

Tui Motu

InterIslands

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... ***not in our name***

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Cover: Protest march against war in Iraq, down George St, Dunedin 18 January, 2003.

"Not in our name" is the slogan being used in peace marches across America against the Bush policy

photo: Stephen Stedman

Better 'jaw jaw' than 'war war'

Better 'jaw jaw' than 'war war', said Winston Churchill, a man not renowned as a pacifist. This dictum has been amply illustrated by the recent history of Northern Ireland. The *Good Friday Agreement* put an end to 30 years of turmoil, and while the present situation there is far from ideal, at least there has been an end to guns and bombs. The cycle of atrocity and counter-atrocity is broken. Differences are settled by negotiation. A culture of peace is established.

A solution like that, impossible though it may appear, is the only hope for Israel. It is also the only sane and Christian solution to the Iraqi crisis. And is it so impossible?

Exactly 40 years ago, during the anguished moments of the Cuban missile crisis, Russia and the USA seemed on the brink of nuclear war. It was Pope John XXIII's intervention which played a vital role in the defusing of that crisis. President Kennedy asked the Pope to mediate, and it seems the Pope's words were vital in enabling Krushchev to withdraw without loss of face.

Pope John Paul's New Year's message revisits the basic themes of John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, composed during the Cuban stand-off. In the Middle East, says the Pope, "...the cumulative effect of bitter mutual rejection and an unending chain of violence have shattered every effort so far to engage in serious dialogue... Until those in positions of responsibility undergo a veritable revolution in the way they use their power and go about seeking their people's welfare, it is difficult to see how progress towards peace can be made. The fratricidal struggle that daily convulses the Holy Land and brings into conflict the forces shaping the immediate future of the Middle East shows clearly the need for men and women who, out of conviction, will implement policies firmly

based on principles of respect for human dignity and human rights."

It is unlikely that Saddam Hussein or Ariel Sharon will read or heed the Pope's words. Nor is it likely that the present US administration, hell-bent on war, will listen either. Yet all round the world people are out on the streets demanding that another way be found.

What principles should guide us in the present crisis?

- war and violent means are always a last resort, to be turned to only when *all* other means have failed. To date no incontrovertible evidence has been revealed that Saddam Hussein is still a serious threat to world peace or that he is linked to Al-Qaida.

- a call to arms must always be judged in a wider, global perspective. To confront Hussein while doing nothing to restrain the injustice of the Israeli government towards the Palestinians is a dastardly exercise in tunnel vision on Bush's part, and will simply serve to inflame outrage against the US and Britain throughout the Muslim world.

- offensive actions which cause widespread loss of innocent lives and wanton destruction of human resources, are always evil and can never be justified.

In the 1940s and '50s, America emerged as principal guarantor of world peace. Even at the time of the Cuban crisis President Kennedy sought and found a peaceable solution. Yet in the past 30 years America has appeared to move more and more into a position of seeking its own advantage at the expense of others. It has betrayed its pre-eminent role as the world's moral leader.

The World Council of Churches has declared this the *Decade to Overcome Violence*. That means a commitment by nations and peoples to 'jaw jaw' – starting in Washington. At the moment there seems little hope of this.

Pax Americana

I would like to be a pacifist! Yet there are times when we must stand firm against evil and injustice, even to the extent of taking up arms.

Such a serious thing has to be a last resort and fundamentally based on the very best interests of the whole of the human community, not narrow and particular self-interest. A peace based on force and narrow self-interest is no peace. A peace without justice and a respect for the human rights of all persons of whatever race, religion or culture, is no peace. It breeds further violence and terror, and above all suffering and death for the innocent.

The founder of my faith, Jesus, lived in the time of the Roman Empire. Rome was the superpower, and the best part of the known world was forced under its yoke. This enforced peace was known as the *Pax Romana*.

A key reason for the execution of Jesus was that he challenged the corruption and injustice which sustained this regime of Rome, because he offered a new vision of health and wholeness and respect for the integrity of all. It is a vision that many seek to keep alive today.

Today we live with another superpower. The imperialist tendencies of the USA government draw alarming similarities with that of Rome. Are we living under a *Pax Americana*? When we place what we hear and are told about the Iraqi situation in the context of other policies of President Bush's administration, I am left with deep concerns as to the primary

motives of the USA leadership.

The USA has scuppered the Kyoto protocol and dismayed its allies and friends, including ourselves. At every turn we seem to see only a narrow self-interest on behalf of Fortress America, and indeed not of all America, but only the rich and powerful vested interests which appear to care little for the growing gap between rich and poor, indeed for the worthy principles of the American Constitution.

Last week Vice-President Cheney torpedoed a deal to get cheap drugs into poor countries whose people are consumed by epidemics of AIDS, of malaria and tuberculosis. The USA was the only country out of 144 to oppose an agreement that would have relaxed global patent rules on treatments. Is America becoming the Rome of the 21st century?

Who am I to cast stones at these rich and powerful leaders? No doubt Saddam Hussein is a wicked and cruel dictator. It could well be that the international community will need to step in and to use force to protect the world and even the people of Iraq.

But as we step deeper and deeper into tragedy, what and who are we to believe? Who can we trust? What are we to do? With all the media spin we ask: "What is truth?"

Fallible as it may be, the United Nations and its Charter provides the only value-based framework for these testing times,

and we should resist any unilateral action by any nation against another, which is unsanctioned by the Security Council. The Charter enshrines in secular words the aspirations and vision of my faith and of the great faiths of the world for a peaceful and just world.

So I stand with you to say to the President of the USA: "Do not flaunt the will of the Security Council of the United Nations. If there is to be armed intervention, let it be based on the fullest and most open evidence and information, that the world may know that what is being done is just.

"And, Mr President, may you stop to hear the cries and the lament of the poor and the disadvantaged in the world. May you have the courage to use your huge power and that of the great nation of the United States to foster peace, justice and good will amongst all peoples. May you help lead the vast proportion of humanity out of poverty and oppression.

"I invite you to pray with me for the realisation of a vision of the world where the weak are protected and none go hungry or poor, where the benefits of life are shared so that everyone can enjoy them, where the peoples of different races, cultures and religions treat each other with tolerance and mutual respect, where peace is built on justice and justice is guided by love.

"Let us pray that we may have the courage and the inspiration to build such a world." ■

An edited version of an address given by Very Revd. Peter Beck, Dean of Christchurch, to a Peace Rally in the Cathedral Square on Saturday 18 January



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

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Sexuality – an essential part of who we are!

In his article *The Holiness of Human Sexuality*, Richard Rohr wrote: “If we are afraid of our sexuality, we are afraid of God.” If as Christians we do truly believe that sexuality is a gift, we need to act as though it were by treasuring and celebrating it. Healthy and holistic education is a positive place to start.

Sexuality education, in order to be effective, must recognise sexuality as a core dimension of the human need to love and be loved. When sexuality education fails to take into account all aspects of the human person: emotional, psychological, physical, social and spiritual, it can never fully succeed in giving young people a balanced and positive view of sexuality, and consequently just becomes a sex education programme.

Sexuality education with the Catholic or Christian perspective can give a broader and richer view of sexuality. Jack Dominion makes the point in his latest book *Let's make Love: The meaning of Sexual Intercourse*: “the real gift that Christianity has to offer is to link sexuality with love and life.”

It must have been with that in mind, when the Catholic Bishops of New Zealand created a programme called Christian Family Life Education (CFLE) in the 1970s. It was in response to what was happening in society as a result of the sexual revolution.

While CFLE was primarily designed for teachers in Catholic schools, many parents, youth leaders and clerics have benefited from this course, not only from a professional point of view. Past graduates have found their personal lives and relationships enhanced by completing this course and have gone on to be valuable resources for their school and church communities.

This programme is unique to New Zealand and aims to empower men and women to understand and appreciate the richness of their own sexuality in order to present a vision of growth to wholeness as a Christian person. This is based on the belief that human sexuality is sacred and needs to be celebrated, treasured and developed throughout life. *Christian Family Life Education* seeks to empower us to live a full life where knowing and appreciating the dignity, giftedness and sacredness of each person is paramount.

As young people grapple with their changing bodies and fluctuating emotions, they search for answers and look to adults for guidance. In the past we have often based our teaching of sexuality on fear and suspicion and then wrapped it in a parcel of guilt, forcing young people to

work out the answers themselves. This approach leaves them vulnerable to outside influences.

The sad reality is that there are constantly mixed messages about sexuality in our society. It is either ignored and never discussed or, as happens through the media, it is demeaned, trivialized and used to sell products.

In his book *Christian Marriage: The Challenge of Change* (1967), Jack Dominion makes the point that as long as everybody else except practising Christians is allowed to discuss sexuality the subject will remain incomplete. He goes on to say that as Christians we cannot afford to remain silent.

We therefore have a responsibility to educate ourselves in order to help our children to grow into responsible, truth-seeking and fully alive Christian people. *Christian Family Life Education* can meet the needs of parents, teachers, youth workers and clerics alike and help them to understand fully the meaning of sexuality. The alternative is to remain in the dark and continue to live in fear, never fully appreciating how sexuality enriches our lives.

CFLE is a NZQA course authorised by the Catholic Bishops of NZ. Courses run in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin. Contact NCRS for course details in your area. ■

Barbara Simpson

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A Famine Tax

It was gratifying to read in your *December* issue how well the Sudanese community has settled in Upper Hutt. The Upper Hutt example shows how New Zealanders are willing to do their bit for the stranger in their midst.

What concerns me is the plight of the 'widows and the orphans' left behind, where mere survival is a daily challenge. From whatever combination of drought, crop failure, accessibility, mismanagement, war or corruption, populations in Africa are facing urgent and critical food shortages.

My proposal is that our country should formally adopt a *Famine Tax*. Operating as low as 0.1 percent of gross income, it would generate something like \$10 p.a. from beneficiaries to beyond \$1000 from those who would not notice the difference. At a guess it could exceed \$50M annually.

At the first level, it would publicly identify this country and its citizens to be concerned about the plight of the less fortunate. Secondly, it should help raise the consciousness of all taxpayers about basic human rights. It may even trigger a corresponding response from other groups, such as parish communities to set aside a portion of their income for the same cause.

"I was hungry and you fed me" (*Mt 25:35*)

Ben Scanlan cfc, Christchurch
(abridged)

Nga Mokai

I'm delighted with *Tui Motu*. May it last longer than past attempts to reflect wide-based Catholic thought.

At Christmas we look back on people from the past – like Hemi Baxter (*TM November*). As I was thinking of God as father a thought came to me on the Catholic idea of Purgatory. I was wondering if it was more of a place for a second chance for those who were never reached or helped in this life – the Nga Mokai, or fatherless ones.

Ideally, fathers never give up on their children, and God portrays himself as the ultimate 'Father'.

Francis Robertson, Waimate

Live Simply (1)

In reply to the article "Live Simply..." (*TM December*), my wife and I, living in a suburb, decided to search out the most frugal 5-seater car in British car magazines. We found the car achieves an average of 53 miles/gallon (18.8 km/l). Think of the savings in personal financial costs, reduction of pollution and reliance on oil supplies, as well as the saving in overseas funds, if this were applied across the nation. The government could even establish a tax on the importation of cars with engines above 1000 cc...

G van den Bemd, Mangere Bridge

letters

Live simply (2)

Over the past few years I have read and listened and taken part in many things around the theme of ecology and the environment. I now realise that something deep was also happening to me through this. I noticed the awakening of an ecological self calling me to live with environmental responsibility.

While digging through some compost at the end of my garden, I was shocked to see all the plastic wrap still intact. So I made a commitment to stop using plastic wrap and tinfoil. This means

using alternative ways of covering food using plastic containers with lids.

Let's explore ways of living with ecological consciousness, so those who come after us will have a home to live in.

Noreen McGrath PVB, Dunedin

Armageddon in the Middle East

John Honoré's *Crosscurrents* are always thought-provoking, but his latest repast of unbridled anti-Americanism (*TM December*) has choked me into some response.

The world we live in will never spawn God-fearing, generous, neighbourly, independent nation-states. All are manipulated by essentially corrupt politicians. The US is no worse than Britain, France etc – and a lot less threatening to our freedom than the embryonic, totalitarian European superstate.

I also fear Armageddon in the Middle East, but I do not share the view that the Bush/Blair strategy towards Iraq is the likely catalyst. No action is *not* an option. Avoiding conflict at all cost or delaying and thereby granting Saddam Hussein more time is more likely to trigger Armageddon. Prompt surgical action, once Saddam's culpability is proven beyond reasonable doubt, is essential.

I too am passionate for peace but not at any cost. Appeasement is but a temporary respite for the greater cataclysm

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Cry from the heart – letter from Baghdad

I wish you could all be here – it's so different from what we see on TV. As we drove through Baghdad for the first time, all I could think, over and over, was the simple truth that at the heart of it all: this is just a place where people live. Ordinary people, welcoming people. These are the people who will suffer.

Baghdad is a sprawling, residential city. Kids tote backpacks to and from school, play soccer on patches of dust along the road, wave at us from the sidewalks. The streets are busy with cars, and the sidewalks are lined with small shops – although most have very few shoppers and many are closed completely.

Today we went to a maternity hospital run by the Dominican sisters here in Baghdad. Sr. Bushra Gaggi OP who runs the hospital told us that many of the women have been coming to the hospital, begging her to give them Caesarean sections, so that their babies will be born before the bombing begins.

Yesterday, we went to a public hospital – the Director told us about all of the effects of the sanctions and of the devastation that would occur if we have another war – only one Iraqi hospital in the entire nation has a machine for radiation treatment. All of the others have broken down. Most children and adults with cancer have no hope.

The oil-for-food program is not enough – the hospitals still do not receive enough medicine, equipment, or training, and malnutrition is still an enormous problem. Five million Iraqi children are malnourished. We visited the cancer ward, full of children. They sat on beds, four to a room, and their mothers sat beside them. They welcomed us, tried

to smile for pictures, and yet two of the mothers broke down weeping while we were there...

All of the parishes, in November, had a day of fasting and prayer for peace. There is a desperate hope that we can make a difference, but already many times I feel helpless to avert this war. And yet many people still speak of hope – and we must hope, and pray, and act...

Sheila Provenchar

The following statement was read aloud at a prayer service at St Joseph's Chaldean Rite Church, December 18, 2002 in Baghdad:

T*o all people of good will in the United States:*

We US religious leaders gather with our Iraqi brothers and sisters to pray for the common peace that we all desire. As women and men of faith, we have

spent ten days in Iraq during this season of preparation for Christmas.

The Iraqi people have suffered for the past 12 years under the most comprehensive sanctions in modern history. Water and sewage treatment facilities are not functioning due to the lack of spare parts, and children die of water-born illnesses. Hospitals are crippled by old and broken-down machinery. Depleted uranium from US munitions is linked to a 400 percent increase in the cancer rate in southern Iraq – and this at a time when sanctions deny the people critical medicines needed for treatment of cancer and other diseases.

These are the people our government is preparing to sacrifice as “collateral damage” in an unconscionable war. As we speak, Iraqi people live in fear of an attack that could happen any day.

A war against the people of Iraq will slaughter thousands of innocent men, women and children in a land already devastated by sanctions. A war could also kill and injure countless young Americans. And a war will unleash violent repercussions and terrorist acts that could destroy our world.

War is not the answer. We must seek a path to peace. Therefore, people of good will, join us in insisting that our government stop this madness and commit to a path of active nonviolent resolution. We as ordinary people can reach out to our Iraqi brothers and



Courtesy of Garrick Tremain, Queenstown

sisters, who are people like our-selves. Together we can support the work of the United Nations and other international efforts to build peace. In peace we pray.

*Iraq Peace Journey:
U.S. Religious Leaders Delegation*

These messages were received via Sr Kathy Thornton rsm, member of a US peace delegation, visiting Iraq last December. Included is part of an agreed statement read out at a prayer service in Baghdad

Philip Berrigan, prophet for peace

Phil Berrigan is the yardstick by which many of us who knew and lived with him will continue to measure our own faithfulness to the promise of the Gospels. He died on December 6, 2002 at about 9:30 pm, at Jonah House surrounded by family and friends.

My own journey as a Catholic convert has been predominantly influenced by Phil Berrigan. I had the privilege to live with Phil Berrigan and the Jonah House community he co-founded, for one year while I was preparing (with three others) to disarm a B-52 bomber. During that time he was also part of our *Plowshares* (disarmament) community. Instrumental to every preparatory step undertaken was Phil's 30-year experience of non-violent direct action – insights into the nature of the evil of the machinations of war and the redemptive power of disarmament.

Jonah House is a resistance community: Bible study, service to the poor and non-violent resistance to war are its identifiable features. Gandhi referred to community practice as a “programme of transformation of relationships”.

Phil believed the personal could not be separated from the political. “We are not called to like one another”, he would say (with the experience of 35 years of community life behind him), “we are called to love one another”. Thus, community was not a personalized therapeutic practice for the benefit of the individual. Rather, the formation of community is an essential part of the non-violent revolution.

Neither did Phil and his wife Liz enter social and economic patterns of domination to take up positions that would offer prestige and influence despite their obvious leadership abilities and fine academic minds.

The community painted houses for a living. Our painting crew was made up of those whose lives were dedicated to the practice of love in action. All were experienced veterans of non-violent direct action. Some had spent many years in prison. While we painted we discussed, debated, reflected, conspired. Worker satisfaction was always guaranteed.

Phil was an unrelenting worker. Even though he was well into his 60s when I lived at Jonah House, he would insist on being the one who would climb the 40-foot ladder to paint those ‘hard to get to’ spots. A friend told a story of watching in horror as Phil fell off the ladder onto a picket fence, getting up despite serious injury, and laughingly say, “The angels cushioned that fall”.

Phil was a man moulded by the Bible. He wrote, “Best of all, the gospel of Jesus Christ has adopted me, and I have adopted the gospel as my manifesto”.

Sunday morning consisted of Mass and Bible study that would last at least two hours. During my year there we only got through a couple of chapters of John's gospel, such was the depth of the study. Those attending were a mixture of scholars and lay people.

The brunch after Bible study was legendary. Phil made the best pancakes. But you wouldn't want to watch the cooking process – Phil often swatting flies with the pancake flipper! When I would catch him doing this he would chuckle, his blue eyes sparkling, and say, “protein!”.

Phil had been arrested over 100 times and had spent 11 years of his life in prison. The Baltimore Four (blood poured over draft files) and Catonsville Nine (draft files burned with homemade napalm) – actions of the '60s – revolutionized non-violent resistance. But it was the beating of the weapons of mass destruction into tools of life that Phil committed the last 20 years of his life to. As well as his seven *Plowshare* actions, he would tirelessly support others in progress, including ours.

He often reflected on our addiction to modern warfare as the ultimate betrayal of the one who chose the Cross rather than the sword. It was a clarity that did not dim even in the final moments of his life. His final statement included the words, “I die with the conviction, held since 1968 and Catonsville, that nuclear weapons are the scourge of the earth; to mine for them, manufacture them, deploy them, use them, is a curse against God, the human family, and the earth itself.”

May he rest in peace.

Moana Coles



*Environmentalist
Angela Cameron, on a
pre-Christmas New Zealand tour,
reports from the World Summit
of the opportunities lost
– and future hopes*

Report . . . from the Johannesburg Summit

with the many other organisations, with Greenpeace and so forth. But an American NGO delegate told me that in their groups they would progress so far, but then one section would drag the chain and it became very frustrating for them. So, when finally Colin Powell got up to speak, it was the Americans themselves who led the demonstration against him. They were simply not being listened to by their own people! To us all it became glaringly obvious that one major problem is the giant corporations who really rule the world.

Yet there were positive outcomes. We met some Indians who had spoken with their own official delegation. They said, "let's not worry about all the 'hogwash' that is going on here; let's go home and do what is needed there!" And so it was for thousands of others, who could not have returned home without having the will to do something tangible.

The good things which came through were the commitment to conserve water and to eradicate poverty. There has been a step forward in attitudes, in the sense that at the subsequent meeting on the World Economy at Monterey they could no longer ignore the environ-mental aspect. The Summit has at last brought these three areas

□ The solution (to economic and technological problems) can be found only if we undergo in the most radical way an inner change of heart, which can lead to a change of lifestyle and of sustainable patterns of consumption and production. □ (Pope John Paul)

together: trade, the economy and the environment. Another sign of hope was the young people – especially young women – who were prepared to take responsibility for their own country. There is real hope for the future.

Often, people are fearful because these world problems appear too vast. And that's where a sound spirituality come in. We need to realise we were not born just on the day of our natural birth. We

belong in a deeply spiritual sense to the whole journey of the Universe. All the blood in our veins comes from the first moment of the Big Bang!

The loving hand of God has guided us right through, and that makes God closely present to us at every moment. He *is* there in the blood

racing through our veins. God is in every aspect of nature. That must be our starting point. And we are all interconnected: with each other, with the animals, with trees, and

with God.

We believe that we should not be exploiting the earth because the earth is sacred, but so often the politicians are driven by short term advantages and the mighty dollar. I felt the real message of Johannesburg is to go home and get on with it ourselves. Gandhi said *My life will be my message*. The call today is to commit ourselves to living in peace and embracing a simpler style of life. ■

What Johannesburg decided

The good:

- halve those without safe drinking water and sanitation by 2015
- cease destructive fishing practices and establish marine protected areas by 2012
- maintain or restore fish stocks by 2015

- significantly reduce biodiversity loss by 2010

The satisfactory:

- halve those living on \$1 per day by 2015
- provide medicines for all
- reduce HIV in young people by 2010

The bad – no commitment to serious conservation

- voluntary regional and national targets only

I went to Johannesburg after attending the Earth Charter conference in Brisbane in December 2000, on behalf of the Presentation Sisters International. With me there were also two Sisters from India and an Irish Sister who had worked in Zambia.

The Rio Summit ten years ago produced *Agenda 21* which remains a visionary statement. Johannesburg aimed to put the Agenda into action. Over 60,000 people attended, and you could not but be caught up by the passion of those campaigning for change.

The main Summit venue was in the business centre of the city, where the world leaders met. But there was also another meeting place called 'Uguntu' ('community'), which had a wonderful area for displaying African culture and handicraft. I remember seeing some beautifully coloured dishes, which on closer examination were seen to be made of sardine tins! It was an object lesson of how to make things out of what we would throw away.

The *Earth Charter* was on display there. And there was a sacred space for prayer and liturgies. There was a display on Antarctica, but to get into it, you went through a maze of rubbish which had been brought back from the Antarctic bases. Uguntu was a place for listening to presentations and meeting people. We had a whole day on globalisation. So we all finished the preliminary week with high expectations!

Sadly, the world leaders heard and witnessed none of this. They arrived for the second week only. As an Australian I was so ashamed of my own government. Along with the US, the Australian leadership was bent on watering down the constructive proposals, especially when it came to energy use.

The NGOs from Australia found themselves in conflict with their government, which is not prepared to compromise on its production and use of fossil fuels. It is so absurd when, at the present rate of use, there is only a 50-year supply of oil left. If the Chinese

started using oil at the rate we do, it would hardly last five years!

We tried to get an interview with David King, the chief Australian delegate, but he refused to see us. And in Australia itself the Summit received very little media coverage. On the other hand the New Zealand delegation appeared to be pushing for much more enlightened stances.

The sad fact is that the final Johannesburg document was watered down by the action of the major powers.

Target dates were removed. There was no agreement on agricultural subsidies or on privatisation of water supplies. Achieving objectives was left to individual countries, with Australia and the US always taking a reactionary stance. Significantly, Bob Brown, of the Green Party, was the only one of our Australian leaders who had to pay his own way to the Conference. George Bush and John Howard did not even condescend to turn up.

In the NGOs we were at least at one

... a feel for the earth is in my blood

Sr Angela Cameron grew up in the 'bread basket' of Australia, near Wagga Wagga. Her father had begun farming there in the early 1900s. It's a flat, dry area, and he and his neighbours had a dream about irrigating the land. This they did, drawing their water from the Murray river. After the war some of the big properties were broken up and a lot of returned servicemen moved in. They were justly proud of a land which could now grow everything.

Forty years later Angela's brother inherited the property. By this time white spots were beginning to appear, so he sought advice. He discovered the white spots were caused by increasing salinity, brought about by cutting down trees and allowing water to lie. The water table comes up and the evaporating water leaves a salt residue.

Angela's brother became sick with heart trouble. He travelled overseas to Lourdes, and came back with the conviction that although he himself was not going to be healed physically, he had received a call to try and 'heal' the earth. He was instrumental in forming the first Murray Darling Commission. Some of the locals, especially the bigger corporations, resented what he was trying to do. He even received threatening phone calls. Yet before he died they had received \$25 million from the government to research the problem.

Angela says: "My brother's work and vision made a big impact on me; so

when I retired from teaching and had the opportunity to study in 1998, part of what I did was to pursue an interest in ecology which sprang from my family roots. I visited *Genesis Farm* in New Jersey USA and studied under Miriam McGillis. Part of my Master's study was to compile a bio-regional report, so I chose to do it on home ground, at Wagga Wagga. By that time the problem of salt intrusion had got a lot worse. The salt was even climbing up the walls of the houses!

"Many farmers now are converted to the necessity of planting trees. Otherwise, what was once the nation's bread basket will in 50 years become a desert. Further down the Murray river the huge concentrations of salt washed down are damaging the trees. And intensive cotton-growing upstream, along the Darling river in Northern New South Wales, also causes serious contamination because of the run-off further down. There are multiple problems.

"Australia has very fragile soil", explains Sr Angela. "Historically, it has lacked the volcanic and glacial action which created the richer European and New Zealand soils. The immigrants came with the best of intentions to irrigate and improve. But it hasn't provided a long-term answer.

"David Suzuki laments that the fertile world we inherited as children will not be the world we pass on to our grand-children. Sadly, modern farming methods have often destroyed the fertility of the land." ■

In harmony with



On Rob and Maria's farm in WA: planting salt bush and grass on raised drills

Rob and Maria, a farming couple in W Australia, are grappling with all the problems of sustainable agriculture.

*But, says their friend **Frank Hoffmann**, their creative impulse arises from a sense of love and gratitude for the world they have been given*

had been killed by a passing motor vehicle. She raised it on the bottle and endured for two years the growing animal's insistence on equal rights to the house, like the rest of its inhabitants, cat and humans.

Eucalyptus, nothing but eucalyptus, apart from a few shrubby acacias. What a bore! Until the eye becomes attuned to seeing the characteristic shapes, bark colour and texture, leaf size and shape etc. On our drives through the countryside I called out, often incorrectly, the names of the various gums I had learnt about: white gum, salmon gum, red river gum, York gum, as well as the lemon-scented citrodora. Odd one out is the mallee gum which from a single central root radiates out up to five trunks at precarious angles.

When the early settlers felled the bush they were not aware that the indigenous gum trees had evolved over millennia in a delicate balance with the water table. Their roots absorbed enough of the rain to prevent it from raising the saltwater table which lurks only one metre below the surface.

Devoid of thirsty tree roots the salty water now reaches the surface where it evaporates, leaving the destructive salt to produce ever-growing patches of barren land. Those settlers, who needed to wrest a living from the land, did not know what they had set in motion.

Colonizers all over the world have had to learn that imposing their culture, even with the best of intentions, has unforeseeable consequences. As often as not the result is rebellion, be it from the land or from people.

But I have been lucky to watch the efforts of an enlightened new generation who bravely tackle their inherited problem. Mental and physical energy, as well as hard-earned cash, are invested in saving precious cropping land from further decline. Farmers who, in uncaring fatalism, just sit it out, find that the ominous small patches of salt grow ever larger and will finally drive them off their land which, once flourish-ing forest, will turn into desert. During my stay I had plenty of opportunity to view the tell-tale signs – bare patches, fenced to keep the sheep out, in various stages of regeneration.

Maria wrote: "We live in the Wheat Belt here in WA, but it's not irrigated. Over 70 percent of Australia's salt-affected land is in Western Australia. The problem arises because there is very little drainage to the sea. With the centre of Australia being some 15 metres below sea level, there is ingress of salt water into the aquifers, which drain inland where lakes which rarely overflow serve as evaporation ponds and become saturated with salt in the process."

Last year Maria had raised from seed and planted out 11,000 trees. The latest

attempt involves a 40 hectare 'patch' which will need 4 km of fence. Planting trees is not straightforward. A tractor is used to make parallel ridges in the light ochre-coloured soil, into which saltbush and Rhodes grass are seeded to establish a cover that will finally create a friendly environment for the eucalyptus plants.

In conversation with one of the consultants, I heard Maria advocating the use of indigenous grasses. He countered that much research would be needed first to identify them, but listened with interest when told that only two days earlier on our visit to the New Norcia Monastery we had viewed the work of Charles Gardner, a botanist who in the first half of the last century had classified and documented much of Australia's flora, which included a special section of native grasses.

Maria and I had been enthralled by his pen and watercolour paintings of flowers and grasses, whose painstaking detail never got in the way of artistic sensibility, a rare gift reserved for the select who truly love their subject. (Albrecht Durer comes to mind).

Sometimes my friends have to face failure when the rains do not come and their efforts are in vain. Yet one can look beyond temporary failure and let one's eye rest on the many green oases of well established eucalypts, the work of only 12 years. They both know that to save the farm they will have to give much of

The invitation came out of the blue: “Why don’t you come and see for yourself?” The invitation came after 12 years of annual reports on the progress of their Texel sheep-breeding programme and the struggle to save their farm from being swallowed up by the ever-threatening salinity.

The farm of some 4000 acres is situated in Bindi Bindi, 190 km north of Perth, but the salt problem seems to extend over most of Australia’s agricultural land. The OECD estimates that 24 million hectares of the continent’s soil is extremely acidic, and developing the land for agricultural purposes tends to increase the salinity.

I knew Maria when she was in her 20s, always willing to talk and eager to get the most out of life. A brief period as field assistant for a prospecting company gave rise to reflection and subsequent discussion of environmental issues. After some professional training she made use of her splendid physique to become a ski instructor, and later worked as mountain guide in the South Island. It is here that her lively mind became aware of and fully absorbed by the wonders and beauty of our natural heritage.

Interest in the care and preservation of the abundant treasures that were her place of work did not desert her when she moved to the very different world of Western Australian farmland. An already well-developed eye for the smallest detail of the vegetation cover served her well and augured a sensitive approach to her regeneration initiative. Rob would have been invaluable with his local knowledge and keen awareness of the diverse soil types of the farm, which he can tell by the kind of gum most at home on them.

Over the years she had rewarded my interest and eager anticipation of the tree planting we had talked about, with long letters which, however, gave me only a glimpse of what I was to learn on my visit. I was also privileged to look into the harmony which binds together two

very different personalities, a harmony that I became instinctively aware of on entering their comfortable homestead.

Maria, any feminist’s dream, (but totally unaware), is equally at home on tractor and farm bike, can work the sheep dogs and use power tools like any man. At about 50 she is attractive, tall and upright in bearing.

Robert, a kind man and a thoughtful host, has lived all his life on the farm and has developed a temperament that can cope with equanimity with the unpredictable moods of the climate. He carries lightly the heavy responsibility over a most diverse enterprise. They talk to each other about the day’s work, as well as general farming and marketing practice.

This quiet harmony can also be felt out on the farm, on entering a paddock. The animals barely look up and carry on with the business of eating, while the lush green of the newly established gum trees proclaim the success of the regeneration work, a sure sign that their pioneering initiative is on track.

They both love animals, each in their own way. I saw Rob remonstrating with a shearer for being too rough. The attachment and eager attention of their dogs spoke volumes of humane treatment. A small incident which I found amusing illustrated a discrepancy in attitudes however.

Maria could not tolerate losing the life of a single animal in her charge. Many hours were spent raising little lambs on expensive milk powder when they were unable to fend for themselves. One evening when I performed this enjoyable task of bottle feeding, Rob looked on in quiet resignation and said, as one farmer to another: “Maria is wasting time, rearing these creatures which will never do any good. I would have knock-ed them on the head.”

But he never interfered. While I understood his sentiment, I admired him for being able to enter into Maria’s feelings and respect them. Three years ago, Maria picked up a new-born kangaroo, barely alive after its mother



Ten years ago – a paddock on the farm before tree planting

Before...

...and After



This is what the same block of land looks like today

▷▷ their productive land over to its original inhabitants.

Their example has created interest among neighbours. A day was spent in the company of young farmers, all well educated and keen to succeed on farms of up to 6000 ha. They had formed a farm improvement club for the purpose of sharing information about their individual experimental experiences under the guidance of two MAF experts. We travelled a long way to visit the sites under discussion. Big problems with various success, but no sign of giving up. You have to be young and full of energy for this.

Rob says that the land is so hostile to farming that it should never have been cleared. The best they can do now is to learn to understand its nature and co-operate with it. May this piece of wisdom spread and be generally applied before it is too late.

On my last day there, Maria's love for animals became evident once more. When she drove me at speed in their four-wheel-drive pickup, with me clinging with both hands to my seat, to view some hitherto unseen areas, I remarked on a kangaroo happily grazing in their canola field. "They need to eat as we do", from Maria. "if only they weren't so hard on our fences" with a rueful look at a loose wire hanging off a leaning post.

Barossa and the Murray river

On the way to Western Australia I stopped at Adelaide to visit Moculta in the Barossa Valley, where a cousin and his wife live in retirement. Wide expanses of vineyard interspersed with pasture as far as the eye can see with no hill to mark the horizon. It made me realise the vastness of the continent. I got to know the wineries which had hitherto been just names on labels. By a lucky coincidence the viticulturist of Barossa Valley Estate drew my attention to Banrock Station. Fortunately Margaret, my cousin's wife, was in an indulgent mood and offered to take me there, a two-hour drive.

Arriving at the winery I noticed a series of solar panels which provide much of their electric energy. Their property slopes gently towards a loop in the Murray River which encircles hectares of wetland. For visitors there is a walkway – 4.5 km with solid boardwalks – that leads through marshes and shallow lagoons with hiding places for bird watching. I recognised emus, stilts, dotterels, swamp hens (a bit like our pukeko) and others I could not name. Here is a company that can look after its shareholders as well as pay its due to the land in its trust.

There are no signs of any interference with the topography to produce more 'productive' land at the expense of wilderness. Only areas suitable for grapes have been planted, while those that are not, are left to nature. On the slopes I saw painstaking efforts to re-establish the mallee gum, the dominant species there. As in the Barossa Valley, there are salt problems, similar to W.A. but needing to be handled differently.

The Murray river provides irrigation which has to be carefully controlled so as not to raise the water table and, with it, the salt. Soil moisture in the vineyards is monitored constantly, and drip irrigation automatically adjusted to the amount the roots can use and no more. There is a painful awareness that excessive irrigation in other areas has, by reducing the river's volume, increased its damaging salt concentration.

For the Murray river is in trouble. As it winds its way along the Northern border of Victoria it is joined by its main tributary, the Darling river, near Wentworth. Its catchment extends to the East and North as far as New South Wales and Queensland, much of it through salt-lake country. But excessive extraction of water from its seemingly inexhaustible flow has led to its undoing.

Curiosity made me find comfortable access to the river where one of the weirs spans across to facilitate the extraction of irrigation water. A lock on one side assured passage for the river boats. All carefully planned and executed. Overlooking the well-maintained technology I pondered

its eventual futility when the already marginal water quality will have tipped the balance against its exploitation.

Sadly, we often get to know the limits of our knowledge only when, with simplistic thinking, we plunge headlong into problems. Australia's agriculture is under serious threat. It is losing millions of tons of top soil picked up and carried away by storms from the bare parched land.

Farmers who have abused their land are now crying out for government subsidies. Hopefully they will get some relief, for their suffering is real. But when will their government realise that droughts, flooding and rising sea levels may be linked to the internal combustion engine?

In my travels I have been lucky to meet some of the best Australians. Contrary to idle perception, they are able to take defeat with good grace. Stopping for lunch at a most attractively situated winery (name withheld!) close to the Swan river, we were invited to taste their Chardonnay.

While I declined, my cousin yielded to pressure. As it was poured I knew that neither colour nor nose were of Chardonnay character.

The lady sensed my misgivings and pleaded: "Do taste it".

"I don't need to; this is not Chardonnay". "But it is – look at the label."

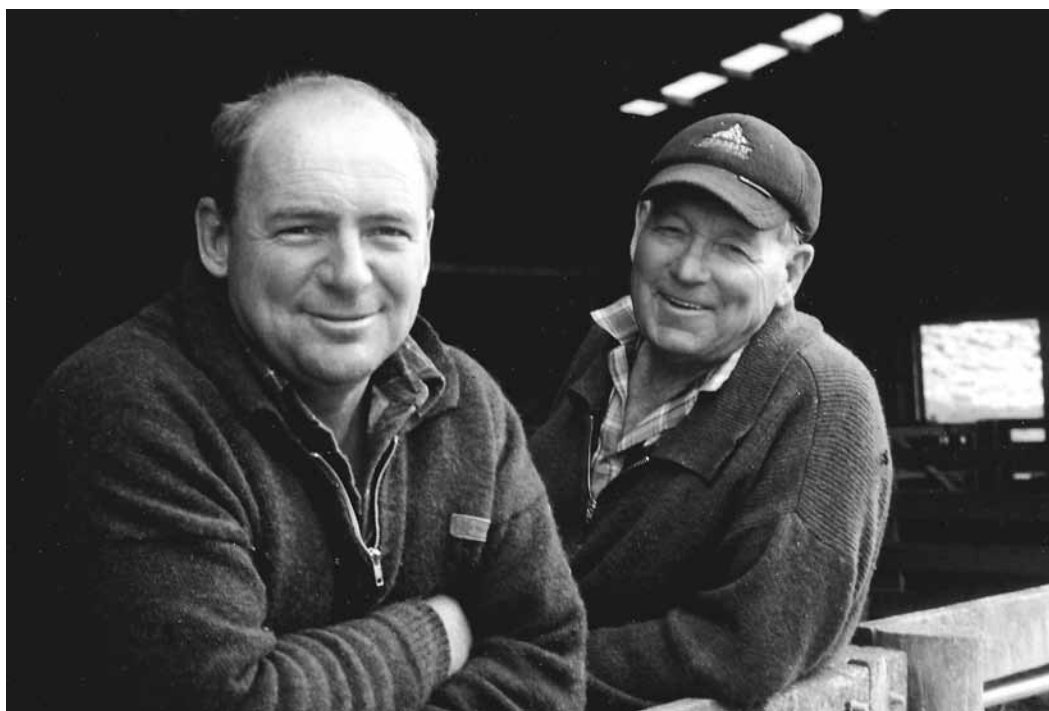
My cousin then whispered: "He is a viticulturist".

"Why didn't you tell me before I opened my big mouth!", she said with well-acted reproach!

When the winemaker joined us at the table later, he explained that only 75 percent of the contents need to be true to label. Tact stopped me from expressing my doubts over this apparent overstatement, and we parted in good humour. ■

Frank Hoffmann is a retired viticulturalist, living in Papakura. He has a passion is for environmental concerns

Dave and Maureen Nicholson came to their 700 hectare sheep farm outside Gore in 1954. They raised a family of seven, and until a few years ago the farm was managed conventionally. Since the '80s their son Mark has taken over. Recently, together they embarked on a totally new direction



Going organic: a hard row to hoe

My interest in 'organics', says *Dave Nicholson*, started when I was a student at Massey, and it matured slowly. There were stages along the way, like reading Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which made me question whether chemicals like DDT were not destructive of the environment. We used to talk about the 'balance of nature', but did we really understand what that meant?

All the time we seemed to be needing more drenches, more vaccines, more fertilisers to maintain the same yield. We were being caught up in a whirlwind of 'you must go on producing more'. But deep down the questions started to well up. By the '90s the organics people were becoming more vocal and their ideas appeared to make sense.

I was strongly influenced by ecologists like David Suzuki. I started reading *Organic New Zealand* and became more aware of general issues of social justice. It was a 'slow burn', a growing awareness.

At first we simply cut out using acid fertilisers. We still felt it would be too tough to go the whole way. Others had made the transition successfully,

but we knew how radical a complete change would have to be. We would have to get rid of vaccines and drenches, organic phosphate dips, acid and high analysis manures. We would have to farm without all those props. It would be like a doctor treating you without being able to write prescriptions for you to go to the chemist.

You're certainly not doing it for money. You are doing it because you are embracing a completely new philosophy of farming. You are starting from the soil. Soil is no longer to be seen just as some-thing you stand a plant up in, pour on the manure and make it grow. The soil is full of life. A healthy soil produces healthy plants which feed healthy animals.

The first challenge is to 'heal' the soil. The acid manures are harmful to soil micro-organisms. You have to aerate the soil and so encourage the growth of aerobic organisms. Most diseases we vaccinate against are active in an anaerobic soil. We are still fighting the same diseases, but in a different way.

The whole farming industry in a sense has been highjacked by the chemical

and drug companies. The dogma has been that we have to use their products. But now we've turned away from the old artificial ways, it would be against my conscience to go back.

It's been easier for me to make the change because I don't get the sort of flak that my son Mark gets. And the climate of opinion is beginning to change anyway.

The high-producing dairy farmers are seeing their stock health bills going up to astronomical heights – up to \$50-60 per cow per year, instead of the two dollars a cow an organic dairy farmer might pay. So a change to organics is beginning to make economic sense. In Southland there are probably 20 farmers who have made the change – but only one or two like us who run sheep and cattle.

The change to organics has to make sense economically, otherwise your bank manager is not going to be impressed. The struggle is in the transition. We've been at it about five years now. We had to 'psych' ourselves up to take the risk and not vaccinate our stock. Our income dropped, but when we come out the other end there will be



▷▷ In July 2000 we signed up with *Biogrow*. We had to sign an affidavit on the last chemicals we had used on the farm. We drew up a new farm plan. It will be July 1, 2003, before we can put a certified *Biogrow* label on all our products and get the organic premium. This will give us a higher return on our lambs, although not on cattle. However, the costs have been a lot lower. The *Biogrow* label is important especially for American and Japanese markets.

The down side for us is that the stock do not fatten as quickly, and the Southland growing season is relatively short. Our stock numbers have gone down. If stock become sick and we have to drench them, we move them into a quarantine paddock.

Down in the pub I find I get ribbed by my mates and called a 'tree hugger'. The guy at the local garage calls me 'Nandor'! You get labelled with the stereotype! We are breaking new ground, since we are the only farmers in Gore to go organic, although a neighbour joined us last year.

When we signed up with *Biogrow*, part of the process was to explain



to the people round about what we were doing. That would be even more important for an orchardist, because of creating a buffer zone for sprays.

We only received one bad reaction from our neighbours. Another simply said: "Good luck to you. We'll be watching with interest." In fact, there hasn't been much negative reaction, because the conventional farmers are having a lot of problems anyway. Another factor is producing what our customers want. If we export to Europe and they won't

have GE products, that has to influence the way you operate.

We are sold on it. We believe in it. We won't go back. It means more work, especially as we have increased the proportion of cattle to sheep on our land. When you go organic, you begin to take more interest in your own well-being too. Farmers get used to living close to nature anyway.

If possible, we eat organic food. Do you know that tea is sprayed 31 times before it's harvested? Conventional potatoes can be sprayed up to 50 times! What do the sprays do to the farm workers? You hear of people suffering headaches and depression. I remember the plunge we used here gave me a headache.

I now seek a balance in my life – not being 'consumed' with greed. In the commercial world you will always run into people trying to take advantage. But the organic philosophy is to live in harmony with nature and with people.

Conventional agriculture has created huge problems. In the last 20 years we have had the three warmest years on record. Climate change has to be a worry. There must be a better way than the conventional way. at first, but now we can see the results. I really believe in it. I feel that nothing but good can come from it. We're doing it to protect the earth – not for the money! We want to leave this land in a fit state for future generations. That's why we are thrilled that our son Mark is so enthusiastic about it.

We know that damage has been done to the earth, so that anything we can do to heal it must be good. Really, we are going back to the way our ancestors here worked the land before there were any sprays and fertilisers. We've been blessed with the gift of understanding what this change is all about..

For me it's a delight to hear the bell-birds again. It has taken a long time for the bird life to recover from the effects of DDT!

Maureen's story



We had a family of seven. I took an interest in the farm always, but I looked after the children, the home and the garden. The beauty of this place – the birds and the butterflies – means a lot to me. I think it rubbed off on the children too.

And when David decided to 'go organic' on the farm, I went along with it. We turned to having only organic food too. You can really taste the difference – in the potatoes and tomatoes for instance. As a family we certainly seem to enjoy better health. Haven't had a cold for years! And I don't think I get as tired.

It's taken a lot of courage to go through with it. It wasn't easy

big premiums for organic meat, not so much for wool.

I'm convinced this is the way of the future because the old intensive farming which has been the way, is no longer sustainable. That's especially true of the dairy industry. It's all being pushed by the big corporations. You lose your old friends a bit when you are not paying them the dollars you used to! But I don't feel sad about that.

They too are going to have to come to grips with the change, because it's the only way ahead. I think the transition to organic will be gradual. A lot of people, for instance, now have gone off superphosphate. We used to spend \$9,000 a year on vaccines alone. And there are a lot of people looking over the fence at us, looking to see if we fall over or not!

At first, when you no longer drench for internal parasites, you see the young stock not doing as well, but you have to make an act of faith that when the soil comes right, they will come right too. The old established farmers in Southland are conservative. They may think you're odd, but they are no longer so derogatory about what we are doing.

Mark was given a lecture by one neighbour that the change wouldn't work, but we've gone ahead. Five years ago those who 'talked organic' were thought to be hippies. Now, opinions have changed. In England the pioneers had the right ideas, but they weren't necessarily the people to make it an economic success. The change now is that people who have been economically successful the old way, are prepared to try to do the same the organic way.

Our daughter Christine was told she had Hodgkins' Disease when she was 24, and had three months to live if the cancer was untreated. It was a huge trauma for us as a family, to say the least. She had been a fit and active girl who used to run half marathons, and she had just completed her Master's degree.

She went through conventional procedures, but she also fully embraced a course of alternative medicines. We are convinced that it was these alternative medicines along with her diet which cured her. But it also made us look at our own lifestyle and our way of farming. My family in general have become aware of diet and health, and have more or less gone the homeopathic way.

Personally I see it as part of my spiritual journey. What we have here is a part of God's creation, and we are here as caretakers. But the modern farmer can become the destroyer of the environment. I could not go back now. The greatest joy for me is to see the next generation not merely taking it on, but taking it from where we have left off.

I took over the family farm, says *Mark Nicholson*, in the late '80s. Both my father and I were educated at agricultural colleges, so we had only learned the conventional perspective on farming.

In the '80s the government stopped sponsoring farming research. It's now done by the companies, and you pay directly for it. But it's no longer independent. The drenches and fertilisers you buy bring the salesmen a percentage. So you're never sure whether what you are buying is good for you or for the environment.

There was a farmer's attitude that 'if a little is good, then more's better'. What we have had to learn is a sense of natural balance – so that you don't overdo your phosphate or use of vaccines. For instance, the more vaccines you use on a sheep, the more its immune system resists the vaccine.

The percentage loss of stock, because of abortions say, might have been one percent – and you could tolerate that. But then it crept up to five percent, in spite of what we spent on vaccination. We tended to treat abortion as a disease to be vaccinated against. In fact, it is

caused by the soil becoming anaerobic – and it was the fertilisers we were putting on that made it like that.

We were creating the conditions for the abortion problem to thrive on. Superphosphate reduces the effectiveness of worms to aerate the soil, which therefore becomes anaerobic. And the soil itself becomes very compact.

We belong to an Organics group who recommended books. *Touchwood Books* in Hastings have been helpful. I like to go back to the original author who is quoted in articles and magazines, and



find out what that person actually said. I found that a lot of the original research was done a long time ago.

There was no flash of light which made us decide to go organic. We talked about it for a couple of years. Christine's cure from cancer certainly motivated us. Alternative ways had done it for her, so we were motivated to try the same. It was a huge change for us. We started experimenting, like using cider or garlic for drenching lambs. All the time we were building up information.

*Tui Motu thanks the Nicholson family
for their willing co-operation.
Interview and photos by Katie O'Connor*

JANUARY

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' (Gen 1:1)

Around me, everywhere, I see the love of God enfolding me.

FEBRUARY

'God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night.' (Gen 1:16)

The glowing moon, the warming sun; God's love embracing everyone.

MARCH

'The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.' (Gen 2:15)

Our work is caring for the land, For people also, hand in hand.

APRIL

'The Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone: I will make him a helper for a partner."' (Gen 2:18)

I have a special friend or two, God's gift of partners, good and true.

MAY

'The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seeds... trees bearing fruit.' (Gen 1:12)

God's gift of trees and fruit and flowers: God's generous love upon us showers!

JUNE

'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky... and let them be for seasons and for days and years.' (Gen 1:14)

The wet and cold of winter's here. God's love is warm, be of good cheer.

St Giles Encouragement

A new year is at hand. We cannot tell what it will bring. If it brings continued struggle, we shall remain undaunted by the following lines:

I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, "I am unknown". And he replied, "Go out into the darkness. It shall be to you better than light and safer than a known enemy. May that Almighty Hand guide and uphold us all. (St Giles)



DECEMBER

'In the beginning was the Word.'
(John 1:1)

*God's love is lying in a manger.
God's love is here in friend and stranger*

NOVEMBER

'The Lord breathed into the
man's nostrils the breath of life.' (Gen 2:7)

*God's breath and life and ours are one!
And we will not be overcome.*

OCTOBER

'God finished the work that God
had done and God rested on the
seventh day.' (Gen 2:2)

*God has for us our work to do.
God gives us time for resting too.*

SEPTEMBER

'God blessed them, and God said to them,
"Be fruitful and multiply."' (Gen 1:28)

*It's spring! New life, new colour's here!
God's promise bursts out everywhere!*

AUGUST

'And God said, "Let us make
humankind in our image according to our
likeness."' (Gen 1:2)

*'And where is God?' our heart may cry.
As close and real as you and I.*

JULY

'... and let there be lights in the dome
of the sky to give light upon
the earth.' (Gen 1:15)

*While days are short and nights are long,
The light of love is bright and strong.*

ment Calendar 2003

ring. If it brings peace, how thankful we shall all
undaunted. I feel that we will all find a message of

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the
ss, and put your hand into the hand of God. That
own way".

King George VI, Christmas Broadcast, 1939)

Mum... why can't I be a priest?

For Jacquie Lambert, her daughter's question reopens old wounds. How much richer, she reflects, would Christians find God's world to be – if they viewed it through a pair of spectacles instead of through a single male lens

Here I was, comfortable having worked through most of my 'stuff' about women and the institutional church, to a point where I was able to belong and worship in a Catholic community with relative 'ease'. Then, over coffee one Sunday after church, my 10-year-old daughter asked me, "Mum, why can't I be a priest?"

It was not a question about a personal calling, but an equally serious question about "what if", and "how come"? I can almost hear the sighs of readers thinking, "here we go again" – and I have to admit to a sneaky thought or two in that direction myself; and yet the truth of it is, we cannot escape this issue. It will not lie down and go away if we ignore it. As with all gospel challenges, it will stay in our faces until we get the point.

for two millennia the Christian church has been visioned, frameworked, legalised and controlled by one gender

I have spent ten years around the issues of women and spirituality, not just within my own personal faith journey, but also in various roles as chaplain, spiritual director, teacher, writer, nurse

and academic. I have been angry to the point of fury in the early years. I have studied to gain knowledge of theology and church history to better understand how we have got to where we are, to better and more legitimately voice my concerns, and also to be challenged in them. I have spent ten years across the divide so to speak, in a Protestant church being nurtured by a remarkable woman minister. I have journeyed the contemplative road as a Benedictine oblate. I have worked intensively on myself to 'clean' up my own psychology and be safer and wiser in my practice.

I thought I had reached a place of relative peace and a workable relationship with the institutional church. I had moved through anger into a deep sadness for the loss the church has experienced through its reluctance to develop and support its feminine expression. This has stifled the myriad of ways that God can be experienced, addressed, worshipped and imaged. I had found a place of quiet personal authority in my own beliefs, yet my daughter had re-opened the issue in new depth and in a way that I feel still begs any credible reply.

A wider question?

I need to identify that this issue is only partially about women priests in the Catholic church. It is in fact much more subtle and critical than that. Having spent five years in a mainline

Protestant church, I continue to have many ecumenical relationships and Protestant directees, including women priests. What appears increasingly

our faith journey is not from point to point. It is as a spiral around a central core of concerns

apparent is that having women as priests is not the magic solution. It is also the *structural framework*, the institutional agenda, the 'spirit' of the institutional church that needs to be revisited. Women priest friends of mine are adamant about the value they feel they contribute as women priests in trying to bring this about, but are also adamant about the difficulties they continue to experience within their own institutions. Simply placing women within an arguably unchanged institutional milieu is not going to 'do it all' for women.

For two millennia the Christian church has been predominantly visioned, frameworked, legalised and controlled by only one gender. Can we even begin to try to imagine how it may have been different? We have looked for so long through one lens of a pair of glasses that it will take us a long time to be able to focus clearly when we add the other

lens. As many Protestant churches have found, when that feminine lens is added a great deal begins to be seen differently, not just the gender of the priest leading a liturgy. It can be daunting – but also incredibly exciting and alive.

Therefore, ordaining women as priests and feminising the church, though related, are not always the same thing. Feminising the church may include facing far deeper questions regarding Christian understanding, expression, and spirituality; modes of leadership and action; dogma and doctrinal questions; patterns of justice and environmental concerns.

This reawakening with my daughter brought a realisation for me that, for all the work I had undertaken to heal this wound in my own spirituality and regardless of all my effort to balance my daughter's spiritual growth and understanding, the wound was nonetheless beginning to repeat within her. I responded instinctually as a protective mother. I found myself back in the anger for a time, and yet also somehow it was different.

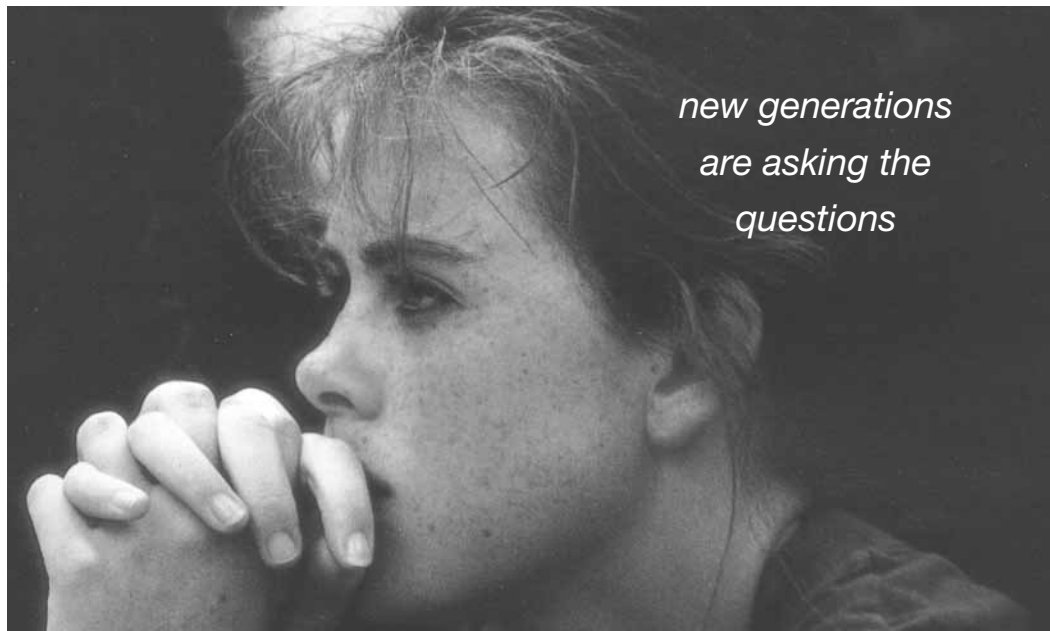
Our life and faith journey is not from point to point overcoming one obstacle to the next. It is rather as a spiral around a central core of concerns, questions and experiences. Each time we return to an issue it is with a different perspective and understanding, and each time the healing continues. Revisiting strong emotions is not negative. Consciously focused anger is a powerful motivator for change and justice.

One very efficient way to silence women in the church is to call them 'angry' or, worse, 'angry feminists'. This dismisses them as emotionally driven and not credible. This time my anger was experienced in response to my own daughter's first real loss of innocence about the institutional church, and also to the reminder that I couldn't just be 'comfortable' with my 'take' on this issue. Comfort breeds silence, and silence ensures ongoing wounding.

Dialogue – or one-way traffic?

As I thought about all the questioning that I and many women have done over the years, one thing repeatedly occurred to me. I have invested an enormous amount of energy, commitment and time into trying to make this relationship between the institutional church and myself work. How much serious time, commitment and energy is the institutional church contributing to the consideration of side of this issue, on behalf of all the women who are asking the questions? I realised that in many ways it is not – and perhaps has never been – a dialogue.

We are living in a time of church accountability. We have seen and heard the Catholic church apologise to various cultures over the process of some missionary approaches. We have heard apologies over the church's role, or lack of it, in the genocide of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. We are witnessing church overtures towards different faiths attempting to find common ground and dialogue. We are also witnessing church accountability and apology regarding sexual abuse within its walls. We hear the church regularly calling upon world leaders for justice and humility towards those they serve and those they are in conflict



*new generations
are asking the
questions*

It has been predominantly about many women trying to find a way to survive with some hope intact within the church – being part of a process of change, hoping in the future, but acknowledging it may not happen in our lifetimes. It has been about trying to live with integrity. It has been predominantly a one-sided process. The prognosis for any relationship in trouble is bleak when only one side is prepared to look critically at them-selves. The relationship between a woman, her faith and her church can be just as intimate and soul-searching as her marriage, for it touches her ultimate beliefs.

with. At what point will the church become accountable to over half its membership for its treatment and perception of them?

As my daughter reminded me that day, it is vitally important that the questions keep on getting asked. The issues have not been solved, and new generations are asking the questions.

The frustration encountered in trying to change the institution sees many women finding solace and meaning in women's groups and women's spiritual reading. I too have found meaning and affirmation in this way.



▷▷ However, this can also act like a sedative. We begin to feel that at least author/person understands and affirms us. If we are not careful, it can almost silence us in the outside world. When women's spiritual concerns are kept private, in the home, in contemplative practice, within women's church groups – given voice only at the occasional approved alternative service, or practiced by the token virtue of being a woman in a male-dominated religious group – they have little power to influence the institution. They struggle to present the gospel challenge of radical inclusivity, and can be effectively muffled or silenced. We need to feel affirmed, nourished and included, but we also need to live our faith with integrity, challenge and courage in the outside world. We need to keep asking the questions loudly. We need to image Christ.

Images of Christ

My daughter and I spent a great deal of time that Sunday discussing women and the church, the images of God she had, why they were mostly male and where that had come from, after all my efforts to keep it balanced. We discussed the language of the liturgy and the

hymns. I was reminded how influential the institution is in our spiritual growth and understanding particularly at that impressionable age. I may have learnt to filter the words and images through my own faith understandings, to reframe them, but children are not so sophisticated.

Especially we talked about the irony of why, in a world where parents try to support and encourage their children to be anything they want or feel called to be, my daughter can be anything a priest in her own church, an institution whose sole reason for existence ultimately is to represent the unconditional love of God. We discussed how, even if she ever felt called to that role, her discernment would be disregarded as misplaced for the sole reason that she is female.

As an intelligent questioning female, in the light of those contradictions how is she to see the church with any degree of credibility as she grows older? How would we as parents counsel her if it were any secular institution denying her on these grounds?

I am still struggling with how to help her find integrity in a relationship like

that. I must admit that I am struggling myself – yet again. I look around church on a Sunday, and I relate to all the people who sit with me, parishioners and priests alike, all struggling, like me,

*at what point will
the church become
accountable to over half
its membership*

to understand, to build and live their faith. We are a faith community. That has never been the question.

I believe in the struggle and hopes of the people; I see Christ bursting through and around them, . I just don't know about the box he and we are being asked to dance in. I know he must be spilling through the margins, perhaps finding greater room to move in the streets. Our boxes have never defined the dance of God. If the box is gone or just reframed, the dance for sure will continue. What are we so afraid of? ■

*There is a place within God's
song
For voices high and true*

IMAGO DEI

*Yet softer notes and complex tone
Are missing from the hue.*

*While up above deep voices ring
And instruments tone loud
In a cell below the orchestra
Is a choir of light, sweet muffled sound.*

*Forced to tap out harmonies
In rhythms soft upon the walls
Not wanted where the big boys play
Yet honouring God's call.*

*Not welcomed up to stand and claim
The gift of which they're born
Their truth is judged and shadowed by
An emphasis on form.*

*So their songs are danced in gowns of grace
Of priestly form within*

*Yet are stifled on their lips
As they're asked to celebrate behind.*

*This keeps their songs from taking flight
Half written on the page
Because the cost to have them join
Would tone an ending age.*

*So they have a voice beneath the stage
A conscience for the lie
And angels light upon these walls
and join God's anguished cry:
"How come this plight for half my heart –
my image – yet denied?"*

Jacquie Lambert

Making Room in the Inn

Glynn Cardy

A parishioner wrote: *"I bought a book of Bible stories and started reading it to my younger grandson, aged four. He had seldom ever been to church (except at Christmas), so I tried to explain who Jesus was: 'Jesus was the baby you saw in the crib scene at Christmas'.*

My grandson replied confidently: 'HE'S COMING BACK'.

'What do you mean?'

'We saw some writing on a big rock on our way home from Rotorua, and my brother read it to me.'"

Frankly I wonder whether Jesus would even be allowed into New Zealand. The 1st century Palestinian Jew called Jesus, boarding an Air New Zealand flight in the Middle East, would be a prime terrorist suspect – wrong colour, wrong language, and wrong political associations (remember Simon the Zealot!). He might get away with a tourist visa, but he would certainly not get a work visa – no financial reserves, no tertiary qualifications, no friends in high places (save One!!), and we've got plenty of chippies already.

"Sorry Jesus, but try to understand, mate, that we gotta be careful down here, preserving our culture, way of life, and all. Can't open our doors to every wandering preacher who thinks he's God. Look, you don't even know how to speak English!"

Since the General Election, parliamentarians have consistently opposed the number of new immigrants, singling out people who have come from various Asian and Eastern countries. It seems that Winston Peters and his followers are concerned about the effect of welcoming people who are racially, culturally, and religiously different from the 'older' migrant communities, namely Polynesian, European, and Maori.

The Anglican Archdeaconry of Maungawhau geographically spreads across about a third of the Auckland

Isthmus and includes nine parishes. As well as my own parish of St Andrew's, three have a large number of parishioners originally from India. There are also in our area Anglican Chinese, Tongan, and Indian congregations. Of course there are also many non-Anglican Christians, who have immigrated in the last ten years or so, worshipping locally.

So, regardless of current or future immigration policies, our community has changed. We are multi-racial and multi-cultural. Schools make special provisions for children of particular religious backgrounds. Many of our schools are blest with children from 20 or more different cultures. We are a cosmopolitan community.

The fear is, if I understand Winston and his supporters correctly, that the customs, norms, and values the 'older' migrants have grown up with will change. Limited migration *per se* is fine – as long as the migrants learn our ways and significantly change their own.

New immigrants signify a world where, as Sir Paul Reeves recently said, national realities of economics, defence, and trade globally interlock. No longer can we pretend to isolate ourselves from the world. People are on the move, as they look for opportunities and fulfilment not available in their country of origin. After all, that's what brought many of our ancestors here. It's a situation that must be managed but it opens up the possibility of a rich diversity.

There are, though, some matters that need to be kept in mind: the need for retaining a common language, as well as encouraging the learning of multiple languages; the need for ways to resolve conflict, promote tolerance, and discourage any form of violence; and the need to encourage participation in the

community – socially, economically, and politically. Such needs place demands on all who live here, not just those recently arrived. Change is never easy. It's also unavoidable.

The international company, called the Church, has frequently made mistakes in talking across cultures. It has been imperialistic, racist, chauvinistic, and very violent. And it still makes mistakes. Yet its message, at its simplest – *God loves everyone* – transcends the borders of culture, class, and race.

This is a very subversive message. No one has special access to God. We are all equally loved. No matter what our language, colour, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, we are all equal in God's sight. It is a vision without borders and privilege. It is a vision critical and suspicious of borders and privilege.

At Christmas time we remembered the birth of Jesus. We sang carols, we went to church, we gave presents, and we felt good. Yet it is timely to remember *Matthew's* account of that birth. Remember the Magi. On their camels they crossed the boundaries of culture, religion, and language to find their truth in Jesus. The whole gift-giving industry should be very grateful that immigration control let them through!

Remember too the flight into Egypt. Following the birth, the murderous wrath of Herod was unleashed. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus fled for their lives, finding shelter in Egypt. Jesus was a refugee. The Holy Family had little money. They had no relatives in Egypt. They were young, dependent, and racially and religiously other. They were very vulnerable. Thank God for the immigration policies of Egypt! Thank God there was room in their 'inn'. May there always be room in ours. ■

The bells of Taizé calling us to prayer

Christian churches in Eastbourne, Wellington, are fascinated by the beauty of Taizé prayer. So Reuben Hardie decided to go over to France and see for himself

About two years ago a large signboard appeared on the side of the road at the entrance into Eastbourne with the word *Taizé* on it. The sign had most people in Eastbourne completely baffled. Like most New Zealanders, few people in Eastbourne had heard of Taizé, and by and large it was pronounced 'Tazzy' – as if it were an abbreviation of Tasmania.

Now, more than two years later, the Anglican, Catholic and Presbyterian Churches of Eastbourne join together monthly to hold an evening Taizé service. It is an established part of the ecumenical ministry in Eastbourne, and it draws 70 or so participants each month from throughout the community, young and old alike. So what makes Taizé such an appealing form of worship? I decided to go and see for myself.

Last year I travelled to visit the Taizé community. I arrived at the beginning of September along with another 2000 or so young people who had come for the week (some weeks there are up to 6000!). It was the middle of the French autumn and the surrounding countryside was like a scene out of Proust's great novel.

Each morning, in typical 'kiwi' fashion, I began the day with a run. The village of Taizé (from which the community derives its name) is a small, insignificant village a few miles north of Cluny, in the heart of the rolling plains of Burgundy. Fields, forests and vineyards stretch as far as the eye can see, and apart from the distant sound of the TGV the countryside seems completely un-touched by the last hundred years. Perhaps even more remarkable, the village appears unaffected by the enormous community of Taizé 100

metres up the road. It's a place of extraordinary beauty.

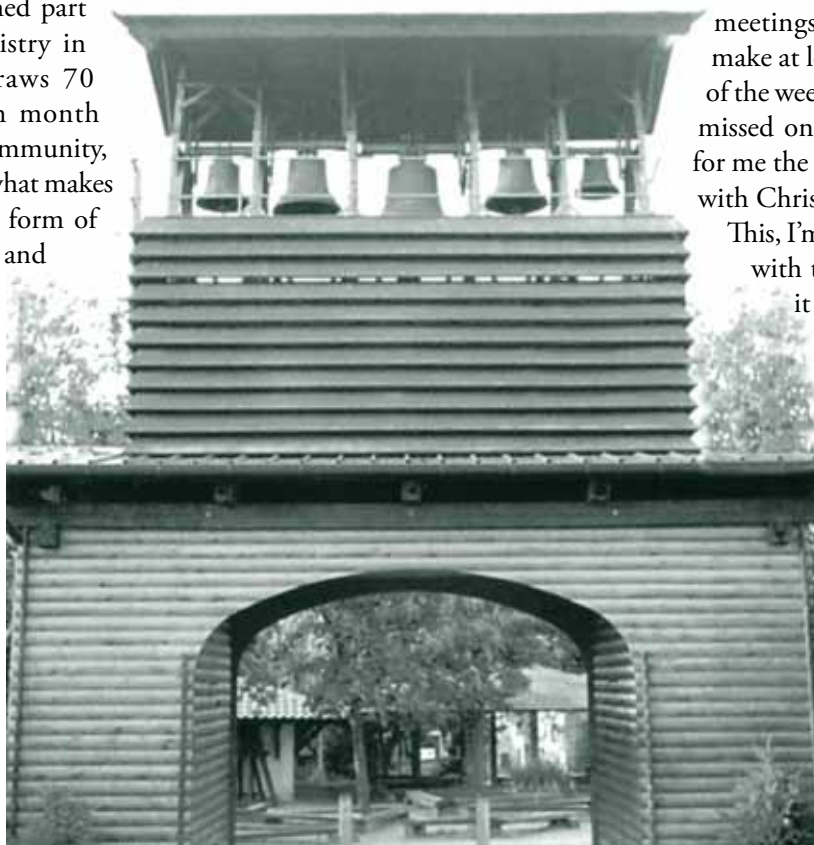
At 8 am every day the bells of Taizé chime throughout the community calling one and all to prayer. A little over 50 years ago Brother Roger, founder and prior of the community, began praying three times a day in a little house he bought there.

Now, in spite of the fact the community has grown beyond hopes or expectations, every aspect still revolves around that same prayer. When I arrived and was told that there were three prayer meetings a day, I hoped I would make at least two during the course of the week. By the weekend I hadn't missed one. These meetings remain for me the most powerful encounters with Christ I have yet to experience.

This, I'm sure, had something to do with the mass of young people;

it had something to do with sitting side by side with Catholics, Lutherans, Swedes, Algerians, even the odd Australian! It had something to do with the beautiful music and wisdom offered by Brother Roger. It had something to do with all these things. It had everything to do with Christ.

Every evening Brother Roger remained after the prayer meeting to



bless or share words of encouragement with any who chose to approach him. It seems to me Brother Roger is very much the heart and soul of Taizé. Every evening, youth gathered at his feet for a blessing, while a train of children followed him wherever he went like a scene out of the Pied Piper. He spoke briefly with each person and then offered a blessing with a short prayer in French.

When I went forward for a blessing and told him where I was from, I was fortunate enough to receive an invitation to eat with him and the rest of the Brothers at Sunday dinner. It was a rare opportunity to observe him interacting with those who believe so strongly in his vision.

While the community of Brothers numbered a handful in the beginning, there are now over a hundred – Protestant and Catholic, from all corners of the world. These Brothers are not just to be found in Taizé; there are also small fraternities working in some of the poorest parts of the world.

For me Taizé exemplified a remarkable simplicity of life. This was not just found in the beauty of the prayer but in every aspect of the community. The food was some way short of typical French cuisine. One meal was just a bowl of sliced carrots. There was certainly nothing elegant about the presentation. However the three meals a day provided a great opportunity to meet young people from places I had only encountered before in an atlas.

Like the food, the accommodation was also very basic. Apart from tent sites the bunkrooms were sparse and barely lit. I shared a room with three Germans, three Frenchman and a couple of Algerians. The common language used in the bunkrooms was broken English. It was easy to find commonalities, and conversations seemed to linger long into the night. When I left the bunkrooms on the last day I discovered that my bag was a little lighter. It seemed surprisingly natural that someone had decided he needed some of my possessions more

than I did!

The Bible study and discussion consisted of a simple dialogue of the Christian message. The discussion each morning was preceded by a talk by one of the Brothers either introducing a passage from the Gospels or retelling a story from the Old Testament. The talks were simple, interactive and allowed translations to take place in several other languages. Small groups were formed at the conclusion of the talks, and they dispersed into different parts of the complex to discuss some of the questions that had been raised. Discussion did not stay on the topic for very long, and quickly turned to the cultural peculiarities that made up the group dynamic.

After the evening prayer meeting which ended at around 10pm, Oyak – an open-air café – was opened. Only one glass of beer or wine was sold to each person per night, and on a few occasions some visitors found that a little difficult.

While I was there, two groups in particular were responsible for the spontaneous singing and dancing each night: a large group of Spanish youth sang, danced and laughed in a large circle; and a Rock Band of four young French women with great looks, loads of enthusiasm but very little talent. It was a perfect counterbalance to the serenity of the prayer meetings.

My week at Taizé stands out as one of the greatest experiences of my life. I discovered truly inspiring prayer, I found simplicity exemplified, and perhaps most of all, 30-31 found incredible encouragement for my personal and professional journey with God. I would recommend a visit there to young and old alike. It is a community appealing for the beauty of its location, the beauty of its prayer and for its simplicity. ■

Reuben Hardie is a Presbyterian Minister serving St Ronan's Church, Eastbourne

Adult Education Trust

<http://homepages.paradise.net.nz/aet>

Rev George I. Drury, SJ

Study Retreat

'The Experience of God'

In reference to the work of Karl Rahner SJ

March 8th and March 9th 2003: Sat 9am-4pm & Sun 9am-3pm

**St Thomas of Canterbury College – Edmund Rice Centre
69 Middlepark Rd Sockburn ChCh**

Cost: \$50 (\$40 students/unwaged)

Bring your own lunch tea and coffee provided

Registration essential Ph (03) 348 3912, 366 4911, 021 449201

Fr George Drury is a Jesuit priest, who is the Ignatian Professor of Theology at Weston Jesuit School of Theology Cambridge Mass. For the last 30 years Fr Drury has been actively engaged in teaching Philosophy, Theology and in the apostolate of the Spiritual

Other AET Events:

13th Feb 7.30-9.30 'A Consistent Ethic of Life',

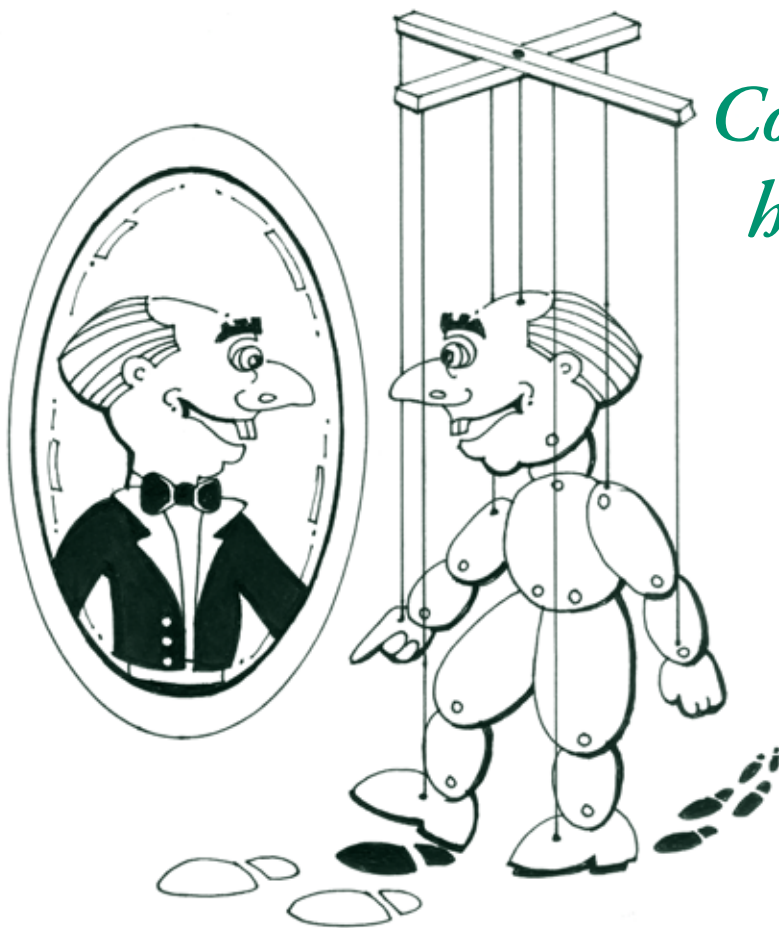
Mary Eastham, Mercy Library Caledonian Rd (Koha \$10/\$8)

20th Feb 7.30-9.30 Themes from the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius (1)

George Drury SJ, Mercy Library ChCh (Koha \$5)

20th March 7.30-9.30 Themes from the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius (2)

George Drury SJ, CSN Tuam St ChCh (Koha \$5)



Could God really have made us free ...or are we just imagining it?

Richard Dowden

It has been stated: “A God who knows all things is inconsistent with human free will”. This is usually meant as an argument against the existence of God since the existence of free will is considered as self-evident. The argument can be written as a series of statements, each one following logically from the previous one:

1. God knows everything.
2. Therefore God knows the future.
3. Therefore the future is pre-ordained.
4. Therefore, EITHER there is no free will OR there is no God.

Is the last statement true? Does it follow logically from the first three? Is there a hidden assumption which is false – and if so, what? Yes, there *is* a hidden assumption, but first let's look at the statements in reverse order.

Statement 4

There is a Christian doctrine, accepted by some Christians at least, called *Predestination*. Each of us as individuals is ‘predestined’ to be saved or damned. To me, that implies no free will, so we must be undeserving of reward or punishment.

But this is fundamentally opposed to the teaching of Christ as presented in the Gospels, for instance in many parables in which the characters were given a free choice and exercised it for good or bad. I guess most Christians would claim that God knowing the Future does not affect our free will – and so our deserving of reward or punishment. Thus I find that Statement 4 follows from Statement 3. If Statement 4 is false, then Statement 3 must be false. If we have free will, then the future cannot be pre-ordained.

Statement 3

Although believed in various forms for millennia – such as ‘Fate’ and ‘*Che sera sera*’, what evidence is there for a pre-determined or pre-ordained Future? One might use the apparent existence of free will as counter-evidence, but far more convincing evidence comes from experimental Physics.

In the late 17th Century, Sir Isaac Newton published the three laws of motion in his *Principia*. These laws applied universally – to cannon balls and to planets. In particular, the future position of a particle is completely

determined by its present position and velocity. The same laws can be used for an assembly of particles, even if they collide with one another.

Thus, according to these laws, the future state of a large set of particles, such as the molecules of gas in a container, is completely determined by the state (position and velocity) of each particle at any previous time. This could be extended to every particle (every atom) in the entire Universe, including the particles in our own bodies and brains. Therefore, the Future is completely determined by the Present, or by the exact state of matter at the Big Bang at time zero.

Clearly, only God who knows everything could know the exact state of every atom in the Universe at some instant. But, knowing that, He would auto-matically know the Future (by calculation from Newton's Laws of Motion). A finite being may lack the resources to find the exact state at the Present to calculate the Future. It is enough if Newton's Laws reveal that the Future is knowable in principle.

About 250 years later, physical evidence began to accumulate which showed that Newton's Laws of Motion did not apply to very light (very low mass) particles.

Sir Ernest Rutherford and his research

student, Ernest Marsden (later to be Professor of Physics at Wellington and to set up New Zealand's DSIR), discovered that atoms consist of a tiny, positively charged nucleus surrounded by negatively charged electrons.

The initial idea was that the electrons are held in orbit around the nucleus by the electrical attraction of opposite charges, just as planets are held in orbit about the Sun by gravitational attraction. In fact, atoms don't work like miniature Solar Systems. From these speculations was born *Quantum Mechanics*, which apply to all particles regardless of mass. Newton's mechanics become an adequate (but never perfect) approximation for large particles, such as golf balls or planets.

The fundamental discovery from Quantum Mechanics (**the Uncertainty Principle**) is that one can never know the *exact* state (position and velocity) of any particle. The lighter the particle (like an atom or electron), the worse our knowledge of its state. I am not talking about human inadequacy here – the exact state is unknowable because it involves a contradiction. So, the conclusion from experimental Physics is that, even in principle. Thus Statement 3 is false.

Statement 2

Consider the two statements: “*God can do anything*” and “*God cannot do everything*.” One is true and one is false. Both cannot be true. Furthermore, the logical definition of God as the sole, non-contingent being – the “First Cause”, as St Thomas Aquinas said – requires the first alone to be true.

St Anselm's definition of God as the most perfect conceivable being, requires God to be perfect in every way, omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), etc. There are some things which God cannot do, although we can, because they are contrary to being omnipotent. Thus God cannot sin. God cannot deceive. God cannot have created the world (the whole Universe) 6,000 years ago with “planted” evidence to the contrary. In

general, God cannot do what is contrary to His omnipotence. He cannot do what is logically impossible.

Similarly, God is omniscient, so cannot “unknow” or forget. God does not know what Lois Lane thinks about Superman, because she doesn't exist – she is fictitious. And so is the Future!

Suppose God were to know the Future. If God knows the Future, then the Future is real. This would imply that, since God made everything, God made the Future by building all the laws of Physics and the fundamental constants into the Big Bang. Or – worse still – perhaps God is continuously controlling every-thing (including us!) to fulfil the Future.

There are two consequences of this, both absurd. Firstly, it would mean there is no free will, which is contrary to the teaching of Christ. Secondly, it would imply that **God planted false evidence** (via Quantum Mechanics) that the exact Future (even if only one second into the future) is not a consequence of the present state. This is about as absurd as the belief that God created the world in 4004 BC together with all the evidence to the contrary!

My point is that God made everything, including the truths being slowly but continuously uncovered (“discovered”) by science. This uncovering and interpretation by us mortals is not always done well, but it is self-correcting, so that eventually we get it right. Heisenburg discovered the *Uncertainty Principle* in 1927. It has been continually tested and built upon ever since, so we can be sure we have got it right.

Heisenburg didn't invent it. He merely uncovered a fundamental truth which God built into the laws of physics at the Creation. Thus to say the future is totally determined is contrary both to directly revealed truth and to truth indirectly revealed by scientific discovery.

Parallel Universes

There is a school of thought called the “Parallel Universes Theory” which supposes that there is an infinite (and

still increasing!) number of Universes corresponding to the infinite number of possible futures.

This gets around the problems above. It allows for free will, for every time we make the most trivial decision – ‘tea or coffee?’, ‘one lump or two?’ – we make another Universe. Since we cannot test this theory even in principle, I find it the ultimate in overkill!

In any case, it raises other problems. If these Universes are real, God must have made them (and must be making them at an increasing rate). You, Dear Reader, would already be in millions of these Universes and so there are millions of You – some virtuous, even saints, some wicked. Are each of these identical copies of You to be rewarded or punished by God accordingly?

I prefer to believe that a single fixed Future is fictitious, so God doesn't know the Future (with capital “F”). However, He knows all possible futures, together with the probability of each of them “coming true”. This is completely consistent with Physics (which God made after all. We physicists merely discover what has existed from the beginning of time). It is vaguely similar to the “Parallel Universes Theory” without requiring the existence of all those Universes.

Statement 1

Yes, God knows everything *knowable*, including all possible futures. For a human analogy, suppose you are looking at a very detailed map of a trackless wilderness. You see it all spread out before you. You see the virtually infinite ways you might tramp on it. You can imagine yourself climbing a ridge here, crossing a river there.

You may plan a route to leave behind for possible rescuers, but the fine details (exactly where you will make every footprint) will be left until you make the trip. So we may say with confidence that God made the Universe the way it is, with built-in uncertainty to ensure free will. ■

Goin' fishing

Paul Andrews SJ has fished the South Island rivers with great delight, as well around his native Dublin. Here, he shares his joys

This passion for fishing puzzles me: is it a temptation or is it a gift of God? At times it seems quite irrational: spending so much time travelling to the bank of a river or lake, and casting a raft of flies onto opaque water, time after time; often coming home with nothing. I know how it started. I was a ten-year-old on holiday in Glenbeigh when an old Kerryman taught me how to cast flies on the river Behy. There I felt the first tug of a struggling brown trout, and there I lost my first substantial fish through impatience. After that for many years fishing was only a magical memory, or a summer pleasure, confined to two weeks near a river or lake. I must have been over forty when access to a motor bike, and later a car, brought rivers and lakes within reach.

Typical: one night last summer I fished the Boyne for two hours. It was bliss, a warm, scented August evening, the sun fading and a half-moon rising, the fish plopping on the surface as they fed. I was casting well. Though I tried a range of dry flies, I did not touch a fish; yet it was a perfect evening. That touches something deep about fishing: it mirrors the imbalance between human effort and God's grace. You may appear to have done everything right, but get no results.

It lends itself to a peculiar sort of prayer. Part of it is possibly unworthy petition. *Lord send me a fish – not by a miracle like St Peter, but one I can cast to and catch honestly.* My experience of that sort of prayer is not encouraging. But there is another sense of God which is less

focussed. You are alive in lovely country, conscious of God in nature round you and in your own heart and body. You may be alone, mercifully far from telephones or other voices. If you have companions, they are special partners in the boat, congenial, not competitive. I think of Brian, Michael, Paul, Ciary - all male as it happens,

And the reward, the peak experience of striking and playing a fish, resembles the orgasmic joy of the gambler when he hits the jackpot.

Friends say: *Ah fishing must be so relaxing.* True, but only in the way that all intense concentration is relaxing. Not in the common stereotype of



though it is known that women have an uncanny ability to attract salmon.

You may reach for God, but admittedly it is not all grace. Some anglers do better than others. Their eyes pick out not merely the movement of trout under the water, but the size, colour and shape of the insects that are hatching. Their casting is more delicate, and they have an intuitive sense of where the fish may lie. Still, part of the attraction of fishing is its unpredictability. You are engaging with the appetites of creatures in another element, below the surface. At times it seems a lottery, casting fifty times for the one moment of contact.

sitting on the bank (a worm at one end of the line, and a fool at the other) and waiting. It is not like that. On the river you are casting, watching and listening intently, ready to strike in a split-second reaction to a boil in the water or a touch on the line: trigger-happy like an anti-aircraft gunner.

People say *I would not have the patience for fishing.* You do need patience, but not in the sense of waiting for fish; if they are rising at all, every moment on the water is enjoyable. Patience is needed when your line tangles in your clothes or a bush, or loops in on itself, and you are trying to unravel tiny knots

in invisible nylon, disabled while the fish are jumping around you.

On this small planet, so heavily manipulated that you can have strawberries at Christmas and turkey in June, where the seasons have lost much of their meaning, fishing remains tightly anchored to the phases of nature. In October, when the trout are preparing to spawn, you put away your rod, tidy your fishing bag, and settle down to tie flies for the winter. You accept the discipline and frustrations of the closed season, and yearn for March. The draw of the river and lake goes deeper than reason can reach. Belloc touched it when writing (in *The Path to Rome*) of the sense of order and accomplishment which attaches to a day one has opened

by Mass:

The most important cause of this feeling of satisfaction is that you are doing what the human race has done for thousands upon thousands of years. Whatever is buried right into our blood from immemorial habit, that we must be certain to do if we are to be fairly happy and, what is more important, decent and secure of our souls.

Thus one should from time to time hunt animals, or at the very least shoot at a mark; one should always drink some kind of fermented liquor with one's food – and especially deeply on great feast-days; one should go on the water from time to time; and one should dance on occasions; and one should sing in chorus. For all these things man has

done since God put him into a garden and his eyes first became troubled with a soul...

Now in the morning Mass you do all that the race needs to do and has done for all these ages where religion was concerned; there you have the sacred and separate Enclosure, the Altar, the Priest in his Vestments, the set ritual, the ancient and hierarchic tongue, and all that your nature cries out for in the matter of worship.

Some things have changed since Belloc. Mass is no longer in *the ancient and hierarchic tongue*, some animals have been wiped out by hunting, and he writes as a man, not a woman. So he sounds politically incorrect. But for anglers, he rings true. ■

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To apply or for further information, write to:

Lighting the Fires, Womens Study Project
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Helping the Dominican Sisters in East Timor



There are many young women who want to join religious life and become Dominican sisters in East Timor. At this stage, there is nowhere for them to live.

The East Timorese Dominicans own a small piece of land in Dili and they hope to build a simple house there, but they have no money. The New Zealand Dominican sisters, their ex-pupils, families and friends, have launched an appeal to raise US\$130,000 to build a house of formation for the East Timorese sisters.

If you would like to find out more about this project, please ring:

Roxane Parkinson OP (04) 477 1897
or Maureen O'Hanlon OP (06) 355 0272.

If you would like to contribute to the project, please send your donation to:

East Timorese House Project,
PO Box 13-688, Johnsonville,
Wellington 6032.

In the Spirit of Christmas

Kathy Watson

Like many New Zealanders, I found myself at a small country church on the Sunday after Christmas. Part of the holiday ritual is attending Sunday Mass in the community you travel to for the Christmas break. Mine was at Akaroa, a small seaside town where my retired parents live.

Two things always strike me about this occasion. Firstly, it is always the feast of the Holy Family. The readings for the day centre on the duties and responsibilities within families. My father is usually the reader and always gives us a piercing stare for "Children, obey your parents". I always wonder why wives have to be subject to their husbands, but husbands are told simply to love their wives, but I understand more fully now about caring for your parents in their dotage. What a wonderful set of readings to share in that special time between Christmas and New Year.

The second important feature of this

occasion is the flower arrangements. Somehow, rural New Zealand is not afraid to create living testimonies to their local heritage. Here, town meets country, introduced meets native, and the whole comes together with a unity that often eludes us as people.

This year, the flowers at Akaroa were no exception. Harakeke provided the framework, within which Christmas lilies sat beside our native arthropodium lilies, pohutakawa bloomed beside South African proteas while honeysuckle and angelica provided further contrast in the display. All this, lovingly arranged in the busy days of Christmas. I spent a long time looking at the flowers and considering our nation. Maybe I should have listened more closely to Father's sermon on the Holy Family. Somehow, I think the flowers said it all. ■

Reflections on Youth

*My world has shrunk
to one small patch of sky
and from my sickbed where I lie
sometimes I see a metal bird go by
trailing its white tail feathers in the sky.*

*Then would I go where glints
the blue Aegean in the sun
to sweet Hellenic meadows
filled with flowers
to sit in the dark olive shade for hours
and watch the glorious golden light fade.
Then down to the Tavernato drink wine
with happy men, who link their arms
and dance the night away. Ah! If only all
the world were such as they
and I was not another world away.*

Margery Giles (aged 94)



Anyone interested in the
formation of a local
chapter of the
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Thomas Merton Society**
is invited to contact:

**Father Ray Schmack,
Holy Cross Chapel,
PO Box 485,
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Useful background reading for the Year of Mark

Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel

David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey and Donald Michie
Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999, 176pp Price: \$51.95 (2nd Ed.)

The Quest for Home: The Household in Mark's Community Michael F. Trainer, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001, 201pp Price: Aust \$47.95

Review: Kath Rushton

Mark as Story is an expanded edition of a popular book which focuses on reading the Gospel of Mark as a story. Although this gospel came from an oral culture and was probably composed to be told aloud all at one time, the authors focus on the reading of *Mark* as most modern people will read it rather than hear it.

The importance of considering the Gospel as a whole rather than in the little pieces that we usually hear in Sunday readings is strikingly made in the first chapter. The authors' translation of the Gospel is set out as a short story without the chapter and verse designations. Paragraph divisions show a shift in scene, a change of speaker or the end of a conflict.

The word-for-word style of translation is faithful to features of Markan style such as the repetition. The recurring use of the word *and* to introduce sentences offers an insight into the urgency of this Gospel's portrayal of Jesus. The word *hodos* is always rendered as 'way'. This differs from familiar translations in which this one word is rendered variously as 'way', 'journey', and 'road' thereby undercutting the consistency found in the Greek. This approach to translation enables the reader to see links in

the story, as when 'the heavens are ripped open' at the Baptism of Jesus and the 'curtain of the sanctuary is ripped' after the death of Jesus.

This book is free of the jargon that often afflicts Biblical studies that draw on Narrative Criticism. Chapter 2 looks at the Markan narrator who tells this story in an engaging manner. Chapter 3 surveys the settings of the gospel under the headings of Cosmic, Political-Cultural, Journey, Israel's Past and The Journey as the Way of God. There are chapters on plot; the character of Jesus; and the characters of the authorities, the disciples and the people. Two appendices offer exercises for a reader or a group.

While this book highlights the importance of story in our shared life together, Michael Trainer's *The Quest for Home* centres on "the need that every human being has for a home, a place to belong for refuge and safety" (p.1) and which is expressed in our longing for a community of faith. In *Mark's Gospel* which stresses the solitude of Jesus and the disciples' lack of understanding of Jesus, the house is mentioned many times. For Trainer, it is the place of intimacy and "the architectural indicator of the discipleship gathering in companionship with Jesus".

Trainer, a diocesan priest and president of the Catholic Adult Educator Association of Australia (who teaches New Testament at the Adelaide College of Divinity, Flinders University) divides his accessible book into three parts. *Part One* presents an excellent overview of the 'House' in the ancient world with illustrations and draws on Greek and Roman writers to explain the structure and ideals of the household. From

this background, Trainer illustrates how Mark is both pro-cultural and counter-cultural in the portrayal of the household of Jesus and discipleship.

Part Two reads *Mark's Gospel* through the lens of the household under the following chapter headings: The Homeless Wilderness, The Gathering of the New Household; Strengthening the Household, The Missionary Household, The Suffering Household; The Household and the Temple, and Homelessness. Each chapter has helpful illustrative charts and excellent summaries. The author's skill as teacher and adult educator weaves into the exploration of the Biblical text concerns and challenges for today's households of faith.

In *Part Three* "The Gospel Household in a Gospel Community", Trainer suggests a 'domestic' reading of this gospel. Home searchers and church leaders are asked to consider five insights into a way to be Jesus' household of disciples and Christian communities today, by being concerned about the present; being a social alternative; having an ability to recognize and address causes of division; being sites of hospitality, communion and outreach; and being local, concrete, practical, tangible expressions of the gospel.

I used these innovative, readable books which make sound scholarship accessible, with clergy who found them good companions in their quest to prepare for the Lectionary's Year of Mark. The greatest gift that a busy preacher could give to their Christian household is to read and ponder these books. For all members of the households of faith and particularly educators at every level, these books provide hope for our Christian life together as well as a wealth of information on *Mark's Gospel*. ■

Iraqi 'Bush' fires fuel Sharon's belligerence

The threat of war in Iraq is constantly in the news as George W. Bush continues the build-up of arms and equipment in the Middle East. The massive media coverage is diverting attention from Ariel Sharon's continuing subjugation of the Palestinian people and the appalling injustices being perpetrated against them. The Palestinian Arabs are now a suppressed minority within Israel. Sharon is asking the US for \$22 billion to continue his 'war on terror' – more tanks and helicopter gun ships to destroy the West Bank completely.

Missile attacks against crowded apartment buildings, the levelling of entire neighbourhoods in refugee camps, cities like Nablus under constant siege, the building of a massive wall around the West Bank and Jerusalem, these acts of terrorism are collectively punishing all Palestinians for being Palestinian. Now Sharon refuses to allow Palestinian representatives to attend peace talks in London and denies children access to educational institutions.

The universities and schools in Palestine are closed and opened by the wilful and punitive decree of the Israeli military authorities, denying academic freedom to the young. Palestinian children are growing up illiterate by Israeli design.

Israel seeks to obliterate the Palestinian national identity. The Israelis have reversed their role as victims and become the victimizers of another people. Palestinians have become outcasts, expelled by the proverbial people of exile, the Jews. Israel continues to administer a brutal military occupation of Palestinian territories on the West Bank and Gaza while the world is occupied with containing US imperialism. Sharon has financial support mainly from US and tacit moral support from the West. The US con-frontation with Iraq serves Sharon's purpose.

Crosscurrents

John Honor

The death penalty

In an extraordinary move, Governor George Ryan of Illinois commuted the death sentence for the state's death-row cases, saying he was now convinced that the death penalty system was 'arbitrary and capricious'. The decision will undoubtedly spark a new debate on the issue and shock many Southern States' senators as well as the State legislatures.

Statistics support Governor Ryan. Two thirds of Illinois's death-row was African American. In 2002, 71 people were executed (33 in Texas). The worst crimes do not necessarily attract the death penalty, because individual prosecutors make their own decision after plea bargaining. People on death row are typically poor and so cannot afford the best defence. Ethnic minorities are likely to receive more strict judgements from juries.

The Catholic Church has pronounced on the subject. In September 2000, Pope John Paul II expressed his hope "that there no longer be recourse to capital punishment". In June 2001, the Vatican called the death penalty "a sign of desperation". The argument is that capital punishment is inhumane and that it is virtually impossible to apply death sentences fairly.

The debate is interesting. Obviously the death penalty is at the top end of the scale but the notion of punishment, as a matter of justice, is that criminals deserve punishment. Whether this is 'eye for an eye' or whether it is punishment through compensation is the argument. Inherent in the death penalty, is the danger that the punishment does not fit the crime.

In the light of the incessant cry in New

Zealand both to lock up all criminals and to extend the jail term as long as possible, some court decisions here appear 'arbitrary and capricious'. There are lessons to be learned in New Zealand from Governor George Ryan's brave decision.

Perks for the boys

Politicians' allowances are being scrutinised again with the populist Act member, Rodney Hide, leading the debate. Jonathan Hunt is charged with ruling on the whole system of tax-free perks and fringe benefits. He is the one who spent over \$26,000 on taxis and leads an annual overseas junket for a few selected polis. I think there is certainly a problem. The whole package of perks and privileges could attract people of only limited ability and with the wrong motives. That is the problem.

The Labour Party is cruising along without making any real progress in any department, but especially not in Maori Affairs with the lacklustre Parekura Horomia nor in environmental issues with the jolly Marian Hobbs. George Hawkins was hopeless at plugging the house leaks. Jim Anderton is a puppet on a Labour Party string. Nevertheless, the government is in cruise mode because of the total absence of a credible opposition. This is cause for concern.

Winston Peters pursues his own agenda of racism, Richard Prebble is a political has-been and the National Party has pressed the self-destruct button. The only replacement for Bill English appears to be Gerry Brownlee, described by Michael Cullen as 'a giant dirigible looking for somewhere to land'. Brownlee has done nothing to warrant being leader of the National Party. The solution is to increase the salaries, drop the tax-free perks and select all members of political parties on talent, not bombast. It is the prerogative of the voters to demand no less. ■

‘Dad – am I ‘legitimate’?’

The Church's discipline regarding second marriages oscillates between heavy handed generosity and painful severity.

Annette Bagley (*Tui Motu*, December) notes annulment is often not an option. She cites finance as one reason. On finance I cannot fully agree with her. There is a cap of under \$1,000 in the fees that a petitioner may be asked to pay. The balance of the expenses incurred in processing an annulment are met by the Church, in other words, from the collection plate contributions of fellow Catholics. Such fees as are asked for result in every case in the petitioner receiving what amounts to legal aid assistance. Civil divorce and custody proceedings have no such cap placed on the legal fees required of the parties involved and these are likely to dwarf the expenses involved in pursuing an annulment.

To talk of the situation of the children as a barrier to seeking an annulment is to be on surer ground. Many have been dissuaded from beginning the process of obtaining an annulment by the protests of their children, who see themselves as about to be declared illegitimate. As Annette put it, "If your parents are not considered to be married, where do you fit in?"

This problem the Church has done its best to solve. As far as she is concerned, such folk are as legitimate as the offspring of any other marriage. Church policy, no doubt out of sympathy for the children involved, has always been generous as to who is recognised as legitimate. Any child not merely conceived but even simply born of a valid marriage is legitimate. I was once close by as a colleague conducted a marriage when the bride was already experiencing labour pains. The child was born legitimate. More to the point respecting annulment, the marriage that the Church is asked to annul is what canon law terms "putative", namely, it has been celebrated in good faith by at least one party. The offspring of such a marriage are recognised by the Church as fully legitimate.

This is a subtlety of canon law that understandably is rarely expounded from the pulpit or included in school religious curricula. Children of a Catholic contemplating seeking an annulment are not likely to be aware of it. If they were, would it solve their misgivings about a parent seeking an annulment? Sadly it might not. Timely circulation of information about the concept of putative marriage and its standing would be a help. At least the

Church has done what it can as to the legitimacy/illegitimacy question and deserves plus points for that.

Not so on the more substantial issue of recognising the legitimacy of second marriages. Here severity is sadly the prevailing approach of the Church. Unless an annulment or a dissolution is obtained, a second marriage is not recognised by the Church and those involved are told they may not receive communion.

Actually to say that is the prevailing attitude of the Church is not true. It is the prevailing attitude at the Roman level. It is not that of many bishops, including New Zealand bishops. At the time of the Oceania Synod in 1999, many bishops went on record as calling for a re-assessment of the existing discipline. As Bishop Leonard Boyle expressed it, "Let us look at the question: is there another way? Let us look afresh, not look at the past answers". That the document issued after the Synod, *Church in Oceania*, made no reference to these repeated calls from the bishops of the Synod, even if only to reject them, seems a shameful abdication of papal responsibility. ■

Humphrey O'Leary

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The meaning of *Tui Motu*

People often ask why we chose this name. So, to start a new year, we are reprinting Pa Henare Tate's explanation from our first issue.

We humans are put together according to the way we relate. Our primal relationship is the way we connect with one another. We are linked by blood to our *whanau* or *iwi*; but we are linked to others of a different family or race who are on the same journey as ourselves. We have to encounter them too.

We are linked also to the land – this is the significance of *motu*. Sometimes we are thinking of the separate islands but sometimes of *te motu*, the whole land. In terms of our *whakapapa*, our genealogy, we Maori have strong links with the other Pacific peoples. And we are linked too with all those who came here from afar – their blood is in us.

The third thing which binds everything together is the link with *Atua*, with God. The word *tui* brings this all to mind: the binding, the sewing, the stitching, the bonding. A person is only a person because of his/her link with God. God made us so. In pre-Christian times it was the link with God which constituted the sacredness and the dignity of our Maori people.

The gospel has brought Christ into the whole fabric of Maori belief. We relate to Christ as *tuakana*, the eldest, the firstborn. This helps us understand our link, our *tuitui*, with God the Father through the person of Christ. We recognise a process of growing together into Christ – a binding, a weaving of the weaker part of the fabric, which is us, to the stronger, who is God.

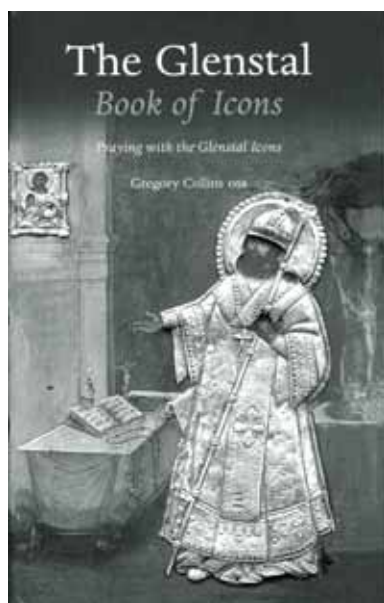
Stitching is also a painful process. Stitching entails **stretching** – beyond

the physical boundaries. The knitting with God is also a process of stretching: it means a surrender to God. Unless we stretch we cannot be joined to God. It is this surrender to God which is the essence of faith. A piece that is sewn onto the garment has to 'surrender' to whichever way that garment is going to move.

The stitching together of the peoples, too, is a process of stretching and involves a surrender.

We are at a crucial stage of the journey. No one walks alone; we are all in this together. So, to be knit together means to help one another along the road. If we fail to respond, then we hold people back, and we miss the 'moment', the *kairos* offered us by God. Part of enjoying the dignity of being a human person or a people is to be able to restore

Henare Tate



The Glenstal Book of Icons

Praying with the Glenstal Icons

by Gregory Collins OSB

This beautifully illustrated small book contains prayers and meditations which are based on a selection of icons from Glenstal Abbey's Byzantine chapel, in Limerick, Ireland. It draws on the popular monastic practice of *lectio divina*, where the icons are seen as 'texts' which give rise to meditation on the Christian mysteries. Thus, through the icon, one's heart may be opened in contemplative prayer to the transforming vision of God's glory.

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