Tui Motu

InterIslands

October 1997 Price $4

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INSIDE
- focus on student morale
- Celtic spirituality

Tui Motu-InterIslands
October 1997

A reader writes: "Please publish material which can give us hope. There is so much sadness and bad news we need something to build us up". I wrote to Fr Jim Consedine, one who is no stranger to the plight of people in adversity, and asked him to write a reflection on the Christian virtue of hope. His response is opposite.

I was reminded of a book I read many years ago by Victor Frankl, who spent the war years in a Nazi concentration camp. When things were at their most grim and it would have been very easy to despair, he sustained himself by the image, the reality of his wife's love for him and his deep devotion to her. These intense feelings gave meaning to his existence. It didn't matter how brutally he was treated by the guards he knew that there was a reality far deeper and stronger. Perfect love casts out fear.

No one can sit easily in our current situation when the suicide figures among our young people are the highest in the western world. We have to ask ourselves WHY? We have to seek reasons and demand solutions. Our editorial office is cheek by jowl with Otago University campus. Every day I mix with students scurrying about their daily business: some laughing, some playing footie in the street, others carrying a grim look with haunted eyes fixed anywhere but on other human beings. We asked around the University and our findings form a principal focus of this issue.

I showed these findings to a priest friend, more in touch with this age group than I. He acknowledged that experimentation is part of the normal growing up process. The tragedy with so many of today's generation is that experimentation becomes an end in itself. It is all part of the 'throw away' society. They do not mature out of it. For many young people — and not so young — there is a lack of a sense of purpose, and sadly the churches are failing to get a message across to them that there is such thing as transforming faith. Obviously the picture is not simply black and there are many signs of hope. But those who come through unscathed do so in spite of the prevailing ethos, not because of it.

If you are brought up to expect material prosperity and a prestigious job as the be-all-and-end-all of life, then failure to achieve these, failure to compete in the scramble for jobs, or even finding yourself suddenly cast out of work, can destroy self-esteem and motivate young people especially to despair and even to thoughts of suicide. If material success equals being good, then failure means you have no place. You are a discard. You no longer belong. Unfortunately the employment policies of our present government do nothing to help.

Last month witnessed the death of two of the world's outstanding women. The extraordinary and unprecedented outburst of grief must surely spring from some deep-rooted desire for something more lasting than bigger and better computers, motor cars and bank balances. What emerged from the mountain of print and the babble of comment seems to have been a profound yearning for the value of compassion: something which linked Diana and Mother Teresa, however different they were in every other respect. They both expressed a rare spirit of pure goodness: a desire to reach out and touch and sustain and love people who for one reason or another were on the receiving end of the world's woes. The world is poorer for their going but they have left behind something infinitely rich: a renewal of hope for a world that had nearly lost its ability to love.

M.H.

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Hope – our friend in darkness

Sometimes I wonder when they will ever end. I'm talking about the endless struggles of daily life. Every day the newspapers, the telephone or the doorstep provide fresh faces with multiple problems that even St Michael and a squadron of angels couldn't solve. And it can certainly get me down. On occasions I start thinking, 'to blazes with it all, I've had enough'.

And then someone comes in to show me their new baby, and I melt into a great Uncle Bulgaria. Or I get a letter saying how well someone is doing. Or I have a wonderful encounter with someone unexpectedly. Or have a great day out with my community. Perhaps I might just have a rest, have a pray in some peaceful spot, take a day off, go to a movie and have a meal out, eat a double dose of my malt and garlic mixture, go to a pub with a friend, get a good night's sleep, and things improve. My mood changes, tiredness disappears, the step becomes lighter, the sun shines again. The problems probably remain as complex as ever, but God moves to ease the stress.

I'm lucky to have a vision and a faith rooted in hope. My parents instilled that and I'm grateful it took root. It's nice to be writing this on mum's anniversary. My vision is biblical, the lamb lying with the wolf, the child playing near a viper's nest, weapons of war all belted into instruments of creativity. My hope consists in a belief in the ultimate triumph of goodness over evil, of grace over sin, of freedom over imprisonment, of life over death. So, every time I come across the 'principalities and powers' active and acting in the structures of society crushing people or dehumanising them, then I know both in my heart and in my boots that it won't last. God will raise enough good people to confront and confound the powers.

It is such a hope that has sustained Christian people down through the centuries. We have lived in an age which has seen some horrendous events. The holocaust, two devastating world wars and countless regional ones, the Great Depression, the re-introduction of a worldwide system of economic injustice posing as 'new' and 'right', evil structures all and systems that bred and continue to spawn despair.

But we have also been privileged to live in an age which has given birth to wonderful signs of hope. I mention only a few. The advent of liberation theology has brought hope to millions of believers in third world countries. The slow but sure development of a 'rainbow coalition' of eco-conscious, non-violent, green progressive forces in western countries which will bear its best fruit in the new century. The new dimension that true feminism brings when it is based on the dignity of all living beings. These and other interconnected movements bring the promise of a more human future for the planet.

They are under way and are unstoppable despite the massive hurdles yet to be fully faced. These include militarism, massive domineering patriarchal structures, the economic power of the transnationals and the world's rich elite, a widespread lack of meaningful work and the spiritual alienation of hundreds of millions, including too many by far of our youth. These are just some of the issues we need to get serious about. I take comfort from the fact that God sees them all and must weep from frustration and anger at times. But since I only see and comprehend a tiny piece of the whole, my pain is so little compared to God's. And that gives me a strange comfort when I'm feeling a bit low.

But hey – such massive obstacles have been faced before. And conquered. Do you remember the grip slavery had on the human soul? People thought it would last forever. That was until the abolitionists got going. Do you remember Reagan calling the Soviet Union the 'evil empire' and the massive military build up during the Cold War? That was only 15 years ago. It seems almost a lifetime. The Berlin Wall? Idi Amin? Pinnochet and the military junta in Chile? The generals in Argentina? Remember Vorster and P.W. Botha and the terror that was apartheid? They and the systems they came to symbolise have all tumbled in a generation.

The Spirit is powerful. Good people harness the Spirit to face and confront these 'principalities and powers', these evils, these 'structures of sin' as John Paul II calls them. Hope is a gift of the Spirit, implanted by Christ, born of faith, nurtured by experience, fed by wisdom, fanned by passion.
Hope? It is ours for the asking.

Jim Consedine

A Ray of Hope for N. Ireland

Is there any prospect for peace in Ulster? A recent visitor to New Zealand, wife of the Anglican Primate of All Ireland, thinks there is.

Lady Christine Eames (left), in Dunedin during August , talking with Mollie Fulton, President of the NZ Association of Anglican Women. at their triennial conference

In Ireland there are four main Christian churches — and they are 'all-Ireland' in the sense that they encompass both north and south. The Anglicans — the 'Church of Ireland' — include many in the south especially, some staunchly nationalist as well as others who are loyalists. But these very divisions help make the Anglicans bridgebuilders: they have to learn to live with the differences within their own ranks and listen to one another at Synod meetings. At the same time there are the meetings at a more official level. Archbishop Eames works closely with the Catholic Archbishop Sean Brady. They are often seen together.

Lady Eames spoke passionately about the extraordinary effect on morale the Canary Wharf bombing had.18 months of peace following the IRA ceasefire had been a wonderful respite after years of violence and tension. There seemed to be real hope, and the ordinary people were greatly encouraged. Then suddenly it all came to an end with the resumption of bombing. There was a huge sadness. Polarisation of opinion became worse. People were really frustrated when the window of opportunity which opened during the period of peace had slammed shut.

There is terrible fear on both sides

By comparison there is no euphoria with this new peace initiative. Yet there is still an underlying hope: the events of 1996 were so awful that the Northern Ireland community cannot face it again. The ordinary people are quite down-to-earth. There is terrible fear on both sides. The RCs want to see some real concessions. But it is important to recognise that even the people who are marching are at heart good people. They feel themselves to be 'in a corner': they see the marches as a way of sincerely expressing the traditions which are valuable to them. The tragedy is that the extremists, the ones who call the tune, are not on the fringe: they are right there in the midst of the ordinary people.

It is too easy to blame the politicians but they too are prisoners in their own communities. They need huge courage to break out. It is absolutely vital that the leaders on both sides sit down and talk. When they do so, we need to remember that they are breaking a barrier that has existed not just for 30 years but for hundreds of years. They must start to recognise the beauty and goodness of people, and unless they meet and talk that will never happen.

What are the signs of hope? Lady Christine emphasised how vital it was to the whole Northern Ireland community that there should be an expression of economic support from outside. There is more equality of opportunity in the North than is often portrayed. But without investment from outside there will be no new jobs. Unemployment is far too high. Without jobs there is no hope for the young. They go to school — but they ask themselves "what are we being educated for? What is our future?"

What about Christian leadership? Firstly Lady Christine spoke of the courage of the priests and ministers who had stood out among their people and implored them to "go home" — to put away their stones and petrol bombs. Likewise they persuaded the Orangemen to discontinue their most provocative marches. This took great courage. There were many schemes supported by the churches to try to integrate the various communities. Mixed marriages and integrating schools can make little progress until the community itself is ready to accept the products. If a Protestant marries a Catholic, how will the couple be accepted if they go to live in the Falls Road?

There have tragically been too many false dawns. Most of the ordinary people crave for peace and don't want any more violence. A horrendous act occurs, and this often produces a wave of revulsion and a determined effort to start again. Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan were two women who really strove to bring about reconciliation. But the basis of trust was lacking so their efforts came to nothing.

..no progress until the leaders sit down and talk

There really can be no progress until the leaders sit down and talk and work out how to live together, yet preserve what is sacred in their traditions. John Hume has been a shining example of one who has worked tirelessly for peace at a political level. Ian Paisley continues to be vociferous but he is not the force he once was. He says NO — but offers no alternative.

The greatest expression of hope lies in the hearts of basic decent ordinary people. Lady Christine described the attitude of a widow whose husband had been killed by the IRA. She is striving to get on with life without bitterness, teaching her children that there must be a better way. And that was happening on both sides of the divide. Religion has been an ingredient in the conflict, but Lady Eames was insistent that it must be part of the solution. It must teach and preach peace and non-violence; its leaders must lead by example.

Blessed are those who work for peace; they shall be called the daughters and sons of God (Matt. 5,9)

Honouring the Boundaries

— putting the spotlight on carer-client relations

At the Dunedin workshop — Dr Clarke (2 from left), with members of the organising committee: (l to r) Sr Mary Concannon, Allan Paulin, Sr Bernadette Cheyne.

Dr Katherine Clarke is a diminutive Canadian lady with a powerful and relevant message about all types of ministry. During August she held 14 workshops up and down the country. They were attended by people of all denominations, counsellors, ministers, nurses, doctors — or just interested people.

Dr Clarke insists that violation of boundaries in ministry does not simply refer to sexual abuse or gross misconduct. Therefore she chose during her workshops to focus more on the everyday situations where there was a danger of the professional relationship being jeopardised.

The theme she constantly returned to was the question a carer needed to ask him or herself: am I here purely to help the client — or am I seeking my own satisfaction? If the answer is the latter, then a boundary is being enfringed. For that reason a clear distinction needs always to be made between friendship and professional help. This has all sorts of implications especially in ministry where the carer lives among the people ministered to — and in a sense is always on duty. It also has important implications about how that person cares for his/her own self▪

Tui Motu-InterIslands has invited Sr Stephanie Kitching RSM to write a series of three articles on this theme in the light of Dr Clarke's message.

The first will appear in the November issue.

Dr Katherine Clarke has been involved for 16 years in the professional training of people in ministry. "I don't see my primary work as crisis counselling", Dr Katherine insists. "We live in a world of shattered beliefs. As a psychologist I ask myself what can a counsellor do to help broken people put their lives back together again.

"The faith dimension is very important. A Minister is a *porta coeli* (literally, a window to heaven). People look through us to something beyond. So, if we do anything to block the view, then we hinder or spoil the process: people can no longer see through. That is why violations are so serious, especially within the Church. People in ministry — and not just the professionals; parish workers come into this category also — are symbolic people. They are sacramental people."

Why has there been such a rash of cases of sexual abuse in the churches in recent times?

Dr Clarke is sure that there have always been such violations, only they often were not treated as such. "We are becoming much more aware of aspects of power and vulnerability. Once upon a time there was only the 'man of privilege' — and his word was sacred. But now there are many more voices, and these voices are being legitimised: the voices of women, of children and of coloured people. Honesty is being forced upon us.

"The publicity given to cases of violation will substantially change relationships within the Church. My hope is that it will change the way people in authority hold power. Power," she added wryly, " is never given up: it is taken away!"

Church people, Dr Clarke thinks, have high expectations of their ministers. That is why it is so important for people in ministry to live a normal life — and especially to care for their own inner needs. Otherwise there is always a danger they will seek to satisfy those needs in a manner inappropriate to the professional relationship. And that is the pathway to disaster.

NZ Bishops hold Open Forum at Mosgiel.

Last month the New Zealand bishops held their September meeting at the National Seminary at Mosgiel as part of the celebrations to end 98 years of Holy Cross College prior to moving to Auckland city. While there the bishops held an open forum attended by some priests, religious and laypeople from all over the country. A range of issues were discussed.

Moving of the national seminary

Bishop Cullinane who chaired the forum emphasised that the primary reason for the shift was the ongoing difficulty in staffing the College. Pooling resources with the Marist Fathers would immediately alleviate this problem. The disconnection which occurred last year with the theology faculty at Otago was also a significant factor in promoting the decision.

The actual moment of moving had created real difficulties since the residential facilities in Auckland were not ready. But the theologate at Mount St Mary's was. The students would have to be lodged in temporary accommodation until a more permanent arrangement could be put in place. The present intention was to adapt property available in the Ponsonby parish, but this would take much of 1998 to achieve.

As regards the style of seminary training the intention was to preserve the advantages of community living without reproducing the 'high institutional model' of Mosgiel. Shifting had given the bishops and the faculty an opportunity to rethink how priests should be trained. Social education was a paramount factor: learning to get on with the people you lived and worked alongside, ordained or non-ordained.

Bishop Cullinane emphasised that the aim was for the seminary to be less institutionalised — but not de-institutionalised. Pope John Paul had given a beautiful image in Pastores Dabo Vobis : priests should be formed in the image of Jesus Christ and his disciples in a spirit of companionship. Bishop John Dew said that the document *Towards Priesthood* of the NZ Bishops' Conference was being rewritten with this new situation in mind.

A vision for the New Zealand Church

The Bishops were asked: "What is your vision: who are we as church today?" The census showed a decline of 25,000 in the number of people who claim to be 'Catholic'. Other mainstream churches have shown a similar decline, and this indicates that 'church' in New Zealand does not have the prominence it once had. The call seemed to be for professed Christians to become the 'leaven in the batch'. The grief shown over the death of Princess Diana revealed a world crying out for faith.

Bishop Peter felt there was no need for despondency. We Catholics can do no better than focus on the three years of Jubilee and nourish ourselves in faith. We may be fewer but we need to become deeper in faith and hope and love. Bishop Owen Dolan challenged the forum to listen to what the Spirit was saying to us. We grew up in a static, somewhat complacent church. Now we live in unsettled times. Our call is to go through chaos. But there are many bright lights. Why, for instance, are people queuing up to get their children into Catholic schools? Indeed, do not our schools offer us a prime opportunity for evangelisation?

Bishop Pat Dunn spoke of his experience recently at the World Youth Day in Paris in August: it seems as if the youth of the world are reacting against a generation of parents who have deprived them of faith.

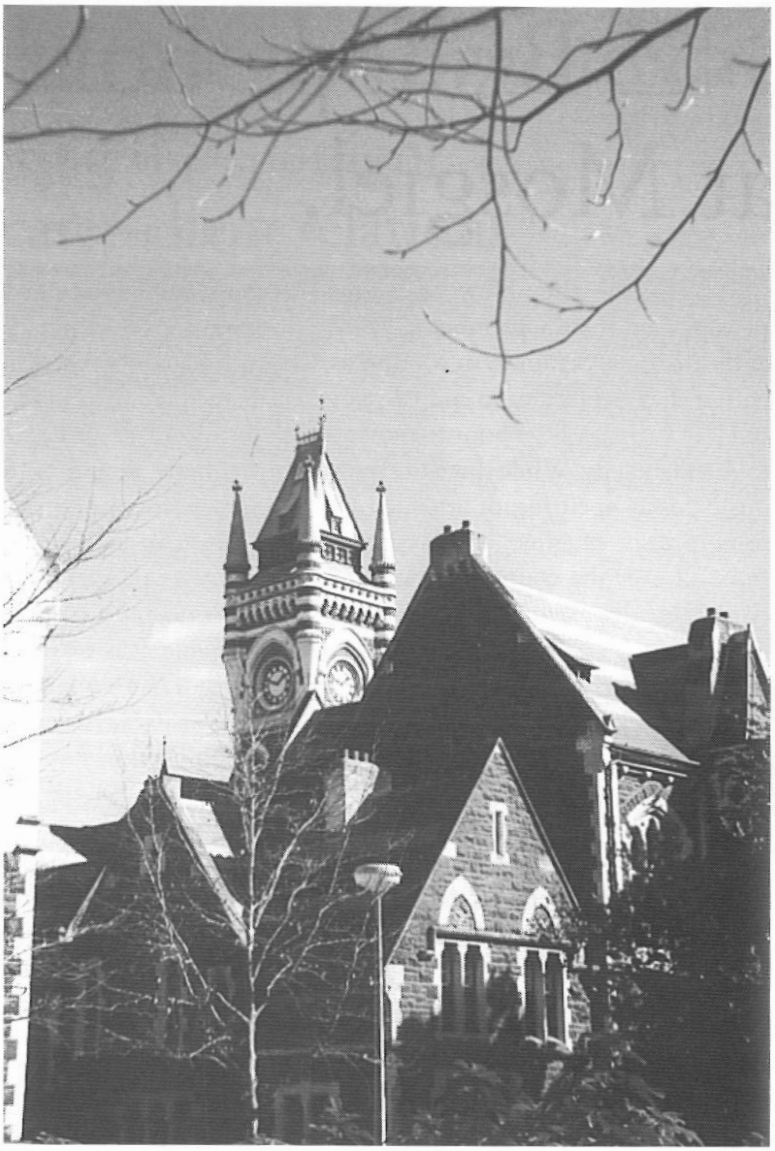
New Zealand *We Are Church* Charter

There was a somewhat heated discussion of the NZ *We Are Church* Charter. Questioners from the floor pointed out the hurt felt by many people from the institutional Church. The Charter Group has received no direct response from the bishops. They sensed a climate of fear; it seemed as if the hands of the bishops were tied. One questioner denounced the Charter as evil, feminist and against the Holy Father.

Bishop Cullinane responded by asserting a need for dialogue within the Church. He quoted Fr Neil Darragh's concept of negotiation: which involves a respect for the dignity of each party. Bishop John Cunneen denied that the bishops' hands were tied — except perhaps by their own faith conviction■

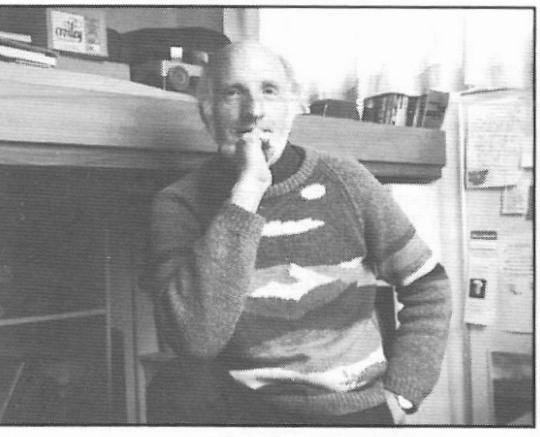
Angst..

..among the dreaming spires



Is Varsity a haven for the pure pursuit of learning — or is it just a practice ground for the competitive world of commerce?

Tui Motu *asks around the campus: Are there issues of real concern?*



The doctor: he thinks the problem is really serious

Dr Peter Strang has been associated with Student Health and Counselling at Otago University since 1990 and was its Director from 1992 to '95

At the start Dr Strang found the service lacking both in funding and resources. However, the University reviewed it and it is now a much more adequate service. Some "user-pays" has been introduced, but it is inexpensive — $5 per consultation, even for a counselling session which could last an hour.

Dr Peter's role has been to bring help and support to young people at a very important stage in their lives. For most of them it's the first time they have been on their own away from home. Especially in the first year there can be a lot of homesickness. A mixed role is expected of medical staff at the Student

Health Centre: having to switch suddenly from doctor to "parent" requires nimble footwork. This group of young people shows a high level of anxiety; the danger for the staff is they too can become affected by the same level of stress.

Dr Strang emphasised that the Halls of Residence at Otago provide excellent care for those coming up to Varsity for the first time. Student Health is staffed by highly motivated people who furnish support for young people in trouble. Nevertheless Dr Peter spoke passionately about the environment which these young adults were coming into. Students are more tense: there is not the lilt that there once was. Financial worries are often mentioned. Among the negative factors he singled out the aggressive nature of the present environment. Students have to become aggressive to survive. The University itself uses aggressive marketing techniques. The word used is 'aggressive', rather than assertive: students must compete in order to succeed; but it has become 'us or them'. This, in Dr Strang's view, is extremely harmful in that it is destructive of community and mutual support.

Student lifestyle can easily degenerate into chaos. Flatting may be seen as the ultimate freedom for these young people. But flatting can also place a heavy strain on the way they interact. Many students are quite naive in their attitude to human relationships. They have an 'easy come, easy go' philosophy. They lack a sense of awareness of the need for healthy community and are naive about the need to take relationships seriously. So, when a relationship breaks up they are surprised to find themselves depressed and can even suffer a breakdown. This is where counselling can be extremely helpful to them.

Mixed flatting can be a very good experience especially for young men who can receive emotional support from the women. At that age women are more mature. Unfortunately the unwritten law about mixed flats — no pairing off — is often not observed.

Alcohol is a problem, especially among the men but becoming more so amongst women. It is worse in the first and second years, but after that it tends to diminish. Cannabis use is common, and both are sought after to alleviate depression – a broken reed. Cannabis users do not see its use as a 'problem'. Habitual users exhibit a 'spongy personality', like living in a fog. It's only when the fog lifts that they can look back and see what a state they were in. The multiple use of drugs causes co-morbidity. For instance Prozac is of little value when the taker is also hooked on other substances. Substance abuse can lead to even deeper depression and suicide. Student Health has to deal with a lot of students with depressive symptoms and has an excellent back-up of counselling and psychiatric services.

Many students who suffer depression tend to live in a spiritual vacuum: they have no goals; they can see no meaning. They are in greatest danger of becoming suicidal. Students who have a sound spirituality — and having significant spiritual experience is not at all uncommon at this age — have much better resources to cope with these stresses. Dr Peter mentioned some patients of his who suffered chronic illness, yet their solid faith sustained them. They were inspirational people. What students need are good role models. What they often get is the aggressive management ethic. Sensitive or shy young people are cowed by that sort of influence: they simply cannot key into the brash new ethos currently in fashion.

Sexuality is another factor which causes problems. Deborah Morris' "condom culture" is an inadequate answer. Condoms may reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted disease (STD), but the philosophy behind this campaign is naive and trivialising. It lacks any notion of commitment or respect in human relationships. The vending machine conveys an implicit message that you can behave as you please. The fact is that the modern day ethos of multiple relationships leaves people wide open to STDs, especially chlamydia, which is known as the 'silent disease' since the symptoms may be masked but the consequences can be serious. STDs are a common cause of infertility.

The campus doctor has to have an open door and be non-discriminating in dealing with sexual problems. You cannot ram religion down the throats of the young. Fidelity tends to be laughed

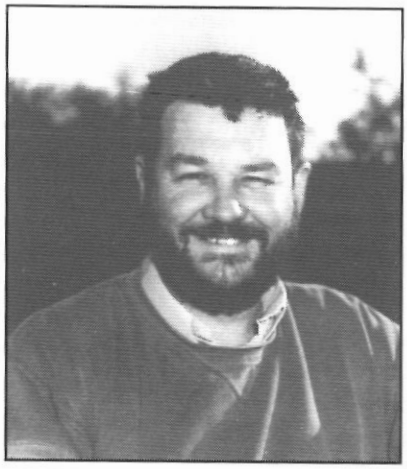
at in our society because it is not 'macho'. In the wider sense then, how do you persuade students that ultimate joy is much more to be found in the context of a stable and meaningful relationship, and not in the frenetic pursuit of orgasm?

Dr Strang concluded by lamenting the philosophical wilderness into which our young people are currently being launched. Instant gratification counts for so much more than long-term commitment. The Prime Minister speaks eloquently of "social capital". Yet the CHEs that constitute the Health Service are not consulting communities and hence their commitment is in question. Commitment as a virtue is being challenged today in our society...yet the ultimate commitment is the very expression of the Christian faith. The measure of success in terms of profit or sacrificing others (including students) for that motive, can only in the end diminish us.

Hugh McCafferty (pictured above)is the ecumenical chaplain on the Otago University campus.

Hugh has serious worries about the pressures today's students are under. One factor, according to Hugh, is the information overload. Students are bombarded with so much data. There is so much pressure on them simply to keep up that they are being deprived of the time to expand their minds, to explore, to become idealistic. They can let their lives sink into a sort of dull utilitarianism.

Have the academics lost their vision? Are they too being subjected to unwarranted pressures? They aren't any braver than any other section of the community. They are rarely the stuff of martyrs. So they too will tend to conform. Once upon a time they had security of tenure in their academic posts and this gave them a lot of freedom. Now they have to watch their backs. Downsizing,



The chaplain: he sees the pressure many students are under.

Just recently we concluded a series of Sunday talks on the theme "Where there is no vision the people perish". A recurring motif was that the visionless vision of 'user pays' philosophy is extracting a terrible price from our young people.

It does seem as if this generation is missing out on some aspects of education. Our students are under a great deal of pressure. Essays, assignments, reports and tests follow each other with little respite, little time for sheer enjoyment. Many are seriously stressed financially too. I know of individuals, a minority to be sure, resorting to prostitution or crime for survival.

It seems to me too that when, as the elders of our particular tribe, we sell our knowledge for money instead of handing it on as a precious gift, then we are setting up a bad deal for the future.

Emile Durkheim understands suicide to be the outcome of the breakdown of social mores caused by the dislocation of the population at the industrial revolution. As people left the villages for the town they no longer had the agreed upon norms to hold them – the resulting experience of "anomie", normlessness leads to a sense of meaninglessness, depression and ultimately suicide.

Our postmodern children are experiencing the same thing all over again. Nothing seems to have intrinsic value. Departments which have produced work of great scholarship can be swept away at the bidding of an administrator because of the way in which the books are now deemed to need balancing. Nothing seems to have intrinsic worth. We do not teach students any more. They have become EFTS, faceless, soulless – of no importance apart from as a source of government revenue. Everything has a bottom line price; nothing is of ultimate value. No wonder some experience despair.

And yet for most, this is still a great place to be. I joy to walk across the campus and see folk engaged in animated conversation with arms waving. It may be just their social lives. But some at least are fired with the thrill of knowledge because of its intrinsic value and interest. I have heard folk passionate about poetry, delighting in Chaucer for his own sake – not just to get marks. I know others totally engrossed in problems of human nutrition, or chemistry or computers.

These are difficult times. But the people I work with are the brightest and best. For the most part they rise above the cynicism with good humour and energy. Recently I see an increasing political consciousness as the apathy of the last few years yields to awareness and the awareness turns to anger. Events of the last few weeks have resulted in a group of students now sadder, angrier, wiser and becoming politically aware. Who knows what hope the future holds?

Hugh McCafferty

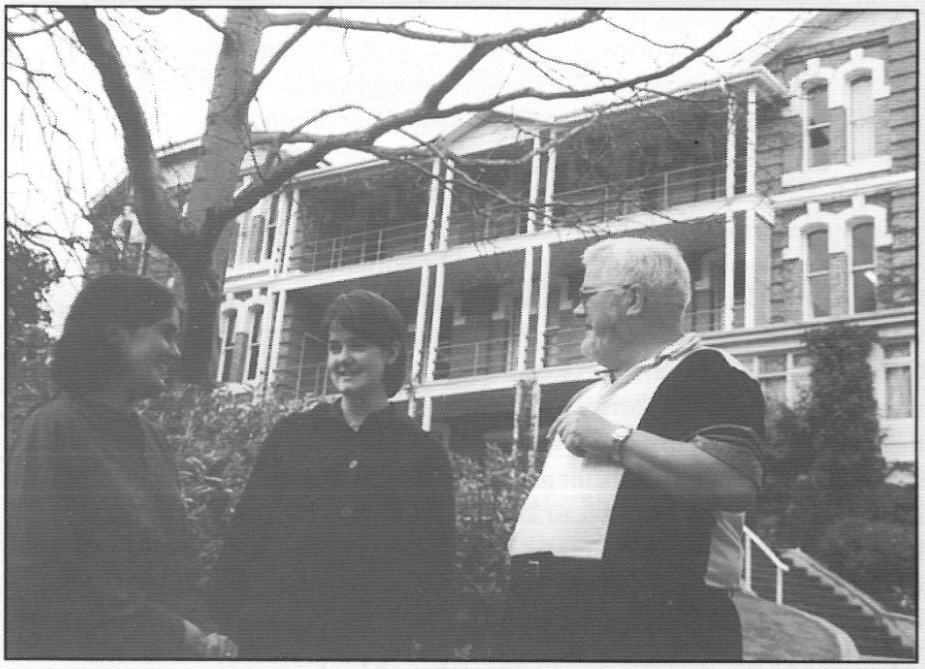
the drive for economy threatens their security. They tend to close ranks. It is a process which can make people very selfish , according to Hugh, who spends a lot of his time with staff.

He is also concerned about the increasing load of student debt which places an unfair and increasing burden on young shoulders. The education debt is not being paid off: it is simply being shifted — onto the backs of the young. This is a grossly irresponsible trend. Young people will of course be profligate: some treat their newly acquired credit card like 'monopoly money'. But that's part of growing up. It has always happened and it always will.

Meantime the vultures lurk to make an easy buck at the students' expense. There is not much public evidence of the use of drugs on campus. Alcohol tends to be the drug of choice. The breweries cynically exploit this — as do some of the pubs. Resplendent on the cover of the student phone book is a blatant beer ad from a local brewery. These commercial agencies have vast monetary resources and they use their muscle to push their products irrespective of the harm that may cause. On the credit side the University Union staff have learned to become more careful in overseeing behaviour. The Student Halls offer excellent pastoral care. So the scene is by no means all black. However there will always be plenty of scope for the energies of the campus chaplain.

At St Margaret's Hall, right in the middle of the Otago Campus, **Fr Peter Norris** is in his ninth year as Warden. He also is in a good position to look around and note the pressures being applied to students and to observe the changing scene. Over the past nine years the roll at the University has increased by 50 percent. That means that a much higher proportion of the students who come are less well equipped for tertiary study. The University has yet to succeed

The students: they like it here! It's been a really good experience.



"We love it here. There's a great community spirit, a very friendly place. It's a 'home from home'."

Susannah and Christie (pictured above with Fr Peter Norris) are Third Year students at St Margaret's, Dunedin. They freely admit that not all the students settle in easily at first. Coming to Otago may involve quite a bit of 'cultural dislocation'. First time away from home and students can be very homesick and become socially withdrawn. It's a culture shock even for Kiwis, enjoying their first taste of real freedom. Overseas students can be under a lot of family pressure to perform.

Financial worries affect a lot of students. Most are on student loans, but you still need a job of some sort to supplement. Being short of money puts a restriction on socialising — but "you can't let that worry you," the girls say. In fact half of the College managed to go on a recent skiing trip. But only the wealthy few can afford to do that more than once in a while. Susannah and Christie thought that even if some students are spendthrifts, most are sensible and learn to live within their budget.

Heavy drinking is a problem with some especially during orientation. Behaviour could be pretty atrocious during that time, and there were cases of rape. But it settles down. The Phys Ed crowd seem to live it up more than most. Otherwise it really depends on the people you choose to go around with. There were drugs around — but there was no pressure to do it in their experience.

They acknowledged that at school and at home they could be pushed to pursue a very narrow Varsity course "so as to get the right job". Both Susannah and Christie however enjoy their studies because it's what they chose to do. Sometimes they have found following Arts courses worries others more than it worries them. The great thing is they really enjoy what they are doing and where they are.

in finding ways to motivate them.

However Fr Peter insisted on emphasising the positive aspects of St Margaret's, and this simply reflects the work of the many Halls of Residence of which Otago is justly proud. A Hall exists to provide a "supportive, welcoming community" into which the first-year student can come and find a home. This supportive environment is much more effective when there is a core of senior students including junior lecturers who stay on past their first year. The hall is part of the network of support, working alongside Student Health and Counselling, the Careers Service and the Chaplaincy. An important part of the Warden's role is to take note of a student going through a difficult patch, intervene if necessary; but at least keep his/her lecturers — even examiners — informed, so that due allowance can be made. And this happens constantly.

A strong source of support for students is the care they give one another. In fact you see little of the "dog eat dog" rivalry; generally speaking they happily give their time to help one another. The social support is good, so that by the time they leave the Hall they have built up for themselves a network of like minded people to rely on. Hugh McCafferty, the ecumenical chaplain, is very much a part of this. The students get to know him when he comes in to help with staff training and with study skills. Not many actually "need" him — but they know he is there when necessary.

Fr Peter is not naive in denying the problems facing his students. Often very unreal expectations are placed on students by their own families; this would certainly include the overseas students. Money management is a serious and growing source of stress. The present loan scheme, Fr Peter thinks, is unfair, especially for those less immediately 'employable'. The level of debt can vary between $20,000 and $60,000. Fr Peter is firmly of the opinion that student loans should be free of interest until the time when the student starts to earn. Those who come to the University with no money at all receive quite generous allowances. Often those worst off are the ones in the middle bracket. They are supposed to be able to support their sons and daughters through University — but often enough that is an illusion.

Fr Peter is not overly concerned about a drug and alcohol problem. It is very important in his work to be selective in the sort of people who are admitted to the Hall and school references become very important here. In his experience there is nothing like the alcohol problem at Otago that, for instance, he observed when he himself was studying in America. For one thing Dunedin as a city is changing for the good. The cafe culture is superseding the pub environment. There are now lots of 'safe' places for students to go and meet up and relax. In his nine years as Warden at St. Margaret's there hasn't been a single case of a student being assaulted. In other words the campus is a pretty safe place still. The staff and students make it so.

There are many grounds for hope — a priest's view from Wellington

There seems to be a tendency for each generation of adults to consider the youth of the present time to be in a state of greater decay. While we cannot ignore the many difficulties that face young people today, we would be utter fools to go round thinking that it was a hopeless situation for society and for the Church.

Some time ago, I accompanied students who were conducting retreats for secondary schools. I was somewhat amazed at their professionalism and their dedication. Those three students are just part of a wide group of young people involved in work that is life-giving, outward looking and calling for self-sacrifice. It is work motivated by the desire to serve the Gospel.

In my present work as a University Chaplain, I come into contact with young people possessing tremendous depth and ideals as noble as they ever were. While there are some difficulties, there exists an enormous alertness and readiness to contribute to the work of awakening the world to the presence of the Kingdom. I know a recent student who has voluntarily given himself to working full time with the poor. He loyally helps out at the Soup Kitchen, has freely given his time at the night shelter and so that he can make ends meet, has recently taken employment there full time – but at a wage far less than what he might earn elsewhere.

I know a student who will soon complete a law degree, who is searching for ways in which she will be able to use this degree, not for her own gain, but to work for the poor.

Currently, I am conducting a series of seminars on Contemplation for a Wellington parish. There are a number of students present, any one of whom I would be more than proud to be their parent.

These examples are not exceptional. They belong to the everyday scene. In many respects I believe there is a new depth of maturity among young people. There appears to be an awakening to the importance of Justice in the world. If the Church is to hold these young people, then we must provide them with opportunities to express their ideals and their faith. Above all, we must believe in them, affirm and encourage them so that they will tap into their potential to live according to the Gospel.

Because of my encounters with these youth, I believe that the future is full of hope.

Fr Alan Roberts is chaplain at Victoria

A Smile of the Pacific

Sr Barbara Hurley RNDM, long-time Samoan chaplain, gives another perspective of NZ youth

I walk into another world I love. A world of richness, respect and infectious laughter. A culture whose priority is the immediate and extended family including community.

Each fourth Sunday this experience is mine as I celebrate a monthly Eucharist with the Samoan people in Christchurch city. It is a ritual in the real Samoan tradition: singing and worship in the Samoan language. The depth of their spirituality comes from their elders because grandmothers and grandfathers have the mana of a great Christian people. Their dress is a sign of respect for the sacred: they are treading on holy ground. It is a very important part of their coming together for liturgy. No matter how little they own there are special clothes for Sunday.

Education is supported by all Samoans. Most Samoan children attend school beginning with Early Childhood Learning until Form 7. Samoan youth also take their place at Polytechnic and College of Education studying a number of different subjects. Even the University has many students who are achieving well. It is a great credit to parents, as so often both mother and father hold down very hard and monotonous employment. So often it is shift work – dad working at night, mum during the day or vice versa.

While wishing their children to do well academically, stress is also put on young people whose gifts are found in other fields of learning. Sport plays a very prominent place. We are all aware of the wonderful sports people young Samoans have proved to be.

There are alas many instances of tension. So many young people today strive to live up to an almost impossible challenge of achieving or else losing face. Some tumble downhill if they have no support. That is why youth clubs are very important. Samoan youth formed clubs which failed to get off the ground... Until now. Today there is a very strong youth club created by young people for young people. Young adults are coming forward in support, which is vital. My hope is that this will create a climate where the Samoan youth see the importance of coming together with other youth groups in the diocese and share resources.

Singing plays a great part in Samoan culture. It brings youth and adults together. What could be more inspiring than to hear the beautiful harmony of a Samoan choir? Samoans are community people. They do things better when together. For example, if work puts several people alongside each other on a job, the work is done in double quick time. Above all they are happy doing it together.

Children play a very important role in the Samoan way of life. They are cared for by all, especially the older children. Little ones are passed from one pair of hands to another. All are just loving them as they are.

Samoan people have a very hard road to journey in New Zealand, especially in matters of finance. Many are supporting a family here and one at home in Samoa. Another hardship is that groups may arrive here from a village in Apia or Savai'i to collect funds for a project. This means the already strained community comes together for a siva (dance), meals etc. to find funds for the project. Their hospitality is such they turn no one away. Of their little they give their all with joy. And at the centre of their rich lives is God, who is very real to them in and through their culture.

Find Calcutta in your

Mother Teresa's message

"What impressed me especially about Mother Teresa was her ordinariness". Eamon Butler (above) is an Irishman now living in New Zealand who spent four years working with Mother Teresa's missionaries

"Mother is a very direct person: you take her as you find her. There is no special aura. She just says to you: 'what is you want?' And when I tell her she says to me: 'Pray to Mary for guidance'". Eamon speaks with an intensity and a light in his eyes. Mother Teresa is still very much present to him.

"The extraordinary rises out of her ordinariness. She is there among her Sisters, just one of the community. There was nothing too rarefied about the community either. They had their differences and their little squabbles — like normal people. And out of this typical community life the work advances. It's all so ordinary and normal. To me, the human side is paramount. If there had been any tangible aura of holiness it would immediately have created a barrier. 'Holiness', in the traditional sense, can be a barrier. It would have put Mother out of the reach of people.

"When I arrived in Calcutta in 1991 I found the door open. There is a great sense of acceptance, of welcome. You are expected to support yourself: all their resources go to feeding the poor people. But you are welcomed in, to join in their prayer and help in their work. The work is very hard. It's a very hard life: hard — but not difficult. The grace is there to sustain you. What is hard is the surrender of self, of your freedom. It is the price you have to pay to give all your love to the poorest of the poor. The hardest thing of all is to surrender your own will."

Eamon stresses however the warmth and humour of the Sisters. Mother Teresa had a great sense of humour. She liked cracking jokes and to gently tease people. And prayer is paramount in the lives of the Missionaries. It always comes first. The Sisters are encouraged to pray constantly as they work, so that their work becomes a prayer. "One day", Eamon recalled, "some journalists arrive with their cameras in the middle of the time of adoration. Mother quietly got up and motioned them to some seats, and made them wait while the Sisters completed their time of prayer. No fuss. Just an emphasis on what must come first."

Eamon has no illusions about the criticisms that have been made about Mother Teresa and her philosophy. Many people are shocked by the lack of basic facilities and more sophisticated medical care at the House for the Dying in Calcutta. "Things could be better", Eamon admits. But Mother Teresa's prime mission has been to bring the love of God to these poor suffering people and enable them to die with dignity. Bringing pain relief has not been one of her priorities.

Eamon himself observed this at the AIDS Home in San Francisco. Her Homes are not hospitals in the normal sense. The Sisters are there to give shelter, food and warmth — and to convey the love of God to people without any discrimination. Mother Teresa's teaching on suffering as a special way of sharing in the Passion of Christ may seem an exaggeration, and Eamon would see no difficulty in this aspect of their work being changed by her successors. He does not believe that she was infallible

from a bust carved by Ria Bancroft

own city...

to NZers

in all aspects,of her work. What is constant is the openness of the Sisters to all who come in need.

Another criticism has been her association with some pretty dubious people. And there can be no doubt that some of the Duvaliers and Maxwells of this world used her to try to legitimate their oppressive politics or business. She was naive: Eamon concedes this but insists that it is part of her unconditional acceptance of people that she was prepared to meet anyone and see Christ in everyone. "Who knows", he says, " how they too may have been touched by her presence."

...the poorest of the poor are the lonely and unloved

When Mother Teresa came to New Zealand in the 1970s she shocked people out of their complacency by telling them to 'find Calcutta in Christchurch, in your own city'. The poorest of the poor in New Zealand, or anywhere else in the world, are the lonely and unloved. You don't have to travel to Calcutta to find those.

In Eamon's view Mother Teresa is the St Francis of the 20th Century. Her message is for all people.

Three years ago Bishop Len Boyle spent several days close to Mother Teresa when they were members of the same group at the Roman Synod on Religious Life. "I never felt at all in awe of her," Bishop Len said. "She had a simplicity combined with shrewdness which was impressive. I remember her as a kindly lady.

"For all that, she was single-minded in her total absorption in the work of her Sisters for the poor of the world. She didn't appear to attend much to the business we were discussing. She would press the button (the sign for her to make an intervention) and deliver her daily *fervorino.* When a problem area concerning Religious was being discussed she would come with the same answer: "If they'd only spend an hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament everything would be all right".

Her answers might appear simplistic. Yet Bishop Boyle was impressed by the transparent logic of what she said. Why was she apparently unconcerned about the causes of the poverty which she worked to alleviate? Simply because her whole focus was on the poor person she saw in front of her. "After all", the Bishop acknowledged, "when people are dying or afflicted with leprosy, what else can you do but help? Mother Teresa's nuns could only scratch at the surface of world poverty. Her solution was simply to help the poor person she met in the street — there and then. And her witness was infectious. Her example has alerted the whole world to the plight of the poorest of the poor."

Bishop Len was impressed by her simple, uncluttered spirituality. Even at 83 her mind was alert. He returned again to her warmth and her sense of humour. She was able to laugh at herself. But she was also sharp enough to make you look foolish — as the bishop discovered when he ribbed her about 'limelighting', living in the spotlight. "Every time I have my photo taken," she said, "I pray that someone will go to heaven". Difficult to find a smart answer to that!

REQUIEM for a princess

Diana, Princess of Wales, died tragically on 31 August 1997. In the week that followed the world seemed to stand still, paralysed by shock and grief. People everywhere were amazed at the depth of impact her death had on them. They could never have foreseen it so. They felt a deep and painful sense of loss that left them baffled about a part of themselves they had not known was there. The phenomenon can hardly be explained by the fact that Diana was surpassingly beautiful and at the same time, spontaneously compassionate and warm-hearted. That might be part of it, but there is far too much complexity here to allow for ready explanations – far too much paradox.

We can speak, for instance, of her love of the poor and immediately become aware of her immense personal wealth and luxurious lifestyle; we can think with gratitude of her commitment to make the world a better place to live in and then recall with shock, having sometimes thought that she lived as though there were no tomorrow; we can righteously judge her for consorting with a reputed playboy and be unaware that, in countries where it matters, there were those overjoyed at such public witness to love between Christian and Moslem – and there remains the ultimate paradox that while we knew her only through the media, it was her flight from the media that contributed to her death: a sophisticated woman feeding our unworthy appetite for glamour and superficiality and a woman of breathtaking simplicity and honesty, putting us in touch with our deepest frailties by exposing her own.

The enigma cries out for an explanation, but not yet. For the time being it is enough to remember that we shared her funeral with some two billion other members of the human family; that for the space of a minute we honoured the eerie silence that fell on the world in respect for her; that in the privacy of our homes we prayed aloud the Lord's Prayer in union with millions of Christians in every country and in every language; that in her brother's making the sign of the cross as her coffin passed, was a salutary reminder to us of age-old Christian customs done in public that we have cravenly abandoned; that in the music of her funeral service we were required, perhaps reluctantly, to embrace the secular and the sacred as one, accepting that God is present in both; and, perhaps most of all, that in her death she gave leave to millions of people to weep not only in sorrow for her but in sorrow for themselves. This was no ordinary woman.

May the angels lead her into paradise.

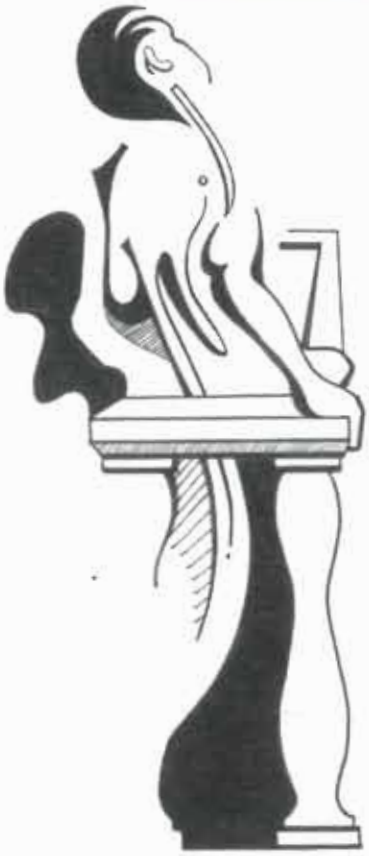
Pauline O'Regan

"Yes, I touch people. I believe everyone needs to be touched, whatever their age. If you put the palm of your hand on a friendly face, you immediately come into contact with them, communicate tenderness and show your closeness to them. It's a gesture that comes naturally to me. It comes from the heart and is not premeditated."

"But a sick boy suddenly caught my eye, a serious little fellow with sad eyes and an emaciated body. I only had eyes for him – I can't explain why. I knew he was going to die. 'Can I take him in my arms?' I asked. The boy couldn't see, or rather could no longer see: a tumour was eating into his brain. I hugged him very tight in my arms. I shall never forget him. The heartbeats of the little boy were the most important thing... I wanted to pass on my strength and health and love to him."

– from Diana's last interview

Courtesy Otago Daily Times



Theology... from the Balcony

A commentator in the London Tablet once observed that the attitudes and hearts of the old men on the balconies of Red Square, Tienanmen Square and St Peter's Square were practically immovable. Nor would their beliefs or ideologies be altered to any great extent by the beliefs and experiences of the people upon whom they looked down.

Several events have occurred which challenge that observation. The old men of Red Square have largely disappeared since the revolution in 1989. The old men of the Tienanmen Square balcony were challenged, futilely, but with great symbolic value, by the wave of student protests in China some years ago now, while those who stand on the balcony of St Peter's Square have substantially survived any protest or expressions of difference – silent or voiced – which the faithful have raised. Such protests have been many: the petitions, declarations and statements of theologians in Europe and throughout the world, the widespread dissonance about the silencing of theologians, the silent departure of all too many from the worshipping communities of the Church.

Recent events have focused our eyes on yet another balcony, that of Buckingham Palace. The vast expression of popular feeling about the death and burial of Princess Diana has illustrated, once again, the potential that balconies have for serving as the basis for different perspectives, different sets of beliefs, different points of view.

Balconies are worthy of consideration. Physically they mark a separation of one group of people [the few] from another group [the many, the crowd, the multitude, the faithful], those who look down, and those who look up, those who speak and those who listen. More importantly, balconies are, by their very nature, for the few rather than for all. They are the place of those who have the authority, the control. Balconies define relationships: social, economic and, above all, political. They are places of leadership, authority, privilege and power.

One of the principal media frenzies surrounding the death of Diana of Wales has been about the seeming inability of House of Windsor to respond to the popular feeling about the death of the Princess. The television coverage of the funeral cortege showed us, against the relentless soundtrack of horses' hooves, innumerable images of people locked in silent grief. These heart-moving images were the icons of popular feeling, the emotions of people on the ground. The television did not show us images of the grief of the balcony people. There was a significant gap between what 'those on the balcony' and 'those on the ground' experienced in mourning for Diana. The very fact that the lyrics of Elton John became the vehicle which encapsulated the public sentiment rather than Verdi's Requiem indicates the difference between what it means to stand on the ground and what it signifies to stand on the balcony. The two positions are not at loggerheads, but are significantly and irretrievably different.

All of this points to some interesting parallels with what theology has traditionally tagged as the *sensus fidelium* – the belief of the faithful, of the people of God. The dimension which seems most significant in the death of Diana, was the dimension of shock. Not just shock at the tragic death of a gifted and elegant woman; not just shock at the shattering of an icon, a Pieta of our age; nor simply shock that this particular woman and mother should become yet another fatality of the roads. Rather, the most significant shock seems to have been about the gap between the *sensus*

fidelium [the experience of the people on the ground] and the experience of people on the balcony. Something foundational and significant had shifted under the feet of the people on the balcony, and they were at a loss both to respond to it and to realise what had shifted.

Those old enough to remember the death of John Kennedy or Elvis, or John Lennon, or Marilyn Munroe or John Paul I, will remember the shock of those deaths. Yet this time, for some reason, it was different. The difference lay in the shock about the degree of difference in perspectives of the event. To put it in contemporary jargon: one was modern, the other post-modern. One of yesterday; the other of today, even tomorrow. An institution – the House of Windsor, the Family Firm – stood exposed, in the popular view, and out of touch with the experiences of those on the ground.

The lessons of all this bear consideration. Is there a similar gap in the Church between balcony and ground? Is there a gap between what is taught from the balcony of St Peter's and what is believed in the piazza? Is there a gap between the Word of God preached from the pulpit and the Word of God heard in the pews and lived in the daily life of the faithful? If there is a gap, what generates it, what sustains it? If you bend your ear and listen to the ground rather than to the microphones on the balcony you will hear a distinctly different discourse in the Church today. The significance of this gap is not simply the significance of any gap between the real and the ideal, between ecclesia docens [the Church that teaches] and ecclesia discens [the Church that listens]. Nor is the gap just something which has always existed in the Church and always will exist in the church. There is indeed a kind of gap between balcony and a quality of ground which has not existed in the Church before today.

Thomas Kuhn argues that knowledge and praxis in any community can change or shift in various ways. One way is simple incremental, the addition of new ideas and conclusions to the already existing body of knowledge. Another is by revolution, when someone in the community presents us with a radically new synthesis of existing information, or makes some absolutely novel discovery which changes our whole view of things.

What is critical in Kuhn's theory is the stage when a paradigm or model is about to shift or change. Kuhn characterises the pre-paradigm shift phase in several ways:

•There is a growing dissatisfaction amongst practitioners with answers given by the tradition of the commnity

•There is a division of the community into different and often highly opposed schools of thought

•There is debate and doubt

•There are many answers or solutions being proposed

•Authority often attempts to reimpose answers or solutions from the past tradition

•There is much pain and seeming chaos.

The events of the last weeks have illustrated Kuhn's theory rather well.

One could argue that the community of the Church is in a massive pre-paradigm shift phase. The dissatisfaction of practitioners, the differing schools of thought, the seemingly high-handed actions of authority, the doubt, chaos and disaffection in the Church all bespeak a moment of radical shift in the Church today. To deny that there has been such a shift or dismiss it as irrelevant or even non-existent, is to enter into ostrich theology.

What are the alternatives? A first might be to ask if we need balconies at all in the Church. The type of leadership we need in the church today is not leadership from above, but leadership from alongside, from within. It needs to be the sort of leadership which has the capacity to embrace all the insights which the Spirit of God brings forth in the people of God.

A similar alternative is to alter our perception of the way the Spirit is speaking in the Church. Currently our theology of where the Spirit speaks has a very narrow basis indeed, largely limited to the clerical, male, official dimension of the Church. The insights of lay folk, the intuitions of women, the experiences of the marginalised are all sources of the intelligent work of the Spirit in the Christian community. These voices must have a much more incarnate role in the Church.

A third alternative is to actually dare to embrace the chaos. Surfing the chaos seems to be the only apt stance for theology today. Surfing implies risking falling or being wiped out. Yet – and this is the nub of the argument – chaos is not *per se* bad or evil. In the beginning, we read in *Genesis,* the Spirit hovered over the chaos, and in due time brought order out of the chaos. God, who is the Provident God of History, is always capable of doing new things. To resist the novelty that God is working in the Church, to deny the 'new thing' which God is or may be doing, is to resist the very work of the Spirit and the endless creativity of God.

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There actually has been a shift in the paradigm or model of the Church. Vatican II canonised such a shift when it spoke endlessly of the *communio* or community model of Church. It is the opinion of many theologians today that this model has been betrayed in the post-Vatican II Church. Equally, one could question whether the current model of leadership in the Church is the sole model which we can deduce or adduce from the teachings of Jesus and the work of tradition. Tradition has sacralised one model of leadership in the Church. It has consecrated one form of Church at the cost of other forms. To test the form of the Church is not to test that Jesus founded the church. But it is to interrogate the forms which [largely] men have put on the Church. One of these forms is the hierarchical teaching Church which we have today, separating those who can teach officially in the Church from those who are meant to listen. It is, by and large, a balcony form of Church. Perhaps the Lord would want us to dismantle the balconies in our Church.

Liturgy Alive

All over New Zealand good things are happening in liturgy – like the two examples shown below. TUI MOTU invites you to send in ideas, preferably with pictures, so that others can share your inspiration

St Mary's Palmerston North (left): At the principal Mass the children go out in procession for their own Liturgy of the Word when the adults begin theirs.

The people farewell them with a simple antiphon – and welcome them back at the Offertory with the same tune. It is Jack Miffleton's "*Happy Those who Hear God's Word*". It is very easy to sing; from a collection called *Wake up the Earth* (by Jack Miffleton 1984 *NALR).*

St Mary Star of the Sea, Port Chalmers is a tiny parish but with a very alive liturgy. Each week a team of about 8 people help with the liturgy (readers, eucharistic ministers, music leader, servers aged from 7 to 70, co-ordinator). Most parishioners take their turn. The servers not only process in and out with the reader, they also prepare the altar and assist the celebrant at the Offertory.

The congregation has lots of children and Parish Priest, Fr Brian Winders, is a great favourite with the young.

Pictured left: a Sunday when the children were serving: preparing the altar and reading the Prayers of the Faithful. Right: after Mass enjoying the winter sunshine.

Overseas News

Brazilian Champion of the Poor

Another 'Champion of the Poor' died recently in Brazil. He was Herbert de Souza – known by the name Betinho. He was born a haemophiliac and in 1986 was found to be HIV positive due to a contaminated blood transfusion. He had dedicated his life to social issues including the care of streetkids, the fight against discrimination aimed at people diagnosed as HIV positive, improved screening of blood donations, a movement to restore ethics in politics and a campaign to help the 32 million malnourished Brazilians. He was an atheist but Leonardo Boff, the Catholic theologian, has suggested that Betinho should be canonised when the Pope visits Brazil in October. Boff would like him declared 'the saint of the poor', and 'The Patron Saint of Citizenship'.

Vatican and Nazi Gold

Claims that the Vatican received money looted from victims of the Nazis are to be investigated by the U.S. Treasury department. President Clinton has made a statement to this effect saying "the records will reveal whatever information we have and let the facts take us where they lead us".
The Vatican has strongly denied that it had acted as a 'pipeline' for storing and smuggling Nazi gold.

Change in Celibacy Rules

Requests for laicisation, the dispensation from the vow of celibacy and dismissal from the priesthood are not usually considered by theVatican for priests under the age of 40 – and then, only in 'exceptional cases'.
A new regulation now states that laicisation will also be considered when 'grave scandal is present'.
It's thought that the change has been made in response to several requests from National Bishops' Conferences that the Vatican make it easier to laicise priests involved in sexual misconduct or abuse.
When a priest who has married in a civil ceremony is in danger of dying, the Vatican now says that the petition for dispensation should be sent 'without delay' so that the civil marriage can be blessed.

"New Look" Irish Church

Bishop Willie Walsh of Killaloe has described how he sees the present- day Church in Ireland – a Church weakened by scandals over the past few years: "The Catholic Church is weaker as an institution but I believe that the Church is now a more humble and more honest Church, a Church which recognises its own sinfulness. A weaker Church is a less oppressive Church and the 'strong' Irish Church of the 1920s to the 1960s was at times quite oppressive. A Church which claims to be true to the teaching of Christ must surely be a liberating rather than an oppressive force. We have come to a Church which is insecure, hopefully less authoritarian and less clerical, a Church which defines itself as the People of God".

Church Tax in Germany

In Germany practising Catholics and Protestants not only give to the Sunday collections – they must pay a 'Church Tax' (1.4 to 3.2 percent of gross income). Those who do not pay are effectively excommunicated and are refused the sacraments.
Recently thousands of Germans have decided to take this option. In 1995 official departures from the Church amounted to 168,244. Among those was Steffi Graf, former Wimbledon Champion.

Tui Motu InterIslands is published by Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd.
P O Box 6404, DUNEDIN NORTH.
Phone: 03 477 1449
Editor: Fr Michael Hill
Assistant Editor: Frances Skelton
Directors: Tom Cloher
Annie Gray
Judith McGinley
Elizabeth Mackie
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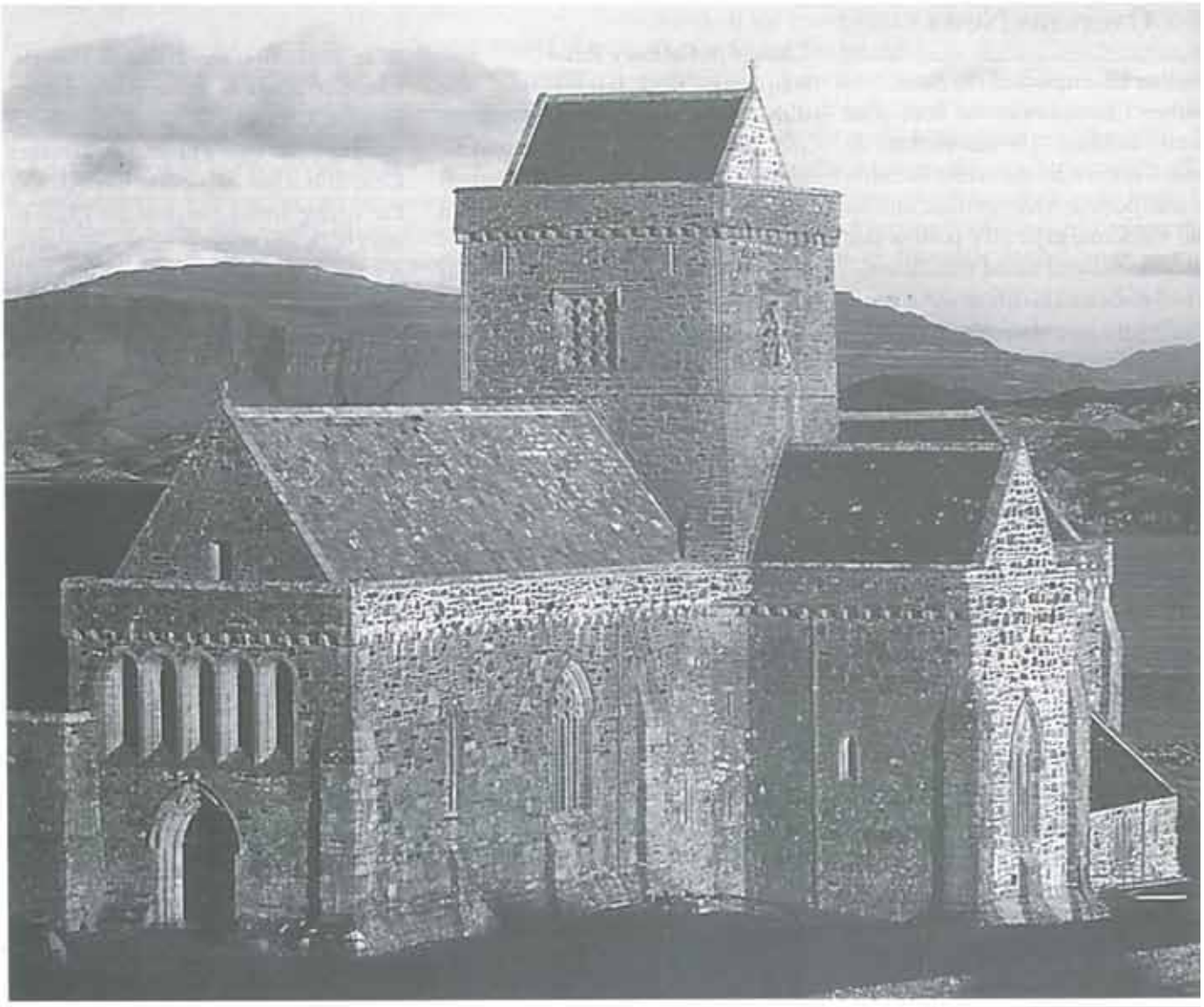
Printed by Otago University Print, Dunedin



Iona Abbey, off the coast of Scotland, founded by St Columba 563. Built in the 12th Century and restored this Century

... in the steps of Columba

In June ***Sandra Winton****, a NZ Dominican Sister found herself on a journey to the island of Iona off the Scottish coast. For Sandra it was also a journey of spiritual discovery...*

It took me a day to get there from London – two trains, two ferries and a bus. It wasn't only the weather that made me feel that I was going to another country. It was the friendliness of the woman beside me on the train, the dry stone walls the same as these people built on the Otago Peninsular, the young woman in Glasgow with her two red-headed tots who told me that yes, you could buy food on the train but that it tended to be a wee bit expensive, the gentle faces of the shaggy highland cattle and the roads that became so narrow that vehicles could pass only by one of them pulling into a lay-by. But most of all it was the inexplicable excitement that rose up in me and had me first out of the bus and skipping unencumbered onto the ferry from the island of Mull to Iona – until I realised that the others were slower because, unlike me, they had waited to get their bags from under the bus.

What was it that drew me so eagerly to this restored twelfth-century abbey and church, to this contemporary community and place of pilgrimage? It was certainly not the comfort of the well-appointed retreat centres I had visited during my time in California. I and my two companions, from Minnesota and England, were met by a van able to drive us and our bags through the tiny village to McLeod House where we were welcomed by volunteers, given a hot, healthy meal and shown our rooms. I was in a top bunk of a room for ten named Machaer after the flat, grassy area where people could graze their sheep. Well, it was spartan and we were herded in. Each morning I would wake up and face the first challenge of the day – sorting out how I had climbed up here last night, and even more daunting, how I had got down the previous morning!

There is definite monastic flavour to the Iona experience. A bell rings in the morning and breakfast in common is followed by Morning Prayer in the abbey church. At the end of the prayer we are told to remain standing, so as to move directly to our work, a symbol of a spirituality that is robust and integrated. We are in teams to attend to the house. Some wash up, others help to prepare food – our team of about eight is assigned to clean showers and bathrooms. We are so many that it is not easy to find a spot to clean and an energetic minister's wife from Australia tries to organise us. Washing the shower floor beside a lively Englishman, I get into conversation with him about what has drawn us here. I have this conversation many times over the week – and hear in how many ways people seek God – or God is seeking people.

It is fourteen hundred years since the death of St Columba and this is Columba Week on the island. I count 57 at meals in McLeod House and a similar number in the Abbey when I dine there. From the life lived here and from the daily talks by Ian Bradley who has written on Columba and Celtic Spirituality, I enter into a way of living that touches me deeply and connects with some seeking I have not named for myself.

Ian speaks to us each day. He draws a picture of a sixth-century monk and his community who have left not one ruin because they built only in branches and clay and yet whose spirituality profoundly affected Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland. It is a tough community and a tough model – daily prayer in common five times during the day and three times during the night. It is the prayer of monks who would walk into these cold waters and stand there chanting psalms. (An enthusiastic pilgrim wants me to join him in a swim but my fervour is outweighed by my Kiwi common sense and I decide to wait for a real summer day. This does not occur.) Columban Spirituality is deeply embedded in the psalms and expressed through poetry, imagination and imagery rather than prose, though Ian Bradley is distrustful of what he calls the 'tarting up' of Celtic prayers by nineteenth century and later writers. There is nothing cosy in the picture he paints of a community whose faith is embedded in the presence of God in all things and whose circling or breastplate prayers recall that they were finally slaughtered by Nordic invaders on the beach here, having already sent the bones of the saint and probably the Book of Kells to Ireland for safekeeping.

The present community seems to say to me that more than the bones and the book were saved from destruction. There is a living spirit and spirituality here that seems as solid, plain and rock-like as the low grassy hills where I and the other pilgrims walk to pray amid sheep, stones and grey sea. The Benedictine abbey built here in the twelfth century and probably abandoned in the dissolution of the monasteries – a piece of history that is not mentioned in this ecumenical environment – was restored by ministry students and unemployed men from working class Glasgow under the inspiration of George McLeod. This extraordinary Scottish minister dared to ask how religion might be able to speak to working class people whom

the church seemed unable to reach. His search for an answer led him to Iona where in the work of re-building first the church and then the abbey, these people had an experience of community that depressed Glasgow had not offered.

This is not a spirituality that flees from the world

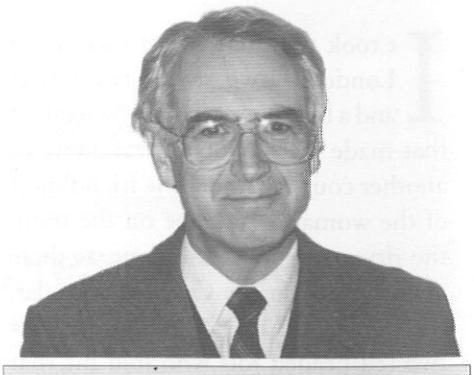
This week the leader of the community, Norman Shanks, who is usually based in the central office in Glasgow, is with us. He speaks to us about the present Iona community. It numbers over two hundred people, people connected to the island but mostly living their daily working lives in other parts of Britain. They make a commitment to spiritual discipline, to community, to poverty and to justice. I believe they are a force to be reckoned with.

The community is rich in its tradition of contemporary religious music and the plain poetry of its prayers. It continues to draw people, especially the young. There are over twenty volunteers living on the island. They lead worship, they cook, some lead music. They are from Mexico and Germany, from Australia, Scotland and Zimbabwe. They lead us in an evening prayer for indigenous peoples and we hear of the highland clearances and aboriginal land rights. We are invited to come forward to place some earth on a map of the world in places where we know indigenous peoples are struggling. As I let the soil fall on these islands I am impressed at all the places where people know about indigenous struggles. There is a level of global awareness I did not find in the United States. It is also reflected in the Amnesty International chapel. This is not a Celtic spirituality that flees from the world. This is a community informed on political and social issues, intelligent and actively involved. I am interested to see that the previous week they hosted the Greenbelt Music Festival and the week before that the national Conference of Christian Socialists. The mood is upbeat and hopeful with the recent Labour victory in Britain.

I pray with a young woman in a tiny stone chapel, I share with another her pain at a grief she does not name, I talk with the women in my bunk room and the man with whom I peg out the teatowels, I hear about a young woman's experience working with the poor in South America, I take home recipes for nourishing vegetable soups, I wander in the graveyard where the kings of Scotland are buried (including Macbeth and Macduff, I hear). I stand by the high Celtic cross that looks out over the grey seas and low islands, I pray for peace in Northern Ireland, I pick my way among sheep tracks to the rocky hilltop where they say Columba prayed, I think of New Zealand, in the unadorned church I commit myself to the life to which I will return, I wonder about the unmentioned divine one who drew people here before Christianity came and whose presence is still powerfully at work.

I stand by the high Celtic cross... I pray for peace in Northern Ireland

Leaving on the early morning ferry I turn my head to hold this in my memory. I recall the dream I had on my first night here. In the dream I am crossing a river on an old, old bridge. In parts it is a ruin. Among the stones someone has placed a wreath. The flowers are dead. Then to my amazement I find that out of the wires of the wreath, beautiful, strong-stemmed flowers have bloomed.■



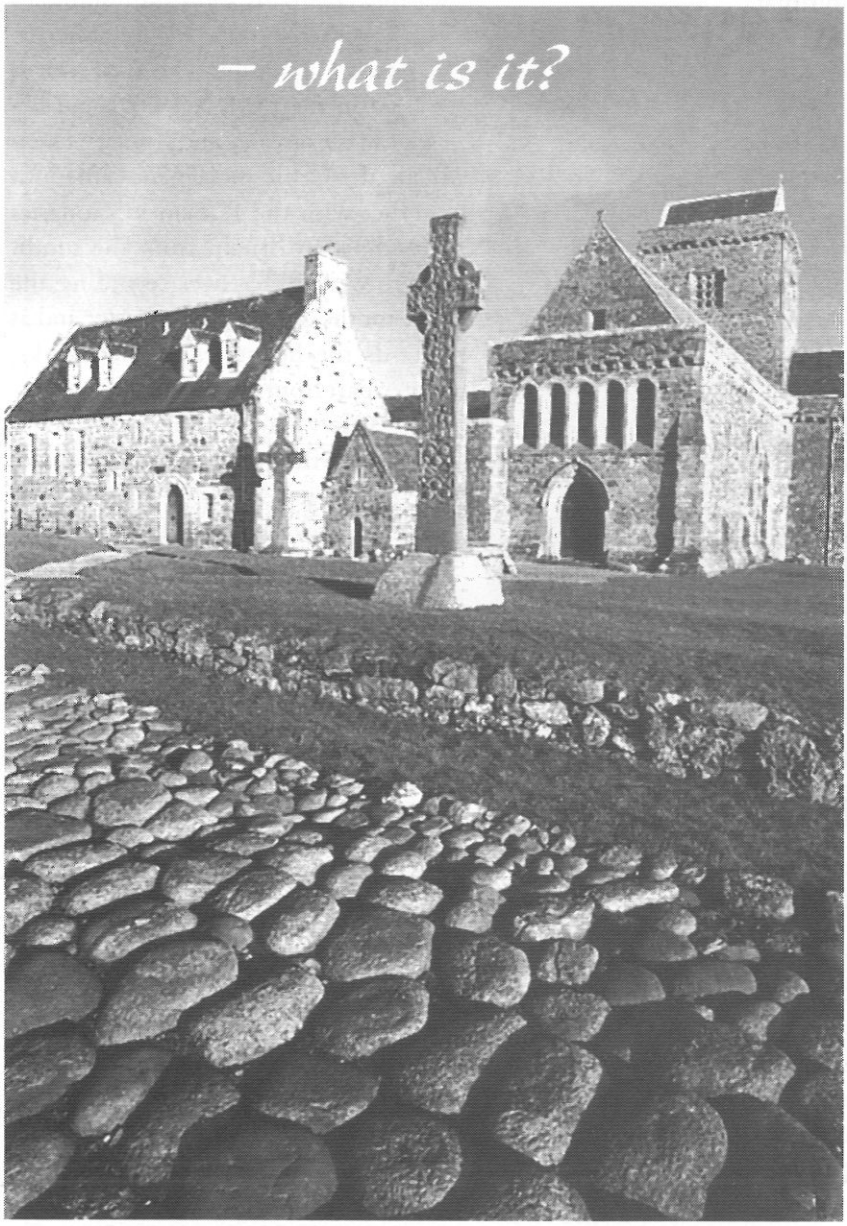
John Hunt is the Presbyterian Minister at St Giles, Papanui in Christchurch. In 1993 he took study leave and found himself on the island of Iona in Western Scotland. The experience changed his life. Iona is the centre for the revival of Celtic Spirituality. John found himself among many different nationalities and Christian denominations. He breathed deeply the air of St Columba and the pure Christian spirit of his Celtic forebears before all the thological squabbles rent the Christian church apart.

When he got home to Christchurch he found his pastoral attitude underwent a subtle change. For instance, in his ministry to sick and dying people he is no longer the 'wounded healer' searching to share people's pain. His approach has become more hope-filled. He tries now to accompany people through their time of adversity towards a flowering "on the other side". His spirituality has become more rooted in the Holy Spirit. The focus now is on the resurrection dawn to come. John is sensing that Celtic spirit of taking the knocks but always looking forward to the delight of springing up again.

In worship he has quietly dropped any 'fire and brimstone' element from his preaching. Jesus constantly recognised the good in people. Likewise John's task is to affirm the strengths and the beauty of his flock. The emphasis now is on the presence of God in nature and in the world around him.■

Celtic Spirituality

– what is it?



Stone is the tabernacle of memory. Stones are wonderful listeners. They sit there and take it all in; and if we listen with our hearts these ancient stones might share with us something of what they have heard: the engagement between a people and God in this place — in their prayers and their tears and their songs.

The fundamental insight of Celtic spirituality is that there is much more to reality than can ever be expressed in purely rational terms. Orthodox Christian theology has pushed the realm of reason as far as it can possibly go. Whereas the beauty of the Celtic insight is to see the rational and the spiritual going hand in hand.

The Christian faith was probably brought to Ireland and the West of Scotland (the Highlands and the Hebrides) by Egyptian traders. The high Celtic crosses which date back to the 8th Century and earlier are decorated with motifs such as the 'kissing fish' which come from Egypt and even representations of St Anthony, one of the early Desert Fathers. And on the Hebridean island of Lewis have been found traces of ancient Armenian chants. The evidence is purely archaeological for there are no written records going so far back.

Christian faith was first found in Ireland among the monks who lived apart just as the desert hermits of the East did. There was however a difference: the Irish monks welcomed people into their hermitages. They lived in communities rather than as solitaries.

In these early times there seems to have been a coming together of the Druid beliefs in God as nature (pantheism) with Christian teachings of God as Creator (panentheism). The Celtic monks rejoice in the immanence of God present in the natural world. Nature was seen as the primary 'Scripture' — with the bible as secondary. They saw the world as good because God had made it so. They were alert to the interconnection of all things. Sin and sadness affects everyone because of this interrelatedness.

In this view of the world people are seen as part of, and engaged in, this world of nature, not spectators or manipulators of it. All living things are either growing — or they are dying. The monks saw a parable in nature: as they observed the way growing things were battered along the seashore by the wild Atlantic storms, so they reflected on how they too were battered by a hostile world but learnt to survive and flourish.

There is of course an ascetical strand in all of this. Jesus is described as "a chief of generous heroes": he is like a clan chieftain who leads the Christian people against their enemies. Jesus goes before us calling us ever onward whatever the temptations and tribulations which afflict us. In his Cross and the Resurrection Jesus takes us through the very worst to the other side.

The Roman Empire had never come to Ireland. Before the Synod of Whitby in 664 there was no contact between Rome and the Celtic Church. For this reason Celtic spirituality lacked creeds and dogmas. It is more a personal, heart-driven faith than a dogmatic, received tradition. Its theologian was Pelagius, condemned by St Augustine of Hippo because he refused to accept the innate sinfulness of man and woman. God surrounds us in a grace-filled natural world. As humans we are called upon to be athletes and to strive for spiritual fitness in order to deal with temptation.

This spiritual viewpoint is reflected in Celtic art. For instance on the great High Cross of Armagh (dating to the 8th Century) Christ is shown crowned in glory, with arms outstretched in blessing. He is *Christus Victus,* Christ in glory; not a defeated Christ. There is a sense of God ever in our midst surrounding us with blessings.

The Celts were especially conscious of the presence of the saints. The saints of old were always with them. They loved to invoke them. The whole world is redolent with God and with God's faithful ones. The Celts managed to escape the dualism which afflicted the Greek tradition. Heaven is not distant: it only a foot above our heads! Their spirituality lacked the imbalance which is caused when the physical is denied in favour of the spiritual.

Celtic High Cross, Clonmacnoise, County Offaly, Ireland

Columba is one of the great early figures. In Ireland he established many monasteries, probably including Derry and Kells. The legend is that he left Ireland following a 'copyright dispute' over a manuscript copies from St Finian as a result of which there was a fight resulting in bloodshed. Columba and his monks sailed away and sought a sanctuary where they could no longer see their native land. They arrived at Iona in 563 and established the community on the island. From there Christianity was carried by the monks all over Scotland. It is recorded in Columba's biography that he even had occasion to rebuke the Loch Ness Monster for attacking one of his monks. Nessie was duly obedient! Their influence spread even into Northumbria. The foundation at Lindisfarne was the result of the invitation of King Oswy, and St Aidan was sent there from Iona.

These communities of monks are the beginning of urbanisation among the Celtic peoples. The monks pacified the warring chieftains and communities of people gathered round the monasteries. The Celtic communities can be seen as a 'light in the Dark Ages'. Ireland became an isle of saints and scholars. Eventually the Celtic movement came into conflict with the Roman missionaries spreading up Britain from the south. There were differences regarding the date for the celebration of Easter and as regards the hairstyles of the monks, quite apart from the varying theologies. King Oswy summoned a Synod at Whitby in the year 664, presided over by the Abbess, St Hilda. The Roman tradition prevailed, and after the Synod of Whitby Celtic influence waned. The Roman tradition was reinforced after the Norman Conquest in Britain. The Normans constructed great Cathedrals which were like castles, presided over by bishops who became like princes.

But the influence of the Celtic monks had spread throughout Western Europe, especially through the preaching of St Columbanus. It was the Celtic monks who established the community of scholars in Bobbio in N Italy. Significantly it was at Bobbio that St Francis of Assisi studied and perhaps imbibed the Celtic spirit.

Today there are Celtic survivals among the crofters and the fisherman of the Hebrides. But the true revival is in the tradition of a Christianity which is less exploitative of the earth, which emphasises the feminine and is more reflective and less rational. It was expressed eloquently by Pope John XXIII when he said: "After the Vatican Council I would like to go back home and plough the land with my brothers". If we ground ourselves more in our senses and in the natural world, then we can begin to heal the hurts to ourselves, to people and to the natural world■

John Hunt

Celtic Prayers

Circle me Lord
Keep protection near
And danger afar

Circle me Lord
Keep hope within
Keep doubt without

Circle me Lord
Keep light near
And darkness afar

Circle me Lord
Keep peace within
Keep evil out

With Your inspiration the pilgrim is fired, is filled with courage to tackle the way.

The pilgrim treks through Tear Valley and makes it a spring, a blessing, like early rain bringing new life.

The pilgrim takes the path inward to stand before God

Delightful I think it to be
in the bosom of an isle
on the crest of a rock
that I may see often
the calm of the sea,
that I may pore on one of my books
good for my soul,
a while kneeling for beloved heaven,
a while at psalms,
a while meditating upon the Prince of heaven

God in my speaking, God in my thinking,
God in my sleeping, God in my waking,
God in my watching, God in my hoping,
God in my life, God in my lips
God in my soul, God in my heart,
God in mine ever-living soul
God in mine eternity.

In Iona of my heart, Iona of my love,
instead of monk's voice
shall be lowing of cows;
but ere the world shall come to an end
Iona shall be as it was.

Praying the Parables
By Joyce Huggett
Published by Eagle
Price $19.95
pp 116

Review: Pauline Gallagher, rsm

A first glance at this book could be deceptive; a browsing reader could easily miss the wealth of scholarship, spiritual insight, and absorbing reading this slim paperback offers. Of course, I may be biased. I was living and working in Cyprus with Joyce Huggett (best-selling author, Interserve Mission Partner and Retreat-giver) and her husband David (Anglican priest) during the book's gestation period. So it was at first hand I came to know each chapter, reflect on it and pray with it. Back in New Zealand when the newly printed volume arrived in the mail, my first reaction was one of disappointment in its humble format. I hope people take time to do more than browse so that they too can appreciate its worth.

The intriguing stories Jesus told as parables, have for centuries been a source of spiritual refreshment for the Christian listener. But they have also been subject to varying interpretations. Many in the Western world have been deprived of the full nourishment they offer through ignorance of their historical context and the cultural nuances they reflect. The message we hear through our Anglo Saxon 'filters' is often distorted. How can we understand the parables more clearly and begin to live the truths Jesus taught?

Praying the Parables gives the key to this mystery, thanks to the collaboration of two 'experts' in their particular fields. In the Introduction Joyce tells how, when pondering the parables, she came upon the scholarly writings of Dr Kenneth Bailey, Middle East Missionary and Professor of Scripture. She read his books *Poet and Peasant* and *Through Peasant Eyes* and confesses to feeling like someone 'whose mind had suddenly been floodlit and whose heart had been strangely touched'. In 1992 a chance meeting with Dr Bailey while he was resident in Cyprus led to a warm friendship. He agreed to allow Joyce to incorporate into her own writing some of his insights in a way that would attract the ordinary reader. And so the idea for this book was born.

An essential key to unlocking the parables is learning to think cross-culturally by projecting ourselves into Palestine as Jesus knew it. Ken Bailey's lived experience in that culture as well as his knowledge of a variety of languages showed him how the Scriptures grow out of the ancient traditional Middle Eastern culture, which Jesus understood and loved. Dr Bailey also gained the respect of the local people in a way that enabled him to pose probing questions about the kind of characters Jesus used for his stories and the customs of their time. He learned what the parables mean when seen 'through peasant eyes'.

Joyce Huggett opens our eyes to these insights through her inimitable use of words and images. The reader is encouraged not only to read the parables with new understanding, but to meditate and pray them. The author's own deep spirituality equips her admirably to do this.

With a series of questions as our guide we are lead through the parables of the Sower and that of The Good Samaritan. In our imagination we place ourselves at the back of the crowd of people who listened to Jesus first tell the story. We are led by the author both to question and to reflect on our response. We are offered several ways of doing this through meditation and prayer.

The text is illustrated with eight coloured photos of excellent quality; in my opinion it is unfortunate that these are placed together in the centre of the book. I think they would be more effective if placed appropriately throughout the text.

It is my understanding that the author hopes to write a second volume in this series on the Parables, when Jesus' masterpiece, the story of The Prodigal Son and other favourites can be presented in the same beautiful style of this first little gem.

Sectarian strife rampant in NZ

Bishop in the Dock
By Rory Sweetman
Auckland University Press
Price:$39.95
Review: Jim Sullivan

In the courtroom drama the climax traditionally comes as the registrar asks the jury, "How say you? Do you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty?" Most readers of Rory Sweetman's recreation of the sedition trial of Bishop James Liston will know already that the reply was "Not guilty", but in a masterly amalgam of courtroom histrionics, historical research, and informed analysis, the author has not failed to convey the tension of the conflict.

In fact, the real tension is not in the trial itself but, as Sweetman explains in detail throughout the book, it is in the sectarianism which was rife in New Zealand society 80 years ago. In a country still very much an outpost of Empire and 'more loyal than the King', to make an unpatriotic utterance was the ultimate transgression. For that reason the circumstances of Bishop Liston's 1922 St Patrick's Day concert remarks, brief as they were, are analysed in great detail.

Sweetman has given the whole episode a comprehensive backdrop before which

the drama unfolds. From the role of St Patrick's Day itself, to the motivations and shortcomings of the journalists at the meeting and their editors, the hostility of substantial segments of society, the quandary of the politicians faced with prosecuting a bishop, and the ever-bubbling cauldron of hatred inspired not only by the Protestant Political Association but by the firebrand editor of the Catholic weekly, the *Tablet.* The trial of James Liston is the setting for the resolution of this ugly, confused time in New Zealand's past. Ugly because of bigotry on both sides and confused because the strands of religion, patriotism and, crucially, Irishness, are a volatile tangle.

Bishop in the Dock addresses far more wide-ranging issues than the day to day minutiae of the trial and the legal manoeuvring which any such case involves. For me, it explains why so many Catholics and Protestants of an older generation were imbued with a mutual distrust, even hatred. The men I interviewed for a recent oral history of the experience of being brought up Catholic in New Zealand, spoke of the name-calling, the 'Catholic ghetto' mentality and the abomination of a mixed marriage. All this falls into place as Rory Sweetman explains the problem of being Irish and Catholic in a British 'colony'. The problem was not so much being Catholic, but the more violent cleft in our society was the perception of Catholics as being Irish (as indeed most were by descent) and therefore of being disloyal, given that the 'Mother Country' was having to fight a 'war' in Ireland as well as on the Western Front. That New Zealand Catholics were dying in the trenches in France did little to assuage the fears of many New Zealand Protestants that the Catholic/Irish were hell-bent on Britain's downfall.

Into all this came one Catholic bishop who commented on the Irish situation when, had there been 'spin doctors' at the time, he could have been advised to focus on St Patrick, the blarney stone, or just about anything but the Easter uprising in 1916. Bishop in the Dock is both scholarly and immensely 'readable'. It prepares the way for a thorough examination of sectarianism in New Zealand. Rory Sweetman has told much of the story – he should be encouraged to tell it all.

Stories from the Heart

The Complete Short Stories
By Joy Cowley
Published by Flamingo, 1997
Paperback: $24.95
Review: Mike Crowl

The stories in Joy Cowley's book fall into two camps: those that leave you with a Yes! and those that stop before you think you've had enough. (Incidentally, though this book is called *The Complete Short Stories*, I suspect it consists only of the stories Cowley is prepared to let us have.)

In one story, *All About Love,* when her characters refuse to behave as their creator wants, the storyteller is told by an old Indian friend, "The best way to begin is with the heart". To which the storyteller replies, "Yes, but it's a matter of finding the heart. Sometimes it's well hidden".

Unlike many modern short stories Cowley's stories always have heart; it's not necessarily worn on the sleeve, and sometimes it's broken by the end of the tale. Her stories always have depth, in spite of their often simple surfaces.

Madeleine L'Engle has written that writers have to let the work take over – and listen. Cowley listens, and what she hears isn't always pleasant. More often than not the children and the innocent in her stories have their lives turned awry by the adults around them. A boy is torn as the result of a long-standing squabble between his father and his aunt. Another, younger, child discovers, along with his father, that what is easy to say isn't always easy to live with. And a disappointed child finds his promised 'mountain journey' takes a whole lifetime to achieve.

But there is good news here too. The realisation of love between a couple who seem on the verge of separation. A daughter's rediscovery of love for her irritating old mother. The way witnessing a farcical suicide attempt allows a woman to see that her life can go on.

In her recent book, *Looking into the Depths,* Nan Burgess says that Cowley's stories not only have a spiritual dimension to them, but also have a recurrent theme of 'letting go'. Burgess says, "Ritual, expressive of 'letting go' is shown in Cowley's stories to bring understanding of latent spirituality. The spiritual significance of ritual within Maori culture is overt, whilst the reality of ritual and its significance within Pakeha experience is more hidden. Cowley shows characters experiencing patterned action which brings order and meaning into felt despair. Rituals of kite-flying, pyjama-making and sailing a poem bring new understandings to characters about relationships. The stories express the reality that 'letting go' demands some form of ritual". (page 175)

The great temptation with a book of short stories is to treat it like a dinner with 14 courses, and try and devour them all in one go. These stories need space between them, however; space to contemplate what has been told and space to consider what effect that might have on our own lives.

Dark Deeds in Sicily

Midnight in Sicily
By Peter Robb
Published by Tower Books
Price: $29.95
Review: Jim Neilan

Ten years ago history was made at a Mass in St Peter's Basilica, Rome, when for the first time ever a member of the congregation interjected during a sermon being preached by a Pope. The interjector was a student, angry at the public warmth shown by Pope John Paul II towards Giulio Andreotti, seven times Prime Minister of Italy, who in a recent trial had been seen to have close connections with the Mafia and who, in 1995, would be on trial himself for ordering the killing of an anti-Mafia journalist. This book centres on the story of these trials with a background of the conspiracies between modern Christian Democrat leaders and the Mafia – and their links with corrupt financiers, the U.S.A., Secret Services and the Vatican.

Peter Robb is an Australian. For 15 years he lived and worked as a journalist in Sicily and Southern Italy. Fluent in the language and with access to many key people he endeavours to untangle the background of the corruption and death which has plagued that part of Italy in recent times. The number of Italian family and individual names may be a little confusing at times but the author gives a clear account of how the Mafia (an organisation which has been described as 'the state within the state') has changed over the past 50 years; from the years when its crimes involved gambling, prostitution and local politics to today's organisation founded on terror – both within its own ranks and towards society and the state. The most dramatic change in Mafia policy and practices was the result of involvement in drug dealing, especially heroin.

Robb speaks to politicians and prosecutors involved in Mafia court cases; hears details about the killings of judges, journalists and witnesses – "a witness against the Mafia is under sentence of death for the rest of his life". He describes the scandal surrounding the infamous Vatican banker, Archbishop Marcinkus and his dealings with Roberto Calvi, the banker later found hanging from Blackfriars' Bridge in London, the atrocities committed by the Red Brigade and their murder of the Prime Minister, Aldo Moro.

But the book is far from being a mere chronicle of names and events. It is also the story of Sicily and Southern Italy, its history, culture and scenery. He describes the produce at the markets, its taste and texture... "the freshness translated into the gleam in a fish's eye, the sheen on an eggplant, the moistness of a speck of manure still clinging to an egg". And there are mouth-watering descriptions of meals he shared (sometimes with recipes); specialties of the South, cassata, caponata, cannoli, jasmine ice cream and a "huge pink mortadella which resembled Pavarotti minus beard and teeth".

One strand of the Mafia web involves art and Robb spends a considerable time researching the life and work of Italy's most famous modern painter, Renato Guttuso. The mystery surrounding his death has never been solved. During the final weeks of his life all close friends were forcibly kept away from him by a sinister group including a Monsignor (later Cardinal) who converted the artist to Catholicism as he died, and a young man whom the painter unexpectedly adopted and who then inherited the multi-million dollar estate. It all makes very interesting reading. A sentence on the back cover expresses well my own enjoyment of this book by this new Australian writer: "It is a brilliant combination of Italian art, crime, food, history and travel, presented with tremendous narrative verve and a wealth of fascinating detail".

Brassed Off
Review: Nicola McCloy

Thatcher's Britain, mine closures, unemployment... All the grim grist of the British film mill for the last fifteen years or so. While there have been many good and some great films made in this genre, my patience with the doom and gloom style of these films is starting to wear a little thin. Having grown up with the work of Allan Bleasdale, Mike Leigh and the like, there is no longer any mystery for me in the economic misery and personal hardship that the Tory government of the time inflicted on an unsuspecting Great Britain. For me to really enjoy any film with the 'trouble at t'mill' mentality, it would need to have a fairly new and innovative approach to an old and thorny subject. Combining social commentary on the mining closures of the 1980's with the trials and tribulations of a brass band sounded to me like a cinematic nightmare.

I was totally unprepared for the surprises that this film threw at me. The effects of the economic downturn and the routing of industry are portrayed through the lives of a group of miners and their families in the Yorkshire mining town of Grimley. Not to be confused with Grimthorpe whose own colliery band provide the soundtrack for the film. The impending closure of the coal mine and membership of the mine's band are really all that the key characters have in common.

Traditionally, very much a male domain, the members of the Grimley Colliery Band are thrown into disarray by the arrival of flugel playing Gloria, the grand daughter of a long dead band stalwart, who has returned to her home town following her university studies. Gloria's presence, both in the band and in the town upset more than one of the band members. The film follows the fortunes of both Gloria and the band as they aim to become the champion Great British brass band while dealing with the spectre of the

pit closure. The focal characters all have very different approaches to both the band and to life and it is these differences which really give the film its sparkle.

Casting two of Britain's most feted young actors in lead roles certainly didn't harm this film. With Tara Fitzgerald (The Vacillations of Poppy Carew) and current flavour of the month, *Trainspotting*'s Ewan McGregor playing the flugel and trumpet respectively, *Brassed Off* is on to a winner. Another core character who will be familiar to most moviegoers is Pete Postlethwaite (In the Name of the Father). Postlethwaite's performance as obsessive band leader, Danny, really draws the entire film together and is nothing short of brilliant. The film, although it has its stars and a large core cast, is an exceptional ensemble performance.

In many ways *Brassed Off* is a film of contrasts. It's been a long time since one film has made me laugh, cheer, clap and cry all within the space of two hours. The film's humour is probably what rescues it from being just another pile of doom, gloom and coal dust. A shambolic Saturday outing for the band providing some of the funniest screen moments of the year. Alongside this are some very tragic and moving scenes that had me, the hardened cynic, bawling more than my Mum did at ET! By the end of the movie I was even enjoying the brass band music too. Watch out for a superb performance of Rodrigo's Concerto de Aranjuez (or Concerto de Orange Juice, in Grimley speak!)

To sum this film up in only a few words is difficult. For a film in the nineties to have no sex, very little violence and not be puerile Disney-fied drivel, is quite something. As it only seems to be on Art House cinema release, if you don't get the chance to see this film at the movies, then rent it. You won't be disappointed.

Topless Women Talk about Their Lives

Review: Mike Crowl

It's normal at the end of a movie for the audience to get up and leave as soon as the credits start rolling. At the end of *Topless Women*, however, the audience I was in sat silent, as though stunned at the bleak lives of the six characters in this story.

Yet this movie is often very funny, with down-to-earth characters who mostly display a good deal of warmth and likeability. But they're also people who have been released from restraint, in whom Self reigns, and who only become passionate when their own little worlds are affected.

There is more tragedy underlying this piece than in the overrated *The Piano*. The people here are our contemporaries, not distanced from us by a century, seen in a vivid picture of a society that has slid downhill into paganism.

I don't know whether writer/director, Harry Sinclair, intended to show us this, but to me the message came across loud and clear. How much does an artist reflect his society and how much does he influence it? Sinclair here seems at first merely to be reflecting it, but the movie is more subtle than that. There is no overt moral tone, yet he constantly forces our innate sense of justice to the surface, particularly in the later stages when most of the characters betray each other, and the only character to have grown into any stage of love is the most betrayed.

It's hard to recommend this as a movie Christians should go and see. Apart from the 'topless women' themselves, there is some nudity and a great deal of obscenity – much of it in your face, as the saying goes. (The 'topless women' of the title appear briefly in a send-up of a foreign movie rightly regarded by the characters as absurd.)

Yet the shock effect of the movie is perhaps something Christians need to experience. Many of us are cloistered from the kinds of lives that are considered normal by the characters in this movie, and we're happy to be entrenched in our ghettos. The movie reveals the huge moral, spiritual and cultural gulf that exists between many Christians and other people.

If you go to this movie, there are certainly things that will upset you – and they won't all be in the area of carnality. If you go to this movie with non-christian friends, you'll have plenty to discuss in terms of "what is life all about?" And if you go to this movie, you'll appreciate that the people who twenty years ago thought the outrageous behaviour in *Goodbye Pork Pie* was a trumpet call for freedom may well be the very ones sitting appalled at the realisation of where that freedom has taken them.

Sr Peter

REQUIEM

Sr Ambrose

Exactly a week after the funeral of Princess Diana, and the day that Mother Teresa was buried, I stood with members of my Dominican family around a grave in Invercargill. Five days later in Oamaru we were again to bury one of our own sisters. On a world stage the passing of Sr Peter and Sr Ambrose seems very small but for us Dominican sisters, these two women are a part of who we are.

In North Dunedin, rural Otago, Invercargill and Queenstown, Peter, with her diminutive body and large heart, brought to everything she did extraordinary energy and purpose. She was passionate, faithful and loving. Beside Sr Peter's dogmatic, terrier-like personality, Sr Ambrose seemed a person of softer colours. Yet as people gathered from Lawrence, from Milton, from Tainui and Oamaru, it was clear that her enjoyment of life, her genuine interest in people and her prayerful presence had touched many, many people. Invercargill and Dunedin, Otago, Milton, Lawrence, Queenstown – as I write these names I am struck by the sense of what is close and familiar, homely even, after the exotic flavour of Europe and India. Lives like these remind me that the love of God and the purpose of God are fully present in the plain streets and familiar houses and fields of our own country. Here too people suffer and are treated with less than human dignity. And here too gifts of compassion and acceptance, of determination, gentleness and fierce commitment flower. It is good to see what is right in our midst. It is important not to overlook what we ourselves can be.

The lives of Peter and Ambrose feel as close and as real as a strand of wool that I can hold between my fingers. Unlike Diana and Mother Teresa, who seem like brilliant stars, they feel like threads in the weaving of my life and the life of our Dominican congregation. Which of us will not remember the sense of mission that drove both of them to break new ground? Who will forget their faithfulness? Held in the memory, they are an enduring part of the fabric.

They are our own and as fully New Zealand as the daffodils I brought home from the graveyard at Oamaru to place in my office where they catch the light and glow.

Sandra Winton