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Tui Motu

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WORK, REST & TRAFFICKING

PETER LINEHAM, ANNETTE ARNOLD, GRACE MORTON

SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

THOMAS O'LOUGHLIN, CHRISTINA REYMER

DECISION-MAKING FOR COMMUNITY

PAUL BARBER, DARYL GUPPY

Work for the Common Good
Mahi me te pai Whanui

INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC MAGAZINE

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Editorial

THIS MONTH WE FACE the challenge of electing a government for the next three years. We're doing this in an atmosphere of exhaustion. Not only are we struggling to understand and recover from the global pandemic but many are suffering from the ongoing disruption of changing climate patterns. Exhaustion and weather events are not affecting us equally. Many areas of the country are unscathed by the climate events which in other parts have laid waste to homes, livelihoods, peace of mind and future plans in a few hours. Even months after, they're reeling under the weight of physical, financial and psychological challenges and recovery can seem unattainable. Overall, we're longing for security and hope for the future.

As painful as it can be to review and identify the causes and factors to the health and weather-related disasters, it will be tragic if we ignore them. We can be tempted to grasp at election "promises" that are short-term solutions to problems where, in fact, decision-making requires sacrifice and courage for long-term sustainability.

None of us relishes living less well-off. But if it means that we have enough to live on, and that doing with a little less will prevent others in our society from sinking into poverty, we would.

None of us wants a prison in our neighbourhood. We're told by those with expertise that criminal activity is complex and imprisonment is not the answer — there is no quick fix. So we would support policies that demonstrate the kind of patience, expertise and resources required for long-term social recovery. We don't want more of our children separated from us in prison.

None of us wants to boil drinking water or to evacuate our homes in the middle of the night because of flooding. We've all contributed to the damage to Earth whether we live in a rural area, town or city. Blaming one sector is no solution. Now we need to listen to the wisdom of kaitiaki and give support to those changing their land and water practices for sustainability. We need combined and enduring agreement among us and radical action for recovery.

All of us want to experience respect, inclusion, participation and home in the community of Aotearoa. So we need to encourage our people to engage in work for the whole community — like teachers, medical people, pastoral and caring roles, land and water care. While we're grateful for those who come from elsewhere to fill the roles, we don't want to develop an "out-sourcing of work" mentality here. Working together meaningfully builds community and dispels the bleakness of exhaustion. So, we have a choice. Let's choose politicians with long-range vision who'll work for hope and life in the whole community.

We thank all the contributors to this October issue. Their research, reflection, art and craft offer much food for thought.

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



Civility & Decency in Parliament

THIS MONTH WE HAVE a general election. The fallout surrounding my former colleague Kiritapu Allan has again cast a spotlight on parliament as a toxic workplace. This affects members of parliament, their family members, the staff who work for them and the public servants who continue to serve the government of the day.

I think that even if we removed all the people currently in the parliamentary complex — those in the Beehive, politicians, staff, public servants, parliamentary service personnel — and replaced them with a new set of people in those roles, then the same culture would prevail. That's chilling.

The role played by the press gallery is no help. They are locked into a mindset where there must be winners and losers. They congratulate one another on the number of scalps collected along the way.

Our parliamentary system is adversarial at its core. It's based on an antiquated system where the breadth of the parliamentary chamber measures two sword lengths between government and opposition benches.

This flows into the demeanour of party-political behaviour in question time, in general debates and often into debates on legislation. Party lines are trotted out, sometimes witty, sometimes cutting and often including personal slurs. There are rewards for anyone who baits a fellow parliamentarian into stumbling and faltering in the bearpit. Month after month, year after year, people who stood to represent their communities for altruistic and community-minded reasons, are moulded into this system.

In his recent valedictory speech the former National Party leader Todd Muller decried the growing swell of partisanship which fuels a level of political toxicity that is corrosive to our society. He called for Labour and National, as the two great political tribes, to be the standard-bearers of civility and decency rather than amplifiers of division. I agree wholeheartedly with him. It is sad, then to have such a voice for reasoned and empathetic debate leave Parliament.

All politicians make wrong calls and say harsh things. I've pondered in the last three years since I left on some of my own statements and of how to make restitution. Michael Woodhouse and I entered parliament in the same year and both represented Dunedin, though in different parties. We both hailed from Catholic families and I thought we mostly shared common values. That's why it was a shock to learn that for a "joke" at a National Party regional conference he and other colleagues had auctioned a toilet seat with a Labour politician's face on it. It was my face. That was an example of the lack of respect for a political colleague — something he has experienced himself recently. I have spoken publicly about its impact on me. I continue to welcome a conversation with him.

It's right that we can expect our parliamentarians to serve our country well. It's right that if they make mistakes, they should acknowledge them, learn from them and be supported to develop and contribute in their roles. It's right that if not suited to serve they should step down. But it is not right that their characters and reputations should be destroyed deliberately by an adversarial system that feeds toxicity. The combination of my experiences as a politician under intense public scrutiny and critique took a heavy toll on me, leaving me with post-traumatic stress. It's a fact and it's ok for me to talk about now. It's led to me working in a fulfilling role in mental health.

We can demand a change of culture. This month we will choose candidates we hope will make a good government. We want them to be able to contribute to the common good of New Zealand, not be scalded by toxicity and become mired in it. Our system can change if we use our collective voice to denounce toxic behaviour. ♦

Photo by Koon Chakhatrakan on Unsplash

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





FAITH, WORK, LEISURE

Peter Lineham *reflects on Christian influences on slavery, work, workers and leisure.*

ODDLY ENOUGH, MOST of the ideas we can get from the New Testament about the nature of work are based on its response to the institution of slavery. Slavery was not the limited form permitted in the Jewish economy. It was the harsh slave economy developed by the Romans as part of their toolkit for subjugating the peoples they conquered, and it was the lot of poor people to be forced to sell themselves.

About 35 per cent of the total population of the Roman Empire was enslaved. Citizens made up around 10-20 per cent and the rest were ordinary “free” labourers. This was a pernicious structure which provoked rebellions and bitter resentment towards the ruling elite. The plebs

were kept happy by organised leisure — “bread and circuses”.

The Christian response sketched in Colossians 3:22-23 promoted the dignity of work, as well as the duty of obedience. At the same time it asserted the equality of slaves and free people and the ideal of gaining freedom if possible (1 Corinthians 7:20-24). But certainly, there would be no point in encouraging slaves to choose careers that suited their talents and their skills. Early Christians had every reason to avoid large-scale leisure, and were quick to stop not just gladiator sport but also the Olympic games when they gained influence.

Military service also absorbed a significant number of people, and

John the Baptist’s cautions to soldiers should be recalled (Luke 3:14). There was also a tiny intellectual and aristocratic elite who did not work. Indeed they regarded manual labour as degrading. This was a very different attitude from the Jewish world of peasant farmers and the high respect for the artisan (so that even Rabbi Paul had learned a trade (Acts 18:2-3).

SERFDOM AND MONASTERIES

In the medieval period, the West became dominated by an agrarian system of serfdom, apart from the small population in the urban areas, where the guild system regulated the trades and fine production. Serfdom bound the peasants to the land, and required the serf to pay a share of the harvest or a portion of his

working hours to the landowner. We should also note the division of work between secular and sacred which penetrated even into the monastery. This meant that the monks did not work other than study, while they had manual labourers at a lower level in the monastery.

WORK AS A VOCATION

Come with me to the early modern period, during the period of the Reformation. According to Max Weber in his famous book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, a distinctive feature of that age was that the notion of a religious vocation was transferred from the priesthood and the monastic call and entrusted to the ordinary secular person. Weber's historiography has been severely criticised and cannot be traced tidily to Protestantism; for it was the Renaissance and the rise of the merchants and guilds which elevated skilled work.

Nevertheless, it is true that notions of vocation and skill as a Christian vocation were elevated in the early modern period. These values are found George Herbert's glorious verses:

Teach me, my God and King,
in all things thee to see,
and what I do in anything
to do it as for thee.

All may of thee partake;
nothing can be so mean,
which with this tincture, "for
thy sake,"
will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause
makes drudgery divine:
who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
makes that and the action fine.

Consequently, many attributes of vocation, which had previously been reserved for an ordained elite, were reclaimed for secular believers. Indeed, the very notion of a "calling" began to be used about any person's vocation.

This vocational approach drew on the Old Testament tradition of craft workers who built the tabernacle and adapted the New Testament notion of vocation, in a manner that suited the skilled and middle class worker.



But like the slave motif, it did not suit or guide all types of workers. And in its own way it inadequately expressed the Christian notion of vocation. As Alan Richardson wrote many years ago:

"We must deplore and protest against the secularisation of the biblical concept of vocation in our modern usages; we cannot with propriety speak of God's calling a man to be an engineer or a doctor or a schoolmaster. [Secular jobs] have Christian value only in so far as they can be made means of serving the gospel."

FACTORIES AS WORKPLACES

From the 18th century to the present day the forms of work have radically altered, in particular with the emergence of the factory system, where semi-skilled labour greatly increased outputs by use of machinery. This has gone through various iterations, including "Fordism", where complex products are put together on assembly lines and, individual workers have simple and repetitive tasks.

The factory profoundly disrupted the traditional rhythms of life. Workers were required to clock in and clock out, and because they often lived in company housing,

were therefore doubly vulnerable — at work and at home. There was little scope for regulation as the old apprenticeship laws broke down.

The harsh principles of competition regulated business life, and the decline of the family or privately-owned business weakened the relationships between employers and employees. Sometimes the employer might be in another town or continent.

It was this kind of work that led to Marx's concept of the alienation of labour from the means of production and the inevitability of class struggle.

CHURCH RESPONSES

Christians struggled to face up to the issues of this kind of society. Trade unions often provoked Churches into fearful reaction. The leaders of protest were figures like John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle and William Morris, who called for a revival of the old crafts and quality in work. While they awakened concern, at the time few took notice of their prophetic voice.

A Christian response to the rise of industrial labour may be found in Pope Leo XIII's encyclicals, notably *Rerum Novarum* (1891). In this encyclical, the roots of which lie in Leo's second encyclical, *Quod Apostolici Muneris* (1878), Leo took a step forward in advocating the rights of the working

class to form collective bargaining organisations such as trade unions, and urging employers to respect the dignity of workers, thus urging the doctrine of subsidiarity, in which each social unit — families, employers and government — needs to respect one another.

Leo's argument owes something to the Christian Socialists of England, and led to the formation of such bodies as B.A. Santamaria's Democratic Labour Party which opposed communist infiltration of Australian labour unions. This emphasis on the place of the union movement drew on the communal aspect of the early Church, but resisted the totalising aspects of Marxism.

REGULATING LABOUR

The last solution that Leo would have wanted was active intervention by the State, but this was the only possibility for regulation. The development of democracy offered some hopes, and places like Australia and New Zealand brought working class people to power. Regulation of factory conditions, wage rates and child labour were the result. Not all Christians were comfortable with the advent of an interventionist state, preferring to encourage employer benevolence, but some Christians saw the importance of regulation.

Lord Shaftesbury, with his concern over child labour and the regulation of hours of work and conditions in factories, pioneered this in the 19th century.

There were also Christian activists in New Zealand, notably Rutherford Waddell, who exposed "sweating" of labour in Dunedin. But while individuals raised the issue, Churches were more cautious.

WORK AND UNEMPLOYMENT

In the contemporary world, there are additional factors to consider. Government preoccupation with regulating the economy has led to unemployment being allowed as a means of controlling the economy. The social welfare system effectively mitigates this by providing the unemployed with the bare minimum for living, while at the same time blaming the unemployed for losing



their jobs. This is a deeply troubling system, and alongside of it has emerged a leisure industry that ensures that the potential for social protest is diverted.

Meanwhile, globalisation has ensured the availability of cheap labour sourced from parts of the world that can offer their peoples nothing else, and this labour is almost by definition unregulated. These aspects of work and leisure are profound scandals of contemporary life.

Part of the puzzle is the relationship of work to leisure and to unemployment. Historically Christians believed that the worker needed a day of rest. Somehow rest and recreation has been transformed into leisure, and leisure has been commercialised, with the mass production of entertainment as a significant source of the economy. The age when we retire, the provision of paid annual holidays and unemployment benefits have developed over the last century.

Churches have been exceedingly cautious about these developments. For a period there was a strong participation by church public policy committees in submissions to state regulatory bodies. Churches spoke up for workers, defending the regulation

of working hours and public holidays and the provision for those unable to work. The relentless pressure from commercial interests and the decline of the union movement has undercut this since the 1980s.

There have been significant Christian voices in favour of a strong labour movement, but the destructive impact of equating work with paid employment and the profound inequalities in the global economies have proved too great to deal with.

In our society we have people who suffer in their bodies from their obsession with work and making money and retaining their jobs. Meanwhile our streets are increasingly filled with beggars.

No government seems able or willing to deal with these issues. Is it not time for new prophets to call us back to restore the balance of work and rest, of community care and justice in a decent reward for labour, that the Creator made us for? ♦

Ruby Loftus Screwing a Breech-ring (1943) by Laura Knight www.iwm.org.uk

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



HUMAN TRAFFICKING HAS MANY FORMS

Grace Morton warns against stereotyping so that we miss trafficking and exploitation in our midst.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS A pervasive crime that takes many forms and impacts millions of people worldwide. When advocating for awareness about human trafficking, the words and images we use hold power. Because we are representing people who are trafficked, the challenge is to be specific in our descriptions and image choices. It is too easy to focus on a limited range of experiences of human trafficking and be oblivious to others.

It is time to stop narratives that sensationalise people who are trafficked. Narrow representations quickly become stereotypes, such as portrayals of “vulnerable” women and girls transported across country borders to be exploited for sex. Common images are of women in shadowy rooms, tied up and gagged, or looking out barred windows. These depictions sensationalise and exploit people’s trauma. They do not represent many of the other forms that trafficking takes: such as forced labour, debt bondage, organ harvesting, or forced domestic servitude.

We are more aware now of exploitation in Aotearoa New Zealand in industries such as agriculture, fishing and construction. Yet because the people in these situations and their experiences do not match common stereotypes of a “trafficked victim”, they may not be recognised as victims of trafficking. This means that support is not offered to all people who are trafficked. If we use only one experience and one definition of a victim of human trafficking, who will speak up for people who are trafficked but whose experiences do not fit the mould? How will they find

support if we don’t recognise their experiences as trafficking?

During my involvement in advocacy around human trafficking and exploitation, I’ve been encouraged by the increased efforts by individuals and groups in raising public awareness of the different types and experiences of human trafficking. The stereotypical image of a “victim” of human trafficking is shifting in the public imagination.

Despite this, we still see stories recording shock that people in Aotearoa New Zealand are trafficked by others. We hear and see phrases that imply Aotearoa New Zealand should be an exception, such as “human trafficking even happens here”. By perpetuating the idea that it is rare and shocking for people in Aotearoa New Zealand to be trafficked, we make it harder to put systems into place to support those who are harmed by trafficking and to bring perpetrators of human trafficking to justice.

“Leaving no one behind” means learning about all the ways that people are trafficked here in Aotearoa New Zealand, in our region and elsewhere in the world. Pope Francis said: “It is not possible to remain indifferent before the knowledge that human beings are bought and sold like goods! I think

of the adoption of children for the extraction of their organs, of women deceived and obliged to prostitute themselves, of workers exploited and denied rights or a voice, and so on. And this is human trafficking ... The human person ought never to be sold or bought as if he or she were a commodity. Whoever uses human persons in this way and exploits them, even if indirectly, becomes an accomplice of injustice.” Reaching every person who is trafficked is not just a task for governments, law enforcement or survivor support organisations. Each of us has a part to play — principally in the way we think about and discuss human trafficking.

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand is among the groups that stand against human trafficking, slavery and exploitation. We advocate for the protection of migrant workers in Aotearoa New Zealand through submissions to the New Zealand Government on relevant policy and legislation, such as the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme and the Immigration Act 2009. Since 2020 we have supported the campaign for legislative action on modern slavery and worker exploitation in the supply chains of New Zealand businesses. ✦

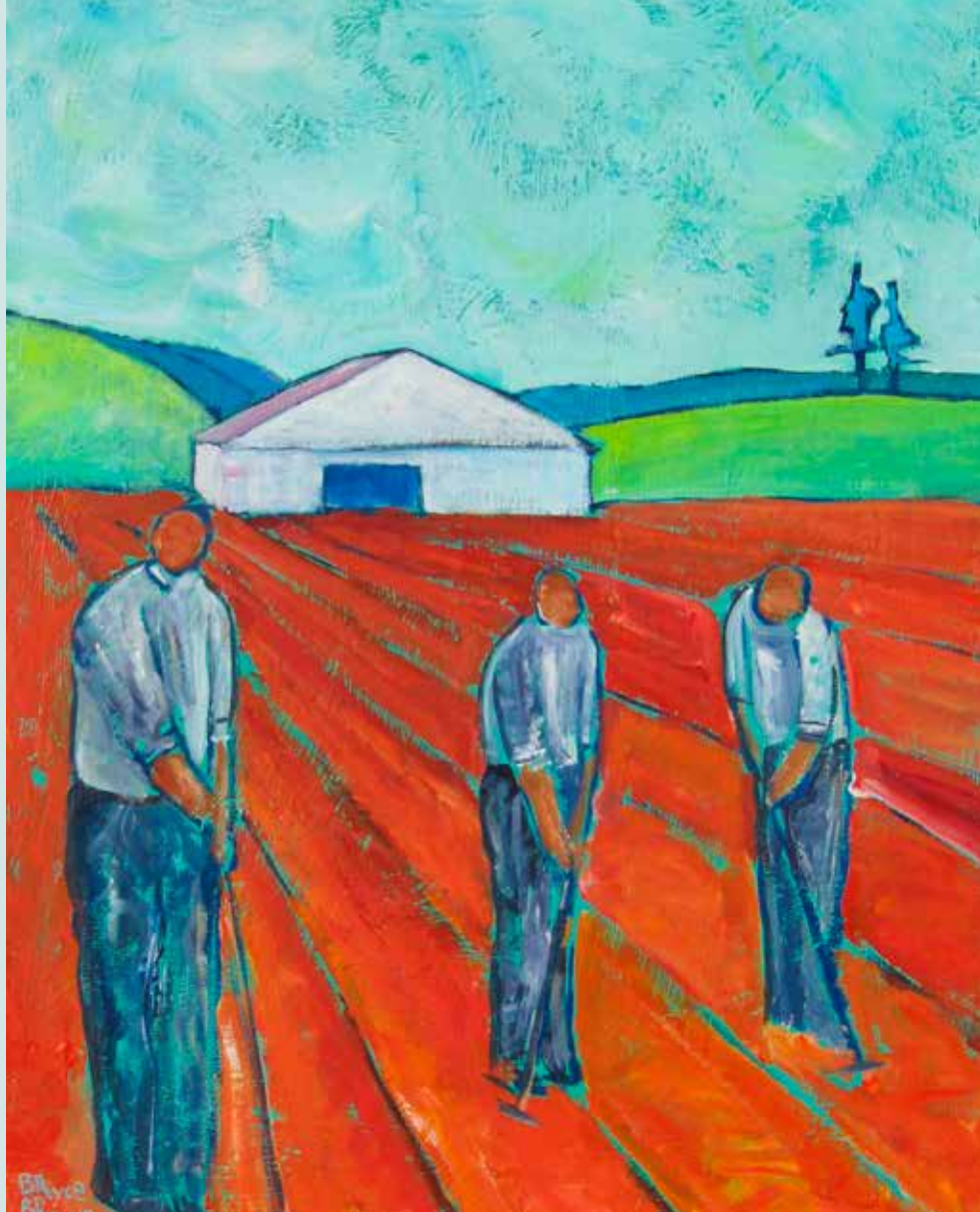
For further info: www.caritas.org.nz

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TACKLING TRAFFICKING

Annette Arnold outlines the challenge to identify and assist men and women trafficked in Australia.



SOCIAL RESEARCHER Brené Brown writes extensively on our need to be vulnerable. She says that vulnerability has the potential to become the source of our love, courage, empathy, hope and belonging. This is true in many instances. But vulnerability is also a key to being exploited and caught into human trafficking. There is a massive difference between choosing to be vulnerable and the circumstances in our lives beyond our control that make us vulnerable.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a huge increase in the number of people worldwide being made vulnerable and exposed to traffickers. One significant contributing factor was the reduction in the demand for labour. Workers were stood down in many industries — farming, sex, caregiving, factory and construction — all sectors in which people were more easily exploited already. International students unable

to go home were also vulnerable. In this time, people's vulnerability was exacerbated by the loss of their livelihood and of accommodation for some. The closure of international borders and the isolation caused by domestic lockdowns and restrictions impacted heavily on migrant workers who were stuck in Australia. Their stress increased when they had no money to send back home to support their families. And many were unable to access government safety nets because of their migration status.

Many of these people came to the attention of groups working to stop trafficking including the Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH). For nearly 20 years ACRATH has supported, advocated for and cared for victims and survivors of human trafficking.

ACRATH works on a “two feet” model of social justice. One “foot”

focuses on providing empowering and compassionate care for victims/survivors. The other “foot” works strategically to raise awareness, undertake research, advocate and lobby government for systemic change to prevent and eliminate trafficking.

Talitha Kum

ACRATH belongs to the global Catholic network Talitha Kum, which began as a response to the crime of human trafficking. Talitha Kum has branches across 97 countries and involves members of 762 Religious Congregations — it's an international powerhouse!

Many have joined besides Religious. ACRATH and the three branches of Talitha Kum in Aotearoa New Zealand (Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin) form the Oceania region of this network.

The ACRATH Companionship programme is a critical aspect in

the support of victim survivors. Companions are ACRATH members who have been specially trained to accompany those trafficked. They enable a safe space to walk alongside the person, not as a case worker, but to provide a warm, human presence, empowering the person to take charge of their own life, as much as they are able. They give emotional, practical, and if desired, spiritual support.

Companions support people with such things as access to emergency dental work, rent assistance, basic furniture, clothing vouchers, sharing a coffee regularly, prescription glasses, emergency food, health surgery and computers for study. Currently there are around 40 women and their 40 children being accompanied.

Trafficked for Marriage

Instances of coercion in labour and marriage are types of human trafficking happening right under our noses today. The story of Lailani [not her real name], a young Australian woman who escaped a forced marriage, demonstrates how easy it is to be unaware.

Lailani, a 16-year-old, was attending a Catholic high school in Melbourne where ACRATH conducted an awareness-raising presentation. Her parents took her overseas for a holiday to their country of origin. When they arrived, Lailani discovered preparations for her marriage were well under way. She didn't want the wedding to take place but felt she had no choice but to comply. Lailani's parents returned to Australia, taking her passport with them and leaving her behind. Through social media, Lailani's Australian school friends alerted her to the "My Blue Sky" website and the fact that forced marriage is a slavery-like practice and is illegal in Australia. Lailani was able to receive support through "My Blue Sky" and was assisted to obtain new Australian travel documents and an airline ticket back to Australia. ACRATH members arranged for her to be met at the airport. Lailani did not return to live with her family and was able to continue working towards her dream of graduating from university. (Story

used with the permission of ACRATH.)

Lailani's story highlights the need for companionship and support as well as the beneficial impact of awareness-raising and education. Many schools have taken up the opportunity to become informed and support the "Slavery-Free Easter Chocolate" campaign.

Education about forced marriage is being provided by ACRATH staff to marriage celebrants, school leadership teams, health professionals, seminarians, teachers, welfare staff and parents. Catholic and public hospitals across Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste have taken up the training on forced marriage with their staff. Recently a person on a temporary visa sought medical help at the emergency department of a major public hospital in Australia. The staff, who had attended a training session

networking and with generous pro bono legal work, ACRATH staff and members supported the workers to apply for an Act of Grace payment from the Australian government to cover their stolen wages of AU\$77,649. Their application was granted.

ACRATH prioritises issues of forced labour. Recent research shows that stolen wages and being shifted from farm to farm without consultation, are key factors that increase seasonal worker vulnerability. ACRATH has a seat at the table of the Federal Government's Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme — important in addressing the ongoing and emerging issues. A partnership programme with the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office encourages parishes to welcome seasonal workers into their communities.

ACRATH is one organisation

A person on a temporary visa sought medical help at the emergency department ... the staff recognised the indicators of human trafficking and were able to engage with the victim.

facilitated by ACRATH, recognised indicators of human trafficking and were able to effectively engage with the victim/survivor.

Trafficking for Labour

Post-pandemic there is a global shortage of labour and an increase in issues around forced labour, particularly with seasonal workers from the Pacific Islands and Timor-Leste. The impact of climate change is causing more people to move from their homes in search of work. ACRATH was able to support over 150 seasonal workers, mostly from Vanuatu and Timor-Leste, during the lockdown restrictions.

Recently ACRATH was instrumental in a successful outcome for a group of 22 seasonal workers from Vanuatu who were, according to a judge, treated egregiously on a farm in Queensland. Through strategic

addressing the scourge of human trafficking. It is working with and lobbying government to eliminate human trafficking effectively. The work is endless because there is huge profit in trafficking and slavery, but progress is being made. There have been significant legislative and policy changes and public awareness is increasing.

Between the "two feet" of ACRATH's work is a sacred space of mutual encounter where victims/survivors may be able to turn vulnerability into the power of love, courage, empathy, hope and belonging. ✦

For further info:
acrath.org.au, mybluesky.org.au
shaktiinternational.org

Three Men in a Field 2 by Bryce Brown ©
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www.brycebrownart.com

Annette Arnold RSJ lives in Queensland and is Vice President of ACRATH. She enjoys accompanying people on their life journey and all things walking, creation, cooking and craft.



"Our People" Are Struggling

Paul Barber invites us to address the pressing issues of the most vulnerable in our society as we prepare for the election.

On another planet, political analysts would tell you that a government that has successfully guided a country through the worst health crisis for decades, while maintaining record low unemployment, supported wage growth that has on average kept pace with rising inflation, and delivered the middle class gains in property values averaging 25 per cent compared with pre-Covid March 2020, would be cruising to an easy victory riding on a tide of gratitude from healthy and wealthier middle class voters.

On planet Aotearoa it seems other rules apply. The current government is in the throes of a desperate catch-up game on the election campaign, trailing in the opinion polls in the lead-up to 14 October election day. Rising interest rates and high inflation combined with an end to the extended period of house price rises has eaten into gains made and the middle class is now feeling under pressure and dissatisfied. The looming prospect of economic slowdown means people feel more insecure and many are looking for political change.

People on the margins of health and social well-being who have the

least resources, are feeling the cost of living pressures the most. Any gains they have made over recent years look very fragile. The future for their communities is clouded by the risk of deepening hardship as rising unemployment makes a very unwelcome return.

The most recent forecasts for employment are that a further 50,000 people will be unemployed by mid-2025, on top of the 109,000 who are currently looking for work. Add to that another 94,000 more who are not "actively" looking for work but would take a job if there was one.

The Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit (SPPU) of The Salvation Army has been warning for months about anti-inflationary policies that aim to deliberately "engineer" an economic recession through higher interest rates and higher unemployment that reduces demand in the economy. "Reducing demand" is economic language that means leaving people with less

income to spend so there is less pressure on prices. As we have said many times, the cure is worse than the disease for those who are already struggling to get by on low incomes and insecure work.

When a whole society is structured around paid employment as the main source of the resources to enable participation in society, exclusion from paid employment is almost by definition marginalisation. That our social system still seems unable to meaningfully incorporate, into the formal economic analysis, the contribution and well-being of those not in paid employment is a continuing social and spiritual deficiency.

The current government has adopted the well-being approach to measuring our progress as a nation since 2018. This has been a substantial first step to opening up our political and economic decision-making to other information on the physical, mental, cultural and spiritual well-being of people in this land. But





this new approach sits uncomfortably alongside the inherited framework of government financial management and policy development aimed at containing government expenditure and revenue raising within very tight financial constraints.

The very unequal sharing of access to good, paid employment has been revealed in more clarity by the well-being approach to reporting. We know in more detail that young people, women, Māori and Pacific workers, and people living with a disability are much more likely to be without paid employment or have inadequate and insecure work. There is a deeply concerning shadow world for those on the margins of paid employment who are facing exploitation and even modern slavery, through weaknesses in our immigration and labour laws and inadequate enforcement.

The well-being approach has not succeeded (yet) in adequately representing the contribution to well-being of the most important work that is also the most undervalued – those who are caring for others as mothers, fathers and family carers for those with illness or disability. It does not capture well enough the well-being (or lack thereof) experienced by those who are unable to work in paid employment because of illness or disability.

The impact of rising unemployment will fall very unequally – we know this for certain. The Director of Treasury or the Reserve Bank Governor or the chorus of economic and business commentators will not face redundancy, loss of overtime, or an abrupt end to the casual work in their local cafe or retail outlet over the coming months. That will be the fate of “others”.

In this Election 2023 we are calling on everyone to ask the hard questions about the “Pressing

Issues” to candidates and politicians in whatever forum or opportunity you have – election forums, social media, street corner meetings, emails, door knocking. Let us bring the experience and perspective of those on the margins into the centre of political debate.

In our series of Election 2023 Pressing Issues briefings, The Salvation Army is taking the view of “our people” – the 150,000 people who received support during the past year and the communities where we are working.

Jobs, Living Costs and Tax

We want to see plans from political parties that will ensure jobs and enough income for people on the margins struggling with rising living costs.

We want to know how they will make sure employers will be flexible and invest in their people with fair wages. Will they provide active employment support such as job navigators and support employment in areas where the need is highest?

Hardship is deepest for people relying on welfare support. Will they commit to ensuring welfare support for all those needing it is set at a minimum, liveable income?

Taxation is the way we work together as a country to help those who are most in need. We want to know how politicians plan to make the system fairer. Those who can, should contribute more, so that those in need receive the help they need. Better taxes are needed to gather the revenue needed to provide the health care, education and welfare support people need to live with dignity.

Helping Children and Youth to Thrive

We are asking politicians to explain what they will do to help children and youth to thrive.

We are looking for actions that will keep reducing child poverty through extra help for low-income households

with children, and further steps to reduce food hardship.

Youth mental distress has been increasing with one in four young people aged 15-19 years reporting modest to high levels of mental distress. We want to hear about actions to increase in low- or no-cost youth-focused mental health services, focused on the places where they are needed the most.

Youth unemployment is still too high. Around one in five young people experienced a sustained period of limited employment over those years between the ages of 16–24 years. We think every young person should leave school with a plan for their future. Politicians need to explain how they will help young people in the regions and communities most affected.

Abuse and Violence towards Children

Is rising, with more than 2,000 violent offences resulting in injury last year and on average seven children die and 211 are hospitalised each year as a result of violent assault. We want politicians to explain how they will support prevention approaches that work at community and family/whanau level in communities most affected.

There are many more Pressing Issues this election and there is much more to say about homelessness and unaffordable housing, the impact of alcohol, drug and gambling addictions, financial hardship and the impact of crime and imprisonment.

On every issue we ask you and all those voting to look through the lens of hardship and marginalisation and call on politicians to commit to clear actions for those who are facing the greatest hardships in this time. ✦

For further info:
www.tinyurl.com/4avwkccp
www.tinyurl.com/rt8j9w2v

Paul Barber is the senior social policy analyst of the Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit of The Salvation Army and an author of *State of the Nation 2023*.





MISSION AS FREEING FROM POVERTY

Susan Smith discusses how and why the Church's mission focus has changed to liberating Earth and people from poverty.

IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL, the risen Jesus tells his disciples to: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). It was a text which easily enough legitimated much missionary activity after Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas in 1492. It was through baptism and conversion that pagans would be saved — no baptism, no salvation. It was a text that complemented the imperial aims of Spain, Portugal, England, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany through to World War II.

Indeed, Māori academic Ranginui Walker spoke of missionaries as "the advance party of cultural invasion" (*Ka Whawhai Tonu Mātou: Struggle without End*, 1990: 85). For example, anti-clerical governments in late 19th-century France were more than happy

for French Catholic Sisters to journey to Vietnam and establish French-medium schools. It could be argued that successful colonisation of distant countries needed missionaries while missionaries appreciated the security that the imperial powers offered them.

Mission as Planting the Church

Mission for the pre-Vatican II Church (before late 1960s) was above all about saving souls. Sisters, and to a lesser extent Brothers and priests, opened schools, but Sisters also provided basic health services in "pagan" lands. It was believed that "pagans'" appreciation of such work would engender an openness and receptivity to the faith. People would ask to be baptised and then churches, presbyteries, convents, schools, hospitals and seminaries would be built. Mission in the 19th century

and prior to Vatican II was all about *plantatio ecclesiae* — planting the Church where it had not yet been planted. Mission was about numerical and institutional growth. This is not to deny the great work accomplished, and even today "mission" schools are appreciated in many countries that we used to call "foreign missions".

Changes in Mission Focus

But the situation began to change by the mid-20th century. There were several reasons for this. First, the collapse of European imperial powers, notably Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands after World War II meant that former colonies rejected foreign missionaries as instruments of imperial powers, and further attempts to proselytise were often forbidden.

New Theology of Baptism

Second, Vatican II, particularly in

its *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes*, encouraged movement beyond dualistic theologies which saw this world as a place of trial in which we prepared ourselves for a happier life after death. Conciliar teaching also moved beyond thinking of baptism as the only and privileged path to salvation. Conciliar teachings also identified baptism as the sacrament that called people to mission. Being missionary was no longer something that flowed from ordination or religious profession.

Social Justice to the Fore

Third, Catholic Social Teaching and the birth of liberation theology in Latin America, meant that history became the arena in which God's salvific plan for humankind, indeed for all creation, was to be realised.

Decrease in Membership

Fourth, vocations to the religious life and the priesthood began to decline significantly from the 1960s onward in the Western Church – the Western Church that had formerly sent Sisters, Brothers, and priests to the foreign missions. But vocations were now more plentiful in the so-called "foreign missions".

Shift in Understanding Mission

Fifth, there was a big theological shift in Catholic missiology. Liberating people from poverty was recognised as the new missionary imperative and this would happen through development. Not for nothing did Vatican II (1962-1965) coincide with the United Nations first Decade of Development in the 1960s.

Catholic missionaries and missiologists now turned to a Gospel mandate for missionary activity. They listened to Jesus's words: "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" (Lk 4:18-19). And to the parable of the Last Judgement, where the king says: "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" (Mt 25:40).

An illustration of this shift is apparent in our Lenten programmes. Some may remember hearing about "black babies" in primary school and taking our coins to "buy" a black baby. We could then give the baby a saint's name for when they were lucky enough to be baptised in some distant country.

Today our Lenten collection literature does not mention conversion or proselytization. Our donations are for empowering the poor so they can move beyond the imprisonment of poverty that generates inadequate health services, poor housing, lack of education and ethnic and gender discrimination.

Evangelisation of "West"

Sixth, prior to Vatican II mission was usually understood in geographical categories, a journeying to distant places inhabited by pagans. But by the mid-20th century, Catholic numbers in Europe, North America and in Western outposts such as Australia and New Zealand were declining. A "New Evangelisation" was required in former Catholic parts of the world as papal documents indicated (see Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Europe*, 2003; Pope Benedict XVI, *Ubicumque et Semper*, 2010).

Focus on Care of Earth

Seventh, in 2015, Pope Francis confirmed what many others were already saying – care of creation must be a new missionary imperative (see *Laudato Si'*, 2015). Francis told us that our sister Earth "now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness

evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why Earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters" (LS par 2).

Mission Emphasis Today

In the Catholic world, but not usually in more evangelical missionary work, baptism of pagans so that their souls are saved has been complemented and overtaken by other missionary imperatives since the end of the second Vatican Council.

The first of these is liberating people from poverty and injustice so that they experience the Gospel as good news for the poor.

Second, John Paul II and Benedict XVI saw mission as reclaiming Western Europe, and by extension North America, Australia and New Zealand for the Church. They both believed that this new missionary task required back-peddalling on some of the reforms initiated by Vatican II.

Finally, Francis' *Laudato Si'* asks us to remember that a broken Earth means broken people. Both need to be healed, to be re-created.

I have found that my involvement with people around environmental issues is very much a missionary activity. It means that I am engaged in actions for the common good with people who aren't involved with Christianity, or even really understand what it is. But being with them can mean conversation about mystery in our lives, perhaps the first step on the road to an awareness of God's transcendent and immanent Spirit present in all creation. ✦

Rev J Waterhouse Superintending the Landing of Missionaries at Taranaki by Unknown Artist (1844) Used with permission Fletcher Trust Collection, Tāmaki Makaurau www.tinyurl.com/e3t2ska7

Susan Smith RNDM lives in Northland. She has researched and written on mission and has authored books on missiology as well as the history of her Congregation.





SMOTHERING INDIGENOUS VOICES

Daryl Guppy *describes what a voice can achieve and how easily it is silenced by external forces.*

A LITTLE OVER 35 years ago I was Council Clerk and Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) Coordinator for a small indigenous community in the far reaches of the Northern Territory tablelands. I saw my task was to act

as the intermediary voice — and I use that word in its deliberate current context — between the needs of the community and the constricting demands of the federal and NT Government bureaucracy. The local Community Council also believed my task was to listen to their voice, and to put it into, what was for the old ringers, a foreign bureaucratic language so the outcomes they wanted could be delivered.

I like to think we had some success. The community grew from around 150 people to over 700 as people voted with their feet and relocated from surrounding dysfunctional communities and outstations. This was, and remained, a community with deep and active connections to country and

culture. I took instructions from the Community Council and wore the ire of Government providers and at times, of the Council when I was not able to achieve the outcomes they wanted.

This was no idyllic indigenous paradise. Although the elders on the Community Council had declared the community a dry area, enforced under NT legislation, alcohol remained a major problem resulting in fights, injuries and deaths. Sometimes justice came at the point of a spear, or the end of a rifle barrel. The two-person police station was two to three hours away when the road was open and officers willing to attend.

This is a story of what a voice can achieve and how easily it is undone by external forces.

Key to success was the original version of the Community Development Employment (CDEP) scheme. The community was paid a lump sum grant equal to the unemployment entitlements of the community residents. The Community Council distributed payment at an hourly rate for 20 hours work a week. Work less than 20 hours, and you received a pro-rata payment or a minimum amount of tucker money at a level determined by the council. Work longer hours and the entitlement was topped up.

This provided flexibility so work could be supported and scheduled according to community needs. We essentially had three workers for every single job. The bureaucrats didn't like it, but it meant that people could attend to cultural obligations and not leave the office, the health clinic, the school, the maintenance crew, the rubbish collection crew, short staffed.

It helped parents to work at school, assisting in language and extending community involvement. It gave people dignity, not dependency.

Just before I finished there was a federal Government review of the CDEP programme. The report was entitled "No Reverse Gear" because participants believed the programme gave them agency and control. That was a strong voice.

The Federal Government received the report and then killed CDEP. It became a mutated, bureaucratically strangled version of metropolitan unemployment benefits which has condemned communities to the destructive cycle of welfare dependency to this day. Now it's said that the most common music heard on remote Communities is the on-hold Centrelink recording.

We tapped Government funds to build new houses. The Community Council decided who was entitled to each new house. We sat in the

dirt and sketched the floorplan and orientation for each new dwelling. For health reasons, the toilet should not back onto the kitchen. One wall should include a breeze block to gather cooling winds in the summer and face away from the cold south east winter winds. Verandas were wide and at ground level so people could sleep outside if they wished and it gave room to cater for the inevitable visitors and the resultant overcrowding. Preferred windows were louveres, easy to open for air circulation and easy to replace if broken.

It was a long and difficult fight

THE INDIGENOUS VOICE HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE, SOMETIMES WEAK, SOMETIMES STRONG, BUT RARELY LISTENED TO FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME.

to have houses built to these designs. The NT Government and the Federal Government demanded houses modelled on Sydney suburbs. Sheet glass windows, ready for air-conditioning. For cost savings, toilets always backed onto kitchens.

We won.

The voice was heard, but it was a tortuous and difficult path, disfigured by threats of funding withdrawal. The repair and maintenance bill for the community was the lowest per capita of any indigenous community in the NT because people did not need to "modify" the dwelling with an axe to make it suitable for climatic and social conditions.

We lost.

The staff that replaced me did not

work in the same way. They acted as an agent of the Government, so new houses were built Sydney-style, with toilets backing onto kitchens. Houses were quickly and ruinously modified.

Community Councils, the very amplification of the indigenous voice to the organs of Government, were later disbanded and merged into cumbersome regional councils because this was the only way to receive Local Government funding.

The indigenous voice has always been there, sometimes weak, sometimes strong, but rarely listened to for any length of time. Australia has a sad record of taking indigenous programmes that work, and defunding them. The Canberra and NT bureaucracy, despite their best intentions, simply do not listen, or provide funding certainty, to the multiple voices that are already in place in health, education, alcohol and domestic violence management. Or they are constrained in what they can do by a raft of "white tape" like Sydney design and environmental planning standards for a family home to suit 3.5 residents instead of 10 to 15.

On a broader scale, the challenge to unleash the smothered indigenous voice remains largely unsuccessful. But it can be overcome. The tools have been there for 30 plus years, but they still hammer on closed ears. ✦

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18 September 2023 <https://johnmenadue.com/smothered-voices/>

West Macdonnell Ranges – Northern Territory
(2019) by Bridget Seaton © Used with permission www.bridgetseaton.com

Bridget's work is made in direct response to places she has passed through on foot. She paints in her sketchbook on location, committing places deep into memory before embarking on larger paintings in her studio that draw on her lived experience of the land.

Daryl Guppy lived and worked in Australia's remote Northern Territory communities with First Nations people for over a decade. He is a financial columnist and author of books on stock market trading techniques.



What God Asks of Us

The Spirit of the Exalted One is upon me,
for the Holy One has anointed me:
God has sent me to bring good news to those who are poor;
to heal broken hearts;
to proclaim release to those held captive
and liberation to those in prison;
to announce a year of favour from the Holy One,
and the day of God's vindication;
to comfort all who mourn,
to provide for those who grieve —
to give them a wreath of flowers instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of tears,
a cloak of praise instead of despair.
They will be known as trees of integrity... (Isaiah 61:1-3)

“When did we see you hungry and feed you, or see you
thirsty and give you drink?

When did we see you as a stranger and invite you in, or
clothe you in your nakedness?

When did we see you ill or in prison and come to visit you?”

The ruler will answer them: “The truth is, every time you did
this for the least of my sisters or brothers, you did it to me.”
... “The truth is, as often as you neglected to do this to one
of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me”.

(Matthew 25:37-40, 45)

From: The Inclusive Bible





Be Not Afraid!

Thomas O'Loughlin discusses the quality of listening needed in the Synod for a way forward for the whole Church.

I'VE BEEN SPEAKING TO many groups about synodality and what it means. One question always crops up: If you were at the synod, what would be your "number 1" ask?

The question is obvious: those interested in the synod are calling for renewal, and many are seeking to bring Vatican II's vision to fruition.

But if the question is obvious, the answer is not. We could each draw up a wish list, but would such a list be appropriate?

Even Pope Francis could make a list — I'm sure that abolishing clericalism, finding new ways of

standing up for the poor and for the creation, and some way to repair the hurt and damage caused by clerical sexual abuse would be on it. But that list, too, might be a short-circuiting of the very basis of a synod.

Synod Is for Listening

At the heart of the notion of synodality is that people from different places come together bringing different views, perspectives and insights. Each has to be listened to, taken into account and valued.

Traditionally, this has meant bishops listening to bishops — and

this is a problem if "synodality" is to become a characteristic of the Church: many other perspectives than those of celibate, older males need to be heard.

A start has been made: some others of the baptised are at the synod; but, if this synod is to usher in synodality, this is just an iceberg's tip.

Only when a genuine culture of listening is in place, can we start to think about changes in the Church.

Why Is Listening so Important?

Because the opposite of listening is a top-down approach. In this approach

it is assumed that all knowledge, guidance and wisdom is held by a group of leaders, or even just one man, and this is then dispensed to everyone else. It makes a two-tier Church of teachers and obedient listeners.

The synodal Church assumes that all speak and all listen. They do this as human beings created in God's likeness, with a common baptism making them members of the Christ, and with a common task as disciples moving along the Way.

We do not yet know how to do this, but — I pray — we have made a start. The period from October 2023 to October 2024 is going to be a steep learning curve, and painful, but also a time of real growth.

And if we're realistic, it will meet stiff resistance not just from curia officials, who have a personal interest in the status quo, but from those looking for simple black and white answers to complex questions, and from those who use religion — and a certain type of Catholicism in particular — as a front for their social and economic agenda.

Authoritarianism survives because it is convenient for so many!

No Foregone Conclusions

The synod attendees are not listening for a voice from heaven or for where to find a secret key that could unlock some wondrous source of wisdom.

There have been many times in Christian history when groups have claimed that they had just such a treasure with all the answers.

Some claim that they have it in a sacred book such as the scriptures, or in replicating yesterday and claiming it as "tradition", or in an individual such as the pope, or even some private revelation (eg, the "secret message" of Fatima). These are flights from reality.

Listen to: "Where Are We Now?"

Synodal listening is far more mundane and requires much more thinking, prayer and discerning.

The focus is on where are we, as the People of God, now? What are the demands of discipleship that we face in our time and culture, and what is the best way to face these challenges.

Moreover, we are a people on the move: we are called to walk and act as disciples, not simply sign up to an abstract list of beliefs.

Listen to: "Where Should We Be Going?"

A second question will ask: Where should we be going? How should we be witnessing to God's love manifest in the Anointed One? What should we be doing that we are not doing?

Answering these questions will throw up rafts of changes needed if we are to move forward.

Once we see where we should be going, if the synod does not act, then it will be a failure. We do not listen just for information. We listen to see what needs doing. Then we pray for



Only when a genuine culture of listening is in place, can we start to think about changes in the Church.

the courage to make the changes in the face of many who oppose change. The true wish list can only emerge from the listening.

Listen and Acknowledge Mistakes

If presenting a "wish list" is not the first step, there is something I would like to say to the synod were I there.

Synods have often failed to solve the problems they discovered. The reason is that making changes would mean admitting the Church had already erred.

At the Council of Constance in 1415, the Church did not face up to the questions posed to it by Jan Hus — instead they murdered him by burning him at the stake.

If that Council had admitted that errors had crept into the Church and remedied them, the division of the western Church might have been avoided.

At Trent, the fear of admitting that Martin Luther might have made many correct challenges, meant the Council swung to the other extreme — and they rejected even the obvious reforms. The myth that the Church does not make mistakes won the day. We are still paying the cost.

At Vatican II many bishops knew mistakes had to be corrected, and they made changes but without calling them remedies.

It would have been better for the Council bishops to come clean and say: "we have gone astray", explain how, and show what we are doing to fix it.

We are not perfect, but we have the Spirit constantly calling us to improve.

Towards Conversion

There are many in authority who will only countenance changes if these do not contradict what has been long defended. To these, the idea of a chronic mistake is unthinkable — but a reality check shows that they do occur.

To move out of the mindset of "we can't have been wrong" requires humility, a willingness to face the unpalatable, and to trust in the Spirit.

We believe that the Spirit leads us into all truth (Jn 14:17) and that we will be complete only at the end of time. In the process of conversion to the Gospel, the best start is to name our blunders. Then ask the Christ for the courage to begin afresh. ✠

Thomas

Photo by Riccardo De Luca/Shutterstock.com

Thomas O'Loughlin is Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology. His latest book is *In Christ Now We Meet Both East and West: On Catholic Eucharistic Action* (2023).





LISTENING TO THE SPIRIT

Christina Reymer is in Rome at the Spirit Unbounded event that coincides with the Synod.

WHEN POPE FRANCIS announced the Synod on Synodality he called on the whole Church to become involved. We were to listen for the Spirit's prompting towards reform for this time. Since we started "walking together" in 2021 the preparations have moved from the local and national stage, to the continental stage, and they are now in the universal stage with the first Synodal meeting happening this month in Rome. The second meeting will be in October 2024.

The universal stage began on 4 October with bishops and delegates, lay and ordained, from around the world participating with Pope Francis. We have 10 non-bishop members and five bishops from our Oceania region at the Synod. From Aotearoa, Archbishop Paul Martin of Wellington is our bishop member and Mr Manuel Beazley, Vicar for Māori in the Auckland Diocese, and Fr Dennis Nacorda, parish priest of St Joseph Hāto Hōhepa parish in Levin, are our two non-bishop members.

Other Oceania members are Dr Trudy Dantis, Mr John Lochowiak, Mrs Kelly Paget and Professor Renee Kohler-Ryan from Australia; Sr Mary Angela Perez RSM and Dr Susan Sela from the Pacific; Fr Sijeesh Pullenkunnel from the Syro-Malabar Eparchy; and Ms Grace Wrakia from Papua New Guinea/Solomon Islands.

The other Oceania bishops are Bishop Shane Mackinlay and Archbishop Patrick O'Regan from Australia; Bishop Dariusz Kaluza from Papua New Guinea/Solomon Islands; and Bishop Paul Donoghue from CEPAC (Pacific).

Spirit Unbounded Worldwide Ecumenical Event

Coinciding with the Synod are other celebrations in Rome. One, Spirit

Unbounded, has been organised primarily by Root & Branch in Bristol with 43 companion groups from around the world. Although the event happens in Rome and Bristol UK, anyone can join online.

Christina Reymer from Hamilton, representing "Be the Change Catholic Church Aotearoa", is in Rome participating in the event. She has taken a suitcase of shoes for a "pink shoes" art installation into the Vatican. This is highlighting the global desire for women's equality as baptised members in the Church.

Before leaving for Rome, Christina shared her first blog:

Pink Shoes 13 September 2023

My mantra has always been "Go where the Spirit leads" and it/she has taken me to the most amazing places and experiences I could not have dreamt in my wildest of dreams.

"Pink Shoes" characterises this next part of my journey, and it takes me to the Vatican! The "Pink Shoes" campaign for gender equality in the Catholic Church was the brainchild of a "Be the Change" member. Now we are literally taking the "pink shoes" to the streets of Rome, right up to the doors of the Vatican. Those doors remain firmly closed to women in regard to our full participation in all aspects of church life, and particularly, to ordained ministry.

So my bags are packed. I'm travelling light with just carry-on baggage because my checked bag is full of "pink shoes" — women's worn-out shoes, their stories of a lifetime

of service to the Church tied to them with pink ribbons. Some write of being regarded still as second-class citizens in the Church. Others of their hopes and aspirations for a more inclusive, welcoming Church.

I'll be connecting with women and men globally, meeting in Rome for a lay-led gathering called "Spirit Unbounded" which will be both in-person and online, so that the thousands around the globe who want to be a part of this conversation can join us without having to burn up air miles as some of us are. There will be over 100 speakers on topics that cover a range of issues — poverty, marginalisation of peoples, justice and injustice, abuse, clericalism, patriarchy, the environment, the status of women, governance structures, liturgy, ministry — all addressing the key question of where the Holy Spirit is leading us in the 21st century. It's about being part of a new way of being church (with a small c), of being more inclusive and welcoming, embracing the rich diversity of who we are as people of this tiny blue planet called Earth, for ourselves and future generations.

God only knows where this will lead ... but that's the exciting part. I just know that it's going to open up ideas, experiences and connections beyond what I could ever imagine. And I know that it will be good. ✨

Further information:

Be the Change: www.tinyurl.com/yc8ejcwb
Spirit Unbounded: www.spiritunbounded.org/8-14-oct

Christina Reymer is a cradle Catholic, a Dutch Kiwi, business owner, wife and mother of five amazing children and lives in Hamilton ... just going where the Spirit leads!



QUESTIONS ABOUT EVIL



THE OTHER DAY A FRIEND, who like me is struggling with the escalating horrors in Ukraine, asked: “Peter, you’re a theologian. Do you believe there are evil powers, or something like that, lurking in the universe?” I gave a stuttering reply. There are no glib answers.

The question is real enough. What do we make of the monsters who stalk our political world at the moment — Putin, Netanyahu, Trump, military juntas? What do we make of ordinary people who capitulate or suck up to them, as if trapped in some pervasive cultural trauma? How do we deal with the steady erosion of democratic, not to mention ethical values all around us? Some of it already surfacing in the propaganda in our election trail.

Belief in the devil and hell was one of the first cracks in the theistic universe in the 19th century, and thank God for that. Yet it was one of the champions of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant who coined the term “radical evil”, which was then taken up by Hannah Arendt in her searing analysis of totalitarianism. The idea is of evil, radical evil, at the very root of things. As our liberal faith in progress has fissured, what do we make of the dark side of history, of the dark side of ourselves?

In my own area of historical expertise, the Early Modern Period, or long 16th century, apocalyptic ideas ruled the roost. It was assumed that the social ills, the conflicts and wars which raged and devastated lives were but a dim reflection of a colossal cosmic battle between good and evil. Martin Luther and Ignatius Loyola shared this take on reality. In John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* the devil gets all the good lines. This apocalyptic outlook goes back to Judaism and early Christianity: Daniel, the Book of Revelation. Christians in Paul’s time knew they were up against it.

Instinctively, I think, we tend to distrust apocalyptic scenarios, any black-and-white take on reality. Those who imagine themselves riding the white horse of righteousness are often the greatest menace to sanity and well-being.

Yet how do we confront the real forces of evil, including ruthless market forces? The bland homilies we often hear about nourishing hope in hard times are a cop-out and drive me witless. Maybe we need to remember that the early Christians triumphed because they had a tough, sober and costly vision of a new humanity. Apocalypticism is not all gloom and doom. It looks evil in the face but sees beyond it.

Take our inability in our own time to focus rationally on the imminence of a total climate breakdown. Dissociation reigns supreme. We read, see and experience unparalleled droughts, tropical temperatures in the midst of a Chilean winter, yet the TV ads rave: “We’re travelling again.” Indeed, I see friends and acquaintances flying off for a “Grand Tour”, as if the fact they can afford it blocks out piling up emissions. The alarming natural phenomena are terrifying but more so is our inability to draw the consequences. It seems nothing can undermine our sense of entitlement.

Apocalypticism says “No” to all this. It placards a vision of a new humanity and gives us the toolbox to confront the radical evil out there. Think of the Berrigans or Bishop Tutu. We look around and see many of our young ones have given up on any future for themselves. Can our battered old Church muster the energy to live out the consequences of a Resurrection faith and body out a credible defiance to such defeatism? I don’t know. And I wish I could give my troubled friend a clear-cut answer. Maybe we just have to live it. ✦

The Conversation by Zack Zdrale © Used with permission
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Peter Matheson is a retired principal of Knox Theological College living and writing in Blueskin Bay, Waitati, Dunedin.





PRIDE IN WHO WE ARE

backdated to a full marriage certificate.

A week after arriving in Wellington, we turned up at the local Meeting for Worship, were embraced as whānau and soon became Members.

Last year, our Young Friends at our Yearly Meeting noted that the New Zealand Quakers' very wonderful "Statement of Affirmation of Same Sex Relationships" had not been reviewed since its adoption in 1992. While stating that we believe that all are equally called

IN THE 1980s OUR local group of Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) met in a room of the Quaker Meeting House in Colchester, England. Quaker Meetings, at least those in Western societies, have long been at the forefront of trying to understand the gamut of sex and sexuality, campaigning for law reform first in relation to criminality. In this century, in countries such as the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Quakers joined the campaign for same-sex marriage. Quakers have been legally able to conduct their own marriage ceremonies since the middle of the 18th century.

I picked up the booklet, "Towards a Quaker View of Sex", at a CHE group meeting in that Quaker Meeting House in Colchester. It had been written in 1963 before the 1967 partial criminal law reform in the UK. The booklet covered all forms of sexual interaction and relationships including the premise that it is the nature and quality of a relationship that matters and that the same criteria should apply whether a relationship is heterosexual or homosexual.

This was my first encounter of Quakers but how profound. Here was a well-respected religious group that wasn't rejecting me, that wasn't saying I was against God, that wasn't disgusted with me.

Many years later in the twilight of my working life, I was invited to apply for a teaching post at an English Quaker school and was successful. The atmosphere of acceptance of different students' diversity, including sexualities, was marvellous. After a couple of weeks the headteacher stopped me in the corridor and asked how things were going. My response was: "I feel totally at home."

It was that feeling that led my husband and me to attend the local Quaker Meeting for some 12 years before we moved to Aotearoa New Zealand. When in 2014 equal marriage was legalised in the UK, the Quaker Meeting was keen to marry us, but it was too late as we had already done our Civil Partnership in 2005. This was later

to ministry through our worship, our daily lives, and in the activities of our Meeting, the Statement mentioned only lesbian and gay Friends being welcomed "publicly and explicitly" to our community. It did not mention all those who come under the Rainbow flag — bisexual, transgender, queer and non-binary people.

Young Friends asked for an updated statement. A group of young and older queer Friends got to work. One might think that the resulting draft would be easily accepted but surprisingly this was not so. Though there was overwhelming support for the good intention of a more embracing statement, there were anxieties, questions, objections to certain language, that it was too long, and distractions — some pedantic and some plain hurtful.

The updated statement intended to reaffirm "our commitment to creating a loving and inclusive community where sexual orientation and gender identities can be expressed" while seeking "to ensure that all in our community can be fully who they are, and that all can feel safe and at home." It took four drafts and some tears before our Yearly Meeting this May adopted "Walking in the Light under the Rainbow: A Quaker Statement of Commitment and Inclusion".

It had been raining hard in Whanganui during the Yearly Meeting gathering. As Friends came out of session there were joyful exclamations to see a double rainbow in the sky.

I am proud of our new commitment. I am proud to be a Quaker. Pride is not a deadly sin when it is pride in who you are and what you stand for. ✧

Alan Greenslade-Hibbert is a therapeutic biographer with his local hospice.



Sight to the Blind

HIGH IN THE PERILOUS ravines that rise towards the highest mountains in Nepal, families live in extreme poverty. They're the poorest of the poor. And those among them with cataracts face the double disadvantage of poverty and disability.

To help deliver vital support for people with disabilities, field workers funded by Christian Blind Mission (cbm) trek the mountains, identifying adults and children with physical disabilities living in remote areas, and connecting them to relevant services. These cbm-funded services provide vital life-changing corrective surgery, physiotherapy and locally made assistive devices.

Sadly, cataract blindness affects many adults and children. Whereas surgery on adults is simple, a child needs a general anaesthetic for safety to keep them still and asleep during the delicate eye surgery. Instead of \$35 for a 12-minute "miracle of sight" surgery for an adult, \$230 is needed for a child's cataract surgery.

At the bustling paediatric ophthalmology department of the cbm-funded eye hospital – where up to 150 young patients are treated every day – 9-year-old Sabina was warmly welcomed.

This hospital was established 40 years ago by Dr Albrecht Hennig from cbm, when he opened a 12-bed Eye Care Centre. From those humble beginnings, the cbm-funded Biratnagar Eye Hospital now carries out 1,000 operations a day.

In her purple surgical gown, Sabina waited anxiously with her mother Devi. Up to 10 children at a time each day receive the "miracle of sight" as the cbm-funded ophthalmologist Dr Pawan treats them.

The miracle of sight-saving cataract surgery is truly amazing. The eye is so complex, but in the way God has designed it, a simple piece of clear plastic can be slipped in to provide a lifetime of sight. It truly is miraculous!

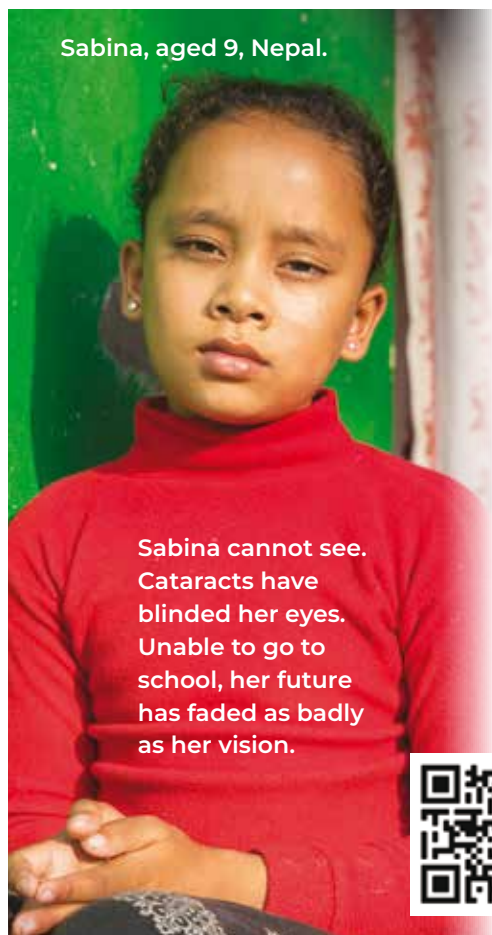
Through the generosity of cbm supporters, adults are able to better support themselves and their families, and children are able to run and play with their friends, go to school and plan for a brighter future.

cbm is an international Christian development organisation, whose mission includes delivering life-changing medication, support and surgeries to people disadvantaged by poverty and disability. cbm aspires to follow the teachings of Jesus in Luke 10:27: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself." ❖

Dr Murray Sheard has worked in international development for over 15 years and is the Chief Executive Officer of cbm New Zealand.



Sabina, aged 9, Nepal.



Sabina cannot see. Cataracts have blinded her eyes. Unable to go to school, her future has faded as badly as her vision.

Please help give the Miracle of Sight to children, like Sabina, in the world's poorest places.

Sadly, blindness from cataracts affects many children. In Nepal, at the bustling paediatric ophthalmology department of the **cbm**-funded eye hospital, up to 150 young patients are treated every day. Restoring a child's sight brings the added necessity of a general anaesthetic to keep them safely still and asleep during delicate eye surgery. Instead of \$35 for a 12-minute Miracle of Sight for an adult, \$230 is needed for a child's cataract surgery.

Please will you prayerfully consider sending a gift for sight-saving cataract surgery for children, like Sabina, so they can go to school, and have a far brighter future.



To learn more, scan the QR code using your mobile phone camera or go to www.cbmnz.org.nz/sabina





What Is of God?

In Matthew 22:15-22 Kathleen Rushton discusses Jesus's conflict with the Pharisees and the Herodians over paying tribute to Rome.

JESUS'S JOURNEY TO Jerusalem in Matthew's Gospel climaxes when he enters the city riding a donkey and is welcomed enthusiastically by a large crowd (Mt 21:1-11). His presence and activities provoke conflict with those in power. They will have him arrested

and executed before the end of that week — which is Passover Week.

Matthew 22:15-22 is the first of four conflict stories in which representatives of leading parties in Jerusalem try to trap Jesus. In each case he turns the issues they raise into opportunities for significant teaching.

Roman Control Through Taxation

The experience of Roman control, *Pax Romana*, was real for all occupied people. Matthew's community, which most likely, lived in Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire and the capital of the province of Syria, was no exception. Occupied territories could not escape *Pax Romana* in daily life because it was expressed through political, military, cultural, legal and social channels and legitimated as the will of the gods.

The Romans used a census to calculate taxes and collected them

along with tolls and levies on land value, goods and services. Ever since the Romans occupied Palestine in 63 BCE, they had required the Jews to pay tribute, or a head tax, in Roman coinage for each man, woman and slave. Roman coins were stamped with the image of the emperor, whom Romans usually identified as a son of a god. Devout Jews found this "idolatry" problematic. Not only was head tax highly unpopular, but those who collected it, according to Cicero, were viewed negatively throughout the wider Roman empire. Tax collecting was held in disdain in some Rabbinic writings.

Jewish life required the community to look after the widows and orphans, the poorest of society. The Roman tax system, though, extracted the resources from the regions, depleting them and impoverishing Jewish people of their

capacity to care properly for the vulnerable. This situation was not the way of God.

The Tax Trap

The Pharisees used the tax in their plan to trap Jesus. They begin with flattering words, then ask a sticky question: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"

In each case Jesus turns the issues they raise into opportunities for significant teaching.

The question is sticky because if Jesus opposes paying the tax, the Pharisees could say he was a threat to peace and public order and identify him with groups such as the Zealots who were in constant revolt against Rome. If Jesus advocates paying the tax he will be seen as a collaborator of the Romans and so lose his standing with the people.

Jesus escapes their trap. By asking his adversaries to produce "the coin used for the tax", he exposes them as carrying the offensive coin with the emperor's image, while he does not. They are revealed as collaborators while Jesus's position is not disclosed.

The disciples of the Pharisees and Herodians seem to be silenced. The Gospel recounts: "When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away." In Matthew's Gospel, "being amazed" indicates that something truly important has happened (Jesus [Mt 8:10]; disciples [8:27; 21:20]; crowds [9:33; 15:31]; Pilate [27:41]).

The question remained for those following the Pharisees and Herodians and those following Jesus: "What things are of God?" That answer is embodied in Jesus.

Taxation and Fairness

Does the Gospel advocate compliance or does it call Christians to set civil power within the broader framework of the empire of God? Even as we "pay tax to Caesar", can we recognise that such authority is relative and maintain that loyalty to God ought to take precedence?

The New Zealand tax system, at its best, is directed to the common good of all in this country. It provides for the health, education, justice and social welfare systems, the infrastructure throughout the country and the local and national governance of the country. Unlike the *Pax Romana* system, tax collected here is used for the benefit of the citizens and for this country's responsibilities to our neighbours and our global alliances. We all contribute.

But we know that there are injustices in the system. In May, 96 wealthy New Zealanders signed an open letter to the Government to say they would pay more tax. They recognised that in the current tax system wealthy people pay less tax compared to those on low and middle incomes. There are other groups, such as EcuAction, an interfaith group based in Ōtautahi/Christchurch, who are proposing ideas for a fairer tax system.

Rather than working for the common good of all

citizens and redistributing resources as intended, our current tax system is a key reason for growing inequality. We need a change to tax policy so that everyone living in Aotearoa can live with dignity and self-respect.

We can be encouraged by the Gospel to take the Catholic Social Teaching principle of the common good seriously as we study the tax policies of each electoral party in our preparation for the general election. Tax change will only come if we, the people, create a groundswell for change.

Disciples living in God's world and the world denominated by greed and self-interest are challenged to live faithful to God in both worlds until Jesus comes again to establish God's reign over all. ✦

Further info: EcuAction Proposal: www.tinyurl.com/2s3pakra

Reading for 22 October: Matthew 22: 15-22

The Tax-collector's Office by Pieter Brueghel the Younger, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

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



OCTOBER 27 & 28 2023

The Fall in Science and Theology

What have we fallen from?
How do we prosper?

Speakers

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| DR. BETHANY SOLLEDERER KEYNOTE | DR. KATHLEEN RUSHTON RSM KEYNOTE | DR. JAY MATENGA KEYNOTE |
| EMMA BELCHER | DR. DORU COSTACHE | REV. DR. ANNE VAN GEND |

NGĀ KARAITIANA KIMI MATŪ
NZ CHRISTIANS IN SCIENCE

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Be Prepared to Vote ✓

their political beliefs is a reminder that I live in a kind of freakish bubble where it is normal to know what was said in the House last Tuesday, when so many have no time or space to think about this. It's all too easy for politics to feel distant and irrelevant, like something that happens to other people, not your ordinary grinding days, the weeds in the garden, the receipt reeling its way out of the self-checkout machine at the supermarket.

The election is just one day (with a little advance voting); just a piece of paper with some ink on it, a tiny contribution of imagination to how the next three years could go. But it can be an opportunity, too, to consider: What do I care about beyond myself? And how do I exercise that care? Prayer is one powerful form of action, of course. And we can sign petitions, write submissions, communicate with our neighbours (or our elected representatives), share our time and resources in ways that make the world more abundant with grace. I hope that this election will be, if nothing else, an opportunity to visit or revisit some of these questions. ✦

Image by Bewakoof on Unsplash

ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER ELECTION to get enthusiastic (?) about. In my work as a journalist I read a lot of news — possibly too much — and occasionally interview politicians. From my vantage point, politics is at once a kind of thrilling entertainment, a rich well of article ideas and something fundamental: floundering humans trying to say something, change something about their communities, to represent someone or something.

So, what to make of the 2023 New Zealand election? I'm interested in how elections are a moment to think about what matters to you — for the people in your community, and the people far beyond.

Part of my work as a journalist includes occasionally doing vox pops — quotes from “the voice of the people”, otherwise known as strangers I walk up to and introduce myself to on the street. It's always fascinating to ask what people care about: many people want to talk about the cost of living or the failures of the education or justice system, but there are other moments too. A man talks, movingly, about his heartache for Indonesian refugees; another discusses the need for fun in the community, for playgrounds and parks and places of

leisure. Others don't know what they care about: I reel off a list of areas — tax, inequality, healthcare, foreign trade — and they consider. (By the by, policy.nz is an excellent non-partisan resource for learning about what each electoral candidate represents.)

It's easy to be cynical about politics. What can the people who purport to represent us really do, really change? Will they keep their promises? I sympathise with this: talking to people I don't know about

Shanti Mathias was runner up in the “Junior Feature Writer of the Year” category of the 2023 Voyager Media Awards for her journalism in *The Spinoff*.



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Reviews

Introducing Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Edited by Jared Davidson. Historical Essay by Claudia Orange
Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2023. (NZD 18)
[Reviewed by Greg Donnelly](#)

Introducing Te Tiriti o Waitangi, a small book of 150-odd pages, gives an historical account of the founding document for our country. The first half explains why the Treaty document was needed, who signed it, where and what happened. I found the summary of the differences between the Te Reo Māori and the English versions particularly informative.

The highlight of the book for me are the 200 one-paragraph stories of the Māori chiefs and high-ranking

women who signed Te Tiriti. These gems add so much character, contextual background and humanness to Te Tiriti. They give flesh and blood to the signature or mark which would otherwise be dry marks on a legal document. For example, the signer Patuone remembered as a boy meeting Captain Cook, and another signer Tawito hunted moa in his youth.

The second half of the book is an historical essay by Claudia Orange that spans from pre-European to the present. This well-researched book is a “must have” for anyone wanting to know about Te Tiriti. I wish I had had it with me on a trip to Waitangi several years ago. ★



My Theology: The Corner of Fourth and Nondual

By Cynthia Bourgeault
Published by Fortress Press, 2022. (USD 12.75)
[Reviewed by Katrina Brill](#)

When I finished this small book of 80 pages I recognised that Cynthia Bourgeault had captured me from the hello. It was not the title, *The Corner of Fourth and Nondual*, (I didn't get the connection with Thomas Merton), but her conversational approach in which she shares simply, interestingly and informatively about the development of her theology.

I was familiar with Bourgeault's writings on Centering Prayer and I was totally intrigued by her title of “cosmogonic mystic”. Cosmogonic mysticism, she says, is a “cosmological seeing or knowing” with the eye of the heart that seeks to break our reliance on rational thought patterns. It's a “luminous seeing; a peering straight into the heart of things; a gentle inner knowingness” that she

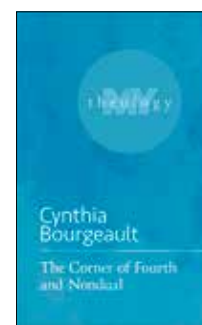
recognised as the fundamental divining rod for her life's journey. It's not what but how to see differently.

Ultimately it is about the consciousness and awareness of the Mystery of love and relationship.

The four short chapters, titled with understated humour — “The iCloud of Unknowing”, “Theodyssey”, “Two's Company, Three's a World” and “The Corner of Fourth and Nondual” — invite the reader to slow down in this world of “iClouds”, instant information and bombarding thoughts to walk our own “theodyssey”, to rediscover the relational nature of loving and to embrace the whole of the universe.

Cynthia thinks Christianity has become “pot-bound” and needs “repotting” where it might have room to grow.

I believe many others will find this book a refreshing approach with practical suggestions for living life consciously and contemplatively. ★



My Theology: The Primacy of Love

By Ilia Delio
Published by Fortress Press, 2022. (USD 12.75)
[Reviewed by Mary Thorne](#)

Ilia Delio's is an important voice in contemporary theological discussion. As Christianity in 2023 struggles to integrate the revelations of science with traditional religious belief, Delio helps us to re-express our understanding of the divine and the relationship of divinity to all matter. This little book of 84 pages sets out her theology in an accessible and beautiful way.

Ilia Delio draws on Teilhard De Chardin to describe love as a passionate force at the heart of the universe, a core energy of cosmic life and the evolutionary impulse towards unity and wholeness. She continues that love is

an irresistible ocean of attraction whose infinite goodness leads into the heart of God. Delio reminds us that God is not a perfect version of ourselves. “God is not a being; God is being itself — the great I AM...” God is love.

This thinking could transform outcomes in today's great ecological and social crises. We need to believe that “creation is not merely an act of God but the very life of God.” And that “to rekindle love around the planet ... is to begin to heal this earth community of its divisions, to transform the pain of violence into bonds of compassion, and to realise the balm which heals all our wounds is love.”

I recommend that we all read and reflect and talk about Ilia Delio's theology. ★



Reviews



Building Bridges: Bill Youren's Vision of Peace

Directed by John Chrisstoffels

Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

Speak of New Zealand and China in the 1950s and the name Rewi Alley springs to mind. Bill Youren was unknown to me until I saw this short but absorbing film recently.

New Zealand in the 1950s was a rather dour, conformist place, slow to adopt new ideas (as the film notes). The Holland government promulgated a crude ideological framework which demonised left-leaning viewpoints as communist-inspired, rhetoric that only hardened as the Cold War deepened.

Into this unpromising arena stepped a young Bill Youren — thinker, law graduate, sheep farmer, motorcycle and racing car enthusiast, peace advocate and cautious admirer of the New China that came to tumultuous birth in 1949. A sensitive and humane man, one commentator notes that Bill was always distressed to see animals suffer. Another friend speaks of his remarkable honesty and openness about his social and political views, his willingness to reveal his motivations to anyone who cared to listen.

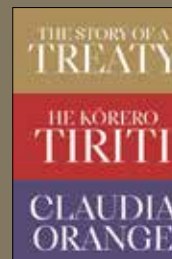
Youren visited China three times, the last with his beloved wife Leila. At first a cheerleader for the rapid progress shown by “the People’s China”, he gradually became disillusioned by a costly and pointless industrial programme rolled out in the villages, the growing cult of Mao and the destruction of much of the nation’s cultural and artistic heritage. This last development wounded Youren deeply. He revered China as an ancient, unified civilization and promoted exhibitions of Chinese art in New Zealand.

Scaffolded by reminiscences and commentary from family friends, historians and peace activists, this film would not have been feasible without one vital ingredient — the 8mm film footage that Bill and Leila took not only of their many trips abroad, but also of innovative farming practices on their Hawkes Bay property and elsewhere as part of Bill’s work on national agricultural boards.

For me, the most vivid and telling image in the film is alluded to in its title. To unify the two halves of their sprawling farm property, Bill decided to build a swing bridge across a deep gulley. His first step was to tie a rock to a long rope and throw it as far as he could across the gap.

Building Bridges is a well-constructed film about a self-effacing but persevering man who embodies a little of all of us who have grown up in this country and gaze with curiosity, wonder and, at times, alarm at the world beyond our shores. ★

The Story of a Treaty/He Kōrero Tiriti



By Claudia Orange

Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2023. (NZD 35)

Reviewed by Thomas Hassan Walker (Aged 11, Year 7, Trinity College)

This book, *The Story of a Treaty/He Kōrero Tiriti*, is about the Treaty of Waitangi and how people reacted to it.

I really enjoyed the start of the book because it had lots about how the Māori and the Crown reacted when they first saw each other. I also liked the part that was set in the Great Depression and how the Māori found it hard to find jobs, food and housing. The bit set in the 1970s and 80s was interesting because it talked about people starting to protest about how unfairly Māori people had been treated and that they needed more rights. I also enjoyed the part about fishing rights — for example what type of fish Māori were allowed to catch in places owned by the Crown.

I found the last few chapters hard to understand because they had lots to do with government, politics and specific laws.

I did not know much about the Treaty before I read this book. I found out lots of information from this book that I did not know before. For example, I learned about how a few Māori chiefs did not agree to the rules of the Treaty and believed that Māori should run their own society and be an independent community without protection.

I think that the Treaty promised things that the Crown then did not do to make Māori equal to all other people.

Some parts of this book were tricky to make sense of but other parts were fascinating to read. This book would be good for people who don't know about the Treaty and want a better understanding of it. ★



Cross Currents

by Jane Higgins

OCTOBER BRINGS TWO EVENTS that will shape our futures, one global, one local. The Synod on Synodality begins in Rome on 4 October and our own General Election is 14 October. Both present opportunities for people to express their faith in concrete ways.

The Synod assembly will hear and explore what the faithful have discerned about the Catholic Church during the synodal process. There have been grumblings about synodality in some quarters — notably from some bishops in the US and Europe. The main critics argue that the synodal process has been, in the words of US cardinal Raymond Burke, “a revolution [that] is at work to change radically the Church's self-understanding, in accord with a contemporary ideology.”

This claim denigrates and minimises the commitment of the many people of faith who took the time to come together in the synodal process at parish, diocesan, national and continental levels to pray, listen and discern. It denies that these are people for whom the Church is home — if at times a difficult home.

The process has been, as Pope Francis has stressed, about listening

and discernment and being open to all the faithful. And, contrary to critics' claims, this journey of communal discernment isn't a modern innovation: it has its roots in the life and practices of the early Christian community — just look at the accounts of that community in the Acts of the Apostles.

The Catholic Church is, famously, not a democracy, so there won't be a vote to produce a “result”. What there will be, we can hope, is a careful process of listening to the voices of the faithful and discerning the breath of the Spirit.

Our own country is a democracy, and later this month the General Election gives us a further chance to express our faith. We hold such power to shape the future. One example: older readers may remember the 1991 benefit cuts when a new government cut social welfare benefits by up to 25 per cent. No government since has restored those cuts adequately. The intergenerational effects of the poverty they induced remain with us today. Policies have long-term consequences.

So, it's helpful to ask, as people of faith, how our voting intentions line up

with the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. How do the tax proposals of the different parties promote equality and a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable? How do their promised solutions to law and order accord with the principle of human dignity? Do their plans to address the climate emergency honour and enhance the common good, respect for life, and solidarity with those who are already suffering the effects of this crisis?

And always, crucially, let's ask: Who benefits? Who loses out?

One principle of Catholic Social Teaching applies to both the synodal process and the election: participation. It's noteworthy that critics of the synodal journey are also critical of welcoming divorced and remarried Catholics back to the Eucharist, and of welcoming members of LGBTQ+ communities to participate in the Church. The election, likewise, poses the question: Do we become a more inclusive society, or do we vote to exclude people, and indeed all forms of life on this beautiful planet, from living abundantly? Let's choose wisely. ☞



TUI MOTU Interlands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

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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 social justice and ecology.

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Letters to the Editor

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

CORRECTING THE RECORD

Boyd Wilson's "Women and Church" (TM Issue 285: 31) was not entirely accurate. The ordination to the priesthood of the first five women in the Anglican Province of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (constitutional change of the Church title in 1992) was on the weekend of 6-7 December 1977. Three women were ordained in Auckland on the Saturday, and two the next day in Rotorua and Gisborne. While the Rt Rev Barbara Harris was the first woman consecrated a bishop in the Anglican Communion in 1989 in the USA she was a suffragan (not a diocesan) bishop. Dr Penny Jamieson was made the first Anglican woman Diocesan Bishop (Dunedin diocese) in the world in 1990.

Jean Brookes, Auckland/Tāmaki Makaurau

CLIMATE REFUGEES

British PM Rishi Sunak warns the British public about the financial cost to taxpayers if migrants trying to enter the country are not stopped (*The Press* 23 August). Australian journalist Antony Loewenstein was promoting his latest book, *The Palestine Laboratory*, in New Zealand (TM, Issue 285: 20-21). He exposes the thriving trade Israel promotes by exporting its population control techniques worldwide, including Britain. Putting it bluntly, warfare and climate chaos (Indian scientist Vandana Shiva's phrase) are driving masses of desperate people from the "global south" to try to reach a Western country. They realise that their survival is at stake. But, as the

frequent reports of drowning in the Mediterranean show, the would-be migrants are not wanted. Financial concerns outweigh humanitarian values. How will NZ react if, as it seems likely, climate collapse will cause desperate migrants in large numbers to try to come here?

Lois Griffiths, Christchurch/Ōtautahi

POWER OF MISSION

"Mission as an Adventure of the Imagination" in (TM Issue 285: 20-21) has such ideas, such pulsating words. It's rather like the curate's egg — good in parts. Two examples are rather appalling — Greek philosophy and Confucianism, both bastions of patriarchy and rigid social conformity. Mission is our journey to God, as followers of Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit. I recommend an excellent book on modern day China, *Red Memory* by Tania Branigan.

Jill Heenan, Whangārei

DISINFORMATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Ann Hassan's interview with Sanjana Hattotuwa "Post pandemic, the virus infecting the mind" (TM, Issue 285: 20-21) was timely in alerting us to the evil of disinformation. "We can't ignore it — the shadow of the pandemic is going to outlast the biological presence of the virus."

Recent research suggests artificial intelligence (AI) presents similar challenges to disinformation. Previously the Church attitude to scientific developments was head in the sand; we have only to remember Galileo's life sentence and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Times have changed. Joseph Weizenbaum, who created the first AI chatbot ELIZA in 1966, was adamant that "we must never confuse humans with robots". Professor Jürgen Schmidhuber, a more recent researcher, was also firm that "you can't stop the march of AI".

Disinformation and artificial intelligence are a similar challenge. What is the answer? AI and the internet are products of human ingenuity, not vice versa. In 1963 I was on a ship in the Caribbean during the Cuban Missile

Crisis. US warships appeared signal lamps flashing questions; a Russian freighter passed with a crated rocket on its foredeck. The world was on the brink. The crisis came down to humans not technology, and we humans have to deal with our modern technical problems.

While governments have a responsibility to make rules they cannot legislate morality. Many of the people who died in last year's earthquakes in Turkey died because construction regulations were ignored and buildings collapsed. Humans can make a difference for good. In the USA the terrible toll of gun massacres is accepted as a fact of life. Their society is not prepared to tackle the gun problem so the carnage continues. On the other hand, mass shootings in the UK and Australia in the 1990s resulted in gun law changes and mass shootings have not occurred in these countries since.

Internet information and artificial intelligence has the potential for good or evil. Governments have a responsibility to regulate where necessary and possible. We thinking people should embrace positive aspects and not accept the negative. It's up to us. God gave us brains and the Gospel. Now is the time for Christian common sense.

Dennis Veal, Timaru

Tui Motu

received **two** Australasian Catholic Press Association (ACPA) awards for excellence 2023:

BEST COVER:

April 2022



BEST CONTENT CELEBRATING CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS OF CATHOLIC FAITH:

"Dying and Rising" by Jeremy Hema in April 2022 issue.



For What It's Worth

VENTURING INTO THE kitchen to do more than employ the dishwasher, has been a new experience for me. I'm actually learning to cook again after a hiatus of more than 20 years when Mike cooked gladly and competently.

At first it was challenging. I've somewhat slavishly followed recipes, eschewing meat and discovering a whole realm of food that never took Mike's fancy, but certainly suits my palate: chickpeas, lentils, coconut yoghurt, wild rice and more.

And then one day, I made a discovery. Well, two actually. The first was a dead easy recipe for bread, no kneading and foolproof. As I took it out of the oven, the top all crusty and brown, the shape rounded just as it should be, I thought to myself, I can make bread!

The second discovery came as I carefully carried it over to my mother's house next door to show her. I felt a small rush of joy. Not pride. But joy in this little accomplishment.

And later that day, it set me thinking about occasions of small joy. How often they come unbidden and unexpected. Grief, or disappointment, or pain can close our hearts, till we wonder what it would take to open them again. We can pray for peace. We can distract ourselves. We can search for answers.

But acquaintance with joy is like a fantail that flits here and there, lands for a moment and is gone. We never saw it coming and we didn't know when it would leave. But when it lands, its felt presence is much more than mere enjoyment. It stirs some small joy.

Where I live in the Ida Valley, we are bounded on both sides by hills. Craggy tor rocks jut out here and there. There's matagouri and a few trees. But that description doesn't tell you what happens when the late afternoon sun lights on the tors or hits the snow-topped hills at the end of the valley. To see that is a small joy, or what the Celtic Christians call the thin place between heaven and earth. There's something ineffable about a landscape touched by

the light, something beyond words, maybe a tad closer to heaven.

Does my small loaf of bread qualify? Absolutely. So, I discovered does the 5pm gin and tonic with my 95-year-old mother, sitting opposite, clinking our glasses with a "slange" (she's Scottish). That moment of comfortable companionship has an "ah-ha" quality about it.

Little joy has a habit of breaking in, unannounced. No great fanfare, no flourish. Suddenly it's there. But while I can't anticipate it, much less manufacture it, I can live attuned to occasions of small joy. The afternoon blackbird, sitting at the top of the silver birch tree, who seems to break into tune every time I venture outside. The frost on the lawn that becomes a sea of diamonds as the sun surges over the hill. The intricate pattern of shadows created by a trellis. All speak to me and say, there's more at work here than the play of light and sound.

The more I look, the more I see. Maybe that's what God intended. ♦

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



Our last word

Bless us with enough work and rest
for our families to live securely now
and going forward
so we can contribute towards
the community
of our country and world.



From the *Tui Motu* Team