

Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008)

# Peace in our time

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Fiddling while Rome burns is an occupational hazard of politicians. So, while Pakistan reels under the blast of terrorist bombs, the Caribbean islands are drowned and desolated by hurricanes, and the world's economic system teeters on the brink of collapse, our lords and masters in the Beehive squabble *ad infinitum* over the recovered memory problems of Winston Peters and John Key. It is a classic example of dodging the real issues by chasing after shadows.

So what are the real challenges for November 8th? Of fundamental importance is **world peace**, about which this October magazine contains a rich cluster of material. Peace is the absolute condition of universal well-being and prosperity. We lead off by commemorating Alexander Solzhenitsyn (pp 6-7), one of those towering literary geniuses regularly born out of Russia.

Solzhenitsyn is famous for his damning exposure of the gulag in Stalinist Russia. Yet Mike Riddell notes that he was equally critical of the decadence of the West, as he experienced it in the United States during his exile. A peaceful stable world is sustained neither by the voracious power-seeking of totalitarian dictators nor by the greedy competitiveness of the liberal democracies.

We print excerpts from Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' address to the 2008 Lambeth Conference (pp 14-15), also from the annual *Otago Peace Lecture*

(pp 10-12). Sacks asks what future is there to political or economic stability in a world devoid of religious faith. The Otago lecturer was Kate Dewes, one of those passionate people who beaver away perseveringly at the peace theme, year in year out. This time, her message was one of hope listing good initiatives on the part of politicians, city mayors and ordinary people the world over – each contributing to a surely irresistible demand to end war and international violence. One ordinary person who literally 'walks this talk' is the doughty Aussie Gill Hicks, whose story of survival and bravery we related in August '07. Her campaign for reconciliation through dialogue is described (page 13).

Many – not least Barack Obama – call for 'a world free of nuclear weapons'. Allied to this supreme imperative are the other critical issues facing us: global warming and world poverty, not to speak of the world economic crisis brought on wholly by consumer greed in the rich countries of the West, including New Zealand.

What are Messrs Clark and Cullen, Key and English saying about these? Precisely nothing. They cannot spare attention from a ceaseless game of name calling and point scoring.

It may well be that the crucial votes in November will be those going to the minor parties. Under MMP, it will be incumbent on them to keep National or Labour honest. We expect much more from our political leaders than we are getting at the moment.

Perhaps we should take a leaf out of church history and apply the 'Viterbo solution'. During a papal election there in 1272 the populace became so angry because of a hung vote, they locked the cardinals up without food until the deadlock was broken. Has the Beehive got external bolts?

M.H.

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**but** – we ask you to strike out our return address in the top lefthand corner, especially when there are insufficient stamps!

# Lost for words

Michael Fitzsimons

In the middle of August we were lucky enough to be holed up in sunny California visiting our student son who is in love with American literature. Americans, he keeps telling me, have a great way with words. The days were hot and sticky, so every so often we would collapse in front of the TV in our various abodes. We came upon the channel that was running wall-to-wall coverage of the Democratic Convention in Denver.

What struck me most was the language – the sharp, soaring language that speaker after speaker used to ignite their audience. Michelle Obama, Jo Biden, Hillary Clinton, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama. The words flowed like a river.

They were on about the American dream, the vision of what life in America should be, the integrity and respect that should go with citizenship. It was the politics of hope and inspiration. The challenge was to be better, to do better, to care more. Their beautifully-crafted speeches sought to summon more goodness. Most of them even began with a respectful salute to Republican opponent, John McCain.

They may not be very good at putting the fine rhetoric into practice. But they sure know how to keep the dream alive. Words are a great place to start. If you are a politician, they are the only place to start. We all know the

saying that *you have to walk the talk*, but you have to have 'the talk' first.

Here in New Zealand we don't. We are suspicious of dreams and visions. We are at the other end of the spectrum. We are pragmatic and cautious and prone to anxiety. We are easily waylaid by things like taxes and crime and the weather and funding scandals.

Our political landscape is bereft of vision, and this is never more obvious than during an election campaign. So many words, so few big ideas. So much heat, so little light. What is the New Zealand dream? What goodness are we being summoned to? What kind of society are we striving to become?

Too often the messages we receive from our political parties are mean-spirited and ungenerous or just plain peripheral to what really matters. We are summoned to selfishness and prejudice and fear. Bigger tax cuts, longer prison sentences, tougher immigration policies, ever-greater disparities in wealth and opportunity, more disregard for the environment and indifference towards one another.

So, this election season, I'm seeking a dollop of inspiration, I'm begging for some uplifting rhetoric. Hit us with it. We need to hear talk about what it means to be a New Zealander, something genuine and memorable about spirit and character and belonging to a community. Talk

to us about what really matters, engage our better selves. Having heard the talk, we should give our votes to those who might just be capable of walking it, those strong enough to govern for the good of all, not just the influential and the well-fed.

David Lange used to say: "the measure of a country and a government is how we deal with the people who can least foot it." Now there's a touchstone for political decision-making, and a Biblical one at that. And what might this mean in practice?

It means a manifesto that engages and benefits the whole community. It surely means a quality public education system that empowers everyone to succeed. A health system for all, not just the privileged. A tax system to pay for it all. A resolve to act decisively on climate change, even if the cost is high. A commitment to restorative justice wherever possible. A determination to address entrenched deprivation.

It means a government that is prepared to roll up its sleeves and make these things happen, because we shouldn't kid ourselves they will happen without government action. These days even the markets can't survive without government action.

Without vision, the people perish. To all political aspirants out there I say: find the words to describe how we can do better as a country. Tell me we can. ■

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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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## Family the first educator

What is the relationship between the family at home and the parish community? If the church is an organisation in decline, both by numerical strength and by influence in society, then changes have to be made in order to support the family as the primary teaching unit. Those changes need to be such as will strengthen the teaching authority and ability of the family to pass on the values basic to the Christian Catholic faith.

Neither parish nor school are achieving this at present. Of course there are social support services provided by the church, but for the most part, while supportive, these are not mainstream to the teaching function of the family.

## Hans Küng – 80 not out

**H**ans Küng is 80. I am nearly that myself. He has been a faith companion to me, without his knowing it, for more than half my ministry. I am a minister of Word and Sacraments of the Reformed Presbyterian tradition and I now want to ‘confess’ that among my very small group of mentors, I treasure Hans Küng.

More than 30 years ago, I met and listened to Küng when he visited our country. I had been leading studies on the Vatican II documents while ecumenical chaplain to Victoria University, and was glad to meet this catholic-centred theologian, soon to become the Professor of Ecumenical Theology at Tübingen.

After all, what had separated us from each other for the past 500 years was the question of Papal authority and its later doctrine of Infallibility. Now Küng was reassessing what divided us. I looked forward to hearing his evolving ecumenical theology.

I have no desire to focus on the ‘things that divide’. We are all conditioned in our various Christian traditions to dwell in the past. But what if Jesus had dwelt in the past? There would never have been a new Gospel. Our churches these days are divided, not denomination from denomination (as

### letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not altering meaning. Response articles (up to a page) are also welcome, but need to be by negotiation

Jesus was born of a woman into a regular family, as it was known at the time. She knew the joys and sacrifices of being a mother, a woman who knew the importance of family. God chose this situation for His son, and as such it should rate as a leading example of where we can best find the environment for our children to learn.

in the old Ecumenical Movement), but divided within – between those who ‘dwell in the past’ and those wanting to create a new stage of history, a peaceful one.

To me, that divide is seen also in the reported meeting of Küng and Ratzinger (see *August Tui Motu* (pp7-9). Küng says that the options have become clear: rivalry amongst the religions, a clash of civilisations, war between the nations; or a dialogue of civilisations, and peace between religions as a harbinger of peace among nations.

If you take Küng as a guide, as I do, then everything changes in two ways. No longer is the essential issue the unity of the churches. I must turn from my old-time and deeply held commitment to the ecumenical vision “that we may all be one” to grasping the nettly reality of ‘peace among the religions’. We can no longer, from a Gospel point of view, spend our time trying to agree among ourselves in our established Christian communities. Our present leaders are not going to change.

Secondly, those of us who accept the vision of Küng are engaged in a new ecumenism – or catholicity if you like – finding a consensus for not only the survival but also for the evolution of humanity in partnership

Does the present structure of church/parish really reflect what appears to be the underlying principles as demonstrated by that family; is it being the place where we should really meet Jesus?

It seems the church has taken the concept of the family as the core learning and teaching environment and concentrated it into the Liturgy of the Word, the school, or a multitude of study courses, all of which reduce the real family into separate segmented parts. Has the church no confidence in the real family?

David Beirne

The writer proposes a solution. This is to be found at the end of the article on *lay groups in the church*. See pp 20-23.

with the creation which we rightly and lightly call God’s. I have on my desk, a copy of Küng’s study booklet: *World Religions, Universal Peace, Global Ethic*.

It is an extension of the creative teaching of Jesus, a chronological story of religions from Hinduism to Islam. It focuses on what we have in common: the Golden Rule, that every human being must be treated humanely. Violence is out, so is greed; truth is in, so are love and respect. We do not have to divide or fight on any of these.

All very simple! Fancy this renowned Christian theologian spending his energies and expertise on repeating “do nothing to others which would cause you pain if done to you.” (*Mahabharata XIII*). Has Küng lost his way or found it? Good question. Should I put Küng back on my shelves and forget him – and go on arguing about homosexuality?

To end, here is a recent quote from Küng on Islam: “Faced with a deadly threat to all humankind, shouldn’t we demolish the walls of prejudice, stone by stone, and build bridges of dialogue, including bridges to Islam, rather than erect new barriers of hatred, vengeance and hostility?”

*The Very Rev. John Murray is former Moderator of the NZ Presbyterian Church*

# The real Olympic winners

Jim Consedine

I enjoyed watching some of the Olympic Games on the television. Swimming, cycling and athletics, especially the marathons, cycling road races and triathlons held special appeal. But I must also say I was often conflicted, when I turned on TV, by the knowledge that millions of people had been deliberately disadvantaged or exploited in order to make sure that the world could see the Games without inconvenience.

My access to the Games generally was unhindered by anything from the real daily world of more than one billion Chinese. *Amnesty International* has reported that the Olympics have actually increased repression in China. One reason was the massive amount of development in Beijing where 300,000 people were bulldozed out of their homes in order to build various stadiums and roadways at a cost of more than \$40 billion in public monies.

*Unhindered* likewise by billions of dollars spent on an already gifted and rich elite to come and enjoy, both as competitors and spectators, in a country where millions work in factories for slave wages. Unhindered by the almost total ignoring of the situation of Tibet, East Turkestan and other dissident areas within China, carefully choreographed out of the picture. Unhindered also by the knowledge that New Zealand taxpayers had shelled out more than \$80 million since the Athens Games on preparations for its own team for Beijing.

The Olympics are run by the corporate elite for the athletic elite. And, increasingly, the rest of us are paying for it through our taxes. It left me slightly less than enthusiastic about the welcome home given our handful of successful athletes, with local mayors rushing to provide ticker-taper parades in town centres.

It seems that the Olympics remain special, the pinnacle of every athletic achievement, despite the fact that they have evolved from being totally amateur to fully professional over the past 20 years. Their billing as the ultimate goal in sport remains untarnished. But I'm wondering whether it is time for a rethink. More and more, the Olympic Games have become the Corporate Games, where hypocrisy and the pursuit of profits, the modern golden calf, are the guiding principles.

The media took some pride in the fact that New Zealand was seventh per capita in the medals table, and

some big countries like South Africa and India were well behind us. The question is – what does it prove to anyone to be placed highly on the medals table? That we have lots of money poorer countries don't have?

Not one of our athletes spoke up at the Games about human rights abuses in China. All adverse comment was successfully screened out of the public view. To all intents and purposes, China appeared to the world as a PR dream: welcoming, smiling, clean (mostly), efficient, friendly.

Media coverage of the Games was a giant con, presenting a perception of China so unlike the reality. And we were all complicit. I was reminded, only a day after the Olympics finished, just how little we know of human right abuses in China when a *60 Minutes* item highlighted the building of the soon-to-be-opened Three Gorges Dam at a cost of hundreds of billions of dollars. This construction precipitated the forced removal of more than four million people from their homes and the submerging of hundreds of villages and small towns.

There is little that can be done to change China from the outside. But do we have to condone what goes on there through our silence? The Olympics offered the world a window of opportunity to stand up and say something of significance. It seems it was wasted.

Imagine what Jesus might have done. Of course, he would have been arrested and jailed within minutes of arriving in Beijing. Such is the state of repression in China. But this is not only a problem for China. I suspect it would also have happened in previous years in Atlanta, in Sydney, in Athens as well. A dissident like Jesus would never be allowed to disrupt the smooth flow of this carefully choreographed, four-yearly event where so much money and image is at stake.

There are bigger things in life than gold medals at the Olympics. Many made huge money from them, not least the successful athletes. Corporate profits will be huge. But spare a thought for the hundreds of thousands displaced from their homes, for those who worked around-the-clock for a pittance, for those who were ignored because they were poor and have few rights.

*Were any of them winners at the Games?*

# Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008)

## *a lonely voice*

Mike Riddell



The death of Alexander Solzhenitsyn represents the loss of a great literary icon; but more than that, it is the passing of a man who engaged prophetically with the political and social currents of the contemporary world. His insights were frequently uncomfortable and sometimes regarded as bizarre. But they were fearless, uncompromising and compellingly insightful. We mourn a writer, certainly; but also a lonely prophet.

My first encounter with Solzhenitsyn was through *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. As a former prisoner myself, I was captivated by his meticulous description of the inner life of those whose world is curtailed by captivity. Had I not been aware of it, I would have known instantly that this writing was born out of personal experience. It spoke with the clarity and honesty forged from his own years of suffering in the gulags. Later, his comprehensive *The Gulag Archipelago* revealed the full horrors of the Soviet Union's political oppression.

Like all good writers Solzhenitsyn had a commitment to truth. For him this was not only a literary duty, but a civic responsibility. He felt the need to reveal what was hidden, even though the consequences of doing so caused great suffering to himself and many of his contemporaries. His imprisonment and later exile were a direct result of a

perceived obligation to announce that which was deemed unacceptable. He became a hero in the West because of his critique of Russia.

But when he found his way to America, some of his supporters were dismayed to discover that his evaluations were not based on an anti-Soviet agenda, but on a much deeper commitment to resisting deception. Consequently the writer's evaluation of America and Western culture was no more welcome than had been his denunciation of the propaganda of his homeland.

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*truth  
is seldom pleasant:  
it is almost invariably  
bitter*

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Walter Brueggemann, a Biblical theologian, has described the task of the prophet as "to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us". This description stands as a reasonable epitaph for the opus of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who consistently struggled against the herd mentality and instead proclaimed the emperor's nakedness. His was an unflinching voice amid the cacophony of partisan commentary in today's world.

In an address at Harvard University in 1978, Solzhenitsyn noted that "truth eludes us if we do not concentrate with total attention on its pursuit"; he also gave the warning that "truth is seldom pleasant; it is almost invariably bitter". This was his introduction to a stinging reflection on life in his new land of exile, the United States of America. The commentary was not what many of those listening, both at the University and beyond, had hoped to hear.

The great man spoke of the moral and spiritual decline of the West, dismissing it as a paradigm which less developed nations should pursue. He pointed out that "the constant desire to have still more things and a still better life and the struggle to obtain them imprints many Western faces with worry and even depression." He talked of the abuses of freedom, and, most compellingly, the lack of moral courage shown by Western leaders – presaging, perhaps, the end of the culture itself. He railed against the superficiality of the media and a blind following of fashion in intellectual life.

His analysis lamented that "irresponsible freedom has been granted boundless space" and that consequently the wider society possessed "little defence against



the abyss of human decadence, such as, for example, misuse of liberty for moral violence against young people, motion pictures full of pornography, crime and horror". His conclusion was that the West is so weakened that it has no power to resist evil and must inevitably fall.

This was not a message that Americans, still congratulating themselves about the triumph of capitalism over the former Marxist empire, were keen to celebrate. Solzhenitsyn, it seemed, was welcome to be a prophet so long as his gaze was directed toward Russia, but not when he examined life a little closer to home. The bitterness of his truth was no more welcome in Harvard than it had been in the Kremlin.

Eventually, the Nobel Prize-winning author returned to a Russia which had ostensibly been reformed under

Gorbachev. While his love for the mother country had not ceased and he enjoyed the liberalisation which had allowed him to return, he was not enamoured by developments within society. He was scathing of the corruption, materialism and liberalism that he identified as elements eroding the Russian soul.

Solzhenitsyn was a complex character, not slotting easily into intellectual currents which flowed around him. He was certainly not a liberal, even though in earlier times liberals had championed him. Neither was he a pacifist, having served in the army, and being convinced that Western military weakness was a factor in allowing petty and evil dictatorships to flourish in the world. His reference to moral and spiritual power set him at odds with determined secularists.

But then, almost by definition, a prophet is not someone likely to win popularity contests. As a writer and as a commentator, Solzhenitsyn kept himself aloof from both mainstream opinion and intellectual fashion. His stubborn commitment was to truth – to the absolute honesty which is prepared to declare things as they are, whatever the consequences may be for himself. We do well to heed his voice – and perhaps the more so when we find it unsettling of our compromises.

A great prophet has gone from us. His writings will remain as a contribution to our literary heritage, where they are rightly venerated. But what of his voice? Will his warnings still sound in our ears, or will they be subsumed under the oceans of consumerism and conformity? That is a question which only history can answer. ■

## Some excerpts from Solzhenitsyn's Harvard speech

### On the West and Russia

I could not recommend your society in its present state as an ideal for the transformation of ours (Russia). Through intense suffering our country has now achieved a spiritual development of such intensity that the Western system in its present state of spiritual exhaustion does not look attractive... The Western way of life is less and less likely to become the leading model. There are meaningful warnings that history gives a threatened or perishing society. Such are, for instance, the decadence of art, or a lack of great statesmen.

There are open and evident warnings, too. The centre of your democracy and of your culture is left without electric power for a few hours only, and all of a sudden crowds of American citizens start looting and creating havoc. The smooth surface film must be very thin, then, the social system quite unstable and unhealthy.

### On the Western press

Everyone is entitled to know everything." But this is a false slogan, characteristic of a false era: people also have the right not to know, and it is a much more valuable one. The right not to have their divine souls stuffed with gossip, nonsense, vain talk. A person who works and leads a meaningful life does not need this excessive burdening flow of information.

### On material prosperity

The majority of people in the West have been granted well-being to an extent their fathers and grandfathers could not even dream about; it has become possible to raise young people according to these ideals, leading them to physical splendour, happiness, possession of material goods, money and leisure, to an almost unlimited freedom of enjoyment. So who should now renounce all this, why and for what should one risk one's precious life in defense of common values, and particularly in

such nebulous cases when the security of one's nation must be defended in a distant country?

### On the rule of law

Western society has given itself the organization based on the letter of the law. The limits of human rights and righteousness are determined by a system of laws; such limits are very broad. People in the West have acquired considerable skill in using, interpreting and manipulating law, even though laws tend to be too complicated for an average person to understand without the help of an expert. Any conflict is solved according to the letter of the law and this is considered to be the supreme solution... One almost never sees voluntary self-restraint. Everybody operates at the extreme limit of those legal frames. A food product manufacturer is legally blameless when he poisons his produce to make it last longer: after all, people are free not to buy it.

I have spent all my life under a communist regime and I will tell you that a society without any objective legal scale is a terrible one indeed. But a society with no other scale but the legal one is not quite worthy of man either.

### On freedom

The defense of individual rights has reached such extremes as to make society as a whole defenseless against certain individuals. It is time, in the West, to defend not so much human rights as human obligations.

Society appears to have little defense against the abyss of human decadence, such as, for example, misuse of liberty for moral violence against young people, motion pictures full of pornography, crime and horror. It is considered to be part of freedom and theoretically counter-balanced by the young people's right not to look or not to accept. ■

# through Jewish eyes



Tui Motu interviews Jewish psychologist Jamin Halberstadt. He recounts his hopes and fears for the Israeli situation

**D**r Jamin Halberstadt comes from an American Jewish family. He was born in New York, grew up in Delaware and went to graduate school in Indiana, where he studied social psychology and earned his PhD in 1996. He then applied for his present job lecturing in psychology at Otago University. His wife is also American and has a practice in clinical psychology in Dunedin. They have two children.

All Jamin's grandparents are Jewish and came to the US from Eastern Europe (from Poland and Russia originally). "When I was growing up," he says, "I attended the synagogue sometimes. I belonged to a youth group. I would call myself culturally Jewish rather than practising in the religious sense. The majority of my extended family are the same way, yet surprisingly, I am the only one in my family not to marry a Jew. My few orthodox family members, of course, are quite intolerant of intermarriage.

## Jewish background

**"M**y Jewishness, however, forms an important part of my identity. My maternal grandparents suffered grievously for their beliefs. Even prior to Hitler there was a lot of persecution against Jews in Poland. They arrived in America with nothing, and initially they had to work like slaves to earn their keep. They sought to raise enough money to bring their siblings to America, but American bureaucracy, anti-Semitism, and ultimately the Holocaust prevented some of them from escaping."

Being a social psychologist, Jamin is able to stand back and apply its principles to his own situation. "Psychologists

observe how easy it is for people to divide themselves, to create quite arbitrary groups who will dislike each other. Even knowing this, though, I too feel the pull of my group. I want to be loyal to what my grandparents and great-grandparents suffered, to ancestors who lost their lives because of their Judaism. That knowledge cannot help but give me a sense of belonging, purpose, and responsibility.

"There is a very strong sense of history in Judaism. We feel ourselves to be the endpoint of a long series of noble actions that our ancestors have done (or things they have suffered). They escaped persecution; they saved their families; they preserved their religion.

"So I feel guilty when I fail to be faithful to my heritage. Even though my wife is not Jewish, we both do what we can to teach this history to our children, to take them to the synagogue and become involved in its cultural activities. My children need to know who they are and be comfortable with their own Jewish culture.

"My wife is a nominal Christian and is happy to support my Jewish cultural heritage. However, there are aspects with which she strongly disagrees (as do I), such as the traditional treatment of women, which makes it difficult to for her to understand or be a part of some cultural traditions. Orthodox Judaism is essentially 'humanist', yet it persists in a number of seemingly misogynistic traditions, such as the exclusion of women from most synagogue rituals.

"Once upon a time I used to argue about these traditions with my orthodox family, but now I am resigned, I suppose, to the fact that neither the traditions nor the family are going to change.

"Ironically, orthodox Jewish women themselves seem to have no difficulty with the traditions. They would say that they are not 'second-class citizens' just because they don't take part in the rituals. Public prayer is simply designated as a job which men have to do; women have other, even more important jobs, such as maintaining the home and



caring for children while the orthodox men spend time studying the Talmud and attending the synagogue.

“With my own children we strive to give them a bicultural grounding. They absorb the Christian background simply by living in New Zealand. We will have a Christmas tree in December. But we also teach them about the Jewish holidays, and light candles on the major ones.

“Our seven-year-old, who identifies as Jewish, asks questions about Jesus and about anti-Semitism. We answer them as truthfully as possible based on our knowledge of religion, history, and psychology. But I am becoming aware that our children will never have any religious commitment unless they see it in us. I used to be reluctant to push Jewish beliefs onto them. But I now worry that they won’t have any identity unless they see some commitment in me.”

### Extremism and terrorism

“**H**ow to deal with actual terrorism is a very difficult question. I hold personally that terrorist actions are wrong, regardless of what has been done to you. I would never condone someone killing others or themselves for a political or religious (or any other) ideal. I do try to understand the anger that motivates such behaviour, though. I’m sure this is equally true for many Palestinians and Israelis.

“I believe that the Israeli government has genuinely good intentions. I think they would take an option for peace if it was verifiable, even if it involved a sacrifice of land. It grieves me, however, when Israeli actions result in Palestinian casualties, because I know how the victims will be feeling. They will want revenge, and that hatred will motivate them for a lifetime.

“I tend to despair that people who are so afflicted will ever come to forgiveness. At heart I believe the vast majority of both Jews and Palestinians would prefer to live at peace with each other – even if it means sharing their space. Ultimately, this must be preferable to living in a war-devastated desert.

“Speaking from a professional standpoint I believe that prejudice against other groups is not actually deviant; it is not a disease. Indeed, in social psychology to say a person has stereotypes is not seen as pejorative. Stereotyping of others is something normal people do, and all people are “prejudiced” in the sense of overgeneralising negative characteristics to whole groups, and of automatically thinking about those negative things despite their best efforts. The key, however, is how people behave in response to those thoughts.

“Social psychologists have also shown that people can to some extent overcome prejudices by learning to work together toward common goals. This seems to work by

realigning the group dynamics, by creating a new “us” from a former “us” and “them”. Unfortunately such realignment may not actually eliminate prejudice so much as redirect it. If the North and South Koreans run as one athletics team, they are now running for one Korea. As a result, they may not hate each other so much, but instead jointly hate someone else.

### Zionist extremism

“**Z**ionist extremism claims that the land of Israel belongs exclusively to the Jewish people and this entitles them to drive the Palestinians out. (Oddly, they are supported in this view by members of the extreme Christian Right, who see Jewish retention of Israel as a means for establishing of the ‘kingdom of God’ on earth.) There’s no reasoning with this viewpoint.

“It shames me and it saddens me, and I sometimes feel angry with my few relations that hold this view, but frankly I can also appreciate their anger at atrocities that they too have suffered.

“The literal authority of the Bible is said to dictate the historic rights to the land of Israel. You get a situation in Jerusalem where the holiest place for Jews, the Temple Mount, is also claimed by Muslims as the place where Abraham ascended into heaven. They have built the Dome of the Rock there. Orthodox Jews refuse to enter that area now lest they accidentally tread on what they conceive to be the holiest place on earth.

“It has been excavated so that now Jews go underground and pray very close to their holiest place. It is a moving thing to do in one sense. Still, it is difficult for a scientist such as me to give any credence to Biblically ordained land rights. The land predated all the people who lay claim to it. The Jews have been there for thousands of years, and yet that is still only the briefest moment in geological time.

Five million years ago there was no one there. Five *hundred* million years ago, even the land wasn’t there. So whose land is it, really?” ■



# Visions of hope for a terrorised planet

*Christchurch peace activist Kate Dewes (left) delivered the annual peace lecture at Otago University on 11 August*

## A history of peacemaking

I wish to begin by acknowledging one of our own visionary leaders, the late David Lange who gave the Inaugural Peace Lecture here in 2004, his last public appearance. In Christchurch a few months earlier, he described how Gandhi was “shot dead with three shots, and died with God’s name on his lips”. The tears flowed, and, full of emotion, he concluded... “We have the capacity to love and be loved. They’re pretty old fashioned words. That’s the guts of it; and that’s why I’m here tonight”.

Mahatma Gandhi epitomised a leader with a vision of love and hope. He was strengthened in his struggle for peace by his deep faith in all the major religions which he respected and practised daily. He devoted his life to the promotion of non-violence and in turn he inspired many great leaders like Martin Luther King, Aung San Soo Kyi, Mandela and others.

When I began my peace journey 33 years ago we knew the terror of the threat of nuclear annihilation. There were enough nuclear weapons to kill everyone on earth 24 times over and the potential to poison mother earth forever. Today the threat is still there. There are over 2,000 nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert and stockpiles of over 26,000 spread among nine countries. This number will grow with the nuclear power renaissance and the

risks of nuclear proliferation from the enrichment of spent nuclear fuel.

Kate Dewe then summarised the historic actions taken by New Zealand to promote peace, in particular the anti-nuclear legislation passed by Lange’s administration, leading up to the historic World Court decision in 1996. The key judgments of the Court are given below

On 8 July 1996, the International Court of Justice, partly prompted by action by successive New Zealand governments, delivered its historic 34-page Advisory Opinion. In a crucial subparagraph, the Court decided:

1. *A threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law.*
2. *There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.*

New Zealand today continues its leadership on disarmament in the United Nations on, among other things, landmines and cluster munitions. In February this year, New Zealand coordinated a major meeting in Wellington promoting a *Convention on Cluster Munitions*. A few months

later in Dublin, a text was adopted which completely bans, and requires the destruction of stockpiles of cluster bombs within eight years. It was supported by 111 nations including Britain which like Japan changed its position at the last minute as a direct result of NGO pressure.

## Progress towards disarmament

Our government also opposed the illegal US invasion of Iraq in 2003. As David Lange said here four years ago, the US adopted a radical new doctrine of preventive war which showed contempt for the UN and rules of international law. “It was simply unprovoked aggression.”

It would be music to David’s ears if he could hear Barack Obama, another lawyer like himself, espousing a very different vision for the US and the world. Obama, the new media phenomenon and potentially the next US President, admits that he too has been inspired by Martin Luther King and other peace leaders.

In a little-publicised speech he gave on 19 March 2008 entitled *The World Beyond Iraq* he promised to end the war and help solve the root causes of war. He says: “We will help Iraq reach a meaningful accord on national reconciliation. We will engage with every country in the region – and the UN – to support the stability and territorial integrity of Iraq. And

we will launch a major humanitarian initiative to support Iraq's refugees and people."

Similarly with Afghanistan, he calls for long term investment in the Afghan people. "We will start with an additional one billion dollars in non-military assistance each year – aid that is focused on reaching ordinary Afghans. We need to improve daily life by supporting education, basic infrastructure and human services. We have to counter the opium trade by supporting alternative livelihoods for Afghan farmers."

Addressing the four critical security challenges of the 21st century he says:

"First, in addressing global terror and violent extremism... We need to give our national security agencies the tools they need, while restoring the adherence to rule of law that helps us win the battle for hearts and minds. This means closing Guantanamo, restoring *habeas corpus*, and respecting civil liberties. And we need to support the forces of moderation in the Islamic world, so that alliances of convenience mature to friendships of conviction."

Secondly, he acknowledges that "weak and failed states risk spreading poverty and refugees; genocide and disease. Now is the time to meet the goal of cutting extreme poverty in half, by doubling our foreign assistance... and now is the time to build the capacity of regional partners in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and the reconstruction of ravaged societies."

Thirdly, the catastrophic consequences of the global climate crisis are matched by the promise of collective action. He called on America to take action so that others will act as well.

Fourthly, on defence: cease spending \$9 billion a month in Iraq; work for a world free of nuclear weapons. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7o84PE871BE>)

Obama's statements on nuclear non-proliferation have spurred Senator

McCain to speak out. "A quarter of a century ago," McCain noted, "President Ronald Reagan declared: 'Our dream is to see the day when nuclear weapons will be banished from the face of the Earth.' That is my dream, too. It is time for the US to show the kind of leadership the world expects from us, in the tradition of American presidents who worked to reduce the nuclear threat to mankind."

McCain's speech was prepared with the help of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who is one of a group of former US Secretaries of Defence and State including George Shultz, William Perry and Sam Nunn – who have led an exciting initiative – a vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and articulating some of the steps that, cumulatively taken, could help to achieve that end.

A few months ago, former British Foreign and Defence Ministers Douglas Hurd, Malcolm Rifkind, David Owen and George Robertson joined their call. They are concerned about so-called 'loose nukes'. They argue: "The ultimate aspiration should be to have a world free of nuclear weapons. It will take time, but with political will and improvements in monitoring, the goal is achievable."

Other countries such as Norway and Italy have provided similar initiatives for peace. In Hiroshima in June, Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced an international commission co-chaired by former Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and a former Foreign Minister from Japan. The commission plans to report to a major international conference of nuclear experts in 2009 which would lay the groundwork for a planned review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010.

### **Parliamentarians for nuclear non-proliferation**

Spurred on by the work of a young New Zealander Alyn Ware and

other international NGOs, politicians all over the world are mobilising under the group *Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non Proliferation and Disarmament* which has over 500 members in 70 countries. Cross party coalitions in Germany, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Turkey and the United Kingdom are calling for removal of US nuclear weapons from their soil. In June, 110 US tactical nuclear weapons were withdrawn from Lakenheath airbase, which means that there are now no US nuclear weapons in Britain - for the first time since 1954.

On 1 July 2008, 69 Members of the European Parliament launched support for a *Nuclear Weapons Convention* to mark the 40th anniversary of the *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*. This campaign is gathering momentum with groups of lawyers, doctors, engineers, diplomats, mayors and politicians seriously discussing how to secure a Convention similar to those banning chemical and biological weapons.

### **Mayors for Peace**

**M**ayors for Peace is led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is gathering huge momentum and now has 2,368 members in 131 countries. The objectives of the Mayors for Peace Vision 2020 are:

- Immediately de-alert all nuclear weapons and start substantive negotiations toward a universal nuclear weapons convention
- Conclusion of a convention by 2010 with the physical destruction of all nuclear weapons by 2020.

At the city level, *Mayors for Peace* has launched the *Cities Are Not Targets* project. This demands that cities are not and will not be targeted for nuclear attack. "Cities are homes and offices. They are not legitimate targets for bombs. To obliterate a city for any reason whatsoever is an illegal, immoral crime against humanity and not to be tolerated."

It is encouraging to note that the





▷▷ capital cities of four of the five Nuclear Weapon States are members of Mayors for Peace – Moscow, Beijing, Paris and London – with major US cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago among the 126 US member cities.

The groundswell against foreign military bases is also spreading internationally. For example, the Ecuadorian government will soon vote on a referendum on Article 5 in the new Constitution, which reads: “Ecuador is a territory of peace. Neither foreign military bases nor foreign installations with military purposes will be allowed. It is prohibited to grant national military bases to foreign armed or security forces.” If adopted, the US military base will be removed like a similar one in Okinawa, Japan.

### Israel and Palestine

At a summit hosted by the French Prime Minister, 43 nations launched an unprecedented *Union for the Mediterranean* aimed at securing peace across the unsettled region. Israel, Syria, the Palestinians, along with countries across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa agreed to “pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction.” The countries committed to “consider practical steps to prevent the proliferation” of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their delivery systems.

### Grass roots initiatives

These government-level peace-making initiatives are building on a myriad of grassroots peace education and conflict resolution activities around the world. Here are a few examples:

- The *Partners for Peace* programme brings teams of women to the US for a month to speak to communities. The tours are called *Jerusalem Women Speak: Three Women, Three Faiths, One Shared Vision*. These women share their stories of pain and grief because they want to influence government policies.



New Zealand has taken a lead in the banning of cluster bombs

- Former Israeli soldiers and Palestinian fighters who are members of Combatants for Peace have also been touring the US together advocating for a non-violent resolution to the conflict.

- A sign-up campaign of Jewish academics who support negotiation of a two-state solution, an end to occupation, Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza and bilaterally agreed-upon settlements in the West Bank.

- Maori elder Pauline Tangiora (part of the *International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers*) has been involved for 20 years in helping secure the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, finally adopted by the UN last year. She has just returned from Rome where the Grandmothers sought an audience with the Pope asking for an apology and requesting the revocation of edicts that contributed to the decimation of indigenous people and cultures worldwide for over 500 years.

They are encouraged by Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s official apology to the aborigines, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s recent apology to First Nations people in Canada, and Barack Obama’s

promise, if elected, to appoint a Native American adviser to his senior White House staff.

### Conclusion

I would like to leave you with the image of Barack Obama addressing over 200,000 Germans, near the footprint of the old Berlin Wall, warning that humanity must build “a world that stands as one” before it is too late.

“The walls between old allies on either side of the Atlantic cannot stand, the walls between the countries with the most and those with the least cannot stand, and the walls between races and tribes; natives and immigrants; Christian and Muslim and Jew cannot stand. These now are the walls we must tear down.” ■

Kate Dewes has recently been appointed to the UN Secretary General’s *Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters*, a unique vehicle to promote peace values amongst Ambassadors and academics and to find ways to work together despite our different cultural and religious backgrounds.

The full text of her speech (as well as the previous four annual peace lectures) is available on [www.dunedininterfaith.net.nz](http://www.dunedininterfaith.net.nz)

# Walking the Talk

*Last August we published an interview with Gill Hicks, survivor of the London Underground bombing on July 7 2005. What stood out in Gill's story was her faith and her forgiveness of the bomber who had crippled for life*

Gill Hicks is the young woman from Adelaide, South Australia, who lost both legs after being blown up in the London Underground bombings of 7 July 2005 (see *Tui Motu August 2007*). This August she completed a 270-mile walk from Leeds in northern England to London as part of the **Walktalk** project, aimed not at raising funds but at initiating dialogue between different communities.

Gill has been working for an organisation called Peace Direct, who are 'practical peace builders'. The team she walked with included her husband, Joe Kerr, and volunteers from the London Ambulance Service. Gill maintains she owed her survival after the horrendous bombing to their utter devotion.

The aim of the Walk, of which Gill was a co-founder, was to meet and converse with different local communities and ethnic groups, encouraging them to communicate across boundaries and seek reconciliation. In the event, they visited 22 towns and cities, starting thousands of conversations, many quite unrehearsed. They had a few inhospitable moments en route, says Gill, but these were completely overshadowed by people's generosity, joy and laughter.

In Rotherham, an industrial town in south Yorkshire, she met Muhbeen Hussain, aged 14. He spoke in the local mosque observing that all Muslims had been labelled "extremists" after the 7 July bombings which killed 52 people. "But", he said, "being Muslim, being British are one in the same. At the end of the day, you are just



*being Muslim, being British  
are one in the same – at the end of the day  
you are just a human being*

a human being, born into the society which you are brought up in.

"I'm grateful for Gill Hicks. She didn't take revenge: she did something which nobody from the Muslim community has done. We shouldn't forget Walktalk. It wasn't just for 2008. It should go on."

Tracy Russell, an emergency medical technician from the London Ambulance Service, was one of the first people to treat Gill after the Kings Cross bomb. The pair have become great friends and share a special bond. Ms Russell, who also walked the 270 miles, called the experience "an amazing journey" which had changed her life for the richer. "It was consistently positive and generous all the way down. Complete strangers were opening up their houses, providing food. It was an uplifting and emotional experience.

"Gill's strength," Tracy said, "was amazing. There

were times she looked absolutely exhausted but she wasn't giving up."

As the tired but triumphant team entered Trafalgar Square on the final leg of their 270-mile journey, they were greeted with rapturous applause from supporters and well-wishers. Gill herself could not stop the tears from flowing: it had been both a physically and emotionally draining journey for everyone involved.

Before heading off for a well-deserved gin and tonic, Gill Hicks released balloons, carrying **Walktalk**'s simple message: "Keep the conversation going". ■



# *Covenant in today's world*

Lambeth Conference participants march against poverty in London

*Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, recently gave the keynote address at the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church. His theme was Covenant: in the first part he focuses on Covenant as it applies to church and state*

Many centuries ago the Jewish sages asked, *who is a hero of heroes?* They answered: not one who defeats his enemy but one who turns an enemy into a friend. That is what has happened between Jews and Christians – strangers have become friends. And on this, I think the first occasion a rabbi has addressed a plenary session of the Lambeth Conference, I want to thank God in the words of the ancient Jewish blessing: *Thank You, God, for bringing us to this time.*

You have asked me to speak about *covenant*, and that is what I am going to do. We will find ourselves better able to answer the question: *what is the role of religion in society, even in a secular society like Britain.*

And let's begin our journey at the place we passed on our march last Thursday, in Westminster. I imagine meeting up with my granddaughter on the way back and taking her to see some of the sights of London. We'd begin outside Parliament, and I imagine her asking *what happens there*, and I'd say, politics. And she'd ask, what's politics about, and I'd say: it's about the creation and distribution of power. And then we'd go to the City, and see the Bank of England, and she'd ask *what happens there* and I'd say: economics. And

she'd say: what's economics about, and I'd say: it's about the creation and distribution of wealth.

And then on our way back we'd pass St Paul's Cathedral, and she'd ask, *what happens there*, and I'd say: worship. And she'd ask: what's worship about? What does it create and distribute? And that's a good question, because for the past 50 years, our lives have been dominated by the other two institutions: politics and economics, the state and the market, the logic of power and the logic of wealth. The state is us in our collective capacity. The market is us as individuals. And the debate has been: which is more effective? The left tends to favour the state. The right tends to favour the market. And there are endless shadings in between.

But what this leaves out of the equation is a third phenomenon of the utmost importance, and I want to explain why. The state is about power. The market is about wealth. And they are two ways of getting people to act in the way we want. Either we force them to – the way of power. Or we pay them to – the way of wealth.

But there is a third way, and to see this let's perform a simple thought

experiment. Suppose you have a thousand pounds, and you decide to share it with nine others. How much do you have left? One tenth of what you had when you began. But now suppose that you decide to share, not power or wealth, but love, or friendship, or influence, or even knowledge, with nine others. How much do you have left? Do you have less? No, you have more; perhaps even 10 times as much. Why? Because love, friendship and influence are things that only exist by virtue of sharing. I call these covenantal goods – the more I share, the more I have.

In the short term at least, wealth and power are zero-sum games. If I win, you lose. If you win, I lose. Covenantal goods are non-zero-sum games, meaning, if I win, you also win. And that has huge consequences. Wealth and power, economic and politics, the market and the state, are arenas of *competition*, whereas covenantal goods are arenas of *co-operation*.

Where do we find covenantal goods like love, friendship, influence and trust? They are born, not in the state, not in the market but in marriages, families, congregations, fellowships and communities – even in society, if we are clear in our minds



that society is something different from the state.

One way of seeing what's at stake is to understand the difference between two things that look and sound alike but actually are not, namely *contracts* and *covenants*. In a contract, two or more individuals, each pursuing their own interest, come together to make an exchange for mutual benefit. So there is the commercial contract that creates the market and the social contract that creates the state.

A covenant is something different. In a covenant, two or more individuals, each respecting the dignity and integrity of the other, come together in a bond of love and trust, to share their interests, sometimes even to share their lives, by pledging their faithfulness to one another, to do together what neither can achieve alone.

A contract is a *transaction*. A covenant is a *relationship*. Or to put it slightly differently: a contract is about interests. A covenant is about identity. It is about you and me coming together to form an 'us'. That is why contracts *benefit* but covenants *transform*. So economics and politics, the market and the state, are about the logic of competition. Covenant is about the logic of co-operation.

Why is it that societies cannot exist without co-operation? Why is it that state and market alone cannot sustain a society? The answer begins with Charles Darwin. Darwin hit a problem he could not solve. All life

evolves by natural selection, which means, by the way of competition for scarce resources: food, shelter and the like. If so, you would expect that all societies would value the most competitive, even the most ruthless individuals.

But Darwin noticed that it isn't so. In fact, in every society of which he knew, it was the most altruistic individuals who were the most valued and admired, not the most competitive. Or, if I can put it in the language of Richard Dawkins: a bundle of selfish genes get together and produce selfless people. That was Darwin's paradox, and it lay unsolved until the late 1970s.

It was then that three very different disciplines converged: sociobiology, a branch of mathematics called games theory, and high-speed computer simulation. What they discovered was that though natural selection works through the genes of individuals, individuals – certainly in the higher life-forms – survive only because they are members of groups. And groups survive only on the basis of reciprocity and trust, on what I have called *covenant*, or the logic of co-operation. One human versus one lion, the lion wins. Ten humans versus one lion, the humans are in with a chance.

Neo-Darwinians call this reciprocal altruism. Sociologists call it trust. Economists call it social capital. And it is one great intellectual discoveries of our time. Individuals need groups. Groups need co-operation. And co-operation needs covenant, bonds of reciprocity and trust.



Church and state leaders reaffirming the Millennium pledge on world poverty. Centre are the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Canterbury flanked by Jonathan Sacks and Cardinal Murphy O'Connor

Traditionally, that was the work of religion. After all, the word *religion* itself comes from a Latin root meaning "to bind". If there is only competition and not co-operation, if there is only the state and the market and no covenantal relationships, society will not survive.

What then happens to a society when religion wanes and there is nothing covenantal to take its place? Relationships break down. Marriage grows weak. Families become fragile. Communities atrophy. And the result is that people feel vulnerable and alone. If they turn those feelings outward, the result is often anger turning to violence. If they turn them inward, the result is depression, stress related syndromes, eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse. Either way, there is spiritual poverty in the midst of material affluence.

It doesn't happen all at once, but slowly, gradually and inexorably. Societies without covenants and the institutions needed to inspire and sustain them, disintegrate. Initially, the result is a loss of graciousness in our shared and collective lives. Ultimately, it is a loss of freedom itself. And that is where we are.

*Part 2 of the Chief Rabbi's talk will appear in the November issue. It treats of the Biblical meaning of Covenant and its application*



Whilst travelling in Italy and Greece this year I was fascinated by how I connected or related to the ancient sites I visited. If they were religious sites there was the obvious hook of my own interest in matters spiritual, whether Christian or not. A place of worship inevitably exudes a certain atmosphere that differs from a place of residence or business; a 'more than' tone, seemingly able to be accessed whether you follow the particular beliefs of the groups who gathered there or not.

Perhaps it is the urgency, the grief and joy of the thousands of souls who gathered in these places that we sense. Or maybe it is the energy generated from the interaction between divine and human that impregnates the very walls and floors of all churches and temples.

It raises interesting questions about the undeniable presence of such feelings in other than Christian gathering places, but I believe a loving God must by nature covet all souls, reaching out in every way conceivable to make connection. Wherever souls reach toward the divine I imagine the divine in return strains to respond. I'm sure that our prejudices, arrogance and barriers around this are exactly that – ours. But this is fodder for another article, not this one.

Reflecting on the relative ease of this connection to ancient places I realised that it wasn't in the more lofty sites of worship and power that it happened more readily, but in the recognition of common life experience. Displays of power and religion in any form and in any generation have an uncomfortably familiar air about them, a heads-up reminder of those who have travelled before, equally convinced of their uniqueness and the truth of their beliefs.

Some of these paths lasted longer than our own has to this point. Our religious defensiveness can kick in, allowing us to be interested and engaged in their strategies and complexities, but protected in our own cocoon of righteousness, difference and superiority, reminding ourselves how they got it wrong. We remain apart from them.

But in the shared commonalities of day to day living, this apartness is shattered. And so in Pompeii, the Colosseum,



Jacquie with daughter Holly and husband Kerry in the Colosseum, Rome



Townscape viewed from a roof in Siena

the Acropolis, the Palace of Knossos, the Italian churches etc... it wasn't the imposing structures, the worship rituals, the statues/paintings, the vastness which connected me to the people who lived in those times, but instead it was the small common things, the personal touches, the things that bring humour and understanding, a genuine human connection through the millennia.

In the Colosseum it was the ancient graffiti showing gladiators in battle and the sheer familiarity of the layout of the building, the overwhelming sense that I could have been walking into the Wellington 'Cake Tin'; in Pompeii it was the number of food vendors, (clearly the Italian feature of a cafe/bar on every street corner – and then some – is no new phenomenon); also in Pompeii, the 'moralist's' house with its highly principled quotes written on the walls, the laundry, the advertisements of houses for rent, the forum public toilets and the brothel. It is undeniable and amusing that toilets in every form seem to have the ability to connect us to others, life at its most basic level! Relative privacy, or not as the case may be, also highlights a different attitude to the idea of body, self and community.

Walking up one of the streets in Pompeii we came across phalluses carved into the road and walls. Initially we thought it was modern defacement of the ruins but on turning to the guide book we discovered much to our amusement that they were in fact a form of ancient signage pointing the way to the local brothel, lest you be lost! In the brothel itself we pondered over the stone bed with its stone pillow and the symbolism inherent in that cold unforgiving work environment.

In Siena I tingled each time I dipped my fingers into the worn stone or marble stoups filled with holy water at the entrance doors of many churches and was left imagining the thousands of fingers that had also dipped there. The confessionals too were heavy with urgent whispers from the ages past.

In Knossos, it was the Queen's bathroom and the grand staircase that still seemed to echo with footsteps. The Knossos guide pointed out that nowhere in all the splendid art in the





## connections

Jacquie Lambert

our art, the graffiti on our city walls, our newspaper headlines, our houses and their layouts, the mountains of 'things' found therein, the designs of our rest homes – gardens, water features, room sizes, our hospitals, our prisons. It is in these that we are truly exposed and where what is really considered important is on display whether we like it or not.

What will future researchers and tourists think of the artefacts we leave behind? Is there enough ecstatic joy or overwhelming

palace is there reference to battle. It was apparently a fairly peaceful community, and the art is dominated by games and joyous celebration. I wasn't sure what to make of this alongside the myth of the Labyrinth and the maiden sacrifices, but it was interesting and I wondered at the art in our own churches. Will people look back in centuries to come and see Christianity as a joyous religion, based on what they find?

**T**his commonplace familiarity, this idea of how we connect to time, place and people is a concept that also applies to Christianity and our relationship with others. We are most genuinely touched through the trivia of day-to-day connection, through our 'warts and all' humanity.

Worship can provide breakthrough for sure, but worship is more often than not an expression of faith rather than a bridge into it. When we walk through churches, temples and palaces of old we get an insight into beliefs and the religio/political umbrella of the community. But it is only at the grass roots level do we get a feel for the real community, what was actually practised, what held people together or tore them apart, how they actually lived their beliefs.

And so for us too. It is in our daily connection with others, our welcome, our acceptance, our compassion that the expression of our beliefs is truly exposed. But these things have no physical life, no way to leave evidence of their existence – or do they? Thinking back on my travels I would say that it is in



Foodstalls on the streets of Pompeii

love of God illustrated in our church buildings? What statement does a powerful religious institution, evidentially devoid of equality for its women in document and much art, make in a world where too few already have too much at the expense of too many?

What will be understood by the plethora of fundamentalist Christian judgment and comment in the public/political arena against the relative silence of the moderate majority? Will future researchers even know how the numbers stacked? The peaceful Muslim majority could speak to that issue I am sure.

Christian principles may not be politically supported in the way of ancient religions and their state counterparts, but Christian belief can still flavour a community. We do not need to have a religious banner of any description flying over a community to know whether compassion and love reside there. If we were to be judged by what we left behind, the physicality of our homes, the nature of our books and art, the place for beauty in our daily lives, the gathering points for our communities, public amenities for health and celebration, how would we shape up? If people from the future peered into the smallest room in your house what would they find? ■

*Jacquie Lambert is a religious writer and spiritual director, resident in New Plymouth*



The grand staircase, at Knossos, Crete





*Two and half hours is about the time Glynn Cardy needs to begin slowing down. That's why every year he heads for Ruatahuna and Lake Waikaremoana. It is impossible to travel fast in Tuhoe country.*

**I**t was two and-a-half hours of winding road leading deeper and deeper into the dark green. The road, little more a one-lane muddy track, was surrounded by beautiful bush. Around one corner would be a waterfall, around another a rock fall, around another would be wandering livestock: cows, horses or even pigs. The animals were feeding on the kerbside grass – there was little other. At one point we slowed and waited for a grader to finish removing rubble. The signs told us the roadworks were now behind us and that we could again travel at 100km per hour. A smile formed. The average travelling speed on this track was about 40km.

Two and-a-half hours is about the time I need to begin slowing down. That's why every year I leave the road to Murupara behind, head for Ruatahuna, and then eventually arrive at Lake Waikaremoana. It is impossible to travel fast in Tuhoe country.

There is a bridge being repaired this year. The road is closed between 9am and 3pm. There are no alternative routes or bypasses. It would take you more than six hours to drive around. Instead you have to sit and wait. We were lucky, however, planks of wood enabled us to get on the bridge and pure luck enabled us to avoid the jutting spikes of steel. The Ureweras are never boring.

I come here to walk for four days around the lake, and to pray. It is my 'retreat'. There is no power here, and no computers. For three of the four nights there is no cellphone

coverage either. My usual tools of work can't operate here. Neither am I accessible here. Everything has to wait. Waiting and praying are intimately connected.

'Retreat' is a religious term describing a time of withdrawal from normal life in order to listen and pray. Most retreats are communal affairs at pleasant locations with catered meals and a retreat conductor to guide the participants through structured days of reflection. I've been on a few and they're enjoyable.

However, I get bored with the conductors' little talks and conservative liturgies, spend time thinking about work or doing it, read quite a lot, and inevitably find some like-minded souls to share a whisky bottle with into the wee hours. As I said they're enjoyable, but not really about listening and praying. Probably the most important thing about praying is knowing yourself, particularly your avoidance behaviours.

I know that I need to be physically active to take my mind off myself. Prayer needs to be more than in the head. I know that I need a little conversation each day. Extroverts shouldn't force themselves into being hermits. I know that reading books doesn't help me have immediacy with God. Books can distract from listening. I know that the Jungian Myers Briggs E's and T's stuff tells me that growth comes in my 'shadow'. Or, put more simply, the unfamiliar God might meet me when I put aside some of my comforts. Retreat prayer is about making oneself vulnerable.

## Paula BrettKelly R.I.P.

A lifelong champion of human rights, Paula BrettKelly RSJ, died peacefully at the Home of Compassion, Whanganui, on 31 August after a 12-year battle with cancer. For almost 20 years Sr Paula was a volunteer with the *New Zealand Aids Foundation* and fought discrimination against those with HIV and Aids. She also worked as a volunteer for the *Human Rights Commission* particularly on *Treaty of Waitangi* issues.

Paula

Diminutive, dark-eyed  
wide-awake to suffering  
to life's refined injustices.

You asked yourself/us  
the difficult questions  
open-heart surgery  
turning us to look again  
to see differently –

the addicted, the HIV'd, the prostitute  
in their large and complicated darkness  
lifted up, accepted in the hard place  
where unlooked for, love breaks out.



Gone  
taking only the intensity of conviction.  
Band of warriors walk with you!  
The overdosed, the virus-killed, the trampled.

You didn't look like a saint.  
You looked like a ninja master  
disguised as a nun.

Peter Rawnsley

It was quite a discomfort to submit myself to dehydrated food for four days. At least the packet said it was 'food'. The real hardship of course was instant coffee. Joking aside, part of retreat prayer is practising gratitude. Each morning, each meal, and each moment I expressed and felt grateful for all the blessings of life and God. The simple is sufficient.

This year it rained. Well, actually, nearly every second day every year it rains in the Ureweras. The track becomes a stream, bridges submerge, and mud overflows. You have to be slightly mad to enjoy it. This year as I waded through a stream I saw a beautiful big trout giving me the once over. A couple of years back I had a similar experience with a deer.

Daily the rich damp smell of Tawa, Kahikatea, Matai, and Miro embraced my senses. The Ureweras offer my soul reconnection between Tane's brood and the downtown concrete of my normal life. In the connection is sustenance and strength.

The relationship with time is indicative of a relationship with all life. The god Maui lassoed the sun in order to have more time for work. Joshua asked his god to do the same

so that he would have more time to kill. Of course, neither was successful, thank God. The sun offers a rhythm to life and part of a healthy spirituality is matching one's heart with its tempo.

In April the Waikaremoana dawn breaks at 6.30 and the dusk envelops at 5.30. Most trampers are asleep by 7, and 11 hours later get up. It is a strange feeling to let your body have whatever rest it wants rather than using your usual 7 hours sleep as a refuelling exercise. Even being woken in the night by undulating snores is not an anxiety-producing occurrence but an opportunity to be still and grateful for the peculiarities of our existence.

The bridge is open on the way out. The road is slow. As we move from the mud back onto the tar seal the car, like our lives, speeds up. The text messages start coming, as do the comforts of real coffee and food. Yet the silence and sustenance of the retreat continues to work its magic long past the place and days of Waikaremoana. ■

Glynn Cardy is Vicar of St Matthew- in-the-City, Auckland.

This article first appeared on Taonga website  
[www.anglicantaonga.org.nz](http://www.anglicantaonga.org.nz)

# *By their fruits – 2*

## Lay movements in the Catholic Church

*This article completes Tui Motu's review of lay movements in the church since the Vatican Council defined the church as the People of God*

In the first part of this article (*September TM*) we looked at lay movements in the world-wide church since Vatican II. In this second part we will focus on New Zealand. These movements have risen spontaneously 'from below', and have won the approval, sometimes grudging, of the official church. However, all of them have served to enrich the NZ church's life and often they offer a spirituality shared with other Christian denominations.

### Charismatic renewal

Charismatic renewal has many antecedents in the history of Christianity. In modern times its origins can be traced to the Pentecostal churches, especially in the United States. It began to have serious impact in the Catholic church in America in the late '60s and '70s. Elizabeth Nicholson, of Christchurch, became very much involved in the Renewal here in the '70s. Her husband John was for a time Chairperson of the National Service Group.

For me, Charismatic Renewal was one means of taking the call of Scripture seriously. We felt that the scene you read about in *Acts* applied now, not just back in the Early Church. Personally I was not attracted by the emotionalism of the Renewal, but I did enjoy a religious experience I could share with my Anglican friends as well as other Catholics.

At the time it gave me a great sense of peace. It seemed to be 'the right way'. I developed a more personal relationship with God, something I could really feel in my life. I enjoyed the magnificent gatherings in the Cathedral here, which happened four or five times a year. But most of all I loved belonging to a prayer group.

The local prayer groups were, I felt, the finest fruits of the Renewal. There you learned to pray out loud with confidence and trust. I felt that my prayer was being heard. And I became confident in leading a group.

I think that for many people Charismatic Renewal acted as a form of adult conversion. Their faith experience was raised to a different level. It is significant that when

RENEW was launched nationally in the 1980s, many of the leaders were people who had come through the Renewal. And I suspect that most parish leaders today have had an experience of the Renewal.

One very real danger of the Renewal is burnout. People simply cannot live their faith at that level of intensity. That is one reason why in one's prayer journey it is necessary to find a wise guide. Such a person can help sort out personal problems. It is never sufficient simply to say: God will provide. We also need human help. It was not unknown for couples to break up as a result of burnout.

Another question people ask is 'how do I know that the insight I have received is really God speaking to me?'. Once again that is where good spiritual direction comes in. In the '70s there were some very good Spiritual Directors – but not enough of them. There were one or two very strong-minded people who claimed to really know what God wanted. They could be a bit of a menace.

I don't think it is right to say that the Renewal had no social justice outreach. If a community really tries to live the Gospel, there has to be practical fruits in their lives. I recall, for instance, that the Bealey Avenue community regularly took in needy people and looked after them.

Clearly, Charismatic Renewal had a major effect on the prayer life of lay people and Christian communities. Often it led into other forms of apostolate or a deeper study of their faith. A valuable book describing the essence of this type of prayer experience and its fruits is John Wijngaards' *Experiencing Jesus* (Ave Maria Press Indiana 1981).

### Meditation groups

One fruit of the Renewal that continues in many parishes is the prayer group. However, the style of prayer has often evolved, and here one must pay tribute to the influence of the Benedictine John Main, continued



since his premature death by fellow Benedictine Lawrence Freeman. Their movement is called the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM). Tui Motu interviewed Dom Lawrence while he was visiting prayer groups across New Zealand in 2005 (see: Silence and Honeycakes May 2005. Website: [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)).

Once again, one can see here the revival of very ancient forms of prayer used in the church across the centuries especially by contemplatives. The following is a quotation from the WCCM leaflet on Christian meditation:

Meditation is deeply rooted in Christian tradition. It involves coming to a stillness of spirit and a stillness of body... in spite of the distractions of the modern world, this silence is perfectly possible for all of us...

The way to set out on this pilgrimage is to recite a short phrase, or mantra. The mantra is simply a means of turning our attention beyond ourselves, drawing us away from our thoughts and concerns. The real work of meditation is to attain harmony of body, mind and spirit.

Obviously meditation is primarily a solitary process. Nevertheless what characterises WCCM is the support given by the group, both in accompaniment, friendly support, instruction and direction.

### Catholic Worker Movement

The impetus of lay movements described above arises largely from the prevailing hunger for spirituality in a world increasingly fractured by materialism and commercialism. An entirely different approach is to be found in the Catholic Worker Movement. Its impetus comes from social justice, yet it too rests on a strong spiritual tradition – primarily Franciscan.

Francis Simmonds, of Christchurch, sent this account:

Roz and Billy regularly come to the Catholic Worker house in Addington. Both have a background of mental health illness. Each lives in a bedsit locally and takes heavy medication each day. Roz has three grown children she sees only periodically as they were taken from her at a young age and have grown up with foster parents. Billy has a son he never sees and splurges on alcohol from time to time, but nothing like as much he did in earlier years.

Roz and Billy are just two of many who have become part of the wider Catholic Worker community. They often help out with the mailing of the community's quarterly paper The Common Good, and usually help with dishes after meals. They love the sing-along that sometimes erupts.

Wednesday night is community night. From late afternoon, people start arriving at the Suzanne Aubert house for the evening liturgy and meal that follows. Some weeks there are up to 30 people, others as few as 12-15. Whoever comes is welcomed.

This week Lynette and Jock are leading the liturgy. It's a simple format they follow, one that has been used on and off here for the past decade. They select a theme from the readings of the day and complement them, add in some prayers and hymns and a period of reflection and quiet time, followed by a peace prayer and blessing. Sally and Jim (and occasionally Kieran) provide the music.

And how the people pray! Their prayers are often cries of anguish for their friends in need. Some have little of the wherewithal of life, but they all have great faith. There is a sprinkling of new immigrants, mainly from the Philippines. Most struggle to make ends meet, often working long hours for the minimum wage here at the same time as sending back money to families at home and to pay off large debts to usurious moneylenders.

The Catholic Worker is a lay movement founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in the 1930s in the United States. It focuses on the practice of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy as found in the Gospels and the living out of the Beatitudes in daily life. The manifesto of the Catholic Worker highlights a commitment to pacifism and personal responsibility for the welfare of the poor and destitute neighbour.

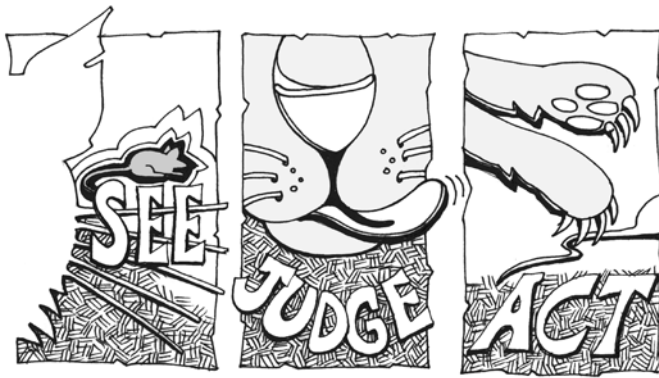
In an often violent materialist culture dominated by militarism and huge centralised bureaucracies and institutions, Catholic Workers promote non-violence and a 'small is beautiful' approach to life. They practise co-operative work and peacemaking, focus on issues of justice, support prison ministry, help create intentional communities, try to live voluntary poverty and practise personalism. Non-violent resistance to oppressive social structures is also practised when appropriate.

### The 'Cardijn' effect: YCW and CFM

During the late 1940s and '50s there grew up a strong Young Christian Worker (YCW) movement in the NZ church. The chief mentors were two priests: Reg Delargey (Auckland) and John Curnow (Christchurch). Peter and Mary Brett of Christchurch were active in YCW and its successor in time, the Christian Family Movement (CFM). They pay special tribute to the leadership of those priests.

"Reg Delargey and John Curnow offered a vision, a challenge, a passion for justice and for service which was both scaring and enriching", says Mary Brett.





▷▷ YCW was very influential in forming a cadre of committed young Catholics, with a radical vision of what the church was about. In that sense they were precursors of Vatican II. They were often held suspect by senior members of the clergy. YCW is based on the 'cell' structure and in this respect it mirrors Marxist theory. Its focus is study of the Gospels leading to social action especially in support of the poor as well as on personal spiritual formation. It tends to be theologically radical. Its origins were Belgian (Père Cardijn – *see below*) and French (the worker priest movement).

The Christian Family Movement (CFM) grew out of YCW, but had a 'softer-edged' North American character. The apostles of this movement were the Crowleys (Pat and Paddy), an American couple who traversed the globe encouraging the formation of CFM groups. They first came to New Zealand in the '60s. Their initiative was reinforced by the message of Vatican II.

CFM attracted a broader membership than YCW: its methodology was similarly gospel-based although more family centred. YCW was never seen as a threat by the powers-that-be and received strong encouragement. Along with YCW it provided a training ground for lay leadership in the church in the '60s and '70s.

### See-Judge-Act

Looking back over a lifetime strongly influenced by the theology of Canon Cardijn, Peter Brett pays tribute to the formative influence of people meeting regularly together to develop their Christian faith. It helps them to grow spiritually and move gradually towards a more adult faith. Peter testifies that YCW and CFM helped to form strong, faithful and long lasting Catholic marriages. Belonging to YCW was "like a marriage preparation of real depth", he says.

The Vatican Council certainly produced a sense of euphoria among the Catholics involved in YCW/CFM. Peter Brett is of the opinion that CFM was more inward looking than YCW. It focussed on the social and religious formation of the family, although it was never seen to be elitist.

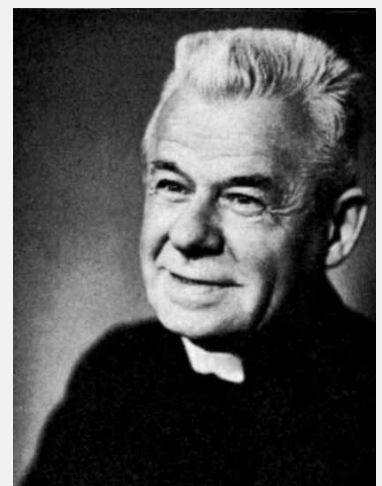
As life became busier, families became smaller and more women went out to work, so the momentum fell away. The forces at work in Western society tended to be more individualistic and promoted a lot of migratory movement in pursuit of economic advancement. All this tends to loosen strong parish structures of the type that CFM had fostered.

### The Passionist Family Groups

The successor to the *Christian Family Movement* has its origins much closer to home. The **Passionist Family Movement** was started in 1972 by Fr Peter McGrath CP in the Terrey Hills parish, New South Wales. It has grown steadily and now it operates in 420 parishes in English-speaking countries touching the lives of over 100,000 people. The first parish in New Zealand to have the Passionist Family Movement was Paeroa (Waikato), in 1988.

Canon Joseph Cardijn was a Belgian priest who founded YCW in 1912 as a means of encouraging the Christian faith of factory workers. It eventually spread to over 100 countries. Its famous catch cry is **See-Judge-Act**: *see* what is happening in your world, *judge* it through the light of the Gospel, and then determine how you are going to *act*.

The Cardijn model of gospel and social enquiry is always looking outwards to see how the Gospel can inspire people to create a better world. Pius XI told YCW: "You are the church's missionaries among working people". The methodology was especially recommended by John XXIII in his social encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (1961).



Peter McGrath describes the essence of the Movement as follows:

A well-functioning Family Group is an extended family. It provides a nurturing and supportive environment for all its members to grow as Christians... It is a basic building block of Christian community, providing a sound foundation for the life of the parish. It answers the need for belonging... When people are at home in a Family Group their gifts and graces are revealed. Then they use them within the parish community and in the Christian mission.

The way the Passionist Family Groups function was described in detail in *Tui Motu June 1999*. The typical family group is inclusive and all-embracing. Non-Catholic partners, the young and the old, all social strata are welcome to belong. In this sense it is in obvious contrast to some more exclusive groups described in Part 1 of this review (*September TM*).

But is it only a successful socialising force, or is it more? John Kleinsman insists the Family Group is a place we encounter God in the most ordinary aspects of our lives.

The focus of Passionist Family Groups is that we do indeed encounter God and experience God-moments outside the four walls of our churches and beyond the sacred spaces where we spend time in prayer... we encounter God in the ordinary; in the ordinariness of our daily lives and in the ordinariness of our social relationships.

This difficulty of believing that God can be encountered in the ordinary is... because the groups seem to focus around social activities, are 'just social'. We believe however it is only people who fail to recognise that God can be in the ordinary who can possibly have such an understanding . . .

Sometimes the need of a person close to us is to receive practical support by way of meals or other means. Sometimes the response called for is simply to get alongside and listen. Sometimes there is a need for us to grieve with others. Sometimes it is a need to celebrate important milestones such as anniversaries, births or baptisms. Always there is the need to converse with, understand, accept and love in real, concrete, and ordinary ways. This is what Family Groups are all about.

## Conclusion

This survey of lay groups and initiatives is of its nature selective. Readers will undoubtedly wish to point out some notable omissions – you are welcome to write in and tell us.

We conclude with a suggestion by one reader, David Beirne. He proposes that the well-being of both church and society depends on Christian values being handed on via stable and healthy Christian families. At a time when the institutional church appears to be in decline and priestly vocations are few, it may be that something along the lines of Passionist Family Groups could provide a possible solution.

How important does church leadership see the family? Is the incarnational nature of the family acceptable? If it is, to what extent in the teaching and sacramental life of the church might the family become involved. Are we open to the challenge of change. If there is to be change, and families are to be recognised as the primary place of learning essential to recognising the vision of Jesus, the shift in emphasis will need to be supported and promoted by the church leadership . . .

Realistically, what can be done? Is it too radical to suggest a combining of Passionist Family Groups, paraliturgies, Ministers of the Eucharist and the parish community Mass? The message of Christ was given to a family and a group of everyday people. They travelled with Jesus to villages and towns preaching the Word to small groups.

The plan would be for Passionist Groups to hold a paraliturgy on Sunday led by a Minister of the Eucharist. Parish community Mass would be held monthly or on a suitable schedule depending on the availability of a priest. Ideally each PFG would have a Minister of the Word and a Minister of Eucharist within the group.

It is a fact of life that cells – such as Passionist Family Groups – split and divide into new groups; and so the church grows. Such a structure of church would appear to be more personal and actively involved with those present than is the case at this time.

Before dismissing this as just a pipedream, we might judge it through the words of its founder, Peter McGrath:

A Family Group is far more than social... it is incarnational. The Spirit of Christ living in the hearts of its faithful members, is able to work wonders. People are accepted, understood and forgiven. There is a true reconciliation. People break bread at a common table. All the sacraments of the church, from Baptism to the Anointing of the Sick, find a place within the Family Group. The Family Group is church.

Perhaps this proposal contains within it true seeds of future hope. ■



# The place of the matriarch in the at-risk family

*In Part One of a two-part article, Celia Lashlie takes a close look at the women she met in the prison system and in the community. She makes the point that each of these women has the potential to bring about significant change in their families and within the community, given the right support*



Each time a child in New Zealand dies a violent death at the hands of someone who was supposed to love them, my heart weeps for the lost magic, for the beauty the world will never see and for the loss we all suffer as citizens of what, we are constantly told, is a paradise. But I weep not only for the child. As a former Manager of Christchurch Women's Prison, I weep also for the child's mother.

Often she will stand and stare defiantly and seemingly uncaring from a courtroom dock or she will appear sullen and uncommunicative, head down, hair masking her face. We, who tell ourselves we are better than this, better than her, wonder at what sort of woman would hurt or allow her child to be hurt in this way. We shake our heads and remind ourselves of the love we have for our own children; we return to our coffee and lament the lives led by 'those' people.

The number of children killed in recent times by those charged with caring for them has led to a flurry of discussion by our politicians and

some action by the government bureaucracy. Much has been made of attempts to connect social agencies more effectively with at-risk families. Politicians have come in and out of the discussion depending on their assessment of where the political gain might lie – and still our children die.

In September 2007 a proposed plan was released that would see every family in New Zealand with a new-born baby assessed for risk. As a first-time grandmother of a gorgeous boy, I was both frustrated and incensed with such an idea. Incensed not only on behalf of my daughter and son-in-law at the intrusion such an assessment would involve in a household that cherishes every breath this child takes. Incensed also on my own behalf that the taxes I pay might be used in such an unnecessary way.

At a wider level I was frustrated that consideration was being given to wasting money in this way. It is a feel-good solution, something that allows all those involved to tell themselves they have the problem sorted and nothing further is required of them. And it grabs the headlines allowing a

government short on moral courage to claim they have acted to make a difference.

My career in the prison service spanned 15 years, ending with three and a half years as Manager of Christchurch Women's Prison. I spent a great deal of time wondering what would make a difference in the lives of those I was meeting in prison, what connections needed to be made to ensure they didn't return or, more importantly, what might have been done much earlier to ensure they didn't arrive there in the first place. There is, of course, no one simple answer.

## **The needs of the offending males**

In terms of many of the young men occupying our jails, we would do well to work on developing better rites of passage for adolescent boys reaching for manhood. Moving among young men of all social strata I see a strong belief, passed on to them by the men in their lives, that to be a man in New Zealand is to be able to drive a car at speed without showing fear, to be able to drink alcohol to the point of insensibility and to be able

to fight. Many of our boys, our good and gorgeous boys, would not be in prison had they been able to find and follow alternative pathways to manhood.

As I progressed from working as an officer in male prisons to the role of Prison Inspector and then to Manager of Christchurch Women's Prison, I began to see another piece of the jigsaw in sharp relief. There are children born in this country whose feet are on the path to prison from the moment they emerge from the womb. Not because they are born bad – it is my firm belief that no child is born bad – but because of the circumstances into which they are born. There are families where lack of education, poverty and a pervading sense of hopelessness mean the magic contained within the new-born child is quickly extinguished. These children in turn, and often at a very young age, pass their sense of hopelessness onto their own children.

### **The position of the matriarch**

Inside every one of these families is a matriarch; a woman who, sometimes unknowingly, determines the culture of the family, who holds her dreams and aspirations for the children within her family close to her heart, who battles where and when she can, to make a difference for her children, but who many times is worn down by what she sees as the futility of her attempts to make that difference.

I met a number of these matriarchs in prison and have met many more since. These women are not easy. They have strong defences, developed to keep themselves and their families, if not safe, at least out of the main firing line. But once a connection with them is made, it quickly becomes apparent that they have their own particular brand of magic. They have fire in their bellies when it comes to their children and grandchildren. I have met some tough women in my time, some very tough women, but

what I have never met is a woman who did not want better for her children or grandchildren than that which she has experienced.

I have never met a woman who would not walk across broken glass to make things happen, if you can get her to see that *she* – and often only she – is the one person on earth who can guarantee that the magic contained within her child or grandchild will survive to be released and shared with the world that is waiting for it.

A compelling reason a woman often appears unable or unwilling to save her children from abuse is because she has, over a lifetime, come to believe her decisions don't matter. They never have in the past. Why would they now? Abused from an early age herself, unable to stop the abuse happening, she has slowly and steadily learned that bad things happen to her no matter what she does to stop them. From there it is a short step to your child being injured or killed by somebody you hoped you might be able to trust.

Think of the number of children killed in recent times by the man whom the child's mother was in a sexual relationship with. We've often focused on what the Parole Board did or didn't do, what the Court did or didn't do – again looking for someone to blame in order to make ourselves feel better.

For me, we're looking in the wrong direction. It is the mother we should be focusing on – not to condemn her but to learn a very simple reality. If she had known that she was the most important person in that child's life, that whether her child would live or die rested in her hands and that it truly mattered what decisions she made in that regard, then she would never have left the child in that man's care, never have had that man living in her home, would never have...

Not all matriarchs from at-risk families are in prison, but a number are. A discussion I had with 20 women resident at Christchurch Women's Prison in 1999 revealed that if they were to change the direction of their lives and make the firm decision not to re-offend, the lives of 98 people in their immediate sphere of influence would change for the better.

The next question is to what degree does the *New Zealand Corrections Service* recognise this reality? What are they doing to maximise the huge potential for change within at-risk families that sits within the women's prisons in this country? To what degree do they even recognise and act on the difference between their male and female inmates? ■

Permission *Rethinking Crime and Punishment* [www.rethinking.org.nz](http://www.rethinking.org.nz)

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## Two pro-life reflections

### *Would you ever choose to have a disability?*

Would anyone choose to have a disability? That is not an easy question to answer.

In May, I was privileged to accompany the Governor-General to the United Nations in New York. We were there to accept the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award on behalf of New Zealand. In an emotional and spine-tingling moment as we were brought into chamber to the sound of karanga and haka, I reflected for a moment on those clinicians who witnessed my birth over 50 years ago. All they saw was a deformed infant. I was not even a human being.

“It’s deformed” were the first words my father heard. And then, “It’s a male”. As I stood beside His Excellency Satyand Satyanand, I had cause to think: “if they could only see me now”.

Would I choose to be any other way than the way I am? Would I want to have any other life than the one I have? Looking back on it, I think not. Sure, I could have done without the stares, funny looks and hurtful comments. I would have wished for an easier transition between childhood and adulthood, between school and work.

But much of the hurtful aspects of my life weren’t because I had deformed arms, or as I prefer to put it, “reconfigured arms”. It was because of the prejudice and discrimination I encountered. It was because of the way in which people responded to me. Thankfully, the number of people in that category has been fewer than those, like my parents, who have valued me for who I am – all of me.

### *Who we are is OK. It’s what happens to us that is not.*

Unfortunately, that’s a value lost on many of the people who generate the prevailing thinking around birth and pre-birth technology. For them it is inconceivable that disabled lives have the same intrinsic value as non-disabled lives. They conflate the pain and frustration that may or may not be integral to a particular set of impairments or conditions, with the socially constructed situations of limited educational, work and social opportunities. “We’ll be a burden on society, because we’ll cost more to support”.

Which is why the *Disabled People Association* (DPA) warns that birth and pre-birth technology devalues disabled lives. In a world where fetuses with Spina Bifida and Down’s syndrome are routinely terminated, it is hard to imagine what else the current motivation represents.

DPA believes that the life of a disabled person has equal value to, and shall be accorded the same rights, dignity and respect as that of a person without disability. DPA acknowledges and supports our rights to make informed choice without coercion. This is a policy that has been agreed to by the majority of DPA members.

It’s a pity the person asking the question at the head of this article buys into the kind of negating views that undermine dignity and respect, and heavily constrain choice. Rather than contest the clinically stereotypical prognosis that disabled people cannot have full and productive lives, the notions are reinforced of inherent pain and suffering, and of social exclusion to support the contention that it would be preferable not to have disabled people. We should be tolerated while we’re here, but if there was a choice. . .

DPA refuses to preface our assertion that we are fully human and are entitled to the respect and dignity that entails, with the caveat: “but it’s a pity we’re here”. We cannot demand that non-disabled people value our lives, if we ourselves cannot do so. And if, as an owner-operated organisation representing the collective interests of disabled people, DPA does not speak out in defence of disabled lives, then who will?

*Mike Gourley  
President, DPA New Zealand*

### *The politics of abortion in the USA*

Abortion has been a central issue of US politics since at least 1973 when the Supreme Court – in the famous *Roe v Wade* case – declared that a woman has a constitutional right to an abortion during the first six months of pregnancy. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops subsequently established a Pro-life ministry separate from its Justice and Peace Office. This was a strategic mistake that led to compartmentalisation and helped create two strongly divided Catholic constituencies, resulting in a loss of credibility and political capital.

One group saw the issue in a broader social justice context, while the other regarded anything less than working to change the law as a sell-out. The problem with the latter is not that they care too much about abortion, but that they care too little about anything else. Politics is the art and craft of building coalitions to advance an agenda.

The law doesn’t cause an abortion to happen. It is a facilitating factor – along with a number of others, many of which can be countered by the application of Catholic social teaching. In spite of the Pro-life Republican Party being in power for most of the intervening years, the law still stands. (60 percent of Republican women, reportedly, approve of *Roe v Wade*).

Until 2004 the Religious Right had had almost exclusive control over the language of religious politics, the definition of what it meant to be religious, and the issues to which the term ‘moral’ could be applied. President Ronald Reagan had won over some Catholics (the ‘Regan Democrats’),



## A wife and husband team, Priscilla and Aquila

Acts 18:1-4, 18-28



Priscilla was a woman disciple well known in the various communities with which Paul was associated. She appears in *Romans 16:3* where Paul states that Prisca and Aquila are working with him and risking their necks for his life, while *1 Cor 16:19* concludes with the message that “Aquila and Prisca together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord”. *2 Tim 4:19*, a letter attributed to Paul but written sometime after his death, has the author concluding “Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus”. In these letters she is referred to as Prisca, not the diminutive “Priscilla” which we find in *Acts*.

It seems Prisca and her husband Aquila were among Jews and Christians expelled from Rome by the Emperor Claudius c. 49 AD. Their expulsion suggests they she and her husband were active in the Christian community at Rome there as well. The name Prisca points to an aristocratic Roman lineage, although Aquila is specifically identified as Jewish.

In Acts, Priscilla and Aquila emerge as collaborative associates in their work as tent-makers and as Christian ministers. This trade which they shared with Paul was physically demanding, and in all probability they would have struggled to make ends meet, and been ignored by the Roman elite.

The different accounts of the ministry of this couple suggest a threefold development. First, they undertook to provide material support to itinerant missionaries such as Paul. There is no evidence of a house church at their home in Corinth. In the second phase however, their involvement intensifies as they accompany Paul to Ephesus, and when

it is time for Paul to move on, they are responsible for the developing mission there (*Acts 18:18-23*). Finally, when the eloquent and learned Apollo needs better teaching concerning Jesus, “Priscilla and Aquila heard him, [and] took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately” (*Acts 18:26*). Priscilla has taken on the role of authoritative teacher of men.

She and her husband emerge as a wonderful example of team ministry in the early church, a model that has sadly been lost in the succeeding centuries. On a more domestic note, should we see a link between her work as tent-maker and as evangeliser? Paul has earlier told the Thessalonians that “we worked day and night ... while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God” (*1 Thess 2:9*) and this suggests a more direct link between manual labour and preaching that good news than normally assumed. Metaphorically, stitching cloth or leather to make tents surely goes hand in hand with sowing the word to make disciples.

Susan Smith

and in the 2004 election Bush’s chief strategist, Karl Rove, won over many more by placing opposition to abortion, gay marriage and euthanasia at the top of the agenda. The action of former Archbishop of St Louis, Raymond Burke, in refusing Holy Communion to Democrat candidate John Kerry in 2004 undoubtedly assisted. Cardinal George, now US Bishops’ Conference President, expressed concern at this action lest Communion become politicised.

Since 2004 groups and individuals who felt their faith was misrepresented by the Religious Right’s definition began to mobilise. The seamless whole-life approach of Cardinal Bernardin gained strength, and within that context the focus is on addressing the various factors that lead many women to abortion.

There have been three significant developments since mid-August this year:

- While the Democrat Party officially supports *Roe v Wade*, it adopted the following amendment: “The Democratic Party also strongly supports a woman’s decision to have a child by ensuring access to and availability of programs for pre- and postnatal health care, parenting skills, income support and caring adoption programs.”

- An organisation entitled *Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good* released a study that shows a strong correlation

between the availability of social services and a drop in the number of abortions.

- Senator Sam Brownback, an early candidate in the current presidential race, is one of the most prominent Catholics in the Republican Party. He says that it is time for his party to stop conceding the social justice message to Democrats and move to a more whole-life view. As Republicans are expected to take a drubbing in November, a post-mortem might be an opportunity for Brownback to get some traction. (Note: The presidential race is in a different category, and McCain could conceivably win.)

This broadening is occurring within the ranks of the Evangelicals also: there is growing recognition that the terms ‘Anti-abortion’ and ‘Pro-life’ are not synonymous. Moreover, Catholic social activists are recognising the need to speak in language familiar to the Evangelicals, realising that a lot of things in Catholic social teaching are straight out of the Scriptures.

This seems to me to be an excellent response to Vatican 2-based Papal calls to “evangelise culture”. The process is the traditional Cardijn trilogy: *See* (examine the underlying causes); *Judge* (choose targeted responses in the light of principles); *Act* (apply – and evaluate – these responses, and work with others in the wider community.) ■

Jim Elliston

## Love and politics in that order

*Love and Politics: The Revolutionary*  
Frederic Ozanam

John Honner,

David Lovell Publishing 2007

ISBN 9781863551212

**Review: Andrew Hamilton**

After the Liberal Party has done its initial patching and bandaging, we may expect it to ruminate a good deal on the spirit of Sir Robert Menzies. That is what organisations properly do when they have to adjust to a new and unfamiliar world. They return to the insights that guided their founders in the different conditions of their times.

John Honner's short but stimulating book about Frederic Ozanam is an exercise of this kind. Ozanam founded the St Vincent de Paul Society – the Vinnies in their Australian incarnation. The Vinnies now work for those marginalised in Australian society. This new environment, because of the central place played by government legislation and funding, is immensely complex both in the organisational and ethical dilemmas it raises.

Frederic Ozanam was a man of many parts. As a student he gathered a group of fellow-students to alleviate the suffering of the Parisian poor at the start of the industrial revolution. He went on to teach law in the university, founded a magazine that engaged in the political and religious debates that followed the French Revolution, and stood unsuccessfully for Parliament.

Before the restored monarchy was replaced in 1848, he appalled many of his readers by the slogan, 'Defect to the Barbarians'. It seemed to them a call to overthrow the monarchy, encourage civil disorder, break the natural relationships between a hierarchical church and hierarchical state, and embrace a soft-headed brand of economic idiocy.

Ozanam, though, had thought deeply on the matter. Against the intellectual tide that saw the fall of the Roman Empire in the West as a catastrophe for civilisation, he saw in the Barbarian invasion the makings of a more just

and compassionate society. He saw Christianity as central in this remaking.

John Honner sees significant parallels between the large issues Ozanam faced and those the Vinnies and other faith-based charities meet today. The relationships between the state, business, churches and poverty were as conflicted then as they are now. The role churches and church organisations should play in political life remains controversial.

Ozanam's gift was to maintain a single-minded focus without allowing the context within which he worked to be blurred. As the title of this book, *Love and Politics*, indicates he kept in sharp focus the faces of the poor. Faces make a claim on compassion and on practical love. He saw this practical love, and the Christian faith that motivated it, as central to the group he founded.

But he also saw that any society that was committed to the good of all its citizens could not bypass love. Business had to have an interest in its workers beyond the contribution they made to profits. Governments needed to go beyond safety nets, and organisations beyond efficiency, in meeting the needs of the marginalised. The organisation of society needed to respect and nurture the dignity of its members. Ozanam's Society focused on the faces of people, without distinguishing between the deserving and undeserving. But he

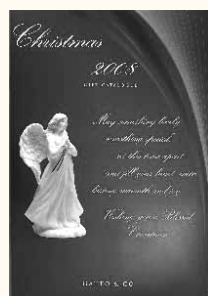
expected its members to ask why these faces bore the marks of suffering.

John Honner, who has worked for Catholic charitable organisations for many years, brings out clearly the relevance of Ozanam to contemporary Australia. He sees especially the contrast between the communal vision of Ozanam and the individualism of Australian society. The emphasis on the individual to the neglect of community has shaped laws on industrial relations and attitudes to welfare. It erodes respect for human dignity.

This makes it important for voluntary organisations to maintain their focus on the faces of those whom they serve. But it also makes such a focus difficult to maintain. Organisations that receive government funding are always under pressure to make care a measurable commodity rather than a movement of the heart, and to accept as the price of funding silence about the ethical dimensions of the policies they help administer. They are expected to be the face of whatever ideology shapes welfare.

In the face of these expectations Honner suggests rightly that organisations need to be seduced by Ozanam's siren call to 'defect to the Barbarians'. ■

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# A really exciting book about whether God exists

*There is a God: How the world's most notorious atheist changed his mind*

Antony Flew

New York, N.Y.: HarperOne, 2007. 1st ed. 2007

**Review: Mike Crowl**

First, let's get the terrible subtitle out of the way. It wasn't Flew's own choice, and it's a piece of puffery that almost stands in the way of the book's value. Flew has probably never been regarded as a notorious atheist at the best of times (Richard Dawkins is a much more likely candidate for the title).

Flew is a philosopher, and has been for around 50 years. His father was a Methodist minister, but Flew lost his faith in his teens, and never returned to it. What he didn't lose was his sense of integrity, and his determination to follow an argument through to its logical conclusion – even if it meant

giving up long-held beliefs. Flew has been debating with God-believers for two or three decades, but it's not his sole reason for existence. He's a philosopher in the best sense in that he thinks about big questions in all sorts of fields.

In the book he explains in some detail how he came to the conclusion that there is a God, and then sets out his arguments clearly. It's the clarity of this book (which could have been philosophically dense) that makes it so good. I'm no philosopher, but overall I found I could understand the arguments almost entirely. (A few points slipped past me, but that's fine – sometimes even philosophers don't even understand each other.)

The book is written in conjunction with Roy Abraham Varghese, an Indian-born philosopher who has written a number of books on the interface between science and God. Varghese contributes

a clear and substantial introduction to the book, as well as a critical appraisal of Dawkins and four other popular atheists in one of the appendices. The other appendix is by N.T. Wright, the English Anglican scholar and writer, who looks at the evidence for the *Resurrection*.

Apart from enjoying the sense of generosity Flew brings to the book, it was an eye-opener for me to see that philosophy doesn't just exist in two opposing camps, the way Dawkins and others might lead us to conclude. The philosophers mentioned in the book may vary hugely in their understandings, but for the most part they're men who are willing to put aside their own biases, and think through issues at the deepest levels.

I haven't been so excited by a book in a long time. ■

## Global warming: *what are you going to do about it?*

*Heat: How to stop the planet burning*

George Monbiot

Allen Lane 2006

**Review: Philip Lister**

Many years ago I had a dream in which everything I did was tempered by the fact that I would be dead soon. Having avidly read *Heat*, I have a similar feeling about our earth's ecology. Many of us don't realise that the Titanic has hit the iceberg; and many of us are busily rearranging the deckchairs.

Despite his initial pessimism, George Monbiot shows it is possible to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the rich countries by 90 percent by 2030. He has all of the necessary facts to show it has to be and can be done. He writes: "Ours are the most fortunate generations that have ever lived. Ours might also be the most fortunate generations that ever will. We inhabit the brief historical interlude between ecological restraint and ecological catastrophe."

He roundly refutes claims of the oil companies and castigates the U.K.

Department of Transport White Paper, *The Future of Air Transport* (2003), for "remarkable evasion". Since there is as yet no international agreement, it proposes that the industry "pay the external costs its activities impose on society at large". It does not explain how this could be arranged. Should a steward be sacrificed every time someone in Ethiopia dies of hunger? The only suggestion it makes is that aviation fuel might be taxed.

There are several "tipping points", likely to happen when the global temperature is about 2°C hotter than pre-industrial levels. There is already evidence that the Amazon forest is beginning to die, which will be a self-accelerating process. There is the danger of ice-caps sliding into the sea, the Gulf Stream stopping (thereby freezing Europe) and of deadly acidification of the seas.

In a hopeful moment Monbiot cites the so-called 'Pearl Harbour effect', which galvanised car manufacturers into making weapons only a few weeks after the Japanese attack. We are now

facing a much greater crisis, and when it is widely enough recognised we can deal with it.

Monbiot demonstrate that while it is possible technically and economically to reduce greenhouse gases in time, "I have not demonstrated that it is *politically* possible. There is a reason for this. It is not up to me to do so. It is up to you."

The reason is people generally dislike change. It is an illusion that much discussion, especially on the Internet, is achieving something. "Action means moving your legs. Indeed, if this book has not encouraged you to want to do something, then I urge you to return it to the shop and demand your money back!"

This may be the most thought-provoking and challenging book I have ever read; yet its eloquence, honesty and humour made it a pleasant experience. I especially appreciated Monbiot's personal concerns for the future of his new-born daughter, who arrived when the book was nearly finished. ■



## Agony and uncertainty in the United States

*The enemy increaseth every day;  
We, at the height, are ready to decline.*  
Julius Caesar, act 4

**I**s the tide turning for the United States? In the field of battle, in the boardroom of banks and in the camps of the presidential candidates, all is not well. The commitment to war is far from over and domestic debt is reaching astronomical proportions. The world's hope of America reinventing itself, by electing a black president after eight disastrous years of Republican rule, is far from assured.

The Republic of Georgia, supported and armed by the US, was overrun by Russia which, with impunity, could reassert its influence knowing that the US was fully committed in Iraq and Afghanistan and has looming problems in Pakistan. The Iranians continue to defy threats to cease their nuclear power ambitions thus destabilising America's proxy – Israel. Angry words from Condoleezza Rice and empty threats from a discredited President are not enough. The balance of power has already shifted to Russia with Vladimir Putin guiding its return to super power status.

American banks continue to fail. Now two massive holders of house mortgages, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, are having to be rescued by the government because the main holders of long-term debt over these companies are China and Japan. This forced the US Federal Reserve to reassure foreign banks that they would be protected. By whom? Once again the American taxpayer takes on further debt. Foreign banks are propping up the American economy.

Barak Obama is losing ground, unable or unwilling to continue with his "audacity of hope". It seems that the idea of a black president is becoming too incredible to hope for. After 200 years of race segregation and maltreatment, the 15 million African

### Crosscurrents

John Honoré

Americans appear unable to sustain Obama's initial momentum for change. There is no rage in Obama, there is not Martin Luther King's 'fierce urgency of now'. A sociologist, himself a black African American, told me that his people seemed resigned to the fact that, if elected, Barak Obama would be assassinated within a year. That idea rules out hope. After all, we know what happened to Julius Caesar.

### Hubris for Helen

**F**our days after this upcoming momentous election in America, Prime Minister Helen Clark has decided that New Zealanders shall go to the polls for an election that is equally as important for this country. But her own future as Prime Minister looks doubtful.

The Labour Party's *Electoral Finance Act* has complicated campaigning and not one politician is able to understand the implications, let alone the general public. The law was pushed through parliament at the final hour with the help of the NZ First Party. Aside from this is the Winston Peters debacle on funding, donations, Owen Glen and assorted chicanery pertaining to Peters' legal bills or whatever. The whole affair smacks of incompetence and even corruption, yet Clark persists in her support while John Key took the opposite step and disowned him completely: an astute move.

By default, both these leaders have knowingly or unknowingly created an opportunity for the *The Greens* and *The Maori Party*. If these two continue to poll over five per cent, their hold and influence on the political scene for the next three years could be formidable. They have much to gain under the

MMP system and should rally their supporters for what looks like their best chance to gain political clout.

### Women in church

**T**o the delight of a granddaughter we celebrated Fathers' Day at a service in the Christchurch Anglican cathedral. The granddaughter knows people in the choir, you understand, as well as some of the girls who form part of the procession. And what a delight it was.

We were warmly greeted at the door by two liturgical assistants; then once inside, given the programme for the Choral Eucharist by friendly women who directed us to our places. As it happened, we were seated just behind a woman who seemed to be on her own and very attentive to the whole ceremony. At the invitation to share a greeting of peace with those around us The Right Reverend Victoria Matthews, the newly installed eighth Anglican Bishop of Christchurch, turned and greeted each one of us.

Come time for the sermon a Priest Assistant, a young Irish woman, gave a heartfelt and at times humorous address with just a hint of an Irish lilt. The congregation listened with appreciation as her delivery and turn of phrase captured the attention of all. The prayers of the people were led by another woman well versed in public speaking.

After the choir had sung the last *Alleluia*, The Right Reverend Matthews joined our family in greeting the much loved Molly Pyatt, widow of the late Alan Pyatt, a former bishop of Christchurch. I could not help but dwell on the role of women in the church and how any religious ceremony or gathering is enhanced and humanised by their presence. They bring warmth and friendliness and should be an integral part of every celebration in honour of the divine. The granddaughter thought so too. ■

## Cultural diversity or imposed uniformity

A decision taken just over 400 years at a synod in southern India has relevance for us today in New Zealand. Around the year 1500, Portuguese navigators circled the Cape of Good Hope and arrived in India. They were followed by missionary priests who proclaimed to the local folk, “We bring you the Gospel. We bring you for the first time word about Jesus Christ.”

A significant number of the hearers were not impressed. “We are Christians already. The Gospel was brought to us by St Thomas the Apostle and by those who followed in his footsteps. We were Christians when you Portuguese were still pagans.”

This the Portuguese would not accept. At the Synod of Diamper, in 1599, the Archbishop of Goa, Aleixo de Meneres, set in process the Latinisation of the St. Thomas Christians, the deliberate and enforced emasculation of the Chaldean Christian tradition of India. This little known tragedy initiated what Andrew Karnia has called one of the darkest chapters in ecclesiastical history. Catholicism in India has to the present day been riven by dispute and hurt, as Catholics of the Chaldean tradition strive to preserve their legitimate ways of worship and of theological thinking. Many of those of Chaldean heritage have ended up in breakaway churches not in union with the wider church.

The evil fruits of the Synod of Diamper are with us in New Zealand today. I live in the same Redemptorist community as a confrere from Kerala, Fr Alex Viruthakulangara C.Ss.R. He has come to Auckland at the request of our bishop to minister to folk of the Syro-Malabar rite, now quite numerous here. We already had a number of priests from India ministering in our diocese. But all are of the Latin rite. With the best will in the world the assistance they can give fellow Catholics of

a different rite is limited. Watching Fr Alex at work, I have been made aware that the policy adopted at the Synod of Diamper four centuries ago, far from solving a difficulty, set up an enduring problem.

The wider Catholic community here in New Zealand faces the consequences of another Diamper-style decision. In 2002 the Roman document, *Liturgiam authenticam*, decreed that there was to be one, and one only, English text of the Mass employed throughout the Latin church. In revising the translation made from the Latin, no account was to be taken of the fact that English is employed with considerable variation in different parts of the world. No heed was to be paid to ecumenically agreed texts for the Gloria, Creed and Our Father, such as we employ in New Zealand. Inclusive language was rejected.

What happened to a friend of mine, studying in New York, succinctly expresses the reality the Holy See is refusing to acknowledge. Friends sent a message to him, “Call at seven o’clock”. When he arrived at seven pm at their front door, they were obviously surprised to see him. Explanations followed. “Call at seven” meant to New Yorkers “Phone us at seven”, not “Drop in at seven”.

Translation of the liturgy will deal with more important matters than the timing of telephone calls or of visits to friends. The English text will have to sit comfortably with the wide variety of nations that employ English in worship. The staidness and solemnity that *Liturgiam authenticam* wishes to be characteristic of the translation could make it hard for the young to identify with the Eucharist. Let us hope that a Roman decision made in the same spirit as a synod in India 400 years ago will not have the same tragic consequences. ■

Humphrey O’Leary

*Humphrey O’Leary is a canon lawyer and Rector of the Redemptorist community in Auckland*

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## A Mothers Journal

**T**hresholds. Crossing from one place to another.

After going through that doorway things are never quite the same. We cross through because that is the only direction our feet will take us. And we crane to know the future, but see only a few steps ahead.

A fortnight ago we welcomed a tiny, perfectly formed little girl into our family, into the world. Jalori is small and sleepy, but her lusty pink-faced cry gets the whole household into orbit. Her hands are tiny with a shell-dot of fingernail on each small digit. These hands may do many things – play piano, stroke puppies, taste raw biscuit mixture, paint placards to protest injustice, tap computer keyboards. For now they clench and unclench soft blankets and big sister's tangled hair.

Spring is another threshold. Through a misty fug of 'too-little-sleep' I notice new life in a hundred ways. At 4 am birds are awake and singing. They drown out the noise of cars and suckling babes, exuberant and definite about the



sister Shanti with Jalori

Lunch on the sunny back steps surprisingly warm. We pull off skivvies and sweatshirts. Jalori lies on a blanket and kicks tiny liberated legs. We have crossed the threshold, we have survived the winter and the long confinement. Warm evenings, longer days and summer lie ahead – and beyond that, none of us know. I feel full of thanks – and hope.

God is good.

**Kaaren Mathias**

*Jalori is a name from where we've been living in Jibhi, Himachal Pradesh. It's a beautiful deep river valley and mountain-pass – and means a special type of soil which seems to us to connect somehow to her special start to life – and we think it sounds lyrical and beautiful*

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