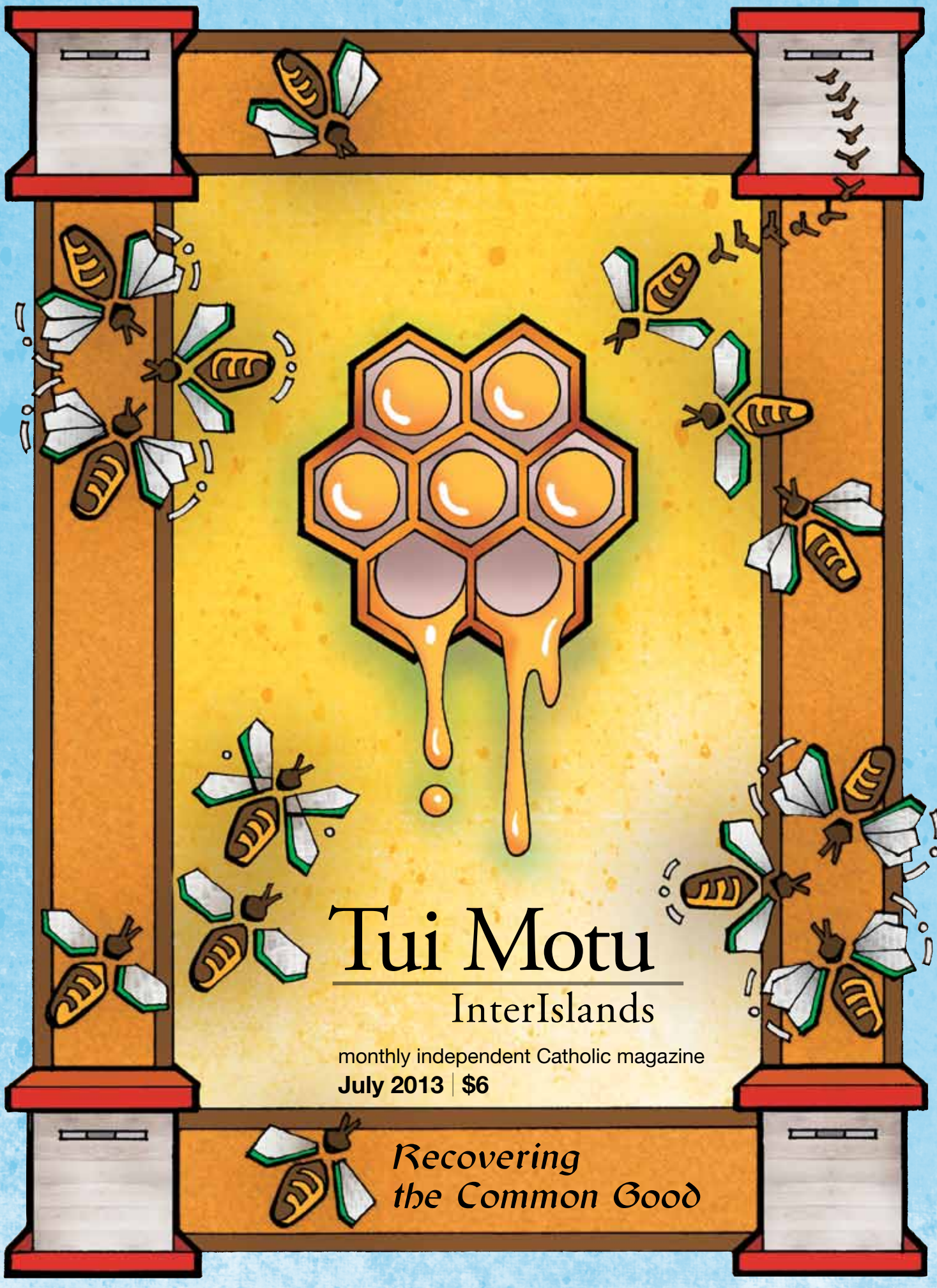

Tui Motu

InterIslands

monthly independent Catholic magazine
July 2013 | **$6**

Recovering the Common Good

differing and diverse voices

Up and down the country, there have been seminars and workshops dealing with the concept of the common good. This idea is, as Andrew Bradstock tells us, "undergoing a revival". And that couldn't be more timely, as we face a changing and uncertain way of thinking about our countries down here in the Southern Hemisphere. Are we protected from the ravages of international economic climate, or are we there "on the block" to see-saw as the global markets sway backwards and forwards?

This background has been used as the reason why our governments have focused so heavily on the power of the almighty dollar, of finding ways of reducing debt, and therefore walling up the economy. So far so good. At the same time, other problems have arisen which the "government-speak" would tell us are being addressed.

But are they being addressed? We tyr to cherish our elderly and look after them — a great gift — but we should also cherish our young adults and children. Polite words are being mouthed, and some good money thrown at problems. Concurrently, government ministers are bad mouthing sections of our population: making them look more problematic than they are. If you are poor, you are clearly to blame for that, and should be penalized. This stark way of thinking, repeated over and over, is a way of making our society less neighbourly, less amenable to helping one another, and diminishing that egalitarian view of human nature which has been the hallmark of our country's way of life, at least for the last 100 years. It is time for us to revise these "government-speak" ideas.

This month we provide you with a number of articles looking at the common good — some are records of talks given in Auckland during Lent; others are reflections on our country's present situation; and one a philosophical reflection on the nature of the common good. They provide different voices, and diverse ways of coming at the ideas of wellbeing, fairness and inclusiveness which are at the heart of our society. At the same time, there is a set of articles looking at things ecological: Ron Sharp's comment goes alongside Jonathan Boston's incredibly concise summation of the present global situation concerning climate change. Seán McDonagh's theological reflection on the concepts undergirding ecology brings another voice to this important subject, while our honorary director, Frank Hoffmann, reflects his wisdom on the methods of farming.

Don't miss Bishop Peter Cullinane's trenchant evocation of the power and importance of work in our society; and enjoy Colin MacLeod's initial expedition on our *Hitchhiker's guide to Church History* — an idea which came from a reader's lament that we hear nothing about Church history these days. We hope to help remedy this lack. And on the last page, there is an opportunity to be thankful — thanks to Kaaren Mathias. That's a good way to end — "always be thankful." ***KT***

contents

Front cover illustration: Donald Moorhead

cherishing indigenous peoples

The constitution — what constitution? New Zealand doesn't have one. Australia does. In both countries there are current moves to think or rethink what this may mean.

In Aotearoa, there is a constitutional advisory panel keen to take "the pulse of middle New Zealand" over key constitutional issues. The panel's co-chair, Sir Tipene O'Regan, says that some groups showed they wished "to reverse Maori influence in this country and seemingly wanted to remove every trace of Maoridom" (*Otago Daily Times*, June 17). The consequence of that would be a New Zealand that was "just another little Anglo-leftover" stuck at the bottom of the Pacific. (cf http://www.cap.govt.nz/).

In Australia, two Aboriginal students from University of Notre Dame Perth, Acacia Armstrong and Gary Bonney, are beginning a tour of South-West and Mid-West Australian schools to bring awareness to constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"I think it's a good thing to focus on the issue of constitutional recognition for Indigenous Australians," Gary said.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not mentioned in the [Australian] Constitution and their rights are not acknowledged.

"The constitution is like Australia's roadmap as a nation and it's about time that it recognised the enormous contribution of our First Australians to our country."

Gary said the indigenous peoples' contribution to the global community should not be undervalued. They are custodians of some of the world's most biologically diverse territories; are responsible for a great deal of the world's cultural and linguistic diversity; and their traditional knowledge is an invaluable resource in many sectors, such as medicine and agriculture.

The constitutional debate in Aotearoa New Zealand may be one of the most important we shall have in this country for many years. Yet it seems to be occurring with little publicity and minimal attempt to clarify the issues for the general public.

It is significant that the question of a written constitution and the place of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* is important to Maori. Ultimately, what is good for *tangata whenua* is good for all of us. It behoves Pākehā New Zealand to become engaged in the discussion. ■

Gary Bonney visiting indigenous people in Peru. [Photo: Caritas Australia]

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

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

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torture and erosion of morality

I strongly agree with Richard Jackson (*TM*, June 13) that torture is immoral.

I am convinced, however, that most often the purpose of torture is not to collect information. Shame on Hollywood for producing a movie, Zero Dark Thirty, to try to convince the public otherwise.

Sometimes torture is used as a warning. The treatment of Bradley Manning will surely frighten any potential whistle-blower from exposing war crimes he or she might observe.

Torture is sometimes used to extract 'confessions' that the torturer and his superiors know are not true. "Ibn al-sheikh al-Libi was tortured into providing information the CIA knew to be false. Yet Colin Powell cited al-Libi's falsehood to the Security Council to bolster the case for Bush's war with Iraq." (*The United States and Torture*, Ed. Marjorie Cohn, NYUni Press, 2011, p 7)

Recently the US Attorney General, Eric Holder, was in this country. When interviewed on National Radio, he should have been challenged about the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo, which led to hunger strikes. Mr Holder should not have been allowed while here to say that NZ and the US have 'shared values'.

I wish someone had had the courage to say, "No, NZ does not torture".

Lois Griffiths, *Christchurch*

letter to pope francis

I have just managed to catch up with your May issue, having been out of the country for most of that month. Many thanks for publishing Anna Holmes' *Open Letter to Pope Francis*.

I have some good news in response, for in January 2012, I met some bishops from our Asia-Pacific region who were the fulfilment of Anna Holmes' dream. I was privileged to be part of a Bishops' Institute for Social Action (BISA-VIII) exposure programme in Thailand which involved spending a few days living with marginalised people in that country. One group stayed with indigenous people deprived of their land and living in squatter camps, another worked as ward-aides for terminal HIV-Aids patients, a third stayed with refugee Burmese in a fishing village while the fourth spent an evening, "wearing ordinary clothes", in Pattaya bars, hearing the stories of 'bar-girls'. Most of these young women were trying to earn money for destitute families in one of the three other situations.

These bishops were living Anna's dream and their reporting-back showed the depth of their response to the experience. I will never forget the image of one Sri Lankan bishop cradling the head of a dying HIV-Aids victim in his lap while feeding him.

It was notable too that the Masses celebrated at the meeting used the 'old' English translation and, on one special occasion, showed the influence of inculturation as aspects of a local celebration were woven into the liturgy.

This experience of what can be done if Anna's dream is realised is helping me find hope during the current dark days of regression, that we have more to learn from our neighbours than from Europe.

Thanks again for sharing her letter.

Kevin McBride, *Auckland*

let us discuss the issue

I would like to congratulate David More on his thoughtful and well-researched article on priestly celibacy. (*TM*, June).

The issues raised by him are certainly worthy of further discussion and could possibly lead also to such matters as the question of whether the priesthood should be restricted only to males.

The permitting of married men to be priests may not neccesarily solve the present problem of shortage of priests, but I certainly see it as a step in the right direction. It would also make more use of the present position the Church takes in relation to Anglican priests.

As Dave More says, "Let us, as a Catholic community, discuss the issue".

Jim Conradson, *Dunedin*

hotere history

I enjoyed reading all the material on Ralph Hotere and particularly the Dunedin Teachers' College softball team. The five kneeling alongside Ralph in the front row were all products of Marist High School in Invercargill where the late Brother Cassian had introduced softball into Invercargill in the early 1940s. They are Michael Rabbit, Trevor Ford, Barry Reilly and Leo (Tiger) Lyons. Lyons pitched for the South Island versus North Island one year but whether it was the same time as another Marist softball player of that era played for the South Island I am uncertain. That person was W A McCaw who on one occasion captained a bunch called 'The All Blacks". He was a home run hitting centre fielder.

Altogether a bit of history!

Michael Fenton, Invercargill

☞ letters to the editor

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

We do not publish anonymous letters otherwise than in exceptional circumstances.

Response articles (up to a page) are welcome — but please, by negotiation.

the bad news - and the good news

Ron Sharp

It seems quite clear now that the Western Empire is in the midst of disintegration. Yet another civilisation is facing collapse. The huge corporations are making desperate last gasp efforts to seek more fossil fuels, mine as many minerals as they can to profit from Mother Earth's resources and control as much food production as they can get their greedy hands on. Clearly climate change and runaway greenhouse gases are appearing too late to turn back.

Homo industrialis is truly interested in persistence of our own selfish selves but not of our own species. He has swamped the common good with individualism. As a society, we will not willingly halt the industrial economy. Given our fundamentally flawed nature, the old Original Sin, we are more likely to bury our heads in the sand and deny that danger is near, until it implodes. Earthquakes and floods shake us up and the grandeur of our giving shines, but we still struggle to pull ourselves together to stem the tide of pollution.

Global Capitalism has succumbed to the promotion of Milton Friedman's theory that the social responsibility of business lies in making profit. Friedrich Hayek even went as far as to promote selfishness as a virtue! Ronald Reagan, Maggie Thatcher and our own Roger Douglas promoted their ideas and led us into this precipitous situation that could collapse any time.

Banks were once highly respected in our communities and now they have become dirty words and their masters criminals still protected by courts and governments. There are four inter-related defects inherent in global capitalism. The first is excessive concentration of wealth. The theories above that greedy pursuit of wealth would trickle down to everyone, even the poor, were a lie. The second flaw is that the vast majority of investments are now made in speculation instead of production. Number three is the creation of money by encouraging consumers and businesses to buy on credit. The fourth flaw in global capitalism is the tendency to exploit and ignore the natural environment.

the good news

Humanity stands at the crossroads. Either we throw up our arms in despair or we bravely set out like our ancestors on journeys of faith. Faith that recognises that there is a power permeating our Universe who brings order out of chaos; freedom out of slavery; homecoming out of exile; dry land out of floods. This Someone is beyond our understanding but it walks with us through Abrahams, Noahs, Moses, Davids and most clearly in Jesus.

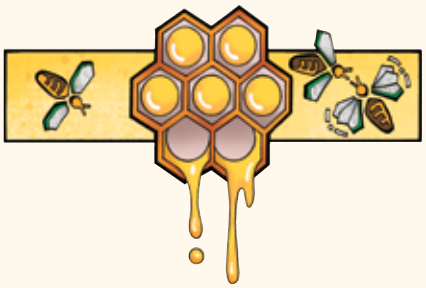
When the Roman Empire slowly turned to chaos and the Vandals and Barbarians ran riot through Europe thieving and pillaging at will, people got together again and set themselves up in protective monasteries. The same is happening now. Just about every night, here in Motueka, there are proficient people from our universities delivering awareness-raising talks on environmental issues.

On Radio NZ National recently an Auckland professor was claiming that the human brain has huge potential for development yet. People are setting up eco-villages, and turning them into permacultural settlements, whereby those involved can live off the generosity of Mother Earth all the year round. Foreign ownership of our country's banks, siphoning off profits for overseas corporates, has caused the creation of several types of local complementary currencies to establish around the world. Transition Towns are popping up throughout the world and preparing for the time when oil runs out and we will be limited in the distances we can travel. God-is-with-us in all those committed to entering into a relationship with our planet. We do not need to be afraid. ■

recovering the common good

Where do our ethical ideas and our political discourse find common ground? The writer delves into history and tradition and finds a clear connection between the individual and a society where no-one is left out; where provision is made for all to enjoy the necessities of life.

Andrew Bradstock



The common good is enjoying a mini-revival at present. In the UK, the USA and here in New Zealand a number of new initiatives, projects and publications are appearing, devoted to examining the concept and seeking to re-inject it into popular thinking.

This is rather surprising on one level, given that the dominant message of the last few decades has been "look after Number One" and "it's all about me". Is that wearing a bit thin now, I wonder? Are we discovering afresh that we are fundamentally social beings, that it is more satisfying to live in a society in which we all flourish rather than one where we're just "in it for ourself"?

origins of the idea

Only time will tell, but many who have kept the flame burning for the common good will see this trend as encouraging, as will those who believe that theology has much to contribute to our 'public life'. Not that the common good is an exclusively 'theological' concept – its origins lie as much with Aristotle as with St John Chrysostom or St Augustine. But it clearly reflects biblical and Church teaching about how our life together should be shaped. This is why one of its strongest advocates has been the Catholic Church and Catholic theologians and bishops have been influential in giving it its present shape, most notably St Thomas Aquinas.

If the Church identifies the common good as the fundamental principle upon which modern society should be grounded, the very *telos* (end) behind all politics, business and corporate life, it does so for sound theological reasons. As British commentator Clifford Longley has said, "... in Catholic Social Teaching the common good is understood as an expression of the second great commandment, to "love your neighbour as yourself", which is why one finds in Vatican teaching statements equating the common good with nothing less than God's will on earth, for which Christians pray in the Lord's Prayer. Perhaps this is also why the Church of England Prayer Book exhorts its users to beseech the Almighty to "give wisdom to all in authority ... that we may honour one another, and seek the common good"."

biblical roots

The common good is also reflected in Old Testament passages listing the rules and norms which YHWH expects the people of Israel to follow, such as the Jubilee. Behind these rules lies a vision of a society in which each individual has the opportunity to flourish and provision is made for all to enjoy the necessities of life. "There will be no one in need among you", the writer of Deuteronomy perceives YHWH to be saying, "If only you will observe my commands." (Deut. 15: 4-5).

The implication is that a society in which even one person is dependent upon others for their survival is a deficient one, and in such a case the community must act to ensure that all can play their full role and enjoy the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. As the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales put it in a document issued in the run-up to the 1997 general election in the UK, "the context most likely to foster human fulfilment for everyone" is one in which "the obligation of every individual to contribute to the common good of society" has been embraced.

a transcendent value

At root the common good rests on the principle that there are some shared values which transcend the rights of individuals. *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) describes it as "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily", and the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales emphasizes that "the common good cannot exclude or exempt any section of the population". "The common good does not consist in the simple sum of the particular goods of each subject of a social entity". As *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004) puts it, "Belonging to everyone and to each person, it is and remains 'common', because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness".

Thus the common good stands apart from political liberalism, broadly understood, according to

which society exists primarily to maximise the opportunity for each individual's potential to be realized. The common good essentially prevails when, in any given situation, the good of the individual is subordinated to the good of the wider community. It specifically challenges notions of well-being rooted in the individual maximisation of freedom and happiness, or suggestions that the good life can be enjoyed by a person irrespective of whether her or his neighbour enjoys it also.

The common good reminds us that human flourishing is not complete without the social dimension. It is rooted in an assumption that we are essentially 'interdependent', that we really are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. But it is not 'collectivism', according to which each individual's well-being is best guaranteed when the state assumes, on their behalf, power to direct the affairs of the community itself. The common good does firmly support the protection of individual human rights and eschews notions of an authoritarian use of power to promote policies which citizens do not endorse.

the aotearoan challenge?

The challenge with the common good is how to relate it to specific situations. Here in New Zealand the vision statements of our four main political parties all reflect what we might call 'common good' aspirations, but each will work those out in radically different ways. Perhaps this is the genius of the concept since, rather than lay out neat prescriptions, it offers a framework for fresh and creative thinking about fundamental issues relating to justice, government and economics. If the common good is a response to the question, "What is the right relationship between God and government?" that response is to offer, not firm policy guidelines, but more subtly "a test of policy guidelines". The test is, "Do they serve the common good?"

The common good gets us to reflect on our conception of what it means to be human, a point made by the New Zealand church leaders in their 2005 statement, *Towards a Robust Society*. As the leaders then asked in this statement, do we primarily see ourselves as autonomous individuals, such that our goal as a society extends no farther than "realizing individual potential, pursuing individual goals, and preserving individual freedom"? Or do we believe, as the church leaders went on to say, that "our humanity is constituted most profoundly in our relationships", that our personal wellbeing includes reference to the fact of our sharing a common life together?

> . . . one finds in Vatican teaching statements equating the common good with nothing less than God's will on earth, for which Christians pray in the Lord's Prayer.

I particularly like a metaphor coined by Norman Barry, which asks us to consider whether we see ourselves living in a hotel, with no responsibility to seek a common purpose or to care for those unable to enjoy its facilities, or members of a whānau, sharing the benefits of our life together and having both a common purpose and a concern that all members have the opportunity to pursue their own ends.

I hope the revival of interest in the common good grows, and that we can have a public conversation leading us to re-think our values and direction as a society; because, as *The Catholic Catechism* puts it, "a society that wishes and intends to remain at the service of the human being at every level is a society that has the common good — the good of all people and of the whole person — as its primary goal." ■

Andrew Bradstock is the retiring foundation Howard Paterson Professor of Theology and Public Issues, and first Director of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Otago.

is health a 'common good'?

What is health, and how might health bear any relationship to 'the Common Good'?

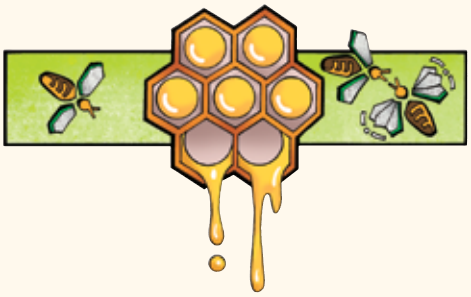
Pat Neuwelt

To those who work in health care, health is often defined by its absence. Illness and injury usually take priority — for example in Vote Health tax funding — over 'health'. This way of understanding health is too limiting. Think of the people you know living with diabetes or cancer or the long-term effects of injury. They can and do experience good health. Why? Because health is much more than the absence of disease or injury — it is a resource for life.

Health incorporates the physical, emotional, and spiritual — but also the individual and the collective. It has a social dimension — something we might call interdependence or connectedness. In *te reo* this broad notion of 'health' is summed up in one word: *hauora*. As Jean Vanier writes in *Becoming Human* (Paulist Press, 1999), one of our greatest human needs is to 'belong'. A sense of belonging through our connectedness to others in relationship is a key aspect of *hauora*/health. How, then, can we separate health from 'the common good'? Health is a common good!

These same ideas could as easily be referring to the principles of public health as to Catholic social teaching.

Public health takes a prevention-oriented approach to health and disease that focuses on whole populations, and considers the collective. Public health regulatory functions do just that — infectious disease trends are monitored in order to prevent further spread, environmental threats are investigated to protect the health of 'the public', teams respond to natural



disasters such as the Christchurch earthquakes. Public health also engages in community development, and strives to support people who are particularly vulnerable. It has been argued that when public health functions are effective, they are invisible. They are part of the civic infrastructure, simply protecting "the common good".

Yet successive governments in western nations, including our own, are actively dismantling this infrastructure. The under-resourcing of preventive efforts in health is undermining the health of peoples already vulnerable. Why? Health has increasingly become a commodity, to be bought and sold in the marketplace of modern economies. (The purchase of many NZ general practices by multinational corporations highlights that there is a profit to be made in health care.) People are referred to as 'consumers'. The idea of communities having a voice in local health organisations is falling by the wayside. The language of consumerism, rather than "the common good", dominates.

It is ironic, then, that many families currently cannot afford to be 'consumers' of health care; and so they go without care until an illness is serious enough to require (free) hospital care. That was the situation I encountered when I moved to NZ from Canada 25 years ago this year — and that is still the situation today. Back then, while working as a GP in a south Auckland practice, I was repeatedly shocked by the level of need of the many women and children who waited patiently, sometimes for hours, to receive my care. Yet, the fellow members of my parish's Lenten small group did not believe it when I described this scenario: "You're obviously new to NZ." "Don't be ridiculous — we don't have that kind of poverty in our city."

The greatest drivers of ill-health in NZ are poverty-related. The headline of the latest newspaper of the Christchurch *Catholic Worker* puts it boldly: "Child Poverty – New Zealand's Shame" (*The Common Good*, No 65). Without appropriate housing (big enough and warm enough), an adequate household income to put healthy meals on the table for the whole family, and meaningful employment, the health of current and future generations is seriously threatened. Māori are hit hardest: they bear a large burden of not only poverty but premature illness and death, compared with Pākehā in New Zealand, reflecting a tragic colonial heritage. The drivers of ill-health are surely sad reflections of the lack of commitment to health as a common good in our country.

This pattern of trampling on "the common good" is evident in the global arena too. It is visible in the food insecurity experienced by many peoples of the world, while so many in wealthy nations are overweight

due to overconsumption. It is also visible in the global struggle for fair access to medicines. Multinational pharmaceutical companies compete to increase their market share, undermining the production of generic medicines, thereby limiting access to much-needed medicines in many parts of the world. (Kaaren Mathias highlighted this situation poignantly in her letter about 'People living with "Mental Disorders" in India' in the June edition of TM.) The current Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) international trade negotiations, involving NZ, is set further to restrict access to medicines for people most in need in New Zealand and other nations.

A commitment to "the common good" is at the heart of Jesus' ministry. Together with Mary Magdalene and his other apostles, Jesus demonstrated what he meant by "love your neighbor as yourself". How well do we know what our neighbour's struggles are — how well do we listen? How ready are we to admit to our interdependence with one another? To commit really to "the common good", we need to renegotiate common values publicly. Do we value "the human good", evident in all humans regardless of age, culture, sexual orientation or intellectual ability? Do we value compassion as a basis for acting for "the common good"? Do we value "deep listening"and silence — time spent listening to the God-spark within — as a way of recharging our batteries and discerning the path ahead?

Health is a common good. We are all called to commit our lives to enhancing this common good … together! ■

Pat Neuwelt is a public health physician and former GP, wife, mother and lay Dominican. She currently teaches and does research at The University of Auckland.

prophecy and the good

In discussion as part of the Lenten series on the Common Good held in Auckland this year, two questions were raised which bear neatly on the recovery of the Common Good.

Chris Trotter

What's the place of prophecy and of prophetic people in dealing with the common good?

I think we need to recover the prophetic voice. I think New Zealanders once demonstrated a really good grasp of that voice. This was a country where not everybody, but always an impressive minority, stood up and witnessed again to what they believed to be evils in the land. Whether it was the fight against apartheid sport; or whether it was the fight against nuclear weapons, there was a willingness to stand up and be counted.

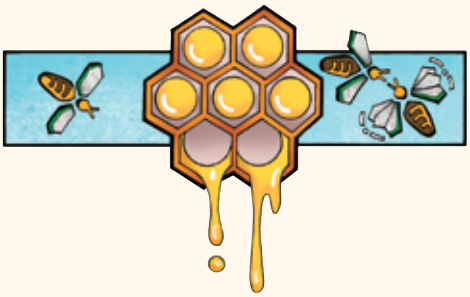
And the amazing thing about the prophetic voice is although it often meets with resistance, it changes people. You only have to think of the difference between New Zealand in 1981 and New Zealand in 1991. The people who stood up against the 1981 tour of the Springboks changed the hearts even of their worst enemies in that year. They made their enemies understand that such passion must have a source, and they began to think about what could be that source. And even in the course of the Tour itself, the opinion pollsters were registering the shift. To bear witness, even in the face of the "batons and barbed wire" (as John Newnham so beautifully summed it up) makes a difference. But you have to do that. And once again if you are a Christian you understand that you have to do that, "Take this cup away from me, but if it be thy will, then thy will be done."

As Walter Brueggeman has said, "This arrangement isn't working … is the beginning of change."

What is the common good in a bicultural context?

The first thing everyone has to accept if the common good is to have any meaning is that there are some things regardless of race or gender, ethnicity or nationality that we have in common. And I think once that is accepted, it will be OK. If that is not accepted, then it is extremely difficult to prove the common good. If there are groups that refuse to acknowledge that there are some things that collectively we all share, things that we all want for our children, that we all want to be able to live in a safe community. We all want our country to be respected. We all like the feeling of belonging to a nation that can hold its head up rather than have its hear down. As long as people accept that those are things we all share then the common good is achievable. But if there is resistance to that, then it becomes immensely difficult. And I have had a great fear for a long time for New Zealand over whether or not Maori and pākehā are any longer able to agree on those basic premises. If we aren't, then our future is grim. ■

Chris Trotter is a syndicated New Zealand journalist.



‘something intensely human ...’

Simon O’Connor

Twentieth century relativism brought with it many positive elements, including greater personal freedom and self-fulfilment. However, it also eroded our sense of the objective good. Without objectivity, the pursuit of the ‘common’ good is a meaningless concept. The absence of this shared understanding is an expression of a new philosophy, or perhaps more accurately, the result of the absence of a philosophy which used to enable the definition of good. Relative good stems from an inherently individualistic perspective. Therefore it should be no surprise that the common good has become elusive. Platitudes and personal validation have become the pillars of this subjective position, in which everything is equally good. Some might attempt to elevate “being nice”to the level of philosophy, which in the prevailing relativistic framework, simply won’t work.

The pursuit of the common good is thus dependent on society’s re-examining what it defines as good. More importantly, however, it must consider the philosophical underpinning of this good. Merely to “be nice” is not sufficient. To recover the common good requires us to agree on a set of principles upon which this good can be based. This will not be easy. Indeed, the concept largely runs contrary to the course of modern history. To find a commonality based on what is understood to be a good human existence requires us to acknowledge that there are aspects in everyone’s life that are not the ideal as defined by these principles. As good and bad exist in opposition to each

other, we must accept that to find the common good is to also face the existence of a common bad, a label many people would be reluctant to allow in this subjective age. To follow principles at the root of the common good requires not only a confidence in what is right and good for the human person, but an ability to stand up for this common good in the face of challenges.

Over the years, as I have worked with various communities both here and overseas, an understanding of the common good has helped ground my volunteer work. Knowing that humans are all essentially good, that we have an innate dignity, and that we are part of a community, is a powerful foundation from which to serve others. An understanding of the common good provides a bedrock from which to challenge and encourage; bringing about change based on a shared understanding of the nature of the good life. Without recovering a sense of the common good, service turns away from being transformative and into something far more distorting. We end up with a continuous list of individual demands without any yard stick by which to measure the validity of these demands. The common good cannot be about individual desires pursued in the face of the community. It is not an expectation that the community will provide to someone what he or she has solely decided would be good for him or herself.

Unfortunately, recovering the common good is far more difficult than some might suggest. The challenge we face is not simply “to respect one another”, “to work together”, or “to care for one another”. These truisms are beguilingly pleasant but ultimately meaningless without a strong foundation on which to base them. They are subjective and can be abused by changing whims and political fads, which can distort them into dangerous ideologies of convenience. The real challenge we face is to agree on the very nature of the common good. I believe we can agree; that we can understand and articulate our shared humanity. I think it is vital that we do so, as otherwise, we fill the void with forms of sentimentalism and individual desire.

Ultimately, the common good is something intensely human and optimistic. Its pursuit is an act of optimism. It is grounded in the belief that we can understand not only what it means to be human, but what it means to be a good human being. It is an optimistic philosophy which asserts that we are essentially good, and that we can both know and express what is good in ourselves and in other people. ■

Simon O’Connor is the National Member of the New Zealand Parliament for Tamaki, Auckland.

‘let’s work together’

Anne Hurley

I was part of a small group of Sisters of Mercy who, in the spring of 1988, moved into a house which we had helped to build. The house is in Wiri, a largely state housing area, just south of the Manukau city centre.

The scriptures and Catherine McAuley, the first Sister of Mercy, were and are our inspiration. Catherine lived in Dublin when it was one of the poorest cities in Europe. She and her sisters cared for the poor, especially women and children, giving them shelter or visiting them where they lived, when that was considered inappropriate. They were known as the walking nuns. The Gospel of John tells us, “The Word became flesh and lived among us.” (Jn 1:14)

And so three of us moved to Wiri to live and work with the poor. I remember talking to a woman whom I had known for some time about a serious neighbourhood issue. She very politely told me that it really concerned only people who lived there. She was so surprised when she discovered that our house was just down the road. We laugh about it now.

Living with and among the people has been an incredibly life-giving experience. When we moved to Wiri we had the intention of being open to whatever people asked of us. We have done our best to do that. For example, we help with providing food, clothing and sometimes money, we advocate on many different issues, we run classes, are involved in neighbourhood issues, and visit families and women in the local prison. Through my experiences, though, I have learned that helping is not the complete answer.

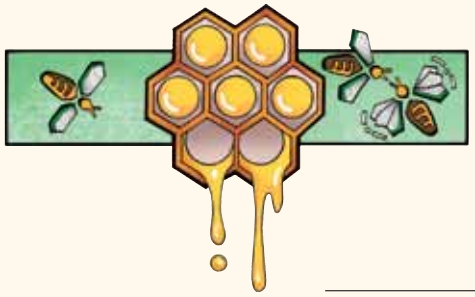
Sharing bread donated by a local supermarket is an ongoing work of mercy. Two mornings a week two of us visit from house to house systematically to offer the bread to families. We visit the whole community every few months. Besides providing bread, we have found that this is a good way of keeping in touch with people, and abreast of community issues.

It is not unusual to be told, “You’re an angel. We had no bread today and I wondered what we would do.” Quite common is the comment, “I had better not take too much. Someone else might need it.” Or perhaps, “That woman over there has lots of kids. They could do with some help.” This is a salutary lesson. The poor, who have little, are willing to share the little they have with others. This generosity of spirit is also evident when a family has nowhere to live. Two adults and six children left homeless when a house burned down last year were housed for three weeks, until something more permanent was found, by neighbours, who themselves were under pressure. This kind of generosity is not uncommon.

We tend to feel good when we give to people who are struggling. Why is it that when issues like the common good are being considered we look at the poor as the problem and charity as the answer? Solutions such as opening a food bank, or providing food in schools are put forward. Surely, the answer lies in considering the question, “Why do some people have so much and others very little?”

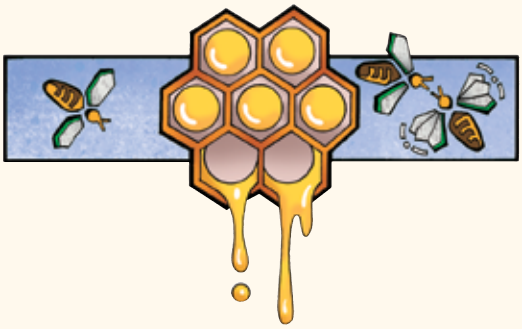
The housing and welfare reforms of the 90s affected the people of Wiri badly, and have continued to do so. Self-build housing schemes and other community housing solutions, though helpful, are not going to provide what is needed. Neither is the market. Decent and affordable housing, a living wage and meaningful jobs for all will be achieved only when the State enacts legislation which will enhance the wellbeing of every member of society.

In sharing the struggles of the people of Wiri, I have become aware of how difficult it is for a poor family to better itself. We will recover the common good in Aotearoa/New Zealand only when we all work together, at every level, to address the issues and embrace the policies which will lead to greater social and economic equality. In the words of Lila Watson, an aboriginal Australian, “If you have come to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” ■



Anne Hurley is a Sister of Mercy who lives and works in Wiri, South Auckland.

at the heart of our society



Susan St John

The market has been at the centre of our thinking ever since the early 1990s, and that has proved antithetical to the common good. Market-based thinking of an extreme nature has guided policy of all kinds and is difficult to unseat. We would have very different policies if paid work and profit were not at the centre but what should replace the "unrelenting focus on paid work"? What we put at the centre should reflect our core values — but where do we find these in today's fractured society?

Placing the common good at the heart of our society is not unreasonable, nor is it impractical. One avenue to do so could be to incorporate the best of liberal thinking as embodied in elements of the Human Rights framework. This framework exists already, not only in the Bill of Rights Act and the Human Rights Act but in conventions that New Zealand is signatory to, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is perfectly possible to adopt this framework now, and doing so would not destroy the best features of a market-based economy. If the right to an adequate income was at the heart of welfare policy, and the rights of all children to social security, housing, education and healthcare prioritised, people would still go to work and society would not collapse. The world might be more socially stable however, more like the post war period I grew up in.

The common good is not only a religious concept. In economics, we have something called a public good. We all benefit from the provision of public goods like clean air and safe streets but they can't be packaged up and sold in markets. The benefits of pollution reduction improve everyone's well-being: they spill over onto everyone not just those who might pay a market price for clean air. The fly in the ointment for market extremists is that public goods need to be funded collectively if we are to have them at all.

This "common good" or "public good" thinking is the basis of much of taxation — we all pay to fund collectively the things we want to enjoy as a society, whether this be the rugby world cup or public hospitals, state education, and in the good old days, energy companies.

A free market simply does not recognise public goods and without a good deal of intervention it is a recipe for ever widening income and wealth inequality. It goes without saying that government policy is absolutely central here. The critical question is: who pays the tax to produce the things that are for the common good?

Should we really give top earners tax cuts, and then have to persuade them to lend their excess back to government to pay for the likes of Christchurch through the purchase of earthquake bonds, or for the purchase of Mighty River Power shares? Government and Treasury are obsessed with keeping taxes low on top incomes, but they are also obsessed with the growth in public debt and cuts to government spending? Which is the lesser evil?

The welfare state has taken a drubbing in recent years. Yet we are all just one step away from disaster or maybe two steps away if we are cushioned by private wealth. One of the roles of the welfare state is to see that no one gets excluded from participating in society when misfortune strikes. Good examples are accident compensation and public health. The most successful protection of all, New Zealand superannuation, is given regardless of contributions, gender, or how it is spent. It is an example of the common good approach that says everyone has the right to a basic income.

But with the current narrow view of the welfare state, many people are excluded and marginalised. Inequality is the by-product of too much reliance on the free market. It has allowed fortunes to compound at the top and disadvantage to compound at the bottom. We are richer now on average than we were in the 1980s — but we have more poverty. If we think it is purely up to individuals to assist the poor we are accepting the charity model that our forebears fought so hard to escape. It is the moral responsibility of us all through just government action.

Perhaps an understanding of the true role of the welfare state would aid the attainment of the common good. ■

Associate Professor Susan St John is a founding member of the Child Poverty Action Group, and a teacher in the Economics Department at the University of Auckland.

the consequences of our humanity

The mayor of Auckland sets out his vision of how the principle of the common good can bring well-being and fairness to all his constituents

Len Brown

I take the Christian focus, that we should love our neighbour as we love ourselves and our closest, pursuing the common good in our own backyard, then in our own street and neighbourhood. I don't think we've lost the pursuit of the common good. I don't think we need to bring it back. I think it's here – it is a matter of how much it's here and how much we apply it.

Until this discussion came up, I'd never reflected on the fact that my own political philosophy was in fact about pursuing the common good; and so I have found in this discussion very much the words that would best reflect what encapsulates my political philosophy and the basis of my leadership, hopefully, in this city.

I've done some research around where this debate has got to in a national forum. In 1993 a declaration was delivered to the governing parties and political parties. It really reflected the nadir of the free-market thinking of Roger Douglas and Ruth Richardson. The nation was reflecting on what had happened through the share market crash, the really high focus on pure market economics and the pursuit of personal wealth as a consequence of that — against the backdrop of one of our nation's founding principles in egalitarianism, that had been such an overarching strength and weakness. I've seen in this nation, as a son of New Zealand, a more advanced sense of fairness, justice, social wellbeing, and equality as national guiding principles than maybe in any other nation. You can see that in any part of our history, but through the 1980s and 1990s things changed markedly — and I think the churches were responding to that, reflecting: hey, hang on, you're forgetting the common good — we've got completely wrapped up in a sense of individual pursuit and individualism. We are now addressing that to some extent.

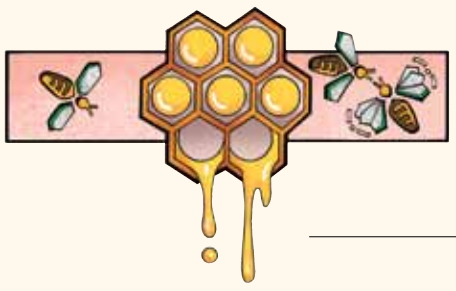
Absolutely, it is appropriate for me to have that vision of the common good personally and work it out in my role as Mayor. I think we all agree that the sense of fairness and equity in our community is driven from the ground up. The aspirations and concerns of the people really determine what our commitment is to justice and fairness within our communities. But there is another side to it, and the side that I have in my statutory role to deliver the vision for Auckland gives an opportunity for that sense of common good, or the wellbeing of all to flourish. It needs to be encapsulated within the overarching vision, or comity of purpose, for Auckland.

This is very much at the base of my view that we should try and develop a city that is one of the most liveable in the world — and a key premise behind that vision is that it be liveable for everyone. This is a vision that is very much about inclusiveness. I was one of those who had some serious misgivings about parts of the super-city structure. But what I felt was that if we could in fact unite Aucklanders behind a common vision and a common plan, and the cultural values of that vision — inclusivity and fairness — reaching out to all of our community, this would be very much a vision that had at its heart a sense that we were there for one another; that we didn't want to leave anyone behind. This would involve lifting educational standards, a key ingredient for lifting up all our youngsters, giving them the very best opportunities around education.

So that sense of inclusivity, of lifting everyone, and leaving no one behind, is not only included in the vision of Auckland but very much the heart and soul of the Auckland plan—unbelievably, across pretty much the whole of the political spectrum.

Secondly, the common good is a potential vehicle by which we can really unite the city, not just on a piece of paper, nor just a legislative change in Parliament nor whim of government, but because Aucklanders are genuinely united by a shared purpose and a shared culture — led not only from the top but from all ranks across our community. It is a challenge to deliver on that aspiration, to develop and deliver a serious outcome around the common good being beneficial to all.

I've got the American Declaration of Independence ringing in my ears. Having just seen 'Lincoln' – 'these truths are self-evident ...' – there are amongst us common truisms about our humanity. Whether you are a believer or not, there is a sense that all of us have obligations because of our shared humanity. Moreover, I don't think that the churches, mosques and temples ought necessarily to feel a particular responsibility. All of us have that responsibility, as a consequence of our humanity. ■



Len Brown is the mayor of the supercity of Auckland.

acting responsibly for our future

Tui Motu *interviewed an Aotearoa/New Zealand expert on the environment and climate change. Where have we come from? How best will we face a future which is by definition unforeseeable?*

Jonathan Boston

Where do we stand now so far as climate change is concerned?

The global community has been mindful of the seriousness of the issue for more than two decades now, certainly since the late 1980s when [Dr James] Hansen raised the issue at global level. And the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, operating now for more than two decades, is just about to produce its fifth assessment, looking at climate change in terms of what we know of the planet.

The 5th assessment report will almost certainly reaffirm the previous reports' messages: the planet is warming a little more slowly than some people thought; carbon emissions continue to increase globally; the concentrations of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere continue to increase at an accelerating rate. All indications are that we are on track for a very substantial increase in the temperature of the planet over the coming century, with very, very severe consequences: gradual sea level rise which will include the inundation of small island states like Kiribati and Tuvalu, and continental coastal areas. In time this will increase up to a metre, and will be increasingly felt by all the major coastal cities around the world. It is going to affect hundreds of millions of people, with huge, costly physical and social impacts. So in terms of the science the basic message is clear. Things are proceeding along more or less as was expected with the exception that the planet isn't warming quite as rapidly over the last decade as some thought it might.

What have been the consequences for policy makers?

From a policy point of view, it is fair to say that things are rather grim. If you think about it at the global level, we failed at Copenhagen to get the agreement we wished; we then failed to generate by the end of 2012 a new kind of treaty to replace the Kyoto protocol and extend it. What we've agreed now is to negotiate a new agreement to take effect in 2020. And we've agreed to do that by the end of 2015, though I don't think we have any prospect of negotiating an agreement by then.

Why is that?

The Republican majority in the House of Representatives have basically decided that they are going to be climate sceptics, unprepared to support any measure to reverse climate change. Moreover, the Democrats in the Senate don't have the 16 votes necessary to push through significant measures.

And the US is reluctant to sign international agreements. This US 'exceptionalism' goes with the strong US contrarian/denialist sceptic movement. Why is this so important? Because the US is still the world's largest economy and leader of the developed world. If the US is not prepared to take the initiative then you have major problems in terms of getting any global buy-in.

The second problem is that the global financial crisis had an impact particularly on what's happened in Europe, which was providing leadership on climate change until then. But with the sovereign debt crisis in European states, climate change is a secondary consideration for obvious reasons. The European sector is now relatively extremely weak. The carbon price is very low, having a very modest impact on the decisions that companies will be taking about the kinds of fuel we want and investments we make.

The other 'block' — Canada, Australia, Russia, and to a lesser extent, Japan — seems resistant to change. And in New Zealand, the issue is not being taken very seriously. We haven't even declared what our target is going to be, let alone what our responsibility target will be for the second Kyoto protocol. And although the global community has said they want to take climate change seriously, to avoid one or two degrees of warming, it was business as usual — an extra $800 billion (1

percent of global GDP) was invested last year in fossil fuel exploration. Over 10 years, that's another 6-7 trillion dollars global investment. That tells us that the international financial community doesn't believe action will be taken on climate change issues; otherwise, their investments would be at enormous risk.

That sounds like a very tough picture?
This is a bleak picture with only very modest good news stories. Events like the horrendous US droughts and Hurricane Sandie will have some impact on the consciousness of people affected, and on policy makers. The problem is that there probably won't be enough big impact events to shift opinion to the extent needed to make a big difference in the next 10-15 years.

The second good news is that investment in wind, hydro and geo-thermal renewables has been going up consistently for a long time – investments of hundreds of billions of US dollars – and the price particularly of solar energy is coming down. Eventually these renewables will undercut the price of fossil fuels —optimists think within a decade.

Thirdly, insurance companies are becoming more and more concerned about climate change. Already I am told that in parts of Florida it is difficult for householders to get insurance because of the risk of severe storm damage and of coastal flooding. As these events become more widespread, more people (even the climate sceptics like Lord Monckton) will come to see climate change does matter. The big reinsurers, like Munich Re and Swiss Re, are very, very concerned about the long-term effect of climate change. So the insurance markets are going to have their impact.

The big problem is that climate change is not going to be one big crisis. It's going to occur as a series of events. The impacts will tend to be localized and periodic, and not simultaneous at a global level. And it's going to be gradual, with big events happening at the regional level, not at the global level. If we could reliably expect that there would be a Sandie once a year or several times a year hitting major urban areas in the US, doing tens of billions of dollars damage on a regular basis, people's idea might change. But most storms affect the Philippines, presently hit by fierce hurricanes many times a year. Who cares about the Philippines? If a storm of Sandie's size had hit the Philippines, you would have got nothing like the coverage that you got in the US.

I have two other concerns. The impact of climate change over time combined with other developments on global food supplies will bring suffering. There will be an increase in distress around the planet in terms of drought impact, as well as storm damage to crops with potentially extremely damaging consequences and millions of people dying of starvation. It's the same with the depleting of many large fossil water supplies or aquifers around the world. In the US, India, and parts of China and Africa, we are rapidly depleting the water stored underground, in some places for aeons. At some point they will run out. Then we will be limited to replenishment from the general rainfall.

And remember we don't have unlimited supplies of phosphates and other fertilisers either. We are using these up at a pretty rapid rate. The price of some fertilisers is going to rise, putting pressure on our capacity to grow certain crops. As well, with the increase in the overall population of the planet you've got the potential for supply shocks in terms of energy supplies, resulting in circumstances that could be very, very serious indeed.

To what extent can we prepare ourselves for some of those events in a responsible, cautious way? Will we build up adequate buffers to carry us through the extended periods of time when there is reduced production, or not? That's going to be matter for policy makers. As yet we are not showing much concern for climate change. Will we show much more foresight into building supply buffers?

What would you say to us ordinary Christian people?
As Christians we need to be caring about this planet, as this is God's world.It is not our world. We believe God has created this fantastic planet and an extraordinary universe. We are here to be good stewards for posterity. We are to cherish and treasure what God has made and not destroy or do anything that might damage what God has created. We're not being very responsible stewards at the moment. The second point is: when Jesus talked about loving our neighbour he extended our horizon to people of a different ethnic background. Now what we need to recognize in terms of climate change is that 'neighbour' includes those not yet born, whose well-being we can affect by our actions or failure to act. So we have to be mindful of the impacts we are going to have on future generations.

What can I do?
If I am a member of a church community, a political party or a community organization, I can use my position to demonstrate care for creation. Or in a business I can use my position to ensure our business stops unsustainable practices. Moreover, for people who understand the dangers of climate change, eg, professionals in the insurance companies, you have the responsibility to tell people about the impacts of climate change, and its effects on a client's capacity to get future cover.

And there are so many practical things to do: using double glazing, insulation around our houses; using skype instead of jetting around the world; getting a smaller car. These are some of the things we have to grapple with. But it's hard stuff. There are no easy answers in most situations, and sometimes one has to make relatively sacrificial sorts of decisions which some people think are silly. So be it!

Finally, I have to say that all of this is a question of the heart: of a vision for our future that I have through God. And while there are many uncertainties here, we have to act responsibly now in the light of the evidence we have available to us at this particular period of time. ■

Jonathan Boston is the Professor of Public Policy in the School of Governance at the Victoria University of Wellington.

To live within wonder

God, in whom we trust
Enclose our simple hopes
In earth's delight-filled struggle.

O God, in whom we struggle
Let not our brief conceits
Be earth's enduring pain.

O God, in whom we suffer
Absorb our fragile selves
In Earth's enduring trust.

Be close, Companion Teacher,
Be close that we may know
to live within wonder
to act with respect
to use without waste
the better to know You
the closer to seek You
the gentler to touch You
and by You be touched.

– Neil Darragh

Knobs Flat, Fiordland. [Photo Mike Brebner]

a glorious but sad vision

We are the last generation of humans that will see the Philippine eagle in the wild. The quick extinction of the species, and the huge loss of biodiversity we are going through, should remind us of the wise words of St. Columban: "If you wish to know God, learn about creation." And lead us to act accordingly.

Seán McDonagh

In his book, *St Columbanus, Pilgrim for Christ,* Fr Aidan Larkin SSC gives a thumbnail biographical sketch: "The child would grow to manhood and become, first, a monk, then a priest, a distinguished Scripture teacher, a master of Latin prose style and rhetoric, a competent versifier, an abbot, a founder of monasteries and monastic lawgiver, notably in Annegray, Luxeuil and Fontaines, in Burgundy, France, from where he would be expelled, and then in Bregenz, Austria and, finally in Bobbio, northern Italy, where he would die in 615." One could write at length on any one of these aspects of Columban's life. Like many other early Irish saints, finding God in creation came naturally to Columban. Many legends grew up around him in Luxeuil. Squirrels and doves were pictured playing in the folds of his cowl. Birds also approached him and nestled in the palms of his hands. Even wild beasts obeyed his commands. In his sermon "Concerning the Faith" he wrote, "Seek no further concerning God; for those who wish to know the great depth (of God) must first learn about creation." Further on, in the same sermon, he challenges us. He writes, "If you wish to know God, learn about creation."

In popular Christianity, the key text for the common understanding of the place of humans in creation is found in Gn 1:26. God said, "Let us make [human beings] in our own image and in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all living beasts and all the reptiles that crawl on the Earth." From the above, we deduced that humans were special, made in the image of God, while all other creatures were put on the earth to be of service to humankind. If we had read the Noah's story or the book of Job or the Wisdom literature, we might have gained more insight into God's presence in other creatures as well.

Saint Columban

St. Thomas Aquinas certainly did. In the Summa, (I, q 47, art 1), he wrote: "Hence we must say that the distinction and multitude of things comes from the intention of the first agent, who is God. For He brought things into being in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures and be represented by them; and because His goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produced many and diverse creatures so that, what was wanting to one in the manifestation of the divine goodness, might be supplied by another." For goodness, which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures, is manifold and divided, and, hence, the whole universe together participates in the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better than any single creature whatsoever.

god's presence in an eagle

So other species also reveal God in ways that humans do not. My own experience of this came many years ago when I worked among the T'boli people at Lake S'bu in the mountains of South Cotabato in the Philippines. One evening, a group of fishermen brought a Philippine eagle over to my house. What had happened was that a flock of hornbills forced this young eagle down on to Lake S'bu and its talons got caught in the fishermen's nets. The fishermen didn't kill the bird; instead, they brought it over to my house where we built a makeshift aviary. We sent for a vet from the Philippine Eagle Foundation because we thought the bird had injured its wing.

For the next few days, hundreds of T'bolis came from all over the mountain to view this magnificent creature. It stood more than three feet tall and had a wing span of more than six feet. Everything about this creature was stunning — its piercing eyes, its powerful beak and its beautiful front plumage. After the bird was treated

by the vet, we released it back into the wild. I remember being struck by the power of its wings in flight. As a result of this experience, the metaphor in Ex 19: 6, took on a totally new meaning for me. "You yourselves have seen how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself."

While marveling at the beauty of the eagle, I experienced incredible sadness at the thought we are the last generation of humans that will see the Philippine eagle in the wild. This is because its habitat has been destroyed through logging. On the wider global scale, we are living in the sixth largest extinction of life on earth since life began 3.8B years ago. If we continue in our destructive ways, we could lose between one third to a half of the species of the planet within the next 50 to 100 years.

Extinction is the permanent destruction of life on the planet and, tragically, the response from the religious world has been minimal. The Catholic Church claims to be a pro–life organization, but it would be more accurate to say it is against human abortion, which is laudable, but it has not cherished the lives of other species of God's creation. In the large Compendium of the Social Teachings of the Church, only one paragraph (No 466) is devoted to protecting biodiversity. I believe that if the Catholic Church was seen to be in the forefront of protecting biodiversity around the world, its position on abortion would be much better understood.

insights of duns scotus

Blessed John Duns Scotus, probably the most significant Celtic theologian, also saw God in Creation in a more intense way even than Aquinas. He was a Franciscan who lived in the 13th and early 14th century (1266–1307). Scotus had no time for neo–Platonism which had a rather jaundiced view of creation.

Like Francis before him, Scotus's love for all reality is grounded in his belief in the Incarnation, that God took human form and became part of creation. For him, there is a direct link between creation and the Incarnation. He takes his cue from those passages in both St Paul and St John where it seems that creation is made for Christ. He is both the source and cenre of everything. In the prologue of John's Gospel (1:1-5), we read: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through Him. All that came to be had life in Him and that life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower."

In Scotus's vision, each and every thing, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, is of infinite value because it images God in its own unique way. In such a scheme of things, the more diversity there is in creation, the greater the glory of God. This is far removed from an exclusively homocentric understanding of the Imago Dei which has informed, or should I say deformed, a lot of our God talk about creation and our own place in creation. Much of our articulation of our faith — in creedal statements or theological tomes — took place at a time when we believed that the earth was the centre of the universe, that the universe was just over 6,000 years old and that everything that grew on the earth, or flew through the sky, or swam in the oceans was put there by God for humankind's benefit.

finding the place of humans

Modern science, on the other hand, describes how the universe emerged from the mysterious fireball 13.7B years ago. It tells how the elements were forged in the galactic cauldrons of the first generation of stars as they collapsed in the supernova explosions. It tells how these new elements seeded our solar system and gave rise to our sun, the planets and, especially, the Earth. The story goes on to tell how, over hundreds of millions of years, our Earth was formed in its physical dimensions. Finally, it tells how life arrived on earth in the oceans, first as a tentative flicker, and later in great profusion and diversity, culminating in the emergence of a creature with reflective self–consciousness. This creature is called *homo sapiens*. This story helps us to discover our proper place in God's creation. It tells us that everything in the universe is linked and that we are literally cousins with every creature on the planet. It tells us that creation is there primarily to give glory to God, not to be a quarry for humans to exploit.

If we take Columban, Aquinas and Scotus as our guides, we have a lot to learn from the story of the emergence of the cosmos. We are blessed in our time that we have the possibility to know multiple times more about the universe and life on earth than either Columban or Scotus. One of the instruments which has given us new eyes so that we can become more intimate with the 'small' world of Creation is the microscope. With microscopes, we can now see things that Columban or Scotus in their wildest dreams could not even imagine.

setting up a laboratory

To facilitate our encountering God in creation, our house manager has agreed to set aside a room in the front of the house in Dalgan Park, Navan where there will be an ongoing educational programme to help people familiarize themselves with the world around Dalgan. The focus here is experiencing God's presence in nature.

The pioneering Swedish botanist, Carl Linneaus, put it well when he wrote in Latin: *Natura in minimis maxima miranda* ('Nature in its smallest things is greatly to be admired'). Admiration leads to wonder and praise – which is the beginning of prayer and contemplation. As Christians in the 21st century, I think it is how we might respond to Columban's challenge — *Intellige, si vis sciere Creatorem, creaturam* ("If you wish to know God, learn about Creation".) ■

Sean McDonagh SSC is a Columban priest who specializes in ecology and spirituality. He lives in Dalgan Park, Navan, Ireland.

holistic farming

The writer, with 74 year's experience of Aotearoa New Zealand farming, compares two systems of agriculture and asks some pertinent questions. Are animals no more than 'cogs' in a manufacturing machine? Do we treasure the living soil as a sacred gift of thousands of mysteriously interacting life forms?

Frank Hoffmann

After my arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand from Austria, the beginning of hostilities in 1939 redirected my academic qualification in viticulture to producing butterfat for Britain. The opinions below are the result of my life-long association with the land as a dairy farmer.

Agribusiness has lately received special attention by the media. Should it follow the present trend in industry and trade which is losing us the fertile personal relationships with cobbler, tailor and owner of the corner dairy through the proliferation of mega businesses? Is a similar loss of the farmer's personal relationship with soil and animal a good thing?

It is clear that farming needs to adopt business methods in order to survive economically.

The business of farming, however, is unique because a farmer's 'factory' is a piece of living land which traditionally is also the farmer's home. He is familiar with the remotest corner of his farm and knows that any setback caused by poor management or sheer neglect will have consequences well beyond a smaller cheque at the end of the season.

A farm is a complex ecosystem with the farmer himself a vital link. Millions of organisms live in self-regulating balance which has evolved over 12,000 years of agriculture's existence. Development through human ingenuity has been gradual enough to be accommodated through the natural resilience of this delicate bio-system. Modern science may yet explain the correlation of some of its many organisms. The tiniest bacteria under the surface might hold the key to the well-being of the grazing animal above.

> The farmer has been replaced by a disenfranchised farm worker. He may be capable and diligent but could not be expected to persist throughout adversity.

When I began dairy farming as a 20 year-old lad, the word 'business' had not yet been associated with dairy farming. All our produce was collected by the nearest dairy factory. The price was guaranteed by the Government. Petrol rationing necessitated the use of horses for taking the milk to the collecting truck in the early morning. The need for sound business management arose after the war when Government-sponsored research challenged us with choices in farming practice. Scientists in Ruakura developed methods which needed low-key investments. Herd testing was recommended to select breeding stock.

Soil testing, too, though expensive, proved to be a sound investment which facilitated more economic use of fertiliser. Ruakura's innovative inclusion of white clover promised to enrich the soil through the conversion of free atmospheric nitrogen. Was money spent now on expensive seed and the associated innoculants good business? New methods of harvesting silage needed investment in specialised equipment. Tightening of belts through sacrifices in our lifestyle over several years was the only way.

However, this cost was never questioned because by this time my family and I had already put down roots in the land, not unlike the now well-established chestnut tree which I had planted in front of our house. Only personal sacrifice could achieve the farm's survival.

But wrong business choices have led farmers into costly traps. A short-term boost in price has resulted in a wild race to increase stock numbers with extra land to be brought in. I have seen tracts of thriving young pine plantations bulldozed and burnt to be replaced by pasture. Other environmental damage from the feverish expansion of dairy farms has been well documented.

Banks have been quick to accommodate the demand for capital and tempted farmers to over-commit themselves. Mortgage sales resulting in overseas investment brought us faceless corporate owners — not the kind to make sacrifices for love of land and animals. For the owner,

[Photo courtesy of the Otago Daily Times]

however, today's sacrifice represents an investment in the future.

When overstocking resulted in a shortage of feed, farmers were quick to resort to concentrate supplements. Clever marketing dictated the most readily available and cheapest: palm kernel. It may look like good business but is environmentally and socially destructive at its source. An emergency measure initially, it has become a profitable routine adopted by uncaring users.

Agriculture is humanity's most important link with the life-giving soil. If we degrade this vital asset to the status of a soulless factory it will lose its life.

By the same token, when we put hundreds of lactating bovines through an automated process of milk extraction we remove the farmer another step from the source of production. Saving labour always poses as economic advantage but we lose the mutual benefits of personal contact with animals in our care.

Agribusiness, like any other profitable business, tends to grow, and amalgamation under individual or corporate ownership has been a consequence.

It can posture as sound economy only while denial of its potential harm remains unchallenged. If not, it will continue to test the endurance of our fragile source of life to the point of destruction.

On the bright side, we are fortunate in still having farmers who thrive through employing sound business practice assisted by congenial science that will enable them to pass on their piece of living farm land to their descendants. ■

Frank Hoffmann is an honorary director of Tui Motu, *and a passionate exponent of all things ecological. He lives in Auckland.*

saint paul – champion of the way

Colin MacLeod

I remember a wonderful Presbyterian theology lecturer, at Otago University, challenging us, "St Paul was the founder of Christianity". As a proud, young practising Catholic I found this a shocking statement, seemingly dismissing God's work with a single stroke. However, I actually knew nothing about Paul, other than the beginning: he heard Jesus in a vision, fell to the ground, was blinded, changed his name and became a Christian.

So, who was he? Why was his role in the early church so pivotal?

We first hear of him in the Acts of Apostles as a young man holding the cloaks of those stoning Stephen to death (Acts 7:58). Saul's faith as a Pharisee (Acts 26:5), as an observer and keeper of Jewish Torah, clearly identified such blasphemous followers of 'The Way' as dangerous dissidents. He initially focused his abundant energy on punishing those people who so flagrantly opposed the Law of Moses (Acts 8:3).

While on one such mission to Damascus Saul was suddenly surrounded by light as Jesus questioned him as to why he was persecuting him. Thus began the great conversion of St Paul (Acts 9). Interestingly, there was no moment where Saul changed his name to Paul. It is most likely that he would always have gone both by his Jewish/Hebrew name, Saul, and his Roman/Latin name, Paul, depending on where and with whom he was interacting. This was quite common practice at that time and place.

Paul was uniquely placed to foster the spread of Christianity. He was legally a Roman, spiritually a Jew and intellectually a Greek. Being born in the Roman garrison town Tarsus around 5–10CE, gave him Roman citizenship (Acts 22:25–28) and with that many rights that supported his freedom to travel and speak without Roman military intervention. His Jewish upbringing and spiritual education, including being taught by Gamaliel one of the great Jewish teachers of the day (Acts 22:3), gave him a strong foundation from which to grasp the context of Jesus' mission. And, as he championed the call to establish and support communities of Christian believers throughout the Mediterranean, his Greek classical education enabled him to preach to gentiles in a language and context they could understand. (I'm not sure what being a tent-maker would have added to the role, but who knows on those long journeys?)

There is no real physical description of Paul in Acts or his letters. Tradition holds that he wasn't much to look at — short, bald, bandy-legged and by his own admission not much of a speaker (1 Co 2:1). Certainly, it seems at least some in the community in Corinth thought his letters were more impressive than the man himself (2Co 10:10; 11:6). But there is complete agreement that when Paul spoke/wrote, people listened!

What must it have been like to receive a letter, written to your own small faith-seeking community, from the apostle Paul!? Out of the 27 books in the New Testament, 13 are addressed 'From Paul'. However, although Romans, 1st & 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1st Thessalonians and Philemon are commonly accepted to be Paul's own dictation, the others are subject to strenuous debate regarding their direct relationship to the Apostle. Many other letters, never recorded in our Bible, are sure to have been lost.

Paul's ability to articulate the need for faith in God's generous love, shown through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and to explain how people with this faith should live, had immeasurable impact on the emerging church. Imagine hearing, for the first time, a description of the church as the 'Body of Christ' (Rom 12:3–5), or the explanation of Love as the central bond between community and God (1Co 13), or being brought to task for drifting from the path (Gal: 6). Men, particularly, have Paul to thank for eliminating a Jewish law as a requisite to follow Christ (Gal 6:15; Acts 21:21). The need for all males following 'The Way' to be circumcised was a great point of contention in the emerging church.

Paul's single-minded enthusiasm to share his faith is evident in the Acts of Apostles. Half of this book relates to his life and works. He travelled over 22,000 kilometers by sea and land in four major journeys. He established many new Christian communities and nurtured many others. At various times he was imprisoned, mobbed, whipped, accused, ship-wrecked (2 Co 11:21b–29). Eventually, so tradition holds, he was beheaded in Rome (around 64CE). It's interesting that there is no record of his death, especially since his words live on so powerfully today.

Paul was a remarkable man in a remarkable time. Perhaps he was not the 'founder of Christianity', but it is certainly impossible to imagine Christianity without him. ■

Colin MacLeod is the assistant principal and the director of religious studies at Kavanagh College in Dunedin.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to CHURCH HISTORY

What do you know of Church history?

With the issue we begin a series of 10 articles each of which will highlight an important figure in Church history. Each will in some way scan or encapsulate a 200 year period, as we move our way from the time of Jesus right up until today. Each will be written by a Director of Religious Studies in one of our Catholic schools, and will have a focus for our school readers.

GOOD READING!

human dignity – the starting point of economic planning

Bishop Peter Cullinane addressed a Workers' Memorial Day commemoration service in Palmerston North on 28 April this year.

Peter Cullinane

On this date we remember the women and men who have been injured or killed or become unwell in their workplaces.

The statistics relating to this are terrible enough but we all know that each one of those statistics represents suffering by individuals and families.

We also know that in recent times various commissions of inquiry have found that many of those accidents have been preventable. They come back to neglect or shortcuts being taken, which in turn is traceable back to an ideology which puts profits ahead of people. In other words, dangers at the coalface of any industry can start in the Board room.

And it's the ideology we need to address, not just the statistics. I want to suggest to you it's the very starting point of economic planning.

human wellbeing

We all know that human wellbeing has a variety of dimensions; there are cultural dimensions, spiritual dimensions, social, environmental and economic dimensions. And we also know that those wider dimensions of human wellbeing need an economy that succeeds. There's no point in undermining the economy.

The point I make though is that those wider dimensions of human wellbeing are not side issues to be addressed after the economic planning has been done. Holistic planning includes those dimensions of human wellbeing in the economic planning. They have to be factored in even before the profits are calculated.

Present practices too often reflect several false assumptions. Just to illustrate that, take the matter of layoffs. It is accepted that sometimes a small business has to layoff staff just to survive.

But what about when a big business lays off workers in order to protect the returns to the investors? Why are returns to investors regarded as a higher priority than the jobs of the workers?

for whom?

We all know that industry requires both capital and labour. But the false assumption in a lot of economic planning is that the fruits of industry, the end product, somehow belong more to those who provided the finance than to those who provided the labour. And that is simply false. Because in any enterprise, surely it's a matter of justice that the end product belongs more to those who put more in than to those that put less in.

Now, those who provide the labour, what do they put in? They actually put in something of their very selves, something in the way in which they think and care, their careful attention, their skills, their energy, their time, their personal sacrifices.

They're putting into the industry something that's of themselves, whereas those who provide the finance — yes we need the finance too — they're providing something that's a lot less personal and a lot less costly. So why is it assumed that the end product belongs more to those

who provide the finance than to those who put themselves into it?

One could go on with more examples of false assumptions, but the point I'm wanting to make is simply this, that the very starting point of all economic and social planning needs to be the innate dignity of the human person. Because when you start there, you've got a way of calculating the real value of human labour.

god-given human dignity

And if you don't start from the innate human dignity of the human person, it's no wonder that you end up concluding that human labour is only a cost item, to be reduced as far as possible.

I will end with a paragraph from one of the last letters that Pope Benedict wrote before he retired. He put it this way:

"One of the social rights and duties most under threat today is the right to work. The reason for this is that labour and the rightful recognition of workers' juridical status are increasingly undervalued, since economic development is thought to depend principally on completely free markets. Labour is thus regarded as a variable dependent on economic and financial mechanisms. In this regard, I would reaffirm that human dignity and economic, social and political factors, demand that we continue "to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone." If this ambitious goal is to be realized, one prior condition is a fresh outlook on work, based on ethical principles and spiritual values that reinforce the notion of work as a fundamental good for the individual, for the family and for society. Corresponding to this good are a duty and a right that demand courageous new policies of universal employment." (*Message for the World Day of Peace,* 2013, para 4) ■

Bishop Peter Cullinane is the Emeritus Bishop of Palmerston North.

Thomas

so intense was the yearning within you
that you masked it
apparently demanding evidence for a disbelieving mind
walking a tightrope of humanity
limited understanding
mixed with fear
you wanted hope that would make going on possible meaningful
he had been seen so many times as you all journeyed together
seeking him later
you wanted to believe
you wanted the risen Christ in you and you wanted to be in him
you yearned for his touch
for his gaze to pierce you as it had so often before
you wanted to put your hand in his side
you wanted him to touch your wounds
the holes where the nails had cut deep into your faith and joy
you wanted him to come
to return
as promised
to change your life once more
you wanted the fire of touching the living God
you wanted to be burned by the joy you knew would well up
at his look
his touch
you wanted it first-hand
the chance to speak your love
"My Lord and My God".

– Joanie Roberson

jesus' visit to martha and mary

Luke 10:38-42: 16th Sunday of Ordinary Time (21 July, 2013)

The Agony in the Garden. c1450. Fresco by Fra Angelico OP

In preparation for the gospel of 16th Sunday of Ordinary Time when the story of Jesus' visit to Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42) is proclaimed, I invite you to ponder the painting of Dominican Fra Angelico (1387-1455). In the painting which is arranged in two parts, my gaze moves between the outdoor and the indoor scenes, between the two groups of figures. The sleeping three are recognisable and that they are Peter, James and John is confirmed by the kneeling figure of Jesus at a distance and alone, awake and in prayer, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Fra Angelico wants his viewers to know who he is depicting, for all five disciples have their names inscribed in their halos. The figure reading a book intently has *Sancta Maria* on her halo. The other with her hands joined has *S Martha* on hers. In this unusual depiction, Mary and Martha are at Gethsemane.

My gaze moves from the hands of Jesus uplifted in prayer to the hands of Martha uplifted in prayer in imitation of Jesus. The composition is framed by their hands uplifted in prayer. What is going on here for Martha's hands are supposed to be busy and her demeanour one of complaint?

At prayer, Jesus is in that struggle that was his submission to death, a death which happened because of his faithfulness to his mission. This is portrayed by Luke when he went into the synagogue, opened the book of the prophet Isaiah and proclaimed: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free." (Lk 4:18-19).

There are two contexts at work in Luke's gospel. The world of Luke's narrative is Palestine in the life time of Jesus. The story tells of incidents back then. Yet Luke is writing in the Greco-Roman world, probably in the area of modern Turkey, about 50 years after Jesus' death. Second or third generation Christians struggle to be disciples involved in this mission of Jesus. That situation shapes the telling of the Jesus story.

welcomes jesus into her household

Martha received/welcomed Jesus into her household (10:38). The Greek word used for 'welcome' or 'receive' conveys the idea of hospitality, which was an important value in the ancient world. In earliest Christianity, some disciples travelled from place to place to spread the gospel. It was also a Christian ministry for local householders to give these brothers and sisters hospitality (9:5; 48; 10:8, 10; Acts 17:7). This word for 'welcome/receive' is used in Luke-Acts 21 times as compared with the rest of the NT (24 times). Large households of the well-to-do were where the early church met. In the private space of their households, women exercised authority and leadership (Acts 16:15).

In Luke, the first to welcome Jesus is Simeon (2:28). The Samaritans did not receive Jesus as he had set his face towards Jerusalem (9:53) or, in other words, towards his death. In contrast, Zacchaeus (19:6) and Martha receive Jesus into their households.

This same word is also used to tell of receiving, hearing or understanding the word. In the parable of the sower and seed, Jesus explains that the ones on rocky ground "hear the word, receive it with joy" but fall away because they have no roots (8:13). Jesus also says that those who do not receive the reign of God like a child will not enter it (18:17). Acts tells about how the Samaritans (8:14), the Gentiles (11:1) and the Jews of Beroea (17:11) "welcomed the word."

This story holds many tensions in its depiction of Martha and Mary. Such tension is much discussed as the titles of articles by two well-known biblical scholars indicate: expat-New Zealander, Warren Carter's "Getting Martha out of the Kitchen" and Dominican Barbara Reid's "Pitting Martha against Mary."

The conflict in this story arises around the word, 'service' (*diakonia*) used to describe Martha's actions. The question arises why this is so when in this gospel the verb 'to serve,' derived from this same word, is used by Jesus to describe his mission: "But I am among you as one who serves." (Lk 22:27).

martha in john's gospel

John's gospel adds to our understanding of Martha. When Jesus comes eventually after Lazarus has died, she went out meet him. They talk about the meaning of life and death. Jesus proclaims: "I am the resurrection and the life … Do you believe this?" (11:25-26). Martha replies: "Yes, Lord, I have believed that you are the Messiah (*christos*), the Son of God, the one coming into the world" (v 27). This confession of faith is remarkable in itself and especially in the context of the gospel — for four reasons.

First, when considered alongside other confessions of faith — Nathanael (1:49), the Samaritan villagers (4:42), Peter (6:69), the man born blind (9:38) and Thomas (20:28) — Martha's is the most complete and, second, reflects closely the purpose of the gospel (20:31). Third, Martha's expression of faith is a threefold confession of three titles for Jesus. Fourth, in her mouth is placed the confession of faith, which in Matthew's gospel is spoken by Peter in the context of his receiving the keys (16:16).

It seems to me that Fra Angelico in his depiction of Martha suggests that she is united with Jesus at the time when he is troubled and suffering in the face of his arrest and impending death, a consequence of his choice to be faithful to his mission. Maybe Martha is a disciple of mature faith who has integrated contemplation and action. In the midst of the tensions and sufferings of mission she remained faithful and steadfast. Martha is a prototype for her sisters and brothers who embrace and strive to live the demands of the gospel, not only in Luke's community, but throughout the ages to our own day. ■

Kathleen Rushton is a Sister of Mercy working in adult education in the Diocese of Christchurch.

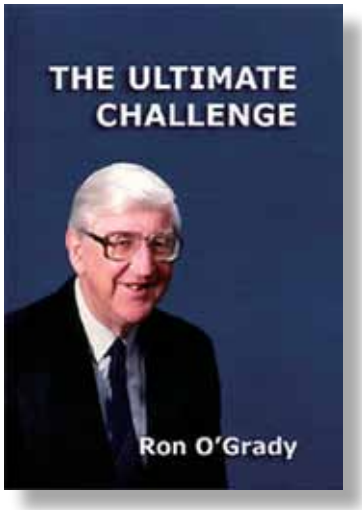
mini-autobiography

Book: The Ultimate Challenge

by Ron O'Grady

Published by Premier Print City, Auckland, 2012. Price: $20, incl p & p (ISBN: 978-0-473199203) Available from Ecpat Child Alert, POBox 41264, St Lukes, Auckland 1021; phone 09 376 5252; office@ecpat.org.nz

Reviewer: Elizabeth Mackie OP



This is a deceptively small book. Deceptive, because the 88 pages manage to express a whole world of rich experience, across the broadest possible sweep of global and local events and histories. Anyone who has reached or come close to the 80 years of life, which Reverend Ron O'Grady records for the reader in this mini-autobiography or memoir, will have moments of recognition and shared recollection. There is nothing small about the man or his life. In fact, he was remarkably present — and influential — in the fields of church, ecumenism, human rights, peace and justice, politics and policy formation, refugee resettlement, ethical tourism, publishing and writing in locations as far flung as Hong Kong, Singapore and other countries in Asia; as well as Geneva, Australia, and the United States and, of course, New Zealand. The ecumenical youth conference held in Hamilton in 1955 is still a very vivid memory in the lives of the 1,530 young people who attended. For many it was a profound experience of christian faith, beyond anything they had previously known. But perhaps few of them remember now that Ron O'Grady led the planning process for the conference as part of his work with the National Council of Churches. Ecumenical experience in Aotearoa was to launch him into the wider ecumenical movement as a staff member in the Christian Conference of Asia for 8 years, a period of mission in the United States and then a few years as director of the inter-church aid and refugee programme of the Australian Council of Churches. A long interest in ethical tourism led Ron to establish ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism).

But this book is much more than a chronicle of events. It is rich in relationships and encounters with world figures: Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II, President Marcos of the Philippines, Sir Garfield Todd, for example. It is also a book serenely lacking in boastfulness or bragging, presenting a church and civic leader who faces life with a simplicity and sense of availability to whatever comes, secure in the love he has with Alison his wife and in the family they created together. The final chapter is more reflective than narrative and offers a moving awareness of a life moving towards its close, yet still available for whatever "adventures" are yet to be. ■

celebrating the local

Book: Exploring Theology Together: A History of the Catholic Institute of Theology, Auckland

By Diane Strevens

Published by Accent Publications, Auckland. Price $25.00, plus postage, direct from the publisher.

Reviewer: Kevin Toomey OP

This short history of the Catholic Insitute of Theology (CIT) is timely. For those, like me, who had some connection with Newman Hall, it is indispensable reading. And because CIT is no longer a functioning teaching institute, it will certainly be among the best possible reminders of the dedication and skill of its teachers, and the gift they were to the greater New Zealand Church.

The Institute was an initiative of the Auckland Diocese, and was inspired to give the reforms of the second Vatican Council their proper and important place within the thinking of the Diocese. Its function was to encourage people to engage with the wider world and its ideas from the viewpoint of a renewed theology of Vatican II; and to give people the tools to use the insights they gained practically.

There was a great emphasis on teaching ecumenically. Moreover a

restoring the balance

Film: The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Director: Mira Nair

Reviewer: Paul Sorrell

'The clash of civilisations' has become a well-worn if contested tagline in the years following 9/11, usually invoked in terms of the alleged threat to Western values and traditions presented by a resurgent militant Islamism. This film, based on the best-selling novel by Mohsin Hamid, and directed by New York-based Indian filmmaker Mira Nair, offers a particular — and scrupulously balanced — take on this portentous catch-phrase.

The film opens in 2011 with the abduction of an American professor from Lahore University, where a brilliant young economist, Changez Khan (Riz Ahmed), is also working. Suspecting that Changez may be a member of an Islamist group behind the kipnapping, Bobby (Liev Schreiber), an American journalist, meets him in a downtown tea-shop for an interview. Their increasingly tense encounter, observed as events spiral out of control around them, forms the narrative baseline of the film.

The interwoven flashbacks that form the other half of the movie take us into Changez's former life as a high-flying corporate executive in New York, grasping at the American Dream and the wealth and power it promises. Here the ambitious young Pakistani mixes with men (and women) in shiny suits who travel the globe 'rescuing' failing companies by 'trimming off the fat' — coded language for the mass sackings of workers, usually those at the lower end of the scale.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist charts Changez's slow pilgrimage from corporate whiz kid to anti-American activist (not a religious fundamentalist, as the cheesy title suggests), a transformation precipitated by the explosive impact of 9/11 on New York City. Abused by customs officials and police because of his ethnicity and religion, and further humiliated by his wealthy artist girlfiend Erica (Kate Hudson), who turns the intimacies of their relationship into public fodder aimed at enhancing her 'bohemian creed', Changez begins to put his love affair with the West into reverse.

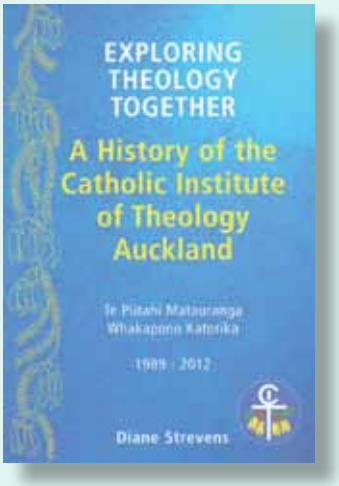
The final straw comes when he is asked to travel to Turkey and close down a venerable publishing house in Istanbul, which he learns has published his father's poetry in translation.

This thoughtful and timely film, which bravely refuses to oversimplify the issues, offers us an alternative way of seeing the contemporary world and the way in which it is being parcelled up and polarised, economically and ideologically. While there is much more to be said, it offers a valuable starting point for reflection. ■

special thrust was to make theological education accessible to as wide a range of people as possible. This was facilitated by moving courses and workshops from parish to parish, as well as by offering postgraduate diplomas.

Two things stand out to this reviewer. First, CIT involved a great team effort. The staff included laymen and women, religious women and men and clergy whose scholarship and dynamic teaching nourished those they taught. CIT had a reputation for being a friendly place, welcoming and hospitable. Secondly, this is a history of one local church's response to Vatican II. You will find out how it flourished and why it has ceased operation. Above all, CIT will be remembered for the way it responded to the contemporary theological mission of the Church, serving through teaching and stimulating new ideas.

This book comes "highly recommended". ■



Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

science versus religion?

"Theology will have to call on the findings of science to one degree or another as it pursues its primary concern for the human person, the reaches of freedom, the possibilities of Christian community, the nature of belief and the intelligibility of nature and history. *The vitality and significance of theology for humanity will in a profound way be reflected in its ability to incorporate these findings*." (John Paul II in a letter to George Coyne SJ, Director of the Vatican Observatory, June 1988.)

There are a number of areas where science has already assisted greatly in our understanding of the faith. For example, the literary and archaeological sciences have thrown new light on the composition of the various books of the bible.

Over the past three centuries scholars have painstakingly unearthed information concerning the formation of the first five books of the Old Testament. This is the Torah — the foundation document of Israel, the people chosen by God for his reconciling initiative. We now know that in its final form it is an edited version of four basic documents, each composed at a different stage of Israel's history; these four are themselves compiled from various other documents and oral traditions. The compilers, naturally, were affected by the existing theories regarding the origins of the natural world.

Another example is how investigations into genetics have revealed our common humanity underneath the myriad differences used to justify prejudicial treatment, often in the name of religion.

Furthermore, the implications of scientific evolutionary theory in general are consonant not only with the development of the physical world, but also with our growing understanding of Revelation itself. God's first self-revelation is through creation. Revelation is a process by which we come, both as individuals in our personal growth, and as 'the Body of Christ', to a fuller understanding of what our relationship with God means. This process results in key aspects of our understanding being reformulated from time to time.

"We must ask ourselves whether both science and religion will contribute to the integration of human culture or to its fragmentation. It is a stark choice and it confronts us all. *Do we dare to risk the honesty and the courage that this task demands?*" (JPII's letter)

original sin

"Does an evolutionary perspective bring any light to bear … *even upon the development of doctrine itself?*" (JPII's letter)

How does the Genesis account of 'Adam's sin' tally with the reality of evolution? In his 1958 study (*The Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin*) A M Dubarle asks, "…whether the account gives a general representation of a spiritual heritage dominating the life of mankind?" and points out that "a certain moderation is suggested by the doctrine of the Wisdom books, which regard as normal the initial imperfection of a creature destined to undergo a test."

The problem faced by the inspired editor of Genesis: an infinitely good God cannot create a sinful human race. The solution: re-interpret existing creation myths in the light of faith in one Supreme Being, with human unfaithfulness as the source of sin. Scholars tell us that, when considered in the context of contemporary Mesopotamian literature, the creation account emerges as a rich theological polemic that reflects the infinite goodness of God and the entry of evil into the world.

Subsequent theological efforts at explaining the ramifications of the Genesis account were limited by contemporary understandings of the universe, and coloured by the Israelite emphasis on sacrifice to expiate for sin. An impetus was given by St Augustine's theory that Romans 5:12 meant we share in Adam's sin. In the western church that interpretation won out over an opposing one, namely, that we followed Adam in sinning. Hence the theology of 'original sin', whereby a world originally in total harmony with itself and God was wrecked, and we are born in a state of alienation.

However, creation is 'a work in progress' slowly evolving towards fulfilment of the Divine plan. Evolution explains how natural disasters (and death) result from the laws inherent in this plan; likewise, human sinfulness is possible because of God-given freedom, without which we would not be human.

Jesuit theologian Jack Mahoney ('*Christianity in Evolution*', *TM* 3/12), points out that human alienation from God through sin is a fact, and Jesus died because of human sinfulness, but the Incarnation was not 'plan B'. Christ's life was the supreme example of God's love; the Resurrection was the triumphant victory over death — his and ours. Mahoney theorises that Christ's death and resurrection give new meaning to John10:10, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." He says, "Within an evolutionary context the words possess a degree of richness that could not have been hitherto appreciated in identifying the ultimate aim of Jesus' coming to earth … as being [an act of love] to defeat death and to lead humanity to an enhanced new stage of living within the divine Trinity."

We are an Easter people. ■

father edmund little

Peter Norris

This morning I was told that Father Edmund Little, from Takaka, had gone into a coma. I knew Edmund was very sick and I was told that he was expected to die. I prayed for him at the evening Mass, as did the celebrant but at the end of mass I read an email saying that Edmund died quietly mid-afternoon. I felt sad as I was friends with Edmund and clearly remembered him working here at Saint Margaret's College as Senior Tutor. Everyone respected him. He organised our tutorial programme and helped teach students French and German. After mass I told the news to the organist, an ex Saint Margaret's student, and I had trouble not sobbing.

Edmund was very formal and I wondered why his death touched me and others so much. When he first had cancer surgery his main worry seemed to be that his skilled surgeon was called 'Alf'. However, Edmund quickly showed his appreciation for his skill. Above all else Edmund had a great sense of humour.

I have mentioned his death to a few people since Mass and they were all sad. I wondered why he touched people so much. He loved a good wine and a good meal. He ate carefully and loved good company. But there was more to him than that.

What I liked about Edmund was his passion for justice. He cared acutely for the poor. I remember when he was studying for the priesthood he got very close to a student who had nothing. Edmund kept contact, did the wedding, and represented sanity and also love. When he was indignant it was where the church let people down. He was passionate in trying to get bishops to be responsible in not allowing sexual predators to minister. He was not as successful as we would have liked but he cared.

Why do I write a whole column about Edmund, or Dr Little as we knew him at the University? I decided to write about him before I heard the news of his death. There are a lot of good people who die and we get touched differently by each one. I find that the older I am the more I get touched and I think that when I stop getting affected it would be time for me to stop ministering. Death asks each of us to look at ourselves and to see how we evaluate our own life.

We are very busy and recently I had to evaluate my own life. I found that in order to stay healthy I had to resign from some committees. This was very hard for me but my life had become cluttered with minutiae. By nature minutiae clutters but it stopped me seeing the big picture. We are all like that but seeing someone die, or being exposed to someone die or hearing about it affects us. It is like a call to honesty.

As John Donne said, "Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee." ■

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a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

Being thankful. Is good for me. It makes me stop and notice. It invites me to be present to this place and these small details. It helps me document the many good things in my life, that are there every day. It reminds me to look and say thank you to the source of all good things. And being thankful is an injunction and an example peppered throughout the Holy book.

In the last few days, I've been reading *A Thousand Gifts*, by Ann Voskamp, a mother of six lively children in rural Canada. She takes on the challenge to enumerate a thousand things she is thankful for. And doesn't stop at one thousand either. She writes eloquently and reminds me that being grateful is an essential task for a pilgrim. While we've kept a written gratefulness diary for several years now, filled in every Sunday evening, being thankful daily is a discipline that I can drop quickly when things get stressful or busy (and that seems to be the status quo much of the time!) So here I am at it again, looking out the window at the rain falling softly and the mist clinging to the hills, thinking about what I'm thankful for this week.

– for the blur of white moth wings, all alive, all action and fury, and yet still showing delicate detail, outside the window, one sleepy late night working.

– for my four-year-old's sheer joy in the new plug-in kind of hot water bottle that she is using to keep herself toasty all day long though its not cold at all.

– for thick pine needles, on Sunday afternoon's walk, Boy and Little Sister turned the carpet of pine needles halfway down the hill, into an hour long riot of playing, burying, chasing, sprinkling and laughing.

– for plum and apricot season — tart, full of flavour, delivered to the door by small and cheerful boys from the villages behind us. The fruit is small, super cheap and perfect for making quantities of jam and preserves. I think 35 jars should keep us in jam for the next year!

– for the faltering but beautiful flute sonata that Big Girl is practising every morning.

– for the visiting facilitator at our Mental Health Promotion workshop last week — she inspired all of us with her tales of working compassionately among people with mental disorders and her NGO's effective advocacy for mental health services in Tamil Nadu.

– for the crazy mix of blue and green prints that Other Big Girl is sewing into a blouse.

– for the neighbours' going away for a month and leaving us their sewing machine to use in the meantime.

– for very few powercuts and functional internet much of the time recently.

– for Roald Dahl.

– for emails from friends who live far away.

– for the height and data pencil markings on the door frame, inching up and up and up — growing children are nearly always healthy children.

– for our new housemate and how well she joins in with balloon volleyball.

I'm on a roll now. There are so many things that I am so glad for. I could just keep going but for now I will go back to *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* and the Little Girl with the Hot Water Bottle who is waiting for me.

For life, and health, and daily food
We give thee thanks O Lord.
Amen. ■

Kaaren Mathias lives and works in community health and development in North India with her husband Jeph and four children.