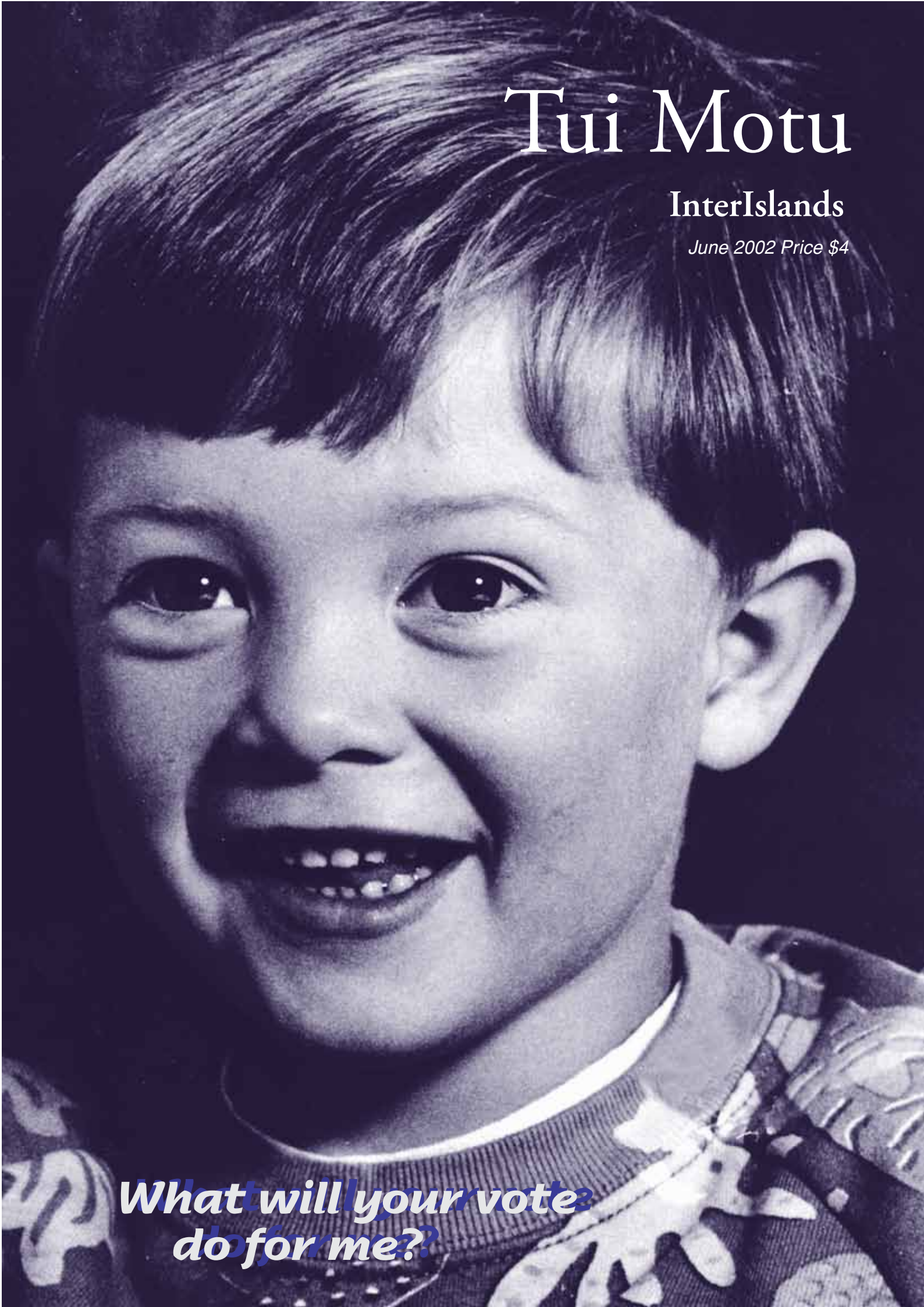
Tui Motu
InterIslands
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What will your vote do for me?

Contents

Election 2002
Our interviews leading up to the Election, underline the plight of children at risk, dysfunctional families and people on the margins. The eyes of our cover child are full of hope. How do we give all our people eyes like his?

Cover photo: Terry Coles

The root of all evil

The failure of New Zealand to host the World Rugby Cup cannot simply be laid at the door of blundering officials or transTasman rivalry. New Zealand's bid foundered for one reason only. Our venues would not generate enough cash for the promoters or the IRB. We are the poor relations. The commercial imperative rules, and we simply didn't measure up.

If we the voters are not vigilant, the same arguments will determine who wins the forthcoming General Election. In this *Tui Motu* we have interviews with two Catholics from the so-called political 'right', Bill English and Merepeka Raukawa-Tait. Both make eloquent pleas on behalf of young people at risk and for the casualties of our world. Both see the family as the foundation of a healthy society. What they say is well worth our heeding and pondering.

Mr English also insists on strong economic growth as an essential part of the recipe, and clearly he is determined to outbid Messrs Cullen, Anderton and Ms Clarke in trumpeting the enterprise way. Haven't we heard this tune before? It is now 18 years since Roger Douglas released the monetarist flood upon us. The years between have certainly multiplied the gas-guzzling four-wheel-drives clogging our highways, the swagger corporate boxes at our rugby stadia and the plush palaces along the Wanaka waterfront. But this economic prosperity has yet to penetrate to South Auckland. Indeed it seems that affluence multiples social ills rather than solving them, especially when this world's goods are not evenly spread.

The guest editorial is from the pen of one who, as a director of social services, should know. His agency is one of many which works to pick up the pieces in an increasingly fragmented society. Our health and social services are often overstretched, reflecting the stresses on the people they serve. Mike Noonan singles out the sense of hopelessness that many people feel who lack the resources, spiritual as well as material, to survive in a greedy, competitive world. Is the real answer simply to generate more wealth? Perhaps we should be redistrib-uting more fairly what we've already got.

Meanwhile the Green leader Jeanette Fitzsimons is in hot water with Helen Clarke. A politician has dared to put principle before pragmatism. How can one go into coalition with a person not prepared to compromise, a party actually having the gall to declare their bottom line? If there were a Bloody Tower on the Wellington waterfront Queen Helen would have consigned Fitzsimons into it! What the Greens are saying is that letting GM organisms out of the laboratory is to open a door impossible to close. Once they are released and established there is no going back. Even scientifically, they have a strong case.

The counterclaim is that there is no proof these experimental organisms are unsafe. The argument is that of the Russian Roulette player. The gun hasn't gone off... yet! In fact there is mounting evidence that what the GE scientists are manufacturing are largely freaks. The much-heralded Dolly the sheep is crippled with arthritis before her time. Surprise, surprise! But there is money to be made from GE, lots of money. There's the rub! If we don't join the gravy train we will degenerate into a third class economy – so we are told.

Long ago Paul of Tarsus said: "The love of money is the root of all evil". And the carpenter from Nazareth proclaimed it was easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for the rich to enter the kingdom. Jesus and Paul were right. Remember that at election time, when you hear the economic imperative bandied about as the ultimate argument.

M.H.

A lifeline for those without hope

Moral theologian Kevin Kelly emphasises the importance of starting where people are. So often moral theology seems to be saying "You should not be where you are, you ought to be somewhere else." I'm certain that it is not just moral theology that can fall into this trap.

Last week I was giving a lecture on the social services to some GP Registrars. I had just explained my belief that there was enough evidence to indicate that the level of benefit should be raised when an impassioned exclamation came from one of the registrars.

"But *I* was able to survive and bring up two small children on the DPB! If *I* could do that why can't they? They should be able to manage, if they cannot they are wasting money, smoking and drinking, and if you raise their benefits, what will my motivation be? I have worked 70 hour weeks when I could have just stayed at home!?"

I turned the question back to the class: "What might be the reasons that some families are resilient and able to manage and some are not?" A softly spoken GP gently remonstrated with his colleague. "You had a good education, you had the ability to see that things could be different for you. And you had hope."

The most painful human experiences are related to the collapse of our hope, the sense that we are discarded, of no value and of no concern to any other human being. A crushed heart cannot be cured by medicine. It may invest in power, wealth, distorted sexuality or the distorted reality brought on by mental illness, alcohol or drugs, but it knows that it has only found disappointing moth-eaten treasure.

We live in a society in which the dominant culture presents a high standard of material well-being. Advertising presents as mandatory and normative that which is just beyond the reach and experience of most people. The result is a permanent sense of inadequacy, of never quite being able to make it. We speak of freedom, but the psychological pressures and control mechanisms on people are immense, while all the time being presented as "freedom".

Before the last city council elections, the Dunedin Christian Helping Agencies invited all the prospective mayoral and council candidates to a food-bank meal. We were able to show the candidates the numbers of food parcels distributed by our agencies each year, the circular problem of welfare debt, the impact of poverty on nutrition and the consequences for the health of growing children. We could even show them what a food parcel looked and tasted like.

What we couldn't give them was the taste of profound shame experienced by so many families when their circumstances forced them to ask for help. Foodbanks were begun as a short term emergency response to the benefit cuts in the early 1990's. They are now institutionalised. A benefit system which requires the safety net of food banks is a failing system. Many families who are on benefit are in debt to Work and Income New Zealand. They are in the position of having to be granted benefit in order to pay back benefit. Is there some collective delusion at work here?

New Zealand has led the world with its welfare legislation. However, an uncritical interpretation of the legislation can often make the child the focus of any professional intervention, and fail to examine and change the cultural norms and social institutions that generate the need for professional services.

The challenge facing society is complex. Children who have experienced non-acceptance from their time in their mothers' wombs grow up to be parents.Their children, in turn, feel a profound and permanent sense of worthlessness with no stake in the past and no foothold in the future.

Some argue that we are seeing social injustice, others argue that we are seeing a collapse in values. A collapse in values arises when people do not see themselves as valued. Social injustice has free reign when people lack the resilience to stand up and affirm their own worth.

It is a toxic mix when a lack of personal hope is compounded by poverty and reinforced by social and structural incoherence. This is something our society must not ignore. It will not go away. ■

Mike Noonan is Director of Catholic Social Services for Dunedin diocese.

Tui Motu-InterIslands

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Tui Motu-InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed. The name *Tui Motu* was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

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Shortage of priests

It was a great pleasure to read so many good articles in the May issue of *Tui Motu*. I will just say a few words about Fr Pat Maloney's article. There is a crisis in the church because of a shortage of priests. How can there be a shortage of priests when there are countless thousands of priests who have left, got married and who are still willing to serve, but are not permitted to because of the ridiculous rule of celibacy?

The Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practise. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation. Those who fail commit a grave sin. So states the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no 2181). I want to receive the Eucharist every day and if I am prevented because there is no priest available, surely those who have let the Church get to this state must accept some responsibility.

Are the signs of the times telling us that compulsory celibacy has outlived its usefulness? The days of a parish priest are long gone. To me the future Church will have two, three, four or whatever number of priests a parish needs and they will be made up of married and celibate people who will run the parish between them.

Paddy McCann, Paraparaumu.

A sign of hope

Each Good Friday, our small township celebrates by presenting a pageant. For the last couple of years my husband, Des, has had the main role. As his hair gets less, the barbed-wire crown becomes more painful and the cross heavier. This year as he carried the cross from the Presbyterian to the Catholic church, a teenage boy came up and said "Do you need a hand?" The boy said he had a friend who would also help.

Des called him 'Simon' and gladly accepted his help. At the end he asked the boy "why?" The answer was that he just felt like helping, and back at school, St Bede's, he'd heard about the event. There is a lot of hope still for good teenagers isn't there?

Marie McSweeney, Akaroa

letters

Who are 'saints'?

Congratulations to Jim Neilan (*Tui Motu* May) when he queries the helpfulness to ordinary people of the proliferation of saints embodying monastic ideals.

What makes a saint? We sometimes act as though only 'canonised' saints are real, but surely they are only the few acknow-ledged by us. The vast majority of great saints, women and men, especially those following their calling as spouses and parents, will be a truly astonishing revelation when we hopefully join them.

Paedophile priests

Last night I listened to Alisdair Cook's *Letter From America*. In it he addressed the issue of the paedophile priests. The main point he made was in regard to the complete lack of compassion for the victims of this regrettable offence. For him the priests, apart from the Pope, were concerned only for themselves.

I have worked with both children and perpetrators, and have agonised over the suffering this particular type of abuse imposes upon people. I wonder if underlying this process, the Holy Spirit isn't bringing about a realisation that no other instruction ever could. The Church cannot dodge facing up to itself, now.

The Church has cast women aside with the same callous attitude that it has applied to those broken lives of the sexually abused, the fruit of its priestly ministrations. There is no concern for anyone other than ecclesial authority and how it 'presents', to the world at large.

The Magisterium must face up to what it is doing, now. We are not here for the sake of man alone, nor for the saving of his face. We are here to set up the new reign of God, and that reign encompasses all people, compassionately. My sincere condolences to our New Zealand priests.

June MacMillan, Foxton Beach

'Betrayal of trust'?

Why must every sin of paedophilia by a priest be called a betrayal of trust? This label 'a betrayal of trust' rests on a very shaky premise, namely, that every priest in a position of trust is automatically trusted by those who appointed him. And pigs will fly.

Archbishop Pell of Sydney said: "priests and bishops, we're human beings not angels... What's going on in the rest of society is reflected amongst us."

Just as in corporate bodies the world over, countless good people in positions of trust are wounded, hurt and alienated by the non-trust of those above them – likewise in the body corporate of the church, there are priests in positions of trust who are wounded, hurt and alienated by the non-trust of those above them. What else is the Catholic system of canonical visitation of seminaries, religious houses and parishes but a manifestation of suspicion and mistrust from higher up?

If some priests are so wounded by the non-trust of those above them, can we be surprised when they seek compensation in deviant behaviour?

Fr Max Palmer, Kopua

A barrier to AIDS?

While on security/welcoming duty at our local church today, I happened to read an article, in the August 2001 issue of *Tui Motu,* entitled "The Vatican and AIDS prevention" by Jim Neilan, in which a case was made for the use of condoms on the grounds of mercy/compassion.

The Vatican is on safe ground in saying *No* to condoms, as I have it on good authority that the AIDS virus is so small that it can easily pass through the natural porosity of condoms, unlike sperm which in comparison is too large to pass. So much for 'Safe Sex'.

Kevin Boyd, Lower Hutt

Dr Anna Holmes comments: *Intact condoms will not allow the passage of AIDS virus. They will not protect against the virus if there is any sexual contact without condoms.*

AIDS medical advice is that the only way to be certain of avoiding AIDS is to have one faithful sexual partnership. Condoms used carefully will give safer but not totally safe sex.

Katie O'Connor interviews National Party Leader, Bill English, and his wife, Mary, amid the bustle of their busy Wellington lives.

The interview took place in three parts on the same morning

Heir apparent

A family man, a team player, a good listener, notes Katie O'Connor, with a down-to-earth pragmatic style

Mary and Bill together

how they relate and 'shape' one another

Mary: You start with the person you are – but you change and grow within the marriage relationship, and that's a healthy thing. The call is to get out of one's comfort zone and journey to a new place.

Bill: We have certainly changed one another. Mary has had a big influence on me. The time we have together we spend primarily on the children and on each other. We don't talk endlessly about politics. But I think we share a common sense of direction.

Mary: Bill has always been a practical sort of person. When we first got married he was in 'St Vincent de Paul' and we were looking after a Kampuchean refugee family. So he expected me to go and clean the emergency home.. which didn't go down too well at the time!

Bill: Mary is like an anchor and a check for me. Politics can get pretty intense, so it's good to be able to check things out with one's partner. She will give me a judgment I can trust. She knows how I will react in practically any circumstance. Politics is actually a much more positive job than it is often portrayed. Being in Opposition is difficult. On the other hand you get to meet people who do so many wonderful things. The personality 'stuff' is really a very small part of a politician's life.

Mary: You develop a pretty thick skin and you learn not to take criticism personally.

Bill: The hardest part is the competing demands. Mary needs to see that I am balancing those demands and getting my priorities right. The hardest moment is walking out the door thinking 'I wish I wasn't leaving', because you are turning your back on your family.

Since I have become Leader of the Opposition the demands have multiplied. So we have to try again to achieve a healthy balance. Mary is a good judge of when I need support and when I need reminding of other responsibilities.

Mary's interview

General practitioner, mother-of-six, wife of the Leader of the Opposition, Mary English kindly found a lunch-hour moment to speak to *Tui Motu*.

Being a politician's wife does limit me a bit in my medical career, but then I would have been equally constrained by the needs of the family. If I were to work full-time it would mean someone else bringing up my children, and I'm not prepared to entertain that.

My policy is *stretch and grow* like the baby clothes! As my roles have expanded I have had to stretch personally and this has helped me grow as a person, which can be painful but is also wonderful. I am capable now of a lot more than I was ten years ago. We talk about human beings 'reaching their potential'. The way to do this is to stretch and grow into it.

The children

As far as being in the public spotlight is concerned, we have brought the children up to expect stresses. They may read something they don't like in the papers, but they will watch our reaction. If we're relaxed about it, then that is the cue for them to be relaxed too.

▷▷

▷▷ What is important to me is that as a family we have shared time together, that we are a 'team', not simply a bunch of individuals. I am insistent that the children are assembled together for meals and family rituals. We need time together each week when we can have fun. We need to have shared experiences together as family. Music is important to us. The children are into the piano and singing. Sometimes we'll have a family concert, and that can be a 'riot'! It's a shared thing and that's important.

My ambition for them is not just to do well in their own lives but also to give something back to New Zealand. My hope is they will have a happy family life and that they'll value it – plus a strong community sense. I think living for a while in Southland taught me to appreciate that. It's the difference between living in a small community where everybody matters compared with being in the big city. I want the children to be achievers – but also to live in a country with a strong sense of purpose and with good relations between the races.

I grew up in a big family myself, so the 'collective' is a big thing for me. In a big family you have to put yourself out for others, learning to look after each other. The older ones have to take turns looking after the littlies. It is vital also to have a Christian – a Catholic – perspective in our lives. So we go to Mass together and we share in the sacraments of the Church. Confirmation is coming up soon for some of the children.

My own values

I grew up in a very Catholic atmosphere – God was one of the family! From an early age I've tried to have a personal relationship with God, to pray regularly and to be aware of the Church's teaching. The Church's social teachings were impressed on us by the Mercy Sisters who taught us – to look after one's neighbour as Catherine McAuley did.

My relationship with God is not unlike my relationship with Bill – it's an ongoing thing. What seems very simple when you are young is not quite so simple as you get older. Always I have a sense of being a child of God and that my life has a purpose – and that everyone's life has a purpose.

Being the leader's wife

Bill's strengths are his integrity, his ability to think issues through, to see things from the other person's viewpoint. He has a lot of grit and he is very much his own person. I am fully 'there' for him and fully support him. I am completely in sympathy with what he is doing, which isn't always the case in political households. Some spouses can't stand the public spotlight.

Politically, I think us being labelled 'right wing' is a waste of breath! I don't like labels. A policy may be labelled 'right-wing' or contrary to justice teachings; but when you actually examine what it is trying to achieve, it isn't at all. Those labels just kill real, fruitful discussion.

Bill's interview

My values as a politician.

It is not good to be two different people. What I stand for as a person I stand for as a politician. You have to live the life which reflects your values.

I believe in commitment to personal relationships. You have to make a contribution to the common good – that's a powerful instinct for many people in politics. Regardless of party, many politicians are highly motivated to contribute to the community. They disagree about how to achieve it.

I am most concerned about those who miss out in our society.What really triggers me is when people are content with the status quo and it's actually harming people. Those are the things I want to change. For example, children who you can predict will fail because of their circumstances.

The boxing business.

The Yellow Ribbon campaign to prevent youth suicide chose boxing, because it provides role models for young people. The campaign has a wide public appeal and raises a lot of money. I'm *not* in it to promote boxing. I'm there to support the cause. It's a serious physical challenge – it's not the usual political thing just turning up for the photo.

Youth suicide is a terrible thing. It's so hard to understand why it happens. The Yellow Ribbon campaign gets a simple message across to endangered young people – that when they need help it's there. The help is there for them now rather than waiting until they run out of options.

My philosophy and priorities

I come from a large family, and this has given me my basic values: work hard, respect people, don't blow your own trumpet – and that doesn't fit easily with being a politician!

You enter politics knowing you might have to compromise these strongly held principles. The challenge is how you can work with your personal principles but within the collective process in a Party and with the demands of the public. Under MMP, to be effective you must win the support of half the population.

As a Catholic I have definite ideas on 'conscience' issues, and people respect you for having a clear position. On issues of fairness and equity, my conscience gives me a sense of direction. When I became involved in Health six or seven years ago I saw that the public system was not meeting the needs of marginal groups. This led me to spend a lot of time working with groups who are unlikely ever to vote for the National Party, trying to improve their services.

In education, I resent the fact that we continue to tolerate predictable failure. Some children come into the system with many disadvantages. The school is the one stable environment in their life. Yet most will still fail. The system is politically driven and is designed to work for the majority – but not for everybody. Those who have no advocates or can't articulate their needs, tend to get a raw deal.

There is enough money there now, I believe, to pay for all these essential services and also to allow for tax cuts. In New Zealand the health funding needs to go up by four hundred million per year. We will do this *and* reduce taxes.

Making changes

For my children I want a society where everyone can realise their potential: people need enough income, but they also need to feel they belong in the community. Thirty percent of New Zealanders live alone. Many are elderly, but it is not a good thing to live cut off from the larger community.

In politics it is possible to effect change. I have already had a good range of experience from broad economic policy decisions to the detail of social issues. I am ambitious to see things change. I get a lot of energy out of seeing the needs and then seeing the achievements.

A 'right-wing' Catholic?

I disagree with the claim that the policies of the last 15 years have created a larger impoverished group. As a Catholic – in any party – you should act with an informed conscience. The challenge is how to relate those principles to the practical collective political process.

Benefit levels, for instance, were cut back. I found that very difficult. But the Labour Party have in fact left benefits where they were. A Catholic in the Labour Party should be as concerned at this – but they've done nothing about it.

I disagree that National Government policies have created poverty at the bottom of the social scale and also disagree with some Catholic commentaries on this. I think the problem in New Zealand is not too many rich people but too many people who are poor in the sense of their becoming dependent. Their incomes are so low they cannot realise their potential and they have no hope. That's bad.

It is crucial we take every step to improve that situation. So, overall economic prospects have to be improved. Improvement in the economy in the '90s caused a big drop in unemployment. The economy has to give people prospects for a better life. For a beneficiary, the best prospect they can have is that there's a job coming for them.

Secondly, their income level needs to be adequate. I'm concerned because the interests of older people have dominated the scene while the needs of children have been left behind. Over a quarter of our children are born into families on a benefit, so they are hugely disadvantaged.

We need always to take the long view. What is our capacity to provide adequate health and education services, not just today, but in five years' time? This country has declined in wealth relative to other countries like Australia.

So our capacity must grow to be able to provide these services and opportunities for jobs. You don't help the very poor by locking them into a society with no prospects. What they need is hope to be able to improve themselves. I don't believe that's opposed to Catholic social teaching.

In parts of the country where the economy is going well it lifts everybody's sense of wellbeing. In Southland for instance the rich have got richer, but everyone senses that the prospects are better. This builds a more cohesive community. A government must spend money on developing potential rather than only on immediate needs.

My family

The difficulties of bringing up a family are not unique to politicians. Since I'm not employed by anyone I actually do have some control over the way I use my time. People expect a lot. But I can decide when it's time to go home.

Bill and Mary English relaxing at the Pasifika Festival

Mary and I have adapted to living with a political career. It's not really very different from a situation where, say, Dad is trying to run a small business and Mum is away teaching. The demands on them are as great as on us.

As leader

My style of leadership is my own unique style. I lead in a different way from the traditional New Zealand 'strong man' leader. I delegate a lot. I lead a team – I don't believe in running an outfit all by myself. I strive to get the best out of people, and I tend to think the best of people I work with. I like to think issues through rather than jump to conclusions. Issues may be very complex, but in communi-cating them to the public you need to keep it simple.

As a Catholic I think I am active and thoughtful. It's a wonderfully rich tradition to be part of and to feel proud of. My faith is an important part of my life. I have had my potholes and pitfalls. Belief is like a 'greasy pig' – it comes and goes, and it's hard to catch sometimes! ■

The Merepeka phenomenon

Immaculately dressed in a stunning yellow jacket and black skirt, Merepeka Raukawa-Tait exudes a personal strength and charisma, which (thinks Katie O'Connor*) she will surely need if she's going to help the Christian Heritage Party gain its first seat in parliament*

Mrs Merepeka Raukawa-Tait, deputy leader of the Christian Heritage Party

Why the Christian Heritage Party (CHP)?

They make no bones about what they stand for – Christian values. I was brought up a Christian, and my journey led me to different places, but right now it's led me back to where I started from. I made up my mind if I was going to enter politics it was going to be *Christian Heritage* or nothing. There is a perception that the CHP is very narrow, yet they have accepted me to stand and invited me to be deputy leader. Yet I'm a feminist: my first feminist role models were the Catholic nuns who taught me – both in their behaviour and in their independent thinking.

This criticism about whether Christians smack their children... I don't see abhorrence of violence in the home to be incompatible with exercising good discipline. Most Christians I know bring up their children with love and kindness. Discipline must be exercised with love. Most of the violence and abuse going on in this country is not in Christian homes.

I feel there are much larger themes – cultural issues, race relations, the Treaty of Waitangi, violence in society. These are hugely important, and that's where my energy is directed.

As regards my choice of party, when I looked at some of the others I was unclear what they stood for. With the CHP there is no such confusion. My goal is that when the election comes we might secure eight or ten seats – rather an audacious goal!

The *Christian Heritage* Party has an image problem. People see us as being narrow and bigoted, and therefore unable to understand the realities of family living today. But I contend that our policies *are* relevant to life as it is lived today. We are broadening our base to welcome all people. I see my role is to bring that perception to the people. We seek to put the family back into 'centre stage'. My work with Women's Refuge has taught me that the funda-mental problems with New Zealand society all come back to the family.

What I think this country needs

We need good leadership. I was disappointed to meet so many people who seemed to want to get into politics for the sake of power and not because they wanted to change things. Good leaders need to speak out clearly, set the tone for the country, articulate a vision for New Zealanders. John Kennedy said to his fellow Americans: "Ask not what your country will do for you – ask what you can do for your country."

I have been critical of ***leadership*** in New Zealand, not just Maori leadership but across the board. Why have we problems of poor health, poor education, poor housing, domestic violence? It is through poor leadership. We have had enough of poor leadership, and I see that as a personal challenge.

We need ***good communication***. We need to identify good communicators and enable them to be heard. We hear a lot about the so-called 'knowledge wave', but most people have no idea what it means. Because it isn't being communicated to them.

And we need ***pride in ourselves***. I'm passionate about being a bicultural New Zealander. Whether our forefathers and foremothers arrived on a waka or on a plane, they wanted New Zealand to be a wonderful place to raise children.

We should be handing on to our children a country with an excellent economy, a health system second to none, a good educational system. I think our country is destined for greatness, and I want to help shape that and I don't intend to wait. What is dragging New Zealand down more than anything else is lost opportunity and lost potential.

Working with 'Women's refuge'

I was with Women's Refuge for three years and it was a life-changing experience. It was terrible to hear battered women and children condemned as 'second-class' citizens. Or the people who worked for them. I don't believe in second-class citizens!

Each year in the refuges we see about 10,000 children and 7,000 women. Those figures are appalling. Violence and violent crime are getting commoner. Violent offenders are getting younger. A lot of this stems from their homes. This work has made me acutely aware of family needs; it has motivated me to stand for parliament.

Just look at the increase in binge drinking by young people. It has huge impact on the youth suicide rate, teenage pregnancies, on education and mental health, and on domestic violence. The cost, social and economic, of these problems is such that we simply have to do better. These issues are so urgent and that's why I think Christian Heritage will do well at the election. What's the alternative? More of the same?

My life journey to date

I was brought up in the Catholic Church and I went to a Catholic school. "Once a convent girl, always a convent girl" – I believe that! The Sisters were quite strict and we were glad at the time to escape. But looking back, I appreciate the emphasis put on good standards of behaviour. My mother was a stickler for that too.

Ours wasn't always a happy home because my mother and father didn't have much in common. My father was a drinker and could be violent; my mother always had to work. My sisters and I are the people we are today because of the influence of our mother, who is a very strong person – and because of the influence of the Catholic nuns.

I left New Zealand when I was 21 to live in Switzerland. I enjoyed working overseas, learning to speak German and appreciating the different cultures. In Europe no-one judges a language and a culture as having no commercial value – but that is how Maori is often judged here. It's sad and it tells you something about the people who hold such a view.

We were brought up very pakeha, but I do not feel I ever lost my Maori culture. My mother insisted we were well prepared for the society we were to live in and that meant speaking English properly. She wanted us to be well educated. She took the attitude that the Maori part of our ancestry was there to pick up again when we needed it. We never questioned that. And all of us have returned and embraced our Maori heri-tage. But I do not view all things Maori with rose-tinted glasses!

Maori people have made a great contribution to the history of New Zealand. I appreciate the wonderful customs and values. I relearned these things when I saw them to be important and how they underpin one's behaviour. Maori women today have great opportunities for leadership especially in our families as well as our communities and the country as a whole.

the fundamental problems with our society all come back to the family

A powerful influence over the last 15 years has been my husband Theo. He's wise and kind, and guides me in the gaps in my own abilities. These 15 years have been a drastic 'make-over'! I often say to him I wish I'd met him 30 years ago!

Theo has brought out in me an understanding and appreciation of how people are. He says to me: "always leave people with their dignity, even if you don't agree with them". A couple of years ago I did an interview with Tariana Turia. Afterwards I thought I'd done really well. But Theo gave me a real dressing-down because he thought I had demeaned her. He said I was the loser!

I know now that if I enter parliament I will strive never to be abusive to people. I will try to address issues and not personalities. Parliament has a reputation of being one of the most abusive workplaces in this country, so I'm going to have to perform! In recent years I have had to learn how to control myself and manage anger. People respect you if you listen to them, concentrate on issues and don't try to undermine them. That's what I see wrong with parliament at this time. If people cannot show each other respect at that level, how on earth can we expect it to filter down?

My beliefs

I have always been a Christian, although I've gone down a few dead end roads on my journey. Some of those experi-ences were painful. I've often looked in vain for an uplifting message in church, but come out as empty as when I went in. I wonder how many people are deprived as I have been, not hearing a message to see me through the week.

Theo is a very spiritual man. He prays in a very conversational way to God, mostly in Maori. Perhaps he is growing more spiritual as he gets older – or maybe I am better attuned now. Sometimes we go to church together.

For a time in my life it was easier to be naughty and not think about God because God got in the way. I didn't want to be answerable for my actions. I never felt abandoned by God. But there has been a price: I have been through two marriages and never been blessed with children. It makes me reflect on what might have been.

Recently I read a message: "you and the church can choose to live standing on the sidelines or you can become actively engaged". I thought, that's me! And I want the church to be actively engaged too.

I know from talkback shows that high expectations are being placed on me. But it has to be a shared endeavour. The country cannot depend purely on 120 people sitting in the Beehive in Wellington. I am impressed by the commitment of the Heritage leader, Graham Capel, and his team. I look forward to working with this group. ■

El Salvador – 20 years after Romero

Two decades have passed since civil war in Central America took the life of one of its holiest bishops. A worker with Christian World Service reports on the situation today

Elizabeth Mackie

Twenty-two years after Romero's death: how did you find it?

The country is still recovering from last year's devastating earthquake. There were whole areas where there were gouges in the road, hillsides fallen away, roadworks everywhere. Wherever we went we had to negotiate them. We went to places where houses were in partial state of rebuilding and some people were still living under tarpaulins. So the country is still dealing with the after-math of a terrible natural disaster.

It's five years since you last visited. So what's the difference in five years?

The thing that hits you is the explosion of chain stores from the United States and the multinational chains – everywhere you see Wendys, Burger King, Mobil stations and Star Marts. San Salvador is just littered with them, much more so than Managua, over the border in Nicaragua. In a way it indicates a level of prosperity – for some – because the prices in those stores are more expensive than the local food outlets, and they are well patronised right through the city. So there is a pervasive North American influence.

The other thing people told us is that a dominant source of the nation's cash is remittances from Salvadorians living in the US and elsewhere. Some left during the '70s and '80s when the oppression was at its height; others have gone since, looking for work because unemploy-ment is so high in El Salvador. The level is 60 to 70 percent if you include underemployment. A lot of people leave the country for that reason, so a lot of families are divided. Many Salvadorians work illegally in the US. That becomes a problem in US-El Salvador relations because, if it so chooses, the US Administration could send a lot of those people back. They have to remain friendly neighbours with the US otherwise their economy would collapse.

There's still a lot of poverty – rural poverty, urban poverty, slum poverty. It is the most highly populated country in Central America. It's such a tiny country and the population per square kilometre is very dense. It is only the size of Otago and Southland combined but containing eight million people, perhaps more.

Yet it's very beautiful – volcanic, mountainous, spread out along the Pacific Coast. When flying in, it's like flying over a miniature Canterbury Plains – a patchwork of little fields, beautiful volcanoes that Canterbury doesn't have, normally very green although some parts weren't so, because they'd had a very dry season.

You went to visit a Women's Group. Tell us about them.

The group is called ***Las Dignas*** – 'Women for Dignity and Life'. It was formed by women who were part of the Armed Resistance during the period of oppression. Not that they necessarily fought, but they were associated with the combatant guerilla forces and lived in the mountains. They acted as cooks, nurses, companions, messengers and became isolated from their families in the process.

At the end of the war in 1990 there was an expectation when peace was finally established that they would return to their homes and do the cooking and washing as in the past. Many of the women no longer knew what their place was in that society. El Salvadorian society was very male, very traditional, very aggressive – and still is. The Church adds another layer to that of sexual custom. These women didn't know their place within that sexual moral code any more, and with the Church itself being very authoritarian, they were rather lost. ***Las Dignas*** decided they would provide a place for women in the country as a whole, but particularly in the areas where women had been part of the fighting.

The women in Las Dignas would now be mostly in their 40s and 50s?

It's an ongoing movement. They support women's participation in every facet of life, particularly political. They work hard to get women elected on local councils, to be local mayors. It's at that level they think women can best participate – in their local environment.

Where women are not elected to council or made mayor, *Las Dignas* works with them to get the issues they want raised onto the agenda. So they work with women politically. They also work to have women accepted into non-traditional occupations – engineering, motor mechanics, carpentry, building. They have great difficulty there but they're working at it.

Many of the women were traumatised by the war. So groups were set up of women affected in various ways by the fighting. Many had lost their children. Others had taken their children out of the country for safety, and then lost touch. Some had never re-established those family links. Many had lost husbands, fathers and brothers, and many saw themselves as less than worthy

because they hadn't remained with their families.

Many were subjected to violence in one form or another at different levels. Some had been raped or suffered physical violence. The idea was to form self-help groups to enable women to deal with these issues themselves. Training was given, and then the groups were left to look after themselves.

We met a group of women who had come together following the earthquake. They had been traumatised by it, especially those from non-earthquake zones. Previously they didn't know what an earthquake was. They saw it as a 'snake in the ground', a punishment on the community for evil deeds or God's punishment on them, and they were just waiting to die. The Group worked with them to give them better information and deal with their fears and the fears of their children.

We went to a meeting where some of these women were graduating from this programme they had done together. They also learned other ways women experience violence – not only the violence of the earth but the violence in the community. They were taught how women can withstand violence in society, in their homes, in attitudes, in authoritarian principles that affect women's lives particularly, also in the Church. It's a strong programme.

What is Christian World Service's role in this?

We supply funding for the work, keep in touch with them and make comments on their programmes as they develop them, share information, provide personal support and understanding. We monitor the way they use the aid money because we have to be responsible. In all the groups we work with our relationship is better if it's personalised, so we like to have someone who knows the people on the receiving end and who also knows us, what we are about, what our philosophy and theology is. They come to know what our expectations are, and we come to know one another as people. When things go wrong – and they always go wrong! – you have a basis of trust to remedy the situation. Our programme is as much about building relationships as about development.

This is where Maria Elena comes in. She is a philosophy teacher at the Catholic University. She acted as translator for us when met with groups in the villages and groups of the staff. We travelled with her for a week.

I asked her if we could go to the Catholic University to see the Romero Centre, and the memorial garden and small museum that remembers the five Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter who were killed there. She asked why I was interested. I said that this is one place where some of the history of the country comes together for me.

She told me she had been a student at the Catholic University just prior to Romero's appointment as bishop. At the time she didn't think he was a very good appointment because he did not appear the right man for the country. At first he was not seen as somebody who would take up the cause of the poor and be a leader who would take up their struggle against a very oppressive regime.

Nevertheless, she and a lot of the students decided to throw in their lot with him – to support him and offer themselves to assist him in his work. She became a lay member on the Pastoral Council, and every weekend she went with other members of the Council to different parts of the country to talk to the people in churches, communities and villages about what Romero was teaching and his messages of hope for the people.

Each week the group met in San Salvador to discuss how they would plan the coming weekend. Romero often attended. Whenever they had problems they called for him and he always came. They worked really closely with him.

Maria Elena's mother was working for *Caritas* at the time, voluntarily, and her father was acting as financial administrator for the diocese, also voluntarily. Her brother was running an underground radio and newspapers for the Church. He was the most at risk, and at one stage had to leave the country because it was too dangerous. Many of her University friends eventually joined the armed struggle and more than half of them died.

She stayed on in San Salvador, eventually married and her husband joined in her work. Sometimes they had to flee to different parts of the city, then come back and find their house ransacked. They hid people from the armed ▷▷

"Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies..". The tomb of Archbishop Oscar Romero in the Cathedral crypt in San Salvador

movement when they came into the city, also peasants who came in on marches of protest against the government. Many marchers were bombed or gunned down. After Romero died it became very dangerous; Maria Elena had one child and she was expecting another. So they went to Nicaragua for five years.

At that time Nicaragua was magnificent. The Sandanista revolution had just succeeded, land was being distributed to landless peasants who were making hopeful new starts, literacy programmes were going on all over the country, women were emerging from positions of subjugation and finding new ways of being women together and contributing to society. It was such an exciting time to be alive. "I needed it," said Maria Elena, "after the life I had lived."

What else did Maria Elena have to say about Romero?

The death of Romero was, she said, the blackest day of her life. The people knew that what he was doing would lead to his death, but when it happened it was devastating. He had been able to lead the whole Church.

From the moment he became bishop he spent every day with the poor. Every single day he spent hours with them. And they loved him. She described the day of the funeral. From the night before people started to assemble from all over the country – they came in groups, from the villages, as a community, from a parish with banners and with pictures, and they stayed together in groups as they started to surround the cathedral in the square. All night there were testimonies – what they wanted to say about him and to him. There were prayers, hymns. "It was a beautiful, beautiful night, the vigil before the funeral".

The intention was to have the Mass outside and to bury Romero in the cemetery. But the military stationed themselves up on high buildings. Then they shot people and let off explosions, and there was a stampede. It was a huge crowd with nowhere to go. Some were crushed and shot. So the dignitaries withdrew into the cathedral and ultimately the Archbishop was buried there. They put bricks around and built a temporary grave and buried him, and that's where his body still is.

I asked her where was the Church now. She said it is so different. When there is peace you don't have the same clarity – not the same focus in black and white. There are still strong base Christian communities all through the country, and still people who have a strong focus on the needs and rights of the poor within the Church. Leadership is not strong in the way it was in Romero's day. But the people in the church are still strong.

Maria Elena had been taught by some

Romero's death was the blackest day of my life

of the Jesuits who were later killed. One was a close friend of her family and officiated at her marriage and baptised her first child. She talked about each one as we looked at photographs: "this was the rector, this one taught philosophy, this man was so gentle, this one had such a sense of humour". There was something so real and connected in the way she spoke of each person.

She is hopeful about the Church in El Salvador, and says it will go on and the faith is still here. But things are not as clear as they were in those days.

Is El Salvador as violent now as it was?

No, it's not. It is still violent. When you go into a bank, you're met by a guard with one of those automatic weapons. Every bank and many other buildings would have automatic weapons, so there are a lot of them in the country. Many of the young people taken to the US as children during the war became ghettoised in the American cities. They formed gangs and have come back and run gangs through San Salvador. So parts of the city are very dangerous.

Out in the countryside it is different. There is an aggression and violence that is not very far below the surface, and the women talk a lot about violence. There's a strong movement of women opposing violence against women and, indeed, all forms of violence in society.

Everybody we met was indignant that President Bush was due to arrive on 24 March, the very anniversary day of Romero's death. They saw it as a threat. They saw his visit as being a push to further integration of their markets. It was all about trade. His visit to Peru had been about trade, and there had been opposition there. He came from Lima to San Salvador and people were resisting and objecting and protesting about US involvement in Central America. US pressure for trade agreements benefits the US but not El Salvador. It causes thousands of women to work in 'maquilas', the Central American version of the free trade zones.

There are compounds where women work in exploitative conditions – long hours, poor pay, bad conditions, working to produce goods that are simply sold elsewhere for multinational chains but don't actually belong in the country. The raw materials are brought in from outside, the labour is provided cheaply and the goods taken out and sold. That's the model of economic development being promoted in Central America and it's very oppressive. Oppression now is economic.

One interesting thing I saw was a letter pinned to a notice board. It was a copy of a letter written by Romero to President Carter only weeks before Romero was killed, protesting against US involvement in San Salvador in support of the oppressive militarised regime; particularly against the provision of armaments. Justice groups were passing this letter about again because they saw Bush's arrival 22 years later as being part of the same pattern – not so much with armaments now, but with economic and trade agreements that were going to be just as oppressive and just as violent.

The trouble with the new economic colonialism is there is no accountability. The people reaping the economic benefits are not bound by any national laws. They transcend national

boundaries. People become a workforce for magnates whose profits don't benefit the country where the work is done.

What about the countryside?

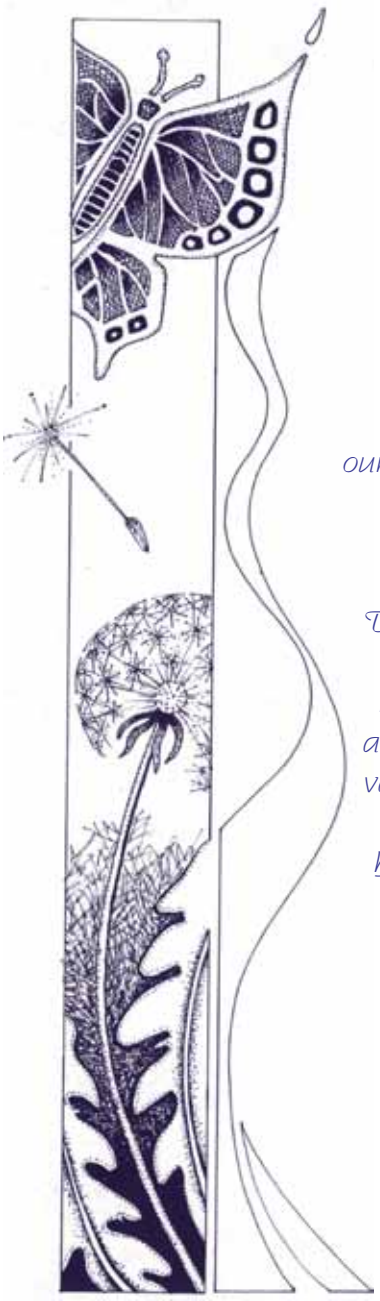
Life is difficult there too. In areas where coffee is grown the price has fallen worldwide, and people were leaving coffee on the trees to rot. They couldn't afford to pay to get it picked because they couldn't recoup their expenses. So they only picked what they needed themselves.

Much of Central America most damaged by hurricane Mitch has been cleared again for banana plantations – growing bananas cheaply for an export market. The local peasant economy is a subsistence economy where people are growing their own rice, beans, vegetables but struggling for any additional income.

So there's a lot of movement from country to city with people looking for work, for survival. People can no longer survive on their small plots of land. In many of the poverty statistics Nicaragua's standard of living has fallen even below Haiti in some of the indicators of poverty in that region. I find that extraordinary because Haiti is so *abominably* poor. There is shocking poverty – dense misery. It's very tiny, very crowded and very poor.

I asked which country in Central America is doing best economically. In the past Costa Rica had been the country that had done best. Now it was probably El Salvador – both in terms of the wealth that's being created and the money coming in from outside. All the investment in Wendys, McDonalds, Pizza Hut etc is an indicator that somebody is buying somewhere.

But there is a widening gap – the wealth of a small proportion of the country is increasing, making the poorer sectors of the community even poorer. When an economy is doing well, it doesn't mean the people are doing well. The 'trickle down' just does not trickle! ■



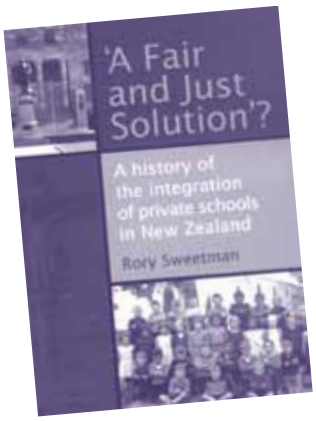
Pentecost

You didn't come in a great wind
or in swirling tongues of fire,
but with a touch as gentle
as the wing of a butterfly.
Yet instantly we knew you,
our recognition much older than words,
and we opened like flowers
to the sweetness of the moment.

Then it was over. The sun continued
its path across iron roofs,
birds flew in and out of the fig tree
and the neighbour's dog, nose down
vacuumed smells from the footpath.

But no, not over, for this remained,
this light that stitches all things
into a shimmering oneness,
so that we lost ourselves
in sun, houses, tree, birds, dog,
and we knew as we stood there
on holy ground, that nothing
would be the same again.

Joy Cowley



'A Fair and Just Solution'?

A History of the Integration of Private Schools in New Zealand

On 21 May, in the Great Hall of Parliament, the Rt Hon Jonathan Hunt MP launched the first comprehensive history written about Integration.

Its author, historian Dr Rory Sweetman, here surveys this landmark event in New Zealand education

This is the story of how New Zealand politicians and educationalists searched for and found a local solution to a problem that bedevilled much of the English-speaking world. The 1877 Education Act in New Zealand created a national system of primary education that was free, secular and compulsory; it also denied state assistance to those schools, mostly religious, which remained outside this network. By allowing private schools to enter the state system and ending a century of secularism in New Zealand education, the ***Private Schools Conditional Integration Act*** (1975) reshaped the country's educational landscape and ushered in what one historian has termed "a quiet revolution".

The *State Aid Conference* (1973-74), convened by Norman Kirk's Labour government, began a process which would radically alter New Zealand's educational system. Amidst copious expressions of goodwill - 'the spirit of integration' - a detailed plan was drawn up by representatives of the Catholic educational system and the state school controlling authorities and teacher unions. This agreement, as set out in the so-called Blue Book, was considered at the reconvened State Aid Conference in December 1974, and subsequently endorsed in principle by the major organisations involved. The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act was was passed into law during the very last session of Parliament in October 1975 before Labour was swept from office by a resurgent National Party.

The Act made provision for the conditional and voluntary integration of private schools into the state system on a basis which would preserve and safeguard the so-called 'special character' of the education they provided. By the addition of section 78A to the Education Act it permitted religious instruction as part of the state schools' curriculum should a majority of parents so desire.

Integration proved to be very popular. By April 1983, 249 Catholic and nine non-Catholic private schools had negotiated agreements with the Minister of Education and taken their place under the state educational umbrella. An Integration Conference, convened by the Fourth Labour Government in late 1984 to review how the Act was working, came up with no significant changes.

In other respects the Act was also deeply unpopular. The Act became widely known and argued about only from 1979 when the Catholic schools for which it was largely designed began to sign their integration agreements. Argument raged over what had been agreed, what various provisions of the Act meant, and what was involved in ensuring the preservation of 'special character'. What was justifiable protection as opposed to unnecessary privilege? The 'spirit of integration' was forgotten in a bitter dispute over an Act that had initially been hailed as marking an end to old divisions.

The sad truth is that, despite its significance as a landmark in New Zealand's educational history, very little attention has been paid to the Act. Not a single submission was received from any university education department by the State Aid Conference or during the various stages of the Act's passage and implementation.

both sides discovered a shared concern for the welfare of pupils in all schools

The press coverage was equally muted and disappointing. What academic and journalistic interest there has been has focused on aspects of integration most worrying to the Committee for the Defence of Secular Education (CDSE), the body most critical of aspects of the Act.

My book, *'A Fair and Just Solution'?,* tells how the Blue Book emerged from the State Aid Conference. Through complex and lengthy dialogue, the negotiators on the integration working party found the words to bridge a century of conflict. While both sides strongly advocated their respective group interests, they also discovered a

shared concern for the welfare of the pupils at all New Zealand schools.

Far from being "routed" by their private school opposites as the CDSE alleged, the state school representatives deliberately conceded ground on integration, while stubbornly blocking any agreement over the terms under which Labour's promised state aid increase could be delivered. The teacher unions also kept up their demand that state aid be discontinued for those private schools refusing to accept integration.

Both sides continued to fight for their ideal Act during the drafting of the Bill and its progress through the Select Committee and the House. While rejoicing at the divisions within the private schools camp over the Bill, the teacher unions pushed hard for its introduction and passage before the 1975 general election. The late changes to the measure won by the Catholic lobbyists were accepted as the price to be paid. As the PPTA negotiator Gunter Warner commented dryly, "Half a loaf is better than no bread at all."

The Catholic leaders agreed to endorse the Act only if it contained sufficient safeguards to preserve the 'special character' of their schools. They also rejected a vigorous lobby within their own ranks to return to the old politics of state aid after National returned to office. The fact that 1975 was election year did not encourage its speedy introduction, while the gusto with which National administered the Act once in power revealed the essentially bipartisan nature of this issue beneath the rhetoric.

Implementation became something of a bureaucratic nightmare which involved long delays, and took place in a rapidly deteriorating economic climate. In November 1980, a Department of Education backgrounder stated that "those most intimately involved with the passage of the Integration Act... could not have appreciated the breadth, complexity and magnitude of the task ahead. The integration process has been more involved and time-consuming than any of the parties would have foreseen or wished."

The price of confidential negotiations, rushed consultations and hasty passage was now being paid. Rank and file teachers had little chance to become acquainted with the Act, and many members were shocked at some of the provisions contained in the integration agreements. The CDSE both mirrored this rising unease and played a large part in encouraging it.

the Act attempts to reverse a century of discrimination against religious schools

The National Government's Minister of Education ML (Merv) Wellington's outspoken support for integration did not endear him to sections of the state school community. Yet, the key organisations shared his desire to have integration implemented as soon as possible, if only so that its imperfections could be ironed out in a formal review.

The Integration Conference of 1984-86 saw the education of a new generation of administrators and a clearing away of misunderstandings. Acceptance by the integrated school proprietors of a commitment to upgrade their schools to state standards had precipitated a financial crisis in the Catholic school system. The Fourth Labour Government came to the rescue with the offer of suspensory loans in1986. Minister of Education Russell Marshall summed up Labour's view, describing integrated schools as "an essential and significant part of the state education system."

The defenders of secularism saw the Act as introducing religious discrimination into New Zealand's education system, while private school interests claimed to have been victimised ever since 1877. As one Catholic teacher put it, "the Act is an attempt to reverse the financial discrimination against religious schools begun over a century ago." This sharp division on the merits of secular and religious education helps to explain why politicians kept the issue at arm's length for so long.

In fact, neither side completely won or lost. The result was a compromise based on a mutual awareness that a worse fate lay in store should there be no agreed solution. Although the Act was framed to be used by any private school and contained no mention of bishop, priest or parish, integration was driven throughout by the looming crisis in the Catholic school system. Recognising this, the state teacher unions pushed the concept as a way of avoiding an otherwise inevitable rise in state aid which would bring closer the nightmare of an Australian-like dual system.

The Act's rapid embrace by the Catholic bishops and heads of Religious Orders showed both the urgent financial need of their schools and a genuine desire to forge a new partnership with the state education system. The leaders of both sides saw the inadequacy of old answers to meet the new challenge posed by post-war conditions. They came up with what Gunter Warner described with justifiable pride as "not merely a quantitative change but a qualitative change."

The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act has proven its durability by repulsing several threats to its separate existence. It has also survived major reforms in education instituted by the Fourth Labour Government. Twenty-six years on, the integrated schools still exist and still jealously guard their special character. ***'A Fair and Just Solution'?*** attempts to explain how the Act which enabled them to survive came into being. ■

This introduction, adapted by the author for Tui Motu, *is printed by kind permission of the Board of Proprietors of Integrated Schools.*
A full review of Dr Sweetman's book will appear in our next issue.

Awake, Awa

Three Steps In the Process

An act of gratitude is a living whole. To superimpose on its organic flow a mental grid like a series of 'steps' will always be somewhat arbitrary. And yet it can be helpful. In any process, we can distinguish a beginning, a middle, and an end. We may use this basic three-step grid for the practice of gratitude.

What happens at the start, in the middle, and at the end, when we experience gratitude? What fails to happen when we are not grateful?

To be awake, aware, and alert are the beginning, middle, and end of gratitude. This gives us the clue to what the three basic steps of practicing gratitude must be.

Step One: Wake Up

To begin with, we never start to be grateful unless we wake up. Wake up to what? To surprise. As long as nothing surprises us, we walk through life in a daze. We need to practice waking up to surprise.

I suggest using this simple question as a kind of alarm clock: "Isn't this surprising?" "Yes, indeed!" will be the correct answer, no matter when and where and under what circumstances you ask this question. After all, isn't it surprising that there is anything at all, rather than nothing? Ask yourself at least twice a day, "Isn't this surprising?" and you will soon be more awake to the surprising world in which we live.

Surprise may provide a jolt, enough to wake us up and to stop taking everything for granted. But we may not at all like that surprise. "How can I be grateful for something like this?", we may howl in the midst of a sudden calamity. And why? Because we are not aware of the real gift in this given situation – opportunity.

Step Two: Be Aware of Opportunities

There is a simple question that helps me practice the second step of gratitude: *What's my opportunity here?* You will find that most of the time, the opportunity that a given moment offers you is an opportunity to enjoy – to enjoy sounds, smells, tastes, texture, colours, and, with still deeper joy, friendliness, kindness, patience, faithfulness, honesty, and all those gifts that soften the soil of our heart like warm spring rain. The more we practice awareness of the countless opportunities to simply enjoy, the easier it becomes to recognise difficult or painful experiences as opportunities, as gifts.

But while awareness of opportunities inherent in life events and circumstances is the core of gratefulness, awareness alone is not enough. What good is it to be aware of an opportunity, unless we avail ourselves of it? How grateful we are shows itself by the alertness with which we respond to the opportunity.

Step Three: Respond Alertly

Once we are in practice for being awake to surprise and being aware of the opportunity at hand, we will spontaneously be alert in our response, especially when we are offered an opportunity to enjoy something. When a sudden rain shower is no longer just an inconvenience but a surprise gift, you will spontaneously rise to the opportunity for enjoyment. You will enjoy it as much as you did in your kindergarten days, even if you are no longer trying to catch raindrops in your wide-open mouth. Only when the opportunity demands more from

re, and Alert

of Living a Life of Gratefulness

Bro David Steindl-Rast OSB

you than spontaneous enjoyment will you have to give yourself a bit of an extra push as part of Step Three.

The Review Process

It helps me to review my own practice of gratefulness by applying to these three basic steps the rule I learned as a boy for crossing an intersection: "Stop, look, go." Before going to bed, I glance back over the day and ask myself: *Did I stop and allow myself to be surprised*?

Or.. *did I trudge on in a daze? Was I too busy to wake up to surprise?*

And once I stopped, did I look for the opportunity of that moment? Or did I allow the circumstances to distract me from the gift within the gift? (This tends to happen when the gift's wrappings are not attractive.) And finally, was I alert enough to go after it, to avail myself fully of the opportunity offered to me?

There are times, I must admit, when stopping at night to review my day seems to be the first stop on an express train. Then I look back and realise with regret how much I missed. Not only was I less grateful on those non-stop days, I was less alive, somehow numb.

Other days may be just as busy, but I do remember to stop; on those days, I even accomplish more because stopping breaks up the routine. But unless I also look, the stopping alone will not make my day a truly happy one; what difference does it make that I am not on an express train but on a slow train if I'm not aware of the scenery outside the windows?

On some days, I even find in my nightly review that I stopped and I looked, but not with alertness. Just yesterday, I found a huge moth on the sidewalk. I did stop long enough to put it in a safe spot on the lawn, just a foot away, but I didn't crouch down to spend time with this marvellous creature. Only faintly did I remember, at night, those iridescent eyes on the greyish brown wings. My day was diminished by this failure to stay long enough with this surprise gift to deeply look at it and to savour its beauty gratefully.

My simple recipe for a joyful day is this: *Stop and wake up; look and be aware of what you see; then go on with all the alertness you can muster for the opportunity the moment offers.* Looking back in the evening, on a day on which I made these three steps over and over, is like looking at an apple orchard heavy with fruit.

This recipe for grateful living sounds simple – because it is. But simple does not mean easy. Some of the simplest things are difficult because we have lost our child-like simplicity and have not yet found our mature one. Growth in gratitude is growth in maturity.

Growth, of course, is an organic process. And so we come back to what I said at the beginning. To superimpose on the organic flow of gratitude a mental grid like a series of 'steps' will remain arbitrary. When I am grateful, I am neither rushing nor slouching through my day – I'm dancing. What is true in dance class is true here too: Only when you forget to think of your steps, do you truly dance. ■

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Other essays by Br David Steindl-Rast are available on his website:
http://www.gratefulness.org

The art of preaching

'Pray with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other'. A Scripture scholar describes how he does this when preparing his homily – and more

Damien Wynn-Williams

As a preacher who by and large does not like listening to sermons, I have a sneaking fear that many in the congregation may be in agreement with the Victorian novelist, Anthony Trollope, who opined in Barchester Towers that, "There is perhaps no greater hardship at present inflicted on mankind in civilized and free countries than the necessity of listening to sermons. No one but a preaching clergyman has, in these realms, the power of compelling an audience to sit silent, and be tormented. No one but a preaching clergyman can revel in plati-tudes, truisms, and untruisms, and yet receive, as his undisputed privilege, the same respectful demeanour as though words of impassioned eloquence, or persuasive logic, fell from his lips."

Yet in the General Introduction of the Roman Missal the homily is described as "an integral part of the liturgy". It is a constituent part of the liturgy of the word, not just an extra. It is this liturgical context which distinguishes preaching from other forms of public address such as the academic lecture or the political speech. While the homily may well convey intellectual information, its ultimate purpose is to move the hearts of the hearers to recognise and respond to the presence of God in their lives.

Normally the Scripture readings that precede the homily will constitute the starting point for the preacher's reflections. Often when I sit down to actually write my homily, I feel that I am nearing the end of a process that has taken all week or even much longer, as I ask myself how might these texts from the ancient past be relevant today. How can this particular community in these particular circumstances hear them as the living and active word of God, a word "able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (*Heb 4:12*)?

Of course there will be times when one wants to speak on a subject that is not

obviously related to the readings and then the Lectionary can appear restrictive. But as a general rule I think some sort of engagement with the text is demanded. If the preacher avoids this, the recitation of the Scripture readings runs the risk of being reduced virtually to a magical ritual, carried out because it is prescribed but with little significance.

So it is that when I prepare a homily I always start with the readings set down for the day. I try to reflect on them prayerfully in the context of some contemporary issue or occasion. What is going on in the community? What has been 'in the news'? The great 20th century theologian Karl Barth once said that one should pray with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. The challenge for the preacher is to facilitate such prayer by providing an interface between these two 'texts'.

As I reflect on the readings I find it helpful to write down in no more than a sentence or two what each of the readings is saying (is it an affirmation of faith, a challenge, a rebuke...?). I note whether there are any verbal or thematic links between them. In the Lectionary the Old Testament reading is usually chosen to complement the Gospel reading, and thus it often provides a valuable and sometimes surprising interpretative 'angle' on the Gospel.

While I regularly consult biblical commentaries, I use them mainly as a 'control' to ensure that I am not off the track in my interpretation. A risk to be avoided is to make the homily too abstract or 'learned'. While this may fascinate an academic audience, and while it may be theologically profound, if the homily does not prompt the people in the pews to think of their own lives in the light of the Gospel, it has failed.

This is no excuse, however, to resort to a simplistic and outdated fundamentalism which would ignore the developments in the Church's approach to biblical studies in the past one hundred years. For instance, the Gospels are not simply straightforward eyewitness biographies of Jesus, but are rather differing expressions of the developing post-Resurrection faith of the early church. One of the benefits of the Lectionary is that the cycle of readings invites us to pay more attention to the distinctive characteristics and emphases in the various books of the Bible.

A simple device I find helpful in structuring my homilies is the mnemonic *NMM*. First, I ask myself what is the ***nature*** of the question I wish to discuss. I have been frequently surprised how, when looking at the Lectionary readings through the lens of a particular issue (an incident that occurred during the week, a question someone has asked...), I discover new facets in the text as though for the first time.

Having decided on the topic I want to discuss and considered it in the light of the Scripture readings, I then explore the ***motive*** that should inspire a Christian response to the issue in question. In this regard it is well to note how the Bible frequently grounds the motive for obedience, repentance or whatever, in the prior graciousness of God. Typically in the Bible grace precedes the Law, as with the Ten Commandments: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt... you shall not have other gods before me..." (*Exod 20.2ff*). Similarly it is God's graciousness which forms the rationale for kindness to one's neighbour: "You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy labourers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land ▷▷

"The Glory of God has departed"

An Anzac sermon with a difference.
The Rev. David Grant reflects with his people on an unusual Old Testament reading – and its Gospel interpretation

So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home; and there was a very great slaughter, for there fell 30,000 foot soldiers of Israel.
And the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli were slain.
(*1 Sam 4,11*)

An odd choice of readings for Anzac Day. But then we are odd people, because we choose to live with the Biblical text, and we regularly place ourselves in conversation with this text where the rest of society doesn't, or doesn't want to, or doesn't have it available as a conversation partner.

It seems right to choose a war text for Anzac Day, but we know that often the Bible's texts have peculiar twists, and they don't always speak with the same voice. And today's text speaks with peculiar voice – and probably minority voice. But Christians of any integrity will listen to every voice, majority or minority, in their search for truth, their search for a proper stance in the face of war.

Eli – Eli of First Samuel. You have met Eli before. Somewhere in your theo-logical travels you have met Eli. He is the one who mentored Samuel when Samuel was very young. And he is the one who redirected young Samuel to listen to the strange voice in the night, a voice which repeatedly called, repeatedly summoned Samuel for his attention. And when the voice gets Samuel's attention, the voice told Samuel things he did not want to know, things about the forthcoming demise of Eli's priestly family, which old Eli got out of him the next morning, much to Samuel's embarrassment.

But Eli knew the message already; he'd received reports about his two sons Hophni and Phineas, who were to carry on the priestly tradition of his family. In the official reports they were described as scoundrels. They used to rob the sheep and goat sacrifices that people brought to the worship place – rob them of choice cuts for their own consumption. An economic act of exploitative self-indulgence, living off the sacrifices of others, not unknown in our own day where people use their power for economic advantage.

And to match that, these priests prostituted themselves with the women who served at the tent of meeting, violating them as well as violating the place of worship. Economic violation and violation around sexuality, it seems, go together. But such violation is intolerable to God, so these two, Hophni and Phineas, along with Eli their father, are threatened with destruction. That's what happens when people persist in violating their fellows.

It so happens that the Isrealites and the Philistines were at war. Sounds familiar! The Israelis and the Palestinians have been at war for three millennia, and when you understand how time passes in the Semitic mind – well it doesn't pass! That war of one thousand years before the Christian era is the same one waged today.

The war does not go well for Israel; they are defeated with 4000 Israelites slaughtered. But Israel has one advantage over the Philistines. God is on their side. So they bring the Ark of the Covenant from the worship centre in Shiloh – they bring it into the army compound. The Ark is mobilised by Israel for a second effort against the Philistines.

You know about this Ark. It is the one that houses the Tablets of the Covenant – the stone tablets of Moses fame. But more than that. Upon this Ark dwells the invisible deity, the one who is "enthroned on the cherubim", so the text says. And the narrator ensures we know that Hophni and Phineas, the disgraced priests, are there accompanying the Ark.

Israel is buoyant, exuberant, optimistic; ▷▷

▷▷ in one of your towns... remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this" (*Deut 24:14ff*).

Finally, I try to suggest some practical ***means*** that might enable such a response. This concluding stage of the homily may well be simply a brief (hopefully!) exhortation to develop a particular virtue such as tolerance or generosity or to make time for prayer in one's day.

While people are not forced into church, the congregation listening to the sermon is a captive audience. Preaching a consistently good sermon week in and week out seems an impossible dream. The preacher therefore should at least pray with Trollope that they "may be able to leave the house of God without that anxious longing for escape, which is the common consequence of common sermons". ■

Fr Damian Wynn-Williams is parish priest of St Bernadette's, Forbury, in Dunedin. He lectured in Sacred Scripture at the National Catholic Seminary in Auckland until last year.

they press their God into service, using the Holy Ark to bolster their arma-ments, their strategies, their tactics, their muscle, their pride, their confidence, their technology, their war machine. The shout of jubilation at the appearance of the Ark is so loud, that the Philistines across the valley hear it, and are afraid. *They* know the reputation of the Ark; they have done a course on comparative religion, and they know Egypt did not fare well when the God of Israel became involved against their cause. Now Yahweh's presence will reverse the Israelite humiliating defeat of a few days ago.

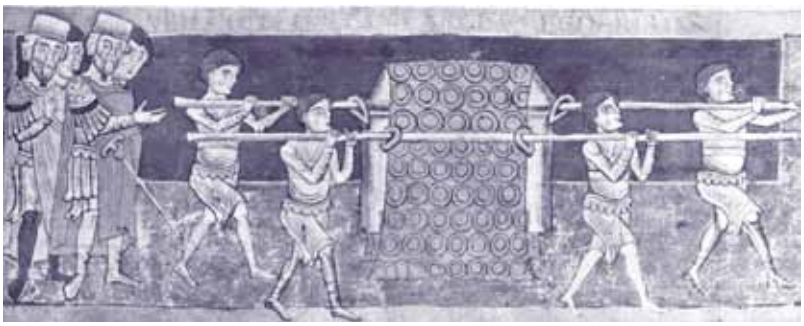
The battle is joined. and the battle report is terse and factual. "Israel was defeated, and they fled everyone to his own home. There was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel 30,000 foot soldiers. The Ark of God was captured,..." And a bit on the end for the listener's benefit; "...and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, died." *We* know why *that* is there; they are the ones who violated their fellows, and violated God. But the price paid for their violation seems disproportionate to Hophni's and Phineas's sin.

There is something more going on here than the disgraceful defiance of a couple of priests. The battle report comes to father Eli who, on hearing the news faints, falls, and breaks his neck. Eli's daughter-in-law, Phineas's wife also hears the report. She is pregnant, near full term, and the bad news is cruel enough to send her into labour.

But what bad news? Five times the text tells us what the bad news is; not that the sons, the husband died, but that the Ark of God was captured. Unnamed wife and daughter-in-law's labour is overwhelming. She dies in childbirth, but before she dies, she names her son. Icabod, which means, 'Where is the glory?'

But the narrator makes sure we know what it really means. It means, the glory has departed from Israel, and the narrator has the woman's last words repeat the awful, terrifying loss, "***The glory has departed from Israel, for the Ark of God has been captured.***" Not, 'My husband has died.' Not, 'My brother-in-law has died.' Not, 'My Father-in-law has died.' But, "***The glory of God has departed.***"

Those are the words I want us to hear on this day of memory; words from an easily ignored, unnamed, dying widow of a disgraced priest; an almost hidden word, certainly a minority word in time of war. "***Icabod – the glory of God is departed.***"Uttered in the aftermath of war; uttered because the glory of God was misused, uttered because Israel grossly miscalculated where God's glory might dwell. "***Icabod – the glory of God is depart-ed.***" God has no natural habitat in war – no ***natural*** habitat.



Medieval interpretation of the Ark of the Covenant being carried on the shoulders of the Israelites

I have here in my pocket a dagger. A ceremonial dagger. It has been in my family's possession since 1918. It was given to my father by a sergeant of the German Army, in occupied Germany immediately after World War 1. It does not take pride of place in our home. In fact it lives at the back of a bottom drawer in a spare room. I cannot, will not throw it out, give it away, sell it; it is part of my family's history – yes, we were there, trained to kill. It is an instrument of death, an article of war. It says nothing about peace at all. It is not a symbol of pride. But nor is it a symbol of shame; I can only call it a symbol of un-pride.

I can only guess that the times we speak of the glorious dead on this day are the times we misplace the glory, for where is the glory? Not here. The glory is gone. And we in the Church – in contrast to those around the Nation's memorials and Cenotaphs today – we in the Church might grasp the moment to hang our heads, not in shame, but in deep remorse, and sorrowful regret, that humankind had to, has to come to this, has to go so low – killing each other, for peace.

Did Jesus get it right in the garden of decision that we call Gethsemane? "Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword, perish by the sword." What cycle of viciousness was Jesus breaking? My guess is the unnamed, dying, easily ignored daughter-in-law, got it right for Jews, and for Christians for this day. There is no glory on this day, or if there is, our sense of loss, remorse and regret must outdistance our sense of pride.

Maybe the seductive attraction of hero talk, courage talk, great sacrifice talk, pride in our troops talk, glory talk is that it is easier to face, and is soothing, reassuring, giving purpose to the many lives sacrificed in these wars, and nor do I want to negate that talk. That talk belongs in this day somewhere.

But talk of terror, and fear, and killing, and wounding, and blood lost, and flesh torn, and defeat, and emptiness, and loss, is far more difficult, so difficult that the men and women who actually fought go very silent when you broach the subject. And I do not blame them one little bit.

But we have a woman, and a narrator, brave enough to voice a different word this day. A word of loss, and regret, and remorse, and sorrow. She says for us, "There is no glory here." And it may be one of the most urgent tasks the Church can do for society –

acknowledging and naming the loss, the futility, the shocking awfulness of dead, wasted youth, and glory gone. So let us fall into silence, in repentant mood, that we are the only species that can calculate so efficiently and determinedly to kill each other. The glory has gone.

But know today, our posture of remorse is in a Christian Chapel, one of the few places in the land where surely it is legitimate to give that voice of 'the glory has gone', a hearing among us; and our hesitant raising of eyes in hope, comes where Christians gather in worship.

For there is one more word to hear; one more word beyond the dead woman's word. It is the cry of a new-born, the inarticulate whimper of a child a few minutes old. The unnamed daughter-in-law makes her fragile offer of life, and the vulnerable newness cries out for nourishment and future. Hopefully, out of our sorrow, and remorse, and regret, we will dedicate ourselves to nourishing new life born among us. ■

The Rev David Grant is Presbyterian Minister at Knox Church, Dunedin

Justice - A Woman

Woman – wise, resilient, full measure of Love for Life,
poised and sensitive to the law of nature,
You inherit the balance of justice!

Warm, mothering image in a maelstrom world,
where man manipulates the power for good or evil,
and easily forgets his feeling role of father,
you bear the child to smile on him and move him
to compassion for those 'distant people'.
Woman – nurturing womb of justice!

You dedicate yourself to foster freedom,
to liberate oppression, reform through legislation,
and can with jurisprudence mould the mind of man to mercy,
where frustrations burst in violence,
And with your spirit so interpret justice!

Dying to yourself that others live,
you weight the scales to serve a broader view,
a spectrum multi-coloured in your eyes
a purpose all embracing for your time,
you see a family universal not as 'distant people'
but your own.

For to love and live in harmony
create and work in peace
laugh and cry in feeling with our fellow man,
Woman – you're the centrepoint
the catalyst for justice
Feminine in your vision for Mankind!

Erin O'Rourke

Celebrating Eucharist in Small Communities

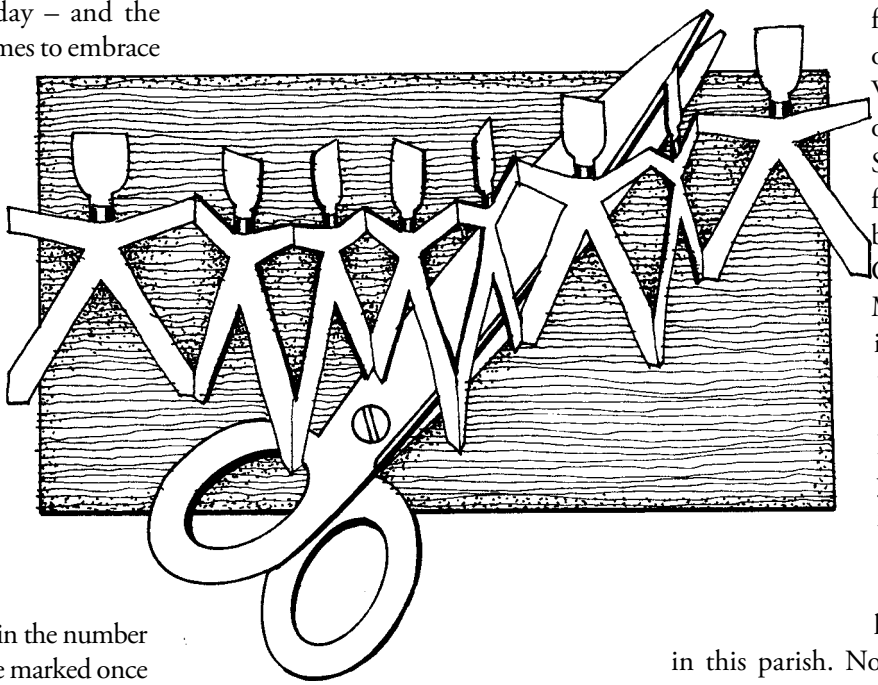
The priest shortage may be a blessing in disguise, suggests Susan Smith, when small communities learn to take responsibility for their own worship

In my reading of *Tui Motu*, I am struck by the number of articles that relate to the Church: articles about good preaching and bad preaching, about parish councils and Vatican decisions, about young and not so young people no longer fronting up for Sunday Mass; about the Church's apparent inability to be involved in the great issues of the day – and the Church's willingness at times to embrace the sorrows and hopes of humankind. No doubt such articles receive prominence precisely because they touch on matters that concern so many of us.

One area of concern that surfaces regularly is the declining numbers of priests, and to a lesser extent that declining number of the 'nuns' and brothers. In particular, the decline in the number of priests has led to a decline in the number of Masses celebrated, more marked once people move outside the major urban centres. Is this always bad news or not?

I would like to relate my own experience of Sundays without a priest in three very different situations. The first occurred in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea in the 1980s. Catechists and lay ministers had significant responsibility for Sunday liturgies much of the time, since Mass was celebrated monthly or bi-monthly. The priest and the Sisters responsible for pastoral formation held regular meetings with the catechists, as, together, they struggled to celebrate a liturgy reflecting their membership of the wider Catholic community and speaking to their own reality.

The second experience was in Ruatoria in the late 1980s and early '90s. When I first arrived there in 1988, an older Pakeha woman had been delegated presider by the parish priest of Gisborne – Ruatoria was part of the Gisborne parish. The priest from Gisborne came through once a month to Ruatoria, to Tokomaru Bay and to Tologa Bay.



On the other Sundays the liturgies were presided over by laity. In Ruatoria itself when the original presider retired from lay ministry, initially I, as the resident Catholic Sister, was asked to take over responsibility for Sunday liturgies. However, the local little Maori comm-unity soon realised that responsibility for liturgy belonged to them as well, so we took turns.

Back-up support from the Gisborne priests was important for us all as we struggled to understand more the relationship between our liturgical and our community life. At this time there did not appear to be any formal training for lay ministry in place in the Diocese of Hamilton.

More recently I have been living in Whangarei, another geographically spread parish. My most important liturgical experiences in Whangarei occur at McLeod Bay. Here, in a church originally built in 1858 by the Rev Alexander McLeod of a very strict variety of Presbyterianism, Catholics meet twice monthly on a Sunday to celebrate their life and faith together. One of the priests from Whangarei comes once a month for Sunday Mass; so far, the priests have been able to celebrate Christmas and Easter Masses with us which is really important for us all.

It is now over ten years since lay ministers assumed more responsibility for Sunday's liturgical celebrations in this parish. Non-priest-led Sunday liturgies take place at Hikurangi, Ruakaka and Maungakaramea in Catholic church buildings, and in McLeod Bay and Maungatapere in community church buildings.

The Whangarei parish provides introductory, intercessory and concluding prayers, homily notes and song suggestions, which reach the presider in the preceding week. Furthermore, personnel from the liturgy office in the Auckland Diocesan Pompallier Centre have come to Whangarei to acquaint the various lay ministers with a better understanding as to what their ministries involve. Various ideas occur to me as I reflect back on these experiences which could help other Catholic lay

people called upon to assume more responsibility for the liturgical life of their community.

• ***Firstly,*** the great strength of small local communities is precisely that they are ***small*** and they are ***local***. The anonymity that I associate with bigger parish churches and their Sunday congregations of two or three hundred people vanishes as people gather together as friends. Not only during the celebration but before and after it, people ask one another to pray for a sick relative, to come to a pot luck supper, or collect produce in the back of the church from someone's garden.

Schumacher's famous comment 'small is beautiful' is never more true than when a numerically small but big-hearted local community gathers for liturgy. What occurs before and outside the liturgical celebration heightens the sense of sharing that a Catholic liturgy should always mean. Vatican II teaches that "***the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all her activity flows***" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 10).

In such community events the ordinary human sharing involves everyone in a deeper sharing of the mystery of God at work in their lives. Where there is no natural community, it is harder to understand how grace is at work in our lives. A mark of the community's 'success' is that the warmth and friendship of the different people has encouraged some absentee Catholics to once again embrace their Catholicism with enthusiasm and commitment.

When we think about society today, one of the realities that strikes us all is its fragmented nature, and the steady but unwelcome growth of individualism. Small communities offer people a way of transcending that societal blight so that the outsider becomes the insider, taking seriously the concluding prayer to go out and love and serve Christ in the world.

• ***Secondly***, another word that leaps to mind is ***participation***. Prior to a Sunday lay-lead liturgy, phone lines are humming as people are contacted and asked to assume different responsibilities. These include someone bringing flowers for the altar, being a eucharistic minister, a minister of the word or the music minister.

Furthermore, there is a conscious effort to involve children. They 'take up' the collection, light and extinguish candles, sometimes provide back-up for the person giving the reflection or provide art work. In such circumstances people are not simply checking out their responsibilities from a list: they are phoning one another, talking about the weather, the garden, ill health, the arrival of new family members and so on. This means that the liturgy belongs to all in a way that so often eludes the bigger parish.

Though I still attend parish Masses in larger provincial towns and in our cities, I am often struck by the passivity of the congregation and by the liturgical formality. I am not advocating that lay-presided Sunday liturgies collapse into spontaneous prayer meetings. But I note a sense of where ritual meets people's needs in contrast to people's needs being subordinated to ritual requirements. Adapting Jesus' words: 'the ritual is made for the community, not the community for the ritual' (*cf. Mark 1:27).*

Where does this leave Catholics today as we face a future with fewer priests? We can be utterly despondent about this, or we can see it as evidence that the role of the laity is no longer simply "to pray, obey and pay." Their role now includes taking seriously their baptismal call to minister to one another in their liturgical lives and communities. It is from Baptism that the call to ministry flows.

I do not see lay-lead liturgies as a substitute for priest-led liturgies and would not like people to think I am advocating an ***either/or*** scenario. However, I think we need to think more seriously about ***both/and*** possibilities so that lay people can rightly assume their place as adults in our church.

Do I have a secret wish about all this? Yes, I just wish that Vatican officials who draw up liturgical documents could anonymously and invisibly be present at such little celebrations – little in their eyes perhaps, little in the eyes of those driving past on their way to a day's fishing or a day at the beach; but big in the eyes of those who are there. I don't think they would see people who are anti-pope, or anti-clerical for that matter.

What they would see is a Catholic community whose members are aware of their links to the wider Church, aware of their responsibilities toward one another, and gathering in the Spirit to be renewed and encouraged for a life of discipleship in the world of today. ■

Susan Smith is a Mission Sister presently living in the Whangarei parish

The Reign of God made visible

Benedict Tolich

I had the opportunity to make a Street Retreat in Darlinghurst, Sydney, an area frequented by alcoholics, drug addicts, the homeless. After morning Mass the participants went to hang around the streets in order to discover the activity of God among the people. In the evening we gathered to share our experiences and to pray.

The first day an alcoholic sat on the front doorstep of a flat opposite where I was standing. A young man came home. He greeted the alcoholic and chatted to him. Then he patted him on the head, unlocked his door and went in.

The next day the Gospel at Mass was *Mark 3:31-35*. "*Who are my mother and brothers?*" Jesus replied, "*Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother*" . I stood where several streets intersected. A car came along the main street, turned left into a one-way street, then stopped suddenly. A well-dressed woman got out and walked back to the corner.

A man was lying there. A dark-featured man carrying a large backpack came along the main street towards the woman. He stopped. They talked. The man put down his backpack. The woman went and opened the back door of her car. The man lifted the drunk, took him to the car and put him in it. The man left to retrieve his backpack.

A postman came along. The woman spoke to him. He pointed down the one-way street, no doubt explaining where *Matt Talbot House* was. The woman drove off. I was amazed.

Then it clicked! I exclaimed to myself, "My God, I have just seen your mother and brother and sister!"

The following day I went to Redfern where a significant number of Aboriginals live. I stood opposite a mural of Aboriginal art painted on a long wall. Four Aboriginals came from the direction of the hotel, arguing, shouting, fighting.

When they came to the mural silence fell on the group. One by one, each moved along the wall fingering and reverencing their cultural symbols, remembering their stories. A wonderful peace and harmony enveloped them. "*For it was you who formed my inward parts*" (*Ps 139 v 13*).

The next two days I observed the love, the care among the alcoholics – the sharing of food and fellowship. the concern – shifting one out of the way of foot traffic, covering up another. "The hungry are fed, the naked are clothed" – signs of the Reign of God. ■

Sr Benedict Tolich RSJ is parish worker in the Balclutha parish

Does ET know God?

In our May issue Richard Dowden explored the notion of other beings throughout the Universe. Ruth Page *responds*

Neither my belief in God nor in salvation through Jesus Christ is fazed by the possibility of life (whether intelligent or not) on other planets. In the same way it is not fazed by the existence of Moslems or Buddhists on earth, for the reasons are the same.

I believe in one God (***credo in unum Deum***) because if there were more than one there would be division and rivalry (think of the Greek pantheon!) and none would have total power.

So it's not a question of different Gods for different planets. I believe further that God is present throughout creation from the galaxies to the quarks. There is nowhere God is not – in Israel/Palestine, in the forests, among urban poverty, and hence on every star and planet. This is a powerful presence when it is attended to, but God, having given creation freedom and possibility to develop as it could, will not interfere with its processes.

Two matters result from that:

• *Firstly*, it is possible to be so preoccupied with mundane concerns that the divine presence is not noticed or acknowledged – a common occur-rence in secular culture.

• *Secondly*, the perception of that presence, and the response to it will be within the terms and possibilities of the creature responding. I believe all earthly creatures are companioned by God and respond according to their kind – hippopotamuses and butterflies in their ways, and humans in theirs. It is therefore no great extension to think of creatures on other planets responding to the divine presence in their own kinds of language and capacities.

But what of the particularity of Jesus Christ? That question has to be faced already in relation to other faiths on Earth. Ninian Smart in the 1960s suggested that salvation in Christ was cosmos-wide, so to speak. But, as respect for and tolerance of, other faiths has grown since the 1960s, Smart's account – then, he's probably moved on since– seems very imperialistic.

The alternative can take two forms. It is possible to say that salvation in the sense of saving from individual private sins is what God is about, and, given that God's presence is everywhere, the possibility of salvation is also every-where. For Christians, here, it has come about through Jesus Christ, but God is not constrained to one localised means of salvation. All faiths (even the non-theistic Buddhists, who are a special case) are possible avenues to what they understand as salvation.

For myself, I tend to believe that the discovery of the relationship with God is what counts. Salvation from sin is only part of that (though in older doctrinal schemes salvation was meant to lead on to sanctification). For intelligent life forms, to have a relationship with God, whether discovered through Jesus Christ or by any other means, is to be forgiven, encouraged, turned outwards to what is going on in God's world, reproved when necessary, energised to action, and generally made new.

The possibility Richard Dowden describes enlarges rather than dimin-ishes the scope of faith. The *Second Coming of Jesus Christ* is a metaphor for what will happen at the end of our world, or at the Big Crunch when the universe contracts again to a singularity. Its real relevance to us comes in the questions posed to the sheep and the goats: what did you do for the poor, the hungry, the imprisoned? The rest, I believe, we may safely leave to God. ■

Author & theologian Dr Ruth Page has taught theology at Otago University and in Edinburgh

Gentle God

Gentle God, when we are driven
past the limits of our love,
when our hurt would have a weapon
and the hawk destroy the dove,
at the cost of seeming weak,
help us turn the other cheek.

Gentle Spirit, when our reason
clouds in anger, twists in fear,
when we strike instead of stroking,
when we bruise and sting and smear,
cool our burning, take our pain,
bring us to ourselves again.

In the mirror of earth's madness
let us see our ravaged face,
in the turmoil of all people
let compassion find a place,
touch our hearts to make amends,
see our enemies as friends.

Let our strength be in forgiving
as forgiven we must be,
one to one in costly loving,
finding trust and growing free,
gentle God, be our release,
gentle Spirit, teach us peace.

Shirley Murray
Alleluia Aotearoa #44
music by Jillian Bray

This song of peace for our violent times is included in the songbook *He Came Singing Peace*, recently published – one of the songs for the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence.

Pompallier on Waiheke Island

The bones of New Zealand's first Catholic bishop have returned to the earth of the land he loved and helped evangelise.
Kevin McBride *accompanies the hikoi to Waiheke Island*

Waiheke Island can claim close associations with Bishop Pompallier. The 50th anniversary of St. Peter's Parish recalled a clay church from the 1850s and a recorded tale of the Bishop and crew of his "Santa Maria" going to the aid of a shipwrecked schooner while on their way to Coromandel. So it is not surprising that we put our hand up when the Hikoi returning the Koiwi of the Bishop through Auckland was planned.

The final burial of Bishop Pompallier's remains. Pa Henare Tate blessing the casket in the presence of Bishop Mariu (officiating) and others

Waiheke could be fitted into a circuit leading from St. Patrick's Cathedral to Sacred Heart College in Glendowie and on to St. Benedicts and other Auckland parishes. A powhiri was arranged at Piritahi Marae, and islanders and members of other churches invited to an ecumenical service on the evening of Easter Monday. The casket would remain in St. Peter's overnight and be taken back to the city the following evening.

On the Monday morning the church was prepared: a large tapa cloth was spread before the altar representing the Pacific receiving its first Catholic bishop. Flax mats were placed over the altar, native toi-toi and greenery set around as decoration, and a display of historical materials put up in the atrium. Pride of place was given to fac-similes of letters exchanged between the captain of the shipwrecked schooner and Pompallier himself.

At 4.30 pm, a group of parishioners gathered at the ferry terminal at Matiatia to greet the beautifully decorated casket and bring it ashore between departing and arriving crowds of Waiheke jazz festival patrons. A car carried the casket two km to Piritahi Marae where a party of 30 or so was ready to be called on with the koiwi. Eventually, the karanga rang out, the reply was given by Heeni Dunn (one of those who had travelled to Paris to receive the remains) and we moved slowly inside.

The speeches began after an opening prayer, following the Tu mai, Tu atu (to and fro) Kawa of the Hauraki iwi. The local speakers stressed their feeling of honour and privilege at receiving the Koiwi on behalf of Waiheke people and the genuineness of their respect for Bishop Pompallier and his role in Aotearoa history. This was spelt out by emphasising Pompallier's role at Waitangi in 1840, when he was instrumental in the drafting of the fourth unwritten article of the Treaty guaranteeing freedom and protection of the Christian faith and Maori custom.

Reference was also made to Pompallier's respect for Maori culture which he had tried to communicate to his mission-aries. Following these and the exchange of hongi the group moved to the wharekai for refreshments. Later they moved back to the wharenui for some photographs and final prayers and hymns before leaving for St. Peter's Church. As the casket was carried back to the car it was accompanied by soulful lamenting identifying the tangata whenua with the purpose and spirit of the Hikoi.

Back at St. Peter's, a nearly full church awaited the arrival of the cortege. The casket was laid on the tapa and the service commenced with prayer led by Fr. Bernard Kiely and a reading by Anglican Rev. Heather Stewart. Meth-odist Peter Stead recalled the beginnings of the Wesleyan mission and testy relationships with Pompallier's Catholic mission.. 'led by French priests to boot!' Hymns and prayers in Maori and English brought the brief service to a conclusion.

Then David Tutty of the Catholic Justice and Peace Office led a participatory review of Bishop Pompallier's life, with Heeni Dunn and other members of the Hikoi intervening with reflections on the journey from Paris and around New

Zealand. Others present added their own pieces of historical and local information. Eventually Bernard and Kevin McBride kept an overnight vigil next to the casket.

The next morning started with Mass in the church at 9.30am. after which many people stayed on for more story-telling and hymn-singing. After lunch the intention had been to take some of the visitors to various spots on the island concerned with either the Bishop or the early church, but over lunch the decision was made to take the Bishop along for the ride.

A group of five cars was assembled, including the "hearse" and set out first to Ostend, the site of an earlier church. From there the procession went to Te Whau peninsula to look out over Tamaki Strait which Pompallier would have often sailed on his way to Coromandel.

The last call was to Onetangi to visit a former Catholic Church, now a private residence. The present occupant was very interested to know of the history of her home. The former altar, a stained glass window and a cross on another window serve to recall its previous role. The old piano used for earlier services is also still in the house.

This unscheduled trip around the island was so engrossing and enjoyable, that the rather more hurried journey back to the ferry was faster than any the Bishop would have made in his day.

Just on 6.15pm, the Waiheke people waved the casket goodbye and back into the mainstream of the Hikoi.

Island time, island ways, island improvisation ruled, but like so many other small communities consciousness and awareness of the people of Waiheke had been greatly moved by the return of a man who gave so much of himself in his mission to Aotearoa 165 years ago.

E te Pihopa! Haere atu! Haere atu! Haere atu! ■

Kevin McBride is national director of Pax Christi for Aotearoa-New Zealand

A pakeha perspective on Pompallier

Sleeping next to a casket is odd enough, but sleeping in the Auckland Bishop's private chapel in Ponsonby next to a casket containing the remains of New Zealand's first Catholic Bishop seemed almost bizarre.

This extraordinary marae style 'sleep-over' happened while I was working in the diocesan archives over the summer. In one night history seemed to have collapsed. Pompallier was back in New Zealand over one hundred years after his departure and the hikoi of recollection and thanksgiving (which remarkably turned into a hikoi of spiritual awakening and hope for the future) was about to set off on its journey.

As a pakeha Auckland Catholic of Irish ancestry the spiritual significance for me of this Frenchman's return was not immediately obvious. But my mind did turn to mission – sacrifice, zeal, love of God, love of Jesus' true presence in the Eucharist and sacraments, love of the Maori, and the work of the early French Marists.

That vision of a faith community is something which we also share today. The cynics might ask what did Pompallier achieve? Is New Zealand not just as 'unchurched' today as then? But that would miss the point. Pompallier's return to New Zealand has not locked us in the past but inspired us to think of the future.

Mission is for all times. As a seminarian training for the priesthood I have personally felt renewed in my call to the mission of sacramental ministry. Pompallier's presence with us invites us all to make Christ present in the midst of our wider community of many cultures and divergent needs and aspirations.

James Mulligan us a seminarian for the Auckland diocese at Holy Cross College

Cold Comfort

Cold Comfort
death does not like thee
for thou bringeth peace where life
denies us.

Clutching beads in troubled fingers
solid strong we grasp they length
age old mystery steeped in history
bringing forth a special strength.

Keeping faith with the familiar
owning that we have denied
sighing deeply as acceptance
resolves conflict deep inside.

Feeling thoroughly connected
to the souls who sit nearby
thinking muddled and unfocused
and an aching urge to cry.

Something precious rediscovered
something special just regained
sudden splash of love for things
so very deep ingrained.

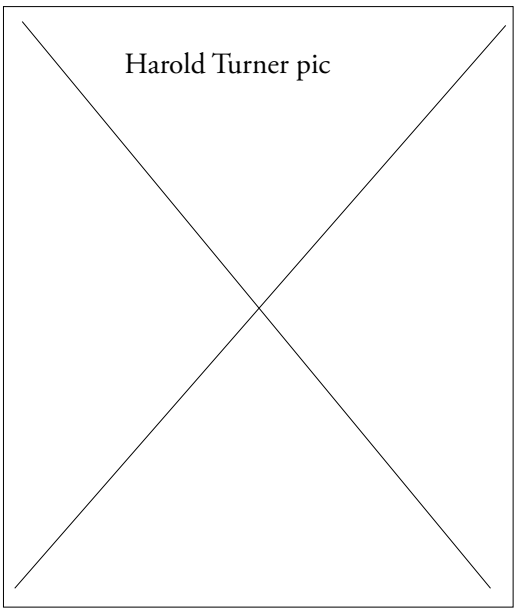
Cold Comfort
death does not like thee
for thou bringeth peace where life
denies us.

Mike Consedine

A Life of Risk and Dedication

Harold W. Turner, 1911-2002

Albert Moore



A Kiwi who became a world citizen, Harold Turner was a lively and creative influence on many lives across the continents. His was a worldwide Christian vision. Like the apostle Paul he took risks which led to remarkable new directions in his own life and thinking.

From his upbringing in Napier he learned practical do-it-yourself skills and went on to study engineering. But in the years of the Depression in 1932, he turned to the study of philosophy. This proved infectious. A fellow-lodger and student friend in Christ-church who went into brewery science, acquired from Harold a lifelong interest in philosophy.

Harold went on to study theology for the Presbyterian ministry, with a sense of both the personal and moral claims of faith and its public implications. He was a leader in the *Campaign for Christian Order* with its ecumenical direction in the early 1940s. As a chaplain to students he became concerned about the need for student accommodation at Otago.

So in 1941, with the help of friends but "with no authority, no experience and no funds" he set up a small student hall of residence, Stuart House, leading on to Arana Hall and Carrington Hall (1943, 1945). Harold also founded the University Book Shop. All these have continued as well-established land-marks on the University of Otago campus area.

Having spent the first half of his life mainly in New Zealand, Harold went on to new ventures overseas. In 1954, to fulfil his concern for Africa, he and his family took the risk of settling in England to find an avenue for work in Africa; so he taught theology in Sierra Leone from 1955, then religious studies in Eastern Nigeria in the 1960s.

A serendipitous meeting with an African member of the Aladura independent church on the beach in 1957, proved to be a life-changing event. Harold embarked on the study of such 'new religious movements', first in Africa but then over a worldwide range of religions. He became a world authority in this field, and the legacy of his work continues in the collection of materials at the *Centre for New Religious Movements* at the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham.

In addition to his research travels, Harold held lecturing positions at Leicester, Aberdeen and Atlanta (Georgia). A central theme of his teaching on religions concerned "sacred space"; his interest in church building took shape in another of his books, *From Temple to Meeting House*, 1979.

Harold and Maude Turner finally retired in 1989 by returning to New Zealand to live in Auckland. Harold continued his thinking and writing, more particularly on themes of faith and culture, theology and science (see review in *Tui Motu*, December 2000). Actively interested right up to the time of his death at the age of 91, his life is a reminder and model of mission and dedication in several fields, of that energy which makes a practical difference to people's lives.

Speaking more personally, I recall the welcome and kindness which Harold and Maude showed to our family, as to other visitors from all over the globe. (Their grandchildren quipped: "One good Turner deserves another".)

Academically, Harold seemed to have antennae in contact with ideas and people who could prove immensely creative and helpful. He encouraged ventures which opened up new insights and connections. He took risks for decisions which he had thought through before stepping out in faith. One might differ from some of his judgments, yet value his experiences, his energy and his single-minded determination. His enthusiasm and achievement have been a source of inspiration for which I give thanks. ■

Albert Moore is retired professor of Religious Studies at Otago University

The God who creates continuously

Habitat of Grace: Biology, Christianity and the global environmental crisis
by Carolyn M King
Australian Theological Forum, 235p
Price: $44.95
Review: Bob Eyles

This is a truly interdisciplinary book written by a practising scientist who also has a recent doctorate in theology. Many of the earliest earth scientists were clergymen intent on discovering the mind of God; after several subsequent centuries of misunderstanding and conflict between science and Christianity, authors such as Carolyn King are now making a powerful case for the need of both to solve the environmental crisis that is gripping our planet. As she puts it: *'The scientific view of the rational, ordered universe is entirely compatible with the... Christian affirmation that we can make sense of the world because God's faithfulness stands behind it'* (p130), and it is clear that lifestyle problems such as human over consumption of resources are ultimately spiritual problems.

Every effort is made to render this book palatable to non-scientists with a glossary of terms and a long appendix, "***How Natural Selection Works***". Important insights into the difficulties of managing commonly held resources such as rivers, groundwater and national parks, are presented in the form of statements called 'Muldoon's Law', 'Berk's law', and 'Bolger's law', with good New Zealand examples. While the book is well written and formatted and contains virtually no typographic errors, because of the breadth of conceptual material it covers some chapters will be more difficult than others to most readers. For example, with my background of earth science and parish ministry, I found the chapter, "Human Nature", to be relatively hard going.

But there will be stimulation and challenge for scientists, theologians and thoughtful members of the public alike who are concerned for the future of our planet and its life. Some of the hard-hitting challenges levelled at the Church are the reminder that the Hebrew word *Yahweh* means *the God who creates continuously* and that, for the Hebrews, discussions of creation concerned practical questions *'about how things are, not where they came from'* (p127). By the time of Darwin, in contrast, *"Christian creation theology was emphasising the idea of an original act, the beginning of life, much more than that of a continuing process of upholding the ongoing conditions for life"* (p129).

The idea of Christian Stewardship appears *"in the context of a servant put in charge of the property of an absentee master"*(p170). The church needs urgently, says King, to rediscover a *'relational understanding of IMAGO DEI (and the) profound implications for religious environmental activism'* (p171).

The church will continue to be part of the problem if we say that we have been 'green' all along. The church will become part of the solution when we work hard to rediscover biblical truth about the God who is lovingly involved! Carolyn King's book should be read and digested by everyone who

Ros

Rosalind Mary Patrick (1955-2002)

To all who knew her, Ros presented as a 'gentle woman' whose talents were many. The youngest of three children born in Carterton in 1955, she was educated at the local parish school and at St Bride's in Masterton. She did a BA at Victoria and then went on to Library school.

At her untimely death she was Physical Science librarian and a member of the Science Faculty at Canterbury University. She was an active member of the Star of the Sea parish, Sumner and chairperson of the finance committee. She was also a member of the core group of *Catholic Women Knowing Our Place*.

Brent, her partner for 27 years, says of her: "Ros was always active... a fantastic person, shy by nature, unassuming. Initially she was not much noticed, but known to be a spiritual, thoughtful and generous.."

She was a woman ahead of her time, an advocate of change in the Church, wanting more liberal views and the opportunity for open dialogue. Hence her reason for becoming a promoter of *Tui Motu*, because she felt it was a forward thinking publication. Ros had a strong belief in freedom and the accessibility of information for all. May she rest in peace.

Jenny Swain-Nicholls

Eyes right in Europe

Crosscurrents
John Honoré

Two dramatic political events have recently highlighted the rise of far-Right politics in Europe. The murder of the Dutch politician, Pim Fortuyn, and the extraordinary 17.5 percent of the vote, on the second ballot, for Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, demonstrate the growing appeal of their respective parties' policies on immigration. Right-wing populists have positions in the governments of Austria and Italy. In a recent election in Burnley, England, three anti-immigration candidates won seats on a British city council. The trend is decidedly xenophobic.

What is the appeal of right wing politics? Incumbent political parties seem unable to curb the rising crime rate, and lack any coherent policy regarding resident foreign ethnic groups. The entrenched middle class of Europe feels threatened by the influx of immigrants who now arrive illegally in their thousands and are presenting a moral problem as well as a sociological one. These racial tensions are battering class solidarity in Europe.

The widening gap between rich and poor means that ethnic groups such as North Africans in France and Eastern Euro-peans in Germany, formerly welcomed as menial workers, now find themselves in urban ghettos with only violent protest as their way of expression. Middle class anger is turning into panic at its unheeded calls for law and order and about questions of identity. These social failures are facilitating the electoral and political success of right wing govern-ments, such as Berlusconi's in Italy, which favour the rich.

In the world, there are more than 21 million refugees and displaced persons who seek a way out from hunger and poverty and are demanding a share in the riches of the West. The immigrants flooding into Europe are from different cultures with alien customs. They are usually from destitute countries and are the victims of European colonisation which has exploited their land. The question being openly debated now is whether a mingling of such diverse races is beneficial to any culture. It is no longer an argument to suggest that cultural diversity strengthens a nation.

The new arrivals have no work and no socio-economic support. They immediately become society's victims. Le Pen and others are radically anti-immigration and millions of voters support this. The elder statesman of the European left, Helmut Schmidt of Germany, writes: "We have seven million foreigners today who are not integrated. Now we are stuck with a very heterogeneous, de facto multicultural society and we can't cope with it". How does the Western world cope with millions more immigrants?

Politicians are quick to prey upon the fears of voters. The far-Right has a fertile ground when they trumpet an end to immigration and blame 'foreigners' for the breakdown of law and order.Racist propaganda, contempt for minorities and political duplicity no longer shock the middle class voter. The sad truth is that they might know in their hearts that such intolerance is wrong but, drowning in a mire of xenophobia and authoritarian nationalism, they will continue to vote for the far-Right. Politics, economics and Western double standards are the reasons for the present crisis.

Cherchez les femmes

Another hurdle has been overcome on the way to an early election. The disgruntled secondary teachers' union seem to have settled its pay dispute with the government, as this column is written. The agreement was greatly assisted by the absence of the Education Minister, Trevor Mallard. He is also the Minister of Sport who embarrassed the country by telling us what he would like to do to the rugby boss, when New Zealand's hopes of staging the Rugby World Cup were spiked. So Mallard was sent on a two-week junket to Asia and, with him out of the way, Helen Clark was able to pronounce her unforgettable put-down: "The girls are getting on with it". She was ably assisted by Margaret Wilson and the jolly Marian Hobbs.

Another mover and shaker, the formidable Michelle Boag, continues to frighten the horses in the National Party's stables. She is now closing in on the lower echelon of National Party stalwarts. Without even admitting involvement, she has managed to oust Brian Neeson and Warren Kydd. Their departures usher in as candidates, a millionaire and a lawyer who are more in keeping with Michelle's ideal National Party representative. The shake-up has not yet reached Clem Simich, who seems to have an impregnable power base in Tamaki, but I don't imagine that he will be invited to Waiheke Island to share a chardonnay or two with Michelle.

All eyes are on another woman who has a strong political profile – Laila Harré. She holds the key to an early election, should she wish to put an end to Jim Anderton's current charade as deputy leader of the country. It is ironic that this man continues to destroy the credibility, if not the legality, of MMP when he owes his political existence to this system of proportional representation. How Laila Harré will fare in the coming election is any body's guess, but Anderton's influence outside of Wigram will be zero. Overall, the pervasive influence of women on the New Zealand political scene continues to be extraordinary. ■

Shamrocks, hongis and tapa cloth

Last Lent I was, as a Sunday Mass celebrant, placed in a dilemma. It was March 17, St. Patrick's Day. The Mass was taking place in Auckland and the apostle of Ireland is the patron of that diocese. An enthusiast had decor-ated the church with shamrocks. Should I at sermon time share with my fellow worshippers on a Lenten topic, or should we rather turn our minds to reflect on the saint and the lessons he has for us?

The issue was not simply that of Lent versus the Saint's feast. One of my servers was Chinese, the other Sri Lankan. Not just their own families but further Asian families were in the congregation. What meaning and relevance would words about St. Patrick have for them?

Twenty years ago the dilemma would not have existed. The vast majority of the congregation would have been of Irish extraction. Of course there would have been those of Italian, Dalmatian, Bohemian (ex Puhoi) extraction. But at least they would not have looked any different to those whose genes were Celtic. Many would anyway have been the products of ethnically mixed marriages, sharing Irish ancestry with the pure blooded Gaels. With only a slight twinge of conscience I could have got away with preaching on St. Patrick.

All of us need to relate to our church communities, at least the urban ones, as the racial mix that they have become. The Samoan New Zealander or the Taiwanese New Zealander needs to be addressed in different fashion to the classic pakeha. Biculturalism – yes. A special place for Maori. But a recog-nition of the reality that our parishes and church communities are made up of folk not just of Maori culture and of Anglo-Celtic postcolonial culture, but also of folk of other backgrounds.

There are three classic stages through which so many migrants and their descendants pass:

• Firstly, characteristic of the foreign born – life-long adherence to the values and in great part to the practices of the land in which they were born.

• Secondly, characteristic of the immediate descendants of migrants – complete rejection of the migrant background, along with wholehearted commitment to the way of life of the new country. A determination to be a New Zealander and nothing else.

• The third stage sees a mellowing. The more distant descendants of migrants have a relaxed confidence about being fully accepted as New Zealanders. They are so much a part of the land of their birth that they can afford the luxury of a second identity, that of their migrant ancestry. They can revel in Riverdance, or take part in Pacific Island dance festivals, or simply outdo their neigh-bours in their skill in cooking pasta, and do this without feeling they are any less part of New Zealand.

In my own life I have lived through stages two and three. Fifty years ago, young student priests in Rome had few recreational outlets. But as for accepting an invitation to join my Irish colleagues on St. Patrick's Day for a rare hour or two's relaxation in a birreria? No way. I was a New Zealander, not an Irishman. Over the years I have changed. My Irishness as expressed today is very different to that of grandfather Humphrey O'Leary who stepped off a migrant ship in Nelson in 1871. But it is there. I must remember that my fellow believers will be at varied stages along the journey

Fr Humphrey O'Leary CSsR is Rector of the Redmptorist community in Auckland

How the media slants the news

The weekly BBC programme *Dateline London* recently shifted its location to Dubai using the occasion of a media conference in the United Arab Emirates. Arabs and Israelis have been regularly included on the BBC *Dateline* programmes to balance the European and American comments, but this particular programme was focused on the Middle East. An Arab woman correspondent and three male journalists, two Arab as well as one English, succeeded in bringing a different perspective to the discussion.

So much of our comment on the international situation is filtered through world-wide news agencies, we have no way of knowing how reliable their sourcing is and of how neutral news selection may or may not be. It is therefore important to be able, occasionally, to hear the people of the Middle East speaking for themselves.

Mustapha Karkouti expressed the view that the events of September 11 had altered all that had gone before and that the bridges which had been begun, or partially completed in the search for dialogue, had been destroyed as a result of that attack. The Arab journalists insisted that America and the West present many different faces to the Arab world, but the face which they saw over the Palestinian question revealed the ugly America. And they saw the United States dominated by Israel to the point where American policy was often dictated, governed and even dominated by Israel.

The woman, Nima Abdi Wardi, responded to a question about Arab attitudes to women saying that she had never had any difficulty in functioning as a professional woman in an Arab state. She stressed that attitudes to women were not as monolithic as the Western media would have the public believe, and there was nothing which prevented her from living her life as she chose. The emphasis which was placed on democracy by the United States demanded a greater understanding in the West because the Arab world had its own way of doing things which did not always sit easily beside Western ways.

Equally, the programme reminded us that when the Arab world refers to the 'West', a shorthand is being employed to describe a diverse group of nations and people, just as we forget that there are 22 different countries in the Arab world, a world containing a strong Christian element often ignored by the media.

The presentation of this Arab point of view was valuable in helping to understand the situation in the Middle East. We can only hope that those who direct New Zealand television purchases and programmes will also see the importance and value of presenting such a balance.

Keith Harrison