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Tui Motu

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DEATH AND FUNERALS

PETER LINEHAM, PETER MATHESON & OTHERS

SPEAK UP – WE NEED TO

CLARE CURRAN, KEVIN CLEMENTS,
PHYLLIS ZAGANO

Dignity, Death and Life
Mate Rangatiratanga me te Ora

INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC MAGAZINE

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COVER PHOTO

Jutland Memorial Park by Julian Hacker. Memorial to the thousands who died in the WWI naval Battle of Jutland 1916

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

AS WE COME to the end of the liturgical year, it is customary to remember the dead. Soon it will be Advent when we look for new life. But in this month of November the liturgy focuses on death and the end times. And death surrounds us: our world has so much violent, inexcusable death — death to people and death to habitats; whole cities reduced to rubble. In Palestine, in Ukraine and Sudan, war crushes civilians under the weight of dehumanisation and starvation. Israel's plans to "cleanse" Palestinians from their own land is not only killing people but is releasing material and psychological toxicity into our world, causing generational trauma and accelerating climate breakdown. Those killed in war don't just disappear. They are our sisters and brothers and their grief and trauma does not die with them. It becomes part of our atmosphere. We feel it in our own bodies and spirits and the witness of millions protesting against war and refusing to accept more death, confirms we are not alone.

In former times we imagined the recently dead as the "suffering souls", waiting in purgatory somewhere above the world, relying on us to pray away their sinful debt so they could be released into heaven. We probably spent a good part of All Souls' Day praying a little cache of prayers over and over — as perfectly as possible — to free our loved grandparents and other family members from purgatory into heaven. And if, by chance, we said more perfect prayers than we needed for our family, we could donate them to some poor soul who had no one to pray for them. It was a trickle-up practice — our good deeds bound us to the living and also to the dead who relied on us. We may have put away these childhood images but our belief in the communion of creation keeps us accountable for, connected to and responsible for the living and dead. It is a way of love.

It means we can't look away from war, from abuse, from violence. We must not allow humans to destroy the lives of our brothers and sisters. So part of our praying for the dead this November is to speak out against war to our governments who can put pressure on warring nations and on institutions profiting from war. And part of supporting life this November is to refuse to allow our government to cut environmental protections, justice for Māori according to Te Tiriti, children's food programmes and hospital funding from their policies, while at the same time giving billions to cigarette companies and landlords. And, we can call on all those who have died to pray with us that God's kingdom is realised in the world.

We are grateful to all the contributors to this issue. Their research and reflection, letters and comments, art and craft make this magazine worth reading. We thank Shanti Mathias who has written her final column after contributing to *Tui Motu* for five years.

As is our custom, our last word is of encouragement and blessing.



Why Language *Matters*

RECENTLY I DESCRIBED myself to someone as an activist. Since then, that pronouncement has sat uncomfortably with me as I've come to the realisation that I don't really know what being an activist means anymore. Often my activism has focused on changing a narrative — the set of messages that the majority subscribes to in order to make sense of the world. Sometimes we call this “groupthink”. Changing narratives is a big undertaking and, if at all successful, usually takes a long time.

Reading Patrick Snedden's column in last month's *Tui Motu* (Oct 2024), I found myself asking the same question Patrick asked himself: Have I been too vested in my various roles to take a wider view and raise my voice in protest? This is where my discomfort sits: I know I didn't raise my voice in protest loud enough to be noticed. And I continue to ask myself why.

Snedden's comments were in relation to the Royal Commission. But did I raise my voice in protest when I bore witness to wrongs in other institutions, political or otherwise? Do I do anything to challenge charismatic leaders who manipulate and weave their narrative grip on the groupthink of the day?

In 2006 I wrote a paper for the NZ Labour Party called “Language Matters” about taking greater charge of the language of debate and discussion in New Zealand. This re-framing meant gaining (or regaining) the use of concepts and phrases that spark public and media interest. To do that, I wrote, required a closer examination of our key values and finding words to describe those values that resonate with voters.

I argued then, and still do, that the conservative political right often do this much better than the left, not just in Aotearoa but in many other countries. They do it better because they understand the importance of capturing the language; they invest more money in it; and they tend to assert more arrogantly that their ideas are the right ones.

I drew on the writings of American linguist and cognitive scientist George Lakoff; the US think tank The Rockridge Institute and The Centre for American Progress.

If you control the language, you control the message. The media doesn't create the message, they run with it. In the early 2000s the dominant narrative against progressive politics and activism was “political correctness”, or “political correctness gone mad”. These days it's “woke virtue signalling” — a phrase used to diminish and ridicule the left-leaning progressive activist and to distract from the issue at hand.

This debate remains highly relevant as another United States election is upon us, and vastly different narratives to explain our world and gain votes fight for dominance. In America, the dominant prevailing metaphor remains the “family”. Lakoff argues that the conservatives espouse a “strict father” model of the family while the social progressives espouse a “nurturing parent” model.

Is it time to be more conscious of the prevailing narratives in New Zealand? What values do they resonate with? Who among us will use our voices to ensure a narrative is based on the values that put humanity first? Or challenge a narrative that doesn't?

I want to be a person who challenges unjust narratives and who isn't afraid to speak up. Then, I won't feel uneasy about calling myself an activist. ♦

Photo by Chameleons Eye/Shutterstock.com

Clare Curran, former politician, is a member of the University of Otago Council, and a committed advocate and representative on social justice issues.



FUNERALS & MOURNING

Peter Lineham *discusses the changing views on death and mourning in Aotearoa New Zealand.*

I HAVE BEEN to a rash of funerals recently. Long ones, short ones, religious ones, secular ones, and ones that I found it difficult to classify (does a short reading from the Bible make it religious, I wonder), with secular celebrants, ministers, priests, bishops, some in Catholic churches, some in Protestant churches, and some in funeral homes. The sheer variety is startling.

FUNERALS WERE CHURCH DOMAIN

Funerals have changed radically in the past 50 years. Until the 1970s funerals were almost entirely the preserve of churches, and the variations in funerals were simply reflective of the different theologies embraced by churches about death. There was a Catholic version and a Protestant version, but almost always funerals were religious.

In fact, funerals were the last place where religion persisted, after church-going, baptisms and church weddings had gone into terminal decline (if you pardon the inappropriate metaphor).

FUNERAL SERVICES PRIVATISED

Today, however, death is run by funeral directors. Traditionally the funeral director was the humble undertaker (usually the local cabinet maker), and did little more than furnish the coffin. Now, funeral directors advertise their services, and provide whatever type of service the family may choose, from religious or secular, employing suitable funeral

celebrants. Since Covid it is even common to hold no funeral at all.

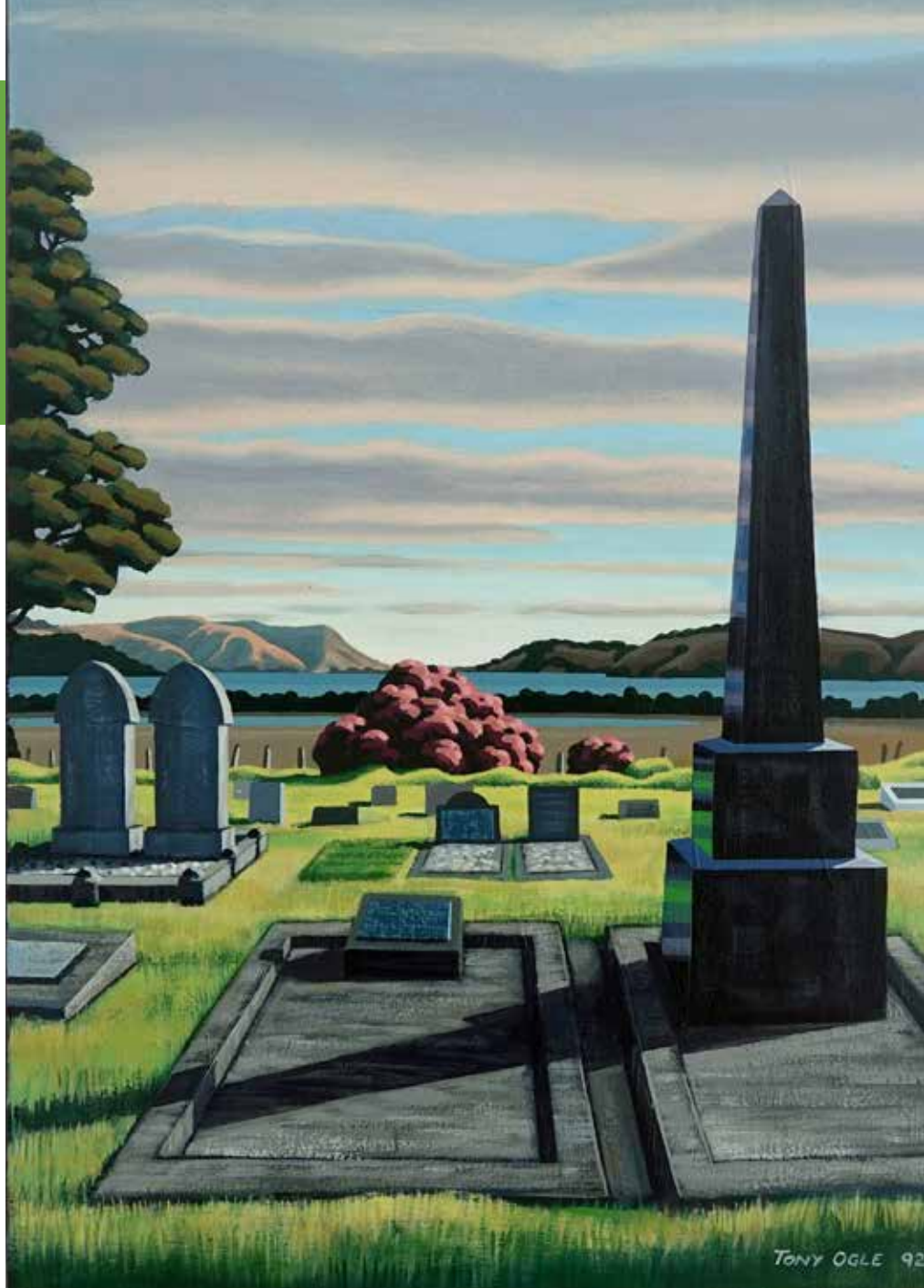
Catholic requiem Masses are reserved for the “really religious”, while Protestant services are often designed by the family, and that means that the favourite music of the deceased – however inappropriate – accompanies the coffin on its departure to burial or cremation. In the past everyone wore a black suit or dress, set aside for funerals, but now the dress code is more casual.

Above all the eulogy has spun out of control, often including humorous reminiscences celebrating the life of the deceased, despite formal guidelines for Catholic funerals disallowing eulogies until after the Mass or at the vigil. The slide-show of

the person's life is now standard. Only the sandwiches at the after-function seem to have gone unchanged (although some Catholics would have been used to wakes)!

MOVE FROM FEAR-INVOKING FUNERALS

These trends partly reflect the secularisation of rituals, but there are other factors at play. The so-called “Victorian way of death” reflected a society with shocking rates of untimely death, but also a longing for personal solace, reflecting the very troubled spirit of the Victorians, for whom death seemed profoundly disturbing. Dying was painful and often prolonged, and Victorian funeral services would invariably recall the last hours of the



deceased. Readers of Dickens will be familiar with the pattern.

In the grim rituals, concern with dying and what lay beyond death was always present. Staunch Protestants had heard many a sermon on the grim doctrine of eternal hell for unbelievers.

Catholics had a deep fear of Purgatory. Such fears are quite rare today, even though the doctrine behind them remains in some theologies.

CATHOLIC LAST RITES

For these reasons, Catholics were very anxious to receive the last rites, Penance, Extreme Unction and the Viaticum (Communion). Today, though, Extreme Unction, renamed the Anointing of the Sick, is seen as appropriate for the sick as well as the dying. Back in the 12th century the rituals of Extreme Unction had evolved into a sacrament that only a priest could administer.

PROTESTANT PROFESSION OF FAITH

Protestants had no sacrament to prepare for death, although a dying profession of faith marked out a "good death", and it was not unknown for strong religious pressure to be visited on the dying.

FUNERALS ADAPTED

The early New Zealand settlers modified these patterns somewhat, for migrants found that "It was hard to die frae hame." Death was hard, and migrants felt that burial in a strange land was a grim conclusion to life.

In New Zealand there was a widespread revulsion at the Calvinist emphasis on eternal hell. Funerals were used to remind Pākehā of the afterlife, the hope that something lay beyond death.

The grimness of the First World War, where so many soldiers died and were buried far from home with little opportunity for the ritual of the funeral, upset the equilibrium of the Victorian approach to death and the space to mourn when no funeral was possible.

HIDING DEATH

We are much more able to hide death away today. The hospice movement, dating back to the 1970s, eases the

experiences of the dying, but also conceals death, softens it and calms it. Outside the hospice, the focus is on living, with very little talk of individual recognition of our own mortality.

A curious feature of the New Zealand funeral is the standard practice of embalming, perhaps because family and friends will usually view the body. It may also reflect the long delay sometimes between the death and the funeral. (We have not adopted the British practice of an early funeral and a memorial service a month later).

BENEFITS OF TANGIHANGA

Often people remark on the Māori approach to death, with the length of tangihanga, the very public displays of grief, the use of greenery wreaths and the time spent around the open coffin, until the moment of the funeral service.

Tangihanga have changed, too, for example using photographs, which was once quite unacceptable, as aids to memory. The practices of Māori and Pākehā have drawn together somewhat, with some Māori elements evident in some Pākehā funerals.

CHANGING ATTITUDES

There are broader issues which underlie these changes. New Zealand was among the first states to abolish capital punishment in 1961, reflecting a greater respect for life, perhaps, but New Zealand has also been among the countries which have legalised euthanasia, albeit in somewhat restricted circumstances.

The way we deal with suicide has also changed, with much greater sensitivity towards the deceased, as a victim rather than a sinner.

The advent of cremation has often been related to the lack of space in cemeteries, but another factor is the squeamishness of those who remain at the thought of the processes of the decomposition of the corpse in the ground. It was only in 1963 that Catholics were permitted by the

church to be cremated, but in 2016 Pope Francis reminded Catholics that ashes ought not be scattered or kept at home.

FEAR OF DEATH

For all these changes, anxiety about death seems greater rather than diminished. The issue may no longer be the pain of death, but fear and nervousness remain.

Surveys suggest that these fears are stronger for the person isolated from family and with no children to maintain the genetic line; surveys also suggest that fear is stronger for females and for the young. In an odd, ironical twist, religious people seem more nervous about death than the irreligious, perhaps because they know more is at stake!

The weird experiments with refrigerating bodies until the elixir of life is found, suggest that Western culture is deeply attached to the idea of personal immortality, even in the midst of widespread discomfort with religion.

FUNERALS TO CELEBRATE THE DEAD AND LIFE AFTER DEATH

I wonder what the role of faith and the church will play in the future of death. One reflection of this is the funeral service in the *New Zealand Prayerbook* of the Anglican Church, which takes a generous attitude towards the future of those who have passed away and speaks words of careful consolation to the living.

I would guess that most of us are content with refocusing funerals on thanksgiving for the life of the person who has passed away, but Christian faith also declares its distinctive hope of eternal life in God, life in a newer and richer dimension.

The funeral is in some ways the clearest evidence of the ways in which our values diverge from those of our society. ✦

Cemetery – Coromandel by Tony Ogle ©
Acrylic on Board 500 x 370 mm
Image courtesy of Parnell Gallery

Peter Lineham is Emeritus Professor of History, Massey University, and has written extensively on religious history in Aotearoa New Zealand.





Death Is Not the End

Peter Matheson *reflects on the loss of the religious connection in funerals that allows mourning and points to the mystery beyond death.*

AN ANCIENT SHETLAND burial formula reads:
"Earth thou art, for of earth thou wast made
To earth thou returns now when dead
From the earth thou shalt arise
When the Lord shall blow the last trumpet".

It sounds familiar because it contains the Christian belief that death is not the end of human life. And it echoes the biblical language of human origin, death and eternal life.

Death has always been with us, but how do we face up to it in this time? We may welcome the dawn chorus day after day with: "This is the day of the Lord, let us rejoice and be glad in it." But what do we say when we know that we are coming to the end of our lives? How do we stand by those who are failing fast? And how do we reach out to the bereaved?

Each of us has our own experiences of bereavement and funerals. I possess a stark postcard depicting a huddle of black-coated men around a gaunt grave in the

Highlands of Scotland, a ceremony stripped bare of all colour and — one fears — of reassurance and hope. No women are present as was the tradition. I am reminded of the reaction of some Calvinists against what they viewed as the superstitious practices of Catholics with their Requiem Mass for the dead. The Calvinists were against prayers for the dead. So their funerals became dark and bleak, with the spoken or unspoken message: Repent for your days, too, are numbered.

For centuries funerals were the province of the church. Medieval historians often talked of a culture in which the living were at the service of the dead, praying and endowing Masses for them.

The 2023 New Zealand Funeral Industry Trends Report estimates that over 50 per cent of funerals now are led by secular celebrants. This is an incredible turn-around. Often our secular services have a celebratory tone, with songs, words and images and the odd funny story but without religious ritual. They provide scant room to mourn. Today

the living might engage in grief counselling to help “get over” the death.

TANGITANGA – DEATH, BURIAL AND AFTERLIFE

Funerals express the cultural and religious beliefs of a family. The remarkable tangi of Kīngi Tūhaetia took us into a Māori world of tradition in reverencing the dead one. Every gesture, song, speech, arriving and going was integral to the ritual. It was evident in the roles of rank upon rank of young and old, adult and child and the prayers and ministry of the clergy fitted like a glove.

It is as if a chasm runs through New Zealand where Māori and Pasifika are able to tap into the numinous while many others with post-modernist views find no sense or comfort there.

An Australian Uniting Church minister friend, addressing a somewhat bemused conference of funeral directors, pondered whether our constipated language and fumbling conduct, when faced by the profound mysteries of life and death, reflects the privatising, achievement-oriented focus of a disenchanted culture.

FUNERAL RITUALS SUPPORT BELIEFS

In her collection of poems, *Do They Make Coffins That Small? Ministry in an Age of Uncertainty*, Rev Ali Sangster portrays her work with street people in St Kilda, Melbourne. She reflects on how her flock farewelled one of their own who had died. As she stood in front of the hearse preparing to lead it through the traffic, an Oscar Wilde-like character clutched her hand.

Stumbling from booze on the cobbled road he urged: “Come on, Rev,’ and then I realise they have all come to join me, all God’s beggars. With canes and bleary eyes, these rough sleepers have come to honour the last journey of their old friend. Like a medieval mystery play we hold up the traffic, my alb flapping in the wind as I try to steer this crew away from danger. This woman who lived and died alone in public housing, surrounded by her plastic bags, a tattered Bible on her bed, is now being farewelled like a queen.”

Ali describes how ritual brings a group together — and funeral rituals were alive and well among the most needy.

PASTORAL TIES TO CHURCH BROKEN

There are multiple explanations why in New Zealand many of our friends and neighbours have become alienated from the church so that they do not think of approaching a priest or minister to conduct the funeral of their relatives and friends.

An obvious reason is that for many families the pastoral tie to the church has been broken, maybe for generations. Some people may have negative experiences and distorted memories of church funerals. In the past there was a rich pattern of innumerable associations with church life, the yearly calendar punctuated with festivals, Sunday schools, Bible classes and youth groups, church socials. The church was a place where people gathered naturally, not least in rural areas. So when someone died the people gathered there, too.

Yet I suspect there are other, more difficult elements at play which explain the demise of funerals in church.

Many of us will have attended church funerals which were conducted in a perfunctory, impersonal way, in which the language used and manner of the celebrant showed little awareness of the family’s situation. Such neglect is not easily forgiven. Whereas in the past, social convention and the mana of the clergy might have carried the day however formulaic the ceremony, these days people will not excuse this behaviour for their loved ones.

The 2023 NZ Funeral Industry Report noted that there is also a worrying trend to have no funeral for the person who has died — one lives; one dies and that is it. The body is simply cremated.

DEATH AS TRANSITION IN HUMAN LIFE

Sande Ramage, a practitioner of spiritual counselling, deplores the deletion of the sacred from secular funerals and their tendency to focus on external achievements.

She suggests that the real challenge is to shape and form words which enliven what is divine within us, so that those grieving can, through the judicious shaping and use of words, be moved forward into a new way of being.

She writes about the need to “bring a perspective to rituals that enables the participants to see life transitions, not just as human achievements but as movements within a larger narrative and to be in awe of that. To be prepared to lean into suffering and mortality, a stance that changes everything.”

The real challenge for a funeral ritual is to shape and form words which enliven what is divine within us, so that those grieving can ... be moved forward into a new way of being.

What I take from the current impasse of ideas about the sacred at funerals is that clergy can learn from Māori and Pasifika colleagues and communities to revitalise attitudes and practices where necessary. The treasury of experience, of dealing with grief and loss, has an unparalleled opportunity to offer the dying and the bereaved what they profoundly yearn for — a meaningful closure to life from within a community of faith and compassion.

It is an incredible privilege to sit with families as they mourn. Many clergy I know are scrutinising our current liturgical practices with imagination and rigour. The Beatitudes of Jesus point the way, as does the incomparable lyricism of the Psalms: “Goodness and mercy will never forsake me, and I will abide in the house of the Lord for ever.” ✧

At the Deathbed by Edvard Munch (1895) in Bergen Kunstmuseum
Wikimedia Commons

Peter Matheson is a peace activist, a Church historian, Emeritus Professor of Knox Theological College, Dunedin and author.





Speak Out!

Kevin Clements *reflects on his recent visit to Dachau concentration camp.*

IT WAS A fine day in Munich. We could have visited the Stadtmuseum, Nymphenburg or the Residenz. But we decided that we should go to Dachau instead. Neither my wife Valerie nor I had visited a Concentration camp and since Dachau was Himmler's 1933 prototype for all the other Nazi concentration camps, we thought that we should start where the violence began.

We took a train from Munich to Dachau (a sweet Bavarian village that dates back to the Middle Ages) and from there a bus to the camp. In this our arrival was in stark contrast to the former inmates who were frogmarched from Dachau station to the camp under the watchful eye of the Schutzstaffel (SS). Those who stumbled or looked weak were often beaten and shot. The entrance to Dachau is now a bookshop and a cafeteria. Before heading into the camp proper we had some lasagne and a coffee, two things which the prisoners would never have had before entering the gates.

Thus fortified we moved towards the actual gate which had the chilling words *Arbeit Macht Frei* above the door.

"Work Makes One Free" was a cruel slogan for everyone, but especially for those who died or were killed in the camp.

Intentionally Punitive Camp

Dachau was built in 1933 to house political opponents of fascism — communists, social democrats and dissidents who opposed the Hitler regime. A large number of Catholic priests were arrested for their opposition. In a chilling echo of this barbarous past Donald Trump has promised to "deal" with his political opponents on the first day of his presidency.

The primary purpose of Dachau was to provide forced labour for munitions factories. After *Kristallnacht*, the Nazi Party's November 1938 pogroms, thousands of Jews and Romani were also imprisoned at Dachau. German and Austrian criminals were also detained, which meant that the camp was initially divided into political and Jewish prisoners and ordinary criminals. The latter soon gave way exclusively to Jews and the political opponents of Hitler.

Confrontation with Brutality

Entering the compound we were surrounded by the remnants of the barbed wire fences, watchtowers and the SS quarters (which now double as a museum), as well as a swift-flowing river alongside the perimeter fence.

Of the 200,000 people imprisoned at Dachau, at least 43,000 were killed, or died of typhus.

Prisoners lived in constant fear of brutal treatment and terror detention, which included standing cells, floggings, tree and pole hangings. The prisoners were demonised, dehumanised and brutalised. One burly SS guard, for example, specialised in killing the sick or infirm by having them lie on the ground so that he could jump on their rib cages.

There were multiple medical experiments that ended in death. The first gas chamber was tested at Dachau.

The SS perfected interrogation and torture techniques on the inmates. There was a crematorium that disposed of the bodies killed. As shown in the 2023 film *Zone of Interest* (reviewed in *TM*, April 2024) life went on as normal in the village of Dachau and the SS had areas beside the camp where they lived with their families. One of those areas is now a Carmelite Centre.

Overall, though, Dachau was a centre of forced labour for a range of munitions factories and a killing machine for people scheduled for death or who had the temerity to oppose those in charge.

Attitude of Staff

As SS member Johann von Malsen-Ponickau said when the camp was opened in 1933:

“Comrades of the SS! You all know what the Fuehrer has called us to do. We have not come here for human encounters with those pigs in there. We do not consider them human beings, as we are, but as second-class people. For years they have been able to continue their criminal existence. But now we are in power. If those pigs had come to power they would have cut off all our heads. Therefore, we have no room for sentimentalism. If anyone here cannot bear to see the blood of comrades, he does not belong and had better leave. The more of these pig dogs we strike down, the fewer we need to feed.”

This statement leaves no doubt about what a concentration camp was for. It was a place to exploit prisoners for as long as possible and was the “final solution” for those considered second-rate citizens or opponents of the regime.

Dachau an Insult to Common Humanity

Dachau has now been completely sanitised. After reading

all about industrial-level slaughter and viewing stomach-churning photographs, we went out in the sunshine, saw the barracks that people slept in and walked down a tree-lined avenue to the gas chambers and crematoria.

Right beside these killing sites there are now a variety of Jewish and Christian chapels at the end of the camp. These provide places to sit in and reflect on the organised slaughter and the unnecessary deaths of thousands.

Even though these chapels are a welcome respite from the slaughter houses, they don't really deal with the constant, ongoing stain and dark cloud of Nazi brutality and suffering. There are now lawns where there were prisoner parade grounds and a museum where the SS decided who would live and who would die.

Dachau remains an insult to our common humanity. Not even the sun could remove the fact that we were walking through a place of horror and unimaginable terror.

What Can We Do Now?

I'm still trying to process what it means to visit such a place. It's very different from visiting an ordinary museum, art gallery or a prince's palace. Nearly 80 years after the war's end, we were tourists trying to make sense of the incomprehensible. And in some curious way, we were also belated bystanders to torture and death. We could come and go as we pleased. We felt disgusted by the brutality but I wonder whether we would have been passive bystanders or critics of fascism given the high costs of dissent.

Pastor Martin Neimoller was imprisoned in Dachau as a special prisoner of Hitler. As he said after the war: “First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out — because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out — because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out — because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me — and there was no one left to speak for me.”

So maybe this is the point of visiting Dachau. We honour the memory of those imprisoned and dead not by being a tourist and a bystander but an active and engaged member of the human race; willing to speak out against evil whenever we see it and willing to stand up to brutality and oppression and speak truth to power no matter the consequences. ✦

Images supplied

Kevin P Clements is the Director of the Toda Peace Institute. He was the founding Professor of the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Otago University.



INEQUITY PERSISTS

Paul Barber and Missy Ditchburn discuss the gender pay gap in Aotearoa and steps their church is taking to close it, both in society and in their institution.

THE OFFICIAL STATISTICS on the gender pay gap were released in August 2024. In 2024 the gap decreased slightly to 8.2 per cent compared to 8.6 per cent in 2023, a decrease so small it is within the “margin of error”. It is little changed from the 9.9 per cent gap a decade ago. Every year the progress (or lack thereof) to equality in median hourly earnings is reported, documenting the enduring inequity women in paid employment experience. It is now more than 50 years since the Equal Pay Act 1972 came into law and the question remains why, half a century later, women on average still earn almost 10 per cent less than men?

WOMEN PAID LESS — AND UNEQUALLY

Pacific women face a much larger pay gap with median earnings at \$29 per hour, 22 per cent less than European men at \$35.48. Wāhine Māori face a similarly large gap with median earnings at \$29.88 per hour. In contrast, the pay gap for European women is 5.5 per cent at a median hourly pay rate of \$33.56.

The overall trend for women

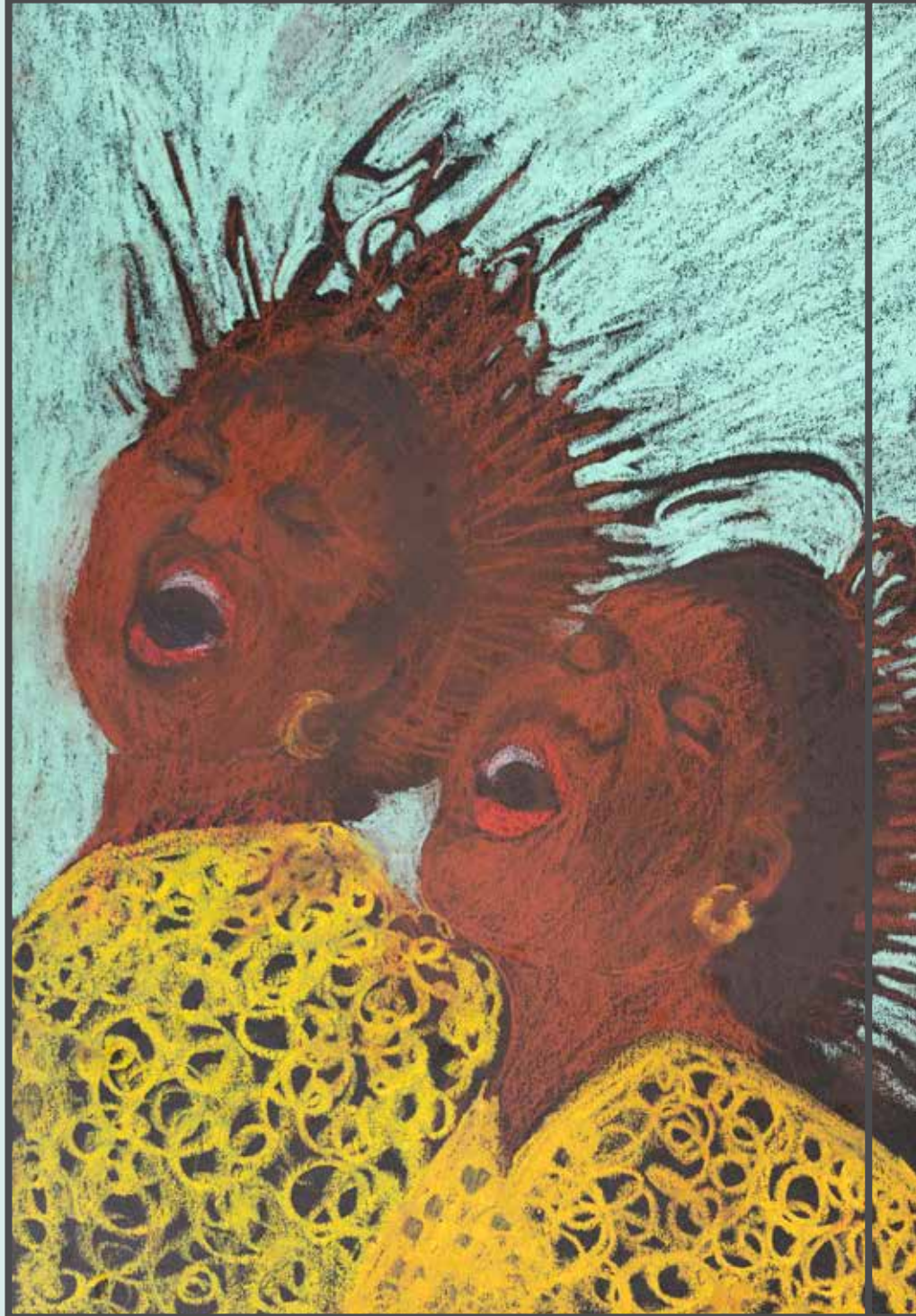
in the past 15 years has been a higher proportion of women seeking paid employment (labour force participation rates) and generally lower unemployment rates. But low unemployment and relatively strong economic growth in recent years has not helped make significant inroads into earning disparities.

For a brief period during the year to June 2022, unemployment rates for women and men were the lowest rate for decades at just over 3 per cent and almost the same for each gender, but in the following two years women's unemployment rate has risen faster and it is once again higher than men's. The burden of rising unemployment

rates also falls unequally among women. The rate for wāhine Māori at 10 per cent and for Pacific women at 8 per cent is much higher than European women at 3.1 per cent or Asian women at 4.1 per cent.

FACTORS MAKING THE GAP

There are complex reasons for the persistent pay gap, but recent research suggests that most of the gap is driven by so-called “unexplained factors” that cannot be easily measured, such as conscious and unconscious bias and a difference in men's and women's choices and behaviours. These factors have a much bigger impact than others



such as levels of education, types of occupations and industries where women and men tend to work, and the fact that a higher proportion of women work part-time.

CHILDREN AFFECTED

Women's experience of employment and the welfare system is inextricably linked to the outcomes of their children. Women make up most of the sole parents receiving welfare support. Just over half (55%) of the 370,250 benefit recipients as at 31 March 2024 were women, but 91 per cent of the 76,300 receiving sole parent support (SPS) were women.

Of the 218,300 children in benefit households, 153,300 (70 per cent) are cared for by parents receiving SPS, therefore the level of welfare support is a critical issue for women and their children. Children in households relying on welfare support are much more likely to experience food insecurity and other material hardship and poverty.

WOMEN DO MOST UNPAID WORK

Women continue to do most of the unpaid work in households and the community, and this in turn restricts their capacity to be in paid employment. The consequences of this flow into lower lifetime earnings and less financial security. Research shows that if the load of care responsibilities and housework was shared more equally, it would add \$1.5 billion per year to the size of the economy.

WE CAN HAVE EQUITY

Gender equity cannot be reduced to economics and wage calculations, but these numbers and statistics give some substance and measuring points for progress towards greater equity and justice.

Gender inequity is an embedded and longstanding injustice but these figures show that progress can be made when there is a legislative and policy focus that addresses barriers to greater equity, such as access to childcare, employment rights and adequacy of welfare support. But also, injustice and inequality is hard to change and those who benefit

from inequity resist change through inaction or active resistance.

The Christian vision for gender equity is built on the conviction that we are all created to be equal and mutually share resources. Achieving equity requires us to recognise the different contexts and circumstances that women and men experience and provide the right resources and tools for each context to achieve equality. Equity of incomes is a crucial factor in resourcing women to achieve equal outcomes across all areas of life.

GENDER EQUITY IN THE CHURCH

Bias towards traditionally male-dominated leadership styles remains a barrier to gender equity within organisations and the church, and The Salvation Army Te Ope Whakaora is no exception. A command-based view of leadership affects women (and men from diverse backgrounds/leadership styles) in reaching executive positions and attaining higher salaries.

However, research suggests that qualities formerly seen as weaknesses in leadership are now deemed critical to building a fairer world. Empathy, collaboration and vulnerability are now essential leadership characteristics. Identifying, training and valuing this type of leader is also helping to reshape how leadership is viewed within the movement and remove barriers for women (and men).

Today as a church we acknowledge a gap often exists between theory and practice. In response we have established a gender equity committee which has established a 40 per cent quota for women on boards, changes to interview processes to support women's consideration for roles, teaching about gender bias

through our college and ongoing work to lower the gender pay gap within the movement.

Addressing the gender pay gap and high-level leadership inequality is essential, but this work must remain integrated into broader work towards a fairer world. Structural changes to governance to honour the Te Tiriti relationship include a new covenant-based Rūnanga structure, along with a Pasifika advisory board. The work of gender equity intersects with many other forms of injustice experienced by women that become barriers to achieving equality.

The Salvation Army is an international partner of the United Nations' efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, one of which is gender equality. It is crucial to ensure no one is left behind in the pursuit of equality. When setting goals there is a temptation to help those who are easiest to reach first, because it boosts the statistics. But reaching "the furthest behind first" is critical to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This commitment to the most marginalised is echoed in the Bible, where those who follow God are called to serve people experiencing oppression because those seen as least important in the world are most important in God's Kingdom (Matthew 5:1-10). The struggle for justice never ends. ✦

For further info: Manatū Wāhine Ministry for Women www.women.govt.nz

Te Vaine Tongareva (2022) by Joan Gragg ©
Courtesy of Bergman Gallery
www.bergmangallery.com

Missy Ditchburn is the Social Justice Co-ordinator of the Women's Ministries of The Salvation Army Te Ope Whakaora.



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What the Church Has Done, the Church Can Do Again

Theologian **Phyllis Zagano**, whose research has provided overwhelming historical evidence that women were ordained deacons by bishops intending to perform a sacrament, talked to **Ann Hassan** about arguments for disallowing women deacons in these times.

POPE FRANCIS CITED the Petrine and Marian principles in November 2022 and again recently equating the Petrine principle with men and ministry, and the Marian principle with woman and spouse. Francis stated: “The church is a woman. The church is a spouse. Therefore, the dignity of women is mirrored in this way.” What does this mean?

Petrine and Marian Principles

The Petrine principle in brief is that men are ministers and women are not. The Marian principle is a theology of women that says that women are lay people, and they are the lay ministers of the church. That’s kind of a shorthand understanding of it — that men and women have different participation in Christ’s priesthood. But it then becomes badly distorted because the Petrine principle supports the notion that the priest stands *in persona Christi capitis* — in the person of Christ the head of the church — and the 2002 International Theological Commission document on the diaconate [“From the Diakonia of Christ to the Diakonia of the Apostles”] says that the deacon is *in persona Christi*

servi — in the person of Christ the servant. The argument is that women cannot serve or be *in persona Christi*. But that says women are not made in the image and likeness of God which is basically heretical.

Pity for Women but Not Equality

The Petrine principle and the Marian principle come up in various places. I think they are offensive and naive — they pigeonhole human beings by their accidents ignoring their substance. We need to recognise that men and women are not the same, obviously, but they are equal.

Women in some cultures are not allowed to drive automobiles, they’re not allowed to go out alone without a male escort. Up until recently in the United States it was difficult if not impossible for a woman to have her own charge account or to buy property. There are several countries in the world where women are chattel — the owned property of their husbands.

And you find in all church documents, particularly those published by Pope Francis, comments about the status

of women and the way women are treated and the way women suffer the direst consequences of war and famine and poverty. But there is always a disconnect between the way the church decries the problems of women and the way the church talks about women. And until those things are connected, I blame the church. If you're going to tell me that I can't image Christ, that I am not made in the image and likeness of God, then I'm going to blame you for dowry burnings, I'm going to blame you for rapes and beatings, I'm going to blame you for every single kind of awful thing that men have foisted upon women, from menstruation huts to childhood marriages — terrible things.

Members of the church keep talking around the situation, but the fact of the matter is the church says women are secondary individuals. It says women are unclean as with *Musicam sacram* (1967) that says if a choir includes women it cannot sing from within the sanctuary. Why? Because women cannot be near the holy.

Deacons — Not Church Heroines

The "Group Five" report given to the recent Synod on Synodality names 13 women ministering in the past — Joan of Arc, Catherine of Siena, Matilda of Canossa, Bridget of Sweden, Hildegard of Bingen, for example — but these are extraordinary women. And Mercy Sister Elizabeth Young (founder of Australian Catholics Exploring the Diaconate) doesn't want to be

Bridget of Sweden or Catherine of Siena. She just wants to serve the people in the Australian outback. The women who are asking to be deacons today certainly

are not Matilda of Canossa — they don't own half of Italy.

These women in history did not have a job in ministry. They weren't ministering sacramentally, or preaching formally in the Mass. They had no authority in terms of jurisdiction or juridical authority. Any jurisdiction they did have was because of their territorial lands as territorial abbesses. None of them is connected to the collection box.

Deacons Held the Purse Strings

In the early church, when you went to the celebration of the Eucharist you brought your chicken or your egg or your dime or your blanket, whatever you had, and some of what you brought, some of the bread and the wine, became the stuff of the Eucharist. And then when you were leaving you went to the deacon and maybe you needed a blanket, or you needed a chicken or you needed an egg and the last person in line to receive gifts from the deacon was the priest, who received his pay.

So that really is what got rid of the diaconate — because until the 12th century deacons controlled the money and they were always giving it away to the poor — and Lord knows you don't want to do that! So, the priests, particularly in Rome, argued for *cursus honorum* (course of honour). It became law that no one could become a deacon unless he (and only he) was also destined to be a priest.

Who Can Preach?

The preacher on Sunday is the representative of the bishop. The person who preaches must be a deacon or priest or bishop who is participating in the Mass. The only liturgical law — it is from 1973, the Congregation for Divine Worship's "Directory for Masses with Children" — that allows a woman to preach during a Mass is during Masses for children. And it does not say a woman can preach; it says a "person better able to speak to children".

Objections to Women Priests Are Different

Objections to women priests are different from objections to women deacons. In 1976 after the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued its "Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood", were two arguments against ordaining women priests: the "iconic argument" which said that women cannot image Christ, and the "argument from authority" that Jesus chose only male apostles.

In 1994, with *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, the argument that Jesus chose only male apostles remains, but the iconic argument is dropped. But then the iconic argument is resurrected in the 2002 report on the diaconate ["From the Diakonia of Christ to the Diakonia of the Apostles"] to apply to the diaconate.

But the diaconate is not the priesthood — that's in the

So that really is what got rid of the diaconate — because until the 12th century deacons controlled the money and they were always giving it away to the poor.

Catechism in 1983. And Benedict XVI made that point in 2006 and then codified it in 2009, with his *motu proprio: Omium in mentem*.

We know that women were ordained as deacons. Realistically speaking the only reason that people have against women in the diaconate is the argument that women cannot image Christ, which I think is disgraceful.

Deacons Put Forth by Communities

In Acts 6:1-16 the Apostles admit that they can't do everything, so they go to the community and ask: "Who do you recommend as deacons?" Seven persons — the perfect number — are mentioned in Scripture. They are the archetype of the diaconate.

The diaconate is in large part a creation of the church. Women have been ordained as deacons. What the church has done, the church can do again. ♦

New Jerusalem by Sieger Köder ©
(Detail of Altar Triptych, St Joseph's Church, Bad Urach, Germany)
Photo by Zvonimir Atletic/Shutterstock.com

Phyllis Zagano holds a research appointment at Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York. Her most recent book is *Just Church* (2023).





MORE MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH

Peter Cullinane shares a letter he wrote to Pope Francis about sharing the powers of the ordained in a greater variety of ministries in the church for today.

OVER-SIMPLIFIED HEADLINES have been giving the impression that Pope Francis has spoken definitively on the matter of women deacons. That is not my understanding. I understand that wider possibilities for the sacrament of Holy Orders need to be explored first, and that simply latching on to the existing structures could further delay the wider discussion that needs to take place. We may lament the time this takes, but we can hardly dispute the need.

I can illustrate what I mean by sharing an abbreviated copy of the letter I wrote to Pope Francis in July 2016.

Dear Holy Father

I wish to make a suggestion concerning the possibility of greater diversity within the ordained ministries of the Church.

As you know, a greater variety of ministries existed in the early Church before they coalesced into the ministries of bishop, presbyter and deacon. Of course, other charisms, prophetic ministries and movements continued to exist alongside the ordained ministries, and continue to inspire and nurture the Church — not least of all the Religious

Orders, and now the new ecclesial movements. But the focus of this letter is ordained ministry.

Greater diversity of ministries within the early Church is not, per se, sufficient reason for greater diversity in today's Church. But there are other good pastoral reasons pertinent to our own times. I do not think our current ordained ministries are adequate for meeting the needs they are meant to meet, even with the support of various lay ministries.

This is not reducible to how ordained ministries are carried out. I take for granted that it needs to be "collaborative ministry". Many lay people have shown exemplary leadership in exercising pastoral, spiritual and liturgical ministries, and formation for them.

I am not advocating more forms of lay ministry because we must not obscure the fact that laity carry out the mission of the Church, and grow in holiness, in their secular callings. The Church's mission is not reducible to ministries, ordained or lay. And ordained ministries are not reducible to their functions; all ministries are representative, in the



sense of giving voice and visibility to what the Risen Christ is doing through them.

Sharing the Powers of Ministry More Widely

Having made the above clarifications, I now ask whether the Church's universal episcopate should consider

WE HAVE HEARD THE LAMENTS OF SOME CHAPLAINS THAT THEY COULD HAVE DONE ... MORE WERE THEY ABLE TO CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENTS ... THEY WERE AVAILABLE AT CERTAIN *KAIROS* MOMENTS WHEN A PRIEST COULD NOT BE, OR IN PLACES WHERE PRIESTS ARE NOT USUALLY PRESENT.

re-distributing the "powers" currently enshrined within the ministries of episcopacy, presbyterate and diaconate into a wider variety of ministries.

"Powers" presently distributed among the existing ordained ministries would live on, but in a wider configuration. The fullness of authority vested in the college of bishops (*cum et sub Petro*) would also live on. But the lesser participations in its teaching, sanctifying and governing roles would be re-distributed among ordained ministries — old and new.

Early Church Shaped Ministries to Needs

As you know, ordained ministries carried out in the name of Christ ultimately have their origin in Christ, but their structure and concrete forms were determined by the Church, during the apostolic period and continuing until late in the second century. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church of those times shaped its ministries to meet its needs.

Church Can Shape Ministries for Today

What the post-apostolic Church could do then, it can still do now. Being faithful to the Tradition involves more than just receiving what the early Church did; it involves doing what the early Church did, which includes shaping its ministries to meet the needs of its mission.

Adaptation to today's circumstances has resulted in lay women and men becoming chaplains, or members of chaplaincy teams, in our hospitals, prisons, secondary colleges and tertiary institutions.

We have all heard the occasional laments of some of these that they could have done so much more were they able to celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick. They were available at certain *kairos* [crucial] moments when a priest could not be; or in places where priests are not usually present.

A greater diversity of ordained ministries would also create a needed new context in which to discuss other

questions that are still waiting to be resolved.

Some answers that make sense within our current perspectives do not seem to fully satisfy, including questions whose lack of resolution has negative consequences for the Church. For example: questions about participation in governance and its relationship to Holy Orders; the ongoing distraction of clericalism; Anglican Orders, the ordained ministries of other Christian churches, and Christian unity; real and perceived

inequalities based on gender.

The primary repository of what the apostles "handed on" is, of course, the whole body of the baptised faithful. This body will always produce the ministries it needs for its nurture, and has the right to be adequately ministered to.

Of course, the development of greater diversity in the Church's ordained ministries would need to allow for differences arising from inculturation. This suggests the need for Bishops' Conferences to take more responsibility.

Invite Dialogue in Church

I realise this far-reaching proposal should also involve the Churches of the East. Such dialogue would be mutually enriching, but given the different situations we experience in the West, the outcome of dialogue should not ultimately depend on East and West being able to move at the same pace.

Sharing Power a Missionary Option

In one sense, my proposal seems a "big ask". In another sense it seems a small thing. You yourself have spoken of a "missionary option" that is "capable of transforming everything." I am reminded of a comment by Hans Urs von Balthasar: "[the] Church will suffer the loss of its shape as it undergoes a death, and the more so, the more purely it lives from its source and is consequently less concerned with preserving its shape. In fact, it will not concern itself with affirming its shape but with promoting the world's salvation; as for the shape in which God will raise it from its death to serve the world, it will entrust [that] to the Holy Spirit."

Holy Father, I believe that what I am proposing is possible doctrinally speaking, and that it could have far-reaching pastoral advantages. I will respect your own judgement on what to do with it.

Be assured of my prayers — for yourself personally and for your ministry. (You and I were born within 18 days of each other, and I am amazed at your energy.) ✠

I-(s)Lander\$ by Dean Raybould © Used with permission Art by the Sea Gallery www.artbythesea.co.nz

Bishop **Peter Cullinane** is a theologian and the former bishop of Palmerston North. In "retirement" he continues his pastoral ministry.



A photograph of a displaced Palestinian child being held by an adult in a rubble-strewn area. The child is wearing a pink and black striped shirt. The background shows a damaged building with a brick wall and debris on the ground.

“Every bombed village is my hometown”

— James Baldwin

And every dead child is my child.
Every grieving mother is my mother.

Every crying father is my father.

Every home turned to rubble
is the home I grew up in.

Every brother carrying the remains
of his brother across his shoulders
is my brother.

Every sister waiting for a sister
who will never come home
is my sister.

Every one of these people are ours,
just like we are theirs.

We belong to them
and they belong to us.

— Unknown

Photo By Anas-Mohammed/Shutterstock.com

Displaced Palestinians inspect their tents, which were hit from an Israeli airstrike, inside the Al-Aqsa Hospital compound, in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, on 27 September, 2024.





MISSION IS DOING THE GOOD NEWS

In the third part of her series, Susan Smith traces the change in the understanding of mission particularly after the Second Vatican Council.

MISSIONARY PRACTICES AND theologies developed in ways that would have been incomprehensible to the Reverend Alban Butler, who in the 18th century wrote: "This conversion of nations according to the divine commission is the prerogative of that Catholic Church, in which it has never had any rival." But when we consider some of the more important developments that have happened in the second half of the 20th century, we begin to see why these "incomprehensible" shifts occurred.

COLLAPSE OF EUROPEAN EMPIRES

World War II meant the collapse of Europe's empires so that most former Asian, African and Oceanic colonies had become independent nations by the 1960s. In those new nation states where a great world religion dominated, conversion of Hindus or Buddhists or Muslims was not acceptable to governments, and while there was still government enthusiasm for mission schools and hospitals, there was less enthusiasm for Western missionaries. Other countries were now under the control of communist governments. Newly independent nations in sub-Saharan Africa where Muslims did not constitute the majority population tended to be more accepting of foreign missionaries.

IMPACT OF CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Even before Vatican II, Catholic populations were declining in the Western world apart from the United States. There evangelical Christianity and more traditional expressions of Catholicism still seem to be alive and well. The New Zealand 2018 Census Statistics reported that the Christian population had dropped to 37.31 per cent, although the Catholic Church here still looks quite strong thanks to the different migrant communities filling parish churches at Sunday Eucharist. These demographic shifts affected the ability of Western religious congregations founded for the foreign missions to continue such ministries. But while vocations to religious life declined in Western countries, this was not true in other parts the world. By the end of the 20th century, former mission-sending countries were now mission-receiving countries.

DECADE OF DEVELOPMENT 1960-1970

Earlier imperial control meant that new nation states were struggling with the legacy of many years of exploitation, causing the United Nations to designate the 1960s decade as one of development to help such countries move millions of people out of degrading poverty. Catholic missionaries, still predominantly Western, recognised that this was a laudable goal. Enthusiasm was

waning for programmes that had as their direct goal the conversion of pagans, but waxed for income-generating projects, empowerment of women projects and other programmes that were paralleled by secular non-governmental organisations.

IMPACT OF VATICAN II (1962-1965)

Vatican Council II brought extraordinary changes in how missionary activity was to be understood.

The first change was that Catholics were empowered to move beyond dualistic theologies to those that were more holistic. The “world” was no longer a place of trial and temptation through which believers had to successfully navigate their way to heaven. The world was the arena where a loving God was actively involved in liberating people from all that oppressed them. Exodus reminded the believer that Yahweh had come to deliver the Israelites and bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey (see Ex 3:5-7). God as active in human history was being reclaimed particularly in Latin America thanks to the impact of liberation theology. *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican II’s *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*) taught that “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”

THEOLOGY OF HOLY SPIRIT

A second important change occurred in theologies of the Holy Spirit. Prior to the Council, there was much emphasis in the church and in religious life on what might be called the particularity of the Spirit’s presence in church authorities and in religious superiors — they had a hotline to the Spirit and so could transmit to others what the Holy Spirit was asking of them. *Ad Gentes*, Vatican II’s document

“THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS ALREADY AT WORK IN THE WORLD BEFORE CHRIST WAS GLORIFIED”

on mission, states that “the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified”, a wonderful statement affirmed by John Paul II when he taught that the Spirit’s “presence and activity are universal, limited neither by space nor time” (*Redemptoris Missio* no. 28).

Such comprehensive understandings of the Spirit’s presence at work in the world in all peoples radically altered perceptions around those formerly thought to be “living in darkness.” These radical shifts, coupled with demographic and political changes, profoundly altered that way in which missionary activity was to be understood in at least three ways:

- Conversion of pagans was to be complemented by

missionary activities that recognised God was on the side of the poor who needed empowering so that they could become the agents of their own liberation and development;

- Ecumenical relations with other Christian churches were to be prioritised, initially with those churches that were closer to the Catholic church theologically, eg, Anglicans and Lutherans, but as the 20th century came to an end, with other churches too;
- Instead of unlimited concern, indeed pity, for pagans, the church invited members to recognise the positive values to be found in the world’s great religions and in the traditions of tribal peoples. Inter-religious dialogue was encouraged at all levels.

CHANGE IN MISSIONARY RECEIVING COUNTRIES

A third important development that has accelerated in more recent decades has been the virtual disappearance of Western missionaries from former Asian and African colonies, and instead the influx of missionaries, women and men from former colonies to the ends of the earth. Sometimes referred to as “reverse mission,” we see this particularly in the numbers of priests now living and working in Aotearoa from Asia, and other places.

CHANGE IN SCRIPTURAL MANDATE FOR MISSION

Finally, as Dr Butler pointed out in the 18th century, the church believed it had a commission to go out and baptise all. Such an injunction reflects Matthew 28:19-20 when the risen Jesus commands his disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

While some smaller evangelical churches still prioritise such a text, two other texts now have more importance for Catholics. The first is from Matthew’s Last Judgement parable where we read: “And the king will answer them: ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’” (Mat 25:40).

Perhaps even more often cited are the words of Jesus not long after his baptism as he begins his mission in Galilee. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus proclaims: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” (Luke 4:18-19).

The latter two texts are those in which most contemporary Catholic missionary activity finds its mandate as it focuses on the reigning of God in society, and in our cosmos. ✨

The Calling Diptych by Robyn Fleet © Used with permission
Instagram: @robynfleetartist The Frame Workshop & Gallery
www.frameworkshop.co.nz/collections/robyn-fleet

Susan Smith RNDM lives in Northland. She has researched and written on mission and has authored books on missiology as well as editing *Zeal for Mission: The Story of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions 1861-2011*.





SPEAK UP: *It's No Time for Silence*

THIS HAS BEEN an exceptionally bleak year politically. Putin's campaign of an unjustified and barbarous invasion of a neighbour, Ukraine, undergirded by disinformation and lies, has dragged on and on. To what end all this fear and hate and pain? And now Israel's campaign of assassinations in Lebanon is threatening to turn that already ravaged country into another Gaza, a landscape of rubble and ruined human lives. But it also signals and symbolises a much more existential threat to the world order, to all our assumptions about national integrity and sovereignty.

These are just two examples, but almost overnight, it seems the entire international order is on the cusp of collapse. We may not have sympathy for Hezbollah or Hamas, but the massive destabilisation of human dignity is now not coming from them but from what we might call state-sponsored terrorism. A confidence that superior military force will deliver the goods is backed by religious ideology, a deranged Zionism in Israel's case, and a sick parody of Orthodox Christianity for Putin.

We sense instability in many places. China swaggers across the Pacific with threats of invasion in one pocket and bribes in the other. Biden, *roi fainéant* (do-nothing king) of what is still the most powerful country in the world, pours armaments into the conflagrations in Palestine and the Ukraine, while chanting his own exceptionalist mantras.

Meanwhile in many places around the world the crudest populism and conspiracy theories are spread intentionally across the internet. The rhetoric of peace is still strummed in the corridors of the United Nations, but the Security Council has become inadequate, a grotesque symbol of the paralysis of peace-making.

An almost exclusive reliance on military hardware is common to all these crucial players in international politics. They have militarised the world as never before. Amoral actions, including deploying hunger and disease as weapons, are part of their massive investments in the most sophisticated weaponry. And now they're brandishing even nuclear weapons as just one more tool in their war chest. Even our neighbour Australia is drifting into a nuclear alliance without any apparent hesitation.

The price for this idolisation of weaponry is being paid for primarily by the innocent civilians — children, mothers,

fathers, grandparents, medics, teachers, aid workers, journalists — caught in the middle. Food, medicines and other aid are withheld. Hospitals, schools and sacred sites are targeted.

The long-term cost to human dignity is unthinkable, not only in terms of the direct destruction of infrastructure, dams and agriculture, but in the diversion of resources to war. This stops countries from meeting our primary global challenges: the ongoing degradation of the environment and the floods of desperate refugees across the globe. How did we get to this perilous state? The Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska writes:

A gale
Stripped all the leaves from the trees last night
Except for one leaf
Left
To sway solo on a naked branch.

With this example
Violence demonstrates
That yes of course —
It takes its little joke from time to time.

The truth is that when we cross a certain line, we cease to be human. As responsible citizens we need to stand back from the dreadful accounts and images which assail us every day. Like many of you, I pray each day the Our Father, hallowing what deserves to be hallowed, yearning for God's Kingdom. I suspect we are bleeding inwardly.

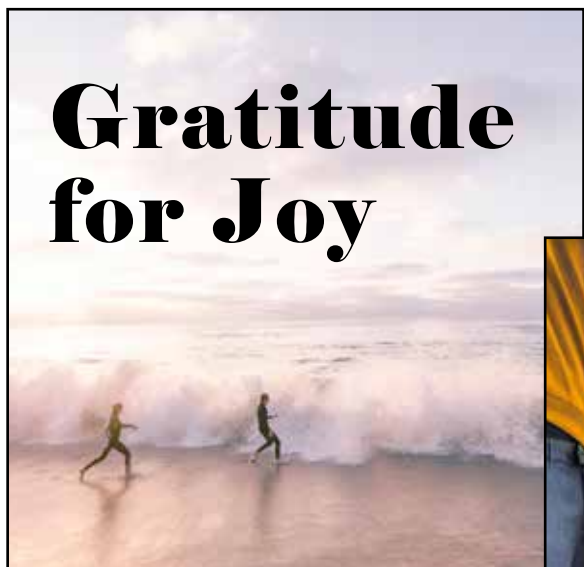
But it is equally urgent to put on the hard hat of reason. Politics and wars are the work of humans and they can be turned around. Behind so many of these policies lurk sick ideologies. We have the moral and spiritual resources to critique, denounce and replace them. Future generations may depend on us acting now. ♦

Photo by Melnikov Dmitriy/Shutterstock

Peter Matheson is a theologian, Emeritus Professor of Knox Theological College, Dunedin and author of many books including *Argula von Grumbach: A Woman before Her Time*.



Gratitude for Joy



IT'S LATE SPRING and hot winds sear blossoms from the trees where they sparkle in the air in front of my window. Momentarily, I forget the screen and the work I'm supposed to be doing, because it seems like nothing could be more important just now than watching those petals dancing in the wind.

I'm curious about this feeling of deep joy rising in me, because it seems to convey something more profound about the nature of creation than I can learn from a standard 6pm news bulletin. The psalmist writes: "Let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant and everything that is in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy." That joy moves through me just as it shimmers in the thousands of living things that make their homes in drops of seawater.

I'm grateful for joy as I've been living with sorrow and uncertainty recently. My beloved great-aunt is undergoing radiation for a brain tumour. My grandmother is adjusting to life in a rest home. They are some of the people I love most but they live far from me. Then there is the bigger picture stuff. Last month I was visiting Dunedin and experienced the severe flooding event there. It brought me face-to-face with the reality of the climate crisis and the grief of victims whose safety and homes were suddenly threatened. Their grief is shared by millions of people worldwide who are encountering ecological disaster hastened and

worsened by human activity — not the least of which is war.

What is the purpose, then, of attending to wind-blown petals, running dogs and talking to my grandmother on my way home? I recently read *If We Burn*, Vincent Bevins' excellent book about protest movements. He discusses with his interviewees what makes a protest movement worthwhile. They can't decide whether a protest is worthwhile — even if, ultimately, it fails — because it engenders solidarity and hope in participants, or whether a protest is worthwhile because it brings people together as they glimpse a possible future world, the way things might be.

Is joy, then, like the shiny pebbles scattered on the road of hard stuff? Or is joy within the road itself, so that by attending to the hard stuff we touch into deep gladness, the worthwhileness of life in community?

Certainly, the unexpected vision of dancing petals in the breeze on an ordinary workday stopped me from sinking into the bleak topics of my work reading and the sadness I carry in my chest as if that was all of reality. Pain, illness, environmental destruction, the dislocation of millions of people, exploitation and poverty, warmongering and the killing of children, are very real. We rightly feel anger. But we need more to keep us going. And the possibility of the joy we can imbibe from all of God's creation — from petals in the wind, from companions with shared

purpose, from leaves and seascapes — will lift us and fuel our efforts together for a better world. ♦

Shanti Mathias lives in Auckland and is a journalist for *The Spinoff*. This is her last column in *Tui Motu*.



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KEEP GIVING THANKS!

Kaaren Mathias *shares about growing in faith through being thankful.*

I'M A BIT of a grammar nerd. Recently, with the help of scripture scholars, I have found a new appreciation for particular passages in Scripture which pay attention to the present tense. The first is in John's Gospel when Jesus says to Thomas: "Do not doubt but keep on believing" (Jn 20:24-31). And the second, when Paul encourages the Thessalonians: "Give thanks continuously in everything you do" (1 Thes 5:16-18).

Thomas Encouraged to Keep Believing

In John's post-resurrection narrative,

Jesus comes to a room where a cluster of his friends were hovering, confused and scared. All the disciples except Thomas had seen Jesus in resurrected form. So Thomas struggled with their stories that Jesus was alive. He doubted this could be true and wanted some evidence. Relatable! Jesus came to him and it seems he knew what was troubling Thomas. He invited him to see the scar where his side had been punctured by a spear. To touch the nail scars in his hands. Only after that, after giving him some evidence and data to work with, he says to Thomas:

"Do not doubt but keep on believing!"

Shortening this imperative to "Do not doubt!" makes doubt seem like a failure and shortcoming. I know from experience. Through my teens and 20s I felt bad about my lack of faith — that I was a bad Christian because I couldn't believe the literal seven-day Creation story. I remember some Christians responding with: "God said it; I believe it; and that settles it!" when I expressed my challenges in matching the Genesis story with the science I was discovering.

And one year when I talked with a priest after the Easter vigil about

how I actively disliked the reading from Exodus where God parts the Red Sea for the Jewish people to cross through and then “God’s people” danced with delight at the drowning of the hundreds of Egyptians and their horses who were following behind. That was so dissonant with the generosity, hospitality and compassion offered by Jesus in the Gospels. The priest seemed untroubled: “I don’t see this as a problem. Just believe!” So I prayed for a gift of faith which would let me suspend my cognitive function. It didn’t work out.

Be Believing

The Greek word used in the passage where Jesus speaks to Thomas is more about being (how and who we are) than just faith and doubt: “Be not unbelieving but believing”. The verb “believing” (present continuous) doesn’t suggest a static state of being but instead a movement of change or even transition. A closer translation might be: “Begin to be not doubting but believing.” This feels more like a prod to start a journey rather than reaching a final destination. It seems like Jesus suggested a slower and gentler way to engage with faith and belief for Thomas. Jesus went to Thomas. He was vulnerable and lifted his clothes to show him the scar on his side. He encouraged Thomas to start re-thinking.

Reading the passage this way, I realise I could have given a lot more grace and gentleness to my dualist 20-year-old self. Instead of struggling with my perceived deficiency, I could have invited myself: “Kaaren, notice how this world is marvellous and mysterious. See how sparkle and goodness shine through every species and substance. Is this God’s creativity that is woven through all of creation? Are you noticing the beauty and goodness of this world and of God in the midst of your fervent late-night debates of Seven Day Creation vs Theistic Evolution?”

Being Grateful

Being thankful is a core practice for my faith. Some months ago, I was out exercising the dog. Suddenly the dog

leapt upon some KFC scraps left in a flax bush, and before I knew it the dog, leash, my bike and the KFC were a tangle of chaos. The casualty was my right knee — already in a brace from my last accident, it was badly injured and I found myself back in hospital, unable to walk.

GIVE *thanks* CONTINUOUSLY IN EVERYTHING YOU DO!

At my Lent study group the following week we talked about giving thanks in an ongoing way. I was back with that present continuous verb. How could I give thanks when I was on crutches and my hopes for tramps and cycling were knocked back for six months, if not forever?

I read in Thessalonians: “Give thanks continuously in everything you do!” I found it helpful to focus on the grammar again. This time my focus was on the prepositions. Not give thanks “for” everything but “in” everything.

Being Thankful For

In my ongoing knee disability and slow recovery there is much to give thanks for: Helpful doctors and physiotherapists; ACC support; great instructors at an accessible gym; a quicker than expected return to cycling up the Port Hills; even delight in managing a modest tramp. Everything sparkled in the cold winter’s sun and I felt thanks for my legs that took me past snow perched on beech branches, stoic icicles hanging on limestone rock and

hexagonal columns of “frost heave” pushing up through the frozen earth.

Being Thankful In

Then at a Catholic Worker gathering we talked about what we were thankful for. Chris, who lives in a rest home, shared: “This week a wonderful thing happened. Someone came and built a shed where we can smoke or vape without having to stand out in the wind or rain. We are all loving it!” The shed was built with good timber, had a comfortable bench seat and an open doorway looking out over the garden. “The smoking shed is now a nice place to be.”

My public-health-self would like all smoking phased out globally and my more punitive side might say that a nice shed encourages smoking. Yet the thought and care that went into this smoking shed inspired me. Chris and his friends feel cared for and less socially excluded for an addictive habit started decades ago before anyone knew better. Life in a rest home is often not much fun yet Chris was modelling that “in” that place, he can give thanks.

Faith Is Trusting We Will Be Well

In her *Revelations of Divine Love* Julian of Norwich suggests that rather than faith being a lack of doubt, it might be more a deep trust that we will not be overcome, that we are always beloved:

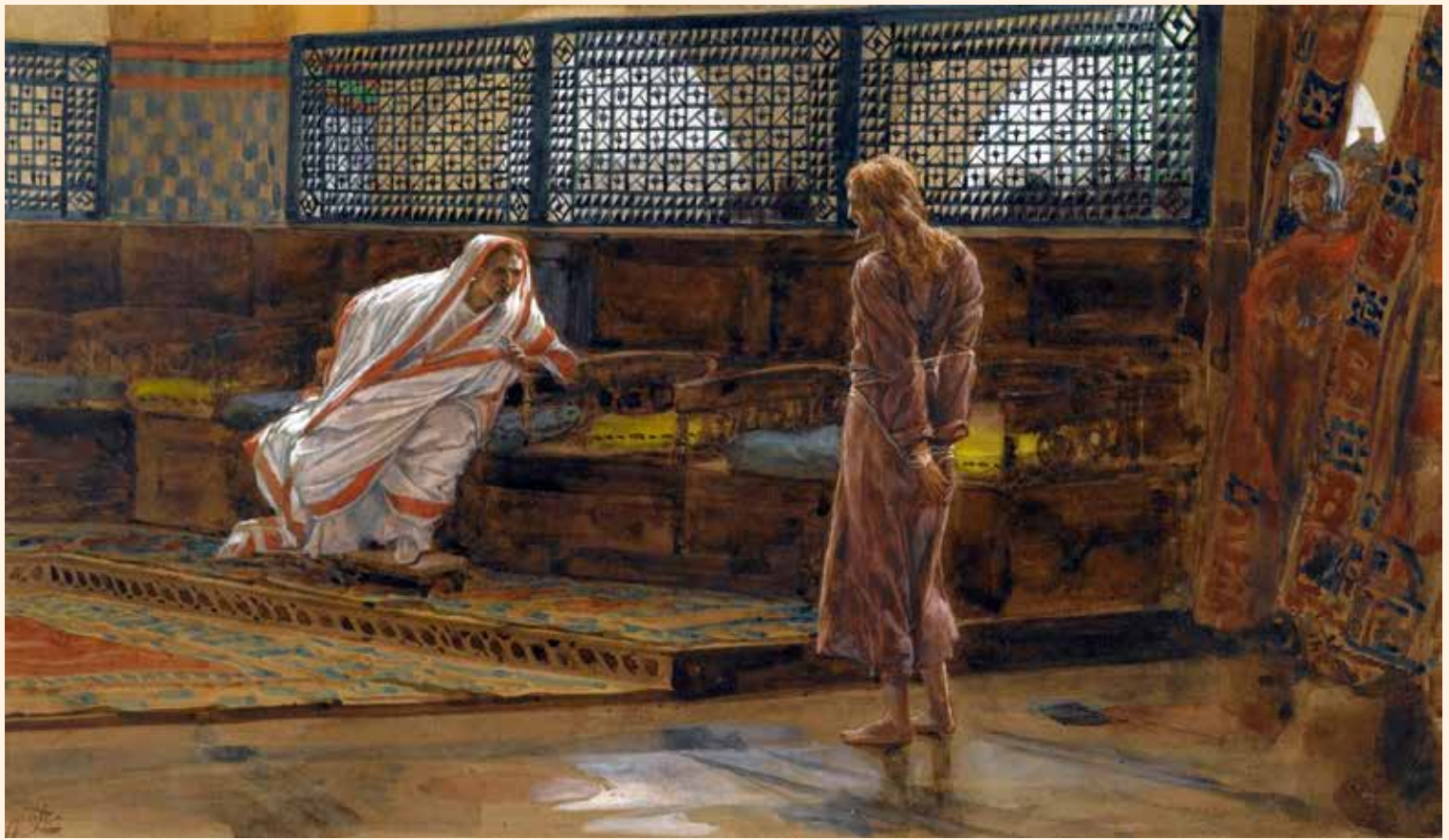
“God wills that we take heed to these words, and that we be ever strong in sure trust, in weal and woe. For God loves and enjoys us, and so wills that we love and enjoy God and mightily trust in God; and all shall be well.”

Even as I look to months of knee rehabilitation and every day seeing God among and with us, I hope that we all can “love and enjoy God, and mightily trust in God; and all shall be well.” ✧

Blazing Glory by Carol Nelson © Used with permission www.carolnelsonfineart.com
Blog: carolnelsonfineart.blogspot.com

Kaaren Mathias is a public health physician active in community health practice and research in Christchurch. She wrote for *Tui Motu* for 17 years when she lived in India.





God's Faithful Saving Action

Kathleen Rushton discusses John 18:33-37 in which Jesus contrasts his mission to reveal the true reign of God with the false Roman reign which oppresses the people.

THE GOSPEL OF John tells the story of the Roman trial of Jesus in seven dramatic, highly symbolic scenes (Jn 18:29–32; 33–38a; 38b–40; 19:1–3; 4–7; 8–11; 12–16a). It is in the second scene (Jn 18:33–37), that Pilate asks Jesus directly: “So you are a king?” This scene is proclaimed on the Feast of Christ the King, a feast at the end of the liturgical year.

Many today feel uncomfortable calling Jesus “King” as the title conjures up ideas and artwork of a ruling monarch associated with wealth and pomp. However, reading John’s Gospel where Jesus is called “king”, aware of both the context of the ancient Roman empire and our context today, may open new, practical and inspiring ways for us to understand and live as disciples.

Humble Beginnings

In John’s Gospel, persons who come to Jesus are often led to him by another. Philip found Nathanael and told him about “Jesus, son of Joseph of Nazareth”. Nathanael asked: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (Jn 1:48). Joseph and Jesus, who lived in that despised town, were carpenters and most likely day labourers. It could be that they worked on the reconstruction of Sepphoris, the largest city in Galilee, which was about an hour’s walk from Nazareth. Nathanael’s response indicates that Jesus is not the expected messiah.

Roman Governors

Governors functioned in the Roman hierarchical, imperial system as a small core of allied elites. Men appointed to the position of Governor, like Pilate, came from the wealthy, Roman aristocracy. Their role included keeping order, collecting taxes, fiscal administration, engaging in building projects, commanding troops and administering justice — including the power to put people to death.

Jesus as King

Against the background of the powerful role of the Roman governor, the portrayal of Jesus as a different kind of king is accentuated — 13 times in Jn 18:33–19:21 and earlier in the Gospel Jesus is addressed as king (Jn 1:49; 6:15; 12:13, 15). The word for “king” (*basileus*) was often used of the Roman emperor so Jesus is presented in an opposing relationship to Caesar and his representative, Pilate. In John’s Gospel, Jesus is not silent before Pilate as he is in the other three gospels.

When Jesus asserts that his *basileia* (kingdom) “is not from this world,” he is contrasting his *basileia* with the feared Roman *basileia*. The issue is about power and sovereignty and how this is expressed. Jesus is a political threat to how Rome and Jerusalem order the world.

Jesus’s *Basileia*

The origin of Jesus’s *basileia* is central to Jesus’s

understanding. He knows the world is created and loved by God (Jn 1:10; 3:16; 15:18-19). Jesus's *basileia* is from God (John 3:31; 8:23, 42; 16:28) and he reveals God's claim over all human lives and structures. Jesus makes a strong political statement when he establishes God's *basileia* over all, including Pilate.

Jesus's followers offer no armed resistance when he is arrested (Jn 18:36). Jesus uses the same word for his followers (usually translated as "police") as that used for those sent by the temple elite to arrest him (Jn 18:3, 12, 18, 22; 19:6).

The sense of this word is to work with another as the instrument of that person's will. The will of Pilate and his Jerusalem allies is based on coercive power and domination while the will of Jesus is to testify to the truth.

Truth — God's Faithful Action

Truth is a key word in John. We might think of it as meaning "genuine" or "real". Jesus describes himself as "truth" (Jn 8:32; 14:6). But in the biblical tradition, it often means "faithfulness" or "loyalty" in the sense that a person is faithful to their obligations and commitments.

The Hebrew term for "truth" or "true" (*'emet*), is often translated as "faithfulness". God acts "truthfully" when God is faithful to God's covenantal promises by showing *hesed* (mercy, steadfast love or loving kindness) to save the people. For example, in Exodus 34:6, God is described as "abounding in mercy (*hesed*) and faithfulness (*'emet*)".

When Jesus declares that his mission is to testify to "the truth," he is telling Pilate that he witnesses to God's faithfulness in saving the people. Jesus witnesses to the truth (Jn 3:33), declares he is the truth (Jn 14:6) and reveals that God is acting faithfully to save the world God so loves (Jn 3:16-17; 8:14-18). Truth, then, refers to God's faithful, saving action.

Jesus also explains to Pilate that the characteristic of those who "belong to the truth" is to listen to his voice — as the sheep listen to the Good Shepherd and Mary of Bethany listens to Jesus. Pilate does not listen, nor does he "see" who Jesus is, his origin nor his mission.

Choice About Reality

At this point in the Gospel there are two trials taking place. On the story level is the trial of Jesus. But on the symbolic level is the trial of "the Jews", Pilate and all humanity. Those in the symbolic trial have two choices — the reign of God in the world as revealed by Jesus or "the world".

"The world" (*cosmos*) frequently mentioned in John (78 times) has three senses. The first is the created universe that God found to be "very good". In creation we find the revelation unfolding through time.

The second sense of "the world" suggests creation which is able to respond.

And the third sense of "the world" is a choice about how we see reality: for God or for the Evil One. Evil becomes flesh in the world by individual and collective actions in political, economic, social and religious systems. Ongoing creation and renewal are needed for disciples to be faithful to their obligations and commitment.

Jesus Is Not Silent

We hear Jesus's challenge in the choices we need to make for the world today: "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (Jn 18:37). Sandra Schneiders wrote: "The 'world' with which we are concerned ... [is] the good world to which we are missioned, the evil world which we confront, and the alternative world" we are called into with Jesus to complete the works of God.

We may associate the word "king" with absolute power — the power to dominate, to decide the fate of others, even, in the case of the Roman empire, to put people to death. "Christ the King" is a direct challenge to this — Christ seeks to bring about God's alternative world and we are called to respond by engaging with Christ in God's mission in God's "very good" unfolding universe. ✦

Reading 24 November: John 18:33-37 Christ the King/Reign of Christ

Jesus before Pilate, First Interview by James Tissot (1836-1902)
In Brooklyn Museum Wikimedia Commons

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).



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For What It's Worth

EVERY YEAR AS spring begins, writers from all around New Zealand descend on Oturehua for a week of creative writing. They come drawn by the landscape, the promise of stimulating speakers and the opportunity to mingle with other like-minded folk who care about words and the stories they can weave. Our week-long retreats have been running since 2020. The year before that, we offered a weekend retreat which attracted 50 people. It was a great success, but we who ran it were so exhausted by the effort that we decided to try a more leisurely approach — and so the week's retreat was born. We cap the numbers at 30 and word of mouth always ensures a good response.

This year, instead of conducting a workshop, I opted to offer one-on-one sessions with writers. These sessions were a masterclass for me in exploring what holds us back from the writing process, how life gets in the way of putting pen to paper and, most of all, how many truly talented wordsmiths there are around. What a discovery!

It was like peeling an onion as layer after layer revealed hopes and fears. It is truly amazing how a throwaway criticism like "You'll never amount to much" can colour a person's life. How fear of failure can prevent us from trying. How the grittiness of life's demands can drive the yearning for creativity underground.

It's true that procrastination can rob us of even attempting to write. But as the French painter Matisse said: "Don't wait for inspiration. It comes while working."

And that was the challenge I set for one of our writers — to sit down and write each morning and the next day to read me what he had written. That exercise had the effect

of breaking the constraints that had held him back. When he saw what he had written, he, like me, said: "Wow that's really good."

For others it was merely the act of talking about their work that unshackled them. It made me reflect on how important a word of encouragement or voicing fears can be in freeing us. Can't crochet? Can't dance? Maybe it is possible or maybe there's an alternative that would be just as interesting — and satisfying.

For some, the aim is to get published. Pete Majendie finally achieved that aim after working on his memoir over three retreats. Coming out in November, the book is called *A Deaf in the Family*. It explores, in the voice of a child, the challenges of having a deaf father and losing his beloved brother. It's laugh-out-loud funny and poignant, too, and I'll be nudging it to the front every time I see it on bookshop shelves.

Others wanted to tell their family history. But what to leave out in case Aunt Gertrude is offended? I remind them of the words of my favourite author Anne Lamott: "If people had wanted me to write well of them, they should have behaved better." It's pretty good advice I say. ♦

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



Reviews

The Invasion of Waikato / Te Riri ki Tainui

By Vincent O'Malley

Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2024. (NZD 40)

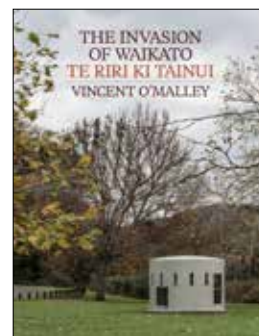
Reviewed by Ray Watembach

The Invasion of Waikato revisits history and shows how Te Tiriti o Waitangi was violated by the Crown. Governor Browne planned to take Waikato's rich lands and Māori sovereignty in breach of Article 2 of the Treaty of Waitangi, while he was attacking Waitara Ngātiawa in 1860. The Colonial Office told him "he was both criminally and civilly liable" for the unlawful war. So he fettered the judges and blocked his victims' access to the courts.

Browne's successor, Governor Grey, proposed "confiscating" Māori lands when they resisted his military attacks. Thus began the government's falsification of history. Even respected historians like O'Malley think the Waitara War

was against Te Ātiawa iwi. But in fact that iwi was created decades after the 1860 War when kūpapa Māori (those who fought on the British side in the New Zealand Wars) moved onto Waitara lands. It wasn't until 2019 that the Waitangi Tribunal reaffirmed that Ngātiawa was the principal victim.

The Invasion of Waitako is a "must read" for New Zealanders. It has taken 150 years to move from the false idea that Māori were rebels and began the war, to the truth that Māori were victims of multiple crimes, breaches of Te Tiriti and falsified histories. The book includes maps, well-balanced precis, photographs, illustrations and indexes. It is an excellent read. ★



The Find: Are Some Things Better Left Undiscovered?

By Anna M Holmes

Published by The Book Guild, 2022.

(NZD 40, Kindle USD 7.15)

Reviewed by Sue Stover

The Find is Anna Holmes's third novel. Although it's set in Ireland, Holmes, a native of the Manawātū, introduces readers to her home country. Holmes has been UK-based since the late 1970s.

Her protagonist is archaeologist Carrie, who is thrust into international visibility when a well-preserved body is unearthed in an Irish bog. Her team's painstaking analysis shows the body is about 2,000 years old, Middle Eastern and has been embalmed with injuries to hands and feet.

That this body could possibly be that of Jesus drives the plot in which Carrie finds herself at the vortex of an escalating clash of cultures, politics and religion. As her exposure to extremism grows, so does Carrie's yearning for refuge on her parents' farm near Alexandra, Central Otago.

The Find is a pacy novel with credible characters and it backgrounds the author's interest in religious studies — her degree from Canterbury University. The complexities of what faith demands and what science unwittingly undermines makes this more than escapist, fantastical reading. Importantly, Holmes also makes space for what rationality can't fully explain. A recommended read for those who enjoy wondering "What if?" ★



Letters to the Editor

THANK YOU

I could not commend more highly the poem by Fr James Lyons showing a way forward (*TM* October 2024). I am so glad I have lived to see a true spirit of atonement heralded so succinctly.

David George, Tirau/Cromwell

My heartfelt thanks to Rev James Lyons for his poem published in *TM* Oct 2024. It is rare to hear such an apology from a priest, delivered with sensitivity and understanding of the very real suffering of victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse. He seems to really understand that in some way, all Catholic priests hold some responsibility for the ones who abuse.

In many cases, victims/survivors want nothing more to do with God or Church, because their faith in both have been forever destroyed by one of the "God-people". As a counsellor I have been privileged to hold many of these stories, and I know just how healing a public expression of sorrow like James's poem can be. It is very rare, and very much appreciated.

Adrienne Dunlop, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland Letters cont'd page 28

Reviews

DEAR CHILD

Directed by Isabel Kleefeld and Julian Pörksen

A Netflix series

Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

If I had to put a label on German Netflix miniseries *Dear Child*, I'd call it a dystopian family drama – a portrayal of what might happen if the darker dynamics of family relationships were to be given free rein. Permeated by an unsettling, creepy vibe, the series deals with male control over women and children, the deeply dysfunctional desire to create a family which is perfectly regulated, where obedience is unquestioning and there are never any surprises. Behind Papa's quiet voice (we don't get to see his face until Episode 6) and polite phrasing there is a will of steel.

This is a complex story woven from the intersecting lives of multiple characters, some present on screen, others only hinted at. When a young woman identified as Lena Beck, who went missing after a party 13 years previously, is admitted to hospital following a road accident, her parents are immediately summoned. We are as shocked as her father, Matthias, who cries out in anger and despair that this is not his daughter. However, his distress is tempered by a mix of joy and confusion when the young girl accompanying "Lena" turns out to be his granddaughter Hannah.

So mystery is piled on mystery. Questions abound. Who is the zombie woman, as the press call her? Were there other Lenas? Is there only one Papa, or are there several men



involved? As the horrifying truth emerges, the focus falls on Hannah, who presents as self-possessed beyond her years, a walking encyclopaedia whose robotic behaviour and learned responses take on an increasingly sinister aspect. Hannah and her "Mama" Jasmin (revealed as a Lena "substitute") illustrate how victims can internalise their abuser's control strategies, anticipating his wishes and even come to desire the diminished life he offers them. Control and surveillance are central to maintaining the status quo – the only place you can be safe.

There is plenty more going on. One character whose presence grows with each episode is Gerd, a local detective and a friend and neighbour of the Becks. A "lone wolf" working on the margins of the official police investigation, Gerd is a vulnerable figure, prone to clinical depression and self-doubt. He is important in dramatic terms, though, as he acts as a lightning rod for the emotional storm the series throws at us.

Disturbing if not entertaining in the conventional sense, *Dear Child* provides sufficient purchase on reality making us ask serious questions about the happy families on our street. ★



Letters to the Editor

Continued

CHURCH RESPONSE TO ROYAL COMMISSION

I am writing to you, as Editor, in the hope of future articles on the church's response to the Royal Commission's Report on Abuse in Care. I believe there needs to be an independent voice within the church community that can honestly and effectively monitor the responses from church and congregation leaders as to how the recommendations from the Inquiry are being implemented or not.

As you know the Inquiry took over six years to reach the final report stage, and at a cost believed to be four times greater than the Canterbury Earthquake. According to the commissioners, abuse and neglect continue to occur in some of the institutions that are at the heart of this Inquiry.

Despite the Catholic church's responses and actions to date, I believe there is much more work to be undertaken. As stated publicly by Bishop Lowe and Thomas Rouse (24/7/24) "We understand that within the community, some of us – including leaders in the Catholic church – have a special role to play to ensure that the findings and recommendations of this significant Inquiry are not lost or

confined to words in a report. We commit to that role."

The Catholic church missed the Commission's recommended deadline of responding publicly within the two-month timeframe. It eventually responded several days after the 24 September. The church now has the opportunity to respond to Recommendation #131 to "issue formal public responses to this report about whether each Recommendation is accepted, accepted in principle, rejected or subject to further consideration. Each response should include a plan for how the accepted Recommendations will be implemented, the reasons for rejecting any Recommendations and a timeframe for any further consideration required. Each response should be published within four months of this report being tabled in the House of Representatives." That means we, the public and especially the Catholic community, should be aware of the church's plan by 24 November.

I look forward to hearing how *Tui Motu* can help to keep us informed in the reviewing and monitoring of the church's response to the Inquiry's Recommendations. Having seen no comment from the Auckland Diocese in several parish newsletters since the initial tabling of the report in July, I hope we can rely on some honest commentary from *Tui Motu* on what it is the church leaders are committing themselves to.

Jennifer Tanner, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland Letters cont'd on page 31



Cross Currents

by Jane Higgins

RECENTLY, I SPENT time with a group of student leaders from several Mercy colleges around the motu. They were wonderful young people, strong in their faith and committed to being good leaders in their schools.

We spoke about the importance of building leadership that encourages right relationships. This concept has a long history embedded in many cultural and religious traditions, including our own Scriptures and Catholic tradition. Often twinned with justice, right relationships involve relating to others in a manner that allows relationships to thrive and grow. And it is surely a good test of leadership decisions to ask: Do these decisions enable and encourage right and just relationships?

At present, we are witnessing markedly different forms of leadership from our church and our government.

As Pope Francis leads the church on its synodal journey, his attention is on listening to each other and the Spirit, and discerning a way forward. His emphasis, he said at the beginning of the final Synodal gathering, is on a church in which “each person feels welcome”. This invites consideration

of right relationships: How can the church be a place where our relationships with God, with each other and with creation thrive? Francis’s call throughout his papacy has been for servant leadership: a church in which clericalism is no more, and the clergy walk alongside the baptised in service.

Our coalition government, on the other hand, appears to be championing a form of leadership that proclaims: “We won, so we can do what we want.” Its priorities to date have paid scant attention to right and just relationships.

And yet, the tools exist to create policy that encourages well-being through such relationships. The Treasury’s recently published He Ara Waiora handbook offers policymakers a way to incorporate right relationships into policy. He Ara Waiora is the mātauranga Māori well-being framework adopted by the Treasury to sit alongside its Living Standards Framework.

Both frameworks focus on well-being and are profoundly relational. He Ara Waiora is well worth studying. In diagrammatic form, it is a series of concentric circles with “Wairua” at its centre. The handbook

explains: “Wairua is seen as the foundational source of well-being. This can be understood as people feeling connected to something beyond themselves, which for many will be a form of spirituality. This could encompass a full range of views, including connections with mana atua. For others, this may take the form of connectedness to values or a shared cause beyond self-interest.”

The next circle out is Taiao, the natural world. This placing of Taiao offers a non-human-centric approach to well-being which suggests that priority should be given to improving the well-being of the natural world, on which human well-being rests, before we consider ourselves. Considering ourselves is the next circle Ira Tangata: the human domain.

This profound document offers us a way forward. It’s no surprise that a Māori world view, wise about relationships and connection, can lead us towards well-being. This gives me hope. And I’m heartened to realise that the name of the new queen, Te Arikinui Kuīni Ngawai hono i te po, can be translated as “a connector of peoples, even in the darkness”. ☞



TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

Tui Motu magazine provides Catholic, as well as ecumenical and inter-faith perspectives and discussion on current issues in church and society. It acknowledges its role in honouring and fostering relationships arising from Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It focuses particularly on issues affecting Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific. Its intent is to promote the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, engaging faith and the world through informed, thoughtful comment and discussion for a general readership. The magazine publishes 11 issues per year in print

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

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Letters to the Editor

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

Opinions in letters are not necessarily those of the Magazine.

VIKINGS BEFORE COLUMBUS

Tui Motu (Sept 2024) was inspirational, with its cover image of the kōwhai in flower. I also loved the colour illustration from the *Catalan Atlas* (1380) in Susan Smith's "Proclaim the Good News". At one point Susan wrote that Columbus was the first European to come across the Americas. This is not quite true. If you google "Columbus", his entry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* comes up. You will find it was the Vikings, headed by Leif Erikson, several centuries earlier than 1492, who sailed to the east coast of North America from Greenland. Norwegian explorer Helge Ingstad, at one time governor of part of Greenland, wrote about a Viking settlement on the coast of Newfoundland in *Westward to Vinland*.

*Hilda McDonnell, Te Awa Kairangi/
Lower Hutt*

DECOLONISATION

You are still having colonisers writing in *Tui Motu*. You refuse to decolonise *Tui Motu*. You have many writers who do not provide what pathways could be taken to address the wrongs being discussed.

Neil Darragh's articles on Synodality did not indicate the pathways forward to decolonise the church in Aotearoa. There is no indication as to where to go to change the situation under discussion. *Tui Motu* could become a revolutionary magazine upholding a Jesus clearly located with the least of the brethren — not the bourgeoisie Christ, the middle-class Jesus who does not threaten the elites. In all of this commentary is the question:

What do we do next? Where is the pathway to go to next, like *Mātihe Mai Aotearoa* with Moana Jackson or He Whakaputanga (Declaration of Independence 1835) with Professor Margaret Mutu? It is all out there for us to read.

David Tolich, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland

WHY NOT WOMEN DEACONS?

"The Vatican has announced that there is no basis for ordaining women deacons" (*CathNews New Zealand* "No to Women Deacons" 8 Oct). The article states that "it came after a year-long study by a specially appointed unnamed synod group." A number of groups were set up to investigate certain matters pertaining to church practice. "The group focusing on the potential for women deacons was the only one that remained shrouded in secrecy with no disclosure of members." Having watched from the sidelines for many years I would like to ask the secret group a few questions: 1. Do they believe that men and women are equal before God? 2. Why was this group kept so secret? 3. Did the secret group contain any women?

As I waited for a chance to minister, I was allowed to clean the church, do the flowers, take Communion to the sick and housebound and teach children about Christian values. For those of us who felt called to ministry in the Catholic Church the time it has taken to make a decision has meant that many of us have missed out because of advancing age. For those women still young enough, you have a tough choice — stay in the church and keep quiet, or present yourself to one of the many Protestant Churches who have had the good sense to ordain women and benefit from their gifts.

Peg Cummins, Tauranga

COMMUNION

Our anticipated hope for Synodality continues. Three weeks ago Pope Francis made a statement: "All, everyone, is welcome at the table of the Lord." Then to emphasis this, he repeated: "Everyone," then for the third time said: "Everyone."

Jim Donald, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland

SEMINARY FORMATION

Like Christopher Longhurst (TM Sept 2024) I experienced some five years of "seminary formation" and I resonated significantly with what he referred to as "things I should never have learned."

As I read through his catalogue of criticism, I ticked just about every box, and found myself recalling the final courtroom scene in *A Few Good Men* when the witness in response to defence counsel cross examination about "following orders" replies: "People follow orders, son, or people die: it's as simple as that!"

One of my seminary professors would say: "If you are going to tilt at someone else's windmill, be sure to be in a position to suggest a viable alternative." In addition to my seminary experience, I have played senior rugby; undertaken five years of service in the Australian Citizen Military Forces; and have worked for a tertiary education establishment for 23 years, and in each instance a similar catalogue of criticism could be predicated of those institutions. The subjugation of the individual; the preeminence of the goals and objectives of the respective institutions; and the inevitable blurring of the truth.

The elements of Christopher Longhurst's alternative windmill for better priestly formation are indeed laudable: yet surely some "structure" would still be required, and inevitably with structure we humans resort again to discipline, following orders and serving the institution. I wonder how Jesus would train seminarians.

Peter Slocum, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland

Our last word

Live for love
for whānau
for community
for peace and justice
at home and everywhere
now and forever.



From the *Tui Motu* Team

ADVENT 2024

“A Saviour has been born to you;
He is Christ the Lord.” – Luke 2:11



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