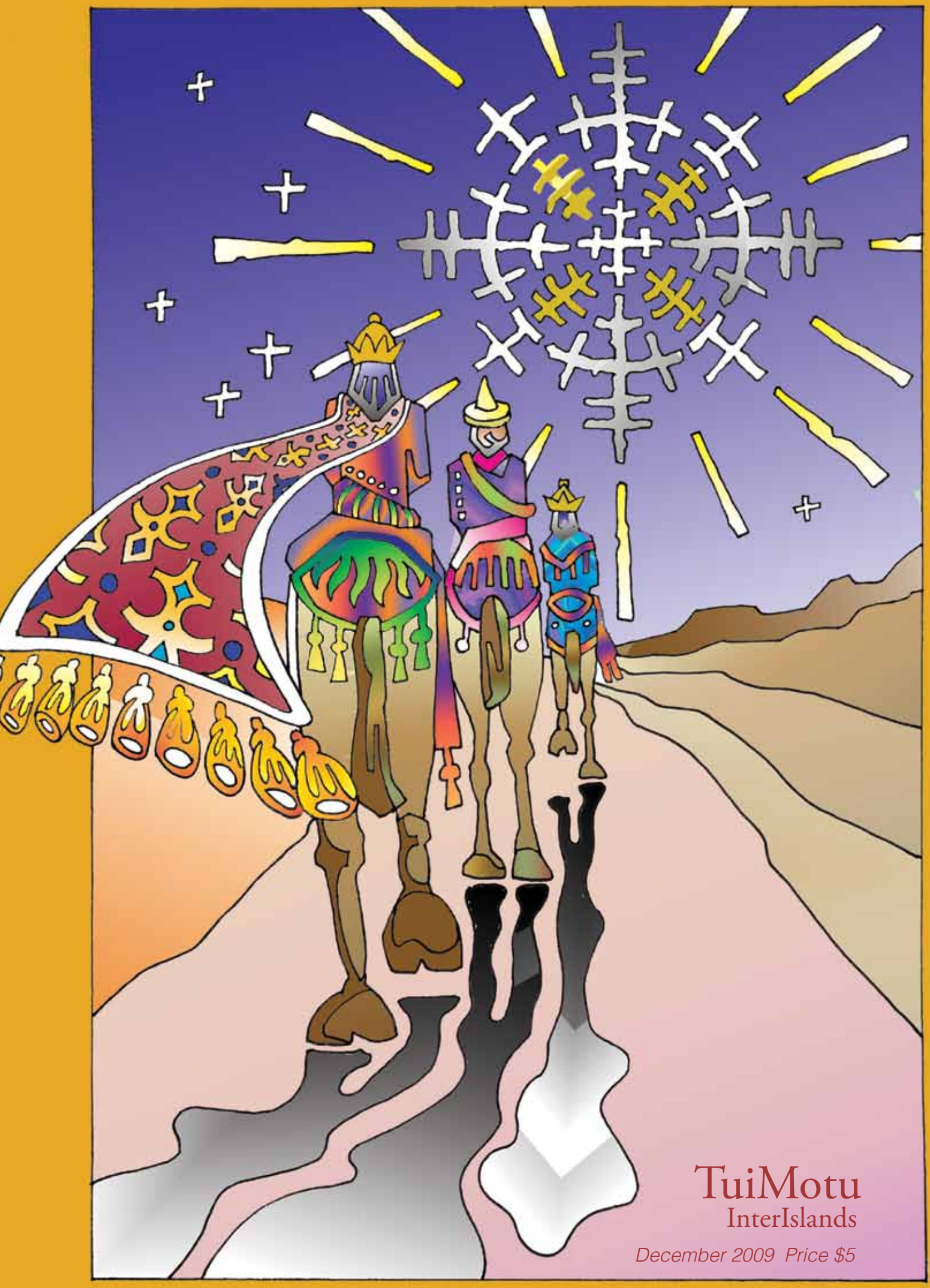

TuiMotu
InterIslands

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venture of faith

Contents

Faith, said Cardinal Newman in one of his sermons, is a "venture". He chose the word deliberately because venture has both a sense of journey and a hint of risk. It is stepping out into the unknown. For the Magi their Epiphany journey involved risk, because they were travelling to a strange land, unsure what they would find when they arrived.

Our artists have 'gone to town' on the Christmas cover to convey also a sense of delight, because the discovery of something precious is always a sublimely joyous experience. Artists down the centuries go to great lengths to depict the Epiphany as an awesome event (in the real meaning of the word) – but also one that brought great joy both to the Holy Family and the visitors.

The music of the Christmas season is also characterised by this mood of joy, and none more than Handel's *Messiah*. David Burchell notes (*pp.18-19*) that the *Messiah* tells the whole adventure of Christ's coming, through promise, birth, life, death and Resurrection. It is like an overture to the story of our Redemption.

To understand the meaning of 'venture of faith' we have to leave the comfort and security of home and the familiar, and sally forth. That is why pilgrimage is a characteristic of the world's great religions: pilgrimage to Mecca, to Jerusalem, to Lourdes. People set out expecting hardship, desiring to deepen their faith and hoping for a religious experience. Even a spiritual retreat (see Jane Hole *pp 22-23*) can be like a salutary escape from the rut of the over-familiar. But you never know until you reach your destination whether anything will happen.

Religious conversion is probably the greatest spiritual venture any of us ever undertakes. We are filled with expectation, eager for new experience, yet aware of the risk that perhaps it won't work. Jim Neilan (*pp 14-15*) looks with misgiving at the latest initiative from Rome to enable disaffected Anglicans to come into the Catholic church as a group. Group conversions are always suspect, because conversion is such a profoundly personal journey. You only need to study the life of Newman himself to understand that.

There is a sense in which all of us are called to adult conversion. If we settle down too comfortably in our familiar routine of religious attitudes and practice, then our faith becomes little better than a favourite suit or dress, which cossets our skin but does not touch our inner selves.

Every religion needs its prophetic voices to jog us out of complacency and keep us moving on the way. Those who recently heard the Jesuit Fr John Dear (*pp.16-17*) had that experience. And no one has done this for *Tui Motu* readers better than the late and greatly mourned Fr Humphrey O'Leary, whose final piece we publish on page 31. There is also an in memoriam to Fr Humphrey on page 27.

He chose there to revisit a favourite theme: his pipe dream of closing down the Roman Curia and sending them all out 'on sabbatical'. That could be the ideal antidote for the malaise of our current leadership: a bureaucracy so inward looking that it tends to lose touch with the blood and sweat of real life. Like the Magi, they need to get away from home and find the living Christ.

Christ too made that pilgrimage. Isn't that the real message of Christmas? In becoming human, the Son of God manifests for us the need to go on a journey, a venture into the alleyways of the city and the dusty byways of Galilee, a voyage to Calvary. That was the price Jesus paid to become

M.H.

the birthday of christ

Michael Dooley

Something we have in common with all human beings is that we all have a birthday. That may seem self-evident but it is one of those facts that reminds us of our common humanity. The circumstances of our day of birth may be quite different, but our physical entry into this world cannot be denied.

The simplest way I have found of explaining Christmas to children is that it is a birthday celebration for Jesus. Again, Jesus' circumstances were quite different from yours and mine, but the fact of his physical birth gives a common experience that is shared by Jesus and every human being.

At times, Christmas in our New Zealand society can seem like just an extravagant party, and we wonder where Jesus is in all of this. Perhaps remembering it is his birthday is the key.

The celebration of the birth of Jesus was not always a big deal in the Christian church. It was not until the 4th century that its celebration came to be mentioned; then perhaps another 400 years before it reached any great prominence. Along the way it was famously banned by the Puritans in England in 1644.

Some religious groups today, notably the Jehovah Witnesses, do not celebrate birthdays, and as a result they do not celebrate Christmas. Despite a chequered history Christmas is still very much with us, both in religious and secular calendars.

The best spiritual reflection for me at Christmas is when I take some time before the Christmas crib. Convoluted theological arguments are put to one side as the reality of God born as the baby Jesus is there before me. Such simplicity is good for my spiritual life which can easily become over complicated. Francis of Assisi knew what he was doing when he put together the first Nativity scene. The depiction of the baby Jesus in the stable, whether it is done in stone, wood or knitted figures, is an eloquent commentary on the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is a mystery that God came among us enfleshed as a human being, but the baby Jesus in the crib puts the mystery firmly before us.

My observations tell me that people are often uncomfortable celebrating their own birthday but enjoy celebrating the birthday of someone they love and appreciate. This is surely what we do when we celebrate Christmas.

Jesus the Son of God chose to have a birthday. He is happy to share that simple yet profound event with each human being who has also been born into this world. ■

The Board and Staff of Tui Motu wish all readers and supporters a safe, happy and holy Christmas season and every blessing for 2010

We are especially grateful for the generous financial support we have received through the ***Tui Motu Foundation*** Appeal and the extra donations which subscribers send in when renewing their subscriptions.

This additional income has not only materially assisted production of the magazine but also it is helping to secure our future

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Tui Motu-InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed. The name *Tui Motu* was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

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Mary McKillop

Shortly, we will be celebrating the great feast of Christmas when God became one of us and "pitched his tent amongst us." (*Jn.1.14*)

I was born in New Zealand and baptised in St Joseph's Catholic Cathedral, Dunedin. I have fond memories of attending Mass there as I grew up. I remember the stained glass windows of the saints, in particular of St Dominic and St Catherine. Men and women of great holiness – except they weren't 'one of us'. They had not pitched their tents amongst us, not in 20th century New Zealand.

Late next year, Mary MacKillop is due to be canonised by Pope Benedict XVI. She was an Australian but who spent considerable time in New Zealand. She will be recognised as equal in virtue and holiness to the saints depicted in the windows of the cathedral. During 2009 I was privileged to walk about in the house where she lived in Albert Street, Melbourne, and visit the chapel where she prayed daily.

letters to the editor

We welcome comment discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words.

The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not changing the meaning.

Response articles (up to a page) are welcome – but please, by negotiation.

Sitting reflecting in the chapel, I was struck by a number of things about Mary MacKillop. How very Australian and Kiwi she was in her common sense and down-to-earth approach to the many challenges of her life. She exercised extraordinary leadership and ministry during her life without being able to exercise ordained ministry.

This Christmas, as I thank God that his Son "pitched his tent and dwelt amongst us", I will also thank God that Mary MacKillop pitched her tent and dwelt amongst us.

M Hennessy-Smith, Melbourne

Humphrey O'Leary 1

We all have our own sacred stories, and sharing these stories is perhaps one of the best gifts we can give one another.

I love *Tui Motu* and read it cover to cover every month. But in the October issue think I read the best piece I have every read in this publication. Thank you, Humphrey O'Leary, for sharing the sacred journey of your mother and yourself.

Amy Armstrong, Dunedin

Humphrey O'Leary 2

It is with great sadness that I read of the death of Fr Humphrey O'Leary.

Each month, with the arrival of *Tui Motu* in my letterbox, I would turn immediately to the inside back page to read his article. Always I was challenged, often excited and frequently I smiled at the view Fr Humphrey presented. His understanding of church as a living entity was tangible.

Freda McGurk, Hawera

A tribute to Fr Humphrey will be found on page 27.

priesthood today

Alan Roberts looks at recruitment in NZ to the diocesan priesthood, and suggests a reason for the so-called 'vocations crisis'.

About six years ago, I accepted the position of Vocations Director for the Archdiocese of Wellington. In that time I have overseen the entry into the seminary of three people, all New Zealand citizens. Two of them were in their 20s and one in his 50s. One of the younger ones has since left the seminary and the remaining two are both converts to Catholicism. They will be the only ordinations of New Zealanders for Wellington in the next seven years. There is currently no New Zealander on the books as a prospective candidate for Wellington.

Does this present state mean that the Holy Spirit is trying to say something to us? Certainly, we would be foolish not to examine that question, for it seems strange to me that this crisis is happening when our understanding of theology, Scripture and spirituality has never been so mature.

Or have we to travel further in our understanding of some aspects of theology, such as the priesthood, because as this current situation is taking place there seem to be plenty of young people around very committed to their faith and interested in ministry. Yet the priesthood for them is not an option. Is this because, as Fr Darragh, says "New Zealand born Catholics don't really like us much the way we are… they don't see us as role models"? (*Nov. Tui Motu*).

One has to remember that the influx to seminaries in the 1950s and '60s was huge. My class and the surrounding classes had an entry of 40 students. The Catholic culture no doubt contributed to this, as well as the subtle ideas sowed in one's mind that a vocation was the greatest thing we could do to please God, that priesthood and religious life was 'higher' than marriage, and, as I think most of us believed, there was something 'not quite right' about sex!

Today, young men and women are very aware of their bodies and emotions, and even if they were to consider a vocation, they would most likely regard celibacy as too difficult. So, is there any hope?

Fr Darragh made the distinction in his article between the *omni priest* and the *priest as part of a team*. I have absolutely no doubt that the team method is the only way to go. Catholics in New Zealand have had unbelievably awful experiences of coping with their priests, and I suspect that every time shifts are made it costs a parish a lot in personnel. A letter in the *November Tui Motu* by Frances O'Leary makes reference to this. After all our renewal, the sad thing is that a priest can still go into a parish and demolish it.

What is dying is not the priesthood, but our method of operating. The growth in lay ministry in the years of my priesthood is phenomenal, and a new way of carrying out our mission is on the way, but bishops are going to have to make major adjustments soon, or it may be too late.

What is lacking in parishes is a collective sense of mission among ordinary parishioners because the priest still 'owns' the parish, and everything is referred to him. The situation will remain until we do something about the 'power of the priest'. When a priest belongs to a team, his ego has to go, otherwise he will demolish the team.

The team in turn, provided they understand what team ministry is – and that's another topic – will create a sense of excitement and belief that all parishioners are evangelisers too. The priest may be at the helm, or he may not.

We can argue about the issue of women priests and married priests to solve the problem, but if there are no people in the pews what will it matter? A team ministry, whereby the priest can no longer become lost in administration and power, will create that sense of mission and vision, which in turn will create the new life we long for. It will look after the priest and keep him 'alive'.

And maybe this will give rise to the sort of priest who inspires others to come and take his place.

Fr Alan Roberts is parish priest of Blenheim.
He is here responding to an article by Neil Darragh in the November issue, entitled Year for Priests.

The Annunciation, by Chinese Christian artist He Qi. He Qi seeks to portray the Christian message as one of peace and rejoicing. He says: "We need to hear a peaceful voice from the angel in heaven". The Annunciation is for each one of us.

What the Donkey Saw

No room at the inn, of course,
And not that much in the stable,
What with the shepherds, Magi, Mary,
Joseph, the heavenly host –
Not to mention the baby
Using our manger as a cot.
You couldn't have squeezed
another cherub in
For love or money.

Still, in spite of the overcrowding,
I did my best to make them feel wanted.
I could see the baby and I
Would be going places together.

U A Fanthorpe

Mary Joseph

Near Jerusalem (they say, in Bethlehem),
Mother Mary and her Joseph
Birthed the Christ,
And God's compassion touched this earth
With irrevocable power

In God's good time, at Hiruharama,
Sister Mother Mary-Joseph
Was one of those who birthed
The Christ-life here
In strong compassion

Mary Joseph, pray the life of Christ
And His compassion
Into me

Peter Stuart

within my room

the annunciation

My eyes hurt.

Joy-bruised
my heart burns,
but my eyes hurt.

Their scales torn off
then flushed with searing truth
grace branded deep upon their blindness.

Around the margins
of the vision left,
a piercing glister dawn remains,
a seductive whisper
to tease upon my memory.

It was as if the sun had risen
from the dust
in a star-reft moon dark night.
A blazing morn
contained within the ashes of my room,
and I eclipsed within its fire,
flesh melted on the floor,
too weak to hold its form.

Yet calm within the firestorm
my spirit rose in windlessness,
stretched out to touch its truth,
and kindled in the Mother flame,
a spark lit deep within my womb.

I barely heard the question asked
but knew the answer
written on my soul
since time began.

I would have thought
that I had dreamed,

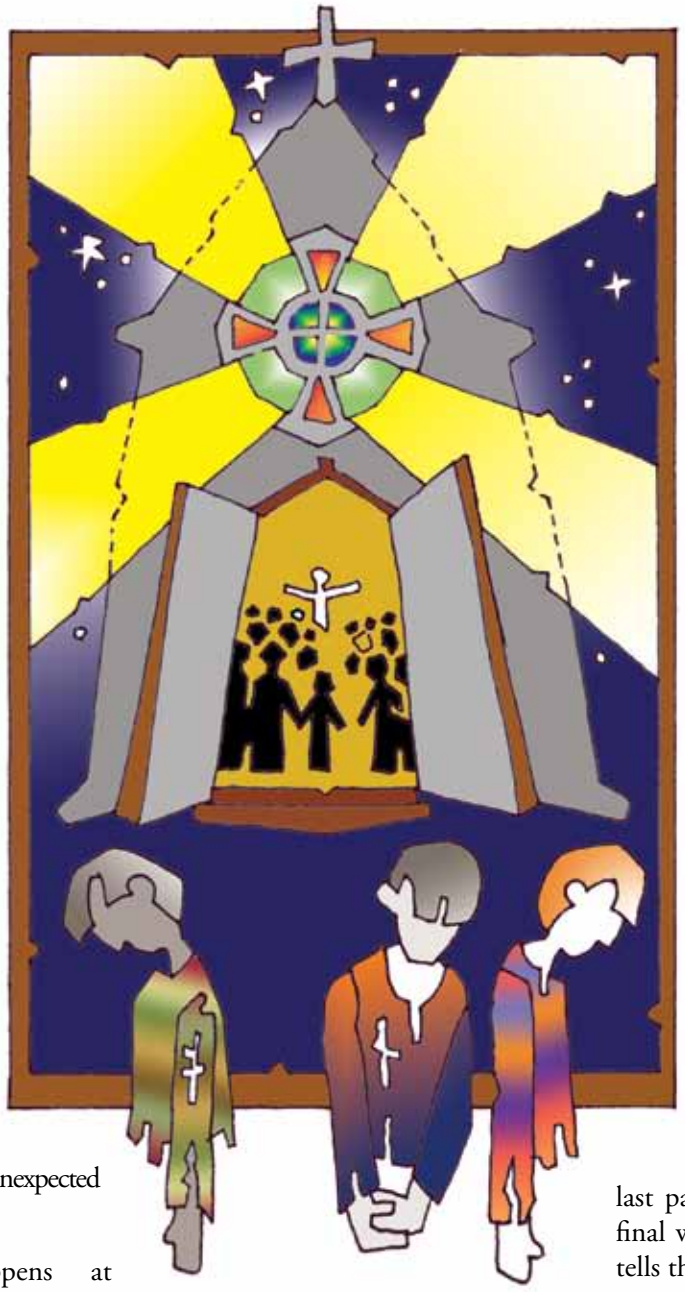
but my eyes hurt.

Jacquie Lambert

the midnight visitors

Daniel O'Leary

It takes some doing to get our heads round the astonishing fact that God stole into our world in the same shape – that of a baby – in which we all started out. The simplicity of it all is almost too much for us. But then, extraordinary things happen in the most ordinary moments



How we would behave at Mass if we understood its full impact as described by the American writer Annie Dillard in one of her striking reflections. We would strap ourselves to our seats, wear protective headgear and be attentive to the earth-shaking import of what was happening around us. We have many ways, she was pointing out, of avoiding what we would rather not face.

And so we argue over translations, rubrics and rites. We distract ourselves with the non-essentials, thus escaping the awesome risk of surrendering to the shocking mystery of Incarnation and transubstantiation, of being crucified into the cross-pattern of Eucharistic living. But most of all, of grappling with God's unexpected way of becoming present to us.

Something similar happens at Christmas. Eucharist and Incarnation tell the same stunning story about divinity in the most ordinary realities – bread, wine, a baby. The shock waves of the Bethlehem truth still reverberate across the universe – but, as with the Mass, we do not pause to ponder the mystery. We have the experience, but we miss the meaning. The profound simplicity of it all is too much for us. We would rather concentrate on something else. And there are many counter-attractions.

But for those who do wish to explore the mystery, how do we get our heads and hearts around the Christian truth that God stole into our world in the same shape as we all started off with? How do we cope with the ensuing belief that the divinity of all of us is now revealed? And how do we make any sense of the consequent expectation that we must therefore embrace our enemies, even die to restore dignity to a dishonoured earth? On such personal decisions and moments depend the salvation of the world.

Mill Hill Missionary Fr Chris told me about the experience of his friend Fr Gerard in a black township in South Africa. The weary parish priest forced himself to attend the last part of a school play during the final week of Advent. This is how he tells the story.

"After the wise men had come and gone I noticed the arrival of three more strange characters – one was dressed in rags, hobbling along with the aid of a stick. The second was naked except

for a tattered pair of shorts and was bound in chains. The third was the most weird. He had a whitened face, wore an unkempt grey wig and an Afro shirt.

"As they approached, a chorus of men and women cried out: 'Close the door, Joseph, they are thieves and vagabonds coming to steal all we have.' But Joseph said: 'Everyone has a right to this child – the poor, the rich, the unhappy, the untrustworthy. We cannot keep this child for ourselves. Let them enter.'

"The men entered and stood staring at the child. Joseph picked up the gifts the wise men had left. To the first strange man he said: 'You are poor: take this gold and buy what you need. We will not go hungry.'

To the second he said: 'You are in chains and I don't know how to release you. Take this myrrh – it will heal the wounds on your wrists and ankles.' To the third he said: 'Your mind is in anguish. I cannot heal you. Maybe the aroma of this frankincense will soothe your troubled soul.'

"Then the first man spoke to Joseph. 'Do not give me this gift. Anyone who finds me with this gold will think I have stolen it. And sadly, in a few years, this child will end up as a criminal too.' The second man said: 'Do not give me this ointment. Keep it for the child. One day he will be wearing chains like these.'

The third man said: 'I am lost. I have no faith at all. In the country of my mind there is no God. Let the child keep the incense. He will lose his faith in his Father too.'

"While Mary and Joseph covered their faces the three men addressed the child. 'Little one, you are not from the land of gold and frankincense. You belong to the country of want and disease. You belong to our world. Let us share our things with you.' The first man took off his ragged shirt. 'Take these rags. One day you will need them when they tear the garments off your back and you will walk naked.'

"The second man said: 'When I remove these chains I will put them at your side. One day you will wear them – and then you will really know the pain of humanity.' The third man said, 'I give you my depression, my loss of faith in God and in everything. I can carry it all no longer. Carry my grief and loss with your own.'

"The three men then walked back out into the night. But the darkness was different. Something had happened in the stable. Their blind pain was diminishing. There had been a kind of epiphany. They were noticing the stars now."

The script of the performance was written by a man from Central Africa. Because his vision was extraordinarily true he told his story well. The unwelcome visitors now knew that God was somehow present in an innocent child who was already destined to be one like them – in all their poverty, pain and sin. And they also began to believe, what we perennially resist, that this human mess was the manger of hope – for themselves and for the world.

Christmas reveals that there is a light within the darkness, a love within the Cross, a life within each death. Our sins and certainties, our wayward compulsions, our despair and desperation, the wars and poverty we collude in – all are redeemed, all are taken care of. And often, it is from precisely there, and maybe only from there, that the redemption of Creation begins. And all because the baby was utterly human.

Above all, Christmas reminds us, as it did the unwelcome visitors, that the most extraordinary things happen in the most ordinary moments. Sr Hilary Lyons, a Missionary Sister of the Holy Rosary working in West Africa, writes about a painting of the Annunciation in Futru parish church in Cameroon. "Mary is preparing a fire for cooking. Behind her the firewood is stacked. She is turning to add a stick to the fire when a luminous presence surrounds her." Heavenly intimacy in a human kitchen. God's secrets are strewn extravagantly around us. God's finger prints are everywhere.

Nothing has ever been written by theologians about God's beautiful presence that hasn't been better traced in the crystal calligraphy of a frosty morning. Nothing has ever been preached by saints about divine intimacy that hasn't been better sung by the summer wind in the roadside trees. And nothing has ever been created by artists about incarnate love that hasn't been more poignantly revealed in the sleepy eyes of a new baby. ■

Daniel O'Leary, a priest of the Leeds Diocese, is based at Our Lady of Grace Presbytery, Pontefract, West Yorkshire.

The miniature of *St Luke the Evangelist*, from the Lindisfarne Gospels, produced in Northumbria in the early 8th Century

the year of luke

advent: a time of unveiling

Kathleen Rushton RSM

Recently, with anticipation, I watched an unveiling. The formal removal of a covering cloth revealed an icon of St. Patrick and a plaque dedicated to the *Holy Faith* Sisters. Something hidden or kept secret was made known, and at once we grasped its symbolism. This Irish saint and these Irish Sisters had served faithfully in a Christchurch parish for 55 years.

Likewise, Advent, and Christmas for which it prepares us, unveils and reveals God made human in Jesus. Each Advent the new liturgical year begins literally with 'an unveiling', for the Gospel reading is from what is often called the New Testament *Apocalypse* – *Matthew 23*, *Mark 13* or *Luke 21*.

Contrary to the fantastic and disastrous ideas associated with *Apocalypse* in popular culture, the Greek word means "unveiling." It refers to a type of Jewish and Christian literature filled with symbolism recording the unveiling of unseen realities in the present and/or the future. It also has links with prophecy which is "a word of God" breaking into the situation of God's people, who need encouragement or guidance or a call to conversion and recommitment.

The readings of Year C, the ***Year of Luke,*** begin on the first Sunday of Advent, near the end of Jesus' earthly life. The challenge of reading *Luke 21* is to hold on to the sense of the whole Gospel. The excerpt is in two parts. In the first, Jesus speaks symbolically about what has already happened by the time *Luke* was written (most likely in 80s): of the times before the fall of the Temple; of the times even prior to that; and of the destruction of Temple itself. They were years of persecution and destruction. The second half creates confidence in the future – the time of Jesus, our present and future time, when we glimpse him so we may "stand with confidence before the Son of Man", as the *Jerusalem Bible* puts it.

With *Luke 21*, as with every Gospel passage, our question is *what image of Jesus is Luke portraying*? How does this function in the Gospel as a whole? Let's explore this question by using "unveiling" metaphorically.

Luke, writing for Gentiles, often inserts the words "all" or "everyone" into his story to unveil Jesus for all peoples. The readings for the second and third Sundays of Advent underscore this. John the Baptist's revelation of the coming of Jesus is prefaced by setting it within the reign of Caesar, Jewish rulers and religious leadership (*3:1-6*). The ***Coming*** – or Advent – is for all people, for the whole world. Then, three groups of people question John: the crowd, the tax collectors and the soldiers (*3:10-18*).

The fourth Sunday of Advent takes us back to the pregnant Mary's journey to visit her older pregnant cousin, Elizabeth (*1:39-44*). Jesus here is truly veiled within the vulnerable body of his unmarried young mother. This first journey in *Luke* prepares us for other journeys: that of Jesus' troubled parents (*2:45*), his own to his death in Jerusalem (*9:51-19:28*) and that of the two Emmaus disciples (*24:13-35*). We are asked questions, as we too are journeying towards Christmas.

Luke's Gospel telescopes us backwards and forwards, and inwards and outwards, into the mystery of Jesus who unveils in his humanity the mystery of God. The mystery is found not only in the awe and beauty of the crib but in Jesus' ongoing birth among us in our daily lives, and unveiled for us in all his suffering, vulnerable sisters and brother ■

christmas is an adult festival

Jim Kershaw

Ask anyone in your street or neighbourhood what Christmas means for them, and many of them will rabbit on about it being a festival for children. Have we then created a sanitised celebration of perhaps the most important event in the history of humankind?

Yes! This feast is about the birth of a child, a child who is the Messiah – the Son of God. But ask yourself: *How many children were at the first Christmas?* Just One!

Mary and Joseph had trudged for many weary miles (probably in the height of the summer heat) to Joseph's ancestral town of Bethlehem at the command of the far away Emperor Augustus of Rome. They were tired out and were looking for rest and comfort. All they could find was a stable in the bowels of someone's home, empty because the sheep which were housed there to warm the house in winter were out in the summer pastures looking for the sweet green grass which would fatten them and give them the condition they needed for the next cold season.

Bethlehem was hosting many of the descendents of King David who had been ordered to take part in a census process to offer data to the Roman invaders of Palestine. Perhaps they were in a merry mood as they reacquainted themselves with their relatives, but at the same time they would have been resentful of the orders which took them from hearth and home and their usual businesses.

Out in the fields were those who were charged with tending the sheep, workers who would spend the best part of six months away from family and many friends as they toiled for their masters. Patrolling the township to keep the peace and to conduct the census, would have been members of the occupying forces well away from Rome, possibly resentful that they had been posted so far away from their familiar surroundings.

This is a picture of people some of whom would have been tired, despondent, lonely, hungry, poverty stricken or care-worn; while others were self-satisfied, well fed, amongst friends and enjoying the good things life can offer. This was a time when people lived their lives in much the same emotional way we do now and who had to deal with the many and varied problems life threw at them.

This was the time when our God became incarnate to share with us both the joys and sorrows of the human condition. This was the time when our God came to assist us by showing just how we might overcome the problems thrown at us by the mistakes we all make. This is still the time for adults to stand up and be counted; to accept wholeheartedly the consequences of the commitments we undertake and to strive toward the goal laid out for us.

Yes! Christmas is a time for adults – a time when we renew our commitment to family and friends. It is also a time when we acknowledge that without the guidance of the Divine Child we will be unable to serve our fellow travellers as God intended. Christmas is a time for welcoming a child, but we would do well to recognise the Christ in our own children. It is the season for adults to accept that it is the festival to celebrate one's personal role in the Divine plan of salvation. ■

Fr Jim Kershaw is a retired Wellington priest, living in Paraparaumu parish, where he kindly promotes Tui Motu

what sort of world are we trying to bring the gospel to?

Sydney Morning Herald Journalist Andrew West looks at the political and cultural climate in the West since World War II. How can we effectively communicate the Christian message, he asks, if we don't understand the world we are addressing?

introduction

There has always been a tradition of progressive Christianity in Western politics, going back to the Victorian era. It is largely responsible for the creation of the Welfare State in Britain and Commonwealth countries. In Europe the Social Democratic parties have carried this flag. Progressive Christianity in the United States has strongly supported movements for women's and workers' rights, although for many years it had a blind spot regarding issues of race.

"At the core of progressivism," maintains West, "– in Europe at the core of socialism or social democracy, in Australia the core of labourism – was the political distinction that I believe endures to this day: ultimately politics is not about post-modernism or cultural relativism but about guns and money, especially about money. It is the divide that still exists between communitarianism and individualism, between the left and the right, between public versus private interest."

Over the last century, he continues, it is possible to note a ***linear*** progression on many social issues, and the churches have had their part to play in this. For instance, there has been steady progress towards the emancipation of women in most Western democracies over the past 100 years.

Nevertheless, the fundamental movement in politics tends to be ***cyclical***. Political philosopher Arthur Schlesinger, a friend of John F Kennedy, notes that typically every 30 or 40 years there is a swing between the extremes of communitarianism and individualism. He calls them 'alternating periods'. These swings happen whether the political party in power belongs to the 'left' or the 'right'.

Often, Christian-leaning groups or parties tend to identify with the political centre, but West notes: "The centre is constantly shifting." Jim Wallis, of *Sojourners* (US religious publishing house), warns against being distracted by political labels. He says: "don't go left. Don't go right. Go deeper."

West then goes on to describe in detail the way the political climate has fluctuated since World War II.

world war II

"The Second World War came on the heels of the Great Depression. Franklin Roosevelt was President of the USA and he had introduced the social programmes of the so-called *New Deal*. During World War II the state was the only agency in society that could harness the power and the productivity and the efforts of the people, first of all to defeat a common enemy, then to rebuild the country. The state represented the organising capacity of the society and the state also called on the populace to demonstrate material sacrifice. There was a realisation in most Western countries that only the state had this capacity to, first of all, defeat a common enemy, then rebuild.

"Then you move to the post-war period. Truman is in power in the US. Franklin Roosevelt had promised a new deal for America, to restart the economy – all the things of which we are hearing echoes today: restarting the economy, stimulating it, giving liquidity to the banks etc, introducing laws for labour rights and labour protections, extending new rights to trade unions. Truman even fought a great battle, which he lost, to introduce universal health care in the US.

"In the UK, you've got the Attlee government (1945-51) introducing the National Health Service, nationalising British rail, developing the so-called Red Brick universities and introducing the welfare state. Then, both countries and Australia elected nominally centre-right governments, but none of them governed as right wing governments. Menzies in Australia may have been a 'blow hard' about the red menace; but he believed in the welfare state. Economies were underpinned by relatively steep levels of progressive taxation, and there was relatively strong trade unionism in all of these countries."

the swinging sixties

"When Progressive parties in the UK and US gained power in their own right again in the 60s they began to push the boundaries on cultural questions. Some of those cultural and social issues were morally right, such as civil rights for African-Americans, civil and political rights for Aboriginal

Australians, equal opportunities for women. I think these were all unambiguously good moral things with almost a religious imperative.

"But other campaigns on sexual libertinism and pornography were not so good. What they said confronted the old working class ethic. We've just had the 40th anniversary of Woodstock. Now Woodstock was a pretty mediocre musical event, but it gathered half a million people on a farm in upstate New York indulging in the practices of free love and drug taking. A lot of people saw this as the great social crack up: that's when the political cycle starts to change again."

reagan and thatcher

"We come to the 1980s for the beginning of a new cycle. While the Americans were governed by Reagan and the Britons were governed by Thatcher, Australia and New Zealand had Labour governments. But the Hawke and Keating governments in Australia and the Lange, Palmer and Moore governments in New Zealand did not in fact govern from the left. They governed by the tenor of their times.

"Hawke and Keating cut taxes, privatised and deregulated. The 'Howard era' in Australian politics didn't begin in 1996 but in 1985. John Howard's great skill as a politician was he knew about these cycles in history: he knew that his time would come. So he rationalised certain welfare payments, introduced work for the dole, deregulated the labour market and removed some of the power of the trade unions because he understood that he was part of a great tide of history, a great political tide sweeping the US and the UK.

"In New Zealand it was an even more radical government at the centre right, as it were. David Lange certainly took a very moral stand on the question of nuclear weapons, but on the domestic agenda he left it to his finance minister Roger Douglas, who came within two votes in the Labour party caucus of introducing a flat tax, not something that a Labour or social demographic government would ever do.

"In the 1990s again we have the consolidation of this conservative or centre right era in politics. You've got the Clinton Democrats back in control in the US. Tony Blair and the Labour Party soon gain power in the UK. But again they govern according to the tenor of the times."

the present day

"Between 2005 and 2008 we have had another great shake up. The Anglican Archbishop of Sydney Peter Jenson has expressed very public doubts about the Australian government's industrial laws. I asked him, 'What do you think the aspirational voters want?' Jenson replied 'The most important aspiration of this class is to have a fulfilling family and community life. Not to own a big screen television, or to live in a mac-mansion, not to have a 4WD'. Here we see the seeds of the backlash against materialism.

"What is filtering up to him through his pastors and his ministers is a disaffection with the materialist era in politics. Similarly the only way that David Cameron, the Conservative leader in the UK, has managed to get so far ahead of Gordon Brown's government is by disallowing the Thatcher legacy. David Cameron now supports raising the top rate of tax.

"Barack Obama has come to power in the US on the promise of higher taxes for the top end, more public spending, health care reform, tackling climate change. Barack Obama is unambiguously a son of the Roosevelt era. I don't think the new PM of Australia, Kevin Rudd, is quite that bold.

"But it is very interesting to note that we have in Kevin Rudd and in Barack Obama, a Prime Minister and a President who read theology. Kevin Rudd's theological model is Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Obama's theological model is Reinhold Niebuhr. Bonhoeffer believed so much in the capacity of the state to do good that when he saw the state committing evil, he believed that it needed to be overthrown.

"Reinhold Niebuhr believed in the pursuit of moral goals, but recognised that we live in a fallen world. Niebuhr was a pioneering Social Democrat, opposed to the communists and the rise of the Soviet Union, yet unambiguously progressive in the New Deal era. He conceived the idea of ***Christian realism,*** and I think now we are seeing that even in sections of the church that are traditionally conservative: not a desertion of their core moral principles – I wouldn't expect that – but a shift in values.

"An iconic figure like Jim Wallace is now saying: 'what are the key issues for American evangelicals, particularly young evangelicals? Climate change, third world poverty, AIDs, redistributing wealth'. He too has now joined the campaign for universal health care.

"In Australia it is very interesting to watch the subtle transition in thinking in the Hillsong church. Today, Brian Huston says the worst thing he ever did was write a book entitled *You need more Money*. Why? Because he senses that is no longer where Christians are. Even conservative evangelical Christians are no longer necessarily apostles of the prosperity gospel.

"The Christian churches, evangelical and Catholic, mainline and Pentecostal, are also subscribing in their own way to this idea about the cycles of history, and it's interesting to note that through the global economic crisis – but I think just through the natural, organic phenomenon of history – the churches and the political class are at one."

West left his audience with a challenge: if Christian apologists want to speak to their own age, they need to read carefully the 'Signs of the Times', the tenor of their age. ■

This address was given at the Australasian Religious Press Association Conference, Sydney in September

St Paul's Cathedral, London

from thames

in the cause

The Vatican is allowing groups of Anglicans to join the Catholic Church while retaining distinctive elements of their Anglican identity.

Jim Neilan looks at reactions, explores implications and possible repercussions

There is nothing new about people leaving the Anglican Church and joining the Catholic Church (or vice versa). Some enrol in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) while others opt for private instructions. They make a simple Declaration of Faith and are 'received into the church'. To them, this is a conversion – a change in direction in their relationship with Christ and the church he founded.

There won't be the same feeling of a break with the past for those who accept this new invitation from the Pope. It's almost a 'come as you are' invitation – same priests and bishops, same liturgy, same Anglican culture. So, who are the people who want to make this change, and why?

Have they suddenly realised that Christ's blueprint for life – *being poor in spirit, meek and merciful, loving your enemies, promoting justice and peace* – is lived more authentically in the Church of Rome? No one has said that this is his/her reason. Do they consider that the Creed we say in both the Anglican and Catholic churches on Sundays is more valid in the latter? No one has put this forward as a reason.

To put it bluntly, two words explain the reason for the exodus of these disaffected Anglicans – ***women*** and ***homosexuals***. They make no secret about this. If Rome had not condemned the idea of women priests (even forbidding discussion about the possibility) and just as strongly excluded homosexuals from ordination, these Anglicans would not be so interested in 'joining up'.

Pope Benedict does not see it this way. His invitation was "in the cause of unity", just as his lifting the excommunication of the Lefebvrist bishops (including a Holocaust denier) was in the cause of unity; just as his encouragement of the pre-1960s liturgy is in the cause of unity. It seems that the common theme is to turn the clock back and pay only lip service to some of the main teachings of the Second Vatican Council – implying that in their four years of deliberations, over 2000 bishops along with Popes John XXIII and Paul VI made no real changes and instigated no new directions for the Catholic Church in the modern world.

Two of the great initiatives of the Council are particularly related to this new move by Pope Benedict: the need for the bishop of Rome to act collegially with the other bishops and the ground-breaking ecumenical change of attitude towards other churches, spelt out in the Council document *Nostra Aetate*.

On these criteria, the Vatican has failed on both counts. There has been no collegiality, no attempt at real consultation with those who would be affected most – the English Catholic bishops. And the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, was notified only a few days before publication of Rome's statement. Hardly an example of ecumenical sensitivity. We are told also that Cardinal Kasper, the head of the Vatican's Council for Promoting Christian Unity, was not consulted.

It's interesting that the announcement was made a few weeks after a new leader of the English Catholic Church was chosen. When his predecessor, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, was asked about opening the door to traditional Anglicans he was not enthusiastic, saying: "I worry about them being nostalgists, anti-feminists and anti-gay bigots."

Reaction from Anglicans has been mixed. Spokesmen – emphasis on men – for the groups opposing the ordination of women and gays in the UK, America and Australia, have expressed delight at the Vatican's approach: "It's more than we hoped for," they've said. Other Anglicans have taken more of a 'good riddance – Rome is welcome to them' attitude.

Catholic opinion varies as well. There's the attitude that we should welcome anyone who genuinely wishes to be a full member of our church. But a lot of questions are raised. If groups, or even entire Anglican parishes, decide to 'cross

to tiber

of unity

the Tiber', they would be able to have their own ordinariate – a sort of mini-diocese, answerable directly to the Vatican and independent of the local bishop. Many questions have been raised about how this would work in practice.

Then there is the matter of married priests. Take this scenario: Tim (ex-Catholic priest) sits at Mass with his wife and children. Despite nine years of training in theology and Scripture and 15 years as a dedicated parish priest, he was told he could not remain as a priest if he married. Another woman and her children are sitting in front of them. She is the wife of Father Nigel (ex-Anglican) who is celebrating their Sunday mass. Some are pointing out the inconsistency, even hypocrisy, of this situation while others rejoice that an influx of Anglican clergy will alleviate the dwindling number of Catholic priests.

St Peter's Basilica, Vatican City, Rome

One outcome would seem certain: the Catholic Church, with these new parishioners, will become more conservative and backward-looking, moving further away from the spirit of the Vatican Council. What if this motivates upset Catholics to look to the Anglican Church as a more welcoming spiritual home: a church making an honest and open attempt to search for Gospel values in some of the most complex issues of modern life? Will the Pope give those people his blessing "in the cause of unity"? ■

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"How do you live a life of no
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American peace activist Fr John De
and gave an open lecture
Here are some quot

Mahatma Gandhi.

Every day Gandhi prayed for 45 minutes morning and night a prayer of peace and non-violence – his favourite text was the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). Gandhi "lived and breathed non-violence", learned from the great Hindu writings – the Baghavad Gita.

Martin Luther King.

He followed the non-violent Jesus, who stepped out into a struggle which ended in arrest and death. King said: "The choice is no longer between violence and non-violence; it's non-violence or non-existence... We are doomed to global destruction unless we become people of non-violence."

Martin Luther King leading a peaceful march in Boston, in 1965

To the people of New Z

"To all you holy sain
are to be the light of peace
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"While Ronald Reagan w
wars – and nuke 'em all!
no! *to nuclear weapon*
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You speak, you pray, you fast, you organise, you lobby, you speak to the media, you build a movement... at a certain point you cross the line and break the laws which legalise mass murder. You risk the Cross, you come to Resurrection.

To break unjust laws which justify mass murder is to risk receiving the Cross. Global change only happens when peaceful people break these unjust laws. They enter into the Paschal mystery, for the Cross is the way to peace and justice on earth.

At this present time there are 30 wars going on in the world

The Salvadorian Jesuits.

John Dear visited El Salvador in 1985 and met the Jesuit community there. In El Salvador, 70,000 civilians (out of a population of five million) had been slaughtered by death squads.

The Jesuit Superior said publicly, "The purpose of the Jesuit University is to promote the reign of God. We have learned that means to stand up against the *anti*-reign of God.

"To stand for peace is to be active against war. To pursue the good is to stand up against global, systemic injustice and structural, institutional violence. To stand against the poverty and violence of our society – that is what being a Christian is".

Four years later, a squad of 28 US-trained soldiers arrived at the Jesuit house, took six of the community outside, shot them – and then took out their brains. Their message was: *if you think, then this is what you will get*. It is the way of empires to use deterrence and to terrorise ordinary people.

he prophets

n-violence living in a country
t of the world's weapons?"

ar SJ paid a flying visit in November
at the University of Otago.
es from his address.

Dorothy Day.

Her contention was that war and violence are the root causes of homelessness and imprisonment. Her *Catholic Worker Movement* was founded to give hope to derelict people. It was based on Jesus' saying: 'Feed the hungry... When I was a stranger you welcomed me... when I was in prison you visited me'.

Franz Jägerstätter.

Empowered by his wife, Jägerstätter resisted the Nazi regime when leaders of church and state were content to co-operate with Hitler. The whole country hated him. He was arrested, imprisoned, eventually beheaded. His widow was present to attend his beatification by JP2.

In Austria they now acclaim Franz as "a new type of holiness, a dangerous political holiness – a threat to the culture of war and Empire. Franz is a model of one who, standing up politically against war, yet still remains a mystic living in perfect union with God as well as a political martyr".

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t going".

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– and over one billion people are short of food. Human history is the story of a race addicted to violence.

In 1945 in two bombing actions, the US vaporised 200,000 Japanese civilians. Today there are 25,000 nuclear weapons on earth. The US Star Wars initiative employs thousands of people and costs billions of dollars, all wasted on arms.

Martin Luther King said: "non-violence – or non-existence". Jesus Christ said: "Those who live by the sword will perish by the sword". War does not work. War does not lead to peace. War is never blessed by God.

Fr Daniel Berrigan illegally entering a base

Daniel and Philip Berrigan.

In 1968, Daniel Berrigan took 300 draft cards (during the Vietnam war), put them in a heap and publicly burned them with napalm. He said: "We apologise to the US people for burning paper instead of children". (Napalm was being used to burn civilians in Vietnam.)

He and his companions were sentenced to six years, and spend over two years in prison. This was the first of some 100 demonstrations undertaken for peace all over the world (of which the most recent was that involving Fr Peter Murnane and two companions at Waihopai, Marlborough last year).

In December 1993 Fr Dear, Philip Berrigan and two others walked onto an Airforce Base near Las Vegas, at 4 a.m. in the morning and chipped paint off an armed Bomber plane. The planes were being prepared to bomb Bosnia. "We were surrounded by soldiers and made to lie down with machine guns aimed at our heads. At the trial I said: 'the Bible taught me to love my enemies, not to nuke them'.

"We were held together in a cell for nine months. After six weeks we were allowed to have a Bible. We used fermented grape juice and prison bread – and Jesus was present. After nine months we were released, but received another year and a half sentence of house arrest."

I know that my redeemer liveth

This Advent, Handel's **Messiah** *will be sung, in part or as a whole, throughout the English-speaking world. Why is it such a universal favourite?*

This month David Burchell (above) will direct Handel's great oratorio, *Messiah*, in the Dunedin Town Hall for the fifth time; with 130 voices this year, the choir is the biggest ever.

"To direct the same piece many times means you get to know it very well," says David. "There is a danger of becoming too familiar – but I don't think I have reached that stage yet with *Messiah*. I hope I haven't! Performing it only every two years is good. There is a tradition for the City of Dunedin Choir to perform the *Messiah* every alternate year, and it gives other groups, like the Cathedral Choir, the opportunity to do it in the intervening years."

So why is Messiah everybody's favourite – at least in the English-speaking world?

"It's a combination of the fact that it contains so many good tunes and because it tells the whole story – Christ's coming, his life and death and Resurrection – and afterwards. It is the whole central drama of Christianity.

"When Handel wrote it in 1742, it was an immediate success. It was performed again and again during his lifetime, and when he died it went on being performed. The performances grew steadily bigger. They were called the Handel Commemoration.

"It was performed annually, so it got itself embedded in English culture and spread through the English speaking world. As the Empire expanded, choral societies were established, and the one thing they all aspired to perform was Handel's *Messiah*. In Germany, of course, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* fills the same slot.

"For the most part *Messiah* is within the scope of amateur choirs. Yet some of the choruses in Part 1 are actually quite complex, and it's a challenge to bring them off well. Like *For Unto Us a Child is Born*, for instance, with all the long runs. The arias present nothing devastatingly difficult. You don't necessarily need topflight performers to carry them off.

"It doesn't have to have a big orchestra either: simply strings, oboes, trumpets, drums... The writing is not so difficult. Eighteenth Century orchestras were smaller and Handel's music was reasonably straightforward. *The Trumpet Shall Sound* is quite taxing. Bach, on the other hand, drove his singers and instrumentalists to the limit, and is therefore much more demanding. Handel was kinder in his writing.

"Bach was writing for his own orchestra and he knew what they were capable of. Handel was primarily a businessman, and he was always looking past the first performance; so he wrote to enable lots of people to be able to perform his music. Unless you were fortunate enough to have a wealthy patron or have an established church post like Bach, you had to work for your living in those days. It was probably *Messiah* that set Handel up for life. Handel was really a musical entrepreneur."

What does the Messiah do for you personally, to your spirit?

"It is certainly an uplifting work to perform – even in its very familiarity. It's comfortable to be a part of it. The contrasting styles sit well together and complement each other. In Part 1 the sequence of the prophets, the angels' proclamation all lead up to the birth of Christ: it flows beautifully. I'm sure that is why it has become a typically Advent rather than a Lenten piece.

"Of course originally it was produced to be sung in Lent, because in those days operas were banned during Lent! Handel had been writing oratorios based on Biblical stories for 20 years – for Lenten performance! They were like operas without the action.

"The *Messiah* is quite different. It is more contemplative. There are of course moments of action. But for long sequences you are allowed to sit back and reflect – on, say, the Crucifixion scene in Part 2. The Christmas connection comes only from Part 1. Nevertheless, it is quite logical to start the church's year with something which follows the whole drama of Redemption."

How does it compare for you with Elgar's Dream of Gerontius, which you gave us so successfully two years ago.

"*Gerontius* is more all-consuming because it is so dramatic. *Messiah* is more contemplative with moments of climax and of praise. In *Gerontius* the whole focus is on the suffering and death of this man, his final journey and his inner wrangling. By comparison, Messiah is like a Scriptural commentary. It tells the story of Christ, then sits back and reflects on it. The long Part 2 allows you to simply think on what Christ is doing for us – and then you are plunged into the climax of the Hallelujah chorus. Handel keeps us waiting and waiting during Part 2, and I think that is his masterstroke. That's why I prefer to perform it without cutting. The very length adds to the experience. You have to settle back and let it all happen."

Tell us about leading from the harpsichord – as opposed to simply conducting from the podium?

"When you are playing yourself, you are part of the ensemble. You are absorbed in it. It's not so difficult with Baroque music, because once the tempo is established the performers can almost conduct themselves."

How about the soloists this year?

"The tenor David Hamilton is coming again – from Germany, in fact. He has established quite a connection with the City Choir here. He is a very easy person to work with. Emma Fraser is the soprano this year. She's a local singer. She is young, but her voice has matured beautifully.

"The Messiah is done with a 'crash course' of final rehearsals. We don't have long to work with the soloists. I get together with them on Monday with the piano. Then there will be a three hour dress rehearsal for a three hour work! To get through it, we have to lop the middle out of some of the arias and choruses. And then we perform it on Tuesday. Of course, I have been working with the choir for eight weeks. The City Choir has come on wonderfully over the years.

"But the soloists know the music so well already. You don't have to teach them the music! It's mostly a matter of making sure they are comfortable with the speed of my conducting. Also there are traditional embellishments to some of the arias, and I need to know what to expect. That was the tradition in 18th Century opera. Some of the arias in *Messiah* have a da capo section, when the opening section returns. On the reprise the soloist is given the liberty to 'show off'. Once you arrive at the final cadence, everything stops while the singer indulges in a little trill!

"Apparently Handel had quite a battle on his hands with some of his soloists. In subsequent performances of the *Messiah*, he changed the voice he used for some arias according to the singer he had available. He tailored the music to suit the voice. That means as Director I am presented with a catalogue of alternatives, and sometimes must decide which singer I use.

"There is no standard version of *Messiah*. Handel kept on writing what he clearly regarded as improvements. If you went back to the 1742 version, you would lose some of the well-established movements. This time, for instance, I have given one aria to the alto rather than the soprano, because otherwise the alto would have nothing at all to sing in Part 3, apart from a duet. When Anna Leese was singing, I gave that aria to her because, being the local megastar, she was the one many of the audience had come to hear! But this time I am looking for a better balance." ■

David Burchell is Director of Music at St Paul's Anglican Cathedral, Dunedin. He is also regular conductor for the City of Dunedin Choir

Handel's Messiah is being performed in the Town Hall by the City of Dunedin Choir and Southern Symphonia, on Tuesday 8 December.

walls, freedom and god

Glynn Cardy

Walls surrounded the Temple that Jesus knew, the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Inside was an outer courtyard, then more walls, then an inner courtyard. Within that was the Holy Place, and within that – separated by a thick curtain – was the Holy of Holies. This was where God was said to dwell.

There were lots of walls protecting God. There were lots of priests and guards protecting the walls. And there were lots of rules and regulations protecting the priests and guards. God was safe and secure.

"Do you see these great buildings?" said Jesus. "Not one stone will be left here upon another, all will be thrown down."

Jesus, like other reform-oriented Jews, was critical of the Temple. The Temple was the dominant symbol of ecclesiastical power and authority. This was where the pious and their pet god ruled. This was where the chosen, those who had wealth and influence, could appease and please God. The Temple symbolised spiritual stability and protection. It was indeed an imposing and beautiful structure. Yet for Jesus it symbolised the imprisonment of God and the spiritual impoverishment of the common people.

In 70 CE the walls of the Temple came down. Imperial Rome destroyed it and killed all within. The Temple's demise was a cataclysmic event for Judaism and the nascent Christian sect.

Although the inflammatory sentiment of wishing the Temple destroyed was almost certainly backdated and placed upon Jesus' lips, it was consistent with his theology. Jesus did not wish for the destruction of Judaism but its reform. He did not wish the priestly caste to give up their lives but to give up their power. He did not wish the rule of God to be cast down but to be a matter of the heart. He did not wish God to die but God to be free.

Last month Europe remembered and celebrated the destruction of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago. On November 9th 1989 East Germans poured through the wall into the West. On that cold night, years of separation and anxiety melted into the unbelievable reality of a new freedom. It was a potent symbol of the collapse of the Communist dream. What toppled the wall was the build-up of popular discontent in East Germany, the example of passive resistance in Poland, a series of chance errors by the East German leadership, as well as the Kremlin's refusal, or inability, to use force to preserve its empire. And so the wall came crumbling down.

The wall, 155 kilometres long, had stood for 28 years, supposedly keeping East Germans safe from the advances of the West. To prove just how safe it was, East German guards had over the years murdered at least 136 fellow citizens trying to get out. Its real function was to protect the power of the ruling elite and the weakness of its pet god called *the greater good*.

It is convenient to forget though that for the poorest of citizens the support services under Communism were significantly better than the support services under a capitalist re-united Germany. The virtue of individual freedom does not favour the poor, as many millions in the United States know. Yet ultimately the East German state died because it tried to fetter the human spirit. It had created a society where fear of difference, fear of criticism and fear of free thought reigned. The fearful were in control. They believed it was their right to access and determine every facet of human behaviour in the name of *the greater good*.

The greater good was a 'god' that did not brook dissent. Any act of creativity, spontaneity or random kindness was deemed potentially subversive. Spirituality was usually

suspect too because it is so devilishly hard to control. Gods, like the Christian one, didn't answer to the Party. They weren't accountable to *the greater good*. Even if you could control church leaders, the message of Jesus and the working of his spirit continued to be subversive. This is why churches were at the forefront of the desire for change.

So, in time, after much protesting, suffering and praying, the spirit of freedom triumphed over the spirit of fear. The wall came down. The wall that had meant to provide safety and yet really symbolised control, came down. Stone by stone it was dismantled. The god of *the greater good* was also dismantled, as was its priestly caste. It was replaced by the god of "*my good*, 'I'm good', and ignore thy neighbour". This new god is that of capitalism.

There is an old Gospel story about casting out demons and new ones coming in. The god of *my good* has significant advantages over the god of *the greater good*, yet at the end of the day both have demonic consequences. This is why the followers of Jesus need to always have a critical relationship with prevailing ideologies and political systems.

Coinciding with the anniversary of the destruction of the Berlin Wall, a group of brave Palestinians tried to make a dent in another wall. In the town of Qalandiya in the occupied West Bank, a group of masked activists using a lorry pulled down a two-metre cement block before Israeli security forces confronted them with tear gas grenades. This wall is called the *Security Wall* and it divides off much of the Palestinian population from its neighbours. This wall has further alienated people from their ancestral land, and provided fresh sites for Jewish Zionist settlers to make new dwellings. The Palestinians have fiercely opposed it. Unfortunately though, the hapless protestors won't be successful in removing this wall in a hurry.

Rather than increase security, walls are an indication that other methods of engagement have failed. Walls do not create solutions. Indeed all they create is resentment. The ferocity of that resentment will come, wave upon wave, to break upon those walls. And break they will. Only the hard and painful work of reconciliation, peace building and forgiveness finding can create solutions.

Similarly a religion that is over-burdened with rules and regulations is indicative of a religion that does not trust the Spirit of God working in the hearts of everyone. A religion that only allows its knowledgeable elite to interpret God does not trust God. Indeed it sees its duty as containing God, leashing God. It is a religion that is wary of humanity, wary of public scrutiny and wary of those who are difficult to control. Walled countries and walled religions have this in common: both are fearful.

Pope John Paul II once said, "What (Israel/Palestine) needs is not more walls but more bridges." It doesn't need more security, separation and continued alienation of land. It needs the bridges of understanding, tolerance and acceptance of difference. He could have also been talking about the Christian faith.

There is a parable told by Anthony De Mello SJ called the *Lost Sheep*. The story has a wandering and errant sheep that escapes through a hole in the fence, enjoys his freedom and then is chased home by a wolf. The wise shepherd though, despite the advice of his friends – or is it the *Sheep and Wool Control Board*? – decides that the hole in the fence serves a good purpose and refuses to repair it. It serves the purpose of offering an escape. To remain with the flock is therefore a choice.

To be truly free one must have a choice. To have a truly faithful congregation one must encourage exploration, venturing beyond the fence, so that to remain is always a choice rather than a duty, compulsion or threat. The God of Jesus is not a God who can be imposed or who controls people against their wills. When Jesus died, so the *Gospel of Matthew* tells us, the thick curtain in the Temple separating off the Holy Place from Holy of Holies was torn in two. It is a striking symbol for the escape of God. Jesus' God ripped open the barrier, ran out of the pen and jumped over the walls of institutionalised religion to freedom.

I wonder whether they repaired the rip… or left it as a symbol of the utter freedom and sovereignty of God. ■

Jane Hole describes the practice of Christian meditation – going away, slowing down, heeding the God within

going out into the desert

The three-hour drive south was easy. The light – under changeable early-Spring skies that toggled from smoky grey to uncertain blue and back again – was good for driving. I enjoyed, on the horizon to my right, the fierce presence of the Southern Alps, while to my left the eastern coast and the main road south moved gradually toward one another until at last I could see a thin line of milky-green sea through the trees. I'm familiar with this beat from Christchurch to Oamaru, across the exposure and bounty of the Plains into the gentle, less extravert, ups and downs of North Otago.

An easy drive – but by the time I stopped at the fruit and vegie shop on Thames Street before turning up the hill I was tired. Perhaps that was why I was so moved by the warm smile of a stranger as we turned into the shop together. She smiled at me for nothing, I thought, just because I was there. Later that day, a woman with a double pram empty of children but full of packages gave me a trusting smile as she went into the paint shop further down the road. I was surprised, but by the end of the day I'd fitted comfortably back into the atmosphere of small-town New Zealand, where life's simpler. That's one of the reasons I come here – but only one.

Before I left home, I heard myself tell a neighbour I was going away because I needed to 'recharge my batteries'. If I 'hear myself' say something, it's usually because it's not entirely true. I'll have used a conventional phrase, either because I believe the other person won't understand the whole truth, or because I don't want them to know it. Certainly the luxury of sleeping in if I need to, long walks in the beauty of coast and hillside, and isolation from demanding communications *do* build up resources depleted by my everyday life in the city. But that's only one more reason for coming here.

I'm sure Henri Nouwen would have known the essential reason. I have with me his *The Way of the Heart: Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry,* which I borrowed – too long ago – from the wealth of contemplative writings in the Dunedin Christian Meditation Community's library.

The book, with its extraordinary insights, has lain on my desk for months, occasionally dipped into but gathering dust, while I've dealt dutifully at the same desk with a flood of vacuous emails. I've wondered uneasily, from time to time, why I give personal and social minutiae priority over a book that promises me such riches.

It's just this question, and that of why I come to Oamaru, that Nouwen examines. He paints a painfully familiar picture of the prison of illusions in which we all to some extent live.

In the chapter entitled 'The Compulsive Minister', Henri Nouwen notes that in general we are very busy people, and this is not always good.

'…we move through life in such a distracted way that we do not even take the time and rest to wonder if any of the things we think, say, or do are worth *saying or doing. We simply go along with the many "musts" and "oughts" that have been handed on to us, and we live with them as if they were authentic translations of the Gospel of our Lord … Secularity is a way of being dependent on the responses of our milieu. The secular or false self is the self which is fabricated, as Thomas Merton says, by social compulsions …. Whether I am a pianist, a businessman or a minister, what matters is how I am perceived by my world. If being busy is a good thing, then I must be busy.'*

He looks at our socially-contrived prison in the light of the social conditions in which the 4th and 5th century Desert Fathers and Mothers also felt imprisoned, and so fled to the Egyptian desert. They sought, in solitude, the God of their freedom, and Nouwen believes we can learn much from their struggles – and their encounters – and take hope.

'Solitude is the furnace of transformation. Without solitude we remain victims of our society and continue to be entangled in the illusions of the false self… Solitude is the place of the great struggle and the great encounter – the struggle against the compulsions of the false self, and the encounter with the loving God who offers himself as the substance of the new self.'

Nouwen insists that we are responsible for our own solitude.

'*We have, indeed, to fashion our own desert where we can withdraw every day, shake off our compulsions and dwell in the gentle healing presence of our Lord.'*

I believe that my practice of Christian Meditation is, in some sense, my daily desert, where for a time I inhabit solitude to seek Love. And this weekend, in this hillside home overlooking the serene sweep of a bay on the North Otago coast, I'm essentially seeking an extended experience of solitude.

Meditation is simple but not easy. Solitude may be appealingly simple viewed from within the pressures of everyday life, but Nouwen insists – and the lives of the Desert Fathers make clear – that solitude like meditation is not easy. But we can take heart, he reassures us; there's no need to fear the struggle, when help is always at hand.

'The wisdom of the desert is that the confrontation with our own frightening nothingness forces us to surrender ourselves totally and unconditionally to the Lord …'

I don't always find the solitude here easy. Sometimes it wraps itself richly round me; at other times it presents a grey and empty face from which I long to escape, for I recognise that face as my own. The call is to get to know this face and accept its terrifying poverty. I can even come to love it, they say, but meantime I long to hide from it among the shining baubles of distractions.

Surrender doesn't come easily to me; perhaps it doesn't come easily to anyone. But the consequence that Nouwen sees – that we shall '*dwell in the gentle healing presence of our Lord*' – is powerfully attractive. And the only alternative – as far as I know – is a life in prison.

On the evening before I leave for home, I look down from the hill on the small town that has been my desert. The roads leading down to the sea from Reed Street are so wide you'd think they had miles to go; but after about six blocks – before they have time to get into their stride – they're chopped off by the sea wall. By day, they look like a plan that didn't work out. But this evening, the sea hidden by darkness, those same broad streets and those that cut across them to make the grid – all of them empty and obediently straight under rhythmically-spaced street lights glowing like barley sugar – suggest absolute order and calm.

Within the homes, violence may be careering across TV screens and families may be fighting in the kitchens, but the town streets look like the dream of a Renaissance architect: harmony and grace. In the shadowy spring gardens, the japonica's out and the viburnum, and some of the blossom, while other fruiting trees still have shiny buds like tightly-clenched fists.

This has been a gentle desert – as deserts go – allowing me the degree of solitude and struggle that I need, without asking psychological or physical heroics that I couldn't have mustered.

And great encounters…?

While I was here, I'd wanted to see the sun come up out of the sea, so on my last night I set the alarm for earlier than usual. When the alarm went off the next morning, I ran to the window bare-foot, rubbing my eyes. There was a brilliant line of light along the cloudy horizon. I was sure I was too late; it must already have bounced out of the sea and hidden behind the rosy smoke above. The sky began to fill with pale light. I was about to turn away and comfort myself with a bowl of porridge, when I noticed that the slit of bright light still lay where the sleeping sea and lightening sky met. As I watched, the slit was ripped wide by himself, the sun, shouldering his glorious way into the day.

Taking a step back from my everyday life, into a few precious days of solitude, silence and stillness in a gracious small town, has given me many things. Among them was an encounter with a great light rising. Perhaps – in one form or another – this is the ultimate gift of the desert. ■

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Quotations are from the section 'Silence' in Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart: Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry,* Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981

Her book *'Under the Huang Jiao Tree: Two Journeys in China'*, written as Jane Carswell, telling the story of the inner and outer journeys of a year spent teaching English in China, has recently been published in Melbourne (www.janecarswell.net).

a divine moment – or two

Diane Kelly spent time working in Mother Teresa's Home for the Dying in Kalighat. The eyes of the most needy are always on you

It was a difficult decision. I was faced with several options as a volunteer in the Mother Teresa's Homes in Calcutta. I could work as a volunteer in one of the several children's homes or I could work in the Home for the Dying many kilometres away at Kalighat – beside the famous Hindu temple. I chose the latter, partly because the countless Korean and Japanese young volunteers were in a rush to queue for the Children's Homes' while few lined up to help in adult hospitals.

from rooftop of Home for the dying at Kalighat

Not that you can call them hospitals in the true sense of the word. They are concrete buildings with concrete floors, along a section of which is an open drain that serves as the toilet. The larger section of concrete floor is the one and only hospital room housing 50 dying women all lying on mattresses in rows on the floor. Through the thick concrete wall lie another 50 men in the exact same positions on their concrete floor in the men's hospital.

No curtains or carpets, no ornaments or pictures, no running water or electrical equipment, no windows to see out of, no sheets on the beds, no personal belongings, no visitors to see... but it's an incredible place. It hits you hard in the stomach and in the heart. You gaze rudely at the women amidst their agony. You hear them moaning and crying out in their unknown language, you watch them react to touch with repulsion or acceptance depending on the amount of abuse they've previously received; their heads shaven to prevent the lice spreading, their backs covered in scabies, and occasionally their bodies announcing a cultural burning tragedy.

But it is the eyes that tell their stories – the wide sorrowful eyes of the young girls and the deep-set dark brown eyes of the older women. You can't say elderly because most are in their 40s-50s, victims of abuse or sickness and whose families had left them in the street to be picked up by the all-familiar white ambulance owned and driven by the Missionary Sisters of Charity.

This is their home. A place of care that relies on the routines of feeding, handing out drinks of water, washing, supporting these women on their walk to the toilet and washing their feeding plates in the tin tub that has no dishwashing liquid, hot water or fancy brushes. Old plastic bread bags are the only utensils to wash the 100 plates and tin mugs.

It was sitting cross-legged on this stone floor amidst the 'dishwashers' that I experienced a divine moment. I sat in awe as the Koreans, the Russians, the Germans and the Japanese washed the tin plates, laughed and told stories. These stories reeked of true service – not a two-week stint to lighten the soul, but the service of divine love. They came for two weeks to spend time with the dying and stayed for four years. You could hear the passion in their voices and the silence of reflection amidst the telling of their own stories. God was there and listening.

The face of a woman, a dying woman, returns to me over and over again. She claimed me on my first day at Kalighat. Perhaps I was older than most. Perhaps I reminded her of someone she once knew but no longer saw. But her eyes sought me out. They begged me to stop my relentless chores and sit down for a while. She held my face between her two gnarled and scabbed hands and looked deep into my eyes. She seemed the healer and I the patient, she appeared the teacher and I the learner, as I struggled to keep her piercing gaze. For it was only when my body and my eyes softened in solidarity that we shared a moment of love, divine love.

From that moment I could scratch her back, stroke her bristly shaven grey head whenever I passed by. She would beckon to me to come and sit with her. The ritual always began with the locking of our eyes. It melted our languages into one, it discarded our histories, it denied our cultural differences... and gave us both dignity. ■

Diane Kelly is a teacher at Bishop Viard College in Porirua. She is married with six adult children and five grandchildren

dialogue: a monastic legacy

Cistercian Fr Max Palmer offers his contribution to the world political debate. What is needed is for people to listen to each other

A droll comic strip had Henry Kissinger asking the Jews if they would talk with the Arabs. Their reply, a resounding 'No'. In the next panel, Kissinger is asking the Arabs if they will talk with the Jews. Again a resounding 'No'. In the third panel, Kissinger is telling the Press – 'We have a basis of agreement'.

Dialogue is the verbal exchange of opinions, thoughts, ideas; it always demands respect for the different ideas of others and does not seek agreement. The road to peace is infallibly paved with dialogue. The ancient Greek and Roman philosophers used it to great effect, but for us lesser mortals, dialogue received its greatest boost from the sixth century Italian, Benedict of Nursia in his Rule for monks. More on this anon.

Recent years have witnessed a stream of dark reports on the state of the church, particularly in Ireland. How we accept these reports is important for us. Dom Colmcille O'Toole, abbot of Mt St Joseph Abbey, Roscrea for 36 years, says: "This is the golden age of the church in Ireland". He is right on three counts. First, the *Peace Accord* between Unionists and Republicans in Northern Ireland is a shining example of what can be achieved through dialogue, a dialogue initiated in dread secrecy by a Redemptorist priest.

Second, the church in Ireland is now seen to be imperfect. The church is perfect in its head and founder, Jesus Christ. In us its members, it is far from perfect. As another Redemptorist says: "If it's perfect, it's not Christian". Spot on! If the church is perfect, it has no need of a Redeemer. An imperfect church has no option but to dialogue with its members – a rarity in the days when it saw itself as perfect.

Back to Benedict of Nursia. The word 'dialogue' is not in his Rule. But Benedict does legislate for dialogue in the dazzling third chapter of his Rule. The Rule comprises a prologue and 73 chapters. The Prologue is devoted to the spiritual life, and the first two chapters set up the structures within which the spiritual life is lived.

In his third chapter, *On calling the brothers together in Council*, Benedict gives pre-eminence to community dialogue. He puts dialogue before obedience, humility, liturgical worship, lectio, silence, stability, hospitality and all the rest. For Benedict, dialogue is the first essential step to community. Dialogue according to the norms of Benedict is not easy; nothing in monastic life is more contrary to human nature. Let us take a look at those norms.

Whenever an important decision has to be made, the abbot explains the pros and cons of the issue to the community, and gives them time to think and pray about it. Then the abbot calls all together and asks each one for his opinion. This is the flash point where human nature rebels.

When one member expresses an opinion I disagree with, my immediate gut reaction is to challenge him. But Benedict will not allow it. Every member must give his opinion; everybody else must listen to it, and let it stand.

In Benedict's words: "Everyone is to give his opinion humbly, and not presume to obstinately defend his views". In asking for reasonable restraint, Benedict is painfully aware how easily we get carried away with our own lofty ideas, and bore our listeners to tears! The abbot takes the opinions of all into account when making a final decision, a decision binding on all.

Whatever our individual differences, in following Benedict's norms we retain reverence and respect for each other, and the peace and unity of the community remain intact. All through his Rule, Benedict makes liberal use of Scripture, yet strangely in this chapter he does not use *Proverbs 11, 14* – "Where no counsel is, there the people fall. In the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

Benedict was hypersensitive to the danger of class distinction dividing his community. Most of his monks were illiterate peasants; a handful, educated aristocrats. His method of averting any division is the stuff of divine inspiration – in community dialogue, Benedict ensured that every monk was honoured, trusted and listened to. However, it was the Cistercians in the 12th century who introduced the distinct class of Lay Brothers – great saints in their own right – and later, at La Trappe, total silence, two factors which wiped out community dialogue.

Abbot Terrance Kardong OSB says that dialogue is necessary for the well-being of the community. Benedict, the Roman patrician, is the last person to pull his priorities out of a hat. It is no mere accident that he devotes the third chapter to dialogue, the 53rd chapter to hospitality, and the 58th chapter to

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Autumn Advent in the Himalayas

Advent is the time of year I particularly think about Mary, the mother of Jesus. Her donkey-riding expedition across Israel while heavily pregnant gets me thinking. Mother as Traveller and Facilitator of Adventure constantly floats to the surface in my parenting pilgrimage. Rather than staying at home and keeping things cosy for the hunters' return I prefer to think of my role as the one who makes sure we have the essentials we need for our family adventures. Bruce Chatwin in Songlines explores the core human need to move, journey and adventure. He says this:

One commonly held delusion is that men are the wanderers and women the guardians of hearth and home. This can, of course, be so. But women are above all the guardians of continuity. If the hearth moves, they move with it.

It is the Gypsy women that keep their men on the road. Similarly in the gale-lashed waters of the Cape Horn archipelago, it was the women of the Yaghan Indians who kept their embers alight in the bottom of their bark canoes. The missionary Father Martin Gusinde compared them to the Ancient Vestals' or to 'fidgety birds of passage who were happy and inwardly calm only when they were on the move'.

This Facilitator of Adventures' role is often as unglamorous as gathering water bottles, snacks and jackets for a long Sunday afternoon walk or organizing Interislander ferry bookings for summer holidays. This month I schemed over maps and timetables to plan the 24 hours by bus and then 40 hours by train for our November trip to South India. Just enough games, stories and snacks were the embers in the bottom of our canoe.

Mary did plenty of this. She was up for adventures at a time when most women are in a maximal nesting phase. Donkey riding to a new town just before her due date, then a journey to Egypt with a newborn, and later she came back across the desert with a toddler. I guess there were no wet wipes or iPods then either.

Advent and Christmas are about journey and adventure – not comfortably nesting. It's a time for seeing the unexpected – talking to the traveller sitting beside me, nappy changes on a railway platform or keeping my eyes open for a Hallelujah chorus of angels in the tropical sky. It is a time to find Emmanuel. God with us.

Kaaren Mathias

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admission to the community. Without a true community of dialogue, what is there to welcome newcomers into?

Can we learn from this sixth century Master? For that matter, has any other Rule for religious in the history of the Catholic Church catered for community dialogue? A fair question.

Dialogue has come a long way since Henry Kissinger. Dr Hans Küng has told us that world peace will only come through dialogue between the world's great religions. Given the current state of their relations, this might look like a pipe dream. And yet, if such dialogue could take place in Northern Ireland, why not in the Middle East and other troubled spots?

This is Ireland's greatest gift to the modern world. And all due credit to the United States for its efforts in promoting dialogue. Every US Secretary of State, from Dean Rusk and Henry Kissinger to Condoleeza Rice and Hillary Clinton have worked indefatigably for dialogue between the nations. As for President Barack Obama, single-handed he has given a whole new impetus and dimension to global dialogue.

Hopefully, dialogue will take its legitimate place in church life of the future. The words of two authors are worth quoting – Msgr John Broadbent: "As Catholics, let us learn to live with differences, but still share the good that the faith manifests in others."

And Sr Joan Chittister OSB: "Let them all talk until, as a church searching under the impulse of the Spirit, we see clearly where the truth lies for us." Then indeed will Cardinal Newman's *sensus fidelium* shine brightly in the church we all love. A small word of caution: if dialogue is difficult for the rank and file, it is ten times more so for those in authority. Tread softly. Tread gently. ■

Max Palmer is a monk of Kopua Abbey, Hawkes Bay

a prophetic servant of the church

Humphrey O'Leary CSsR (1925-2009)

In 1972 Fr Humphrey O'Leary came into a classroom in Melbourne to begin a course in Canon Law for a group of seminary students. For most of us, this was not our favourite subject. Canon Law in general was considered "boring". This course in particular might have got off to an especially dull start because we were to begin by considering the rather abstract principles referred to in the first section of the Code of Canon Law under the heading General Norms.

But then Fr O'Leary held up a small, red-covered book. It was, in fact, a copy of what was commonly called The Little Red Book of Chairman Mao. The official title on the cover was "Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung". It was a collection of quotations from the writings and speeches of the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party.

You might well ask, "What was a copy of Chairman Mao's Little Red Book doing in a course in Canon Law?" That's exactly what Humphrey was hoping you would ask! He had brought the book into class precisely to prompt questions in our minds. You might disagree with the sayings and even more with the actions of Chairman Mao, but you could hardly deny that the Little Red Book was one of the best-known publications in the world at that time.

Humphrey put the question before us. In it Chairman Mao proposes principles for how he believes society should be organised and how government should be exercised. How do these compare with the principles we find in Canon Law about how the church should be organised and governed?

I mention this episode of the Little Red Book as an example of Fr Humphrey's original and searching mind and also of his provocative style. As those familiar with his articles in Tui Motu would know, he often challenged conventional ways of thinking about the church. Yet I believe he did so as a faithful servant of the church. He could be quite critical of policies adopted by bishops or the Roman Curia if he considered such policies were not in the best interests of the people they were meant to be serving. Yet his criticisms were intended to be positive, calling the church to be more completely conformed to the Gospel.

He challenged us to become more ecumenical, in line with Christ's prayer that we might all be one. He called for more respect for the Eastern Churches, mindful that the Catholic Church embraces believers of the East as well as the West. He was critical of the recent policy of literal translation of the prayers of the Mass because he believed this policy does not show sufficient regard for the value of people praying in a language they can understand.

Fr Humphrey O'Leary was often provocative, but he was provocative in order to promote the good of the Christian community and indeed the good of people throughout the world. He was a faithful servant of the church.

Paul Bird CSsR

Fr Paul Bird is Provincial Superior of the Redemptorists in Australia and New Zealand

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The *Tui Motu* 'family' owes an enormous debt of gratitude to Fr Humphrey O'Leary, not simply for his faithful service but for the clarity and courage with which he expressed his insights into the current state of the church.

Humphrey loved this work. When his final illness was diagnosed in September, he wrote to us as follows: ***Today I extensively rewrote the later section of the November contribution I have now just sent you. I have plans for a December contribution...*** (*see p. 31*)

I wish I had the energy and time to express how much I have appreciated having been able to be a part of* Tui Motu*... I am glad to have had an opportunity to put my thoughts out for others to share. Thank you for having me on the team.

Humphrey was a wonderful example of what a theologian, thoroughly steeped in the moral theology and law of the church, can achieve. The Vatican Council taught us that there is hierarchy of truths. Equally, there is a hierarchy of laws. Humphrey possessed the acuity of mind to see when the lower law must give way to the higher – and how the supreme law of God's overwhelming love for us must never be lost sight of.

His writing has been an inspiration to very many people, not least the editorial team.

M.H.

May he rest in peace.

tales about women – fictional and historical

Kathleen Doherty

Perhaps one has to be living in a rambling Gloucestershire farmhouse surrounded by trees and orchards and old stone walls and deer and foxes and badgers, to be happy to do it. English author and publisher Susan Hill has just spent a year re-reading the books she already owns, and spending as little time as possible on the internet, too much use of which, she claims, fragments the brain and dissipates concentration. From this exercise has come *Howard's End is on the Landing*, by all accounts a highly entertaining meander through a lifetime of reading.

Not addressed, however, is the question of what you do when your favourite authors *will* insist on producing new works. Give in, I say. Forget the orchards and the foxes and one's favourites of 50 years ago (apart from *The Wind in the Willows* which must never be forgotten) and revel in the Now.

Two of Ireland's best-known literary sons published wonderful novels this year. In ***Love in Summer*** (Viking), his 14th novel, William Trevor returns to the rural Ireland of the 1950s which he has made his own territory. It is set in the fictional town of Rathmoye, where nothing happens according to its people. But they kept living there, although the young often left for the cities or for England or America. "That nothing happened was an exaggeration too," writes Trevor, and one senses the menace.

At the age of 81 William Trevor never fails to amaze with the delicacy of his touch. Half-articulated thoughts, dreams that the reader knows will come to nothing, connections which are either made or not made, with equally dire results, the quiet griefs never spoken about that sear ordinary lives – William Trevor is the master of conveying them. In deceptively simple prose he sketches the gulf between Dillahan, the middle-aged farmer, mired in grief after the death of his wife and child in an accident which he believes was his fault, and Ellie, the orphan girl from a convent, chosen by his sisters to be his housekeeper – and eventually his second wife.

The tragedy is that good-hearted, practical Dillahan sees no gulf at all, while Ellie can see nothing else. It is no surprise that the arrival of a stranger for the summer throws Ellie's world into turmoil, but what is the greatest emotional happening in her life is nothing more than a summer dalliance for the stranger. It is a classic William Trevor situation, delivered with compassion and artistry.

There is grief too in ***Brooklyn*** by Colm Toibin, (Penguin) the story of one young woman's journey from her village in the south of Ireland in the 1950s to New York – for so many Irish the Promised Land. The chance of a new life in America was engineered by Eilis's older sister, Rose, who sacrificed her own chance of escape to enable her sister to leave. But when she gets there Eilis finds that she is totally alone, she knows no-one and no-one knows her; nothing in Brooklyn, which is teeming with Irish, was part of her; she had nothing to look forward to… "not even Sunday."

Colm Toibin's 2004 novel *The Master* was about Henry James. There are echoes of James's *Portrait of a Lady* in the depiction of Eilis Lacey's life in New York, her job in a department store where her life is centred on the clothes she is selling, her moving out of despair to friendship and love and a secret marriage. A return to Ireland after the death of her sister is bitter-sweet. Eilis no longer belongs here. Her life on the other side of the world has changed her in ways that can barely be explained. Her return to Brooklyn has her imagining the years ahead, Brooklyn must now be her all. "She almost smiled at the thought of it, then closed her eyes and tried to imagine nothing more."

The ***Sisters Who Would Be Queen*** by Leanda de Lisle (Ballantine Books) is a fascinating account of the three Grey sisters, great-nieces of Henry VIII, and named by him and by his son, Edward VI as heirs to the throne of England. Lady Jane Grey was Queen for less than a fortnight before Mary, Henry's Catholic daughter, took control and imprisoned her before ordering her execution. Her sisters, Katherine and Mary, came nowhere near the throne, both marrying for love without the monarch's permission and paying for their indiscretions by confinement, one in the Tower of ▷

life inside a monastery in 2009

Finding Sanctuary: monastic steps for everyday life
by Abbot Christopher Jamison
Review: Mike Crowl

In May 2005 the BBC broadcast a TV reality show in which five ordinary modern men with no experience of Christian monastic life spent six weeks at Worth Abbey, in Crawley, West Sussex. They lived with the monks, and their progress was filmed from week to week.

Four of the men were in the age range 29 to 37; the fifth was a retired teacher. The youngest man produced trailers for a sex chat-line. Not all of them were changed by their experience (although the youngest has moved out of his rather unsavoury job). This wasn't about instant miracles.

Finding Sanctuary is the book that follows on from the series.

In it Jamison, the Abbot of Worth, offers his readers the thing that the TV programme gave its audience a hunger for: a way to be 'monastic' in the midst of the ordinary everyday world. At one point he quotes St John Chrysostom: "…thinking that the reading of Scripture is for monks only… you need it more than they do. Those who are placed in the world, and who receive wounds every day, have the most need of medicine."

The monks at Worth Abbey are Benedictines, so naturally the book is based around St Benedict's *Rule.* How -ever, reading the Rule on its own compared to having it applied and expounded by someone for whom it is daily life, are two different things. Jamison brings warmth and humour to his explanations, and a sense that it is possible to be spiritual outside a monastery. In fact, he explains that within a monastery it's very possible to be quite unspiritual – as you might expect, given the nature of human beings.

The book begins with a short introduction on the question: *How did I get this busy?* These 20 or so pages are then followed by seven chapters relating to seven monastic steps. Benedict, of course, gave rather more than seven rules, but Jamison manages to encompass enough of Benedict within his narrower framework to satisfy those who consider they need more discipline in their spiritual life.

His discussions are dotted with anecdotes, with stories from the Church Fathers and Mothers, and with cross-references to the world at large. There's nothing 'hidden away' about these monks. Furthermore, there's no sense of being heavenly-minded and of no earthly use about what's said: whatever your circumstances it can be taken on board and reflected on. Each chapter is followed by a link to a website, or a suggestion of a book to take you further. Two of the participants in the programme have written of their experiences and these can be found online at the Abbey's own site (www.worthabbey.net). They give more insight into a life lived with spiritual discipline.

Just to finish, one of my favourite stories from the book: *A young monk once went to see his superior: "Father," he said, "I must leave the monastery because I clearly do not have a vocation to be a monk." When the older monk asked why, the younger monk replied: "In spite of daily resolutions to be good-tempered, chaste and sober, I keep on sinning." The older monk looked at him with love and said: "Brother, the monastic life is this – I rise up and I fall down, I rise up and I fall down, I rise up and I fall down." The young monk stayed and persevered.*

There are hardcover, paperback and audio editions of the book available within New Zealand, all at reasonable prices. Various publishers. ■

▷ London, one in restricted quarters at Chequers, now the official country home of Britain's prime ministers. This is an absorbing account of the dynastic politics which made being a Tudor royal so very dangerous.

The three Grey sisters were Protestant; Mary Tudor who put paid to their designs of being Queen was Catholic, very much the daughter of her mother, Katherine of Aragon. Her coming to the throne led to one of the darkest episodes of English history. In just under four years, from February 1555 to November 1558, 284 Protestants, 56 of them women, were burned alive for their beliefs, and around 30 more died in prison.

In ***Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor*** (Yale University Press) the distinguished historian Eamon Duffy seeks to demonstrate that public sympathy was not on the side of the heretics, and that the persecution had the effect of setting England back on the road to Catholicism, a road which came to an abrupt end with the death, on the same day, of Mary herself and of her kinsman, Cardinal Reginald Pole.

It is hard, with today's sensibilities, to countenance the torture and burning of people for their religious views, but this was not the case in Marian England. Mary Tudor demanded communal participation in the old religion; withdrawal from such participation led to accusations of heresy, and the punishment for heretics was death. Eamon Duffy argues "with some diffidence and discomfort" that even though the burnings cast a "horrifying moral blot" on the regime, Mary's brutal religious policy was forward-looking and the foundation of the Counter-reformation. It is an awkward concept to grapple with. ■

the meaning of christmas

Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

By definition most of us are ordinary people. Our influence is limited to a small circle. Some who stand out because of a personal achievement have little or no effect on the rest of us. Then there are the leaders whose vision and energy do leave their mark on many. But they still rely on ordinary people to realise their vision. True leaders for good have to toil long and hard to develop their skills and insight, endure hardships, set-backs and abuse – something often overlooked.

It is customary at Christmas to concentrate on the Christ-child. This is good and proper, but unless seen through the perspective of his total life, it is a merely sentimental exercise. It is the risen adult Christ who is our leader; we are called to realise that vision.

As Geoffrey Ainger's hymn ends:
"Hope of the world, Mary's child,
you come again to reign;
King of the earth, Mary's child,
walk in our streets again."

middle east peace.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently praised Israeli PM Netanyahu for offering to slow down – not halt – development of settlements in Palestinian territory, and demanded that the Palestinians "return to negotiations without preconditions". Israel then announced 900 more homes would be built in the West Bank. Amid all the horrors of the Middle East situation, the savagery and misery, the name-calling and the 'they did it first' rhetoric, people can be excused for being confused.

During World War I, after living under Turkish rule for centuries, large numbers of Palestinian Arabs joined in Britain's fight against the Turks in the belief that after the war Palestine would be granted independence. Their hopes were dashed when, in 1917, Britain's *Balfour Declaration* proposed "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people".

It may have been possible to achieve this in a reasonably peaceful manner, but the British regarded the issues as merely administrative. The reality was that the fear, suspicion, desperation, resentment etc flowing from the decision had human and political dimensions. Clear, sensitive leadership was lacking.

In June 1947 Britain withdrew from its commitment to the *Palestine Mandate* because it was "unable to find a solution acceptable to both sides". The United Nations divided the country into two states with effect from May 1948, giving 77 percent to Jews. Seen through Arab eyes, Turkish Muslim overlords were replaced by Western Christian ones, who then gave a large part of their land to immigrants – three major waves of immigration occurred between 1901 and 1939. In 1967 Israel invaded part of the remaining Arab territory in the name of self-defence. It defied UN orders to withdraw, and is proceeding to establish settlements there.

The attitude of many today is neatly summed up in what Balfour wrote: "Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in the age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, *of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land."*

The people who live in refugee camps (so-called "hotbeds of militants") feel that their 'desires and prejudices' are also important. If no one is willing to recognise their natural rights, is it any wonder that they are now despairing? Where there is no hope, history tells us, people do desperate things. Violence begets violence. Negotiation requires an understanding of the other party's viewpoint, and willingness to compromise.

To refuse to halt, let alone undo, illegal annexation of territory is abysmal leadership.

accident compensation

Shortly before our 2008 elections, Merrill Lynch advised Australian clients to invest in insurance companies, which stood to gain $M200 per year if the *Accident Compensation Corporation* were opened up to private insurance. This was considered likely as *National* was heading for a win at the polls. Our Government appears to be contemplating that move in the name of "greater efficiency".

The bottom line of business is to make a profit for the owners. According to the *Business Roundtable* the social responsibility of business is to increase profits for the shareholders. The 'service' provided is aimed at inducing people to pay the price. The bottom line of the ACC is accident prevention, rehabilitation and compensation. This means it is not a business.

Roger Kerr, of the *Business Roundtable*, a privatisation advocate, stated that *"ACC should be re-established ... with the single objective of making a profit* (*NZ Herald' 21/7/98*)." Thus the whole purpose of ACC would be subverted, with profits taking precedence over everything else, and mostly going to overseas shareholders.

House owners buy insurance from private companies. As the direct beneficiaries they have a strong incentive to balance service against cost. Business owners would buy workplace insurance but, not being the direct beneficiaries, have a strong incentive to favour cost over service.

Proper leadership from the Government should ensure good management of ACC in terms of the Corporation's bottom line. ■

final testament

I looked back recently over a collection of the monthly back cover columns I have submitted to *Tui Motu* over the past seven or eight years. One page in particular caught my eye. I was able to say of it: "That could be the best thing that I have been responsible for over those years".

Don't accuse me of writer's pride. The page was a copy of a letter forwarded to me by a *Tui Motu* reader, Lance Bardwell. He had not long before sent it to the Holy Father. With his permission, I shared it with *Tui Motu* readers in the December 2005 issue.

Dear Joseph,
Please do not think me bad mannered in addressing you by your baptismal name, for Jesus greets you with that name and I am your brother in Jesus.

Joseph, why not 'close down' Head Office in Rome for three years? All Cardinals, Monsignors, priests on the staff at Head Office would go off to mission stations in Africa, South America, Cambodia, Iran, Iraq and other similar countries during that three year period. Such 'priests' should not take their best vestments and robes of office; shorts, sandals, cotton tops and a change of underwear are sufficient in hot countries. No cell phones either so they will not be tempted to ring you, Joseph.

What can one add to a letter like that, except say that one is envious not to have written it oneself?

The notion that the church can get along quite well without a *Head Office* has a long and honourable tradition behind it. For the first thousand years of Christianity no such body existed. Yet that was the time when Christianity successfully effected the conversion of Western Europe and gave birth to the Latin Church to which most of us belong. The Eastern Churches got under way the conversion of the Russian and other eastern European peoples. At the same time the Eastern Churches managed to survive the onslaught of a militant Islam, a threat still with us at the present day.

After the first millennium, various institutions began to form and grow in Rome. But only some 500 years ago, in the later 16th century after the Council of Trent, did the Roman Curia take on something of its present size and form.

Lance goes on to say in his letter to the Pope: *A three year trial of a Head Office-less Church would clarify the best way for things to go in the future. Would Joseph – sorry, Pope Benedict XVI – be game to try the experiment?*

Don't worry, Joseph, about how the church will survive during that 'three year period' – the local bishops are not idiots – they will perhaps better serve God and God's children with the closure of Head Office.

More than four years have passed since Lance sent his letter to Rome. Ample time for the Holy Father to despatch all ranks of the curial clergy to the missions, and for the church as a whole to assess the workability of being again a Head Office-less Church. We have been such for three quarters of the time since Christ. Maybe – in a form adapted to printing and the wonders of modern IT communication – that should be the way ahead.

Lance told me that he had not yet had word of his letter being received by the Pope. I gravely doubt if it ever was. It would have got blocked in the layers of Vatican bureaucracy. Are we to lament one more lost opportunity to revitalise the life of Christ in his church ?

Fr Humphrey died during November. This is his last column, published posthumously. *See page 27 for tributes*

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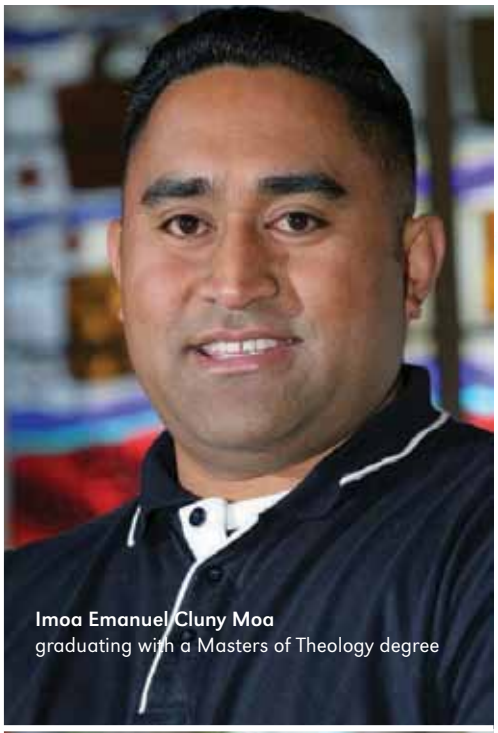

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