

# TUI MOTU InterIslands

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## KIA ATAWHAI



## BE KIND FAITHFULLY

MIKE RIDDELL, MARY THORNE, FAYNE MYERS, JESSIE MUNRO, CHRISTINA NEUNZERLING,  
NADIA JOHNSON, DAVID BROPHY & OTHERS share how, why, who and where

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## EDITORIAL

### Springs of Kindness

I watched a tender moment: a one-year-old investigating the mouth of her puppy with awkward fingers and then bending to hug and kiss it. I thought the pup might snap at her — but no. The little dog lay patiently, accepting the poking and the affection.

That moment is just one of thousands of acts of kindness, many unnoticed, feathering through our families and society. Kindness fosters an atmosphere among us that warms our ability to cope well in our new normal.

Psychologist Jacqui Maguire has said that some of the aggressive responses reported in this second lot of COVID-19 restrictions may stem from our underlying and unacknowledged anxiety and concerns — our vulnerabilities. When we don't acknowledge our vulnerabilities we can let loose in anger at the supermarket checkout, the government employee, our children, or the shoppers in the queue. But acknowledging that we're feeling worried, fearful, frustrated, confused or exhausted and that it is okay — in fact, *normal* — to feel like this in these uncertain times could temper our reactions, remind us we're in this together and move us to understanding. Now is when we need truth, compassion and kindness to come to the fore.

The prophet Micah calls us to be kind — faithfully, consistently, regularly. Making the effort to be kind is how we form the habit — a consistent way of being encouraging, of looking out for others, of deciding for the common good, of being truthful, of cooperating, of being in solidarity, of participating. As the puppy showed, kindness is putting the best construction on events.

We know what it feels like to have kindness pulsing through our country — we've been part of it, especially this year. It's what we want to continue in families, communities, businesses. We want our politicians to be respectful and kind as they endeavour to convince us that their policies are the best way forward for the willing but wearied team of 5 million and for our country's participation in the world.

And to encourage us all, we can imbibe the vitality of the land unfurling with vibrancy and zest in Spring. This energy bursting into life, blossom and leaf around us is pure kindness — refreshing, rejuvenating and delighting us after we've been sapped by the months of coronavirus caution. It's God's reminder that we are not alone.

We thank all the contributors to this September issue whose generosity in sharing their research and expertise, faith and reflection, experience and wisdom, art and craft invite us to drink from the springs of kindness.

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



# ACTING WITH GRATITUDE

**W**e've had plenty to think about this year, as well as the time and space for thinking. It is curious, given the circumstances, that however my reflecting starts, it ends with the same thought: how lucky I am.

There is, of course, much to bemoan and, despite my best efforts, I engage in the odd spot of bellyaching. About confinement. Isolation. The abundance of bad news.

But like so much in life, on balance, none of these burdens weighs heavy on my shoulders. After all, each of these small obstacles I face, I face in small measure. While I may know a little of self-confinement, I know nothing of unjust incarceration.

Unlike plenty of others around the world, I have no experience of being locked up for the colour of my skin, the prayer on my tongue or the company I keep. I do not need to fear coming undone by my political leanings or by my associations. I do not need to steal to eat or hurt others to protect myself or the ones I love.

My hands are not tied, nor my eyes clouded, by circumstance.

Fortunately, my loved ones are not frail or elderly. They do not depend on me and what distance lies between us can be bridged by the wonders of technology that even I, in my youth, predate.

Of course, I miss the physical proximity to others. The chance encounters, the casual conversations with strangers, the mingling with those outside my immediate circle of friends. I still long for the ease and carelessness with which I could go about my life, from packing into a train carriage to greeting people with hugs and handshakes.

While I still long for those things and others to return, the longer I go without them the more my perception of them changes. Little by little, they feel less like rights and much more like privileges. I feel less loss in not having them now and more grateful for having had them in the first place.

And I feel a certain sense of shame for having had so much that I

took for granted. International travel that was, by geography, class and timing, rendered so accessible to me. As a young person fortunate enough to grow up in Australia and to live in cosmopolitan cities with ample employment and decent wages, I have had opportunities denied to others, that I took as commonplace.

Contrast that with my parents' generation, for whom holidays abroad were largely a dream to be realised in retirement after a long working life.

Or compare my experience to that of migrants around the world for whom travel to another country isn't a holiday but a chance to provide something better for their children. Or refugees for whom it's perhaps their only chance at survival.

For many, the concept of survival is fortunately an abstract one. But this year has brought the idea of survival to the forefront of my mind. Australia's catastrophic bushfire season, even before the pandemic, produced a powerful time in which collective tragedy united people. Across political and geographic lines, Australians were supported by many around the world in facing a threat that felt so unbearably close.

It focused attention on the threats of climate change and environmental degradation in a way I've never experienced before. Before the pandemic struck, I felt that we were reaching the point where we were ready to tackle climate change as a united front — that we'd all accepted the gravity of the problem and knew change was needed.

And now, with the world taking a moment to breathe and reflect, I'm hopeful we'll emerge from this collective trauma focused and united, and with a new, more realistic perspective of the world we inhabit. Perhaps it's not too much to ask that we do so with a renewed sense of gratitude and mission to boot. 🌱

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# BEING ROUTINELY KIND

MIKE RIDDELL reflects on kindness contributing to developing kinship in our society.

**W**hen my wife Rosemary was sworn in as a District Court Judge in 2006, she announced her guideline in the role as "To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God". It was a charter for her in the way she would conduct herself in the process of decision-making that affected the lives of those who

appeared before her. These words became her touchstone for managing the responsibility placed upon her.

Justice without mercy is cruel, and mercy without justice ignores responsibility. Neither of them is possible without judicial humility, an often neglected aspect of the intervention into the broken lives of those who find themselves before the courts. While wearing her sombrely black robe, Rosemary sought to offer dignity and respect to those present. She did this through making eye contact, addressing people by their correct name, attempting to listen to concerns, fears and anger. The law needed to be applied, but it could be seasoned with kindness.



## Kindness Makes Us Kin

In fact, kindness is probably a better translation of the Hebrew *hesed* which in the book of Micah has been rendered as mercy. It's worth asking what this idea of kindness means. We are often kind to those we love, though not always. A little research indicates that the roots of the word "kind" go back ultimately to the Old English "cynn" (family), from whence also springs the term "kin".

To treat people with kindness is to treat them as members of one's family. The salient point here is that one has a bond with one's family because they are part of the same base network, and therefore are to be protected and respected.

In this regard kindness might be seen as the outward expression of an internal bonding. Could it be that we are more likely to be kind toward those we feel are members of our tribal group?

## Kindness Challenges Our Inclusiveness

In New Zealand's cultural history, it seems that much of our vaunted reputation of kindness is directed toward "people like us". Numerous examples demonstrate that we are not so embracing of those who we regard as outsiders. I'd venture that the biblical concept of kindness is that revealed in the parable of the Good Samaritan, who crosses religious and ethnic divides to rescue an injured enemy.

Our contemporary example would be that of Patrick Hutchinson, a Black Lives Matter supporter in the UK who stepped in to rescue an injured far-right protestor who was semi-conscious. Patrick, a Black man, hoisted the wounded man over his shoulder and carried him to safety. Patrick later explained that he hoped his actions would help others be kind to those in need. "I just want equality for all of us. At the moment, the scales are unfairly balanced and I want things to be fair for my children and my grandchildren," he said.

This is the gold standard of kindness, where it reaches beyond enmity. A couple of years ago, I stopped my car to rush to the aid of an older woman who had tripped on the footpath and was semi-conscious on the ground. But this is not the stuff of *hesed*, as expressed by Hutchinson. It cost me nothing, and was more the action of a concerned citizen. What we mean by kindness may be no more than a glorified form of selfishness, in that we reach out to those we sense an identity with, and duly feel good about ourselves afterward.

## Kindness in Public Life Inspires

Just before she was sworn in as Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern declared: "I also want this government to feel different, I want people to feel that it's open, that it's listening and that it's going to bring kindness back." The statement was met with some cynicism and seen by many as a form of political naiveté. As local journalist Martin van Beynen responded: "Government is about the exercise of power to achieve ends, which ultimately should benefit society, but kindness often has to go out the window to get things done."

In some ways, of course, everyone's in favour of kindness. But only in the realm of close interpersonal relationships — not insofar as it implies a structural change in the way that we do things as a nation. Ardern seemed to think otherwise. Van

Beynen admits: "But kindness, like Christianity, might be one of those great ideas that just hasn't been tried yet. It could be that Jacinda Ardern is exactly the person to lead the way — and what a trip it could be."

Some of our pride in Jacinda Ardern is due to the way she handled the March 2019 Christchurch massacre. Not just for the decisions that were made, but for the way in which she immediately reacted to the victims, a minority group in our society who had been the subject of prejudice and discrimination for many years. She led us by wearing a hijab, by identifying with those who were suffering, by giving words to our grief — showing us a tangible form of practical kindness.

Although Ardern has a religious background, it's not faith alone that determines social and political responses of society. It is rather in disabusing the notion that kindness is dependent on some form of kinship between helper and helped. The notion of kinship must be expanded beyond its familial roots. If the duty of care is extended to embrace those who are not family, but are nevertheless part of our community of care, then the traditional idea of kindness might be rehabilitated.

## Kindness Extends to All

The commonality that binds us is our membership in the human race. Such a philosophy flies in the face of contemporary individualism and monetarism. It refuses to exempt us from a duty of care, even though we fail to identify ourselves in the plight of others. Simple existence becomes the basis for demonstrating kindness. Because we are human, we respond to the humanity in others.

It might be best to break kindness free of moral and religious underpinnings, if the idea of kindness is to have any chance of survival in a hostile environment. If the citizens of New Zealand ever had a reputation for being kind, I doubt whether such a quality was prompted by vicars or ethicists. It was more likely the product of geographical isolation and hardship.

We were all in it together, and in such a setting, it was more easily recognised that whatever enemies we had, they were not each other.

We are asked to look into the eyes of those who hate us, and see beyond the hatred. To be kind is not some casual nicety such as baking scones for a neighbour. It is the tough recognition that when we oppress others, we oppress ourselves. It's expressed heroically in actions like those of Patrick Hutchinson, and structurally by changes that require the sacrifice of selfishness for the opportunity of acceptance and equality. We have daily and repeated chances to express a routine kindness. 🧡

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**Mike Riddell** writes novels, plays, films and apology notes. He cooks when he can and breathes intentionally on a daily basis.



# Our Landscape of Kindness

MARY THORNE points to the threads of kindness running through our way of being and doing in the world.

**K**ind can seem a mild, unremarkable word. We human beings are accustomed to undervalue and underestimate the extraordinary, transformative power of that which is hidden in the ordinary. Paradoxically, the notion of kindness is so simple yet so all-encompassing and complex!

## Learning Kindness

As a chaplain in the women's prison in South Auckland, I was sometimes looked at hard by a passing woman and asked: "What can you do for me?" A fair question. I usually answered, with a laugh, that I had big ears, a small mouth and time, so I could listen. I'm beginning to think that one of the keys to being kind faithfully is an openness, even a curiosity about everything.

All living creatures, including people, all places and their geological idiosyncrasies, all ideas, all endeavours; there is such fascination in encountering diversity and difference. I am ashamed to admit that, at first, I was surprised

to discover, in the women's stories, beauty and wonder, courage and vulnerability, tragedy and aspiration. I had been seduced by the stereotypical thinking that attaches labels to large groups of people and closes down opportunities for open encounters. To share the story of a life is an indescribable privilege. Honest encounter with another brings joy; kindness is a two-way street.

## Quality of Daily Relationships

Another strand of kindness might be illustrated by advice I read a long time ago in some self-improvement book about relationships, which said that the success of a relationship could be measured by the quality of its ordinary time.

We all have high points, when we can hardly believe our own luck at how great things are. We all have low times, when we can barely see a way forward.

But the degree to which the practice of civility and mutual consideration is part of our day-to-day jogging along is the hallmark of success.

We know this in New Zealand because both international sporting success and huge natural disaster elicit our unity and generosity. Our ordinary time can be wanting. Small personal rituals of kindness can contribute to a much bigger reality.

## Kindness as Manaakitanga

There is a fragment of Patricia Grace's wonderful book *Potiki*, published in 1986, that describes kindness intrinsic to culture. In this case kindness is named manaakitanga. It has stayed in my mind for decades as a kind of precious insight that stretches me and helps me see.

The novel is set in a small coastal community which is experiencing persistent, unscrupulous attempts by developers to obtain their land for a resort. A devastating fire burns their treasured wharehenui to the ground. Many from around came to help them fight the fire, to no avail.

Next morning the community is paralysed by grief and anger as they survey the ashes. Granny Tamihana



turns to go to the wharekai.

"What shall we do?" someone asks and Granny Tamihana replies: "Manaakitia te manuhiri" — Look after the visitors.

"So it was she who led us to do the usual things of making tea, putting the cups out, bringing those who were outside in, pouring the tea from the big teapots, and then gradually to discuss what had happened, telling what we knew to those who had come."

For a long time, when I thought about this story, I would think that Granny Tamihana showed her community that this is what we DO; even in crisis we ACT according to these deeply held values. Now, I think that she demonstrates to her people that this is WHO WE ARE. It is woven into our worldview and our default position is kindness.

### Kindness Challenges Enmity

It can seem that the default psychological stance demonstrated within our society is often adversarial. Contest for supremacy, power or victory shape our human engagement.

Government is achieved by opposing factions competing fiercely, often denigrating each other, winning majority endorsement and governing, against constant opposition, for the given term.

Justice is supposedly arrived at by a battle to determine guilt or innocence with limited capacity for nuance, restoration or reconciliation.

Workplaces can experience distrust and struggle between employer and employee to find a just balance between fair wages and profit.

Different ethnic groups, sexes, religions, religious denominations can all engender fear, suspicion and antipathy towards outsiders.

### Call to Be Faithful in Kindness

Little wonder that in the Scriptures our God asks of humanity to be faithful in kindness. Perhaps our fundamental call to conversion lies here. When we live in unity with the goodness and kindness that is God, our instinct to fight or flee from that which is other can change. It can become an openness and willingness to engage.

2020 has, so far, proved to be a momentous year. The pandemic is one massive aspect, but also a chorus of voices has become louder, challenging lack of kindness on many fronts.

Black Lives Matter challenges racism. #MeToo challenges misogyny. Greta Thunberg's message that the adults of the world are failing future generations issues a powerful challenge regarding climate change. I feel very hopeful that a recalibration of humanity's kindness is, at long last, building momentum.

On one Saturday morning recently on RNZ (Radio New Zealand) National we heard Samantha Power, former human rights advisor to the Obama White House and US Ambassador to the United Nations, speak about the complexity of social justice on a global scale. Emma Espiner who is completing her training as a doctor spoke of her powerful commitment to work to rectify the discrepancies in the health system which lead to failures in Māori health. She has a podcast, *Getting Better: A Year in the Life of a Māori Medical Student*. Eammon Ashton-Atkinson was part of the formation of the first gay inclusive rugby club, the Kings Cross Steelers, and was delighted that the All Blacks had affirmed his newly released documentary. The first Saudi woman

film director, Haifaa al-Mansour, tells of the works she makes to show female empowerment. Thrilling stuff.

### To Care Requires Courage

I have a sense that ancient blocks and barriers to love and kindness are more often breached by our young. Old ideas that tender-heartedness is foolish and naïve are being replaced by an understanding that connection and interdependence are the only possible pathways to the future. This relationality encompasses the Earth and all its lifeforms.

Kindness is not a soft option. To care requires courage because kindness is negated by fear. Alertness and willingness to listen deeply take us far on the path to wise, compassionate action.

A true understanding of faithful kindness includes no superiority, no beneficence, no long-suffering martyrdom. Nor are there conditions or requirements attached to it.

It seems more to be a prevailing, deep interest in the well-being of all and a willingness to act in order to achieve this.

It flows particularly into situations where there is pain, struggle, desolation, and when this distress is our own, we must be kind to ourselves.

The opposite of being kind faithfully is indifference. The women I met in prison knew instinctively when the people entrusted with their care were going through the motions without the slightest interest in who each woman was as a person. In such encounters neither party was satisfied and discord was exacerbated.

To live with a fundamental inclination towards kindness frees us from excessive fearfulness and allows us to live with a hope that pain can be healed and justice can be achieved. 💕

Painting: *Taku Turangawaewae* by Liam Barr ©  
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**Mary Thorne** and husband Russell live in Papakura and are coming to terms with retirement. They have many projects awaiting the time to begin.



# Loving Sips from a Crystal Glass

**FAYNE MYERS** shares the experience of her family accompanying their father and grandfather lovingly to his last breath.

I love the phrase “love tenderly”. Yes, the outward sign of loving tenderly is kindness, but to love tenderly is so much more. Loving tenderly is a mixture of holding another in one’s heart, of awe and of presence. Like the response a newborn baby elicits in a parent — an overwhelming desire to care, protect and nurture, motivated by pure joy in beholding the other. In graced times, such as a birth, it may come as gift; at other times loving tenderly is the result of reason and commitment to a gospel of love that draws us out and beyond ourselves. Loving tenderly until death is a sacred journey.

## Gazing at the End

Emmett and I were married 55 years ago. There was a popular poster at that time that stated: “Love is not so much about gazing into each other’s eyes but about gazing in the same direction.” Years of balancing our love for each other, commitment to family, Church, an accountancy practice and the desire to be part of a just and

loving society needed that joint gaze. In recent years, though, it became apparent to me that it was time again to gaze into each other’s eyes.

This became particularly intense in the last six months of my beloved’s life. After leaving early from a New Year’s Eve party he woke me at 2:00am saying he needed to go to hospital — the pain in his back had become unbearable. Thus began the last months of living with prostate cancer that had metastasised in Emmett’s spine and liver. This was a profound, beautiful time of being present to each other.

## Learning to Live while Dying

Approaching death is about a number of things. It is living life to the full under deteriorating conditions. It is preparing to leave this life and struggling to understand the actual process of dying while being actively in the process. But it is also preparing for life after death. Reunion with our loving God — and the kindness from so many people helped Emmett make this transition with dignity and thankfulness. It was amazing how peaceful we felt, even though Emmett was so ill.

We agreed we would not define this period of life as dying — but living each day in God’s presence, aware one day would be his last. Together

we seemed to glide on the prayers and kindness of others.

## Staying Connected

We were grateful for Zoom meetings during Lockdown that gave us contact with our Church community and Messenger that allowed frequent calls from family. The grandchildren sent messages saying “We love you Granddad”, “We hope you get well” and videos of their activities: painting pictures for Granddad, singing him songs, baking biscuits and swimming face down in the bath. A special delight was FaceTime with our great-grandchild: his face covered in food as he learned to feed himself, bouncing in time to music or crawling flat out across the floor to reach for the camera.

## Whole Family on the Journey

This journey was not just the two of us. Each of the children and the extended family had their own journey all intertwined in our love for their dad and grandfather.

Family overseas, in Melbourne, London and the USA felt the distance keenly. Not being able to hug Emmett was so hard for them, as it was for the children here during Lockdown.

Emmett spent a lot of time on the lower deck surrounded by bush views

**Fayne Myers** lives in Auckland. She describes herself as “just a mother with all the joy that brings.”







and native birds. The boys had always sat on the deck with Emmett smoking his pipe while they discussed issues of the world. Vaping had replaced the pipe, but the pleasure of these conversations continued, as seated at the necessary social distance, they would chat and enjoy a vape together.

This activity allowed the boys to retain their closeness and show their care for their dad when in hospital.

One son would arrive early with the newspaper then wheel Emmett outside to enjoy a vape and a “real coffee” at the café on their return.

Another son would come after work and repeat the outing. They were both so attentive to his comfort and needs and Emmett looked forward to breaking free of the constant medical attention.

### **Love in Little Spoonfuls**

Food played an integral part in our loving care. Emmett battled with nausea and vomiting — a side effect of the radiation. It was a delicate balancing act of medication and food, one which it was hard to depersonalise as our lovingly prepared offerings were declined or triggered distress. The family cooked his meals when in hospital.

At home I took delight in presenting

food in beautiful dishes, just the right size for his diminishing appetite — offering small portions of a variety of food in the hope some might appeal and be kept down.

Emmett needed to take anti-nausea medication half an hour before he ate. One day I thought: “This is ridiculous — the anti-nausea meds are making him sick every morning.” So, drawing on my experience with morning sickness while pregnant, I replaced the meds with coffee, toast and vegemite at 5:00am. And this was successful for some weeks. We would sit up in bed enjoying a small sense of normality, often sharing the daily Mass readings, praying or just being together.

### **Love in Sips and Gaze**

In the last weeks each day brought little losses and increased intimacy as our every thought was centred on Emmett's comfort. Time together was so precious.

I started offering him food on a spoon when it became too hard to lift his elbow high enough to reach his mouth.

He became unable to move to get himself comfortable; it took four of us to turn him gently to relieve the pressure. One son was an expert at

manoeuvring the hospital bed to make changing his position less stressful.

Then Emmett could no longer sit up or drink from a cup. My father's crystal glasses were the last he could manage to drink from — Emmett would smile as he recognised the link with the past. Soon a water bottle replaced the glass.

When he could no longer drink, we spent hours lovingly offering him water on a sponge. This was without doubt an experience of loving tenderly while gazing into each other's eyes.

### **Love, Gratitude and Mystery**

Emmett gave us so much, always managing to smile, telling us he loved us and he was so thankful.


On his last day we were supported by Fr Bernard Keilly who came and shared Eucharist with us and anointed Emmett. He encouraged the family to do the same — each of us telling Emmett special things we were grateful for. We prayed and sang. We held hands and told Emmett how much we loved him until he finally sank into God. It was truly a blessed time. 

Photo by Kichigin/Shutterstock.com



# Kindness Takes a Thousand Forms

JESSIE MUNRO describes Suzanne Aubert's appreciation and practice of kindness.

In Suzanne Aubert's *New and Complete Manual of Maori Conversation* (1885), being kind covers loving and caring, feeling and doing: aroha and atawhai — "Ka nui tō aroha: You are very kind" and "Ka whakapai ahau ki a koe mo tōu atawhai: I thank you for your kindness".

Expressions of kindness crop up in much of Suzanne's writing. "Above all, let us be kind," she said in her *Directory* written to guide the Sisters of Compassion. "Kindness is what most resembles God, and what disarms men most efficaciously."

Kindness is seen as faith-fullness; attainable human kindness was imbued for Suzanne with spiritual virtue. Benedictine Cardinal Gasquet, first Cardinal Protector of the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion, was for her "saintly" and "so kindly disposed as well".

## Kindness in Others

Kindness permeates her pencilled notebook record of tramping along the West Coast in 1889 while

collecting to rebuild the Hiruharama church, destroyed by fire. She listed families offering money, a bed for the night, a meal, a lift, a hand with the collecting, arranging the next contact, children showing the way — everywhere infectious helpfulness:

"We slept at Mr North's. Very kind. 17 October. Went around Maori Creek with Miss North. Master North drove us to Marsden. Sleep at Mrs Russell's. Very kind. 19 October. Slept at the convent where we were most welcomed. Saw the Fathers. Very kind. Left for No Town, walked up there. Slept at Mr Gillin ... 21 October. Went up and down hills with Miss Gillin..."

## Encounters with Kindness

The Gillins were known for kindness extended to swagmen and clergymen alike. Once, Sarah Gillin nursed for days a Chinese miner ill in his hut with pneumonia while Patrick kept his fire going day and night.

Suzanne Aubert would feel at home in this atmosphere. She held strongly to a concept of helpfulness, tolerance,

practicality. It was what she wanted to believe and she somehow made sure she encountered her beliefs.

Marist Father Euloge Reignier described Suzanne, newly arrived in 1871 to live at the Hawke's Bay mission: "She has extraordinary courage and willingness and the most sunny nature"; while, for her part, in 1874 Suzanne rated visiting Marist Father Rolland highly because he was "blessed with a conciliatory and friendly personality".

This was the year of highest immigration ever; kindly attributes of understanding and forbearance were necessary.

## Building Society with Kindness

In *The Story of Suzanne Aubert* I wrote: "She knew that neighbourly co-operation among settlers was a thin membrane barely covering a turmoil of feelings going far back in inherited history. Her approach was to protect the delicate, pulsing fontanelle of a new society until it had firmed and safely closed." She knew that goodness had to be worked on constantly, crafted gently.

Nothing shows this better than the direct homely teaching that she would give the Sisters. "Kind words are the heavenly music of this world," she told them. "A kind word is as quickly said as a harsh one. Let us then strive to become the minstrels of Paradise in the wards of our Homes, and among



the poor and the afflicted."

Such messages and images would certainly have helped the Sisters care for the children, the old and disabled who filled their Wellington days.

## Making Friends

A kind gesture could unlock bonds. In depressed, poverty-stricken Auckland back in 1870, a bigoted anti-Catholic neighbour, a keen gardener, would longingly look next door at a lone beautiful lily slowly unfurling. Suzanne cut the lily and offered it over the fence. They exchanged "a few words about its beauty and rarity. Ever after that, they were the best of friends". (Fay Tutahi, in *Memories of Love and Faith* (TM August 2020) offers a touchingly similar story about her mother's botanical flair and how a Pākehā man asked her Māori mother how she grew her rare amaryllis.)

## Persisting in Kindness

Suzanne's caring would see her go the extra mile — dropping everything in Wellington and heading by train to Whanganui to storm the hospital ward and retrieve little John McMahon from having his infected arm amputated. She did not give up.

Trying to trace what happened to her earliest companion, Antoinette Deloncle, who had left to return to France, she must have anxiously enquired back home because, in one torn scrap remaining from her mother's letters, Clarice Aubert replied: "I do not know what has become of Antoinette. Her mother was counting very much on her return when we left Lyon." Antoinette never returned, spending the rest of her life in Sydney mental homes.

Or Jean-Marie Grange, another of Pompallier's 1860 missionary recruits,

by the 1870s a priest in the Bay of Plenty. He had been kind to Suzanne in traumatic times in Auckland; he was now lonely, ill and poor. From Hawke's Bay she was sending him money from her recent small family inheritance; and seeking news of him from her



**"Let us be kind without weakness... Let our kindness take a thousand forms... Let us be kind in our mind, in our heart, in our intentions."**

Auckland French friend (Suzanne was no longer in the Auckland diocese). "Please ask", "please tell me", she'd write; also deputising her brother in France to try and contact Grange's sisters: "Can you find out ... so that they can give him some help?"

## Kind Neighbourliness

Many other instances abound in the life of this woman whose vision of large-hearted spiritual neighbourliness was an open vista, viewed with pleasure by thousands of New Zealanders.

Historian Richard O'Farrell, in his book *Vanished Kingdoms*, commented that people began to sense "the growth of a shared identity, shared with all

comers, reasonably and by choice".

The story of Suzanne and the people of Aotearoa New Zealand consistently shows that there could be a willingness to co-operate, reasonably and, yes, by choice.


This surely has manifested itself

in the willingness to co-operate during COVID-19. Professor Paul Spoonley, talking with Jack Tame on Q&A, pointed to compliance, instant and everywhere, as the outstanding aspect of the Lockdown here. Something which, in itself, made world headlines. Kindness was presented as the best, most feasible option, which the whole population agreed with.

Yet we are faced with a conundrum challenging our concepts of kindness, choice, compliance. Individual kindness and compassion, or kindness defined as a societal "greater good"? Suzanne, with the influence of 19th-century asceticism alongside her sunny, outgoing nature, was capable of "offering up" self-denial, hers and the Sisters', in a wider cause.

Suzanne Aubert did not flinch from issues. She

told the Sisters: "Let us be kind without weakness ... Let our kindness take a thousand forms ... Let us be kind in our mind, in our heart, in our intentions."

In the issues now confronting us, we need to keep close the *Directory's* parting reference to kindness: "Let peace and kindness radiate incessantly from us." 

Painting: *Kowhai Tree Blossoms* by Svetlana Orinko ©  
Used with permission [www.svetlanaorinko.com](http://www.svetlanaorinko.com)  
Photo: Mother Mary Aubert (R) with Sister Peata and children in 1869.



Jessie Munro is a writer and author of *The Story of Suzanne Aubert*, Book of the Year in the 1997 New Zealand Montana Book Awards.





# Growing Our Kindness

CHRISTINA NEUNZERLING describes how the scriptural word *hesed* invites us to develop kindness at the heart of humankind.

**T**he Hebrew biblical word *hesed* is the invitation to “grow kindness”. The prophet Micah proclaims: “There is only one thing God asks of you: to act with justice,

to grow kindness and to walk humbly with God” (Mic 6:8).

The “one thing” that God asks is to respond wholeheartedly to the call to become fully human.

Micah says the way to full humanness is through the dynamic of the interchange and engagement of three movements within us.

The first is to “do” justice in the structural arena of our life, by growing kindness. As this happens, it leads us into the “humble walk”—walking with humility, reflectively, contemplatively and circumspectly

through our lives.

We continue to experience *hesed*. Over the weeks and months of trying to stop the spread of COVID-19 through Aotearoa New Zealand we were hearing a profoundly simple invitation — “Be kind!” This message provides us with a description for a way of becoming more human together. It is as simple and difficult as that — to grow in kindness.

*Hesed* — growing in kindness — reveals the richness and infinite mystery of God in whose image we are all being created. *Hesed* is a word-symbol pointing to God’s nature towards each of us. God is kindness which is loving and faithful. As we receive this faithful loving kindness, we grow in kindness ourselves and are drawn into deepening relationships with others.

### Experiencing Kindness

Seen from this perspective, our everyday living holds the potential to reflect God as Love. The embodied kindness we experience, which comes to us from God, we give again to the “other”. We can think of this relating as a cyclic dynamic that brings about the fullness of our humanisation. We come to know *hesed* in the invitations which come in our delightfully ordinary lives. We can appreciate *hesed* as “God’s Spirit imparted freely and immediately to all human beings.”

### Kindness Is Contagious

I read a newspaper article about a woman on the East Coast who one morning while making her son’s lunch decided to make a second lunch for another child. The boy took the lunch to the school office. The office staff were inspired by this idea and the next morning some of them also brought an extra lunch. Parents, hearing about it, did the same and there came to be enough lunches for every child at that large school.

The first woman had acted with kindness in response to her awareness that some children at the school were hungry. This kindness grew among the others and justice came about for hungry children. Because of this experience the parents, grandparents, teachers and Board became far more

conscious, reflective and aware of the needs of all who belonged to their school community.

### Kindness Changes Us

Our response to the invitation to “be kind” has everything to do with becoming human-kind.

This is because the invitation always changes us. If we choose to respond, we choose to continue to evolve as people. If we choose not to respond, this decision too changes us.

As we grow in kin-ship we grow in recognising and expressing our own uniqueness through recognising the utter mystery and reverence of others. Kinship is not serving the other — it is being one with the other.

**“Be kind!” This message provides us with a description for a way of becoming more human together. It is as simple and difficult as that—to grow in kindness.**

In Micah’s advice *hesed* — growing kindness — is the leader in a dance-like dynamic.

Richard Rohr explained: “We inch by inch come closer to creating a community of kin-ship such that God might recognise it. Soon we imagine, with God, this circle of compassion and kindness. Then we imagine no one standing outside of that circle, moving ourselves closer to the margins so that the margins themselves will be erased. We stand with those whose dignity has been denied, those readily left out, those who have been demonised. We situate ourselves right next to the disposable so that the day will come when we stop throwing people away.”

When kindness grows, justice happens, which leads us to live more reflectively, realistically and circumspectly.

### Māori Wisdom

The tangata whenua of Aotearoa have a similar tradition of wisdom. It is held within the triune, interactive dynamic of the call to “re-cognise” our humanness by embodying three

principles: tika — striving for right relationship, and pono — living with integrity, which result in aroha — a state of being in relationship.


When we are living tika, that is, being in right relationship with all of life, and we are living pono, that is, living with integrity, we are living in aroha, that is, within good relationships, connections — whanaungatanga. As aroha evolves in our relationships we will recognise it as the child of the union of tika and pono.

Over the time when I lived in a rural area where we experienced tangi frequently, my awareness of *hesed* was deepened through understanding tangihanga — Māori funeral protocols. The energy given to the preparation, the gathering and meeting with others, the poignancy of the karanga onto the marae, the word offered through speakers’ welcome and connection to place, family and history — all worked together to create a sense of growing unity.

Underpinning all this human activity is *hesed*. In the grief and sorrow expressed in the speaking, the hearing and the responding, the situation of mourning and gratitude moves slowly, inviting each person into a new place of connectedness, whanaungatanga, relationship, aroha.

I learnt from these experiences of a God whose kindness is always offered through the invitations to grow into right relationship with all of life.

The two traditions, Judeo-Christian and Māori, while having different starting points, call us to be conscious of the invitation to become human — our autopoiesis. This involves us in the long, slow process of recognising our potential. This is our first vocation: the task of becoming who we are called to be, gradually growing into the nature of a faithful, kind, loving and loyal God.

*Hesed! Be kind!* 

Painting: *Landscapes Beneath the Stars* by Jimmy James Kouāratōras © Used with permission [www.jimmyjamesk.com](http://www.jimmyjamesk.com)



**Christina Neunzerling** is a Josephite Sister involved in adult education, spirituality and retreat work.





# When NORMAL

# Keeps CHANGING

**NADIA JOHNSON and DAVID BROPHY tell about living in Melbourne during the COVID-19 resurgence and Lockdown restrictions.**

**W**e are a family of three living in Melbourne's northern suburbs. We moved here from Western Australia around three years ago to take up jobs working in museums and the arts sector. Nadia is a Kiwi from the South Island. David is from Western Australia and our one-year-old daughter Aroha was born here in Melbourne.

We are in Level 4 Lockdown during this second wave of coronavirus outbreak in the city, the worst Australia has experienced. Rural Victoria is in Level 3 restrictions. Although Lockdown restrictions kicked in at the start of August, we have been under some form of restrictions since the first outbreaks in March.

Level 4 permits up to two people

at a time from a household one hour of exercise out of the home each day, and one person from each household is allowed to go out for essential shopping — groceries and medical supplies. All of these trips must be completed within a 5km radius of our home and we must wear face masks and practise social distancing. We can attend essential medical appointments or provide essential care, but we must carry a permit in case of police checks. And we have a curfew with hefty fines if we're caught travelling between 8pm and 5am.

### **Psychological and Financial Challenges**

David runs his own art installation business and has been able to work very little over the last four months.

We are a young family and David is immune compromised, so we decided our health was top priority. He scaled back his business well before Level 4 restrictions began.

With spiralling community transmissions, intensive care admissions, deaths in younger age groups and emerging research about the long-term implications of the virus, we feel this was a wise, although challenging, decision.

One of the hardest aspects to deal with is the uncertainty around the sources of this new virus outbreak in the community and the asymptomatic transmission of the virus. And there's the feeling of being locked in the city and State with no idea when we may be able to visit our families again.



Financially we are surviving on government welfare payments, living frugally and doing our best not to dig into hard-earned savings.

We also have to work really hard on our mental health and provide support to each other, keeping a positive attitude and driving away the fear despite the current situation.

### Blessings of This Time

We are blessed with a beautiful, healthy and vivacious daughter who brings a smile to our faces every day. We celebrated her first birthday with friends and family over Skype during Level 3 restrictions. We gave her a puppy (Ziggy) that we managed to get across the South Australian border in a cattle truck days before the borders closed. And the significance of the weeks and months of family time we've both been able to have with Aroha, in her formative first year, is immeasurable.

We are very grateful for our little garden, garage studio, couple of chooks and veggie beds. It's been an opportunity to turn our attention to creative pursuits although getting supplies in has been challenging. Deliveries have become an exciting event as we all huddle round to see what's arrived — followed by the obligatory 20-second hand washing and safe disposal of packaging protocol.

We are lucky to have forged some great relationships with our neighbours during the first wave. We shared toilet paper supplies and veggie seedlings during the panic buying period. When mask wearing became mandatory our neighbours gave us home-made masks. Now in Level 4 it has changed — we rarely see anyone in their front yard or on the street anymore.

### Disruption in the Neighbourhood

A few weeks before Lockdown, work began on a government funded major rail construction project close to us. The work continues uninterrupted 24/7 and involves heavy machinery and the constant passage of trucks up and down the next street. It is a surreal and disturbing contrast to the rest of Melbourne's curfew. The disruption to our neighbourhood has

been profound, and along with other families, we have been relocated. It could be for anywhere between two weeks and six months.

The move was stressful. We vetoed the first apartments offered because they had not been cleaned since last occupied. We finally arrived at an Airbnb just 20 minutes from our home. And we have a travel permit allowing us to return home to feed the chooks and pick up supplies and deliveries. We have more freedom than many Melbournians and our 20-minute car ride now feels like a jailbreak.

### Heartbreak of COVID-19

We were devastated to hear that one of our colourful neighbours in his 70s, who enthusiastically greets everyone from his porch, has tested positive



for coronavirus. It was bizarre to see the military and police knocking on his door to ensure he was following isolation directives. So far he has been asymptomatic but we fear for his parents in their 90s as he lives with and cares for them.

And it has been heartbreaking to hear that one of our local aged care facilities has been ravaged by the virus. The residents have been evacuated to hospital. The aged care sector in Melbourne is attributed with the highest number of deaths and family members are unable to be with their loved ones in their final moments.

Lockdown meant our neighbours attended the funeral for their family member in Queensland by Skype. The

sufferings of our neighbours bring home the reality of our situation. We are extremely grateful for the low case numbers in our respective families' home States and country. We live vicariously through family travel photos and attend family gatherings via Skype.

### Our Changing Normal

In writing this we are reminded of how much our lives have changed and what is now our new normal. We are grateful for the online platforms which allow us to connect to support networks such as our local parents' group.

Going to our local farmers' market has become a luxury. Although the community vibe has been replaced with long queues, hand sanitiser stations and muffled conversations through face masks, the mutual gratitude of farmers and customers is still present.

The resilience of our daughter is a constant relief and surprise to us both. She hasn't had tantrums when we pass her favourite, once-frequented playgrounds now closed and tied with caution tape. Maybe our blessing is that she is still too young to understand!

The first day we hit the streets for our daily walk sporting face masks, Aroha laughed hysterically every time she looked at us or at a passer-by. Her laughter freed us from our self-consciousness.

Despite the challenges of life under the restrictions, we are hugely grateful to be in Melbourne. Compared to millions around the world suffering COVID-19, we are privileged. We have access to world-class medical and government support, we are together and we are healthy. We look forward to a day when we can visit family and friends, return to work and have a decent haircut.

Stay safe! Stay strong!

Photos: Aroha and Ziggy watching the chooks and the work on the train line.



**Nadia Johnson and David Brophy** are creatives working in the Australian visual arts sector. Their hobbies include pottery, sculpture and surfing.

# Kindness

Before you know what kindness really is  
you must lose things,  
feel the future dissolve in a moment  
like salt in a weakened broth.  
What you held in your hand,  
what you counted and carefully saved,  
all this must go so you know  
how desolate the landscape can be  
between the regions of kindness.  
How you ride and ride  
thinking the bus will never stop,  
the passengers eating maize and chicken  
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness  
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho  
lies dead by the side of the road.  
You must see how this could be you,  
how he too was someone  
who journeyed through the night with plans  
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,  
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.  
You must wake up with sorrow.  
You must speak to it till your voice  
catches the thread of all sorrows  
and you see the size of the cloth.  
Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,  
only kindness that ties your shoes  
and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,  
only kindness that raises its head  
from the crowd of the world to say  
It is I you have been looking for,  
and then goes with you everywhere  
like a shadow or a friend.

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From: *Words Under the Words*, Far Corner Books, 1995







# Thoughts on the Habit of Being Kind



**Bernadette Kelly** and Rik live in Rotorua. She has three children and is Nana to six delightful grandchildren.

Gardening and licorice allsorts are favourites.

**I**t can be a challenge in a partnership to be kind all the time. Developing a new partner relationship especially calls for kindness and patience — maybe more than in other relationships. It's so much easier

to respond with kindness to my adult children, their spouses and my friends — who don't live with me. And my grandchildren are just the bee's knees. They all think I'm pretty good and we get on. But responding kindly with

those I live with keeps our communication open and the atmosphere loving.

One of my “go to” resources when I find myself running short with my partner is to remember a lesson I learnt from my parents. They never took anyone at face value but looked beyond to that person's “baggage”. They taught me to look at the underlying reasons for a person's behaviour and this changes the way I respond to others.

I've found that knowing and understanding my partner's background and how this affects the way he reacts, empowers me. Knowing myself is also essential.

Sometimes the threads of kindness are a bit taut but faithfulness pulls us through. Kindness and faithfulness are entwined in developing a loving relationship. 💞



**Theresa Eyre Vossen**, from Dunedin, lives in Queensland with Caleb and their two teenagers. She loves dawn, coffee, people, prayer and volunteering.

**R**eflecting on “being kind faithfully” has been a wonderful gift during this pandemic.

In Australia we are months into “church online”, closed borders, lost visits to see family, no access to school for

parents, Lockdown rules at aged care homes and hospices, community spread in Victoria, 200 deaths and a “second wave” lapping at the shores of Queensland.

Being kind faithfully is to be kind relentlessly! It is seeing the other: looking up and smiling at a stranger's face as we pass by, without knowing their day or their fears. It is my volunteer hospice reception shifts, where

my welcome to visitors used to be: “Help yourself to drinks and baking. Make yourself at home” and is now “I must enforce Lockdown”! Faithful kindness here is not letting security screening, sanitisation or a temperature gun steal away my kind eye contact, warm welcome, and “I will bring a drink to your room”.

Faithful kindness includes care for the self: our body, mind and Spirit. Self-sabotaging behaviour, addiction or neglecting our own cries for help is not kindness. For me, taking a year off alcohol — to be kinder to my body — has been an incredible gesture requiring faithful intention and diligence: the ultimate kindness in a time of chronic stress. I sleep well, am healthier and can rise to pray and read and, therefore, have more to give to others.

To have the audacity to faithfully be kind each day in a global pandemic, may be what saves me from despair in this hard season. 💞





**Jenny Wilson** lives in a Masterton retirement village, on her own since Mike's death. She was active in St Benedict's parish, Auckland and enjoys long walks.

**M**y first reaction on reading "being kind faithfully" was to go to the Gospel teaching. On further reflection I realised that over the past two years I have received constant kindness from

a friend in our village. This person, as far as I know, has no church affiliation and does not speak about religion, yet has strong beliefs on living life. He has faithfully checked on my well-being ever since Mike, my husband, became seriously ill and then died.

All the time we were in Palmerston North for Mike's

treatment, there were phone calls and texts, conveying village news and generally staying in touch. I found this contact helped me to cope with the horror of what we were experiencing.

During Lockdown, and still now, my friend stays in touch.

Other people in the village also receive his kindness. Many of us bought rainwater tanks from the Council. My friend and two helpers have installed them for us. And we have the benefit of his technical knowledge — he runs a Technology Users Group (TUG) in the village to help us with our devices.

For me, we are kind faithfully when we live according to our beliefs. Staying kind is a strand through our lives which can be received or given — and it is, without doubt, God given. Whether my friend agrees or not. 🌸



**Ted Richards** is an aspiring house husband based in Tamaki Makaurau. He has enjoyed knitting during both Lockdowns.

**W**e live in times which are filled with doubt, discordance, raging wild fires, global pandemic, massive protest movements and controversial political

leaders. So what is it to "be kind faithfully"? I can think of no better example than the way that Aotearoa has reacted and is continuing respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

It is a self-emptying action of sacrifice undertaken by a community who hold a shared faith that this is our best course of action. It is an act of kindness that utterly depends upon our belief in one another. We

only need to look overseas to see that when selfish motivations reign, or there is not a shared unity of action, people suffer and die.

We are called by Christ to live this faith far more broadly than how we respond to global pandemics; we are called to be continually kind in all aspects of our lives. But, importantly, this kindness is not about "the self" — it is to be nested in the context of our community. We believe that when we are all "kind faithfully", the kingdom of God will be revealed and present among us.

Through our response to the pandemic we share the best example I've experienced of "being kind faithfully". It's an odd example, though, and almost paradoxical: in the case of coronavirus, what saves the community is the community withdrawing and isolating from itself. 🌸



**Pam Wood** is a wife, mum, grandma, daughter, sister, friend, artist, crafter, bread maker and quilter. She lives in Auckland.

**I** was raised in a loving, kind family and always believed that being kind was my default setting. But there's nothing like a global pandemic and several weeks of Lockdown to test your

resolve. Dealing with the vagaries of modern technology, trying to work from home within a noisy household with little privacy, having someone else choose my groceries, attempting online purchasing with frustrated sales reps

— it was all very challenging. How hard I found it to react with kindness in the face of other people's irritability and snippiness! Two quotes help focus me: Ian Maclaren's: "Be kind for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle" encourages me to stop and breathe before I respond and give others the benefit of the doubt. The second quote "In a world where you can be anything, be kind" reminds me that this is most definitely a choice that I must consciously make. Micah reminds us that God calls us to "be kind faithfully". It is a clear challenge for me to choose to consistently act this way — and often the only way I can do so is to enter that place where I can tap into God's compassion and mercy. 🌸



## Connecting with Kindness

SEÁN BROSNAHAN shares how Micah's prophetic advice has influenced his life.

**A**ct justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God." I encountered this verse from the prophet Micah 35 years ago when an old schoolmate was being ordained. He chose it to adorn his ordination card and I can recall the impact it made on me at the time. The words seemed to glow with a subtle power and I recognised their potential to frame a life of faith. Years later, when the Otago Daily Times invited me to be the subject of their regular "Five Questions" column, I chose Micah 6:8 as my response to the "if you had a message for the world" question. So we've got history, Micah and I.

It's all very well loving a beautiful quotation, of course, but not much chop if I don't live it, too. I could say the same about my entire life as a Catholic. Turning up faithfully every Sunday to Mass and listening attentively (mostly) to the readings and the homily, won't count for much before the Holy Inquisition which awaits us all at the end of things. The

question won't be "What did you believe?", or even "What was your favourite biblical passage?" The core of judgement will be "What did you DO?" And, if you're anything like me, that thought is disturbing. Because I know that I am probably struggling with my scorecard against Micah's three-part challenge.

Yet there is a glorious simplicity to his injunctions that gives me hope. In middle age I can't claim that I have changed the world, nor even dented its injustices and inequities. But Micah isn't setting his call to action on such a scale. I just have to change me. How hard can that be? Well, pretty hard in fact. But not impossible, especially if I take baby steps. "Loving tenderly", for instance. New Zealand now has compelling evidence of how powerful simple kindness can be. The Prime Minister's exhortation to "Be kind", set at the centre of national public health messaging to combat the coronavirus pandemic, may well be the secret to our national success in limiting the spread of the contagion. "Be kind". Simple, measurable, achievable.

It's said that travel broadens the mind. It can also stretch the heart. I've been lucky enough to do quite a bit of overseas travel in recent years and it

has been one of my most fulfilling life experiences. One of the things I came to admire intensely was the intricate and incredibly efficient system of international mass transit. The interconnections between airlines, airports, border security and the million-and-one steps in the process of delivering a traveller from one side of the world to the other simply amazed me. I always felt immensely privileged whenever I stepped out of ordinary life and into that unique chain of connections, along with the millions of other people who were lucky enough to be taking a jet plane somewhere on any given day.

A few years ago, passing along this slightly out-of-real-life conveyor belt of connectivity, I had an epiphany. Just a small one I suppose, but an epiphany nonetheless. I realised with a compelling sense of certitude that I was no more important than anyone else in any of the lines that I queued in. Everyone deserved as much space, time and consideration as I did. There was no reason for me to push forward, be demanding, or expect any better treatment than any of my fellow travellers. That realisation made me adjust my behaviour. I sought to be kinder to everyone I encountered, simply by recognising their needs as equal to mine, and acting accordingly. And to communicate that insight, I decided to consciously smile at every face that was turned my way.

Not exactly St Paul on the road to Damascus, I know. But that desire to be kinder, to smile at strangers, made a real difference to my experience of that trip. And when I returned home it translated easily to everyday life as well: on the road, at the supermarket, on the street. It was a perfect antidote to the many frustrations I encountered each day, providing the impetus to let things go, to accept delays and to forgive drivers who annoyed me in traffic. Practising kindness in little things made me feel like I might just be getting somewhere with Micah's "love tenderly". Best of all, when I smile at someone, they often smile right back. 💞

Seán Brosnahan is a parishioner at St Francis Xavier Dunedin and works as a curator at Toitū Otago Settlers Museum.



Photo by Andrew Angelov/Shutterstock.com



# KINDNESS IS A COMMITMENT

## JENNY BECK reflects on her appreciation of the resolute kindness of people.

Last September I was lucky enough to find myself in Jerusalem. One day I went a-looking: my goal was to find Oskar Schindler's grave in the Roman Catholic Franciscan Cemetery on the slopes of Mount Zion. As I approached the gates my heart skipped: I've admired Schindler for decades now, honoured as he has been as "righteous among the nations" at Yad Vashem, the Jewish Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Schindler, a Nazi Party member, owned a factory. During WWII he risked his own life to save his Jewish employees, 1,200 people altogether. He explained afterwards that he had no choice but to subvert the ghastly Nazi regime, overcoming his "inner cowardice" to take action.

It was easy to spot the grave. It was covered with stones left by visitors, in the Jewish customary manner. Standing there I had the oddest sense. I don't know whether Schindler was a person of faith. But the Spirit whispered to me: "If this man was able to show such self-sacrificial kindness, how much should I, or we, who have the love of Christ and the imperative of the Gospel?"

According to Micah 6:8, God wants us to "be kind faithfully". Or "love mercy" as some translations have it.

I've been ruminating much upon kindness recently. In July my 89-year-old mother, increasingly befuddled by dementia, died suddenly in South Africa, of COVID-19. She was a person of many brilliant colours and aspects, but the characteristic invariably remarked upon by those who've written was her resolute commitment to kindness.

Mom was infinitely hospitable. She used her home to reach out, inviting people around, offering them a meal, a bed. She was no respecter of whether a person's status was elevated or lowly; she took you to her heart regardless. We, her children, often found her openness embarrassing, but this deterred her not at all. Occasionally I asked, not a little resentfully: "But why all these extras?" Her simple answer: "Because they're people, and God loves them."

She entered into the lives of others, whether that of the young, pregnant girl at Church, or the prisoner convicted of drug-dealing, or the elderly couple evicted from their flat,

or even the politically active student who needed an urgent lift across the border into Lesotho. She cooked; she gave money; she visited the hospital and prison; she prayed over people whose situations seemed hopeless.

She was kind faithfully.

My heart is obviously still raw, but I remember with pride. My mother, like my hero Schindler, modelled kindness in a spectacular way. She took seriously the job of being Jesus's hands, feet and voice in the world.

Kindness it seems to me involves a deliberate choice. I'm reminded of Ephesians 4:24 and 32: "And put on the new self ... be kind and compassionate to one another."

Kindness is love in action: supporting others in words and deeds, encouraging them, showing sensitivity, entering into their worlds, being quick to sympathise and slow to condemn. Bearing in mind the saying that we should at all times be kind, because everyone we meet is fighting a great battle.

Kindness also involves risk: after all we might be taken advantage of, scorned or hurt. And the recipient might not deserve it. But let's persist anyway, following Proverbs 3:3: "Do not let kindness and truth leave you ... write them on the tablet of your heart."

The "faithfully" part implies a commitment for the long haul and no matter what the outcome. It's been a particular challenge to me to remember that my (however imperfect) dedication to kindness has nothing to do with "quick results" and everything to do with what Eugene Peterson called "a long obedience in the same direction".

Besides all that, I've discovered that being kind is good for me! I'm involved as an "alongsider" with a group of men with mental health problems. People say: "You're so kind!" But honestly, I'm the true beneficiary. As I open my heart I receive love, closeness and a peculiarly warm fellowship in return.

In the end, of course, we can only show kindness faithfully because of God's grace extended to us. Having shown us mercy, God walks with us and strengthens us to be kind, generous, human, on an ongoing basis. 💕



**Jenny Beck**, originally from South Africa, is mother to eight sons and has a general law practice in Dunedin.





# CALL ON GOD'S MERCY

VERONICA LAWSON provides an ecological explanation of Isaiah 55:6-9.

**Isaiah 55:6** Seek YHWH while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; **7** let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to YHWH, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. **8** For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says YHWH. **9** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

**E**cological readers of Isaiah 55:6-9, the first reading for the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, will immediately notice that it is male-gendered and that it is concerned exclusively with divine-human relationships. The more-than-

human is invoked only to demonstrate the gulf between God's ways and thoughts on the one hand and flawed humanity's ways and thoughts on the other. Earth becomes the negative counterpart to the heavens above.

There is more to this reading, however, than first meets the ecological eye and it would be tragic indeed if we were to miss the force and even the wonder of this prophetic piece.

## Exiles Were the Elite

Like all of our liturgical texts, it needs to be heard within its historical and literary contexts. This is particularly so, in this instance, since these verses are taken from a poem that forms the conclusion to the 15 chapters (Isaiah 40-55) attributed to a sixth-century Babylonian based "disciple" of the great eighth-century BCE prophet, from whom the work as a whole takes its name.

This prophet-poet author is generally referred to as Second-Isaiah. While he addresses the people of Judah in exile, his writings were almost certainly compiled and assembled in their final format in the post-exilic period.

Thanks to Boney M. a Euro-Carribean vocal group based in Germany in the late 1970s, the story of the Babylonian exile of the people of Judah is fairly common knowledge. From my vantage point at that time, in a senior secondary girls' boarding school, it seemed as though the whole world was resounding with the lyrics of their signature song, *By the Rivers of Babylon*:

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down  
Yeah, we wept, when we remembered Zion."

Those who wept for Zion were the elite Judahites taken into captivity by the Babylonians in the early part of the century as well as their descendants, many of whom had never seen the land of their forebears. The Babylonians had only been interested in deporting those with the capacity to contribute to Babylonian supremacy, probably 10-20 per cent of the population of Judah.

## Poor Left with Foreign Rule

The poor were left behind to eke out a living in the vineyards and fields assigned to them by the Babylonian administrator in Judah (2 Kings 24:14; Jeremiah 39:10).

**Veronica Lawson RSM** is an eco-feminist biblical scholar and author of *The Blessing of Mercy: Bible Perspectives and Ecological Challenges*, 2016.





## Rise of Persia Brings Hope

The rise of Persia in the mid sixth century, under the leadership of Cyrus the Great, gave hope to the exiles — hope of return to their war-ravaged land, hope that the Jerusalem Temple might be rebuilt and hope that their community might be restored. This is the historical context for engaging in an ecological reading of Isaiah 55:6-9.

## Come to the Water

While our reading focuses primarily on flawed humanity in relation to the divine, its literary context embraces the whole Earth community. The opening line of the poem invites those who thirst to “come to the waters”.

## COVID-19, ITS PROVENANCE AND ITS SPREAD, PROVIDES A STARK REMINDER THAT ISAIAH 55:6-9 HAS MUCH TO SAY TO OUR PLANETARY COMMUNITY.

In the wake of devastating summer bushfires in Australia and California, we are particularly conscious that the thirsty of our planet include all the creatures of Earth.

The closing lines of the poem evoke Michael Leunig's image of the trees as academies of “very ancient music”. They affirm the agency of the mountains and the hills that burst into song and of the trees of the field that clap their hands.

The opening invitation to come to the water and the closing affirmation of the more-than-human provide the literary context for an ecological exploration of Isaiah 55:6-9, a reading that is attentive to both the environmental and the social dimensions of life in our planetary home.

## Seek God

Four times in this passage, we hear Israel's name for God, YHWH, and twice we hear the more general Hebrew name for God, Elohim. The passage is a summons to seek YHWH, to call upon YHWH, to turn away from wrongdoing, to restore right relationship or

right standing with YHWH.

The prophet-poet is addressing those who are not in right relationship with YHWH, those who have established themselves in Babylon and are now so comfortable that they lack the will to return to the land of their ancestors and play their part in rebuilding the Temple and restoring the land. From the prophet's perspective, they have forgotten who they are: what they are doing and thinking is not “of God”.

These recalcitrant exiles are reminded that, guilty as they may be, God will “mercy” them if they “turn” back and bring their thoughts and ways into harmony with the ways and thoughts of God.

The expression “have mercy” is one word in the Hebrew, not two: it is a verbal form (*rahām*) that denotes womb-compassion. Israel's womb-compassionate (*rahûm*) God is a God of forgiveness: God will “womb-compassion” God's wayward exiles and “abundantly pardon” them. Womb-compassion and forgiveness are God's mercy-filled way of being in the Earth community.

The exiles know their sacred songs. They are well aware that it is through God's womb-compassion and enduring love that sinners find boundless forgiveness: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love [*hesed*]; according to your abundant mercy [*rahāmim*] blot out my transgressions” (Psalm 51:1).

## Invitation to Us

An ecological reading of these verses might inspire us to seek God's womb-compassion and forgiveness for our neglect of Earth and for our tendency to use and over-extract Earth's resources for human convenience and comfort without proper attention to the integrity of the whole Earth community.

It might inspire us to reorder our thoughts and our ways so that the needs of all the creatures of Earth might be met within the means of the planet.

It might inspire us to live in right relationship or right standing with all that is. COVID-19, its provenance and its spread, provides a stark reminder that Isaiah 55:6-9 has much to say to our planetary community. 🌱

## Old Testament Figures in Art

by Chiara de Capoa

Published by J Paul Getty  
Museum, 2004

Reviewed by Lyn Smith

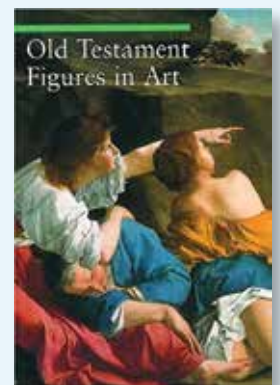
BOOK

This wonderful book is a must for teachers and students of Scripture and the history of art. It is a treasury of beautiful images of Old Testament stories from across the ages. Alongside each image is the Scriptural story and an exploration of the detail the artist has painted.

The Old Testament images have a strong link to ideas about Christ that have been important in the Christian understanding of the relationship between God and humanity. The artworks are placed chronologically, which makes it easy for the reader to find and see the development of this relationship.

I enjoyed *Old Testament Figures in Art* both for the simplicity of the layout and the opportunity to explore each artwork. There were many images that I looked at again and again, but my favourite sections dealt with “The Creation of Woman”, the detail of “The Jesse Tree” and “Isaiah and Jeremiah”. The painting that I returned to often was Gustave Moreau's “Delilah” from 1890; its richness of colour was most striking.

This book is a feast for the eyes from beginning to end, a book to be studied or just admired. 🌱





# THINKING ABOUT WORKING AND WORKERS

KATHLEEN RUSHTON writes of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard in Matthew 19:30 – 20:1-16 as the core of the Gospel.

**T**he parable of “The Labourers in the Vineyard” begins and ends with two similar verses and has two parts. In the first part, the vineyard owner “going out” at five different times hires labourers (Mt 20:1-7). Each time he agrees to pay the labourers “the usual daily wage” of one denarius which provided subsistence living for a family for a day. In the second part (Mt 20:8-16), as evening comes the vineyard owner instructs his manager to pay the labourers.

The contrast between the groups in the reversal of the order of payment, their treatment and responses are crucial to this puzzling story which parable specialist Adolf Jülicher calls “the core of the good message, of the Gospel” — its kernel.

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



## Socio-Economic Background

Jesus connects with the world of his listeners to reveal some aspect of real life in the alternative household (*oikos*) of God which he is building throughout his ministry. In contrast, the details of the parable reflect the socio-economic situation of a wealthy *oikos* in Roman-occupied Palestine.

The *oikos*, the basic unit of society, consisted of three relationships (husband-wife, father-children, master-slave) and the task of earning wealth. In the three pairs, the former rules over the latter. This parable is in Matthew 19-20 where Jesus addresses critically the relationship of husband and wife (Mt 19:3-12); children (Mt 19:13-15); a rich man and his wealth (Mt 19:16-30); and uses the image of masters and slaves (Mt 20:17-28). In all these areas, Jesus opposes the use of power to “rule over” others.

The owner (*oikodespotē*) is described literally as “master of the house” (Mt 20:1) and as lord of the vineyard (Mt



20:8). Wine brought in greater profits on cultivated land than grain. Because of economic changes dictated by Rome, many vineyards had changed from being family owned and operated to being owned and managed by wealthy landowners. Many families were uprooted from peasant farms because of foreclosing on debt or being forced from family plots because they were unable to provide for their families. Consequently, day labourers were a common sight in the marketplace and would have seen in the owner one of those responsible for their plight. These “expendables” were not permitted to seek work. They had to be invited to work.

In this androcentric – man-centred – text, we do not see any women or children whose lower paid work was crucial for poor households. It is striking that the owner addresses one of the labourers as “friend” (Mt 20:13). His surprising generosity functions within the concept of a landowner who could do what he liked according to Roman law.

### What Does Jesus Expect?

What is the intended reality behind the image? What kind of transposition or switching from the world of the story did Jesus expect from his audience? The parable both captivates and irritates those listening. They are forced to reflect. A breakthrough may occur on three levels.

First, those listening may realise that the parable points to God as God is known and experienced by Jesus. God is radically different from human perceptions. God settles accounts and gives freely much more than a person merits for an hour of work. God breaks through what human reasoning holds to be strictly just. Will listeners allow such a God into their lives? Behaviour is challenged: Are you jealous because of my goodness to your neighbour?

Second, in this parable Jesus reveals how God works. Jesus has been given a hard time because he brings God’s gifts of goodness and mercy to outcasts – the sick, tax collectors, unclean, sinners.

Third, listeners are drawn into the parable. Jesus does not give us the labourer’s answer to vineyard owner’s questions (20:11-15). Each listener needs to give her or his answer, not in the story, but in the concrete situations of their lives and to be moved by the vision of God presupposed by this parable.

### “The Core” of the Gospel

Jesus is teaching us about God – convincing us to lay aside jealousy and our sense of unfairness and to invite into our lives the God of Jesus. The parable calls us to conversion: to proclaim with our lives the God of Jesus and rejoice in the gifts of others. Philosopher Paul Ricoeur believed we must tell the parables of Jesus in ways that those listening will be “once more astonished” – so touched to the core of their being that they are called to conversion.

The alternative household – a household of disciples in which one does not “rule over” the other – is called to a way of life in which all human beings have equal value. The parable is framed with a general saying: “So the last will be first, and the first will be last” (Mt 20:16) – we are called to create a new social world.

How does the parable unmask attitudes of privilege and entitlement in regards to equality in our Christian community? How are newcomers to a parish included? How are the increasing numbers of immigrant groups included? And recent Catholics as opposed to lifelong members? Is my parish an alternative household or do competitive and acquisitive attitudes prevail?

COVID-19 has been a time to support workers and to be aware of vulnerable migrant workers on temporary work visas. The concept of a “living wage” emerged as a response to growing poverty and inequality that continues to hold back many Kiwi workers, their families and our economy. The Living Wage Movement Aotearoa New Zealand brings together community, secular, union and faith-based groups to campaign for a Living Wage. We can consult their website and support those organisations listed there who pay workers the Living Wage and advocate for businesses and organisations we associated with to take steps to work towards following their example.

And we can reflect on how this parable is the kernel of the Gospel because we, too, are labourers of the eleventh hour. We, who emerged so recently in Earth’s evolving story, are blessed abundantly by God’s grace, loved and called to transformation. 🌱

20 September – Matthew 20:1-16  
RL 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
RCL 16th Sunday after Pentecost

Photo by Jan Homolka/Shutterstock.com

## COVID-19 NATIONAL RECOVERY APPEAL

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Cardinal John Dew



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# LESSONS FROM LOCKDOWN

**M**y community held a retreat day a few weeks ago to reflect on how we'd been doing so far this year, and how we'd been affected by COVID-19 and Lockdown. It was lots of fun. We read the Bible, played games and ate lunch together. We thought about our gratefulness, fear, grief, hope, reconciliation and joy; lighting candles, doing art, drawing in chalk. The "grief" station involved reflection with a labyrinth.

The labyrinth wasn't a maze. It was a path to be followed. We were asked to carry a rock through a route marked out by spray paint on grass. All I had to do was take my time, wending my way along the convoluted route rather than striding across the lawn directly to the centre.

As I did, I felt the weight of my jagged black-grey rock and thought about what I had lost because of coronavirus, what my family had

lost, what my friends had lost. What almost everybody in the world had lost in some way, especially those who are the least — the least well-off, the least educated, the least powerful.

I had lost small opportunities like a field trip, time with friends and adventures which had been planned. Along with my family, I'd lost a place I had considered home for a decade. My brother had lost the opportunity to finish high school well. My little sister had to move away from our beloved dog. Others had lost hoped-for travel. Across the world we'd lost concerts and sport, financial stability, thousands of lives — people God created and loved. We lost the ability to be there for each other, lost trust in many world leaders.

The world is more fragile than I had grown up believing, and my only word left is *why, why, why?* I know God as healer, creator, lover, companion — the One who cradles my soul. Yet this scale of awfulness has happened and is still happening. God saw the world was good, yet it is hard to understand this death, Lockdown, worsened poverty, starvation and separation as good.

I want my heartache at what is lost to turn me towards God rather than away. I am comforted by little things: the rounding of snow on the Pisa Range and sunset on the Remarkables, the rhythmic crash of waves at St Kilda, blades of grass covered in frost on the lawn, *griselinia* tinged golden on Leith Saddle, and dried *celmisia* from the summer still beautiful, encased in petals of ice on the Rock and Pillars. In the spontaneous ukulele playing with my flatmates, running up Signal Hill with a friend and watching 12-year-olds throw balls with absolute exuberance.

Most of all, I am comforted because I follow a God of the least: of children, prostitutes, tax collectors and lepers, of the hungry and the manual labourers. While I don't understand what this suffering means, or why it is happening, I am challenged to be part of the kin-dom of the least, to be Jesus to the sick, poor and hungry. Most of all I rest in the knowledge that God is beyond time and is right here every second, minute by minute and day by day. I rest in God who cares so much for the small that I can trust God's goodness in the big. ☁️

**Shar Mathias** enjoys reading, running, tramping, music and a lot of other things. She studies ecology and lives in Dunedin.





## The Outlaw Christ: The Response, in Poetry, to the Question: Who Do You Say that I Am?

by John F Deane

Published by Columba Books, 2020

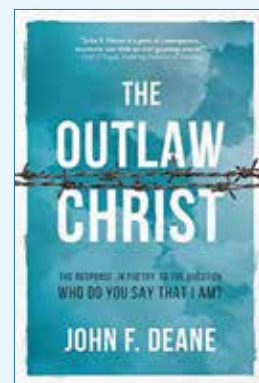
Reviewed by Elizabeth Snedden

BOOK

In his foreword Deane writes: "My study has been Christ; my living has been love and poetry." I can recommend this book to poetry lovers, and those whose developing understanding of Jesus, the Risen Lord of the Cosmos, is open to seeing him as the one through whom, for whom and in whom all created reality is still coming to be. Jesus may be the "outlaw" rejected by the establishment of his own day

and ours, but he is close to little ones.

This book is based on a series of talks and lectures the author gave at Loyola University, Chicago. He explores, in clear and accessible language, the faith journey of selected poets and their religious poetry. I chose to spend a day or two with each poet, savouring lines that sang for me, and there were many of these. I met at new depth some old favourites like Robert Southwell, John Donne, Robert Herrick, George Herbert, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Patrick Kavanagh, but some new ones too, notably John Skelton, Emily Dickinson, Pádraig J Daly and James Harpur. Their poetry is in touch with reality, human and divine, and a joy to read aloud. 🧡



## The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor: Preaching Justice in John's Gospel

by Kathleen P Rushton

Published by SCM Press, 2020

Reviewed by Elizabeth Julian

BOOK

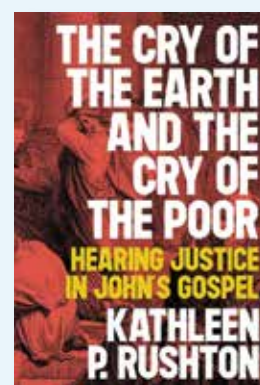
"Let John be John!" is Kathleen Ruston's advice to anyone beginning this ambitious book. Combining her skills as a biblical scholar and a spiritual director, Rushton has offered a ground-breaking framework to hear both the cry of Earth and the cry of the marginalised in this particular Gospel.

This ecumenically sensitive book is a must for senior seminarians, secondary RE teachers and all preachers. Anyone with an introductory New Testament background would find it both nourishing and challenging. Parish Scripture study

and prayer groups would find it valuable, particularly in the Season of Easter when the Lectionary features John's Gospel.

Rushton has included a very helpful chart of Johannine passages in the Roman Lectionary and the Revised Common Lectionary and the Sundays and feasts on which they occur, a comprehensive list of biblical references and their page numbers in the text and a list of key words and a glossary.

Rushton structures her work according to the five stages of *Lectio Divina* and the introduction alerts the reader to the emphasis on the meditatio stage throughout. For me, the strength lies here. Through her extensive, careful research and love of her local landscape, Rushton has provided a wealth of fascinating insights. Although the last three *Lectio* steps are compressed they often contain real gems. 🧡



## The Liminal Papacy of Pope Francis: Moving Towards Global Catholicity

by Massimo Faggioli

Published by Orbis Books, 2020

Reviewed by Mary Thorne

BOOK

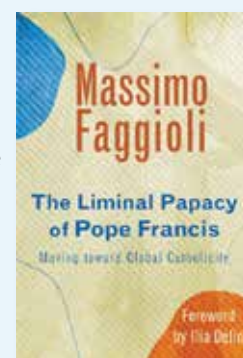
I found this book fascinating and very hopeful. Massimo Faggioli presents a broad and well-founded analysis of the papacy of Pope Francis to date.

He situates the discussion within the context of the Church evolving from a Western dominant force to a truly global Catholic Church finding its way in an increasingly complex, globalised world. He draws on his own background in theology and Church history to examine Catholicism and the papacy from Vatican I teachings on papal primacy and infallibility through the Vatican II

promise to redefine and rebalance the Petrine ministry.

Faggioli finds Pope Francis's present priorities indicated in his Argentinian background. Pastoral considerations take precedence in this pontificate. Francis speaks the language of synodality, collegiality and *sensus fidei*, insisting on the importance of dialogue. Pope Francis focuses the Church on the peripheries with the marginalised, urging compassion. His pontificate vindicates the notion of a possibility of change in the Catholic Church which, Faggioli acknowledges, evokes opposition from both conservative and liberal groups.

This book requires time and perseverance in order to appreciate its scope and thoroughness but it is well written and encouraging for those who long for the implementation and expansion of a Vatican II Church. 🧡





## The Last Wave

Directed by Peter Weir  
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

FILM

Like the scribe in the Gospel story, the New Zealand International Film Festival continues to bring out of its store things both old and new. Although the bulk of this year's festival was available for online viewing only, a remastered version of Peter Weir's *The Last Wave* (1977) was one of a handful of films shown in the grand setting of Dunedin's Regent Theatre.

Set in Sydney, Weir's brooding classic explores the dangerous forces that are unleashed when two very different cultures meet in the person of an outsider. Played by Richard Chamberlain (whom I remember as the heart-throb physician in the 1960s TV soap *Dr Kildare*), David Burton is a corporate tax lawyer who takes on the defence of a group of aboriginal men charged with killing one of their own. His involvement with Chris Lee (played by David Gulpilil) and the mysterious elder, Charlie, reveals his identity as a spiritual conduit, a messenger from a Dreamtime world entangled with stories of ancient South American travellers, leading him into an unseen reality filled with power and danger.

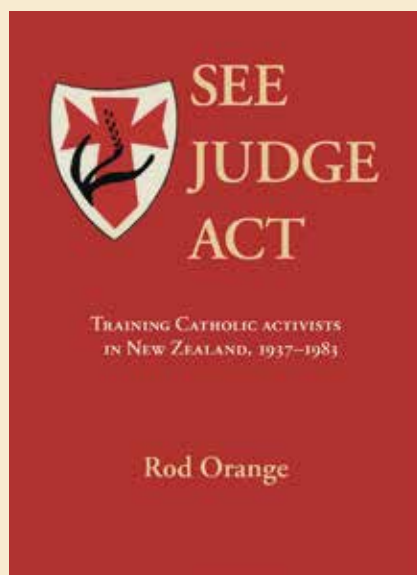
Throughout the film, Weir emphasises the great gulf between Burton's privileged middle-class lifestyle and the local aboriginal

community who are constantly dismissed as "non-tribal" and thus cut off from their cultural roots. Although living in the same city, they inhabit different worlds. As Burton's wife (Olivia Hamnett) says, "My family has been in Australia for four generations and I've never met an Aboriginal".

The supernatural story unfolds to the accompaniment of powerful visual effects and the unsettling bass notes of the didgeridoo. A wider backdrop is provided by scenes of torrential rain and hailstorms — even downpours of oil — sweeping across the continent, encouraging a mounting sense that the earth is about to be engulfed in a tide of apocalyptic proportions.

This open-ended symbolism, along with the themes of cultural and spiritual misalignment, invite new interpretations from a 2020 audience preoccupied with threats of political instability and global climate change.

Despite the odd clunky note, and the feeling that the plot is a little overcooked (the South American plotline recalls the extraterrestrial fantasies of Erich von Däniken, whose books were enormously popular in the 1970s), the film retains much of its power to move. While Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), which also deals with the eruption of uncontrollable spiritual forces, is probably the better film, *The Last Wave* is worth a second look. 🧠



STEELE ROBERTS AOTEAROA

*See, Judge, Act* is a remarkably well-researched history of the origins, growth, achievements and demise of the Catholic youth movements.

~ Cardinal Tom Williams

... more than just a history; it is an analysis of the foundational principles behind the 'See, Judge, Act' theology, combining Catholic social teaching with leadership training in order to reform society.

~ Pat Lythe, *NZ Catholic*

... the closing chapters are resplendent with hope and encouragement that the Christian transformation of society is awaiting and is possible.

~ Peter Slocum, *Tui Motu InterIslands*

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# CROSS CURRENTS



by Susan Smith

## Water Crisis

Auckland's drought and the America's Cup shenanigans have been on the news lately. Both are connected. First, drought is not the only explanation behind Auckland's current water shortage. Inadequate maintenance — currently 50,000,000 litres are being lost each day due to leaking pipes, inadequate treatment plants — and inadequate infrastructure for a rapidly growing population are also emerging as key factors in helping explain the crisis. Second, the Auckland Council's enthusiasm for eye-catching projects such as the America's Cup and Skypath for the Harbour Bridge merit attention. Ratepayers understand that the hugely expensive infrastructure associated with both projects will ultimately benefit them, but it seems the decisions made are more to attract tourists rather than the need the town or cities have of that infrastructure or upgrading at present.

## Forestry or Farms

Growing more trees, particularly *pinus radiatus*, has been promoted for the environment. The ubiquitous pine tree matures rapidly, in about 20-25 years, and so offers a quick return on investment. If the country were to become a vast carbon sink, pollution would decrease rapidly.

The economic and environmental benefits of reducing the country to a vast pine forest are readily apparent to some. Government policy promoted by the New Zealand First Party favours farmland becoming pine forests. This is an example of a policy that sees making the quick dollar as the privileged way forward.

Such changes have significant social costs such as the decline and even disappearance of small rural towns

which depend on the agricultural sector. They will cause more unemployment in rural areas. In 2017 in the Wairoa district, it was estimated that each 1,000 hectares of forestry directly employed 1.5 people, compared to 7.6 people for every 1,000 hectares in sheep and beef farming.

## Dirty Politics and Clean Politics

We've seen some dirty politics this year. A former president of the National Party sent private health information to her National Party MP contacts, one of whom had circulated unverified "facts" about a homeless man availing himself of five-star hotel accommodation in Auckland during Lockdown. On a more positive note, a member of the National Party has admitted that National's policy when in government of selling off state housing stock — so assiduously promoted by Bill English and Paula Bennett

throughout 2016 — was a mistake. Absolutely.

## Culture Wars

The international Catholic media is writing about culture wars in the Church. The term, *Kulturkampf* (culture struggle), appeared in late 19th-century Germany to describe the work of German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, who sought to minimise the influence of the Church. (Gerard Manley Hopkins enthusiasts will be familiar with what *Kulturkampf* meant for German Catholics from Hopkins' poem, "The Wreck of the Deutschland"). The term is being used today, not to discuss antagonistic relations between Church and State, but between those groups in the Church who accept willingly the changes introduced by Vatican II, and those who oppose them. Some conservative wealthy Americans are pouring millions into blocking the work of Pope Francis, and they are supported by some curial and American cardinals. It is particularly concerning that in the US, Cardinal Dolan of New York is actively promoting Donald Trump, and that over 50 per cent of white Catholic voters support Trump. We have to wonder what has happened to gospel values in our Church. ☁️



**TUI MOTU InterIslands**  
*The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited*

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

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

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

## MORE HOPEFUL VIEW OF HUMANITY

Susan Connelly prefaces her claims about Australian dirty tricks in East Timor with reference to the teaching of René Girard (*Tui Motu*, August 2020). According to Girard, violence “is the default human position” into which we readily collapse; it arises because we are “rivals for possessions, favour and position”. But is violence really human nature’s default position? The possibility of better depends on knowing it is not.

Fortunately, a longer view of human history shows that the lust for possessions and power showed up relatively late in human history. It was not always so, and need not be. Nor need violence. Rutger Bregman’s intriguing and timely study, *Humankind: A Hopeful History* (Bloomsbury, 2020) deserves serious and joyful consideration.

*Peter Cullinane*

## Food, Feast and Fast: The Christian Era from Ancient World to Environmental Crisis

by P Fintan Lyons OSB

Published by Columba Books, 2020

Reviewed by Diana Atkinson

BOOK

Lyons offers a feast of theological and liturgical issues surrounding food and the Eucharist within the long history of Western Christianity.

Heavier theological chapters are interspersed with fascinating incidents and illustrations around the feasting and fasting of pope, monk or monarch. Many will enjoy dips into art, music and pageantry as part of non-food feasting. I particularly enjoyed the chapters on the northern European reformers.

Lyons’ extensive research is readily accessible with subheadings, endnotes, references and index.

This is a history of male privilege in the Church – the ability of an elite to choose to fast or feast, and impose regulations on others. Throughout centuries Christians have fasted. Lyons would like religious reasons to be among physical or psychological purposes for fasting today.

I read with increasing disquiet. Women are largely and inexcusably omitted from this historical focus on Eucharist and food. Millions still unable to choose to feast or fast deserve more than a few sentences and a thread of unworthiness persists. And offers little new environmental understanding, with cows coping responsibility for much of climate change.

It may provide a useful background for contemporary discussions on Eucharist. Conclusions may surprise you. ☁️



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## Looking OUT and IN

Over many sojourns outside Aotearoa I often longed for the skylines of New Zealand towns, for Seuss-tree silhouettes of cabbage trees and the graceful curve of flax leaves. I would remember the bright-blue Auckland skies above and brassy bounce of kikuyu lawns underfoot at my Mum's place in Carrington. I wished I could hear golden sound-coins of bellbird song, the zesty rush of mountain streams in the Canterbury alps, and taste the sour zing of feijoas in autumn, and slurp grapefruit FruJus at a Gisborne beach.

And now, when I am in Aotearoa, it is August but not monsoon. But nearly foolish in my absurdity, I find that stinging, tender longing of homesickness still swells. My heart has always belonged to more than one place and now, I am deeply missing life in India.

After spending 15 Augusts in the skyscapes of cloud of the Indian Himalayas the song of monsoon has soaked all the way in. As monsoon eases, the tree ferns (green doilies of lacy detail lining tall deodar trees) slowly fade to brown. The hairy lingri season is nearly finished but by late August, tennis-ball guavas are stacked in voluptuous pyramids on vegetable trolleys. Seasons and the ways we engage with the natural world, locate me so tightly and specifically to a place. Seasons are so core to where we belong as well as to our spiritual journey.

One night last August we went out looking for the elusive nocturnal, giant flying tree squirrel (*Petaurista nobilis*). Seven adults and children set forth with headlights and whispers. We looked high and low. Tiny eyes of spiders were

reflected; white pinpoints dotting plants. The 10-year-olds spied a huge double-chinned toad and squatted low to engage with bulbous wondering eyes. At Fairy Glen, three chattering 10-year olds observed a remarkable five minutes of silence while we stayed very still, waiting and looking. Headlights pulled aside the velvet night wraps. Trees in the grey-scale night were bleached and skeletal, different altogether to the verdantly frocked flora of the daytime.

Yet no flying squirrels were to be seen. So we sipped hot chocolate in plastic mugs but hastily, for in that thick squirrel-less dark, we heard a glowering rumble of thunder.

We started home. Then the first fat cold raindrops hurled themselves at us. Giggling and quickly sodden, we abandoned the earnest stalk of wildlife enthusiasts. Instead we ran zigzagging along the narrow path. Raindrops and headlights sluiced through the black and white forest. Very soon we were at our front gate. We shouted a wet goodnight to our friends.

It felt like the end of church — we had warmed our inner beings. Jeph, Jalori and I crossed the threshold of the front door blinking back in the world of colour, internet and housework. Though sodden and dripping and not blessed by a sighting of flying squirrels, we felt elated — triumphant even.

Belonging can have many shapes. Richard Rohr has introduced me to the merits of "both and" or non-dualist thinking. He says: "The dualistic mind cannot process things like infinity, mystery, God, grace, suffering, sexuality, death, or love... Nondual consciousness is a much more holistic knowing, where your mind, heart, soul, and senses are open and receptive to the moment just as it is, which allows you to love things in themselves and as themselves."

I belong to Aotearoa New Zealand. I belong to India. Perhaps we all belong to all places. Any August, I can enjoy knowing about the exuberance of green and wet monsoons as well as the exuberance of spangled skiting flowers on magnolia, rhododendron and camelia — Aotearoa's introduced trees. The exuberance of the natural world — human, animals, plants and minerals, in many more places besides. And so all things and all people jangle along, making some sort of unholy, holy continuum of joyful noise, and all are welcome unto God. 🧡



**Kaaren Mathias** is living in Christchurch with her family. She sings, cycles, writes and sews wizard capes and promotes community mental health in New Zealand and India.



Like water  
in artesian springs  
let kindness  
well in us  
God of community

From the *Tui Motu* team