

Tui Motu

InterIslands

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The real meaning of Lent

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We have chosen Michael Smithers' graphic painting of Christ driving the moneychangers out of the Temple for our Lenten cover. That incident, almost certainly, was the last straw for the Jerusalem authorities. This man would have to be got rid of. The plans were quickly put in place to arrest Jesus, trump up a charge of sedition and hand him over to the Romans to deal with. The shadow of the Cross lurks behind this image, a step on the road to Easter.

What was it that really stuck in Jesus' craw and made him lose his temper so dramatically? It was rampant commercialism, the exploitation of ordinary Jewish people. It was a blasphemy, an affront – and the religious powers-that-be were totally complicit, probably getting their share of the proceeds.

Lent creeps up on us inexorably, once a year, often in the middle of a spell

of really summery weather. One good thing about Lent is that, as Catholics, we happily share it with other Christians. Why? Probably because the practice of Lent is solidly founded in God's Word, which is our common heritage.

In the leading article New Testament scholar Tom Wright looks at what Jesus' call to *repent* means both to First Century Jews and to us immersed in a highly secularised society. It is a universal message.

It is all too easy during Lent to content ourselves saying a few extra prayers, denying ourselves some pleasure, giving to charity and kidding ourselves that that is enough. There is nothing wrong with any of these. But what Jesus is demanding is so much more.

One of the main sins of Christians down the ages is to trivialise God's message. Paul Oestreicher (p.24), in an

The anti-smacking Bill

Sue Bradford's controversial anti-smacking Bill has just passed its major hurdle in Parliament, and the talkback warriors are having a field day rubbishing her. On Noelle McCarthy's overnight show nearly every caller, male or female, was critical.

There was one notable exception, a father of ten, who indicated that for him and his wife there was no place for physical violence in their home. They found other means of disciplining their children. *Tui*

Motu invited one of its Board members to discuss the issue (p.32). He is totally supportive of Ms Bradford.

Sue Bradford is a person of principle – a precious commodity among politicians. She stands up for the underdog; she is not afraid to stick her neck out; she perseveres in advocating the rights of the most vulnerable. And no one is more vulnerable than a young child, however naughty or fractious. Good on her! *M.H.*



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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. Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd, P O Box 6404, Dunedin North, 9030
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article on Christian Ethics written for a secular audience, says precisely this. Christians have condoned all manner of social evils down the centuries because they do not listen to the message of Christ first and then apply it. Rather, they choose to follow a convenient ethic and then try to justify it by watering down what the Gospel so clearly says.

Nothing stands out more starkly in the Gospels than the *Sermon on the Mount* (Mt. 5-7). It is revolutionary, radical, shocking – and most of us allow it to wash over us like a cold douche we have to endure until it switches off. In Philip Yancey's brilliant book *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Harper Collins 1995), he devotes a whole chapter to the *Sermon*, especially the Beatitudes.

For Yancey – immersed as he was in the American Dream of self-sufficiency, success by personal effort, superiority over other cultures and ever-growing, richly deserved prosperity, – Jesus' words came as a bombshell: they were the American Dream in reverse. For all of us who are children of the Enlightenment

the medicine is the same. Those pregnant chapters of *Matthew's* Gospel taste like a bitter pill.

And that is what Lent is *really* all about. You have to reread the message and apply it to yourself, to the church and to the world. That is why it is very useful to give time to a Lenten programme (like the one *Caritas* provides for Catholic parishes) where Christians come together and reflect. They hear the gospel afresh through the voice of a friend or neighbour. They then go away and chew over it. It becomes the focus of their prayer. And, with the grace of God, change happens.

Practically every article this month has a bearing on this Lenten challenge. We have just had the bicentenary of the Wilberforce Bill ending slavery in the Western world. Slavery had been condoned and practised throughout the Christian world for 18 centuries since the time of Christ. Yet nothing could have been more at odds with Jesus' message of universal love.

Jim Consedine (pp 12-13) describes Wilberforce's life and achievement – but

he points out that economic slavery is still rife and we in the West provide the markets for it to happen. We buy and consume the goods produced by what is in effect slave labour. Who is today's Wilberforce? In the Catholic church especially, his voice is too faint to hear.

The message is reinforced by a couple of homilies sent on to us: one on the moneychangers, by a *Caritas* worker; the other on the Beatitudes by a Cistercian monk (pp 8-9). *Tui Motu* is grateful to receive such gems to share with a wider audience.

There are two benefits from a Lent well kept. First is personal conversion which none of us is too old or 'holy' not to need. The second is the call to change – not only ourselves but our world. Our society is rotten with phoney values, predominantly self-seeking in its philosophy and in the process of fast destroying this beautiful earth. It is time for radical change. But who is to be the catalyst? Who is going to bring about the kingdom on earth? Jesus says: *You are the Salt of the Earth*. That, dear reader, means you and me.

M.H.

Christ driving the moneylenders from the Temple

by Michael Smither

Oil painting on board (121 x 170 cm).

Victoria Univ. Wellington.

Some rough stuff going on here! Jesus is angered by the abuses which he sees in the Temple in Jerusalem. The events are summed up in *Matthew 21, 12-13*: "Jesus then went into the Temple and drove out all those who were selling and buying there; he upset the tables of the moneychangers and the chairs of those who were selling pigeons. According to Scripture, he said, *my house will be called a house of prayer; but you are turning it into a robber's den.*"

This is what made Jesus angry. He saw the exploitation of people who had come to offer worship and sacrifices for their visit to the sacred Temple. Early painters had picked up this theme of righteous anger. El Greco's *Purification of the Temple* (c.1570) showed the austere and commanding presence of Christ; before the gaze of



his large and piercing eye the wretched moneylenders quail and flee. I was always impressed by that eye!

As a modern New Zealander Michael Smither relates it to feelings of anger in his own experience. He says the painting came after a humiliating interview with his Bank Manager!

So the moneylenders here get short shrift as their tables are violently upset. Their ghoulish expressions of 'shock horror' betray their crude motivation of greed; they are now exposed for all to see. Jesus acts more like a short-tempered and "vigorous street-fighter", to quote NZ art critics Jim and Mary Barr.

Many things can make us angry. In recent decades an oft-heard opening phrase for speakers has been "I am sad and angry". But Jesus is not just sad; he is active in doing something to express his anger. He is prepared to face the risks of what he is doing, out of deep concern for what is right.

Albert Moore.

Anglican Eucharist

My wife, a deeply committed Anglican, received permission from our Bishop to receive Communion in our local Catholic church when accompanied by me. Apparently I should not reciprocate – although I confess I occasionally do.

What about this scenario? ‘John’, is a lapsed Catholic and Mass means little to him. He meets and marries a Catholic girl, who insists on a Nuptial Mass. In order not to upset his in-laws-to-be, ‘John’ agrees to – and is permitted to – receive Communion at the Mass, since he is a baptised Catholic.

Meanwhile ‘Peter’, a committed practising Catholic is engaged to an equally committed Anglican girl. They decide to be married in the Anglican church. ‘Peter’ is impressed by the integrity and commitment of the Anglican minister. He agrees to receive Communion at the marriage service alongside his bride.

I wonder which of these two men Jesus would have approved of – and what the Roman Curia would judge! The Catholic Catechism says: “The mystery of Christ is so unfathomably rich that it cannot be exhausted in its expression in any single liturgical tradition”. (CCC 1201). That sums up my feelings beautifully.

Brian Connolly, Helensville

Society needs change of values

In his topical article, *Bringing something hopeful to birth, Waitangi day 2007*. Glynn Cardy based his grounds for hope on the virtues of ‘fairness’ and ‘selflessness’, saying: *When the powerful voluntarily give up power for no personal gain, the whole community can be empowered*. And ‘wisdom abounds when the wise becoming fools for the sake of the community’. Cardy alluded to the example of Jesus.

I welcome the image of an ideal society in which the powerful become selfless in the exercise of their power and everyone – Maori and all others in our land – are treated with fairness and justice. Cardy gives examples of those in church and society who historically

letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not altering meaning.

Response articles (up to a page) are also welcome, but need to be by negotiation

and until the present have worked for a fair outcome for all through the signing of Treaty at Waitangi. They had and continue to have a hope and belief in people of goodwill sharing their vision of fairness.

So, why are we still struggling 167 years later to have the Treaty justly interpreted and fulfilled? The answer must surely lie in the bald facts that not all those present at the Treaty nor those who later had power to interpret it and enact it in law, had the same vision or the same good will.

Jesus was a realist, as indicated by his advice to the disciples he sent out on mission: *Be as wise as serpents and as simple as doves*. Hope and reliance on the goodwill of others does not suffice for a just society; those with vision need also elect and rely on just lawmakers and enforcers to ensure that everyone not only receives justice but also in turn is prepared to mete it out to all, irrespective of self gain.

Every community has its proportion of opportunists who, irrespective of the example of selfless leaders or their own advantages or disadvantages in life, are prepared to ‘rip off’ any system which relies on all being honest and fair.

Hope for a just society therefore can be damaged by ‘do-gooders’ being exclusively ‘dovelike’, not recognizing the need for prudence. When goodwill is betrayed, the universal virtues of hope, selflessness and fairness seem hopelessly altruistic. Unless just practical provisions are enacted, those who are selfish are able to take advantage of the goodwill of others.

We need to elect and listen to leaders who have prudence, accountability and a practical vision of a just society, leaders who prioritise policies that seek to overcome disadvantages from birth.

Such leaders should seek to change societal values in the home from infancy, recognising that is there that change must start.

If policies are enacted that lead to the development of all New Zealanders in fairness and selflessness from infancy, we might then regard hope of a just society and a just Treaty interpretation a realistic possibility. Only with due attention to the spiritual and educational development of the young can we hope that an inbred sense of fairness and selflessness will ensure that New Zealanders grow up expecting to be receivers and givers of due respect and justice to all.

With Lent around the corner, it would be a good time for me too to start exemplifying the virtues of selflessness and fairness to all!

Martina Burke RNDM, Christchurch
(abridged)

Richard Rohr and Men

Reading Richard Rohr’s *Men Matter*, on the male journey of transformation in *Tui Motu* (February), created some interesting and humorous discussion in our house.

My dear husband, who falls into the ‘wisdom journey phase’ (50-65), thought that *The Lover* suited him best of the four male archetypes. I, however, thought differently. Funny that!

I think Rohr makes some very important points about how difficult the spiritual journey is for men. He is right when he says we have lost the important rituals that help our young men to face significant life questions and find meaning.

Perhaps the “holy fools” reading this might be challenged to think what a difference they can make to the spiritual growth of the young men they father and mentor? I’d be interested in their views.

I have to say I’m rather glad I’m a woman. I wonder what my female archetype would be?

Hilda Hengist, Southland



Jesus' essential message

If we don't understand what Jesus was saying to the Jewish people of his own time, then we won't hear what Jesus is saying to us today.

Scripture scholar Tom Wright describes the revolutionary and subversive nature of the Gospel message

*The time is fulfilled,
the kingdom of God is at hand;
repent and believe the Gospel.
(Mk 1,15)*

What do those opening words of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark really mean? What was the mission of Jesus Christ? What was Christ's message to the Jewish world of the First Century? Was he announcing something completely new – or was he just another Jewish prophet?

It is the job of Scripture scholars to find out what God was saying through Jesus Christ to First Century Jews. Then we may all come to understand better what the Holy Spirit is calling us to do in our own times.

The climax of world history

"Repent"

By *repent* Jesus means: 'change your mind, change your agenda. What my Father in Heaven – *Abba* – is calling me to do is to spearhead God's genuine kingdom movement.' This really was a novel call for the Jews of Jesus' time, but it was by no means totally new: it was simply the climax of Israel's destiny. Israel's history – *all* history – reaches its climax in Jesus Christ. It is as if a great door is being swung open, the door to freedom and hope, and once it is open it can never be shut. Nothing will ever be the same again.

It is significant that Christians date their calendar from the birth of Christ: that is when the 'Christian era' begins. The Muslims have a different dating system. Year One, for the Romans, was the year in which the city of Rome was founded. For them, that was when history started. But the birth of Christ, in fact, is *not* really the beginning. The

People of Israel had been waiting for this moment for centuries, even if for the most part they didn't recognise it.

Western civilisation is in denial with regard to Jesus Christ. Our Western culture with its values of liberty, democracy, human rights, representative government and free trade is the heir to the 18th Century *Enlightenment*. It's a narrative that we in the West instinctively live with. That is one reason why much of our contemporary culture wishes to marginalise or play down the Gospel message. For modern man and woman, the Enlightenment has superseded Christianity.

"The time is fulfilled"

The great dream of Jewish history was that through the Chosen People God would address and solve the world's problems. This is expressed throughout the Bible. God calls Abraham to reverse the sin of Adam; that is the logic of *Genesis*. The world was – and is – in a mess, yet it remains a world loved by God: it is God's good Creation. In Abraham *all* the people of the world will be blessed.

But the people of Israel constantly get it wrong, as do their kings. The prophets tongue-lash them for their infidelity. They are chastened by being carted off into captivity in Babylon and by the destruction of their Temple. Defeated and wayward, nevertheless this people continues to be the vehicle of God's promise to humankind.

Israel was forever being overrun by a succession of conquerors. The prophet *Daniel* has a nightmare image of monsters coming up out of the sea and scrunching Israel underfoot (*Dan. 7:1-14*). This is a classic depiction of the oppression of Israel. The Romans were simply the last and the most cruel of many conquerors.

By Jesus' time the Jews were so accustomed to being a subject race they didn't see themselves any more as God's people *for all humanity*, but rather as God's people – to the exclusion of everyone else! The Gentiles they saw as unclean, outside the Law, damned by God.

"The kingdom of God is at hand"

For the Jews *God's Kingdom* is not a vision of a future heavenly world. It is the re-creation of this present world. The people of Israel were destined to be the blessed inhabitants of this new world. (Jesus does not disagree with this. He too prays: 'Thy Kingdom come on earth'.)

From the beginning of the world (*Gen. 2-3*) the people were called to be wise stewards of creation – but they failed. The Kingdom of God will only come about when God rules through God's people – here on this earth. That's a basic theme of the prophets. In *Isaiah 40-55* the prophet declares that God is sovereign over all things. God's people are destined to be rescued from oppression. In that beautiful prophetic



▷▷ poem is foreshadowed the true destiny of Jesus Christ. Sometime in the future a Messiah will come.

Around the time of Christ there were many 'kingdom' movements: the people yearned for a new David to lead them to triumph. Under the leadership of this new king Israel would once again be top dog. Rival nations would be smashed.

These revolutionaries could never accept the Herods and the corrupt aristocracy in Jerusalem, who were simply lackeys of Rome. This is why there were so many revolts against the Roman establishment. Only occasionally did these visionaries retain the notion that Israel could be an instrument of blessing for other nations.

The prevailing message was: *when God reigns, all the promises of Isaiah will happen*. The true Messiah will get rid of the pagans (Romans) and rebuild the Temple. World history will reach its climax. This narrative has two implications:

- exile would never have happened if Israel had not sinned. And since Israel is still, – in a sense – in exile, Israel must still be in sin and be in need of forgiveness.

- God will return to Zion. But what will God look like? And when will all this happen? The beginning of *Mark* says: '*it is now. It is happening now!*'

The prophetic profile of Jesus of Nazareth

"believe the Gospel"

Jesus is not only a teacher. He does not just speak out – he also acts. What do his actions mean?

Jesus' actions can be summarised under the following heads.



• *A new creation.*

Jesus is initiating a new creation as foretold by the prophet Isaiah (*Is.35*). The God of Abraham is a Creator God. And when Jesus feeds the 5000 or calms the seas, something new is starting to happen.

These are creative acts. So are his healings. "When I cast out demons", Jesus says, "the kingdom of God has come upon you". He is putting to rights what is deficient in the world around him.

What is more, Jesus is doing it to all the wrong people; he is sitting at table

and eating with the poor and the tax collectors, the lepers and sinners. These were the people at the margins of society. Yet these are to be the new Israel. No wonder the respectable – the Pharisees and Scribes – have their noses pushed out of joint.

- *Confrontation with evil.* Evil is an individual experience. But it can also take over a people or a society. A common image for evil in the Old Testament is the sea. The psalms often remind us that Jahweh is mightier than the turbulent seas.

In the beginning God brings the world to birth by bringing life, out of waters, out of chaos as represented by the sea. Chaos constantly threatens to engulf the world like a tidal wave. When Jesus stills the storm, he shows he is master of the sea: he conquers evil. Confronting and defeating chaos is part of Jesus' agenda.

- *Celebrating.* Jesus is also celebrating and feasting; he points out that we too must celebrate, because the bridegroom is still with us. What he is celebrating is the new Israel. When he calls the 12 disciples, symbolically he is re-creating the 12 tribes in a new Israel. He is the bridegroom and Israel is the bride, and the celebration is a wedding feast. Jesus is relaunching God's People.

• *Renewing the sabbath.*

Jesus appears to go out of his way to heal on the sabbath. He is telling the Jews that even if the old creation demanded rest on the seventh day, this is a *new* creation. It is a time for action, not rest. It is the eschatological moment – the climax to which the whole plan of the Old Testament is leading up. Jesus therefore overrides the legalism of the Pharisees because it is now outmoded. Jesus is launching a new way, not finishing the old.



Preaching in parables.

Jesus' stories are a cryptic explanation of all this renewal. His teaching is to explain how the kingdom of God is to

Why does John baptise? What is John's vocation?

Part of the great Biblical narrative is that the people came to the Promised Land through water: first through the Red Sea, then the Jordan. John's baptism is not merely to wash people free from sin, but to invite them to pass through water again. They are being called to a new Exodus. But someone else is due to come after me, says John, who will carry this movement through into the reality of God's Kingdom.

This is a deeply subversive message. It threatens the religion of the Temple and of the Scribes and Pharisees. Herod and the priests do not like it because it upstages both of them.

When Jesus comes to be baptised by John, he hears the voice of God saying "This is my beloved Son" (*Mk. 1, 11*). Jesus is acclaimed Son of God. The kingdom of God is about to happen.

come about. He is reshaping the idea of what it means to be 'king' – and it is certainly not to be another Herod!

His teaching is in stark contrast to what the Pharisees are on about – an ever more scrupulous adherence to the laws and rules; or what the Dead Sea Scrolls speak of – going off into isolation leaving the rest of humanity to go to the devil. Yet it is not a revolutionary movement either, beating ploughshares into swords and doing another Judas Maccabaeus. Jesus comes as Prince of Peace.



- *The parable of the Sower* (Mk 4; Mt 13; Lk 8) is not just about failure to respond to a call to reform. Jesus takes his disciples aside and explains that it is their hearts which must change. Evil consists in wicked thoughts causing wicked acts – not in eating pork.

This made shocking hearing for those many Jews who rejoiced in the memory of the Maccabees who had given their lives for their dietary and ritual laws. Those dietary laws were once a good thing, but now they are superseded.

But it fulfils all those ancient prophecies (*Jeremiah* etc.) which said that when Israel was laid waste for its sins, then – and only then – God would come and sow his Land again (*Jer 31, 27*). Hence the theme of Sower. Such a metaphor was meaningful to the Jews who were basically a pastoral people.

But most Jews did not want to hear that their privileges were to be taken away. They certainly did not want to hear about Naaman the Syrian (*Lk 4,27*). They did not want to learn about Isaiah prophesying doom and gloom for the people (*Is 6,8-13*), even if it is their only way to forgiveness.

- *The Parable of the Lost Son*: the climax is the father tucking up his robe and doing what no man of status would ever do in Jewish society of the time, running and whooping with joy

to greet his lost boy. The kingdom has happened for the lost son because in spite of his sin he is forgiven. And it has happened here and now, on this earth. It is not just that there will be joy in heaven – the party is to be here and now. This interlocking of heaven and earth is something the Jews understood, and Jesus appeals to it.

Other actions of Jesus

In Mt 8-9 there is a series of *healing miracles*. But right in the middle of them is the call of Matthew the tax collector. Why? Because for Matthew his call by Jesus really was a healing. Matthew will no longer be an outcast but will belong. At once, Jesus bids him to throw a party for his friends to celebrate. This healing is all about the coming of the kingdom into Matthew's life in fulfilment of *Jeremiah 31*.

The *Call of the Twelve* is explained in terms of the formation of a new family. In Mk 3 Jesus' mother and brothers come looking for him. "Who is my mother?" Jesus asks. The question is shocking, and his answer is even worse: "here is my mother...". Family is of fundamental importance to the Jews, and yet Jesus appears to be undermining family values?

What he is actually saying is that the new family of God implied by discipleship is even stronger than blood relationships: he is not denying the strength of family ties. Likewise the command of Jesus to "follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead" (*Mt.8,22*) pronounces that the kingdom is even more important than a sacred duty like burying your father.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is very difficult, especially the forgiveness of debt. It was hard for the Jews, and it is hard for us. Yet that is what millions want and need. *The Prodigal Son* is a classic example of how wonderful it is to receive God's forgiveness. It is exactly what the new creation is all about.

Jesus warns the people of Israel of the urgency of proclaiming the kingdom

now. In Lk 13, about people who die in accidents, he warns: "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish". Repentance means Israel must turn away from its kingdom ambitions. Otherwise they will perish at the hands of the Romans. And that is exactly what did happen in 70 AD.

In the *Lord's Prayer* Jesus teaches us to be 'forgiveness people': unless we open the steel door in our hearts and let forgiveness out to others, we cannot let God's forgiveness in! We won't even be able to forgive ourselves.



Summary

The fundamental question is: *is the 'kingdom of God' actually present during Jesus' ministry – or is it merely imminent?*

Jesus is a prophet for the new kingdom of God. The answer is: he is *already* living the kingdom. Where Jesus is, the new kingdom is breaking in. Jesus has the profile of a Jewish prophet, but the revolution he is bringing about is not only at odds with the Romans and powers of this earth but also with the way the Jewish leaders thought the revolt would and should happen. Jesus fulfils the prophets. Yet he is also wholly new.

Jesus retells the great story of Israel. It is an invitation to the people to join in and be part of that story. The *Sermon on the Mount* is more than just a handbook to Christian ethics: it is a challenge to Israel to *be* Israel.

You are the light of the world means making the light of faith shine forth before *all* people. The people outside are in the dark because Israel is failing to shine God's light on them. Likewise you are the *salt of the earth*: through Israel the whole world is destined to be cleansed and renewed. ■

This lecture was part of a seminar in 2006 in Brisbane by Bishop Tom Wright, Anglican bishop of Durham

The Beatitudes and the Woes in *Luke*

Fr John Kelly, of Kopua Abbey, preached this homily (slightly abridged) a few Sundays ago. The Beatitudes challenge us to turn our world upside down



When I read today's gospel (4th Sunday in ordinary time) I was shocked, challenged, threatened and roused out of my complacency. Is this really God's word to us? Yes indeed, it is part of the gospel so we are obliged to listen to what it says. God is speaking to us but do we hear him? Can we accept what he is saying? I personally find it hard to embrace his challenging message. I feel that the four Beatitudes and the four Woes are aimed at me.

Let us have a look at *Luke's* Beatitudes and Woes. Jesus mentions four types of people that are blessed. The four Woes are aimed at people that are the exact opposite to the four blessed types.

The first Beatitude and Woe

Blessed are the poor; yours is the kingdom of heaven.

Woe to you who are rich; you have had your consolation.

I feel that I am rich and secure. The good people around me will look after all my needs. But Jesus is always biased in favour of the poor. Lazarus, who was starved and covered with sores, ends up in Abraham's bosom while the rich man ends up in hell. The tax collector went home at peace with God while the Pharisee did not. The good thief 'stole' into heaven.

A few rich people managed to enter the kingdom, such as Paul and Zacchaeus, but they had first of all to become poor. In *Luke* (16,13) Jesus tells his audience that they cannot be the slaves of God and money. On this occasion the Pharisees laughed at him because they loved money.

I might try to get myself off the hook by citing *Matthew's* first Beatitude, which says, 'blessed are the poor in spirit'. Can I claim that I am poor in spirit even though I am wealthy in

fact? The commentators teach us that unless we are actually poor we will not be poor in spirit.

I certainly have doubts about my ability to embrace this very challenging message. I don't want to give up my comfortable life. Hence I am in danger of closing my ears and heart to the gospel.

The second Beatitude and Woe

Blessed are you who are hungry now for you will be filled.

Woe to you who are full now for you will be hungry.

Those two statements challenge all our assumptions. All of us have plenty to eat and I'm afraid that I often overeat. But there are over two billion people, about one third of the world's population, who live on less than two dollars a day. If Jesus is correct those poor people, just like Lazarus, will be welcomed into the kingdom, while those who are full now will go away hungry. Jesus didn't come to tell us what we would like to hear. He certainly is not trying to please his audience. He must have known that this kind of preaching would end up in crucifixion.

The third Beatitude and Woe

Blessed are you who weep now for you will laugh.

Woe to you who laugh now for you will mourn and weep.

Once again Jesus is turning the accepted values of our world upside down. The last will be first and the first last. He is saying those subversive things on every page of the gospel, but are we deaf to him because we do not want our security and pleasure to be taken from us?

I suggest Jesus is speaking about rejoicing in the wrong things. The first type of false joy would consist in

setting our hearts on sinful pleasure. He may be referring also to finding all our delight in secular values. When Jesus condemns empty joy he is obviously referring to a joy that is not in the Lord.

Blessed are you who weep. Jesus must be referring to genuine sorrow for sin. Jesus wants us to weep for our own sins and the sins of the world in which we are accomplices.

The fourth Beatitude and Woe

Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you and defame you on account of the Son of Man; rejoice on that day and leap for joy for surely your reward is great in heaven...

Now for the corresponding Woe - *Woe to you when all speak well of you for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.*

Once again Jesus turns our accepted values on their heads. Who of us wants to be hated and reviled by those around us? I fear that I want people to speak well of me and flatter me. If I had the courage to preach the gospel I would have been crucified like Jesus. Jesus had the courage to speak the truth and he was dead at 33. Doubtless I would be dead years ago if I had the courage to preach the whole truth.

No doubt all of us want to be true disciples. If we are to take Jesus seriously we will have to change all our false assumptions and our secular thinking. Our minds and hearts will have to be transformed by full acceptance of gospel values. ■

We have no problems, only difficulties!

*The plight of the world's poor
is made worse by modern economic conditions.
Is this the sort of situation which would have made
Jesus angry, asks Tara d'Souza?*

Two phrases jump out at me when I read *Mark 11,15-19: He drove them all out of the Temple... and Stop turning my Father's house into a market...* Clearly, Jesus was angry. The Temple markets and moneychangers of the time were approved by the Jewish authorities because they provided an important service for pilgrims from distant places. Yet, Jesus drove them out of the Temple. Just why was Jesus so angry?

Perhaps because the economic exchanges in the Temple had become the Important Business of the day. Maybe because this commercial activity had become so much a custom, so normal a part of the Temple, that no one had thought to challenge its centrality or question its true purpose. Most significant, is it possible that those who profited were those who permitted it to flourish?

Jesus Christ's cry in the Temple was a challenge for change. What are the economic and social systems that we need to challenge and change? I have recently returned from a visit to Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. *Caritas'* partners in those countries work with the poorest of the poor, remote communities isolated by lack of access to roads, schools, hospitals and even water.

I sat cross-legged on the wooden floor of the meeting house on stilts in Atsaithong Village in southern Laos and said "Sabaidee" to a gathering of villagers, "Can you tell me about your problems?"

"We have no problems," they replied, "Only difficulties."

For six months of the year, when the rainy season sets in and stocks of rice have run out, families forage in the forests for food. Bamboo shoots, roots, tubers and leaves, fish and small animals become the primary food source. These foods are fresh, natural and rich in protein: they do not pose a problem. The difficulty arises out of the fact that logging companies are swiftly causing those forest resources to dwindle.

Another difficulty: this is also the sowing season. However, food security must come first, so the rice fields must wait. In addition, when the rice is finally sown and harvested, it cannot compete with the highly subsidised imported rice that is now the legacy of globalisation in developing countries.



Caritas Aotearoa has assisted the villagers of Atsaithong, in Laos, to dig two new wells. The villagers are being impoverished by the activities of logging companies, also trying to compete with subsidised rice on world markets

Over the years, the families in Atsaithong have becoming increasingly poor, victims of systems over which they have little control. *Stop turning my Father's house into a market!* Like Christ, should we not become angry?

Caritas' partner in Laos, an NGO called *Cidse Lao*, has assisted the Atsaithong community to build a rice bank, hand dig two wells and set up a primary school. A corner has been turned. The use of the word "difficulty" rather than "problem" reflects the inner strength of the community, its spirit.

Not so in another community, one in Banteay Meanchey Province in northern Cambodia. Here, for people living with AIDS, access to retroviral drugs for their treatment is an ongoing economic struggle. Ten percent of all families have been affected by HIV/AIDS; 200 children in 14 villages have been orphaned. Should we be asking ourselves, viewing the situation through the eyes of Christ: do economic concerns prevail over all other matters in today's world?

I believe Jesus Christ's anger spilled from a well of compassion. The compromising of human dignity by commerce was so deeply offensive that his response is one of passionate outrage. In explanation, a third phrase from John's gospel is especially appealing: *He was speaking of the sanctuary that was His body.* By extrapolation, we are that sanctuary because we are His body. We allow our own dignity to be diminished on every occasion of social injustice and economic neglect. ■

*Tara d'Souza, who is officer in charge of Asian programmes
for Caritas Aotearoa, gave this presentation in the Seatoun parish,
Wellington, the Third Sunday in Lent 2006.*



Two contrasting churchmen

Bernard Häring and Joseph Ratzinger

How does experience of war shape one's personality?

*Ted Schmidt looks at two eminent Germans,
both profoundly affected by the Second World War.
The effects were totally contrasting*

They were both German theologians, chronologically 15 years apart and theologically on different planets. The comparisons between Häring and Ratzinger highlight the tragic direction of the Roman Catholic church today. Bernard Häring (1912-98), a German Redemptorist, was arguably the most influential moral theologian of the 20th century. Josef Ratzinger now sits on the throne of St. Peter as Pope Benedict XVI.

It is fascinating to look at the lives of these servants of the church, and speculate on what made them so different. Certainly one of the most significant factors for both was the disastrous Second World War. For Roman Catholics the war was the catalyst for a whole rethinking of the way theology was done. How could it come to pass that in the midst of Christendom, 60 million were killed? How could such unimaginable savagery proceed in the lands of Christianity where the icon of the non-violent Messiah was omnipresent in homes, schools, and churches?

Joseph Ratzinger

At the beginning of the war Joseph Ratzinger entered the minor seminary at the age of 12. In 1941 he was drafted into the Hitler Youth and later into the army, aged 17. He never saw active service. The war ended in April 1945, and in November he entered the diocesan seminary, a man with little human experience, virtually none with the opposite sex.

During the war Ratzinger's local pastor, the fiery Josef Steltzle, was arrested for his prophetic rejection of the new 'Aryan Christ' and his insistence that Jesus was "the child of Jews." Steltzle was expelled from Ratzinger's home town, Traunstein, but survived the war. In 1938 Traunstein was declared *Judenfrei* (free of Jews). The town of 20,000 also had its leftist martyrs to the evil regime. None of the above is mentioned by Joseph Ratzinger. His biographer, David Gibson, writes: "There is a sin of omission in his reminiscences."

Another biographer, John Allen, comments that Ratzinger seems to have idealised the loyal minority, which includes his own family, "...our church and it confirmed for me

We stand, not under naked legalism, but rather under the rule of grace. This must be felt in all our pastoral work. (Bernard Häring)

that Catholicism was a citadel of truth and righteousness against the realm of atheism and deceit."

Historians almost universally reject Ratzinger's idealisation of the Catholic church in this period, though there were indeed heroic individuals. Catholicism in general has been convicted of protecting the institution, but refusing to sacrifice for the Gospel. Keeping churches and schools open was the main thrust of its approach. Gibson concludes: "The Nazi experience... reinforced in him a kind of distancing,

a pattern of removing himself from unpleasantness, isolating the pure ideal – of the faith, the church, the family, the nation – from the inevitable corruptions of the world."

Many Germans refer to Ratzinger as "*der ganz schwarz*" (way too dark), and even a cursory reading of his writings shows this. The man is, in his own words "decidedly an Augustinian", obsessed with the essential sinfulness and even corruption of human nature. On the other hand Häring's experience of the goodness of people mirrored more God's nature and God's divine summons to choose and grow. He crafted a moral theology not so much from humanity's fallenness and slave-like obedience to the Magisterium. He had witnessed way too much obedience in his native Germany. War would also be his great teacher, a laboratory which would lead him to radically different conclusions to Joseph Ratzinger.

Bernard Häring

Bernard Häring was 27 when war broke out. In 1940 he was already teaching moral theology and making notes for the book which would make him famous in the Catholic world, *The Law of Christ*, which finally saw the light of day in 1954.

Called up as a medic in September 1940, Häring found himself in France. As a chaplain he began to say Mass for anyone, thereby breaking the rule which stipulated that all pastoral work

was forbidden to priests engaged as medics. His unit was redeployed to Poland near the Russian border in May 1941. Again he said Mass for all. He was summoned to appear in full battle dress in front of his superior. Questioned as to why he included Poles in his pastoral work, Häring responded with a question: “Why then does my adjutant consort with Polish women?” Case closed. “Thus I learned to live with risk, necessary for me when I became known as a theologian.”

When the war against Russia began, Häring again ministered to all, tending to the wounded and dying as priest-medic. Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, Häring made no distinction. Fellow Germans helped him to save Jews and release Russian prisoners in the freezing cold of the Stalingrad winter. Häring experienced the deep love of the Russian people who plied him with sleighs and horses to escape. As a prisoner of war, Poles freed him and he became their pastor.

He was overwhelmed at the goodness of those who were the victims of his own nation. It was in the crucible of war, when the worst can often be expected of people, that Häring experienced radical goodness. This led him to his fundamental option for the human being’s capacity for authentic decision-making and potential for goodness. “Is it not of absolutely decisive significance for a moral and pastoral theologian to believe in the goodness of humankind?”

Goodness was Häring’s overwhelming experience, and it proved pivotal for him. What appalled him was “the most absurd obedience by Christians.” For him obedience could not be his core concept. It would be responsibility. As well, Bernard Häring would not become obsessed, as so many Catholic bishops are today, with ‘pelvic orthodoxy.’ Sexual rigorism, which so bedevils celibates, would not snare this theologian. His main calling would be as an apostle of peace and non-violence. War had changed him forever.

The Law of Christ

When *The Law of Christ* was published in 1954, a new moment in Catholic moral theology was born. The dry, judgmental and deeply unsatisfying theology of the tired confessor’s manuals was under attack: the ridiculous dividing lines between ‘venial’ and ‘mortal’ sins, the obsession with numbers and acts rather than with the human person and his or her orientation.



The legalist edifice of the sacrament of penance under Häring’s influence moved toward the absolute good news of the Divine covenant with humanity, the overflowing of God’s love which sees people on a journey of growth and conversion, rather than fundamentally depraved. God was the loving Other, not the controller and harsh Judge. By 1978, Häring’s massive three volume work *Free and Faithful in Christ* moved further from a legal basis to a more relational model. And he moved more toward non-violence as his major focus.

Troubles with Rome

Häring’s problems with Rome accelerated with the birth control encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (1968). He signed a world-wide petition against the encyclical. He was blamed for the majority report of the Papal Commission, which had advocated a change in the church’s teaching. Häring

acknowledged conscience to be on an equal footing with papal decrees.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, he was the subject of an intense investigation by the Holy Office which endangered his health. The pressures and secrecy of his trials were so intense that his statement, “I would rather stand once again before a court of war of Hitler”, shocked the present Pope.

He was less than enthused with John Paul II’s grasp of moral theology in the latter’s 1993 encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*. “Let us ask our Pope: ‘Are you sure your confidence in your supreme human, professional and religious competence in matters of moral theology and particularly sexual ethics is truly justified?’... We should let the Pope know that we are wounded by the many signs of his rooted distrust and discouraged by the manifold structures of distrust which he has allowed to be established.”

In conclusion, we may observe the radical impact of war on Häring’s psyche and his theology: “What most influenced my thinking about moral theology was the mindless and criminal obedience of Christians to Hitler, a madman and a tyrant. This led me to the conviction that the character of a Christian must not be formed one-sidedly by a *leitmotif* of obedience but rather by a discerning responsibility, a capacity to respond courageously to new values and new needs, and a readiness to take the risk” (*Free and Faithful in Christ*, 1978).

Sadly, in an earlier incarnation, Joseph Ratzinger would have agreed. “Conscience is the supreme and ultimate tribunal, even beyond the official church, and it must be obeyed”, he said, in 1966. ■

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*We wish to express our thanks
to the editors and author,
Ted Schmidt*



Abolishing Slavery

... unfinished business

Jim Consedine

Recently I watched a docu-movie called *China Blue* about the sweatshop labour employed in most countries of Asia in the manufacture of clothing for Western markets. The rawness of the film is redeemed to some extent by the sunny dispositions of the young workers, especially 15-year-old Jasmine, through whose eyes we see what happens.

Jasmine works as a trimmer. Scissors in hand, she goes over every pair of denim trousers clipping loose threads. Each pair takes 30 minutes, two pairs per hour. For this she is paid six cents. Some days she works for 12 hours. When a 'big order' comes in, she is expected to work up to 20 hours a day until it is completed.

The factory makes up to 200,000 pairs of trousers per month. Western buyers pay about \$4 per pair, of which the workers like Jasmine receive \$1. Giant outlets in the West sell them for up to 30 times the price paid for their manufacture. We see graphic pictures of these young workers asleep from exhaustion waiting for the next shift to begin, too tired to go back to the cheerless factory dormitories, so much a feature of Asian sweatshops.

China Blue is an indictment of the globalised economy, partly because this type of exploitation is the backbone of its economics. In simple terms, the film crystallises the basic feature of global capitalism – rich people and entrepreneurs making money from a vast pool of poor people.

I stumbled from the theatre thinking of slavery. For while it is a different type of slavery to the images of the past where Africans were shackled and led off to distant plantations a continent away, this form of slavery is, nonetheless, as restrictive. The notion of freedom is as remote from Jasmine and her friends as it was from the ancestors of today's African-Americans.

The point is worth making because 23 February 2007 marked the 200th anniversary of the passing of the Abolition Bill in the Houses of Parliament at Westminster, the first major piece of legislation abolishing slavery in England. The campaign to abolish slavery was led by

one of the moral giants of his time, politician William Wilberforce. Around the world the event has been marked by celebrations and brave speeches about the success of this crusade, for indeed a crusade it was in every sense of the word.

A middle class man with manners and charm to match, Wilberforce was an unlikely leader of the campaign to abolish slavery. He was born into a prosperous merchant family in Kingston-upon-Hull, a North Sea port. From an early age he harboured ambitions to be a parliamentarian, and at the tender age of 21 was first elected for his local constituency. That was in 1780 and he was to remain a member for the next 45 years making him one of the longest serving MPs ever.

But a conversion to evangelical Christian faith in 1785 proved to be the turning point in his life. He took moral issues very seriously, introducing a variety of Bills to promote Christian moral standards in British life. He remained one of the most prominent Christians of the age for the rest of his life. Already there was a large and growing abolition movement in Britain but it badly needed a figurehead and a leader at the highest level. It took the promptings of William Pitt the Younger, prime minister of the day, to project Wilberforce into a leadership role in the abolition debate in the parliamentary chamber.

At the time, slavery was seen as an integral part of the British economy. The abolition movement was treated by most with the same disdain and opposition as terrorist organisations face today. It was impossible for many to envisage life without slavery. Africans were seen as less than human and a source of great wealth to the big traders of the day. It formed one of the pillars of international capitalism, and many of the most influential figures in British society either owned plantations in the colonies and the Americas, or bought and sold slaves as part of their trading business.

Once Wilberforce took abolition seriously, there was no holding him back. He developed a passion for its abolition

which would last the rest of his life. He introduced a Bill to abolish slavery in 1789 and argued most forcefully for its passage. But there were strong forces working against him and the growing popular sentiment. A general election and other pressing matters intervened to delay its advancement. It took two more years before it reappeared in the House of Commons. Again, he was up against powerful vested interests. Half the Parliament left before the vote and the Bill failed. It was to remain in abeyance for a further decade.

While Wilberforce pressed on with his campaign, the movement lost momentum. But early in the new century, with an influx of Irish members of parliament keen on resolving the Irish question, abolition was once again marked out as a winnable project. In 1803 he introduced his Abolition Bill and it was defeated. The same thing happened a year later. A new Whig government in 1806 advocated a change. Wilberforce, the parliamentary figurehead for a widespread social movement, introduced his Abolition Bill yet again. And on 23 February 1807, Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of the abolition of the slave trade.

But it was only ever a partial victory. The trade had become illegal on British ships but slavery remained a reality in British colonies. So Wilberforce set about making sure that where slaves still existed as they did in their tens of thousands, they should be registered. It was his way of giving further teeth to the Abolition Act. In parliament he supported the equally radical Emancipation Bill, which would make slavery outlawed even in the colonies.

The Anti-Slavery society enjoyed a revival as this campaign was launched. It was another fierce campaign which took its toll on Wilberforce to the point that his health began to suffer. In 1825, with full emancipation still not enacted, he resigned from parliament. But from the sidelines saw the Emancipation Bill passed into law in 1833, a final triumph for this great crusader. Part of the bill freed slaves in the colonies but required planters to be heavily compensated. Three days after the new laws were enacted, William Wilberforce died, on 29 July 1833.

The legacy of Wilberforce is colossal. He truly was a moral force to be reckoned with, the 'Mandela' of his day. But can we say that his campaign was fully successful? Was slavery abolished? Indeed not. His dream that all people should be free to be the sons and daughters of God we are each called to be, remains a pipe dream.

In dozens of countries around the world, indentured labour for meagre wages keeps more than one billion people in virtual slavery. The shackles aren't there. The chains have gone. The floggings have been abolished. But the abuse of human dignity, the entrapment within poverty,

the exploitation remains as widespread as ever. Not just among adults. It is children who suffer the most.

These are all forms of modern slavery. Economic and social systems hold people in slavery as much today as they ever did. For example, in West Africa, right through Asia, in India, Pakistan and Nepal, bonded child labour is widespread. This is a form of slavery. Child labour in the Philippines currently numbers more than three million children, who are put to work at a tender age, are denied an education and the prospects of a healthy adult life.


Fr Shay Cullen recently reported, "These children work by necessity in the fields hauling water, selling in the streets, begging on corners, scavenging in rubbish dumps. More are lured into prostitution or are breaking stones in quarries or work in back street factories collecting scrap and junk. They are exposed to pesticides, chemicals, fumes and dangerous gases and lead. Nearly all suffer from malnutrition. Poverty and social injustice is a form of slavery – and a cruel one at that."

While we can celebrate the efforts of William Wilberforce and rightly so, we need to remain grounded in the concept that slavery is far from having been abolished, and millions cry out for their liberation today – just as they did in Wilberforce's own time. ■

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Not so Pacific:

a response

Alan Quigley

*Retired Presbyterian lecturer Alan Quigley offers a response
to the articles in the February issue on Fiji.*

Current unrest in Fiji is reflected throughout the South Pacific

Events in the Pacific in the last few years have shaken New Zealanders' perception of a balmy and beautiful region. Thousands of people have been killed in the course of the independence struggle in West Papua. There were bitter days of conflict in New Caledonia. The Solomons have seen ethnic conflict. There has been civil war in Bougainville, in Tonga there was rioting in Nuku'alofa, in Vanuatu armed struggle at the time of independence, and in Fiji there has been a succession of coups.

With the tourist brochures conveying an image of Pacific people as brown gods and goddesses we do not expect them to behave like the rest of humanity with our love of power and money. We also tend not to take account of the mixed results of both colonialism and the missionary enterprise. There were many fine and committed colonial servants, but there was also the introduction of a super-class, whose place it was tempting for those of chiefly rank later to assume.

More seriously, the colonial powers drew lines on maps, artificially dividing people who naturally belong together, or lumping together people who find

it difficult to live in harmony. Look at the division of Papua and its assignment to the Dutch and Germans (later Indonesia and Australia), the division of Samoa into German and American Samoa, and the later NZ invasion of W.Samoa, the linking of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and the Solomons in the Western Pacific High Commission; the continued immigration of people from the colonial powers, and particularly the introduction of Indians to Fiji in 1879. All these events had serious consequences, and none took place with the consent of the indigenous people.

The introduction of Christianity in the Pacific, while bringing immense benefits, has also inevitably had some unfortunate consequences. This was inevitable, because the bearers of the faith were never perfect, and this is of course the case still. There were people who were pompous and those who were humble. Some were authoritarian and others liberating, some limited, others brilliant. In 1967 I was astonished to see the Anglican bishop in Suva being driven in a large black car with the flag of St George flying on the bonnet. It looked to me like the symbol of the English national church in its export mode. (His successor dispensed with it.)

By way of contrast, in 1974 I rode pillion with the bishop of the New Hebrides on the episcopal Vespa. In her fascinating memoir *I Remember...* Inez Hames tells of the ways she was warned by an expatriate missionary, when she arrived in Fiji as a teacher in 1920, not to have an extra chair in her office or else a Fijian would come in and sit on it "and that makes them cheeky". She used to say she spent the next 40 years or more making Fijians cheeky.

When in 1972 I returned to Fiji, I was welcomed by a delegation from the Methodist Church in Fiji. I was greatly honoured. At one point their spokesman presented me with a *tabua* (whale's tooth, a very important cultural artefact). I had not been warned, did not know what to do, and was embarrassed. Fortunately, a Fijian student, Eloni Goneyali, ran over, knelt beside me, accepted the *tabua* in the proper way and made the appropriate response.

That presentation was a small sign of how deeply the church had become interwoven with Fijian culture. As the result of much work over many years, it had become the national church of

Fijians. My ignorance was a sign not only of my own lack of preparation but possibly also of a general Kiwi assumption that of course we know what's what in the Pacific. (Eloni later entered Parliament as a Labour member and was a hostage in the Speight coup.)

Following the Reformation, national churches were established throughout Europe. They have their strengths, at least notionally, in their commitment to care for all in the nation. They also have their weaknesses. They can become prisoners of those who hold power, and fail to care for the humble, as certainly happened in England.

They also change very easily from being national churches to being nationalist. A few years ago a leading minister of the Church of Scotland, Charles Warr, lamented his own actions in his first parish during the First World War in permitting the communion table to be draped with the Union Jack and virtually turning the pulpit into a recruiting platform – as though God were on Britain's side.

The preceding articles in *Tui Motu* (February) drew attention to what they see as a similar slide in the Methodist Church in Fiji. It is a very serious issue. We who look on from the outside have to be a little humble about this; our hands are not spotlessly clean. But we can share what we have learned in the course of our history, and our awareness of the sort of faith we passed on to them.

Methodist missionaries were apprehensive about the introduction of Indian indentured labourers into Fiji; they were aware that a major cultural change was being initiated, and they were also afraid that the vision of a 'Christian' Fiji was about to be subverted. It is not surprising that later generations of Fijian Methodists looked negatively at the Indian population.

But it is also to be remembered that the church has done an immense amount for the education of Indian children,

and that in 1977 an Indian minister, Daniel Mastapha, was elected president of the church. In more recent years, as has happened in many parts of the world, Fijian nationalism has increased. In particular, the religious right in the US, now so powerful, has strongly nationalist views combined with a black and white theology which has no difficulty identifying what it disagrees with as evil. Unfortunately, that theology is powerful in some of the groups represented in the ACCF (*Assembly of Christian Churches in Fiji*).

How does this affect our response to the latest coups? The forceful removal of a democratically elected government is always disturbing, and the human rights

violations that have taken place are unacceptable. The notion of combining the offices of Prime Minister and head of the military is repugnant. But in so far as there is a genuine concern for social justice, and a commitment to building a just and multiethnic state, we are bound to see an opportunity to build something better.

As churches, it is important we dialogue with Fiji Christians and seek with humility to help the churches move from nationalism to nation building, from subservience to those in power and lack of concern for the poor to a passion for justice, and from a theology of evil and exclusion to one of grace and inclusion. ■

A Hymn for Anzac Day

Honour the dead, our country's fighting brave,
honour our children left in foreign grave,
where poppies blow and sorrow seeds her flowers,
honour the crosses marked forever ours.

Weep for the places ravaged by our blood,
weep for the young bones buried in the mud,
weep for the powers of violence and greed,
weep for the deals done in the name of need.

Honour the brave whose conscience was their call,
answered no bugle, went against the wall,
suffered in prisons of contempt and shame,
branded as cowards, in our country's name.

Weep for the waste of all that might have been,
weep for the cost that war has made obscene,
weep for the homes that ache with human pain,
weep that we ever sanction war again.

Honour the dream for which our nation bled,
held now in trust to justify the dead,
honour their vision on this solemn day:
peace known in freedom, peace the only way.

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Music: © Colin Gibson 2005

Tune: ANZAC 2

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I've been watching a native pigeon, *Kereru*, drinking from the creek in the gully below the house.

Kereru – there is a word. One has to say it to feel the sound that that bird makes: a rarely voiced call in the bush, a thrumming, soft, “kuuu-r, kuuu-r”, almost a question, it rumbles clearly and unmistakably into the heart, is uncommon enough to bring one up short when one hears it.

This was at 6 am when the pigeon might reasonably have expected to be alone. I had been drifting down the gully on a ‘before work’ escape, careful with my feet in the half-light, was just moving away from the pool in the creek when I heard the quiet *boom* of wings coming at me. I froze, hand on a tree trunk, and tried to be ‘not there’, stilled the breath, thought wood, and damp coolness, and small bird song, and the grey air moving, and the long, stretch of fibres in the tree trunk, and nothing; aiming not even a stray thought at the bird, except that it was caught in a glance from the edge of my eye. I could ‘see’ myself as boots, the unaccustomed blue of denims, a rising, warm shape where there hadn’t been one, a breathing disturbance not two metres away.

The bird came down onto a root over the pool, dipped its beak and drank, thought for a while, drank again, preened its feathers, and sat. Its red beak and eye were the only visible colour, its iridescent green-mauve feathers and pale breast easily absorbed into water colour and the reflection of sky. There was the slight, liquid plop of a water drop from its beak. Then it raised itself on its feet, looked around, and lifted away softly upstream.

I stayed, just breathing, to not contaminate the safety of its drinking hole with sudden movement, then eased out of the creek bed and went on downstream, out of sight over a ridge before turning up the hill to the house. I felt shaken out of myself. The grey, quiet air, the leaf green, the water

sound, seemed to stick to me like a wrap, a protective stillness between me and the coming day.

This is by way of preface to a conversation that has tugged at me since it happened, and will probably keep returning until I have an answer to it. A friend has uncovered this sometimes ability of mine, to recognise specifics in nature that seem invisible to her: I can ‘see’ things she says. As if it was an innate talent.

I could have told her that being able to ‘see’ is what my mother would label ‘pure country’; that is, it is a commonplace which seems inexplicable only if you are not practised at it. The details that you live with over days and years lead to recognition of the patterns that contain them; and conversely, finding a pattern opens to its parts, you can find what you already know should be there, and at the same time notice the anomalies that are difference. Instinct and intuition grow out of that deep familiarity. You get better at it.

I am fascinated by patterns, by the seen and the unseen, the underlying structures that are not available to the human senses but which seem to web together all of existence. And I love to observe, without being able to join into them, the mental and verbal gymnastics of theoretical physicists whose art it is to recognise the unexplainable, and to phrase it with a clarity that allows one to consider it. There is a light at the end of physics, a music and a poetry. Not so complex, and not at all magical, it is more about being watchful.

She wanted to know, took me to lunch on a working day and asked me to tell her how I view the world, what secret knowledge I possess. Ouch.

The mystery

Jan Kelly describes a trip to the coast. She attempts to describe and interpret a profound reflection on the nature of time and the connection between the seen and the unseen.



My inability to explain, her ability to not listen. We sat on concrete steps above the sea with our sandwiches, the seagulls whirled and drifted over us. She is well read, and so I started, carefully, with David Bohm’s beautiful mind game that demonstrates interconnectedness, his concept of enfoldment.

She was so annoyed that she cut me off right in the first sentence, “*That isn’t what I wanted to know*,” she said in sharp disappointment, “*I don’t need to know any concepts that are proof, don’t give me science!*”

I felt guilty, as if I’d failed to understand something significant. But why not? That is one of the great joys, that the unity of being, the interlocked working pattern, is demonstrably real as well as instinctively real. You can get to the infinite mind through the art and logic of the mathematician and the physicist as well as through centuries-

of the forest

transcendent experience.

interpret it to a friend. She is lead to a
nature of being, of wholeness
edness of things



old intuitive knowing. It is there, and not by faith alone. I feel oddly sure of my ground. I speak from being inside the living world, I want to tell her, *I'm here*, I can't explain it in a way that she wants to hear but I am inside.

"I'm like the artist who can't talk with words as well as he can with his hands," I told her by way of penetrating that wall. *"I'm a blunt instrument for this kind of communication."* She didn't respond to that, clearly agreeing with it. We ate our lunch in almost silence.

The truth is, though, that I'm not a blunt instrument, I am a sensitive one, blunted perhaps by a lack of mental confidence. There isn't anyone to hear me and so I forget how to speak words. That is what I meant to say.

Unity is self-evident. *"The assumption of being an individual is our greatest limitation,"* says Pir Vilayat Khan.

"Mind is by its very nature a singular entity (unique). I should say: the overall number of minds is just one" said Erwin Schrödinger.

"I feel such a sense of solidarity with all living things that it does not matter to me where the individual begins and ends," wrote Albert Einstein to Max Born. Both of them knew something about God.

Enfoldment and unfurling. The 'fact' uncovered by science, the distillation that reveals the pattern, bursts into the mind with the rightness of a Haiku poem. *"Ah Hah!"* say the scientists, discovering the same thing at the same time. *"Of course, yes!"*

Leave it, it changes nothing, I am still where I am, trembling inside the rim of discovery, and quite sure now of my path. It is over to her to continue. She was put off by the fact that Bohm is a scientist. We shall beg to differ, and maybe she will tell me some day what exactly it was that she wanted me to say to her.

But here is a small offering, a walnut, a seashell, a blue bead. David Bohm says that while the self thinks of itself as being separate from the things that it thinks about, science shows no such division: there is only the unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence, as an undivided, flowing movement without borders.

This is no new idea, it is the holistic vision of the mystic. *"Bohm had returned to that ancient maxim 'as above, so below', the medieval teaching that each individual is the microcosm of the macrocosm,"* wrote David Peat in his biography of that craggy, singular, slow-spoken man.

I don't know how I can tell my friend all of this, but sense that it is exactly what she wanted to know. How do you link into the world in a way that engages the senses, the mind, spirit, emotion and thought, and full, clear, cool, dispassionate knowing: a harmony that opens to unexpected, even counter-intuitive levels of understanding?

Wholeness isn't the only issue, I thought to myself today, wholeness is self-evident in the proper sense of that term: physical, spiritual, emotional, cultural, within consciousness itself. It is the driver for spirituality. David Bohm knew that. What he was searching for was an accurate way to say it.

This morning I was being a tree. There is no trick to being a tree, other people do it too. You have to disengage human preoccupations and be 'nothing'. The surface chatter of the mind, its inward and outward focus, is stilled. Beyond self, you open into the pattern and become synonymous with it. The bird knew that: if it saw me, and it may have, I wasn't a disturbance in the fabric, I was within it.

And if David Bohm could have proven the existence of something within this tough and fragile earth capsule that is not connected to something else, that isn't in the chain of life and of living and non-living existence, then there would be a thing to discuss. Because of course there isn't anything that isn't connected, there is only connection. In the bones of the earth and in the air. ■

Works of reference:

Infinite Potential, The Life and Times of David Bohm, F David Peat 1997.

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Journey to hell and back

The Pioneer Total Abstinence association has flourished in Ireland for over 100 years. There has been a group in Auckland since the 1950s. A member, David Hagar, describes his journey from alcoholism back to AA, to sober living, to Catholicism and to the Pioneers

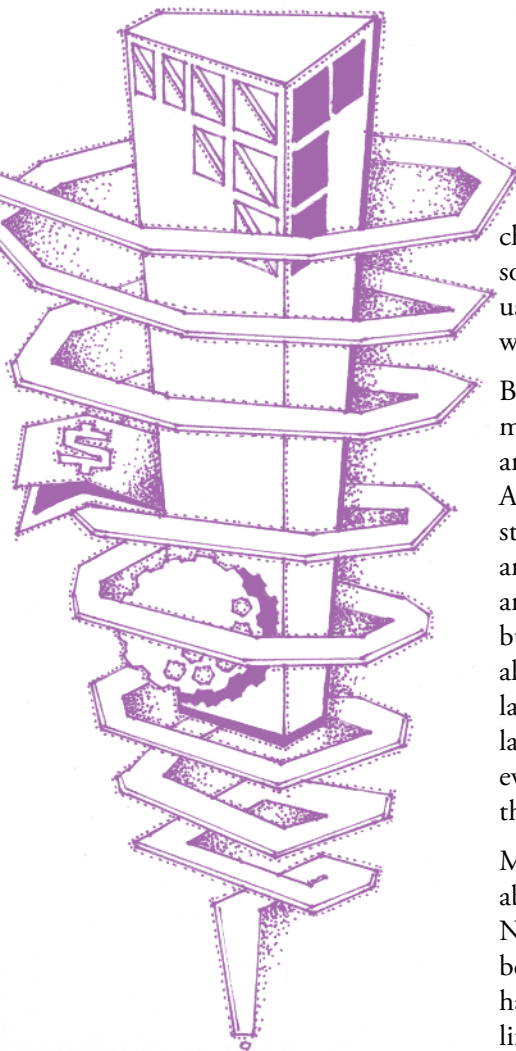
My mother was a good-looking, convent-educated Irish Catholic. She was swept off her feet by a handsome and charming young man from an extremely talented and gifted, but unfortunately godless, non-Catholic family. When their marriage broke down after only a few years, she was left to bring up my younger brother and me with the help of her twin sister and her New Zealand born Irish mother.

We all lived together in a tiny two-bedroom State unit, with my mother, my brother and me sleeping in one bedroom, and my auntie and my grandmother sleeping in the other.

It was pretty crowded. There were no *Domestic Purposes Benefit* in those days, and it was also pretty short of money.

Life did, however, have its compensations. We lived next door to the public golf course, and I was free to roam there after school and hunt for lost golf balls which I would then sell back to the golfers. I soon had my own thriving little business going. At the age of ten, I used to have a big jar hidden in my bedroom, full of coins and pound notes and ten-shilling notes. And I had no father to be telling me what to do, like all the other kids in the neighbourhood, so I enjoyed the freedom to do pretty much as I liked, within reason.

By the time I was 17, I had been farmed



out to live with relations, I had been farmed out to live in an orphanage, and I had spent four years in a strictly run Catholic boarding school where I used to go to Mass just about every single morning. It was a very Spartan existence, much like living in a monastery.

During my childhood I had to become financially self-supporting from a very early age. It was really a matter of self-preservation and necessity, forced upon me by my family circumstances rather than a fully and freely chosen lifestyle

choice which I voluntarily made. I soon found out that money was a very useful thing to have a lot of, and that I was very good at making it.

By the time I was 30, I lived in a great mansion and owned seven houses and two big commercial buildings in Auckland. Every day was a highly-structured pattern of intense activity, and my life soon became unmanageable, an endless procession of complicated business deals, parties, women and alcohol. My life as an entrepreneurial lawyer was very agreeable while it lasted. When you are rich and famous, everyone agrees with almost everything that you say.

My fall from this iconic status was abrupt. Economic conditions in New Zealand changed. Properties became harder to sell, and easy money harder to come by. My whole social life had become centred around the consumption of alcohol, to which by this time I was becoming addicted. I drifted gradually into chronic alcoholism and two unsuccessful marriages which ended in divorce. My property empire fell apart. Eventually, my descent became complete.

Today, I can look back on these events with ironic detachment, and with humour rather than bitterness, like a shipwreck survivor looking back on his ordeal. But at the time, it was a most unpleasant experience for me to have to undergo.

At age 35 I turned for help to an organisation called *Alcoholics Anonymous* (AA). Fortunately for me, at my very first AA meeting I 'got the message' that I really *was* an alcoholic and that there was absolutely no doubt about it.

I had all the classic symptoms of alcoholism, every one of them. It was a relief to me to find out what was really wrong with me and what I really needed to do to fix it. So I did the AA program over many years and I have stuck to it down to the present time.

Some years after I joined AA, I returned to the Catholic Church after a long absence. I even undertook a full course of instruction in the Catholic faith from a Dominican priest who used me as his guinea pig to design a course of instruction for lapsed Catholics returning to the faith.

I was glad to be back. The Catholic faith had not changed. It was still exactly the same faith. I only needed to be reminded, not instructed. Over the ensuing years, I joined a number of Catholic organisations and eventually I finally joined the *Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart* as well. I was never one to do things by half measures when I was drinking, so it is only natural that I would not employ half measures when it came to staying sober.

I like the objects of the Association itself, and I like the people in it. I find that, on the whole, the members of the Association tend to be more honest and truthful than the average run of humankind, and I have already had in my life more than my fair share of the company of thieves and liars. As I have got older, I have come to value truth more highly than anything else in this world, and I have been pleased to discover that the Association's membership matches my own particular standards in that regard.

My now deceased grandmother was an Irish Catholic, working-class woman of simple faith. She was a 'dyed-in-

the-wool' Catholic all her life. She never missed Mass on Sunday ever in her life. To her, the very idea of missing Mass on Sunday would have been unthinkable, as unthinkable as the thought of committing murder, or bank robbery. It would never have crossed her mind.

In the final hours of her long life, fortified with the last sacraments and by much prayer, as she lay there in her deathbed waiting for Brother Death to come to claim her, she kept making the sign of the cross every five seconds, until her final breath. I would like to die just like that when it is my time to go (and I hope the Blessed Virgin is looking over my shoulder as I am writing this).

When I was a child, she passed on her simple faith to me, mainly by her example rather than by formal instruction, and that was my richest inheritance from her. She was not university educated, like me, but she was full of simple wisdom gathered from long experience. One of her favourite expressions was "birds of a feather flock together. It is only natural" she would say "for like to flock with like."

Given my personal history and my nature, it was only natural that I would

become, sooner or later, a Pioneer. By making my personal abstinence from the consumption of alcohol an act of reparation for the sins of intemperance of others, I make a virtue and source of grace out of an action which is for me a necessity.

Other members of the Association have other, and more virtuous, motives for joining the Association. Their husbands or wives, or children or brothers or sisters have alcohol problems. Or they do not like the idea of drinking anything which contains a powerful, mind-altering drug (which alcohol is) for fear that they might like it as much as I did. Or perhaps they are just saints in the making, attracted to the concept of renunciation as means of reparation for the sins of intemperance of others.

Whatever one's motives for joining the Association, be they highly noble, highly saintly, highly practical or highly secret, the other members of the Association are not concerned to inquire. Their reasons for joining are their own business and nobody else's.

The act of reparation, the daily act of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the daily prayers are the same for all, regardless of motive. And all are welcome to join. ■

PIONEER

The Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was founded by Fr James A Cullen, SJ in Dublin on 28 December 1898

Aim of Association:

Peace and harmony in the home

The Pioneer contribution:

The spread of the christian virtue of temperance throughout Ireland and abroad

Means:

- Prayer; an alcohol-free lifestyle and public witness to the infinite love of the Sacred Heart by wearing the pin
- Support for the young and victims of drug and alcohol abuse
- Alternative social and cultural activities
- A monthly family magazine and use of other media
- Promoting Pioneer membership worldwide

For more information, please write or phone:

John Joe Lynch, 15 Loch St, Remuera, Auckland, or
Phone 09 522 1728 after 7pm

Raging For Jesus

Glynn Cardy

It was in Spain, 1975, in the last days of General Franco's dictatorship, that Antoni Ruiz from Valencia, just 17, told his mother that he was gay. His family sought advice from a nun. The nun went straight to the police. Antoni was arrested and sent for trial. He spent three months in prison. He was raped and psychologically tortured by the guards and prison doctor.

Other gay men during Franco's time were locked up in 'correction camps', given electric shocks, and forced to watch pornographic heterosexual movies. Although thousands of political and other prisoners were pardoned in 1976, gay men were left in jail to serve their sentences.

It is always sobering to read of the injustices meted out upon homosexual people. It is sobering to realize that what happened in Spain is not unique. Nor is 1975 unique. Violence, physical and psychological, has been inflicted upon gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people by individuals, governments, doctors and religious in many countries in many times. And so it continues.

The purpose of telling Antoni's story is fuel our rage. While the word rage can be thought of as extreme anger or violence, it is also used to describe that determined, potent force that motivates social reformers in their work for change. It is this use we find in Dylan Thomas' poem: "Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

Feelings of sadness and sorrow are usual initial reactions in hearing the stories of victims. Yet these feelings are not the fuel one needs in order to work for years trying to change systemic structural injustice.

In the Bible the word compassion, literally 'with' (com) 'passion', is a synonym for rage. Yet like many biblical concepts pertaining to justice however it has been de-powered, de-politicised, and moulded into a caring concern that no one could possibly object to. Similarly the word 'passion' itself, used to describe the brutal torture and death of Jesus, is often thought of a patient acceptance of suffering. Oh that we could regain the sense of Jesus, and the prophets before him, raging against injustice wherever it manifests!

I suspect the nun in Valencia had heard the Bible read most of her life. I suspect she was faithful in worship, and in carrying out the rules and caring concern of her religious order. I suspect she had heard the condemnation of homosexuality from Leviticus 18:22. I suspect she had heard that the government is ordained by God from Romans 13:1. I suspect too that her encultured prejudices and fears were confirmed rather than challenged by Holy Scripture.

When the moment to be true to her faith came, namely to defend the vulnerable, she believed that her religion demanded she handed Antoni over to the police. She believed that God wished Antoni to be incarcerated.

The current strife in the worldwide Anglican Communion over the acceptance of homosexuality is focused around two issues. One is the extent of autonomy that a province of the Church should have. What constraints if any should be put on existing provincial autonomy when other provinces find their decisions difficult? Some want a form of centralism and a 'covenant' to express that. Former colonies like New

Zealand and the United States are, not surprisingly, wary of centralism. Generally speaking those in favour of a covenantal centralism are opposed to gay priests and gay relationships.

The other issue is the Bible. There are numerous scholars who have written on and debate the issues surrounding homosexuality. There are some who see the Bible as condemnatory of homosexuality. They see it as a sickness, an abhorrent aberration, or a sin. There are others who see the Bible as articulating great themes, like liberation, and different cultural ways of expressing them. 'It is destructive abusive relationships' they say 'not mutual loving relationships that should be condemned'. Then there are others who see the Bible as largely compromised by the knowledge of its authors. The moral dictates of communities that existed over two thousand years ago they believe need to be tempered by the more contemporary understandings of science and the humanities. Often the Bible debate comes down to Jesus and the way people choose to view him. Would he be tolerant and accepting of sexual otherness, or restraining of difference?

Grappling with these issues are an interesting and diverse plethora of international personalities. There are lots of egos, lots of territory staking, and lots of mediating. It is very time consuming.

I view the Anglican arguments over homosexuality differently from many. Mostly I don't care about covenants, conferences, or splits; or even about how others might choose to read the Bible. Mostly what I care about is the Antonis of our world. I care that fear and prejudice, backed by religions



Winter's Womb

Diane Pendola

*For Diane Pendola, writing from the depths of a northern winter,
the season is a symbol of Lenten stripping, of undoing, of waiting, of unknowing.
“Unless the grain of wheat dies . . .”*

The season is a season of dying back. The dying unfolds before our eyes. The leaves turn and fall. The green bracken is now shrivelled and brown. The bones of earth are exposed. This is not a time of taking on but stripping away. This is a time of unknowing, of undoing what has been done.

I contemplate all the doing in my life, the lives of friends, family and the busy-ness of our society. I contemplate the words of the Tao Te Ching: *Doing nothing, nothing remains undone*. And I wonder, if we did less would we have more of what we really want: love, meaning, purposefulness, joy? If we did less perhaps there would be less destruction. If we did less perhaps there would be more for those who have so little. If we did less perhaps there would be more of the planet left for the other life forms to inhabit.

If we did less... I'm reminded of those religious vows of poverty; those monastic vows of simplicity and staying rooted in one place; those insights into renunciation which run like streams of clear water through every spiritual tradition. They are all about doing less, accumulating less, stripping down, letting go. This is their season.

Now the life force turns back towards the root. Flower, foliage and fruit disappear. Death appears at the surface but in the darkness below life gathers itself, coils itself like a snake, hibernates like a bear, descends into the grave like a Christ concentrating the energy of resurrection. This is the season of the Spanish mystic, St John of the Cross: *If you would know everything, proceed by the way of unknowing. If you would possess everything proceed by the way of non-possession*.

Here in the northern hemisphere organic life turns inward toward the centre. Like it or not, I also feel the stripping of the season and I feel subsumed in unknowing. Like it or not, my energy takes a downward turn away from the light. The serpent power sleeps below the threshold of consciousness. The earth tilts towards that moment of standstill, that solstice where the whole Earth hovers in choice: to hurtle on into darkness or turn again toward the light.

Each year the earth chooses to turn again towards the light drawing forth life from her winter's womb. So too we can have confidence that as the Earth turns so shall we: as individuals, as nations, as a planetary community. ■

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that understand their sacred texts as intolerant of homosexuality, continue to violate and brutalize the Antonis by word and deed. I care that a faithful nun, nurtured and shaped by the Bible and her Church, is an accomplice to that violence and brutality. I care that Christianity, allegedly following the example of Jesus, sits talking and arguing when the Antonis are continuing to be abused.

I have a deep rage within me, nurtured by my mentors and the Anglican tradition in this land, and fueled by the stories of Antoni Ruiz and others who have been treated unjustly. This rage keeps me true to my baptismal calling and makes me impatient.

In rural Oxfordshire where I was working last year I found a wonderful tolerance of villagers who were gay.

The criteria for acceptance of someone was not 'Whom are they sleeping with?' or 'Who do they vote for?' or 'What do they believe?' but rather 'Are they willing to support the communal life of the village?' In other words being a good neighbour was the most important thing. It reminded me of a story about a Samaritan. If only that nun had thought like a Samaritan rather than a priest or Levite. ■

The Second Journey

Paul Andrews

Here we are on Ash Wednesday, the month that comes in like a lion and ends like a lamb. Today and Good Friday are all that is left to us of mandatory fish days and fasting. The 40 days of Lent recall the desert where the People of Israel, and then John the Baptist, and then Jesus himself, made their journey to a new life. The desert was not a destination, but a place for travellers going somewhere. In our liturgy that somewhere is Easter, the feast of the risen Lord. But in each of our lives, Lent can be more than that; it can be the start of a second journey.

Jesus had gone into the desert an unknown young carpenter from Nazareth, with 30 years of hidden life behind him. After the desert he returned to Galilee with power of the Spirit in him, and started to preach. Quickly he became a public figure, but he loved to withdraw to desert or mountain to recharge his energies by prayer. He moved forward like any of us, with no sure knowledge of what was to happen to him. His life was shaped by the spirit driving him forward, but shaped also by the accidents of his life, the enthusiasm of some of his listeners and the resistance of others. He had a sense of where God was calling him – *I am sent to cast fire on the earth* – and of the joy he felt in this vocation – *my meat is to do the will of him who sent me*. After the quiet life of Nazareth, Jesus' public life was tumultuous. If we are to do justice to his humanity, we must accept that he did not know what would happen next, only that this was where God wanted him to be.

Most of us could point to a similar second calling, though we might not think of it in that way. I remember Patricia, born with a weak heart, nurtured through childhood by an attentive mother and father, facing fewer demands than her healthy sisters and brothers, always treated as delicate and dependent. When she was 20 her father died, then her mother. It seemed like the end of the world. She still thought of herself

as a child who would be looked after, and suddenly she was adrift. With her sister's help she found the sort of steady job she could do well, got a place to live, and a rhythm of life. But it still felt as though something was wrong. She was accustomed to identifying herself as her mother's child. That no longer fitted. She was a woman, forced to be self-sufficient. Jung put it starkly: *The afternoon of life brings the reversal of all the ideals and values that were cherished in the morning*.

This was an important insight for Patricia. She had been thinking of this part of her life as calamity and failure. It took her a while to accept that her dreams might differ from her parents' dreams for her, and that she was starting on a new journey. It took a while for St Paul to accept that the road to Damascus, and his spectacular change of life, was a movement forward, not a failure. *When I was a child I used to talk like a child, and think like a child, and argue like a child, but now I am a man, all childish ways are put behind me*.

Patricia's journey started when she left home and made her own way in the world. But there are further journeys later in life, often when we have succeeded in our first career. I was once principal of a Jesuit school which had some exceptional lay teachers on the staff. It sometimes irked me that these good men, while they taught their classes well, obviously gave their best energies to interests outside the school. One of them was a brilliant journalist whose free-lance writing was in hot demand. Another was a highly effective politician whose party wanted him to go full-time into politics – as eventually he did. Another was a born entrepreneur, an outstanding teacher who had an eye for unmet needs in the country's educational system, and found ways to meet them.

Secondary teaching offered them a decent living wage, and a pension. But they were working well within their

powers. Teaching offered them no large horizons. In a Jesuit school of that time, they had no prospect of being principal. In fact there were not even posts of responsibility. The only promotion was the small annual increment to their salary which seniority brought them – and even that levelled off after 20 years. They found themselves on a career plateau while still in their forties, at the height of their powers. So without putting a name on it, they each of them started a second journey, which would offer scope to their creative energies. Gradually I came to realise that their outside interests were good for them, made them happier and more engaged in life, and therefore better teachers. In the end their stars led them out of teaching, and I could see the rightness of their move, however much I regretted losing them.

A second journey like this is not an easy option. It means casting adrift from the security you have enjoyed, not knowing where the road will take you. When Ignatius Loyola was wounded at Pamplona, and slowly realised that he could not go back to the courtly life he had enjoyed, he went through nine months of agonising indecision in Manresa, trying to work out what the Lord was asking of him. He was so despairing of finding his way that he was seriously tempted to suicide. Out of that agony he worked out what he called rules for the discernment of spirits, which are an essential part of any Ignatian retreat. Those who have mastered them, find that they become part of their everyday decision-making – and of their prayer, because in all this journeying we are looking for light from the Lord:

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on!

The night is dark, and I am far from home, lead thou me on!

Paul Andrews is a Jesuit priest and psychotherapist, semi-retired in Dublin

Kopua Calvary

Tenth Station: A meditation on
Jesus being stripped of his
garments



You beckon—simply because I see;
You beckon, you bastard.
You say nothing.
You just hang:
cursed and cryptic.
My only horizon a hill –
not a lofty mountain,
just a rubbish dump
outside the city.
Humility hangs,
cryptic and crucified;
the humble humiliates:

And... but...
And so necessary
the stripping down of my soul.
How I resist
and pull my tattered self
around me, seeking comfort
amid the pain of letting go.
And I am not yet hung as you are!
These tatters are torn from me
in ways I thought could never be
and I am left standing naked,
stripped bare of all the fanciful
clothing
from another land, another time.

Standing naked in an open field
of tall and dancing grasses
and humble buttercups
blinking in the sun,
their graceful bow and bending
invite me to their dance
in the presence, the company of Lord Wind
who clothes me now with, ah—
Humility.

And in simple thanks
like the gracious grasses
scattering food for hungry sparrows,
I'm given the ring
of rippling river sparkle and morning dew
to sear the pain (of the world) with gratitude,
yes, and even joy.

Kevin Dobbyn

This is my Body

This is my Body

Diagnosis
Parkinson's disease.
Meditative links with
the Passion of Jesus.

Agony in the Garden

Loneliness and aloneness.
Uncompleted dreams and hopes
Failure.

Taken Prisoner

By one's own body and mind.

Subject to Ridicule

Dressed in clothing
Giving a false impression.

Crown of Thorns

Brain function deteriorates

Carrying the Cross

No option. Lack of
mobility. Falling
repeatedly beneath
the weight.

Simon of Cyrene

Strangers called
in to help.
Personal embarrassment.

Jesus meets his mother

Our Lady reveals her
presence and strength.

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Face muscles immobilize
and fail to show emotion.
Friends have to remember
earlier responses and
characteristics.

Jesus is stripped of his garments

Dependent on others for
dressing and undressing.

Jesus is nailed to the Cross

The body becomes increasingly
immobilized.

Death and Resurrection

Death is not an exit
But an entrance

Jocelyn Franklin

By slow boat to wisdom

Paul Oestreicher

Eating people is wrong, sang Donald Swan to a delighted audience. But if killing them isn't wrong, why shouldn't hungry people eat people? After battle, the Maori proudly did. They were never savages but had a highly developed culture. We Europeans simply imposed ours on them, called it Christian, made the maidens cover their breasts and stopped their warriors eating people.

I ask myself: *what is and what is not Christian?* The churches have never had a problem with killing people, provided it is held to be in the public interest by the religious and secular powers. When the church was itself in power, heretics no longer had a right to life. As the flames grew hotter, they might even repent in time to save their souls.

Execution for those threatening the establishment always had ecclesiastical blessing. The wrath of God demanded it. Caesar was God's friend. What we call Enlightenment has changed that – often to the church's dismay. But not now in America's Bible Belt.

Maybe being an executioner is a dying profession. But not when it comes to dealing with collective rather than individual killing. Soldiering remains utterly respectable; so respectable that on solemn occasions royalty are decked out in military regalia. Being killed in the process of sanctified killing still has the status of martyrdom. "Greater love hath no man..." graces the war memorials – everywhere.

As the Second World War was drawing to a victorious close, hundreds of thousands of German and Japanese civilians were still deliberately being killed by Allied bombing – to the lone protest of one Anglican bishop, who thereby ruined his chance of being made Archbishop of Canterbury.

How that fits with following Jesus, who counter-culturally taught his disciples to love their enemies and not repay evil with evil, has always puzzled me. Theologians did manage to produce a doctrine to justify war in very exceptional cases. So far pretty well every war seems to have been an exceptional case.

In this anniversary year of Wilberforce's legislation, we all know about slavery. Its abolition was the achievement

of a group of Christian reformers who were steadfastly opposed by the English bench of Anglican bishops. They could cite St Paul in favour of an institution they held to be a social necessity. It was not, so they lost.

When the Catholic lawyer Peter Benenson and a group of friends founded Amnesty International 45 years ago, the churches kept a polite distance. There was not a word about human rights in the Bible, said many Christians. Sure, getting Christians out of Communist prisons was fine, but not getting Communists out of Fascist prisons. Christian tradition had never championed the right to be wrong. But a new secular wind was blowing. Good Pope John steered his ship straight into that wind and before long the churches were preaching human rights as though it was their idea.

When I look at this scenario, I wonder what God's Holy Spirit has been up to as I watch Richard Dawkins' self-satisfied smile. Has the third person of the Trinity given up on religious institutions and put her eggs in the basket of secular wisdom? After all, in most of Christendom patriarchy still reigns.

What then of the present traumas of Anglicanism? As certainly as slavery was natural for centuries and soldiering still is, surely men loving men must be unnatural, says the voice of orthodoxy. As late as the 1960s a standard medical text book classified homosexuality as a disease. The place for such people was a psychiatric hospital or a prison. Our missionaries spread that message afar, when they dared to name it. "The Bible says so" – and other religions too.

What is so surprising is how quickly I and many others, Christians included, have come to see how wrong we were. It will take time for the others, at home and abroad, to catch up.

That wind is blowing but overcoming psychological traumas is costly. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, is paying part of the price as he prays for time. The price may prove too high for the structures of Anglicanism to hold.

Nor, I fear, does the Spirit's wind blow strongly enough to persuade both world and church that killing people - en masse - is wrong.

Canon Paul Oestreicher is a counsellor of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship and Quaker Chaplain to the University of Sussex, England



Reflecting on John — OXFORD FONT

The Arrest of Jesus in the Garden (*John 18:1-11*)

Normally we think of the gospel stories of Jesus in the garden as stories of great suffering and sorrow. In Mark and *Matthew* for example, we hear how the three favoured disciples – Peter, James and John – fall asleep instead of being present to Jesus, while in *Luke* we learn that the sweat of Jesus was like drops of blood. These various accounts are graphically captured in artistic representations – traditional and contemporary – and there is less emphasis on *John's* story of Jesus in the garden and his subsequent arrest. At the end of the Supper story in John's gospel, Judas goes out into the night. Jesus has earlier on warned (*11:10*) that "those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them" while in *12:35* he teaches that "if you walk in darkness, you do not know where you are going."

Judas, the Roman soldiers, police from the Temple and the Pharisees then

return with torches and lanterns to arrest Jesus. These are the ones who have not accepted the light of the world and so have to rely on artificial light to find the way. While it is unlikely that such a large contingent was needed to arrest Jesus, it serves the author's theological purpose of identifying the powers of darkness – the Roman political and Jewish religious authorities.

What emerges so clearly in the Johannine account is that Jesus is not a helpless victim but is very much the one who directs the action. He comes forward and initiates the encounter with his enemies. Three times he states: "I am he," words that recall Yahweh's pronouncement to Moses in *Exodus 3:14* "I am who I am!" The significance of Jesus' "I am he" is obvious as the crowd steps back and falls to the ground. Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is not beaten down or despairing. Instead he clearly is identified as the Son of God involved in a cosmic struggles with Satan. Patristic commentators suggest that the fact this encounter takes place in a garden is the author's way of suggesting that the damage wreaked in the first garden is shortly to be reversed.

In 1843, Karl Marx wrote that "religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people." He argued that religion was used to persuade the oppressed masses that economic deprivation, political and religious oppression in this life should be endured for the sake of a better life after death. *Mark's* Jesus prays to God in the garden: "Father, for you all things are possible, remove this cup from me; yet not what I want but what you want," a text that has been used to justify suffering. *John's* garden narrative presents a different picture of a Jesus who stands up to those who seek to harm him. He does not relinquish control to his opponents, and so serves as a model for all victims of oppression today. ■

Susan Smith

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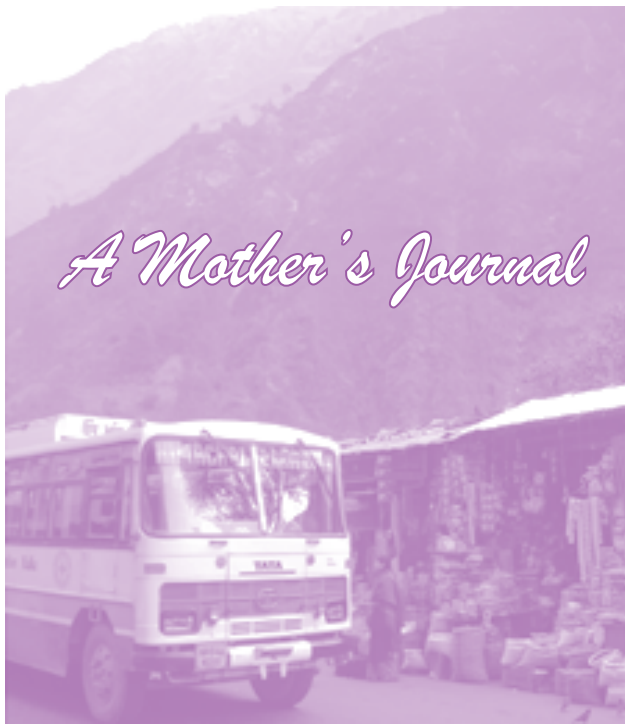
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Come to the office at 4pm sharp, ma'am, then bus will be going."

I paid up and sauntered smugly out into the raucous blur of central Delhi. The journey to our home in the Himalayas involves an arduous overnight bus trip but this professional looking travel agency offered a 'super-deluxe' bus leaving only 400m from our hotel. This solved much of the hassle. Maybe 'hassle free' is the motto of Western life. Anyway the journey was looking more hopeful this time.

Four o'clock. The office men apologized that all their normal buses had been cancelled. Luckily for us they had secured the entire drivers cab for us on another bus. Smiling politely. The bus would leave at 7.30pm.

Seven-thirty. The agency van dropped us under a dark motorway bridge five kilometres away. The kids watched squirrels' night-time antics and a swivel-headed owl. When a bus materialized out of the night we discovered three others in the cab, our cab. I assertively explained it was all for us – we had tickets to prove it. They nodded, said they had also been promised the space. Then quietly shuffled themselves around the gear stick, onto the sloping engine box and into a 'no leg-room nook' behind the driver's seat. Thus began our camaraderie of tinned sardines with a teenage boy from Gujarat hoping to find labouring work, another young man planning to sell T-shirts in the Himalayas in winter and a young engineer installing wireless internet in tourist town Manali. Our children dissolved into sleep. Heads and legs sprawling over unknown laps and shoulders.

OSH, our driver, told us he had been driving 14 hours a day for the last 16 days. He cheerfully opened his window and the sunroof. The Himalayan blast seemed nearly endurable if it kept him awake. The rough cigarettes he started smoking had the same justification but were utterly nauseating. I pointedly opened windows, then asked him to not smoke and finally

vomited out the window. The driver generously passed his glowing cigarettes around the cab throughout the night

Dinner at a roadside dhaba. Two more men crammed into our 'exclusive' cab. The assistant asked us to move over. I refused, waving my ticket and shouting about small children and promises that the whole cab was for us. Slowly sleepy bodies oozed over each other. All night the Gujarati teenager resettled Rohan and Shar, (now sleeping behind the driver's seat) and calmly sorted out their squabbles about sweatshirts and pillows. Ankit, the young engineer, twisted into a corner over the engine to let Shanti stretch her legs out and later her head was on his lap. The driver passed me a thin shawl to plug the wind hole under my armpit. We had a winding 2000 m ascent to the Kullu valley.

Night and more night. Our family was definitely winning on per capita space in the cab. The others just tucked their legs into a tighter space, with each new arrival and quietly accepted that the driver and his assistant were selling unlimited places in the cab and putting the money into their back pockets. I alone in that cold whirl of cab cursed the dishonest travel agency, my own gullibility... even the potholed road for winding on and on. Ankit tucked his legs to the side giving Jeph leg room and smiled tiredly. "Morning will come" he said.

Endless night. The thin foam nailed to the seat had progressively thinned since we started. Now the seats were wooden benches. One leg got pins and needles, then the other. I prodded a shawl behind my back and rolled my eyes at Jeph. The oily black heads of our travel companions had lurched now onto his shoulders. Wind whistled through every chink in glass and metal. I retched out the window again.

Finally thin dawn. Sporadically passengers alighted, leaving their padded reclining seats empty. Our fellow sardines drifted to their places. At last the space that was 'rightfully ours! We stretched out in our ocean and plunged deep into sleep. Aaah. Five minutes later three bushy tailed children who had slept soundly most of the night dragged us back to the bright surface. Milky mango light on snowy mountain tops. Home soon.

That evening. Slightly fortified by afternoon sleeps we sat down to dinner when there was a quiet knock. We opened the door to Ankit, our young engineer companion. Over pizza we talked about families, work, adventures. We thanked him for his kindness in trying to give us space. "For all of us it was a difficult journey" he said "but my motto is to practise and live humility."

His quiet words were a charge inside me. I'd already mentally launched a battleship of complaint letters to India Tourism, Himachal Tourism, the bus company and the travel agency.... Munching pizza with Ankit I abandoned all those plans. Hmmm... maybe I'll just try practising humility I thought. ■

Kaaren Mathias

Kaaren Mathias is a mother of three living and working with her husband, Jeph, in a village in Himachal Pradesh. She is focussed on keeping her kids happy, improving public health and enjoying the beautiful surroundings

Some practical guidance for the season of Lent

Anchorhold: Prayer of the Heart in Daily Life

Raymond Pelly

St Peter's publications 2005. 55 pp

(obtainable from The Cathedral Bookshop

P.O.Box 12-044, Wellington

email: giftshop.cathedral@paradise.net.nz)

With Christ: the Gospel under the guidance of St Benedict

Jean-Francois Baudoz

(translated from French)

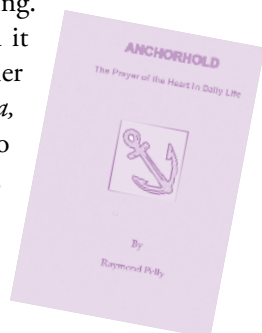
Liturgical Press, Minnesota 2005. 73 pp

Price \$28.95

Reviews: Michael Hill IC

Here are two books for Lenten use, both pocket-sized yet totally different in compass and style.

Anchorhold describes how to practice solitude and prayer of the heart in the midst of busy urban living. If you live in an all-adult household it is often possible to dedicate a corner of the house to creating a *poustinia*, somewhere exclusively dedicated to private prayer. Author Raymond Pelly, however, is married with a family, so he had to resort to the classic Kiwi male thing of building or adapting a shed out the back.

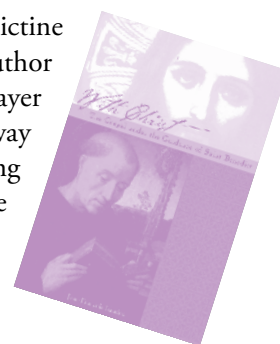


Pelly suggests four basic requirements for contemplative prayer – the four Ss: *silence, solitude, stillness, simplicity*. He gives lots of useful practical hints. Among various prayer methods offered, his preference is clearly for the contemplative way as practised, say, by John Main and Lawrence Freeman.

Pelly calls his cell, which incidentally he also uses for spiritual direction and reading, the *Anchorhold of the Transfiguration*. Jesus led the disciples up a high mountain in order to give them an experience of the transcendent. It is this aspect of prayer which this book especially emphasises.

I found this book a useful reminder of how to use one's prayer time beneficially. The style is somewhat staccato and some of the quotations I found more of a distraction than a help. Nevertheless it is well worth reading.

With Christ is a typically Benedictine work, in the best sense. The author is more concerned with themes of prayer than methods. However a good way to follow these themes is by using *lectio divina*, the stock-in-trade of the Benedictine tradition.



Baudoz is a Scripture scholar, so not surprisingly the Scriptures are his quarry for prayerful reflection. Nevertheless his narratives are never far from the problems and challenges of real living. In particular, he declares a sense of closeness to the Benedictine brothers murdered in Algeria a few years ago. As well as martyrdom he also explores Eucharist, the Passion, Temptation, Humility.

The aim of the book is to seek closeness to God by identifying one's life with that of Christ. It is achieved by drawing on the wellsprings of wisdom, moderation, gentleness and peace, which have distinguished the great Benedictine teachers right through to the present time. Baudoz' little book adds to this treasury. ■

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Picking Christianity up by the scruff of its neck

Mole Under The Fence; Conversations with Roland Walls

Ron Ferguson, with Mark Chater

Foreword: Rowan Williams

Saint Andrew Press. Pbk.191 pp.

Review: Mike Noonan

Now that the Da Vinci Code brouhaha has settled down, I'm willing to admit a very real fondness for Rosslyn village near Edinburgh, Scotland. The village does indeed house a treasure of Christendom, but not the one dreamt up by Dan Brown in his book. There lives a tiny community – the *Community of the Transfiguration*. I met them first in 1979 at a Regional Gathering of *L'Arche* in Northern Europe, when John Halsey, a community member and an Anglican worker-priest, came to speak about their way of life.

They are a community that picks Christianity up by the scruff of its compromised neck, and with a great deal of affectionate and forgiving laughter, shake it until the truth is sifted out. This book – a series of conversations with Roland Walls, the founder of the community – is an often hilarious engagement with someone described as “one of the liveliest and most creative theological minds of his generation”. Ron Ferguson, one time leader of the Iona community in Scotland, has done us great service by making the wisdom and humour of Roland and the spirit of this remarkable community accessible to a wider audience by recording these conversations.

Etched into my own childhood memories is one occasion when my mother encouraged my brother to live a particular difficulty a little more like Jesus would have. “But look at what happened to him!” was my brother's prompt reply! This too is Roland's reply, inviting us to look at what constitutes success in following

Jesus – failure! They established a very simple monastic community in the ramshackle rusted old building that was the Rosslyn Miner's Institute. Their monastic cells and chapel are garden sheds in the back garden. They live in poverty. Roland could very easily be mistaken for a tramp, unshaven, with string holding up his trousers.

He tells of a backhanded compliment they once received. A man approached the community on behalf of his friend who had had a serious mental breakdown. Could he come and stay with them? Roland was at first going to decline, saying that the poverty and austere conditions that they lived under might not be appropriate for someone in such a vulnerable state. The friend persuaded him when he protested: “But the psychologist man told him he needed a place where people have failed. Your place is the only place I can think of!”

The book tells of how they came by their name. They had noticed that the date that the atom bomb, which caused so much death and disfiguration, dropped on Hiroshima was August 6th – the same date as the feast of the Transfiguration. Transfiguration or disfiguration is the choice facing our world, and their community has lived with a prayerful consciousness of that choice ever since. It is as relevant now, as our world begins to face the threat of global warming, as it was in the '60s, when their community began against the background of the arms race and the threat of nuclear destruction.

This book bursts at the seams with inspiring stories and plain wisdom. I love the story of how the community came to be founded in Rosslyn. Roland, at that time an Anglican Priest, had been invited by the Bishop of Edinburgh to come to Rosslyn as priest in charge of the chapel.

Roland visited, saw the chapel for what it was – “an absurd museum of a church with a tiny congregation in the middle of a field eight miles south of Edinburgh”. On the train back to England he remonstrated with the Lord in his prayer, eventually striking a bargain, “I'll do anything, so long as you make it clear.” At that point, he looked out of the window to see a coal train coming in the opposite direction with a handwritten notice in big red letters, pinned to one of the trucks, saying RETURN EMPTY TO SCOTLAND. So that is what he did.

It is a community that has a great deal of wisdom to offer on ecumenism and the pain of disunity. Part of their vision was that they should be an ecumenical community, but they were all Anglicans. They began praying that a Catholic would join them. Roland describes how the prayer was answered in a most unexpected way when in his guts he felt drawn to the Catholic faith and how, for two years, he didn't dare talk to the community about it in case they saw it as a betrayal.

He talked it through with Fr Jock Dalrymple, who had been appointed Visitor to the community by the Scottish Council of Churches. Jock advised him to pray over the next year or two “If this is of you Lord, make it more urgent. Give the nudge a bit more strength to it. And if it isn't, then turn it off.”

The call did become more urgent and Roland, with the permission of his Bishop, went to see Cardinal Gray. I was very moved to read of the old Cardinal's response: “Go back to your community and ask them if they are prepared to take the pain of Christ into the very heart of their community. Right at the heart of your life will come a sword, and you will experience not just your own pain and the pain of

Monastic spirituality without tears

Finding Sanctuary

Abbot Christopher Jamison

Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006.

Review: Elisabeth Nicholson

In 2005 the BBC produced a television series, *The Monastery*, in which five very modern men lived the monastic life at Worth Abbey, S England, for 40 days and 40 nights while TV cameras tracked their progress. To everyone's amazement the series attracted an audience of three million people (TVNZ please note – couldn't we see it here? You too might be surprised.)

Worth Abbey, and no doubt other similar places, experienced a huge upsurge of interest following these programmes, many enquiries coming from people with no background of religious faith, let alone a specifically Christian one. The interest and the searching of such people inspired this book. Abbot Christopher came to believe that St Benedict and his *Rule*, which is not actually a book of rules but a book of insights for Christian

living with suggestions as to how to put such insights into practice, has much to offer people today.

Traditionally, monasteries have been places of sanctuary – holy space, and this small book sets out to describe ways to create that sanctuary amid the hectic hurly-burly of modern life. St Benedict and the writings of the Desert Fathers are the guides on our journey, but Abbot Christopher also has suggestions for using sites on the internet as well as modern writings, and these references are placed at the end of each chapter, making them very easy to access.

We are given seven steps: *Silence, Contemplation, Obedience, Humility, Community, Spirituality, and Hope*. Some of these sound daunting, even unattractive to a modern ear, but each is opened up and explored, so as to be both comprehensible and relevant to our age.

For example, in the chapter on *Obedience*, we have the story of a monk at Worth, well into his 80s, having

entered at the age of 18. A journalist asked if he did not feel he had missed out on life having become a monk so early and having to obey the monastic rules for over 50 years. The monk replied: "Look, I've woken up every day of every one of those years and freely chosen to be a monk". Surely this is obedience expressed in a way which many people who give their lives, say, to caring for a disabled child or partner, can relate to and understand.

Although this book is written by a Christian and from a Christian viewpoint it is not written only for Christians but for anyone who is searching for something deeper in their life, even if they have no idea what that 'something' is. I think it could be particularly suitable for the seeking young person whose natural habitat is the world wide web. Having said that, I, a not-so-young Christian, also very much enjoyed the book and learned a lot from it. ■

▷ other Christians, but the very pain of Christ where his Eucharist is made an absurd division."

The *Mole under the Fence* of the title describes how Professor Henry Chadwick saw Roland's conversion – one of their own burrowing into Roman Catholicism.

I have found much in this book for prayerful contemplation. Many of the issues facing those who would follow Jesus in our contemporary world are addressed prophetically with wisdom and with a lightness of touch that can dissolve into Roland's trademark wheezing laughter and this too is recorded.

A sample of the book chapters includes a wonderful discussion

of the purpose of monasticism in "The sound of silence"; poverty is spoken about with a grittiness born of lived experience in "option for the poor"; while the chapters "How to be a minister without really trying" and "The upside-down kingdom" are a profoundly compassionate re-orientation for priests, ministers and anyone who labours under the burden of having to be 'successful'.

The book concludes with what Roland describes as "the cheekiest thing I ever said" – a transcript of a sermon Roland preached at St Paul's cathedral on the occasion when two friends were consecrated bishops. It was a sermon that he nearly didn't preach – the man on the door, thinking he was a dossier,

tried to turn him away telling him that an important service was about to begin! His confusion when he learned that Roland was the preacher must have been a picture!

The community – just three people: Roland, John and Patti, living without a telephone or any of the modern communication devices – has had a phenomenal 'word of mouth' outreach. They have inspired so many on the margins of our society, including church leaders. These days, the community is entering a time of real fragility. Now in his 80s, Roland is beginning to exhibit signs of dementia. The man for whom everyone is either a "poor soul" or an "old dear" has become both. They deserve our prayers. ■

Helen fumbling in the field

Over a year ago, Prime Minister Helen Clark chose to ignore the charges of corruption against M.P. Phillip Field and allowed the whole affair to fester and finally erupt into the present situation of Field's suspension from caucus. This means that the Labour Party no longer has a clear majority and must seek the support of the minor parties in order to pass any legislation or indeed make any progress towards "meeting the challenges our country faces".

If an election were to be held today, the Labour Party would be gone by lunchtime. It plods from one crisis to another, defending itself from the more and more assertive attacks of John Key. Michael Cullen's mention of a levy on mortgages and the inadequate funds given to School Boards and Health Boards to run their schools and hospitals are all leading to a breakdown in the social fabric between the rich and the poor, which John Key is exploiting. One must not forget to mention another ironic twist to Labour's decline in popularity. Trevor Mallard now suggests a cheap makeover of Eden Park rather than his original 'cuckoo land' proposal for a stadium on Waitemata harbour.

What is Helen Clark's response to all this? Green! is now cool! Sustainability and carbon neutrality "across the four pillars of the economy, society, the environment and nationhood" are the goals. Forget all that stuff about equal opportunities for all and think about "lowering our carbon footprint". If it wasn't a rude term in Helen's new world, all this would sound like a smoke screen for an opposition slouching it's way to Bethlehem (with apologies to W.B. Yeats).

Howard drops the catch

As if all this were not enough for our Prime Minister she then

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

had to contend with a visit from her Australian counterpart, John Howard. He is struggling in the polls and facing a real threat from Labour Leader, Kevin Rudd. John Howard arrived here immediately following his extraordinary outburst against US Presidential contender, Barack Obama, wherein he had the effrontery to warn voters in America not to vote for the Democrats. Apart from the obvious monumental diplomatic blunder, there seems an overtone of racism in the attack. Even a Republican senator, John Comyn, warned Howard to stay out of US politics.

John Howard has become the mirror image of his friend from Texas and seems unable to grasp the fact that he is now totally lacking in credibility. Is this desperation, native political cunning or delusions of grandeur? Helen Clark's response was really the classic political diplomatic strategy, namely to kick for touch and mumble vague things like "Australia is our closest friend" and "I respect Australia's decisions". The Prime Minister refuses to comment on Howard's disastrous support of the American invasion of Iraq. Asked why he was leaving abruptly, Howard said that there was "trouble at home". Was he referring to the Black Caps 10 wicket win over Australia that very day?

Under Howard's premiership, Australian foreign policy continues to be one of total support for the US Republicans and the Iraq war, so much so that it is becoming a source of embarrassment, not only for New Zealand but also for the majority of Australians who are beginning to oppose such mindless support of a lost cause. Perhaps Kevin Rudd is the solution.

Showing the flag

New Zealand is slowly following a world-wide trend of displaying the national flag on every possible occasion. What is particularly noticeable is the profuse draping of the flag as the background for photo opportunities and facing the press. Now leaders stride purposely to a podium with a rictus smile or a grim look on their faces, (depending on the occasion) but always in front of the national flag. In George W. Bush's case, they are everywhere and large ones at that. John Howard's public appearances and podium pronouncements now have flags in the backdrop. Helen Clark is starting to sneak in a modest one.

National flags are flown as symbols of a state and are a means of recognition. They are used by royalty and high-ranking naval and military officers. For that, their purpose is valid. But television moguls recognise that such a powerful symbol enhances the appearance of the people who stand before it. It enhances their credibility.

The national flag is different from other symbols. It has dignity, appeal and *gravitas* which suggest visually that the leaders or speakers who stand before it are people who can be trusted. They are the leaders who have the good of the country at heart and speak in defence of, and in the best interests of, their people. How could you not agree with them? Remember however, Hitler and other villains were well aware of the significance of the national flag and used it to create a false image of their true intentions.

Exploitation leads to cynicism on the part of the viewer, particularly when the leader or speaker is obviously speaking with forked tongue. To do so in front of a mass display of national flags is to debase the symbol and create mistrust. ■

The church and climate change

With all that has been said on climate change, there are still points worth making.

What of sceptical scientific voices not convinced that global warming is under way? Should we wait and see if such sceptics are right? Hardly. The consequences that climate change threatens are just too dire. To listen to such sceptics has as much sense as believing someone who assures us that we could all drive at 150km per hour through suburban streets and never injure anybody. We just might get away with it. But the odds are we would not. The risk is just too great and the price to be paid too high. Utterly sensibly, the community limits drivers to 50km.

What has the church had to say about climate change? We have had of course things like the recent cartoon in The Tablet. A penitent is saying in a confessional, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I came to confession in my four-wheel-drive". But we need more than cartoons. The official voice of the church needs to make itself heard.

No reproach need be levelled at the bishops in this part of the world. The

New Zealand bishops produced last September a highly readable statement on environmental issues. A good half of this was devoted to climate change. Their peers in Australia set up five years ago Catholic Earthcare Australia. One of the fruits of their initiative was to hold in Melbourne last October a Climate Change Conference. Check the website: catholicearthcareoz.net for more about the work of this agency.

But the Vatican has done little to swing Catholic resources behind the struggle to contain climate change. Only later this year is the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace to be part of a summit on climate change. In 2004 the Council produced a lengthy Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. This dealt in its some 600 paragraphs with a wide range of matters. But it gave only just over five per cent of its space to the safeguarding of the environment. There was only a single paragraph that dealt with climate change. Certainly there was no sense of urgency about global warming. There was nothing of the tone of a recent headline in a secular publication, "Ten years left to avert catastrophe". Surely Rome's action

must be judged too little and definitely very late.

Given the slowness of action at the top, we each need to do our own bit to stir the Catholic body into action. The Vatican's Compendium on Social Doctrine did not get everything wrong. It contained the reminder that putting things right on social issues is not something to be left to other people. We each have to play our part. And the personal price on this social issue could be considerable. Reining in our appetite for air travel, using public transport, doing something as simple as fitting more efficient light bulbs in our home or work place, driving more slowly.

To avert planet-wide catastrophe, governments will have to mandate draconian measures. They will be able to do this only if their peoples see the need of these and are willing to accept and implement such measures. We Christian believers can be models for our fellow citizens, leaders in the painful steps needed to save our world from catastrophe. The voice of the church needs to be heard on the magnitude of the climate change crisis. If not so far from the top, maybe quite powerfully in the future from the grass roots. ■

Fr Humphrey O'Leary is rector of the Redemptorist community in Glendowie, Auckland

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To smack or not to smack.

As we go to press the anti-smacking legislation has just passed its second reading. We asked Board member Robin Kearns for his opinion, as father of a young family.

TM: *How can legislation allow parents the necessary authority over their children while at the same time preventing some children being cruelly treated?*

RK: I don't believe we should speak of parents having 'power over' their children but rather 'empowering' their children. The word 'authority', which in the past has had an echo of 'power over', comes from the same root as 'author'. That means 'giving life to' – helping form a child's character, writing the script for them to follow. If you talk with your children you create a safe environment for them.

TM: *New Zealand ranks very low on the childcare scale in a recent UNICEF report. One 'let out' is to suggest that the statistic is skewed because of our high Polynesian population. What do you think?*

RK: There may be an association between certain levels of violence in the home and ethnicity, but I think we should beware of arguing that such levels are essential to Polynesian cultures. We need to look to others causes: drug and alcohol abuse, extreme poverty, unemployment or underemployment, poor housing. We should rather be asking ourselves what sort of a society are we living in which allows such inequitable distribution of wealth and opportunity.

TM: *Alan Duff not only gave us Once Were Warriors depicting horrific levels of domestic violence among Maori. He has also set up a charity to improve literacy levels in impoverished homes.*

RK: The important thing Alan Duff is pointing out is that the home shapes the child, and if there are books in the home and children are read to, then they will receive a much better set of stimuli than a diet of TV and Ipods. But it isn't necessarily Maori or Pacific Islanders who are demanding the right to smack. It is white middle-class New Zealanders, especially those belonging to fundamentalist Christian groups.

Holland and Sweden both score highly in the UNICEF Report, and in both societies welfare of children is a high priority. There is a whole mosaic of causes which contribute

to our poor showing. One is the current high cost of urban accommodation which force parents – often both parents – to work long hours.

Abused children of today become a liability for the future. The abuse may be malicious violence or it may be corporal punishment. I cannot believe that smacking a child ever builds a loving, compassionate relationship.

TM: *So what do you do when your children are very naughty?*

RK: One strategy is 'time out'. It gives both parties a chance to cool down. Children can be sent to their room. Silence induces contemplation. Smacking, however, invokes a sense of wanting to retaliate.

A naughty child may have to earn back its privileges. If they want to have their weekly pocket money, they may have to do a few more of the tasks about the house. They have to show they deserve to belong to the team.

It's a matter of constructive discipline. Discipline does not have to be harsh and punishing. Discipline, I think, should always be positive. ■

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