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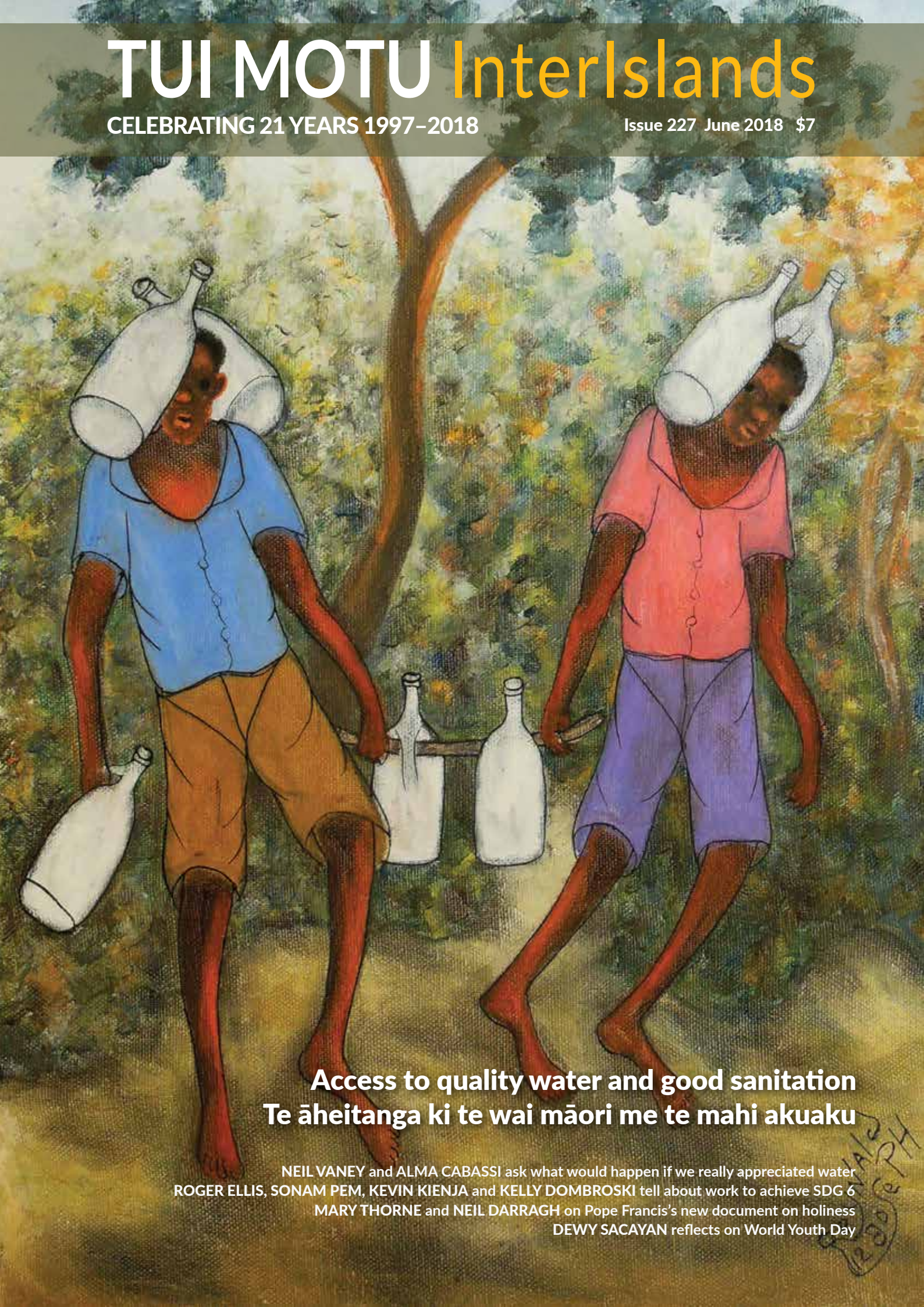

Access to quality water and good sanitation
Te āheitanga ki te wai māori me te mahi akuaku

NEIL VANEY and **ALMA CABASSI** ask what would happen if we really appreciated water

ROGER ELLIS, SONAM PEM, KEVIN KIENJA and **KELLY DOMBROSKI** tell about work to achieve SDG 6

MARY THORNE and **NEIL DARRAGH** on Pope Francis's new document on holiness

DEWY SACAYAN reflects on World Youth Day

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Cover Painting

Carrying Water by Joseph Reynald (Haiti)
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TuiMotuInterIslands Tuimotumag

EDITORIAL

Living Water for All

I remember, as a six-year-old, being astounded by the information that some places in the world have no water. My experience was of never-ending water — at the turn of a tap, in rain, rivers and snow on distant mountains — and so the thought of spending hours each day walking to find it, carrying it home and rationing it by the cupful, was almost incredible. Although I couldn't disbelieve my grandfather's story, shared while he was working in our garden, I needed confirmation from a higher authority — my mother. Yes, indeed, it was true: my grandfather had served in Egypt during the war and knew desert conditions first-hand. So my worldview developed porous boundaries and from later experiences of water scarcity, even in a water-rich region, grew an understanding that water is essential for life and the access to water is a divide between the "haves" and "have-nots".

Our Scriptures come from a dry region of Earth and abound with stories where the search for water and access to wells was an everyday concern, even a cause of tribal warfare. And in them water is imaged as a gift and blessing, as a figure of God's presence. Thirst is used to describe a yearning for God. In this region where the rainfall is minimal, water is prized.

In contrast, in water-rich regions we've overestimated the capacity of our waterways to absorb the pollution we've injected into them and to stay healthy. We're scrambling now to remediate them — and we hope it is not too late.

It is no wonder that with climate change settling in, the United Nations has a global goal for all people to have access to fresh water by 2030. Pope Francis reinforces this goal, pointing out particularly that the quality of water available to the poor is a serious problem. "Access to safe drinking water is a basic universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights." And, further, the UN is working with communities to ensure that drinking water is kept free of contamination.

This 227th issue offers a range of articles on water and sanitation describing both the complexities around access to water and the commitment of governments and NGOs to improve water access and sanitation in communities. Like the Pope, our writers recognise the inestimable gift of water to Earth and tell of projects and technologies that give communities access to water and protection of their water supplies.

We are grateful to all who have contributed reflection, research, writing, art and craft to this issue.

And as is our custom, our last word is of blessing.

Porridge, Power and Simplicity

Simple things afford us the most pleasure. We all know that any fool can weave complicated words, thoughts, actions. Nothing harder than simplicity, though.

Whether in food or philosophy or life, simplicity is ever the soul-sister of integrity. Erasmus, sophisticated as they come, talked of *innocentia*.

I cannot, of course, claim the latter, but at least, true to my origins, I make a start each day with porridge. Not rolled oats, of course, but the real McCoy, honest-to-God oatmeal, lumped up from Harraways, just down the road in Green Island, Dunedin. Real sustenance. Real value, all 10 kg of it. Just boil the water, add some sea salt, and stir in the oatmeal. In no time my miniature Rotorua is bubbling away, nudging me out of sleep, spurting provocatively. (So is that why we call the wooden mixer a spurtle? Evocative sounding, that word.)

Takes me back, porridge does, back down the generations. Oatmeal, of course, was a hardy crop which tolerated the grinding weather and poor soil of my crofting ancestors. Oatmeal, snorted Samuel Johnston, was fed to horses in England. Trust the simple-minded Scots to eat it! Students, off to Glasgow or Edinburgh to study, would hump a sack of oatmeal with them, we are told, to keep body and soul alive through the winter. Wouldn't suit the Dunedin Hyde Street student bunch these days, I fear.

Breakfast takes my mind back, therefore, to our ancestral croft on Skye, Nr 10 Husabost, the name redolent with Norse memories, though Uig in Gaelic, the lilting language of my old folk. The fields slope down from the moor to the sea-loch, where mackerel swarmed to augment the oats. Simplicity, sure, but no romantic gloss, please! The poet

Sorley Maclean reminds us of the hard work of the Highland woman, *ban-ghaidheal*, toiling up with the seaweed for the lazy beds, the raised plots needed to give the crops half a chance to beat the elements: *The load of fruits on her back / a bitter sweat on brow and cheek*, labouring away for her children's food and the castle's reward. The crofter and the laird. Worlds apart, these two. Little justice there. No romanticism, please!

It lays a good foundation for the day, my father used to say of his porridge, spurning flashier breakfast cereals with some indignation. I admit that in Germany I allowed myself to be seduced by the *brötchen* — displayed in all their bewildering variety in the local bakery — baked at some ungodly hour, setting the nose twitching as I entered the shop. But here in Dunedin, loyalty to the old tribal tradition remains unbroken.

Porridge is one thing, of course. Other simplicities are far harder to realise. Talking to Kim Hill recently, Jeffrey Sachs, brilliant world economist, complemented his grim warning that we are spinning towards ecological disaster, with encouragement that if we keep simplicity before us all is not lost.

At present a tiny group of the unbelievably affluent holds the reins and corrupt democracy with their greed and short-sightedness. Politics, however, is the art of the possible, and — I would add — faith is the spur to achieve the impossible. We can turn things around. Simple things do afford us the most pleasure. And our steaming plate of porridge reminds us of that each morning. So let's get on with it.

Peter Matheson is a peace activist, a Church Historian, Emeritus Professor of Knox Theological College, Dunedin and author of many books.

WATER

LIFEBLOOD OF EARTH

Early in April I attended the Eucharistic Convention in Auckland. One of the most striking speakers was Michael Hopkins, a NASA astronaut who had spent 166 days on the International Space Station in 2013. A new Catholic, he blended high technology with deep faith. At the end of his talk he was asked what struck him most on his return to Earth. The feel of rain on my face on the launch pad in Kazakhstan, he answered. In the Station the temperature and atmosphere never varied. It was as if he tasted water, wind and coolness for the first time — and realised just how precious they were.

Water surrounds us in a myriad of different forms: clouds, mist, rivers and lakes, ice and snow. Oceans cover 71 per cent of the globe. This proportion is replicated in our bodies too: our brains and hearts are 73 per cent water, our lungs 83 per cent.

More and more of us are becoming aware that water is a precious resource. Further, it is a spiritual vessel of God's presence.

Water as the Foundation of Human Survival and Flourishing

It is obvious that water is essential for the life and growth of every plant and animal on our planet. Yet it is so much more, and it is easy to miss the more obscure ways that water shapes and preserves our world. It is sculptor, insulator, conveyor belt and sower. In more scientific terms it is unique for its thermal properties, surface tension, viscosity, solvency and density. We need to examine these a little to comprehend why a world without water would be a merciless expanse of baked and blasted rock.

Icebergs float. That seems so normal — but it is not. All substances increase in density from their form as a gas, to a liquid, and finally to a solid. That is why steam rises and most solid things sink. Water is the one and only exception to this rule. If ice did not float, oceans would freeze from the bottom upwards. All aquatic life would die and vast tracts of land would be flooded.

Ice is also incredibly viscous, tough and abrasive. It wears down mountains, scattering their minerals over plains and seas, making the Earth fertile.

Water is also a remarkable solvent, much more so than most other liquids. This allows it to act as a powerful cleanser but also as a base for so much we eat and drink: soups, stews, fruit juices and wine. Within every cell of our body it enables reactions that provide energy and construct vital enzymes. Much more could be said of its remarkable properties — water is clearly the lifeblood of our planet.

Water on Earth

There are more than 1,260 million trillion litres of water on earth. However, only 2.5 per cent of that is fresh water, and of that most (around 70 per cent) is frozen in icecaps and glaciers, or is groundwater. Less than 0.3 per cent is accessible in lakes and rivers. About 5 per cent of the water used to feed the world's seven billion humans is not renewable.

As the global climate warms up, access to clean and fresh water is becoming a problem in some regions. Already 783 million people lack clean water for drinking while another 943

million do not possess toilets or water for personal sanitation. Every year 6-8 million people die from drinking contaminated water.

Some regions, such as the Middle East and Northern Africa, already try to cope with shrinking resources. There are extreme shortages in Algeria, Israel and Qatar. And in April the severe lack of water in Capetown was declared a national disaster.

Even closer to us, Australia is staring at severe shortages. It is the driest of the continents but its citizens each consume 100,000 litres annually, more than any other continent. Perth is the driest city, and is adopting measures to limit water use, while Adelaide and Melbourne could be facing major shortages within the next decade.

Moving to an Ecological Spirituality

Given this background it is tempting to regard water as a commodity — the new gold — an asset with huge economic and political potential, a stimulus for war or enrichment. But I think that God is inviting us to open our eyes to a new vision.

Two great streams of Catholic spirituality emerged after the 16th- and 17th-century Reformations. The first, associated with saints like Margaret Mary Alocoque, Faustina and Thérèse of Lisieux, gave us devotions such as the Sacred Heart and Divine Mercy. In reaction to the preoccupation with personal guilt and sin and the rigour of movements such as Jansenism, the new spirituality celebrated instead the personal love and mercy of God.

The second great stream emerged from the pontificates of Leo XIII and Pius X, and focused on social justice and the more frequent reception of Eucharist.

At first sight, the two may not seem to be linked. However, developing theologies of Eucharist focused increasingly on a response to the hunger of the world and a sense of embodiment and these themes gradually worked their way into public liturgy.

Now, with the publication of Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'* and the ecological movement in our world, we may be moving into a new paradigm wherein God's personal love and the unity of the body of humankind are viewed through an environmental lens. Love and social justice no longer focus just on humans. We are called to experience and live as companions with plants, animals and waterways in a give-and-take of mutual co-dependence. In this new vision, water must enjoy a central place.

Our Bible opens and closes with images of a watery world. In Genesis God breathes to bring order and life out of the turbulent waters (Gen 1:1–2). And four great rivers, Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates, fed the garden of Eden and the Persian Gulf area (Gen 2:10–14). When Adam and Eve sinned they were banished into a desert world.

In Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we read of the great river of life flowing from the throne of the Lamb, making wherever it flows fruitful, and a source of healing (Rev 22:1–5). Then the Exodus story of crossing the Red Sea from slavery to freedom, followed by the story of entering into the promised land crossing the Jordan river, are apt symbols for times of earthly transition: birth, baptism and death that mark our journey as Christians.

In John's Gospel Jesus promised that the waters of life would flow from his breast (Jn 8: 37-9), a promise that began to be fulfilled as blood and water, signs of the Spirit, flowed from his pierced side as he hung on the cross (Jn 20:34).

It is tempting to regard water as a commodity — the new gold — an asset with huge economic and political potential, a stimulus for war or enrichment. But I think that God is inviting us to open our eyes to a new vision.

We might recognise at this time God's invitation to appreciate the gift of water that surrounds and supports our existence. It is not just fundamental to physical life but is a sign of the nourishment, the cleansing and the fruitfulness with which God enriches our lives and all life in our planet.

Neil Vaney SM is a writer and spiritual director now working as pastoral director of the Catholic Enquiry Centre, Wellington.

LIVING WATER in the desert

ALMA CABASSI shares her experience of living with Aboriginal Communities in the Kimberley and hearing how they found water even in severe drought.

a dreamtime creation story . . .

In the Dreamtime two sisters, Mundurr and Gingarrayi came down from the hills to Gulyawurrdjaru (Banana Springs). In their coolamons they carried seeds. They also carried their firesticks with them. These two sisters were Nungurrayi.

There was no water at Gulyawurrdjaru — nothing, only a big rock. The sisters ground their seeds into flour and made johnny cakes. They decided to cook them. Before this, Aboriginal people had never cooked their johnny cakes. They made a fire with their fire sticks and put the johnny cakes on to cook.

All of a sudden, the johnny cakes burst into flames. There was a great noise and explosion and there was light all around. The sisters were frightened and hung on to each other. They were burned to death and turned into two trees. The fire spread. It went under the ground. It was a special Dreamtime fire. It burst through the ground again in several places. Every place where the fire came up there is a water soak.*

This is a foundational story that is told to visitors arriving at Ringer Soak (or Ring of Soaks) Yaruman in the Kimberley. This Community is located 170 kms southeast of Halls Creek in Western Australia. Ringer Soak was the first of the Aboriginal communities where I was called to minister as a teacher and in pastoral care. It was my first real experience of living alongside an ancient race of people who lived simply and travelled lightly.

The people of these traditional language groups travelled lightly because being on the edge of the desert they had to move frequently to survive — unlike those who live near water. We all know what happens when we need to move location regularly. We eventually carry only the bare essentials — not that that has happened for me yet. I envy my colleagues who manage to move around with only small cases and a tiny backpack.

It is interesting that there is no native Australian animal that can carry loads or assist with heavy work. Australian animals were not able to be domesticated to assist people with carrying, digging or pulling. Therefore, the "tribal or family" groups carried everything themselves and their movement was mainly restricted from water hole to water hole. And they shared the waterholes with the animals, which also provided the people with a food source.

Living Water

It was in my early days in the Kundat Djaru Community at Yaruman, Ringer Soak, that I was struck by the women referring to "living water". I heard in their description one of my favourite Scripture passages: "Whoever drinks of the water that *I will give* them *shall* never thirst; but the water that *I will give* them *will* become in them a well of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). The Jaru people called "living water" the water in the springs that never dried up. This water remained all year round even in the drought —

** I was told by one of the senior men some years ago that the johnny cakes exploded because the women had mixed in some different seeds.*

so very different from the waterways that came and went.

So, I found myself on the edge of the desert with the Jaru people who lived simply, travelled lightly and called their water "living water" recognising its deeper meaning for their very lives. It didn't just quench their thirst. It was water that sustained them. It was their source of life.

There has been development in the Community over the years and there are now bores and storage tanks. But visitors to the Community are invited to a special water hole that is a spring, and there they are blessed with the living water, as a ritual of welcome and expression of hospitality. To receive the blessing, the visitor kneels and bows low, and the leader trickles the water over the person's head. It is such a generous ceremony to use precious water for welcome in a very dry land — it somehow humbles the soul and opens the eyes of the heart.

Traditional Ways of Finding Water

The desert people knew where to find water, not only from their song-lines or stories, from oral instruction or visiting groups passing on information, but also by closely observing the bird life and animals and insects. They knew that corellas were never far from water nor were the delightful green budgies or the varieties of finches. In fact, these birds were always within a 15 minute flight of water.

And the people knew of significant rock holes where water lay stored from the wet season. They covered the holes carefully, usually with a flat rock, to keep them free from contamination.

They recognised, too, the tell-tale signs of animals that had found water in seemingly dry creek beds. The animals could smell the water and would scratch around for it. The people would then scoop out the earth by hand or with a coolamon, digging down until they found the water.

A simple and effective way to filter the water was by placing a mesh of grass stalks into the soggy sand — the stalks acted like a sieve, allowing the water to rise but not the sediment, so that it was clear enough to drink.

Survival in Extreme Times

I have been told of two life-saving methods of getting water in times of extreme drought.

One was by squeezing sand frogs that hibernate under the sand in drought and are usually gorged with water. If people are desperate they can dig out a frog and squeeze it to release the fluid. They could release enough fluid to save a person from dying of thirst. When I heard this account I didn't think to ask what happened to the frog once it was squeezed of its fluid. I suspect it gave up its life.

The second method was by using the root of a particular kurrajong tree. Once they had found the tree they looked for a crack in the ground near the tree where they could dig down to expose a root. They would then cut out a length of root, scrape off the bark covering from a section of it and cut the root into shavings. They would then squeeze the shavings to release the fluid and drink it. They would carry the remainder of the root with them on their journey and shave and squeeze it as they needed it.

Communion of Creation

My experience of living with the Jaru people made me aware of their deep connection to the land and their embeddedness in the whole of their environment. They feel these relationships in every sense — a life of oneness in creation. I am grateful to be living with them and learning from their wisdom.

Photos: (left) Angela Gordon and Davina Seela. (above) Aerial view of Ringer Soak at the beginning of the wet season.

Alma Cabassi RSJ, of Italian immigrant parents, has ministered in small rural towns of Western Australia, the mining country of the Pilbra and in schools and communities of the east Kimberley.

Protecting Fresh Water

ROGER ELLIS writes about Caritas's work in the Pacific in assisting communities to protect their water supplies even in times of emergency.

In May 2015, Pope Francis reinforced Pope John Paul II's call for everyone on the planet to undertake an "ecological conversion". In his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si': Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis called on the whole human family to come together to advance sustainable development.

Caritas incorporates sustainable practices into our programmes wherever we can. Pope Francis has underlined the importance of freshwater for all people: "Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights" *(LS* par 30).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 for water is: "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all." Specifically, 6.1 states that: "By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all." And 6.4 says: "By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity."

In the Pacific, drinking water is sourced primarily from rainwater, groundwater and surface water such as rivers and lakes. Major problems arise for communities when cyclones damage their rainwater collection systems, storms contaminate their freshwater pools with sea water, or when droughts affect their water supplies.

The availability of freshwater varies greatly across the Pacific region. However, because many people have traditionally considered water to be abundant, water conservation and efficiency measures are not widely practised — except in times of drought or shortage. For example, we've found that leakage can lose up to 50 per cent of the water in water supply systems.

Roger Ellis is the Community Engagement Manager for *Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand*, the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' agency for justice, peace and development.

Partnering Local Communities

Caritas is involved in working with local communities to help identify local water sources and to promote sustainable uses of water, particularly in the face of climate change effects. The impacts of one-off events, such as a cyclone, mean that pollution, contamination and water wastage are ongoing challenges. The water supplies on coral atolls are particularly vulnerable as they are mainly from collected rain water. The *2016 Caritas State of the Environment Report* noted that the "El Nino weather pattern hit widely across the region. Where food is usually abundant, it became scarce. People were forced to travel long distances for food and water."

Reusing an Abandoned Well

People in some villages in Papua New Guinea (PNG) recently found hope in restoring abandoned water sources. Caritas Coordinator Francis Kemaken of the Diocese of Wewak said people in his area have to cope by finding and using whatever water supplies they could, even though the drought was not as acute as in other parts of PNG. In one parish area, he said people dug drains to lay pipes from a well-hole to the healthcentre in order to maintain their health services. The people had abandoned the well-hole in favour of a creek-water supply from the neighbouring

village. He explained: "Now with the water levels declining, the abandoned well-hole was revisited to be an alternative source of safe, clean, accessible water."

Installing Water Tanks

A Kiribati survey of women from Teitoiningaina (the Catholic Women's Association of Kiribati) found in 2016 that six islands had a reasonably good supply and quality of water. But another six islands had problems with inadequate supply, saltiness, or risk of contamination requiring them to boil all the water before drinking. The Caritas Kiribati Youth Group visited Tabiteuea Meang Island later that year and discovered that 10 of the island's 13 villages had salty or brackish groundwater. They recommended installing rainwater tanks which would help provide freshwater.

Drinking Water Standards in New Zealand

Closer to home a campylobacter contamination in the Havelock North water supply in August 2016 was linked to three deaths and made 5,000 people ill. The outbreak sparked a government inquiry into drinking water infrastructure and has changed water care around the country. A report by New Zealand's Ministry for the Environment and Department of Statistics said 50 of 70 groundwater sites (71 per cent) did not meet the drinking water standards for E. coli at least once, while 47 of 361 sites (13 per cent) failed the drinking water standard for nitrate levels at least once.

Preparedness for Emergencies

Caritas is working with partners in various parts of the world to help ensure that everyone has access to clean, safe drinking water — at all times and particularly in times of disaster. One example is in Tonga which often suffers from cyclones. Their aim to have well-managed water resources and sufficient water for all is being achieved through the rehabilitation and management of community water tanks which act as a back-up water supply for communities. This is helpful from the perspective of both disaster preparedness and also from the perspective of adapting to climate change.

Of course there is still much to be done to achieve sustainable fresh water for all — in the Pacific, around the world and here in Aotearoa New Zealand. The effects of climate change, including extreme weather events, will continue to challenge our traditional understanding about the availability of water and the urgent need to use it wisely. As nation states and local communities begin to adapt to climate change and adopt more sustainable lifestyles, we may come to appreciate the vital importance of water for life on the planet.

"Ka hoa te hunga e haikai ana, e hiainu ana, ki te tika: ka makona hoki ratou" (Mt 5:6).

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied" (Mt 5:6).

Photo supplied by Caritas

I visited five remote Baka villages in the forests of eastern Cameroon which were getting wells for clean water for the first time. The native Baka peoples of Central and Western Africa are commonly referred to as "Pygmies", a name that had some negative connotations but that some people have reclaimed. I was surprised to learn that they are found not only in Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo but also in Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

Living in the forest may be "simple", but it's not easy. Families forage for food: gathering honey, wild yams, berries and other plants; hunt antelopes, pigs and monkeys for meat; and fish. Although migratory, most groups have developed close ties to local settled villagers. Missionaries try to help the Baka transition to a settled life so their children can go to school and have regular healthcare, but it is challenging.

The chief of one village told us they had waited 20 years for water, anticipating its drilling and pump installation in the next week — a dream come true. An added benefit was the safety of the children who must collect water for their families. The forest is dangerous as well as beautiful, which we experienced walking single-file through the dense forest to the place where children go to collect water.

We eventually came to an embankment with steps carved out of the earth and secured with rock. At the bottom was a pipe pouring out muddy water into a low cement trough. Children were bathing, women were washing clothes, and others were filling buckets to carry home.

We continued to four other sites over the next three days. Sister Marianna Ngugu, administrator of a rehab centre for people with disabilities, excitedly showed us the new well and water tower that will furnish water for the numerous hostels and classrooms in her village.

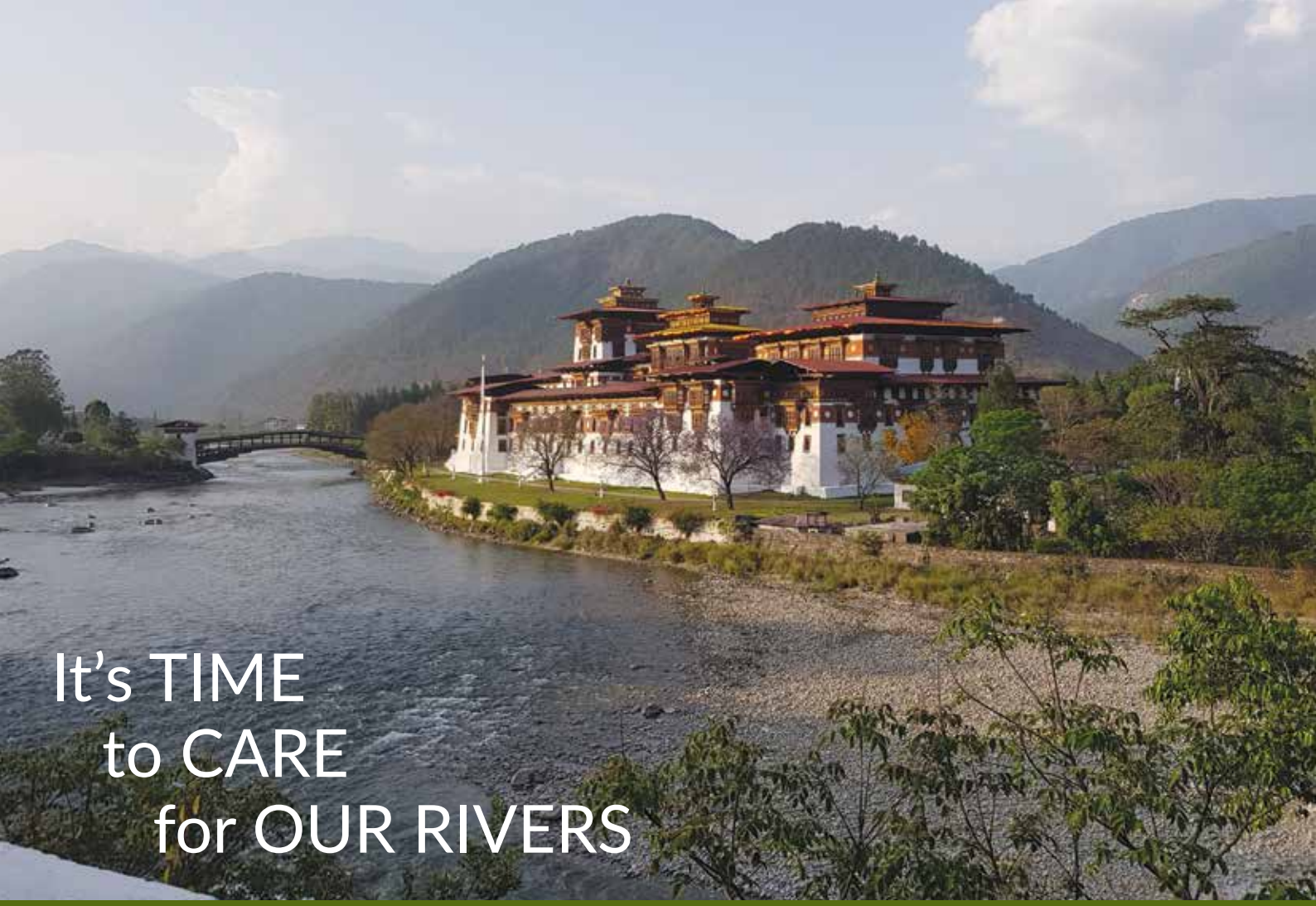
Deeper into the forest we met three Sisters of St Paul de Chartres who have a clinic and a school. We visited the school and the clinic with its new water pumps shared with the villagers.

The joy that these communities feel having water is indescribable. Water is life, but I want to add, water spawns new life, too, and not just for gardens. Every one of the new water points is a seed for new ventures, whether it is sanitation, jobs, more time with family, entrepreneurial ventures, or better nutrition and health. The list is endless.

I know the Sustainable Development Goal for water is that every household in the world will have easy access to clean water by 2030. These wells are a start, but cleanliness is not a given because of the containers used and how the water is transported to homes. There is still much to do to reach these goals.

Abridged and reprinted with permission from the *Global Sisters Report* 21 May 2018.

Joyce Meyer is a Sister of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Global Sisters Report's (GSR) liaison to women religious outside of the United States.



It's TIME to CARE for OUR RIVERS

SONAM PEM was saddened to see the effects of rapid urbanisation as she walked with friends along the Thimphu River flowing through the largest city of Bhutan.

Bhutan is a water-rich country with lots of rivers, streams and lakes. It is famous for its rejection of Gross Domestic Product as a measurement of development, and has adopted instead Gross National Happiness, which prioritises environmental protection, economic development, local governance and cultural preservation. However, assuring there is safe drinking water is a major challenge in Bhutan. The steep terrain creates a huge challenge for accessibility to clean water. In most places, water resources are found at the bottom of gorges and ravines while the human settlements and farmland are located on upper slopes and hilltops. This problem is referred to by the national government as "the problem of plenty". Most of the households and schools in the country are supplied with water directly from these springs, streams and rivers by tapping and storing the water from upstream of settlements.

Rivers under Threat

While water-based sanitation is not the only effective system for hygiene and sanitation, especially in the majority world, we must always consider the effects of our sanitation practices on water bodies.

In some parts of Bhutan, there are dry toilets where no water is required, reducing the demand on water supplies and preventing human waste from making its way into water bodies — important for reducing diarrhoeal diseases.

However, this is not the case in most parts of the country especially in Thimphu, the capital city of Bhutan. Water from the streams and river is directly used for hygiene and sanitation. Indeed, rivers and streams are often over-utilised as both water source and drainage system — which exposes humans to disease-causing infectious agents.

My research in this area leads me to call for an evaluation of the role of rivers in water, sanitation and hygiene and their effects in disease prevention and transmission.

I've found that in all the talk of water, sanitation and hygiene, we often neglect to consider the role of rivers. It is urgent for us to understand that our access to clean water and sanitation in Bhutan is directly related to our protection of our streams and rivers.

Protecting Water Sources

Protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems such as forests, mountains, wetlands and rivers is essential to mitigate water scarcity.

Bhutan's response to climate change included the development of a Water Safety Plan (WSP) — a comprehensive approach to risk assessment and management that includes all steps in the water supply from catchment to consumer.

The WSP is being implemented nationwide and is expected to improve the safety of drinking water supplies in our country. However, in reality, to protect and manage even a small stretch of river has become a challenge in developing towns and cities. The Thimphu River is facing lots of problems due to the activities of the people. The quality of water as it flows through the city is visibly degrading. We are choking our streams and rivers with solid wastes and other contaminants.

Walking along the Thimphu River

I walked along the river from above the city to downstream of the city with Kelly Dombroski, from Canterbury University, and her daughter, Imogen, and we met communities affected by the degraded quality of the river.

It was a big disappointment to me observing the water quality, the activities around the river and hearing from the communities how they were affected by the river pollution. Our country is trying to advocate for and set an example to others through Gross National Happiness and as a steward of nature.

We could see the pristine, clean condition of the upstream river and then the murky, brown condition downstream with plastic waste and garbage along the riverbanks as the river flows through Thimphu city.

We saw that the river receives sewage overflow, grey water from all households and road runoff that contaminates and pollutes the river. Even though new apartments and housing have septic tanks, others such as Indian immigrant construction workers live near the roads and river in informal housing without toilets and they use open defecation into the river.

We left the city and followed the river downstream where we visited a community that has to use the contaminated water for their daily activities, even their drinking water. They told us of how a stream that flows into Thimphu River has greatly reduced in volume and quality. Where once it gave abundant, good water for everyone in the village, now they compete with industry — quarries and factories upstream divert the water for their use and for irrigation in the agricultural fields.

The impact of contaminants now flowing into the river from the factories and quarries has affected the rice paddy fields, rendering them hard because of the clay and sand suspended in the irrigation water. The water is muddy because it has been used to wash sand at the upstream quarries. This means that the community's agricultural productivity is affected.

We could see the pristine, clean condition of the upstream river and then the murky, brown condition downstream with plastic waste and garbage along the riverbanks as the river flows through Thimphu city.

Care and Protection of Water

The rapid urbanisation of Thimphu without adequate infrastructure for sanitation has impacted the water quality. I think we do not value our rivers and streams as our source of fresh drinking water and life, but instead we treat them as drainpipes. Imogen, aged 11, was very moved by seeing water pollution and joining in the conversation with the community as she walked along the river banks. After her visit she wrote a very touching poem.

Water in Thimphu River

Up to the top
of the Thimphu River
the spring trickles down,
clean and pure —
not anymore,
for the rubbish has clogged the stream.
Down to the bottom
of the Thimphu River
the river sits and stews,
the mud up top
not in the banks as it should be.
Care for the stream
of the Thimphu River
and keep it as it was —
clean and pure.

Changing Attitude and Taking Action

The poem tells simply how the river has been degraded over time by the people living around it. Imogen saw and mourns what is happening where those who live closer do not appear to notice. Her poem tells of care for the streams and the river thereby and challenges us to restore the much-degraded river.

For Bhutan and particularly for Thimphu River, it is not too late to restore our river. We need to attend to our activities which contribute to the degradation of the water.

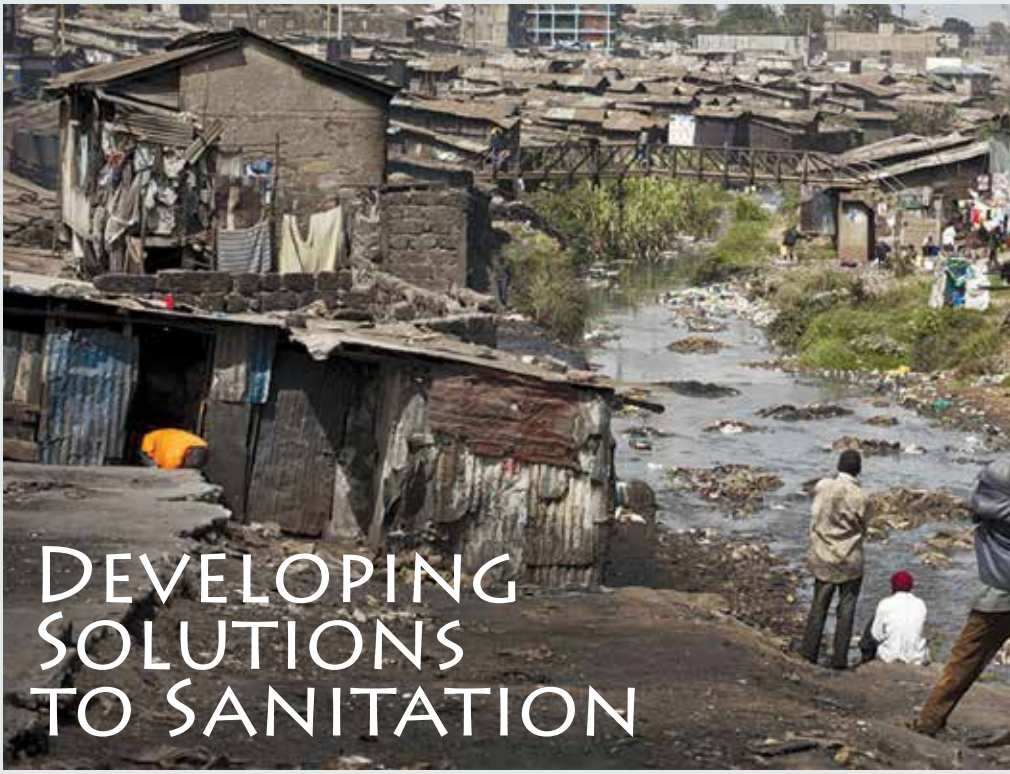
We need to remember and respect the environmental networks, webs and relationships our streams and rivers have with all life — human and other.

We need vigilance and care for our river as the source of water for drinking, washing, sanitation.

We need to be responsible for our rivers and look beyond our own needs to embrace the needs of our rivers.

Photo by Imogen Dombroski.

Sonam Pem from Bhutan studied water resource management, particularly the Thimphu River. She has long experience in environmental issues and went on pilgrimage picking up plastic.



Developing Solutions to Sanitation

KEVIN KIENJA and KELLY DOMBROSKI report on their research and experience with communities finding ways to improve their sanitation practices for the good of all.

Sanitation is about keeping the water supply safe. Development agencies often combine water, sanitation and hygiene into the acronym WASH, to emphasise that these things must be understood together. But sanitation is not just about public health — it is also a cultural practice. In some places, cultural taboos around discussing sanitation lead to practices of open defecation, such as in parts of India. Elsewhere, as in parts of China, the understanding of human waste as "manure" leads to quite different sanitation and agricultural practices. Development practitioners and funders need to be aware that their own practices are *also* culturally embedded and not enact their cultural practices as "correct" and "developed".

Measuring Sanitation

The United Nations tells us that 2.5 billion people in the world are without adequate sanitation, a scary one-third of the world's population. Their sixth Global Goal aims to: "achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations by the year 2030."

But what does it mean to be without adequate sanitation? Technically, it means not having access to appropriate places to dispose of human waste safely to avoid contaminating food supplies. An appropriate place could be anything from a classic long drop to a fancy Japanese toilet with all the bells and whistles and heated seat.

But UN data crunchers don't investigate every long drop in the world to see if it is adequate, so they use "indicators" of sanitation. An indicator is not an actual measure, but an indicative measure — in the way that the number of women in parliament is sometimes used as indicative of — but not a measurement for — gender equality.

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 6) indicator for sanitation is "private flush toilets attached to a septic tank or public system". This is, of course, a quite different measure from actual sanitation. For example, this measure describes many New Zealand camping toileting arrangements as being *without sanitation*. We need to supplement global level indicators with real on-the-ground qualitative research into how sanitation is enacted (or not). In our research we have found a variety of issues and solutions people are using to provide adequate sanitation for themselves and their families.

Kevin and Nairobi

In the informal settlements of Nairobi, Kenya a sanitation problem has persisted for years with little or no improvement It is aggravated because congestion and high poverty levels mean it is not feasible to provide individual household sanitation facilities. A conventional sewer system is costly and requires huge quantities of water to run efficiently. And most residents cannot afford the monthly service fee payable to city authorities.

I found that in one settlement around 90 per cent of residents do not have in-house piped water and relied on water points. To put individual latrines in each household is a huge challenge due to lack of space, costs of regular emptying and the risks to ground water contamination.

Instead Nairobi communities have found other ways to cope. People use shared pit latrines; wrap waste in a plastic bag and toss it (commonly referred to as "the flying toilets"); construct direct discharge toilets along rivers; build communal ablution blocks; and practise open defecation. Women face the additional challenge of disposing of used sanitary pads. This inadequate sanitation has led to the pollution of Nairobi's urban waterways.

As well as addressing sanitation, SDG 6 also hopes to "improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimising the release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally."

In Nairobi almost all rivers traversing the city are heavily polluted

with raw sewage, solid waste and industrial effluent.

> *We know that the way to go is to focus on what people know and are already doing and build solutions on that. The community solved their sanitation issues by working together in a way that was appropriate to their culture and region.*

Even households using conventional sewer connections have indirectly contributed to the pollution of urban rivers, because the sewage treatment plants in the city have exceeded their capacity and discharge partially treated sewage into the rivers. They are bigger pollutors of urban waterways than the informal settlements classed as "without adequate sanitation".

Therefore, it is urgent to address the proper treatment of sewage before it is discharged into the environment by expanding and improving treatment plants before increasing individual sewer connections to households.

The situation in Nairobi shows that SDG 6 needs to include guidelines for sewage treatment plants and how to achieve quality of treated sewage for the good of the communities and the environment.

Kelly and Urban China

I have researched commercial areas in Xining city, China, where many shop owners do not have access to private toilets and adults pay to use public toilets and showers. Many people live "without sanitation" in their shops or in rented rooms in traditional housing, where running water is a tap or handbasin.

I interviewed people with children under five and found that the children generally used potties and basins — even very young babies would go mostly nappy free, urinating on cue when held out over a basin, or defecating onto pieces of newspaper. The newspaper would then be wrapped up and disposed of in the rubbish, which was normally collected daily in commercial areas.

This is not ideal from a sanitation perspective. But is the answer to install toilets in every small shop? Would that make a real difference to people's health or the security of the water supply?

One study on children's growth rates found that the addition of running water, not toilets, improved their rates more.

China has a history of night-soil collectors known as the "honey pot collectors" — and the waste they collected was used as humanure on farms. Might a solution be to provide night-soil containers — something similar to our dog poo containers in New Zealand parks — that could be collected and disposed of separately from other household waste?

We know that the way to go is to focus on what people know and are already doing and build solutions on that.

Kelly and Indonesian Rainforest

I recently visited a community in Kulon Progo, Indonesia that had developed an innovative way to improve sanitation. The people wanted to install squat toilets with septic tanks as their hand-dug longdrop toilets were problematic on the hilly terrain. However, the cost was prohibitive for most families. It was not just the cost of the porcelain squat plate and concrete for the septic tank, but the supplies needed to be brought up the mountain and installed.

Their solution was to draw on a cultural practice of rotating credit. The villagers organised themselves into an *arisan* group, with each family contributing a set amount of money each month. Then they held a draw and several families were selected to be the first to receive the toilets. The community used the practice of *gotong royong* or "sharing labour" to assist one another to build the septic tanks and the bamboo or banana leaf shelters for the toilets. Eventually everyone got a toilet.

The community solved their sanitation issues by working together in a way that was appropriate to their culture and region.

Solutions Found by Communities

We have found that though sanitation is a key issue internationally, we need to understand how people are already managing sanitation. It is too easy for consultants to bring their own standards of what is hygienic.

The water-based systems of sanitation we rely on in New Zealand are shockingly wasteful of drinking water which we flush down the toilet with each visit. Our aim is not for a world where one kind of sanitation exists everywhere — private flush toilets — but where all people have access to clean drinking water and appropriate places to toilet and wash.

Kevin Kienja, an urban and regional planner in water resources management, is working for Tana and Athi Rivers Development Authority, a government parastatal in Nairobi, Kenya.

Kelly Dombroski is a Senior Lecturer in the Geography Department of the University of Canterbury, and a member of the faith community at Ilam Baptist Church, Christchurch.

Photographer Caroline Powell writes:

"Ocean trash is a problem facing every coast, sea, and ocean. This plastic gyre (off Honduras) is tiny compared to the ones in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. It forms when the winds and currents are just right. We do not know where the garbage comes from. Some of the main sources are rivers on the mainland of Honduras and Guatemala but the rest could come from anywhere in Central America, South America, or the Caribbean. Some of the microplastics have probably been floating around for years. But again, we don't really know as there has been very little research done in this region."

A PLASTIC ETERNAL LIFE

BRIDGET CRISP **outlines the problem of disposing of plastic waste and recommends we reduce our plastic footprint.**

The word plastic is increasingly becoming associated with pollution. Plastic is now the second largest environmental disaster on planet Earth — surpassed only by climate change — an ever-growing problem that is entirely of our own making. The product — that scientists and chemical engineers developed in the 1950s and then marketed as cheap, durable and mouldable — now influences almost every facet of our lives, from paint to packaging, from clothing to drinking straws.

The problem with plastic is that it's designed to last. The first 30 years of plastic production was associated with textiles, paints, car interiors and plastic crockery — things we use and reuse and rarely dispose of.

The use of plastic for packaging at that time was almost non-existent. There was a change in the late 1970s and early 1980s when more and more consumer goods began to be packaged in plastic. Plastic packaging soon began to fill rubbish dumps so that more new sites were needed to take our waste. Suitable dumping sites became harder to find so that recycling was encouraged, becoming its own thriving industry.

Recycling

However, recycling can also contribute to plastic pollution. That's right! Recycling, although helping to reduce the amount of rubbish in our waste disposal sites, has created a new and different plastic problem.

When plastic is recycled it becomes an inferior product to what was originally produced. And as well as selling it as an inferior product, recyclers will do one of two things. They will either wrap it between two layers of "new" plastic to make a more complex product, or turn it into fibre for filling goods such as jackets and sleeping bags, or incorporate it into clothing.

The more complex plastic product then becomes more expensive to recycle — which means that recycled plastics are more likely to end up in landfill. And perhaps worse, when the plastic fibres used in clothing and

stuffing are washed, they begin to break up. The result is that minute microfibre threads end up in our waterways, find their way to the ocean where they enter our foodchain if fish consume them.

Plastic Resists Decay

Plastic, designed to last, does not break down. If it does, it is well beyond the life span of humans. Our landfill sites, when full, are covered over by enormous quantities of earth and then recreated as sports fields and parks. The "tip" is forgotten, except for the oldest among us, becoming "out of site, out of mind". Most of us believe that our rubbish will break down into the soil.

We had a reality check in February when a storm exposed a Greymouth landfill site close to the coast that had been filled in over 20 years ago. Suddenly thousands of 30-40 year-old plastic bags still full of rubbish became a threat to the coastal habitat. There was no sign in the exposed rubbish of any decay in the plastic waste.

Single-Use Plastic Bags

Plastic bags belong to the category of soft plastics: they're not rigid and we can crunch them up easily. And most soft plastics are also single-use plastics — used once and then discarded. It is only recently that a few companies have begun to recycle soft plastics. These companies are generally working with supermarkets, which offer soft plastic recycling areas to the public to dispose of their plastic shopping bags, as many council recycling contractors will not take them.

Of all plastics, plastic bags and plastic straws are highlighted as most damaging to the environment and other-than-human species.

We have seen the images of plastic bags, bottles, etc. floating below the surface forming swathes of trash with lighter plastics on top forming vast plastic islands in the world's oceans — including the Great Pacific garbage patch.

We've been saddened by photos of plastic in the stomachs of whales and turtles who had mistaken them for their food, jellyfish. As these creatures swallow plastic bags their stomachs become full of plastic and as they have no way to break it down, they starve.

And maybe we've seen the graphic images of marine ecologists and veterinarians removing plastic straws lodged in the nostrils of turtles.

We realise that our seemingly wonderful inventions have unforeseen diasatrous consequences for other life on Earth. We are causing pain for and destruction of other life.

These movements offer hope, and an alternative to apathy or despair — to the fruitless mindset that says "the problem is too big", and "there's nothing we can do about it".

Changing Our Habits

Social media has its benefits — especially for informing us about the plastic scourge. The generation that grew up being connected to the World Wide Web is spreading concern about pollution and environmental destruction through their networks.

The mainstream media news has not given extensive coverage to the growing problem of plastic pollution in our world's oceans until very recently. It has generally been a small story lost in the middle of the newspaper or added to fill-in time during news bulletins. However, this is beginning to change as stories, images and the extent of the problem sweep the internet.

What is especially encouraging is the prevalance on social media of solutions — there is an evident desire and drive to do something to fix the problem. We are seeing movements like *4Ocean.com* through which consumers can support the clean up of plastic and other waste from our oceans and beaches by buying a bracelet made from the waste collected. Or *theoceancleanup.com*, an initiative that deploys booms across ocean currents to capture floating plastic — again the collected waste is made into products of a higher quality than the single-use plastics that created the problem.

These movements offer hope, and an alternative to apathy or despair — to the fruitless mindset that says "the problem is too big", and "there's nothing we can do about it".

They encourage us to shift our attitudes around plastic consumption, from convenience to stewardship and care. This calls us to take responsibility for the waste we generate when we purchase items. And as our awareness develops so will our attitude of stewardship. Every new person and group converted adds to the movement of people committed to working through the issue of plastic waste.

Starting Today

The following tips may help in reducing our plastic waste footprint. We could try to become plastic free and carry our own bags with us when we shop.

- When purchasing a consumer good refuse the plastic bag.
- Go plastic straw free. Refuse the plastic straw.
- Use cloth or net bags when buying fruit and vegetables and buy loose produce, not stuff pre-packaged in plastic.
- Take a recyclable cup if we are having coffee or tea on the go.
- Use non-plastic containers wherever possible.
- Return containers for berries, tomatoes, etc. to the Farmers Market to be reused.
- Look up other tips on the internet.

And we can take stock of the amount of plastic in our homes. Are we able to change any for a natural alternative? We can begin with one item at a time, until it becomes our norm. And remember to congratulate ourselves every time we change a habit. After all, we are helping to reduce that plastic mountain through our small steps.

Bridget Crisp RSM is the NZ coordinator for Mercy Global Action and works part-time for Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand.

In Light of Recent Events

We are not alone. At the level of atoms
we are trees, grass, sky, we are far planets,

we are blood and bone and dirt;
we arise from this earth.

May the rivers pray for us
in rushing, bouldery stanzas,

may the mountains implore for us
with peaks and flanks, their thrashing grasses,

scree slopes sighing
sandstone, greywacke, limestone, schist.

May the trees sing out for us from the skins
of leaves and bark, may the earth under our feet press

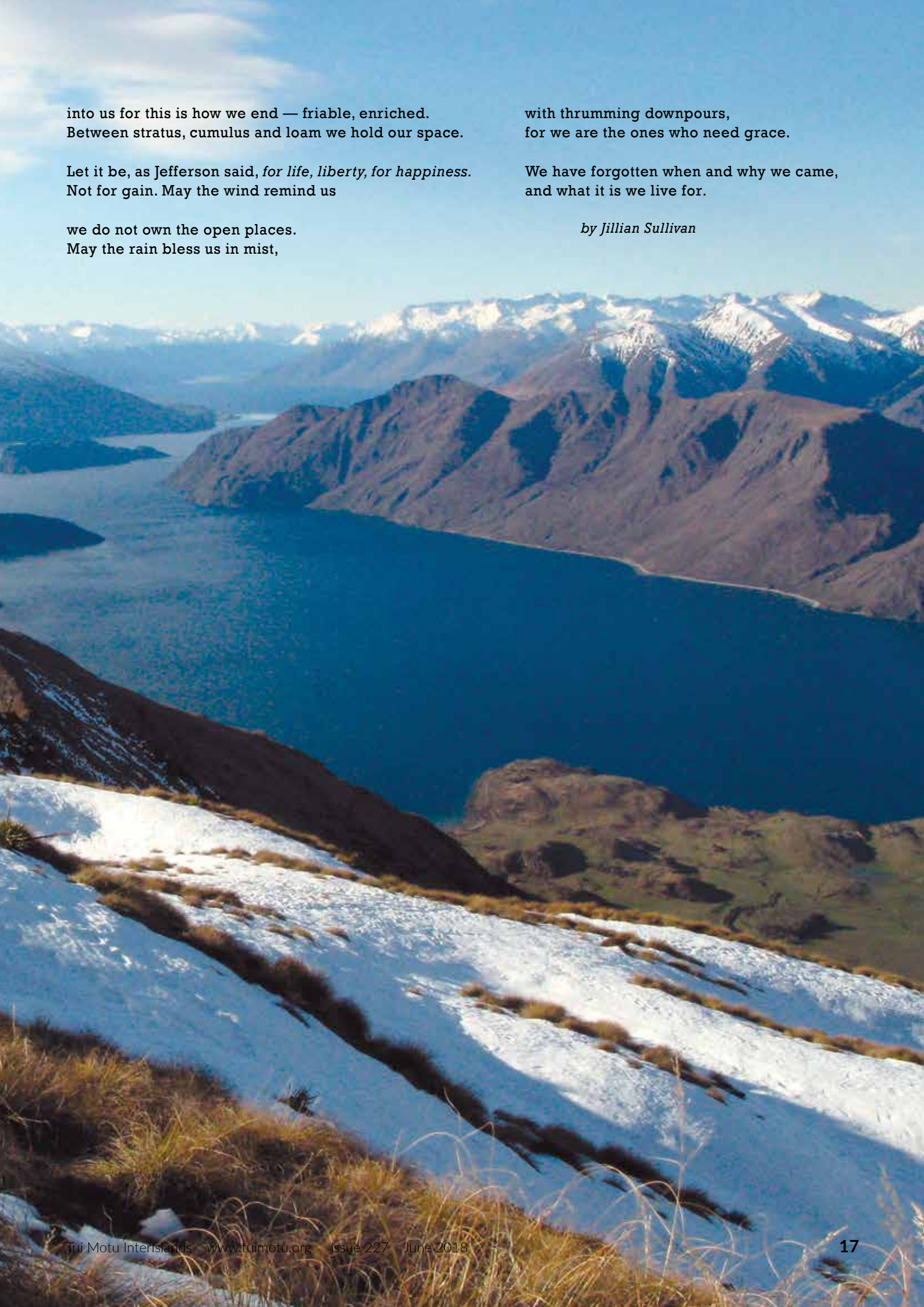
into us for this is how we end — friable, enriched.
Between stratus, cumulus and loam we hold our space.

Let it be, as Jefferson said, *for life, liberty, for happiness.*
Not for gain. May the wind remind us

we do not own the open places.
May the rain bless us in mist,
with thrumming downpours,
for we are the ones who need grace.

We have forgotten when and why we came,
and what it is we live for.

by Jillian Sullivan



REJOICE AND BE EXCI

As I began to read Pope Francis's Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Exult)*, I couldn't help a rueful smile, recognising my own prejudice. I feel rather disconnected from the word holy. In the midst of ordinary life, I don't often ponder HOLINESS as a personal aspiration. I do strive to live by gospel values and value being one of God's pilgrim people, but holiness feels a bit beyond me. Perhaps, too, the word has acquired some awkward connotations — obedient, quiet, well-behaved and compliant, not so much like the woman I've grown to be.

> *Holiness looks different in different people. Each must follow their own way of answering God's invitation. The essence of this holiness is love — courageous, unconditional, all-embracing love and holy doesn't mean perfect!*

Pope Francis addresses my concerns. He asks us to hear anew that we are all called to follow a path to holiness and, acknowledging the challenges, he gives relevant and practical advice on how to proceed. It is not a docile option at all. We read that God does not want us to settle for a bland, mediocre existence (par 1).

Holiness looks different in different people. Each must follow their own way of answering God's invitation. The essence of this holiness is love — courageous, unconditional, all-embracing love and holy doesn't mean perfect! Pope Francis reassures us that holiness "will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy… you will be faithful to your deepest self. To depend on God sets us free from every form of enslavement and leads us to recognise our great dignity" (par 32).

The Beatitudes give clear yet challenging direction regarding holiness. In many respects the path they indicate goes against the flow of contemporary thinking and living. Pope Francis suggests we allow Jesus's words "to unsettle us, to challenge us and to demand real change in the way we live" (par 66). We are asked to examine whether our security resides in wealth (par 67) or whether we try to live simply and share in the lives of those most in need (par 70). Do our pride and vanity cause us to think and act with an air of superiority? (par 71, 72). Does our pursuit of entertainment, pleasure, and diversion blind us to the suffering of others? (par 75, 76). Do we long for justice for the poor, the weak, the most vulnerable? (par 79). Do we try to understand and forgive others? (par 81). Do we keep our hearts free of all that tarnishes genuine love of God and neighbour? (par 86). Do we sow peace all around us? (par 89). Can we accept all this even though it may cause us problems? (par 94).

The Beatitudes culminate in the call to recognise Christ in suffering humanity (par 96). Pope Francis states strongly that it is his duty to ask Christians to accept the demands of Jesus to care for the suffering without any "ifs or buts" that could lessen the force of these demands (par 97).

Pope Francis describes five signs of holiness which he considers important in the context of today's culture. The first sign is "Perseverance, Patience and Meekness". My concern for women, long taught that to be holy is to be accepting and uncomplaining, is slightly alleviated by an acknowledgement that "at times, precisely because someone is free of selfishness, he or she can dare to disagree gently, to demand justice or to defend the weak before the powerful, even if it may harm his or her reputation" (par 119).

Encouraging, also, is the sign described as "Boldness and Passion" in which we read: "We need the Spirit's prompting lest we be paralysed by fear and excessive caution, lest we grow used to keeping within safe bounds. Let us remember that closed spaces grow musty and unhealthy" (par 133). "Complacency is seductive; it tells us that there is no point in trying to change things, that there is nothing we can do, because this is the way things have always been … We 'let things be', or as others have decided they ought to be … Let us rethink our usual way of doing things" (par 137).

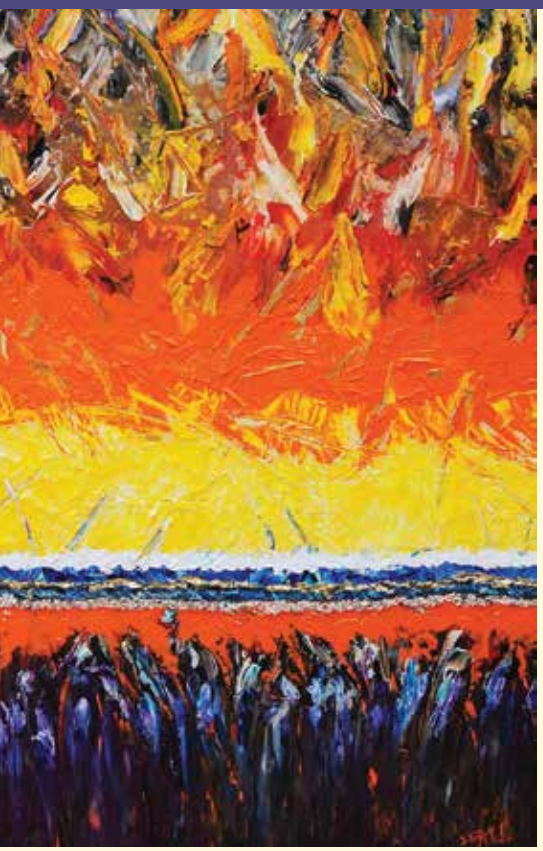
Throughout, Pope Francis encourages us to be vigilant in examining ourselves about our motivation and about possible aberrations in our belief. "I ask all Christians not to omit, in dialogue with the Lord, a sincere daily examination of conscience" (par 169).

Although we must each respond to the call to holiness, the goal is to be a Holy People. May our Church be holy.

Mary Thorne and husband Russell live in Papakura and are coming to terms with retirement. They have many projects awaiting the time to begin.

TED

We asked MARY THORNE and NEIL DARRAGH to respond to Pope Francis's new exhortation to all Christians, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, on the call to holiness in today's world.



Pope Francis's "modest goal", as he calls it, in this Exhortation is to re-propose the call to holiness in a practical way for our time. He does this in an invitation that is like a symphony in three movements.

The first movement presents us with a single strong theme: everyone, all of us, is called to *holiness*. There is no special status in the Church or in society that is holier than others. He suggests, too, that holiness, while it may sometimes call for great heroism or radical decisions, will normally grow in us through small gestures — every minute of our lives can be a step along the path to holiness. We can learn from saints, both the "canonised" saints and the "saints next door" — the people we meet every day. The bottom line, though, is that each of us has to discern our own path using our own God-given gifts rather than try to imitate someone else.

The second movement is an answer to the question most of us will have been asking all through the first movement: *What is holiness?* Francis is clear in his answer: the Beatitudes which begin Jesus's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel (Mt 5:1-12) are like a Christian's identity card. To be "holy" is to be "blessed" or "happy" like the people described in the Beatitudes who are poor in spirit, are gentle, mourn, hunger and thirst for justice, are merciful, pure in heart, peace-makers, and, yes, persecuted for justice's sake. And the final test for what it means to be holy lies in Matthew's last judgement story (Mt 25:31-46): "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

The third movement in Francis's re-proposing of the call to holiness seeks to translate that biblical answer into a modern day answer. Here he highlights *five spiritual attitudes* or "signs of holiness in today's world" which he considers great expressions of love for God and neighbour that are particularly important in today's culture.

1. Perseverance, patience and meekness. Holiness has a solid grounding in the God who loves us; it is an inner strength to persevere amid life's ups and downs.
2. Joy and a sense of humour. Holiness, though remaining completely realistic, radiates a positive and hopeful spirit.
3. Boldness and passion. Holiness is enthusiasm, an apostolic fervour, the freedom to speak out.
4. In community. Growth in holiness is a journey in community, side by side with others.
5. In constant prayer. Holiness consists in a habitual openness to the transcendent, expressed in prayer and adoration.

Through these major movements of the Exhortation are woven more negative but realistic themes about the "enemies" of holiness and the dangers in today's culture. In this mood, the short final chapter is concerned with spiritual combat and discernment.

This whole Exhortation is focused on *personal* spiritual growth. It seldom expands into the wider implications of holiness for the Church, the wider society, or planet Earth. It often quotes holy women, for example, yet does not expand into the implications of this for a Church which severely limits the active participation of women. It emphasises that there are no statuses holier than others yet does not address the effects of clericalism in the Catholic Church today. It alludes to but does not spell out the implications of this personal holiness for social justice or care of the Earth — topics on which Pope Francis has already produced major documents.

> *The bottom line is that each of us has to discern our own path using our own God-given gifts rather than try to imitate someone else.*

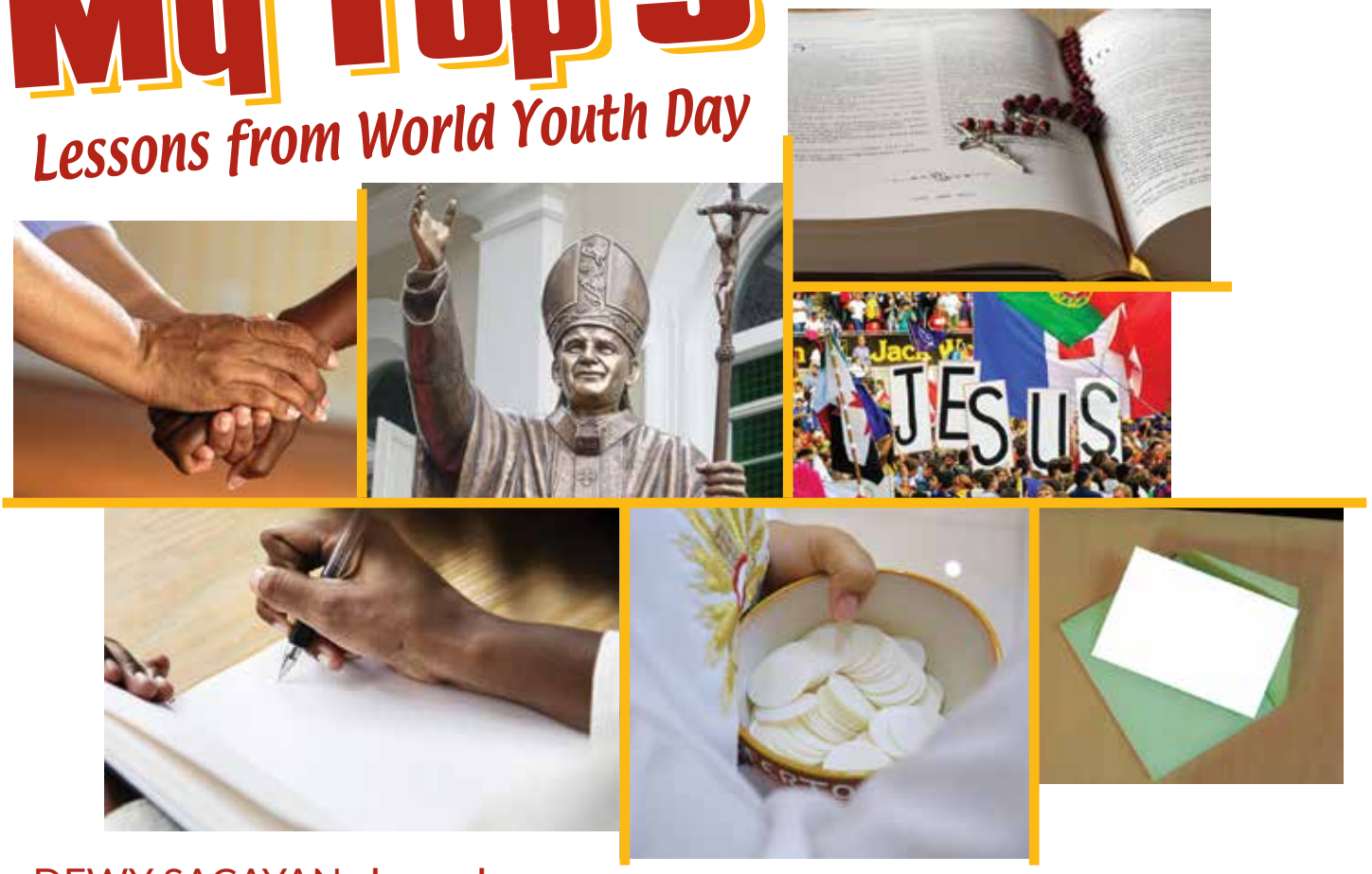
Yet this strong single focus on personal spiritual growth means that the Exhortation is more readable and more coherent than previous major papal documents. This is something for which we can be thankful. We might remain just a little uneasy nevertheless about the idea of "today's culture" (a single common culture?) that is an important background to this Exhortation. It will be up to us rather than to the pope to work out how his "spiritual attitudes" can be played, not so much in tune with a single "todays culture", but with the several *different cultures* that are such intimate impulses in our spiritual growth and our relationships today.

Painting: *Journey Through our Sunburnt Land* by Ida Ernhardt © Used with permission www.generations-art.com

Neil Darragh is a pastor, writer, and theologian in the Diocese of Auckland with a long-term interest in the impact of the Christian Gospel in New Zealand society.

My Top 3

Lessons from World Youth Day



DEWY SACAYAN shares how the experiences and friends she made at World Youth Day enrich and encourage her faith in everyday life.

Going to World Youth Day has become a rite of passage for many young Catholics. It is a way of finding out more about our spirituality through meeting our peers from all over the world, discerning vocations and celebrating the mysteries with the Pope.

WYD with Family

To a certain extent, it has become a family tradition for me and my siblings to attend World Youth Day (WYD). Our first WYD was in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. We went as pilgrims with other Aucklanders. Our quaint group of 17 allowed us to travel in one bus, and to be as flexible as possible about where we would camp the night or which festival people we would like to go to. More importantly, our little group meant that local Brazilians in Guaratingueta were able to shower us with love through opening their homes, dancing and feeding us good food!

Our second WYD was in Krakow, Poland. My twin sister and I went as volunteers. I was a field journalist for the international content team while Dawn, my twin sister, was based at the airport where she was in charge of welcoming bishops and pilgrims.

World Youth Day Krakow was an exhilarating experience as we were literally surrounded with inspirational saints and history. As volunteers, we were able to visit different solemn monasteries and beautiful churches whenever we wanted and needed to pray. My favourite experience was celebrating Mass and Reconciliation at the Divine Mercy centre. Practising the sacrament of Reconciliation made it even more special since it was 2016, the Year of Mercy, and we were at the heart of mercy.

These two experiences allowed us to gain new perspectives on our faith but, most importantly, we made new friends who have helped us to grow spiritually.

In terms of spiritual growth, WYD gave me three main lessons which I will have for the rest of my life.

Practising Reflection

First, I learnt the importance of reflection. Before going to WYD, I kept a journal where I diarised my journey, prayers and worries. Keeping a journal meant that I committed one or two hours to reflect back on the day and be grateful. It was also a moment where I could stop and start afresh for the next day.

We millennials often over-fill our days and end up

Dewy Sacayan is an avid volunteer for the Church especially in youth leadership, a climate change activist and a newly-admitted lawyer in Auckland.

having "The Busy Syndrome". We can spend hours on social media and yet it can be a mission to sit still and find peace and quiet for an hour, or even half an hour.

I definitely suffer from bad FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) so I tend to say yes to all opportunities even if it means I'm exhausted by the end of the day — which means I sleep as soon as I sit to reflect. But although I don't want to live with regrets, I'm trying to remind myself of the flipside to FOMO: there's no point to all these experiences if I'm not able to remember them. So I'm learning to embrace the silence and reflect.

Discerning Vocation

The second lesson I learnt is the significance of asking for your vocation from friends and the Religious. When I went to WYD in Rio de Janeiro, I was too young and naïve to think about my future as a Catholic. All I knew was to have fun and live in the moment. But we are given a purpose in life and we are called to listen and to follow God's plans for us. Knowing my vocation is a way to give meaning to my life and to see my 9-5 job as not just work but as part of my identity or calling.

I don't want to live with regrets. I'm trying to remind myself there's no point to all these experiences if I'm not able to remember them. So I'm learning to embrace the silence and reflect.

I found WYD in Krakow a gathering of vocations. Poland has a tragic history and yet it is rising above it. In almost every corner, we found monasteries and churches devoted to saints who had found their calling as priests and religious — St John Paul II, St Maximillian Kobe and Sr Maria Faustina to name a few. Being near to inspirational people who were witnesses to God and learning about their lives was an overwhelming experience. It showed me how important discernment really is.

Discernment is a funny concept. You may not know how to discern or even what discernment is when you start out. I certainly knew nothing about it before WYD Krakow! A good friend — who trained as a seminarian and recently got married — told me something that has stuck with me: "Discerning for God is consciously choosing to love. After all, all vocations are rooted in love and in God. It is only when you feel at peace with yourself and in your situation that you realise that this may be your vocation."

Finding my vocation was a rollercoaster ride. I prayed and accepted all opportunities to be with friends and the Religious. I joined youth groups where I met newlywed couples, asking them how they found each other through the faith. I stayed with long-married friends and learned about their family life. I built rapport with a Carmelite nun. We would have tea and I would receive counsel from her. I even lived in a secular city surrounded with non-believers to burst my bubble — that in itself was a form of discernment as it helped me choose love over anything. My conversations with all of my friends — living with them and seeing their daily lives — gave me a good sense of my own ongoing vocation discernment. I have learned that it is not until I consciously open my life to listening to God's plan that I will find what I am looking for.

Support of Friends

My third lesson is the importance of keeping in touch with friends for fellowship. One of my friends said that WYD is the Woodstock for Catholics. I think it is more than that — it is a community. It is a place where like-minded young people come together for one main reason — love for God.

Nowadays, making friends is easy but keeping in touch is difficult. Although social media is great for keeping in touch, it can be a bit superficial. This is why I write and send postcards! And after coming home from WYD, opening my mailbox or going to the post office has never been such fun — reading pages of handwritten letters fills my heart.

My friends reinvigorate my faith every time I face challenges or spiritual dryness. The sisterhoods I have made and the friends who I have visited in their homes during my European trip are a tremendous testament to our Church.

I feel privileged and grateful to have experienced WYD and I encourage young Catholics to attend it if they have the opportunity. I have learned so much, and it has been wonderful to see how big a part youth play in the Church. It is a rite of passage, but more importantly, it is an elating experience because of the priceless memories you will make.

See you at WYD in Panama in 2019!

God's Work in seeds

KATHLEEN RUSHTON **interprets two parables in Mark 4:26-34 — the seed that grows by itself and the mustard seed.**

The ministry of Jesus in Galilee (Mk 1:14-8:30) divides into three sections. Each ends with people making a decision about Jesus and the *basileia* (reign) of God. In the first section (Mk 1:14-3:6), scribes question why Jesus is eating with tax collectors and sinners (Mk 2:16). Pharisees question why he is not fasting (Mk 2:18), why his disciples are plucking grain on the Sabbath (Mk 2:24) and keep watching to see if he cures on the Sabbath (Mk 3:2). Their decision is to conspire with the Herodians to destroy him (Mk 3:6). The next section (Mk 3:7-6:6a), which is the focus of this reflection, is about Jesus and his new family who hear the word of God, accept it (Mk 4:20) and decide to follow him (Mk 6:6). The third section focuses on the disciples (Mk 6:6b-8:30) and ends with Peter declaring: "You are the Messiah" (Mk 8:29).

"Galilee of the Gentiles"

The two agricultural parables appeal to the hearers' experience of everyday life and their wider context. Jesus's hearers are the ordinary folk of Galilee. Matthew refers to "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Mt 4:15). This phrase indicates that Galilee, which is comprised of Zebulun and Naphtali, land God gave to the people (Deut 34:1-4), had for generations been conquered, invaded and was currently under the Empire of Rome.

Galilee was ruled by Antipas (4BCE-39CE), son of Herod the Great and also called Herod. He was raised in Rome and later the Emperor *(basileus)* bestowed on him the title of tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. Greek culture had spread across the region. One of Jesus's disciples, Philip, had a Greek name. Cities were renamed with Greek or Roman names. Antipas supported the building of the new cities of Sepphoris and Tiberias in Galilee. The Herodians, who are associated with the Pharisees (Mk 3:6; 12:13), were local elites who supported the Herodian rulers in their general policy of government and in the social customs they introduced from the Empire *(basileia)* of Rome. Although opposed politically to the Pharisees, they participated with them in the persecution of Jesus.

The changing nature of social, ecological and economic life under Herodian rule and its Roman overlord affected Galilean peasant farmers and villagers greatly. This mix of imperial and political factors meant the resources of the land were not shared equally by all who lived in the region as was intended in the ideals laid out in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. In the ancient Mediterranean world the landscape usually provided the key to the religious concerns of the locals. So the parables of Jesus come from a religious imagination earthed in the world of nature and the human struggle with it, while at the same time being grounded deeply in the religious traditions of Israel.

17 June:
RL: Eleventh Sunday Ordinary Time Mark 4:26-34
RCL: Fourth Sunday after Pentecost Mark 4:26-34

The New Family of Jesus

A series of parables and sayings (Mk 4:1-34) are addressed to the new family of Jesus. Their responses had contrasted with those of the elites as Jesus travels the Galilean countryside and waterfront. Not the rich and powerful but fishers, a healed man, the mother-in-law of Peter, a leper, a man who was paralysed, Levi, the twelve and those affected by the powerful, comprise the new family

of God: "Whoever does the will of God is my mother and my brothers and sisters" (Mk 3:35). God as creator informs Jesus's use of biblical tradition. Israel's God as the creator could be trusted to make all things right in the present as God did in the Psalms and prophets.

The parables of the seed that grows by itself (Mk 4:26-9) and the mustard seed (Mk 4:30-32) draw on the experience of farmers growing food. Grain — wheat and barley — were basic foods. Mustard seeds were used for seasoning or in healing remedies. The leaves were eaten raw or cooked. Yet do these parables tell of farmers' experience? There is no inclusion of the hardships of preparing the earth — ploughing, harrowing, arid earth, tending, weeding, protecting from insects and disease. Absent, too, is mention of the toil for landlords, struggles of tenant farmers, taxes, debt, enslavement and dispossession.

The Care of God as of Old

Those who heard the first parable (found only in Mark's Gospel) are not pressed to act (Mk 4:.26-29). Actions of sowing and reaping are recorded. The emphasis, however, is on the people of the land's reverent wait. These people walking through or alongside a ploughed field saw the plants and the potential food as God's creative work. This connection was on their lips and in their hearts for praise of God and creation are at the core of the Psalms and Jewish prayer. The plants and the processes of Earth are agents revealing God's mercy. Both parables extend that awe-filled, interconnected way of seeing all that is, as belonging, to the reign *(basileia)* of God.

The main character is not the sower or reaper but the seed which ripens despite all the forces stacked against it. Central to this parable is the wonder of creation. In the mysterious, benign earth is found the care of God as of old. The reign of God is about the person of God, not a place.

The farmer who had scattered the seed on the earth (Mk 4:26) goes about his ordinary life "night and day" in the Jewish rhythm of time where sunset is the beginning of the new day (Mk 4:27). He does not understand how the seed grows. The Earth produces growth "of itself" *(automatē)* without visible cause (Mk 4.28). The energy of the seed is unexplained. The focus is the working of the natural processes of Earth which transform the seed.

This parable directs the reader to the wonder of seeing the work of God and the Earth with new eyes. While other parts of the Gospel stress the hardships of life on the land, this parable creates peace and composure for weary people living under foreign occupation because it shows what happens when God is totally in charge of life and right relations exist. Through the agency of the seed, readers discover that so, too, the *basileia* of God develops at God's initiative and its growth is unexplained and unseen.

In the second parable, too, there is no mention of a human agent. A mustard seed, the main character, is sown (Mk 4:32). The end is in the beginning; the great in the small; the present is in motion — though its development is hidden and insignificant. It grows "into the greatest shrub of all and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in shade" (Mk 4:32). This mysterious saying was well-known (cf. Ps 104:12; Ezekiel 17:23). The image of the world tree in whose branches birds find shelter, was widely used as an imperial symbol of the empire *(basileia)*. Is Mark's shrub suggesting a different quality for God's cosmic empire *(basileia)*?

How can we reflect on these parables today, to understand where the seed of the care of God as of old is growing — though it grows unseen and hidden? Might we have to choose, too, between the *basileia* of Rome — the conquest and occupation of peoples — and the *basileia* of God?

Painting: ***A Mustard Seed*** by Piety Choi ©
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Kathleen Rushton RSM lives in Ōtautahi Christchurch where, in the sight of the Southern Alps and the hills, she continues to delight in learning and writing about Scripture.

relationships disrupted

Gen. 3:7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.
8 And they heard the sound of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of God among the trees of the garden. *9 But God called to the man and said, "Where are you?" 10 And the man said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." 11 God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." 13 Then God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

14 Then God said to the serpent,
"Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.
15 I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel." . . .

Elaine Wainwright is a biblical scholar specialising in eco-feminist interpretation and is currently writing a Wisdom Commentary on Matthew's Gospel.

ELAINE WAINWRIGHT **points to ecological questions we can reflect on when we read Genesis 3:7-15.**

The First Reading from the Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Gen 3:9-15) highlights an issue inherent in our lectionaries. Our Scriptures are written predominantly in the form of lengthy narratives or poetry while our lectionary readings tend to be short selections from the Scriptural texts. And it requires a significant literary and theological wisdom to make the selections meaningful. Such wisdom does not seem to have informed the choice of opening verse for the First Reading of the Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Gen 3:9-15). As the fuller text of Gen 3:1-15 makes evident, Gen 3:9 cannot be separated from at least Gen 3: 8 given the connective "and" at the beginning of Gen 3:9; and, narratively, Gen 3:17 provides the broader context for both verses and what follows in Gen 3: 9-15.

These familiar texts have a long history of interpretation. Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, recognises that "biblical texts are to be read in their contexts with an appropriate hermeneutic" (par 67) and the encyclical invites us to use an ecological hermeneutic, in the face of the current degradation of Earth and all its constituents and people.

Pope Francis notes further that "the creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain, in their own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality." He goes on to lay

out what he sees as "three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God (the Holy), with our neighbour (the Human) and with the Earth itself (Habitat)" (par 66) (my parenthesis). These three categories give significant lens for an ecological reading of biblical texts.

The immediate literary context for Gen 3:9-15 is verses 7-8. First, the woman and man find that on eating the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden "their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked" (Gen 3:7). The actions awaken a new consciousness. They see both the world and each other in a new way — not with the innocence of before but with a knowing that has them recognise their nakedness. Their new knowing also calls for a response, and so they take "fig leaves" from their habitat to function as loincloths — habitat and human function together to seek to restore right relationships.

Norman Habel *(Earth Bible Commentary Series)* says of this new state that they are "no longer 'simple' and innocent". Rather they are "on the way to wisdom", but Gen 3:8 makes it evident that the journey toward a new wisdom is now treacherous, marked by the experience of estrangement from God (hiding themselves among the trees) and from their naked human bodies (sewing fig leaves together).

We have brought "enmity" between the Earth, its waters and all its resources because we have not respected the right relationships established by God. However this "enmity" could be reversible. The way forward will be challenging and conflictual, but there is hope.

The ecological reader will recognise in the choice made by the man and woman of Gen 3 a violation of the triad of right relationships between habitat, human and holy. This echoes through Gen 3:8–13. Verse 8, for instance, evokes the *sound* of God *walking in the garden in the cool of the day*, a powerful image of right relationship between habitat and holy. In this same context, the human couple hide from the presence of God, using the trees as their camouflage, thus highlighting the rift their actions have caused in that same triad of habitat, human and holy. The conversation which follows between God and the human couple in Gen 3:9-13 widens this rift.

The Holy One begins the conversation, asking the male where he is in the garden, indicating that there has been a break-down in relationships. Habitat is no longer a place of right relationship but of disjuncture. The man is afraid of his nakedness and he hides. He also sets up a cycle of blame as the Holy One questions whether he has broken the boundaries of right relationship by eating what was prohibited. The woman joins the cycle, blaming the serpent. These verses call for significant reflection as we seek to address the spiralling devastation that our choices are causing in our habitat and our responsibility for that devastation.

The harshest language characterising the breakdown of right relationships is directed at the serpent: "Cursed are you" (Gen 3:14). This is confronting language that can alert contemporary ecological readers to the horror of the ecological degradation of our day and to human responsibility for that degradation. How challenging it would be for us to receive as severe a divine critique as that directed to the serpent of Genesis 3. We are responsible for the breakdown of right relationship with so much of our habitat, Earth.

We have contaminated Earth's waters and brought degradation to much of its land. We have brought "enmity" between the Earth, its waters and all its resources because we, like the serpent, have not respected the right relationships established by God.

However, this "enmity" could be reversible as Gen 3:15 suggests. The way forward will be challenging and conflictual, but there is hope.

Gen 3:9-15 is a "poetic" text evoking new meanings when we read it in new contexts — the contemporary ecological crisis being one of them. Let us take time with this text in our own contexts so that it may open up new meanings and responses for us to the radical challenges of our day, in particular those coming from Earth and Earth creatures.

Painting: ***Adam and Eve*** by John Powell (Jamaica) © Used with permission
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Email: johnpowellpaintings@gmail.com

HARVESTING THE FOG

It's not difficult to conjure up an image of the Sahara Desert, the same undulating crests and valleys of sand stretching beyond the horizon in all directions, not a drop of water in sight. At 9.2 million sq kms the Sahara is beautiful in its vastness, but it is challenging terrain, even for the unfortunate camels tasked with carrying us across the Moroccan dunes.

Conditions are no less punishing when we leave the desert. Moving westward toward the coastline, the sand surrenders to dust, the heat to nightfall, but the exsiccation does not relent. The heart of the country, it seems, is bone dry.

Indeed the situation in Morocco has worsened significantly in recent decades. Today the nation's water supply sits at just a fifth of half a century ago. Its agricultural industry is heavily reliant on capricious rainfall while the absence of a functioning sanitation network compromises already scarce resources.

Geography has all but defeated conventional efforts to solve the nation's water crisis. Moroccans are more generously scattered around the country than its limited precipitation. Disparate communities dot the countryside and plague infrastructure efforts, while accessing major underground water sources remains wholly uneconomical.

This predicament flashes by the car window as I leave the intimidating Saharan frontier behind on my way to Marrakech. On the way I pass through central Morocco and see some of the areas hardest hit by water inadequacy.

With less than 112 millimetres of rain a year in this part of Morocco, it seems almost a cruel joke that air pressure and currents result in low hanging cloud cover for half the year. It's little relief for the local Amazigh people who suffer increasingly frequent droughts. The burden lies heavier on the women who every day spend more than three hours finding water for their families.

And concerns about water only compound other daily anxieties. Ecological pressures, such as scant topsoil, limit local economic opportunities and breed poverty. The stubborn cloud coverage produces a lingering fog that prevents rainfall, and intensifies the humidity that rusts farm equipment and causes disease.

This is an area that typifies many of the dilemmas currently facing the water poor. But, as they say, necessity is the mother of all invention, and in the face of this adversity, Moroccans have proved ingenious.

As I drive through the area I spy Mount Boutmezguida where one project, named Dar Si Hmad, has its head in the clouds. By installing giant nets on top of the summit, locals have been able to extract the moisture from the maddening fog as it passes through them, creating a reliable supply of clean water. In total it produces over 6,000 litres of drinkable fresh water each and every day.

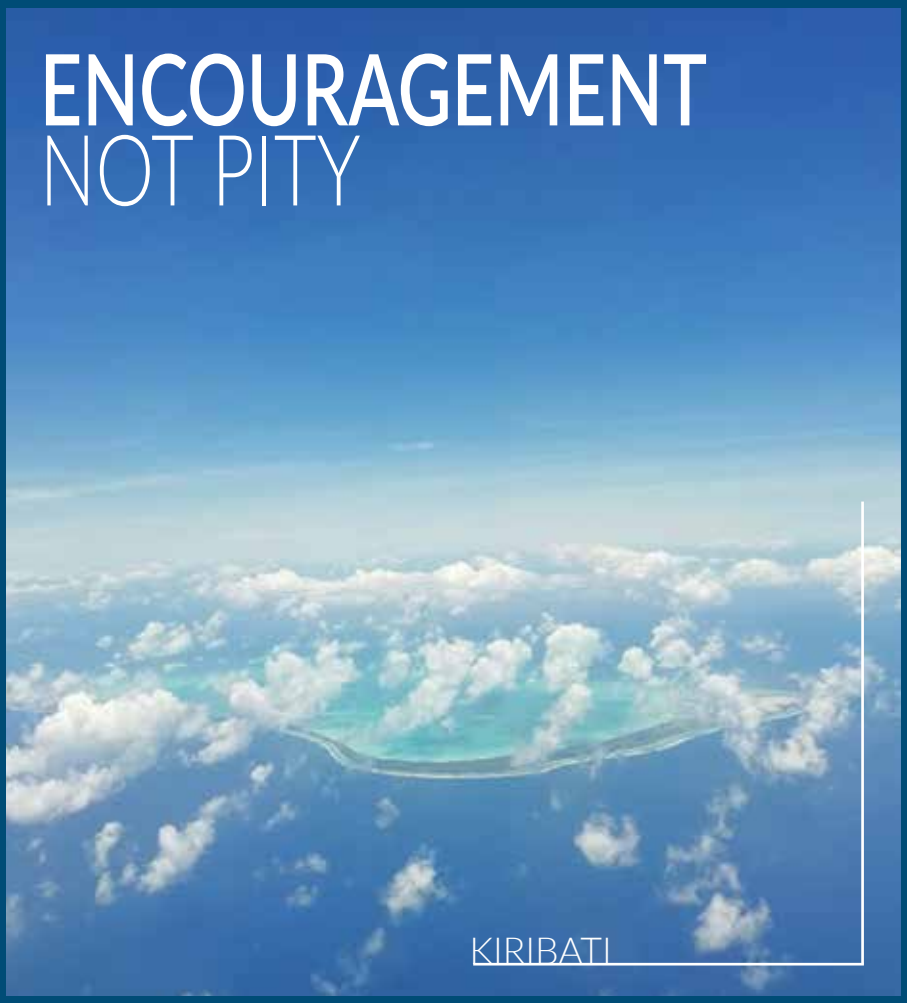
The same women who were tasked with the time-intensive chore of fetching water have maintained their traditional roles, although they are now able to manage the new water project via an effortless SMS system. Beyond securing a clean water source, it means farmers are no longer forced to sell their livestock at a loss at the first sign of water shortage. The water project is strengthening the economic viability of local communities. This initial project on top of the mountain has now been expanded to 13 different towns in the area and has provided much needed relief.

While projects such as Dar Si Hmad may not prove possible in all areas of the world, it is a shining example of what creative thinking can achieve when convention fails. With a changing climate and growing pressure on already scarce water supplies, it is human ingenuity that has never been more sorely needed.

Photo: Nets on Mount Boutmezguida by Peter Trautwein, Aqualonis © Used with permission. https://www.aqualonis.com

Jack Derwin is a journalist and writer currently living in Córdoba, Spain.

ENCOURAGEMENT NOT PITY



Earlier this year I travelled to Kiribati (pronounced Kiri-bas) for work. Telling people of my trip I quickly became accustomed to providing a quick geographical description of the island nation, as I was met with many blank faces when I announced my destination. Few people know of Kiribati — which is roughly halfway between Papua New Guinea and Hawaii — and even fewer have visited. Kiribati is considered one of the least visited nations in the world, with approximately 6,000 international visitors in 2017. Made up of 33 coral atolls — 21 of which are uninhabited — the island nation is home to approximately 110,000 permanent residents.

En route to Kiribati, I became acutely aware of its geographical isolation. It takes two days of travel from Auckland and flights from Nadi to Tarawa depart twice a week. The airport runway is in fact in the middle of a village, and it's open to be walked across on non-flight days.

While my pre-trip briefings were full of warnings about gastroenteritis, dengue fever and zika virus, Kiribati was one of the most welcoming places I have ever had the opportunity to visit, and presented no more logistical or health challenges than many other developing countries that I have been to. The generosity and sincerity of the Kiribati people that I met was simply lovely, and Tarawa — although home to over 55,000 people — had the warmth and welcome of a village. With stunning sunsets over the lagoon every evening, and some of the best fish I have ever eaten for NZ$6–7 a plate, it was certainly an enjoyable experience — and one that seems somewhat dreamlike now that I am back in New Zealand contending with grey skies, traffic congestion and the impending cold of winter.

Every day provided a rich plethora of new experience, but most memorable for me was the strong tradition of song and performance which is an important part of Kiribati life, with many important cultural narratives and ideas being conveyed through song and dance. Similar to Māori culture, welcome ceremonies often include both parties singing songs to acknowledge each other, and my colleagues and I stuck to what we knew best and performed many renditions of "Tutira mai nga iwi" in response to some incredibly beautiful traditional Kiribati songs.

Like many developing nations, Kiribati faces complex challenges such as over-population, widespread poverty and lack of resources. Notably, Kiribati is most often in the international media as the poster-example of the dire consequences of climate change, a very real threat considering that many of the atolls are only a few metres above sea-level. Coastal erosion is already underway, and as sea-levels rise and extreme weather events become more frequent on a global scale, complex problems start to unfold. These problems include mass migration, lack of fresh water supply and reduced land-mass to grow crops.

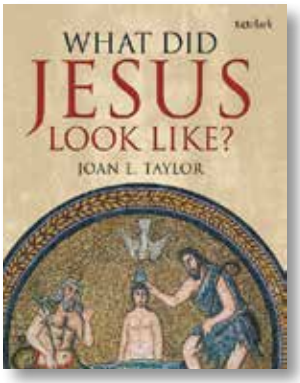
It is imperative that we engage with this new reality unfolding and continue to look for solutions to help our Pacific neighbours on many different levels; but it is also important that we pay attention to how these stories play out in the international media. News reports often portray developing nations as helpless and in need of our pity, which can have the effect of erasing the integrity of the nation. The reporting of these issues can diminish the incredible work that is being done by local organisations on the ground, the resolve and solution-focused action that is happening in Kiribati, and the cultural attitudes and values that inform how people conceptualise what is happening to their home. It is easy to see only problems when we focus on the complex challenges that face our Pacific neighbours, yet we must also recognise the richness and diversity of culture.

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

What Did Jesus Look Like?

by Joan E Taylor
Published by Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018
Reviewed by Kathleen Rushton

This is a book I have been waiting for, could not put down and wished did not end when it did. I've been troubled by Western European culture's characterisation of Jesus in pictures and statues and I have dipped into many books to try to counter such representations. Now not only has this information been collected in one well-illustrated book but there is an added delight because its author, Joan Taylor, is a New Zealander and former lecturer in religion and history at Waikato University. She is now Professor of Christian Origins and Second Temple Judaism at King's College, London.



Taylor uses research from different fields to create her story of the depiction of Jesus. She cites evidence from ancient art, relics, traditions and memories supported by early texts and archaeology. For those who want to delve further into Taylor's sources, about one third of the book is made up of notes and bibliography. And for readers interested in the story of the ways Jesus has been depicted so as to uncover what he looked like and the clothes he most likely wore, in the other 200 pages Taylor writes with the ease and clarity of a gifted story-teller.

Reading the book, I found myself paying closer attention to the biblical text. When in Judea, for example, Jesus warned against the wealthy scribes who "walk in long tunics" (Mk 12:38). Jesus would not have been wearing what he warned against! Long flowing robes were not the dress of a Judean Jew from Bethlehem who spent most of his life in Galilee working as a carpenter and then as a wandering teacher.

Taylor reviews the "self-portraits" of Jesus as in the legend of Veronica's Veil and the Turin Shroud. In Chapters 5-9, the influence of context is striking. Jesus is portrayed in the poses and clothes of gods, philosophers, Moses and influenced by the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. Chapters 10-11 draw on archaeological evidence about ethnicity, height, age, hair and clothing. Then, Taylor suggests a reconstruction of Jesus.

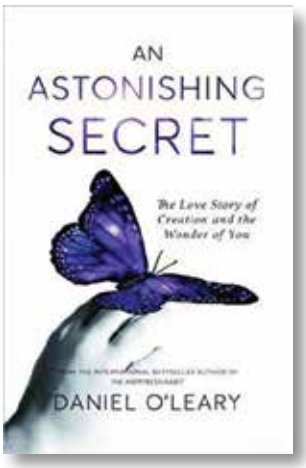
This is one of those books one reads not once, but dips into often. I recommend this book to those willing to embark on an intriguing journey to recover what Jesus may have looked like. It is a great resource for teachers, artists and preachers.

An Astonishing Secret: The Love Story of Creation and the Wonder of You

by Daniel O'Leary
Published by Columba Press, 2017
Reviewed by Margaret O'Neill

BOOK

The subtitle to Daniel O'Leary's latest book, "The Love Story of Creation and the Wonder of You", immediately tells the reader something about the book. Through his reflections on Pope Francis's encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, which point to an evolving new theology, Daniel takes his readers on a wonderful journey of discovery. Instead of talking about a sin/redemption theology, Daniel demonstrates that Pope Francis, along with many other theologians, is calling us to a new way of looking at the world and the universe and the place of Jesus and ourselves in the story of God's love. Daniel speaks of a Creation/Incarnation theology in which God created us out of love and continues to love us unconditionally. We are not born in a state of sin, but are born pure and innocent and open to love. And in God's infinite love Jesus was born as one of us to reveal, in a human way, God's love.



Daniel emphasises that it is in connectedness that we find God. He says that Creation in its evolving history is the product of a loving God who wishes to be in union with us all. Over and over he repeats the maxim: Know that you are loved totally and forever by a God who is continually drawing you towards an understanding of how great and deep is this love. How can we do anything but respond to that love in every person we encounter and in lovingly caring for every aspect of creation?

I loved this book. It was refreshing, thought-provoking and mind-stretching. Each chapter revealed a slightly different nuance of the new theology emerging. It is exciting and consoling. It changes our thinking.

Daniel believes that Pope Francis sees sin as our refusal to care for one another and our planet. How long will it take the new way of theologising to become the norm in preaching and practice in our Church communities? It will certainly change our views on a whole raft of moral questions.

I recommend this book to anyone who is keen to see life and religious beliefs in a different but more exciting and comforting way. I know you will read Scripture with new eyes and the journey will involve you in a love story with your God. Happy reading!

Sweet Country

Directed by Warwick Thornton
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

FILM

It may be "sweet country for cattle", as one of the characters puts it, but in this corner of outback Australia race relations could hardly be more sour. For this is a place where Aboriginal farm workers and their families are routinely beaten, raped, verbally abused, chained up like dogs and hunted down like wild animals. Drawing on the familiar conventions of the western genre, indigenous director Thornton skilfully draws us into a powerful story inspired by real events.

In the aftermath of the First World War — the film is set in 1929 – indigenous Australians were regarded by many white farmers as little more than slaves, to be rewarded or abused at their employer's whim. Voting rights for Aboriginals were still many decades away. In this profoundly unequal society, human tragedy is always just a step away; it is just a question of what will provoke it.

The events chronicled by *Sweet Country* are set in train when Harry March, a cattle rancher and traumatised war veteran, visits neighbouring farmer Fred Smith (Sam Neill), requesting the loan of his "blackfella", Sam (Hamilton Morris), to do some work on his station. An outspoken Christian and humanitarian who makes a point of treating his workers as equals, Smith agrees to this seemingly innocuous request to help a neighbour in need.

But it is not long before Sam and his wife Lizzie become victims of the damaged and brutal March and, following a long pursuit through the inhospitable desert lands of the Northern Territory, Sam ends up being tried for murder in a redneck town where he has no friends.

The complex tale that unfolds involves a cast of characters including a third farmer, Mick Kennedy, and the aboriginal boy Philomac (who may be his natural son), Philomac's co-worker Archie and Sergeant Fletcher (Bryan Brown), the conscientious policeman who is charged with capturing Sam and bringing him to justice. Between them, they represent every point on the "racial attitudes" scale from subservience to rebellion, from equality and acceptance to the belief that a black man who kills a white man is fit only for the gallows, whatever the circumstances.

Against expectations, by the end of the film some characters are treading the path of redemption while others cannot move beyond culturally engrained judgement and violence. *Sweet Country* should be compulsory viewing for those who think that everything is sweet in the "lucky country" — and for the rest of us, too.

CROSS CURRENTS

by Susan Smith

End of Democracy

Some years ago, I read and reviewed *Left Behind*, authored by two American Christian fundamentalists, Tim LaHaye and Jerry B Jenkins. As I recall, I did not recommend that *Left Behind*, or the other publications by these two authors become "must-read" items for the *Tui Motu* community. The millennial, apocalyptic, dispensationalist and anti-Catholic character of their writings would not sit comfortably with us.

Today, there are billionaires, not particularly religious people, living in the US, wishing for the end of the world as we know it. Instead of escaping to heaven "up there", they wish to escape to New Zealand. In 2011, Nathan Guy, then Minister of Immigration, granted one such "escapee", German-born American citizen Peter Thiel, our highly sought after New Zealand citizenship, although this was not acknowledged until 2017.

In his application, Thiel declared he had found "no other country that aligns more with my view of the future than New Zealand' (*The Guardian* 15 February 2018). Thiel, an ardent Trump supporter and libertarian, has been deeply influenced by a 1997 publication, *The Sovereign Individual*, which looks forward to and indeed encourages the collapse of liberal democracies as we know them. It says democracies need collapsing as they are little more than a vehicle for robbing the rich to pay for non-essential items such as government-financed hospitals, roads or schools. It is apparent how such a dystopic vision would have appeal for some politicians here.

Rule of the Elite

Instead of democratically-elected governments ruling a particular nation, there would be what *The Guardian* referred to as a "self-appointed cognitive elite", free to go on creating wealth for themselves in the new heaven on Earth that would include New Zealand. I cannot comment on what heaven may be like, as Paul tells us that "eye has not seen, nor heard" (1 Cor 2:29), but I am sure it is far removed from the utopia that Thiel and his ilk have in mind for us.

War Not the Answer

I recently watched the American PBS TV series, *The War in Vietnam*, that horrific and senseless war which saw 2,000,000 Vietnamese and 50,000 Americans lose their lives, a war which America effectively lost — as it has lost subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Aotearoa, the rallying cry of those New Zealanders who favoured sending troops to Vietnam was "all the way with LBJ". Now we are being urged by the Opposition that "jump with Trump" should be our response to the appalling situation in Syria that unfolds before our eyes almost every night on our TV screens.

It is a little over a year since Trump first decided to bomb Syria for its use of chemical weapons, and less than a year later, according to American sources, the Syrian government has again engaged in chemical warfare against Syrian rebels. At the same time, Trump's advance notice of retaliatory responses allowed the Syrian government to relocate military personnel, warplanes and the resources used in the manufacture of chemical weapons. Time will tell what impact the recent US and UK bombing has had on the Syrian government's war plans.

Neither the United Nations nor democratic government is perfect. Both have often enough failed people, but the alternatives are worse. Do we want "self-appointed cognitive elites" managing our lives in ways that will enhance their wealth? Do we want our foreign policy to be driven by someone's often ill-informed Twitter messages? There is nothing in human history that suggests that rule by powerful, rich elites is good for anyone except themselves. And there is little in human history to suggest that war resolves problems of injustice, oppression, or dictatorships.

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

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

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

GAZA NEEDS LIBERATION AND PEACE

The wanton slaughter of unarmed civilians by the Israeli defence force is a modern day abhorrence. The Palestinian desire to leave the ghetto/open-air prison of Gaza is entirely understandable. That half of the population is children and 70 per cent are refugees from Israel's historical ethnic cleansing, give this tragedy truly epic proportions. I have informed all my suppliers that I will not purchase anything from Israel until this civilian population is given the chance of leaving the Gaza concentration camp. To think that 97 per cent of the water supply provided to Gaza is unfit for human consumption and that the UN describes conditions as unliveable is a disgrace to Israel and all the global community who tolerate this genocide.

Dr Bernard Conlon GP, Murupara

CHURCH MUST DO BETTER

The *TM* April gender equality issue is a delight. A favourite among many gems is from Mary McAleese. The Church, crippled by ingrained misogyny, is "flapping about awkwardly on one wing when God gave it two".

Consider the attempt of Pope John Paul II to halt discussion in 1994 on the ordination of women (Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*). He relies heavily on the Declaration *Inter Insigniores* (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1976) using it three times in his 12 references. He repeats some of its errors, particularly that having said something for a long time is evidence of its correctness. Flat Earth, anyone? Slavery? Divine right of kings?

He silently accepts its denial that the foul sexism in the writings of some of the Fathers distorted their thinking. And the denial that the confused biology of the scholastics ("that modern thought would rightly reject") was also toxic.

Both the Letter and the Declaration [Introduction] say the Church believes "it has no authority" to ordain women. This is the death knell for each document as they explicitly contradict the very words of our Saviour that they would use for their authority: "Whatever you bind on earth . . ." (Mt 18:18). Neither document quotes those words but any apologist for the documents would have to rely on them. The documents contradict Our Lord's words, quoted or not, so the issue is wide open.

Laurie Williams, Auckland

TRADE AID IN NEW ZEALAND

While applauding *Tui Motu*'s promotion of the Fair Trade outlet in Australia, Ethica, in "Women and Partnership" (April 2018), I couldn't help wondering why not also promote the good work done in Aotearoa by the hundreds of volunteers working for Trade Aid.

For over 50 years Trade Aid has been promoting partnerships with women's groups by importing and selling crafts sourced from small community groups around the world — yes, including Peru.

Artisans that Trade Aid buys from also earn "reliable fair living wages" and proceeds from product sales are invested back in the communities, providing training and development at the behest of the local groups.

I was fortunate to travel to Peru with a Trade Aid education group several years ago, and met with many of the local groups Trade Aid supports. I learned firsthand of the hardships of their lives, and the benefits they receive through selling their craft to Fair Trade not-for-profit groups, like Trade Aid and Ethica.

Bev Smith, Whangarei (abridged)

MY VIEW OF MARRIAGE

I cannot agree with Julia Spelman's views in "Rings, Readings and Rituals" (*TM* May 2018: 3). As a Christian I believe what the Bible teaches us about marriage is correct. In the Gospel of Matthew it says: "Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning made them male and female? . . . This is why a man must leave father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two become one body." Why did God institute marriage? I believe it is necessary for the protection of children. Mothers and fathers complement each other and offer different perspectives to children. I know not all marriages are perfect, far from it, but I can see many more problems arising in the future because of the redefinition of marriage. Christians are asked to follow God's laws not state laws.

Mary Overbeek, Kawhia (abridged)

LISTENING AND HEARING

The May edition really warmed my heart with Mike Riddell, once not a Catholic I gather, writing about Pentecost and especially "The Gift of Tongues". Mike suggested a more suitable title might be "The Gift of Ears", for it was in the listening and responding to languages the various hearers could understand that "The Message" got through. I, personally, have struggled with the "wordiness" of our Liturgies. I rejoice that Mike "tries not to waste his time on correcting the Church, but connecting with the world outside it". I rejoice that many denominations follow the same Lectionary Readings — and pray that one day we may worship together (what a witness, our languages shared, and Jesus's prayer answered). Meantime, along with Mike, I will remain a faithful member of my Anglican denomination and Parish, but, "continue to make my lot with the people who will (may) never darken its (the church's) doors".

Rev David Day, Napier (abridged)

Looking **OUT** *and* **IN**

The invitation to listen carefully and attentively to small or excluded voices has become more important to me in the past few years. The Gospels provide a very clear mandate for this with numerous examples of the ways Jesus intentionally turned from being with educated males like himself to connect to women, ethnic minorities, those with stigmatised illnesses like leprosy and those with stigmatised income streams like commercial sex workers.

As a parent, paying attention to small voices must start with me really listening to my four children. One way I do this is that I note down particularly precious "quotes" as a way to notice and share my children's perspectives with grandparents and other family members. Here is an example:

I was driving near Hagley Park in Christchurch a decade or so ago when one of my children asked: "Is God really everywhere?"

"Yes," I replied. "Of course, God is everywhere."

"Is God in my lunchbox? Is God in the rubbish bin?" rejoined my preschooler.

This led me to reflect later in the day that of course the presence of God can be noted in the most ugly and absurd places if we keep our eyes peeled. There is the gospel episode where the disciples were trying to shoo children away, and Jesus jumped in and said: "The Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." There is insightful understanding of God to be found in the play and burble of children, and in the ongoing practice of trying to be a loving parent. The invitation over and over is to see children as conduits to God and God's grace and presence.

This invitation to listen carefully and intently to those on the edges has also become an important theme for me professionally. I recently conducted research into social exclusion and inclusion, interviewing (with the help of a local research assistant) 40 people with severe psycho-social disability and their caregivers. Qualitative data analysis was a powerful process requiring me to pay deep attention to the voices of those people. I found that there were some devastating accounts of taunting and verbal exclusion, of loss of relationships and even financial exclusion.

But while experiences of exclusion were prevalent, there was also an irrepressible current of social support, welcome and inclusion and this was most evident in families with Dalit identity (the most oppressed caste group in India). Affected families described generous neighbourly support: neighbours watered the fields and harvested the entire rice crop, while one man took his anxious wife to shrines and places of healing. Another family described how their mother battled postnatal depression and couldn't get out of bed, while their neighbour plaited the hair of their three young daughters and took them to school each day, for a whole year.

It underlines for me that there are resources and practices of community support that are much richer in rural India than in New Zealand — I find myself asking: Which place is more "developed"? By publishing and presenting these stories publicly I hope to elevate policy attention to these experiences and encourage greater resources and programmes to support social inclusion and mental health.

We are all invited to build relationships with "the other" — whether that means children, sad or mad people, people with different ethnic or sexual identity, or people who are not employed. Because God is everywhere — no one and nowhere is excluded.

Kaaren Mathias, with her family, is on a sabbatical-sort-of-break away from community mental health work in India, and will be staying in Christchurch until June 2018.

Blessing

May our love and care of water be like that for liquid gold.

From the *Tui Motu* team