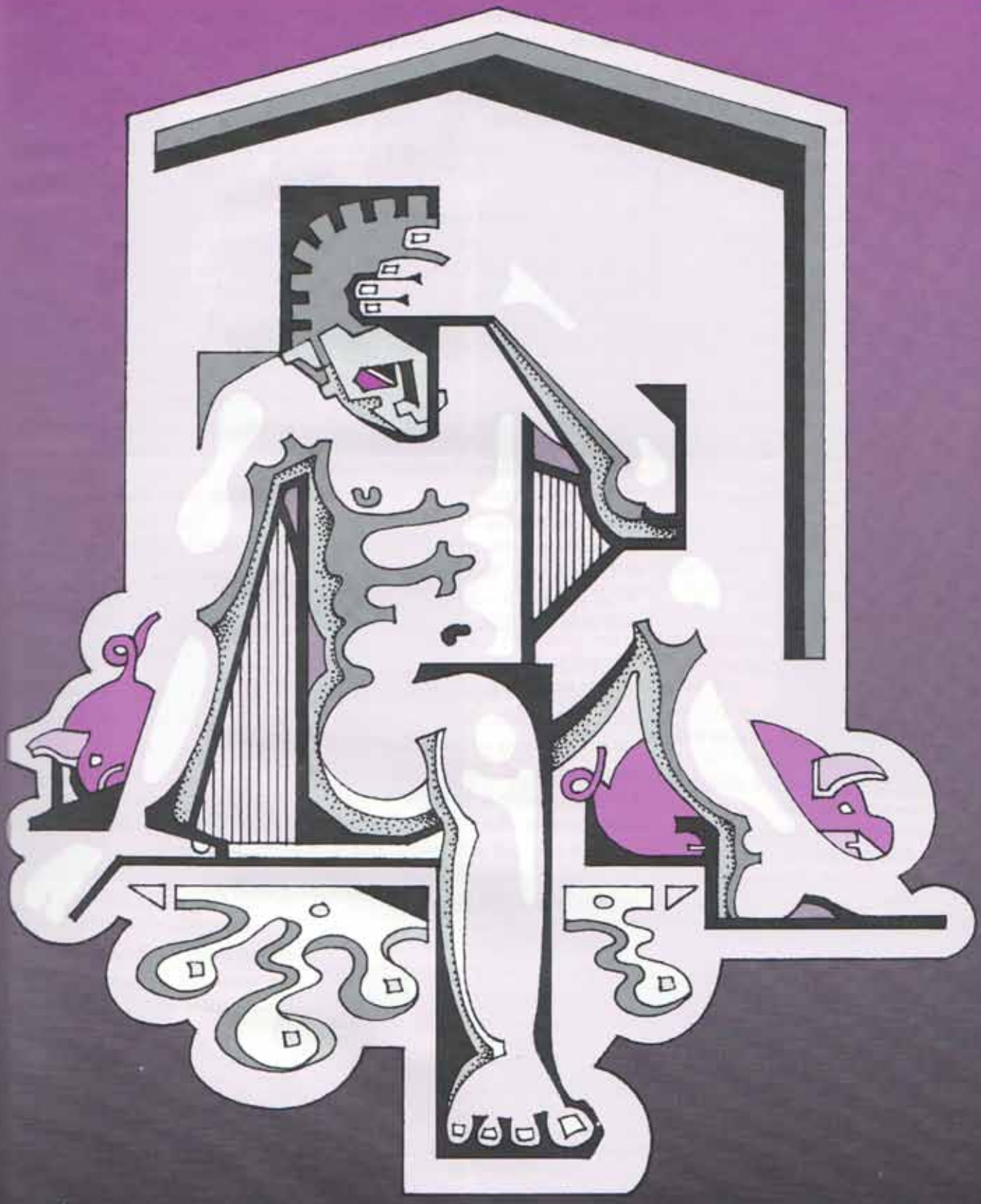
Tui Motu

InterIslands

FEBRUARY 2008 $5



I will return to my father. . .

I will return to my father. . .

contents

Lent has crept up on us suddenly this year with Easter as early as is possible (almost). So this year our Lenten issue is *February,* not *March.* Lenten themes appear throughout the magazine from the pens of some regulars: Paul Oestreicher, Mary Betz, Glynn Cardy and Jim Consedine.

Probably no Gospel story expresses the Lenten call so eloquently as the parable of the Prodigal Son. Our cover depicts the climax, when the errant son finally comes to his senses and succumbs to the healing grace of unconditional love. He cries out: *I will arise and go to my father...* (*Lk.15,18*).

For our leading article we offer one of the most profound explorations of the crisis of our age that we have come across. Archbishop Bruno Forte spoke to the annual gathering of the bishops of England and Wales last November. What we offer is a digest of his speech with extended quotations.

For Archbishop Forte, the journey of the Prodigal is a figure of the modern quest for freedom and 'emancipation', fostering a spirit of individualism so characteristic of Western civilisation today. Inevitably it leads to dust and ashes, because when we turn our backs on God and put self-gratification in the place of service, we end up, like the Prodigal, in the pigpen.

The bishop, however, sees many signs of hope, specifically in contemporary movements of compassion for the weak and vulnerable, especially for those fleeing from situations of deprivation and poverty. He observes that when we confront the prevailing tide of atheism in our world, we should first look at the atheism within our own hearts. This is a profound reflection for the start of Lent, and that is why we have given it pride of place.

Those who study the Archbishop's text as Lenten sustenance might well go back to the article on Richard Rohr's visit to NZ, in the February 2007 issue – also a leading article. Rohr is looking at the human journey in a similar way to Forte, except that he is emphasising the individual search rather than a great historical and sociological movement.

A striking point that the Archbishop makes is that the true seeker may find more common ground with atheists than with believers who are complacentin their faith. The atheist too is a seeker for truth – not yet arrived, yet on a similar quest.

How to meet those who reject religious belief is the theme of another powerful piece in this issue, from the pen of Neil Darragh (*pp 28-9*). He examines the writings of Richard Dawkins, an English biologist who sees organised religion as pernicious and damaging. Darragh notes Dawkins' philosophical shortcomings – but also what we might learn from him. Clearly, believers must see scientists as their companions in the quest for ultimate truth, not as incompatible rivals.

M.H.

ISSN 1174-8931

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

Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd, P O Box 6404, Dunedin North, 9030
Phone: 03 477 1449: Fax: 03 477 8149: email: tuimotu@earthlight.co.nz: website: www.tuimotu.org
Editor: Michael Hill IC; *Assistant Editor:* Frances Skelton; *Illustrator:* Don Moorhead
Directors: Rita Cahill RSJ, Philip Casey, Tom Cloher, Robin Kearns, Chris Loughnan OP,
Elizabeth Mackie OP, Katie O'Connor (Chair), Kathleen Rushton RSM

Celebrating ten years of *Tui Motu*

Ten years ago, in September 1997, the first issue of Tui Motu *was circulated throughout New Zealand. Since that time the publication has grown steadily here and overseas. So, St Andrew's Day 2007 was celebrated in Dunedin true southern style*

Cutting the haggis: *TM reviewer* Kathleen Doherty, flanked by Fr Damian Wynn-Williams and Frances Skelton

(l to r): Mike Noonan (*writer*), Susanne Hannagan and Shirley Curran (*volunteer helpers*); Robin Kearns (*TM Board*); Aidan Baughan (*printer*)

Tui Motu editors receiving bouquets: Michael Hill and Frances Skelton

Tui Motu Board and Foundation both met in Dunedin the last weekend of November 2007, so the opportunity was taken to celebrate *Tui Motu*'s 10th birthday. All facets of the enterprise from writers to sellers to promoters to readers were represented. Since it was St Andrew's Day, the haggis was piped in. The party wound up with the Dunedin Barber's Shop Quartette.

TM Foundation chair John Gallaher in earnest discussion with *Board chair*, Katie O'Connor

TM readers and supporters putting the world right: Trish Lainchbury and Graeme Donaldson

Serenading the desserts: the Dunedin Barber Shop Quartette, aided by Brian Rea (*TM promoter*)

Photography: *Jim Neilan*

Is Earth having an identity crisis?

a response

Zella Horrell

One of the ideas in Fr Neil Vaney's paper on "Theology and the Environment" (*TM December '07*) helped give form to a question: *Is earth undergoing an identity crisis?* Obviously I mean the people of the earth; 'Earth' seems to understand and accept her purpose in the cosmos, but do we, as societies and as individuals, understand and accept ours?

In philosophy, identity is distinguishing sameness from change or unity from diversity. Psychologist Erik Erikson coined the term ***identity crisis***, and believes that an identity crisis is the most important conflict human beings encounter. It involves a struggle with time, success, sexuality, confidence, role, ideologies and leadership. If this is an important crisis for an individual, imagine the significance it can take on if is applied across an entire global society.

Fr Vaney's idea that modern people have become increasingly rootless and have ceased to be connected made me wonder that perhaps we no longer know who we are. Being rootless causes deep unhappiness – being rootless also hinders the development of an identity.

To know who we are, we must know what we stand for and where we come from. Our world is changing at a pace so rapid that our value systems haven't been able to fully adapt. Incessant change and the trend to measure success solely against an economic backdrop, have caused people to abandon traditionally held values in their desire to keep up.

Children who are unable to establish an identity for themselves, or who are having an identity foisted upon them, often become the disconnected ones of our schools and neighbourhoods. They are the ones who will dare to defy authority and more willingly inflict damage onto property and people.

The students who cause the most work for a school, who have the largest files and require the additional support of outside agencies, are the students who do not have a strong sense of themselves. They are described as having poor self-esteem. They appear lost. They continually bang against the walls of conformity as if they fear that fitting in will somehow cause them to disappear. They have not accepted that it is through belonging we take our first step toward establishing an identity.

Turangawaewae – "the place where I stand. I belong here" – has as much a spiritual and emotional definition as a physical one. As individuals we are defined by our family, our heritage, our morality. We can define ourselves as much by what we are not as by what we are. As a child within a family, we first learn that we have a place and from that place we are accepted and supported.

As more and more pressure gets placed upon the family institution, more and more children experience their first attack on the development of an identity. Yes, they are loved – but where do they belong? Children whose parents share custody after a divorce rarely say 'home'. They say they are going to 'Dad's' or that they left their togs at 'Mum's'; but the word home no longer has a viable place in their existence, and without that word, a child has to work a lot harder to find a place where he or she can say, "I belong here."

A generation ago characters, whether fictional, historical, or real, could manifest attributes that young people wanted to identify with. Heroism, gallantry, grace, strength, nobility, honour were played out in literature, movies, the sporting arena and the Bible. Parents and wisdom were respected and even sought after. Too many children are now growing up in front of television sets where values are used as play things to toss around, fly in the air, squash and turn inside out. This is entertainment.

Where do the young find their identities? How are they to find their identities? Gang colours, patches, tattoos, piercings are used to create an immediate, if false, sense of identity. And on the other side of the economic scale, Generation Y identifies with material objects: Oakley sunglasses, Lee Jeans, Rip Curl T-shirts, Roxy school bags.

Identity is linked to tradition, but traditions are under a steady stream of attack. Schools teach with new modern methods. New mothers are not comforted with a stay in the maternity home as they grapple with the complexities of their role. These same new mothers are bustled back into the workforce so that productivity is not decreased and their chances for advancement remain viable. Employees are lured into believing that a series of job changes throughout their lifetime will provide stimulation; there's no retirement package in such a scenario, and no chance of developing an identity around your chosen profession.

The political struggle between the ideological Right defending traditional values and the ideological Left

Monologue sermons – 1

The observation that struck me most about Barbara Grant's very perceptive response to articles from last August's edition (in *December TM p 5*) was her noting that sermons pre-Vatican II were delivered facing the people and in English, and so it remains. Granted that we have lay readers of the epistles and prayers of the faithful but the presidential character of the sermon still prevails, however much some celebrants seek to share their thoughts rather than talk at the congregation.

The culture has really not changed. The sermon or homily is delivered to a silent assembly, many of whom are at least as well educated as the priest while some are theologians themselves. Not that capacity for comment is the prerogative of graduates; amongst the congregation are many mature and reflective people who could add value to the theme of the day by drawing upon their own experience, but no opportunity is given for response or comment.

You can't help wondering how this formal, virtually inflexible setting would compare with the experience of the early church assemblies. My assumption would be that after a reading from a letter from St Paul there would have been an animated discussion, co-ordinated but free flowing, dynamic not static.

Ask anybody in your parish what part of the Mass they find most inspiring. If no one – or very few – mention the sermon/homily, then don't necessarily blame the celebrant. It's more likely an apparently inflexible tradition that is stifling the potential of this part of the Mass.

If I am wrong about this, please write and let readers know.

Jack Fitzgerald, West Auckland

letters to the editor ✍

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words.

The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not altering meaning. Response articles (up to a page) are also welcome, but need to be by negotiation

Monologue sermons – 2

I am grateful for Barbara Grant's article encouraging dialogue at homily time. I hear many, many homilies and lectures which are immediately forgotten. We learnt as student teachers that most influential ideas came from our individual hearts, boosted and shaped by group sharing.

Engaged dialogue, with space for disagreement, respects our God-given experience and search for meaning. We cease to be mindless sheep when we express our understandings and listen creatively.

M Prior, Whanganui

A family wage

I recently read a booklet *This is human work* (a simplification of Pope John Paul's letter *Laborem Exercens*). It has this quote: "A just wage for an adult responsible for a family is one that allows the establishment of a family, its proper maintenance and provision for the security of its future".

This can take the form of a family wage, or other measures such as family allowances or grants to mothers who devote themselves exclusively to their families.

Experience confirms the need to re-establish the role of mother in society, her toil and her children's need for care, love and affection. Having to abandon these tasks in order to take up work is wrong for society and it hinders the main goals of a mother's mission.

Such common-sense was, I believe, the basically Christian motivation behind both Labour and National governments until the time of Rogernomics. It is still true that for a large percentage of our population a single just wage for each household is unattainable.

I would like to hear from any of the political parties if the concept of the common good and a ***just wage*** remains part of their philosophy and, if so, what policies do they propose in furtherance of these principles.

Dan Maguire, Dunedin

fighting for tolerance and acceptance is little more than our governing instincts trying to distinguish sameness from change – unity from diversity. Global transportation and international trade cause robust intermingling of cultures. Medical and scientific research push further and further into the sacred aspects of life, forcing us to find answers to questions that were inconceivable just one generation back.

What's driving it all? Faust's lust for happiness? Man's pursuit of knowledge? Our will to survive? Money?

The earth is constantly changing. A landslide will wipe away decades of growth in an instant, leaving the terrain looking broken and hostile. There is a brief pause when such an event occurs, but it doesn't take long for the life force to ignite and regeneration to begin. The process is slow. Lichen and moss attach themselves to the rock, adding colour and a base for the nutrients to gather; they are barely noticed, but without them the moss could not grow and without the moss, the ferns could not grow.

If earth is suffering an identity crisis, and our way of life is being swept away as if by a landslide, we can be the regenerative force. Humanity has as much an ability to be divine as to be destructive. Plants cannot grow in space because there is no sense of direction for them to send their roots. We must provide direction whenever and wherever we can. In every small choice that we make, we are laying down a foundation, and with that foundation we welcome a mighty forest to grow. ■

We have received another response article – on **Dairy Farming** *– which is held over to a later issue*

I will return to my father...

Freedom and belief

The real divide today, says Archbishop Bruno Forte, is not between those who believe in God and those who don't.

It is between those who seek for a purpose in life and those who have given up

Last October, the bishops of England and Wales invited, as keynote speaker for their annual conference, an Italian, Archbishop Bruno Forte. His topic was *freedom, contemporary atheism – and how these challenge our faith and life today*.

At the very beginning of the Gospel we read the Greek word '*metanoéite*', which means *change your heart and life* (*Mk 1:15*). We fear to heed this message because it disturbs our complacency. "Very often," says Forte, "church mission fails because we answer questions no one is asking, or we pose questions which interest no one. The challenge is to discern the true questions, the questions that God writes on the tablet of our heart and of our times."

What is important for Christians therefore is not so much to provide answers as work out what are those crucial questions. Origen, an early church writer, said: "Every true question is like the lance which pierces the side of Christ causing blood and water to flow forth".

As a way of exploring this, the bishop presented his theme as "three arches of a bridge joining thought to life":

- the search for the Father-Mother, infinitely loving;
- religion and freedom in today's world;
- what is our agenda as church?

Searching for the father-mother

In a famous phrase from his *Confessions* St Augustine writes: "You have made us for yourself, O God, and our heart is restless until it rests in you". Every thinking person sooner or later is confronted with the fact of his or her own mortality. We are born to die. To struggle with the inevitability of our dying means facing questions which spring up in the heart like piercing wounds: *what is my destiny? What is the meaning of life? Where am I going with all my worries, consolations and joys?*

Yet we, pilgrims on the way to death, are in fact called to life. "Within us there is an indestructible longing for the face of Someone who will take away our suffering and tears, who will redeem the infinite pain of death... When we are most alone and sad we have a deep longing for someone Other who will welcome us and make us feel loved. This longing is the image of 'Father' – or, if you like, 'Mother' – because 'father' and 'mother' are in this sense only two metaphors to express the same need, to have someone to trust without reserve, an anchor, a haven in which to rest our insecurity and pain."

The bishop uses 'father' and 'mother' freely to express the divine Other. He says: "*Father* is at the same time *Mother* – the womb, the homeland, the origin in which we place all that we are."

Yet this figure at the heart of all our longings – infinitely loving, infinitely caring – is also the one whom we humans instinctively reject.

Rejection of father-mother stems from a basic need to find independence, to escape from being possessed, enslaved or dominated. "The 'murder' of the father is a sort of ritual murder, an act to affirm our independence, our autonomy." Because we turn our backs on the loving father-mother we spend much of our lives striving to be free like the prodigal son in the Gospel.

For Bishop Forte this theme of rejection provides a key for understanding the history of the 20th Century. Since the time of the Enlightenment humans have sought *emancipation.* It is the dream of modernity. Karl Marx wrote: "Emancipation means leading everything in this world back to man, to man alone" (*The Jewish Question).* But making humanity the centre of all things means rejecting God.

This dream of universal freedom was shipwrecked in events of unprecedented violence. The terrible carnage of two world wars, the Jewish Holocaust, the Gulag, are fruits of the fatherless society which has sought an illusory freedom, but instead found totalitarianism, despotism and senseless slaughter.

As the century drew to a close, modern men and women found themselves increasingly victims of solitude and

despair. "Who will set us free from the prison of our solitude? Thus there arises a nostalgia for a hidden face, the need for a common homeland to give horizons of meaning without violence. Life appears either as a pilgrimage towards a promised homeland or as a mere waiting for death. There is no other choice."

We come back again to the predicament of the prodigal son. He has gorged himself on the delights of a fatherless-motherless freedom and ended up in the pigpen. The crucial decision is for him to say: *I will arise and return to my father!* (*Lk.15,19*).

Forte insists that as believers we must identify fully with the human predicament of our age. We must be the first to 'arise and return to the Father'. In the words of Vatican II, we belong to a pilgrim church. We are part of the journey of discovery.

I will arise
and return to my father
and say to him...

The bishop concludes this section: "The most important thing for those who believe in God is not to harvest but to sow – a sowing which will bear fruit in time when and how God wills. We must say 'no' to frustration and 'yes' to a passion for the truth.

"This leads us to search for the hidden face, the face of the father-mother in love. The core of the church's mission today is to proclaim this face to all those who are in search of it."

Religion and Freedom

We can identify two contrasting streams of thought in recent centuries where human beings have explored the relationship between religion and freedom:

- the way of emancipation, which involves turning one's back on the father-mother figure;
- the conviction that without accepting a transcendent truth there can be no true freedom.

A. *Emancipation* The European 'Enlightenment' of the 18th Century inspired European society towards processes of emancipation which have gone on ever since. Abolition of slavery; declarations of human rights; religious toleration; parliamentary democracy; anti-colonialism and feminism are all instances. Reason rather than tradition becomes the final court of appeal.

The most remarkable instance of this great movement was the French Revolution. The impetus towards emancipation continues today in the liberation of the working classes and of the oppressed races and peoples of the 'Third World'.

One common feature has been the ending of aristocratic and hierarchical societies. "A society without fathers is constructed," says Forte, "where there are no vertical relationships, no 'dependence' – only horizontal ones, of equality and reciprocity...".

However, "the abolition of a 'father -lord' figure led to a complete rejection of God. Just as on earth there must be no fatherhood creating dependence, so in heaven there must be no Father of all."

The bishop concedes that this historical movement is a mighty project, and that we are all in some measure in debt to it. Who would want to live in a society that had not undergone this process of emancipation?

Yet even apart from the loss of religion, these movements have often tended to become self-defeating. "Inexorably, this all-encompassing dream becomes totalitarian. All modern ideologies, of right or left, eventually issue in totalitarian and violent expression. The *leader*, the *party*, the *cause* become the new masters."

Freedom in a world without God has failed to make humankind more free, more equal, more fraternal.

B. *Rebirth of Transcendence.*
So what has gone wrong? Martin Heidegger, the philosopher, talks about the 'night of the world'. This passion for freedom eventually leads people to lapse into indifference. Humans no longer aspire to commit themselves to a higher cause. We cease searching for that 'father-mother' figure towards whom we hold out our arms.

Forte says that by following this path society disintegrates into a "crowd of solitudes, in which people seek their own self-interest, in an endless pursuit of possessions and gratification. This explains the triumph of the most shameless consumerism, of the rush towards hedonism and whatever may be enjoyed immediately. Our societies degenerate into archipelagos, collections of separate islands."

our earth needs
to be a shared home,
which provides horizons
of meaning without
violence

Yet at the same time there are clear signs of a reaction against this tide of nihilism. "There is born within us a longing for the Totally Other... We need our earth to be a shared home, which provides horizons of meaning without violence. Far from being mere nostalgia, there is a *rediscovery of the other* in the recognition that my neighbour, by the mere fact of existing, can give me a reason to live, because he or she challenges me to go out of myself, committing myself in love to others."

The Archbishop sees great hope in contemporary movements of compassion for the weak and vulnerable, especially for people fleeing from situations of deprivation and poverty. He quotes the Second Vatican Council: "'...the future of humanity is ▷▷

▷▷ in the hands of those who are capable of providing the generations to come with reasons for life and hope'" (*Gaudium et Spes* 31).

What is our agenda as church today?

When we look out on a world of so much hedonism, violence and unbelief, are we to retire into an ivory tower and turn our backs? Not a bit of it, says Forte. "Christians, engaged in living and working in this changing world, are required more than ever today to give an account of the hope that is in them, with gentleness and respect for all."

A. *True belief.* Nevertheless there is an interior journey each of us must all undergo – and it may come as a surprise and shock to us. We discover that the atheist – the only atheist – that can be taken seriously, may live *within our own hearts*. "Only someone who believes in God, and has experienced God as the Father-Mother welcoming in love, can also 'know' what it would mean to deny Him, and what infinite suffering His absence would be. The non-believer is not outside believers, but within.

"To believe is to be taken prisoner by the Totally Other. Belief does not claim to have an explanation for everything, but lives rather as if by night... longing for the dawn. Belief is not yet totally lit up by the day, which belongs to another time and to another homeland, but it still receives enough light to bear the burden of keeping the faith. True belief is humble: it hangs on the Cross in the world's darkness...

"One who does not believe and who lives this condition in a responsible way is aware of the acute pain of absence, feeling himself/herself orphaned, deeply abandoned. The thinking non-believer, like the conscientious believer, wrestles with God. *My religion is to wrestle with God*: says Miguel de Unamuno. The whole of religion lies in this wrestling with God.

"Believers and non-believers alike ask the deepest questions about their vulnerability to pain and death, not as people who have already arrived but as searchers for the distant homeland.

Human beings who stop, who feel they have mastered the truth, for whom the truth is no longer Someone who possesses you more and more but rather something to be possessed – such persons have not only rejected God, but also their own dignity as human beings."

The true believer, therefore, is a pilgrim – someone on a journey in search of the Father-Mother welcoming in love. The temptation is to stop and imagine we have arrived. What Jesus showed us was that this 'exodus' consists in helping him carry his cross. To follow Jesus along the path of self-denial is the only path to real freedom.

B. *Faith as struggle.* True faith, therefore, is the meeting that happens when we go out and God comes in: it lies between *exodus* and *advent*. "Faith is what happened to Jacob at the ford of Jabbok (*Gen 32, 23-33.*): God is the one who attacks under cover of dark, who comes upon you and wrestles with you. If you do not know God in this way, if for you God is not a consuming fire, then your God has stopped being the living God and is dead...

"That is why faith is always tempted by doubt. Only those who do not know are shocked by the Baptist's words when at the sunset of his life and restless with doubt, he sent to ask Jesus: *Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?* (Mt 11,3). This is the trial of faith: to struggle with God, knowing that He is the Other, who escapes from our certainties, and does not allow Himself to be tamed by our presumption..."

C. "Finally, faith is *submission.* In the combat there comes the moment when you understand that it is the loser who really wins. Then faith becomes self-abandonment and forgetfulness of self and the joy of entrusting yourself into the arms of the Beloved.

"*O Lord, you have seduced me, and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me; you were the stronger!... I would say to myself, 'I will not think about him, I will not speak in his name any more', but then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart... the effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not do it"* (*Jer 20, 7-9*). Jeremiah wrestled mightily with God but there came a moment when he knew he had to give in.

D. *Some consequences.* Believers are those who try every day to *begin to believe*. Faith is to be lived as a continuous conversion to God. Non-believers are perhaps people who *try anew everyday to believe*, but fail; "who struggle with an upright conscience, who have sought but not found, and who feel all the pain of God's absence: will they not be true companions of those who believe? Dialogue between believers and non-believers can thus be understood as an exercise of reciprocal respect and a witness to religious freedom."

The Bishop insists "we say 'no' to a lazy, static, habit-worn faith made of comfortable intolerance, which defends itself by condemning others because it does not know how to live the suffering of love... There is also a 'no' to every superficial atheism, to every ideological denial of God and of the holy mystery; as well as a 'yes' to the unceasing search for the hidden Face... the Love which opens itself to embrace our searching hearts.

"Perhaps the real difference is not between believers and non-believers, but between those who think and those who do not; between men and women who have the courage to go on trying to believe, hope and love and those others who have given up the struggle."

Bishop Forte concludes: "Our ability, as persons, as society and as church to serve the quality of life and the dignity of every human being, depends on our answers to these questions." ■

Archbishop Forte, bishop of Chieti-Vasto, is regarded as the leading theologian in Italy

It is what it is

it is nonsense, says reason
it is what it is, says love

it is unhappiness, says reflection
it is nothing but pain, says fear

it is hopeless, says insight
it is what it is, says love

it is ridiculous, says pride
it is frivolous, says caution

it is impossible, says experience
it is what it is, says love

Erich Fried

With the words "…the greatest of these is love" St Paul ends a poetic masterpiece in his Letter to the church in Corinth. He gets as close as words can to express the inexpressible, to put flesh on the mystery of love.

Erich Fried was a secular socialist Jew who, at the age of 16 had fled to London from Vienna. He had seen the Nazis kill his father but managed to rescue his mother. London became his home. German remained his language. By the 1960s he had become the cult poet of a young generation that had rejected the Germany of their fathers.

Erich had worked for the BBC's German Service and also translated the plays of Shakespeare into contemporary German, but towards the end of his life, volume after volume of poems poured from his angry but deeply caring pen. A slim volume that began with It is what it is outsold any previous collection of German poetry. It works well in translation, as do the words of St Paul.

In this terse poem Fried expresses what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "the cost of discipleship". It is beyond reason, it is often painful, it is not a path to superficial happiness. Human insight will often suggest that the way of love is a hopeless undertaking, and our pride will says to us "forget it, you'll just look foolish". The cautious who are scared of the consequences will often think twice before risking love, and the wordly wise will give up on it, will retreat into a safer zone. Security in love? Impossible, they'll say.

Launch into the deep, said Jesus. That's trusting love. Erich Fried's life, as I knew him, was an expression of that. He never cared what the world thought. He showed respect even for those who hated him.

When a German TV programme asked him to debate with a young neo-Fascist leader he readily accepted, but the management had second thoughts. This surely was too much to expect of him. They called the young man off, leaving Fried to put his views unopposed. Fried was not pleased. When the programme was over he took a taxi to the young home of the young man who hated Jews. He'd never met a real Jew. They talked until breakfast.

Loving enemies was, for Fried, much more than a philosophic idea. He lived it. No, he made no claim to be religious. He was bitterly angry at every form of injustice. His poems hit out hard. But he refused to be poisoned by hate.

Define love? He couldn't, but he knew what it cost. It was priceless.

Paul Oestreicher

Helping each other

In a world which becoming increasingly violent and individualistic, the basic ethic of simply helping one's neighbour becomes more and more compelling

Gerry McCarthy

When the novelist Kurt Vonnegut died aged 84 last April, I mourned his passing. He was a fabulous writer with a tremendous wit.

In Vonnegut's last book entitled *A Man Without a Country* (published in 2005), he wrote some compelling, hilarious, and wise pieces. One of my favourite parts of the book is when he explained that: "When you get to my age, if you get to my age, and if you have reproduced you will find yourself asking your children, who are themselves middle-aged, *What is life all about?*"

Vonnegut said he put this question about life to his son Dr. Vonnegut, who is a paediatrician. His son responded: "Father, we are here to help each other get through this thing, whatever it is."

Recently I've been thinking a lot about Dr. Vonnegut's reply. Especially when I observe the society we live in today. Among other things, it's a society that relentlessly fosters a selfishness that continually loosens the bonds of solidarity we have with each other. In different ways, our selfish society promotes a culture of suspicion towards our neighbour too. That suspicion is heightened by a manic competitiveness that frequently ruins relationships and further distances us from each other.

But we don't hear much discussion about this selfish society – especially from political leaders. Writer Judith Werner recently raised this point in *The New York Times*. She wrote: "There has been a lot of interesting discussion of Mormonism and Evangelical Protestantism, about Mitt Romney and Mike Huckabee outdoing themselves to appeal to Christian conservatives, and about John McCain's belief in a 'Christian nation.'"

But she notes that one point of view is taboo: "I'm thinking of the now entirely muted issue of whether the basic ethical foundations of Romney, Huckabee and others' political views truly are 'Christian' – in the good-neighbourly sense of the word".

This is an important point, because as Werner asks: "Where is the public soul-searching about the absence of care, compassion, acceptance, and inclusion – the things many consider to be the essence of Christianity – in the words of our purported Christian leaders".

Given the fallout from our selfish society, what can be done? Is this selfishness a permanent feature of post-modernity? In his new book *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor writes about the need for re-enchanting society with the mysteries of spirit and sensuality. Taylor's argument is that our disenchanted society is driven by rules rather than thoughts. I couldn't agree more.

But this re-enchantment must include the "help each other" approach Dr. Vonnegut spoke about too. That approach is furthered when people refuse to project human traits onto people simply because of the clothes they wear, the political party they support or the neighbourhood they live in. Allowing the mystery of spirit to work in our lives means seeing the human being first, instead of the stereotypes and 'racial profiling'.

Oddly enough there's a lesson here for social justice activists. While challenging structures of injustice that exploit the poor is obviously critical work, it's important not to automatically demonise those in power. They're people too. And part of transforming society comes when we recognise that governments sometimes do the right thing.

In *A Man Without a Country*, Kurt Vonnegut wrote about a letter he received from a 43-year-old woman who was finally going to have a child, but was wary of bringing a new life into such a frightening world. She wanted to know what Vonnegut thought.

He replied: "What made being alive almost worthwhile for me, besides music, was all the saints I met, who could be anywhere. By saints I meant people who behaved decently in a strikingly indecent society," he said.

I was never drawn to the word 'decent'. Other words seem to do the job better. But lately the word has greater meaning for me – especially when we consider the many gut-wrenching newspapers stories about how people are routinely robbed, cheated and swindled in sordid ways. We definitely need a major dose of decency in our society today.

But, yes, Mr. Vonnegut you're right. Saints can be anywhere acting decently and "helping us get through this thing." I believe this can be our path to salvation. It's risky, because our hearts can be broken. But it's in service to others that we experience life abundantly. ■

Gerry McCarthy is Editor of The Social Edge. *Reproduced by kind favour. The editorial is set in the context of the American Primaries.*

Lenten resolutions

Lent comes upon us suddenly, with the haunting echoes of John the Baptist calling for repentance. I watch TV news of global warming, famine, genocide and war with horror. Yet I am also one of the crowd who maintains a typically middle-class lifestyle, while struggling to limit my car and air travel, consumer goods input and garbage output.

For many of us, childhood memories of Lent include giving up lollies. But as our faith matures, it is deeper reflection and active involvement that God's reign leads us toward. Using the Lenten Sunday gospel readings may help us reflect on the following:

• *how similar our temptations are to those of Jesus.* Do we spend our time, money and energy to advance ourselves or to care for those in great need?

• *what the Transfiguration has to teach us.* Can we identify moments of special grace and sustenance for the uncertainties and inevitable sufferings of our journeys?

• *how to encounter Jesus with the woman at the well.* What do we really thirst for in life, and are we drinking from wells that are dry or full of living water?

• *how to gain (in)sight like the man born blind.* What is in the world and in our lives that blinds us or gives sight to the life God offers us?

• *what the Lazarus story says about different kinds of death.* How can we be part of moving ourselves and our world from despair, disillusionment and death to hope and life?

• *looking closer at Jesus' passion.* Jesus could have safely stayed a carpenter in Galilee, but was willing to undertake an arduous and power-challenging ministry to bring about God's reign. If we are his followers, how much security and comfort are we called to leave behind to bring God's compassion to our world?

To *change* society's values, judgments, interests, inspirations and models: that is what Jesus and Catholic social teaching call us to do. The well-being of people must be put before economics. The health of our society depends on how we care for our children, sick people and the poorest members of our society.

The first steps are always individual and internal. That is why Lent isn't just about giving up lollies.

Mary Betz

Attention

Once I climbed beside
the country's highest waterfall
without a rope or any aid
but foolhardiness

and knew I was alive
with each hold
on rock or leatherwood.
because life wagered

turns attention on, its
cold stream of water
sluicing through the body
which forty years

removed, sits in a room
in silent meditation and
finds it more difficult
to keep the mind still

though the soul hangs
from two trembling hands
and clings, and clings
or floats like mist

over water.

Peter Rawnsley

Paul VI

The Pope of the revolution

the 'Hamlet Pope'

*Years ending in 8 are fateful ones for Popes. In **1958** Pius XII died. John XXIII was elected. A Council was called which changed the church.*

*By **1968** the Council had come and gone. But it was the year of Vietnam, of the student unrest – and the Pope 'banned the Pill'*

*In **1978** Paul VI died; the year of the three Popes – and the election of John Paul II.*

*So what can we expect in **2008**?*

Paul VI has gone down in history as 'the Pope who banned the Pill'.

Humanae Vitae *is the most controversial Papal document of recent times. But it would be a gross injustice to judge him on one Encyclical.*

It was Paul who steered the Vatican Council to its successful conclusion. He is the architect of the Catholic Church of today.

This article tries to give a balanced account of what Paul VI achieved.

The Vatican Council

We should look first at Pope Paul's achievements. His predecessor, John XXIIII, had called the Second Vatican Council. But he died in 1963 at the close of the first session. So it fell to Paul to guide the Council to its successful conclusion two years later – and then to implement its revolutionary decisions. What were these? Here are some of them:

• First, the reform of the church's *liturgy*. Paul fully endorsed the decisions of the Council to use the vernacular for celebrating Mass and the sacraments. The liturgy of the Word and the importance of the homily at Mass were restored. The church's worship became much more an act of the assembled community rather than the actions of a celebrant with the faithful as prayerful attendants. Concelebration was introduced, communion was received in the hand and under both kinds, and many other ancient practices of the church were restored.

• *Collegiality* was established as a balance to papal primacy, as defined in 1870 at Vatican I. Pope Paul introduced regular Synods of bishops and also gave status to national hierarchies. It was hoped that by these means the rigid centralisation and iron control of Rome would be relaxed.

Yet Paul often spoke out strongly in defence of the ancient 'Petrine' office. He saw himself as the chosen Father of the church flock and he was loath to let that burden go. In this we may see the long shadow of Pius XII, who in his exercise of papal authority wanted "executors, not collaborators" and who for much of his pontificate was his own Secretary of State.

• *Ecumenism.* Paul held out a hand of friendship to the other Christian churches in a way Rome had never previously shown – first to the Orthodox, then to the Lutherans and Anglicans, to whom he showed special warmth. He initiated new bodies for

theological investigation and was happy to join in prayerful exchange with the leaders of other churches. In this he was clearly fulfilling the spirit of the Vatican Council. In one public statement he called the Anglican church "our well-beloved Sister". This is not language we hear from Rome today.

Papal journeys

It was Paul who started the tradition of papal journeys outside Italy. The most significant of these were three during the Council itself: to the Holy land and Jerusalem in January 1964; to Bombay in India in December 1965; and to New York to address the UN in October 1966.

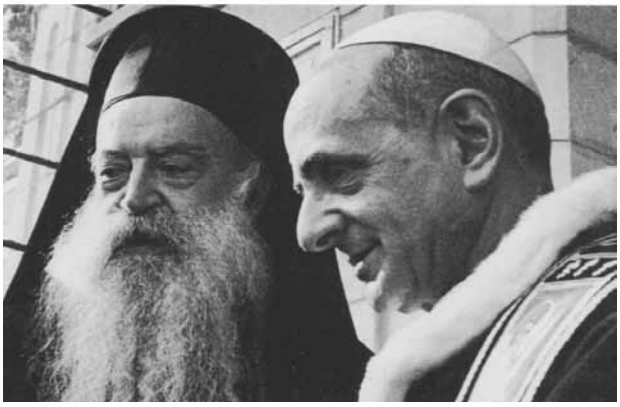
Peter Hebblethwaite describes Paul's speech to the UN as "... a 30 minute address for which 30 years of Vatican diplomacy had prepared him. He was cordial, discreet, human and radical in the sense of going to the deepest roots of the institution... He found the right balance between grandeur and simplicity, rhetoric and sincerity"(*Paul VI: the first modern Pope* pp 437-9).

Before he became too old and sick, Paul made other significant journeys – notably in August 1968 to the meeting of the South American Bishops at Medellin, in Columbia. Here Paul gave his tacit blessing to the *theology of liberation*, a movement much in harmony with both the Biblical teaching and sociology of Vatican II, but later censured by Pope John Paul.

In his travels Paul was eager to embody a new commitment by the Catholic Church to dialogue with and embrace the great wide world outside Europe, outside the walls of Rome.

Humanae Vitae.

During the Council Paul deliberately chose to remove two topics from the Council's agenda: contraception and clerical celibacy. It may be that public discussion on such delicate topics at that time would have been premature. Nevertheless, by his determination to take the ultimate responsibility himself, he was creating the heaviest of crosses for his own back.



In January 1964 Pope Paul met the Orthodox patriarch Athenagoras I in Jerusalem.

A Pope had not met an Orthodox patriarch for 500 years

During the Council itself a Commission had been established to study marital matters and, specifically, birth control. This Commission included lay people from many parts of the world. For the clerical 'experts' who attended, it was a steep learning curve, listening to the lay people with a firsthand experience of the inner workings of marriage; it caused some of them to change their minds completely on the morality of contraception.

the majority view was that contraception is not intrinsically evil

The Commission met for the last time in June 1966. It issued a report which stated that contraception is not intrinsically evil, and therefore advised that the condemnation in Pius XI's encyclical *Casti Connubii* should be revised. The church should change its stance of out-and-out condemnation. This was the majority view of the Commission (a small minority wished to maintain the status quo).

There is no doubt that Pope Paul agonised over these reports. The church waited for two years while he made up his mind. The situation was made more fraught when the Commission's majority report was leaked to the press in April 1967. This leak built up an expectation in church circles that change was imminent.

So why did Paul decide to reject the Commission's findings? Primarily, it was fear of changing 'the Tradition', of reversing the unyielding line on contraception which Pius XI had taken in his Encyclical on married life. It may be he was influenced by a fear that a vote for change would strengthen the wave of permissiveness then sweeping through the Western world.

But mostly it was his own personal fear that if he did not make the decision himself, no matter how the Commission had advised him, he was betraying a sacred trust conferred on him by God when he became Pope. So he made his decision – and the floodgates opened.

It was not simply that *Humanae Vitae* came to be largely disregarded. Paul himself was strongly criticised for keeping the decision to himself. Cardinal Suenens, one of the leading lights of Vatican II, pointed out to him that a Pope could hardly preach collegiality on the the one hand and then reserve crucial issues such as contraception and clerical celibacy to himself. Why were the bishops' conferences not consulted?

It is significant that even though many subsequent authorities have attempted to give *Humanae Vitae* the stamp of infallibility, at the time that it was issued the cleric given the task of announcing it to the world, moral theologian Archbishop Lambruschini, stated that the Encyclical was "not irreformable teaching". Nevertheless the Pope had spoken. Many priests ▷▷

and moral theologians left the church. Most married Catholics simply ignored the Encyclical. In the great debates on population growth and world health the Vatican view was condemned as obscurantist. On many issues the church's views came to be disregarded.

The sequel

Although Paul did many admirable things during the final ten years of his pontificate, *Humanae Vitae* hung over him like a dark cloud. Significantly, he never issued another encyclical letter. In 1972 a decision was needed to determine the topic for the next Synod of Bishops, due in 1974. *Marriage and the Family* was top of the list. When someone pointed out to Paul that such a topic would very likely reopen the can of worms over contraception, he quickly substituted *Evangelisation* as the topic.

That 1974 Synod was somewhat indecisive, so it was given to the Pope to summarise its conclusions. In 1975 he issued the letter by which he is best celebrated, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Since it was not an encyclical it enabled him to write more freely, and it is a beautiful and highly influential document. So *Humanae Vitae* did bring one unexpected blessing!

There are many striking similarities between Paul and the present Pope. Both Benedict and Paul spent most of their careers working in the Curia in Rome. Both have a public image which is somewhat awesome; yet one-to-one, Ratzinger like Montini is charming and courteous – and is also a good listener.

Both were the trusted right-hand of long living predecessors. Montini stood alongside Pius XII from his election in 1938 right through the Second World War until eventually Pius made him Archbishop of Milan. As Prefect of the CDF, Joseph Ratzinger was John Paul's trouble-shooter for most of his long tenure of the chair of Peter.

Theologically, however, they are poles apart. Montini was always a forward looking thinker: on social issues, ecumenism and as regards the liturgy. Ratzinger by comparison is very much the traditionalist in the line of the Roman Curia.

Yet Paul will always be remembered as the Pope of *Humanae Vitae*.

M.H.

Caritas ad

Personal Impressions

Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* speaks of an audience she had in 1975 with Paul VI. "I see a man who is quite human and quite old , holding out his hand to me in a sort of half-welcome, half-blessing, with eyes full of the guile and authority one would expect in a man who has risen to the pinnacle of such a powerful political world, staring at me, studying me...

"He took my hand in both of his, as if he really meant his concern for women. He seemed much more human, somehow, than I had expected, with a warm and caring expression; he wasn't going through perfunctory motions in meeting me; he seemed strangely intent, curious, interested in this meeting which was going on much longer than anyone had given me reason to expect... And he held out his arms, as if to bless me, I guess, and I was ushered out."

Peter Nichols, the London *Times* Rome correspondent, describes Paul VI like this: "The Pope's manner is gentle rather than tense, but kindly, and the most striking details of his presence are the way he holds his head to one side and the brightness of his eyes. His personality is striking at close quarters but it is not easily projected, with the result that the smaller the occasion, the more natural and impressive he is. But he loves crowds and loves contact with throngs of enthusiastic faithful."

On the eve of his 'coronation' in St Peter's, Pope Paul celebrated an evening Mass for the Milanesi in the Milanese church, *San Carlo al Corso*. Since it was cared for by the Rosminians we were able to get in and watch proceedings from a loggia high above the main altar.

At the end of the Mass Paul was mobbed by hundreds of enthusiastic Milanese, who had arrived from the north in their trainloads. I was taken aback by this behaviour, but Paul was quite unruffled by the fairly rough treatment he received. He almost appeared to enjoy it.

Much the same thing happened a year later on his first journey out of Italy – to the Holy Land. He was mobbed in the *Via Dolorosa* in Jerusalem. And on a similar occasion later on in Manila, a deranged person in the crowd lunged at the Pope with a knife. Tragedy was only averted by one of the Pope's retinue, a hefty English Monsignor, jumping on the man and pinning him to the ground.

Paul appeared to be indifferent to his own personal safety. In the last year of his life he offered himself in exchange for some Lufthansa prisoners hijacked and held to ransom in Africa. (*M.H.*)

Simply Good

"In the depth of winter I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer" (Albert Camus)

It is profoundly good to open my eyes to see the sleepy and dishevelled face of the woman who has borne my children, borne my moods, extravagances and egocentrism, overlooked my ageing, balding, sagging body, and is still content to lie beside me and love me with all her heart.

• There is a serenity to be found in some of the simplest of pleasures. I am sitting outside at 6.30 am, looking at the trees, with a cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. I hear the birds and some distant morning traffic. Closing my eyes I listen to my heart and it is peaceful.

• Table-tennis in the garage is always a boisterous affair, deliberately so. Here, young versus older can tease, laugh and compete. There are two lessons I want to teach. Firstly, that fun is something you determine and then create. Secondly, the real triumph of any game is the mutual enjoyment. The desire to win always needs to be kept in check, lest its destructive force is unleashed.

• I try to laugh every day. I therefore need to put myself in the company of or communication with people who are as seriously twisted as I am. That takes discipline, but is manna to the soul. It helps too to know authors that are similarly twisted. Today it is Christopher Moore.

• In the office it is the trickster who contributes more than she or he knows. The ability to release laughter into the common atmosphere is a divine gift, sowing the possibilities of hope and transformation. Churches in particular need lots of pranks – just to piss the pious off and remind us what piety is.

• With age comes the ability to enjoy rich, strong flavours. Insipid food and beverages lose their appeal. It's great to see kids progress from cheddar, to Colby, to Tasty, to Stilton. I wish their theology would too. Usually they try the cheddar equivalent then give up on cheese.

• With strong flavours, too, comes the realisation that a little is all that is needed. A dram of Glenfiddich can last a whole sunset. When you get stuffed on anything – food, drink, or religion – you miss the beauty on the horizon.

• Enjoyment is not always assisted by money. Big toys can lead to big stress, and big maintenance. Bigness is also part of the illusion that the grand is always preferable to the simple.

A car will give you the pleasure of arriving quickly. A bicycle will give you the pleasure of feeling the wind. Walking will give you the pleasure of noticing the flowers. All are pleasurable, but some cost more. Generally, the more it costs the worse off your heart is.

• Beauty is the artist's gift to the city. These gifts stimulate our eyes and imagination, and goddishly invite our souls to be transported beyond the ordinary. Sculpture, in particular, offers us the vulnerability and intrigue of three dimensions, inviting touch and reflection. Sculpture is the foil to utilitarian design, suburban routine and soulless consumerism.

• Working downtown it is important to misplace your diary and cell phone, walk out and get lost at least once a week. In the world of noise and demand we need a silence break, or we will break. That's why it's important for churches, art galleries and large bookstores to be open in the city – for the quiet. It is a prayer to walk from noise to silence. Our souls simply need it.

Glynn Cardy

Ahmed Zaoui –

Ahmed reunited at last with his wife and children

Children and the sense of justice

Blessed Oliver Plunkett's Catholic school, on the northern fringe of Melbourne, was in 1951 just three classrooms and a shelter shed. Folding wooden walls divided the classrooms, in each of which – as in the shelter shed – a harassed Sister of Mercy tried to give a basic education to a double class of more than 60 children.

Sister Agatha was the school principal. Like all nuns she received no wage; just the two shillings 'school money' that most of the working-class families paid to help feed her community and to run the school. We children made jokes about the Sisters, but knew they were heroic volunteers, educating a quarter of Australia's children. We heard our parents complain how unjust it was that none of our taxes were allocated to schools like ours.

I was in Grade Six. One advantage of having two classes in one room was that you could listen in to what Grade Seven pupils were learning. Sister Agatha taught them history. One day, during The French Revolution, I heard that in the corrupt *ancien régime* that came before it, anyone could arrange to have their enemy locked away forever in the Bastille simply by posting an anonymous *lettre de cachet* . At age 11, this horrible injustice shocked me deeply.

Where do children get this strong sense of justice? Not from 'Catholic indoctrination' by Sister Agatha, or even from the British Empire of which we were an outpost. I believe I still would have felt this had I been born Aboriginal, Chinese or Maori. The Maori proverb asks "What is the most important thing in the world?" and replies: "The people, the people, the people."

Our sense of fairness does not come from adults manipulating our minds. We feel it even more keenly when parents or teachers are themselves unjust to us. Some deep part of our spirit recognizes that justice means giving to each person what is their right: dignity, respect, freedom, equality and a fair share of available goods. All the religious traditions – and their liberal-humanist heirs – frame it in similar words. As Catholics we heard that all human beings are "children of God".

The case of Ahmed Zaoui

Fifty-two years after listening-in to that Seventh Grade lesson, I heard about Ahmed Zaoui, the Algerian refugee who, when he arrived in Auckland was at once slammed into solitary confinement under maximum security and left there for ten months. The Security Intelligence Service would not tell us why he was being tortured like this, because that "would endanger New Zealand's security". Many people around the country saw that this kind of 'justice' threatens everyone's security. If a person can be locked away without the accusers being accountable to Parliament or the public, we have wiped two centuries of legal reform and are back with *lettres de cachet*.

A nation-wide network of ordinary people gladly supported Mr Zaoui's lawyers' in their two-year struggle to have him released on bail. We Dominican friars agreed to receive him into our home. So slow was his case that after leaving prison he was with us for almost three years. It was to be five years before he saw his wife and four sons again.

a cry for justice

Peter Murnane

Not everyone could see that this was unfair. Without taking the trouble to hear his story, some people were swayed by shallow – sometimes deceitful – journalism or the fear-mongers who populate talk-back radio. Believing untruths, they readily projected their own phobias onto this 'other', a Muslim, a stranger, a refugee. Ahmed Zaoui became a scape-goat for their prejudices.

Convicted of no crime and, while still in maximum security prison, declared a legitimate refugee fleeing the illegitimate and murderous Algerian regime, even some Members of Parliament savaged his reputation. But at crucial moments, neither the New Zealand Government nor their Security Intelligence Service could bring forward any damning evidence. After five long years, concluding with weeks of review of the *Security Risk Certificate* attached to him, they were forced to withdraw it before any final summing up and decision. There never had been any solid evidence against him.

Although the Government had refused to shorten his case or even to allow his family to visit him during the long wait, once the case was withdrawn it did act swiftly to improve his situation. His family soon came to join him and a house was arranged for them.

But why was he treated as if we lived in the *ancien regime*? A key witness at the review of his case, a former member of Algerian Security, admitted to being part of a campaign to malign Ahmed Zaoui soon after the military had dissolved the parliament of which Ahmed was an elected member. From there, the international network of security services marked him as a 'terrorist suspect'. Why would anyone believe such anonymous lies? This is the terrible power that an anonymous accuser can wield. Who can affirm or deny the statements they let trickle from their concealed hand? When we are afraid, we are easy to bluff.

More so if our self-interest is at stake. If they tell us that all done is done "for our security", recent history has shown that ordinary citizens in a democratic country will not even object to their government using torture. And what if it is "to protect our property" or our prosperity? Is it without significance that this country sells a large quantity of milk products to Algeria?

Lessons to learn from the Zaoui case

If the injustices suffered by Ahmed Zaoui remind us of the *ancien régime* and make us determined never to return to the evil of *lettres de cachet*, his patient endurance will have done this country a great service. But is this happening? There are ominous signs that the use of "secret evidence" is being expanded in acts now coming before parliament. Why should our legislators extend the powers that only the SIS have at present, giving them to Immigration personnel or other civil servants? If they play enough on our fears, they could possibly trick us into accepting this. But this outcome would be a disaster for our freedom. After the Zaoui experience, are we still unable to grasp the simple lesson that Sister Agatha's 12-year-olds could understand? ■

Peter Murnane OP is a member of the Dominican Preaching Team working out of Auckland

Seven deadly sins – a Gandhi series

Sandra Winton

True religion leads us never to violence, often to self-sacrifice, always to compassion: such was Gandhi's teaching in word and action

Worship without Sacrifice

As I write this, news has just broken that a suicide bomber has destroyed himself after killing the Pakistani politician Benazir Bhutto. As has become sadly familiar, this young man left his house that day with the intention of murdering someone, then blowing up himself and, indiscriminately, any number of others. Motivated by political or ideological beliefs, perhaps fired by seeing poverty, suffering, repression and powerlessness, a young man like this is also likely to have been driven by religion. His religion tells him he is a martyr, a saint. He is sacrificing his life.

By way of contrast, earlier this year I saw the film *Amazing Grace*. It depicted the struggle of another young man, William Wilberforce, and his largely Quaker supporters to achieve the abolition of slavery in Britain and its empire. William sacrificed standing, reputation, health when, year after year, he stood before parliament to be jeered at, ridiculed and mocked as he re-presented his bill. Like the young man depicted above, he also was sustained and inspired by religion.

From where we sit, it seems easy to see one of these young men as tragically misguided and the other as a hero and prophet. But it would be simplistic to attribute the difference to Islam on the one hand and Christianity on the other. There are Muslims who are devoted to peace, as there were Christians who vehemently supported slavery as being part of the divine plan. Whatever its expression, worship or religion (and I will use the two terms interchangeably as both appear in versions of Gandhi's sins) has enormous potential for good and for evil. It can be a source of life – or death. This is the meaning of a 'deadly sin' in the Christian tradition, a sin which is a root sin, one which leads on to other sins.

When Gandhi named worship without sacrifice as a deadly sin he was, I believe, acknowledging that religion by itself, no matter how devotedly adhered to, is not the final arbiter of human conduct. "As soon as we lose the moral basis," he said, "we cease to be religious. There is no such thing as religion overriding morality. Man [sic] for instance cannot be untruthful, cruel and incontinent and claim to have God on his side." His words sit well with the life of Jesus who healed on the Sabbath, forgave sinners and placed compassion above law.

For both Jesus and Gandhi the regulations of religion and the rules of religious leaders are insufficient guides to human behaviour. After all, the witch hunts of the Middle Ages, the Crusades, and the bombers flying over Dresden and Hiroshima were blessed by certain religious authorities, as are the terrorists, suicide bombers and invading armies of today. Religion can be serving of personal, political and ideological interests just as much as commerce and politics can be. Gandhi himself said, "Millions have taken the name of God and in His [sic] name have committed nameless atrocities."

Compassion, not self-flagellation

To say that worship or religion requires sacrifice to keep it honest is not the same thing as calling for the kind of self-denial that for a period of history governed much Christian living especially in the English speaking world, including New Zealand. When my Scottish Presbyterian ancestors built their main church hall in Dunedin with a sloping floor to discourage any possible temptation to dance, they were life-denying in a way that makes little sense today.

When my Catholic forbears told young people that they were committing a mortal sin to 'entertain' even a sexual thought or desire they were walking in the same territory. Young people of today will find it hard to believe that this was ever seriously taught and practised. Modern spirituality seeks God in the joys and beauties of life as much as in its sorrows and sufferings. It is right to do so. The sacrifice that Gandhi considered essential to ensure the truth of worship, or "worship in truth" as Jesus put it, was not a dour denial of human pleasure but a pursuit of goals that required sacrifice for their attainment.

For Gandhi, no less than for Jesus, true worship always involved ***compassionate*** action for human beings. When we go beyond our prejudices of age, race, language and religion, then the suffering of any human being will move us and impel us. The battered child in New Zealand no less than the starving child in Africa; the victims of war, Muslim, Christian Hindu or of any faith; those who suffer from injustice, poverty, fear and powerlessness will matter to us. We may not be able to attend to all these needs but those that touch our hearts will call us to action.

On October 6, 2002, three American Dominican Sisters aged in their 50s and 60s left their homes knowing that that day they would be in prison. They had spent years of their lives studying the meaning and impact of the United States' nuclear build-up and its policies of war. They were impelled by the injustice of the staggering sums spent on military weapons, in light of the desperate poverty within the United States and beyond it. They had previous convictions because of their protest actions.

On an early autumn morning, wearing white chemical suits labelled *Citizens Weapons Inspection Team* they broke through the fence around a military installation to protest for peace and nuclear disarmament. They sang religious songs, prayed for peace, and symbolically poured their own blood onto the metal cover of an underground nuclear missile silo. "We wanted to shed our own blood rather than see others' blood poured out for war," said one of them, Sr Carol Gilbert. "If you follow Jesus, he gave his blood for all of us on the cross. As Christians we are called to sacrifice ourselves for others."

Gandhi and non-violence

As a root virtue of Christian life, worship or giving one's life over to God can be the source of the highest virtue, as I believe it was with these Sisters. It can also be a source of cruelty, murder and the deepest injustice. What guides do we have? Gandhi taught compassion for the least, justice for the many, restraint with regards to possessions, non-violence as a principle of action, means that are as just as the ends they seek.

These guides will not tell us at once if an action is right or not; nothing frees us from the inevitable struggle to sift through shades of grey. They will not give us certainty; many circumstances of life do not allow it. But they would have stopped the suicide bomber. And they inevitably involve sacrifice. They cannot be ▷▷

Possible questions for discussion:

- *What are some ways in which you see religion used to support self-interest, internationally and personally?*
- *How would you like to see religious leaders encouraging governments and people to pursue a more just and peaceful world? What might they risk in the process?*
- *Can you think of situations in everyday life where you might be called to act on principle and where this might involve some cost or sacrifice for you?*
- *What do you imagine it would be like to be called up to fight in a war you did not believe was right? What do you think you would feel and do?*

practised without it. That is why Gandhi led a very ascetical life himself and taught his followers to do the same.

A school pupil who refuses to participate in bullying, physical or verbal, knows he will sacrifice popularity with some. A parent who holds in her anger and does not hit her child must exercise self-control. The business person who asks how his investment choices and business decisions will affect workers and the ecology of the planet may sacrifice some wealth. The politician who acts with conscience may lose votes. The scientist who asks how her research will affect human lives may not pursue certain lines of investigation. There are people who make these choices.

A lesson in humility

There was a particular verse of a Hindu scripture, the *Ishopanishad*, that held great meaning and comfort for Gandhi. It said to him that "all there is in this universe, great or small, including the tiniest atom, is pervaded by God". If I were to become more fully aware of this truth I would care about my actions in so far as they affect not only others in the world but the created world itself. A belief that human beings are at the centre of the universe, free to use it in any way they wish, for their own profit, pleasure and satisfaction, is a part of the deadliness of religious sin; it is the antithesis of worship. Inspired by a false interpretation of the Biblical creation story that sees humans as masters of all, this belief is leading us rapidly into destruction of the planet's water, its potential to feed its children and its very air. Were it not for greed for oil, how much war and suffering might have been averted in recent years?

True worship reminds humans that we are not the ultimate gods of all. We are here to serve life, that of humanity and the whole created world. All of us and our church communities are invited to this highest way of life. This is a fully religious calling. It involves outer action and inner transformation. It requires both sacrifice and hope. I finish with Gandhi's words:

Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissoluble to the truths within and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself.

Seismic Change

The people of Gisborne were startled into a new consciousness of the fragility of life on 20 December last year when a 6.8 earthquake struck about 8.55 pm. Suddenly, all the business of the frenetic silly season was brought to a sudden halt as the earth's plates moved to release pressure built up. For a brief moment the world stood still for tens of thousands of people up and down the East Coast.

Scientists tell us that an earthquake is caused by a seismic shift in the earth's plates as they readjust to the pressures building up around them. Inevitably they create a certain degree of chaos and destruction. Eventually they settle and produce new life. All the hills, valleys and mountains of our planet have evolved out of such changes.

The birth of Jesus of Nazareth on that first Christmas night created a seismic change in human consciousness. Nothing like this had happened before in history. God came among us as an infant and took on the frailty of human nature. The birth produced a fundamental shift in the relationships of humanity with God and humanity with itself.

If only we realised it, the change effected is momentous. Now, in the new order each individual has become a son or daughter of God, a brother or sister of Christ, brothers and sisters of one another. This was to be the new pattern for all humanity. We were to practise justice and mercy, forgiveness when offence was taken or crime committed; we were to tolerate differences in origins, race and ethnicity, and show compassion to the weak and vulnerable. Love would be the power behind our actions gluing all together.

The subsequent life of Jesus, his radical teachings and eventually his passion, death and resurrection, sit on a 'fault line', which stretched from Nazareth through Galilee to Jerusalem and beyond. The effects of this seismic shift are still with us and now stretch around the world. Those who understood this reality would bind together in community. They would be called 'church'.

Back then, new ways of living and being were developed. New structures were formed to effect the goals of the seismic shift. But in time, like the hills and the valleys of the landscape, the structures have settled into patterns of being that need further adjusting. Just as the energy built up off the coast of Gisborne eventually shifted the plates, so from time to time energy builds up in the church and fundamental realignment occurs. Another seismic shift happens.

The Second Vatican Council was one such shift. While its epicentre was Rome, its effects have been felt everywhere. The valleys and hills of church life world-wide have been changed forever. Vatican II's flow-on effects are still with us. While some things are settling down, the new valleys and hills it produced have not yet been consolidated. It is still early days.

However, huge difficulties confront the church as it seeks to witness in the highly mobile world of global corporate capitalism, built as it is on greed and materialist values. This all-pervasive culture either co-opts, sentimentalises or generally neutralises the Christian message. It ignores the seismic shift. The Western Church is being forced to downsize all over. Ageing clergy get sick and die, and their numbers are not replaced. The Holy Spirit behind the seismic change seems to be saying something very fundamental to us. Adapt or die.

Yet the prophets among us, though persecuted, are speaking clearly. Find new ways to be church, to be the People of God. Create new communal models. Develop fresh leadership. Go back to Scripture – and Tradition with a capital T, and build around the fundamentals – proclaim the Good News to the poor, create community, celebrate the sacraments especially Baptism and the Eucharist, be inclusive, practise justice, proclaim the Reign of God present in time and eternity; and pray – always pray. As Abraham Heschel says, "to pray is to dream in league with God." Do what Jesus did – *dream in league with God*.

Since Vatican II, the church has truly undergone a seismic shift. Things are never the same after a seismic shift. Just as the land under Gisborne has changed forever even if it is not obvious on the surface, so the church has changed forever. It is in a period of consolidation charting new hills and valleys. Take heart. Trust in God. There is no going back. Only the future beckons.

Dream. Then act.

Jim Consedine

The Gift

Mike Noonan

And he said to them, *"Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."*

Welcome to New Zealand, Jim! How was your flight?" In response, Jim's exhausted eyes focused on my face and gained in intensity. He made the sound of an airplane's engines, with his arms outstretched like wings. Gracefully he mimed how the plane had gone up and down, waved his arms in a huge circle to show that he had been around the world, then made the sign for sleep. A deep chortle followed as, beaming broadly, he hugged me.

Jim is a man with intellectual disabilities who has been my friend now for 30 years. He is a free spirit, a man who does not speak with words, but whose ability to express himself is sometimes astonishing. As I'd stood at the airport awaiting his arrival I'd cast my mind back to the years we had spent in community together in l'Arche in Liverpool.

I remembered his 21st Birthday celebration where so many people had come and made speeches in which they spoke of how much Jim meant to them. I remembered also an incident initiated by Jim that had changed his life, his family's life and the life of some of us who, as assistants, shared our lives with Jim.

It happened like this. Because we were an ecumenical community, we invited the local ministers of the parishes and congregations we were involved in to come and celebrate services with us on alternate Tuesdays in the community. This particular Tuesday, it was to have been a Roman Catholic Mass. However, the local curate rang to say he was ill and could not come. The busyness of the evening took over and after letting everyone know the change

of plan, we got on with preparing the evening meal. When the time came to call everyone to the table, there was no sign of Jim. We searched the house – but still no sign of him. We were becoming seriously worried at this stage. Jim had never gone missing before and his survival skills were not great if he had run off into the streets of inner city Liverpool. Someone had the bright idea of checking the cellar. The cellar was the place where we celebrated the liturgies of the community and where we gathered for community meetings. Perhaps Jim was down there waiting for Mass to begin.

Sure enough, when we went down, there was Jim. He was not waiting for Mass to begin. The doors of the cupboard where we kept the bread and wine were open and Jim was behind the table, drinking wine out of the Chalice. There was also some clear tell-tale evidence that some of the communion bread had been consumed. Jim beamed at us, but then anxiety quickly clouded his face as he realized he may have done something that we were not happy with.

A few days later, in a light hearted way, we mentioned this incident to Jim's mum, who had come to our Open Night of prayer with the Baptist minister of the family's congregation. Jim's Mum became serious and we realized that we may have been insensitive to her and to her family's Baptist tradition. However, we were astounded when, a couple of weeks later, she contacted us saying that after a number of deep and reflective conversations with their minister, he and the family were united in wanting us to prepare Jim for reception into the Roman Catholic church.

Whether our dismay showed or not, it was present. As a community we had taken as our guiding light that we would support each person to grow within their own faith tradition. This often meant that assistants accompanied people with intellectual

disabilities to services in churches that were not of the assistants' tradition. Because we had a majority of Catholics in the community, we were particularly sensitive to ensure that a perception did not arise whereby the families of people with intellectual disabilities feared a Catholic 'takeover' of people who were not of the Catholic tradition.

Regardless of our fears, what Jim's Mum and the Baptist Minister had perceived was that where the Baptist tradition is strongly reliant on words, the Catholic tradition communicates much through symbol.

In Jim's actions in the cellar that day, they had understood something which we had missed: namely the power of symbol to nourish Jim's heart in a way that words alone could not.

The rightness of their decision was confirmed by Jim's ongoing response to the dramas of the Catholic Church. From stained glass windows, which told him the gospel stories, to the processing, bowing and genuflecting that makes up part of the Catholic liturgy; all these wordlessly conveyed to a wordless man a sense of the sacred.

I remember a pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1981. Maria and I found ourselves irritated by the 'tat' of Lourdes – see-through Our Ladies with screw-off heads for Holy Water; the ashtrays with religious scenes depicted on them and the torchlight 'shuffle' which, because of the crowds, could manage but a few feet! Jim meanwhile processed around Lourdes in an attitude of profound prayerfulness, seeing beyond all the commercialism to the sacred encounter that continues to bless that small French town.

Recently, when Tony Blair, converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism much play was made by some British politicians and some sections of the press that a conversion necessarily entails a repudiation of whatever belief was held before. I believe Jim's journey into Catholicism was one not of repudiation of his Baptist roots, but of a journey undertaken with a supportive community within which there was mutual respect between the Churches. Even more important was the recognition of Jim as an individual and of what would help him and what might provide food for his journey.

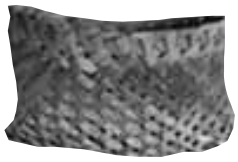
The lack of a priest to celebrate Eucharist that day was a gift. The Sabbath was made for Jim, and just like David and his men, Jim ate of the Bread of the Presence in that Liverpool cellar as he tried to recreate the mass that day. Because of the wisdom of his mother and his Baptist Minister, Jim has found his place of belonging. Jim's reverence for all that is sacred continues to touch the hearts of many people and identifies him as a great communicator. ■

The Cosmic Kete

The house is full
Many faces, many stories lived
Like the motley crew who walked with Him,
the twelve.
In brokenness, open to the goodness of God
The God of all people, alive in each one.

"This is My Body, I give it to you."
We gather because of these powerful words
To break bread, drink wine and give thanks
Our liturgy is the cup we all share
Whether old and cracked or shiny new
The contents renew and refresh us

"This is My Body, I give it to you."
We are called to communion,
and into community
Weekly, daily, together, alone
All of us suffer, not one is spared
Child or adult, dark or fair
Our suffering transforms to joy.



"This is My Body, I give it to you."
We're a motley crew
Each different, none perfect
Woven together as blades of harakeke
The gift of communion, the gift of community
The kete, a whare, the people of God.

"This is My Body, I give it to you."
The whare is open
We receive and we welcome
Linking arms, linking hearts
With the wider community
Ours is the earth, ours are the heavens
The cosmic kete, of which we are one strand.

Pat Neuwelt

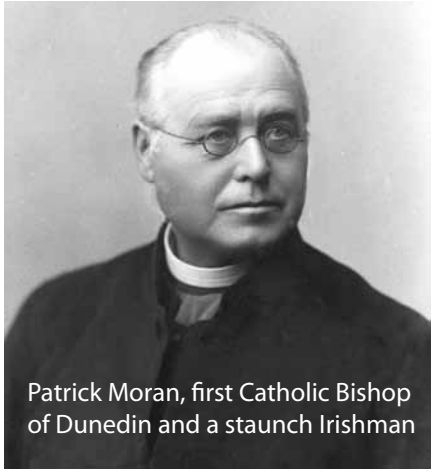
St Patrick's Day sports, Invercargill 1902

Our 'Irish' Catholics

...what happened to the 'Irish' bit?

by Seán Brosnahan

When Eamon de Valera visited this country in 1948, during a brief period out of office as Irish Prime Minister, the podiums at all his major public functions were thick with the clerical black of Catholic bishops and priests. The New Zealand *Tablet* provided extensive coverage of the visit, one correspondent hailing de Valera as "a great Catholic and a great Irishman." There was no question but that the two characteristics were inextricably linked. Archbishop McKeefry, in his speech of welcome, declared that the greatest gift New Zealand had had from Ireland was 'the faith'. De Valera visited convents, presbyteries and Catholic schools, winning acclaim from the school children by granting half-holidays in Auckland and Taihape.



Patrick Moran, first Catholic Bishop of Dunedin and a staunch Irishman

In stark contrast, when Ireland's current President, Mrs Mary McAleese, visited New Zealand in late October 2007 there was no such association. In her determinedly secular public utterances there was just one reference to "the squabbles of religion", cited as a regrettable element of the cultural baggage brough to New Zealand by Irish migrants of the past. Receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Otago, Mrs McAleese was hosted and welcomed by Dunedin's academic and civic dignitaries. Bishop Colin Campbell was in attendance but simply as one of many invited guests. No other priests were present, no representatives of the religious orders nor of the Catholic schools. This, like all of her engagements, was an Irish occasion but definitely not a Catholic one.

The disconnection seems to be mutual: in contrast to the effusive coverage by the Catholic press in 1948, the national Catholic newspaper *New Zealand Catholic* did not even consider the Irish President's 2007 visit worth reporting. Clearly, 'Irish' and 'Catholic' no longer represent the symbiotic identity that they did 60 years ago.

Irish immigration and the church

Yet an Irish strand is at the core of our New Zealand Catholic Church's historical identity. Catholicism developed here virtually as an outpost of the Irish Church, focused on Irish-born immigrants and their children. Irish Religious established the Catholic school system to mould the coming generations of New Zealand Catholics. The concept of the 'Irish Catholic' represented a mutually reinforcing pairing of identities that sustained a tribal loyalty to the church among the immigrants and their descendants for several generations. Even after the flow of Irish immigrants slowed to a trickle after the 19th century, the ongoing contribution of Irish-born and trained priests and religious to the New Zealand Church remained profound well into the 20th century.

Tasked with inculturating itself in New Zealand, however, the modern church has found it relatively easy to jettison the husk of 'Irish' traditions and engage instead (haltingly) with the indigenous culture of these islands. At the same time, Ireland's surplus of priests and religious dried up, putting an end to the traditional

regular infusion of new Irish clerical blood. It was entirely appropriate, of course, that after more than a century in Oceania, New Zealand's Catholics should begin to see themselves as people of the Pacific rather than exiles of Erin. The subsequent evaporation of the old 'tribal' loyalty to the church, however, may have played a significant part in the rapid decline of participation in Catholic life by descendants of the Irish ethnic group over recent years.

Irish culture in New Zealand

What then of their 'Irishness'? Separated from the religious culture of Catholicism – essentially Roman rather than Irish in any case – what residue remains of the Gaelic culture that Catholic New Zealanders might have expected to inherit from their Irish forbears? Was it simply left behind when they emigrated or did it gradually evaporate in the new colonial environment?

These questions are prompted by an exhibition at the Otago Settlers Museum in Dunedin. Titled *Erin Go Bragh: the Irish in Otago and Southland*, the display presents a historical survey of the Irish in southern New Zealand, with a core focus on its Catholic aspect. What emerges is the great difficulty of trying to pin down 'Irishness' in the New Zealand context, reflecting perhaps the essentially fluid nature of cultural identity.

Today there is unprecedented interest in the Irish dimension of our history and Irish culture seems to be newly resurgent in New Zealand. There is, for example, a programme for Irish and Scottish Studies at Victoria University's Stout Centre and a new Chair in Irish Studies at the University of Otago. 'Irish' bars are ubiquitous and traditional Irish music has a devoted New Zealand following. Many New Zealanders look back proudly to Irish roots, including descendants of the large number of Irish Protestants who came to this country. Pilgrimages to the ancient homeland are becoming more and more common. What is noticeably absent, however, is a strong Catholic connection with modern New Zealand Irishness.

The writer would be pleased to hear from readers with contrary views or experiences of Irish cultural identity in New Zealand. Likewise from families with a continuing Irish heritage expressed through language, music, dance or some other form of cultural expression. Was there any successful transmission of these traditions – especially the language – beyond the migrant generation?

The Craic in Dunedin, one of the many Irish-themed bars springing up across New Zealand

Readers with an Irish whakapapa (I am not thinking of recent immigrants) might consider the following questions:

- do you think of yourself as 'Irish' at all? If so, how does that express itself, and in what does it consist?
- Is there any tradition carrying a sense of Irish heritage in your family – apart from Catholicism? Any stories or memories of Ireland handed down? Any fragments of Gaelic, any Irish songs or superstitions...
- In short is there anything, apart from your DNA, that could be classed as 'Irish' about you? ■

This 1921 Catholic procession around the grounds of St Dominic's drew hostile attention from the 'loyal British' citizens of Dunedin. The open display of an Irish Republican flag (on the church upper left) was tantamount to treason in the eyes of many Protestants in the heightened sectarian atmosphere of the early 1020s.

Seán Brosnahan is Curator of the Otago Settlers Museum, Dunedin. He can be contacted at the Otago Settlers Museum: seán.brosnahan@dcc.govt.nz.

Erin Go Bragh: the Irish in Otago and Southland is on show until 8 June 2008. Admission free.

Disappointment

Paul Andrews

Paidin and I were burying Eoin, a dear mutual friend who had died at the height of his powers. He was a devout man of strong principles. Not only that, he lived by those principles. He was a high-powered engineer, always stretching himself in his professional life, but keeping the best hours of the week free for his wife and family, a spirited lot who made constant demands on him. The tributes at the funeral were lavish, but no more than Eoin deserved. When a dangerous heart condition finally turned fatal, Eoin fought for life every inch of the journey, panting breathlessly all the way through his last night, with his wife holding his hand, until in the end it was she who gave him permission to relax and breathe his last.

As Paidin and I threw our handfuls of earth on the coffin, he turned to me: *Paul, you could say of Eoin:* "May God be as good to him as he was to God." *I'm different. I'm in the mercy queue. Here's what you can put on my grave:* "Dear God, I didn't enjoy it as much as you meant me to."

When Paidin died in his sleep a year later, a relatively young man, I remembered his words, but they did not appear on his gravestone. He and Eoin and I were all of an age, had worked together, and watched the next generation – Eoin had six children, Paidin four – with absorbed interest. I wept for them both and still feel a pang as I recall the two deaths, 30 years ago. I feel survivor's guilt. Why should the Lord have taken two fathers, and let me live on?

Paidin, who was a poet as well as an engineer, put his finger on it. Upright Eoin had learned the rules and kept them, and taught them to his children. He had carried out everything that God, through his parents and teachers, had taught him. The children grew up interesting, loving and lively. Though they turned out very different from the model that Eoin had in his mind, each of them in their diverse ways reflected his warmth and integrity.

In Paidin there was more of the maverick mystic than the obedient student. He tried for the priesthood – the Jesuits in fact – but the early death of his father forced him, the eldest of a large family, to become a breadwinner as soon as he could. He had four remarkable children, and lived to enjoy grandchildren. But as his chosen epitaph hinted, he had a sense of disappointment. It was not so much disappointment with his achievements and circumstances – by any standards he had been a successful family and professional man – as disappointment with himself. In a poignant poem he spoke of himself: *Inconsolable that I am I.*

Look at a cross-section of middle-aged and elderly people. How many of them, like Paidin, might admit to disappointment. Are there any who do not carry some grief or wound in their heart? Last September it became clear that even the smiling and heroic Mother Teresa lived a life of spiritual desolation and torment. The Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins put it sharply in one of his sonnets of desolation:

> *I am gall, I am heartburn.*
> *God's most deep decree*
> *Bitter would have me taste:*
> *my taste was me.*

In St Luke's Gospel, the Prodigal Son reaches a low point and realises: *I have sinned against heaven and disappointed my father.* There are billions of people who feel that life has somehow cheated them. At a certain point they say to themselves: *Is this all there is? Is this as good as it gets?* They look back on a marriage that has broken or fallen short of expectations; or at a career in which they hit against a glass ceiling and failed to win the promotion they coveted; or at a religious vocation in which they often fell short of their ideals. Or they feel they somehow let down their children.

There is a moment of truth here. This is what Jesus meant when he urged us to carry our cross. It was not a call to take up special penances. The biggest cross is our own selves.

The biggest cross is our own selves. This is what Jesus meant when he urged us to carry our cross. ... it was not a call to take up special penances

In that extraordinary parable, the Prodigal Son tries to make an apology to his father, but he gets nowhere. His father will not listen to the self-blame of his son. He hugs him, dresses him in the best robe, and arranges a celebration.

Jesus does not want us to waste energy blaming ourselves. He would rather we were as unsurprisable as he is, and that we would move away from the might-have-beens, and forgive ourselves our mistakes as God forgives us.

Decision-making in the early church

Acts 1:12-26

Susan Smith

After Jesus returns to his Father, the apostles go back to Jerusalem where they gather in an upstairs room. The *New Jerusalem* Bible tells us that "with one heart all these joined constantly in prayer, together with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (*1:14*). The Greek expression, ομοθυμαδον (literally "united"), and translated as "with one heart" points to an important quality that Luke ascribes to the primitive Christian community – the spiritual unity of believers. The believing community consists of disciples who included members of his biological family, and those whom he had first called to follow him.

What spiritual unity means is spelt out in the verses that follow. The 11 need to replace Judas. Peter proclaims to the community of approximately 120 believers what the problem is and they nominate two potential disciples – Barsabbas and Matthias. They then cast lots and "Matthias was added to the 11 apostles". Again the

Greek expression is interesting here. "Believers" is the *New Revised Standard* translation of the Greek αᾳδελφων, a gender-inclusive term.

Is it stretching the parameters of biblical interpretation to suggest that one practical implication of spiritual unity is shared decision-making in the community? I think not. Here in these verses that we usually read through quickly to get to the all-important Pentecost narrative, we have a description of the early community coming together to make an important decision that would bear significantly on the mission of the church in the decades ahead.

As I write this – early December – I have just finished reading a press release about a senior Vatican official, Sri Lankan Archbishop Malcom Ranjith, Secretary of the *Congregation for Divine Worship,* berating bishops who are concerned about the potentially divisive nature that the widespread use of the Tridentine Mass could mean. It is worth noting that those who most vigorously support the Tridentine Mass are often enough those most opposed to the reforms of Vatican II.

Were bishops, were lay women and men, were parish priests consulted prior to the papal promulgation regarding the Tridentine Mass? Again the answer appears to have been a resounding "no!"

Consultation, participation, and involvement in decision-making are messy and often protracted processes yet in the long run, their alternatives are worse for the spiritual unity of the community. Sometimes it is difficult to see that we belong to a church that is 'of one mind'. ■

Susan Smith is a Sister of Our Lady of the Missions and teaches in her congregation's Asian provinces

---

You may think that was all very well for Jesus – he was the Messiah. That is not how we see him in the Gospel, which recounts a series of rebuffs and disappointments in his life. His own townsfolk rejected him when he revisited Nazareth. Of the 12 men he chose as apostles, Judas was to betray him, Peter to deny him. James and John were still arguing over petty ambitions even after three years in Jesus' company. The Pharisees, the religious leaders of his people, had no time for him. Idealistic people like the rich young man turned away when asked to give their money to the poor. The Jews walked away in droves when Jesus spoke of the Eucharist. He wept over his dear Jerusalem, yearning for acceptance like a mother over her children. But the holy city rejected him.

We look on the Sacred Heart as a symbol of love. It was also a heart of tough courage. Jesus was repeatedly disappointed, and like any human, he must have felt at times that he could have managed things better. But he carried his cross, which for him as for most of us consisted of rebuffs, failures and disappointments. He did not grow bitter, or bland, or disillusioned, but kept love flowing in his heart. ■

Fr Paul Andrews is a Jesuit priest resident in Dublin – but at present, supplying in Otago and Southland and catching fish in the Mataura river


Richard Dawkins

Richard Dawkins and the assault on religious belief

Neil Darragh

Richard Dawkins' recent book *The God Delusion* (London: *Transworld, 2006*) comes amidst a surge of books over the last few years that argue aggressively for the elimination of religion. Among the most publicised of these are such books as *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* by Sam Harris; *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* by Daniel C. Dennett; and *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* by Christopher Hitchens. The subtitles of these books give a fair indication of the intentions of the writers. Most notably they tend to see religion as not only irrational but also as the major cause of violence in the world.

Dawkins' *The God Delusion* advocates atheism and attacks all forms of religion or theism. He claims not to be attacking any one particular form of religion but the overall view that there exists a superhuman, supernatural intelligence who deliberately designed and created the universe and everything in it, including us. Religion, says Dawkins, is not just a delusion but a pernicious delusion. Dawkins hopes that his book will convince its readers to become atheists and that all atheists will 'come out' so as to become a combined political influence in the world.

The book includes a wide range of anecdotes and dramatic examples of the evils of religion. The two major lines of attack however are directed towards religion as *explanation* of the nature of our world and religion as a *basis for morality*. Religion, says Dawkins, has tried to *explain* our existence and the nature of the universe in which we find ourselves, but this role is now completely superseded by science. Dawkins has a prior commitment to the view that the world is just as depicted in scientific theories. Nothing else can be considered evidence in the debate about God. He then finds that there is no evidence in favour of the God hypothesis and concludes that the existence of God or gods is extremely improbable.

How people come to believe in God

Most theists that I know do not arrive at a belief in God in the very rationalistic way that is expected by Dawkins. Belief in God is more likely to be the result of a long period of practical testing of the foundations of our life commitments. We test how our lives can be integrated with practical living in some nearly coherent way that involves not only our reason but also insights and confrontations with mystery.

Our belief in God in other words is as large and intricate as our whole lives, including reason but not just a result of scientific-style reasoning. We do not then expect 'God' to explain our existence for we are also familiar with the 'cloud of unknowing' and the dark night that is interwoven with religious belief. It is at these levels of understanding that the argument for atheism needs to engage us if it wants to claim our attention.

Readers who are very serious about the reasonable and logical argumentation for or against the existence of God would be better to consult the recent *Believing by Faith: An Essay in the Epistemology and Ethics of Religious Belief* (Oxford: *Oxford University Press, 2007*) by Auckland philosopher John Bishop. This book accepts that the 'natural' evidence for God's existence is ambiguous and examines the moral justifiability of taking theistic beliefs to be true in one's practical reasoning. The reader should be warned though that some familiarity with philosophy is a considerable advantage in following the careful and intense reasoning employed in presenting this book's arguments.

The 'immorality' of religious belief

A second major line of attack in Dawkins' book is directed against the belief that religion provides us with a *basis for morality*, i.e. moral instruction on how we ought to behave: if there is no God, why be good? Dawkins

maintains on the contrary we cannot ground our morality in holy books which are themselves responsible for wars, violence, and all kinds of discrimination. Atheism of course is also strongly associated with large scale violence particularly in the 20th century. And this condemnation by association can also be applied to democracy, freedom, national sovereignty and any of the great ideas that can motivate peoples' commitment but can take different forms.

Dawkins' argument however is that religion is very often the *cause* of wars and violence. Therefore if religion were eliminated, much of the violence in the world would also be eliminated. Oddly, he does not similarly argue that, independently of religion, British imperial policy in its colonies or Russian communist expansion or American oil interests in the Middle East might have something to do with wars and violence. Dawkins distorts a serious analysis of the causes of violence in favour of his denunciation of religion.

Dawkins himself puts his own basis of morality in the broad liberal consensus of ethical principles that he sees emerging in the world today, i.e. on ethical principles that the 'ordinary decent person today' would come up with. We might consider this belief both laudable and naïve, but in any case the people that hope for and work for such an ethical consensus are likely to be at least as much religious as atheist and we can be grateful for this cooperation.

What Dawkins can teach us

If we do not decide to become atheists as a result of Dawkins' attack on religion, are there still points to be learnt from his critique?

• One point we are reminded of here is that religion (like atheism) is undoubtedly dangerous. Religious people can often assume that their own religious beliefs, even if not those of other religions, are always good for us. This is not the case, and we need to re-examine where our own religious beliefs and the structures of religious organisation can promote, support or be co-opted by violent agendas.

• A second point concerns religious fundamentalism. Dawkins' arguments are strongest where directed against Christian fundamentalism in the form of the arguments for the existence and nature of God from 'Intelligent Design', 'Creationism' (God intervenes to create new species) and the interventionist 'God of the gaps' approach to knowledge (God is claimed as explanation of events in the world whenever science can't yet explain something). It is still relatively easy for religious people to fall back into the simplicity of religious fundamentalism.

• The most important point perhaps is that it matters a great deal *who* we think God is. Whether God exists or not depends upon what we think the nature of God is. Many of our common images and metaphors of God are in need of serious revision. Dawkins does not take us very far down this track but a recent book that does do this is Australian theologian, Val Webb's *Like Catching Water in a Net: Human Attempts to Describe the Divine* (New York & London: *Continuum, 2007*). This book examines in a readable way the multitude of divine metaphors and images that people over the centuries and across different religions, but especially Christianity, have found inviting and believable.

A final point raised by several reviewers of Dawkins' book is the issue of intolerance. *The God Delusion* comes across as an advocate of intolerance towards any kind of belief that is not a relentless rationalism. Dawkins denies this and says that he is merely passionate. But just as we thought we might overcome religious intolerance and even move beyond simple tolerance of diversity, as expressed, for example, in the 2008 *National Interfaith Forum*'s theme "Beyond tolerance: understanding and respect", we are confronted by a new intolerant atheism. ■

Teresa McCann – 1930-2008

Teresa and Paddy McCann were well known figures in Dunedin Catholic circles during the '60s, '70s and '80s especially in charismatic renewal and in social justice circles.

Born in Falls Road, Belfast Teresa started her life's real journey when she met Patrick McCann. They married in 1949 and began their married life in Belfast. They wanted a big family, and five children were born in Ireland. They decided to make a new life for themselves in New Zealand in 1957. They went to Dunedin where the family grew to eight.

Eventually they retired to Paraparaumu for their last home. In 2005 Teresa was struck down with polymyositis. Her years of intense suffering were marked by great courage and acceptance, yet she was always concerned about others. .

Many parishioners of St Patrick's, Paraparaumu and Our Lady of Fatima, Waikanae visited and prayed for her in her long illness of over two years. The family had rosters to spread the domestic work, meals and shopping. At one time there was a daughter in residence for a week each over five successive weeks.

During her long illness the drop in her quality of life was marked by bravery and unselfishness. She became an inspiration to many in St Patrick's parish and to residents of the retirement village.

Eventually Teresa died with her family around her. Her wake on Sunday 11 November was attended by about 300 people. Her funeral held at St Patrick's on 12 November drew 400 or so mourners. I will always remember the quality of care and the time given her by her eight children.

Requiescat in pace.

Nina O'Flynn

A peace initiative 'late, piecemeal and phoney'.

It seems certain that 2008 will be dominated by the final year of George W. Bush's disastrous eight years in power and the political battle for his replacement, be that person a Republican or a Democrat. In a pathetic attempt to regain some credibility, his Middle East tour in January only highlighted his irrelevance and exposed the true purpose of the visit. It was to sell billions of dollars of arms to Israel and Saudi Arabia in order to maintain the pressure for war against Iran.

Nothing has changed since the February column a year ago which pointed to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict as the root cause of the troubles in the Middle East. The human catastrophe inflicted on Gaza can be traced directly to Bush and his Middle East policies over the past two years and is one of the great crimes of this decade. As *The Guardian* pointed out, Bush's engagement in the world's most intractable dispute is late, piecemeal and phoney.

The influence of the Israel lobby on American foreign policy has not abated and as the presidential campaign progresses, all the candidates express their allegiance to the state of Israel, implicitly supporting the $3 billion dollars in annual foreign aid to Israel, with not the slightest criticism of Olmert's relentless persecution of the Palestinians. As Israel continues to expand its settlements on the West Bank the plight of the Palestinians worsens, while the Gaza strip is now a humanitarian disaster. Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and Rudy Giuliani see no political advantage in addressing the Israel/Palestine issue but there are campaign funds available by backing Israel to the hilt.

Bush flitted from Israel to Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region seeking the legacy of a peacemaker seemingly oblivious of the fact that, because of his 'war on terror', the area has spawned terrorists by the thousands who seek revenge for the violence and the chaos he has created. The countless new graves in the Middle East bear testimony to that.

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

Church and state in US politics

The American presidential campaign will run on until the end of this year and will probably cost the equivalent of New Zealand's GNP for 2008. However, what is interesting is the language of all the candidates who seek election. It seems to run contrary to the First Amendment of the US Constitution which declares that the government should neither enforce nor intrude on religion. The separation of church and state was a cornerstone of the French Revolution that separated and reorganised relations between church and state.

We know that Bush was told by God to invade Iraq and John McCain thought the Constitution established a 'Christian nation'. That aside, religion – Christian religion – has become synonymous with morality, righteousness and true democracy. To speak of God now means connecting with a fundamentalist society. Mitt Romney says that "freedom requires religion", Obama seeks the presidency by giving "all praise and honour to God", Hillary Clinton has a "Faith, Family and Values" team and John Edwards assures the nation that "the hand of God is in every step of what happens with me".

The implicit idea behind these public professions of Christian faith is that this is the one true religion and therefore qualifies the believer for the presidency. They have a mandate from God to pursue the leadership. No other faith nor candidate will do. This attitude is the seed bed, not of faith, but of prejudice and discrimination. It is anti-semitic, in the true sense of that expression.

In a democracy, there should be no fixed truth, everyone has the right to offer his view but a claim to absolute truth negates that possibility. The political arena is not the place to dramatise the quest for moral certainty. The American presidential election seems a long way removed from the consequences of the French Revolution and indeed from John F. Kennedy's declaration in 1960, "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute. I believe in a president whose views on religion are his own private affair".

****!

This columnist is now a university student (again) and is awaiting approval of a massive student loan. Having just read in the financial pages that "senior bond holders with collateralised debt obligations are suffering defaults because income streams have ceased", I decided that it was time for more education. Such inscrutable language requires university training to interpret but I totally agree with the idea that "super-senior holders can accelerate payments to themselves". That sounds like me.

I immediately called the editor of this magazine seeking a massive increase in payment for this column in order to meet my own forthcoming debt obligations. The editor's charming assistant, skilled in the art of resuscitation as well as everything else, was able to get him back on his feet and transmit his refusal with expletives deleted.

I thought that this was a short-sighted approach and pointed out the inevitable repercussions. Three or four years hence, when I become entitled to an embossed certificate, I will have to join the brain-drain seeking more money overseas in order to pay off the student loan. Thus will *Tui Motu* lose a valued columnist to the *Uzbekistan Monthly Chronicle*. ■

UN and the sanctity of human life

The United Nations General Assembly recently passed a resolution that had wider implications for the church than we might imagine. The resolution condemned the use of the death penalty and called for its universal abolition.

The passing of this resolution was the culmination of a lengthy campaign in which Catholic voices were prominent. The principal NGO lobbying for the measure was the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty. This was founded in Rome six years ago under the auspices of the Community of Sant' Egidio, one of the 'new movements' in the Catholic church. In this campaign, Sant' Egidio worked closely with Cardinal Martino, president of the *Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace*.

Ten nations co-sponsored the resolution. Eight of these were countries with a Catholic majority. Of the other two, we can be rightly proud that New Zealand was one.

The sponsoring nations fought off the addition to the resolution of a clause that would have widened it to include a condemnation of abortion. This seemingly desirable addition was in reality a tactical move by those opposing the passing of the death penalty moratorium. Confusing the two issues of death penalty and of abortion would have brought those not sharing our views on abortion to oppose the overall resolution. The anti-abortion battle was one to be fought on another day.

Even if it does not have binding force on individual nations, Catholics can rejoice in the passing of a resolution. It clearly embodies the Christian view on the sanctity of human life, with the world community moving in the right direction in the matter of capital punishment.

Why have I said that the resolution has wider implications for the Church than we might imagine?

Cast you memory back over the Catholic practice of past years regarding the death penalty. What was the penalty often imposed by the Inquisition on those found guilty of heresy? The death penalty. There was of course the face-saving device that after being found guilty the accused were handed over to the royal authority. It was the state rather than the Church that actually took the lives. But woe betide any ruler who failed to carry out the execution. This penalty was being imposed, let us recall, not for child molestation or wilful murder, but simply for differing with the Church regarding what belief in Christ and his teachings entailed.

Think back a few centuries earlier. What happened when in the First Crusade in 1099, the Crusaders captured Jerusalem? Virtually every Jew and every Muslim in the city, man, woman and child, was put to the sword. They were not Christians and had no right to live.

Patently the Church's views on the sanctity of human life have evolved over the centuries. Happily they have evolved for the better. Let us rejoice in that.

But one is set wondering about other positions that seem unmoveably entrenched in Catholic life. Make your own pick of the church positions that you wonder might be changed. Is it true that no woman can be ordained a priest? Must the Eucharist always be lead by an ordained minister? Why cannot those in a second marriage readily receive communion? Could Catholics legitimately receive Communion in churches of a different tradition to their own. The list could go on and on.

I cannot tell you which, if any, of the above will ever be changed. I just know that one position that was in its time firmly held and practiced by the Church has been done away with. It makes one wonder what other positions will in time be abandoned. ■

Humphrey O'Leary

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

Maurice Francis McIntyre (1926-2007)

For most of his 81 years, Maurice McIntyre was one who "hungered and thirsted" (*Mt 5,6*) for justice and for integrity. Apart from his professional career in Law, Maurice promoted high ideals by example and by a generous giving of time and talent to a wide range of organisations, institutions and activities, as well as maintaining a special devotion and care for his wife and family.

Maurice graduated in Law at Victoria University where he met his future wife, Anne. They married in 1952 and soon moved to Hamilton to take up a legal career and to begin a family. Later they moved to Gisborne where they were to spend the next 25 years.

At this time Maurice began a 'parallel profession' as columnist in the Catholic Press. It all started in 1953 when his offer of a weekly commentary on radio broadcasting for the *Tablet* newspaper was accepted by the then Editor, Fr O'Dea. The column appeared regularly under the pseudonym *MM*. Shortly afterwards, another column was provided by Maurice, headed *Spotlight on New Zealand* but with a different pseudonym – *Veritas* (latin for 'truth'). When television began, that too came under "*MM's"* scrutiny in his media column.

So, for almost 50 years, ending in 2002, Maurice penned two 800 word columns for the *Tablet*, and later, with that paper's demise, for the newly established *NZ Catholic*. His comments were always topical, dealing with issues and controversies that were in the public scrutiny. Inevitably, some feathers were ruffled, but Maurice constantly provided a much-needed stimulation to debate and some original thinking – which must be good for the health of both church and state. In an interview on retirement from his columns, Maurice admitted that, on occasion, he would deliberately put in a controversial titbit "just to wake people out of their torpor and get them thinking!"

In 1979, he and Anne moved to Wellington. As in Gisborne, Maurice continued to be involved in a number of activities in the Capital, including work for the Catholic Homes Trust, for the Ranui private hospital, for the Thomas More Society and others. Maurice died in early December.

May he rest in peace.

Bernie Hehir

Maurice McIntyre (*left*), in Wellington, with the editor (1996)

A personal memoir.

I first met Maurice at his law office in 1993 shortly after taking over the *Tablet* editorship. He greeted me with some reserve since, as he confessed, he thought I was about to terminate his connection with the *Tablet*. The previous year he had fired a healthy brickbat at me in his column.

I assured him that, on the contrary, I regarded him as the *Tablet*'s chief asset and had come to plead with him to continue. We became firm friends from that moment. Each week I would phone him and discuss topics for his column. From those conversations I always received more than I gave.

Maurice never pulled any punches or suffered fools gladly. His wife Anne always supported him, even if she found she sometimes had to avert her eyes when she met someone in Wellington whom Maurice had been having a 'go' at.

Over 50 years no one surpassed Maurice in his service and devotion to the Catholic press in New Zealand.

M.H.

Sir Edmund Hillary – a memoir

Ten years ago Dr John Heydon, his wife Sue and their three children spent two years at Kunde, in Nepal, working at a clinic started by Sir Edmund Hillary (*see TM March '03*). They returned to Kunde several times,

All this brought the family into close personal contact with Sir Ed. They found him a kindly person, very approachable, down to earth and "fun to be with".

What impressed Sue about him was his thoughtfulness and the wisdom of his decisions in the running of the Himalayan Trust, responsible for various projects he founded. He had been the initiator, and it was his energy that kept the various works going through difficult times as well as good ones. He worked always with the Sherpas as equals.

"It was not so much *what* he did as *how* he did it", says Sue. He never presumed to 'know best' when dealing with the Sherpas. Hillary's principle was "the Sherpas are our friends. You don't impose your opinions on your friends." He was consistently modest and unassuming.

The Heydons grieve his passing; he was their warm and caring friend. ■