Tui Motu

InterIslands

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Praised be to You with all your creatures

ourselves as part of nature

I joined three generations of a family gathered to farewell and bury their great-grand-father recently. Only the year before they'd celebrated his 90th birthday and now they'd brought him in their home-made coffin to Alexandra where he'd spent most of his life. Against the backdrop of mountains and sky they threaded tears and stories of John's long life with their own as they lowered him into the earth letting him go into the mystery of life-after-death in the universe.

To live to a "great age" is no longer rare – at least among Pākehā in our country. Yet even the longest human life is infinitesimally tiny in comparison with the origin of other life forms of Earth. Earth itself is young compared to other planets in the universe – and we've not found the "end" of the universe yet. Though we've had several stories of the beginning of the universe, including the biblical accounts, what we now know as the story of the cosmos from a scientific perspective gives urgency to our caring about how we live in Earth now and how we relate to other created life and forms. We have to open ourselves to new relationships with rocks, rivers, insects and birds. Far from thinking that God will save us from the injuries we're causing our planet, its people, animal, plant and mineral life, we are to take responsibility and compel our government and multinational powers to put Earth before profits. In the words of Pope Francis we have to "care for our common home".

This September issue is different from usual in that most contributions explore the encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, from different perspectives. The cover begins by praising God gloriously with Sister Tūī and Brother Kōwhai. Neil Darragh provides an overview of the encyclical's content. Tony Spelman describes how a Māori worldview can broaden our understanding of earth relationships. Jeanette Fitzsimons urges us to see ourselves as part of, and not as superior to, the natural world. Kennedy Graham suggests that our theology has worked to increase our distance from nature.

Jeph Mathias introduces people already struggling with the effects of global warming in their regions and reflects on his decision to assist people to adapt to climate change. Cavaan Wild says we can wait no longer to act for the life of our planet — we must fire our imaginations with why and how we can act. Michael Melville reflects on architectural practice in relationship to sustainability of life on Earth.

Catherine Shelton outlines a spirituality of communion and the conversion creeping over us as we experience reciprocal relationships with all creatures of Earth. Paul Sorrell's photography, along with the contributions of other artists in this issue, gift us with fresh eyes and reflective moments of wonder and beauty.

The guest editorial is by 90-year-old Frank Hoffmann. After encouraging ecological and sustainable care of earth untiringly for years he celebrates the Pope's words.

We are grateful to all the creators whose articles, reflections, comments and art contributed to this issue. We give it to you our readers — along with our blessing. ■

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Cover illustration: Tui photograph by Paul Sorrell.

francis realistic and hopeful

Frank Hoffmann

Global warming is upon us but we have declined to see it as nature's revolt. We have accepted cleaning up after floods and landslides year after year as routine. Drought-stricken farmers are able to get assistance from the Government. People pointing to the obvious cause of drought are branded "alarmists".

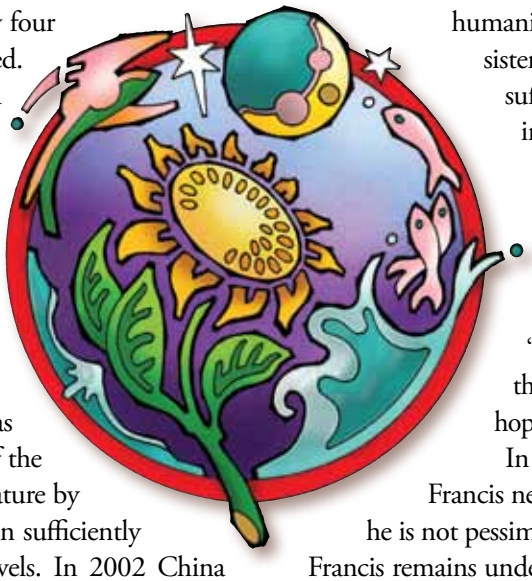
Yet internationally acclaimed climate scientist Tim Flannery reports in his book *The Weather Makers* that since 1974 the number of category four and five hurricanes has almost doubled. Also the intensity of storms in the south Atlantic has become so severe that Hurricane Katrina alone killed almost 200,000 people. Admittedly the shameful lack of preparation in New Orleans contributed to the calamity.

But rises in temperature have effects other than storms. Flannery says the 2005 flooding in Mumbai, India, which took thousands of lives was demonstrably caused by the warming of the ocean. A rise of the sea's surface temperature by only one degree will increase evaporation sufficiently to feed the storm clouds to danger levels. In 2002 China experienced floods of historic magnitude which affected the lives of 100 million people.

"Natural cycles" or human activity?

Pope Francis's views became known when parts of the encyclical were leaked to the press ahead of its publication. The wealthy oil and coal interests lost no time. Aware their profits were at risk they spent millions on advertising fierce opposition: "The Church should not appoint itself arbiter in matters still debated by scientists."

While scientists engaged in deciding humanity's role, Francis had his answer ready. It was decisive: "YES, this is a moral issue and the answer is in the Bible."



He warns that humanity is called to awareness of the need to change styles of life, production and consumption to combat this warming, or at least the human causes producing or accelerating it. This should not come as a surprise. Last November Francis argued that people cannot ignore the moral dimension of environmental protection.

Pope Francis discusses the various components which make up our environment and highlights humanity's tenuous relationship with our sister Earth "who cries out in agony as she suffers from the wounds which we are inflicting on her".

But he gives a message of hope to those who are prepared to abandon accustomed practice in favour of the small sacrifices needed. He prays for the protection of our environment: "May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope."

In discussing the condition of our world Francis needed to be realistic and truthful. But he is not pessimistic.

Francis remains undeterred by the hostility and has stuck to his plan. He has earned worldwide approval for his courage to take on powerful industry and its millions.

There is widespread expectation that this encyclical, written with the poorest people in mind, will impact on the forthcoming talks in Paris and inspire hard-hitting global agreement.

If there are repeats of the hate campaign they are being drowned in the approval greeting the encyclical, *Praise be* to you, O God. ■

Frank Hoffmann, now in his 90s, is a long-time environmentalist and honorary director of Tui Motu Magazine.

Laudato Si' graphic by Donald Moorhead.

Tui Motu InterIslands

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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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move out of auckland

When my parents built their first home in 1948 just after they were married and when we built our own home in 1976, the whole financial structure was geared to supporting home ownership. Personal financial management was based on the principle of living within one's means. It was all so uncluttered.

Today the financial structure is geared and focused on profit and as a result humanity is thinking selfishly. Consequently we have sold that primary concept of being there for the other.

The housing situation is solved not by more housing, nor by *Tui Motu* publishing informative articles, but by relocating businesses and industries out of Auckland. There's plenty of scope in delightful rural towns like Marton, Feilding, Patea, Waverley and even Sanson. All are on main highways with accessibility to local, national and international markets. There's plenty of industrial land. Unemployed people who already have housing, could provide labour and reclaim the right to work. There would be no transport problems because workplaces would be in walking or biking distances.

When on earth are we going to begin to think, not only outside the square, but within the circle?

Sue Seconi. ***Whanganui***

revitalisation needed

Archbishop Allen Vigneron of Detroit speaking about people in the pews said recently: "Many people have been sacramentalised, but never evangelised"; they "knew about God but they did not know him". How many parishes would this apply to in New Zealand? We have lengthy RCIA programmes but to what sort of communities are we introducing the candidates?

To claim to be Christian today is to have entered into a relationship with Jesus and to be in a working relationship with his Gospel and his Kingdom. It goes deeper than being a member of a Church institution.

Daniel O'Leary's excellent article on the dilemma faced by the independent Catholic Press between loyalty to the Church and the pursuit of veracity could well be applied to people in parishes. Jesus is our Way, our Truth, and our Life. The challenge for those invested with the power, is to establish in parishes means whereby honest and frank dialogue can take place.

Parishes are under threat of "the grey pragmatism of the daily life of the Church, in which all appears to proceed normally, while in reality faith is wearing down and degenerating into small-mindedness."(*Joy of the Gospel,* par 82.)

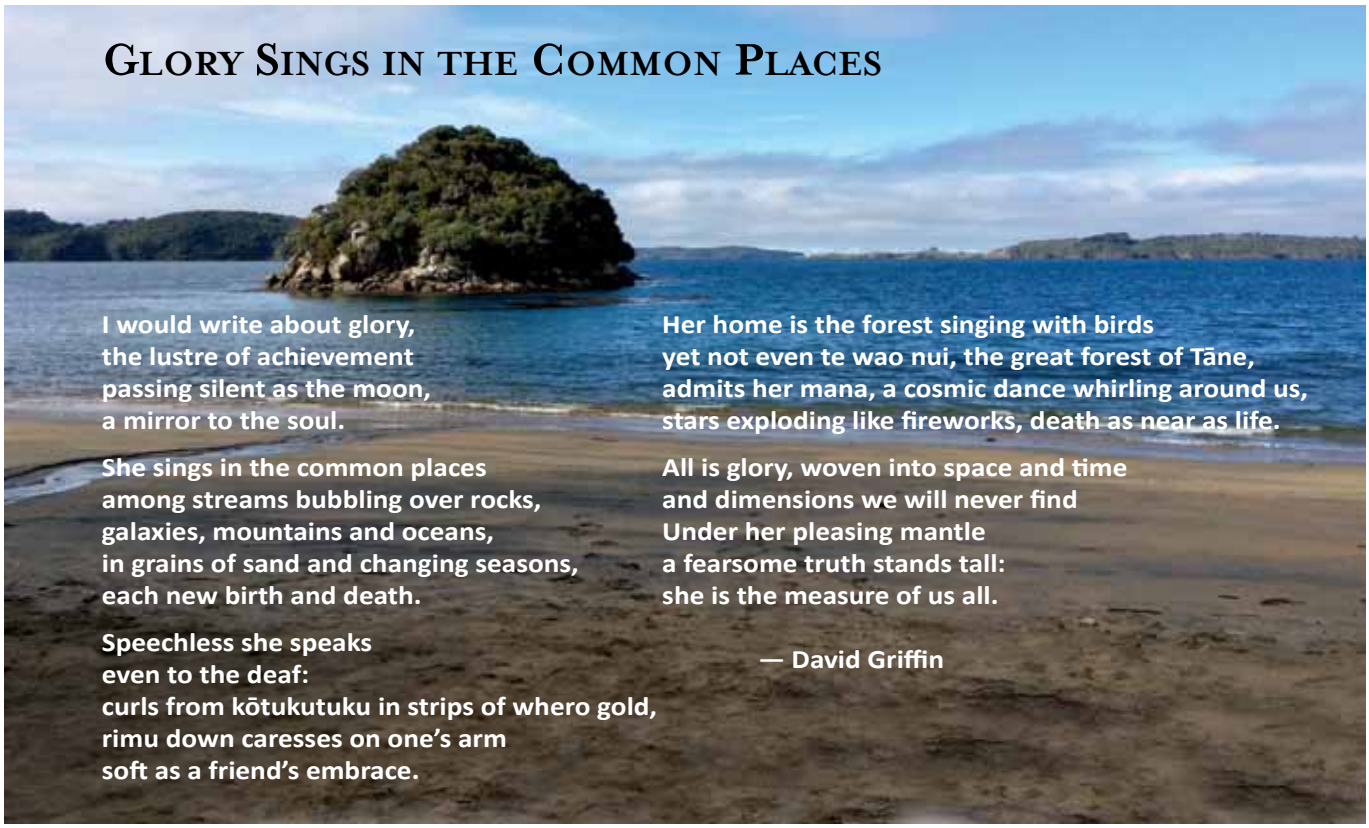
Jim Vercoe Austing, ***Dannevirke***

☞ letters to the editor

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

correction

The author of "All Black and Bland" in the *Tui Motu* August issue is Br Graham-Michoel Wills SH, a **Catholic** contemplative religious living in Wellington. ■



invitation into integral ecology

Peter Healy

The launch of *Laudato Si'* seems momentous. For anyone who has enjoyed the prayers of St Francis and been touched by the work of Teilhard de Chardin this encyclical is something of a vindication of their visionary presences in the Church. It's hopeful that Teilhard de Chardin has been named — even if only in a footnote.

I am impressed by the clarion call throughout the work for "a new synthesis", "a bold cultural revolution", "a renewal of humanity", "a broader vision of reality" and "a more integral and integrating vision". We have never before heard prophetic language like this coming from Rome — and it's inspiring. It is poignant that the world and all peoples are addressed in this broad prophetic manner.

"Everything is connected" is a theme throughout the encyclical. Many connections are made: between social and biological ecology, between rich and poor nations, between love and action, between care for ourselves and care for others, between ethics and action, between economics and a better world, between values and progress, between ideologies and the common good and best of all the connection between God's caress and all that is. This inclusive, connective impetus is impressive.

Perhaps the most radical notion in the encyclical is an invitation into "integral ecology". This is the new synthesis that Pope Francis is calling for. Integral ecology on a personal level is ecological conversion. On a collective level it is an arrival at a shared worldview. Integral ecology is a new way of behaving in the world and ultimately a new set of social and economic systems. Integral ecology includes everyone — their interior life, their collective life, their being in the world and the institutions of our world. Integral ecology is wholism. Integration occurs when our inner values find outer expression and there is mutual benefit everywhere. As the 2014 New York climate march put it: "To change everything we need everyone." Everyone has to be on board for this next new phase of synthesis and renewal. Only such an inclusive embrace will create a renewed humanity.

Some years ago Thomas Berry CP said: "Ecology is the most subversive science." One of its subversions is its ability to expose mechanistic and "thingafying" worldviews. *Laudato Si's* promotion of ecology is subversive in the best sense. It calls us to view our world with the new mind and heart of ecological conversion. This gracious subversion-conversion gives us the opportunity to introduce ecological models into our plans, programmes and preaching. In these models the larger ecology of the cosmos can be presented. This is our big picture, our big history crying out for recognition. The theologian Ilia Delio notes that *Laudato Si'* does not include this "new cosmology" and points out that we cannot shape up an adequte integral ecology without contemporary cosmology. She will address this aspect more fully in her new book, *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology and Consciousness*.

I hope that we will begin the conversation and conversion into integral-ecological-ways-of-living in all our communities. And devise practices and prayers that will lead us into the bold cultural revolution that is underway. I hope our theology will become fully ecological and the same for our spiritualities, our local economies, and indeed everything we do! ■

Peter Healy SM lives and ministers in Otaki.

Painting *Nga Tararua* by Peter Healy.
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care of our common home

Francis of Assisi's* Canticle of Creation *has been an inspiration for Pope Francis's encyclical* Laudato Si', *urging all people to take stock and change the way we live in this world. Neil Darragh gives an overview of this letter indicating the concerns, the care, the change and the integrated approaches the Pope hopes for.

Neil Darragh

The Italian title (Umbrian dialect) of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* is unusual but significant. (The official titles of encyclicals are usually in Latin.) It comes from the first words of St Francis of Assisi's canticle — "Praise be to you, my Lord" — which praises the wonders of God's creation. This canticle sets the tone of the encyclical for which Francis of Assisi provides the great example of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically.

holistic view of world

The encyclical begins by reviewing what the pope sees as the most troubling ecological issues of today: pollution and climate change, the depletion of natural resources especially water, the loss of biodiversity, the decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society, and global inequality.

But how did social issues like the "breakdown of society" and "global inequality" get into this discussion of "ecological" issues? This is one of the key points of the encyclical. It takes a holistic view of the world where human beings are integrally related with the whole of nature. A decline in the quality of human life and a decline in the quality of the natural world around us go together. "A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings" (par 91).

our common home

The encyclical is subtitled *On Care for our Common Home.* It is about care for the home we have in common with all

> "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs."

the creatures of this planet. Previous papal comments on ecology relied mainly on the image of "stewardship" to focus the relationship of human beings to our environment. The image of the "steward" appears only briefly in *Laudato Si'.* The central image is not one of stewardship — essentially management — but rather that of a *common home,* a planet in which we are interdependent with other creatures, all members of God's family with mutually supporting roles and responsibilities.

The pope's call is for an *integral ecology* which respects all the environmental, human, and social dimensions of this common home. An integral ecology is one in which we recognise one complex crisis which is both *social* and *environmental* and which requires an *economics* in service of a more integrating vision. It is one in which we respect not just the natural but also the *historic, artistic and cultural patrimony* which has shaped our cultural identity and sense of meaning; in which the quality of daily life is influenced by an ordered and beautiful environment; in which human ecology is inseparable from the *principle of the common good;* and where the notion of the common good also extends to *future generations.*

human causes

The encyclical is strong on the human roots of the ecological crisis. We have developed powerful technologies but we do not yet have a spirituality and ethics capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint. Our inability to take this challenge seriously has much to do with an ethical and cultural decline which has accompanied the deterioration of the environment. People today run the risk of rampant individualism, and many problems of society are connected with today's self-centred culture of instant gratification.

This focus on human causes has provoked criticism from those who believe in the power of technology to solve our current problems and from those who believe in the long-term benefits of neo-liberal individualism. The encyclical's comments on climate change in particular have incurred the wrath of climate change sceptics, who regard climate change as a natural cycle not caused by human activity. Also opposed are the fossil fuel lobbies who advocate increased use of fossil fuels not just to maintain high-energy standards of living but also to overcome the plight of the poor.

dialogue needed

For solutions, following the style of Vatican II, the pope examines the major paths of dialogue which can help us escape a spiral of self-destruction. He calls for dialogue in the international community and in national and local policies, dialogue and transparency in decision-making especially between politics and economics for human fulfilment, and dialogue between religions and science.

This encyclical is a call to a conversion of heart towards an enthusiastic appreciation of all of God's creation and away from attitudes of destructive self-interest.

This ecological conversion requires education for the covenant between humanity and environment. It includes appreciation of the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, recognition of the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policy, the need to deal with the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle.

sources and accessibility

Papal encyclicals usually draw on Scripture and on the statements of previous popes. But this one also quotes from a number of bishops' conferences throughout the world (including the 2006 New Zealand Bishops' statement on the environment). Pope Francis is here recognising his collegiality as bishop of Rome with Catholic bishops around the world as he did also in his 2013 Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel). He draws too on statements from the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople, the 9th century Sufi mystic Ali al-Khawas, and on the widely recognised document *The Earth Charter* (2000). He acknowledges the gains already made by the worldwide ecological movement.

For those who have attempted to read papal documents in the past but given up exhausted part way through, this encyclical is one that is accessible to most people with some knowledge of ecological concerns. It is still very long though. The master of mass communication through significant gestures and actions has not yet beaten the tradition of wordiness that has characterised encyclicals for some decades now. Many people will have to struggle too with the doggedness of the Vatican's English translators who continue to use sexist language. Nevertheless it is more readable than most official church documents.

The encyclical is addressed to every person on this planet. The pope is calling on a common humanity to address this crisis. But the encyclical also has a chapter which is addressed specifically to Christians with a common heritage in the Scriptures. Christians in particular are called to realise that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith.

Two prayers conclude the encyclical. One is a prayer that can be shared with all who believe in a God who is the all-powerful Creator. The other is a prayer particularly for Christians where we ask for inspiration to take up the commitment to creation set before us by the Gospel of Jesus. ■

Neil Darragh is a theologian and priest of the Auckland diocese and author of a number of books particularly,
At Home in the Earth.

Painting by Peter Healy.
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stirring the waters

Colleen O'Sullivan suggests that Laudato Si' *is calling us to stir the waters as in the Bethsaida gospel story so that we will discover and respond to the wonder of our universe.*

Colleen O'Sullivan

Laudato Si' is a continuation of the teaching of the Catholic Church in the area of social justice. In 1971 Pope Paul VI mentioned the need to be aware of the ecological fragility of creation: "Due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of its degradation"(cited in *LS*, par 10). This statement was written about ten years after Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was published in 1962. Her text was credited with beginning the ecological movement in the United States.

Pope Francis refers to the great scriptures which underpin most world religions. Our Christian scriptures often highlight present complexities and needs because each story can be read on many levels. Like the encyclical the story of the pool of Bethsaida (Jn 5:1-15) begins with human ills, abject poverty, helplessness and a calmness of the waters. Only when the pool is stirred is a meeting of the human and divine possible. The story then moves on to show the shift in that meeting place. It is Christ who brings together in his own person that meeting and who makes possible the healing of the most vulnerable. It is now the human who is newly entrusted with this vulnerable world.

learn to stir

Environmentalists, ecologists, scientists, those involved in eco spirituality, concerned humanists and others must learn again how to stir the waters and use chaos to bring about a new reality that unites our common world. The encyclical is a kind of compendium for reflection on the possibilities for doing this.

Thomas Merton warns of the human urge to sabotage itself, of an inner death-wish which is universal and subconscious and affects life at all levels. *Laudato Si'* shows an awareness of this wish in its use of the language of sin and evil at various times in the encyclical. Power, finance and economic greed often combine to produce such evil:

"A simple example is the increasing use and power of air-conditioning. The markets, which immediately benefit from sales, stimulate even greater demand. An outsider looking at our world would be amazed at such behaviour which at times appears self-destructive" (*LS*, par 55).

we are one with creation

However the encyclical also calls us to life, to examine who we are in reality and to reflect on the call to life at every level of creation. When it refers to "our common home" it is not talking only about human beings. Compared to the rest of creation humans have been here a microscopic number of years. "Our common home" includes all of creation not simply that which has an awakened consciousness. All must be reverenced.

The language of Bethsaida is of healing juxtaposed with the language of individual and social evil. And once Christ enters the frame in a recognisable way then the language of hope also enters that world. The world of Bethsaida is a mirror image of the human condition.

attracted by divine mystery

Teilhard de Chardin, Jesuit mystic and scientist, experienced that profound hope vested in creation since it first came into being. Teilhard's thinking and mystical reflections placed him outside the normal dogmatic boundaries of the church. Pope Francis himself knows how to move beyond boundaries. He cites secular, scientific and ecumenical documents employing all that is available to himself and those who assisted him in researching and writing the encyclical. He noted that from a Christian perspective the universe's ultimate destiny is the fullness of God which is already attained by the risen Christ. Christ is beginning and end, the measure of the maturity of all things.

As well he says: "against this horizon we can see the contribution of Fr Teilhard de Chardin" (*LS,* Footnote 53). For Teilhard "Christ acts towards creation not only as inner dynamism, but as future magnet drawing the multitude towards the unitary by force of his attraction" (www.*Whosoever Desires: Evolution and Original Sin*).

Perhaps the greatest hope of the encyclical lies in the last sections when it begins to use the language of epiphany. Bethsaida was an epiphany showing where and how the power of the Sacred was entering creation. The story finishes with awe and wonder at unexpected healing. Awe and wonder seem to have been a natural state for Teilhard from

the time he first encountered a piece of iron. Its potential amazed him.

"Driven by the forces of love the fragments of the world seek each other so that the world may come into being. Love alone is capable of uniting living beings in such a way as to complete and fulfil them, for it alone takes and joins them by what is deepest in themselves." (Blog *Gaiamlife-quotes from Teilhard de Chardin*).

Ilia Delio reflects on the inherent wonder at newness within the priest-scientist:

"Teilhard saw the computer ushering in a new level of shared consciousness which he called the noosphere, a level of cybernetic mind giving rise to a field of global mind through interconnecting pathways.

"Like Teilhard, Pope Francis believes that human consciousness finds itself on the threshold of a new age which requires entirely new dimensions and values. The deepest beliefs of human beings must find new forms of expression." (*Global Sisters Report*: June 30, 2015).

For the Church one of these new forms of expression must be to use a language of inclusivity. The encyclical's title "Our Common Home" and its address to everyone in the world is ironic if the actual words include only one gender and women are ignored. The unnamed feminine is part of the face of the poor.

As Teilhard pointed out there is a need for a "new consciousness and relatedness within the Church". By breaking boundaries Pope Francis has begun the journey into new consciousness. We hear: "the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor are the same."

The *Earth Charter* states: "As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning … Let ours be remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace and the joyful celebration of life."

Teilhard speaks of the "amorisation" of the universe — the movement towards ultimate, all-embracing love. Christ is the *alpha* and the *omega*. Brian Cox and other ecologists and cosmologists speak of "allurement". They see attraction as the fundamental power within the universe. Although some who recognise the scientific gravitational reality as allurement deny a creator, perhaps unconsciously all are naming the same spiritual reality.

Bethsaida required the stirring of the waters before the sacred and the suffering could meet. Our awareness of the need for a spiritual and moral response to our universal crises challenges us to continue to move the waters so that we function from an attitude of heart, consciously striving to redress our world's imbalance. As the poet Wendell Berry sings:

"It may be when we no longer know what to do
We have come to our real work,
And that when we no longer know which way to go
We have come to our real journey.
The mind that is not baffled is not employed.
The impeded stream is the one that sings." ■

Colleen O'Sullivan rsj, is a teacher, writer and has a ministry in spirituality.

Painting *Fiji Dreams* by Anna Porter, watercolor on hot press paper, 29" X 21",

engaging with a māori world view

Tony Spellman explores how the Māori worldview can move us into a new understanding of the meaning of shared responsibility for Earth and relationships in our communities.

Tony Spelman

At last! The Pope has given us an opportunity to engage seriously with Māori worldview ,philosophy and practice. *Te Ao Māori* as a philosophy of the world has a lot to offer as we reflect on *Laudato Si'* in Aotearoa New Zealand. It needs to be part of the conversation in developing a new way forward.

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis calls us to build a new understanding of the meaning of shared responsibility for the earth and our communities. He is challenging us to think beyond the dominant role we have cast for ourselves in the world and to acknowledge a reordered set of relationships with one another and with the created order.

Our views of the world are social constructs whereby we make sense of things. Some worldviews we were born into. Others we have grown into. Being clear about how our worldview is constructed is important to the way we engage others whose worldview is different. This can have a tangible effect on the way we address issues like respect for the environment and social justice.

I am struck by the importance of Māori Marsden's work in this area. Māori Marsden was a Ngāpuhi tohunga and Anglican priest who died in 1993. He uses the term "worldview" to describe a broad frame of reference and a model of perceived

reality, a "central systematisation of conceptions of reality to which members of its culture assent and from which stems their value system".

loss of reverence for nature

In *Laudato Si'* Francis asserts that the worldview of Judeo-Christian thought reveals a demythologised nature. He says: "while continuing to admire its grandeur and immensity, it no longer saw nature as divine" (*LS,* par 78). This view is well documented in western literature in the writings of Karl Jaspers and Karen Armstrong. They describe the change in the concept of "many gods" and a more intimate relationship between the parts of the living world to that of "one god" in the first Axial period (800-200 BCE). They then describe the later separation of that one god from the living world and from humans, the separation of humans from the natural world and finally the separation of people from one another.

creation one family

Francis challenges this. He says that we are one single human family *(LS,* par 52) and secondly that the ultimate purpose of all creatures does not reside in us. "Rather all creatures are moving forward with us towards a common point of survival, which is God" (*LS,* par 83).

He quotes from St John of the Cross who "taught that all the goodness present in the realities and experiences of this world 'is present in God eminently and infinitely, or more properly, in each of these sublime realities is God'" *(LS,* par 234). This brings Francis into close contact with the thinking of Māori Marsden on worldviews and their function. Francis recognises that our knowledge of the interrelated network of the "physical, chemical and biological" parts of the planet is something "which we will never fully explore and understand" (*LS,* par 138).

Francis acknowledges that reference to "dominion" in the first Genesis creation story (Gn 1:26) is problematic as this effectively introduces a type of hierarchy into the created order (*LS,* par 116). However his interpretation of "dominion" as "responsible stewardship" in the relationship between humanity and other living things is difficult to sustain when he says "Christian thought sees human beings as possessing a particular dignity above other creatures" *(LS,* par 119). Yet he also suggests we "till and keep the garden of the world" implying "a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature" *(LS,* par 67). Francis does not resolve this tension in the encyclical. Clearly it is an issue for us to work through.

> . . . the notion of an inter-relational God also in relationship with the entire created order adds richness to the bigger picture.

everything interrelated

Māori Marsden says that in terms of worldview, "interrelationship" covers everything, not just humans, and not just humans and other creatures. As we are a part of this world and do not completely understand the fullness of it, we have little justification in privileging human or other animate activity within it, thereby marginalising so-called inanimate members of the world community.

I believe the use of the concept of *tuākana* and *tēina*, from *Te Ao Māori*, can help us uncover a different and more useful interpretation of the first Genesis creation story. In Genesis 1, the creation of humans was last, not first, in the order of creation. This means that in the world, all the non-human dimensions of creation are elder to us and are to be recognized and acknowledged as *tuākana* not *tēina*. If we applied this perspective in Aotearoa New Zealand I believe we could identify more profound and relevant change initiatives than we can by continuing to preserve the notion that humans possess "a particular dignity above other creatures" (*LS,* par 119).

Laudato Si' discusses the place of indigenous communities and the need for non-indigenous peoples to show special care for those cultural traditions. The paternalism of this remark is unfortunate. It arises out of the ongoing preference for a western cultural perspective to continue informing the normative discourse. This necessarily relegates indigenous culture to being essentially "other" in relation to the western paradigm.

For me personally the notion of an inter-relational God also in relationship with the entire created order adds richness to the bigger picture. It seems to me that if our thinking about our common home were to include all parts of the created order, it would strengthen the base on which we could plan and change our relationships throughout our world and not just within and between the creature communities. It makes sense to me to see all parts of the created order being infused in diverse ways with the loving presence of God.

An ecological conversion in our land requires significant change in the way the general western paradigm is used to engage with *Te Ao Māori*. The track record of such engagement is mixed. A key priority for action is to frame a conversation between those whose worldview is derived from a predominantly western perspective and those whose worldview is informed by *Te Ao Māori,* so that *Te Ao Māori* can inform the conversation in ways that reflect its status as a philosophy of the world on the same footing as other worldviews. ■

Tony Spelman lives in Tāmaki Makaurau and belongs to Ngāti Hikairo ki Kāwhia. He works with organisations seeking to develop so that they can operate in more Māori ways.

Tui painting by Robin Slow.
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encyclical for the planet ... & me

Jeph Matthias reflects on Laudato Si' *in relationship to his work of helping some of the poorest communities in Asia adapt to climate change.*

Jeph Mathias

Earlier this year I was listening to an indigenous Bunong elder in a forgotten corner of north-east Cambodia. His story was of illegal logging that destroyed their ancestral forest. An NGO had got them to sign papers and then disappeared. The government now has laws preventing them from going into their own forest. Their children are cut off forever from the forest that nourished their souls. Knowing that the forest is the font of life for Bunong, I was probing his reaction.

"What will you do then, for your land and your people?" With eyes as empty as his voice he said: "Nothing. We're just waiting to die." Self-deprecating laughter rippled from the elders around him, engulfed me, then dissipated. We all fell into hopeless, hollow silence.

Here it was again! That shame that swallows me sometimes in my work in ecologically sustainable development. It creeps up sporadically from interactions with marginalised people in remote corners of this planet, whose identity is braided into nature. I see human identity unravelling along with the environment that sustains it and I know I am involved. They had welcomed me as a guest and told their tale of hopelessness, perhaps unknowing that the impact of my world has trampled them under its rampant economics and unbridled consumption, obscene war machines and massive carbon footprints. The man's story is a silent scream for justice, one of millions emanating from forgotten corners of our exquisite and flawed planet. Silent, because these stories don't cause the slightest wobble in the neoliberally-oiled global machine that smoothly furnishes me with my luxuries. He does not know that my luxuries cost him his identity. But it shames me.

seeing both sides

It's a privilege to work in the borderlands of the Empire. An Empire we've cleverly partitioned to allow us free movement and exploitation of developing-world resources while strictly limiting developing-world people from sharing the wealth their resources create. I'm one of the few who rolls under the fences. I hear stories from north-east Cambodia and climb mountains in rich green New Zealand. And I roll back to see the effects of what we dump into the global commons — atmosphere, oceans, forests. We are happy to share our waste with the global South and exploit their labour (as long as they stay where they are).

I can buy shoes in lovely Godzone made by solo mothers in an Indonesian sweat-shop, working under conditions that would be illegal here. I exult in our Department of Conservation projects and buy cashew nuts grown where tropical forest once stood in Cambodia. International development makes me see Laos and Mali, perhaps as other rooms, but still as much my home as New Zealand.

adapting to climate change

One of my programmes is community based adaptation to climate change (CBA). The logic is: rich people's enormous carbon footprints contribute to climate change but because of geography and wealth this does not (yet) affect us. Poor people in developing countries have tiny carbon footprints. But their lives teeter on the edge and our carbon (remember we share waste but not wealth) forces them into migration, malnutrition, land-loss poverty, even death. They don't analyse where the responsibility lies. They just make daily decisions to try to stay afloat.

Development CBA professionals are helping communities understand that changed climate, not bad weather, is making their traditional lives untenable. We help them change their lifestyles to cope.

A mother in India's parched central state of Madhya Pradesh told me about sending their daughter to the Delhi sex trade because of three consecutive "bad rains". From her reality this was the only livelihood strategy she could see. I was there to try to create other options but I squirmed inside with clandestine shame.

It's an inverted logic. Morally our world should be abandoning cherished aspects of our culture — private cars perhaps — so that she does not have to send her daughters to the sex trade. Thousands, millions maybe, of people like her should be paid well to tell their stories, helping the rich-world to live with less. Instead the rich-world exploits common resources and lives well while the poor watch even the tiny scratches into which they dig their fingernails erode away. When will we understand that if the bottom deck sinks with its huddled masses in humanity's boiler-room, inevitably also will the upper deck and those lounging in the deckchairs. SS Humanity is one ship. We are all

connected — although we may pretend otherwise.

We have created a world deliberately in which we get the shoes and cashew nuts but keep the people out. I read that most of the republican candidates for the US presidency (aka presidency of the planet) deny climate change. They are not worrying about SS Humanity's trajectory. The poor have no speaking rights on the top deck and few there speak for them.

change not quick fix

Francis's *Laudato Si'* goes to the jugular of some of the earth's big issues. It's like walking through a tropical rainforest where everything is interconnected in diverse and surprising ways, webs of relationships, big themes, now biting like ants in our boots, now flashing beautifully like macaws in the treetops.

It's not "about" the environment. It's far bigger! Francis's "integral ecology" calls for fundamental changes of humanity, not merely an environmental fix. He's painting a big picture, including the environment, humanity and God.

He approaches big issues from different angles often making surprising connections. Though they are not bullet-pointed, equality, concern for marginalised, human-human and human-environment relationships, connections and shared responsibilities, the injustice of privatised assets and globalised pollution, flaws with the global politics and economics — these are inescapable. So too the moral/spiritual underpinnings of everything we do.

personal and communal

Somewhere in Francis's images I found all the reasons I work in development in India rather than in medicine in New Zealand. I felt he voiced the cries of the indigenous elder and the Madhya Pradesh mother.

The encyclical is radical political/spiritual/social/environmental philosophy with no division between them. Francis wants a new world order, a new way of relating. It is for me the expression of a nascent spirituality of relationship and connection so appropriate for this moment, for this flawed and exquisite planet.

With his shout of solidarity for the solo mother in the sweatshop Francis makes our faith relevant. Francis makes the indigenous leader surveying the charred forest an issue for my faith. For the concerned, privileged members of humanity feeling small and powerless but nevertheless trying to do their bit, Francis widens and complexifies, blurs boundaries and plugs the easy outs. Here is a leader who brings Catholicism to where I work — where the rubber of religion meets globalisation's hard road.

Humbly Francis doesn't claim answers to our big and mysterious planet but says they will come from working and reworking issues among equal human beings. The encyclical is a tentative step towards a new politics, economics and spirituality. It is an invitation to all humanity to celebrate common life rather than just waiting to die. ■

Jeph Mathias lives with his family in India and works in international development.

All photographs by Jeph Matthias.

our biggest environmental challenge

We are destroying our planet because we don't see ourselves as part of the natural world. Jeanette Fitzsimons encourages us in ecological conversion and structural change.

Jeanette Fitzsimons

What is the most pressing environmental challenge? I am often asked this, as I have been for this issue, and the answer has not changed. It is not climate change, it is not extinction of thousands of species, not the ecological collapse of the oceans or the spread of toxic materials to every corner of the globe. These are actually symptoms of an underlying dysfunction and if it is not addressed they will continue to overwhelm us.

Humanity has increased its demands on a finite world to the point where it has used up key resources and overwhelmed the capacity of the earth to regenerate — to absorb and process the waste products of all this economic activity.

disconnected from nature

In *Laudato Si'* Francis goes straight to the root cause when he says "the exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we have still not solved the problem of poverty."

Lying behind this over-consumption is our disconnection from Nature. We no longer see ourselves as part of the natural world but as in charge of it, entitled to use it how we will for our own profit and comfort. In contrast, indigenous communities have always seen themselves as in a family-type relationship. Māori *whakapapa* include rivers, mountains, trees. *Papatuanuku* is our mother. We have family duties of nurture and care, and receive in return great joy from experiencing the world as alive.

These personal relationships, found all over the world where western civilisation has not yet entirely taken over, are echoed by Francis when he refers to the earth as "our sister". Scientific accounts of damage to oceans or climate evoke a logical response — "how terrible". But abuse and cruelty towards a sister evoke a more powerful emotional response on which we are more likely to act. We need both the scientific logic and the emotion to respond effectively.

Echoing the Club of Rome's seminal work of 1972, *Limits to Growth*, Francis says the concept of "infinite resources and infinite growth is a lie". Yet economic growth is the way virtually all governments and economists measure progress, just as individuals measure their worth by getting "more stuff".

If we are going to address the huge environmental challenges that Francis outlines with great detail and scientific accuracy in his Chapter one, we need to understand the human psychology behind this mad goal of getting ever bigger.

consumerism

It is pretty standard psychology that greed for material possessions is trying to fill an inner void, a lack of purpose in living, a lack of satisfying personal relationships. In the Pope's words, "consumerism feeds an internal emptiness". Of course, we are surrounded by advertising telling us we need more, that we won't be happy until we have a bigger house, a bigger car, more electronic gadgets, more fashionable clothes, which all require throwing away the old ones.

population

I often get asked: "Isn't it all just because we have too many people?" I agree with Francis that "to blame population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some is one way of refusing to face the issues". Over my lifetime consumption per capita — mainly of the already-rich — has grown many times faster than population has.

Yet we cannot ignore that over my lifetime world population has grown from two and a half billion to over seven billion, heading for ten. If a finite planet cannot support infinite economic growth, it cannot support infinite population growth either. If the Vatican could recognise this and lift its embargo on family planning it could make a huge contribution to a just and sustainable world.

priorities for spending

Sometimes economic growth is defended as the way to end poverty. In developed countries this is a lie. If the richest country in the world cannot afford to provide decent health care for all its people, then making it twice as rich won't either. It is a societal choice to spend money on war, billion-dollar election campaigns, and opulent luxury rather than caring for people.

Francis reminds us that most of the world's people are poor, neglected and disrespected. As he says, people can't be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless their unique capacities are recognised and valued. That applies to many of today's directionless young people, even if they are rich in fast foods and PlayStations. The environmental crisis and the social and political crises of poverty and loss of democracy are one.

cultural values

Lying behind our abuse of the environment are our cultural values. Our current system reinforces personal and corporate greed which have been elevated from vices to virtues. We hear less these days about working for the common good, the value of public space and public goods, seeing the big picture beyond self. We need more public debate about the cultural values behind policy proposals and corporate actions.

what can we do?

So what can we best do, here in Aotearoa?

There is an assumption that technology is or will be the answer. But as Francis so wisely points out, technology without love and respect, without a moral compass, will do far more harm than good. Get rid of coal — but get fracked gas instead?

The ultimate in a technological fix has been seriously suggested by geo-engineers: fill the atmosphere with sulphur particles that will block the sun and cool the planet. So my grandchildren will never experience a golden sunny day with a clear blue sky, but live in perpetual gloom, just so you can keep on burning coal? What kind of desecration of life and beauty is that?

Francis says "changes in lifestyle, production and consumption". Simplicity in the way we live. More equality. Yes, frugality is essential, but effective only if we tell others why. When questioned about why we don't fly internationally any more, or drive a bigger car, or get new stuff at the mall, we must not be embarrassed to say "because the earth can't support that level of consumption" or "because I've already had my share". We need to change the public discourse about the goals of our society.

As well as personal ecological conversion we need structural change — a conversion of the body politic. As Francis says, ecological disaster cannot be addressed simply by the "sum of good deeds". We need a commitment to phase out fossil fuels. No more new coal mines. No deep sea oil drilling. Development of our waste wood resource as a clean fuel. Close Huntly coal-fired power station and build the wind and geothermal systems that are ready to go. Efficiency standards for vehicles (by global standards ours are appallingly wasteful). No subsidies for big energy consumers like Rio Tinto but support for the innovative technologies of a low carbon future. True sustainability limits for fishing. Strict rules on toxic chemicals, especially in our food. A flourishing of small, locally-based, sustainable enterprises meeting local needs.

Laudato Si' could be a game changer for our relationship with the planet. But judging by previous Papal messages, it will be easily ignored. It needs to be embraced by the whole church and shouted from every pulpit. It needs ambassadors who will talk about it constantly in the street, in schools and workplaces, in households. The biggest disrespect we could offer Francis now would be to remain silent. ■

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Painting by Adele Souster.
www.adelesousterart.co.nz
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Knowing our own Place

We don't have to travel to the glaciers of Antarctica, the Serengeti Plains or Brazil's Pantanal wetlands to see the wonders of nature — or take arresting photographs.

Exploring our own backyard offers us the world in a small compass. It has the added advantage of being our own world, the place we inhabit and, if we keep our eyes open and our ears attuned, a place that will grow to be a part of us.

Text and Photography by Paul Sorrell

spirituality of communion

We're called to profound change, a radical new consciousness of our relatedness within every aspect of creation and to grow into a spirituality that will encourage, motivate, galvanise and nourish us.

Catherine Shelton

"It cannot be emphasised enough," says Francis, "how everything is interconnected." Everything! The theme of "universal communion" runs through the Pope's encyclical in a tapestry of multi-coloured threads and repeating patterns. These threads and patterns catch our attention, stir our hearts and challenge our souls to the core.

Motivation and energy to act upon Francis's call, however, will be difficult without a profound change of heart in each of us, a conversion born of a radically new consciousness. We shall need to re-orient our view of ourselves in relation to every aspect of creation. Science has opened up for us a story of our coming-to-be that we could not have known even 50 years ago. Over billions of years of evolution, with its ever increasing complexity, diversity, consciousness and capacity for care, human beings arrived very recently on the scene. In and of the universe, we are the universe made conscious. Through us, the universe can reflect upon itself. We are its eyes, ears, minds and heart. Other beings do not know their beauty; nor do they know the peril they are in, much less our part in it.

all share basic elements

Unique though we are, the advent of the microscope, along with other scientific tools and processes, has given us a way to explore the inner structure and workings of plants and animals that show us how much we have in common. Richly and wonderfully diverse, we all come from the same process and share the same basic elements. We can only be amazed as we discover the extraordinary intricacies and complex mechanisms these creatures use to enhance life and promote the survival of their species. "What is God doing here?" we are moved to ask. What is God saying to us? And, further, what is our response to be? To look long and lovingly — contemplatively — and to ponder these questions, leaves us wide open to a profound internal shift and the staggering realisation: My God, we really are related! We are kin!

> We begin to see that we are connected in reciprocal relationships, not only to one another, but to all creatures of Earth.

prophetic voices

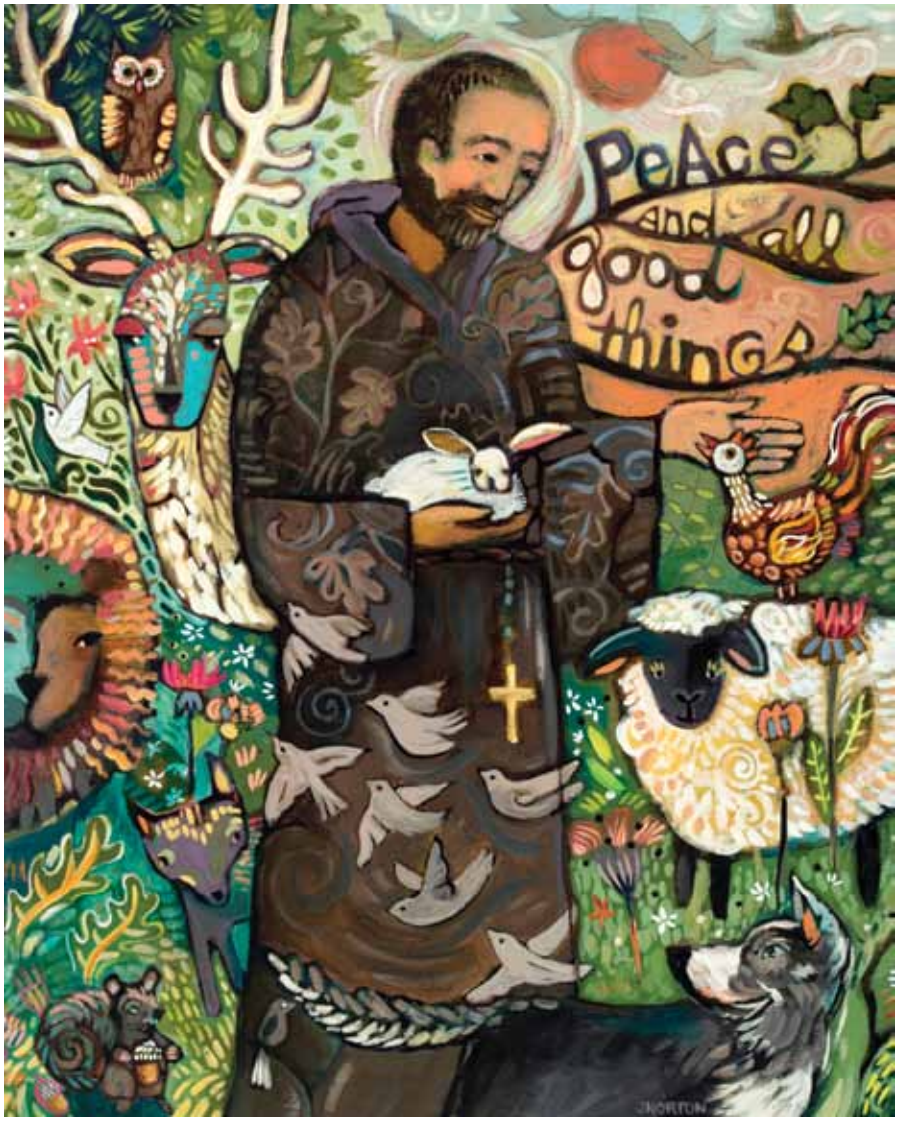
It was Rachel Carson who first drew my attention to the interconnectedness of all things. A young biology teacher in the 1960s, I was captivated and disturbed by Carson's *Silent Spring*, in which she wrote graphically about the effects of DDT and other synthetic pesticides, first upon insects, but ultimately moving up the food chain to human beings as they and other creatures on the chain entered into complicated patterns of exchanging energy. Pope Francis would identify with the backlash Carson suffered from those with vested interests in maintaining the *status quo*. He might also take heart that the backlash itself was evidence that her work was having an impact.

There have been many courageous, prophetic individuals since, among our communities at home and around the globe, who grasped the significance of these events decades before most of us. They underwent their own personal conversions largely alone or with a small network of kindred spirits; they faced equally strong resistance in their efforts to share their insights and passion for the wider community of Earth. Justice, ecology and spirituality were never separate for them.

Modern ecology has opened our eyes to the existence of interconnected and interdependent webs of relationships. We begin to see that we are connected in reciprocal relationships, not only to one another, but to all creatures of Earth. Ecology, cosmology and other sciences demand that we look with new eyes and curious, open hearts at what God is revealing to us about creation. What the mystics intuited centuries ago, scientists and theologians work to articulate for us today. While insights into how the universe works come from science, and how God is at work within the story is the domain of the theologian, there is a thrilling "bi-lingual" dialogue going on between the two today.

one community

Interrelatedness is at the heart of the mystery of God. Diversity of persons, interdependence and intimate union flourish within Trinitarian life. We



are one community with all of creation, part of the exuberant universe teeming with novelty and diversity. Together we emerge out of the fullness of God's love and remain held in existence by that love. Each created being images God in its own particular way. Extinction of any one deletes a self-expression of God forever. What differentiates us is not our superiority, but our God-given capacity for interpersonal relationships, our capacity consciously to praise and thank God, our capacity to partner with God compassionately in relating to all creatures, as God does.

The wisdom traditions of indigenous peoples around the world have much to teach us about kinship. The *Tangata Whenua* of Aotearoa have always known that we are partners with Earth and all life in it. The *iwi* along the Whanganui River live by these words: *"Ko au te awa. Ko te awa ko au.* I am the river. The river is me." Long separated from our own earth-honouring ancestors, it may be time for each of us to reclaim our heritage of sacred connection with the Earth.

spirituality of communion

"We need," Francis tells us, "a spirituality capable of inspiring us; an interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity." He describes in detail what that spirituality could look like in practice.

Times of crisis often bring about such spiritualities, motivate conversion and galvanise individuals and communities into action. Have you ever had a felt sense of being a part of the living world around you, close to God and the cosmos in such a way that it made a difference in your life and became a turning point in how you related to yourself, God and the living world? Have you ever looked in wonder at the beauty of creation; felt the pain of suffering animals as your own; mourned the devastated land and forests, the loss of habitats, the disappearance of species; ached for humanity diminished by social and ecological injustice? And were you then seized by a passion and energy that moved you to creative, compassionate action and purposeful disciplines in the service of justice, reconciliation and right relationships?

A spirituality of communion calls for just such shifts in consciousness, attitude and action. John Philip Newell expresses this spirituality of intimacy with all things, in poetic prayer:

For everything that emerges from the earth
Thanks be to you, oh God.
Holy Root of being
Sacred Sap that rises
Full-bodied Fragrance of earth's unfolding form
May we know that we are of You.
May we know that we are in You.
May we know that we are one with You.
Together one.

Guide us as nations to what is deepest
Open us as peoples to what is first
Lead us as a world to what is dearest
that we may know the holiness of wholeness
that we may learn the strength of humility
that together we may live close to the earth
and grow in grounded glory. ■

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Beloved St Francis by Jen Norton
www.JenNortonArtStudio.com
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an ecological reading of the gospel of mark

In the eighth part in this series Elaine Wainwright reads Mark 10:17-30 pointing to the clues that draw the reader into the ecological world of radical relationships among the human, the holy and the habitat.

Elaine Wainwright

The Markan section that I've chosen to read ecologically this month is slightly longer than usual and so I invite you at the outset to read it from your *Bible.* As you do this, place the selected verses in the context of the whole of Mark 10. This will bring you into contact with the rich ecological texture of this segment of the gospel.

Woven into the ecological texture of this text are diverse material and social features that draw readers into the realm not only of the human and the holy but also of habitat. As you begin reading Mk 10:1, you encounter Jesus walking new ground — the region of Judea beyond (or on the eastern side of) the Jordan and in that place people (human bodies) are gathered in significant numbers. Jesus teaches the crowds as readers have come to expect. In Mark 10:13-16 though, readers encounter another feature of the ecological texture, namely human touch, indeed human embrace. The crowds bring children to Jesus so that he might touch them. While the disciples try to prevent this, Jesus gathers the children into his embrace, blessing them and laying hands on them. It is as if Jesus knew what contemporary philosophers and psychologists tell us, namely that in our reaching out and touching another (not just human but also other-than-human), we, in our turn are touched by the other. Jesus is touched by what is holy, what is of God in these children (Mk 10:14) and such encounter takes place in material human flesh.

on the move

As the focal section of Mark 10:17-30 opens, readers encounter Jesus "on the move" again — "setting out on his journey" which is taking him toward Jerusalem. It is in such a familiar and material context that profound ethical questions arise. A young man approaches Jesus and asks what he must do to gain life without end (Mk 10:17). If we listen attentively to Jesus' reply, we note that the commandments cited by Jesus are rich in ecological texture in ways that we don't always expect of commandments. They call for right relationships lived out in material/human bodies (no murder, no adultery, no defrauding but honouring of father and mother Mk 10:19). If we listen more attentively, we will notice that these commandments entail not only human-human relationships, the lens through which we generally read the text, but also relationships with other-than-human elements that are encoded in the text. These include instruments of murder, money, as well as gifts and property that pass between parents and children and among neighbours. The human and other-than-human are always inextricably bound up with one another and must be attended to in the ecological texture of the text as well as in the texture of our social lives.

do not steal

It is the commandment not to steal which seems to evoke the other-than-human most explicitly in this text. Before we turn to this, it is important to note that in its origins, this commandment referred to enslaving human persons. This meaning needs to be retained today in the face of widespread human trafficking in which young women and men and even children are stolen from families and birth places and sold into multiple forms of slavery in foreign lands. These are among the "crucified poor" that Pope Francis speaks of in *Laudato Si'* and he links their pain with that of

a "wounded world" *(LS,* par 241). The violence inflicted on their bodies is also being inflicted on so many Earth elements as this international endemic grows.

The wounded world is evident in the breakdown of right and just distribution of the material resources of a region, a country, a community and even an individual. These resources will be water in many areas, food in others, or materials for shelter in others. All this is evoked by the commandment not to steal. It informs the final challenge Jesus offers the young man who believes that he has kept all the commandments, living in right relation with human and other-than-human. He is invited by Jesus, who looks on him with love, to go and to sell all "he has". The invitation to the young man to give over property and possessions to be in right relationships with/in the more-than-human encompassing reality (sky/heavens, Mk 10:21) is an invitation to all readers. This is not a negation of what is material, but rather a recognition that right relationships with the material will vary considerably across responses to Jesus. This young man sought more than the doing of the commandments as they served the maintaining of right relationships. Having requested an answer to his question to Jesus, he finds that he cannot take on the radical re-aligning of resources, the giving over of what he has to the poor, to which Jesus invites him. He goes away sorrowful — for he had many possessions (Mk 10:22).

radical relationship

This is a poignant story — the loving gaze of Jesus on the young man bursting with enthusiasm for the right ordering that his sacred tradition called forth from him; and the "shock" and the sorrow/grieving of the young man who cannot enter into the radical relationship with all that is material, to which Jesus invites him. The "wounded world" that Pope Francis has brought before our eyes in *Laudato Si'* cries out for right relationships between the other-than-human and the human. It calls for the radical responses that Jesus asks of the young man and from his disciples: go sell what you own and give to the "crucified poor" (Mk 10:21); for it is hard for those with many resources/possessions to enter into the right ordering that is of God (Mk 10:23-24). Jesus uses what we might call a carnivalesque image — an image that upturns our world views — to engage with the difficulty of what Jesus asks: he evokes a camel, a tall, towering animal being threaded through the eye of a needle! This is not just difficult but wildly impossible and yet such a radical re-ordering of our relationships is possible "for God". The right relationship between habitat, human and holy is evoked and it can enable us to address the intimate intersection today of the "wounded world" and the "crucified poor".

Reading this section of the Markan gospel ecologically has brought to light the radical nature of the call to be disciples of Jesus, the crucified poor one who is at this point in the Markan narrative "walking ahead of them" on the "road going up to Jerusalem" (Mk 10:32-34). Those who would accompany him on this way will leave family and fields in order to attend to the "crucified poor" and the "wounded world" (MK 10:28-30).

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Artwork opposite *Christ and the children* (1910) by Emil Nolde, and above *He went through the villages on the way to Jerusalem* by Jacque Joseph Tissot.

musing of an architect

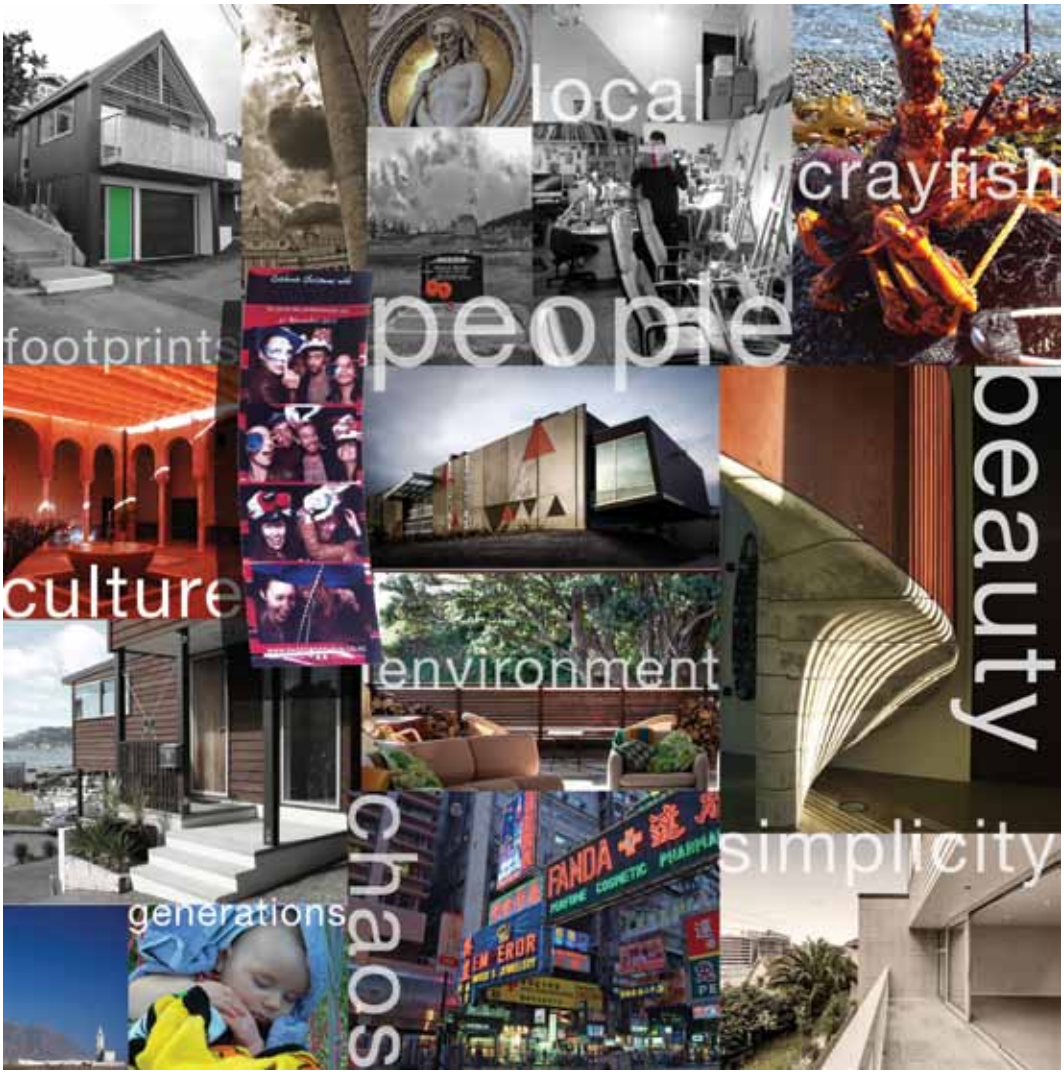
Michael Melville reflecting on how architecture can contribute to the sustainability of Earth suggests that it must leave nothing or leave everything.

Michael Melville

When Ann (editor) asked me to write some words on the role of sustainability in architectural practice she posed the question: "In what ways can we plan and build so that we don't kill off our planet?" After a month of reflection my musing led me to the thesis that architecture must leave nothing or leave everything.

To leave nothing is an architecture of simplicity that literally leaves only footprints. Many cultures do this but not so much our western one. Alternatively we should strive to leave everything and the energy used to do so is somehow offset by currencies that validate a leave everything concept.

One thing we accept with this position is our inability to create without taking. I have concluded it is no longer possible to build our way out of environmental change without continuing to compromise it. In fact it was probably never possible and instead we need to create an architecture that adapts and seeks to minimise the effects we have upon the planet.



An anecdote I use with my clients that best describes such thinking is never design to stop a skateboarder from skating. It will only end in tears. Instead design so the skateboarder can skate and create an environment that eliminates conflict simply by acknowledging they [my clients] are not the only people in this world.

Such thinking does not just concern architecture, but how we obtain food, how we want our children to be educated, how we interact and support our communities, how we move around, what technologies support us, and how much energy it takes from the environment to support these aspirations. Some kind of reconciliation is needed.

Let us also indulge an idea that there is such a thing as a building that reaches zero entropy; the point in time when it has returned the energy it took to build it. In an ideal world this is a point of inflection when the building starts to give back to the environment whether through continued use, adaptation, or something else.

How do we establish this point and more importantly what are the currencies needed to define it?

transgenerational thinking

One currency is transgenerational thinking. The NZ Building Code has a minimum life expectation of 50 years for new buildings. We need to design for 250-300 years and then some. The embodied energy in the materials needed for such longevity is high. So we build smaller, smarter, and use regionally based fabrication and technology. More importantly what we build can be adapted over time to multiple uses.

utilisation

So a second currency is the idea of use, or perhaps utilisation. How do you create a transgenerational architecture that can adopt multiple uses over extended periods of time? For years I have harped on about the bones of a building being the component that should stand the test of time. The cladding can wrinkle and be replaced, and with it the vernaculars we use to express our culture as style and ideas shift.

resilience

Lofty as these ideas are there is a parameter long-term thinking cannot predict and that is climate change. A third currency then needs to be resilience. More and more we are designing not just for increased rainfalls, greater temperature differentials, stronger winds, and the curve ball of seismic activity, but the ability for structures to survive these events.

I like to think architecture began when survival drove some persons to protect themselves from a changing and untameable world. Perhaps because they could not find a cave to keep out the rain or stop their fire from going out in the wind, but the result was the first hut, a built structure. How long ago this occurred is best left to myth but the inheritance of this imperative is an architecture that has at its core the creation of space that seeks to neutralise the effects of the environment.

As people gathered in groups and built towns and cities they added vernaculars to their "huts" that celebrated regional climates and cultural traditions. This was an important point in time as the idea of beauty and difference was established and architecture became more than just a function of survival, but a necessary part of cultural identity.

beauty

So this provides a fourth currency — the most subjective and difficult to build but the most tangible in our appreciation of architecture; beauty.

During my time of reflection I concluded there are more insidious ways a world can be "killed off" than by climatic events, and that is when we no longer appreciate difference as a form of beauty. Instead we plug into the matrix and become universal in our thinking; culture-less, and of one mind.

Today architecture strives to maintain a balance between these currencies which are often put at odds when other influences take effect. Such as population growth, economics, greed, and in the case of post-catastrophic events like the Christchurch earthquakes; desperation.

It is with a heavy heart I see that the residential redevelopments surrounding Christchurch are still based on a fence-to-eave housing stock that has nothing to do with either climate or beauty. It is a stock that does not challenge or change what was and instead seems to accept an homogenisation of culture. It is not architecture nor is it sustainable but in a sad way it is safe and in being so will reinforce a greying out of the diversity that is/was/could be New Zealand's built environment.

The first hut didn't take much but the idea behind it left an enormous burden on the planet. Strange as it is to say, architecture needs to protect not just its people, but itself. It needs to take on more than the simplistic demands of a consumer-driven society and have a voice of its own that reaches far into the future. In doing so architecture can become the vehicle humanity needs to abide in harmony with the environment as long as entropy allows.

The nihilist in me wants to quote the philosopher: "Life is useless, all useless."

But the optimist in me wants to quote David Bowie: "Let's dance!" ■

Michael Melville has an architectural practice in Wellington.

Collage by Michael Melville.

this changes everything

Green MP Kennedy Graham talks to Michael Fitzsimons about the need for a fundamentally new way of thinking – and maybe believing – to make up for 20 years' inaction on climate change.

The challenge that lies at the heart of monotheism is to develop a new-found humility in regard to our place on planet earth, says Kennedy Graham, Green Party Climate Change Spokesman.

The Achilles heel of monotheism is that it sets humankind in a superior position with dominion over the natural world.

"We need to discover a new-found humility," says Kennedy Graham. "If we don't proactively and voluntarily acquire it, then it will be imposed upon us by nature. The difference between animism and monotheism is that with animism humans do not separate themselves from nature. Animists saw themselves as a part of nature, which is why you could talk to the trees and the stones, and the spirits of the natural world would talk to you and we felt at one with all this.

Green MP Kennedy Graham …" a qualitative change in our thinking is needed immediately because nature will not wait for us to catch up with reality."

> "With monotheism … we tend to assume that we are separate and superior, and potentially omniscient and omnipotent."

"With monotheism, especially some of the western branches of it, we tend to assume that we are separate and superior, and potentially omniscient and omnipotent. We are in the business of proving ourselves to be closer to Greek fables of Icarus and now we are beginning to realise it. We need a new kind of kind of humility which I think was what the encyclical [Pope Francis's Encyclical, *Laudato Si'*] is all about."

Indigenous peoples too, of course, have participated in the extinctions of species but "we in the west have taken it to a new art form in terms of the global reach of our technology and the predatory nature of some aspects of global corporatism.

"You combine that together and we are exploiting the planet in a way that cannot continue. Climate change is only one of what have been identified as nine planetary boundaries but it is the most urgent one to be addressed."

Kennedy Graham has a very interesting CV. Since 2008, he has been a list MP for the Green Party and currently holds the Green caucus portfolios of global affairs, defence and disarmament and constitutional affairs. Politics is in the blood — Doug Graham is his brother and he is a great grandson of Robert Graham, an MP in the 1800s. Before he entered politics he worked in the Foreign Service for 16 years and lectured at Canterbury University and Victoria University.

His road to Damascus experience came a long time ago in 1986 when he was out on his daily run, keeping up his fitness for his role as a rugby referee.

"It dawned on me that what you had to do was assume the global ethic and then work backwards to your national interest policy formulation, as opposed to going the other way round.

"If you reason your way from traditional 19th century national interest stuff, you are inevitably going to be competing with 192 other member states of the United Nations. You come back and proudly announce to Parliament that you have punched above your weight, everybody claps and re-elects you but in fact what you're doing is screwing the planet."

Addressing climate change is the policy issue of our time, says Kennedy Graham. For the last two decades it has registered very low on government priority lists here and round the world. When it does get attention, the belief is the problem will be solved "through simply trying harder rather than acting differently."

The extreme weather events of the last five years, however, have finally made the world sit up and take notice.

"At last the international community is facing up to the inconvenient truth that after 10 millennia of existence, human society is fundamentally altering the planet's habitable zone. But what remains contentious is whether the problem can be solved through a refinement of the existing worldview and economic orthodoxy or whether — to quote a famous commentary — this changes everything."

The Establishment view, Kennedy Graham told Parliament, is that global food demand is expected to rise by 50

per cent and New Zealand is well placed to maximise agricultural productivity and feed five to ten times its own population. They say it's commercial commonsense, as well as an argument with "a moral hue".

Kennedy Graham takes the alternative view, that the scale of the challenge changes everything. "Global sustainability becomes the global policy driver and food security is dependent on that sustainability. We shall not be feeding 10 billion people 40 years from now with a degraded planet and a raging climate. There will not even be 10 billion people."

"The latest news says there is a 10 per cent chance of a planet six degrees hotter than normal. A six degree world is beyond catastrophic, it is essentially a death sentence."

Kennedy Graham has called for a cross-party consensus on "this greatest of all human challenges", but so far his words are falling on deaf ears. In July the National Government announced a 2030 emissions reduction target of 30 per cent off 2005 levels, which translates to an 11 per cent reduction on 1990 levels. This is a paltry target, which means New Zealand isn't pulling its weight internationally, he says.

"Our fair share is at least 40 per cent reduction on 1990 levels and the Government's target is not even close. If all countries followed New Zealand's lead, catastrophic climate change would be the result."

Thinking and acting differently however does not come easily to human beings. A spiritual vision of our relationship to the world which immediately segues into a moral and ethical basis for our relationship to other humans, the planet and the cosmos — "a lot of people aren't interested in that."

Nevertheless most New Zealanders — a recent, reputable survey put the figure at 87 per cent — are becoming concerned about climate change. There is a growing awareness that the cost of doing nothing, or very little, is greater than the cost of acting on the scale required.

"I do a lot of talking to audiences around New Zealand. My message to people is to adopt the world view, urge the government to act mightily and fast, and see beyond the short-term monetary cost of taking action on climate change," says Kennedy Graham.

"It's the ultimate test of the human psyche — the ability proactively, fundamentally to change our way of thinking on an abstract, long-term threat." ■

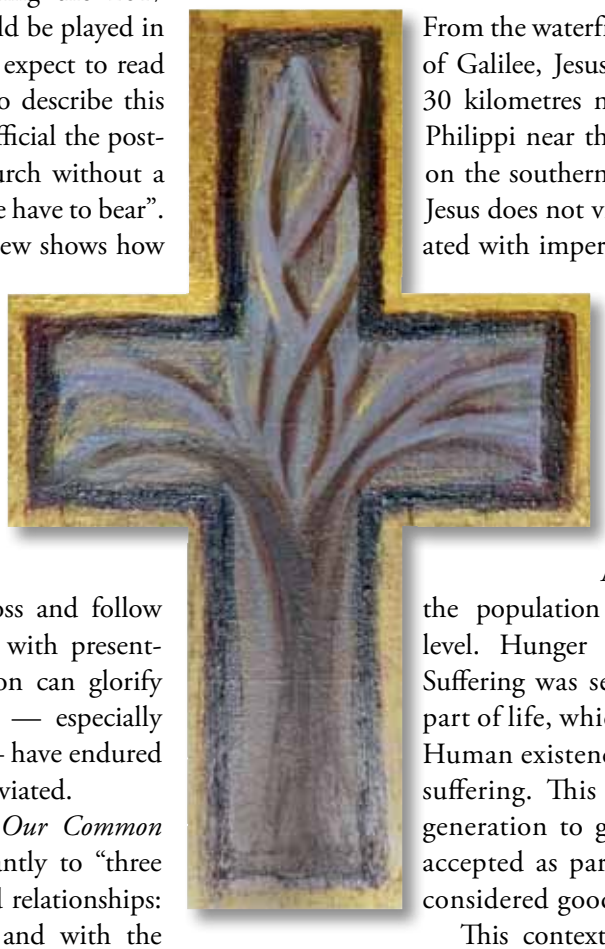
Michael Fitzsimons lives in Wellington and is a project manager, publisher and writer for FitzBeck Creative

for the sake of the gospel

Jesus' challenge: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me," (Mk 8:34) is not to glorify suffering. In her interpretation of Mark 8:27-35 Kathleen Rushton suggests that our relationships in creation will enable us to respond to suffering.

Kathleen Rushton

The banner headline of *The Weekend Press* read: "South in pain over loss of Lions test." It was no surprise to find this response to the New Zealand Rugby's announcement that during the 2017 Lions Tour no All Black tests would be played in the South Island. What I did not expect to read was the religious language used to describe this loss. According to a Canterbury official the post-earthquake situation of Christchurch without a world-class stadium was a "cross we have to bear". The expression used in the interview shows how the saying "to bear one's cross" to convey loss and suffering is engrained in popular and religious consciousness.



The invitation of Jesus to disciples, from which this expression is drawn, is in Mk 8:34: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." If read out of context and with present-day understandings, this invitation can glorify suffering. Generations of people — especially women, the poor and the Earth — have endured suffering that could have been alleviated.

In *Laudato Si' On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis refers constantly to "three fundamental and closely entwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself" (par 66). How do these three interconnected relationships enable us to read Mk 8:34, in its many contexts, for *whakawhanaungatanga* (making right relationship) with *Atua* (God), *tāngata* (people) and *whenua* (land)? And how do we with Pope Francis hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor (*LS,* par 49)?

literary context

In the gospel of Mark, the verse 8:34 is near the beginning of the central section of Mark when Jesus and the disciples are "on the way to Jerusalem" (Mk 8:22-10:52). The focus is on the formation of the disciples. This highly symbolic and carefully structured section begins and ends with those who were blind coming to see (Mk 8:22-26; 10:46-52). This contrasts with the disciples who fail to understand what Jesus is saying to them.

cultural context

From the waterfront town of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus and the disciples walked about 30 kilometres north to the villages of Caesarea Philippi near the headwater of the River Jordan on the southern slope of Mt Hermon. In Mark, Jesus does not visit the city itself, which is associated with imperial claims and power which have damaged the fabric of village life. God's purposes for Jesus and his disciples contest the purposes of the Empire.

The story is located in an area where the high taxation levied by imperial Rome threatened the people's subsistence living. Approximately 90 per cent of the population lived at or below subsistence level. Hunger and disease were ever-present. Suffering was seen as a normal and distasteful part of life, which in the main was unavoidable. Human existence required the ability to endure suffering. This survival skill was passed from generation to generation. While suffering was accepted as part of the human lot, it was not considered good or redemptive.

This context of suffering differs remarkably from that of western culture, where suffering is not seen as part of normal everyday life. Everything possible is done to take pain away as quickly as possible. Whole industries revolve around the elimination of pain. Television advertisements persuade us that there are instant cures. While this "eliminate-suffering" approach orders life, strands of Christian teaching promote suffering as a Christian virtue.

"to suffer" in Mark

Three times Mark uses two words usually translated as "to suffer" or "suffering", but literally meaning "to endure many things." "Many things" is followed by a form of the verb "to endure." This construction is lost in English

translations. A woman "had been suffering (had been enduring many things) from haemorrhages for twelve years" (Mk 5:25). Jesus teaches that "the Son of Man must undergo great suffering" and "he is to go through many sufferings" (endure many things Mk 8:31; 9:12).

There are two distinctions. The first concerns the suffering of the woman who had endured haemorrhages. This is general human suffering which is healed or alleviated as Jesus inaugurates the *basileia* of God. The second distinction concerns the suffering which arises for Jesus and those who choose to be faithful to inaugurating the *basileia* of God. The going will get tough. This suffering would end or could be avoided if Jesus and his disciples walked away from action for the *basileia* of God.

In earlier chapters Mark (1-8) showed what the *basileia* of God offers and two ways of responding: those who follow Jesus with enthusiasm (the disciples and crowds) and those who oppose and reject Jesus (leaders, scribes and others). Many of the latter use force. The Pharisees conspire with the Herodians to destroy Jesus (Mk 3:6). Herod has John the Baptist beheaded (Mk 6:14-29). Both the ancient reader and the present reader know Jesus was crucified.

cross in the ancient context

The cross was an instrument of torture. Jesus' shockingly strong invitation (Mk 8:34) introduced new dangers. Centuries of theological layering obscure from us the reality of the cruel, shameful means of execution which imperial Rome imposed on conquered peoples — slaves, rebels and trouble makers — but never on its own citizens. "To take your cross" refers to a specific reality: to pick up the crossbeam, carry it to the place of execution where you would be nailed or tied to it and then hoisted up on an upright pole and left to die. The gifts of Earth — trees, metals and fibres — are misused as instruments of torture.

The meaning of Jesus' invitation would have been clear to ancient readers. They would have understood the cross to have referred to execution and not to suffering in general. They would have known, too, that unlike general human suffering, the suffering brought about by adherence to God's *basileia* "for the sake of the Gospel" (8:35) could have been avoided by renouncing Jesus. By continuing to be faithful, disciples risked having to endure many things because of the *basileia* of the powerful.

In addition, in the ancient world, and for most people today, the basic unit of society is their multi-generational kinship group rather than the individual person. In that context, to renounce oneself means to lose everything — parents, clan, identity, voice, power and the ability to earn what is needed to sustain life. Modern western readers individualise Jesus' invitation "to deny oneself" because the basic unit of Western society is understood as the individual. To renounce oneself, therefore, means to renounce one's very individuality.

I have discussed the literary and cultural contexts of "enduring all things", the cross and denying oneself, to enable us to interpret Jesus' invitation without glorifying or promoting suffering. The artist, Felolini Maria Ifopo depicts the cross as "an ever-present symbol … a living tree reminding us that Christ is living with us." What are the implications of Mk 8:34 for *whakawhanaungatanga* (making right relationship) with *Atua* (God), *tangata* (people) and *whenua* (land), so that with Pope Francis we hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor? ■

Kathleen Rushton RSM is a scripture scholar and adult educator.

Gospel reading for 24th Sunday of Ordinary Time (13 September).

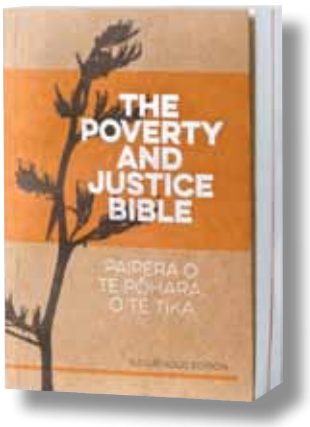
Cross image: a detail from *Ia tatou tatal "Let us pray"* by Felolini Maria Ifopo. *Used with permission.*

a bible for our time

Poverty and Justice Bible: Catholic Edition (NRSV)

Published by The Bible Society

Reviewed by Kieran Fenn FMS



During this month's Social Justice Week, the Bible Society, in partnership with Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand, will launch the *Poverty and Justice Bible*. There are two translations — the Contemporary English Version and the Catholic edition of the New Revised Standard Version. The NRSV version has 3,500 verses highlighted to alert us to issues of poverty and justice. We know God cares for the poor — now with this Bible there's no way of missing that — just as there is no way of missing the poor in Francis's *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si'*.

For every copy of the Bible purchased, another will be gifted to a family who do not have the resources to buy one. Many families experience poverty in our own country. The gap between rich and poor widens, children go to school hungry, conflict and violence rob people both here and abroad of security and our economic systems fail to protect the dignity of vulnerable workers. We only have to turn to Exodus 22 to find a God on the side of the poor and oppressed — God who HEARS, SEES, and ACTS, who responds "in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy" (Hosea 2:19). And God calls us to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

The *Poverty and Justice Bible* is one to hold and pray with. It also features study notes based on the Catholic Church's Year 12 teaching on social justice issues.

Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said: "By developing a greater love for Scripture and being more aware of social justice issues throughout the world, we are better able to take positive action to effect change. Every Christian has a binding duty towards Christ not only to hear His Word but also to act on it.

"The fact that this campaign (*Poverty and Justice Bible)* is supported by Cardinal John Dew, President of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference, and is a cooperative arrangement between Bible Society and Caritas in New Zealand is a sign of real communion that exists among New Zealanders and their passion/thirst for justice."

As Christians we are united in the call to take issues of poverty and injustice seriously and to act on behalf of our God, our neighbours, and our planet and home, Earth. ■

living and dy

Being Mortal: Illness, Medicine, and What Matters in the End

By Atul Gawande

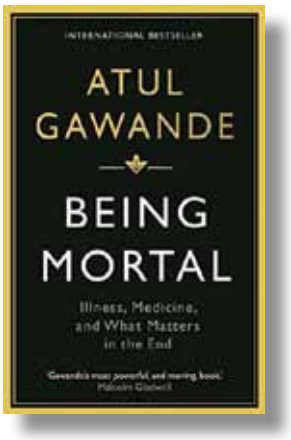
Published by Profile Books Ltd

Reviewed by Margaret O'Connor

With his latest book, *Being Mortal: Illness, Medicine, and What Matters in the End*, surgeon, Harvard professor and award winning writer, Atul Gawande provides a sympathetically articulated account of the challenges faced by the medical profession as they treat and care for the elderly and dying. In an increasingly technological world a myriad of options exists for treatment, which have implications for medics and lay people alike. The combination of our youth-worshipping culture and the veneer of control technology gives us can allow us to think that decline and death are avoidable. Gawande terms this: "the prevailing fantasy of being ageless." In Gawande's view medics and lay people are often equally complicit in this.

Gawande exposes the culture in which growing old or frail is demonised and the scope of modern medicine has almost duped us into believing death can be avoided. In a series of professional and personal vignettes he presents the dilemma medics face when life's one certainty looms and their training is to fix. He shows how the extreme medicalisation of end-of-life care — sometimes with neither doctor nor patient acknowledging what is actually happening — comes at the cost of dignity and meaning for the dying. It can leave everyone involved feeling bereft and impotent. He claims that the existence of

ying well



certain therapies is not sufficient justification for using them. The humanity of both doctor and patient is neutralised in the pretence that every disease is curable.

Gawande says it is imperative that many skills form part of a doctor's end-of-life care. He has devised questions that help a doctor focus on the person rather than the disease in the provision of effective and meaningful care.

Not satisfied with critiquing the limitations of the medical model used in decline and death, Gawande explores alternatives to "treating" until death is inevitable. He accompanies a hospice nurse on her rounds, interviews a geriatrician about his role, and canvasses several creative and questioning alternatives to traditional nursing homes. He shows the positive effects when patients are able to live with autonomy, dignity and meaning to their end.

This book is a timely, accessible and riveting read by a fine doctor-writer. It comes highly recommended. It would be a particularly good read for anyone who believes like Epicurus that "the art of living well and the art of dying well are one". ■

return from the dead

Film: Phoenix

Director: Christian Petzold

Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

In the May 2013 issue of *Tui Motu*, I reviewed *Barbara*, a film set in East Germany in the 1980s that celebrated the power of compassion and selflessness to overcome a repressive environment. Barbara was directed by Christian Petzold and starred Nina Hoss and Ronald Zehrfeld, and Petzold and his two leads have come together again in *Phoenix*. A more complex and nuanced piece than *Barbara*, *Phoenix* is, as the title suggests, the story of a woman who comes back from the dead.

The film is set in Berlin in 1945 amid the ruins of war, with thousands of displaced people, traumatised and often gravely injured, filtering back from Nazi concentration camps. One such is "Esther" or Nelly Lenz, a German–Jewish nightclub singer who was apparently betrayed and abandoned by her husband, Johnny. Despite this, she is desperate to find him in the chaos of the bombed-out city. Against all the odds, she comes across him working in a downtown bar.

Despite the evidence mounting against Johnny, Nelly is still deeply in love with him and sets out to test his love for her. Failing to recognise her as the result of facial reconstruction surgery (and here we have to suspend our credulity), Johnny schools her to become the Nelly he once knew — whom he believes died in the camps — so that he can stage-manage her dramatic return and claim a valuable legacy that he promises to share with her.

Improbable as this story line sounds, it provides the setting for a subtle, complex and deeply moving exploration of the nature of love and identity. By gradually slipping into her role as herself, Nelly is able to act out her feelings for Johnny at the same time as probing the secrets of the past. A further layer of complexity is provided by Nelly's relationship with Lene, another Jewish survivor, who urges her to abandon the duplicitous Johnny and emigrate with her to Israel.

Growing in confidence and power, Nelly gradually wrests the initiative in the relationship away from Johnny, culminating in a final scene that will take your breath away. Set in a lyrical key, with fairytale overtones, the film makes perfect sense as long as we do not insist on strict realism. Part of this year's New Zealand International Film Festival, this beautifully acted and emotionally provocative drama is well worth an evening at the cinema. ■

Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

rabbits, steel and climate change

The marvels of modern technology appear to have found a way to turn carbon monoxide, formed as a by-product in the creation of steel, into bio-fuel (eg, for cars) whereas the current system turns it into carbon dioxide. Apparently microbes found in the gut of rabbits can convert the waste. A small NZ firm has joined with the world's largest steelmaker to install the system. Instead of greenhouse gas being discharged into the atmosphere the waste becomes something useful.

beam me up, scotty

Astronomers have found a planet that appears almost a twin to earth. It orbits a very distant star and seems in many ways to enjoy conditions similarly conducive to life as we do. Which raises the question: "Is or was — for the "twin" is much older than Earth — life possible there?" And, what has that to do with our Christian beliefs?

Two years ago The Vatican Observatory Foundation sponsored a conference on astrobiology. Astrobiology is a compound science which relies on astronomy, biology, chemistry, to ask about the origin, evolution and the distribution of life in the universe. *Commonweal* published an article by John Coleman in which he reported some of the questions raised:

* Are there habitable environments in our solar system and beyond it, where forms of life may have emerged?
* Might there be biospheres that function differently from those we know on earth?
* What is the likelihood of extraterrestrial intelligent life?
* Would we recognise a radically different language code?
* How likely is communication in literally millions of miles of space?

It seems probable that forms of life have appeared outside of earth. A moon around Jupiter contains water and the carbon chemistry which could yield life. On Earth so called extremophiles hidden deep in the ocean in hydrothermal vents may not be sun-dependent. Forms of bacterial life on earth have been found in conditions of acidity, extreme heat, or cold, which would kill most life on earth. Somehow these forms thrive. This raises the question about a possible biosphere which would function differently from those usual on Earth. At present we are sure of life and of intelligent life only here.

Christopher Impey, co-editor of *Frontiers of Astrobiology* (2012) which came out of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences' meeting on astrobiology in 2009, says that even on earth life has been found in the aforementioned extremes as well as in extreme isolation.

The ingredients for life as we know it (water and carbon) are also found elsewhere in our solar system and, by implication, beyond it. Indeed, some planets in other solar systems are older than Earth, so could have had the necessary long timeline to develop complex life, even intelligent forms. In the entire Milky Way there are multiple planets which have more water than earth. There are possibly 816 habitable known planets larger than earth and 400 the size of earth or smaller.

Bill Stoeger from the Vatican Observatory raised a series of philosophical and theological issues involved in astrobiology. In theology (where every concept of God is insufficient) as in science, the task is to filter out the inadequate or misleading concepts to find ones more attuned to reality as we know it. Stoeger warned of the danger of setting theological non-negotiables too quickly. Perhaps theologians should begin humbly with the premise that we inhabit a vast universe whose contours we barely know.

business ethics

Some of the political claims and counter-claims regarding home ownership, private sector involvement in social services, TPP etc. reminded me of Sir Charles Peckerwood's translation of the fifth century BCE Chinese business classic *The Art of Grovelling* by Gao Lee Ji. Gao Lee Ji was the first Chinese sage who addressed directly what later became known as "business ethics".

Apply as you see fit:

* Sometimes "it could be worse" is the highest quality to which one can aspire.
* If one prevaricates long enough the very stones of the citadel will turn to dust.
* A good leader doesn't fix what isn't broken. A great leader breaks it in order to fix it and take the credit for it.
* As long as the peasants like the music they won't pay any attention to the instruments.

yeah right!

The NZ Herald recently ran a piece "Robots take on airport cleaning". Robotic cleaners ($50,000 each) can be programmed to follow a path using sonar to avoid obstacles. They cover three times the area of a human cleaner on a time basis and use less water and detergent. The Managing Director of the cleaning company said workers will benefit by taking on the more "skilled work" such as the programming and maintenance of the robots. ■

procrastinate no longer

Cavaan Wild

When I asked my friend about the lengths to which she would go to protect the environment I received mixed answers.

Q: Dogs have a larger carbon footprint than an SUV; would you be willing to kill your dog?

This was met with a quizzical, slightly offended: "No!"

I can understand why she would be reluctant to dispatch her bichon frise. And indeed I can see that it could be unfair of me to ask that question when surely there must be less traumatic ways of dealing with global warming.

But one cannot help but think: "When will the inconvenient become the inevitable? At what point will we be forced to stop procrastinating — the pastime of a generation — and actually take urgent action?"

At what point must the dog become dinner?

Any change must be popular. Change must be supported by the masses, sufficiently appetising so that the masses can get behind it. There is very little appeal about global warming and making lifestyle changes.

Killing the dog is unappealing. Killing the dog is tangible. And unfortunately making positive change isn't tangible. It's difficult to see how individual effort can effect change. We must be shown not told. This is why trends are so powerful.

If we examine other issues facing this generation, marriage equality for instance, we see that large- scale change was effected on the basis of appeal and trend. It became popular to support gay rights and to push for a fairer legal interpretation of the bond of marriage. Without the chart-topping song *Same Love* by US artists Macklemore and Ryan Lewis the cause would certainly not have been as far advanced as it is now.

So do we need someone to sing about the plight of the Kiribati people, whose islands are fast disappearing under rising sea levels? And about extreme weather events destroying homes and families? And floods through Waitotara and islands of plastic in the Pacific? The Pacific can seem far away and its waters won't lap at the threshold of most of our family homes. The rain will beat down on our sturdy roofs and our beds will stay warm and dry.

But everyone sits down to eat. Everyone wants to feed their young — full tummies and round cheeks. Food resources, and the available land for food production, are being affected. New Zealand's greatest export, dairy, is wreaking havoc on land unsuitable for dairy farming. Our native birds, prized so highly, are only just recovering from the depredations of pesticides. Hand-over-fist we scramble for tangible profits, tangible gains.

What happens when there's nothing left to lay our hands and fists upon? Everyone wants a portion of the milk solids, everyone wants to capitalise.

But maybe an awareness of the measures taken to sate our appetites is necessary. Maybe we have to take our chattels to slaughter now so that our children will have something to eat too.

We are a generation obsessed with the length of our own existence and nothing beyond that. Maybe we are too frightened to look too far ahead for what we might see — and so the inconvenience of it all. Major negative change will occur in our existence — be it popular or not. We can procrastinate no longer.

The recipe book has fallen open to the well-thumbed page. The vegetables are wilted, the pressure cooker is heated. Is it time to add the dog? ■

Cavaan Wild is studying Arts and Law at Victoria University.

a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

Outside the laundry door cheerful weeds grow through the cracks in the concrete. The concrete too is a virile shade of green. Many days of cloud and rain dial up algae and moss to reign over this hillside. Leather shoes, bathroom tiles and concrete walls also betray the high humidity. Clothes hang for two-to-three days in the attic struggling to dry. Mould is as unstoppable as too the cheerful family of mice who have moved into our kitchen, delighted with our relatively dry house and its many crumbs.

Monsoon.

"Make friends with them all!" suggests a friend when I write an email bemoaning the rodents and algae. I can just about feel charitable towards the mice but a little less convinced with the mould. Despite the constant mist and rain, the key is to go outside and walk through the forest.

Here monsoon becomes the lavish conductor of lush scenes of growth, chlorophyll, and frantic ferns. Every tree trunk is coated with green-velvet moss. The tree ferns are not the kind we think of in New Zealand. They are single strand fronds that frill all the way up the trunk of a tree. A purple, orchid-looking flower our kids call the peacock flower skitters daringly through the aggressive nettles.

Walking home from school, usually with an umbrella, our six-year-old stops to look at the brave ladybirds tripping around the leaves despite the huge raindrops. We tiptoe around the muddy bits on the path. Leap the puddles.

While I was away on a trip to Delhi last weekend there was a two-day deluge that enchanted little Jalori. On my return we had a long dinner conversation about all the places that turned into waterfalls and puddles and streams.

The cicadas seem to love the monsoon. Pre-dawn and sunset time (though we haven't seen the sun for a week) are a crazy cacophony of chirping, sawing, shouting insect chorus. The monkeys are less convinced. They sit around huddled and a little soggy, looking for a dry spot and picking one another's fur for parasites.

Some evenings just before night, the most ethereal golden light, clear and shimmering as water, breaks through the thick clouds, transforming this muddy, fern-filled, mouldy, mossy place into a vision of purity and light. Really it's all about how I want to respond to this intensely green and wet season. Resent? Complain? Protest? Pray?

O God
Rain and clouds are with us
for this season.
They are damply persistent and present.
This rain trumpets in the ferns, the moss,
the orchids, the exuberant green.
Even if I sit inside, I know of monsoon
the sound of rain and frequent thunder.
Some days this season drives me crazy.
I long for sun and dry clothes.
This season enchants me,
catches me by surprise with beauty.
In intense rain of monsoon
In the intense sun that will come
You are creator
You are amongst us
Amen ■

Kaaren Mathias is a Public Health physician and the programme manager for Mental Health in the Emmanuel Hospital Association in North India where she lives with her family.

With each rock and fern
star and waterfall, ladybird and gecko
wren and oyster, child and kitten
may we become more at home
in your family
God of all.

From the Tui Motu team