Tui Motu

InterIslands

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Sanctuary

Contents

Cover photograph:
Jim Neilan

Sanctuary

Language wells up from the deepest part of human consciousness. Sometimes a word can have meaning in both the sacred and secular spheres, but when we reflect carefully we can see how one meaning illuminates the other. *Sanctuary* is such a word. In the secular world people talk happily about offering sanctuary, say, to refugees. Environmentalists talk about creating a sanctuary for native species to enable them to survive.

Tui Motu interviewed the project manager of an ambitious new 'eco-sanctuary' just north of Dunedin (*p 7*). The people behind this project are no doubt driven by various motives, including the desirability of educating people about native species. Yet deep down in each of them – and hopefully in each of us – is the conviction that we owe these creatures a break. They too have a right to their place in the sun. And if human activities have endangered their very existence, then we have a bounden duty to act to preserve them. Most environmentalists recognise that their quest is fundamentally a spiritual one.

All human beings too have a basic need for sanctuary. Ron Sharp explores this in his own life (*pp 5-6*) and other pieces complement what he has to say. Hearth and home provide this necessary balm for the human spirit, especially in an increasingly frenetic world. But most people also have the need, from time to time, to 'retreat' from noise and seek peace and solitude. The bush, the mountains, the beach – or simply a city park may provide this necessary space.

City planners need to have this in mind when planning new shopping precincts, housing developments or urban motorways. *People* live in cities; people have other needs than economic. Our ancestors were acutely conscious of this, and so many of our cities have their lungs: parks, reserves, botanic gardens, squares, riverbanks, accessible beaches – or just trees and flower beds along the pavements.

Yet today's planners are often so dollar driven and focussed on meeting an immediate need (like alleviating Auckland's traffic congestion) that the big picture is lost, and what they are creating is simply tomorrow's slum.

The ultimate sanctuary is that place where one's innermost spirit dwells – the seat of conscience, the fount of love, the place where we encounter God. Our most dearly held beliefs belong there – and these too are sacred. We have a fundamental human right to hold them and have them respected by others. Here lies the solution to the recent cartoon controversy.

Those who ridicule and lampoon the sacred beliefs of others are in fact trespassing on their sanctuary. My home is my castle, but so is my conscience. Unfortunately, in an increasingly secular world it is hard to persuade some editors, publishers and politicians to accept this. Their concept of sanctuary has become impoverished. The challenge for religious people is to educate these folk to change their minds.

M.H.

Questionnaire

By the cut-off date we had received 222 replies to the Questionnaire, sent out in March. Since this represents well over ten percent of subscribers, it is a pleasing response, and provides a mound of material for the *Tui Motu* Board to ponder when they meet in May.

We are very grateful to you for taking the trouble, and the editorial team is most gratified at the warm support we have received from readers. ■

The prisoner's dilemma

John Cooney's article 'To Covet – the fuel of consumer society' (*Tui Motu, March 2006*) reported on what he saw as "the inability of young people to distinguish between generosity (freely giving) and coveting (desiring what others have)." His report reminded me of the following experience when I was a lecturer in economics.

In the name of wanting to become 'scientific', some economists in the 19th century began to imitate the physics of the day. Roughly speaking, they atomized the social world. People, then and now, are assumed to be 'self-interested', which does not necessarily mean selfish, but only that each person makes up his (or her) own mind about his own values. These values may in fact be altruistic. Thus 'self-interest' is defined in a special, technical way, and it goes under the name of ***rational choice***, and it involves nothing other than the ability to calculate.

What happens when one starts habitually thinking of human action in such terms? I once gave a third-year class and a first-year class the same question, which was a variant of the so-called *Prisoner's Dilemma* game. The third-year students were very familiar with the game, the first-year students were only vaguely so.

"Imagine", I asked them, "you are a certain Nelson Mandela, who has a deep friendship with Walter Sisulu. Both you and Sisulu are freedom fighters in South Africa, committed to resisting racist laws, first through wholly legal means, then through non-legal means. You both ultimately engaged in acts of sabotage, exposing yourselves to imprisonment when you got caught.

"The state has managed to get only enough evidence to convict both of a relatively minor offence, for which the penalty is five years in jail. You and Sisulu are in separate cells; you are both told that if one confesses while the other one remains silent, the confessor will only get one year in jail, while the other spends life in jail. If both confess, both will get an intermediate sentence of 10 years. Will you confess or remain silent?"

Most of the third-year students responded with *confess*. A key assumption is made that each prisoner is rational, considering costs and benefits that accrue directly to themselves; that is, they are 'self-interested'. Irrespective of what the other prisoner does, each prisoner gets a shorter sentence by confessing. The game is one in which the pursuit of self-interest is self-defeating: the dominant strategy is to confess, and both prisoners would have been better off remaining silent.

Many if not most of the first-year students responded with *remain silent*. Some students noted that each prisoner had an interest in overturning the racist laws and that could impact on their decision. Some argued that both had an interest in justice. Some suggested that maintaining their friendship mattered, both as an end in itself and as a means to ultimately overcoming the racist laws. Some pointed out that acts of trust and commitment were important here, and that their existence can readily permit or lead to the more desirable outcome (from each of the prisoner's point of view) of lower jail sentences by both remaining silent.

What is one to make of all this? In my view, the third-year students, through their immersion in conventional economics, had developed a mind-set of thinking about people in terms of results ("how can I get what I want" or "how can I avoid getting what I don't want"). The first-year students, yet to be immersed, had the mind-set of thinking in terms of general principles ("racism is wrong, and it must be defeated") or in terms of appropriateness to character ("I couldn't selfishly put my friend away for life").

Think what different kinds of characters and communities the different students imagine, as Mandela, as being part of. For the third-year students, they as Mandela effectively treat Sisulu as an object of manipulation, as a means to an end. I suspect they were not conscious of doing this, and certainly not conscious that such treatment was the kind of relationship they were seeking to defeat in their desire (preference?) to overturn the racist laws. For the first-year students, they as Mandela effectively treat Sisulu as an 'end' in himself.

The contrast between the students disturbed me. What becomes of us in learning the language of conventional economics? It seems to me that it may readily commit us to covet.

Richard Dawson, Christchurch

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Tui Motu-InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed. The name Tui Motu was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.
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The 'new' Mass – 1

In February bishops from a 11 different countries concluded a week long ICEL meeting in Auckland. This is the latest in a series of meetings endeavouring to meet the highly debatable translation requirements of the Roman document ironically named *Liturgiam authenticam*.

The same week the bishops met, the world press published an alarming report from a prominent earth scientist, Professor James Lovelock. In his view, global warming is already irreversible. The earth's climate will warm up alarmingly within the next hundred years, billions will die, only the polar regions will remain inhabitable. Admittedly, an extreme view. But plenty of other authorities tell us of the immensity and immediacy of the threat of global warming.

The church has a major role to play in challenging the governments and citizens of the world to put aside their immediate personal interests, which are often selfish ones, and to tackle the matter of climate change before it is too late. How regrettable that when there are such vital matters to be faced, so many of our church leaders are compelled by curial decision to travel the globe and spend time dealing with such issues as to whether the Creed should begin ***I believe*** or ***We believe*** and whether the response to the priest's greeting at Mass should be ***And with your spirit*** rather than ***And also with you***.

Nero was accused of fiddling while Rome burned. Rome is fiddling while the world burns.

Humphrey O'Leary, Auckland

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

The 'new' Mass – 2

Reading the article on the proposed changes to the new English Mass in *Tui Motu* (March) left me with a sense of outrage and disillusionment. After much reflection I decided to grade the proposed changes that Rome and the Commission of Divine Worship want to impose on us ordinary pew sitters.

A+ ... for formal, complex, elevated language – that's according to Msgr Harbert, Secretary of ICEL. I'm a great believer in 'KISS' – keep it simple stupid!

A ... for managing to undo a lot of good ecumenical work that has been done in our country.

A- ... for not respecting our culture and allowing us to celebrate the Mass in a way that recognizes our uniqueness as New Zealanders.

A++ ... for ensuring that at least 50 percent of us continue to feel completely alienated and excluded.

I hope this document remains tied up for at least another 30 years in a constipated state.

Maggie MacGraw, Wellington

Honouring the gifts of laity

Not all Catholic women are agitating for the ordained ministry to include women. In an age when the majority of women in the world are struggling to survive and to feed themselves and their families, the debate in the Western church about women and the priesthood is akin to fiddling while Rome burns. This starving majority is mostly non-Christian and not seeking the spiritual food the priest gives. One day everyone of us will be judged on what we have done to satisfy their physical hunger. (*Mt.25:34-46*)

The essence of the priesthood is service (*Jn 13:4-16*) and there is no restriction on who can serve. Mother Teresa probably gave Eucharist (i.e. made Jesus present) to more people than many ordained ministers. Likewise, telling the good news is an obligation on every baptised person not just the ordained ministry.

Women are not the only victims of church legalism, and the church will not become a truly servant church until the gifts of all members are fully recognised. I have great sympathy for those women and men driven to turn their backs on the church.

Many practising Catholics believe that there is too much legalism in the structure of the church, but the church will only be renewed by the action of those within its walls, not by the criticism of those outside.

K.E.Kenrick, Dunedin

On the stile

I am profoundly moved and comforted by Eve Adams' articles on page 32 of *Tui Motu*. They touch a very deep chord in me and the April one is especially timely. How long must we wait for those in Rome to come out into the daylight and see what is staring some of the rest of us in the face, i.e. that Jesus is being sidelined by rules and restrictions that are well past their sell-by date?

Bless you, Eve, for putting the case so well; and bless you *Tui Motu* for publishing it.

Peg Cummins, Tauranga

Where the heart is . . .

*Ron Sharp explores the meaning of **'sanctuary'**. How grounded are we, he asks, in the earth which sustains and nourishes us?*

We live four kilometres out of town. Unless there is a bag of wheat for the chooks or another large load to be collected, we go by bicycle. The motivational attitudes going in and coming out are quite different. On the way in there is a sense of purpose, but the return journey is more relaxed by a 'mission accomplished' feeling. It is in this frame of mind that I regularly reflect on my home, my retreat.

Without thinking, I always go home the same way. It's as if the bicycle knows which direction to go. I am heading home. Why don't I go another way? What is it about home that draws me back without hesitation time and time again? If I'm biking in the evening, all the traffic flashes by and 99 percent of it is also heading home. Why is home such a powerful drawcard? Is it because love is there; one is at ease here; I feel I belong here? Home is my sanctuary: holy place – whole place. I am safe, protected, warm, wanted even needed. I am not in a strange place. I am not an alien. I am welcomed here.

Sanctuary is the centre. We get in touch with our essence. We glimpse the truth, get lost in wonder; our inner self cries "Wow!" as we experience ecstasy. Everything is clear and in one whole for a lifetime second. Sanctuary is full of light that disappears as quickly as it came. We try to recapture it, but know we won't because its purity fades. We have allowed ourselves to be convinced of the dark as forbidding blackness instead of the womb of new possibilities.

Sanctuary can be in a tent or palatial edifice. You can be a wandering nomad or stable permanent. It is a gift, whoever you are. To go to a certain place might help, but everything cannot be made to come together there. Enlightenment comes in unexpected places and times. For the Old Testament writers it was on mountain tops, transcendent, ***up*** – beyond human reach and for the privileged few. For Jesus it was at marriage feasts and shared meals. It was definitely not in the desert wilderness or in exile. It could only be when refugees and prisoners of conscience can return home or feel welcomed or settled again. It is when the long dark memories of genocide, tsunami or hurricane devastation have well subsided.

Earth as sanctuary

As our planet begins to show signs of depletion from human greed and exploitation we are becoming aware of Earth as sanctuary. Earth Mother is our home, our nurturer. We are poisoning her children's milk, stifling her seasonal breathing and stripping her naked. We have abused her abundance, creating infinite goals for her finite resources. Where will we find earthly sanctuary?

The strange thing about sanctuary, like all polar extremes, is that it causes us

to sanctify it. Home, property, district, province, country and culture become sacred. Possessiveness and defence mechanisms surround its value. I resist intrusions on my intimacy. The vigour of its defence becomes equal to the vigour of its sanctity. Sanctuary can create jealousy and exclusivity. We go to war and put our bodies on the line in defence of our sanctuary.

Sanctuary is usually somewhere we like to go, to meditate, sit or kneel comfortably, be alone, relaxed and at peace. Sanctuary is also within. I used to love to say my formal and set prayers, sing psalms in chapel, study holy books and pop in to churches to be near the eucharistic Christ.

Now I immerse myself in the life and environment that nurtures me: I involve myself in activities to ease the burdens of the vulnerable in my community. I listen to all that is happening in the world of humans and enter the arena from my rich and limited position, trying to empathise with the suffering and rejoice with the stream of universal becoming, because this is my species.

I can also relate to nature, wander amongst her infinite artistry, feel her depletion by greedy corporates and play with her in my garden in a respectful way, because she is my mother producing masses of children in all shapes and sizes and with all sorts of personalities. In the sanctuary of myself I find people of my past, who have touched me along the way of my 70 years, intruding on my natural silence and letting me know that our relationship is still alive, including the deceased ones, and we wonder where each other's energy is spread now and delight in our momentarily conscious communion again.

This understanding of sanctuary as relationship is not new. Apparently Maori, before the intrusion of pakeha, saw their relationship with land as part of *whanaungatanga* – family kinship. *Atua* – spiritual realm, *tangata* – people realm and *whenua* – earth realm are one interrelating whole. Land is not just a place to stand and belong – *turangawaewae*, but a sister ancestor – *Papatuanuku*, a link between the spiritual and human worlds.

Tui Cadogan, in "Land and Place" (*Accent Publications*) writes: *Acknowledging whenua as their lifeline, Maori in different areas developed tikanga – rules for the use and treatment of her resources. For instance, when a tree was cut down to fulfil tribal needs, Tane, the kaitiaki responsible for forests and birds, had to be acknowledged. The wood chips that resulted were buried, returned to whenua. Only what was needed to sustain the whanau – family, was to be gathered at any one time. Whether seafood, flax or birds, the kaitiaki of that aspect of creation was acknowledged, addressing the tapu – sacredness, of creation and Atua as the source of that tapu.* Maori also rested land and seabeds with sacred bans called rahui.

There is a place for sanctuary, for privacy, where each individual, each family and culture treasures its secrets and inmost journeys. The stones of our mountains, rivers and plains are our oldest sanctuaries, because they hold millions of years of stories. ■

Ron Sharp is a member of St Peter Chanel parish, Motueka

My sanctuary

Juliana Ng

The Lenten reflection group was deep in discussion about the temple of God, and all I could think of was a bird sanctuary back in Singapore. It's a small hideout along Marine Parade on the East Coast, easily missed if you zipped by in a car or even on bicycle. It is that small! Well, that's not surprising in sardine-packed Singapore.

I had visited one early morning after a night of rain, and sparkling water droplets still dangled from the tangle of trees. Magnificent trees! Sinewy arms stretched over me in wonder, and I stretched out at them. The highway traffic roar melted into the distance and a soothing calm filled my being. A sacred space.

A nun once asked me at a personal retreat to draw what it is like being with God. I drew a garden with a path leading towards distant hills, but I was in no hurry to go anywhere. No one stood with me in the garden. Could God be the garden? The nun ventured a wink. Hmmm. . .

2006, Dunedin, North East Valley – my new home. I'm right next to the Botanic Gardens. Sometimes, when the roar from outside and inside gets too loud, I retreat to my trees, up the Waters of Leith, to be under my shady companions. My hiding place, my sanctuary.

Sacred Silence

As we come near holy ground,
we undress our minds
and lay the garments of habitation
at the side of the road.
We do not carry the judgements
that we place on others and ourselves.
We let fall our notions of evil,
our desire for goodness.
These too, must go by the way.
Next we take off our religious shoes,
all those ideas about worship,
and the words we use to measure God.
They have a place in our lives
but not in this inner sanctum.

Do we feel naked?
Do we feel vulnerable?

Then it is time to proceed,
bare and simple, to the place
where we will be clothed
in the radiance of Love
far beyond human thought

Joy Cowley

Te Korowai o Mihiwaka
the cloak of Mihiwaka

Tui Motu interviewed Diane Campbell-Hunt, project manager of the new Orokonui eco-sanctuary, 20 km north of Dunedin

The idea of creating an eco-sanctuary near Dunedin goes back to 1983, but it was not until 2000 that a serious feasibility study took place under the leadership of Ralph Allen. A highly successful wild life sanctuary had been created at Karori in Wellington, and that provided the spur. The Orokonui site 20 km north of Dunedin was chosen. Much of the valley is conservation land and the Department of Conservation gave approval.


kakariki

A fence had to be built, a Visitors' Centre, the sanctuary prepared and its new inhabitants introduced. It will take about five years at a cost of over $4 million, half of which has already been raised. The fence must exclude exotic species which might attempt to climb or burrow or wriggle through the mesh. It has to cross streams, preventing rats swimming through but not blocking the movements of native fish.

The Karori fence is a galvanised iron mesh, but the mesh is not small enough to exclude mice. So it was decided to use a finer mesh at Orokonui, of stainless steel. A 'top hat' stops the climbing animals getting in. Four metres will be kept clear outside. The cost of the fence alone is $1.6 million. It will contain an area of 250 hectares and run for about seven kilometres.

A sanctuary for native species

Meanwhile a team of biologists has researched what the Orokonui forest was like in pre-human times. The fossil record was investigated. Some species of course are extinct. The ideal is to rebuild the natural community the way it was.

The valley at present has a large pine plantation as well as stands of Eucalyptus, which will eventually be naturally replaced by natives. Most of the pine is being felled and sold, but some will be kept because kiwis (animal variety) like pine trees! There are already a few native birds in residence: bellbirds, fantails, tomtits.

The plan is to reintroduce two species of kiwi, saddlebacks, takahe, the kaka, the yellowhead, the kakapo with many others. There is already a population of South Island robins close by on Flagstaff, and they will be 'resettled'. Some reptiles such as the tuatara will be brought in.

At Karori, it was the first time that a total eradication programme had been carried out for pests on the mainland – and it succeeded in six months. Likewise they have been successful in retaining the flying birds so that they stayed to breed, even though species like the kaka leave the sanctuary to forage.

A sanctuary for people

So what will the new sanctuary have to offer visitors? The aim is to recreate a part of New Zealand's rich natural heritage, giving people an experience of how the first settlers experienced the New Zealand bush. We do not realise how silent our forests have become because of the ravages of introduced predators.

Behind the whole project, says Diane, is a deeply spiritual purpose. Species displaced by human action have as much right to be here as we have. For instance, the last confirmed sighting in Dunedin of the native saddleback was in 1871. These birds are very vulnerable and have only survived on offshore islands. But they have become well established at Karori.

A local runaka from Karitane has given the new sanctuary a Maori name: Te Korowai o Mihiwaka, 'the cloak (forest) of Mihiwaka' – a local hill. It will be a place where people can go to find God in nature. The tracks will offer varying degrees of solitude where people can relate to native species and commune with them.


S Island saddleback

Humans beings, Diane maintains, easily focus exclusively on their own needs and wants. We are greedy and irresponsible in the way we treat the earth and its inhabitants. In a thousand years of human habitation we have destroyed a third of the native bird species of our islands. Te Korowai o Mihiwaka is one small step to redress the balance. ■

Diane Campbell-Hunt is a qualified zoologist, with experience in management of natural resources. She has published a book on the Karori wildlife project.

Bird photography: *Rod Morris*

Learning through experience

Few church initiatives in the 20th Century church so profoundly affected Catholics as the work of Belgian Joseph Cardijn. Stuart Sellar asks why it all faded out after Vatican II

There is a very significant line in Matthew's Gospel. It records that "Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables; indeed, he would never speak to them except in parables" (*Mt 13:34*). Why did Jesus constantly use stories? I believe he told stories so that the Spirit could awaken in his hearers a dawning awareness of eternal truth manifesting in the light of their ordinary experiences.

It is sometimes forgotten that experience was St Thomas' preferred starting point for deep reflection. On moral matters, being true to Aristotle's system of virtue ethics, Aquinas always started with a consideration of human experience. Indeed, the noted theologian Elizabeth Johnson observes that "consulting human experience is an identifying mark of virtually all contemporary theology, as indeed has been the case at least implicitly with most of the major articulations in the history of Christian theology."

Reflecting on life experience

By reflecting on experience we can actually engage in a transformative learning about the faith, one that deepens our spirituality. Jesus did it, as did Aquinas, but a commonly accepted approach today urges us to start with lofty ideals and reason. Please do not misunderstand me: ideals and reason are indispensable. It is simply that the best adult education never starts there, preferring always to lead people, as Jesus did, from their experience to a deeper understanding of eternal truths.

Our grassroots experience can lead us to mystery, and that in turn can unfold deeper meaning when we discover how it meshes with the Christian tradition. Then we become aware of a deep awakening within the soul. This is what Jesus meant when he promised that "the Holy Spirit... will teach you everything" (*Jn 14: 26*). This is a deep and transformative learning about the faith bringing an awareness of awe and mystery, and also a sense of the unity of all things until we too can exclaim that "God is ... over all, through all and within all"(*Eph 4: 6*).

Think of that very common experience when you held a new-born baby in your arms. I'm always fascinated by the fact that whenever you ask a man or woman to describe what happens for them at that moment they are lost for words. The experience has been so awesome that words are inadequate to describe the occasion. For most, it would have to be an experience of awe and mystery, gazing afresh into the nameless wonder of life.

Such experiences are epiphanies, occasions that could never be described adequately in abstract language, because the words of reason are too brittle. They need the language of poetry, of art, of music, and of silence; as Simon and Garfunkel realised, these are sounds of silence.

In the 21st century we are still very uncomfortable about using the language of imagery and parable to express the realities of the divine and of the human heart. I think the Australian academic David Tacey put his finger on the point when he said: "Today, countless people in the community say that religion is external, irrelevant, an outside burden of dogma and institution. This is a two-way breakdown; the people cannot see what religion has to offer, and religion has failed to speak to the personal experience of the spirit. If religion could learn to lead the spirit out, it would no longer be conceived as a burden, but as a boon or gift".

If he is right, then simply retelling the content of faith will not guarantee spiritual transformation, and will risk leaving the soul unnourished and parched. Whenever faith is limited to facts and truths, it risks being experienced as something external, irrelevant, and an outside burden. As Tacey suggests, when that happens, "religion has failed to speak to the personal experience of the spirit. Then by leading the spirit out, by leading people to treasure their experiences there comes an awakening..."

Canon Cardijn's approach

How this might be done in practice was something I discovered when still a newly ordained priest. As a chaplain to the *Christian Family Movement* I witnessed the transformation of lay people in their understanding of the faith and in their spirituality. CFM employed a form of Catholic Action, following the pattern of Canon Cardijn by using the ***See-Judge-Act*** approach.

In the early 1900s this young Belgian priest, Fr Joseph Cardijn, saw that many young workers were alienated from their faith. Somehow their needs were not being addressed by the church, so young people were overtaken by the values of their peers. The answer, he realised, demanded a new approach, where young workers could become instruments of their own liberation and salvation.

He often said: "I cannot do it nor can the bishops or the priests... workers are needed in movements run by workers for workers." Also: "No solution can be found in the clergy, in parents, in teachers, in employers, in public authorities. All these may and must help; but they cannot replace young workers. This is their own affair." So began the *Young Catholic Workers* movement (YCW), quickly followed by the *Young Catholic Students* (YCS) and the *Christian Family Movement* (CFM).

Cardinal Tom Williams understood Cardijn's method because of his involvement in the movement as a layman. Recently he summed it up: "The YCW... was probably the most durable and effective movement this country has known. Durable, because it recruited and trained youth in parish groups over a full three decades. Effective, because it provided two generations of lay leadership within the Catholic Church and beyond.

"At the heart of the YCW/CYM was formation through coming to know the Gospel and applying it to everyday life, the cell system (leader and team of six to eight), and the see-judge-act method of addressing social issues. Leadership formation was anything but academic. 'Formation through action' was the movement's key method... "

The method of the Christian Family Movement

This very method was also employed by CFM, proving to be very simple and deeply effective. Six or eight married couples agreed to meet every three weeks for about an hour and a half. Their agenda was set well in advance because preparation was almost as important as the meeting. Couples took turns at hosting the meeting, and to ensure equality the meeting would end with a simple cup of tea and a plain biscuit.

Preparation for the meeting required that each couple think and pray about a set passage from the Scriptures, and also contact any six people in the local community to hear their opinions on the social issue set down for the meeting. For example, the social issue assigned for that meeting might be a concern about local health provision for children. This was called the 'social inquiry'.

The meeting always began with prayer, followed immediately by a half hour reflection on the assigned Scripture. Then, reports on the Social Inquiry with couples recounting the opinions of the local community. Since the six or eight couples in the group had already contacted several others in the wider community, they had some sampling of community feeling.

Next, a time of reflection considering the social inquiry in the light of the Gospel. This was the heart of the meeting where reality was evaluated in the light of the Gospel. Some appropriate social action would evolve from this. Finally there was a study on some aspect of the Church's liturgy so that 'formation through action' could be reflected in the liturgy.

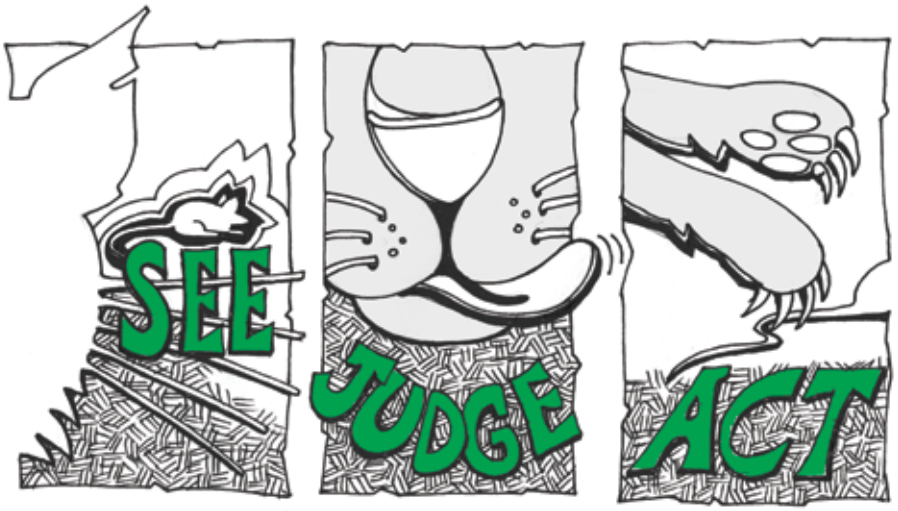
Loss of momentum after Vat II

Why did this vital movement in lay leadership lose momentum after the Second Vatican Council? Catholic Action movements of leadership formation like CFM and (by association, YCW) were no longer nurtured after the Council, not because they were ineffective, but probably because we concentrated so much on learning new ways of the liturgy.

Could it be that by concentrating on these aspects of renewal we failed to realise the bold vision of the Council for renewal in a transformative sense. This may still be the case. There seems to be a hesitation about allowing experience to become a starting point. I suspect that many fear it might lead to excessive subjectivity, and subjectivity is often suspected of being akin to relativism.

Looking back, there can be no doubt that CFM and other forms of Catholic Action were effective because they generated a critique of reality, enlightened by a living awareness of the Gospel. That led in turn to Gospel-inspired action, and incorporated a growing awareness of the liturgy as a community expression of faith. In other words, it was about the faith and apostolic spirituality lived eagerly at the grass roots.

So, is it time to revive and adapt the best of what we once had? That's not to suggest we turn the clock back to reproduce the past, but rather to bring from the storehouse of our tradition things both old and new? Our faith has always done that. Why not now? ■



Fr Stuart Sellar is a theologian and sociologist. He lectures at Good Shepherd College, in Auckland

Dreaming the Land

Hope and resistance in Aotearoa New Zealand.
Mary Eastham reflects on her experience of coming to live in a foreign land

I would like to begin by acknowledging the indigenous people of this land. They knew God long before they heard the Christian gospel and lived in harmony with the land. In the 13 years that I have lived in Aotearoa-New Zealand, I have tried to discern the movement of the Spirit in my adopted country. Without a doubt, *land* and *place* are crucial topics for New Zealand practical theology.

When the Maori people sailed from their ancestral land in Hawai'iki, it is believed that a long white cloud drew them to these lush islands in the South Pacific. After months of navigation on the open sea, imagine how the sight of land must have gripped their psyches.

And what a land! Brimming with vegetation, abundant wildlife and majestic landscapes, the land would have looked like paradise. But they soon would have felt its violence too, for earthquakes and volcanic eruptions underpin the geological history of the place. For over a thousand years before the arrival of the *Pakeha*, the Maori thrived and established a complex cultural, religious and social life.

Land and *place* are central to Maori identity and spirituality. The Maori understanding of land is *whenua,* which means placenta; the Maori are the *tangata whenua,* literally the people birthed from the land. This intimate relationship implies that Earth is mother. Indeed, Maori call the Earth *Papatuanuku,* who in various myths is the female created being called Earth Mother.

In a *powhiri* which introduces every important event, the host will acknowledge his ancestral place – his *turangawaewae* – which provides his unique place to stand. His ancestors are buried in that place and he will be buried there as well. That land, that place has a spiritual meaning, therefore, which embodies the history of his *iwi,* his tribe. To be Maori is to intimately belong to *that land, that place.* Another way of saying this is that Maori believe people belong to the land, whereas Pakeha think land belongs to people.

Maori believe people belong to the land, whereas Pakeha think that land belongs to people

Colonisation did not change the intimate spiritual relationship between Maori and the land. It only changed land ownership. For the Crown, land was property to be bought and sold in order to establish a colonial outpost. Resistance and hope have been a way of life for Maori once it became clear that the English had no intention of honouring the Treaty of Waitangi, the foundation document of Aotearoa/New Zealand, which gave Maori the sacred right to govern their own land – *rangatiratanga.*

Consider for a moment the impact of the *New Zealand Settlements Act* of 1863 which enabled the Crown to confiscate land and property from any Maori who were believed to be in rebellion, whether the land belonged to the 'rebels' or not. (Consedine, Robert and Joanna (2005) *Healing Our History: The Challenge of the Treaty of Waitangi,* Penguin p. 94)

Like all modern nations established on violence against their indigenous people, New Zealand carries scars which cry out for healing. I will look at three movements of resistance and hope aimed at restoring right relationships between the people and the land: the Maori struggle; the ecological movement; the protest against neo-liberalism.

1 The Maori renaissance

The Maori struggle for self-determination is a great sign of resistance and hope – by telling their story, reclaiming their language and culture and, in the process, stimulating a cross-fertilization of ideas in the broader society and the church. In a workshop on Culture and Social Action, Makareta Tawaroa, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Nazareth, tells us that "just surviving and keeping our culture alive is a constant daily struggle. Since European colonisation, our lives have been dominated by the systems and values of the white colonisers... Our marginal position is clear on every social measurement – poverty, failure in education, poor health, high unemployment and imprisonment.

"Yet there is a vigorous resurgence of Maori vitality and culture, and a growing resistance to the dominant white culture, as we struggle to retain our identity and language, our *mana* and culture, and demand a more just share in the land and resources of this country. Our people are speaking out with increasing clarity and great forcefulness. For us to move forward we must have confidence in our own cultural heritage. To reduce dependency means a return to our sources and values. *Te tino rangatiratanga* – 'to recognize our sacred right to rule' – is a constant cry at *hui* (meetings) all over the country".

In the last 20 years, Maori have achieved significant gains in education, health and politics. Last year the Maori party was formed, and 20,000 Maori representing most tribes in

New Zealand participated in an historic *hikoi* or pilgrimage to Parliament to protest the Government's proposed legislation to assert Crown ownership of the foreshore and seabed on the west coast of the North Island. The key issue for Maori is the obligation to protect customary land rights that are not subject to negotiation – in short, to care for the land (*kaitiakitanga*). If the foreshore and seabed remains in Maori hands, it is open to everyone. In theory, Crown ownership keeps the beaches open too. In theory!

Today, the strong, confident Maori voice is slowly bringing about a shift in consciousness in Christian spirituality and cross-cultural anthropology. Many *Pakeha* are beginning to realise that Maori spirituality contains philosophical resources sorely needed in modern thinking today.

Church architecture is beginning to reflect a bi-cultural consciousness. For example, the Diocesan Centre in Palmerston North is also named *Te Rau Aroha* which means the *Leaf of Love*. The Centre is shaped like a *wharenui,* a large meeting house, and the entrance includes a carving of *Tane,* the common male ancestor of the Maori people and *Hineahuone,* the common female ancestor. Danny Karatea-Goddard comments on the link between Maori culture and the Old Testament: "Our wharenui is called *Te Rau Aroha*, the Leaf of Love... The *rau aroha* is the leaf of peace laid down before visitors (*manuhiri*) by the warrior who performs the challenge (*wero*) with a long club (*taiaha*) on the marae. In the Old Testament the fig leaf was carried by the white dove on Noah's Ark to announce that land had been found, a new beginning, a new start, a new world."

The cross-fertilisation of ideas can also be seen in collaboration between Maori and Pakeha to achieve understanding, reconciliation, and a common commitment to justice. Robert and Joanna Consedine explain the wisdom behind the method of parallel workshops through which Maori and Pakeha are realising perhaps for the first time that there are two very different versions of the Treaty of Waitangi. At issue are significant cross-cultural differences about the meaning of sovereignty, the right of Maori to rule Maori, and Crown recognition of Maori possession of their Lands, Forests and Fisheries – in short, their treasures.

2. The Ecological Movement

New Zealand is a country of incomparable beauty and yet the deforestation policies of the European settlers and the continued 'development' of the country's natural resources jeopardise the ecological balance of this country – and, by extension, the planet. Ecologically sensitive New Zealanders know that we share the fate of every other developed country because "we experience the greed of a consuming world that uses the great deposits of mineral wealth and fossil fuels as if there were no future generations for which to provide", as Dominican Sr Mary Horn says. (*The Dark Night of Creation*, Accent 2004).

Perhaps even more critical for New Zealanders is the way our unique fauna and flora evolved in conditions of great isolation. This means that such a tiny country contains some of the rarest and most threatened plants and animals on this planet. These are now under grave threat. We know that two thirds of Aotearoa/New Zealand's rain forest has been wiped out, 32 percent of indigenous land and fresh water birds as well as 18 percent of seabirds have become extinct, along with many other plant and animal species.

Last year the Catholic Institute of Theology published *Land and Place (He Whenua, He Wahi): Spiritualities from Aoteaora New Zealand* in which the contributors express a diversity of relationships to the land and how the unique New Zealand landscape has informed their spirituality and ecological sensitivity. One contributor, Ann Gilroy, presents the Pakeha passion for gardening as an expression of how precious land was to the early settlers, many of whom were themselves victims of exploitative land practices in their own countries of origin. A carefully cultivated plot of land would provide for their families, sustain them in old age and launch their children after they die. How different this is from the commercial understanding of land as 'real estate'.

Neil Vaney, who lectures at Good Shepherd College, the National Seminary of New Zealand, has articulated a practical theology with a public and pastoral focus. His recent book, *Christ in a Grain of Sand,* (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, 2004) has been hailed as an innovative breakthrough in re-visioning the famous *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius in an ecological register. Unlike Thomas Berry, who builds an eco-theology on the 'new cosmology', Vaney prefers the sources of Christian faith to affirm the value of the natural world and the beauty of Creation.

In a talk on ethical investment, he put forward "five critical stances" gleaned from the Biblical tradition that are a basis for dialogue with men and women of all creeds as well as contemporary science. These include the goodness of technology – the result of human creativity – and the right to shape nature to human advantage *but* within certain limits, "the infringement of which may ultimately bring about human ruin."

Obviously Vaney believes in the power of dialogue and rational arguments to inspire changes in attitudes and behaviour. But at this 11th hour, reason alone will not bring about the radical changes needed to stave off ecological disaster. He admits that "...issues of pollution and conservation are not just political or economic realities – they are also issues of sin and grace."

An important dimension of his pastoral theology is a reflection on the importance of *place* in moments of conversion. Vaney appropriates Lonergan's insights into the process

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of conversion to explain how 'graced' experiences enable them to break through intellectual, emotional and/or psychological blocks. These 'graced' experiences often occur in special places – mountains or rivers – in which a veil was lifted that separated this reality from the next, and people gained a greater awareness of the beauty of life. Evidence of the power of the experience is that they often recall every detail of the *place* where it happened, and return there when they feel the need for spiritual renewal.

Neil Vaney calls us to conversion. Dominican artist and poet Mary Horn suggests that we enter the dark night of the soul in order to "live for a while as if God were not." This process will invite us deep within to discover a "new face of God... as energy, elegance and an intimacy coming from within rather than from outside... creatures will be invited to dance with, and become co-creators in, an evolutionary process that takes us -- we know not where." (*op.cit. p. 231*)

3. The Protest Against Neo-liberalism

As an ethical imperative, *the preferential option for the poor* challenges us to respond to the cry of all marginalised groups in our midst. When my family and I came to New Zealand in 1993, the country was engaged in serious reflection about how a round of neo-liberal economic reforms was affecting the soul of the country. The debate was not just about transforming a nation of hard-working, practical people into prosperous entrepreneurs; it was also about eroding the welfare state which reflected the egalitarian ideals of many New Zealanders. The reforms decreased government spending in the crucial areas of health, education and welfare, and thus marginalised even further the most vulnerable segments of society, such as Maori and Pacific Islanders, women and children, and the elderly.

In 1996, 150 prominent New Zealand Christians issued an open letter on poverty which stated that one in every five New Zealanders and three in every ten children lived in poverty. In 1998, the bishops of the Anglican Church led a *Hikoi of Hope*, a pilgrimage in which Christians and all people of good will prayed, sang songs, and shared stories to remember the vision of Isaiah to build a just and fair society free of poverty.

Some of the most vocal critics of the ideology of neo-liberalism were prominent New Zealand Catholics working in the fields of education, Maori self-determination, Treaty work, prison reform, social work and social policy, and politics. Many had in common a teacher who inspired them in the 1940s, '50s and '60s when they were members of the *Catholic Youth Movement*. His name was John Curnow, a Christchurch diocesan priest who was director of CORSO, New Zealand's leading non-governmental international aid and development agency.

The CYM, who later claimed the same name as their European counterparts, *Young Christian Workers*, were taught to ***See*** or experience what was happening around them; to ***Judge*** or evaluate it in the light of Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching; and to ***Act*** according to Gospel principles (*see article by Stuart Sellar pp 8-9*). They were to form prayerful Christian communities to sustain their commitment, so that they could continually examine the world around them with a view to transforming it.

In later years when he was very engaged with religious communities in the renewal of religious life, Curnow facilitated workshops in structural analysis. Participants came to understand that poverty and injustice were human constructs through systems and structures which protected the interests of the rich at the expense of the poor. If poverty was a human creation, than human beings could change it. Many Young Christian Workers became professionals with a conscious Catholic identity, able to mediate Catholic social teaching in the world. They embodied a praxis of study, action, prayer and further reflection.

In some parish social justice groups, the spirit of the Young Christian Workers continues to live through members who were radicalised in the 1950s and 1960s. At the Diocesan level, *Justice, Peace and Development* Commissions provide education for justice on a range of social issues including problems affecting the mentally ill, immigrants and refugees, among others. At the national level, the Catholic Agency for Justice, Peace and Development *Caritas* addresses the causes of poverty, advocates against injustice and responds to disasters around the world. There are also six Catholic Worker communities in New Zealand which embody a theology of action. In varying degrees, members try to live the ethos of personalism, the works of mercy, non-violence and voluntary poverty.

The future in Aotearoa

New Zealand is at a turning point. By becoming part of the global economy, it has embraced a way of life which inevitably widens the gap between rich and poor both within its own borders and in the outside world. But what are the alternatives?

This question hit home during a class I facilitated at Massey in which the topic of discussion was *alternatives to development*. Half the class were young Chinese students whose parents had sent them to study in New Zealand at great expense in order to get degrees that would translate into good jobs in the new China. The students looked at me blankly when I suggested alternatives to capitalist development – because to them, capitalism *was* the liberating alternative to a system which had impoverished and tormented their parent's generation. Context is everything!

Right now we may not know what that liberating alternative might be, but perhaps the New Zealand Church might help discover it if we are attentive to the voices of our indigenous people, attune ourselves to the life-giving energies of the land, and open our eyes to sources of wisdom wherever it may be found. Without conversion, none of this is possible! ■

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Is death a mistake?

The demise of a pet prompts Diane Pendola to reflect on the mystery of death. Is death is a huge cosmic mistake? Yet the scene at the foot of the Cross of Jesus teaches us that dying evokes in us the greatest degree of love

Our Yakima is dying. Our cat, whom we found as a skinny kitten wandering a motel parking lot in Yakima, Washington 17 years ago, is dying. I don't think it will be much longer. He stopped eating days ago. He stopped taking water yesterday. Teresa has much greater capacity than I to just be present with him – just be present in love.

I'm reminded of Jesus on the cross. It's not such a leap as it may seem. Most of his friends could not sustain his suffering. They wanted to do something. Save him. Take him from the cross. Take up arms. Start a revolution! Anything but this watching and waiting. Anything but this 'suffering with'.

We are told that there were at least three people close to Jesus who had the capacity to stay present with him in his suffering and their powerlessness. We know that one was his mother. We know all three loved him dearly. Perhaps in their love they were not so powerless as they appear.

I watch Teresa with Yakima. I see her bathing him with her love. I see him respond – looking into her eyes, reaching out a white mittened paw, even though he is so weak now he can barely move. I reflect on something Brian Swimme said recently at a retreat we attended. He asked: *Is death a mistake?* This thing called death that is woven into the very fabric of the Universe, that is itself the nourishment of life – *is it a mistake?*

Two years ago I was experiencing some mysterious neurological symptoms. "What is happening to my body?", I asked myself, "the beginning of MS or, worse, Alz..." Right there, in my numb hands and feet, in the strange sensation of deadness travelling through the mid-section of my body, was my mortality. And yes, I was afraid.

But the dominant experience was not one of fear but of liberation. The reality of death, the possibility of not having a future, opened up a freedom within me to more fully embrace the present: to live this moment, as Jesus counseled, like the lilies of the field and the birds of the air who do not store up their goods against an uncertain future. In fact, the future is certain. Death waits. So live now. Completely now. Not holding back for a tomorrow that never comes.

The feeling of spaciousness eventually closed down. I was diagnosed with chemical poisoning that would eventually clear out of my body, and my mind turned again to the details of securing my life and my future. But the experience of liberation left its imprint on my soul. Death had its way of shocking me into wakefulness to the precious, exquisite, extraordinary moment of my time. This time.

So, I ask myself again: ***Is death a mistake?*** Is suffering a mistake – the suffering of Jesus on the cross? The suffering of those watching who could do nothing but love him? The suffering of an animal at the end of life? The suffering of the human holding his frail and shuddering body? Is it all a mistake?

If it is, we will do anything to avoid or control it, change or deny it. We will do something, anything but be present to suffering and death and let it do its work in us. Perhaps one of the ultimate questions is: *is the Universe trustworthy?* Or, to put it theologically, *is God trustworthy? Is reality trustworthy?* Is it something we can allow ourselves to be held by with the attitude of trust and surrender Yakima shows in Teresa's loving embrace?

These seem to be such important questions for our time. We are alive in a season of great dying, a level of dying which has not been seen since the great extinctions that brought the demise of the dinosaurs over 65 million years ago. A December 2005 report, drawn from NASA aerial photographs taken in Alaska, showed that polar bears are literally drowning due to the loss of Arctic ice from global warming.

Many of us saw the documentary *The March of the Penguins.* It allowed us to fall in love with a species very few of us had even known about. Now, just as we come to know and love them, they are being lost to us as their habitat literally melts beneath them. The question that rises for me, for all of us, is how to be present to this time of such great suffering and dying? Do we keep busy?

Deny or ignore it? Run away through drugs, alcohol, all our myriad ways of numbing ourselves? Or do we keep watch and wait?

At the foot of the cross those who loved Jesus dearly showed the capacity to suffer with him. There was no hope of resurrection in that moment. There was only the pain and the dying.

I watch Teresa. Her capacity for love, for presence, moves me to tears. It moves me toward Yakima and toward my own heart that breaks with all the deaths that have been and all the deaths that are yet to come. But in the breaking I feel the spaciousness: that doorway in my soul that death opens. It feels like freedom. Maybe even like resurrection. It definitely feels like Love.
May this be the space from which all my 'doing' comes. ■

With kind permission of Diane Pandola. First published in Earthlines.
Diane's website is **<www.ecocontemplative.org>**

A hope which all can share

Easter is the great festival of hope. If we concentrate exclusively on the dogmatic and the personal, we can lose sight of its far richer promise – that a better world is possible and achievable. The message is, not to flee from the world, but to go out and change it

Speaking last month on Australian radio, the renowned British environmental scientist Norman Myers presented a dire picture of the consequences of global warming on untold numbers of vulnerable species around the globe and, ultimately, on the prospects of human life as we know it.

Professor Myers, in Australia to advise the Federal Government on strategies to conserve biodiversity, was not given to gloom about the prospects of meeting the challenge, however. To those, he said, who insisted that the ecological problems threatening the planet were too large and they too small to do anything of consequence in response, he liked to pose the question: *have you ever tried sleeping with a mosquito in the room?*

Myers was giving vent to an optimism that it was not too late to deal with the dangers confronting our environment. But implicit in his stance was another sentiment: the need for, indeed the celebration of, hope. Hope is the central theme of Easter. But all too often these days what that message entails is lost in a rational-scientific approach to the story.

We tend to reduce the Easter message to doctrinal teachings about an empty tomb and a bodily resurrection. We become engrossed in the veracity of such teachings and, in the process, we reduce the cosmic significance of Easter to a series of precepts which we then either embrace or dismiss with ease because they have been accommodated to the limits of our imagination.

But revelation was never intended to be confined to information about another reality. Just as importantly, revelation is meant to constitute a promise about this reality. The story of Easter is not simply an allegation about Jesus having conquered death and consequently making that victory accessible to us – in some other life. That, certainly, is the stuff of fundamental belief.

But the hope of Easter lies also in understanding the Resurrection as the first sign of the possibility of a better way of living our lives and of bequeathing life, in the fullest possible sense, to our children and to theirs. Put another way, Easter constitutes the first fruit of the Kingdom of God in this world, the first sign of deliverance from only what is.

It is undeniable that these are days of declining faith – that is, of the outward manifestations of fundamental Christian beliefs. Perhaps, though, the evidence available to support this conclusion is actually symptomatic of a larger and deeper cultural crisis of hope.

This crisis is evident even within the churches themselves. It can be seen in their efforts to rein in some of their more critical and creative thinkers, to reduce religious insights to platitudes, to emphasise personal salvation as distinct from collective redemption, and in the tendency of so many faith communities to turn their backs on the world in preference for an inward-looking confidence in their own self-sufficiency. All too often, in other words, institutional religion seems to reflect a wider secular attitude that expresses itself as an *I'm all right, Jack* approach to life in general and the future in particular.

The Easter story begins in despair but then enlarges into its essential message of hope. Jesus is betrayed, arrested, mocked, tortured and sentenced to death in a conspiracy involving the religious and civil authorities of his day. During Jesus' ordeal even his most trusted disciple, Peter, denies three times any acquaintance with this 'troublemaker'.

Then Jesus is crucified, dies and is buried. The small band of followers

The Gate Beautiful

Sadao Watanabe (1975: print 65x60 cm)

A moment of confrontation is caught in this print. It faithfully depicts the Biblical story from the *Acts of the Apostles* (*3:1-10*), where the Apostles Peter and John speak to a lame beggar at the Gate Beautiful of the Temple in Jerusalem.

This man has been lame from birth and is brought daily to this place to beg from people going into the Temple. Peter and John look like a good catch. They fix their eyes on him, saying "*Look at us!*" He looks, expecting a handout. But the result is something unexpected.

Peter says: "*I have no silver or gold. but I will give you what I have. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, walk!*"

Immediately the man feels strengthening in his feet and ankles, and he springs to his feet – to walk, to leap, to praise God. The result is general astonishment, leading to further confrontations by the two Apostles with the Temple authorities.

Watanabe captures this tense 'moment of truth' with its life-changing outcome. Something unforeseen, an unexpected possibility, is about to emerge from this interchange – a release of body and spirit, of life itself.

Watanabe (1913-1996) was a prize-winning Japanese artist, who devoted his art to his Christian faith in depicting Biblical themes. His distinctive, captivating style draws on both Western traditions and Japanese Buddhist and folk art.

(The writer purchased this print from Watanabe at a consultation for Asian Christian artists, in Bali 1978.)

Albert Moore

is devastated: their project brought to a brutal and, apparently, utter end. Their behaviour, their despair, their abandonment of hope, are certainly understandable in the circumstances. Yet, three days later, this same group – Peter included – rejoices in the Resurrection of Jesus and goes on to spread his message in a way that changes history.

Christians constitute a community of hope. Theirs is a life lived in expectation that they have glimpsed the future in the risen Christ and, through this experience, are called to share in the divine creative plan by changing themselves and the world for the better.

It is for this reason that Paul places hope among the three pre-eminent Christian virtues – faith, hope and charity. Paul understood that without the hope that what we see around us is not all there is, faith is meaningless. Paul also understood that without the hope that lives can be changed for the better and that relationships can be made more satisfying, charity is pointless. Hope is what orients us towards a future of possibility rather than a future of despair.

Christian hope, properly understood, is thus not a renunciation of the world or an escape from responsibilities in the here and now. Far from it. Christian hope constitutes a refusal to accept that anything we see and experience is absolute, beyond improvement, or immune to criticism by the standards of the kingdom of God or, as Jesus puts it in *John*, the standard made explicit in his declaration that "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (*Jn 10:10*).

The story of Easter affirms that humanity is in the process of developing towards a reality beyond the limits men and women set themselves. Through the story of Easter we are invited – and empowered – to take responsibility for our own lives and the lives of others in ways that lead to the renewal and re-creation of the whole world.

To recoil from this responsibility, as Christians, is to deny the very point of the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus: to reject a hopeful disposition, more generally, is to abandon our potential, not to mention the reality, that we can – and must – make a difference for our sakes and the sakes of those who will come after us. ■

This editorial appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald, Good Friday 2006. Reproduced by kind permission

Those mysteriou

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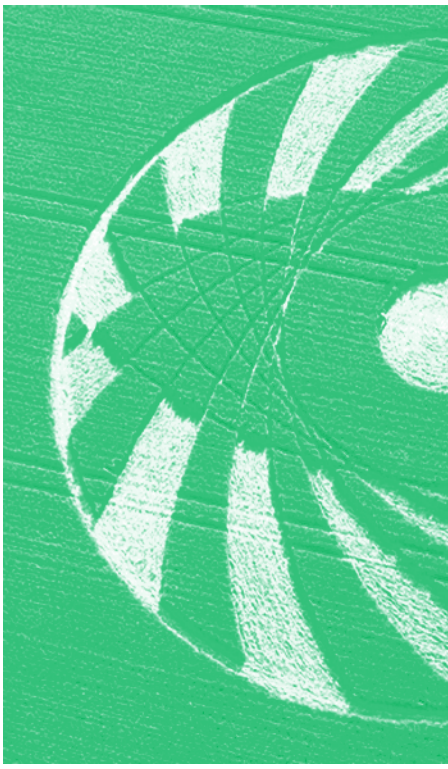

Drawing geometrical patterns on the ground has been a favourite human pastime throughout history. The creation of geometrical gardens, the planting of mazes, even town planning on the gridiron pattern are examples of the fascination humans have always had with geometric shapes. However, no example of this phenomenon seems as bizarre as the eruption of crop circles on arable land which has attracted considerable public attention and interest in recent decades.

Modern farming methods occur on a much grander scale than in the past: fields are a lot bigger, so the scope for creating a spectacular pictogram is much greater. Or much more tempting? That would presume that these phenomena are all hoaxes. But are they?

Tui Motu recently spoke to Shirley Burrow who farms in Wiltshire in southern England. She acknowledges that some crop circles may be hoaxes – but most are not. Why is she so certain? For one thing, she says, many of the designs are huge. They are so accurately created. And they happen overnight. Yet no one ever sees one being made – no one has chanced upon the hoaxers in action. The circles simply appear 'out of the sky'.

Although they have been found in many countries, they are commonest in Britain – and the densest concentration is in the southern county of Wiltshire and in the neighbourhood of the ancient stone temple of Avebury. This is the countryside of Stonehenge, of Sarum, of King Alfred as well as many other neolithic remains. Little wonder people speculate that the crop circles are somehow associated

A commentator notes that the circles are laid "gently and include many beautiful and delicate features... the plants are not damaged and depending on the time of the forming of the circles the plants will continue to grow and ripen".

Here (*left*) we see in close-up the condition of the wheat – where it is flattened and where it is still upstanding.

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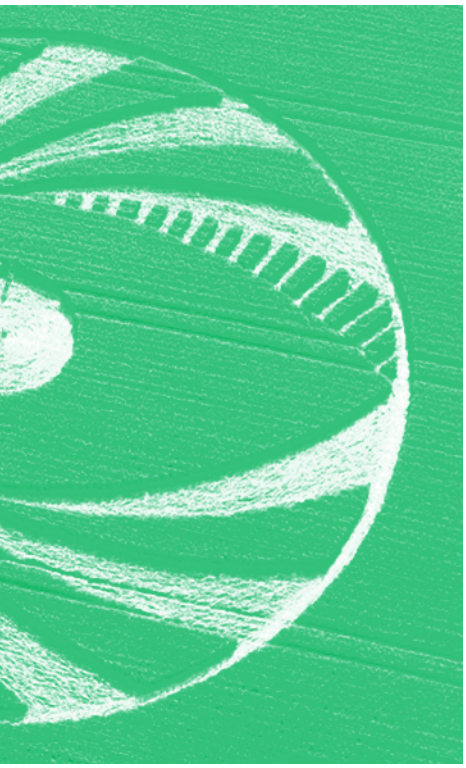


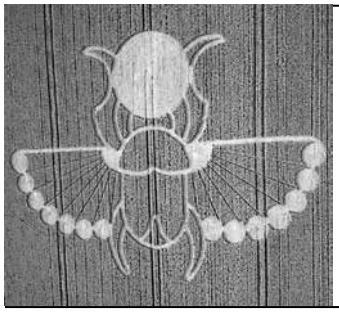
with the Druids. Apparently most formations worldwide occur near ancient sites of ancestral worship.What is it that the gods are saying to us, people ask?

On Shirley's property two crop circles appeared appeared during the summer of 2005. Her opinion is that one was almost certainly a hoax, but she is equally convinced that the other was created by some other means which is totally mysterious. She says the circles are usually about the size of a football pitch although the biggest so far seen in Britain was nearly a mile long and consisted of circles near 800 feet across.

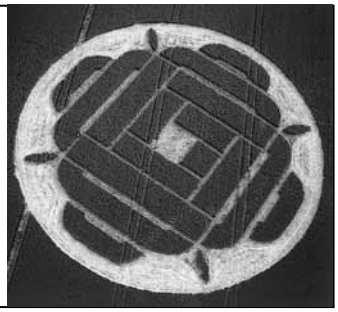
Shirley has farmed in the area of Avebury all her life, but the phenomenon has become common only in the last 20 years or so. The circles themselves don't do a lot of damage to the crops. The problem is they attract visitors who trample all over the growing wheat or barley.

One year when the number of visitors was at its peak, Shirley's family decided to make a virtue of necessity and charge people to come and explore – and they grossed several thousand pounds. But generally speaking those who come to ogle are simply a nuisance to the farmer. In any case the shapes are so big you can only really appreciate them from the air.

So where *do* they come from? Shirley says she really doesn't know. She speculates about laser effects from above. But she is convinced that the intricate pictograms simply could not be done at ground level so quickly and with such precision. ■



The shapes in which the so-called 'circles' appear are very varied. Although most are geometrical and symmetrical, sometimes the shape is that of an animal such as the flying beetle (*left*), which appeared at Alton Priors in August 2005, on the property of Shirley Burrow. The 'wingspan' of this pictogram is nearly 200 feet.



Celebrating a Dominican Jubilee

Carmel Walsh O.P., who teaches at Good Shepherd College in Auckland and Jenny Collins, who has recently completed a PhD on the Catholic educational mission in the post war years, met to reflect on the ways that Dominican principles of study and education can help us to engage with key historical and contemporary issues facing New Zealand Catholics

Dominican study and education

Jenny Collins (left) and Carmel Walsh, OP

Carmel

As a child growing up in the 1940s and 1950s the concepts of study and education formed part of my basic understandings of God, Family, Church, School and Country. Education was instilled into me both as a privilege and a right by my parents. Study was an enjoyable duty and an opportunity not to be ignored.

Since all my schooling was facilitated by Dominican teachers I grew up appreciating the Dominican tradition of understanding study as the way to search for the Truth about God and the big questions of life. The wider dimensions of education continued to fascinate me as I grew older – education in the humanities and sciences, in faith, prayer and spirituality, in justice, peace, ecology as well as theology and culture. It also delighted me down the years to discover outstanding Dominican men and women in several of these fields of knowledge. Usually they had studied together in community. Dialogue was crucial; they often argued and wrestled with the truth although each had been taught that the real teachers are always humble. Blessed Jordan of Saxony had written of Dominic his mentor, that he had understood everything through "the humble intelligence of his heart".

I saw study as a challenging but a hopeful enterprise. Doubts were acknowledged and turned into serious questions. I remember one of my teachers wishing me *many doubts* during my theological studies. These doubts were there to open and stretch my mind, to keep my heart honest and to increase my understanding. Today, sadly, questioning is often frowned upon, perceived by many as a threat to legitimate authority rather than as a chance for faith to grow through a search for the truth. One of the oldest mottos of the Dominican order specifically links prayer with study, preaching and teaching … *To contemplate and to share with others the fruits of that contemplation.* Thus in Dominican life, the true missionary man or woman is identified not merely by what he or she does but by what he or she professes and lives.

Jenny

My studies have also been shaped by a Dominican education and the times in which I have lived. The Dominican Sisters who taught me in the 1950s and 1960s wore cream serge habits and flowing black capes; they were anchored in a religious world of certainty, ritual and tradition. To my young eyes they were part of a Catholic Church that was a timeless and unchanging standard bearer of religion and culture in a troubled world. As a "convent girl" at St Dominic's College, Dunedin, in the 1960s (a time when you, Carmel, were a teacher there), I experienced the beauty of the traditional liturgies, the unchanging rhythms of convent

and school life and a way of life characterized by clear lines of authority. At the same time I was encouraged to ask questions about the world around me and (as a senior pupil), to embrace the renewal of Church that grew out of the Second Vatican Council. I was excited by the opportunities and impatient to discover new pathways of prayer, community and mission. I had little appreciation of the difficulties facing those who had to watch as old rituals and traditions that gave their lives meaning were swept away.

I was unaware too of the challenges facing religious orders such as the Dominicans as they searched for a new vision of their role in contemporary society, a journey that has taken them into new endeavors well beyond their traditional role as teachers.

Nevertheless, it was a growing fascination with the issues that faced Catholic educators in the post-war years that prompted the questions in my PhD research. I have come to understand how the years preceding the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) were a critical time for the religious orders that ran Catholic schools in New Zealand, particularly as the number of pupils increased and vocations to religious life began to diminish. In an era when the New Zealand Church was moving away from a "fortress" mentality to engage more actively with contemporary social issues, teaching orders such as the Dominican Sisters worked with very few resources to improve the life opportunities of the working-class Catholic pupils who filled their schools. They faced a crucial challenge: how could they help their pupils to succeed in the world while keeping the important faith and cultural values alive in their schools? It is a question that still faces Catholic educators today.

Carmel

You are right, Jenny. As you know, I was actively involved for over 25 years in Catholic high schools. Our students have succeeded "in the world" without a doubt, but many now struggle to see the relevance of living an active faith life. The situation today is not unlike that in the thirteenth century although the challenge now is one of overcoming *apathy* rather than fighting *heresy*.

For St Dominic's early followers, for example, study was never seen as an end in itself, but the means to enable the Word to reach peoples' hearts. Preaching was often a form of dialogue. Study also enabled the early sisters to dialogue with the friars who preached to them. Often the nuns would reread and study the texts of these sermons at their leisure. The educational value of the oral and printed versions of these monastic sermons in the vernacular also had a significant impact on the religious reform movements of the late Middle Ages.

Today, Catholics, who want their faith to be meaningful and life giving, are increasingly taking up opportunities for ongoing religious education. Continuing education has become an essential pathway to a deeper understanding of spirituality. Among members of the international Dominican family currently living and working in 108 countries throughout the world, there is a new awareness of the old educational tradition – that of studying together for mission. Liam Walsh OP expresses it succinctly in a recent publication:
Theology is the human taking hold of the Word of God, the kneading of it, the shaping of it into human words and images, and the baking of it in the fire of critical thought, so that it can be received as the bread of life by God's people… Theology needs to have the full range of human experience in it -…

I see the renewal that has always been a constant feature in Church life as a continuing source of hope.

Jenny

I agree with you Carmel about the importance of study for developing the powers of critical thought. The desire for "veritas" or truth, that thread that runs through Dominican life, has underpinned my search for an understanding of the complex processes that shaped Catholic education in the years covered by my research. By listening to the stories of the religious men and women who taught in our Catholic schools, I have also gained insights into the integrity, grit and down to earth humour of Catholic teachers as they worked to hand on the faith and to improve the lives of Catholic pupils.

Today we face our own challenges. We live in a time when many Catholics feel embattled. They fear the loss of respect for our faith traditions and long for a return to conservative values that promise certainty in a world of change. Others believe that it is time to offer new and radical understandings of the Church's mission in the world. The faith community seems divided. Yet it is clear from our history that Catholics have faced difficult issues before.

As part of a Dominican lay group, I have an opportunity to study and dialogue with others about some of the current critical issues that affect our lives. And I have found that the ancient, simple principles of Dominican life, encapsulated in "veritas" – a motto emblazoned on my school uniform – have something to offer the Christian facing the challenges of ministry, prayer, community and study in today's world. ■

Seeking the middle way

Do extreme positions, whether to right or left, ever bring longterm solutions? Mike Marshall *looks ino his own soul and shares some lights*

I'm not a fan of reality TV but I enjoyed the recent series "That'll Teach 'Em", in which a group of high achieving, self-confident British 6th formers were placed in a 1950's Grammar school to see how they coped with the disciplinarian regime and a syllabus geared to cramming facts into your head. I recalled my own less than memorable education in that era, underpinned by fear and fuelled by brutality. When I sat my O levels (School Cert) I had already cottoned on that you had to play the game - memorising likely topics and developing skills in exam technique, with a nod to work ethic.

Prospective employers could not assume that I could think for myself or show initiative, but they knew how many passes I had to my credit and that was deemed sufficient. The current direction both here and in the UK (though still far from perfect) is to identify the specific aptitudes and skills a student has mastered over a range of areas – yet this is encountering a degree of resistance, and I'm wondering is it because employers, parents and many teachers want to return to a comfortable black-white, pass-fail situation?

This example is merely one example of an over-simplistic approach. Look at any *Letters to the Editor* page in your local newspaper or listen to radio talkback. Whatever the 'issue de jour' is, be it religious cartoons, immigration, seashore and seabed, 4-wheel-drives, Treaty of Waitangi, sensible sentencing, boy racers or the NZ flag, many correspondents appear to be firmly on one side of the debate or the other. Not that there's anything wrong with having passionately held views, but, even when dubious logic or the abuse has been weeded out, there frequently seems to be a lack of understanding of the wider issues, or willingness to consider other points of view. Pauline O'Regan wryly comments in her latest book Miles to Go: "…it could be argued that radio talk-back offers the greatest opportunity there ever has been for people to freely share their ignorance with one another."

Can you wonder, when phone surveys reduce everything to yes-no opinion, or politicians who should definitely have researched the wider issues embrace populist philosophy – witness Don Brash's instant acclaim based on his Orewa speech, or most of Winston Peter's sporadic outbursts?

People like forceful, strong politicians. We rejected Rowling for Muldoon whose larger-than-life image became a huge vote winner. But, in retrospect, did the quality of his decision-making warrant his popularity? Those who seem to be weak and indecisive often are taking the time to consider all perspectives (refer to Fowler's stages of faith development – summarised in *Tui Motu*, June 2005, pp14-15). The individualistic and simplistic Stage 4 Muldoon garnered the loyalty of the Stage 3 voters, who could not understand the apparent Stage 5 procrastinations of Rowling.

There must always be a time when judicious and decisive decisions need to be made, acknowledging that not everyone will have their needs met, but how many resolutions are based on pressure, emotion or self-interest rather than factoring all the information and considering the greater and longer-term good? Perhaps the overarching cult of individualism has to take some share of the blame. 'I want it and I want in now' is the creed, and the battle cry is 'my rights'.

We hear and read often about the interference of the Nanny State restricting our rights to decide. Never mind that single-mindedly pursuing 'my rights' may trample the rights of others. Who is reminding us that with rights comes responsibilities?

An ideal world would give us all more responsibility and the opportunity to direct our own fate, but until as individuals, families, communities or nations, we can consider the bigger picture, we possibly need more rather than less nannying. For example, a responsible society should not need censorship at all, but, until we demonstrate some sense of communal accountability and mutual respect, we probably require more stringent controls rather than fewer.

In *Tui Motu*, March 2006, I suggested that there has to be a balanced judgment when considering the freedom to print and the potential to offend. Two other articles in the same issue also considered aspects of balance; Angela Stupples' article on Linda Clarke, reflecting on the growth from a black and white to a broader view, and the Dominican Spirituality piece on Veritas (truth) and the quest for insights, beginning by listening to others who think differently from us. My constant challenge over the last decade, with varying degrees of success, has been not to put people in boxes, to listen to their stories and not to make ill-considered judgements.

My hope, then, for me, and all of us, is to seek the truth in the grey and less in the black and white, to find more middle road, greater compromise and an entreaty that we all endeavour to employ prayer, time and wisdom to listen, and to engage the brain before putting the mouth into gear. ■

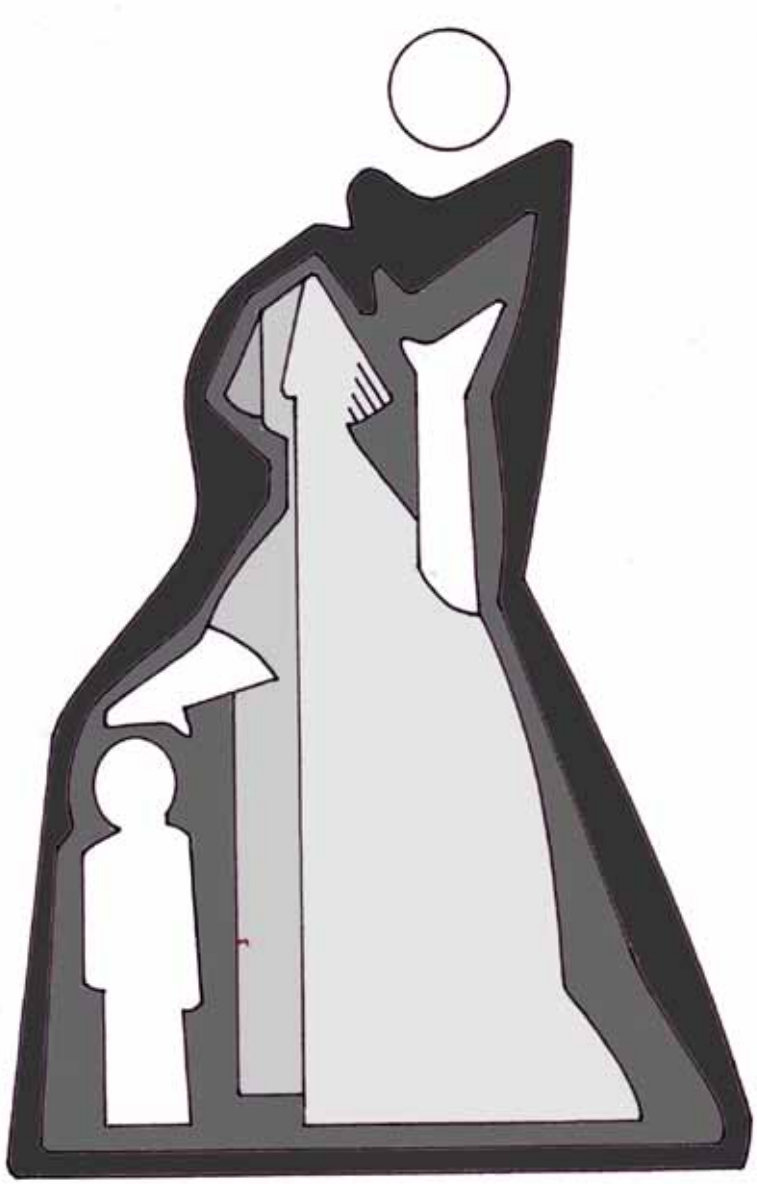
Mike Marshall is a Christchurch Catholic layman with a special interest in music and liturgy

Mother's Day

"No to War and Yes to Peace"

Arise then. . . women of this day!
Arise, all women who have hearts!
Whether your baptism be of water or of tears!
Say firmly:
"We will not have questions answered by irrelevant agencies,
Our husbands will not come to us, reeking with carnage,
For caresses and applause.
Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn
All that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience.
We, the women of one country,
Will be too tender of those of another country
To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs."

"From the bosom of a devastated Earth a voice goes up with
Our own. It says: "Disarm! Disarm!
The sword of murder is not the balance of justice."
Blood does not wipe our dishonor,
Nor violence indicate possession.
As men have often forsaken the plough and the anvil at the summons of war,
Let women now leave all that may be left of home
For a great and earnest day of counsel.
Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.
Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means
Whereby the great human family can live in peace . . .
Each bearing after his own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar,
But of God –
In the name of womanhood and humanity, I earnestly ask
That a general congress of women without limit of nationality,
May be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient
And the earliest period consistent with its objects,
To promote the alliance of the different nationalities,
The amicable settlement of international questions,



Born in 1819 in New York, Julia Ward Howe was a published poet who wrote the words of the Civil War song, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. She and her husband, Samuel, co-published the anti-slavery newspaper *The Commonwealth*. She was active in the peace movement and the women's suffrage movement.

In 1870 she penned the (above) *Mother's Day Proclamation* and in 1872 the Mothers' Peace Day Observance was first held on the second Sunday in June. Her idea was widely accepted, but she was never able to get the day recognised as an official holiday. Mothers' Peace Day was the beginning of Mothers' Day, now celebrated all over the world.

The modern commercialised celebration of gifts, flowers and candy, bears little resemblance to Howe's original idea, as the words of the *Proclamation* clearly indicate.

Lust

Paul Andrews, S.J.

It is a catch-penny title, isn't it? It seems to promise something titillating and naughty, the sort of headlines the tabloids love, half tut-tutting, half leading you on to spicier stories. Advertisements targeted on smart people even use the word *lust* in an approving sense: *Here is a car (or perfume or house) to lust after.* They are legitimising the inner pressure that leads to rapes and sexual abuse.

Advertisers are constantly turning to ethics and religion for a vocabulary that is stronger and more robust that the tired clichés of the market-place. *Lust* is one such word, vigorous, Anglo-Saxon, deadly, in fact one of seven deadly sins (strange how that word *deadly* has also mutated into a term of approval – you hear boys enthusing about a film: *That was deadly*).

Lust takes off from something good and God-given, namely sexual desire. In the same way *gluttony* takes off from healthy hunger, and *drunkenness* takes off from thirst. All three go astray when they go over the top. Lust is defined as animal desire for sexual indulgence, or excessive desire for sexual pleasure. Sexuality is given us as a channel of love for others. It becomes lust when it disregards the other's feelings, and becomes totally self-regarding, when it treats other humans simply as sexual objects.

Of course it leads to all sorts of other iniquities. You remember the story of Susannah in the Book of Daniel? Two elderly judges – we'd call them dirty old men – lusted after the comely Susannah, and when she rebuffed their advances, they concocted a story that she had been making love to a young man in the orchard. They nearly got away with it. She was being led away to execution when young Daniel intervened and addressed the old judges: *Spawn of Canaan, not of Judah, beauty has seduced you, lust has led your heart astray!* Daniel called for a re-trial. He separated the villains, showed how their evidence was contradictory, and rescued Susannah.

Plenty of others – more men than women – have followed those old men in being led by lust into personal disaster. Think of a US president's furtive escapades in the White House corridors, of a judge who was found to have child pornography on his computer, of another in Germany who lost his job (and had all his judgments re-examined) because he was found to be stealing women's underwear from clothes-lines, of another in London who was arrested for curb-crawling for prostitutes, of a TD who precipitated a cabinet crisis when he was found to be cruising for gays in a park. Out-of-control hormones can trigger what looks from the outside like self-destructive madness.

Hormones, and the sexual cocktail, are different for each of us. They vary from high to low testosterone (a measure of sexual urgency in males): from strongly male and hetero- to strongly gay, to bisexual, to transgender. Our job is to live with the challenge of our own mix, to enjoy our own cocktail, and to have respect for others, never use them, try to be faithful, aim to make sexuality what it was meant to be, a channel of love.

God placed us in a particular sort of body. In the mystery of God's providence, this is where we must work out our way to him. Plato compared the sexual, instinctual side of us to a pair of wild horses, and indeed for most men (is it easier for women?), the beasts are hard to tame and keep under control. There are few men who as they grow older can look back and say they never made fools of themselves over sex. (I think, without being sexist, that women have a better record in this matter.)

It is only too obvious that the hazards have grown. How much of the Worldwide Web is given over to pornography? Something over 70 percent. And it is sophisticated porn, designed to create addicts. There are no reliable figures for Ireland, but studies in USA indicate that over 15 percent of married men (and probably a higher proportion of single men) masturbate to pornography. Many of these are addicted, in the sense that they are ashamed of what they are doing but feel unable to change.

They move gradually from furtive viewing in a place where they feel nobody would walk in, to more and more careless behaviour. By the time they are caught, the computer screen's main meaning for them is sex. Inhibitions have been lowered, fantasy inflamed, and they are obsessed with the visual stimulation on offer. To that extent they are victims of the hucksters who sell the stuff and make fortunes from their victims' weakness. In the USA the selling of internet pornography is estimated to produce profits of between one and two billion dollars a year.

These addicts of lust risk losing more than their jobs. Their addiction bypasses their needs for sensuality and intimacy, and exalts their sexual needs. They become obsessed with looking at women, as opposed to interacting with them. Out the window go modesty and the privacy that protects love-making in most cultures They come to feel that sex is unrelated to love,

Pot holes

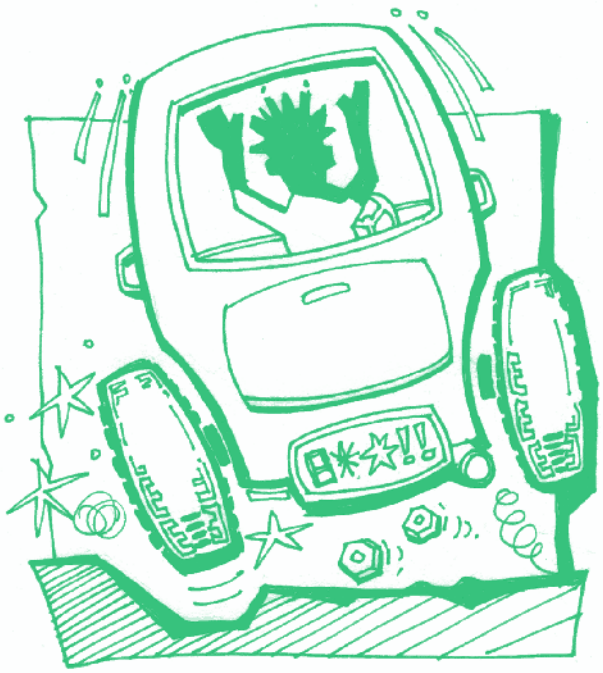
Glynn Cardy

I really get sick of pot holes.

Like today I was out for a lovely drive in through the countryside… enjoying the scenery… when I happened not to see the latest cavity. Bang! The whole car juddered and shuddered and an expletive escaped my lips. For the next few miles I endeavoured to regain my serenity.

My experience of church liturgies is often similar.

You see I am one of those people who don't believe God is male. Or female either for that matter. Yet peppered throughout liturgical language are 'Father', 'Lord', 'He,' 'Him,' etcetera. These words are used almost as frequently as punctuation marks. I experience them as spiritual pot holes.



Now I pride myself on being a tolerant person. I know the maleness and anthropomorphic nature of the Divine is very important for a number of people. I also know that others enjoy the poetic nature of some older liturgies so much they are prepared to tolerate words they no longer believe. So for 20 years as a priest I have said and lead liturgies where this male God is present. I have done this because, using my driving metaphor, I enjoy the spiritual countryside so much that a few pot holes are not going to deter me.

However there comes a time when the road is literally littered with pot holes. Instead of spiritually swerving around them, using the best of my mental agilities, they are so numerous that I start to no longer enjoy the drive.

If God is unassailably male, and we are constantly reminded of it, then the spiritual life of many Christians, me included, suffers.

Many years ago I was travelling in Chad. Most buildings sported bullet holes. The main roads had suffered a similar fate. Indeed the pot holes were so huge and numerous that the locals had created dirt roads alongside the main highway. Nearly everyone used the dirt roads.

My fear is that if the Church does not attend to its language, which is the primary means for portraying its images of God, and the pot holes of a male divinity continue unchecked, more and more people will choose not to drive on the road. In other words, people increasingly will choose to nourish their spirituality separate from the Christian Church, or just pay occasional visits.

Nobody likes pot holes. ■

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commitment or marriage, that the more bizarre forms of sex are the most gratifying, and that irresponsible sex has no serious consequences. Many addicts are nervous of women and feel safer with pictures.

In a series of studies, researchers saw changes in people who constantly view pornography. They come to trivialise rape as a criminal offence, have exaggerated notions of the prevalence of most sexual practices, become more callous towards female sexuality and concerns, more dissatisfied with sexual relations, and less caring and trusting towards their intimate partners.

These are not happy characters. Dissipation and addiction is a form of imprisonment in which the chains are inside you, not outside; so the pain is greater. The German (*God is dead*) philosopher Nietzsche stated the downside of lust: *The mother of dissipation is not joy, but joylessness.* St Thomas Aquinas put it more positively: *A joyful heart is a sure sign of temperance and self-control.*

How to achieve this balance? With the help of good friends, a healthy regard for my body, a heart that is attuned to loving, and a rhythm of living that leaves time for leisure and prayer. ■

Paul Andrews is a Jesuit priest and psychotherapist living in Dublin

At the heart of our lives

We hear plenty about rules and rubrics, says Daniel O'Leary, but what really matters is to connect the Eucharist to our pain and our happiness, and to cling to its embrace

Rome Slams Abuses of the Mass." Priests and parishioners are worried at these loud messages about rubrical correctness around the sanctuary. Many objective commentators describe such Vatican warnings as sadly missing the point. Those who stop coming to Mass claim that they are bored by the irrelevance of our liturgies and homilies. The real issues, they say, are about what happens in their daily lives, and how the Eucharist might support and nourish them in their often desperate struggles.

So how do we set this beautiful sacrament free of all that would diminish it? How do we provide fresh, sweet water for thirsty people? And where do we begin?

I remember a story about an American football coach called Guy Lombardi. His team had plummeted from the top of the league. The previous season they had dazzled the country with the magic and sophistication of their passing strategies and scoring techniques. Now they had lost the plot completely. He called them together and settled them down. "Let us begin at the beginning. This", he explained, "is a football. And these", he said, "are your legs and arms. Now the aim is to get that ball, using your legs and arms, from one side of the field to the other."

Where do we find a simple but profound strategy for bringing the Mass to life? How do we reveal new depths to its mystery? A deeper understanding is reached, I feel sure, when we connect what we do around the altar with what we are doing each day of our lives. We celebrate the Eucharist so as to never forget its implications for our ordinary routines and chores. I see the Mass as the 'colouring in' of the pale outlines of the lives we bring to it. I see it as revealing the true worth of all that is going on within us and around us – disclosing and celebrating the hidden presence of God in the midst of the most common things.

Put more poetically, I like to feel that the bits and pieces of each day's jigsaw puzzle are put together at the altar; that the separate, often discordant notes of each day's living are fused into one flowing Sunday symphony; that the hurts, fears and shame of our lives are all held and embraced in this weekly ritual of bread and wine; that the Eucharist creates stories and poems out of the mixed-up alphabet of what happens to us each day; that, on Sunday, the scattered and broken beads of our fragmented existence are again refashioned into a necklace of pearls; that at Mass, we are astonished by the nearness of God who comes to us disguised as our lives.

Many dedicated pastors will want the people to feel affirmed at Mass, to be more aware of the holiness of even the most menial part of their lives, to appreciate the beauty and power they carry, to see the stumbling blocks of ill-health, breakdowns in relationships, anxiety over money, as potential stepping stones to a new life.

On a Sunday morning, I long for our parishioners to walk out of our church with a new spring in their step, a new look of confidence in their eyes, a holy determination to start all over again. I see them sitting there, pervaded by a strange and often heart-wrenching innocence. There is loss in their faces, hope and delight, too, apprehension and guilt.

I remember Marie's intense loss when her baby was stillborn, Eleanor's joy at achieving her A-level hopes, the shock of Harry when his wife walked out. "You are all heroes and heroines exactly as you are," I say to them. "If you only knew how unconditionally you are loved, how cherished you are, how safe you are. Today's Eucharist guarantees that everything in your life is sacred. That no bitter tear or heartfelt wish is ever wasted. That no sin is ever left unredeemed.

Full of these thoughts I carefully hold the bread and wine. They are the fruit of the earth and work of human hands, symbols of the history of Mother Earth, signs of the often tumultuous struggles that rage within the human hearts of our congregation. Then, with all the graced intensity granted to me, I utter, over all of this astounding reality, the shattering words of God, ***This is my body: This is my blood.*** Nothing is 'merely' human any more. Everything is now revealed as divinely human, shining with God's incarnate light.

In these ways I try to transcend an overemphasis on the rubrics and liturgical niceties of the daily or weekly ritual. Life is incredibly raw and violent. Passions ignite in a moment. Fierce emotions wage silent civil wars in the hidden places of our hearts. This is the raw material of our Sunday Mass. If it is not about our volatile, erratic and deeply powerful drives and emotions, then the Word has become flesh in vain. Where else can redemption happen if not at the point of our pain? If the hard-won Eucharist of the Passover is to have any relevance to our lives, it must be felt at the very guts and marrow of our being, at those

precarious places within us where our demons and angels meet. This is where our need is strong and urgent.

John Paul II described this need of God's healing in the Eucharist as being "as physical as the need for food or water". He said that our desire for personal transformation is expressed in wanting an intimacy with God which is "instinctive and physical". I often ask our people to feel and reflect on the actual sacred and sensual awareness of the bread and wine within their bodies. Beyond words, this is another kind of life-giving intimacy.

Before he died, having exhausted what he could do with words, Jesus went beyond them. He gave us the Eucharist, his physical presence, his kiss, a ritual within which he holds us to his heart. Touch, not words, is what we often need. God has to pick us up, like a mother her child. Skin needs to be touched. Our bodies have their senses to be nourished. There are times when even holy words are not enough. That is why God became a baby, and why that baby grew up to become our Eucharist.

In his encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, John Paul II writes: "I have been able to celebrate Mass in chapels built along mountain paths, on lakeshores and seacoasts; I have celebrated it on altars built on stadiums and in city squares. This varied scenario of celebrations of the Eucharist has given me a powerful experience of its universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always, in some way, celebrated on the altar of the world. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation. In the Eucharist, Christ gives back to the Creator and Father all creation redeemed."

Resonating around the heavens, this magnificent and stirring vision of the Mass as the sacred song of praise for a wild and dancing cosmos, full of wild and dancing hearts, can never be contained in fearful and constricting regulations. ■

Daniel O'Leary is priest in the diocese of Leeds, Yorkshire, England

Easter hope

This past weekend has been an experience of church – of communio for me. On Saturday afternoon I attended the funeral service of a young man who had chosen to end his life. The funeral parlour was packed as friends gathered to support the bereaved family and share memories of his life. The anecdotes and tears flowed freely and afterwards over a cup of tea hugs and handshakes helped people come to terms with the tragedy. Despite the requested secularity of the service, God was present in the people, in the embraces, the tears and the reminiscences as people engaged in serious life-searching and life-giving conversations with one another.

Next morning the parish community was enlivened by the visit of 37 refugees from Myanmar (formerly Burma), who had been invited to experience "this wonderful parish family" by an earlier refugee family to whom the parish had offered support.

The group arrived on a cold misty morning between the two masses. They were already buzzing with the excitement for many of them of seeing the sea for the first time, as they drove over the harbour bridge en route from the Mangere refugee centre. But they were nervous too as most of them had limited English. However almost immediately children of parishioners and visitors were running round playing tag, and soon halting conversations were eliciting stories of years in refugee camps in Thailand and Malaysia. They were apprehensively looking forward to relocation in Nelson and Wellington and making a new beginning in a free country. As they spoke briefly of their journey at the end of Mass their joy at being accepted by New Zealand was infectious as was their delight at the Burmese food provided by the earlier arrivals at lunch later. They were soon mixing with the families of 5 children just baptised at the later Mass – people of all colours, races and ethnicities.

Then on Sunday evening a group of parishioners gathered to pray around the body of a long term parishioner who had died on Friday night. Thirty to forty people squeezed up on the fine mats in the family home to firstly recite the rosary then to join in a singalong of the dead man's favourite hymns and songs. This has become a common practice in the parish and the comfort and release it brings to the families is clearly seen. As I sat there joining in, watching the grandchildren clutching Grandad's hand, people of many different nationalities singing hymns in one another's languages, I thought that truly God was in that place, in these people – this is church – this is communio.

It hit me very powerfully – in the week after our commemoration of Easter, of the Resurrection – out of two deaths and the horrors of refugee camps came faith and hope and the promise of new life. And who communicated that hope? – that faith?

The people of God, gathered together living and demonstrating their faith and love for one another together.

Pat Lythe

CORROBOREE

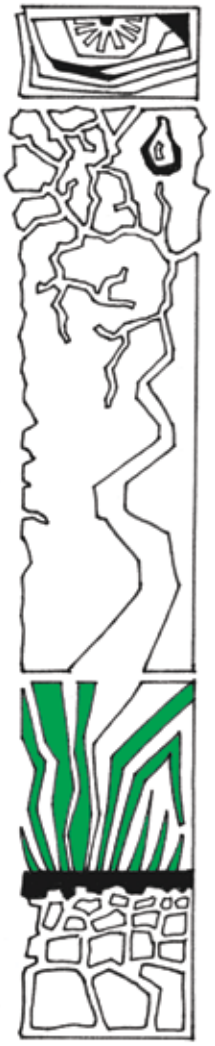
Painted, dusty feet dance in corroboree,
Black; – whitened and reddened by the dusty earth.
Dry barren soil – the plain of grief,
Choking, moistened only by tears.
The tears of parting, of sadness, of destitution.

But beneath the surface there is still a spark of life,
Dormant, but alive, waiting for a spring shower,
And with the redeeming rain comes new growth,
new life.
From the sunbaked red, yellow and white
green bursts forth
And the arid plain is healed, restored, renewed.

Another drought will come – the process will repeat
But that does not detract from each single miracle
of regeneration.
For this is part of the life cycle, understood by the
elders.
It is harsh, cruel and devastating,
But it is in this process that we learn and grow.

Mike Hogan

The author wrote this poem two years after losing his partner suddenly. It is offered in the hope it might help someone else to travel the grief trail



A mother's journal

Vyast is busy, Vyask is adult" explained Shruti.

"Are they supposed to be connected?" I asked in my pidgin Hindi.

"Of course they're linked. It's true isn't it – when you become an adult then you are busy."

At the tail-end of a long week it had been hard to focus on the daily Hindi lesson. The only suitable time for Shruti to teach us was each evening from 6.30 to 7.30pm. A challenging time for our family. It means getting dinner on and off the table by half past six, and our three kids organised with self-directed activity for an hour. On badly organised days it means frequent lesson interruptions by three grumpy children: "Is your lesson nearly finished. We're hungry."

Language learning builds new windows in my mind. I find new ways of saying things and even a new way of thinking. Today it's two new words. An 'Adult' as a 'Busy'. I've become a 'Busy'. A Too Busy 'Busy' in fact.

Breakfast, lunches, work, emails, grocery shopping, looking for a lost library book, preparing a Sunday School lesson… They're all pretty necessary things to do at some stage – but not continuously with no SPACE. I don't remember the last time I told someone: 'Oh, I'm doing fine, I'm not busy at all, I'm enjoying doing not too much!"

Busyness becomes bad for my soul when I don't have any thinking space in my day.

What about a washing machine, a dishwasher and a paid house cleaner to give me a little time and space? But if I eliminate all the repetitive household chores I could end up with no thinking space at all. My friend Sam in Dunedin calls it a theology of housework. When I'm washing dishes my hands are busy but my mind is free to think, talk, sing… ruminate and my heart is free to turn to God... Outside there is fresh air and no telephone. Hanging out clothes or weeding the garden are even better for my busy head.

I think we'll do without that dishwashing machine for another year or two. Washing dishes I can even practice my Hindi vocabulary list. Whoops – getting busy is too easy.

Vyast – sure I'm a Vyast – but with some intentionality and space to think maybe I won't always be a Vyask Vyast.

Kaaren Mathias

Kaaren Mathias is a mother of three and public health doctor. She has recently moved with her family to live in rural Himachal Pradesh, North India.

Discipleship in Mark

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother"

(Mark 3:31-35)

One of the important themes in *Mark*'s gospel is that of discipleship, a theme intensified in this passage in which Jesus appears to be dismissive of his mother and his biological family. Prior to our reading, Jesus has worked miracles, called the first 12 disciples, and been criticised by family members, who are concerned that others think that Jesus "has gone out of his mind". At this point in Jesus' ministry, his natural family appears to have no part in, or understanding of, his ministry or movement. Furthermore, the reader has already learnt that Jesus' first disciples had left family and occupation in order to follow him (*1:16-20*), and, in the case of the sons of Zebedee, James and John, they had also left their father.

However, this passage should not be interpreted as an attack on the biological family. Having said that, Jesus' vision for a new community makes it clear that spiritual kinship and not physical relationship is the fundamental basis of the new family of God. Family and friends could not rely on special treatment or advantages in the coming Kingdom. Faith and a willingness to do the will of God were what would count rather than blood ties. The radical nature of this teaching in a traditional patriarchal culture where blood was thicker than water, and indeed thicker than anything else, is striking. Commenting on the counter-cultural nature of this text, Catholic NT scholars, John Donohue and Daniel Harrington write: "membership in a new human family (is) not determined by blood ties but by the shedding of the blood of Christ."

Earlier, in *2:21,* Jesus has announced that new wine could not be put into old wineskins. Our chosen text points to what this might mean, as *3:35* makes it very clear that Jesus' disciples include women and men, sisters and brothers. The fact that women are part of the Jesus' new family of disciples stands in marked contrast to traditional practice in Jewish, Greek and Roman culture. In all three, popular teachers and philosophers had male disciples only.

It is unfortunate that in the Christian community the questions that traditionally arose out of discussion and reflection on these verses were concerned with whether the brothers referred to *3.31* were children of a previous marriage by Joseph, cousins of Jesus, or whether they were the natural children of Mary and Joseph born after the birth of Jesus. The important contemporary question is why has the teaching of Jesus, concerned about faith commitment and obedience to God's will rather than biology, been ignored, and why has biology so often driven church teaching and church law regarding the ministry of women? ▪*Susan Smith*

Susan Smith is a Mission sister who teaches Biblical Studies at the School of Theology University of Auckland

Wedding theology with science

Exploring Reality: the intertwining of science and religion
John Polkinghorne
SPCK London 2005
Price: $39.99
Review: Richard Dowden

After 25 years working as a theoretical physicist, the last 10 as Professor of Mathematical Physics at Cambridge University, John Polkinghorne left physics, not because of any disillusionment with physics, to concentrate on his Christian faith. He was ordained an Anglican priest in 1982 and so has now been working as a theologian for as long as he was a working physicist. He has published several books on the inter-relationships between of science and religion, of which this is the latest (published in 2005).

With this background in science (not just physics) and in theology, he is obviously at home with terms and words, many of which you may not have heard before, and uses them in this book. While this can be very off-putting, I think John Polkinghorne gives the meaning of the word in a subtle way to avoid appearing to 'talk down' to the reader. An example is at the beginning of Chapter 2 entitled: "The Causal Nexus of the World" where he compares the many diverse branches of science with "how little understood are *the connections between them*" [my italics]. Thus he subtly explains *nexus* without offending the reader's pride. Maybe British readers are sensitive this way, but I think a good Kiwi editor would have reduced the number of words needing a big dictionary.

This is a pity because words such as *noetic*, encountered even in the preface, may discourage you from reading further. It is worth the effort to read. Let me confess that after agreeing to review the book, and then starting to read it, I thought a quick skim through would get me off the hook. Instead I became hooked and ended up reading it right through twice before starting on this review.

This is how I managed it which I commend to you. Firstly the book consists of eight essays, some taking up two chapters, which can be read independently. It is not like a text book where you must understand Chapter N before starting on Chapter N+1. If you are not a professional physicist or theologian, I suggest starting on Chapter 4, *The Historical Jesus*, where there is food for thought without indigestible words. Secondly, you will find indigestible words in other chapters, so what do you do? Your pocket dictionary probably doesn't have them. Look up *ontology* in the Oxford paperback and you get: "philosophy concerned with the nature of being" [Yeah, right!]. So I suggest you look it up on the Web. Just type *reference.com* which gives you a window into which you type the word. Click the *dictionary* button for a definition or *encyclopaedia* for a full description with examples of usage. Within a few seconds you get definitions/explanations from several dictionaries/encyclopaedias.

It is important to realise that this is not holy scripture. It is presented as a logical argument usually from different, often opposing points of view. This is how it gives you food for thought. Polkinghorne sometimes says what side he is on, but you don't have to agree. In the chapter on ethics he presents a wide range of views. Polkinghorne presents the problems and questions, not the answers, leaving you with a feeling that although you might make the right decision personally, if you were a doctor in a given situation, what if you were on a parliamentary select committee trying to generalise it into the nation's legal system?

John Polkinghorne sees himself as a 'bottom-up' thinker: one who examines the evidence to form a conclusion by a series of logical (and testable, if possible) steps. This is the way a detective solves a murder case and the way a scientist forms a theory from a series of testable hypotheses. The opposite is the 'top-down' thinker who starts from the top and works down. An example is a physicist who considers God as the ultimate perfect being, and then works out the requirements (*almighty, all-knowing,* etc) and logical restrictions (can God create a wall too high for Him to jump

over?). Since God is un-testable, you would expect a theologian to be a 'top-down' thinker, but Polkinghorne does pretty well as a bottom-up thinker in theological questions too.

First, an easier one for a bottom-up thinker is in Chapter 4, *The Historical Jesus*, where he begins with the purely secular evidence, including what we see now: "everyone has heard of Jesus" and the near contemporary accounts from non-Christian sources. The latter reveal that Jesus lived in Palestine and was executed under the jurisdiction of Pontius Pilate. The historians Suetonius and Tacitus mention the troubles in Rome attributed to the followers of "Christus." Beyond that, Polkinghorne says, we have to consider the accounts in the New Testament, warning that the evangelists were intent on teaching, not on writing history in the modern sense. Even so, they were anxious to records incidents and words of Jesus, some of which must have given them great difficulty.

Logical analysis of the evidence raises serious questions. To quote John Polkinghorne: "[Jesus] died a shameful death, reserved for slaves and rebels, and one abhorred by any pious Jew as a sign of God's rejection … deserted by his followers… On the face of it, his life ended in utter failure." This is supported by secular evidence. Yet we find the followers who deserted Jesus were, soon after his death, standing up in Jerusalem proclaiming Jesus as Lord (meaning God). As John Polkinghorne says: "Clearly *something* must have happened …" and points to secular evidence that these followers (and all Christians ever since) *believed* in the resurrection of Jesus and were willing to die for this belief. This and the secular fact that Jesus has been one the most influential figures in the whole history of the world, strongly suggest that Jesus really *did* rise from the dead.

The chapter following this is on the Trinity and intensely theological, but John Polkinghorne still attempts this as a bottom-up thinker. In fact, it in this chapter that Polkinghorne explains 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' thinking and goes on to say: "I believe it is also possible to approach theological issues in bottom-up fashion and devoted my Gifford Lectures to a defence of the Nicene Creed set out along these lines." There is obviously no secular evidence of the Trinitarian nature of God, so he seeks it in Scripture and liturgy: the former being mainly the New Testament, particularly the long discourses of Jesus in St John's Gospel, and the latter in the blessings in the name of the Trinity and the basic definition in the Nicene Creed.

He explores traditions and sayings in the Western and Eastern Churches, and makes comments on some which might lead "into the error of tri-theism." He condemns "the most prevalent of all Trinitarian heresies, *modalism* [my italics], the idea that the Persons correspond simply to three contrasting ways of approaching the single reality of God." Personally, perhaps due to having Unitarian ancestors, I go for *modalism*. It gets around what Polkinghorne calls "speculative mystical arithmetic" (3=1) and what I find disturbing in the hierarchical way the Trinity is expressed in liturgy in contradiction to the teaching that the Persons are equal. Polkinghorne makes much use of the mysteries and even paradoxes in Quantum Theory discussed in Chapter 2 (*The Causal Nexus of the World*) to justify Trinitarian mysteries. As a physicist I found my colleagues happy to use quantum mechanics as a tool in their research without worrying about the apparent paradoxes, and I feel that Christians can do likewise as regards the Trinity.

For many, particularly those of you in the medical or legal professions, the chapter on ethics would be the reason for buying this book. Here Polkinghorne excels. As an expert (he was a member of the Medical Ethics Committee of the BMA) he knows all the questions, not the answers. I touched on this above, but space demands I say no more.

While Polkinghorne may be at the cutting edge of theology, it has a medieval flavour. At the end of the book (last 2 pages), Polkinghorne timidly considers "one final naïve question" and goes on to say: "Science today does not know how properly to assess the *probability* of there being 'little green men' out there …" That I dispute. Recent discoveries of extra-solar system planets imply that there are as many planets as stars. We already know that there are about as many galaxies as there are stars in a galaxy, so this *probability* is virtually a certainty. What we don't know are the chances that there is a civilisation with similar technology within hailing distance from us. ■

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Anzac memories

Anzac Day, a day of remembrance for the fallen in the war to end all wars, is now firmly entrenched in the psyche of all New Zealanders. Everyone has memories, experiences, or a family history indelibly imprinted with stories which resurface on Anzac Day.

My ancestors have deep roots in the north of France, a region devastated by every war with Germany. My wife's family comes from Ireland, but her father, as a New Zealander, fought in the Great War in that same region of France - Flandres, Picardie, Artois. He returned to New Zealand, wounded but alive.

My engagement to a Dunedin girl resulted in the ritual of our parents meeting for the first time. It was an encounter of a fiercely proud Frenchman with an honourable and proud New Zealander who did not want to talk of his experiences in France. However, there was an exception. Tom Moynihan spoke of being deloused in huge vats of antiseptic at a brewery which had been made available for that purpose. The soldiers were immersed fully clothed and attended to by the proprietors and staff of the brewery who were only too willing to help the New Zealanders.

Henri Honoré asked Tom if the brewery was close to Armentiers, to which Tom replied , "Yes, something beginning with F? Frel?, I can't remember."

"Was it Frelinghien?", to which Tom replied, "Yes!, that's it!"

The brewery belonged to my mother's family. The two men were stunned and became friends for life. With the approval of two generations and two nationalities, how could I not marry Tom's daughter?

Winsome Winston

Last month a press release from New Zealand's Minister of Foreign Affairs, but not widely disseminated, caught my eye. Rt Hon Winston Peters, no less, was commenting on the election of Hamas in Palestine. "The New Zealand Government considers the recent election result reflected the will of the Palestinian people and must be respected."

Hello! Winston is now taking heed of what his superiors are telling him and that is to be a diplomat, mix with the right people and say the right things. Suddenly, "all the world's a stage", and the sharply dressed Winston has the main role. He is revelling in it and giving the performance of his life. Winston is sticking to the script. Who needs Tauranga?

Winston Peters has already outshone the United Sates Ambassador (not difficult) and has earned praise from Alexander Downer (difficult). So far the peripatetic Peters has concentrated on the South Pacific where he has been warmly received. This seems only the start of the play. Winston's main act is to improve relations with the United States.

His off-the-cuff remarks, after a speech to the NZ Institute of International Affairs, were appreciated and even considered a breath of fresh air. He admonished the United States for not recognising New Zealand's contribution to the stability of the South Pacific. Helen Clark and Phil Goff were impressed. They could never have uttered those lines.

Don Brash has just announced his trip to the United States where, it is trumpeted, he will be meeting Donald Rumsfeld. Winston Peters has a visit there in the near future where, if he is wise, he will not expose himself to too many handshakes with Donald Rumsfeld. The role of a roving ambassador is beginning to look as if it were made for him. With a pair of elevator shoes to go with those double breasted suits, Winston Peters should continue to rise to the occasion.

Vietnam Revisited

Vietnam was bad enough, but to repeat the same experiment thirty years later in Iraq is a strong argument for a case of national stupidity" - Arthur Schlesinger Jr., (historian).

The call for the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld by a group of retired United States' generals has met with a flat refusal from the increasingly unpopular Secretary of Defence. George W. Bush, more and more disconnected from reality and from popular support, responded, "Don Rumsfeld is doing a fine job".

In 1968 Robert McNamara, in exactly the same position as Rumsfeld, finally resigned under the same pressure. In both Vietnam and Iraq the US has embarked on conflicts which were based on false premises and the arrogance of power. Countless lies were told during the Vietnam war and such atrocities as My Lai have been repeated in the abuses at Abu Ghraib. Such myths as the desire of the US "to leave a free and democratic Iraq" are no longer accepted. The credibility of US military power is being questioned. Is the Pentagon under the control of the White House or do both ignore the dictates of public accountability?

Wars are ultimately won politically or not at all. In both Vietnam and Iraq the US government has overestimated the support of their friends, both inside and outside America. If the incumbent US President and the Secretary of State continue to neglect the local political reality, their days are numbered. Like Vietnam, Iraq is a political and economic disaster. If these men have no memory of the past, how can they expect to deal with the present? Perhaps Schlesinger has a point. ■

Crosscurrents
John Honoré

On yer bike!

The page in Tui Motu that I intended to write this month I no longer need to produce. I was going to alert readers to the imminence of global warning; to point out how close we are to the point of no return regarding the destruction of the planet's atmosphere.

But the job has been done for me by others. In recent weeks the media have been full of reports of the reality of climate change. The voices of those contending that global warming is only a distant and unproven possibility have been stilled. As NZ Listener put it, "no one worth listening to is questioning global warming any more". The emphasis has shifted to what responsibility each one of us has for the creation of this crisis and then to what each of us can do to contribute to a solution.

The motor car has been a great invention. For the first time in human history folk have the use of powered personal transport. But this has come at a price in environmental terms. The carbon dioxide emitted world-wide from motor vehicle exhausts contributes significantly to the advent of global warning. Each time we switch on the engine we share responsibility for modifying the state of the planet.

Several years ago one Auckland University lecturer decided to take action. She would give up the use of a car and cycle to and from the university. At considerable personal cost she was doing her bit to avoid the onset of global warming. Obviously the amount of CO^2 emitted into the atmosphere was lowered in only a tiny degree by her decision. But the impact of her decision on the consciences and attitudes of other people has hopefully been worthwhile.

We have enjoyed for several decades relatively inexpensive long distance air travel. So many of us have been wafted around the globe, or at least around our own country, in a fashion unbelievable in earlier generations. But at great environmental cost. The jet fumes spilled into the upper atmosphere are a significant factor bringing about climate change. It has been suggested that airline fares be greatly raised and the funds used on measures to restore balance to the gases present in the atmosphere. It would take a hefty hike in fares to in any extent cover the cost of remedying the environmental damage our travel is causing.

So many of the needed steps to limit the onset of catastrophic climate change can be taken only by governments and the world community. The financial cost and the impact on various vested interests will generate massive opposition to the needed steps. We can at least, as committed and believing stewards of God's creation, appreciate the need for such steps and press for them in any way we can.

We will be capable of having an impact on public policy only if we are taking steps ourselves, minuscule though those steps may be. We may not be called on to sell our car and replace it by a bike. But we could at times leave the car at home and take public transport. We could in our homes use compact flourescent light bulbs in place of filament globes that waste 90 percent of their energy as heat. We could install solar panels in any new buildings or extensions.

In one way or another, our personal lives must be energy saving and environment conscious. Only then will we be equipped to take our part in the wider battle at public level to save from irreparable damage the world with which God has gifted us. ■

Humphrey O'Leary

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

The quiet voice within

Eve Adams

So why do I still stay with one foot in the church? The question has been asked. The truth is that literally, 'God knows'. I believe that if and when the time comes for me to remove that foot, it will be more of an 'invitation' on God's part, and less of a 'decision' on mine. It is important for me that this is not simply a, 'what other option is there', or a, 'leaving by default or despair' kind of resolution. I believe I will know when the time comes and so for now I continue to listen, reflect, question, challenge myself and also grieve.

I grieve because for all that the Institutional Church is systemically flawed, within its walls, so many of its people and individual parishes manage to shine Christ's love and compassion in such a myriad of ways. These gifts and blessings are as real as the problems and I don't forget or dismiss them or the people who work so tirelessly to see them come to fruition. There still exists incredible potential within the Church, wonderful generosity and genuine love. Of that there is not the slightest doubt.

I went to mass two weeks ago for the first time in a little while. In my struggles I am trying to pay attention to why I go and separate out guilt and 'should' from genuine desire. That particular morning I felt drawn and so I went. I sat in the pew and studied the familiar faces of all those attending. My eyes filled. I felt an intense connection with these people; an appreciation that we are all struggling to understand what our faith means for us. I knew that what I would miss most was not ritual, nor priest, nor any other structure or individual, but instead it was the almost absurd coming together of so many different, ordinary lives struggling to understand one extraordinary belief.

Yes there is much to celebrate in the Church. Much achieved, much fellowship, and much love, often in the face of all the obstacles that I have been writing on. Rules are bent, people are put first, risks are taken. It happens daily in parishes near you and me. It used to fuel the hope that kept me going. Those efforts have not changed but something within me has. An unease has settled in and a quiet voice that won't let me brush my doubts aside as easily as I used to. How to balance the scales: the undeniable good of the Church on one side and the equally irrefutable limitations of the institution on the other, limitations which I believe will ultimately endanger the former? God knows. And so I pay attention and I wait. ■

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