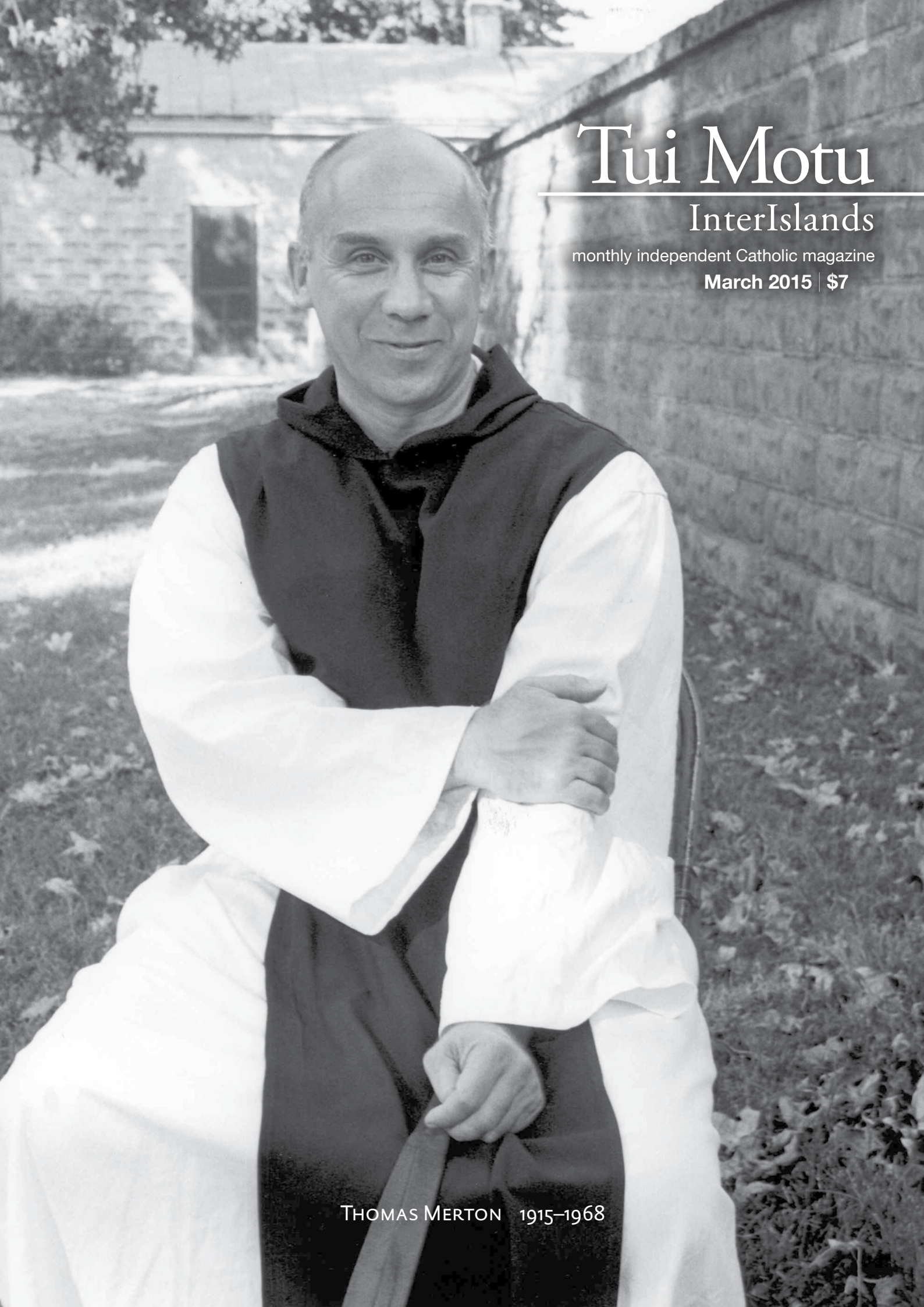


Tui Motu

InterIslands

monthly independent Catholic magazine

March 2015 | $7

Thomas Merton 1915–1968

choosing peace in lent

Admittedly I'm new in town and don't know everyone, yet no one I've met supports the Government's idea of sending our soldiers to the conflict in Iraq. In spite of the evidence of the Islamic State's atrocities, responding to violence with violence is against our New Zealand values. With our history of the loss of fathers, grandfathers, uncles, sons and husbands killed, wounded or slogging through the two world and Vietnam wars, we have learnt some bottom lines. Never again.

While we know it isn't fair to ignore the carnage groups like ISIS cause, we are certain that joining them in it is plain wrong. We have stronger ties to the fathers, mothers and children of Iraq than to the "club" egging us on to fight. We may not all share religious convictions but we do share values of peace and communion with all peoples in our world.

We have home-grown alternatives to violence — at home and internationally — offered by leaders such as Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi, Archibald Baxter and David Lange, who got us thrown out of the "club" by refusing to host nuclear-armed ships here. Then we have Helen Clark's "no" to our joining the Iraq war in the early 2000s and Sue Bradford's halt to hitting children. None claim perfect solutions but all put their foot down on violence. Each says there are other, better responses. And while these may be uncharted, messy and time-consuming — they are more life-sustaining.

Our March issue offers food for thought and discussion on these and other concerns. In the year of the centenary of his birth we claim the writer and contemplative monk, Thomas Merton, as a kiwi through his father. We offer three perspectives on his life. We see how he developed a commitment to dialogue and nonviolence in the 1960s.

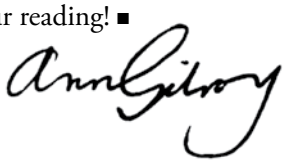
We have two reflections on nonviolent responses in a violent world. Kevin Clements argues for principled nonviolence as the way of gaining lasting peace after a struggle. Joan Healy shares her experience of people in Cambodia returning from the refugee camps to take up life again. She gives us an insight into the lingering effects of trauma on the people and their commitment to work for peace.

We find *metanoia* at the heart of our Lenten journey shining through Merton's spirituality, the articles on nonviolence and coming into bud in the reflection of our young writer, Susana Suisuiki. She captures the confusion around trying to find her her way. Even though her future is not all worked out, she senses that her first steps are in the right direction.

Cythnia Greensill offers a way of understanding the semi-abstract paintings of the stations of the cross by New Zealand artist, Joanna Paul. Just as Elaine Wainwright reminds us to attend to the time, place and characters of the gospel stories, so does Cynthia open our eyes to what Joanna wanted to portray in the colours, lines and shapes of Jesus' journey to crucifixion.

As you'll see, the *Tui Motu* team has the last word this issue.

Enjoy your reading! ■



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Cover illustration: Thomas Merton
[Cover photo and all photos on pp 6–7, 8–9 and 9–10 used with permission of the Merton Legacy Trust and the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University.]

the issue of housing in new zealand

Rev Susan Thompson

One of my favourite quotes is from the New Zealand historian Allan Davidson who once described the church as a human and diverse institution which "has lived between its ideals and human realities". That idea of living between our ideals and aspirations and the reality of being human is one that for me speaks to the heart of many of the church's struggles, both past and present.

It's why as churches we have histories which aren't always easy to own, being made up in almost equal measure of stories of faithfulness to the gospel and of betrayal. And it's why we often end up conflicted when we consider the churches' contribution to the social and political issues facing our communities today.

Last year Karen Morrison-Hume and I were involved in a group which fought a proposal from the Hamilton City Council to sell its 344 pensioner housing units. We formed a diverse alliance of church leaders and social service agencies, pensioner tenants and community groups, including the rather conservative president of a local Grey Power. He was actually a formidable campaigner and the experience of working alongside him was a good lesson in finding allies in unexpected places.

Council gave us a tight time-line but we held meetings, made submissions, spoke in the media and even held a protest rally — unfortunately to no avail. In November Council made the decision to sell the units to so-called "social housing providers", although it did impose some constraints on the sale in response to the concerns that had been raised. However, it wasn't able to put more than a ten-year limit on the period for which the units had to remain as social housing. After that all bets were off; the buyers could do what they liked with the houses.

Early on in this process we realised we probably weren't going to change the Council's mind. It was clear from the time the proposal was first raised that a majority of Council members supported it. As the debate progressed it also became clear that the church and social service sector was split with some groups supporting the sale and putting their hands up to buy the units. That made it impossible for us to speak with one clear voice.

The idea that pensioner housing could be sold to social housing providers who would be better equipped to offer tenants "wrap-around social services" was a cunning one. It split the sector, allowed the Council to sound contrite about its poor record as landlords and made the proposal more acceptable to the wider community. It seemed plausible, even compassionate, and it was hard to get people worried about it.

The comments made recently by John Key indicate that the Government will be taking a similar line when it seeks to sell state houses to community-based providers. If we have concerns about such a proposal we need to counter the cunning of our leaders with our own wisdom, our own vision, which will be compelling enough to generate some public concern. And we'll have a far greater chance of success if we can speak with a unified voice.

In Hamilton, even though the numbers were against us, we thought it was important to make a stand against the Council's proposal. Our pensioners were really stressed and we wanted them to know that someone cared. We also believed that someone needed to argue for the sake of the common good. In our view Council was trying to abdicate its social responsibility to have a care for the

continued on page 4 . . .

Tui Motu InterIslands

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

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

address: Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd,
52 Union Street, Dunedin North, 9054
P O Box 6404, Dunedin North, 9059

phone: (03) 477 1449

fax: (03) 477 8149

email: editor@tuimotu.org

email for subscriptions: admin@tuimotu.org

website: www.tuimotu.org

TuiMotuInterIslands

editor: Ann L Gilroy RSJ

assistant editor: Elizabeth Mackie OP

illustrator: Donald Moorhead

directors: Susan Brebner, Rita Cahill RSJ, Philip Casey (chair), Neil Darragh, Paul Ferris, Elizabeth Mackie OP and David Mullin

honorary directors: Pauline O'Regan RSM, Frank Hoffmann

typesetting and layout: Greg Hings

printers: Southern Colour Print, 1 Turakina Road, Dunedin South, 9012

our church has changed radically

I would like to share some thoughts with you on your challenging and informative journal.

I have been a subscriber since its beginning. And what controversy there was about that — especially with the "putting to bed" of the old *Tablet.* I grew up and was nurtured in the almost ghetto church. Women had no part to play, clericalism was rife, and there was "no salvation outside the church". You continue to challenge this because some facets still remain. Your journal deserves, and probably needs, a wider circulation. May you continue your meaningful journey.

Denis Power, *West Melton*

attitude changes for the better

Two recent films, *The Imitation Game* and *Selma,* are powerful reminders of just how far the dignity of the human person has advanced in our lifetime. The former tells us that homosexuals were classed as criminals; and the latter that coloured people were second-class citizens, denied civil and human rights, notably in the USA.

Add to these two issues the following — single parent mothers, notably in Ireland, instead of being imprisoned in convent laundries, are now proudly showing off their babies; conscientious objectors are treated with respect; capital punishment has gone by the board; torture is abhorred; the rise of trade unions and demands for a just wage — and you have a rare potpourri of a great sea-change in public values and attitudes.

I'm not promoting same sex marriage and single parenthood. Rather, let us give thanks to God that we have been privileged to witness this turnaround of the public perception of humankind, created and fashioned in the image and likeness of God.

Fr Max Palmer, Southern Star Abbey, *Kopua*

tui motu delivers

February — an astounding collection from our NZ contributors, plus the usual gem of wisdom from Daniel O'Leary. I couldn't put it down. When one reaches past 96, combined with having to live in a wheelchair, one's options for pleasure get fewer.

I would like to tell you of how my resistance to *Tui Motu* was overcome by an astute acquaintance. One day, within earshot she started reading an article by Mike Riddell from *Tui Motu*. He was likening the fallacy of transplanting a Christian theology into an alien culture to an equally mistaken attempt of transplanting European forest trees into our New Zealand environment. This did it. I put my name down immediately and discovered subsequently that *Tui Motu* was an open forum for discussion of not only ecological but social and religious issues as well. I have never missed a number since.

Frank Hoffmann, *Papakura* (abridged)

☞ letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not changing the meaning.
We do not publish anonymous letters except in exceptional circumstances. Response articles (up to a page) are welcome — but please, by negotiation.

the issue of housing in new zealand

. . . continued from page 3

vulnerable. Our protest rally took the form of a funeral where we mourned the loss of a sense of community and care for our neighbour.

For some of us, it was essential that the churches be a part of this campaign. Too often in the past our voice has been silent when it needed to be heard speaking out for justice or asking the hard questions.

We've been that institution living between its ideals and the reality of being human and, in the words of Allan Davidson again, sought to take on the role of "chaplain to the nation" rather than that of the "prophet at the gate".

As difficult as it is to be the prophet at the gate — the one who sits outside the centres of power, asking the hard questions and usually being criticised for doing so — we believed this was more truly the church's vocation than acting as a cheerleader for the Hamilton City Council. We did get accused of being scaremongerers by our opponents, but throughout the debate I always felt we were where we were meant to be: alongside those whom Jesus named "the little ones", those who were most vulnerable and who needed us. ■

Rev. Dr Susan Thompson is the Methodist Superintendent of the Waikato-Waiariki Synod.

identity of catholic schools

Elizabeth Horgan

When the new editor telephoned asking me to write "something on education" it presented me with a dilemma. As a leader I appreciate a "yes" response but I was also daunted by writing something worthy of *Tui Motu.* After having said "yes" I hoped the Spirit would move — quickly!

As Catholic educators we desire to inspire young people to live with compassion, justice and a deep spirituality. Our challenge is to discern the best way of doing that now. What sort of school identity might inspire and convince young people immersed in cultures of materialism, consumerism and individualism that there are alternatives?

Pope Francis said Catholic education was "one of the most important challenges for the church in the 21st century". And the Congregation for Catholic Education stated recently that the first challenge and "urgent task" for Catholic schools in the 21st century was a redefinition of identity.

I began pondering. Identity is often shaped by story and the story embedded in Catholic schools is the Jesus story. Our mission then is to communicate it with a freshness, vitality and conviction that makes sense and captures the imaginations of our youngsters of 2015.

Our challenge lies in inspiring excellent learning alongside thoughtfulness in our way of living. How to live is revealed in the Jesus story that lies at the heart of Catholic identity. God's dream for humanity as revealed in the Jesus story will therefore underpin and inform everything that occurs in a Catholic School. It will shape our goals, policies, programmes, day-to-day operations and behaviours. In short the culture of a Catholic School will be a Jesus culture.

"Telling" the Jesus story will be demanding enough but "living" the story will be more demanding. I hear

Pope Paul VI's prophetic words echoing — people listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it's because teachers are witnesses!

We can't witness to what we don't know ourselves. As educators then we'll question and reflect on what Jesus was on about. We'll identify and revise where Jesus's story has become so smothered by the accoutrements of history and culture that we have lost sight of the real Jesus. We'll let the questions — Who was Jesus? What did he live and die for? — keep stirring us.

I picked up and reread a favourite book, Marcus Borg's, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*. Two concepts immediately struck me.

Borg asserts that Spirit and compassion are key to Jesus and his understanding of Mission. They are the "two focal points around which an image of Jesus may be constellated".

Borg explains that in Hebrew the word, "compassion", portrays a powerful, gutsy concept that was active rather than passive. To act with compassion required courage and integrity — and at times, confrontation. It has both personal and socio-political connotations.

Compassion, along with justice and inclusiveness, give us measures for the questions we struggle with as teachers. Who will we enrol in our schools? How will we form our leaders? How will we assess children? What qualities will we encourage and reward? Who will be our heroes and heroines — and why? What place will reconciliation and forgiveness have in our schools? How will we respond to the plurality and diversity of our world?

Borg describes the Spirit dimension of Jesus' life as his "experiential relationship with and of God". We need this Spirit at the heart of schools. As well as attending to our personal spiritual development we will foster children's discovery and experience of the spiritual in all dimensions. We'll find opportunites for them to appreciate beauty and God's creativity. We'll think about how prayer, music, literature, art, dance and drama will enhance our school lives. We'll endeavour to make sacramental and liturgical rituals meaningful. We'll mine our Catholic spiritual tradition for riches for this new time of 2015.

Compassion and Spirit then will be at the heart of our Catholic school identity serving both as our touchstone and yardstick for responding to challenges facing us in this new school year of the 21st century. ■

Elizabeth Horgan is the long-serving Principal of St Joseph's School, Otahuhu, Auckland.

from grieving child to spiritual master

Thomas Merton lost his mother early and lived an itinerant life with his father who also died young. The writer explores how these losses impacted on Merton's spiritual quest.

Ken Bragan

Thomas Merton had an unusual childhood. His parents were artists. Owen Merton, his father, showed early talent as a painter and as a young man made sufficient money selling his paintings to get him from Christchurch, New Zealand, to an art school in London. After a time he moved to Paris where he met the woman he married.

Ruth Jenkins came from a wealthy American family. She had had an expensive education and had shown talent in the arts. Her decision to study painting in Paris came as a shock to her family, as did her decision to marry a penniless painter.

Their first child, Tom, was born in 1915. The war made it too difficult for them in France and they moved to Ruth's parents on Long Island. Although the Jenkins welcomed them, Owen was too proud to accept their financial help and life soon became a struggle.

Ruth was a devoted mother. She read books on child-care and gave full attention to her baby. Tom had four years of full maternal attention before his brother, John Paul, was born in 1918. His mother transferred her focus to the new baby and Tom had his first taste of rejection that came to play a big part in his life.

loss of his mother

Not long after John Paul's birth Ruth became ill with stomach cancer, was hospitalised and died in 1921. Tom never saw her after she left home. She wrote to him saying that he would not see her again. There could have been no greater loss for him. It remained a difficult matter for Tom for most of his life.

Owen and Ruth Merton

When Tom finally entered Gethsemani monastery he found contemplation a difficult, painful exercise because he had to deal with the sense of emptiness left by his mother's death. He described the experience as an "abysmal testing that brings disintegration of spirit". In the same account he also wrote of a peace and happiness that he did not know before but now finds subsisting in the face of nameless interior terror.

Was it that deep in his psyche and behind the interior terror of his traumatic loss, lay the peace and happiness of his first four years? Does this allow us to understand how he was able to persevere in the way he did? Could his mother have been a guardian angel as well as a source of abysmal testing?

insecurity of life on the move

Tom's father, Owen, was considered a fine and spiritual man by his friends. No doubt he loved Tom but he seemed to have no idea of a little boy's needs particularly after losing his mother.

Not long after Ruth's death Owen took Tom with him to paint first in Bermuda and then in Algeria. In Bermuda he left Tom free to explore the island, including the unsavoury parts. Merton later wrote: " . . . that beautiful island fed me more poisons than I have a mind to stop and count."

Owen became seriously ill in Algeria. When Tom heard of his father's illness he showed little reaction, indicating the extent traumatic

loss had blunted his emotions. Owen recovered but when he got home he was gaunt and bearded and refused to shave even to reassure his son. Tom was pleased when Owen decided to take him to France, leaving John Paul with the grandparents.

The effects on Tom of the loss and the moving about must have been great. During his childhood he had too much freedom and too much moving about. It is understandable that he felt trapped by what was happening and by the feelings of loss and rejection that were so much part of his inner world.

Owen was torn between his life as a painter and being a responsible father. The three years Owen and Tom spent together in France were important to them both. There Owen built a house in Saint-Antonin and for the first time Tom briefly experienced living in a family home.

But one day out of the blue Owen took him to England leaving behind their home and many of Owen's paintings. It seemed that Owen acted from impetuous despair. His losses had also been great.

loss of his father

Owen connected with relatives in England and Tom went to boarding school. Within months he received news of his father's serious illness — a cerebral tumour. Merton later described sitting at his father's bedside: "I sat there in the dark, unhappy room, unable to think, unable to move, apparently without any friends, without any inner peace or confidence or light of understanding of my own . . . without God . . . without grace, without anything."

At Owen's bedside Tom experienced that despite his father's confused mind he was in communion with God, who gave him "light to understand and make sense of his suffering ... and to perfect his soul". I suggest that although Owen contributed to Tom's sense of alienation and angst he also gave him a sense of the presence of God. (Tom had had no religious formation as a child.)

search for the spiritual

As an eighteen-year-old in Rome, Tom had a similar profound experience. While visiting churches he began to discover "something of whom this person was that is called Christ". Then one night he had a vivid experience of his father's presence ... "as though he had communicated to me without words an inner light from God." This epiphany raised his spirits and also a strong feeling of self-disgust at the way he was living.

But he did not change his behaviour. At Cambridge University he indulged in a hedonistic life-style that got him into trouble. Eventually it was decided he should leave the university and England for the USA. He did it in a state of abjection. He had lost family, friends and his self-respect. He was in a low state. How he could go on from there to become both a spiritual master and exemplary person is amazing, beyond any psychological explanation. However, he carried in him the core love he had experienced with his mother and the presence of God he had from his father.

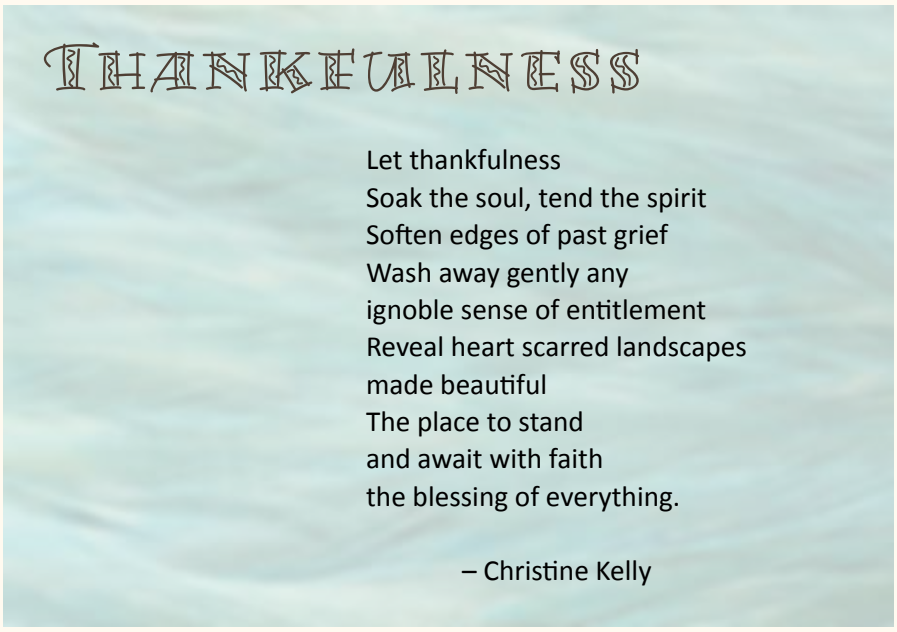
Tom enrolled at Columbia University and there made the first steps in his spiritual journey by making friends with some talented and "spiritual" fellow students. This helped to consolidate the father-God experience with Christ at the centre he'd had in Rome. A visit to Cuba helped: "Everywhere I turned there was someone to feed me with the infinite strength of Christ." "It was as if I had suddenly been illuminated by the manifestation of God's presence."

He resolved to be baptised and work towards becoming a priest. Eventually he went to a Gethsemani retreat where he learned of the Mother of God's place in Cistercian spirituality. An essential part of his spiritual journey was establishing a spiritual feminine presence.

While he was teaching at a Catholic college a spiritual experience resolved his doubts about priesthood. He prayed at a statue of St Therese in the grounds. "Suddenly ... I became aware of the wood, of the trees, and the dark hills, and then clearer than these obvious realities, in my imagination, I started to hear the great bell of Gethsemani ringing in the night."

With father-God to direct him and the Mother of God to "hold" him Tom journeyed for 27 years in the Cistercian contemplative life. Along with the world-wide influence of his writing his exuberance for life made him remarkable. ■

Ken Bragan is a retired psychiatrist.



man of ever-widening vision

Thomas Merton lived most of his adult life in a trappist monastery in rural Kentucky yet he engaged with the social-justice issues of his day, confident that God is with all.

Charles Shaw

In *The Seven Storey Mountain* Thomas Merton gives an account of his life from the time of his birth in France, up to when in 1947 he made his solemn vows as a monk at the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani, Kentucky. The story is a compelling one: a passionate and gifted but also restless and direction-less young man discovers purpose and peace by embracing the Catholic faith and committing himself for life to one of the toughest religious congregations in the Church, the Cistercians of the Strict Observance, commonly known as Trappists.

As with St. Augustine's *Confessions*, the subject of Merton's narrative is *metanoia* — conversion or change of heart in response to divine initiative. In his account of his baptism Merton writes of God "finding" him, and by way of absorption into the life of Christ, drawing him ever deeper, as if by some irresistible force, into the immensity of God's love:

"For now I had entered into the everlasting movement of that gravitation which is the very life and spirit of God: God's own gravitation towards the depths of His own infinite nature, His goodness without end. And God that centre Who is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere, finding me, through incorporation with Christ, incorporated into this immense and tremendous gravitational movement which is love, which is the Holy Spirit, loved me. And He called out to me from His own immense depths."

Merton understood that his "incorporation with Christ" was not a single event but an on-going process over the course of a lifetime. He writes:

"We are not 'converted' only once in our life but many times, and this endless series of large and small 'conversions,' inner revolutions, leads finally to our transformation in Christ."

> " . . . the kind of life that I represent is a life that is openness to gift; gift from God and gift from others."
>
> – *Thomas Merton*

Merton recognised that all our salvation "begins on the level of common and natural and ordinary things ... Books and ideas and poems and stories, pictures and music, buildings, cities, places, philosophies were to be the materials on which grace would work."

The seven volumes of Merton's personal journals provide a window into the way grace worked on "the materials" of Merton's life to bring about the endless "inner revolutions" that characterised his ongoing conversion.

a man of truth and humour

The journals reveal a multi-dimensional personality, an honest man who does not try to hide his faults behind his virtues as he records his responses to an ever-widening range of complex issues — spiritual, emotional, intellectual, monastic, contemplative, artistic, social, environmental, inter-religious, political and technological. As Christine M. Bochen observes: "Not everything one finds in the journals is lofty and inspiring — Merton can be petty and even bitter at times — but the journals, taken as a whole, tell a bigger story and one that is worth telling: God encountered and embraced; faith found, lived, and kept."

Conversion had become a way of life for Merton.

While his constant and consistent drive was his quest for inner unity and peace — his search for God — it was only as he developed and matured as a man and as a monk, that Merton came to see that a truly contemplative life is also an inclusive life, one that reaches out in love to others to "reset" the "body of broken bones" which is our humanity.

learning the life

In the first two volumes of journals, *Run to the Mountain* and *Entering the Silence*, we see Merton opening himself to inner transformation through immersion in the teachings, practices and traditions of the Church and, ultimately, vowed commitment to monastic life.

During this period, Merton believed that his responsibility towards men and women in the world was purely spiritual. As David Givey bluntly puts it, Merton's "first years in the monastery were spent counselling Christians to leave the

world to its own self-destruction and seek personal happiness in the security of a contemplative order." Merton would later admit that it was probably his own fault that he had "become a sort of stereotype of the world-denying contemplative — the man who spurned New York, spat on Chicago, and tromped on Louisville, heading for the woods with Thoreau in one pocket, John of the Cross in another, and holding the Bible open at the Apocalypse."

As the 1950s progressed Merton grew increasingly dissatisfied with aspects of life at Gethsemani that prevented him from satisfying his longing for greater solitude. At the same time, he came to see that a genuine commitment to his monastic vocation demanded an engagement with the issues facing contemporary society and the Church.

In his May 1958 journal Merton writes: "Thinking of the new and necessary struggle in my interior life, I am finally coming out of the chrysalis. The years behind me seem strangely inert and negative, but I suppose that passivity was necessary.

"Now the pain and struggle of fighting my way out into something new and much bigger. I must see and embrace God in the whole world. (It is all very well to say I have been seeing God in Himself. But I have not. I have been seeing Him only in a very small monastic world. And this is much too small.)"

By acknowledging that he was "in the same world as everybody else", Merton was signalling his willingness to grapple with the most complex and pressing issues facing Americans in the 1960s: racism and war. Underpinning and shaping Merton's response to both these concerns was his belief that commitment to social action and nonviolence would bear fruit only if it flowed from solitude, contemplation and inner peace.

Merton praised the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King as "the greatest example of Christian faith in action in the social history of the United States." Yet, he feared that it was already too late for the majority of white Christians to act decisively for the non-violent elimination of racism:

"The choice is between 'safety', based on negation of the new and the reaffirmation of the familiar, or the creative risk of love and grace and new and untried solutions, which justice nevertheless demands."

In a series of articles written against the backdrop of the Cold War, nuclear weapons proliferation, and war in Vietnam, Merton seeks to undermine the argument that war is a valid response to contemporary social and political conflicts. In addition to challenging the popular perception that the possession and use of nuclear weapons is both sensible and morally justifiable, Merton attempts to persuade his fellow Americans that conventional warfare is no longer acceptable because in the modern age it regularly violates the norms of justice and always includes the risk of escalation and mass-destruction.

By adopting these positions Merton aligns himself with the profoundly hopeful vision of Pope John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* (1963). The encyclical's uncompromising affirmation of the dignity of the human person and the ultimate possibility of peace and unity encouraged Merton to maintain his own courageous stance against war, especially at a time when he had been banned by his Superiors within the Order from writing on the subject of peace. "The thought that a monk might be deeply enough concerned with the issue of nuclear war to voice a protest against the arms race, is supposed to bring the monastic life into *disrepute*."

Merton's fundamental response to life was that of trust. As Christopher Pramuk observes: "Merton never despaired that the lightning flash of God could be found on every genuinely human terrain, above all in the poverty of ordinary life." For people of goodwill, having to endure in our own day what Pope Francis has recently termed a "never-ending spread of conflicts" that is "like a true world war fought piecemeal," this is no small gift.

Near the end of his life Merton wrote that the office of the monk is "to go beyond the dichotomy of life and death and to be, therefore, a witness to life". A century after his birth, Thomas Merton continues to witness to the presence of God, alive not only in the depths of his own heart, but alive in the world and in its people. ■

Charles Shaw is the Secondary Schools Religious Educator in the Christchurch Diocese.

union and communion

As Merton's experience of union and communion deepened he was drawn to dialogue with people of other Christian traditions and faiths.

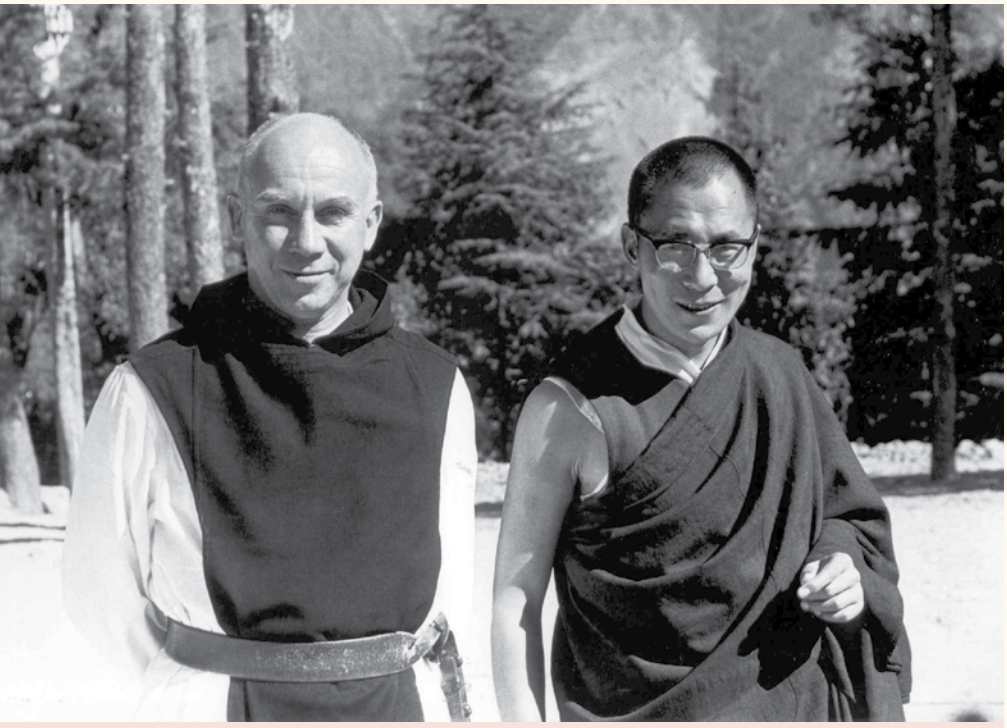
Colleen O'Sullivan RSJ

January 31st, 2015 marked the centenary of Thomas Merton's birth in St Antonin de Prades in the south of France. His birthplace was fifteen kilometres from the site of the Battle of the Marne. He was born into a time and place that was openly at war — a time that was as disjointed and violent as our own.

In his autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Merton described himself as follows: "... I came into the world. Free by nature, in the image of God, I was nevertheless the prisoner of my own violence and my own selfishness, in the image of the world into which I was born."

The title of his autobiography is taken from Dante and refers to the seven mountains of purgatory. It is a title chosen from the Catholic belief that a person must suffer for their sinfulness after death but it also, for Merton, contains the hope that each one is invited to discover the way beyond the mountain. There is a path through to both union and communion, even if that way is as difficult as scaling the heights.

In a later work, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Merton notes: "The *Theologia Germanica* speaks of the "heaven and hell" that we carry about within us. It is good to experience either one or the other of these, for then one is in God's hands . . . it is precisely anguish and inner crisis that compel us to seek truth, because it is these things that make clear to us that we are sunk in the hell of our own untruth."



Thomas Merton with the Dalai Lama

early experience

Merton's search for union began unconsciously and surfaced for the first time perhaps when he was sixteen and staying in a small room in Rome. He became aware of his father's presence in the room and was overwhelmed with grief and anguish at the way he was living. It was a moment of truth that led him gradually to Catholicism, then to the Cistercian Abbey of Gethsemani, to the vocation of monk/writer and to an awareness that the call of God to each person is a call to contemplation.

Contemplation has been described in many ways but it is ultimately beyond words. It is the place of intimacy with the God who brought all into being. This God is beyond our understanding. God cannot be imaged.

being contemplative

In his morality play, *The Tower of Babel*, Merton makes the striking comment: "They suppose that if they build a high tower very quickly, they will be nearly as strong as God, whom they imagine to be only a little stronger than themselves." This is perhaps a fundamental error that human beings still make in understanding God. It is even more prevalent today as the ability to control life seems to grow exponentially.

However Christ is our bridge for Christians, the one who images God. For Merton this was true but his contemplative pathway was always the way of the unknown; the dark path of John of the Cross. Contemplation therefore for Merton was via the way of paradox. It was

the authentic experience of love and presence in the darkness.

Merton's search for inner unity was always linked to truth. He spoke often of the need to eradicate the false self, the mask, all that was untrue in the self, and to encounter and make real the true self. This is the self recognised by God and known to us through our search: "Life is, or should be, nothing but a struggle to seek truth: yet what we seek is really the truth that we already possess. Truth is mine in the reality of life as it is given to me to live."

> Contemplation . . . the authentic experience of love and presence in the darkness.

This acceptance of life is not a passive acceptance; after all the Kingdom of Heaven as experienced here is won by the violent! But the only violence that will win it is the violence of love that breaks through the blocs humans construct and the resistances humans use to hide from their God. This is the way to union within and without the boundaries of the self and beyond. Poets and mystics have known this intuitively. Merton quotes W. H. Auden speaking of the same search:

"He is the Truth
Seek Him in the Kingdom of Anxiety.
You will come to a great city
That has expected your return for years."

Spiritual experience is to be reflected on so that its truth can be tested and so that it will deepen continually and find its expression in life. Growth in love reveals the truth of any spiritual experience.

beginning new conversations

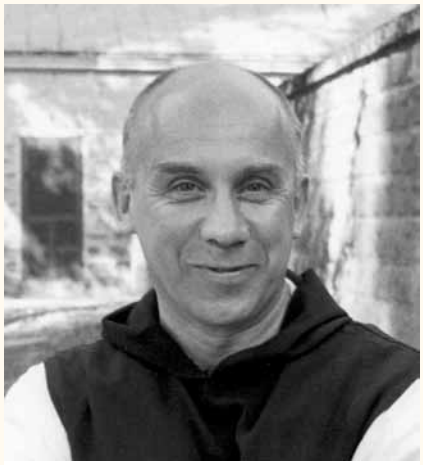
Merton's search for union with the other began with dialogue with other religious groups and individuals, firstly in the monastery at Gethsemani, then in the small house that became his hermitage. It was here that men, (sadly only men!), came to begin conversation leading to a deeper understanding of each person's religious experience.

The conversation did not begin in a vacuum. It was the end result of a movement within Merton, of a decision he made and reiterated for himself many times. When first studying the schism between the Orthodox East and the Catholic West he resolved: "If I can unite in my own spiritual life the thought of East and West, of the Greek and Latin fathers, I will create in myself a reunion of the divided church and from that secret and unspoken unity within myself can come the exterior and visible unity of the church. For if we want to bring together the East and West we cannot do it by imposing one upon the other. We must contain both in ourselves and transcend both in Christ."

Merton began with this resolve but gradually came to be aware that the path to union and communion began with dissolution of all dichotomies within the self. One must enter into the experience of the other — beginning with conversation. If the dialogue is to remain open, however, questions such as the following must be asked: How does a Protestant Christian, for example, experience Christianity? This is not an attempt to learn about other religions but rather an extension of Merton's own belief that in the last analysis we must trust our own experience of God. It is not a letting go of one's belief system but a both/and. For Merton experience holds ultimate truth for each one.

understanding the true self

At Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka, ten days before his death, he experienced a depth of clarity which moved him beyond the shadow and the disguise.



"The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all . . . living beings, which all are part of one another, and all involved in one another."

The understanding of the true self, of all that is, entered into him. He wrote that he had come to the East to seek the "great compassion", whose face is Christ — the image of that God whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. Here, through the serene statues of Buddha and his disciple, Merton entered into the experience of the other most truly.

His legacy to us is the invitation to union and communion through the acceptance of our experience, through the dissolution of all dichotomies within ourselves and through the willingness to enter into a deep understanding of the experience of the other. Definitely a mountain worth climbing! ■

Colleen O'Sullivan is a Sister of St Joseph who ministers as a spiritual director, retreat guide and art therapist in Sydney.

principled nonviolence

This article compares and contrasts principled and strategic nonviolent social and political movements. Strategic nonviolence has often proven effective in overthrowing corrupt regimes. But for radical transformation of such regimes only principled nonviolence can be truly effective.

Kevin P. Clements

Analysing why individuals, groups, movements, organisations, and nations resort to (direct or indirect) violence to satisfy their interests and needs is a key focus of those engaged in peace and conflict studies. Analysing individual, group, movement and national alternatives to violence has not, however, received anywhere near the same amount of attention. This is partly because violence is assumed to be more interesting and newsworthy than nonviolence; but it also reflects the fact that even in the rich discipline of peace and conflict studies we tend to be much more concerned with pathology than cure.

why choose nonviolence?

One of the reasons for the relative neglect of nonviolence is that there is no word which adequately explains what it is all about. Is it an ethical belief, an attitude, a tactic or a strategy, or all of the above? What has motivated people in the past to choose nonviolence and what motivates people in the present to choose nonviolence in response to life's many dilemmas? Why in the second decade of the 21st century has there been an upsurge of both academic and political interest in nonviolence?

There are many answers to all these questions. In the first place it is clear that within most major religious and philosophical traditions nonviolence is viewed as a superior way of living — something to aspire to. These religious traditions developed what is known as "Principled Nonviolence." This was and is seen as more virtuous than the old warrior traditions. Christians, for example, are enjoined to love their enemies; Hindus and Buddhists to observe the oneness of all things and not harm life; Taoists and Confucians reinforce a search for harmony as a universal truth principle. All of these religious traditions highlight the value of principled nonviolence. Nonviolence is a way of both understanding and living "truth" in the face of the physical, psychological and moral vulnerability that flows from each one of us living in the company of others.

principled nonviolence

Principled nonviolence is based on a rejection of all physical violence. It rests on a willingness to suffer instead of inflicting suffering; a concern to end violence and a celebration of the transformative power of love and compassion. Nonviolence is seen as an outward manifestation of a loving spirit within each one of us. Principled nonviolence seeks to love potential enemies rather than destroy them and promotes nonviolent peaceful means to peaceful ends. Its preferred processes are persuasion, cooperation and nonviolent resistance to forceful coercion for political purposes.

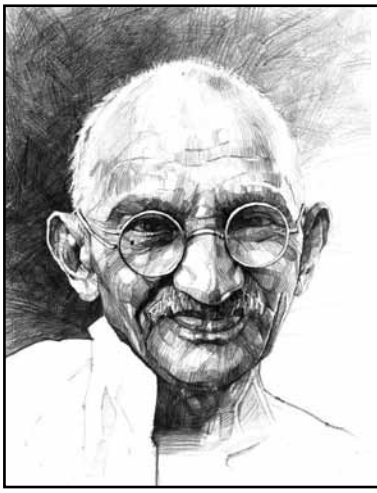
This principled nonviolent tradition has over the years given rise to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and fuelled many of the principled nonviolent political movements of the 21st century. It has been successful, for example, in places like Poland, the Philippines and many countries in the former Soviet Union.

strategic nonviolence

The second understanding of nonviolence is what is known as pragmatic or strategic nonviolence. Some critics refer to this perspective as "nonviolence light." This is a little unfair since many of the people who engage in strategic nonviolence often exhibit considerable courage when confronting oppressive regimes and deep-rooted injustice. The reason it is considered nonviolence light, however, is because it does not demand a commitment to personal pacifism or a nonviolent lifestyle. Strategic nonviolence simply asserts that physical violence is too costly or impractical; it is seen as an effective method or tool for generating political change. Instead of asking what is right it asks what will work? Strategic nonviolence is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Successful strategic nonviolent movements, having overthrown repressive regimes, are willing to utilise the coercive power of the state for their own political purposes. In doing so they often become fatally compromised as was the case in Egypt, Palestine and Syria.

The main concern of strategic, pragmatic nonviolence is to resist oppression, build mass-based movements, and ensure that they are effective instruments for waging a range of political struggles. Because of this philosophical position, strategic nonviolence focuses a lot of attention on articulating and promoting a wide range of nonviolent protest tactics; the withdrawal of cooperation or noncooperation (with private and public sector actors) and the tactics and strategy of civil disobedience to unjust customs, norms and laws.

The good news is that strategic nonviolence has proven effective in civilian



I oppose all violence because the good it does is always temporary, but the harm it does is permanent.

– Mahatma Gandhi

resistance to oppression. The bad news is that many of these successful examples of pragmatic nonviolence have not proven so successful over the long haul. Many have come to power, e.g. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, but have refused to grapple with many of the deeper sources of both direct and indirect violence and have wittingly and unwittingly perpetuated popular preoccupation with state power, politics and coercive agency.

nonviolence as a way of life

This is why I wish to argue that principled nonviolence is an imperative and not an optional extra. Principled nonviolence is capable of embracing all the tactics and strategies of strategic nonviolence but it always maintains a critical wariness of the monopoly of violence at the heart of every state. Like strategic nonviolence it encourages the development of grass roots capabilities, but it is aimed at long-term rather than short-term solutions. It will work with the state when appropriate and oppose it when it's not. It derives its legitimacy from values that cannot be compromised. It does this by continual self-critique as well as a robust commitment to constant change for a more just and peaceful world. It knows that simply overthrowing an unjust, repressive system is no guarantee of long-term justice and peace.

The advocates of principled nonviolence apply a principled rejection of the use of physical or emotional violence in all personal and political life. They do not see nonviolence as a short-term rational choice for particular political ends, rather it is a way of life and being. The challenge is how to hold the principled and strategic in tension.

If we take two examples of principled nonviolent action — e.g. the Indian Struggle for Independence and the United States Civil Rights movement — it is clear that analysts and activists in both movements were as concerned with the peaceful consequences of their processes as they were with the outcomes. They felt uneasy with processes that did not accord as much respect to their opponents as to their followers. Because of this they subjected their politics to much more radical scrutiny than those that are opportunistically nonviolent. If our goal is to be in peaceful relations with fellow human beings at all levels and in all sectors through time then this is a much more demanding proposition than simply applying nonviolence to achieve immediate political objectives.

gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence

Principled nonviolence is aimed at building radical cultures of respect, dignity and peacefulness at social, economic and political levels. It is not seduced just by the political. It is based on giving practical recognition to what I would call the politics of love and compassion. Most principled nonviolence flows from Gandhian philosophy and is based on a daily practice to wage peace. Gandhi was always looking for the "truth" in relationships and believed that if he could discover what generated deeper compassion this "truth force" would prove more compelling than brute force. He believed in living each day with truth, justice, patience, compassion, courage, and loving kindness as his companions. These are the values and concerns that most principled peace advocates promote. This is a much more radical commitment than simply looking for effective political tactics. Gandhi's use of the ancient Hindu term *Ahimsa* (which means not injuring or harming anyone in thought, word or deed) actively promotes universal well-being for all species. This means a radical respect for the environment and all species, what Gandhi calls *Savodaya* or justice for all creatures. It also involves a commitment to what Gandhi called *Swaraj* or self rule, where we assume full responsibility for our own behaviour and for decisions on how to organise our own communities. It stands in radical tension with what we might think of as dominatory politics. Finally it is based on *Satyagraha* or nonviolent revolution, which is aimed at turning foes into friends and intolerance into hospitality. This is very different from mass-based social and political movements which assume that regime change will solve the problems of human coexistence. It is aimed at continual nonviolence, unleashing virtuous cycles from multiple small acts of goodness.

All of these principles for a just and peaceful life are a long way from the short term considerations of the strategic, pragmatic activist. They are a clear articulation of a living revolution, a daily revolution, a revolution that, by definition knows no end. They are principles that give a radical edge to personal and political transformation and the good news is that they have been embodied by many of the leaders and movements that advocate principled nonviolence. ■

Professor Kevin Clements is the foundation Chair and Director of the National Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies, University of Otago, Dunedin.

re-forming the broken pot

The author reflects on her 25 years' experience with Cambodian families from the time of the Khmer Rouge.

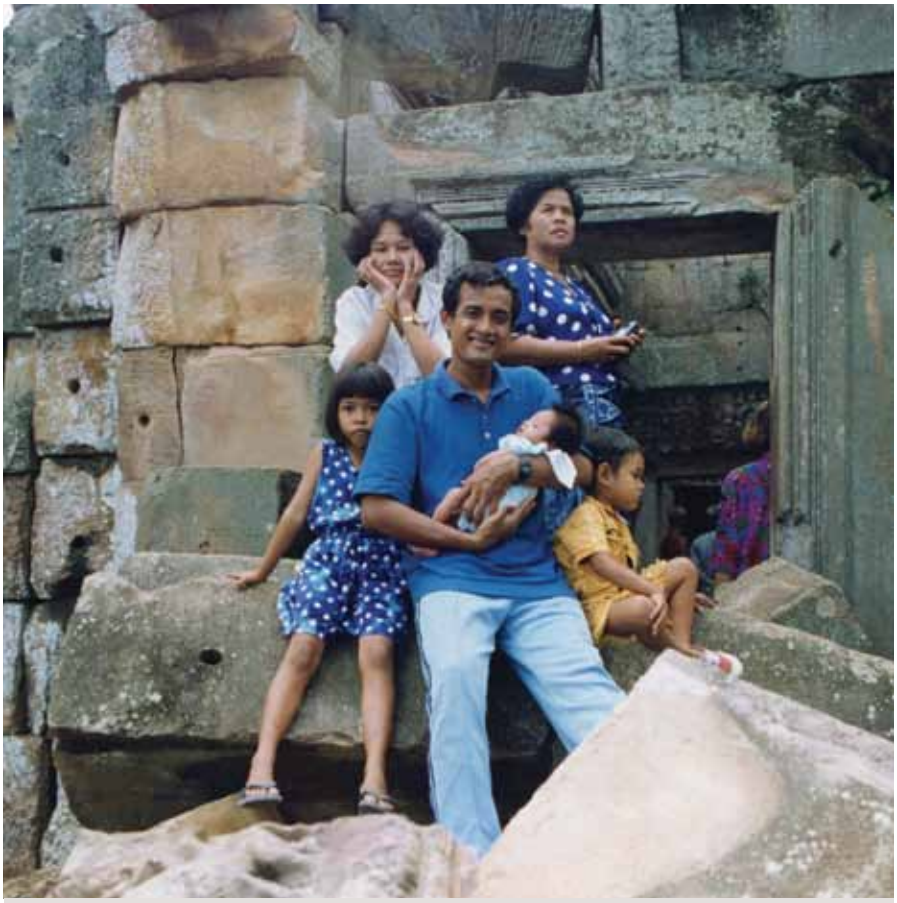
Joan Healy RSJ

It is more than a quarter of a century since I first went to live and work among Cambodian families behind barbed wire, held in a war zone, in camps along the Thai-Cambodia border. Those detained here had survived the Killing Fields. Through the years since those days I have spent long times working and living in Cambodia and have been able to stay close to families I first met in that camp. There has been time to watch the friends I knew as refugees become grandparents and great grandparents — time to watch the many patterns of life that have followed their suffering. Even now I have chances to share their hospitality in Cambodian villages and towns.

pot broken and glued again

There is a sculptor who came to her audience carrying in two hands a terra-cotta pot of the kind used in villages to cook rice over a charcoal fire and wearing black cotton pyjamas, the garb of those held by the Khmer Rouge during Pol Pot time. She lifted the pot above her head like a consecration. Nobody made a sound. She stretched out her hands and the pot shattered to the ground. All I heard was the breaking and the intake of breath from the watchers. She sat on the mat among the broken pieces of pot, took a small tube of super-glue from one pocket and a ball of string from the other. She gathered the large fragments and glued them, tied string around the shape so that the glue would set, then gathered shards and slithers piecing them into the gaps of this new shape. Nobody moved. Nobody spoke. It took an hour. Then she held it towards us saying nothing.

Much later we talked among ourselves. "It was different yet the same." "It is Cambodia." "It is our village." "It is me." "It is out of shape." "It is cracked." "Strange to say it, but that new shape is beautiful." "It can't do what it used to do." "It might do something else."



Family returning to Cambodia after 11 years as refugees in Thailand.

living amid violence

In Cambodia during this quarter century there has been violence after violence. Civil war before the Killing Fields, civil war after. The government led by Hun Sen for thirty years until the present has been brutal. This autocratic leader does not hesitate to send his troops or his body guard or his military police to fire on his own people.

What happens during violence? After violence? Must violence beget more violence? I have watched something different happening, watched it often. Mysterious grace. I remember meeting the Cambodian monk Maha Ghosenanda who begged his people to clear the landmines from their own hearts first and then led them on a Dharmayatra walk — a pilgrimage — through the battlefields with "every step a prayer". I think of the poet Yeats who, after the brutal suppression of the Irish Easter Rising wrote: "All is changed, changed utterly … A terrible beauty is born."

Ka, a friend of many decades, confides that though he has tried to concentrate on a career in international development he has to return to living and working among people

who are poor and powerless in remote villages — he cannot walk away from this. "They still suffer," he says, "I know what it is like."

Peau holds before her the memory of her brother lying face down in the dust being tortured to death by his Khmer Rouge captor while she lay beside him, hands tied behind her back. She manages a shelter for women who dare to bring before the court those who do violence to them.

nonviolence passed on

There is a family who had nowhere safe to return when Site 2 camp was emptied. Since I rent-shared a small house in Battambang they came to us — husband and pregnant wife, their daughter and son and the wife's mother. I have known them like family through the years as their own new lives took shape. All are marked by what happened before.

Keing, blinded in battle.

The elder son, the boy born in the camp, has been to villages where his father, Nee, works. He has seen Nee quietening an angry crowd, bringing factions together, diverting violence. This thoughtful young man, working now in poverty-alleviation research, told me that this is not something that his father chooses to do but rather something he must do. Nee will not be free while others are still oppressed.

> "There must be a way of acting that is thoughtful, that avoids bloodshed. There has been too much blood."

The younger son, the one born after the camp, is at University now. He knows these are dangerous times and wants to work for justice. He shows me a YouTube of a Phnom Penh protest: a bank of military police, helmeted, booted, holding a body shield in one hand and a baton or AK47 in the other, are advancing step by step towards unarmed protesters with placards. Some potesters have no shoes. The dead lie in blood. The arrested, women and men together, lie face-down on the road with hands tied behind their backs. "Nothing to fear but fear itself," he says. He has not yet tasted fear.

Last year Nee took me to the north-west for a meeting of indigenous people. The forest which nurtured their culture, where they have lived for centuries, has been "grabbed", cleared, sold and the land given as a 99-year-lease to a rubber company. We squatted in dust while we met them.

"This is the most dangerous time. More and more poor people have begun to claim their dignity. They are ready to protest, to die." Nee tells me. "I can understand their anger. Some activists deliberately use the anger. But there has to be a way of acting that is thoughtful, that avoids bloodshed. There has been too much blood."

He nurtures their leadership delicately because the military police are primed to fire randomly whenever there is the slightest provocation. Only this week there have been more deaths. "Undisciplined protest is like feeding a crocodile," he says. He knows these people and cares for them.

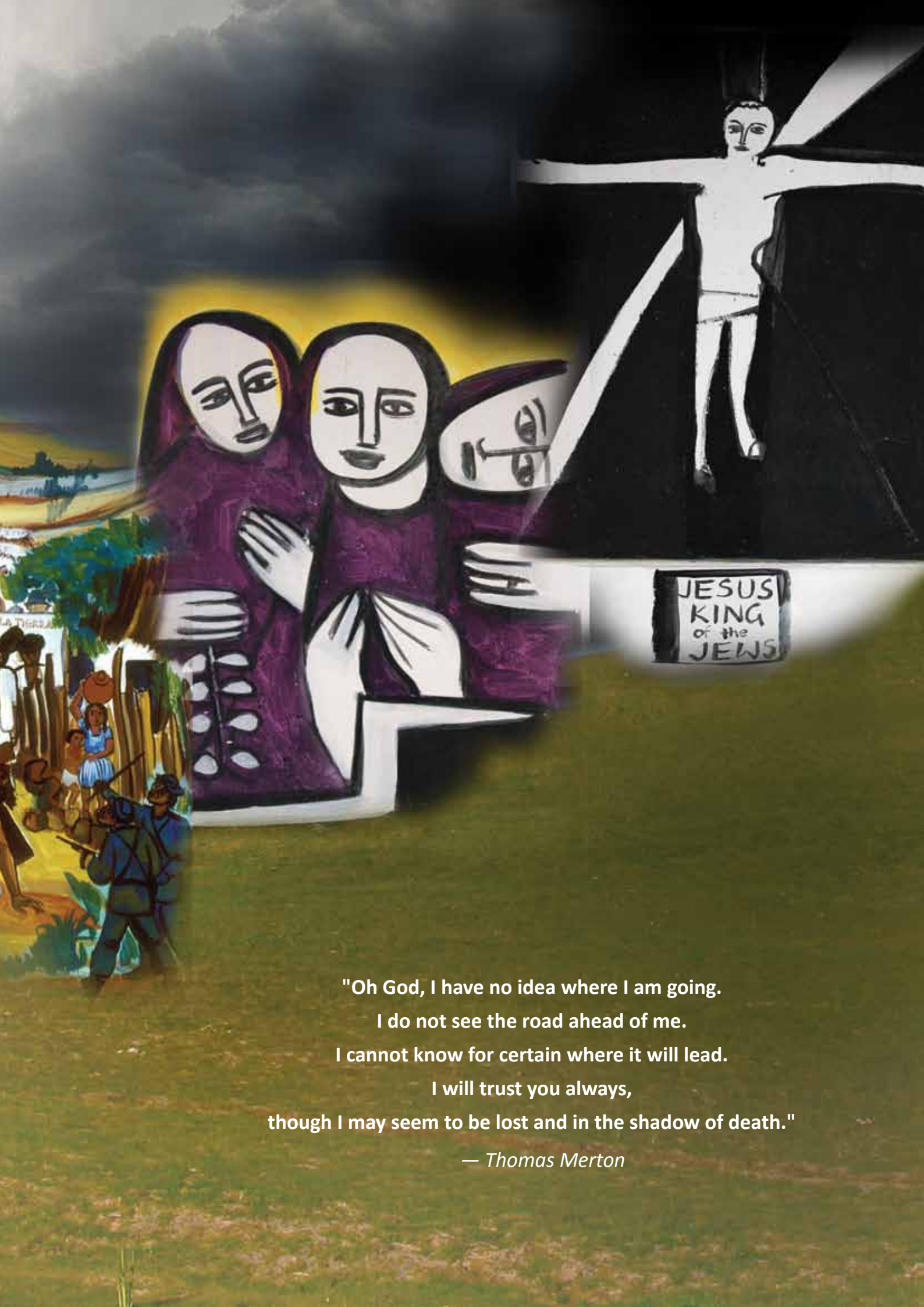
wounds of horror remain

I have never had to suffer what Nee and Ka and Peau and other friends have survived. Nevertheless sometimes in the middle of the night even I, who have had such a protected life, wake and return to troubled times. I am back in Site 2 Border camp. Keing, who has been brought in from the battle-field sits on a piece of blue plastic in a darkened corner of a bamboo shelter, his eye-lids closed across empty sockets. Keing's father and mother, brother and sisters died in Khmer Rouge times. He honoured his army commander in place of the father he had lost. He did not hesitate when, during the battle the commander asked him to crawl ahead through a field. A land-mine exploded; his limbs were intact but not his face and eyes. In the battle-field tent-clinic the medics removed his eyes. Day after day he waits for the commander; the commander does not come. Tears flow down Keing's face from the tear ducts at the edge of his empty eye sockets. He believes that his eyes could have been saved. He feels my face and eyes.

Though it was his pain not my pain, my heart cracked and came together in a different shape, like that shattered and glued-together cooking pot. ■

Joan Healy, Sister of St Joseph, co-ordinates a Partnership Program to bring newly arrived families from 17 different ethnic groups into the community of St John's School in Melbourne.

Images by Joanna Paul and Juan Garcia Esquivel



"Oh God, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will lead.
I will trust you always,
though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death."

— Thomas Merton

joanna paul's stations of the cross

The New Zealand artist, Joanna Paul, painted the stations of the cross in a semi-abstract style for the Port Chalmers' catholic church in the 1970s. The author gives an insight into why Joanna used this style and what she hoped to evoke in her paintings.

Cynthia Greensill

As you drive into Port Chalmers your eye will pick out the slate roof of the stone church of St Mary, Star of the Sea, on the ridge.

Inside, the church is white with windows in geometric pieces of coloured and clear glass. There are reminders that this church serves the people of an old port town. The lectern is a fishing boat's anchor, an old ship's lamp illuminates the reserved sacrament, the altar is mounted on a ship's propeller and the paten used at Mass is a polished paua shell. This church has a sense of simplicity and is much loved by its congregation. The stations of the cross hanging on the walls are reproductions of 19th century works. But something different rests underneath them.

joanna in port chalmers

In 1971 two painters married in this church. Both Jeffrey Harris and Joanna Paul were living and working in the area and subsequently each became Frances Hodgkins Fellow at the University of Otago — Jeffrey in 1977 and Joanna in 1983. Art was central in their lives along with bringing up their children; not always an easy balance to manage. The couple eventually parted and Joanna died in a tragic accident in Rotorua in 2003.

Joanna had joined the Catholic Church in 1966. When she settled in Port Chalmers in 1970 she became friends with the local priest. Joanna wrote in her unpublished memoir, *Rooms and Episodes*: "The small town I saw in Jungian terms: the mirror of the soul. Eventually I painted stations of the cross for St Mary, Star of the Sea at Father Kevin's request. Bright, beautiful, simple, even childish images with a consciously symbolic use of colour."

Unfortunately the priest did not consult the parish adequately and when finished the stations were not well received. Later other stations were hung over Joanna's frescoes but hers still remain underneath.

Recently Joanna's stations have had two "outings". One was at a service to mark the first anniversary of Ralph Hotere's death; the second was at the request of Joanna's family to mark her birthday when the stations were exposed for a week in December 2014.

simplicity of her paintings

In his Art Beat column in the *Otago Daily Times* in 2014 Peter Entwisle commented: "Paul appears to have chosen to return to the simplicity of the very earliest Christian imagery. The figures are outlined in black. There are few, though bold, colours. Much is left white, or unpainted. They are grouped in plaster diptychs or triptychs. Suffering is apparent but also much sympathy and empathy."

Entwisle picked out some key elements of Paul's work. She used strong black outlines. Such outlines are the foundation of drawing seen in cave paintings of Lascaux to Mondrian and contemporary art. Colin McCahon, Joanna's teacher, and Georges Rouault used black outlines extensively in their figure painting.

The black outlines also suggest the lead framework of stained-glass windows. They define the shapes and colours. Black becomes a character in its own right in the strong diagonals of the cross-shape.

symbolic use of colour

Joanna chose colours resonant of the liturgical life of the church — green for ordinary time and creation, crimson for martyrs, purple for preparation and mourning, white and gold for festive times, and the traditional blue of Mary's robe and the sky.

In St Mary's Joanna employed the powerful colours of purple

and red in her stations — colours already present in the church stained-glass windows.

Joanna uses an arresting colour to highlight Jesus. The bright orange of Jesus' hair draws our eye to him — "ginga" Jesus — and marks him out from other figures in the narrative. Artists have often used visual devices to single out Jesus — a halo, shafts of light, brighter clothing. Joanna's may initially shock but it is effective.

Her use of white or unpainted areas in the stations became a feature of her later painting and drawing. Jesus' robe is unpainted and the skin is left implied in the figures. Joanna's figures are not tied to ethnic identity. She leaves them open to interpretation so that we colour them with our historical knowledge and preconceptions. She gives us space to think our own thoughts and see our own visions.

In his obituary for Joanna, Peter Ireland commented: "Paul's conversation with the particulars of the physical world was often conducted in the great and potent silence of negative space — that apparent emptiness between lines of text, pencil marks or wads of colour is no less an active part in the formal dynamic than anything positively marked or made. Herein absence becomes presence." The stations are an early example of this.

In them Joanna's images are spare, stripped of much detail. She brings her film-maker's point-of-view to the images — full frame, medium shots, close-ups, bird's-eye view. This gives a sense of movement and heightens the drama of the story.

the journey unfolds

The essentials of the passion narrative are present. Jesus stands before a detached Pontius Pilate beside him a jug of water for hand-washing and the Emperor's portrait — suggesting where Pilate's loyalties lay. Jesus is seen from the back taking hold of the cross. He struggles under the falling weight of the diagonal cross. He has an intimate moment with his mother as she reaches to touch him in a gesture of connection and comfort.

Jesus meets his mother

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

The last station

[Photos: Mary McFarlane]

An exhausted Jesus, arms hanging, is relieved of his burden by Simon of Cyrene. Then Veronica reaches from behind Jesus to wipe his face and his image on the cloth is displayed below. Jesus is seen from above as the cross falls on him. Three purple-clad women of Jerusalem, with expressive faces and hands, one holding an olive branch, gaze at us and him. Jesus lies prone with the cross on top of him. Wavy force lines suggest the impact of his fall. We see his naked torso stripped of garments — but not his face.

The crucifixion station shows one wounded hand in the foreground, the head of the man with the hammer in red on the purple ground, and Jesus' contorted body raised beside a ladder.

Then comes the station with Jesus relaxed in death. The diagonal of the cross is now white in the darkness becoming the torn Temple veil. Beneath is Pilate's inscription: "Jesus King of the Jews". A heavy-eyed Mary supports Jesus's head as he is taken down from the cross.

While in the last station some artists show Jesus being placed in his tomb or just an empty tomb, Joanna leaves us with a puzzle. The central image is placed on a green and blue background edged in black and white peeled back suggesting a cave. Is it a tree or an irregular seven-branched menorah? Is it a resurrection image — a tree of life, in contrast to the death tree we have followed? Its ambiguity makes us work.

With her stations Joanna gave St Mary's an offering of her faith, her artistic skills, and sensibility grounded in art history and literature. Now that Lent is here could the frescoe stations be shown again to allow her works to evoke the meaning of Jesus' journey to death in our time? ■

Cynthia Greensill is a teacher, writer and gardener living in Dunedin.

an ecological reading of the gospel of mark

The author explores Mark 1:29-39 in this second article in the series.

Elaine Wainwright

We began our ecological reading of Mark's gospel by focussing on the message of Jesus: repent. The call to *metanoia* invites us to change our perspective, our way of seeing. As ecological gospel readers we look "for and with" the **human characters**, the **holy characters and presence**, and the **habitat**. Further we explore these three in intimate relationship, and through a new lens of interconnectivity.

An important phrase at the beginning of Mark is "the kingdom" — the *basileia* of God — the core of Jesus' teaching (1:15). For the Markan community, *basileia* would have evoked the oppressive Roman Empire with its power over land, its material or Earth resources, and its people. However in the gospel the image functions metaphorically as an alternative to Rome. *Basileia* is God's dream for the universe — for the Earth community in the universe and all the more-than-human making up the universe.

focus on habitat

By being attentive to habitat we will notice the locations named, such as the wilderness (1:4, 12), the Jordan River (1:5, 9), Galilee and its sea (1:14, 16), and one of its towns, Capernaum (1:21). They are not merely backdrop to the story but for the ecological reader they are encoded in the text in all their materiality (water, dry earth, built environment — stone and wood to name but some). They are the "stuff" of our lives, the "stuff" without which no gospel story could be told.

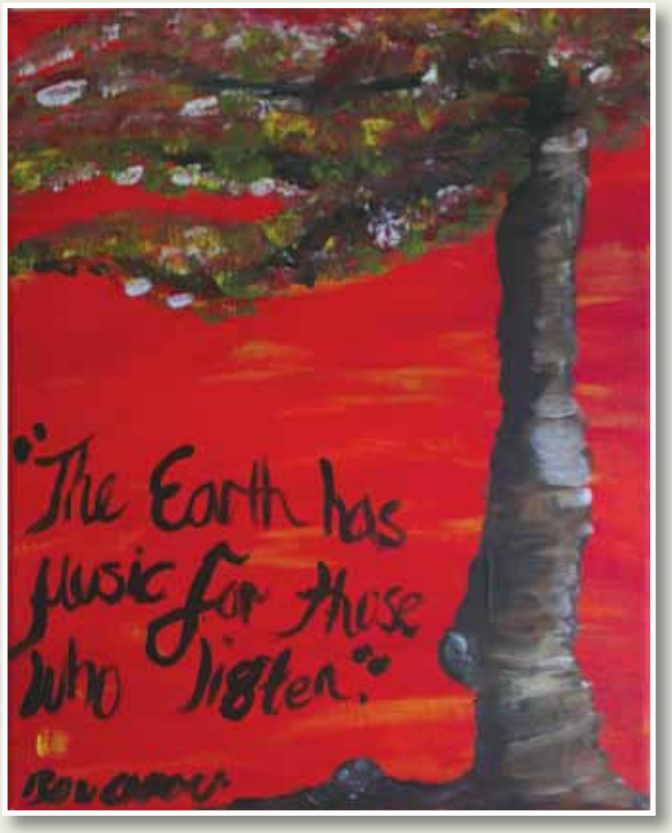
We are invited to engage with these and many other such material elements in the gospel narrative and to allow such attentiveness to make us alert to the materiality of both the human and other-than-human that constitute our own lives and in which we seek to live the alternative vision of the *basileia* of God.

emphasis on "time" and "place"

Mark 1:29-39, the focal text for this month's reflection, turns the reader/listener to time, as the text opens with the favourite Markan phrase "and immediately". (It occurs 12 times within the opening chapter: 1:3, 10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43.) There is but the space of a breath between the close of the previous narrative in 1:28 and the opening of 1:29. The reader then encounters the complexity of material spaces woven into this narrative: Jesus leaves the synagogue and the activity there and enters a house, a house whose materiality of wood and stone are intimately related to the human community. The house is identified as belonging to Simon and Andrew. James and John are among the human characters in this scene. The *basileia* ministry of Jesus takes place in time and space/place with all the materiality and interconnectivity of these.

dis-ease upsetting the space

But there is dis-location or dis-ease



Painting by Brittany Oughton, Auckland

in this space. We read that Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. In the ancient Hippocratic medicine of the first century world, fever was seen as the cause of many illnesses, rendering the materiality of the human body out of order. The body of the woman and also the social structure of the household with its gendered roles characteristic of first century Palestine, are disrupted by the illness. When Jesus is told about this disruption to body and society, he reaches out and takes her by the hand. The human flesh of Jesus touches that of the woman and the fever leaves her. Both the healer and the healed touch and are touched in the mutuality of flesh meeting. This is a characteristic of the healing that shapes Jesus' proclamation of God's transformative dream.

The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-law, by James Tissot [Brooklyn Museum]

restored to ministry

The final phase of this short healing narrative encodes in the text the complexity of the social relations in the household. Many interpreters will read, "and she served/was serving him" as a restoration of not only the body of the healed woman but also the gendered structure of the society — the woman takes up her household tasks. The verb "to serve" is *diēkonei* and it is written in the imperfect [she was serving them] indicating that this restoration began in the past following her healing and that it continues on into present and possible future. This verb is used to describe Jesus' own ministry (10:45). It is also used to describe the minsitry of the women of Galilee who followed Jesus (according to the text as "disciples" 15:41). Restoration of bodies, social relationships and structures establishes the new *basileia* that Jesus proclaims.

sickness and demon possession

Time continues to characterise Jesus' *basileia* ministry — the evening of the very same day the people bring "all" who were sick or possessed with demons. Both sickness and demon possession are seen within the worldview of the first century. Sickness manifests as dis-ease or a lack of right material relationships within the body. Demon possession shows as a lack of right relationships in the space between the human/sublunar realm of the cosmos and the superlunar realm of the heavens. This was the space inhabited by demonic powers in the Hellenistic world-view of the first century. Demons were considered "out of place" when they inhabited human persons or the sublunar realm.

A very different cosmic world-view as well as health-care system inform us today and the gospel can invite us to explore both of these more deeply as they shape our reading of the gospel. The ecological reader encounters restoration of both the materiality of human bodies and the sociality of human relationships as signs of the new *basileia* dream for Earth and Cosmos.

Verse 35 may have been read traditionally through the interpretive lens of the holy — Jesus, who is named "son of God", goes off in the early morning to pray, to maintain his relationship with the Holy One. The attentive ecological reader will note, however, that the Markan narrator continues to locate each new story in time — and here the reference is extended. Not only does the narrator tell us that it is "in the morning" but amplifies this with the phrase "a great while before day". As well as in time, the scene is also explicitly located in place — "a lonely place". The shortest phrase in the sentence is the last — "there he prayed". Habitat, human and holy are engaged in right relationship.

As this section of Mark's opening chapter draws to a close, Jesus is presented as going throughout all Galilee. This locates him in place both generally and specifically — he is preaching in synagogues. Both the material and social realities continue to be evoked in Mark as Jesus "is casting out demons".

In the coming month perhaps as we read this gospel we could give greater attention to the relationships of time, place, the holy, the human and social interactions in the stories.■

Elaine Wainwright, a Sister of Mercy and scripture scholar, recently retired as the foundation Professor of Theology at the University of Auckland. She continues to research and write.

pope francis – anna speaking

The author writes an open letter to Pope Francis as he prepares for the Synod on the family in October.

Anna Holmes

Dear Pope Francis

Thank you for enabling hope in the church and in the world. Your clear message of God's love and compassion for all people has never been more needed. This is particularly so for the Ordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family later this year.

Contemporary families come in many forms — traditional families, one parent families, blended families, couples living together, divorced and remarried couples, same-sex couples, mixed-race families and mixed-faith families. Most couples live together before marriage as a result of the demand for social, political and sexual freedom beginning in the 1960s.

Families often move to seek work, or a place to live in peace. This may leave the young without support and the old feeling isolated and lonely. Many grandparents are parenting second time around as they support their children whose relationships have broken down.

In today's materialist and individualist culture the decision to marry is made only after long thought and negotiation and is often about a wish to have children. When both partners have to work to survive it is hard for couples to change from being "me" and "possession" focussed to being "us" and "family" focussed.

It is a particular challenge to believe that faithful, life-long love is possible in a world fixed on the new and exciting, where if something is not to your liking you are encouraged to get rid of it. Such love is not about a once-and-for-all wedding vow. It demands daily acceptance and forgiveness. After nearly 50 years of marriage I can say it is about total self-giving and other-receiving — a pure gift that cannot be manipulated or demanded.

families with babies

Children provide a further challenge. They need the total human presence of their families so that they can learn to be present to themselves and others. Noisy toys, televisions, computers or other technology cannot replace human voices and touch.

Last month I stayed with my great-grandson Luca and his parents. At seven months old he requires watching all the time he is moving around, needs feeding night and day and demands a hug about every ten minutes. Given these he is a delightful happy baby. His mother is a bit short of sleep, being up each night to feed him.

Perhaps at the synod you could ask the participants to set their alarms for 2.00am and 4.00am so that they could see how exhausting caring for an infant is. Their mothers need support from caring partners and families.

families with youngsters

Having several young children also makes life very busy. I recall once having one child setting the table, another fetching the eggs and the third doing spelling homework, while I was making a cake. The eldest came in very excited from the hens: "Mummy, I saw the rooster putting the little things into the hen that make the chickens grow." She had just had a Growth and Development film at school. "Mm," I replied scraping the cake into the tin. As I put the cake into the oven she asked: "Is it the same with people?" Distracted, I replied: "Yes." Immediately she was right beside me. "Well, I've never seen Daddy jumping on you and clucking!"

families with adolescents

Mid-life for parents coincides with adolescence for their children and for both it is a time of change. Parents have to allow children to make life decisions while being there to support them — despite mistakes. Adolescents need space to grow as independent, responsible adults. Support for families at this stage is important. It would be good if the church provided such support.

Older age is also a time of change. Some couples are left widowed, others find retirement provides new challenges. This can be a rich and wonderful time if the couple have come to terms with life changes and found new ways of connecting with family and community.

questionable biology?

The Questions sent out for the coming Synod include one on the transmission of life in the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae (HV)* and quotes from *Familiaris Consortio (FC)* on a number of occasions. Both these documents forbade contraception but have much that is good to say about marriage. Their understanding of human reproduction was inaccurate.

HV states: "Every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life." Even without contraception most intercourse cannot transmit life because female fertility at ovulation lasts only 12-24 hours. *FC* says: "The choice of the natural rhythms involves accepting the cycle of the person, that is the woman …" But it is the continuous fertility of the man that imposes the need for abstinence. Nowhere do these documents talk about the effect of pheromones — smell hormones — that attract the couple to each other particularly at the time of ovulation, when conception is most likely.

Most couples ignored the forbidding of contraception in *HV.* Some left the church as a result of it. The ban was introduced just after the contraceptive pill was developed, at a time of fear of the overpopulation of the world and when women were becoming able to develop careers. It was the first time that church teaching had been widely ignored. Contraception is now seldom discussed, for many priests and bishops know it is couples who make the decision.

marriage – mystery of love

Marriage is a complex harmony of growth, pain, joy and reconciliation and no more easily defined than any other mystery of the love of God. It is the responsibility of married couples and those working in the pastoral care of marriage and family to develop and enrich the theology of marriage in dialogue with the teaching church. There is a particular need for listening to the voices of women.

The preparatory document and questions now available for the Synod are an opportunity to start this dialogue. I hope many will respond to the questions and that the Vatican will publish the results of the consultation. It is important that the results are shared widely for controlling the access to information is about power not pastoral care. The responses to the Extraordinary Synod were not all published.

Our world needs to understand the importance of the pastoral care of all families. Those who marry are making a statement of faith — they deserve all the help they can get. The teaching church needs to listen and be present to families. Not just to those who seem to be able to live up to the ideal but to all struggling in the process. Jesus came for everyone.

Finally it seems important to mention that the church family also has similar stages of growth. Pope Francis you have already raised the issue of too much clerical control, ambition, materialism and oppression by some priests at the expense of mercy and love. Please remind your bishops to look at this in their dioceses because there are still parishes where the priest believes it his divine right to order everything without consulting his parishioners.

In conclusion I pray with Job: "Oh, that I had one to hear me!"

May the Synod focus on the real needs of families at all stages of family life. May it work with families and support them.

Blessings and hope for a peaceful and fruitful Synod. ■

Anna Holmes is a former GP and hospice doctor and now assists in the clinical formation of medical students in Otago.

discovering myself in samoa

A struggle with an assignment leads the author into an unexpected experience and a new awareness of the issues confronting small island states.

Susana Suisuiki

In Samoa, the place considered to be the sacred centre of the Pacific, there is an ancient proverb: *"E lele le toloa, ae ma'au lava i le vai."* It means no matter how long you leave home, you will always return.

The proverb perfectly sums up the professional/personal experience I had in Samoa, working and participating in the 2014 United Nations Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The proverb is also a testimony to how I, having been born and raised in New Zealand, learnt to be a Samoan in Samoa.

In one of my university papers in 2014, we had to undertake research and work within an organisation that was aligned with our interests and values. Originally I wanted to work in an organisation that looked after survivors of abuse, mainly women and children.

This led to a conversation with my aunt in whom I confided about my assignment. To be quite honest, I was stuck as to where I would start. I was already feeling as if I was failing my paper before I'd typed a single word!

However my aunt told me that a former school friend of hers had asked whether she would consider coming to Samoa to participate in the SIDS Conference. The conference focussed on 52 small island nations located in three regions: the Pacific, Caribbean and AIMS (an acronym for Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas). These island nations have unique vulnerabilities and characteristics as they pursue sustainable development. They are all looking to find ways to meet the needs of the present without robbing future generations. They face a range of environmental problems such as climate change, pollution and natural disasters, and as well, social issues including the needs of women and children.

A few weeks later I was whisked onto a plane to Samoa with a better plan for my assignment. Also I felt this trip was a personal quest in increasing my knowledge and solidifying my own cultural identity.

welcome in samoa

The sights and sounds in Samoa were buzzing as the people prepared to welcome all nations to their humble home. As tourism is one of the key sectors in Samoa's economy there were plenty of festivals and celebrations. The main coastal road was decorated with flags and banners reading: "Welcome to Samoa SIDS delegates!"

Leading up to the official opening of the conference, the UN offered pre-conference forums covering Youth, Major Groups and Stakeholders, Renewable Energy, and Private Sectors. The aim of these forums was to generate plenary discussions for the main conference.

working together essential

Since my focus was on women and children, I attended those forums. I learned that according to the UN, sustainable development requires nine major groups to work together. These are women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, NGOs, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological community and farmers. As each of these groups plays an important role in society they each bring their own level of expertise and knowledge to addressing their issues. Each group is needed to inform the whole.

I became intrigued at how

L-R: Bernadette Pereira of PACIFICA Womens Inc, Susanna Suisuiki and Nele Leilua, Samoa NGO consultant.

environmental and social issues were affecting SIDS people nearly every year. I felt empathetic as well as sorrowful hearing of real life tragedies primarily caused by natural disasters. Although I'd briefly touched on these issues at college, I hadn't realised how severe the effects were until I heard the raw accounts of the volunteers working within aid organisations.

The 2009 tsunami that struck Samoa's southern coast has been etched as one incident in Samoa's dark times. More than 100 lives were lost and village homes and churches destroyed. From dawn to dusk volunteers dedicated their time to restoring livelihoods and hope. Although businesses and tourist activities around the area have resumed, the local villagers still fear the sea. The sea which was once their plentiful friend had come like a thief in the night. Not only was I made aware but it made me re-assess the direction I was heading towards after finishing my studies. How could I contribute to the betterment of SIDS and their peoples?

the cross, a life of service

The homily at the Sunday Mass, a prelude to the opening of the conference, struck me. I heard that as disciples of Christ we must learn to take up our cross if we are to follow Him. It is not to say that carrying the cross would mean enduring great or small tribulations of life to please God. Rather taking up the cross means to lead a life of service. From my perspective the message of taking up the cross led me to believe that my presence at the conference was no accident. It made me rethink. I could see that service in the work of aid volunteers in the aftermath of the devastating tsunami. Also I could see a life of service playing out in my own life and the direction I was planning to take seemed more comfortable and secure.

Little Samoa officially welcomed the big world of UN delegates at the opening ceremony. The Conference's theme: "Sustainable development through genuine and durable partnerships" was expressed in dancing, song and oratory, showcasing the richness and essence of Samoan culture.

During the conference I met a matriarch from Fiji who had worked as a market vendor her whole life. This was the life she knew and working in the market provided the means to give her children a greater future. Today she is a proud mother and grandmother, as most of her descendants either work as business owners or have sought higher education. I asked her what kept her going at the markets and she replied with a smile: "God's plan for me."

practical outcomes

Some commitments and action plans outlined in the document produced by the conference particularly excited me. One was a project where the British High Commission brought biogas to a rural village in Samoa. Instead of relying on expensive, imported fossil fuel which contributes to air pollution, biogas is a renewable energy made from organic waste and local plants.

In relation to our country, New Zealand's Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministry contributed $7 million in aid towards a project entitled "Safe Cities in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea". The aid would refurbish Port Moresby's markets. Eighty percent of the vendors in the Port Moresby markets are women and girls who rely on selling their vegetables for income. Unfortunately 55 percent of them faced harassment and violence on a regular basis. To avoid these situations women forced themselves to sell their goods next to busy roads, sewerage or rubbish dumps — making a health, safety and social issue.

I returned to New Zealand a different person. I came to Samoa filled with uncertainty and when I left, I had an abundance of joyful memories, a renewed spirit and purpose and a deeper cultural identity. I still think about what it means to lead a life of service. The life I thought I had wanted would involve working in a corporate company, writing press releases. Being "ethically sound" with community matters would be limited to corporate social responsibility. However that has drastically changed as my ignorance led to me realise how vulnerable life is for people of SIDS. What was supposed to be an assignment focusing on women's and children's rights became instead: "Sustainable development for small islands — is it too late?" ■

Susana Suisuiki, a proud New Zealand-born Samoan, has a Bachelor of Communication Studies. She is a youth leader in her parish. She hopes to establish a mini-web series using social media to educate youth about environmental and social issues in the Pacific region.

gifts of soil and wheat

"… unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit …" John 12:24

Fifth Sunday of Lent – John 12:20-33

Kathleen Rushton

Last month's scripture reflection highlighted how Jesus' inherited belief in the gift of the land was the backdrop to his role in God's call. The grain of wheat image in John is an example of how his imagination was grounded in the natural world and the human struggle with it.

Many who first heard this image would have known that wheat is listed in God's promise — "a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in hills and valleys, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees" (Deut 8:7–15).

A rich scriptural tradition associates God and creation. The prologue of John inserts Jesus into this scriptural tradition: "In the beginning was the Word ... All things came into being through him ..." (1:1-3).

In cosmology at the time this gospel was written, the word for "all things" *(panta)* was one of the terms used for what we understand to be the universe. While this image of the grain had rich connotations for those versed in Scripture, it was a familiar natural image which also resonated with those who did not share that tradition.

gift of long processes

Imagine you are holding a grain of wheat in your hand. Take time. Consider its size, shape, colour, texture, its potential for new life, its journey from the soil to your hand.

This gift of Earth evolved through long processes. Some 3.9 billion years ago, for example, photosynthesis emerged; 335 million years ago the first forests emerged; 114 million years ago flowers evolved with their colour, perfumes, nectars and seeds.

This grain is descended from the

family of grasses which evolved some 50–70 million years ago and from which, about 20 million years ago, came the sub-family which includes wheat. The story of its ancestry is complex and includes gene flow from wild cereals.

The earliest evidence that hunter-gatherers collected and used this grain's ancestors is on the southwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee about 19,000 years ago. The domestication of wheat took several thousand years as in many locations spike, grain and plant size evolved to enable cultivation some 5000–10,000 years ago.

For agrarian peoples, the repetitive organic nature of processes of planting and harvesting, grinding and milling, baking and cooking were linked inextricably to the natural world. In all this, God is in some way present and, too, is present in the organic processes of the cosmos which are controlled by the other-than-human.

Life was hard in the face of drought and famine. Farmers knew wheat depleted the soil. It needed to be grown in a crop rotation cycle and with other measures for restoring soil fertility. The cycle of the seasons — the death and renewal of nature — was a basis of local fertility and mystery religions, associated with the death and rising again of a god.

In her recent book, *Fields of Blood*, Karen Armstrong traces how settled agriculture introduced institutional or structural violence as elites began to control land and force others into subjection. As Thomas Merton pointed out, all of us who have benefitted from this systemic violence are implicated in the suffering inflicted for over five thousand years on the majority of people and, I add, the Earth.

harvest imagery

The grain of wheat image is found in the gospel section which begins with two scenes: disciples networking to provide access to Jesus (12:20–22); the sayings of Jesus to those brought to him (vv.23–26) and then two public prayers of Jesus (vv.27–33). The wheat verse has signals which alert the reader to significant threads in this gospel. The verse begins with: "Amen, amen I say to you ..." (Jerusalem Bible in the Lectionary has: "I tell you, most solemnly ...") highlighting the authority with which Jesus was accustomed to speak (used 25 times in John). Demands for discipleship begin with "unless" and preface rites of transformation: the grain dies that it might live and bear much fruit (also 3:3; 8:24; 13:8).

In the Scriptures, the image of harvest is used for several aspects of God's intervention in the world. One related to John is when "the harvest" comes, God will gather, redeem and heal God's

scattered people (Isaiah 27:12–13). Harvest is evoked in three images by the gathering and bearing of fruit. The grain of wheat could bear "much fruit." The vine and branches image refers to "fruit" (Jn 15:2, 4, 5, 8, 16). The fields, which Jesus declares are ripe for harvesting even though it is four months away, have a reaper who is "gathering fruit." John's community are reapers of a harvest sown by Jesus (4:35–38).

down-to-earth god

Now in this UN International Year of Soils, hold a handful of soil. Take time. Touch and smell the soil formed by endless cycles of the weathering of rocks and necessary for all ecosystems. Into soil the grain of wheat falls. Jesus, the self-revelation of God in our world became "flesh" (1:14), a term which includes all living creatures.

The Holy One in embracing materiality enters into the evolutionary process of becoming, in which death is an integral part. God is with creation in process, in evolution and is revealed in humility, a word derived from the Latin *humus*, referring to earth, soil or ground. Humble, then, may mean "from the earth", "down to earth" or "grounded." God hears the groan of creation, embraces the world of all living creatures in the incarnation and the cross, and promises re-creation in the risen Christ. In Jesus' resurrection evolution reaches a new stage.

The transcendent God enters into the evolutionary process in the unimaginable nearness of a down-to-earth, grounded God, imaged by the imaginable grain which falls to the ground and is separated from all in which it lived previously. The same act is on one side a sowing and on the other side a falling and dying. The Unshakeable One is shaken. Jesus' whole being (soul) is "troubled" (12:27 cf. 13:21; 11:33–34). In the Johannine agony in the garden, Jesus prays to be saved from "this hour" and then praises God. He is affirmed by a voice from heaven (12:28). Jesus enters into the evolutionary process of death and resurrection to finish the work of God. He proclaims on the cross: "It is finished." (19:30) The scattered people in the image of the harvest are gathered: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (12:32)

Mission is the work of God, the Son and the disciples as shown in Jesus' prayer of Jn 17. All three parties are involved in "the drawing" of people (6:44; 12:32; 21:6, 11). This is also suggested in 15:16: "And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."

How does the down-to-earth image of the grain of wheat bring me to greater awareness of the gift of the Earth? How does this image help me as a disciple to enter into the evolutionary process of Jesus' death and resurrection? ■

Kathleen Rushton RSM is a scripture scholar working in adult education in the Diocese of Christchurch.

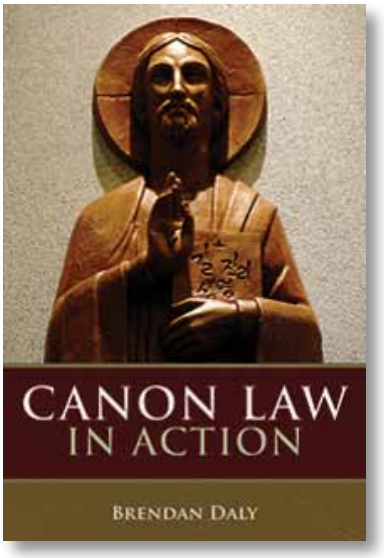
how canon law works

Canon Law in Action

by Brendan Daly

St Paul's Publications, 2015.

Reviewer: Patricia Hannan OP



Brendan Daly is Principal of Good Shepherd College. He is an experienced and well-qualified canon lawyer, lecturer and teacher.

This book is much more than a pastoral handbook for canonical matters. It is an historical study of where, when and why certain norms and processes arose in the Church and how these practices have developed over centuries, as the Church has expanded globally into different cultures. It is also a spiritual guide for those in ministry.

The opening anecdote for Chapter 1 illustrates simply the difference between canonical theory and practical reality. It is a lively story which gets our interest immediately and sets the style and tone for the rest of the book. Each chapter, based on wide-ranging research, gives the history of how a current canonical prescription developed originally and has been shaped by time, the 1917 Code, Vatican II Documents, the 1983 Code and recent, authoritative interpretations. This is followed by commentary by well-regarded canonists, and then a return to the underlying scriptural and theological principles, and a pastoral reflection.

There are frequent quotes from recent popes, including Pope Francis. The emphasis is not so much on legalities, though these are presented clearly, but on the spirituality of a living faith.

The book gives examples and questions arising from the lives of ordinary Catholics faced with situations that don't fit the rules e.g. Chapter 6 is entitled, "Refusing Sacraments": Another Name for Driving People Away from the Church. Daly gives examples from various countries of different ways of addressing matters. He does not make simplistic claims. He admits that in a difficult pastoral situation, canonical norms cannot solve all problems.

The book preface is by canon law professor, Frank Morrisey OMI from Saint Paul University, Ottawa. Morrisey praises Daly's clear, legal explanations and gives special mention to the contexts in which these are presented. He writes "... in the life of the Church, the juridical has no place if it is not related to the spiritual and pastoral dimensions of ministry, all of which have Christ as their primary focus." This aspect of Daly's book is particularly helpful.

This book will be valuable to anyone with an interest in Church history and life, and particularly to all those in pastoral ministry. ■

hokitika's gi churches

God knows where they come from! Four faith stories from Hokitika

by Allan Davidson, Steve Lowe, Ted Schroder, Richard Waugh

Published by the Kynaston Charitable Trust with Craigs Design & Print Ltd, 2014.

Reviewer: Garth Cant

If you started life in a small town, then moved to larger arenas, *God Knows Where They Come From!* will resonate with you. If your life has been interwoven with Ted Schroder in the Episcopal Church in the USA, with Steve Lowe in Rome or Timaru North, with Richard Waugh in the Wesleyan Church or aviation history, or Allan Davidson at St John's College in Auckland, this book will delight you.

Ted Schroder grew up in the Central Hotel, went to Hokitika DHS, and was part of All Saints Parish. His journey into priesthood took him across the Alps to Canterbury University, then across the world to Durham University. From there he became Dean of Christian Life in Gordon College, Massachusetts. Most of his Ministry has been in the Diocese of Florida. Now, in active retirement, he is host and chaplain at the Amelia Plantation Chapel in Florida.

Richard Waugh's Dad came to Hokitika as Chief Pilot and Engineer for West Coast Airways in 1958, flying in and out of South Westland. The Waugh family were part of St Paul's Methodist congregation, served by a succession of young, enthusiastic, probationer Ministers. Wesleyan theology and aviation stories have shaped Richard's identity. He now leads the Wesleyan Methodist Church in New Zealand

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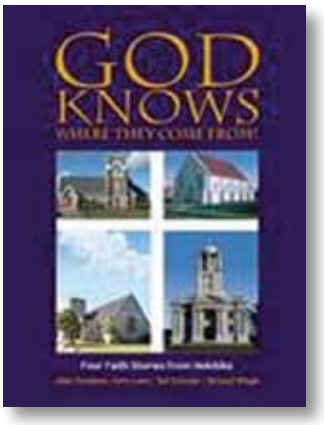

and is Regional Secretary for World Methodist Evangelism.

Steve Lowe was born in the year of Vatican II. He was nurtured by family, parish, and the Sisters of Mercy who taught him at St Mary's. Work with the NZ Forest Service took him to Timaru North and that parish changed his life. He trained for the priesthood at Holy Cross Mosgiel and the Gregorian University in Rome. Back in New Zealand, he has worked in parish ministry and ministry formation. Life will expand in new ways in 2015 when he becomes Bishop in Hamilton.

Allan Davidson is both historian and Presbyterian Minister. He studied at Knox College and Otago University in New Zealand, the University of Chicago Divinity School, and Aberdeen University in Scotland. He taught for a time at Rarongo Theological College in Papua New Guinea, and then took up a post with the Anglicans and Methodists at St John's College in Auckland. He has nurtured successive generations of students and writes on Pacific and New Zealand religious history.

These four are a fascinating set, and their life stories, are shared with compassion, with honesty, and with a lightness of touch. Will Hokitika also celebrate its women in ministry: Patricia Allen, Jean Waugh, Tui Cadigan, and Gladys Styles? ■

bloody road to freedom

Selma

Director: Ava DuVernay

Reviewer: Paul Sorrell

This engrossing biopic is based on a single key event in the history of the American civil rights movement — the campaign led by Martin Luther King, Jr (played here by British actor David Oyelowo) and other members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Selma, Alabama, in 1965 and the planned march to the state capital of Montgomery. The focus of their bitterly contested campaign was the issue of voting rights for black people — granted in theory, but denied in practice through a range of bureaucratic blocking manoeuvres.

As the action focuses even more narrowly on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, which the marchers will have to cross, the film has already established the various groupings with a stake in the outcome: King and his supporters; local black campaigners who at first feel sidelined by the newcomers; the white establishment in Alabama, including a hostile governor and a brutal police chief; and President Johnson, who is several times seen in fierce discussion with King. Johnson comes across as a conflicted figure, more concerned with political survival than granting justice to black Americans. Preoccupied with the war in Vietnam, he wishes the whole issue would go away.

King directs events in Selma like a military campaign; if his opponents want to play hardball, then so will he. A visionary but also a realist, like a general in the field he understands that early losses are necessary to secure a final victory. He also fully appreciates the role of the media in turning the tide of public opinion and encourages support from white liberals, especially the clergy, who join the protest ranks in increasing numbers. More importantly, he has right on his side — a burning passion for justice versus blind prejudice and kneejerk violence. In the end, King succeeds in outmanoeuvring his opponents, albeit at considerable human cost.

Alongside the political tensions inside and outside the civil rights movement, the film sketches the strains in King's personal life — the constant threats to his family and the rumours of marital infidelity which are presented as part of a conspiracy masterminded by a malignant J. Edgar Hoover. Given the complexity of the plot, the exposition of key information is skilfully conveyed in a variety of ways, including brief transcripts of undercover CIA reports that gloss the events unfolding onscreen from Hoover's paranoid perspective.

Selma is an intelligent — and intelligible — treatment of an important and complex episode in American history. At every turn, the justice of King's cause and the moral superiority of his movement's nonviolent path shine through. Highly recommended. ■

Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

food for thought

Because of the USA's world dominance its internal political matters are of interest to us in NZ. We can only view with concern recent developments in the US political system with the Republican Party in disarray, and the Democrats not much better off. The rise in influence of the so-called "Tea Party" has pushed the Republican Party into a senseless negativity. The law change effected by the Supreme Court a few years back allowing "Super PACs" (Political Action Committees) to engage in unlimited political spending independently of the campaigns (they can't contribute to candidate campaigns or parties) has skewed the system in favour of big business interests. The reason? Super PACs can raise funds from individuals, corporations, unions and other groups without any legal limit on donation size.

Social commentator Michael Sean Winters has found cause for hope. His analysis of the failure of the Democrats at last November's elections was that they could not agree on a unifying message. They paid the price at the polls. "Pulled in different directions by special interest groups, they ended up focussing on issues of particular interest to slices of the electorate but never found their voice on the kinds of issues that were once the Democratic Party's strong suit." Sound familiar?

A Congressman, Van Hollen, recently unveiled a proposal that addresses the issues that concern most voters and provides the Democrats with the kind of unifying policy proposal that reflects the best traditions of American liberalism. Winters writes: "We live at a time when economic advancement trumps social justice with most voters. This shows the degree to which market ideology has won the argument in the public square. But, the beauty of Van Hollen's proposal is that it brings the two together … it asks whether broad based economic growth is preferable to economic growth that yields benefits almost exclusively for the very wealthy."

cardinals – prelates or apostles?

The Church in Tonga consists of one diocese — not an archdiocese. It has a smaller area and fewer members than many parishes in other parts of the world. Why then would Francis make Bishop Soane Mafi a Cardinal?

Cardinals were appointed traditionally to assist the Pope in his hitherto relatively restricted role. As well as bishops, some priests and deacons were also eligible for the post. In modern times the role is to help the pope in the governance of the universal church.

At first the people of Rome, later the clergy of Rome, elected the Pope. In 1059 cardinals were given that right. In 1587 Pope Sixtus V limited cardinals to 70: six bishops, 50 priests, and 14 deacons. That limit remained untouched until John XXIII. In 1971 Paul VI changed the rules so that, while there was no limit on the number of cardinals, only those under 80 could vote in Papal elections. John Paul II limited the number of cardinal-electors to 120. They are all now considered to be parish priests of the diocese of Rome.

A tradition had grown whereby certain Dioceses and Curial positions were automatically granted a red hat and so fostered a degree of competition for ecclesiastical favours. (I remember being shocked when Pope John XXIII, on TV after his first conclave, bluntly remarked: "Pius found it difficult to choose suitable candidates because so many unsuitable clerics were pestering him for promotion.") A shift in emphasis began with Pius XII (1939-1958), who began a radical internationalisation of the College.

One result of Francis' changes is that clerical careerists, who thought they knew the road to becoming a cardinal, now find that "the first will be last, and the last will be first". Two interesting factors in the latest round of appointments are: first, these are not prelates with close ties to the Vatican, and second, they are or have been presidents of their national or regional bishops' conferences.

It looks as though working well with other bishops is more important to Pope Francis than connections in the Roman Curia. This fits well with his intention to move towards a more synodal and less self-referential Church and the transformation of the Curia into a model of service.

It seems to me that if you ask: "What message is Francis conveying to the world by this or that action?" the answer is to be found in the following from the Vatican II Decree on Apostolic Life: "Catholics should make it their business to cooperate with all men and women of good will for the advancement of whatever rings true, whatever is just, whatever is sacred, whatever is lovable. They should confer with them, taking the initiative discreetly and courteously so that ways and means may be sought of improving the structures of the community and the State according to the spirit of the Gospel."

That is evangelisation, bringing an experience of Christ to all people. By making Soane Mafi a cardinal Francis is expecting him to lead this evangelisation in his corner of the world. ■

opportunities for service

Peter Norris

Today we held our traditional "Opening Afternoon Tea" for new students and their families. It has always been referred to in that way even though most students have hot chocolate — if anything. I have met some wonderful students — full of life and remarkably hopeful. Even though they might not articulate it to others, most of these students want to be doctors or dentists. They will have a long, hard struggle.

At the same time I am adjusting to the death of a good friend in the United States. After a long illness and much pain, Fr Richard McBrien died last month. I was a mature student in the History Department at the University of Notre Dame in USA and he was Chair of the Theology Department when we became close friends. He would often pick me up for breakfast at the start of the day and he was stimulating company. We chatted about everything. He was generous in sending me copies of the various books he wrote. I was aware sadly of the work of the militant right wing who tried to get him excommunicated and to have his work banned. This amazed me. He was the kindest faculty member I met at the University and lived simply in a small apartment — seeking no special privileges.

When I look at the students who want entry into medicine I'm aware that some want to serve while others see it as a way to a life of privilege. I cannot help but think of Richard McBrien when I see this. Our students have time to grow into living a life of service and my aim is to try to expose them to people who serve rather than strut.

Another friend of mine, anglican Archbishop Philip Richardson, will be visiting for a few days. Anyone who is interested in an ecclesiastical career should spend time with Philip. I could not deal with the media attention and the knife-edge diplomacy that is sometimes needed. The best leadership comes from an attitude of serving rather than giving orders. I think most of the churches in New Zealand are led by people who serve first.

In university we teach various subjects so that when students finish the course they understand the technical expertise needed in the disciplines. It is easier to teach for technical expertise but harder to teach so that a mature understanding is attained. Yet the aim of the various courses is to give students the maturity of outlook held by people like Richard McBrien and Philip Richardson. I use these two men as examples but I am aware of many women and men who are equally engaged in lives of service.

This Wednesday our students go to the Orokonui Ecosanctuary for voluntary landscaping work. There is not a lot of glory in this work but students are happy to take part. And every year some students have returned voluntarily later in the year. Because they had given their own time they feel an ownership of the whole project. I think that opportunities like this lay a foundation for volunteering and service. A university education builds on these opportunities. We have wonderfully open students and with encouragement and opportunity they will be as generous as my friends Fr Richard McBrien and Archbishop Philip Richardson. ■

Rev Peter Norris is the Master of St Margaret's College at Otago University.

a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

He had been looking at me curiously for the last half hour, crouching near the door of the train carriage. A classic Oliver Twist urchin, he was a little grimy and wearing ill-fitting clothes. We were rattling south, away from the winter of North India. Dawn was breaking, a cold lemon blinking through the fog. He hugged his arms, head nodding against his knees in his cold corner. I was well-slept and warm under a woollen shawl and two merino tops.

I beckoned him over and he perched beside me and chirpily answered my questions:

"My name is Ameer. I am nine years old … My father is in jail and my mother is busy all day with my three little sisters. Her new husband sent me away from the house … I am going back to Nagpur now. I have a friend there who catches trains and asks for money too, like me …"

Ameer wolfed down a slice of Russian fudge and an orange and was soon curled asleep on my berth, draped with my shawl.

Ameer joined our family for the next 20 hours. After a few shy questions, Ameer and our kids got busy playing UNO and drawing pictures together.

I wanted to ask him a thousand question to understand more about his life. I wondered if I could somehow rescue him and find him a home. Maybe we could take him home with us?

He had no expectations and was happy with paper and felt-pens to draw with. He disappeared to do some begging for an hour or so. Ameer didn't like peanut butter and banana rolled in roti. He liked the salty, spicy snacks sold by train vendors.

One good reason for travelling on this train is that I get to meet Ameer. We had discussed whether to fly or catch a train. It was easy to rationalise why we should fly to Chennai. The train takes more than two days and two nights. Flying is more sensible when I have little annual leave and lots of work deadlines.

But what about our family commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and going by land whenever the option is available ...To move from wintry North India to hot South India at a speed our bodies can keep pace with ... use the time to write *Tui Motu* columns? When I slightly grudgingly booked train tickets I vacillated again. Wouldn't it be sensible to book the train's air-conditioned class this time? Parsimony and tradition won over and I'd booked the cheap sleeper class tickets.

This morning reminds me that carbon footprints aside, the spiritual practice of encounter is important to me. Going by train I have had to meet Ameer and his searching street-kid eyes. I can't plead ignorance of kids who are abandoned and alone, scavenging on trains across India.

The spiritual practice of encounter is most often the practice of hospitality. Jonathan Sacks in *The Dignity of Difference* describes how the Hebrew Bible commands us in 36 different places to "love the stranger".

Encountering the stranger involves locating myself where I meet people who are different from me. This is more likely when I remove the buffers that wealth and education provide, or use public transport, or spend time in places on the edge of the empire, or worship in churches with the less varnished people, and in locating myself in places where "strangers" hang out. All this makes it easier to build relationships with the people on the fringes.

So Ameer leapt off the train when we finally pulled into Nagpur. I didn't think of a way to stay in touch with him or help him have a better life circumstance. He has no address and no phone number. But for today I'm glad we chose to travel by train in the sleeper class, and I am glad we could share this segment of the journey rattling along side by side. ■

Kaaren Mathias lives with her husband Jeph and four children in North India, where she works in community health and development. Her email address is: kaarenmathias@gmail.com

May generous grace
steep your spirit
expand your hearts
comfort your bodies
and enliven your homes
this month.

FROM THE TUI MOTU TEAM