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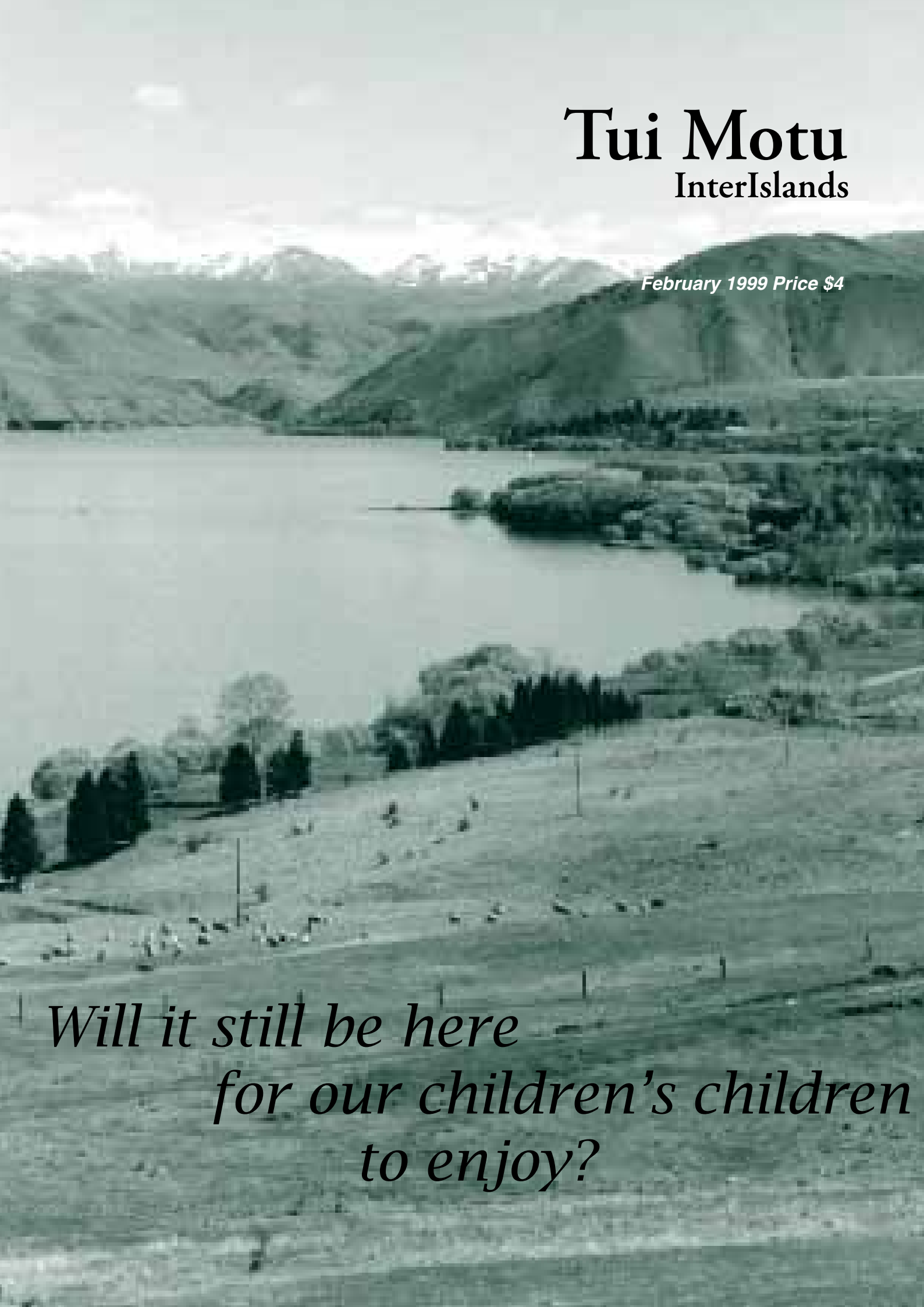

Will it still be here for our children's children to enjoy?

Contents

Cover photo

by Jim Neilan

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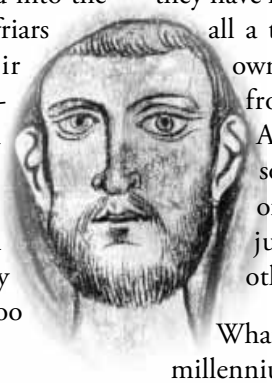
Brother Sun, Sister Moon

As the Millennium draws to its close, media pundits compete to name the greatest statesman, the finest author, the noblest philanthropist, the wisest thinker of the last 1000 years. In literature Will Shakespeare easily leads the field, especially in the English language. But, in my opinion, if we are seeking a person who had the greatest impact on his/her age for the good – and whose life speaks just as eloquently today – then Francis of Assisi stands out.

When he was born, great trading cities like Venice and Milan and Florence were just starting to spread tentacles of monetary dominance through the mediaeval world. In an age of burgeoning commercialism Francis offered a counter-culture and a religious response, not only in what he said but through the life he lived. He helped draw religious life out of the desert and monastic seclusion into the city squares and into the heart of human misery. The friars preached, they dirtied their hands, they lived in the ghettos and rubbed shoulders with the poor. Their lives offered simplicity and brotherhood at a time when human greed was beginning to tear society apart in a way which is all too familiar to us.



Pope John Paul showed a deft diplomatic touch when he chose Assisi as the place for a great major ecumenical gathering of 1986. Francesco Bernardone is claimed by Christians of every colour as their inspiration and mentor. One of the traditional stories of Francis is his journey to Palestine to befriend the Sultan. For Francis, the Muslim was his brother and his sister – and that during the age of the Crusades!

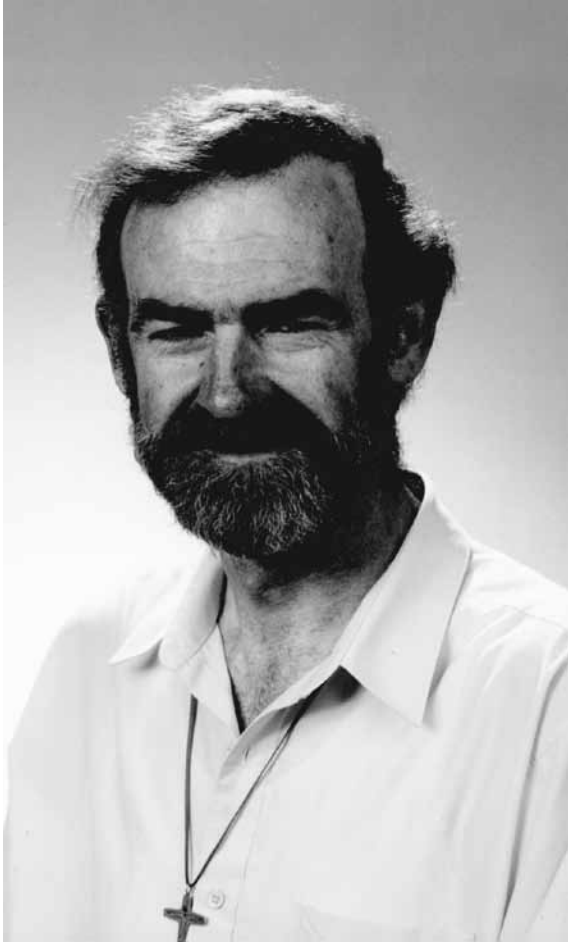
So too were the birds and the beasts and the land and its fruits: they were all his brothers and sisters, worthy of continuing reverence. Perhaps that is the supreme reason why Francis is a symbol and example for us in this twilight year of 1999. Of all the conflicts which threaten the earth at the turn of millennium, even the constant warring and religious pogroms pale before the threat presently offered to the future of the planet itself. Humanity is poised through sheer greed to destroy the very world which sustains our being.

Francis is celebrated for his joy and his love of peace. But he is also known as the *poverello* – the little poor one of Assisi. He deliberately turned his back on wealth and extravagance. He taught and lived a life of simplicity and care for the creatures who share the world with us. This month's *Tui Motu* focuses especially on the issue of Ecology and the paramount need for drastic changes in the way we live and exploit the earth. We tell stories of people who have made this choice, and the lessons they have learnt which might teach us all a thing or two. Nor can our own land boast any immunity from this universal disease. Aotearoa-New Zealand has sold its soul to the religion of materialistic self-adulation just as profligately as any other nation on earth.

What a new century and a new millennium needs – far more than exploiting the tourist dollar ogling at the first sunrise of the year 2000 in Poverty Bay – is a renewal of faith appropriate to our beautiful land. It needs to hear and respond again to the voice of Christ, not uttered in the accents of the coloniser but in symbols and concepts which belong here and help unify our diverse cultures. And it needs to persuade our people to embrace and live this renewed faith. Then we might have something of value to trumpet about as we celebrate the 2000th birthday of the humble carpenter of Nazareth.

M.H.

(Portrait of St Francis is a detail from a 13th Century fresco, Subiaco, Central Italy)



On a Dunedin summer's evening we looked down on Port Chalmers from high on the flank of Mt Cargill. We honoured the beauty of the scene with awed silence: its silver-blue surface touched by mere catspaws of breeze; houses just tiny pale boxes strewn around the green hills of near and farther shore. Above a hawk hovered, a lark sang. The container ship beside the dock looked like a child's scale-model; yellow machines loading it like ants carrying loads eight times their own size. Nearby, a small mountain of wood chips awaiting export.

So peaceful a scene – but as we talked, we realised that before our eyes many struggles for survival were going on and much destruction. Out at the harbour heads, under a scarf of mist was the albatross colony. Although sealers and whalers no longer plunder these coasts, every year the majestic albatross is pushed towards extinction, for thousands die on the lines of our fishing industry because it is 'uneconomic' to prevent it. Out beyond the horizon, fleets harvest vast tonnages of fish with shamefully inadequate regulation, careless of the future of the species they plunder for quick profit.

And all that movement of cargo: is the global community ready yet to ask the hard questions? Who *really* benefits when great quantities of fossil fuels are burnt to carry potato crisps from Belgium, cheese from France, bottled drinking water from somewhere overseas – when all these can be provided locally? The death of local industry and skills is a kind of rape of the planet's resources: a madness driven by the profit-seeking of the powerful few and not for the common good of the many. We consumers encourage this madness when we buy goods to fulfil our greed, not our need. What cost to Mother Earth is our extravagance?

Up here on the hillside pine plantations grow to provide a retirement income for the locals: do they heed the damage to local wildlife by the monoculture they create. We are surrounded by imported plants and animals: huge stands of macrocarpa, sheep, rabbits, foxgloves and gorse, abundant deer and possums in the forest behind us. Some of these immigrants have brought much good; but many – so carelessly introduced – have severely damaged the web of native life. The yellow-eyed penguin, Hector's dolphin and even the humble kiwi are all under threat of extinction.

Worldwide, no one knows why the frog population is declining. The cynical will laugh and say: "So what!" But frogs are the natural controllers of the insect population. Urgently we need to find what it is in our human technology which is wiping out these sensitive species. Otherwise we are cutting away at the very foundations of our own survival.

In the summer twilight above Port Chalmers we became thoughtful. If earth's beautiful moments are so undermined by our unhealthy, insane treatment of her resources, what hope is there for the planet? And if we so damage Creation how does this affect our relationship with God? If it is evil to kill oneself or another human being, is it any less evil to wantonly destroy whole species putting life itself at risk? Our churches, officially, are coming round only slowly to look at these urgent ecological issues. This may be one reason why the young lose interest in the organisational church.

That night I had come away from the Dominican Sisters' Chapter. Ecological issues had been talked about. It was a joy to hear this or that 'retired' Sister speak of the garden she had started, about the dignity of growing one's own food and sharing it with people in the neighbourhood. Are such tiny efforts a bit pathetic? On the contrary.

...the little good which each one of us can achieve

In February a Dominican from New Jersey, Sr Miriam MacGillis, will be visiting New Zealand to share her ecological wisdom with many New Zealanders. We may hope that such concerned people will grow to become a 'critical mass', eventually bringing lawmakers and the mighty Corporations to treat the earth itself more justly.

So the many-sided theology of creation is awakening in the hearts of individuals. It will flourish only as each person develops a contemplative heart. We cannot expect others to value what we ourselves do not love or treat with care. To spread the truth and to act ourselves: this is the little good which each day each one of us can achieve. ■

Peter Murnane

(Peter Murnane OP is chaplain to Auckland University. Sr Miriam MacGillis's New Zealand tour started in Auckland 5 February. For information phone 09 638 8600)

letters ✍ CCANZ Withdrawal

True charity and Ecumenism

Ecumenism was discussed in the November *Tui Motu*. Many valuable points were made, yet I was left with a feeling that something was missing. In view of the recent withdrawal of the Catholic Church from CCANZ it is important to find out why. Vatican II describes Ecumenism not in terms of a change of loyalties of individuals so much as a coming together of whole bodies of separated Christians into an act of reunion (*Ecumenism* 4:4).

Jesus empowered and equipped the Church to evangelise the world from paganism, which it actually achieved in about 400 years. With the approach of the Millennium the world has reverted to paganism. So why is the Church making no impression on contemporary pagan society?

The Church had visible unity in the early centuries. It follows that if the Christian Church is ever to achieve its purpose it must be committed to and strive for *visible* unity. Even if the ecumenical process were to take a hundred years there must still be that underlying objective in the hearts of all concerned: *that they may all be one*.

The Catholic bishops would therefore have to withdraw from the National Ecumenical body if this overall objective could not be kept in view.

Patrick Cronin, Nelson (abridged)

CCANZ and the Women's Programme

In 1992 the CCANZ goal of inclusiveness sought the participation of marginalised Christians, and the Women's Programme operated inclusively without regard for denominational affiliation or ecclesial status.

In 1994 there began a full review of CCANZ... and in 1995 the Review Board expressed the need for member Churches "to seek common understandings on what ecumenism is and the nature of the unity it expresses". The Review Working Group (1996) found "no consistent and coherent understanding". Whether CCANZ existed for the ecumenical purposes of its member Churches or as a body which was largely autonomous in relation to its constituent member Churches became a crucial question.

With the introduction of the new Constitution in 1997 membership of a denomination became more important than being a Christian; the Constitution became more important than its earlier prophetic vision and goals. Effectively CCANZ had moved away from its Women's Programme.

After negotiation, rather than work within the imposed structure which in disempowering women dishonoured the *Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women*, the Women's Programme withdrew from CCANZ. The 1994 question remains unanswered: "To what extent is CCANZ an accurate reflection/expression of the ecumenical commitment/vision of the Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Anne Taylor, Dunedin (abridged)

overseas news

Capital Punishment

The Catholic Church's official teaching on capital punishment has gradually become clearer. Individual Bishops' Conferences had called for a complete abolition, but the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* allowed the death penalty in restricted cases. Then the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* took a step further and forced corrections in later editions of the *Catechism*. The burden of proof was put on governments to show why there was no viable alternative to the death penalty.

Now the Pope in his Christmas message has made an explicit plea for complete abolition. President Clinton's spokesperson said: "We appreciate the Pope's point of view, but the President's position on the death penalty is well known.

Four countries were responsible for 84 percent of executions worldwide in 1997: China, Iran, Saudi Arabia – and the United States.

Should Popes be able to retire?

The Dominican Provincial in Switzerland believes that it should be possible for Popes to retire. Fr Hubert Niclasse said, in an interview with the monthly *Kirche Intern*, "In my opinion it would be desirable one day for the Pope to be permitted to say: 'I have fulfilled my task; now I can retire'. There is nothing to suggest that the Pope may not retire. A retirement can be a sign of wisdom.

Sign of the Times

One of Ireland's best known seminaries, *All Hallows*, in Dublin has now not a single clerical student. For 200 years *All Hallows* 'exported' priests to many countries, including Australia and New Zealand. The last two resident seminarians were ordained in December.

On the other hand the college has 550 students taking theology courses, most of them lay people.

Dying with dignity

Sean O'Riordan, an Irish Redemptorist with an international reputation, spent much of his life dealing with moral decision making. His own last moral decision concerned the manner of his death. When he realised he was dying, he gave clear instructions as to how he wished his case to be managed.

If it was simply a matter of medically maintaining him, then he wished to be allowed to die a dignified and gentle death. No intervention to hasten the end; simply that any treatment to prolong his life be discontinued at the appropriate time.

He named members of his community who were to make this decision and communicate it to him. Thus he was able to say farewell to family and friends. On his final day he could no longer speak but was able to follow the concelebrated Mass, extending his hand at the invocation of the Spirit. He died peacefully the following night.

A Theology of the Earth ...and the Creatures who dwell there

We live in an age of decision. We face a vital choice between two conflicting ideologies:

- do we reverence the earth, its peoples and its teeming life? Are we one people on planet earth with a profound sense of gratitude for the beauty and abundance which a loving Creator has given us for our care?
- or do we look upon the earth and its peoples as commodities to exploit and abuse for our own selfish, individual benefit? Perhaps we are the last generation on earth to have this choice.

This month *Tui Motu* has invited two groups of Christian people who care about these issues to tell their stories. We are grateful to them for allowing this intrusion. In North Auckland a group of Religious have set up a rural centre where a spirituality of the earth is lived and taught. In Nelson a family transformed a barren piece of worked out land into a miniature Eden where no sprays or monocultural methods violate the natural balance of species.

But the ecological crisis is far greater than simply the methods we use to till the earth and pasture our stock. It affects the oceans and the way we fish. Indeed it is now changing the climate of the whole earth. Like a human body the earth itself will tolerate only so much abuse before it suffers irreversible damage. A third article tells the story of the Sardine fisheries off the west African coast. It underlines some of the current absurdities of the world economy.

Genesis in North Auckland

Genesis Farm, New Jersey, the home of Sr Miriam MacGillis OP. Peter Healey went to *Genesis* in 1992, and came back determined to follow the same ecological path

It has been seven years since the Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro, and very little has changed in the meantime to safeguard life on earth as a long term possibility. Peter Healey, a New Zealand Marist priest, attended the Rio gathering. He has always been interested in environmental issues and is a member of the Green Party. What triggered him into action – rather than just interest – was going to Rio de Janeiro in 1992 on behalf of the NZ Network of Religious for Justice.

For Peter the Rio Conference was an eye-opener. It drew people concerned for the future of the planet from all its corners. A challenging phrase which has stuck with him, a slogan of the World Watch Institute, is: *the next 30 years of the earth's history are critical.* A scientific path towards healthy human development has been in place for the last 300 years, and it has produced many benefits for humankind. It is, however, a flawed system in that it claims to be able to solve all our current woes, whether they be in medicine, agriculture or in domestic science. The truth is that more science and technology applied to our world is not going to make things better. For Peter, a more appropriate path than the scientific one is to return to basics: to go back to the land, to live in harmony with its natural fertility – and not exploit it.

On the way back from Rio Peter visited *Genesis Farm* in New Jersey, where Dominican Sister Miriam MacGillis lives and works. This was already well established in 1992. It is an organic farm supported by a cluster of families in the surrounding neighbourhood. They pay to finance its running. In return they receive the produce. At the same time *Genesis* works as a centre for education in ecology, spirituality and sustainability. The farm was started by Religious, and therefore has a good pedigree since historically the monks have had a great track record in good husbandry and in transforming the wilderness into fertile land. And the monasteries were often a focus for education.

So, on return to New Zealand, Peter linked up with Josephite Sisters Noelene Landrigan and Colleen Woodcock. Noelene had studied Creation Spirituality with the Columban, Fr J. J. Ryan, in Australia, and about this time Matthew Fox had come to New Zealand and had aroused a lot of enthusiasm for environmental spirituality in Auckland. Peter, Noelene and Colleen started an Urban Ecology project on a small scale on the Sisters' property in Northcote, Auckland. They endeavoured to interest the local community in their work, and also linked up with the Eco-Village community in Auckland. Alongside this environmental work they became active in the CCANZ/Community Sector initiative, *Building Our Own Future*, which was working with many groups such as the unemployed, youth, Unions, women's organisations and churches.

Peter and Noelene, along with Bill and Sue Bradford, saw an opportunity to make their dream become more of a reality by acquiring, in 1994, a 50 acre property near Wellsford, north of Auckland. For Noelene it was like going home, since she was raised on a dairy farm in Taranaki, and was used to manual work in her years of teaching and running schools and convents. For Peter, coming from a Marist teaching background, it was something of a culture shock!

Rustic roadsign outside Kingfisher Farm, Wellsford

Noelene Landrigan (right) and Catherine Woodcock at Kingfisher Farm, with *Kotare*, the calf who came to birth with difficulty – hence the name! Peter Healey on tractor

The venture is called *Kingfisher Farm*, and the Sisters of St Joseph are in partnership there with the Bradford family. On the surface this may seem an unlikely alliance. Sue Bradford is a well-known political and social activist, having had an early involvement in peace and justice movements in America and in New Zealand. Sue has always sought a spiritual dimension to her work for justice. Bill Bradford is the farmer of the group. His father, Roy, has spent years in the Pacific as an agricultural adviser for the NZ Government, and Bill and his brother once owned their own farm in the Hokianga. The Bradfords and Peter and Noelene discovered they had a common vision – seeking and working for a more egalitarian society.

Working with them is another couple who joined them in 1998: Quentin Jukes and Shona Solomon have initially given two years to help build the centre which is called *Kotare*, the Maori name for Kingfisher. They also offer hospitality and catering services to visitors and participants. Three old classroom blocks have been moved onto the land. Although the buildings are not yet complete, several seminars have already been held there.

Peter Healey says: "New Zealanders can no longer rest on their laurels under a 'clean and green' banner. As with every westernised nation we are at a stage of early adolescence when it comes to relating appropriately to the natural world." Peter sees it as primarily a spiritual problem, arising from a false sense of what is *sacred*. "The realm of the sacred has been relegated to specially designated places and these places have been in the care of designated holy men or women. The earth has become a second class type of reality. The earth along with its air, soils, waterways and landforms is sentenced to a lesser realm".

Peter notes that in the whole of his seminary training in moral theology there was never a mention of the moral and ethical need to preserve the breathability of air, or the purity of water or the organic life of soils. By moving onto the land Peter and Noelene are able to live out what they profess. The seminars which he and the team run emphasise that the environment has become *the* spiritual issue of our age. Crisis point has been reached. It becomes imperative to ground people in ecological values and ethics.

In tandem with the environmental objective the team are also seeking to realise one of the dreams of the late Fr John Curnow. To this end seminars are run to provide education in social change, leadership and community organisation. This wing of the venture is known as the *Kotare Research and Education Centre for Social Change*. Central to their philosophy, Noelene maintains, is to give people the skills to find solutions to their problems in their own gifts and in their own life, rather than seeking help elsewhere.

Living and working on the land transforms one's theology and one's spirituality

For the folks on *Kingfisher Farm* the two projects go together in harmony, since they are both facets of justice work. While there has been little official church interest in their work, the *Kotare Centre* has received significant church backing. In fact the outreach is to a community of people often outside and beyond the churches. The issues which are being taught and lived are human issues in the broadest sense. Many who support them have been turned off mainline churches because these do not appear to be addressing the real issues of people. Yet there is a deep spiritual yearning, and here is an area where Catholics and other Christian groups can respond to these needs.

So how does this vocation of Peter Healey's tie up with his life as a priest? Peter admits there have been difficulties. John Curnow had warned him: "Don't let your priesthood subvert your religious life" – and one prime aspect of the religious life is to live prophetically. But Peter finds in his work a profoundly eucharistic theme. Eucharist symbolises the oneness of the divine and the material, the organically grown. Living on the land transforms one's theology and one's spirituality. An essential part of it is doing hard physical work. The educational outreach is a task which implies taking on spiritual leadership, to help move society towards a reverence for the earth and its creatures, to appreciate creation as a divine handiwork: surely this is a priestly task *par excellence* for all of us. ■

Miracle in Motueka

When Ron and Edith Sharp came to Riwaka 12 years ago they had nothing but a dream. But by dint of hard slog they have created a little paradise

Edith grew up in a European village. The house-cum-shop was on the main road surrounded by concrete and tarseal: the window boxes were the only 'garden'. No grass verges to the roads; cows and sheep graze right up to the edges of rural roads; trees in the wood are selectively felled: every inch of space is utilised.

Edith's grandmother knew all about the local herbs and their medicinal powers. She 'potentised' them. She would have been burnt at the stake in earlier times! Edith loved to collect the linden tree blossoms, the flowers of chamomile and the native herbs as she wandered with her family on country walks. Her mother showed her how to make herbal teas. Marigold petals would be turned into skin creams; hawthorn berry potion into a heart disease preventative. She learnt to ferment the flowers of elderberries to make a wonderful cheap fizzy drink. For Edith, to be able to care for her own little section of Mother earth would be a dream come true.

Ron's earliest memories are of the New Zealand 'quarter acre paradise' where he lived with his family. Dad has his vege patch and Mum her flower garden. Ron's teenage chores were to keep the lawns tidy with a handmower, trim the edges with hand shears, and hunt for weeds among the flowers and shrubs. Everything was kept in neat geometrical plots. The planet may be made up of air, water, fire and earth – but each element had to have its allotted slot.

When Ron and Edith met, well past their twenties, they recognised the wisdom of the Spirit in their waiting and the potential in the teaming up of their two lives. Twelve years ago – now with two young children – they heard of an affordable one and three quarter acre section near Nelson. The land was once river bed, and the boulders and shingle lay only a few inches below the sandy silt. Their first lettuces grew to the size of a teacup, revealing the poverty of the life of their soil. They found that for 40 years their ground had been used for growing tobacco, and every scrap of nutriment had been drained from it.

To build up the soil again Ron would drive round the neighbourhood collecting any organic waste he could find in a borrowed trailer. There was hop waste full of non-biodegradable string which had to be extracted, waste from a flower grower, ruined hay, weeds and grass clippings. Two days a month were spent gathering material to make huge heaps of compost. Every year for nine years he made 18 to 20 cubic metres of compost. Now the growing plots have acquired at least a couple of inches of good topsoil – and the lettuces are the size of kitchen bowls!

How did we do it?

And why didn't we use commercial chemical fertilisers and get the results much quicker? Because we determined to work with, rather than against, nature. Beneath the tree canopy of Aotearoa's native forests lie myriads of leaves, twigs and branches rotting into new soil for seedlings. Composting simply mimics what Mother Earth is doing all the time. The forest floor is soft and spongy, not compacted by the wheels of heavy tractors – so the plots we made were workable from the edge, and only hand tools were used. Nature never produces monoculture – so our plan was to grow a variety of plants. In the forest there is teeming life of insects, moths, birds and animals.

Likewise a healthy soil will bring a balance of pest/predator insects. Aphids, caterpillars, slugs, snails and other pests all have their share; but with lots of companion plants and attractive flowers among the vegetables, there will also be bees and birds and natural predators keeping the horticultural life in balance. We love to observe the praying mantis, the ladybirds, the hover wasps and dragonflies from our pond – and the children take delight in them too. In 12 years we have seldom encountered an infestation.

What do the Magi, the Maori and other indigenous people – and organic growers – have in common? They have a cosmic outlook, for they observe the Spirit in the moon and the energy flows of the universe. The moon does not merely influence the tides: the whole earth, its soil and atmosphere seem to respond to energetic impulses according to constellation and planetary positioning.

Some days are watery, and best results come from caring for leaf plants like lettuce; other days are fiery – and fruit plants respond best (tomatoes, apples); other days are airy, and flower plants bloom; yet others are earthy, and root plants like carrots and beetroot flourish. This does not only happen on moon cycle days but also on wider cycles. Compost making is best done when the moon is in a descending state, moving closer to the Earth (not to be confused with the moon's waning).

Our patch, which is on loan to us to care for, is dotted with plots for vegetables, others for fruit trees, an area for three milking goats, and a stand of native trees. Shelter is provided by tree lucernes and alder because these are nitrogen-fixing and enrich the soil. Chooks meander among the trees broadcasting their nitrogenous effluent. Some might say the place looks chaotic and unkempt compared with the orderliness of more conventional gardens.

The grass is let grow longer with natural 'weeds' flowering among it. Docks take the nutrients deep within the soil; dandelion has medicinal qualities; plantain provides instant relief from stings; and comfrey and stinging nettle make great liquid fertilisers. We gather seaweed for mulching around plants and smothering pest harbours under trees as well as for moisture retention.

And we like to be part of the local economy by selling all our produce at the gate or in the local Motueka market. In these days when people feel threatened by chemically stimulated growth and horror stories of genetic engineering, there is a growing desire for organically grown food. The sort of remarks that encourage us no end are: "Your gardens look wonderful!" "I can see and feel a good spirit about this place". "That lettuce was beautiful." We are also part of the local Green Dollar skills swap, where wares and skills are exchanged without money.

What are we learning?

- Teilhard de Chardin's experience of the Spirit of God pulsating within the whole Universe in evolutionary waves penetrating all forms of matter.
- The breakdown of the old classical principles: cause and effect, determinism, the whole consisting of no more than a number of parts. These ideas have caused humans to think they can control and manipulate Nature at will.
- The interrelatedness of all creation. Parts are not separate from the whole. The Universe is the 'Body of God'. All creatures must work together, and none may dominate the rest.
- Life is not a humanly-controlled organisation. It's a dance in waves rather than in regular beats. We learn to go with the flow and rhythm of the Spirit rather than be ruled by predictable outcomes.
- Negatives are not always *sin-full*, but need to be befriended because they are full of potential for new beginnings. The wheat plant must die to produce the seed. The Spirit of God permeates a process of birth, death and rebirth.
- Every creature, animate or inanimate, has its lifestory. Each plant grows to a different tune. There is no set pattern. We listen to that story rather than force it into our mould. Giant stories arise because human feet and tools trample the lives of insects.
- Ancient wisdom is being revived in the relearning of old horticultural practices.
- If large farms were split up into two-acre blocks, there would be enough employment for everyone in Aotearoa, sufficient for families to live on as well as share with others. There would be less need for humankind to be crammed into impersonal, consumer-driven cities. ■

Ex-Aucklander Ron Sharp milking one of the goats on the organically balanced farmlet which he and his wife Edith have established near Motueka

Ron Sharp

Squid Boats in a Japanese port preparing to scour the world's oceans in search of an abundant catch. The squid are lured by batteries of powerful lamps (*photo: Robyn Skelton*)

The Rich.. ..have inherited the Oceans

A simple tin of sardines has become a can of worms in West Africa, writes Paul Brown of the Guardian Weekly

There, poor fishermen, prevented by international treaty from fishing off their own shores, are forced to buy their own sardines in European cans. The seas are being scoured clean in a saga of greed, exploitation and irrationality.

Mauritanian fishermen sit in harbour gazing out to sea. In the distance, where Africa bulges out into the Atlantic, they watch sunlight glinting off other men's boats. They dare not set sail for fear of being jailed – their government has banned the catching of this coast's traditional harvest of sardines. The reason? Overfishing.

Yet vessels are out there fishing: giant factory trawlers are scooping up the sardines they are not allowed to take. The Mauritanian government is powerless to stop this plunder because under a European Union agreement the state is getting more than $600 million in hard cash over six years to allow unlimited fishing of its waters. The country needs the money to pay off its foreign debts, some of them loans from Europe.

But for African fishermen, deprived of both income and their main source of protein, something hurts even more. The Dutch factory trawlers take the sardines to the Canary Islands, package them and send them back to West Africa. So if the Mauritanians want to eat the fish that were once swimming off their own coast they have to buy them from European suppliers. The scarcely affordable prices reflect the use of expensive ships and Canary Island labour paid at European Union rates.

Europeans do not eat enough sardines to match the West African harvest. The EU's main interest is to keep expensive subsidised fishing fleets employed and provide employment for Europeans. The chief markets for tinned sardines are those countries that would normally have eaten fresh sardines caught by local fishermen. So the sardines packaged in Las Palmas go on sale in West Africa.

This is the worst current example of the EU's exploitation of its financial power to gain access to the fisheries of poorer countries in exchange for a cash payment. There are 25 such agreements, 14 of them with countries in Africa and the Indian ocean permitting about 4,000 European vessels to fish in non-EU zones.

Although the sardine catches are sold back to the region where they are caught, the main market for these foreign catches is elsewhere. More than 50 per cent of the fish now eaten in Europe is imported from distant waters. Japan's home market sucks in huge quantities of fish from around the world.

Once the poor man's source of protein, fish has become far more expensive than meat. In the Mediterranean the average price of fish in restaurants is now three times that of meat: 20 years ago fresh fish was half the price of meat. The high price of fish and its image as the rich man's food is a recent phenomenon. Fish as a source of protein and an item of trade is as old as civilisation. The Greeks colonised the Black Sea because of its plentiful fish. Salt cod fed much of

Europe from Elizabethan times.

Many of the fishing agreements made by the EU are with some of the poorest countries in the world, Mauritania and neighbouring Senegal being just two of them. Both need money to pay back aid loans. Of course it was never intended that the sardines should go back to Mauritania. The EU's distant-water fishing agreements, as they are called, were designed to pay needy countries for *surplus* fish stocks not fully exploited by the host country. Often part of the deal is to boost the fishing fleets and technical know-how of developing countries with investments so that they make better use of resources.

The rich marine stocks are Mauritania's main source of wealth, and the EU, Japan, Ukraine and Russia have all made deals to fish the country's waters. So large have been the combined catches of these fleets that even though the West African coast used to be one of the most productive in the world its fisheries are now in danger of collapse.

A two-month moratorium on sardine catches was imposed from September 1. After initially choosing to ignore it, the European Commission ordered EU vessels out of the area a month later. Research has now begun into the size of the sardine stocks and a safe level for fishing.

Resistance to this exploitation of Third World fish stocks is being mounted in Brussels by a group called the *Coalition for Fair Fishing Agreements*, a loose-knit but respected lobby of environmental and fishing organisations from the poorer countries. It points out that fishing agreements do not comply with the European Commission's stated policy of sustainable development and is telling the politicians that such agreements are depriving poor people in these countries of their best source of protein – and pushing them towards malnutrition.

fishing agreements are depriving poor people of their best source of protein – and pushing them towards malnutrition

The dilemma of West African states bordering the Atlantic is merely a symptom of a world-wide crisis over fish stocks. Capital to build larger and larger fishing vessels is provided by governments despite clear scientific evidence that most fisheries of the world are over-exploited. Some have already completely collapsed, the most celebrated being the Canadian cod banks. The last act in that drama was the arrest of the EU-subsidised Spanish trawler *Estai* in October 1994 off Newfoundland. The commercial fishery has been closed ever since. The Spanish had the last catch of cod the Elizabethans once said were so numerous that sailors could walk over their backs to the shore.

Every country with distant-water fleets heavily subsidises them, in blatant contravention of World Trade Organisation rules. Environment groups say, and the United Nations accepts, that this is jeopardising the health of the world fisheries, but so far nothing has been done. Some hope lies in the creation of 300km exclusive economic zones. It is this that forces the EU to pay for the right to fish off Mauritania.

A sensible fishing policy depends on these states having an understanding of how to exploit their oceanic resources to best advantage. The World Wide Fund for Nature says: "The coastal state, if acting rationally, will, or will not, decide to grant access in the light of the expected impact that this decision will have upon the state's long-term economic and social interests".

It is a judgment that many countries need to make, too. As the Mauritanian fishermen await permission to relaunch their boats they must reflect how little evidence there is that anyone in the world is acting sensibly in everyone's long-term interests. ■

Seal kill triggers domino effect

One of the most endearing of all marine mammals could be at risk – from one of the most popular. *Orcinus orca*, the killer whale celebrated in the film *Free Willy*, is eating up the cousins of fellow celluloid star *Tarka*, the sea otter. Researchers in West Alaska report in the US Journal *Science* that an abrupt fall in the sea otter population has meant an explosion in their prey, the sea urchins – which in turn threatens the huge, submarine kelp forests of the north Pacific coast.

Orcas prefer seals and sea lions, but trawlers and factory ships are cleaning out the fish of the Bering Straits and Aleutian archipelago, triggering a chain of cruel consequences.

Because the fish have gone, so have the seals. So killer whales eat otters instead, the scientists say. They began studying the region's ecosystem in the 1970s. It was not until 1991 that they saw a killer whale attack a sea otter. Since then they have watched a dozen attacks, and the sea otter population has declined by a quarter each year, from 53,000 in 1978 to 6,000 last year.

Killer whales are big animals: a single orca would need to eat 1,825 otters a year to live, since otters – unlike seals – have very little blubber and are poor nutrition for mammals in near-freezing waters. "They're eating popcorn instead of steaks," says Paul Dayton of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in California.

In a cascade of consequences of overfishing, kelp forests have declined 12-fold under attack from the otter's normal prey, the sea urchin – disaster for spawning fish, mussels, barnacles and even bald eagles, which rely on the kelp. ■

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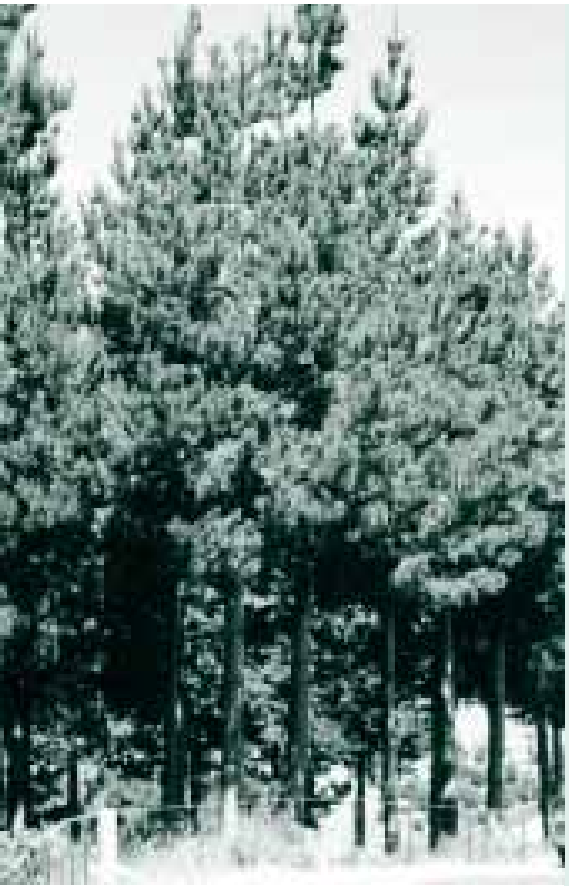
Pine.. or Pohutakawa?



Tree Colonies

Pinus Radi-bloody-ata,
from Whangarei to Waipiata,
everywhere I look I see
needles bristling on a tree.
Forming ranks on every hill,
fodder for the nearest mill.
Shallow-rooted boring stands
taking over all our lands.
Where the Rimu, where the Ponga?
Pine alone in Onehunga.
Give me Kauri, give me Rata,
anything but radiata.
Enough's enough, it has to stop;
I vow to take an axe and chop
down every tree my eye offend
from Kawhia until Woodend.
And if I must, I'll die a martyr
to Pinus Radi-bloody-ata.

Mike Riddell

..Christianity in New Zealand

by Mike Riddell

On the one side of the mountain the pines grow. They rise up high and stately, like the pillars of a Cathedral. We are aware of a religious solemnity in their shadow. Their branches say, moved by the wind, "Endure, endure, one day we will come to God." But below the pines nothing can grow. One finds only pine needles and dog manure.

On the other side of the mountain grow the the broad-leafs. They do not rise so high. Their branches spread out horizontally and much dead material falls to the forest floor. The scene is not a tidy one. But saplings grow among the rotted wood and fallen leaves, and the broad-leafs shelter them with their branches.

(James K Baxter: *Thoughts About the Holy Spirit)*

There is something about Christian faith in this land which indicates a lack of belonging. An appropriate analogy might be the pine tree which has been introduced to Aotearoa-New Zealand. Pine trees are quick-growing, utilitarian, adaptable and shallow-rooted. They have usurped entire hillsides where native bush might otherwise have flourished in luxuriant chaos. Pine plantations represent stately order and disciplined productivity. They have been imported from the Northern Hemisphere, like so many other elements of Pakeha culture and history.

Contrast the pine with the native pohutakawa, which grows in the most unlikely and exposed locations. It clings to the sheer rock of the coastline, with its roots reaching like desperate fingers clawing a grip on the land. The pohutakawa is no exotic under threat from its local environment; on the contrary, it is part of the environment. It belongs here, thrives here, and contributes its own special magic to our environment.

Christianity has come to New Zealand like the pine – towering, formal, domineering and out of place. It remains largely an import. While Pakeha culture retained its strong links with Britain, the establishment of a largely European church seemed unremarkable. It was an expression that our hearts, values and worship belonged elsewhere. But when our trans-global umbilical cord was painfully severed at last, the church stood isolated in its irrelevance and lack of connection to the culture in which it had been abandoned.

To switch for a moment to more formal theological language, contextual-isation of the gospel has never taken place. The pressing need for the Christian community in our land is to embed the faith in native soil. To survive in our cultural environment, it is necessary that the roots of faith follow the example of the pohutakawa and take a life-giving grip. Thus far the penetration has been shallow and ineffectual.

This is a 'far land' with the associations of pilgrimage, questing and discovery

The community of Christ has largely failed to either understand or articulate the angst or hopes of Pakeha inhabitants of the land. Neither our preaching nor our worship has captured the hearts and minds of the people. Nor, one suspects, has the gospel been effectively modelled in a way which distinguishes the church from other bastions of middle class culture and authority.

Whatever theological reflection has taken place among Pakeha has proceeded almost despite the church rather than because of it. The vehicle of theological discourse has been the creative output of some of our leading artists and literary figures. While we might search in vain for a scattering of contextual theologians within ecclesiastical halls, we find in symbol-makers such as McCahon and Baxter an apparent obsession with theological themes.

Any attempt at contextualising Christianity in New Zealand must take cognisance of the formative influence of our physical location. That primal wound which lies at the heart of many expressions of Pakeha culture may well be an expression of alienation from the land. The features of our geography in and of themselves contribute to theological formation.

We live on an island, surrounded by sea. All who come here must do so by leaving something behind and embarking on a journey in which everything familiar sinks beneath the horizon. This is a 'far land', with the mythological associations of pilgrimage, questing and discovery. In a sense we are all migrants, *tangata whenua* and *manuhiri* alike.

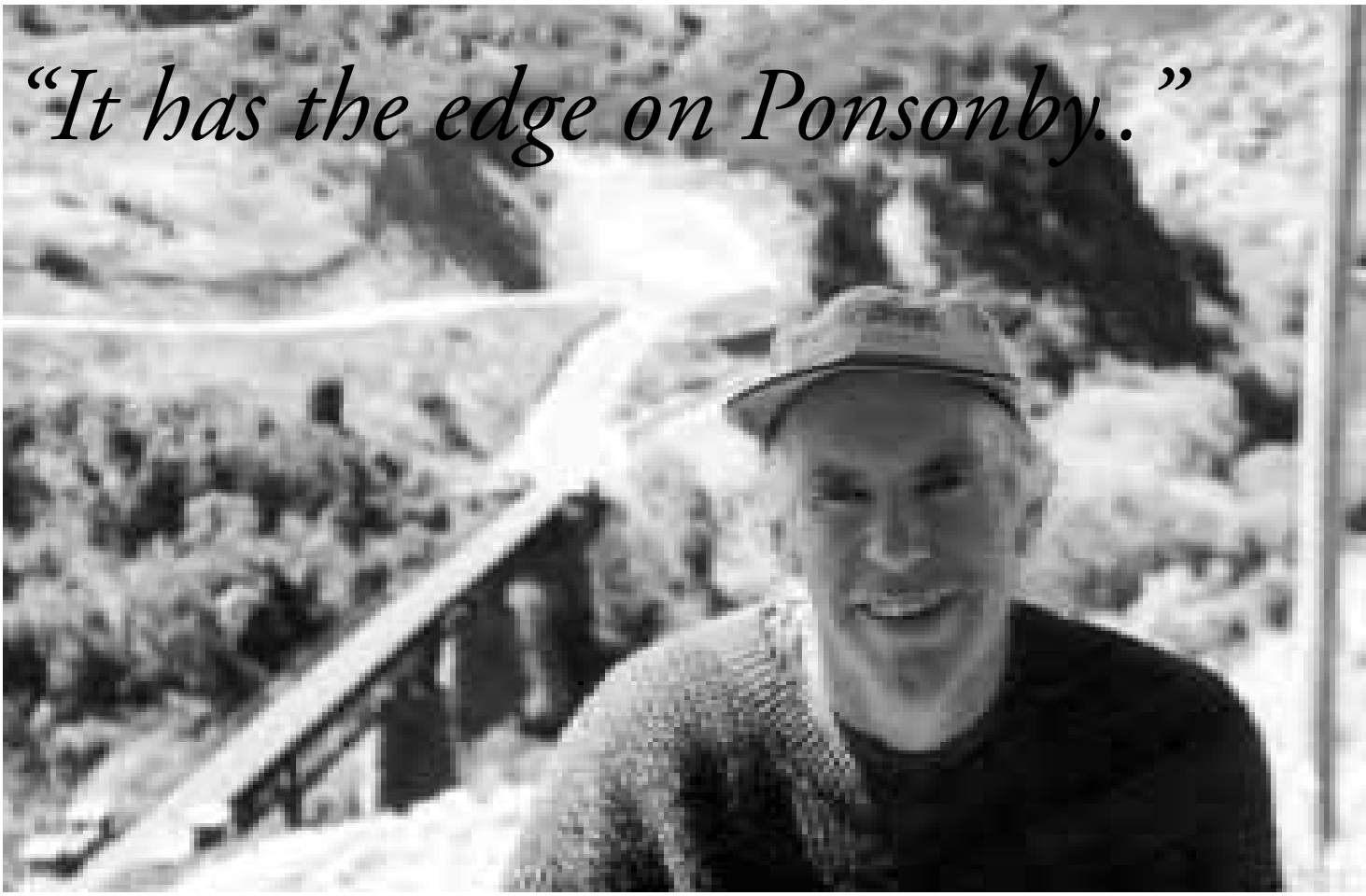
The all-embracing sea whispers to us of longing, separation and death. The long flat beaches which mark the borders are our confessionals, labyrinths and playgrounds. We live close to the radical openness of the coastal horizon, with all the possibility and tang of adventure which it offers. Let us not imagine that this does not give us a different perspective on life and faith from those in land-locked countries.

And then there is the sky. Its soaring blue cathedral heights lift the lid on life and allow us to dream as if there were no limits. The weight of history does not bear down upon us as it does in some European settings with a low cloud base. We can see into the distance, so that which is far off seems attainable to us. It is little wonder that those from the Northern Hemisphere find us reckless and irresponsible.

There is more we could speak of. The jagged peaks with their 'altar cloths of snow', silent witnesses 'of what's eternal'. The tufted green valleys unfolding like new-born mammals onto the plains. The gentling bush with its filtering ponga fronds seasoned by fantails. The wild rivers sluicing away all impurity on their cleansing race for the sea. These are our heritage, our life, our matrix, our sustenance, our *whenua*. Until the land informs our theology, our faith will be barren.

The faith of the Christian church in New Zealand remains distinct from and largely unshaped by such contextual influences. It is, like the pine tree, an exotic which has been imported and widely established without accommodation to the local environment. The task of the coming millennium might be to clear a little space so that the pohutakawa sapling begins to grow and put forth flowers. And for that to happen, a few pines may need to be felled. ■

"It has the edge on Ponsonby."



Author and theologian, Mike Riddell, rejoices in his rural retreat, nestling above the Taieri Gorge, in Central Otago

Tui Motu caught up with him at the old railway cottage, now turned crib, in Central Otago far from the roar and fumes of the Auckland traffic which had once been his life.

You've made three mighty shifts in your life in the last two years: from Auckland to the Deep South, from being a Baptist to becoming a Catholic, from a Minister to a lay person.

Some of these have been unanticipated: I was shaken out of a very comfortable niche in Auckland. I was lecturing in the Baptist Theological College and reasonably content in doing that. After the publication of my novel, *The Insatiable Moon*, the Baptists were unhappy with it – and I ended up by losing my job. Their objection was to the sexuality expressed in the text rather than the theology. I can understand why they felt that way. But for me it was the expression of who I am as a person.

So I had to look further afield and that prompted the move to Dunedin. I had been down to Dunedin a couple of times researching Baxter – and I loved it. This all happened in March 1997 and it was a major move for the whole family. I was still a Baptist Minister while I was lecturing at Bible College, but the shift to Dunedin really precipitated the other moves.

It was a venture into the unknown: a real step in the dark. My wife had resigned her job. Neither of us had work; we had nowhere to live, and we were off to a city we knew very little about. We had two of our children still with us. So it was a huge step.

Coming down here, the discovery of Catholicism was a real surprise. It wasn't so much for my wife who had been brought up in the Church but had drifted away in her teens. We began casting about for somewhere to go and felt uncomfortable with what we found. Then Rosemary went to the Cathedral to see how that was and found it wonderful. For a while she was going to church and I wasn't. Then one day I said I'd come along, and I found myself very much at home.

People ask me why I became a Catholic. I can't give very good reasons – it was a journey of the heart more than the head. What I discovered through going to Mass was that my own spirituality had been shifting for a number of years. Especially it was the incarnational and sacramental nature of the faith. The type of spirituality expressed within Catholicism was almost familiar to me.

Some of the major influences in my life have been Catholic writers such as Graham Greene and James K Baxter: they had helped form me as a person. It was a real surprise to me to find myself so much at home, and by and large that hasn't changed.

There must have been some aspects of the Church which you wouldn't find so attractive?
It doesn't matter which denomination you're in, there are always aspects of the institution you are going to struggle with. The priest who was guiding me through the process asked me why I was becoming a Catholic. I said, if I was going to take on institutional scandal, I might as well come to the mother of them all!

The thing I find most difficult is the exclusivity of communion. People come to communion because they're responding to God. Since it is so much part of worship it's an aspect that impinges on me each Sunday.

In your writing you concentrate especially on the community aspect of Church.
For a long time I've had a fascination with that side of church life. Wherever the Spirit moves there are expressions of community in its wake. The ways of belonging which permeate society are either some sort of kinship or some connection with the land. People have to find their identity throught those connections.

But in our very individualistic Western society people are in desperate straits because they have broken both of these connections. In Western thinking selfishness has been promoted as a virtue rather than a vice. At the same time if you look back through the history of European settlement in New Zealand there are limits to the extent people shared with others. Immigrants were determined to make a new life. But there was a strongly selfish aspect – they saw themselves competing for space.

The first Christian missionaries took the gospel to the Maori. If you look at the *Church Mission Society* their efforts at first were very impressive; but when Selwyn came out he wasn't interested in the Maori. It was the immigrants that concerned him. They set about building an institution which simply replicated the European Church. The Maoris had adopted Christianity in a big way at the beginning of European settlement. But then they had the tables turned on them: they were left out.

People use the idea of 'mateship' to imply there's some sort of bonding in our society – but it doesn't go very deep. Pakeha New Zealanders have prided themselves on their race relations. But the last 20 years have shown that a whole lot has been brewing below the surface for a long period of time. The colonists were comparatively enlightened in some respects, but they were also patronising. The European disease carries with it an assumption of cultural superiority.


With Rosemary, who has shared fully in his 'pilgrimage of grace'

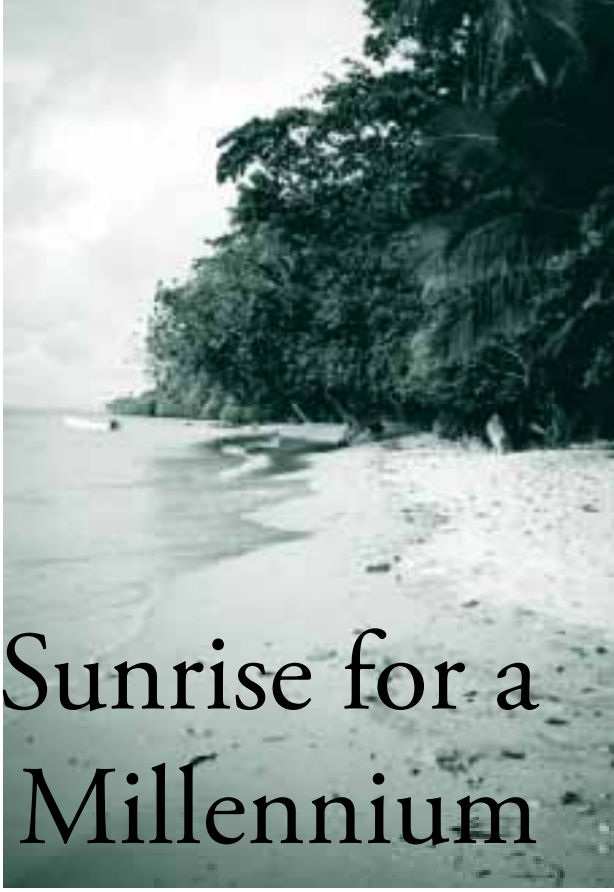
Nevertheless I still feel pretty positive. I think the setting up of the Waitangi Tribunal has given rise to a process whereby anger can be expressed and historical wrongdoings are being addressed at a governmental level. I think in that sense we are miles ahead of what has been happening elsewhere. For all the complaining 'around the edges' I think we are substantially along the road. The worry is that there may be a backlash.

Where do you see your vocation at this stage of your journey?
I feel very happy in my change of direction. I see my main vocation now as writing, although I still do a bit of teaching alongside that. This year I'm due to lecture part time in the Otago Theology Department. I'll be lecturing in applied theology – the contextualisation of theology in contemporary culture. So that will help complement my writing.

I've just finished a second novel called *The Shadow of God*, which hopefully will get published in England giving it a wider market. And another couple of books came out before Christmas, and there are contracts for two more. At the same time I am finishing a Doctorate – on James K Baxter as an example of contextual theology.

When you talk about the acculturation of Christian faith, where does gospel end and the cultural baggage start?
The difficulty is to distinguish what is essential to the gospel and what is cultural baggage. This has been the problem for mission over the last few centuries. And the trouble is you cannot define what *is* the essence of the gospel. They used to say the gospel was the seed and the husk was the cultural packaging. But I think that too is a bit simplistic.

In the end what has to happen is to plant some version of Christianity in a culture, which obviously has other cultural roots, and then allow it grow and take on a specific form in the new culture without trying to control it from the outside. And that was what my article was all about (*see pages 12-13*). ■



Apart from the enchanting mist hiding the peaks of the steep mountains greened by luxuriant rain forest,writes **Simon Caldwell**, *the thing most likely to catch the eyes of travellers sailing to the Fijian island of Taveuni is an enormous white cross about a third the way up one of the hillsides*

Greeting the Sunrise for a New Millennium

The cross stands there alone, surrounded only by trees, and leers across the beautiful Somosomo Straits at the larger island of Vanua Levu. It stands almost precisely on the 180th Meridian – more commonly known as the International Dateline because it is the point internationally recognised at where real time begins.

In the South Pacific, further east than both Australia and New Zealand, in roughly a year's time it will mark the first place in the world to enter the third millennium – and the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ. Taveuni's fortuitous location is no secret, and rooms in the island's hotels for New Year's Eve in 1999 are selling fast and for lots of money. Furthermore, Taveuni, known as the garden island because of its stunning natural beauty above and below water, is also becoming fashionable because of its increase in popularity with wealthy, chiefly American, tourists.

Holy Cross Church, Taveuni

Holy Cross Church in the village of Wairiki, to which the hillside cross owes its existence, will still remain the closest religious venue in the world to the dateline, and at midnight of 31 December 1999 will be the scene of the first Mass of the new millennium. Almost all of the 14,000 inhabitants of Taveuni are Catholics (though most Fijians are Methodists) and some 6,000 of them belong to Holy Cross parish.

They owe their faith to an event marked by the cross on the hill – their triumph in war over invading Tongans in 1863 and their consequent conversion in gratitude to a priest called Fr Laurent Favre. A French Marist, Fr Favre had been approached by the Taveuni chief, who thought he might have had guns to sell him but instead was instructed to "fight under the cross" to achieve victory. The Tongans were crushed at Wairiki and tried to flee in their canoes but were pursued until all were killed.

The people of Taveuni are today among the friendliest you are likely to encounter anywhere in the world, though a walk to Wairiki from Waiyevo Wharf fails to reveal the sort of awareness of an impending great event one might expect to find in more developed countries. The dirt track that leads to the village is punctuated by a single signpost to mark the dateline. A few hundred metres on stands a cinema on the site of the famous battle, then a track climbs up the hill towards the church, the two schools, and then the solitary cross.

Before the church is the presbytery in impressive colonial style. A European statue of Our Lady looks slightly out of place without even a hint of brown skin. Inside the French Gothic-style church, one of the three largest in Fiji, hangs an equally pallid figure of a crucified Christ. Inside and out, the place is alive with children, many of them from the nearby primary and secondary schools, and the air rings noisily with the shrieks of laughing voices. They are poor, sometimes dirty, but invariably happy. And, like so much on the island, there is little which is ostentatious about their

preparations for the Millennium.

Fr John Crispin, parish priest, says that the people of Taveuni were "very proud" of their church – though the turn-of-the-century building, complete with stained glass windows from France, appears to be falling down. He said there was also a great deal of mounting excitement about the Millennium and added that it had a religious focus. The Mass would mirror the scale of events normally only seen in Holy Week when crowds of thousands attended ceremonies outside the church because there was not enough room to fit them all in.

Fr Crispin, 56, who, along with Fijian Fr Lui Raco, runs the parish, is the man most likely to have the honour of celebrating the Mass. Of English and Irish stock, he was born in Blenheim, New Zealand, and was educated by the Marists at St Bede's College, Christchurch. A fluent Fijian speaker, he has so far spent three stints spanning a total of eight years on the islands, and he has also served in Rome as general bursar. He was not impressed by Europe ("Rome needed a good coat of paint") and is now back where he is most at home – among islanders, conducting pastoral work. "It's very encouraging working in a parish like this," he explained. "People turn up and listen. You only battle against backstabbing and gossip – rural community stuff.

"The Church is getting stronger. We are an ascending Church. Nearly everyone goes to Mass. Of course, being islanders and laid back, some will come sometimes and not others, and some will be very fervent. People said it will all go down the tube – 'just wait a few years and they get television, they will stop coming' – but it hasn't happened. The youth will hang around outside the church but will still come in –the church is the focus of community life – and family life and community is much stronger than in the West.

"Vocations are proportionately higher too. About five Fijians from Holy Cross alone are currently training in a Marist seminary. A further ten from the parish have been ordained for the Society in the last two decades. Others have become secular priests and have joined the Columban Fathers." One weekend in six, Fr Crispin must still travel to administer sacraments to people in one of 26 Mass centres run by catechists, who are invaluable to the Church in the islands because of vast distances and inaccessibility.

In spite of the optimism, Taveuni is not without its problems. Among the cultural ones is domestic violence, tackled by awareness campaigns and the work of groups like Marriage Encounter. Another is illegitimacy. The average size of a family is six, but women often have one or two children by men other than those they eventually marry. "Illegitimate or not, their children are always welcome, and I always baptise them," says Fr Crispin, " and treat them the same as anyone else. Illegitimacy goes back to the pre-Christian times. They were very free-and-easy in that regard and there is still a bit of that. When they get past the stage and settle down, they can become very fervent. There is a tradition of them being prayerful here – I just tell them to get the rest of their lives in gear."

The annual high point of the Church's celebrations is at Easter when people from Taveuni's scattered villages converge on the parish for the Triduum, some sleeping in classrooms for the weekend. "It is a great social event where people meet up with old school friends," said Fr Crispin, who hopes to replicate the event at the turn of the century. "There are about 4,000 people there, all lighting candles to renew their baptismal promises. And I get them to hold them up, and there is a whole sea of candles, and you can hear the kids gasping. The whole place is lit up – you talk about Christ being the light of the world. This is a remarkable event done by the numbers and the faith of the people."

The green shoots of joy and hope already springing from expectations of the "Great Jubilee of the Year 2000" help to make sense of an old saying in the islands which goes: 'Fiji – the way the world should be'. With secularism sweeping the globe at the end of the 20th Century, some people have already twisted it to say: 'Fiji – the way the world is'. But the latter does not apply in Taveuni. A fitting place for the Church to enter the Third Millennium. ■

"Inside and out, the place is alive with children..." (*photos by the author)*

"Attitudes about reverence for others should be markedly different in those who emerge from the Catholic school"

Option for the young

A new school year is upon us. **Dr Tony Russell** looks at what Catholic schools are all about

Preferential option for the poor was coined by the South American bishops at Medellin in 1968 and it remains a key slogan of modern theology. In fact, the Medellin Synod spoke of a twofold option – "for the poor – *and for the young*". The Church's mission of justice includes the imperative to focus on the next generation of people, and that has profound implications for the Catholic school.

Biblical justice is about right relationship, with God and with our fellow human beings. Gathered together, the just become the Church, the pilgrimage of those who are redeemed, yet sinners. The Church is a community with the task of preaching the Good News to all and of building up right relationships in the world. The Catholic school is part of this mission – to build the world anew.

In Catholic theology the Trinity provides a fruitful model. In the Trinity of Persons "none precedes the other in eternity, none exceeds the other in greatness, none excels the other in power" (*Council of Florence* 1442). The Trinity, therefore, represents the original pattern of all love: a community of participation, symmetry, communion, reciprocity, and equality of all in importance. For Trinity in the preceding sentence one could substitute *marriage... parish... family... school... Board of Trustees*. All these communities should be marked by a fundamental justice, a loving reciprocity with others, a love for others and a reverence for others.

The Catholic school, therefore, must not only preach justice; it must *do justice*. We will consider three principal elements which bear upon the justice mission of the Catholic school.

'Pedagogics'

'Pedagogics' is a poor translation of a word used by the Argentine philosopher Enrique Dussel and the great educationalist of Latin America, Paolo Friere. By their definition 'pedagogics' means the oppression or unjust domination of students and children by teachers and adults. In brief, Dussel and Friere argue that there is often foundational injustice done to children in schools (and homes).

The teacher/parent attitude to the child or student is critical. The child can be viewed as uncontrolled, out of control, or controlled. Or, ideally, the child can be viewed as "distinct, novelty, new one, mystery, totally other, epiphany" (Dussel). To hold in one's arms a newborn child is to hold in one's arm a mystery, a total novelty, an epiphany of God. Such a wonder calls for total reverence.

To assume rights over the child in any sort of unjust way is to be involved in 'pedagogics'.

Parents and teachers can so easily become adroit at "housing the souls" of the young, at treating the young in a way which

is in fact a subtle form of domination and oppression, forgetful that here, in the child, is a mystery, a novelty, and epiphany yet to come to its full realisation.

the Vicar asked the child: Who made you?
And the child replied: I'm not really finished yet

Dussell writes *(Philosophy of Liberation)*: "Pupils and the young admire teachers who, in their lifestyle, in their living together with them, in their humility and service, dedicate a critical awareness to affirming the values inherent in the young." In other words, the teacher or parent must become learner and disciple in the face of the mystery which is the child. This calls for a tremendous surrender of power by teachers and parents who can so easily oppress the young, dismiss them, judge them, and fail to assess their true worth.

The tendency to dismiss the child as 'failure' is something which should be totally alien to the Catholic school, yet in the daily course of school life can become a standardised manner of treating children. Schools, with their rules, behaviour structures, hierarchical structures, can become places of 'pedagogics' rather than places of due reverence for the 'epiphanies' crowding the corridors and classrooms.

Reverential relationships

If we examine the encounter model of Jesus in the Gospels it is clear that he meets every person with a foundational reverence. If we look at the passages about the woman at the well, the woman with the sick child, the rich young man, the lawyer who stood up and addressed Jesus as "Teacher", we see the Lord responding always with complete reverence for the epiphany of the other'. Such reverence calls for an enormous feat of imagination by teachers when faced with the epiphanies rioting in 5B or the difficult child awaiting disciplinary action. The teacher must go beyond the external face of the child which represents the merely superficial elements of the epiphany which is the other. Rather the teacher has to learn to listen to and encounter the "spirit" of the other, the querulous, complaining, depressed, elated, exuberant, hurt, joyful, grieving, arrogant, biddable and unruly spirit within the other. The teacher is called to be justice, to be compassion, to be reverence and reconciliation. In situations where the good of one child and the common good of the school or the class are in conflict, this paradox can be particularly acute. A path to delivering teachers from this surely lies in frequent discussion and reflection about the ethos of the school, the task of the school, the mission and vision of the school.

"Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow; you may strive to be like them but seek not to make them like you..." Kahil Gibran *The Prophet*

In other words, if the school is to be a place of justice then the staff-meetings cannot simply be about administration; nor can the Board of Trustees simply be a collection of experts on finance, public relationships, working-bees and the like. Rather, the staff and Board must somehow enter into due reflection about the principles of love and justice which inform the very life of the school. They must take time to contemplate the Gospel of redemption and reconciliation, and to converse about what it means to be a community of adults seeking to do justice to the students who come to the school.

Social justice outreach of the Catholic school

The Catholic school is also called to do justice *ad extra*. In some manner the great theological banner headlines of our times about involvement with the world must inform the life of the school. The first line of the *Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* stands as a yardstick to the social justice outreach of the school: *"The joys and hopes and sorrows and anxieties of people today, especially of those who are poor and afflicted, are also the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of the disciples of Christ, and there is nothing truly human which does not also affect them."*(Vatican II, 1965, *Gaudium et Spes* #1.)

Many of those who suffer and weep, those who are humiliated will in fact be found within the Catholic school itself. Principals and teachers will find that one of their first tasks in social justice is in fact to feed and clothe many of the pupils who come to the school. This is a sad fact of our times.

But beyond that first charity to the students themselves, there lies the task of the school to teach about and to involve the students in social justice. Many schools support children or institutions in poor countries, and this is undeniably a good work of social outreach. It seems imperative that all Catholic schools have some specific and identifiable mission which they assist with money and other support.

cont'd p20

Handing on the Faith

Paul Andrews, S.J.

Paul Andrews is an Irish Jesuit priest who practises as a psychotherapist. Last year we started to publish extracts from his book written to help parents understand their children. One question, especially relevant at the beginning of a new school year, is whether faith is taught – or caught

I am conscious of two hats: that of the *priest* who is repeatedly asked by practising Catholics: 'How can I pass on to my children the faith which I treasure, and which makes my life worth living?' And that of the *psychologist* who is asked for evidence and the fruits of research.

If one puts the two questions together, and asks: What does research tell us about the passing on of the faith – the answer is simple: nothing. Faith, according to Catholic theology, is a gift. It is given by God, not passed on by parents. They help to form the personality, teach their children how to pray. From the early image of a loving, wise and powerful parent, children form their concept of God. The same parents may have one child who is a devout believer and another who is indifferent to religion. We are in an area which psychology finds hard to scrutinise, intensely interior, dealing with the most central part of the person, and manifesting itself unreliably in behaviour.

What has passed for a psychology of religion has had to rely on shallow manifestations of religious belief, such as stated opinions about God, attendance at religious services, professed habits of prayer. We have only to look into our own souls to see how much deeper faith goes than such behavioural indices. Religious observance can co-exist with a profound alienation from anything spiritual, or from the person of Jesus Christ. An atheistic or agnostic attitude may co-exist with a commitment to something beyond oneself, which in most good theologies would be seen as religious. Nobody I know has explored these anomalies in today's Ireland more profoundly or lucidly than my colleague Michael Paul Gallagher in his book *Help my Unbelief* (Dublin, Veritas, 1983).

There may still be some parents – and teachers – who think of the task of religious upbringing as being to indoctrinate, to brainwash the child into accepting a particular set of beliefs.

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What is critical in all this are the attitudes of emergent students. There should be a recognisable ethos of heart or calibre of attitude on the part of the students who emerge from our schools, particularly with regard to social justice. Attitudes about reverence for others, gender issues, inclusive language, violence issues, the fair distribution of resources, racial rights and so on, should be markedly different in those who emerge from the Catholic school. If they are not then it seems fair to interrogate what is going on in the school itself, and what is being taught about social justice outreaches.

The critical issues in the Catholic school are not ultimately about funding, the ERO, quality audits and the like. These are important but not constitutive. Rather, the Catholic school is a place where justice is both preached and done, and from where students emerge with a distinctively Christian attitude to life. Particularly in the realms of justice and social justice should the Catholic school be nurturing distinctive convictions of heart.

Having spent 10 years in secondary schools as a teacher, DRS and in charge of disciplining several hundred boarders, and after teaching for 8 years in the tertiary sector, I am rather aware of all the elements which can crowd into the daily routine of teaching and administration, the accomplishment of which can become the *raison d'etre* of one's life as a teacher and administrator. Yet the Catholic school is on about something quite different to all that. It is about establishing right relationships *within* the school itself, and about teaching the students, by example and word, what true justice is about. ■

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imply total control of children's thinking, which in our age of open media is clearly impossible. Even if it were possible, it would involve a contradiction. Faith is by definition a free act. Anything short of free is that much short of faith.

The aim of a religion teacher is so to present the life of a Christian that when, in their teens, our children choose (often implicitly) a philosophy by which to live, it may be an educated choice, and a free one. Where school and home are at odds on such fundamental questions, the price is paid by the young person in confusion and uncertain identity. A majority of parents want the school to offer their child a reasoned and critical education in their religion, in the creed, moral code and worship which shape one's approach to God.

This is not indoctrination. It simply ensures that one has thought seriously about the larger issues of life, the nature of humanity, life and death, the problem of evil, the existence of God, and the historical background of Christianity in the Bible, the life of Jesus, and the critical thought that has been given over the centuries to his impact on humankind.

in the religious development of the adolescent the father seems to have the stronger influence

In the USA Andrew Greely found one intriguing link between the religious commitment of the child/adolescent and that of the parent: namely that the father seems to have a stronger influence than the mother. The same has been found in Australian, Belgian and British research, that the child's religious commitment has a stronger correlation with that of the father than of the mother. It seems paradoxical. We think of children learning their prayers at their mother's knee rather than their father's; yet in this area of faith we seem to find the father more influential.

Research offers us correlations but not reasons. These are a matter for speculation, and my own guess is this: that if religion in a young person is associated primarily with prayers-at-mother's-knee and the lessons of early childhood, it is liable to be left behind in the young person's determination to put away the things of a child. But if religious commitment, a sense of prayer and of responsibility to one's maker, is seen in the father who is making his way in a harsh and competitive society (and it is still the case that children are more likely to see their father than their mother as the bread-winner outside the home), then the young person is more likely to see faith as part of the challenge of adult life than as a relic of childhood.

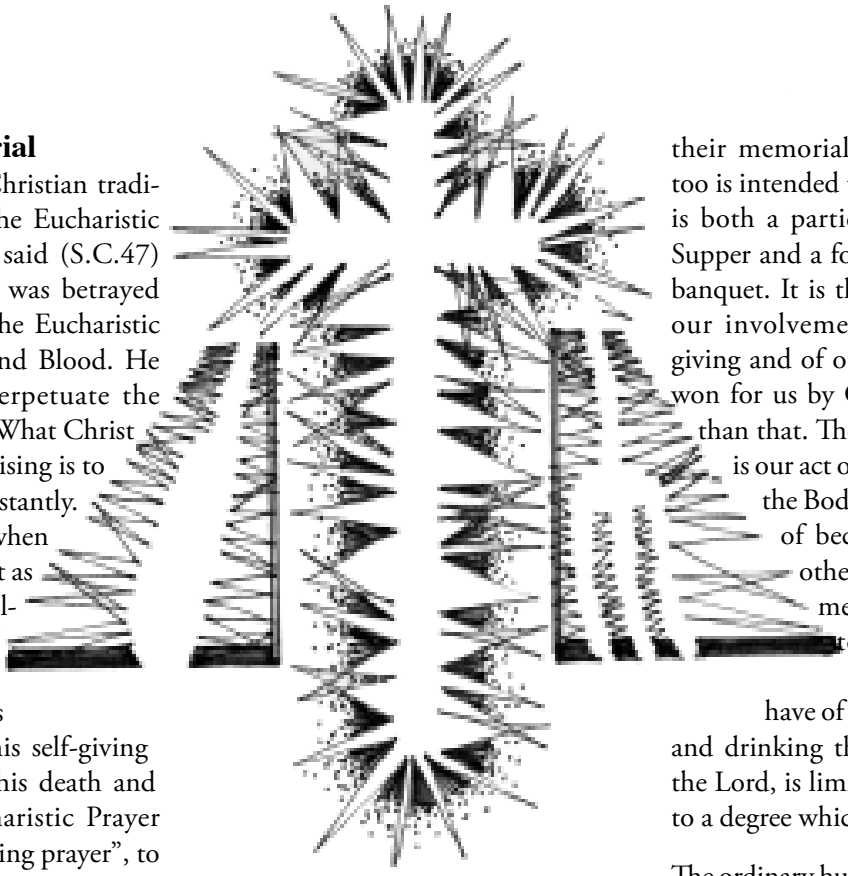
The present generation of parents see an extraordinary change in the religious education of their children. In my Leaving Certificate class, the professed unbeliever was the exception. Now the daily communicant is the exception. Among young adults, especially in the cities, one can meet an astonishing level of ignorance even about feasts like Christmas and Easter which are part of the secular scene. 'Why is the Christmas baby always a boy? Who is the little man on the cross? How do we know that Jesus existed?' Religion has roots in reason and history. Theology, the science of God, has a longer and more critical pedigree than most of the disciplines which are accepted as university faculties. Many young adults who have gone through ten years of education, can think of religion as a matter of eccentric habit, explained by one's emotional needs. It is not that they have moved to other philosophies or religions than the Christian. More generally they have moved to the values of the marketplace and the soap operas of TV, to the sort of consumerism that values people for what they buy and possess. Worst of all, they have moved to the bloody-mindedness that Roddy Doyle portrays brilliantly in *The Snapper,* where any sense of morality or righteous indignation has yielded to a smouldering, unfocussed resentment, unredeemed by any notion of what life is about, except having a laugh. When people stop believing in God, they start believing not in nothing but in anything.

This is an area where parents suffer most from 'changing children' and the suffering makes sense, because they are thinking of their deepest beliefs and the child's soul and destiny. Yet through these very changes, God is touching not just the teenagers but also the parents ■

Next month's Tui Motu, Paul Andrews tells a story of teenage forgiveness.

If people at Eucharist don't experience a sense of sharing, then there is something inadequate... Liturgist ***Guy Hartcher*** *looks at the way the Mass is celebrated and asks some challenging questions*

Eucharist as Meal



Eucharist as Memorial

The Mass throughout Christian tradition has been seen as the Eucharistic sacrifice. As Vatican II said (S.C.47) "on the night when he was betrayed our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross..." What Christ did for us by dying and rising is to be placed before us constantly. That is what we mean when we speak of the Eucharist as "memorial". It is the solemn occasion on which the Christian community remembers Jesus, his life, his teaching, and his self-giving for us, culminating in his death and resurrection. The Eucharistic Prayer therefore is a "remembering prayer", to be proclaimed in such a way that everyone present recalls Jesus and his work on our behalf and is moved to respond in praise and gratitude to God. That response though must be more than emotional and verbal. It must involve a recommitment by each Christian to Christ and to his mission as *our mission*.

The active missionary Christian derives his or her motivation, graced power, and determination from the Eucharist, and each worshipping Christian ought to become a missionary Christian through his or her involvement in the Eucharist. This is one facet of the Eucharist which we all recognise, and in theory at least, try to apply.

Eucharist As 'The Lord's Supper'

Another facet of the Eucharist which has received renewed emphasis in the years since Vatican II, but which has not been fully applied as yet is the fact that the Eucharist is the Lord's Supper. It was at a meal that the Lord committed himself to establishing the new covenant in his blood. His command "Do this in memory of me" was given in the context of that meal.

The early Christians, as abundantly witnessed in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, celebrated their unity and their bond with the risen Christ with their memorial meal. Our Eucharist too is intended to be a meal. That meal is both a participation in the Lord's Supper and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. It is therefore a sign both of our involvement with Christ's self-giving and of our hope for eternal life won for us by Christ. It is even more than that. The act of eating the meal is our act of commitment to being the Body of Christ now, our act of becoming one with each other in Christ. It seems to me that this is preached too rarely, so that the understanding people have of Communion, of eating and drinking the Body and Blood of the Lord, is limited and individualistic to a degree which is clearly inadequate.

The ordinary human context of a shared meal offers us valuable insights into some of the values which the Eucharist as meal ought to display. A shared meal is an occasion for social interaction... for "togetherness" if you like. It gives to those partaking of it a sense of belonging, of solidarity, of kinship. If the Eucharist is fulfilling its function as a builder of community among the People of God then it too will demonstrate those values. Similarly a meal gives a sense of sharing, of good things made available to all the participants. The Eucharist too should show these values to those sharing. It is not enough to *say* that in its theological essence the Eucharist is a meal and that therefore those

who share in it share one another's lives in mutual solidarity. If the way the Eucharist is celebrated does not let people *experience* and even feel that closeness and sense of sharing, then there is something inadequate about the way it is conducted.

The early church quickly discovered, as the number of Christians grew, that it is almost impossible to have a full meal for a large community. So the Eucharistic meal quickly became a ritual meal, a symbolic meal, in which a mouthful of bread eaten and a mouthful of wine drunk symbolised the fullness of the Lord's supper and the bounty of the heavenly banquet. Much of this meal symbolism was lost in later centuries. The church is endeavouring to restore it and so enrich our understanding of Eucharist. This requires a new attitude to the Communion Rite as meal.

Real Bread

In the first instance it requires the use of bread which is recognisably bread (see General Instruction of Roman Missal Nos.281-283). This would require a change from the white wafers used in many parishes, which do not look like food, nor taste like food, nor even require chewing. Further, since it is the one bread which is the bread of life, the host ought be of such dimensions as to allow it to be broken *and the pieces distributed to the people.* We, the many parts of the one body of Christ are reminded of our union with one another in him when we receive bread broken from the one bread. Thicker bread – possibly using wholemeal wheaten flour – is more recognisably bread and food in appearance, texture and taste. This is not a case of unimportant detail as some might be inclined to think – if the sign is not clear then its message cannot be imparted fully... and the message is *vitally* important, that Christ is our food!

Share the Cup

In the second instance it suggests Communion from the cup for the whole congregation whenever it is pastorally feasible (this was approved by the New Zealand Bishops in 1972).

The meal symbolism can only be fully realised when the cup is available to all; and have you ever noticed the incongruity of the celebrant's saying, "Take this all of you and drink from it..." and then proceeding, a few minutes later, to drink it all himself. Of course Communion under one species alone is fully efficacious – it is simply far less fully a reminder of the two meals, past and future, which our Eucharist calls to our minds. In most parish churches, with the aid of Extraordinary Ministers and a number of cups (two to three per distributor of the bread) Communion from the cup for everyone is quite possible. To avoid having many chalices on the altar through the Eucharistic Prayers some places use either a large cup (holding a litre or more) with a pouring lip or simply use the celebrant's chalice and a carafe. Then during the breaking of the bread the pouring of the wine also takes place.

No "Leftovers"

A third point which should scarcely need mentioning at this stage is that obviously everyone should receive Communion bread which has been consecrated at that Mass. As the General Instruction (56h) makes clear it is only by way of emergency that hosts from the tabernacle should be used. What kind of sign of unity and life-giving meal is it when people are routinely fed "leftovers" from an earlier meal? If there are going to be hosts left over, then it is quite permissible to give more than one to the last people to receive, thus avoiding having large quantities of bread accumulate in the tabernacle.

Church Layout

Another aspect of Sunday worship which needs evaluation is the physical layout of the church. Alteration could be inconvenient, and so it is easier to "leave things be". Yet seats arranged as if in a picture theatre are directly counter-productive to the building of any sense of community, and often people at the back of the church have the sense of being an enormous distance from "the action". A little thought can usually result in an arrangement of the pews (where pews must be used – they are really the most uncomfortable and immobile form of seating known to humanity!) and of the sanctuary which will bring everyone closer to the altar table both physically and psychologically. We are one family, and the Eucharist is supposed to teach us how to be a family, yet it cannot do the job properly when we insist on a physical arrangement which gives the lie to what we say.

Following the same line of thought it becomes obvious that the way the meal is distributed is often more akin to a queue buying tickets. More distribution points scattered around the church would break up this sense of being one of a huge crowd. The resemblances to the line-up at a soup-kitchen is too close for comfort.

Quo Vadis?

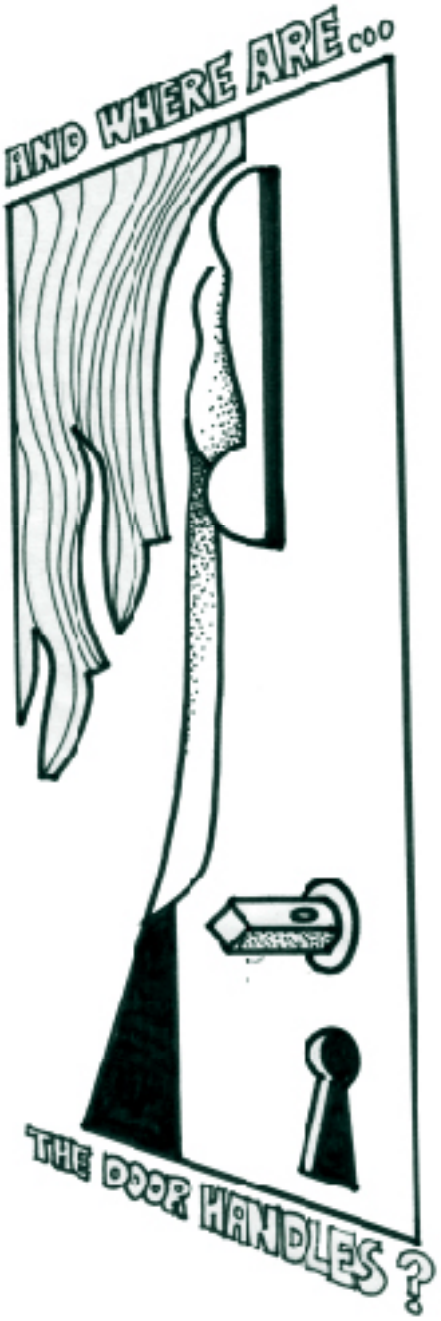
Other areas where improvement might be made are many. The key to the whole issue though is to re-order our thinking. When we think of Eucharist as meal consistently and naturally, then the way we celebrate the Communion Rite will, hopefully, alter so that the symbolism inherent in it will become visible and everyone's understanding of Christ as the bread of our life will be incredibly enriched. ■

Guy Hartcher is Parish Priest in E. Gresford, NSW.

I am about to do a new thing

(Isaiah 43:19)

Does fourteen years on the outer edges of the Church community, asks **June MacMillan,** give one the right to comment on the phenomenon of absentee Christians?



Perhaps it does. Perhaps it does not. Yet this group of people absent from those gathered round the Eucharistic Table, numbers on average three quarters of the names of those listed on parish registers, which means only one quarter of those claiming to be Christian attend church. One could well ask: if non church-goers were to share their faith stories with those gathered round the Eucharistic Table would they become a catalyst for change within church communities today?

Three quarters of a population absent from its community has to be saying something – but who is listening? This number does not include those who have moved on into the post-Christian era, or those who are recovering from wounds received at hierarchical level, who see the Church as having no part to play in their overall healing or ongoing life experience. For them the Church is a tyrannical body to be avoided at all costs.

So who are these absentee Christians who no longer enter the door of the church yet do not remove their names from the registers of their various parishes? Perhaps two groups could be considered. There are those who silently grieve, and who being passive by nature, or conditioned to a degree, have difficulty naming the reason for separating themselves from something which remains very important to them. All they are aware of is that they no longer have any sense of belonging to those gathered round the Eucharistic Table. These people find themselves locked into a state of grieving within the desert of their own hearts.

In times gone by they may well have found their sense of belonging in sodalities or other spiritual groups which are no longer part of church worship today. Others may have suffered a life crisis which in many instances the Church appears incapable of handling, further wounding a person who could have grown in faith from their experience, and pushing them into a state of deeper grief. Sexual abuse by the hierarchy could well fit in here: a sort of taking advantage of the disadvantaged. The faith of these people remains intact where God is concerned, but their faith in the Church is in tatters.

The second group is one which has evolved through education and a personal integrity, calling people to listen to the voice of the Spirit within, who is revealing them to themselves in a new way. This group actively works at its spiritual life but fears the heavy hand of the Church, so stays away until all issues are resolved.

These two groups make up the *Diaspora* Community, the dispersed ones of the

Church. They are joined by yet another group who attend church but who are almost subversive in their practice. To this group the Church seems to be increasingly losing sight of its original purpose, and to have chosen a path which is more of a dictatorship bent on preventing growth than a compassionate Body of Christ seeking to implement the mandates of the Gospel.

The Church is always happy to welcome new adherents to its ranks and will willingly kill the fatted calf, bring out the finest robes and the most expensive rings, and call all to celebrate because someone new is to be welcomed. But what about the prodigal whom Jesus so beautifully storied into the Gospel? To whom does one turn when one wants to find one's way back into the Church figure? For most, impossible to find. The fatted calf has grown old and tough, the best garments are mildewed and the rings tarnished from lack of use. All this needs to change but how does one stir the apathy of a complacent Church community? Not very easily I suspect.

There are glimmers of hope. For example, an American priest, Father William McKee CSSR, decided he would seek to form a ministry which would reach out to people absent from their Church communities in his area. He set up meetings and broadly invited interested people to attend. He was somewhat perplexed at the anger that emerged and could well have given up, but thankfully, he did not. A pattern began to emerge for him which was very revealing. He began to note that people's life hurts were getting in the way. God and the Church were getting the flak often enough, but in many instances the roots of the anger went deeper. It was through listening creatively to people's life stories that a way was uncovered to attend to their faith needs.

The Church appears to be a lofty remote body of people who will not allow objective criticism of its performance to occur. It appears to be stuck in a stagnating, life-limiting process, which serves very few. This is a great tragedy because what is required of it is that it generate new life-giving processes for the many.

One seldom finds the poor or the needy in the pews of the Church. They would not be comfortable there, yet they were utterly comfortable round Jesus Christ, whose body the Church professes to be. Jesus knew how to heal their life hurts before leading them to God, and Jesus is the way we are called to follow.

It is my belief that just as in the time of Isaiah God directed him to point out to the people that God was doing a new thing, making paths in the wilderness and rivers in the wilds, so is God attempting to get us to discern that God is doing a new thing today through the phenomenon of absent Church communities. The question is: *are we capable of searching out what that new thing is, or has such an ability been mutated within us through Church conditioning?* What is going on in all these people who have not lost their faith, yet lie fallow in the desert, waiting in the grief of their own hearts?

God is a creative genius. The world is large and deserts are hard to get to, but the desert of the heart is as vast as it is available, and the dark night of the soul as much a reality today as it was in the time of St John of the Cross. It could be said that the Church is putting all its energy into maintaining the status quo, while God has led God's people into the desert in order to speak to their hearts, so that a new thing might emerge for the third millennium.

God has promised, "I will lead my people back". How many will answer the call which will make that possible, "I will go. Choose me"? An interesting apostolate could well emerge if the call of absentee Christians was to be attended to. Perhaps then we would find three quarters of those on the parish register in attendance round the Eucharistic Table, and only one quarter missing. What great cause for celebration that would be. ■

The Body and Blood of Christ

I want my Molenberg!
How many times I have heard that.
How could an advertisement for simple bread be so effective?

Take and eat, this is my body.
How many times have I heard that?
How could such a simple invitation hold so much truth?

The advertisement enters almost unnoticed into my brain
so that when I go to the supermarket
I respond to that trade name,
unthinkingly, automatically.

The invitation to take, eat,
is so familiar
I can miss its meaning.

The centre of my life,
this gift from Jesus,
without it I lack focus, meaning, nourishment.
How can such a simple thing as bread contain so much, challenge so much, console so much?

In today's individualistic world
I can eat bread on my own
but it is so much more symbolic
to eat with others.
So it is with the eucharistic bread,
the body of Christ.

To eat this bread alone,
to act as if no one else is with me,
is to miss the point of the
body of Christ that is the community.
To eat the Body of Christ,
wholly God and wholly human,
is to become united with God
and with you and you and you.

Margaret Butler, OP

Teacher extraordinary

Sr Mary Veronica Delany, (1915-1998)

Kaitaia High School was a sound and comfortable place for a lower sixth former, so it came as something of a shock when my dear mother, Maori and convert to Catholicism, turned my world on its head by announcing that my final year would be at St Mary's College in Auckland. That decision introduced me to a community of teachers and students that were to influence the rest of my life: none more so than Sr Mary Veronica Delany.

That concluding statement would hold for hundreds – more likely thousands – of women of several generations throughout Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas. This is why her passing is of great moment to many, and a matter of honour that her contribution go on public record. Were one to have her mastery of language it might be possible to do it justice.

First and last she was a woman of mercy, educated by Mercy Sisters at Avondale parish and St Mary's College where (inevitably) she was dux. This profile makes no attempt to deal with her major contribution to her St Mary's community; this has already been done better than well. (See *Mercy Federation Newsletter 1998:* Sr Judith Leydon.) These words attempt to acknowledge her extraordinary combination of teaching skills, scholarship and piety, the first constantly in evidence, the two latter as lightly worn as they were profound. Any one of the three can make a person distinguished; all three, and in balance, and you are dealing with the truly exceptional.

Only great teachers are able to convey knowledge of their subject and a love for it too. They achieve this by dedi-cation to learning and to the learners. Veronica seemed to arrive in the classroom at great speed, full of eager-ness to begin another delightful excursion into literature. This class was going to be a good experience for her and she assumed (rightly) for us too.

Notable amongst comments from senior scholars around the world is reference to her skill as teacher. One, a notable teacher herself, declares Veronica to be the best teacher she encountered in either Auckland or Oxford, attributing much of her own success to the model Veronica provided. When recently approached by an ex-student in a supermarket and being plied with gratitude for lecture notes the student was still using, she commented quietly to herself "Veronica's legacy lives on!" Another academic on another continent reinforces this view: "Veronica was a great piece of luck for me! ...I most remember her kind, unpatronising, painstaking teaching of the earnest but not necessarily gifted, at a time when I was impatient and arrogant! I know now that being a good teacher is more than erudition or having a Ph.D."

Her scholarship of course was far more than enough for our needs. In retrospect she could easily have spent a lifetime making the very talented more so at some premier university. That she chose St Mary's (or it chose her) was our great good fortune. Prior to her spending some time at Oxford, an internationally recognised professor of Classics and former lecturer wrote a letter of introduction to support her entry: "...I retain a vivid memory of M.M. Delany's acute mind and fine linguistic sense as a student. Later I was to witness each year the arrival of a contingent from her school, eager girls, well trained, willing to learn and bearing visibly the impact of Sr Veronica's culture. I can imagine no one better equipped for research in language and literature."

Her time at Oxford was a delight both for her and I suspect for her supervisor (Dame Helen Gardner) who swiftly realised that this antipodean student, already bearing the first class honours of her own university (English and French) and senior qualifications in Greek and Latin, was a supervisor's delight. She was steered towards Patrick Cary, a 17th Century poet, of whom very little was known. It comes as no surprise that what Veronica discovered and wrote was sound and stylish enough to satisfy the University; more than that and less usual, it was promptly published by the Oxford University Press. The *Times Literary Supplement* (10.11.78) concludes its extensive review thus. "As biographer, critic and editor, Sr Veronica Delany combines authoritative scholarship, exploratory zeal and general competence, tact and good judgement." For those familiar with Veronica's felicitous use of English, written or spoken, the opening sentence of *Patrick Cary* will be no surprise; "Although Patrick Cary is only one of the common people of the skies of Caroline verse, those skies were so unusually brilliant that even their meaner beauties shine with an uncommon lustre".

Veronica's knowledge of literature was quite vast but her literary loves beyond

doubt were Shakespeare and Hopkins from whom she could quote with ease and aptness at any tick of the clock. She referred once in a seminar to "my dear friend Shakespeare" with such warmth that someone was later heard to exclaim "for a moment I really did believe that Shakespeare lived in Auckland". Another was later prompted to say that if there were a Shakespeare Club in paradise (membership 1000) to accommodate the best exponents of the Bard, a place would have to be held for Veronica.

The link between scholarship and teaching skills is obvious enough. Less obvious but even more significant in Veronica's case was the link between them and her piety. She was ever sensitive to the spiritual messages of literature. These were beautiful threads that were interwoven with Sacred Scripture and liturgy. In unison they constituted the spiritual storehouse that nourished her mind and heart.

The integrity of her work and spirituality was a very modern approach to Catholicism. Her spirituality was never precious, fussy, nor trivial. The grandeur of God and the significance of people never escaped her. It was celebrated in the classroom, in the chapel, and through the bonds she maintained with hundreds of ex-pupils, encouraging them in a variety of ways, always alert to compliment them on their successes; she rejoiced in the progress of others.

What spurred it all though, deep down, was her relationship with God, intimate and unwavering. A simple but beautiful anecdote exemplifies this. Periodically she enjoyed holidays on the Coromandel Peninsula. The 'chef' for the evening, a very close friend, gave an instruction to their host for Veronica who was praying in a little church nearby. "Do go and drag Veronica out. Dinner is nearly ready and she simply has no sense of time when in church".

She never sought a sphere of influence. It simply emanated from the spirit and purpose of her life and work. Nor was it confined to St Mary's although that was ever her primary focus. A senior administrator of the Diocese of Auckland paid tribute to her willingness to translate all manner of documents on request and to give days of recollection for priests of the diocese. Her importance to the diocese, though, in his view, was not the things she did but "who she was". We could all identify with that.

Veronica herself would be somewhat bemused by all of this, but we would be the least grateful of students if we did not record our everlasting gratitude to such a teacher and mentor. Perhaps both she and her beloved Shakespeare would forgive us the liberty of a final farewell:

"Now cracks a noble heart.
Goodnight sweet prince(ss)
and may flights of angels sing thee to thy rest"

Hamlet; Act V, Sc.2

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Film Review

EverAfter

Every so often my friends will drag me along to a movie which I have little or no interest in seeing. Even less often I actually enoy the films that they choose! My latest such excursion was to see a new take on the *Cinderella* fairytale in the form of *EverAfter.*

Starring Drew Barrymore as Cinderella and Dougray Scott as the Prince, *EverAfter* deviates somewhat from the tale that most children know. Cinders is a strong, independent and opinionated young woman (yay!) who at one point manages to save the Prince's life! The ugly sisters are far from ugly. In fact New Zealand's own Melanie Lynskey turns in a fabulous performance as one of the sisters. Angelica Huston is superb as Cinder's stepmother and cameos from Timothy West and Jeanne Moreau add wonderfully to the film.

While remaining firmly in the realms of a romantic fairytale the film provides, through its portrayal of royal life and an unlikely visit from Leonardo da Vinci, some very witty historical one-liners. These manage to float happily over the heads of most kids but provide a good laugh for any adults in the audience. The film's historical references are also very clever with Cinders having read *Utopia*, da Vinci inventing a number of contraptions and the King asserting that divorce is something only the English do!

The film's provincial French setting provides some glorious scenery but a bit of a drawback with accents. Huston's accent slips part way through the film and the other characters range from American to English to French. However, this is soon forgotten as the film sweeps you up and into its magic.

EverAfter is a delightful piece of fantasy for children of all ages. It is a rare film that you can take kids to and really enjoy yourself.

Like every good fairytale, there was a moral at the end of the story. For me, it was that I really ought to trust my friends' judgement more often!

Nicola McCloy

Among the desperate and the dying

Saving Private Ryan
Film Review: Paul Sorrell

When I catch myself in an introspective mood, I sometimes reflect that I'm only here because of a physical defect, my shortsightedness. In 1940 my father queued up for a job as a rear gunner with Bomber Command, but was rejected because of his poor eyesight (which I've inherited). He went on to become an instrument technician with the RAF in East Africa – a far safer job in a barely-troubled theatre of the war.

Things are very different in Steven Spielberg's wartime epic, *Saving Private Ryan*. The first half-hour plunges the audience into a harrowing re-enactment of the abortive D-Day landings on Omaha Beach on the coast of Normandy. The jerky, hand-held camera puts us right there among the desperate and dying, and enduces a strong sense of claustrophobia. I couldn't have taken much more of that, and was passionately glad not to have been there. This intensely realistic war action – heightened by an astounding soundtrack – is twinned by a second battle at the end of the film which takes place in a bombed-out town. The gut-wrenching verisimilitude of the film was attested by the returned servicemen who attended a special premiere of the film in Dunedin and elsewhere.

For all its harrowing realism, *Saving Private Ryan* is framed – and at the same time undermined – by Hollywood conventions. The Stars and Stripes flutters at the beginning and end of the movie, and the film finishes with the sentimental Hollywood cliché of the dewy-eyed veteran, Private Ryan himself, contemplating his fallen comrades' graves in a war cemetery in France. And the mainspring of the plot – the quest to find and rescue Private Ryan, whose three brothers have already been killed on active service – arises from the cloyingly sentimental appropriation by the US commander-in-chief of a letter written by President Abraham Lincoln to a mother bereaved of several sons in the American Civil War.

The main action of the film, the quest for the elusive Private Ryan, at times threatens to dissolve into a *'Dirty Dozen'*–type action movie. There is the 'Jewboy' character who taunts a line of German prisoners by displaying his dog-tag, emblazoned with the Star of David, and chanting "Jude"; the tough kid from the Bronx (or somewhere similar); and the weedy translator who falls apart in the shock of battle. Tom Hanks plays the tough but flawed platoon commander whose bottled-up emotions are betrayed only by a shaky hand. One or two characters transcend the stereotype, such as the sniper who, with a victim in his sights, recites verses from the psalms as psychic protection against becoming the psychopath his actions are forcing him to be. My daughter tells me that Matt Damon, who plays Ryan, is the new(!) Leonardo DiCaprio, but pre-teen fans will have to wade through two hours of gruelling battle action before getting the chance to ogle their idol. This is not a movie for the kids.

Nor is it, as many commentators have noted, the definitive film of the Second World War. Yet Spielberg puts great effort into shaping the plot into a microcosm of the madness and futility of war. Questions such as: "Why risk a whole platoon for the sake of one man?" and "Isn't everyone's life precious?" are put directly into characters' mouths. With due allowance for its Hollywood dress, *Saving Private Ryan* makes a fair attempt at unmasking the absurdity and total arbitrariness of the choice made and the resulting task – and thus of the choices and actions involved in all war. ■

How to Meditate

Silence and Stillness in every Season
Daily Readings with John Main
Darton, Longman and Todd
Price: $42
Review: Helen Doherty

This book is a wonderful daily companion to one who feels called to meditation, also to one who has been meditating for some time.

To the beginner, it gently encourages and stimulates, also leaves no doubt that personal discipline is essential. Perseverance is the key. The 'how to' is explored and the use of Mantra central to the tradition. Everyday reading is an encouragement to enter into the tradition, building it into your life as a regular pattern.

To those who have established their daily pattern, it is like taking a quiet retreat, daily mulling over the benefit and power of meditating. The short daily readings have the ability to help them appreciate the journey they are on. The source of readings and the World Community for Christian Meditation lists are also a treasure that can be called on for continued spiritual readings.

This book is highly recommended as a daily companion for those who are called to meditation. ■

How the women of the Gospel saw Jesus

Six New Gospels: New Testament Women Tell their Stories
by Margaret Hebblethwaite
Geoffrey Chapman 1994
Price: $15 approx (pbk 151 pages)
Review: Patricia Stevenson, RSJ

"A mother of a prisoner, a woman flustered by housework, a heretic five times divorced... an unmarried mother, a former mental patient, an extravagant dreamer... What an unlikely bunch Jesus chose to be witnesses to the truth! And so in the end we come back to Jesus' own answer to the question, 'Who is the greatest?' He replied, 'The least among you all is the one who is the greatest'. (Lk. 9:48) After two millennia of Christian history, in which women have been silent and invisible, and even today are widely considered unfit for priestly ministry, one cannot help feeling Jesus was right." (p151)

This extract from the conclusion of Margaret Hebblethwaite's book gives us an idea of the scope of the portraits of some of the women disciples found in the New Testament. Many people are surprised by the ministry of these women as recorded in the Gospels and other New Testament writings. In most parish churches women outnumber men, but because the homilist is a man the breaking open of the word has tended to offer a male bias to the story. A very good example of this is the persistence of the idea that Mary of Magdala was a prostitute even though there is no evidence from Scripture to support such a view. It has also been observed in studies of the Lectionary that some of the stories which feature women have been overlooked.

Margaret Hebblethwaite, writer and journalist for the English *Tablet,* offers in this book a view of Jesus which might have come from the women who were closest to him. She creates a narrative using the voice of a named woman, and supplies a theological commentary using sources from Scripture and an impressive list of writers from Augustine to the *Women's Bible Commentary.* The theological commentary is supplied on each page as numbered notes.

The author suggests reading the narrative straight through and then coming back to the commentary. Because of the sheer bulk of the notes I found their presence a distraction and so read the two together. The layout of the book is awkward, but it is obvious that the author was at pains to show that her narrative was based soundly in the tradition. The commentary is a valuable synopsis of the material available as background to these women.

The six women selected are: Elizabeth of Judaea, Mary of Nazareth, Photina of Samaria, Mary of Magdala and the sisters, Martha and Mary of Bethany. The stories are vivid, interesting, well researched and inspiring, contributing much to our understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus.

In the commission of Jesus with which *Matthew* ends his Gospel the command is to teach the message of Jesus, and we know that our written Gospels were an outcome of a long oral tradition. The Evangelists were not the only tellers of the Jesus story. Everyone who knew Jesus had a story to tell. Remember the two blind men,... "they went off and spread word of him through the whole area."(Matt.9:31) Or the woman of Samaria, called Photina in the book, of whom the villagers said, "No longer does our faith depend on your story. We have heard for ourselves, and we know that this really is the Saviour of the world". (Jn 4:42)

While respecting the nature and purpose of the canon of Scriptures we can enrich our spirituality by some 'lateral' views. The perspective of the storyteller is very important, and these good-news stories which look at the life and ministry of Jesus through the 'eyes' of those closest to him, his women friends, can tell us much about what women regard as significant:-

Elizabeth: It was good to have someone to talk to, good to share a pregnancy, cherishing our bodies and growing together.

Mary: My memories of Jesus have been treasured in my heart,... that is true theology – to experience, to reflect, to live and value the reality, and then out of the richness of one's heart to bring up an eternal truth, drawn out of the human story.

Photina: Something deep inside me resonated with his words and a chord seem to echo between us.

Mary of Magdala: We were like so many women the world over, who have followed the men they loved along the path of suffering – crying and grieving and sharing their shame... I felt useless on that journey to Calvary, and yet later I understood how much we had done by our passive following.

Martha: Yes. I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world. And that was such a big thing to do to be the first person to make a public profession of faith that Jesus was the Messiah.

Mary of Bethany: And yet there was something of hope here in what Jesus was saying. Was he not telling me that I could go on loving and serving him after his death, in the person of the poor.

Here are six women who appear in the Gospel story. They have their own stories to tell but they also stand at the head of a long line of women of the early Christian community and beyond, whose place has been diminished and whose ministry has been trivialised by the promulgation of an image of a God who confirms culture and custom instead of transforming culture and custom. ■

Sr Catherine Hannan DOLC was one of two women observers from New Zealand to attend the Oceania Synod

Oceania Synod –

From the first sound of the conch shell heralding the Opening Mass in St Peter's, the Oceania Synod brought the colour of the Pacific to the heart of the Vatican. The liturgy had been planned with the help of many Oceania residents in Rome, and the two-hour ceremony incorporated a Samoan procession honouring the Book of the Gospels, presentations of *leis*, gifts of a canoe and *kava* bowl to the Holy Father. Interspersed with the great organ and the Sistine choir were the vigorous rhythms of Pacific dancing and music. It was the wealth of symbolism familiar in our world, but arrestingly new there – in fact to some, quite shocking.

Colour of another kind predominated the following morning for the first and subsequent sessions of the Synod. There was a sea of red and cerise and I felt very drab in my navy. It was all highly organised with Cardinals, mostly from the Curia in the first ring of seats, then several rows of bishops, followed by Synod fathers not bishops, experts, auditors who were priests, brothers, then laymen and finally women auditors – religious, then laywomen. We all learnt our place. Even the boxes we were given for our papers were colour-coded – red for Bishops, dark green for the rest.

Beforehand I'm not sure what I expected, but aware that over 100 bishops were to give talks (termed 'interventions') I thought the first week could be rather tedious. Imagine my surprise when after the preliminary prayer and reports, all in the presence of the Holy Father, the first intervention came straight down the line outlining in specific detail the way the Church has failed women. Open-mouthed we looked at each other in the back row, hardly believing our ears.

The momentum continued with succeeding interventions given with similar courage and directness. Among the concerns expressed were:

- *Inculturation* emerged as a key issue affecting at the very deepest level, areas of spirituality, theology, liturgy and formation
- a review in the law in the pastoral care of the divorced and remarried, and those caught in irregular marriage situations who in their greatest need for Communion are unable to receive
- simplify procedures within the marriage tribunal to make it more accessible
- more understanding and mercy be extended to priests who have left the active ministry
- the harm done by clerical sexual abuse and the need for the Church to respond at the universal and at the local level
- an easier accessibility to the Third Rite of Reconciliation
- re-imagine, re-image and re-form the Church around the theme of a loving communion of disciples reflecting Christ's forgiveness
- employment at all levels in the Church be open to women, and issues of authority, leadership and decision-making be separated from ordination
- more indigenous Bishops in Papua New Guinea and Bougainville
- respect for Creation as a context to commend Catholic teaching on methods of family planning.

The Bishop of Galapagos, isles made famous by Darwin, asked the Pope for a document defending every form of life on earth, while a highly dramatic intervention came from the Bishop in the Northern Marianas. It was from his diocese that the aircraft set off to drop atomic bombs on Japan, and to this day nothing has grown in that spot on the island. He apologised to Japan in the person of a Japanese Bishop attending the Synod as a specialist.

But the most pressing issue was that of the ordination of mature married men to the priesthood to enhance the possibility of Eucharist for every Catholic community. When a Pacific bishop spoke of islands in his diocese where the Community may have to wait for more than two years for celebration of the Eucharist, heads were seen to jerk up especially in the front row where the curial cardinals sat.

The two documents the Synod produced – the *Message* already published and the *Propositions* delivered to the Pope – lacked the sparkle and passion of the bishops' interventions. In fact I felt the *Message* was tame. Evidently a more general proposition has a greater chance of getting through, but do they end up saying anything?

Hence I could have cheered when Cardinal Williams in brilliant closing words to the Pope made a plea to take into account the first week interventions as well as the final propositions when he comes to write his apostolic letter on the Synod. These interventions were "a kind of stained-glass window for the light of the Gospel to shine through. But its sharp and radiant colours inevitably fade in the process of group discussion and consensus propositions". I live in hope.

I was very impressed with the bishops' compassion, their passionate pastoral concern, frankness and friendliness. They were respectful but not subservient with a refreshing openness. They spent valuable time networking with each other, listening, gaining strength from each other and they must have drawn heart from the fact they faced many similar pastoral issues even if the solutions may seem daunting.

Surely this must lead to a greater collegiality for this doesn't exist when bishops are passive. However intriguing it was to be in Rome, I still hope that any future Oceania Synods are held in our region. ■

Rome, December 1998

Timothy Radcliffe OP, Master General of the Dominicans, represented the Union of Superiors General at the Synod. Interview by Kevin Toomey OP

The Synod was a 'down to earth' event, thought Fr Timothy. 'The bishops tried to address issues and difficulties with great frankness, and that made it for me a breath of fresh air. The tendency so often is to feel that smooth talk can solve problems, instead of having the courage to face them openly. The Oceania bishops faced them.

"I was touched by the bishops of Papua New Guinea and the Islands – by a sense of their heroism and fidelity to their people. Often they are very isolated. I was impressed by some of the old European bishops obviously wedded completely to their people and equally to some of the younger indigenous bishops whose deep sensitivity and courtesy touched me. And I was specially impressed by the courage of Cardinal Tom Williams.

"There was some tension as to where we would rest the greater authority. Some participants appealed to the authority of their experience, to the experience of their people, like the divorced and remarried, and especially of their own priests and of women. Whereas others appealed more directly to the authority of tradition. I have always been touched by Newman's view that there are three sources of authority: tradition, experience and reason. If we don't give enough authority to reason, then tradition and experience can come apart. It's a tension that can ultimately only be overcome if we really talk and think deeply together.

"The fact that all the bishops of Oceania were present gave more authority to the Synod because it meant that a full range of opinions were expressed. If only elected representatives came it may well eliminate the extremes. Here you had everybody. But I think it would have been wonderful if we could have had a stronger voice of the women of Oceania.

The issue of inculturation was seen as offering a double challenge, because when we meet other cultures they challenge us to a larger view of humanity. But the Gospel also presents challenges to cultures.

"An issue that arose was how to give, to preserve and to let flourish the micro-cultures of Oceania which can so easily be gobbled up in the global culture of today. We say "small is beautiful", but how do we try to preserve those beautiful small cultures of the Pacific? I think this requires a real commitment by the two dominant cultures of Oceania: New Zealand – and her smaller neighbour, (sic) Australia!

"I would have hoped we could have gone further in looking at solutions for those people who have no Eucharist or sacramental life. I think it is important to give reconsideration to the confining of ordination to unmarried men. I also think that the position of divorced and remarried people and their full participation in the sacramental Church is an urgent issue everywhere I go – including Oceania.

"Perhaps what was most important was that bishops from all over the region who did not know each other grew in friendship and a common vision of the Church in Oceania. There is now a new perception of the region and its challenges. Those challenges are very different for the little islands and for the larger ones like Australia and New Zealand, but they can face them together in a way they cannot do apart." ■

To Bomb or not to Bomb

*You pessimistic old b***,* I thought as I listened to a distinguished but very disillusioned Professor of Literature pour a bucket of cold water on my hopes for a decent world order. It was the mid-1960s at the University of Canterbury. He had been discussing the 19th Century Romantics, and on the record of the world's behaviour during his lifetime he did not give a peaceful future much chance.

Optimism no doubt feeds on good experiences, and I was in that fortunate group of 20th Century males who were born too late for the First World War and too soon for the Second. With no personal experience of war it is easier to be hopeful.

Furthermore the United Nations had emerged from the ruins of Western diplomacy to offer a different way of dealing with the world's problems – an emphasis on international solutions, a move away from the dominance of national heavyweights and the principle of 'might is right'.

At this stage of my life I am about the same age as my Professor was then, and it rather depresses me that I am beginning to find his dismal forecast chillingly accurate. In particular I refer to the pre-holiday excursion undertaken by the United States and the not-so-United Kingdom (Scotland having expressed its thorough distaste for the exercise).

We were treated on TV to a new way of introducing the season of peace and goodwill as Baghdad was blasted on successive evenings. Two reasons were offered in justification: to ensure the safety of Iraq's neighbours (none of whom had been complaining of insecurity, nor did they offer a word of support for the attacks); second, to reduce or eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Somehow the US seemed to be under the impression that UNSCOM was reporting to it, rather than the UN. Russia, China and France (all members of the Security Council) were under no such illusion, and said so before, during and after the attacks.

There are several appalling aspects of this bombardment of Iraq. It was given the misnomer *Desert Fox. City Fox* would have been more accurate since the inability to avoid civilian casualties was gruesomely obvious. To reduce weapons of mass destruction by using weapons of mass destruction was an utter contradiction in terms. Finally, the UN did not authorise these attacks. However well-intentioned, they were unlawful.

The checks and balances of the United Nations may be frustrating, but it is a much superior arrangement to some nations assuming they know what is best for everyone else.

Are there still some optimists out there? I'm listening. ■

Tom Cloher