Tui Motu

InterIslands

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if you had only recognised
the things
that make for peace

Contents

Cover picture:

Jesus weeps over the city

Retired Presbyterian Minister Rev. Denzil Brown recalls looking down on the city of Jerusalem as Christ did and weeping.
This inspired him to represent in sculpture the face of Christ weeping over the city (*Luke 19,41*)

Good Friday

Our TV screens and newspapers are dominated by horrifying images of war. This season of Christ's Passion is also the passion of countless innocent Iraqi people. A new darkness is covering the earth.

Inevitably the Iraqi war dominates this *April* issue. Sue Bradford MP joins our regular columnists, John Honoré and Humphrey O'Leary, in outright condemnation of the action of our erstwhile allies, Britain, the USA and Australia. Both Fr O'Leary and Ms Bradford are prompted to personal memories of war and peace. I would like to add my own.

Just after the end of World War 2 I witnessed, at Church Hall, Westminster, what was in effect the very first meeting of the fledgling United Nations. I recall being highly impressed by the keynote speech of the US Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, eloquently pledging the full and foundational support of America to this new world body. Meanwhile Anglo-US rebuilding of the defeated Axis powers ensured that high-minded words were being backed up by deeds.

How Cordell Hull must be turning in his grave over the actions of President George Bush. When a country like Iraq is ruled by an evil tyrant who knowingly perpetrates evil acts, the consequences to his people are dire. When the leader of the world's most powerful nation flouts the judgment of the United Nations and fondly imagines himself to be morally justified, then the peace and stability the whole world is under threat.

It is good that our government has deliberately stood aside from supporting Britain and America in this evil course of action. It would be even better if we were to join the Christian leaders of the world in unequivocal condemnation.

Maundy Thursday

This issue also focusses on pastoral problems arising from the so-called 'shortage of priests'. Articles approach it from various angles: a call from a meeting in Gore for a new style of leadership, a possible model already in action in Queensland, and a theological-pastoral reflection by Fr Neil Darragh.

On Maundy Thursday we will read *John*'s account of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. Jesus' teaching is devastatingly simple. To lead in the Christian community is to be a servant. At a stroke, the whole equating of leadership with worldly power is undermined. It is a teaching which Christians – especially the ordained – need to return to, constantly.

In a recent article in the London *Tablet* two German theologians noted that in the Early Church there were two levels of Christian priesthood: 'Pauline' priests – full-time, celibate and missionary; and what they term 'Corinthian' priests – lay people thoroughly formed in leadership in their parish communities and eventually ordained to be the residential local leaders. These 'Corinthian' priests, they maintain, should be introduced only into active, mature Christian communities.

This somewhat radical proposal could be what the Queensland model is moving towards and what the Southland parishioners are ultimately seeking. It is a development firmly founded in Jesus' teaching on Maundy Thursday. It will, sadly, be resisted by many clergy entrenched in their power and privilege as well as by a blinkered Roman Curia, for whom every innovation seems to be a threat. It may well be the prophetic

M.H.

A New War Begins

Rt. Hon. Sue Bradford M.P.

This afternoon the Americans began the bombing of Baghdad. Within two hours thousands of us around Aotearoa were holding vigils, marching, singing, chanting and praying for peace. On a beautiful autumn evening we think of the ordinary Iraqi people and what they are facing right now, and we cry. At the same time, however, I sense something new and wonderful evolving – a connected global peace movement that will become the largest the world has ever known.

I come from a generation that learned its politics in the struggle to end the Vietnam War. We grew up with the visceral horror of one of the richest, most powerful countries in the world waging war in and on a troubled peasant nation, aided and abetted by our own Government. Back then, it took years before our demonstrations reached mobilisation level. This time round, we were marching in our tens of thousands before the war on Iraq had even begun.

What's different? Some of what is happening now is very familiar – for example, the assumption by the US, UK and Australian Governments that they have a God-given right to enter and wage war on a country far away on the other side of the world, and the blatant role taken by the American military-industrial complex in pushing for and profiting from the war.

However, the exponential speeding up and democratisation of communications in the years since the Vietnam War has meant that we can inform each other, organise and mobilise at speeds unimaginable in the '60s.

We have also learned from the past – some of us anyway. But Bush, Blair and Howard haven't, as they ride roughshod over the United Nations, the very international institution built out of the wreckage of World War 2 to try and stop that kind of blatant aggression from ever happening again.

We can count ourselves lucky this time that we have a Government which hasn't rushed to 'follow the leader' in the same way that Holyoake once did. However, there is an equivocation in Labour's approach to the war on Iraq, which reeks unpleasantly of complicit ambiguity. The Labour Government is content to maintain the frigate *Te Mana* patrolling through the middle of the war zone, even now. They are happy to maintain the Waihopai satellite communications interception station, despite its having been exposed several weeks ago as part of the *Echelon* network used to spy on UN Security Council members in the build-up to the war.

Our Government should be taking unequivocal leadership for peace and against the war. Not so long ago our country had the courage to stand up to the American superpower and become nuclear free. We should find that source of courage again, and unilaterally declare that we reject this war, that we will do nothing that might be interpreted as support, and that we will do everything a small nation can at the international level to work for peace.

I hope by the time you read this the words I have written will have become redundant. After all, Helen Clark and Phil Goff once marched for peace on the same demonstrations I did. However, I didn't see them or any of their colleagues on the streets of Wellington tonight.

The next few days, weeks and months are going to be hard, and hardest of all for the people of Iraq and Palestine and any other places which get dragged in to the conflict. Some Iraqi and Palestinian people are our fellow-citizens, and we need to care for them very much just now.

We need to find within ourselves the strongest, truest ways to work for peace, with no holding back. We must also do what each of us can to persuade our country's leaders to do the same. ■

(Sue Bradford is a Green Party M.P. and is party spokesperson for employment, social services, housing and labour, among other areas)

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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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A 'legitimate' term

How sad that Tui Motu should accept the mindset that entitles an article "Dad – am I 'legitimate'" (*February issue p 31*). Surely all children are a gift of God, precious to God, and the sins of parents, real or imposed, should not be visited on them.

Marriage is a sacrament, a sacred covenant, but we have hardly begun to deal with its implications. The church has, instead, dealt with marriage as a legal contract, with celibate clergy setting the rules.

It would do us no harm to go back to St Paul's practicality, forget whatever may be in their past, and build up the genuine commitment of a Christian couple. But, however we bumble along, let us not implicate children in our petty legalism.

Jill Heenan, Whangarei

We apologise for any offense taken at the use of the word 'legitimate'. The issue itself, however, is one that cannot be avoided - Ed

Clergy Sexual abuse – 1

In his article on Cardinal Laws Jim Neilan raised the matter of secrecy. The sexual abuse of children has probably been part of church life for many generations. Many of the cases coming before the courts involve an abuse which took place 40, 50 even 60 years ago.

I have spoken to some of the survivors of such abuse and the scars of the event have remained in their memory like a demon which could not be exorcised. The question we can now ask is why has this fact been hidden for so long.

Together with that question is the fact that church authorities knew about some, perhaps many, of these cases but chose to use the many resources of the church to prevent the crime becoming public knowledge. Clergy were transferred, payments were made to victims to purchase their silence and church officials closed ranks to hide the abuser. And this raises the same question why has the church been afraid to face the reality of child sex abuse by its clergy?

The motive in both cases was the desire to protect Mother Church. There was

letters

the often unspoken agreement that if news of this abuse reached the outside world it would affect the credibility of the church and hinder its mission. The effect on the children who were abused was minimised and the church moved into damage control. This was the action taken by all churches - it was not an exclusively Catholic response.

But it is also true that the church hid the crime because it was able to do so. This is particularly true of hierarchical and structured churches which operate globally. It became a simple matter to shuffle priests to another parish or even to a foreign mission field where their pattern of abuse could continue in a more discreet fashion.

But the walls which protected church secrecy in the past are crumbling fast. Jim Neilan's argument that the members of the church in Dunedin have a right to propose (and accept) their own Bishop is a sign of these changes which the church must hear.

Ron O'Grady, Auckland

Clergy sexual abuse – 2

Your March issue (on sexual abuse) will invite, hopefully, some honest sharing and informed understanding of human beings and our sexuality. There are a number of critical issues:

• First is the betrayal of trust and the harm done to others by persons in authority. It is difficult to generalise, but I know of persons so abused or hurt who have suicided or been so damaged as to have spent years in turmoil and suffering, abandoned to their confusion and bewilderment. Money or 'sorry' don't hit the spot.

• The priesthood is a vocation, a call from God... "There is no psychological reason why a priest should become a paedophile... " (Desmond O'Donnell's article, *March p 6*). Could there, however, be a theological reason? A sense of vocation for instance?

• Who is to blame.. ? The history of the Inquisition is one of sickening sexual perversion. Today, the media... construe our social environment as much as the Inquisition of old... Today, society at large is cultivated into a state of anxiety: lurking paedophiles, sexual harassment, domestic violence.

• About responsibility, a word not to be seen in O'Donnell's article. "Canon law still makes it very difficult for a bishop or religious superior to laicise even a proven paedophile". (*ibid. p7*) It is hard to believe anyone today could think like this. The church is not a law unto itself. It ought to be a responsible social institution. Sexual abuse of children is a criminal offence.

• The more significant offence is the realisation that church powers deliberately and systematically moved known offenders from one position to another. This is not only a breach of trust but a considered policy. The suffering brought on hapless others by this practice is immeasurable, the damage ongoing.

P Callachor, Dunedin. (*abridged*)

The 'liberalism' of *Tui Motu*

Your journal of liberal Catholicism is snatching souls from the Faith of Holy Mother church. It was by way of a gift to me by some liberal Catholics.

Liberalism and Catholic liberalism have been explicitly condemned by Pope Pius IX. Liberalism is anti-Catholic and rationalistic. Liberalism is a heresy and consequently a mortal sin against faith... It denies the infallible Magisterium of the church and of the Pope, and consequently questions all doctrines and dogmas defined by the papacy in total. The *Syllabus of Errors* of Pius IX is a nightmare to the liberal Catholic because it amounts to a papal condemnation..

'Tui Motu reader', Wanganui

(letter abridged, name supplied)

Tui Motu *seeks to follow the Augustinian dictum :*

"in matters of faith, obedience; in matters of debate, freedom; in all things, charity". If such 'liberalism' is anti-Catholic, then so was St Augustine. - Ed.

Apple Tea

Joy Cowley

It is a hot day in Jordan, and we've been walking the ancient ruins of Petra for hours. They stop us, this Bedouin family camped at the foot of one of the monuments. They offer us tea. The woman unpacks a sooty kettle from their donkey's saddlebag. The man squats in the sand to blow flame into some dry twigs collected by the little girl.

The man's face is lined by the sun, his feet aged by the earth. They are feet with a history. The soles are crusted with hard cracked skin bearing the scars of old wounds. The splayed toes have blackened and broken nails. Miles of dust, thorns and animal dung have left evidence in the hollows.

I think with sudden clarity: "These are the feet of Jesus. These are the feet of his disciples." And in an instant the old Middle Eastern custom of washing a guest's feet has new meaning – cultural and spiritual. I see a man much the age of this Bedouin, and feet like these, bathed with a woman's tears and dried with her hair. Then comes the image of the man tying a towel around his waist – an apron, the garment of servitude – to wash the feet of his disciples.

From the saddlebag, the Bedouin woman takes a bottle of water. She carefully unscrews the cap and pours the water into the kettle, not a drop spilled. In a place where the land and everything on it proclaims thirst, this is precious fluid, the stuff of life. The man places the kettle on the sticks which burn with an almost colourless flame. We sit with our backs against a red and yellow marble wall and with limited language, talk about our families. In the summer these people camp in the ancient ruined city. In winter they live with relatives in the town a few kilometres away.

I look at my white socks and walking shoes. In many ways, I have travelled through life with protected feet. In many ways I do not connect with the immediacy of the road. Moreover, where I come from, water is so abundant that I have lost awareness of its significance in Scripture. Phrases come up with sparkling freshness:*All you who are thirsty... Living water... The water which I shall give you...*

Steam rises from the kettle. The lid of a tin comes off a sweet fruit smell and instant apple tea is spooned into two glasses. Only two? We look at each other. The fire has burned down to grey ash over a small jewel of heat. The kettle is lifted from it and set down beside the woman. Nearby, the grey donkey lifts its lip and brays, perhaps moved by the apple fragrance. The Bedouin woman gets up gracefully, volumes of cloth unfolding like a flower, and presents us with a hot drink, the colour of sunshine.

When Jesus knelt in an apron before his disciples, they protested. He was their Master. They were his followers. Just as they thought that the roles were clearly defined, he reversed them, intro-ducing his beloved friends to the true meaning of giving. Dear Peter, always impetuous, missed the point. Not just my feet, my heart also!

I like Peter. I know him well.

We are thirsty and the tea is delicious, sweet apple flavoured with smoke. As we drink, the couple watch us, their eyes warm with pleasure at our enjoyment. The little girl who has been wandering around the ruins, comes back with a pottery shard in her outstretched hand. She wants us to have it but she is shy. With gestures towards us, she gives the shard to her father who passes it on. It has some ageless design etched on its curved surface.

It is time to go. We thank them, hands on our hearts in the Arab way, praising God in God's Arab name, for their hospitality, and we continue our walk. I carry with me the image of the man's feet, Christ's feet, the feet of his disciples. I see again the water poured into the kettle, poured into the basin, the apron, the towel, the glasses, sticks on a fire. I hear Peter's words.

I like Peter. I know him well.

His enthusiasm is heart-warming, but it sometimes veils the truth. It is a while before I realise that it is our feet that have been washed. ■

Joy Cowley, spiritual guide and internationally known author, lives with her husband Terry in the Marlborough Sounds

The washing of the feet

When all had had their turn to speak, we moved to another room and arranged ourselves in a great circle for the washing of the feet. A carer and a handicapped man sat in the centre of the group, waiting with towel and basin for the ceremony to begin. Then it was the turn of Xavier, the professor from Paris, to speak.

Had we noticed, he asked, that St John had omitted the passage of the Eucharist from his account of the Last Supper? The other gospels related how Jesus had taken the bread and broken it and given it to his disciples, telling them that this was his body, given for them. But not John. Instead he told how Jesus had taken a bowl of water and a towel and washed his disciples' feet.

John had replaced one story with another. Why? Because they conveyed the same message: that life was about sacrifice, about service, and the love of God must be cashed out in love of neighbour. And life is not just blood given once and for all; it is time and energy, tears and laughter, poured out hourly, daily, over a lifetime.

Impatiently, Michel waited, poised to wash the feet of Patrick, the man seated in front of him. I'm not sure how much he understood of what the professor said. His eyes were fixed on the water, and he held the towel in readiness. At last he was allowed to begin.

No silver jug and basin here, and certainly no symbolic or ritual ablution! This was the real thing: a washing-up bowl full of warm, soapy water with Patrick's foot plunged firmly in. Lovingly, Michel soaped it, up and down, down the heel and then gently between each toe.

At last, he was satisfied and lifted Patrick's foot out onto his lap to dry. Gently, he patted the clean skin and separated the toes, drying each one individually. Then the other foot was soaped, rinsed and dried with equal care.

I sat fascinated. Here was the carer being tended by his charge. Here was Michel, the simpleton, showing us how to love. It was not just the gentleness, but the rapt concentration and attention to detail. He was showing us in his own way that people are precious, that the human body is wondrously beautiful, to be honoured and handled with care.

I was reminded of the times I had seen nurses in the hospice, washing an unconscious patient with such tenderness that it breaks my heart. This manner of handling the body is for some an instinctive thing, an expression of love that possesses the carer, driving out natural squeamishness or distaste, and replacing it with an innate sense of the holiness of people, of their infinite worth. ■

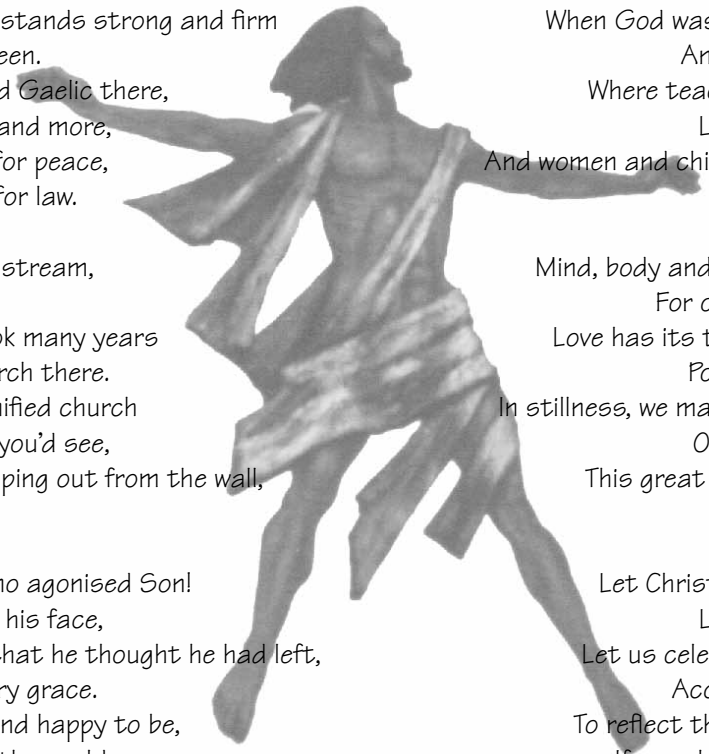
(This passage by **Dr Sheila Cassidy***, about Maundy Thursday celebrated at l'Arche in Trosly Breuil near Paris, is taken from her book* ***Sharing the Darkness*** *pp 47-48, DLT London, 1988. The wall painting "Lavement des pieds" is by Arcabas in the church of St Hugues-de-Chartreuse, Isère, France.)*

The Dancing Christ

In Inverness, in Scotland's north,
There's many a church to be seen.
Their comforting bulk stands strong and firm
When Highland winds blow keen.
There's Methodists here and Gaelic there,
Presbyterians, Free Church and more,
A haven for anyone looking for peace,
For friendship, for succour, for law.

A Catholic church sits by a stream,
Sturdy in brick and square.
A plaque explains why it took many years
For Catholics to have a church there.
Inside itís a formal and dignified church
With the usual things that you'd see,
Save the Dancing Christ leaping out from the wall,
Vital and joyous and free.

Here's no crucified martyr, no agonised Son!
With the light of the sun on his face,
He sets foot on the earth that he thought he had left,
And whirls with extraordinary grace.
This is Christ resurrected and happy to be,
Experiencing with gladness the world.
Out of the tomb with the wind in his hair,
He flings up his arms and he whirls.



Would the clerics in Rome frown on His dance,
As they frowned on Celts' faith of old,
When God was worshipped with natural love
And not with strictures so cold,
Where teachers of faith were family folk,
Like the Rabbis of Jesus's day,
And women and children need not fear such men,
Who lived in a natural way.

Mind, body and spirit surround and equip us,
For our time in this physical place.
Love has its temple in all three dimensions,
Potential for wisdom and grace.
In stillness, we may glimpse the flawless design,
Of the Creator's exquisite plan.
This great Intelligence made no mistake,
In making us woman and man.

Let Christ dance for us all in Inverness,
Let the Celtic faith spread far,
Let us celebrate life in the natural world,
Accept ourselves, just as we are.
To reflect this Creation, we're like mirrors.
If our glass is too dim with life's dust,
Loving practice will better help polish the mind,
Than criticism, fear and mistrust.

Linda Bremford

Vigil

After I had stooped
beneath the lintel
to keep vigil with you
they rolled the stone in place
and the echo of its grinding
fell away into silence
darkness and the smell of
winding cloth.

And knowing that
there is a Sunday
a bud-bursting-out day
is no consolation
for I have fallen too far into
the cold earth.

Only this remained:
why, why
and your cold corpse
an object without any
source or spring within
the epitome of inability.
Yet so sacred

everything was in a hush
between two atoms
of hydrogen
a billion stars
did not breathe or burn
but keened over you body

and in their electromagnetic dance
the void-crossing light waves
paused in place frozen
and cried the why
of your death. Let
my many little deaths
sit down in this cave
and fall one by one like stones
into the pool of your
life ended.

For
this is
the dearest
barest
of being:
to be
with your
holy body
only
and wait
upon the
silence
that you
might keep
with me
and endure
with you
the end.

Peter Rawnsley

Praising God . . . on the Sunshine

Tom Cloher experiences a Third Millennium parish while on holiday in Queensland

itself, based in Caloundra? Here the principal church resides, one of ten parish communities. Five are rural based, and five are urban. Thirteen Masses are involved on a normal Saturday/Sunday. Numbers vary, but never less than three thousand people participate in these Masses each weekend. There are three priests, the youngest is 57 and the oldest is in his 80s. It is clear that there has been and is a major policy thrust to entrust substantial responsibility to each community.

The parish priest assures us that while each community has its special character and gifts, community energy is manifest in all of them. Paradoxically, the energy level seems to be rising as priestly resources are declining. Providentially perhaps, since for the first time in the history of the Queensland dioceses, there is not a single candidate entering the seminary at Banyo in 2003. Caloundra would be one of five Brisbane parishes finding itself in this situation.

In keeping with recognising the individuality of each faith community, there seems a determination for the centre to be at the service of the other nine, and not adopt a higher-than-thou approach. Indicative of this perspective is the equal representation offered each community on the *Caloundra Parish Pastoral Conference*, which meets each month: 2-3 delegates are invited from each, irrespective of the size of the community, and resources at the centre are available to all. These include a full-time parish manager, a director of pastoral care (a layman with theological qualifications), and a full time liturgist (an ex-Mercy sister) due home shortly from Paris. At present there are four full-time lay members of staff, growing to six in 2004.

On a broader scale the entire parish takes responsibility for a unit for the intellectually disabled, family day-care, a hostel for aged care, and a retirement village, so the larger picture is not overlooked.

In an era where pastoral initiatives are becoming necessary in the face of priest-scarcity, there are some aspects of this model on the Sunshine Coast that invite reflection.

• First, the decision to maintain each of these parish communities instead of amalgamating them: this latter option has been the prevailing 'solution' as the priest shortage has become more sharply evident. In this respect the model in question is counter-cultural. It is inspired by the conviction that each faith community, however small – one has 40 people, should retain its individuality, its character, its gifts, and take responsibility for the maintenance and development of its spiritual life. Already there are ten such communities in Caloundra parish, and there are plans to open two more!

• Second, there is an evident willingness to experiment with locating the liturgy. Four of the ten have taken this option: one holds Mass by arrangement in an Anglican church, another at Golden Beach in an Indoor Bowls club, in the Mooloolah Hall for the Mooloolah community, and of course Kawana Community Hall where these observations were triggered. This willingness to settle for options where no church is available, or perhaps even desirable, is an innovative development, and asks whether we have been too tied to the conviction that we must have a church building to be an authentic worshipping community.

• Third, for such a model to thrive there obviously has to be significant handing over of responsibility for pastoral care to lay parish leaders. This might be challenging for priests who still feel that they really need to have their hands on the tiller most of the time as well as for parishioners who are used to such an arrangement. There was no trace of such unease amongst the priests and people we encountered in Kawana, nor we suspect would there be in any of the other nine communities.

Mass at Kawana celebrant Fr John Dwyer

To conclude on a personal note: we found the experience of *Praising God on the Sunshine Coast* quite exhilarating. Just when we were prepared to doze off in typical holiday fashion the people of Kawana Waters would not let us. They did us a favour, and we hope through us

Team leader, Irene Pychtin

Finding a Mass centre and getting there is a minor challenge while on holiday. When my wife Dorothy and I were told that we were not far from a Mass centre in Kawana Waters (Queensland) – the Kawana Community Hall – we felt less than inspired. Usually Mass in a local hall is the kiss of death to liturgical celebration.

Approaching the hall there seems to be a hubbub, a medley of conversation rather like the atmosphere that precedes a wedding. It gets louder as we enter the hall to find about 280 people, most talking to each other animatedly. Moments later it subsides as a considerable procession approaches the altar, about 12 people in all, and somewhere in their midst, a celebrant. That sets the scene for what follows.

Lay participation is abundant. Later we discover that 90 people are on an extended list of volunteers, amongst whom is a sacristan to prepare the altar, crossbearers, a roster clerk, overhead projector opera-tors, hospitality personnel, gift presenters, prayer writers, organ removalists (to take the organ away afterwards), ministers of the Eucharist, the choir (about 12), and a microphone technician.

Mass is celebrated on the same level as the people and the choir. But the stage in the hall is used to maximum effect for the liturgy. Celebrating the Epiphany a veritable host of characters took the stage, proclaiming the event, engaging worshippers, and making liturgy come alive. On each of four Sundays we were confronted by evidence of thorough preparation and unmitigated enthusiasm.

After Mass some 300 individual chairs are stacked, and the hall is gradually vacated. "We have no church", someone said, but not sadly, and with reason, for she sensed as we did that they had a living church. Being curious Catholics we decided to find out why.

The only physical building this community owns is an average size, unpretentious house opposite the hall called the *Good Shepherd Centre.* It is their modest community headquarters. Two years ago, after widespread community consultation, four parishioners were commissioned by the parish priest to undertake leadership responsibilities. One coordinates all activities, liaising with the others; another chooses the music and prepares the choir for Sunday liturgy and other special occasions; another is a maintenance person to ensure that the *Good Shepherd Centre* and its grounds remain in good shape, and a fourth deals with the preparation and organisation of ministers of the Eucharist to visit homes and nursing homes, and to arrange social functions as required. That is a thumbnail reference to the manifold tasks they undertake, and their relationship is clearly interactive.

The *Good Shepherd Centre* hosts a range of meetings each week: two meditation groups, a Mass and discussion each Tuesday morning, Catholic Women's League meetings, St. Vincent de Paul, and sundry administration tasks, among many other things.

Where does all this fit into the parish

The ministry of organ removalist

. . . and the architect of all this . . .

John Dobson was ordained priest in 1971, and became parish priest of Caloundra in 1982. The parish then had 25,000 people. Now there are 85,000 and it is destined to grow to 170,000 in ten years time. Urban growth like that is unprecedented even in Australia. Fr John says: "It's very exciting to be parish priest at this time. There seem to be no models for us to follow. It means going back to our beginnings at the emergence of Christianity.

"We refer to the communities (within the parish) as 'churches' – coming from the Hebrew *qahal*, Latin *ecclesia*, English *assembly*. The church is Eucharist. Everything else, including parish and diocese, is an administrative abstraction that can be changed – and is changed – by boundaries. Church is eucharistic community in its prime form. Everything else is subservient to that.

"The role of the parish is to support the community in Eucharist and not be controlling. It is the difference between the servant model and an imperial, controlling, authoritative model, which is our immediate history. I believe that the church needs to be *pastoring, not policing*."

The Coloundra ministry team consists of the three priests, one religious sister, and four full-time lay people – to become six next year. One of the new positions is a full-time trainer and co-ordinator of chaplaincy/pastoral care for the sick and aged. By the end of 2004 it is expected there will be as many as 800 sick and age-care beds within the parish. ■

The Spirituality of the Priest

Neil Darragh

When I was a young seminarian in Christchurch in the early 1960s we went one day to a liturgical reception in the cathedral for a newly arrived Apostolic Delegate. This occasion also served as a social gathering for the priests of the Christchurch diocese, many of whom had travelled long distances, and who gathered beforehand in the presbytery adjacent to the cathedral. The noisy social chatter of priests outside the cathedral dropped abruptly to a pious solemnity as the splendidly robed Delegate arrived, and the procession of priests preceded him into the cathedral in a wave of crumpled surplices and a billowing aroma of stale cigarette smoke.

As a retired Southland farmer sitting behind us later observed: the clergy are like cow manure; spread around the paddock it does quite a lot of good, but all in one place it's just a smelly heap.

This new value was first signalled in the liturgy. During the 1960s the liturgical language of the Latin Rite in the Catholic Church changed from Latin to the vernacular. Other signals of a change in spirituality quickly followed: a change in the interior design of churches that emphasised closeness in community; a change in the priests' attire from Roman collar and suit to a style of dress which did not obviously mark the priest as different from everyone else; presbyteries that were less monastic and more welcoming to visitors.

Underlying all this was a change to a spirituality that *valued change*. This spirituality was now concerned with the 'development' of both individuals and nations, and with 'liberation', again both for individuals and for oppressed socio-economic sectors. So, refusing to change and accepting the status quo were evaluated negatively.

The question of authority

The chain of authority had played an important part in the organisation of church life especially for priests. Vatican II (1962-65) put that chain of authority into question simply by deciding in favour of changes forbidden by previous authorities.

An important event in the questioning of church authority was the papal encyclical *On the Regulation of Birth* (*Humanae vitae*, 1968). This encyclical was an exercise in authority, not an exercise in reason. The result was not so much that people then stopped practising artificial birth control as that many people stopped believing in the authority of the Pope and the Vatican offices to make such decisions for them.

Sacramental practice

The reformed liturgy of the Mass (Eucharist) which followed the Second Vatican Council encouraged much greater participation of people in the liturgy. From being a mysterious activity of priests, the Mass became a ceremony in which people could actively participate. Most priests were enthusiastic about people's participation, but few were able, in the last resort, to relinquish control over liturgical practice in the Eucharist.

A second shift was the growing influence of Scripture. The Sunday (and often weekday) homily was now a reflection on the Scripture readings rather than an explanation of Church teaching. The increase in Mass attendance and participation, with an accompanying decrease in many other devotional practices, was largely a result of decisions made at the Second Vatican Council.

At the same time there was the rapid drop in participation in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Where the sacrament of Reconciliation (or Confession) had been a prominent feature of New Zealand Catholicism, it very rapidly, and by some kind of silent conspiracy without public discussion, fell off the list of common Catholic practices.

Priests had been affected in deep ways by their close contact with both people's sinfulness and their reconciliation, with guilt and its release, with the human struggles of many people including priests themselves. Much of this intimate contact

Warnings like this did not deter me from becoming a priest. They did teach me though to prefer the earthy smell of reality above the odour of sanctity when it comes to giving an account of the lives of priests.

Priests ordained in New Zealand up to the 1960s were entering into a valued role of service in a well-structured organisation committed to stability and sanctioned by a longstanding religious tradition. The core of this role could be described as that of *mediator*.

The priest as mediator

The priest's role as *mediator* was understood as bringing the saving love of Christ to people. Priests did this principally through administering the sacraments of the Mass, Confession, and Baptism, but also through the sacraments of Extreme Unction and Marriage. Important also both within and outside these sacraments were the functions of preaching and teaching.

The priest's role combined both that of servant to his people and father to his people. He needed to be in close contact with the people he served, but the needs of his office also required him to be in some ways set apart from the rest of the people. Obedience to the bishop, and celibacy, were the most important means of achieving this, and this apartness was marked and reinforced by clerical dress and residence in a presbytery.

This *mediator* view of the priest's role has never quite disappeared, but during the 1960s and '70s two other views of the priest's role became common. These could be described as the model of *pastor* and that of *community leader*.

The priest as pastor

The model of *pastor* maintains most of the ingredients of the *mediator* model, but the emphasis is different. In the model of *pastor*, the central feature of the priest's spirituality is expressed in the New Testament image of the shepherd who tends and cares for God's sheep. In this model, the central feature of the priest's spirituality, rather than that of *mediator*, is one of pastoral care. Pastoral care implies a broad care for people's spiritual, emotional, psychological, and to some degree social needs. Pastoral theology, which usually took the form of a combination of theology and psychology, became prominent in the training of priests as this model became more popular during the 1970s.

The priest as community leader

In the model of *community leader* priests are seen as leaders of local Catholic communities, and from this derive their other functions. Developing community here becomes one of his major responsibilities. The priest is seen as engaging with other church members in a common task.

The priest is an enabler, a resource, a unifier, and an arbiter of many other ministries. This spirituality requires that priests have good communication skills, that they have deep respect and love for people, and that they be able, where necessary, to challenge people to change. The priest's role in liturgy is also seen in terms of leadership rather than mediation.

The priest as religious professional

There is one further model that deserves notice – that of *religious professional*. In this model priests are seen as persons with special training and knowledge in religious beliefs and ceremonial. As a professional grouping the priests have a distinctive spirituality or subculture, i.e. values, norms, symbols and ritual behaviour shared by the members. They are integrated into modern society as caretakers of religious knowledge in a way parallel to doctors as caretakers of health knowledge, lawyers as caretakers of legal knowledge etc.

The change in priests' spirituality indicated above was a change from a fairly stable spirituality to several overlapping ones. This change was accompanied by, perhaps even caused by, the larger context – changes in society at large, movements in the church, and events within the priesthood itself.

Changes in society at large

The 1960s was a decade when *change* itself became valued. Traditional authority gave way to a new accent on freedom and individuality. This was a double-edged sword for priests. On the one hand the traditional lines of authority of the Catholic Church were challenged by the desire for change taken on by Catholics as much as anyone else in New Zealand society. From a position of a poor minority, Catholics shifted into the mainstream of society in social and economic terms.

The feminist movement identified the injustice of patriarchy and instigated changes in society that recognised the equality and difference of women and men. Some priests, like other men in New Zealand society, were content to regard feminism as a passing fancy and their own maleness as normative. For many, the essentially male spirituality of Catholic priests looked unbalanced and unjust in a church composed of both women and men. They were caught in the conflict of a spirituality that advocated a just society but was here condoning unjust structures within their own institution.

The later part of the 20th century also saw a large increase in the number of people involved in the social services professions. These were trained specifically for, and gradually took over from clergymen and doctors, many of the tasks in the area of counselling and trauma support, e.g. marriage breakdown, grief, guilt, life-stage transitions, childcare, sickness, depression, preparation for death. As many of these services became provided by trained and paid professionals, priests found both that they could (and often should) refer people in need to professionals and that fewer people called on the priest for such services. Priests partly felt relief from the burden of bearing other people's distress and partly felt demoralised by the diminishment of what had been a major feature of their commitment to priesthood.

Movements in the Church

The value of change

Catholic spirituality in the mid-20th century valued tradition. Rather suddenly, during the 1960s, that spirituality began to value change rather than stability.

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▷▷ with people's inner lives, their fragility and their courage, passed to counsellors and therapists of various kinds.

Fr Darragh's article goes on to deal other issues pertinent to the spirituality of priests today. Please refer to the original article (see below) for these sections. The issues are: Social Justice; Ecumenism; Maori Spirituality; Ethnic Diversity; Immigration; Diminishing Numbers of Priests; Priestly Celibacy; Prayer Life

Some contemporary problems

Sexual abuse

Victims of sexual abuse or other kinds of professional misconduct by priests have been prepared to speak out in recent years more than they ever did before. The traumatic effects of these abuses on both adult and especially child victims are now better known and more understood. But these are not the only effects.

Because some priests are clearly guilty of sexual abuse there has been a shadow of suspicion cast over *all* priests. More than that, the possibility of being accused of sexual abuse has had a dramatic affect on the priests' ministry. The easy, perhaps naive, relationships priests had with children and young people, in for example, schools, sports, camps, youth groups, etc. have now become nearly impossible without strict protocols and explicit attention to clear boundaries. At a time when the formality that had existed between priest and people in the past was becoming more familiar and more casual, the misconduct of some priests has reversed all this in a cruel twist. A spirituality of more informal relationships that suited the style of New Zealand priests has become quickly surrounded by protocols and fears.

Aloneness

The New Zealand diocesan priests had always regarded their local parish or local congregation as their primary Christian community. It is mainly from this both intimate and structural contact with people in the local community that the diocesan priest's spirituality has found its resources, suffered its most desperate failures, and undergone pressure to change.

The priests' spirituality is also affected by the brotherhood of priests and by the experience of *aloneness*. Priests were used to visiting one another for any number of reasons and could almost always expect hospitality in another priest's house. But it has become harder to find anyone at home. Single priest presbyteries, increased ministry demands outside the presbytery, increased mobility in general, the rarity of housekeepers, and the advent of the answerphone meant priests are less at home to other priests as well as to parishioners.

Moving ahead

In the 1970-80s it was possible to talk of a new emerging spirituality mainly among younger priests and a conservative spirituality held mainly by older priests. Today it is simpler and more accurate to say there are two overlapping spiritualities.

For one, the core value is belonging to the 'presbyterate' (the order of priests) within the structures of the church. At its best this is a sense of *belonging* and common purpose with other priests. At worst it is the maintenance of a clerical caste within the church with special powers and privileges.

For the other, the core value is *service*. In its best interpretation this is a dedication to working for the well-being of people both within the church and beyond it. At worst, it is an individualistic attachment to doing good.

Intersecting with these is a third kind of priestly spirituality often associated with priests simply focused on *survival*. This spirituality encourages priests to retain their position as priests even under great personal stress and provide basic services such as the sacraments as best they can.

Most important is that area where priests combine the two values of *belonging* and of *service*. They combine both a sense of common purpose with other priests and a dedication in service to other people. Some of the changes that would alter the situation of the priests' life and ministry are largely outside the control of priests. The diminishing number of priests in the New Zealand Church, for example, is the result of a decision by central Church authorities not to ordain women or married men. The patriarchal structures of church management remain a constant threat to the spirituality of priests.

The key factor in priestly spirituality that could open the door to a new future is the use of power *not as dominating but as enabling*. On the whole New Zealand priests see their priesthood as a ministry rather than a status. A shift in power would mean deliberately cultivating a spirituality that sees ministry as *team ministry* where the priest's role is one of several complementary ministries.

Not many of us, however, know how to take the concrete steps that would lead us towards shared ministry, shared decision-making, shared preaching and teaching, and shared liturgical leadership.

If we could accomplish some of this, we would find I think that the resources for revival are strong and deep. But they lie not so much within the ranks of the priests themselves as in the energy of contemporary church members and the ancient multi-cultural traditions of the church. ■

Note: Most comments made here apply to diocesan priests rather than to priests who belong to religious orders.

Tomorrow's church

Soon country parishes will be lucky to have Mass more than once a month. Otago and Southland Catholics meet and look at possible solutions

If you read the story of the feeding of the 5000 in the Gospel, the disciples say: "there's nothing here – except two loaves and five fish". What is our theology, asks Sr Christina Neunzerling, one of scarcity or of abundance? We may have a scarcity of priests and professionals – but we have an abundance of laity!

Our job is not to make the present church comfortable but to make the future possible, as Joan Chittester once said. Parishes must find and set free the resources they have. We expend huge resources on a tiny number of men in the National Seminary. But are we prepared to sponsor lay people to be trained from their own parishes?

Leadership is necessary in the church, but we have to change our thinking on how leadership happens. It can no longer reside in the 'lone presider'. That will not meet the needs of our time. We have to shift focus towards a gospel vision of the reign of God. In this vision leadership will not be found in a single person but within the community.

Leadership, therefore, must reside in a team which works together to draw out the gifts and talents of the whole com-munity. Blaming priests for the poor quality of parish life does them a disservice. What we should be doing instead is obeying Christ's bidding to his disciples: You *yourselves* give them to eat.

In the Hokianga where I work, there will shortly be only one priest. My commission there is to give resources to the catechists so that when there are no longer priests and religious, they can carry on. After three years the people are starting to lead the liturgy of the Word themselves and provide really good reflections. There will be resistance to moves like this, but in the Gospel Jesus says: "Leave the dead to bury their dead". Get on with it, he says! In many Third World countries leaders are trained on the spot, in their parishes.

The future of the church, I think, lies in the formation of small groups and in the equal participation of men and women in leadership. Out of 50 people attending the Gore meeting, the vast majority are women. The new model of leadership is *not* replacing patriarchy with matriarchy. Men and women have to work together in partnership. The unity needs to spring from this diversity, not, say, from feminist theology.

But the parish leader of the future will need to come from that community – and perhaps be its leader for three years only. We could be 'ordaining' people to look after the liturgy of the Word or engage in the ministry of hospitality. I am using 'ordain' here in a different sense. Instead of the 'ordained priest' leading everything, what will happen will be a sharing of ministries.

How is such a change brought about? By education, reading and the provision of good material. It starts with small groups. The group takes on a project which has within it a call to justice. There is action and reflection, and the process will find its own leadership. Periodically these groups will come together for Eucharist and will share their riches.

A danger is that community leaders will burn out. They have to learn to let go. Jesus taught us – *by leaving us*. He promised to be 'with us', but it was going to be in a different way. If Jesus had hung around on earth forever, probably the church would never have got off the ground!

Christina Neunzerling RSJ is part of the leadership team in Panguru, Northland.

We should learn from other denominations who call married, older people and train them to look after parishes. It may be only for a short time. A person may feel himself or herself called to give three years to a particular parish. In justice, this person will need to be paid. And it may be that some lay leaders will have to keep a part-time job to supplement their incomes.

A parish may decide it needs, say, a youth worker. Then it must find funds to support that person. Part of the solution is to network resources with other parishes. Don't expect one person to do everything. Otherwise you will overwork that person the same way as priests have been overworked.

In remote areas Eucharist will happen less frequently, but parish life will continue in other activities. Mass is not the only occasion where we can be nourished. The people have to take responsibility for their own adult education-in-faith and not rely on the priest's homily to do it all.

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▷▷ When people move away from looking to be spoonfed, they start taking responsibility for their own relationship with God. It's important not to be tempted to leave, but stay within the mainstream and use one's gifts for others in the building up of community. Jesus stayed within the Judaic system. He began his movement of reform from within.

But staying doesn't mean remaining static. At Emmaus, Jesus was prepared to walk the wrong way with the disillusioned disciples. He explained to them why the mess had to happen. When they eventually did share Eucharist, they said: did not our hearts burn within us *on the road*?. Then they turned and went back to join the others.

We have a wonderful heritage. Christianity is more than just squeaky clean moral living. It exists to transform the world and its structures, and it starts precisely at the patch where we are. And that must be our vision. ■

Sr Christina gave this interview at a rural parishes gathering, 14-16 March

Gathering in Gore to look at rural resources. (*l to r*) Colin Bellett, Maureen Cummings, Susan Cowley, Lyn Grove (and a junior parishioner)

people in the parish of great faith. My main focus has been senior CCD and children' liturgy. We enjoy the catechetical days together, but they are rather one-off. Access to suitable books and reading *Tui Motu* certainly help me." Lyn also finds the other denominations in Riverton very supportive. She likes house Masses, which lead to study and discussion.

Susan Cowley has been organist at Tuatapere for 23 years and running education-in-faith for 15. "It's a lonely job," she says. "People in the area come together easily for leisure activities but are reluctant to do so for church things. It's difficult to attract people to help with education-in-faith programmes. Parish council work tends to fall on the shoulders of the few." Susan recognises that she is getting near burn-out.

Maureen Cummings has worked with the rural advisory group for some years. She feels her gift is administration. "I see a need for people to be re-energised. They run out of energy, support. The rural education group exists to try to do this. For myself, the time on the Synod and also doing CFLE (Catholic Family Life Education) certainly helped 'fill my cup'. But at the end of being on the Diocesan Pastoral Council, I felt I'd had enough."

In general discussion various points came out. There are resourceful people in the community, but they need to be discovered and brought in. There needs to be a programme for back up; and a 'ginger group' to find out the needs and then try to meet them. A weekend such as this Gore one could be the catalyst. It will need time and money to achieve. The commitment is there.

In rural areas, communities are isolated. Sr Maureen Cahill, the Rural Advisor, is a good resource person, but she can only be in one place at a time. She needs a group built around her. When a priest is withdrawn, what happens is that funding goes with the priest! A facilitator is needed to co-ordinate the efforts of many talented people. That would need funding to gather resources, books and people.

Are the priests letting go of power?

The priests are generally co-operative, although some are not entirely happy about letting go. The ideal would be for more cross-pollination of ideas. The priests are now facing reality and giving more leeway than five years ago. But if the people aren't forthcoming – which is how it is in some places, then the priest is forced to do more himself.

Are people more willing to be involved?

Some will 'buy in'. Not everyone is confident to go further. People can't be pushed beyond the level of faith they are at. The trick is to involve more people. The group felt better now at identifying and using people's gifts. Small numbers are an advantage here.

The church tends to put too much money into buildings and not enough into the formation and resourcing of people. There are some people in the

Tui Motu interviewed four people from different parishes attending the Gore weekend. Colin Bellett has for 15 years helped organise eucharistic liturgies in Arrowtown every alternate week. Susan Cowley is from Tuatapere which has a eucharistic liturgy on the first and fifth Sundays each month. She describes herself as a 'one-man-liturgy-committee'. Lyn Grove and her husband Bill help prepare a liturgy on second Sundays in Riverton. Maureen Cummings is from Lawrence where an elderly, retired priest still celebrates Mass for them each week, but it is a 'temporary reprieve'.

How well are they coping with these liturgies?

Colin Bellett is one of a team of six who are responsible in Arrowtown. The people are generally happy with this, he says – even the visitors and they have lots of those. "As we prepare, we grow in our faith development".

Colin prepares himself for the task through reading. Rural weekends like this one are really helpful. "But we have to use our own initiative. We are left largely to our own resources," Colin says. "The clergy don't tend to worry too much about how it goes. A sign of trust perhaps – but we would appreciate more support.

"I'm content to lead eucharistic liturgies. But I don't feel I have the creativity to put them together. We need the creativity which some people have and the rest of us could learn from. The 'red book' we have been given provides a structure, but it is also restricting. It is not particularly user-friendly."

Lyn and her husband Bill who is the local doctor have been in Riverton for four years. "We are supported by Sr Frances Gaffaney, and we have some

Wellington launches out

project each year. Examples are running a parish First Communion programme or organising a parish mission. They are guided in this by mentors and are expected to reflect theologically on how the project is going. At the end of the year the trainees gather and share their learning with one another.

The origins of the whole process may be traced to the diocesan Synod back in 1988. The *Launch Out* programme itself has been in preparation for four or five years. It began with ten participants in 2002, and nine of these have gone on to Year Two. This year another 11 have started. The trainees are told there is no absolute guarantee that at the end they will be employed. Nevertheless the intent-ion is that a pastoral leader, once appointed, will be paid by the diocese and will be under contract. The diocese funds their spiritual formation, but the academic courses they pay for themselves. The fees may amount to $300 or $400, and in some cases this is subsidised by the person's home parish.

Anyone applying to join the *Launch Out* scheme must have a reference from their parish priest along with three other referees. All are interviewed by a panel of four which includes Cardinal Williams and his assistant, Bishop John Dew. Those accepted for the course are then assisted by Joan in the individually-tailored design of their year's programme. Each stage is carefully evaluated both by themselves and by diocesan personnel.

Joan has been delighted that the first-year group achieved a pleasing sense of group identity. She also noted their personal growth through doing the programme. She is very enthusiastic by the results so far. "It's new and exciting," she says, "a pioneering and ground-breaking enterprise for the New Zealand church." And yes, the programme could be made open, she thinks, to applicants from other dioceses. ■

Launch Out is a two-year training programme, started in 2002 in the Wellington Archdiocese. It is part of a two-pronged strategy to meet the problems arising from an increasing shortage of priests and trained religious. *Launch Out* aims to train and prepare lay leaders. Alongside it is a diocese-wide consultation process to provide data for a complete restructuring of the Arch-diocese. It is anticipated that Wellington will be divided into pastoral areas consisting of a cluster of perhaps three or four adjacent parishes. These may eventually be staffed by one priest and some pastoral leaders trained by the *Launch Out* scheme.

Tui Motu recently interviewed Joan McFetridge (*pictured right*), who is Director of *Launch Out*. It is a two-year training programme, says Joan, for training these leaders who eventually will work alongside diocesan priests. In this way the existing parish identities will be kept intact as far as possible, even with fewer clergy.

There are three parts to the programme. The first is a study component, consisting of courses on Scripture, Theology, Pastoral Ministry and leadership skills. These courses are approved by NZQA and so are 'portable'. Alongside this the trainees also undergo spiritual formation: each has a spiritual director and attends prayer days and a weekend retreat during the year.

Thirdly, each trainee has to design and undertake a pastoral

Rejoice in the L

Easter is a time for great Church music.Tui Motu discusses
and David Burchell, Director of Music, St

Is there a tension between liturgy as a prayerful action and music as an art form, which can also become entertainment?

Colin: Liturgy can become entertainment too. I'm very aware of the theatrical nature of liturgy and liturgical music! A congregation can sit back comfortably and listen to melodious sounds rolling off from a well-trained choir and not be involved very much in the liturgy at all.

Music of any form can be corrupted in its use or can be used inappropriately. I'm sometimes conscious, with St Augustine, that beautiful plainsong is simply 'carrying me away'. If I simply let my soul have a good bath in beautiful church music, perhaps I need to ask myself what I'm up to.

Tui Motu: *Do you think Augustine was still infected with the old Manichean thing against taking pleasure in something beautiful?*

Colin: Wesley would sometimes stop a congregation in full 'flight' and ask them if they really knew what it was they were singing. Enthusiasm can likewise carry you away.

David: As a musician you have no control over the mind of the congregation. What might take some closer to God may carry others further away. The music may become a distraction. The fact is that there will be many people who come to the Anglican Cathedral principally to hear the music. You just have to hope that through the music they'll be inspired and brought closer to God, even though at the time for them it may be little more than pleasant entertainment.

When you choose music for the liturgy you try to relate it with other elements of the liturgy: either the theme of the day or the point in the service which you are at. Thus, during Communion you might select a piece which is contemplative. Or you choose a piece which relates to the Word of God which has been heard that day.

The two principal Anglican services, Eucharist and Choral Evensong, are pretty well 'set in stone'. The musical elements are well established. The texts are there for you, so the music is used to articulate the texts. The style varies hugely from plainchant through Renaissance polyphony to elaborate baroque Masses.

You can also match the music to the mood of the season. So, for Ash Wednesday you choose something spacious and contemplative. For high festivals you might go for the boisterous and exuberant.

When musicians show they are enjoying themselves it raises the mood! I think it would be narrow-minded to think music is not 'there to be enjoyed!' In choosing music, I aim to try to find a balance.

Colin: Historically the church has been afflicted by the notion that only the 'word' can confirm the proper reflection; that music is at best a support and at worst a subversion of this primary purpose! There have been traditions in which churches have simply excluded music altogether on the grounds that it is dangerous.

The other issue is 'how much art should there be in liturgical music?' Should it be spontaneous and unrehearsed, or should we allow the richness of musical structure and skill to take us where we want to go?

Tui Motu: *Is Bach an example of that?*

David: Bach was a 'one off'! At his best Bach has that sense of introspection and focus on the text, yet he can involve many performers and the music may be technically very demanding.

Tui Motu: *You have to be brought up with his music to fully appreciate it.*

David: People outside the church or outside classical music tradition neither understand nor like Bach. Someone said to me recently they would rather poke their eye out than go and listen to him! Another challenge for me is to strike a balance between the familiar and what is innovative. A new interpretation of a familiar text will shed new light on it for someone. People will sit up and take notice of the unfamiliar.

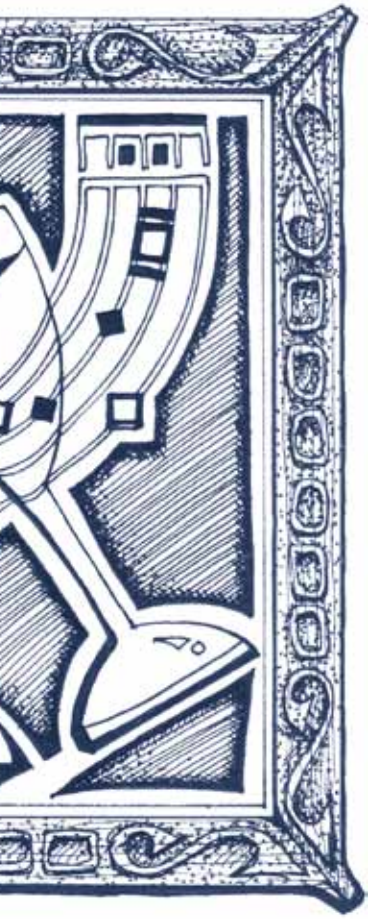
Colin: I agree totally with that. It is the musician's responsibility to shape, to open, to educate. The wonderful richness of the musical tradition must not simply be allowed to stop dead at the compositions of 100 years ago. The John Taverners and the Avo Parts of today will be loved in future years for their skills and their ability to take people to God. But they will never get a chance if we simply sit listening to the thousandth performance of the *Messiah*. Not that I have anything against the *Messiah*.

Tui Motu: *Can we now turn to the involvement of the congregation and specifically to the writing and singing of hymns?*

Colin: If we focus, say, on Easter music, then the same tensions are present that I've just talked about. The words you compose may satisfy the consumers because they always have, but they

ord always . . .

this with Colin Gibson, Methodist hymn-writer,
Paul's Cathedral, Dunedin



may say nothing to them about their contemporary life. The singers will stop thinking about the words they are saying because they are so familiar. You can write new texts which are not 'new' texts at all.

But the hymn gives you an opportunity to awaken the powers of thought as well as the emotions. It has always been a teaching, thinking, educational medium rather than simply doing the comfort job – although it can do that as well!

So you can compose a new hymn which addresses the tougher side of the Easter experience. You thereby relate the ancient Easter theme to a contemporary challenge. Such a new text can pick up attitudes of behaviour, or war, or suffering, and put it in the context of the sufferings of Christ. Otherwise church music simply continues to be just another beautiful bath, a happy memory to distract us while we go on struggling with our lives. My concern, in writing an Easter hymn, is that it will say something to the people sitting in the pews and connect to their lives now.

The hymn*(below)*was in response to Christchurch churches which asked for a hymn touching on contemporary city life. So the crowd boo the crucifixion parade as well as cheer the donkey coming in. That is the way crowds act, now as then – and we make up that crowd.

Tui Motu: *So the hymn writer has a great deal of freedom.*

Colin: There is another side to that because by setting the hymn in a contemporary context the writer may be disabling it for future generations. By becoming particular and local you are doing what the liturgy seldom does.

David: The *now, here we are* hymns meet with the most resistance from choirs and congregations alike, because they challenge them to think. They may welcome a new text – but perhaps not if it challenges them to say "look here!". The hymn is a powerful tool. But we are also cumbered with hymns that should not have stood the test of time and yet are still in circulation.

For me some of the finest old texts date back to the 11th and 12th Centuries. They seem timeless in a way that 19th Century hymns are not.

Colin: It takes about a hundred years for the sifting process to take place. Every hymn was once new and struck a congregation for the first time. If they are still with us it's because they mattered to the singers then. But things that 'matter' change.

We need new hymns because we live in a new world. Yet people often prefer to be bathing in the afterglow of the world before: the myth that everything was easier and people were all well-behaved and came to church.

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Easter City

For the crowd, another busy day,
in the usual careless city way;
three cheers for the man on the donkey ride,
three boos for the ones to be crucified.
But the city can never be the same,
the Christ has come, and Christ is slain
on the edge of the city.

In the stillness of the early dawn,
in a peaceful garden, hope is born;
and Peter is running to an empty tomb,
the door is unlocked in an upper room.
And the city will never be the same,
for God in Christ has overcome
death's power in the city.

On the margins, still they come and go
in the restless city s ebb and flow;
we watch or we pass on the other side,
yet these are the souls for whom Christ died.
And the city can never be the same,
for love's reborn each Easter dawn
in the heart of the city.

Welcome all, let none be turned away,
let the cup be spiced and the trumpet play
for the outcast found and the prisoner freed,
for justice done and an end to need.
And the city shall never be the same,
for we will set ourselves to do
Christ's work in the city.

Colin Gibson (1998)

(A hymn for the season of Lent commissioned by the inner city churches of Christchurch, New Zealand)

Tui Motu: *Can there not also be an opposite response where only the new and trendy is acceptable?*

David: The trouble is that it is not because someone has sought and found good new texts and good tunes which will uplift people – but because "there's this new book out, and we ought to use it because they're using it down the road". Sets of hymnbooks are costly and it puts an enormous burden on the musician if he or she has to produce a hymnal 'on the run'.

In the Anglican church we are still somewhat stuck with *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. Cathedrals and large parish churches are often the slowest to move despite the fact that they probably have better resources.

Tui Motu: *When a person enters a church they often seek first the familiar, the beautiful, the aesthetically pleasing. They need to be comfortable first. Isn't the music part of that comforting, settling-down process?*

David: True – you have to make a congregation feel comfortable before you start challenging them, or else they won't come again.

Colin: The forces of conservatism are very powerful. We all prefer what we have known. It's a miracle that new hymns are ever written.

I once composed a hymn called *These hills where the hawk flies lonely*. The context was an invitation from the Conference of Churches to write a hymn on "contextualisation of theology in Aotearoa New Zealand". The phrase is burned on my brain, and my first reaction was: "Ridiculous! How can ordinary people get away from language like that and start thinking in images which will help them understand the thinking behind it?"

Then I reflected on our love and care for the natural world. That, I thought, was 'doing theology' – actually being the servant of God's creation. From that moment on composing became a joy, because I had unlocked the riddle the Commission had given me. I wrote my hymn to help people celebrate what they really are doing in their communities, to 'act' or 'do' theology.

As regards music, I drew on a recent experience of going out on the ocean at Kaikoura to experience the whales. And I thought of the great sea pieces of Rimsky Korsakov. New Zealand's love affair of the sea which surrounds us is part of our spiritual experience.

A congregation which sings that hymn may not understand my thinking, but I hope they will feel my inspiration because that is the way music works. The text seemed to fall into the 'surge' of the ocean. That was very satisfying.

It has been sung frequently, even in America. The images translated well. If the hymn speaks of something important in a way which is memorable, you can take it to any community of people.

Tui Motu: *Why do you think Taizé music is so popular? It seems to have successfully crossed the boundaries of nationality and denomination.*

David: It's simple, it's repetitious: a few well-chosen words for a few well-chosen chords. It enables people who may not be particularly musical to lose themselves in the music. They aren't worried about what the next note is or how high it's going to go.

At the Cathedral people are more used to listening than joining in – and that rather misses the point. I think Taizé music is most likely to succeed in a small community which comes to pray together regularly.

Colin: Taizé music at best takes you inward to a spiritual experience. In a busy, noisy populous world, that's a great experience to have. The Brothers may work during the day in the slums of Sao Paolo, but they aren't singing the chants while they are in the streets. They need to replenish their spiritual resources later because they're so active during the day.

Tui Motu: *Finally, tell us something, David, about the St John Passion, which is shortly to be performed in Dunedin as part of the Lenten music.*

David: It's a phenomenal work. The tradition in Bach's day was to sing the Passion on Good Friday. He was innovative: he brought in musical instruments and the whole text was sung. Bach took the dialogue and the interaction with the crowd, soldiers and Jews.

He wrote a dramatic interplay. But at key points the action stops for a time of reflection: either a personal reflection by a soloist or by a chorale where the congregation joins in. This was a way of bringing the Passion story to the congregation as directly as he could.

The *St John Passion* tends to be used as much as a concert piece as a religious performance. We will sing it in German and sing it as an art work. The English translations are not good, especially the chorales. That cuts out the 'congregation' – but they often don't know the tunes anyway.

It is still a wonderfully dramatic work. The intensity, passion and the joy shine through the music. It's a pity it isn't better known because I think it is a finer piece musically than Handel's *Messiah*.

Colin: Singing the *Passion* in German is an interesting proof that pure music will do the job. It is the music that is speaking to the people.

It's demanding but, then, all good art is demanding.

Letting go

Paul Andrews

Take yesterday for instance," said Fiona. "I came home from school and straight to the kitchen to talk to Mum. It had been a mixed sort of a day, good and bad, and I just wanted to sort it out with her. You know what happened?" *Watch your uniform in the kitchen,* Mum said. *It will pick up splashes and spots here. Better go up and change. And while you're up there, would you just take out your books and get down to your homework. You really need to put in three hours a night. I'm worried about how much study you are putting in. Really I don't want you going out to a disco on Saturday with the exam coming up.*

"You know something?" said Fiona, "Mum says she's glad to see me, but it doesn't feel like that. It feels as though I just give her ulcers. I'm a bundle of worries for her. It's not like that with Mike, my boy-friend. When he sees me he's happy. He doesn't worry about spots on my uniform, or hours of study. We're both working for the Junior Cert and we are always being nagged about that at school. When we see one another it is a relief from all that worry. I wish it was like that with mum."

Another young woman, Ciara, now in her twenties, was deeply attached to her parents. It was natural for her to ring home and share both good news and bad. One day last summer she rang home with good news. She had passed her final college exam with honours, and had interviewed for two jobs, a permanent one in the public service, and a more interesting one in a reputable charity. She had gone for the job that interested her more, and told first her father, then her mother, the good news that she had been accepted.

Her Dad congratulated Ciara with real pleasure. There would be many more forks in her career path. She had taken this one boldly and followed her own bent. He offered some help on managing her finances, and called his wife to the phone.

Suddenly instead of congratulations Ciara heard words of worry. *Are you sure you really thought about this?* said mother. *There aren't many safe pensionable jobs going today, and you never know how the economy will go. How will you travel to this new job? You will be on the roads more, in danger. I think you may have jumped into this too fast. Maybe you should go back and reconsider it.…* And so on. The good woman thought she was being helpful and thoughtful. In fact she was unable to step out of her own state of constant anxiety to enjoy the flavour of her daughter's joy. Ciara knew what she was doing far better than her mother. She had held a job for years before going to college, and appreciated the difference between a secure but boring occupation and challenging work that involved you totally. Her mother's reaction infuriated her.

Dear mothers, none of us would have survived if you had not worried about us. A baby daughter changed your life. She filled your conversation, hung out of you, wanted into your bed in the morning, needed you to think of her body, sleep, food, warmth, clothes, dangers. She drew out of you an energy, responsiveness and love that you did not imagine yourself capable of. For her you were larger than life, immortal. You must survive, never get sick. You were the universe for her.

How that changed as she grew into her teens! She reduced you to life-size, then cut you down still further, took you off your pedestal. She grew tall, sexy, quick-witted, in touch. She felt she could take on the world, didn't want to know about bedtime, claimed she could plan her own life, take her own risks, spar with her friends, share their passions, spurn your advice but quote the same message with awe when it was uttered by some young idiot in her group. She started to earn money, plan her own holidays, pull away from the family. Once you could do everything for her. Now she seemed to need you for nothing except bed and board.

Grown up, she needs to know that you have a life of your own without her. Now that she needs you less, she does not want to find that you need her more. We have all watched mothers' pain when they find themselves redundant. They have succeeded as mothers but have not been able to shed the habit of worrying about their children.

Shedding a habit of worrying does not mean shedding love. May Sarton put it well:

If I can let you go as trees let go
Their leaves, so casual, one by one;
If I can come to know what they do know,
That fall is the release, the consummation,
Then fear of time and the uncertain fruit
Would not distemper the great lucid skies
This strangest autumn, mellow and acute…
Love will endure – if I can let you go.

Fr Paul Andrews is a psychotherapist based in Dublin. He has visited and worked in New Zealand

Experiencing God in Darkness

Alice Sinnott

as a quality less valuable than light. Fortunately, Christian teaching never completely equated darkness with evil. John Ellerton's hymn ***The darkness falls at thy behest*** is a good example of how a hymn could serve to teach that darkness is part of a God-given world, with its own positive significance. John of the Cross wrote "the greater the darkness wherein the soul journeys, the greater its security".

Darkness is a rich source of metaphor for spiritual realities, having both strongly positive and negative images in human experience. We can portray it as physically oppressive, as an environment associated with death and evil, or we can see it as signifying the presence of God. T. S. Eliot in *East Coker* prays: *Let the darkness come upon you. Which shall be the darkness of God.*

In ***Remembering Babylon*** David Malouf, a contemporary Australian writer, brings into play images of the dark to evoke the physical reality of the dark and the possibilities that lie within. He is speaking about a reality, the darkness that conceals that which some of his characters cannot face. We see that some approach under cover of darkness and the courage and perhaps fool-hardiness of Jock McIvor and his wife and daughter. Ellen McIvor observes that she and her family, in their new settlement cut out of the bush, are in a place where "there are no sureties of any kind".

The land has no past that they know about, and the first white graves ever dug there will be their own. Malouf struggles with the issues of settlement and of the stranger who appears, by having his characters examine their ideas of distance and their sense of proportion. They have to find themselves in the 'here' that is around them if they want to survive. They cannot kill the darkness or banish it completely. Malouf captures something of the danger and fear residing in the new settlers and the cost for those who embrace the darkness in welcoming the unwanted and the strange.

The McIvors and other characters in ***Remembering Babylon*** show the cost of entering the darkness of injustice, exclusion, discrimination and violence.

We see a recognition of that which is in the darkness – the shadow – that which is out of the light. Rilke's 'dark interval' as the place where reconciliation takes place says something similar:

I am the pause between two notes that fall
into a real accordance scarce at all:
for Death's note tends to dominate –
Both though are reconciled in the dark interval, tremblingly.
And the song remains immaculate.

How do we embrace the darkness where God is to be found? What are the dreams, the stories the myths out of which we live? Recognising our history and traditions, how do we embrace the darkness in this time and place? According to Heaney we find a 'door into the dark' and Malouf would have us welcome strangers as guests. To be welcomed as guests, strangers have to be viewed as similar to the hosts, "like us" in needs, experiences and expectations.

Novels, poems, art, drama, music, films can be our parables or doors into the darkness. They tell us things we want to avoid and make us aware of what we are oblivious to in our lives. Among our best guides into the darkness are artists, poets, storytellers, and musicians. Bede Griffith, a mystic, saw a coming to terms with darkness in this prayer:

I know that Great Person
Of the brightness of the Sun
beyond the darkness
Only by knowing him
one goes beyond death.
There is no other way to go. ■

Among the networks of Christian symbols and metaphors that shape the way we view the world, light and darkness are the most pervasive and all-embracing. While Christianity draws profoundly on the Old Testament for its images of light and darkness, Christian teaching and preaching have tended to a preoccupation with the metaphor of light.

While metaphors of light are very attractive, inevitably Christians have to encounter the images of darkness surrounding the presence of God in the Bible. Authors often describe God as in 'darkness' or 'thick darkness' as in *Exodus 20:21*: "Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was." Chapters 19 and 20 of *Exodus* tell about the Israelites' awesome first-hand experience of the presence of God. We learn that Moses had to enter the thick darkness to meet God. Clearly, the Sinai experience was an event on such a scale that it burned deeply into the people's consciousness.

In *Deut 4:11* we hear how Moses reminds his audience about two features of this Mount Sinai experience. First, there was the terrifying nature of the event and what it said about God enveloped in thick darkness; secondly the paradoxical combination of blazing fire and deep darkness. In *Deut 5:22-23* Moses proclaims: "These words the LORD spoke with a loud voice to your whole assembly at the mountain, out of the midst of fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness."

Many more references to the presence of God in thick darkness occur in the Old Testament (see *2 Sam 22:10; 1 Kings 8:12; 2 Chron 6:1; Psalms 18:11; 97:2. Job 22:13*). While these texts may be very familiar to us, many find the use of the 'thick darkness' as the abode of God repugnant or shocking, so it is not surprising that translators often tone it down to read 'cloud' or 'dark cloud'.

In the above texts and many others 'thick darkness' shrouds God's appearance. It hides God from general view and simultaneously is part of the means of God's appearance. The association of this thick darkness with the presence of God suggests an aspect of God's presence that has been ignored or unrecognised particularly in our Christian tradition.

Many Christians overlook or ignore the notion that God may be present in thick darkness, preferring to associate the Divine presence only with light. A much needed adjust-ment of Christian teaching about the symbolism of light is long overdue. Such an adjustment demands an appreciation of the relationship between light and darkness in Christian symbolism.

Seamus Heaney, in his poem ***All I know is a door into the dark,*** uses the metaphor of darkness in a way reminiscent of the Bible texts mentioned earlier. Metaphor of the dark, darkness, shadow, night can represent that part of us, our history, our story, our tradition, our culture that we have not examined, discussed or even reached. We cannot reach this darkness in the same way that we approach other dimensions of our lives. Moses did not have a map or a guide for his journey up Sinai. Neither do we have a guide-book to direct us into the thick darkness.

Metaphor is a way we talk about what we cannot express, what is invisible, that which is not ordinary or familiar, that which we cannot describe in everyday or familiar words. It is the language of poetry. It is a way of speaking and writing when more usual language cannot express our deepest perceptions. When we are trying to enter unfamiliar territory, metaphors act like bridges to the place beyond our reach. This is why poetry and story are doors into the dark and the means by which we can enter the darkness.

Biblical accounts of how darkness envelops God on so many occasions force us to question our notions about our experience of the divine. Adjusting to such an idea may demand some drastic changes in our expectations. We could liken the change demanded to how we understand the difference between myths and parables. Myths establish our world while parables challenge it. In other words, myths confirm that what we believe and know is correct. They do not challenge us or compel us to rethink our views. They serve to explain the status quo, to give some sort of rationale for why things happen as they do.

Parables on the other hand are subversive. They undermine or subvert the very ground on which we stand. Parables make us think again, whereas myths confirm our world view: they do not alter or challenge our horizons or expectations. Parables, by questioning our world view, demand that we expand and broaden our understanding of the world.

The darkness metaphor functions like a parable rather than like a myth. We can see this in the images of the deep darkness that surrounds the presence of God in the texts mentioned. Like all great stories (classics) this darkness metaphor expands our horizons, expectations and world view. The suggestion that God might be present in deep darkness is a powerful, even a disturbing image. It engages our feelings before it engages our logical or rational side. It draws us into a world created by the text. We experience such texts before we understand them. The metaphor of darkness has the power to provoke, persuade and change us or to repel us.

We may be still working out of some 19th and earlier 20th century religious thought, particularly missionary teaching. Such teaching presented the spread of the gospel in terms of a struggle with darkness and evil usually associated with poverty, superstition and paganism. Missionary territories were seen as especially subject to Satan, Prince of Darkness.

William Blake in this poem struggles to find a positive meaning in blackness.

I am black, but O! my soul is white.
White as an Angel is the English child
But I am black as if bereav'd of light.

Traditionally darkness has been regarded

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Modern China – a land of many

Paul Shannahan SM

Some days later we also met and dined with Archbishop Jin of Shanghai, an amazing man of 84 year – a Jesuit who trained in Rome in the late 1940s. He got his Doctorate there and did study at the Biblicum. He was arrested soon after return to China in 1951 and spent 27 years in jail. What impressed me about him and other Catholics I met was that he sees himself as beyond question a member of the universal Catholic Church. He is prevented from goin to Rome, being a member of the State-aligned Patriotic Church, yet his life and church are united in spirit and practice. For instance they pray for the Pope in the Canon of the Mass as we do.

He said: "we are Roman Catholics, loyal to the universal church, we are united in faith. The problem we have is a political one. So we try to be loyal to the church and the government".

This pragmatic approach means the church certainly has a living presence in China. For instance, this dynamic old bishop started his own diocesan Religious order in 1985, and now it numbers 80 sisters. He has his own printing press and has just produced a New Testament version of the Jerusalem Bible in Chinese. Meeting this man and talking with other Catholics led me to the conclusion that the Catholic faith is alive and well and that they see themselves as Catholics who belong to the universal church and want union with Rome.

The purpose of this trip was to maintain, and even enhance good relations with the Chinese state officials and Chinese Christian Council (Protestant) we met with separately in six major cities – Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai, Nanking, Guilin and Kunming. It gave us the chance to see and hear of the rapid change going on in China and the rapid advance being made by all the main religions and certainly by the Christians even if it happens within the supervision of the State. Mind you, all institut-ions are closely watched and have to comply with policies set by the central administrat-ion.

We also made the visit to see and support the huge printing enterprise that the United Bible Societies of the world helped start in 1985. Even now they still supply all the special paper used for the production of over two million Chinese bibles printed and bound there each year. The *Amity Press* as it is known is based in Nanjing. An approach was made to the State in the early 1980s by local Protestant Christians to have bibles printed and made available again after the Revolution. The world body offered to provide the plant.

An agreement was reached and good relations were established with the Government. Now there is a plant there the size of a football field that pushes out a bible every two seconds. Just last month a celebration was held to mark the 30th million bible produced since 1985. And another surprise was to find that a New Zealander, Peter Dean of Tauranga, directs this plant.

To ensure the Chinese have access to a bible, 70 bible distribution depots exist around China. It means that anyone who wishes can purchase a well bound bible very cheaply which is a major aim of the Bible Society worldwide.

I had gone to China with a vague image of a peasant culture, an old economy and oppressive State control. I left it with a head full of surprises, amazed at the motorways and flyovers, the five star hotels and huge airports, the countless numbers of high-rise living quarters, the prosperity of Shanghai alongside the poverty of the rural farmers. I had an impression China was something of a police state, but I now see it rather as a one-party state where central control percolates through all stratas of society, but which is being decentralized and loosening-up to meet the new capitalist type economy that is expanding at speed.

It means too the Christian faith has a window of opportunity for expansion and certainly that is happening as seen in the free flow of bibles and literature. If a way could be found to solve the impasse with the Vatican over Taiwan and good relations could be restored, which still looks like a big task, I suspect the local Chinese would be the first ones to rejoice, and it would be the setting for a new evangelization – but done in a Chinese way.

One member of our delegation summed up his impression this way: "If the 19th century belonged to the British, and the 20th to the Americans, it sure looks like the 21st century will belong to the Chinese". ■

Paul Shanahan SM with Archbishop Jin

Recently, I had a great surprise in being invited to be part of a delegation to visit the People's Republic of China. As it turned out this was to be just the start of a string of surprises. It began on the *Air New Zealand* 12-hour flight to Asia. The hostess explained that the TV in my economy class section had failed, and would I care to move up to business class? Would I care? Not at all, thank you very much! The spacious cabin and armchair-like seats were a treat although more conducive to dozing than TV watching. Either way it was a great start to a two-week journey of discovery.

I was one of five *New Zealand Bible Society* board members that joined five from the Australian State Bible Societies. We were invited by SARA – the State Administration for Religious Affairs – a department within the Chinese Government. It is the equivalent here of having a Minister in cabinet and a department set up to deal with all things religious.

It was soon confirmed for me that the Communist Party creed has no place for belief in God: indeed they used their best efforts to stamp out religion of all colours during the horrendous Cultural Revolution years of 1966-76. Then they made a pragmatic decision in recognizing that many people do have strongly held religious convictions. So now there are five recognised religions in China – Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism.

Not that they enjoy the same kind of unfettered freedom that we do. Each local church or mosque must be registered with the state authorities giving details of who is in charge, what numbers attend, how they are financed. I met a young parish priest in a brand new Catholic church in Guilin and he confirmed that he had to attend to all these legal requirements. State permiss-ion must be sought to set up a church or to extend to new areas. If they judge there is another church close by permission is often refused. If they approve, they are helpful in providing a site as at Guilin.

This is especially so for the Protestant Christians who now number about 15 million. After the Cultural Revolution the State scrapped all denominations such as Baptist, Lutheran etc and so there is just one undenominational Protestant Church. I visited one – a lovely big brick one in Shanghai. It was once a Presbyterian Church and had been built with American money in the 1920s for 'expats' working in the then financial capital of China (and it is fast becoming that again). The property had been confiscated by the Red Guards and had become the headquarters of a state ballet company during the Cultural Revolution. In the 1980s it was returned and is now a registered Protestant church with about 5,000 church-goers.

Naturally, I had a special interest in making contact with the Catholics. I was not disappointed. I found the Catholic Patriotic Church is alive and well and officially an integral part of the State administration. I met Bishop Michael Fu Tieshan of Beijing. He reported there are six million Catholics countable in the Patriotic Church of China, along with 70 Bishops (mainly elderly) in 90 Dioceses; 1,700 priests, about the same number of theological students and 3,000 Sisters. Other sources would suggest there are many other Catholics who hold out for direct loyalty to Rome.

I got a glimpse of the Patriotic Church when I concelebrated the 10 am Sunday English Mass with Fr Francis Xavier Zhang at the Jesuit-built Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, in Beijing on November 10. In fact, I preached a ten-minute homily to a packed church of upwards of a thousand people that included many tourists and English-speaking people who work in Beijing. This Mass had followed a 6 am Latin Mass plus two packed Masses in Chinese at 7 am and 8.30 am. It was just like a Sunday Mass in New Zealand. In fact, we used the same altar book I use in my chapel. I arrived as the 8.30 am Mass was concluding and found 42 priests concelebrating – they were from the neighbouring diocese and were having a study week together.

Paul Shannahan is Director of the Catholic Enquiry Centre, based in Wellington

Ruth Dyson, Minister for Disability Issues, taking a look at *Until Proven* before officially opening the

Soul-Art

Trish McBride pays a visit to Art Compass, an art project in Wellington for intellectually disabled people under the auspices of the Sisters of Compassion

with intellectual disabilities in Chicago) has a profound belief in the power of art "to change society's perceptions of people with intellectual disabilities" and allow for recognition of "their unique qualities and strengths".

One of the phrases in the exhibition catalogue is 'cultural democracy'. This phrase, even if it has been around in art circles since the 1980s, still has a potent message: "People have the right to put across their own point of view in their own particular way. More people have creative potential than are allowed to realise it, and more people have the right to participate meaningfully in the making and defining of their own culture than are given the opportunity. By widening access to creative processes we unleash the potential for products we haven't yet thought of, and allow the dignity of creative action to previously margin-alised sections of our community".

As the artists (aged 18 to over 50) vary in their cognitive and linguistic abilities, Marcel endeavours to work at the level of their need and abilities to use the language of the non-disabled world.

One artist, if asked whether she wanted red or blue, would respond "blue". If asked whether she wanted blue or red would respond "red" – simply repeating the last word she had heard, her way of coping with questions from people who rely on linguistic communications. To offer her a tray with a selection of colours, says Marcel, gives her a true freedom of choice not accessible through the use of language.

Such alternative ways of communication allow the facilitators to connect with the artists and facilitate the process of art-making without interfering with their creative processes. This allows the artists space to develop their own unique abilities. The works they produce are comm-unications in their own right and give further insight into the lives, interests and abilities of the artists.

Being at *Art Compass* is a good experience for the participants. "I like painting and weaving", said one enthusiastically. Development in focus, attention span and initiative, and a reduction in anxiety has been observed in some who have been doing art work there for a significant time. One woman happily works on her piece up to five hours a day.

Rt. Hon. Ruth Dyson MP opened the *Art Compass* Inaugural Exhibition in her capacity as Minister for Disabilities. She bought Amy's picture *Kick in the Head* which graphically describes her frustration with her support worker and her wish for independence. Amy

Framing art works for the *Until Proven* exhibition

Exhibition openings are always notable occasions. The opening of *Until Proven* in November, 2002, was no exception – proud artists, their work framed and displayed, excited families and friends, and a Minister of the Crown, chatting with the artists and choosing a painting to adorn her office wall in the Beehive.

Each piece of art rewards the viewer: there are Tamzin's small jewel-like works, Emmet's abstracts in large blocks of colour, Amy's narrative works where her everyday experience interacts with the complex inner world of her previous lives, Yelena's textures, layered, lined, feathered or connected, Lisa's roundlets bubbling with energy, Noreen's wool wall-hanging and Idan's cheerful self-framed explorations.

The founder of *Art Compass*, Marcel Baaijens, returned to New Zealand from study and work in USA early in 2000 with a dream to set up an art programme for intellectually disabled people that would free their creativity. When Sr Margaret Mary met Marcel, she wondered how the Sisters of Compassion could help this dream become a reality. The Sisters caught Marcel's vision, and so the Compassion Centre has become *Art Compass*' major sponsor. They have been enthralled with the results so far.

Scream on your Wedding Day
by Amy Szostak

Sr Margaret Mary comments: "The Sisters of Compassion have had an association with people with disabilities since the time of Suzanne Aubert, mainly in the areas of care and education. Supporting the new approach of *Art Compass* builds on this foundation".

The exhibited works, Marcel hastened to point out, are by artists who happen to have a disability, not disabled artists. The works give pleasure in their own right – the seven artists have every reason to be proud of their work and the recognition that the exhibition has brought.

At the studio Marcel and his assistant Michael Apathy facilitate the art process for their artists, rather than 'teach' art in the traditional way. They are utterly respectful of the creative process of each of the participants. And this is reflected in the studio's name *Art Compass*, which refers to art as a way to find one's direction.

"Facilitators," says Marcel, "critically observe how the artists present them-selves through their creative process. The facilitator must be able to observe mindfully and see through cultural conditioning by dominant culture, listen beyond learned communication, and not be distracted by behaviour adopted by those with intellectual impairments to cope in a society that has difficulty accepting difference. Collaborations happen only after intuitive cues have been taken from the artwork."

In the exhibition catalogue Professor Sally Field, Head of Massey's Fine Arts School writes that Marcel "who pioneered a similar project at *Austin Special* (a sheltered workshop for people

Art Compass studio at 132 Tory St, Wellington, on the first floor of the Compassion Centre, is permanently open to visitors during studio hours, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday. Alternative times can be arranged by calling the studio (04) 3859298, or Marcel (04) 737437(home).

The Carrier and the Carried

I don't notice your disability anymore – it's just something you carry with you, she said.

I carry it with me
like a handbag swinging loosely by my side
pick it up
put it down.

A handbag
I never lose and never replace.

I carry it on me
like a cotton shirt on a summers day.

Wind easing its finger
between skin and fabric
billowing it out pulling it too
playing at separation
but the buttons hold tight.

I carry it in me
channels carved deep
by a river always in flood.

I carry it through me
like the weight of a name
for a child never born.

A presence
and an absence.

I carry it with me
on me
in me
and through me.

I am the carrier
and I am also the carried.

A blue tear
filled with gold.

Trish Harris

How Human was Christ?

Desmond Smith

It has to be admitted that we have a pretty loaded view of this Jewish man from the first century. We don't think of a baby who cried normally and messed his pants, a little boy who was full of questions, or a teenager who pulled against established authority. Yet, as Paul says, "It is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us; but we have one who has been tempted in every way that we are, though he is without sin" *(Heb. 4:15-16).*

If we truly take that to heart, it is surprising how it colours some very well-known incidents in the life of Jesus. The finding of Our Lord in the Temple is a case in point. After what must have been a truly inspiring Bar-Mitzvah, this young boy of twelve takes it upon himself to go missing for three days without contacting his parents in any way. Mary shows that she has been in an agony of distress by her "My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you". This miraculous child entrusted to their care by God Almighty has been away from them for three days without giving them any inkling of his intentions.

And what is Jesus' answer? Surely that of a typical teenager who has his own agenda in mind. "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be busy with my father's affairs?" But they did not understand what he meant *(Luke 2:41-50)*. At first sight, it appears to be a thoughtless and selfish act on the part of Jesus. He apparently shows no concern for his parents' anguish. Yet, knowing Our Lord from the New Testament and knowing his love and concern for others, how can we believe such self-centred conduct?

If we look through the eyes of a teenager, however, this is simply a case of exerting an independence newly-won through the ceremony of the Bar-Mitzvah. A very human thing to do. Luke finishes the story with the fact that Jesus went down to Nazareth and was subject to them. He didn't wish to offend his parents.

Surely the tale of the wedding in Cana typifies the humanity of Christ as much as anything does. They ran out of wine and he didn't want to know about it because he had not yet begun his mission. His mother's attitude is quite amusing in a way. She took absolutely no notice of what he said and just turned to the stewards telling them, with complete confidence, to do as her son directed. And what was Jesus' response? He simply changed his mind at her request and worked that wonderfully kind miracle. So much human affection between mother and son is shown by John's recounting of this incident.

Many aspects of Christ's life take on new meaning for us when we genuinely believe with St Paul that this man was altogether like us, except that he never sinned. After all, there are numerous examples in Scripture of how he rebutted the normal rules and gave his version of what should be done. His revolutionary approach to the Sabbath, his scathing seven-fold rejection of the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, his insistence on close communication with prostitutes and tax gatherers and his plain anger with the sellers in the Temple, his ignoring of the rules about not touching the dead or being too close to a menstruating woman, these all exhibit just how human this man of God was. Yet, he didn't have the fear of human opinions and difficulties that we do because he had such a trust in his Father's closeness to him.

A particularly endearing and understandable trait was his utter exasperation with the Apostles for being such a dumb lot who couldn't see beyond their noses. "Have I been with you this long and you still don't understand?" His remarkable feeding of five thousand and then three thousand people, his insistence that the kingdom of God was amongst them, his Transfiguration on Mt Tabor. And they were concerned about whether they would get to have the place at his right hand in heaven, rather than being in awe at the message of love for all people given by his every emotion, word and action.

For this writer though, the moving, utterly heart-rending humanness of Jesus shone out most courageously when he was on the cross. In effect, he became the sinfulness of all humankind and, as such, was naturally separated from the only source of comfort left to him. His Father's presence was no longer apparent and he cried out in the depth of human despair: "My God, my God, why have *you* forsaken me?" If ever a cry came from the heart, this surely was it. Nevertheless, his faith overcame the despair for he told his God right at the end: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit". That is human courage at its finest.

Certainly, he was the Son of God, but let us not lose sight of the likeness he bore to us in his humanity. Then it becomes

Desmond Smith is a parishioner at Mount Wellington, Auckland, with a special interest in liturgy

Mum... why can't I be a Priest?

In our February issue Jacquie Lambert wrote a reflection after her 10-year-old her daughter posed this question. Now Sheryn Gillard Glass, of Christchurch, offers this imaginary dialogue

Mum... why can't I be a priest?
Because the Pope said so in a letter he wrote, called *On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men alone.*

What did he say?
He blamed it onto Jesus, and tradition, and God's eternal plan. He said the church lacks authority to ordain women and the matter is not open to debate – we are not to talk about it. Later, infallibility was invoked, but I will tell you about that another day.

But aren't we the church?
Yes. Yes, we are. He means the church hierarchy – the Pope and bishops.

So should we be talking about it?
Of course. That's what people do. It's part of being a human being and part of being a Catholic. We cannot suspend our reasoning powers even if the church hierarchy tells us to. Each of us has a conscience and must consult it.

Does that mean Jesus was against women?
Not at all. Jesus said, "Love one another as you love yourself", and "Treat others as you want to be treated."

So what about the church's tradition?
Well, lots of authorities have been quoted, but they don't boil down to anything. Just sexist old stuff arising from the mistaken idea of women's inferiority.
My favourites are the medieval reasons as to why women can't be priests:
• because it is hard to cut women's hair in a tonsure - but tonsures are long gone;
• only those made in the image of God can be priests, which is quite wrong. God images women and men;
• because St Paul said women should not teach but keep silent. But women do teach and they help train male priests in seminaries;
• because ordination is preparation for being a bishop, a bishop is the bridegroom of Christ but a woman can't be a bridegroom. Therefore she can't be a priest.

But that emphasises only one metaphor of Christ as a bridegroom, to the exclusion of the multiple metaphors of Christ in Scripture. And it emphasises only the maleness of Christ. After all, Jesus had to be either a man or a woman. And in those days he would not have been allowed to teach and preach among the Jews unless he was male.
What else? Well, the law doesn't help. The Human Rights Act permits discrimination against women because it provides for exceptions for religions. We have women in most top political positions in New Zealand, but the law still permits the Catholic hierarchy to discriminate against women. We made a submission to the Law Commission about it years ago, which you can read.

Yeah - well, what's the real reason I can't be a priest? Well, Darling, there is no biblical or scriptural reason. The real reason is just that the Pope and many in the church hierarchy have inherited what is really a prejudice against women.

What do you mean by prejudice?
It means someone is biased. A 'bias' is what makes bowls run off line on a green.

And that's just what it is. Jesus is on a straight line – he loves and values everyone equally, female and male. But the hierarchy has diverged from the straight line.

God said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep." He didn't say, "the good shepherd gives his life – but only for his rams."

But why are they still prejudiced. We're not living in the Middle Ages now? I suppose it could be fear. Fear of the unknown. And fear of losing power. Some parish priests are very autocratic, but then some are prepared to listen and to consult with parishioners.

Why power? I am not sure because it seems to me that power is like love – it is not a limited quality. But that is another story.

So the real reason I can't be a priest is because I'm a girl. Yes, Darling, it is. ■

The irrepressible life of painter Lindsay Crooks

Venus on a Beach Towel: The Paintings of Lindsay Crooks
Longacre Press 2003
Price: $54.95
Review: Mike Riddell

The title of this delightful book celebrating the art of Lindsay Crooks is both apt and informative. *Venus on a Beach Towel* invokes the intersection of myth and the mundane, of sensuality and serviceability, of that provocative margin between land and sea so beloved of New Zealanders.

The beach is Crooks' most constant theme, whether it be the site of playful and often sexualised encounter between people, or the threshold which purposeful colonists cross to the promised land. He is a man of the sea who lives beside the ocean in his Otago home of Brighton, and this wonderful collection of his work demonstrates his love for it.

There is little subtlety in Crooks' work. With his confident use of colour and form, his paintings erupt in voluptuous praise of life itself. He is constantly teasing, goading, seducing; his art is a sustained appeal to see the wonder and joy around us. With the cheek of Beryl Cook and the primitive appeal of the early Picasso, his enthusiasm often seems to transgress whatever boundaries a frame may set.


English Rabbit Farmer

Perhaps the defining feature of these paintings is an uncomplicated eroticism which glorifies the embodiment and physicality of human life and its interaction with an always proximate environment. In his vision, life and its relationships are fecund, saucy and bursting with fruitful potential.

In his cartoonish impression of a British colonist, 'English Rabbit Farmer', Crooks depicts a startlingly iconic example of English gentry stepping ashore with his cargo: a box of rabbits. But for all the anachronism and threat posed by this pretentious immigrant, the fish dance around his feet and the rabbits have begun to copulate above his head. Life, it seems, is irrepressible.

These are not religious paintings as such but they resound with such abundance in their hymnology to life in the flesh that their spiritual and even sacramental quality cannot easily be ignored. In 'Venus at St Clair', the well-rounded Venus exposes herself to the riot of colour which is that southern playground. But she is the epitome of rather than a distraction from what is already present.

Crooks thus helps us to see what is hidden; the delights which lie only just under the surface, clothed for modesty but waiting to be discovered. This is art which allows viewers to glow with quiet satisfaction at a shared disrobing of the world; an accomplishment indeed.

Longacre Press is to be congratulated for another fine production from its stable, and David Eggleton for his perceptive introduction.

A wonderful book. ■

Praising God through the Creative Arts

Those who found

Ana ter Huurne's article in the March issue interesting (pp16-17), might like to view the website of the Christian Dance Fellowship of Australia:
www.cdfa.org.au

and for Cynthia Newland's Collage:

A biography hard to put down

My Stroke of luck
by Kirk Douglas
Harper Collins publishers
(also available in Large Print)
Price: $39.95NZ
Review: Enid Lagan RSM

This autobiography will hold your attention from its beginning through every one of its 167 pages. It is the arresting story of a man who had known fame and international acclaim as a Hollywood legend for over half a century. His 83 films include *The Bad and the Beautiful* and such classics as *Spartacus*. He has topped bestseller lists as an author of two memoirs, three novels and two children's books, but it is in this candid and moving story of his life-changing stroke that you discover his greatest achievement. In it, he pays tribute to the childhood that formed him, the devotion, challenge and support he received from his wife, Anne, and his four sons, and to the event that was to help him appreciate the gifts given to him over his 83 years. Touching, inspiring and uplifting, Kirk Douglas speaks of the depression he knew that nearly led him to suicide, and his own decision to take another path. In fact, his very stroke became for him a source of strength and renewal.

The style of the narrative is conversational and relaxed. I felt I was sitting beside Kirk Douglas as he told the story of his life. There are occasional flashbacks to earlier situations but all tie in very easily, not interrupting the flow of the main message of the narrative. I could see this book appealing to all ages, from ten years upwards.

The story is told with honesty and good humour. You will find many a laugh – with the author using the most hilarious situations to find empathy with his audience and readers. His *Operator's Manual*, at the close of the book, gives his principles of life. 'Never lose your sense of humour. Laugh at yourself, laugh with others.' 'Pray not for God to cure you, but to help you help yourself', – to lift out a couple.

On the principle of 'Stem depression by thinking of, reaching out and helping others', he speaks of his building and funding schools and parks in needy and trouble spots. Kirk Douglas is currently serving as a goodwill ambassador for the US State Department and the Legion d'Honneur in France.

I warn you, this is a 'can't-put-down' book. See for yourself. ■

Stunning story of survival

The Pianist
Review: Kathleen Doherty

If ever the Oscars seemed irrelevant, this was the year. Hollywood's annual extravaganza of glitz and glamour was toned down in deference to the invasion of Iraq, but coming as it did only four days after the first bombs fell on Baghdad, the ceremony and what it celebrated seemed particularly shallow.

To make it even more so, the award for the best picture went to *Chicago*, a slick musical which was great fun but appeared almost obscene when set alongside the TV shots of bombing and burning which have taken over the news broadcasts.

In the opinion of many commentators the best picture in the short list of five was *The Pianist*, Roman Polanski's account of one man's survival of the horrors of the Warsaw ghetto. But, as has happened before, the best picture is not necessarily the *Best Picture*.

To view *The Pianist* in the week the US led the 'coalition of the willing' in an invasion of Iraq was a sobering experience. I left the theatre feeling insecure: the comfortable middle-class life of the Jews of Warsaw was so easily demolished as they were robbed first of one right, then another, until their deaths were inevitable – and 60 years on, war and annhilation of 'the enemy' are still seen by some as the answer. Peace is very fragile. It was probably hoping for too much to think that the *Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences* would give their top award to a film which leaves a viewer uneasy and questioning.

And then there was the problem of Roman Polanski. In 1969 his eight-month pregnant wife, Sharon Tate, was murdered in her home, along with four others, by Charles Manson and his 'family'. It was yet another tragedy for Polanski, a child survivor of the Krakow ghetto, whose mother went to the Auschwitz gas chambers. But sympathy turned to outrage when, in 1977, Polanski, then 43, pleaded guilty to the rape of a 13 year-old girl. When the judge changed his mind on a plea bargain and Polanski faced 50 years in prison he fled the US to France where he has lived ever since.

A return to the US would mean imprisonment and it was no surprise that he was not at the ceremony. Meanwhile, the girl concerned, now married with children, has expressed an attitude of amazing generosity. In an interview in the *Los Angeles Times* Samanatha Geimer said that Polanski should be honoured according to the quality of his work, and that the *Academy* should vote for the films that deserve it, not for people who might be popular. She says that she is refusing to live her life as a victim. Perhaps his Oscar for best director is, in a sense, a healing.

The Pianist is a stunning film – literally. The marvel of Wladyslaw Szpilman's survival – he died only in 2000 in his late 80s – is small comfort as one sees through his eyes the destruction of a society succumbing to starvation, disease and violence as the Nazis execute their 'final solution'. In a film full of desolate images, tiny intimate moments of family life are haunting, none more so than the careful, almost reverent, cutting of a caramel into six for the family to share in their last moments together. And Chopin will never sound the same again ■

The dangerous Messianism of George W Bush

I write this just after George W Bush has just announced that he is waging war against a nation, half of whose inhabitants are children, 'to free its people and defend the world'. The horror is that he does this as a Christian in the name of God. This is evil confronting evil. It begins an uncertain age in international relations and international law. All that is necessary now is might. This is the first unpro-voked war in the history of the US, under the rubric of preemption, in order to force regime change on an inde-pendent sovereign state.

Bush is taking on the mantle of a Messiah. He appears on television striding purposefully down a red carpet to a podium flanked by the American flag and an eagle holding arrows in its claws. Using biblical language, which calls on God to bless his misguided endeavours, he gives the impression of some latter day Icarus, tempting the fates. Last September, Bush told a group of clerics that the only reason he occupies the Oval Office is that "I found faith. I found God". John Adams, the second president of the US, might have been addressing George W Bush when he warned that "power always thinks it has a great soul and that it is doing God's service when it is violating all His laws".

It is obvious now that after 11 September, the US always intended to force regime change on Iraq, Iran and, in a domino affect, on Syria as well. War is the national industry of America. Let us not lose sight of the real reasons for this war, nor allow ourselves to be swayed by the coming onslaught of propaganda to justify it. There is a danger, as Arundhati Roy writes, "that once war begins, it will develop a momentum, a logic and a justification of its own".

This war conceals a failing American economy. It conceals the reduced spending on welfare, medicare and education. The discontent of two million Americans who have lost their jobs since this administration came to power, is without voice. There is no red-carpet pronouncements to the people about these matters. God help America.

Crosscurrents

N Korea calls US bluff

The Bush administration's obsession with waging war against Iraq has overshadowed the current crisis with North Korea which is developing into another major problem. Bush's inept management of foreign relations and America's imperialist ambitions for 'regime changes' are fuelling worldwide unrest and resentment.

Evidence of renewed nuclear activity in North Korea was discovered in October 2002 which prompted Washington to cancel the 1994 non-proliferation agreement immediately. The previous US strategy of deterrence was scrapped and replaced by the threat of military might in order to constrain adversaries and to stop the development of weapons of mass destruction.

North Korea was joined to Iraq and Iran in Bush's 'axis of evil' (never mind the syntax). In Shanghai in October 2002, Bush called Kim Jong-il a pygmy and informed a journalist that he was in favour of regime change in North Korea. Understandably, North Korea reacted by kicking inspectors out of the country and doing its own bit of sabre rattling. It was inevitable that a country branded as evil and threatened with a pre-emptive strike would call Bush's bluff. It is becoming more and more obvious that Bush has wanted regime change for both North Korea and Iran as well as Iraq. Kim Jong-il is in a position to react, while Bush is fixated on Iraq.

The whole of the Korean Peninsula has been destabilised. North and South Korea were moving towards reconciliat-ion. But now South Korea has mixed feelings towards its neighbour and towards the 37.000 American troops stationed in its own territory. There is a fear of being embroiled in more American military aggression at the whim of a super-power bent on conquest. Is Bush just using South Korea simply as a base for military operations as he is using Israel? Bush is not only risking the safety of both Koreas but also causing alarm in China and Japan.

How neutral are we?

In New Zealand, Helen Clark is keeping a cool head and treading a fine line between New Zealand's disapproval of the war and complete alienation from the American administration. She is to be applauded for distancing us from an illegal war, yet at the same time, committing us to assistance for the Iraqis caught in the middle of American aggression.

The National party still flounders for identity. Bill English endorsed the American war and echoed Lockwood Smith's belief that "our interests lie with the US, Britain and Australia". That is, we would wage war for a trade deal. In later statements he resiles from this position and no doubt will do so again.

At least we know where Richard Prebble and the Act party are situated. They are part of the coalition of the willing and support war when the US, Britain and Australia want war. Richard Prebble and moral principles were never synonymous. ■

A weapon more powerful than missiles and bombs

I could be the only contributor to *Tui Motu* old enough to have an adult-like memory of those doom-laden months of 1939 as the world moved towards the opening of the Second World War. I was a teenager with a precocious interest in world affairs. Austria and Czechoslovakia had fallen. Poland would be next. And it was. A war began whose outcomes we feared, outcomes that in fact turned out to be far more terrible than anything we anticipated.

Past months have been a re-run of that experience. The fear of a new and unwanted war. The anticipation of the injury and death of countless civilians. Speculation as to the subsequent upheavals in the Middle East and throughout the world. Is this a plan to flatten Iraq, and then turn and flatten equally devastatingly the Palestinians, ending forever their presence as an irritant to the Israelis and to the Religious Right in the United States?

What has gone wrong ? Why have we been unable to stop this conflict from starting?

Christians have tried at all levels to head off this war. The Archbishops of Canterbury and Westminister in an unprecedented joint statement called on the British leadership not to take part. The Holy See made the strongest of statements, pointing out that those who initiate an uncalled for conflict must answer for this before God.

At grass roots Christians have tried their best to stop the war. They have co-operated with other people of good will in marches and demonstrations. Even more to the point they have used their own weapons of prayer and fasting to invoke divine intervention to head off the outbreak of conflict.

All this has been in vain. I write this just after war has started with an attempt to kill the Iraqi leadership by an air strike on their supposed place of meeting. A legitimate act of war? Imagine the howls of righteous indignation if a new attempt were made, more successful than the last, to fly an hijacked aircraft into the White House with the intention of ridding the world of another aggressor.

Prayer has gone up throughout the world that war might be averted. Prayer has not been successful. Are we to be blamed if we feel our trust in prayer and our confidence in the care of a loving God put to the test? Others have in the past had their faith put to the test of unanswered prayer in time of dire need. Their faith survived such a trial. Let us hope ours will as well.

This is not the time for easy, 'All will be well', nostrums. But it is worthwhile to reflect on the Genesis story that is the first reading of the day on which I write, the day after the opening of war. Joseph, hated by his brothers, was sold by them into slavery in Egypt. An injustice and for the young man, a disaster. But in the providence of God, the salvation of the brothers when Joseph in time of famine magnanimously extended aid even to his erring kin.

Maybe the Lord's plan will work out in such a way, maybe in quite another. But the failure of our efforts to avert war must not discourage us. Continue to protest. Especially make use of our uniquely Christian weapons of prayer, and dare I say it, fasting and penance. These are weapons that in the end could turn out to be more powerful than cruise missiles and mega bombs. ■

Humphrey O'Leary

(Fr Humphrey O'Leary is Rector of the Redemptorist community in Glendowie, Auckland)

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The Prostitution Bill

A group calling itself 'Catholic Action' made some scathing comments and judgments about politicians who would support the Bill decriminalising prostitution. 'Catholic Action' is not an official organisation of the Catholic church. I have no idea who they are and want to make it clear ... that we dissociate ourselves from the organisation and its methods used in opposing the proposed legislation on prostitution.

The legislation certainly needs serious debate and discussion. This should be done objectively without condemnatory attacks on those debating the issue. The position of the Catholic Church is that it is clearly against prostitution. At the heart of this position is the exploitation of women. But the debate is centred on the legislation. Some might be opposed to prostitution, but have a view that it could be better controlled if legalised. Others may vote because they are for – or have no particular opinion on – prostitution.

In this debate we need to look at the place of 'law' in our country. Thomas Aquinas defined law as an ordinance of reason from the one who is in charge of the community for the sake of the common good. Also, in regard to law, the community sets its standards and learns from the principles shrouded in law.

Keeping the above principles in mind in addressing this debate, do we want a society which enshrines laws that allow – and even reflect a society that encourages – prostitution? Apart from the community at large, I wonder how parents feel about introducing such a law? We need also to consider the implications for a school Board of Trustees if prostitution becomes a legal activity and is engaged in by a student.

Speaking from the heart, a woman told how it affected her and eventually destroyed her marriage when she discovered that her husband was visiting prostitutes. She related her story, expressing her opposition to the Bill and then gave us a key phrase to think about: should we bring in legislation that makes prostitution legally and socially acceptable? I have pondered what she said. To bring in such legislation would be not only sending the wrong signal, but it would be enshrining in law by the highest court in the land that prostitution is legally and socially acceptable.

The whole debate may have missed the deeper questions that should be asked and debated. Why do people need to do this? Such a debate would say more about a caring society than a debate on decriminalisation.

Bishop Len Boyle

Bishop Boyle wrote this letter to the Otago Daily Times in response to a letter to MPs from so-called Catholic Action threatening them with hell if they voted for the proposed Prostitution legislation