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# Tui Motu

## InterIslands

May 2024

### CHURCH LEADERSHIP FOR TODAY

NEIL DARRAGH, PHYLLIS ZAGANO

### NO NEED FOR HUNGER HERE

PAUL BARBER, PETER LINEHAM,  
CHRIS FARRELLY, JANE HIGGINS

### ENGENDERING HOPE

CATHY ROSS, ANNA NICHOLLS



**Give Everyone Daily Bread  
Hoatu te Taro ia rā ia rā**

INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC MAGAZINE

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#### COVER PHOTO

*Loaf of Bread*

by Monika Grabkowska  
on Unsplash

FSC

OUR NAME *Tui Motu InterIslands*

Tui Motu is te reo Māori (Māori language) meaning "stitching the islands together". We pronounce it: to-ee maw-to.



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# Editorial

THE LITURGY REFORMS of Vatican II highlighted Eucharist as a meal reconnecting the ritual of "Mass" with its foundation in the Last Supper. This inspired the reconfiguration of church buildings to make the altar table-shaped and placing it closer to the people so that the presider could face the people and speak in a language of the whenua. That's why the altar rails, which formed a barrier between the sanctuary/holy and the rest of us, were removed.

It's why we corrected the overemphasis on the "real presence" in the tabernacle. The tabernacle is a cupboard for storing consecrated hosts in case they're needed between Eucharistic celebrations, eg, to be taken to people in their homes and in hospital — it's not needed for Eucharistic celebrations. That's why it was removed from the altar and put into a side chapel in the church. Giving the tabernacle pride of place at Eucharist now is like sitting in front of the fridge rather than around the table where the food is eaten.

And after Vatican II we began to process the bread and wine to the altar table through the middle of those gathered. We put our contribution on the table. And as we listen to the Last Supper story again and the words "This is my body and blood. Take and eat", we're joined with Christ in the ritual and in participation in God's mission. That's why the manner of receiving communion changed from having the priest feed the wafer into our mouths like babies, to ministers of Communion putting the host into our hands in a normal way of eating.

These simple changes focussed Eucharist as the gathering of the people of God, priest and people, listening, reflecting and responding to the Word and eating and drinking together. But our Eucharistic gatherings are different from those of a social club, as Neil Darragh suggests in his series titled "Journeying Together", the second article of which is in this issue. We eat from the altar table to give us energy for mission together.

A sign of our participation in mission is apparent in the basket of food which is brought along with the bread and wine to the altar table. The basket contains breakfast, lunch and dinner food — more recognisably food than the Communion wafer — and it is given to the hungry in our neighbourhoods. Increasingly, many families in our country struggle to afford food. Hopefully we've increased our contributions to the basket — like Catherine McAuley, whose Mercy spirit Anna Nicholls describes in her article, we're seeing a need and responding to it. The Vinnie's basket acknowledges our Christian responsibility to feed the hungry — it's a familiar and well-established connection — but we also need to look for new ways of sharing and securing food for those made hungry by the structures and circumstances of these times. We need charity, but justice, too, and it's for this end that we come together to eat at the altar table.

We thank all the contributors to this issue whose faith, research, reflection, generosity and sharing of art and craft provide thoughtful openings for further reflection and discussion.

And, as is our custom, our last word is of encouragement and blessing.





# Eroding Trust in Fourth Estate

"LEGACY MEDIA SIMPLY can't compete with hundreds of millions of humans providing real-time, AI-assisted, interactive information." This was a recent tweet from Elon Musk, owner of X (formerly Twitter) and CEO of Tesla Motors — one of the biggest companies in the world.

A chill ran down my spine. His tweet was triumphant. After all, this is his objective.

In New Zealand, legacy media is struggling. News bulletins and news journalists are rapidly becoming a dying breed. Cuts to TVNZ. The decimation of Newshub. Does it really matter and is there any hope for what we often call the fourth estate? It's telling that our Prime Minister, Christopher Luxon, employs more staffers working on social media than as press secretaries.

Media is powerful for a reason. In non-democratic countries it's used as a propaganda tool to create and maintain a narrative that suits the government or regime. In democratic countries, a free, independent and vigorous media keeps democracy clean and safe.

Therefore our media is precious. Or it should be.

I don't imagine as we go about our daily lives making ends meet, or as journalists in the press gallery watching the spectacle that is question time, that we spend any time at all pondering the reason for a free, independent media and the critically important role they play.

When we click on the *Otago Daily Times*, the *Stuff* or *NZ Herald* websites, turn on the radio for the hourly news, listen to RNZ's Morning Report, or switch on the 6pm TV news bulletin on One or Three, we no doubt expect and hope for accuracy and balance and a fair representation of what's happening in our country, our world. But our expectations aren't high.

In April the AUT research centre for Journalism, Media and Democracy (JMD) published its fifth annual *Trust in News in Aotearoa New Zealand* report, authored by Dr Merja

Myllylahti and Dr Greg Treadwell. The report finds that while interest in news in New Zealand is high compared to 46 other markets, trust in news continues rapidly to decline, and news avoidance is increasing.

Trust in news in general fell significantly from 42 per cent in 2023 to 33 per cent in 2024. The proportion of those who actively avoid the news grew from 69 per cent in 2023 to 75 per cent in 2024.

TVNZ remains the biggest source of news for New Zealanders, but Facebook has become the second most important source, despite a drop in its trustworthiness.

The impact of a sick media is serious. It cuts to the essence of our political system, our way of life, the thing we call democracy.

The philosophers Hobbes, Rousseau and Locke wrote about the need for an institution of political power to regulate society (the state).

The state's legitimacy was based on the notion of a social contract; that people must sacrifice some of their individual liberty and submit themselves to the rule of law in return for the state's protection and support.

This gives citizens rights and they can expect security and justice. It also raises critical questions about how those in power can be held accountable to civil society. A free and independent media is crucial to this. For centuries now, we have trusted our media to provide us with a clear lens focused on the big issues and happenings of the day. Tragically that trust is now fragile. ♦

**Clare Curran**, former MP, is a committed advocate and representative on social justice issues and a writer of novels.





# On a Journey Together: The Synodal Way

*In this second of a three-part series Neil Darragh discusses traditional resources for leadership in a synodal church.*

## Part Two: Learning from Traditional Leadership

The “synodal way” is about transforming the church. The kind of transformation we are looking for is not just about our own individual, spiritual transformation. It is about how we relate to one another, how we work and pray together, how we organize ourselves as a church. It is about transforming the organisation of the church so that it powers us forward on the mission of the church.

But are we, collectively, capable of playing our part in this transformation? What resources can we call upon? What resources do we have for leadership in this new, transformed church?

In the past, church leaders and theologians have answered this by drawing on models of social organisation with which they were already familiar in the existing religious, social, or political organisations of the time: as shepherds, synagogue elders, heads of families, local civil administrators, feudal lords, kings/queens, elected representatives, military commanders, imperial officials, spirit-filled charismatics, prophets, and so on. Some of these may still serve us today, but others have proven themselves liabilities. Like the scribe in Matthew’s Gospel (Mt 13:52) we will likely need to bring out of our collective treasure house things both old and new, both traditional and contemporary.

Among the major *traditional* resources for renewing the church are *New Testament understandings of leadership* and ministry, historical patterns of church leadership, and the church’s *social justice traditions*. These are “traditional” in the sense that they originate in the experience of earlier generations of Christians. This article looks at these traditional resources. A following article will look at contemporary resources.

## Leadership in the New Testament: Resources not Constraints

There were many patterns of leadership in the New Testament: missionaries like Paul and Barnabas, the 12 apostles of the Gospels, the “beloved disciple” of John’s Gospel, the Hellenist leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 6), the prophets and teachers who were leaders in Antioch (Acts 13), the councils of elders in the Pauline letters, the



ministries and gifts listed in the churches of Corinth (1 Cor 12: 27) and Rome (Rom 12:3-8), appointed single leaders like Titus and Timothy, the hosts of house churches, and many others less clearly identified.

The variety of patterns of leadership seem to have been adaptations to the needs of the church’s mission and the internal needs of those early Christian communities in different places and times. Yet the leadership roles in the New Testament churches were not just arbitrary. There are some kinds of leadership that are *disapproved* of in the New Testament. These are particularly the kind of leadership which lords it over other people (Mk 10:41-45; Mt 20: 24-28; Lk 22:24-27). Hypocrisy was a disqualification from leadership.

There are some features that *must be included* in any type of Christian ministry and leadership. We need to remember that the Holy Spirit is the source both for the choice of new leaders and for their ongoing ministry, and that God continues to act in new ways (for example, raising Jesus from the dead, the inclusion of the Gentiles, directing the mission of the church to the Gentiles).

It is also an important principle that leadership is



service. Ministry and leadership are calls to service, not opportunities to exercise power. (See again Mk 10:41-45; Mt 20: 24-28; Lk 22:24-27). It is clear, too, that the church has need of some *organised leadership* or “office-bearers” for the ongoing life of the church and to serve as guardians of the faith and morals of the community.

Selected models of New Testament leadership are sometimes used today to maintain that one particular model of leadership, such as bishop or presbyter/priest or charismatic, is essential and obligatory for the Christian church for all time, a binding tradition. But this style of biblical interpretation is using New Testament models as *constraints*. It is unnecessary and arbitrary.

Rather than constraints, New Testament models can be resources. Resources do not in themselves determine what our churches should be like today. They stimulate, provoke and warn us. Sometimes they set boundaries and sometimes they make requirements. They provide good and bad examples, but they are not blueprints and we need not regard one or other as obligatory for all time.

### Later Historical Models of Leadership: Faithful Improvisation

There were often acrid debates about legitimate church organisation during and following the 16th-century European Reformations. Few contemporary churches still claim today that their own

denominational structures are the only ones legitimated in the New Testament. Over the centuries, churches have adopted and adapted some, but not others, of these early patterns of leaderships.

Since New Testament times, new movements in the church have produced many other kinds of leadership: religious teachers of many kinds, monasteries, the mendicant orders particularly from the 12th century, the huge growth of congregations of vowed women and men in the 19th century, and most recently the enormous growth of “lay” ministries and charismatic leadership in the 20th century.

The idea of “faithful improvisation” is a useful one for guiding us on how we can deal with past patterns of leadership and invent new ones. The language of leadership has frequently been adopted from the social and political world around it, then adapted to new circumstances. A central thread through all this creativity (and sometimes turmoil) is the concept of “*apostolicity*”. It refers to the way in which a contemporary church remains faithful to, even though not the same as, the church of the apostles as we find it in the New Testament.

Yet apostolicity has several facets. The “protestant”

tradition has tended to identify apostolicity with apostolicity of *doctrine*, while the “catholic” tradition has tended to identify apostolicity with apostolic succession in *ministry* (the college of bishops).

Faithful improvisation would seek to hold apostolicity of origin, of *doctrine*, of *succession in ministry*, and particularly apostolicity of *life (living the gospel)* together in some form of balanced tension so that these various structures can be resources for reforms today.

### Social Justice Principles: Practising What We Preach

Social justice principles are now firmly embedded in the traditions of many Christian churches, including the Catholic Church. Such principles of social justice or the “social gospel” have been formulated in a variety of ways for different audiences or different situations, but may be abbreviated as:

*Human dignity* (every person has an innate human dignity that no one can take away); the common good (working for the good of all); *subsidiarity* (ensuring decision making happens at the most appropriate level so all those affected can contribute); *solidarity* (actively working for the good of others who are different from ourselves); *preferential option for the poor* and vulnerable (prioritise the needs of those who are most vulnerable); *participation* (recognising that everyone has a part to play in our communities); *integral ecology* (care for all the environmental and social dimensions of the Earth as our common home).

These principles have been articulated in different ways and some of them overlap. But the key point here for our concern with transforming the church today is that these principles of social justice have commonly been proposed as moral requirements for human relationships in the wider society outside the church. They have not so often been applied *within* the church’s own organisation.

If applied *within* the Catholic Church, these principles would go a long way to forming a church that is, for example, more participative in its decision-making and ministry, or more carefully focused on *subsidiarity* rather than centralisation, or more active in a combined thrust for *environmental responsibility*. The church could then both transform itself and become a “witness” rather than just a teacher/preacher of these principles to the wider society.

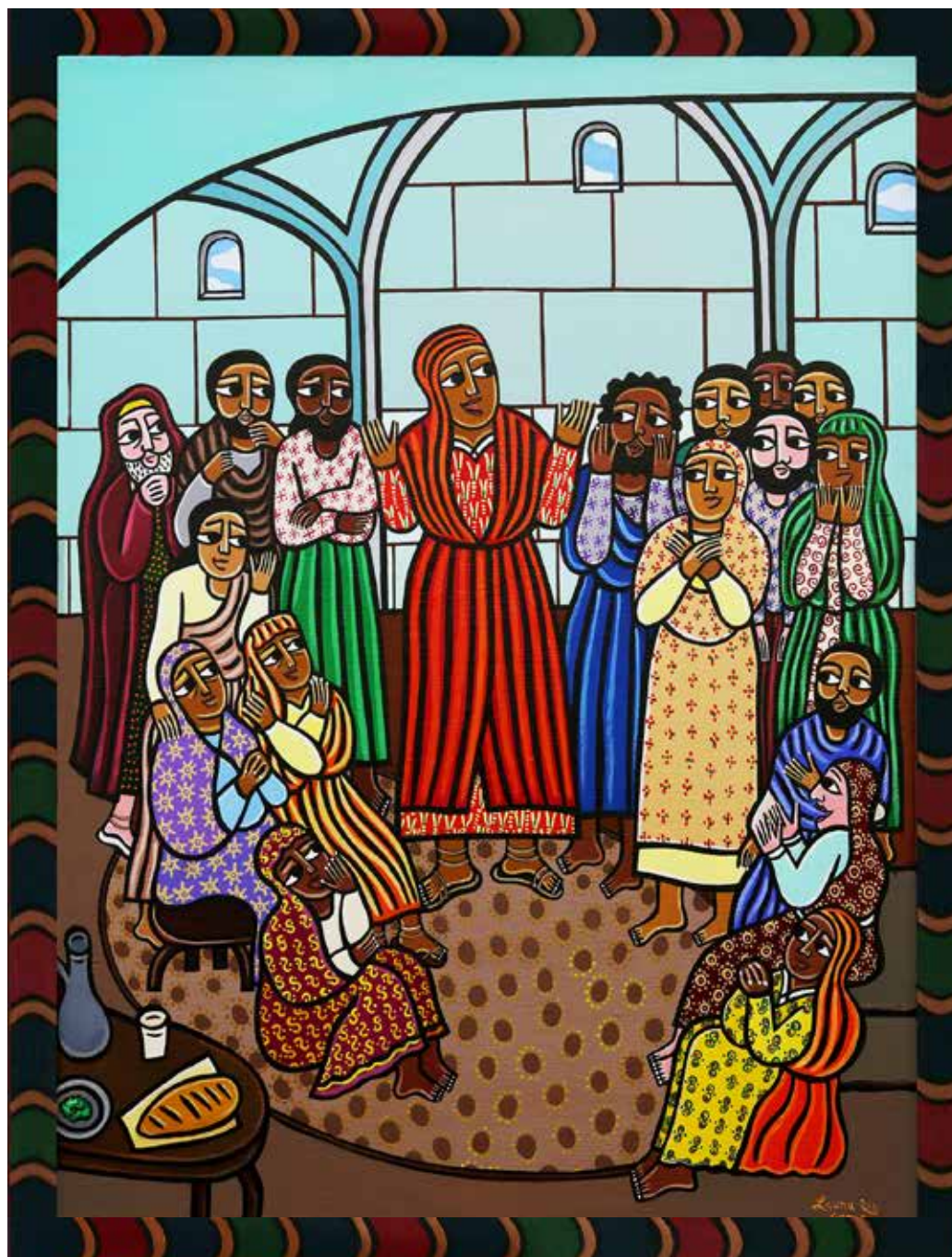
I have looked briefly here at some of the major traditional patterns of leadership that we could use as resources on our journey of transformation. Next month I will look at some more contemporary resources that could also aid in this journey. ♦

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Ángel Alberto Morillo  
*interviews*  
Phyllis Zagano *about*  
*the introduction of*  
*women deacons in*  
*the church.*

## SPACE FOR WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE

### *What do you think about the first phase of the 2021-2024 Synod, especially about the participation of women?*

"The first woman to have a significant position in the Curia was the Australian laywoman Rosemary Goldie (1916-2010), who was undersecretary of the then-experimental Pontifical Council for the Laity from 1967-1976. In her memoirs, Ms Goldie wrote that this "first timid opening of the Curia to lay people, and even to women, required nothing less than an Ecumenical Council." Despite Pope Paul VI's apparent interest, when the Council became permanent, a priest was named as its undersecretary. Ms Goldie remained in Rome as a professor at the Lateran University and working in various capacities until her retirement.

"While even the Second Vatican Council held its first two sessions with only male lay auditors (Goldie joined some 20

other women as an auditor for the next two sessions) today we see the Synod of Bishops transformed to a Synod of the whole church. The fact that 54 women — both secular and religious — were among the 365 voting members demonstrates the church's progress in recognising women's abilities and importance.

"From the outside looking in, the Synod meeting in Rome seemed to be a collegial gathering of like-minded individuals — men and women of various states of life — all willing to help in the building up of the church. The participation of women in the 4-29 October 2023 Rome meeting partly represented women's participation in earlier Synod stages, from the initial diocesan and episcopal conference meetings, through the continental stage consultations, to the process for nominating continental representatives to the Rome meeting. Continents were asked to name 20 possible participants, half of them

women, of whom 10 were named as Synod participants.

"The participation of women at the Rome Synod marked an important step forward."

***The permanent diaconate of women is a "sensitive" issue for many in the church especially in the hierarchy. Do you think it can prosper?***

"The restoration of women to the ordained diaconate recognises the past, the present and the future. The Synod Synthesis Report, entitled 'A Synodal Church in Mission', presented the discussion about women deacons as follows:

'Different positions have been expressed regarding women's access to the diaconal ministry. For some, this step would be unacceptable because they consider it a discontinuity with Tradition. For others, however, opening access for women to the diaconate would restore the practice of the early church. Others still, discern it as an appropriate and necessary response to the signs of the times, faithful to the Tradition, and one that would find an echo in the hearts of many who seek new energy and vitality in the church. Some express concern that the request speaks of a worrying anthropological confusion which, if granted, would marry the church to the spirit of the age' (Report n 9).

"The Synthesis Report demonstrates the uneven knowledge of the diaconate and of women's participation in it. It is important to remember that not all the Synod members are theologians or historians and not all come from cultures that respect women's baptismal equality. To be fair, the Synthesis Report proposed that:

'Theological and pastoral research on the access of women to the diaconate should be continued, benefiting from consideration of the results of the commissions specially established by the Holy Father, and from the theological, historical and exegetical research already undertaken. If possible, the results of this research should be presented to the next Session of the Assembly' (Report n 9).

"The most important point in the Synod proposal is the request that research 'already undertaken' be included in the presentation to the October 2024 Synod meeting."

***In the synthesis report it says that during this year a commission of theologians will delve deeper into the topic of the female diaconate. What do you think about that? Will there be room in the tent?***

"In fact, since the Second Vatican Council, the question of restoring women to the ordained diaconate has been studied by five different Vatican bodies: three times by subcommissions of the International Theological Commission (1972-73; 1992-1997; 1997-2002) and twice by pontifical commissions (2016-2018; 2021-2022). It is entirely possible that for these studies the same topics were reviewed, and the same conclusions drawn.

"A new group of theologians looking at the topic may come to it with the same prejudices evidenced in the Synthesis Report. Before reviewing any materials, they believe that ordaining women as deacons restores the practice of the church. Or they may believe that ordaining women as deacons is a break with Tradition. Similarly, they may believe that the recognition of women's baptismal equality will bring

new energy to the church's mission. Or they may believe that ordaining women as deacons displays, as the Synthesis Report calls it, 'anthropological confusion'.

"The Synod's challenge to its participants, indeed to the entire church, is 'to enlarge the space of your tent' (Is 54:2). In fact, that is the title of the Working Document for the Continental Stage: 'Enlarge the Space of Your Tent.'

"Yet it is not only the 'tent' — the space for people to participate — that must be enlarged. What must be enlarged is the manner of thinking that restricts certain persons to certain positions and functions within church governance and ministry. That is what needs 'enlarging.'"

***Even with all the historical evidence about the female diaconate, is there resistance?***

"The resistance to restoring women to the ordained diaconate does not accept the historical facts of their ministries, the sacramentality of the liturgies used to ordain women, the distinction between the diaconate and the priesthood, the baptismal equality of women.

"Therefore, there are two categories of objections to the historical evidence of women ordained as deacons: The first is that female deacons did not perform the same tasks and duties as male deacons; the second is that female deacons were only 'blessed', not ordained.

"In addition, there are two categories of theological/ anthropological objections to women being ordained as deacons: The first is the 'unicity of orders', which argues that because women cannot be ordained as priests, neither can they be ordained as deacons; the second is the 'iconic argument' which states that women cannot image Christ.

"Scholars have responded to objections many times. Women with the diaconate carried out the tasks and duties assigned to them by their bishops, and they did not have the same needs in all times and places. They were often ordained with the same liturgies used to ordain male deacons, which meet the criteria established by the Council of Trent for sacramental ordination.

"The sacrament of Holy Orders is clearly defined. The diaconate is not the priesthood and diaconal ordination does not imply eligibility for priestly ordination. Regarding women's ability to 'image' the Risen Christ, it must be recognised that baptismal equality means that men and women are equal in the eyes of God. "Behind many and possibly all of these objections are taboos inherited from the ancient world regarding the 'uncleanness' of women. Only gynophobia and misogyny contribute to such objections today."✠

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# Memory, Lament and Hope

*Cathy Ross asks how can we face the disasters and suffering in the world and where can we find hope.*



NORTH AMERICAN WRITER and chronicler Rebecca Solnit writes powerfully about hope. She says that though difficult, disasters can open up another possible world: “A disaster is a lot like a revolution when it comes to disruption and improvisation, to new roles and an unnerving or exhilarating sense that now anything is possible.” She sees hope in the possibilities for newness and change but that this will not come about automatically – we must be prepared to struggle for it.

## MEMORY PRODUCES HOPE

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann points to the importance of memory: “Memory produces hope in the same way that amnesia produces despair.” Our hope is grounded in memory and “our consumer culture is organised against history. There is a depreciation of memory and a ridicule of hope, which means everything must be held in the now, either an urgent now or an eternal now.”

Being immersed in our consumer culture can deaden any expectation that we can reshape the future. Solnit explains that our memories can give us hope for the new as we

remember our other campaigns to bring about good change: the end of slavery, universal suffrage, a living wage.

## UNDERSTANDING LAMENT

Brueggemann advocates this idea of change by the use of the term “disruptive.” He explains: “We think in terms of systems and continuities and predictability and schemes and plans. I think the Bible is to some great extent focused on God’s capacity to break those schemes open and to violate those formulae. When they are positive disruptions, the Bible calls them miracles. We tend not to use that word when they are negative. But what it means is that the reality of our life and the reality of God are not contained in most of our explanatory schemes.” He draws on the biblical language of lament to help us to name and face crises, or negative disruptions, and then to find hope.

## POWER AND HOPE OF LAMENT

In *Born from Lament: The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa*, Ugandan Catholic theologian Emmanuel Katongole faces the cruel violence and tragic suffering in the



continent's civil wars. He details the trauma and the depth of loss experienced — the loss of community, the loss of humanity and tragically, the loss of future. The stories are chilling. Katongole asks, how do we live with this? Can there be a future and if so, what kind? And, where is God? Like Brueggemann, he finds the clue to the future in the power and hope of lament.

Katongole suggests that the African church tends to focus on a powerful God, a God who performs miracles, who is mighty to save and who reigns supreme — which is true, but we also need to know how to lament in the face of suffering, trauma and pain. The counterpoint to our almighty God is the crucified God, seen in Jesus Christ on the cross, who continues to suffer with and among us.

Katongole reminds us that for Israel, their safety and security are not found in military might and strength, but in their covenant relationship with Yahweh. Yes, the Israelites praised God but they also protested at God, railed against injustice and pressed God for deliverance. We see this especially in the psalms. Of the 150 psalms, 60 of them are of lament. This meant that the core of Israel's life — social, religious and community was framed by lament.

### STRUCTURE OF PSALMS OF LAMENT

There is a generally recognised structure to these psalms of lament with five elements. Let us take Psalm 13;1-6 as an example:

1 How long, O Lord? ADDRESS/ARTICULATION — *prayer directed to God*

Will you forget me forever? COMPLAINT — *description of the problem*

How long will you hide your face from me?

2 How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

3 Consider and answer me, O Lord my God! REQUEST — *they ask for a specific response from God*

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, MOTIVATION — *articulates the reason God should help*

4 and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed"; my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

5 But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

6 I will sing to the Lord, CONFIDENCE — *confession of trust in God's help*  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

These elements of address, complaint, request, motivation and confidence do vary but they signify a kind of turning to God which reflects a relationship of trust, intimacy and love — a necessary precondition for genuine lament.

When the biblical writers lament, they do so from within the context of a foundational relationship that binds together the individual with members of the community of faith and that community with their God.

### LAMENT TO GOD

Katongole says that biblical lament is neither an unrestrained whining at God nor a kind of angry venting

but rather it is a structured and complex language of complaint, protest and appeal directed to God. It is a distinct faith language with its own vocabulary and grammar for those intimate and difficult conversations with God when we are hurting.

### LAMENT WITH CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Another important facet is that lament often moves into praise — the laments and songs of thanksgiving belong together in Israel's worship. They have the confidence to express the entire range of human emotions before God — doubt/faith; sorrow/joy; fear/trust; life/death — the confidence born out of the covenant relationship and a sign of the depth of their relationship with their loving God.

What kind of relationship is it if we can only express our joy and faith but not our need, our sorrow, our pain, our trauma, our complaints even?

### COMPLAIN IN LAMENT

Complaint is a key component of lament. Expressions of complaint in the psalms range from expressions of concern to utter desperation in the face of illness, confronting enemies or protestations of innocence.

However, to complain is risky and seems almost improper. But it shows that the relationship with God is alive, dynamic and open. It also refuses to accept things the way they are; it protests God's silence and presses God for deliverance.

### NEWNESS AND HOPE AFTER PAIN

While the writers of the psalms of lament draw on memories of God's saving actions in the past, there is always the risk and possibility that God will act in totally new ways as a result of this present suffering so we may see and learn something totally new and unexpected about God.

Saint Oscar Romero said: "There are things that can be seen only with eyes that have cried." This is an important insight — that there is newness and hope after the pain — but it will be different and we will only arrive there because of the pain.

This suggests that Israel understood complaint as an essential part of their covenant relationship with God. Katongole writes that "it is not those who lack faith who complain, but those recognised for strong faith who bring their most honest and passionate feelings to God." It ensures that the relationship is alive, dynamic, negotiated, contested. Voicing lament and pain can be a form of resistance and a path to healing. It means that we will not be rendered powerless and voiceless, nor will we remain paralysed by despair. ✎

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# WHAT POMPEII REVEALS ABOUT EUCHARIST

**Thomas O'Loughlin** discusses how the archaeological discoveries of a house in Pompeii throw light on the early Christian communities' celebration of Eucharist.

EVEN IF YOU are not a fan of archaeology it would have been hard to miss the media reports last month about the recent excavations of a house in Pompeii and in particular its wonderful 90m<sup>2</sup> dining room with black walls, beautiful painting and white mosaic floor. Spectacular pictures brought us back to the home of a wealthy resident of a prosperous city just before the sudden eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE.

This house (and it is typical of the Greco-Roman world in the first century CE) and its arrangement can throw light on how the members of the Jesus movement gathered, worshipped, and – most importantly – disagreed with one another about the interface between the demands of being disciples and how they functioned socially.

## DINING ROOM

We are so familiar with Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper, where Jesus and the disciples are seated at a monastic refectory table, that we are blind to how the gospel-writers imagined the scene. A typical dining room of that time would have had three couches (*triclinium*) upon which people could lie down on their left shoulders while taking food with their right hands from a low table set between the couches. Mark (14:18) says that "while they were at table ..." (NRSV). But the phrase, "while they were at table" is an interpretation of *anakeimenón* which literally means "while reclining [on couches]." It comes from *anakeimai* which not only means reclining for dinner but implies reclining among equals for dinner.

This arrangement – on couches around a table – allows

us to make much better sense of the reference to Judas Iscariot "dipping his hand into the dish with me" (Mk 26:23) because in the three-couch arrangement every hand was more or less equidistant from the dishes.

So the disciples in the first and early second centuries imagined their archetypal meal, the Last Supper, in terms of their own dining practices of lying on couches. We know the owners of large dining rooms – such as the rich lady Chloe mentioned in 1 Cor 1:11 – made them available to their church so that their fellow disciple could "break the loaf in their homes" (Acts 2:46). For a meal with many guests – say around 15 people – there probably would have been five couches arranged with one couch at the top and several in two rows running down each side with a low table in the middle. The food would have been served, most probably, by slaves.

## MILL AND THE BAKERY

In the same Pompeiian property – and no doubt an important source of income to the owner of the dining room – was a flour mill and a bakery.

A local mill was an essential service in the pre-modern world. Milling was skilled work but backbreaking, and it was dangerous as flour in the air can just flash if there is a naked flame. It was also dirty work because a large proportion of mills had their energy supplied by animal power: a donkey going around in a circle provided the motive power to turn the cogs that turned the millstone.

The mill in the Pompeii house was just such a mill – the miller and the donkey shared the same tiny space. And



as mills were places of many moving cogs and gears and fast-moving heavy stones, workplace accidents were an everyday occurrence.

Few people could afford to run individual ovens. People relied on buying bread from a bakery, or paying to have their own dough baked in a common oven. Both the miller's space and the baker's space are very small in the Pompeii house, and there are indications that the windows had bars: these were skilled people, but they were slaves.

This may have been an elegant house for an elegant household, but its dark side is that it was run and paid for by the enslavement of many human beings. Equality was never considered and those few groups that did consider it — such as the Essenes — were seen as oddities! Paul — with his Pharisee background (Acts 23:6) — had no problem with the idea of slavery as we see in his letter to Philemon.

Note the contrast: The dining room is a place of elegance, opulence, relaxation and plenty. The mill and bakery are places of back-breaking toil; they are cramped, very hot, stuffy, smelly and dangerous.

## QUARRELS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN EUCHARISTS

So long as the slaves remained in their quarters and the elegant diners stayed in their rooms, all was well. The Pompeii household operated on “upstairs, downstairs” principles and the only interaction was when the household slaves — such as those who waited at table — performed a service for their owners or their guests. But what happened if this strict arrangement — and such social stratification was the very essence of Greco-Roman life and the guarantee of the Pax Romana across the empire — was broken down?

One such group, where it should have broken down, was among the disciples, a community meant to model the final times when all distinctions, even the distinction of master/slave, were to disappear. This is what Paul preached to the Galatians: “There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Ideals are one thing, but the slave owners in the early churches simply did not want to share a table with slaves, especially their own. The proof of that can be seen in that a slave's task — foot washing as prescribed in Jn 13:15 and intended as a “paradigm” (*hypodeigma*) for a community ritual — never took off in the churches.

Moreover, the actual meal disappeared so that the “religious bits” became our formal ritual, while the community meal was eaten by groups according to their social orders (if they could afford it) — but that splitting up was a “development” of the third century.

Our best evidence for non-sharing with slaves at table in the time of the Pompeii house comes from Paul who

has been told of quarrels at the meeting of the church in Corinth (1 Cor 1:11).

Among the problems is that some are rushing ahead with their meal without waiting for the others — who are presumably the servants of the meal. There are to be no factions at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:19) and it seems clear, from the way Paul concludes this section of the letter, that these factions are groups based around the division of Jew/gentile and slave/free. Paul concludes: ‘by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and made to drink of the one Spirit’ (1 Cor 12:13).



That last sentence would not have been welcome to the owner of the Pompeii dining room and he certainly would not have wanted it spread abroad among his millers or bakers or his other servants. Paul had already laid stress on the unity of the community who eat at the Lord's Supper — one loaf, one body, one Lord — in this letter (1 Cor 10) and it was not just a “theoretical” unity: it was a costly thing to own one's unity in the Christ with one's slave.

But even if a Jew or follower of Jesus never went near the house in Pompeii, some central activities (the eucharistic meal), and some key problems (Can we actually share a table with our slaves?), were being asked in similar urban establishments across the Mediterranean world. ♦

For images and plan of the Pompeii house see:  
[www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-68777741](http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-68777741)

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# They All Ate and Were Satisfied

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*Paul Barber outlines clearly why New Zealand has to work harder to ensure all people in Aotearoa have food security.*

THE “FEEDING OF the five thousand” stories in the Bible are crucial parts of the gospel narrative and one of the few stories all four gospels tell, albeit in different ways. In the version from Mark 6:30-46, likely the earliest account to be recorded in the biblical texts, the story of the miraculous feeding of 5,000 people from a few loaves and fishes ends with the statement “all ate, and all were satisfied.” This vision of all people having eaten and who are satisfied inspires Te Kai Mākona — food that satisfies and fills our needs — the new food security framework being implemented by The Salvation Army Te Ope Whakaora. This name speaks to equity and community aspirations. It also speaks to the holistic nature of satisfaction that goes beyond physical sustenance into emotional, cultural, spiritual and social sustenance — and more.

## A Generation of Food Banks

Foodbanks began to appear in the late 1980s as an emergency response to food insecurity, arising from welfare reforms that increased poverty during that period. Since then, the number of foodbanks has continued to grow.

Almost 40 years later, continuing high levels of poverty and inequality have seen the extent and level of food insecurity change for many people and whānau — from being a temporary experience to an enduring and complex challenge. Currently The Salvation Army has around 58 centres offering this kind of support and many other organisations around the country also provide this support.

Food insecurity is defined by the Ministry of Health in Aotearoa as “a limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited ability to acquire personally acceptable foods that meet cultural needs in a socially acceptable way.” Food insecurity occurs when people do not have reliable access to adequate food, when people feel stressed or anxious about providing food, or are forced to rely on food grants or food parcels.

## Food insecurity Is Increasing Again

More than one in five children (21 per cent) lived in households where food runs out often or sometimes according to the latest Ministry of Health New Zealand Health Survey data from mid-2023. This was a sharp rise from the previous two years where reported food insecurity had fallen but now has risen back to levels reported in previous surveys since 2012.

The impact of food insecurity does not fall evenly, with 40 per cent of Pacific children and 35 per cent of tamariki Māori affected — more than twice the rate experienced by children of European (18 per cent) and Asian (12 per cent) ethnicities.

Food insecurity is more common among households on low incomes or receiving a welfare benefit, sole parent households, or households with three or more children. People living in neighbourhoods with higher levels of deprivation and those who are renting are also more likely to experience food insecurity.

This increasing food need has been reflected in those seeking assistance from The Salvation Army. During the year to December 2023 the quantity of food parcels provided increased by nearly 40 per cent



compared to 2022. Indeed 2023 was the year that saw material hardship and poverty rise again, after several years of declining hardship. Just under 180,000 households reported in 2023 that they did not have enough income to meet their everyday needs, which is 9 per cent of all 1.9 million households in this country and an increase of nearly 25,000 compared to the previous year

## Beyond Food Banks to Food Security

The vision of Te Kai Mākona is to take the response to food insecurity beyond simply addressing the immediate food needs of people in our communities. The framework recognises that achieving food security rests on three pou (pillars): appropriate and effective food provision through foodbanks, new and empowering food security initiatives for whānau and communities, and addressing the root causes of food insecurity in Aotearoa.





such as seafood and fisheries. This has led to poverty and loss of well-being and does not honour the commitments of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

These deep-rooted problems require persistence and a long-term timeframe to address but cannot be ignored if the embedded nature of food insecurity is to be overcome. Advocacy and organisation at local and national levels is needed to bring about structural change.

Reforming the grocery sector to reduce the enormous power of the two main players is one way to do this. The Salvation Army called for changes that make space for community-owned initiatives focused on supporting local communities to achieve food security in a submission to the Commerce Commission inquiry into the grocery sector. The Commission has since then initiated changes to open up access for other services, but the structures of the market still make it hard for local initiatives to become established and thrive.

Inadequate incomes are another root cause of hardship and pressure on government to ensure all households, whether in employment or not, can have enough income to live with dignity remains a key solution for food security. Government income policies that seek to limit access to welfare support and suppress wages will increase food insecurity further and it is important such policy is challenged and alternative solutions advocated for at local and national level. Joining with others to call for liveable incomes for those relying on welfare and the Living Wage for those in employment are examples of how to respond.

Let us hope that it will not take another generation to turn our nation around to a place of food security where “all are satisfied”. ✦

Root causes of food insecurity are the bigger structural aspects of our food systems that must be confronted. These include (Realising food secure communities — Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective):

- Government support for food systems is tailored towards export over domestic food production. Our country exports our healthy, high quality food and imports low-quality unhealthy food.
- Food chains have become highly centralised in the past 30 years. People mostly shop through supermarkets and local food businesses struggle to survive.
- Many households are earning comparatively lower wages and have less job security than previous generations. Wealth is more concentrated at the top at the same time as hundreds of thousands struggle with the cost of living.
- Many people lack the time or money

to gather, grow, shop and cook real food and instead tend to eat ultra-processed food or takeaways, which is contributing to poorer health outcomes such as obesity, diabetes and cancer.

- Industrialised production of food, along with its distribution, consumption and waste are affecting our land, rivers, oceans and the wider environment and climate.
- The disproportionate impact of food insecurity on Māori as tangata whenua, the indigenous people of Aotearoa, reflects a history of colonisation leading to loss of land, and authority over food economies, food gathering places and practices

*Lowcountry Boil* (2023) by Andie Freeman © Used with permission [www.andiefreeman.com](http://www.andiefreeman.com)

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# FOOD, FAITH AND HUNGER



*Peter Lineham outlines the involvement of churches in feeding the hungry in Aotearoa from early times.*

FOOD PLAYS A significant role in the New Zealand mythology. In our traditions of our life and customs — especially family customs — food plays a vital role. The focus is often upon food in the home, the smells of food in the kitchen: good, wholesome, simple food.

Food has also played an important role in our communal life. Every community organisation would hold functions where the encouragement was “ladies, a plate please”. Lavish sweet foods, cream cakes and later pavlovas, was how we celebrated a community of enjoyment and participation.

And in the Māori community, the same was true, with the traditional diet rich with seafood and kumara, but dramatically changing with the advent of pigs and potatoes when the Pākehā arrived. There are many accounts of huge feasts with hundreds of pigs and thousands of baskets of potatoes in the late 19th century. Māori above all knew the ways in which eating brought iwi together, enabling the richness of protracted tangi and other communal gatherings.

## Harvest Festivals in Churches

The churches joined in this too. Among Protestants harvest festivals became high points of the year. These festivals had been commenced in England by AngloCatholics seeking new rituals that might attract rural labourers to church. The idea was quickly adopted in New Zealand.

The Anglican Primate spoke in favour of such “irregular” services at the General Synod in 1871, and by the mid-1870s many Anglican churches were holding them.

Such festivals soon became popular. According to an Anglican magazine in 1908 they often drew larger numbers than attended at Easter or Christmas. The harvest season in Aotearoa — different from the northern hemisphere — meant that festivals were celebrated around Eastertime, and that raised the concern about whether to hold them in Lent. This was no problem to other Protestants, but Anglicans generally held them on Easter Day or on Low Sunday immediately after Easter. Harvest festivals were never used by Catholics — I am not sure why; maybe they were just too Protestant!

Harvest festivals meant the church then had to dispose of the fruit and vegetables. Sometimes they were distributed to the poor, and some city missions held festivals to replenish their supplies. Many protestant churches held soirees at harvest time, when people from different churches around the district would gather to enjoy singing, preaching and sumptuous suppers.

## Soup Kitchens

The settlers took great pride in the bounty of the land but there were sometimes hungry people in the early days of the colony. Soup kitchens — following the European model



— were established when people were in particular need, but it is interesting that in the 19th century these were due to council initiatives rather than churches, because hunger had no denominational features.

The first soup kitchen was in 1859 when the Wellington Provincial Government set up a soup kitchen to help those who were left hungry when public works schemes for the unemployed ceased.

Similarly a soup kitchen was opened in Auckland in 1866 for the unemployed, but a scandal erupted when it was found that the relief officer was exaggerating the need while he fed his pigs with the unwanted food.

A soup kitchen was set up in Christchurch in 1880 but when the unemployed began to demand more than food, it was soon closed down. For in the 19th century the problem was rarely the lack of food, it was the lack of money.

### Attitudes to Charity

In New Zealand a major social problem has been the lack of houses. In England the workhouses had been based on the principle that social aid had to be unpleasant, or else too many people would seek it. So there was food — very basic food — and shelter in the workhouse, but once a person entered a workhouse they had no right to ever leave it.

New Zealand settlers loathed the idea of the workhouse, and so when the state finally felt an obligation to meet social needs, it did so by means of grants from the Charitable Aid Board. Grants were usually in the form of wood or coal, potatoes and medicines.

The levels of charitable aid rose hugely when times were tough. In Wellington the moralising of an Anglican clergyman was criticised in blunt verse cited by a newspaper in 1893:

“Too long have oily preachers tried / To drug us with a platitude / ‘Have patience, for God will provide.’ / Have patience, without work or food / Come down from off your pulpit perch, / Come down and share our nothingness. / And test the bubbles of your church / Against the thorns of our distress.”

### Food with Compassion

In 1899 Suzanne Aubert’s Sisters of Compassion opened a soup kitchen from the St Joseph’s Home in Buckle Street Wellington, and this began a tradition of Catholic generosity to poor people without discrimination.

During the depression of the 1930s hunger stalked the land. Most of the city missions ran soup kitchens. In 1932 the Auckland Anglican City Mission supplied 102,080 free meals in seven months, while the Salvation Army ran a soup kitchen in Lorne Street and a motorised soup kitchen in Freeman’s Bay altogether serving 250 gallons of soup every week in 1932.

Soup was a simple solution because it could be stretched to meet the need by adding more water, and could include whatever meat or vegetables were contributed. Some of the city missions were given meat by generous farmers and they distributed this to hungry families.

### Food Insecurity in Aotearoa

The tradition of soup kitchens was loathed by later social

workers. It was viewed as a palliative that did nothing to address longer-term needs. It is a sobering thought that in that last 20 years food security has become a deep concern among social agencies. With a huge increase in the number of food parcels delivered to families who need them. We had become accustomed to these agencies holding massive Christmas dinners for poor or lonely people, but the symbol had begun to get in the way of the underlying need.

### Eat and Let No One Go Hungry

Food in abundance, elaborate concoctions of food, seem to be part of the psyche of New Zealanders. We might reflect how different this is from the historic Christian approach to food, which is much more simple and basic. Within our Christian traditions, self-denial has often been symbolised by fasting. The very notion may seem abhorrent to the way of life in Aotearoa New Zealand. But hunger and simple food — bread and wine — are potent symbols of the human needs and true fulfilment. So food carries a symbolic value far beyond what we put on our plates.



In Garrison Keillor’s *Lake Wobegon Days*, there is a delightful account of two factions of Plymouth Brethren trying to settle an abstruse theological dispute. They are at loggerheads until the wise housewife of the home in which they’re gathered urges them to come into the parlour to share a meal. But then a new challenge arises: who should say grace for the meal? They resolve that each person will say grace silently. But to maintain their own righteousness, no one is prepared to be the first to lift his head and prepare to eat. In the end the housewife has to interrupt them and the aroma of food overcomes their defensive protection of their individual self-righteousness.

Perhaps we need the same sense of recovery of the simple but rich fare of the Eucharist drawing us together at the Table to find in bread and wine the welcome of an hospitable God. ♦

*Cabbages* by Charlotte Thodey © Used with permission [www.charlottethodey.com](http://www.charlottethodey.com) “I am very interested in sharing food. I grew up in Timaru helping my father grow vegetables for a family of seven. I always thought cabbages had heart!”

Peter Lineham is a historian, who taught and researched at Massey University, and has written extensively on religious history in Aotearoa.







# Last Tomato Standing

in solitary stance  
tied against the wind  
its back to the stake  
one red tomato

stands defiantly  
amid the dying foliage  
a testimony to life  
fruitfulness, grace

on this frosty June morning  
I pick it gently, tenderly  
hold it with reverence  
admiring the rich texture

then receive it like communion  
a cosmic moment  
the last fruit of summer  
a first taste of winter

By Jim Consedine

From: *Syrian Boy and other poems* (2019)









# EUCCHARIST, AROHA AND MEALS ON THE TABLE

**Chris Farrelly** *urges us to practise the love we share at Eucharist by eliminating hunger in Aotearoa and beyond.*

IT IS SOMETIMES hard to see the connection between our church ritual and our society. The Eucharist can be one example: it is a meal, but do we think of it as a meal like other meals? As a church, we debate who can receive the Eucharist, but do we think of those who do not receive food, those who go hungry?

In March 2018, I wrote an article, “Sharing our Baskets”, throwing light on the injustice of hunger and food insecurity in our country. I referenced Te Tiriti o Waitangi’s requirement of protection for Māori and their

treasures of which food is one of the greatest. Te Tiriti has been violated.

In November 2022, Bishop Peter Cullinane, in a powerful article, also linked Eucharist and Te Tiriti with a warning of “tokenism” if the Eucharist was not followed through in all ways required by respect for the rights of Māori in wider society and for Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

With food insecurity increasing to a point where it is experienced by one in five of all children in our country, and with threats to cut back the Ka Ora, Ka Ako Healthy School Lunches Programme and threats to reinterpret the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Eucharistic theme and its implicit call for action needs to be brought to the fore.

## **GIFT OF MĀORI TIKANGA IN AOTEAROA**

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a relationship of reciprocity and obligations. The tangata tiriti (non-

Māori) partner has over the years been gifted with cultural treasures far greater than the haka that celebrates and identifies us here and internationally. We have been immersed in wairua/spirit, te ao Māori/relationships in creation, te reo/language, waiata/song, tikanga/customs and mātauranga/wisdom and knowledge that together have shaped us consciously and unconsciously into the unique Aotearoa New Zealand culture that defines us.

## **CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGISING MISSING**

Unfortunately a theological lens on



te ao Māori (relationships between humans and natural world) and the Catholic Church's integration into the Māori world has been limited, particularly in recent times. This paucity highlights the importance of the few Māori theologians who have lived, and particularly Catholic priest, the late Pā Henare Arekatera Tate. His book, *He Puna Iti i te Ao Mārama* is a rare attempt to lay the foundations of an indigenous Māori theology. This work should be a core text for every student of theology especially seminarians, and of all students of Māori theology and spirituality. It is a mārama/light to all of us as we continue to grow our relationship with tangata whenua/Māori.

### TIKA AND PONO MARKS OF AROHA

Pā Tate teaches that the fundamental concepts of Māori theology include pono, tika and aroha. Pono is truth and calls for actions that promote and acknowledge integrity, faithfulness, loyalty, reliability and consistency. Pā Tate explains that “the theological basis for pono is in Atua/God. Jesus lived and died with pono. Pono is the faith we profess and the faith we live.

Tika is the right way of doing things; it directs action and directs the right order of relationship with Atua, tangata and whenua. Aroha is love and is namely a principle of communion and the way that pono is to be carried out.

Of the three principles, aroha alone can be used as a verb. Pā Tate explains that “if our aroha is to be pono, to have any truth, honesty or integrity, there must be action behind our words otherwise our words are empty.”

### EUCARIST REQUIRES US TO DO LOVE

We now make the connection with the Eucharist. Although the word “Eucharist” is technically a noun, we can also think of it as a verb with the closest synonym being love. There is an intrinsic relationship between Eucharist and loving as Jesus did. His words resound: “Do this in remembrance of me”. Eucharist is a radical call to continue the cause for which Jesus lived and died.

Yet throughout history this has so often been manipulated or

suffocated. We have seen where feudalism, capitalism, colonisation, racism and sexism have all made the Eucharist conform to their values and priorities. However, from St Paul until the present day we have been exhorted to go back to Jesus and his expression of love in the Eucharist.

Seeing the abuses of the Lord's supper in Corinth, Paul uses strong language in his letter to the communities (1 Cor 11:17-34) fearing that celebrations may do more harm than good. His rebuke comes when he sees that instead of sharing the agape



feast with one another, some had plenty to eat and some went hungry. He saw the Eucharist as having no meaning if it were not egalitarian and building a real community. And in verse 27, he has a severe judgement on those who so desecrated the Lord's supper.

### EUCARIST MAKES US PARTICIPANTS

This theme was promulgated by Pope Benedict in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*: “A Eucharist which does not pass over the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented.”

The late German-American theologian Monika Hellwig in *The Eucharist and Hunger of the World*, wrote that “the meal of the Eucharist is a celebration of the hospitality of

God, shared by guests who commit themselves to become fellow hosts with God.”

And Asian theologian Tissa Balasuriya expanded further: “When the Eucharist ceases to relate to integral human liberation, it becomes a ritual without life. Unless there is a twofold dimension of personal love and social action, the Eucharist can be a sacrilege.” Our Eucharistic theology must be connected to a hungry world.

The words that have been used here to describe a Eucharist that is not connected with love – “violation”, “empty”, “desecration”, “lifeless”, “tokenism”, “incomplete”, “intrinsically fragmented”, “sacrilege” – are strong and emotive. The situation of child poverty and hunger in our country equally requires strong emotive language and a response of courageous generosity and love. Not to do so would be to accept and perpetuate the “intrinsic fragmentation” of the Eucharist that Pope Benedict describes. To do so is to act fully in the spirit of pono, tika and aroha as taught by Pā Tate.

### EUCARIST IS FOOD FOR ALL WHO HUNGER

We as a Eucharistic community can no longer be silent in word or action. The lines are drawn. There is now a threat to remove food from schools, which for some students is their only substantial meal in a day. Our church has been focused on itself for too long. Our church has been silent “in the market place” for too long. Now is the time to break through our paralysis and reclaim our voice. If not now, when?

If our voice is to be pono and tika, it must be accompanied by significant actions to feed the hungry and address food insecurity in Aotearoa New Zealand. By doing so, we bind what is fragmented and bring together two of our great loves: the love of the Eucharist and our love and passion for the rights of children. ✦

*Celebrating Food* by Nicola Bennett © Used with permission [www.nicolabennett.co.nz](http://www.nicolabennett.co.nz)

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# Walking with Āwhinatanga

**Anna Nicholls** describes the practice of service with compassion as a hallmark of the Mercy charism.

FOR THOSE CONNECTED to the Mercy charism on Aotearoa, Catherine McAuley (1778-1841), the Irish founder of the Sisters of Mercy, is inspiring even though she never set foot in this whenua. Many who are engaged in Mercy schools and other works say that Catherine's spirituality resonates with them, particularly her commitment to āwhinatanga, service. I have been reflecting on āwhinatanga (being of service to people and meeting their needs) in the Mercy tradition as we experience it today.

## Symbol of Service

In the 1830s, the Sisters of Mercy made their own boots, a practice synonymous with Mercy service. The boots represent how Catherine McAuley and the women who worked alongside her headed out into the alleyways and homes of those in

need to offer comfort and support in difficult times.

The discourse surrounding the boots originates in a letter from Catherine to Catherine Leahy in which she writes: "They have lately made some very nice cloth boots and got them soled and capped with leather. When finished they do not cost quite 4 shillings. Dear Sister M de Sales commenced the work, and it now goes on rapidly. They are exceedingly neat and warm — any kind of stocking will do. I have been long recommending these homemade boots, both for neatness and economy."

## Going to the Poorest Places

It is not, however, the narrative of the making of the boots that is reflective of service but rather the definitive actions that occurred while wearing

the boots. Unlike other religious women of the time in Ireland who were confined within the convent walls, the Mercy women did not wait for those in need to arrive at their doorstep, although this certainly happened; instead, they left the security of the convent enclosure and sought out those who were suffering.

The sketch (opposite) by Clare Agnew around 1840, shows two Mercy women visiting a prisoner. The sisters had removed their distinctive starched headdress worn inside the convent for something more akin to women's public attire — a black coat and simple bonnet.

The drawing suggests that one woman is offering spiritual consolation. The other woman is attending to the prisoner's wounds.

The political orator of the time, Daniel O'Connell, described this



action in a speech at Carrick: "Look at the Sisters of Mercy, wrapped in coarse black cloaks ... they are hastening to the lone couch of some sick fellow creature fast sinking into the grave with none to console, none to soothe. They come with consolation and hope and bring down with their prayers the blessing of God on the dying sinner."

### Service Is Presence and Care

The image echoes the story in Luke's Gospel of Jesus visiting Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38-42). The women are conflicted; Mary focuses on listening to Jesus and Martha attends to the other practical tasks that she needs to accomplish. Service includes both: attending to the practical needs and also the less tangible support of listening to the person in need.

We can ask ourselves how we serve those in need today not just in our own sphere but beyond to people and places outside our comfort zone.

### Service Is Incarnational

Catherine's writing shows how she linked her understanding of mercy service with her desire to serve God.

The opening to the *Constitution* of the Sisters of Mercy uses the phrase from a parable in Matthew's Gospel reminding us that whenever we do something for the least of our brothers and sisters, we do it for Christ (Mt 25:40-45). Does this motivation matter? Is there such a thing as mercy service without a desire to serve God?

Catherine was a 19th-century woman of the church imbued with an understanding of the time concerning the importance of practising religion. In her later letters it is evident that Catherine's heart was centred on God, the source of all her actions.

Earlier in life Catherine did not

appear to have had such a strong adherence to church. Her biographer Mary Vincent Harnett says that it was when Catherine was living and working for William and Catherine Callaghan that she went to meet with a priest and prepared to receive the Sacraments. Though there is little written about this possible fallow time in Catherine's church practice, her loving service to the Callaghans was apparent.

### Compassion Fuels Service

In a letter to Catherine in 1840, Fr Andrew Fitzgerald writes: "Ireland

lived, embodied and encouraged mercy through service.

### Living Mercy Service Now

Our challenge as Mercy people today is to express mercy in the service we give in our contexts.

One issue facing us is the environmental crisis. This was not a concern of Catherine's time. But as a woman who responded to the needs of 19th-century Ireland, we can assume that she would encourage us to respond to the pressing environmental needs of our times. She

would encourage us to listen to the cry of Earth and ask what it means for us to be in service of Earth.

Catherine's homemade boots feature again at the end of her life. Elizabeth Moore wrote to Angela Dunne describing Catherine's last acts: "At four o'clock of the morning of the day she died, she tied up her boots, and you know they were generally of her own making, gave them to one of the

young Sisters with directions not to open the parcel but wait at the fire till all was consumed."

Only as death approached did Catherine relinquish her boots, the symbol of her lifetime of service.

As we focus on service, whatever the motivation to action, may Catherine McAuley inspire us to leave the security of our own places, to put on service boots and to respond compassionately to those in need and all creation. ♦



## Compassion is service by its very nature; it is being alongside another in their pain.

has learned from long suffering to be compassionate towards human misery."

Compassion is service by its very nature; it is being alongside another in their pain. That Catherine demonstrated compassion in her life is irrefutable – compassion that stemmed from her desire to serve God and to respond to the human misery she encountered. Catherine

P20: *Boots* by Lesley Alexander © Used with permission [www.lkafineart.com](http://www.lkafineart.com)

P21: *Visit the Imprisoned* by Clare Agnew © Artwork courtesy Mercy International Association

**Anna Nicholls RSM** is a PhD student in Religious Studies at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington. She worked in secondary schools in New Zealand and Samoa and is currently at Mercy International Association, Dublin.





# Postnatal Repair Surgery Needed

THIS MONTH WE celebrate Mothers' Day. Not all mothers feel honoured especially if they're living with obstetric fistula – one of the most serious and tragic childbirth injuries caused by prolonged, obstructed labour without access to timely, high-quality treatment. Without corrective surgery, these women live with the smell and the shame associated with it, becoming isolated from their communities and losing hope for an ordinary life.

Obstetric fistula is a hole between the birth canal and bladder and/or rectum, which causes incontinence and has ongoing physical, social and family relationship problems for the woman. For example, it is not unusual for husbands to leave their wives, adding poverty and alienation to their suffering.

Obstetric fistula is a preventable and treatable condition. The fistula or tear happens when the baby's head puts too much pressure on the birth canal which restricts the blood supply to the tissue. This causes a fistula that allows urine and faeces to leak uncontrollably. Because of poverty and poor healthcare, women in some parts of the world do not get the surgical repair they need.

The World Health Organisation estimates 50,000–100,000 mothers develop this condition each year and maternal health is its Sustainable Development Goal 3. Nigeria accounts for 40 per cent of global cases and this is where cbm has a project to help.

Faith is one Nigerian woman who was living with obstetric fistula after the traumatic birth of her son. Faith was “dreaming big” to save for the corrective surgery. She worked at baking cakes and planning festive events. But her earnings were never enough. Fortunately she was referred to cbm who assisted her to get the life-changing surgery. She is a new woman!

cbm has a project in Nigeria to ensure mothers with obstetric fistula get access to the services of skilled doctors and nurses, to post-operative care and to assistance in developing a livelihood.

Your generosity gives women, like Faith, hope again. ✦

**Dr Murray Sheard** has worked in international development for over 16 years and is the Chief Executive Officer of cbm New Zealand.



You can  
help restore  
hope & dignity today.



Please will you prayerfully consider sending a gift to help more mothers, like Faith, receive life-changing surgery.

Your gift will be helping mothers who cannot earn enough to pay for the surgery they need, and will be generously blessing mothers, like Faith, who are living with the smell, shame and isolation of obstetric fistula.

To send a gift, call 0800 77 22 64, or scan the QR code using your mobile phone camera, or go to [www.cbmnz.org.nz/faith](http://www.cbmnz.org.nz/faith)







# Musing ☺ on a Smile

I CAUGHT THE eye of a truck driver when I was on my bike riding home. We smiled at each other as he gracefully halted his articulated vehicle to allow me to pass. Then I saw on the back of his truck an enormous drum marked “hazardous substances” and with a Portaloo logo.

I pictured the truck and its load of bodily excretions weaving through the streets to the disposal place. Then I thought of the driver: his smile, steady hands on the wheel and his dignity.

As a person with a desk job which allows me to quite literally keep my hands clean, it’s easy to build myself up as isolated, intellectual, responding to the drama of contemporary Aotearoa with words and ideas. It’s harder to keep in mind all the other work that makes our lives as a community possible: work like road repairing, teaching, stocking supermarket shelves, planting and harvesting, unloading containers.

Our interdependence with others isn’t always glamorous. But it relies on us acknowledging one another’s dignity; the workers who maintain sewage systems have dignity, the nurses bleary-eyed after a night shift at a rest home have dignity; the mum heating her wailing baby’s bottle has dignity. Dignity is essential to humanity, all of us with bodily functions included.

Perhaps a smile shared through a truck cab window is the beginning of the grace of gratitude for me for all the care in my life that has been invisible to me — which I’ve taken for granted. More importantly, that moment makes me acknowledge the dignity of each person no matter their work, because they contribute to society that takes care of us all.

There’s a flip side to this: often

the decisions of people in power don’t acknowledge humanity’s interdependence, let alone the human dignity of each. We see the people in Gaza being murdered and deprived of food, while Israel and its allies continue to limit further aid to them. Leaders in our own country are passing legislation taking off restrictions to protect the environment and so allowing companies to “use” the whenua, God’s creation, for profit.

In this Easter season I’ve been reading the first few chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, particularly the story which describes how the early believers share everything they have. There’s even the example of Barnabas selling his field so his wealth can be shared in the community. I don’t own land, but I have a good income I could share. A selfish part of me recoils. I have time, space and income I could,

and should, be more generous with.

Acknowledging the dignity of others can be hard because we humans like to favour the group we’re part of and to see others as “not like us”. But we share humanity with the billions of others in the world. We share hope and fear, laughter and bewilderment, love and grief, isolation and community. That smile between a cyclist and a truck driver gives me a glimpse of a world remade in the radical, generous equality of God. But it is nowhere near the full promise of the Christian community where we dare to hold what we have in common so that no one is without. ✦

Photo Matthew Collingwood/Shutterstock.com

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*The Spinoff*.



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# Encouraging Breath of the Spirit

**Kathleen Rushton** *discusses the many ways the Spirit's activity is imaged in John's Gospel.*

---

THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES some of the extensive and unique ways the Spirit is presented in the Fourth Gospel from the Farewell Discourse (Jn 14-16) to when Jesus appears to his disciples (Jn 20:19-23).

## **“Wind”/“Breath”/“Spirit”**

The story of the Spirit began long before Pentecost. The earliest Christians brought to their listening of John's Gospel their rich tradition of the Spirit/Wind/Breath of God

which was a way of speaking about the powerful presence of the God. The Greek word *pneuma* is used to translate the Hebrew *ruah* meaning “wind” or “breath” or “spirit.”

These images describe the Spirit as an unseen wonder known by what it does, the effect it has and how it is experienced. The Spirit expresses the creative, prophetic and renewing presence of God by flowing through all creation bringing life and love.

For people today, the coming

of the Spirit, too, begins before the biblical creation story. The Creator Spirit is the dynamic, energising presence who enabled the universe to come into being some 14 billion years ago and is creatively at work enabling the ongoing emergence of the universe and the evolution of all life in Earth.

## **“Breathed on Them”**

Jesus “breathed on” those present saying: “Receive the Holy Spirit”



(Jn 20:22). This recalls the Spirit sweeping over the waters (Gen 1:2) and the Breath of God breathing life into the dust of the earth to create the earth creature (*adam*) from the earth (*adamah*) — earthling from the earth, groundling from the ground (Gen 2:7; Wis 15:11).

The verb “breathed on”, found only here in the New Testament, is used in the Greek Old Testament to refer to creation. Ezekiel is told to breathe on the dry bones so that the people might be recreated (Ez 37:1-28). Human persons will stay alive only if they have the Divine Breath abiding in them (Gen 6:3). This applies to all creatures. God warns that the flood would “destroy from under heaven all flesh in which there is the breath of life” (Gen 6:17).

## God Creating with Two Hands

The interconnected images of the Breath of God and the Word of God are linked in the creation of the universe: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host [the sun, moon and stars] by the breath of God’s mouth” (Ps 33:6). The Breath of God always accompanies the Word. Early Father of the church Irenaeus tells us of “God creating with two hands, that of the Word and that of the Spirit.”

The Spirit is with Jesus, the Word, at every stage of his life. John the Baptist speaks about the outpouring of the Spirit, testifying that Jesus is the one on whom he sees the Spirit abiding (Jn 1:32-33) and who gives God’s Spirit “without measure” (Jn 3:34).

Understood in the light of the death-resurrection, the Spirit is life-giver (Jn 6:63). Jesus is led by the Spirit in his preaching, healing, compassion for the marginalised, in his passion and death. His death is a leave-taking and he hands over the Spirit to the women and the Beloved Disciple at the cross (Jn 19:30 — see *Tui Motu* March pp 24-25) and to re-create the disciples. Jesus and the Spirit are interrelated and in communion with all life. This is the baptism with the Holy Spirit that Jesus brings and into which all the baptised are immersed.

## Four Aspects of Spirit

The Evangelist offers four unique aspects of the Spirit.

First, Jesus gives the Spirit to his friends as their Paraclete (*parakletos* Jn 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). *Parakletos* means “one called alongside of.” Under this title many meanings come together in a rich, all-embracing picture of the Spirit as presence, teacher, comforter, guide, helper, friend, advocate, one who intercedes, consoler, spokesperson, witness, one who goes with, supports and stands beside another. The Spirit is presented as a person (Jn 14:15-16; 15:26-27; 16:14-15).

Second, the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

Third, the Spirit is the Advocate almost in a legal sense of “counsel for the defence” (Jn 15:26-27; 16:8-15).

Fourth, the Spirit has a special resemblance to Jesus. Both come into the world (Jn 5:43; 16:28; 18:37; 3:16-17). They share titles: Jesus is the Truth (Jn 14:6); the Holy One of God (Jn 6:69) and the Spirit of Truth (Jn 14:17); the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26; 20:22). The relationship of Jesus and Spirit with disciples is expressed in similar ways. Both: abide/remain (Jn 14:10, 17; 15:4-10); guide/teach (Jn 6:59; 7:14; 8:20; 14:26; 16:13); are unseen/unknown (Jn 16:16, 3; 7:28-29; 14:7). The Spirit’s teaching is about/glorifies Jesus while Jesus glorifies God (Jn 8:28; 12:16, 23, 27-28; 14:13; 17:4).

## Re-announcing

In his farewell discourse, Jesus expresses deep concern for his disciples now and future generations. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus remains with us to enable us to complete the works of God. He repeats the word “declare” (NRSV) or “tell” (JB) three

times in John 16:13-15. This verb has the sense of re-announcing what has been heard previously — mysteries already communicated are described. Jesus is encouraging the disciples to face the hard times ahead by seeking deeper meaning in what has already happened. Raymond Brown explains: “The best Christian preparation is not an exact knowledge of the future but a deep understanding of what Jesus means for one’s own time.”

Jesus knew the hearts of those earliest disciples were troubled; he knows our hearts are troubled (Jn 14:1, 27). He says: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (Jn 16:12). When we can bear it, the Spirit will re-announce and re-proclaim, what has been received from Jesus who was sent by God (Jn 16:14).

As Raymond Brown says: “The one whom John calls ‘another Paraclete’ is really another Jesus. Since the Paraclete can only come when Jesus departs, the Paraclete is the presence of Jesus when Jesus is absent.”

The Spirit is a bridge between the historical life of Jesus and the post-Easter life of the church in this world God so loves (Jn 3:16). The role of the Spirit is to enlighten our minds and hearts to the truth, and to that deep inner knowing that accompanies a feeling of peace.

Pentecost offers us time to reflect about ways the Spirit is re-announcing the significance of the truth of God already communicated in what Jesus has said and done to our generation. We might recall a time when we experienced the Spirit as “the gentle whisper of a breath” or as “the wind blowing where it chooses” (Jn 3:8). ☞

Readings for Pentecost Sunday, 19 May: John 20:19-23 or Jn 14:14-16; or Jn 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

*First Breath* by Kathy Little © Used with permission [www.kathylittle.co.uk](http://www.kathylittle.co.uk)

**Kathleen Rushton** RSM, Scripture scholar, teacher and author, lives in Ōtautahi/Christchurch. Her latest book is *The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor: Hearing Justice in John’s Gospel* (2020).



# For What It's Worth



FOR I AM fearfully and wonderfully made, declared the psalmist, and I have to agree. A couple of months ago I had a three-hour operation requiring stitches. Post-op recovery was about six weeks. Every day I checked the stitches, amazed at how they settled, less impressed at how they itched – but that was part of healing too.

It got me thinking about how much our bodies attend to, most often without any input from us. It's almost unbelievable to think we are individually made up of not hundreds or thousands, but trillions of cells, all very organised and all with specific functions.

Take the brain, for example. Its storage capacity is virtually unlimited, which I need to remind myself when I struggle to learn a new piece on the piano, or walk into a room and wonder what I'm there for. Though, I'm heartened to know it's a myth we only use 10 per cent of our brains. In fact, our brains are active all the time, even when we're asleep. And how marvellous that our brain uses our spinal cord to communicate with the rest of our bodies. All without any conscious effort from us.

For all our developing knowledge, I like that we haven't plumbed the depths of how the brain works. As one scientist put it, "we don't even understand the brain of a worm". There's a lot we don't know about how cells work or how they come together to form our consciousness.

Our blood sends nutrients around our bodies. Our digestive system breaks down food. Our skin, the body's largest organ, protects the heart and liver and lungs.

If we get something in our eye, our body's first response is to tear up to help push it out. If we get a cold, our immune system leaps into action to defend against infection. Think about that scratch from a rose bush – one day it's red and sore, the next day, less so. Within a few days, it's gone.

I don't wish to demean modern science or the medical knowledge that keeps us going, but I'm also acutely aware of their limits. Three colleagues, judge friends of mine, died recently within a week. None of them had lived the usual expected life span, and all died of a disease the body couldn't successfully fight. Sooner or later, this marvellous body fails us. But until that happens, it will go on doing its work, while we fret and fluster and pay little heed to the mystery of it all.

And the greatest mystery is that we are made in the image of God, hardwired to reflect God. Amazing as our physical bodies are, this has to be the most breathtaking fact of all – that we are made in God's image and our lives are about reflecting that.

We are not an accident. We have been created for a purpose, each one of us unique and each entrusted with what we need for the journey. ❖

Rosemary Riddell lives in Otarehuna, Ōtago. She is the author of *To Be Fair: Confessions of a District Court Judge* (2022).



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# Reviews

## Reconnecting Aotearoa: Loneliness and Connection in the Age of Social Distance

Edited by Kathy Errington and Holly Walker

Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2023. (NZD 18)

Reviewed by Micheal Smith

Loneliness and connections are explained in the context of widening distances between individuals and social groups. The contributors to *Reconnecting Aotearoa* take a specifically Aotearoa New Zealand look at this issue.

The book not only highlights the known challenges of loneliness but also of burgeoning social media. Readers start out learning how loneliness, already present prior to Covid's onset, further exacerbated as the pandemic's impacts deepened. Our already lonely people faced a new and officially enforced form of loneliness.

A chapter on love amid Covid highlights the difficulties lovers underwent to maintain an international relationship. Another writer tells of the challenges Covid brought to their journey exploring their whakapapa.

Covid hasn't gone away. The writers in this book take us to the place where we can recognise how loneliness works and how we can counter it, personally and as a church. Parishes have an opportunity to go deeper in mitigating the likelihood of deeply worrying levels of loneliness and social distance among parishioners.

Are mechanisms in place sufficient to help lonely parishioners overcome the tyranny of rampant social distancing and associated loneliness? If not, this book suggests we must try harder. ★



## I Surrender: A Memoir of Chile's Dictatorship, 1975

By Kathleen M Osberger

Published by Orbis Books, 2023. (USD 27)

Reviewed by Anne Sklenars

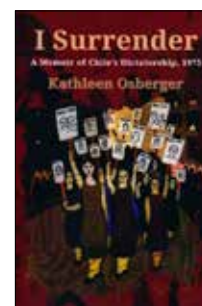
*I Surrender* is an autobiographical story set in Santiago, Chile, two years into Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. Kathy Osberger, a teaching volunteer, arrives to share life with women religious missionaries who, with their understanding of mission and justice, are giving shelter to political activists. Kathy faces ethical dilemmas and eventually she, too, lives in terror and danger.

The book begins with Osberger learning to live with coded messages and her witness of the missionaries "surrendering" their own safety. This immersion leads to

her kidnapping and torture, and threats to her emotional and psychological stability. At the same time she is worrying about her newfound friends.

*I Surrender* tells how these missionaries were shaped by culture, conflict, confusion and theology in Pinochet's Chile. It draws the reader into deep concern for Osberger and her friends when they disappear and are captured. It is in this conflict that Osberger encounters God as "spiritual balm".

*I Surrender* reignited my passion for mission and justice on behalf of the poor. It is a "must read" and may jolt, inspire and renew us in our Christian calling. ★



## Abolishing the Military: Arguments and Alternatives

By Griffin Leonard, Joseph Llewellyn and Richard Jackson

Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2023. (NZD 18)

Reviewed by Tracy Robinson

This short book is written primarily to invite discussions about the myths surrounding the benefits of having a defence force; the need for it, the justification of its costs, along with the security it provides and the good it does our society.

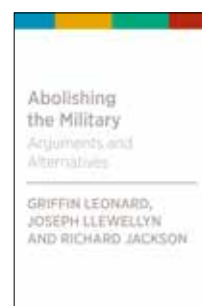
I didn't expect to enjoy reading *Abolishing the Military*, let alone relate to it. It is easy to assume we need a defence force and that the government knows best. This book changed my thinking on all of that.

I was astounded to learn the history of the New

Zealand Defence Force was still largely modelled on its white settler colonisation origins, and that it is better-funded than in countries such as Germany, Canada and Japan.

The book seems especially relevant now, when right-wing governments — and their associated nationalistic ideas — are ascendant or in power, both in Aotearoa and overseas.

I would recommend this book to those interested in the current political scene and anyone looking for alternatives to war and ways to engender peace in our world. Surely that is everyone! ★



# Reviews



## Mr Bates vs The Post Office (ITV, 2024)

Four episodes, screening on TVNZ+

Reviewed by Paul Tankard

This British drama tells the true — and unfinished — story of an appalling IT stuff-up and dreadful miscarriage of justice, in which hundreds of subpostmasters were, over more than a decade, wrongfully convicted of fraud and theft. It's far from being a televisual masterpiece, but is compelling viewing. As a result of privatisation and the internet, post offices across the world have gone from being some of the most trusted and visible agents of government, to being odd little counters in corner dairies and news agencies. But in thousands of small communities in the UK, the local post offices remain centres of social activity and connection with the wider world.

In the late 1990s, a computer software system called Horizon was rolled out by The Post Office Ltd to handle all the accounting for post office services, including pension payments, etc. Problems with it commenced almost immediately, with local subpostmasters investigated for balancing errors which they were unable to explain, and for which their contracts as franchisees made them personally responsible.

In this series, the human side of this saga is readily depicted in picturesque villages and communities, focusing on the experiences and the domestic circumstances of a small number of the many subpostmasters who were sacked, prosecuted, fined and jailed. Prominent among these is Alan Bates (played by Toby Jones), who first gathered the evidence of systemic issues, ran the campaign to challenge The Post Office to investigate properly and to open its records, and formed an alliance which took a group action against The Post Office.

The subpostmasters are small-business people, perhaps retired from other careers, who drive modest cars and have modest habits and ambitions. They eat scones and drink tea or beer, they meet in pubs and community halls. The meetings with lawyers and Post Office officials, and the eventual court cases, take place among the skyscrapers of London.

The narrative, cinematography, characterisation, dialogue and music are simple and unambitious, which is what they need to be. This is a campaigning production, aimed at the widest public, and the story is the simple one of David versus Goliath, or the Human versus the Machine: individuals facing oppression, obstruction and manipulation by technology, bureaucracy and corporatism — which is a story of our times.

Every day millions of people are frustrated and enraged by techno-bureaucracy: our time and energy wasted, our competence questioned and eroded by the increasing concentration of power outside of human hands. But seldom to the extent of loss of liberty, livelihood and lives as happened here. This series has prompted further action by the UK government and should give us all hope to continue our resistance. ★



## Planet Earth III

By BBC Earth. Available on TVNZ+

Reviewed by Shaun Davison

Pope Francis in his encyclicals *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum* has urged the world to care for Earth the common home of diverse life and to adopt lifestyles that allow all life to flourish. The eight episodes of *Planet Earth III* narrated by the renowned David Attenborough, emphasise the wonder, resourcefulness and fragility of life in Earth. Each episode journeys in different and ever-changing habitats: coasts, oceans, deserts and grasslands, freshwater, forests, extremes, human and heroes. They span 43 countries and offer fresh perspectives of the vitality and resilience of animals we share Earth with.

The cinematography is breathtaking. We see unprecedented glimpses into habitats such as a fox's den and the ethereal beauty of sea angels in glacier waters. Attenborough tells stories of animal families and their adaptation, often with poignant reminders of our human footprint on their lives. The stories are both hopeful, such as the remarkable resurgence of the right whale and heartbreaking, as shown by Caribbean flamingos struggling with rising sea levels and a magnificent tree ecosystem chainsawn down in a matter of minutes.

*Planet Earth III* is captivating. It can help us fall in love with the magnificence of other life in the planet and, as Francis challenges us, to live accordingly. ★





# Cross Currents

by Jane Higgins

IT'S AUTUMN, AND in my garden there are still a few potatoes to dig up, there's the always reliable Swiss chard, there are enough apples to freeze some apple sauce for crumble in the dark days of winter and, as usual, there are far too many quinces.

I'm so lucky to have the time and space for an autumn harvest — these days not many do. And yet, whether we have vegetable gardens or not, our planet can produce enough to feed everyone — not that you'd know it from the way food insecurity haunts the headlines these days.

Here in Aotearoa, there's the threat of cuts to the free school lunch programme, Ka Ora, Ka Ako. Many thousands of kilometres away, but before us daily, is what seems to be the Israeli government's weaponisation of food scarcity in Gaza.

It's not a mistake that children here and elsewhere are going hungry. It's the result of what the church has long called "structural sin" — political and economic systems that create the conditions for food poverty.

Consider Ka Ora, Ka Ako, criticised by Associate Minister of Education David Seymour, for being "a huge waste of money". He argues that it

does not work and should be cut.

But there is evidence to suggest otherwise. The PISA (Program for International Student Achievement) study now gathers data on food poverty. Of 25 OECD countries providing this data, Aotearoa has the second-highest rate of students who, in a 30-day period, missed a meal at least once a week because there was not enough money to buy food (14.1 per cent). This is well above the OECD average (8.2 per cent) and is similar to rates of food poverty in Colombia and Chile. In our land of abundance, poverty is real and its impact is found in hungry children.

A key finding from the data is that students in Aotearoa who miss meals due to lack of money are two to four years behind in maths, reading and science achievement, compared with their peers who never miss meals.

Ka Ora, Ka Ako is offered to 230,000 students in around 25 per cent of the least advantaged schools nationally. But the majority (60 per cent) of 15-year-olds in food poverty do not attend Ka Ora, Ka Ako schools, so miss out on the programme. Even if academic achievement was the only reason

to support the programme, this suggests it needs to be expanded not cut.

Meanwhile, in Gaza, children are going desperately hungry as famine threatens to engulf the population there. In an update at the beginning of April, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warned that more than 50,000 children under the age of five in northern Gaza were acutely malnourished.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has cautioned: "Children in Gaza are starving to death. They are cut off from food, even crumbs are not easy to find. The occupying power has blocked or severely restricted food and other life-essential supplies and aid... Children in Gaza can no longer wait, as each passing minute risks another child dying of hunger as the world looks on."

Political decisions like these are not inevitable. They are not the natural order of things. Governments can act justly towards the most vulnerable if they choose to. ✧



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# Review



## The Not-Yet God: Carl Jung, Teilhard de Chardin, and the Relational Whole

By Ilia Delio

Published by Orbis Books, 2023.  
(USD 30)

Reviewed by Mary Thorne

Ilia Delio writes that every 500 years or so, religion undergoes a significant paradigm shift: we are presently “in a major ‘God shift’”. Many people of faith feel the truth of this. Delio’s contribution to contemporary theological discourse is significant and revolutionary. Reading *The Not-Yet God* feels like whitewater rafting. It is difficult and exhilarating. With the clarity and courage of an Old Testament prophet she treads a theological pathway into the future that will meet the needs of our children and our grandchildren. Quantum physics and evolution demand a new story of religion. Delio draws on the insights of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Carl Jung to create a new framework and a new understanding of God is breaking through – no longer God up in the sky, but God-matter unity evolving towards a whole that is still unfolding.

When I persevere with the weighty philosophical ideas in this new book, I get a marvellous, expanded understanding of God. The disciples on the road to Emmaus described their hearts burning within them, so wondrous and exciting was their new understanding. My heart burns within me as I devour this book. I strongly recommend it to those who search for renewal in their faith. ★



## Letters to the Editor

We welcome letters of comment, discussion, response, affirmation or argument of up to 200 words.

### LIVING MORE SIMPLY

Mary Betz (TM Apr 2024) points out correctly that solutions to climate change and sea level rise require changes in human behavior, rather than changes in technology. In other words, changes in what we do, rather than how we do it.

Electric vehicles – frequently promoted these days – are a case in point. As a means of travel from one place to another, yes there is less pollution, they are quieter and less expensive to run; all positives. But this is too narrow a context. To be able to drive an electric car requires firstly; mining, smelting of the ores, transportation of materials (plastics, rubber), manufacturing and assembly of components, transportation to New Zealand from overseas. The electric car is more complex than a standard car and overall its environmental footprint is greater. It is also heavier and therefore requires more energy to travel the same distance. If New Zealand were to go fully for electric transport it is estimated we would need to double our electric generation capacity – in other words replicate all the power stations built here in the last 100 years. And that is a major challenge. In solving one problem by technology we are faced with the prospect of creating an even bigger problem for the next generation.

As Pope Francis keeps reminding

us we should be asking with regard to everything we do: “Do I really need this?” (Tropical fruit, imported chocolate/wine, fashion-ware, week in Fiji...) The answer is there clearly before us in the Easter liturgies: The truth will set you free.

*Anthony Williams, Ahuriri/Napier*

### KNOW THE AGENDA

Are we like a pilot fish suckering onto a host fish and just following wherever in the Ukraine conflict? In the West’s case we have suckered onto the USA, an old shark that is dying from too many fights for territory and domination. I wonder if the Ukraine is an invasion by Russia or an invasion of eastern Europe by the USA? The relentless narrative that the West is noble while Russia and China are evil is simple-minded and dangerous. The US has over 750 military bases around the world. It has only 4.4 per cent of the world’s population yet wants domination, evidenced by its involvement in wars and addiction to violence. Since 1950 China has not bombed any country while USA has bombed 35 countries causing millions of deaths and refugees. The US claims it is doing it for the people. For the last 75 years both the UK and USA have had a policy of comprehensive encirclement, containment and suppression of Russia. Their plan was for NATO to move into Ukraine then Georgia, building military and naval bases to cut off Russia’s access to the Mediterranean Sea. I think we need to take more care and thought about to whom and how we give our support in war.

*Geoff Hansen, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland*

### Our last word

Bless us with food,  
shelter, rest and wairua  
for today and tomorrow  
and the will to secure that  
for all in our whenua,  
Spirit of community.



From the Tui Motu Team



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