

TUI MOTU InterIslands

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Ko te mahi hāpai tangata, he ratonga
Ministry is Serving

MARY THORNE, JIM McALOON
and OTHERS on ministering
ZAIN ALI on the Muslim call to service
PLUS — ANN HASSAN's response to the
killings at the Mosques

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EDITORIAL

Rising from the Bloodshed

My Mum died in March and our family gathered to bury her in peace and love — sad, but grateful for her long life among us. In dreadful contrast, on Friday of the same week, other families not far from us had their loved ones ripped from them as they prayed. Our country experienced unimaginable betrayal, death and shock — a shock that radiated around the world.

Yet through it all we have been inspired by the exceptional leadership of our Prime Minister, local governments, Māori communities, Churches and Faiths and young people in universities and schools, to face down our fear and gather in solidarity with our Muslim communities; to recognise humbly that our racist and Islamophobic leanings had a part to play and that we want to change; to accept that the massacre of innocent people has happened before in our history; to refuse to seek revenge; to commit to becoming a more welcoming, inclusive and neighbourly people.

We experienced “Holy Week” in an awful and truly real way. The social, cultural and religious boundaries we’ve erected in our minds and hearts to keep us apart, stand out in relief as artificial and false in the light of the resurrection. Will we be like the disciples who hid in fear when Jesus was arrested, or like the women who risked following Jesus to the cross and witnessed to the resurrection? We’ve been offered new life and encouragement to commit to unity — to allow that overwhelming, divine Love and Life we call God to transform us individually, communally and as a country.

Our forced entry into the passion and death of our neighbours gives us every incentive to seek life. As we’ve experienced in the past weeks, coming together inspires us to greater unity, and in the practice of solidarity we are becoming the change we hope to be. So that when we — as long-lived as my Mum — come to submit our lives to God, we’ll breathe our final breath in the land and communities we’ve helped to make more loving, good, just and welcoming.

In this issue of *Tui Motu* are reflections and discussions about ministering — serving our neighbours — in the name of God and in the interests of community, solidarity and the common good. We thank all those who have contributed their thoughtfulness, research, analysis, faith, art and craft to make this a lively Easter magazine.

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

Speaking Up for Love

On Friday 15 March, a 28-year-old gunman opened fire at two Christchurch mosques, killing 50 women, men and children and injuring a further 50. He filmed and live-streamed his killing, and minutes before distributed a manifesto detailing his intention: reportedly (in shorthand), to rid the West of the scourge of Islam and reassert the white man in his rightful place in society, that is, at the very top.

We are all shocked and appalled. We also feel helpless, and in our helplessness are drawn to symbolic acts: laying of flowers and wreaths; moments of silence; vigils in public spaces. Like Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern – whose poise, sensitivity and unequivocal condemnation of the killer's ideology has been impressive – we desperately want to believe that “This is not us”.

In almost all ways, it isn't. That's why we're all appalled. But I'm also reminded of the intensely defensive national response to filmmaker Taika Waititi's 2018 description of New Zealand as “racist as f***”. And I'm left thinking that “moments of silence”, while an appropriate mark of respect now, will be inadequate response in the longer term. Silence is part of the problem.

For “this” – white supremacy, religious intolerance, racism, murder in places of worship – to be “not us” we will all need to speak up. I admire the Crusaders Super Rugby Club's willingness to open discussion about changing their name. Why should Christian aggression towards – *mass slaughter of* – Muslims be invoked as a symbol of strength and masculinity?

If the Crusaders (Canterbury rugby team) name change had been suggested before Friday, comment sections of news articles would have focused on this as another example of “PC gone mad”. I think we all need to realise that our world can't be PC enough. We should be as PC as we can, all the time. Tolerating the non-PC in its mildest forms – stereotyping, generalising, fostering our fears in order to legitimise our prejudices – opens the gates to the extremists amongst us. And they are amongst us. The gunman lived in Dunedin, five minutes from my own home.

I smart at the realisation of the need to speak up. I can think of at least half a dozen times over the past few years when I've said absolutely nothing as a person over the table from me, or on the sofa, or at a barbecue, has expressed what are undeniably objectionable views specifically about Muslims. I've said nothing, primarily out of some misplaced sense of politeness – that well-taught social fear of disagreeing with people – and also in the knowledge that such views have become so commonplace that objecting to them has begun to seem futile. Nigel Latta this week described Islamophobia and racism in New Zealand as “rampant”.

We aren't all entitled to our views. Some of our views are hideous, and we would do well to rid ourselves of



them immediately. When they are brought to our attention by people such as Taiki Waititi we should listen, rather than touchily break out in a defensive national sweat. The worldwide web of online white supremacists, the National Front chapters in our towns and cities, the general tolerance of egregious opinions, however diluted, along with the ability of the shooter to purchase a semiautomatic weapon, made the massacre more likely.

Our collective shock and grief is testament to our fundamental empathy, inclusiveness and care for one another. This unity has been evident on the ground in our communities but also at a political level – Jacinda Ardern, Simon Bridges, Winston Peters and James Shaw travelled together to Christchurch in the aftermath of the massacre to speak with and listen to members of the Muslim community. Our silence shows respect, but it will take something more active than silence to keep unity alive. If we want New Zealand to be a place where “This is not us”, we will all need to speak up and say so. 🤝



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



MINISTERING *is at the heart of* CHRISTIANITY

MARY THORNE says that lay people must claim ministry as a gospel response.

We have to take care with language. It is sometimes inadequate to convey the finer nuances of meaning and we can get things wrong. With this in mind, thinking about lay ministry, I double-checked the definitions of the words I was pondering.

Minister (noun) is a person employed in the execution of some purpose, especially pertaining to the institutions of state or Church. This is a leadership or governance role.

Ministry (noun) is the body of ministers of government or religion.

Minister (verb) is to render aid or service, especially in a situation of sickness or need.

Even in the dictionary, the challenge of that paradoxical servant leadership is there, as it seems to be at the nub of many of our current troubling issues. Could that pernicious dis-order of clericalism have crept into our thinking and language about the work we do?

Structures No Longer Supportive

Years ago, a Dominican sister helped me view the institutional Church differently. She reminded me that all human organisations have a structure. If I was planting a kiwifruit orchard, my first tasks would be to plant shelter and build the supportive framework that the vines would grow on. The frames are required to ensure sound fruit but they are not the important thing — the important component is the fruit-bearing vine. All people in the Church are the people of God. We are the branches receiving life from the deep roots of divine energy. Roles undertaken within the liturgical and pastoral realms of Church life are called ministry (recognised and valued) and all healing, caring, sustaining work carried out in the world is classified as service. Our supportive structure is outdated, worm-eaten and falling apart but in the world, God's people, clergy and laity are needed as never before.

Vatican II Vision of People of God

The notion of the laity participating in ministry in the Catholic Church was inconceivable until the late 1960s. In the heady days following Vatican II there was great excitement among many lay members of the Church that more equal status would be achieved between clergy and lay people. The image of the Church as the People of God fired the imaginations of lay women and men and they were eager to participate alongside priests, in meaningful ways. Lay people moved from being passive recipients to active contributors. Indeed, lay people now fill very many roles at parish, diocesan and national levels. Their work, paid and voluntary, is massive and ensures the ongoing life of the Church.

The fact remains, however, that final decision-making authority remains the preserve of the ordained and the involvement of lay people often depends on the goodwill of the clergy. Diocesan and parish pastoral councils exist as advisory bodies only and it is not unknown that they receive the response: "I am the parish priest and I won't consider that." The original enthusiasm and energy seem to have diminished and some feel disheartened.

Who Is Ministering?

We can examine our language more closely. The lay people who prayerfully prepare and proclaim the Word and share the bread and wine of Eucharist with reverence and dignity perform ministries. Is the quiet parishioner down the back, who is caring for their spouse on the cancer journey and nearing the end, ministering? Yes, I think so.

The young mum and her team who prepare children and their families to participate in the sacramental life of the community? Yes, definitely ministry.

The woman in whose home the children on the street gather after school because there's always a snack and a listening ear for worries and problems? Yes, surely, an important ministry.

The faithful priest who draws on every scrap of creative energy to communicate the depth, power and beauty of this particular piece of Scripture to his congregation? Ministry.

The parishioner who hears, goes

home and tries again to bring some warmth and kindness into a marriage which has become cold and distant? Ministry? Yes, I think so.

The image of the Church as the People of God fired the imaginations of lay women and men and they were eager to participate alongside priests, in meaningful ways. Lay people moved from being passive recipients to active contributors.

What about the elderly woman who walks with her old dog around her area every morning, always with a bag to collect litter which she recycles and disposes of appropriately? Or the friend who goes out in the heat of the day to pick flowers from her garden and travels by train to take them to her elderly friend in hospital waiting for hip surgery? She hoped that with the flowers they could take an imaginary walk around the garden. The tradesman who gives a youth a chance at employment which may lead to apprenticeship? The environmentalist who pleads with an insatiable society to be aware? All these show the world the love of God.

All Are Called

We the People of God, all of us, were sent out by Jesus, whom we follow, to continue his work across the face of the Earth. It was a reconciling, restoring, justice-bringing work. There are some lovely word pictures that help us understand. We are to be the yeast that causes the dough to rise and be delicious. We are to be the salt in the porridge that makes it edible. We are to be like light in a dark place so we can all see. We are to be people who loved greatly.


Regaining Our Focus

To enable us to carry out this work, to replenish our energy and joy, we must gather and recall the stories that are our story and share the bread that is

Life for us. This seems to be where we've got things a bit wrong. Instead of gathering to build up the body to go out and do the work, we've allowed the gathering to become just about building up the body. Building up the body for its own sake becomes about the magnificence of the body. It becomes a spectacle and the work becomes a secondary or even a forgotten thing.

There seems to me to be no doubt that we need to achieve a healthy balance between the ecclesial and the lay parts of our Church. We have become introverted and the sacred/secular divide has become almost un-navigable. Perhaps I exaggerate, but sometimes who says what, or who sits or stands where, seems to absorb more energy than the fact our Earth is burning.

There is an effective parenting strategy which advises not to buy into the nonsense. The institutional Church will either renew or die. With all my energy I send aroha to Pope Francis and thank God for this voice which gives hope but there is other work that cries out to be done. There are other lay and ecclesial voices which speak a renewed language to articulate an original vision of God's people as a community of mutual respect and kindness, with courage to address our own failings, and a commitment to our big work.

In 2019, God's people are an adult people. We are ready, willing and able to do God's work in a world beset by crises. For us, MINISTER is a verb. God has no favourites, we are diverse beyond imagining but we are equal and we know without a shadow of a doubt, that we must minister first to the most broken and vulnerable and distressed, no matter what the cost to status or reputation. 

Painting: *The Washing of the Feet* by Ghislaine Howard from the Methodist Modern Art Collection © TMCP Used with permission. The Methodist Church in Britain. www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection



Mary Thorne and husband Russell live in Papakura and are coming to terms with retirement. They have many projects awaiting the time to begin.

LET'S TALK ABOUT PRIESTS

JIM McALOON asks for discussion about having married priests in the Catholic Church.

Cardinal John Dew's recent pastoral letter asked parishes to reflect on the buildings they need. He referred to several considerations: parish amalgamations, declining attendance at Mass, the cost of insurance and, in some cases, of earthquake strengthening. And he raised the fundamental issue that the number of priests available for ministry is diminishing as priests age and are not replaced.

All these issues would be significant regardless of the number of clergy, and the Cardinal noted the need for radical thinking. Most people would welcome the pastoral letter's call for parishes to look outward and serve the disadvantaged and the marginalised.

But so far as the recruitment of clergy is concerned, there are two dimensions which are not widely and systematically discussed in the Catholic Church in Aotearoa. These are, of course, the ordination of married men, and of women. They are of a different order. While confirming the requirement, Vatican Council II stated that compulsory celibacy for male priests "is not demanded by the very nature of the priesthood". Opening ordination to women would be much more controversial and would require a major reversal of doctrine. People will differ on whether either or both should be discussed, and what the priority should be.

Married Men as Priests

Because it is a simpler issue, I will confine my discussion to opening ordination to married men — particularly mature men of proven integrity, or as they are called in Latin *virī probati*.

I acknowledge that some think this would entrench patriarchy further within the Church. I do not think it would necessarily do so. It is arguable that clericalism may be reinforced by clerical celibacy, which may sometimes be taken as a sign that priests are a caste apart. What is certain is that there are presently exceptions to celibacy, most notably in the United Kingdom, where married male Church of England priests — and some bishops — have been ordained in the Roman Catholic Church after resigning from the Church of England (in some cases at least because they object to the latter ordaining women). If exceptions can be made for such cases, but not for more general pastoral need, that speaks for itself. These exceptions suggest, in any case, that mandatory celibacy could be ended by the stroke of a papal pen.

There are some reports in the religious press that Pope Francis is open to the possibility of ordaining married men of proven integrity where the pastoral need is great. However, it is not easy to know the state of Francis's thinking on this question. What is clear is that he would like the Church to be more synodical — particularly the significant role of national bishops' conferences.

Opening the Discussion

But how are bishops to know the mind of the People of God without open discussion? I've found that the suggestion that clerical celibacy might not be compulsory — or even that the discussion should begin is met by people and clergy alike, with an answer that "this is not in our power". Perhaps not, but this means that there is little opportunity to consider



not only whether this should be done, but how it might be done.

Priests Support Themselves

Perhaps one problem is the assumption that a married male priest would exercise his ministry in the traditional fashion — full-time, remunerated, and provided with accommodation and other necessities. This need not be the case. We need only look at our Anglican sisters and brothers for different models.

One is, simply enough, non-stipendiary ministry. That is priests are ordained but expected to support themselves in whatever way their circumstances suggest (normally, in their existing occupation, or through a retirement income or the income of a spouse). Their priestly ministries are defined by agreement with the bishop, and they are licensed by the bishop to those ministries. This is how the majority of Anglican priests in this country exercise their ministry.

Ministry Licensed to the Community

Another model involves the parish



Change Is Already Upon Us

It might be objected that these non-stipendiary, part-time models diminish the role of the priest. But then it can also be said that the specific responsibilities of the priest are thereby highlighted, and other members of the parish community are enabled to develop their own gifts in ministry.

In any case, it is becoming increasingly clear that the future will be one where priests are required to work in sacramental ministry with a number of communities. In other words, there aren't going to be a lot of full-time priests anyway.

Pope Francis says that clergy should be "shepherds who smell of their sheep". That should include knowing what their people are thinking. We need to have the conversations. The problem, however, is that we do not know, because we have not even begun the conversation. We have nothing to fear from having this conversation as adults, as the People of God. "Everything you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight; what you have whispered in locked rooms will be proclaimed from the rooftops" (Lk 12:3).

People of God Need Eucharist

Nor, of course, would anyone suggest that these ideas would solve all the problems, or even many of them. But the celebration of Eucharist is an essential part of our Catholic spirituality. Vatican II called Eucharist "strength for life's journey" and regarded it as fundamental to Christian community. We might reflect on Jesus's question: "Is there any among you who would hand your daughter a stone when she asked for bread? Would any of you hand your son a snake when he asked for fish?" (Mt 7:9). 🙏

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Jim McAloon lectures in History at Victoria University of Wellington, and is a member of Wellington's Sacred Heart Cathedral parish.

community in significant discernment. Known usually as Local Shared Ministry, or sometimes as Total Ministry, this has been a feature of Anglican life for over 25 years, in New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom.

I've found that the suggestion that clerical celibacy might not be compulsory — or even that the discussion should begin is met by people and clergy alike, with an answer that "this is not in our power".

The Local Shared Ministry website explains the principles. Most important is that "all members of the congregation, led by a Ministry Support Team, share the responsibilities that were traditionally carried by a "vicar" — a full-time

priest. The parish community discerns who is called to the ministry support team, which includes people with administrative responsibilities as well as those ordained to sacramental ministry. Those called as deacons and priests in this model are licensed to the community which has called them.

Parishes working in this way are guided by a Ministry Enabler, appointed by the bishop, who will usually have responsibilities for more than one parish. In this way, as the website notes, it has been "possible for Anglican ministry and mission to continue in those local areas" where otherwise it would not have.

Effective Training for Ministry

In both models, there is the need for suitable training and formation. Within the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington, there is already a model that could be adapted: the Launch Out programme, by which people become qualified to act as parish Lay Pastoral Leaders and for other ministries. Normally, this requires between four and six years of part-time work.

In Pope Francis's concluding address to the leaders of the national conferences of Catholic bishops recently assembled in Rome (21-24 February 2019) to discuss the scourge of clerical sex abuse, he noted that "everyone knew of its presence yet no one spoke of it". This is indeed true, and much of that silencing – whether in Ireland, the USA, Chile, Australia, or elsewhere – was a deliberate strategy of Church leaders.

For example, as we learned retrospectively, when in 1975 Irish (now-retired) Cardinal Sean Brady, in his capacity as a bishop's secretary, interviewed a sex abuse victim of a serial priest abuser, he swore the 14-year old boy to silence (and his parents, too, were effectively silenced because they were not even allowed into the room when he was being interviewed). Subsequently, Cardinal Brady explained that an oath of confidentiality was administered to bring "solemnity" and formality to the proceedings. He also conceded that there "was a shroud of secrecy and confidentiality with a view to . . . not destroying the good name of the Church."

Clearly, the "solemnisation" Brady had in mind was a word choice – and a strategy – to conceal something else: the use of power and the abuse of power.

Words to Deliberately Obscure

The great, late French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* elaborated on how word-games, including euphemisms, are a crucial strategy in the Catholic Church's reproduction of inequality between the hierarchy and the laity. I recently wrote a piece for the *National Catholic Reporter* about how euphemistic language is not simply jargon or the pragmatic shorthand of insiders. It is used rather to mystify and to distract from and, especially, to deny a given reality.

Church officials use euphemistic language, Bourdieu argued, to inoculate themselves from acknowledgement of the real truth of Church practices and to convince the laity (and others) that there is nothing arbitrary about hierarchical power and the clerical privilege it embeds.

I thought about Bourdieu back in August as I read the findings from the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report on sex abuse in Pennsylvania Catholic dioceses.

Using Euphemisms to Conceal

The Report documented multiple instances of euphemisation in action. And indeed it called out euphemisation for what it is.

Summarising the analysis of the diocesan sex-abuse files conducted by the FBI, the Grand Jury wrote: "It's like a playbook for concealing the truth: First, make sure to use euphemisms rather than real words to describe the sexual assaults in diocese documents. Never say 'rape'; say 'inappropriate contact' or 'boundary issues'. When a priest does have to be removed, don't say why. Tell his parishioners that he is on 'sick leave,' or suffering from 'nervous exhaustion.' Or say nothing at all." (*Report*: 2-3)

Euphemisms, as the Grand Jury noted, conceal the truth. And as Bourdieu elaborates, euphemisation serves to conceal the double-truth or the "coexistence of opposites"



SILENCE and as Weapon

MICHELE DILLON analyses the way
euphemisms and clericalism to con

that is necessary to sustaining the Church's power.

Double-truths and Contradictions

This is the truth that although, as the Second Vatican Council affirmed, the Church comprises the whole People of God – the laity and the ordained – in practice, the Church is structured by inequality that is sanctioned and consecrated by priestly ordination.

The fact that clerics engage in sex and the fact that such clerics are protected by the Church both materially and symbolically (through euphemistic language) illuminates the double truth of celibacy and sexual activity. It also conveys the truth that the priesthood, as the Vatican argues, is different. It "is of another order," bound up with "the mystery of Christ" (see *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, "Women in the Ministerial Priesthood"), but nonetheless concretised in particular ways by the Church.



and WORDS ns of POWER

Church leaders have used silence,
control rather than serve the Church.

Indeed, its concretisation reveals the double-truth in the Church's claim that "priesthood is a service and not a position of privilege or human power over others."

Church Leaders Silent on Causes

Today, despite the fact that there is a great deal more talk in the Church about clerical sex abuse, Church leaders still struggle to name its root causes and to identify the necessary structural and cultural changes that might offer a credible path forward.

Only toward the very end of Francis's relatively long speech does he intimate that the "plague of clericalism" is a "fertile" factor in the Church's current, multifaceted crisis. And while he earlier notes that "It is difficult to grasp the phenomenon of the sexual abuse of minors without considering power," he offers no comments on how power and clericalism are intertwined.

Euphemisation has enabled the hierarchy to mask the double-truths (celibacy/sexual activity; priestly service/power) that have sustained its consecrated status for many generations of Catholics.

In my opinion, any emergent path forward must be grounded in Church leaders' recognition of how sacramental power, that is, ordination, may contribute to the fermentation of abuse.

Allowing Clericalism to Continue

Francis frequently denounces clerical elitism and expresses concern lest "sacramental power [become] too closely aligned with power in general" (*Joy of the Gospel* par 104). In reality, however, power in the Church is inextricably bound to ordination. And ordination, by definition, consecrates a clerical culture as well as exclusionary practices toward the non-ordained.


Language, no matter how deftly employed, cannot obscure this reality.

Unless Church officials can come to recognise the standpoint of privilege and power that they occupy, and how it might be distorting their understanding of priesthood, of equality, and of sex and sex abuse, it is hard in the current moment to see a way out of the crisis they have created.

Meaningful Action Needed

Euphemisation has enabled the hierarchy to mask the double-truths (celibacy/sexual activity; priestly service/power) that have sustained its consecrated status for many generations of Catholics. But the effectiveness of that strategy may be waning.

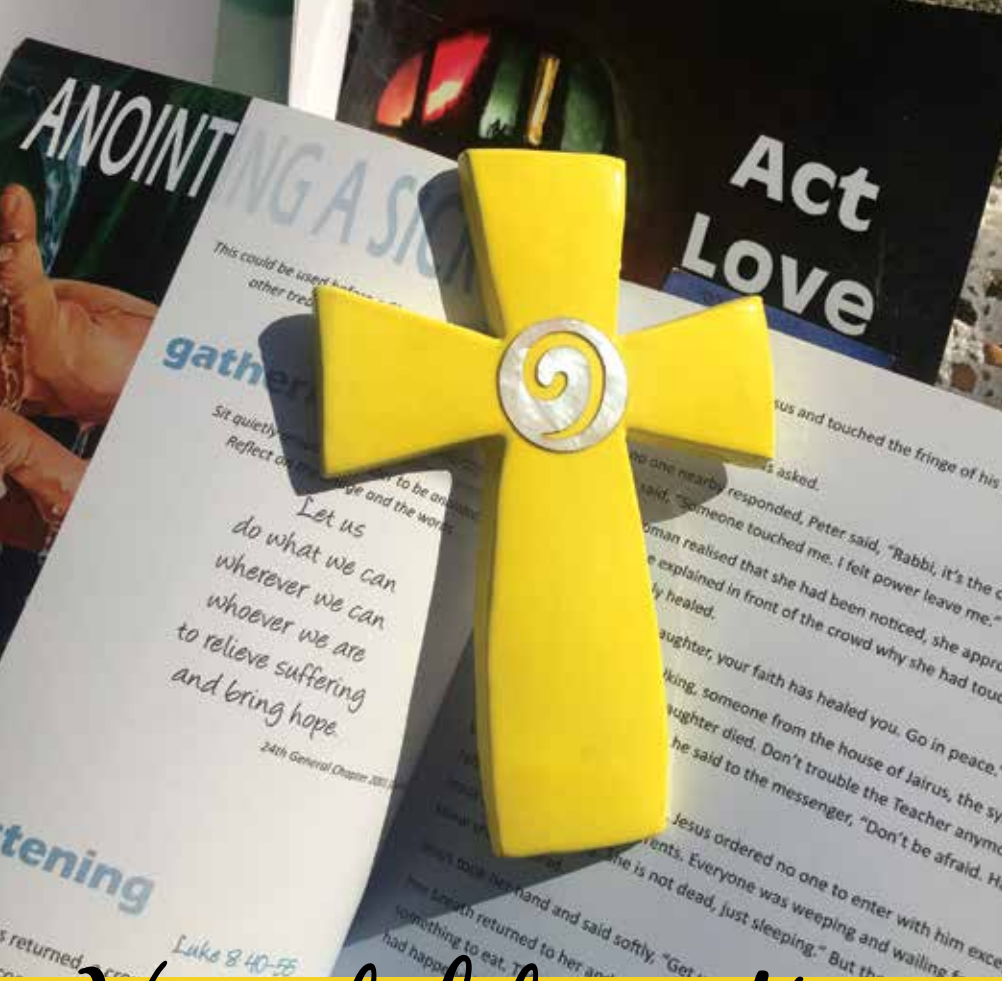
In the US, for example, the laity's declining confidence in Church leadership is palpable. Even more worrisome, within the space of just one year, there has been a precipitous drop in the percentage of American Catholics who rate the honesty and ethical standards of priests as high or very high: down from 49 per cent in 2017 to 31 per cent in late 2018, according to a Gallup poll.

It really is time for Church leaders across the globe to move forward from silence and word-games to meaningful actions that will accomplish structural and cultural change in the understanding of priesthood and power. 

Vatican photo by Lorenzo Gallo from Pixabay



Michele Dillon is Professor of Sociology at the University of New Hampshire and author of *Postsecular Catholicism: Relevance and Renewal* (Oxford University Press).



Hospitality is Key

TONY KENNEDY speaks about resonating with Catherine McAuley's sense of hospitality in his ministry in hospital chaplaincy.

I minister as a Pastoral Chaplain at Mercy Hospital in Dunedin. And I visit those having kidney dialysis at Dunedin Public Hospital – a voluntary role in gratitude for the initial and ongoing training and support I receive from the chaplains' group there.

Hospitality for a Living

My work background was far removed from my chaplaincy role. Most of my younger working life was in telecommunications. When this came to an end, my wife and I converted our large family home into a bed and breakfast. We enjoy offering hospitality to family and friends, so decided that we could extend this to guests. I had been the family cook for a good while. And after renovations to our house and the acquisition of a friendly black Labrador puppy named Riley,

we were set to go.

Most of the guests were from overseas and hospitality was the most important purpose of our business. Very soon it became evident from the comments in our visitors' book that between our hospitality and Riley's antics our guests were well satisfied. I think it was that sense of offering hospitality that eventually led me into my present role.

Hospitality as a Ministry

After we sold the B&B I was looking for something else to do and a close friend, the Mission Co-ordinator at Mercy Hospital in Dunedin, suggested that I join their Pastoral Care team. Our family had long-standing connections with the Mercy Sisters going back to my mother's early life in Alexandra.

With some trepidation, at the

beginning of 2012 I started training in chaplaincy at Mercy Hospital which has about 200 staff. My duties were in keeping with the Mercy Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy Policy that states: "The hospital is committed to providing holistic care. This concept embraces not only the physical needs but also the spiritual, emotional and social needs of the patient, whānau/family and staff."

My role involves leading prayer and liturgy for a group of regular members of the local faith community and family members of patients. Our mandate is to offer a "sound liturgical and prayer base within the hospital". We also celebrate Mass weekly in the chapel. An environment of prayer is an ongoing expression of the Mercy charism in the hospital.

Discovering Catherine McAuley's Hospitality

As preparation for chaplaincy I read the life of Catherine McAuley. I could sense we both place the same value on hospitality – she emphasised "hospitality at all times" and a "comfortable cup of tea".

The hospital deals mainly with elective surgery and patients know the day they are coming and the length of their stay. I've found that many patients from country areas do not have family and friends to visit them in hospital.

We see it as our ministry to fill the gap. We spend time listening, reassuring and sharing prayer when requested with patients. I always check out the latest rugby or cricket scores for the sports fans.

Ministry Is about Presence

I often reflect as I'm driving home: "Well there wasn't too much mention of God today." But God's presence is felt just by being there for patients – even if we've only spoken about how the Highlanders or the Black Caps fared!

Sometimes when we offer Catholic patients Holy Communion they respond: "I haven't been to Church for a while so this might be a good time to start again." I think of Pope Francis's words that communion is not a reward for the perfect but an

encouragement for the weak.

I have conversations with patients about my own faith. Many are time-rich in hospital and able to ponder what life is about and where God is when they are struggling with discomfort and uncertainty. Many appreciate the chance to pray, others graciously decline – no pressure. Accepting people where they are and responding to their needs is an important part of our chaplaincy.

Preparation for Chaplaincy

I trained for this role through a course on hospital chaplaincy at Dunedin Public Hospital. I was fortunate to have the support and experience of the Mercy Mission Coordinator and a colleague, both of whom helped me enormously as I gained experience.

The course was facilitated by a local retired Anglican minister who was also a hospital chaplain. Lois arrived slightly late to the first session and apologised: "We have had a hard day. Five patients have died and two of them have been in difficult circumstances." I wondered how this woman was still standing.

The course provided opportunities for learning about the role of a pastoral chaplain at regular meetings – personal reflection and development, role play, verbatim practice, responses to professional reading and supervision.

Ministry in Ecumenical Chaplaincy

I felt great satisfaction when I was commissioned as an Ecumenical Chaplaincy Assistant at Dunedin Public Hospital and was assigned to the Dialysis Unit there.

Dialysis patients usually require 3–4 sessions of 4 hours connected to a dialysis machine.

The Dunedin unit aims to train patients to do their own dialysis at home with a machine that has been "plumbed" into their house.

New Understanding of Suffering

Chaplaincy has given me new insight into pain and health issues. I've encountered people with major health crises that affect the quality of their future, who accept their illness and

become outward looking: "I'm ok. There are others worse off than me." I find this acceptance very inspiring.

I have noticed, too, the number of people who say they continue to believe in God but have left the "Church" long ago.



Challenges to Funding Chaplaincy

Hospital chaplaincy is not without bureaucracy. Funding is based on statistics. This seems at odds with many experts in medical disciplines highlighting the importance of the spiritual dimension in the holistic care offered to patients.

I question having to "categorise" my patient visits: Did I carry out prayer service? What was the patient's ethnicity? These questions seem reductionist and even unrelated to our understanding and practise of pastoral care.

Hospitality Is Reciprocal

I have experienced sad times in chaplaincy. One day one of the dialysis patients whom I had got to know well was being sent home to live out his final few days. I visited him and asked would he like me to pray with him. He responded: "If it helps you Tony go right ahead." Tears welled in my eyes as I prayed and it was he who consoled me. I can't imagine what it would be like to be facing death without a belief in God. These are the challenges hospital chaplaincy offers. Sometimes treatment is being discontinued at the patient's request. Life gets too hard for some people.

Supporting the Minister

There is a need for good support in a role like this and I am fortunate to have strong family backing. I find, too, that walking the dog is therapeutic as it provides me time for reflection. My dogs always seemed to understand

what I was telling them, and their soulful eyes often told me they knew I was sad, and that was comforting.

Ministering Is about Becoming

I've learnt a lot about how people live and what's important to them. Our priest in his homily told about being at a gathering of young people, one of whom asked what work he did. He replied: "I am a Catholic priest." "But are you a Christian?" she asked. He paused before answering: "I'm working on it." Hospital chaplaincy gives me opportunities to do just that – to work on being Christian every day among people in need. Chaplaincy has taught me about the fragility of life and the imperative of kindness. It is a privilege, a chance to be a face of Jesus with people at the most vulnerable times in their lives.

"Hospitality at all times," wrote Catherine McAuley – I find her spirit keeps drawing me and I'm encouraged by the like-mindedness of my fellow chaplains. 🐾



Tony Kennedy is married to Anne and has three children and four grandchildren. He has been a chaplain for seven years.

LISTENING, ENCOURAGING AND ACCOMPANYING

LIZ GEORGE writes of her ministry in the parish as tuning-in to the diversity of people's needs and hopes.

I have a sign up in my office: "Welcome! Interruptions are my main line of work". My hope is that everyone coming into our parish office feels valued. Lay ministry is all about the people.

It's more than 20 years since I was first asked to be a catechist for our parish sacramental programme. I remember thinking: What if I can't answer the children's questions? So when the Catholic Institute of Theology (CIT) in Auckland advertised courses in Religious Education and a Certificate in Ministry I felt called to deepen my education.

As my involvement with CIT continued it opened me to a new network of people among whom were the Sisters of Saint Joseph. Their sharing of wisdom and personal experiences brought the Scriptures to life for me. Their hospitality and guidance are still significant influences in my spiritual journey. Four years ago I became a Covenant Josephite. My spirit feels nourished and most at home with the Sisters and their teachings, and this has given me the strength to extend compassion to the wider community.

It is my privilege to walk alongside the men and women of our diverse and ever-evolving parish community. This includes the Catholic school next door. The school is an extension of the parish community just as we are an extension of theirs. Little ones visiting me in the office bring immense delight and keep me grounded. I find joy in attending school Masses. In this ministry every day brings an element of surprise: children, like God, have a wicked sense of humour!

Co-ordinating the sacramental classes is one of my passions. We encourage parents to attend with their candidate children and use a conversational approach in sessions. I have seen how precious it is for parents to have time and space dedicated to sharing their faith with their children. And they also meet other families. As my mum would say: "Everybody wins!"

Celebrating the sacraments provides a platform for our parish to facilitate positive experiences of community

living. Recognising the importance of this, a group of us trained as Lay Ministers of the Word with Communion 15 years ago. Our parish has benefited greatly from having Lay Ministers and we have each developed our understanding of the Scriptures and how best to meet parishioners' needs.

As a parish we are learning to open our hearts, to welcome the diversity of cultures, faiths and demographics among us. We are becoming aware of the struggles of those around us, and are working towards dissolving prejudices and judgemental attitudes in all aspects of parish life.

Something that is not unique to any one culture or demographic is grief. Recognising the need for a support programme, I trained in "Seasons for Growth" – a "Grief Companioning Programme" for children and adults. The programme is divided into four seasons, with each session working through an aspect of the grieving process. This gentle, non-threatening programme recognises that feelings are real – we guide people through sadness, and offer tools for healing. I have felt my compassion and empathy for people extend to those who need it most in our parish and school community.

I feel especially for the young women in our community. For almost 10 years I worked as a chaplain at a Catholic girls college. I held a unique role – neither teacher nor counsellor, I was able to gently

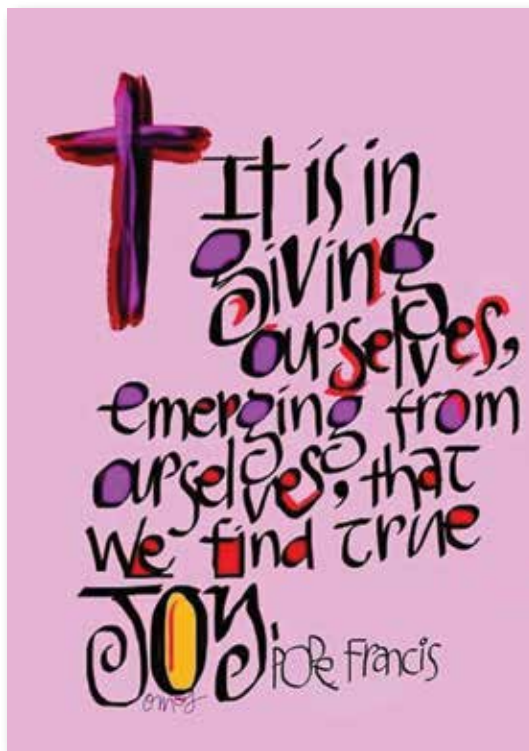
walk beside the girls.

We talk a lot about leading – walking in front – but walking beside is everything. Jesus walked with the people. He met them where they were, wherever that was, and encouraged growth and healing. I believe that's how I'm called to participate in God's mission. Listening more than talking and lots of laughs and hugs.

At times my heart takes a battering but when I came to see God in all people it became my privilege to hold a hand, pray with or listen to those who needed an ear or a hug.

Without faith none of this would be sustainable. I get to meet God every day, in every person and in so many ways.

Those interruptions I welcome through the sign on the door aren't really interruptions at all. Instead, they're an ongoing, everyday opportunity to meet people where they are – they're the purpose of ministry. 🖐️



Liz George is married with three adult daughters. She is a Covenant Josephite and Pastoral Assistant in East Coast Bays Parish, Auckland.



Pope Francis Quote *It Is in Giving Ourselves* by M O McGrath ©
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Giving Support

SHONA WATERHOUSE describes her day-to-day work at Catholic Social Services.

People make their way to Mass. They greet one another as they enter the church belonging to this place, ready to commune. I enter a different building, but still nestled within this environment, as I begin my working day at Catholic Social Services in Dunedin.

Through the doors there is warmth and a hot drink for our clients. It's a welcoming environment. Some of our clients start their day sitting on the couch in reception with a tea or coffee. As I make my way to my office I greet my colleagues, some who have started the day much earlier than me.

I am lucky to have my own office. Many of my colleagues share space and juggle places to meet with clients.

Our agency is expanding to satisfy demand. I work alongside fellow counsellors and social workers. Currently there are also community workers based at our office. We are squeezed and are working out ways to best use the available space in the building. We joke about setting up desks in the file room – a natural fridge. My colleagues whose offices face the summer sun find the thought of the cool file room inviting.

We already have desks set up in the staffroom and I worked there with another colleague for a period of time last week as someone else used our offices to meet with clients.

My colleagues are my immediate support. I am not alone in my work. I can go to them for advice and I can refer within the agency if one of my counselling clients needs a food parcel, social connection, parenting support, help to pay a power bill or advocacy. This benefits my clients but me, too.

This morning one of the social workers is leaving to make a home visit to a young mother. Another is arranging supervised access for a parent, while yet another, who co-ordinates a parenting group, is ensuring the group has everything it needs.

Phone calls from clients are answered; food parcels are arranged for people in need; preparation for the community lunch is underway.

I pass the door of my counsellor colleague – closed because she is working with clients. I hear about the fathers' group, held the night before, and how well it is going. The phone rings and there is an inviting reply – someone wants to make a referral.

Everyone who works at Catholic Social Services wears a different "hat". There is so much and such different talent among my colleagues. One of my "hats" is facilitating a mothers' and babies' playgroup, which means I get to hang out with babies, toddlers and young mothers, devising messy activities or having visiting speakers. I have the privilege of being part of these young women's lives, watching them and their babies grow up and explore. Over the years I have said goodbye to mothers as they have left for tertiary study or entered the workforce. I am sad to see them go but also delighted they have found their place in the world.

My main role in the agency is as counsellor. People who refer for counselling can wait up to two months before they are seen. We are one of the few places that people can access low cost counselling – many times low cost means free. Who subsidises? I am aware as I make my way down the hallway, past the director's office, that I am blissfully unaware of the financial side of the agency. He is hard at work, maybe filling out grant forms. I know that only a few years ago our costs exceeded our income by quite a lot. I realise that my position here is fragile, dependent on the whim of the government of the time and the generosity of those who believe in our work.

As a counsellor I work with both individuals and couples, supporting them through a myriad of issues. I also facilitate a group for people who have suffered change, loss and grief. This challenging work can bring both huge joy and sorrow. There are prayers scattered around Dunedin streets as I go walking, asking for wisdom in my work. And as I watch the parishioners make their way to the church I rest in the knowledge that our work is held in their prayers as well. 🙏

Photo by Charles on Unsplash



Shona Waterhouse works as a counsellor at Catholic Social Services. Her down time is spent trying, unsuccessfully, to tame a large garden.



Be a Lamp a Lifeboat a Ladder a Shepherd

ZAIN ALI reflects on Islam's tradition of selfless service as a way of life to develop community relationships.

Our car began to slow down. Dad made a rapid turn and brought it to stop on the left-hand shoulder of the motorway. We were heading for West Auckland; however, the petrol tank had run dry. So there we were, me and Dad, on the side of the motorway. The closest petrol station was a good half hour walk from where we'd stopped. Just as we began contemplating the walk, a car pulled up ahead of us. The driver walked up to Dad: "You right, mate?" "Yeah, nah. We're out of petrol." "All good. I'll tow you to the petrol station." We made it to the petrol station a few minutes later. Dad thanked the good Samaritan, and we carried on with our journey.

Listening to Wisdom

The theme of the good Samaritan is important in the Islamic tradition. We find it in the example of Muhammad — the prophet of Islam. Muhammad had a relatively successful career as a trader, so it is likely he would have travelled the trade routes to Syria, which had a strong Christian presence at the time. Around the age of 40 his life took a spiritual turn. He is reported to have gone on meditative retreats in the hills surrounding Mecca. During one such retreat he described an angel appearing to him and commanding him to recite the following words:

"Read: In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that

exists). Has created humans from a clot. Read and Your Lord is Most Generous, who taught by the pen, taught humans what they knew not" (Q 96).

This experience was unexpected. Muhammad wasn't seeking to be a recipient of revelation — he found the experience deeply unsettling. He immediately ran home to his wife Khadija.

As it happens, Khadija was considerably older than him. She was also his boss. Muhammad had been her employee. He was about 25 years old when she proposed to him; Khadija was 40 at the time. So, there he is, running home to Khadija saying:

"Cover me! Cover me! They covered him till his fear was over and then he said: 'O Khadija, what is wrong with me?' Then he told her everything that had happened and said: 'I fear that something may happen to me.'"

Given the highly unusual nature of his experience, Muhammad probably thought he was losing his mind.

Khadija's response to Muhammad is interesting:

"Khadija said: 'Never! But have the glad tidings, for by God, God will never disgrace you as you keep good reactions with your kith and kin, speak the truth, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guest generously and assist the deserving, calamity-afflicted ones.'"

Khadija's words calm Muhammad, reassure him that God is to be trusted, and would not disgrace a man like him. She knew him as someone who was good to his family and relatives, honest and generous, someone who also helped the poor and the needy. She loves him and she cannot see God as someone who would disgrace a good man. Khadija's role is pivotal — she could easily have advised Muhammad to simply ignore his experience. Had

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she done this, there most likely would not be a religion called Islam. Khadija is a key figure in the origins and development of Islam.

Characteristics of Service

So what of the good Samaritan? We should look closely at what Khadija says about Muhammad. The character traits she sees in Muhammad seem to be the kind of traits that would belong to the good Samaritan. While the phrase "good Samaritan" isn't explicitly used within the Islamic tradition, Muhammad can be seen to embody the character of a good Samaritan. And Khadija can also be seen to embody the spirit of the Samaritan – she sees the good and seeks to bring about the good.

There are three ways to be of service: first, by not being a source of harm to others; second, having a willingness to forgive others; third, through preparedness to serve others.

Kindness as Love of Neighbour

There are also Quranic verses that strongly encourage behaviour that is consistent with being a good Samaritan:

"... worship God and don't worship anything else, and show kindness to parents, and to kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbour that is a kinsman and the neighbour that is a stranger, and the companion by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom your right hand possess. Surely, God likes not the proud and the boastful" (Q4:37).

These verses echo the dual commandments to love God and to love thy neighbour. Other categories of people are mentioned, too: parents, orphans, the poor, spouses, travellers, the homeless, slaves. Each deserves kindness from the believer. The verse ends with a strong reprimand against those who are full of pride and arrogance – a strong caution against straying from the way of the good Samaritan.

Serving Willingly

In addition to the Qur'an, there are also anecdotes (*hadith*) from Muhammad which emphasise the importance of helping others, even animals:

"Whoever alleviates [the situation of] one in dire straits who cannot repay his debt, God will alleviate his lot in both this world and in the Hereafter.

A prostitute had once been forgiven. She passed by a dog panting near a well. Thirst had nearly killed him, so she took off her sock, tied it to her veil, and drew up some water [for the dog]. God forgave her [for her sins]."

Muslim tradition also speaks about more intimate forms of service. For instance, Aisha, a wife of Muhammad, was asked about what Muhammad did while he was at home. She answers: "He would serve his family, then when the time for prayer came, he would go out to the prayer."

We don't know for sure how Muhammad would have served his family, although we could speculate that he helped with the cleaning, tidying, washing and

possibly cooking. It's interesting that Aisha remembered Muhammad for his service to his family. He wasn't too proud to serve others.

Examples of Serving Others

The idea of service is also a theme that permeates the work and lives of later Muslims. For instance, the 11th-century scholar, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, said there were three ways to be of service: first, by not being a source of harm to others; second, having a willingness to forgive others; third, through preparedness to serve others.

A more recent example is Abdul Sattar Edhi, who established the Edhi Foundation, which runs the world's largest volunteer ambulance network, along with homeless shelters, animal shelters, rehab centres, and orphanages across Pakistan.

There is a story about a robbery in Pakistan. The crime went unsolved until it became public that the robbers had made off with money intended for the Edhi Foundation. At this point, a member of the Pakistani underworld noted that he would probably end up dead in a ditch one day and Abdul Sattar would be the only person who would care enough to give him a dignified burial. The money was soon returned by the robbers to the Foundation.

As we approach Easter and reflect on the nature of service and the selfless life of Christ, we may reflect, too, on Rumi's words:


"Be a lamp, or a lifeboat, or a ladder. Help someone's soul heal. Walk out of your house like a shepherd." 

Photo by Engin Akyurt from Pixabay

Because we are like Muslims

And so we turned on The News
and we thought what country is this
with all these people screaming and running
and bleeding
and they talked like us
it was our country
and they are us
and then we saw little groups
under the weeping trees
and police so many
and familiar yellow ambulances of St John.
There is the love and the care.
And they talked like us
And oh One God!
They are us.
It is our turn.
And next day we went to Mass
and we thought how someone could rush in
and shoot us all dead
because we are like Muslims praying
and we sang make us instruments of peace
and there was blood everywhere
and our hearts were broken before the bread.

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Be Blessed

*Blessedness is something
found unexpectedly when
distraction causes us to pause.*

May the gracious be blessed
as they hold both the bruised
and the bruising in their compass.

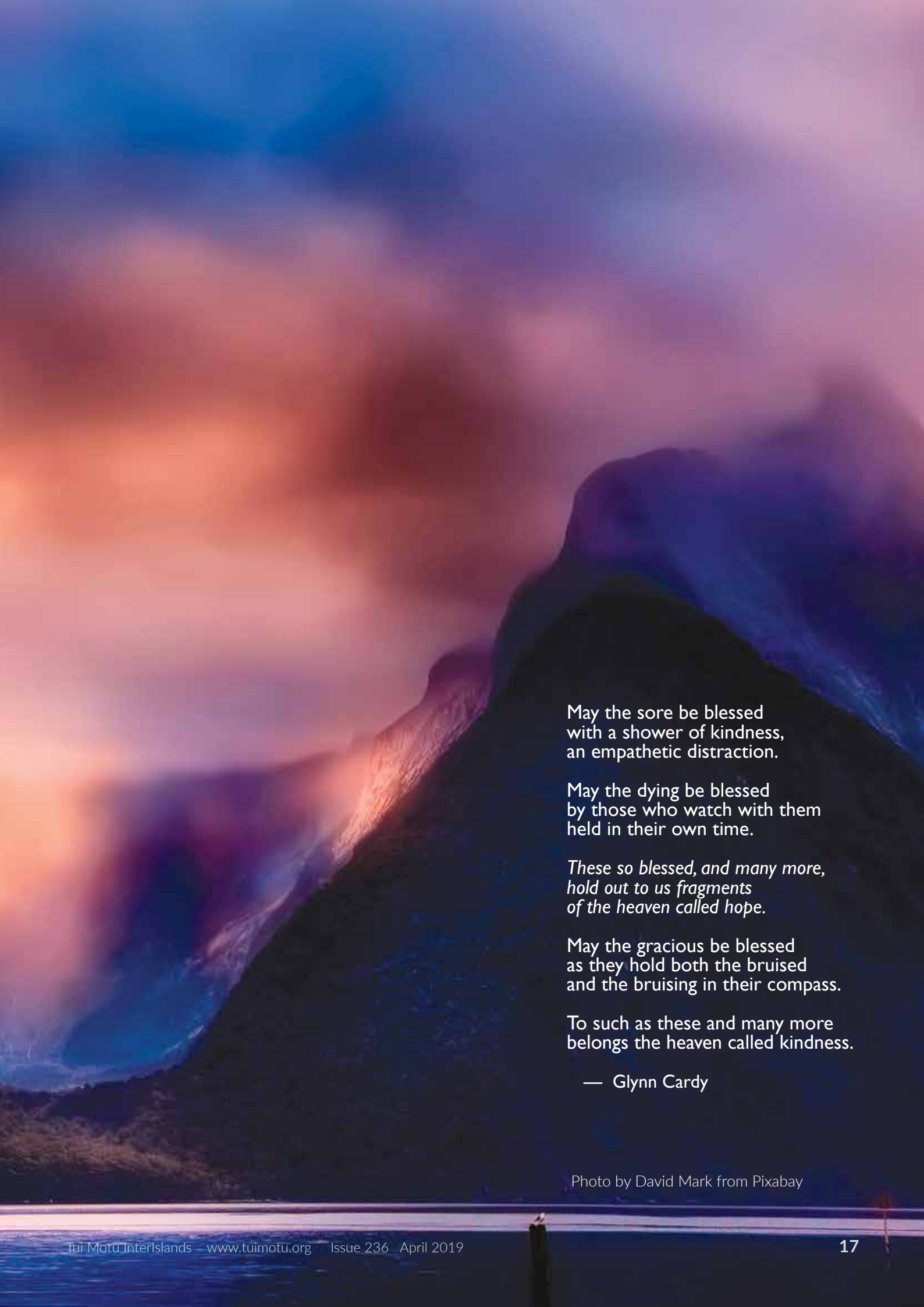
May the impure be blessed
knowing that we are all
unfinished masterpieces.

May the confused be blessed
with an encouraging song
and its soothing spirit.

May the gentle be blessed
as they wait upon the diminished,
protected from grinding demands.

May the sick be blessed
with both care and company,
sensitive and unobtrusive.

May the dismayed be blessed
with the gift of patience
and the spur of impatience.



May the sore be blessed
with a shower of kindness,
an empathetic distraction.

May the dying be blessed
by those who watch with them
held in their own time.

*These so blessed, and many more,
hold out to us fragments
of the heaven called hope.*

May the gracious be blessed
as they hold both the bruised
and the bruising in their compass.

To such as these and many more
belongs the heaven called kindness.

— Glynn Cardy

Photo by David Mark from Pixabay



Writing a Glowing Moon

MELISSA WASTNEY interviews author Vasanti Unka about her experience of encouraging primary school children to write their own poetry.

**I just love my hero mum
Who dreams of flying in the sky
and touching the glowing
yellow moon**

This poem by eight-year-old Motiana Pasa Finau is just one of a group of treasures penned at St Joseph's Ōtāhuhu as part of the Writers in Communities project.

A highlight on the New Zealand Book Council's calendar, the project sees five writers or illustrators hosted at five low decile schools in Ōtāhuhu.

The authors encourage and inspire the children to develop their creative writing talents, and help them publish their work in a series of anthologies.

Artist and writer Vasanti Unka grew up in Pukekohe and has worked for many years in publishing and design, writing and illustrating a number of children's books. She was one of five authors-in-residence in South Auckland schools in terms three and four last year.

Writers in Communities started in 2013 as a collaboration between the Book Council, the National Library and the Reading Together programme, which works to encourage whānau to read to their children at home.

As the programme's name suggests, its aim is to engage children and their wider community in reading and writing, but it's also very much about celebrating family, creativity and culture.

Vasanti worked with children at St Joseph's to write poetry, focusing on interesting language and encouraging each child to write about their future hopes and dreams for themselves and their families. This was expanded to thinking about their wider community, New Zealand, and the world.

The resulting poems encompassed everything from favourite foods to climate change, expressions of love for family and wishes for world peace.

Every year, the Writers in Communities project culminates in a celebratory book launch for students and their families.

Last year's launch took place at Ōtāhuhu Primary School, on a stage decorated with flowers, woven mats and precious tapa cloth loaned by school families. Vasanti joined her students on stage as they read their poetry to family members and teachers.

The children's words conjured strong images: a tree looking down on people below, chocolate-chip rain, the feeling of belonging to a family. Other students researched and wrote about the rich history of their local

area or family stories.

Vasanti says being an artist-in-residence at St Joseph's was very special and has changed the way she approaches her own writing and illustrating. We talked to her about the experience.

How did you first get involved in the Writers in Communities project? Was it your first time working with young writers in this way?

No, it wasn't my first time. I've been involved with the project for four years now. I was approached by the Book Council and have worked with Otāhuhu Primary for three years previously.



Vasanti Unka



How did you go about sharing your writing skills and inviting the children to respond?

I read to them, not only from my own work but also from that of other writers. To the older children, I read poetry. We talked together about the words and phrases that were being used.

I try and get the children to feel at ease with writing down their thoughts. So we did a few exercises of just jotting down words, much like brainstorming.

I found it's easier for them if I give them a structure — like a mountain of adjectives, then verbs. The words become sentences and we construct poems from this. I encourage them to think outside the box, and nothing is too weird.

What were the personal highlights of this experience for you?

I try and help the children feel at ease with writing from their heart and this is what I get the most enjoyment from — reading their amazing writing! I love it when they, themselves, are proud of their own work and rather than being too shy to share it with the class, they all tussle to be the ones who get to read their work out loud.

Were there any challenges in doing this work?

The biggest challenge as a writer is working out how to

teach a process that I know intrinsically and have always thought of as intuitive. I've had to analyse and evaluate my method so that I can share it and this — of course — has been a good thing to do.

What do you think is valuable about artists visiting schools?

It's great for children to rub shoulders with people from all walks of life, to broaden their own lives. I first met Joy Cowley when I was in my 30s and I felt so inspired by her! I think if I had met a writer when I was even younger, it would have made a huge impression on me.

Writing and illustrating are profoundly important

creative outlets for people. I hope that even if the children don't become writers or illustrators, they will carry on with a creative outlet for the rest of their lives.

Do you think the work you did with the children at St Joseph's will affect your own writing and art in any way? If so, how?

It's been really good to have a closer look at who my audience is. I've always tried to appeal to as wide an audience as possible and because of my Indian heritage, I've always aimed for a multicultural feel but I am taking this even more seriously now. I'm working on my next book at the moment so wait and see! 🖋️

Writers in Communities: www.bookcouncil.org.nz/programmes/writers-in-communities

Photos by St Joseph's School, Otāhuhu, Auckland

Painting: *Big Moon* by Alicia Dunn © Used with permission www.aliciadunnart.com



Melissa Wastney looks after communications for the Book Council. She lives in an old house in Wellington with her family.

My Call to Serve

Carmel College, Auckland



This year I have been given the amazing opportunity of leading my school as Head Girl, alongside Rebecca Conlon. It is an honour to lead such an amazing school that I have had a connection to my whole life. My mother was a Carmel College pupil also and led the school as Deputy Head Girl. There was never a doubt that I was going to follow her footsteps in coming to Carmel. This school has done so much for me and has helped shape me into the young woman I am today. This year I have the opportunity to give back to my school, be a leader, inspire my peers to be the best versions of themselves and continue to

strengthen the sisterhood bond of our school body. I am called to step up to this role and give my full heart and effort to be the best role model for the younger ones coming through. While I am very aware this year is going to be challenging with balancing schoolwork, sport and time for myself, I have the best support team. Delegation, time management and organisation are going to be vital for me to continue to grow our school's family atmosphere and to make the Carmel community proud. I am beyond excited to see what is ahead of Rebecca and me this year and the difference we can make.

Tayla Dalton



As one of the Head Girls of Carmel College, I have taken on this role and I am humbled to be able to serve my school community this year as we embrace our core mercy value of āwhinatanga (service). Throughout my school years, Carmel has provided me with so many amazing opportunities and experiences that I am incredibly grateful for. I wanted to be able to help other girls on their own journeys and give back to the community who gave so much to me. Being one of the leaders of the school means that I am a role model for my peers. I

want to help lift them to the heights they can achieve and encourage them to reach their full potential. While it may be challenging trying to balance responsibilities, schoolwork, sports and extracurriculars, I have the full support of my school community, friends and family behind me. I decided to put myself forward for this role to make a positive impact on the student body, staff and wider community, by listening to them and serving them while acting with mercy. Hopefully, I will grow into a confident and able woman and make Carmel proud.

Rebecca Conlon

Encountered in the Hospice Shop



When we're asked what our ambitions in life are, my answer includes helping others and being the best version of myself. I was instantly captivated when the Columba College Service Award was announced at school. The requirements included completing 30 hours of service for the community. I volunteered at a rest home for two years, and then I wanted to challenge myself further – thus the Hospice Shop came to mind. I had no idea what to expect, but soon learnt about it with the help of my lovely manager, Miyo. Now, every fortnight on Sunday mornings I price donations for the shop and serve

customers as best I can.

Last year I completed 30 hours of service in a fleeting 10 weeks. I decided to continue giving service and I volunteer to this day. I think serving the community is an exceptional way to open my mind to people of different social classes from all over. I met an elderly lady originally from Britain who was passionate about different fabrics. She shared about her favourite patterns from Liberty London. In moments like that, I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to not only serve, but listen and connect with others around Dunedin.

Saffron Lai

Francis Douglas Memorial College, New Plymouth



Being the head boy of Francis Douglas Memorial College is an honour. I am wholeheartedly proud of Francis Douglas Memorial College and all of the boys who attend. For me giving service is about being a man who values others above himself.

There are countless examples of Jesus putting others first and teaching the idea of loving others as yourself. In my head boy role I hope to emulate this when giving service in multiple aspects of my community. I will strive to live out these Gospel-based themes to help those who are in need; from the big things to the smallest things.

A key aspect of my service in 2019 is to assist our

college to produce educated Catholic men of good character. This is the primary goal of our college staff, our leadership team and myself. This year I hope to provide some tools and inspiration for boys to achieve in every aspect: spiritually, academically, culturally or sporting. When I look at my brothers in college I see young men who have endless amounts of potential. Young men who with some guidance will be able to go out and make a positive impact in the world. I see young men who one day will be good men in the community: good fathers, good disciples, good brothers and good husbands. If I am able to inspire or guide one person I know, I have succeeded.

Corban Dravitzki



Kia ora te whānau, ko Jeremy Johnston taku ingoa. I have the privilege of being named the 2019 Francis Douglas Memorial College Lasallian Youth Captain/Deputy Head Boy of Special Character. This is such a big role and sometimes I find myself getting lost in the whole

concept of leadership, especially a Catholic leader. Upon reflection, though, I have found it all boils down to one key word: service. To be a leader is to be a servant, it's to

do the big things well, but the smaller things even better. It's the attitude to roll up your sleeves, get your hands dirty and dig in for the hard yards. Being a Catholic leader is in a sense easier as in times of unsureness, I find myself looking for inspiration and luckily, as a Catholic we have the ultimate example of leadership in Jesus Christ. So for me leadership is not about the big flash stuff, the badges and titles, but rather in actions and truly living out the leadership example that Christ set for us.

Jeremy Johnston

St Catherine's College, Wellington



On my first day at St Catherine's I was welcomed with an atmosphere like no other — a close-knit community of students and teachers that really has each other's interests at heart. For the first time I felt like I was noticed, I was praised for having different ideas and for speaking my mind.

I didn't feel like I had to be a particular type of person to thrive here; all I had to be was myself. I decided to accept the role of Head Girl to give back to a school that has only kept giving and giving to me. The connections I've gained with the wider community through my school have

contributed to the things I am passionate about, helping me to recognise what I hold to be important in life. By taking on the role of Head Girl, I also aim to encourage our student body to get the best out of this wonderful little school, just as I have. I know I'll have many challenges this year, but just as I have grown from all the challenges I faced last year, I'm more than excited to repeat the process. And I can't think of a better way to spend my time than to help improve the place that has improved me so much. I'm not sure whether I view it as service, or just as my favourite hobby!

Steph Edlin



Kia ora, I'm the Deputy Head Girl at St Catherine's College. My desire to be a head prefect for my small, yet thriving school began four years ago, the instant I walked into school and was inspired by the Head Girl at the time. Our school community plays a major role in nurturing students to

grow in a safe and encouraging environment to become young adults who step up and do the right thing, even when it's unnerving. John Adams said: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more and become more, you

are a leader." The challenges that I face include balancing my academic goals with my extra-curricular activities and managing my time. As my teachers always say: "It's quality over quantity". I think being a prefect isn't a job or service, it's a privilege and an honour. Sure, being a prefect has its tasks but it's not a job if you enjoy it. I took on the role because, just as *Tui Motu* aims to bring the different races and peoples and faiths into relationship, meaning "stitching the islands together", I want to tighten the stitching of the school community and the wider community.

Niamh Cartysquires

RESURRECTION is GOD ACTING NOW



Luke 24:1-12 On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in, they did not find the body. 4 While they were preplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. 5 The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them: "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. 6 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." 8 Then they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

ELAINE WAINWRIGHT suggests that we read the resurrection story of Luke 24:1-12 as the culmination of Jesus's life and death and as God's continuing acting in all of creation.

At the beginning of March many of us in Australia and New Zealand were grappling with the death of Denis Edwards, outstanding eco-theologian in our region and internationally. A priest of the Adelaide Archdiocese, South Australia, Denis was captured by the question of *how God acts* (the title of one of his books) in an evolving universe. Having spent his life questioning how we might understand the Christian tradition in an evolving universe and amid complex eco-systems, Denis now knows the profound experience of this reality at the heart of life in a new way.

In *How God Acts*, Denis describes resurrection as "an unimaginable and amazing act of God in our history . . . a promise that human beings and with them the whole creation will be transfigured in Christ." He goes on to say that resurrection "contains a claim that the final transformation of all things has already begun in Jesus and is at work in the universe." Elsewhere, he says that

"resurrection is not only the culmination of the life and death of Jesus, but also the inner meaning of creation." He makes this very explicit when he says that "resurrection is the central expression in our history of the self-giving love of God who is present in every ancient oak tree, every ant, and every kangaroo, closer than they are to themselves, as the source of their being and the enabler of their action." He invites us through the enduring quality of his words to encounter this "self-giving love of God" not only in ancient oak but also majestic kauri; in kangaroo and kiwi. God is appealing to us through Denis's life and work to discover anew how God acts.

"The God of resurrection is the God who is present, in the life-giving Spirit, in the events of the big bang, in the stars which lit up the early universe, in the first bacterial life on Earth, in the lives of the first human beings in the history of Israel, and in the life and death of Jesus."

At Easter time each year, we seek to "discover anew how God acts". In this, we turn to our sacred texts, the scriptures and their story-ing of Jesus's journey through life, death, and resurrection. Our growing ecological consciousness also turns our attention to Earth and Earth's story as it interacts with the Jesus story. In this short article I seek to listen to each of these stories and their profound interrelationship in the text of Luke 24:1–12 as they reveal a little more clearly for us the God who acts.

As with most stories, the account of Easter morning in the Gospel of Luke grounds what is recounted in time and place.

It is the first day of the week and at the first sign of dawn. These details are not mere props in the story. They invite us to attend to time that both locates each happening and alerts us to its potential: the *first* day of the week and the *first* sign of dawn. Interdependent with time is place – the women go to the tomb – and it is in this time and this place peopled with the materiality of human bodies and fragrant with the spices that the women had prepared, that resurrection will be experienced.


The materiality permeating the narrative engages us as readers as the narrator informs us that the stone, the cover to the entrance to the tomb has been rolled back. The earthen tomb that had received the body of Jesus who had been crucified is revealed. But, the text says pointedly, the material body of Jesus was not there. The words of the two figures who appear to the women provide an explanation: "He has been raised" (Lk 24:5).

How might we understand this resurrection of Jesus from an ecological perspective? Denis Edwards can help us. He says that in "Jesus's act of self-giving in death, he falls into the arms of God and is raised up and transformed in the life-giving spirit . . . In the paschal event, part of evolutionary history gives itself completely into God." Denis tells us: "The God of resurrection is the God who is present, in the life-giving Spirit, in the events of the big bang, in the stars which lit up the early universe, in the first bacterial life on Earth, in the lives of the first human beings in the history of Israel, and in the life and death of Jesus."

As we read/hear the Lucan text this Easter, we are

invited to encounter the "God of resurrection". This may occur as we hear the words of the ones in dazzling apparel: "Why do you look for the living among the dead. He is not here but has been raised" (Lk 24:5). But for those of us who seek to hear these words in a world understood from an evolutionary perspective, there needs to be an expansion of our consciousness.

The final verses of Luke 24:1–12 remind us that this extraordinary expansion of consciousness occurs in a world marred by limitations and injustice. For instance, the testimony of the women is not believed by the male disciples, even though three of them are specifically named which indicates their significance in the community. Peter quietly confirms "what had happened", providing a conclusion to the obvious gendering of the narrative.

When we return to the heart of the story, Jesus has been raised. We each spend our life-time engaging with this reality. Our growing ecological consciousness is inviting us, as it invited Denis Edwards, to allow the call of the universe to lead us along new pathways for interpreting and understanding the God who acts in ways beyond our imaging. 

Painting: *Mary Magdalene Discovering the Empty Tomb* by Herschel Pollard © Used with permission www.pollardgallery.com



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



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HANDING OVER the SPIRIT

KATHLEEN RUSHTON explains John's version of Jesus's death as his handing over the Spirit at the heart of the universe to all beloved disciples.

Jesus as king. A seamless garment. The cry: "I am thirsty." The mother of Jesus, the women and the Beloved Disciple "near the cross." The piercing of the side from which blood and water flowed. Jesus entrusting his mother to the beloved disciple. All these details, found only in John, have influenced Christian spirituality and art profoundly. Scriptural quotations and allusions, imagery and symbolism, irony and double meanings abound. This is an interpretation

of the death-resurrection of Jesus refracted through the prism of John's theological responses to the struggles of communities in a particular time and place. Often obscured or overlooked in the Christian tradition are three interconnected strands which are critical to hearing both the cry of Earth and the cry of the poor: creation and re-creation, the last words of Jesus and the handing over the Spirit. I will explore these against the background realities of Roman power at the time.

Three Moves

Palestine had been a Roman colony since 63 BCE. Roman political and economic domination, with the collusion of local leaders, lay heavily

upon the people and the land. In the devastation that followed the public execution of Jesus, disciples in the New Testament writings made three core moves in their understanding. They fused the cross and resurrection into one hopeful symbol – they did not ponder the cross and death of Jesus in isolation from his resurrection. Then, having fused the death, cross and resurrection, they looked back through this strong light at the whole life of Jesus and gave it saving significance. God did not just raise any one. The One raised had been involved totally in a passionate ministry. His words and action gave flesh to the God of mercy who frees slaves, leads exiles home and hears the cry of the poor. As a consequence, Jesus was put to death.

Finally, during the lifetime of Jesus, many disciples saw him as the expected Messiah who would restore their nation from foreign domination.

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.



RL and RCL: Good Friday John

18:1-19:42

RCL: Holy Saturday (Alternative)

19:42

That hope ended with his death. A shift took place. Disciples saw the death-resurrection of Jesus as a new age of redemption. The narrower political leadership of messiah was rethought to include all people and the whole world. These three moves are very different from later ones such as Anselm's theory of satisfaction which focused on the cross alone as saving. The cross gave God payment for debt and said nothing of the resurrection. Scripture used a different language of being with, accompanying: "I am with you." Redemption means God walking with the people and creation in solidarity even to death. Elizabeth Johnson, in her book, *Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril*, explains that this theology has a double solidarity "of the actual Jesus who lived with all who live, suffer and die, and of the resurrecting God of life with the ministering and crucified Jesus." John's Gospel tells of this in narrative and image.

Jesus Replied: "I am" (Jn 18.8)

There was official Roman interest in the arrest of Jesus in the garden (Jn 18:3, 12). A cohort (one-tenth of a Roman legion) and its tribune were involved alongside Judas and "police from the chief priests and the Pharisees". It was a confrontation rather than an arrest. Jesus was in control. He took the initiative. He spoke the first and last words (Jn 18:4, 11). He was conscious of what lay ahead of him (Jn 18:4). Coming forward, Jesus asked: "Whom are you looking for?" (Jn 18:7; cf. Jn 1:38; 20:15). At his: "I am", armed soldiers behaved unusually before an unarmed man — they fell to the ground (Jn 18:3–8).

At one level, Jesus was simply saying who he is, yet, there were other echoes (Ex 3:14). The disciples' escape was not desertion but highlighted his concern for "his own" (Jn 17:12). Jesus was about "drinking the cup" which was the consequence of his doing the works of God.

No Jewish court ever charged Jesus formally or condemned him. No Jews beat him or mocked him (beyond a single slap in Jn 18:22). Even though the Jewish leadership

instigated his trial and execution, the omission of the Sanhedrin trial — a trial before a Jewish judicial body — meant formal responsibility was with the Roman governor, Pilate. There is more emphasis on the political nature of the charges against Jesus than anywhere else in the New Testament. The Roman trial was dramatic, highly symbolic and structured in seven brief scenes (Jn 18:29–32, 33–38a, 38b–40; 19:1–3, 4–7, 8–11). Two trials took place: the literal trial of Jesus; and the figurative trial of "the Jews", at which Pilate and all humanity choose either the reign of God as revealed by Jesus in the world — or choose the world.

". . . There Was a Garden" (Jn 18:1; 19:42)

The passion and death of Jesus began and ended in a "place" where "there was a garden" (Jn 18:1; 19:42). He rose in a garden. The strands in the prologue (Jn 1:1–18), which inserted Jesus into God's creation and re-creation, continued in his passion, death-resurrection and his absence and presence in the Spirit. God "planted a garden in Eden, in the east" (Gen 2:8). Like a gardener, God cultivated it (Gen 2:9) and walked in it (Gen 3:8). Elsewhere, God was described explicitly as a gardener (Num 24:6; 4 Macc 1:29). As God is central to biblical creation so, too, Jesus is inserted in God's creation.


"It is finished" (Jn 19:30)

The works of God were to be finished by Jesus. This was especially so as his death approached "Jesus knew that all was *finished*" (Jn 19:28). His last words were: "It is *finished*" (Jn 19:30). His food was to *finish* the works of God (Jn 4:34). God gave him works to *finish* (Jn 5:36). Echoed here is Genesis where "God rested from all the work that God had done in creation" (Jn 2:2). Jesus spoke of God doing works through him (Jn 14:10) and those who believed in him "will do the works that I do and, in fact, greater works than I do" (Jn 14:12).

Jesus "Handed Over the Spirit" (Jn 19:30)

It is commonly understood that Jesus's death was being described

when he "gave up his spirit" (NRSV). Nowhere in the ancient world was death described like that. The word in Jn 19:30 means to "hand over" and was used for the betrayal action of Judas in the other Gospels. The Greek has no "his". So, a more accurate translation would be: "handed over the spirit". James Swetman observes that "at the deeper level the climax of the Passion of the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel is not the death of Jesus, but a bestowal of the Spirit". The Spirit was promised previously (Jn 7:39; 14:16–17). So, Jesus handed over the Spirit to his mother, the women and the Beloved Disciple near the cross.

And who is the Beloved Disciple? Sandra Schneiders suggests *each reader/hearer* is a Beloved Disciple to whom Jesus hands over the Spirit. Why? To finish the work of God's ongoing creation and re-creation (salvation). In this work the "Spirit, infinite bond of love, is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways" (*Laudate Si* par 238). 

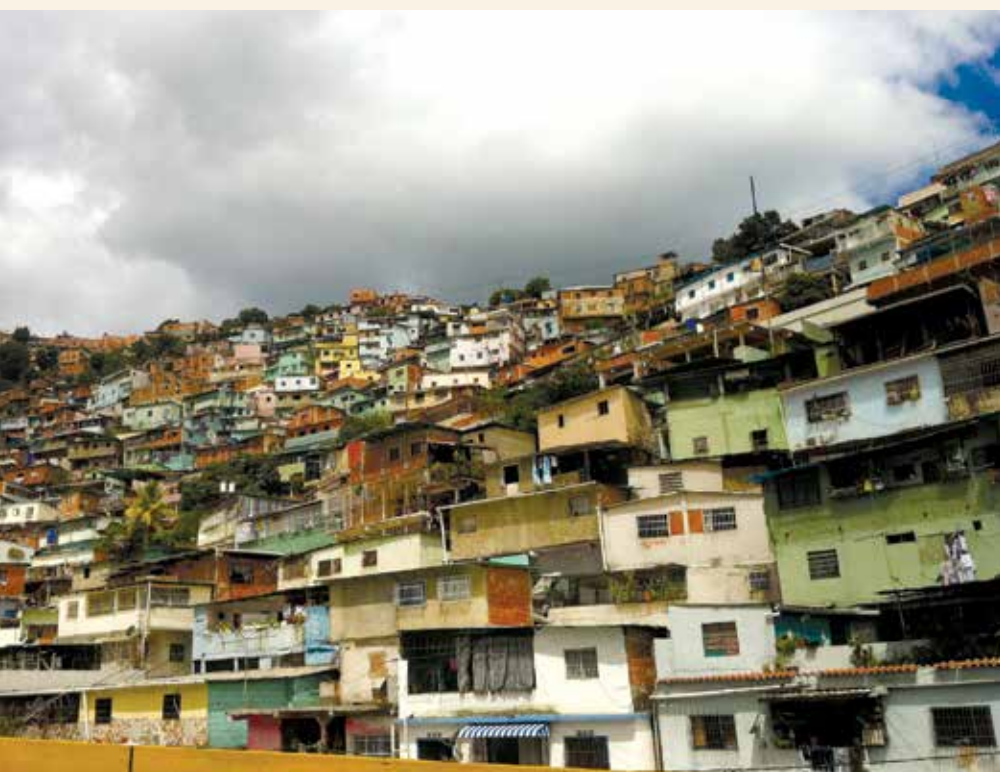
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SELFISHNESS DESTROYS SERVICE



I'm not sure whether it's with good-humour or mockery that New Zealanders view Australian politics across the ditch. After all, we've had almost as many prime ministers as we've had years recently, from both sides of the political aisle.

We are now approaching another election cycle. The polls indicate another change of government is likely, so our most prominent politicians are jostling among themselves yet again. We are again watching our leaders posture for the electoral spotlight – and many of them do not fare well under its light.

But while the self-interest of Australia's politicians is evident, we are comparatively lucky. Elsewhere leaders in name only have more than once reduced their own countries to rubble. It's a sobering reminder of what can happen when the consequences of corruption remain unchecked and when blind personal ambition runs rampant.

Right now in Venezuela a hefty price is being paid for the political struggle for power. Worst of all, it is paid by the very people the leaders were meant to serve – their needs have been forgotten.

There are two men in Venezuela who are currently claiming to be their nation's president. One is Nicolás Maduro, who has been clinging to power since 2013 when former President Hugo Chavez named him his successor. The other is opposition leader Eduardo Guido, who declared himself the legitimate leader of the country in January 2019 with the support of the National Legislature.

The nation with two men vying to lead it has been gripped by crisis for years. Part of the problem is its deep dependence on its oil reserves, by some estimates the largest in the world. The price of oil has plummeted, and Venezuela is struggling to repay its large debts to countries like China while also generating enough money to fund itself.

The nation is barely functioning. Hyperinflation has rendered the local currency almost worthless, nationwide power outages have shut down critical infrastructure like hospitals

and people continue to go hungry as severe food shortages take their toll. The situation requires immediate redress but right now, no one appears ready to do so.

Growing national unrest has helped set off protests across the country. Maduro, like Chavez before him, fears foreign intervention and has taken to denouncing any form of international interference. While nations in Latin America are perhaps right to be suspicious of US intervention in their affairs, this paranoia has come at a giant cost: Maduro has halted foreign aid from entering the country, deepening the despair of Venezuelans and further fanning the flames of dissent.

As a result, 3.4 million Venezuelans have fled the country, more than the population of its capital Caracas. Many have been taken in by neighbouring Colombia. It is in this context that Guido declared himself the rightful president of the country and centre of mounting pressure for Maduro to stand aside. Fifty countries from around the world have since recognised Guido as the legitimate leader of the country.

But there is precious little positive change. More than two months on and Venezuela is no closer to a resolution. The crisis has only deepened as Maduro digs in, declaring Guido a criminal and a traitor, and redoubling his efforts to consolidate his support. The Venezuelan army watches on, refusing to mount a coup, and there appears little hope for change.

As both leaders struggle to take control of the country, only one outcome is certain: that the situation on the ground will surely worsen before any glimmer of peace is restored. Given the current status quo, it is difficult to imagine what the breaking point will be.

In the meantime, it will be the ordinary Venezuelan people, not their leaders, who continue to pay the price. 🖐️

Photo by Ander Unibaso Villaverde from Pixabay

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



Many young people give their time to a wide variety of causes. Often, though, we do it because we have to, to earn a badge or award. At school and in my holidays, I did various kinds of service. I planted trees for a few terms, helped at a local orphanage, worked with a project for children with disabilities and at a school.

I think I did these things because of a sense of obligation. If I was a good person, then I would want to serve. But none of these activities brought me a great sense of satisfaction (except the tree planting – the baking that the teacher in charge always brought was very satisfying). I learned some things, but I didn't feel as if what I was doing made much difference to my life or the cause I was trying to help. There was no training or discussion of the purpose for any of these activities.

We planted trees, but didn't discuss why we were putting them there, or ask people from the community where (or if) they wanted more trees. At the orphanage, we'd come and play games and do crafts. I remember deciding once to teach the children how to make an origami bird. But they already knew how and instead tried to show us how to make paper windmills which would spin as they ran. I decided to join in and learn to make windmills, but other volunteers were frustrated that the kids didn't want to do the planned activity. The programme wasn't asking "why" questions, or looking at the long-term value of the activities.

At the school, where I did about 20 hours a week for a month or so, I was constantly frustrated by the corporal punishment and the rote-learning style. As a volunteer, who was younger than the staff, I felt that I couldn't question decisions I disagreed with. I learned a lot about India's education system, but I didn't feel like my work would change anything. I had all these experiences I could list on my CV, but I never felt that I'd achieved much for me or the people I was allegedly serving.

Service can easily feel like a box to be ticked. But my more recent



Photo by Jamie Turner from Pixabay

serving experience has felt more like what God's vision for people serving would be.

Last year, I volunteered with intermediate school kids once a week. The leaders and volunteers are asking the "why" questions and I know that what we do has a lasting impact. The intention is for our weekly games and dinners to be fun and to teach the kids values like teamwork. It is also intended for them to have constant presences in their lives who remind them they are loved. And the value of the work to me has also changed – while spending time with twelves is tiring and messy and takes emotional effort, this hasn't felt like something I have to do. It feels like something I want to do, because I can sense its value for me and see its impact on the people we work with.

Serving gets me out of my normal life and minor concerns. It reminds me that I'm lucky to have great friends, a family, to be able to study. (It also makes me grateful to no longer be in intermediate school.) It's fun – I wouldn't sock wrestle or build balloon towers with my peers, but I legitimately enjoy it.

Serving builds skills – I'm getting better at taking initiative, organising, watching out for the vulnerable

people on the edges and learning how to lead. I use all these skills in other parts of my life. Most importantly, this experience with service has built community. I have created relationships by seeing the same children every week, getting to know them. And building relationships and having fun with like-minded volunteers has been equally valuable.

I have found myself surprised by service. It is a gift to me as well as the children I work with, making us all more whole. I've become better at leading the people I'm working with and listening to let them lead me. I'm able to learn from other volunteers and get my friends involved in this valuable experience. This kind of service has felt transformative and given me a deep sense of its importance. I remember Shane Claiborne's saying that bringing God's kingdom on Earth is joyous, not miserable. I've learned that being Jesus's hands and feet isn't easy, but it's radical, important and, especially, a delight. 🖐️



Shar Mathias enjoys reading, running, tramping, music and a lot of other things. She studies ecology and lives in Dunedin.

Archways to the Infinite: A Spirituality for the Twenty-first Century

by Peter Murnane

Published by Garratt Publishing, 2018

Reviewed by Peter Slocum

BOOK

“Synchronicity” is a concept to which Peter Murnane refers frequently in his curious, challenging, disarming and ruthlessly honest apologia titled, somewhat ambitiously, “Archways to the Infinite”.

Early in the piece Peter Murnane refers to synchronicity as “. . . this archway to the unknown” and suggests that, in his experience, the most extraordinary cases of synchronicity happen when a person is to some degree desperate, perhaps praying for help or escape. I’m not entirely sure I was praying for help or escape when I opened this book – nonetheless, I was well and truly captured by chapter 2 at page 6.

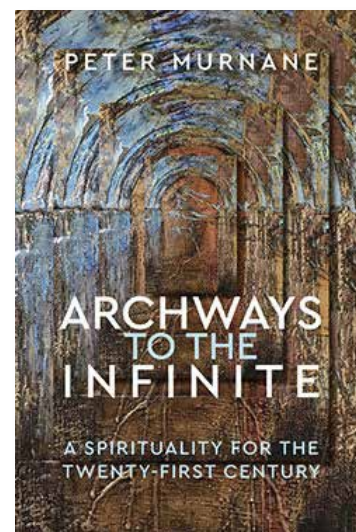
I initially baulked at the title *Archways To The Infinite* (the image which most readily came to mind was the McDonalds Golden Arches) however Peter introduced me to the word “proscenium” – literally that part of a stage in front of the curtain.

The “proscenium arch” is effectively a gateway for the telling of a story – a threshold which separates the “real world” of the audience, from the “imaginary world” of the stage. Peter’s compelling narrative of his lifetime journey, through a series of proscenium arches towards a largely

unknown endpoint, begins while watching a school play towards the end of his 14th year: and the rest is his history. If you have a love of, or even a sense for the theatre, you will resonate with Peter as the curtain is raised on each of the 20 chapters of this life-time Odyssey: however, be wary of the Muses, and even the Sirens, and where they might lead you.

My reading suggests that *Archways to the Infinite* is not really about Peter: it invites readers to discover their own archways, and to dare looking through them and walking under them to grasp a sense of something transcendent. As Peter lightly suggests, it is not so much that we find the transcendent; but that the transcendent finds us.

Peter is never didactic, dogmatic or preaching: he invites. WARNING: Reading *Archways to the Infinite* is potentially life-changing. If it is a while since you have done a “retreat”, walking through Peter’s fascinating archways is a strongly recommended alternative. I dare you – you have nothing to lose; but much to gain. If you are pondering the “meaning of life”, this book may give some answers. 🙏



As Good as Gold: Essays from a Priest on the Road

by James B Lyons

Published by As Good as Gold, 2018

Reviewed by John Meredith

BOOK

While the expression “as good as gold” probably meant “genuine” originally, today it can carry the connotation of “meeting approval”. However, as the title of James Lyons’ autobiographical essays, it conveys the conviction that through his 50 years as a priest he has found a treasure “as good as gold”. In fact, no amount of gold could replace the life-changing experiences and relationships Lyons has encountered along the road.

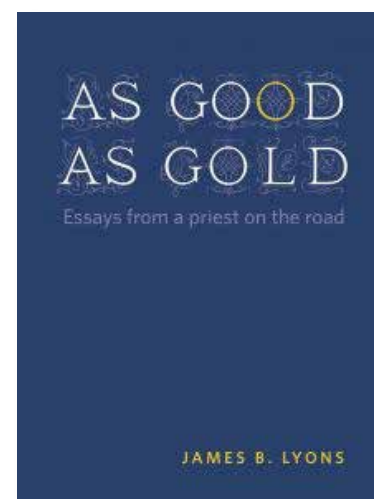
In his essays, Lyons presents himself as a fellow traveller – someone who dines with friends, watches television, plays sport and experiences doubts and frustration – and writes of insights he’s learned that have awakened his heart and mind. He is a priest of the Archdiocese of Wellington, and embraces the concept of the Church as the People of God where priest and people are working together to build up the Body of Christ. He

sees the priest as enabler in the community.

His essays span topics such as family influence, faith and doubt, changing tradition, friendship, grief, marriage, ecumenism, preaching and communication and the experience of drought in Ethiopia. They give readers glimpses of the grace of God active in his life.

As Good as Gold is attractively presented and includes photographs as well as poetry. I learned about Lyons and his compassionate, humble, accepting and insightful ministry. And of how he continues to learn and grow. That the love of God motivates his life is apparent in his reflections.

The book is a joy to read – indeed, as good as gold – and would appeal to those who enjoy biographical writing or who find inspiration in reflection on life. 🙏





Older Than Ireland

Directed by Alex Fegan
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

FILM

The premise of this film is simple. Take 30 Irish centenarians, put them in front of the camera and let them talk about their lives. The results are always engaging and often moving.

The participants are a diverse bunch. At one end of the spectrum is 103-year-old Bessy Nolan, gossipy and stylishly dressed, with a cigarette held in her elegant hand. At the other is Luke Dolan (108), small and wizened in his bed, but still able to emit a loud “Yippee!” when remembering youthful hijinks.

The first question they are asked is how it feels to be 100. For most, it made no difference at all – merely the turn of a page in the calendar. They talk mostly about their personal lives – hard childhood days when an orange was a major treat, suffering under “brutal” schoolteachers, then courting (mainly a lot of fun) and marriage. Almost all speak warmly of their spouses, counting themselves blessed to have found their soulmate. Their inevitable loss is hard to bear. “When my wife died, so did I”, says Jimmy Barry (103).

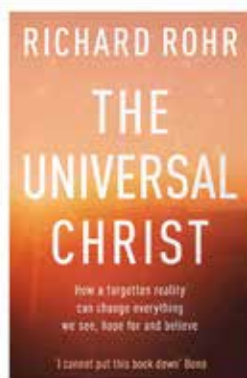
In one segment, the participants recall Ireland’s tumultuous political history. One woman tells of climbing a

tower with her mother to see Dublin ablaze during the Easter rising of 1916. Others recall the Black and Tans – “volunteer police, not soldiers” – with a sense of dread. The Irish Civil War was a time that most would rather forget, and the original IRA is recalled with a mixture of pride and unease. Jimmy Barry was at Dublin’s Croke Park on Bloody Sunday 1920 when British troops opened fire on the crowd. One woman, a member of the Church of Ireland, remembers only a single hostile incident – when her parish church was torched, her Catholic neighbours rushed to beat out the flames.

I was impressed by how full of life the centenarians were. The oldest, Kathleen Snavely (113), then living in

Syracuse, New York, didn’t look a day over 80 – she is astonishingly alive. While their stories are interwoven, director Fegan ensures that we keep track of who’s who by adopting different filmic styles and showing his subjects in a variety of situations – in rest homes, celebrating a birthday, taking tea in the front room, meeting a friend at the shops or pottering in the garden.

In a film full of memorable lines, the quotation that has stuck with me is Michael O’Connor’s formula for a long and healthy life: “If you dig a hole in your back garden today, and fill it in again tomorrow, you’ll be doing yourself a power of good.” There’s something quintessentially Irish about that! 🇮🇪



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CROSS CURRENTS



by Susan Smith

Religion and Politics

What do Donald Trump, Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro, and Australia's prime minister Scott Morrison all have in common? Strong links with extreme right-wing conservative evangelical groups. Such groups were critical in ensuring the electoral successes of Trump and Bolsonaro, while Scott Morrison is a practising Pentecostal. In order to please his evangelical supporters Trump has moved the American embassy to Jerusalem, and his Brazilian and Australian counterparts are promising to do the same. By "evangelical" I mean those Christians who believe in the absolute authority of the Bible, in salvation through Jesus, and the urgency of preaching about personal salvation.

Evangelicals' favourite NT book is Revelation, in particular its references to the Anti-Christ, which they may interpret as a metaphor for the Roman Church, and its apparent prophecies about the coming of Jesus as judge at the end of time. Another key belief is their conviction that God's promise of the Holy Land to the Jews is eternal. As American scholar, Elizabeth Oldmixon, says: "When we talk about the Holy Land, God's promise of the Holy Land, we're talking about real estate on both sides of the Jordan River. So, the sense of a greater Israel and expansionism is really important to this community. Jerusalem is just central to that. It's viewed as a historical and biblical capital."

Evangelicals believe that Jerusalem is where Jesus will come as Judge. Jesus himself may teach that we know nothing about his second coming: "about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matt 24:36). But Jesus's lack of knowledge does not bother Evangelicals. Hence the need for political leaders to move their embassies to Jerusalem where all the action will occur.

Given the position of these right-wing evangelicals it is not surprising that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can say that Israel has "no better friends in the world than the evangelical community".

Salvation Army State of the Nation Report

Of course, I am not talking about all evangelicals as many of us recognise the important work being done by evangelical congregations and communities in our society. For example, the Salvation Army is emerging as one of the more prophetic church groups in Aotearoa when it comes to social justice.

They identify in their *The State of the Nation Report* (February 2019) five areas which need much better outcomes:

- Our Children:
All our children are safe and doing well
- Work and Incomes:
Our growing prosperity is fairly shared
- Crime and Punishment:
Our homes and communities are free from violence and crime

- Social Hazards:
Our homes and communities are free from addiction and related harm
 - Housing
We all have housing which is healthy, safe and secure
- The report was carefully discussed, critiqued and affirmed on the Radio New Zealand, NZ Herald and Stuff websites. The Salvation Army seems to be a more significant prophetic voice than the mainline Churches in this day and age.

Slash

Last year we were alerted to the problem of "slash" — the debris left when pine plantations are cut down. The issue of slash surfaced in a frightening way when the North Island's East Coast experienced severe flooding in July 2018, causing millions of dollars of damage. No one, least of all the forestry companies, was willing to assume responsibility for this disaster.

"Slash" is also emerging as one of several factors causing the devastating fires that have swept through the Nelson region. This time too little water, not too much water, was the problem. Around Whangarei great heaps of slash are visible, some on district council property, some on privately owned land. It would seem as though owners of pine forests need to get their act together about environmentally safe ways of managing slash. 🐾



TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

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

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

NEW METAPHORS NEEDED

Unfortunately, child abuse is not confined to religious groups, dominations or religions — some secular institutions are just as guilty. However, Roman Catholic institutions have to take full responsibility for their actions, or lack of, to safeguard the most vulnerable. Deep and systematic reflection on the nature and causes of child abuse within the Church has not happened yet. I think the causes cut to the core of Catholic/Christian tradition and belief (theology) and I do not think healing will take place until this honesty is acknowledged.

The flaw lies in theology. Humanity is not in a fallen state — original sin is a sociopolitical theory developed by the Church to control the masses. Jesus's death has nothing to do with God's plan to redeem humanity. Jesus was crucified because he upset the establishment. The Eucharist should not celebrate blood and guts theology. It should celebrate being thankful for life and the universe we live in. The celibate state is not holier or closer to God than the single, married or gay life. As we know, most sex abuse cases were committed or fall within the 1950s to 1980s. This period of intense sexual revolution within Western societies, created within the Church a distorted view of human sexuality, and the many

thousands of young men who entered the priesthood or religious life were buried with guilt, not understanding their own psychosexual development. A distorted view of sexuality is ingrained and the expression is unhealthy — now the fallout is evident.

My theological thinking has taken me outside the Catholic Church. To me the divine or the mystery of life is most fully expressed here and the existential questions are found in the imperfections, joys and sorrows of life. I wish the Church would abandon its traditional structures and theology and allow its metaphors to gracefully die so that new metaphors can be created or rise up from the ashes of the old.

Paul Donnelly (abridged)

EXCLUDING THE PEOPLE OF GOD

I was an altar boy at the Sacred Heart Basilica in Timaru for years. Gradually I gained an understanding of the many different symbols that were a part of the pre-Vatican II Church — vestments, vessels, what each one was called and why it was included, why different colours, the Gospel side of the altar, why the epistle was read on the right side, incense and thuribles.

The symbolism within the Mass is still significant. After the Vatican II change to the vernacular the People of God gradually became more involved — the ministry of reading the Epistles and later eucharistic ministers. Liturgy ministry groups became an integral part of parish life. They developed themes for each season. We began to see liturgical dance and mimes which, like the miracle plays of early literature, told the Gospel story of the day.

Over the last couple of decades parish liturgy groups have declined and the priest often brings his own perspective only to Easter and

Christmas liturgies.

In our travels we've noticed subtle differences in parishes that include the participation of the People of God. They're small but they're examples of the royal priesthood of all the baptised. For example, in New Brighton the first and second Scripture readers stand alongside the priest as he reads the Gospel, sending the message: "We're in this together!" The eucharistic ministers wear distinctive wooden crosses and the Eucharist is passed to the ministers without any sign of overarching authority. The prayers for the faithful come from the pews.

In other parishes such little gestures, previously signs of inclusion, have been taken back. In one parish the people are no longer allowed to cleanse the Communion chalice and vessels. It is done only by the priest. It's implying that those of us in the pews are unworthy. That the priest is somehow more worthy to tend to their care. It's a powerful example of clericalism.

Thomas Lamb (abridged)

TOGETHER IN SOLIDARITY

I read the moving, quite revealingly honest article by Daniel O'Leary just days before he died. (TM March 2019) What an impressive priest you've lost! I wish he'd been an Anglican — or even from one of the other Christian denominations who remain "separated" from your great, but fallible, Church. We in Napier, along with all parts of our beloved land, are still reeling from the Christchurch massacre and, I suspect, one of the good results from the evil deeds of last Friday, is a coming together of so many Faiths in a gesture of solidarity, even respect, for the pain Islam is going through — surely a "nod" towards our common humanity as sisters and brothers on the same journey.

David Day (abridged)

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Looking OUT and IN

Suddenly all four of us slowed our pace and conversation as we looked at a leftover patch of slightly grimy snow lying benignly on the roadside. Crossing it there were leopard prints, bigger than the palm of my hand. Where was this wild cat going? Where did it spend the night? What did it eat? An apex predator just hours earlier had gone strolling through our home territory.

I had a similar experience in February. Walking on a nearby path, I was halted into silence and mystery by a tangled stack of sharp black and white quills and some ragged scraps of skin. A porcupine had come off badly in an encounter with a predator. Wildness almost forcefully breaks through my banal thoughts to remind me of God, the Creator, the Mystery Source of All. My electric kettle and teabags are only half an hour's walk away from the sites of the porcupine assassination and the leopard footprints, yet these incursions of wild places and wild creatures into my domestic life remind me of all the things I don't know.

The rain stopped. A shaft of late evening sunshine gave the dishevelled bridle path a tamer and more domestic beauty and there was still two hours of cycling uphill to go. By the time I reached home, weary but happy, there were frosty stars high above me. I didn't learn the word "apophatic" until last week, but I have always known what it means in the thousands of encounters I have had with raw and uncouth wild places. There is so much that I don't have control over. This eco-web of life is surprising, tangled and mysterious.

So is God.



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

Photo by Karen Mathias

Rain clouds are gathering as I start my slow cycle ride up the historic bridle path. The signboards from 1929 are still there at the old tollgate, at the base of the trail. Text in Urdu, Hindi and English describes the different charges for palanquins, donkeys and people going by foot. I usually ascend the 1,500 vertical metre climb from Dehradun to Mussoorie on my doughty red scooter, glad to have fossil fuels do the climbing work. A few times a year, though, I feel the reality of these huge Himalayan foothills by walking or cycling home, an embodied experience of the high kilojoule cost of this ascent.

The bridle path goes up steeply through a number of hairpin *kainchi* (literally, "scissors") which have been concreted several times in the last few years to notionally allow motorcycles to traverse the route. Every monsoon, part of the steep mountainside slumps onto the route, ensuring it remains open only to people on foot or mountain bikes

Puffing and pushing now, the steep concrete path turns to chunky gravel and fat raindrops start to fall thick and fast. The path narrows to a small track, awash with fast muddy water. Twigs and leaves brush my arms and I weave around tree roots which have cracked the concrete path. I feel the wildness pushing in. Through the skein of falling

drops I look down on Dehradun city. The urban traffic, chai drinking and office-closing routines are removed in time as well as space from this steep hillside.

Perhaps because today is Shrove Tuesday, on the brink of Lent, this dreadlocked landscape pushes me to reflect on God. A book I started reading this week (Beldon Lane's *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*) talks about the apophatic tradition, a theology and practice that attempts to approach God, the Divine, by negation, speaking only in terms of what may not be said about the perfect goodness that is God. I think of it as a kind of un-understanding — acknowledging the mystery, darkness and unknowability of God. The apophatic tradition somehow allows absence and doubt to become a route toward the presence of God. It connects to John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul* and is perhaps part of the unknowing, confusion and bleakness that Christ experienced in the desert, at the death of Lazarus and on the Cross.

Being in wild places reminds me of how much I don't know and don't understand. But — strangely perhaps — these wild places seem to push me towards the mysterious presence of the Creator. Saturday morning last week I walked along chattering to a friend, while our children wove circles around us on their bicycles.



Photo by Shirley Holland

*Rise
in us
transforming
our hard edges
into humble, giving
ministers of love
Spirit of Life*

From the *Tui Motu* team