Tui Motu

InterIslands

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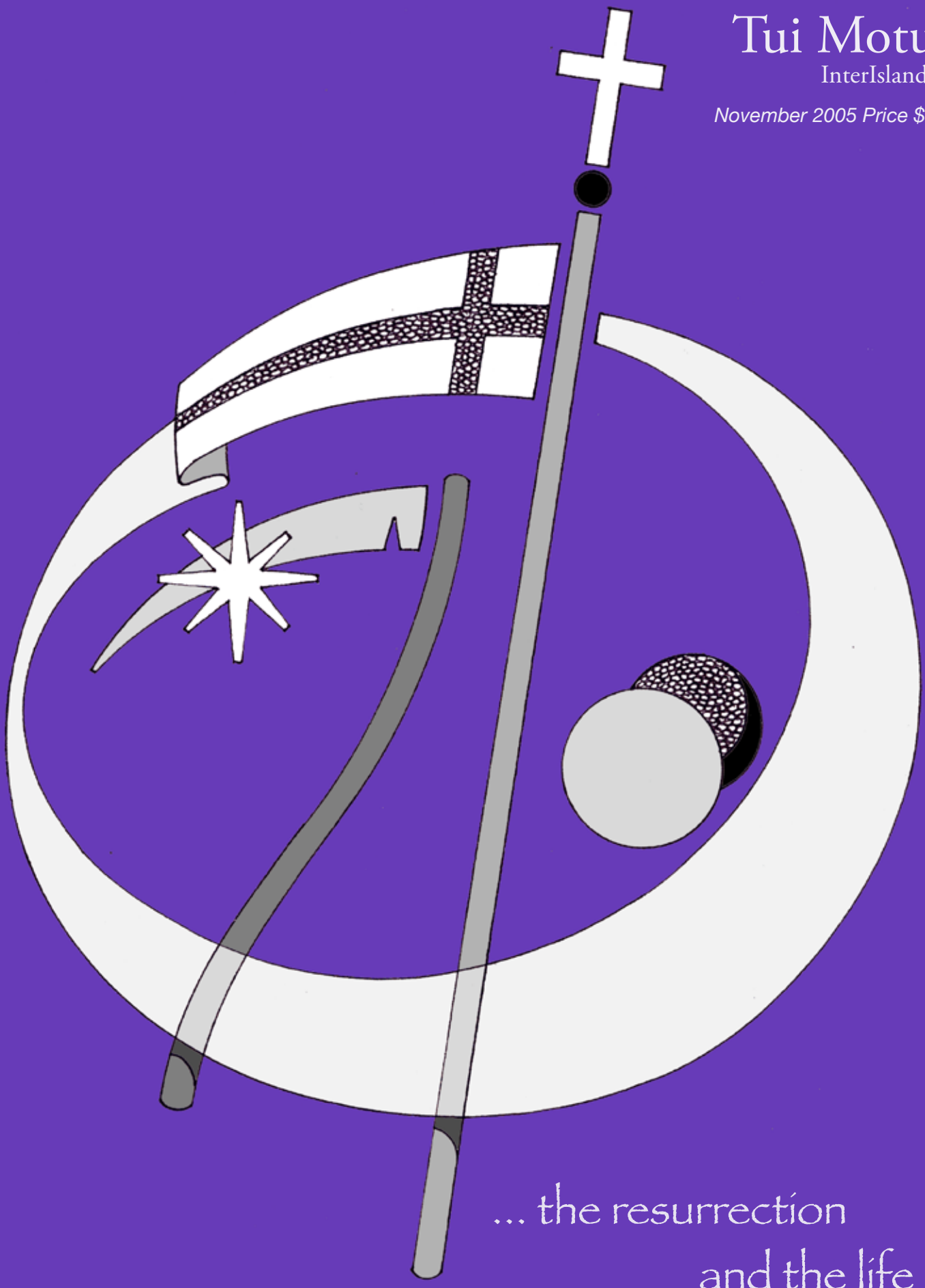

... the resurrection
and the life

Remembering the dead

Contents

November, in the Catholic tradition, is the month for remembering the dead. One reason is that in the Northern Hemisphere November is *Brumaire*, the month of mists and shadows, when the season changes rapidly, when days become shorter and darker. The time when nature goes into repose and wears the mantle of death.

The old liturgy reflected this. On the first days of November the church celebrated All Saints and commemorated All Souls. The two feasts flowed into each other. Really it was a celebration of the *Communion of Saints*. It reminds us that those who have gone ahead of us still belong to us and we belong to them.

Sadly, in today's secular world the celebration of these 'holydays' has gone, and even the church has downplayed them. All that remains is the ghoulish practice of Hallowe'en imported from the United States. But in some parts of Europe it is still the custom to visit cemeteries in November, pray for friends and forebears, and deck tombs with autumn flowers. It is a wholesome practice, well worthy of our emulation.

The way we as Christians regard death centres upon our belief in the Resurrection. Jesus the man died a shameful death on Calvary; Christ the Son of God rose again and lives on in us who believe in him. The door to eternity is unlocked for each one of us.

This week I have been to three funerals. Neil was revered as a Christian gentleman, a loving father, husband and parishioner. He and his wife had attended our little parish church for 60 years. He was truly a faithful servant. Campion was a Sister of Mercy – gentle, kindly and beloved by pupils, parents and fellow religious alike. Hers was a vocation 'well fulfilled'. Henry, a Christian Brother, was another wonderful character, a legend at the local Catholic High School, a man of rare charity, a great religious (*see opposite*).

At such a funeral we grieve the loss of a friend, yet in faith we celebrate a life which has been well lived, which has influenced both ourselves and many others for the good. In a true sense we are remembering these departed ones as belonging already to 'all saints'. There is joy as well as loss.

But not all deaths are like that, as well we know. Opposite also, University Chaplain Mark Chamberlain describes the sudden death of a young student. The whole student body, as well as family and immediate circle of friends, is shattered and in need of comfort and special prayer. As the *Book of Wisdom* says, such deaths 'seem like annihilation'.

Even harder to fathom and to live with is suicide. The suicide of someone close always tortures us. *Tui Motu* devotes several pages to this theme (pp 10-13). Daniel O'Leary emphasises that it is a sickness of the mind, that whatever tragedy a human being may inflict – on self or others – the heart of God is always bigger than we can imagine. Once upon a time the only way either church or society could deal with it was

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Tui Motu-InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed. The name Tui Motu was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.
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by criminalising it. Thank God, today wiser counsels prevail. We see suicide as the final cry for help: a cry which only the compassion of God can fully comprehend.

Death is the ultimate mystery of life. Only faith can provide us with some glimmer of understanding. The early Christians have much to teach us here. For them death, through human misadventure or persecution, was an ever-present reality. Yet when they visited the tombs of their loved ones in the catacombs there was no sense of hubris or despair.

Their artwork and inscriptions are full of hope. The death of a loved one is described as 'falling asleep', a passage into new life, a joining with Christ – the Good Shepherd whose image is everywhere on the walls of those fascinating corridors of faith.

Those who have died are our friends, our loved ones, our exemplars. We are on the journey; they have arrived. So let our prayers and the memory of their lives be a source of joy and consolation during this month which, for us in the south, is the time of rebirth, of resurrection in every sense, of anticipation of the Saviour's coming.

M.H.

Death of a friend

He was only 22 years old. There is no way of conveying the sinking feeling in my stomach as I am phoned with the news that one of our students has suddenly died. Part of that feeling is denial that this is so; another part comes with the appreciation of the trauma for all involved. Every relationship, close or more distant, trembles with the incomprehensibility of death.

As chaplains at Otago University, we work together. We have developed over the years a 'critical incident plan': our services work side by side, so we can offer a good response to moments such as this. The students gather and give time for listening, tears and laughter. After the initial shock we become aware how much we have loved this companion. The students, time and time again, have shown me how important it is to care for one another as the pain is felt. They are wonderful at gathering together when one of their own has died. We all need special care during such times of pain.

Gradually a time comes to pray and remember. We gathered in *Holy Name* church once again, as we had done only a week before, for another memorial occasion. With prayers, music, data photos, storytelling, holding and tears, we move together to reach into the mystery of death. I was moved by the faces of those who lit a candle or with great dignity placed a single daffodil in gratitude for the life of a friend.

Throughout these student gatherings, the light of the Paschal candle flickers. These moments happen within the moment of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Our faith is a way we have of standing when death comes. Death is always an interruption, even when waited for. Life has changed.

We remember our baptism, of our belonging to the life and death of Jesus. This enables us to sense intimations of life continuing beyond this death, of eternal life being gifted. Those who have gone ahead remain with us: we can't see them. They are present, not absent from our lives. They belong to us as much as we are part of them all. Like the students they too gather around us in prayer and with great love.

Mark Chamberlain

Brother Henry Shepherd CFC

John Shepherd, equally well known by his religious name Brother Henry, died in Dunedin on October 22. He had been a Christian Brother for over 40 years. He taught all over New Zealand, but in recent years he had been a key member of the Kavanagh College staff.

Br Shepherd (left), with Bishop Colin Campbell at his ordination

Paul Ferris, the College Principal, describes Br Henry as "a very humble and happy man. As a teacher he spent countless hours throughout his religious life tutoring pupils at night as part of his commitment to making sure they were successful. He was passionate about his Christian faith and the practice of the faith, and he never gave up on the young people who didn't share his sense of enthusiasm.

"His great legacy to the school was his founding of the Edmund Rice Camps – through his immense enthusiasm literally thousands of young people became involved, giving those who would not have had the chance to enjoy a good holiday. Around the school he was always a keen participant in all the special events, and he will be long remembered sporting a yellow-haired wig and canary suit. But more than anything he will be remembered as one who was *gentle and humble of heart*".

At *Tui Motu* we valued Br Henry for his voluntary work in keeping our accounts during 2003-4. But more than that, we treasured his ever-cheerful presence and rich sense of humour. Henry was a very good and humble man who will be missed by his many friends.

May he rest in peace

Where spleen should be vented

Perhaps John Honoré would like to vent his spleen on our Government's handling of the upheaval in Matata, where New Zealand people have been waiting for about five months to get some assistance for their area.

Let him also cast his mind back to the floods in the Manawatu area, when the citizens living in the Waitotara Valley had to wait for many days before they were reconnected to the rest of New Zealand by phone and road.

It's so easy to sit in a country of four million people and cast massive rocks at the Americans for their handling of the recent upheaval in the Southern States due to Hurricane Katrina. As I saw it, troops and aid workers were on the job within a couple of days.

Margaret Hurley, Palmerston North

The dream-Apostle Paul – 1

Perhaps the dream-Apostle (*Editorial October*) was not knocked off his horse hard enough as he is still condemning people. But he endorses the Greens (the most pro-abortion of all) because "they really care for the little ones.." What a relief it was only a dream.

T Rademaker, Christchurch

letters to the editor ✍

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not altering meaning.

Response articles (up to a page) are also welcome, but need to be by negotiation

The dream-Apostle Paul – 2

Your dream fantasy is a gem. It has shown that a little light-hearted humour can be effective in holding a mirror in front of people and make them aware of their sophistries and pretentiousness.

Misguidedness, in the case of our fellow Christians, you dealt with beautifully in the final sentence. During the election campaign I wasted much time and print trying to express much the same through tedious reasoned discussion – with little impact.

Frank Hoffmann, Drury

The dream-Apostle Paul – 3

While it's true that the Green party has an exemplary record on many justice and peace issues, it is odd that a *Tui Motu* editorial could conjecture that the Greens "really do care for the little ones".

The Greens have done nothing to stop the killing of the 18,211 innocent little ones aborted last year. They raised not one word of protest or took not one act in defence of these innocent little ones. Their voting record on abortion is appalling. The Greens support for "the little ones" appears to be rather selective.

Chris Sullivan, Pakuranga

If so many MPs have voted pro-abortion, then we as Christians should first reproach ourselves for failing to get the pro-Life message across.

Judged in terms of Cardinal Bernardin's 'Consistent Ethic of Life', the Greens would come out well ahead of other NZ political parties. To label the Green's philosophy as pro-abortion is like saying that the essence of Catholic priesthood is to be paedophile. It is a tragic aberration.

And now we have Mr Peters in place of Ms FitzSimons as the Labour government's social conscience. Some solace!

See also below – an offering on behalf of "mainstream farmers". ed.

I had a dream . . .

Having read your editorial I too fell asleep with the Apostle Paul's punchline about the Greens still in my ears – and had a vivid dream. . .

"Virtually all Christians in New Zealand read *Tui Motu* and were mightily impressed by the *October* editorial. In the winter of 2006 Helen Clark's hotchpotch government fell apart, and the country went to the polls with that editorial fresh in their minds. The Christians reasoned: 'St Paul can't possibly be wrong'. The Greens swept to a landslide victory. No coalitions needed: a massive majority. Just go to it, Jeanette and Rod – and they did.

"Within a year they had:

• put a punitive tax on use of inorganic fertilisers, superphosphate, urea etc.

• banned the use of selenium, molybdenum and other trace elements in farming

• restricted livestock drenches to those considered organic (cider vinegar?)

• banned all orchard and crop sprays deemed non-organic

• legislated for all local authorities to conduct a poll on the use of common food and water additives – fluoridated water, iodised salt etc.

"And that was only the beginning. The Green's administration ran full term. In the run up to the 2010 elections St Paul came down in person to NZ to check up. He toured the country (on foot and bicycle of course) and found to his surprise...

• the farming industry in crisis – run out pastures, weeds, dry matter yields that didn't bear thinking about

• sheep and cattle numbers severely reduced...

• the horticulture export industry wiped out. The Japanese codling moth in our apples...

• thin daggy and dejected lambs all through the countryside

• and on the West Coast he wondered why so many children had such swollen, lumpy throats. (Those feisty Coasters had voted against the fluoridation of water even before the Greens came to power)."

At that stage I woke up and realised... it wasn't a dream; it was a nightmare. (*abridged*)

Des McSweeney, Akaroa

This letter has been referred to the Green Party for comment

What constitutes a war crime?

The August '05 editorial linking the recent terrorist bombings in London with dropping the A-bomb on Hiroshima troubled me. It is important to discriminate between a criminal act committed by a terrorist organisation and an act of war that arguably saved millions of lives in Japan, as well as among the Allied forces. To call Hiroshima not only a war crime, but also "a symbol of callous and unprincipled violence wrought by one people over another" is a rather harsh judgment, which would appear to ignore the historical circumstances.

Nation states have committed, and still do commit, terrorist acts against their own and other peoples, but I don't believe the atomic bombing of Japan belongs in that category. It makes more sense to judge the fire bombings of Shanghai, London, Coventry and Dresden as war crimes, because they had no other strategic purpose than to terrorise the populace and break its will to resist. In hindsight we know that such tactics failed utterly.

The same cannot be said about the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The evidence indicates that the Japanese were aware that the war was lost, but were so determined to make the Allies pay such a high price for any attack on the mainland that they would sue for peace and Japan would preserve its sovereignty. They were warned about the destructive power of the bomb and were repeatedly offered opportunities to surrender unconditionally. They refused and the war party in government was still willing to fight on, even after the bombing of Nagasaki.

It was only the intervention of Emperor Hirohito that ended the war. If the bomb had not been used, the Allies calculated that they would have lost over a million lives of their own and this does not take into consideration how many Japanese lives would have been lost. I believe that the Truman administration and its military advisors were making the same sort of judgment to save lives.

We should find forgiveness for those who made the decision and those who dropped the bombs, for there were no good choices to make and I believe they chose the lesser of evils in good faith. It was a war the Allies did not start and it had to be ended. We shall never know whether or not there was something else that might have been done to persuade the Japanese to surrender.

Long after the war was over we began to realise that the bomb was more than a huge explosive device comparable to 10,000 tons of TNT. It poisoned the people and the earth with extremely toxic radiation, but this was so poorly understood that we exposed our own troops to it during the Cold War arms race that followed. As always, our hindsight is much better than our foresight. When making moral judgments about the actions of others we have a responsibility to use that superior hindsight with great care and compassion.

The terrorist attacks on the London transport system, like the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre, were extraordinary crimes. The latter should *never* have been treated like an act of war. Had the perpetrators who planned and financed the 9/11 attacks been pursued like the Lockerbie bombers, the entire world including the vast majority of Muslim nations would have had no choice but to support the anti-terrorist campaign.

The militant and politicised factions like Al Qaeda and its allies would have been isolated. I believe the Bush and Blair administrations have made grievous errors by treating that terrorist attack as an act of war and by using the euphemism to escalate their conflict with Al Qaeda into wars against Afghanistan and Iraq. These acts have swollen support for the militants and united many more Muslims against the Western powers. *By linking the London terrorist attacks with Hiroshima we make a similar error.* ■

Paul Green

Tree of Life

Thanks as always for sending *Tui Motu*. It's a real breath of fresh air. I was struck by the ***Tree of Life*** picture on the latest cover.

I have a similar thing on my desk – a cross made from a spent bullet. It's an initiative from Liberia and now provides an income for 30 Liberians in the aftermath of civil war.

Br Christopher John SSF, Korea

Creed and Credibility in a Critical Age

Jacquie Lambert was one of the opening speakers at the September Colloquium in Palmerston North celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Diocese. Her task was to identify some of the 'gaps' where the modern church lacks credibility. This is an amended version of her address.

We do not all have the same experience of church, and if the institutional church really wants to know whether its lofty Catholic ideals are being brought to fruition, it needs to go to the darkest, most isolated, forgotten or ignored part of its membership and ask there. It needs to go to its own lepers. Then it needs to listen and listen carefully. The church looks very different when seen from the bottom looking up. In a sweepingly simplistic way I've chosen to reduce the issue of credibility to two basic questions:

What do we say we as Catholics are ultimately about?

Do we as Catholics act in a way that supports that?

Between these two lies the gap.

Identifying these religious hazards in each generation is critical. The trouble is that most of them are only seen 'as through a glass darkly'. We might like to think that our Catholic or even Christian truths are absolute, but perhaps the only absolute truths we can trust are that we don't fully understand it all and we're not really in control. In many ways we're still spiritual children, and God grows us not only through the church but also through the rest of the family. Many defining visions have come from the most unlikely sources, sources the church has been known to initially dismiss, outlaw or ignore. The Spirit appears to find a freedom of expression in these souls, a freedom seemingly often denied her in the belly of the church itself.

For this reason we must take seriously the criticisms of credibility that come to us from both inside and outside our church. Both may possess a wisdom worthy of respect, and we ignore them at our peril. Sue Monk Kidd writes: "When you can't go forward and you can't go back and you can't stay where you are without killing what is deep and vital in yourself, then you are on the edge of creation."

And the truth is that the church cannot go back and it cannot stay where it is regardless of how hard it is trying and the future looks decidedly murky. So what does this mean? It means that we have an incredible opportunity to reframe and refresh and resurrect. The enormity of God's love must always keep doctrine on its toes; it's always more than we can explain or understand.

What would the inspectors think?

I have wondered on occasion what God would say if the church were to have its millennial divine performance appraisal. Would God find us credible based on the legacy of his Son? I have imagined in my darker moments that in the performance stakes we would be considered to have overstepped our authority on occasion, to have neglected to invite our CEO to one or two fairly critical planning and policy meetings, and to have focused too much investment in the corporate takeover, marketing, personal accounts and debt collection departments and too little in complaints procedures, customer service and repair.

I also suspect we may face insider trading litigation and accusations of head office fraud and financial padding at the cost of branch management resourcing. Of course this is only in my more cynical moments.

As I spoke with people inside and outside the church about this topic four issues arose:

a) Many of the gaps shared common foundations.

b) Often there were the same credibility issues for people both inside and outside the church.

c) It was not so much core beliefs or doctrine that caused the biggest credibility problems for people. It was the *church as an institution*, its processes, power, and structures, and its relative intolerance and acceptance of them and their families at times that caused greatest concern.

d) And there was the 'sin' of omission, things people did not see in the institutional church: humility, tolerance, inclusion, and – amazingly – joy.

So I'm going to consider just a few of these issues under characteristics I believe would be considered important hallmarks of our faith:

- ***Love***, living the centre of our faith
- Power and ***Humility***
- Diversity and ***Inclusion***
- Images of ***Priesthood***

1. God's Love: living the centre of our faith

The 'what we are ultimately about' is part of my simplistic definition of credibility. You would struggle to find a single person at odds with the idea of Christ's unconditional love being a credible foundation for the Catholic Church. But you might also struggle to find people who feel that the church is genuinely striving to embody that – and there lies a huge credibility gap.

So we must ask ourselves: is our institution trying to be loving? Is it looking after its family of priests lovingly, a contemporary priesthood where there exists pain, isolation, stress and worrying levels of depression at times?

Is your parish a loving environment? What would that look like, feel like? Every parish/institutional decision or direction should be framed around that question. Are we genuinely trying to love as we are loved.

I don't know about you, but that frustratingly difficult idea of love is what my faith is all about. The impossibility of living up to it is what keeps me honest. The unconditional offer of it every day from God to me, I find miraculous and humbling. It reminds me that I have a lifetime of work ahead of me just trying to get myself in some kind of order without worrying about judging anyone else. It holds me lovingly in my own gutter so I can sit with others there and accept them where they are, working for love rather than correctness; and I think perhaps the church hasn't spent enough time in its own gutter in recent centuries.

This love was Christ's profound point of difference, and without it we have nothing to offer other than our own obsessions and pompous self-righteousness. It is not naïve. It's ultimately all we have: so impossible in its audacity, it has to be divine – but are we are too scared to let it loose?

2. The issue of Power and Humility.

The church is struggling to give answers, old and new, but in doing so we are being seduced by the secular need for definition and solutions and away from the essence of Christ's love. In a world where society is trying to foster personal accountability, determination and empowerment, the church is continuing to model a heavily parental and authoritarian role. The jarring of this discrepancy for many is just too hard to live with: the answer for most outside the church is to simply ignore it, and for those inside is to follow their consciences regardless of official doctrine.

None of us has to look far to find all kinds of people and institutions ready and willing to tell us how to live. People do not need decisions made for them; they need to be supported and accepted through the painful process it may take to make them on their own. We don't have to get it right, we just have to try and love people through the pain and joys of life – and this is a key paradigm shift that I believe the church as an institution has never truly made.

Does this smack of secular individualism? Perhaps. But I think the church has too often thrown out charges of individualism as a way to simply scare people and endorse its own parental agenda. Groups are made up of individuals and the strength of groups reflects the strength of its individuals Disempowerment weakens the individual and by consequence the church.

Christ touched people as individuals in a world that barely even acknowledged them. He met them where they were as people with their own history, experience and faith or lack of it; and often sent them on their way with little more direct guidance than 'sin no more', leaving it to them to work out what that meant in their own hearts. And of course they made mistakes but that should come as no surprise. Institution, age, wisdom and a clerical collar or a crimson cape afford no protection against that.

This leads into another authority issue in the credibility question: *transparency*, important for any institution's credibility. In the wake of the sexual abuse scandals we must be transparent and not just to outsiders. Most people including Catholics themselves are beyond submitting to the 'have faith and trust us' scenario, and the church has been largely responsible for that cynicism by its own actions.

3. Diversity and Inclusion.

Several key credibility issues raise their heads under this topic. Examples of ▷▷

these are the shameful exclusion of women from the priesthood, of other Christians at our table, the plight of divorced Catholics, gay Catholics, the changing face of what it means to be a family – to name but a few. But this idea of diversity and inclusiveness is a key point in many credibility issues, not the least because it is actually something that the church does amazingly well on the one hand and yet in other ways we suck badly.

Can we any longer say with absolute assurance what defines a 'family'? And is that because the definition has changed or simply that our limitations have been exposed. The official church view may give one definition of family, but what if we polled its members?

The issues of divorce and sexuality are good examples here. The church has a position on both those. But within our churches, particularly our older members know the struggle of what it takes to keep a loving family together through overwork and stress, divorce, through homosexuality, through remarriage; the compromises, the tolerance, the patience, the forgiveness, the compassion. They are living the gospel and feeling let down by the institution. Who is the more credible in this?

And what about inter-denominational inclusion. How can we be credible as a loving institution that harbours the compassion and inclusion of God when we deny our believing brothers and sisters a place at our table. There seems no credible answer to this exclusion any more, and hiding behind lofty theologies won't cut it any longer. I often wonder how it might have been different if we had chosen foot washing as the centre of our worship instead.

We must look again at what it means to be Catholic and to be a credibly welcoming and compassionate church. Catholicism is a lived experience, not a check list. The Catholic church is a complex animal and therein lies its most precious treasure. Within this family most people can find a home, from hermit to charismatic, mystic to scholar; and if there isn't a home there is a potential to develop new real estate and build yourself one.

We are not and never have been like peas in a pod. That is our strength. That is inclusion. That is gospel. We were never called to like, approve of or even understand our neighbour, only to love and accept them.

4. Priesthood.

In an age when the concept of family is becoming increasingly complex and stressed – and the priesthood is suffering a support crisis of its own, the question of married clergy seems another no brainer as a credibility issue regardless of which side you align with. I believe most parishioners who support a married priesthood, do so because they genuinely want to see their priests in supportive, intimate family environments, something they believe their priests may be missing and are very much in need of, in the current environment of their ministry.

And the concept of priesthood itself is changing. People are looking for less of an intermediary and more for someone of faith and skill and knowledge/wisdom to walk beside them and mentor their faith journey. They are looking for a spiritual home, not just a sacramental experience – an Emmaus road companion. Currently we are running around trying to plug a bleeding sacramental timetable. Is this a credible response? Maybe we should be asking tougher questions.

On the issue of priestly vocations, I also offer some food for thought. People pray for more vocations. I asked myself another question not long ago. If you were God wanting to reach into the heart of Catholicism and breathe new life into it, would you inspire more vocations so that you would have more of the same? What reason would the church have to change then? So maybe – just *maybe* – the Sprit is already at work.

Summary

Rome has not cornered the exclusive rights to wisdom just yet, at least not last time I looked. So as a New Zealand church we must be courageous. If we are to narrow the credibility gaps, we must ask ourselves these core questions:

- Do we come from a striving for unconditional love?
- Do we reflect humility and are we empowering? Are we transparent?
- Are we inclusive, compassionate and forgiving?
- Can our existing model of priesthood facilitate what we need to do?
- And lastly, are we showing a willingness to risk it all for the core of our faith, to be faithful to the delicious scandal of the gospel? I ask this because I still believe in this church and its capacity to do just that. ■

The death that nobody noticed

Michael Goodson

The Americans are fond of the '*Where were you when?*' line of questioning. This initial opening is followed by reminiscences of such tragedies as the Kennedy assassination(s), or that of Martin Luther King, or the attacks on the World Trade Centre. The assumption is that the first news of a major catastrophe will imprint the time and place of the hearing onto a person's memory, like the images of vaporised civilians, burned onto the walls of Hiroshima buildings.

I was in the Moorhouse Ave *Pak'n Save*, close to the fresh flowers, in the early afternoon when an acquaintance told me of Princess Diana's death. Along with most of the Western world, I watched the sombre pageantry of her funeral service in London, unaware that at the same moment, Mother Theresa of Calcutta was forever taking leave of her work in India. Her everlasting holiday was, apparently, her first in 60 years. The world was so focused on London that it only slowly awoke to the fact of Mother Theresa's passing. Few people will ever be able to recall their whereabouts and circumstances, when they heard of Mother Theresa's death. Which, of course, was just as she intended.

Hers was a truly remarkable life, a miraculous life; like Bob Geldof – 'Saint Bob' – she provides an instant response to the despairing cry: "But what can I do? What difference can any individual make?" I imagine that the governing impulse driving Bob Geldof was one of indignation. Watching the images of starvation on television, his soul revolted and he rose up crying 'Enough! How much longer does this have to continue?' And then he reached for the telephone, and a genius for organisation created a global tsunami of goodwill.

Behind the tiny, stooped figure of the most famous Albanian is, I imagine, the driving impulse of will. Good will, God's will, a focused, undeviating commitment to making a difference, creating a new order, showing that life for the world's poorest can end in ways other than squalor and lonely abandonment.

In the 1930s Leni Rieffenstahl made a much-acclaimed documentary on the rise to power of Adolf Hitler. She called it *Triumph of the Will*. That particular triumph resulted in the ruin of a continent and millions dead. The will of Mother Theresa rounds out and corrects the picture: human will, so often aberrant and deviant, can yet create the stuff of miracles. The same will chose for her the moment of her death.

Witnesses to the death of Shakespeare's Macbeth, state that "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it". The same is hardly true of this little woman who was a global legend decades before her passing, and yet the manner in which she chose to die was the most becoming possible.

Most people are familiar with the three vows taken by any monk or nun, of poverty chastity and obedience; vows which are memorialised by the three knots tied in the girdle they wear. Beyond these vows there is a strong expectation that the life of a religious will be characterised by humility. The life of St Francis is an object lesson in humility. But he did not have to contend with the relentless attentions of a global media, challenging his humility at every moment. The last triumph of Mother Theresa was to die unnoticed, unremarked.

Reading the lives of the saints, one naturally finds that miracles are commonplace. Levitation, bilocation, and in many cases, a foreknowledge of the time and place of their deaths. The most startling story concerns that of the first St John, the Eagle of Patmos. Knowing his time to be near, he ordered his grave dug in the body of his church. When it was ready, he climbed down into it, smiled up at his sorrowing disciples, gave them his blessing, closed his eyes and died.

Closer to our own time, the first explorers in the lands of the North American Indians often recorded how apparently fit and able old men would one day announce that their time had come, walk off into the forest, lie down and die. Foreknowledge of death is not unique to any one faith or denomination. One of the spiritual privileges granted to Mother Theresa was that of being able to choose the circumstances of her death. And, out of humility, she chose for her passing to be invisible.

This tiny stooped figure continues to cast a giant shadow, and will do so for decades to come. On the next anniversary of her death, 6 September, pause a minute to remember her. Then smile at the joke which she played at the last: that this most respected of all 20th century women, whose passing would otherwise have been front page news, managed to slip away invisibly, secretly, while all our backs were turned. ■

Michael Goodson is a teacher and writer living in Christchurch.

Suicide, especially of someone close, always tortures us. Kevin Dobbyn tells the story of two suicides on Kiribati. And he aks the question Why?

Why do young men kill themselves?

A parody of paradise

Jesus, you know everything.
Sometimes I follow you
sometimes I go where I want
and I leave you behind.

These were the words I found in the journal of the young man called Kairaoi who spent an Easter retreat with us. While they are simple words, they reflect the depth of insight this young 19-year-old had about life and about himself. Later, this same young man was found hanging from a tree on our property on a Sunday morning.

Kairaoi was our next door neighbour and, in the last year of his schooling, he would join in the work or the sing-along on a Saturday evening with the young men we had here who were taking a serious look at the life of brotherhood with us. He was moving in this direction himself – so it seemed to me.

The death of young men by suicide is a matter of real concern in this atoll paradise: a parody of paradise when suicide becomes the path of idealistic young people on the brink of world-changing life-choices, the sorts of spirit-filled world changes that the likes of Francis or Clare or Marcellin brought about. Most of the suicides in Kiribati are of young men in their late teens or early twenties and most occur under the influence of alcohol, whether it is beer or locally made from yeast and sugar.

For some weeks after the death on our property, I was really disturbed and I tried to work out why. It took me some time to realise that it was the death of another young man still lingering in my mind and heart. This other young man had been at the school where the brothers are teaching and had got into an argument with a cousin which resulted in the latter being stabbed. Through neglect at the hospital the cousin died.

Our 16-year-old student was convicted of manslaughter and imprisoned for six years. When his term was done, the brothers took him back to complete his schooling. Halfway through his second year, depressive thoughts and imagined rejection by other students took hold of him. He came to see me several times and together with a doctor we worked out a programme of counselling and medication. But twice he took an overdose. The first was not very serious, but the second required pumping out his stomach. I recall the relief I felt, his gratitude and the joy of his family when we had overcome this obstacle.

Sadly, he returned to his outer island – I couldn't discourage him otherwise – and hanged himself soon after arrival. This young man, like the others I have worked with suffering from depression or some form of psychosis, have remarkable insights into life, and into themselves and their relationships with others; and yet something goes awry.

I corresponded with the Jesuit Francis Hezel who has been researching this phenomenon for 30 years. The patterns in the Federated States of Micronesia are the same: young men who suicide in a fit of drunken anger or depression – and the two emotions are related.

Why do young men kill themselves?

For the most part, these thoughts are only conjecture because for family and friends the distress of suicide is the unanswered questions, and especially the 'why' questions. It appears to me that there is often a conflict of generations and lack of understanding, with the refusal of adolescents to be told what to do by parents who are caught between custom and their own recall of growing up, and the demands and pressures faced by young people today. Coupled with this are the skills of effective communication which are so lacking even within generations and across the gender divide, let alone across generations.

Sometimes, I think, young men face the difficulty of becoming men when they are experiencing a variety of feelings that the stereotypical 'boys don't cry' view of masculinity imposes upon them. Many of the models of manhood are not those anyone would want to emulate. This is especially true if a boy has grown up in an alcoholic family where domestic violence, most frequent on pay-days, is a regular occurrence.

Related to this is the confusion that comes in adolescence if a boy has been physically and/or sexually abused. That often means he does not have any close and intimate friend with whom to share the struggles of growing into adulthood; not only friends who are peers, but those who can accompany and mentor him because they are a little further along the way.

Coping with transition

The New Zealand Ministry of Health has an excellent web site on the suicide issue. So too, do the British. One document where "young men speak out", notes the recurring themes from interviews. They match with what I have learned from young men I have known and worked with.

Briefly, I list some of them here:

- boys are expected to cope with problems themselves. Girls have the freedom to share with each other.
- boys can't show their feelings, except perhaps for anger. Fear, affection, sadness are not allowed.
- myths and beliefs about what it is to be male that stop a young man speaking about things close to the heart, with the resultant feelings of being vulnerable and the fear of being seen to be weak.
- a sense of powerlessness, isolation and victimhood.
- an uncertainty about their sexuality and the lack of access to good information, and the fear of asking about this area since they are expected to have it all worked out themselves.
- abuse of alcohol or drugs.
- lack of confidence or trust in someone named a pastor or counsellor and the perception that 'they would have no idea of the struggles I have'.
- parental conflict and stress, the separation and divorce of parents, adoption without knowing about it until adolescence: any of these can trigger feelings of despair and rejection that lead to suicidal thoughts.

The role of the church

The church, generally, has not been very helpful. It is because of the perceived teaching of the church on suicide, based on what has been received by generations and handed down. I once heard about a priest who would refuse to bury any body found on the beaches of the West Coast. This is what I mean by 'received' teaching of the church. This is not the church's approach to this issue today. What saddens me, however, is the gap between what is real Catholic teaching today and what people have received over generations.

some responsible for animating the faith pay more attention to the rules of the Catholic club rather than to the gospels

On Marakei, we broke the 'rules' and attended the death of several young men who had suicided (some not Catholic) – much to the tut-tut of catechist or priest. Sadly, some among those responsible for animating the faith of a community pay more attention to the rules of the Catholic club and its archaic traditions rather than to the mandate of the gospels.

At the funeral of our next-door neighbour we were blessed by the wisdom of our wise and holy 80-year-old pastor, who led the Eucharist for the family in the home of the dead boy. The family needs to grieve and the rituals of prayer and Eucharist help.

A time to grieve

After a death it is the custom in Kiribati for the family of the deceased to gather in the evening and tell stories of the deceased, and after the burial (which depends on the state of the body) to gather again to celebrate the life of the young man. There is no fanfare, and there is a real sadness underlying the songs and speeches.

Some from Kairaoi's class attended his burial and sang movingly as the plain wooden coffin was buried. On return to the family home, one of the extended family spoke to the young people, urging them to share their problems and difficulties with their elders. Words of wisdom indeed.

The difficulty, however, for today in the close society that is Kiribati – and perhaps this is true of other societies also – is the trouble young people have trusting their relatives for fear of their problems spreading abroad through the 'coconut wireless'. For this reason there is a growing need for wise adults to be close to young people, indeed, to be brother or sister to them, rather than as an authority figure of mother or father.

For those left behind

I do not have any answers, nor even any words of comfort. I have watched and cried with a family searching for answers and knowing that they will never get them, not from their son, cousin or grandson, nor from the police or the hospital authorities. The best support we can offer the grieving family of a suicide is simply to be with them in their grief, in their anger with their son or grandson, and allow them also to be angry at God. Being with young people means taking them seriously, listening to their hopes and dreams, their angers and frustrations and building sufficient trust for them to open up and to be vulnerable, knowing that they are loved without judgement.

But even this is no panacea for preventing suicide. Ultimately, only God who is mercy and love can achieve this. But there is no way young people will ever know that unless they see it in those who walk the same path of growth, beside them and perhaps, at times or in certain areas, a little ahead of them. ■

Kevin Dobbyn is a Marist Brother

So many troubled hearts

Suicide is on the rise in the West. Our response should not be one of horror, nor should those left feel guilty. The victims will fall into the embrace of Christ

Daniel O'Leary

It happened in a country place. A local teenager had committed suicide. I was summoned to the scene immediately. It was a timeless moment I shall never forget. In the unearthly light of a pale moon rising into the October sky, the field seemed empty. The 4ft 6ins body of Brian was lying in the grass, a 3ft 6ins rifle by his side. A cow was licking his face. I could hear the unbearable screams of anguish from the house beyond the gate.

Some years later I befriended Michael, a young postman who had struggled with depression for a long time. We used to have great chats. I loved his company. On his rounds, one grey and silent morning, he parked his van and walked heavily through the long rushes into a lonely lake.

Memories of those dreadful moments came back to me with alarming clarity when I visited a parishioner last week. His wife had committed suicide more than a year ago. He is still struggling to cope. He knows it will take a long time. It is for him, for parents and the millions whose lives have been touched by suicide, that I offer these reflections as we approach November, that mysterious month of memories that both bless and disturb our souls.

On a 'good' day I cannot grasp how any kind of pressure could be intense enough to drive someone to seriously think about suicide. And on another personally dark day of quiet desperation, I can. You may remember the collapse of the Enron empire in the United States. Not

The Despair of Waiting – and the Touch of God

Ah! Come, let me see you alive at last.
Come, let me hold you in my arms,
God's embracing arms.
I have no words now, my friend,
just one big sigh, or three:
Relief, Thanks, Praise.

And tears, tears at the goodness of God.
You know me by now,
and how I hate that pious twaddle,
but when you longed for Limbo
and found yourself held fast in Hell,
there is no better language,
no better relief
than that of faith, of God and Alleluias.

You sought me out and waited,
waited while you trod the grapes of wrath,
a wrath stained with the discontent of short years,
discoloured with a turmoil of self-infliction,
the patterns of forgetfulness
crushing you in darkness and almost death
by your obstinate lack of words uttered in trust.

No sooner do I return
and I find you here again,
head bowed with the weight of it all,
leaving me only guessing and helpless.
You know I stand beside you
and there are times I can only hold your hand,
watching you suffer a purgatory
bereft of any purification,
the key – just a word uttered in trust.

But purgatory is not enough for you.
No, you dare toy with the sleep of death.
You've entered the language of darkness
and firmly locked the door behind you,
deaf to the tears of those who love you,
of those who wait in frail hope.

I will wait at your door of death.
All I have to offer you now is
Tai maku, Boni Ngai – 'Don't be afraid, it is I'
whispered in your unconscious ears.
And for all our Catholic custom
you've not yet met the one
whose words they are.
So here am I, my hands are his
and I am He.
So begins your christification
and mine.

And now I see you alive
still shackled by ribbons of darkness
yet to be cut away by words uttered in trust.
There is time yet for that, my Lazarus friend.

For now, hold fast to that light you've glimpsed,
like a star best seen when not looked-for,
and our fragile hope will grow strong,
washed in the tears of joy
and the relief of faith held firm
by words uttered in trust.

Kevin Dobbyn fms

long afterwards a top executive killed himself. Why would this man end his own life while many others, in far more disgraceful or disastrous circumstances, would manage to hang on and survive?

Probably because they would unmask and recognise their shame and self-blame; they would search, in spite of their desolation and fear, for a truer perspective on the whole issue; they would try to weigh up the long-term consequences and painfully find a new way forward – a way that might eventually be more fulfilling than anything they had lost. My own suggestion is that without being held in love, in some sense or other, this slow climb back into the light is impossible.

People's inner reaction to tragedy varies so much. In the soul of that Enron leader, perhaps the identity of success, power and human respect was stronger than the identity of his own humanity as husband, father, community member, son of God. All of this is very unsure ground on which to be speculating about the inner worlds of a person's soul – that fragile, fearful place so strong on a Sunday, so anxious on a Monday.

There is something about the news of a suicide that cuts across everything we are doing or thinking. It has a chilling ring to it. We are stopped in our tracks. Everything else becomes unimportant. With deep gut reaction we know that there is something ultimate here.

There is no pretence in the minds of those who take their own lives. Somewhere in all of us, a silent shiver of fear begins. Most letters received by counselling services concern this phenomenon. Either intimately or at a distance, almost all of us are personally acquainted with the shock of suicide.

You may remember the tragedy in 2003 when British scientist Dr David Kelly took his own life. He felt caught in a tangle that made it impossible to live any more. By all accounts he was strong and gentle, a good man, a true friend, a father and husband. And something snapped. The strain, the pain, the unbearable pressure were all too much. Before he died, the scientist referred to those "dark players in a deadly game".

Closer to home any one of us is liable to be seduced into the power games of dark players in our own community, in our own family, in our own mind. And I'm always surprised at the number of my own acquaintances who are prepared to admit that, maybe even briefly and superficially, they have at some stage in their lives considered the possibility of ending it all. There is so much mystery about the inner state of those hearts and minds that cannot go on with the journey of life. It is foolish to pass judgment too soon. Grace is everywhere.

Last year we read another suicide story about a man referred to as an agent of evil: Dr Harold Shipman, who killed many elderly patients. A journalist wrote: "Harold Shipman's suicide raises an intriguing question. Was the fact that he took his own life evidence that even a man like him was capable of a transforming journey?"

With all its profound complexities the propensity for suicide is, in most cases, an illness. We are made up of body and soul: either can snap. Fr Ronald Rolheiser, whose sensitive understanding of this phenomenon I incorporate in this article, wrote: "We can die of cancer, high blood pressure, heart attacks, aneurysms. These are physical sicknesses. But we can suffer those, too, in the soul. There are malignancies and aneurysms also of the heart – mortal wounds from which the soul cannot recover."

When a person commits suicide it is always a tragedy, but not always an act of despair. The death is not freely chosen, but is a desperate attempt to end unendurable pain. And there is no reason for the deep guilt and self-blame that sometimes haunts the lives of those who are left behind. We often torment ourselves by regretting not being there when the tragedy happened.

But we were not there for the very reason that the person did not wish us to be there. He or she chose the time and place precisely with our absence in mind. That is part of the anatomy of the disease of suicide. And, this side of heaven, sometimes all the outstretched hands and professional help in the world cannot reach a heart paralysed by fear and illness.

Our wounded loved ones who fall victim to suicide are safe in God's huge heart – safer by far than in the hands of those of us who in our ignorance tend to judge or condemn. The Christian response to suicide should not be horror, or fear for the person's salvation. Suicide victims are met by a gentle Christ who, with a compassionate embrace, restores peace to their troubled hearts.

Neither should we be anxious, or forever accusing ourselves, about what we did or did not do, or whether, if we had paid enough careful attention, we could have prevented the tragedy. Such understandable but self-defeating introspection brings no healing. What friends can do is gently hold the grieving ones, share their helplessness, avoid explaining, carefully harvest the bits and pieces of today's hope to make tomorrow's living a possibility. They can encourage the person to talk, be prepared to listen and place some reasons for living into an empty-looking future.

Suicide is, indeed, a desperate way to die, but we must understand it for what it is, a sickness of the soul. And the God who redeems all manner of failures and mistakes, who brings new light into even the deepest darkness, will restore eternal hope and courage to those frightened hearts who leave this life too early. ■

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Seeking solutions in a world racked by insecurity

Former Caritas international programmes manager Peter Zwart left for new pastures, including more family time, after 11 years with the agency. In his farewell speech he reflected on threats and challenges, old and new, facing Caritas.

On the global stage it is concerns about security that dominate. *Make Poverty History*, debt, trade, aid, these are given scant attention. What dominates the agenda of world leaders is security. This is really not surprising. For a world that spends ten times as much on arms as on aid, such issues are big business.

In my work for *Caritas*, I have also thought about security. Occasionally my own! But more often the threats to another kind of security. Human security. The kind of security that matters to ordinary people, whether they live in Iraq, East Timor, or New Zealand. It is the mundane things – livelihood security, the right to traditional lands or fisheries, security of culture, the battle against HIV and malaria.

It is the security of a mother who knows she will be cared for when childbirth comes, or that her children will have access to healthcare and will not die needlessly from easily preventable or treated conditions. It is the security of entire Pacific peoples such as those on Kiribati, facing the prospect of the drowning of their islands and the turangawaewae of their culture and people through rising sea levels. When I think security, these are the terms I put it in. These, now as before, are the real threats to security. They kill vastly more than does international terrorism. And even that kills more poor people than it does rich.

Behind the façade of security concerns, lies a deeply unequal world – the old clichés of 'rich richer and poor poorer' remain sadly true. But these days the struggle for dominance over the finite resources of the world is an ever more concentrated one. We are seeing the rise of the resource wars. Whatever Iraq is or is not, it is *also* a resource war. Whatever the scramble and abuse of West Papua is or is not, it too is *also* a resource war. These wars are not about security. And they are certainly not about human security.

Yet security measures continue to take their toll on human rights protections and, most particularly, protections for the rights of refugees and on the equality of people of all ethnic backgrounds. As the case of Ahmed Zaoui has shown us, these are not distant debates for other countries. New Zealand too, will play a role. And we are not yet sure, just what that role will ultimately be.

The religion factor

Of course, when people feel fear, they look to certainty. Twenty five years ago, John Curnow spoke of religion and culture as being the two forces strong enough to embolden resistance against the disempowering economics and political repression of his day. Indeed these were themes of much of church Social Justice thinking at that time. But in the 1980s and '90s, here in secular far-flung NZ, you could be forgiven for thinking that John got it wrong. Formal religion seemed on the wane. No longer the powerful cultural force it was. More an anachronism than a rallying cry.

But in fact, John was not wrong. He may not have foreseen quite the events of the past decades, but what is the most dominant and vocal protest today against the values of modernity and globalisation – if not Islam? Denied political participation and freedom and witnessing the human insecurity of so many in Muslim countries, many young Muslims have turned to Islam to seek ways to resist, and to seek black and white answers to grey questions. This, of course, has sadly been a fertile recruiting ground for those who have quite a different agenda.

And it is not only Islam that has seen a rise in fundamentalist extremism. The kind of millenarian cults that exist in Christianity are also serious threats. These cults have connections to much more powerful people than Osama Bin Laden or Al Zaqawi. Hinduism, Buddhism – all too have their extremists, united by their intolerance.

The challenge for *Caritas*

I find that this context poses a deep challenge for an agency such as *Caritas*. Of course, *Caritas* works with those who are poor and oppressed irrespective of their religion. And we have always rejected any form of proselytising in our solidarity. But *Caritas* is also a Catholic agency, drawing strongly on the faith and spirituality that has formed it and the teachings that guide it. We are not Oxfam. We are not secular. Our name says as much. Love of neighbour is what it means.

As I was clearing out my desk today I ran across a clipping I had saved from a column by Chris Trotter who was quoting James K. Baxter. Baxter

was describing 'Caritas' – not the organisation, but the Christian concept from which *Caritas Aotearoa* draws its name. He called it "the crushed herb of grief at another's pain". I do not think it could be put more beautifully.

But alongside this Catholic identity there is another. We are also a faith-based agency. This too is part of our identity. What does *Caritas* have in common with *Al Qaeda*? Both claim to be faith-based. I think the similarities end there. But the lessons do not.

For there are very big questions to be asked of faith-based agencies in these times. What is faith to be in the new Millennium? Is it to be a militant war? An anachronism? Or a hope for a more human world?

Peter Zwart relaxing at home. Peter has just retired as a Caritas manager

A religious solution

The jury is out. All seem possibilities. And in this time of insecurity – of human insecurity – people will look to religion. And to which of these religions will they turn? And here I am not talking about denominations or the battles for souls of colonial days. I mean, will they turn to those in any religion who preach fear and intolerance? Or to those in all religions who preach justice and peace?

I do not accept the ***Clash of Civilisations*** theory which has become such a potent idea. I believe the fault lines lie elsewhere. It is not Islam versus Christianity, or the West, or anything so crude. Like most struggles this one is also between the possessed and the dispossessed. But it is particularly between those who espouse fear and those whose call is to hope and humanity. To what might be, the *Civilisation of Love* of which John Paul II spoke.

Let us remember that Islam is also a faith of peace, tolerance and civility. For hundreds of years when the Moors occupied much of Spain, they ruled with tolerance and intelligence. Visit Toledo today and you will see synagogue next to church next to mosque, dating from that time. When the Christians took over, in one of a number of dark periods for Spain, it was with the Inquisition, a process which dwarfs anything that the Muslim world is accused of today. We need to remember that there are many beacons in the world, not one, to justice, dignity, peace and humanity. In its mandate, *Caritas* is asked by the Catholic Bishops, among many other worthy things, to cooperate with other like-minded organisations. This is a very enlightened clause. It is in fact one of our 'objects'. Not a means, but an end in itself. I have made it my business to see that *Caritas* cooperated and that *Caritas* also fostered others to cooperate.

But the question remains – with whom shall we cooperate? Those who work for Justice, Peace and Human Development will not find allies in all parts of the church or in all who claim Christianity. We will need to recognise other allies – those who work and struggle for justice, tolerance and peace in other faiths. These are the people who can challenge militant Islamists, militant Hindus, or any other kind of religious extremism, with a message of hope and humanity.

One thing is certain, that 2005 is not a time for silos. It is a time for bridges. I believe this is a time when leadership will be critical in this area. There must be voices which appeal clearly and profoundly to people's aspirations and hopes for a better world. I do not think it will be an easy road ahead. ■

Are we Driving our

When the school term begins again, our city newspapers invariably warn: "School traffic returns" and wistfully reflect on how "great" the traffic has been over the school holidays. Why do so many parents drive their children to school? Increasingly, parents want to supervise their children at all times.

Fear of traffic and strangers underlie this drive towards surveillance. Not long ago, the street was a site of casual contact and play among young children. Now, many neighbourhoods seem devoid of youngsters, except behind high fences or within their parents' cars. There's a myth that urban children are lazy and actually want to be driven around by parents. So, let's begin with two anecdotes that suggest the contrary.

First story: It's a rainy winter evening in Auckland and our children persuade us to go to a movie at St Lukes, our nearest mall. Our seven-year-old suggests we walk. After a couple of raised eyebrows, we don coats and set out, getting splashed by speeding traffic along the way. The walk there and back passes quickly; the sociability of walking with others ensures that time doesn't drag, when on foot. On return, I ask what was best about the evening. Caitlin responds, "seeing how the drains work and where the water goes".

Second story: A spring September morning and I'm leading the *Rocket Walking Bus* en route to our neighbourhood school. Two boys have their noses in some overhanging bushes and seem reluctant to walk on. "Come on guys, we need to get to school – what's with the bushes?" "We're looking at snails", says one. "We never knew snails could climb trees", says the other.

Both stories serve to remind us that an intrinsic part of the work of childhood is to learn about the world through first-hand discovery. While being driven everywhere may assuage parental anxieties, it seriously interferes with children's environmental experience. It us surely time to rethink the meaning of 'neighbourhood', and advocate a greater children's voice in urban planning.

Ironically, the increasing use of private cars (that can positively enlarge children's worlds through travel) has led to a decline in children's freedom of movement close to home. Many parents, fearful for their children's safety, have imposed restrictions on

activities such as unsupervised cycling, walking, and street play.

Children are, to an extent, marginalised by our contemporary obsession with cars. In a recent Auckland study, six to nine-year-olds were given disposable cameras and asked to photograph what they perceived to be dangerous in their neighbourhood. Not surprisingly, cars loomed large. Literally, in fact! To a child of half our adult size, a car appears to be twice as large as it does to us. The message of such a study is that too often we fail to see things through a child's eyes.

A part of the problem is deeply embedded cultural norms. We allow 15-year-olds to drive, younger than in other Western countries. Driving, then, becomes part of a person's identity from a very formative age. In many suburbanised Western cities, driving children places has become, *de facto* a measure of successful


Photo: Auckland Regional Transport Authority

Children Crazy?

Robin Kearns

parenting. Indeed, a study of women in Sydney found that car use was seen as instrumental to 'good mothering'. Driving was seen as minimising the dangers faced by children in public places. At the same time, study respondents underestimated the dangers of car travel, congestion and air pollution for commuters as well as pedestrians.

Parents in Auckland commonly 'chauffeur' their children to and from school in private cars. However, in trying to ensure the safety of *their* children, parents can be putting *other* children at risk – of injury, through adding to traffic congestion; or more generally, by adding to conditions that discourage walking. A set of powerful cultural expectations has developed around parents – overwhelmingly mothers – transporting children between places of supervised activity (eg. swimming lessons, dancing classes, shopping at the mall). Even birthday parties are increasingly held at costly and commercialised 'theme spaces', rather than in homes and at parks and beaches.

Walking school buses

How often do we ask our children what they really want? A 1999 survey in Mt Albert completed by both parents and primary children showed that more children wanted to walk to school than were being allowed to do so.This research at *Gladstone Primary* led to the beginnings of Auckland's first walking school bus (WSB), which involves children walking to school supervised by (largely parent) volunteers along set routes at set times each day.. There were modest but significant beginnings. A year after its launch, an evaluation revealed there to be 195 fewer car trips to the school gate per week. Five years on in 2005 Auckland, 72 schools operate a total of 142 routes.

There are three main benefits of walking buses: sociability, safety, and health. First, participation in a walking bus is more enjoyable for children than being chauffeured. Second, 'riding' on the walking bus can hasten the acquisition of road safety skills. Third, children's participation in walking school buses promotes both personal and environmental health through exercise and reducing car congestion.

Walking buses are, on face value, empowering as they allow children a convivial, healthy and safe means of travel. They allow young children to engage in exercise, environmental exploration, social interaction as well as a modest form of resistance to a car-dominated society.

Sadly, the legacy of the relatively rare cases of child abduction cast a long shadow over the trust which we extend to others in the midst of our children. Another bonus of WSBs is, therefore, that participating children get to know other parents and children in the school community. The focus of Kiwi houses (compared to those in, say, older North American neighbourhoods) tends to be the back of the dwelling, with the deck and the garden hidden from public view. We therefore have fewer sets of eyes on the street than would be present in other countries.

Indeed, David Engwicht, the originator of the WSB idea, says the best contribution any property owner could make to the sociability and safety of their neighbourhood is to tear down their fence and put in a park bench instead. We tend to think of people lingering in front of our houses as a threat; however, for David, encouraging others to sit and chat helps keeps a 'watching brief' on the street and generates conviviality.

Walking buses are, at best, a partial solution to the question of children's quality of life within a car-dominated society. Rather than freeing children to again share in ownership of the streets, they are dependent upon parental surveillance and are subject to adult-imposed rules. In this respect they reinforce adult authority and ideas of children's inherent vulnerability. Nonetheless, children love them, and once self-graduated, they appear to have more street sense.

But unless we, as proponents of walking school buses, couple our efforts with lobbying for other interventions in favour of children, this innovation risks being merely an acquiescence to car-dominated society. They are not a return to the unstructured and idealised journey to school that many of us, as adults, recall. For this situation there needs to be a new-found trust within neighbourhoods, a steady commitment to public transport, and a growing belief that children should be a priority in public policy. ▷▷

One of the 'drivers' with passengers near the start of the Zippy Rocket Bus route

Each of these goals can be at least in part achieved, but change will be slow and require 'many hands on deck'. Children's hands too. Recently my 13-year-old asked why he had to wait until the age of 18 to vote. Fair question. He, like others with enquiring minds, could definitely have used a vote more wisely than the almost 20 percent who didn't bother on September 17, 2005. But while Liam and his mates are unlikely to get the vote, perhaps we might think of ways to better include them in thinking through the future of our cities.

The first step is simply asking children and young people what they think. Take them seriously. Encourage them to write letters on issues of concern and speak their minds. Answer their questions, and if you don't know the answer, say (and mean) "let's find out together".

We need to encourage young people to have a civic sensibility. The United States has it right on this matter. The subject of Civics is taught in schools, so that youngsters know about how government works and how laws are made. How many of our high school children know the function of a select committee? Do we? Do we care if they do or not?

In lieu of such matters being covered in the curriculum, we shouldn't hesitate to take our children to public events – meetings, conferences, or even protests. Even if they are sitting in the back row reading Harry Potter, ideas will be absorbed by osmosis. Before you know it you'll have a child saying, "Mum, I think we should ring the council to get that broken footpath fixed". ■

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Page from a mother's journal

Sharhirah woke me with coughing and now I can't sleep. In the stillness and darkness of this pre-dawn, I will pause, write and pray. This room is cold and my fingers are quickly numb. Weeks roll by, busy, full, mostly happy – what is my prayer for this new week? Time to set aside my thoughts swirling with activity, planning and lists.....

God,
Ever present and dependable in our rhythms of life
Like night and day
Like breathing
Like seasons
Here is another Sunday, another week, another chance to invite you in
Walk with me, run with me, sit with me
In my easy distraction and absorption with the unimportant
Could I also ask you to hassle me, jest with me, poke me in the ribs
Keep my soul-heart-mind-body attuned, alert, aware, listening, responding
To God
This week in early Spring
Amen

Kaaren Mathias

The Mathematics of Ecology

Glynn Cardy

Mathematics. The answer to any equation is always dependent upon the number and type of components. If the components are my family, my interests and me, one type of answer will be arrived at. If, on the other hand, the components are the world, our vitality and me, another answer will be arrived at.

I grew up in Birkenhead, on Auckland's north shore. Over the road from our home was the bush. When the area was landscaped for roads and houses in the 1950s the gullies were largely left alone. There the native bush remained. It was a playground par excellence.

When I was young I took it all for granted. I took it for granted that *koura* (native crayfish) could be caught in the streams. I took it for granted that native birds serenaded our play. I took it for granted that I could run barefoot through the tracks.

Yet the prevalent form of mathematics in our society is my family, my interests and me. So over the years people built new houses and subdivided for more houses. Invariably inorganic waste went over the fence into the bush. Drainage, and occasionally not just stormwater, went into the bush. Trees that provided inconvenient shade were dealt to, usually at their base.

Not surprisingly the *koura* are no longer there. The native birds have been severely reduced due to feral and domestic cats. It is no longer safe to play in bare feet. Indeed it seems children seldom play there anymore.

At some point the good people of that neighbourhood, like they've done elsewhere, will do the maths differently and realize what they've lost. Then they might galvanise themselves into action and address the problem. Hopefully, it won't be too late.

Unlike 30 years ago we can no longer pretend to be ignorant. We now know that what goes down the drain doesn't disappear. It turns up somewhere for someone or no one to deal with. We now know that we can't chop down any or every tree without impacting on the life of birds, animals and insects, or on a larger scale our climate. We now know we can't dump our storm water or sewage into the sea without it having an effect. We now know about polystyrene, global warming, the ozone layer, nuclear waste, extinct animal and bird species. There is a prayer about pollution by Michael Leunig that has the refrain: ***God do not forgive us, for we now know precisely what we do.***

It's about mathematics. We need to factor into our equations the component of the health and well-being of our earth. I tire of hearing small-minded politicians and other leaders that want to preserve our country as a nice little South Pacific paradise regardless of the rest of the planet. Their equations are too small, and too self-centred. If our planet is our home, we can't keep soiling the carpet in one room without creating a stink in every room. ■

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The Spiritual Imperative – 2

In this second instalment from the 2004 Schumacher lecture, Satish Kumar explores the role of spirituality in various aspects of public life

Spirit In Business

This notion of spiritless existence can be described as materialism. All is matter; land, forests, food, water, labour, literature and art are commodities to be bought and sold in the marketplace – the world market, the stockmarket, the so-called free market. This is a market of competitive advantage, a cut-throat market, a market where survival of the fittest is the greatest imperative: the strong competing with the weak and winning the biggest share of the market for themselves.

Monopolies are established in the name of free competition. Five supermarket chains control 80 per cent of food sold in the United Kingdom. Four or five giant multinational corporations, such as Monsanto and Cargill, control 80 percent of international food trade. Small and family farms cannot compete with the big players and are forced to retreat. This is the world where spirit has been driven out. Business without spirit, trade without compassion, industry without ecology, finance without fairness, economics without equity can only bring the breakdown of society and destruction of the natural world. Only when spirit and business work together can humanity find coherent purpose.

Spirit In Politics

Just as materialism rules economics it also rules politics. Instead of seeing nations, regions and cultures of the world as one human community, the world is seen as a battlefield of nations competing with each other for power, influence and control over minds, markets and natural resources. One nation's interest is seen in opposition to the national interest of another.

Indian national interest is opposed to Pakistani national interest. Palestinian national interest and Israeli national interest; American national interest and Iraqi national interest; Chechen national interest and Russian national interest, and so on… the list is long. And so we have polarised politics: "If you are not with us you are against us," has become the dominant mind-set. And if you are not with us you are not only against us, you are part of the 'axis of evil'. This is politics denuded of spirit.

What can we expect from such politics other than rivalry, strife, the arms race, terrorism and wars? Politicians speak of democracy and freedom but they pursue the path of hegemony and self-interest. How can a particular view of democracy and freedom suit the whole world? There can be no democracy and freedom without compassion, reverence and respect for diversity, difference and pluralism. Compassion, reverence and respect are spiritual qualities – but politics founded on materialism considers the values of the spirit to be woolly, flaky, utopian, idealistic, unrealistic and irrational. But where has the politics of power, control and self-interest led us? The First World War, the Second World War, the Cold War, the Vietnam war, the war in Kashmir, the war in Iraq, the attack on the Twin

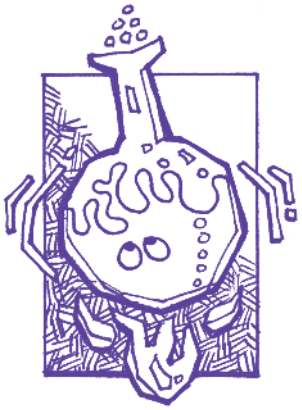
Towers of New York. Again the list is very long. Politics without spirituality has proved to be a grand failure and, therefore, it is time to bring politics and spirituality together again.

Spirituality and Science

Often it is believed that science and spirituality are like oil and water: they cannot mix. This is a mistaken notion. Science needs spirituality and spirituality needs science.

When science forsakes the restraints of moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions and strives to achieve everything that is achievable, experimenting with everything irrespective of consequences, then science leads to the technologies of nuclear weapons, genetic engineering, human and animal cloning and poisonous products which pollute soil, water and air. It is dangerous to give science *carte blanche* to dominate human minds and to subjugate the natural world. Contemporary science has acquired such status of superiority that it is presently commanding the total adherence of industry, business, education and politics. Some of its experiments have become so crude

and cruel that it reaches beyond the constraints of civilisation. Ethical, moral and spiritual values are essential to moderate the power of science.



As science needs spirituality, spirituality also needs science. Without a certain amount of rational, analytical and intellectual skills spirituality can easily turn into sectarian and selfish pursuit. I was a monk for nine years, pursuing my own purification and salvation. I saw the world as a trap and spirituality as a way of liberation from the world. Then I came across the writings of Mahatma Gandhi. He said that there is no dualism between the world and the spirit. Spirituality is not just for saints. It is not confined to monastic orders or caves in the mountains. Spirituality is in everyday life, from the growing of food to cooking, eating, washing up, sweeping the floor, building the house, making clothes and caring for neighbours. We must bring spirituality into all parts of our lives: into politics, into business, into agriculture and into education. And we must do so with a scientific approach.

That was such an inspiring insight that I decided to leave the monastic order and return to the world of everyday life.

Meeting Spiritual Needs

We human beings have our bodily needs and also our spiritual needs. Food, water, shelter, warmth, work, education and health are our essential needs. We need to engage in economic activities to fulfil these needs. But once these needs are met we need to find a sense of contentment and satisfaction in order to be happy and fulfilled. We need the wisdom to know when enough is enough. If we go on with economic activities even after our essential needs are met, then we become victims of greed and desires. Many of our social, political and environmental crises are crises of desire.

Those who profit from endless economic activities put enormous effort into persuading us that by having more material goods we shall be happy. But happiness does not come from material things alone; we also have social and spiritual needs: the need for community, for love, for friendship, for beauty, for art and music. We need to use our imagination and our creativity. We need the opportunity to make things with our own hands. We need time to be still and contemplate; we need spaces to appreciate and enjoy. These spiritual needs cannot be met by turning ourselves into consumers of goods provided by companies who make vast profits at the cost of the environment and ethics and at the expense of future generations. Materialism has become their new religion and they want everyone to be converted to it and become loyal members of their faith.

This religion of materialism is obviously unsustainable. If the six billion citizens of the world were to live the lifestyle of Western consumers and use the energy provided by fossil fuels we would need five planets, but we haven't got five planets: we have only one planet. Therefore, we need to invent a lifestyle of elegant simplicity where Earth's gifts are shared among all human beings fairly, without compromising the needs of the more than human world as well as of future generations.

Such elegant simplicity is the way to discover spirituality. We embrace simplicity not only because the consumerist lifestyle is unfair, unjust and unsustainable but also because it is the cause of discontent, dissatisfaction, disharmony, depression, disease and division. Even if there were no problem of global warming, of resource shortage, of pollution and waste we would still need to choose a more simple lifestyle which is conducive to and congruent with spirituality, because a simple lifestyle, a lifestyle uncluttered with the burden of unnecessary possessions, is the lifestyle which can offer the opportunity to explore the universe of the imagination and to find boundless joy in that universe.

The Buddha was a prince; he possessed palaces, elephants, horses, land and treasures of gold and silver, but he realised that all his wealth was holding him back, that wealth was keeping him chained to greed, desire, craving, pride, ego, fear and anger.

The idea that wealth and power would make him happy was an illusion; joy through material possessions was a mirage. So he embraced a life of noble poverty which meant voluntary acceptance of limits. There was no population explosion at that time, the Buddha faced no shortage of raw materials or natural resources, there was no problem of global warming and yet he preferred the path of spirituality and simplicity because that was the way to meet the needs of the soul as well as the body. ■

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Zimbabwe from the inside

Fred Smith, with his wife and family,
recently came from Zimbabwe to take up a post in Southland.
Here he speaks to Katie O'Connor about the country they left.
Fred is a lay-minister with the Baptist and Presbyterian churches

Prior to leaving Zimbabwe I was working in a Christian project called 'Tears of a Nation', or 'Let the Nation Grow'. The project was based in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second city. It aimed to help educate contract farmers, providing them with base levels of numeracy and literacy and farming techniques. The special focus was on widows and orphans. It had a success rate of over 90 percent.

Tears of a nation

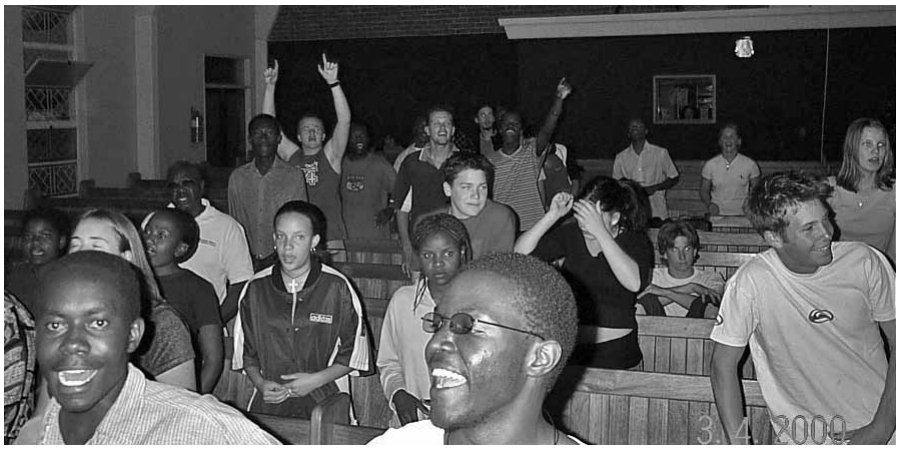
One project was rearing ostriches. These birds need a lot of 'hands on' care especially during the first six months of life. This level of labour intensive work is not a viable proposition for the big commercial farms. We took small clusters of birds – up to 50 – and allocated them to these families who reared them almost like their own children. They even had names for them! The birds were well cared for, and as a result they compared very favourably (by weight) with birds from commercial farms.

At the start we received good government support, since the project was really bene fiting the poor and destitute farmers. We also had an Indonesian partner, and this too was very acceptable to Mugabe's government. However, in the course of time problems increased. Some of the trucks we used for supplying feed were impounded. Drivers were attacked. The Central Intelligence Organisation tried to stop us distributing food.

Our political connections gave us some protection at a time when white farmers were being seriously assailed by the regime. We were thus able to support black workers who initially simply came to us for work. We gave them an education and they became part of our family, living with us. They received shelter and protection which otherwise they might not have got. The price of all that was that we had to live in a secure compound, since the safety aspect was deteriorating. Two people were killed in gun battles in our road, one of them being a corrupt policeman.

The Christian school

In Bulawayo itself there were no Christian schools. As the Baptist church expanded, its Sunday school, which grew in numbers from about 20 to 120, evolved into a Christian school. In fact there were two schools. One section was Riversdale Collegiate for mentally challenged children: it provided a hands-on, practical education, to enable such children to work with a tradesman. This grew out of the church and moved to its own premises. We also started a junior school, called Petra ('on the rock'), which had a very Christian curriculum. We had both black and white children, and were fortunate to attract some very competent teachers who appreciated what we were trying to do.



Eventually we had 600 children in the junior school, so we started a senior school as well. However in recent times the government has forced the school to follow a regime of teaching lessons in the local languages. The exams too are done through a localised medium, which means the qualifications are not accepted outside Zimbabwe. The British tradition had enabled children to move on to trade qualifications under the *City and Guilds* in London although administered locally. Since Mugabe has been in power some four million Zimbabweans have left the

country, mostly black. The foundation provided under the old system gave Zimbabweans an excellent foundation and accepted qualifications in European countires.

The culture of the Mugabe regime

Mugabe survives because of the local culture. When someone rises up to be chief of a village, that person is chief for life. The tradition of ancestral worship gives rise to some very good things: respect for one's elders and family. But there is also the assumption that someone in power or leadership is always right. They become difficult to challenge. Belief in the influence of ancestors makes people reluctant to go against the status quo, since it is your ancestors who control your destiny. If your ancestors have put someone in power, you cannot go against them.

In fact, many of the young blacks are not so bound by that system, but it is going to take a generation to establish change and undo the damage being done by the current regime. Mugabe also has many people around him who are beholden to him. The head of the Army has received a farm, and is no longer simply a professional soldier: he has wealth and land, which he owes to Mugabe. Even if Mugabe were to die, the transition will not be as straightforward as, say, Uganda was. Mugabe is too clever.

Strategically the position of Zimbabwe in Africa is crucial. The huge source of hydroelectric power is in the Congo, but many of the electrical powerlines come down through Zimbabwe and from there power is cycled into Botswana, South Africa and Mozambique. Zimbabwe is the geographic key. The power lines are not owned by Zimbabwe but stand on Zimbabwean territory, and so are controlled by the government.

A proposed water pipeline will take water out of the Zambezi into Botswana and South Africa, and the preferred route will be through Zimbabwe. Likewise, all rail routes coming north from South Africa run through Zimbabwe. So Mugabe has a stranglehold on all these strategic infrastructure systems. Mugabe and President Mbeke of South Africa were all indoctrinated by the Chinese and went through a similar liberation struggle, so they are comrades. It is only the new ANC leaders therefore who are critical of Mugabe.

Politically, Mugabe controls the rural areas. In the recent election much of his support came from those areas and the 'vote' in some places was triple the actual population. Unemployed youth are enrolled into Mugabe's 'green brigade'. He has used these youth to evict farmers and keep the informal traders off the streets. They therefore control the food distribution in rural areas, and in this way Mugabe controls the people. People survive by accepting food in exchange for giving their vote to the regime. Mugabe's problem lies in the urban areas where there is a lot of opposition to him. So he has forcibly evicted hundreds of thousands of people out of the urban areas.

What can be done? Food and blankets sent by the South African Council of Churches have been sitting on the wharf in Durban for months. The Zimbabwe Customs authority refuses entry. Unless Mugabe allows it, no aid can get in. Within the country we tried to distribute food in conjunction with the Catholic *Commission of Justice.* We sent in seed for planting as well as food and blankets for their immediate needs. But we too were obstructed by red tape. Licences are not renewed. The police control the roads, they demand permits and documents. The only way sometimes to get the food through is to 'grease the palms' of these officials.

There will need to be a fundamental change in Zimbabwe and it has to come from within. There is a groundswell of opinion against the regime, but this will take time to reach a point of action. One dilemma about sending help is that any hard currency you might send back goes to support the regime, because all the banks are controlled by it.

The AIDS pandemic

Some blacks sadly have tended to see Christianity as a 'white man's religion'. They were invited to embrace this faith, but they ended up being 'servants of white people'. The missionaries did not intend it that way, but that was the way things turned out with the political system under Mr Smith. Hence their suspicion. That is one reason why the blacks will reject the advice the churches or white doctors propose for controlling AIDS. "They are trying to control us," they say, "and prevent us having fun".

Culturally, there has been a tradition of a man having more than one wife. A sign of your prosperity as a person was how you looked after your wives. The more wives you had and the bigger your house, the better you were. In the more Westernised postcolonial culture the Zimbabwean male may have only one wife – but he proves his virility by having as many girlfriends as possible. That has become a 'bombshell' that promotes the spread of AIDS. Not only is he spreading the disease by sleeping around, but he may bring the disease into his own family.

At the main Bulawayo hospital an organisation called *Crisis Pregnancy* operated. The girls had been thrown out of their homes because they had become pregnant. Perhaps they were still at school, but had been picked up after school by some businessman, who used them as free prostitutes. When the girl became pregnant the man would dump her. And many of these girls would now have AIDS as well.

Children born from these relationships are usually HIV positive and live for only a short time. The Army has moved out into rural areas and the latest informal WHO figures showed that 97 percent of Army personnel are HIV positive. Now a hospital nurse will assume that anyone walking in ▷▷

Appreciate this life

Colin Durning

I enjoyed Daniel O'Leary's article in the October *Tui Motu – In praise of beauty.* In it he quoted Rabbi Lionel Blue who "refers to an admonition in the Talmud: on the final judgement day we shall be called to account for all the beautiful things we should have enjoyed – and didn't."

Four of my father's brothers became priests, three Marists, one Dominican. The eldest priest, James SM, was born in 1900 in Glasgow and with the whole family migrated to Timaru in the early 1920s.

James went to Hyden and Greenmeadows the Marist seminary. The devastating Napier earthquake of 1931 left him trapped under collapsed masonry. His obituary notice appeared in the *Timaru Herald.* Three days after the quake he was rescued. His ordination was delayed because of his injuries including a broken back.

After ordination he spent time at Pukekaraka, the Maori Mission at Otaki. He learned the Maori language, it is said, "by sitting next to the old people there". As Pa Hemi he was to spend most of his 63 years of priesthood in the Maori Mission in Taranaki, Whanganui and Hawkes Bay. He had a good voice, a good ear for languages and became somewhat an authority on the Maori language. He was always active, walked everywhere and played tennis into his old age. He died just a few months short of his 90th birthday.

He was always regarded as rather distant by us youngsters. I knew him for more than 70 years as the holy man – ascetic, austere and highly disciplined and I loved him. He did not enjoy garrulous people. He mentioned to me once his regret that the priesthood is no longer respected as in the past.

In his 80s he was seriously ill with viral encephalitis. When my cousin and I visited him in Whanganui hospital, he was unresponsive and unconscious. We talked to him in the hope he might hear us. As we left I kissed him goodbye.

A few months later I was at a *Waka Aroha* hui at Kaiwhaiki just north of Whanganui. Late morning a car drove up to the marae. Pa Hemi, my uncle, a passenger. He was welcomed into the meeting house with brief speeches. In his reply he said: "I tae atu au ki te tatau o te Po" – "I arrived at the doorway of death but I was sent back."

Later he told me and members of the family that he was sent back because he had not properly appreciated this life. The result was delightful. He enthused over so many things – sunsets, flowers, songs and especially of present beauty reflecting or evoking occasions or people from the past, appreciated in a new way. The effect also on us was interesting, at least for some of us. We saw him in a new light. We were also changed.

One of our extended family was not surprised by the change in our uncle. Spontaneous and loving she had always ignored his stern 'ahuatanga' and received him with hugs and delight. Clearly her welcomes would always please him.

When the strange thought of priesthood came to me in my mid 60s I went to see him. We talked. I asked him whom I should now see. As I left he gave me his blessing and said: "Find someone you can open your heart to and all will be well." ■

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through the door will be HIV positive, and their bodies are no longer resistant to other diseases.

Children over seven are probably still free of AIDS because they were born before the epidemic really took hold. But at 11 these children will become sexually active. Their culture encourages this.

Western commercialism has made the situation more grave. People who are over 50 may also be free of the disease. But the bulk of the breadwinning population are those with the disposable income to go to the beer halls and to hire a prostitute. That is how the disease spreads.

Leaving Zimbabwe

In 2001 we planned to leave Zimbabwe. The needs of the country, however, caused us to linger on and become involved in the Trust. But by 2004 the violence became endemic. Highjacking of cars and trucks had become everyday occurrences. We became more and more concerned for our children. We saw a job advertised on the Internet at Camp Columba, Pukerau, in Southland. My wife sent in my CV. We prayed about it. Providentially, the paperwork was completed quickly and within three months we were here in Southland.

It would have been impossible for us to buy air tickets in Zimbabwe. We were able to barter with someone coming into the country, however: we provided them with what they needed and they brought our air tickets in with them. We arrived here with just our suitcases.

In spite of arriving destitute God has been good to us and the local church cared for us, providing what we needed. Truly we serve the living God. ■

Matthew's Last Judgment, 25:31-46

Susan Smith

Two good friends, both committed evangelical Christians, recently told me that they were actively engaged in fundraising for two missionaries their church sent to Afghanistan to try and convert Muslims. While I am humbled at the generosity of people to go to such dangerous places, I question the desirability of trying to convert Afghani or Iraqi Muslims.

Matthew's Last Judgment parable offers some interesting insights into who is saved and who is not. *Matthew* probably intended this parable to teach the first Christian communities about their obligation to provide hospitality for missionaries. In *Matt 10*, Jesus has told his disciples that when they go out as missionaries they are to take no money, no spare clothes, no food – it will be provided. Obviously this has not always happened and so this parable. Some of the Fathers – Origen, Augustine, Basil the Great – believed that the parable obliged Christians to care for others in the community, particularly the little ones.

In today's world, the parable is usually interpreted to mean that the disciple is required to reach out in loving service to those whom Jesus calls "the least of my brothers and sisters" because in serving them the disciple is serving Jesus himself. Such an interpretation makes sense in today's world where the gap between rich and poor is so vast. We who have, will be judged on how we relate to those who have not.

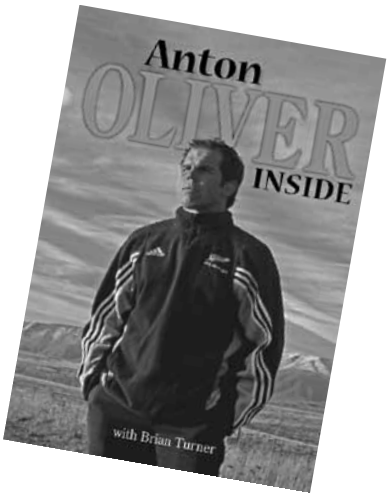
Although such an interpretation seems far removed from what the author of *Matthew* intended, if the word of God is active and living as *Hebrews 4:12* tells us, then such an interpretation is valid given that one of most urgent crises facing us today is poverty.

There is another way of understanding this parable. Ethical behaviour – in this case active charity on behalf of the poor by those Gentiles who do not know the Lord – is salvific. In an ideal world, right actions and right belief should complement one another, but *Matthew* makes it very clear that right belief is not sufficient. Elsewhere in his gospel he warns those who say "Lord, Lord" only, that they will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only the one who does the will of the Father (cf. *Matt 7:21*). *Matthew* seems to be suggesting that orthopraxis is as important, if not more important than orthodoxy. Daniel Harrington, a Jesuit NT scholar, asks: "By what criterion can non-Jews and non-Christians enter God's Kingdom?" By acts of charity and justice toward the poor.

Matthew's parable therefore becomes a precious resource for dealing with what is a major theological issue in the 21st century. How do we understand salvation? Do we need to send missionaries to war-ravaged countries in the hope of gaining converts to our particular brand of Christianity? Can Muslim women in Afghanistan struggling on behalf of other women, or Muslim doctors working frantically to heal victims of terrorist and American attacks in Iraq, be saved through their commitment to the least of their brothers and sisters? Do they need to be baptised in order to be saved? ■

Dr Susan Smith is a Mission sister who teaches Biblical Studies at the School of Theology, University of Auckland

Southern Man



Tui Motu *discusses the new book about Anton Oliver with Paul Chamberlain who works with the police's DARE programme*

I consider this book very much a study of human nature. Anton over a few years has grown up beyond his time. He's a deep thinker – a feeling, intuitive person. He is immensely loyal to his Otago and New Zealand roots. Southern rugby is part of those roots, and his friends, mentors, role models have become very important to him.

Some people think that the book is more about Brian Turner's clever writing than Anton's thinking. While I agree Turner is a fine writer, in Anton he had an excellent subject. He is prepared to share his personal insights – and in no shallow way.

The media have blown the alcohol aspect of the book out of all proportion. Here was a young man caught up in a culture. Because he identifies with the group he becomes drawn into the activities which are part of that tradition. But as he grows older and becomes a senior member of this culture, he says: "we are the ones who have the power to change it. As a junior I couldn't. But now I am one of the role models; I am on the back seat."

I think it takes a lot of courage to speak against the drinking culture of dear old Kiwi rugby. I would have no hesitation in using Anton's story when talking to kids. I have mixed feelings about using the story of someone, say, like Norm Hewitt, who has been down the path of destruction and survived: that can give a mixed message to young people. Anton has kept to a more level playing field in his life. He doesn't deny that there were some pretty shoddy moments – but he doesn't try to justify them.

Teenagers of their nature tend to see themselves as unique: "I won't be the one who ends up in disaster. I'm invincible and indestructible", they say. That's the essence of the problem of drug abuse, drunk driving and binge drinking.

Traditionally rugby has been the male sport. If you wanted to be the ultimate macho Kiwi bloke, you had to succeed in rugby. In New Zealand that also involved a lot of heavy drinking. I think there has been a change – probably in the towns more than in rural areas. These modern young men will have a few beers after their game and then they disappear home pretty quickly. They have other lives beyond rugby.

Under the new generation of All Black coaches, like Wayne Smith and Tony Gilbert, the culture of professional rugby was beginning to change too. Anton Oliver saw that, and as a senior he readily went along with it. But when John Mitchell and Robbie Deans came in, he saw the culture beginning to swing back, and that is what he despised. When he spoke out, Mitchell saw his authority as coach being corroded. Mitchell saw Anton as a threat.

To me this book is a great study of a human being. Alcohol is a part of the story. But far more it's the story of a young man who as he grew older, grew wiser, precisely because he was a reflective person. And he's still there – selected once again for the All Black tour. I imagine the management have chosen him not just because he's a good player, but also as an excellent role model for the younger players in the squad.

Oliver has had to stand out against some of his fellow senior players, like Justin Marshall, who had different ideas about the drinking culture. Yet to be effective as a role model for the juniors he still has to be seen as one of them. It's a fine line. If, as a policeman I were to speak out against rugby and its culture, I would be written off as a Bible-bashing extremist. Yet if you go to the other extreme you become part of the culture and you cease to be effective. I think Anton struggles with the fact that others have not quite come to the conclusions along the lines he has come to.

I think it's also true that people react physically to drink in very different ways. As an 18-year-old I went up to see my brothers at University and partied and got very drunk on gin – and I have never touched gin since. Yet some young men cheerfully get drunk every week. That's the way it is. 'You get drunk. You throw up. The next weekend you do the same again'. Yet for other people, once bitten twice shy! What we are up against is the person for whom the 'shame' of becoming incoherent with drink is almost a badge of honour.

The alcohol problem today

Binge drinking is on the increase and the age is getting younger. One reason is the effectiveness of modern marketing. If you walk into a liquor store today, you find they are targeting the young with spirits concoctions but marketed as 'soft drinks'. Peer pressure and peer interaction make this sort of selling all the more effective.

There are also more drugs around. Party drugs – 'herbal highs' – are still legal in New Zealand (In the US they are banned). They are very expensive but they promise the earth to those who use them. It might cost $60 just for one pack for the weekend. There are rules for using them but young people don't follow them. They should only be taken on their own, but youngsters will wash them down with alcohol. They will take several times the recommended dose. Then it becomes dangerous.

While it is true that people learn quickest from their own mistakes, nevertheless the importance of good

role models is paramount. And here where we come back to Anton Oliver. Growing up is about learning – and learning from the right models. It is not about being a prude, but about showing people how to behave.

Prospects for the future

The minute we start accepting lower standards as the norm, then we fail to speak out to the young in the way our parents spoke to us. 'Drink,' you have to say, 'is a part of our culture – but this is the correct way to use it. Use alcohol – in moderation'. Then it becomes not just an acceptable but an enjoyable way of behaving.

Sadly, alcohol is still number one problem with the young. It is still the drug of choice. The alcohol producers are quick to use that fact. Think of the cult of the 'Southern Man', which promotes hard boozing and hard living.

On the positive side, drink driving has come down. In ten years, in spite of the increase of traffic, deaths on the road have reduced dramatically. The anti-drink-driving campaign has been effective. And the proportion of alcohol-related accidents among young people has also diminished. There is no reason to be complacent. I believe that our education campaign in schools has helped, and locally we have received great public support for that. We also need good role models, like Anton Oliver. ■

How the Church should support indigenous peoples

Lisa Beech

"Christ is still hungry; he is still thirsty. He is still a stranger; he is still in prison. If we love him, we will come to help him, no matter in what part of this world he may be. There are of course some who refuse to see Christ in members of races other than their own….

"There are racial problems in the world – real problems – and it does no service to truth or charity to minimize them. But any solution is wrong which brands a man as inferior just because he belongs to a certain race, or denies him his rights as a son of God with an immortal soul redeemed by Christ and destined for glory. These problems do not, thank God, exist in this country."

Dr Dominic O'Sullivan points to this 1962 Wellington sermon by Fr James Durning as an example of how Catholic social teaching has failed to realise its purpose where prevailing secular thought and fashion have overshadowed Catholic thinking.

He explains this in his book *Faith, Politics and Reconciliation: Catholicism and the politics of indigeneity*, just published by Huia Publishers in Wellington. Dr O'Sullivan is a Post-doctoral Fellow at the University of Waikato, and a member of the *Caritas* Board and the Hamilton Diocesan *Social Justice Commission*.

In the 1950s, he says, it was common for the church to be unduly influenced by the prevailing view of New Zealand as a land of "racial harmony". While Fr Durning later went on to become a vocal supporter of biculturalism in the 1980s, Dr O'Sullivan sees failure too in Catholic groups' vigorous support and adoption of the language of bicultural and *Treaty of Waitangi* policy, rather than explaining the higher moral and religious authority for indigenous rights. He believes that where there is racism among the Catholic community it is best challenged by Catholic thought and tradition rather than by secular political fashions.

"Church teaching since the 15th Century has a lot to say about indigenous rights. Getting so caught up in the *Treaty* debate, the church was not as attentive as it may have been to its own history and traditions from which to draw its contribution to the public debate.

"We need to get back to the basic principle of our shared humanity, created in the image and likeness of God." He states that while that may have been the starting point for statements from the Catholic Church about the *Treaty of Waitangi*, it is presented as a given, and not explained. He says the church needs to be clear that its role is to provide principles that guide the political process in reaching a solution, rather than proposing or endorsing particular solutions.

There is currently some discussion and debate about how much religious language should be used in political settings, such as making submissions at Parliament. Dr O'Sullivan' position is clear: "If you are making a submission in the name of a church body, you are obviously a religious group, and need to establish what gives that religious group authority to participate."

In New Zealand there has tended to be a lack of confidence about participating in public debate unashamedly and unapologetically from a Catholic perspective. "And when that happens, there's a tendency for day-to-day fashions of secular politics to have undue influence."

His book is both sympathetic and critical of the efforts made by the church, including the JPD Commissions of the 1980s and 1990s, to respond to the situation of indigenous people. "There are times when the church has remained silent in the face of extended abuse of its own principles… There are also times when Catholic teaching has become meaningless because the political context is not understood." ■

Faith, Politics and Reconciliation: Catholicism and the Politics of Indigeneity by Dominic O'Sullivan
Publisher: Huia Publishers, RRP $44.99

How secular is New Zealand?

Christianity, Modernity and Culture. New Perspectives on New Zealand History
Edited by John Stenhouse, assisted by G.A. Wood.
Adelaide: ATF Press, 2005.
Price: $44.95
Review: Peter Matheson

How secular is New Zealand? Will the march of modernity eventually lead to all religion withering on the stem? What is the historical evidence for the way in which the sacred and the secular have interacted in this country in the past?

For some time now the confident answer to these questions has been given by the secularists in the media, the academy and in government. Religion has been written out of our general histories. This lively collection of essays challenge this consensus. Thoughtful, meticulously researched chapters point to very different conclusions.

Allan Davidson and Peter Lineham, for example, refer to the new avenues which have opened up to the churches in the field of government policy formation, and through imaginative prophetic acts such as the hikoi of hope. G.A. Wood points out that though modest church interventions in areas such as biculturalism have given a lead to the whole nation, Susannah Grant illustrates the influence of the liberal Anglican beliefs of Sir George Grey in the innate equality of Maori and Europeans.

Tony Ballantyne argues persuasively that missionaries played a key linguistic role in the cultural vernacularisation of Christianity in New Zealand, while Lyndsay Heads suggests that the ambiguous role of Wiremu Tamihana in the King Movement derives from his use of Christianity's intellectual openings to 'produce a modernized model of Maori political independence.' (p.70)

The second section, 'Popular Christianities', includes Alison Clarke's delightful vignette of the way in which Christian beliefs, festivals and rites of passage held Otago colonist society together. John Stenhouse draws on research into working-class families in South Dunedin to counter the assumption that Christianity, especially in its Protestant form, was a bourgeois phenomenon. He highlights the role of Christian women such as Rachel Grimmett in the public sphere, in the controversies around temperance and women's suffrage. With James Beattie Stenhouse also contributes a pioneering article on attitudes to the environment. Biblical imagery underlay much of the conservationist arguments of the nineteenth century.

No attempt is made to cover up the deficiencies of the Christian churches. Stenhouse's introduction argues, rather, for a more differentiated approach to the complex evidence which our history throws up. Readers of *Tui Motu* may realize that this book is only the latest of a series of books and articles which John Stenhouse, G.A. Wood and others have produced in recent years. Cumulatively they offer an alternative perspective to Keith Sinclair's materialist reading of our history. The publishers are to be congratulated on this affordable new look at what forges our identity as New Zealanders. ■

One woman's journey of faith

Faith Evolving: A Patchwork Journey
by Trish McBride
Price: $30 plus $3 p&p
Review: Joan McFetridge

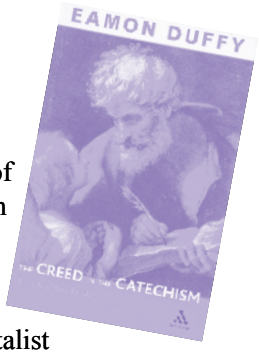
Faith Evolving: a Patchwork Journey is an intentional reflection by Trish Mc Bride on her life's journey. She has a sharpened awareness, somewhat unusual in our society, of someone who is sensitively in touch with the God who embraces every moment of her life. She both painfully and gracefully etches out God's silent or dynamic ever-present self.

This is a book that has been written over a period of time. It is full of treasures, surprises, stories, insight, grief, disillusionment and transformation.

Trish McBride has cleverly written from both the inside-out – her story, images, experiences, feelings; and from the outside-in. She views her life with its multiple paths and wanderings from the objective perspective of James Fowler's stages of faith.

Fowler's stages of faith focus on 'how we make meaning'. He does not develop the reality of holiness. Trish McBride

A helpful guide for catechists



The Creed in the Catechism
Eamon Duffy
Continuum 2005
Price: $28.95
Review: Michael Hill

Sometimes while browsing in a bookshop you chance with delight upon a real treasure. Such was my experience with this little book. I must have missed it when it first came out nine years ago, but it has been republished this year.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a prime source for Catholic teachers and preachers, but it received a mixed reception when it was first launched. It was seen as something of a curate's egg: some marvellous sections, while other parts were seen as quite deficient. In particular, the Scripture scholarship of the Catechism was often found wanting.

So how can the ordinary Catholic teacher using the First Part of the Catechism (on the Creed) be expected to make such a distinction? One answer is – use this book. The text follows, section by section, through that part of the Catechism. Eamon Duffy is a distinguished Cambridge historian and author of the celebrated book on the English Reformation, *The Stripping of the Altars*. Here he systematically evaluates each section, especially as it relates to the documents of the Vatican Council.

The *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, compiled by the Dominicans, "had the coherence and consistency of a theological school" (*Introduction*), whereas this new Catechism, he says, is "like a camel, an animal designed by a committee". His general conclusion is however by no means disparaging. Indeed he notes that studying closely this first Part on the Creed was for him "a voyage of discovery and renewal in faith".

To take one example. In the section on *Creation* Duffy commends the Catechism because it concentrates on the question 'What does it all mean?', rather than trespassing on the more scientific 'How did things happen?'. And by situating its teaching on creation in the ambit of Christian hope, the Catechism reflects beautifully the age-old trust in the goodness of God the Creator. Unfortunately, as Duffy notes, when the text moves on to the details – the creation of heaven, earth and the angels – the discussion "seems crude and almost fundamentalist in its handling of Scripture". (p22) The curate's egg again.

Duffy especially commends the section "I believe in the Holy Spirit". Catholic teaching on the Holy Spirit prior to the Vatican Council was extremely impoverished. But the Catechism summarises well the rediscovery of the richness of this fundamental teaching.

One of the delights of this little book is the way Duffy illuminates his text by a wide range of literary quotes, from Newman to Hopkins, from Rahner to von Balthasar, as well as relevant church documents.

I thoroughly recommend this book. What I like best about it is its Catholicity – in the best sense. It is the thoughtful response of a wise, learned and loyal layman to the church's official voice. It is part of that healthy conversation of faith which has been one distinguishing mark of the post-Conciliar era. ■

has taken his structure or skeleton and enfleshed it with her life.

However this is not a boring tome to be studied. This is a book that is to be explored, perused, read and re-read, picked up and put down again. It contains poems, reflections, newspaper articles, magazine articles, prayers. It is full of raw experiences that include abuse, and glorious moments of transformation.

It is disquieting yet joyful, confusing yet insightful, angry yet hopeful, questioning yet full of discovery. This engaging book tells the power of story, and the gift of the reflected life.

One commentator on the back cover says "She is at home now". I think not. Resting maybe. But this is a journey unfinished. Readers may well conclude the explorer is still searching. She herself quotes TS Elliot:

And the end of our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Fowler's stage five and six will be the opening of yet another door to the "fullness of life".

I look forward to the second book of treasures. n

Coping with global calamities

Calamity strikes again in the form of an earthquake in the Pakistani portion of Kashmir. It seems the world is full of man-made and natural disasters which force us to cope with death on a massive scale. Where will misfortune strike next? Tsunamis, floods and earthquakes have decimated the population of entire towns. Now there are threats of an influenza pandemic and a bird-flu pandemic as well.

The extent of the devastation numbs the mind. This becomes the means of obscuring a world that can no longer be understood. The Rosminian fourth maxim, 'To give myself wholly to God's Providence' described in *Rosmini Revisited,* "as the key to our peace of mind and heart because it implies perfect trust in God alone", is of great spiritual comfort.

On the practical plane, what can one do? Watch the domestic cat, I say. It will know before you do when an earthquake is imminent and it will retire to the safest place, outside the house, close to the stored water-bottles. Whether you follow it, is of no concern to the cat. All it is doing is looking after itself and trusting in providence. Do not go to the beach to watch the arrival of the tsunami and don't be caught fishing in flood-prone rivers when it's pouring with rain. Finally, wear a mask when feeding the chooks, and as a last precaution – make a will.

Turkey and the EU

Turkey's dream of joining the EU took a definite step forward in Luxembourg last month when both sides agreed to open membership talks. The changing face of Turkey, under the leadership of the dynamic Prime Minister Recep Erdogan, has persuaded the majority of EU members, albeit grudgingly, to approve Turkey's eventual inclusion.

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

Recep Tayyip Erdogan has a long career in Islamic politics yet he is more than willing to embrace democracy. He calls himself a "conservative democrat" rather than an Islamist and has no wish to extend religious influence in public affairs. Yet he clings firmly to Islam, which undermines the view that democracy and Islam are incompatible. His support in Turkish politics is far from being rock solid. Many Turks are worried that he has made too many concessions in order to be considered for EU membership but he is convinced that the future for Turkey lies in the West.

There is always the danger that the Islamic fundamentalists, in view of the American invasion of Iraq, will persuade Muslims to turn inwards which would threaten the independence of all the secular Muslim democracies in the Middle East. Erdogan believes that EU membership affords an important opportunity for Turkey to increase the power of Europe as a counterbalance to US domination. It is an ambitious new path for the EU.

There are widely held concerns about Turkey's record in human rights, particularly in regard to torture, the death penalty and what is perceived as inequality towards women. Erdogan has instigated a series of radical civil and human rights reforms in these areas.

Turkey has made concessions and has earned the right to membership. Entry would stabilise a large region of the Middle East and breathe new life into Europe. In human terms, it is a pivotal moment in the EU's relationship with the Islamic world and cuts down ancient boundaries and taboos between Christianity and Islam. Both these monotheistic religions can but benefit.

Ruled by expediency

Helen Clark has formed a government of convenience which demeans and degrades the principles of MMP and her own political integrity. Having campaigned on the intention of forming a coalition with the Greens, she capitalised on the stupidity of Tariana Turia's approach to National that let her off 'the foreshore and seabed' hook and moved the Labour Party to the centre right. It is a betrayal of the Green Party and a slap in the face for Labour supporters.

In order to maintain power, Helen Clark has had to promote the xenophobic Winston Peters to the post of Foreign Affairs Minister – outside Cabinet – which allows Peters to behave like a loose canon in parliament. This is the man who was thrown out by his electorate and already has defectors in his own party. He wants Muslims kept out of New Zealand because they are potential terrorists, is opposed to a China free-trade deal and he will soon have to enter into discussions with United States on the nuclear ships issue. *The Australian* has already called this appointment 'a bad joke' and I agree.

Another bizarre addition to Clark's situation comedy is the charlatan Peter Dunne who makes no bones about his preference for National but obviously could be bought for the right price. The title of Revenue Minister with all the perks was enough. This is Dunne's last chance in parliament before sinking into political obscurity.

I am sure Don Brash has postponed his retirement in the knowledge that there could certainly be another election within two years. Helen Clark has given him another chance. The National Party would certainly win. They say politics is the second oldest profession but this government bears a close resemblance to the first. Helen Clark has sold her political integrity for the dubious honour of a third term. ■

Musings on the Synod

Even the most casual watcher of racing on TV knows one thing. You can see the position of the contenders as they round the corner coming into the straight. But that does not tell you who will be in front at the winning post.

The opening days of the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist saw long-taboo topics being aired as real problems and concrete remedies being proposed. Our New Zealand bishops played a prominent and honourable role in this. Archbishop John Dew of Wellington spoke of the need for a rethink of the rules that exclude divorced and civilly remarried Catholics from communion and which make it impossible for marriage partners belonging to different Churches to receive communion together. Bishop Denis Browne, president of the New Zealand Bishops' conference, spoke of the increasing shortage of priests and raised the possibility of a wider authorisation of the priestly ordination of married men. Their remarks caught worldwide attention and were echoed by many other participants.

These lines are of necessity written while the synod is still in progress and before the conclusion of the race. But the prospects of the synod backing any of the more radical solutions to problems relating to the Eucharist are not good.

In previous synods recommendations of an even remotely radical kind were simply ignored by the Holy See in the follow up to the synod. The present limitation is not one of curial censorship. It is one that Cardinal Williams referred to in his report on the Oceania synod and which is endemic to such gatherings. A significant number of those taking part lean towards traditional solutions and consensus on more radical moves cannot be found. Many good things will doubtless be agreed on at the present gathering in Rome. But other possibilities will not get to the winning post.

On the issue of shortage of celebrants for the Eucharist, a number of speakers, among them Cardinal Pell of Sydney, have maintained that the law of clerical celibacy must remain intact. I wish I could invite such speakers to come with me after the synod to visit some of the remote islands in the Pacific or rural communities in the Philippines, places where Mass is celebrated only once or twice in the year. I would be asking these distinguished clerics accompanying me to explain to the Catholic folk there that attendance at Mass is to be considered a rare privilege. I would invite them to clarify for these simple believers that participation in the Eucharist is in no way a right to be zealously safeguarded by their pastors, but something that must be sacrificed for the sake of a particular usage of the Latin Church.

The solution to the problem of shortage of priests depends on many factors. Ordination of *viri probati*, tried and true mature Catholic men who have already evidenced their leadership qualities, would only be one contribution to a solution. As of course would be the ordination of women. But it is sad to see the latter possibility not even mentioned and the former, though raised, gaining only limited support.

The synod is an advisory body, not a decision-making one. Whatever comes out of its deliberations will depend on follow-up decisions made by the Pope. Benedict XVI has already shown that the decisions he makes as pontiff can differ from those he might have made in his former subsidiary role as panzer cardinal. After the talking in the synod is over, there is still room for a much more powerful movement of air, the breath of the Spirit, to sweep in and re-invigorate the Church ■

Fr Humphrey O'Leary is rector of the Redemptorist community in Glendowie, Auckland

On the receiving end

Morning tea can last a lifetime. I was eight when I learned this, and even though I know that it can't have been more than 15 minutes, even looking back after 30 years, my first time in a New Zealand school playground seems to last forever.

After days of peeking at school-aged children through the fence, I was excited to begin my first day of school. Friendships had always come easily to me, and I assumed my classmates would be happy to meet me.

We hadn't travelled far – only from an Australian Irish Catholic community to a New Zealand Irish Catholic community. But I soon found that it was quite far enough.

I endured five minutes of being the centre of attention – "Say 'fish and chips'!" – before everyone ran away, leaving me alone. I watched them play unfamiliar games, and wondered what my friends in Canberra would be playing without me. I missed them so much that I could not keep myself from crying.

Our school principal, who had only taken me to my class an hour earlier, came past and briskly asked: "Come on now, what's the matter?" I explained I was feeling homesick. "Get over it," she said, "you're a New Zealander now."

It had not occurred to me that I was a New Zealander. I did not feel like one. I watched the New Zealand children playing without me, and did not believe they thought I was one.

I remember vividly the minutes passing while the cold desolation of the phrase sank into my bones. To this day, any time I hear anyone use "New Zealanders" as a means of ignoring or whitewashing differences, I find my spine shiver with that cold.

"We are all New Zealanders now" continues to be a popular rallying call of those who ignore the needs of those who are different while still objecting to their difference, like asking me to forget my homesickness while laughing at my accent. When I hear "New Zealander" being used in that way, I find that I call myself only "Kiwi".

My isolation lasted less than 15 minutes. Many children are not so lucky. Before the end of morning tea, Julianne had noticed me and asked me to play. But the memory of the loneliness has never left me. There are many people living in New Zealand with that loneliness and desolation, and for so many, it is not as memory, but as their daily reality. ■

Lisa Beech