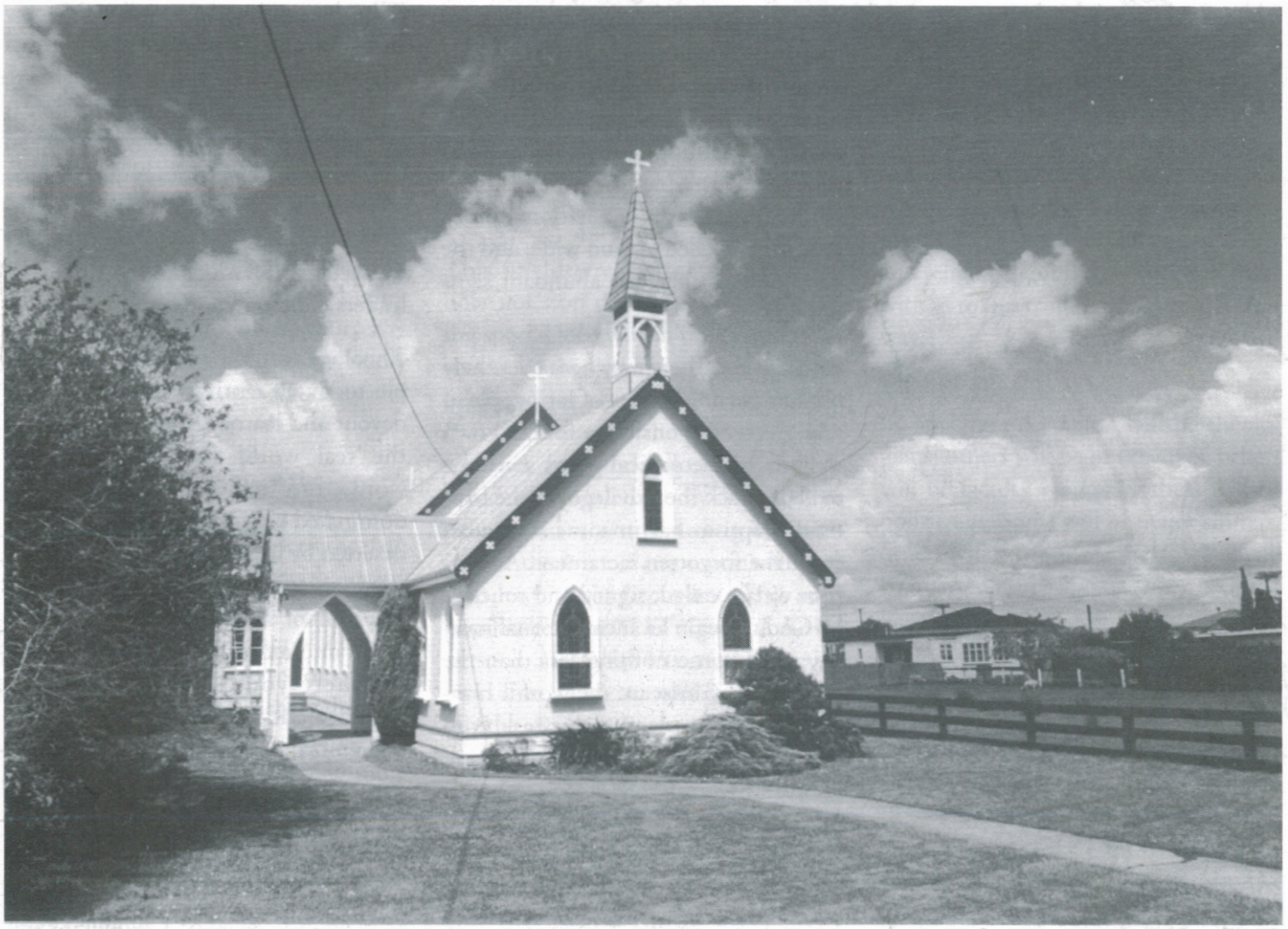
Tui Motu

InterIslands

November 1997 Price $4



Sacred Heart Church Rongotea

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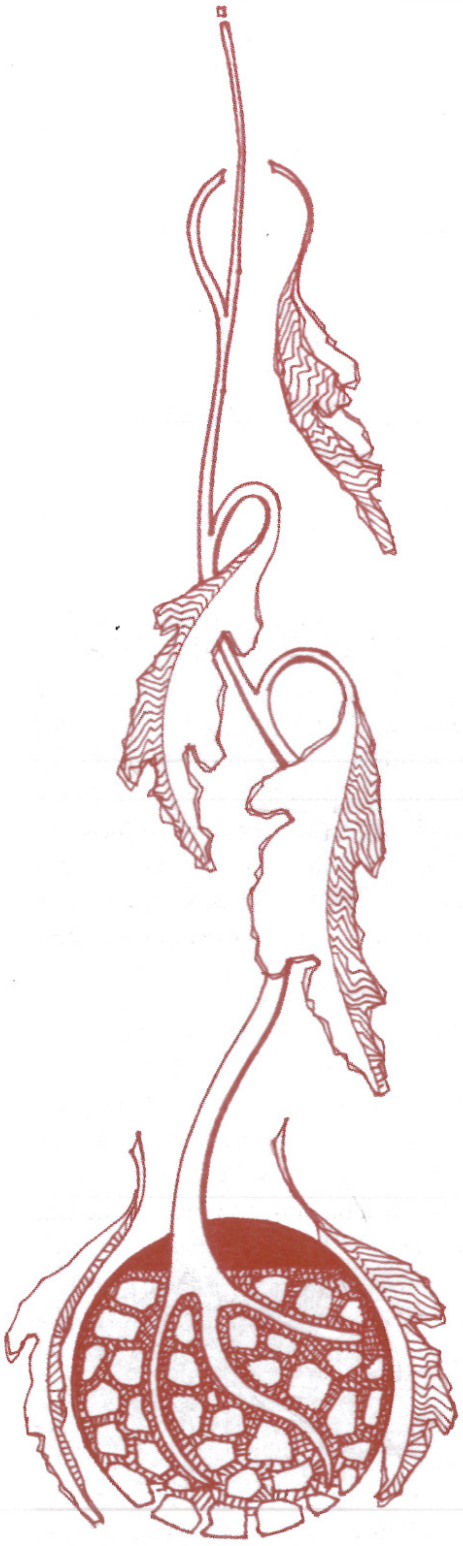

Autumn sowing

The Church, said Bishop Cullinane recently, is in a season of autumn. Empty pews, churches shut, the clergy fewer — and older. Symbolic of this 'dying' for Catholics is the closing of Holy Cross College, Mosgiel. The old order changeth... But Bishop Peter is not indulging in a fit of gloomy pessimism. Autumn, he says, is also the time for judicious sowing and planting. This month Tui Motu has spotlighted those rural areas which are at greatest risk because of declining resources The focus is deliberately wider than the Catholic Church, because it is a national problem. We travelled far and wide, and the good news is there are abundant signs of hope.

Fewer priests there may be — yet there is a hunger on the part of lay people to take greater responsibility for their own welfare. In theological terms it is time to claim back the privileges of the baptised. Baptism has in some senses become the forgotten sacrament. At baptism we are called, signed and touched by God to begin an incarnational journey: to become nothing less than the presence of Christ in the world. Having once been planted our task is to flourish and grow. Opposite, Margaret Hebblethwaite, reflects on what it means to be a lay person in today's Church. It is a timely reflection.

Last month *Tui Motu* also called on Gerald Pillay, newly appointed Professor of Theology at Otago University. For many church.people the loss of the connection between the theology faculty at Holy Cross College, Mosgiel and Knox College in Dunedin was seen as wholly negative. Since his arrival Professor Pillay has not ceased to paint this new situation as a wonderful opportunity. Theology, he suggests, is at last being returned to the marketplace, which is its rightful place. Theology grew up in the medieval universities as queen of the sciences. Its role was to inform and instruct the minds of these destined for the secular professions and to mould the leaders of church and state.

Theology would be seen by most people today as a private activity for the devout and learned, of no relevance to the 'real' world. In Professor Pillay's words, the "naked public square" is dominated by the business man — but deserted by university and Church. He wants to see the queen of the sciences taken out of the seminary enclosure and thrust into active debate at the very heart of where young minds are being moulded and the future of our land is being nurtured.

Perhaps that would be a true planting for a second spring.

M.H.

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The Lay Vocation

Margaret Hebblethwaite

The definition of a layperson is "not a cleric, not a religious": though negative in form this is still positive in thrust. Such a paradox should not surprise us, for it is a basic characteristic of Christian statements that they have a rather upside-down nature: through death we are born to eternal life; through giving we receive; through humbling ourselves we are exalted. And so on.

The true reason, I suggest, why today there is such an attraction to the lay state is that it captures this fundamentally Christian call to be no-one-in-particular , to be a base-line Christian; without special powers and privileges, without ambition for supposedly higher states. "You must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi since you have only one Master, and you are all sisters and brothers (Mt 23, 8)".

The lay way is one form of the "preferential option for the poor". To choose to remain a lay person is to seek the path of poverty in the Church, without any of the adornments of hierarchical status. To choose the lay state of life is to remind oneself that in terms of Christ's Church I am not what others think of me according to the rank I have risen to, but I am myself and nothing more than that.

Witness to Baptism

To be lay, therefore, is to be "not a cleric, not a religious". To be lay is to be *just* a member of the People of God, without frills. And because there are no frills the lay state has a special witness to make — a witness to baptism. Baptism — and baptism alone — is the entry to new life in Christ. No further vows need to be added to the baptismal commitment, which is, in itself, both sufficient and total. To be lay is to say: "I am a Christian: what more is there to say? It is already given."

You do not, in any sense, become more of a Christian by the sacrament of Holy Orders or by the profession of religious vows. The days are gone when we believed that one class of Christians gave instructions of how to be holy and the other class concentrated on *being* holy. The new Code of Canon Law states unambiguously that "lay people, like all Christ's faithful, are deputed to the apostolate by baptism and confirmation (225)". The apostolate is not an optional extra for the laity; it is a task to which we are already deputed, whether we like it or not.

This uncluttered witness to baptism does not stop the lay person from doing special jobs within the Church. Laity can be theologians; a lay person can be the editor of a Catholic newspaper. Laity can preach the word of God, whether by speaking or writing or broadcasting, but can only do so if other people find it worth reading or listening to: there is no automatic audience who have to sit through it. This non-permanent, unofficial aspect of the lay person's apostolate has a valuable side to it. The lay person will go on preaching the word as long as he or she believes in it — no longer. In this way the lay apostolate is closer to the witness of the first apostles: it goes on day to day because it goes on being inspired by new fire, not because the work is expected and the escape routes are heavily guarded.

The unremembered event

Baptism for most of us was long ago and unremembered. We need to find new expression for that Christian dedication, but in a way that does not change or modify or redefine the original commitment — simply saying it afresh. That way is Eucharist. By drinking the cup of the Covenant we are able to reaffirm our baptismal vows regularly, even daily. The Eucharist is of special importance to the lay person, because it provides the essential sacramental means of updating our baptismal commitment, to which we have a special witness. In those churches where laity are not permitted to drink of the cup of the covenant, a crucial symbolic expression of the Christian commitment is denied them.

The lay person draws our attention to the rich variety of charisms in the Church. There are as many vocations as there are Christians, and each one is different, precious and unrepeatable. The laity do not find their calling or develop their charisms by looking for something outside themselves, with which they can fit in, but rather by discerning the particular, personal way in which God calls them as individuals and none other. This is not untrue of clergy and religious, but the lay vocation bears witness to this truth in an especially clear way.

The specific role of the laity is to have no specific role. Some will be theologians, others will be housewives, others will be factory workers, others will be politicians. Some will be major sinners, others will be minor sinners. Some will be married, some single. Diversity is the keynote for the laity — diversity of charisms, leading to diversity of vocations. And there are only two common factors. One is a clear witness to the basics of Christianity, sacramentally expressed in baptism, confirmation and Eucharist: the laity are the People of God. The other is a clear witness to the value of not seeking status in the Church. The laity, in other words, are *just* the People of God, nothing more. In the words of Congar: "there can be more far-reaching ways of putting the Christian abilities of the laity to work, and thus the possibility of a new springtime in the Church".

Margaret Hebblethwaite is a journalist and assistant editor of the London *Tablet*.

Charity or Justice: the Tough Option

A reflection on the lives of two extraordinary people – Mother Teresa and Archbishop Helder Camara

Robert Consedine

The death of Mother Teresa has provoked a level of reaction to her life culminating in calls for immediate canonisation. People who met her (myself included), were impressed by her simplicity and focused approach to those in need. Even by today's standards, her empire is impressive – more than 500 convents in 105 countries, excluding India. The articles in the October *Tui Motu*, while acknowledging her limitations, reflect her simple, some would say simplistic, response to poverty.

The saintly status imposed on Mother Teresa and her global popularity begs to be examined in an age when governments are jailing and executing people who struggle for justice in many countries. The Church also puts Mother Teresa up as a model while continuing to harass, marginalise and expel those committed to justice and human liberation. Criticising Mother Teresa is like criticising motherhood. However, her contribution to humanity is so important it begs to be examined. It brings us to the centre of the complexity of responding to the very powerful gospel challenges about poverty and the poor.

Feeding and housing the hungry today is a very complex challenge and sometimes the most obvious response is not always the most appropriate. It does not take long for people who feed the hungry to realise that the number of hungry, homeless people increases faster than they can be fed and housed. There can be a strong tension between charity and justice and in a healthy church both have their place. Charity gives comfort to the poor in a very immediate way. Justice is bringing about change to the causes of destitution and poverty. This tension is illustrated by the lives of Mother Teresa and Archbishop Helder Camara, born within one year of each other, and both destined to lead extraordinary lives.

In 1910 Mother Teresa was born in Albania and her life journey led her to join a religious teaching order in Ireland before moving to Calcutta. The story she tells is that one day she found a dying person being eaten by rats in a dustbin and it was at that moment she decided to begin a series of projects that would enable people to die with more dignity. Those of you who have been to Calcutta or even observed the images of hunger on TV will know something of the immensity of what absolute poverty looks like. In 1973 I walked the streets of Calcutta and visited many of her projects. The poverty is staggering, over a million people sleep each night in the streets of that city alone. It is a powerful witness to the immensity of what absolute poverty looks like. Here in the flesh are the people with spindly legs, the children with bloated bellies living amongst the stench of their excrement. Each day workers from Mother Teresa's home for the dying take carts around the streets of Calcutta to pick up people in various states of terminal functioning and bring them back to die with a small measure of human dignity.

In 1909, one year before Mother Teresa was born, Helder Camara who later became an Archbishop was born in a little village outside Recife in Brazil. Camara was formed by the same Catholic Church. He too was confronted by the problem of the absolute poverty of possibly millions of Brazilian people. The poverty in Brazil is as horrific as it is in India. Archbishop Camara took a different course to Mother Teresa.

Mother Teresa saw the Christ in each individual, fed and comforted them one at a time and cared for tens of thousands of individuals. She is reported to have said, "I think it is very beautiful for the poor to accept their lot, to share it with the passion of Christ. I think the world is being much helped by the suffering of poor people".

For that she was welcomed in every country, was courted by some of the most corrupt politicians in the world, received massive financial support and had honours bestowed on her including a Nobel Peace prize. Mother Teresa did not address the question as to why this hunger existed and persisted. She did not challenge the structures which create hunger. She did not challenge the rich.

Archbishop Helder Camara took a different choice in Brazil. He asked why people were hungry. Camara used to say,

"When I give charity to the poor I am called a saint. When I ask why they are poor I am called a communist".

He chose the difficult and dangerous course of challenging the structures which create and perpetuate poverty. In taking that course he was physically threatened, his books have been banned and he has been reduced to the status of a non-person in Brazil. Despite the personal and political pressure his influence has never been stronger among the poor, the persecuted and the young. Archbishop Camara was even more explicit in hjs challenge to the rich when he said, "The rich are prepared to talk about charity but woe betide those who talk of justice, rights and structural change".

Mother Teresa made a loving charitable response to the individual poor. She went to open homes in New York during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Reagan received her at the White House and they were photographed together. While Mother Teresa was opening her three homes for the homeless in New York, Reagan was in the process of dismantling the welfare system in the United States which, in effect, was making more than five million people homeless. Hillary Clinton went to the funeral of Mother Teresa in Calcutta and she was photographed cuddling an Indian baby. Last month President Bill Clinton cut US$500 million to federal day care children's centres and gave about the same amount as a tax break to the Boeing Corporation.

Helder Camara challenged the structures of injustice, the rich and the powerful and lived a life of enormous personal risk. He got no prizes. His biggest enemies were Mass-going Catholics *and* so were his biggest supporters.

Both of these extraordinary people responded to the demands of the Gospel. One became popular. The other became hated. Feeding the hungry calls for tough options.

▷▷ *Archbishop Helder Camara, Archbishop of Recife, in the poorest and least developed part of Brazil. A prophetic figure at Vatican II. Twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize*

In the last few weeks we have seen those with money and power all over the world praising the work of Mother Teresa as they go about the business of promoting policies which increase the poverty. The two main political leaders in this country, Jim Bolger and Helen Clarke, also praised the work of Mother Teresa in parliament. Both belong to governments which cut benefits to our poorest people and promoted policies which put our basic needs at the mercy of the free market. They forgot to mention the challenge Mother Teresa presented us with during her 1973 New Zealand visit: "your India is your street, your India is your neighbourhood, your India is your city, your India is your country".

• What do we make of a state housing department which is actively working to increase homelessness while families live in old cars, caravans, sheds and overcrowded houses? This same housing department is boasting a record profit of $111 million and a minister of housing who takes no responsibility for the homeless. Many state houses are empty. The homeless can't afford the rents.

• What about the CHE which boasted huge profits and is harassing an old man to pay for his wife's terminal care?

• What do we really think about a market-driven education system which has transferred a substantial amount of the national debt onto the shoulders of our youth, desperate to get an education?

• And perhaps the most frightening question. How do we feel about a government which is discarding traditional roles and is increasingly no longer taking responsibility for the common good? Notice the number of ministers *whom we elected,* when challenged about issues of justice, health, housing, education and welfare, say they are powerless to do anything. So the choices in regard to the challenge that we care for those in need, are difficult and complex.

Pope Paul VI said that the church must take *a preferential option for the poor.* The synod of Bishops went even further when it said that *working for justice is an integral part of preaching the gospel.* This is the challenge to each one of us. Whether we make a charity or justice response – *and both are valid,* Jesus was clear about our responsibility. ■

Robert Consedine as Corso organiser, co-organised Mother Teresa's visit to Christchurch in 1973 and subsequently visited many of her projects in Calcutta. Tui Notu publishes this response to articles about the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta in the October issue. We invite ongoing discussion on this controversial theme.

Fishhooks ... and the Ministerial Relationship

*Stephanie Kitching (above), a Sister of Mercy, is a qualified psychotherapist and counsellor working for Catholic Social Services, Wellington, as well as in private practice. Following the visit to New Zealand of Dr Kathleen Clarke (*see October issue of *Tui Motu) Stephanie has written three articles on boundaries in the carer-client relationship and how they may be transgressed. This opening piece focusses on situations of conflicting interest.*

"Mrs Adams, you have been so good to us while we've been in your Baptism Programme. We would like you to be godmother to our twins."
"Father, we were up country last week and we saw this art work in an antique shop. We know you collect this artist's work so we bought this for you."
How does the minister, Mrs Adams or Father, respond in situations like these?

As human beings we live our lives in relationship. We all have physical and psychological needs. We need to belong, to be in community, to be loved by others, to have a sense of self-worth, and to live out our creative potential.

But professional persons, lay and ordained, must attend to these needs too. They need to know themselves and the professional boundaries to be put in place in order to protect the people they are serving. Boundaries are limits which provide safety in the presence of power. They are there to protect the vulnerable. If professional ministers do not have clear personal boundaries in place, they will find it impossible to set solid professional boundaries so as to provide a covenant of protection for parishioner or client.

The professional ministerial relationship presents a different requirement from ordinary person-to-person relations. A minister serves the parishioner or client; their needs are primary. The minister will need to set clear boundaries and maintain them in order to protect the vulnerability of the person ministered to. Ministers must scrutinise their own behaviour and always act in the best interests of those they serve.

This is obviously easier to do when the minister and the parishioner or client are and remain relative strangers to each other. But what happens when there are overlapping roles: for example, when the minister is a pastor and is invited by a parishioner home for a meal. Does he or she respond as parish leader or as friend? Or a young woman invites her uncle who is a priest to preside at her marriage. Does she see him as her priest, or as her uncle? What if there were to be a difference of opinion in planning the wedding ceremony?

Such *overlapping* relationships are unavoidable in ministry settings but they require ethical management. The minister needs to be absolutely clear that the parishioner's needs are primary – and his or her own needs are irrelevant. The constant question is: "Is it for me, or is it for the other person?" And the minister will need to ensure that the parishioner is included in any decisions about managing the relationship.

On the surface, other relationships may seem similar, but with close scrutiny a difference emerges. Take the case of the pastoral assistant who asks advice of a participant in the sacramental programme she is running. She needs some

investment advice; he is the manager of the local bank. Or suppose a spiritual director is asked for spiritual guidance by someone they employ.

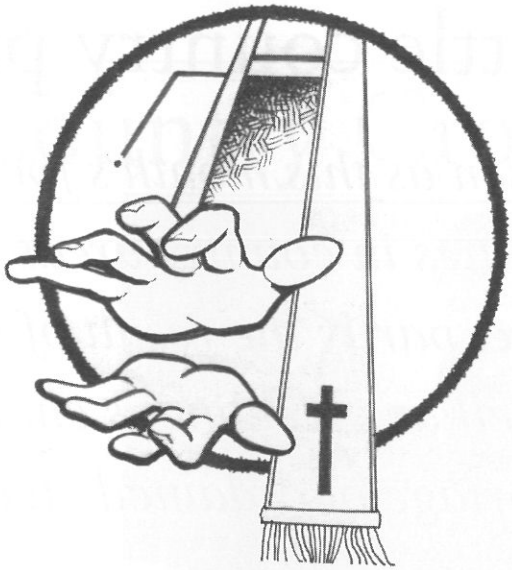
In both of these cases, the relationship is not just an overlapping one. It is a *dual* relationship: one in which each person in the relationship has more than one role in relation to the other. In such situations, the professional relationship is potentially damaged or impaired because of the combining of two totally incompatible roles. Professional ministers who are at the service of others by virtue of their role, need to be scrupulously honest and rigorous in their self-searching to determine the impact of their behaviour on the person being served.

Some cases can be easily identified as potentially harmful for the client, such as the case of the spiritual director just mentioned. If a relationship were to be established, the director would become party to much confidential information and the vulnerability of the directee. If the directee's work as employee needs to be appraised, then the director, who is also the employer, will be caught in an impossible situation.

What if the relationship is initiated by the client or the parishioner? A parishioner offers the local minister a fortnight's holiday at their beach house each year? What harm can be done by this? But following this scenario through, imagine two families entering the church on Sunday just after the minister has returned from holiday. With the best will in the world there will be a difference in the way the minister and each of these two families react; one, the owner of the beach house; the other, the family who has not long moved into the parish, and who came requesting assistance for some furniture.

The personal challenge is to make an honest appraisal of the possible outcomes of one's behaviour, and of its impact not just on the person concerned but on one's wider ministerial position in relation to others whom one serves.

One of the most complicated issues in this area of relationships and professional behaviour centres on emotional distance. Ministry must be seen and be understood as something different from friendship. In friendship, as in ministry, there are aspects of mutuality. Certain things such as beliefs, commitments



or values are held in common by both parties. There is also an element of benevolence, of wishing well for the other, the forming of the relationship for the other, as well as for oneself. But in ministry that is where the similarity ceases.

Friendship and ministry are quite distinct. A client comes to the minister out of need; the minister does not choose the client, whereas in friendship friends choose each other. Friends are equal in power and status, but the minister by virtue of his or her position has power and status. Reciprocity and self-disclosure are not present in ministry as they are in friendship. This difference in self-disclosure underpins the difference in power in the ministerial relationship. The minister is there for the parishioner or client, so self-disclosure is minimal; it is done only to enhance the needs of the person being served who will never know as much about the minister as the minister knows about him or her. Ministry demands intimacy, but there is an art, a skill, in being intimate in the professional relationship. It has to do with stepping in and out of the service of the client; it has nothing to do with serving the minister's needs.

It is vitally important that the minister receives supervision on a regular basis.

Supervision offers a way for ministers to become aware of their own personal issues and growth areas, as well as providing support in difficult situations where ethical boundaries may be infringed without clear knowledge of what is occurring.

Supervision is a process of uncovering one's blind spots, of raising one's awareness to unconscious processes and responses. It enables ministers to extend their knowledge base in the area in which they are working, and provides an opportunity to give voice to feelings within a safe and confidential context. ■

In her second article, Stephanie Kitching will deal with issues of power and the ministerial relationship.

http://www.biblesoc.org.nz

What future ..

for our little country parishes?

Tui Motu ***has chosen as this month's focus the situation of Christian communities in country areas. All churches are feeling the pressure, partly the result of rural depopulation as well as a decline is church attendance and a growing shortage of ordained clergy***

First we went to the Catholic diocese of Palmerston North, where the problem has been faced fair and square with two immediate positive outcomes. Sr Cathy Egan who has co-ordinated much of the investigative process, described how, firstly, a team — or diocesan 'task force' — of priests, religious and lay people went all round the diocese talking and listening to the people.

The overwhelming response was a determination to keep small rural parishes as *eucharistic communities*, whether or not there was a resident priest or Sister. Coupled with this was a strong call for lay formation. A second initiative, consequent on the first, was to launch the *Hands On* programme for lay formation throughout the diocese. Over 400 people were nominated by the parishes and started on the journey together. Even more remarkable was the fact that some 350 completed the two year course.

At the same time the diocese committed itself to a more *collaborative* style of ministry. What exactly does that mean in practice? We asked Bishop Peter Cullinane. His response was realistic as well as optimistic. Bishop Peter prefers the term *complementarity* of ministry to "collaborative". He sees the essence of the process as leadership shared between the ordained and the non-ordained.

keep small rural parishes as eucharistic communities

Bishop Peter is insistent that although the shortage of priests may be a catalyst for radical change, the move is theological rather than merely sociological, and is firmly founded in the vision of Church which comes out of Vatican II. The Council redefined the Church as the People of God, seeing lay Christians as primarily the leaven of the world. Meanwhile the concept of ordained priesthood was turned upside down. All the ministries of the ordained priest are now to be seen in the context of the *word of God*. Karl Rahner claims that there can be no conflict or competition between the love of God and the love of this world. Indeed one enriches the other. Therefore the primary thrust of the lay apostolate must be outwards to serve the world: the Church must not become too self-serving or onward-looking. Whereas the ministry of the priest is to minister to the people through word and sacrament, the two ministries are complementary and nourish each other.

That's the theory. What about the practice, at a time when there are fewer priests and so many small parishes are under threat? The Palmerston North scheme is bold and revolutionary. Bishop Peter described how the small sacramental communities have to take responsibility for their own life: their

liturgy, catechesis and their evangelical witness. Each of these small parishes is a eucharistic community *by right*. Each will have its leadership group. The priests act to serve these groups and will work in relationship to them. Bishop Peter foresaw the time when there would be appointed lay presiders who would conduct funerals and weddings and preach. They would of course need a specific formation for this.

The priests

Meanwhile there will need to be a radical "repositioning" of the priests. Ideally they will live in small communities in *base parishes*, which will serve an area. Priests and paid lay assistants will serve across parish boundaries. Part of the formula, the bishop insists, is the ongoing formation of the priests. They will need professional supervision in their work, more mentoring and evaluation of their apostolic effectiveness. (In the dioceses in America where collaborative ministry has taken on, preaching the word is seen as the key, and priests undergo further formation in homiletics.) Bishop Peter is hopeful that the seminary training in New Zealand will continue to form priests on a communal model. They will live communally and their role will be to build communities.

▷▷

Country Crossroads

100 miles from Paris deep in the heart of the French countryside a mixed group of Christian people seek to carry the gospel of Christ to the people of the Eure

The *Country Crossroads* team in early morning session. (l to r) Fr Jean Vivien, Sister Odile and layman Matthieu de Preville

The sun is not yet up on a February morning but the team at *Country Crossroads* is already hard at work. Their first task is to sift through a heap of local press cuttings sent in by friends. "We country folk prefer to start at the grassroots rather than from grandiose abstract notions as a foundation to our apostolic work," remarks Fr Jean Vivien, the priest member of the team. Press cuttings represent the ground soil of the region.

By digging through the information they discover what nourishes and fertilises, what is sterile or arid; and it stirs them into action to help improve the life of the people. "Everything is significant: the environment, justice issues, the health of the economy, closure of rural schools," says Odile, a Sister on the team who has been trudging round the country roads for the past 30 years. "After all it is this life which matters to God, and that's where we have to start if we want to help people discover the spiritual dimension."

The *Country Crossroads* team today are looking at misspending of public funds, violence in schools as well as questions of social security and pensions. Their discussions often lead to local initiatives. Among these are working with the divorced, setting up a house for youth (dear to the heart of Matthew, the lay member of the team), a formation programme for town councillors, finding alternatives to violence.. and so on.

The panel on the place of divorcees in the Church is headed by Pascal Richer, himself a divorcee. That evening a group meet together in a local church. One woman asks, "Are we not all unworthy of receiving Holy Communion? Why are the divorced and remarried more unworthy than others?" So the most difficult pastoral questions are being aired.

People who come to the *Crossraods* testify to its worth: "I come here to breathe fresh air and recharge my batteries and return renewed to my own parish or neighbourhood". People find comfort and a listening ear. The Church in the *Eure* doesn't only exist in the shadow of ancient steeples.

courtesy of Panorama *magazine*

autumn is a time for sowing

Autumn time

The Bishop concluded by comparing this period in the Church's history to autumn time. An ageing priesthood and falling membership could be interpreted as signs of dying. But autumn is the time for sowing; a time of change — but also a time of revitalisation. Our call therefore is to do autumn tasks; to be content to live in the season we are called to exist in. What needs to die is *clericalism* which sprang from an oppressive model. There will be a flowering of vocations — but not necessarily to the priesthood or religious life. We remember that Easter came after, and as the fruit of, Good Friday.

It is also a time for ecumenical endeavour. We need to get close enough in collaboration with other Christian groups that we "feel" the discipleship of the other. We need also to experience the pain of disunion; and, most important, have a commitment to do something to heal it.

Rongotea

Tui Motu was fortunate to meet some of the leaders of a parish community which is already experiencing the new pastoral structures. Rongotea is a eucharistic community without a priest. It is situated on a road which leads nowhere in particular, and for a long time there has been no resident priest, although for many years they benefited by the proximity of the Marist novitiate house at Highden. It's a dairy-farming area with a strong tradition of church-going. There are some 16-18 families who attend regularly: a Sunday Mass attendance of about 60 including 20 or so children. For a time they depended on the parish of Bulls; but Bulls too has now lost its resident priest. Now one of the priests comes to them each week from Feilding and also attends the monthly parish pastoral council meeting. But to all extents and purposes they "run their own show". The people are willing and are involved. There is a parish council of 12, which is responsible for preparing the liturgy, for finance and for sacramental programmes.

Several of the leadership group have completed the *Hands On* programme, and some have completed the ABIL scripture formation programme. They emphasised that it was important for them to have the confidence to shoulder the responsibility for the parish. Some people say: "we are not worthy..." – but no one is "worthy". They are used to organising their own midweek eucharistic services and Stations of the Cross during Lent. They combine with other Christian groups in the area for Lent and Advent services as well as for a combined Lenten programme.

The Rongotea group were very optimistic about the way things were going and were in no way 'fazed' by the shortage of priests. They saw the hand of the Lord in this evolution: it was a way of getting people back into church where they belong! It has been good for the community to be thrown more on their own resources. "We have known the old way. But that's gone. Everyone now is more involved. Loyalty to parish meetings is now much greater. There are people who don't volunteer — but their turn will come! There are people who have returned to the Church during this time. We've always had a good community in Rongotea. But now it's more spiritually alive — and more integrated".

It seems that springtime is already near at hand in Rongotea.

In Southland

Meanwhile many hundreds of miles further south the same problems are being faced, and *Tui Motu* encountered a similar spirit of optimism. Garston and Athol are two tiny communities enfolded in the foothills of the old gold rush areas south of the Wakatipu basin. They too are suffering from rural depopulation and are threatened with less professional support from the churches. There are three tiny churches in the valley: Catholic and Presbyterian cheek by jowl in Garston, and Anglican in Athol.

Des and Kit O'Brien are pillars of the local Catholic community. They are every bit as confident that the faith will survive in their valley as are the people

of Rongotea. The official priesthood is under assault in more ways than one. But that simply calls for a more empowered laity, say the O'Briens. What is urgently needed is lay training so that they can function with credibility in the absence of the priest. This meant theological, liturgical and scriptural formation. Pastoral visitation could also be done effectively by the laity: they often had the gift for this ministry, more perhaps than the pastor.

The local Presbyterian community are also feeling the pressure of the times. But along with the O'Briens they saw a great opportunity for closer ecumenical co-operation. Basically there is one community in the valley even though they each honoured their own religious traditions. The village hall is common ground, and they all felt the need for the local church to be a focus for celebrating events in the life of the local community. The three churches all have fortnightly services led by a Minister. But why could they not all come together the alternate Sunday? The grassroots movement was clearly for much closer ecumenical co-operation. Liturgies for common worship were urgently required. Interestingly enough, the Catholic and Presbyterian couples were united in nominating who their local lay leader might be: one of the local Anglicans!

Down the road in Lumsden there are Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian churches. Ecumenism is not quite so much in evidence as in the country districts, but that doesn't mean to say that it could not be the answer to many problems.

Chris Rogan is the local Anglican vicar. The diocese, he says, has lost nearly half its clergy during the last 15 years. The answer has been to train and ordain more non-stipendiary clergy. Chris was fortunate to have one with him in Lumsden, who teaches in the Area school. The Anglican parish covers a wide area, and Chris looks after six

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Anglican concern for rural communities

Penny Jamieson, (right) Anglican Bishop of Dunedin, is also very concerned for the situation of Christian communities in remote country situations

Recently she recalled a joint event in the small Southland town of Riversdale where she and Bishop Len Boyle had shared in an ecumenical event in both their churches as a way of affirming their common faith. This type of "conversation" between the churches Bishop Penny saw as being extremely fruitful. It was built on hospitality, something that comes naturally in rural communities..

She is extremely concerned at the radical demographic change which is taking place in the south of Aotearoa-New Zealand. There is a "flight from the south" which has affected the small rural communities over many years; it hit Invercargill some five years ago and is now hitting Dunedin. Bishop Penny thinks that it will be Christchurch's turn next. This moving away of people and structures puts a huge strain on local communities. The Church needs to respond to this.

Bishop Penny has initiated changes especially in Southland country areas. What happens when a local community can no longer afford a salaried priest? "Sacraments are not for sale," says Bishop Penny. The response in the Winton area is what is termed *mutual ministry*. Several people in the local Anglican parish have now been ordained deacon or priest, but they are all non-stipendiary. In the bishop's view "it is the whole community that is being 'ordained'". A covenant group is being set up. She sees it as an expression of the presence of Christ in the whole body.

When these small rural communities become dependent on very occasional visits from a vicar, there is a serious danger of the local community not surviving from a lack of continuity in the ministry. Therefore it becomes essential to prepare local leaders for ordination. The diocese is involved in that it was Bishop Penny herself who initiated the mutual ministry programme and she as bishop calls the individual people to be ordained. Ordination, she thinks, makes a real difference, since the leaders are enriched by the process of "becoming different". She sees these local pastors as being like GPs. She feels they are more likely to stay faithful to the Anglican tradition; the move for radical change tends to come from the outside.

Talking to Bishop Jamieson it is clear she has no intention of leaving these small country churches to die from lack of resources. Where there is a problem, then with the God's help a solution will be found.

A wedding scene outside St Thomas' church, Garston in Northern Southland. These small country churches are cherished by the local Christian communities

churches. There are services in each two to four times a month. His strategy has been to train lay readers who are non-ordained but licensed by the Church. He has supervised their training, and there have also been diocesan training days. Each of the six local churches is autonomous, run by its own local committee.

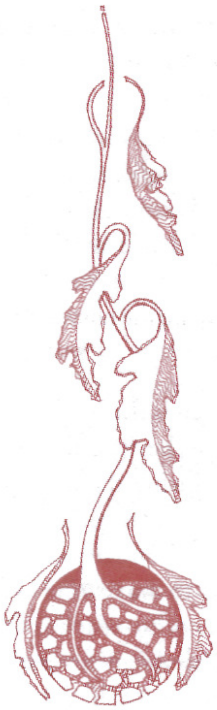
He sees no great problem in the churches having their own local autonomy. Indeed he has found that spoon feeding the laity too much tends to kill local initiative. It is essential that the clergy avoid being dominating. He has some reservations about the strategy of *mutual ministry* which is being initiated in the neighbouring Winton area. He sees it as a vital priestly function to be a little detached from the immediate local community. The priest therefore comes to the local community from outside in order to serve them. He or she is also in a sense the "trouble-shooter". It is important that this aspect of church control continues, or there might be a tendency to lapse into congregationalism.

Chris sees two other functions of the official church presence: as a critical voice in local affairs and to provide pastoral assistance to anyone in need in the local community. Counselling was an important part of his life. But he saw a lot of scope in the future for ecumenical co-operation: sharing premises and perhaps moving towards some blending of the individual ministries.

Paul Johnson is the local Presbyterian minister, and he has to service four local churches. He also saw a need for lay training so that the people would become less "minister dependent". He thought this was a more biblical approach, but it also was a way of avoiding "burn-out" for the minister as well as frustration on the part of lay people with gifts for leadership. He felt the challenge to bridge the gap between meeting social and the evangelical needs. In his view the social gospel is integral to the life of a praying community. He also felt there was a lot of scope for closer relations with the other churches. There was a lot of fear which put people off getting closer to each other.

A lay view — and a Catholic one — comes from Mary Ryan, a farmer's wife just up the road near Balfour. She sees these small rural communities as preserving a very long and precious tradition of care and devotion for their faith, for each other and for their little churches. But the local communities were dwindling in numbers. Often there were fewer Masses. Therefore there needed to be more services of the word led by lay people. And there was real scope for more ecumenical co-operation. Country people are used to working together. She was confident that this ecumenical growth would come from below rather than above. And that was a good thing!

The overall conclusion is that there are solid grounds for hope in these small rural communities. The faith is still strong and there is a real sense of resolution to face up to problems which arise because of the drift away of population as well as the diminishing clerical resources. The people have an instinct to take responsibility for the health of their own communities; to run their own affairs in a much more self-reliant manner than once was the case. ■



Developing Lay Ministries

Bishop Peter Cullinane

It is interesting to see how the early Church organised itself and dealt with difficulties. Often it was a crisis that led to new developments and growth. For example, when the Apostles realised they simply could not keep up with it all (Acts 6,1-7), they called a meeting of "the whole people" (consulted the parishes, so to speak). First, they clarified their own position: they said their first responsibilities were prayer and preaching the good news, and that this was a full time job. The community agreed to choose others who would share the rest of the work. The Apostles set the criteria: they were to be people of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Eventually they were chosen, prayed over and mandated.

You will recognise the parallel between this and what is happening in our own diocese right now. All the parishes have been consulted; they have told us they want to keep their identity as communities which have their own celebration of the Eucharist — they don't want to be submerged in some other parish. If there aren't enough priests for residence in each community, they want to select parishioners for special formation and leadership.

I want to share with you what I believe should be the guiding principles for this development:

1. **What it means to be Church**
I think St Peter's definition is still the best: "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart to proclaim the wonders of God who has called you out of darkness into his own wonderful light." This means that however we organise ourselves it needs to be for the purpose of better proclaiming the wonderful things God has done. This is what we do in worship and in sharing the good news with others.

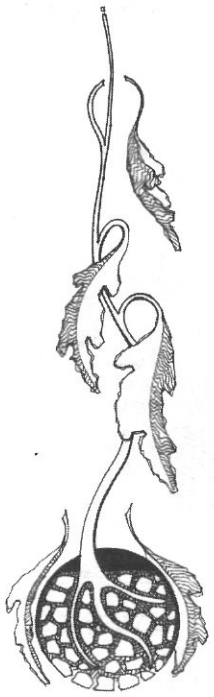
3. Responsibility for Mission
This belongs to the whole consecrated people of God, not just to those who happen to be in ministries of one kind or another. The real reason for this is not the shortage of priests, but what it means to be a baptised/confirmed people. The shortage of priests is only a reason for not kidding ourselves that priests can do it all.

4. Disciples first
The ones Jesus "sent out" were first of all called to be "with him", and to know him well. Only those who talk with Jesus can talk about him. The witness of one's personal life is the first requirement of every ministry. And only those can be leaders who, like Jesus, are servants.

7. In the name of the Church
A vocation carried out in the name of the Church must first be recognised by the Church. That is why the Church is officially involved in Christian marriages, the vows of Religious Life and Ordination. The same applies to ministries carried out in the name of the Church: God's call is made known through the Church's call. Even God's call to belong to the Church and to share in its mission is mediated, or given voice, through the Church's sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

8 **"In the world"**
The ordinary apostolate of lay people is to make the Church present to the wider community. To be a "leaven" in the world is a requirement of our baptism and confirmation, and does not require belonging to any particular ministry.

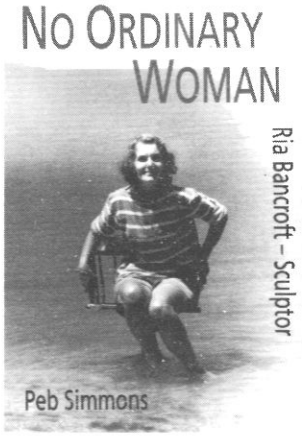
9. **Pastor, Servant of all**
In Catholic theology and in Church law, the "pastor" is the ordained priest



(c.519). The same is true of the "chaplain" (c.564ff). When lay persons exercise pastoral ministry, in a parish of a chaplaincy, they are said to "participate" in pastoral care, alongside the priest. This participation can be in the form of a team looking after a parish or several parishes. Or, when lay persons are appointed to take charge of a parish, the bishop is to appoint a priest from some other parish to provide pastoral oversight (c.517). The same applies to chaplaincies (c.516). The priest exercises his pastoral ministry by calling forth, encouraging and uniting all the other ministries. He would be failing in his own ministry if he were not promoting the participation of others.

11. No vocation is at the expense of others
Each vocation has its own dignity and purpose; each needs the others.
There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit. There are all sorts of service to be done, but always the same Lord. Working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose.
(1 Cor 12,4-7)

Excerpts from a paper published in 1994



Art, Life and Faith

Last month two exciting books about two very creative women hit the New Zealand scene. Great art, whether dramatic or 'fine', often arises out of lives of intense suffering and high adventure. It also can lead the artist down the pathway of faith. For both Ria Bancroft, the sculptor, and Shona MacTavish the dancer, art and faith converge

Peb Simmons lives in Christchurch in a house filled with memorabilia of her mother, Ria Bancroft the sculptor, who died a few years ago. In writing her mother's biography Peb determined to tell the *whole* story of Ria as a woman so that the reader could truly comprehend Ria the artist. Ria was a "Victorian lady with a past"! She was always very secretive about the 'shadow' aspects of her early life. The details of her failed marriages and the poverty of her early life were not things she cared to speak about. Peb has told it all including the details of a violent first marriage, not hesitating to include herself in the book when she felt that was essential to the unfurling of the Ria's story. In a sense the writing of the book has been a catharsis — both for herself and for the memory of Ria Bancroft.

A second reason for writing the book could apply to any human being. Ria was born in comparative poverty, and the book relates how the human spirit can triumph even over horrendous difficulties. Her mother was always the artist, even when she trod the boards as a music hall performer. Her muse as a sculptor, as one who always 'saw in the round', was combined with extraordinary technical gifts: she seemed to be able to do anything with her hands which her imagination moved her to fashion. The harshness of her early life prevented the flowering of her artistic flair until she was 50: but the seed was always there.

A third aim of the book, something especially dear to her daughter, was to reveal the way God worked in Ria's life. Peb herself found her way into Catholicism as a girl. Her mother for a long time simply could not understand Peb's religious faith, and she always expressed regret at not being able to experience God as her daughter did. Yet Peb's own journey of faith was influential in bringing Ria to her maturity as a "faith-filled" artist.

Peb believes the providence of God can be clearly read in her mother's life. Ria went to Italy, to Florence, after the break-up of her second marriage. At once — for the first time in her life — she found friends who were to be like a family to her. She was already a sculptor: in these Arcadian surroundings and under the spell of Ghiberti and Donatello her genius at last began to flower. Then, after she came to New Zealand she found a real Christian community to belong to in New Brighton parish in the late 70s. Her

(left) 'The Seated Madonna' Resin/steel/copper inlay. 27cm 1966. Private

faith came alive and her work blossomed. This was the period of her finest works. Peb believes that Ria's greatest work was the sculpting of the tabernacle doors for the restoration of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament during the early 80s. The doors expressed the way Ria felt God pursuing her as a woman: the passion of Christ balanced by the rapture of his rising from the dead. Ria's own life had been just like that.

Peb makes no secret of the fact that Ria was an uncomfortable person to be close to. The words she used about her mother are very evocative: an "intense" person; a strong personality who could "crush" you; "obsessed" with her work — her art was "an all-consuming fire". Ria could be described as a "driven" personality: she had to do what she had to do. She could never abide being kept from her work.

Yet there was nothing cruel about this captivating and gifted woman. Simply that when she was around she was always the dominant figure. Peb confessed that when her mother was in Italy she herself felt "free". Yet it was the right thing to encourage her to follow the Simmons family and come to New Zealand and settle in Christchurch. It finally gave Ria a family who could properly care for her and provide the necessary human support for her to be able to create such an extraordinary variety of artwork.

Peb is obviously very happy about her book. Telling the true story of her mother has meant a special fulfilment for herself. If it helps bring Ria the recognition that her art deserves, then Peb and all her family will be mightily pleased. ■

No Ordinary Woman
Ria Bancroft: Sculptor
By Peb Simmons
David Bateman Ltd
Price $49.95 incl GST
Review: John Honore

The life of an artist and the work she creates are always a challenge for a biographer, because objectivity is sometimes hard to achieve. As Peb Simmons puts it in her foreword, *No Ordinary Woman* is written "in fairness", which is, in itself, an achievement, because the author is Ria Bancroft's daughter, and she could have been excused for an obvious bias in her reporting.

The language is quaint, such as "her prominent brown eyes had become two warm, secret lamps", which describes her mother at 18. A picture of Ria at 18 shows a beautiful young woman with compelling eyes. Again, "Eddy found in Blanche a woman who... was totally trusting, possessing a heart never before touched by true love". This is a little ironic, as the author describes this suitor as having inherited from his grandfather a natural way with words. I'm sure he would not have put it that way.

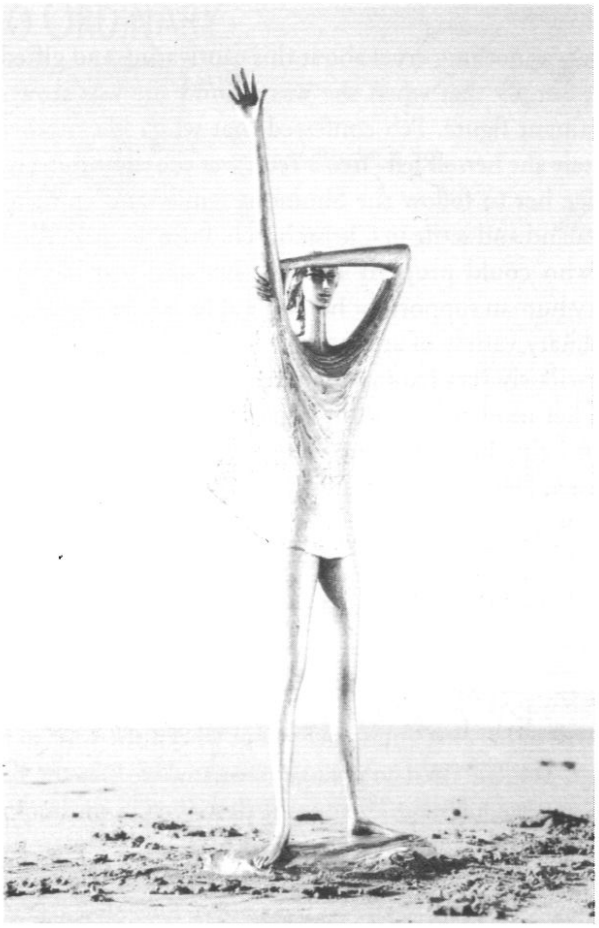
Ria Bancroft was born Violet Ivy Wack in Edwardian England in 1907. She was influenced more by the male side of her family rather than the distaff. Her German great-grandfather gave her the gift of "forming with the hands" and her father gave her a desire for an uncompromising truth in all things. The story is told in the third person to the point when Peb, the daughter, is born and then it becomes a first person narrative. This fits the life of Ria Bancroft, for the daughter was to play an integral part in her life until the day she died.

Ria's early years were filled with sadness. A disastrous marriage in the post war depression years in London, the traumatic birth of her first child, Jack, from whom she was later separated, and the need to change her name to Blanche to play the musical halls, are all honestly described in the book. She finally achieved a certain happiness with Eddy Bancroft, and she changed her name to Ria.

The book recounts the milestones in Ria's formation as an artist, from when she began to paint in London in 1943, experimentation with plaster model manufacture, the lost-wax process to cast lead and hand painting the finished model, until the family moves to Canada in 1951. A happy time in Florence completed her fascination with, and developed her expertise in sculpture, where Donatello's statue of *Mary Magdalene* and Ghiberti's *The Gates of Paradise* were influential in later works created in New Zealand.

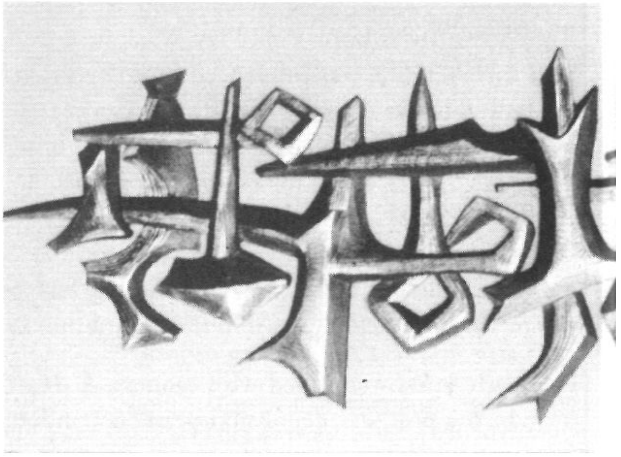
Ria arrived in New Zealand in 1962 where she would remain until her death in 1993. Despite ill health, as her biographer truly puts it, "Ria packed a lifetime of artistic endeavour between the ages of 57 and 85 years". The illustrations of her works are excellent. Her female figures, *Horizon,* the *Madonna and Child* series and the nudes, are particularly striking. They are sensual in form, and have a great visual impact. I find these her best works.

I recommend *No Ordinary Woman* as written "always with love" and as a fitting tribute to the artist and her art. Her sculptures were perhaps not recognised enough nor appreciated during her life. But is this not the case with many artists? This book will redress that. A retrospective exhibition by the McDougall Gallery in Christchurch next year will display many of the works detailed at the back of the book. Her mother would be delighted, and Peb Simmons will complement that exhibition with this biography of a remarkable woman.



The all-embracing gen

Ria Bancroft



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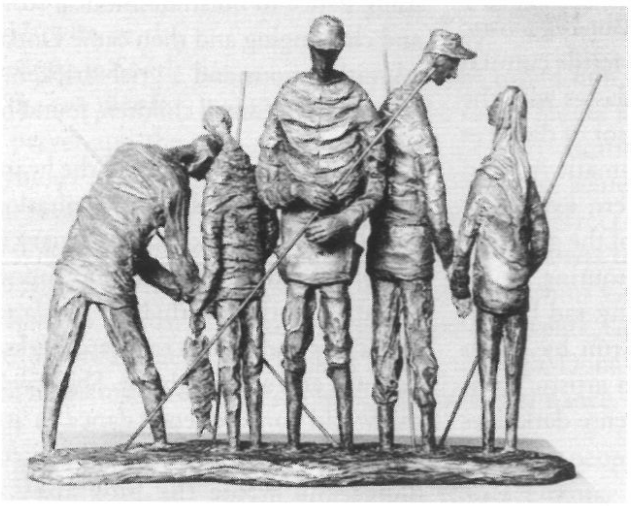


top l: 'Horizon' Christchurch Airport
bottom l: 'Mary Mother of Jesus' St Mary's Catholic Church, New Brighton
centre l: 'Christus Rex' All Saints Anglican Church, Dunedin
centre top: 'Two Mourning Apostles' 1970 Private
top r: 'Fisherboy' 1963, destroyed in a fire
centre r: 'Fisherfolk' 1965, Private
bottom r: 'Unicycle No 2' 1963, Christchurch Girls H.S.
bottom c: 'Forms' clay maquette, 1964-65, Univ. of Canterbury

Leap of Faith
by Shona Dunlop MacTavish
Longacre Press
Price: $29.95
Review: Kathleen Doherty


▷▷ Shona MacTavish at home in Dunedin

She has known great love and great loss, fame and joy and deep personal sorrow, and through it all Shona Dunlop MacTavish has danced. From the richness of a life fully lived has emerged a warm, wise and deeply compassionate woman whose remarkable story has now been told in her autobiography.

A Leap of Faith is a fascinating account of the life and times of a great New Zealand dancer who, at the age of 77, is still developing and choreographing dancers which illuminate issues of prime relevance, and who promises that she has not done and said it all yet.

The young Shona Dunlop encountered dance in an intense way only when she travelled to Europe in 1935 with her mother and older brother, Bonar, following the sudden death of her father the Rev Prof Frank Dunlop when she was only 12. The purpose of the trip was to develop Bonar's artistic talent: but it was Shona who flourished in the fertile cultural milieu of pre-war Vienna. She began taking classes with the celebrated Gertrude Bodenwieser, first professor of dance at the Vienna State Academy for Music and Dramatic Art and leading choreographer and teacher of modern expressive dance. A new way of being took over the life of the girl from Dunedin: by the time she was 18 she was touring South America with the Bodenwieser dance company, sad but relieved to leave behind a Europe being over-run by Hitler with devastating consequences for the Jewish artistic community. Diary entries tell the story of those tense dark days with a compelling immediacy.

The displaced Bodenwieser eventually brought her company to Australia. Shona's career as a performer flourished. Dances were created for her, she was feted as an exponent of the New Dance and she started taking pupils of her own. And then entered Rev Donald MacTavish, en route to China. "I realised I had to work fast" wrote Shona. She did. Five days later they were engaged, three weeks later they were married and the principal dancer of a leading modern dance company sailed for China, the wife of a Presbyterian missionary.

But just as the first chapter had been dramatic in its changes of direction, so was the second. Mao Tse-tung's army changed the face of China and foreigners were evacuated. Shona and Donald had a stint in Taiwan, where their first child was born, and then continued their missionary work in South Africa where Shona taught dance and first experimented with using dance to illustrate Biblical stories. Life was rewarding and challenging and then came Donald's sudden death from a brain tumour and a grief-stricken young widow, only 36 and with three small children, found herself back in Dunedin.

The story of how she turned the heartbreak of loss into positive action is, quite simply, inspirational. For Shona Dunlop MacTavish her work as a missionary simply took a new turn. She pioneered dance in worship, founded the Dunedin Dance Theatre, worked with New Zealand's leading composers, musicians and writers to create works which reflected society as it was and as it might be. She travelled extensively all over the world to experience dance in its cultural context, was invited to numerous international conferences on liturgical dance and wrote the biography of her great teacher, Bodenwieser.

At the end of her book Shona Dunlop MacTavish writes "I feel it is not so much the destination which counts, but the journey itself." Her journey has been tumultuous and rewarding: it is a privilege to accompany her.

Dance is about illuminating the spirit. Where it falls short of this I believe we are in danger. Deep inside lies the answer to all our quests, and from that place begins the growing understanding of life's purpose. The dance has the power to speak, to inform, to incite, in a manner we in the sophisticated world today have nearly forgotten. A lifetime in dance is both a growing and a paring down. I feel it is not so much the destination which counts, but the journey itself. All life is a discovery and for me the dance has been my teacher and my guide. Because I am so aware of the power of dance, which apart from the sheer joy of bodily movement, gives one the heightened feeling of being totally alive, I also see it as a kind of living sermon. It is also capable of speaking upon issues of our time with devastating clarity. (p.233)

Lady of the Dance

Shona MacTavish dancing the part of Cain in *Cain and Abel*, Australia 1940

Shona Dunlop MacTavish, doyenne of modern dance teachers, complained of being a little weary after five hours a day giving lessons. At 78 she is entitled to be tired after the recent whirl of the launch of her book, book festivals throughout the country and the making of a video. Her limbs may ache but her spirit is as vital today as when it propelled her into the most acrobatic leaps as a member of the Bodenwieser dance troupe nearly 60 years ago.

For Shona her life, her faith and her art are one. It took a special turn when she worked as the chaplain's wife at the Lovedale Missionary Institute in South Africa in the early 50s. She saw that for the African "the art of prayer and the art of dance are synonymous". So she decided to dance out the stories of the Old Testament as a way of teaching the Scriptures. For those young Africans her dance spoke far more than her words. Later on with the tribal people in the Philippines she could see no contradiction between what they expressed in their dance and the Christian message. Sadly, she thinks, we more sophisticated folk have lost the power to express spirituality through bodily movement. For all of us, especially the young, the visual impacts much more than the audible. So, ever since that time, Shona has maintained that Christian worship needs to be brightened up and be made relevant to the needs of the day. And this she tries to achieve through the medium of dance.

The other event of her time in Africa was the tragic and sudden death of her husband, Donald. Donald had a wonderful gift as a preacher. He attracted the Africans by playing tricks with ropes, but once they gathered round him he held them with his voice. Shona felt that when Donald died his vocation descended on her. She must achieve through dance what he effected through his preaching. Yet it was not as if God spoke to her within. God spoke through people and events. God had spoken to her through Donald, and she responded with her dance.

Shona will have no truck with people, often Christians, who see dance as something impure. A clean mind, she says, sees the beauty or is moved by the message which the dance conveys. Dance can be shocking and arresting as well as sensuous and beautiful: it will move people to action. She believes that good dance is like all true art. If it is honest it has a spirituality of its own. But she likes her dance to convey a message, which may be to shock people into an awareness of injustice or oppression. Once she conceives a purpose she will "use all the tools in the kitbag" to express the meaning. This sense of vocation has inspired her to dance more about what is wrong with the world than simply about the joyous or the beautiful.

When she perceives an injustice she believes that it is not sufficient to motivate people to "rise above" the injustice; rather they most be moved to fight for its ending. For instance, only last year she choreographed a dance for an Ecumenical Conference which brought out a homosexual theme. Many who attended were shocked or embarrassed. But the issue was talked about. In Shona's view the worse thing that can happen is when an issue like that is swept under the carpet. She is perfectly aware it's a 'hot potato' — but "if we are made in the image of God, how can we condemn the way some of us are made?"

Shona writes as she speaks, with verve and immediacy. Her life has been full of colour and not a little tragedy. But at 78 she retains the same *jeu d'esprit* that so many years ago took her into a career of dance. Her book tells the tale of a life of action and movement. It is a life still in full spate. ■

Without Vision we're going nowhere

Alan Roberts

If a parish is to function well, then of supreme importance will be a commitment to *vision*. This vision must be arrived at by those responsible for the pastoral life of the parish. Ultimately, it must permeate all members of the parish. Depending on how much it has done this, will there be life within the parish community. So, for the vitality of parish life, there is probably no more important question to be pondered and understood than this – *Do we have a Vision?*

First of all, a vision for parish must be intimately connected with the vision of Jesus: *Your kingdom come,* it will be discovered by examining one's heart. Vision is an inner desire for the coming of the kingdom in a specific place for a specific situation. It is implanted by God in the core of the receptive soul. I will come into contact with my vision through prayer. Prayer will nourish it, encourage it, and give me the courage to carry it out. Most probably this vision will be general, enormous and beyond my power. Look again at Jesus' vision!

When a group of people sit down and begin to pour out their heartfelt longing for the renewal of their parish, they have begun to get in touch with *vision*. They are in fact sharing the vision of Jesus. This longing of theirs will need to be nurtured by prayer, and it will be good if they can support one another in its development.

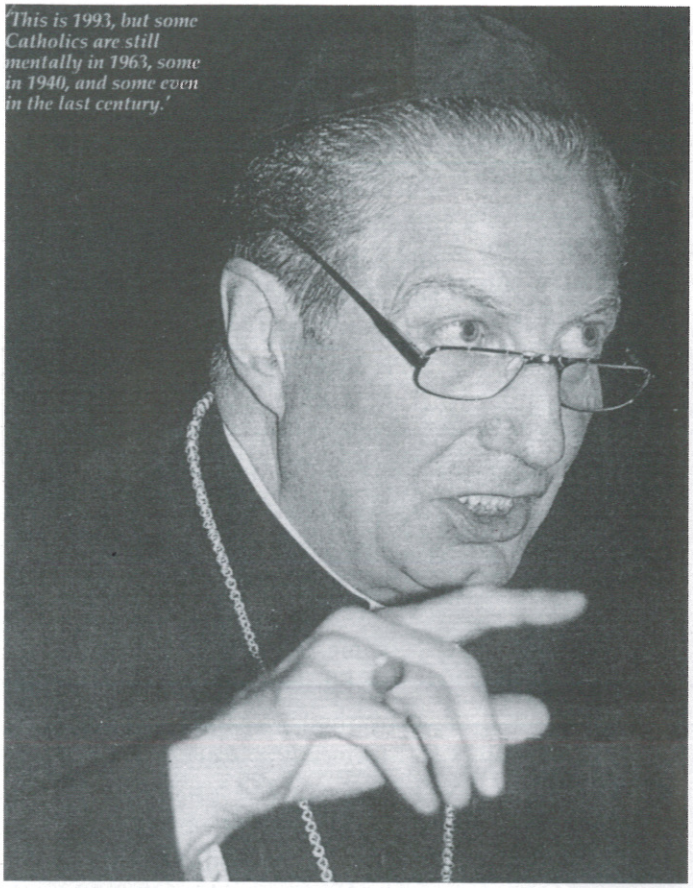
When a new beginning is made in a parish – such as the appointment of a new priest or pastoral council, or perhaps a parish initiative to begin renewal – then a renewed vision will be needed if progress is to be made. If I have advice for someone about to embark on parish work it would be this: "don't go there without vision and preferably without a vision shared with your coworkers".

For quite a while now, I have been reflecting on this subject, and have become engrossed by it. If the apostolate demands faith, then surely as a foundation at least, it is in this area of believing that something good can happen. If I enter into parish work believing that my job is to keep the ship afloat then I will achieve just that, but it will be fairly depressing. Why not dare to believe that God is with me? That abundant growth is possible with these people, in this town, right here and now."

Now there is one thing I notice when I venture into this territory of vision, particularly when I start feeling the excitement that accompanies vision, and that is the rising of my *fear.* How and why this comes about is a topic in itself, but one thing is for sure: like a tiny spring bursting through the soil and about to gush forth it is blocked because of something more powerful. Therefore, I consider that vision lives when developed by getting together to pray and reflect, to pray and reflect some more. Vision must be born within us. And it survives in a community. Remember vision is not having a lot of good ideas. They are important and will need to be discerned later. There is no greater nuisance than the blueprint plan for renewal! But when you set out, look for the longing in your heart. When Jesus prayed: *Father, your kingdom come*, he was expressing his vision. Being in touch with this desire is all that is needed to begin.

In parish life I think the priest and the Pastoral Council have just one role: to be caretakers of the vision. It is up to them to keep it alive and present before the people. Therefore, it is up to them to discern what God is doing in the parish, what needs to be done. But all this will unfold quite naturally when a group of people gather round with a shared longing for the coming of the Kingdom.

Imagine now — Jesus is telling you a story. It goes like this: *At one time, when I was on earth, a crowd of about 5000 came to hear what I had to say. They got hungry and there seemed to be very little food about. A small boy brought up five loaves and two fish. I blessed them, offered this to God and with that we fed the whole crowd who were there, and you know what? What?* – you walk right into it! *There were 12 baskets full of food left over!* Now that is vision – the tall story, but *not* the unrealistic story: *Thy kingdom come.* When for so long there has been so much hate, fighting, greed and lust for power in the world, how can the kingdom come. It just isn't possible. And it wouldn't be if it were not for the fact that God is with us. ■


'This is 1993, but some Catholics are still mentally in 1963, some in 1940, and some even in the last century.'

Faith in the balance

Carlo Maria Martini, Archbishop of Milan, called in Italy the 'Pope in waiting'. A leading biblical scholar he was invited to speak in Rome for the beginning of the three year preparation for the Millennium.
The following is an extract.

At the age of 70, I have been asked to talk about the figure of Jesus Christ. I find it hard to speak of the figure of Jesus in the abstract, with detachment. Anyone who approaches him is involved with him. I am describing a journey, using subjective and objective elements, but without muddling them. The objective elements are historical facts about the life of Jesus; the subjective are part of my own often wearisome progress, through which I have come to know and appraise these facts, to clash with them, to make them a part of my own understanding and the choices of my own life.

The adventure could be linked to particular stages in life. I will follow a recent novel – Susanna Tamaro's *Anima Mundi* – which speaks of three periods in human life: Fire, Earth, Wind – the time of growth, the time of choice and the time of arrival; and at the same time I will use freely the revelation to the prophet Elijah on Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19:11-13), where god's presence showed itself mysteriously in fire, wind, earthquake and the murmur of a soft breeze.

Time of fire, or of fascination

My journey started very early, in childhood and early adolescence. It is the story of a boy who knew Jesus and was greatly drawn to him. The boy knew at once that it was impossible to treat such a figure lightly. It was a time of increasing, enthusiastic knowledge: the time of fire. He kept the gospels at hand, astonished by their penetrating words and by the richness of what they said. Everything seemed original, new, unexpected, clear, demanding, simple, accessible, and altogether rich in promise.

astonished by the richness of what the gospels said

Time of earth, or of doubt

This early happy period does not last long, however. A second one follows, which we may call the stage of questioning and doubts: the stage of earth. Questions arise, at first scarcely noticeable, then more insistent. Can it really be so? How could we know that the gospel writers were telling the truth, that things happened in that way? What is said about Jesus may be all very fine, but is it soundly based? The boy then decides to read whatever he can find about the historical basis of the figure of Jesus. Yet there is always a certain dissatisfaction, a certain disappointment. The answers he is given prompt new questions, and he has a feeling that those who answer them do so in a rather glib way: they are trying to defend something about which they have already made up their minds.

Time of wind, or of rage

Then comes the time of rage, the time of the wind mentioned in the Book of Kings: "A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks" (1 Kgs 19,11). In my case it was around the age of 25 when my longing to discover the truth about Jesus coincided with the chance to study the origins of Christianity scientifically and in depth. I studied the languages in which the books of the Bible were written. I became familiar with papyri and ancient

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codices, and learnt about archaeology and the cultures in which the events of the gospels occurred. But the effort was worth it, because from what I call the time of rage and the fierce wind, I have obtained many ideas and the ability to ascertain a great many things and find a great many answers.

Time of earthquake, or of trial

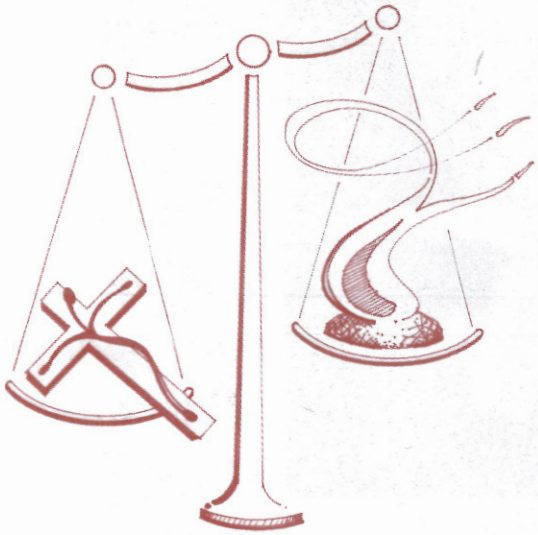
My searches continue even though I no longer have time to consider them closely. Today we are better able than people were in the past to recognise the authenticity of the gospels. The time of rage had to be followed by a period of testing and questions. According to the Book of Kings, still on the subject of Elijah, "after the wind an earthquake" (1 Kgs 19,11). This is the time when faith is shaken and put to the test. I was put to the test in the following way: studying ancient sources and evidence of Jesus also involved studying ancient and modern interpretations of him, from the beginning of historical criticism, the Enlightenment and historical positivism until our own time.

Such labours often plunge people into a dark night of the soul: will there ever be a way out of this tunnel of critical doubt, out of the systematic questioning of all the facts? All the same I want to express my thanks, my gratitude, to

..a period of testing and of questions..

all the masters of suspicion of the last century and this one, for having put me into direct touch with all the possible objections to the figure of Jesus, even the most extreme: that he may have had no historical existence, doubts on fundamental points of his life — and the rest.

Not avoiding any critical challenge was most fruitful and stimulating; so was allowing myself to be questioned by all the attempts to make Jesus into a mythical or imaginary being. Systematically, cruelly, and at the same time healthily, I laid myself open to doubt, defenceless in my search for the truth. It was like seeking continuously to keep one's balance on ground shaken by an earthquake. Were these words, these events and these attitudes in the life of Jesus original, his own, or were they the result of some retrospective elaboration put about by enthusiastic or fanatical admirers or followers, or else the product of the creative efforts of the early Christian communities? How far is it still possible to know what Jesus really wished, said and did?



Little by little I had a surprising experience. Trying to weigh up the opposing arguments one by one and comparing them with the texts and with ancient discoveries, I came to see more and more clearly that we cannot avoid the solid basis for what we can know about Jesus, that we cannot reduce his figure to something faded or inaccessible without contradicting ourselves or the ideas that come out of serious research. There were significant and decisive sayings and events in his life which could not be eliminated by any criticism, however corrosive it was, or be attributed to the inventiveness of later communities. From this data the basis of an important number of facts, words and actions of Jesus emerges — more than enough to move us to the depths of our being.

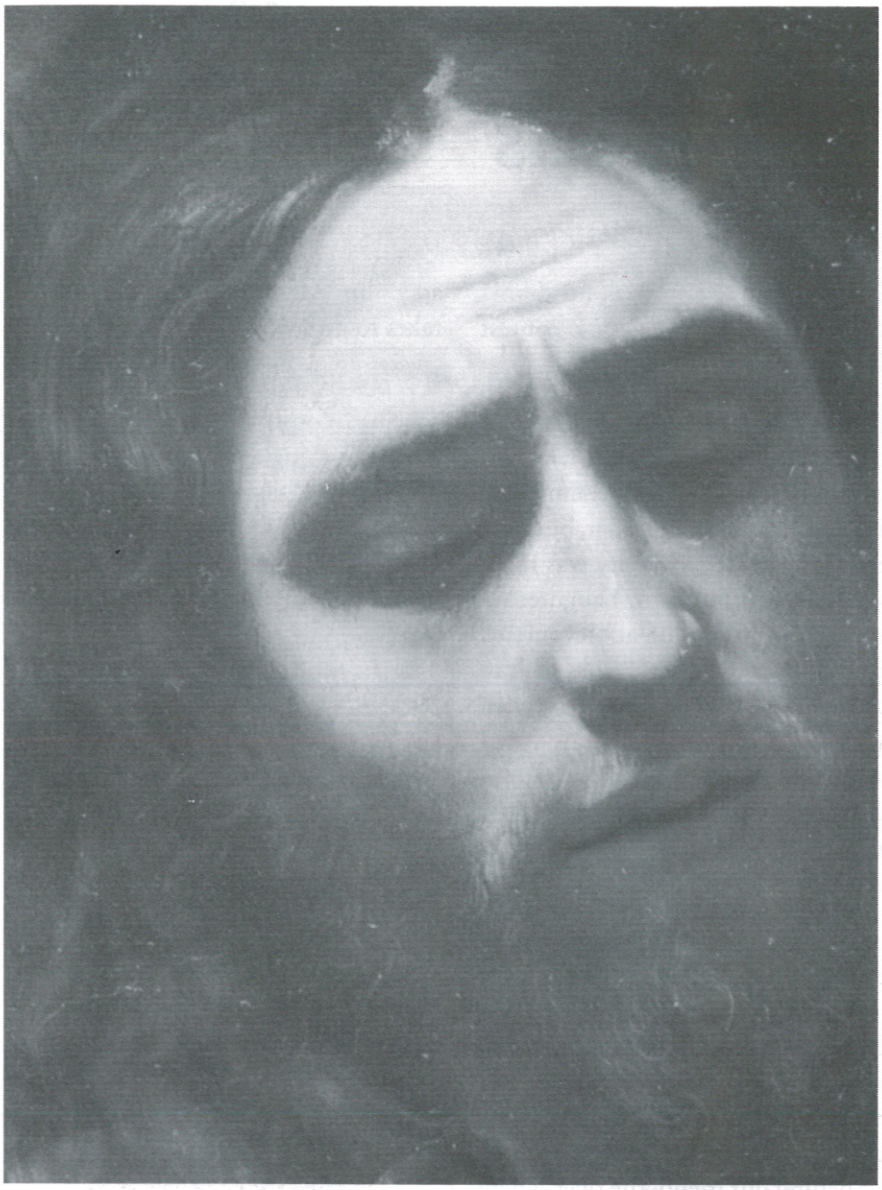
Time of the soft breeze — of struggle

There was a time of loving, a time of doubt and questioning, a time of rage and a time of testing; to these we must add the time when we struggle with Jesus, a struggle which is never-ending. It is rather like the struggle of Jacob by the ford of the Jabbok at night, when "a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day" (Gen.32,24). It is a struggle against someone who is stronger, who never gives up the fight; the dawn of full, unveiled knowledge has not yet come. It is also like the experience of Elijah who after the wind, the earthquake and the fire, heard what seemed like a faint whisper, a small murmur, and covered his face with his cloak: "And after the fire a still small voice. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him, and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" (1 Kg 19,12).

Are you prepared to believe in what I say as words that come from God?

The historical knowledge of Jesus ends in a question: *Are you prepared to believe in what I say as words that come from God?* Are you ready to recognise my mission as a mission that comes from the Father in Heaven? Are you ready to believe entirely and deeply in me, like Peter when he says: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt.16,16)?

This is the fifth stage, the one in which we can just hear the murmur of a light breeze, the stage when we have knowl-



Head of Christ — detail from the painting by Caravaggio of the *Kiss of Judas*. The painting was discovered four years ago in Dublin at the house of the Jesuit Fathers. Now in the National Gallery of Ireland.

edge of faith. This involves a leap which no historical research can make us take, a step which all of us must answer within ourselves, to our own conscience; a step which sets us before the mystery of Jesus, his unique relationship with the Father, his transcendence, his meaning for the history of everyone and of the whole of humanity and his capacity to reveal the face of God. Many new, even harder, questions then arise: why did someone whom we think so near to God, beloved by God, suffer such a cruel fate in his own life? Why did he seem, humanly speaking, defeated? Why did he appear so weak and helpless?

This is the time of the understanding of faith, which means further questions and an unending search to link the human defeat of Jesus of Nazareth with his intimate closeness to God; the Cross and his death with his divinity. The scope of these questions widens to include all human experience of pain and death, the meaning of what seems to have no meaning, why God revealed himself not in power and glory but in the very opposite of what one might think of as God.

And there is yet another new fact, another surprise. When we consider the mystery of God crucified and God's weakness, seeing these in Jesus crucified and risen, then the words and actions of Jesus take on a new meaning. Everything is linked again in a new understanding of Jesus, which makes it enter the pith of our living experience as weak creatures seeking a hope that will not disappoint us. It is this mysterious, enticing journey which I should wish for everyone. ■

"..there is yet another new fact, another surprise. When we consider the mystery of God crucified and God's weakness .. the words and actions of Christ take on a new meaning"

Shooting the rapids

Tony Watkins

By good fortune I was able to raft down the Motu River twice during the last year. The magnificent four day journey traverses one of the last wilderness areas in the North Island.

The first expedition was led by "Buzz", an American guide with a great deal of rafting experience, and many stories to tell of mighty rivers such as the Colorado. With a leader like Buzz there was no reason to fear any of the great rapids on the Motu. The first half day, in the gentle upper reaches, was spent developing teamwork and co-ordination. Strokes had to be mastered, and the discipline of following commands without question was essential. In the boiling fury of a rapid there would be no room for any mistake. When Buzz bellowed above the roar of the water an instant reaction was essential.

We mastered the Motu. In every rapid we fought against the river and we overcame it. The screamed commands of Buzz were matched only by the fury of our paddles, as we took the raft exactly where Buzz wanted it to go. At the end of the journey there was a great feeling of triumph. We had won. We proved that we were superior. We knew that we could do it. We felt powerful and good. The mystery and majesty of the Motu had been overcome.

The second time I went down the Motu the experience I had gained should have been invaluable, but the guide on this journey was a very softly spoken Kiwi. It seemed that it would not even be possible to hear his voice above the noise of the rapids. As we approached the first rapid, he never even raised his voice. He did not attempt to take command of us or the river. Gently and quietly he felt the mood of the river and watched every little whirlpool. There was no drama and no shouting. There was no contest to be won. He loved the river.

We swept through each rapid with grace and beauty, and after a day the river had become our friend, not our enemy. The quiet Kiwi was not our leader, but only the person whose sensitivity was more developed than our own. Laughter replaced the tension of achievement. Soon the quiet Kiwi was able to lean back and let all of us take turns as leader. A quiet nod was enough to draw attention to the things our lack of experience prevented us from seeing. If we made a mistake then we laughed and it was the next person's turn.

We began to penetrate the mystery of the Motu. Now, like the quiet Kiwi, we listened to the river, and we looked carefully for all those things we had not even noticed on the first trip. At the end of the journey we had overcome nothing except ourselves. We did not want to leave behind our friend, the river. There was no contest, and so nothing had been won. Rather we had become one with the river.

It remains difficult to believe that the external circumstances of the two journeys were similar. The difference was in an attitude and a frame of mind. At the end of the journey it seemed that there could be no other way. Given the opportunity to choose a leader everyone would have chosen someone like Buzz. At the end of the second journey we had glimpsed a very different vision, and we felt humble, and intensely happy.

When you have only met people like Buzz you can never imagine that there is any other way, and when you do meet a quiet Kiwi you could be forgiven for assuming that they do not have what it takes to deal with a complex problem.

It is possible to lose by trying too hard to win. To possess everything you must give everything away. ■

Going Deeper

Go down
down
down
to the place in you where fire
and silence dwell -

the place of power.

Go down
down
down
to that pool in you
of weedless water -

the place of knowing.

Go down
down
down
the moss bright path
to your Grandmother's house

the place of song.

Go down
down
down
to the last strawberry

freshness of God.

Anne Powell

On the Road

Photo: Terry Coles

Please, slow down and walk with me.
Be my companion for a mile or two
and tell me your story,
for I have much to learn
and every pilgrim's story
enhances my own.
Speak to me of yearnings
beyond people and things
and show me the leaning of your heart like a
needle towards true North.
It does not matter that we borrow
from different books
or use different words to describe the journey.
We are on the same path whatever shoes we wear.

Joy Cowley

Theology..

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Professor Gerald Pillay, head of the Theology Department, Otago University

.. in the 'Marketplace'

Professor Gerald Pillay is the newly appointed Professor of Theology in the University of Otago. The appointment is unique in the sense that theology has been placed at the learning heart of the University in the humanities faculty: no longer an adjunct of a ministerial training programme of the Presbyterian or the Catholic Church but in the very place theology has traditionally been set. Dr Pillay is the only Professor of Theology in a secular University in Australasia. In his words theology has been restored "into the marketplace".

Gerald comes to New Zealand from Pretoria in South Africa. His own story is reminiscent of the biblical Exodus. He was born forty years ago in Durban of fourth generation Indian immigrants. He grew up in a vigorous charismatic Christian community; at the same time his youthful experience was not unlike that of Mahatma Ghandi, who spent 20 years of his early life in South Africa. If you were not white in South Africa you were a second or third class citizen. You were born into it; you could no nothing about it . That was the way it was; it was as vicious and enslaving as the caste system.

What aggravated the situation was the religious attitude of the Boer leaders, solidly grounded as they were in the tenets of the Dutch Reformed Church. The rhetoric of the Afrikaaners employed biblical texts to justify their evil policies. The Boers had been defeated by the British at the beginning of the Century. Apartheid was to give them a sense of identity. They were the "chosen people" of the new South Africa, and it was a God-given duty to keep themselves pure, surrounded as they were by the black and coloured 'peoples of the land'.

Gerald and his young family were thrust headlong into this arena of injustice when he was appointed Professor of Church History in Pretoria in 1988. The family shifted from Durban and found themselves with no home and no

prospect of one unless they set themselves up in a white neighbourhood. He chose, like Ghandi, to become a conscientious objector against the system. There was uproar and the case hit the national and international press. The Anglicans rallied to his support: how could so-called Christians persecute a Christian theologian just because of his colour?

Gerald came to understand — rather as Ghandi had — through suffering and persecution what the heart of the gospel of Jesus really meant. He saw it as a call to sacrifice self-interest. To identify with Christ he had to be prepared to suffer for what he saw as right and just.

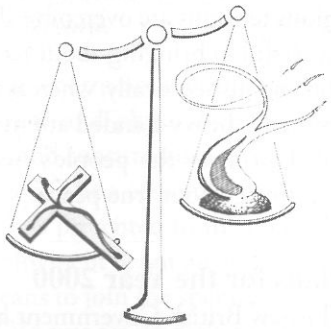
"When you march for justice you do it to touch the conscience of the world. Ghandi maintained that if by your struggle you win a benefit for yourself that is only half the battle: you have to convert your enemy before you can claim victory. To help create the reign of God on earth is a spiritual struggle more than political one."

You have to convert your enemy before you can claim victory

Gerald speaks with feeling of the way the anti-apartheid struggle went. The defiance campaign by black Africans and Coloureds during the 60s was unsuccessful, and it gave way to the violent protest of the 70s. The movement split. Albert Luthuli was the African Ghandi and advocated a campaign of non-violence whereas Mandela and the African Youth League opted for violence. The radical gospel-based message of peace was for a time obscured. However, Mandela's years in prison were a conversion experience for him and he has been able to return to the heart of the Christian call: to forgive, to be reconciled and to include all people.

Why leave South Africa to come and settle in New Zealand?

Gerald was motivated by two factors. The first was a career decision: to concentrate on the academic rather than become embroiled in University politics. But there was also a personal choice — to find a more secure place for his family to grow up in. In South Africa the Indian minority (only 3% of the population) is very vulnerable. They have always been outsiders looking in; for his children Gerald is seeking a different way.



..through suffering to understand the heart of the gospel of Jesus

He has come to a well-founded theology department in Otago. It is an exciting prospect especially as the situation of Theology is something new in the University. Dunedin serves more than just the local people: it serves the Pacific region, especially the Asians and the Pacific Islanders who come here for their education. He sees it as a "wonderful contextual happening — a laboratory of theology".

Gerald maintains that to have theology at the heart of the humanities programme is a revitalising of the mediaeval experience: theology was always at the centre of those early Christian universities, alongside philosophy and jurisprudence. The Enlightenment of the 18th Century destroyed this mediaeval synthesis; it caused human enquiry to fragment. Education became piecemeal, and interdisciplinary vision was lost. Yet universities, in Gerald's opinon, are first and foremost centres for the pursuit of learning, not the mere training of technicians. This move to create a Theology faculty at Otago is exciting because it promises a vision of interconnectedness. Theology is back where it belongs — in the marketplace.

Gerald chooses the word *marketplace* deliberately — and he is not thinking of the narrow sense beloved by economists and politicians. He is referring to the "naked public square", where people meet and interact. He asks: *who is determining our values, who is forming our opinions?* It is a task of theology to be present in the place of influence, not as a position of power but of service.

Gerald Pillay's plea is for the Christian people of Aotearoa-New Zealand to get behind this. In a small country there are neither the people nor the resources for duplication. There need to be one or two centres of quality where theology is well taught, while retaining the necessary distinctiveness of the different traditions.

The task of theology is to be in the place of influence... not as a position of power but of service

His hope is that the religious denominations will come to see this and support an integration of teaching. This appeal is especially to the Catholic Church. The great divisions of Christianity happened long ago. Luther and Calvin were Catholics before they broke away. It is paramount that Christian theologians argue less among themselves but carry their fight for truth into the public arena, into the world where our children will live. ■

Overseas News

Drug Money and the Church

Canon Raul Soto, a senior and influential member of the Mexican Church, recently raised a storm when, in a sermon, he praised two leading drug traffickers for their generous donations to church groups for the purpose of helping victims of the 1985 earthquakes. "Helping one's neighbour is the only way to achieve salvation" he said, in defence of his views.

The comments were picked up by the mainly anti-Catholic press, causing the Archbishop of Mexico City to issue strong statements condemning the drug trade. He described it as "one of the scourges of humanity" and that he "personally had never received a cent from drug traffickers".

Nicaragua: Turning Peace into Development

In the remote village of Yolaina in Nicaragua the local "peace commission" mediates land conflicts, domestic disputes and contested inheritances. It supervises community health work, investigates crimes and takes proposed settlements in writing to a judge in the provincial capital of Nueva Guinea, who stamps the papers, making the commission's decisions legally binding. Arnesnio Alvir says "the government ended the war but never sowed the seeds of peace". Alvir is co-ordinator of the region's peace commissions which originated a decade ago during the worst of the civil war, when ordinary citizens organised themselves and forged a dialogue between the then Sandinista government leaders and the "Contras" who opposed them.

Sixty commissions existed around Nueva Guinea when the war ended in 1990 but they have continued to multiply until today there are 120. Their most urgent task is to mediate between the present government and various groups of former combatants who, feeling too insecure to live in peace with Sandinista neighbours and frustrated with the government's inability to meet their needs, dug up hidden arms and started robbing, kidnapping and killing almost at will. The peace commissions, which are usually made up of five or more people, including a Protestant pastor and a Catholic lay person, are one of the few places in Nicaragua where religious tensions are overcome. They are successful in bringing about reconciliation and justice locally, whereas the government's heavy-handed attempts have failed to meet the people's needs and thus bring about true peace.

Plans for the Year 2000

The new British Government has been making its mark as a promoter of sound human values. A recent suggestion by Chancellor Gordon Brown would, if followed through, expand this influence to the international scene.

His proposal is to cancel the debt of most of the world's poorest countries by the year 2000. He would like to set up a process of relieving the estimated 5.6 billion dollar debt so that resources can be channelled into education, health and the relief of poverty.

Part of the scheme would be to make the giving and receiving of aid a more open process: censuring corruption, not only in recipient regimes but also those Western Governments who turn a blind eye to companies in their own countries which act irresponsibly and encourage corrupt practices in the developing world.

Rwanda: Anglicans Seek Forgiveness over Genocide

Rwanda's new Anglican Bishop, Emmanuel Kolini, has said his church is ready to seek forgiveness for its silence during the 1994 massacre of between 500,000 and 1 million people. The Anglican church is a minority in Rwanda, which is predominantly Catholic. Bishop Kolini said petty infighting during the four years leading up to the genocide had made the Anglican diocese in the capital, Kigali, fail to recognise others' sufferings. "You can be silent or you can raise your voice," he said, "but when you don't stop, when you don't help the person, the victim, then to me it is the same as being a party to the killing. The church must exhibit repentance and forgiveness for it to play a role in Rwanda's recovery."

Abortion in Britain

This month sees the 30th anniversary of the passing of Britain's Abortion Act which made abortion legal in certain restricted circumstances. The build-up to the 1967 Bill saw the media presenting example after example of horror stories about mothers and babies who had suffered because, it was implied, abortion was not legally available. Over time the public (the voters!) was lulled into thinking that perhaps it was time for a change in the law.

So the Abortion Act was passed with very strict limitations on the reasons for approval being given for individual terminations. David Steel who presented the Bill, made assurances that this would not be the beginning of a slippery slope and it would not lead to abortion on demand.

The result: five million abortions in Britain in 30 years, one in every five pregnancies deliberately terminated and abortion of disabled babies being allowed right up to the time of birth. Thirty years later, what was seen as a crime is now treated as a right – a woman's right to choose. All efforts to introduce bills into parliament to curb the flood have been blocked by successive British governments since 1967.

It will be interesting to see what happens under Tony Blair and the new Labour government. ■

Heard on the streets of Wellington:
If Spong be wrong,
Is there hope for the Pope?

..the culture of the lowbrow

Keith Harrison

TV Comment

Television today is most dramatically described in the words of Lee Loevinger of the United States Federal Communications Commission. These words, spoken several years ago, capture the dilemma which confronts New Zealand television today.

"Television is: the literature of the illiterate, the culture of the lowbrow, the wealth of the poor, the privilege of the under-privileged, the exclusive club of the excluded masses." The drama of these words and the aptness of the quote were vividly illustrated in a televised item on the Indian people of the Upper Amazon who had allowed developers in to mill their precious mahogany trees and goldminers to sluice for gold, to pay for the consumer goods they were told they needed. So there they were, in their thatched long huts, watching Western soaps with a kind of confused mesmerism and clutching two-way radios which they waved proudly at the camera.

In our own country, the objects favoured by the poor when robbing the houses of the equally poor are television sets and video recorders. In the houses of the poor, these possessions may be the only portable saleable objects – there is often nothing else of value. And the television set is the window into our culture, the link with the culture of consumerism and the market place.

For television today is the most obvious and immediate expression of our culture – it reflects the tastes, aspiration and values of the majority of our population. Everything in the business is based on the great numbers game so that the ratings determine what is shown at prime time and the most expensive advertising can be arranged around these programmes. It is these advertisements which reveal our society in the raw – the way we aspire to look – the image we aspire to project and the car or house we aspire to own.

There is an enormous concentration on the material and physical elements of our lives, and consumerism is presented as the goal. To be a consumer is the carrot which is presented to the young so that employment is not an end in itself but a means to join the spending cycle. When TV4 was set up earlier this year, the Chief Executive Officer, Belinda Hollings, said, "The 15 to 39 year-old age group demands more from television now than a predictable programming schedule... We know they are a sharp, media-savvy group... they love to shop, are willing to try new products and spend a large amount of their income on entertainment, leisure activities and preferred brands."

Managing Director Graeme Hunter said: "Our research shows advertisers will welcome the opportunity to tap into this lucrative market and we're offering very attractive rates." The success of the medium has become a treadmill of cause and effect. If the ratings are good, then, in the 'ad-man's' world, there is a chance of selling anything which is associated with that success. It has everything to do with market forces, with competitiveness, with the demands of the market place, and the only criteria for its success is its cost-effectiveness. There is very little time for exploring issues in depth or at length. The teenager is drawn to the images of success, of what is cool and smart in the advertising segments and where the brand names are placed in a glamorous and attractive setting. Shows such as *Baywatch*, *Friends* and *Home and Away* are made to a formula which is in turn designed to complement and attract advertising. They appear to deal with some of the issues which confront society but the reality is that they are not investigated or developed in any significant way. Relationships, sexuality, success and failure, all get a mention, but are glossed over so that the coolness, the smartness are not lost and the presentation remains flip. Quick changes of scene pander to youthful restlessness and snatches of dialogue are not designed to test the ability of the viewer to concentrate on a particular argument or line of thought.

News has become 'infotainment', while the Holmes half hour has degenerated into a kind of Roman circus which is passed off as investigative journalism. Although the ratings have dropped, Holmes still commands a large audience and uses every trick in the media handbook to hook them. To retain his audience he must buy into a fight, make someone cry on screen or ridicule a public figure concluding with a feel-good piece on animals, sex or other people's peculiarities. This combination of items has proved successful in retaining an audience and in attracting a range of advertisers.

The programme is not about bettering the lives of New Zealanders, uncovering political or corporate corruption: it is all about selling television to the advertisers. The business of ratings debases all television. Even with the mute button at the ready you must sit there watching the ads until the programme resumes. If the ads run long enough there is a danger that the viewer may have even forgotten what the programme was about.

I believe that we have reached a critical time in the development of the medium and that it is time for a major restructuring of the industry. ■

Keith Harrison is a retired schoolteacher whose particular interest is in theatre – acting and producing. He has been a theatre critic and writes a retrospective TV column for the *Otago Daily Times*.

Christopher

News Notes

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KSC CHRISTOPHERS, P O Box 1937, Wellington

Revealing Peep at British Comedy

The Full Monty
Review: Nicola McCloy

The cinematic depths have been plumbed over the last few years, with such screen horrors as Striptease and Showgirls. Just when it seemed that any film about stripping was going to be borderline pornographic sleaze, in strolls *The Full Monty*. Anyone that has ever come across the tales of James Herriot will be in no doubt of the versatility of Yorkshiremen. *The Full Monty* proves that in a way that would have made James, Siegfried et al blush. This is a film about a bunch of ordinary Sheffield blokes on the dole who decide that the only way they can make any cash is by forming a strip group.

An unlikely scenario? Absolutely, but one that affords some of the most hilarious film moments of the year. How does this all come about? The group's ringleader, Gaz, played by Robert Carlyle (Priest, Hamish McBeth, Trainspotting) is in the toilets of the local Working Men's Club one night and comes across a crowd of baying women all there to see an American strip group. Down at the Job Club the next day he and a couple of mates work out that one night of that alone is worth ten thousand pounds. Facing a seven hundred pound maintenance bill for his son, Nathan, the cogs turning in Gaz's mind are almost audible. A plan is hatched and set in motion along with Gaz's best mate, Dave, and their old steel mill foreman, Gerald.

Auditions are held, music is chosen and a sunbed is commandeered (to little avail!). The resulting six-man ensemble consists of a startling variety of the least stripper-like people ever brought together. Six ordinary blokes desperate for cash and all with problems of their own. The rehearsal scenes and the ensuing problems the group encounter are cringingly hilarious. Watch out for a new take on how to entertain yourself while queuing and a handy way to scare off repo men.

Although the subject matter of this film won't be to everyone's tastes and at times the language is a little strong, *The Full Monty* is a guaranteed laugh. The reason that the film really works, in my opinion, is the fact that the men in it are so ordinary that I couldn't help but imagine some of the people I know in a similar predicament, which is a very scary thought indeed!

The Full Monty won't go down as an all time movie great, but it will be remembered for it's great scripting, excellent casting and one of the most hilarious stripping scenes the world is ever likely to see. Although not for the faint-hearted, *The Full Monty* is proof that British comedy is still alive, kicking and, when absolutely necessary, willing to go the full monty! ■

Tui Motu InterIslands is published by Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd, P O Box 6404, Dunedin North. Phone: 03 477 1449

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Printed by University of Otago Printing Department, Dunedin

A baptismal theme has bubbled to the surface in this November issue of *Tui Motu*. The symbol the Church has consecrated is exact: it is *water* that so often brings about change. Rain breaks the summer drought. Moisture penetrating the earth causes new life to germinate and brings about fantastic growth. The power of water can smash and destroy; yet, when harnessed, it yields unbelievable energy and strength.

Cardinal Martini's personal journey of faith (*pages 21-23)* elicits powerful elemental symbols: earth, fire, wind. There is no mention of water. Perhaps if it had been a woman writing, she would have mended this omission. Only a woman can experience the trauma and ecstasy of giving birth. The new life in the womb is contained in water. At the onset of birth the water is released. Giving birth means letting go – moving with rather than against – and at the moment of birth, the opposites are resolved. Past pain and future promise are held together in the ecstasy of the present — the wonder of new life brought forth.

The early Church celebrated this in its wonderful rituals of baptism. Aidan Kavanagh wrote: "Baptism's knowledge of Christ is that of the bathhouse. It is not mannered knowledge; for manners, etiquette and artifice fall away as one takes off one's clothes. God speaks not only in logic but also in smell and in the feel of oil and warm water on the skin.. Baptismal iconography has always imaged Baptism as cosmic rebirth, Eden restored. Early baptistries, decorated to resemble paradise, were filled with fertility, vines, sunlight, water and a humid atmosphere. They were gloriously womb-like, for from them issued a new People."

Edwina Gately speaks of the "warm, moist, salty God" of the Africans. Tribal people often have a healthier, less sanitised image of God. The God who transforms us is not the 'gentle Jesus' image, which can often be little more than a cop out. It is an image of power and transformation, of pain and risk, and always contains the experience of Calvary as well as the joy of Emmaus.

Unfortunately adult baptism is the experience of few in the modern churches. But we cannot escape from the reality that it symbolises: a call to radical change, to letting go, to being reborn, to giving birth — allowing autumn decay to give rise to spring newness. ■

Glitches in the October edition for which we apologise:
– omitting the author's name – Tony Russell – from the article Theology from the Balcony.

– and describing a children's liturgy from *St Mary's, Palmerston North.* The vigilant saw it was the *Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.*