Tui Motu

InterIslands

September 1997 Price $4

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Tui Motu-InterIslands
September 1997

The mustard seed

Bringing a new publication into being is fraught with its own special labour pains. Is a new magazine needed? Will anyone buy it? Has a serious religious paper any future? The answer in biblical terms is that the path of the prophet is always beset with thorns.

On my desk is a heap of really successful religious papers from around the world. Some succeed by the quality of their content, like the London *Tablet* (which I have devoured weekly since my student days when it cost ninepence). Others have *elan and* style and fall definitely into the quality bracket — like *Panorama*, from France. One or two are hugely successful, like *Famiglia Cristiana*, which goes into a million Italian homes each week. They have one thing in common: they nourish and challenge one's faith.

So it can be done. But can it be done here? John Bluck, Dean of Christchurch, contends that a vibrant religious press is not merely desirable, but vital. His words are printed opposite; his thesis is that there are things only serious religious journals do, things the secular media currently fails to provide.

One aspect common among the quality overseas papers is that they are usually independent. They are not controlled by the church hierarchy nor are they official mouthpieces. That should please those in authority because they don't have to pick up the tab if a publication falters. There is one compelling reason for being an independent voice. It reflect the post-Vatican 2 church, which is a church of adults whose faith is a questioning, searching journey. The official church defines and guides, but it too is human and needs to be challenged and questioned as well as listened to and supported. One classic sign of a healthy, free society is the independence of its press; and that is true of church as well as state. And independence allows for a taste of salt in the product. If a paper is to be truly prophetic it must afflict the comfortable as well as comforting the afflicted!

Many successful Catholic papers overseas are run by religious: Jesuits, Paulists, Assumptionists and others. *Tui Motu-InterIslands* is born here from an initiative of the Dominican Sisters and Friars. They have been generously supported financially by other religious congregations as well as a host of laypeople. These have provided the potting mix. If the mustard seed is to grow it will need to support itself on income, that is, on its circulation. The response of readers is vital — in dialogue with and through the paper, and by promotion.

The name *Tui Motu* was given us by Pa Henare Tate (see pages 16-17). It describes our vision which is to help build and weave together the disparate elements, racial, social and religious, that make up our society. May this mustard seed grow to the point that it will allow many birds to find rest and refreshment in its branches.

Humpty Dumpty

When will he fall? When will he self-destruct? Perhaps 1997 will be known as the year of Winston. He is a caricature of the maverick politician, driven relentlessly by his ego and his eloquence. Alas! his support is as insubstantial as straw — or, perhaps, cotton (thinking of underpants and Kirtons).

The saddest aspect is that this man really has got something to tell us. The compulsory Super scheme is a jolt to our complacency regarding the demographic nightmare facing an ageing population. He rightly asks: if not this way, then how else do we guarantee our children's security? His party demands a halt to the commercialisation of healthcare and education — and they are right. He has already ensured free health access for the very young. And although his David act against the commercial Goliaths has faltered because the winebox turned out to be full of pebbles, a huge question remains: whose money was laundered into the pockets of the wealthy tax-evaders? Was it the public purse which might have funded a better-paid teaching profession, more cash for tertiary education and more resources for health and social services? Winston is the one who dares to ask the hairy questions.

Unfortunately Jo Citizen sees and hears the medium rather than the message. The referendum vote is likely to be a vote against a person rather than for or against a policy. Meanwhile Mr Bolger watches and waits — like the man who sat on the fence so long, the iron entered his soul.

M.H.

The need for a religious Press

John Bluck, Dean of Christchurch, trained journalist and Anglican priest, sees the printed word as relevant today as ever it was.

Most church people, however otherworldly in their piety, rely more on mass media than their Bibles to describe and inform their worlds. Our ability to shape the consciousness of our readers by what we print is minimal compared with the effect of the television images and talkback radio conversations and the morning paper pictures and headlines, and all the other electronic flotsam and jetsam our readers absorb every day. The mass media environment in which we swim is the benchmark and framework for our craft. That environment makes it harder than ever for the church press to survive, let alone flourish.

The religious press can still flourish, despite the climate, partly because we have some built-in advantages as church press, and partly because that wider mass media industry for all its seeming success and control is in terrible trouble itself. In its desperate race for circulation and ratings and a bigger share of the advertising dollar, our mass media counterparts are constantly compromising their own standards about quality, depth, complexity and balance of coverage.

Journalistic standards in this country have never been lower, journalistic ethics have never been more ambiguous, media ownership and control have never been more monopolistic, public media have never been under greater threat.
The advantages that mass media can celebrate these days are more to do with the technology than the art and craft of journalism. Consumers are briefly titillated but increasingly alienated by the sensationalism, the hype and distortion that even mainstream media rely on.

It is about time that we, the religious press, reclaimed some of the dignity and the unique advantages of the printed word, especially for reflecting on issues of faith and dimensions of the spirit.
Print is a reflective medium in the sense that you can absorb it at your own pace, and return to it or share it with others easily. You can also preserve and repeat something very precisely and almost indefinitely. It is also a more transparent and manageable medium (than TV or radio), less subject to the quick manipulation and easy emotional exploitation of images and sounds.

It may only be a sign of my advancing age, but spend an hour watching the visual swirl of music videos or two hours of listening to the babble of talkback radio, then pick up a page of calm and elegant print that you can explore at your own pace – and experience the refreshing difference! There's no doubt in my mind which medium leaves me feeling more human. Not least because of clarity I can achieve from print which comes in part from the control I can exercise over it. No unintelligible brief sound bytes, no more incoherently juxtaposed images; but words in sequence that I can connect and reconnect.

All of which gives a dignity and power to the print medium that is lost when you try to turn a book into a television programme laid out flat, or when you reduce words to instant throw away, junk food signals that have no enduring value.

The church press could quite intentionally work at being a degree or two less arrogant, less earnest, less fixated on its own importance than its mass media counterparts.

The cynicism and disdain is especially evident as race and gender issues shape the news of the middle nineties. A common media response is to dismiss all that as a fad of political correctness that will pass. My hunch is that these issues will become more dominant as we review who we are and where we belong and how we can stand tall together and separately as women and men. And if our Christian identity is not interwoven and grounded in those wider cultural identities then we end up like shallow rooted trees blown over in the first strong wind that comes.

My plea is for the church press to capitalise on celebrating the things it does best and can do better than other publications. The freedom to take space, to explain and to contextualise is one such advantage. There never is enough space, but our control over what we have is considerable.

Right now I sense a growing hunger to get at the stories behind the stories; to try and make sense of the anger and alienation behind the issues of land rights and sovereignty, sexual abuse, changing family values, models of healthy relationship, working a world where nothing lasts – not even the jobs.

From an address to the Australasian Religious Press Association in Wellington 1995

Good news to the poor..

Left: Suzanne Aubert, Founder of the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion.

Right: Frederic Ozanam, Founder of the Society of St Vincent de Paul

Two young people grew up in the city of Lyons in the 1800s. Both were inspired by God to give their lives to the service of the poor and the dispossessed.

Frederic Ozanam saw the devastating effects of the Industrial Revolution. It prompted him to found the worldwide society of St Vincent de Paul. This month Pope John Paul is due to celebrate Frederic's life with the young people of the world in Paris.

A few years after Frederic's time, Suzanne Aubert set sail for New Zealand as a missionary. She too carried the same message of hope – good news to the poor.

SVP founder beatified in Paris

On Friday 22 August in Paris Pope John Paul is due to beatify Frederic Ozanam. It is to be the climax of the World Youth Gathering in Paris, and the Pope is presenting to the young people of the world an exemplar, one who devoted all his strength to serving the poor.

The Industrial Revolution had been going for only a few years but by 1833 it was already having an impact on the thriving industrial centre of Lyons in the south of France. "What does the Church do for the poor?", asked Frederic Ozanam, then a law student in the city.

Or, more precisely, Frederic asked his friends: "what are we doing?" They went to see a well-known Sister of Charity, Sr Rosalie Rendu and discovered exactly what they could and should do. The six young people placed their work under the patronage of St Vincent de Paul, and vowed to alleviate suffering by meeting it face to face. Frederic wrote: "The blessing of the poor is God's blessing: let us go to the poor!" He was just 20 years of age.

Frederic pursued his studies in law, but his charitable work was unceasing. Within a year he had 100 followers and by 1848, when Frederic was 35, the Society of St Vincent de Paul already had 10,000 members. One of his favourite sayings was: "Justice has limits; charity has none". He was a devoted family man and had one daughter, Marie. His influence spread throughout France and he is seen as one of the founders of Social Catholicism. Frederic Ozanam is neither a mystic nor an ascetic. Affectionate father, loyal friend, he is also a remarkable teacher. In all things he showed a love of life and acted with a love for God and people. "Charity", he said, "is a fire which goes out without fuel: the fuel is good works." He was always physically frail. Hi health deteriorated rapidly after 1851. He died two years later, aged only 40.

Ozanam was born in Milan in Italy on 23 April 1813, but spent his early years in Lyons, his parents' native city. His early years in the family were not without sadness: only three out of the 14 children born to Ozanams survived. Frederic was deeply religious but also an excellent student and went to study at the Sorbonne in Paris. At first he was deeply involved in defending his Christian faith against rationalism, but it was seeing the poverty of the great cities that changed his life.

Today the Society Frederic founded operates in 132 countries. There are some 47,000 conferences with a membership of over 800,000. This vast movement of social action has preserved its lay character. Its activities have become legion: working with the homeless, with the sick, with drug addicts, in the world of prostitution and prison. There are some members who specialise in helping people with budget advice and with literacy. There will be great rejoicing among this worldwide membership that their founder, Frederic Ozanam, has been at last recognised as a Saint for our times.

Young Vinnies inspired by 'Fred'

Frederic Ozanam, affectionately known as 'Fred', is an inspiration for a group of young Vinnies working in a Dunedin parish. Josephine, Gabrielle and Nicole (pictured above) with their friends meet each month to pray together and then plan what they can do to follow the lead of Frederic Ozanam.

One job they enjoy doing is visiting elderly 'shut-ins' at home and do messages or jobs for them. 'Gladys', aged 96, lives in the parish and is going blind and deaf; but they love to visit her, wash her windows, do a few odd jobs and cheer her up. Like lots of old people Gladys enjoys the company of young people. At Christmas they took parcels round the homes and sang carols for the 'oldies'. During the school holidays recently they organised and ran a holiday programme for 4-8 year-olds. "It gives the mums a break", explained Josephine. "We'd happily do it again. It was fun."

Recently they spent a weekend in Methven with some 50 young Vinnies from Canterbury and Otago. The spirit of Frederic Ozanam is alive and well among this group of young people.

Advance Notice from the Hamilton Curia of the Legion of Mary

A Marian Congress

for all Catholics

Date: Saturday 8 November 1997
Venue: St Joseph's, Morrinsville
Theme: Mary's Place in Jubilee 2000

The opening Mass will be celebrated by Most Rev Bishop Browne, DD
Registration and full programme available later

Inquiries to: Marian Congress Committee,
C/- P O Box 4387,
Hamilton
☎ : 07 856 6319

A woman for all seasons

Suzanne Aubert is back in the news and in bookstore windows following the extraordinary success of the latest biography when it won the Montana Book of the Year Award last month.
In June the author, **Jessie Munro** *(left), spoke to the Auckland Mercy Healthcare Conference on* ***Mother Aubert, pioneer in Catholic Healthcare.***
The extracts are from a longer paper, available from **Home of Compassion, Island Bay, Wellington 6002.**

We can't ever be sure how Suzanne Aubert would be reacting to our experience today. We arrive at conclusions obliquely, from the tangent of her recorded words and actions, her writings and memories, and from the ongoing work of the Sisters of Compassion.

The enormous and bewilderingly fast recent changes in the fabric of New Zealand society bring with them a real danger of loss of memory, whether it is on the scale of institutional, professional memory, family or communal memory, or one's whakapapa. How does a tiny, comparatively defenceless society of just over three million protect its culture or cultures, its overall identity, in the face of huge odds from without, unless it can sense from the accumulated communal and individual experience it carries within it that it has the right to do so?

The first and foremost sense of identity the Sisters of Compassion had, written into their earliest constitutions, was their mission partnership with Maori. The past is powerful and alive in Maori view of life, held out front for its key to present reality and attitudes. On her arrival with Bishop Pompallier in Auckland in December 1860, Suzanne Aubert remembered holding out her hand for support to climb from the rocking boat on to the wharf. It was a Maori hand that held hers as she entered this country.

Living in a changing world

So Suzanne landed – an outgoing, enthusiastic, sometimes impetuous young woman who would front life here with shoulders squared and sleeves pushed up. With this impulsive energy also went an intelligent and discerning judgment, a clear memory that could evaluate events and interpret them in terms of their wider meaning, a personality that could appreciate and even enjoy difference, that could seek out and find resolution without losing her own identity and integrity, nor that of her faith. She had stamina; she was a 'survivor', here to stay.

With Suzanne in that boat was Antoinette whom she knew already before leaving France. Antoinette tried to commit suicide on board ship. She was a casualty of years of dislocating, graunching change. Eventually she spent 35 years in Sydney mental asylums.

The pattern of our lives today is one of huge change, not necessarily geographically but conceptually – the information age fast redefining gainful employment. The feeling of bewilderment, shock and lack of sure identity that pushed Antoinette to suicide is here now. In a book about recent change in New Zealand, *The New Zealand Experiment*, Jane Kelsey notes: "One of the most telling indicators of social distress [has been] the increase in suicide. Between 1974 and 1990 the rate of male suicide [rose] by 288 percent, with the greatest increase in the late 1980s. In 1990 New Zealand had the highest rate of suicide for 15-24 year-old women in the OECD, and the third-highest rate for young men."
Suzanne might have had a modified concept of afterlife consequences of suicide, but she would still be determined to respond to spiritual despair. She always kept herself very well informed on social indicators; she would have found out these statistics of today and done what she could. She would have owed it to Antoinette.

Suzanne learnt how to be well-informed, how to question, to lobby, to assemble back-up strategies, how to network so that she was not blocked in. Not being passive, being more in control of change ourselves is a lesson we can gain from her. As a society we have not tended to suspect manipulation on a grand scale until recently; we have not been ready to counter it.

We can, for instance, be alert to the dangers of competitiveness in social services. We can acknowledge the benefits of cost analysis and management but still question underlying commercialised profit motives. To establish a co-operative climate does not have to mean we collude in mediocracy and 'inefficiency'. It can mean a complementarity of competence and care.

Suzanne learnt during the 1860s to live in a bicultural world, venturing into what Judith Binney calls "the borderlands of thinking between cultures". How would she as a Pakeha be approaching these borderlands now? How would she be dealing with the bicultural birthright of this nation? How would she as a Catholic healthcare leader be planning ahead for the rising line of Maori on the population graph and, therefore, their higher percentage of health care needs?

In the early Constitutions, the Sisters' timetable for devotions and recreation was to tie in with the variable timing of Maori prayers on the marae, which they took part in. Riding horses was the appropriate transport for speedy health care among the Whanganui hills. The Sisters therefore rode horses, against the wishes of diocesan authority.

Tolerance and involvement

Suzanne now moves on to the 'other world' of settler migration, the other world of religious difference, to her world of tolerance and involvement. 1874 was the year of highest immigration ever in New Zealand. 1872-1876, the peak years of government-organised immigration schemes, are recognised as a turning point in New Zealand history. Many of these people, like Suzanne herself, came with a dream of co-operative community. There was quite a lot of 'build up' in New Zealand history, rather than 'trickle down', and we can remember that to our advantage now. And today? As other cultural norms impinge on comfort zones of belief and custom, we will be tested. What will our traditional, if imperfect, Maori/Pakeha biculture uphold as intrinsic core values? And what values will it readily absorb from new arrivals or recognise as validly different?

Suzanne had already experienced a cultural and religious background where without compromising your own beliefs, you could co-exist in friendship with others, and she made friendship a strategy for honest mission: she helped try to forge what one historian has termed the 'diffusion of friendliness'.

Joan Akapita who grew up on the Whanganui River, knew the Sisters of Compassion all her life and was a strong figure among Catholic Maori, gave me this image for Suzanne's approach to the people of the river: "She cared for them all. You didn't have to be a Katorika, a Ratana or whatever. It's by her actions and deeds that she showed her faith in God. She didn't save ten apples for Katorika, five for Mihinare, two for Ringatu, Presbyterian etc. She didn't push her Gospel down people's throats: she lived her Gospel". In Wellington, too, even strong freethinkers reasoned they could help Suzanne because 'she made no distinction of race and creed'.

How would she deal now with the present demographic change in New Zealand? As Sister Catherine Hannan has said: "Suzanne Aubert saw the presence of the Spirit of the Divine in every person she met". Suzanne's personality and beliefs warmed to people and family. She would probably still personify a Jesus, Mary or St Joseph in all. ▷▷

An Apostle of Optimism

Sr Rita Hickey, (pictured left) who works at the Home of Compassion, Silverstream, calls her beloved Founder, Suzanne Aubert, an "Apostle of Optimism". The Montana Award has been for her "an explosion of light and colour", because it focuses the Sisters' attention again on the threefold essence of their vocation as Mother Aubert spelt it out: their consecrated life, their mission and the people who benefit from their work.

"We face adversities of an equal magnitude to the times of Suzanne," said Sr Rita. "There are three elements here too: the complexities of our social and political systems, the degradation of the human spirit by poverty and secular greed, and the ageing and declining numbers of Sisters, which can bring a certain sense of complacency and weariness.

"We have inherited Suzanne's single minded devotion to the most needy. This inheritance finds expression through our care of people in our Homes of Compassion in New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific Islands. Partnership with the Maori people is an intrinsic part of this mission. The Suzanne Aubert Relief Centre in Wellington keeps up the tradition of providing for the homeless and the destitute, needy families and new migrants. The compassionate love of God entrusted to us is a gift to people of all ages."

▷▷ Caring and healing

In the years after the Land Wars illness also began to strike Maori communities noticeably. The 1870s began Suzanne's years on a medical circuit. These years saw the beginnings of Suzanne's *rongoa*, at first distributed freely, later sold to raise money for the Jerusalem mission. These medicines were developed from her partnership with holders of Maori medicinal knowledge and from her own experimentation combining indigenous plants and Western chemistry.

Suzanne always combined spirituality in her health care

Their story is very relevant right now. All around the world, indigenous medicinal knowledge and plants are more than ever in the sights of multinational drug companies. Indigenous people can find that plant extracts have been patented and/or genetically altered by these companies without consultation. Alternative systems of medical practice and medicines are increasingly sought after nowadays. Herbalism, alone or in combination with conventional Western medicine, is being used more and more.

Suzanne always combined spirituality in her health care. She had her Sisters' devotional life integrated as fully as possible with their active work. She preached a 'chapel of the tub' for the laundry novices: "Jesus is like a wonderful Bone-Setter. He resets all the dislocated parts of our soul" (from her Directory), and "Jesus is the great Physician who applies also massage in a spiritual sense".

From knowing the Sisters of Compassion, I am aware that passing on this positive spirituality to the lay personnel who replace religious sisters in health care is now an important part of the Catholic healthcare mission. This is where the risks of generic management touch on health care which has a faith tradition. Generic managers, armed with theory, may not have institutional memory or an overview. Suzanne would be training her generic managers.

Wider social issues

Everything in Suzanne's story would indicate that her thinking nowadays would be encompassing wider social justice issues as well as the continuing, essential practical help. Charity should be a back-up answer to the unpredictability of the human condition. Divisiveness arises as an obvious corollary to grossly widening social gaps.

The French Revolution would have taught Suzanne's family that. It is better to resist the widening of the gap rather than to buy into the culture of division. That is not to say that Suzanne was a 'softy'. She even wrote: "It is not so dangerous to do wrong to most men as it is to do them too much good". Accepting that people's gifts are different and some will prosper less than others in the arbitrariness of life, she went straight on trying, where she could, to safeguard people's welfare and dignity.

She tried to offer what support she could .. to people addicted to alcohol, the terminally ill, the disabled, the struggling working parents

Along with the Sisters of Compassion's partnership with Maori goes its commitment to people who are poor or in need. Suzanne tried to offer what support she could to old washed-up survivors of an itinerant colonial workforce, to people addicted to alcohol, the terminally ill, the disabled, the struggling working parents. Suzanne opened the first creche for working parents, mainly mothers, who brought their children in the morning and collected them in the evening in clean dry clothes. When women are poor, children are too. Today, social research literature agrees that children are the greatest sufferers of today's poverty.

Jesus is like a wonderful Bone-Setter. He resets all the dislocated parts of our soul

In tackling the area of social justice, we have arrived at Suzanne's period of social activism and lobbying. Suzanne's public championing of mothers and babies is one indication of a growing sense of social justice. It was, of course, mainly a religious impulse powering her, informed by her French past. In 19th century France, many babies were given up at birth to hospices and the death rate was staggeringly high. Babies died also in Catholic orphanages, but there they would have been baptised first. And if the children survived, they had a Christian upbringing. Suzanne was thinking about the soul of the child; the soul of a mother tempted by suicide or infanticide, the soul, even, of a father who might commit infanticide or pressure the woman into abortion.

What made her handling of the childcare issue in New Zealand different was the pioneer freshness about the way she was prepared to go public. In newspaper articles, letters and personal applications to Parliament, she advocated the rights of women not to be identified in order to protect them from the punitive double standard of the time. They kept their rights to visit, to retain access to their children and later reclaim them once they had the means to do so. She accepted newborn babies when no other orphanage would, to help the women hide the fact of childbirth and retain a 'good name'. Suzanne

Tom's feet

"I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat..."(Matt.6:25-34)
Thoughts are shared at Mass as we celebrate the memorial of Mary Mackillop and links are made with Suzanne Aubert. Our day is well under way as the Soup Kitchen door is opened for those coming in for breakfast. The words of the hymn *Strong and Constant* still filter through my mind as I see old Tom standing by the door. Old Tom looks like the weather. On windy rainy days he is windswept and wet. On hot sunny days he looks like the baked earth. But no matter what the weather, he is always in need of a shower. He won't come into the soup kitchen for a meal until he is invited. Others complain and don't want to sit at the same table as Tom. They say that it's not good for their digestion. He eats heartily and enjoys his meal. I suggest that he washes his feet and gets some dry socks. I strongly complain at the invading odour and encourage him to go to the Day Room to use the shower. He just smiles. On leaving he is so grateful, appreciating even the growling. His appreciation is humbling and stops me in my stride, as in his gentleness he shares Christ.

Sister Yvonne comes in part way through the van collection. She is in a hurry and a little flustered as she says: "We have got boxes and boxes of sausages, so many sausages, I think we could feed all the people in Wellington". Nigel, our cook, can't get over the generosity of people and our faith in Providence. The guys in the dining room help to carry the sausages in and smile as they now know the menu for tea. But they might be surprised as a phone call has just revealed that 16 boxes of vacuumed packed meat is to arrive from up North.

Peter has finished his soup, but he won't go to enjoy the day, he is upset. "Can I talk to you. I have got no one to talk to. I lost all my insurance money about $7,000. This guy forced me into putting it into a separate bank account under a false name. I did as he said. I went to withdraw some money about a week later and found that the account was closed, with a zero balance. I need that money. What can I do? The police won't listen to me, I can't afford a lawyer." I reply that he could go to the Community Law Centre and talk with someone there. His face lights up and he asks to use the phone to make an appointment at the Centre.

The food scraps are now all cleared from the tables and the floor is swept. I wonder how the rest of the day will unfold and what stories we will all share at the evening meal.

A Sister of Compassion

almost had to 'move heaven and earth' to ensure she could provide homes which ran according to her principles because she was running counter to the government position of the time, which was in fact a sensible, caring one.

The crucial factor in the government's giving Suzanne permission to run an alternative system to the standard government one was her skill as an advocate and most importantly her readiness to dialogue with people of influence, from the Prime Minister down. Suzanne was trusted because the channels of open and sincere communication were there; professional people knew her personally and were familiar with her Sisters' spirit and work. Once this trust was well established, she had their support, advice and facilitation thereafter.

The argument over childcare continues forever. How Suzanne dealt with controversy could be applied to another and more gigantic area for controversy and bewilderment today: medical ethics. Lines are being drawn on either side of ethical divides. There may be some areas where there can be no question of conceding. However, statements of genuine care and concern are coming from varying ethical standpoints. We, the public of New Zealand, have to absorb and sift these at the same time as working, raising our children, cooking, washing, cleaning...

This talk has only skimmed across the surface of so many issues. This bossy, stubborn, miles-too-busy woman was a lateral thinker. She saw how much tributaries make up the water of a great river. A wide river flowing calmly south may owe much to narrow, looping, leaping torrents charging east, west, or even north. She believed that Catholic social welfare in this country prospered most by people co-operating, being friendly, sharing access and sharing justice. She embodied perfectly naturally the Meri of her relationship with Maori, the nursing 'Sister' of settler Hawke's Bay, the canonical Mother Mary Joseph of her congregation, the secular Suzanne Aubert of her legal documents, the Mother Aubert of Wellington streets and the Grandma of the children.

Liturgy of Light launches Christchurch Charter

..a light shining in the darkness

"We pray that the light of this flame may burn brightly across our land." A candle liturgy was the climax of the We Are Church gathering in Aldersgate Centre, Christchurch, 16 July

Some 70 or 80 people braved a bleak midwinter night in Christchurch in July to support a New Zealand version of *We Are Church*. This movement for Church reform started in Austria at Pentecost 1995 and has spread all over the world

The purpose of the Christchurch meeting was to launch a charter and seek signatures across Aotearoa-New Zealand. These would be added to over two million signatures from various countries which are due to be taken to Rome in October.

The organisers explained how the Charter was drawn up, the work of a group of a dozen or so people who worked together until they had reached consensus. The name *Charter* was preferred to 'petition' because charter implies dialogue, a conversation between equals rather than a request for favours.

The keynote address was given by Dr Anna Holmes who described the whole process of the Charter as a response to Pope John Paul. In his letter *The Third Millennium* the Pope had invited the whole world to celebrate 2000 years of Christianity. "Birthdays are to be celebrated as a collective remembering with love. Tonight," said Dr Holmes, " we are here because we care about the church. The Pope has proposed the year 2000 as a Year of Jubilee. A jubilee year is a year in which captives are released, slaves set free, and the poor and oppressed emancipated. Jubilee restores equality among the whole community (para 13). Alas, there are some who still want a church of leaders and led rather than a community of equals."

The Holy Father also pointed out (para 33) the need for personal repentance in the church, although he did not specify a need for structural repentance for the sins of the institution which have hurt so many both in our own age and in history. "What we are asking in this charter," said Dr Holmes, "is that the institutional church also be reformed, repent and be reconciled with the many

people who are distanced from it because of oppressive relationships. The Pope regrets 'the responsibility shared by so many Christians for grave forms of injustice and exclusion (para 36)'. Some of the injustices we are all witness to are the exclusion of women from the governance of the Church; the exclusion of the divorced and remarried from the Eucharist; the exclusion of resigned priests from any other form of parish ministry. We remember the many distinguished theologians who have been silenced..."

Jubilee is also a time for renewed unity. Yet, the speaker suggested, what we see is a church more fragmented, with its government limited to the hands of a small, male, clerical cast. The divisions within the Christian community are not at the grass roots but at the top, where the loss of power and status is liable to be greatest. "The Charter is good news of a church of people who care and who are stretching the boundaries of church as Jewish boundaries were stretched by Jesus for the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4)...

The Charter has potential to provide a church home for many who are otherwise homeless. It is an act of faith, of hope and of love".

There followed a time of discussion and questions and a candle liturgy of light and praise. Those present were urged to take away copies of the Charter and collect signatures "from market places, from town centres, from churches and workplaces.

A copy of the Charter was sent to Bishop Cunneen on the 26 June. He did not reply to it but in a letter to diocesan priests he said: "You may or may not know that signatures are being collected for a petition entitled We Are Church. This petition is part of a worldwide movement aimed at bringing about change in the Catholic Church. My understanding is that this petition in part arises from a rejection of the teaching of the Catholic Church as taught by the magisterium. Therefore I wish to caution you and your parishes and schools against signing this petition or assisting in its process".

This letter appeared in some parish bulletins. The Charter group has responded to Bishop Cunneen asking that he explain exactly what part of the Charter he considers arises from "a rejection of the teaching of the Catholic Church as taught by the magisterium".

WE ARE CHURCH NEW ZEALAND CATHOLIC CHARTER

We the undersigned people of God, members of the Catholic Church, are committed to justice, reconciliation and renewal in our church and community.

We believe all people are called into being by God's love and are created equally in the image of God.

We believe that it is only through dynamic dialogue that healing and growth can occur.

We believe a church following Christ is:

1 **a Church of love**
- a) in which all are equal;
- b) in which each person's gifts are respected and accepted;
- c) in which decision-making is shared by all; in parish, diocese and synod.

2 **a Church which is catholic**
- a) so that it becomes inclusive and accepting of all people;
- b) so that it honours the stories and experience of all in the church.

3 **a Church which recognises**
- a) the priesthood of all the baptised;
- b) that God may call anyone to leadership and sacramental ministries.

4 **a Church which affirms all creation as good including:**
- a) the God-given gift of sexuality;
- b) individual conscience in the making of moral decisions;
- c) reverence for the environment.

5 **a Church that is mature**
- a) which reflects Christ's unconditional love of all people;
- b) which supports, encourages and works for reconciliation and justice in the light of the Gospel;
- c) which celebrates life in its fullness and diversity.

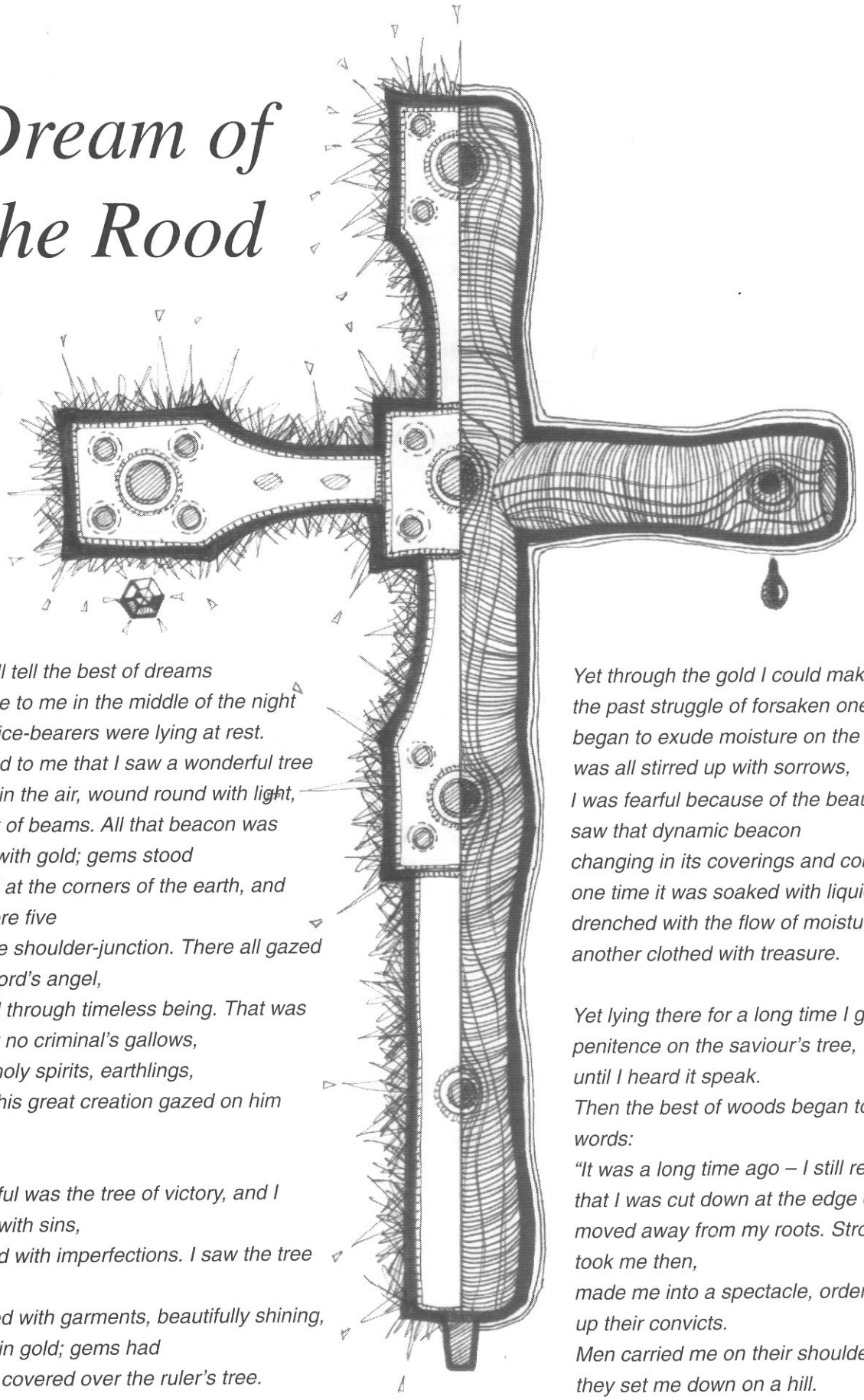
We seek a church which acts responsibly and which is accountable not only to God but to all the baptised.

We will labour with determination and gentleness until we have brought to birth a renewed church which nurtures and empowers all to grow to fullness as taught by Jesus Christ and desired by God.

NAME	ADDRESS	SIGNATURE	Are you Catholic? (yes/no)

Send signatures and donations to Catholic Women Knowing Our Place, P O Box 2184, Christchurch, or 52 Murray Place, Christchurch; by 28 September, 1997

Dream of the Rood



Yes, I will tell the best of dreams
that came to me in the middle of the night
when voice-bearers were lying at rest.
It seemed to me that I saw a wonderful tree
lifted up in the air, wound round with light,
brightest of beams. All that beacon was
flooded with gold; gems stood
beautiful at the corners of the earth, and
there were five
up on the shoulder-junction. There all gazed
on the Lord's angel,
beautiful through timeless being. That was
certainly no criminal's gallows,
but the holy spirits, earthlings,
and all this great creation gazed on him
there.

Wonderful was the tree of victory, and I
stained with sins,
wounded with imperfections. I saw the tree
of glory
honoured with garments, beautifully shining,
clothed in gold; gems had
worthily covered over the ruler's tree.

Yet through the gold I could make out
the past struggle of forsaken ones, so that it
began to exude moisture on the right side. I
was all stirred up with sorrows,
I was fearful because of the beautiful sight. I
saw that dynamic beacon
changing in its coverings and colours: at
one time it was soaked with liquid,
drenched with the flow of moisture, at
another clothed with treasure.

Yet lying there for a long time I gazed in sad
penitence on the saviour's tree,
until I heard it speak.
Then the best of woods began to utter
words:
"It was a long time ago – I still remember it –
that I was cut down at the edge of the wood,
moved away from my roots. Strong enemies
took me then,
made me into a spectacle, ordered me to lift
up their convicts.
Men carried me on their shoulders, until
they set me down on a hill.

Enemies aplenty secured me there.
Then I saw the lord of all the earth
hurrying eagerly, intent on climbing me.
There I dared not bend or break,
against the lord's word, even when I saw
the earth's surface tremble.
I could have struck down all our enemies, but I stood firm.

Then the young man – who was God almighty – stripped himself,
strong and resolute; he mounted the tall gallows,
brave in the sight of many, when he set out to redeem humanity.
I trembled when the man embraced me; but I dared not bow down to earth,
fall to the earth's surface. I had to stand firm.
As a rood was I raised up. I lifted up a mighty king,
the Lord of heaven – I dared not bend.
They pierced me with dark nails; on me the wounds are visible,
open gashes of hatred. I dared not harm any of them.
They mocked both of us together. I was all drenched with blood,
poured out from the man's side after he had sent out his spirit.

On that hill I lived through many terrible events. I saw the God of hosts
stretched right out. Darkness had covered in clouds the Ruler's body,
that bright radiance. The shadows moved forward,
dark beneath the clouds. All creation wept,
lamented the king's death. Christ was on the Cross.

(Abridged translation)

All Creation Wept

The spiritual heritage of these islands of Aotearoa-New Zealand is intimately linked to the Christian past of the northern islands of Britain and to their rich traditions of doctrine and devotion. Among the great religious treasures that survive from the early Middle Ages we can count an untitled and anonymous poem about the crucifixion known as *The Dream of the Rood.*

The poem, written in Old English, survives as part of a devotional anthology of prose and verse written out around the year 1000. The poem traces a powerful spiritual journey from a vision of overwhelming intensity to a sober, but still impassioned commitment to follow the Way of the Cross. It begins with a night-time dreamer's vision of a mysterious object of cosmic dimensions, fearful yet magnificent, witnessed not only by the troubled dreamer but by the whole of creation.

Next, the cross itself speaks, telling in the first person of the terrible things seen and experienced on the day Christ died. It tells how it was forced to endure the agony of the crucifixion with Christ its lord and how it was later cut down with its companions and buried, only to be recovered by the grieving disciples. Then the cross turns to address the unnamed dreamer (and, through the dreamer, the reader or listener of the poem), and urges that person to spread the message of its saving power, now that it has been transformed from an instrument of suffering into a life-bringing object of glory and worship. In the final section, the dreamer throws off his dark mood and, full of zeal, embraces the cross as the means of salvation that will conduct him to heaven.

As a meditation on the crucifixion, the poem is packed with intense emotions, both of great suffering and great joy. We encounter the suffering first of the dreamer, then of the cross, then of the dreamer again, but never of Christ himself. "They pierced me with dark nails", says the cross; "on me wounds are visible, open gashes of hatred" (lines 46-7). The earth trembles, and the whole creation is galvanised by the events taking place.

This is stunning enough, but the poem contains much more that is startling, even baffling, to the modern reader – a cosmic cross presented as a wonderful and mysterious object of awe and adoration, a cross that speaks and suffers, and Christ the young warrior actively mounting the instrument of his death. Presenting Christ as a heroic Germanic warrior was the common coin of Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition. In the poem the cross acts as Christ's retainer, or even perhaps as his weapon, boasting that although it could have bent down to sweep away his lord's enemies, "yet I stood fast" (line 38). For the cross, obedience, loyalty, faithfulness consist not in defending its lord from the violence offered to him by his enemies, but in allowing them to carry out their deadly work unchallenged.

In the Old English riddle tradition an object often speaks about itself in the first person. The cross of the opening vision is never described as a cross, but as "a wonderful tree", "brightest of beams", a "beacon", and so on. This riddling style is maintained when the cross begins to speak. It tells how it was cut down as a tree in the forest, and then fashioned into an instrument of deadly punishment.

The riddle tradition leads us to the mystical heart of this remarkable poem, for in the end *The Dream* is about the revelation of a great mystery, about concealing (as with the "garments" that cover the cross) and revealing, covering over and throwing off. At the climax of the poem the riddle of the identity of the mysterious visionary object is finally solved and the cross is revealed with its true and triumphant name:

As a rood was I raised up. I lifted up a mighty king, the Lord of heaven. I dared not bend (lines 44-45).

Paul Sorrell

Photo: Terry Coles

Tui Motu

There is no separation.
Peel back the strip of water
and see the oneness of the land
that lies beneath it.
Feel the same pulse
in the roots of northern kauri
as in the kelp beds of the south
and know the Heart
that lies behind it all.

We are not separate,
you and I and they,
born of the land and returning,
sharing its life, its breath,
its song of rejoicing.
How rich and beautiful
are the many faces
that come from the One!

Separation is the illusion.
What is known by every tree,
every bird and blade of grass,
we learn step by slow step
in the journey together,
as we gift each other
with the extra vision
that we call love.

So come then, beloved.
Peel back the strip of water.
Peel back the land itself.
Go beyond skin and language
and the knife edge of ideas
and embrace the shining reality
of the Oneness of all being.

The kingdom is truly within.

Joy Cowley

Haere mai Tui Motu

Haere mai te korero hou o nga tangata. We welcome this new magazine which comes from the heart of the people of Aotearoa-New Zealand and celebrates God-with-us in our unique identity.

Our spiritual journey and our physical environment are inseparably linked, and at this distance from Europe we are more likely to find God singing in a flax bush than in an ancient cathedral. Yet, still the old world over there lies between us and our everyday experience of the Divine.

We need words that will help us shift some of our sacred metaphors to images that are nearer home, that will help us rejoice in our land, our sea, our cultural diversity, to rejoice also in the challenge of our growing spaces.

Deep in our hearts, we already know a Christ who walks on Auckland harbour and heals in downtown Christchurch, who breaks fish and chips and drinks Marlborough wine. What we have now, is published recognition of that experience and a way of sharing it with each other.

Haere mai, haere mai. Welcome, welcome.

Joy Cowley

Tui Motu – what does it mean?

The design Tui Motu was drawn by Auckland Maori artist, Leonie Maxwell. Leonie has also provided the explanations below:

Niho Taniwha–Te Atua/God
The Blessed Trinity, Three in one, relates to spiritual sovereignty which acknowledges a supreme God. Maori spirituality speaks of three stages of reaching fulfilment: Kua mutu, to finish; kua oti, to complete; kua tutuki, to reach total fulfilment. This stage, Te tutukitanga.

Nihoniho
The smaller nihoniho represents the Rangatiratanga of other people of other cultures from other countries who make up the wider community of Aotearoa and of the world. The Human Whanau.

Pattern Haehae/to tear apart,.
In this context haehae relates to the severing of links between God and humanity, people and people during the process of life that can cause violation to the sacredness of life, te tapu i te tangata, and to the worth and dignity of humankind, Te tapu o te tangata.

Tohora/Whale
The Tohora has been incorporated into the design as it demonstrates the key principles that link God to humankind and to creation. Pa Henare Tate uses the symbolism of the whale during his lectures on Maori Theology/spirituality to demonstrate the key principles, Tapu, Mana, Tika, Pono, Aroha and Hohourongo. That is: sacredness, power to effect, justice, truth, concern for and reconciliation: "Without acknowledgement and encounter, injustice will never truly be resolved. Like a whale, it will disappear for a time, only to surface again, seeking the pure oxygen of Tika, Pono and Aroha". (Pa Henare, N.Z. Geographic 1987)

Wairua Tapu/Holy Spirit
Through this path and process only can Maori and people of other cultures attain true understanding, enlightenment and true justice.

"In Jour
Ofte

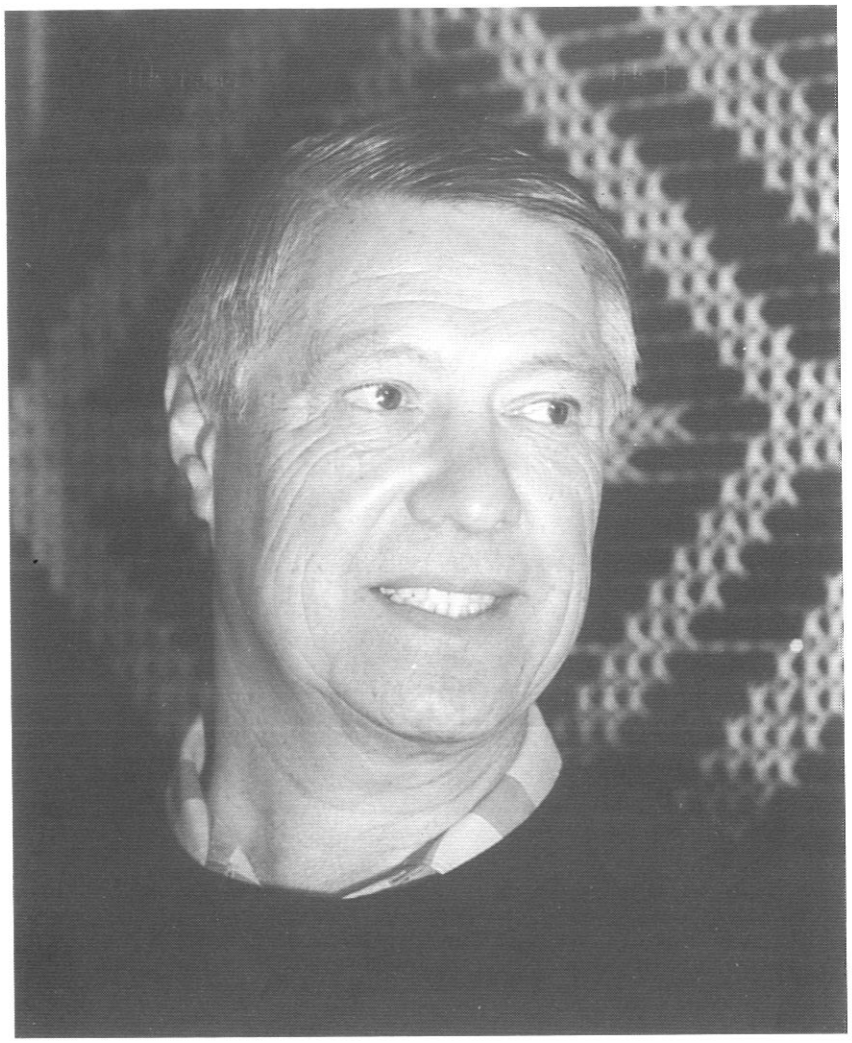
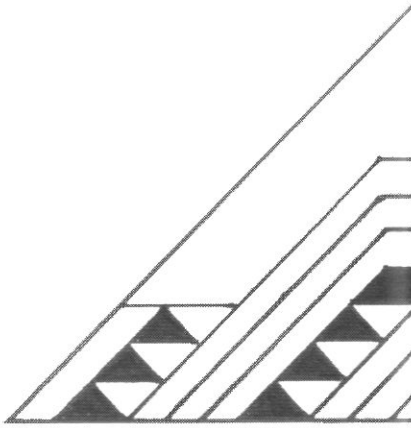


Photo: Paul Freedman

"In journeying often..." The phrase in Scripture (2 Cor 11,26) describes St. Paul's life, busily carrying the good news from one little church community to another across the broad spread of the Eastern Mediterranean. It can justly be applied to **Pa Henare Tate.**

He too scurries from one end of New Zealand to the other, 'knitting together' Maori Christian communities, encouraging them, building them up, listening to them, and with them developing the concepts of Maori spirituality as seen in the light of the gospel. It was Pa Henare who gave us our name *Tui Motu.* When he was recently in Dunedin we asked him to put the name into context.

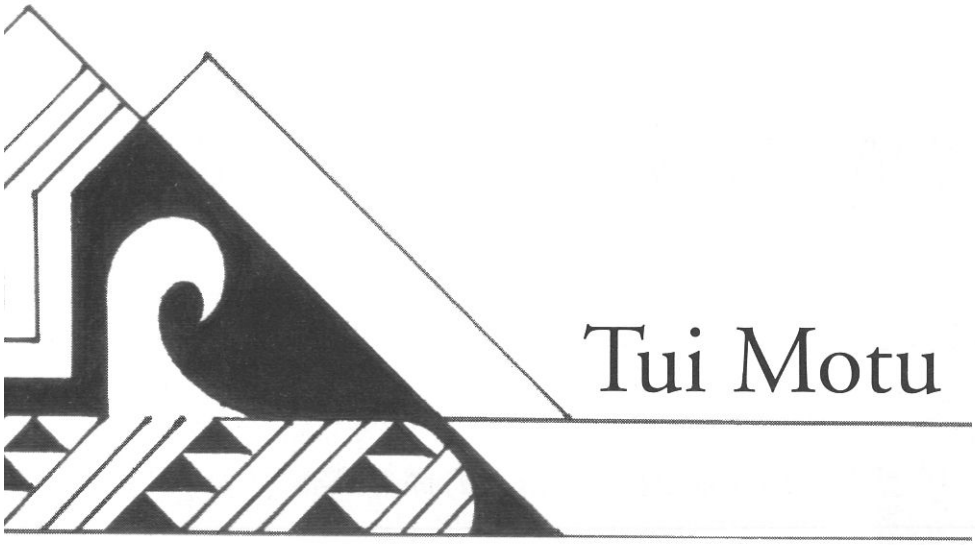
Pa Henare smiled wistfully as he strove to put some of the most sacred traditions of his people into another language. We humans, he said, are put together according to the way we relate. Our primal relationship is the way we connect with one another. We are linked by blood to our *whanau* or *iwi*; but we are linked to others of a different family or race who are on the same journey as ourselves. We have to encounter them too.



We are linked also to the land — this is the significance of *motu*. Sometimes we are thinking of the separate islands but sometimes of *te motu,* the whole land. In terms of our *whakapapa*, our genealogy, we Maori have strong links with the other Pacific peoples. And we are linked too with all those who came here from afar in the last Century: their blood is in us.

The third thing which binds everything together is the link with *Atua*, with God. The word *tui* brings this all to mind: the binding, the sewing, the stitching, the bonding. There is a Maori proverb: *tuia i runga; tuia i raro; tuia i roto; tuia i waho*. "Bind all that is above; bind all that is below; bind all that is unseen; bind all that can be seen." A person is

neying
n . . ."



only a person because of his/her link with God. God made us so. In pre-Christian times it was the link with God which constituted the sacredness and the dignity of our Maori people.

How the gospel develops this idea of connectedness

The gospel has brought Christ into the whole fabric of Maori belief. We relate to Christ as *tuakana*, the eldest, the firstborn. Paul calls Christ "the first-born of all creation (Col.1,15)": this helps us understand our link — our *tuitui* — with God the Father through the person of Christ. We recognise a process of growing together into Christ — a binding, a weaving of the weaker part of the fabric, which is us, to the stronger, who is God. The weak part needs the strength of the strong part. We are 'knitted' to the person of Christ, through whom we are knitted again to God the Father.

Stitching is also a painful process. Stitching entails **stretching** — beyond the physical boundaries. The knitting with God is also a process of stretching: it means a surrender to God. Unless we stretch we cannot be joined to God. It is this surrender to God which is the essence of faith. A piece that is sewn onto the garment has to 'surrender' to whichever way that garment is going to move.

The stitching together of the peoples

This too is a process of stretching and involves a surrender. But first of all the Maori people must be recognised as *Tangata whenua.* At the time of the Treaty the Maori response was to **share** their resources. This is the Maori concept of *tuku* (sharing). Every time someone is welcomed onto the *marae* the Maori, the home people, receive the *manuhiri* (strangers) who may be Maori or not. The Maori hosts go outside of themselves to receive the visitors, so that they become one with the home people. The title *manuhiri* should have the shortest 'shelf life' of any, because visitors are straightaway invited to belong and become 'part of'.

This is a most Christian concept. Those who are welcomed in become part of the 'body' of the people; and all will become one with a common goal. The goal is to share and to offer hospitality, and this gives people *mana.* Pain comes where one party abuses the hospitality which has been offered. After the signing of the Treaty the tragedy was that those who were invited in, displaced those who had been the welcomers; they took over.

Pa Henare paused at this point and a shadow crept over his smiling countenance. He described the intense work he along with other Maori have been doing with government officials to be more understanding of this concept.

Treaty issues, he maintains, must be addressed first: to enable Maori to exercise *mana* , so that the people of the land may have restored to them the dignity of being able once again to share their home. It was a supreme injustice to deprive the Maori people of their ancestry and of their rights, and put them in a position of *noa,* of weakness and powerlessness. This strength has to be restored so that once again there can be outreach and hospitality towards the other peoples. The Maori people were deprived of the ability to invite — and that is something which lies at the very heart of *marae* life.

The stitching *(tuia i runga)* becomes an imperative — "stitch!". What is bound

▷▷ on earth becomes bound in heaven. *Tuia i te muka here tangata:* "stitch them with the fibre that alone can knit people together". In Maori spirituality the fibre is God, the Holy Spirit, the God within, penetrating land and people and all creation.

Where does *Tui Motu* come in?
People need to have an understanding of Maori concepts; for instance, *Te Wa* — the moment. Once again a phrase of Paul springs to mind: "Now is the acceptable time, now the day of salvation! (2 Cor 6,2)". What this *kaupapa* is all about is the **moment**, the opportunity to restore the people.

We are at a crucial stage of the journey. No one walks alone; we are all in this together. So, to be knit together means to help one another along the road. If we fail to respond, then we hold people back, and we miss the 'moment', the *kairos* offered us by God. Part of enjoying the dignity of being a human person or a people is to be able to restore and affirm the rights of others.

At the heart of this process of restoration is recognising the concept of God and **land**. In the Jubilee year celebrated by the Jews the land was let lie fallow for a year. Likewise with us in Aotearoa there has to be a restoring of *tapu i te whenua* to the land so that it has the *mana* to nourish people. *Atua*, God, is encountered in the land when the indigenous people are respected. For those who come to this place God is to be found here, in this land. Severing the link between the people and their land is a further violation. This broken link too needs restitching!

A final point is to note how in Maori imagery the islands of Aotearoa become linked. Those who die go on a journey, beginning from *Rakiura* (Stewart Island) or from *Whare kauri* (Chatham Islands); from *Murihiku*, the southernmost part of the S Island, travelling up the island, crossing *Te Moana o Raukawa* (Cook Strait) and traversing *Te-Ika-a-Maui* (N Island) too, until they arrive at *Te Rerenga Wairua* (Spirits Bay).

The two most important events in anyone's life are *te whanautanga* (birth) and *te matenga* (death). In death the soul retraces the journey and stitches together the land, revisiting each of the *iwi* until reaching the *Taitokerau* and the *iwi* of the far north who are the guardians of the souls of the departed. By this journey life is brought to completion.

Pa Henare smiled. He has a justifiable pride in belonging to *Te Rarawa Iwi* of *Taitokerau*, the guardians of the departed ones. He too is fulfilling a call of God to help bring to completion a tale of 'knitting together'.

HERE

Over cups of tea and coffee
the sacred becomes gathered warmth.

In low fenced backyards and playgrounds
the sacred chatters and laughs.

On black sand beaches and stretching seas
the sacred is shining.

Under cool ferns and bright green puriri
the sacred is uncovered.

In conflicts and misunderstandings
the sacred waits to be revealed.

Through love and truth, justice and struggle
the sacred stands.

On barefoot journeys of pilgrims,
attentive
ear to the ground
walks the sacred.

The pot of the world is simmering with the sacred.
Take off the lid!

Anne Powell

Alisi's story

"Ever since I was born my Nana taught me that I'm the 'princess' of the family." This is the tale of a Tongan woman struggling to adapt to life in Auckland. She is trapped between two cultures — until she discovers how build a bridge between them

"..Then they brought a lot of cousins to stay with us at home. I didn't realise that they're coming to do our chores, so that I can sit down and do nothing. The only thing I know: wake up, have a bath, go and visit my other nana. Afterwards, come home, my Nana already prepare things for my bath. She will bath me, wash my hair and get me changed. And I rest before dinner. That's the only thing I know how to live. Now they have all died.

"I'm still here and I feel lost like an orphan. There's no one around to do what I'm used to. I sometimes feel like waking them up from the grave, to see me now. I am 50 years old and I still don't know how to live my life. I hate making my bed. I hate tidying up my house. And when I look out into the garden my hands are sore just looking at it.

"Now I learn to know myself, and build up a relationship between me and my parents for the first time in my life. No Nana, no adopted children here! I came to New Zealand from Tonga and married a pakeha. Then I had one son. I had a lot of problems with my marriage then. I started to go to counselling. One took me right back to when I was born. I finished the healing of my 'inner child' with Cabrini. I learn to bring up my son and not follow the way I was brought up".

Alisi is one of a host of Pacific Islanders who struggle with a new life in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Sr Cabrini Makasiale, senior psychotherapist with Manakau Counselling, helps many of these immigrant people make the transition. Alisi, says Cabrini, knows well the pain of having to parent her own self, so to speak, let alone parenting another. "Alisi inspires me. Because she now knows what's in her storehouse within, she has the confidence to set up shop for her son and for others. The challenge for our people from *ake ota motu* is to keep our meaning but change our forms of expression to suit our present context.

"The challenge of our Pacific Island peoples is to hold on to the values that express our identity and begin to change the outward expression of these values because we are in a new context. For example, we value the extended family; all family members are responsible care givers. But this tends to fall down in Aotearoa-New Zealand because of shiftwork, geographical distances, and so on. We have to find new ways of bringing up our children in a society that is urbanised, industrialised and based on a monetary system. The challenge is to keep the meaning but change the expression of those meanings-values."

Cabrini has been running a group programme for a few years to help Polynesian mothers to cope with bringing up their children in a totally different culture. The children come home from school with new ideas which often anger their parents. The older generation was brought up never to question the authority of elders. Now they find their own authority questioned.

The course which Cabrini has devised teaches the parents to listen to their children rather than simply becoming angry. Some of the mothers who did the course are now running groups themselves. So the idea is mushrooming.

One mother-become-group leader expressed the outcome like this: "We have to learn different ways of bringing up a family. The thing is to balance the two cultures so our children are able to mix comfortably with pakehas but not forget where they are from, what their roots are".

The Year of Mark

1997 is the year of Mark's gospel in the Church's liturgical cycle. It is also the first year of the Triduum of preparation for the Jubilee Year 2000, and the Church has bidden Catholics to contemplate the person of Jesus during this year. ***Mary Betz,*** *biblical scholar and Catholic tertiary chaplain in Palmerston North, looks at the gospel of Mark and asks the question: Would we know the Markan Jesus if we met him?*

Images of Jesus

Each one of us knows Jesus. But who is this Jesus we claim to know? Is he the gentle, meek and mild carpenter from Nazareth; or is he the eschatological prophet; the wandering charismatic; the itinerant preacher; the incarnation of Sophia; the man who could do no wrong, the perfect revelation of God; the son of Mary and Joseph, and brother of James? Our many images of Jesus are born largely of 19 centuries of interpretation by scholars and theologians, using the writings of late first century disciples whom we know as the gospel-writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The Gospel stories about Jesus have been so harmonised within our churches that it is often with disbelief that we discover there are so many discrepancies and differences in the accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. Did Jesus minister for three years or one, was the last supper on the eve of Passover or the day before, what were the names of "the Twelve", did Jesus claim to be God? Some differences hardly matter. Others, however, may drastically affect the way we believe, behave and structure our lives. Following a meek and mild Jesus would probably lead us down a different life path than following a Jesus who struggled with social injustice.

The evangelists each wrote from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds — and their communities were equally diverse. They gave their own very individual interpretation to the stories about Jesus and his sayings, as they had been handed down in the 40 or so years since his death. They then wove them all together, each in his own individual fashion and with his own theological purposes. That is how the gospels came to be.

Mark's gospel

Mark is generally held to be the earliest of the gospel writers. He probably committed his 'good news' to writing at the end of the disastrous Jewish uprising about the year 70 C.E. The community he writes out of had been seriously affected by the war's social displacement, emotional, religious and political turmoil. His good news is that people can make sense of disaster, but they must believe that the coming of God's reign preached by Jesus would come soon. His simple Greek indicates he is writing from the lower middle class for the lower classes — the peasants. Mark often explains Jewish words and customs, and many of his stories involve encounters with Gentiles; so even if he was Jewish Christian himself he is writing so that Gentile Christians will also understand and welcome his gospel.

What sort of a picture of Jesus emerges?

The first words of *Mark* introduce Jesus to his readers as "Jesus Christ, the Son of God", and at his baptism he is described as God's "beloved"(1,11). The reader is in no doubt who Mark claims Jesus to be. Yet all through the narrative people are trying to find out who Jesus is. The scribes say: "How can this man talk like this?(2,7)"; the disciples ask: "Who can this be? Even the wind and sea obey him (4,41)"; and Jesus' home townsfolk ask: "Where did the man get all this? (6,1-6)".

The Gospel starts with John the Baptist preaching repentance (*metanoia* — a turning towards God, a change of heart and mind) and baptising; he is portrayed as the prophet and precursor of Jesus. We are swept along into the ministry of Jesus in Galilee, outside Galilee, in and out of Gentile territory, on the way to Jerusalem, and in Jerusalem itself. The whole gospel is a **journey** of Jesus who is on fire with a mission, a process of growth in knowing and doing God's will. It is also a journey for his disciples as they attempt to understand and follow that same way.

From his very first words Jesus follows John by urging people to *metanoia*. He then proceeds to make manifest the

power of God to change things by exorcising demons, curing illnesses (fevers, leprosy, paralysis, withered limbs, haemorrhages, etc), stilling storms and multiplying food. He believes and he lives what he is preaching about God's presence in a way that makes his teaching authoritative. The crowds need his gifts and they follow him everywhere.

Compassion and wholeness

What kind of *metanoia, or change,* is Jesus living and preaching? He is compassionate, reaching out to those in need, making them healthy and whole again. For Jesus, healing often involves **touching** — sick or dead bodies. It sometimes involves touching women: Simon's mother-in-law (1,31), a leper (1,41), Jairus' daughter (5,41), epileptics (9,27). On one occasion his ministry of healing takes him into a cemetery among Gentiles and pigs (ch5). He eats at table not only with Jewish tax collectors and sinners (2,15-17), but with Gentiles (8,1-10). According to first Century Judaism, such touching and such encounters rendered Jesus as ritually unclean as those whom he touched.

The sick, demoniacs, women, tax collectors, the Gentiles and all those who associated with them were marginalised. They were excluded from worship and from social relationships with upright Jews because they were 'unclean'. To become ritually clean again, these unclean people had to go show themselves to the priests and give an offering. Under this system the need for ritual purity kept the Jewish religious and class structures in place. Little wonder that Jesus' apparent flaunting of the purity laws brought down on him the wrath of the religious establishment! Jesus strove for human wholeness, and that rendered concepts of 'ritual purity' meaningless. For the Markan Jesus all are included in the realm of God — without boundaries.

St Mark meditating on his gospel (Reims 9th Century)

Kinship

Jesus also brought about social healing. The Jewish people he healed were able to rejoin their families and friends. They could be reconnected to their loved ones and restored to their rightful kinship ties. For Jesus kinship went even further. In a time and place when society valued kinship above all else — perhaps in the same way individualism is valued today — family and familial responsibilities were paramount. A person was defined by who their mother or their father was and by their family background.

Jesus challenges the value placed on kinship ties because it excludes compassion for those outside family circles, such as widows and orphans. It encourages lack of concern for justice and well-being outside the family. Jesus' own family soon heard about the kind of people he was associating with as well as his challenges to established religious and social norms. His mother, brothers and sisters set out to bring him home(3,20-35), presumably travelling from their home in Nazareth to his house in Capernaum. They thought he had gone mad — or perhaps was possessed by demons (as the scribes suggested). Jesus bluntly rebuffs his family asserting that the family of God embraces everyone who truly hears the word of God.

Faith redefined

The example of Jesus' quest for human wholeness redefines what we mean by faith. Faith for Jews always involved faithfulness and not merely the intellectual 'belief' which some Christians have mistaken for faith. Nevertheless Jewish faithfulness could be an exclusive fidelity to family and to cultic laws at the expense of people who needed compassion or situations that needed righting. Faith, as Jesus demonstrated, is still genuine faith even when there is doubt or failure. The epileptic demoniac's father expressed both doubt and hope about Jesus' ability to heal (9,14-29); yet it was the longing for his son's healing that Jesus called faith. Jesus' faith here stands in contrast to his disciples' lesser faith when they were unable to cast out the demon.

Faith then is not simply belief in God — or even hope in Jesus, but a longing for healing and a relationship with God. It is this kind of faith which Jesus again and again names as the reason people are healed. Thus the longing of the woman with the haemorrhage (5,34) resulted in both her health and her social relationships being restored. The Syrophoenecian woman's conviction that Jesus shared the power of God (7,24-30) resulted in her daughter's healing. Jesus saw the woman's faith at once, but refused at first to extend his healing power to one who was both a Gentile and a woman — and a stroppy one at that!

...faith is a longing for healing and a relationship with God

Only when her persistence and argument surpassed his did Jesus realise that his inclusiveness needed a further stretching. That encounter resulted directly in more Gentile healings and in the feeding of the Gentile multitude (8,1-10).

Discipleship and service

The lack of faithfulness and understanding of the Twelve in contrast to the faithfulness of the women disciples underlines the Markan teaching on the nature of faith and true discipleship. In chapters 8-10 of Mark Jesus identifies God's reign with service to those who are least important, like children. At the same time he predicts that his 'way' of understanding God's reign is destined to lead him to his death. Each time he speaks of his suffering and death the Twelve either ignore him or are too busy talking about who is greater or how to share glory. They do not understand how he is turning the values of society upside down. Ultimately they fail to follow him, they betray him, they abandon him and deny him in the last days of his life.

The (women's) ministry is prophetic and compassionate

At this moment of climax when Jesus dies and Mark's hearers have all given up hope, Mark quietly reveals (15,40-16,2) that there were women who had followed Jesus from the beginning. They had not abandoned him, but kept watch with Jesus at his death and burial. Jesus praises the widow (12,41-44) for giving all she had. He allows an anointing by a woman (14,1-11).

This latter ministry is prophetic and compassionate, for it empowers Jesus with strength and endurance for his passion, just as a former encounter with the Syrophoenecian woman empowered him for his ministry to Gentiles. Jesus himself who serves and brings wholeness to others, allows himself to be ministered to. He asks the same of those who elect to follow him.

The call to radical change

Mark's Jesus is remarkable and radical. He is so transformed through his relationship with God in prayer that he exercises divine power in healing and making people whole. The healings are not just physical manifestations but make an impact on the relationships and the whole social fabric of his time. To make people whole is to include them and invite them into God's realm. The outcasts are God's family, and God's reign must be extended to them too: boundaries and conventional social values must be replaced with an inclusive vision in which achievement, affluence, appearance are replaced with radical compassion.

And what does this mean to each of us? Our *metanoia* will commit us to being out of step with social convention and values. We will be misunderstood by those in our own house and town. We will be ridiculed for upholding the rights to health and wholeness of the sick, the unemployed, the elderly and people of colour i.e. all who are marginalised or excluded by contemporary society. The spirit of radical change will also draw us inexorably and steadfastly into God's reign on earth as it is in heaven, into the heart and mind of God, and into kinship with Jesus.

Dawn Chorus in Aranui

by Pauline O'Regan

At six-thirty every Tuesday morning we had a prayer meeting! "Mad dogs and Englishmen..."

It was the early 1970s and we were three Sisters of Mercy, freshly arrived to live in a State unit in Aranui in Christchurch. George Revelly had also freshly arrived: 22 years of age, a family farm in Mid-Canterbury waiting for him and the ink still wet on his degree in agriculture. But, in the mysterious workings of God's providence, it was not the farm that called to him in those years, but the people of the poorest part of the city, living in its most disreputable street. He stood on our doorstep and said that he'd had an idea.

His idea, when he spread it before us, had those singular qualities of transparency and directness of which the young are capable, unencumbered as they are by preconceived attitudes that, in their elders, can pass for prudence. It was simply this: that all the people who wanted to live in Aranui to work for the good of the people there, should come together once a week to pray for God's blessing on their efforts. We would pray for the needs of the people, he said, and we would pray for one another. True to both his Baptist formation in Scripture and to his farming background in growing crops, he wanted us to pray that the seed we sowed would fall on good soil and give a full harvest. He noted in passing that our house would be the best place to meet; it had a fairly large room, it was in the centre of Hampshire Street and it had a big enough kitchen for everyone to have breakfast together afterwards! That was the easy bit. He had yet to negotiate a time when everyone could come. Finally, he announced that it would have to be at 6.30 in the morning. So 6.30 in the morning it was. It continued so for years.

It should have been a disaster. We covered the whole range of the theological spectrum. Amongst others, there was Tom Askin from the Maori Evangelicals, Bob Miller from the Salvation Army, Donald Malloch, the local Presbyterian minister and his friend and mentor in the ministry, Archie Houston, and George from the Baptist community. We three nuns were left to represent the Catholic tradition. The local Anglican minister came a couple of times, but he was not comfortable. He reiterated his firm belief that no right-minded Christian could pray properly at such a barbaric hour and, faithful to this logic, he withdrew. Our parish priest of that time chose to handle the situation rather more subtly. He didn't come at all.

Let me say, here and now, that it was not a disaster. It was quite the opposite. Separated though we were by our respective theologies, we were completely united – 'stitched together' if you will – by our love and concern for the people of Aranui and even more securely by our growing respect and love for one another. Teresa, Helen and I had to acknowledge as we reflected on the experience, that we had embarked on one of the most significant learning curves of our lives. We were, each of us, steeped in Catholic theology and Catholic tradition. After all, weren't we the church that produced saints and reserved the right to canonise them? Secretly, we believed that if those outside the Catholic church attained sanctity, it was in spite of their theology rather than because of it. Now, here we were, having our prayer life enriched, our perception of the Scriptures expanded and our spirituality nourished by people who had little or no touch with Catholic theology. They were transparently holy. The only thing that was diminished in us as a result of those prayer meetings was our pride.

Twenty-five years ago, the three of us were still not completely at home with spontaneous prayer and the self-revealing that it asked of us. We took refuge

in prayers of intercession. It always seemed appropriately virtuous somehow to be praying for someone else. The fact that it provided a worthy escape from revealing, even in a small way, our inner relationship with God was a coincidence that we scarcely acknowledged. Tom Askin saw no need in his spiritual life for such protective mechanisms. For the first time, we were to hear someone in spontaneous, lyrical prayer, pouring out passionate words of praise, worship, wonder and thanksgiving addressed directly to God. He never permitted himself a word of intercession until he had glorified the goodness of the Giver. He lifted my heart to a new awareness of the words "Holy, holy, holy" in our Eucharistic liturgy that has stayed with me to this day.

We had an important lesson to learn from Captain Bob Miller. One of the recurring questions that we asked ourselves in this new life was how could we best witness to the love of God which was our chief motive for being there. Should we introduce the name of Jesus into our conversations with the local people, or should we rely rather, on following Jesus as closely as we could and letting them draw their own conclusions? We inclined towards the latter. That way, no one could accuse us of proselytising: no one could accuse us of actively evangelising either! When people asked us why we were there and why we did the things we did, that would be the time, we said, to tell them of our love of God and of Jesus whom he had sent. It is in fact quite a difficult thing to bring up the name of Jesus in everyday conversation, and we had not developed the skills it took to do that easily.

It took Bob Miller to shake us into learning those skills. Within minutes of meeting someone on the street or of going into a home or of ministering to someone in need, he was talking about his friend, Jesus. He talked of Jesus in the butcher's shop and while he was getting his hair cut and in the pub where

he gave away the 'War Cry' on a Friday night – not in a suitably lowered voice, mark you, but with the full robustness of his normal speaking voice. No wonder that it seemed the most natural thing in the world on a Tuesday morning to hear Bob Miller speaking to Jesus with the ease and familiarity of an old friend. He so unsettled us that we decided that we too, must begin to let everyone know that Jesus was the love of our lives. We agreed that we wouldn't necessarily do it Bob's way, but we'd do it nevertheless. And we did – self-consciously at first, but with a growing ease as we encouraged one another in the practice of it.

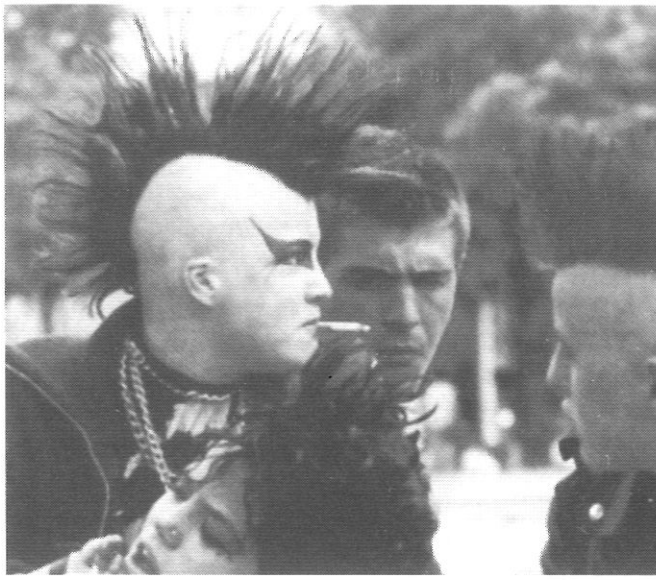
Donald Malloch was the closest to us nuns in experiencing the unfamiliarity and scariness of opening one's heart in public prayer. Like so many when, without benefit of book or ritual, they first find their voice to speak to God in the presence of others, Donald found it an emotional experience. Archie Houston, for his part, reached deep into his Presbyterian tradition to find his vocal prayer. For over fifty years he had sung hymns that he loved. He knew them all by heart. Now, he recited them in prayer. They were the rock base of his spirituality, and as we listened we came to recognise the spiritual power inherent in a theology that had relied almost exclusively on the spoken word.

Sometimes something would be revealed in our respective theologies that would cause a moment of tension. On one such occasion, after Sister Monica had joined our community, she was speaking at our prayer meeting about the Scripture reading of that day. It was from St John. God is love. Monica was propounding her favourite belief that wherever we come on love and goodness in another person, that person is revealing God living within them, whether they themselves know God or not. As she was speaking, the expression on Tom Askin's face became increasingly dismayed. Finally, he could contain himself no longer. "No, no!" he said in real distress. "Each person must experience a conversion in their lives and consciously receive the Lord Jesus into their hearts. Not until then can God come to live within them." That incident gave us the first glimmer of understanding why people like Tom were such committed evangelists whose zeal never seemed to flag and why, by comparison, we Catholics do not seem driven by the same urgency to evangelise others.

For all that we were quite unshaken by Tom's theology. Ever since coming to share the lives of people at close quarters it had been a recurring paradox to us that we so often had an intense experience of God, revealed in the life of

someone who was completely unchurched. In some cases they would have us believe that they didn't believe in God at all. This experience most often came to us in the recognition of pure goodness in another's life: sometimes it was the perception we had of utter self-sacrifice by one person on behalf of another; sometimes it was finding by chance that a neighbour, who had little or nothing herself, had given food or clothing she could not afford to someone else in need, and done it with the most delicate discretion. We knew love when we saw it, and in those moments we knew we were in the presence of God.

Far be it from me to drop names, but by a strange coincidence, we were provided with this theology by no less a personage than a Cardinal of the church! It so happened that I was getting a ride from Wellington to Palmerston North with Father Tom Curran and the other passenger was Cardinal Delargy. At one point of the journey he suddenly turned to me in the back seat and asked me what had made the greatest impression on us in our new life in Aranui. I told him it was this matter of meeting God in the lives of people who did not profess to know him. He was silent for an uncomfortably long time. When he finally broke the silence he said, "You know, we shouldn't be surprised at that. God is living in the heart of every person. We Christians are simply the fortunate ones who have knowledge of this and it is our mission to reveal this good news to everybody in the world by whatever means we can".



Those words had a transforming effect on me. I saw everyone in a new light, andnot just those whose lives spoke to me of love. God lives in every human being! That theology embraced everyone: the stroppy teenagers I was teaching at the time, the shopkeeper with the short tether, the man who put in toll calls on our phone for free, the tattooed gang-member who had moved in next door. It is a theology of joy in every human being; it is a theology that drives all unfounded fear of others out of our hearts; it is a theology that asks us to greet everyone we meet. It is my theology. It is Catholic theology.

Those early morning prayer meetings deepened my love for the theology of the church into which I was born, but it did more besides. It taught me to love and respect the theology of every other church because each one has within it the seeds of holiness to be planted in people's lives. That is a truth that I'll always cherish and if the Holy Spirit chose 6.30 in the morning to reveal it to me, then what better time could there be?

Letter to the Editor

I grew up in the church, left it, found my way back with strengthened spirituality. I've always steered away from any 'religious type' label. For me, the greatest tribute to God could be paid in a forest – on a mountain – preferably somewhere in Montana. A good friend directed my attention toward a quiet rustling of ideas occurring in the church at the moment, and convinced me that a rural retreat may just be the tonic for a hungry spirit. She is a woman of insight.

Sr Christina Neunzerling RSJ was the director at our rural seminar in Dunedin last month. She told the stories of Jesus with familiarity and passion. She breathed life into them by transposing the culture of his time on the perspective of ours. In her historically factual presentation, Christina challenged us all to ask ourselves how these ancient tales could be pertinent in our busy lives. I felt compelled to ponder how I will keep them alive and relevant for my children. It became clear to me that the reality of these 'stories' is often squandered in church.

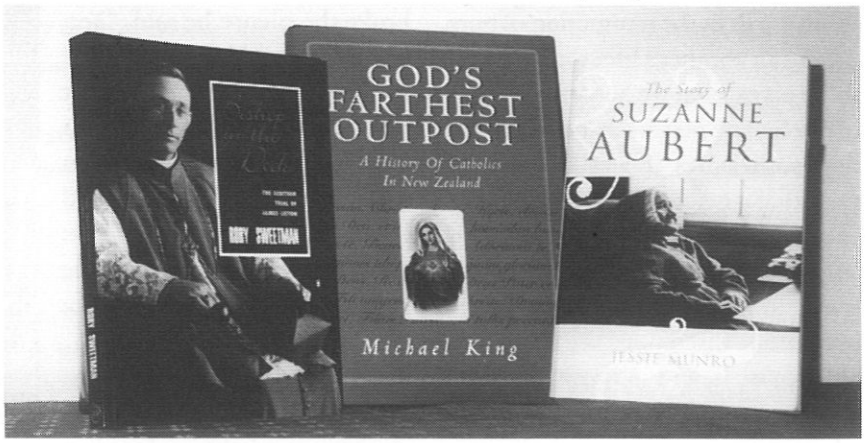
Christina was trying to clarify that in 1997 "Jesus is my salvation" simply means that we have to find what is good within us and share it as often as we can. Jesus is kept alive in our goodness toward one another. Now this message shines for me. I'm willing to come down off my mountain to splash it around. It helps me make sense of the changes Vatican II placed on the church of my childhood. It helps me concentrate on the continuation of life as opposed to the end of the world, which newspapers and television make me think more and more about.

The doctrine of the Catholic Church has gotten so heavy and so controversial. It's vitality is being choked. When I go to church to be relit, I end up being stifled into submission. I like being a Catholic. I must, or I wouldn't have come back, and I certainly wouldn't have gone to a rural retreat. I like being enthused by enthusiastic people; who doesn't? I just wish I could get more of it on Sunday.

Zella Horrell
Southland

Tui Motu *hopes to look at faith in rural areas in a forthcoming issue of the magazine.* Ed

The Year of the Book(s)



God's Farthest Outpost: A History of Catholics in New Zealand
By Michael King
Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd
Price $49.95 (hb)
(Paperback available at $39.95)
Review: Kevin Molloy

The ink was still wet on the pages when I began reading this book. It had its genesis in the Tablet office and I had looked forward to its publication. Had he been alive, I feel the job of reviewing it could well have fallen to Arthur Feslier, a friend and colleague and a very fine writer who loved his church.

What a struggle for the church over the first 100 years... churches and schools rose around the country because of the pennies from the pockets of the poor. Depression was bad enough; war was worse. WWI was a disaster. Thousands of young Catholics, mainly soldiers, died, and many returned to their families maimed and unfit to work again. Three sons of one Southland family died in a single day on the Western Front in 1916.

War was still on our minds in the early 1950s when the Church decided to go public. Archbishop Peter McKeefry (later Cardinal) was to cause waves in the campaign for State Aid for Catholic schools, by saying that, in the event of future wars, he might call on Catholic men not to enlist for the armed forces unless governments supported the Catholic education system. In the same year, also on State Aid, Bishop John Kavanagh, of Dunedin, told a large gathering in Invercargill following a public march: "We are an angry people".

Even the most ill-educated of us have some idea of how New Zealand came to be colonised. But what about the first Catholics? They were certainly not proselytisers. One even stole kumara from the Maori. The first Catholic of substance to step ashore and glimpse Maori life at close quarters was the French Dominican Fr Leonard de Villefeix who visited Doubtless Bay with his ship *Saint Jean-Baptiste* in 1769. The saintly, courageous French Marists were to make their mark later as missionaries.

Best known of the early New Zealand-Irish Catholics, and by far the most respectable, was the doggedly determined trader, Thomas Poynton who settled in Hokianga Harbour with his wife Mary. Jean-Baptiste Pompallier, Vicar of Oceania, was New Zealand's first Bishop. He came in 1838 and celebrated his first Mass in the Poynton's living room. Thomas Poynton was trilingual and instructed the Bishop and his missionaries in English and Maori.

Bishop Pompallier was a handsome man of 36 and had the manner, education and courtesy of a gentleman. After three months the Bishop and his assistant, Fr Catherin Servant, were able to preach in Maori. However, he lacked organisational skills and had a peculiar attitude to money. He seems to have lived the life of a supernatural gambler, believing that the Lord would provide. Sometimes God did, and sometimes God did not. The result was that Pompallier lost the trust of many of his priests and religious. A pity because he had been a charismatic preacher and teacher.

I have read previously of the early French priests' part in our history and have been inspired by it. Michael King builds on that. Nothing seemed to daunt these dedicated men. They tramped the South Island when there were no roads, few tracks. They opened a boarding school for boys in Nelson presbytery, teaching Latin, French and algebra, and provided tuition in basic literacy and numeracy. Few priests exceeded the spectacular energy of Fr Antoine Garin. In November, 1890, 18 months after his death, his coffin was disinterred for removal to a new chapel. The body was found to be incorrupt. His is the only body known to have exhibited such a feature in New Zealand.

The missionary era in the church was closing in the 1870s. The Irishness of the Church here was coming to the top. An earthquake erupted in episcopal circles when Patrick Moran came to Dunedin. Today he would be called a stirrer. Unfairly he blamed the Marists for the raw nature of his diocese. He was a builder, a writer, a would-be politician, and he was "prodigiously energetic, relentlessly efficient and humourless". And he didn't get on with the other

bishops. Much less stern were the Wellingtonians Archbishop Redwood and his successor Thomas O'Shea. Neither seems to have heard of the daily miracle of Gillette. It was Redwood who named Mother Aubert's society the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion. Redwood was a true prince of the Church and a man of great warmth. Wellington loved him. He was once the youngest bishop in the world; eventually the oldest.

It is easy in a review to get caught in a facet of the New Zealand Catholic story and find there is little space for the Orders, the sodalities, the teachers, the laity. There is so much in this superbly produced compendium. Michael King is one of our foremost historians. He has stitched together in 200 pages the raw material of history from archives and notable sources, among the many, Fr Ernest Simmons, Fr Michael O'Meeghan SM, Prof Patrick O'Farrell, and the result is a book to treasure. There is a marvellous collection of illustrations. Congratulations, too, to researcher, Merle van de Klundert.

The author observes that the history of Catholics is a story of people of many cultures: Eastern Europeans, Pacific Islanders, the Dutch and so on. The first wave of Dutch landed here in the 1950s. They made an immediate impression. Along with the thousands who followed them, they have given much to the Church in New Zealand. I feel their contribution should have been acknowledged in more detail in this history.

King closes as Vatican II reforms begin to bite, but adds a brief epilogue. I am a bit disappointed we are denied an historical perspective on what the author describes as "a controversial period of rapid change". As W B Yeats said, writing "without the salt".

An Interview with Michael King

The primary outreach of the official Church over 150 years has been to European settlers. The Church made little effort to be indigenous. The Maori were given token recognition. That was not how it was in Pompallier's day but evolved naturally enough as a consequence of the huge tide of immigration from Western Europe. Since Vatican II, however, Dr King maintains there has been a determined effort to create partnership with the Maori, recognising the symbolism of the Treaty and acknowledging the value of indigenous spirituality. Vatican II is a watershed and has erected new signposts; and for that reason Michael King chose quite deliberately to focus his book on the pre-Vatican II period.

Michael King sees his work as a "heritage" book, striving to identify all those aspects of 100 years of history which the Catholic community can feel positive about. It is neither critical nor analytic. The book concentrates on breadth even at the expense of depth. The commission to write the History came in 1992 from the National Director of Catholic Communications, Fr Jim Lyons. Eventually Penguin Books received the commission to publish it: a mainstream publisher gives the work a certain aura of objectivity, less likely to be regarded as 'partisan'. Michael is happy to be seen as a New Zealand historian who happens to be a Catholic rather than a Catholic who has written an in-house history.

The Church is going through an unfortunate time at the moment when so much publicity is given to abuse cases and so many skeletons have been resurrected. He is confident that his work will help redress the balance. His emphasis is to tell the story of highly principled people who strove to live up to their principles. On the other hand there has been no attempt to cover up the 'human' side. The readers will judge how fair his treatment has been. The reality of the 'dirty linen' episodes needs to be acknowledged — but not emphasised.

What he has related is a heroic work of evangelism. If the canvas is sometimes painted 'warts and all', then what is good will stand out all the more. A case in point is Pompallier himself. He was such a gifted person. He gave a vision to the early pioneers. He certainly inspired Suzanne Aubert. He was a wonderful preacher and a skilled diplomat. Yet it is clear that his skills at managing people and money were deficient. That had to be said. A good history tries to paint the complete picture. What Dr King has aimed to do is emphasise the positive.

Book of the Year

The Story of Suzanne Aubert
By Jessie Munro
Auckland University Press
464 pp
Price $49.95
Review: Fr Michael Hill

"A rattling good story wonderfully told". David Lange's accolade to Jessie Munro's biography of Mother Aubert on the night of the Montana Book Awards is fully merited. Significantly, the reporter announcing the winner not only mispronounced her name but had no clue who Suzanne Aubert was. It is sad to think that any young New Zealander would be so ignorant of his country's history and its heroes. Can one imagine any French person not knowing who Joan of Arc was? Perhaps the very success of this biography will prompt some people like that reporter to read the rich story of our young country — or at least learn and be inspired by some of its legendary founders. ▷▷

▷▷ Suzanne Aubert belongs not just to the Sisters of Compassion or to the Catholic Church but to all of us, believers or non-believers, Maori or Pakeha. The first merit of Jessie Munro's biography is that she makes Suzanne spring out from the pages as a real, vibrant human being. It requires no feat of imagination to see her sturdy figure stumping round the streets of Wellington, confronting bishops and cabinet ministers or simply begging for supplies for the myriads of unfortunate human beings she and her Sisters looked after. The book details the extraordinary tale when âll the city worthies — from the Governor General and Lady Plunket to the boys of Wellington College alongside trades unionists, all with sleeves rolled up and perspiration flowing freely — lugged bags of shingle up a steep slope to help construct a water-supply to the Island Bay Home. And Suzanne and her Sisters in the midst of it all; surely the Mother of all working bees!

The figure that emerges from these pages is a woman of great strength and no little wisdom.

Jessie Munro sets her scene with the deftness of an artist. Her broad brushstrokes course widely from the early Catholic mission led by Pompallier and the Marist priests, to the bustling industrial city of post-Revolution Lyons where Suzanne was brought up, focussing on the little settlement of Jerusalem high on the Whanganui River, the jewel of her life's work and the precious shrine of her Sisters' unique story. The reader marvels once again at the amazing courage of those bourgeois women and men who, at the bewitching word of Pompallier, abandoned their European creature comforts and their security to be rolled halfway round the world in cramped and smelly whaling ships; then to be unloaded at the other end of the earth and plunged into the hazards of a lonely mission station or the hurly burly of a precarious new colony.

Suzanne Aubert is the stuff of legend. Jessie Munro is careful to sift and evaluate fact from myth. Did Suzanne ever meet her fellow Lyonnais, Frederick Ozanam — or was it a coincidence that both should follow such similar calls from God? Was she directly inspired by the Cure of Ars to come to New Zealand? The fact was that Suzanne deliberately destroyed most of her family papers before setting off for Rome in 1913, so that much of the detail of her early life has had to be reconstructed from oral tradition. Suzanne was a great talker and must be forgiven if sometimes in advanced age she embellished some of the facts. The gospel writers did no less!

The figure that emerges from these pages is a woman of great strength and no little wisdom. She appears fearless, afraid of no challenge, intimidated by no human obstacle. She is a creative innovator: her Sisters were to be Martha and Mary rolled up into one. Their prayer was often made 'on the trot'. They worked hard and long, but always cheerfully and without that Jansenistic rigour that often afflicted Religious especially in the 19th Century

She saw Christ in all and passed judgment on none.

She befriended all manner of people, happily crossing the artificial barriers of class or religious denomination or race. Yet she always preserved something of the 'style' of a French gentlewoman. Animating it all was a great heart that throbbed for the victims of a greedy and increasingly intolerant colonial society: orphans, unmarried mothers, the incurably ill, the underclass of the burgeoning capital city. She saw Christ in all and passed judgment on none.

...except perhaps for some of the bishops who in her later years tried to clip her wings and restrict or skew the direction of her Religious foundation. Then she acted as Mary McKillop had done, jumped on the next boat and took herself off to Rome.

A strong woman, yet loyal to her faith, her Sisters and her friends

Her battles with Archbishop O'Shea, however, need to be read in balance with her lifelong relations of mutual support with Redwood, whom in character she in many ways resembled. And there can be no doubt that with all his faults Bishop Pompallier was the person who most influenced the flowering of her vocation. It was he that inspired her with love and devotion to the Maori people. He gave her his vision of evangelising and also a full measure of his own humanitarian, tolerant spirit.

A strong woman, yet loyal to her faith, her Sisters and her friends; *wahine kaha ki te mahi* — a great worker, but also in the memory of her Maori friends, a very holy person. As an inspiration for New Zealanders seeking to build a better society or Christians seeking to bring about the realm of God, there could be no better model than Suzanne Aubert. This wonderful book brings her to life, but prompts us to reflect on our own world, its opportunities and shortcomings.

Secrets and Lies

by Nicola McCloy

Modern British film has been dominated by the epic, the costume drama and 'tits and bums' comedy. Nestled among them Mike Leigh has managed to create a niche for himself as a quality film maker.

With the success of *Secrets and Lies* at all the major film festivals of 1996, Leigh is finally gaining recognition. Beginning his film career in the 1980s Leigh has created a vivid, if slightly uncomfortable, record of the lives of ultra-ordinary British people. He celebrates the average, the unexceptional and the common. In a style that can be called neither comedy nor drama, Leigh combines tragic and comic elements to come up with a style surely all his own.

Scripts are banned from his sets, rehearsals are loosely work-shopped. Leigh's work is designed to create comment, to force his viewers to stop and think. Viewing a Mike Leigh film is never a comfortable experience; a happy ending is not guaranteed and if it's warm fuzzies you're after, my advice is to stay at home.

His latest offering, *Career Girls*, does not deviate from the standard and style that we have come to expect from Leigh. In *Career Girls*, he pulls together a cast of relative unknowns to tell the story of two college friends and their various acquaintances in mid 80s London. This on it's own would have been story enough for most directors, but, thankfully, Leigh is not most directors. He also takes a high risk in using a difficult and often disastrous film ploy, the time jump.

As the film develops we are introduced to a pair of women in their mid 30s who lead very different lives and a couple of college students sharing a flat. Although they are the same characters, they are very different people. The versatility of the lead actresses, Alison Steadman and Kaitlin Cartlidge is astounding. Both actresses know their characters so well that it seems the transition from late teens to early thirties has happened naturally over time rather than as part of a film sequence. As in most of Leigh's work, it is difficult to really like any of the characters although I'm sure that anyone who was an angst-ridden teen in the late 80s, be it in London or Lumsden, will be able to related to these women. Their portrayal of the discomfort found in growing up and the struggle to establish their own identities is at times excruciating, but the ultimate payoff, seeing two women with very different but rewarding lives, is fantastic.

Despite concerns of having nothing to talk about, the pair meet up for a weekend together in London and they revisit their old lives. Subsequently we witness the people and events which have combined to shape their lives. We gain a deeper understanding of who these women are and why they are who they are. Leigh, with his uncanny ability to balance bleak and bright, has created a captivating, honest and moving film that will surely be one of this year's cinematic highlights. It is the first film that truly epitomises the spirit of the 80s.

The death of a gentleman

The passing of Jimmy Stewart last month has been mourned by film fans around the globe. On hearing of his death, I started to think about what it was about the man that had made me a fan. I'm in my twenties, I've been an avid movie-goer all my life and in the latter years have been a sporadic reviewer of cinematic produce. Surely I should be idolising Brad Pitt or Bruce Willis rather than mourning the death of an idol old enough to be my Grandad.

The first Jimmy Stewart movie I ever saw was *The Philadelphia Story*. A marvellous lush production starring Cary Grant and Katherine Hepburn. Stewart played a support role, a befuddled journalist looking for the big story at a society wedding. He perfectly complimented the suave and sophisticated Grant with his muddling comic performance. Other Stewart classics followed. *It's a Wonderful Life*, that Frank Capra classic set in small town America, showing the impact that one good man can have on a small town is enchanting. The message is a simple one. Make the best of what you have and the impact your life has on others will be great. Viewed by the weary eyes of a teenager bombarded with Rocky 19 and Rambo 57, this film was a revelation. And so on...

Growing up on a diet of Hollywood schlock, of shoot 'em up and bash 'em down, love 'em and leave 'em pulp, these films are honest. They have an incorruptible integrity invisible in the movies of today. Jimmy Stewart's role is pivotal. Watching his films, it never once occurred to me he was only acting. I felt like I knew him. I felt as if, for a few brief moments, I had been watching scenes in this man's life. Even in *Harvey*, when he was being followed round by an invisible bunny that would make even a Maniototo farmer shudder, I believed him. If he could see that bunny, then so could I. This, surely, is a sign of a true craftsman.

In reflection, I knew nothing of his real life. Even in death, there was no hint of scandal attached to his name. It was even said that he lost the will to live following the death of his first and only wife last year. My life has been enriched by this man's films and, in my opinion, the world was a better place for his having been here.

Fr Ambrose Loughnan (1919-1997) – a Memoir

Fr Ambrose Loughnan, OP died suddenly in Port Moresby last month. The following is taken from a panegyric preached by Fr Gregory McCormack, OP.

Underlying the richness and variety of Fr Ambrose's 78 years was a simple and unwavering desire for and trust in God, expressed and embodied in his love for all that God has created. Ambrose loved God, he desired to pattern himself ever more completely upon the generosity of God made visible in Jesus, and he sought to return the love of God by loving those that God placed along his path.

What others might have called irresponsibility in him was, in fact, a facet of Ambrose's search for freedom, specifically the freedom that belongs to the children of God. What does it mean to be free? Where is the God, whose nature it is to liberate people, to be encountered? These questions were basic to Ambrose throughout his life. I think that Ambrose found intimations of the freedom for which he was searching in the many years he spent in the Solomon Islands; it was a period of enormous creativity for him; he loved the people there with a passion and he, in turn, was loved, respected, and admired by them.

To say that he was unhappy at having to leave the Solomons would be something of an understatement. Auckland was another beginning for Ambrose, for it was here that he discovered another dimension to his priesthood, the ministry of healing. He was appointed Catholic chaplain to Auckland hospital, and was very quickly involved in the pastoral care of cancer sufferers, especially children with cancer. He offered his presence, compassion and the rock-solid conviction that God was a part of it all, that God was suffering in the suffering of those who suffered, that they were not abandoned but loved, that death was not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be lived with and through. What he offered was love and hope.

From Auckland to Teschemakers: yet another beginning. Ambrose was enthusiastic about the possibilities for developing alternative lifestyles in which people could be provided with the opportunity to live in harmony with the environment. The desire for simplicity was always a part of Ambrose, and Teschemakers was perhaps the closest, apart from his time in the Islands, he got to attaining it.

During this period the many strands of Ambrose's life wove themselves together in a vivid pattern: his sense of the love of God and of the primary human values, a respect for the local and the particular, a felt sense of the spirit of a place, a capacity to put down roots into the human soil of those he encountered, and a love for nature of a quite unsentimental kind, together with a concern for the disadvantaged and marginalised; in all of this, he was a little like Isaiah.

Women always played a significant role in Ambrose's life: he loved and respected them and they–fortunate man – often enough returned that love and respect. Ambrose often credited the Dominican sisters with greater courage and insight, not to say common sense, than their Dominican brethren. The receptively contemplative temper of Ambrose's personality made him spiritually sensitive to the need for healing felt by the many women he came to know, more than a few of them hurt, broken and angry.

His friends saw in Ambrose a man of prayer; here again I think we can see the way in which the desire for God and the search for freedom made and remade him again and again throughout his life. Ambrose delighted in prayer, whether it was praying the Office, meditation, the freedom of charismatic prayer and, above all, the Mass. His preaching was simple, unselfconscious and direct, deeply informed by his love for the scriptures. A few well-chosen words, often accompanied by an anecdote or two, always about the boundless love and generosity of God. One had a sense when listening to Ambrose preaching that here was a man transparent to the ways of God. In this he was a practitioner of what the Dominican mystic Meister Ekhart called *Gelassenheit* – releasement or detachment – letting God be God, letting God be God for us, letting oneself be in God, trusting that God will be all in all, however dark and obscure the shape of that might be now.

May he rest in peace.

Overseas news

♦ Robin Cook, Britain's Foreign Secretary, has set out 12 practical points he said could help improve the observance of human rights throughout the world. Britain is donating funds to be spent on facilities to bring to court those accused of war crimes in Rwanda. But in speaking about a review of exporting British weapons, he made no mention of a 20 billion pounds deal to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia, which has a poor human rights record.
The British government has also deferred a decision about a proposed 160 million pounds sale of 16 Hawk trainer jets to Indonesia. This has lead to doubts being expressed about the new Labour Government's statement that in the long term, higher ethical standards are good for British business. Is anyone in the arms industry listening?

♦ The Scottish Catholic Church's anti-abortion scheme, which offers financial help to women who refuse abortions and choose to keep their babies, has helped its first mother – a fifteen-year-old girl.

♦ A book containing the texts of the Mass in braille has been produced in a Scottish prison by Tam Whiteside who is serving a life sentence for murder. He had formerly worked with the deaf and blind and had learnt braille in just five weeks.
Mr Whiteside, once an altar boy, speaks of the way in which he has turned back to his faith: "When I was in reman awaiting my sentence, I thought everything was God's fault. Then I realised that it was my own fault that I was in my position. I took a life and I therefore deserve to be in jail. And it's only by being in jail that I have come back to my faith. It has helped me to become stronger. In some ways I feel freer now than I did on the outside when my faith was non-existent".
He plans now to translate school work into braille for a blind boy in Shetland.

♦ There were indications recently in London of a softening in the Church's position on married priests. 'Advent' is a U.K. support network for married priests. Bishop Victor Guazzelli, the Vicar General of the Westminster diocese, spent a study day with the group in July. He told members that he had come out of pastoral concern and as an act of reconciliation with a group which has felt ostracised by the Church. The Bishop, who presided over the group's Eucharist, is said to have learned a great deal from the meeting.
'Advent' has previously spoken out about the perceived contradiction between the way in which its priests had been treated and the warm reception given to married Anglican clergy when they have been welcomed into the Church.

♦ *European Quarterly*, a magazine produced in Edinburgh, asked well-known European academics and heads of national institutes from 24 countries to rank the greatest Europeans of the 20th century. Top of the resulting list is Winston Churchill – "the one who has made the greeatest contribution to Europe this century". Albert Einstein was ranked second while third place is shared by DNA pioneers Doctors Crick and Watson, Pope John Paul II and Picasso. One of the panel supported her selection of the Pope by writing: "the Catholic Church is a joining force for all the nations of Europe. Its actions after two World Wars have been concentrated on promoting peace, solidarity and understanding among people, thus contributing to a sustainable development of European civilisation. Pope J.P.II is a man who recently has increased the power of the Catholic Church in fulfilling these tasks".

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Postscript

People, more qualified than I in financial matters, have been advising us lately on the pros and cons of the Retirement Savings Scheme (RSS). In a month when the Referendum takes place, every New Zealander of voting age will make a decision for themselves, and every New Zealander should vote. Do I vote yes or no? As a retired business man and currently a University student, it will not affect me but I still advise my children on commercial decisions and I care deeply for the future of my grandchildren. So how do my children vote?

I took this problem to my fellow students, most of them many years younger than I, and asked their opinion. Their disenchantment with a further impost on their income was palpable. The student loan scheme, from which some students will never recover financially, is an example of the theory as against the practice.

RSS will compel people to put money aside, which in itself is not a bad thing. But the timing is wrong. The haste is ridiculous and the political climate, under which the scheme is being proposed, is worsening by the day. My gut feeling is that RSS is not a practical, commercial proposition, but a political one. RSS is fatally flawed because future governments will surely tinker with it, it is not guaranteed and it will cost an enormous amount of money to administer. Any political decision is, by nature, both transitory and opportunistic. Politics change overnight and politicians come and go. The mystery to me is why Mr Peters is so obsessed with his own propaganda, not seeming to want to recognise the weight of opinion both against him and the scheme. Both he and Mr Bolger are defying reality, and it seems they will be punished for it.

There is no doubt that there will be a need for a more sustainable superannuation scheme in the next fifty years; demographics tell us so. Equally, there is no doubt that the present one is workable for the near future. I would think then, that if the problem can be removed from the political arena, we have time to come up with a solution. You will say that this has already been tried and the accord failed. Then, quite simply, it must be tried again, or further reports like the Todd Report be commissioned and acted upon, without fear or favour.

My fellow students are not going to vote for it because they cannot afford to forget tax cuts, and I am not going to, because the reasons given are not good enough. So what do I advise my children for the sake of their children? Save for your future, but not through RSS – vote NO!

John Honore