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Te Hīranga Ake o ngā Minita Hāhi

People of God without Clericalism

MARY BETZ, MIKE RIDDELL, BRENDAN DALY, NEIL DARRAGH and **OTHERS** on clericalism in the Church

JO AYERS on sharing the leadership in liturgies

ALEISHA KEATING on religious support for sustainability

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Cover Photo:
St Peter and Saints,
St Peter's Basilica,
Vatican City.

Tuimotumag TuiMotuInterIslands Tuimotu

EDITORIAL

New Steps in Loving

Welcome to the *Tui Motu* new year and to the promise it offers!

We're becoming part of a new consciousness — a consciousness that is breaking into the world and announcing a new collective responsibility for life. In part, we have come to this sense of shared responsibility through the knowledge of the effects of our human community on the planet. We hear that unless we take radical steps to reduce climate change, our planet will no longer be our home. So we find world leaders, national politicians and international and local businesses negotiating what to do, who will do it and how we will participate. At the local level we're influenced by movements to reduce and eliminate waste, care for our environment and to live more simply.

We have the effects of the #MeToo movement rumbling through institutions and workplaces, supported by technology and a groundswell of women and men saying: "Enough is enough!"

And, as the theme of this issue indicates, we have the movement to transform the culture of clericalism in the Church.

The consciousness beginning to gain momentum is that humans and all life in the universe are connected — and specifically that we are an interrelated community of planet Earth. Once we grow in this consciousness we begin to understand and live in communion, loving and respecting all life.

We can expect a gradual transformation as our consciousness dawns and we get into action. We can think of it as conversion, or Pentecost, or conscientisation. We won't tolerate men preying on women and children for their sexual satisfaction or to dominate them and less powerful men. We'll sacrifice our way of life for the sake of the life of our planet and the future of our children. We'll take seriously the way our church has been taken over by the ordained and negotiate how it can be a Church again.

Many are ahead of us, well aware and already living in this consciousness. They have to keep hopeful and inviting in the face of our resistance, ignorance and pride. Many have chosen to leave the clerical church, unresponsive governments, institutions and businesses that continue to ruin people and the environment. Seeing the on-going damage all around, it is easy for them to fall into depression.

We can't let that happen. We need the prophets, loving and effective leaders, people who can think, learn and be responsible to keep encouraging us. As Teilhard de Chardin says we need to raise the powers of love, to step up and take responsibility for the common good of the whole Earth community — maybe beginning with our local community.

We are grateful to all our contributors to this 234th issue whose reflection, research, faith, challenge, art and craft invite us to understand and take action around clericalism.

And as is our custom our last word is of hope and blessing.

ADVOCACY FOR THE POOR

RITA JOSEPH interviews Cynthia Mathew working in advocacy at the United Nations.

What do you do at the United Nations?
Our main work at the UN is advocacy and lobbying. We are in 23 countries addressing issues such as migration, human trafficking, social development, women, girls and children. We network with our Sisters engaged in social justice missions in various countries. This helps us bring the reality from the grassroots to the UN.

How was your transition from Bihar villages to New York?
The UN is a vast institution. It takes time to learn the system. Initially I felt a bit lost — as it was a new culture, and the nature of work was different. My work on the ground helped me as I could cite examples, especially when we discussed Sustainable Development Goals or the Right to Education Act. I have seen people suffering human rights violations. At the UN we cannot expect immediate results as happens at the grassroots.

Would you describe your work among the Dalit?
In Bihar, I worked with "Chirag" (Flame), our Congregation's NGO, after earning my bachelor's in social work in 2000. It is a centre to promote awareness about education and healthcare in Buxar district. My work was mostly among poor Dalit women, youth and children. I was also part of the local unit of Prison Ministry India. I was shocked to see women jailed because their husbands were on the run after committing crimes. Their plight prompted me to study law and then practise in the Patna High Court from 2007. The High Court made me a member of a committee to study homes that shelter destitute women and juveniles. After three years of work at our provincial house in Patna (the Bihar state capital), I returned to Buxar in 2015 to practise at district court. It exposed me to the harsh realities of Bihar. I found the district court the best place to help the poor because it is where people first come for justice.

Did other lawyers accept you?
I was the only Christian in the Buxar court and people knew me as "the sister from Chirag who helped the poor". Many judges appreciated my work. Senior lawyers also helped me.

Once, some lawyers introduced me to a woman who they said only I could help. The woman told me that her daughter of 13 was raped by a relative and had delivered a baby boy. She filed a case in the local women's police station. Everyone, including the village council, asked her not to press the case. They warned her that litigation would be expensive and shame the family. The rapist's family offered her a bribe to withdraw the case. But she remained adamant. Her courage impressed me. I took up her case.

The court granted the woman 250,000 rupees (US$3,790 then) as compensation. It was the first time that someone got such a huge compensation in Buxar. I became popular. On 24 December that year, the woman was handed the cheque in the presence of judges and district administration officials. It was my Christmas gift for her.

What are the main problems of the Dalit?
Many. Untouchability is still prevalent in villages. Even young Dalit think they are lower than high-caste people and blame the sins of their previous life (according to Hindu belief) for the current situation. Don't know how we can change such mindsets. Poverty and landlessness add to their woes.

What about Dalit women?
Dalit women face harassment outside and domestic violence at home. Their husbands beat them up regularly and abuse them sexually. Most women keep quiet to save the family honour. Some, who could not tolerate it any longer, came to me. We counsel them and try for out-of-court settlements. We go to court as the last resort. Litigation is very expensive and time consuming.

How do you intervene in their lives?
We focus on their economic empowerment. We have more than 100 Self Help Groups where women deposit money and get loans for starting small-scale businesses such as candle-making. This has helped them come up in life. They no longer go to moneylenders for loans.

We have realised that just running a project will not help. We have to empower people economically and socially. We tell them of their rights and launch programmes for their advancement. Unless they know their rights, how can they demand them? We inform them about government projects meant for them and explain how to avail them.

Was there any disappointment?
Yes, of course. Some Dalit men from Buxar worked in the brick kilns in Uttar Pradesh (a neighbouring state). They had borrowed money from their employers. Higher caste people lend money to their Dalit workers as a ploy to make them bonded labourers to work for their entire lives. The Buxar men managed to escape and came to me. I wanted to file a case, but the men said their bosses would kill them and harm their daughters. The labour department officials asked me not to risk my life. Even some of my Sisters warned me that the brick kiln mafia was dangerous. I felt helpless. Many activists face such dilemmas — how to challenge the oppressive system.

First published By NCR in *Global Sisters Report* 15 January 2019.

Cynthia Mathew is a Sister of the Congregation of Jesus. Besides years of working for justice for Dalit she is now in the United Nations. She is a member of the Forum of Religious for Justice and Peace, an advocacy group in India, and the Asian Movement of Women Religious against Human Trafficking.

DIALOGUE AND COLLABORATION

MARY BETZ imagines a Church without clericalism where ordained and lay dialogue about a shared vision of participating in the mission of God.

Pope Francis has called clericalism "a perversion" and "the root of many evils in the Church". It has been identified as the root of the horrific sexual abuse uncovered last year by the Pennsylvania grand jury in the USA. It is experienced daily in multiple guises by Catholics around the world who are prevented from exercising their rightful roles in the life of the Church.

What Is Clericalism?

A succinct definition of clericalism comes from the late Richard Neuhaus before he became a Catholic: "It is the problem of a caste that arrogates to itself undue authority that makes unwanted claims to wisdom, even to having a monopoly on understanding the mind of God. The consequence is the great weakening of the Church by denigrating or excluding the many gifts of the Spirit present in the people who are the Church. The problem of clericalism arises when "the Church" acts in indifference, or even contempt, toward the people who are the Church."

Clericalism creates a culture of entitlement, superiority and "Father knows best" — aided and abetted by the longstanding belief that ordination causes an "ontological" change which makes a priest different in essence from ordinary mortals.

How Is It Experienced?

Clericalism can be found at every level of Church life. We encounter it, for instance, when:

- parish councils and committees disband when a priest prefers to make decisions himself;
- homilies proclaim the evils of divorce without compassion or understanding; or consist of anecdotes totally extraneous to lectionary readings, or of spiritual prattle without relevance to real life; or when they teach that women in abusive marriages should "carry their crosses";
- priests stop the Mass to glare at parents with a crying child until they leave, or to insult the ministry of lay people;
- parish staff (usually women) are employed without contract, paid below a living wage, expected to work more than paid hours or expected to perform tasks

unrelated to parish matters;
- priests reverse egalitarian structures and inclusive liturgies encouraged by previous priests;
- a priest leads a teenaged employee into a sexual relationship; or attempts to fondle a woman who comes seeking an annulment.

And clericalism is alive in the upper hierarchy, too — when a bishop chooses to do nothing when told of injustices; or cover up bad decisions; or makes decisions affecting laity or priests without seeking input from either; or when synods of bishops and pope (or the curia and its congregations) issue statements informed by only token input or representation from laity.

What's Wrong with It?

Clericalism is contrary to subsidiarity — the principle of Catholic social teaching which calls for decisions to be made at the lowest or least centralised competent authority. When all decisions are made by Church hierarchy, the message to us "below" is that we are not competent to make such decisions, and that our rich and diverse natural and baptismal gifts are unwelcome. When the hierarchy appropriates decision-making to itself, it assumes it has the right, the knowledge, the wisdom and the authority of God to do so. We, the non-ordained, have often acquiesced.

The 99.9 per cent of us in the pews are ourselves imbued with lay manifestations of clericalism. We often "pray, pay and obey", with an understanding of Church that sees us being deferential to Father, agreeing with him, following his instruction and rarely asking questions. And while we have rightly taken Vatican II as an invitation to help our dwindling numbers of ordained with ministry inside the Church, we have not been prepared for — and have largely failed to carry out — our most important commission: to become a People of God working radical change *in our world*.

Not all Catholics continue to spend time and energy within the Church. Catholic numbers in New Zealand (as throughout the West) are declining, except in the Auckland Diocese, where more than 50 per cent of Catholics are recent immigrants. The phenomenon of "white Kiwi flight" has been obscured — and clericalism (including the hierarchy's attitude toward women) is at fault. Those at the top have tried to blame secularism, sports and consumerism for the loss of parishioners — a convenience which avoids clear, honest and humble examination of the Church's own structures, practices, theologies and behaviours.

To rid ourselves of clericalism, we need to know the God of love Jesus knew — not a god who exercises power over others but One who cares, serves, liberates and empowers.

Church without Clericalism

What did Jesus show us? He gathered unlikely people, but taught and related to a God of love. He nurtured them with compassionate interpretations of scriptures relevant to their lives. He modelled healing and the challenging of unjust structures, then sent his disciples out to care for people and change their world. Jesus pleaded with his followers not to "lord it over one another" — an appeal that has long gone unheard.

Perhaps our basic problem is that we have failed to really know God. To rid ourselves of clericalism, we need to know the God of love Jesus knew — not a god who exercises power over others but One who cares, serves, liberates and empowers. If our Church worships an unapproachable authoritarian god of power and might, is it no wonder that we make or accept Church leaders in the same image.

A Church without clericalism would involve women and men as equals. It would be more horizontal than vertical in its structures. It would invite questions and consider possibilities instead of rigid answers. It would lead Christians to friendship with and knowledge of God not only through sacraments but through many forms of prayer and action. And it would involve the People of God collaboratively in Jesus's mission within the Church as well as "on the streets".

How Are We to Change?

The Church is not the only institution to abuse its power. Anyone who has worked in corporations, government and even NGOs will have found similar behaviours. We can make structural changes in the Church in the hope of changing clerical culture, but human attitudes — both ordained and lay — have to change as well.

Our whole Church needs to dialogue about God, ministry and mission:

- Who is the God of Jesus, and what is God's mission we talk about?
- Is it healthy for those who lead us in mission in the world to see themselves as ontologically "set apart" by ordination?
- Who needs to be involved in choosing those who minister? What curriculum do leaders need for ministry? To whom do ministers need to be accountable?
- Could seminarians spend time learning and practising collaborative (gift-based) ministry with lay people to appreciate the richness of all our gifts?
- What qualities do we need in our ministers?
- How can we include ministers of all genders and marital states?

We know we need ministers who have compassion, wisdom, spiritual maturity, respect, humility and a heart for the poor and Earth. As lay people we can continue to grow in our understanding of God, one another and the needs of our world working appreciatively with wise and compassionate clergy as we do so. We can initiate dialogue with our leaders, but also be willing to embrace the mission of God — and run with it ourselves. We have one life on this Earth and it calls us urgently to *metanoia* and the reign of God to which Jesus longs for us to belong.

Mary Betz is a writer and spiritual companion with a background in ecology, theology, justice and peace, and spirituality.

Breaking the CLERICAL CULTURE

VINCENT LONG VAN NGUYEN speaks to priests about the urgent need for the Church to abandon clericalism and become the People of God as envisioned in Vatican Council II.

We really need once and for all to jettison the clericalist model of Church with its by-product of the exclusive clerical club. The Church as understood and articulated by Vatican Council II sees itself as a pilgrim People of God, incarnate in the world. It is a new paradigm — one that is based on mutuality not exclusion, love not fear, service not clericalism, engagement with the world not flight from or hostility against it, incarnate grace not dualism.

The time has come for us to embrace and implement unambiguously and decisively the vision of the pilgrim Church that Vatican II entrusted to us. The time has come for the Church to be truly the Church of the baptised. Together with the ordained, all the People of God can create a new culture of humility, accountability and service.

It seems that the deeply entrenched patriarchal and monarchical structures of the Church have failed to correspond with our lived experience. In fact, important as it is to consider the question of women ordained ministries in the Church (for which the Study Commission on Women's Diaconate was set up), it is far worse to persist with structures that fail to convey the message of the Gospel to the deep yearnings of men and women of today. Adding women into the archaic structures that need fundamental reforms may be likened to pouring new wine into old wineskins.

For the Church to flourish, it is crucial that we come to terms with the flaws of clericalism and move beyond its patriarchal and monarchical matrix. The Pope famously said that we need a new theology of women. I would like to postulate that what we need even more is to find fresh ways of being Church and fresh ways of ministry and service for both men and women disciples.

Breaking the Priesthood Open

The priest is not a lone, exalted figure exclusively chosen and gifted with something that most people do not have. Rather, the priest is the presence in whom the implicit priesthood of the baptised is called to become explicit and active. We must rediscover the specific and full charism of the priesthood within the matrix of the universal priesthood of the faithful. The priesthood cannot be lived fully apart from the community of disciples. This is one of the key insights of the Vatican Council. The Church is not the Church of the ordained but of all the baptised.

If we are to break open the priesthood and allow the ministries of the baptised to flourish, I think we will need to revisit the clerical and patriarchal culture along with its many institutional dynamics such as titles, privileges, customs, structures and so on. I am not suggesting the ordained and the non-ordained should be collapsed into one another.

Priesthood of Mutuality and Partnership

We are on the threshold of renewal and transformation of the priesthood. Like the wedding feast of Cana, the wine of old has served the Church well but it is running out. The old wineskins of triumphalism, authoritarianism and supremacy, abetted by clerical power, superiority, and rigidity, are breaking. The new wine of God's unconditional love, boundless mercy, radical inclusivity and equality needs to be poured into new wineskins of humility, mutuality, compassion and powerlessness.

When Jesus sent his disciples on a mission to announce the Good News, he sent them not as lone rangers but in pairs. Christians can only minister effectively when they recognise their limits as individuals and are open to partnership with others. Priests particularly must learn to minister in relationship with one another and with their community.

Yet, ironically, the whole clerical culture is often geared towards individual heroism and even a Messiah complex. If the priesthood is to have a better future, it has to be humanised; it has to find expression in better mutual support, collaboration and partnership. It has to free itself from the variant strains of clericalism such as sexism, narcissism and paternalism.

While ordained for service, the priest remains not apart from but a part of the faithful in need of support, ministry and community. Though he preaches, he listens with open heart to the preaching of others. (When I am home with my mother, I am keen to hear pearls of wisdom from the real preacher!)

Though a priest blesses, he also bows his head to receive the blessings of others. Though a priest leads with a leadership of service, he must be willing to be led by others.

Though a priest ministers, he also recognises the ministerial charisms in others and works with them in collaborative ministry for the good of the community. Maintaining the healthy tension of this dialectic is a key to a priesthood oriented to mutuality and partnership.

The Church cannot have a better future if it persists in the old paradigm of triumphalism, self-reference and male supremacy. So long as we continue to exclude women from the Church's governance structures, decision making processes and institutional functions, we deprive ourselves of the richness of our full humanity.

Though a priest leads with a leadership of service, he must be willing to be led by others. Though a priest ministers, he also recognises the ministerial charisms in others and works with them in collaborative ministry for the good of the community.

So long as we continue to make women invisible and inferior in the Church's language, liturgy, theology and law, we impoverish ourselves as if we heard with only one ear, we saw with only one eye and we thought with only one half of the brain. Until we have truly incorporated the gift of women and the feminine dimension of our Christian faith, we will not be able to fully energise the life of the Church.

Learning from the Exile

I am a former refugee and as such I have a deep and personal interest in the biblical period of the exile, both as a historical development and a metaphor. The exile did not happen out of a vacuum. It was preceded by political and social disorder. Jewish society, which was meant to be an alternative social system to a pre-exodus Egypt, had become oppressive and exploitative.

As the pre-exilic prophets, such as Amos, Micah and Isaiah pointed out, it was marked by systemic injustice — injustice was built into the very structures of society. With the emergence of a powerful kingship beginning with Saul, a domination system was established, ironically in the land of promise and freedom. Solomon became a new Pharaoh and Egypt was reborn in Israel.

The exile, painful as it was, turned out to be a time of renewal. It shone a spotlight on the systemic injustice that needed to be addressed. Through the prophets of the exile, the Israelites learned to live their faith anew — without familiar symbols like the temple, the temple-based priesthood, the festivals and the land. They learned to re-engage their faith tradition critically and imagine their new alien world differently. They taught us the art of prophetic imagination that can re-energise and enliven us with new possibilities.

It seems to me that the biblical metaphor of the exile is pertinent for us as we acknowledge and tackle the systemic malaise in the Church. Like Israel before the exile, the Church has failed to be a place of promise and freedom. It has not lived out the radical vision of powerlessness of the Servant Lord. Its dysfunctional and destructive culture of clericalism has betrayed the Gospel.

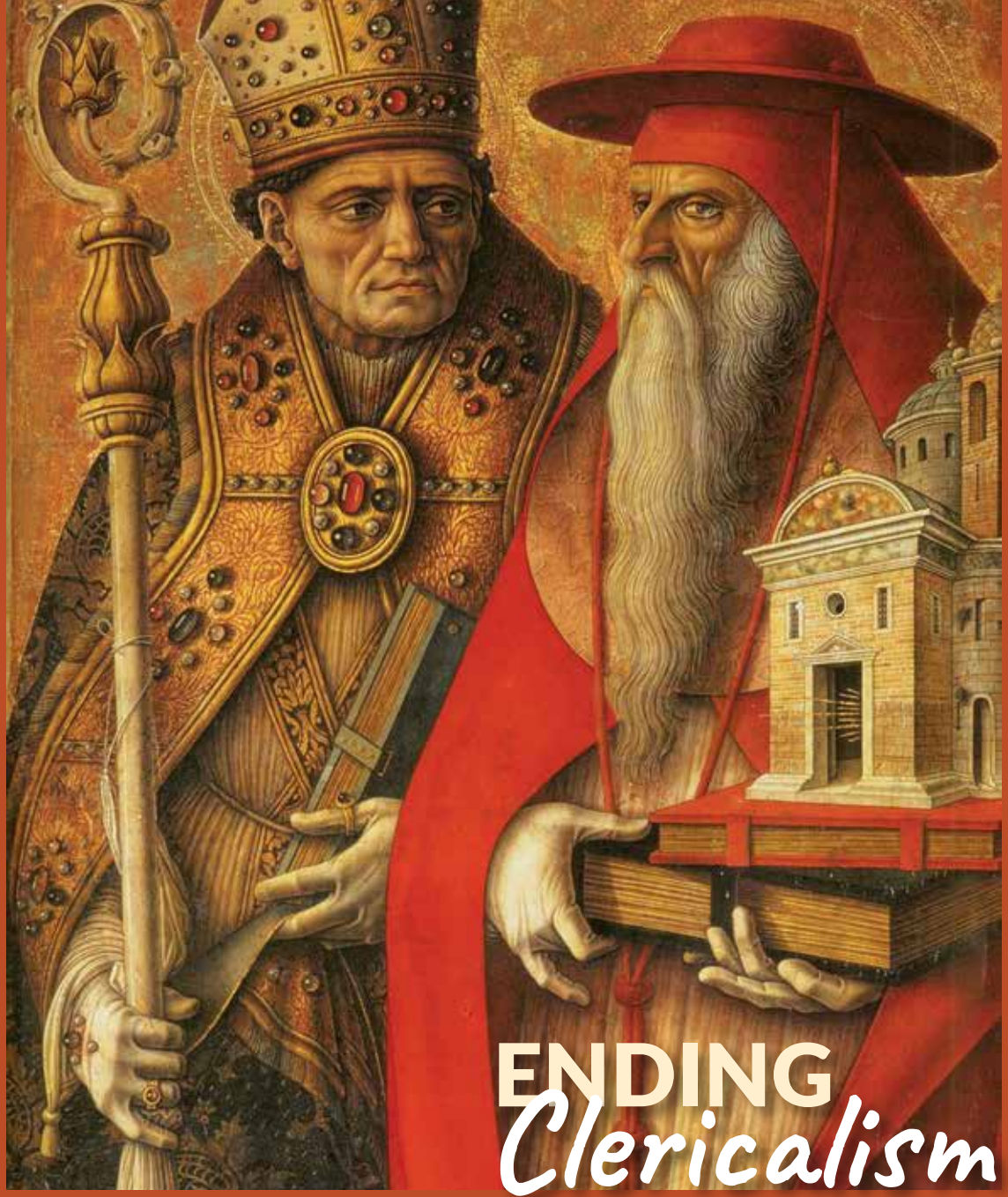
As the Church enters a time of darkness, we must have the courage to embark upon the journey of conversion, which will lead to cleansing, renewal and revitalisation. The paschal rhythm summons us to a discipleship of humility, weakness and vulnerability, of dying and rising in Christ.

As the Church, we must die to the old ways of being Church — steeped in a culture of clerical power, dominance and privilege. We must learn to rise to a Christlike way of humility, inclusivity, compassion and powerlessness.

The full version of this presentation to the Priests of New Zealand is on the *Tui Motu* website www.tuimotu.org

Photo: ***Ordination, Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris.*** Robert Harding / Alamy Stock Photo ©

Vincent Long Van Nguyen is Bishop of the Parramatta Diocese of New South Wales. He came to Australia as a refugee from Vietnam.



Painting: ***St Jerome and St Augustine*** (detail) by Carlo Crivelli

ENDING *Clericalism*

MIKE RIDDELL encourages us all to do our bit in ridding the Church of clericalism.

"Clericalism arises from an elitist and exclusivist vision of vocation, that interprets the ministry received as a power to be exercised rather than as a free and generous service to be given. This leads us to believe that we belong to a group that has all the answers and no longer needs to listen or learn anything. Clericalism is a perversion and is the root of many evils in the Church: we must humbly ask forgiveness for this and above all create the conditions so that it is not repeated."

— Pope Francis' Address to the Synod Fathers at opening of the Synod 2018 on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment

Clericalism may not be the root of all evil, but it is, as Pope Francis describes it, a perversion of the community of faith. It is the inevitable outcome of attempting to contain the vibrant movement of the Spirit inside an institution. And Catholicism has a long and bloody history of institutionalisation.

One of the mechanisms of institutional survival is protection of the core — a task that falls to the power holders within the structural skeleton of any bureaucracy. Little surprise, then, that the various levels of the clergy have sought to preserve both the faith and their position within its administration. They do so by vigorously defending the fringes of the institution, sometimes violently.

Bad things are done for good reasons. Power is concentrated, cliques are formed, and all too often the laity are seen as peripheral, if not a threat, to the continuation of the status quo. The Church is in a far better place than during the dark days of the Holy Roman Empire, but we

are all painfully aware of the continuing abuses — both structural and sexual. These outrage many and cause others to become defensive.

Laity and Clergy Together

So much is clear to both insiders and observers of the Church. Francis, however, not only nails the source of the problem in clericalism, but calls on us to create the conditions that might put an end to it. That is a task that cannot be left to the "princes" of the Church, but is the responsibility of us all. Power has passed upward because for many of us it is convenient to forgo our own obligation for ecclesiastical function.

Part of any solution must be the understanding that we're all in this together. To adopt an "us and them" attitude is to perpetuate a duality that is fundamental to the problem. Despite what traditional teachings of the magisterium may tell us, priests, bishops, and even popes do not become super beings due to their ordination. They retain their humanity, with all its beauty and frailty, as is all too obvious.

Equally, we laity are not absolved of responsibility for the scandal of the Church simply because we keep our heads down, happily blind as long as we receive the Eucharist. Some priests are lonely because of their ordination, feeling isolated from the joys of genuine community. How many of us consider what our ministry to the ordained might consist of?

Priests to Relinquish Power

The responsibility of priests and their superiors is to find a way to lose power. Such is the call of the Gospel to them. A sincere reflection on Matthew 20:25-28 might be in order.

"But Jesus called them to him and said: 'You know that among the Gentiles the rulers lord it over them, and great men make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave — just as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many."

Relinquishing power and authority is a slow and painful process, but is the call of Christ to us all.

Laity to Take Responsibility

From the side of the laity (and the clergy/laity terminology is in itself flawed), the corresponding attitude is not the assumption of power. Rather it is the offering of genuine friendship and responsibility. We are complicit in the great scandal of the Church, not simply an audience to it.

Were we to bring our broken humanity to our priests in expressions of love, it may make it easier for them to be free from unrealistic expectations. Pastoral care is not a one-way street. All of us are prone to being trapped in our vocations and patterns. Sometimes we need help to be able to escape the roles that give us meaning. Freedom lies in choosing rather than fulfilling expectations.

I don't intend to over-simplify the embedded nature of clericalism — simply to point out that it's not someone else's problem. The Curia, for example, is tenacious in its grip on ecclesial power, and unlikely to willingly let go of it. Centuries of intrigue and accumulation have enabled them to stare down the gentle stirring of the Spirit in Vatican II.

Nevertheless, that was a Council of the Church, and its mandate remains to be fulfilled. There has never been a better time for us, with Francis at the helm, to reclaim the Church as our common identity. We are the people of faith, and should never relinquish that status through either fear or apathy.

Through centuries of passivity, we've been conditioned to accept that our major role is to turn up to Mass and serve on various committees to keep the parish structure running. It is time to recognise that we aren't bit players in someone else's organisation, but that as members of the body of Christ, we are the ones who have the invitation to make it what it might be.

Clericalism is the current plague that besets the Church. We cannot wish it away or leave it to others to eradicate it for us. The time has come for all of us to take responsibility, and begin living with the freedom that is given to us through the Gospel. We all have our gifts to give, our love to spread, our choices to make.

Many of our priests understand this and welcome it. They are as much imprisoned by a distorted structure as we are. It's at the higher levels that the major resistance to reform is likely to be experienced. But, even then, New Zealand is a long way from Rome, and our bishops are in the main prepared to accept the need for change. It's up to us to get on with it.

Reform and Live in the True Spirit

All the great institutions of our age have undergone either reform or death. History and authority have seemed great bastions against change until the tsunami of public opinion has washed them away in astonishing ways. Up until now, Catholicism has managed to hide behind the ramparts and dismiss calls for transformation as heresy or insurrection. I suspect the mortar is crumbling.

Clericalism is the current plague that besets the Church. We cannot wish it away or leave it to others to eradicate it for us. The time has come for all of us to take responsibility, and begin living with the freedom that is given to us through the Gospel. We all have our gifts to give, our love to spread, our choices to make.

We will probably never redeem Catholicism from its terrible reputation. But we can live in the true spirit of catholicity, finding a place for all and living from freedom rather than fear. May the Spirit lead us.

Mike Riddell writes novels, plays, films and apology notes. He cooks when he can and breathes intentionally on a daily basis.

CLERICALISM OUT – SYNODALITY IN

Photo: Yeti Studio / Shutterstock.com ©

BRENDAN DALY explains how Canon Law directs the Church to deal justly with issues such as sexual abuse and how clericalism has undermined the law.

Professor John Renken, at the 2018 Canadian Canon Law Conference, defined clericalism as the "attitude, resulting in actions, whereby a false superiority and unfounded privilege is assigned to, or claimed by, persons in the clerical state, resulting in a fabricated belief that clergy are entitled to dominate because they are 'more than,' 'better than,' or 'superior to' those who are not ordained."

Privilege of the Forum

Historically, there has existed what is known as the privilege of the forum. In 1170, Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered by four knights because he had earned the displeasure of the king. Thomas had insisted on the right held by the Church of that time to try a paedophile priest in a Church court, rather than allow the accused priest to be tried in the secular court of King Henry II. In the 1917 Code of Canon Law one of the privileges of clerics was the privilege of the forum. Canon 120 §1 stated: "All lawsuits against clerics, both civil and criminal, must be brought before an ecclesiastical court, unless for particular places provision is otherwise lawfully made."

Privilege Dropped

Canon 120 §2 of the 1917 Code provided otherwise: a priest could be brought before the secular courts if the bishop granted permission. The law said that such permission was not to be refused without a just and serious reason. In some places the privilege of the forum did not apply by reason of a contrary custom. Such was the position in Germany and in those places where English customs prevailed, including the USA and Canada.

For the same reason, the privilege of the forum did not apply in New Zealand. Accordingly, canon law has never prevented a person in New Zealand from taking her or his allegations that a priest had committed sexual abuse of a minor directly to the civil authorities. In New Zealand any charge of sexual abuse of a minor committed by a priest would be dealt with by the secular courts. And, after the 1938 Code of Canon Law, the privilege of the forum has ceased to exist.

Law Not Followed

However, the fact that the privilege of the forum ever existed reflects a mentality that influenced bishops and religious superiors all over the world not to report offences of sexual abuse by clergy and religious to the police.

Theologically, clericalism grew out of the cleric's presumed expert knowledge, divine mission, ontological change, and so on. The mentality of clericalism can exist in an individual cleric, in groups of clerics, or even in lay persons who bestow an unfounded entitlement or who approximate themselves to clerics as they seek some share in the entitlement and status of clergy. Clericalism can be very subtle and insidious. It is always destructive and leads, as Archbishop Scicluna said at the Synod on Young People, to "looking at ministry as a source of power and not of service."

Pope Francis's Stance

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has repeatedly condemned clericalism and urged those within the Church to actively work against

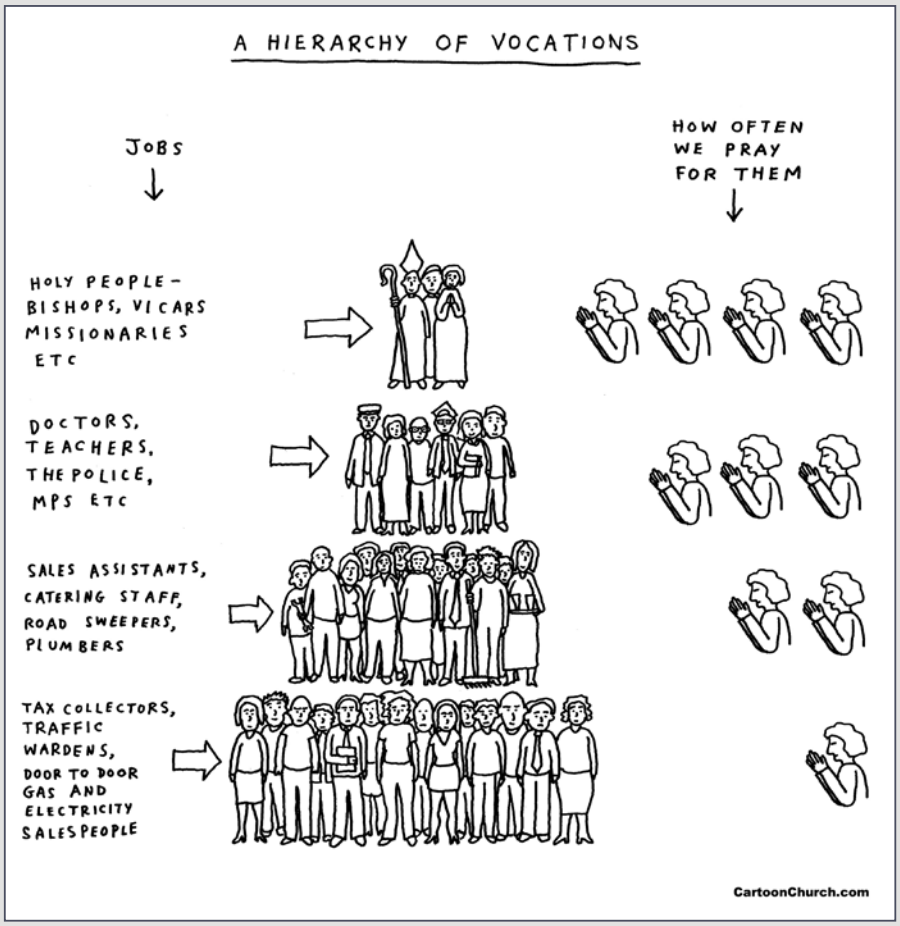
it. It is worth listing his comments as together they demonstrate his unequivocal stance.

In his *Jubilee Address* he stated synodality reveals ministry as service: "the only authority is the authority of service, the only power is the power of the cross … in this Church, as in an inverted pyramid, the top is located beneath the base. Consequently, those who exercise authority are called 'ministers,' because, in the original meaning of the word, they are the least of all."

In *Evangelii Gaudium* (par 102) he pointed out that excessive clericalism excludes lay persons from decision-making. In a letter 19 March 2016 to Cardinal Marc Ouelette, president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, he stated: clericalism "tends to diminish and undervalue" the baptismal grace given to all, and which "gradually extinguishes the prophetic flame" to which the Church is called.

Addressing the bishops of Chile and Peru on 16 January 2018, Pope Francis described clericalism as a "caricature of the vocation we have received", and in a letter on clerical sexual abuse in August 2018, Pope Francis said: "To say 'no' to abuse is to say an emphatic 'no' to all forms of clericalism." Francis urged Irish bishops at the August 2018 World Meeting of Families not to "repeat the attitudes of aloofness and clericalism that at times in your history have given the real image of an authoritarian, harsh and autocratic Church."

At the opening address of the October 2018 Synod on Youth, he stated that the "scourge" of clericalism must be "decisively overcome" since it is a "perversion" and "the root of many evils in the Church." And three days later, in a Communication from the Sala Stampa on 6 October 2018: "Both abuse and its cover-up can no longer be tolerated and a different treatment for Bishops who have committed or covered up abuse, in fact represents a form of clericalism that is no longer acceptable." Finally, in an address to those participating in the Synod on Youth, Francis said: clericalism is "princely and scandalous" and "one of the ugliest perversions of the Church . . . we need to tackle questions of formation of clergy, screening of clergy, cooperation with civil authorities, but also the empowerment of our lay communities."



This CartoonChurch.com cartoon by Dave Walker © originally appeared in the *Church Times*

The renewal of the Church cannot be deferred. Francis promotes the active participation of all members of the Church in its processes of discernment, consultation and cooperation at all levels of decision-making and mission.

Church without Clericalism

Pope Francis has clearly expressed his desire for clericalism to be eradicated. But he also offers something in its place, a vision for a renewed Church. This vision takes clear expression in *Evangelii Gaudium*: "I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself."

This renewal of the Church cannot be deferred. Francis promotes the active participation of all members of the Church in its processes of discernment, consultation and cooperation at all levels of decision-making and mission. It is by working together — with all members of the faithful involved at all levels — that we will begin to recover from clericalism.

Brendan Daly is a priest lecturing in canon law at Good Shepherd College. He has a doctorate in canon law and is Judicial Vicar of the Tribunal for New Zealand.

COLLABORATE and FREE the CHURCH

NEIL DARRAGH describes how Christian beliefs such as participation, collaboration, justice and transparency will help us change the clerical culture of the Church.

"Clericalism" is a term that has been tossed around a good deal recently, usually as an accusation. In Catholic circles, this is partly perhaps a result of Pope Francis's frequent attacks on the "danger/scourge/plague" of clericalism as a terrible evil in the modern Church. Partly, too, in society at large, the abuse of power has become less acceptable and more often reported.

Broadly speaking, clericalism refers to the abuse of power by any person with authority in the Church. Behind it lies a false sense of "entitlement" and an attachment to power and privilege. It encourages an obsession with ladder-climbing and obedience. Since nearly all ordained priests in the Catholic Church are male celibates, it also encourages male chauvinism.

Claims to power and privilege are not of course confined to priests. It is a kind of elitism that was inherent in the idea of belonging to an upper class. In more recent times we have learnt how it has infected the extravagantly wealthy, celebrities and government ministers, as well as the medical and legal professions. Likewise, clericalism is the particular form of elitism that we find in the Church. The tragedy here is that it has become increasingly common, or at least increasingly obvious, among ordained clergy today.

The best definition of clericalism that I am aware of is that of American theologian Raymond Helmick. He describes clericalism as the sense of privilege of ordained clergy, the sense of being set apart, better than those one deals with, entitled to deferential treatment and even submission from others. This sense has often been inculcated from the beginning of the priest's training and is an expectation built up in the actual life of the priest.

A Pyschological Personality Problem

The issue of clericalism is often treated as a psychological problem. It is regarded as a personality dysfunction that appears in some priests once they have been placed in leadership positions which normally attract respect from other people. This personality dysfunction may come out in the form of authoritarianism, bullying, an inability to cooperate with other people, a sense of belonging to a superior caste and a lack of insight into one's own limitations. The clericalist priest has an urge to control; especially to control the conduct of worship of which he sees himself as

the guardian. He also sees himself as the controller of the beliefs and practices of his congregation. "I am the parish priest" is a statement intended to conclude any arguments. This sense of identity with a superior caste comes out not only in overbearing human relations but also in a preference for distinctive dress fashions, both everyday (clerical collar and suit) and liturgical (splendid, flowing vestments).

An Institutional Problem

Yet clericalism is not just a personality problem. It also has an institutional character as embedded in the structures of the Church itself. We are dealing here, then, not just with personality disorders but with a clerical "culture".

Most of the time, the priest himself (unless he has some good, honest friends and relations) doesn't even notice the operations of this clerical culture. Many years ago, when I was a young priest involved in a youth group of the time (when priests were younger and youth groups older than today), the youth group leaders organised an end-of-year celebration in a local eatery. Like all such youth celebrations there had to be an element of novelty which in this case was that the priest (me) wore ordinary street clothes while two of the more mature-looking male youths wore clerical collars and suits. One of the things that surprised me (I was young and innocent in those days) was how much deference the restaurant staff (with no known church affiliations) paid to the two clerically-dressed youth. They were treated as spokesmen for the group and their opinions regarded as group decisions. The two young "clerics" enjoyed enormously all this attention and deferment. This was an unconscionably false presentation to the restaurant but none of us was alert to that at the time.

This clerical culture is fed by a theology which exaggerates the priest's (and even more so the bishop's) role as "another Christ". It emphasises the importance of the ordained priesthood while diminishing the priesthood of all the baptised. Empowered by this superior rank, his special training and the power of the clerical brotherhood, the clericalist priest overrides or suffocates nearly all the normal, varied ministries of a Christian community. He closes off opportunities for church members to exercise their ministries or else he fails to provide any adequate information or training. Attempts by lay members of the Church to exercise a liturgical or pastoral ministry within the Church (they can do it outside) becomes a threat to the "priesthood" of the ordained priest. He feels his priesthood "diminished" by other people doing what he does, especially if they do it better.

A clerical culture is clerics self-absorbed. The solution to clericalism requires much greater participation of the laity in all aspects of the Church's life. It requires a commitment to collaborative ministry rather than line management. A priest's success in his role is measured, then, by his ability to empower a variety of other ministries, liturgical, pastoral, educational and administrative within the local Church. It means, too, that the local parish as a whole is focused outwards towards social justice and an integral ecology rather than inwardly absorbed by its own survival and the salvation of its own members.

Lay Support of Clericalism

Clericalism, however, is not just something that afflicts priests, bishops and deacons. A clerical culture embedded in the structures of the Church survives because other people, lay people, approve or collude with it. It is a sociological or cultural phenomenon which even those priests who disapprove of it often fail to see in their own congregations.

The solution to clericalism requires much greater participation of the laity in all aspects of the Church's life. It requires a commitment to collaborative ministry rather than line management. A priest's success in his role is measured, then, by his ability to empower a variety of other ministries, liturgical, pastoral, educational and administrative within the local Church.

Once we are alerted to it, it is not too difficult to recognise whether or not our own parish (faith community) is submerged within a clericalist culture. We can try a simple test here by responding "yes" or "no" to the following statements:

- In our parish, the priest (or deacon) is the only one who gives the homily at Sunday Eucharists
- Our parish liturgies almost always refer to God as if God were male (Lord, Father, he, his, etc.)
- Our parish priest reminds us from time to time that he is our shepherd and we are like sheep
- The priest is in charge of everything in our parish
- We always call our priest "Father"
- We do not have any "lay presiders" who can lead liturgies (funerals, house blessings, weekday liturgies, etc.) in our parish
- There are no regular in-service training programmes for lay ministers in our parish
- We have no parish pastoral or mission council, or, our parish council is ineffective
- When our parish priest is away on a Sunday he always calls in an outside priest to say Mass
- Our parish priest is too busy with his church obligations to become involved in social justice or environmental issues.

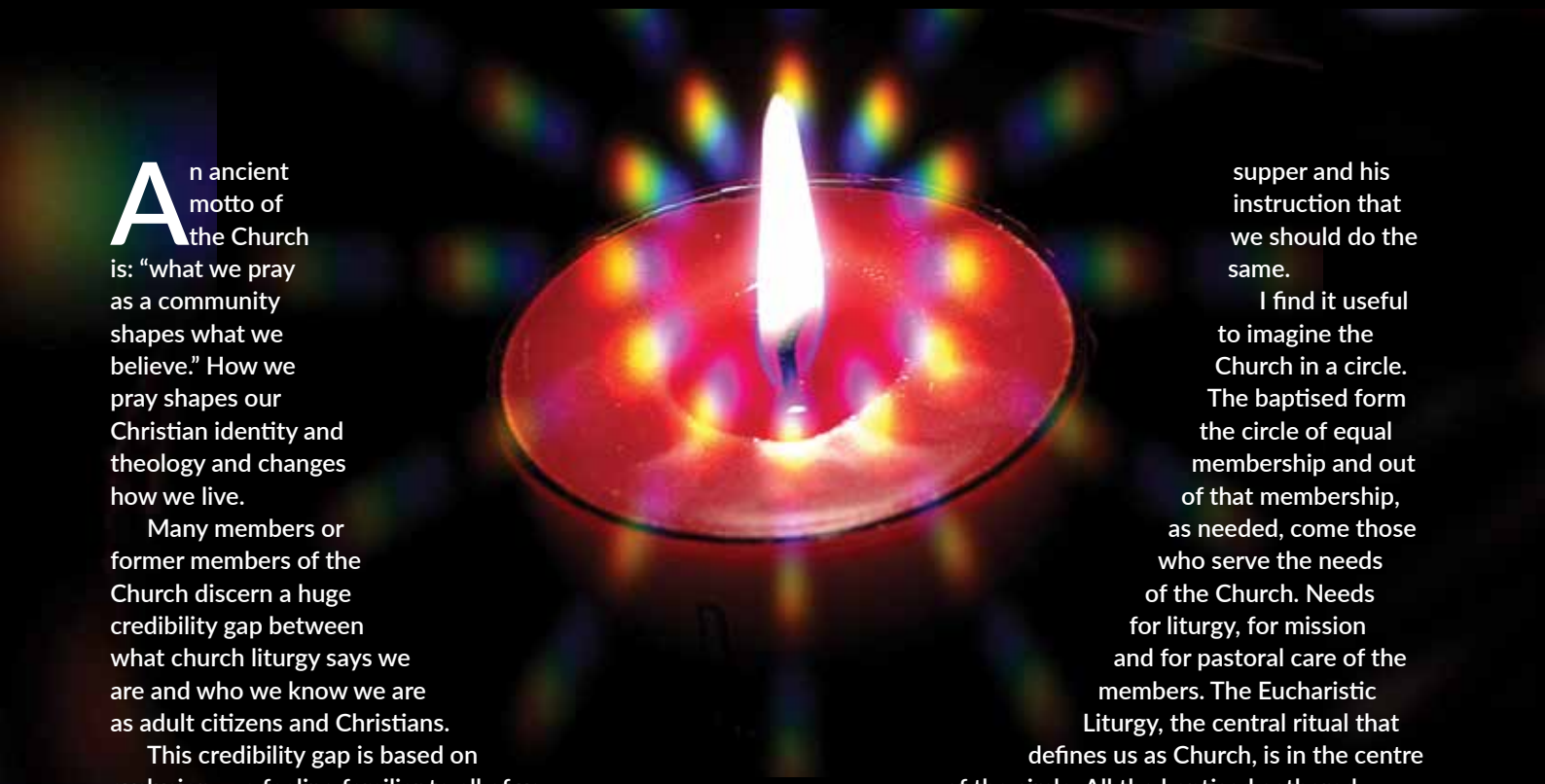
Real Change Necessary

If we say "yes" to most of these propositions, then we are thoroughly entrenched in a clericalist Church. We may prefer it that way of course. If not, the way out of it is, in principle, quite well established. It lies within the basic Christian beliefs about participation, collaborative ministry, justice, honesty and transparency.

Neil Darragh is a pastor, writer, and theologian in the Diocese of Auckland with a long-term interest in the impact of the Christian Gospel in New Zealand society.

SHARING LEADERSHIP in LITURGY

JO AYERS writes about the possibilities for inclusion which come about by sharing the leadership in our Eucharistic liturgies.



An ancient motto of the Church is: "what we pray as a community shapes what we believe." How we pray shapes our Christian identity and theology and changes how we live.

Many members or former members of the Church discern a huge credibility gap between what church liturgy says we are and who we know we are as adult citizens and Christians.

This credibility gap is based on exclusion — a feeling familiar to all of us. We may be baptised, but unless we are ordained we are inessential. Women in particular are superfluous as they are permanently excluded from ordination. The language and images of the liturgy insist God is, always and exclusively, male. Male gender is the norm so women are not. We know that this is untrue, wrong and contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But it persists and many, many people, finding no entry point into the liturgy, have moved away. They are people of faith but they find no expression of their faith in the liturgy and no nourishment.

The elephant in the room is the specific exclusivity of the priesthood. We cannot continue with the hierarchy of the Church consisting only of celibate males. It's an insult to the Holy Spirit. The sexual abuse scandals make us realise anew that this oppressive model of leadership — oppressive for priests and people alike — is not working. To perpetuate it is to widen the credibility gap even further.

Baptism Creates Church

Enough! I don't want to lay blame, but to share the inclusive way our community worships. Our starting point is Baptism (and Confirmation). Baptism creates Church. Baptism gives us all a common and equal dignity of membership of the Church. And to be baptised is to be in service to one another. The finest image of Church for me is Jesus washing the feet of his friends at the last supper and his instruction that we should do the same.

I find it useful to imagine the Church in a circle. The baptised form the circle of equal membership and out of that membership, as needed, come those who serve the needs of the Church. Needs for liturgy, for mission and for pastoral care of the members. The Eucharistic Liturgy, the central ritual that defines us as Church, is in the centre of the circle. All the baptised gathered around have equal access to that ritual, equal opportunity to use their gifts in service of this celebration.

Shared Liturgical Leadership

Our community uses a model of the Sunday Eucharist called "Shared Liturgical Leadership". Three leaders share leadership, one each for Word, Eucharist and Gathering and Sending. There are the usual ministers too: readers, musicians, homilists, communion ministers, collectors and those in charge of hospitality.

Ideally we sit in the round or semi-circle. We do this in the image of Church as a circle of equals, but also so that we can see one another and the action of the ritual. There is no hierarchy of seating. Each leader comes out of the gathering as she or he is needed.

Worshipping on the same level reinforces the concept of equality of the baptised. In many churches this seems impossible to achieve but this arrangement can be very powerful and working bees can shift lots of furniture!

Leader of Gathering and Sending

The leader of Gathering and Sending welcomes and gathers the individuals into a praying community and leads up to the opening prayer. This person attends to the needs of the gathering and most importantly at the end of the liturgy sends the community out into the world to carry on

the work of the Gospel. This leader is always a lay person and a permanent, established member of the community.

Leader of the Word

The leader of the Word, assisted by readers and a prayer leader, organises for readings to be introduced, proclaimed and preached and prayed about and the creed recited. This leader is a lay person who has knowledge of and training in Scripture. About one Sunday in three the homilist is a lay person. The prayers of the faithful are spontaneous, made possible with roving wireless microphones.

Leader of Eucharist

The leader of the Eucharist leads the liturgy from the preparation of the gifts until he prays the final prayer. This leader is always a priest. The communion ministers assist in the breaking of the bread and the distribution of communion. They receive communion with the priest after the community has been served. This has become a very significant expression of servant leadership for our community.

Candle Lights Change

The change of leadership within the liturgy is marked by the passing of a lighted candle. The candle identifies the leader but also encourages focus on the particular presence of Christ in that part of the liturgy.

Developing the Model

We didn't come to this liturgy by chance, or *ad hoc*. In 1990 in the crypt of St Benedict's church in Auckland we sought change: more participation and input from the congregation, especially women. The Dominicans in charge of the parish at the time supported the innovation. We wanted the perspectives of women and men and wide expertise about the moral and political challenges to contribute to our reflection on the Scriptures. And we wanted inclusive language.

We held monthly Mass meetings to discuss the homily and message of the readings. We produced the music and prayers, the hymn sheet and the ministers. And we evaluated and discussed the theology of what we were doing. We had the vital resource of a local theologian and liturgist Neil Darragh to critique and support us. Gradually the model of Shared Liturgical Leadership that we have today was instituted.

We chose not to ask for volunteers but instead identified people and invited them into the process. We provided support and training and we planned as a group. No one was out there on their own. Anyone involved needed to have expertise in their leadership role — and so we provided training and support. Over the years we've compiled guidelines for the paths to leadership.

And yes: we regularly ignore several rubrics. Good liturgy lives and grows and responds to the lives of the worshippers. Otherwise we would still be praying in Aramaic or Greek or Latin. So we have invited a Baptist minister to preach, and a city councillor, and an organic farmer and sometimes a member of the youth group. These people widened our view of the action of God in the world by relating their lives and work to the Scripture.

We are aware that what we do raises explicit questions about the nature of priesthood within communities. Current practice in parishes asks a nearly impossible task of the priest — he has to be an expert in everything. Although his perspective is always shaped by his age, experience, culture and gender, we ask him to compose 10 minutes of homily that will reach everyone in the congregation. He may do this quite well for a little while but ultimately he will be on permanent repeat.

I find it useful to imagine the Church in a circle. The baptised form the circle of equal membership and out of that membership, as needed, come those who serve the needs of the Church. The Eucharistic Liturgy is in the centre of the circle. All the baptised gathered around have equal access to that ritual, equal opportunity to use their gifts in service of this celebration.

Sitting in the pews is deep spiritual wealth, holiness, wisdom about the world, understanding about society and knowledge and learning about the Scriptures. The homilists, both women and men are there, as are those who can lead the community at prayer. Servant leadership is seen active in the life of the community.

Praying this model is like a great gust of the Spirit. God is experienced in multiple ways through the leadership and participation and the variety of perspectives and spiritualities.

What does it mean for priesthood? We are content to leave that detail for another generation. What is required of us now is courage, informed by prayer and community, to keep working for inclusive liturgy.

For further information see: *Eucharist in the Local Church: Meeting the Challenge of Real Participation* by Neil Darragh in association with Jo Ayers. Distributed by ATF in Australia and Accent Publications in New Zealand.

Jo Ayers has a long involvement teaching, writing and practising liturgy and ritual. She and husband Pat Snedden and family live in Auckland.

Prayer in a Time of Climate Change

God up ahead of us,
You who carry us foward,
we pray in anticipation of a world drawn-down.
In the midst of unthinkable harms we know only anxiety and pain.
We trust the impossible to happen,
we hold fast to your Kindom of care and protection,
we believe in your promise of justice and peace.
Wherever we are on our journey go before us,
surround everything with your
enduring spirit of love.
Amen.

by Peter Healy

OPPORTUNITIES Not to Be LOST

THOMAS LAMB **voices his disappointment in the Church and speaks of new opportunities for the People of God today.**

I'm concerned about the declining participation in the Catholic Church, particularly among the New Zealand majority culture in this time. My experience makes me believe that clericalism in the Church is neither authentic nor life-giving and we must be converted to be People of God, people living the Scriptures.

Vatican II Changes Reversed

When I look back, I feel disappointed that many of the life-giving movements emanating from Vatican II have not survived in the Church. These include the Church's failure to engage with the feminist movement which raised women's awareness of male domination generally and of the male clergy domination of the Church hierarchy.

Where Vatican Council II stimulated energy, interest and involvement by the People of God, that energy has diminished. The concept of the "People of God" has been replaced by "laity" (defined as the "ordinary", "uneducated").

The Charismatic Renewal movement, seen by many

as a worldwide outpouring of the Holy Spirit and with its focus on Scripture, arrived in New Zealand in the 70s. Despite capable men and women emerging with multiple gifts, the last four popes have not openly encouraged this movement. Yet Charismatic Renewal encouraged Catholic people to read, reflect on and share the Scriptures.

Throughout the 70s and 80s a number of women began studying theology at a seminary. Some did so in anticipation of acceptance for priestly training as was happening in the Anglican Church — but no. And while an exception has been made for married Anglican priests who come into the Catholic Church, the rule of priestly celibacy has again been reinforced by popes for all other priests.

When our parish took part in a late 80s nationwide survey, initiated from Rome, about the place of the laity in the Church, we put forward that educated People of God should have a voice in Rome alongside the clergy. We discovered that the New Zealand collated findings were not presented in Rome by laypersons. We didn't think that a cleric could present our viewpoint faithfully.

While the Catholic Women's League has had a strong voice on social needs in many dioceses, attempts have failed to build similar men's movements. Priestly power and body language still hold sway in many pastoral councils.

The departure from the priesthood after Vatican II of a number of lively, deeply spiritual men around our country left its toll. While they continued to contribute through marriage and teaching in Catholic colleges and at University, their departure shocked us and we felt the leadership gap in the clergy of their going.

The Church's stance on responsible parenting, particularly as promoted in *Humanae Vitae*, continued to burden Catholic couples. There was an expectation in the Church of a change in teaching given the signs of the time. However, Vatican II teaching on the conscience encouraged couples to make their own informed decision. I know that many felt guilt after years of being conditioned by Church legalism.

Vatican II was a new spring in the Church and encouraged us to think that the dominant power of the priestly hierarchy could make way for more sharing with the People of God. We saw some of this happening when national colleges of bishops began to include changes particular to their local cultures. But then gradually during the pontificates of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI the college concept was eroded and control taken back to Rome. Largely, their conservatism flattened the enthusiasm generated by Vatican II.

We experienced this when newly-ordained Kiwi priests began to adopt and exercise a pre-Vatican II formal, clerical style — black suits and Roman collars, control "over" parishes and parishioners, and other displays of power, small and large.

And we have introduced many foreign priests into our dioceses. While we can be grateful to them for ministering in our Church, we're finding that many come from cultures where priestly status comes with a sense of clerical entitlement and power which influences their behaviour.

Scandal of Clerical Sexual Abuse

Perhaps the greatest wound in the Church is the handling of clerical child abuse. When the news first broke in the Boston archdiocese, many priests trivialised the problem by saying that the child abuse statistics in the Church were similar to those of the general population. They failed to grasp the enormous damage abuse and cover-up has done in the Church and to the children and families involved.

Pope John Paul dallied for 30 years doing nothing about clerical abuse. Under his watch, 91 theologians and activists were silenced, expelled and excommunicated while priests guilty of sexual abuse were allowed to keep their positions. Now the Church has been exposed for its belief that the institution was more important than child victims.

Vatican II was a new spring in the Church and encouraged us to think that the dominant power of the priestly hierarchy could make way for more sharing with the People of God. We saw some of this happening when national colleges of bishops began to include changes particular to their local cultures.

New Spring for the Church

I would like our Church to be a place where we are confident that we belong to an organisation that values the safety of its members.

A Church that is caring and welcoming of all, especially those marginalised by poverty, divorce, sexual orientation and relationship issues.

A Church that is genuinely ecumenical.

A Church where liturgy is creative with inclusive participation, where families are welcome and the involvement of the People of God is valued.

I would like the Church to provide equal opportunity for utilising the gifts of women, men and young people.

I would like celibacy in the priesthood to be optional.

I would like small study groups in parishes to become faith-based communities supporting the pastoral, practical needs of the wider community.

I want us to be an outward-looking Church and encourage parishes to engage in practical action such as adopting a mission station or project.

I look forward to it happening.

Thomas Lamb is a cradle Catholic, a former farmer, contractor, workplace chaplain and member of prayer and discussion groups. His interests are family, conservation and the arts.

SUPPORT TO SUSTAIN OUR COMMON HOME

Imagine life on Earth as three threads woven together: the natural environment, the economy and human society. When these threads complement and support one another, an intricate, beautiful fabric is produced. This is how I like to conceptualise sustainability. Presently, the economy thread often dominates over the other two, resulting in a fabric with holes in it: the environment or people suffer. Pursuing sustainability is about realising that every fibre of these three threads is connected: people, religions and cultures, financial and political systems, air, water, soil and creatures large and small.

Cultural values and beliefs shape society and our interactions with the environment and economy, reinforcing disconnections or promoting connections between these different threads. Some cultural values, such as the consumerism which currently dominates much of society, promulgate beliefs about material acquisition, that such wealth increases human well-being, promoting the economic thread over other forms of well-being and environmental concerns.

Conversely, society, especially in religious and spiritual belief systems, also contains many values which could be used to encourage sustainable living. For us to evolve and strive for sustainability, it is imperative that these are extracted.

Teachings of Buddhism

Living in Thailand, I am surrounded by three of the world's major religions: Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Most Thai people are Theravada Buddhists, with around 5 per cent being Muslims. Very few Thais are Christian, but I volunteer and live within a Marist school and community here. Each of these religions has a basis for pursuing sustainability: all feature ideas of interconnections and calling people to take responsibility for their actions. I am also inspired by indigenous spiritual beliefs, particularly from my native Aotearoa.

Buddhism knits together the ideals of *karma* (cause) and effect and *ahimsa* (non-harm), along with the values of compassion, selflessness and mindfulness. Through this lens, all living things are woven together, so that people become intertwined with their surrounding environment.

This is exemplified through positive or negative *karma*, leading to happiness or suffering respectively; respecting all living beings through *ahimsa* (many Buddhists are vegetarians); and striving to live a life enriched with compassion, selflessness and mindfulness, so as to mutually benefit all life forms. Contrary to predominant Western individualistic, consumerist values, an individual's significance is diminished and satisfaction cannot be achieved simply through personal gain.

Islamic Teaching

Christians and Muslims alike believe that God created everything and all creatures' existence is reliant upon God. Islamic teaching is founded upon interconnection through the principle of *tawheed* (the Unity of God), relating to the statement "There is no God, but God".

The Unity of God is mirrored in the Unity of all creation, including humans, flora and fauna, and all of the natural environment. Everything is an intrinsic part of God's creation. Furthermore, integrity and equilibrium of all things is needed to accomplish Unity and this cannot be done if certain priorities dominate over others.

Christian Teaching

Similarly for Christians, God's love, wisdom and glory is revealed through the universe being united in harmony, and interdependency is required to guarantee this continues. Acknowledgment of Earth belonging to all is infused throughout Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'*, referring to Earth as "*Our Common Home*" and proclaiming: "We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it". This is echoed by The World Council of Churches which recognises that people are but one part of the global community.

Māori Teaching

Many indigenous groups, such as Native Americans, Australian Aborigines and Māori, also have spiritual beliefs featuring strong connections to the land and people — both present and past.

For Māori, everything is connected, which is evident through their whakapapa, their identity in

ALEISHA KEATING writes of how Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Māori teach about our relationship in creation and caring for Earth communities.

relation to the land, water, animals and other people. Believing that everything is inherently linked, they consider their well-being to be dependent upon ecosystem health: "Ko ahau te taiao, ko te taiao, ko ahau", meaning my well-being is characterised by the ecosystem (Ngāti Wai and Ngāti Whatua).

> ***Merely recognising that nothing happens in isolation is not sufficient: to pursue sustainability we must also take responsibility and ownership for restoring harmony on earth. These ideals are fostered in many religious and spiritual beliefs.***

As our lifestyles become increasingly urbanised, industrial and technology dependent, we are becoming more disconnected from nature and each other. Without holistically considering the wider social, environmental and economic impacts of our decisions and behaviour, the global ecosystem will continue to be pushed out of balance. However, merely recognising that nothing happens in isolation is not sufficient: to pursue sustainability we must also take responsibility and ownership for restoring harmony on earth. These ideals are also fostered in many religious and spiritual beliefs.

Learning from One Another

Buddhism has a strong basis for taking responsibility to ensure that all beings flourish through *karma*, *ahimsa* and its core values. Through belief in the intrinsic value of people to all life, nature is cherished as a friend, cultivating behaviours that work with rather than against nature.

The Dalai Lama suggests that people have responsibility to act: "Ultimately the decision must come from the human heart … So I think the key point is genuine sense of universal responsibility which is based on love, compassion and clear awareness." Buddhism's core values and ideals, and living simply can thus be applied to make good change in the world.

The Islamic principles of *tawheed*, *akhroh* (accountability) and *khalifa* (guardianship) are central for developing environmental consciousness and advocating stewardship.

Muhummad (the Prophet of Islam) said: "The world is green and beautiful and God has appointed you stewards over it", calling Muslims to be *khalifa* rather than masters. People are therefore responsible and accountable for maintaining the earth's integrity, everything that God has created. Moreover, Islam discourages waste and extravagance, with the Qur'an promoting using rather than abusing Allah's gifts: "O children of Adam… eat and drink: but waste not by excess for Allah loveth not the wasters."

The bible's reference to people having "dominion" over the earth has often been interpreted as being a licence to exploit and control everything non-human. "Dominion" is mentioned in the Genesis creation story and other passages such as Psalm 8:6: "You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands." The 1986 Assisi Declarations on humanity and nature refuted this, instead proposing that people be stewards of God's creation. This mirrors Francis of Assisi who, centuries before, summoned people to lead mutually beneficial lives, for people and all creatures. From his perspective, we are fed by the earth, our sister; and we co-inhabit the earth with our brothers and sisters.

Guardianship is also fundamental to Māori spirituality: people are called tangata whenua (people of the land) and have responsibility to be kaitiaki (guardians) over wāhi tapu (sacred sites) and natural taonga (treasures) to sustain both human and environmental well-being.

While religious and spiritual beliefs differ greatly, many are grounded in strong values, offering guidance on how to live full and sustainable lives. This is illustrated through examples from Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Māori spirituality, but there are many more in other religions and spiritual beliefs. We must embrace values which promote interconnection and responsibility to ensure that the beautiful fabric of life on Earth endures for generations to come.

Aleisha Keating is a volunteer teacher with Marist Asia Foundation in Ranong, Thailand. She also enjoys writing about sustainability issues in her blog www.anethicalyarn.com

Anointed to act justly

Luke 4:14 Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. 15 He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. 16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 "The Spirit of God is upon me,
because God has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
Has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
19 to proclaim the year of God's favour."

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

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

Elaine Wainwright reads Luke 4:14-20 ecologically, pointing to our invitation to respond to the Spirit poured on us to do justice in our world.

The text from the Gospel of Luke is the Gospel we will hear and read during the 2019 liturgical year. It is a familiar text reflecting what would have been a regular event in Jesus's life: his going to the synagogue in his home town of Nazareth on the Sabbath and his being called to read from the Torah from time to time. The text from the prophet Isaiah that Jesus selects to read on this occasion as narrated by Luke is often called *programmatic* because it sums up the mission and ministry of Jesus — good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind and freedom to the downtrodden.

Reading with All Earth Community in Mind

Traditionally we have read/heard this text against the backdrop of suffering and injustice of the human community. We need to continue to do so as suffering abounds across planet Earth despite our work for justice. For instance, we know that 20 per cent of Earth's human population consumes 80 per cent of the planet's resources — which causes extreme poverty and degradation far beyond our imagining for many of the other 80 per cent. But the Spirit of God is given to us in these days as it was given to Jesus, inviting us to expand our discernment of justice. One of the voices that can guide us in this regard,

as the prophet Isaiah guided Jesus, is that of theologian Elizabeth Johnson who envisages: "a flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God: such is the vision that must guide us at this critical time of Earth's distress to practical and critical effect" (*Ask the Beasts*, p 286).

If this becomes our vision, the lens through which we read our sacred texts, then the planet and indeed the entire universe and all its constituents becomes the context both in which and through which we seek to read the Gospel. Attentiveness to the other-than-human as well as to the human elements and characters in a text is another way of describing the new, expansive way of reading which we now call "reading ecologically".

Spirit Gives Understanding of New Relationships

The opening verse of the scriptural selection (Luke 4:14) places us in a rich interactive environment. The human Jesus is said to be moved by the power of the Spirit, by a force that is more-than-human but interactive with the human. This Spirit seems to impel Jesus into a material context: the geographical region of Galilee and the village of Nazareth in particular; and the synagogue as the explicit location. Habitat, human and holy in spirit-infused interrelationships opens this section with the natural environment (Galilee and Nazareth in particular) in creative interaction with the built environment of village and synagogue.

It is in this rich, interactive context that Jesus stands up to read. He is handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, a papyrus scroll made from the papyrus plant, the medium for bringing the Jewish scriptures to the community. Creative interrelationships between the human and the material continue to be made explicit in this text (Luke 4:16-17) with the entire interactive context being spirit-filled. It is evident in the opening words of the text of Isaiah 61:1-3 (and Is 58: 6) from which Jesus reads. The Spirit of God has been given to the prophet in a material human body over which oil has been poured out. The oil evokes Earth's materials: ancient olive trees with their fruit processed into olive oil which is used to anoint — the human and the divine intertwine. The Lucan text specifies Jesus as the prophet to whom this text is addressed. He claims: "Today this text is being fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21).

Anointed to Do Justice

There is now another "today" — our day — when this text is being fulfilled yet again. We can hear it speaking in an ecological key. The Spirit of God has been given to us, to the entire Earth community, anointing us to bring about now the vision of justice and restoration appropriate to our day.

"Good news to the poor" extends beyond the human community to include all Earth's species. That good news is of right and just relationships that support the flourishing of all on land, in the oceans and in the air.

"Liberty to captives" includes species which are caught in the web of human power so that they are dying a thousand times faster than through the natural process.

The Spirit of God has been given to us, to the entire Earth community, anointing us to bring about now the vision of justice and restoration appropriate to our day.

"Sight to the blind" evokes the urgent need that the human community sees beyond its own narrow wants and desires and opens its eyes to the plight of the planet itself and all its diverse species.

"To set the downtrodden free" envisages an Earth community in which all its constituents live fully.

This vision enables us to proclaim with the prophet Jesus, in the words of Isaiah, a year of God's favour. At the time of Isaiah and at the time of Jesus, the words of each prophet rang out for justice. They resound anew in our time and in our circumstances — a time of profound ecological crisis.

As we enter this new year, with the crisis even more acute, may we be attentive to habitat, the human and the holy as we are anointed prophets of a new justice. This new justice extends beyond Earth to include the cosmos.

True Disciples Grounded in God

KATHLEEN RUSHTON interprets Jesus's teaching on the beatitudes as told in Luke 6:17-49.

The Gospel of Luke is addressed to those living in the Gentile and Greco-Roman world. The story of Jesus is shaped to show them how they are to live and proclaim the Gospel in their cultures. For these people, "the twelve", are like windows into what it means to be authentic disciples. Like them, we need to interpret this discipleship in our own time and place.

Jesus — Solitude of Earth

For some time, Jesus has been carrying out the programme he announced in the synagogue in Nazareth when he read from the prophet Isaiah and proclaimed "the year of God's favour" (Lk 4:16-19). As his ministry unfolds, Jesus desires and experiences the solitude of Earth and nature. His baptism in the waters of the Jordan and time in the wilderness prepared him for the temptations (Lk 4:1). Before calling his first disciples, he departed for the wilderness (Lk 4:42). When he returned to the waterfront, the crowds "pressing in on" him were so great that he taught from Simon's boat. Later Jesus called Simon and companions on the Lake of Galilee (Lk 5:1-11) and, nearby, Levi the tax collector (Lk 5:27-28).

Before Jesus formally selected the twelve, he "went out to the mountain to pray and he spent the night in prayer to God" (Lk 6:12). The mountain, rich in biblical symbolism, is where Jesus communicated with God. Jesus's pattern of praying — intimacy with God in solitude on a mountain — is repeated in the Gospel; Jesus is transfigured in prayer (Lk 9:28) and just before his passion and death he prays with his disciples on the Mount of Olives (Lk 22:39-46). More than in the other Gospels, Jesus is presented as praying in Luke.

Jesus Calls 12 Apostles

Just as Israel was descended from the 12 sons of Jacob, Luke images the community of the reign of God as resting on 12 chosen individuals (Lk 6:12-16). They are called apostles — literally, the ones who are sent on mission. Notice the categories of people Luke says are gathered around Jesus: "*He came down with them* and stood on a level place, with *a great crowd of his disciples* and *a great multitude of people* from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon" (Lk 6:17). The closest to Jesus are his newly chosen twelve apostles. Next is the wider group of disciples from which they were chosen. And then is the great multitude who have gathered from near and far.

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

— 17 February —

RL 6th Sunday Ordinary Time – Luke 6:17; 20-26 and RCL 6th Sunday After Epiphany – Luke 6:17-26

— 24 February —

RL 7th Sunday Ordinary Time and RCL 7th Sunday After Epiphany – Luke 6:27-38

— 3 March —

RL 8th Sunday Ordinary Time – Luke 6:39-45

With Those Gathered

After a night of prayer and selecting the twelve, Jesus came down with them and stood with those gathered — not over or above them. The condition of the multitude is described vividly. They came to hear Jesus, those sick to be healed of their diseases and those troubled with unclean spirits to be cured. They "were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them" (Lk 6:18-19).

The crowd took the initiative. They tried to touch Jesus to be healed not from afar but through human contact. Jesus allowed himself to be touched. He communicated a desire to heal and a love that brings about wholeness. In front of this crowd of afflicted and burdened people, Jesus instructed the twelve, those who will serve as the windows through which Luke's communities will witness authentic discipleship. Jesus's *deeds* of healing (Lk 6:17-18) are followed by his *words* of teaching, preparing the twelve for mission (Lk 6:20-49).

"Congratulations" "Unfortunate"

If we set aside our own familiarity with the Beatitudes we will better appreciate the sharpness of Jesus's sermon. Jesus "looked up at his disciples", addressing them, calling them "blessed" (Lk 6:20-23) and inviting them to ongoing conversion (Lk 6:24-26). He addressed the disciples directly in the second person laying out the principles for inclusion in the reign of God: –"Yours is", "You rich".

Brendan Byrne suggests that "blessed" in this text is better conveyed as "congratulations". The blessed formula declares a person to be in a "fortunate or advantageous position in view of a coming action of God". On the other hand "woe" means "unfortunate". But ideas clash provocatively for both the poor and the rich in the text. It shocks us to congratulate the poor on being poor, the hungry on being hungry, those who weep and those who are reviled for their situation. It seems crazy to assert that the wealthy, the well-fed, those who laugh and those who benefit from good reputation are unfortunate.

So who are those declared "blessed" in particular circumstances of poverty, hunger, pain, sadness and persecution? Jesus began by addressing explicitly "you" (the disciples) who are poor and rich, now (found four times in Lk 6:20-26). Remember "the twelve" are windows of what disciples are to be in Luke's community, that is, the poor and the rich among them. So far, good news for the poor spirals throughout Luke (Lk 1:52-55; 4:18). God is on the side of the poor and pledged to act on behalf of the poor and marginalised.

The poor are certainly the economically poor. Traditionally, for those waiting for God's salvation in the fullest sense, economic and social justice are included. Salvation also includes those who have a deep spiritual longing. Their vulnerability, openness and emptiness provide scope for God's way and action. They are not passive victims.

The words of Jesus and the context need to be held together. Jesus is speaking to the disciples in the countryside, in front of the multitude — many of whom are vulnerable and afflicted. Their vulnerability gives room for God to act.

To Go Beyond

"But I say to you that listen", continues Jesus, taking vulnerability to new limits in a series of imperatives: "Love your enemies ... bless ... do good ... Give to everyone ... Do to others as you would have them do to you." Do all of this is in the face of "hate", "curse" and "abuse" (Lk 6:27-38). True disciples are to go beyond, to do more than the golden rule, to be grounded in the covenant attitudes and actions of God. They are to be merciful as God is merciful.

Vulnerability means disciples are to engage in self-scrutiny. Jesus illustrates this humorously with a speck and the log (Lk 6:37-42). The "tree and its fruits" parable encourages commitment to right action (Lk 6:43-45). The "two foundations" parable invites reflection on the sermon. Its teachings advise disciples to form strong foundations to withstand the coming flood of opposition (Lk 6:46-49).

Window for Today

We can reflect on the sermon on the plain and its context for authentic discipleship for our time. Like Jesus, we can seek solitude and prayer in nature around us. And we can reflect on how "the twelve" provide a window for God's mission of healing the Earth and the poor today.

All photos in montage from Shutterstock.com ©

What We Choose to Do Matters

It is easy to lose sight of the big picture as we go through our day-to-day lives. We immerse ourselves in the minutiae of our jobs, our petty disagreements and the small-minded running commentary that plays on in our heads. As we ruminate about the poor quality of that last coffee or our tired, screen-reading eyes, we quickly take on a myopic perspective.

It's because of this that we yearn for something to snap us out of the mundane. It's also perhaps why our dulled minds are attracted to the distractions of pageantry and celebrity. But these distractions only further disconnect us from one another, and dislocate us from ourselves.

This is troubling. Studies show that we are more likely to receive assistance on a lonely country lane than in a major city. In numbers, desensitised to other people, we become alienated and despondent. When we are surrounded by many other people we tend to shirk our responsibilities — to think "someone else will help" — and to pretend as if we have many other pressing concerns which mean we're unable to respond to another's cry for help.

This phenonmenon is called "the bystander effect". The fact that it appears to be intrinsic to our modern world makes it no less terrible. However, there is another, comforting side to that same coin. When we know that there's no one else around and we feel we need to act, we do.

It's the same call to action we feel when a disaster strikes. In the face of great adversity, and in the middle of the worst circumstances, the very best of human nature is on offer. We unify, collaborate and aid one another to overcome what can seem insurmountable.

It always amuses me when a reporter asks an emergent hero why he or she acted as they did, saving a life or preventing some catastrophe. The reply is always the same: "It's what anyone would do."

Calamity usurps that nonchalance about the needs of others. Instead, we actually put others' needs above our own. In this way, as a bushfire burns away the dead scrub and allows new life to flourish, so chaos sweeps aside what is largely unimportant.

While no one would wish for disaster to strike, it serves as a reminder that we are alive and that we must strive to act with humanity and compassion, even when the stakes seem low.

When individuals take a myopic view — when we can't see the forest for the trees — society begins to divide. When we reduce each decision to the individual, or the single instance, we see no problem with cutting down a few trees or cutting someone off in traffic just that once. "Scaled up" to corporations, governments and institutions, this is dangerous thinking. It is impossible to comprehend the intensity of the impact of even the smallest action.

While our actions may seem insignificant, they compound. A week of selfishness quickly becomes a month and then a year. If one person does this, one thousand can — and so the ill-effects compound and multiply.

Likewise, when individuals make selfless changes *en masse*, the large organisations in which we collect are also changed. In this way, little by little, the tide of individuals shifts and our course of direction is corrected.

We can't always see that this is what is happening. It is at the end and the beginning of years and eras that we're granted some sort of perspective, retrospectively recording what we've been through and forecasting ahead.

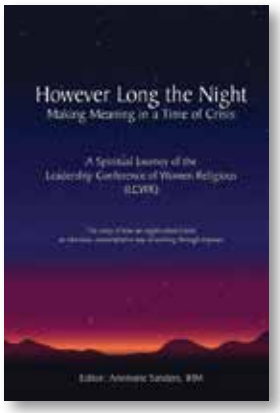
If we make a resolution this year, let it be that we take a breath from time to time, to forget ourselves and to remember that we are an infinitesimally small part of a greater whole. Most of all, remember that despite our smallness, what we choose to do matters greatly.

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

However Long the Night: Making Meaning in a Time of Crisis

Edited by Annmarie Sanders IHM
Published by CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2018
Reviewed by Jane O'Carroll

BOOK



The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) USA came under scrutiny from the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith from 2009 to 2015. In 2012 the doctrinal congregation required reforms that challenged the organisation whose members are leaders of about 80 per cent of the women's Religious Congregations in the country and held wider implications for the laity and the role of women within the Church.

In *However Long the Night*, former presidents of LCWR, members of the organisation's executive staff and members of a lay support group share their experiences and insights from this critical moment in their history.

This book tells how the Sisters navigated the LCWR through the doctrinal assessment to an amicable resolution with the Vatican in April 2015. Ten essays detail the approaches and practices used, such as communal discernment, relationship-building, a commitment to nonviolence, lessons in humility, governance methods adopted by Congregations after the Second Vatican Council and a lot of prayer. The essays convey what the Sisters learned in moving from a reaction "immersed in our confrontational culture" to "discovering another way of being". While some overlap occurs in the stories, this is to be expected given the essay format and the personal perspectives.

The book also gives the facts and chronology of the doctrinal assessment through different lenses. It explores themes such as personal and institutional integrity for an organisation during a time of crisis; understanding the roots of perceptions and stereotypes that can lead to polarisation and a "cultural chasm"; how to use influence and manage the media spotlight responsibly; and how leaders and members find renewal and personal growth even in pressure-filled times.

The essays provide insight into how LCWR reacted to the crisis and offers insights to other organisations. It is a story of a spiritual journey in humility and which brought unexpected blessings for all involved.

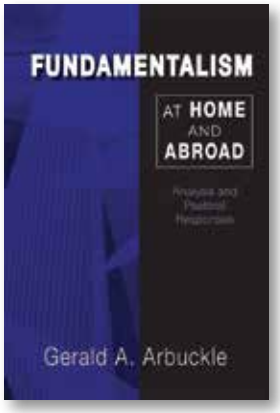
I was inspired by how deeply negative and sometimes devastating experiences of Church were transformed by the Sisters' attitudes into a deep spiritual peace. It illustrates the ongoing gift that Religious Life is in the world and Church. Many will love this book and I recommend it to pastoral Church groups for reflection and inspiration.

Fundamentalism at Home and Abroad: Analysis and Pastoral Responses

by Gerald A Arbuckle
Published by Liturgical Press, 2017
Reviewed by Colin MacLeod

BOOK

This challenging read is skilfully and purposefully crafted to be accessible and engaging. Gerald Arbuckle manages to delve into the complex nature of fundamentalism providing a huge array of examples and theoretical perspectives. I felt as though I was crossing a raging torrent through a series of deftly placed stepping stones, some of which were familiar and comfortable and others were slippery or submerged from sight until I landed on them.



We are all familiar with "fundamentalism", especially as a term applied to religious groups. However, *Fundamentalism at Home and Abroad* takes this concept beyond religions and into culture, politics, media and personal identity. As the title suggests, no-one can read this book without wondering how the tendrils of destructive fundamentalism have touched our own lives.

I have been involved in interfaith dialogue for a number of years and participate in various gatherings with friends and acquaintances who are Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu or members of other religions. I am familiar with their expressions of sorrow and fear about what individuals are doing in the name of their cherished faith. This book helps put some structure and form around expressions and causes of religious violence and oppression. And, it doesn't only point to other religions. It highlights fundamentalism within our Catholic Church — and in surprising places — considering the liberal agenda as much as the conservative.

Ultimately, this informative book is hopeful. It draws on the wisdom of Pope Francis and calls for a renewed spirit of listening and dialogue. Ir gives summaries and discussion points for personal or group reflection. It concludes with 16 responses to fundamentalism which we can apply immediately to our own actions and attitudes. The first is to be aware that "we are all in danger of becoming fundamentalists".

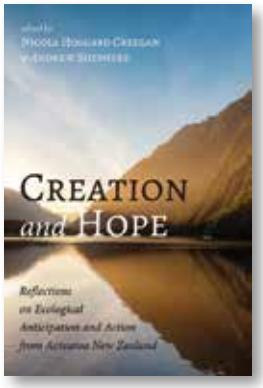
I recommend this book to all, especially those curious about the impact of fundamentalism on our lives.

Creation and Hope: Reflections on Ecological Anticipation and Action from Aotearoa New Zealand

Edited by Nicola Hoggard Creegan and Andrew Shepherd
Published by Pickwick Publications, 2018
Reviewed by Moeawa Callaghan

BOOK

Many of the essays in this book came from the Ecology & Hope conference held at Carey Baptist College in January 2016. The authors offer their expertise on creation and eco-theology from various contexts in Aotearoa. The collection headings of phenomenology, text, and theology include the themes: understandings of evolution, climate change, telling our stories, water pneumatology, eco-theology metaphors and images of Aotearoa, Derrida and animals' gazes, waterlings (we humans), evangelicals and creation meta-narratives, human dominion, the Sabbath and God's creation, the commodification of ecological action, and the re-ordering of creation with the role of human creatures. In the final chapter Celia Deane-Drummond of the University of Notre Dame draws out theological threads from Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'* — a message of hope for a fragile Earth. Pope Francis's message is universal. As Deane-Drummond states: "The outcome is practical, ethical and brimming with hope, a renewed integral ecology and a common good that is inclusive of our common home, rather than exclusive." To fully appreciate the theology in the essays requires focus and reflective processing. Take your time with this book, the many perspectives make it quite dense. Yet while each essay has its specific focus, together they address Christian hope and harmony. The book is informative, challenging and hope-filled.

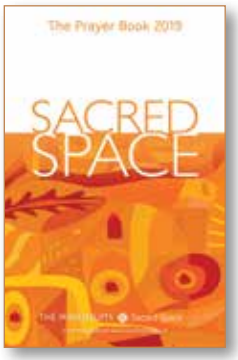


Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2019

by The Irish Jesuits
Published by Garratt Publishing, 2018
Available from Pleroma Christian Supplies
Reviewed by Patricia Hick

BOOK

The printed edition of *Sacred Space* by the Irish Jesuits contains daily prayers for 2019 in one volume. The prayers may also be found day-by-day on the website: www.sacredspace.ie. The book offers readers guidance in prayerful awareness in their relationship with God.



At its core, *Sacred Space* contains simple daily prayers based on Scripture. The reader is guided in six steps through each prayer session which is based on the Gospel reading of the day.

The prayers are organised into weeks. Each new week has a theme introduced by different writers. The theme begins with: "Something to think and pray about each day this week". The six steps of prayer are then set out: "The Presence of God", "Freedom", "Consciousness" — designed to prepare the reader to hear the Word of God in their heart. Then follows "The Word" — reading the Gospel passage. Reflection and inspiration points are provided for those who might find them helpful. The movements of "Conversation" and finally "Conclusion" follow.

I particularly liked the theme section at the beginning of each week as it provided food for thought that often resurfaced through my day and resonated in my responses with others. As the structure of the prayer in *Sacred Space* is the same for each day, it enabled me to entwine the book prayer with my own morning meditation. And I found the book's overall format helpful in providing a prayer focus — often a valuable prod to get me started!

The book's simple structure for prayer is suitable for busy people who wish to incorporate prayer into their day. I think the book is helpful as a tool for developing regular daily prayer. Prayer groups may also find this book useful.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

. . . Letters continued

is not proper that *man*made laws prevent a developing relationship between God and God's people. That is scandal. It is proper that all the baptised have easy access to God's graces in daily living in order to deepen their loving relationship with God and Rite III is one of the ways that eases access to grace.

Peter Costello, New Plymouth

CAN THE LAITY PREACH?

I would like to offer a gentle correction to a letter published in *TM* Dec 2018 which "lamented the fact that only ordained men can preach in the Catholic Church". The homily, which is one form of preaching, is indeed reserved to the ordained (Canon 767/1). It is a constitutive part of the Eucharistic liturgy and is as much a part of the priest's office as the praying of the Eucharistic Prayer. It is, however, open to lay people, religious or otherwise, to preach in Church (Canon 766). I would like to point out that the ministry of the ordained, whether it is by the sanctifying, governing or teaching functions, is not merely functional but is essential and qualitative. This allows for a fruitful complementarity whereby lay, religious and ordained cooperate, made equal in dignity and action by baptism (Canon 208), work in harmony in the Body of Christ for the mission of the Church.

Marcus Francis, PP Parish of Whanganui

The Happy Prince

Directed by Rupert Everett
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

FILM

During the summer holidays, a friend told me that his elderly mother had gone to see this film expecting that it would be based on Oscar Wilde's story of the same name, a rather sentimental piece that was frequently broadcast on National Radio's Sunday morning children's hour during the 1960s.

As in Wilde's fable — which does find a place in the movie — an air of sorrow pervades this film, which deals with the writer's exile in France in the late 1890s following his imprisonment in England for homosexual acts. Wilde's decline into a world of seedy bars and music halls, absinthe, cocaine and rent boys is laid out before us, with flashbacks to his earlier life offering glimpses of the once celebrated playwright and doting father.

In Dieppe, he is initially supported by friends Reggie Turner (Colin Firth) and his literary executor, Robbie Ross, who is also a former lover. While at one level Wilde (Rupert Everett) seeks a new start, he comes adrift after linking up with another old flame, Lord Alfred ("Bosie") Douglas, who is portrayed as louche but cold-hearted, before the pair pass a debauched interlude in Naples.

We learn much about Wilde from the diverse cast that drifts around him. The hedonistic Bosie is set against the loyal Robbie, and there are several scenes in which his troubled wife Constance, mother of his two young boys, is seen struggling with the prospect of reconciliation with a man who has flouted not only the conventions of marriage, but the mores of polite society.

Throughout *The Happy Prince*, Wilde looms as a tragic figure, whose brittle wit and gaiety is finally overwhelmed by the unresolved conflicts and compulsions that beset him. "I am my own Judas," he proclaims, and he several times draws comparisons between himself and the suffering Christ. However, in Wilde's case, resurrection seems a distant prospect, despite his admission in a moment of clarity that love can redeem the greatest suffering. The humiliation he endures from a hostile crowd at Clapham Junction, en route to Reading Gaol, is the nadir of his own personal Passion.

John Conroy's cinematography deserves special mention. The film is shot in a glowing chiaroscuro, adding a painterly beauty to every scene, but also suggesting the fading, twilight atmosphere in which Wilde spends his declining months.

While Everett's portrayal of the unravelling of a once great creative spirit is no fairy tale, it explores complex issues of sexuality, personal freedom and responsibility and the part that each of us plays in making our lives what they are.

CROSS CURRENTS

by Susan Smith

Towards the end of 2018 we drove from Whangarei to the Wairarapa. Certain politicians are right to be vocal about the state of Northland roads. A week before our departure, an articulated truck roaring down the Brynderwyn Hills cracked my windscreen, the second I've had in two years. Then, despite the TV advertisements that suggest all these problems will be solved in no time, the state of our district's roads often means we wait three to four weeks for service. State Highway 1 from Whangarei to Puhoi passes through crowded Wellsford, through the increasingly dangerous Dome Valley, then through traffic-jammed Warkworth — and it seems to carry more articulated trucks than anywhere else in the country. The road is mainly narrow, windy, hilly and endowed with pot holes. What a relief we felt driving further south and finding that country roads in the Wairarapa are far superior to SH1 in the north. I was at a meeting when even a Green Party enthusiast expressed her amazement that the government did not believe in extending the motorway further north. Northland is a poor part of our country and by not developing its infrastructure we agree to tolerate more accidents and broken windscreens.

Dairying's Effect on Land

And what an ecological eye-opener the journey south was. For example, as we drove through Takapau, usually hot and dry in summer, one block of land was being cleared of its remaining trees and irrigation pipes were being laid. I am presuming this will soon hold herds of dairy cows ensuring the ongoing supply of milk powder for export. In other places we saw dairy cows having to walk up to two kilometres to and from milking sheds twice a day. If I were to be reincarnated in some future life I would certainly not want to be a dairy cow in New Zealand. It would not be a long life — perhaps only five years, just a quarter of a dairy cow's natural life expectancy. I read in a local newspaper that around Waipawa and Waipukurau in southern Hawkes Bay, six dairy farms use more water from the aquifers than do all the domestic users in the area.

Conservation

We visited Pūkaha/Mount Bruce Wildlife Centre, a wonderful monument to the concerned people who around 60 years ago began trying to reverse the earlier tree-felling and clearing which turned forest into farms. Now wandering through Pūkaha we saw many birds and reptiles saved from deforestation.

Problem of Plastics

Many of us are trying to reduce our use of plastic and the announcement that an 80 per cent Chinese government-owned refuse company wants to build a huge recycling plant just off SH1 in the Dome Valley, Northland, might seem like a good thing. However, it could be a disastrous plan, leading to the destruction of indigenous flora and fauna in the area, and adding 450 vehicle return trips every day, on one of the country's deadliest roads.

So what can we do about plastic? Most of us are conscious now about plastic wrappings on food, but there is so much use of plastic in everyday life. While planting veggies the other day I was conscious that nearly everything we buy from garden stores is enveloped in plastic — like almost all household items. Some believe that technology will eventually find solutions to this problem and there could be truth in that. But I think that our Christian values — asceticism, being poor in spirit — will go a long way in helping us diminish our reliance on plastic right now. We can do it motivated by care of God's creation.

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

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

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

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Reading Elizabeth Julian's article (*TM* Nov 2018) I was struck by the quote from Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator SJ that "treating half the members of the Body of Christ as outsiders ... seems like a distortion and mutilation of his body." Together both female and male make up the Body of Christ. Yet the Church continues stumbling along on one leg only. It is not surprising then that the pace is slow. How much further could we go striding out together as Christ intended, evidenced by his Gospel teachings and the involvement of deacons male and female in originally spreading the Word of God? The Spirit of Christ has never been exclusive to the male sex.

Patricia Chaplin, Wellington

God bless you Elizabeth Julian (*TM* Nov 2018) and I truly hope she hears and answers you. (Yes, *she* is just as valid as *he* in this context.) I am one who left the Church in frustration at the lack of recognition of my calling. After 10 years of ministering with joy in another Church I returned to the Catholic Church for family reasons. I do what I can to live out Christ's way in my parish but still feel saddened by what I have not been allowed to do. It seems to me that a few old men in Rome are holding us back especially when I see my own parish priest overworked and overburdened. I live in hope that those who come after me will be acknowledged as full members of the Body of Christ.

Peg Cummins, Tauranga Moana

Thanks to Elizabeth Julian and Phyllis Zagano for their articles in *TM* Nov 2018. I read and reread them saying "Yes! Yes! Yes!" to so many points raised, then wondered if those who have the power to enact the changes to bring about the equality of women in the Church have read them, would read them or would be interested and concerned to know this is how many of us women in the Church feel about this injustice in our patriarchal, clerical Church. I felt so excited by Mary McAleese's article "Now is the Time for Change" in *TM* April 2018, that I sent off an email to two of our NZ bishops who I thought would be the most sympathetic to the cause of women. I'm still awaiting a response. Where I do find hope, peace and joy is in the realisation that God and the reign of God is greater than the institutional Church.

Barbara Cameron, Morrinsville

THE QUR'AN AND MICHELANGELO

Dr Chris Longhurst ends his article in *TM* Dec 2018 by asking: "Is Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* an aesthetic reading of Q 59:24?" Given Islam's absolute prohibition on representation of the divine, surely it would have to be an aesthetic misreading? I suspect our Muslim sisters and brothers would consider it more accurate that Q 59:24 provides a profound reading of the limited Christian understanding implicit in the anthropomorphic image of God presented in Michaelangelo's picture. Given the aniconic position prevalent throughout Islam, what of the homoerotic pose of the naked Adam that is the centre of Michelangelo's picture?

Nick Polaschek, Member of Wellington Abrahamic Council

ROMERO'S INFLUENCE

There is a link between two articles in *TM* Dec 2018, "Poor Women and Poor Health" and "Putting the Pain of Others First". Some years ago a retired missionary bishop friend from Africa gave me a book by Oscar Romero, *The Church and Colonialism*. Inside the cover was written "From Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania". Apparently that great man had given a copy to all the bishops in Tanzania. Oscar Romero was influential long before his canonisation. Beside the advances made by President Nyerere citied in Anna Holmes's article, he introduced other practical measures. No government employee was allowed to have a second job as there was an unemployment problem. The president was chided by the West — probably the USA with its paranoia about communism evident in Anna Holmes's article — for having only one political party, the Tanzanian African National Union (TANU). Nyerere, ever practical, replied: "We are a poor country. We can't afford more than one."

As one who is passionate about rehabilitation not retribution I was thrilled to read the article about Arohata women's prison.

Dennis Veal, Timaru

REINTRODUCE RECONCILIATION RITE III

Bishop Charles Drennan's statement about clericalism [https://pndiocese.org.nz/bishop/clericalism-governance/] gives me great hope that we will again have access to Rite III of Reconciliation. It was a clerical decision by the Bishop's Conference 10 or so years ago to ban Rite III even though it had full community involvement. St Joseph's Church in New Plymouth was packed (approximately 600 people) and when it was prohibited numbers dropped to about 150 for Rite II. The *sensus fidelium* was speaking, yet clericalism closed the "clerical caste ears" to the community message. Now that we know the limitations that clericalism imposes it would be wonderful for our bishops to put their words into action and empower the Catholic community by making Rite III available again. It

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

We have just returned from a short family holiday in India's North East state of Meghalaya. Getting there and back took 48 hours by train. Each way. The villages are nestled on steep forest slopes and on the grassy tablelands. Each has a prominent church spire and a football pitch with pigs and chickens roaming freely. With our four children we walked and talked through the tangled forest and swam in clear blue and green rivers. There were waterfalls, limestone caves and living root bridges. The litter was minimal and the sky was blue.

At Mawsynram we strolled through the ultimate farmers' market. Women draped in tartan shawls sold silvery river fish and strange yellow eels. Other stalls held crowded baskets of the orange betel fruit, alongside the knobbly spikes of yellow pineapples, green bitter gourd and purple tree tomatoes. No branded or pre-packaged products in sight.

A resolution I have made for 2019 is to notice and savour what is hopeful around me. There are highly inequitable social structures and damaged environments throughout India. Of course, the betel nut habit in Meghalaya causes high rates of oral cancer. Yes, there was still lots of litter. Literacy rates are very low. The behemoth state of India still imposes unfair structures that limit self-determination for the indigenous Khasi and Garo people. Yet this visit to Meghalaya encouraged me: there was plenty of health in the ecosystems and communities in Meghalaya. My travel brochure-like opening paragraph is me paying attention to the positive.

Jumping now to a wedding I attended a few weeks ago.

The waiter proffered a tray studded with a novel appetiser: tandoori braised pineapple, grilled and lightly spicy. All the waiters at this high-society gathering were dressed in dapper red waist-coats, topped with perky black newsboy caps. Two colleagues from our community mental health team, Jeet and Samson, were congratulating each other on having received the invitation to this wedding when one of the waiters stopped to introduce himself: "Namaste Jeet, do you remember me? I am Raju. I was in the *Nae Disha* (new pathways) youth inclusion group 18 months ago."

Jeet remembered Raju, and all the boys in that group we had run. They had all struggled with addiction and substance abuse.

Raju shared more of his story. "That group made a really big difference to me. We had to take time to think about what we wanted to change in our lives. And then in the group we were talking about how to make a plan and break it into small steps. So, at that time I decided I needed to get a regular job and stick with it. Somehow, I smartened myself up and started job hunting. After some months working at a very simple place, I was offered a job here at this wedding venue. I realised I could only keep the job if I stayed clean. I've been working here for over a year now and I've stopped using. I am so thankful for that programme and for this change in my life."

We all felt encouraged. There are so many complex forces that seem to work against the people we work with. The unfair landlord who refuses to supply water to the rented shack of a needy family, young women pulled out of school before they have finished Class 10 and the moonshine traders who ply strutting young men with cheap booze. Raju's story inspired all of us to keep doing what we do.

Today I walked back from the bazaar through shoals of discarded plastic and pushing through it were vigorous green plants catching the winter sunshine. Daily there is grim news, but I am looking forward to 2019 and noticing the shafts of sunlight that continue to break through the smog. It has started well.

Kaaren Mathias lives with her husband, children, a cat and dog, in a small town in North India and works in mental health.

Accompany us
on our pilgrim way
living the Gospel
together
uniting us
as a people of God.

From the *Tui Motu* team