our children are our most priceless asset. They are the nation's future. The plight of our young people must be the Number One issue for debate at the forthcoming election. What Dr Asher has documented for us is nothing short of a national disgrace. So, if Cullen's formula is wanting, what have the other parties got to offer?

Reward for Joy Cowley

Tui Motu is delighted to report the recognition in the Birthday Honours list of the celebrated New Zealand author, Joy Cowley, who has been made a Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit. Her success over many years as a children's author is well known. What is less widely recognised is the quality and value of her religious writings. *Tui Motu* has been privileged to print many of these, and Joy has been a good friend and supporter of the magazine. In this issue she makes a notable contribution to the series on False Gods.

To Joy – and to her doughty assistant and husband Terry – we offer our heartiest congratulations.

M.H.

Is the meat too tough?

A friend said to me: "I was talking to X. She said she found a lot of the articles in *Tui Motu* above her head. I was relieved to hear her say that, because I find them the same." This took me aback, so I settled down and read the current (June) issue through to see if I agreed.

Tui Motu is a 'reader's magazine'. Few people will find every article absorbing and relevant. They will flip through the contents and choose what interests them. That's fair.

I would be surprised if readers find difficulty with most of our regular writers: Glynn Cardy, Paul Andrews, John Honoré, Humphrey O'Leary. They will not always agree, but they will be engaged. Good writers have the skill of capturing and holding one's attention. The difficulty, I suspect, lies with the meatier pieces up the front.

So I reread Peter Hodgson on the theology of war, Pat McMullan on GE, Mary Eastham analysing the pervading secularism in Western society. These demand more concentration. Sometimes I had to read a passage two or three times to be sure I knew precisely what the writer was saying. Sometimes my attention wandered, and I needed to go back. But the effort was always repaid.

This magazine's job is to present these serious major issues in the most accessible way possible. Some are literally matters of life and death. We cannot fudge them because they may make difficult reading. So what are our criteria?

• The issue must be relevant to our world; something which will affect the well-being of our children; something which is not transient, but likely to be with us for years. Like global warming. Most of us are ignorant of its causes and may not understand the science. But if we're not seriously worried about the world becoming uninhabitable because of our current lifestyle, then we live in a fool's paradise.

• Language and style of writing must be intelligible. Even complex ideas can be expressed in simple language.

• The moral force of what is being said must accord with the Gospel, because this is a Catholic magazine. Some ideas will challenge or may appear speculative. They invite debate, and lead to sane and serious discussion. But that is healthy.

Every one of us is sometimes faced with a difficult text to unravel. It may be a cooking recipe or a knitting formula, a computer manual or a legal document. We would prefer not to have to sweat over it. But if we are sufficiently motivated we will persevere. Should we be less diligent when it comes to matters of faith, or social concern, or public morality? If the meat is a bit tough we just have to chew it a bit longer!

M.H.

Getting the facts correct

Msgr John Meier would be deeply concerned to learn that Norman Maclean believes that he had "argued persuasively that Jesus was married". (*Letters, Tui Motu, June 2005*). Meier in his four-volume work *A Marginal Jew – Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 1991, 1994, 2001, (Vol. IV is still in progress), sets out to recover or reconstruct what can be known of the historical Jesus by using the tools of contemporary historical research. As a historian he prescinds:

" … from what the Christian faith or later Church teaching says about Jesus, without either affirming or denying such claims".

The breadth of Meier's scholarship is exemplary and his opinions are nuanced and finely judged. Towards the end of Volume I, Meier raises the question Was Jesus Married? After reviewing the pertinent material available to him in 1991, he concludes, "… we cannot be absolutely sure whether or not Jesus was married. But the various proximate and remote contexts, in both the NT and Judaism, make the opinion that Jesus remained celibate on religious grounds the more probable hypothesis. …It is possible that Jesus counts himself among those who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. The total silence about wife and children in contexts where his various relatives figure may well indicate that he had never married."

We live in an age where 'the facts' are important. We need to get the facts correct when marshalling our arguments.

BrianKeogh, Kopua

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 altering meaning.

Response articles (up to a page) are also welcome, but need to be by negotiation

Changing church processes

I find it quite disturbing that Pope Benedict has already embarked on a change to the church's processes for sainthood so that Pope John Paul will be canonised speedily. This from a man whose job it was under the last Pope to keep change to an absolute minimum. He was the 'Grand Inquisitor'. He was the head of the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* since 1981. He is the man who has been rigid with regard to the church's rules.

To me, speeding up the canonisation of Pope John Paul makes a mockery of all the other candidates waiting further recognition. It makes a strong statement about man-made church requirements in many fields. I would like to see the speeding up of urgent changes in the church's requirements for celibacy of the priesthood; allowing women into the deaconate and ordination; and proscribing the doctrine of papal infallibility.

I pray that the Pope will reflect on the above issues which are crucial for the survival of the Church we all love.

Nina O'Flynn, Paraparaumu

A Season of Creation

Four liturgies to celebrate *A Season of Creation* leading up to the feast of St Francis of Assisi in early October, have been prepared by Church leaders in Australia. They could be used instead of, or to complement, the Days of Prayer for the Care of Creation in New Zealand lectionaries.

They are available on the internet at:

www.seasonofcreation.com and can be copied free of charge for use in congregational worship.

As yet, there is no material specifically relating to Aotearoa New Zealand. If you are interested in helping develop such material, or being a contact person for *A Season of Creation* for your parish or region, please contact:

Keith Carley at the College of St John the Evangelist,
Private Bag 28-907, Remuera, Auckland 1136
k.carley@auckland.ac.nz; or phone (09) 521 2725 x 820.

Being blackballed

It is not often that I feel ashamed to be a New Zealander. But that is how I felt as I watched the sex-offender drama unfold in Blackball. I kept wondering with sadness whether we as a nation were such moral pygmies that such an issue should dominate the mainstream news for nearly a week? The later copy-cat actions in Whitby (wrong person!) and the Hawkes Bay compounds my sense of shame.

Sadly, vigilantism and prejudice are alive and well among some in this country. And that can be a dangerous thing. It is one thing to keep an eye on a neighbour's property and wellbeing. It is another thing altogether to drive someone out in a public parade of community violence. For that is what it was.

Are compassion, understanding and fairness such alien features on the West Coast as the Blackball experience would have us believe? I am sure they are not. Coasters have a deserved reputation for generosity of heart, fairness and community spirit. But regrettably, not in this instance.

Are ex-sex offenders really the threat that we perceive them to be? What are the fears that lurk in our sub-conscious that are aroused in such circumstances? Do we recognise and acknowledge such fears? Or are we merely exercising the ancient custom of scapegoating someone as a means of cleansing ourselves?

Was this man really a danger to those around him? There is no evidence he was. Probation had acted correctly in dealing with him and helping him re-adjust to life outside prison. True, he wasn't supposed to be in Blackball. But the police knew he was there. Was he a greater danger than the other anonymous ex-sex offenders living in the area? According to statistics, they live in every one of our communities. About 80 percent of sexual abuse cases against children occur within the home, committed by a family member. These people all live among us, yet we don't target them and drive them out. We use our collective wisdom and simply try and keep children safe in a rather unsafe world.

There is a huge ignorance about sexual offenders in the wider community. Because of the sensational approach the mainstream media has taken in recent decades, the perception is prevalent that all sex offenders are a danger. The fact is that there are varying degrees of such offending. Not all sex offending cases are the same, any more than all theft cases are. Most sex offenders released from prison can be resettled quietly and respectfully. Many will have graduated from special therapeutic programmes specifically geared to help them. Those with a perceived on-going problem often have probation officers and police keeping a discreet watch. They do not need community vigilante groups targeting them. There has been too much of that in the history of fascism to allow it to sit comfortably in the New Zealand psyche. We venture down a dangerous road when we allow such actions to go unchallenged.

Certainly, we need to assess the safety of our communities. There is no issue with that principle. But to have the media descend upon such small communities and blow such cases up into national headlines does not serve the truth well. In fact, it inevitably distorts it. National television news coverage and four big stories and pictures in one week in The Press in Christchurch did not bring clarity. It simply fuelled prejudice and undermined the paper's editorial which sought to place the case in a better social context. You can't highlight and sensationalise stories on the news pages and then expect to have credibility in a serious editorial.

Why the police felt compelled in the Blackball case to make the man's presence known to the wider community is intriguing. They must have known there would be a public outcry. Was it their aim to get this man off their patch? One would hope not. One would hope also that the Blackball experience doesn't become common police practice elsewhere. That would be dangerous.

Who are any of us to judge such people? I seem to recall Jesus confronting an angry mob who wanted to stone a woman caught in adultery. He welcomed her, included her and made sure others did the same. He also went out of his way to meet with and eat with 'lepers' and others who were outcasts from their communities. Some of them like Mathew became key disciples. Jesus made it clear that it wasn't up to us to exclude them. We were not to drive people out of their communities. No one ever knows the full facts. Judgment was to be left to God alone.

So should it have been in Blackball. ■

Christopher Carey

Budget Breakfast 2005

Innes Asher takes a look at Michael Cullen's recent budget and finds it wanting as regards the most vulnerable members of society, our children

Last week I heard this disturbing story from an Asthma Nurse Educator from Porirua: *"I visited a family who had almost no furniture in the house. They had taken their child to the doctor one evening in the previous week for an asthma attack. They spent $80 for the visit and the medications. This was their entire food budget for the following week. They were eating white bread and butter."*

I ask myself, in the 2005 Budget how has this government answered the very pressing needs of the most vulnerable members of our society – children living in low-income households? In New Zealand today one in 15 adults is poor – but an appalling one in three children lives in poverty: about 300,000 all told.

Inflation-adjusted superannuation protects the elderly from poverty, but children have no such safety net. Their needs were overlooked by the sweeping economic and social reforms from the mid-'80s to mid '90s. These 'reforms' resulted in inequality and poverty, especially among children.

As a paediatrician I see shocking rates of poverty-related disease and injury in New Zealand children, which have escalated during the 1990s. Many children become, unnecessarily, permanently disabled, with lasting costs to them, their families and society.

The most notorious poverty-related condition is meningococcal disease, especially common where people live in crowded homes. In South Auckland, among Pacific Islands children under the age of one, about one in 300 has been stricken with this disease. Our rates of other preventable third world diseases are less well known: for example, rheumatic fever, pneumonia, chronic lung infections, gastroenteritis, ear disease, dental disease and serious skin infections.

- More of our infants die than in many other similar countries, and our ranking in the world has fallen over the last three decades.
- We have high rates of death among Maori children, 90 percent being potentially avoidable.
- Our adolescents and young adults are dying excessively due to motor vehicle crashes and suicide.
- Our dental health used to be the best in the world, but policy changes have plunged this rating downwards. Children and young people now have disturbingly high rates of missing and filled teeth.

We have become accustomed to regard these high rates of disease, injury, disability and death as 'normal'.

Family income and children's health

Income is widely recognized as the most important determinant of health. Income determines:

- the ability to purchase nutritional food; the size, adequacy and location of housing: 11,000 state houses were sold off in the 1990s. When you are poor and not in a state house, rental costs can be crippling, forcing families to shift often or double up to survive.
- the ability to afford to heat the home, buy clothing, bedding, soap and towels
- the ability to pay for phone and transport, participation in sport, visits to the doctor and prescription; and education.

In the words of a young Auckland rap group *No Artificial Flavours*, writing about their current experiences living in poverty:

"...Do you know what it feels like
When you're having dinner and the power runs out
The kids are in the shower and the water runs out
Three babies are crying 'cause their powder run out
Instead of buying food every week
they're paying bills
so every night they've got somewhere to sleep..."

The deteriorating health of children and its relationship to inadequate incomes has been documented in numerous Government and non-Government reports over the last decade. The Public Health Advisory Committee report to the Ministry of Health in 2004 confirmed that each stepping down of the household income is associated with a deterioration of health, or even of death.

The cumulative effects of long-term inadequate nutrition, crowded and substandard housing and living conditions, and unaffordable or inaccessible primary health care over the last 15-20 years have taken a lasting toll on the health of hundreds of thousands of New Zealand children, causing loss of well-being and even permanent disability.

Attempts to improve the situation

Since 2001 some modest measures have been introduced which have begun to redress the deficits for children:

- building new state houses (but the current waiting list stands at about 11,000 households),
- the Healthy Housing Project which has improved the size and quality of some state houses,
- improved participation in early childhood and tertiary education,
- the 'working for families' package,
- more money injected into primary health care,
- the development of Maori and Pacific health providers.

However, there has been little evidence of improvement in child health as a result of these new policies, because they are not nearly enough to address the shortfall resulting from our country's long-term neglect of children. The need to fully redress the policy neglect of children has never been more urgent.

At the *Knowledge Wave* conference (2003) at Auckland University Professor Dame Anne Salmond said *"If we want a prosperous knowledge economy, …the fate of the bottom 20 percent of our children should be at the top of our list of national priorities…".*

The 2005 Budget

The Budget is said to be about securing the future and the social health of New Zealand. However the word *children* appears only three times in the 18-page budget speech, which illustrates how they are undervalued in the future of New Zealand. How wrong and short-sighted this is!

In this Budget we find:

- Increased funding of early childhood education
- Funding for 421 more teachers
- Increased funding of special education
- Further funding of the immunisation register
- Increased disability support – but this has been woefully inadequate for a long time
- Increased uptake of the Primary Health Care strategy.

However, since there is no children's voice in this budget. I will try and speak for them.

Looking through the eyes of a child

If I look through the eyes of a young child living in a low income household, unable to afford all the necessities, what does this Budget deliver now to improve my health, and thus my ability to contribute to the future of New Zealand?

My dad has a low paid job – earns only $9.50 per hour. I am worried about an economic slump and my dad would become unemployed.

If he does lose his job, does the Budget provide a reliable safety net for me so that I won't have to live in worse poverty? **No**

My family is struggling to pay the rent, and we have had three moves in the last year.

In the Budget, have my chances of being able to live in state rental improved? **Yes, a little.**

Over the next four years more state houses will be built – 100 more each year. But we are needing 11,000 state houses now in New Zealand, so 100 doesn't seem very much.

In February I got sick with a chest infection, and my Mum and Dad took me to the nearest doctor on a Saturday. It cost them $45. When I got sick again in April they couldn't afford to take me to the doctor, so then I got really sick with pneumonia, and had to go to hospital.

Does this Budget provide free primary health care for me whether I get sick in the day or night or at the weekend? **No**
There are no plans for doctors fees to cost less or become free in the evening, night or weekends.

My parents couldn't pay for my antibiotic prescription when I was discharged from hospital. I suppose they could have if they bought less food for the family.

In the Budget, have my prescriptions become free? **No**

My first teeth are full of holes, and I would like to have healthy teeth when I am a grown up.

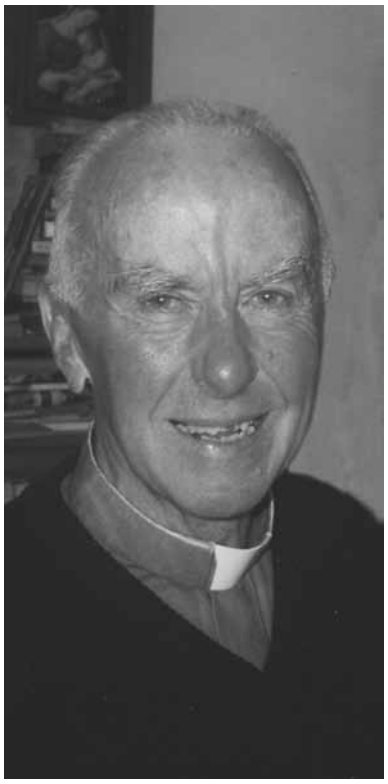
Does the Budget provide me with free dental care when I need it at my school? **No**

If I get an illness like meningitis and become permanently disabled, the stress of it all could result in my parents splitting up. My mum wouldn't be able to go to work, because she would have to look after me. How would we manage financially? She would be on a benefit I suppose.

Has the benefit been increased enough in the Budget so Mum could meet my basic needs? **No**

Michael Cullen says that too much jam now is likely to lead to crumbs later. But what about the children who don't even have bread to put jam on? It seems that Dr Cullen and the Government think it is "prudent and sensible" for these things to wait for yet another year. ■

Professor Innes Asher holds the Chair in Paediatrics, University of Auckland and is Paediatrician at Starship Children's Hospital



Fr Tom Keyes has spent nearly all his priestly life in Invercargill – where he is known as the friend of those society brands as derelicts

Every guest is Christ

Marysville

"I first came to Invercargill in 1956," says Fr Tom sitting back in his homely den at St Theresa's presbytery. "I was sent by my parish priest to be chaplain at the Borstal. The inmates there were all young offenders from 15 to 18, and they came from Wellington and the South Island.

"I was also running a parish youth group and sometimes three members of the group would come and visit the Borstal with me. They discovered that the Borstal lads had nowhere to go when they were released, so they invited some of them to join them in their flat.

"After a few months I asked the parish priest if I could have the use of a house which the church owned, previously occupied by Dutch immigrants. The three youth club members formed the nucleus of a new community. That is how Marysville started and I was there for 15 years.

"It was a night-and-day existence – you had to be young to put up with it. The house held 30 young people and sometimes some of the lads wouldn't come in at night so that meant waiting up. But I found great satisfaction in the work. Our motto was that of St Benedict – every guest was Christ. Everyone was welcome, young offenders as well as down-and-outs. A woman called Joan Smith came and cooked for them and she stayed over ten years. Fortunately jobs were plentiful in those days and I was always able to get them work.

"The neighbours were amazingly tolerant. The lads could be pretty noisy. If they got depressed they would tend to revert to criminal behaviour. I remember once taking them up to Lake Wakatipu station where we were given use of the shearing quarters. The boys used to go out on the lake in canoes. One day a canoe didn't return. I managed to get a plane to search, and we found them.

"When we got them in, we found they had stolen cigarettes and grog from a car. Since the boys were still technically under Borstal supervision, I said they would have to go back to there. However, they managed to find another car and took off up the West Coast and were eventually caught in Blenheim.

"One of those boys, Bill, was in and out of gaol for ten years, mostly for drug offences; then he went to varsity and obtained a BA. I helped him. Eventually he came back down to Invercargill and became my 'minder'. Sadly, he lapsed into taking drugs again and had another short spell in prison.

"He became very depressed. In prison he was locked in his cell for up to 21 hours a day for four months. Even on Christmas Day he had to eat his dinner in his cell. When they were out for recreation, all the other inmates talked about was sex and drugs, and what they would be up to when they got out. Their criminal behaviour is reinforced by prison, and often they become embittered.

"Bill's background was shocking. His adoptive father abandoned the home when he was very young. His mother died when he was 10. He spent a couple of years in a boarding school. Then boys' home, Borstal, prison. Then to Marysville. He has never really been able to rise above his origins. Now he can see only failure in his life, and the result is he becomes totally depressed. When he phones me I say: 'Come back to Invercargill'. I pray that he will keep in touch.

"When these young men get on drugs they lose all conscience and it is so difficult ever to wean them completely off the habit. It's worse than alcoholism. I feel that Bill probably has some sort of mental sickness as well, which makes him periodically depressed. When they are depressed, drugs provide some sort of escape from a dull, aimless sort of existence.

"Nearly all of these boys come from dysfunctional families. That is the root cause. There has been no real love. Many of them don't know how to love.

"Bill thought he could be a saviour to other addicts after he had got a degree. In fact, they were his downfall. I pray every day for him and all these fellows.

Three of them have taken their own lives. One of them was only 29 when he died. He had visited me three times that week; yet he gave me no sign what he was about to do. It was the saddest funeral I can remember."

Fr Tom's present apostolate

"These days I still have about 30 fellows in Invercargill whom I take an active interest in. About 20 come regularly to a house Mass on a Monday. Most of them would never go near a church normally. But they come, and it gives them a Christian community to belong to. They would feel unwelcome if they went to a normal Sunday Mass.

"Fifty two weeks of the year they come. There are no holidays. Holidays are a disaster for these people. Everything closes down. They have no money to enable them to go away. They are God's poor. Or as Mother Teresa said: 'they are Jesus in the distressing disguise of the least of his brethren.'

"Take Ted. He is schizophrenic. He tried to kill his minister and went to gaol. He is out now. He came down to live in Invercargill because he thought 'the Chinese were after him' – and he wanted to get as far away as possible! Slowly he has come back to the Catholic Church. He loves going to communion, but I'm not too sure about his theology.

"Sometimes they can be really difficult to deal with. Like Stan. When he comes to me he is all smiles. But with the group he growls at everyone and upsets them. He is an orphan. Any money he has goes straight into the poker machines. There is no point in telling him where his money has gone: it only makes him feel worse about himself. So I give him food. Giving him money simply feeds his addiction.

"The world doesn't care a damn about a person like Stan. His 'mother' didn't want him home for Easter. His poor self-image makes him angry. So I tell the others not to get upset when he flies off the handle. The great thing about the others is they are so tolerant. They put up with Stan. They never growl at him. I learn a good lesson in patience from them.

"Our Mass together is very reflective. They all have their say. And after Mass we always have a cup of tea and something to eat. Phil is an interesting case. He has had terrible mental trouble, spent seven years in the mental health unit and put himself deliberately under a bus so that he was run over. He was often suicidal. His own family wanted to be rid of him. He has been coming along to Mass for some time, but he always had to go out sometime during Mass to have a smoke. He used to be totally addicted to cigarettes. He always wanted to give up. He would have a smoke, then cough his head off. He only has one lung. Six weeks ago I baptised him. He was confirmed and received communion. Then we had a great party to celebrate.

"Since that day he hasn't touched a smoke! He's a different person. His answers at Mass are always full of insight. He is quite amazing. Since he was baptised he has become much more positive and his spirit has come alive.

"On a Friday night the Catholic Women's League prepares a supper for some of these men. There will be quite a few non-Catholics come along to that. And after the Sunday Mass at the Basilica I prepare a lunch for them and again quite a few come.

"So each week I spend three times with them as a group – although the composition of the groups will vary. Otherwise I see them when I visit them at home. Mostly they live down south in the poorer part of town. The Basilica is their closest church. Often, after the priests have had lunch together there on Mondays, I gather up the leftovers and take them down to the flats where most of them live. Then the Salvation Army provide a meal on Tuesday. By that time of the week they are getting hungry because they don't collect their benefits until Wednesday. Many of them are mental cases and the Salvation Army cares for them.

"Sometimes I am taken in by these guys. And they come back to see me again because they never forget a 'soft touch'! I pray that at least they will remember that someone listened to them and was kind to them – even if I was in fact conned by them."

The spirituality of care

"These men are the 'poorest of the poor'. It is hard sometimes to get them caring for each other. But within the group the grace of God is operating. I will pick the best reading of the week, something they can relate to. They will then talk about the theme. There are not many conversions. It's a slow process. I'm reminded that Mother Teresa never looked for converts. She only wanted to give people love. I think this is the heritage she has given to us. The Holy Spirit operates in all people of good will. They don't have to be Christians.

"Praying for these people is very important. Now I am old I have more time to spend in praying for them. I pray for each one and ask for the Holy Spirit to be given to him. It is like a mantra for me. I get other people to pray for them too. I write to them and tell them how the boys are getting on.

"One of my supporters, an 80-year-old lady in Wellington, tells me: 'I relax in my armchair and let Jesus envelop me – and I pray for them all.' She writes to me every week, and she often writes to them. I get the Carmelites and the Cistercians to pray for them too. I remember Bishop Kavanagh saying to me once: 'You know you will never know until you are dead what success you have had with these boys'. I would really appreciate it if any *Tui Motu* readers were to write in and say: 'I would like to pray for them and perhaps write to them as well'.

"I am always hoping they grow in love and support for each other. I don't expect them to be converted, although some are. One of them, a Maori boy who is schizophrenic, spends over an

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Family Start

Katie O'Connor interviews Nobby Clark, a man passionate about the well being of families. Nobby is General Manager of Murihiku Whanau services who own Invercargill Family Start and Invercargill Gambling Services

There are 16 *Family Start* sites in New Zealand including Invercargill. Invercargill has 21 staff of whom 30 percent are Maori. *Family Start* was trialed 8 years ago and first established in Invercargill in 2000. Its key philosophy is early intervention and it seeks to catch people at the top of the cliff rather than the bottom. Unlike most agencies *Family Start* does most of its work with families in their homes and employs a holistic approach in working with them.

Participants must live locally (in Invercargill) and must have some of the following indicators:

- unsupported parent
- young mother
- low income
- lack essential resources
- frequent change of address
- relationship problems
- mental health issues
- drugs, alcohol or gambling issues
- low education achievement

The parents will often have a family background of welfare dependency, levels of domestic and family violence, pre and post-natal depression and poor skills in managing money. Or they may have enough income, but their debt level is too high. The biggest factor which Nobby Clark notes among clients is low self-esteem – often hidden. The spectrum goes from a 14-year-old Mum who is pregnant, still at school and living at home to a 45-year-old women with mental health issues about to have baby number eight.

Family Start in Invercargill is funded to handle 233 families, and since the programme started five years ago they have had 650 families through the programme. Its staff includes nurses, social workers, early childhood educators, teachers and counsellors.

In the past a client may have had to deal with up to 20 different social agencies, which simply overwhelmed them. Now they have only the one agency, which is able to operate in their home as often as an hour daily when the need is urgent. At the low end a family may need just one or two visits per week.

The situation

Some such families may move home 8 to 10 times in a year: if that can be altered to staying at the same address for more than 12 months, that would be seen as a significant success. Then the children will be able to attend the same school and make friends. Constant moving means they cannot make lasting connections within a community.

The parents may be on drugs: if this can be reduced to, say, smoking marijuana once a fortnight and not in front of the children, that is deemed a success. The

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hour in prayer every day in his flat. Ted also spends time meditating every day. He's not too sure whether he's a Catholic or a Buddhist, but he says the rosary each day for me. All the groups pray together quite naturally.

What can society do?

"I agree basically with the attempt to de-institutionalise the mental health system. Simply locking them up was a denial of their basic human rights. Now they live here in what are called 'PACT' houses. They are quite well looked after. Their problem is boredom. They haven't got jobs.

"The sheltered workshops give them some employment. But the government is talking about insisting on the patients being paid – and that is likely to put the workshops out of business. They will be paid the minimum wage instead of just the benefit.

"The effective initiatives are usually community enterprises, not state run, so they survive on a tight budget. If the government insists on full wages, it could effectively deny these men the jobs that help give them a bit of dignity." ■

Anyone wishing to help Fr Tom's work by prayer or by writing letters: contact him at St Theresa's, 40 Perth St, Invercargill

goal is to minimise the harm the parents do to themselves and to the children. Most dysfunctional families have come from families which are themselves dysfunctional. It's critically important to break such cycles of behaviour.

Some families are at first reluctant to become involved, but once they know *Family Start* is a charitable Trust and that they have control over whether they stay involved, then most will want to stay. For Nobby, it is crucial that real friendships are established between staff and clients. It is also important to keep staff safe from collusion and personal damage. The job can be extremely stressful, but it can also be hugely rewarding when staff see families making real changes. Staff turnover in Invercargill has been low, which means that client families are able to establish long-term relationships with them.

About a quarter of the families dealt with make huge life changing decisions for the better. About a half are in a much better position than they were previously and won't revert to where they were. The rest just tread water.

Nobby's personal belief is that employment is the key to success. If you are unemployed it lowers your self-esteem, and you don't have a sense of belonging. So it becomes vital to get families involved in training courses aiming towards long-term employment. Getting clients off the benefit is vital.

If there are small children, then the aim should be for a solo mother/father to work part time to supplement the benefit. Nobby has found that a significant number of these have gone on to long-term stable employment. In Invercargill there are 82 families in this category, and the cost benefit of is something like 1.3 million dollars a year.

Having only one agency

Unless government agencies work collaboratively with dysfunctional families, these will continue to be dysfunctional. Dysfunctional families usually suffer from a combination of needs, which attract the attention of different social agencies. Clients become overwhelmed and waiting lists grow. *Family Start*, however, works to deal with the family at risk 'as a whole', recognising all the needs together.

If a family has a mountain of debt and is stealing to pay their debts, they are not going to tell the budget advisor that they're into fraud or selling drugs or that Mum is into prostitution: they don't know where this information is going to go.

And maybe Mum might have been physically or sexually abused; she uses gambling, drugs and alcohol as a form of escapism. Social services may do as much budgeting as they like, but unless you sort out the drugs and alcohol problem which hides the child abuse or sexual abuse, nothing will change. The pieces of the puzzle are all intertwined. Holistic services are the only way to go with dysfunctional families. And Nobby maintains we are talking about one family in 20, in today's society.

A poor child from such a family will be developmentally backward but may have the sexual behaviour you might expect from a teenager. Or they will be aggressive, and when they are angry at school they lash out. So they become unacceptable in the classroom: the child becomes a victim of a repeating cycle.

These children learn far more at home than they'll ever ever learn at school. It is questionable that we can ever change their behaviour solely in the school setting. They can modify it, but never change it. It is in the home that their behaviour has to be altered. ▷▷

Stella

When Stella first came to our programme in 2000 she was a young mother with two children. Her family is well known within social service agencies in town, in particular for drugs and alcohol and child abuse. Most of the females in the two generations that sit behind Stella have mental health problems or have had children in CYPS care.

She is one of three siblings. Her other two siblings are very dysfunctional. Stella was living with the partner at the time, and he was a very violent man. They did some significant amounts of drugs and alcohol so she could cope with life and cope with her abusive past. The family is full of children with absentee fathers. She has only just recently graduated from the programme.

During the five years with Family Start Stella has had another child, she's been to Hamner Springs twice for alcohol and drugs programmes, and is now clean. She did a training course and now lives in a nearby town where she has full time employment. While she struggles with relationships and still has some issues with men, Nobby says her children are a delight. Stella sees her family worker as a 'mother' and the children view her as a 'grandmother', and even though she has exited the programme they are still very close.

For Family Start Stella is a success story because she has full time employment, a violence-free home, her children are well-adjusted and bright, and she now has heaps of self-confidence.

Nobby is sure that she has a future in front of her. And today, when Stella stands up to speak at Rotary Groups there is not a dry eye in the audience.

The father figure

There is a huge amount of debate in our society about whether, when parents split up, fathers should have equal rights with mothers in the care and custody of children. Nobby Clark firmly believes that if the parents are both good parents but incompatible with each other, the children need a caring mother more than they need a caring father because a mother is the better nurturer.

This may be an unpopular view, but Nobby speaks from experience. He believes we have lost a sense of the uniqueness of both genders. The cornerstone of at-risk families is usually the mother – so it's the mother we have to work with. The male has his place in the family unit and women have theirs. Mix the two roles and you create all kinds of problem.

If Dad is a solo father who picks up a stream of female partners, that too will create problems. Children bond with the current partner, and then have to face loss. If all else fails, a child still has a Mum and a Dad. They may not live together, but usually they remain interested in their children's lives. What tends to happen is that absentee fathers/mothers get replaced with a series of others.

Celia Lashlie's research on boys indicates that there is a definite place for a male mentor role, whether it is the birth father or a stable stepfather (or grandfather or uncle). Boys, especially in their pre-teenage and teenage years need to have that male mentoring role. If women take over that role, then when boys get into Forms 2, 3 and 4 they become resistant to Mum taking over that one-parent role, and they will often rebel.

Girls are less affected by the father being absent because of the gender balance with the mother. When fathers walk away from their children – not only physically but emotionally and financially, then the system has to look after their children for them.

The ideal family and ideal society

According to Nobby Clark, there are two ideal families. The first is where you have two parents who love each other. The next ideal is one parent who loves the children and keeps them safe. If two parents together are warring with each other, it is better to cut your losses and have one parent provide the TLC – children absolutely need that tender loving care.

Families who have extended families do much better than those who don't. The home needs to be violence-free; it needs a focus on employment, tolerance for other feelings, and high levels of family recreation and leisure. There must be a sensible approach to the use of drugs and alcohol. Children need to learn that it is not okay to binge drink.

The family needs a sense of belonging to a community where they engage in sports days, fund raisers, school camps and can contribute to these. The best intervention we could ever have is families who support their own.

Nobby Clark's ideal society has these three elements:

- full employment.
- no hire purchase for anything but a house or car. If you don't have the money to pay for something you don't get it.
- a rethink on equal pay legislation.

In the past the father was the primary provider and the mother was the nurturer. We have lost that, Nobby thinks, because of materialism. The woman today not only has to be the primary nurturer but often have to be the secondary and tertiary income earner for the family. So some women are under huge stress trying to achieve the impossible.

Many mothers who have a 6-weeks-old baby are back working 40 hours a week. "I really struggle with that," says Nobby. "I'm not saying that women can't work, but those first three to five years are crucial, and research shows that time to be vital in the development of a child. If you lose it, you cannot have it back. Of course there is no easy answer."

And there isn't – but there must be a better way than the present one. *Family Start* is providing a healthy pointer. ■

Return of the bargee

Canals in Britain are back in fashion. More miles of waterway are being restored at the present time than were being built at the height of their use. Two hundred years ago canals were the motorways of that age and carried huge quantities of goods around the country. Did you know that a strong horse can pull a ton of goods along a road – and 60 tons along a canal?

I paid a visit to the famous Forth and Clyde canal. Completed in 1790 before the age of steam and over 50 km in length, it was the first sea-to-sea ship canal in the world. The boats pass though 40 locks as they climb over the spine of Scotland, and several reservoirs are needed to keep the canal topped up. In 1820 a clever engineer named Hugh Baird constructed a shorter 'contour' canal – without locks – to connect the middle of Edinburgh with the main artery. This one is called the Union canal. But when Baird reached the junction with the Forth and Clyde canal near Falkirk, he found himself at a level 35 metres above the other canal. So the boats had to go up and down a staircase of 11 locks, and it took them nearly a day to open and shut the 44 lock gates.

During the 20th century the whole system fell into disrepair. The 'unkindest cut' was when a new motorway to Edinburgh was driven straight through the old canal. But now the system has been restored as a Millennium project by British Waterways at a cost of £80 million. Locks were rebuilt, sections rerouted, and over 40 blockages cleared. And here is the most intriguing thing. Instead of the staircase of locks, the Scots engineers have created one of the new engineering wonders of the world, the Falkirk Wheel.

This astonishing and beautiful structure lifts or lowers several boats at a time through a height of 25 metres. The vertical climb takes all of five minutes plus a few minutes to open and close the gates. There is virtually no water loss. And the energy required for each half revolution of the wheel is a mere 1.5 kilowatts, enough to boil six kettles. The secret of this amazing efficiency is that the two gondolas carrying the up and down traffic are perfectly balanced. Each weighs 300 tonnes. It doesn't matter whether the gondolas are full of boats (or fish), or empty, they both weigh the same since each boat displaces exactly its own weight of water into the canal before the gates are shut. So the whole thing is like a gigantic pair of scales. Archimedes would whoop with delight to see his famous Principle so brilliantly vindicated.

At the top each barge sails out along a great concrete aqueduct until it reaches the upper ground level and enters the canal to Edinburgh. But there is still one more hurdle to cross – or, more precisely, to burrow underneath. 1700 years before Hugh Baird, the Emperor Antoninus Pius built a wall across the waist of Scotland to keep those marauding highlanders out of Britannia. It was the northernmost frontier of the Roman Empire. Even today its remains present a formidable barrier. The final task therefore was to tunnel under the Antonine Wall – the first canal tunnel excavated in Britain for over a hundred years.

If you are a tourist in Scotland don't miss this spectacular creation. And take a barge trip up and down the Wheel. At present this canal, like most of the others restored throughout Britain, is used mainly for recreation. People flock to them to escape the frenetic pace of motorways and modern high-tech living. But when the oil runs out, the canals will surely once more come into their own commercially. I also paid a visit to the Royal Highland Show in Edinburgh. Among the stars there were the mighty Clydesdale horses. Clearly the canny Scots are already prepared for the return of the canal era!

M.H.

Christian theology in an age of terror

Last month Professor Hodgson traced the genesis of the present Iraqi conflict, maintaining that neither terrorism nor its response have any sound basis in either Islamic nor Christian thinking: war itself has become a form of idolatry. In Part 2 he looks at the Christian response

Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also

In the Sermon on the Mount (*Mt.5:21-24, 33-35, 37-48*) Jesus places before us a series of difficult and demanding ideals. We may well ask what they have to do with the realities of terrorism? Are we supposed to invite terrorists to strike again? Jesus' ethic might work in a more perfect world, but ours is a very imperfect one in which self-defence and pre-emptive strikes are sometimes necessary.

True enough, this gospel is too much for us. But perhaps it provides some guidance. Jesus is condemning anger, false or profane witness, vengeance, hatred of enemy. Instead of them he offers reconciliation, truth-telling, non-violence, love of enemy. Isn't this ultimately the only way to break the cycle of hatred, violence, and terror? There is a middle way – in terms of truth, courage, justice, love, and hope – by which some of these objectives might be realised.

Truth

Jesus advocates simple truth-telling and declares "the truth will make you free" (*Jn 8:32*). His gospel brings truth into the world; by contrast, deception and the telling of lies are the essence of the demonic (*Jn 8:44*). Evil is rooted in deception, illusion, lies.

Truth has been a casualty in the war on terror. We know that we were led into war in Iraq on false pretences, on hyped intelligence regarding weapons of mass destruction and the threat of terrorism. Subsequently, almost everything about the war has been conducted in as secretive a fashion as possible.

Truth is also at risk in our political system as a whole, and as a consequence our democracy is at risk. The most egregious example of lying as we approached the Presidential election was the political 'attack advert'. Barrages of TV attack ads can be viewed as a form of domestic terrorism. In the last election both sides used them, but the Bush campaign and its surrogates perfected the form, had greater resources to deploy them, and did so more viciously. These ads play on fear and emotion with psychological sophistication, honed through decades of deceptive advertising of products. Apparently most people obtain their basic political information from these advertisements. It is difficult to see how democracy can survive if the most affluent and effective liars win elections.

Courage

Jesus enjoins his followers not be anxious about their lives, not to worry about what they will eat, drink, or wear, not to be afraid of what tomorrow brings (*Mt. 6:25-34*). Such anxiety, he says, is a sign of a lack of faith that God cares for us. Our fate is in God's hands and our task is to strive for the right without worrying about the consequences.

Courage is the opposite of anxiety. It is a useful thing to have in an age of terror. The primary purpose of terrorists, it has been said, is not to defeat or even to weaken the enemy militarily, but to gain publicity and to inspire fear, to obtain a psychological victory. Obviously the horrendous attacks on the World Trade Centre are frightening, traumatising events; and we all know that similar, even worse attacks are possible in the future because there is no foolproof defence. But on what does our security depend? The best way to hand the terrorists a posthumous victory would be to become so obsessed with security as to let our democratic freedoms slip away.

Living in a democracy requires courage: the courage of openness and freedom, the courage to let a sometimes messy and contentious way of deciding things prevail, the courage not to strike back in kind, the courage to live with diversity and disagreement, the courage to trust in the (often foolish) wisdom of the people. Courage requires faith in an ultimate whence and whither of life, an ultimate mystery of things that is good and true. This mystery for Christian faith is God, whose nature is revealed in Christ and the prophets and saints, and who is known to be compassionate and trustworthy. With faith in God we know that truth is greater than lies, that good is more powerful than evil.

Justice

Justice and love form a pair of virtues, with justice pointing more to a goal achievable in human relations and love to the ultimate goal that transcends human possibilities.

Justice is a central theme of the Hebrew Bible, where it is associated with the idea of judgment. Jesus fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah about a servant of God who will "proclaim justice to the gentiles" (*Mt 12:18*). How does Jesus proclaim justice to the gentiles? The parable of the Wedding Banquet (*Lk 14:12-24*) reminds us that the Messiah is one who is anointed to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed (*Lk 4:18:19*). These works are to do with adjusting inequities between the haves and the have-nots.

Perhaps in our case the 'gentiles' to whom justice is due include the Arabic/Islamic world. They are among the outsiders, the foreigners, the ones not invited to the Western feast. The only long-term solution to the problem of terrorism is to enhance justice throughout the world, including not only the Middle East but also sub-Saharan Africa, where hunger and disease and political chaos are forming the next fertile breeding ground for terrorism.

Terrorist acts are ultimately an outcry against injustice intensified by religious fanaticism and hatred. We cannot expect to live in a terror-free world as long as the world's resources are so inequitably distributed. Islam itself was born in the social vision of the prophet Muhammad, who denounced false contracts, usury, and the exploitation of the poor, orphans, and widows. One of the pillars of Islam is almsgiving, which means that Muslims are bound to attend to the social welfare of their community by redressing economic inequities. Christians, Muslims, and Jews could make common cause in the struggle for justice, which is deeply rooted in their traditions.

For America this would mean reallocating the enormous resources we have poured into the war on terror into initiatives to draw the Arabic world out of its poverty, tyranny, anger, and resentment. Sacrifices would be required in our own consumption and standard of living that Americans are not likely to be willing to pay.

Upon seeing the horrific images of torture, humiliation, and sexual abuse of Iraqi detainees, Senator Diane Feinstein remarked, "If somebody wanted to plan a clash of civilisations, this is how they'd do it. The pictures play into every stereotype of America that Arabs have." If we allow ourselves to be drawn into a contest to see who can produce the most grotesque acts of inhumanity, justice will never come. Against all odds, we must hope that the clash of civilisations may be overcome in a vision of God's community of justice such as that shared by Jesus and Muhammad.

Love

In order to work, justice requires love, the ultimate truth-force or soul-force, as Gandhi called it. If God is love, we have to believe that love is a greater power than hatred, reconciliation a deeper truth than vengeance, non-violence a more effective strategy than violence. The world hungers for this soul-force. God's love disrupts normal human codes; it demands love of neighbour as well as self – and, more shockingly, the love of enemies as well as neighbours.

The neighbour described in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (*Lk 10:29-37*) is a stranger in need. The victim of the robbery was abandoned by his fellow-Jews. A foreigner, a Samaritan – a Palestinian! – took pity on him and cared for him. In this way two persons who were traditionally at enmity became neighbours to each other. Is it conceivable that we might someday regard Muslims as our neighbours, and that they should regard us likewise? Or that Jews and Palestinians would do the same? (see also *Mt. 5:43-48*).

Of course we must defend ourselves against terrorist attacks, strike terrorist cells before they strike us, track their networks and interrogate their operatives. But if this is all that we do, we shall be doing it forever. To break the cycle of destruction we must have the courage to love, the wisdom to seek justice, the clarity to tell the truth.

Hope

One more virtue is needed: *hope.* Paul includes hope along with faith and love as the greatest of the virtues (*1 Cor.13:13*), and he tells us that we hope for what we do not yet see and must await in patience (*Rom. 8:25*). The same prophecy from Isaiah that identifies Jesus as the servant of God who will proclaim justice to the gentiles, also says that "in his name the gentiles will hope"(*Mt. 12:21*). God's promise of a new day of justice, given originally to the people of Israel, is now extended to Christians and Muslims, indeed to all the peoples of earth.

Hope empowers us to act: it gives us a vision of new possibilities, even if we cannot directly see what they are, and the faith that by God's grace they might become realities. In the present situation it is very difficult to see what will bring an end to terrorism and a reconciliation of Arabs and Americans. We are at a dark moment in history. Patience is needed for a long process. Let us not abandon hope for the dawn of a new day. ■

Peter Hodgson is an emeritus Professor of Theology in the Divinity School of Vanderbilt University.

Korimako – home

Judith Robinson is a Dominican Sister. Like many religious women she spent years as a teacher, but today she finds herself using her gifts in a more direct way, preaching the message of justice especially on behalf of the poor of the earth. Almost six years ago, with the blessing of her Congregation, she set up near Invercargill the *Korimako Centre*, a two-hectare farmlet having a small flock of sheep, 25 hens, 2 cats and 5 goldfish. 'Korimako' is the Maori name for the bellbird – a native bird with a most beautiful song.

Judith's interest in the physical environment and human interconnectedness with plants and animals stems from her family background. She was one of 12 children, and suffered the anguish of watching a number of her brothers and sisters die. Her mother was a woman of deep faith and had to cope with the deaths of five of her children. "We watched their suffering," says Judith, "and suffered while watching their suffering. I was bought up recognising that birth and death was a cycle that we just had to accept.

"In the end it seemed right that my mother was able to spend the last 17 months of her life with me at *Korimako*, and many people were touched by her gentleness, wisdom and her deep faith. I'm not afraid of death and the fact that I could be with my mother and care for her when she was dying was the natural thing to do. On the farmlet I've had to bury sheep, hens, cats and kittens – life just goes on.

Eggs from the chooks feed several families

"My parents were farmers and loved nature. I think that's where I first felt a deep connection to the earth. While the boys in my family did the outside jobs, my task was to care for one area of the flower garden. I watched my father take care of our vegetable garden. If we were hungry my mother would say: 'go down the back and eat something from the vegetable garden.'"

During a sabbatical year in 1990 Judith visited *Tabgha*, an organic farm near Sydney where five religious sisters from different congregations run a 65-acre farmlet. At the time she was Principal at St Joseph's, Invercargill. The experience at *Tabgha* prompted her to launch an environmental garden and teach a course in environmental studies to the children. She became interested in Te Tomairangi and Maori spirituality, and started to explore her own Celtic background.

"It was like coming home – back to the earth and a way of life that made sense to me. So I went to our leadership team with my dream. They supported me, and *Korimako* was born. I arrived there with Sr Dominic. Our aim was to live a sustainable lifestyle.

"We wanted to live it before we could preach it, learning ways to control weeds, and which native trees and plants are suitable for the local environment. We hoped to encourage the native birds to return by planting more native trees. We made our own natural compost to create the veggie garden. It was hard work, but we never used sprays of any kind."

"We also made it our aim to respond to the needs of the community in whatever ways we are asked. We discovered there was a need for a place for women to come for time out and to have their spirituality fed, especially when some of them were uncomfortable in their church but not wanting to leave. Many who have come to Korimako have watched the dream unfold – and that includes the development of a ***Peace Garden***, a place where people can go to sit and reflect. Judith says she doesn't advertise *Korimako*. The spirit seems to draw people and groups there. The majority who come are from other religious faiths and are working voluntarily or have a ministry in their churches.

"Many are interested in the idea of justice for the planet and sustainable development. Recently the *Desert*

of the bellbird

Katie O'Connor

Air ecumenical group which meets monthly came to celebrate the Autumn Equinox. I think it's important to be able to ritualise and celebrate significant times and events, and women are good at finding meaningful ways of expressing their spirituality which feeds the hunger in them.

"It's the cyclic nature of our lives – the feminine wisdom coming to the fore. I believe it is because women have birthed that they feel more connected to the earth, and many feel drawn to the whole idea of creation spirituality and holistic well-being. While some men identify with the same call of God in creation it seems to be something that women particularly seem called back to."

Judith has great hope for the future. There is a groundswell of people who seek to live a more balanced life: trying to change, beginning with oneself, or one's home, neighbourhood and city. Society has become so frenetic, noisy and stressful. When technology dominates, it can take away the freedom to be still, to reflect, celebrate.

"I've been very inspired," Judith says, "by people like Brian Swimme, a scientist, and Thomas Berry, a religious cultural historian: both leading spokespersons for the earth and a new cosmology looking at the past and future. The Dalai Lama says 'spirituality is the immune system of the world'. I have pondered on this quote. I believe that some of today's youth who are searching for their dream using drugs and suchlike, are really seeking a spirituality to feed them. Many inhabitants of the earth are sick because they've become disconnected from the earth, from their story.

"For that reason I feel drawn to the ***Earth Charter***, a document outside the churches but which can become part of faith communities. It talks about a kind of spirituality that awakens a new reverence for life, and encompasses caring for the earth and ***all*** its inhabitants from the tiniest insect, four-legged and two-legged creatures – feathered, furred and finned – all living things."

The *Earth Charter* is the product of a decade-long, world-wide, cross-cultural conversation. It was launched in the year 2000 naming 16 principles which include building a sustainable world based on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace. After months of study, Judith made a decision to take the *Earth Charter* to her own local community in Invercargill, talking to various groups and running workshops.

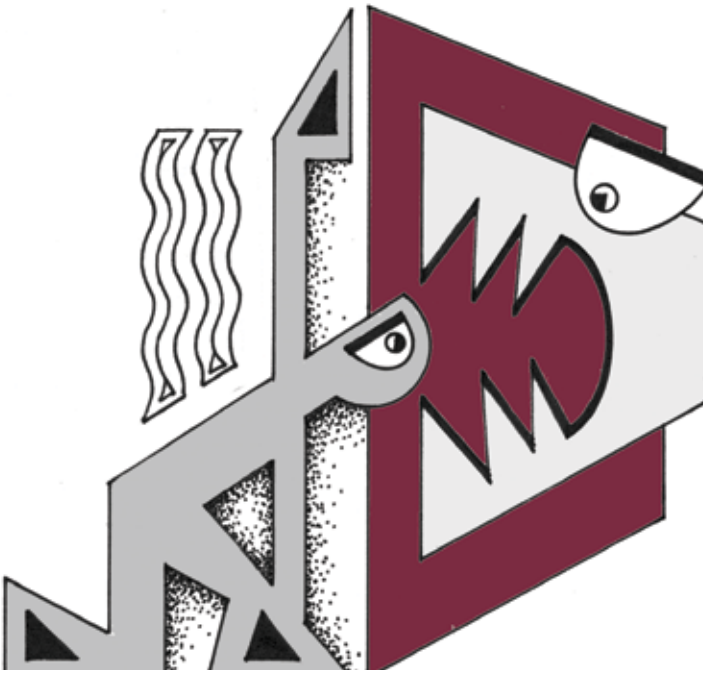
"I've had lots of support from my own Sisters. Some have visited and pruned roses and worked in the garden; others have just taken the opportunity to pray in the Celtic circle honouring the four directions. When the weather is inclement I have study time, and when it is good I'm able to get outside and spend time in and with the garden. I'm getting older and I'm learning what I can and can't do. That is teaching me a lot about *Sabbath* – when things should be fallow and when they should be active.

"When you enter the Dominicans, the Order has its identity, but it is the individual identity that contributes to the collective. The 'OP' after my name is something to personalise, to live. I think my life has become fulfilling because I've been able to follow my dream, and if you are following the right path the way seems to open up for you. It feels like the doors are opening just as they are meant to."

Korimako, the home of the bell bird, is a place where people can discover their own song and gifts, and Sr Judith Robinson works to support them to live their lives more fully and follow their passion and their dreams. ■

Fear parading as virtue

Joy Cowley looks at the place of childhood fears and notes how we make security into a false god



It's interesting that false gods begin existence as gifts, blessings of one kind or another to help us on life's journey. So what turns a gift into a false god? When does the blessing become inauthentic? I think the answer lies in the degree of possession. I know that I am given everything I need for personal growth but, like manna in the desert, those gifts can turn bad if they are hoarded and jealously guarded.

Take security for example. We are born with a primal instinct for survival. It is a part of our gene code. As new infants, we blink at strong light, flinch at loud noise, cry when we experience hunger and discomfort. In early childhood it is our fear that helps keep us safe. We reject food that tastes unfamiliar. In moments of uncertainty, we run to our parents. Why is it that all over the world, children are afraid of the dark? Could this be a deeply atavistic reaction? After all, for millions of years, night has been a dangerous time for small, helpless, wandering humans. Fear might be an uncomfortable emotion but it is the gift connected to our survival, and an important gift, at that.

Somewhere early along the road, we start pushing back the boundaries of fear. Children seek adventure, new skills, daring games that occasionally result in fractured limbs but almost never broken spirits. Parents can become alarmed at a child's appetite for horror films or violent comics. Just as fear is instinctive, so too, does the child feel the need to actively meet fear face to face and stare it down.

Years ago, I had a letter from a mother who was politely objecting to a book I had written for young readers. The story was about a farmer who discovered a giant weta in his bed. The woman said her four-year-old was having his six-year-old brother read the story to him every night, and every night, the four-year-old woke up screaming that there was a giant weta in his bed. This woman was very concerned and wanted the book withdrawn from publication. We had a long and friendly discussion. I told her that the book was written for school-age children who understood the difference between fact and fantasy. Also, I suggested that what was happening to the four-year-old was very interesting. Although he had nightmares, he still insisted that his brother read him the book each night at bedtime. This four-year-old was actively dealing with his fears.

It would be convenient if we naturally outgrew fear, but that doesn't happen. In adult life, the survival instinct, operating as the ego, still uses fear to protect itself; but in the adult world, fear has learned to wear a socially acceptable disguise. It often parades as virtue.

We would all know that a certain amount of caution is both healthy and necessary. Again, it is a matter of degree. We also recognize that evil in the world is a distortion of the animal instinct for survival, that "me first"

instinct out of control, and nearly always it dresses itself up as goodness, justice, even holiness. Society knows how to put a layer of gold leaf on fear and make it an object of worship. The gift becomes a false god.

We are aware of what Jesus said about the worship of security, whether that be related to power, material possessions, status, law or even our own ideas. Jesus advocates an insecurity that can sound threatening to us. *He who loves his life will lose it. Take up your cross and follow me. Except a grain of wheat die it remain a single grain. Do not gather treasure on earth. Consider the lilies of the field.* It all sounds so miserable! But some time in midlife, when we can reflect on the road behind us, we begin to see the wisdom of insecurity. We realise that some of the protective fences we've built around ourselves have become prison walls that can prevent growth and shut out a greater love.

As children we needed to deal with our fears in order to inhabit a wider place in society. Now, in maturity, the process begins again, this time bringing us to a larger place in our spiritual life. Far from being threatening, taking down the fences of fear is the most liberating thing we can do for ourselves. It frees us to the greater love that Jesus talked and lived.

some of the protective fences we have built around ourselves have become prison walls

We know how our hearts respond to the words in the St John letter: *There is no fear in love but perfect love casts out all fear.* The ideal resonates as truth, but our fears have grown subtle. They too, claim truth. All that gold leaf! How do we recognize the false god beneath it?

I believe that this inner journey must be done with compassion, love and prayerful gentleness. Judgmental attitudes come from fear and when we lay criticism on ourselves, we compound our problem. Simple awareness is usually enough. What is it within us that feels tight and restrictive? What thoughts harden our lovely soft hearts? What ideas do we hold in a tight fist? What takes us forward on our sacred journey and what holds us back? Where is the clutter in our lives and how do we name it? How do we fill that inner emptiness that was created for God?

When we become aware of our false gods, they usually melt away by themselves. But that is not to say we won't make new ones. We will. Of course, we will. That's what it means to be human. But with ongoing awareness, we can look kindly on our infantile needs, laugh at our performing ego and let the false god of security diminish with neglect.

The Australian cartoonist, poet and mystic Michael Leunig writes:

There are only two feelings.
Love and fear.
There are only two languages.
Love and fear.
There are only two activities.
Love and fear.
There are only two motives,
two procedures,
two frameworks,
two results.
Love and fear. Love and fear.

Is it really so simple? I think it is. It's the tension between the two that can make life complex.

There is an old Hasidic story about fear which I find powerful. It goes something like this:

A holy man went on a journey and failed to lock the door of his house. While he was away, a crowd of demons entered and took over his dwelling. When the man returned and opened his door, the demons rushed at him, ready to devour him. The man slammed the door shut and prayed. Then he took a deep breath and opened the door again. At once, the demons pounced but as they reached for the man, he bowed low and acknowledged their presence. An amazing thing happened. Half the demons disappeared but the biggest and strongest were left, and they leapt at the man. He reached out to them and offered them hospitality. Could he give them drink? Cook them a meal? At this, the rest of the demons disappeared – all but one who was the chief. This demon was huge and very fierce. It was not going to be deterred. It opened its jaws, showing the sharpest of teeth, and as it came close, the man put his head right inside the demon's mouth. The chief demon also disappeared and the man had his house back.

The meaning I glean from this parable is useful:
1. I acknowledge my fears.
2. I embrace my fears as part of myself.
3. I locate the chief fear in my life, and put my head in its mouth.

It is not necessary to describe the pantheon of false gods that can be formed by our desire for security. My biggest false god is created by my ideas and my values. What should be gift held lightly in an open mind, will very quickly become an idol and I find myself sitting on the road, worshipping my own opinions. Always it takes conscious effort and much good humour to be aware of what is happening and move on.

as adults we begin to see the wisdom of insecurity

We are sometimes reminded that we are not human beings on a spiritual journey but spiritual beings on a human journey. I like to think of myself as a human becoming, rather than a human being. We are all little souls that must learn to cope with the love and fear paradoxes of incarnation, and that is the job of a lifetime. And if the way at times seems difficult, then we have the great comfort of knowing that we do not walk alone. *Emmanuel. God-is-with-us.* ■

Noah

Glynn Cardy

The narrative of Noah is a problem for those who have God and life all worked out.

On the surface it seems that Noah and his clan, in faithful obedience to God, took up boat building. This was followed by the greatest muster in the history of the animal kingdom. I'm amazed at their zoological skills in determining the gender of each species – can you tell the difference between a male and female Australian blue-tongued skink, or the kiwi for that matter?

Then, so the story goes, the rains came down and the floods came up, and Noah and crew floated on top as people and animals screamed and drowned. Finally a rainbow came out, the waters abated, and Noah and his remnant emerged to repopulate the earth.

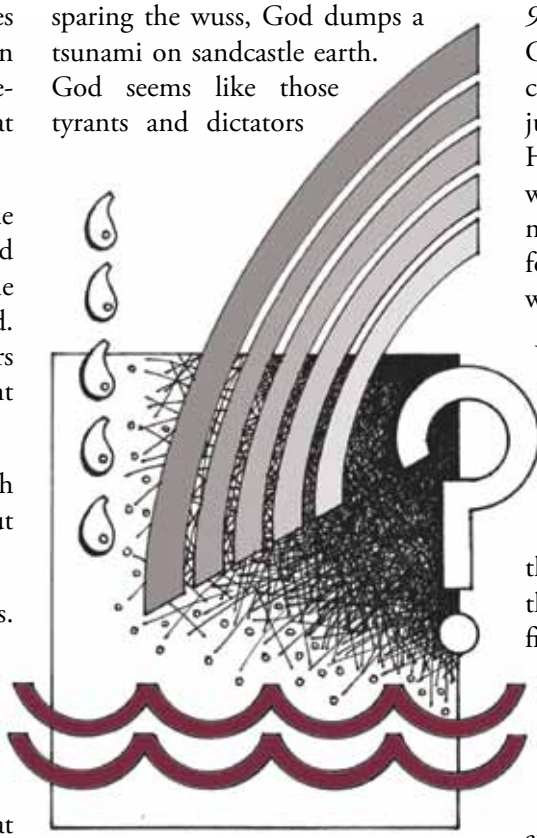
Well, that's the surface story – although in Sunday School you don't hear about the screaming and drowning.

You also don't hear that Noah was a wuss. Compare him with Abraham. In the Noah account humanity is about to go down the gurgler. In *Genesis* the city of Sodom was likewise soon to be no more. Abraham, though, takes pity of the inhabitants and has a go at God:

"Hey God, what do you mean *everyone* is going to die! What if there are 10 righteous people, or 10 children, or even one innocent puppy… won't you spare them? Hey God, remember you're not just meant to be Mr Muscle. You are also meant to be Mr Mercy."

But Noah is no Abraham. He doesn't give a fiddle for friends and country-men, let alone their animals. He's Bob the builder. Get out the hammer and nails. Whack up a whopping big ark, do the zoo thing, and forget the imminent holocaust.

The real problem however with the Noah story is God. *Genesis 1*: God makes the sandcastle and thinks it's very good. *Genesis 6*: God is tired of the sandcastle and the disobedient (read *independent*) cretins that inhabit it. So, sparing the wuss, God dumps a tsunami on sandcastle earth. God seems like those tyrants and dictators who have assumed godlike powers and have attempted to purge the world of what they regard as evil: the Saddam Hussein and George Bush approach to problems – liquidate them!



Of course by the end of the story God is having second thoughts: "Oops. What have I done? Dead, bloated bodies everywhere. This is not a good look. I don't think I'll try this again!" God is somewhat remorseful.

Maybe God took a long look at the survivor of the trauma, Noah. Noah came out a mess. The last we hear of Noah, he's consoling himself with the bottle and projecting his feelings of guilt and self-disgust on to his grandson.

Again in Sunday School we never hear the end of the Noah saga. In *Genesis 9:20-29* Noah curses his grandson, Canaan, a totally innocent party. This curse has been used for centuries to justify racism (the inference being that Ham was a black African). It was Noah who was in the drunken stupor, and not his children who tried to cover up for him, and certainly not Canaan who wasn't even there.

When we used to paint rainbows and arks in Sunday School we were not encouraged to think about a God who drowns people, or to ask what happened to Noah afterwards. We were not encouraged to think about the dead bodies, and the smell, when the waters abated. Which, of course, is fine. There is a time to be an innocent child in Sunday School. What is not fine is continuing to read the story as an adult ignoring its difficulties.

The world Noah knew was swept away, and for 40 days and 40 nights, he floated on the unknown. Noah and his whanau were riding out there, bobbing along, while everything familiar was being swept away. The fixed points in their lives were no longer there. Their farms were gone; their friends were gone, so were their schools, their clubs, their evenings out, … it was all gone. Like one of those old nuclear fallout movies.

Even God was gone. There is no mention of God talking to Noah

during the 40 days and 40 nights. There were no encouraging fireside chats at night, or the sharing of plans now that civilization had been obliterated. It wasn't as if Noah could even comfort himself by saying "I'll just trust in the faithfulness and generosity of God". For the God of the flood was busy killing kids as well as everything else. The future was uncertain. Noah and crew were alone out there.

There are times when we experience dislocation. What we had trusted in, relied upon, and was a reference point in our lives is suddenly no longer there. This is quite common when a parent, spouse, or adult child dies. While we are sad and grieve their death, we also feel shaky. It's as if the ground under our feet is no longer stable or fixed. God too can feel shaky. The loving God-in-heaven has just stood by while your 45-year-old wife died of cancer. You never quite think about God the same way again. Usually in time this feeling of shakiness passes.

fixed beliefs about God might drown but the search for a God to whom we can relate continues

This experience of dislocation can also be a cultural phenomenon: in times of rapid social change, in times of war, when a fiscal depression overtakes a country, or a national disaster. The personal feeling of shakiness can be a collective experience. We often hear this in the lyrics of contemporary songwriters. It's as if everything is floating, and the anchors can't connect with any ground.

Our views of God also suffer during these times. Beliefs can sink beneath the sea of personal and collective experience. Yet while fixed beliefs about God might drown, the search for faith, for a God to whom we can relate, continues. As it did for Noah's offspring. ■

Leaf Wisdom

No sound was heard
save that of a gentle breeze
Then the sight of a leaf
fluttering down from a tree;
holding within it for all
the world to see
the hope
of what lay in store.
Still and open,
it waited to be picked up,
explored, taken as an offering of promise.

No cheap disguise
No more despair.

O Holy ground emerging
O sacred mystery unfolding
Deep longings from within find meaning
in your loveliness, your simple beauty,
your quietness and strength
your Truth.

Judith Casey

Matthew 9:16-17

my warm coat of certainty
is full of holes
letting in strange winds

is it time to
snip the sturdy buttons
and sew them
to a richer cloth
of similar weave,
Or
patch the holes,
and hope to keep
the searching winds
at bay?

Norah Tobin, rndm

I believe,
If you feed and look after a spark,
It turns into a flame,
And if you give that flame oxygen,
It will one day turn into a fire,
And that fire will share its warmth
With the world.

Andrew Cardy, 11 years old, written while sitting in church one Sunday

The wisdom that only comes with wrinkles

Paul Andrews

When you are old like me, you find yourself talking and listening to old people more than you used to. I have younger colleagues who find it an effort to get interested in anybody over the age of fifty. Not me. I find a level of truth in the experience of those who have lived for a long time, especially if they have been struggling with God. They may look as though they had a contented and unshakable faith. They may be faithful in their habits of devotion, their regular Mass, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, perhaps the Rosary. Beneath the piety many deep questions are bubbling.

I think of Margaret, an alert old (80) lady I met at a retreat. Listen hard, and you find she is asking more existential questions than many of her bright grandchildren who may be studying philosophy or other learned sciences at university. As she attends the funerals of her friends, she wonders about life after death; does this manifestly decaying body of hers really contain the seeds of immortality? As she watches her grandchildren grow up unbaptised and ignorant of God or the church, she wonders if she has to write them off as lost souls.

Margaret has more time to read the paper, but it poses more puzzles. She is not shaken by what the media call scandals in the church, even where bishops and religious superiors have been failing to take action about the criminal behaviour of their subjects. Indeed she imagines that such criminal behaviour should be a matter for the Gardai (the Irish police) and the individual accused, rather than for higher ecclesiastics. Her faith is too deep to be shaken by the behaviour of some clerics; that has been an occupational hazard for Christians ever since Jesus faced down the Jewish High Priest.

However other issues bother Margaret at a deeper level. The old mystery – *Why do the wicked prosper?* – becomes more intrusive when she sees a teenager hammering another boy's head in, and showing no remorse; or when men who profess loyalty to Allah can kidnap innocent hostages and cut their throats. She wonders about the billions of humans who were born before or have lived since Christ, but never heard of him. Many of them tried to be good according to their lights. Many of them followed other pieties. How is it possible for God to have time for each one of the billions who have toiled on this planet since the beginning of time?

Because we call God our father, we easily ascribe to him the limitations of a human father or mother. As children we always wanted to know that we had a place in our parent's mind and heart. When my father came back from a journey, I looked to see had he anything in his bag for me. I watched the gifts he brought for brothers and sister. Sibling rivalry centres on the question of how much father or mother has time for me – and how I compare in their minds with my siblings. But with my heavenly father I have uncountable billions of siblings, stretching backwards and forwards in time. How can he have a place and thought for all of us?

One thing we know: God is beyond our imagination. Every comparison, even with father or mother, limps. St Augustine said: *God is not what you imagine or think you understand. If you understand him, you have failed.* The God we believe in is outside space and time, and surpasses all that we can conceive.

This also we know: that our faith is a mixture of light and darkness. We look to the holy people of history to give us some light on the quest for God. St John of the Cross, who reformed the Carmelites and was imprisoned for his pains, *distrusted whatever removed the soul from the obscure faith where the understanding must be left behind in order to go to God by love.* One of his greatest Carmelite followers, Thérèse of Lisieux, lived her religious life in darkness. Her biographer described her state in these words: *The whole area of religion seemed remote and unreal to her, not arousing the least response, either friendly or antagonistic, in her mind and heart. It was as though religion had become simply something remembered, grey, cold and unimportant.*

If that was the emotional condition of saints, what kept them going? It was the unemotional love that shows itself in fidelity. Both John and Thérèse had known enormous joy in the experience of God. But they had only hit him in spots. So do we.

A lesson in inculturation

Susan Smith continues her reflections on Matthew's Gospel

In *Matt 18:15-17*, Jesus teaches his disciples about the appropriate steps the community should take when handling a recalcitrant member. This three-stage process deserves our attention. First, the one who has sinned is rebuked in private, second, if this has no effect, the offender is rebuked in the presence of two or three witnesses, and, third, if the offender refuses to acknowledge his guilt, the community is informed, and initiates action against the offender.

But this text is interesting for reasons other than its teachings on church discipline. It recommends a process that is similar to that practised by another Jewish group, the Essenes. The Essenes emerged about150 years before the birth of Jesus as a reforming group, who, concerned about lax observance of temple ritual and purity laws, retired to the desert to live righteously. Matthew's community was initially Jewish-Christian and would have known the Essenes, so the gospel writer's use of an Essene process emerges as an early example of inculturation.

The young church took for granted that the culture of the first Christians should serve as the starting point and expression of Christian faith. Throughout the early Middle Ages missionaries tended to take local culture seriously. This changed when the missionary and imperial tasks became linked. Lack of cultural sensitivity characteristic of many missionaries, led the *Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith* to make the following wonderful statement in 1659: "What could be more absurd than to introduce France, Spain, Italy, or any other European country into China? It is not these but rather the faith you should bring."

However, a willingness to engage seriously with other cultures was soon to be dismissed as disapproval of the 17th century Jesuit missions in India, China and Japan demonstrates. European, and later North American, Australian and New Zealand missionaries, proclaimed the good news through their own cultural lens.

Aware of these dangers, Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) identified the relationship of mission to colonialism as "a plague most deadly to … apostleship, which would kill in the preacher of the gospel every activity for the love of souls, and would undermine his authority with the public" (*Maximum Illud*, 1919). This was a brave statement that ran counter to much of the missionary thinking of the time.

Today, we have another Pope Benedict, and today the missionary outreach of the Church has never been more critical as it faces unprecedented challenges that include American political, military and cultural domination, mass movements of peoples, millions of political and economic refugees, diminishing resources and burgeoning populations, poverty, sexism and racism, to cite but some. Let us pray that Benedict XVI can be as courageous in responding to new missionary needs as was Matthew's community, the *Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith* in 1659, and Pope Benedict XV in 1914. ■

Dr Susan Smith is a Mission sister who teaches Biblical Studies at the School of Theology, University of Auckland

There is a sort of enthusiasm that can carry us away when we are young. Under the influence of warm friendship or stirring music, we can be so filled with fervour that we imagine this emotion will last for ever. These are the high moments, the spots when we find ourselves on holy ground, and God shows himself. All we do our whole lives long is go from one little piece of holy ground to the next. You remember St Peter when he witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus on top of Mount Tabor: *Lord, let us build here three tabernacles, for you, for Moses and for Elijah.* Peter wanted the party to go on for ever. Jesus brought him down to earth, led him down the mountain, told him to stop talking about the vision and instead be ready for Calvary.

My old friend Margaret finds the memory of Holy Ground often escapes her. The best grace I could wish for her is the gift of faithfulness, of being able to go forward in relative darkness, hoping for the occasional blink of light. Listen to the aging Cardinal Newman: *What are we doing all through life, whether by choice or by necessity, but putting away the world's poetry and putting on its prose?* ■

Paul Andrews is an Irish Jesuit priest who recently spent four months in New Zealand, partly on holiday


Paul the Apostle by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)

Paul and the Victory of the Cross – *Part 2*

Will O'Brien

Paul is sometimes written off as being a social reactionary. In fact he critiques the society of his time, especially the imperial system of Rome. Part One of this article Paul the Passionate Apostle *appeared in the June issue of* Tui Motu

The problem of Romans 13

In *Romans 13* we read: "Submit to the governing authorities... they have been ordained from God..." and all that. It's the text that haunts all social dissidents. It puts the kibosh on many efforts for social change, solidifying the status quo with a theologically sanctioned stranglehold of obedience. Meanwhile, there's the entire *Book of Acts*, which portrays Paul as a model citizen, obsequiously fawning before the imperial lackeys and overlords. A far cry from – if not a downright betrayal of – the authority-challenging Messiah who denounced worldly power.

Whole libraries have been filled with exegeses, commentaries and debates about *Romans 13*. But, without wanting to ignore the complexities and conundrums of this challenging text, I worry that we can get unnecessarily entangled in a *Romans 13* debate while missing the broader sweep of Paul's politics, which, I am convinced, are hardly conservative.

We tend to assume that Paul spiritualised and depoliticised the Cross of Christ. In our reading of Paul's preaching, the stark, brutal reality of Jesus' state-sanctioned execution has been mythologised into a cosmological version of Jewish sacrificial theology (*Rom. 3:21–26*).

It's true that Paul does not 'tell the story' of Jesus' Passion, as do the evangelists. His language appears sterile and symbolic.

But, in reality, Paul was keenly aware of what the Cross meant. He was a Roman citizen, well versed in the laws, customs and politics of his time. Every time he mentions the Cross he – as well as his hearers and readers – understood the reference: the gruesome torture, the unbridled violence of state terrorism, the perversion of justice that consumed Jesus (and thousands of others as well).

Here, in fact, is Paul's shocking genius. Far from engaging in mystification he boldly throws the Cross back at the executioners, taking Rome's symbol of ultimate power and using it as a sign of God's ultimate power. When Paul speaks of Christ's victory, the unwritten but very clear assumption is that the losers are those who pretentiously claim power – including the Roman Empire (*1 Cor.15: 24–25, Eph 1:21–22*).

He is constantly harping on the theme: Caesar is not in charge. The rulers of this world are defeated, they have no power over us. We serve the justice of God, not the false justice of society. Just as Christ overcame the worst that they could do to him, so will we. When Paul speaks of us participating in Christ's death and resurrection (*Rom. 6:8*), he is, in large part, speaking of how we too are freed from allegiance to – or domination by – the imperial powers of this world.

Often communicating in the spirit of Jewish apocalypticism, Paul engaged in a full frontal linguistic assault on Roman ideology: The "rulers of this age" are doomed (*1 Cor.2:6, 5:24*). The "peace and security" promised by the *Pax Romana* is artificial (*1 Thess.5:3*). Even the letter to the *Romans*, with its infamous 13th chapter, stresses that we not conform to the world (12:2) and that love be our most central law (vv. 8–10). His very vocabulary – Lord, Gospel, Saviour – is a conscious commandeering of the imperial lexicon, by which he urges his communities to shift their allegiance. His constant run-ins with the authorities suggest he was rather successful in his efforts.

Philemon and social revolution

A different but intriguing expression of Paul's politics can be found in the brief letter to *Philemon*. What seems at first glance an almost throwaway, personal missive is, in fact, explosive in its ramifications.

Paul is writing to a slave owner, Philemon, whose young slave, Onesimus, has escaped. In Ephesus, Onesimus encounters Paul, converts to the Christian teaching, and is baptised. Paul says Onesimus became a son to him (v. 10). He sends Onesimus back with this letter, the contents of which are a masterful work of rhetoric, calling on Philemon to set his former slave free and take him in as a "dear and faithful brother" in Christ.

Paul is aware of what he is asking. By agreeing to free Onesimus, Philemon could entail personal financial loss and possibly loosen a lynchpin of household order. Philemon has probably heard Paul preach sublimely about the radical oneness in faith, about the transformation in Christ in which there is no longer slave or free (*Col. 3:9–11*). Lovely words, but is he really ready and willing to take on the social costs of enacting them? And what would happen to the stratified social order if others joined him in freeing their slaves and embracing them as sisters and brothers? Why, it would be a revolution . . .

Given my own struggles for social change, I wish Paul had been a sign-toting, out-in-the-street, rabble-rousing abolitionist. But he wasn't. Nor was anyone else. It would take 18 more centuries before the church fought the institution of slavery. But this short letter to *Philemon* is a revolutionary manifesto of a different sort, unleashing a Christ-like vision that rang the death knell for slavery and other forms of oppression.

Paul had no armies to combat the Roman legions. He was not free to engage in democratic political protest for new legislation or positive social change. But he could announce the fundamental illegitimacy and impotency of imperial presumptions, and nurture communities in a radically different ethic of covenantal commitment. He could unleash a mustard-seed revolution of new practices – sharing resources, loving one another, and freeing the oppressed – that subverted the domination system. Like Jesus, he proclaimed the reign of God and invited others to join him.

Let me confess. I still struggle with Paul. I get impatient with his sometimes labyrinthine argumentation. (I am hardly alone: even fellow apostle Peter acknowledges that Paul's writings "contain some things that are hard to understand" (*2 Peter 3:15–16*).) And I choke at Paul's lapses into hierarchical modes of thinking and acting.

But perhaps this is part of Paul's gift to us. He is not the Messiah – his flaws are on display for us all. When we detect his occasional arrogance and overbearing authoritarianism, he simply incarnates his own powerful teaching that God's treasure is stored in earthen vessels (*2 Cor. 4:7*). He is a mirror to our own proclivities for control and dominance. When he occasionally defaults to cultural norms, unconsciously betraying his own powerful and prophetic utterances, it is a painful reminder that all of us are trapped, helplessly complicit with the paradigms and systems of our world.

I also have to remind myself: for all his shortcomings, the man suffered for the faith. As much as any other follower of the Crucified One, he walked the walk. When he speaks of persecution, hardship, hunger, and homelessness (*1 Cor. 4:10–13, 2 Cor. 4:7–11*), he is far from being symbolic. He knew the lash and the cellblock. He had been hunted and ostracised, the victim of state terror and mob violence. His rhapsodic evocations of grace and divine love (*Rom. 8:38–39*) were not abstract poetry, but hewn through the crucible of painful experience – and thereby all the more powerful for us.

The *Book of Acts* ends on a strange and ironic note (*28:30–31*). Paul is under house arrest in Rome. He is ostensibly still awaiting a hearing with the emperor to vindicate himself, and the author of *Acts* tells us he is able to "preach boldly and without hindrance." Yet even when this account was written, the history was undoubtedly well known: the Apostle had been executed by the state, another martyr in what was to be a long line of those who refused worldly allegiance.

I speculate: perhaps in that final jail cell, Paul began to muse about what it meant to render unto Caesar. It is probable that it was at this time he penned the exuberant letter to the Philippians (as referenced in *1:12–14*), in which he reflects on "a crooked and depraved generation" (*2:15*). He writes that we are citizens of heaven, looking to our Saviour, who has ultimate authority over all creation (*3:20–21, 2:10–11*).

Which brings me back to *Romans 13*. The rulers who Paul had years earlier insisted were ordained by God, the rulers who wielded the sword to enact divine justice, axed him to death. Ironically, his own life experience proved that strand of his theology flawed. Expecting imperial justice, he finally grasped the deeper truth of God's justice.

Like the Lord he served, Paul's death at the hands of the powers and principalities only served to reveal the good news of God's reign. May we learn from Paul – sharing with him the frailties of our sinful nature – how to truly believe and live out that good news in the midst of our fallen world. ■

The composer who wrote with God-colouring

The True Life of Johann Sebastian Bach
by Klaus Eidam
Basic Books, New York
Price: $69.95 Hardcover only
Review: Mike Crowl

Earlier this year I discovered Klaus Eidam's biography of Bach. Eidam, who's been living and breathing Bach for two or three decades, and has produced an award-winning documentary on him, spends a good deal of the book putting earlier biographers to rights: he says few of them have thought through some basic facts about Bach and his life, and thus make poor assumptions. In Eidam's account, Bach no longer appears as an irascible and impatient man – in fact, he seems to have had far more patience with his contemporaries than many deserved.

Nor is he the 'Holy Bach' who wrote everything as an act of worship. As Eidam says, "By no means did Bach compose only sacred music, although his music as a whole was for him a holy thing to which he was absolutely committed. The most devout person can also very well be the most open-minded, because he has an unshakeable standpoint in this world and so does not have to close himself off from it. Similarly Bach's music making was not bound only to the church; because of his steadfastness in the faith, it was a music that remained open to the world."

Bach didn't need to tinge everything he wrote with 'God-colouring' in order to make it God-music. The Forty-Eight Preludes and Fugues, for instance, are full of glory, joy, mathematical complexity and startling innovation – just as God's own creativity is. They reflect God by their sheer wondrous imagination and splendour. Who else but a God-made genius like Bach would have the ability to write fugues in which the subject plays opposite its upside-down self – and still make extraordinary music out of it?

Like all Bach's music, the Forty-Eight are full of glimpses of the sublime – you get the impression that when Bach improvised or composed or played he was always discovering sublime moments – or God was handing them to him.

Eidam gets rid of another myth about Bach: that after his death he was forgotten for nearly a hundred years. In fact, he says, composers like Mozart, Beethoven and the like venerated him hugely and studied his works when they could. Many lesser known musicians also benefited from his compositions, along with his pupils and his pupils' pupils, who disseminated the teaching and life and work of Bach for decades.

The theory that Mendelssohn resurrected an almost forgotten composer turns out to be nonsense. Mendelssohn keenly promoted Bach, and that was his strength – he conducted one of the great Masses when he was barely out of his teens – but Bach was hardly forgotten before that. Even in Bach's later years, when he was so often quashed by the Leipzig authorities, there were plenty of people who appreciated and loved his music – and him.

It might be said that Eidam's book makes myth in the opposite direction: ***Bach as Saint***. Certainly the last years of his life were enough to test the patience of any saint, though it's unlikely Bach saw himself as one. He was a journeyman composer, contracted to different bosses at different stages of his life, and his job was to produce music. Perhaps he didn't have to compose as much music as he did – he wrote a complete three-year cycle of Cantatas, week in and week out – nevertheless he wrote music, in or out of a job, in times of great sorrow, in times of exasperation, in times of financial and family stress. God created a genius for the world, and made sure he got His money's worth. n

A prophet you cannot ignore

God's Politics: a new vision for faith and politics in America
by Jim Wallis
HarperSanFrancisco, 2005
Review: John Thornley

The back cover blurb describes Jim Wallis as an "evangelical" and "a leading figure at the crossroads of religion and politics in America today". On his recent visit to New Zealand, the Old Testament scholar, Walter Bruggemann, was asked to name any contemporary prophets in the US today. "Jim Wallis" was his first choice.

Author of seven books and founder/editor of *Sojourners* magazine, Wallis is a lecturer on faith, politics and society at Harvard University, a speaker at more than 200 events per year, and has been named by *Time* magazine as one of the fifty faces for America's future.

The subtitle of the book is 'Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It', a succinct summing up of the central thesis in the book: that the religious Right's position on moral values needs to embrace the larger social issues of poverty and global peace and justice along with their commitment to issues of personal morality, and that the secular Left's sweeping dismissal of religious and church-based traditions and values is an equally one-eyed and prejudiced stance.

Readers will find in this book extensive coverage of the *Jubilee 2000* campaign to release Third World countries from debt to the World Bank and IMF, analysis of the US Budget against the Gospel yardstick, a thorough critique of the 'mistake in Iraq' ('Not a just war'), coverage of recent US corporate scandals including the collapse of Enron, and insightful comment on the traditional battlegrounds of personal and family morality debates, including abortion and same sex relationships.

There are extensive references to scriptural teachings, including the prophets (Isaiah, Micah, and Amos) and the words and actions of Jesus, providing guidelines on contemporary moral issues. Illumination is given to the words, "The poor you will always have with you", shown not as an excuse to do nothing, but, in the context within which it is spoken, as a challenge to take action.

Poverty is highlighted as a priority challenge. Wallis refers to extensive biblical studies showing "several thousand" verses in the Bible on the poor and God's response to injustice, adding, as an aside, "There are twelve verses on homosexuality".

He has carried out an exercise in which his students cut out each verse in the Bible which addressed the issue of poverty. They were left with a Bible "literally falling apart in our hands". The author began taking this fragile Bible out with him when he preached. Holding it above his head, he says, "Brothers and sisters, this is our American Bible; it is full of holes", continuing, "Each one of us might as well take our Bibles, a pair of scissors, and begin cutting out all the Scriptures we pay no attention to, all the biblical texts that we just ignore".

This is a book, also, that you cannot ignore!

John Thornley is Editor of *Music in the Air.*

Hitler: man and tyrant

Film: *Downfall*
Review: Paul Sorrell

Oliver Hirschbiegel's powerful film about the collapse of the Third Reich has been condemned in some quarters for portraying Hitler as a human being rather than a monster. While such a 'distanced' approach might have been more comfortable, it would also have obscured the fact that the evil which Nazism engendered had its roots in that prolific seedbed of good and evil, the human heart.

Hitler, man and tyrant, bestrides this significant German-made film. Hirschbiegel offers his audience a riveting psychological portrait of the Führer, played with masterly nuance and understatement by veteran Swiss actor Bruno Ganz.

Crafted with meticulous detail – every word and action is based on eyewitness accounts – *Downfall* confronts us with the claustrophobic realities of the last days of Hitler and his inner circle, trapped in the Führerbunker as the Russian armies advanced on Berlin. We are drawn right into the conflict and mini-dramas swirling around Hitler – his 11th-hour marriage to his lover Eva Braun; the jostling for power among his lieutenants Himmler, Goering, Speer and Goebbels; and the clinical murder–suicide pact that swallowed up Joseph and Magda Goebbels and their six young children.

Hitler emerges as a delusional monomaniac, prepared to drag the whole German nation down with him rather than contemplate the ultimate betrayal of surrender. In a telling speech, he reveals his utter rejection of compassion – the refuge of weaklings. He rebuffs every urging to spare the German people further suffering. For him, the strongest have already given their lives in the service of the Fatherland, and only the weak and contemptible remain to face what they deserve.

The film's colour palette suits its subject-matter – the labyrinthine concrete bunker where most of the action unfolds is matched by the field grey of Wehrmacht uniforms and the claustrophobic gloom of the subways and bombed-out hospitals where soldiers and civilians alike take refuge. Outside there is carnage as Soviet artillery pounds the city to rubble and gangs of Nazi thugs roam the streets stringing up "deserters".

The action is framed by Hitler's young secretary, Traudl Junge, presented as a political ingenué. She is a kind of 'guide' for the audience throughout the film, someone relatively normal amongst the Nazi top brass. Frau Junge survived the war and died an old woman in 2002. At the end of the film she speaks a few words in her own defence, words which help us test her claim that she was blind to the enormity of the regime she served until well after the war.

Despite its numerous complex sub-plots – and perhaps overlong at two and a half hours' running time – *Downfall* is a "must see" for anyone wanting an anatomy lesson in the nature of evil. ■

Journal of a Soul

Gilead
by Marilynne Robinson
Farrar Straus Girout
Price: $49.95
Review: Kathleen Doherty

Perhaps once a year – if it is a good year – one comes across a book which quietly insinuates itself into one's heart and head and life and changes the way the world appears. For me, *Gilead* is such a book, and weeks after finishing it I keep going back to it to relish again the beautifully precise language and the thoughtful observations which transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Gilead is the second novel of American writer Marilynne Robinson. Her first, *Housekeeping* (Virago pbk), was published in 1981 and was given instant recognition as a modern classic. It deals with the dissolution of a family and the transience of life and the writing is hauntingly beautiful. Between the two novels was a book on environmental pollution and a collection of essays. These works too were praised as significant, but it is with *Gilead* that Marilynne Robinson has confirmed her place as a writer of the most exquisite prose – prose which deserves to be read as carefully and slowly as poetry.

The novel is written as a letter, in journal form, from Congregationalist minister Reverend John Ames, aged 76 and aware of what he perceives to be imminent death from heart disease, to his 7-year-old son, the unexpected offspring of a second marriage to a much younger woman. John Ames mourns the fact that he has little in material goods to leave his wife and son after his death. The journal/letter is an attempt "to tell you things I might never have thought to tell you if I had brought you up myself, father and son, in the usual companionable way" – described by his wife as "writing his begats". Along the way he muses on how much he loves life and the world, on death, on friendship, on the spirituality which sustains him.

The Gilead of the title is a small town in Iowa where the Rev Ames has succeeded his father as pastor of the Congregationalist church. His grandfather too was a minister, one who had fought on the Union side in the Civil War and left home when he was an old man to become an itinerant preacher. The journal is being written in 1956, the family story goes back one hundred years. In spite of his father's apologies, the child is being left a very rich heritage,

John Ames has a deep faith, and total confidence that he is bound for a joyful hereafter: "... you read the dreams of an anxious fuddled old man and I live in a light better than any dream of mine …" but he loves life, and can't imagine that he could be happier than he is right now: "Existence seems to me now the most remarkable thing that could be imagined… I cannot imagine not missing terribly this poor perishable world."

Gilead is a wonderfully rambling narrative. John Ames tells the story at his own pace, giving as much as he can bear before taking up another thread and then returning to his original story 40 pages further on. He reflects on God, on his life as a minister, on what has been happening that day. It is a mark of Marilynne Robinson's artistry that all seems so natural, the conversational tone of an old man.

The sequence when John Ames, aged 12, is taken by his father to Kansas to find the grave of his grandfather, has something of the epic in it, a journey of the soul. The reward after they have cleared the grave in a lonely overgrown graveyard is a numinous moment when they see the full moon rising as the sun is setting "with the most wonderful light between them" and his father says: "I would never have thought this place could be so beautiful. I'm glad to know that".

There are passages of such beautiful intensity in this novel that they could serve as prompts to meditation, the reflections of a man who has learned a lot about himself in 40 years of solitude before he was given the joy of his second marriage and a child. It is heartening to know that such an 'unfashionable' book has been awarded both the *2005 Pulitzer Prize* for fiction, and the *2004 American National Book Critics Award*. ■

Light in dark spaces

Redemption Songs: An appreciation of 'Available Light'
by Dave Dobbyn
Sony BMG, Released June 2005
Review: Robin Kearns

As suggested on its cover image, Dave Dobbyn's midwinter release of his new album *Available Light* beckons light into dark spaces, and dwells firmly in the here and now of Aotearoa. It is a cycle of songs to be immersed in and to carry one upstream into the heart of a faith journey.

Its opening song, '*Welcome Home*' is an anthem for our times. Inspired by an anti-racism march in Christchurch, it utters an emphatic 'yes' to a new New Zealand, an Aotearoa where "you'll find most of us here with our hearts wide open". The 'welcome' is to "you who have suffered much to be here/ 'there but for grace…' as I offer my hand". This paradox of saying 'welcome home' to newcomers is one deeply inflected with gospel-inspired values.

Increasingly, popular music exists in synergy with the medium of video. For '*Welcome Home*', the images in the accompanying bonus DVD amplify the song's themes. As Dave sings: "see I made a space for you", we see him greeting locals while strolling down the streets of central Auckland. Here, "all the colours are one", with cameo appearances of a Russian taxi driver, a Muslim woman at Mission Bay, multi-cultural school children in Mt Albert, and Ahmed Zaoui with Dominican friends at St Benedict's church, Newton. The two lines, "Out here on the edge/the empire is fading by the day" presents our country in crisp reality – far from anywhere, yet centrally placed to shape a new post-colonial world.

Themes of personal and social justice pervade the songs. He sings: "Well there's always forgiveness/why don't we give it a try" ('*Forgiveness*') and "Free the people, free them now/find forgiveness anyhow" ('*Free the People*'). Such lines assist in interpreting the album's title. *Available Light* may be a photographer's term but, at a deeper level, it is the enlightenment that awaits those who journey in openness to the Divine.

The CD is beautifully produced. Musically, the piano Dobbyn used to compose the songs remains on most tracks. Neil Finn's presence is discernable, alongside Dave's current band comprising Bones Hillman (ex *Midnight Oil*) and Ross Burge (ex *Mutton Birds*). In other ways, too, it is an emphatically local work of art. For instance, the mood-setting theme that begins and ends the disc is populated with the sound of cicadas, reminding us of a season both past and still to come. The sense of the familiar is heightened by the cover and accompanying booklet which are graced with the artist's own landscape photographs. To complete this window into one man's journey, the DVD has Dave offering comments on each song from the intimacy of his living room.

Too often, the world seems full of what Paul McCartney's lyric calls "silly love songs". Mercifully, Dobbyn has seldom contributed to this genre. Rather, he has shown flair for achingly beautiful celebrations of conjugal love ('*Naked Flame*' and '*Belltower*' come to mind). But, as he remarked to Kim Hill on National Radio recently, there comes a time to write love songs to God rather than one's spouse. And what love songs we have been gifted with here.

In '*Roll Away*', he sings:

> "Roll away my stone, love/
> that my life be just a doorway/
> to that room at the centre of my heart".

In explanation, Dave tells us that this song speaks of a need to "plead to God that the obstacles preventing us moving forward in life be removed". Surely this is a prayer we all could own?

These are redemption songs from a man open to the Aotearoa we know is possible: a land of inclusion, diversity, and faith. In small print he dedicates the album "to healing hearts". The font is tiny; one could miss it. So too, one could miss the religious content of the songs. Their subtlety demands that one read between the lines, rather than be told what to think like much conventional 'Christian' music. Like the album's photographic self-portrait, *Available Light* illuminates the face and faith of one ready to acknowledge his place before God and his place in the here and now.

But these are just words on paper. Buy the CD, listen and be moved. ■

Robin Kearns is a Director of Tui Motu *and only plays one musical instrument: the stereo*

The winds of change in South America

Crosscurrents
John Honoré

What is happening in South America? At the turn of this century Latin American governments seemed pro-American and pro-globilisation, but now they appear to have lost faith in a democratic system based on market forces and controlled by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This is a combination that empowers an élite and manipulates the poor. The 'trickle down' theory has long been discredited.

Latin American voters are supporting political parties of the Left and demanding a fairer share of their own assets. They want severance from the crippling debt generated by the IMF and the World Bank. The negative impact on the poor of these American based organisations has started a backlash. Popular uprisings in Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile and Brazil point to a seismic shift towards left-wing politics. In all these countries social movements, with a strong connection to human rights, are now demanding an end to corruption and greater transparency in their governments. Moreover, they are willing to fight to get justice.

Bolivia, in hock to the IMF's economic policies, successfully staged two uprisings over water privatisation which led to the expulsion of international companies. Chile and Argentina are reclaiming their ancestral land and demanding autonomy. The land conflicts began with the arrival of foreign mining, oil and forestry consortiums. The indigenous, vocal groups are now being dubbed terrorists by the US government. Even in Brazil the President, Lula da Silva, is being challenged by Mr Cavalcanti's Progress Party. An ex-president of Ecuador, Abdala Bucaram, has returned to politics vowing to lead a 'revolution of the poor'.

Leading this social revolution against big business and American domination of all things global is the President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez. This is a man who relates to the poor and is the most exciting political figure to appear in South America since Fidel Castro came to power in Central America. Chavez has called George W. Bush a "jerk", which prompted Condoleezza Rice to name him "a negative force in the region". In order to eradicate American political influence, Chavez is suggesting an alliance with Iran to exploit the two countries' oil wealth for the benefit of the indigenous peoples. These South Americans are not terrorists: they are simply reclaiming their own rights. There is a political storm brewing in South America – the United States' own backyard.

Un 'non' massif

There is a link between the politics of South America and France's rejection of the EU constitutional treaty. The referendum on the new Constitution, so strongly supported by President Jacques Chirac, was viewed by French voters as a chance to protest that ordinary citizens were being left out of their own affairs. By rejecting a Constitution that enshrined free-market liberalism, the choice became one of the élite versus the working class. France is not prepared for liberalism and globalisation. The French are Europeans who want an end to free markets which imperil their identity and their way of life.

The European Commission has appeared to be obsessed with economic reform, with no consideration for the social security system which protects the welfare of the poorer classes. The Commission's ideology is for an ever-expanding free-market zone, lower corporate taxes, business-friendly legislation and the dismantling of the welfare state. The EU is being challenged to rethink whether a single global market can really benefit the European citizen and whether it wants to remain a junior military partner for the US. The Referendum was democracy operating at a grassroots level.

By voting NO the French have rejected Anglo-Saxon-style capitalism and voted NO to a "third way". The social divide in Europe is growing. A series of free-market reforms has hit pensions, education and industry. Unemployment keeps rising and poverty is growing. Nothing in the proposed constitutional treaty seemed to address these issues.

As Europeans, the French have rejected the logic of size and market, of efficiency and profit, of homogenised commodities for universal consumption. There is no guarantee that these things will improve their lives. They do not want to be workers on a global production line. The cost in loss of individuality and social benefits they see as being too high.

The French NO has been echoed by the Dutch, who have also rejected the Constitution. It has provoked political change. There is a new Prime Minister in France, Dominique de Villepin, a brilliant Eurocrat who opposed the war in Iraq so eloquently in the United Nations Assembly. This democratic rejection of a 'Western' model of capitalism for Europe is similar to the movement in South America. It is a reclamation of identity and an affirmation by the people of their own historic past.

A reasonable question

I thought it was quite a reasonable question. In order to keep *Tui Motu* readers fully informed, some investigation had to be done on the progress of the touring Lions. People want to know how to get a few lessons on media spin from Alistair Campbell – in 45 minutes. My acquaintance with rugby is not the most profound, but for the sake of this magazine I wanted to get to the bottom of things. As a result of my endeavours, I have been shunned by my sporting friends and invitations to dinner have dried up. My question, which I thought showed a keen interest in rugby, was simply: "Who won?" ■

A time to speak out with conviction

The *Year of the Eucharist* will climax in October with a meeting in Rome of the Synod of Bishops. As soon as 'Eucharist' is mentioned, one cannot help thinking of the increasing problem of providing the faithful with access to the celebration of the Eucharist. There is, without doubt, far more involvement of laity in the church's ministry than there was in past years. But we still cannot have Mass without a celebrating priest. An extreme shortage of available celebrants is rapidly coming upon us. One arm of a solution is the ordination of married men, not to say the re-admission to the exercise of Eucharistic ministry of priests who have married.

The history of the eucharistic fast gives light as to how the Catholic Church should proceed. Until 50 years ago, no one could receive communion unless they were fasting from midnight. This served the excellent purpose of highlighting the exceptional character of the Eucharistic meal and the reverence due to it. It had the less desirable effect of limiting access to communion. In the church I attended back then, a maximum of three people received communion at the 10.00 am Sunday Mass.

The admirable exhortations to frequent reception of the Eucharist made 50 years earlier by Pope St Pius X were frustrated by the fasting rules. The remedy, of course, was to cut back the requirement of fasting before communion to the current single hour. Access to communion has been deemed more important than this particular mode of respecting the Real Presence.

Papal pronouncements have highlighted the suitability of the Western discipline of having a celibate priesthood. This is of course not a requirement of divine law; almost all the Eastern Catholic Churches have married parish clergy. They could no doubt make a matching case for the suitability of this Eastern discipline. For instance, they might say that a married pastor could more readily appreciate the spousal and parental issues faced by parishioners than could a celibate, whose acquaintance with such matters must of necessity be second-hand.

The disciplinary requirement of an extended eucharistic fast has been rightly modified to permit adequate access to communion. There is a case for saying the celibacy law needs to be modified for exactly the same reason. There are pros and cons in the matter. None of us knows all the answers. But the issue certainly needs to be debated at the highest levels in the church.

The coming Synod on the Eucharist is an obvious opportunity. The agenda for previous synods has been tightly controlled by the Roman Curia. Maybe the ordination of married men, much less of women, will be kept from the agenda. In which case it is to be hoped that the Holy Spirit will inspire some courageous bishop to take action. Having submitted advance notice of a planned talk on safe and predictable lines, he might go to the microphone and launch out saying: "As a member of the hierarchy I feel I have an obligation to raise a different matter"; then use his ten minutes of speaking time to explore ways in which the pool of candidates for priestly ordination can be enlarged.

One thing is certain. If the Synod does not face the issue of how to provide access to the Eucharist in this and other ways, it will lack credibility. If it limits itself to re-phrasing the pious reflections found in the preparatory documents, who will take its conclusions seriously? Let us hope that the conclusions on the Eucharist emanating from the Synod will not simply be empty words signifying nothing. ■

Humphrey O'Leary

Fr Humphrey O'Leary is rector of the Redemptorist community in Glendowie, Auckland

Missing the Target

Bureaucrats love targets. Targets are set in order to make operations more efficient, and that's fine provided the target is set by – or at least approved by – the operators. It is not so fine when it is arbitrarily imposed from above.

A friend of mine – not in New Zealand – who has had a distinguished career as a cardiologist told me this story. The Health Ministry decided to make Cardiac Care Units (CCUs) more efficient, so they proposed to set new targets aimed at lowering mortality rates. The fewer the deaths, the more efficiently the CCUs were deemed to be operating.

My friend sought an interview with the Minister of Health. He told her how he too had decided to improve the efficiency of the CCU he was put in charge of. When he first took over, the mortality rate was 3.5 percent. "After 18 months," he told the Minister, "it was 19 percent."

"Surely you have your figures the wrong way round," she said. "No," he explained, "when I started it took an average of six hours and 20 minutes to get a cardiac arrest victim admitted into the unit. After 18 months we got that figure down to one hour and 40 minutes. But since a lot more of the patients coming in were very seriously ill, the mortality rate became a lot higher. Previously the most serious cases had simply died before we got to them."

The Minister saw the point and altered the criteria. However, in my friend's country – let us call it Barataria – he assures me the 'target' mentality is still very much alive among health bureaucrats. As a result some surgeons in the public system are simply refusing to operate on high risk patients because inevitably that would mean higher mortality rates in their department and they would have their grants topped. High risk patients – those in greatest need – must either go private or die. Saving lives is being sacrificed to bureaucratic efficiency in order to meet artificial targets.

This is what has been happening in Barataria. But the philosophy of target-setting and quality control imposed on operators by people outside their profession, also bedevils institutions in New Zealand. Schools, universities and hospitals have to be run as businesses. Often the people who make the ultimate decisions are econocrats. And, in the name of efficiency, health and educational standards fall.

I sometimes wonder what goes on in our Cardiac Care Units? I am reaching the age when it begins to matter. ■

M.H.