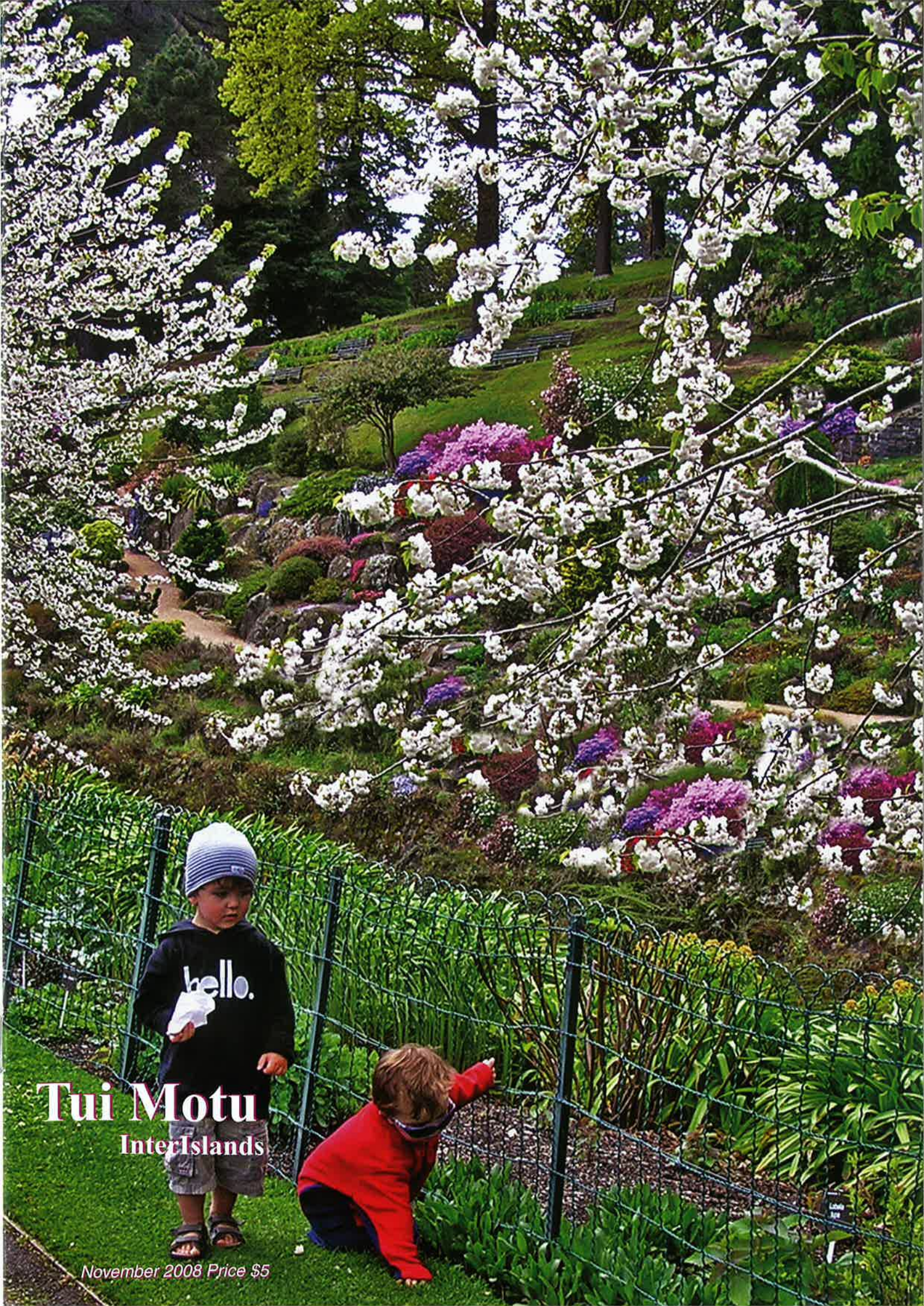

Tui Motu

InterIslands

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Spring in Dunedin Botanical Gardens

seasons of change

The onset of spring is the perfect companion to a surge of hope – in many respects the most characteristic of all Christian virtues. Suddenly, the trees are clad in freshest green, camellias, rhododendrons and azaleas burst into a riot of colour. This southern city is putting on its most glorious vesture.

Tui Motu has been going through an agonising season of change, as you may observe. We lost our Printers to the economic recession, a sadness for us since they served us well for 11 years. Our last two issues have been produced under some duress, but there has been a silver lining. New technologies enable us to produce the magazine for the first time in full colour within our budget. We hope you like the result.

The world stage, too, is undergoing massive change. By the time you read this, the United States will know who its new President is to be – while we are in the throes of voting in our own general election. We print some enlightening material from Zella Horrell and Jim Elliston on the US (*pp 6-7*), while the political debate at home receives due comment from Jim Consedine (*p 3*) and Elizabeth Mackie (*p 4*). Ron Sharp analyses the world financial crisis (*p 5*). All these topics receive the usual incisive comment in *Crosscurrents* (*p 30*).

Tui Motu is New Zealand produced, and its prime focus is here. But many copies travel offshore to over 20 countries. Most of these are in the Northern Hemisphere – and their autumn is an equally dramatic and colourful season. Diane Pendola writes with feeling of the Fall in the western states of America (*pp 12-13*).

The whole of Christian life is encompassed in this cycle of ebb and flow – birth, death and new life. The Catholic Church devotes the month of November to commemorating those who have gone to God before us, the most poignant of all transformations. There are a number of articles and poems dealing with death (*pp 18-21*).

Worthy of special note is our centrepiece article (*pp 16-17*) on Newman's *Dream of Gerontius,* his account of the journey of a Christian soul through death into eternal life, which gave rise to Elgar's greatest choral work. This has been performed several times this year to commemorate 150 years since Elgar's birth.

The poem traces the journey of a dying man, his hopes and fears, the prayers that accompany him and his entry into the other world beyond. Elgar's wonderful music moves us as only great composition can – dramatising the struggle between good and evil, hope and despair, death and mysterious new life.

We hope you enjoy our smorgasbord.

the money changers

Last week's media prize must surely go to the picture of Contact Energy Board members, facing the wrath of shareholders as they arrogantly persisted in awarding themselves megabucks with scarcely a blush in sight. Their greed and self-importance persuades them that an unceasing flood of wealth is destined for their pockets because they are the masters. They are to be pitied, as their secure financial world collapses like a house of cards around them.

I wonder, if Dante were writing today, what niche in Purgatory would he reserve for them and their fellow money shufflers. Sweeping the streets – or digging compost for their clients' gardens? That at least would be an honest day's labour. A day of reckoning is surely in store!

M.H.

voting for the common good

Self-interest and fear are often the primary reasons why people cast their votes the way they do. The principal focus of campaigning for elections appeals to the self-interest and fears of voters. These form an unholy alliance of twin motives which often cloud more important issues.

This is not to say there are not many who have a more visionary agenda. Most political parties give some recognition to this. Both self-interest and fear in theological terms reside within the dark side of human nature. They form a component part of the 'unredeemed' human psyche and just as 'getting tough on crime' rhetoric appeals to the dark fearful side of our human nature, so self-interest appeals to that same powerful force.

Politicians know this. That is why they ratchet up the tough talk on law and order every election. And why they shamelessly appeal to our self-interests in seeking votes.

That is also why the Gospel of Jesus will only ever have a marginal impact on an election campaign. To appeal to peoples' redeemed, grace-filled natures would produce a vision of radical change in society which would threaten the very existence of some social institutions and political parties.

Imagine if a mainstream political party promoted a truly holistic Gospel vision: a real and active care of the planet based on just social policies as a starting point; a living wage for everyone but no excessive salaries; the disarming of the military, and promotion of a model of community development based on service and the non-violence of Jesus; creative work for all; inclusive social structures which ruled out all discrimination; education and medical care free and accessible to all; a fair taxation system where those who had most paid most and those with least paid proportionately? Jesus taught all this and more.

How then should we vote? My view is that the ***promotion of the common good*** is the antidote to self-interest and fear. A vote for the common good is a vote for our neighbour and an assured future for ourselves. Place that first – and the rest flows. The recent New Zealand Catholic Bishops' excellent statement highlighted that focus.

They were not the first. In October 1996, the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales produced a pastoral letter on the common good in the light of the Catholic Church's social teaching. It's a document that should sit on the bedside table of every priest and bishop, and be required reading for every Catholic.

In it 'the common good' is defined as the whole network of social conditions which enable human individuals and groups to flourish and live a fully genuine human life. Far from each being primarily for him or herself, all are responsible for all.

They went on to point out that the common good stands on four other principles, essential to its realisation. It's like a healthy horse, standing on four legs. If one leg is damaged or missing, the horse is crippled and unwell. All four legs need to be sound.

- The principle of solidarity implies the interconnectedness of all human beings – we form one family.
- The protection of human rights speaks for itself.
- The principle of subsidiarity supports a dispersal of authority as close to the grass roots as good governance allows.
- Lastly, making a preferential option for the poor, so the poor are included in society's structures and share its resources fairly.

Each of these, if lived, implies a radical redistribution of power and wealth which could well make the common good achievable and help bring God's Kingdom. All four, along with the principle of the common good, help develop social justice which forms "a constitutive dimension of the church's teachings", (*Bishops Synod, 1971*). But how many Catholics really know about or accept these church teachings?

For a Christian, voting beyond self-interest and fear should be to vote for the common good. The fundamental question is: ***which party protects, enhances and develops the common good best?***

Jim Consedine

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

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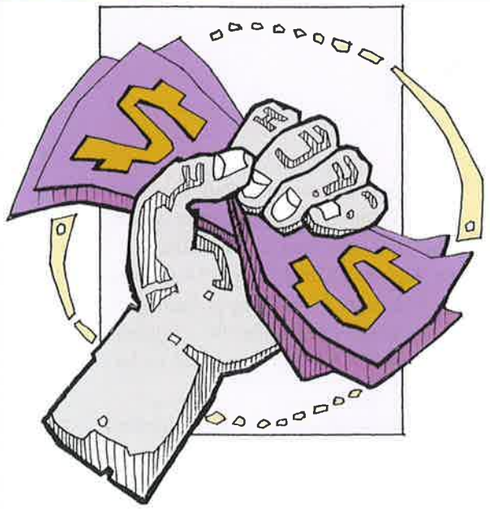


money – *that tainted thing*

Ron Sharp

Thirty-five years ago Fritz Schumacher warned the world in his book *Small is Beautiful* that humans cannot go on having infinite goals in a finite world without it coming to a crash. The crash is here!

In my article on Mohandes Gandhi's deadly sin - *Wealth without Work* (*Tui Motu Aug '07*), I pointed out the inherent defects in the international monetary system. It is debt-based and is forced to grow to pay interest. Money as we know it today has 'crisis and collapse' built into its basic design. This is because it seeks interest, bears interest and is born of interest. Interest drives the creation of money. Any time money is created through debt, a need to create even more is also created. As the money grows, so does the need to create more goods and services until there is nothing left of our planet's natural resources.

Now, suddenly, people have been allowed to borrow to feed the growth bubble and cannot repay their mortgages. We have allowed the money machine to control all social, cultural, natural and spiritual capital and convert it into money to keep the system going. We have even seen pollution turned into opportunity for profit making.

There is a sense about our present crisis that this is an end of an era. An era of unregulated, casino-like manipulation of money. The crisis will persist and continue to intensify until money itself is transformed. Is this doom and gloom? Of course not. For those with faith and hope, it is opportunity for love to blossom. It is God's way of out-of-death-resurrection!

The time has come to remove things from the goods and services basket and return them to the *koha kete* of gifts, co-operation, self-sufficiency and community sharing. It has happened in past depressions as people lost their jobs or became too poor to buy things, they helped each other and real communities re-emerged.

In the meantime, anything we can do to protect some natural or social resource from conversion into money will bring on the collapse and ease its severity; any forest we can save, any road we can stop, co-operative we can establish, anyone we can teach to heal themselves or to build their own homes, grow and cook their own food, make their own clothes, will sustain and enrich life after money. We can try to lessen our dependency on money for some of life's necessities and pleasures. We can help establish or join a local Transition Town or community network, that will shorten the Machine's life.

People are not waiting for those in power with vested interests to reform another system that will have an inbuilt mechanism for feeding their greed. They are creating local complementary currencies themselves, based on mutual credit with a small administration charge instead of interest. These are empowering a fundamentally different human identity from the one that dominates today. No more will it be true that more for me is less for you. We will realise our inseperateness from and our interconnectedness to each other and the totality of all life.

The ideology of perpetual gain has brought us to a state of poverty so destitute that we are gasping for air. That is what is collapsing today, and the quicker it dies the better. ■

Ron Sharp is a parishioner in St Peter Chanel, Motueka, and is an ardent environmentalist

annual press awards

This year Tui Motu was not represented at the annual Catholic (ACPA) and Religious (ARPA) Press conferences in Brisbane – an economy measure. However, we entered for the *ARPA Annual Awards* and were successful in the following:

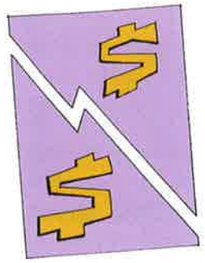
Category 9: best social justice story: Highly commended *Raging for Jesus*, by Glynn Cardy (*March 07*).

Category 13: best original artwork: Silver Award *The Road to Parihaka*, by Donald Moorhead (*Sept 07*)

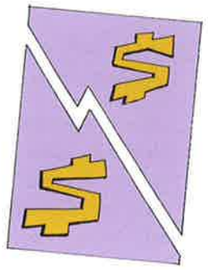
Category 16: feature showing the most originality: Gold Award *Pooh's Prayer*, text by Rev. Clay Nelson; artwork by Donald Moorhead (*June 07*).

Congratulations especially to artist Donald Moorhead and our successful authors – a clean sweep for St Matthew-in-the-City, Auckland!

We also received a mention for *Little Aussie Battler* (August 07) in the 'best features' section. Some 80 publications are members of ARPA, so there are hundreds of entries.



what price tax cuts?



This open letter could well have been written in the months leading up to the 2005 general election. At that time all the discourse or rhetoric, all the media moments seemed focused on one object only. The questions posed by journalists to political candidates were endlessly repetitive: *will you bring in tax cuts?* How deeply will you cut? How much more money will I have in my hand each week? Gradually it seemed that this was the only purpose for the poll. So extreme were some of the promises and the demands that to me it came as something of a relief to hear one party say clearly: *we shall not introduce tax cuts – yet.*

Nothing much has changed in the three years since 2005. The cry for tax cuts seems as strong as ever, except that now the question is not *if*, but *how much*? What does this incessant emphasis on reduced taxation say about us as a nation? Whose interests are we really serving when we join in the side-line barracking for tax reduction?

Increasingly I realise that there are many others like me who are uncomfortable with what seems to be an excessive desire for personal gain. For some, of course, any reduction in taxes may mean the critical difference between paying the mortgage or losing the house. But for many it will be (as it is so frequently described) more money in the pocket, a few more lattés or that larger block of cheese.

As a nation we have always been better than that; more generous, more aware of our fellow human beings, more compassionate and less self-centred. Why else did we so early in our history develop schemes for income and housing support for the poor or homeless among us? Why else do New Zealanders give voluntarily and with extraordinary generosity of their time and talents and energy to help the young, the old, the sick or the disabled of our own society and at the same time give to the poor and disadvantaged of the wider world? We are great people.

Tax cuts in the late 1990s followed benefit cuts in 1991. The main advantage in those tax cuts went to upper and middle income earners. One analyst at the time commented that in many New Zealand towns the amount of money made available to the wealthiest citizens through the tax cuts was exactly matched by the amounts removed through benefit cuts from the unemployed and other beneficiaries in the same the same towns. It was pointed out that increasing the wealth of some at the expense of the poorest, through the mechanism of taxation, was both shameful and unjust.

I am not an economist – –so much is probably already obvious. To me the question about reduced taxation is an ethical, not an economic question. I believe tenaciously in the basic goodness of people, in our capacity for generosity and concern. I believe tenaciously in the goodness of life and in the right of every single being on the planet to flourish and to reach his/her/its full potential.

I believe that respect for earth itself should be a high priority in all policy formation. I believe that we elect governments to help us collectively to realise the full life potential of all of us. I do not think that economic growth is the sole purpose of government, although it seems that we must constantly measure it. If government is about anything it should be about the ***common good*** – the good of all citizens, especially the disadvantaged.

In the lead up to this election therefore can we begin again to believe that if a policy is not good for the poorest or most vulnerable in our society it is not good for any of us? I think we can. I'd like to offer a simple checklist to help us vote beyond the rhetoric of tax cuts:

- If tax cuts come with increased government borrowing and debt, the cost is too high.
- If tax cuts further limit the resources available for protecting species, or taking care of national parks and wild places, or protecting the earth itself, the cost is too high.
- If tax cuts mean that fewer resources will be applied to address climate change, the cost is too high.
- If the billions spent on tax cuts mean that less is available to meet historic Treaty claims, the cost is too high.
- If tax cuts result in increased numbers of children living in poverty, the cost is too high.
- If tax cuts are achieved through reduction in health, education and social support services, the cost is too high.
- If tax cuts reduce the nation's capacity to habilitate prisoners and compensate victims, the cost is too high.
- If tax cuts deepen divisions in the social fabric of this nation, the cost is too high.

What price tax cuts? We all need to be sure about the real costs before we tick the boxes on 8 November.

Elizabeth Mackie OP

elections US style and kiwi style

Zella Horrell

The American presidential campaign is like everything in America – bigger than it needs to be; designed for the market; and packaged to inspire consumption. The race for the White House ingeniously mixes the spectator thrill of professional sport, the emotional involvement associated with an Oscar winning film and easy, constant access across all electronic media. The political formula for a typical American election combines competition, entertainment and communication.

There is a winner and a loser in every election, so there is competition: the Red team, the elephants, versus the Blue team, the donkeys. The candidates from each team challenge one another in stadiums designed especially for them. Rules are set and followed. There is a referee, a live audience, a much larger television audience and a panel of experts to discuss the 'game' once it is over.

Sport is entertaining, but the presidential campaigns offer dramatic and comedic entertainment as well. Americans, and the world at large, start viewing the candidates just as they view characters from a favourite TV series. We stick by the ones we like, and special interviews tell us who the 'real person' is behind the character played on screen.

Powerful people are the royalty of America. During an election the presidential candidates receive the veneration reserved for big name Hollywood stars. Debates, appearances, press conferences are choreographed with the same accent on glamour as that used for the Academy Awards. The tele-perfect precision makes the process seem artificial, and thus underwrites accusations that candidates are 'out of touch with ordinary people'.

How talented a candidate?

A big part of the Presidential race is spent trying to make the candidates appear normal. Barak Obama is a family man. John McCain is a Vietnam vet; and the campaign is inundated with references to 'Main Street' and 'Joe the Plumber'. Such references testify the importance of making genuine contact with the voters. Both candidates regularly recount conversations they've had with ordinary citizens whose lives are a misery. They retell anecdotal stories as a way of communicating that they 'get it'. Americans are hurting. McCain answers, "I know how to fix this, my friends." Obama answers, "We've got to change things because it's not working."

Here is a quote from a recent *Newsweek* article on elitism: *There is a mad love of mediocrity in this country... "I'm voting for Sarah Palin because she's a mom. She knows what it's like to be a mom."*

Such sentiments suggest an uncanny detachment from the real problems of today. The next administration must confront issues like nuclear proliferation, ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, global climate change, a convulsing economy, Russian belligerence, the rise of China, emerging epidemics... and so on. Sarah Palin does not seem competent even to rank these items in order of importance. She didn't even have a passport until last year.

The main candidates

Both McCain and Obama are promising to stand up to big business, big oil and the corporate excesses that caused such mayhem on Wall Street. They know that this is what Joe Citizen expects of them, so they promise to do it. And it is here that Obama has spoken to the American people and told them that they will have to do their part in creating a better America. A long time has passed since JFK challenged Americans: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

Even though the cynics think that trying to debate world peace, health care, the economy, immigration, and foreign policy in 90 minutes is ludicrous, I got useful information from the debates. The respect for the rules, the respect for the process, and the respect shown to the opposing candidate allowed answers to be given and developed and also allowed the audience to hear and consider what was said.

Here is what I see as the most striking difference in the election processes of the two countries. The respect. I watched a clip on Fox News that showed John McCain talking to this "sweet little old lady" who had walked up to him at a rally to confidentially let him know that she'd heard that Obama is a Muslim. McCain looked straight at her and told her that that was not true; his opponent is a good family man. They just have some very different ideas on how to run the country.

The NZ Election

Clark and Key are less respectful of one another. The first TV One debate was a joke. I've watched high school kids debate with more integrity at *The Bishop's Shield* competition. They talked over the top of one another. They interrupted one another. They muttered negative comments under their breath while the other was speaking.

Nor have Clark and Key shown respect for the New Zealand political system, MMP, which was voted in by the people in a free election. The arrogance in refusing to debate with the others leaders is contemptible, and they've been let away with it. They've been chastised slightly on National Radio, but there is no uproar. The Green Party, Maori Party, ACT and United Future have political clout. I can give any of them my party vote, but I cannot listen to them debate the issues in a reasonable manner with the other leaders. Why?

In a democratic country, the way we run our politics plays a huge part in creating our national identity. America strives to honour the eloquent past offered by the Founding Fathers. The American people demand attention even though their power that comes in their right to vote is often ignored.

New Zealand is a harder story to read. It's been agreed that money can't rule politics, so there are financial caps on spending. More people vote, so does that mean there are fewer cynics? The issues are debated somewhere if you look – try *National Radio* on a Sunday afternoon. Perhaps there's no such thing as a perfect democracy. Perhaps this is where faith kicks in. ■

Religion and the US Presidential Election

Jim Elliston

Should the religious beliefs of a head of a democratic state matter? Not usually. But they become an issue if the campaign and policies of a political party are portrayed in religious terms, particularly if significant numbers of the electorate are single-issue voters.

Neo-Conservative activists formed an alliance between the Republican Party and the previously politically inactive Religious Right, leading to the election of Ronald Reagan. Because of this alliance future candidates have been constrained to 'come out', and in a sense the 2008 election has featured an extraordinary emphasis on the religious affiliations of candidates.

According to historian Nicholas Boyle, the original Constitution of the United States had a the quasi-religious basis. Hence President Bush's declaration earlier this year: *"The US is compelled to fight the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to offer freedom to others who have never known it. Freedom is not America's gift to others but a gift from the Almighty."*

The clear implication is that the US is the instrument of God. The neo-Conservatives embrace the doctrine that America has a unique destiny to battle against the forces of evil throughout the world.

The Republican ticket

John McCain has had to reinvent himself so as to re-motivate disillusioned and dispirited Republicans. He originally termed the leaders of the Moral Majority 'agents of intolerance' but has been courting the Religious Right; his 2007 congressional biography lists his faith as Episcopalian, now he claims to have been a Baptist for years; originally 'pro-choice', now 'pro-life'; now opposes his earlier legislative attempts to reform immigration policy; he once compared the tortures at Guantanamo to the Spanish Inquisition, but is now silent. He originally opposed the Bush tax cuts for the very wealthy, now favours making them permanent; holds that an unregulated private enterprise economy is best.

He bowed to pressure to forego his first two choices for Vice President because they are 'pro-choice' – Democrat Jewish Senator Joe Lieberman and moderate Republican Catholic Governor Tom Ridge.

Sarah Palin has boosted the Ticket's appeal to small town Americans and the Religious Right with her anti-abortion, anti gun control and hawkish utterances. She was baptised a Catholic, brought up Pentecostal, now is a 'post-denominational' Christian. She stated earlier this year that *"our national leaders are sending US soldiers to Iraq on a task that is from God".*

The Democrat Ticket

Barak Obama is a churchgoing Christian. He holds abortion to be a moral issue, but maintains that supporting women in making a range of choices, including improved healthcare, adoption and keeping the child, is more effective than criminalisation.

He eschewed the chance to become a wealthy lawyer in favour of working for the dispossessed. At the heart of his style of politics is the theme of drawing people together; an attitude that has enthused many hitherto politically disaffected young people. Internationally, he sees co-operation with other countries as essential, calling for dialogue in the first instance, rather than imposing US ready-made solutions. Obama sees economic reform as essential. Although pro-private enterprise, he published plans for effective regulations in March 2007.

Obama's running mate, ***Joe Biden,*** is a Mass-going Catholic who publicly accepts the Church's teaching on abortion, but supports *Roe v Wade* "because repealing it would have minimal effect". Several bishops (but not his own) have publicly advised Biden not to present himself for Communion in their dioceses.

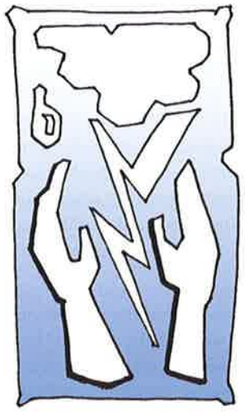
His perspective on life is broad, gained from his working-class upbringing, as well as from the deaths of his wife and two children and his own near-death experience. He is passionately committed to fighting injustice and is well grounded in Catholic principles for social justice.

Covenant describes the relationship between humanity and God as revealed in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Originally seen as a form of treaty, in the Bible it takes on the idea of betrothal. God offers this intimate relationship to the chosen people. Their history is thus seen as a saga of courtship, infidelity and reconciliation

biblical covenant – *part 2*

Jonathan Sacks

In the ancient Near East, covenants existed in the form of treaties between tribes or states. They had little to do with religion. On the contrary, in the ancient world religion was about politics and economics, power and wealth. The gods were the supreme powers. They were also the controllers of wealth, in the form of rain, the earth's fertility and its harvests. So, if you wanted power or wealth, you had to placate the gods.



The idea that there could be a covenant between God and humanity must have seemed absurd. If you had told people there could be, between the Infinite and the finite, between the eternal and the ephemeral, a bond of love and trust, I think they would have said: *go and lie down until the mood passes*.

If you had added that God loves, not the wealthy and the powerful, but the poor and the powerless, they would have thought you were mad. But that was the idea that transformed the world.

Covenant is a key word of the Hebrew Bible, where it occurs more than 250 times. No one put it more simply than the prophet *Hosea*, in words Jews say every weekday morning at the start of our prayers:

I will betroth you to me forever;
I will betroth you to me in righteousness and justice, love and compassion.
I will betroth you in faithfulness,
and you will know the LORD.

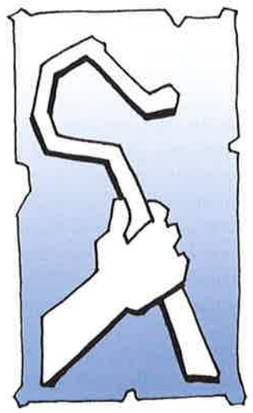
A covenant is a betrothal, a bond of love and trust. And it was the prophet *Jeremiah* who in the name of God so beautifully spelled out the result:

I remember the devotion of your youth,
the love of your betrothal,
how you were willing to follow me
into the desert,
through an unknown, unsown land.

Covenant is what allows us to face the future without fear, because we know we are not alone. *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me.* Covenant is the redemption of solitude.

Covenants of fate and covenants of faith

There are three covenants set out in the Bible's opening books of *Genesis* and *Exodus*:



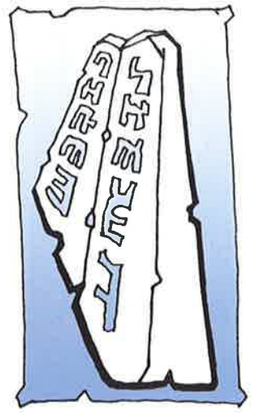
- *Genesis 9* is the covenant with Noah and through him with all humanity;
- *Genesis 17* is the covenant with Abraham;
- *Exodus 19–24* is the covenant with the Israelites in the days of Moses. None supersedes or replaces the others.

I want to look at one significant distinction between two types of covenant.

If we ask: *when did the Israelites become a nation?* the Mosaic books give us two apparently contradictory answers. The first is: in Egypt (*Deuteronomy 26*): "our ancestors went down to Egypt and there they became a nation". The second is only when the Israelites *left* Egypt and stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, where they became (*Exodus 19*) "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation". These two answers can't both be true – or can they?

A recent authority, Rabbi Soloveitchik, says that both are true, but they involve two different kinds of covenant. There is, he said, a covenant of *fate* and a covenant of *faith*, and they are very different things. A group can be bound in the covenant of fate when they suffer together, when they face a common enemy. They have shared tears, shared fears, shared responsibility. They huddle together for comfort and mutual protection. That is a covenant of fate.

A covenant of faith is quite different. That is made by a people who share dreams, aspirations, ideals. They don't need a common enemy because they have a common hope. They come together to create something new. They are defined not by what happens to them but by what they commit themselves to do. That is a covenant of faith.



The Israelites had two foundational moments, the first in Egypt and the second at Sinai. In Egypt they became a nation bound by a covenant of fate – a fate of slavery and suffering. At Sinai they became a nation bound by a covenant of faith, defined by the Torah and by God's commands.

Why is it that no-one made this distinction before Rabbi Soloveitchik – in other words, before the second half of the 20th century? The answer lies in one word: *Holocaust*. At the level of faith, Jews in the 19th and 20th centuries were deeply divided. But during the Holocaust they shared the same fate, whether they were Orthodox or non-Orthodox, religious or secular, identifying or totally assimilated. Rabbi Soloveitchik saw this as a covenant of fate, even in the absence of a covenant of faith.

When we read *Genesis* and *Exodus* superficially, it seems as if the covenants of Noah, Abraham and Sinai are the same sort of thing. But now we can see that they are not the same kind of thing at all. The covenants of Abraham and Sinai are covenants of faith. But the covenant of Noah says nothing about faith. The world had been almost destroyed by a flood. All human beings, all life, with the exception of Noah's Ark, had shared the same fate. Humanity after the Flood was like the Jewish people after the Holocaust. The covenant of Noah is not a covenant of faith but a covenant of fate.

God says: Never again will I destroy the world. But I cannot promise that *you* will never destroy the world – because I have given you free will. All I can do is teach you how *not* to destroy the world... How?

Three dimensions of covenant

The covenant of Noah has three dimensions.

- "He who sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God, He created man." The first element is *the sanctity of human life*.
- Read *Genesis 9* carefully. Five times God insists that the covenant of Noah is not merely with humanity, but with all life on earth. So the second element is *the integrity of the created world*.
- The symbol of the covenant, the rainbow, in which the white light of God is refracted into all the colours of the spectrum. The rainbow symbolises what I have called the dignity of difference. The miracle at the heart of monotheism is that unity up there creates diversity down here.

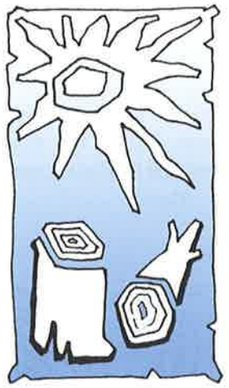
These three dimensions define the covenant of fate.

There is a famous prophecy in *Isaiah 11*, that one day the wolf will lie down with the lamb. It hasn't happened yet – though there is the apocryphal story of a zoo in which, in a single cage, a lion did lie down with a lamb. "How do you do that?" a visitor asked. The zookeeper replied: "Simple – you just need a new lamb every day".

There was, however, one time when the wolf *did* lie down with the lamb. When? In Noah's Ark. Why? Not because they were friends, but because otherwise they would drown. That is the covenant of fate. Note that the covenant of fate *precedes* the covenant of faith, because faith is particular, but fate is universal.

The present situation

We are living through one of the most fateful ages of change since *homo sapiens* first set foot on earth. Globalisation and the new information technologies are doing two things simultaneously. First, they are fragmenting our world. Narrowcasting is taking the place of broadcasting. National cultures are growing weaker. ▷▷



We are splitting into ever smaller sects of the like–minded.

But globalisation is also thrusting us together as never before. The destruction of a rainforests here adds to global warming everywhere. Political conflict in one place can create a terrorist incident in another, thousands of miles away. Poverty there moves consciences here. At the very moment that covenants of faith are splitting apart, the covenant of fate is forcing us together.

All three elements of the global covenant are in danger. The sanctity of human life is being desecrated by terror. The integrity of creation is threatened by environmental catastrophe. Respect for diversity is imperiled by what one writer has called the clash of civilisations. But the covenant of fate precedes the covenant of faith: before we can live *any* faith, we have to live. And we must honour our covenant with future generations that they will inherit a world in which it is possible to live. That is the call of God in our time.

Chrsitians and Jews

Friends, I stand before you as a Jew, which means not just as an individual, but as a representative of my people. And as I prepared this lecture, within my soul were the tears of my ancestors. We may have forgotten this, but for a thousand years, between the First Crusade and the Holocaust, the word "Christian" struck fear into Jewish hearts. Think only of the words the Jewish encounter with Christianity added to the vocabulary of human pain: blood libel, book burnings, disputations, forced conversions, inquisition, *auto da fe*, expulsion, ghetto and pogrom. I could not stand here today in total openness, and not mention that book of Jewish tears.

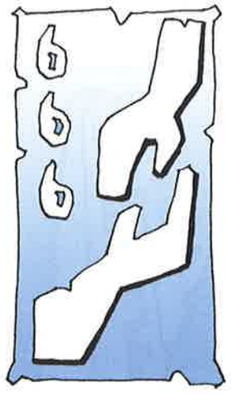
But what would our ancestors want of us today. The answer lies in the scene that brings *Genesis* to a climax and a closure. After the death of Jacob the brothers fear that Joseph will take revenge. After all, they had sold him into slavery in Egypt. Instead, Joseph forgives – but he does more than forgive.

You intended to harm me,
but God intended it for good,
to do what is now being done,
to save many lives.

Joseph does more than forgive. He says: "out of bad has come good. Because of what you did to me, I have been able to save many lives." Which lives? Not just those of his brothers, but the lives of the Egyptians, the lives of strangers. "I have been able to feed the hungry. I have been able to honour the covenant of fate."

By honouring the covenant of fate between him and strangers, Joseph is able to mend the broken covenant of faith between him and his brothers. In effect, Joseph says to his brothers: we cannot *unwrite* the past, but we can *redeem* that past – if we take our tears and use them to sensitise us to the tears of others.

And now we see a remarkable thing. Although *Genesis* is about the covenant of faith between God and Abraham, it begins and ends with the covenant of fate: first in the days of Noah, and later in the time of Joseph. Both involve water: in the case of Noah, there is too much, a flood; in the case of Joseph, too little, a drought. Both involve saving human life.



But Noah saves only his family. Joseph saves an entire nation of strangers. Both involve forgiveness. In the case of Noah, God forgives. In the case of Joseph, it is a human being who forgives. And both involve a relationship with the past. In the case of Noah the past is obliterated. In the case of Joseph the past is redeemed.

And today, between Jews and Christians, that past is being redeemed. In 1942, in the midst of humanity's darkest night, a great Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, and a great Chief Rabbi, J. H. Hertz, came together in a momentous covenant of fate, and founded the *Council of Christians and Jews*. And since then, Jews and Christians have done more to mend their relationship than any other two religions on earth, so that today we meet as beloved friends.

Now we must extend that friendship more widely. We must renew the global covenant of fate, the covenant that began with Noah and reached a climax in the work of Joseph, the work of saving many lives. And that is what we began to do when we walked side–by–side: Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Zoroastrians and Baha'i, in a public march through the centre of London at the beginning of the Lambeth Conference reminding people of the Millennium pledge to end world poverty.

Because though we do not share a faith, we surely share a fate. Whatever our faith or lack of faith, hunger still hurts, disease still strikes, poverty still disfigures and hate still kills. Few put it better than that great Christian poet, John Donne: "Every person's death diminishes me, for I am involved in all humanity."

Friends, if we look at *Genesis 50*, we will see that just before Joseph says his great words of reconciliation, the text says: "Joseph wept". Why did Joseph weep? He wept for all the needless pain the brothers had caused one another. And shall we not weep when we see the immense challenges with which humanity is faced in the 21st century – poverty, hunger, disease, environmental catastrophe? And what is the face religion all too often shows to the world? Conflict – between faiths, and sometimes within faiths.

And we, Jews and Christians, who have worked so hard and so effectively at reconciliation, must show the world another way: honouring humanity as God's image, protecting the environment as God's work, respecting diversity as God's will and keeping the covenant as God's word.

Too long we have dwelt
in the valley of tears.
Let us walk together towards
the mountain of the Lord,
Side–by–side,
Hand in hand,
bound by a covenant of fate
that turns strangers
into friends.
In an age of fear,
let us be agents of hope.
Together let us be a blessing to the world.

Jonathan Sacks is Chief Rabbi of Great Britain. He delivered this keynote address at the 2008 Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church. Reproduced by kind favour.

the autumn wind

These are the first days of fall. This time of year the shadows lengthen, the light turns golden and the wind begins to move. I feel my own spirit lift as the cool breezes stir after the still heat of summer. I breathe in the clean scented air of the rising autumn rains and slowly a sense of renewal begins to spread through my being.

I'm reminded that in the three languages closest to the heart of the Judeo-Christian tradition, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, the words for *wind*, *breath* and *spirit* are interchangeable. The Hebrew word *Ruah,* which is identical to the Aramaic, makes its first appearance in *Gen. 1,2*: "...there was darkness over the deep and God's *Ruah* hovered over the waters". In other words, *God's Spirit* hovered over the waters, the *Sacred Breath*, the *Holy Wind.*

In Greek, the word is *Pneuma*. *Pneuma* is gender neutral in Greek, but in Hebrew the word *Ruah* is feminine and implies a feminine divine presence.

Jesus probably spoke Aramaic. It was the common language spoken in Palestine at the time. I find it interesting to shift some of the best known expressions of Jesus from the usual translation of *spirit* to *wind* or *breath*. When I do, suddenly the wind itself, the air I breathe, my very breath is an immediate experience of the presence of the sacred.

"Jesus *breathed* on them and said, receive the *Holy Breath.* Receive *the Holy Wind*" *(Jn 21,25).* How might we change if we received each breath we take as the breath of God? How might our relationship with the air – the very vitality of life – change if we perceived the wind, not simply as a sign of the Spirit but *as* the Spirit?

Meditators often take the breath as a focus of their attention. The breath is empty of thought. One might say it is empty of ego and thus becomes a vehicle for a direct experience of the sacred.

For beginners, this focus on breath can seem banal, boring, insignificant. After all, what can be special about the breath? It is with us always. Exactly! Just as Jesus said: "I am with you always; yes to the end of time". *(Mt. 28,20)* How do we experience this abiding presence? Through the *spirit*, the *breath,* the *wind.*

It is in the context of these reflections that I offer these two poems, inspired by the Wind.

Diane Pendola

The fullness in my hands

How can my hands be full
of the wind?
But they are. They are full
of energy invisible, pregnant,
taut as skin drawn tight
around the pulsing womb,
full of the sound of the drumbeat.

And my hands, they move,
they undulate like a wave.
They shape, they create,
they vibrate with heat.
My eye sees fire
bursting from my palms.

How can my hands be full of flame?
But they are.
They are full of the light
that does not hurt but heals,
burning away the dross,
the doubt, the dread,
the dead-wood and the dry blame.

How can my hands feel so?
But they do. Oh touching
an infant's tender crown
and the soft down,
reaching like fingertips into
the most delicate underbelly,
the stroke of a kitten's fur,
a puppy's velvet nose,
or the petal of a rose.

How can my hands see so?
But they do. An eye opens
in every pore, pouring out
Light, oh
Love, oh
Wind
in the beginning and
Wind
in the end.
Wind –
the fullness in my hands.

When I die

When I die
lay me upon the earth
and let me listen
one last time to the Wind.

And let me feel,
one last time the Wind
on my body.

And you can watch
as my Spirit rises
to become one with this Wind,
finally and utterly. . .

one with the Wind
who has wooed me
all my life,
who receives my breath
into her breath
as we move clouds
across the broad sky.

Diane Pendola

Music evokes the spiritual in us, says balladeer Annie Lennox.
It communicates profound feelings like nothing else. Music is a divine gift
– yet devalued by having become too available.
Nothing can replace the transcendent quality of a Jacqueline du Pres
on the cello or the voice of a Kiri te Kanawa

what is music?

Annie Lennox

What is music? Music is pure magic. It is a wonderful gift to humanity. Music moves us, and soothes us. It stimulates. It makes us want to dance or sing. It makes us feel happy or sad, inspired or uplifted. It affects our mood in all kinds of infinite ways. It can be exquisitely subtle or wildly raucous: from a lullaby, to a war cry for revolution.

The question ***what is music?*** has no ultimately fixed answer, because although music can be defined in mechanistic terms as merely vibrations that are detected by the organ of Corti and assimilated by the brain's cortex into what we hear, that is still only half the story. It is no accident that the Latin word for breath – that prerequisite of music – is *spiritus*, for music invokes the spiritual in us. It is of the spirit and so is universal, other-worldly, nebulous and freely evolving. What a wonderful gift to humanity.

Ever since I can remember, music has been an accompaniment to my life. It would be impossible for me to even try and conceptualise a world without music. If you have a natural aptitude and appreciation for it, then music simply draws you to it and connects. Watch a baby nodding her head, clapping her hands or bouncing in response to a rhythm or melody.

Songs in particular contain something profoundly elemental. The singer actually 'becomes' the instrument, or vehicle of communication and expression. Through the combination of voice, lyrical content and poetic structure, melody, rhythm, the nuance of combined tonal qualities and phrasing within the breath, singers can transmit and translate thoughts and feelings, potentially elevating and transporting both the singer and the listener to another realm. Music really can lead us into another dimension.

Music also tells stories, breaks hearts, reduces us to tears, or seduces us into falling in love, over and over and over again. Music is a universal language. A human creation from a divine source… perhaps.

Music is a mystery, a code. A vehicle of spirit and soul. It is perceived through 'hearing' the vibration of sound, the most sublime resonance – from the eardrum to the brain. Music moves us beyond intellect to the heart-centre.

I'm not a music 'expert'. I'm a music lover – a discoverer, an explorer. Music for me is pure 'potentiality'. I can engage with it. I can commune with it. Sometimes, if I'm open to it, it takes me by surprise and I step out of myself. Music is a friend, a companion, a guide and a teacher. A challenge, a landscape, a palette, a texture, a shape. Music is chord structure, harmony or dissonance.

Music is culture from every origin; it is identity and belonging. It is history and invention. Music is remembering and forgetting. Music is symmetry, rebellion, genius, prodigy, mastery, virtuoso, dazzling, breath-taking, spell-binding, and extraordinary.

Pause for a moment to 'think' of these sounds: harp, clarinet, kettledrum, xylophone, violin, guitar, trumpet, saxophone, sitar, oboe, flute. They are all uniquely different; yet we can 'hear' them in our heads, just by thinking of them.

Then think of the individual styles of various composers – Bach or Debussy, for example. We can tell the difference between Vivaldi, Couperin and Telemann – and they too have unique 'sounds'. But what drew them to compose? How could Mozart play with such brilliance at the age of four? These are the deeper questions that remain unanswered.

There are other questions that need to be asked: what does the wind sound like, or a dripping tap? Can this be a form of music too? A car door slamming, a baby crying, footsteps, whispers, a log fire crackling, animal sounds, city sounds, bar-room conversations, the roar of a football crowd, a familiar voice, the ocean, early-morning birdsong. Are these sounds musical to your ears?

the sublime communicator – Elvis Presley in his prime

How does music make you feel? Does it make you nostalgic? Where does it take you in your internal landscape? How can a snatch of music evoke a certain period in your life?

What does silence sound like? Have you ever experienced silence? Do you like it? Are your thoughts too loud? Where is your mind located? Is music located 'inside' or 'outside' of you?

These are not just random questions; they are the kinds of question rarely posed when young people start to learn how to approach an instrument. Yet, I think they need to be asked, because music is so much more than just going through the motions of producing a sound. People may be able to play well mechanically – because they have learned to copy well – but in doing so they do not truly connect with the essence of music and express themselves.

We have become so accustomed to recorded sound that it has become rather facile and formulaic. When you can literally access any piece of recorded music at the touch of a fingertip, something valuable gets lost or devalued in the process. Music has become ubiquitous. It's in shops, restaurants, bars, airports, waiting rooms – in fact, anywhere that people gather. Sadly, in a way, music has become just another kind of social 'filler', like small talk or gossip. I get frustrated when I sit down to eat with a friend and we actually can't have a conversation because 'background' music dominates the situation.

People ask me what kind of music I listen to, and, quite frankly, it's come down to the sustained resonance of Tibetan bowls. Why? Because it's so. . . so pure and still and utterly beautiful. It is the essence of music full circle, back to the source, the universal vibration. I guess what I'm saying is that as a music maker and music lover I have become more discerning. I don't want to listen to music 24/7 just because it's available to me and I can.

Sometimes I dip into the thing we call 'music' and it still takes me profoundly by surprise, as if I were hearing it for the very first time. ■

Annie Lennox is a world-renowned singer and social activist.
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Requiem

Most loved one,
today was the day
of your passing.

Thy will be done, amen
so sings our requiem.

Ritual brings
its solemn relief
murmuring prayer
mops up our grief

The quiet candles burn.

Fay Clayton

Cardinal Newman

journey of a soul

The Dream of Gerontius

John Henry Newman wrote this imaginative and moving poem after the death of a close friend. Edward Elgar received it as a wedding present and fell in love with it. It resonated with his personal faith and it prompted his most majestic choral work

Elgar's masterpiece, *The Dream of Gerontius*, is the intersection of the the creative genius of two highly introspective Victorian Catholics – John Henry Newman who write the poem in 1865 and Edward Elgar who set it to music for the Birmingham Music Festival (1900).

The *Dream* has been performed three times in New Zealand during the past 12 months to celebrate Elgar's jubilee year (150 years since his birth). There was a memorable performance in September 2007 under the baton of David Burchell, in Dunedin Town Hall. This has been followed this year by performances in Christchurch and Wellington. This celebration of the *Dream of Gerontius* is providential since Newman has himself just been declared 'Venerable' by the Catholic Church, a prelude to his beatification confidently expected by the end of the year.

John Henry Newman

The November issue of *Tui Motu* – the month in Catholic devotional tradition when the faithful departed are commemorated – seems an opportune time to look at this masterpiece of composition. Newman wrote the poem in 1866, and it is said that it was composed in great grief after the death of a close friend. Newman all his life enjoyed very close and warm friendships and the death of anyone close always made a deep impression on him.

It is characteristic of much of his writing – academic as well as fictional – that it leaps out of his own experience and reflects his personal spirituality. The poem describes the journey of a dying man. The name Gerontius suggests an elderly person with a full experience of life, and could be Newman himself who was 65 years of age when he wrote it. Newman was always acutely aware of the other world of the spirit, the hidden reality of God. Therefore the final departure from this earth, the specifics of the human journey into eternity, is of intense interest to him.

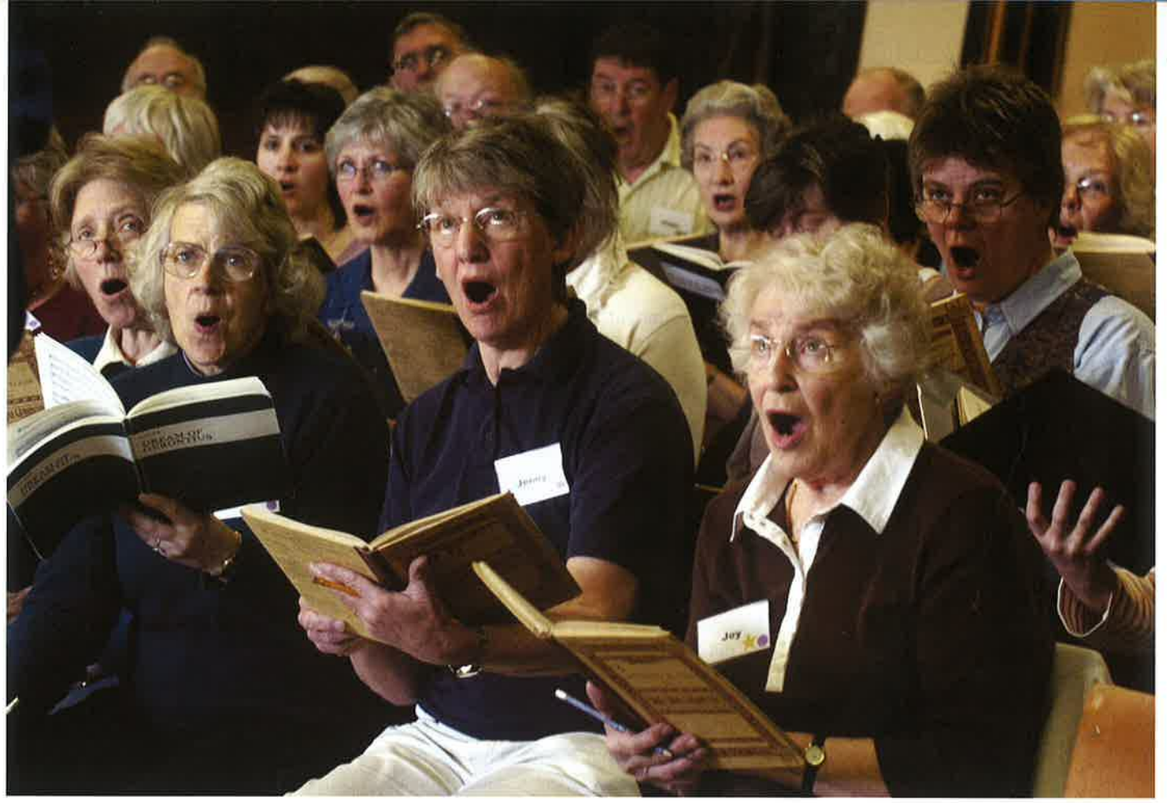
The Dream of Gerontius

Part 1 describes Gerontius on his death bed, part terrified at the prospect of his impending fate, part confident of the mercy of God and secure in his own faith. One of Newman's best known hymns *Firmly I Believe and Truly* comes from this section. The choral voices, his friends gathered round his bed (Assistants) pray and intercede for him while the priest chants *Go Forth, Christian Soul*, the prayer from the funeral rite familiar to all Catholics.

Part 2 opens gently with the moment of the soul of Gerontius reawakening from death. Here Newman allows his imagination to run riot, and the great appeal of the poem undoubtedly comes from that universal curiosity of what happens to our loved ones at this climactic moment of life. Obviously this section is highly coloured by Newman's acceptance of the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory – and it was distaste for this dogma which triggered the initial coldness with which *The Dream of Gerontius* was received by English audiences.

The popularity of the work today throughout the English speaking world shows that the discerning public have long laid that ghost to rest. David Burchell, himself an Anglican, says: "I have no problem with Newman's theology. I find the story quite a valid conjecture of what the soul goes through after death. It has a compelling sense of progression: Gerontius' deathbed fears, his statement of faith – *Firmly I believe and Truly*; his dialogue with the Angel. Newman is exploring what happens".

Gerontius receives a beautiful reassurance from the Angel (his 'angel guardian' in the Catholic devotional tradition), but this is rudely interrupted by the *Demons' Chorus* – the fallen angels expressing their utter abhorrence of mere mortals who have supplanted them. The male voices spit out their anger and derision – but fortunately Gerontius cries: 'I see not those false spirits'.



City of Dunedin Choir rehearsing ***Gerontius*** in St Paul's Cathedral crypt. *Photo:* Gerard O'Brien. Courtesy *Otago Daily Times*

Gerontius is then greeted by a chorus of *Angelicals*, the heavenly chorus welcoming him. Their climax is the wonderful and familiar *Praise to the Holiest in the Height*. Gerontius expresses a desire to see God and the Angel leads him on.

"He receives only a fleeting glimpse." notes Burchell, "Elgar builds up the volume over a page of writing. There is an almighty crash – and it's gone. It is like a flash of blinding light." Elgar notes: 'for one moment, must every instrument exert its fullest force'.

After that triumphant climax the Angel takes the soul of Gerontius off to Purgatory. He encounters the *Angel of the Agony*, a bass solo acclaiming the redeeming actions of Christ on the Cross. Finally we hear a prolonged song of farewell with the distant sound of the Angelicals with a brief snatch of earthly voices interceding for the soul of Gerontius, before the final *Amen*.

David Burchell sums up: "Elgar is very introspective and spiritual. His famous concertos focus on one player, one instrument. Gerontius too is focused on one person: it is like a concerto for voice. The tenor voice of Gerontius carries the story right through.

"It says something about Elgar's character and his genius: the 'Newman of music'. His best works came from deep down within him. He is inspired in a way we can also describe J.S. Bach. A great work of music continues to speak to us long after we have listened to it – and long after the composer's death."

The Production

"I took immense satisfaction in producing *The Dream of Gerontius* last year", says David Burchell. "Gerontius has probably been Number One on my list of works to perform.

"Elgar learned to write a continuous work like this more from the operatic than from the oratorio tradition. Gerontius is a journey with one scene entering into the next almost seamlessly. Nothing before or after in Elgar's work quite matches up the dramatic structure of Gerontius.

"It is a most complex piece for a Director. I sang in it when I was in my teens and fell in love with it then. It has been a great privilege to perform such an intense and well-crafted work: a first rate line-up of soloists; an orchestra giving their everything; the choir likewise, singing with wonderful conviction."

In the Dunedin production David Hamilton (tenor) sang the part of Gerontius; David Griffiths the bass and baritone parts; and Helen Medlyn (mezzo-soprano) sang the part of the Angel. Helen Medlyn said this about it: "I really love this piece... The music is very potent, both musically and lyrically. It's very touching and moving and engaging. And it's always a treat to come down and perform in Dunedin Town Hall. It has the most wonderful acoustics – probably the best in the country." ■

David Burchell is Director of Music at St Paul's Anglican Cathedral, Dunedin. He is also regular conductor for the City of Dunedin Choir

death and drink

Paul Andrews

I thought I knew about funerals. What happens? After the death, the family decides on a day for the funeral, and puts notices on local radio or the newspapers. There may be a waking of the body in the home, or in a funeral parlour. On the eve of the funeral the body is brought to the church and received there by a priest, with a short service and a few words about the deceased. Next morning, at a fixed time, the funeral Mass is celebrated. The priest gives a homily. Family or friends may say a few affectionate, respectful words at the end. Then the body is brought to the cemetery and buried, after a few more prayers. Many of the mourners gather for a meal after the burial. The style will vary depending on the circumstances of death – the mood after a sudden or tragic death is clearly different from the loss of a very old person.

By and large we do funerals well in Ireland. People take pains to attend and support the grieving family. We do them better than across the water. I once buried my aged uncle in London, where he had worked and lived for most of his adult life. The church part was done well. But the congregation! There were six people in the church, including his only son with a wife and two grandchildren. After the burial they had nobody to talk to, no way to work through their feelings. The son, a successful professional, went back to work that afternoon. It was desolating to think that a good man could leave this world so little remarked or grieved for.

In New Zealand, my eyes have been opened by watching Maori funerals. They carry the marks of a culture in which the tribe and family count for a lot. Relations, even quite distant ones, will travel the length of the island to reassert their links with kinfolk and say goodbye to the deceased. They gather in the Marae, the community hall, and greet one another at leisure. For three days they live with the dead person, grieving, talking, remembering, keening. The body is never left alone. Death is a point where time intersects eternity, and there is solemnity in the way they mark that intersection. The proverb has it: God gave the white men clocks, but he gave the Maori time. The business of the day – indeed in many cases the business lasts a whole week – is to see off their friend; other businesses can wait. There are no deadlines.

The funeral service itself may be scheduled for eleven oclock; but if the relatives have not arrived, the start is delayed until everyone is there. There are speeches, centred on the coffin. If you want to speak, you tell the assembly what bonds of blood or friendship entitle you to open your mouth about the dead person. There will be a succession of speakers, who hold a special stick while they are talking, then hand it on to the next speaker. How would you describe what they say? The truth spoken in affection. They will speak of their grief, of the company they miss, the traits they loved. They utter what is on their mind. A son may stand over his mother's coffin and give out to her for not giving him enough attention or time. Or a brother may speak sadly about what alcohol had done to the dead person.

...they will speak of their grief, of the company they miss, the traits they loved

It is easy to imagine the hazards of this custom: bad-mouthing the dead, dancing on their grave. That was not the effect I witnessed. There was a truth and a release in speaking what was on the mourner's mind. It was therapeutic, especially because at the end of the day the feeling was of acceptance: he was one of us, of our blood, and we loved him as he was. If God can love us as we are, so we can love one another. The custom saves the mourners from the sense you sometimes get at an Irish funeral of important things being left unsaid, maybe even of whitewash. Like so much of what we see when we travel, we do not want to copy others' ways, but we are glad of a completely different perspective on something we do ourselves.

Funerals sometimes end in pubs, and that is another area where New Zealand has intrigued me. Southland, at the bottom of the South Island, came under strong Presbyterian influence in the early days. For a long time there were no pubs, no places where you could get a drink. If you were living in the country town of Gore before 1940, you were unable to get a drink within a radius of five miles from the post office. So people travelled to villages outside that area, as Irish drinkers used to travel to what were called *bone fide* pubs.

In a 1942 referendum the people voted to change the system and allow the sale of drink within the town. Licensing laws were still strict. Until 1967 the closing time for hotel bars was 6 pm, which led to what they called the "six o'clock swill". The sale of alcohol was to be controlled by a Licensing Trust, which would employ people to manage the pubs, but would put all the profits into community services. Publicans were not private capitalists, but civil servants.

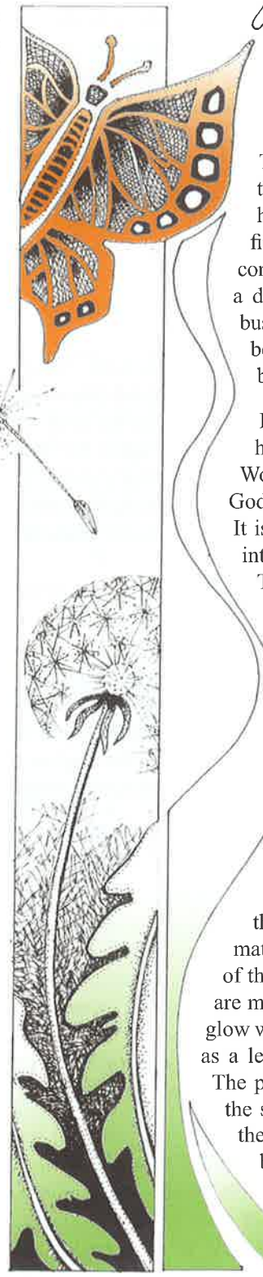
The results are spectacular. The community trust has used its ample resources to build magnificent sports facilities, such as a multi-sport complex with a skating rink, four swimming pools and a huge gym for indoor events like basketball. It supports scholarships, a public library, a museum and art gallery, big playing fields for every school, children's playgrounds, and roads so broad that you can do a U-turn on almost any street in town – and all this for a population of less than nine thousand.

No, I'm not suggesting that all Ireland's publicans should become salaried civil servants, working for the profit of the community. The imagination boggles. But I have enjoyed getting a fresh angle on two issues that hit us all at times: death and drink. ■

unwrapping the gift

Joy Cowley

It happened a few years ago, and it began as a light comment from a Mass reader. She said that all the grey heads in the pews looked like a field of dandelions in late summer. A parishioner sighed, "Where are our young people?" and another man joked that maybe the elderly were catching up with their insurance policies. The first two disagreed by politely changing the subject and I lost an opportunity to present another view, which didn't matter because suddenly, the subject had become so deep that I was no longer sure of words. How do we put language to mystery? For mystery it is, the way faith comes to maturity in the gospel of our lives and is at its deepest, richest, sweetest, in our senior years.



Not that it wasn't meaningful when we were young. It was. But in our youth, faith was mainly about belief in a system and obedience to a code of ideals given to us for guidance. Images of God met the simplicity of life experience: God, Jesus and a Spirit like a sacred breath, the Trinity we met at church each Sunday. We believed that God spoke the words of Scripture, that Jesus fed us with his body and blood in Holy Communion and that the Holy Spirit came to live in us at Baptism, and we believed these things because people told us to believe them. Some of us connected the beliefs to a stirring of the heart and a hunger for something just beyond our reach. Some of us rebelled against the rules or were overcome by fear of rebellion. Some of us became just plain bored and looked for other things to do on a Sunday morning.

Most of today's faithful Mass-goers, have at some youthful stage, been through this 'nest-leaving' syndrome. Learning to fly is an important step towards internalising faith. It is the discovery of God in a wider world. It is the unwrapping of the first layer of the gift.

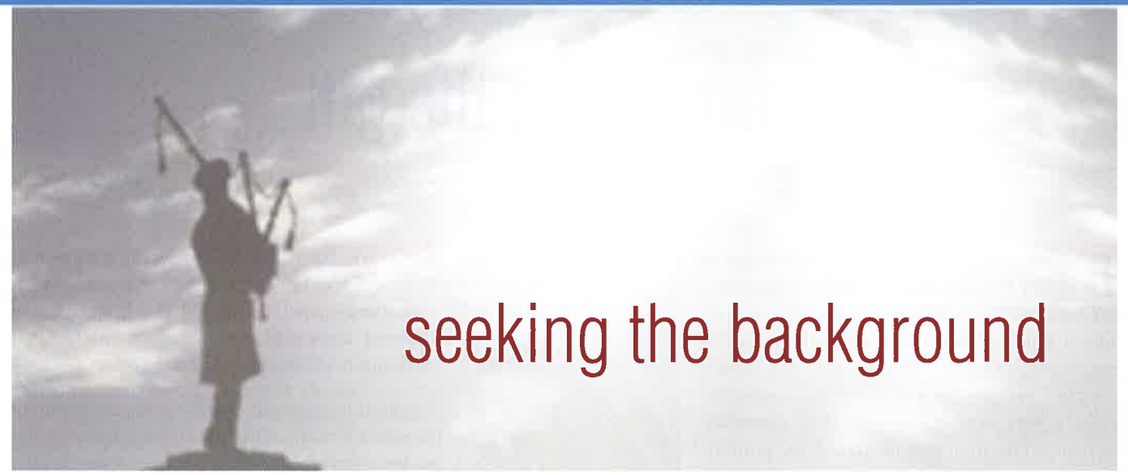
If the first layer is a certain amount of youthful rebellion, what is the second? Perhaps it can be recognized as restlessness, a constant search for meaning. Many will do what we could call a Religious O.E, exploring other religions, reading philosophy, trying meditation techniques, tasting here and there for whatever is sweet to the heart. Those who experiment with sex and drugs are also looking for spiritual experience. There is a growing awareness of an inner hunger although it may not be consciously associated with matters spiritual. The unwrapping of the second layer concerns a movement towards defining the God-space in our lives.

The third layer usually involves finding meaning through a breadth of life experience. The searcher has become busy and responsible – career, family, financial commitments – and life is beginning to connect with those ideals that seemed old-fashioned a decade ago. For many families, the week is so busy that Sunday is the only day for drives, picnics, beach, visits, but parents will still make an effort to bring a young family to Mass.

It is more than a duty. What happens during that hour on Sunday morning connects with the week. Worship is less about God's law and more about God's love, and it is not merely external statement. It is an internal discovery and it is difficult to put into words other than 'sacrament' and 'mystery'. The unwrapping of the third layer brings the discovery that the journey to God lies in oneself and what the church offers is a series of valuable maps and sacred food for that journey.

The fourth layer is unfolded in slow time and it brings us very close to the ultimate gift. This comes naturally in the senior years, in retirement when there is time to savour the wisdom of life experience and see how beautifully it connects with the wisdom of the church. It is a time of knowing that all the years have been held by God, no matter what we thought at the time, and every part of the journey, light and shade, was valuable. There are moments when everyone and everything seem to glow with beauty, moments when something as simple as a leaf held in the hand brings exquisite pleasure. The physical discomforts of ageing are balanced by the strength of inner peace and an awareness that there is nothing outside of God. External belief has become inner knowledge.

So there they are at Mass, the senior majority in the company of Jesus and Mary and all the saints. We observe them holding out time-worn hands in gratitude. The fifth layer will not be unwrapped for them until the final transition but they already know what it is. It's what we are born for – the Love that welcomes us home. ■



seeking the background

Mike Noonan

It was a big event, Cathol Sutherland's departure to L'Arche. It was in 1975. Cathol was a Sutherland from Sutherland. News spread across the highland clan that one of their beloved sons was to make the move to the new community in Inverness. As the news spread, people came out to the road to wave goodbye to him as he took the car with Elizabeth Buckley to Braerannoch, the house that would become his home for more than 30 years.

Cathol was a man with Downs Syndrome. 'Sans Peur' is the clan motto – 'Without Fear'. Cathol never raised his voice, but spoke in a rasping whisper of a brogue. He always carried himself with immense dignity and when one entered into his presence one knew that one was in the presence of a great and indomitable spirit.

L'Arche has always amazed me by the diversity of the people it attracts to live together in its communities. Old people and young, men and women, families and single people, people with intellectual disabilities and people with doctorates, people of faith and people with none – all find a home together.

Cathol settled in to his new community, bringing with him the richness of his Scottish Highland heritage. I always remember him with his tanned handsome face, his piercing blue eyes, wearing the Sutherland Tartan, with pride, his Sgian dubh (the ceremonial dagger) tucked in his sock and his Glengarry Tam upon his head. He cut a fine figure and a strong Scottish presence that somehow conveyed the mystery and drama of Scotland.

He was a piper from the roots of his hair to the tips of his toes. At any community event he would appear, sometimes silhouetted against the horizon – but always to great and solemn effect – with his pipes, ready to pipe the visitors to the door, or to lead the lament for a departing assistant.

I have entertained some beliefs about Cathol which, while never checked, just make sense. They emerge out of the swirling mists that surrounded the man. For example, I believe that there was a day in his childhood when Cathol noticed the sound of distant bagpipes. He would have asked where the sound was coming from. I believe he was told that the sound was in the background.

It became his mission in life to find 'the background'. I remember finding one of the newer assistants (who had a PhD in astrophysics) one day, scratching his head in puzzlement. He'd obviously just been asked the question. "Where is the background?" It's a devilishly difficult one to answer when you think about it. I remember the relief we all felt when some bright spark – on Cathol's birthday – drew a beautifully embellished sign for his door which said 'The Background'. Well then, that was one of life's deeper mysteries settled – for a while, at least.

With his clan background, Cathol had a clear sense of hierarchy. While I was community leader, he would acknowledge my role, grasping my hand in greeting, smiling broadly, patting my hand saying "Mike, the big man." When one morning he arrived at my office demanding to see 'the big man' I knew there was trouble in the community. His presence preceded him into the room. He fixed me with his steely stare. He was clearly angry and something – or someone – had annoyed him mightily. "Mike", he said, rocking from side to side, "Mike," he said again, "I want you to put your foot down."

When Cathol was aggrieved, it was always important to ensure that he felt heard and understood. It was a test of community leadership. Not wanting to be found wanting, I summoned up all my sensitivity and empathic understanding. "Cathol," I said "something has upset you and you want me to speak to some of the people in the community about it." "No" said Cathol, "not people." Mystified, I asked what it was that was upsetting him. "Mike" he replied, "I want you to put your foot down!" "Yes Cathol, I've understood you want me to put my foot down….." "Yes, Mike," he interrupted, "I want you to put your foot down… on the CAT!!!" Hot Chocolate, the community cat, had clearly ruffled Cathol's feathers that day.

Cathol had a dignity that defied the ridiculous. One Christmas, he had been asked to play the role of a shepherd in the nativity play. He was extraordinarily put out by this, because he knew he was made of sterner stuff and destined for higher things. We could not know or predict whether he would appear as the shepherd, so we made contingency plans for that scene. On the day of the performance, Cathol was nowhere to be found, but as we started the play, in marched Cathol who had dressed himself in flowing robes, a Palestinian head-dress and a long grey beard. The only wardrobe malfunction in his ensemble was that the moustache of the beard went over the bridge of his nose. "I am God" said he, with such authority that not one of us dared to laugh.

It was only when we had taken our seats on the plane that I learned of Cathol's fear of flying. His whitening knuckles told the story as he grasped the arm rests of his seat. "Cathol," he told himself gravely, "keep your eyes fixed on the blue lights of the run-a-way." For the first time in my life I noticed the colour of the lights on the runway. He used this self-counselling technique throughout our take-off and landing, without any major crisis developing. 'Sans Peur'! He'd felt the fear, but had not been disabled by it.

We were on our way to L'Arche in Kent to celebrate their 25th anniversary. Cathol was an Episcopalian, it was Sunday, and so after we arrived we went to Evensong at Canterbury Cathedral. Something in the solemn proceedings had impressed him greatly. I noticed his attention had intensified during the procession where the reader was led to the lectern. So at supper that night, Cathol processed with a spoon tied to a broom handle leading the person who was carrying dessert to the table. "Cathol, you're a crackpot!" I said affectionately. Drawing himself up to his full dignified height he corrected me. "I am not a cracked pot!" he told me. "I am a good pot!" Cathol died in April of this year, 33 years to the day when he was welcomed into L'Arche Inverness. It was a big event, Cathol's departure from L'Arche Inverness. Many people, whose lives he had touched, celebrated a life lived with dignity and sometimes with unwitting and uproarious humour.

I can imagine a scene of great rejoicing, with God welcoming Cathol into heaven, perhaps making sense once and for all about the difference between the foreground and the background and just maybe, in special honour of his new guest, wearing the moustache of that long white beard of His over the bridge of His nose! ■

hitching a ride on a musical and emotional roller coaster

Young@Heart
Film Review: Paul Sorrell

When I first saw the advertising for *Young@Heart*, it looked eminently missable. A documentary about a group of elderly, ailing and mostly overweight Americans who had formed an amateur choir did not immediately engage my attention. It seemed a perfect subject for the kind of sentimental treatment so beloved of Hollywood. How wrong I was.

Far from being a syrupy study of a geriatric chorus, this is a funny, witty, generous and life-affirming picture of a community of committed individuals who, despite being mostly in their 70s and 80s and beset by a variety of major health problems, have lifted their lives onto a new level of creativity and compassion. Not for this choir the stock melodies of Rogers and Hammerstein or barbershop. No, these choristers take on the likes of The Clash, Coldplay and Prince.

The film follows the erratic progress of the chorus as they prepare for a concert in their home town of Northampton, Massachusetts, under the baton of their director, Bob Cilman – a mere stripling at 53. As the choir takes on apparently impossible numbers such as Allen Toussaint's *Yes We Can Can* and *Schizophrenia* by punk band Sonic Youth, always rendered with tremendous gusto, each rehearsal seems more shambolic than the last. Stan Goldman, who has a key role in a lively rendition of James Brown's *I Feel Good*, muffs the same two lines over and over again. Things are not made easier by the deaths of two key members during the course of filming.

As the time for the concert approaches, a series of connected stories is unfolded as we accompany several of the chorus members at rehearsals and into their homes and, sometimes, hospital beds. We are moved by Bob Cilman's uncompromising quest for musical quality matched with a delicate compassion for his elderly charges. We laugh along with Eileen Hall, a British woman in her 90s who can't stop flirting with the film crew. We marvel as Fred Knittle, a heavily overweight man with congestive heart failure and an unstoppable stream of one-liners, delivers the performance of his life with a soulful rendition of Coldplay's *Fix You*, oxygen bottle at his side.

The group's effect on others is seen when they perform outdoors in the local prison yard, hemmed in by high barbed wire fences. The faces of their young male audience show pain and confusion mingling with emotion and gratitude. When, unexpectedly, the two groups meet and embrace, we are aware that this band of extraordinary senior citizens has created something very special indeed.

Everyone who can should see this film. It is a tribute to the power of the human spirit and the capacity our species has – and occasionally displays – to shunt life onto a new level. ■

sweet singer of Mostar

Hara Selcin-Watts has much to sing about. He has packed more into his 30-odd years than most of us in a lifetime. A survivor of the Yugoslav conflicts, he converted to Catholicism and married a New Zealand girl, Ellie. Their mission has been to help the ravaged children of Bosnia through music therapy. This is the first intalment of their story

The background

Bosnia-Herzegovina is one of the six republics which arose from Yugoslavia. Mostar, Hara's home town, is in the south and has some 100,000 inhabitants. Bosnia is a heart-shaped country. Croatia lies to the West and South, Serbia to the East; to the South-East is Montenegro. During the break-up of Yugoslavia after the fall of Communism each of these states tried to expand at the expense of Bosnia. Each asserted their independence as countries in their own right. It was during this process of the break-up of Yugoslavia that the republic Bosnia suffered the bloodiest of conflicts.

The war was basically an ethnic war inflamed by nationalism, not a religious one. In Bosnia there are three main ethnic groups: Serbs, Croats and Bosnians. The Serbs are mostly Eastern Orthodox, the Croats are Catholics and the Bosnians are mostly Muslims – but, for the most part, 'cultural' Muslims who took on aspects of Turkish culture following the Turkish invasions. They celebrate Muslim festivals, drink Turkish coffee and eat Turkish food. But few women would wear the headscarf and few men would attend the mosque daily. There are plenty of mosques which would be visited during the Islamic festivals but these are seen more as cultural heritage symbols. Only a few Bosnians would keep the strict fast at Ramadan.

There are many Bosnian Christians also, but not in communion with Rome. Originally the country was Christian, but after the Turkish invasions many of the inhabitants converted to Islam.

The various Yugoslav republics were different nations, brought together into one state after World War 1 as the country of Yugoslavia. After World War 2 the Communist Party of Yugoslavia forced the different national ethnic groups to intermix, moving and mixing cultures throughout the region. Bosnia, being geographically central, became the most mixed – and the city of Mostar most of all.

After the death of the Yugoslav dictator Josip Tito in 1980, there was a reaction leading to the break-up of the whole region. The war was, to a large extent, a struggle over who would control each territory. Another factor was that under Communism religious observance was proscribed. For example, when a priest came to visit a family in those days, he wore civilian clothes and was known as 'uncle'! This caused an underground church to grow up.

Hara's own family largely lost its Muslim culture under the Communist rule. They became Yugoslavs rather than Bosnians. 'God' ceased to exist for them. They were dictated to by the State that God did not exist, so it was something Hara never learned about. Religion was for other people.

Communism in Yugoslavia brought about two opposite outcomes: acceptance or hate. People either conformed, or they went underground. The latter group tended to grow stronger in their nationalistic sentiment.

The war that erupted was primarily between the different nationalities, who sought to drive the others out and make their area 'ethnically clean'. The aim was to establish a coherent territory with properly defined borders so that a nation could exist independently. If other nationalities got in the way, that was too bad for them.

"I was born in 1976" says Hara Salcin-Watts. "I was 15 when the war started. My family had inherited land, so we were quite well off. It was a beautiful, prosperous place by a lake, in a village just outside Mostar. My childhood was a happy one. We lived in a very mixed neighbourhood. There were lots of Serbs and Croats, even Jewish families – and some gypsies.

We were very close to each other. We played together, and as teenagers we dated happily 'across' national ethnic boundaries. We lived normal lives. As a youngster I was quite unaware of any Croatian ethnic independence movement. No one tried to stop us living this way. I have the kindest memories of all those people whom I grew up with."

The civil war

"When the war started in 1992, my childhood effectively abruptly ended. Everyone in my village was called upon to take up arms to defend themselves regardless of their age, including my father and myself. Serbia, under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic, sought to expand their nation into a 'Greater Serbia'. This meant they wanted to redefine their borders and extend into parts of both Bosnia and Croatia.

"In our village we were given guns. Our immediate Serb neighbours realised what was happening; many got out prior to the conflict erupting. Serbs poured into the country from the outside. Our house was taken, and they destroyed the boats we used to cross the lake. But we thought it was only a passing disturbance and it would soon stop.

"Meanwhile Croatia had rebelled and won their independence. The local TV news portrayed the Croatians as bad people. The republics of both Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence, and the further break-up of Yugoslavia seemed inevitable. How this was to affect Bosnia we were not sure.

"My father was quite a stubborn guy. He was reluctant to believe anything serious would happen, which seemed to be the general attitude of all those in our village. But my mother convinced him to send my younger brother and sister away to a safer place with her family. We lost contact with them once the war started.

"The Serbs invaded in January 1992 and took over the village, and we were all caught up in great confusion and fear as to what would happen. The Serbs had obtained all the armaments belonging to the Yugoslav army, which put them at a considerable advantage – given the international arms embargo that was placed upon the whole region. The Croats were poorly armed, and Bosnians even worse. Eventually, arms were smuggled into Bosnia from outside. In April a huge car bomb was set off near a local Serbian base, which made the Serbs react very angrily.

"After the explosion the Serbs barricaded us in. In their quest to conquer our region, the Serbian forces were seeking to ethnically cleanse the land. All non-Serbs from my village were arrested and held in improvised gaols. We suffered terribly. It was a time of great darkness living with the unknown. We were beaten and tortured over many days.

"Over a hundred men from our village were taken and shot dead in the village hall – including my father. Some of the bodies have since been identified but many were never found. Later, their remains were discovered in a mass grave in a rubbish dump outside of my village. The bodies included my father and many of my family and friends.

"Whilst still held in the improvised prison, my father had begun to fear the worst for us all. I was the thinnest of the group, and in an act of great love and desperation my father managed to push me through the bars of the toilet window where we were held. I was certain I would be seen and shot. I ran and ran, and swam across the lake that had once been my childhood playground. On reaching the other side of the lake I finally found a safe area where I joined the Bosnian units. Only two of the men escaped, and among those killed were members of every group except the Serbs.

"The army unit of 15 that I had joined was an unbelievable mix. There was one Jew, some gypsies, Muslims, Croats, even a couple of Serbs. We succeeded in driving the Serb invaders out against all the odds. For instance the Serb Army had tanks and numbers. We had nothing. Of that group of 15 men, eventually only two of us

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survived. The other was a Serb and he has remained my friend – my second brother.

"My mother also had been locked up, but one of our Serb neighbours managed to set her free along with some of the children, and they too were able to escape. The women hid in a local vineyard for over a week, until our combined Bosnian and Croatian forces succeeded in pushing the Serbs out. I searched for six days to find my mother. I had almost given up, but a friend found her with other women, still hiding."

The second conflict

"The tragedy was that the Bosnians had all come together in 1992 to drive the Serbs out. Sadly, in the following year the Muslim Bosnians and the Croats bitterly attacked each other, and the city of Mostar was brutally divided. Many of the mixed marriages split apart. My unit chose to stay together in spite of the ethnic mix: it seemed to us the only way to survive.

"The city of Mostar was effectively destroyed. The east bank which was mostly Bosnian Muslim was flattened. A lot of it has not been rebuilt. During the fighting we soldiers felt all right as long as we were moving and in action. But when the fighting stopped, the silence seemed to threaten. I still feel that way when I am out in the New Zealand bush in the silence – even though I know that nothing can happen to me.

"It was a dreadful time – there were great food shortages, no electricity, no water; most shelter was effectively destroyed – only one primitive makeshift hospital. Every day, over 2,000 grenades fell on the East Bank. People lived in constant fear: civilian casualties and deaths were daily occurrences.

"I was shot by a sniper. The bullet entered my back and exited through my chest. I was not expected to live and my mother was informed I would die. But my life was spared against the odds. In June I found my little brother and sister and they were safe. My mother survived because she is a strong woman: simple, yet strong. She stayed in the village, and I brought my brother and sister back to her in September. My mother and other women cooked for our unit and helped look after our needs. She knew we were there to defend them.

"One thing I always had with me during those troubled times was my guitar. When we had a ceasefire, we would be on one side of the street and the 'enemy' on the other. I would strike up a few chords on the guitar and start to sing a traditional song – and the 'enemy' would join in singing with us! It made us realise how insane this whole war was. The other thing that I always had in my pocket was a pair of rosary beads, even though I didn't know what these really were. They had been given me at the start of the war, and in my pocket they remained.

"Part of the trouble was that under Communism we had grown used to doing exactly what we were told without question – and we still tended to act without question. Now I would ask *why* – but then nobody did. It was part of the army culture not to question."

Hara (postwar) with children in Mostar

After the war

"When the war came to an end I was exhausted physically and emotionally. We were refugees and even still today my mother lives in a UN refugee village. I had been wounded. I had lost many of my family members and friends and could not recognise the post-war environment. We had been short of food. Only a few convoys ever got through to us, and so we were all in very poor health. I was 19 and had been a soldier for three years.

"The city was divided. My home had been destroyed. There were no social benefits for us and so no income. Many suffered from 'global trauma', which is a post-traumatic stress disorder. Everyone had been through the same hell. There was no one 'normal' you could talk to.

"I was discharged from the Army in April 1996. I started work as a musician playing in the Bosnian schools and orphanages to highly traumatised children, survivors of the terrible civil conflict. I began working for an organisation called *Warchild*. There were international efforts to bring music to help rehabilitate these children.

"Then I met Ellie – and that is another story." ■

(In Part 2 Hara tells the story of his musical career in post-war Bosnia, his friendship and marriage to New Zealander Ellie Watts, and his spiritual journey to belief in God and reception into the Catholic Church)

in memoriam

Fr Bernard Hehir R.I.P.

St Theresa's Church, Karori, Wellington where Fr Bernie Hehir had spent most of his priestly life opened its doors for him one last time on 13 October, 2008. He who with his mellifluous voice had assuaged the angst of the bereaved so many times now had his own relatives comforted. Throngs of parishioners, young and old came to say good-bye. An atmosphere of quiet calm, a restrained grieving, if a tear or two, nothing flamboyant. Bernie to a tee.

Bernie lived his priesthood. If we were to 'teach all nations', then he did this with panache. The radio in the days before TV was his medium, though the Karori people loved his Sunday homilies as well. He got to know most of the people in broadcasting who appreciated his humour, ready smile and his quiet Gospel input. He could talk their lingo as he like them had received many a shock as they fiddled with wires learning by experience the wonders and dangers of Marconi. He graduated to TV, computers, digital cameras and the rest.

Down in the bowels of the Catholic Centre lies its heart – Bernie Hehir's communications room. To enter, there had to be a password, for this was like Mission Control Houston. Bernie never slept. He became the Catholic Centre's night watchman as he completed the latest *Welcom* or watched the rushes of his latest films.

In everything he did he was a perfectionist. 'Near enough' was never good enough for Bernie. He was an immensely talented man who mostly kept his light under a bushel. He had a beautiful singing voice, played the violin well and loved classical music. If he had had his way Gregorian chant would still be in. He was cultivated, urbane, slightly eccentric, someone we all secretly wished we could be.

He seemed to float over or under or through all the -isms and fads of his 58 years of priesthood. As far as I know he never joined a protest march. He seemed to know deep in his grace-marinated heart that in the end all will be well and all manner of things will be well.

In all the years I've known him I have never heard him make a disparaging remark about anyone, never. Who could forget that little chuckle emanating from a loving heart. *There are three – Faith, Hope and Love and the greatest is Love*. Now he knows it for sure. Not that he ever doubted.

John Carde

Fr Gerard Matthew Mills SM QSM

On 8 July 2008 Fr Gerard Mills SM collapsed and died during an art class. He was 77.

Gerry Mills seemed to have greatness thrust on him. When he was first appointed to St Patrick's College Wellington in 1956, the College was at a low ebb. The 1st XV rugby team was being trashed by a large score each week. To raise the spirits of the College, Fr Gerry collected some very talented musicians from among the students and put on a public performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*. Now the College had something it could be proud of. It worked. Even the 1st XV started winning again.

When he was appointed Rector in 1971 the very future of the College was under threat. It was in the path of the proposed inner-city motorway, and must go. He gathered a high powered group of advisers who secured a future for the College on its present site at Kilbirnie. Despite being thrown into a world of concrete and demolition dust he still found time for his art. A Mills landscape graces the walls of several homes, and he continued to produce plays and musicals, some home-grown.

He became the Chair of the *Association of Heads of Independent Secondary Schools* (AHISS). Integration was on the horizon. Catholic schools were expected to integrate into the state system as were certain independent schools, but others were not. Their future had to be assured also. Government had to understand this, and it was Fr Gerry's job to make sure it did. He walked a careful but firm line in all these negotiations.

St Bede's in Christchurch next demanded his attention. Seismic engineers reported them an immediate risk to students and residents. Demolition and rebuilding was started immediately. More rubble and rebuilding.

Gerry's next major appointment was to *St Mary of the Angels*, central Wellington. The seismic engineers had beaten him to it again. The church required considerable strengthening to bring it up to modern earthquake safety. If you visit St Mary's now you will see no signs of the well hidden structural strengthening. Nor water damaged paint work. You will see a bright and airy interior, and brightly coloured stained glass windows, obviously the work of one with considerable artistic flair. A fitting memorial to a wonderful priest.

John O'Neill sm

The New Zealand Marists are noted for their warm hospitality, especially to fellow priests and religious. No one typified this more than Gerry Mills. He always had time for you, and his ever-welcoming smile spoke volumes of a warm, generous heart. M.H.

philip's prophesying daughters

Acts 21

According to *Acts 21:9*, Philip the evangelist had four daughters who were prophets. Early in *Acts 6-8*, Philip has emerged as one of most visible and active of evangelists – he engages first with the Samaritans, and then with the eunuch of the Ethiopian queen, Candace. Later in *Acts 21*, Paul and his companions have journeyed to Caesarea where they stay in 'the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven... [and his] four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy' (*Acts 21:8-9*).

This is the only reference to these four women prophets in the New Testamnent, although the early church historian Eusebius (c. 260-341) tells us that the churches in the Asian provinces derived their apostolic origins from them and that one of the daughters was married.

In the first two chapters of his gospel, *Luke* has devoted considerable space to the three women prophets – Elizabeth, Mary and Anna. These three women are from three different tribes, from three different stages in their reproductive lives, and from three different social classes. In other words, Luke wants us to understand them as representative of women at that time.

However, in *Acts*, Philip's four prophetic daughters remain curiously silent, in marked contrast to the male prophet Agabus who, immediately following the reference to the daughters, predicts a severe famine in Judea and Paul's arrest and handing over to the Gentiles (*Acts 21:101-11*). Earlier in *Acts 2:17*, Peter quoting from the prophet *Joel* has proclaimed that "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," so why the silence?

Acts has preserved the memory of women who exercised a prophetic ministry, but at that same time *Luke* has emphasised that this ministry belonged primarily to men as he describes in detail their works and actions.

It has been suggested that the early church was seeking to resolve the tension experienced between the necessity of catechising women converts who were of real political and economic importance to the church, and coping with the anxiety that an expanded role for women might mean. Any expansion meant that believers – women and men – could be accused on 'un-Roman' activities.

In assessing *Luke's* position regarding women, it could be argued that he is aware of their contribution but is concerned not to draw attention to it in a culture that was basically unaccepting of women exercising public roles. By the third century, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (*Teaching of the 12 Apostles*) ruled that widows were forbidden to teach, to baptize, and gad about which could well refer to their answering and asking theological questions.

It is sad that *Acts,* which give real prominence to the prophets particularly male prophets, has reduced women prophets to silence. Canon Law prohibits lay people from preaching although in certain circumstances they can offer a reflection after Communion. The 1997 Vatican document, *On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Priest*, excludes lay people from preaching at Eucharistic liturgies. Apparently, ordination gifts priests with the power to preach while the non-ordained are not so gifted. Such thinking needs to be tested empirically as, though some priests offer stimulating and enriching homilies, others do not. The gift of preaching a good sermon owes more to an appreciation of the Biblical text, to the quality of one's own life, and to pastoral sensitivity, and in today's world these characteristics do not belong to priests alone.

a keen eye cast over New Zealand life and faith

A Word in Season
Reflections on spirituality, faith and ethics
Richard Randerson
Matai House 2008. 132 pp
Review: Michael Hill ic

This book by retired Anglican Bishop Richard Randerson is a collection of articles, sermons and public addresses by the author, mostly recent but some going back a few years. None of the pieces is very long, each has a brief synopsis at the beginning and questions for discussion at the end.

Richard's style is easy and engaging. Some of the topics cover a lot of ground, whereas others, the ones I found more satisfying, pursue a unified theme. I think he writes best when his spiritual objective comes through clearly and there is a unity in the message which is conveyed with energy and passion.

An example would be his sermons on St Francis, which while speaking of incidents in the life of the saint also distil for his audience a clear message pertinent to their own lives. Francis challenged people of his day, not just to be kind to the poor but to live alongside them, to be compassionate rather than just givers of alms. His message rings equally true today.

When Richard comments on a Gospel passage, such as the marriage at Cana, he seeks to discover what lies behind the incident. This 'sign', as John calls it, points beyond the miracle to the "saving and transforming power of God in Christ". Likewise, his sermon on the Passion of Christ goes beyond the cruel death of an innocent man. It presents for us the cosmic struggle between the forces of evil and good erupting constantly into our world.

In other places he responds to a contemporary issue or event, such as the Mangatepopo tragedy or Richard's Dawkins attack on religious belief. His response here prompted the accusation that he was an agnostic. What he said was that we come to know God by analogy and not through science. I cannot imagine Thomas Aquinas having any problem with that. The popular press, however, swooped on his remarks with glee. If you enter the public arena you run the risk of this sort of misrepresentation.

I would recommend this book as a resource to be dipped into rather than for continuous reading. Collections of articles on such a wide variety of topics suffer the handicap of seeming to be disconnected. However, underneath Richard's writing it is not difficult to discern his faith, his passion for justice and his love of the God we cannot see. ■

Copies are available from J.R.Randerson, 13 Matai Rd, Wellington 6021: price $19.50 includes postage. Phone 04 976 6050. email randersonjr@paradise.net.nz

Postscript

Obviously writing a column in a Catholic journal means that I often draw on my own experiences of life in the Catholic Church, which basically means my life in the Whangarei Heads community, part of the Whangarei parish. Given the geographical spread of the latter, some 20 years ago it was recognised that the pastoral and liturgical needs of Catholics who lived in Ruakaka, Hikurangi, Whangarei Heads, Maungtapere, Maungakaramea, or more recently Ngunguru, would best be met by allowing for Eucharistic liturgies to be celebrated in ways that continued to foster and enhance the growth faith life of such small communities.

Mass may be celebrated once or twice a month, depending on the size of a particular community. Other Sundays mean a lay-lead liturgy while on other Sundays, people may go into St Francis Xavier Parish Church in town.

I have been impressed over the years by the ability of the Marist Fathers based in Whangarei to lead liturgies that recognise the differences between a parish Mass in a large, urban church, and a small Mass celebrated with 20 or 30 people. As our church copes with the reality of declining Mass attendance, and of an aging church, their willingness to allow a diversity of ways of celebrating the Eucharist serves as a model for a pilgrim church on a difficult but ultimately rewarding journey. ■

Susan Smith

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

a rich and varied conversation about God in NZ

The God Book: Talking about God Today
Edited by Neil Darragh
Accént Publications
Price: $29.95
Review: Kevin Toomey OP

The God book is easy to read, never dull, and takes us into the 'battle-zone' for God in a special way: to see how it is possible to have meaningful conversations now about God in the public forum of our secular society. With an insightful introduction from the editor Neil Darragh, the book is the result of a symposium held at the *Catholic Institute of Theology*, Auckland, in 2007. Thirteen woman and six men, all from Aotearoa New Zealand, lend their expertise to doing what the subtitle says "Talking about God today".

The resultant 19 articles are spread across a wide range of thinking, and are of a uniformly high quality. Some are scholarly and beautifully researched; others more user friendly and easily accessible. Naturally I found some more engrossing than others, purely on the basis of my own interests. The writers' enthusiasms are divided loosely into five lenses.

First, the backgrounders, where the scene is set. Here I appreciated Kevin Duffy's contribution on talking of God as good news. Then we pass to the sources: Biblical, Christian, ecological, and liturgical – all five contributions really interested me. The third lens points us to the mystics. The articles by Stuart Sellar and Ann Marie Harvey are stylish and enlightening; and Ann Nolan's scholarly article on Edith Stein gave me light on another mystic of whom I knew nothing. The fourth focus is on the contemporary scene, where six women (interestingly there is no contemporary male viewpoint) give closely related, soul-searching reflections. Finally, I was moved by Jewish and Muslim insights, both elegant celebrations of their belief in God.

This book helped me think anew on many things, especially about liturgy which pushes God out into the public forum; on mysticism which sees God in everything; and in spotting outworn, and renewing tired, images of God.

In view of the stated aim of the volume, namely, *God conversation in the public forum*, I would have loved to have listened to some interaction with politicians, the sciences and the professions where public God talk is so crucial. ▷

Shirley Murray's hymns – a fruit of luminous faith

Touch the Earth Lightly
New hymns by Shirley Erena Murray
Review: Maureen Smith

I was pleased to be asked to review this new hymnbook, as I have long been an admirer of Shirley Murray's hymn poems and I am in awe of her ability to again and again bring new insights into our relationship with God. I have introduced a number of her hymns to youth choirs including: *Child of Christmas story* and *Carol our Christmas,* and to congregations: *Christ is alive* and *Christ let us come with you.* I particularly like her reworking of words and imagery of well-known hymns, for example her version of *Lift high the cross.*

Touch the Earth Lightly is the fourth collection of her hymns to be published, and many more of her poems are included in four collections published over the past 15 years by the *New Zealand Hymnbook Trust.*

▷ I was glad that there was a Maori contribution; greater Polynesian input would have garnished even further the wonderfully local flavour that this book provides of our God! That, indeed, was the particular joy of the book: I felt truly at home reading about God reflected in an Aotearoan environment.

This is the third tome which the CIT has edited and put out into the public forum. For this reason alone, the book is well worth buying. Each has been consistently thought-provoking and of excellent quality. This small diocesan faculty punches well above its weight in helping Christians of all denominations think more clearly about God and faith.

Long may the *Catholic Institute of Theology* continue to serve us in this way. ■

Shirley Murray was born in Invercargill and now lives in 'active retirement' at Raumati Beach. Since the late 1980s she has been writing hymn poems to keep *her* faith growing, and many Christian denominations have been the richer because of her ability to articulate what many feel and experience in their lives.

She has helped us praise and worship God in a language that we can readily understand and relate to. Shirley writes: "When it is impossible to sing with any sincerity or sense, when language, however beautiful, keeps us in a straitjacket of outdated ideas, this is, for me, to obstruct the movement of the Spirit and deny the real world we live in."

Touch the Earth Lightly is a collection of 60 hymns, 15 written before 2003 (most of the latter reset to new music) including the well-known hymn of that title (1991). The phrase was borrowed from an Australian aboriginal saying "the clouds of disaster" referring to the testing of nuclear devices by France in the Pacific Ocean.

The book is attractively presented on quality paper with a bright, cheerful cover and is spiral-bound so that it will lie flat for the pianist/organist. The layout is clear and uncluttered, and the music is easy to read. All the words are underlaid in the music version, thus making it easy to sing all verses. As well, all hymns are printed as poems in clear, good-sized print which makes it easy to read the words as a reflection or prayer.

In the past I have enjoyed Shirley's *When mountains rise to open skies* to the tune *Dunedin* by Vernon Griffiths, and in this present collection we have another hymn for Waitangi Day, *God bless our land*, set to music by Barry Brinson. Another written specifically for New Zealand is No. 20, *A hymn for ANZAC Day* set to music by Colin Gibson.

(v .1)

Honour the dead, our country's
fighting brave,
honour our children left in foreign grave,
where poppies blow and sorrow
seeds her flowers,
honour the crosses marked forever ours.

The words of this hymn appeal to me – honouring our soldiers; those left grieving here at home; those who were conscientious objectors; grief for the violence and waste of war; and always Shirley's call for peace.

Other aspects that make this book user-friendly are the Alphabetical Index, a Topical Index (which is always helpful when choosing an appropriate hymn for a specific occasion), an Index of Composers and Arrangers and an Index of Tunes. Then there is a section – *Notes on the Hymns*, the first time I have come across this in a hymnbook. Shirley's comments give more depth and meaning to the hymns. I know all users of this hymnbook will find this section of great interest.

What shines through this collection is Shirley's love of God and her openness to the Spirit; her joy and celebration of life; her concern for social justice, reminding us again and again of our God-given task to care for each other; care for the land and its resources; that love is what matters; and that we must constantly strive for peace. There is a fruitful collaboration with fine composers who understand what is needed for successful hymn singing – that the music is of a high standard and in a wide variety of styles.

I know those who buy and use this collection will enhance and deepen their own spiritual life and that of their worship gatherings – an excellent resource for use at Sunday Mass. A book I highly recommend. ■

Maureen Smith is a Dunedin singing teacher and choir director

facing up to the final journey

crosscurrents
John Honoré

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (Rev ch.2)

The queue behind me was getting restless. I was the next in line to the bank teller but I had turned to greet a little old lady, well known to me, who proceeded to tell me the latest ominous development in the state of her health. It made me reflect on the spiritual or religious unease that affliction provokes.

With personal resolve and courage, together with good medical care, people often bounce back from life-destroying illnesses. The will to survive is innate in all of us and, usually, to be admired. But there comes a time when the inevitability of impending death must be faced. It is then that one tries to give simple, modest and almost friendly consideration of the ultimate reality which is approaching.

It is not entirely clear what happens after death, yet there is some inner awareness that there is a purpose to this finality, a reason for having lived that leads to gratitude and acceptance. He who truly loves life and has lived it fully is able to accept death with equanimity. Thomas Merton writes that he who fears death admits that he has not lived. One conquers death by love, by one's own belief that there is no higher goal in life than sharing the life and the death of another. This is a matter of the most profound faith and ultimately gives the greatest satisfaction.

I knew that the little old lady had family and carers, so quoted the inscrutable oriental guru who said, "It is so easy to die when one does not die alone." The disgruntled queue behind us was about to prove that.

The new Mr President

This issue of *Tui Motu* will probably coincide with the election of a new president in the United States, so the result will be known to readers. As of this writing, Barak Obama seems to have regained the advantage and could make history. So, for this column, it is perhaps useful to consider briefly the past eight years of George W. Bush and the future that a new president will be responsible in forming for us all.

Almost as a finale to Bush's disastrous reign comes one of the greatest financial collapses in history. His tax cuts, which transferred the burden from wealthy individuals to ordinary wage earners, led to inflation. His attempts to privatise social security led to further demarkation between the rich and the poor.

Now, in an ironic twist of fate, the US government is nationalising its banks to prop up free market capitalism so revered by the world, under the rubric *the market will decide.* Free enterprise in financial markets is no longer fashionable. When the Treasury Secretary, Henry Paulson (personal net wealth $450 million), speaks of the need for trillions of dollars of ordinary taxpayers' money to save the nation, you know a new low has been reached in pseudo-capitalism.

Bush's costly wars against terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to bleed the US Treasury. It is the neocons' credo that the threat to the US does not come from known enemies but from Al Qaeda which is supported by rogue states in the Middle East. The latest state in this category is Pakistan, assisted by the Bush regime in becoming a nuclear power and now considered unstable and a potential future threat.

Who would want to be President for the next four years? This one man must shore up the domestic economy, re-establish America's tarnished international image, seek a diplomatic exit from costly wars and assure his people that there is equality and justice in America. Experience is needed says McCain, change it must be says Obama. For the sake of the world, the next President had better be right.

Helen or John?

The reality is that there is an election in New Zealand as well. I know this because politicians have been seen in kindergartens speaking about crime and punishment. Helen Clark's Kiwis and John Key's ordinary blokes will have grasped the nettle and voted (not forgetting the smaller parties, I hope) by the time you read this. The media will have reverted to their normal blanket coverage of court cases and the election post-mortems will have begun.

At this point in time, I have a horrible suspicion that Clark and Key will have to come to terms with the minor parties in order to move forward. At the end of the day they will open the books and give Winston Peters the job of telling us that all the election promises were "a tissue of lies" and are hereby revoked. The books do not make good reading – there's no money in the kitty. Roger Douglas flogged it all years ago.

My gold card will be cancelled and I will be forced to use the turbocharged Zimmer frame to make it to the supermarket where prices have risen across the board. There are tough times ahead heralding the end of the day of easy bank credit but, thank God, the reality is – the campaigning is over. Enjoy! ■

giving a new impulse to Catholic Scripture reflection

Humphrey O'Leary

In the month just past, a major gathering has taken place in Rome, a Synod of the church on the Bible. Before discussing the Synod itself, one can ask the question, "How well did the church handle biblical matters in the past, say, since Reformation times"?

Early in that era both sides of the Catholic/Protestant divide tended to act in the same fashion. "Our opponents say it should be done such and such a way, therefore we'll do it the opposite way". That was applied by the church, as well as to such matters as the language of Eucharistic celebration and clerical celibacy, to the question of access of the laity to the text of Scripture. Such individual access was not encouraged. The message of the Word was normally to be mediated to them through the preaching of the clergy, through pious books, or through the answers in the catechism.

Over time the church significantly improved its game. There were hiccups, as when Saint Pius X baulked at what seemed to him improper scholarship used in the interpretation of the Word and condemned it under the name of 'Modernism'. But matters improved. In 1943 in his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* Pius XII opened the door to the use of the historical-critical method. With that a new era was under way.

More recent Catholic efforts to make the Scriptures available to the faithful have been trail blazing. Such features of Sunday Mass as the three-year cycle of the Synoptic Gospels and having second readings that worked through a complete book of the Bible on a succession of Sundays were innovations that have been taken over by other Christian churches under the title of the common lectionary. There has also been such developments as a flowering of bible study in parishes. The participants at the Synod were able to undertake their work with a sense not so much of matters to be remedied but of achievements to be built upon.

Not that they were ignorant that there were matters to be put right. One was the limited ability of priests to make effective use of the Scriptures in their preaching. This was exemplified by one bishop who spoke of folk in his diocese who went faithfully to Mass at 8.00 am on Sunday and then went on to another church not of our communion at 11.00 am so that they could be 'uplifted'.

Much of what the bishops talked about had a practical, pastoral focus. A multitude of avenues of action were proposed for adoption. The year of 2009, it was proposed by one bishop, could be be declared a "Year of Preaching," in which bishops, priests and deacons sit down with laity in order to study how preaching can become more dynamic, more relevant to people's real-world struggles. Others called for the compilation of a 'General Directory' for homilists, bringing together resources for preaching.

The problem facing the bishops was not so much to find ways forward as to choose between the plethora of possibilities. Perhaps the wisest word about this flood of possible courses of action may have been that agreed on by John Allen of NCR and Cardinal Pell of Sydney in the course of an interview the Cardinal gave to the journalist.

Allen suggested that rather than a programme, the best thing that the Synod could give would be an impulse. The prelate endorsed that view saying "That's probably better put than anything I was about to say! I think that's nicely put, because the situation in the church is so ferociously different [in various parts of the world]". ■

Humphrey O'Leary is a canon lawyer and Rector of the Redemptorist community in Auckland

A Mother's Journal . . .

It's been a month of enjoying small things: small animals, small people, small pockets of time for reflection.

The paradise ducks at the bottom of our road quietly inspire. Their fluffy black and white chick hatched a month ago. It's getting more and more confident as it trots behind Mum and Dad. Now it can climb up the slippery shrubs on the edge of the river and paddle across the whole Avon. Often distracted and running late as I run or cycle past this family trio, I am pulled out of the mental tangle of plans (is there is time to buy vegetables before the baby's next feed… must remember togs for school swimming tomorrow…) to pause and delight in the gentle being of these attentive parents and their eager duckling.

Our little Jalori has also made progress in a month. Now she can smile, is more alert and can latch on herself. She gazes intently out the window at the twittering leaves on the tree next door. Her vigour and beauty makes me smile even at a fuggy hour in the middle of the night.

A fortnight ago my nine year old girls and I joined the weekly service at Delta Fellowship – a Monday night gathering from around our community – few people are employed, many have been life-long beneficiaries and live with a mental disability. Others are psych survivors.

We were welcomed with huge smiles and claps on the back. The singing was joyful and enthusiastic, with lots of clapping although most of the people in the 'choir' didn't sing at all. Applause was generous as certificates were handed out for *Treasured Members of Delta Fellowship* – for tenacity at crafts or helping with the Food Bank. The joke-telling session was a highlight of the service for our twins and we've heard the jokes on multiple occasions since. The queue for supper was full of excited anticipation. The simple service didn't have the sophisticated veneer of many churches – it felt like this was a gathering of the Small people Jesus sought out – a place where he would have hung around too on a Monday evening. I felt welcome and accepted and unusually sure of God's extravagant love for me and all of us gathered there.

Small is beautiful.

Kaaren Mathias