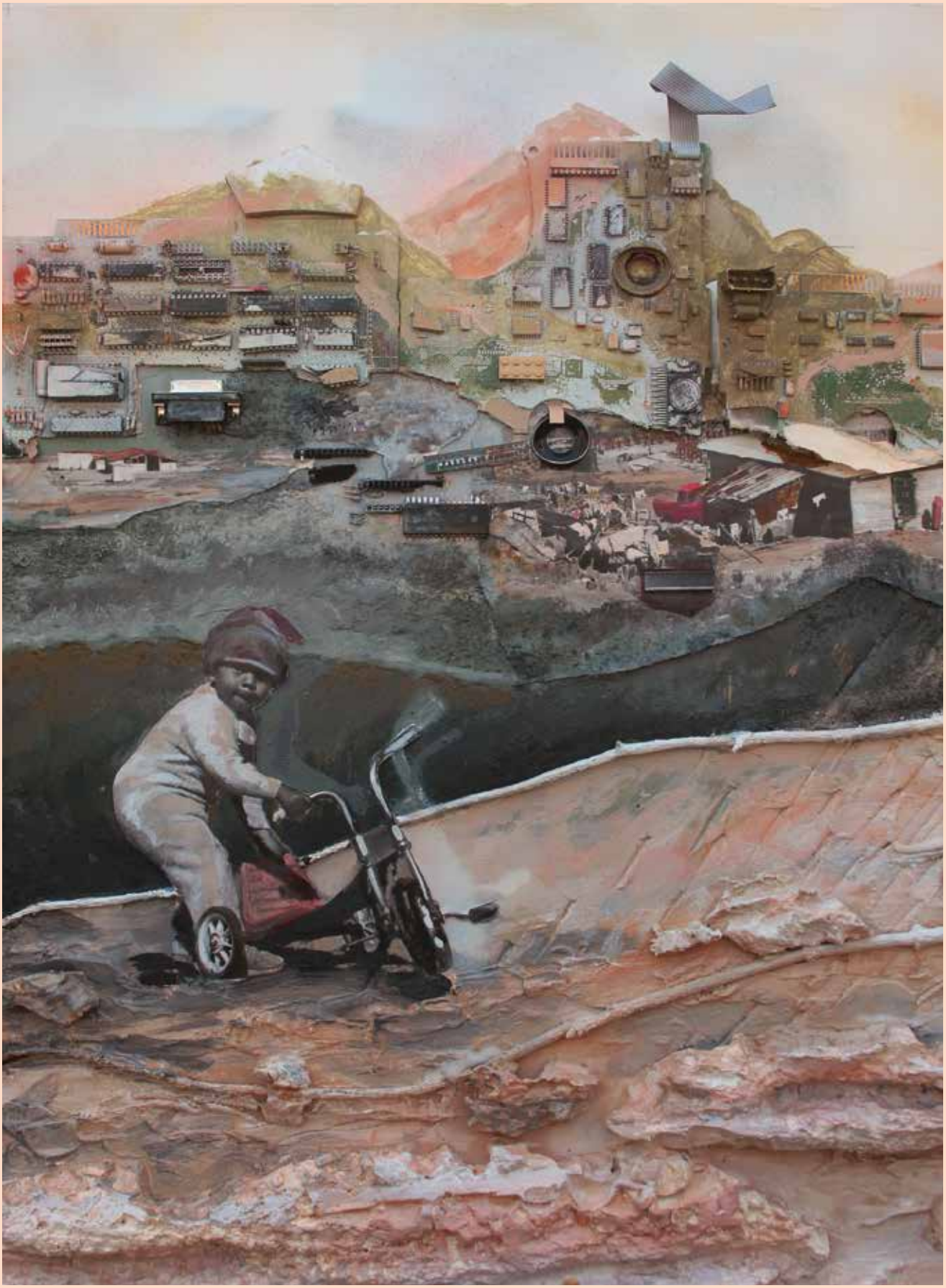
TUI MOTU InterIslands

CELEBRATING 21 YEARS 1997–2018

Issue 223 February 2018 $7



FREE THE WORLD OF POVERTY — UNUHIA TE AO, I TE RAWAKORETANGA

Kelly Dombroski & Stephen Healy • Jim Consedine • Susan Smith • Alice Snedden • AND MORE

CONTENTS

FEATURES

COMMENT

COLUMNS

SCRIPTURE

REFLECTION

REVIEWS

LETTERS

Cover art:
City Progress and Simplicity
by Ellen Osborne ©
© www.TrinityArts.com

TuiMotuInterIslands Tuimotumag

EDITORIAL

New Year Goals

Our new year is unfolding — holidays are ending, children are returning to school, Lent is approaching and summer's fruitfulness is blessing our land. As it unfolds may we discover energy for participation, hope in whatever we encounter and a sustaining well of joy.

In the 2018 issues of *Tui Motu* magazine we will explore some of the United Nations' 15-year goals for Earth and Earth's people. Like the Gospel works of mercy and Pope Francis's latest encyclicals, they focus our participation in God's mission. Jesus described this mission simply: "I have come that all may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). So we will not be surprised that the goals include no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation and responsible consumption and production. They are geared towards the sustainable development of our world.

All the goals will be difficult to achieve because they seek to transform the life-limiting situations of millions of people and of Earth. They require a shared vision of the common good of Earth's community and the committed cooperation, generosity, fairness and honesty of political powers, governments, organisations and local peoples. All negotiations must respect many different perspectives including cultural and religious. And progress must be made despite bureaucracy and corruption. While the goals focus on a united effort to achieve better living conditions in developing countries, governments like ours must also look at transformation in our own country.

The February theme is the goal to rid the world of poverty. Several of our university researchers, Kelly Dombroski and Stephen Healy, Ken Jackson, and Michael O'Brien, provide a broad picture of what poverty means today and as well, suggest strategies for eliminating it.

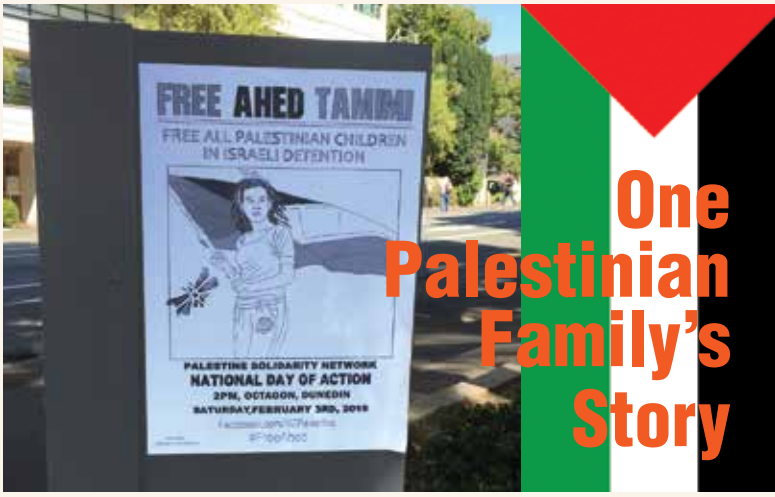
Jim Consedine and Greg Coyle bring the discussion close to home outlining the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society. Jim advocates strengthening the social justice focus of the Society's work and Greg tells of a new initiative in Wellington.

As well as the main theme, we will have two other threads running through this year's issues — one on prayer and the other on young people and faith. Pope Francis has announced that a Synod on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment will be held in Rome in October and as preparation we will hear the voices of young people discussing their faith in each issue.

We welcome Alice Snedden and Susan Smith as regular columnists this year. And we thank all our contributors who in sharing their research, reflection, faith, writing, craft and art have given us a feast for the month.

As is our custom our last word is of blessing.

One Palestinian Family's Story



I was devastated reading in late December that 16-year-old Palestinian Ahed Tamimi was dragged from her bed and arrested in the middle of the night by Israeli soldiers. She is not just another Palestinian teenage protester. I'd met Ahed when she was a happy, innocent 10-year-old. I'd slept in her house, sat at the table with her family and listened to her grandmother as she shared the terrible things her own children had suffered at the hands of the Israeli military. Her daughter had been shot in a military courtroom and her son had been detained innumerable times. I was gutted to think this family had to deal with yet another trauma. I particularly feared what might happen to Ahed in military detention, especially as her trial has been delayed twice. Not only is she in danger but her cousin Mohammed (15) is lying in an induced coma as the result of the injury caused by a rubber bullet shot into his face. It was heartbreaking news.

In 2011 I had volunteered with the International Women's Peace Service in Palestine on the West Bank. This group supports Palestinians in non-violent resistance to the occupation of their land by Israel and reports on human rights abuses.

At that time I had the privilege of meeting Ahed's father, Basem Tamimi, a charismatic village leader (he reminded me of Gandhi and Mandela) whose gentleness and commitment to non-violent, peaceful protest was in stark contrast to the media-fuelled image I'd formed of Palestinian resistants. I enjoyed the warm, generous hospitality typical of Palestine in Basem's home and family.

Within days of that meeting Basem was picked up by the Israeli military police and accused of inciting protesters to throw stones at the soldiers. In his speech before the military court (June 2011) Basem said:

"In my lifetime I have been nine times imprisoned for an overall of almost three years though I was never charged or convicted. During my imprisonment I was paralyzed as a result of torture by your investigators.

"International law guarantees the right of the occupied people to resist occupation. In practising my right I have called for and organised peaceful, popular demonstrations against the occupation, settler attacks and the theft of more than half the land of my village.

"Our demonstrations are in protest of injustice. We work hand in hand with Israeli and international activists who believe like us that had it not been for the occupation we could all live in peace on this land.

"I did not incite anyone to throw stones but I am not responsible for the security of your soldiers who invade my village and attack my people with all the weapons of death and the equipment of terror.

"Despite all your racist and inhumane practices and occupation we will continue to believe in peace, justice and human values. We will still raise our children to love; love the land and the people without discrimination of race, religion, or ethnicity, embodying thus the message of the messenger of peace, Jesus Christ, who urged us to 'love our enemy'. With love and justice we make peace and build the future."

Now six years later in the wake of the demonstrations on the West Bank following Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, Basem's family is again suffering from the cruelty and injustice of the occupation.

Basem reported: "They dragged Ahed out of bed, handcuffed her and put her in the back of their military jeep. She is 16 years old.

"The next morning, Nariman, my wife, went to the police station to be with our daughter as she was interrogated. But Israel took her into custody as well. The following day they arrested my 21-year-old niece Nour.

"This is too much! Israel must immediately release the Tamimi women! They must stop their persecution of my family.

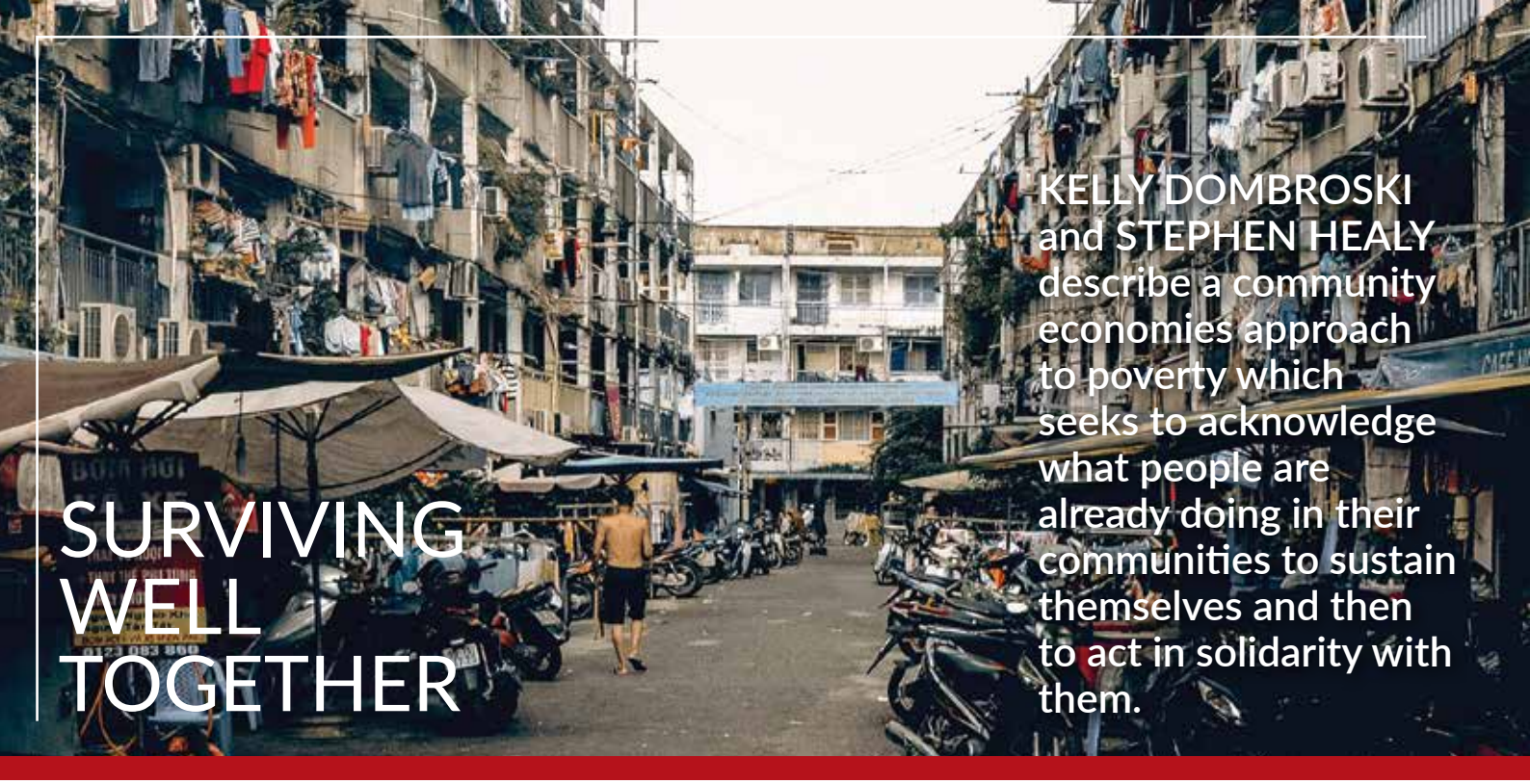
"All of this started last Friday when soldiers in my village shot 15-year-old Mohammed Tamimi directly in the face with a rubber-coated steel bullet. Following surgery, Mohammad had to be placed in a medically induced coma. Then the soldiers came to our home. Ahed and Nour slapped the soldiers in the face and pushed them back yelling that they could not enter our home.

"The Israeli military is threatened by our regular protests, by our refusal to live with occupation."

The media might only publish the story of 16-year-old Palestinian girls slapping the Israeli soldiers. Readers won't hear about what provoked their reaction — the soldiers' shooting of the 15-year-old brother and cousin and the ongoing harassment of the family. Palestinians have suffered for over 50 years and in an effort to end the violence and the occupation the Palestine leadership has asked the international community to support them in the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Movement (BDS) against Israel. It is a non-violent way to bring pressure on Israel, the occupying force. The boycott was successful in bringing an end to apartheid in South Africa.

This is why Lorde's decision to cancel her tour of Israel is significant, courageous and principled. New Zealanders have stood in solidarity with victims in the past and we can do it again. We can do it for Ahed and Mohammad, their parents and grandmother — for the whole Tamimi family and for other families like them in Palestine. ■

Barbara Cameron is a Sister of Our Lady of the Missions now living in Morrinsville.



SURVIVING WELL TOGETHER

KELLY DOMBROSKI and STEPHEN HEALY describe a community economies approach to poverty which seeks to acknowledge what people are already doing in their communities to sustain themselves and then to act in solidarity with them.

How can we work to transform our economies so that all can survive well together? In the United Nations Millennium Declaration, signatories pledged to "spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty", eventually resulting in the detailed targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Setting targets is a management strategy which assumes the problem of poverty is primarily a lack of goal-setting, vision or resource allocation. This is one important aspect of the problem to be sure, and the SDG process has certainly altered resource allocations and produced results.

The other part of the problem is transforming the way we do economy more broadly, towards modes of production that care for people and planet more effectively. In our view a first step is to recognise that economies are something we construct both through what we do and do not do. The Community Economies Collective is a group of thinkers and writers who work to rethink how we do economy, with a preference for those who are most vulnerable in our world — human and nonhuman.

Valuing All Work Being Done

The starting point for our work is to acknowledge the valuable economic work that the poor and vulnerable already do to survive — often unpaid subsistence work in the so-called informal economy. Mainstream development approaches, when they acknowledge these activities, see them as significant only to the extent that they might be made to contribute to formal sector growth.

Community economies researchers begin by documenting and making visible how everyday economic activities might contribute to shared survival, emphasising the role of unpaid labour, nonmarket transactions and the use and care of resources shared in common play. Rather than looking only at capitalist development we emphasise the role of family, cooperative, and social enterprises which generate wellbeing directly, investigating how these shared endeavours might be invested in further.

Pursuing this approach requires a shift in the mode of politics, away from only bringing attention to the "abject and dehumanising conditions" of the lives of the poor in order to elicit a charitable response (mostly to help the lives of the poor look more "like ours"). Our mode of transformational politics is to seek to "humanise" or include, through paying attention to the intrinsic humanity and economic know-how of those living in poverty. We aim to produce a shared understanding of different ways of surviving well in the world.

Looking at what is there already opens *all of us* to new possibilities for how we might survive well together.

Using a Community Economies Approach

A community economies approach asks us to question our understanding of what is necessary for our survival. In Kelly's work in the urban slums of a city in western China, she unpicked the targets for sanitation that used figures based on numbers of private water-flush toilets. While some in the West (such as Matt Damon) express horror that more people have cellphones than toilets, Kelly began with the ways families were already keeping hygiene even as they lived in shops or rooms without running water, identifying ways this could be tweaked for optimal sanitation without private toilets. Indeed, she also discovered groups in Australia and New Zealand rethinking their hygiene practices in light of the "nappyfree" practices of the poor in urban China.

Using the Approach for Gender Equality

A community economies approach asks us to question our understanding of how we relate to one another. For example, members of our collective have been working in three different

countries in the Pacific on appropriate indicators for gender equality. Rather than imposing a particular view of gender equality that seeks to make vulnerable men and women equivalent participants in a formal market, they began with an inventory of the diverse economic contributions that men and women already make to the household and village economy.

For example, many women feed their families through household gardens, which does not appear in official economic measures. The team then worked with community partners, men and women, to define what gender equality would look like in their part of the Pacific. Rather than a vision of men and women becoming equivalent participants in a market economy, equality became about according respect to the different contributions each made to surviving well together.

For these communities, gender equality did not mean a vision where everyone did the same work, but a future where some people (particularly women) were not unfairly burdened with heavier workloads than others.

Six Key Concerns

Community economies thinkers J K Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron and Stephen Healy identify six key concerns that groups all over the world are questioning their understanding of, in order to "take back economies for people and planet". These are:

- *Surviving well* – what do we really need to live healthy lives for ourselves and the planet?
- *Distributing surplus* – how do we decide what to do with what is left over from meeting our survival needs?
- *Encountering others* – what kinds of relationships do we have with other people and environments as we seek to survive well?
- *Consuming sustainably* – what do we use up in the process of surviving well?
- *Caring for commons* – how do we maintain, restore and replenish our natural, social and intellectual commons?
- *Investing in future generations* – how do we direct surplus for the wellbeing of people and planet into the future?

The idea is that rather than "managing" poverty, we seek to survive well in solidarity and negotiation with others, based on a recognition of both our difference and our interdependence. The "community" of a community economy is not predefined, but an open term referring to those who are questioning together in solidarity around these key concerns. Our solidarity is based on the recognition that we are all engaged in balancing our needs, others' needs, and planetary needs.

The starting point is to acknowledge the valuable economic work that the poor and vulnerable already do to survive.

Being-with Not Doing-to

The targets of the SDGs and the basic needs of all must be considered in solidarity and relationship with the knowledge that we are entering "overshoot" with regards to our human demands on our world, which, as Pope Francis has insisted, must not be considered just a "thing" to use up. The recognition of "overshoot" must shift us away from managing a problem "out there" in the world and towards cultivating a kind of being-with and learning together. As Catholic theologian Henri Nouwen reminds us, by being-with those in poverty and crisis we might remember the real faces and stories of those whom we are seeking to help. While Nouwen was thinking mostly of transformational politics in the face of imminent nuclear war, his thoughts apply as much to our work in transforming poverty in the face of global climate change:

"There are many voices who say: 'These little acts of mercy are a waste of time when we consider the urgency of stopping the arms race.' But the peacemaker knows that true peace is a divine gift which has nothing to do with statistics or measures of success or popularity. ... when our peace work is primarily issue-oriented it easily loses heart and becomes cold. People are not problems. They smile and cry, work and play, struggle and celebrate. They have names and faces to be remembered."

Thus we imagine the danger of the SDGs could be slipping into competitive achievement over specific targets for "issues" that have somehow lost a human face. What we as community economies thinkers seek to do is to bring to light questions of surviving well *together*, where the "issues" are less important than the community that gathers in solidarity to negotiate how we might take back economies for people and planet. ■

> "I'm concerned about poverty because in a minor way I've lived there, and know how hard it is to have a life that's different from 'everybody else's'. So I'm conscious that secure accommodation, adequate food for children and self, new clothing and shoes, music lessons, hobbies, dentist and hairdresser visits are markers of economic privilege."
>
> ***Trish McBride, Wellington***

Kelly Dombroski is a Senior Lecturer in the geography department of the University of Canterbury, and a member of the faith community at Ilam Baptist Church, Christchurch.

Stephen Healy is a Senior Research Fellow in the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University who has recently found his way back to his Catholic faith.

Painting: *Ozanam Mural* (at Graz) by Sieger Köder, 2000 ©

JUST CHARITY

JIM CONSEDINE reflects on the vision of Frederic Ozanam in founding the St Vincent de Paul Society and asks if now is the time to refocus on social justice as well as charity.

When the St Vincent de Paul Society in New Zealand celebrated its 150th anniversary last year we acknowledged with gratitude the thousands of Vincentians who over that time trod the pavements, knocked on the doors, worked in the shops, visited the prisons and hospitals, and drove the miles in all weathers to deliver solace, comfort, food and material goods to the needy all over the country. They held to the highest ideals of Vincentian service and have played a vital role in the Church's mission.

Frederic Ozanam's Vision

The anniversary also provides an opportunity to revisit the founding vision and work of the Frenchman Frederic Ozanam (1813–1853), founder of the St Vincent de Paul Society. Born only 24 years after the French Revolution, Ozanam himself was devoted to progressive thinking in the Church. Founding the St Vincent de Paul Society was his most impressive achievement. This movement that we know so well, based on small groups and the person-to-person contact with the poor, eventually provided the principal means of taking the Gospel into society. It's a model that has stood the test of time.

In 1848, with poverty endemic all over Europe, Ozanam started *The New Era* — a newspaper dedicated to securing justice for the poor and the working classes. He wrote: "The poor person is a unique person of God's fashioning with an inalienable right to respect. You must not be content with tiding the poor ones over the poverty crisis. You must study their conditions and the injustices which brought about such poverty with the aim of a long-term improvement." The St Vincent de Paul Society in France, with 50,000 members, became so effective with public advocacy that the civil authorities took measures against it, accusing it of "acting as political opposition".

Emphasis on Social Justice

Many of Ozanam's social justice ideas found expression in *Rerum Novarum* (1891) the first official Church encyclical in 1900 years to speak out on workers' rights. In it Pope Leo XIII expanded Ozanam's thoughts on industrialisation, the innate dignity

of workers, a fair wage, work safety, just working conditions and promoted workers' membership of trade unions.

Many of his other social justice beliefs have since found their way into later encyclicals, particularly those promoting the dignity and equality of all people. His voice resonates today as workers continue to call for decent conditions, workplace safety and a living wage. The philosophy of personalism, recognising every person as having a divine identity and being deemed important, was a concept later adopted by Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement. This all formed part of Frederic Ozanam's legacy and shows clearly he was a prophet of social justice.

After Vatican II, all religious orders and Church organisations were encouraged to revisit the original charisms of their founders. The Society did this in 1973, more than 120 years after Ozanam's death, at the International Plenary Assembly held in Dublin. There, the worldwide movement proclaimed: "The St Vincent de Paul Society is concerned with not only relieving need but also redressing the situations which cause it. We should listen to the voice of the Church which demands we participate in creating a more equitable social order. Where injustice is due to oppressive, unjust social, economic or political structures or insufficient or bad legislation, the Society should contribute to try and change these structures or improve the legislation. The Society has at its disposal the Church's best kept secret, the papal social encyclicals."

That is a clear call for justice, not just charity.

Charity and Social Justice Go Together

The question is: Does the Society and its membership in New Zealand speak out with a loud enough voice today to challenge the unjust social, economic and political structures of our time? Does it believe it should? Is social justice as well as charity seen to be part of its founding mandate?

I think it is fair to say that the Society in New Zealand today is perceived publicly as focused on the charity dimension, with little recognition of its justice origins. The perception is that we do charity well but not justice. Yet the Gospels don't differentiate between the two dimensions.

Like Jesus and Pope Francis, Ozanam also saw justice and charity as two sides of the same coin. Both are vital, essential, equal dimensions of the central command of Jesus to love God and our neighbour. As the prophet Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister says: "To support the poor without devoting ourselves to eliminating the cause of their poverty . . . simply perpetuates a sinful system."

Both charity and justice are vital, essential, equal dimensions of the central command of Jesus to love God and our neighbour.

Building on its first 150 years in New Zealand and in beginning a new era, is it opportune for us to reflect again on the Society's origins and, because the world is in such a mess and crying out for strong moral leadership, seek to develop its original social justice charism to sit alongside its charism of charity? We have the presence of Christ within us, the powerful social teachings of the Church to draw on and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to guide us. What more do we need? What have we to be afraid of? Surely, this would honour Frederic Ozanam's original vision and legacy more accurately.

The service wing of the Salvation Army, publicly perceived as a similar organisation to the Society, is now highlighting the economic and social causes behind our social sins more frequently. They now have paid staff analysing why the poor are in the situations that they are in — and they are speaking out in the name of the Gospel about social issues in a prophetic way, as did Frederic Ozanam. This in no way undermines their charitable works. And neither would it undermine ours. Is their model one we can learn from?

"I'm concerned about poverty because it is such an avoidable stain on human community. Caused by human greed and sustained by unjust power it demands of us all to think and behave more radically - to 'do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God'. Do justice! Fight poverty!"
Jenny Te Paa Daniel

Just imagine if for the next 150 years the St Vincent de Paul Society, in addition to its current works of charity, could redevelop its original social justice charism and "unpack the dynamite" of the Church's social teachings!

The Society is the largest lay organisation in the Church. What if it could address and speak out on economic issues, the causes of poverty, the wastage of war, our polluted environment, homelessness, unjust food distribution — and highlight these issues among others. It is what Ozanam did. What beacons of hope and light we would provide to a world cast adrift from its spiritual moorings!

Celebrating and Refocusing

Now is our opportunity to honour and pay tribute to the thousands of Vincentians who, for 150 years from their small group bases in parishes all over New Zealand, have gone about the daily charitable works of the Society without fanfare, ministering to the sick, the lonely, the dispossessed, the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the imprisoned.

We honour their faithfulness, their generosity of spirit, their sheer hard work. They are a hidden source of so much grace, working discreetly but effectively, angels of mercy to the poor and dispossessed.

We encourage and honour the Vincentians — young and older — who continue the Ozanam legacy now. They are a source of inspiration to us. We look forward eagerly to how they will reimagine their work combining charity and social justice. ■

Jim Consedine, a priest for 48 years in the Christchurch Diocese, is a former spiritual director of the Papanui and Lyttelton parish SVDP groups and the Christchurch Central Council.

NEW HOPE to reduce CHILD POVERTY

MICHAEL O'BRIEN explains that increasing family income is critical to reducing poverty in children's lives in Aotearoa.

"I wasn't at school yesterday because it was wet and I didn't have a raincoat."

"I didn't have dinner last night because we didn't have any food."

"I won't be going on the school trip because we can't afford to pay for it."

"I wasn't at sports at the weekend because we can't afford the footwear."

"I can't come to your birthday party because we can't afford to have friends for my birthday."

"We didn't get the prescription from the chemist because we didn't have the money."

This is the daily face of family and child poverty in New Zealand. These are the personal experiences behind the statistics — statistics which have increasingly horrified New Zealanders over the last decade. The growing awareness of child poverty and, more importantly, the pressure and demands for effective action by government, are well demonstrated in both the significance given to the issue in the 2017 election campaign and in the Prime Minister taking on ministerial responsibility for its reduction. Never before have major political parties committed to reducing child poverty as they did in last year's election.

Why does this matter? First it matters economically: the costs of child poverty were estimated in one recent review to be between $2.1 billion and $8.5 billion, depending on what is included and on some of the assumptions made. It is a very substantial figure, even at the lowest estimate. However, the economic costs are not the most important.

Poverty Isolates Children

Rather, child poverty matters for children and their families for critical human and social reasons. For individual children poverty means a life without many of the items research tells us are essential for the opportunities and experiences we think all New Zealand children should enjoy. Poverty means living in a house that is not warm enough; not being able to take part in educational and recreational activities with their peers; not being able to participate in the full range of school activities; not having warm clothing in the winter or all the items required for the school uniform; it means putting off a visit to the doctor. One of these experiences on its own does not constitute poverty — children and families living below the poverty line are experiencing a combination of these deprivations and missing resources.

Poverty Wastes Potential

Second, it matters because the experiences of child poverty mean that the potential of too many children is wasted — their lives are more limited than they should be. This potential is not developed because their financial circumstances mean that they can't take full advantage of educational opportunities. Frequent changes of school and home location, for example, make it more difficult for children to realise their capacity. While they may keep their dreams and aspirations — the opportunities to realise them are missing.

Poverty Is Inexcusable in Aotearoa

Third, it matters because as a society we have the resources and power to make a difference for children living in poverty. Children themselves cannot change their circumstances as they are dependent on those who care for them and have responsibility for them. In the first instance this is parents and caregivers. However, it is society as a whole that needs to ensure, as its first priority, that parents and caregivers have the financial and other resources required to provide their children with what they need to fulfill their potential. Families want the best for their children; society, through the government, needs to ensure they are able to give it. Charities can help, of course, but they cannot ensure that all families and children have the financial resources they need — that is the critical task of government.

Improving Family Income Is Critical

I have emphasised financial resources because we have clear evidence from good research that money matters and that improving family incomes is central to reducing child poverty. Children and families need warm, affordable, secure housing. They need reliable, affordable access to health services, educational facilities, transport and recreation services. They need programmes and services which are culturally appropriate and enhance cultural wellbeing and identity. Sometimes they need sustained professional support to manage pressures and stresses. While all these aspects are a part of what is needed in a total approach to child poverty, different studies have identified that improving incomes is absolutely critical. Money alone won't fix child poverty but we can't fix it all without improving incomes.

A review of studies which considered the effects of increasing income found that children's lives were improved in a variety of ways. Their educational levels and school performance was better; relationships with peers and child self-confidence improved; and so did their physical health. There were also important improvements within families, with reduced stress, an improved home learning environment, better health of mothers (both physical and mental) and improved parenting.

It is worth noting too, that the available studies show that extra money has more positive effects when it is given without conditions (such as work requirements) being attached to it. Money has greatest impact when families are able to choose how to use it most effectively. This should come as no surprise: after all, we commonly and rightly assume that improved incomes and tax cuts for the better-off will improve their lives! Why should it be different for those with less income?

Improving Other Areas

And better housing makes a difference too. Families need good housing — housing which is warm and dry — and they need it to be affordable and securely available. Good quality housing reduces the effects of the illnesses which result from poverty.

> "I am concerned about poverty as it remains the single most potent destroyer of people's dignity. It strips people of opportunity and creates inequality and divisiveness. Poverty is unjust and the direct result of disconnectedness and greed."
>
> ***Delphina Soti, Auckland***

And children will also have a better sense of being part of a community and continuity in their education.

Reducing levels of family debt, often to loan sharks and other exploitative money lenders, will make an important difference to families both financially and pyschologically.

The Challenge to Eliminate Child Poverty

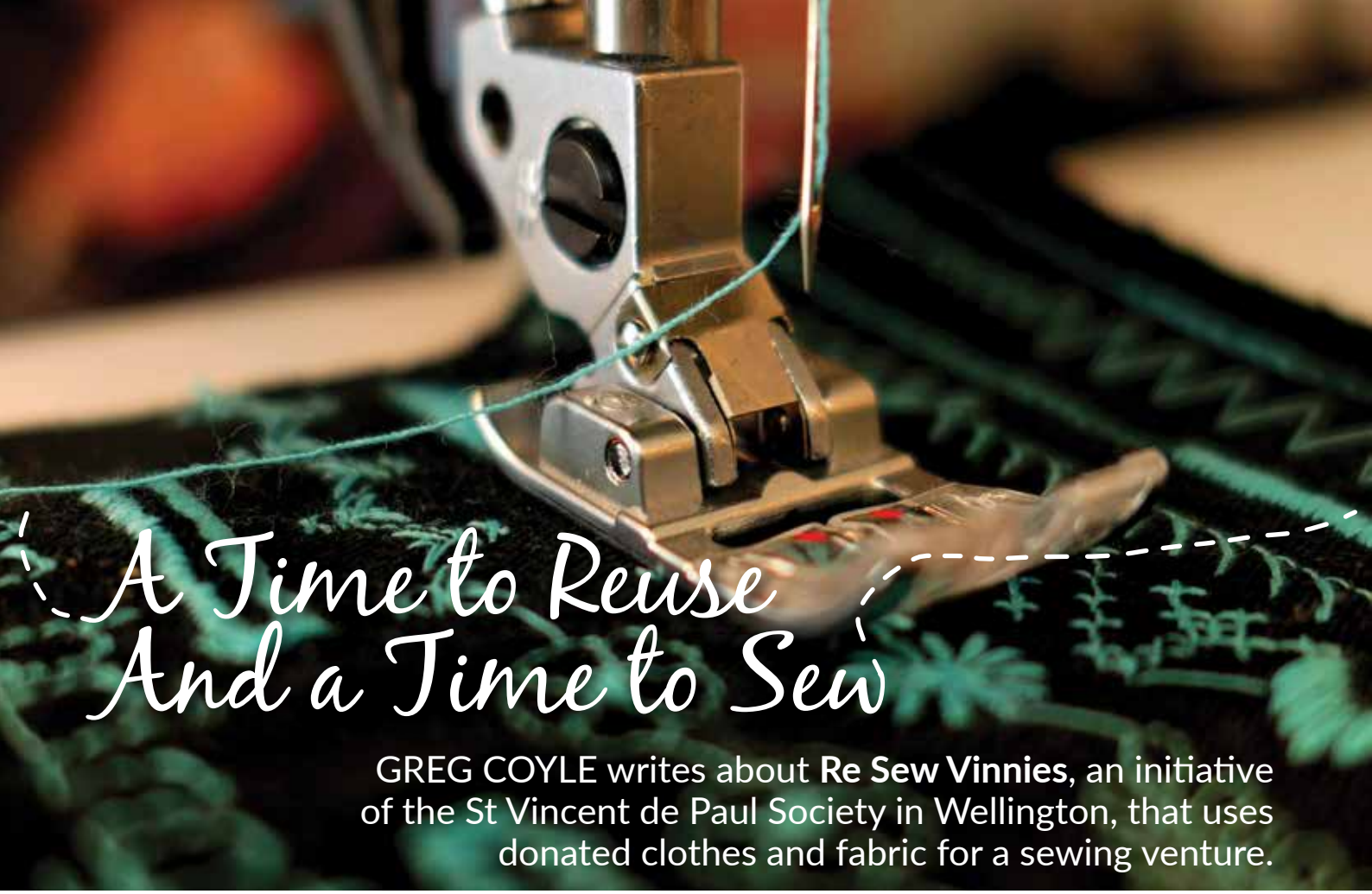
If we are able to make a thorough, sustained effort to eradicate child poverty in New Zealand we need to tacke all of the above issues through serious, systematic, inclusive and committed work.

However, it is critical that we first improve family incomes to ensure that families have sufficient means to meet the needs of their children. We want all children in Aotearoa to have the supports, resources and opportunities to develop their abilities, meet their potential and have a rich (in the widest, non-financial sense) and fulfilling life.

We must continue to expect and demand that our governments put policies and programmes in place which work towards achieving this goal. We must support them when they do, and challenge them when they don't. And we should expect it of all those with power, not just those in office: all political parties need to give active support to policies and plans which will reduce child poverty. Our children need and deserve nothing less. ■

Photo by Justin Courtney ©

Associate Professor **Michael O'Brien** works in the Social Work Programme at Auckland University. He has written widely on child poverty and related children's issues.



A Time to Reuse And a Time to Sew

GREG COYLE writes about **Re Sew Vinnies**, an initiative of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Wellington, that uses donated clothes and fabric for a sewing venture.

I think the image of a car stuck in mud is a helpful way to understand the cycle of poverty in our country. Urging the driver to step harder on the accelerator and spin the wheels — usually successful in moving a car — will have no effect in this situation, in fact it will bog the car deeper. Freeing the car needs a different approach — the combined effort of helpers, a tractor or larger car — to drag the car out.

We can be dismissive of New Zealanders experiencing poverty with comments like: "It's your own fault. You're not trying hard enough" as if getting out of poverty is a well-paved pathway. But we know that there are many contributing causes to poverty beyond personal control and, like a bogged car, it will take "know-how" and a combined effort to move people into a more secure life. I like to think of many hands and initiatives contributing to this effort in large and in little ways.

Greg Coyle is a member of St Mary of the Angels Parish in Wellington. He is Principal Advisor for the Salvation Army Social Programme.

The Idea Takes Shape

One example is the "Re Sew" initiative in Wellington which grew out of a need and a good idea. The St Vincent de Paul Society opened a store in Kilbirnie last year, which happened to have a mezzanine floor above the shop. As usual the shop sold used clothing but found many items did not sell and had to be dumped. The idea arose to repurpose as many unsaleable items as possible and to turn the mezzanine floor into a sewing room for people in the local area, particularly women, many of whom could sew but did not have the wherewithal at home.

The idea caught people's imagination. Several sewing machines, overlockers and cutting and sewing tables were donated. People contributed cottons, haberdashery, patterns and other sewing essentials to get the venture up and running. And local businesses chipped in donating wall boards, paint and materials to make the room safe and attractive. Vinnies hired Caroline O'Reilly to manage the room and tutor in sewing along with with volunteers. Volunteers commissioned a washing machine and dryer on the premises and they wash and dry donated clothing or large pieces of material not sold in the shop to stock the sewing room. The service Re Sew Vinnies was born to reduce, reuse, and recycle materials, particularly those donated to the shop.

Developing a Sewing Community

Many of the women who come to Re Sew have the time to do so because they are not employed out of the home. Some, particularly immigrant women living around Miramar, Kilbirnie and Newtown, can sew but do not have their own sewing machine or spare money to buy materials. At Re Sew they have machines and everything they need and — importantly — company. They are producing clothes for their families and others in the styles they like.

Other women and a few men have taken advantage of Caroline's volunteer tutors to learn to sew. Most have moved quickly from being unable to sew to proudly producing fine-looking clothes. Caroline is encouraged: "The transformation in these people is wonderful to see."

A surprise is the number of teenage girls who have turned up. Some didn't have the chance to learn at home or

school, others could sew but their families couldn't finance their sewing projects. They are all making new garments for themselves or repairing or refashioning used clothes. Caroline says their excitement and enthusiasm is infectious. Many of these young people feel peer pressure from their teenage friends who can afford high street fast fashion. With Caroline's expert tuition they are learning that being fashionable does not necessarily mean purchasing expensive new clothes. She is sharing the tricks of the trade to adapt and accessorise garments to get "the look" and they are getting the thrill of acquiring independence and skill at the same time.

A few local people with mental health disabilities have found their way to Re Sew and if not learning to sew are giving their service in cleaning, cutting or folding fabric. Caroline has noted it's a place for them to belong with patient and caring people and where also they can contribute to the venture.

"Re Sew is a place where ideas, crafts and skills can be shared across the generations and cultures that live in our diverse community," Caroline says.

Connecting to the Wider Community

Re Sew is connected with the local sewing community. Some Massey University students of design are volunteering and sewing there. Community sewing groups are using Re Sew facilities and paying Vinnies for the use of the space. Caroline is also connected with local primary schools and provides fabric for their own projects. And volunteers sew items to donate in their Vinnies work.

Because Re Sew is demonstrating in a real way how to reduce waste in the city, the Wellington City Council is supporting it through its Waste Minimisation Seed Fund. And with less waste, Vinnies is finding its dump fees have reduced.

Re Sew is becoming a community of (mostly) women who have the opportunity to widen their circle of friends and neighbours. Coming to the workroom develops belonging and provides them with a place and group to talk about all sorts of things happening in their lives as they work at their sewing. Caroline says: "The chatter can be very loud and hilariously funny at times and other times very serious problems come out."

And other local people are coming too. They want to support the venture, or belong to a new community, or help people learn to sew, or want to reduce city waste and join a viable recycling effort. We find business and corporate people are donating goods and money to Re Sew because they see the benefits in the community. This project is developing community in many different ways.

> "I'm concerned about poverty because I have seen the body language and look in the eye of the person marginalised by poverty and realise that nothing sucks the self-esteem from a person faster than the feeling that comes with owing or not having. I enjoy being able to do something and want this to be the norm for all."
>
> ***Paul Gilroy, Christchurch***

One of the areas we haven't cracked yet is transport. We've discovered that the cost of getting to and from Kilburnie is preventing some women, particularly those living on welfare benefits, from accessing Re Sew. We're working out how we can solve this with them.

Re Sew is one initiative providing new options and resources for poor people and the environment in a community context. It is enabling women to gain sewing skills and at the same time reducing the impact on landfill. It has the backing of the St Vincent de Paul Society whose aim is to reduce poverty. It has an imaginative, capable and committed management and a host of donors and volunteers. Most importantly is it shaped mutually by those who come. ■

The idea arose to repurpose as many unsaleable items as possible and to turn the mezzanine floor into a sewing room for people in the local area, many of whom could sew but did not have the wherewithal at home.

What makes POVERTY?

KEN JACKSON **summarises the way poverty has been thought about in the last couple of centuries and the way this thinking has influenced approaches to reducing poverty.**

I've been studying poverty and methods for alleviating it for over 50 years now. Poverty has its own history — each generation has its own way of defining, understanding and treating it — and the United Nations' 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are the contribution of our own time. A "potted history" of approaches to poverty helps us see the approach to poverty of our own time as just that: an approach — a construct — and something we can modify and improve if we wish.

Theories of Poverty and Its Causes

The question of how to reduce poverty has been a central focus of development policy and discussion for years. Emblematic of this discussion was the "standard of living debate" in late 1950s and 60s Britain between historians Max Hartwell and Eric Hobsbawm. They considered the case of the Industrial Revolution: Hartwell took an optimistic view, believing that by his definition of poverty, the standard of living for the working class had improved, while Hobsbawm — with his Marxist approach — considered that the ultimate outcome for the poor had been negative. Considering our world today, where technological advances are having fast-changing effects on manual labour, this debate is as pertinent now as then.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a realisation and admission that poverty had its own geographics; that there were geographical patterns to poverty which could be mapped. The "poverty maps", such as those of the cities of York and London, resulted, furthering our understanding of the physical placement of poverty. Such studies revealed issues of primary and secondary poverty using a head-counting approach, reminiscent of poverty lines in more recent times, and with similar issues relating to the high resource costs involved in the counting and calculation of the metric for measurement.

Others focused on poverty as it relates to available resources. The Reverend Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), for instance, focused on the causes of poverty and formed debate on the causes of famine and links to the Food Availability Decline hypothesis (FAD) — the idea that famine is caused by a decline in food production.

The 20th-century work of the Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen was instrumental in challenging the ideas of food availability decline as a cause of poverty and replacing it with the "entitlements" approach — who gets the food available. This both fitted and explained the Irish 19th-century famine where grain was shipped to England and the 1940s famine in what is now Bangladesh. Both places had food but it was either too highly priced or taken from the locals.

Historical approaches which concentrated on food, nutrition and diet, or on housing, or clothing and heating as separate approaches, added to the income-centred measure of poverty with a host of other concerns.

Thinking about Poverty Now

We now see a similar movement away from a narrow approach focused on income and money to a broader interest in development.

The Walt Whitman Rostow stages of growth, prominent since the 1970s and the failed blueprint of the post-war American hegemony of the International system and its dominance of the post-WWII era of reconstruction and United Nations Development programme, is now in decline.

We also see a continuation of the neo-Malthusian pessimists' recent work, as typified by the Limits to Growth studies of the late 1980s which predicted collapse or extreme unsustainability. The recent 40-year review of the Limits to Growth has continued in the same manner as the original, resulting in little that is optimistic in terms of poverty alleviation, while highlighting unsustainability.

Idea of Sustainability

Sustainability had emerged as a central focus in poverty discussions. The findings of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*, attempt a definition of sustainability: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The later work of David Pearce and others on various forms of sustainability, including weak and strong concepts of it, provided something more workable, but left a sense of fuzziness about the process.

The recent past has continued to develop the study of poverty by concentrating more on the provision and ability to obtain basic items, such as food, housing and health. We'll recognise these approaches by the terms "basic needs" and a focus on obtaining "livelihoods".

United Nations' Goals

The core of the United Nations' eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2000-2015 was poverty reduction. They still prioritised income poverty, but stressed other issues such as basic education, the empowerment of women and access to health services. Sustainability was included as a clear goal. The MDGs achieved some poverty reduction across the world, although the record in infant mortality and maternal health in many parts of the world has been less than stellar.

The MDGs moved to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from 2015-2030 with 17 goals replacing the eight. While there is stress on the measurement and achievement of the goals there is no less stress on the role of income poverty. Sustainability has risen in prominence. Poverty alleviation appeared to be the early core of the Millennium Development Goals, with poverty reduction named as Goal One, but poverty alleviation appears more diffuse in the SDGs.

Development as Releasing People from Deprivation

Sen's work moved on from his research on famine to a major philosophical exercise on development, which resulted in his book *Development as Freedom* (1999). He described the process of development as releasing people from their unfreedoms by reducing their capability deprivations. Sen's work was not alternative to the United Nations Goals but was wider in scope and arguably maybe more directly focused on poverty alleviation, as it had a broader idea of what constitutes poverty.

Looking to the Future

My thoughts about the future are based on the outcomes of some recent investigations and attendance at the UK Development Studies Association conference in Bradford last year. Entitled "Sustainability Interrogated" it brought together a wide spectrum of people whose focus is sustainability. These thinkers recognise that sustainability is not the only criteria for judgement, but argue that it be used along with a myriad of other ideas for the betterment of societies, social justice and growth and development.

To paraphrase David Hulme, President of the UK Development Studies Association, when people talk about development today, they seem always obliged to include the word "sustainability" somewhere. There is of course a notable exception to this: pronouncements from the US administration are not only unlikely to make mention of sustainability issues, but almost inevitably will ignore or refute sustainability as having any role at all. How much rhetoric and how much substance is involved is less than clear.

For the Asia and the Pacific region, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in a 2013 working paper, quirkily entitled *A Zen Approach to Post 2015*, foresaw a need to focus on some key factors including the eradication of extreme poverty as a priority. Beyond that: rising inequality was placed second, followed by environmental interests, which needed to be balanced with the economic ones and a need to mitigate the impact of climate change. The Asian Development Bank is clearly not accepting sustainability as the key component in development and certainly not in poverty alleviation.

However sustainability is defined, the many goals of the SDGs, the downplaying of the key goals of the MDGs including education, and the increased number of targets, measurement indicators and the ongoing discussions as to the process, look like a possible turf war rather than something which will materially assist in poverty alleviation. My lasting impression from Bradford may be that sustainability is "contested", not least in its effects on development and poverty alleviation. All contestants, including those who push for a sustainability theory of value or any other disciplinary dominance, need to be viewed with caution. ■

"I'm concerned about poverty because it seriously limits the freedom of people (especially children) to grow to wholeness — to experience the 'fullness of life' — the reason Jesus came as Emmanuel. Therefore, while any one person is impoverished the Body of Christ is lacking and the Reign of God incomplete."

Bruce Drysdale, Auckland

Painting: *Poverty* by Janith Kariyawasam © University of Colombo, Sri Lanka janithkariyawasam@gmail.com

Ken Jackson was born in England and came to New Zealand in 1972. He is now retired and lives beside the Kaipara Harbour.

Language of Love

DANIEL O'LEARY writes that the messages that lovers will exchange on Valentine's Day will express the depth of their devotion. The words we use to describe God's love must also come straight from the heart.

Valentine's greetings such as Ogden Nash's verse will criss-cross our planet on 14 February as lovers compete for new expressions of their love:

I swear to you by the stars above,
And below, if such there be,
As the High Court loathes perjurious oathes,
That's how you're loved by me.

Little did the third-century saint realise what he was starting when he signed himself off with "from your Valentine" in a note to a girl he had cured of blindness!

When we experience love we reach for a new language. When we sense a transformation within us we search for new ways of expression. Pope Francis repeatedly refers to the need for "a language of the heart". When we struggle to bring relief to a dear friend we ache for the right words. In *Words for It* Julia Cameron captures this anxious moment:

I wish I could take language
And heal the words that were the wounds
You have no name for.

In a troubled Church, there are also those who long for more beautiful ways of communicating the mystery of God's love. For too many hurt people even the word "God" brings memories of the hard judge preached by hard men in a hard church. Well aware of this, the Pope proposes using "the mother tongue", a more feminine, intuitive, more "tender" way of revealing divine love.

"Out from the heart (which knows by experience and by suffering)," writes theologian Karl Rahner, "human words arise, intimate words, words of the heart, words of God that have only one meaning, a meaning that gladdens and blesses . . ." The message of a prophet, a lover, a visionary can never be truly said in prose alone. Rhineland mystic Mechtild of Magdeburg writes:

God speaks . . .
When your Easter comes
I shall be around you,
I shall be through and through you
And I shall steal your body
And give you to your love.

A lost, powerful, poetic and mystical strain running deeply through the Catholic faith is slowly being recovered. A precious awareness is happening in people when they reflect on the abiding meaning of God's unconditional love, and when they experience that divine presence in all their relationships. Their closeness to God becomes more intense, more personal and more universal. They search for new words for a revitalised love story.

A feminist critique of our attempts at restoring a language of love around God sees current usage as oppressive and divisive. The exclusive and distancing language of the "new translation" of the Mass is a case in point.

It is high time to turn to the mystics among us. Without listening now to the wisdom and consciousness of women, and to the language and symbols of love that reflect and embody their experiences, the Church will fail to find worthy words to communicate inexpressible mystery.

Writer Joyce Rupp beautifully expresses the word of love in terms of melody. She compares each soul to an empty, silent flute awaiting the lips, fingers and breath of God. And then we become the very music of divine love's language. Rupp writes:

The small wooden flute and I,
we need the one who breathes,
we await one who makes melody.

How can so sublime a mystery of divine desire be described? God uttered the language of love and Creation emerged. Chronologically later, but first in intention, Jesus was born. God is fleshed into humanity.

Humanity, then, is God's language of love. "You are God's love-letters," wrote St Paul, "written not with ink but with the love called the Holy Spirit; not on tablets of stone but

"I'm concerned about poverty because there are enough resources for everyone to have sufficient to eat and a place to sleep. Society has changed. There is a reduction in community responsibility. We have to change the fabric of society so that helping each other becomes normal rather than an exception."

Catherine Birt, Whangaparoa

across the pages of your human heart." There are times in the seasons of the soul when the phrase "the Word became flesh" strikes us with new, astonishing, shocking force.

We are people of the flesh, not just people of the Book. God's Word is translated into muscle and bone; inscribed in flesh and blood. That Word, for Christians, is now their own physical presence, the loving way they listen, look, speak, touch, create. We ourselves, in our complicated, ambiguous humanity, are the last, most complete and beautiful utterance of the Word. Most people find this too difficult to believe.

"Fill my whole being so utterly," wrote Blessed John Henry Newman, "that my very life may only be a radiance of you . . . not by words but by example, by the catching influence of who I am . . . " In passing, one of Newman's "examples" might be a loving invitation back to the family table, by Mother Church, for all those banished from it. In God's eyes they never left it.

St John Paul II said that "the body makes visible (God's) invisible love". This mystery is experienced and expressed above all in the mutual intimacy and identification of Holy Communion. "We are beyond words here," the saint said. "We are in the realm of the physical, the sensual." A transformed world is revealed.

Maybe this is the kind of "new country" Nobel Prize-winner Rabindranath Tagore wrote about:

And when old words die out on the tongue,
new melodies break forth from the heart;
and where the old tracks are lost,
new country is revealed with its wonders.

After all, what on earth can Christianity mean — especially when it descends into exclusiveness and worthiness tests — if it is not first about people's loving, saving intimacy with the Gracious Mother from whom they first emerged, and together, towards whom they are always intuitively stumbling?

Beyond worn words and routine rites, only the "fully alive" human beings of Irenaeus — the light in their eyes and the love in their hearts — will ever be that "catching influence" for others, those "love letters" to the world, God's ultimate valentine to all of creation: "You are my body, my very blood." ■

Published with permission of *The Tablet*.

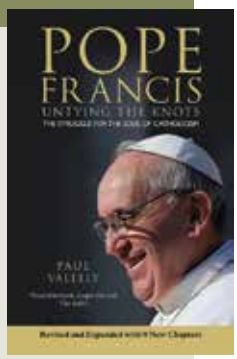
Painting: *Love Molecules* by Miki de Goodaboom © www.mikidegoodaboom.com

Irish-born **Daniel O'Leary** is a priest of the Diocese of Leeds UK, an author and teacher. He is an award winning author of 12 books. His website is www.djoleary.com

Pope Francis: Untying the Knots – The Struggle for the Soul of Catholicism

By Paul Vallely
Published by Bloomsbury
Reviewed by Dennis Horton

BOOK



On March 13, it will be five years since Jorge Mario Bergoglio became pope, chosen by his own admission "from the other side of the world", the first Jesuit and Latin American to be elected. A bishop from the slums of Buenos Aires.

Half a decade on, we have grown used to being surprised by a pontiff who wants a Church of the poor for the poor, who as cardinal in Argentina drove a small car or used public transport, who as a new pope carried his own bag and settled his own hotel bills, and who washed the feet of a refugee Muslim woman in a Holy Week liturgy.

Francis is clearly his own man, radiating from deep within a peace he has known from the moment he was elected. "For me, this was a sign that God wanted it," he insists. But beneath the joy and tranquillity he shows in every encounter with ordinary people or with leaders from around the world, lie tensions which few in the pews might imagine.

Exposing the lines of some of the major pressures behind this extraordinary pontificate is the work of British journalist Paul Vallely. His first edition was published in 2013; the second, revised and expanded with nine new chapters, appeared in 2015. "Read this book, forget the rest," says a quote on the front cover of the 470-page update, subtitled "The Struggle for the Soul of Catholicism." The need for such an extensive revision after just two years gives a clue as to how rapidly Francis has set about the process of change. Yet there are those who feel that the rate has been too slow to be endured.

Major topics explored in this book include the pope's efforts to reform the Vatican's bank and financial systems, to change the Curia and the offices through which the Holy See does its business, the call from Vatican II to strengthen the role of bishops around the world in synod, supporting the pope in making pastoral decisions, to address the issue of sex abuse and Rome's treatment of priests who abuse minors and bishops who must deal with clergy who offend in this way, and the Church's options for recognising the equality of women while refusing to consider them eligible for ordination.

Of particular interest is Vallely's skill in clarifying the background of this pope from Argentina, especially his years as a young Jesuit provincial in that country, his role as archbishop during Argentina's Dirty War, and the period of exile that worked to transform an authoritarian conservative into a much freer and more merciful person. Here is a book that helps to explain why mercy is such a clue to understanding this pope who insists, above all, that he is a sinner who knows from his own experience what it means to be forgiven and made whole. Not an easy read, but well worth the effort to anyone seeking light on what it means to be a Catholic today. ■

O MYSTERIOUS GOD; O WONDERFUL GOD;

A CONCERTO IN THREE MOVEMENTS — FOR WONDER,

PRELUDE *(non troppo allegro)*

1. Who is that riding a blue planet gliding
deep into outer space –
no pilot, no engine, no way to get off?
It's you, on the journey of your life.

2. The sky's pretty crowded out there,
might we get lost far away careening?
No, you'll lose your life only
if you have the experience but miss its meaning.

3. Scientists tell us much, with more to come,
– where from, where to, how and when.
Their sights are set on everything there is,
and only what is! – their rightful domain.

4. But why is there anything at all
and not simply nothing? That is a question
outside the dimension
of knowing only what is.

5. What began to exist ("big bang" and all that)
before it existed could not make itself.
That needed One who already was,
who then became present in all that began.

FIRST MOVEMENT *(largo)*
O Mysterious God . . . I bow deeply
down before You

6. You chose to create. But sometimes I wonder
why would you bother? Why?
You didn't need it, or me, or anyone else.
Your choice was entirely free.

7. The only place we can ever be
is in a world that might never have been.
We don't know ourselves as long
as this truth is not clearly seen.

8. They risk not knowing who don't stop still
enough to see, and wonder at
the mystery of your freedom
and the mystery of themselves.

9. In all history, there was only one moment
when a million others and I
could have come into existence. I did,
they never will. O God, why me?

10. I'm just a speck in millions of galaxies,
just a flicker in billions of years. But in
this unfolding spectacle every moment, every inch,
colour and sound has its place – and so do I.

11. Grandeur, power and beauty peep out at us
throughout earth, sky and sea.
I bow before you, lost for words,
caught up in – part of – this mystery.

12. There's beauty more sublime in
smiles on children's faces;
there's power more wonderful in
victories of love, forgiveness and graces.

13. But there's terror, too, on children's faces:
wars tear apart the planet, and people's lives.
Evil preys, exploits, destroys, enslaves,
O God, why do you let this be?

SECOND MOVEMENT *(allegro)*
O wonderful God ... in joy I will
thank You forever

14. You've not left us in the dark
or standing at graves that give no answers:
an empty tomb, glorious light, and a "plan
you had in mind before the world began".

15. In another step you didn't owe us
you entered our lives, our world, our history,
your own love reaching out, drawing us in;
enough to make angels and shepherds sing.

16. In the person of Jesus now we see
yourself – and ourselves – in better light.
Road-side beggars danced; Martha, Mary,
Lazarus...in his company delighted.

17. The privileged and powerful wanted him out
'national security', they said.
His challenge to them – "go learn what this means:
not sacrifice, mercy is what I want."

18. Their own prophets had already said:
"Is this not the fast that pleases me –
to break unjust fetters, undo the yoke,
and let the oppressed go free . . .

O MERCIFUL GOD

THANKSGIVING AND TRUST

By Peter Cullinane

19. to share your bread with the hungry
and shelter the homeless poor . . .?
His life a cup lifted up. I think of
how he felt in the small hours of the night.

20. ". . . aloud and in silent tears, He prayed
to the One who had the power to save him
out of death; He submitted so humbly
that his prayer was heard."

21. In him, creation opened up to the life
you poured into it – became the "first fruits"
of creation made new;
He the "first-born of many," including you and me.

22. Your Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see
who Jesus really is, and our hearts
to receive the life He gives. The Paraclete
bridges our lives with his.

23. "... the life I now live is not my own;
Christ is living in me. I still live my human life,
but it is a life of faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me."

24. So real this union it makes us his "body",
so real his presence He brings us still
new life, new starts, new sight...
healing and peace as only He might.

25. Drawn into this life: "... all the good fruits
of our nature and enterprise,
cleansed and transfigured, we shall find again."
Nothing dear to us will have been in vain.

THIRD MOVEMENT *(adagio)*
O merciful God ... I entrust myself to You

26. Though knowing all this — the mystery deepens —
we have sinned, and sinned again, as if born
with ball and chain, even disfiguring
the community that bears Christ's name.

27. But "where sin abounded, grace more abounds"
love, stretched and compounded,
is mercy, compassion, forgiveness...
In grace alone our hope is founded.

28. A world redeemed from failure and sin
is of love far greater than a world
where mercy isn't needed.
O mysterious, wonderful, merciful God.

29. In the valley of darkness you teach us hope —
not assurance things will turn out right,
but deep down knowing all will be well
even when they don't, whatever our plight.

30. How much I matter, or my life is worth,
is all revealed in this: how much I mean to you.
The same for others, no matter what,
or where or when or who.

RONDO *(andante)*

31. The life that is mine, the self that is me
can only and always be
your gift — not owed but given;
we become ourselves in being given.

32. With eyes, ears and hearts open
to the most troubled and most needy,
we discover healing, joy and meaning
we never knew we were missing.

33. Our self-giving reaches far
through union with Christ whose
body was "given up" and life "poured out"
— the holy comm-union "AMEN" is all about.

34. His self-giving continues in ours,
our loving makes present your own,
until you are "all in all" and
your purpose for creation comes home.

Photo: *Aurora Borealis* by Paul Morris on Unsplash

BE STILL IN GOD'S PRESENCE

NICK POLASCHEK recommends meditation as a practice of prayer opening us to the love of God.

In Christian meditative prayer we seek to still our thoughts in order to be receptive to the Divine Presence within our inmost being at this particular moment. Although we know that we can never know or grasp God with our human minds, in prayer we seek God in love and dispose ourselves for God's gracious manifestation to us. As the 14th-century book on meditative prayer, *The Cloud of Unknowing* advises: "God can certainly be loved, but not thought. God can be taken and held by love but not by thought... Beat with a sharp dart of longing love upon this cloud of unknowing which is between you and your God ."

Instead of praying in words, in meditative prayer we work to empty our minds by shutting down our thinking and to be lovingly attentive to the present moment. We simply sit in silence in the divine presence being open to God. To help us settle into this attentiveness we can repeat interiorly a mantra or prayer word or, focus on our breathing or, on a single point. And when we're inevitably distracted we can refocus by returning to the mantra or point of focus. As Christians we recognise that in the depth of stillness and silence we are being opened to the loving presence of the Source of all that is.

While the practise of meditative prayer has been common in the Eastern Church, more active forms of prayer have been normative in the Western Church and contemplative prayer was largely practised in monastic traditions. Nowadays there has been a resurgence of the practise of meditation by Christians in the Western world.

Ordinary Mysticism

Contemplation has been thought of in the Christian tradition as a person receiving a transitory and profound experience of the Divine Presence — an "extraordinary" experience of prayer. The person receiving the experience was called a mystic. This perception suggests that contemplation is an elite activity undertaken only by a trained religious specialist.

But this is not true. Every Christian can receive an awareness of the mystery of God. The Scriptures affirm that we are all children of God through the experience and gift of the Holy Spirit within us. We can recognise the Divine Presence as a "depth dimension" that occurs within ordinary events — faith activities like the sacramental rituals, sacred reading, meditation and personal prayer — but in principle within any event in our lives. Rather than extraordinary, this intimation of the divine presence in and though our normal prayer is ordinary or everyday mysticism. Contemplation is the gracious gift of this awareness of the presence, support and guidance of God in our lives. There appears to be a spectrum of degrees of our awareness of the Divine Presence which reflects our capacity and our degree of receptivity. The mystics like St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila have shown a deeper sense of the Divine Presence in their lives than most people.

Meditative prayer, or contemplative practice, is a disciplined activity through which we dispose ourselves to receive the gift of God's loving presence, support and guidance. In this graced moment of prayer we are aware only that we are known lovingly by God.

Meeting Spiritual Needs Today

Today meditative prayer can address the "noise" of contemporary life by creating a mental space in our lives free from everyday distractions. The popularity of practices such as Mindfulness and Transcendental Meditation shows the need we have for mental respite in our time. From a Christian perspective meditation creates a mental space by going inwards into the Divine Presence.

And for some people meditation addresses the irrelevance or inauthenticity they find in formal religious practices, in particular in some contemporary liturgical practice. Meditative prayer opens them to the spiritual centre in the depths of their being preparing them for the community response of more formal religious practices or liturgy. Their personal prayer can enhance the community prayer.

Karl Rahner wrote: "The Christian of the future will be a mystic or will not exist at all" suggesting prophetically that without a personal practice of prayer, people living in our contemporary secular society will no longer identify as Christian.

It takes some discipline to get into the practice of meditation but when we establish a regular daily practice meditative prayer can become integral to our life, a wellspring in the depths of our being from which we draw to meet the daily demands on us. Through meditation many people today have rediscovered the spirituality at the heart of the Christian tradition and become involved in a local church community again. Certainly it has helped them discover a new depth in their participation in the liturgy.

In the last 70 years there has been a body of writing supporting and mentoring the practice of meditation. For example many will know of the work of Thomas Merton, the Cistercian monk writing in the 1950s and 60s, who used the writings of the mystical tradition for nurturing personal prayer. Today the World Community for Christian Meditation founded by John Main and Laurence Freeman and Centering Prayer established by Thomas Keating and Basil Pennington offer support for the practice of meditative prayer.

Transformation and Openness

Our Christian tradition affirms that the value of all prayer is not to be found in how successful it seems to us. Indeed the time of prayer can be arid or difficult as we seek to retain our focus despite the regular intrusion of distractions.

The value of meditative prayer, like all prayer, is that it is transformative, it affects our lives and over time alters the way we live, gradually softening us to become more open and loving towards all others. Prayer supports transformation and development in our lives in which we can realise our authentic selves as created in the divine intention.

> *Meditative prayer is a disciplined activity through which we dispose ourselves to receive the gift of God's loving presence, support and guidance. In this graced moment of prayer we are aware only that we are known lovingly by God.*

The practice of meditative prayer can be inclusive in enabling us to relate to those of other Faith traditions. We can pray with other Christians and learn from those Faiths who have strong traditions of meditation. Sitting in shared silence in the Divine Presence creates an openness that unites us as humans, beyond the intellectual frameworks and religious practices that reflect our different cultural settings. This inclusive practice points beyond a narrow Christian sectarianism, towards recognising all human as open to the Divine Source, "who is the ground of all beings, present and active in the depths of every human heart". ■

"I am concerned about poverty because the real crisis is hidden! Awful stress accompanies poverty. Government's failure to respond adequately or in time tips people into worse, dire poverty. Homes become overcrowded, in cars or non-existent. Families separate. Relationships fracture. Stress and dysfunction reign. That's why we started "Stand Up for Shelter" giving-circle."

Jo Ayers, Auckland

Painting: *Hands by Candlelight* by Rebecca Zook © www.rebeccazook.com

Nick Polaschek is married with three children and eight grandchildren. He participates in the New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation.

Gen Zs Speak About FAITH

AMANDA GREGAN **asked four young Catholics presenting at the recent Youth Festival to share about living their faith.**

With over 650 participants, the Aotearoa Catholic Youth Festival of worship, discussion and performance took place under a beautiful blue Auckland sky in the first weekend of December. The Festival highlights included workshops on mission, digital disciples, human sexuality, the work of the Catholic faith community, the state of Earth and bishops' banter sessions. Cardinal John presided at Eucharist with a packed auditorium of young people on Saturday night and the much-anticipated concert of global Christian music sensation Matt Maher followed on Sunday evening. Young people from around the country filled the days with impromptu dancing, singing, celebration and a sense of community and joy.

Festival participants enjoyed a range of presenters and keynote speakers who had a passion for their faith and for working with young people.

After the festival I asked a few of the presenters to share how their faith influences their lives.

Amanda Gregan is Communications Advisor for the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference.

Christina Shared

Christina Masae, a social worker in South Auckland, said:

"Like life, my faith has been a rollercoaster of a journey especially through my late teenage years. What living faith in my life comes down to is relationship and how we choose to meet, react and respond to the many different situations and people in our lives. When we meet people we have the decision to let worldly things come between making connections with each other and ourselves or become divided in the stigma that surrounds the different people of race, age and/or gender we meet. I'm no theologian but I know for certain God does not see me with all the stigma that comes with being a New Zealand-born Polynesian woman raised in West Auckland.

I strongly believe that how we relate to others is the chance we have to share God's love. We don't have to mention God's name but when he is seen in our actions that is a proclamation of God's love in itself. In strengthening my relationship with God, I'm strengthening my relationship with myself, and in doing this, a deeper strength is created for myself to connect to others."

Therese Reflected

Therese Kiely reflected:

"For me living my faith is a combination of things. It's forming, developing and maintaining your relationship with God, others and yourself. From these relationships is the desire to seek understanding; if you don't understand what you believe, then why would you bother to come to church on a Sunday?

"During the Festival, I had the opportunity to co-facilitate a workshop on God's Word and Catholic approaches to scripture and you could tell that people were having little 'a-ha' moments. I can only speak on the experience of our workshop, but many people throughout the weekend seemed to be storing away many thought-provoking and challenging tools to help them in their lives. A significant one in our workshop was the fact that Catholics do not take the Genesis creation stories literally as a historical account of the beginning of the universe. Although we can never fully understand God, seeking understanding of why we have these relationships and beliefs is of huge importance — otherwise they become irrelevant.

"It's about finding what your gifts are and using them in your face-to-face interactions with others. Keeping balance between these relationships for me is the fullest expression of living in the image of God both in and outside of Church."

Sam Responded

Sam Brebner, a presenter and participant, said:

"To live out faith in my life could be best summed up by a C S Lewis quote that sits on my bedside table. It

reads: 'Relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing had yet been done.'

"First and foremost, my faith consists of relying on God. If you've ever found yourself in a situation where you had to rely on someone that you didn't have a good relationship with, you'll know it's a struggle. To truly rely on someone, you need to be in a relationship where you trust them. With that in mind, the foundation of my faith is turning to God in prayer each morning, reminding myself of God's love for me and placing my trust in God.

"Living my faith is something that begins again every day as if 'nothing had yet been done'. I do not think Lewis is saying that we should disregard all previous progress on our faith journey. Instead, he is reminding us that the most important day for living out our faith will always be today."

"Just because I was a good Catholic yesterday doesn't mean I can take a break from living my faith today! Yet there is also redemption in this world. No matter how badly I might have messed up yesterday, every day is a new chance to rely on God."

Maria Pondered

Maria Puaula works for the St Vincent de Paul Society and gave a keynote address at the Festival. She said:

"Living faith in my life means to me faithfully practising being present in the now, inviting stillness into my life, to every moment I can remember to. This is extremely important to me because we live in such a busy world in our personal, work and Church lives, that the practice of routinely inviting stillness into my day means that I am grounded within myself and able to hold a constant space of stillness inside me, while living out my day.

"When I am aware of and can hold and connect with a still grace space within me, while being side by side with any other human being, it allows said human being freedom to be as they are, accepted for who they are, however they are feeling in that moment, whether they be a young adult volunteer, a student young Vinnie, an elder Vincentian volunteer, a peer, a staff member, or for especially our whānau in need whom we seek to serve, kanohi ki te kanohi — face-to-face."

Keynote speaker Dewy Sacayan said: "If I could summarise the Festival in one phrase, it would be finding your identity. Personally, my identity as a Catholic was challenged many times throughout my life. For many of the youth that attended the Aotearoa Catholic Youth Festival, the same story rings or will ring true if it hasn't already.

"Through the praise and worship led by Matt Maher and the energy of all those at the festival, I was so moved by the realisation that love for God trumps differences. And that bridges could be formed to remedy severed ties because, after all, we are all baptised in Christ.

"As youth we are called to use our creativity and vigour to act. I am hopeful that the Aotearoa Catholic Youth Festival sparked a flame of inspiration so that they can think widely and act locally." ■

"I'm concerned about poverty because it comes from our cultural obsession with the pursuit of affluence. This both brings suffering into the lives of innumerable people and endangers the survival of all earthly life. Until we seek the common good before all else, poverty will continue to threaten us all."

Kevin McBride, Auckland

Painting: *The Merchants Chased from the Temple* by James Tissot. Brooklyn Museum.

Pilgrimage to the DWELLING PLACE *of* GOD

KATHLEEN RUSHTON **looks at how John 2:13–25 expands the "Clearing of the Temple" story and considers different understandings of the dwelling place of God.**

"The restless heart is the starting point of pilgrimage. Everyone harbours a longing that impels him or her to leave behind the indifference of everyday life and the narrowness of habitual surroundings. All the paths . . . point to the fact that life is a path, a way of pilgrimage towards God." These words of St Augustine ushered me into the world of pilgrimage when I walked the Camino Frances in 2011.

My understanding of the Fourth Gospel's so-called "cleansing of the Temple" story expanded. It, too, is about pilgrimage to a sacred place. Jesus is a pilgrim. Philo and Josephus, who went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the first century CE, describe exhilarating experiences when pilgrims left the demands and constraints of everyday life imposed by social structures and concerns to enter another world. Pilgrims mixed together, shared experiences, often wore the same pilgrim clothing and emerged at the sacred site for the common purpose of festival worship.

Pilgrimage — "Jesus went up to Jerusalem"

"The Passover . . . was near and Jesus went up to Jerusalem" (Jn 2:13). This festival inaugurates the ministry of Jesus and is the first of three key points of his public life — the second is the backdrop to the Bread of Life (Jn 6:4–14) and the third is the context of his arrest, trial and execution (Jn 11:55–19:14). Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the week-long spring festival celebrating the Exodus from Egypt (Ex 12:1–18). Passover is associated with liberation and with God's salvation past and future.

Jesus, like all Israelite males, was commanded to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year: "at the festival of unleavened bread, at the festival of weeks, and at the festival of booths" — that is, Passover, Pentecost and Sukkoth (Deut 16:16). Pilgrims travelled to Jerusalem on the spring, in summer and in the autumn. The focus is the Temple: God's dwelling place and the place of worship, reconciliation and covenant renewal. These festivals are the background to John 5–10.

The Temple — The Order of Creation

The Temple in Jerusalem was invested with meaning from both within Israel and the Middle East culture. Temples were constructed according to a divine revealed plan to be a dwelling place for God/the god(s) who visited and dwelled in the sky immediately above the temple. The understanding was that God/god(s) above did not actually come to earth but could be accessed by people in the temple which was usually built on a hill.

A temple replicated a palace. A temple existed for God/gods as the palace for the king. Like surrounding temples, the pattern of the Jerusalem Temple's personnel, interactions and activities followed that of the palace. God was accessible in the Temple as the king was in the palace. God, too, had a household ordered according to rank — high priest, priests, Levities, an army with officers and soldiers, slaves, household staff.

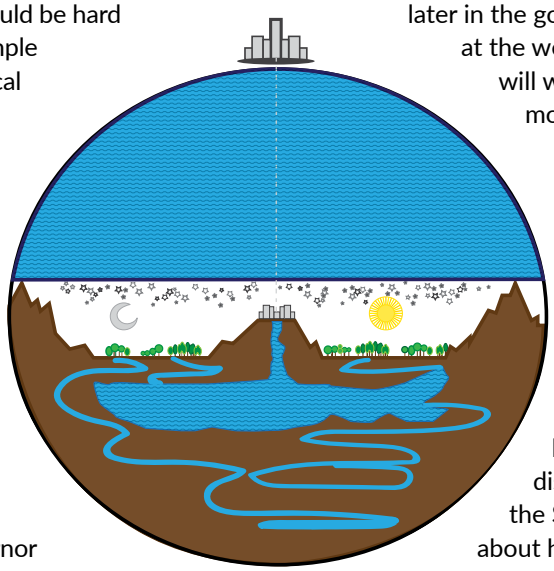
4 March Third Sunday of Lent
– John 2:13-25 (Roman Lectionary)
John 2:13-22 (Revised Common Lectionary)

Kathleen Rushton RSM lives in Otautahi Christchurch where, in the sight of the Southern Alps and the hills, she continues to delight in learning and writing about Scripture.

The Temple was a cosmic centre, a navel of the world, a place where heaven and earth met, replicating in physical space the holy order of creation. In this focal religious place for all Israel, social relationships were mapped in the concentric circles which moved out from the Holy of Holies, to the sanctuary, the Court of Israelites, the Court of the Women and the Court of the Gentiles.

Cosmic, social and religious significance interconnected with the Temple's political and economic aspects. As a king collected taxes, so too did the deity. According to Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, "it would be hard to overestimate the import of the Temple as the centre of a redistributive political economy." Within its precincts were large treasuries and storehouses in which were deposited a great amount of money and goods "extracted from the surplus product of the peasant economy". As only a few priests had access to most of the Temple precincts what was stored there was secure and inaccessible.

In addition, the Jerusalem elites (Jn 2:18, 20) held power by being allied with Rome and under Roman supervision. The Roman governor appointed the chief priest and controlled the use of the priestly garments which were kept in the adjoining Antonia palace. This alliance between the elites and the Romans was threatened by Jesus' actions.



Jesus in the Temple

In what looks like a cleansing of the Temple, the Fourth Gospel gives more detail. There is more force. Jesus is more radical. The animals are named as "cattle" and "sheep" and there are doves. Jesus makes a whip to drive them out. He "poured out" the coins of the moneychangers and overturns their tables. Caged doves cannot be driven out so Jesus orders the sellers to "take these out of here" and adds: "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" The disciples "remembered" words from the Scriptures: "Zeal for your house will consume me" (Jn 2:17).

What Jesus did, in effect, was to shut down the Temple as a place of worship. The animals required for sacrifice were driven out — cattle and sheep, and doves (the offering of the poor). The necessary exchange of foreign currencies for the official temple tax half-shekel (Ex 30:11-16) became unavailable. The purpose of the temple as a place of reconciliation and covenant renewal between God and Israel was over. Where is God's dwelling place now?

God's Dwelling Place

In the Prologue, we learn that within all humanity, God's dwelling place is within the humanity of Jesus: "The Word become flesh and lived/dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). Jesus' words draw out the meaning of his actions.

A shift occurs in terms. "Jesus drove all of them out of the temple *hieron* (Jn 2:15). The term *hieron* refers to the whole area of the temple and is used for pagan shrines.

Then another term referring also to the whole area of the temple is used: "Destroy this temple *naos*" and "but he spoke of the temple *naos* of his body" (Jn 2:19, 21).

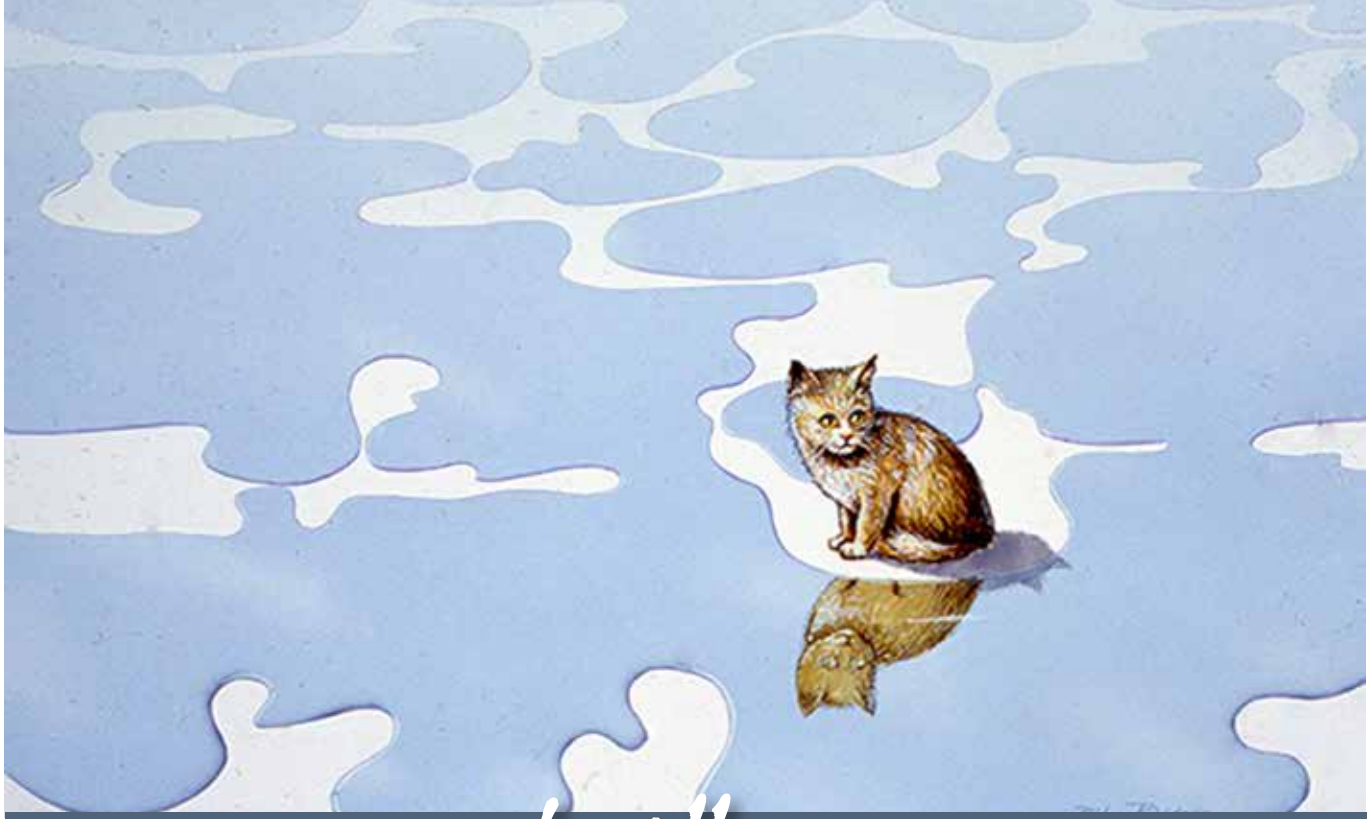
The evangelist, however, makes a distinction and associates the term *naos* with the temple of Jesus' risen human body, now the dwelling place of God, the place of reconciliation and covenant renewal. Earlier, John the Baptiser saw Jesus and declared: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29). And later in the gospel Jesus will inform the woman at the well: "The hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (Jn 4:21).

So the Evangelist, probably writing from Ephesus, interprets an event of 60 years before in the early 30s, in the now non-existent Temple destroyed in 70 CE. Perhaps some of the community had been drawn into the activities of the local Roman temple of Artemis. Others may long for the Jerusalem Temple. The disciples "remembered" words from the Scriptures and also Jesus' words about his body (Jn 2:17, 22).

While Mark, Matthew and Luke place this incident as happening in the last week of Jesus' life, John's Gospel begins Jesus' public ministry by focusing on his now ever-present risen human body as the dwelling place of God, the place of reconciliation and covenant renewal.

Lent can be our pilgrimage towards God, a time of preparing for deeper participation in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus, the dwelling place of God. Are we drawn into today's equivalent of Artemis's temple? Do we need to refocus on Jesus and whakawhanaungatanga/making right relationship happen with God, the land and people? ■

This page: Diagram showing the ancient Middle Eastern view of the world with the Jerusalem Temple on a hill and the Divine temple above. By Lilly Johnson adapted from Bernhard Anderson.



Return With All Your Heart

ELAINE WAINWRIGHT **interprets Joel 2:12–18, the first reading of Ash Wednesday, as an invitation to become involved in restoring relationships in the whole Earth community.**

I believe we need to read our biblical texts in dialogue with the issues and the challenges rising up in our world today. Over recent decades Christian communities have done this in relation to a range of liberation issues, feminist concerns, postcolonial perspectives and other contemporary challenges. But now we must read scripture in dialogue with the most urgent and comprehensive issue of times — the ecological.

Almost daily we hear the cry of the Earth confronting us. Extreme weather patterns wreak havoc across the globe, causing devastation and suffering to the most vulnerable in the human and Earth communities. In many places Earth's temperatures are the highest on record as are those of our oceans. Ice sheets are shrinking and glaciers are retreating. Arable lands that support the livelihood of Earth's people are becoming deserts. It's with these cries around us that we seek to read our biblical texts ecologically so that those texts may shape a new ecological consciousness in us.

Elaine Wainwright RSM is a biblical scholar and the Executive Director of Mission and Ministry for the Mercy Sisters in Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Critique and Reclamation

Together with other liberation perspectives, an ecological approach holds two stances in tension: critique and reclamation.

At the critical phase, the reader is attentive to the ways in which Earth might be obscured by focusing only on people in the biblical text itself; the other-than-human may be represented in a subordinate relationship with people; or the materiality of the other-than-human might be completely absent from the text.

In the reclamation phase we attend to the voice of Earth and all Earth's constituents as these function either explicitly or implicitly in the text.

Joel, First Testament Prophet

Joel 2:12-18 is the first reading on Ash Wednesday (14 February) the beginning of the Lenten season. Joel is one of the 12 minor prophets in Israel but as we know nothing about him, his time or his context we will focus on the text.

12 Yet even now, says our God,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and
with mourning;
13 Rend your hearts and not your
clothing. Return to your God, who
is gracious and merciful, slow to
anger, and abounding in steadfast
love, and relents from punishing.
14 Who knows whether or not
to turn and relent, and leave a
blessing behind, a grain offering
and a drink offering for your God?
15 Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify
a fast; call a solemn assembly;
16 Gather the people. Sanctify the
congregation; assemble the aged;
gather the children, even infants at
the breast. Let the bridegroom leave
his room, and the bride her canopy.
17 Between the vestibule and the
altar let the priests, the ministers
of our God, weep. Let them say,
"Spare your people, O God, and do
not make your heritage a mockery,

a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples: 'Where is their God?'
18 Then God became jealous for the land, and had pity on the people.

At First Seems Human-Centred

We can see in a first reading that the text's perspective is anthropocentric or human-centred. The divine voice is speaking to the human community, inviting them to *re-turn* to God — a fitting invitation as we enter into the Lenten season. And the return is to be shown in the human body — fasting, weeping and mourning and in the rending of hearts and not clothing. This is accompanied by a gathering of the human community, identified specifically with the aged, the children, even infants at the breast — the least powerful in the community. It is this vulnerable group whose plight cries out to God to restore justice or right relationships. Lent is a time when we listen to these cries and endeavour to respond.

Reading More Deeply

A critical phase in our ecological reading is recognising the faint voice of the material in the text. In Joel 2:13 there is a passing reference to clothing, which could be torn to indicate mourning, and mention of "a grain offering and a drink offering" (Joel 2:14). The materiality, or material things in the text — a grain or a drink offering (Joel 2:14); the bridegroom's room and the bride's canopy (Joel 2:16); the vestibule and altar (Joel 2:17) — give a context for the human interrelationships.

In order that the biblical texts can inform and inspire us we're invited to hear the text as addressed to the *entire Earth community* — the human community being just one participant in that wider community.

Invitation to Return

The divine voice first invites us (Joel 2:12) to turn or to re-turn, suggesting that a relationship is broken and needs to be righted. The broken relationship can be multi-dimensional: between Divinity and the Earth community — which includes people, animals, and all other communities of being. The call is to re-turn, meaning to turn from the current relationships to a prior one. And the call is coming not only to the human community but to all groups within the Earth community. It is a comprehensive call to right relationships between Divinity and Earth. Within the call is the recognition of many broken relationships not only between the Divine and people but within the multi-relational world that we now know.

Joel 2:13 characterises the Divine as multi-dimensional and relational: *hanan*, *raham*, and *hesed* are three key terms describing the merciful love of God. God, gracious and merciful abounding in steadfast love, invites the whole Earth community into right relationship. Joel 2:14 recognises that the human community is ambivalent towards repentance: Who knows whether or not to turn and relent? But as the text unfolds it assumes that we do repent, that we do make the change to right relationships.

Invitation to Restore Relationships

We can read Joel 2:15-16 in terms of the right relationships that need to be restored. Lent is a time of fasting — fasting in order to restore relationships. Today our fasting can have an ecological face. For example, we might concentrate on a just way in which we use water and power; on growing our food or accessing what is local; on joining action for justice so that all the Earth's people can access clean water, power and local food supplies. The trumpet blast of Joel 2:15 can refer to such critical actions reminding us that repentance is a communal activity (Joel 2:16). We can look around for others with whom we can gather during this Lenten season to expand our own consciousness of ecological conversion.

God in All Relationships

Conversion is not only about restoring right relationships between the human and other-than-human but also noticing God's engagement in these interrelationships. The question: "Where is their God?" (Joel 2:17) recognises that in participating in interrelationships we are led to further recognition. The prophet then acknowledges God's care or even, God's jealous care for "the land" — which we know includes the entire Earth community. We can read the final statement: "God had pity (merciful compassion) on the people" (Joel 2:18), as also extending to the whole Earth community.

During Lent we can take Joel's invitation to restore right relationships as our own. And we can think of the invitation as including relationship among Divinity, humanity and Earth. It's an invitation into adventure. ■

Painting by Bjørn Richter, Norwegian painter, sculptor, designer and writer. © Giclèe prints available from wwwbjornrichter.com *"The sales of my work help me continue my (often idealistic) work for our planet. I began expressing my concern in painting in 1974 – probably the first artist to do this."*

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY SERVING AFRICA

Of all that a parent can pass on to a child, the condition of poverty may be the most heartbreaking. It stifles one generation's ability to provide and diminishes the opportunities available to the next. New solutions are required to break this vicious cycle.

Consider for a moment that more Africans have access to mobile phones than proper drainage, piped water or paved roads. Rather than simply a case of misplaced priorities or unstoppable globalisation, it's a testament to the power of the cell phone technology when in the hands of those who need it most.

In the West, phones are too often a device for distraction. In the developing world they can prove a literal lifeline in defiance of broken infrastructure and remote geography.

Take for example the World Health Organisation, which is pioneering mobile technology that would allow medical staff in under-resourced nations to upload and share images with medical staff elsewhere, thus allowing diagnoses to be made across borders.

Or in Nigeria, where SMART, a mobile programme, has halved the turnaround time for HIV tests for infants. Or Madagascar, where health workers are remotely monitoring the well-being of the country's pregnant women, providing up-to-date health information as well as organising appointments to local clinics. Small battery-powered printers and SMS have enabled all of this information to move quickly around vast areas devoid of computers or medical offices.

These children will be born into a world filled with technological possibilities — they may even be educated via a screen. This sounds impersonal but may be quite the opposite — already in South Africa an education app means pupils can easily switch from being taught in formal English to their native language. Ownership of a computer may be beyond the reach of these children, but a mobile phone is still a powerful tool.

Eliminating poverty? There's an app for that too. More than half of all Kenyans utilise M-Pesa, a mobile payment system that enables residents to transfer money and pay bills via SMS. It's estimated that around half the country's GDP flows through it each year. In fact, an MIT study identified M-Pesa as the sole contributor to lifting 2 per cent of Kenyans out of poverty between 2008 and 2014.

In this respect, Kenyans are not alone. Millions of their sub-Saharan neighbours cannot afford to pay bank fees while inflation dwindles their savings. Instead they use mobile systems similar to M-Pesa, transforming the financial system of a part of the world where Western notions of banking simply do not work. Likewise farmers in Ghana can now check market prices for their crops, initiate trades and accept payment via their mobiles.

However, there is no doubt the mobile revolution in developing countries still has a way to go. Guaranteeing a reliable and comprehensive mobile network across huge swathes of land in rural Africa is a difficult feat.

The surrounding costs of the technology are also a factor. Energy consumption and production in nations such as Burundi (where charging a mobile phone may cost 20 per cent of a person's wage) renders such mobile initiatives inaccessible to many. And telecommunications companies are unlikely to work to improve coverage in Uganda and Rwanda where there is no market to pay the costs.

However, despite these challenges the payoff remains as enticing as ever. If such technology continues to expand and become accessible it means that one day a child, regardless of where in the world they are born, can exploit opportunities their parents never knew with nothing more than a cheap mobile and an internet connection.

From our vantage point — where mobile phones are often derided as necessary irritations, or little time-wasting machines — we can easily lose sight of the power of this technology. But in other parts of the world the mobile phone is functioning as an agent of change — providing new opportunities in commerce, health and education and helping to break the cycle of inherited poverty. ■

Jack Derwin is a journalist and writer currently living in Córdoba, Spain.

Photo by Jamie R Mink on Unsplash

Listen! We're Saying . . .

Lately the news has been filled with revelations of sexual harassment and assault. Week by week, more and more powerful men are shown to have been sexual predators. The torrent of revelations will be a surprise to many — but those surprised will mostly be men. For women this isn't news at all: almost every young woman I know has experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace, most have experienced sexual assault and all have been in situations where they were made to feel unsafe or that their boundaries were not respected.

The exciting upshot of this movement is that these actions are no longer being discussed exclusively among those who are victim to them. The discussion is now being had by the public at large, with the internet proving the great leveller. The voices of the powerful and the powerless are being heard in equal measure. Movements like #metoo, a Twitter-driven initiative that encourages women to describe their own assault or to identify themselves as a person who has been assaulted or harassed, has given a voice to many who were, until now, scared into silence. "Time's Up" is transferring that momentum into a legal fund to protect women who wish to speak up in the future. Driven by Hollywood, it aims to reach across all industries. It seems like what is happening is a revolution. The standards of what is expected behaviour are now shifting to meet the standards of what is acceptable behaviour.

For too long women have been violated — and then told that they were "wrong", "overreacting" or that the behaviour was "normal". Micro- and sometimes macro-aggressions were expected and tolerated. This year, that's finally beginning to change. But change needs the support of large institutions to lead, while individuals do the private work.

Observing the #metoo movement and the rise of accusations has been powerful. From the conversations I've had with my friends it's produced a re-examination of the past. Not exclusively, but for the most part, this means the women in my life have revisited past trauma, or finally been given the words to understand why certain experiences have made them uncomfortable. For the men, it's been about admitting some hard truths to themselves.

No person is *all* good or *all* bad and human interaction is difficult. Often it's not black or white, we exist in grey. But thanks to this movement and people speaking up, the boundaries are becoming clearer and the grey is illuminated. For some women it's taken another to say: "This is my experience and it's unacceptable", to acknowledge their own feelings on past experiences. And for some men it's taken hearing the experiences of strangers to see how their own behaviour affects others.

The question then becomes how to reinforce this personal introspection in our communities and teach young people about respect and boundaries so they don't have to learn by experiencing or being responsible for violation.

I believe so much of this has to do with how we talk about sex and sexual relationships. This has to change in our homes, our schools and our religious communities. From the Church's own experience with sexual assault it's clear we don't currently have a framework for these discussions. So much of the reason why people stay hidden about sexual assault is fear and shame. Fear of what their attacker will do to them and fear of being shamed by their own community.

I challenge the Catholic Church and congregation to think about how you will change the culture so that victims don't feel as if they need to be silent. How can you begin to talk about sex in a way that encourages respect and isn't weighed down with silent sin?

My concern is that this movement will be stalled. Stalled by parents who don't want to acknowledge their kids are having sex and therefore don't teach them about enthusiastic consent. Stalled by schools believing their job is only to educate on mechanics and not relationships. And stalled by religious communities who focus on the morality of sex in the abstract, divorcing it from the reality of people's lives.

As we expand our view of traditional heterosexual relationships to recognise the validity and reality of many other relationships shaped by age and gender as sources of real love and personal development, I encourage the Church to look toward how we can shape the future.

What role can the Church play in developing a healthy sexual environment where respectful, consenting relationships are fostered and, consequently, so are communities where people feel safe to speak out? ■

Alice Snedden is a writer and comedian from Auckland who identifies as culturally Catholic and religiously agnostic.

Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House

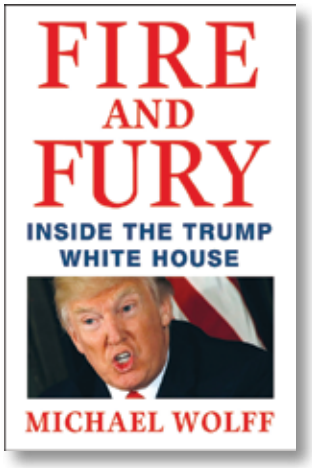
By Michael Wolff
Published by Little, Brown 2018
Reviewed by Ann Hassan

BOOK

Fire and Fury is an enormous hit — an immediate bestseller that has dominated news reports since its publication.

Through an opening dinner party vignette we glimpse the context of Trump's ascendancy. A global shift away from career politicians towards populist, protectionist protagonists; the GOP, with its brewing Tea Party tensions and peculiar personalities; an America suspicious of the Beltway after the 2007–2008 financial crisis; a scandal-ridden election campaign; and — finally — the hubris of Trump himself who, according to Wolff, ran for office not because he thought he would win or even wanted to win, but rather for the limelight which would secure the Trump family as a media powerhouse. If Wolff is right, voters called Trump's bluff, installing him in a position he was "horrified" to find he'd won.

Wolff is sometimes hazy about his sources, but the dominant figure is Steve Bannon, right-wing media kingpin and former White House Chief Strategist (a position created for him). Bannon resigned/got the sack in August 2017, but at one time was as close as anyone to the president. Through Bannon and others we see Trump "at home": unruly, unteachable, craving attention, a fiend for television. We see his shifting allegiances with assorted cronies, his ambitious daughter Ivanka ("dumb as a brick", says Bannon), son-in-law Jared Kushner ("just kind of flits in"), and a litany of bureaucrats variously outraged, bewildered, disgruntled, shamed. (Incidentally, Wolff claims that "Jarvanka" — Bannon's slighting moniker for Ivanka and Kushner — harbour their own presidential ambitions.)



Those close to Trump appear to consider him generally incompetent — occasionally incoherent, even — and work to protect him from his own impulses. For Bannon, he is singularly strange — "a natural wonder, beyond explanation" — both unable to take advice and susceptible to manipulation, making him the ideal "avatar of Trumpism". Guided by trusted friends, Trump is fickle and capricious so that being in his trust is an uncertain state — he appears decadent not because of dissipation but rather his gargantuan disregard for the gravity of the job at hand.

Fire and Fury would be a wonderfully pleasurable read — full of salacious gossip and far-fetched tales, all fluently told in a smart tabloid style — if only so much of it weren't likely to be true. Instead, it is ultimately quite disturbing: it tells the story of what happens when voters' distrust of authority leads to one of the most anomic characters on the planet being given the largest dose of it. There must be a lesson to learn in there. ■

The Life and Work of Thomas Scott Eastham: An Anthology

Edited by Mary Eastham
Published by Mimesis 2016
Reviewed by Michael Hill

BOOK

Thomas Scott Scott Eastham was a Californian who, from 1992 until his sudden death four years ago, was professor of English and Media Studies at Massey University, Palmerston North. Scott was essentially a seeker after truth, whose penetrating mind was always searching "deep down things".

He was profoundly influenced by the celebrated Catholic priest-theologian Raimon Panikkar (1918–2010) — part Spanish, part Indian — some of whose works Scott translated into English. It became his vocation to make Panikkar's thinking more widely available in the English-speaking world. The Eastham family spent many months in Spain in the company of Panikkar, who dedicated his final work *The Rhythm of Being* to Scott.

Diane Pendola wrote that like Christ on the road to Emmaus, Panikkar influenced his followers by being able "to open their third eye, the mystical and single eye, so that they can see their own tradition . . . and understand it in a new and liberating way" (*Tui Motu* October 2007). Precisely the same could be said about Scott himself. He, too, enlightened and motivated people so that they discovered the treasure hidden within.

Some of the most enjoyable contributions in this book are from his students: "Scott nurtured and inspired his students, encouraging each of us to think outside the square." Other contributors are his family members and his university colleagues. Together they paint a portrait of a philosopher of our time, a passionate environmentalist, "a born teacher and leader" as his younger daughter Alison testifies.

Mary Eastham is to be congratulated for collecting and editing this rich anthology of reflections on her beloved husband, a true man of faith, who passed away on 4 October 2013, the feast of St Francis of Assisi. ■

Darkest Hour

Directed by Joe Wright
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

FILM

Even while the centenary commemorations of the First World War continue, popular interest in the Second continues to build. *Darkest Hour* is the latest of a number of recent films about the early days of the war, including *Dunkirk* and *Churchill*, when Britain was threatened with destruction by Hitler's seemingly unstoppable armies.

Set during a few days in May 1940, when Britain's entire professional army was trapped on the beaches of northern France, the film charts Churchill's swift rise to power as the nation's war leader. It convincingly depicts the atmosphere of confusion and panic that gripped the nation as the political elite was split between Churchill's pugnacious stance and the drive by his political foes, headed by the ousted Neville Chamberlain and Viscount Halifax, to broker a peace deal with Hitler.

While at first the peacemakers (or appeasers, depending on one's point of view) have the upper hand against the isolated Churchill, the mood begins to change as the danger to the nation becomes increasingly clear. This shift is reflected in the attitudes of King George VI — a surprisingly hands-on if stuffy monarch — who moves from being an ally of Halifax to supporting the embattled new prime minister. The king comes to see the truth of Churchill's argument that capitulation to Hitler would mean the enslavement of the British people, the destruction of their island home and the end of civilisation in Europe.

Against this tumultuous background, at the heart of the film is the towering figure of Churchill, the private as well as the public man. He is a welter of contradictions — moody, irascible, surviving on whisky and cigars (and almost no sleep), a man of steely resolve, but also a flexible thinker, humorous and capable of acts of kindness and compassion. While even the king finds him "scary", he is also shown as vulnerable and self-doubting at times.

Most importantly, *Darkest Hour* depicts Churchill as a master of the English language, a superb orator and debater. On one level the film can be seen as a series of set-piece speeches — ruminating, doubting, probing, passionate by turns — that chart the inner journey of a man who knows himself to be responsible for the fate of an entire nation.

While Gary Oldman as Churchill dominates the screen, an array of lesser political and military figures provide sounding boards, as does his wife Clementine (Kristen Scott Thomas) and his long-suffering typist, Miss Layton (Lily James). While the film is broadly based on fact, a few scenes are entirely fictional, notably the vox pop Churchill conducts on a London tube train, which has been added to give the narrative momentum and an extra dash of humanity.

Despite its limited scope, *Darkest Hour* is well worth a visit to your local multiplex. ■

CROSS CURRENTS

by Susan Smith

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet asks Romeo: "What's in a name?" Quite a lot if the recent name change from National's "Ministry of Vulnerable Children" to Labour's "Ministry for Children" is anything to go by.

The name "Ministry for Vulnerable Children" (which itself replaced "Child, Youth and Family" in April 2016) is a very un-literal translation of the Māori term, 'Oranga Tamariki", which translates as "the well-being of our young". For the National Government, "vulnerable children" were those deemed most at risk of ending up in prison, in foster homes, in welfare-dependent homes or among the mentally ill. The structural causes that lay behind such vulnerability, such as a lack of regional development in economically depressed parts of the country, high unemployment among Māori youth, lack of suitable and justly priced accommodation, or inadequate mental health services did not seem to inform the name-changing. As for the dreaded "C" word — colonisation — which many Maori identify as explaining some of the challenges they encounter today, it was never mentioned.

Since 2008, National Government policy sought to reduce the social welfare budget. Such policies represent what Bill English describes as "social investment", whereby individuals with specific needs are targeted. The hope was that money invested in these people would be returned a hundred-fold. Government policies presumed that problems around vulnerability originated in personal or family inadequacies. To date none of the main political parties would favour setting up a Ministry of Vulnerable Aged People at the other end of the continuum. To do so would ensure years on the Opposition benches.

The National Government believed that if government spending were targeted at vulnerable children, over-represented in Māori and to a lesser extent in Pasifika communities, then this would ensure reduced tax-funded spending on young adults being imprisoned, living off welfare benefits, being poorly educated, or being mentally ill. That same government required that "the delivery agency [whether it be Work and Income, Justice, or Health] needs to be accountable for reducing the forward liability and the associated reduction in long-term welfare dependency" (Social Welfare Working Group, 2011).

All this from a government whose policies steadily increased the gap between rich and poor so that today 20 per cent of households in New Zealand hold 70 per cent of the wealth. Despite comments that "English was a conviction politician for the poor and marginalised. Attempts to portray him as motivated by a desire to save money rather than souls never stuck because it was so patently untrue" (see Audrey Young, *New Zealand Herald*, 16 December 2016). Emergency housing trusts, social service organisations, City Missions, and the St Vincent de Paul societies know that many people coming to them are struggling mums and dads working in low-paid but essential jobs for whom there is not enough money to cover basics — rent, food, school, medical or dental costs.

In December 2017, the Minister for Children, Tracey Martin, announced that the name, "Ministry for Vulnerable Children" would be changed. Martin said: "I have just been sworn in as the Minister for Children. Not vulnerable but all children." Good for Tracey.

Is there anything in a name? Indeed there is. Andrew Becroft, Commissioner for Children, noted that the National Government's name was "depressing, even crushing. It focuses on the problem, not the solution. We do not call the Ministry of Health, the 'Ministry of Sick People' . . . Surely we need a name that is hopeful, visionary and positive. In the jargon of the day, an 'aspirational' and not a 'deficit name'." The names chosen to label particular groups or persons say a lot about the government which does the labelling. ■

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

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

ISSM 1174-8931
Issue number 223

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

Phone: (03) 477 1449

Email: editor@tuimotu.org

Email for subscriptions: admin@tuimotu.org

Editor: Ann L Gilroy RSJ

Assistant Editor: Ann Hassan

Design & layout: Greg Hings

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

Board Directors: Neil Darragh (chair), Rita Cahill RSJ, Philip Casey, Cathrine Harrison, Agnes Hermans, Judith McGinley OP, Chris Loughnan OP.

Honorary Directors:
Pauline O'Regan RSM, Elizabeth Mackie OP,

We welcome letters of comment, discussion, response, affirmation or argument of up to 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge longer letters, while keeping the meaning.

TE REO IS NOT A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN AOTEAROA

I have so been enjoying your magazine in recent times. My grandmother sent me the issue on *Laudato Si'* and I have been devouring them ever since. One thing I have noticed, however, is the italicisation of Māori words. This is correct practice in publishing for *foreign* words, but has fallen out of practice in New Zealand academic journals since Te Reo Māori is an official language of New Zealand and in no way foreign. I encourage your magazine to take up this practice and further normalise Te Reo for New Zealanders of all backgrounds. Nāku noa, na.

Kelly Dombroski, Christchurch

[**Editor**: Te Reo will no longer be italicised in *Tui Motu* magazine. Thank you for bringing this to our attention.]

RECOMMEND BOOK FOR TEACHING

Having already read *The Rosminian Mission: Sowers Of The Second Spring* I applaud the review by John Stenhouse in the December issue of *Tui Motu* and would like to add that it would make an admirable gift not only for its literary and educational prowess, but also for its strong evangelical thrust. I am confident it would have a similar effect on others, particularly on youth. May I take the liberty to say that the book in my opinion has potential as a *teaching aid* in Christian schools for sowing the seeds of a Third Spring?

John N Vincent, Dunedin

TELL MPS OUR VIEWS

In a recent discussion about the Voluntary Euthanasia Bill my friendly opponent wished to draw a parallel between this bill and the Marriage Equality Bill of a few years ago. There is no possible comparison between these two bills. Voluntary euthanasia is about ending lives. Marriage equality is about honouring the rights and dignity of same-sex couples; it is about enhancing life. I was born in 1935. I lived through the Holocaust. Can we blindly believe that the safeguards of the Euthanasia Bill will respect and protect the rights and lives of the elderly, disabled, mentally ill and other vulnerable, "invisible" persons? Let us remember that under Nazi Germany 6,000,000 Jews died — and nobody noticed. We are not doomed to repeat the past. The bill will be passed into law on a "conscience vote"! Our MPs are our representatives: they need to know our views.

Jim Howley, Auckland

TEMPORARY SOLUTION TO MASS TRANSLATION

Rather than to have a debate drag on indefinitely about a replacement translation for the Missal, could I suggest a temporary solution. I feel there is an urgent need throughout New Zealand for a standardised text for the short Responses at Mass — as well as for the Gloria, Creed and Lord's Prayer. It should not be too difficult for this to be produced at a national level and then each diocese could undertake its own distribution policy. Laminated cards could be kept in churches — distributed and gathered up each Sunday. Some parishioners may prefer their own copy. A folded sheet that fits in a Missal is a possibility. Parishioners could also be invited to download their own copy from a website. A longer-term project would then be to tackle the unintelligible prayers etc that celebrants are expected to deliver in an understandable way. Rather than wait for the publication of an expensive Missal, could dioceses/parishes be supplied with an electronic month-by-month replacement translation. These could be printed off and filed in liturgy-suited binders. Bishops, you may not consider these ideas to be consubstantial with your idea of right and just, for you and for many — but I leave them with your spirits.

Jim Neilan, Dunedin

JOSEPH MAN OF CHARACTER

"Painting Jesus as a Baby in His Family" (*TM* Dec 2017: 18-19) was interesting. One point caused me to stop and think. The writer states Joseph is "under the stairs... awake, not breaking the stillness and safety of the scene." Poor Joseph! A young man, 18 or 20 years old; aware of his genealogical heritage; skilled already in his chosen craft; happy to have won the girl of his heart; quite able to support her; pleased with the wedding plans made with Mary's parents. Sitting below the stairs — what is on his mind? Earlier his world was shattered by what Mary had revealed to him. Broken hearted, a deep sense of loss, confusion! Be Joseph for a moment. He loves Mary. Judaic law requires unthinkable action. What options does he have? Stand in his shoes. He hasn't had intercourse with her. Her life is in immediate danger. He has plenty to fear. It won't only be Mary to be outcast. His only reassurance is a dream telling him not to be afraid! He struggles mentally. Can he believe a dream? Should he accept or deny it? What does the future hold? Mary has gone to her aunt. He has real mental stress and the stares and ridicule of the village community. Consider — what strengths of character does Joseph reveal?

Does the manner in which Joseph dealt with the stress have anything to offer young men of today?

David Beirne, Cambridge *(abridged)*

Looking OUT and IN

"I'll meet you at Fort Lobo in 20 minutes! And remember to use Dogpath Snowy!" My nine-year-old Jalori yells her afternoon playing plans to our neighbours' children who live down the hill. Most Sunday afternoons the three of them spend hours scrambling up and down the steep-forested hill of rhododendron and deodar cedars between our houses. As an adult, I think of this hill as a fence-free area which gets tangled with weeds and nettles in monsoon. But for Jalori and her friends, this patch of forest holds realms and underworlds, many opportunities for den construction and is always a perilous leaf-slide. They play and imagine in an entwined spiral that mixes fantasy and reality.

In their playful cartography they might take Dogpath Duffy to Tank One, go around the Itchy Plant Circle or visit the Hugging Tree or Purple Flower Glade. The neighbourhood dogs Edmund, Snowy, Duffy and Frodo wander in and out of games as special envoys, invading wolves, as Raja's war horses or as nuisances to be chased away. The dogs good-heartedly join in, particularly when there are snacks or a feast in the offing.

The ways that children who play can uncover doors to other worlds is discussed in the last chapter of a wonderful book I read over the Christmas holidays — *Landmarks* by Robert Macfarlane. When I pay attention to the children's play I can see the forest in new ways and learn of new places, new identities for plants and paths, and know more texture and colour, detail and beauty in this forest that I had thought of as rather homogeneous.

Landmarks primarily explores the way that words and language can precisely name things in the world of nature, yet in English these are going extinct as fast as species on this beautiful planet. Examples I particularly liked from the glossaries at the end of each chapter included "hareslip" — a hole in a hedge that a hare might slide through, and "shadowtackle" describing shifting netlike patterns of shadow formed on woodland floors by the light-filtering action of the canopy in the wind. The book is generous in sharing new ideas, worlds, other authors and — and most of all — words.

The way that a word can bring me to an entirely new understanding of a phenomenon was illustrated alluringly in a small flat in Hamilton many years ago. A Mongolian friend was showing me a promotional video of her home country. When the heart-thumping footage of galloping horses in the famous Naadam horse-racing festival played, Halian turned and asked: "What's the word in English for *hamar-sharhirah*, that feeling of longing in the back of your nose when you see horses galloping across the steppes?" I had to explain that this most important and immediately recognisable concept could not be captured by any single English word and might actually need a short paragraph to ensure transmission of meaning. Since learning about "*hamar sharhirah*" seeing horses galloping across grasslands has become a different, deeper experience for me. A few years later, we named one of our daughters Sharhirah.

Isaiah 55:3 says: "Incline your ear and come to me, listen, that you may live." Inclining my ears and eyes includes intentionally paying attention to the natural world, other cultures and languages and the concepts crystallised in the vocabulary of these realms. Being attentive to my children and their play is one of these realms. Children intuitively understand words as keys to the doorways in the natural world that open to magical realms. Maybe I should spend more time at Fort Lobo and continue to look for precise and beautiful words that can be signposts to God's presence. ■

Kaaren Mathias, with her family, is on a sabbatical-sort-of-break away from community mental health work in India, and will be staying in Christchurch until June 2018.

God of the fullness of Life
Pour on us
Opportunities for solidarity so that we
Value and
Engage in
Radical moves to
Tackle the elimination of poverty
Year by year.

From the *Tui Motu* team