

TUI MOTU InterIslands

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Hearts Open to the World

NEIL DARRAGH, MARY THORNE,
PAUL DALZIEL and OTHERS on
engaging with all in the world

WHAKATUWHERATIA

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI, BRENDAN WALSH,
KIP OMOLADE on hope for the USA

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EDITORIAL

Plain Speaking to Our Hearts



“Let our hearts be open” is Pope Francis’s plea to all people as he sees suffering and death pile up around the world. COVID-19, drought and famine, refugees, displaced persons, trafficking and slavery, burning of rainforests, global warming — Pope Francis says all need our attention. Repeatedly he outlines his vision of countries working together as a worldwide family to relieve these global ills. Every person in every country, whatever their situation, must have the basics to thrive, he insists. There is no place for selfish nationalist agendas. In this region of the world our countries are cooperating and looking out for poorer nations — though we are not above criticism. However, our hope for global cooperation and common cause has been bruised under the impact of power-wielding countries, like the USA, putting partisan interests first.

2021 is already bringing change, lifting our hearts and arousing our hope. Last month the USA signed up again to the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organisation — evidence of a new willingness to work with the rest of the world to protect Earth as our home and to bring an end to COVID-19. This recommitment to programmes for the common good moves us closer to saving the world from the crises of climate and health — crises that threaten disaster, or even extinction.

Pope Francis tells the stories of suffering and misery around the world not to shame us but to open our hearts and move us to compassionate action — in our neighbourhoods and through the world. He’s like Mary Oliver relating a story of loss and death: “I tell you this / to break your heart, / by which I mean only / that it break open and never close again / to the rest of the world.” We are to be good Samaritans, Francis urges, personally, nationally and globally. If we follow the Scripture readings through this Lenten season we’ll hear familiar and poignant echoes: soften the hardness in our hearts, rend our hearts and not our garments, open our hearts to the Spirit’s urging, take the plight of the needy to our hearts. We need real change, not lip service.

Francis’s voice, weighted with the Gospel, Catholic social teachings and papal encouragement, joins the chorus of like-visioned religious leaders, governments and business, of young prophets like Greta Thunberg speaking directly and with urgency about the issues we face. As Amanda Gorman said at the presidential inauguration: “If we’re to live up to our own time / Then victory won’t lie in the blade / but in all the bridges we’ve made.”

We thank all our contributors who through their generosity in sharing their research, reflection, insights, art and craft encourage us to trust our hearts. And we welcome Mary Betz as our new writer of the Cross Currents column.

As is our custom, our last words are of blessing and encouragement. Keep heart!

Danger of Lies & Extremism

In November last year, New Zealand released the full report of the Royal Commission into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain, the country's deadliest mass shooting. This was less than two years after the terrorist attack and highlights several areas where



authorities overlooked or disregarded evidence they had received that could have prevented it. The Commission's findings are relevant in Australia, too, but the report has been largely ignored. It's not good enough.

Since March 2019, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has set a precedent in not naming the perpetrator. Nor will I in this column. I don't think the media should give fame or power to those who plan or commit such horrific acts.

But I don't recommend plenary silence. We need to scrutinise the report to learn how the attack was allowed to happen and where responsibility for it lies.

The crime may have been committed in Christchurch, but its roots are planted across the Tasman where the perpetrator spent his childhood — a relatively normal, unremarkable childhood, by all

accounts. So how was it possible for an otherwise ordinary Australian to be radicalised in his own country?

This much is made clear in the report itself which notes the killer arrived in New Zealand from Australia already armed with a “fully-developed terrorist ideology”. By the virtue of distance and denial, Australia appears to be avoiding its role.

According to the Commission's findings, it was in adolescence that the attacker came to believe that Muslim immigration is “an existential threat to Western society”. Australia as a nation enabled this. The Australian history of immigration, complicated, carefully cultivated and littered with simplistic slogans like “stop the boats” and “queue jumpers”, would have given weight to the attacker's views.

And the contemporary political landscape is no better. Australian then-Senator Fraser Anning made inflammatory remarks echoing the sentiment the killer espoused. Nonsensically, Anning publicly argued that Muslim immigration leads to rising violence, essentially blaming Muslims for their own deaths.

Most telling — and absurd — is that public discourse surrounding terrorism inevitably turned into a discussion on Islamic terrorism. The two are not interchangeable. Australia's security agency ASIO estimates that as much as 40 per cent of its work involves far-right extremism. In other words, violence that is likely to directly target Muslims, rather than be perpetuated by them, is increasingly threatening national security.

The Christchurch Massacre is an example of what happens when those in power shut their eyes to, or even encourage, these extremists. Far-right ideas are permitted to proliferate, unchallenged, and those susceptible to the ideology are radicalised. This is clearly not something to be ignored. Disregard of the deadly potential of the far right is what enables their branch of terrorism to thrive.

And yet the push to recognise this, even in the aftermath of Christchurch, is met with a great deal of resistance in Australia.

Australia has not yet listed any far-right group as a terrorist organisation. Yet their threats are real. Two weeks before the release of the Christchurch report, Philip Galea was sentenced for planning a terrorist attack against “Muslims and lefties” in Melbourne.

And two days after the report was published, 18-year-old Tyler Jakovac was arrested for allegedly sharing bomb-making instructions online and urging others to kill “non-whites, Jews and Muslims”.

We should look on the US as a cautionary tale. There, far-right groups not only broke into the Capitol last month but have put the country on high alert for other potential domestic terrorist attacks since.

But in Australia we are complacent. It seemed positive when, two days after the NZ Royal Commission report was published, Australia launched an inquiry into domestic extremism, specifically to examine the far right.

It should have been a call to action. But a late intervention by Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton broadened its scope to include Islamic extremism specifically, and all extremism generally. In doing this, the government muddled the waters at a time when Australia and New Zealand both require long-overdue research and clarity into the ideology and plans of far-right extremism.

The Minister's intervention also sends the wrong message. It says that Muslims are seen first as suspects in perpetuating attacks and only second as victims of violence. This is how extremists who are committing murder in the community fly under the radar — because the focus and blame is already on Muslims.

New Zealand's Royal Commission has begun the conversation about extremism in our communities. It's high time for Australia to join in. ♡



Jack Derwin is a senior reporter at *Business Insider Australia*. His interests include all aspects of social justice particularly in the South Pacific region.



BE GOOD SAMARITANS

NEIL DARRAGH introduces Pope Francis's new encyclical which encourages all people in the world to relate like sisters and brothers.

Pope Francis's 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship* focuses on issues the Pope has addressed before about the contemporary world and the part the Church could play in it. It adds some specific applications to more recent issues such the condition of migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is no doubt about the thrust of Francis's thought. Charity or love is his central concern and must not

be reduced to a simple, personal, one-on-one virtue. It is a virtue that we practise together. Our Churches, our social institutions and our politics need to be imbued with this open vision excluding no one. "Kindness" is a central virtue that is both personal and corporate. "If someone helps an elderly person cross a river, that is a fine act of charity. The politician, on the other hand, builds a bridge, and that too is an act of charity" (FT par 186).

Francis begins from the conviction that no one can face life in isolation. His dream is for a single human family which includes all people throughout the world and in which we all relate to one another as brothers and sisters.

A Stranger on the Road

At first sight this encyclical may be intimidating because of its sheer size (43,000 words) and its dense papal language. A reader-friendly entry into the spirit of the encyclical would be to start with the second chapter entitled "A stranger on the road". This second

chapter is a reflection on the familiar parable of the “good Samaritan” who comes to the aid of a man who had fallen among robbers (Luke 10:25-37). The pope treats this story as an analogy where many different parts of the story have modern equivalents or applications.

Many *Tui Motu* readers would easily find here a source of inspiration for our own prayerful reflection and meditation. Or, alternatively, this second chapter could be seen as the hopeful response to the lament for the modern world at the heart of the encyclical's first chapter.

With the second chapter as an introduction we can get a further sense of the spirit of the encyclical from the sequence of the chapter titles: Dark clouds over a closed world, A stranger on the road, Envisaging and

development of all peoples.

To achieve this we will need a better politics, a politics which fosters subsidiarity and solidarity among peoples. We will need a politics which finds a solution to current attacks on fundamental human rights: social exclusion; the marketing of organs, tissues, weapons and drugs; sexual exploitation; slave labour; terrorism and organised crime; and human trafficking. Francis supports a reform of the United Nations for this purpose.

Francis proposes also a concept of life as the “art of encounter”, a society of dialogue and friendship, where no one is useless, no one is expendable. Kindness is a key to this society. He promotes peace always connected to justice and mercy. He promotes a religion at the service of friendship

In an open world, the goods of the world would be seen to belong to all people not just our own families or our own nation.

engendering an open world, A heart open to the whole world, A better kind of politics, Dialogue and friendship in society, Paths of renewed encounter, Religions at the service of fraternity in our world.

Open World and Open Heart

The “dark clouds” over a closed world include terrible injustices, discrimination and suffering. At a different level within these dark clouds, important concepts like democracy, freedom, justice, unity and concern for the common good are being deformed. In response to this dark state of the world, Pope Francis advocates a more open world, free of selfishness, where there is a sense of solidarity and the dignity of all people, including strangers and refugees. In an open world, the goods of the world would be seen to belong to all people not just our own families or our own nation.

This more open world requires in us an open heart, open especially to those who flee situations of conflict or poverty. Such an open heart calls for international and long-term collaboration that deals in a human and generous way with modern mass migration and which supports the

in society. He refers several times here to the document on world peace signed jointly in Abu Dhabi by himself and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in 2019.

Two Complementary Encyclicals

Because this encyclical reinforces much of Pope Francis's earlier writings, some commentators have suggested that it could be read as an overall summary of Francis's teaching. Certainly, this encyclical is a continuation and reinforcement of his earlier teaching on the Christian church's engagement in the wider world as an advocate for peace and justice. It contains very little, however, about the environment and ecology, another major centre of concern for the Pope. *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship* is best seen, it seems to me, as complementary to his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si': On the Care for Our Common Home*. Both these documents were inspired by St Francis of Assisi and both their titles (*Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*) are quotations from his writing. The two encyclicals together could be taken as a vision for Christian action, both personal and institutional, in the modern world.

An Encyclical with an Impact?

From the point of view of the English-speaking reader, two features of the encyclical will, sadly, limit severely its impact. The first is its size and complex language. The encyclical is passionate about social inclusion, peace and justice. Its message is so important for today's society and the Church's part in mission within it. Yet only a theological and ecclesiastical elite will ever read it. It advocates inclusion of as many people as possible but its own language style communicates with only a few.

The second sad feature is the sexist language that runs through most of it. When Pope Francis writes of “brothers” or “fraternal” he clearly means to include both women and men, and the whole of the encyclical is about social inclusion. Yet most of the encyclical expects that women will see themselves included when addressed as “brothers” or in the terms “fraternal” or “fraternity”. There is some mental block here and it is not clear (not to me anyway) whether this comes from Pope Francis himself or if it is the English translators who do not see this sexist language as a problem of both language and attitude and an exercise in social exclusion.

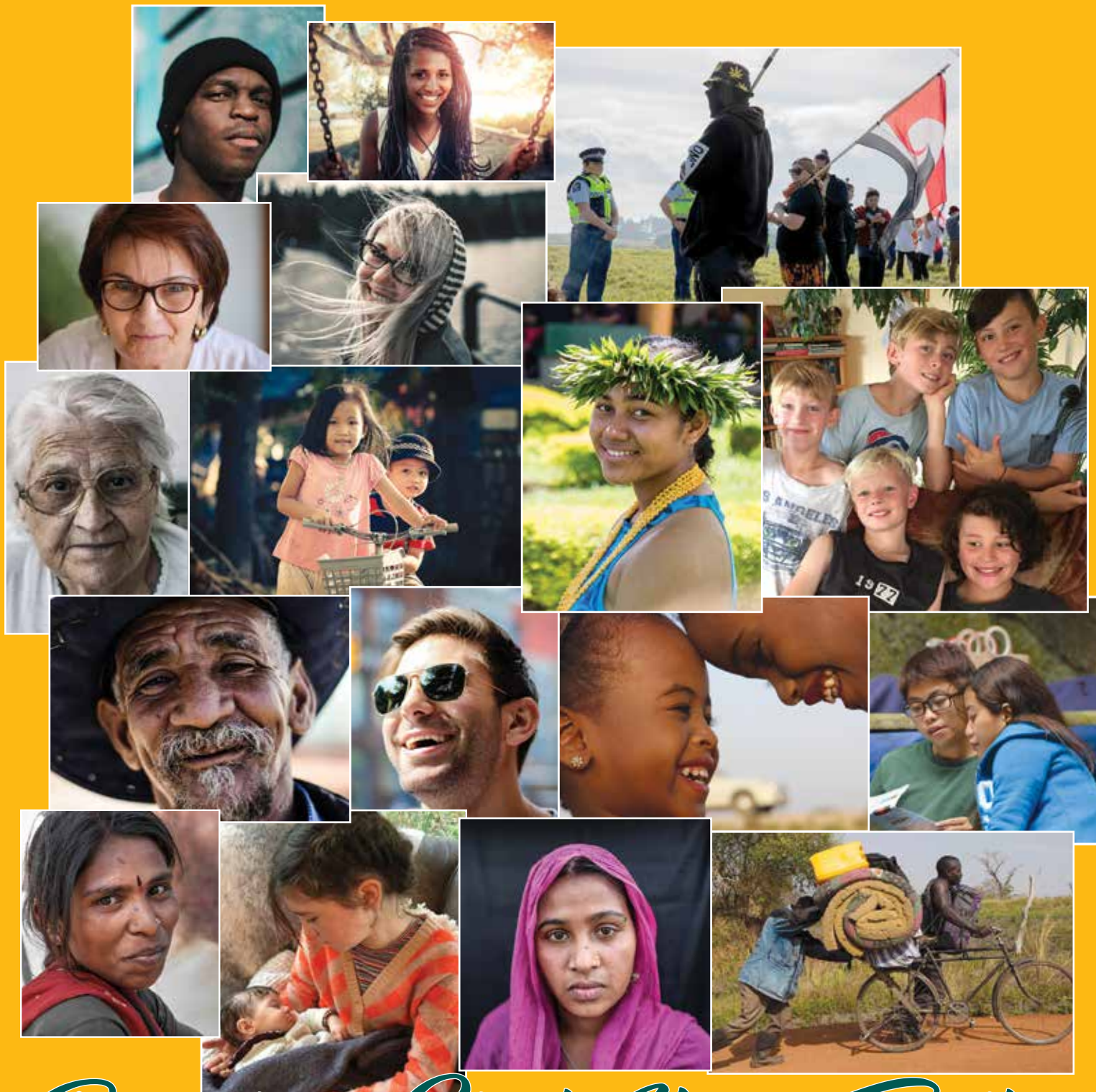
A Challenge

Yet, both our Church and our society need the force and focus of this encyclical. Some *Tui Motu* readers will be morally and intellectually hardy enough to read the whole encyclical. If this is you, I would challenge you to pick out a single sentence that could serve us in this part of the world as a motto for our own social friendship and mission action. My own pick is: “The decision to include or exclude those lying wounded along the roadside can serve as a criterion for judging every economic, political, social and religious project” (FT par 69). ♡

Painting: *I Am Your Neighbour* by Bob Booth © Oil on canvas 140 x 150 (2010) Used with permission www.trinitypaintbox.com



Neil Darragh is a pastor, writer, and theologian with a long-term interest in the impact of the Christian Gospel in New Zealand society.



Becoming a Single Human Family

MARY THORNE summarises Pope Francis's vision of all peoples relating as a family.

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis sets out his desire to contribute to the establishment of close, trusting,

Mary Thorne is retired and derives great delight from exploring the inner reaches of the Manukau Harbour with her tiny granddaughter.



familial relationships which encompass the whole of humanity and enable a future of social and ecological justice and peace. He introduces his concept of human connectedness inspired by the openness of heart shown by St Francis of Assisi whose love and compassion were given to all without discrimination.

Connecting Around the World

Pope Francis describes the need for renewed initiative and concerted effort to achieve this widespread caring connection in a world fractured and at odds. He notes trends which hinder attitudes of universal respect and concern. Among these are the divisive effects of cynicism,

indifference and casual disposability inherent in contemporary capitalist society. These destroy relationships, as do despair and discouragement, fear and mistrust. He criticises the manipulated reality created by digital communication which can deliver information without wisdom. He prays that the great sorrow of the present COVID-19 pandemic will result in a new shared passion to create a community of belonging and solidarity.

Relating with Love

At the heart of the document is a reflection on the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke's Gospel. This is the model of authentic human love of others. We are invited to ponder each of the characters in the story and recognise our own complicity in sometimes turning away and walking past occasions of great need.

Becoming a Single Family

The final six chapters of the encyclical outline the Pope's vision of the implementation of our living as a single human family, sharing the same flesh and planet, as travellers and companions on our journey through history, each of us a unique individual of inestimable worth.

Politically, Pope Francis urges that we structure all political and economic institutions to foster the common good and care for our common home, our planet. He notes the need for reform of the United Nations Organisation and international economic institutions so that they have more power to act on behalf of the family of nations. He rejects war and capital punishment as answers that do not resolve the problems that they are meant to solve, but instead exacerbate retributive violence. He asks for compassion at national borders and speaks of a politics of open-hearted generosity.

Healthy relationships require authentic communication and the Pope speaks of a new culture of encounter based on truth and dialogue. This calls for esteem and respect for others and the practice of kindness. He credits the internet with

offering immense possibilities for interactions and solidarity. He says this is something truly good, a gift from God. Francis says that truth is an inseparable companion of justice and mercy and should not lead to revenge but to reconciliation and forgiveness.

Calling on Believers

Finally, Pope Francis posits the believers of the different religions as a starting place for this transformative initiative. He expresses his gratitude to Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew and the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb for encouragement and inspiration. He also acknowledges the inspiration of Martin Luther King Jr, Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Gandhi and Charles de Foucauld.

Perhaps the most succinct summary of this document is a quote from Julian Tenison Woods, priest, scientist and co-founder, with Mary MacKillop, of the Sisters of St Joseph. "We must love others so much as to feel no happiness as great as that of serving them and advancing their interests."

Women Missed Out

Catholic women in English-speaking countries and beyond were shocked and hurt by the masculine language of brotherhood in the title and throughout this encyclical. We also note the omission of women's voices. There is not one woman among the many citations. Women are mentioned twice in regards to equal human rights but in light of paragraph 48, which speaks of the necessity to listen attentively to what others are saying, it is hard not to feel angry — women are crying out for equal participation in the Church and do not feel heard. The Catholic Church remains a bastion of gender inequality.

Fratelli Tutti reminds me of a letter from my much-loved grandmother. It is full of loving concern for all and practical wisdom born of faith and lived experience of struggle but its mode of expression seems not to have registered contemporary values and sensitivities about egalitarianism and mutuality between the sexes within the Catholic Church itself. ♡

A Promised Land

by Barack Obama

Published by Viking, 2020

Reviewed by Mike Riddell

BOOK

This memoir by former US President Barack Obama marks the third in a series of autobiographies, with another to come. The volume covers his ascent to the presidency and his experience of it from 2008 through to shortly after the assassination of Osama bin Laden in 2011.

The writing is excellent, and Obama does a superb job of drawing us into not only the events and issues of his presidency, but both the internal and



external quandries he faced during this time. I found his description of political pressures, international issues and family dynamics consistently engaging and often enthralling.

What happens when an idealist enters into the murky territory of realpolitik? This is a lived answer to the question, as Obama's evident liberal agenda comes into conflict with rigid Republican opposition, an unsympathetic media, and often resistance from his own Democratic base. His response is one of careful planning, listening to advice, achieving that which is possible and working hard with stubborn endurance.

His is not the leadership of a tyrant, but that of a person with many self-doubts and frustrated dreams. Because of this, *A Promised Land* is a human and relatable story that will engage and inform readers. Highly recommended. ♡



On Fraternity and Social Friendship

PAUL DALZIEL reflects on influences that encourage his commitment to universal human dignity.

In 1979, I entered the Marist seminary at Greenmeadows in the Hawke's Bay. The photograph opposite was taken at the seminary that year. On the left is the Rector, Fr Gerald Arbuckle. On the right is Fr Kevin Roach, who was my Spiritual Director. Between them is a visitor, His Excellency Angelo Innocent Fernandes.

Fernandes was Archbishop of New Delhi. Between 1966 and 1976, he had been a consultor and then a member of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace. He had become the first President of the World Conference on Religion and Peace in 1970, a position he held until 1984. I do not know why he briefly visited Greenmeadows in 1979, but Fr Arbuckle invited him to talk to us students on the eve of our annual retreat.

Called to Create Just Systems

Fernandes spoke about people in his diocese trapped in poverty, hunger and early death. The cause, he explained, was not any global shortage of food. Rather, huge numbers of people are unable to access a fair share of the world's resources. What is needed, he said, are good persons working to create just economic systems that ensure all people can lead lives reflecting their human dignity.

I met daily with Fr Roach during the week-long retreat that followed. We discussed many things, but mostly we

talked about my growing conviction that I wanted to be one of the "good persons" called for by Archbishop Fernandes. I left the seminary and began to construct the life pathway I am still following 40 years later.

This did not feel like a moral choice, not then and not now. It was more like someone saying to me: "Here is a jacket I have been wearing for a long time; would you like to try it on?" I found it suited me well, no doubt influenced by my parents' own sense of social solidarity forged in their childhood experiences of the Great Depression and World War II.

People's Right to Speak

After leaving the seminary, I encountered many people walking similar pathways. Tens of thousands of New Zealanders in every generation experience something that leaves them wanting to work for social justice and world peace. My own experience took place in a Catholic context. I found that while this is not uncommon, neither is it typical. Diverse motivations fuel the commitment to universal human dignity as an essential foundation for living a good human life.

New Zealanders with this commitment have marched against war, racism, nuclear weapons, sexism, colonisation, homophobia, income inequality and violence against children. Inspired by the vision of universal human rights,

we work in health, justice, education, public service, academia, politics, trade unions, community work and civil society. Without minimising serious injustices that demand our attention still, this work contributes to the special character of life in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The rich diversity among these good persons prevents a simple description of what we hold in common. Nevertheless, reflecting on personal experience, I think a crucial element is widespread acceptance of the following principle: *People have a right to speak in their own words about their personal and collective experiences of injustice and violence; people with privilege must listen attentively to those words and respond with a compassion committed to justice and peace.*

Fratelli Tutti

Against that background, I read the recent encyclical of Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*, with two questions. What can people committed to universal human rights learn from this document? What might we want to say in response, based on our own experiences of working towards social justice in this part of the world?

The first thing to say, and to celebrate, is that Pope Francis is clearly walking with us on his own social justice pathway. He writes with compassion about human suffering and the destruction of nature. He is resolute in demanding justice as the only authentic response. He refers again and again to universal human rights. He argues insightfully on the futility of war, advocating instead for a “culture of encounter” that seeks points of contact, builds bridges, and plans projects that include everyone.

Three paragraphs on kindness resonate strongly with my experience during the COVID-19 outbreak. Pope Francis comments that people who choose to cultivate kindness at such moments of crisis “become stars shining in the midst of darkness”. It is not difficult to think of politicians, scientists and public officials in Aotearoa New Zealand who demonstrated that truth in 2020.

The encyclical is attentive to the experiences of new migrants, particularly of refugees driven from their homelands by violence and persecution. It is also sensitive to protecting the cultural values of host communities. Pope Francis urges all of us “to open our hearts to those who are different”, arguing that universal inclusion is not utopian, but “demands a decisive commitment to devising effective means to this end”.

These are important messages from a person of the

Pope’s standing on the world stage. In contrast to the approach of some political leaders, Pope Francis offers a hopeful vision of inclusiveness:

“Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all.”

Diverse Voices New Harmonies

The last two phrases in that quote, “each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all”, echoes the principle that “people have a right to speak in their own words about their personal and collective experiences of injustice and violence”. This brings us to a contradiction that permeates the whole of *Fratelli Tutti*, with its focus on fraternity.

Liz Dodd, writing in *The Tablet* (17 October 2020), reports that of the 292 sources cited in the 288 footnotes of *Fratelli Tutti*, none are authored by women. She comments: “You do not hear from a female voice in this encyclical at all.” Given that inexcusable exclusion, let us acknowledge that male fraternities throughout human history have silenced women, with disastrous consequences for people and planet.

I understand the warmth of living in fraternity. My own time at the Marist seminary was personally enriching, enhanced by the social friendship of men like Fr Arbuckle, Fr

Roach and Archbishop Fernandes. I think I can understand why the idea of a universal fraternity might appeal to the man who has become Pope Francis.

Nevertheless, in this part of the world we recognise that fraternities in politics, business, science and religion contribute greatly to social injustice and environmental destruction. Breaking open these fraternities is an integral aspect of addressing the serious

challenges confronting the human family. Only the full range of humanity’s diverse voices, speaking from positions of leadership, can create the new harmonies urgently needed in our society and in our churches. ♡

Painting: *Swallowed in the River* by Clare Wilcox ©
Used with permission Facebook: Clare Wilcox artist



Gerry Arbuckle SM, Archbishop Fernandes and Kevin Roach SM
Courtesy of Marist Archives Wellington ref: MAW GMA.N.10.2.



Paul Dalziel lives in Christchurch. He is an author of *Wellbeing Economics: The Capabilities Approach to Prosperity*, published in 2018.



A HEART for the WHOLE WORLD

PETER CULLINANE discusses why Christians need to be engaged wholeheartedly in our world.

A Heart Open to the Whole World” — Pope Francis addresses very specific, modern issues in this section of *Fratelli Tutti*. Not the least of these is the plight of refugees and exiles. What we do about these issues is what makes us actors in the parable of the good Samaritan — whether we choose to be the pseudo-religious people who pass by on the other side of the road, or the strangers who become brothers and sisters to those in need.

The Gospel, like Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*, encourages us to engage with the world around us. So how did we ever come to imagine that the Gospel required us to turn away from the world?

Our propensity to imagine that material creation is somehow bad is as old as the human race. It shows up in the idea that salvation means exiting from “this world”, and in ascetic practices based on wrong reasons for detaching from “the world”.

These negative attitudes towards material creation matter greatly because sooner or later they affect our attitudes to people. Christians have even tried to make a disjunction between Jesus and material creation. Elizabeth Johnson is not exaggerating in her book *Consider Jesus* when she says: “There has been heresy after heresy in the history of the Church which has denied the genuine humanity of God in the incarnation: there was no real human body, nor real soul, nor real human will, nor real human nature. It is as though God and humanity are somehow opposed to each other, or in competition with each other, so that a choice has

to be made for one or the other.”

If choosing God seemed to require distancing God from human nature even in regard to Jesus, perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised that at least one nation in Europe has used its Christian faith as justification for closing its borders to desperate migrants.

For many of us, the need to re-learn our faith involved the need for some un-learning. For this I do not blame our earliest teachers in the faith, who mostly were given no formation for their task. But nor do I regret the passing of an era which, although it bred great saints, also carried the virus of Jansenism with its impression that in order to honour God and grow in holiness we needed to denigrate human nature. Fortunately, these put-downs of humanity never became part of the Church’s official teaching, nor even the teaching of its best theologians.

Thankfully, against this grim background, stunning insights awaited us. We learned from Pope Paul VI that we are to love the world as we love our own bodies; from Karl Rahner, that “love for God and love for the world are in direct, not inverse, proportion”; from Chenu, Congar and other great French theologians that God has called us to be co-workers in the gradual organisation of a universe in which we are meant to be “its demiurges and its conscience”. And it was during the enthusiastic lectures of Bernard Häring that I first heard of “Schema XVII” which eventually became the Council’s document that opened with the famous lines: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”



We have come a long way. The vocation of every Christian is to bring to bear on all areas of life what our faith teaches concerning human dignity and the meaning of life; to accept the personal costs of doing so (so cogently spelled out by Joan Chittister in *The Time is Now*), and to be accountable in all the ways that citizens should be.

Often, what we learned subconsciously was harder to reach and remove than what we more consciously learned. Yet it is surely a sign of human nature's innate goodness that when the opportunity for better understanding came to us, we recognised its truth. It was as if we already knew the truth pre-consciously, and re-knew it when it was articulated for us. That was liberating, and became the sure footing on which we could step out to embrace "the world".

Pope John Paul II had already taught (World Peace Day, 2000) that nothing will change until we literally see one another as one family, brothers and sisters of all. Francis has been teaching that *everything* is connected (*Laudato Si'*), and that everyone is connected (*Fratelli Tutti*). Devastating damage to the planet has taught us — which indigenous people always knew — that the spiritual, cultural, ethical, social, political, economic and ecological are inter-dependent. A post-COVID "new order" will not be new so long as we continue to disregard this inter-dependence.

To open ourselves to all reality — to accept truth from whatever source and whatever the consequences — is how faith is different from ideology. Faith is open-ended; not limited to what can be reasonably expected. Ideology is agenda-driven, which is why it can blatantly turn a blind eye to what does not fit the agenda or match the slogan, limiting our engagement with the world. Of course, Christians can be, and have been, guilty of this too.

The most spectacular manifestations of ideology today are those that involve disregard for the sciences, whether it is medical science's reasons for taking precautions against the spread of coronavirus, or what the sciences tell us

concerning the status of a newly conceived human being, or what doctors and lawyers recommend for the protection of children suffering gender dysphoria etc. At some point, the difference between true and false no longer matters; say what you like to get what you want. Demagoguery still works. And it is counter-human, because only truth can set us free. And only the truly free can reach out to love the world and work for its enhancement.

Christian asceticism is about becoming gradually more free. The case for ascetic practices and detachment is not premised on any part of creation being bad, but on the premise that "this present age" is passing. We can be "deceived" and allured into treating creation's present forms as something they are not. To counter that contamination, we practise "letting go".

Every involvement which helps to make the world a better place is a way of letting go of what was less. Growth in holiness does not run in parallel with this involvement, but in and through it. This asceticism embraces creation.

The everlasting worthwhileness of all creation, and the transitoriness of its present forms, are both affirmed in *Gaudium et Spes*: "All the good fruits of human nature, and all the good fruits of human enterprise, we shall find again, cleansed and transfigured." But that final transformation will be all God's doing, and gift. Our challenge is to live as good samaritans in our world. That is what Hearts Open to the World open us to. ♡

Painting: *Portrait of You As the Good Samaritan* by James Jangknekt ©
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Bishop **Peter Cullinane** is a theologian and the former bishop of Palmerston North. In "retirement" he continues his pastoral ministry.



Building Solidarity

STEPHEN BEVANS outlines the building blocks for supportive relationships among peoples and countries.

Pope Francis sets out the theme of *Fratelli Tutti* in paragraph two. It is, he says, a reflection on “fraternity and social friendship.” What these ideas mean can be also expressed in another word — solidarity. Solidarity has a long history in Catholic Social Teaching and the Magisterium as well, going back to *Gaudium et Spes* in Vatican II, the teaching of John XXIII and John Paul II. Pope Francis has used solidarity in his own teaching from the beginning of his papal ministry. The term appears 19 times in *Evangelii Gaudium* and in various talks that he has given through the years. In *Fratelli Tutti* it appears 24 times in the text, and there is a short section devoted to the idea in paragraphs 114 to 117.

As Francis explains it, solidarity is “a moral virtue and social attitude born of personal conversion”. As a virtue, it “means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of

generosity”. Francis speaks of it in terms of the common good, of opposition to the structures that dehumanise women and men, and commitment to care of Earth. Giving an example from ecological commitment, Francis commends people who, although they “enjoy a surplus of water ... choose to conserve it for the sake of the greater human family”. This “allows them to look beyond themselves and the group to which they belong”. In the same way it is recognising “the rights of all people, even those born beyond our own borders”.

The basis of solidarity is reaching beyond the self. Francis calls this the “law of *ekstasis*” and says: “Let us realise that as our minds and hearts narrow, the less capable we become of understanding the world around us”. Solidarity is what makes us human. In a departure from the usual sources quoted in a papal document,

Francis cites a popular song by the Brazilian poet Vinicius de Moraes: "Life, for all its confrontations, is the art of encounter". Solidarity creates sisterhood and brotherhood and social friendship.

How can we achieve the virtue of solidarity? Throughout the encyclical, Francis offers a number of "building blocks" toward solidarity. These are attitudes and practices which help us develop into people like the Good Samaritan. He reflects: "By his actions, the Good Samaritan showed that 'the existence of each and every individual is deeply tied to that of others: life is not simply time that passes; life is a time for interactions.'"

Dignity of Every Person

The first building block is the recognition of the fundamental dignity of every human being, a recognition that anchors the whole structure of Catholic Social Teaching, and appears in many other places in Francis's thought. When human dignity is respected, Francis writes, human beings begin creatively to perform "actions that further the common good". Quoting his earlier encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis insists that "The mere fact that some people are born in places with fewer resources or less development does not justify the fact that they are living with less dignity" (EG par 190). In his discussion of the death penalty toward the end of the encyclical, Francis affirms the human dignity of "even a murderer". "If I do not deny that dignity to the worst of criminals, I will not deny it to anyone. I will give everyone the possibility of sharing this planet with me, despite all our differences."

Affirming Human Rights

The second building block is affirming basic human rights, and in particular the rights of women.

Francis focuses on issues about which he has voiced his concern in previous years, namely human slavery and human trafficking.

Commitment to Justice

Awareness of this vicious reality and working to do all we can to end slavery is intimately related to a third building block, the commitment to justice. "In today's world," Francis laments, "the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia." The fact is, however, that we are all connected, we really "are all in the same boat".

Culture of Encounter

A fourth building block is the development of a culture of encounter. Quoting from his message to the TED Conference in 2017, Francis exclaims: "How wonderful would it be, even as we discover faraway planets, to rediscover the needs of the brothers and sisters who orbit around us". Later in the encyclical the practice comes up again. To develop a "culture of encounter" means being "passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone. This becomes an aspiration and a style of life". "Building bridges", not a "culture of walls"!

Trust

Fifth, there is the building block of trust, expressed negatively: not fearing the other, especially the stranger, the migrant. Fear may be our natural instinct, Francis says, but — echoing his anthropology of ekstasis — "an individual and a people are only fruitful and productive if they are able to develop a creative openness to others." Our fears make us "intolerant, closed and perhaps even — without realising it — racist. In this way fear deprives us of the desire and ability to encounter the other".

Listening and Dialogue

A sixth building block is developed in listening and dialogue. Through these practices we avoid what Francis calls "parallel monologues", prevalent on social media. Dialogue and listening "calls for perseverance; it entails moments of silence and suffering, yet it can patiently embrace the broader experience of individuals and peoples". Authentic listening and dialogue are, in many ways, ascetical practices, and as for the Good Samaritan can lead us to seeing and paying attention to the strangers we meet on life's road.

If women and men, of every culture, of every religion, take these practices seriously, Francis's utopian vision of solidarity in *Fratelli Tutti* might well become a reality, and heal a wounded world.

Kindness and Memory

I have discovered other building blocks in *Fratelli Tutti* — inclusion, co-responsibility, "becoming a neighbour", effective catechesis and preaching — but two warrant special mention: kindness and memory. "Reconciliation and forgiveness are acts of solidarity, but we must always remember — the victims of the Shoah, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, of the slave trade, past and present. As Francis said in his message for the 2019 World Day of Peace, we must "keep alive the flame of collective conscience, bearing witness to succeeding generations to the horror of what happened".

In an article about *Fratelli Tutti*, William Cavanaugh tells of a friend who "wondered how a document that is so full of truisms could also be so radical." The building blocks that Francis offers for the virtue of solidarity are simple, often-cited practices. But that does not make them easy, or superficial. If women and men, of every culture, of every religion, take these practices seriously, Francis's utopian vision of solidarity in *Fratelli Tutti* might well become a reality, and heal a wounded world. ♡

Painting: *Mamiko tsy hiofo /I Love Not Cry* by Nataoa Rasolonjatovo ©
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Stephen Bevans SVD is emeritus Professor of Mission and Culture at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He has presented regularly in New Zealand and Australia.

CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY IN STATE AND CHURCH

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI writes that the US needs to address its colonial and slave history in order to stop the violence threatening democracy.

The 6 January assault on the US Congress building in Washington by Trump supporters was not an accident caused by a staggering lack of preparation (or connivance) by the authorities responsible for public order. It is an episode that includes a series of threats by armed militias against parliaments and state governors in recent months by the "Trump movement". The president himself had incited his supporters in a speech delivered in person, in front of them, a few hours earlier. Over 100 deputies and senators on the night after the assault, continued their attempt to obstruct the certification of the election of Joe Biden as president.

Grounds of Violence

The day of 6 January, with the tragic count of the dead and a series of legal and political consequences which at this stage are only half-known, must be seen within a longer chronology — the last five years of Trumpism; the reaction of white America to the Obama election in 2008; nationalism and militarism as effects of the 11 September 2001 attacks and of the wars in which America has been involved in Afghanistan since 2001 and in Iraq since 2003 (and, less visibly, in other countries).

But we must broaden our gaze and chronology: the assault on Congress raises in a dramatic and visually inevitable way the question of what America is.

We keep hearing — even from



President Joe Biden — the mantras "this is not America", "America is better than this".

But America is also what we saw on 6 January: the gallows mounted in front of the Capitol, the journalists and police officers almost lynched by the crowd, the Holocaust deniers, political-religious slogans echoing the sinister "God is with us".

This Is America Too

I have lived in America since 2008. It is where I got married and where our children were born and go to school.

I am very grateful to this country and its Church for welcoming me. But the instincts of "white supremacy" populism, the celebration of violence, the political and nationalist use of religion, the presence of the military in institutions — are all elements that are part of American history.

Trumpism has given a leader to feelings that have always been present in American history. January 6 is a chapter in the autobiography of the American nation, not a scribble in the margin.

Why have these instincts been

unleashed now in a way that is angrier and more violent than before? Simple answers are often wrong.

The movement that supports Trump is a movement that voices resentment of various kinds: economic for a declining country in the world where America is no longer the only superpower; cultural due to the growing separation between urban and suburban areas on the one hand and rural and de-industrialised areas on the other; religious for the relentless struggle between the religious and secular soul of America.

Ethnic and Racial Resentment Now Mainstream

But there is also — and it is the new factor from 2008 to today — an ethnic and racial resentment that has gone beyond the margins and has become mainstream and acquired political legitimacy.

Trump's rhetoric of the "stolen election" is nothing more than the rejection of an election result determined by the fact that African American and Latino minorities voted *en masse* and largely for Biden. The attempts by Republicans (for a decade now) to obstruct the exercise of the right to vote by minorities have failed, at least in the 2020 elections.

Trump became a political figure with his disinformation campaign against Obama, falsely accused of not having been born in the United States and therefore of illegally occupying the White House. Trumpism is the violent reaction to a shock that already began with the Obama presidency and became radicalised in those years.

Today the country is no longer in the hands of the white Christians of European descent and this redefines the self-understanding of a country like the United States which is more than a state ("a nation with the soul of a church", as GK Chesterton said) and less than a state (as seen from the inability to develop a national policy against the COVID-19 pandemic).

What is America Now?

What is America? One of the most solid democracies in the world which was conceived on a system

that at all levels (political, economic, social, religious) was based on rigid mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

The voters who now contribute to determining the outcome of the elections in the 21st century were those excluded from the political process until a few years ago.

The crisis of American democracy is an episode in the epochal crisis of the Anglosphere: the delayed end of Anglo-Saxon colonialism — this time with consequences developing internally in the United States.

There is the need to correct... the original sins of the USA:

- the settlement at the expense of the populations who lived on the continent before the arrival of the Europeans;
- slavery up to the civil war and racial segregation for at least a century later;
- the role of the US in the global world between the Cold War and today.

Church in Crisis

Just as the country has elected its second Catholic president after John F Kennedy in Biden, this momentous crisis raises uncomfortable questions for the American churches, including the Catholic Church.

Catholics became part of the mechanisms of inclusion (and the exclusion of others) in a period between the Second World War and the 1960s. But most Catholics have so far cradled themselves in the illusion of their own virginity, in the name of a mythical self-narration: the poor immigrants who have made it, in spite of and against the anti-Catholic Protestant establishment. But that is clearly only part of the history of Catholics.

Church Must Correct Past Story

There is still a lack of institutional awareness of the responsibilities of Catholics as an integral part of the establishment (in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, for example, Catholics have developed a deeper awareness of their colonial past).

There is, therefore, a historical problem: the need to correct or at least problematise a history of Catholics (and of all Churches) that has to deal with the original sins of the United States: the settlement at the expense of the populations who lived on the continent before the arrival of the Europeans; slavery up to the civil war and racial segregation for at least a century later; the role of the US in the global world between the Cold War and today.

Church to Address Theology

But there is also a theological problem. The events of recent months show that American Catholics must contribute to rebuilding — even within the Church — a culture and ethos of participation in public life.

The "culture wars" were born in the 70s and 80s on the issues of life (especially abortion), but over time they have also transformed on the Catholic side in an attack on the very idea that the Church can live in a multicultural and multireligious society.

Calls for Catholics to unite in defense of democracy do not find fertile ground now, after years of cheap skepticism against the many delicate distinctions required of Catholics on the public stage: between church and state, between politics and religion.

A generation of Catholics has been trained to think exclusively in terms of "non-negotiable values", which is intellectually and spiritually a disaster, and which can become a passport to extremism. ♥

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Massimo Faggioli is Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Villanova University and author of *Joe Biden and Catholicism in the United States* (2021).



THRESHOLD

Make time to open
the slow door of morning
letting light spill like lemons
over the threshold.

Choosing one
your day grows bitter
or sweet with gratitude.

May your unsteady heart
learn steadiness of heron
its blue grey grace
forging thin spaces in water.

By Anne Powell ©

In The Edge of Things. The Cuba Press, 2018, p19



Photo by Ivan Kruk / Shutterstock.com



Exploiting the Nation's Demons

BRENDAN WALSH discusses why the 6 January assault on Capitol Hill is a threat to the USA and to the world.

Of all democracies, Americans like to think of theirs as uniquely robust. This belief has been sorely tested by the truly shocking events on 6 January, but vindication may be on hand with President Joe Biden now sworn in as the 46th President of the United States.

Democrats the world over will breathe a sigh of relief, not least to see the back of President Donald Trump and an end to his capacity

to cause havoc whether in his own backyard or the farthest reaches of the planet. The American security services are concerned that further mayhem may lie ahead, with the more organised character of an armed insurrection. The storming of the Capitol building by an angry mob, while both houses of Congress were meeting in joint session to confirm the results of last November's presidential election, was

a provocation as outrageous as it was disorganised and futile.

No matter how much damage the rioters did once inside, no matter how disrespectful and intimidating their words and conduct, it is unlikely that any single representative or senator could have been swayed to change course. Some of them wanted yet further investigations into allegations of ballot rigging, despite the assurances from the departments

of Justice and Homeland Security that no serious fraud occurred. But it has been clear for weeks that most legislators in both houses accepted Biden's victory. No coup, sedition or insurrection — however the events of 6 January are described — could have altered that. The confirmation of Biden's victory was all but inevitable, because that is what the facts said. There were no "alternative facts" to set against them, and Trump's insistence that he won by a landslide was a baseless piece of fiction.

At the heart of that week's bizarre eruption of anarchy was a manifest fallacy, and the fact that Trump had promoted and encouraged it — and by all accounts, believed it — suggests he had lost touch with reality. In this he was not alone. The most striking feature of the mob was how many of its members felt they were acting out of Christian and patriotic duty.

There is a warning here for the US and for the rest of the world. Demagogues are dangerous, and become more so when apparently rational people are prepared to believe them. Trump was insisting the ballot would be rigged against him long before election day itself. What remains a mystery is how the alleged conspirators spread across the nation could have managed to decrease the Democratic vote in the congressional elections, while simultaneously, and usually using the same ballot paper, increasing the Democratic vote in the presidential race.

This is not the first time sections of the US population have been drawn to irrational conspiracy theories about a hidden enemy, concealed inside the workings of legitimate institutions. The arrival of social media has amplified this tendency, particularly the way it allows individuals to filter out all views contrary to their own, and the fact that the more sensational a claim, the more attention it will receive. Social media giants such as Twitter and Facebook have been slow to recognise the wisdom in Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes' dictum that the principle of free speech does not permit the shouting of "Fire!" in a crowded theatre. They

have now slammed their doors shut on Donald Trump, which is a tacit admission that they were part of the problem.

That, however, raises more questions than it answers. These social media platforms have always denied responsibility for the content of their users' posts, saying they are more like a telephone service than a newspaper. That defence collapsed, once they realised that some of those users seemed to be wanting to use them to organise a civil war. Unregulated free speech on social media may not have survived the Trump era.

Demons in the USA

Trump's success was largely due to his intuitive exploitation of some of the fundamental fault lines in US society — its demons.

DEMAGOGUES ARE DANGEROUS, AND BECOME MORE SO WHEN APPARENTLY RATIONAL PEOPLE ARE PREPARED TO BELIEVE THEM.

The most crucial and disturbing is race and the legacy of slavery. The US has a long way to go before it is at peace with its own history.

Another is the conviction that wealthy and powerful elites, well placed in Washington and Wall Street, conduct public affairs solely for their own benefit. The power of money in US national politics has never been greater.

A third is the ready resort to violence and the proliferation of firearms. The rugged individualism of the Wild West still has its allure.

A fourth is the way globalisation has exported jobs in heavy industry to the developing world where wages and safety standards are lower, leaving whole communities poorer and with a sense of abandonment.

Fundamental Issues for Democracy

There are even more fundamental issues raised by this astonishing episode that should concern the friends of democracy everywhere.

The first is how easy populist leaders can beguile millions of voters with lies and half truths, often designed to bring democracy itself into disrepute and prepare the way for dictatorship, of the extreme right or of the extreme left. Such movements quickly attain cult-like status, where the will of the leader is the only law — the *Führerprinzip*.

The second is how the breaking of democratic norms, which may seem trivial at the time, can slide down a slippery slope into the wholesale undermining of the system.

The third is how dangerous violence becomes when it is used for political ends — one of the hallmarks of fascism.

And the fourth, very relevant in the case of the US, is the supreme importance of the separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary. Trump's stirring up of a mob to interrupt congressional business is an example of the executive interfering with the legislature. Presidential impeachment is the opposite process, which is why it is undesirable except in the gravest cases.

Packing the courts with judges thought to be favourable to one party rather than another is an example of the executive joining with the legislature to suborn the judiciary — one of the most serious flaws in the US system. Any review of the American Constitution in the light of recent events must examine this "separation of powers" principle so it can no longer be abused. And that applies to all systems of government elsewhere in the world. These are not just America's nightmares. Nowhere is immune from them.

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Brendan Walsh is the editor of *The Tablet* (UK). He was the literary editor before his appointment in 2017.



KIP OMOLADE writing from New York State, says unaddressed issues of colonialism and racism are fomenting violence in the United States.

I'm sure you've heard about the attempted coup at my nation's capital. My family and I are safe but cautious. Many Americans, including myself, are not surprised by the attack. The current president has been calling for acts of fascism for the past several years. He and his followers have been blindly blaming their problems on minorities and Democrats since President Obama was in office.

One of the blaring observations seen worldwide is the blatant racism with police reaction. When Black Lives Matter protestors peacefully met, they encountered severe police violence. Seeing how police officers gingerly handled a coup led by whites reaffirmed my belief that the United States is and always has been a military state designed by

white supremacists.

Coincidentally, as the attempted insurrection was taking place, I was participating in a photo shoot about being African American in America. I was draped with two vintage United States flags while posing in front of my art. Living in this country has been a challenge. I love the country because of all of the opportunities but the systemic racism and hypocrisy are a vile reality. During the photo shoot, I thought about the inherent structural problem with America. It was founded on stolen Native American/First Nation land, which was worked on by enslaved African Americans and viscosly enforced by white slave owners. The system itself (which has been used around the globe) is based on an imagined hierarchy of race which places people of colour at the bottom rungs of humanity.

Obviously, colonialism has had devastating psychological and emotional effects on Native Americans and African Americans, but it has also damaged the psyche of many white brothers and sisters.

There's an inherent belief among some whites that they are better than people of colour. When they see anything that conflicts with this reality, they react with violence. Police brutality, lynching, church bombings, etc. are examples.

Many of the insurrectionists have twisted perceptions about reality fuelled by recent lies in media and generational prejudice and racism. My hope is that the country continues to: ban anyone, including the president, from using social media to spread lies and threats; arrest and convict perpetrators and use measures to impeach the president. As a follow up, there needs to be widespread police reform (some police officers helped the mob) and accurate education about politics, history and race.

I'm actually hopeful because the United States has a chance to see our internal virus. Seeing the disease increases the chances of our country to identify the symptoms and to begin applying treatment. ♡

Born in Harlem, Kip Omolade is a fine artist whose work explores immortality, beauty and humanity.



Photo by Johnny Silvercloud / Shutterstock.com



you made us Stronger

In 2019 ZADRAN SAFI's father was shot while he was praying. Zadrán spoke this statement at the shooter's sentencing in 2020.

My father was shot dead as a result of the attack on the Al Noor Mosque in Christchurch on Friday 15 March 2019. I was 15 at the time, and you must be shocked that I'm standing here at 17 having to talk to my father's killer with so much courage while you sit there speechless.

The day it happened I was in class and soon after our Principal heard the news the school went into lockdown. My peers were scared and we had no idea what was going on. We went under the tables and one of my classmates looked on social media and said: "Someone has done a terrorist attack on the mosque."

I looked on my phone and read about it. I was calling my father because he's always there. I never got an answer. I called my brothers and asked: "Is everything all right?" — because I thought they were also at the mosque. Luckily they weren't but my father was.

I saw a 14-second clip of the livestream of the attack. I was mortified. I asked myself: Who had this much hatred inside of them? All I could feel was bad for the shooter because the person cannot feel happiness. No contented human could ever do that.

That night my father didn't come home but I slept peacefully through the night. Maybe he was the angel that was guiding me. My father was kept in the mosque lying down on the carpet the entire time for four days. Then they moved him into the hospital and we had to clean him for his funeral.

On Thursday morning, I saw him for the first time and he had a smile on his face. Later on that day the burial happened. So many people were there for him, people who loved him and people who cared for him.

Till this day when I see a fellow Muslim walking, the first question I ask after giving my *salam* (greetings)

is: "Is your family okay?" It's so hard to comprehend that this has now become the reality for people that didn't make it out. We are all family, all brothers and sisters, and our *ummah* (wider family) all lost family that Friday.

You will always be known as the terrorist killer but I thank you for bringing us closer than ever. I heard you planned and plotted this crime to get rid of Muslims for years. You wanted to break us and I'm sorry you didn't get that wish. Instead you even made non-Muslims gain an understanding of Islam. I'm sure you aren't happy to know that more joined Islam after what you did.

To finish off, I want to say that I will always go to the mosque, any mosque. This act has not scared me but shown me how strong I am and how strong we are. I will forever be proud of my faith and who I am because of it. ♥

Photo by Sheryl Watson / Shutterstock.com



Zadrán Safi came to NZ as a refugee when he was 3 years old and his family settled in Christchurch. He is studying at Otago University in 2021.



Healed and Called

ELAINE WAINWRIGHT and ANN GILROY suggest that when the mother-in-law is healed by Jesus in Mark 1:29-31 she is also called to follow him, as were the men disciples.

Mark 1:29 And immediately Jesus left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a

fever, and immediately they told him about her. 31 And Jesus came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve him.

The story of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law occurs in the first chapter of Mark (Mk 1: 29-31) when Jesus has been teaching and healing in the synagogues.

Then Jesus moves "immediately" from the synagogue, a public place, to the privacy of a house. There is a sense of urgency and purpose in Jesus's response to mission

in the story — note how the text says: "he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John."

Although the named disciples are all men — representing male ownership of property — the story turns to one of the women living in the house.

"Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and

immediately they told him about her." This woman is the first female character we encounter in Mark's Gospel and she is presented as "ill with a fever" — in need of healing. She is characterised differently from the men who are engaged in discipleship.

The phrase "sick with a fever" is a general descriptor used in Graeco-Roman narratives of healing for a range of illnesses. It doesn't identify a specific illness. Jesus finds out about the woman's sickness when the disciples tell him.

His response is immediate: he takes the woman by the hand and lifts her up from her sickbed. In the story, Jesus's touch is the medium of healing and that healing touch is for women and men.

The story ends with the woman's response: she serves him. The Greek verb *diakonew* is used to describe her serving. This is interesting because it is akin to *diakonia* meaning discipleship of Jesus. Which would mean that women's *diakonia* is not just in the privacy of home but in the whole world. Certainly we find women from Galilee, who have followed Jesus and provided for him, standing with many other women from Jerusalem at Jesus's cross at the end of the Gospel (Mk 15:40). Their discipleship is evident and commented on.

The woman is not only restored to her previous state of wellness but called to a new state of discipleship ... Just as Matthew is called and rises to follow Jesus, the woman is raised from her sick bed to do *diakonia*, to take on the key roles of a disciple.

I think this story of Peter's mother-in-law is not only a healing story but a story of her call to discipleship. The woman is not only restored to her previous state of wellness but called to a new state of discipleship.

In Matthew's Gospel we have brief parallel stories — the call of the mother-in-law and the call of Matthew:

"And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. 15 He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him" (Mt 8:14).

When we compare this story to the call of Matthew, the woman's call to discipleship is reinforced:

"As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, 'Follow me'. And he rose and followed him" (Mt 9:9).

Just as Matthew is called and rises to follow Jesus, the woman is raised from her sick bed to do *diakonia*, to take on the key roles of a disciple.

Call and Practice in the Church

These insights may appear unimportant but in our time when women are asking for leadership roles in the Church, they take on significance. From our reading of

the Gospels it could seem that Jesus called only men to be disciples — and this is one of the arguments against ordaining women in the Catholic Church. But a close study of Scripture, especially in the original language, suggests that this argument is questionable. Scripture scholars and historians such as Phyllis Zagano (who was a member of Pope Francis's committee to study if there were women deacons in the early Church) are pointing to instances where women's call and service appear to have the same quality and equality as men's.

The early Christian communities that produced the Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke and John — developed the stories of Jesus's life and ministry in response to their own contexts. One of the issues and challenges they faced was the role of women in their societies and in the emerging gospel narratives that they were developing. Now, 2,000 years later, the discussion about women's roles in the Church continues. The recent change Pope Francis made in canon law to permit women and girls to read the Scriptures, distribute communion and be altar servers at Eucharist is an example of the discussion continuing. It highlights the gendered division in the Church. We can ask why the Church listens and responds to men when they ask to discern a call to priesthood but holds it impossible for women to hear a similar call.

Healing and Practice in the Church

We can take inspiration for discipleship in this time of pandemic from the story of the healing of the mother-in-law. While the pandemic rages elsewhere, in our part of the world we are now relatively free from the community spread of COVID-19. But this doesn't mean that we can lessen our efforts in keeping the virus at bay.

Thankfully the leaders of our Churches are encouraging us to think of discipleship as responding positively to the message of the health and government authorities that certain restrictions are necessary for the common good.

We have been asked — and may be asked again — to put aside our usual practices of discipleship which include touch and proximity — attending to people at home and in the community and coming together for liturgies — for physical distancing, tracking where we go, staying at home, avoiding large gatherings. Yet even in this strange time we need to ensure that the life of the community continues — that hunger, shelter, safety, company and health are attended to. Like the mother-in-law in Mark's gospel, discipleship is calling us to new and creative ways of service so that the world is healed and emerges into renewed life. ♡

Painting: *Caring Hands* by Helgunn Bjerga Ravonsheed © (Stavanger, Norway)
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Elaine Wainwright is a biblical scholar specialising in eco-feminist interpretation and is currently writing a Wisdom Commentary on Matthew's Gospel.



Staying on Track

KATHLEEN RUSHTON explains the significance of the story of Jesus's baptism and testing in Mark 1:9-13.

Mark tells of the baptism and testing of Jesus in just five verses.

Jesus from Nowheresville

Mark's Gospel builds up dramatically for the entrance of the main character (Mk 1:1-8). However, Jesus enters the story as one of the anonymous crowd coming to John the Baptist (Mk 1:9). His unspectacular entry is intensified — he “came from Nazareth of Galilee.” Ched Myers said this is like saying: “Jesus from Nowheresville.” His

home village is not found in ancient sources. The humble origins of Jesus are referred to as the Gospel unfolds (Mk 1:24; 10:47; 14:67; 16:6). Galilee, the northern border of Palestine, was separated from Jerusalem and Judea by Samaria and regarded with suspicion by many southern Jews. A tension is implied between the centre and the margins.

The Margins

The story of Jesus has hardly begun and Mark already subverts key

understandings. The wilderness, representing the peripheries, is found four times in the prologue (Mk 1:1-13). Jerusalem was considered the hub of the world to which all nations would come (Ps 69:35; Is 60:10-14). Instead, “people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem” are seeking John in the wilderness. Rather than making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and its temple presided over by the Jewish leadership, crowds flee to the wilderness — to the margins — for

purposes of renewal.

Mark leaves us with two facts. Jesus is the One whose coming Isaiah promised: "Prepare the way of the Lord." And Jesus comes in solidarity with thousands of others who underwent a rite of repentance and renewal from John who is "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4).

Baptism of Jesus (Mk 1:9-11)

In Jesus, a person of doubtful social origins and in this out-of-the-way place, the divine is revealed. Startling imagery is inserted into the narrative which up until now has been rather Earth-based and mundane. The whole cosmos is affected. Creation is ongoing. When Jesus comes up from the waters of the River Jordan, he — and he alone — sees the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And only Jesus hears the voice from heaven. It is a reminder of God's Spirit hovering over the waters in Gen 1 and the dove signalling a new beginning for the world after the flood in Gen 8:8-12.

The heavens are "split apart" (Mk 1:10) as the veil of the temple sanctuary is "split apart" after Jesus dies (Mk 15:38). The linking of these two scenes suggests that Jesus is opening up God's dwelling place. The vision of the heavens being torn apart along with the sound of a voice coming of heaven also recalls the prophetic hope of Isaiah 64:1: "Oh that you would tear the heavens open and come down". Could this unknown Nazareth villager be the fulfilment of this ancient longing? The scene, however, ends with an anti-climax. Jesus goes into the wilderness (Mk 1:12).

Tested in the Wilderness (Mk 1:12-13)

This event is usually named "the temptation" of Jesus. The Greek word in this episode, also used in Matthew and Luke, can mean "tempt" or "test". "Tempt" better suits the Matthew-Luke accounts where Satan puts three courses of action before Jesus. Test better suits Mark where there is no evidence of a struggle. It evokes other biblical characters who were tested

and remained faithful — Abraham (Gen 22), Job, and the people during the Exodus from Egypt (Deut 8:1-5).

When a person is without their usual human support and resources, they are in an extreme or liminal place — a wilderness — where they review their faithfulness to God's calling.

Against this background, we can recall that Jesus had just seen the Spirit descend on him. He is assured of his filial relationship with God. Jesus is, perhaps, reliving the experience of Israel being tested and being attuned for what lies ahead as he lives into the reign of God in the world where the powerful will oppose him.

When a person is without their usual human support and resources, they are in an extreme or liminal place — a wilderness — where they review their faithfulness to God's calling.

The Spirit drove him immediately into the wilderness — this language is strong. The human Jesus is steadfast between wild beasts and ministering angels. Maybe the wild beasts evoke the relationship which Adam once had with animals (Gen 2:19-20) or the harmony of the messianic age (Is 11:6-9). That the wilderness is also the home of wild animals adds to the danger, isolation and distance from the known. In this situation, the ministering angels suggest divine care and protection.

For Us Today

We have been immersed in and have come up out of the waters of baptism a new creation — as God's daughter or son. With Jesus, we can recall and renew our relationship with God.

We have seen how being tested is a way Scripture interprets the experience of hardship which comes to those committed to God. Mother Teresa wrote in her journal at the end of her life that for many years she had not felt the presence of God but that she continued her work knowing it was true to the Gospel. For us, too, divine care and protection are there even though we may feel they are absent.

We experience "testing" in various ways. Laura Waters' book *BeWILDered*

is an example. She explains how, after a toxic relationship and crippling bouts of anxiety, she set out to walk Te Araroa, 3,000 kilometres of raw, wild, winding, mountainous trail the length of New Zealand from North Cape to Bluff. Laura was tested not only by the treacherous terrain but by her self-doubt and anxiety. She learned how to trust her gut and judgement. She emerged "rewilded" and transformed.

During the season of Lent there are many ways to pause, reflect and recommit our lives. Mark 1:9-13, where river and wilderness permeates the baptism and

testing of Jesus, can invite us to be "rewilded", to be set free, to be healed by the natural world.

We can take time to be "rewilded", to immerse ourselves in nature — in our garden, gazing at the night sky at the end of a long day, or walking in a local reserve. According to our situations, we will have different places and spaces for reflection time. Guided by the Spirit, we can reassess if we are being true to our Christian calling or if activity, consumerism and noise are distracting our focus and energy.

These intentional pauses, however long or short, allow us to ponder and find ways to practise being more loving — whakawhanaungatanga/ making right relationship happen with God, with our family, our neighbours and all people and our common home, Earth. ♡

21 February

RL – First Sunday of Lent: Mark 1:12-15

RCL – First Sunday in Lent: Mark 1:9-15

Painting: *The Gathering* by Mel Brigg ©
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www.artsy.net/artist/mel-brigg



Kathleen Rushton RSM is author of *The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor: Hearing Justice in John's Gospel* (SCM Press 2020).



Taking Risks

I'm standing on a tiny ledge below the Dragon's Teeth mountain range in Kahurangi National Park. There's only space for two pairs of boots; below us the rock drops vertically into thick beech forest. We can see across to the mountains on the other side as the sky gleams bright blue. I wait for my turn to clamber over the last section, a sturdy outcrop with a few scrubby roots to hold on to. All I want is some flat ground I can't fall off but going backwards is now harder than going forwards, so I take a deep breath, hoist my pack, and climb.

After that, the gradient eases for the rest of the day, and we have less perilous scrambling around rock, tussock, Spaniard and snowgrass. My adrenaline has drained away and my heartbeat has slowed, but I feel shaky on easier climbing. I walk, focusing on keeping one foot after the other as my body asks to stop. "I can do all things" — step — "through Christ who strengthens me" — step. Eventually we get to a hut and I can rest. "Why do I do this when it scares me?" I ask myself.

I enjoy lots of adventure sports with elements of fear — rock climbing, mountaineering, mountain biking. I do it for the views, the thrill and the sense of accomplishment at the end. But I also believe that doing things that are scary (within reason) is good for me.

Shar Mathias enjoys reading, running, tramping, music and a lot of other things. She studies ecology and lives in Dunedin.



I have this image in my head of Jesus calling Peter to walk on water in Matthew 14. Jesus knows Peter, his fears and doubts, and keeps him safe. When he begins to sink, Jesus catches him. Later, although Jesus was no longer physically present, Peter was able to found the early Church, leave his home and those he knew and loved to preach to the Gentiles, and follow Jesus into an untimely, excruciating death. He could live with his fear because he knew God was there, calling him into a life of challenge.

As followers of Jesus we are also asked to take risks. It could be to let go of the money and prestige that keep us safe in this world and to go into the unknown as God's hands and feet, in solidarity with those different from us, in places close to home or totally unknown. I don't want to do any of that!

When I am doing purposefully dangerous activities for fun it seems all right. But I am fearful of the risks I face at other times. My friends and I like to joke about the state of the New Zealand property market and the challenges of finding meaningful employment, but underneath the laughter we have genuine concern.

I don't have a clue what my next step will be when I finish my studies at the end of this year. Finding any job seems difficult enough. Will I have the courage to pick radical servitude wherever God leads me — a terrifying unknown — over a traditionally "safe" and financially stable option?

I hope so. Now my generation is facing fears for our future — a post-COVID world, the planet increasingly devastated by inequality, environmental destruction and climate change. At the same time I know God stands by me in my fear and that God loves me, loves the world and will challenge me just as much as I can handle as I serve. I am both deeply afraid and radically hopeful. God remains, steadfast as a mountain and even better than the sunrise over the hills. ♡

Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church

by Alfredo Tradigo trans. Stephen Sartarelli
Published by Getty Publications, 2006
Reviewed by Ann Hassan

BOOK

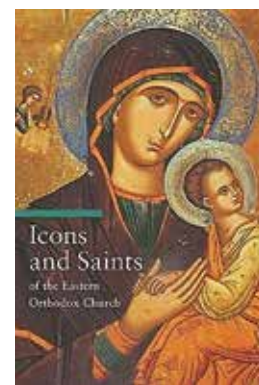
Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church is part of the Getty Publications “Guide to Imagery” series. The book is richly illustrated: an image on each page, each image decoded with accompanying text.

A brief Introduction explains that the icon performs a vital role in Orthodox liturgy, being a sign of the presence of God: not only decoration, or storytelling aid, but also a path from the material to the spiritual.

I was particularly struck by one technique which seems

odd to the contemporary Western eye: a figure appearing twice in one image, performing two separate actions. In one panel, for instance, Mary weaves the veil of the Temple while an adjacent, smaller Mary prays in the sanctuary.

Icons and Saints reminds us that our Christian images are products of theologies always in flux, changing over time. It will appeal to readers with an aesthetic interest in iconography and to those interested in the history of theological ideas. The book is standard paperback size, which means some images are smaller than ideal and that text next to the spine is sometimes hard to read, but even so it is a beautiful, informative read. ♥



Ruth: An Earth Bible Commentary

by Alice M Sinnott
Published by T&T Clark, 2020
Reviewed by Susan Smith

BOOK

The biblical word is a living word. Old Testament scholar Alice Sinnott certainly breathes new life into the Book of Ruth by identifying its significance for us who live in an environmentally-threatened world. Not that *Ruth* provides detailed analyses as to what is causing climate change, nor what responsible ethical decisions are required of us today. But the reader is asked to move beyond interpretations that see *Ruth* as either a liberating feminist interpretation or an affirmation of patriarchy as the genealogy (Ruth 4:19-22) could suggest.

Sinnott achieves this by asking the reader to focus on

Earth not simply as a congenial background — or an uncongenial one, for that matter — against which human characters live out their lives. Earth becomes the protagonist, as the reader allows herself to move beyond an anthropocentric hermeneutic to an ecological hermeneutic. Such a move makes clear the relationship between what is happening in Earth with what is happening for humanity.

Abundance, fertility, loss, death, famine are realities for Earth and humanity. Sinnott rightly concludes that an ecological reading of the Book of Ruth obliges us to question the relationship of human beings to Earth, to one another and to the wider Earth community. ♥



Cranes Ever Flying: Introductions to Asian Christian History and Theology

by John C England
Published by ISPCK, 2020
Reviewed by Simon Rae

BOOK

For decades John England and his late wife Rita Mayne England working in a variety of Asian bases studied, taught, mentored, archived, catalogued and collected in order to understand and document “the other half of Christian history”. *Cranes Ever Flying* has a wealth of references and provocative reflection on what it might mean for those of us formed in a Western tradition of Christianity. It is a study handbook and a programme statement for a long overdue reorientation

in a world that no longer sees “Western” as normative in religion or in anything else.

England's viewpoint may resonate with Christians struggling with over-complex doctrinal and traditional norms and also with people trying to understand the essential Christian message. He has documented a treasury of devotion, art and learning, long dismissed as “Nestorian”. He shows how theologies focused on knowing God in the “human life of Jesus with people” are less theoretical and dogmatic and more focused on humanity and fellowship in a shared journey. That much of this emerged in Christian minority communities makes this perspective particularly relevant for us now. ♥





Nomadland

Directed by Chloé Zhao
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

FILM

“I’m not homeless – I just don’t have a house”, says Fern (Frances McDormand) of her life on the road and in trailer parks across the American West. Her predicament – if that’s what it is – sums up this thoughtful docudrama which explores the world of America’s growing band of RV (campervan) nomads displaced since the 2008 recession. In her role as Fern, McDormand is one of a handful of professional actors – everyone else plays themselves.

Although a wanderer, Fern is not rootless. Her life accrues new meaning and purpose through the experiences she has and especially the people she meets. Although her encounters are almost wholly positive, *Nomadland* does not present an idealised version of the travelling life. Far from it. The need to earn enough to support herself, even living in the desert, regularly leads her back to the city and the soulless, automated aisles of an Amazon warehouse or the counter of a fast food outlet.

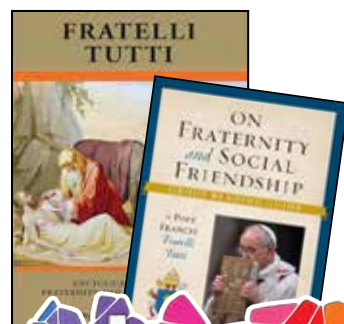
Fern’s life had come to abrupt halt following the death of her husband and the closure of the gypsum mine in remote Empire, Nevada, where they both worked. When the mine

closed, the town shut down, too, and, unable to settle, she has been on the road ever since. Much of the action is focused on an RV park in the Arizona desert. Presided over by (the real) Bob Wells, a gentle, bearded philosopher, the residents form a community that is an intentional one insofar as they are seeking an alternative way of life that is not wholly bound to the almighty dollar.

Here personal bonds run deep. Fern strikes up a practical friendship with Linda May, and when elderly cancer sufferer Swankie dies, the community gathers round the campfire to honour her memory. In contrast, Fern’s rejection of conventional living is underlined

when she pays a visit to her sister, seeking a loan to pay for major repairs to her clapped-out vehicle. Despite her plight, she chides her sister’s husband, a real estate agent, for “selling overpriced houses to people who will spend the rest of their lives paying them off.” And when former traveller David reaches out to her with romance in mind, inviting her into the heart of his extended family, she seems awkward and out of place living under a roof.

Nomadland is a compassionate and complex film about identity, “home” and the value of human relationships that asks more questions than it answers – always an excellent quality in a movie. One not to be missed. ♥



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CROSS CURRENTS



BY MARY BETZ

people from sexual abuse. Like Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia* he believes in moving “beyond thinking that everything is black and white”. He defended a priest working with the LGBT community and the need to “accompany people on the periphery of society”. He called out President Trump for a “growing plague of offense and disrespect” and publically condemned his tear gas clearing of Lafayette Square for a photo op.

Climate to the Forefront

The Climate Change Commission has released its draft carbon emissions budgets and recommendations on actions that need to be taken to transition to a carbon neutral economy by 2050. The draft is sobering, as major changes are required, particularly in our transport, construction and agricultural sectors.

Climate change is the most dire threat to human life in Earth. Over the past year we have seen our government respond swiftly, courageously, scientifically and compassionately to the threat of COVID-19 with both economic and human resources. We need the same immediate and sustained response to climate change. Respond to the consultation now for our climate rhetoric to be turned into urgent action. ♥

Address:

Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd,
52 Union Street West,
Dunedin North, 9054
PO Box 6404, Dunedin North, 9059

Phone: (03) 477 1449

Email: editor@tuimotu.org

Email for subscriptions: admin@tuimotu.org

Editor: Ann L Gilroy RSJ

Assistant Editor: Ann Hassan

Design & layout: Greg Hings

Proofreader: Christine Crowe

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Board Directors: Neil Darragh (chair),
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Welcome to 2021, the year we hope will end the coronavirus pandemic and open up our world again. With some trepidation and with gratitude to Susan Smith, I have accepted the passing of the Cross Currents torch. The editor has challenged me with three currents to flow with each month: ecumenism/inter-church, universal/local Church and local issues. So we begin, in hope . . .

The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical *Vademecum*

This new document released by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity is a guide (*vademecum* means “go with me”) to bishops for their work in ecumenism. It also reminds us “faithful” that we have as much responsibility as bishops and theologians.

The critical first step in engaging ecumenically, and the “primary duty” of Catholics, is “to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be done or renewed in the Catholic household itself” (a task that needs to be ongoing in all areas of Church, locally and globally!) The document also notes the importance of the “hierarchy of truths” – weighing which truths are most essential – in our dialogue with other Churches. Our ecumenism is to be formed through Scripture study, homilies, liturgy and spirituality.

Alongside our own change of heart, we are to engage in a dialogue of love with our sisters and brothers by Baptism; truth by exchanging gifts of our truths and deepening our grasp on the whole truth; and life by acting

together in all matters, especially those of justice and charity – unless there are unbridgeable differences. AMEN!

First Black US Cardinal

In a country whose conference of bishops has been increasingly aligned with a “gospel” of prosperity rather than the preferential option for the poor, the appointment of Wilton Gregory as cardinal is surely a sign of hope. He did have his own reckoning moment though. As bishop of Atlanta he was called to account for building a residence and archdiocesan facility which was extravagant in light of the poverty of the area. He apologised profoundly, consulted widely and moved within months to a modest house a fraction of the cost.

Gregory has acted to protect young



TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

Tui Motu magazine provides Catholic as well as ecumenical and inter-faith perspectives and discussion on current issues in church and society. It focuses particularly on issues affecting Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific. Its intent is to promote the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, engaging faith and the world through informed, thoughtful comment and discussion for a general readership. The magazine publishes 11 issues per year in print and regular digital postings on social media.

The magazine invites contributions from writers of Catholic and other Christian traditions or faith backgrounds, who can offer our readers insights which resonate with the Gospel as it affects us today. We value diversity and seek contributions which are representative of our church and our society: Maori, Pakeha, Pasifika, other cultures, a range of ages and genders, lay and ordained. We offer feature articles, interviews, reviews, poetry, comment and opinion on theology, spirituality and history, as well as on social justice and ecology.

Jenny Beck

LAW

Barristers & Solicitors

P: 03 479 0340
 E: enquiries@jennybecklaw.co.nz
 www.jennybecklaw.co.nz
 Level 3, Bracken Court
 480 Moray Place, Dunedin, 9016
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We welcome letters of comment, discussion, response, affirmation or argument of up to 200 words.

The editor reserves the right to abridge longer letters while keeping the meaning.

ASK BLIND LOW VISION NZ FOR HUMAN READER OF TUI MOTU

You may like to know that at 92 age-related macular degeneration has really kicked in in my life and my days of “ordinary” reading are over. Now enrolled in Blind Low Vision NZ I’m listening to *Tui Motu* per Alexa — my technology companion. It IS automated reading — ie, a robot-type voice — which certainly requires a leap of imagination and know-how, anticipation, guesswork but I keep TM plus a magnifier beside me — well, I more or less guess it.

Blind Low Vision have said if others will add their requests for a human reader to mine, they would consider such a request.

Ruth McLay

Editor: We send the text of each TM issue to Blind Low Vision NZ every month. If you know of anyone using the services please encourage them to ask for a human voice to read Tui Motu magazine.

LAY MINISTERS NOT EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

It was good to have Tony Williams’s explanation of the proper meaning of “ordinary time” so commonly misunderstood (TM Nov 2020). There is a similar misunderstanding of the word “extra-ordinary” when used to label lay liturgical leaders, readers and sacramental ministers. The meaning here is of course “non ordained”.

The classical Latin term *extraordinarii* is often used to refer to the inferior rank of auxiliary soldiers, sometimes without Roman

citizenship, in the Roman army. In other situations, however, “irregular” or even “unnatural” is what the word means. But why do we use such a negative label for lay ministers? After all, we do not usually call priests or deacons “non lay”. Furthermore, to describe defrocked clergy as “laicised” sounds almost like an insult to laity in general. (Should they be called “extraordinary”?) So why not call “extraordinary” ministers what they are and not what they are not? Why not simply “lay ministers”?

Tony Starbuck

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL IDENTITY BETTER

Pope Francis’s comments on the need for legalised civil unions for same sex couples come as no surprise. He will be aware that recent research in 19 American states and five Canadian provinces has revealed that of the “same-sex” couples interviewed, 46 per cent proved to be chromosomally heterosexual. One partner of the couple was chromosomally female; the other chromosomally male. Chromosomal sexual identity is one’s true sexual identity. Faced by such factual research, can any intelligent person or Church stick labels on couples or on persons?

Jim Howley

TRUTH DOES MATTER

In “Battle for the Truth Really Matters” (TM Dec 2020), Jack Derwin reminds himself, journalists in general and all of us, that the vigilant search for truth is of vital importance to democracy. I would like to take Jack’s clarion call wider and deeper. Commitment to truth and justice for all are at the core of Christian life, and of every truly human endeavour — individual, community and corporate. How do we discuss important issues with our friends? What can we do about food poverty, unemployment, lack of adequate housing and financial inequality in our own country? How can we ensure that everyone is accorded respect? This search for truth and commitment to justice-making belongs to each and all of us. Thanks to Jack and *Tui Motu* for leading and encouraging us!

Judith McGinley

Our Shadowed World: Reflections on Civilization, Conflict, and Belief

by Dominic Kirkham

Published by Cascade Books, 2019

Reviewed by Beverley Smith

BOOK

Civilisation is often seen as the opposite of savagery, but in *Our Shadowed World*, Kirkham shows how, under the expansionist guise of “civilising” the world, civilisations were in fact destroyed.

For instance, when Columbus stepped ashore on the Bahamas in 1492, he was welcomed by the Taino, a hospitable multiethnic people who had inhabited many of the Caribbean islands for over 1,000 years and had a well-ordered and peaceful society. These he summarily denounced as heretics and while women were raped he began mass burnings: at one *auto-da-fe* 80 *caciques* (chieftains) were burned alive. After 12 years of genocidal butchery and disease brought by the Spanish, the islands had been depopulated. In such a case we may well ponder just who exactly were the savages?

For readers in the Commonwealth, the effects of colonialism will cause speculation about “belief” at the time of the growth of Protestantism in the 16th century. Even in the Geneva Bible of 1560-, the word “tyrant” appears more than 400 times to describe an ungodly ruler who subjected a nation to his cruel whims.

Through detailing the failures of historical attempts to “civilise”, Kirkham in *Our Shadowed World* hopes to ward off the planetary disaster we now face, thanks to our own “civilised” societies. The book is well-researched, with an extensive bibliography which invites further reading — I’ve already added several books to my library! A gripping, if horrifying read. ♥





Looking OUT and IN

I am in the middle of sunny summer days in Aotearoa New Zealand. I have enjoyed riding horses, cooking on fires, climbing steep slopes of tussock and rock and reading books. I have also encountered pain, disappointment and brokenness. This afternoon my nephew will attend the funeral of a young man who died on New Year's Eve. He was with thousands of cheerful young people planning to celebrate life and youth at a music festival, yet things went badly wrong. I feel deeply sad thinking about the preventability of his death, and the bewilderment and loss for everyone around him.

And also this afternoon, in the grainy illegal urban settlement of Janta Colony in East Delhi where we lived for six months, our former friends and neighbours will farewell "Aunty" who died yesterday. Aunty was our landlady and next-door neighbour and was the world's most patient and kind grandmother to Aman, her little grandson with severe disabilities. She lived in a narrow brick house with a dark staircase which I have struggled up and down with bags on so many occasions. She has been bedridden for the last few years after a severe stroke, in a place without mobility aids or rehabilitation support. I have remained in semi-

frequent contact with her daughter who has been sending me photos of her bedsores and lists of medicines and asking for medical advice. Other nurse and doctor friends gave helpful guidance in a curious chain of forwarded WhatsApp messages and pictures that stretched from Delhi to Lucknow to Brisbane to Ōtautahi. I sat with Aunty and two of her daughters in the early months of last year. She groaned in her misery and we three were silent, finding no words we could say.

It is easy for me to be self-absorbed in my own small troubles and lists of tasks. I've found I can pull myself out of this insularity in the early mornings as I sit quietly with my cup of tea. I try to pause my circling thoughts to think about the experiences of others. I hold people or situations that come to mind in prayer. "Holding in prayer" sounds a little pious and mysterious, but it's actually a rather haphazard affair as my butterfly thoughts tend to hover over my own preoccupations. Occasionally I wrest them away to hold a person before God — their pain, their unknown future — to seek grace and goodness to break through to them.

I think about friends who are waiting for exam results. I hold

before God one of my children and their longing for new friends. I remember a person from our Church who has been waiting for a scary biopsy result. I hold tenderly the intractable situation of no access to medication for many people with epilepsy in North India. A very much loved couple, who are close friends have decided they can't remain in marriage and are looking for separate housing, and I don't know what to pray for them. So I pray for grace and wisdom and try to be in touch with them often. I think about the patient and hopeful sending away of job applications and CVs which is exhausting another family member, and hold their need for hope and a job before God. I am particularly poor at holding hope for diffuse and wicked problems like militarism, white supremacy in NZ's history or COVID-19 everywhere but I allow them to also wash through this holding process.

Sometimes I follow up with a text message, or a letter or email to a person I have thought about, but often I don't find time. I don't know if my thoughts and prayers do any good, but I did know that at the end of my quiet time of holding, I'm usually a more helpful and hopeful person. So today I am holding prayers for Aunty's six children and her wider family in Delhi. I am praying for grace and comfort for the family and friends of a 19-year-old in Wellington. These prayers are for me as well, an invitation to empathy, compassion and to expand my small world for a short time. ♥



Kaaren Mathias is living in Christchurch with her family. She sings, cycles, writes and sews wizard capes and promotes community mental health in New Zealand and India.



Bless us —
fuel our hearts so that
when we see suffering, we work for health
when we see want, we share resources
when we see inequalities, we promote human dignity.
For it is in the kinship of all people that we believe
and in the integrity of institutions that we hope
and on your divine Heart in our midst that we rely.

From the Tui Motu team