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Te Rangi me te Whenua
Season of Creation

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EDITORIAL
Season of Creation

In the south we've emerged from our most restrictive level of Lockdown into spring. We've joined the plants in exuberant revitalisation — we humans are masked and perhaps less giddy, but no less festive. However, our jubilation is enjoyed unevenly across the country because Lockdown continues in our most populated region. But whatever our situation, this Season of Creation can renew us all.

While most of us stayed at home as directed, we heard through the media of the numerous groups — Christian, Sikh and others — who, working within the rules, mobilised to provide food and necessities for families. Without fanfare, day after day they demonstrated love of neighbour — their generosity lifting desperation from many families. Once fed, these parents and children would be better able to enter into the liveliness of spring.

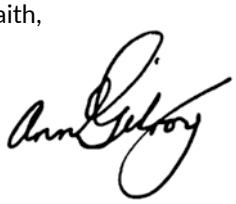
We've also felt the challenges chipping at the unity among the team of five million: solidarity dissolving into blame, misinformation stoking fear, personal freedom ignoring the common good. Through these challenges we have retained the spirit of cooperation, but have also come to see the diversity within our human kin.

In the Season of Creation we don't just focus on people. The intention is to deepen our understanding of our interdependence on all life forms in God's creation — our kinship. It promotes our growing in love with other life and including them in our vision of the common good. In this issue Paul Sorrell shares about a rare sighting of a kōtuku: "I felt a quiet joy, a sense of being graced by this wholly unexpected visitation, a feeling of communion that must have lasted only a few minutes, but will stay with me always." Neil Darragh explains that the Season gives us the opportunity to further develop our ethics especially around what plants and animals we kill, and when we need to restrain ourselves.

So when we feel stuck at home, a walk in the neighbourhood, an outing to the supermarket, or even standing in a COVID-induced queue, can immerse us in the Season of Creation. We'll find budding, bursting and blossoming all around, often encroaching unashamedly on our manicured areas. We have more daylight. It's much quieter without traffic. We can't hurry the queue for tests, or the jab, or food — we just wait our turn. We're in spring and there is enough gorgeous life around to prompt us to contemplate the invitations to kinship the season offers.

We thank all our contributors, whose faith, writing, reflection, art and craft have gifted us with further enjoyment and reflection.

And, as is our custom our last word is of blessing and encouragement.



It's Serious AND We're Serious

The news surrounding climate change is rarely positive — forecasting tends towards the apocalyptic rather than the auspicious.

It was no different when the United Nations handed down their hotly anticipated Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report in August, which assessed the current climate situation and measured how close we are to running out of time.

The report told us everything we suspected — but don't want to hear. The world will heat up by more than 1.5°C within the next 10 years. The report was labelled "code red" and "a wake-up call for humanity".

This is the sixth report from this Panel. The population of the world has been conscious of climate change since the late 1980s. But more than three decades on, global emissions have continued rising sharply and our transition to renewable energy is far from complete. We're cutting down the Amazon rainforest at the fastest rate in a decade and we have billionaires traipsing around space burning jet fuel as if it was going out of fashion.

Despite the warnings, human progress appears to be accelerating in the wrong direction. We know a climate breakdown is unavoidable unless we reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the next four years.

The United Nations' analysis is sobering. It is an issue that no one can ignore. The stakes couldn't be higher.

With that being said, it's also important to note that the doom and gloom associated with climate change can be counterproductive, paralysing us rather than impelling us. The media seldom reports the progress underway to limit damage to Earth's climate — great leaps of progress being made in many areas of the world. Knowing about them starts to feel a little more hopeful and encouraging of the action we're involved in personally, in dedicated organisations and as nations.

For example, in the last 10 years an area larger than Russia has been reclassified as conservation land or national park. To put that into perspective, 42 per cent of all the land conserved over time has been conserved in the last decade. It is a mind-blowing figure, especially considering that nearly 20 per cent of the world's land mass is now protected.

More recently, the EU enshrined emission targets into law, requiring a 55 per cent reduction by the end of the decade and net zero by 2050. Belgium courts ruled that failure to meet climate targets would be a violation of human rights. This follows related decisions in France, Germany and the Netherlands. Closer to home, an Australian court ruled the federal environmental minister has a duty of care to protect young people from climate change.

And companies are taking action. In Europe, Audi will stop making new combustion engine vehicles within five years and switch to all-electric engines, and Ford, Volvo, Volkswagen and Fiat will follow a few years later. Canada will stop the sale of combustion cars by 2035.

We understand the environmental damage of burning coal. Romania, North Macedonia and Montenegro are saying farewell to coal over the next 15 years. Spain is following suit and is intermittently meeting half of its power needs with renewables already.

Malaysia's largest bank, RHB, is getting out of coal entirely by next year. Bangladesh has replaced 10 new coal-fired plants with renewable projects. A new report last month suggested that 92 per cent of new coal projects will not turn a profit, suggesting the writing is well and truly on the wall.

At the same time, Canadian activists finally sealed a 12-year victory and stopped the Keystone XL pipeline that would have moved more than 800,000 barrels of oil a day. It has been hailed as one of the greatest environmental victories in history. Across the border, the US has suspended all oil drilling in its largest wildlife refuges in Alaska.

It's not just these large-scale developments that are cause for celebration either.

In West Bengal, thousands of schools are installing mini-power plants and will use the energy savings to employ extra teachers, plant trees and schedule computer classes for students. In Tanzania, wild elephant populations have risen by 17,000 in the last seven years. The country looks as if it might finally manage to eliminate illegal poaching entirely.

New Zealand is to ban single-use plastics by 2025, removing billions of items from landfill, and 60 of Australia's largest companies have signed on to make all packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025.

Australia has saved the bridled nail-tail wallaby from extinction. The UAE, the US and Gabon have reversed the trajectory of endangered species of oryx, wolves and sharks respectively. Likewise, the Galapagos Islands are being rehabilitated, with millions of dollars to be spent on reintroducing and protecting more than 60 vulnerable creatures.

These victories, whether big or small, give us no reason to be complacent, but we need to celebrate them. They are evidence that the tide is turning on everything from coal to climate action. People power has secured this in the last 30 years. Looking towards the next three decades, I'm confident more of our combined action will help save us all.

Jack Derwin is a senior reporter at *Business Insider Australia*. His interests include all aspects of social justice particularly in the South Pacific region.

— the Season of Creation

NEIL DARRAGH **discusses how the season of Creation adds balance to Christian spirituality.**

The Easter season, the Christmas season and the seasons of Lent and Advent are familiar old liturgical "seasons". But a "Season of *Creation*" is a recent invention. It was initiated by people who noticed a gap in the spirituality of Christians who commonly celebrated the great historical feasts of Christianity (especially Easter, Christmas and Pentecost) but did not pay much attention to the seasons of the Earth itself. Surprising perhaps, because these liturgical cycles are embedded in the natural Earth cycles (Easter = spring; Christmas = mid-winter). Or perhaps not surprising for us in the southern hemisphere where the historical feasts do not correspond at all with the natural Earth cycles (Easter = autumn; Christmas = mid-summer). We believe, nevertheless, in God the Creator of heaven and earth (as we proclaim in the traditional Creeds) but this did not seem to have anything to do with the cycles of sun, moon and Earth. Hence, a liturgical "Season of Creation" which calls attention to this neglected dimension of Christian spirituality.

Our spirituality can easily become unbalanced — operating in just one or two dimensions and being blind to the other dimensions. It is easy to see this in our past where one or other dimension of Christian spirituality came into prominence then faded away as it went in or out of fashion.

The Personal Dimension

Personal spirituality pays most attention to personal prayer, personal retreats and personal development. It is focused on communion with God within the interiority of our own hearts. It finds nourishment in the Christian mystics whose experience of God was intensely personalist.

This is an important dimension of Christian spirituality, but it is also a trap for those whose culture already inclines them to an individualist lifestyle. It is primarily self-focused, about "me" and my personal journey into God. It slides easily into a narrowed devotion to particular saints or to private revelations of Jesus or Mary.

The Church/Community Dimension

The personal dimension of Christian spirituality has become more prominent recently even as *church* spirituality has waned. Not long ago, there was an emphasis for many people on the Church/community dimension of Christian

spirituality. Here our belonging to a community of people, a Church, is an important way of being Christian. It calls for some degree of self-sacrifice — paying attention to others and fitting in with others, being aware of the need for structures and communication. It is not so much about "me" and more about "we". It expresses itself in community prayer, Sunday Eucharist and sacramental liturgies.

This spirituality has taken something of a knock in recent decades with a diminishing of trust in Church leaders, the increase in clericalism and a rise of individualism in some of our contemporary cultures.

But also the Church dimension of spirituality has received some revival in recent years with the emphasis on "community'"in parishes and revival movements such as "divine renovation".

The Social Justice Dimension

Social justice spirituality has ancient roots in the "reign of God" theology of the Gospels and the warrior song (the "Magnificat" Luke 1:46–55) of Mary of Nazareth. It is only a few hundred years old, however, in its modern form.

It came into prominence with the spread of democracy in nations where the Church became free from its alliance and reliance on imperial and aristocratic governments. It has been nourished by papal encyclicals on social justice since the 1890s.

This spirituality focuses not so much on "me" and my intentions, but more on the common good of all. It is founded on, but is more than, acts of compassion for those in need. It calls for structural change in society. Its style is "prophetic" and confrontational because so much of contemporary society is unjust and violent.

The Creation Dimension

Creation spirituality is a dimension of Christian spirituality that has come into prominence only recently. It focuses on the human relationship with the larger world.

There has always been a tradition of "creation" within Christian spirituality, but in the late 20th century this dimension of spirituality evolved in a different way to meet the powerful secular ideology which regarded human beings as the "owners" of the non-human world to be used and exploited for human use.

This creation spirituality emphasises the "interconnectedness", the "harmony" of all things. It leads to a sense of wonder and its prayer is often contemplation of the natural world, sacraments of their Creator. By the late 20th century this creation spirituality was also evolutionary — human beings are an integral part of an *evolving* cosmos.

Yet creation spirituality itself has continued to evolve. The idea of "creation" as interconnected and harmonious is itself a mixed blessing. Christian spirituality can be trapped within a biblical idea of "creation" understood as a relatively small "cosmos". We know, now, how unimaginably large the universe is. We live in an infinitesimally small bit of it — this tiny planet Earth. We can see the harmony of creation on the large scale but the Earth we actually live in is complex, diverse, and often dangerous to many of the living species within it.

We may have been deceived by too literal an interpretation of some powerful biblical images like the image of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:4–25) where the original humans lived in harmony with the rest of creation, or the image of a new creation in which the prophet Isaiah foresees a future, peaceful world where the "wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid … and a little child shall lead them" (Is 11: 6–9). These are peaceful images of a natural world without predators.

From Contemplation to Ethics

The mention of "predators" forces our creation spirituality to evolve again, by descending from the *contemplation* of the natural world to the *ethics* of engagement in the natural world.

Contemporary creation spirituality leads us into issues of natural decay (including the deaths and the suffering of sentient beings) and predation (nature "red in tooth and claw"). It leads us, in other words, to worry about the role of predators, ourselves among them, within the interconnectedness of Earth beings, and in particular, our destruction of other beings (animal and vegetable) for food, clothing, and shelter.

We can see the harmony of creation on the large scale but the Earth we actually live in is complex, diverse, and often dangerous to many of the living species within it.

Our creation spirituality needs to deal now with ethical issues like when it is legitimate to kill for food and shelter and when it is not, about the balancing of the intrinsic values of different beings, about our carbon emissions into the atmosphere, and restraints on our consumption and waste.

It leads us, for example, into taking part in the current war being waged in Aotearoa New Zealand between birds and small mammalian predators (mainly possums, rats and feral cats) for which we are at least partly responsible, and may require us to kill the predators for the sake of the birds.

Oddly, our creation spirituality which began in the contemplation of natural beauty and the interconnectedness of all things, has evolved towards ethical decisions about what we should kill, and when, and how much.

We need all four of these dimensions of Christian spirituality. The personal dimension, the Church/community dimension, the social justice dimension and the creation dimension are all interrelated. The Season of Creation helps to bring back a balance and an integration in our spiritual life by calling attention to the most neglected of these four dimensions.

Painting: ***The Starry Night*** by Vincent van Gogh (1889) Commons.wikimedia.org Google Art

Neil Darragh is a pastor, writer and theologian with a long-term interest in the impact of the Christian Gospel in New Zealand society

Keep Following the Thread

CATHERINE SHELTON describes spirituality as like holding to a thread in the tangles of our evolving lives.

When I was in mid-life, I spent time facilitating conversations for other people in mid-life. Now that I'm older, I find myself engaged with women and men in their 70s, 80s and 90s about what it means to come to a good life completion. This shift has been a profound personal journey for me into the depths of my own conscious ageing, or spiritual eldering.

During one of these conversations, a participant described how, as she was getting older, she found it enriching to reclaim some forms of prayer and spiritual practices that had been more familiar to her when younger — like a homecoming. A few others agreed. But one member of the group was incensed that I had not discouraged this. She had found it excruciatingly difficult to accept new practices and had worked hard to do so — and she felt returning to the old meant that she had wasted time and effort.

But the way we do things is always in flux. Richard Rohr has said that "Every reform becomes its own new orthodoxy, and the painful pattern of growth begins all over again."

We like to believe at all times that we have reached the ultimate, whether it be spirituality, science or how we got here in the first place. Cosmologies, or stories of our origins since the first Flaring Forth nearly 14

billion years ago, have been many and diverse across cultures and millennia.

The New Story of our beginnings upon which we currently agree and which inspires and vitalises us today will surely give way to further major human awakenings into the future.

I was shocked when as a seven-year-old my friend declared that she did not believe in God. That was outrageous and novel to me. That it might be of God, inconceivable.

This was the beginning of a dawning realisation of fundamental difference. It was to become in turns alluring or troubling and painful. A constant search always to know by heart this God in whom I have continued to believe, albeit through novel and diverse images and experiences, while holding dear the threads that do not change.

Lines from William Stafford's poem "The Way It Is", written just 26 days before he died, have stayed with me: "There's a thread you follow. It goes among / things that change. But it doesn't change. [...] Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding. / You don't ever let go of the thread."

The last line is more of a statement of fact than an imperative. Stafford is speaking of groundedness in something deeply meaningful that offers an abiding authenticity, even while we live into the paschal realities of an evolving universe.

Ken Wilbur in *A Brief History of Everything* says: "Transcend and include. This is the self-transcending drive of the Cosmos — to go beyond what went before and yet include what went before ... to open into the very heart of Spirit-in-action." This draws us straight into the relational shape and action of the Trinitarian God.

The Contemplative Everywhere

It would be hard to find a religious tradition or faith that did not have, at its heart, the desire for union and ultimate unity with God through compassionate action and prayer.

It is our openness to God's presence that clears the way for the gifts and fruits of the Spirit to be activated. Galatians 2:20 tells us: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."

"The gifts of the Spirit," Cynthia Bourgeault says, "are not just nice. They are energy packs that influence our planet directly ... We are great transformers – putting out energies whether we like it or not" (from the podcast, *Eye of the Heart: A Spiritual Journey into the Imaginal Realm*).

In her book of the same title, Bourgeault speaks of the function of these gifts as a "cosmic dialysis". They do for the atmosphere what it cannot do for itself, reducing all that pollutes it with spiritual and psychic smog.

We clearly see this in active and able people who every day influence the world for change, sometimes heroically.

The gifts of the Spirit are energy packs that influence our planet directly . . . We are great transformers – putting out energies whether we like it or not.

In contrast to these, I think of a 91-year-old friend speaking about her life in the rest home: "Now, mostly I wait. I wait to have a shower; I wait for breakfast to come. The staff are so good to me." A year later this has not changed. Peace, patience and a good dose of gratitude and equanimity are cleansing the planet of entitlement, violence and greed.

I remember my 92-year-old mother two weeks before she died — almost completely deaf and unable to see. She could no longer easily identify her children or grandchildren. But when her 12-month-old great-granddaughter visited from Perth, the connection was electric. The two looked intently at each other and wove their fingers together. This was recognition, not by hearing or sight, but by heart.

Beatrice Bruteau wrote that "all kinds of 'activities' are the milieu of the contemplative act." Love, gentleness and joy are nourishing the planet.

Images and Reflections

Humans have much to learn in relationship with all other creatures. Each in its own way images God. All of creation is the self-expression of God. "It is in Jesus," Ilia Delio writes in *The Emergent Christ*, "that the self-communication of God to creation explodes into history", the climax of the long evolutionary journey towards consciousness in Earth.

We know now our purpose. All of creation, individually and more effectively together, is to move towards transformational whole-making and healing in Christ.

The biologist in me sees myself and the wider community reflected in parallel processes in nature everywhere. The metamorphosis of caterpillar to butterfly is one.

The caterpillar eats voraciously until it eventually stops, finds a stem or leaf to attach itself to and forms a chrysalis. With no room inside the chrysalis, the caterpillar dissolves into a nutritious soup.

From the outside we see nothing happening in there. Inside, dormant cells from the caterpillar called imaginal cells begin to develop. Initially the caterpillar experiences these imaginal cells as foreign. The caterpillar's immune system kills them. In time, though, these imaginal cells increase and multiply ahead of the rate of destruction, forming clumps and clusters, working together and connecting with one another. They begin to form chains of specialised cells with specific tasks.

At a tipping point, the caterpillar stops fighting and a new structure we know as the butterfly is born.

Interiorly, quietly, together, the imaginal cells bring about the birth of new life.

As C S Lewis conveyed in *The Discarded Image*, the modern view is not the absolute, ultimate truth — not the ultimate viewpoint but rather just a "view from a point".

Threads and unfoldings, views and points. Everything changes, but "you don't ever let go of the thread". ✿

Painting: ***Perception*** by Clare Wilcox © Used with permission Facebook:@clarewilcoxartist

Catherine Shelton is a Sister of St Joseph living in Whanganui after returning from a Congregational Leadership role in Australia.

GAZING with Love

Paul Sorrell shares how his love of wildlife photography has become a personal and shared contemplative practice.

Earlier this year I was surprised and delighted to get an email from Lucy, a 10-year-old bird lover from Auckland. Lucy and her mum were planning to travel to Otago on a wildlife-watching tour and they were keen to visit my local nature reserve, Orokonui Ecosanctuary, near Dunedin.

Lucy had read my new book about bird photography and was eager to improve her technique in the field. The three of us spent a wonderful morning at Orokonui, and I will not soon forget the joy on the faces of mother and daughter as they snapped away at a friendly ngirungiru (tomtit) sitting a couple of metres away.

Spiritual Practices

As a convert of around 25 years' standing, one of the things that attracted me to the Catholic faith was the many spiritual traditions available for people to draw on — from the Desert Fathers and Mothers, the Celtic saints of the British Isles and Julian of Norwich to Thomas Merton and Richard Rohr.

Today, my personal prayer life is informed by reading Scripture each morning through the lens of the Lectio Divina, closing the day through the reflection offered by the Examen, and a fortnightly Ignatian prayer/study group to which I feel privileged to belong.

Supplementing these more traditional practices, my love of the natural world has stimulated attitudes and practices that fall under the broad rubric of "creation spirituality". In my case, with a distinctive twist.

Wildlife Photography

For the last 15 or so years, I've been involved in wildlife photography, refining not only my technique, but my perception and appreciation of the natural world — one of many portals to the divine.

For me, spirituality is all about making connections — to others, God, ourselves and the world around us — a deepening of the bonds that cement each living (and even inanimate) thing to every other one.

As Pope Francis has reminded us, we share a common home with all life on this planet and we have a responsibility to preserve and care for it.

For me, photography has opened a new and creative window on this challenge. The camera offers a new way of seeing, literally framing nature through the lens, opening a space through which our experience of the world around us is extended and enriched.

Sharing with Others

This year, I published a book, Getting Closer: Rediscovering Nature through Bird Photography (Exisle Publishing), in which I summarise all I've learned on the subject in the hope of encouraging others to take up their cameras and make their own discoveries about the wild wealth that lies around us.

I underline the importance of really getting to know a particular spot, visiting it again and again in all weathers, different times of the day and through all the seasons of the year.

Invitation to Contemplation

This practice breeds a deep attentiveness, an intimacy, an immersiveness, that is essential to the development of a personal spirituality. If this sounds akin to meditation, then that's precisely what it is.

When it happens, getting in "the zone" — achieving a state of attunement and at-one-ment with my avian subjects — can inspire feelings of privilege and gratitude, and occasionally even a sense of awe.

I shall never forget the day a kōtuku (white heron)

dropped out of the sky and touched down a few feet in front of me as I lay beside a local lagoon. With precise and elegant movements, this rare visitor calmly explored the shallows as if I wasn't there.

The experience was enriched by my knowledge of this bird, which has a special place in Māori nature lore, and every winter disperses widely across New Zealand from a single breeding site on the West Coast of the South Island.

I felt a quiet joy, a sense of being graced by this wholly unexpected visitation, a feeling of communion that must have lasted only a few minutes, but will stay with me always.

Learning to Love

I've come to see that the birds that live around us are inhabiting a parallel universe, doing all the things we do — seeking out mates, building homes, gathering food, nurturing and protecting their young.

My long-standing engagement with nature, and identification with the creatures I observe and photograph, has led to the realisation that we humans are part of an intricate, interconnected web that we harm at our own peril, and indeed to the detriment of all life on the planet.

We will only protect what we have learned to love. This is a lesson that we are slowly and painfully learning — let's hope it's not too late ...

Sometimes, of course, when the birds are not co-operating, a photo expedition becomes a walk in the park or the bush, or beside a lagoon or lake — outings which have their own quiet rewards.

My engagement with nature, as with life taken as a whole, is a work in progress, a deeply rewarding exploration of a world that I am discovering to be an integral part of who I am and who I am becoming.

And, since writing the book, and engaging in talks, articles and workshops, I've become aware that my "spiritual" practice is also a social one. Sharing my vision with others — sharing the connectedness, the joy — has become integrated in my approach. I look forward to helping other Lucys realise their own visions of the wild.

Paul Sorrell is a freelance writer, editor, *Tui Motu* film critic and wildlife photographer living in Dunedin.

Power in a Song

CHRIS SKINNER **reflects on how music, singing and performance nourish our spirituality.**

Music has always been part of my life. My mother and her family were singers around the piano and at home we were singers in the car and singers around the house. My eldest sister introduced me to the music of the 60s, playing the old 45s on the gramophone. I knew that music, singing and performance were part of me. If I wanted my spirit to be nourished, although I would not have expressed it then in those terms, singing, music and performance needed to be part of the mix. This has continued throughout my life. I enjoy singing alone, and I also appreciate sharing my music in groups — small and larger — allowing time for quiet reflection and times of exuberant participation. I can literally feel myself coming alive.

Songwriting

I remember being fascinated by a neighbour's guitar when I was around 7 or 8. Later, when I was 16, I would borrow my brother's guitar and teach myself to play by following the chord diagrams above the music. I also began writing songs at that early stage. I discovered I could express myself through music. Back when I was more reserved and lacked

confidence, music was a way I could communicate my thoughts and ideas.

Expressing thoughts and feelings in song has a way of touching those deep-down parts of ourselves that ordinary discussion and conversations may not. Music carries a power beyond words.

Connecting with a Group

It is easy to look at my compositions and understand what really matters to me, what moves my spirit. I have songs about family and relationships. One of my most popular songs is one I sing with my mother: "I want to sing with you, Mum." It touches a chord with the audience every time I sing it. The relationship with our mother — both the joys and challenges — is fundamental to our lives. I find that the song moves people to tears and I am OK with tears. I never know exactly what has gone on within individuals as they listen, but I know something profound has happened.

Listeners' Responses

I used to feel confused by the silence that came over the audience at times. I couldn't tell if people were appreciating the music or not. I know now that people have different ways of processing the songs. I feel privileged to be able to present my music and find that it is moving people's hearts. The music becomes a catalyst that enables them to enter the quiet places within themselves and encourages them to connect with their experience.

Some years ago I was thanked for my song "Lovely Young Person" by parents who had lost their son. They had struggled to talk about their immense loss, and the song helped them to express their grief.

Many of my songs reflect my Christian faith. I'm a priest who sings so it makes sense and motivates me to use music to encourage and support people in their journey of faith. There are songs of praise ("Awesome God"), songs of gratitude ("We Say Thanks"), songs of healing ("Loved Sinners") songs of petition ("*Veni Sancte Spiritus*") and songs encouraging community and service ("We are Christ"). As I sing, I am always encouraging myself as a fellow traveller and I hope it does the same for other people.

Inspiration for Songs

As a Marist, several of my songs reflect Marist Spirituality and my relationship with Mary. "Mary, Mother of the poor" and "Mary Said, Yes" are examples. The former was inspired by a presentation on Mary in Scripture which reminds me that our spirit is nourished by other people and their wisdom and creativity. Many of my songs have resulted from what others have shared with me. The Spirit in them has touched the Spirit in me.

I attended a workshop by an Australian worship singer who drew on images of the Australian landscape in some of her songs. This inspired me to reflect on New Zealand images.

I am humbled and privileged when my music touches the hearts of people, inspires and encourages their faith, helps us celebrate who we are and that we belong together.

I composed, "God of Our Island Home" out of that experience and have gone on to write other songs making connections to my identity and sense of belonging to this country. "Sons of Gallipoli", which incorporates several lines of the New Zealand National Anthem, has had a powerful impact nationally.

To express something in song, I first need to feel something within me — a sense of wonder, sadness, sorrow, anger, human experience and connection, merciful love. A generous person recently described my music as earthed and real. I was grateful.

I found the mosque killings in Christchurch abhorrent and deeply disturbing and I needed to express this. "Garden on the Street" is my song about solidarity with those traumatised by the shootings. So many people were placing flowers outside mosques throughout the country in a symbolic gesture of support for our Muslim brothers and sisters.

I was appalled by the death of George Floyd. He was choked despite calling out "I can't breathe" — stopped from breathing — the basis of life we take for granted. I composed "I Can Breathe" in which I sing: "I can stand in the daylight, and I can breathe."

Taking on Commissions

Several Religious Congregations have commissioned me to compose a song about their founder. For inspiration I read their key texts waiting for a word, phrase or idea to resonate in me. That becomes the seed of the new composition.

Sometimes the inspiration comes unexpectedly. In the mid-90s I was chaplain to De La Salle College and a phrase I heard frequently in the prayer of De La Salle caught my imagination: "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God." I wrote "We Are Here in the Presence of Our God" for them — a gift for the brothers, the staff, and students from the treasury of their tradition. A musical reminder of God's presence always with us.

Another time a Sister of Compassion friend shared Mother Aubert's prayer: "Thanks be to God for all he has done and is doing for us." That idea inspired me to compose "Thanks Be to God". The song has been adopted by the Sisters and other groups and has been translated into Māori and French. Not only does this song unite me with Suzanne Aubert and her legacy in our country but also with my Sister friend who has since died. The relationships I make through music are important for me.

The delight and sense of mission I have in sharing and performing my songs animates and lifts my spirit. I am humbled and privileged when my music touches the hearts of people, inspires and encourages their faith, helps us celebrate who we are and that we belong together. Music is powerful in this, it is of the Spirit.

Painting: ***Composer*** by Van Hovak ©
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Chris Skinner SM lives in Auckland where is involved with the formation of Marist seminarians. He has produced over 20 albums. His version of "You Raise Me Up" earned public acclaim.

POPE FRANCIS'S MODERN VISION IN A MEDIEVAL CHURCH

ILIA DELIO points out that Pope Francis's vision of integral ecology needs a new theological perspective.

Pope Francis's encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, issued on the feast of St Francis of Assisi, indicates his spiritual affinity with the founder of the Franciscan movement. The encyclical deepens the pope's vision of integral ecology laid out in *Laudato Si'*, now extended to the social order on the level of fraternity and social friendship.

Like Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis builds his new vision of social order based on the core virtue of fraternal love. It is clear that he is making every effort to enfold the Gospel life into the interstitial tissues of social order and, prima facie, his efforts to do so are admirable, if not outstanding.

The reliance of the pope on the Franciscan charism, however, is both endearing and troublesome. His select use of Francis of Assisi's writings to support his own agenda of reform deflects the trajectory of attention, away from theological reform within the Church to social and global reform outside the Church. Contextualising the Franciscan charism in its historical context may elucidate some of the underlying tensions that persist in Pope Francis's writings.

ST FRANCIS'S EMPHASIS ON GOD'S GOOD CREATION

St Francis was a man filled with the Spirit of God, to the extent that he rarely mentioned the name of Jesus in his writings. His conversion as a young man and renunciation of his father's inheritance led him to take up a poor, itinerant life, initially as a contemplative, and later as one engaged in the ministry of caring for people with leprosy.

The genius of Francis was not in establishing a new religious movement of fraternity (although this is not to be denied) but the way he ushered in a new theological emphasis on materiality, without intending to do so. Since he had received little formal education in his youth, Francis never absorbed the Christian Neoplatonic attitude toward creation — the idea of transcending the world to contemplate true reality. Rather, he regarded earthly life as possessing ideal, positive potential as God's creation.

Francis's nature mysticism included a consciousness of God, with the appropriate religious attitudes of awe and gratitude. He realised that matter is not an evil in opposition to a good God but rather it is the very image of God and the means by which we encounter God.

God has entered into the material world, with all its fragile limitations, in and through the person of Jesus Christ.

MATTER IS SPIRIT FILLED

This realisation changed the way he viewed the world, not as a world of limited matter to be transcended towards a higher spiritual realm, but as

matter filled with the Spirit of God, a world charged with divine grandeur.

It is this material-theological vision of Francis that left an indelible mark on the theologians of the Order, giving rise to the Franciscan school, initiated by Alexander of Hales and John of La Rochelle.

FRANCISCAN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Alexander of Hales was a trained theologian who entered the Franciscan Order at the age of 50. His influence on the young Franciscan, Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, was significant.

Bonaventure brought together Francis's nature mysticism and Christ mysticism into his own theological synthesis, which he laid out in his final lectures at the University of Paris in 1257, a set of lectures he never completed, due to his untimely death.

In the first lecture, he brings together philosophy and theology in a new metaphysics of Christ at the centre, which the late Franciscan theologian, Zachary Hayes, interpreted as a metaphysics of love.

INCARNATION ABOUT LOVE NOT SIN

Two generations after Bonaventure's death, John Duns Scotus, an English-trained theologian, began developing his own novel theology based on the charism of Francis of Assisi and the Oxford school of thought.

Duns Scotus advocated the primacy of Christ, stating that sin was not the reason for the incarnation; rather, the primary reason was the love of God.

Duns Scotus's primacy of Christ doctrine was radical and creative, although it was never officially embraced by the Church.

The rise of Franciscan scholar William of Ockham and the school of nominalism provided a philosophy that aided the rise of modern science, and the gap between Franciscan theology and the Church widened.

AQUINAS'S THEOLOGY ADOPTED

The Church eventually turned its back on the Franciscan theologians and mandated the theology of Thomas Aquinas as the official theology of the Church in 1879 (Pope Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*).

Pope Francis has benevolently cherry-picked ideas from the writings of Francis of Assisi but essentially has left the official mandate of theology untouched.

It seems that our current pope wants to take the Church to a new place in the world, not as an authoritarian leader, but as an animator of the spirit. He has a Franciscan vision, but he has ignored the novel theology ushered in by the early Franciscan theologians (although we can find aspects of Bonaventure's exemplarism in *Laudato Si'*).

PROBLEM WITH DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

What the Church will not reconsider is the place of original sin as the reason for the incarnation, despite the science of evolution.

Duns Scotus thought that original sin distorted the meaning of God as love, essentially making the incarnation "plan B" for a fallen creation.

He did not deny original sin but, he said, it is not the principal reason for the incarnation. Rather, God is love, and from all eternity God willed to love a creature to grace and glory, whether or not sin ever existed: Christ is first in God's intention to love and to create.

According to Hayes, Bonaventure, too, realised that the incarnation is not about the remedy for sin but the excess love and mercy of God.

LOVE THE CORE ENERGY OF UNIVERSE

Almost a hundred years ago, Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin saw that Christianity was a religion compatible with the world of modern science, precisely because it placed a positive emphasis on materiality as the place of God's incarnation. One of the main problems Teilhard saw was the Church's inability to reconcile original sin and evolution.

As a scientist, Teilhard felt that the notion of original sin and its corresponding monogenism (Adam and Eve as the source of original sin) is incompatible with evolution. When he discovered the Scotistic doctrine of the primacy of Christ, he announced "there is the theology of the future!"

Love and not sin is the reason for the incarnation; in Teilhard's view, love is the core energy of the universe. The doctrine of original sin thwarts the ability of the material universe, including the structures of human relationships, to realise the incarnational potential within. As a result, Christianity is impotent to effect real change in the world.

HOPING FOR NEW THEOLOGICAL VISION OF EVOLUTION

I am left wondering, who is Pope Francis writing for? Without a theology that adequately deals with materialism, nothing can change. The Church will not budge from its Thomistic-Aristotelian synthesis because the theological edifice is like dominoes. Once the Thomistic mandate is lifted, the chips will fall. What holds the Church together in its universality is original sin (and hence Christ as true saviour), the fallenness of matter, not the potential of matter to become something new.

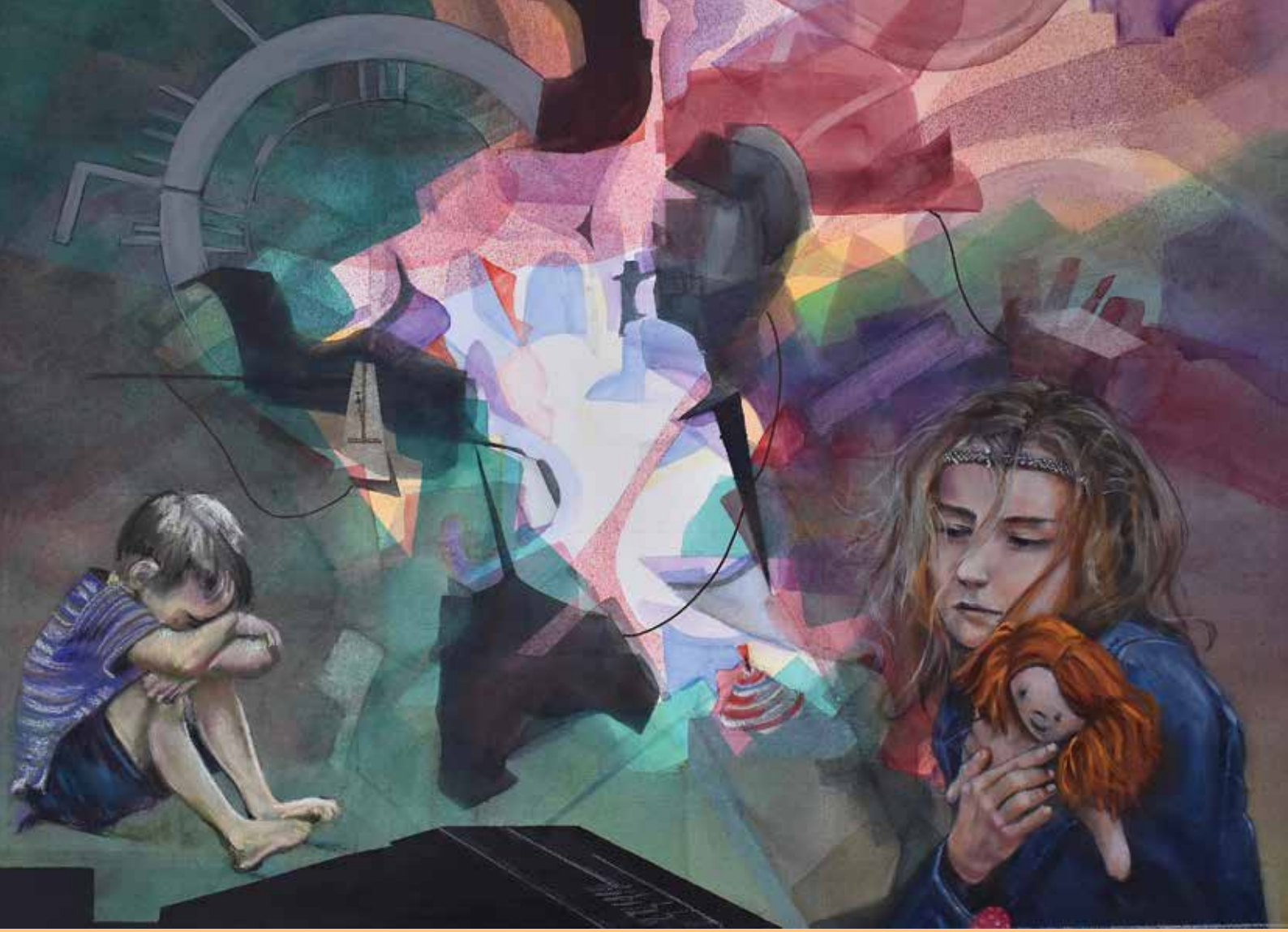
It is good that Francis looks to Francis of Assisi, who was a man of keen wisdom and insight. Before the Church looks at the world and its disorder, it might be worth assessing its own inner dysfunction; for an institution divided within lacks a Spirit of truth and cannot heal its own wounds.

Despite the dissonance between the pope's global outlook and the Church's medieval paralysis, God continues to do new things, and a new theological vision of evolution forming on the horizon of the future is entirely within our reach.

Full article available: www.globalsistersreport.org 1 Dec 2020

Painting: ***Tui Korero*** by Julie Whyman © Used with permission www.juliewhyman.co.nz

Ilia Delio, a Franciscan Sister of Washington DC, teaches at Villanova University. She has authored 22 books and edits the series *Catholicity in an Evolving Universe*.



To Act Justly, LOVE MERCY and to Walk Humbly with God

ROSEMARY RIDDELL reflects on her work as a district court judge.

When I became a judge in 2006, the ceremony contained a number of elements. Chief of these was the promise to act fairly, without fear or favour, affection or ill will.

Then in my acceptance speech, I said that the words of the prophet Micah would guide me in my job — to act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with my God. They are such simple words, yet so profound.

Over the next 12 years and part-time after that, those words became the hallmark of my work as a District Court Judge.

In a recent radio interview, I confessed to having prayed for people that I sentenced. I say "confessed" because the words popped out, almost before I meant them to. Given the chance to reflect on what I was about to say, I might not have admitted to praying, especially for those I sent to prison. A judge, after all, is meant to be objective and if he or she has a religious bent, they keep it to themselves; at least while they are on the job.

But now I have retired. And that has opened the door to all kinds of reflections. No longer am I subject to the judicial restraint that prevented me from commenting publicly, from writing to the newspaper, or saying what I really thought about public criticism of judges. Now I can speak freely. And speak I do.

Opportunities of Retirement

First I wrote a book, *To Be Fair: Confessions of a District Court Judge*, born out of the frustration of Lockdown and the grief of letting go of a job I loved with a passion. I wrote about laws that I thought were just plain wrong and acknowledged my own mistakes. And I told our daughter Polly's story, which was woven through my judging years and kept me humble in so many ways.

Retiring from my work as a judge also enabled me to have free rein to exercise my quirky sense of humour and to record

those eye-watering occasions in court when a defendant would get it so wrong that I wanted to stuff my gown in my mouth to stop myself from hooting with laughter.

But retirement has also afforded me the opportunity to reflect on life to a greater degree. To think about words and the people I dealt with in court. To go into my little chapel that sits in our garden, light the candles, and let the silence swoop and glide around me. That has been a gift. To be rather than endlessly doing. To think about the rhythm of life, the seasons, love and loss.

And more, to wonder about goals and the things we tell ourselves. To reflect on all I have worried about through my life and the relatively small percentage of worries that ever amounted to anything.

I may not be a judge anymore, but Micah's words still ring true for me and I believe they are a clarion cry for us all, whatever our stage in life.

To Act Justly

To act justly in the face of injustice and indifference is to poke our heads above the parapets and, by our actions, to call out discrimination and inequality, by whatever means.

That might involve writing a letter, attending a protest, speaking up or supporting the underdog.

I have been reminded this week of those in the legal fraternity who put their career on the line to represent the unpopular.

I watched the film *The Mauritanian* about Mohamedou Ould Slahi who was arrested and held without trial at Guantanamo Bay for 14 years and ultimately released only because of the unceasing efforts of his legal team. His quest for justice is still not over, but what shines through in the movie is his unwavering faith and his refusal to hate those who have oppressed him.

To Love Mercy

Time and time again, when about to sentence someone, I would hear a whisper in my ear: "Mercy, sister, mercy." Mercy doesn't have a lot of currency in our society. Instead we usually a clamour for revenge, for a punitive approach to justice that focuses on "make 'em pay", in contrast to putting it right.

But mercy says there is a way beyond punishment alone — a different approach that heeds the victim's voice and, at the same time, offers the criminal restoration rather than retribution. That is at the heart of restorative justice — a concept that seeks to restore both the wronged and the wrong doer. It's a more merciful approach to justice and one that is now being taken up with greater enthusiasm by our courts. Maybe mercy can show the way.

To Walk Humbly with God

Micah's admonition to walk humbly with our God sums it all up for me. People may not think of judges as particularly humble. They sit in a court elevated above others, deferred to and bowed to. Theirs is a well-remunerated position. They have security of tenure. Indeed it requires the intervention of Parliament to remove a judge from office in circumstances where it is alleged the judge is not fit to hold office.

Yet, the best judges I have ever known were humble. They did their job with compassion and a fair degree of self-deprecating modesty. And, as it happens, all of them that I knew and respected had a faith in God that carried them through. No doubt there are good judges who are atheist or agnostic. We are all different.

Humility is the knowledge that all we have comes from God, not from our own cleverness. That we are all equal before God and that we recognise the goodness in one another. Humility doesn't lord it over others and is never boastful.

Contemplating

And so, sitting in my little chapel with its bell tower and church windows, with its altar, candles and a small tape deck to play Taizé music when the silence becomes overwhelming, I turn over in my mind all these thoughts about words: how we live by them — or not. I think of all the people whom I came across in my job, both in the family court and in the criminal jurisdiction.

Mercy says there is a way beyond punishment alone — a different approach that heeds the victim's voice and, at the same time, offers the criminal restoration rather than retribution. That is at the heart of restorative justice.

I think of their challenging lives, their struggles to manage when a regular job, warm house and a committed relationship eluded them.

I think, too, of all the children who never knew what it was like to feel safe or loved. Of those with mental illness, whose lives were upturned by their diagnosis; their families trying to absorb this new reality.

Some days, these reflections leave me sad and helpless. What can I do? Other days, I offer up silent prayers.

Often as a judge I felt like the proverbial ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. I couldn't really change their lives, couldn't address people's poverty, addictions or illiteracy.

But on better days I remembered the small touches. I could look people in the eye, treat them with respect and remember justice, mercy and humility. Every person deserved that from me. ✿

Painting: ***Pandora's Box*** by Toni Armstrong © Used with permission www.toni-armstrong.com

Rosemary Riddell lives with Mike in Oturehua, Otago. As well as a career in law Rosemary has been an actor and film director, the most notable work *The Insatiable Moon*.

Walking the Earth

I make the encircling
ripple of water
elegance of dawn
blush of rose
stirring of day

I make the encircling
quiet of earth
glow of candle
rhythm of pulse
stillness of night

I make the encircling
green of Spirit
heart of God
presence of Christ
wellspring of life

by Anne Powell © In: *The Edge of Things*. The Cuba Press, 2018

Making Sense

ARIA BERCIC discusses how Catholicism and secularism help answer the big questions in her life at this time.

Finding meaning in this modern world is an intriguing exploration into the mind of humanity. Historically, we have constructed life on the basis of culture, progression, spirituality and hierarchy; through these four foundations, come forth the diverse and eccentric society we today call the modern world. However, due to the expansion of human consciousness we often find ourselves experiencing moments of existential dread. We ask ourselves: "Where did we come from?" "Where will we go after death?" and "What is the purpose of my life?"

The Catholic tradition explores these questions and answers them in accordance with the Bible. However, a large proportion of people do not hold affiliation to a religion. Rather, they rely on science and natural law to give answers to the big questions. One such worldview is that of secular humanism.

A Catholic Perspective

As Catholics we contrive our views of the origins of the universe on the Genesis account, but we do not interpret it literally. We accept that the universe evolved over billions of years. The message of Genesis is that we all come from one source — God. God is at the forefront of creation; everyone is created in God's image. God is the origin, the designer and **the fulfilment** of life. This understanding intimately connects our individual purpose with that of the created world — our home.

Our purpose in life could be summed up by the mission "to love your neighbour as you love yourself" (Mt 22:39). This means to treat others in the same way as you would like to be treated.

Helping others is a significant part of the Catholic traditional. We promote peace and goodwill to all humanity. Pope Francis says: "When people feel truly loved, they feel able to love, too... We feel called to pour onto the world the love received by the Lord, to offer it in the Church, in the family, in society, to join it in serving and in giving not out of duty, but out of love. ("The Meaning of Life is Love, Pope Says" *NCR*, 14 Sept, 2018). Our purpose is linked to others.

As Catholics we believe in heaven; God will welcome us home. While our time on Earth will involve suffering, the future holds a blissful eternity. We come from God and when we die we shall be reunited with God and loved ones.

A Humanist Perspective

Humanists will answer that the world was made naturally with no God behind it. The universe evolved from a "Big Bang" — the cause of which science is yet to discover. There is no place in the humanist worldview for either immortality or God.

For humanists, progression is an important aspect of life. Government systems, technological advancements and sociological understandings help create a functional

society. Their premise is that "you only live once", so it is vital to make life fulfilling.

Humanists understand that biological death is essentially the end of our life. Our body breaks down and we have no soul or consciousness that lives on. This is why we must live life in abundance; why people should strive to make a mark on this planet.

Shared Beliefs

The Catholic and the secular worldview share many key beliefs. The obvious connection is the idea of morality. Both believe in a world that should be ruled by morally correct standards such as kindness, compassion and dignity. Catholics teach that social justice principles apply to everyone. These make up the principles of Catholic Social Justice Teaching: Human Dignity, Solidarity, Subsidiarity, Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, Common Good, Participation and Stewardship. Secularists believe that people should choose good over evil and that basic human rights are needed to ensure this.

When you look at the differences between these two worldviews, it is important to notice that they agree on the need to do what we can to preserve peace in the international community.

Spirituality makes up one of the foundations of contemporary society, as does a materialist perspective. Rather than being polar opposites, we must be ready to notice that we find ourselves leaning towards one and then the other over the course of our lives.

We could ask a young person looking out on their long life what their opinion is. Their response might be that there is no such supernatural being in existence. But 50 years later, we might find that their understanding has changed. When the time comes for them to die, they hope that they can be reunited with God and all their loved ones once more.

Our minds and hearts seem to shift from a focus on the physical to the metaphysical when faced with suffering and uncertainty. This shift might even occur during the course of a single day.

Making Sense Now

My personal approach is that Catholicism and secularism are interwoven. I lean back and forth between the two worldviews.

Being raised in a Catholic environment, I was introduced to what was morally good. However, as I grew and came to understand the world more, I became more influenced by the secular worldview.

I've concluded that I am rather similar to Pi Patel, in the novel *The Life of Pi*. He had been raised in a Hindu environment. His religious worldview shifts as he studies about Catholicism and Islam. He reaches the conclusion that he does not have to pick a religion to be content with his life. Instead, he acknowledges that all three religions can coexist harmoniously.

I believe that Catholicism is beneficial for me to understand the unseen, unspoken connection with what is greater than myself. And I believe that secularism helps me to configure my life here and now. That without one or the other we wouldn't have been able to reach the podium of evolution and find the meaning in our lives, whatever that meaning may be.

Our minds and hearts seem to shift from a focus on the physical to the metaphysical when faced with suffering and uncertainty. This shift might even occur during the course of a single day.

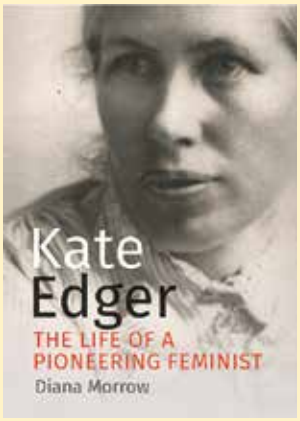
Painting: ***Thinking Woman*** by Said Elatab © Used with permission
Facebook: Said Elabat Art

Aria Bercic: I'm a student attending Pompallier Catholic College, Whangarei and I find fulfilment in studying the many themes of philosophy and anthropology.

Kate Edger: The Life of a Pioneering Feminist

by Diana Morrow
Published by Otago University Press, 2021
Reviewed by Susan Apáthy
Reviewed by Joe Green

What a life story this is! Kate Edger, born in 1857, was an important first-wave New Zealand feminist.



Encouraged by her father, a noncon-formist minister, she was the first woman in the British Empire to gain a university Bachelor of Arts degree. At 26, she became the foundation principal of Nelson College for Girls. Then she moved on to national and international issues, campaigning for legislative change to mitigate violence against women and children, conducting meetings to support women's suffrage, playing prominent roles in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Society for the Protection for Women and Children and the League of Nations Union. She carried on much of this work into her 70s.

I long to know even more about Kate, whose faith and staunch commitment reveal the world of the colonists who aimed to make a better society in New Zealand.

Diana Morrow has given us a truly absorbing and readable book, which provides a wonderful view of Pākehā New Zealand's development in the late 19th- and early 20th-century. That there is no sign of Māori in Kate's life reflects the society she lived in — and gives us something else to reflect on.

Celebrating Catholic Schools

Education in faith is at the heart of the Catholic Church's participation in mission. Catholic schools as part of the Church share in this mission, and as the bishops describe are "the Church in action" (NZCBC, 2014).

We have 235 Catholic schools in Aotearoa New Zealand educating 66,875 young people — 8.5 per cent of the total student population of our country. Through their educational endeavour these schools offer young people "an encounter with Jesus Christ, learning that communicates our God of mercy, love, and justice so that faith, culture and life are brought into harmony" (NZCBC, 2014).

The network of 187 primary and 48 secondary schools spans the country — in the north from Pompallier Catholic School in Kaitaia and Pompallier Catholic College in Whangārei, to St Theresa's School in Bluff and Verdon College in Invercargill in the very south.

Each school contributes to the diversity of the network of Catholic schools in our country. They have different contexts — a remote primary like St John's School in Ranfurly, boarding facilities as at St Joseph's Māori Girls' College in Taradale, a small school like St Joseph's School in Matatā, a large boys' such as St Peter's College in Auckland, and a coeducational secondary like John Paul College in Rotorua.

The young people in the schools have diverse cultural backgrounds representing the changing face of the Church in Aotearoa. The 2020 figures show that of the total student population, 15 per cent were Māori, 48 per cent were New Zealand/ European, 17 per cent were Asian and 16 per cent were Pasifika.

Some years ago we initiated Catholic Schools Day, an event which has become a triannual celebration of the place and influence of Catholic schools in their communities and as a network.

Catholic Schools Day affirms that Catholic education and each school is a taonga of the Church of Aotearoa. We know that Catholic education has a long tradition in this country — a tradition that encapsulates the desire of Catholic parents, women and men religious, parishes, priests and bishops to provide a Catholic education for each new generation. That tradition continues.

The theme for the 2021 Catholic Schools Day is *Tūrangwaewae: Catholic Schools — A Place to Stand.* We recognise that Baptism makes us members of the Christian faithful, te whānau whakapono. The school offers children a place to stand and grow. Their experiences introduce them to the wider Church and Catholic tradition in this land. The school hopes not only to strengthen the faith of young people but also their connections in the parish community so that school and parish together become their tūrangawaewae.

Pope Francis is encouraging the Church, and all people, to create relationships of care for one another, to strengthen our sense of responsibility for one another and to relate with a sense of sisterhood and brotherhood throughout the world. The Catholic School endeavours to be a microcosm of this sister and brotherhood, in its own community and with the parish and the wider community.

Each school is supported in this endeavour by the network of Catholic Schools — they are not alone. As tūrangwaewae Catholic schools are places where relationships are developed and nourished and people are valued and respected, where learning includes celebration, reconciliation, responsibility and love. Where witnessing to God's love is a mark of "our place".

The history of Catholic education in Aotearoa is comprised of many stories of hope, service, sacrifice, generosity and courage. Of teachers, often women and men religious travelling great distances to start schools around the country, of parents giving time, materials and funds to build and maintain schools, of the organisational support of priests and parishioners, of negotiators with the government for recognition of Catholic schools, of teachers studying Religious Education courses for teaching in Catholic schools. And, of course, of the stories of thousands of students. The history speaks of the people of God through the generations who valued an education in faith. It also holds the stories of the failure to protect children at times, and our deep sorrow for that.

The 2021 Catholic Schools Day stands in this history, in this place, celebrating that those involved in Catholic Education now are standing in the tradition of Catholic Schools in this land. Catholic Schools Day remembers and celebrates our continuing hope for connectedness, diversity and community.

Rosalie Connors is the Special Character Manager at the New Zealand Catholic Education Office. Rosalie has an MRE and has taught in Catholic schools.

Memories of My Catholic Education

GRAY NELSON began school in the 1930s Depression. An article about Mary MacKillop prompted him to write his memories.

I am 94 years old and have some memories of being taught by the "Joeys" as we called them in Manaia, Taranaki in the early 1930s.

The Manaia nuns were the Sisters of St Joseph, the group who had come from Perthville, NSW in 1880 at the behest of Bishop Redwood and who operated from Whanganui. They taught my aunt in Whanganui. One of the nuns who was nearly blind always called her "that light headed girl in the back row". A number of schools in Taranaki parishes were staffed by this group.

Back to Manaia. I started school on my sixth birthday. It was during the Great Depression. The rotten Coates/Forbes coalition government, as a money-saving move, decreed children could not start school until they turned six, so depriving me of a year's schooling. We were from then on known as "the six-year-olds".

It would have been much better if I had been taken in hand by the nuns when I was five. My early government-enforced "sabbatical" gave me the opportunity to be a real nuisance in the neighbourhood. The farmer to the rear of our house was after me for sliding down his haystacks and taking the tops off them and other neighbours had my measure, too. So I amused myself by climbing on the roof of the house to contemplate Mount Egmont (Taranaki). I always jumped off the roof — a matter of 15 feet didn't dissuade me. I think everyone breathed a sigh of relief when I turned six.

Manaia convent school was a stucco building of three rooms staffed by four nuns. Three taught and one was the home sister. We had about 30 pupils. I was in the class of the youngest nun, Sister Celine Sullivan. She was quite pretty and kind in the view of a six-year-old. The other teachers were more challenging.

Most of the pupils came from farms adjacent to the town of about 500 population. The farm kids mostly came to school on horseback. There was a horse paddock next to the school grounds where the ponies spent the school hours. They were quicker going home than coming to school.

We had no adequate heating in the school. I recall those freezing icy mornings when the nuns would take us out on to Mountain Road and walk us up the tar road (Taranaki had the earliest sealed roads in New Zealand). We would break the ice on the puddles with our bare feet. Few of us, except the girls, had shoes.

The tradespeople of Manaia were good to deal with. Our families were all in the same boat during those difficult years. The baker would drop off a surplus loaf of bread to my mother at the end of the day. He went on to develop a worldwide business and donated large sums of money to the welfare of Taranaki. His name was Yarrow.

Religious tolerance was not the saving grace of Manaia. We had a continuing confrontation with the pupils of the public school. My personal problem was with the German Swiss settlers' kids at the top of Mountain Road. They did not like me. They must have thrown half the road surface on our roof. We replied with the old doggerel: "Puppy-dog, puppy-dog sitting on a well along came a cattle-dog and bit him down to hell." Luckily physical fights were rare. Our teachers saw to that. Still, they did happen sometimes.

Things began to improve for our families with the advent of the first Labour government. My elder brother and sister both won entry in the first intake of the reopened Auckland Teachers' Training College. My mother, younger brother and I joined them in Auckland. I was placed for a time in Monte Cecilia under Mother Ligouri (an unhappy time) and then went to Epsom under her sister, Mother Clare (happier times).

My Catholic education continued as a foundation pupil of St Peter's Christian Brothers' School. On the first day, 3 February 1939, 185 boys turned up at the new school. At the 75th anniversary in 2014 only four of us foundation students were still alive. I could be the sole survivor now. I certainly am of Manaia Convent, I expect.

Mary MacKillop contributed much to education in New Zealand and of course Australia. I am happy and grateful that the Josephite Sisters were my first teachers in my faith. ✿

Photo: Primary school children eating apples. Pascoe, John Dobree, 1908-1972: Photographic albums, prints and negatives. Ref: 1/4-001007-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Gray Nelson served as private secretary to seven cabinet ministers and five prime ministers. He spent four years in London as councillor/adviser to two NZ High Commissioners.

TRACTORS Come to TOWN

What are we to make of the well-choreographed inruption of dogs, tractors and their owners into city streets and squares throughout New Zealand? How should the government be reacting? How should we all react to this "Howl"?

Well, presumably we listen. When you hear a cry of pain you listen. The concerns aired may have been varied: bureaucratic interference, unrealistic expectations about water use, irritation at the animus against utes. Behind it all, though, a clear ground-tone emerged: "Enough is enough." Accompanying the anger was distress, frustration that the farmers were not being heard; and that blanket solutions were being foisted upon the entire farming community. On the human level, we were told that the constant stress has been too much for some, leading to psychic burnout and even to suicide. If even half of this is true, attentive listening is indicated.

Part of the problem, as Robyn McPhail suggested recently to Dunedin's Knox Church congregation, is that few of us are "bi-lingual", able to straddle the different worlds of town and country. And it may well be the case that farmers are far more cognizant of city life than suburbia is of the country. Farmers have to come to town constantly, and many have spent years at school or university in cities. On the other hand, we townies tend to have limited experience of rural life.

So it was intriguing to listen to Dr McPhail, a Presbyterian minister who grew up in a sheep farming family in eastern Southland, learning by absorption about life in community and living with the land. Faith, farming and neighbourly relations were for her, so to speak, an integrated package.

Her 32 years of ministry have been in rural parishes in Central Otago, mid-Canterbury and Te Tai Tokerau Northland. Her call to action: we need a much more attentive dialogue — more "bi-lingualism".

But how to achieve that? In sheer economic terms town and country are utterly dependent on each other, and the challenges of COVID-19 to tourism suggest that this dependence is likely to grow. Yet the other side of the coin is equally evident. We cannot go on as we are. Unparalleled heatwaves in Canada and the USA, the floods ravaging Germany, not to mention the devastation of Westport, must signal to all, except human ostriches, that time is no longer on our side. "Enough is enough" may be a good slogan but it is no answer to the urgency of climate change. The situation in Australia points to the grim outcome when a government closes its eyes to the issues.

It seems obvious that in their own self-interest and that of the wider community, those farming need to step back and take a good look at their current operations in the light of rapidly evolving social and environmental imperatives.

Criticism of large swathes of farming practice is unavoidable if we are to get back to sustainable food production within healthy ecosystems. Scientific groups such as Wise Response urge planning land use to take into account the basic elements — stability, groundwater conditions, soils, water supply, aspect, climate and weather, flooding, ecosystem function — as, of course, countless farmers are already doing.

Yet the tractors in the streets point to the formidable challenges ahead, both practical and philosophical. The practical problem is that it is easy to preach about radical change, but the hard yards to achieve it will fall on a farming community which is already stressed.

So how can we as a nation offer the farming community the support — financial, psychological and spiritual — needed to get through these tough times?

The philosophical problem is that these days we are all individualists, town and country alike. Remuera might cry: "No social housing on our patch." The farmers: "Enough is enough." But property rights should never be absolutised.

In 1883 Oamaru clergyman James MacGregor, mindful of the Clearances which had devastated Highland life and culture in Scotland, made the then unusual connection with the fate of Te Whiti-o-Rongomai in Parihaka. In a series of lectures about the "Land Question" he warned that the common good of the whole nation must always be paramount. "The nation, relative to the land, is entitled and bound to make such laws as are best fitted to promote the public interest of the nation as a whole."

Somehow we need to relearn this fundamental moral and Christian insight. Town and country are joined at the hip. We can't forget that thousands of our school students have taken to the streets as well as farmers, dogs and tractors. Let's hone our bi-lingualism, learn to straddle the different worlds we live in, face down the looming ecological catastrophe. For as the old song has it: "There's never a time for hope to die."

Peter Matheson is a peace activist, a Church historian, Emeritus Professor of Knox Theological College, Dunedin and author of many books.

Photo by kb-photodesign/Shutterstock.com

CO-RESPONSIBILITY of Laity

SUE SECONI highlights new opportunities for co-responsibility of laity in the Church.

We are speeding towards an Aotearoa in which there are more parishes than priests. If we are to shift from the current parish model of priest as sole decision-maker to a new model of co-responsibility of priest and laity, we will need to convince ourselves that Baptism wasn't a one-off event that happened when we were babies, and that the Church is not clergy first-class and laity second-class.

There is a growing emphasis on a synodal Church which will implement the orientations of Vatican Council II with greater theological and pastoral understanding. A synodal Church has "the active participation of all the faithful in the mission of the Church ... the united march of the baptised towards the Kingdom which is being built on a daily basis in the realities of family, in the workplace, as well as in social and ecclesial life in all its forms," explained Cardinal Marc Ouellet in an address about an upcoming theological symposium. "The ordained ministry isn't about belonging to the 'ecclesiastical power'."

Professor Michelina Tenance, another involved in the conference, said going back to Baptism and the priesthood of all believers "isn't just a fashion. It's the basis for all Christian life."

The years ahead will call for huge change — but not beyond the kinds of changes we've been challenged with before. Our Church lives as we know them now may be turned upside down. Yet in the anxiety and chaos, we can hope in God's involving presence. This can be a maturing of ourselves as Church.

The Church has often faced new situations which challenged the familiar. In Acts the community wrestles with the question: Can non-Jews become Christians? "Yes," they decided. Peter explained: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God" (Acts 10:35) .

In the Lutheran Reformation, the Church clarified that tradition must be a living experience and that Scripture is essential for spiritual growth.

Vatican Council II gave us the Church in the world, not apart from the world. The Church is to be like yeast leavening the world, not like an untouchable diamond at a high-end jeweller.

Now we face a new challenge: that of the laity coming more fully into the practice of their Baptism. It will mean parishioners coming together for discernment with their priests and bishop. It will not be about instant decision-making, but enabling the Holy Spirit to open the way forward from within.

This is a time when we need to attend to the spiritual gifts in the community – those charisms of the Holy Spirit that enable us to minister and build our faith communities in life and joy.

We will need to look at each other in deeper ways — often the gifts the community needs aren't those we are most accustomed to looking for. We'll need to look beyond our "go-to" people and obvious choices.

Pope Francis in *Antiquum Ministerium* (Institution of the Ministry of Catechist, May 2021) says that developing lay ministry isn't an effort to clericalise lay people. Co-responsibility in Church life means walking humbly in a ministry of serving the community. Just as clericalism, when an ordained man believes he is superior to lay people, limits the community, so too will lay people if they misuse spiritual gifts to gain self-importance. In both examples, the people are using their spiritual gifts as if they were their own possession. Ministry, whether by priest or lay, is about service to the community.

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops have endorsed the concepts of co-responsibility and lay leadership and we will soon be called to participate in conversations. Pope Francis is calling for a synodal Church marked by Communion, Participation and Mission. In preparation for the assembly in 2023, he has asked all bishops to begin the synodal journey in their dioceses in October this year. All bishops have to consult with the laity and listen to the Spirit active in their local Church. This preparation needs the laity to participate responsibly and the bishops to listen. This could be an entry into developing our baptismal heritage in a new way of co-responsibility in being Church.

Sue Seconi belongs to the Catholic Parish of Whanganui — Te Parihi Katorika ki Whanganui. She is inspired and excited by the biblical Lydia (Acts 16:11-15).

QUESTIONS ON THE WAY

In her explanation of Mark 8:27-9:1 KATHLEEN RUSHTON highlights the significance for Christians of understanding suffering, death and resurrection for discipleship.

While they are "on the way", Jesus asks his disciples a general question: "Who do people say that I am?" When Jesus asks a question it is often a signal that he is about to give a new teaching. That question prepares for a weightier and more personal one which is at the very heart of the Gospel and is addressed not only to the disciples but to every reader. We will need to listen to the question, and then respond from the depths of our hearts.

Kathleen Rushton RSM is a Scripture scholar and author of *The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor: Hearing Justice in John's Gospel* (SCM Press 2020).

Near a Turning Point

All that Mark tells us about Jesus so far has led to his asking the disciples: "But you, who do you say I am?" We are near a turning point – the end of his ministry in Galilee (Mk 1:14-8:30) and the beginning of the journey to Jerusalem. Jesus has been presented as an authoritative teacher who reflects God's power through "mighty deeds"

(dynamis) of exorcism, healing, stilling the sea, walking on water and the multiplication of bread. Jesus has reached out to the most alienated, the suffering, sinners, women, the possessed and the marginalised.

Jesus has called himself the bridegroom (Mk 2:19), lord of the Sabbath (2:28), physician (Mk 2:17) and founder of a new community (Mk 3:14). His actions have inspired awe and amazement (Mk 1:27; 2:7; 4:41; 6:2). However, he has met with resistance and misunderstanding by religious authorities, his family, the townsfolk and his own disciples. Jesus has suppressed any talk of his messianic identity. His teachings are in parables. His actions are like parables both concealing and revealing the mystery of who he is.

Being On the Way

The Roman Empire looms in that "Jesus went on with his disciples towards the villages of Caesarea Philippi", which is named after the emperor. Its buildings, activities and history were associated with imperial claims and power. "On the way" (Mk 8:27) evokes the First Testament backdrop to Jesus's actions. God led the people, for example, on "the way" out of Egypt. Later, Isaiah prophesied that God would prepare "a way" for the people to return joyfully to Zion (Jerusalem).

Likewise, the journey to Jerusalem (Mk 8:31-10:52) is both a geographical and a spiritual journey on which disciples learn that the way to share in the glory and resurrection of Jesus is by following him on the way of the cross. The Christian life as a journey and as a pilgrimage was so central to the early Church that "the Way" was the first name for Christianity (Acts 9:2; 18:25-26).

First Prediction of the Passion Mk 8:31-33

Peter's confession: "You are the Messiah" marks a transition from the first half of this Gospel (all about the discovery of the identity of Jesus) to the second half (all about the mystery of his suffering and glory). This climax is followed by an astonishing anti-climax. In a sharp change of tone and direction, Jesus talks openly about his being the Messiah and that for his followers this will mean the cross. The Gospel story from now onwards is permeated by the cross-resurrection.

Jesus is vulnerable to the plots against him. He will "undergo great suffering" and be "rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes" — groups that comprised the Sanhedrin, the supreme religious authority. Yet here, as throughout the New Testament, his suffering and death is not the end — "after three days [he will] rise again."

Cost of Discipleship Mk 8:31-9:1 Formation of Disciples

After Peter's rather blundering response, Jesus speaks openly to the crowds and the disciples about radical discipleship. In six sayings, he outlines what it means to follow him "on the way".

The first saying, beginning "Whoever wishes/wants to …", indicates that to be a Christian is a personal decision. To "follow" is not to be a passive bystander but to follow Jesus wherever he goes. Denying ourselves requires a total shift in the centre of gravity of our lives, reckless abandonment to Jesus and letting go of our own agendas and attachments. Taking up the cross in the context of the Roman occupied world evoked a fearsome image of death.

The second saying offers the paradox of losing our life to save it. This is not about accepting suffering and death as good in themselves but as the way to fullness of life.

The third and fourth sayings are drawn from commerce — profit, gain, forfeit and exchange. Jesus calls his followers to a trade-off: to accept losses for unimaginable gain.

The fifth saying explains why someone would turn away from Jesus: concern for reputation and fear of human disapproval.

The final saying offers comfort to those who remain faithful despite the cost because "the reign of God has come".

Being on the Way Today

Following Jesus is not merely about believing privately but living our faith publicly in word and action. We will need to stand up and be counted, consistently and with integrity being Gospel people living for the common good.

The Christian life as a journey and as a pilgrimage was so central to the early Church that "the Way" was the first name for Christianity.

Jesus avoids Caesarea Philippi, which is associated with imperial claims and power that have damaged the fabric of the surrounding village life. Instead, he ministers to the majority of the population who are living at or below subsistence level. God's purposes for Jesus and his disciples contest the purposes of the Empire as well as the popular views of the Messiah. Jesus defied expectations that the Messiah would bring about glorious victories and change through war. Instead, he transformed people within themselves so that they were able, with him, to bring about the reign of God.

Our participation in the prophetic ministry of Jesus is not primarily about addressing every crisis, but in season and out of season, faithfully addressing whatever is not fulfilling the reign of God.

Our energy and resilience to live "on the way" with Christ, the suffering-death-resurrection way, will arise as we realise their intimate connectedness. This interconnection is found throughout the New Testament. I'm hyphenating death-resurrection to remind us of this inseparable connection in faith.

We might want to reflect on Jesus's question: "But you, who do you say I am?" and respond to it as a question for this stage of our lives. It may focus us on our participation on the way.

12 September
RL: 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Mark 8:27-35
RCL: 16th Sunday after Pentecost, Mark 8:27-38

LIFE IN CHRIST

Picture this: I'm at a party, earnestly explaining to my old flatmate that Jesus is alive, while getting through some horrible white wine that is making me question the entire concept of alcohol. *"We get to get up every day and do our ordinary everyday things and Jesus is with us the whole time!"*, I say.

He agrees, luckily, even though our approaches to faith are markedly different. We talk about how we don't have dramatic conversion stories, don't have a Road to Damascus moment. "I've realised that even though faith is normal to me, Jesus has still saved my life," he says. "And that's totally fine!"

I've been thinking about the everyday mundane lately. It's easy to turn my life into metaphors — perhaps because I'm a writer. I've done it several times in this column. Jesus is like finding a ruru where you didn't expect one; the kingdom of God is like a buyer looking for fine pearls. God is like this, like that.

I respect the value of metaphor, as a way to approach the inexpressible beauty and vitality of God; metaphors are a crucial part of my faith. But so is the literal.

When Jesus was ministering, walking the rural areas of Palestine with his mates, he was speaking to literal realities living there. He knew and loved people who were sick and he healed them; he knew and loved people who needed hope, and he told them stories of truth and love. For all the years since Jesus's time, Scripture has been the story for Christians about who God is and God's creating the world, and we've needed metaphor to comprehend that, seeing through a glass, darkly.

I wake in the mornings and sleepily read the Bible, this holy book that God has given us to understand God's promises for our lives. In that dreamy, liminal space, I have to remind myself: this was a literal truth, spoken to real people, in a real place, thousands of years and kilometres away.

This distance of time from the original biblical context does not stop the life of God from being literal. Jesus Christ is alive in my here and now, as involved in my everyday as he was in the fishing and farming of the people around him 2,000 years ago.

I get home late after the party, feeling resentful towards public transport systems. None of my life is a metaphor: I talk to real people, run over real concrete, walk in a real city. And all of this, all this ordinariness, every mundane moment is made possible by the life of Jesus in the world. I want to sing this to the city, the people with places to be, the flicking traffic lights.

Tomorrow will be another ordinary day: I will study in the library, send texts to my friends, eat muesli, climb the stairs, watch the clouds and think about tomorrow. It's all real; but so is Jesus the Christ. In the moments of frustration, I will encounter the grace of God. In the fear of not getting all my study done, I will be given the peace of God which passes all understanding. In the moments when I don't know what to say, Jesus will lead the way. He did it thousands of years ago; he has not stopped making the world with his life.

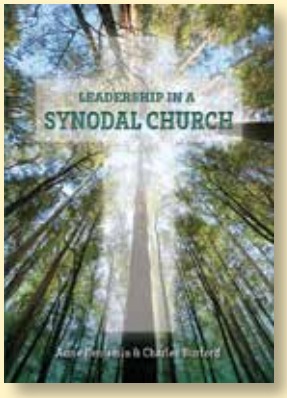
Shanti Mathias is at Victoria University, Wellington, enjoying using long words and immersing herself in the intricacies of media, politics and literature.

Leadership in a Synodal Church

by Anne Benjamin & Charles Burford
Published by Garratt Publishing, 2021
Reviewed by Joe Green

This book considers a Church in which lay and ordained share responsibility. In the chapter titled "Cultural, Transrelational and Synodal Leadership" our own Jacinda Ardern is cited alongside Nelson Mandela, St Mary MacKillop, Martin Luther King and Pope Francis as offering the kind of visionary leadership that is necessary for a synodal Church.

The challenge lies in leading a Church whose culture is typified by polarities: the leadership role of women; a hierarchy that is male, clericalist, arguably misogynist, secretive and sees itself as self-sufficient and separated from the People of God; and progressive liberals facing those seeking a return to a Church of the past.



From my perspective as a lay ecclesial minister living and working in a synodal archdiocese, such visionary leadership and preparedness to change on the part of the ordained hierarchy is going to be pivotal to the synodal way.

Leadership in a Synodal Church sets the scene and provides a toolkit for those seeking to unleash the power of the "synodal way".

Nothing to See

by Pip Adam
Published by Victoria University Press, 2020
Reveiwed by Pat Lythe

This book follows the struggles of pairs (or are they?) of women attempting to stay sober after lives of alcoholism, sex and drugs. It is written in three "ages": 1994, when the women start on the path to sobriety; 2006, when they begin to settle down; and 2018.

The 1994 section paints an intense picture of day-to-day attempts to live a normal life. The women are by turns judged and ignored; they survive on grated carrot sandwiches for economy; they are welcome to volunteer with the Sallies as long as they stay out the back. They attend regular AA meetings, a mentor who talks to them on the phone, and their own dialogue with each other keeps them going. Are they two people? Or split personalities? The reader is left to decide.

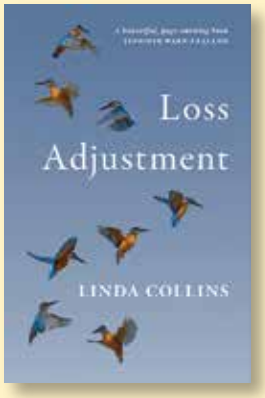
In the 2006 section, there is a steady job, moderating for IT firms. Adam explores the ethics of surveillance capitalism (the way firms use your personal data to target you with advertising) — and then suddenly two women become one. She suffers extreme loneliness, and an old mobile phone comforts her. The 2018 section turns everything upside down again. But still sober!

Nothing to See is a brilliantly original novel where the line between reality and simulation is blurred. It won't be for everyone — there's lots of bad language and explicit sex scenes — but Adam has created a stunning experience of walking in another's shoes.

Loss Adjustment

by Linda Collins
Published by Awa Press, 2020
Reviewed by Trish McBride

Loss Adjustment is powerful writing as befits a journalist mother, a New Zealander living in Singapore. It is a raw, raw story, with yet whispers of connection and eventual hope. The deep trauma of having a beautiful, gifted 17-year-old only daughter take her own life. Total shock for her parents, but over the ensuing years a growing understanding, helped by the diaries and writings Virginia had left behind. And the messages — too many and specific to be coincidences. Later by the return to a long-discarded Catholic faith.



Who would read this book? It is painful to read the agony of the parents, then Virginia's inner world of despair, and could parents who have lived through similar trauma bear to share another family's? Would friends of a family newly bereaved by a suicide learn something of what may help, and what doesn't? Certainly, those involved in suicide-prevention would gain much. Also those involved with neurologically-diverse young people for whom academic achievement is just too hard. Anyone brave enough to open their heart to this mother's story will find their humanity deepened.

Antoinette in the Cévennes

Directed by Caroline Vignal
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

This movie is just the tonic I needed this week, following yet another devastating global climate report, continuing bad news about COVID-19 and many more weeks of winter (and the cold southern spring) to go . . . I certainly didn't feel like submitting myself to the stresses of *Coming Home in the Dark*, the new Kiwi horror film based on a short story by Owen Marshall.

Antoinette in the Cévennes is lighthearted to the point of silliness — a jeu d'esprit about joie de vivre, if I may be permittted to toy with the French language. The springboard of the plot is simple. Antoinette, a primary school teacher living in Paris, is having an affair with a married man, Vladimir — she teaches his young daughter. Counting on spending some stolen time with him in the upcoming holidays, she learns that his plans have changed and he will now be taking a hiking tour, with his wife and child, in the beautiful Cévennes region of south-central France, walking (with a donkey) in the footsteps of Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson.

Throwing caution (and good sense) to the winds, Antoinette makes plans to shadow them — a scheme that we know can only end in upset of one kind or another — and follows them into the mountains, where she hires a donkey of her own, Patrick, and plants her nose firmly in Stevenson's famous 1879 book, *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*.

Of course, none of this has the slightest foundation in reality, and elements of farce and fantasy are strewn liberally throughout. The best way of approaching the film is simply to suspend moral judgement (indeed, judgement of any kind) and enjoy the ride as Antoinette and Patrick make their slow, incident-packed journey through some magnificent, sun-dappled mountain scenery. If the comparison wasn't risible, we might compare Antoinette's journey to a pilgrimage of sorts.

The people the pair meet, as well as the adventures they encounter en route, are generally over the top — or perhaps this merely reflects this reviewer's Anglo-Saxon temperament vis-à-vis the more unbuttoned and volatile Gallic approach to life. In the end, it is Antoinette's generous appetite for life and love — in tandem with the vast affection she develops for the phlegmatic and often recalcitrant Patrick — that carries the film and enables us to leave the theatre with smiles on our faces.

Religion and Racism

A recent Council of Christians and Muslims gathering focused on how religion can help "mend our social fabric". Three women offered stories and wisdom.

Noeleen, Māori and Muslim, has felt discrimination for being both. She looks to Te Tiriti o Waitangi which guarantees that all people have a place here and all may practise their faith. We need to explore and challenge ourselves, our households and our communities for hidden racism.

Jennie, a Nigerian-born Kiwi Christian, pointed to the scriptural call to treat one another with respect because all are made in the image of God. We ought to feel dissatisfied that so many New Zealanders experience racism and religious discrimination, acknowledge that Western ways of being and doing are not the only ways, and hold our politicians to account.

Tayyaba, a Pakistani-born Kiwi Muslim, spoke of the Qur'an teaching that God made us into different tribes so we can get to know one another. After the Christchurch mosque attacks, Jacinda Ardern told our nation: "This is not us." Sadly, Tayyaba says, "This IS us." Racism is heightened when combined with gender and/or religious discrimination, and we must un-learn them all.

Rites New and Old

The reforms of Vatican Council II were enacted to give Catholics a renewed faith, liturgy and practice — a radical (going to the root) understanding of Jesus's vision of God's reign.

The Tridentine Mass, with its Latin language and accumulated pomp, would have shocked the Jesus who was put to death by the Roman Empire. Vatican II gave us a Eucharistic celebration that was vernacular, simpler and meant to engage people in gospel living. The old rite was allowed to continue for a time, largely for those too old to adapt.

This pastoral reason no longer exists, and some who reject the Council have found in the old Mass a rallying point. Francis has made the difficult decision to reverse Benedict's decree that both rites have equal standing. Francis has delegated the hard yards to the bishops who must deal with the proliferation of pre-Vatican masses in their dioceses. Now is the moment to invite people back to ongoing education in faith, Scripture, history and liturgy so that we can embody a more authentic meaning of Eucharist in liturgy and life.

Towards a Wiser Balance

Farmers recently paraded tractors through cities, protesting government regulations that aim to restore water quality and protect our land and climate. Without farmers we would have no food, but our country produces enough food to feed 40 million people, and most of it is exported.

To enable this, we have allowed fertilizer use and animal excretions to ruin our waterways and threaten our health, while methane-producing cattle and carbon dioxide-emitting dairy goods processing endanger our climate. Government policy to increase agricultural output has also caused the encroachment of farming into ecologically sensitive areas, and water-hungry crops to be grown in areas which are increasingly subject to drought.

Some of this devastation is driven by the increasing loss of agricultural land for housing. Aotearoa is in urgent need of a comprehensive plan for the sustainable and wise use of our resources. This should include mapping of ecologically sensitive areas as well as land capability for cropping, grazing, forestry and wildlife; legislation to protect prime agricultural land; and fair, consultative land use decision-making which prioritises the health of our land, air, water and people.

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

Tui Motu magazine provides Catholic as well as ecumenical and inter-faith perspectives and discussion on current issues in church and society. It focuses particularly on issues affecting Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific. Its intent is to promote the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, engaging faith and the world through informed, thoughtful comment and discussion for a general readership. The magazine publishes 11 issues per year in print and regular digital postings on social media.

The magazine invites contributions from writers of Catholic and other Christian traditions or faith backgrounds, who can offer our readers insights which resonate with the Gospel as it affects us today. We value diversity and seek contributions which are representative of our church and our society: Māori, Pākehā Pasifika, other cultures, a range of ages and genders, lay and ordained. We offer feature articles, interviews, reviews, poetry, comment and opinion on theology, spirituality and history, as well as on social justice and ecology.

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We welcome letters of comment, discussion, response, affirmation or argument of up to 200 words.

The editor reserves the right to abridge longer letters while keeping the meaning.

UNDERSTANDING WHITE PRIVILEGE

Before studying this topic at school, I never gave much thought to my unearned privilege because I never noticed it. I don't attract the suspicion of security guards when I walk into a store. I have a white-sounding name which might help me get a job one day. I have never experienced racial abuse. I can see plenty of white faces when I watch a movie, read the news or browse social media. I realised that these very normal benefits for me are not common to everyone in our society. But perhaps the most powerful privilege I have is to be able to be silent in the face of racial inequality. While I could live in blissful ignorance of the social issues going on around me, to uphold the human dignity of my neighbours I need to stand in solidarity with them.

George Cunningham, Pompallier Catholic College, Whangarei

WELCOME TO THE CHURCH

Ann Hassan's article (*TM* August 2021) brought a tear to my eye. I too am a convert (and yes I sometimes feel a bit strange using that term). There were so many things to resonate with — a Presbyterian upbringing; an Anglican school and then Catholicism. My "crossing the Tiber" came as a young woman. I was 19 when I started instruction and 21 when I was received. It was the best thing I ever did in my life and though I was by no means a "good Catholic" during much of that time, I have never regretted the decision.

Most important has been the sense of belonging; of being among people with the same world view; the comfort that Catholics have in talking of God and of prayer; the way my Catholic faith inhabits my whole world rather than just the Sunday service stuff; the diversity of expression of faith with the different spiritualities; the depth of theological writing and thought, alongside the simple devotional life; the universality of the Church. And of course, for me the crowning glory has been the arrival of Papa Francesco on the scene, who combines all of the above!

I loved your comment about your holy moment at Mass! It has inspired me to do a little piece for the parish about being welcoming. Actually our parish is pretty good, but we may wonder why young ones don't think Church is much fun if you come and go without anyone showing they appreciate them being there!

Welcome, welcome, welcome!

Bridget Taumoepeau

Ann Hassan, I couldn't believe that the first article I read (*TM* August 2021) was your journey! I turned 80 on 1 January, my husband is a little older. We joined Our Lady of Kapiti at the Easter vigil THIS year! I have written about "moving over" as from my perspective I haven't "converted" as I've always followed a Christian path. Blessings as you journey, Ann.

Moving Over

Peter and I are moving over.
We are not "converting" as our
spiritual path is neither Muslim,
nor Buddhist nor Hindu.
We are simply moving over in the
Christian stream.
Many want more action in their
worship,
they too move over.
But we are moving into a calmer,
gentler stream.
We are moving over in the Eucharistic
tradition.

Many of my friends think that our
move is a huge leap.
I was part of this thinking too, for a
long time.
But now I do not see a wide, fast
flowing river
because Peter took me to an island in
the middle.
Twenty years in the Eucharistic
tradition of the Anglican Church
has prepared me well.
It's just a step across the stream to
our new community.
...
Peter and I are moving over.
The time is well overdue.
600 years is long enough to be cross
with the Pope and the Vatican.

Peter and I are moving over.
The time is right for us.
Peter's mother was baptised into the
Catholic Church,
but marrying his father who came
from dour Presbyterian stock,
saw them both worshipping in the
Anglican tradition.
In some ways Peter is moving back,
while we both move on.

Marilyn Wilkinson (abridged)

AUGUST — A GOOD ISSUE

TM August 2021 contained some real gems. Jack Derwin's article on space was informative and appreciated. It caused me to "pause and reflect" and to open my eyes to the possible consequences of turning space into "a playground". Patrick Snedden's contribution resonated also and felt so true. It was full of examples that struck a chord with me, especially because they were written with simplicity and honesty: "It means accepting a simple discipline that requires active respect for those who don't look or sound like us." And : "This is where a little courage makes a world of difference." Bridget Taumoepeau gave us pearls of wisdom about mental health and the benefits to ourselves and others of being compassionate. Mary Betz provided soul food: "What a different world it would be if the Church taught us how to live with mystery, uncertainty, ambiguity and the unknown — and to hold the tensions of this world of good and evil." Very apt for our world at this time of uncertainty. Keep up the good work *Tui Motu*! We need you!

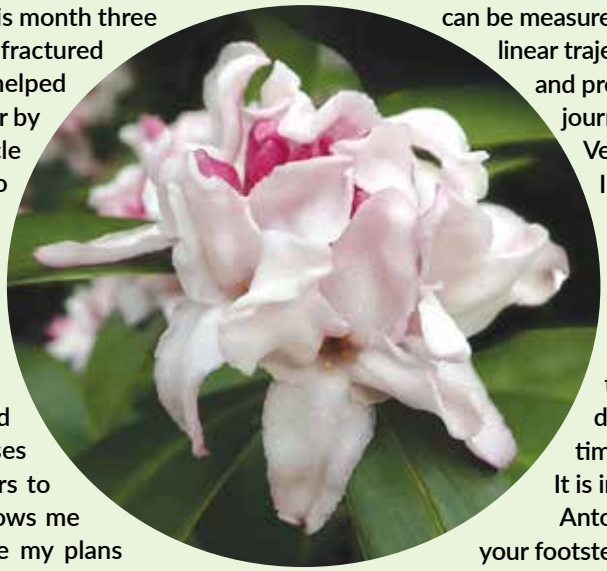
Helen McEwen

Looking OUT and IN

This month I have been orbiting around four words that begin with the same letter: patience, privilege, practice and perfume.

Patience (or is that Patients)

In some odd quirk of bad luck, this month three people in our household have fractured something. My accident was not helped by the poor intersection design or by pedestrians loitering in the cycle lane, or by my cycling in haste to get to a meeting on time. The outcome was a fractured right wrist — and surprise to be on the hard asphalt, an insistent cold-blade of pain and feeling foolish. I am trying to be patient with my slow typing, left-handed writing and six weeks using buses not bikes. Asking family members to cut onions or a slice of bread slows me down and back on the shelf are my plans to learn to ski this winter. Having a disability for two months is inefficient but still only a temporary slowing down. So the invitation again is finding what is good about this new state, being not doing, grace and rest in the unplanned pause.



Privilege

With the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) presenting a potentially grim future, I am reminded that there are many good reasons for our household to continue to live without a car. We are fortunate to enjoy exercise, live in a mostly flat town with an excellent and growing network of cycle lanes, and to have bicycle lights, raincoats and bike trailers so we can carry gear and grandmothers around town. Being car-free by choice can be inconvenient, but many of my friends can't afford to run a car with increasing petrol prices or the cost of repairs, while another friend has a disability meaning he can't drive.

Whenever I start feeling virtuous about being car-free I realise this is facilitated by the privilege I have in friends and neighbours who generously share the use of their vehicles. They trust we'll return their car in good working order and Ian even added our teens to their insurance policy so they could practise driving. Essentially, they prop up our car-free stance. So it's one less car on the road, but ony with the help of our privileged circles.

Practice

It is easy for me to believe that progress is only real if it can be measured by forward movement on a linear trajectory. This is a very Western and probably also capitalist idea. Faith journeys are more circular than linear. Very frequently something I thought I had mastered (like speaking well of others or truth-telling) turns out to need more practise. The prayer labyrinth is a great metaphor for faith journeys — circling around and around God on pathways that are very similar but slightly different from the time before, at times further, at times closer to God. It is important, though, to keep walking. Antonio Machado said: "Wanderer, your footsteps are the road, and nothing more; wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking. By walking one makes the road, and upon glancing behind one sees the path that never will be trod again."

Perfume

Outside our house is a daphne bush. The dark green leaves are decorated with clusters of pink and white flowers. While taking Tussock the dog for a walk, it's only after I've brushed past the demure bush that I note the understated sweet gracing of the morning darkness. Later, eating a hummus sandwich in wintry sun on the deck, the cloud of fragrance wafts across and calls me to attention again. Surprised, I find there can be perfumed holiness even at lunchtime.

Kaaren Mathias based in Christchurch writes, parents, promotes health, prays and is learning ukulele.

For blessings of life, health and country — we give thanks
For government decisions to protect us all — we give thanks
For our grappling with sudden restrictions — we give thanks
For our endurance through fear, tedium and worry — we give thanks
For all who feed, house and support us — we give thanks
For the team of 5,000,000 — we give thanks
For our solidarity in the face of Delta — we give thanks

From the *Tui Motu* team