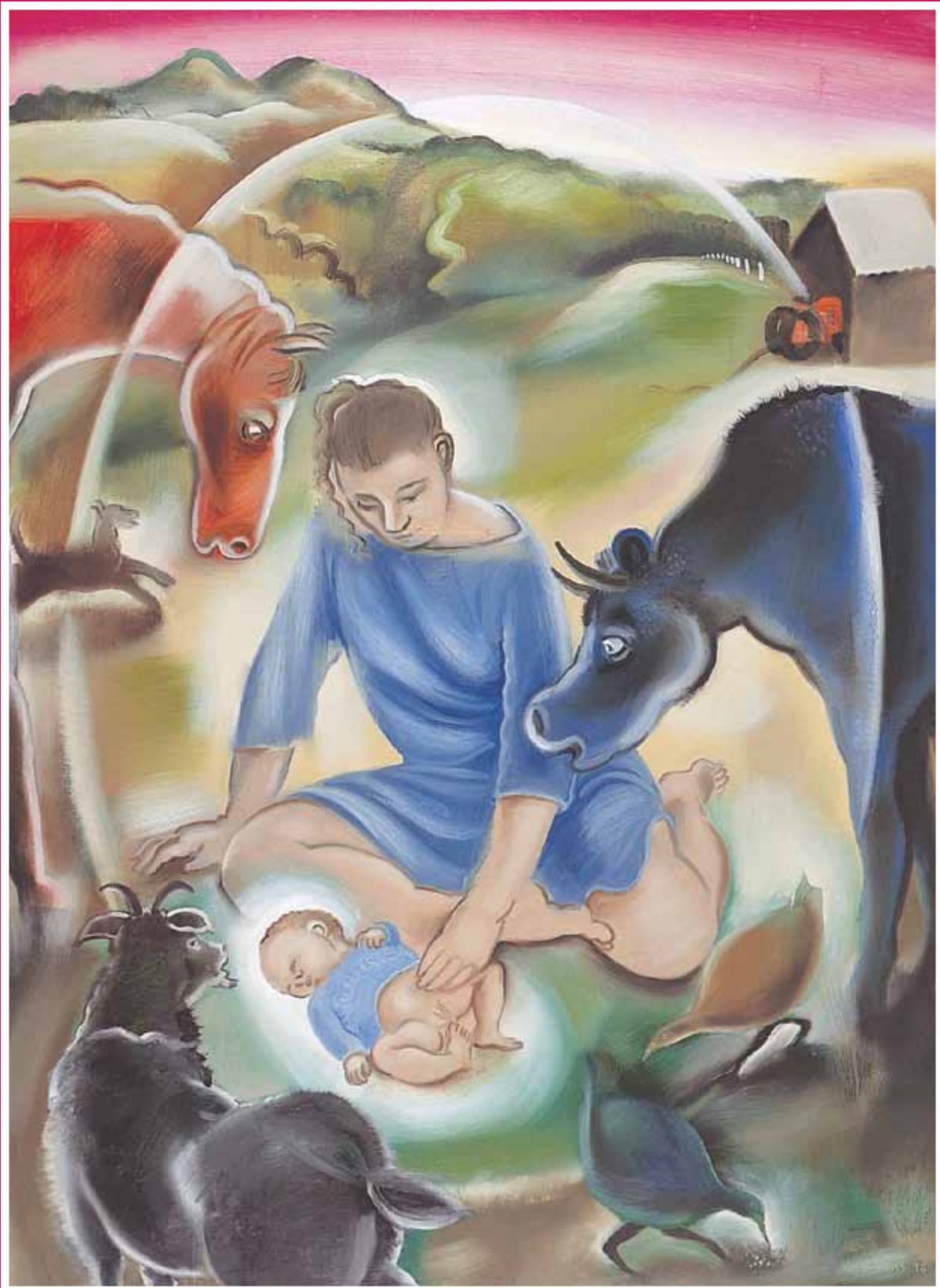


# Tui Motu

Interislands

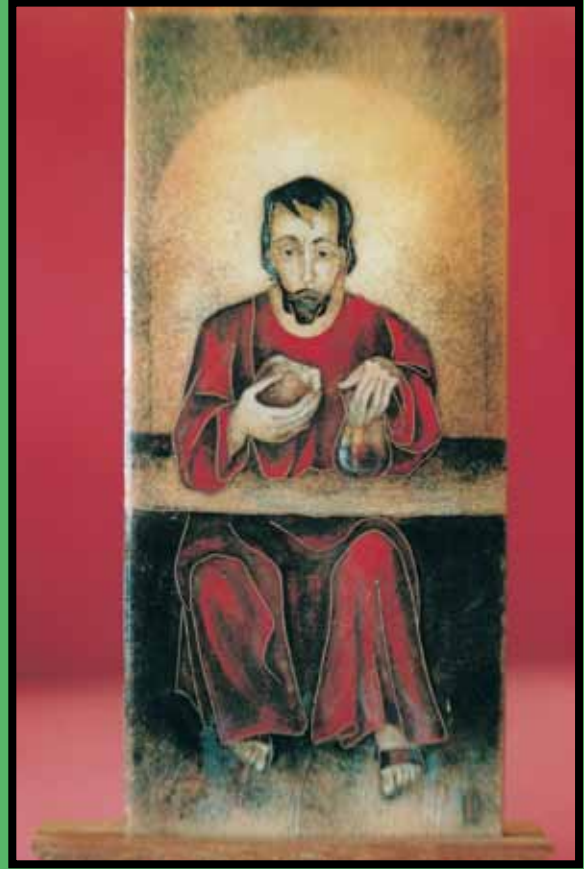


December 2002 Price \$4

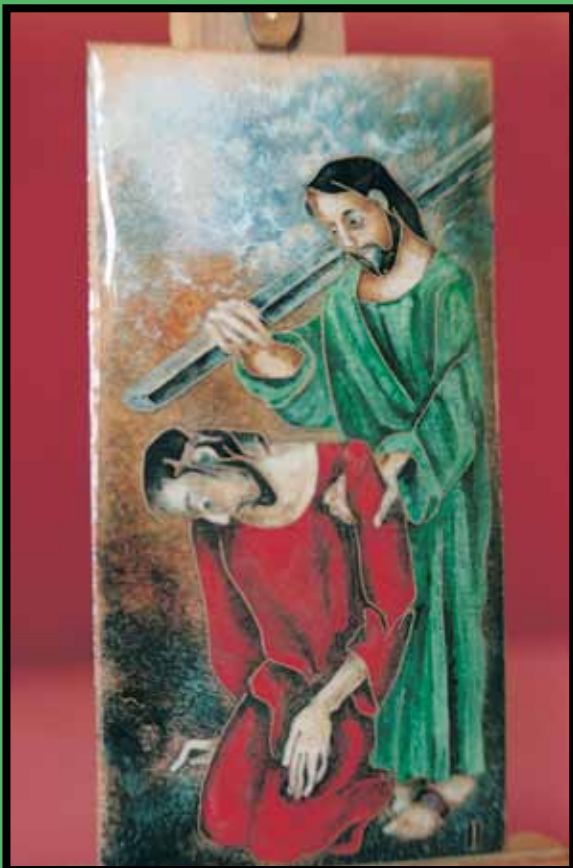
# New Stations of the Cross



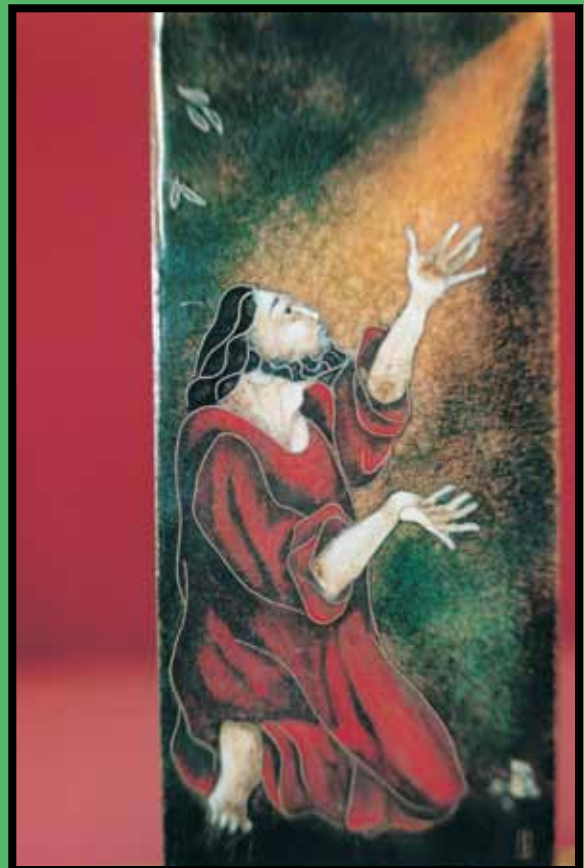
**IX** *"And when they reached the place called The Skull, they crucified him there" (Lk 23:33)*



**I** *"Take this and eat; for this is my body" (Mt 26:26)*



**VII** *"On their way out they met a man from Cyrene called Simon and pressed him into service to carry the cross." (Mt 27:32)*



**II** *"Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Yet not my will but Yours." (Mt 26:39)*



# Jewels from Calvary

*Paul Freedman pays a call on Auckland artist Mary Barker – and is entranced by her Stations of the Cross, in enamel. Photos by Paul Freedman*



The works of art coming from the studio of Auckland artist Mary Barker glow with a numinous lustre. (Not ‘luminous’ misspelled! I get the feeling the inner light from these little treasures is somehow transmitted directly from heaven.)

The technique is known as cloisonné, a very ancient artistic technique which Mary found for herself years ago. “I wanted one of these works for myself”, she told me, “and since I couldn’t find one, decided, like a good Kiwi, to ‘do it myself’”. Her skills have subsequently flourished, and as well as being a recognised sculptor with works at several Auckland churches, Mary is now known principally for these exquisite enamels.

They are mostly very small – the size of a couple of postcards or a book cover. Most of her finished work is displayed in elaborate framing, often itself encompassing wonderfully creative ideas like frames made from rusticated fence posts complete with original lichen, little doors, shutters and whatnot. Some frames are tiny and delicate, others massive. All tend to complement superbly the exotic colour-burst within.

“I’m mostly a copier”, says Mary modestly, when asked why so much of her work is religious in theme. “I love icons!”

She gestures to the room we are in – a generous kitchen/living/multi-purpose area at the sunny end of her Remuera home. “As you can see, I fill my home

with religious art!”

It’s true. Art of all kind surrounds us, icons, statues, paintings. Angel wings, haloes, the works.

‘A copyist eh?’ Has she done anything ‘original’ recently, I ask, and am treated to a breath-taking series of 14 plates – a set of Stations of the Cross. They recently featured in an Auckland exhibition but remain, as yet, unfinished. Despite having no frames, I find them entrancing. A Christ serene yet agonised, calm yet challenging, silent yet calling, invites me to tread the Via Dolorosa with him.

Mary’s icons share with their illustrious forebears that haunting, surreal quality for which icons are famous. But these are different. The fused glazes (the result of many separate kiln firings) produce startling, jewel-deep colours

that grade and merge into one another, both complementing the stylised iconographic form, yet producing toning more often associated with representational art. As regards the ‘meaning’ of her works, Mary prefers to allow them to speak for themselves.

“This is my most creative material. I wrestled with it, prayed it through. One in particular (Christ being nailed to the cross, the Ninth Station) defeated me. I tried again and again, within the constrictions of the tall, narrow shape, to show the nails, the agony. Finally I said, ‘It’s up to you, mate!’ – and sat down and did it. There it was.”

And there, indeed, it is. I can only hope that this marvellous set of Stations will not be broken up. It deserves display in a chapel where Easter people can prayerfully, thoughtfully, accompany

## How Mary does it

Mary Barker’s artworks begin as flat sheets of copper. Most are quite small, about the size of two postcards, though astonishingly heavy. The outlines of the basic image are formed by copper wire, hammered flat to form little ‘dams’ that contain special enamel glazes.

The wire is bent to shape and fused to the base. When applied, the glazes are mostly insipid, even colourless, assuming their vibrant hues only in the heat of the kiln.

Each plate is fired many times as

layers of colour and shading are added. Often the plate distorts in the heat, assuming a slightly convex shape, which can add a sense of depth to the image. The copper ‘outlines’ can range from black to silvery-bronze depending on the angle of viewing and the light. The outer enamel surface is mirror-glossy.

Messages from heaven that they are, these lovely icons are quite diabolically tricky to pin down on film!

## Contents

*Paul Freedman* letters Tom  
Cloher **focus – refugees** Pam  
Green Kathleen Casey Vincent Hunt Ronald  
Rolheiser Pat Maloney **Christmas**  
**writing** Norman Habel a poem Judith  
Reinken Joy Cowley John Hunt

Colleen Walker

Glynn Cardy Jack Dominian **response**  
**books & films** Kathleen Doherty

Mike Crowl, Roger

Proud John Honoré Humphrey O'Leary CSsR  
**Postscript**

There is a legend of the early church which venerates the Good Thief as Saint Dismas. Who else had his salvation assured by no less an authority than the Son of God?

One of the apocryphal accounts of the infancy of Jesus adds an embellishment, suggesting that this thief is one and the same as the robber who waylaid the Holy Family on their flight into Egypt. However, Dismas was merciful, released them and sent them on their way. He was ultimately rewarded by the forgiving words of Jesus on the Cross. Dismas was venerated in the Middle Ages as the patron saint of prisoners and thieves!

Perhaps in our age Dismas should become the patron saint of refugees. God knows they need one. It's hard to imagine a more appalling fate than to be made homeless by famine, war or 'ethnic cleansing' (a newcomer to our vocabulary which perhaps more accurately than any other term sums up the depravity of the civilisation we live in).

Refugees lose not only their homes and possessions. They often lose their families, friends, even their identities. If they succeed in escaping with their lives they are often less than welcome in the countries where they take refuge. They can be shunted from one camp to another, their human rights infringed – deprived of their basic dignity as people. I doubt if there are accurate figures for the world's refugees, but 10 million would probably be a close estimate.

A prime example would be the inhabitants of the Gaza strip. This is now one of the most densely populated slums on the face of the earth. The inhabitants were largely driven from lands their ancestors had inhabited since time immemorial. Most of the working population used to travel daily into Israel to fuel the thriving industries there. But the intifada has largely put a stop to that.

In Gaza now there is high unemployment, grinding poverty, severe malnutrition affecting about one quarter of all the children. It is a feeding ground for bitter resentment and for terrorism. But it is also the easiest target for Israeli reprisals. Jewish media point out that their Arabic neighbours have been even more inhospitable to these unfortunates than the Israelis themselves. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it was Israeli settlers who drove the Arabs out.

When we celebrate the feast of Jesus' birth, we should remember Bethlehem as it is at this time, and Norman Habel's reflection on pp 16-17 may help us realise that Herod is alive and well there.

In this *December* issue we have three stories about refugees. The common factor is that each group has effectively been driven out of their homeland – probably for good. They have arrived 'down under' and been more or less well received. One person interviewed, Sheila Phillips of Upper Hutt, became

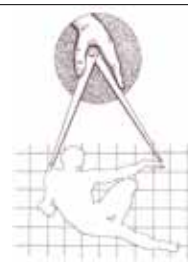
**Christmas Cover:** *Kiwi Nativity* by Dunedin painter Lindsay Crooks. Crooks delights in scenes of everyday life. *Kiwi Nativity* reinforces the ordinariness of Jesus' birth and puts it in a New Zealand context with surroundings of domestic animals as well as the pukeko. This and many other paintings by this most colourful contemporary artist will be found in an illustrated book about his work, *Venus on a Beach Towel*, due for publication by Longacre Press, February 2003

### *This issue:*

"God believes in human beings... God likes us, He enjoys our company."

So writes Dunedin theologian and parish priest, Pat Maloney.

His article **God the Optimist** (pp 14-15) is as cheerful as its title suggests – a suitable reflection for the festive season.



# you welcomed me

involved in helping Sudanese immigrants because she, an Irish woman, knew how disorientated you can feel when you first arrive in a foreign land. The Sudanese are trying to cope with a strange language, totally different customs, and – perhaps hardest of all – with the consumerism and materialism of Western affluence.

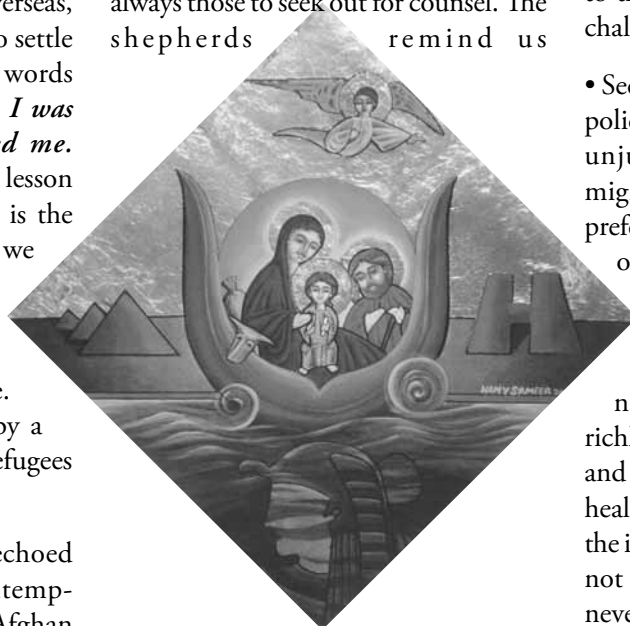
Christian groups, here and overseas, are prominent in helping to settle these migrants. They hear the words of Christ ringing in their ears: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me.* And they act. Perhaps this is a lesson for Christmas 2002. Christmas is the great family feast and each year we have much to celebrate. But the Gospel story is also about an unmarried mother giving birth in a stable a long way from home. The family is then driven out by a hostile tyrant and they become refugees in a foreign land.

The plight of the child Jesus is echoed a thousand times over in contemporary stories, like that of the Afghan boys, Rauf and Gafoor, on pages 6-7. Will people welcome them? Will they be allowed to settle? Will they ever be able to return to their families and homeland?

Joy Cowley (pages 18-20) offers us a beautiful meditation on the Nativity journey. For her it is essentially a journey from head to heart. The head might be warning us that for prudence

sake we need to put barriers up against all those undesirables wanting to invade our space. But it is the heart that warms to the smile of the stranger whose skin is a different colour and whose accent is alien.

Joy Cowley singles out the Magi and the shepherds among visitors to the Bethlehem scene. The wise voices are always those to seek out for counsel. The shepherds remind us



again of Dismas, of marginal people with suspect mores. If we try to make our world too respectable, too sanitised, too politically correct, perhaps we shall miss Christ present in that shabby, grubby figure along the street or that stranger who is extending a hand in

*Above: Coptic icon Holy Family on the River Nile, by Hany Sameer, Egypt. From Christ for all People. (ed. Ron O'Grady, Pace publishing, Auckland 2001)*

our direction.

## What practical lessons are there?

- First, we may join or support organisations who work incessantly to solve the causes of the refugee problem. For example, the *United Nations Association*; or *Pax Christi*; or *Amnesty International*. Ultimately it is evil governments which demonise and expel their own citizens. Or maybe – like President George Bush – they lend support to regimes which carry out ethnic cleansing or deny human rights to their own people. These need to be challenged and opposed.

- Second, to question and change those policies in our own country which are unjust and discriminatory towards migrants. Is it right, for instance, to prefer applicants who are wealthy ahead of those who are poor? I think of the Lebanese or Dalmatians or Dutch immigrants in our recent past who came to New Zealand with nothing, but who contributed so richly by their enterprise, their values and their colourful personalities to the healthy growth of the nation. These are the immigrants who should be preferred, not those with fat bank balances. And never forgetting a preferential option for the very poorest, driven out of their homelands by violence and intolerance.

- Finally, a simple openness which any one of us can habitually practice to the stranger at the door, the visitor who is bewildered or lost, anyone who is marginalised by a disability or by infirmity. Christmas is a time when, like Dismas in the story, we single out

M.H.



Tui Motu-InterIslands

ISSN 1174-8931

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

**Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd** P O Box 6404, Dunedin North, 9030

Phone: 03 477 1449 Fax: 03 477 8149 email: tuimotu@earthlight.co.nz

**Editor:** Michael Hill IC, **Assistant Editor:** Frances Skelton, **Illustrator:** Don Moorhead

**Directors:** Rita Cahill RSJ, Tom Cloher (**chair**), Margaret Darroch, Robin Kearns, Chris Loughnan OP, Elizabeth Mackie OP, Judith McGinley OP, Kathleen Rushton RSM, Julia Stuart

**Printed by Rogan McIndoe Print Ltd**



## Christmas 2002

*The Board and editorial team wish all our readers a happy and blessed Christmas – and good reading for 2003*

### Second marriages

Bill Jorgensen (*Tui Motu October*) has raised a question I consider to be one of the most important for us as Catholics to answer. Any parish worker will confirm that the issue of those in second marriages causes much heartache.

Often, when young, people enter into relationships which later prove to be a disaster for all concerned. When in time these people move into a second marriage they are often no longer involved in the church, but in many cases they want and need to return. Are they then forbidden because of circumstances to take part in Eucharist? I believe Bill is right, and the Scripture passage dealing with the adulteress (*John 8:11*) gives the teaching on this matter. The important words are: *Go and sin no more*.

I am not advocating wholesale divorce, but there must be a resolution to this situation. We of course must continue to hold fast to the ideal of marriage, but as one who has been married for 37 years I cannot believe that showing compassion to those less fortunate than

I will in any way diminish the blessing I have received.

I can already hear people suggesting annulment, but that is often not an option for many reasons, such as finance. The big question is the situation of the children. If your parents are not considered to have married, where do you fit in? The message we give to these people is not one of compassion. Surely, as followers of Christ we can do better.

*Annette Bagley, Bombay, Auckland*

### letters



#### James K Baxter

I enjoyed the Baxter pieces in the *November* issue. I remember James Baxter as Burns Fellow at Otago walking round the University, head in a book, reading as he walked. I wondered if he ever walked into some body or thing! I remember he spoke to us at the Theological Hall. He appeared, as always, unkempt. Then, from his mouth came the most mellifluous voice. "Would someone be so kind as to lend

me a watch? I don't own a watch. I should not like to exceed my time". Then he added: "I will need an ashtray. I am afraid I have not been able to give up the tobacco".

Was he nurturing the myth?

*John Hunt, Christchurch*

### Catholic schools

The *September Tui Motu*, in publishing Ivan Snook's address looking at Catholic schools, brought the predictable response in the *October* issue. Question the relevancy of Catholic schools, and the inevitable posse takes flight formation.

I recently read that Vatican II brought us from the 16th Century to the 19th. This obsession with Catholic schools in New Zealand is perpetuating the 19th Century mindset of Bishop Moran. Rumour has it that three new Catholic secondary schools are planned in the Auckland diocese. If this is true, then the 19th Century mindset is alive and well. Roll on Vatican III to bring us into the 21st Century.

*Gavan Michie, Auckland*

### *The hope that is born with Christ Jesus – a carol*

*the hope that is born with Christ Jesus!*

Set the sun dancing!  
New life has begun!  
Star, you must fade,  
for your journey is done,  
New Year rides onward now,  
Christmas is gone,  
carry the light with us  
as we move on.

*For the light that is shining  
is our light to hold,  
facing, embracing the  
darkness and cold, light that's not  
hidden where Good  
News is told:*

Wise men with riches  
of knowledge and thought  
found greater treasure  
than ever they brought,  
rose from their knees and  
were clothed in this light -  
new understanding  
of power and right.

*And the light.....*

We are the company,  
foolish and wise,  
rich in a faith that all reason defies,  
crossing the borders  
of culture and race,  
leading by lifestyle,  
forgiveness and grace

*And the light.....*

Peace is not born  
at the end of a gun,  
peace is a family  
gathered as one;  
here is Epiphany,  
wrapped in a shawl,  
Christ who is Light,

copyright - Shirley Murray  
Permission of the New Zealand  
Hymnbook Trust



# Party time for *Tui Motu*

**T***ui Motu* has celebrated her 5th birthday (*again?* did you say?). Yes, this time in her local environment, Dunedin. Why Dunedin? Because Otago has an established record of originality and ‘stickability’; witness the schools of medicine and dentistry, philosophy and theology, created there while the rest of New Zealand waited and wondered. In the Catholic version, witness the national seminary at Mosgiel and the *Tablet* newspaper that served the country for 120 years.

Providence was kind placing *Tui Motu* in such an environment, but equally so in recruiting an Auckland and a Yorkshire-man made of the right stuff: determined, talented and industrious. Dunedinites, quickly recognising these traits, put together a network of volunteers that make an indispensable contribution to the continuing viability of TM.

At the party:  
some regular contributors to *Tui Motu*: (l to r)  
Sandra Winton OP,  
Katie O'Connor and  
Fr Pat Maloney



So, on Wednesday November 6th last, we gathered for an evening of recollection and rejoicing. It was a suitably mixed assembly: office volunteers, artists, writers, ecumenical contacts, parish clergy, shareholders (Dominican women representing also Dominican men and Sisters of St. Joseph), editorial staff, and even a couple of directors from the board.

It was no dismal assembly. Was it Chesterton who said that “those who have the faith can have the fun”? We laughed, we sang, we ate from laden tables (understated as ‘pot luck’). Above all we celebrated the continuing life of

an initiative born of faith, supported by hope, and motivated by a sincere desire to be of service to a Church and community that we value beyond words to describe.

TM is still a very young lady, at five just starting school, but she is a triumph over many concerns for her getting this far. Note the gender. As a mere male I deliberately identify her thus, because women are generally more durable than men, and they certainly have more poise.

Will she make it to a teenager? Looking at the level of care and the skills

*Tom Cloher*

**Jesuit ad (183 x 125)**

**Refugees.** Throughout the world millions of people are homeless victims of famine, war and ethnic cleansing. *Tui Motu* offers three articles on one of the most tragic and intractable human problems of our times.

# A Tale of Two Brothers

*An Australian reader, Pam Green, sent us this personal account of her friendship with some Afghan refugees in Australia*

**R**auf is aged 17, of slight build, reserved, thoughtful, obviously very well brought up. He is an Afghan of the Hazara tribe, living in Brisbane in Australia, on a temporary protection visa, as are other Hazara boys and young men. Sixteen of them are still under 18 years of age.

About two years ago the Taliban came to the home of one of Rauf's friends wanting to take the boy away to fight for them. The father paid them off, but the following year they returned saying, "You must contribute people. We do not need money. You should send your sons to the front. You have grown-up sons". The boy was about 15. This was a typical situation and many Hazara boys were taken.

Their father, fearing that both Rauf and his brother, Gafoor, who is a year younger, would be conscripted, paid a smuggler to take them away. There was of course no way they could cross Taliban-controlled territory to reach an immigration queue, so they will forever be regarded by some as queue-jumpers.

I often think of the anguish of his parents over the impossible but inevitable decision to send them away, expecting never to see them again. The parents have no way of knowing whether or not the two boys were in the boatload that drowned, or whether they are suffering

the miseries of a desert detention camp. The Red Cross is trying to contact the parents of these and other boys, but so far with little success. Perhaps the Taliban killed them on finding the boys gone. Perhaps they changed their names and fled.

## Arrival in Australia

The smugglers flew the boys to Indonesia and a few days later they were put on a small fishing boat. The trip must have been an absolute nightmare for people who had not even seen the sea before. The engine broke down twice. More and more water kept coming in. They did not expect to survive the voyage.

After a couple of months in the Curtin Detention Centre, where "some of the guards were nice", they were put on a bus for Brisbane where, after three days' travel, they arrived tired and dizzy with the strangeness of it all, still not knowing the language. Rauf said: "We had no information about anything. We didn't know what to do, and what not to do".

The boys would have been literally on the streets except for the help of the Romero Centre which arranged food and accommodation. The Government paid them the minimum benefit of \$148 per week but with no access to various benefits available to permanent

residents. This was part of the Minister for Immigration's "Less Attractive Package", designed to discourage Boat People from coming to Australia.

Rauf and Gafoor are not complaining, even though for the first time in their lives, they have to cook, clean house and shop without parental help, at first in a language strange to them. They say: "Life is good here so far. We go to school, we play sport, we are free and can go everywhere. We can eat food in peace". That last sentence has remained in my mind.

The boys first went to the Milpera Special School to learn English. Rauf was ready to be transferred to a Normal High School with an ESOL section after a few months. Gafoor needed a longer time at Milpera.

Rauf was just about to join a mainstream class when suddenly he left school and went to work in a chicken factory. This was distressing as he is obviously intelligent and had been cherishing ambitions of tertiary study and a profession. So why did he do this?

We think that it was partly, because, knowing he had every chance of being deported when his visa runs out – if not sooner, he thought it best to have at least a little money to take back with him to the extreme poverty of Afghanistan.





Afghan refugee brothers, Gafoor (left) and Rauf, sporting their trophy after a successful soccer tour to Canberra. Gafoor wears a medal as most improved player

Also, he had found it hard to concentrate on his studies because of worrying about the future. His teachers said he seemed very depressed at one stage.

I first came to know about these Afghan boys last November when watching a documentary on SBS Television channel. I later met a number of them at a barbecue and have had other contacts with Rauf and Gafoor.

Rauf and I write to one another which is no doubt very difficult for him, though his spoken English is good. But he managed two foolscap pages in his last letter. So, by small steps, our friendship has grown. He is very appreciative indeed that I and other people really care about him. He writes: "I feel very alone sometimes".

Once after visiting our home he wrote that ever since he was born he had been amidst fighting; that he passed his life in sorrow and many difficulties; that his family had never had a good, happy lunch or dinner. I thought: 'How could that possibly be?'

### **The Soccer Tour**

In the May holidays this year the boys went on a soccer tour to several towns

from Toowoomba to Canberra. A remarkable Catholic woman, Camilla Cowley, has made this soccer team a place of family and belonging for these boys. Gafoor is in the A Team.

They made a very good impression every-where. (see picture above). Young people commented that they were "not what we expected" and "much like other Australian boys"; and that they ought to be allowed to stay in Australia. A former teacher at the Milpera school has described the Afghan students as polite, very motivated, helpful to one another and altogether the nicest group to teach.

### ***Afghan students are well motivated and the nicest to teach***

#### **So what is the boys's future?**

Refugees are now flooding back to Afghanistan in huge numbers that both the UNMCR and the Kabul Government say they cannot cope with. Returnees report no work and no housing. The World Food Programme has had to cut back money due to unmet pledges. There are still two million landmines there which it will take seven years to clear – and then *only*

if international funding is forthcoming. There is also serious drought, great political instability, assassinations and car bomb blasts. Add to this the special dangers for the Hazari people.

Will Mr Ruddock, our Minister for Immigration, allow these boys to remain in Australia? A large petition has gone to his department from South-east Queensland but his mind seems to be set in cement. Even though he is a member of Amnesty and of the Anglican church, Ruddock insists that all his lack of compassion is necessary to "protect our borders".

Ruddock believes that the majority of Australians are behind him. Unfortunately that could be true. Having been whipped up into a state of xenophobia before the last election (the *Tampa* incident, children overboard and so on) the ignorant and prejudiced keep one another stirred up by means of talk-back radio. It is very sad to be an Australian at this time and not only due to this issue.

If the two brothers and their companions are sent home, I shall never again see a distant Afghan on crutches on TV without wondering if it is one of them. I shall never see great crowds living miserably in huge UNMCR refugee camps without wondering if they are there. I picture them searching fruitlessly for their parents, taking shelter in various ruined buildings, as we saw in a recent SBS programme on returnees to Afghanistan. I shall never hear of people killed by landmines, bomb blasts and massacres without wondering if their short lives have been cruelly ended.

The captain of the *Tampa* was reported as saying that it was the boat people who ended up in New Zealand who were the lucky ones. I wish these boys had. I wish a kinder country than mine would take them. ■

*Pam Green is an Australian. She was the Guidance Counsellor at Rangitoto College, Auckland, for most of the '70s. She returned home, but Aotearoa is still her 'magic country'. She is an Anglican.*

# Africa comes to Heretaunga

*A group of Sudanese Christian refugees has recently settled in the Hutt Valley. Tui Motu interviewed Boutros (below), who recently graduated from Victoria University.*

*The longest-lasting and perhaps most tragic war of the 20th Century is one of the least known. Forty years' oppression of South Sudanese by the Khartoum government has received little attention in the West.*

During the first half of the 20th Century South Sudan was under British rule, says Boutros, and the country enjoyed peace and stability. The chiefs and tribal leaders were maintained. Education was introduced, although many were still too poor to benefit. The British kept the South Sudan distinct from the North because the people were racially different and not Muslims.

The South Sudanese are Christian and African, whereas in the north round Khartoum they are Arabic and Muslim. The British originally came in to put an end to the slave trade at the end of the 19th Century. The Mahdi had enslaved the people. But with the British came the Christian missionaries, and the slave trade was stopped.

After the British left in 1955, discrimination against the southern people intensified. The Khartoum government wanted this land which is fertile and abundant compared with the barren North. Oil has also been discovered. The government wanted to



*Thank you, New Zealand! Boutros celebrating his Master's Degree from Victoria University (picture courtesy of the Evening Post)*

pipe it to Port Sudan and turn it into profit, but they denied its wealth to the southerners.

The sufferings of the southern peoples have received little media coverage, because the Khartoum government effectively controls the media. The media has not been free to tell the international community how seriously the southern people have been oppressed. Nobody knows how many have died. One estimate puts it at over two million who have lost their lives as a consequence of the civil war.

Even though the land in the south is rich and fertile, the war has often

prevented the people sowing their crops. So they starve. Meanwhile the war has wrecked the infrastructure which the British left. Even the churches have been destroyed.

In the early '60s the foreign missionaries were all driven out by the government, so the churches became dependent on local clergy. Gafar Nimeiri came to power in Khartoum in 1969, and under him Shariah law was introduced in the south. He tried to impose a sort of peace, but after a few years the South went into revolt against him. This war has continued from 1983 until now.

Recently there has been another attempt to end the war. But will it last any longer than the previous peace?

Sheila Phillips is Irish and a member of the Heretaunga Catholic parish. She responded to a call for people interested in helping Sudanese coming to settle in Upper Hutt. She had experienced what it was like to feel disorientated in a new country and wanted to help.

The majority of the Sudanese refugees are Christians. St Patrick's College, Silverstream, boarded 14 children who came down from Auckland in advance of their families – including five girls

who started at Sacred Heart College. Eventually some 6 or 7 families settled locally. There were about 24 who started coming to the church regularly and were formally welcomed by the parish priest, Fr Brian Fletcher.

One thing that impresses Sheila is the devotion the Sudanese have to one another. A girl named Assunta had a severe allergic reaction to a drug she was given and went into a coma. Ten Sudanese women and men were waiting at the hospital until Assunta was out of danger, they were so concerned for her. In Africa she would have died. But they saw the care the hospital gave her and she came through.

The young people at her bedside were overjoyed and prayed out loud in thanksgiving. One, in his early 20s, said, "God is the only thing that matters to me, Sheila. All through my years of war God was my help."

He also told her: "Kiwi boys are silly. They do not realise how important God is. They just want to play football and

drink beer". Sheila notes that some of the young Sudanese are quite exemplary in their faith and really live their faith.

She was invited to meet the Assyrian Catholic bishop who was visiting the Sudanese community in Upper Hutt. He said to them: "Don't be fooled by affluence. Always remember your dignity as African people. Teach your children their language so they can go back one day to their homeland and know their own people.

"You are seeds scattered by the wind," he continued, "and one day you will help bless Sudan in its restoration. If you lose your God in the Western world, it would have been better that you never left the refugee camp."

Some of the refugees are overambitious. If they aim too high they are doomed to failure. They need friends who will stand by them and advise them. Some of the Sudanese men got work filling the shelves at the local *Pak 'n Save* supermarket. They have done well because they started earning straight

away and they were working alongside other Kiwi men. Others prefer to go and study Polytech courses in English, alongside Chinese and Indians immigrants, but they are not getting integrated so easily into Kiwi society.

One family was placed in a house with a very hostile neighbour. He was a drunk and threatened the family with a gun. The woman screamed down the phone: "A gun! A gun! Sudan again!" The police were called; the man was arrested, tried and sent to gaol.

Their experience of the camps in Kenya had been that refugees had no rights, and they were up against corrupt police and officials. But here they have learnt that the police were there for them when needed, just as the hospital staff had provided them with special care. And the local people have been generally good at receiving and supporting them.

Fr Fletcher finds them lovely people, and says there are no serious social problems. He encourages them not to lose hope but to be at home here. ■

### ***Boutros' story***

**I** was born in a town called Wau, the capital of Bhar el Gharzal, one of the three regions in S Sudan. My tribe is called Balanda and is Christian. I studied law in Khartoum. That was where I learned English. I graduated in 1993 and returned to Wau to work as a law officer. But the job prospects for indigenous people were poor, so after a year I decided to leave the Sudan. I went first to Kenya where I lived in a refugee camp.

"I was interviewed by the New Zealand government, but I had to wait five years before I could gain entry to New Zealand. Since coming here two years ago I have completed a Masters degree in law at Victoria University. We live in the Heretaunga parish, Upper Hutt. There are about 50 of us. Six or seven families. The local people have been very welcoming to us.

"Some of us have found work, in supermarkets and so on. But first we had to learn English and also acquire skills for employment. The children go to local schools and are making good progress. It has taken time for our people to adapt to a new culture, to learn how to move around, even to shop. But now the group is well settled.

"Our people in the Sudan are still oppressed and are dying. They are in the same situation as the East Timorese were –

an oppressed and enslaved people. Liberation could happen, I think – but with difficulty because the Muslims who rule in North Sudan are so powerful."

**J**ames and Mary Lado and their three young children also came to Heretaunga. They were made welcome by Christian families who found them accommodation and provided a support group. The children were able to go to school and already speak better English than their parents.

Finding work has not been easy for James because there are others also competing for jobs. He would like to be able to send money home to his family. He too has found it essential to be able to speak English well.

James' family in the Sudan are suffering greatly through poverty and loss of freedom. "They are like dead people", he says. "I do not believe peace will ever happen there. I never experienced peace in the Sudan. The Muslims want to impose Islam everywhere. If I call my family there, I know they are not free to speak.

"But I am happy to be here with my family, and I can speak my mind freely. Here I can declare whether something is right or wrong without fear. I am happy to be here with my family and friends".



## Finding a new home

*You do not have to be black or poor or a casualty of war to be driven out of your homeland. Kathleen Casey talks to a family of recent arrivals from Zimbabwe*

**F**lying into Christchurch last October was a tough moment for Mark and Mary Karshulton from Zimbabwe – with their youngest child, Annette May, suitcases, sleeping bags, little money, and knowing not a soul. In Zimbabwe they no longer felt safe because of the escalating violence within Robert Mugabe's land reforms. Inflation had soared to 12 percent. So they cashed in their insurances to buy flights at the black market rate demanded.

But it wasn't easy to cut ties with their homeland. Mark Karshulton was born in Chipinge, an Eastern border village where he managed his parents' farm for seven years before moving into the irrigation business. Mary had become a full-time teacher. A qualification in specific learning needs she obtained in Africa has brought a full-time job here more quickly, and her teaching qualification enabled her to get a work permit for New Zealand.

In 1996 the political situation in Zimbabwe began to deteriorate and inflation rose more. "We couldn't even run a car", says Mary. Mark's work literally dried up as farmers became unwilling to invest in irrigation. Mary's mother who lived with them was diagnosed with senile dementia. With difficulty Mary Karshulton told her mother the family were going to New Zealand. Her mother eventually died on Christmas Eve.

Mary misses her family – but not Zimbabwe and its tensions. Here she feels much safer. The older children who arrived after their school year finished, are happily into Catholic youth groups though desperately missing old friends. Mark, after starting at *The Warehouse*, now has a job with an electronics firm.

"We've all had to think laterally," says his wife.

For Mark Karshulton, whose brother was killed in the 1970-1980 war of independence in Zimbabwe, ties are still strong. He feels very strongly about Mugabe and sees what he is doing economically as grossly immoral. In 1980 when Zimbabwe achieved independence, commercial farmers employed people from Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia who were anxious to get work. These men settled and married. Now they are being ousted and replaced by 'authentic' local people,

or didn't. A successful commercial farmer is a very successful human resources officer, employing many people".

Mary Karshulton is grateful for her full time job here. With children at school and university, and no possibility of a student loan, their budget is tight, and they have limited finance to help Mark's mother follow them to New Zealand. In the limited container space they could afford, they brought their piano, worthless in Zimbabwe, but which they expected to sell here. The Karshultons have been overwhelmed



**"Where we came from".** Mark and Mary Karshulton sitting (right) with two of their children among a group of teachers

leaving the others destitute. Mugabe, Mark says, has taken the development away from the people.

"The party hierarchy is getting money, the Government is hanging on to the title, farms are being lost". A UN project where 50 peasant farmers had one hectare each was last year bought out by three farmers who run the land commercially. "These ones are efficient, they grow vegetables. Others couldn't,

by the continuing generosity of New Zealanders. And it means they still have their piano.

With the assistance of the diocese and the local MP they have written to the Minister of Immigration for help with Mark's mother. The latest news tells of a 12-week administration delay. "We hope and pray something will happen", says Mary Karshulton. It's faith that moves mountains. ■

# Priests for a new millennium

*Vincent Hunt takes a critical look at seminary training over the centuries and replies to some of the criticisms made of priestly formation today*

## The seminary system we inherited

We can understand and judge the traditional seminary only when we have regard to the church and world in which it developed and the reasons for its development. The seminary as produced by the Council of Trent was a key part of the church's response to the Reformation.

The many-sided degeneration of life within the church did more than anything else to lead people to support the Reformation. No effective reform was possible without the reform of the clergy. Therefore the new seminaries had to correct and go counter to the deficiencies and looseness that had been the source of so much evil and failure.

Special attention needed to be given to doctrines questioned by the Reformers; and it was imperative that the prevalent forms of superstition be dealt with. The seminaries would need to be places of discipline and respect for authority. If looseness of conduct and decay of moral standards were allowed freedom to invade the seminary, the very problems it was designed to correct would infect the sources of reform. So it was necessary that the new institutions be isolated from society and its influences.

It was a thorough, carefully designed and logical system for preparing priests in the late 16th and 17th centuries. In general it did what it was intended to do for several centuries, to educate good and devoted priests in great numbers. The Reformation was followed in succeeding centuries by wave after wave of serious threat, opposition and, at times, virulent hostility. It was very difficult to adopt anything but a defensive stance towards this world.

And yet in hindsight we wish it were otherwise. A major weakness in the design of the new seminary was that it was stronger on logic than on vision, for the logic of the various aspects of reform was impeccable. At the time it was established, sea changes were taking place in European society, changes that constituted not only a

*the new seminary  
was stronger on logic  
than on vision*

danger but also an opportunity for the church. So it must be judged regrettable that the seminary system remained so firmly remedial and so defensive towards the society it served.

## A quasi-monastic model?

One of the most frequently heard criticisms of the seminary has been that it is quasi-monastic in its life-style and hence ill-adapted to the needs of the contemporary church. The seminaries established after the Council of Trent were indeed heavily influenced by the older monastic tradition. The Benedictine monasteries in particular were essentially centres of Christian community devoted to living the Christian life with special dedication. The monks heard and reflected on the word of God, they celebrated the liturgy, they exercised fraternal charity in the communal life, and they strove to be centres of light and guidance.

But I believe the greatest source of difficulty with the post-Tridentine seminary came from somewhere else. A new factor was introduced into that seminary which was in some respects difficult to reconcile with the monastic tradition. As we have seen, looseness, vagueness and dissipation

were disturbing features of church life. New levels of order and system and super-vision were discoveries with great appeal in post-Reformation Europe. For instance, the early 17th Century saw the great success of the Jesuit organisation of education. While the seminaries may have been designed to keep the world at bay, they readily assimilated this spirit. This new approach laid emphasis on order, discipline and method for their own sakes, and made it more difficult to see the pattern of the ordinary Christian life in the seminary programme.

As a result the seminary was perceived as essentially different from the home and parish from which the seminarian came and from the parish to which he would go. And, as always happens when there is undue stress on order



Bible Society ad



▷▷ and compliance with strict rules, there was a decline in originality, inspiration, initiative and the development of individual talents.

### Pastores dabo vobis (PDV)

The official and greatly appreciated handbook for today's seminary is the document of the 1990 Synod of Bishops called *I Will Give You Shepherds*. An emphasis on human formation as the foundation for spiritual and pastoral formation was maintained. 1968 had been a watershed year. Education could never again be simply one-directional. In future it would always have a pronounced element of dialogue.

I remember the shock I felt when, shortly after beginning to teach in the seminary, I asked the Dean of Studies about rescheduling a class for some reason – and he told me to ask the students! Students henceforth had clear rights as well as obligations. I recall the quip that the only right a curate had under the old Canon Law was to a Christian burial. The rights of students needed better recognition than that.

Nor could formation depend to the same extent as before on the system. The crucial importance of free and honest human exchange between educator and student became especially evident. In general, PDV, while retaining the quasi-monastic model, made very significant modifications. The seminary community is seen as a community of Christian disciples. It is as members of this community that students and staff-members fill their respective roles. So the distance between staff and students has been very significantly reduced. The church of our time has every reason to be specially concerned about human wholeness, and today we are better informed on how to promote it.

Besides this there is a significant new feature – specific preparation for pastoral ministry. The older system tended to assume that once ideas were successfully lodged in someone's mind they translated readily into appropriate action. The model proposed for the future priest is the 'good shepherd' who

comes to serve and not to be served. It is imperative for the priest to have the mind and heart of Christ, to be one who looks on the Catholic community he serves and on the whole world with compassion and love. Pastoral charity is a key notion in the document.

Order and a clear programme are specifically prescribed, but also a wise flexibility – "out of true love and respect for the person, who in conditions that are very personal, is proceeding towards the priesthood". The purpose of the seminary is to prepare good, pastorally-minded priests for the contemporary church and world. The old defensiveness is gone.

### *pastoral charity is a key notion for today's priest*

In a flourish of language unusual in such a document, PDV speaks of the place of the *charism of femininity* in every educational itinerary, and of the place of laypeople in general in the training of future priests. It is not the mind of the document, as it is not the mind of Vatican II, that a sort of apartheid should exist between priest and people.

Universal education had become standard in all Western countries and in many others. And the number of years spent and the level reached in formal education increased very rapidly. The world has been described as a global village with a global culture transmitted and constantly reinforced through the new media of communication and the recently developed means of travel.

This is the world that the future priest must speak to and serve. The priest is no longer looked up to as he was in the past, certainly not by those outside the Church, and scarcely within it; present-day society in a country such as New Zealand can hardly be called Christian any more, and provides much less support than it did for the priest in his role.

So a mature and well-integrated personality is a first essential for the priest. There is need for growth in

participation in the liturgy and in the practice of personal prayer. The challenge of living celibacy for the kingdom of God, at a time when secular wisdom regarded it as foolish, if not positively unhealthy and a danger to others, demanded that this be faced in its several aspects. Psychologists have given us a better knowledge of and sensitivity towards the development of the human being, and this needs to be taken advantage of in the preparation of priests.

And since the church is a communion, a most basic requirement of the future priest is that he learn to live with others and not merely co-exist with them. So, from 1979 onwards, the first year of the seminary programme has been devoted to personal and spiritual formation and to a very limited amount of academic work relevant to this.

Then the student comes to know the teaching of the church, but it must be the kind of knowledge that leads one to be church and lead other people in being church. This has meant a change in style and approach by the seminary staff rather than a change of formal programme, but it has been a change of great importance.

In conclusion, there are many other features of the present-day seminary which would be unfamiliar to older priests during their seminary days. There is a much richer ethnic mix in the student body. There is much greater diversity of ages, backgrounds and previous occupations. In 1979 diocesan priests assumed responsibility for the national seminary, previously staffed by the Vincentian Fathers. In 1998 it transferred to Auckland: a new seminary designed to prepare priests to serve the church and the world in a new millennium. ■

*Msgr. Vincent Hunt was born and educated in Ireland. He taught at the National seminary for 30 years and was Rector from 1991 to 1995. He is now retired in Auckland*



# Jesus Christ Superman!

Ronald Rolheiser

Christmas is about God in the ordinary. After the birth of Christ, we need not look to the extraordinary, the spectacular, the miraculous, to find God. God is now found where we live, in our kitchens, at our tables, in our wounds, and in each other's faces.

That is hard to believe and always has been. When Jesus was on earth, virtually no one believed he was the Messiah, precisely because he was so ordinary, so unlike what they imagined God to be.

People were looking for a Messiah. When finally Christ did appear, they were disappointed. They had expected a superstar, a king, a miracle-worker, someone who would by miracle and hammer, vindicate good, destroy evil, and turn the world rightfully upside down. Jesus didn't live up to those expectations. Born in a barn, preaching meekness and gentleness, unwilling to use power in a forceful way, there was little hammer and few miracles. Mostly there was a lot of ordinariness.

It is curious that Scripture refuses to describe what Jesus looked like. It never tells us whether he was short or tall, with beard or without, had light or dark hair, had blue or brown eyes. Neither does it ever assign to him anything extra-ordinary in terms of psychological countenance. For example, it never tells us that when Jesus entered a room his eyes were so penetrating and his gaze so awesome that people knew they were in the presence of something extraordinary.

No. Scripture doesn't describe him because, in terms of his appearance, Jesus wasn't worth describing, he looked like everyone else. Even after the Resurrection he is mistaken for a

gardener, a cook, a traveller. People had trouble recognising Jesus as God incarnate because he was so ordinary, so immersed in the things they took for granted. He was just a carpenter's son and he looked like everyone else.

Things haven't changed much in two thousand years. Seldom does Christ meet expectations. We, like his contemporaries, are constantly looking beyond the ordinary, beyond the gardener, the cook, and the travelling stranger to try to find a miraculous Christ.

It is for this reason that we fly off to Fatima or Lourdes to see a spot where the Blessed Virgin might have cried, but fail to see the significance of the tears shed at our own breakfast table. We are intrigued by Padre Pio who had the wounds of Christ on his hands, but fail to see the wounds of Christ in those suffering around us or in our own emotional and moral wounds.

We pray for visions, but seldom watch a sunset; marvel at the gift of tongues, but are bored listening to babies; and desire proofs for the existence of God even as life in all its marvels almost overwhelms us. We look for Christ everywhere except in the place where the incarnation took place – our flesh.

Several years ago at a prayer seminar, a woman was giving a talk on Zen. She was describing how she spent more than two hours a day in Zen meditation and how she would, through this practice, make very deep connections with the Transcendent. During the question period, I asked her how she would compare the feelings she had about God during those meditations with the feelings she had about God during dinners with her family.



"No comparison," she replied. "Eating with my family can be a good experience, holy even in its own way. But the experience of God in meditation is so deep that it dwarfs everything else."

My point here is not to question the value of meditation – nor indeed, the value of Lourdes, Fatima, or Padre Pio – but I am both Christian and pagan enough to know that hers is an answer that fails to account for Christmas. The God who was born at Christmas is more domestic than monastic... *God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God and God in him/her.* Love is a thing that happens in ordinary places – in kitchens, at tables, in us when we abide there.

Christmas is a time to be born in a church, but it is also a time to be at home, among family, with loved ones, eating and drinking, abiding in the flesh – for that is what Christmas means. Through the incarnation God crawls into ordinary life and invites us to meet him there. Merry Christmas. ■

*This Christmas piece was previously printed in the New Zealand Tablet, December 1994*

Pat Maloney

Years ago, I learned a little poem which began like this:

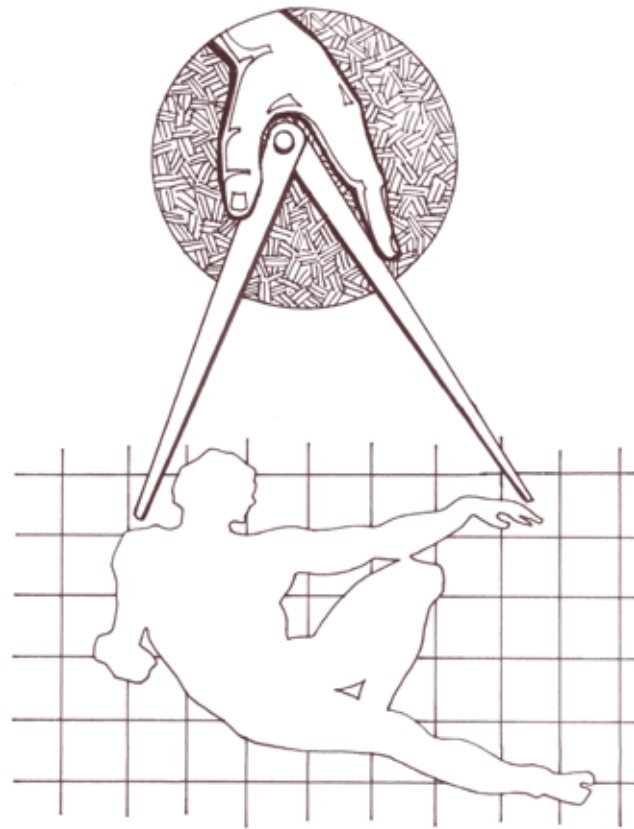
*The Lord looked down from his window in the sky,  
Said "I created man, but I don't remember why.  
Nothin' but trouble since creation day,  
I'll send a little flood, and I'll wash them all away."*

I often wonder why God bothers. Whatever God's success with the angel hosts and any other intelligent beings he may have created, from one angle the story of the human race has been a disaster, right from the word 'Go!' It is a history of rebellion, betrayal, murder, gross ingratitude – the list could go on and on.

Understandably enough, an air of pessimism seems to have wormed its way into the hearts of many Christians today, fed by lashings of fear, threats of war, the decline of the church's influence and social disintegration. Who wouldn't, were it possible, pull the emergency cord to stop the world and get off? Many believe that the world now is worse than it's ever been.

If that's how Christians think, then I believe it's time we took a second look at our church, our world and ourselves. We need to rediscover that God is no wet blanket, no killjoy. On the contrary, God is the eternal, irrepressible optimist.

To the opinion that things are worse now than they've ever been, my response is 'Rubbish!' It's simply not true. My



nomination for that distinction among recent centuries would go to the 18th, the age of slavery, the age of the so-called Enlightenment, when faith throughout Europe had almost universally gone cold, an age of the most abject poverty and wretchedness for most of Europe's peoples, an age when small pockets of the privileged grew obscenely rich at the expense of the rest. You may have your own candidate for the distinction. There are lots to choose from.

*we need to re-  
discover God is no wet  
blanket, no killjoy*

The 20th century and the beginnings of the 21st have had their fair share of horrors and challenges, but let us not ignore the progress our human family has made. Millions starve, it is true, but the overriding truth is that human beings around the world today are living longer and more healthily than

ever before. Far more than ever before, ordinary people are able to read and write and receive at least an elementary education.

China, the most populous nation on earth, has been transformed from a nation the majority of whose people lived in demeaning poverty, into a superpower able to feed its entire people. Our century has witnessed horrors of war and genocide. But we forget that intertribal fighting has been a way of life for peoples all over the planet for thousands of years. Conquest and killing

have been normal elements in the lives of peoples everywhere. nothing new here.

Let's get our theology straight. God believes in human beings, and made us in his own image. Indeed, God likes us. He enjoys our company – can't see enough of us. Our shortcomings notwithstanding, God loves us and has nothing but good things in mind for us.

One of the great triumphs of Vatican II is the solemn declaration that God intends the salvation of all people, not just the privileged few (cf *Lumen Gentium* 15). God's intent for universal salvation sparkles throughout Scripture (cf *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 56-64). Christians have no monopoly on grace, privileged though we are (cf *Ephesians* 1:11-12).

God's Holy Spirit moves within all the great world religions, bringing countless millions to holiness. It has

taken these last two thousand years of Christian history finally to appreciate this. This is in no way to deny the enormous privilege and benefit of our Catholic Christian faith. God, though, is not restricted in his love for his other children. This point leads us on to consider another giant step forward for the church in her self-understanding.

Without question, history will mark the enormity of Edwin Hubble's discovery in 1924 that our Milky Way galaxy is only one of millions, perhaps billions of other galaxies in the universe. The self-understanding of human beings was utterly changed.

*for every step  
backwards, we  
make more than one  
forwards*

In a way no less spectacular, the French Jesuit scientist, Teilhard de Chardin in the *Phenomenon of Man* (1938-40) and other writings opened us a vision of the evolution of humanity, drawing upon his own backgrounds in palaeontology and theology. With a gigantic sweep of vision he proposes that the whole universe has been and is being drawn forward by God in an evolutionary process, culminating at the end of time in its being fully absorbed into Christ, the Omega.

More than most, Chardin knew the horrors of human evil such as he experienced as a stretcher-bearer in world War I. But for every step backwards, the ones we tend to over-dwell on, he proposes that we make more than one forwards. God's plan for us under the influence of the Spirit, is evolving. The entire history of the earth and the universe is evolutionary.

How wonderfully this vision resonates with that of Paul as he explained it to the Corinthians. When speaking of the end time he writes:

*After that (the resurrection of the dead) will come the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, having*

*done away with every sovereignty, authority and power. For he must be king until he has put all his enemies under his feet, and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is death, for everything is to be put under his feet...*

*And when everything is subjected to him then the Son himself will be subject in his turn to the One who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15:24-28)*

See also *Colossians 3:20, Romans 8:22-23*

So many good people fret over the perceived decline of the Church. Vocations to the priesthood decline, religious orders are dying and young people no longer go to church. Yes, these things are a worry. But I suspect we worry because we can't see the bigger picture God is painting. The reality, I believe, is that the ever-creative God is doing a new thing and most of us prefer the way things were!

Years ago, I remember hearing the great Archbishop Fulton Sheen speaking to a multiethnic audience, say: "*Up till now God has been playing his music with the white keys, but now.....!*" The audience of black, brown and yellow faces thundered applause. Today, more than half the world's bishops come from Third World countries.

*we worry  
because we can't see  
the bigger picture  
God is painting*

Sheen was right, of course. The church in the West is in decline along with much of the rest of Western culture. Western countries are steadily depopulating themselves out of existence. In the Third World, though, the church flourishes. Other peoples and cultures are clamouring for a place in the sun.

Lest we get too pessimistic about the church in the West, I believe God is busily purifying the church and renewing her. Think of the new love of Scripture, which has arisen, in recent

years, the numbers of laywomen and men now trained in theology and pastoral skills. They are taking on ministries previously the preserve of clergy and religious.

Catholics, for instance, come to Mass no longer to keep a rule, but out of love for the Eucharist. The absence of the young may well be a timely challenge for parishes to be more welcoming, for liturgies to be more relevant, for older Catholics to be less judgmental. In many cases Catholics now are sufficiently mature in knowledge and faith to make their own moral judgments without always referring to the priest.

The Second Vatican Council taught us that, far from standing apart from the 'World', it is precisely *in* the 'World' that we must find God. Today, we do find in the church a new openness to the world. News of clerical sexual scandals are humbling us.

I believe God is teaching us, in the church, to experience weakness, to be poor and powerless. We don't like it, but the truth is that God operates better out of our weakness than our strength. Shortage of priests may well be opening the way to whole new models of priesthood more suited to present times. We may fret, but the Spirit will have her way in the end.

It's not easy to keep our balance in times of rapid change, but it's essential that we do. It's God's world, not our world. It's God's church, not our church. Like it or not, we have to be faithful and obedient.

One thing that does not help is thinking that God is sitting on his hands, off on holiday, or has clean forgotten us. That's why we need to get back our perspective. That means, very simply, remembering that God loves us, that God is with us, and that the kingdom he is preparing will be a brilliant success.

*Dr Pat Maloney is a theologian,  
now parish priest of Waverley,  
in Dunedin diocese*



# Bethlehem: Little Town – Deep Wounds

Norman Habel

A few years ago, I sat in a conference room in Bethlehem. Through the window we could see the barren hills. One solitary hill was green with ancient trees. As we watched, a bulldozer came to clear the trees.

Why? Who?

That hill, it seems, was declared *terra nullius* by the Israeli authorities. No one was actually living on the hill! Israel therefore felt it had the right to clear the land and build another settlement deep in Palestine, regardless of who owned the land. Israel felt justified in building another road from Israel proper to that settlement, a road that no Palestinians could use or cross.

The people of Bethlehem watched, helplessly, as another tentacle of Israel extended across the hills where once the 'shepherds watched their flocks by night'. The wounds of the Palestinian people run deep.

We remember Bethlehem as that little town where the baby Jesus was born in a stable and the heavenly host appeared to announce 'Peace on Earth'. That message must have sounded strange even at the time of Jesus' birth – a time of grinding poverty for the masses, tax collectors extorting money, brutal Roman military forces and crucifixion for those who dared to resist. We remember the brutal massacre of the Innocents.

The scene in Bethlehem in recent years has been remarkably similar. This Christmas we may well expect the children of the Lutheran School in Bethlehem to write across the walls of their school, as they did some years ago, "Sorry, Jesus, we cannot celebrate your birthday this year. Bethlehem has been occupied."

Why should the Christian Arabs in Bethlehem be invaded and treated as terrorists? They are peace-loving people. They are not Muslims converted to Christianity. Many of them are as 'native' to Palestine as Aborigines to Australia. They can trace their origins back to Pentecost. They have a right to their land and peace in their land. The same is true for Muslim Arabs. And we should be outraged at the unjust way both groups have been treated.

The way Jews were treated by the Nazis in Germany was wrong! Anti-Semitism is wrong! Bombing is wrong – whether suicide bombing or aerial bombing! So too, is the invasion of Palestine and oppression of Palestinians. We need to name such wrongs wherever they happen.

Would you like to celebrate Christmas amid the Israeli tanks in Bethlehem this year? Or would you, perhaps, like to invite Dr Mitri Raheb, the Lutheran Pastor in Bethlehem, to join us? Alas, he cannot leave Bethlehem without a permit from the Israeli military. I recall one old lady saying, "I am not permitted to travel from my home in Bethlehem to visit Jerusalem – just 10K up the road." The people of Bethlehem are under virtual siege – and often actual siege. The standard refrain is: 'No Palestinian is allowed to leave the country'!

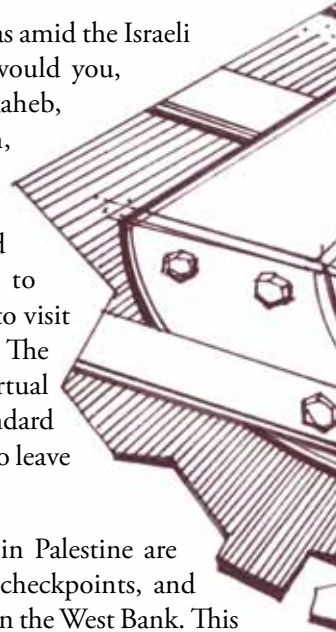
In fact, all Lutheran congregations in Palestine are virtually walled in by the closures, checkpoints, and curfews that restrict their movement in the West Bank. This makes it difficult to perform the normal ministries needed for communities that have been traumatised over many years.

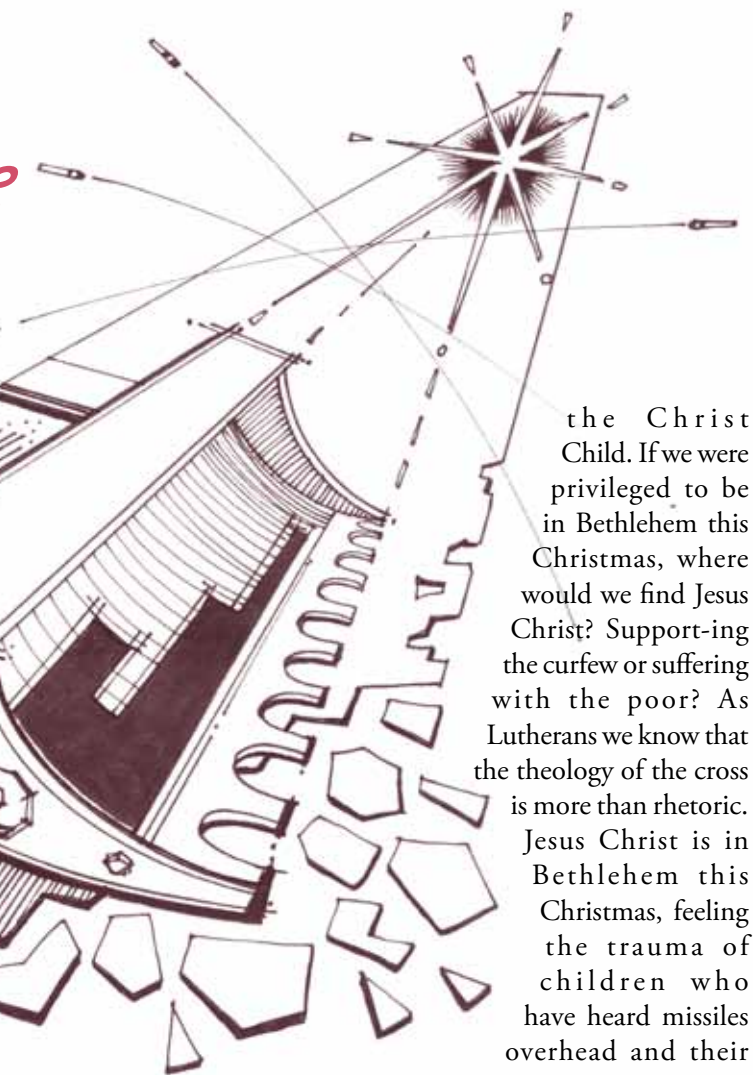
The people of Bethlehem suffer from shortage of water, poverty, lack of services and unemployment (about 80 percent). Meanwhile, Israeli settlements in Palestinian land nearby are healthy and affluent – with swimming pools and high walls. The USA supplies millions of dollars each day to support the Israeli government and its military. Bethlehem, alas, has no army to defend itself – only the promise of the Christ Child.

And what is that promise? That we should answer Israeli invasion with violence? That we should leave the fate of Palestine in the hands of the super-powers like America? No. Far from it! We need to dig deep into the Gospel and focus our faith on proclaiming a peace that can change lives, attitudes and policies. We need to pray – but do more than pray!

One point to start reflecting on – a path to peace – is the story of Abraham. Abraham is given a promise by God. And, according to St Paul, that promise precedes the coming of the law. That promise precedes the birth of the Jewish people, the appearance of Christians and the advent of Muslims. And that promise, says Paul, is the embryo of the Gospel.

Abraham lived at peace with the peoples of Palestine. Abraham remains a symbol of peace, of the Gospel lived in community. We would do well to support all efforts of peace that affirm the model of Abraham and the peace of God imparted through





the Christ Child. If we were privileged to be in Bethlehem this Christmas, where would we find Jesus Christ? Support-ing the curfew or suffering with the poor? As Lutherans we know that the theology of the cross is more than rhetoric. Jesus Christ is in Bethlehem this Christmas, feeling the trauma of children who have heard missiles overhead and their

homes destroyed. Jesus is in Bethlehem this Christmas, suffering with the hungry and unemployed who have no money for gifts. Jesus is in Bethlehem this Christmas, promising peace to those who follow the way of the cross, not the way of war.

Rev Don Hinchey, a former student of mine in the USA, re-wrote the words to a familiar hymn. These words should give us pause and hope as we join with the people of Bethlehem in a prayer for peace:

*Oh little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie,  
Above thy deep and restless sleep, a missile glideth by.  
And over dark streets soundeth the mortar's deadly roar,  
While children weep in shallow sleep  
For friends who are no more.*

*Oh sing for holy Innocents who hurled a hopeless stone,  
Who ran from tank, who wounded sank in gutters all alone.  
Their eyes by bullets blinded, their lungs by gases burned,  
In sad exile, the Holy Child,  
Knows Herod has returned.*

*Oh holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray.  
Your love bring down on David's town; drive fear and hate away.  
Awake the will of nations, let justice be restored,  
Rebuild the peace in silent streets  
Where once your love was born. ■*

*Norman Habel, a Lutheran pastor in Adelaide, S.A.,  
composed this Christmas piece for The Lutheran newspaper*

## Tears

They are primal words, 'Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh'.

O my people, you are bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh – how can you be so blind to what I see?

So excellent the Torah your God gave you  
that Moses promised that all who saw you would exclaim with wonder,  
'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'.

Who sees you now, your tanks flattening tenements –  
or the missiles, the checkpoints, the money-power, and says  
'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people?'

Hosea likened your goodness to a morning cloud,  
as lasting as the morning dew. It dries off at once  
Leaving behind hysterical hatred of your neighbours,  
a certainty that no beastliness will be sheeted home to you,  
a willingness to trade on the sufferings of your forebears.  
You choose your leaders and their policies –  
who listens to them and says,  
'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people?'

Jeremiah heard your God longing for the affection of your youth  
when you followed Him in the wilderness,  
when He promised, 'Any that devour you shall be held guilty'.

O bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh!  
I should want to cut off my hand to save you, you are mine.  
But I have heard the Torah,  
the songs of the prophets ring in my ears.  
None say, 'this great nation is a wise and understanding people'.  
My hand? You are not worth a finger.

O bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, we are one.  
The God who reigns over us is a just judge,  
loving but not partial.  
When the judgment comes upon you – as it will,  
and soon – I will weep for you.

You are not worth a finger but I will give you all my tears.

*Judith Reinken*

*Judith Reinken, a Jew by birth and a Christian by faith, is a writer and lifelong student of the Hebrew Scriptures. She lives in the Hokianga.*

# The Gifts of Christmas



The Adoration of the Magi, Anon.,  
The Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Book of Hours,  
Turin, late 15th Century

## The Annunciation: Luke 1:26-38

This is the first of the great gifts, ours for the unwrapping. How profound it is – this story of the Virgin Birth and how rich is its truth in our lives. We all have the Virgin space within us, a centre that is made for God alone. Nothing else will fill it. It is the innermost sanctuary, the still place beyond words, where we encounter the true nature of Love. Male and female alike, we become pregnant with God and carry Christ within us. It is an ongoing process. It is what we are born for.

I think of the ways we become pregnant with God, the times when God fills us with living presence. They are special moments of love and beauty, sometimes inspired by Scripture, sometimes by the direct word of God in creation. Sometimes we are given new insights, new awareness, through other people.

If I fail to unwrap the gift it is because I am temporarily closed to the voice of the angel whispering against my heart. My life

gets cluttered with busyness, with the idols of words and ideas. I spend much time thinking in the past or the future, when I know that I can only receive God in the present moment.

I pray that this Advent I will listen to the quiet voice and find the simplicity of Mary's answer: "Let whatever it is you ask, be done to me."

## Mary's Song: Luke 1:46-55

With Mary we unwrap the gift of our gratitude to the Abundant Giver, and sing in wonder at the goodness of all of life's gifts. We remember the early days of our faith when our Advent God had a red suit, white beard and a sack of toys over his shoulder. That's how we prayed.

Now, looking back, we see that some of the most valuable gifts were the ones we didn't want. They were gifts of pain – loneliness, perceived betrayal and rejection, depression, hurt, disappointment. It took us a long time to unwrap these gifts and discover that it is the journey through pain that brings growth. Without these gifts we could not hope to inherit wisdom and compassion.

I sing Mary's song of gratitude for the giving from the two hands of God. The Abundant Giver has done great things for me. The proud heart in me is pulled down from its throne. The part of me that gathers material possessions is made of no account, and the spiritual beggar in me is given unnameable richness. This Advent I touch the pain in my life and see how it has become a gift, greater than anything I could have chosen for myself. My heart bows in awe and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour.

## The Journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem: Luke 2:1-5

Pregnant with God, Mary goes from home town Nazareth to Bethlehem, the birthing place. We too, take our Advent journey from head to heart. Intellectually, we can discuss faith and Scripture, but we can only know God's love through the heart. We do not give birth to Christ in our heads. So, a part of the unwrapping of our Christmas gifts is to leave the head, the ordinary dwelling places, and go deep into the heart to experience God's love and the life of Christ within.

These days, Christmas has become so commercial, that it is a stressful time for most people, especially for Christians



# – An Advent Journey

Joy Cowley

who want to claim it as a time of holiness and peace. Perhaps, each morning, we can leave behind the busy routine for five or ten minutes, and go to Bethlehem where we will give birth to Christ in the world.

How do I ride to Bethlehem? Through awareness. Through staying in the present moment and reflecting on the Love that Christmas is all about.

## **The Birth of Jesus:** *Luke 2:1-8*

We give birth to Christ in our lives, through love. Jesus himself, gave us the answer. We become pregnant with God when we love God with all our heart and all our mind and all our soul, and we give birth to God when we love our neighbours as ourselves. On these two acts, said Jesus, hang all the law and the prophets. It is very simple and also very difficult, unless we read it backwards. We need to start with self. If we don't love ourselves, it's difficult to love others and difficult to see God as a God of unconditional love.

In this consumer age, loving ourselves can be seen as buying something we want. But loving ourselves is about the alchemist's miracle, transforming 'dross' to gold, pain to rejoicing, fear to love.

There are times when we carry unnecessary burdens, and often a heavy burden we can't let go of is a bundle of hurts from our childhood. It seems to happen in every generation. Most parents try to do their best for their children and most children are hurt in spite of these good intentions.

I know in theory that I need to love myself, and I know what damage these burdens do to my self-esteem, but how do I let them go? Maybe it will help if I see them not as hurts but as lessons that had to be learned early in life's school, to prepare me for the future. It could be that the experience was tough and is now labelled traumatic. Truly, a climb up Everest! But the greater the lesson, the greater the knowledge that comes from it.

When I can understand that everything I am is held in unconditional love and wisdom, then I can be free to rejoice in all the ways Christ is born in my life and the lives of others.



The Annunciation to the Shepherds,  
Jacobus Coen attrib.,  
*The Blessed Virgin Mary's Book of Hours*, Naples, pre-1550

## **The Shepherds:** *Luke 2:9-20*

In those days, shepherds had a bad reputation. They were nomads, branded as rustlers, thieves and even murderers. Householders fastened their doors when shepherds were near the village. Travellers were fearful of being waylaid and robbed. As is usual in society today, a criminal element gave all a bad name.

Isn't it marvellous that these were the people chosen to be the first to celebrate the good news? When we look at Jesus' ministry, we see that this is the way God worked. The respectable people concerned with their own goodness, didn't have much space for Jesus. They had no awareness of their emptiness. Jesus came for the hungry ones, the needy ones, those who knew their own lack.

What does that say to our hearts? It's a matter for great rejoicing. We hear the first words the angel said to the shepherds. "Do not be afraid!" Ah! That in itself is a complete Christmas gift. The shepherd in us loses self-consciousness. We lose our fear of being inadequate. We >>

# A Christmas story

John Hunt

A young couple came to me to be married. I liked them very much. Ian was tall and dark, a man of few words but with a quick grin, a farm labourer; Sarah was fair, a sweet girl, a nurse. Just as they were about to leave, I saw tears roll down Sarah's cheeks. I waited. She whispered, 'My parents won't come to our wedding'. She said, 'They don't think Ian's good enough for me'. Poor Ian studied his shoes. She spoke to me about their feeling and hers. I asked her, 'Would you like me to visit your parents?' She couldn't believe I would!

Her parents were a little uneasy with me. They were hard working people. Their home was comfortable and immaculate. Her father said, 'We gave her a good education. She has a future as a nurse. She could travel overseas.' Her mother added, 'She's chucking herself away on that boy! No-one knows his family!' She cried.

I listened to their hurt. I expressed some understanding. After a bit, I gently pointed out to them, 'You have been wonderful parents. Your daughter loves you dearly. She is very distressed you will not be with her at her wedding'.

On the day when I came into the church, there in the front pews was the groom's family hard up against the wall on the right side and the bride's mother hard up against the wall on the left! She was there, but plainly not happy.

Following the Service, the photographer asked me, 'Where are the bride's parents? I want a photograph of the two families!' I found them sitting in their car. I managed to persuade them to get out for the photograph. Incidentally, the photographer did a wonderful job. When I saw the photograph, you would never see a happier group!

The reception was something of an ordeal.

About a year later, I saw in the newspaper that Ian and Sarah had become parents to a little girl. I went to the hospital to congratulate them and to offer prayers. And what did I find?

The baby was in a bassinet and standing around her were her four grandparents. They were all smiles. They were delighted and proud. They were sure the little one had features from both families. They might have even had their arms around one-another. Sarah was sitting up in bed, beaming. She gave me a wink. Ian's grin had become permanent.

The baby had brought them together, brought out the best in them, brought out the love. ■

*John Hunt is a Presbyterian Minister with a particular interest in Celtic spirituality*

▷▷ have been chosen! Then the angel says, "Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared with all people."

We notice that the angel doesn't tell the shepherds to have a bath and a change of clothes, doesn't demand they make a sacrifice at the Temple and present themselves to Jesus in a clean and sanctified state. What does that say to the shepherd in each of us? I look at the shepherd in my life, at the fears and doubts I've had about myself, at the times I've thought that God didn't know what He was doing when He made me... And then I let the angel tell me the good news.

## **The Wise Men:** *Matthew 2:1-12*

It is time to unwrap the gift of the wise ones in our lives. Only in Matthew's gospel do we have the story of the Magi, sometimes called the three kings, who came from the East with gifts for Jesus. Like the shepherds, these wise ones were also on the edge of respectability. Their wisdom was not traditional. They travelled from the East, possibly Persia, and they were magicians (*magi*) who came to Jesus through astrology. Neither magic nor astrology would be

viewed comfortably by many Christians today. So here again, God was working outside the circle of establishment. What does that say to us?

Just as we all have the shepherd in us – that part of ourselves that doesn't measure up to social ideals, so do we also have the wise ones who daily speak to our lives. These are the voices of guidance – or conscience – that are concerned with the growth of our souls. They keep us moving on the road. They prevent us from worshipping signposts. They speak to us of truth. And they bring the spiritual gifts symbolised by gold, frankincense and myrrh.

For me, gold is the richness of God's love, the treasure that encompasses all other gifts. Frankincense represents the fragrant incense of prayer, especially prayers of gratitude and praise. Myrrh, the burial herb, represents the bitterness of the cross but is inseparable from gold and frankincense. All are the gifts of wisdom. All are the gifts of growth.

We give thanks for the Gifts of Christmas and celebrate Emmanuel, God-with-us in Aotearoa. ■

# The ghost of Christmas past

Colleen Walker

**M**y mother is dead. My mother, the black reef at Takapuna. Her few moist salt-swept rocks are rainbowed now with diesel oil. The boat ramp had to be; and, of course, the parking area with its 40-gallon rubbish bins. They never seem to be full, those bins, but always clustered, around with all sorts of takeaway leftovers.

I can see my first Guy Fawkes bonfire there outside the motor camp. I was five and the sparklers and squibs were entirely bewitching – dazzling. There were all the night's shadows wonderfully changed, and I was part of it. The tent and caravan people were so happy that the blackout was over at last. Everyone just laughed and talked loud and friendly and stuffed themselves. I don't know where all that food could have come from. We were mad with delight, we kids...

And then there was the night when the spring tide brought the sea right up to the camp fence and the water was bulging with sprats. Everyone – the Booths, the Lyons, the Scots, Walkers, Bakers and who knows how many more were out in the soft sea dark, looking and dropping any sort of bucket and tin into that seething fish-bright amazement. I couldn't lift the basin that filled with one swish of those twinkling evening waves. And we had torches. In the caravan it was only hurricane lamps with that kerosene smell and the blackened glass. But torches were for outside and I was the oldest and it didn't matter about getting wet all up my pyjamas while the others were in bed.

When I was looking after my brother and sister, we caught those white-blazed rock cods for the cat. She wouldn't eat

them and we got told off for having smelly things in jars. We didn't care. Our feet and the rocks were bare, and we were strong and wild except when I got mumps and had ice cream and was wrapped in Granddad's woollen scarf.

When my baby sister had whooping cough, Mum said we should be living in a house because she was sick and tired of it, and she blamed it on the sea. Even that didn't matter, because what did I know about babies and sickness. All I knew was playing with Jillian Reston in the pohutukawas after school. At least they are there still. I loved those crunchy, knee-grating stairways that burst into flame at Christmas. They just gnarled vaguely towards the sky and held us like a grandmother's knee when we were pirates.

Jillian moved away to dolls and just-so ribbons in her hair while I was drawn into the magic album of the pools in the rocks. They were my bedtime stories. They were my daytime dreams. When we had to stay home from school because of the polio epidemic, I was in paradise out there on the no-more reef. You could flick a finger at yourself and vanish; to come shimmering up again in a minute without any trace of being stuck back together.

We never had to wear shoes on the rocks. We never had to be home before dark on the rocks. There was no trouble on the rocks – only endless daring and enjoying the flutter of anemones, that tingling scuttle of crabs and the funny way your legs look in water. The just dangerous enough oystery, splashy space held me in a spell where solitude was full of sun and never being quite alone. There was a triangle on a stick



at the very very end where a big seagull always stood and didn't fly away until you nearly got there.

One night Terry Baker's yacht got wrecked on the rocks, and everyone said he was spoilt and shouldn't have a boat anyway. There was a shamrock on the sail, and Mr Baker used to help him paint it. He was called Charlie, like my brother. They liked him best and said he should have his hair cut. He was only three, though, and his hair was lovely. Anyway, when Charlie's hair was cut he looked like all the other boys except that his top teeth stuck out and he kept getting bronchitis. He used to amuse himself with a wooden clothes peg and bits of string when his chest was bad, and the other kids would gather round and wonder what he was making.

There was another Charlie. He was Maori, so we called him Maori Charlie and he used to let us run races with him. They had a tent. His mother's hair was lovely too. We had our picture taken one day with another kid from the camp. The rock we were together on is now covered with cement. I can never go there and show my daughter where that photo was taken. In fact I can never go there at all. It's just a car park and a boat ramp outside the motor camp wall. ■

*Colleen Walker is an Auckland writer and poet*



# Whispers Of The Heart

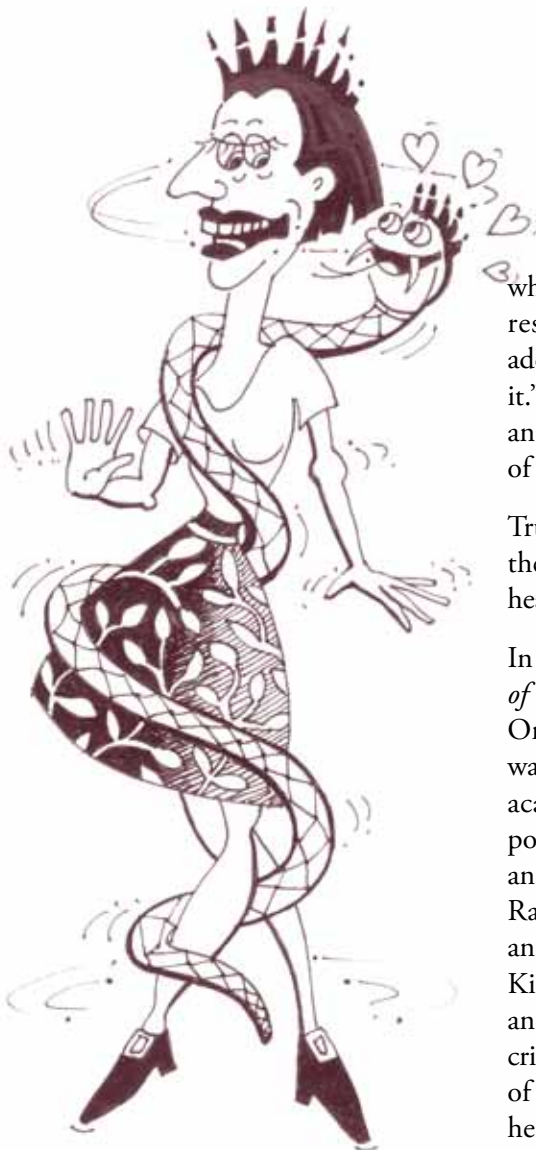
Glynn Cardy

**Y**ou Are Now Entering The Human Heart is the name of a well-known Janet Frame short story. Set in a museum where there is a huge walk-in model of a human heart, the story centres on a dilemma within a teacher's heart. A herpetologist is expounding to a group of school children and their teacher the beauty and harmless nature of snakes. The teacher, who is far from comfortable with snakes, is chosen to model his thesis.

The herpetologist drapes a large grass snake around her neck. The teacher, quivering, draws on all her resources to endure this event, trying desperately to set a good example to the children. The children stare at the teacher as one would stare at a ticking bomb. Finally, the snake thrusts its flat head against her cheek. The teacher screams, tears the snake from her throat, rushes across the room and collapses in a chair crying.

It is the dilemma between head and heart, between what you know and what you feel, between what is seemingly right and reasonable and what is intrinsically instinctive and 'of the gut'.

Is religion of the head or of the heart? Once upon a time I spent three years reading theology at Knox Theological Hall in Dunedin. In those days Knox was significantly influenced by a brand of reform theology that put great store on the first five centuries of the Christian Church and their interpretat-



ion of the same. This theology would have said that whilst religion can, and must, touch the heart, it is in the head where it all makes sense. This theology was highly systematized, every question had an answer, and every innovation could be measured against the revealed 'truth' of the past. For those who lived this theology, the head was all important, the heart just lent it the fuel of passion.

Needless to say, although I learnt the formularies well, this brand of theology never got very far with me. On one occasion a lecturer asked me

what I thought. I parroted the correct response and then, to his horror, added: "But don't expect me to believe it." It was all too neat and tidy, all black and white, no loose strings, no shades of grey.

Truth, for me, was, and is, something the heart would whisper before the head would hear.

In 1983 I attended the *World Council of Churches* Assembly in Vancouver. One of the more rivetting speakers was Dorothee Soelle. She is a German academic, a Lutheran, having held positions in Germany and New York, and having written numerous books. Raised on Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, and profoundly influenced by Barth, Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer, Gogarten, and Bultmann, she is steeped in the critical German theological approaches of the 20th century. The theology of her head though just added fuel to her heart.

She has spent half a century deeply involved in the peace movement, the anti-Vietnam War protests, the anti-apartheid movement... indeed any-where that torture, disappearance, oligarchic immunity, enforced misery, weapons, warfare, and the buttoned-up arrogance of the great powers has been present.

So, given all the above, I was a little surprised and deeply moved to read Dorothee's public letter to her children, broadcast in Germany as part of a series of "what really counts in life".

*Liebe Kinder,*

In the fairy tales I used to tell you years ago, there is a story of a poor shepherd who one day is led far away by a little gray man to a mysterious mountain. The mountain bursts open, and inside glisten the most precious treasures. But as the shepherd keeps stuffing his pockets, a voice calls out, "Don't forget the best!" The story goes on that the door crashes shut behind the shepherd, and the treasures in his pockets turn to dust.

I have never understood what 'the best' was really supposed to be. Was it perhaps the clump of flowers at the gate of the mountain? Or a homely old lamp like that of Aladdin? Was it perhaps the key with which to get back in? Perhaps the wish to go back and not to forget?

*Don't forget the best!* All of you know that the voice of the little gray man enticed me far away from ordinary life into religion. Of all the things I would have liked to give you, this is the most difficult to explain. I can't simply sign my treasures over to you. To love God with the whole heart, with all one's strength, from one's entire soul,

is something I cannot pass on like an inheritance.

My attempts to raise you as Christians had little chance of succeeding; the institution of the Church again and again attacked me from behind. The Church was and is only rarely worthy of trust. But I am also very conscious of my own lack of credibility, of making a simple faith and prayers part of everyday life. It is as if we parents had no house of religion to offer you to live in but a derelict one.

But – organized religion or not – I do wish that you all become a little bit pious. *Don't forget the best!* I mean that you praise God sometimes, not always – only the chatterers and courtiers of God do so – but on occasion, when you are very happy, so that happiness flows by itself into gratitude and you sing "hallelujah" or the great *om* of Indian religion.

On our trips we used to drag you into churches; on one occasion the church we looked at was awful. One of you announced dryly, "No God in there." Precisely that is not to be said of your lives; God is "in there", at the sea and

in the clouds, in the candle, in music, and, of course, in love.

Without grounding in the ground of life, this true joy is not there, and our joy is then focused always on occasions and things. True joy, the joy of life, the happiness of being alive is not the joy that arises because there are strawberries, or because school was cancelled, or a wonderful visitor had arrived. True joy is without a "why," or as my best friend from the Middle Ages, Meister Eckhart, used to say, "sunder warumbe" ("utterly devoid of *why*").

If I could give you only a little of this *sunder warumbe* joy it would already be very much. Then I would readily let go of my unwelcome extra-special wishes, those motherly demands, such as that once in your life you would read Meister Eckhart: I would gladly turn back again into the little gray man and sit in the blue cave among the glistening jewels and call out, "*Don't forget the best!*"

*Eure alte*

*Mama*

Abbreviated from Soelle, D,  
*Against The Wind*, Minneapolis:  
Fortress, 1999, p.166ff.

### St Philomena's Class Reunion

3rd Form Class of 1972 – 1976

A St Phil's Class Reunion will be held at St Peter's Hostel in Gore the weekend of 12/13 April 2003.

We are looking for the names and contact details of classmates entering St Philomena's College, Dunedin in 1972.

*For further information contact:*

Robyn Kelly (nee Bennie),  
Motu Rimu, RD 11, Invercargill.  
Ph 032186686 or  
email: robynkelly@clear.net.nz or  
Katie O'Connor (nee Robertson)  
'Moyvane' RD Gore.  
Ph 03 202 5376 or  
email: pkoconnor@xtra.co.nz



### CENACLE MINI SABBATICAL

Thursday 6th MARCH – Tuesday 15th APRIL 2003

In Mark 6:30 Jesus said:

*"Come away to some quiet place all by yourselves and rest for awhile".*

**A Sabbatical gives time set apart –**

- \* For remembering the holiness of life
- \* For personal renewal and refreshment
- \* To regain a new enthusiasm for life – ministry – community!
- \* Time to slow down and renew your vision!

*The mini sabbatical allows opportunity for a loosely structured program, offering a six-day retreat, a seminar on the Enneagram and Spirituality, and a two-day reflection on Jesus and His Land. Time to pray, relax, read, share with others, read and reflect, on the beautiful shores of Moreton Bay 55 minutes from the city of Brisbane – in an area noted for the koala population and native bird life.*

**For further information:**

Sr Pat Clouston, Cenacle Retreat House, Centre of Spiritual Development  
267 Wellington Street, Ormiston, Q.4160  
Tel (07)3286-4011 Fax (07)3821-3788



## Church and the Sexual Revolution

*Jack Dominian*

**T**he sexual revolution started in the 19th century and flourished in the 20th. The work of Freud, Havelock Ellis, Kinsey, Masters and Johnson and others has taught us to recognise that sexuality is not an added factor, but an essential characteristic of our personality. We are sexual, embodied beings. This should not come as a surprise to Christians who believe that the Son of God took flesh. This embodiment of the Son of God has yet to find the fullness of its glory.

Kinsey not only revealed the incidence of premarital and extramarital sexual intercourse in an age where orthodoxy would have liked to believe that Christian standards prevailed, but also uncovered the hidden incidence of homosexual and other minority sexual practices. The hidden and the guilt-producing surfaced for all to see. By bringing the underworld of sexual behaviour to the surface, talking,

discussing and exchanging views, hypocrisy has receded. Society as a whole became aware of the depths of the range of sexuality. Men and women were liberated to own their sexuality.

This ownership of sexuality has still some way to go, because in sex men and women encounter a mystery and this mystery elicits awe. While sex elicits awe, fear has also been reduced. With the recession of fear, sexual minorities, homosexuals, bisexuals, transvestites and others have emerged to claim their rightful place in society.

All this is a massive step forward in a civilisation which can now lay claim to the goodness of the erotic and of sexual intercourse. But is all this undiluted progress? In my opinion it is not. For while the 20th century has gone a long

way to liberate sex, it has also trivialised it. The result of the sexual liberation has left society with a technology of sex, without an adequate link to love and sacredness. Sacredness is not a prerogative of Christianity. It is an inherent human characteristic.

Sex is allied to life, new life and the growth of love. The emphasis on biology has detracted from wholeness and holiness. The revolution has favoured the impersonal. The media are free to celebrate fantasy. In television programme after television programme, the forbidden, the scandalous and the erotically exciting are pictured as the pinnacle of human aspiration. The media portray repeatedly the falling in love stage and says little about the contribution of sexual intercourse to the maintenance of relationships.

In the balance between showing the importance of the sexual minorities



and marriage, the sexual minorities are given much more attention. Marriage is treated by the media as old-fashioned, stale, stifling and oppressive. It is clear that some of these criticisms are accurate. What is forgotten is that marriage and the family are vital for health, happiness, the realisation of love, the upbringing of children and the centre for imparting love from generation to generation. In this context, marriage is a platform for life and we, as yet, have found no alternative to it. Having said that, I do not want to omit the fact that Christianity has received from Jesus a specific revelation about the single state dedicated to God. While it must embrace sexual love, it must also proclaim the single state.

The absence of love in the portrayal of sexual intercourse is also to be found in the greatly enlarged pornographic literature. Hard and soft pornography have multiplied. Sexual titillation and impersonality are the hallmarks of pornography and they have certainly increased.

In brief, the sexual revolution has confronted the world and Western society in particular with a vital art of being human. To that extent it is a success. Insofar as it has distorted and trivialised the sexual identity of men and women, it has dehumanised us.

### *What should the Christian response to the sexual revolution be?*

In my opinion the sexual revolution is a major challenge to Christianity that can either be denied or embraced with Christian wisdom and revelation. I believe that such Christian transformation finds itself in the word *love*, which is the essence of God. For 2,000 years Christianity tried to beat that passion out of existence. It never succeeded wholly, but it managed to put a cloud over sexual pleasure, the erotic and sexual intercourse.

All this offered a massive negativity to the precious gift of sexuality. It was as if Christianity was adamant to say that, 'In the beginning was the word and the word was "No".' The sexual revolution

put passion back on the agenda, and Christianity must embrace it. The churches should recognise a gift when offered one.

The church's first task is to educate its own people. The Catholic church and indeed all Christian churches have a good record in cognitive education. But, for a religion steeped in love that considers that the essence of God is love, education for being a loving person should be predominant.

How often do we hear from the pulpit a positive sermon about sexuality? We need an 'Amen' to sexuality – it is 'Amen' to our humanity, and we must not compartmentalise our humanity to body and soul. Dualism has played havoc in Christianity and it has no place at its centre. We are whole people, a unity of body, mind and heart, and we are people of passion. So I see the church transferring its focus from procreation to an education for personal love.

As Christians we must explore the Scriptures to find what they teach us about love. Let us reclaim them. In the Gospels we have the incarnation of

Jesus as the epitome of the sacredness of embodiment. The Roman Catholic church has a habit of looking to the past for its direction and inspiration, and so it should, for revelation is their springboard. It also pays great attention to tradition but we need to forget and bury a great deal of our sexual tradition.

When sex is seen primarily as the principal force of love that maintains relationships, then we are right at the very heart of the life of God and the Trinity. When sexual intercourse takes place in the context of an ongoing, enduring, committed, exclusive and faithful relationship, its integrity is safeguarded.

The sexual revolution is a major event that cannot be ignored, and it has penetrated and percolated all our lives. It has transformed the way we see ourselves. Christianity must embrace it and rejoice over it. The real gift that Christianity has to offer is to link sexuality with love and life. In speaking of sex with love, Christianity will be responding to what is missing in the sexual revolution and what people instinctively want to hear. ■

*This series of articles on sexuality by Jack Dominian comes with his permission from his recent book *Let's Make Love: The Meaning of Sexual Intercourse*, published 2001 by Darton, Longman and Todd*

## **Mt St Joseph Conference Centre** **14 Hillside Terrace, Wanganui**

### **MANAGER/HOSTESS**

We are seeking a live-in Manager/Hostess to co-ordinate and oversee the running of this busy Centre set in beautiful grounds overlooking Wanganui city. This is the hearth-place of the Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth as well as a place of retreat and reflection and a Conference Centre.

The position involves the creation of a warm spirit of hospitality ensuring that the satisfaction and needs of all clients are met. Co-ordinating the domestic management of the facility and being responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and smooth running of Mt St Joseph are important daily tasks. The position requires the ability to work collaboratively with other staff members who initiate and co-ordinate programmes. The personal attributes we are looking for are a creative thinker, one who can relate well to others, has leadership skills and excellent communication and presentation skills. Job Description available on request.

*Applications for the above position along with a current CV and two references should be sent to: Manager/Hostess Position, PO Box 777, Wanganui*  
**Applications close 20 December 2002**

# Live simply – that others may simply live

*The November Tui Motu illustrated the World Poverty gap by means of a Wineglass graph, used by environmentalist Sean McDonagh during a recent visit to New Zealand. It brought this response.*

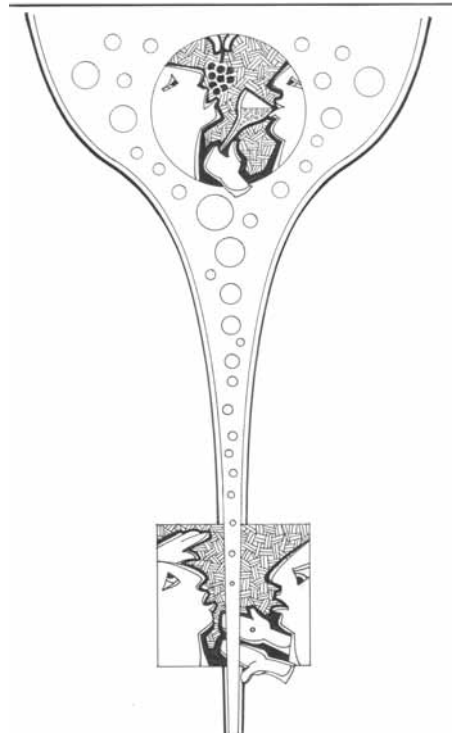
In the November issue of *Tui Motu* the editorial challenged its readers to begin doing something about redressing an imbalance – “the glaring disparity” between our “unheeding and profligate West” and world poverty.

Many people in Aotearoa/New Zealand have been addressing that challenge for several years now. James K. Baxter was one prophet of it, and the Land family of Hokianga have long been “living simply that others may simply live”. There are others.

Fifteen years ago our family of four made a conscious choice to find a small piece of land, for which we would be given temporary responsibility. We found a one and three-quarter acres in a rural district surrounded by conventional farms of large – and getting larger – proportions, where the bigger are swallowing the small and the technology is replacing the once labour-intensive, hands-on ‘care’.

We set out to live in harmony with the air, soil, animals, birds, insects, plants and spirits around our little patch. We resolved to look after our environment by communicating with her through observation and experience. We learn from her lessons, which are never predictable but full of exciting and fascinating natural growth cycles, subject to the changing phenomena of climate, ecosystems and microclimates.

We plant all sorts of crops, collecting our own unadulterated seeds and note what the land and climate want to produce so that there is no need to force produce with toxic sprays. We replenish the soil with compost and mulch.



*The wineglass bowl represents the wealthiest 20% who have 82% of the world's wealth. The bottom of the stem represents the 20% poorest, having 1.4 % wealth*

For winter and spring sustenance, we preserve and dry summer and autumn's abundant supplies.

As parents, we resolved to share the bread-winning by working together on the land and selling our surplus at the gate and at our town's Sunday markets. We live according to our relative needs rather than our wants, because anything over that would be “off the backs of the poor”.

Over the 15 years our income has varied between \$11,000 and \$20,000 taxable total. The children have not suffered from any lack of funded activities. We are rich in every way. We swap produce with neighbours for the loan of occasionally required equipment. We are members of the local skills co-operative:

swap and exchange veges for labour. Two members built us a fine water-heating solar panel. We find that we are offered holiday baches, fishing trips and compost materials.

We limit ourselves to one secondhand 1300cc station waggon which we only use when we have to. A bicycle each covers most of our needs and pleasures. We do not have TV and have all benefited from the many family activities like reading, music, games and outdoor pursuits.

Each year during Lent we distribute 10 percent of our income to the *Caritas* Lenten Appeal and select together whether Amnesty International, Pax Christi, CORSO Inc., Christian World Service or Arena (a NZ network working for alternative development models based on self-determination, social justice, genuine people-centred development and environmental sustainability) will receive a portion of our funding.

Our leisure activities include commitments to the local community through the centre for unemployed, parish, marae, health, ecumenical and political issues areas.

Swimming against the tide of advertising for greater consumption and economic development is challenging; working out ways to reduce our standard of living is creative and healthy.

We would be interested to hear about other readers' efforts.

*Annie and Dane Rawson, Erewhon*

*... and Tui Motu would be pleased to print other readers' stories on this important topic.*

*Bend it like Beckham*, directed by Gurinder Chadha

*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, directed by Joel Zwick  
Review: Mike Crowl

Two comedies popular in NZ at the moment, *Bend it like Beckham*, and *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, both deal with the fact that when people emigrate to a new country, their children, the generation brought up in the new country, gradually side with the new world rather than the old. This, naturally, produces conflict between the generations, and is the stuff both of drama and comedy.

The first of these two movies is English, and centres around an Indian family living in London. The second is set in Chicago, with a Greek family as its focus. The moving force in the first movie is football (and an Indian 'girl' daring to play it); in the second, it's that old stand-by: true love. In both films there is a large wedding, though the heroine in the British film is only the bridesmaid, unlike her counterpart in the American job.

## Film



Both films have fairly predictable plots. The Brits, however, add some curious side-issues relating to gay matters and an ending that's slightly off-the-wall, while the Yanks, typically, overlook pre-nuptial sex, and throw in a rather speedily-arranged Greek Orthodox baptism..

In each case the films have been made by people from the cultures in question rather than outsiders. These people know what it's like to be caught between two worlds, unable to shake off the old – and not wanting to, yet not quite fitting into the new – and that isn't entirely a problem.

In both films the writers have great affection for large, noisy, ebullient extended families. Privacy is almost impossible and community is everything. Food and marriage are hugely important

amongst the mothers; doing what the father says is hugely important amongst the fathers – naturally. It's the fathers who have to change the most, even though they're also the ones most hurt by the changes.

And in each case we, the audience, are given some insight into strange cultural behaviours (spitting on the bride to keep the devil away, for instance), and presented with some hilarious characters.

Neither of these films is going to change the world; neither will make a huge dent in interracial problems. But in a country where we too are facing more and more cultural differences, these two films remind us to be more open to others, to be less censorious, and above all, to keep our sense of humour. ■

*Mike Crowl is a New Zealand Freelance Writer*

### METHODIST SOCIAL SERVICE CENTRE (Palmerston North Methodist Parish)

#### DIRECTOR

The Palmerston North Methodist Parish seeks to appoint a person to be responsible for directing the work of its Social Service Centre. The Centre is a long-established and respected agency in the city offering a range of services to the community including counselling, education programmes, a foodbank and the sale of quality used goods.

The person appointed will be responsible to the Parish Leader's Council for providing leadership, vision and direction for the Centre consistent with its Mission Statement and Values, for management of its staff, for development and oversight of its services and for financial management of the agency.

For further information and Job Description please contact:  
The Administration Officer

Methodist Social Service Centre  
P.O.Box 1887, PALMERSTON NORTH

Phone 06 357 3277; Fax 06 356 8799

Applications, including full current CV, to the above address by February 10, 2003

## WALK BY FAITH

### An Extramural Course for Adults

This 3-year-course uses adult learning processes to help you to:

- *know and understand yourself better*
- *deepen your faith*
- *enrich your knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Scriptures and the Church*
- *learn with others participating in the Course.*

*For an enrolment form or further information, please contact :*

NCRS PO Box 1937, Wellington,

Ph: (04) 496 1761 Fax (04) 496 1762

Email: [ncrsnz@clear.net.nz](mailto:ncrsnz@clear.net.nz)

OR your Diocesan Education Office

The Programme is directed by the National Centre for Religious Studies on behalf of the NZ Catholic Bishops' Conference



## Go North, dear reader!

There must be something in the water in Canada. Or perhaps being sand-wiched between the hostile Arctic to the north and big brother USA to the south gives life a certain edge. Whatever the reason, Canada consistently produces wonderful writers of fiction. I didn't set out to make 2002 the year of "reading Canadian" – but it just so happened that virtually every memorable book of the year was the latest offering of a Canadian author. Most were born there; two, Carol Shields and Rohinton Mistry, were born in the USA and India respectively, but now call Canada home.

Opening a new novel by Carol Shields is always a delight, but reading *Unless* (Fourth Estate) was a bittersweet experience, because this will be her last novel. Carol Shields has terminal cancer and is now living on borrowed time. One would not blame a writer for falling into inertia after such a diagnosis, but for Shields it was the impetus to write a novel about a writer, writing a book about a writer, whose life is also divided into before and after by a critical happening. "*It happens that I am going through a period of great unhappiness and loss just now*" reads the first sentence. It may not be the same great unhappiness and loss which Carol Shields has lived with for the past three years, but the understanding she shows of how a woman copes with the mundanity of daily life when the world has changed forever is portrayed too knowingly to be attributed solely to her skill as a novelist.

Yet, in spite of the tension and grief of the situation, this is not a sad book. It is full of the delicate touches and the wry humour which have endeared Carol Shields to her readers since 1976 when her first novel was published when she was 40. There is anger too – caustic observations about book editors who don't listen, and a series of letters (never posted) to public figures who

### Book Reviews



can hold forth pompously about the world without once mentioning the contribution of women. One always leaves a Carol Shields novel knowing more about the intensity of quiet lives than when one started: I finished this one with sadness, knowing that there will be no more.

There is something fascinating about reading other people's letters. There are wonderful collections of letters of historical and literary figures which give great insight into the mood of their times (probably we have seen the last of them – "the collected e-mails of ..." doesn't have the same ring), and usually we take these as expressions of the truth as it appears to the writer. But how much of a letter is a facade, conveying the desired impression while the real person is unheard and unknown?

As a male writer, Richard B Wright has taken a risk in *Clara Callan* (Harper Collins) in telling of the interior lives of the two Callan sisters through their letters and journals, and it seems to have paid off. The calm disciplined exterior of Clara, the spinster sister who stays in small-town Ontario, hides a turbulent passionate nature which is revealed only to the journals: the letters to Nora, the younger adventurous sister who escapes to New York, are reassuring and sensible and convey what Clara wishes, but not what she is.

Set in the 1930s, *Clara Callan* is a quietly beautiful novel which is intimate and totally absorbing. The afterword, written by Clara's daughter after her mother's death, is deeply moving, an acknowledgement of how Clara was not understood because she chose not to tell her real story. Anyone who has

cleared personal papers after a death and has discovered, too late, secrets which explain so much, will feel a surge of recognition.

Rohinton Mistry was born in Bombay but has lived in Canada for 25 years. His third novel *Family Matters* (Faber and Faber), set in Bombay, tells of the often strained and never simple relationships within a Parsee family and the effects of unbending traditionalism and religious bigotry on the generations. There are secrets and shocks, warmth and love and resentment, the whole human situation worked out in one family in one tiny apartment. Rohinton Mistry has created some wonderfully memorable characters, their dialogue revealing them in all their complexity.

Even though this novel has an exotic setting which alone makes it fascinating reading, it encompasses truths which are universal. Family ties are strong, family hurts are deeper than any others, family matters are, ultimately, the only human ones in which most people find meaning in their lives. It is not surprising that both Canada and India want to claim Rohinton Mistry as their own.

In *The Navigator of New York* (Jonathan Cape) Wayne Johnston weaves fact and fiction in his story of Devlin Stead and his involvement in Frederick Cook's race for the North Pole in the first decade of the 20th century against his arch-enemy Robert Peary. Against this background of polar exploration is set Devlin Stead's search for his own identity.

The security of what he believes his background to be – child of an often-absent explorer father known mainly through newspaper accounts of his exploits and a loving mother who dies in doubtful circumstances when he is only young – is shaken by the arrival of a letter from a man purporting to be his real father. He is not just any man – he is the great explorer Frederick Cook, and the matter is complicated by the fact

*Psalms for the Road* Text by Joy Cowley, Photos by Terry Coles Catholic Supplies (NZ) Ltd Price: \$22.50 **Review: Roger Prowd**

**I**t has been an interesting experience reading Joy Cowley's *Psalms for the Road*. Unlike my use of her two previous books of psalms, this time I have absorbed myself in ten or twenty at a time, instead of just dipping into her books to find a quick moment of inspiration or a suitable prayer for a service or pastoral encounter. The affect has been quite different, an entering into a different space and rhythm of life where peacefulness came gently as a cloud and I found myself deeply reconnected to God.

The affect has also been a sense of reconnection to myself, an awareness that both myself and God can get so easily lost to the other me, the one that goes about life most of the time and like the frog in the heating water doesn't realise just what is happening.

Joy Cowley's psalms manage to halt this process in simple, unaffected ways that belie their keen spirituality. Their appeal lies in the sense of generosity and kindness with which they are offered to the reader, as if 'You can do this too, there is a place in this for you!' There is an experience of being set at ease in the presence of one whose art is so big that it is bountiful. There is plenty to go around, plenty to be explored, held and tasted, without fear.

Even the often disarming surprises at the end of many of the psalms are not experienced as rebukes, provoking a sense of inadequacy, but rather as invitations to get bigger oneself or even to laugh at the absurdity of life and one's setting on the stage.

Joy Cowley has established herself as one of the most accessible writers on prayer and spirituality in Aotearoa-New Zealand. In this book she has again demonstrated why this is so. Her psalms, complemented by the sensitive photo-graphy of Terry Coles, are about the ordinary things of life. The book's art is to transform the perception of them in ways that ring true to the reader's experience. Nowhere is this more powerful than in her profound incarnational understanding. Jesus is brought forward in time and made apparent in life around us: consider 'How could you miss me? Forget the history and politics that make truth small' (*The Eternal Lover*).

So she writes about children and parents, nature and beauty, hopes and pain, bringing them into the life of God, or rather shows them coming forth from the life of God. In her work all becomes holy, all becomes One. A special book. ■

*Rev Roger Prowd is Ecumenical Chaplain,  
Dunedin Public Hospital*

that Stead's nominal father has perished on a Peary expedition.

It all sounds rather "boys-own" material, but it doesn't come out that way. There is a gripping story, certainly, but there is also self-discovery and the facing of personal demons, some exquisite descriptions of the haunting beauty of the Arctic, and interesting observations as to why a man would choose the danger of polar exploration in preference to success in less strenuous fields – possibly more a dread of the latter than a love of the former: and "it was life as I would live it unless I went exploring that I dreaded".

**A**nd if your taste is not for the big novels but for small bites of Canadian literature, you need look

no further than the wonderful Alice Munro. Her 10th collection of short stories *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* has recently been published in Vintage paperback, nine beautifully-honed gems to treasure.

It is not for nothing that Alice Munro has been called Canada's Chekhov. Her stories are quiet and detail the secrets that so often are hidden beneath the veneer of ordinary lives. The atmosphere she creates is so believable that one can enter into it as though it were personally known, and supply personal experiences to fill the gaps: very often in an Alice Munro story what is not said resonates as loudly as what is. ■

*We will find those books  
for you!*

Books mentioned in this paper,  
or any other books you can't  
find, can be ordered from:



*OC Books*

Use our email to order – or  
to receive our fortnightly  
email newsletter

Tollfree 0800 886 226

39 Princes St,  
Dunedin Ph/Fax (03)  
477 9919 email:

shop@ocbooks.co.nz

<http://www.ocbooks.co.nz>

# Armageddon looming in the Middle East

At the beginning of the year the American war against terrorism was a subject in this column and, sadly, it continues to dominate world affairs at the close. The US makes its own *ad hoc* rules and has added assassination to its arsenal of unilateral action against perceived enemies.

Donald Rumsfeld was delighted and the expressionless eyes of Condoleezza Rice signalled approval when the assassination, by the CIA, of a suspected al-Qaida member (and five others) was reported by the White House. The murder took place in the sovereign state of Yemen.

Qaed Senyan al-Harithi, a suspect in the attack on the USS *Cole* two years ago, becomes the latest victim in the breakdown of international laws pertaining to the sovereignty of independent states and International Human Rights. The killing reminds us of similar CIA activity in Vietnam, Cuba and Afghanistan in the interests of US imperialism.

What has now been added to Washington's 'war on terrorism' is the unrelenting pressure by the US to wage war against Iraq, with or without the UN Security Council's ratification under Resolution 1441. Any such action against Iraq would be an unprovoked attack. The resistance by France and Russia seems to have been quashed. Ostensibly, these two countries have buckled under diplomatic and financial pressure.

George W. Bush, together with Tony Blair, is prepared to lead the world to – it seems to this writer – an Armageddon in the Middle East. This whole area is becoming more and more anti-American as the military satellite of the US, Israel, continues its subjugation of the Palestinian people. Israel is building a barrier twice as long and three times as

high as the Berlin Wall around the West Bank and Jerusalem. The physical and psychological separation between the US and Islam is growing ex-potentially. We will all suffer.

## Crosscurrents

John Honoré

### Crumbs for Lazarus

The US Trade Representative Bob Zoellick simply said that Congress would be asked about a trade deal with New Zealand – and Helen Clark, together with several captains of NZ industry, went into a paroxysm of joy. If we had another Te Kaha, we would send that limping away to the Gulf in thanks for this nod in our direction, this crumb from the table.

For the US, trade liberalisation means open access for American multinational companies, aggressively promoted by the WTO and IMF. Witness Bush's tariffs on imported steel and his massive increase in farm subsidies. The rest of the world must adopt this US version of free trade. A trade deal with the US must also include obeisance to Bush's self-styled war on terror and tangible support for his war against Iraq. Free trade with the US means supporting American goals and values.

On September 20, Zoellick wrote in the *Washington Post* under the title "Countering Terror with Trade", that America's light and might emanate from its political, military and economic vitality which requires the US to advance its leadership across all these fronts. Bob Zoellick must have been astonished at the reaction to a PS on his letter to Australia. Despite Helen Clark calling it "fantastic", I would call myself Père Noël if it ever happened.

### The fall of Ross Armstrong

Fortunately, corruption is not a feature of NZ politics, but the latest affair involving Dr Ross Armstrong shows how it pays to have friends in high places. Dr Armstrong, a close confidant of Helen Clark, and a member of that group of professional board-chairmen and directors who seem able to flick off lucrative positions of power among themselves, has been called to account. The uncaring arrogance with which these people spend public money, comes from the surety of the 'old boy network' and the patronage of the political party in power. Helen Clark thought the matter closed when she removed Dr Armstrong from her guest list and obliged him to pay back \$1000 for a modest dinner. The Auditor-General had other ideas. Now we learn that Dr Armstrong ran up over \$50,000 expenses while chairman of TVNZ, which included \$6500 on taxis and a \$6000 bill spent in Paris (on what?). The Labour Party is dangerously close to proving that old adage – power corrupts.

Caught in the imbroglia is TVNZ itself which has been asked to explain the costly use of corporate boxes. I would like to know who gets invited to them. No doubt the guests will all be named as clients and no doubt there will be a few 'friends' of Dr Armstrong, together with a clutch of politicians. And while on the subject of patronage and cronyism, who exactly makes up the entourage of the Prime Minister's frequent overseas trips, apart from Dr Ross Armstrong and the jolly Marian Hobbs?

But this is the season of goodwill. Even though the world appears in a parlous state, remember that at the bottom of Pandora's box was revealed Hope. So I remain optimistic. To all *Tui Motu* readers, I extend my wishes for a holy and a happy Christmas. ■



Thirty years ago the Western (Latin) section of the Catholic Church updated the selection of scripture readings to be used at Mass. Those with longer memories will recall that until then the same Sunday readings were used year after year. There were legends about parish priests who had fifty two sermons repeated word for word each year. When with advancing age they occasionally could not think of the next sentence, there were reported always to be several in the congregation who could prompt them as to what words were to be said next. Whatever of that, those attending weekday Mass suffered from there being for most days only a small pool of readings from which the scriptures of the Mass were drawn.

A new arrangement was introduced. Sundays have a three year cycle during which the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are read on successive years. John's Gospel is woven in at appropriate places. There is a first reading each Sunday from the Old Testament, throwing light on the Gospel of that Sunday. For good measure, as almost an embarrassing surfeit of riches, in the second reading we wend our way on successive Sundays through a book of the New Testament. Weekdays have their own two year cycle, during which representative passages are read from practically every book in the Bible.

The merits of the reform were numerous. To mention just one: each of the three synoptic Gospels has its own nuances, bringing its own layer of understanding to the overall message of salvation. In the older system, in which Mark (my sources tell me) was read on only two Sunday's in the year, it was impossible for preachers to bring out the special contribution

each Synoptic Gospel had to make to our understanding of the Faith. This can now readily be done.

This reform is now for us just the accepted order of things. But it was in inter-church terms a touchy one. The reform, in earlier times, of the calendar, a basically secular matter, had taken centuries to be grudgingly received by those outside the Roman fold. How would this Roman initiative dealing with the bible readings that form the basis for Christian worship be received?

The welcome given to the new lectionary was a warm one. With only minor adaptations, many churches other than the Catholic Church have authorized its use, at least as an alternative cycle of Scripture readings. Under the name of the Common Lectionary, it is used Sunday by Sunday in the services of many denominations.

Reflecting together on the same passages of Scripture Sunday by Sunday is a simple but powerful way of furthering unity among Christians. Most Catholics are unaware of the existence of the Common Lectionary. Only on the rare occasions when they on the same Sunday both attend Mass and take part in a service of another church do they realize that the same readings are being used. But quietly and pervasively the Common Lectionary is having its good effect.

Full unity among Christians has yet to come. But the ready acceptance by others of a Roman Catholic initiative in so basic a matter is an indication that we have already come a long way along the road to unity. ■

TUI MOTU-INTERISLANDS SUBSCRIPTION

*If you know a friend who might enjoy reading Tui Motu – and perhaps become a subscriber – then fill in the name below and send it to:*

**Freepost No. 97407  
P O Box 6404  
Dunedin North 9030**

*– and we will send them a free copy.*

Name:.....  
.....

Address:.....  
.....

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

..... Area Code.....

\$22 for FIVE ISSUES ☐

\$44 for ONE YEAR'S Subscription (11 issues) ☐

Overseas – all regions: \$60 ☐

I enclose a cheque for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Payable to: *Tui Motu-InterIslands*)

or please debit my credit card (Visa/Mastercard)

Card No: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

***Mail to Freepost 97407, P O Box 6404 DUNEDIN NORTH 9030***

email: [tuimotu@earthlight.co.nz](mailto:tuimotu@earthlight.co.nz)



# More parables

## The talents

**M**y life is the parable of the talents. You have a responsibility to use the talent God gives you. You live always in the shadow of having certain gifts, and you are answerable for them. You either have the courage to answer the call and use them – or you bury them!

People say to me: 'It's easy for you'... but it's not easy. It is like walking on water – and that takes courage. You can spend your life waiting for people to ask you to do things. But if you have a talent, you just have to decide to use it. Many women of my age have lacked the courage to do the things they would really like to do. I think you are given a talent for a reason. It is there to use in the service of God, in some way.

Creating the *Stations of the Cross* took me back to the Scriptures. Jesus being nailed to the Cross (*see inside front cover*) was my biggest challenge: I found it technically impossible. There wasn't room for two figures. I had to show the agony of being nailed. I sat in front of it for weeks. Eventually I said to God: "You want it? You do it!" And I sat down and did it within a couple of hours, forming the wire framing.

My mother used to say she couldn't bear a crucifix where Christ looks as if he is going out to a dinner party! I agree. His was an appalling death, and we have tried to whitewash it. We can forget that this was a real death, that Christ died for us!

I am inspired to do this work. These *Stations* were not made to sell. They may be used rather like icons, for personal meditation. And they are also virtually indestructible. I love to think that perhaps my great grandchildren will inherit them and know that I created them.

I may never know the reason why I'm doing this work. For instance, a young man died in an accident at Christmas time. Later his wife unwrapped his present to her, and it was one of my icons – a *Virgin and Child*. It is the one thing she has kept, his last gift to her. She was expecting their child at the time.

If I fail to use the gifts I have, there is a 'death'. I have failed to pass on the gift. I am being 'used' – that is the sense I have.

*Mary Barker*

*Mary Barker is an Auckland artist. Her enamels are described and illustrated on the inside front cover and on page 1*

## The Two Sons

**S**ometimes we call it the story of the Prodigal Son. It's one of the most prayed over and written about of all of Jesus' parables. Great artists like Rembrandt painted masterpieces inspired by it. Henri Nouwen wrote a beautiful book about it.

A parable is a story, and it makes sense to us when the story resonates with something in our own lives. Perhaps when we are in need of forgiveness, we find consolation in this story. However, this particular parable can touch us still more profoundly because it also resonates with one of the great human archetypal tensions, namely the rivalry of siblings.

When the Jews heard Jesus tell it, they would instinctively have put it into the frame of their Biblical memory of brothers vying with each other. Cain the first murderer slew his brother Abel out of jealousy. And Jacob, the great patriarch and 'father' of the 12 tribes, is drawn in the Book of Genesis as the classical usurper. From the moment of his birth he supplanted his elder brother Esau.

But these two patriarchal figures also represent peoples. Esau the redhead is the ancestor of the people of the land who

inhabited part of Palestine when Moses and Joshua arrived to take their land from them. Israel is another name for Jacob, and the 12 tribes invaded and subdued the Promised Land like many a conqueror before and since.

This Christmas, Bethlehem, city of David, rings again with the cries of a suppressed and assaulted people. Another supplanter claims his inheritance. The vanquished – Christian and Muslim alike – claim also to be the descendants of Abraham. But the story of Abel, of Esau, is repeated again – and its final solution can only be found in Jesus' parable.

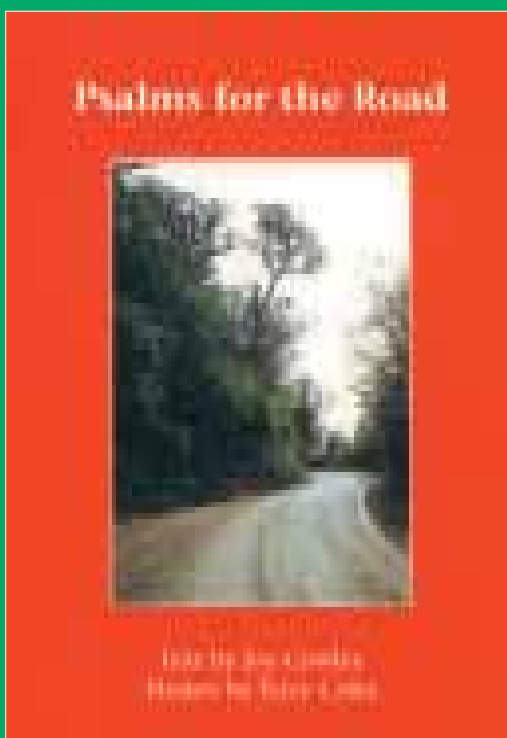
"Your brother who was lost, is found". "All I have is yours". When people move across the earth and claim another patch of God's land, they come either to share or to steal. And the prior occupier either extends the hand of welcome or the fist of repulse.

When Muslim and Christian and Jew choose to live side by side in harmony, then God's kingdom will have come. When Maori and Pakeha and Pacific Islander live side by side and love each other as brothers and sisters, then Aotearoa will become God's land.

The parable of the Prodigal Son was left unfinished by Jesus. It is left to us to compose the final verse.

*M.H.*

CATHOLIC SUPPLIES (NZ) LTD  
Serving the Wider Christian Community since 1918



## **Psalms for the Road**

Text by Joy Cowley – Photos by Terry Coles

*“Through this book, Joy Cowley offers us the hospitality of her heart, offers us God as companion, the land and city streets as places of divinity, our brothers, sisters and strangers as pilgrims on the road. These prayers hum and ring with reverence for life in all its forms”*

Anne Powell, Cenacle Sisters, Wellington

**Pbk 120p @\$22.50 + p&p 80c**

Mail orders our speciality – all major credit cards accepted

CATHOLIC SUPPLIES (NZ) LTD, 85-89 Adelaide Rd, P O Box 16 110, Wellington, 6002, New Zealand  
Phone: 04 384 3665 \* Fax 04 384 3663 \* Freephone 0800 882 284 or \* email: [sales@catholicsupplies.co.nz](mailto:sales@catholicsupplies.co.nz)



*Order now to ensure your copy  
of this special book for Christmas.*

RRP\$35 plus \$2 p+p

Yes! I wish to order \_\_\_\_\_ copies of  
**Spirituality in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Enclosed is my cheque for \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please Pay: **Accent Publications**

P O Box 47-086, Ponsonby, Auckland

Tel: 09 361 2283 Fax 09 361 2284

Email: [Accent.publications@bigfoot.com](mailto:Accent.publications@bigfoot.com)

***In the Spirit of Christmas  
give a gift that will make a  
difference!***

## **Spirituality in Aotearoa New Zealand: He Kupu Whakawairua Catholic Voices**

Edited by Helen Bergin OP &  
Susan Smith RNDM

**Joy Cowley says:**

*This is the book we'll be giving each other  
for Christmas. Like a family album, it has  
images we recognize, situations we share and a faith  
background that is as familiar as the shape of Aotearoa. It's a book of  
celebration It's about our history, social responsibility, education, family  
life, justice, vocations. It's all good stuff! Marvellous stuff! It's the kind  
of reading that has us standing on our hands and clapping our heels in*

Accent Publications proudly presents our latest book. This is a unique  
collection. Fifteen well known Catholics write on New Zealand spirituality  
today. Bob and Diane Strevens, Neil Darragh, Hugh Laracy, Henare Tate,  
Alice Sinnott, Tui Cadogan, Vincent Hunt, Terry Dibble all deliver insightful  
reflection on the contemporary Church.

***This is a book for Catholics, those who used to be and  
those who wonder what makes Catholics tick.***

