TUI MOTU
InterIslands

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS *1997–2017*

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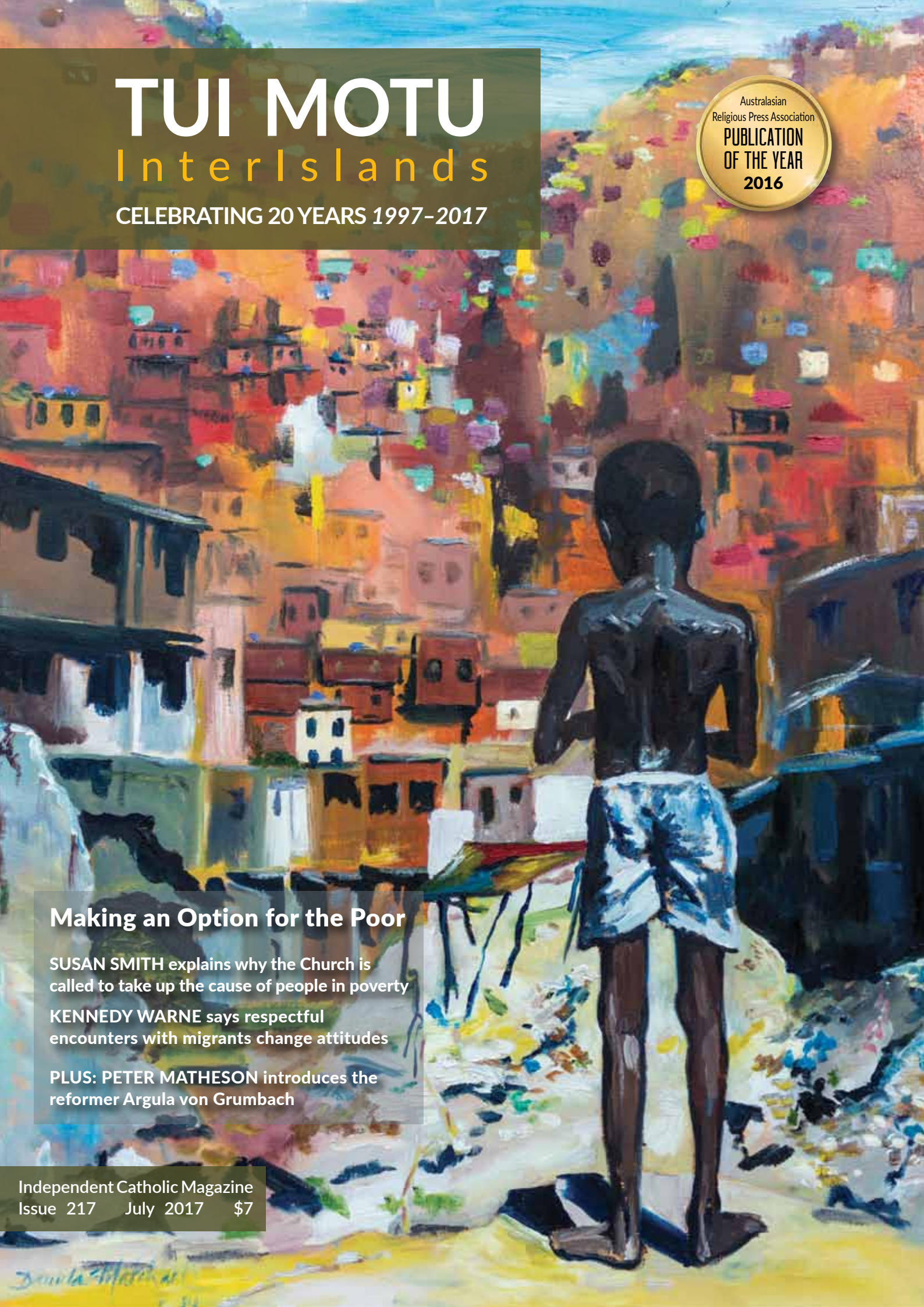
2016



Making an Option for the Poor

SUSAN SMITH explains why the Church is called to take up the cause of people in poverty

KENNEDY WARNE says respectful encounters with migrants change attitudes

PLUS: PETER MATHESON introduces the reformer Argula von Grumbach

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EDITORIAL

Face to Face With Poverty

Our Pentecost enthusiasm is heightened this month by the visit of the Matariki constellation to our morning sky heralding a new year — new love, energy and resolve for caring for all in our common home. We need this boost when we contemplate the extent of poverty in our country and around the world and work out what we can do about it. How do we make an option for the poor when the scale is vast and we've little influence?

In this issue, along with our writers, we're calling on the power of artists to show us the truth, fire our imaginations and capture our hearts because, as Joan Chittister reminds us in Dorothy Day's words: "No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do."

Consider Daniela Matchael, who grew up in Brazil without noticing the poverty that backgrounded her middle-class life until she visited as an adult. Now she paints the struggle and hope of those living in the *favelas* to convince us that we can be part of the change we want to see in our world.

Filipino artist, Joey Velasco, reinterprets da Vinci's elegant, *Last Supper*, as Jesus eating with street children around a make-shift table in the slums. Each is a real child — Itok, Nene, Joyce, Tinay, Emong, Onse, Buknoy, Michael, Dodoy, Jun and Roselle — with a nightmarish story. Before his early death, Joey was able to get them into a children's home. And now the foundation set up in his name continues to work among the children and families of the Hapag community.

Malcolm Evans and Rod Emmerson give us nowhere to hide from their truth-telling couched in crisp humour. And Lilly Johnson images the Statue of Liberty in *Pietà*-like grief weeping into the US flag, evoking our own grief at leadership that collapses the values promoting the good of all, enthroning in their place the aggrandizement of the rich.

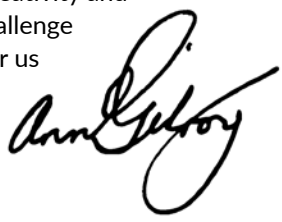
Then the photographers grasp our attention by capturing the soul pouring from a face, to whom we are compelled to respond.

The Nobel Laureate, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, imagines the end of suffering, exploitation and the effects of colonisation, in a joyful communion of all people.

So we find that when we make an option for the poor we are not alone or without influence. In Adrienne Rich's words "we cast our lot with those who day after day, perversely and with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world."

Our gratitude encompasses all of our contributors who in sharing their reflection and faith, creativity and hopes, research and craft, passion, challenge and inspiration, freshen the Gospel for us once again.

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



a SHARP EYE on the BUDGET

Susan Smith

I liked Audrey Young's comment in *The Herald*: "Steven Joyce has a good sense of humour. We know that because when he said his first Budget would not be a lolly scramble and would not be designed for the election, he was clearly kidding." It is indeed a lolly scramble — but will everyone manage to get a lolly?

Not according to Mike O'Brien and Cindy Kiro, faculty members of the University of Auckland. Addressing volunteers and staff of various service groups in Whangarei, they spoke about who will and won't get a lolly from this budget.

The lucky ones included those receiving superannuation benefits and those on higher incomes who will gain the most from tax cuts. You could also argue that the dairy industry receives lollies in the sense that nothing in the Budget indicates any real commitment to cleaning up the environment or compels the industry to address the problem of nitrate-leaching discharge into our rivers. Apart from superannuitants, other beneficiaries receive almost nothing.

It is little wonder that Cindy Kiro, former Children's Commissioner, describes the Budget as a magician's sleight of hand. The government is using one hand to attract the public eye, as its emphasis on Working for Families and the accommodation supplement demonstrates, while with the other hand it takes back or gives to those who are not need. For example, Kiro argues that there will be nothing to prevent landlords raising rents if they think that their tenants will be receiving higher accommodation supplements. The increased accommodation supplement could mean an extra $36 per week for families — a significant sum that, for instance, might cover half the cost of a child's school trip.

Both speakers commented on the Budget's limited responses to child poverty. The government package would perhaps lift around 35,000 children out of poverty, while almost double that number will still be trapped in real economic and social hardship. There will be no lollies for these children. Stephen Joyce himself has admitted that more than 100,000 people live below the poverty line, and that thousands of children live in households where, once the rent is paid, only $180 remains to cover all other expenses. There are other alarming statistics. For example, in 2002 the Auckland City Mission gave out 2,000 food parcels; in 2016 it handed out 160,000.

Unsurprisingly, the government failed to address in this Budget the lack of safe and secure housing for our communities. Poor quality housing (or no housing) means poor health, insufficient money for basic food and clothing needs and diminished education opportunities. Children from low income families living in inadequate housing are children on the move, sometimes attending as many as 20 schools in a given year.

Kiro also commented on the highly targeted nature of funding for Māori. This targeted funding delivers the message that it isn't for Māori to be deciding how money should be spent — the government will tell them. She argues that this approach of more targeted funding also means more bureaucrats, employed to monitor its expenditure. Kiro points out that the changes outlined by Joyce are simply a catch-up mechanism for years of neglecting health and education services, which has left New Zealand with one of the highest gaps between rich and poor in the developed world.

None of the changes outlined in the Budget are scheduled to take effect until April 2018. So, really, in presenting this budget the government was not giving us a lolly scramble, just the promise of one if we are well-behaved. Our government has ignored the possibility of a living wage (as distinct from a minimum wage). It shows no interest in repairing the damage caused by environmental degradation. Even the pre-Budget announcement of more money for the Department of Conservation was disappointing — the additional funds are targeted not towards our environment and natural resources but to cope with growing tourist and visitor numbers. There is no clear target or strategy for responding to the child poverty crisis facing the country. There is no real intention of addressing the housing crisis and, as an angry Phil Goff noted, nothing to abate Auckland's growing infrastructure and transport problems.

Stephen Joyce unsuccessfully managed National's election in Northland in 2015. Bribes were a big part of that election campaign — ten bridges, no less. This Budget is also about bribes although no bribe money will be paid out until after the election. Let's hope the New Zealand public is as smart as the people of Northland were in 2015. ■

Cartoon by Malcolm Evans

www.evanscartoons.com

A Preferential Option FOR THE POOR

SUSAN SMITH outlines the Church's preferential option for the poor with a particular focus on those struggling under dehumanising poverty and oppression.

In 2013 Pope Francis stated that "without the preferential option for the poor, the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, par 199). His words echoed a radical theological insight first articulated in 1968 by Pedro Arrupe, Jesuit Superior General. The meaning of "preferential option for the poor" was to be teased out in the years that followed Vatican Council II.

Focus to Include Justice

The Church has always demonstrated a strong commitment to the poor through its charitable works, but Vatican II's *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, and the 1971 Synod of Bishops' statement, *Justice in the World (JW)*, asked Catholics to complement traditional works of charity with works of justice. The Bishops stated that "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation" (*JW* par 6).

In particular, the Bishops recognised that the appalling situation of so many economically and politically disenfranchised demanded a discerning of the signs of the times.

Where should the institutional Church and individuals direct their energies in the face of overwhelming poverty? The answer was that Christians were called to care for all people but by preference they were to choose solidarity with the poor in their struggle for justice.

Liberation Theology Emerges

We cannot underestimate the importance of liberation theology from the late 1960s onwards in exploring the meaning of a preferential option for the poor. Nor should we overlook liberation theology's emphasis on social analysis methodologies for identifying mission priorities.

Social analysis was a tool that allowed oppressed communities to identify the cause of their problems, so that work for liberation would bring about societal change, not simply band-aid responses to immediate crises. However, Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI all registered unease at using social analysis because of its presumed reliance on Marxist class ideologies.

Option for Poor Expanded

During the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict, a preferential option for the poor became much more inclusive. While it still included the economically oppressed, it also evolved to include unborn children, persons with disabilities, the elderly and the terminally ill.

Of course while it is the

responsibility of the Church to support all such peoples in their vulnerabilities, the papal widening of what was understood by "option for the poor" weakened the focus on being in solidarity with those struggling to move beyond lives of dehumanising poverty and oppression.

Social Analysis Taught

By the mid-1970s, Christchurch diocesan priest, John Curnow, had introduced social analysis to significant numbers of Māori and Pākehā. Tariana Turia, co-founder of the Māori Party, could say: "I remember in the 70s and 80s, two community champions who had a profound influence on my thinking — the late Father John Curnow, from the Catholic Commission for Evangelisation, Justice and Peace, and Fernando Yusingco who was a Filipino community development worker."

But how did social analysis touch the lives of those of us who were not Māori? How did it affect the average, white middle-class Catholic, influenced by the teachings of Vatican II, particularly by *Gaudium et Spes*, by the 1971 Synod of Bishops' *Justice in the World* and by the challenging encyclicals of Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975)?

For many of us, social analysis touched our lives through workshops run by Fr Curnow. John organised these for many different groups — Catholic Sisters, peace activists, feminists, Māori, social justice groups, groups focused on colonies struggling against enormous odds to gain political independence such as the then New Hebrides, East Timor, or groups working with anti-Marcos groups in the Philippines — and the workshops were held across New Zealand.

God Has Preferential Love of the Poor

What helped me to appreciate what an option for the poor meant came through re-reading the biblical texts from the position of "the other".

What were we to make of Yahweh's words to Israel: "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:7-8).

God's preferential, not exclusive, love of an oppressed people is abundantly demonstrated. God was not on about upping the benefit by a few dollars a week. God was on about bringing Israel to a good and broad land.

Christians are called to care for all people but by preference they are to choose solidarity with the poor in their struggle for justice.

Jesus Makes an Option for the Poor

I was even more struck by a careful reading of the Gospels. Jesus was a village artisan; he chose four fishermen who left their boats and servants to follow him. In other words, Jesus did not belong to the poorest sectors of Palestinian society. Although he said that the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head (Mt 8:20), and although he exhorted the rich ruler to leave all his wealth behind (Lk 18:18-23), it is important to note that Jesus does not praise poverty as such. Instead, he is concerned to help the poor; he feeds the hungry, restores sight to the blind, speech to the dumb and restores people to life. In this way he announces the reign of God and fulfils the messianic prophecies of Isaiah who proclaimed that the Messiah has come to bring good news to the poor (Is 61:1, see also Lk 4:18).

What a thoughtful reading of the Gospels reveals time and time again is that Jesus of Nazareth, who came from what we today might call, the "lower middle class", reached out in compassion and mercy to those who were further down the socio-economic ladder. But, just as importantly, Jesus denounced those above him on the social pyramid — for the higher up were responsible for the sufferings of those down below. The Gospels depict Jesus confronting scribes and Pharisees during his Galilean ministry — when he reaches Jerusalem, he denounces those controlling temple life. His prophetic denunciation of Jewish religious leaders meant that they complained to Pilate who ordered the execution and death of Jesus.

In the Gospels we see Jesus consciously making an option to come to the rescue of the poor and marginalised in Jewish society. At the same time we see him denouncing those political and religious leaders, so often responsible for the oppressive situations in which others find themselves.

Our Option for the Poor

In contemporary New Zealand, the gap between rich and poor is widening. For example, the CEO of one of our biggest retailing stores earns a base annual salary of $1.4 million, plus a possible bonus of $700,000, while a shop assistant might earn $35,212 in a year. Since 1997, CEOs' incomes have registered an increase of 228 per cent, or an annual 7 per cent increase. The wealthiest 10 per cent own nearly a fifth of the country's net worth, while the poorest half of the country has less than 5 per cent (*NZ Listener*, April 29-May 5, 2017).

Catholics such as those who read and appreciate *Tui Motu* have a real responsibility to make a preferential option for the poor. It will require us to reach out in compassionate love to those more vulnerable than us, and challenge those higher up the social ladder who benefit from the inequity of existing financial and political structures. We are called to bring good news to the poor by being in solidarity with them as they struggle against injustices. ■

Painting: *Hapag Ng Pag-Asa (Table of Hope)* by Joey Velasco (1967-2010) © Used with permission of Queeny Velasco and the Joey Velasco Foundation. www.joeyvelascofoundation.wordpress.com

Susan Smith RNDM lives out of Whangarei where she is involved in her local landcare group, in gardening, researching and writing. Susan likes walking, listening to music and reading.

the other has a face

KENNEDY WARNE **claims that facing the other is the challenge of our times.**

On 1 May 1517 — 500 years to the day that I am writing these words — an event with distinctly modern resonance took place in London: a riot broke out over immigration.

A fortnight earlier, on Easter Tuesday, a preacher had delivered an inflammatory address blaming immigrants for eating the bread of "poor fatherless children", stealing jobs from English artisans and taking business from English merchants. He called on his listeners to "cherish and defend themselves, and to hurt and grieve aliens" for the good of the country.

On the night before May Day, a mob of 1,000 young men, mostly apprentices, did just that — rampaging through the city, sacking the homes and pillaging the businesses of Dutch, German, French, Spanish and Italian immigrants.

Although the mayhem lasted only a few hours, the event has entered the British cultural lexicon as "Evil May Day".

I knew nothing of it until it surfaced on social media at the time of the Brexit referendum, when subtle and overt anti-immigrant rhetoric was rife. In particular, what drew my attention was a blistering soliloquy believed to have been penned by Shakespeare for a play called *Sir Thomas More*. The soliloquy exposes the moral bankruptcy of those who railed against immigrants (referred to as "strangers") in the 1500s — but applies just as accurately to those who vilify immigrants today.

Thomas More was an under-sheriff of London at the time. He confronted rioters near St Paul's Cathedral and asked what they wanted. "The removing of strangers," came the defiant reply.

More, through Shakespeare's brilliance, asked the rioters to imagine a scene of "wretched strangers, their babies at their backs, with their poor luggage, plodding to the ports and coasts for transportation" while they themselves relaxed in their self-righteous entitlement.

Now imagine if the tables were turned, he told the crowd. Any of them, forced by circumstances, might find themselves seeking refuge in another country. Would they be pleased to be denied an abode on earth? To be spurned like dogs? "This is the strangers' case, and this your mountainish inhumanity," he thundered.

Five centuries have not laid low inhumanity's mountain. If anything, it is growing higher in some countries. In the UK and USA, anti-immigrant sentiment is thriving — for all the reasons listed in Shakespeare's day.

Who Calls Us to Account Now?

Who are this century's Thomas Mores? Who speaks for the "wretched strangers" on our screens and in our midst?

One of them is surely Pope Francis. From the beginning of his

Kennedy Warne, founding editor of *New Zealand Geographic* magazine, continues to write for that and *National Geographic*.

pontificate, Francis has consistently condemned the global "economy of exclusion and inequality" that drives human displacement. And he has been a constant defender of the displaced — "the long file of women, men and children fleeing war and poverty, seeking only a future for themselves and their loved ones."

Francis was criticised recently for comparing European migrant and refugee holding centres to Jewish concentration camps. Those camps, said critics, were such a singular atrocity that any comparison is an insult to the memory of those who survived or died. But others countered that the inhumanity of refugee camps — and the broader calamity of displaced people — is so severe that a jarring jolt to the consciousness is needed to waken the sedated souls of the privileged.

For Francis, the greater danger is not misrepresenting history but failing to act in the present. We face the continual risk, he says, of becoming "desensitised to the world around us." Desensitised, especially, to immigrants, minorities, the marginalised, the "other".

"The other is not a statistic or a number," he told an audience of young people in April during a TED talk. "The other has a face."

The other has a face — here is a message to confront the slogans of populist prejudice.

Respond to the Face of the Other

The face of the other was the great subject of 20th-century Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who taught that the other is the centre of the ethical life. Never is the other generic — nameless bodies walking with their meagre possessions along endless roads. The other has a name, and a face, and that face makes a claim on me.

"I owe the Other everything, the Other owes me nothing," wrote Levinas in *Difficult Freedom*. "The trace of the Other is the heavy shadow of God."

Levinas said our duty to the other is infinite and inexhaustible. A "difficult freedom" indeed, and too difficult for most. Much easier to deny the claim of the other, choosing instead the pseudo-freedom of self-regard. For Levinas — for the Pope, too, I suspect — such a freedom is an ethical and spiritual prison.

How do we learn to encounter the other? Would it help to translate Jesus' second commandment as "love the other as yourself"? For who is my neighbour but the despised foreigner — the Samaritan — the one who is not of my tribe, not of my religion, not of my culture, but who, in fact, saves me?

To the rabble on May Day, Thomas More counselled:

"Wash your foul minds with tears,
and those same hands,
That you like rebels lift against the peace,
Lift up for peace, and your unreverent knees,
Make them your feet."

What an image — making our bent knees our feet in the long march towards justice.

Refusing to look away must also play a part. Poets can help with this, taking the imagery of tragedy and shaping it into narratives of encounter. I think of a 2017 poem by Ohio poet Maggie Smith, whose work has been included in anthologies of protest poetry published in response to the election of Donald Trump (a man who compares immigrants to snakes).

In *Small Shoes*, Smith links stars in the heavens to migrants in leaky boats. She is thinking of the famous 2015 photograph of the little Syrian refugee boy lying at the water's edge. "There are fewer stars now than when I was a child," Smith writes. Some of them are missing. Some of them, she says, are "lying in the sand face-down, wearing small shoes."

"Is it not a crime unless we call it a crime?" Smith asks. She helps us name the crime and face its victims.

Small Shoes

If there are fewer stars now
than when I was a child,

I can't say
which are missing,
who was the last to see them.

Is it not a crime
unless we call it a crime?

It is difficult to document
a disappearance,
a boat full of stars

capsized.
Stars lying in the sand

face-down,
wearing small shoes.
Add that to the report:

some of the stars washed up
in small shoes.

—Maggie Smith

Solidarity Is Crucial

Solidarity with victims is one of Francis's favourite themes. He sees solidarity as "the most effective antidote to modern forms of populism".

Solidarity also played a part in the aftermath of Evil May Day. Of the thousand or so who rioted, 17 were executed for treason and a further 300 imprisoned. These 300 might have met the same fate had not the Queen of England, Catherine of Aragon, interceded on their behalf. She pleaded with her husband, Henry VIII, to spare the rioters' lives for the sake of their wives and children. The king acquiesced and set them free. Even in the context of a volatile political moment, the face of innocent suffering called forth pity and pardon. That the rioters were themselves perpetrators of inhumanity did not invalidate their own humanity — a point worth considering in our increasingly partisan social and political climate.

God help us see that the other — whichever side he or she is on — is the face of the divine. ■

HEAR THE CRY OF THE POOR

HELEN CAUGHLEY speaks of feeling the situation of the other "in our skin" which helps to make the cause of poor people our own cause.

The Hollies 1969 hit, *He Ain't Heavy, He´s My Brother* is a song that tugs at the heartstrings of listeners. It awakens our social consciousness just that little bit more — a consciousness fed, I believe, by the inner yearning of a love so deep that it doesn´t count the cost. An "option for the poor" is essentially a choice to love and be loved radically. It's a choice of life for all.

Here, where I live among the people in the *favela* of Nova Esperança in Brazil, I've discovered that the term "poor" has lost the sense of definition. I have witnessed our people weep as they watch the starving of Somalia because they too have known the cruelty of hunger. I've seen their helplessness and confusion as the enormity of corruption is revealed in political leaders. And I've felt their genuine concern when another earthquake hits New Zealand. I've found that my people have become their people and while poverty may be a circumstance in which we live here, relationships are more important.

Poverty Matters for Social Justice

The concept of an "option for the poor", though not a new concept, came into sharp focus as a principle of social justice after Vatican Council II. From the time of Constantine the Church has struggled between the reign of God and the reign of the Church. We had become a triumphant Church with a "them-versus-us" mentality. Pope John XXIII, the son of Italian sharecroppers, had the wisdom to open wide the doors and windows to reform in the form of the Vatican Council II. As the deliberations started echoing around the globe, the Latin American Bishops' Conference spearheaded "liberation theology" — a theology which recognises that God wants all people to be freed of physical poverty and political oppression. It speaks of God having a preferential option for the liberation of all those burdened by systemic poverty. The documents of the *Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano* (*CELAM*) from Medellin (1968) to Aparecida (2007) outline liberation theology as a gospel way of life for Christians. Since then other forms of liberation theology have developed in other parts of the world — feminist, womanist, black and Asian. All aim to articulate the gospel of God's liberation from the perspective of poor people.

Liberation Recognises Human Dignity

We have the saying that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link and when we recognise ourselves as part of humanity then all of humanity becomes our concern — we work for the common good. Jesus named this when he said: "Love one another as I have loved you." It is interesting, then, to note who it was that asked Jesus: "Who is the other?" It was the Pharisee, the control freak, the one imprisoned by rules and regulations, who was sure of the limits and found security within them.

I think it is essential to realise our own poverty before we can truly reach out to help others, or we risk being patronising or condescending. This is true for the individual and for institutions.

When we risk encountering the other not as "other" but as an extension of ourselves and our needs, we dare to step beyond our comfort zones. It stretches our worldview to recognise ourselves as one with all humanity. We learn to live as gracious recipients of the One who calls us all into being and communion. We are nudged from the comfort of control.

I was struck recently by a saying on a card a friend sent from India: "The salvation of the individual lies in their universalising themselves and this is the lesson which LIFE tries always to teach us." It's a call to melt the artificial boundaries we build and allow ourselves to be caught up in the Divine interplay of life. It calls for a trust in Love; to become recipients, open to Love's transformative power.

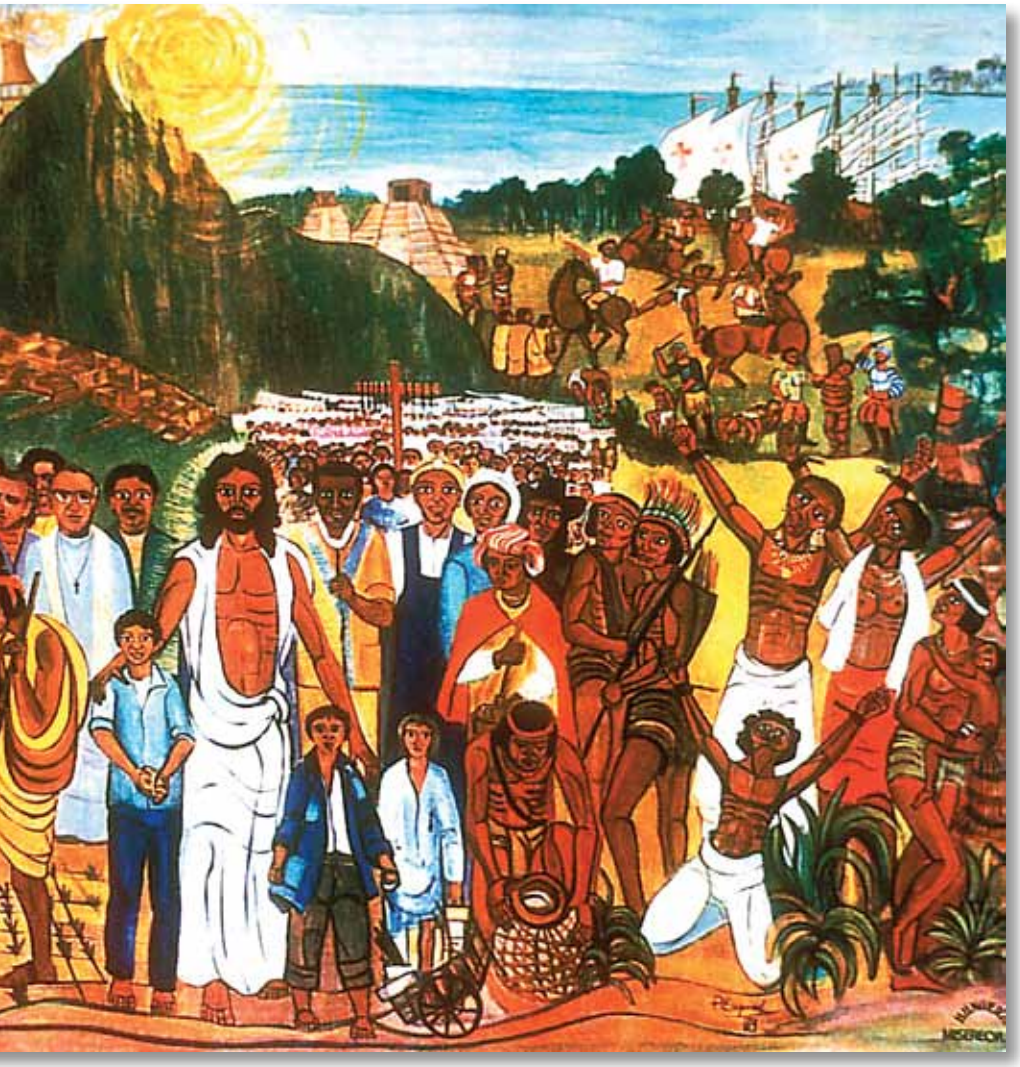
God's Option for Liberation

When I hear the well-known hymn, *The Lord hears the cry of the poor, blessed be the Lord*, I always want to sing: "The cry of the poor is that of God, blessed be the one who hears." God yearns to announce God´s being in all that IS, a yearning etched into humanity´s DNA.

I wonder if we can hear the cry of God in poor people amid the incessant demands that seem to muffle God´s weeping and instead comfort our complacency.

We can substitute God for an idol but such a god gives us the false comfort of indifference. And we know that indifference, not hate, is the opposite of love. God weeps in the eyes of the poor who look on in bewilderment at our delusion.

Our present Pope was raised in Argentina where the cry of the poor was the background noise of his everyday life. Pope Francis has kept promoting the cause of the poor as a gospel message, rocking us from our liturgical lullaby and sending us into the highways and byways to become the Eucharist we celebrate. And Francis has encountered the resistance of some comfortable in their powerful positions and unwilling yet to be converted.



Solidarity with Poor People

In Brazil we have a saying, "*sentir na pele*", which means to feel in our skin, not just to know in our head but to feel in our very being. This is what happens when we make the cause of the other our own cause.

At times of national disasters, earthquakes and terrorist bombings in otherwise peaceful countries, we experience solidarity in our outcry at the tragedy, a huge pull of collective energy to address the immediate needs, and a synergy that sweeps everyone up enabling them to go beyond our normal limits and reach out to those who need our help. People open their doors and hearts and a sense of pride grows from being part of the solution. This is the type of neighbourly-feeling we need to practise until an option for the poor is no longer just an option, but instead a habitual, reflexive response to suffering.

It is the shared experience that enables each of us to "feel in our skin" the pain and heartache or the joy and happiness of the other. Our challenge often lies in keeping ourselves open to the sharing of our common humanity — when we are so skilled at developing techniques to distance ourselves from our commonality. We are often slow to be as Pope Francis describes "pastors who smell like their sheep," but it is important for us to engage tenderly in our world.

I remember the impact Alex Haley's book *Roots* had on me. Haley wrote of the slaves as real people with their own hopes, dreams and desires. They had stepped beyond the boundary of their collective term, "slaves", to become people just like me. The horror of their experiences struck home. Haley's description of the governance system that dehumanised these people opened me to critical analysis. And now I see how language and the use of collective nouns (like "slaves") labels people and robs them of humanity. Just think how referring to "the poor" makes these people sound — as if they are a little less than the rest of us.

The call of that Hollies' song is as strong now as it was half a century ago, when it was first heard. The challenge is to respond to the call, to fell the wall between us and them, and trust in Love.

The cry of poor people and Earth is that of God, blessed be we who hear. ■

Painting: *Fifteenth Station* by Adolfo Perez Esquivel © Used with permission

Helen Caughley RSJ grew up in Christchurch, taught secondary school in New Zealand and has lived in Salvador, Brazil for about 15 years.

Not Poor . . . MADE POOR

ADRIENNE GALLIE warns that high interest, short-term loan companies with lax lending criteria are pushing families into excessive debt.

In 2014, HSBC Chief Economist, Paul Bloxham, coined the phrase "rock star economy" to describe New Zealand's strong performance in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). But how are ordinary New Zealanders actually faring today? Jane Kelsey shed light on the question in 2015 with a sound analysis of Aotearoa New Zealand's economy in her book *The FIRE Economy – New Zealand's Reckoning*. The acronym FIRE refers to the rise in influence of Finance, Insurance and Real Estate on our Economic life. Also in 2015, a concerted campaign by high profile community groups, submissions from the public and members' bills in parliament, led to new lending and borrowing principles and amendments to the Credit Contract and Consumer Finance Act (CCFCA) — increasing consumer protection.

Interest Rates a Problem

Among these submissions were calls for the Government to regulate interest rates. These calls came from those whose work involves supporting people through financial difficulty — from people who have witnessed first-hand the damaging effects usury has on the lives of New Zealanders.

But the call was, and continues to be, rejected and remains the elephant in the room as the "free market" runs amok. The sections on *Consumer Debt*, *Loan Sharks and Regulating Usury* in Kelsey's book make sobering reading and mirror what I observe today in my budgeting ministry in South and East Auckland. With the exception of one statistic where Kelsey highlights interest rates of 400 per cent on short term loans, recent loan contracts have brazenly displayed 600, 700 and 803 per cent interest per annum! How much is too much?

Adrienne Gallie RSJ has a growing interest in exploring different types of economies to bridge widening inequality in Aotearoa NZ.

Change to Budgeting Services

As part of sweeping reviews within the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), a new approach to the delivery of budgeting services was launched in November 2016. The Strengthening Financial Capability (SFC) process has become a key strategy in a renewed attempt to alleviate poverty and bring more financial security into families' lives. Coupled with the sharing of individual client data across multiple organisations (though this is not without privacy concerns and has been dropped until a secure system for storing data is established), the intention is to connect families and individuals with the services that best meet their needs.

The style of support offered is now less directive than in the past and more in line with mentoring and coaching people as they navigate an increasingly complex economic life. The SFC process includes a tool, a Financial Plan of Action (FPoA), to help families articulate their own goals and aspirations, look at their reality, discover the options available to them and identify strengths in themselves for moving ahead one step at a time. The tool aims to create a financial plan suited to each unique situation. It provides a good framework for people to set aside immediate concerns, allowing them to imagine and share in a non-judgemental and compassionate setting, how they want their lives to be.

The Spectre of Debt

Coming from a multitude of cultures, creeds and income streams, the people I see, while often prompted by a crisis, have one thing in common: an excessive debt burden.

Some, considering themselves middle class, simply don't see themselves as "poor", even when they are presented with a budget deficit of $200-$300 per week. Instead they think that everything is just so expensive.

In May I attended a Community Credit Forum in Auckland hosted by the Commerce Commission. Of particular concern was the proliferation of high interest short-term lenders (particularly in geographical areas already facing economic hardship) and the lax practices around affordability criteria. As the agency responsible for enforcing the Credit Contracts and Consumer Finance Act (CCCFA), the Commerce Commission has in the past few years successfully prosecuted mobile truck traders and finance companies who have failed to meet their obligations under the Act.

The new SFC process and the successes of the Commerce Commission around consumer protection are positive steps from both a borrowing and lending point of view. But it is not enough, and the issue of a cap on interest rates urgently needs to be revisited.

Accumulation of Debt

While the outrageous interest rates I mentioned earlier are designed for small, short-term lending, the interest accumulates daily and can balloon over a short period of time. Due to the ease of borrowing, these loans are picked up in times of desperation by beneficiaries and wage earners alike — borrowers who can very easily default if money cannot be found to repay the debt over a few weeks. Often more borrowing is sought from other lenders to pay off the loans that fall due.

Finance company contracts for longer terms are regularly set at between 29.95 and 40 per cent. Consumer items that are not paid for with cash or credit are transferred to a finance company which then issues a line of credit that is available while the

item is being paid off and afterwards — creating a never-ending debt.

People often have several of these loans running at the same time. The loans are impossible to maintain in the first instance and produce devastating effects if an unexpected health incident or redundancy occurs.

Encouraging More Debt

Other disturbing trends are also emerging: the use of unsolicited email offers to "top-up" existing loans without rechecking the financial status of the family or individual concerned; higher amounts of money being offered by finance companies than is being requested; and banks and finance companies encouraging borrowers to apply for KiwiSaver Hardship withdrawals to service or pay down debts. And the voluntary nature of payment protection plans (often with limited cover) is not clearly understood — these plans attract interest over the term of the loan.

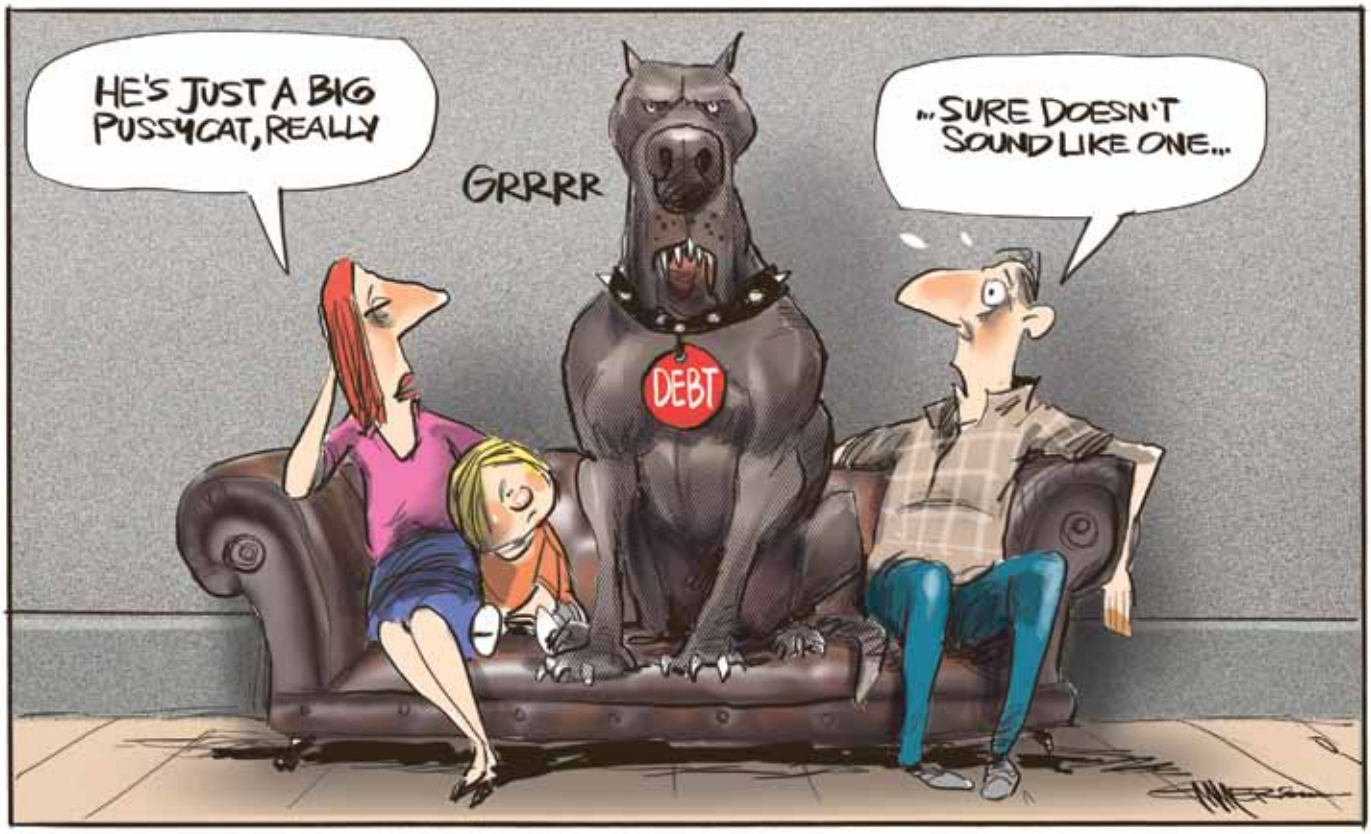
The new Peer to Peer (P2P) lending market is also raising concern. The 2016 *Listener* article "Hey, Big Lender" describes the gulf between what this new platform claims to offer to borrowers and the reality — which is characterised by a lack of rigour and poor practice. The author noted the ease of applying for these loans: "they don't have to traipse to an office with a truckload of documentation to get a loan. The platforms accept scanned documents, hold interviews via Skype and draw on web-based data to make risk assessments." One P2P lender has already been fined by the Commerce Commission.

The *No Interest Loans Scheme* and the *Step-Up Loan* offered through community and Church groups are great initiatives but the strict criteria (to satisfy the banks underwriting them), the paperwork involved and the time processing the application can be obstacles. In other schemes eligibility is filtered through the requirement to have a history and ongoing relationship with a budgeting service, to be a low-income earner and to be seeking a relatively small loan.

Make Debt an Election Issue

An election year is a good time to scrutinise any unjust, unhealthy or unfair practices which are being embedded into society and becoming "normal". New Zealanders of all colours, creeds and income levels are suffering from the effects of usury. Yes, legislation already exists and responsible lending and borrowing criteria and consumer protection have been put in place. But New Zealand is out of sync with comparable countries by not legislating an upper limit of interest charged on loans. As a result rates are skyrocketing and the elephant settles in.

"Poverty is not natural, it is human-made, and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings." Nelson Mandela claimed this in 2005 in his address to the thousands-strong crowd in Trafalgar Square for the *Make Poverty History* campaign. Now, 12 years later, this begs a question of me — and I hope many others, too — as we respond to the Catholic Social Teaching of our preferential option for the poor. That question is: What action can I take right now to contribute to overcoming and eradicating debt-induced poverty in Aotearoa NZ? ■



THE VICIOUS BREED IN MOST NZ HOMES

Cartoon printed courtesy of Rod Emmerson and the *NZ Herald* (8 June 2016) ©

MOUNT TABOR
Community of Transformation

JUDITH WILLIAMS traces the evolvement of the Mount Tabor community in Auckland and its membership of the International Federation of L'Arche Communities.

For anyone travelling through Helensville, the sight of a small farm — really just a collection of buildings and an orchard — wouldn't normally warrant a second glance.

Helensville, on the northwest outskirts of Auckland City, is one of the less affluent of the rural townships surrounding Auckland. But it is blessed instead in the number of community and welfare enterprises it supports, and the strength of its ecumenical and charitable interactions.

One of the most closely integrated with local life, after four decades in the area, is Mount Tabor, a special community whose core members are intellectually disabled adults.

The community is today supported by trustees, neighbours, caregivers, friends and families, local churches and community organisations from a variety of beliefs and backgrounds.

Judith Williams is a journalist, smallholder and unofficial community worker. She is the social justice representative for the Warkworth-Puhoi Catholic parish.

The Mount Tabor ethos is rooted in the 1970s, a time when the Auckland Catholic Diocese was rich in lay and clerical personalities, many of whom are still celebrated today for their social justice work.

Some of these iconic figures, including Irene Hogan and Lorraine Popple (products of the Catholic Lay Training Centre established by Jocelyn Franklin), were encouraged by Fr Brian Arahill of St Patrick's Cathedral parish to establish a house to accommodate the homeless. Between them they had nursing, midwifery and teaching training, Volunteer Service Abroad and Catholic Volunteers experiences, and had belonged to meditation groups and the Catholic Worker Movement.

Influence of Jean Vanier

In 1977, French Canadian Jean Vanier, a Catholic layman, philosophy lecturer and 1964 founder of international L'Arche communities, visited New Zealand and encouraged Irene and Lorraine to advocate for and work with the intellectually disabled overseas. Inspired by the ideal of living, working and praying together like a family, in the spirit of the Gospels, particularly the Beatitudes, their Charter was eventually adopted as part of the trust deed of the later Mount Tabor communities.

But instead of following Vanier overseas, the two women asked themselves who such poor in New Zealand might be. They concluded they were those under the care of the Mental Health Act, who had no rights, who were forcibly medicated and sometimes mistreated, who were isolated and powerless.

First Community Started

In 1978, before the large-scale closure of pyschiatric facilities across the country, Lorraine, Irene and John Hill invited seven men and women from St John's Psychopaedic Hostel in Papatoetoe to share a rented villa with them in Grey Lynn.

To this day, all but one of the seven — Janet Quinn, Sandra Sturgess, Jane Hannam, Stuart

Leydon and Ian and Robin Sangster — are still living together in the house in Grey Lynn and expect to be able to do so for the rest of their lives. The other member, Sally McCormack, has died.

Ian Tells His Story

Lorraine has been helping Ian Sangster to write his life story, including coming to live in Helensville's Mount Tabor community.

"I was born in Taihape and I lived on my Dad's farm," Ian told Lorraine. "I had Mum and Dad and my three sisters and my big brother, Robin. Dad was a good worker on the farm. He took me to the Taihape races. I remember going to the beach — my last trip. It was two days before Mum drove me to St John's.

"Life was horrible after that. Robby was already at St John's. I don't know why Mum and Dad put us there. I was a teenager. Mum would visit once a year with my sisters on Christmas Day.

"The first people from St John's who came and stayed in the Mount Tabor Trust were Janet and Sally. I thought: 'I want to come too'. Next were Sandy and then Jane. I wanted to come straight away. Stuart and I came on the same day, on a Monday in 1979."

Community Homes Grow

The number of Grey Lynn residences increased and the Trust spread to West Auckland and Helensville, with the farmlet and community buildings on the edge of town, two Housing New Zealand residences, and the administration centre in the latter's main street. There is also a L'Arche community at Kapiti, Wellington.

"Mount Tabor wanted to be a sign of hope, seeking to respond to the distress of those who are too often rejected and to give them a valid place in society," say its founders.

"It aims to create a place of welcome, a community of faith and love, trusting in God, and seeking to be guided by God, its members living simply and discovering and living their spiritual life according to their particular faith and cultural traditions."

Affiliation to L'Arche

In 1986 Irene spent a year visiting L'Arche communities in England, Canada, India, Australia, Europe and North America. This was the beginning of a movement which in 2016, after a thorough discernment process involving all the New Zealand communities, saw the Trust finalise its decision to apply to become part of the International Federation of L'Arche Communities.

In June, current New Zealand Mount Tabor communities leader, Janine Felton, and Narelle (known as Nellie) Pemberton embarked on a wonderful journey together.

> *Mount Tabor wanted to be a sign of hope, seeking to respond to the distress of those who are too often rejected and to give them a valid place in society.*

Last year the Mount Tabor communities were accepted as probationary members of L'Arche International and two leaders were invited to the International Assembly in Belfast, June 2017. The Mount Tabor communities chose Nellie to accompany Janine.

Nellie Understands Community

Nellie came to Mount Tabor as a teenager through the L'Arche Faith and Life Movement. Recently, her community, family and friends celebrated together when Nellie and Richard Swingler pledged their commitment to each other as a couple.

Nellie trained in the gym to lose weight for the trip and rehearsed for her address of a small congregation at Mass — a public speaking opportunity organised by Irene's teacher sister, Doreen, also from Helensville.

"Why was Nellie chosen?" I asked Janine. "Nellie has a deep understanding of community," she replied. "She is a wonderful welcomer, networker and public speaker, she can sing and has matured in Mount Tabor communities."

Experiencing Mount Tabor

And what about the personal meaning of Janine's work? "It means to think about, hold in your heart and plan for around 80 people, the 32 core members and their carers. It is a calling to lead people in community as helper and facilitator through relationship problems and other difficult times.

"There is enormous joy and challenge in being a leader in such a community and the willingness to grow in relationships is extraordinary."

As I was winding up my time with Janine, two quite distressed people were bustled into her central Helensville office. Lorraine's lovely, white-bearded husband, Mike Popple, was as upset as Lisa, the former Mount Tabor resident he was bringing in with a splinter in her finger. They had been working out at the Mount Tabor farm, renovating a separate dwelling for an elderly core person.

As the splinter was carefully removed I watched this living example of all that Mount Tabor homes stand for in our often troubled country. The homes are places of peace warmed and surprised by grace — they are well named. In them adults with limited intellectual abilities, who, by the world's standards, might not always be honoured with the dignity they deserve, can live secure and fulfilled lives. I felt included and transformed in God's love shining through them. ■

A **HOME** FOR THE **HOMELESS**

IRENE ALEXANDER
tells of giving a home to Josef, an Iraqi Kurd student whose family had been taken by ISIS.

"Is not this the fast that I choose, to bring the homeless poor into your house?" (Is 58:6-7) God asks, through Isaiah, the prophet.

In July 2014, a friend told me about a student who had turned up in her office to ask for help. He was from northern Iraq and was in Australia for two years to complete his Masters degree. Suddenly his family in Iraq had gone missing and he was receiving no more scholarship money from his government.

Josef was so worried that he was struggling with his study. With the words "bring the homeless poor into your house" ringing in my heart, I invited him to stay with me. And so began two years of solidarity with one whose family was taken captive by ISIS.

For eight months we heard nothing. During that time he and I both moved into a small Christian community, where we prayed frequently for his family. At last they were ransomed, just before 300 of their fellow captives were killed. And then came the long months of fleeing their homeland and finding ways across Europe to new homes in countries that would take them in.

During that period, Josef wrote an assignment on people smuggling. "It's only illegal," he explained to me, "if the people smuggler does not keep the contract." How we prayed that the particular people smuggler, who was taking Josef's family member across Europe, would keep his end of the contract.

And how we rejoiced when Germany gave asylum. And, of course, we considered the thousands of dollars paid to the smuggler to be money well-spent, and prayed for another trustworthy smuggler for the next family member seeking safe passage.

It was around this time that there were many drownings in the Mediterranean from overloaded boats. Josef pleaded with his family: "Don't go by sea."

I cannot describe the privilege of identifying with the Other, of seeing the photos of refugees fleeing and knowing "my" family was somewhere in that throng. I cannot describe the relief and joy when, after many months, they finally made it to safety. But I also experienced shame that my country was not offering hospitality to those desperate for a safe home.

Over the years we lived together, Josef and I talked frequently about cultural differences — marriage, food, community, family, beliefs, meanings of dreams. But more often we found similarities in the shared human journey: love of family, desire for meaningful work, stories of a carefree childhood, hope for love and marriage, a God who cares for us in danger and everyday life.

Whenever we talked about God, it was clear that we were talking about the God — not "his God" or "my God". But one day I realised

Irene Alexander is a spiritual director and has a background in counselling and missions. She lectures in Australia and Asian universities and is a grandmother.

how Western our Christianity seems through Eastern eyes. A friend had accompanied us to Church, and after the service she turned to Josef and said, "I had quite an epiphany today. I realised that in sitting next to you I was sitting with someone who looked more like Jesus than anyone else in the church!"

Josef was nonplussed. "But Jesus was white!" he said. We couldn't persuade him otherwise.

"In all the pictures he's white!" he insisted. "Yes, that's because we paint the pictures." "But Mary — she was white, wasn't she?" "No, she was a Palestinian girl."

For all of us, the journey is to know this God who is Father to us all. My ancestors, like most of the populations of Australia and New Zealand, came by boat to find a new life in a new country. Like the children of Israel, I recall God's injunction to "give justice to the sojourner … you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt" (Deut 24: 17–18).

And so I remember that I have no more entitlement to live here than my brother from Kurdistan. ■

RECYCLE VEGETABLE SCRAPS

Last year Campion College, Gisborne, introduced "impact projects", where students work on projects that have real world, authentic and relevant learning contexts. A number of students developed their projects around social justice issues and environmental concerns, while others have increased their scientific knowledge, their knowledge of technology or developed their interest in the arts. The projects call for problem solving, communication and collaboration. The young people choose their own project, journal their progress and their learning as well as evaluate their final product. They also hold an exhibition for the wider community.

CODY ANDERSON **wrote to *Tui Motu* magazine about his project.**

At Campion College we do two projects a year that need to have a positive impact in our community. My project this semester is about growing vegetables from food scraps which can reduce food waste, help those in need and save people money by growing their own food. This is the process I used.

First, I chopped two inches off the bottom of a vegetable. Secondly, I put the bottom of the vegetable in water for three to five days to soak. And finally, I planted it and it started to grow.

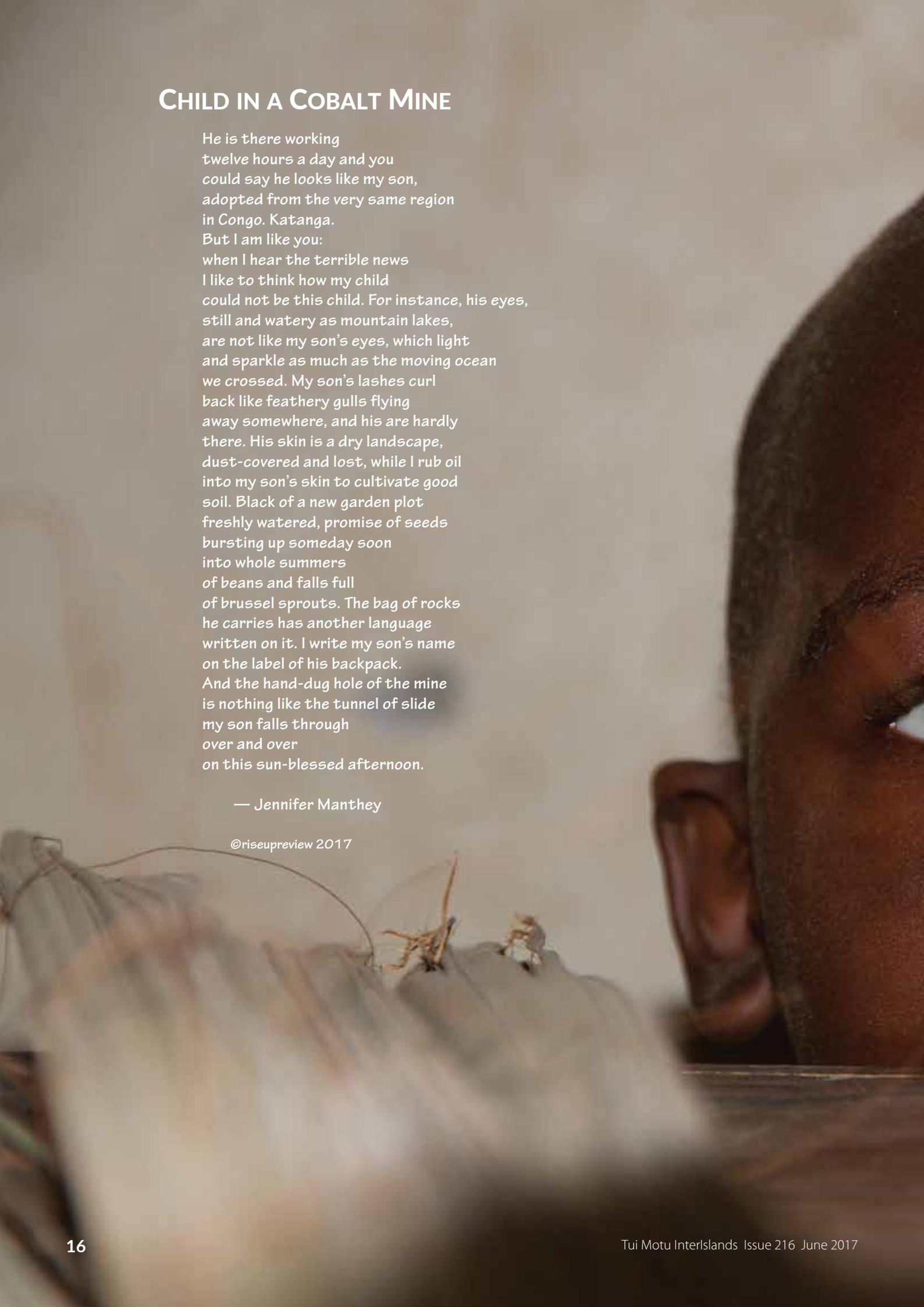
So far I've been successful with lettuce, spring onions, silver beet, garlic, carrots, spinach, red onion and mint. I haven't used fertiliser or rooting hormone. It has just been sun and water — pure photosynthesis.

This is how photosynthesis works. The sunlight beams on the plant and it gives it energy to grow. Once watered, the water goes down to the roots and the plant starts to sprout out from the soil. If plants or vegetables don't have sunlight it is like not giving them food or water and they will rot away and die.

I have loved doing this project and seeing what has grown. My vegetables are struggling a bit now in winter as there are fewer sunny days. The best growing seasons are autumn and spring because they have just enough sun and rain. Winter is too wet and cold and summer is too hot and dry. Things grow during these months but it is more tricky.

This isn't a new idea, however my project brings attention to a simple process that can reduce food waste and even help others. You learn from doing this growing and you can give away fresh healthy vegetables to people without, as well as save money for yourself and your family. I hope this gives you some inspiration. ■

Cody Anderson, 12, lives in Gisborne and is a competitive swimmer. His favourite subjects are cooking, maths, English and music.



Child in a Cobalt Mine

He is there working
twelve hours a day and you
could say he looks like my son,
adopted from the very same region
in Congo. Katanga.
But I am like you:
when I hear the terrible news
I like to think how my child
could not be this child. For instance, his eyes,
still and watery as mountain lakes,
are not like my son's eyes, which light
and sparkle as much as the moving ocean
we crossed. My son's lashes curl
back like feathery gulls flying
away somewhere, and his are hardly
there. His skin is a dry landscape,
dust-covered and lost, while I rub oil
into my son's skin to cultivate good
soil. Black of a new garden plot
freshly watered, promise of seeds
bursting up someday soon
into whole summers
of beans and falls full
of brussel sprouts. The bag of rocks
he carries has another language
written on it. I write my son's name
on the label of his backpack.
And the hand-dug hole of the mine
is nothing like the tunnel of slide
my son falls through
over and over
on this sun-blessed afternoon.

— Jennifer Manthey

HOLD FAST TO DREAMS

JOAN CHITTISTER writes of the new and disquieting amorality of US politics and urges citizens to protest the *status quo* for the sake of government and for the common good.

There's a pall hanging over the United States of America these days. And it's everywhere.

It colours every news article, of course.

But, it's not only the news that's been tainted by the non-majority election of a president and the appointment of an "alt-right" cabinet. It's on the comedy shows, too — an even more serious blow to the national psyche. Without comedy that has something more to laugh at than simply ridicule what is, where can the soul go to breathe again?

Worse, the depression infects our spiritual DNA, as well: What is truth anymore? What is fact now? When is the "news" really *news*? How can we determine the true from the false, the real from the fake, an authentic report from an adulterated facsimile? What happens to a democracy that cannot trust the integrity of its leaders, the objectivity of its media?

We walk through the world now looking over our shoulders, waiting for the next headline, the next investigation, the next breach of protocol on the slippery slope between democratic government and irresponsible governance.

So, should we just give in and let this runaway world run its course?

These are questions we never had to ask before. In today's political climate, they underlie the depression of the society.

But Victor E. Frankl in his classic, *Man's Search for Meaning*, reminds us: "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

It may be time to look at our own attitudes to discover what we ourselves are doing to cement this kind of social chaos and what we might need to do to reverse it.

Four attitudes, in particular, I think, chart the American journey away from the ideals of the founders and the common good to our present flirtation with pathological individualism.

Our attitudes toward politics, toward politicians, toward the purpose of government and toward moral memory as a dimension of political life will determine our common future.

Politics and Politicians

The current American attitude toward politicians in this country seems to be that the best way to deal with the problems of Washington is to elect candidates from "outside the Beltway", outside of politics. This laissez-faire philosophy of political life threatens to leave us with non-politicians who turn Congress and the presidency into an on-the-job learning experience, while time, wisdom and life-changing crises go by.

Maybe we should rethink the whole idea and start electing politicians to be politicians. They might know how to get bills through Congress that meet

the needs of all the people. They might even come to realize that compromise brings more unity than the desire for control ever will.

Or, as Herbert Hoover put it: "When we are sick, we want an uncommon doctor; when we have a construction job to do, we want an uncommon engineer, and when we are at war, we want an uncommon general. It is only when we get into politics that we are satisfied with the common man."

The very meaning of politics itself may be in danger. Where once politics was seen as "the art of the possible", it has become the gross art of the power grab. One extra congressional seat is enough now to smother the voice of the minority party. Party politics become more important than national politics, and half the country goes unrepresented as a result.

The Purpose of Government

Even a sense of the purpose of government is under fire and open to question now. At one time, the purpose of American government was seen to be a commitment to the common good, nobody excluded. Then, it became a commitment to party principles, all other principles in doubt. Now it is commitment to "America first", a blatant call for global narcissism. And that came in the face of 200 years of presidential inaugural addresses that pledged the United States to be the good Samaritan, the new Zion or a light to the nations.

A loose translation of "America first" now means all others shall be ignored or denied or bombed out of existence, if necessary, to achieve our own power and profits, our own goals and good.

And so, clean air, world health research, global cooperation and the preservation of the planet become suspect as we plan to go our own way for our own profit in a world where, metaphorically, "no [country] is an island".

Moral Memory in Political Life

Finally, the whole notion that morality is itself an aspect of good government has become laughable. Truly laughable. The stuff of late night comedy acts. Lying is now simply overlooked. The monarchial presidency — enthroned in its "alt-right" world — rules by executive order and personal pique. Spiritual integrity is forfeited for the sake of force, obscene wealth and American supremacy.

We have gone from government "of the people, by the people, for the people" to government "of the rich, by the rich, for the rich". And so, watching the American dream become an American nightmare for many, the classic American can-do attitude has soured a bit.

> ***As good citizens of the world, we must pledge ourselves to do what the humanity of the whole globe and all its peoples requires of us.***

Resist Becoming Passive

But without clear direction, high ideals and common commitment, who are we now and who are we becoming?

In such a John Wayne-style, gun-slinging world, Cabinet ministers are chosen for their lack of background in or even commitment to the agencies and areas they are deputed to lead. Instead, they threaten — or even promise — to overturn years of social growth and social-scientific progress. And as a result, social welfare, education, the environment, and subsidised housing projects are all in danger.

In a government where "America first" means "me first", the poor, the sick, the illiterate, the homeless — the marginalised citizens of America — are the shadow society of life. Yes. But these people are the unseen and unknown whose lives, in the end, will really define this country's standard of living, its social climate, its economic future and the quality of its soul for decades to come.

Of course, the temptation is to withdraw from it all. Yes, the challenge is to surrender spiritual tenderness in the face of such spiritual ruthlessness. Indeed, the delusion is that we can simply give up, turn our backs on the resistance, bury the "American dream".

The poet Langston Hughes confronts us with our cowardice. He writes:

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

The point is that we do not have the luxury of depression, of withdrawal or of surrender to our lesser selves as human beings. As long as these attitudes and acts are the mark of the new America, someone must hold fast to the dream, declare it, require it, demand it. And that's us.

We must join the groups who move in the direction we ourselves want this country to go. We must embrace again the inclusivity, the civility, the compassion and the intellectual competence that made the United States a model of a global world. And as good citizens of that world, we must pledge ourselves to do what the humanity of the whole globe and all its peoples requires of us.

Finally, we must support a public press that keeps the traditional moral compass of the nation clearly in sight; a beacon to steer by; the measure of a godly people.

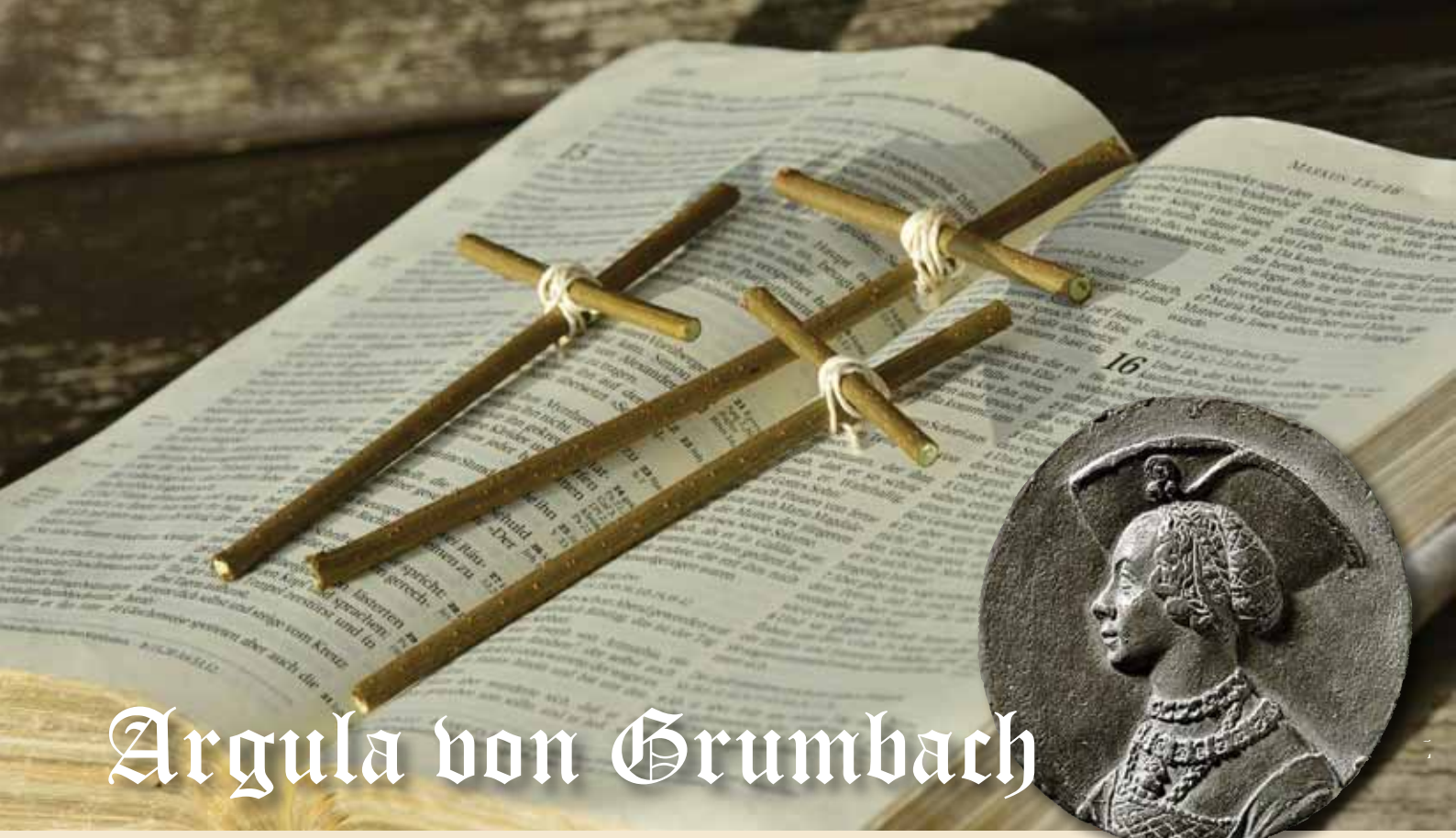
From where I stand, it is a moment that calls us all to the kind of public protest it will take to make America, America again. The ecological community, the social welfare community, the educational community and the political system need us as never before in our lifetime. Join something and make your voice heard.

As Dorothy Day is credited with saying, "No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do." ■

Reprinted with permission of Joan Chittister OSB from her online column for the *National Catholic Reporter* 5 June 2017 (joanchittister.org).

Illustration by Lilly Johnson ©

Joan Chittister, a Benedictine Sister, is a best-selling author and speaker on justice, peace, human rights, women's issues and contemporary spirituality.



Argula von Grumbach

PETER MATHESON **describes the story of Argula von Grumbach, Protestantism's first woman reformer.**

Don't be put off by the obscure name. Argeluse was one of the noble ladies of King Arthur's Round Table and our Bavarian noblewoman, Argula, was named after her. Argula von Grumbach (1492–ca 1554) grew up in a whirl of chivalric jousting and story-telling in the beautiful rolling countryside around the proud castle of her ancestors, the Ehrenfels, or "rock of honour", now an impressive ruin in the romantic little village of Beratzhausen. I've attended Mass in the lovely baroque church, there. On the western wall is an impressive monument to her grandfather, Johann von Stauff. History is palpable at every corner.

In the Otago University Library there's an illustrated page from the magnificent Koberger Bible, which was presented to Argula as a 10-year-old by her father, Bernhardin. It reminds us of the skill of early printers, and that German translations of the Bible circulated in Germany long before Luther appeared.

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

Early Life

Young Argula's university, so to speak, was the glittering Munich Court, where she learned to hold her own with the high and mighty of her world. Here, too, she became a superb wordsmith, as we will see. She was educated alongside the future princes of Bavaria.

In 1510 she married Fritz (as he was called) von Grumbach, and moved to the tiny village of Lenting, which has just commissioned a statue to her. These were rough, tough times. It wasn't a great match, but her parents had both died of the plague, and after civil war her once prestigious family was in financial toils. Her uncle, Jerome, was even beheaded for alleged treason — a put-up job! But she held her head high.

As a young mother of four she ran the household, got some order into the chaotic finances, and rode side-saddle around the distant estates of her incompetent husband, organising the spring sowing and the autumn harvest and wine-making. We have fascinating lists of the foods and spices and clothes she ordered for the kitchen and household.

She also built up an impressive network of friends, many of them women. She was to need that support.

Influenced by Reformers

In the early 1520s she became part of a little group of lay people and nuns who began sharing and reading Luther's pamphlets. Her brothers, too, had links with the Saxon court and with a Lutheran noble Bohemian family. The University of Ingolstadt, on the Danube, was just two hours walk from her little village of Lenting. (I know this, because I've walked there through the grain fields.) Argula knew a young student at the University who had been to Wittenberg. He was arrested by the University authorities for spreading Lutheran ideas and then tried for heresy. Under huge pressure, he recanted. That was nothing very unusual or surprising.

What was utterly surprising was Argula's reaction. She was so outraged at this repression — "shaking in my

whole body", as she put it — that she, a mere woman, challenged the Ingolstadt professors to a public debate about the legitimacy of their actions.

"I have no Latin," she wrote, "but you have German." Did Jesus go about persecuting those who disagreed with him, she asked? Of course, women at this time had no access at all to universities — and far less the right to debate with learned professors.

Taking a Courageous Stand

Within a few months her biblically-based protest letter had appeared in print in 17 editions, being reprinted up and down Germany. Uproar resulted. Her husband, a ducal administrator, was dismissed from office. Argula herself was threatened with being walled up in a tower, or having her fingers chopped off — even with death.

But many hailed her as a prophetic figure. "This is scarcely credible," one supporter wrote, "something very rare for the female sex, and completely unheard of in our times." Six other writings flowed from her pen within a year, calling for reform not only of the Church, but of the legal system, of education and of the loose sexual mores of the nobility.

Argula Rediscovered

I got onto Argula by accident. While researching for something different, I stumbled on a poem she wrote to refute lewd attacks on her, and was so fascinated that I dropped everything else and eventually published a translation of all of her writings. Later I produced a critical edition of her works and wrote biographies of her in English and German, based on an usually rich collection of her family papers.

My personal Bible is dotted with marks to show her countless quotations from the prophets and the Gospels. I now read the Scriptures, so to speak, with her eyes.

I guess what fascinated me initially was Argula's courage. "I am compelled," she said, *gezwungen*, to speak up. As a baptised Christian she felt she had no choice. She had to confess her faith, whatever the cost. "I cannot and I will not cease to speak at home and in the street."

But I soon noticed that she read the Bible in a new way, with a woman's eye, and obviously her insight fascinated the thousands of readers who read her little pamphlets. Her theological mentor, Osiander, also published a writing of the Abbess, Hildegard of Bingen. Argula became a vocal advocate of reform in the German parliaments, or Reichstage, in Nuremberg and then in the famous gathering in Augsburg in 1530.

This was quite extraordinary, of course, at a time when women were supposed to keep to their house and kitchen. Luther himself met Argula and wrote a personal dedication of his little printed book of prayers to her. Finding this copy and holding it in my hands was one of my greatest thrills as a historian.

Living With Sorrow

Increasingly, though, I became aware of the tragic dimensions in Argula's life. Her husband, Fritz, died young and her second husband died shortly after their marriage in Prague. She fought a losing battle against the hard-drinking and violent mores of the German nobility at the time.

Despite getting the best possible teachers for her children, including her daughter, Apollonia, her eldest son got into a feud and died young; her second son was murdered; and Apollonia died early too. There is a moving letter about Apollonia's lengthy illness. Of her four children only Gottfried survived her.

My wonderful Catholic colleague in Bavaria, Elisabeth Spitzenberger, has discovered recently in the archives heart-rending material about the family quarrels (nothing to do with religion) which forced Argula in her extreme old age, already mortally ill, out of her family home. It was a brutal time.

Remembering Argula Today

Argula's, then, is no glossy success story. Yet her memory was preserved by a thin line of witnesses down the centuries, and now schools and hostels are named after her. There is even an Argula von Grumbach bicycle tour around the little villages in which she lived.

She is honoured not only for her courage, but for her critique of censorship and for her biblical insight. As she wrote: "Ah, but what a joy it is when the Spirit of God teaches us and gives us understanding, flitting from one text to the next." How astonished she would be that she is now remembered in distant New Zealand. ■

Medallion: Argula von Grumbach by Hans Schwarz (www.heiligenlexikon.de/BiographienA/Argula_von_Grumbach.html) [Wikimedia]

An Ecological Reading of Matthew's Gospel

Matthew 15: 21 Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. 22 Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting: "Have mercy on me, *Kyrios*, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." 23 But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying: "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." 24 He answered: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 But she came and knelt before him, saying: "*Kyrios*, help me." 26 He answered: "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 27 She said: "Yes, *Kyrios*, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered her: "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Painting: *The Canaanite Woman* by Limbourg Brothers [Wikiart]

In *TM* June 2015, we read the Markan story of a woman named according to her region, Syro-Phoenicia. This woman sought healing for her daughter who was described as "demon possessed" (*TM* Issue 194, June 2015: 20-21). Now we will read the parallel story in the Gospel of Matthew 15:21-28. We will find that the story has been developed significantly as it was told and re-told in the Matthean context.

Region of Tyre and Sidon

The first words of Matthew's story draw the reader into its groundedness in time and place, something we've come to expect in our ecological reading. The opening reference is vague and time and place merge: Jesus left "that place" (Mt 15:21). We need to go back in the text to discover "that place" was Gennesareth (Mt 14:34) where Jesus carried out his ministry of healing (Mt 14:35-36). However, the text quickly draws us towards a new destination, the region of Tyre and Sidon (Mt 15:21) where Jesus initially refuses to heal.

The reference to the "region" of these two major cities, Tyre and Sidon, along the western seaboard from Galilee, evokes not only materiality but also the tense socio-economic and political interrelationships between the regions.

For instance, one of Tyre's staple and wealth-producing industries was the production of the precious purple dye. But, as an island city it needed its own hinterland as well that of its most immediate neighbour, Galilee, to supply its inhabitants with food and bread. In Acts 12:20 we find evidence of Tyre's dependence on Galilee and the conflict it generated. So, complex and tensive material, social and political relationships underlie the brief reference in the opening verse of this text of Jesus going *toward*, rather than *into* the region of Tyre and Sidon.

Elaine Wainwright RSM is a biblical scholar and the Executive Director of Mission and Ministry for the Mercy Sisters in Australia and Papua New Guinea.

The Canaanite Woman

The ecological reader will be alert to the beginning words of the next verse, *kai idou*/pay attention or look (Mt 15:22). They draw our attention to a woman, designated as Canaanite, who was coming out of this region, rife withits ethnic and politico-economic tensions.

The name "Canaanite" has puzzled scholars as it seems more symbolic than descriptive, especially when we remember that in the Markan Gospel she is called "Greek, Syro-Phoenician by birth" (Mk 7:26). Her "Canaanite" title in Matthew evokes the ancient inhabitants of the Promised Land who were stripped of access by the Hebrews coming in from the desert. It constructs this woman similarly as being denied access to Israel's/Galilee's resources — as will be seen as the story unfolds.

Plea for Healing

The woman seeks healing for her daughter whose body has been possessed by a force or power that she names as demonic (Mt 15:22). We are not told how this possession manifests in the daughter's body. This can be obscured by the dominating verbal interchange between the woman (who is called Justa in later traditon), and Jesus.

However, the demon-possessed body of the daughter remains close to the surface of the text. As ecological readers we will notice, the corporeality imbedded in the woman's desire and the supplication for healing.

In Mt 15:24 we encounter the materiality of the other-than-human in the text when Jesus claims that he was sent only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel". This phrase occurs only twice in other parts of Scripture, in Psalm 119:176 and Jeremiah 50:6. It speaks of sheep, the most common other-than-human creatures in the agricultural life of the Jewish nation. It is the materiality, the corporeality of the straying sheep that Jesus calls upon to contrast his mission to the lost with the dynastic implications of the title "son of David" given him by the Canaanite woman.

The reference to the lost sheep could be seen or read simply as a literary cipher, but Donna Haraway provides insights into ways in which "the biological and literary or artistic come together with all of the force of lived reality". This is an area that invites further exploration by the ecological reader of biblical texts.

> *It was Justa's refusal to accept rejection by Jesus, the Galilean healer, that enabled healing to happen.*

Embodying Her Plea

Justa continues her agency (Mt 15:25), re-addressing her plea to Jesus. This time, she does not use a title for Jesus. She appeals simply: "Help me." She uses her body to strengthen her appeal by kneeling before Jesus, as did the leper and the ruler's daughter earlier in the Gospel (Mt 8:2; 9:18). She is embodying pleas for healing. Justa uses the language of her body to speak her desperate need.

Jesus' response — "It is not *kalon* (good or right) to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" — continues to intertwine the metaphorical and the material. Or, as in Haraway's words, the "biological and the literary or artistic" come together and the text moves between them.

Sharing Reversed and Extended

Jesus draws "the dogs" into the text to evoke those who ought not share the bread. Justa, however, reverses the function of the metaphor and does even more. Like Haraway, she evokes the "lived reality" of those dogs that found a place beneath the table. That reality was found recorded on a first-century stone of epigraphical remains.

Justa's reversal of Jesus' metaphoric use of bread and dogs functions in the text to reverse his response to her desperate plea for her daughter. First, Jesus affirms the faith that enabled Justa to see the possibility of reversal and to bring it to speech: "Even the dogs can eat the crumbs." And what she desires for her daughter that is also brought about — her daughter is healed instantly and her body is restored. It was Justa's refusal to accept rejection by Jesus, the Galilean healer within the web of borders and boundaries, that enabled healing to happen.

Reading Scripture Ecologically

To read biblical texts ecologically is to be attentive to the material, the metaphorical, the socio-political, the economic, the human, the holy and other forces that characterise the text and the world it encodes. It is to examine each of these forces in its integrity and then to trace the interrelationships between them. Once again it is to be caught up in habitat, the human, and the holy. ■

LISTEN AND HEAR

In her interpretation of the parable of the baker woman KATHLEEN RUSHTON alerts us to the twists hidden in Matthew's parables 13:1-52.

15th–17th Sundays of Ordinary Time 15, 23, 30 July

Jesus is recorded as uttering the words: "Those who have ears to hear, let them hear" a number of times. Nine variants of his appeal to our sense of hearing are laced through Matthew 13 and include Jesus' response to the disciples' question: "Why do you speak to them in parables?" Parables are an invitation to go beyond what seems, to ponder at length, to take further and to go deeper. An invitation. To whom?

Matthew says that Jesus sat beside the sea. Great crowds gathered. He got into a boat and from there he told the parable of the seeds and the soils to the crowds and the disciples (Mt 13:1-9). When he was alone with the disciples Jesus answered questions and explained the parable (Mt 13:10-23). Then, yet again, he "told the crowd all these things" in a series of parables beginning "the kingdom (*basileia*) of heaven is like" the wheat and the weeds, the mustard seed, and the yeast (Mt 13:24-43). The crowd leaves and Jesus returns to the house, explains the parable of the wheat and the weeds to the disciples before telling them three more parables: the treasure in a field, a pearl, and a dragnet cast into the sea (Mt 13:44-52).

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

Basileia of the Heavens/Skies

Only in Matthew do we find the phrase, the *basileia* of the heavens, which expresses God's vision for the earth and the universe. This vision is imaged in the first-century language of the *basileia* or empire.

The word for heavens is plural and has layers of meaning. When used in the phrase "earth and heaven" it can mean the sky above. Because so often "heaven" is understood apart from earth, Elaine Wainwright uses the phrase "the *basileia* of the heavens/skies" (*Tui Motu* Issue *212*, Feb 2017: 20-21; *TM* Issue 213, March 2017: 22-23). Such wording is inclusive of contemporary understandings of the universe of which the human community is a part.

Context of Hearing Parables

What is the immediate context of the seven parables of Matthew 13?

Matthew 11-12 tells of the failure of Jesus' mission. While the word was preached to all, a few came to believe in Jesus but the vast majority did not. Opportunity does not guarantee response. People are free to respond. The gospel has met and will meet a mixed response.

The parables about Jesus' ministry of proclaiming the *basileia* of the heavens in the here and now, draw on the everyday, earthy realities in which his listeners were immersed — a sower, seeds, soils, weeds, a farmer, a merchant, fishers, nets, a baker woman, yeast, bread, mustard seed and the hope of finding treasure or a pearl.

Jesus' parables are puzzling stories. Often they are not pleasant tales that reinforce the way things are. They can turn the world upside down. In these stories of earthy realities, there is usually an unexpected twist that invites us to imagine God and the *basileia* of the heavens in a radically different way. There are no neat answers. They are open-ended. They tease us into working out what the story means and what our response will be.

God's basileia, like yeast working in a hidden way, will pervade life. Life is not the same for those who encounter the basileia of the heavens. It is disruptive of and disturbing to the way things are.

Puzzling Comparisons

Let's look at "The *basileia* of the heavens is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

Jesus' hearers would have noticed several things that the modern ear won't detect. They would have been surprised that Jesus referred to yeast in a positive way. In other places in the Scriptures, yeast is used to refer to corruption and hypocrisy as when Jesus warns about the yeast of some Pharisees (Mt 16:6; 11-12). Luke speaks of the "leaven of Herod" (Lk 12:1). And instructions for the first Passover prescribe unleavened bread which became a sign of membership of God's holy people (Exodus 12:15-20). No grain offerings were to be made with leaven (Lev 2:11).

Greek writers, such as Plutarch, also refer to the leaven of corruption.

How, then, does Jesus invert these commonly held notions of holiness? What is the unexpected twist here? Has leaven now become the locus of the sacred for Jesus? Is the *basileia* of the heavens like dough, which has been tainted by a "corruptive yeast", as was the commonly held standard?

The story said the woman *hid* the yeast in the flour. "Mixed", used in translations, has the wrong connotation because the Greek means "hid" — the same word Jesus uses when thanking God "because you have hidden these things from the wise . . . revealed them to little ones" (Mt 11:25; 13:35, 44).

Something Hidden Becomes Great

The coming of the *basileia* of the heavens does not have spectacular, grand and public beginnings. A little can have a great effect, a transforming influence.

Three measures of flour is a huge amount — about 30 kilos — which would make a great many loaves of bread and feed about 100 people. What does this suggest about the abundance of God? Those who heard Jesus speak and knew their biblical traditions would recall that Sarah (Gen 18:6), Gideon (Judges 6:19) and Hannah (1 Sam 1:24) also baked with three measures (also called an *ephah*). They did so in preparation to receive a heavenly visitor. So what is Jesus asking of us by evoking this connection?

The practice of using living cultures of yeast in bread-making has been part of the interdependent rhythms of human and other-than-human life from time immemorial. Live organisms are isolated and propagated. This organic, growing process functions in similar but different ways to single grains of wheat which fall into fungi-rich soil to be transformed into ears of wheat. These ears of wheat are then worked by human hands, milled into the flour in which the woman hid the yeast. Live organisms working silently and unobtrusively, quietly, organically — a fantastic outcome.

Unexpected Twist

What is the unexpected twist? How are we teased into working out what the parable might mean? God's *basileia*, like yeast working in a hidden way, will pervade life. Life is not the same for those who encounter the *basileia* of the heavens. It is disruptive of and disturbing to the way things are. What does it mean for us gathered at the Eucharist and for living our faith in the world? ■

Painting: *Parable of Leaven* by James B Janknegt
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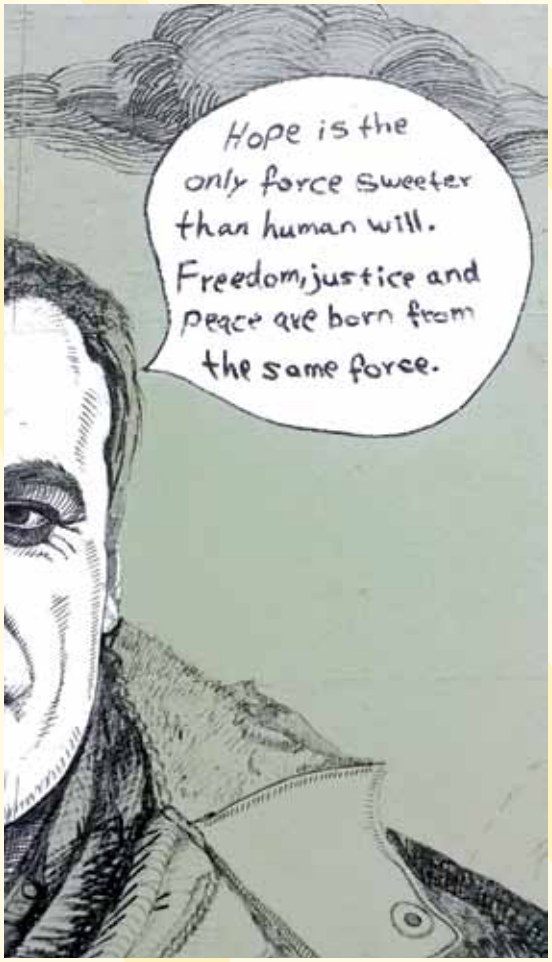
THE SUN OF PEACE FINALLY SHINES

I'm writing this sipping a latte in a café in Oslo, having just visited the Nobel Peace Centre. I flew to London for a dear friend's wedding and planned this side trip to Norway because I've been curious for a long time about the Scandinavian societies. They have an exemplary approach to human rights, outstanding access to healthcare and education and a socialist approach to politics and equality. Plus, Oslo is the home of the Nobel Peace Prize and the Nobel Peace Centre is located on the waterfront of the Oslo fjord. This visit is a highlight of my week in Norway.

The Nobel Peace Prize, along with four other prizes in physics, chemistry, medicine and literature, was established as the legacy of Alfred Nobel. Born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1833, Alfred became known as an "inventor, promoter of culture, and friend of peace". He invented dynamite — and made his substantial fortune from it — but before he came to wealth he travelled extensively and was known as a citizen of the world, or *verdensborgeren* in Norwegian. He collected over 2,000 literary works and in his later life co-authored a book on ending war and suffering — an interesting project for someone who invented a powerful explosive. In his will he stated that a prize be awarded to the person who "shall have done the most and the best work to promote fraternity among nations for the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and for the holding and promotion of peace".



Now, the Nobel Peace Prize is administered by the Norwegian Nobel Committee and awarded annually on 10 December by the head of the Nobel Peace Committee at the University of Oslo.

The Peace Centre shows permanent and temporary exhibitions. The most recent exhibition offered an intimate view into the life of the 2016 Peace Laureate, President Juan Manuel Santos of Columbia for his long-term dedication to peace in Columbia. The civil war in Columbia raged for over 50 years, claimed the lives of an estimated 220,000 people and internally displaced 8 million Columbians. A peace deal was signed only in November 2016 after years of negotiation. The conflict in Columbia rose out of the stark inequality between wealthy and poor Columbians and developed in an incredibly complex political situation that bred insurgent groups, the largest being *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, (FARC). The State was weak, allowing insurgent groups to gain power and influence often through violent strategies — kidnapping, disappearances and assassination. And further complicating the situation, the insurgent groups were funded by the cocaine trade, which provided millions of dollars for weaponry.

In his acceptance speech for the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize, titled *Peace in Colombia: From the Impossible to the Possible*, President Santos noted that the Nobel Peace Prize was not only an acknowledgement of the peace process, but also an intrinsic part of the journey towards a conflict-free Columbia. The Prize signifies international endorsement of peace for Columbians and acknowledges the lengthy peace process brought to a successful resolution. It is the first conflict resolution process in the world that has placed victims of the war and their human rights at the centre of the solution. President Santos used his acceptance speech to share his experience and advice about peace negotiations, offering encouragement to other countries wanting to resolve their internal conflicts. He advised that negotiations should be focused on solving the specific issues that would reduce the conflict at hand, rather than trying to fix all the problems of a country in one sitting.

He ended with a humble and inspiring challenge: "Let's awaken the creative capacity for goodness, for building peace, that lives within each soul.

"In the end, we are one people, and one race; of every colour, of every belief, of every preference. The name of this one people is the world. The name of this one race is humanity.

"If we truly understand this, if we make it part of our individual and collective awareness, then we will cut the very root of conflicts and wars…

"The sun of peace finally shines in the heavens of Colombia. May its light shine upon the whole world!" ■

Photo from Nobel Peace Centre by Louise Carr-Neil.

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

MORE MILESTONES ESSENTIAL FOR AUSTRALIA

Last month Indigenous Australians celebrated two milestones: 50 years since constitutional reform, and 25 years since the recognition of native title — that is, the legal right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Indigenous Australians, to their own land.

But while some triumphs have been had, many are yet to be won.

To coincide with these historic anniversaries, the Indigenous Australian community held three days of national talks at Uluru to determine the future direction of their rights and welfare in Australia.

The result of these talks was the Uluru Declaration, which produced three clear objectives to work towards. The first was to have an indigenous voice enshrined in Parliament.

The second was to establish a "Makarrata Commission" that would supervise agreements between indigenous groups and government. *Makarrata* translates to "treaty" — it is hoped that the commission will provide what almost 250 years of European-Australian history has not.

Indeed, Australia remains the only Commonwealth nation not to have signed a treaty with its indigenous people. Considering New Zealand will soon commemorate 180 years since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, such a measure seems long overdue. While the Treaty of Waitangi certainly didn't erase inequality from Māori future, it went a long way to ensuring a relationship of respect was built between the main stakeholders.

The final conclusion from Uluru was the need for a truth commission to acknowledge and formally recognise the full extent of harm inflicted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. With the arrival of European settlers the history of Australia is one of massacres, Stolen Generations and dispossession — a history that has an enduring effect today.

While we may have just marked two important watershed moments for Indigenous Australians there are less encouraging milestones as well.

This year marks 20 years since the *Bringing Them Home Report* that documented stories from one of the darkest periods in Australian history: the years between 1910 and 1970, when the Government forcibly and systematically removed Indigenous children from their families. Two decades on and these communities are no closer to redress.

And there is worse news to report. Since 2008, when the Federal Government made its formal apology, the number of Aboriginal children in care has increased by 65 per cent. Sadly, that is not the only area where Indigenous Australians are overrepresented.

When the Australian Government announced a *Close the Gap* programme aimed at reducing the marked difference in the quality of life enjoyed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, it was well overdue. Now almost 10 years later, the programme is largely failing as Indigenous Australians have infant mortality rates twice as high as other Australians, die about 10 years younger, and endure higher unemployment.

While making up just 2 per cent of the Australian population aged 18 years and over, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for 27 per cent of the total Australian prisoner population.

Strikingly, while in New South Wales arrest rates for Indigenous Australians over the last 15 years have declined by more than a third for violent offence and property crimes, their incarceration rate has doubled due to higher rates of conviction and bail refusals.

So there is no doubt that Australia needs to do better. There is no question that given our ongoing failure to do so, we need to consider a change of tack. Given our past failings as a nation, now is the time to stand up and deliver on what politicians have been talking about for decades.

While a treaty will not in itself eradicate inequality, it will go some way towards showing that Australia can deliver more than just empty promises. And while acknowledgement of the Stolen Generations cannot undo the harm caused, a real dialogue cannot begin without it.

We, government and immigrant-descended-Australians, have an undeniable responsibility, one that until now we have without doubt failed to fulfill. A solution cannot be found without proper consultation with our indigenous communities and genuine efforts towards their self-determination. Australia cannot possibly move forward until it has acknowledged and addressed its past wrongs. ■

Photo: *Children of Warmun, Kimberley, Australia* by Julianne Murphy RSJ ©

Jack Derwin is the assistant reporter to a foreign correspondent in the Sydney Bureau of the Japanese newspaper *The Asahi Shimbun*.

Faith Beyond Belief

Spirituality for Our Times

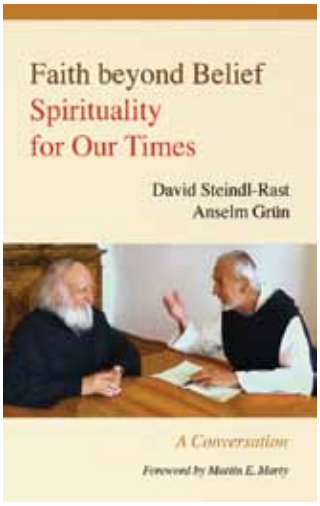
by David Steindl-Rast and Anselm Grün
Edited by Johannes Kaup
Published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 2016.
Reviewed by John Thornley

BOOK

This short book of 180 pages offers an engaging and accessible introduction to Christian spirituality for the 21st century. Two members of the Benedictine Order, David Stendl-Rast from Mount Saviour Monastery, New York and Anselm Crun, from the Benedictine Abbey of Munsterschwarzach, Germany, meet in the abbey with editor, Johannes Kaup. They talk together with humour and honesty sharing spirituality as an everyday reality and addressing some of the most profound and complex issues confronting the human family.

Johannes Kaup, a Catholic Austrian journalist, with qualifications in theology, philosophy, depth psychology and psychotherapy, is the perfect host for the faith journey. The reader will feel privileged to be present in spirit.

The book is organised into 20 chapters, averaging nine pages a chapter. Each chapter has a main title and subtitle, the latter a summary of what to expect. We have, for instance: *Goodbye to Infantile Images of God — In Search of the Divine Mystery; The Incarnation — How Body, Soul and Spirit Go Together;* and *Roots and Growth — Linking Old and New'.*



This is not a systematic treatise but rather a "heart to heart" informal sharing of critical issues that face all of us, Church and non-Church people. The Benedictine men discuss gender equality (the editor has used "she" in place of the usual "he"), Christianity and other religions, conflict resolution, eco-theology, fundamentalism and crises in capitalism and democracy.

The central Christian teachings of the Incarnation, Resurrection, Atonement, Trinity, Sin and Forgiveness are considered and prayer and care for our personal and collective meditative lives occupies a central place.

I was initially challenged by the sustained discussion on the role of, and distinctions between, the "ego", "I" and "Self", especially the idea of the "Self" as collective rather than personal. But as I read further, this triune mystery became clearer, having echoes in the Methodist Church's focus on the "social gospel" of John Wesley.

There is a marvellous chapter on the virtue of gratitude with obvious links to Karen Armstrong's *Charter of Compassion* (2008).

I would warmly recommend this book to adult readers, and also as a group study book — monthly meetings with several chapters being taken at each. ■

A Step along the Way

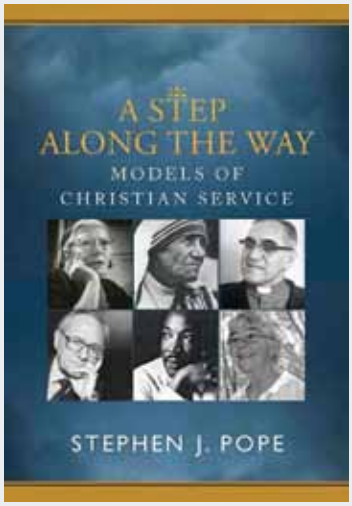
Models of Christian Service

by Stephen J Pope
Published by Orbis Books 2015
Reviewed by Helen Robinson

BOOK

Stephen Pope's book, *A Step Along the Way*, explores just what service is and what it means for people of a Christian faith. Published in New York, it has a North America orientation and to quote an often-used phrase, "it's a book of two halves".

In the first part, Pope tells the stories of Dorothy Stang SND, Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr, Oscar Romero and Pierre Claverie OP. His storytelling is insightful, particularly about those who lives are very familiar and already well-told. Pope does not shy away from sharing their own limits and struggles, a refreshing take on these saints of our times.



In the second half of the book Pope unpacks the different models of service: stewardship, hospitality, compassion, advocacy, solidarity and witness. He provides a biblical frame and a theological frame, and a "what it all means today" frame for each of these models. He includes in this discussion the "temptation" of each model, the shadow side, giving pause for reflection about our own behaviour and motivations as we seek to serve. The second half of the book can be a bit heavy going at times, albeit knowledgeable and interesting.

Pope is providing a challenge to all people, and especially all who profess to be Christian, to make our faith real by serving. Each act of service is a "step along the way" to finding ourselves, finding each other and ultimately finding God.

I can see teachers and formators enjoying this book as well as those seeking to explore what service means. I found it compelling in general and, on occasion, inspirational. ■

The Sense of an Ending

Directed by Ritesh Batra
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

FILM

Based on the 2011 novel of the same name by Julian Barnes, this subtle, intelligent film is designed to resonate in the mind and encourage the audience to reflect on the things it deals with — memory, the influence of the past on the present, and how we construct our own lives and thus give them meaning and purpose.

The past reaches out to Tony Webster (Jim Broadbent) in the form of a lawyer's letter that promises to put him in touch with an earlier life — in the shape of Veronica (Charlotte Rampling), an old flame from school and university days who went on to form a relationship with his best friend, Adrian. The unresolved adolescent emotions involved in this awkward entanglement led to tragedy at the time — a troubling seed-time that Tony is now reaping in his inner life.

Ritesh Batra, well-known as director of *The Lunchbox* (reviewed *TM* Issue 188, Nov 2014), handles the to-ing and fro-ing between past and present with unobtrusive skill, deftly sketching in key aspects of character and action that determine the fate of his young protagonists. He drip-feeds information in a way that both piques our curiosity and enables us to comes to grips with the unfolding situation along with the older Tony.

Tony's battle with his past does bear some positive fruit, however, allowing him to draw closer to his ex-wife, Margaret (Harriet Walter) and their heavily pregnant daughter, Susie, who has made the brave decision to have a child on her own. The nickname they have given him, Mudge (short for curmudgeon), seems increasingly ill-fitting as the action progresses. At the end of the film, even the postman benefits from Tony's newfound equilibrium.

As a domestic, interior drama, *The Sense of an Ending* asks questions that concern us all. Do we have the power to construct our own lives? And if we resile from this task, will others shape our lives for us? How do we deal with wounds inflicted in the past and the disconcerting messages that filter across to us through time? Is there anywhere we can flee where we will be immune from the consequences of our past actions? What does it mean to live a satisfying life in the present?

A well-crafted, engaging film that comes highly recommended. ■

An Unexpected Hero

by L P Hansen
Published by CreateBooks Ltd
Reviewed by Jacky Armstrong

CHILDREN'S BOOK

A thoroughly enjoyable read. Having personally moved with a family of four from the big city to the country, I could easily identify with many of the scenarios described by the author. This story follows the journey of 12-year-old Matt Turner. Matt has moved to the countryside to stay with his grandparents who reside on a typical New Zealand dairy farm. His expectant mum has been ordered to remain on complete bedrest throughout the completion of her pregnancy and his dad has been called away on business affairs. On his first day at the new school Matt's class visits a war memorial where a guest speaker introduces the children to their class project. Each student must choose a hero from their own family and write a short story. The stories are to be compiled into a book called *Lest We Forget*. Matt has to overcome his fear of public speaking and his grandmother unexpectedly turns out to be a master coach. The story plot has a twist when the war hero Cedric, who hated the "conchies" (conscientious objectors), turns out to have a hidden past. Matt chooses as his hero his family relative, Archibald Baxter, a well-known New Zealand pacifist. In his research Matt discovers Cedric's dark, hidden secret. And although he was embarrassed at first by Archibald Baxter he realises what a true war hero he really was.

This is a thought-provoking tale about bringing a piece of New Zealand history out of the past and into the present day. It is an inspiring story suitable for Year 7 and 8 students, and would be especially poignant when read around Anzac Day. ■

CROSSCURRENTS

Jim Elliston

Moral Perspectives

The three little girls know it is wrong to play on the busy street. Six-year-old Helen knows because Authority (her parents) so decrees; Eileen, four, because she finds it disadvantageous to be caught disobeying Authority. At eight, Gemma can recognise the danger involved and is beginning to realise why Authority has forbidden it.

As she matures she will discern the difference between rational and irrational authority. The former respects the person subject to it while the latter, based on power, doesn't. Rational authority may be backed by power, as in the case of parents.

The children's differing perceptions as to why the action is wrong reflect their growing development towards maturity. However, their motivation for obeying or not may at times be identical — "I won't be caught".

This shows three of the basic elements in the process of evolving morality: self-interest, the rules set by authority, and understanding the nature of the action. All of these subsist to a greater or lesser degree in our need for approval from our "community" — our parents, families, peer groups and other relationships. This can be a force for both good and evil. Social media currently wield a powerful influence.

There are other developmental stages — for example, someone endangering themselves to save another from harm. This is sometimes called altruism. Aristotle called it love, nowadays a much-debased term.

Church Perspectives

Theology has been called "faith seeking understanding". It aims to deepen our insights into our faith. Cultural differences have frequently been strongly associated with religious differences over the centuries.

A new kind of division has been taking place in recent decades, and although disturbing in some ways, it is a positive one. In many parts of the Catholic Church, local theologies are increasingly replacing the universally applied theology that developed mainly in a European cultural environment. This imported theology made little sense to a lot of people.

Many Catholics are experiencing emotional turmoil from being confronted by new ways of doing things in the Church. This is a major factor in the resistance Pope Francis is experiencing.

Pastoral approaches are affected by theological understanding; pastoral practice in turn modifies theological understanding.

Pastoral Perspectives

Laos is a repressive communist country with 6 million inhabitants. There are about 45,000 Catholics grouped into four impoverished missionary areas. The area of Paske, home to 15,000 Catholics, is served by a bishop, seven priests, nine male religious and sixteen women religious. Few parishioners are *Lao Lum*, the lowland people who rule the country.

Bishop Louis-Marie Ling Mangkhanekhoun is reputed to be diligent and kind to the local community. He is actively concerned in environmental issues, opposing the rapid deforestation which sees well-connected companies push villagers from their land and creates a spiral of social problems.

He has a radical approach to priestly formation. He told *AsiaNews* in 2015: "We have married catechists who are true missionaries, who go to live in the villages and become the 'roots' of evangelization. They go, live, they begin to build bonds. We offer this experience to seminarians. Seminary students must study three years, then they must stop for at least a year, up to three years, to mature in their decision, but also for pastoral experience as catechists, carrying medicines, aid, prayers for the people of the mountain. They integrate with the villagers, live as the villagers do in everything."

Pope Francis has just made 73-year old Bishop Ling a Cardinal, demonstrating his drive to bolster the influence of local churches. ■

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.

We do not publish anonymous letters except in exceptional circumstances.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO LIFE

In *TM* March 2017:26 *More Than a Single Issue* abortion is considered from "a human rights perspective" but grievously misses the mark.

Right to life is the first of human rights; without this fundamental human right there are no other human rights.

I agree "it is of utmost importance" to consider how policies "affect the most vulnerable". In the instance of abortion the most vulnerable of other persons is, the unborn child. As abortion survivor, Gianna Jensen, so clearly stated: "If abortion is about women's rights, then what were mine?"

Abortion is never safe for the most vulnerable, the unborn child, and carries multiple risk factors for women even in the developed world. Visit www.safeandlegal.com to see documentation of the 100+ women known to have died in the USA since legalised abortion.

Women have a right to full information about the physical and psychological risks involved in abortion. Responsible journalism requires these risks are made known and this is now appropriate for *Tui Motu* to prioritise.

Finally, Catholics for Choice like to mislead Catholics into thinking abortion is compatible with being Catholic. View www.catholicsandchoice.org.nz for further analysis.

Clare McClean, Porirua

L'ARCHE MOUNT TABOR WELCOMES ALL

A few Sundays ago I accompanied a young friend, Nellie, to a gathering of "Friends of St Ben's". There, she shared the details and excitement of her trip to L'Arche International Assembly in Belfast 14 June – 5 July. It's held only once every seven years, so Nellie gets to go in the first year of the community's (probationary) membership.

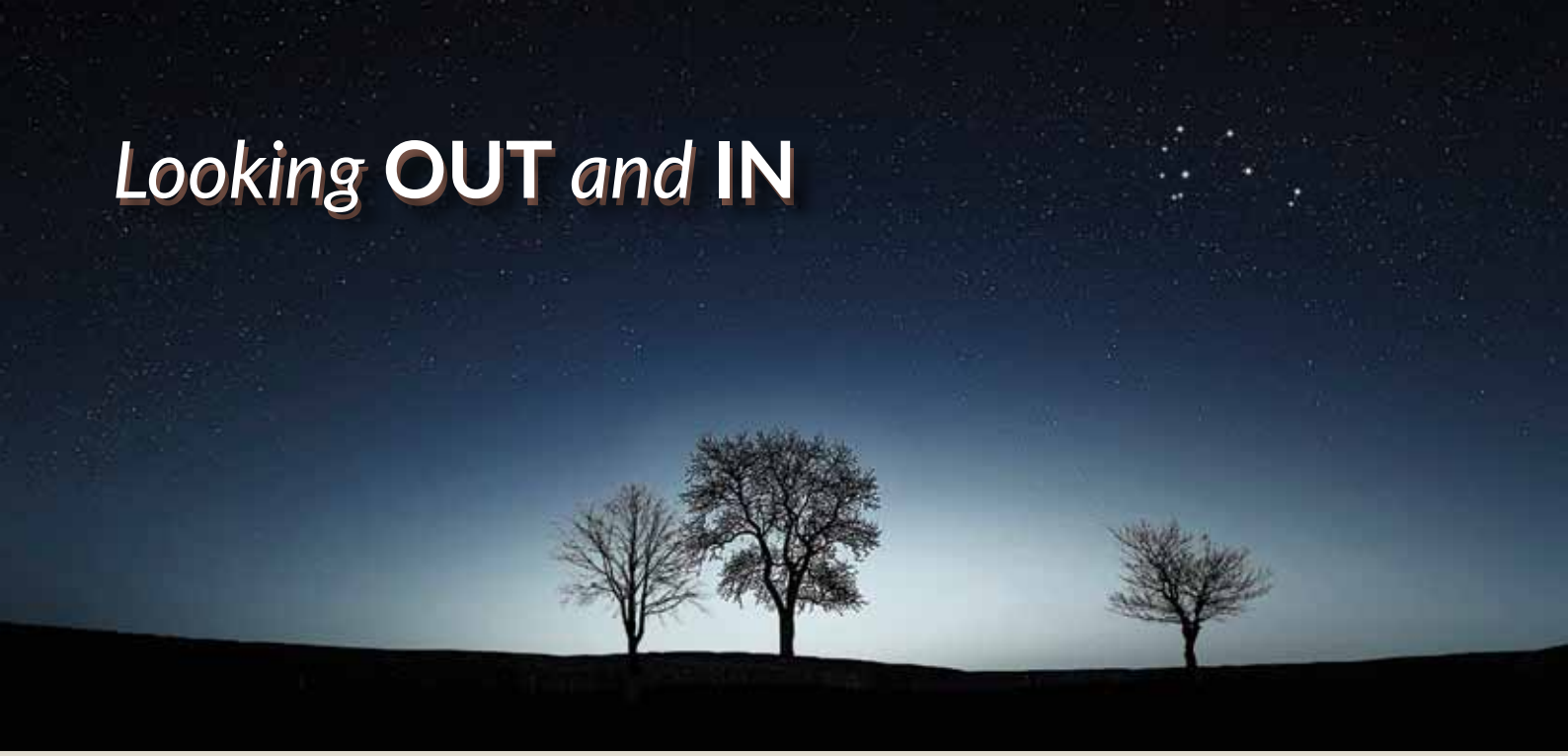
She will represent the 27 core members of L'Arche Mount Tabor, the community in which she has lived since she was 17. Now in her mid-30s, she told the gathering that she would love to welcome new members to her community.

After nearly 40 years the community does have some "old-timers" but also members like Nellie herself, and Richard; also Louise, Kevin, Andy, Michael and Rebecca, Daniel, Rebecca M all in their 20s and 30s say: "Welcome!"

And, as families and communities know, there is always a place for friends, visitors, volunteers of all ages and abilities to be advocate, or Trustee, handyperson, or simply a friend. Visit www.mt-tabor.org.nz or Facebook Mt Tabor Trust.

Doreen Hogan, Auckland

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



It started with a reminder — you know, the kind that comes when you flip the calendar from one month to the next. Mine transitioned from May to June and showed the anniversary falling in Pipiri-June — Matariki. The Matariki cluster of stars (absent for 28 days prior) experiences a resurrection in the June night sky. This constellation speaks to me of absence and presence; presence and absence. I am present here in Aotearoa and absent from my place of birth, Ireland.

I rise early to join with Ngāti Manuhiri for a dawn service at Tawharanui Regional Park, south of Omaha. In the darkness I cross the Harbour Bridge whose fortified girders embrace the isthmus in a steel hug of connection. It's early, so early that the stars puncture the night sky like glow-worm lights.

I arrive at Tawharanui where the Auckland Council, in tandem with a local *iwi*, marks this New Year. The *kaumātua* tells the story of their *tūpuna Manuhiri*, who migrated from Kawhia to Tāmaki in the 1600s. I migrated too, from County Meath, Ireland to Aotearoa.

The *kaumātua* reminds us of why we celebrate Matariki. We remember those who have died in the last year and especially those in our families — for them a blessing. My parents, Annie and Kevin, dart through my consciousness. They're not in full health. My mother's recent diagnosis of terminal cancer is a hard thought. My parents embody presence and absence for me. Almost two decades ago I left them and migrated here — a somewhat selfish act. I was in my 20s and blind to the pain migration was causing.

I *hongi*; skin touches skin, warm nose meets cold nose. I breathe in and think of the *tāngata* opposite whose loved ones have died. I think of their struggles, their sadness, their loneliness, their story. We join in *waiata*: "*Haere mai e ngā iwi, haere mai Pakiri*."

We share *kaimoana*, gift of Tangaroa, crayfish, kina and paua. And after *kai* we plant trees because we're told: "As one person dies a tree is planted." I pause; next Matariki I may need to plant two trees.

A trench is dug for the *hāngī* lunch. The hole is coffin-shaped and my mind connects to my cancered parents. Over *kai* I *kōrero* with some of the *tāngata whenua*. "You Irish are like white Māori; the land is important, family is important, *Te Atua* is important." We refer to Parihaka and the apology given by the Government. In my letters home to my parents, I apologise for ways my actions have hurt them.

As I write, Matariki begins. As you read now, Matariki ends. *Ngā mihi o te tau hou!* Happy New Year! ■

Philomena Clare's passions are children, Scripture and the environment. She is the Religious Education Adviser for Secondary Schools in the Auckland Diocese.

Gaze at us with love
that soaks through our skin
and bursts in our hearts
as compassion and energy
for striking poverty from our world

From the *Tui Motu* team