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Whakahekea nga tōrite i waenganui i nga iwi

Reduce Inequality among Countries

CAMPBELL ROBERTS urges action on inequalities in Aotearoa

RON HEALING puts the case for West Papua

LUKE KAVIANI JOHNSON on a project in Malawi

JOEY & GIAN DOMDOM on migrant workers

PLUS **ELIZABETH JULIAN'S** letter to Kate Sheppard

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Tuimotumag TuiMotuInterIslands Tuimotu

EDITORIAL

Reducing Inequalities

Reducing the inequality among countries is a global challenge. The 10th United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of reducing inequalities is focused primarily on income inequalities. Measures such as reducing costs for the least developed countries to export their products, aim to increase incomes for those who need it most. Reports on the goal show that gains have been made in the "duty free" exportation of produce from the poorest countries — from 41 per cent of all exports in 2005 to 65 per cent in 2015.

Another target is to drop the standard charge for sending migrant workers' money home to their families to 3 per cent of the remittance. Reports show that post offices and money transfer companies in host countries charge 6 per cent and commercial banks a hefty 11 per cent. Prepaid cards and mobile money companies charge 2-4 per cent but unfortunately these services are not always available in "remittance corridors", places with the highest congregation of migrant workers.

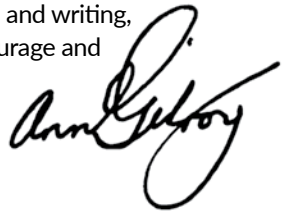
These examples show some of the ways that the institutions in rich countries can screw poorer countries. It's like when a developed country's budget for overseas aid is funneled to their own companies working in the target country rather than into the hands of the local government. It's easy — and sometimes true — to justify this by saying that local corruption is so rife that the money will not be used for the purpose it is given. But further analysis shows strains of patronism, racism, sexism, greed and elitism in the roots of our present inequality among nations.

We see signs of this in the recent example of a few billions worth of arms sales excusing the murder of a journalist. Or, the lacklustre search for the hundreds of girls kidnapped from their boarding school in Nigeria compared to the international involvement in the rescue of boys from a flooded cave in Thailand. Or, the trafficking of humans from developing countries and regions disturbed by violence being one of the most profitable illegal businesses in the world. Or, the illegal but highly profitable trade in endangered species to provide trophies for the rich. Or, as Ron Healing describes, the exploitation of Western Papuans by mega-mining companies.

We can feel despondent — even God-forsaken — faced with the inequalities in our world and, for women, in the Church. However, our writers in this 232nd issue tell stories of effort, of communities and partnerships, of hope. They remind us of the kindom of God among us and inspire us to continue participating in God's mission for inclusion and equality.

For all our contributors whose research and writing, artistry and craft, faith and reflection encourage and hearten us in this November issue, we are grateful.

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



Speaking to the Eye

So often our religious discourse is conscientious and well-meant but comes across as prosaic. Those of us who are professional clerics can slip easily into traditional ways of speaking — forgetting that every group, meeting and congregation is utterly unique in its history, its demography and its urgencies.

Yet we know our task is to speak to the heart, to travel that incredible distance between our words and the minds and hearts of the hearers. And we know that Jesus used the language of parable, startling his listeners into finding their own path to discernment through his words and images.

The collection, *Speaking to the Eye* (Brepols, 2013) looks at medieval mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen and others perhaps not so well known to us. It asks how texts and images can be combined to meet our particular cultural moment. It offers some clues as we face the tough task of breaking through the glass ceiling of contemporary religious indifference.

The authors remind us that although Augustine was suspicious of anything apart from the *visio intellectualis*, from the 12th century on there was a growing awareness that the intellectual truth about God had to be complemented by what might be termed God's palpable love. Women, especially, were sensitive to the role of visions, the affective value of devotional paintings and sculptures.

Hildegard, for example, related the text to the inner eye of vision, and the sound of words to that inner ear which grasps their existential meaning for oneself.

Here is her lovely vision of three figures around a fountain: *caritas*, *humilitas*, and *pax*: "I, love, am the glory of the living God. Wisdom has done her work with me and Humility, rooted in the living fountain, is my helper, and Peace is her companion. And by the splendour that I am, the living light of the blessed angels glows, for, as a ray of light flashes from its source, so this splendour shines in the blessed angels… It was I who wrote humanity, which is rooted in me like a reflection (umbra) in water. Hence I am the living fountain, because all created things were reflected in me; *cum igne et aqua*, with fire and water."

We could reduce this to a blunt affirmation: "It is love which makes us human." But Hildegard's magic, of course — why her words reach our hearts — lies in her imagery, her vision. Similarly, mystic Henry Suso still speaks to us today with his narrative of the "servant of eternal wisdom". Suso had a parchment drawing made of Wisdom sitting, as it were, in his own bosom — to show God's hidden, comforting presence in his soul. He envisaged the servant of eternal wisdom as having a gentle heart to all who were suffering, treating them like a mother. He may be talking here of his own pastoral care.

For all these mystics, the images are not ends in themselves, but are meant to stimulate the affective bonding with the Word of God. For the Sisters of Santa Maria Regina Coeli in Florence, for example, Christ was envisioned as a maternal Christ who suffers, yet nourishes. One of Protestantism's first women writers, Katharina Zell of Strasbourg, took up this mothering image: "But the grace of God through Jesus Christ is the true mother, Christ in God and God in him . . . For he has come to us in our flesh and in great fear birthed us into grace, or restored us to grace, shedding bloody sweat as he did."

Mystics have rightly been treated with caution throughout the history of the Church. Their nuttiness coefficient can be high! But so often it was the radical vision of the Thomas Mertons which was the one thing needful. We are not blessed with a superfluity of mystics in our New Zealand Church.

Maybe James K Baxter came close to it. (Isn't it curious that we think of mystics as unworldly, yet it is they who remind us of the materiality of our faith. Historians Miri Rubin and Caroline Walker Bynum point to a physicalisation of spirituality in the 14th century under the influence of women.)

What is so exciting about the true mystics may be this dynamic counterpoint of word and vision, of eternity and immediacy. They rework the teachings of the faith in the "abyss of the soul". Classical rhetoric, after all, talks of *enargeia*, that vivid quality of figures of speech which spurs the listener or reader into doing their own visualising. Mystics offer us the *lumina orationis*, the light in the eye which is life. If Thomas Müntzer, the 16th-century liturgist, reformer and champion of the poor is right, we are all — lay and cleric alike — called to a discipleship which has this quality of freshness, even "ecstasy". We then touch others because we ourselves have been "touched". ◑

Painting: *Mary Magdalen and her Disciples* by Miki de Goodaboom © Used with permission www.mikidegoodaboom.com

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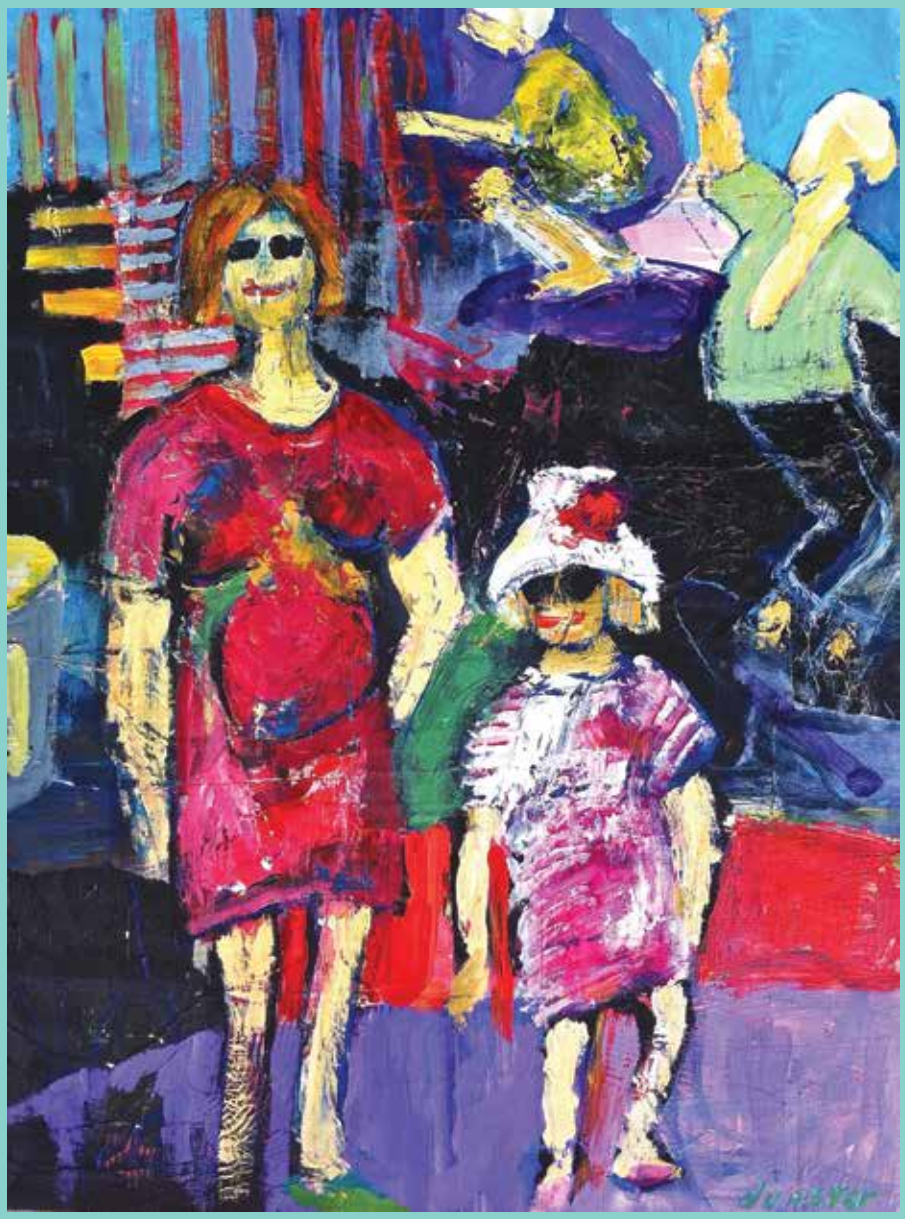

We Need IMAGINATION and COMPASSION

CAMPBELL ROBERTS **warns against the inequality developing in New Zealand society and invites us to join with imagination and courage to grow an alternative future.**

Inequality between people is socially damaging and personally destructive. Disparities of wealth, privilege, education and opportunity have existed in each era of human history, but in recent times the inequality between people has become more concentrated and extreme.

Mtumiki Njira writes powerfully from Limbe, Malawi about the corrosive impact of inequality in her region. "When we in Malawi were all poor together, you didn't need doors, let alone locks. Today, with a grossly rich elite having been developed, one lives behind walls with bars on every window and door."

A compassionate society is where people are loved and wanted, where we don't allow them to be hungry, uneducated or homeless. When we see growing inequality, unnecessary deprivation and hardship in New Zealand, we are witnessing a poverty of compassion. We don't care enough. It is also a poverty of imagination — we are unable to imagine a world that gives priority to addressing poverty and growing inequality.

Inequity in New Zealand

In New Zealand income inequality has been increasing. In comparing income inequality across countries, the OECD uses the Gini coefficient. Gini coefficients measure income inequality, with a score of 1 indicating perfect inequality and a score of 0 indicating perfect equality. The most recent OECD comparison (from 2017) gives New Zealand a rating of .35, indicating higher inequality than the OECD median of .32.

But the inequity in New Zealand is not just numbers on a graph. It is a conscious national decision that leaves some of our fellow Kiwis in poverty and need. Such disparity between households is seen in these two families presenting at the Salvation Army community centre.

Family One

Mother and father with two children — net weekly income $2,577, housing costs $1,430. The family's total weekly income available after housing costs is $1,147.

Family Two

Solo parent with two children — net weekly income $507.22, housing costs $450.00, advance offset to Ministry of Social Development (MSD) $17.00. The family's total weekly income available after housing costs is just $40.22.

Does that inequality of income of $1,107 a week matter for the future of those two

children? Yes, it matters. Even if the love, attention and care of each of the parents is constant and comparable, it will matter. It will matter in their nutrition, health resources, in their education, socialisation, their housing and their holidays. Income inequality of this degree matters and requires our immediate action.

A few of the problems contributing to inequality in New Zealand include: work that does not deliver a living wage, the ongoing impact of colonisation on Māori, social policies built on the belief that the primary cause of inequality is poor budgeting and household management skills, and insufficient investment in education, particularly early childhood education and care (ECEC). Then there is the appalling failure of the housing policy in New Zealand. In these and other ways, public policy has sometimes developed, supported and nurtured systems which have sustained and even expanded inequality.

For too long, inequality in New Zealand has disabled individuals, destroyed families and damaged communities. It is heartbreaking to see people robbed of hope. Parents are struggling to give their children a future, sometimes fighting a society stacked against them, depriving them of the opportunity to nourish and provide for the children they love.

Change Is Possible

Change is possible. It will require a fight of determination, compassion and justice to achieve social justice. But it is possible. Change to inequality requires, among other things, a living wage, child poverty reduction and access to affordable, secure housing.

A Living Wage

In its first 100 days the New Zealand Coalition Government signalled plans to bring the minimum wage nearer to the living wage. This represents a significant step in reducing inequality. Eventually, though, the country must ensure the living wage becomes the minimum wage in New Zealand. Recent minimum wage experience is that when wages for those on the bottom rise, so too do wages for those not far from the bottom — in other words, minimum wage legislation is effective in raising incomes for a more significant number of workers than those on the minimum wage, therefore decreasing inequality.

Universal Child Allowance

Child poverty can no longer be allowed to destroy the future of the nation's children. A universal child allowance is required to ensure that the most vulnerable families not only dream of a hopeful future for their children but are able to achieve it. We know that our universal income provision in superannuation has mostly lifted the elderly from poverty. It is now time to do the same for the nation's children.

Real change happens in the hearts and minds of ordinary people — when we gain an imagination to see an alternative future and the courage to seek it.

Early Childhood Education

Universal and free access to early childhood education (ECE) for children living in the most impoverished two and three decile communities is another goal we should prioritise. Seeds of inequality grow into significant disparity when we don't provide early opportunities for young children's education and brain development.

Stable Housing

The failure of some people to access affordable, healthy and secure tenure housing continues to drive and deepen inequality amongst New Zealanders. Thankfully, this inability of families to obtain adequate housing is being recognised and successive governments have started to give increased focus to housing needs. Overcrowded houses with two or three families in residence, camping grounds that become permanent homes, a massive rise in emergency housing and people living on the streets are all signs of our increased inequality. The housing crisis New Zealand is experiencing is the result of government inaction over some years. Fixing this crisis will require sustained and consistent action for years to come.

KiwiBuild and the increased provision of social housing alongside other planned government initiatives will help, but they will not fix the problem. Further solutions are required — a larger government budget allocation in Vote Building and Housing will help create the opportunities for even more creative solutions.

The government's KiwiBuild initiative is essential to ease housing supply problems but it needs, also, a KiwiBuy programme. This is a programme giving households the ability to buy the KiwiBuild homes that are presently projected to cost between $600,000 to $700,000 each. KiwiBuy would allow low-income families to enjoy home ownership. Shared equity, rent to buy and leased land options are some of the possibilities that could be considered in a KiwiBuy package.

Additional action is required in reforming our tenancy laws to encourage private sector investment into rental housing, for the building of more social housing and rethinking of the accommodation supplement.

If New Zealand continues to foster inequality in the way it has over the last 20 years, we will create a damaging economic and social cost with a consequential deterioration in our national well-being.

Change is needed, ensuring we include and value all Kiwis, giving them the ability to enjoy and participate in this fabulous country. Real change happens in the hearts and minds of ordinary people — when we gain an imagination to see an alternative future and the courage to seek it. ◑

Painting: ***Game for Anything*** by Susan Dunster © Used with permission
www.artfindnz.co.nz/project/susan-dunster/

Campbell Roberts is the principal advisor for the Salvation Army's social policy and parliamentary unit in Auckland and advocates for those most in need.

FREEDOM FOR LAND AND

RON HEALING tells of the history of colonisation and exploitation of the West Papuans which has rendered them poverty-stricken in their own land.

For years, West Papuans have struggled to retain their sovereignty under Indonesian rule. This struggle is taking place in our own backyard — and with West Papuans forgotten and unsupported by the rest of the world. Intense mining operations, transmigration policies, underdevelopment as well as brutal suppression have left West Papuans with few resources. But now growing international attention is putting the spotlight on the human rights violations and the tragic history of this country. It is sparking support from many New Zealanders including parliamentarians.

Slide into Indonesian Control

West Papua occupies the western part of the island of New Guinea. It shares a border with Papua New Guinea in the eastern part. Indigenous Papuans are Melanesian and have inhabited the region for at least 40,000 years.

When the Dutch East Indies broke up in 1949, West Papua was the only region not incorporated into the newly independent Indonesian Republic. In 1961 the Dutch established the West New Guinea Council and, recognising Papuans right to self-determination, submitted a plan proposing that the land be placed under United Nations administration. The plan failed to gain the necessary support of the UN General Assembly.

On 1 December 1961 the West New Guinea Council voted for a name change to West Papua and selected the Morning Star flag and a national anthem. The Council passed resolutions supporting the Dutch plan for self-determination. But later that month, Indonesian President Sukarno despatched hundreds of paratroopers to claim West Papua for Indonesia. Then, in August 1962, the Dutch and Indonesians signed the New York Agreement which gave the United Nations temporary oversight of West Papua before transferring control to Indonesia seven months later — with provision for Papuan independence.

Indonesia took control of West Papua in May 1963 after the UN withdrew and banned all political parties and activities. The military killed thousands of Papuans. When President Suharto came to power in 1967, brutal anti-communist massacres and human rights abuses continued. And Suharto signed a concession granting USA mining company Freeport mining rights over 250,000 acres of Papuan land for a period of 30 years. This forced the resettlement of indigenous Papuans and has caused widespread environmental destruction.

Pope Francis warned: "The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet" (*LS* par 48).

The terms of the New York Agreement, "The Act of Free Choice", explicitly required Indonesia to guarantee freedom of speech, movement and assembly for all in return for sovereignty. This was not followed — Papuans were given neither freedom nor choice. A mere 1,022 Papuans participated in the "consultation" — all handpicked by the Indonesian authories. And with a background of carefully orchestrated brutality, coercion, violence and death threats, the outcome was a foregone

conclusion. When the Indonesian report was presented to the UN General Assembly, several countries condemned it and unsuccessfully called for another "consultation". Chakravarth Narasimhan, former Under Secretary-General of the UN, declared the process a "whitewash" — to no avail.

In their distress, Papuans formed the pro-independence Organisasi Papua Merdeka in 1965. The Indonesian military retaliated with executions, torture and incarceration throughout the 1970s. Meanwhile, the government instituted a transmigration policy appropriating large tracts of Papuan land on which to resettle migrants from Eastern Indonesia. This resulted in the loss of between 2,500 and 13,000 Papuan lives. These migrants have changed the demographics and the Indonesians are now in the ascendency in the coastal areas and dominate the economy. Papuans still endure serious human rights violations — killings, torture and unlawful arrest. It is a conservative estimate that 100,000 Papuans have been killed by the Indonesian Military Forces since 1963.

Exploiting Natural Resources

West Papua is extremely rich in natural resources — it has an abundance of gold, copper, oil and gas. The Grasberg Mining complex in Papua is the world's largest gold mine and second largest copper mine. The main shareholder, US mining company Freeport-McMoRan, contributed US$1.5 billion to Indonesian State Funds in 2014 but is doing untold destruction to the Papuan environment. BP began producing LPG in 2005 and is poisoning the land and waterways. Deforested land is now being appropriated for palm oil plantations.

Francis wrote to all people: "It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on the land they themselves care for it best" *(LS* par 146).

> ***"Freedom! It has been said a thousand times and will be said again and again, until my people have freedom."***
>
> ***— Rev Socratez Yoman***

But in Papua the indigenous people are dying because of widespread corruption and exploitation. Logging and plantation companies substantially underpay for the land they acquire. For example, Kaya Lapis Indonesian Group, one of the largest logging and plantation companies in Indonesia, paid indigenous Moi landowners 65 cents per hectare for land that, once developed, is likely to be valued at $5,000 a hectare. They paid $2.80 a cubic metre for timber that was sold at $875 a cubic metre.

To our shame, New Zealand imports rain forest timber and palm oil and in doing so we contribute to the oppression of the Papuan people.

Despite the wealth of natural resources in their land, systematic exploitation and persecution has contributed to West Papua today having the highest poverty and illiteracy rates in Indonesia. This is compounded by extremely high child malnutrition rates and a major shortage of doctors and medical supplies.

Growing International Concern

The United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) now has observer status at the Melanesian Spearhead Group made up of Fiji, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front of New Caledonia. Indonesia has associate status and contributes funds to its operations.

South African Nobel Peace Prize recipient Archbishop Desmond Tutu has long supported West Papua's case for self-determination. But for decades the New Zealand Government has turned a blind eye to Indonesia's treatment of West Papua. Some parliamentarians are now reconsidering this stance. As the world awakens to the slow genocide occurring in West Papua, Papuans remain strong in their aspirations for freedom and justice for their tortured homeland. The fraudulent "Act of Free Choice" is a deep and burning grievance for the Papuan people.

Pope Francis understands the desire for self-determination and calls on the world's people to honour it: "The world's peoples want to be artisans of their own destiny. They want to advance peacefully towards justice. They want their culture, their language, their social processes and their religious tradition to be respected. No actual or established power has the right to deprive peoples of the full exercise their sovereignty… For 'peace is founded not only on respect for human rights but also on respect for the rights of peoples, in particular the right to independence'" (Paraguay, 11 July 2015). ◑

Photo by Clare Harding © Used with permission

Ron Healing is a member of West Papua Action Canterbury and serves on the Christchurch Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace.

Growing a GOOD IDEA

LUKE KAVIANI JOHNSON describes working with young entrepreneurs in Malawi to establish and grow their small businesses.

Arriving in Africa expanded our horizons — big landscapes, bright people and stark inequalities. Our family moved from Thailand to Malawi in early 2017 for my wife's work with the UN, and we've been discovering our new home since.

Malawi as a developing country has its challenges. Measured on any metric — poverty, health, education, income inequality — it ranks well down the list. As the 2017 International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported: "Malawi's per capita Gross National Income of just US$320 in 2016, is one of the lowest in the world." There are many local and international organisations working closely with the government in Malawi to improve the lives of citizens — and progress is being made despite "climate-related external shocks and domestic political and governance shocks." We have met many hardworking, entrepreneurial Malawians eager to build on any help they receive.

A UN Sustainable Development Goal Report identified that: "Efforts have been made in some countries to reduce income inequality, increase zero-tariff access for exports from Less Developed Countries (LDCs) and developing countries, and provide additional assistance to LDCs. However, progress will need to *accelerate* to reduce growing disparities within and among countries." In order to reduce these growing inequality gaps, more Malawians need help to participate in the formal economy, which will accelerate economic development. Partnerships, including with private sector development, are extremely important in enabling successful participation.

Working with Entrepreneurs

My background is in finance. I first became interested in helping Malawian entrepreneurs when my friend Ray and I attended a competition run by a local organisation supporting start-ups. The entrepreneurs competed for the US$25,000 prize for start-up funding. But with any competition there is only one winner and we both saw that other finalists also had compelling business ideas and promise.

That initial interest evolved into our small partnership called Kweza Equity Partners. Kweza, in Chichewa — Malawi's local language — means "to elevate" or "raise up". We focus on helping young start-ups to get funding and technical support in order to grow and expand their businesses.

While development organisations and charities are doing their share to improve the lives of Malawians and reduce inequalities, there is significant room for private sector engagement. We see increased investments in the small business sector leading to economic growth and job creation. Small businesses are the businesses of tomorrow — they will create the employment opportunities that will give young people real futures in the world.

The Start-Ups

While Ray and I have met with more than a dozen promising entrepreneurs, we are focusing on helping three start-ups at the moment.

The first one is in the agricultural sector — a family-owned market gardening business. They grow fresh produce which they supply to local supermarkets, hotels and restaurants around Lilongwe, the capital

city. The family employs more than 10 staff now and with our help, aims to expand to over 30 staff and to supply fresh produce nationwide. Our investment will enable them to expand their irrigation and dig more wells on their land. This will increase their production and extend their growing season.

Right now, the majority of supermarkets in Malawi import a significant amount of fresh produce from nearby countries, such as Zimbabwe and South Africa. So our entrepreneur has a great business opportunity in disrupting the dependence on overseas suppliers, and increasing local employment and productivity — which will reduce inequalities.

Kweza is also working with Chimango (pseudonym) a very talented and hardworking young entrepreneur who makes tailor-made shoes. In Malawi, primary industries predominate and the value chain is limited. There is very little value-added manufacturing. The largest export is tobacco. This is what makes Chimango's business exciting. But in order to grow his shoe-making business, he needs funding and a team to produce and market his shoes. We are helping with the funding as well as supporting his efforts to recruit a talented team to grow his business. What's interesting is that when local people see his shoes, they don't believe they've been made by a Malawian. This occurs very often!

Our third start-up was a finalist in last year's start-up competition. Their idea is to digitise the village savings and loans groups that are widespread throughout Malawi. Since a significant portion of the population does not have bank accounts or access to bank loans, many Malawians create local savings and loans groups with their friends and family. These groups pool their savings and lend to one another as needed. The group determines the interest, which is calculated monthly. At the end of each year the loan money is repaid and the group starts over in the new year.

Our start-up group wants to replace the paper ledgers and desktop spreadsheets with a custom-made mobile app and user-friendly website. The proportion of Malawians who have inexpensive smart phones and are in savings and loans groups has been growing rapidly over the years. Our start-up wants to capitalise on this growth and provide a service for these informal groups to assist in keeping track of their savings in a hassle-free way. We believe this start-up can provide a valuable financial service to its customers who are currently left outside the formal banking sector.

What Are the Barriers?

In order for entrepreneurs to grow their business on some sort of scale, they need money investment. It is a financial challenge — trying to grow as a business at the same time as managing household finances. As a result it is difficult for the average business to rise to a level of scale that would be sustainable in the longer term.

Entrepreneurs have drive and determination, but some may not have all the skills and knowledge required to establish and grow their business. Sometimes it can be difficult to recruit a skilled team; this can leave the founder on their own, with no way to scale their business.

Malawi is landlocked and imports the majority of products. This means that start-up businesses have to bear

the high cost inputs, such as fuel and machinery and other essentials from outside.

While Malawi enjoys a fairly stable political environment now, the up-coming elections in 2019 could weaken that situation, especially if politicians over-promise during their campaigns and under-deliver after the election. In the past, issues of widespread corruption have put pressure on the current government's ability to finance existing debt, raise interest rates and devalue the currency.

These issues create an unstable and unpredictable environment for entrepreneurs in which to start and grow their businesses.

Success

We take the journey with these entrepreneurs, so their success is also our success. We hope to see their businesses grow and flourish. We watch as they add employees and expand their products and services and their customer base. Ultimately we would like to see some of our entrepreneurs export their products internationally. That would be a huge achievement for them and really put Malawi on the map! And some international organisations have paved the way through aid and support, as well as opening international markets with reduced tariffs.

However, for Ray and me, what is really rewarding is seeing the entrepreneurs develop in themselves. As they tackle the problems that come with any small start-up, every challenge is an opportunity for them to test their skills and push ahead. And we are there to help them find solutions to their problems and to support them along the way.

If you would like to know more about how we are helping entrepreneurs in Malawi, please contact us via our website: www.kwezamalawi.com

Photos by Luke Kaviani Johnson

Luke Kaviani Johnson, his wife and two children live in Lilongwe, Malawi. He works as a private sector development specialist at Kweza Partners.

I MUST GO

JOEY and GIAN DOMDOM speak about the political systems that cause Filipino people to leave their families and seek work overseas in order to support them.

"I'm really glad that I can work here in New Zealand," says Ranelio, a heavy machine operator for an Australian company on a roading project in Wellington. It was a Saturday evening and he had just arrived from work. "I do work on Saturdays, even on Sundays when the weather is good."

"I have my qualifications in industrial technology, and have experienced working in Papua New Guinea for two years and in Saudi Arabia for three years. I felt I needed to work overseas, otherwise I would not be able to feed my four children, let alone send them to school." Ranelio is an "OFW" — an overseas Filipino worker.

Working overseas due to the lack of domestic economic opportunities has been an ongoing phenomenon for many developing countries. For decades, the Philippine Government encouraged workers to find employment overseas. Training schools and programmes were established for healthcare, IT or construction workers, housekeepers, miners and many others. This phenomenon is an artificial solution that eases the huge problem of unemployment and at the same time generates income for the government from various processing fees and remittances — the money sent home by these workers to their families.

The remittances help improve the family's quality of life with better opportunities. Children can go to school, houses are built, small businesses flourish. They sustain the economy and provide a sense of financial security. The total remittance sent by around 2.5 million OFWs from April to September 2017 was estimated at NZ$5.75 billion. But while remittances improve the quality of life for many Filipinos they are yet to make an impact on the overall inequality in the country.

A Form of Inequality

The Philippines is one of the countries in Southeast Asia where the gap between the rich and the poor is strikingly evident. While a small group of individuals or families has a monthly income of as much as PHP$7.8 million (NZ$227,000), eight out of 10 families survive on PHP$30,000 (NZ$870) or less. The daily minimum wage of PHP$512 (NZ$15) is not enough for a family with four children, like Ranelio's, to live a decent life. An income of at least twice as much would only reach as far as providing for very basic needs.

"If I work in the Philippines, even with my experiences, it would be a hopeless struggle. What I would earn would barely meet our daily needs – not to mention providing for the children's education," Ranelio says.

Recent numbers show that more than a quarter of the population falls under the poverty bar — a situation which will only get worse as the population hits 142 million by 2045.

Inequality has many faces. In the Philippines, the inequality in basic resources takes the form of the inequitable distribution of economic opportunities caused by unemployment, the high inflation rate, decades of slow economic growth, recurring natural disasters and, above all, poor governance at the national and community levels. Government policies like the recently implemented Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) have meant further suffering for the poor while the rich continue to thrive. This form of inequality is extended to land distribution, basic welfare services, educational or vocational opportunities and human development. And 19 out of 20 people in poverty belong to households where the heads have little or no education, which limits their earning potential.

Widespread corruption in Philippine politics and business is also a major obstacle for growth and social mobility for the poor. Power is concentrated in a few families and closely connected individuals, meaning those without connections have little chance to improve their lives. It is this disconnect between policymakers and the people's welfare that has a major impact on the poor.

Motivation

The glaring lack of opportunities, unemployment, low wages and deepening poverty in the country drive Filipinos to seek opportunities overseas despite known or unknown dangers. Overseas workers endure the psychological pain of being separated from their loved ones.

"While some of my mates would regularly come together for drinks to pass the time of being away from their families, what I do is to get involved in the Church and the community. It keeps me busy, makes me feel connected to my family. I feel [that] I need to be present to them even though I am here in New Zealand. I take the time to talk to them every night — to my wife and to each of my children. My children do have a mind of their own now, but they still need guidance and constant reminders," Ranelio says.

He continues proudly: "My eldest child has recently completed a university degree, while the other one intends to become a priest and starts seminary training next school year."

Across the world, there are more women overseas Filipino workers than men. Most of these women are caregivers or domestic helpers who typically bear the brunt of the inequality that exists between migrant and domestic workers, employer and employee, homeowner and housekeepers — including the intrinsic unequal treatment for being a woman.

For most Filipino overseas workers, their children's educational success is a major motivation to work hard. It is a fulfilment of their obligations as parents. It is worth all their sacrifices. Although there are also as many who are not as successful — with relationships and families permanently broken apart, or with personal purpose and meaning lost for all the sacrifices endured — working overseas remains a more attractive alternative than remaining in the home country.

Many overseas Filipino workers are professionally employed as accountants, IT specialists, engineers or nurses, but a huge number of them are in jobs that put them in precarious working and living conditions. Across the world, there are more women overseas Filipino workers than men. Most of these women are caregivers or domestic helpers who typically bear the brunt of the inequality that exists between migrant and domestic workers, employer and employee, homeowner and housekeepers — including the intrinsic unequal treatment for being a woman. Exposure to hostile working conditions and various forms of abuse or working for long hours are common. Anecdotal evidence and documented narratives of inequality for migrant workers also abound in New Zealand.

Some Implications

New Zealand will continue to rely on migrant workers from countries like the Philippines to fill workforce shortages across several sectors. It is important that their rights as migrant workers and individuals and their contributions to the society are recognised and protected. Conversations with the governments, agencies, employers and other stakeholders regarding consistency around policies, processes and interventions that affect migrant workers and their families need to be initiated and sustained. We can do this at the parish or community level, too, where support, assistance or advocacy on behalf of the migrants can be made available.

"I am a person who finds it difficult to say 'No'. So, if I am asked to do a job even if it may be outside the normal arrangement, I will just do it. It is me, I hardly say 'No' to anybody, how much more to my employer," Ranelio confides. Migrant workers concerned that their contracts and New Zealand work visas may not be renewed by their employers are vulnerable to injustice and inequality. They need to be encouraged to speak out about their concerns — and we need to listen to their voices. Understanding one another is a huge step towards equality.

Photo by Ranelio

Joey Domdom teaches in the Master of Professional Practice at Whitireia New Zealand and Wellington Institute of Technology.

Gian Domdom studies English Literature at Victoria University of Wellington in the hope of becoming a literary editor.

From Elizabeth to Kate:

Dear Kate

What's a girl to do — especially an old girl like me? Thanks to you we've been voting for 125 years. But change in the Catholic Church is glacial. It's fair to say we've made some progress over the past 25 years — women are involved in all Church bodies except Councils of Priests — but we still can't make decisions because decision-making is tied to Ordination not Baptism. And we can't give a "homily" because only the ordained can.

The American women's rights activist Susan B Anthony wrote to you: "You have the vote, but what have you done with it?" It's a question we Catholic women can ask today. Honestly, Kate, we've tried to effect change and not without cost. But, clearly, we haven't done enough.

The contrast between our experience of Church and our social reality is striking and challenging. Because of you, our history of political and social recognition means that women like me have a voice. We can make a difference and bring about radical change. And with Jacinda on the global stage showing how a working mother can lead a government committed to kindness and compassion — our own gospel values — the Church's sexism seems ridiculous! Jacinda is providing a role model for young women but I can't see the same from the Church.

Sadly, I've met old girls like me recently who've left the Church because they can't be bothered with the struggle any longer. But I'm here for the long haul — staying because I believe I've been called into the Church not out of it.

The problems are the same as those I outlined in 2006 when I addressed the NZ Bishops on the prophetic role of Women Religious in Aotearoa.

The Church continues to address Paul's first two areas of division of equal relationships — "between slave and free and between Jew and Gentile" (Gal: 3:28) — but refuses to address its own institutional sexism.

And our Church preaches a gospel of divinely-willed equality, liberation and justice in society, but maintains teachings and structures which guarantee women's inequality.

Although the Church admits that it finds no mandate in Scripture for women to be denied full access to the sacraments, it claims it has no power to change this man-made teaching.

And it teaches that, because women are human, they have full and equal human rights and responsibilities — politically, economically, socially, culturally and ecclesially — but insists upon women's "proper or special nature" that prevents women from realising these rights.

The Church circumscribes women's rights with male-imagined "special nature" but promotes men's full rights. And calls other institutions to treat women as full human beings but refuses to do this internally.

The Church says God is neither male nor female but prays liturgically to a God imaged overwhelmingly (indeed, almost idolatrously) as male. And teaches that God's merciful forgiveness is freely available sacramentally but mediated only through a male.

It promotes Eucharist as the sacrament of unity and nourishment but ritualises women's subordination so many women experience exclusion and hunger. It chooses to ignore that women's bodies do what Christ did — bleed, feed and give life to others — but dresses up clerics and institutionalise a ritual for men only.

The Church deems half of humanity incapable of imaging Christ in the Eucharist. This, despite women and men equally imaging Christ through martyrdom, re-presenting Christ's own love in Christian marriage, sharing in Christ's presence in the gathered community (women and men) and although we know that Christ baptises when anyone baptises (woman and man).

The Church affirms that a piece of bread represents Christ, actually becoming the Body of Christ, but cannot imagine a woman being a valid re-presentation of Christ. And ignores the Gospel where Christ resides most clearly in poor and suffering women and men (eg, Mt 25:31-46, for example). Instead, it fixates on the presider of Eucharist being of the same sex as the human Jesus.

One Old Girl to Another

The Jesuit theologian Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator recently said that "treating half the members of the body of Christ as outsiders or assigning them second-class status is a detritus of history and tradition unsuited for the 21st century and unfounded in the Gospel … The exclusion of the majority in deciding the teachings and affairs of the body of Christ seems like a distortion and mutilation of this body."

I wonder how we can encourage young women to participate in the Church today? Teachers in Catholic schools are experienced in creating community in their schools, but how do young women feel they belong in the Church after they've left school?

I remember as a 10-year-old in Levin tidying the sacristy before school — picking up surplices, soutanes and collars strewn on the floor by altar boys. Even then I wondered why they couldn't do it themselves. Now, 25 years later, I heard 10-year-olds boys asking why girls couldn't serve at Mass. "Keep asking!" I exhorted them.

It seems to me that clericalism is a major cause of the Church's current problems. Embedded in all its structures and theology of priesthood is an entrenched sense of entitlement and privilege held by 1 per cent of the Church who have power and authority over the 99 per cent but have no accountability to us. I can scarcely believe it now, but as a child I sang: "Why do I tip my hat to a priest and why do I call him father? He's like God and how do I know? Holy Orders made him so." What theological nonsense! I feel a reprimand coming my way with a reminder about the "ontological change" that ordination is supposed to give. Considering the nightmare of sexual abuse revelations engulfing us, I prefer to believe that we are all created equally in the image of God.

I'm encouraged by Pope Francis's bold vision: "I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation" (Evangelii Gaudium par 27).

And in September Francis said to young people: "When we adults refuse to acknowledge some evident reality, you tell us frankly: 'Can't you see this?' Some of you who are a bit more forthright might even say to us: 'Don't you see that nobody is listening to you any more, or believes what you have to say?' … We ourselves need to be converted, we have to realize that in order to stand by your side we need to change many situations that, in the end, put you off."

Kate, with your supporters you achieved a world first for women in Aotearoa, so perhaps old girls like me just keep on. Keep on urging the Church to realise the best version of itself. It's like Francis said: "It is beautiful to have dreams and to be able to fight for them. You have a right to dream . . . Wherever there are dreams, there is joy; Jesus is always present." That's the crux for me, Kate — it is about realising the communion of the trinitarian God at the heart of our faith.

Keep encouraging us, dear Kate!

Elizabeth xx

125th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage 19 Sept 2018

Kate Sheppard Suffragette

Elizabeth Julian is a Sister of Mercy and long-time advocate for women's equality in the Church.

The Synod: *Who is Listening to Whom?*

Here's the perfect comment on the October 2018 Synod of Bishops:

"I call on the Church, my family to live up to the challenge to instill in our family the Church a sense of we, to encourage each person — male or female — to develop their skills to serve the Kingdom of God. I ask our Church leaders to recognize how many women who feel called to be in service of the Kingdom of God cannot find a place in our Church. Gifted though some may be many cannot bring their talents to the tables of decision making and pastoral planning. They must go elsewhere to be of service in building the Kingdom of God."

Good idea? It came from US Sacred Heart of Mary Sister Maureen Kelleher at the 2015 synod. I know things move slowly, but this is critical. Women, who once did the slow walk away from the Church, now never get there in the first place. The new generation (read: youth) followed or were carried out the doors by their mothers, who had had enough. Enough of pederasts and predators, of corrupt or do-nothing pastors, in short, enough of a Church completely controlled by men. No woman would allow any creep near a child; no woman would cover up for a philandering cleric. Women might steal, but it is highly unlikely they would drain the parish accounts while off on cruises. And women ministers tend to work, not play golf.

Diocesan chanceries are slowly adding token women officers where they can. In Rome, repeated calls and promises to place women in positions of leadership have not breached the dicastery doors, behind which real influence lies. Oh, here and there a woman or three is named as a "consultor" or gets an undersecretary spot, but there is no visible female presence in the Church. None.

Run the video of any Vatican ceremony and, except for a few women and girls bringing up the gifts or reading in their native languages, it is very clear that it is a men's operation through and through. Who surrounds

the altar? Who touches the sacred vessels? Who distributes Communion?

Ceremony represents reality. As early as the fifth century, popes complained about women being unclean. That charge, repeated and ingrained over the years, helped end both the ordinations of women deacons and of married men. Women — by definition unclean — cannot approach the altar. And men who touch women render themselves unclean.

The current kerfuffle about laywomen voting at the Synod of Bishops both gives evidence to and deflects the real discussion. (Backstory: They invited the group representing men's religious orders and institutes to name ten representatives. The men sent eight priests and two brothers, all now voting members. The women's group sent seven sisters, but none has a vote.) The business of men and women religious' representation goes in several directions. If, like the medieval Church, you recognise abbots and abbesses as the equivalent of bishops, then their representation and voting today makes sense. But that does not equal voting laypersons — religious or secular — in a synod of bishops.

The working document for the synod — the *instrumentum laboris* — reads in part like the sociological analysis it contains (*pace* Archbishop Chaput). But the original idea was to listen to young people. So, here is what young people said they want: recognition of the role of women in the Church and in society (n. 70); renewed reflection on the vocation to ordained ministry (n. 102); and promotion of the dignity of women (n. 158). As it happens, at least five of the synod's individual language groups — two in French and one each in English and German — have called for a greater participation of women in church leadership.

Of course, young people want a lot more, but central to their requests is a call to genuine respect for all persons — young and old, male and female — both inside and outside the Church. There is a deep understanding that the Gospel gives the answers, but no clear indication of how the answers can be concretised with action.

That is what Sister Kelleher pointed out: "to encourage each person — male or female — to develop their skills to serve the Kingdom of God. I ask our Church leaders to recognize how many women who feel called to be in service of the Kingdom of God cannot find a place in our Church."

It's time. ◑

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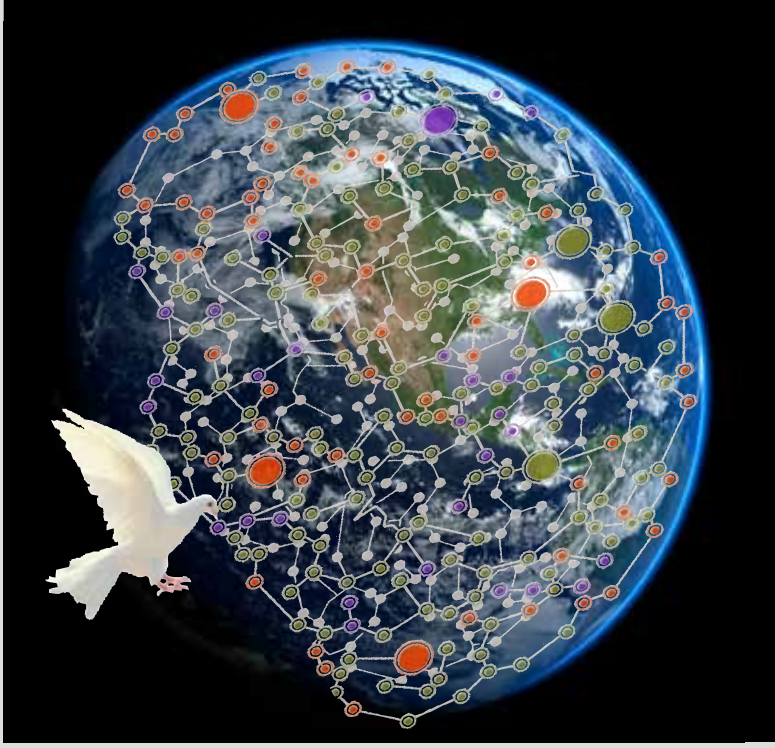
Phyllis Zagano is an author and senior research associate-in-residence at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York.

Surprises for a Peace Activist



When I decided to visit the Washington Code Pink House of activism after attending the World Beyond War conference in Toronto in September, I had no idea I would end up protesting Judge Kavanaugh's Supreme Court confirmation. Nor meet two women Senators and almost get arrested in the process of lobbying.

I didn't imagine I would be asked to speak outside the White House at a rally to get troops out of Afghanistan or be interviewed live on Voice of America Pashto TV!

Nor did I imagine the massive security checks just to get into the United Nations building or an invitation to high level peace and disarmament meetings with the Republic of Korea.

It all came about like this…

I got involved in a voluntary role in World Beyond War (WBW), a new global peace organisation, a year ago. Peace has always been very close to my heart, as I'm the daughter and granddaughter of soldiers who, like so many others in New Zealand, left home to fight far away in other people's wars — the Boer War, WWI and WWII. While I was on a US study tour thanks to the Sonja Davies Peace Award, I met Leah Bolger, veteran for peace and former military commander, who asked me to take on the role of Aotearoa New Zealand WBW coordinator and to be on the international coordinating committee.

WBW is an international peace organisation with three part-time staff, members in 173 countries and affiliations with 5,000 organisations worldwide. It has three main aims: divesting from arms, closing military bases and education for peace. It works closely with other peace organisations and is gaining momentum globally.

With longtime nuclear free campaigners, Laurie Ross, from the Peace Foundation in Auckland and Alyn Ware, from Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament, we put together a "Kiwi delegation" for the WBW Conference held in Toronto. Together with a Canadian youth ambassador we ran a workshop on civil society engagement with legislators on promoting peace. We made many friends and learnt a good deal about peacemaking from the programme and from informal sharing.

After the conference we travelled to New York and observed the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty meetings at the United Nations and, as well, attended a workshop on Peace, Disarmament and the UN Sustainable Development Goals hosted by the Republic of Korea. They are hopeful of reunification of North and South after the long years of family separations and the truce.

Then on to Washington DC. I was a speaker at the rally outside the White House dedicated to getting US troops out of Afganistan. Many speakers had witnessed the destruction and waste of war on Afghanistan. Some had served in the military there and had the emotional scars to prove it. I was particularly struck by teenage speaker Hoor Arifi saying: "Once you're aware, you can never go back to being unaware. Awareness is everything." It astounds me that someone whose family had suffered so much could have such a sweet disposition rather than constant rage.

I visited the Code Pink DC Activist House, run by a group dedicated to protesting pro-war policies outside the White House, the Senate Offices.Paki Wieland, a retired university professor from Massachusetts, looks after the House and its many visitors and interns. She was busy organising the upcoming Women's March on the Pentagon. Even as we joined the protest against Judge Kavanaugh's appointment, I sensed there was little hope that President Trump's decision would be overturned. Even so, every day I was there, it was all go.

I ask myself: "Was it worthwhile burning precious fossil fuels flying to the other side of the world?" The answer is "Yes — as long as it bears fruit." Military emissions are astronomical, not accounted for, and need to be challenged. It was priceless to meet colleagues who think the same and inspire action and who shared success stories which keep us all encouraged. But also, we need to steward our resources, using technology to connect people and unify campaigns. So this is our challenge and our work in progress.

Today, the audacity to hope for a peaceful world seems challenged to the fullest extent. However, I've noticed peace activists tend to live long lives and are active until they die! Our challenge of creating peaceful communities and peace economies is the work of a lifetime — even several lifetimes. We need a community of "peace spiders" weaving a beautiful web that spans generations and countries, capturing our dreams for peace, fostering learning and teaching tools for peacemaking that will transform us one by one. ◑

Liz Remmerswaal is a former environmental campaigner and regional politician from Hawke's Bay and now works for peace in all its facets.

Hymn

Here at the beach, the silence is deafening

In the stillness of evening, a dinner-plate sized leaf
Clatters to earth from the pukapuka tree
And a hundred tiny wings beat out a drum roll
As the congregation of little birds, disturbed,
Rises, then settles in the hedge
To resume their evening vespers.

A pair of paradise ducks is silhouetted against the gathering dusk,
their passing punctuated by a single trumpeted note.

From two doors down, a conversation drifts through the clear, crisp air:
"It will be dark soon. Make sure you take the bike with the light."
"I know, Mum", is accompanied by the percussion of tyres on gravel.
On the hillside, a lonely bull bellows three times,
His strong bass note urgently repeated
in anticipation of spring's renewal.

As the sunlight weakens, the sure tone of the bellbird rings true:
Rests on the tonic, honours the dominant, descends to the tonic
Before finishing with a triplet trill; so pure, so present.

And in the distance, the relentless waves pursue each other towards the beach,
The bodhrán of their fugue mimicking life-blood, heartbeat pulsing;
Life, yes, life.
A symphony of glorious silence.

— Helen Sligo

Painting: *Kaiteriteri Inlet* by Jennifer Stebbings ©
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J STEBBINGS

TELLING A NEW STORY

COLLEEN O'SULLIVAN explains how shame binds us to a dead-end existence and how the empathy of listeners can help create a new, life-giving story.

We are hardwired for story. We need people to listen to our difficulties, hardships, fears and suffering as well as to the celebrations, joys and loves that make up our lives. We want to be there when a new story starts or an old one ends. However, it's the pause between the old and the new story that sometimes causes us trouble.

I first came across researcher and storyteller Brené Brown on a TED talk. Her presentation on the power of vulnerability has gone viral with over 2 million hits — obviously speaking to the heart and experience of many people. Brené had interviewed over 1,000 men and 1,000 women, listening to their stories. She then analysed these stories using the grounded theory research method. From her findings, she was able to identify the essential components for recovering compassion and openness in our interactions with ourselves and others.

Unexpected Beginning of Stories

Brené talks about how we contribute to our own stories. She finds that, looking back on our lives, we can sometimes see where we've written our own "script", or how a specific "script" is written into our life. When Brené asked interviewees about the positive aspects of their lives, they replied in a way she didn't expect. Many responded to questions about love and belonging with stories of heartbreak, rejection and powerlessness.

She discovered that it was at the point of pain that transformative stories often begin. These can be personal stories or the stories of a people. Perhaps it is when the leaders of nations become aware of the suffering of their people through their own story, and then are able to discern how to act.

For example, had Mandela not experienced his own need to forgive he would not have been able to initiate the social and cultural movement towards forgiveness and justice in South Africa — the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions which led to the ending of apartheid.

It is the same with Mahatma Gandhi. During his time of reflection in his ashram he developed the wisdom to understand how to combat British victimisation of his people. And he began a new story when he set out with a handful of followers in March 1930, walking towards Dandhi on what became known as the Salt March. By the time he reached the salt marshes, tens of thousands of people were following him. When Gandhi picked up a clod of muddy salt at Dandhi, the rewriting of a nation's story began in earnest.

Colleen O'Sullivan is a Sister of St Joseph. She is a teacher, presenter and a spiritual director. Her passions are contemplation, ecology and art.

Story Moves Us Forward

These national stories may be initiated by one or two people and while the stories are often personal, we find that the great transformative stories of yesterday and today are written by many people. Each one's story contributes to the new emerging story.

This is true whether the stories enable us to move, to evolve more consciously or whether they are regressive and pull us back towards safety and security. Regressive stories might even be "antistories" — holding to the past in an unhealthy, false tradition that stagnates our existence rather than revealing the new. True tradition moves us forward — the heart of the older experience is embodied in the new emerging narrative.

Shame Blocks New Story

What stops the new narrative from emerging? Brené discovered the key factor keeping us from transformation, connection and compassion is shame. Many of the stories she

listened to were told for the first time because they involved shame for the storyteller. Shame grows in secrecy. And, sadly, all cultures and societies use shame in some way to control people and to keep those in power in their positions.

I remember coming out of a crowded railway station in Japan. Standing in silence and absolute stillness with a placard around her neck and her head bowed was a young woman. I couldn't read Japanese and didn't know why she was there but I recognised her posture as the universal stance of shame. There seemed to be no one forcing her to be there. I wondered if she was there by her own choice or a cultural custom. I'll never know. But it seems that we can sometimes be so bowed down by what our cultures tell us that we can only stand in shame.

> *To become connected and compassionate we need to tell our story and move beyond our feelings of worthlessness. As Nouwen says, to recognise that God's name for each one is "Beloved".*

Shame Isolates

Shame is used by every institution — political, military, religious, educational, economical. In our Western society shame is manipulated through the media to support the push for economic growth. We are made to feel we live in an environment of scarcity. As Brené says, the opposite of scarcity is not abundance but enough. We are taught, however, to hoard — for example to grab what we can at sales or all will be gone and we will be left with nothing. We are taught subliminally to be first in line, to fight for bargains. Scarcity and a culture of blame often form the heart of our story.

Shame has been used as a tool for punishing people. But it does not change behaviour or enable human connection. Shame correlates with addiction, crime and diseases such as bulimia. The experience of shame is isolating: it tells us we are worthless, a mistake.

A distinction must be made: shame is not the same as guilt. Guilt says: "I have done something wrong." But shame says: "I am something wrong." Shame keeps people powerless. It keeps people in a place where they can call only on defence mechanisms to survive — fleeing, freezing or fighting.

Vulnerability Robs Shame's Power

To change a culture lashed by shame we need to change the story, to see other possible outcomes from the scripted story. We can listen to the unconscious and discern when shame is our motivator and, once we realise this truth, to risk vulnerability in our daily living. To become connected and compassionate we need to tell our story and move beyond our feelings of worthlessness. As Nouwen says, to recognise that God's name for each one is "Beloved".

Stories foster connection when there is both someone to speak and someone to listen. For example, we have former All Black John Kirwan speaking publicly about his experience of depression and encouraging others to disclose their own experiences. This is helping society understand mental illness and how we can provide for those who suffer.

We have women who have spoken out about their experience of sexual abuse in the workplace and men who have disclosed their sexual abuse at the hands of priests and religious.

Learning Shame Resilience

Brené suggests there are people, like Kirwan, who have learnt shame resilience — who can risk failure and keep re-learning their stories. They are able to "own" their vulnerability, which means they're able to face uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure.

Understanding our vulnerabilities helps, but it is empathy that is most effective in healing the experience of shame. It's through our listening with the heart — the very opposite of secrecy and judgement — that we can combat shame.

The people who are freed from shame are those who believe they are worthy of love and belonging. We find this in Scripture stories over and over again. Brené's research offers us a way of reimagining Scripture for our time. Jesus Christ is the model of vulnerability in every story in the Gospels. He invites each one with whom he interacts to become vulnerable and to be responsible for life. Taking that risk embodies the challenge and the hope of transformation for ourselves and for our institutions. ◑

Watch: TEDxHouston: Brené Brown *The Power of Vulnerability*
TED2012: Brené Brown *Listening to Shame*

Painting: ***Storytellers*** by Shelby McQuilkin © Used with permission www.blog.shelbymcquilkin.com

Settling into Silence

CLARE MCGIVERN shares how the experience of meditation, a prayer form used in monasteries for centuries, has been rediscovered as a practice for everyday life.

The practice of meditation has been in the Church as far back as the desert fathers and mothers. It was rediscovered by Benedictine John Main in the 1970s and involves sitting in silence twice daily for 20 to 30 minutes and quietly repeating the mantra *Maranatha*. The idea is that this act of contemplative practice calls us into the present moment to rest in God. It is described as a way of simplicity, stillness and silence.

Meditation is both solitary and communal. John Main was keen to share this gift with ordinary people, and the first centre for Christian Meditation was established in London in the 1970s. By the 1990s, after the establishment of the Worldwide Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM), this had evolved into a "monastery without walls", with weekly groups meeting and supporting each other in more than 120 countries all around the world.

Clare McGivern is a wife, mother and teacher who enjoys walks at sunrise, listening to audiobooks, playing the piano, singing and happy hours in her sewing room.

Getting Started

Like many who have tried to practise meditation, my experience has been one of stops and starts. I first began to meditate about 15 years ago, after attending a day run by the New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation.

The practice sounds simple, but 25 minutes of silence can bring an overwhelming awareness of how distracted our minds are. Thought of tasks undone, reruns of unresolved issues, an itch or feelings of physical discomfort all seem intent on calling us away from God and back to a sense of self-absorption. With gentleness we are asked to let these thoughts and feelings pass by and return to our sacred word. I experienced enough of the deep quiet I was aiming for to keep bringing me back, and for a number of years I met weekly with others in a nearby Presbyterian church to sit in silence and deepen my understanding of the meditation.

By then my circumstances changed and my commitment to the practice gradually slipped away. Over the ensuing years I returned to meditation several times and was once again reminded of how it offered an anchor, especially in challenging and difficult times.

I am surprised at the ease with which my young children happily sit with me for 20 minutes to meditate, and the stillness which they adopt. They love lighting the candle, reading the opening prayer and the sound of the meditation bell leading us into the silence. As the timer sounds at the end of the practice they smile contentedly up at me, blow out the candle and head back to their other activities.

Praying Together

John Main said that meditation builds community, so I

again looked for a group to join that would fit in with my busy family schedule. At that stage none of those offered nearby worked for me until I discovered the treasure of online meditation.

Each day I join with other meditators from around the world to share morning and/or evening meditation. If time permits, I stay on for the sacred sharing which follows and this always provides a gem to carry me through the day. The group is facilitated by the UK-based WCCM Benedictine Oblates, and while the majority are based in the UK, meditators from America, Europe and Canada contribute, too. I am still astonished at the deep silence I experience and the sense of being part of something so much bigger than myself. The sight of a screen filled with the faces of like-minded people is so encouraging and a delight even when I'm a bit bleary eyed first thing in the morning. I find it is easier to meditate knowing that I am joining with others around the globe at the same time.

> ***I am still astonished at the deep silence I experience and the sense of being part of something so much bigger than myself. There is a sense of the planet being wrapped in prayer as different groups gather for meditation.***

As God is beyond time it seems fitting that we cross the time zones to meet and there is a sense of the planet being wrapped in prayer as different groups gather for meditation. Our groups are greatly enriched by the presence of those from the Centering Prayer tradition who also share silence and their practice with us. The community has always had an ecumenical and inter-faith outreach and the genuine welcome which is extended to people of other faiths is very heartening to witness.

From a Child

My 9-year-old son is a regular participant in the online groups. "I have been meditating since I was about 6 or 7. At school we meditate together in the church each week but some of the kids find it difficult to sit still and not fidget. I like to meditate at home with Mum and sometimes my sister joins us, too. We sit together for 25 minutes and I like the peace and quiet — I say "Maranatha — Come Lord Jesus" silently in my head. About four or five times a week I join with the online WCCM meditation group and now I have friends from all around the world. When someone new joins us, I like to find out where they are from so I can look it up on my world map. My American friend Ken says that they are like my aunties and uncles and grandparents from across the pond. The time passes quickly and helps me to feel calm and peaceful. My dad and I are going to make a meditation stool these school holidays so I can sit more comfortably during the meditation."

Learning to Meditate

The New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation offers regular community days, seminars and retreats throughout the country to share the practice. It supports schools that wish to introduce meditation to their children. As a teacher, I often witness the hunger that young people have for silence in a world dominated by devices, busyness and instant communication. The opportunity to sit in stillness with a class of teenagers is surprisingly refreshing.

Benedictine Laurence Freeman, who has been the director of WCCM since the death of John Main, will lead the National Silent Retreat in Hamilton in January next year. This retreat attracts meditators from throughout the country and from Australia. Fr Laurence will then lead a two-day seminar at Auckland City Hospital, "Meditatio — Contemplative Care". Contemplative care is a dimension of healthcare practice that comes out of the great tradition of contemplative practice. It aims to enable the practitioner to develop better self-care, self-knowledge, inner reflection and intuition that informs their healthcare practice, and enlivens their personal presence with the patient. Seminar speakers from across the healthcare spectrum will dialogue with participants on the many ways Contemplative Care can be used to benefit both practitioner and patient alike.

With more silence in our lives I believe the world can be transformed into a place of healing and peace.

Painting: *Piha Pinks Sunset* by Helen Emmett ©
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WAKE UP

KATHLEEN RUSHTON interprets Jesus's sermon in Mark 13 uncovering the symbolic language and urging us to stay awake in our world.

Mark 13 is an example of a type of writing we call "apocalyptic". "Apocalypse" means "unveiling" and describes the revelations told — in the form of visions, symbols and vivid images — by a superhuman being to a human intermediary. Such revelations allow us to see our experience within a larger context and imagine a new world. Mk 13:4-37 is a sermon about the coming of the *basileia* of God, not revealed from heaven but from the mouth of Jesus on Earth. This sermon, moving between reassurance and warning, looks beyond the time span of the Gospel and addresses the situation of readers past and present. There is no simple application for our times, but the urgency and insistence that accompanies Jesus's message exists for us today.

Jesus leaves the Temple which he had earlier closed down (Mk 11:15-17). The disciples marvel at its beauty (Mk 13:1). In 19 CE, Herod began massive renovations of the Temple which were completed 45 years later in 64 CE. Jesus's description of Jerusalem's destruction (Mk 13:2) tells of events which are likely to have occurred. In the spring of 70 CE, the Roman general Titus set up camp to prepare a siege wall. Eventually, the city was captured and the Temple destroyed.

Mark's criticism of the *basileia* of Rome is veiled because the armies of Titus are already in control of Galilee. In contrast, the Temple and its leaders are denounced vehemently. Just prior, Jesus had accused scribes of devouring widows' houses (Mk 12:40). The story of the poor widow critiques the temple treasury practice (Mk 12:41-44).

Gospel Context of Mark 13

Jesus and disciples were "on the way to Jerusalem" (Mk 8:31-10:52). Now, a series of "endings in Jerusalem" unfolds: the end of Temple worship as a way to God (Mk 11:1-25); the end of the authority of Jewish leadership (Mk 11:27-12:44); the end of Jerusalem (Mk 13:1-23) and the end of the world as we know it (Mk 13:24-27). Mark 13 is balanced between the end of the public ministry of Jesus, after which he goes underground (Mk 14:1), and

18 November

Mark 13:24-32 — RL 33rd Sunday Ordinary Time

Mark 13:1-8 — RCL 26th Sunday After Pentecost

the beginning of his way to the cross. "The way" of Jesus encounters opposition and leads to the cross. This, too, will be the disciples' experience on "the way" of Jesus in his day, in Mark's time and in all times. This reality is the backdrop to Mark 13.

The Imperative — "Watch!"

Jesus sat down on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple (Mk 13:3), a setting evocative of a well-known tradition. From there, the Messiah will intervene in the crucial hour of Jerusalem's need (Zechariah 14:2-4). The sermon is arranged around the imperative "watch" (MK 13: 5, 9, 23, 33). The literal sense of the eye seeing extends to the intuitive, critical level of looking deeply into, seeing through, becoming aware of the essence. A religious view is implied — view of God, insight into the cosmic order and universal world. Often in the New Testament, "watch" suggests seeing the processes of understanding which lead to faith in God and in Jesus. Bibles variously translate "watch" as "take care", "be on your guard", "take heed", "beware" or "be alert".

Despite Jesus's efforts, the disciples don't get it. They weren't able to "stay awake" — instead they flee from what Jesus wants to show them . . . Any more than in Jesus's time, do we "get it" today?

Jesus exhorts the disciples to "watch" (Mk 13:5). He clears the ground of all that could be interpreted falsely as "signs". Signs of false prophets, wars, rumours of wars, earthquakes and famine on such a scale that the whole world order would appear to be collapsing (Mk 13:6-8). His next "watch" (Mk 13:9) zooms in closer to home. Trials and persecutions are to be endured. In this turbulence, Jesus's primary focus is that "the good news must first be proclaimed to all the nations" (Mk 13:10).

What we are told in Mk 13:14-20 is so anchored in its original context that it is impossible for us to unravel. We are best to approach "watch" in Mk 13:23 as an invocation of Mark's conviction that all remains in the hands of God.

Climax of the Sermon

The climax of Jesus's sermon attempts to describe the transcendent reality of the establishment of the *basileia* of God on Earth by using vivid language and symbols (Mk 13:24-27). The whole cosmos is affected — sun, stars, the powers of heaven. The risen Jesus is active in the cosmos and "his elect" being gathered "from the fours winds" suggests that the Gospel has been preached to all and the *basileia* of God established.

Two parables follow. Earlier, Jesus had cursed the fig tree (Mk 11:12-14). The blossoming and fruiting fig tree is found in First Testament passages about God visiting the people with blessing. The fruitful fig tree, unlike most trees in Palestine, was deciduous, so its budding leaves signalled summer was near. The whole cosmos is affected by signs that prepare the hearts of disciples for God's final coming. God will overcome evil.

"Stay Awake" Always

The word "watch" (Mk 13:33) opens the second parable addressed to disciples, who are to be like "servants" awaiting the return of Jesus. Then, the imperative "stay awake" (Mk 13:35,37) is introduced. This verb, commanded also of the door keeper (13:34), means "stay awake," "be vigilant." Where else do we find, "Stay awake"?

The Gospel moves to the last supper and the passion. Mark uses "evening", "midnight", "cock-crowing" and "morning" — the times of the four duty watches of the Roman military sentinels. The *evening* of the last supper (MK 14:17) is the first watch. From there, Jesus and his disciples go to Gethsemane. Twice Jesus implores Peter, James and John to "Stay awake" (Mk 14:34, 38) because they would not "keep awake" one hour (Mk 14:37). Where are the disciples? How do they respond at the second watch of *midnight*, the time of Peter's denial (Mk 14:30)? At the third watch of cock crow, the specific time of Peter's denial (Mk 14:30, 72)? And then at the fourth watch of *dawn* when Jesus is handed over to the Romans (Mk 15:1)? The disciples did not stay awake. They fled.

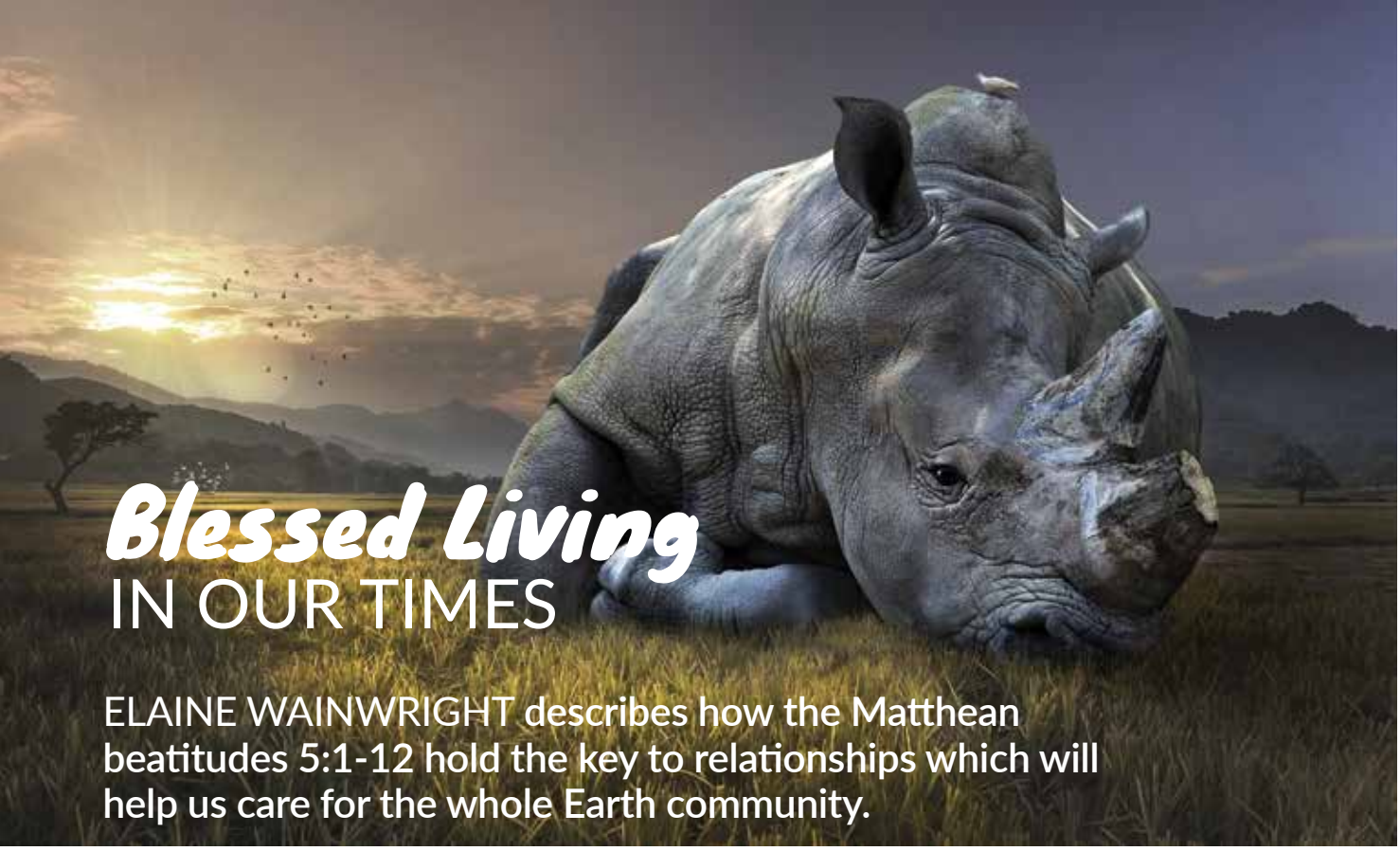
Do We Get It?

Despite Jesus's efforts, the disciples don't get it. They weren't able to "stay awake" — instead they flee from what Jesus wants to show them. And so, the way through the struggle is the way of the cross. Today, we will need no small measure of historical empathy to understand how difficult it was to "believe" in an end to the world of the Temple. Any more than in Jesus's time, do we "get it" today?

Maybe the sermon primarily deals not with the destruction of the Temple or Jerusalem but the fate of the present world. The Christian community is called to live in history with open eyes, to look deep into past events, beyond the conflicting claims of those vying for power. We can read Mark 13 as an "apocalypse" that invites us to "unveil" our world — to search for, and work against the roots of violence and oppression. Chad Myers calls Mark 13 a sermon on revolutionary patience. The coming of the *basileia* of God is in solidarity with Earth and the human family in its dark night of suffering. Never have members of the Earth community been so alert to a global crisis of such social, economic and ecological proportions. German theologian Dorothée Soelle encourages contemplation as revolutionary patience which opens up new creative abilities, energy and ways to respond. ◑

Photo by Kazi Faiz Ahmed Jeem on Unsplash

Kathleen Rushton RSM lives in Ōtautahi Christchurch where, in the sight of the Southern Alps and the hills, she continues to delight in learning and writing about Scripture.



Blessed Living IN OUR TIMES

ELAINE WAINWRIGHT describes how the Matthean beatitudes 5:1-12 hold the key to relationships which will help us care for the whole Earth community.

The text challenges the ecological reader in two ways. First, its familiarity means we tend not to notice what's really being said — we hear only what we've heard before. And second, because it seems to focus very specifically on the human community and human virtues. But having taken up the challenge to read the beatitudes from an ecological perspective, I have found them rich in what we might call ecological ethics.

The opening two verses (Mt 5:1-2) are rich in inter-contextuality. This means that the human and the other-than-human interact subtly and collaboratively in the text even though Jesus functions as key character in these verses. He *sees* the crowd, a simple statement that links him to the human community, and he *goes up* the mountain, reminding readers that all that is human takes place *in a context*, *a material context*. This context in particular is rich in symbolism. Within Israel's religious tradition, mountains are places of encounter with the divine, for Abraham (Gen 22:2-19), Moses (Ex 19:1-6) and many others. The text states explicitly that Jesus sits down on the mountain — on the earth itself, which acts as an authorising agent for what takes place there.

The first word that the crowd hears is *makarioi:* fortunate, happy, privileged, blessed. It is an affirmation of members of the human community, those who live the virtues that will be praised by the nine-fold repetition of *makarioi.* So, the invitation to hear these well-known beatitudes ecologically is to hear them anew.

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

Matthew 5:1-12

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain;
and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he
began to speak, and taught them, saying:
3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of
heaven.
4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness, for they will be filled.
7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called
children of God.
10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for
righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute
you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my
account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in
heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets
who were before you."

Poor in Spirit

The "poor in spirit" are the first proclaimed *makarioi*/blessed (Mt 5:3). This phrase does not appear anywhere else in the Jewish scriptures or in Greek texts of the first century. Scholars recognise in it, however, echoes of the virtue of humility that was highly prized in antiquity. Such a virtue recognised what the human person shares with all Earth's constituents. It is a virtue essential to our contemporary ecological ethics.

The second half of the beatitude gives the reason for this blessedness — the *basileia*/kin(g)dom of the heavens is theirs. John (Mt 3:2) and Jesus (Mt 4:17) are proclaiming

this kin(g)dom. It is a vision for right relationships at the heart of the Matthean Gospel. The ecological reader understands the vision extending relationships from just within the human community to those in the entire Earth community.

Those Who Mourn

The second proclamation of 'honour" or "blessing" is of those who mourn (Mt 5:4). Members of the human community mourn when they lose someone or something they hold dear (Gen 23:2, 37:34; 50:3; 1Sam 15:35) as do members of the other-than-human community. But also in Hosea 4:3, the land and all beings who live in it mourn as Earth's creatures vanish (see, Is 33:9; Jer 4:28; 12:4); and people mourn this fate of Earth (Amos 8:8).

Mourning accompanies the breakdown of relationships in the Earth community and in the community's relationship with the Divine. Grief and mourning for broken relationships characterise many today who work for ecological transformation. Just as they characterise Earth creatures experiencing the loss of habitats and companions at the hands of the human community. However, mourning is not to become a permanent state for those who seek the gospel vision of Jesus. Rather, their comfort is in a commitment to the flourishing of diversity.

Humble Meek

We might notice the close relationship between the first and the third beatitudes: the "poor in spirit" and the "meek". Both can be characterised as "humble". To understand this connection, we can read Psalms 37 in which the phrase "shall inherit the earth" occurs five times. In particular, Ps 37:11 names the "meek" as inheritors.

And also Israel's tradition is strong in the recognition that the land belongs to God (Num 26:53; Ps 105:11). Israel's task is to till and keep it (Gen 2:15); to be in right relationship with it. This beatitude could have offered hope to a first-century Galilean audience whose land was being confiscated by Roman landlords.

Right Relationships

Righteousness/right ordering/right relationship is the virtue praised or honoured in both the fourth and eighth beatitudes. It is a key Matthean virtue preached in the Sermon (Mt 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 23) and in Ps 85:10-13 it is repeatedly linked with other key virtues:

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet
Righteousness and peace will kiss each other
Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
Righteousness will look down from the sky.
God will give what is good
And our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness will go before God,
And will make a path for God's steps.

This righteousness or right ordering is to characterise Divine, human and other-than-human interrelationships. Within them ecological and social justice meet and embrace. However, right ordering needs to be worked out in each unique location and community, each habitat and ecosystem. In so doing those hungering and thirsting for right relationships will be satisfied.

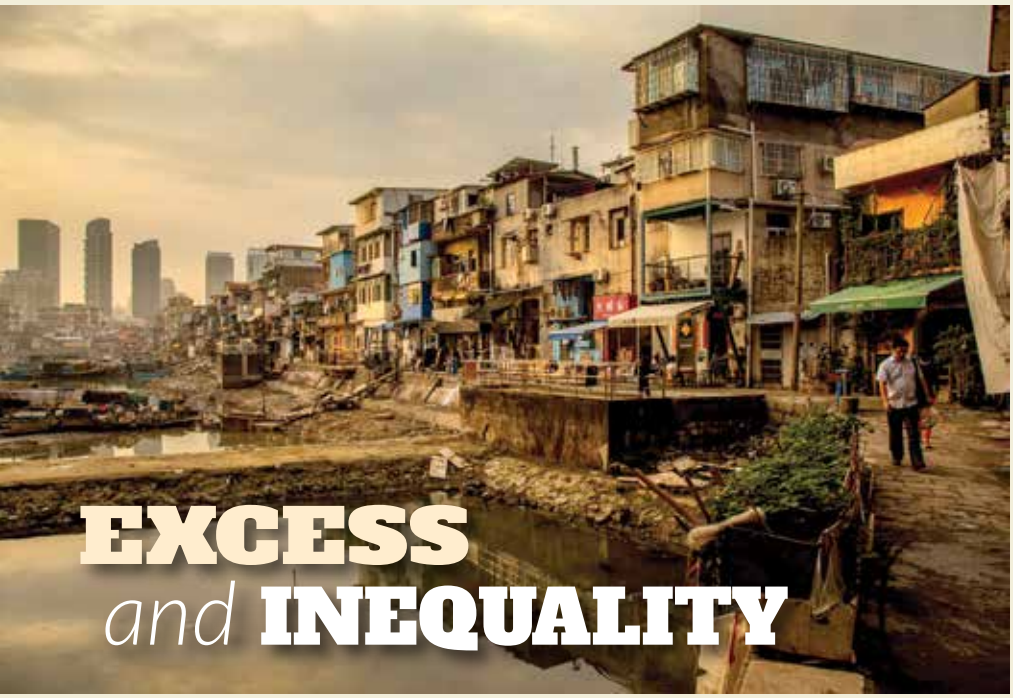
Practising Compassion

The sermon gives us three additional ways of living the right relationships that characterise the new vision that Jesus preaches. Those who show mercy participate in the mercy of God and are caught up in a spiral of mercy (Mt 5:7). Compassion is not confined to the human community. Our hearts break when we see the ravages of Earth and all Earth's creatures by wanton industrialisation and destruction. Can we receive compassion that heals such pain?

God Is with the Whole Earth Community

The pure in heart (Mt 5:8) are named blessed and promised that they shall see God. It is through our body, our heart and our eyes, that we can see and know God. We know that God is "with us" as Mt 1:23 tells us. That "us" is not just the human community as we usually think. Rather, God has entered into a unique relationship with the entire Earth community. We need to call on all our senses, all our bodiliness, to engage fully in this relationship. It is this which makes for peace — an ecological peace (Mt 5:9).

The idea of reading the beatitudes ecologically is new. It extends the invitation to repentance as preached in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 3:2; 4:17) beyond the human to the other-than-human community. We are on the very threshold of a response to that invitation and each of us is invited to participate. We might reflect and talk to others about how we are invited to articulate the beatitudes afresh in the face of the ecological imperative. ◑



EXCESS *and* INEQUALITY

There are two certainties in life, the old axiom says — death and taxes. But not for corporations, it seems. In their case there's just one foregone conclusion — they'll encounter neither. According to Berkeley University economists the state of tax avoidance worldwide is that as much as 40 per cent of multinational profit shows up in tax havens — roughly one-tenth of the world's GDP.

We can assume that a further portion of profits is paid to the accountants, advisers and lawyers required to create the avoidance. These seemingly innocuous middlemen are necessary cogs in the process. We need only to look to New Zealand after the release of the Panama Papers which showed that legal firms and advisers had been drumming up business by advertising the country as a veritable tax haven.

Their websites appealed to the unscrupulous, outlining the beguiling nature of foreign trusts. Essentially they were set up in New Zealand to guarantee not only that entities paid no tax but that their identities were shielded from taxation authorities and the public.

While this may sound technical, it's also hugely significant. Every dollar lost through tax avoidance is a dollar that can't be spent on hospitals, roads and schools. It is the missing money that causes funding cuts, the discontinuation of services, the tightening of pensions and social services for the community's most vulnerable.

Australia is no better. Just last month we discovered that Glencore, one of the world's biggest mining companies, restructured in order to move some $30 billion of its assets into overseas tax structures and away from the public purse. Our tax office is now investigating whether Australia's big accounting firms devised the scheme and have been using legal privilege to avoid cooperation.

Large companies have been avoiding tax for years. It's nothing new. Apple, one of the world's most profitable and successful technology companies, shifted an estimated $8.9 billion in profits to an Irish tax haven between 2005 and 2015.

Why do we accept that profitable enterprises are able to safeguard excessive profits from fair taxation? After all, the aim of the obligation for individuals and companies to pay taxes is to strengthen the countries in which we live and work. Everyone loses from a depleted tax base — so who benefits?

Company executives are those ultimately rewarded by increased profitability — achieved by any measure. While average employees have watched their wage growth overtaken by the rising cost of living, executives have been rewarded with take home pay packets many times larger than their employees.

In fact, their bonuses and salaries have been growing quickly. They hit a 17-year high in Australia this year — the top CEO was paid more than $36 million. In New Zealand, executive pay is also on the rise although the difference is dwarfed by their US counterparts, who typically earn between 300 and 500 times more than their employees.

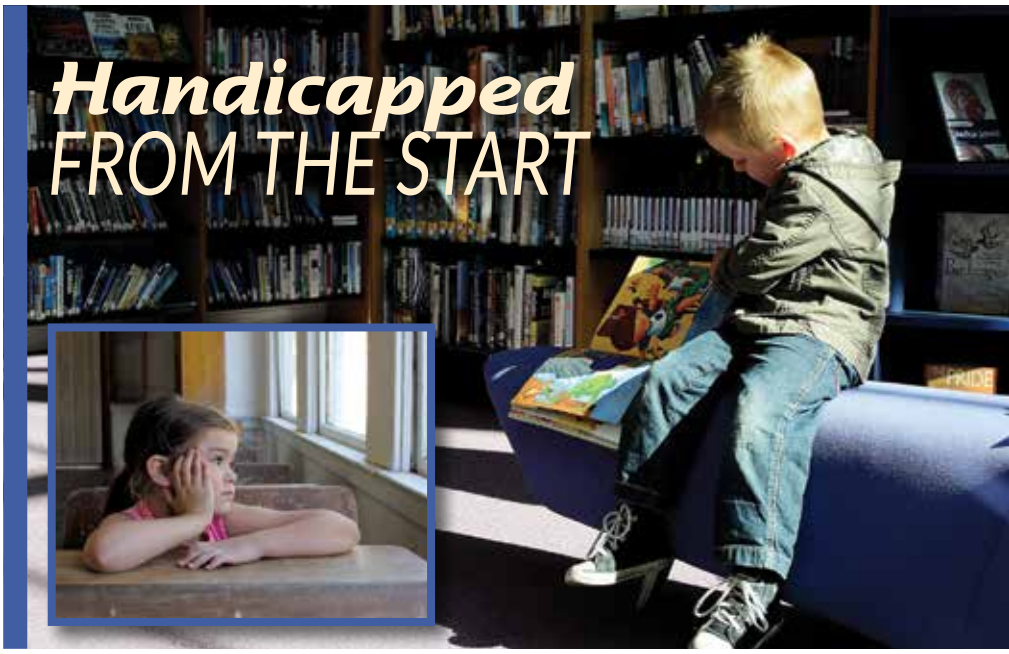
These inflated pay scales are the product of misguided incentives. An executive who authorises an illegal or unethical tax avoidance measure to improve a bottom line or a short-term share price is ultimately rewarded.

In Australia, a recent royal commission into our financial sector demonstrated the results of incentivising staff at all levels to prioritise short-term profit over people — with sickening clarity. The final products of this system showed misconduct of the highest degree. Dodgy sales tactics, unfair fees for services never provided, exploitation of the vulnerable, charging the dead and an intense surveillance of insurance policy holders were just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what has transpired.

Everyday customers have clearly been mistreated by companies motivated by greed. That same vice has been the impetus behind tax avoidance and a whole range of sins that hurt the victims of these crimes twofold. Ironically, the share price that such activities were intended to raise, has also suffered. There are many victims and few victors in this greedy orientation. It is an example of how inequality compounds and spreads. It is time we readjusted the collective moral compass or we will be fated to repeat the same mistakes and suffer the same consequences yet again. ◑

Jack Derwin is an Australian journalist currently working for Channel Nine in Sydney.

Handicapped FROM THE START



A few years ago, I taught a critical thinking course at a summer school in London for international high school students. The students were between 15 and 17 and came from very wealthy families around the world. There were sent to London to learn debating and critical thinking skills and to visit UK universities, with the hope of being accepted to Oxford or Cambridge after high school.

One of the activities we did was a large scale global trade simulation: students were split into groups and were told that they needed to trade with each other and the "stock exchange" (the teachers) to get gold stars. The group with the most gold stars at the end would be the winner. The teachers traded paper circles for 5 gold stars, squares of paper for 1 gold star and so on.

What the students realised as the game went on was that some started with resources (paper, scissors, drawing tools). Those with resources quickly began making perfect circles and were delighted when the stock exchange accepted them in exchange for gold stars. After some time, they traded gold stars in exchange for paper from teams who had stockpiles of paper in order to continue production. Teams without scissors struggled to make circles that would be accepted by the stock exchange and the paper baron teams quickly upped the number of gold stars they would accept per piece of paper. Teams with lots of people but few resources slowly made squares by folding paper and carefully tearing it. The teachers changed the prices for exchange without explanation.

Tensions rose quickly. Those who were doing well had no time for listening to other students about how it was unfair. They refused to donate paper to teams who had nothing to trade. Some students were frustrated when we (the teachers) would not answer questions about the discrepancies or rules of the game. Particularly for these assertive, entitled young people who had enjoyed many advantages in life, it was an unwelcome experience to be disadvantaged and powerless.

Eventually the game came to an end and we took the students through a reflection and discussed what lessons they learned. During the game, fortunes had changed quickly and, in the moment, ruthless competition drove behaviour.

Students who began with resources knew they had had an advantage but they quickly moved to feeling entitled to their good fortune — they had worked hard to make circles and maximise their position by trading strategically.

Those without resources felt frustrated but had been creative in their endeavours to get into the game. I was struck by the intensity of their emotions during the debrief.

We often frame inequality as a deficit on the part of those less fortunate. It can be a useful exercise to flip that — to consider what protective factors, what advantages, what metaphorical (as well as tangible) resources the fortunate started with. If groups, citizens, or countries are starting with an unequal distribution of resources but are expected to participate in a game with the same rules, those with existing resources have an unfair advantage.

While these inequalities are obvious in the classroom setting, they also play out in many parts of our daily lives that we are probably less willing to acknowledge. When the "starting point" is so different for each of us, are we further perpetuating inequalities by insisting we must all conform and be judged by the same standards or rules? Asking kids to sit still in class and concentrate, where one was put to sleep with a full tummy after a bedtime story and another is coming to school from a damp house without breakfast, is surely a much greater challenge for the second child. Understanding why some people commit crimes is perhaps more challenging. Personal choice and individual responsibility are part of the picture but where person A has 10 options to choose from and person B has 3 (where one includes committing an offence), the individual's actions need to be seen as part of the collective where society has created such a discrepancy in options.

Striving for action to reduce inequality is a great aim. But the first step is acknowledging the many and complex inequalities that exist as well as the reasons for their existence. One way of doing this is to experience the lives of others, particularly given that learning through experience is incredibly valuable. While some forms of experiential learning such as "voluntourism" have been discredited as exploitative, it is important for us to create opportunities to walk a little way in each other's shoes. It is only once we are able to be honest with ourselves about these different starting points that we can begin to dismantle some of the systems that perpetuate intergenerational inequality in our society.

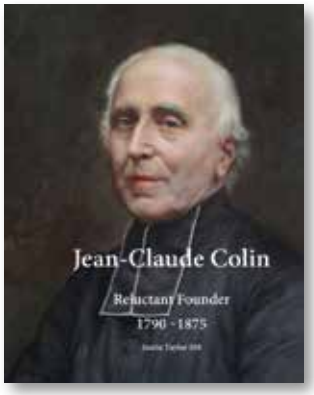
Julia Spelman, of Ngāti Hikairo descent, is a barrister at Pipitea Chambers in Wellington. She helped to found JustSpeak and is now Chair of the Board.

Jean-Claude Colin: Reluctant Founder 1790-1875

by Justin Taylor SM
Published by ATF Press, 2018
Reviewed by Kevin Toomey

BOOK

Justin Taylor's biography of Jean-Claude Colin is a gripping story shedding light on the development of the Catholic Church in our part of the world. Frenchman Colin lived through the greater part of the 19th century, a period of ferment, political turmoil and spiritual courage in France. In this meticulously researched book, Taylor traces Colin's personal development, culminating in the founding of the Marist Fathers, recognised by Pius IX in 1873. As a stone dropped into a still pond sends ripples flowing effortlessly outward so, too, Colin's life rippled into the culture of the Church in France finding itself again after the French Revolution.



Taylor covers Colin's early years seeking diocesan recognition of his sons of Mary until on Christmas Eve 1836 Jean Baptiste Pompallier, with four priests and three brothers, set off from Le Havre for Aotearoa. They were the first of 15 bands of men sent on mission over 20 years — some with familiar names like Bataillon, Viard and Moreau.

The book records the fascinating beginnings of the Catholic Church in Oceania: New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, Rotuma, Melanesia and Micronesia as well as Australia. The mission in the Solomons foundered and was only restarted after Colin's death.

And it tells of the conflicts that arose in leading a mission and of supplying confreres in the Pacific when mail was extremely slow. The demands of the Roman congregations of "Propaganda Fide" and "Bishops and Regulars" and French Catholics' devotion to the person of the Pope.

Taylor writes of the courage of the first missionaries, often alone and lonely, and of those murdered like St Peter Chanel and others who died of tropical diseases.

At the same time in France the congregation set up secondary schools. By 1854 there were 211 priests teaching in these schools.

Other branches of the Marist "tree" grew under Colin's influence, until at Propaganda's direction, some branches were broken off. From these, the Marist Sisters, the Marist Brothers and the Blessed Sacrament Society developed their own charisms and work.

In 1,000 pages Justin Taylor tells Colin's story with humour and judgement portraying him as the reluctant founder of the Marist Fathers. I recommend this book to all who are interested in understanding the development of the Catholic Church in New Zealand and Oceania. And I think every library needs a copy.

The Last Earth: A Palestinian Story

by Ramzy Baroud
Published by Pluto Press, 2018
Reviewed by Ruth Johnson

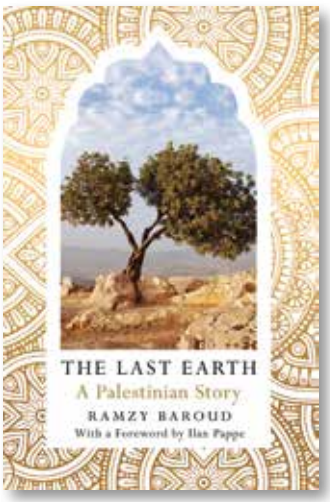
BOOK

The Last Earth is a collection of stories from interviews with nine Palestinian refugees. Author Ramzy Baroud, born in a Gaza refugee camp, is now a journalist and academic. He prefaces each story with a contextualising paragraph that connects the stories and unifies the book.

Through each personal history we see the challenges, pain and suffering, as well as the joys in the small victories, in the lives of Palestinians around the world.

Mahmoud Darwish tells about his struggle to escape Palestine — finding a boat and trustworthy captain to begin with. Darwish hopes to reunite with his love in Scandinavia, and this hope drives him onwards despite having to traverse unimaginable horrors.

Sara Saba was born in Australia to Palestinian refugee parents. She feels like a foreigner even though she has grown up in Melbourne and has never known Palestine. Sara's parents, who have limited English, talk about Palestine as the land of special food and sacred rituals that they try to keep alive in Australia. But Sara just wants to feel she belongs to Australia and be free from her father's anger. Sara's story offers an insight into how we can understand the needs of refugee families in our country.



Umm Marwan is a mother trying to keep her children safe from the Israeli army. Her son's ideas for rebellion and liberation are fuelled by his childhood experiences of injustice and poverty. Umm began a daily routine of trailing the Israeli army, intervening to prevent the Israeli soldiers from taking children away for questioning. Her action led to the establishment of the Mothers' Movement in Gaza — a small but meaningful show of solidarity among Palestinian mothers.

Though these stories are hard on the heart, *The Last Earth* is an enlightening read — a must read, even. It helps to explain why those who remain in Palestine must dig deep in their faith and find personal strength to survive fighting armies, loss of their land, unemployment and the unpredictability of the Israeli occupation. Those who flee Palestine face the dangerous physical journey and further challenges as refugees. For any choice there is struggle and sacrifice. I recommend this book to parents particularly — it gives an insight into families dealing with systemic injustice and we can pass our empathy to our children.

Ladies in Black

Directed by Bruce Beresford
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

FILM

Based on the novel by Madeleine St John, *Ladies in Black* follows the lives of a group of women who work behind the counter at Goode's, a major Sydney department store (strongly reminiscent of David Jones), in 1959. It is a time of social change as Anglo-Australians are beginning to lose their suspicion of post-war migrants from Eastern Europe, or "reffos" as they are labelled. At root, the film is about having the courage to cut loose from one's familiar moorings and embrace change and difference.

Fay (played by Rachael Taylor) and Patty (Alison McGirr) work together in ladies clothing, while Magda (Julia Ormond), a sophisticated (and therefore mysterious) "new Australian" from Slovenia, presides over the high-fashion or "model gowns" section. The catalyst for change arrives in the form of Lisa (Angourie Rice), a bright but naïve school-leaver who takes up a holiday job in womenswear. Magda takes Lisa (a name she prefers to her androgynous given name of Leslie) under her wing, widening her horizons in rapid time, but also threatening to create a rift with her conventional but loving Aussie family.

Madga and her Hungarian husband Stefan also provide pretty blonde Fay, fed up with the boorish attentions of the local blokes, with an introduction to their accomplished and dapper son, Rudi. "At least you know where you are with Australian men," Fay's flirtatious chorus-girl bestie tells her. "But what if you don't want to be there?" she replies. "With continental men you're always going somewhere new." Meanwhile, Patty is having her own problems with her painfully "inattentive" husband, who seems to know even less than most men what women want.

These stories of ordinary and not-so-ordinary Australian women are expertly woven together by director Beresford to create a series of happy outcomes. The film's atmosphere is sunny and upbeat, and any shadows are soon dispelled. (In this way it's like a musical, but without the song and dance routines.) If this gives the film its breezy charm, it may also be a fault, and the story lines at times verge on the sentimental, proffering answers that are perhaps a little too easy.

But if you want something uplifting and inspirational, but still loosely grounded in the cultural and historical reality of our closest neighbours, *Ladies in Black* is a good choice. ◑

CROSS CURRENTS

by Susan Smith

Thank you Kate Sheppard

On 19 September the *NZ Herald* published wonderful articles to celebrate the centenary of women getting the right to vote in our country — the first country in the world to pass such legislation. In the US, women's suffrage was not achieved until 1919, in the UK in 1928, in France not till 1945 and in Switzerland not until 1971! I felt proud of the achievement of all the women who struggled to ensure equal voting rights for women and men. Then I decided to do a crossword puzzle (not in the *Herald*), and the first clue was: "An assembly of women, two words — 3, 5 letters." All *Tui Motu* readers will know the answer immediately — "hen party". That's absolutely correct, but what does this answer say about continuing to stereotype women today?

Abuse and Clericalism

Our poor Church is really being buffeted by the sexual abuse scandals at home and internationally. Some bishops, such as Bishop Paul Martin in Christchurch, are making courageous moves to be more transparent about sexual abuse offences. Until recently, Church practice had been to cover up sexual abuse of girls and boys, women and men by priests. In August, in the wake of sexual abuse revelations in Pennsylvania, Pope Francis identified clericalism as one of the causes behind such cover-ups. He wrote: "The heart-wrenching pain of these victims, which cries out to heaven, was long ignored, kept quiet or silenced. But their outcry was more powerful than all the measures meant to silence it, or sought even to resolve it by decisions that increased its gravity by falling into complicity. The Lord heard that cry and once again showed us on which side God stands . . . Clericalism, whether fostered by priests themselves or by lay persons, leads to an excision in the ecclesial body that supports and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we are condemning today. To say 'no' to abuse is to say an emphatic 'no' to all forms of clericalism."

Joan Chittister's comments likewise merit consideration. "Clerics make up less than 1 per cent of the Church. But clericalism makes its clerics superior to the rest of the Church in power, the presumption of holiness, absolute parochial authority and as the keepers of accountability." As far as personal interaction between laity and priests is concerned, I don't believe that clericalism is the biggest problem facing our Church here but at the institutional level, the "Father knows best" syndrome is still around.

Another Worrying Relationship

New Zealand farmers rely on fertilisers, particularly on imported phosphate from Western Sahara, which Morocco controls against the wishes of the indigenous Saharawi people. Morocco's brutal rule and occupation of Western Sahara has led to most countries refusing to import phosphate from that source. But 98 per cent of New Zealand's phosphate comes from Morocco. And next year, our country will be the biggest importer of phosphate from Morocco. In September's *Tui Motu*, retired Taranaki farmer and former director of the New Zealand Dairy Board, Tom Gibson, persuasively argued that the dairy industry here — although no one would deny its importance for our economic well-being — needs to reduce its reliance on phosphorus and nitrogen, both of which pollute our waterways. Quality rather than quantity outcomes need to drive the dairy industry. Furthermore, if New Zealand stopped importing fertiliser from Western Sahara, that could perhaps persuade the Moroccan government to return independence to the dispossessed Saharawi people who have not enjoyed it since that part of Saharan Africa became a Spanish colony in 1884. Profit at any cost must not be what drives our country's economy. ◑

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

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

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

NEW DESIGN OF ECONOMY NEEDED

As you editorialise in *TM* September 2018: "We have been warned by scientists that global warming has reached dangerous levels and if we continue to ignore it, Earth will be unable to support human life in the future." We just saw hurricane Florence dump catastrophic rainfall over North Carolina and super typhoon Mangkhut disrupt the lives of millions of people.

Jeanette Fitzsimons says that the overriding goal must change from economic growth to sustainability. Yes, economic growth is the primary goal of any politician, and so given the choice between a thriving dairy industry and protecting our rivers, politicians have chosen the former. Naomi Klein, author of *This Changes Everything*, puts it bluntly: "The economy is at war with the climate."

Whatever our belief in a Creator God, most are in awe of our beautiful world and want to preserve it for our children. But actions do not stop at environmental ones like biking rather than driving. Is there not also a relationship between the environment and the very design of our political economy? Is there not an awe of the commons itself — sky, land, sea, rivers, forests, fish and a belief that it is not fair for anyone to monopolise any part without paying a rent to the public? Is it fair that a person pockets $700,000 capital gain when they sell a house? And what about the commons we don't see — our money system? Didn't humans invent that too? What actually causes the growth imperative?

God endowed humans with wondrous brains to ask such questions. We believe it is our duty to start to design a political economy that is truly in line with natural laws.

Deirdre Kent, Living Economies Educational Trust

BUYING CHRISTMAS CARDS

If all Christians purchased only those Christmas cards that portray the true meaning of Christmas, the message should get through to the producers.

Max Palmer, Southern Cross Abbey

RECOVER FROM CLERICALISM

Pope Francis's letter to all the faithful regarding sexual abuse in the Church identifying clericalism as a major factor and the recent explosive New Zealand priests' meeting reveal that, at last the elephant in the Church is demanding attention.

Not long ago to be anti-clerical was synonymous with being anti-Church. It will require a seismic shift to change. It is a clerical culture infecting clergy and lay alike.

Yes, people have left in droves. We have parishes that are inert, unwelcoming, lacking in inclusiveness, with little or no enthusiasm for the Gospel and dominated by the few clerically-minded who maintain power and control. As long as the normal boxes are ticked and someone is doing something then all is well. Who wants to encourage a return to such a club?

In *The Joy of the Gospel* Pope Francis spoke of "a spiritual worldliness which hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, consists in seeking not the Lord's glory but human glory and personal well-being ... closed and elite groups are formed, and no effort is made to go forth and seek out." This section of the encyclical is a must for any parish evaluation.

Jim Vercoe Austing, Dannevirke

REDUCING CLERICALISM

A recent letter from Bishop Dunn speaks of the need to root out clericalism. Since clericalism is a policy to uphold the power of the clergy, it strikes me that its presence is often most clearly visible within the Vatican.

Let's consider two examples. Two survivors appointed by Pope Francis to his Papal Commission on Child Abuse resigned within a couple of years because, according to their reports, the work of the Commission was being consistently blocked by the Vatican curia's inaction. Unless Vatican officials are completely out of touch with reality, they must be aware of the horrendous damage caused by child rape. Yet it seems they have the power to dismiss it. In his inspirational memoir *Beyond Belief* Colm O'Gorman commented: "Doing nothing in the face of great wrong is not passive — it is an act of violence; a violent refusal to act when we have the capacity to understand the harm done and the power to prevent it continuing."

Sr Lavina Byrne, well-known BBC broadcaster, published *Woman at the Altar* on the ordination of women. About 20 years ago Vatican bureaucrats ordered the destruction of the remaining books. They harassed Byrne until word reached Cardinal Basil Hume who promptly wrote to the Vatican CDF strongly "recommending" they end their harassment. It stopped.

Jesus's talent for turning the question back to the questioner points to another way of managing clericalism. He used the technique in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The lawyer's initial question: "Who is my neighbour?" was turned back to him after the story: "Which of the three do you think was a neighbour?" Jesus obviously wants us to find the truth for ourselves. If we did that 50 per cent of the time, clericalism would end.

Jim Howley, Auckland

Painting: ***Christ Blessing the Children*** by Lucas Cranach the Elder. Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum

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

Last month, my son Thomas was baptised. He's six, and he goes to a Catholic school in Dunedin. Nine children were baptised in the same afternoon at the parish church adjacent to the school.

We'd been talking about it at home for ages. What it means, what it would be like on the day. Thomas was excited — but I wondered if he really understood what was happening. Godparents were approached, and he, like me, was touched by how quickly and enthusiastically they responded in the affirmative. It felt like gathering together a family of people he already knew and loved, but who didn't yet know and love each other. Which is a wonderful thing, if you think about it — a little child uniting big people.

There was a measure of happy haphazardness — as is to be expected from a troupe of kids in frenzied excitement and on display! But there was also a gravitas that was undeniable: each child at the font, surrounded by a small, solemn group of loving adults. A friendly priest they know, who already features in their lives. A familiar church with pews full of familiar faces. Standing next to their wee friends, waiting in line. The sheer communality of speaking in unison. And for Thomas, the pure joy of being special on a special day, doing something special and important.

We live in difficult times. Families don't always stay together. Relatives are spread far and wide. There's no great consensus of thought — kids have to do a lot of philosophical thinking for themselves. It may be that none of these things is inherently bad, or bad for our children, but sometimes it seems we've a lot of storms and very few ports. And watching your child deal with difficulty is hard — there's a real desire to provide sanctuary.

But the wonderfully simple, charitable act of welcome — of a door being opened and a person being ushered in — remains a powerful act of generosity. I'm certain that Thomas, like everyone else in the church, could feel that generosity. Maybe a child just feels it as joy — and all the better for it, I'd say. What's on offer isn't membership, but belonging, and that's what community is: having your own sense of place and time and participating in it. Being a part of things, not apart from things.

Thomas's place and time started there and then. He was as happy as you like to be fussed over, dressed in his best — crisply ironed by Nana! — and welcomed. And, watching on, it was easy to be hopeful about the future — not just for our children, but for the Church, too. ◑

Ann Hassan is the administrator and assistant editor of *Tui Motu* magazine in Dunedin, an author and mother of two young boys.

Photo by Elaine Casap on unsplash

Blessing

May neighbourliness —
that attitude of caring about others
of sharing fairly
of appreciating enterprise
of fostering new ideas
of paying equitably
of respectful relationships
of believing in the common good
here and around the world —
be at home in us
E ihowa Atua o ngā iwi mātou rā
God of all nations.

From the *Tui Motu* team