

Issue 302 | \$7

# Tui Motu

InterIslands

April 2025

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR NEIGHBOURS

WAYNE TE KAAWA, PAUL BARBER, EUGENE DOYLE

## BAPTISM AND PARTICIPATION

THOMAS O'LOUGHLIN, ANN GILROY

## KEEPING SAFE AND BEING HOSPITABLE

ANN HASSAN

Baptised to Be Involved  
Iriiria kia uru atu

INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC MAGAZINE

## CONTENTS

### FEATURES

<b>Food, Mana &amp; Hospitality</b> .....	4
Wayne Te Kaawa	
<b>Get the Basics Right</b> .....	6
Paul Barber	
<b>Peacing Together</b> .....	8
Eugene Doyle	
<b>Baptism in a Synodal Church</b> .....	10
Thomas O'Loughlin	
<b>Don't Underestimate the Loud Woman</b> .....	13
Ann Gilroy	
<b>From Roncesvalles to Estella</b> .....	18
Barbara Henley	
<b>Developing a Safe, Hospitable Culture</b> .....	20
Ann Hassan	
<b>When Forgiveness Is Not the Answer</b> .....	22
Trish McBride	

### SCRIPTURE

<b>Rising with Christ</b> .....	24
Kathleen Rushton	

### COMMENT

<b>Editorial</b> .....	2
Ann Gilroy	
<b>Pacific Neighbours at Risk as Aid Cuts Bite</b> .....	30
Damian Kean	

### COLUMNS

<b>Diplomacy &amp; Values</b> .....	3
Clare Curran	
<b>Honouring Life</b> .....	26
Oak Jones	
<b>Cross Currents</b> .....	29
Jane Higgins	
<b>For What It's Worth</b> .....	32
Rosemary Riddell	

### REFLECTION

<b>No Ordinary Dawn</b> .....	16
Anne Powell	

### REVIEWS

<b>Book Reviews</b> .....	27
<b>Film Review</b> .....	28

### LETTERS

<b>Letters to the Editor</b> .....	31
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#### COVER PHOTO

*Easter Dawn*  
by Wokandapix from  
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OUR NAME *Tui Motu InterIslands*  
Tui Motu is te reo Māori (Māori language) meaning "stitching the islands together". We pronounce it: to-ee maw-to.

FSC



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TuiMotuInterIslands



## Editorial

HAPPY EASTER FOR the end of the month! Over the next weeks we will journey through the rest of Lent and Holy Week before Easter dawns with its promise of life and a boost for our hope. Despite the helplessness that atrocities abroad and cuts to our resources at home cause us, the Easter season emphasises we are not alone. We have opportunities to come together leading up to Easter when we gather as Church for the liturgies of the triduum. And in many places across the country, churches will unite for a "way of the cross", a ritual procession along the streets or up a hill, alerting our neighbourhoods to this sacred time when we relive in story our fundamental belief that death is not the end of life and hope. At the Easter Vigil we reenact Christ's rising from death and we respond together by renewing our Baptism as disciples. At home we'll feast on hot cross buns, chocolate easter eggs and rabbits, delicious expressions of the mystery of life from the "tomb" — the rising of yeast, the chick breaking out of the shell and the bunny hopping out from its burrow. Mostly these Easter treats are no longer imbued with religious symbolism — they're a tradition adrift from its roots. And yet the excitement of children on an easter egg hunt echoes the women finding the tomb was empty on that first Easter, hunting for the answer and discovering the risen Christ and a company of believers over the following hours. There may be an opportunity for us this Easter to retie the treats to their story of love and life.

As we renew our baptismal promises we are being challenged by Pope Francis to begin implementing synodality in our local church — our dioceses and parishes. Although Francis has spent several weeks in hospital he's not letting the Final Document from the Synod fade into oblivion. The Vatican has sent a letter to the Church outlining a three-year programme of implementation, accountability and evaluation aimed at us, as baptised disciples, participating together in the mission of God. The first step is for dioceses and parishes to resurrect and refresh parish and diocesan pastoral councils and other groups — basically to get to know one another and the needs of our neighbourhoods. These groups might include liturgy, care of the vulnerable, hospitality, formation and education, relationships with other churches and Faiths. We have a year to get these going, and as the letter said, the parishes and dioceses that have done nothing about synodality to date will need to catch up in this time. We'll need plenty of resolve and chocolate at Easter to give us the energy for this challenge.

The thing about synodality is that there's no map with all the directions. We have to learn to be synodal by doing it. Like the first disciples at the resurrection, we'll need to listen, experience, believe and work together.

We thank all the contributors to this 302nd issue. Their reflections, art and craft are our Easter treats.

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

An illustration at the top of the page shows two hands, each wearing a white shirt cuff and a black suit sleeve, positioned over a world map. The left hand is moving a white chess piece (a king) and the right hand is moving a black chess piece (a king). The world map is centered on the Atlantic Ocean, with North and South America on the left and Europe, Africa, and Australia on the right. The background is a solid blue color.

# Diplomacy & Values

PATRICK SNEDDEN'S EXCELLENT column (TM March 2025) warned of the dangers of abandoning the checks and balances which keep diplomacy functioning well. We did not have to wait long for the blowtorch of United States' disruption to be felt on our own shores. Foreign Minister Winston Peters' pre-emptive dismissal of Phil Goff as UK High Commissioner raises some important questions. Was the comment made under the Chatham House Rule which means speakers are not identified? The matter was complicated by the fact that there were visible cameras in the room. Whether Goff was aware his comments would be public remains unclear. Ultimately, the question remains whether the comment justified his sacking.

That Winston Peters felt compelled to sack Goff immediately appears to be overreach. In any other political environment this would have been so. In the current environment, where chaos rules and governments around the world are keeping their heads below the parapet, it reflects an overriding wish by our current government for Aotearoa New Zealand not to become the next focus of Trump's wrath. I have some sympathy with this position but am fundamentally disturbed by its implications.

I have known Phil Goff for a long time, beginning with his role as the Leader of the Labour Party from late 2008-2011, then as a valued colleague, and more recently in his post-parliament life. It's hard to reconcile Peters' swift and brutal axing with the legacy of the man whose career long predates my involvement in politics, and which, among many other ministerial roles he held, included Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1999 to 2005.

Diplomacy is an artform and a delicate dance. It requires polite intercourse; its currency is sensitivity, nuance and tact. From within his Chatham House false bubble, Goff's comment about Trump not understanding history rang true. Outside, it was a clanger and embarrassing for a small nation intent on maintaining good trade and diplomatic relations in a Trumpian world where the threat of tariff sanctions has weaponised foreign relations.

In this sensitised environment, what can we make of

Winston Peters' incessant dismissal of anything he considers to be "woke" and his championing of "straight talk"?

Two days after he fired Goff for calling out Trump, Peters, via his X (formerly Twitter), account, decided to define what NZ First means by "woke". He said it was:

- A state of awareness only achieved by politically correct fascists who are dumb enough to find injustice in everything other than their own behaviour and believe they have the right to harass and lecture others about how they should think.
- Any out-of-touch pearl-clutching virtue signaller who cannot define what a "woman" is.

There's a lot to unpick here. Most terrifying is that the man who wrote this tweet, who is Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister (until May), is also in charge of Aotearoa's response to the Chinese naval ships conducting military exercises in the Tasman Sea off the coast of Australia. Pundits have alerted us that China is sending a warning to Australia and New Zealand.

Aotearoa plays a role in world diplomacy and foreign affairs that outweighs our actual size. We have long been the Switzerland of the South Pacific, maintaining good relations for trade but standing up for our values and for human rights. Has that changed? No. Well, it better not have.

If ever we needed courageous statesmanship and someone who actually does understand history, who can coherently state our position in the world and steer a steady but valued course, it is now.

This is not the time to abandon our nation's independent foreign policy stance and bow to incoherent, manic Trumpism nor to be cowed by the spectre of nuclear warships on our very own doorstep. Kia kaha Aotearoa. ✨

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





## FOOD, MANA & HOSPITALITY

**Wayne Te Kaawa** *reflects on how compassion can move us to ensure that everyone has enough food in our society.*

WITH EACH VISIT to the supermarket we see increases in the price of food. It's the norm now for many people to ration their food to last the week. In some whānau the parents go without a meal two or three times a week to ensure that their children are not hungry. Foodbanks tell us they are struggling to provide enough food parcels for their customers. And the government has indicated that it will reduce funding for foodbanks this year. Some foodbanks have signalled that due to insufficient resources, increasing demand and funding cuts they can no longer cope and will have to close. It is clear that we critically need a mana-enhancing theology of compassion and acts of charity to meet the challenge of today's cost-of-living crisis.

As a minister in a small town I found it heartbreaking when parents trying to negotiate credit at the local dairy to buy bread for their children's lunches were declined by the owner. He said his dairy was a business not a

helping agency. It was a humiliating experience for a parent knowing that their children would be hungry all day. Hunger lessens the mana and health of the child and their parents. So I was excited when the school lunch programme was introduced. I listened to the children from our local school happily talking about the lunches. That was until the present government reviewed the school lunch programme with the goal of saving "tax payers' money". The political rhetoric has become messy and blame is falling on parents for being poor.

I listened to one person, who lives on the streets in Auckland. He had spent the day sitting with his sign waiting for a few coins from passers-by. He was constantly berated by shopkeepers telling him to move on and by comments telling him to "get a job". Then at the end of the day, he was beaten up by street kids who stole the little money he'd been given. It's hard being poor, it's inhospitable, mana-destroying and dangerous.

### Food and Hospitality Increase Mana

Food and offering hospitality are central to the Māori world. Much mana/spiritual power and authority, is attached to providing hospitality to your visitors. Food and food sources are about identity. For example, Kāi Tahu (iwi of the South Island) is associated with tītī or muttonbirds. At each Kāi Tahu hui (gathering) they will entertain lavishly with tītī. But what does it say about identity and mana if the iwi can no longer provide culinary delicacies to their visitors?

As food prices have risen, so has the cost of tangihanga/funerals. The tikanga entails providing meals to visitors for up to three days. The hākari/feast that concludes the tangi process is about transitioning the bereaved whānau from a world of death, grief and mourning back to a world where life continues. Many whānau now struggle to meet the cultural requirements of hospitality and so we have modified the traditions to make things easier financially and yet maintain the mana of the bereaved person, the whānau, marae and visitors.

### God Stands with the Poor

The Bible is very clear that God does not like poverty or seeing people go hungry. In the Old Testament, God goes to great lengths to put in place safety measures to ensure that the least in society — the widow, the orphan and the poor — are cared for. Simple things were practised like giving alms and picking your crops once and leaving the rest for those in need to come and share in the harvest. The Year of Jubilee was to be the great equaliser in society, when slaves were to be freed, debt forgiven and confiscated land returned.

Each time the rights of the widow, the orphan and the poor were violated, God would raise up a prophet to seek justice and speak the truth to power because the root cause of poverty was injustice. Address the injustice and poverty should disappear — so the theory goes.

Inspired by this example, Tāwhiao, the second Māori King, introduced the poukai as a way of caring for the widow, the orphan and the poor. People would donate food for a large hākari and all would be invited to eat. A donation was expected when entering the hākari and the money collected along with the leftover food was then divided up and given out to support those most in need so they could move out of poverty.

### Acting for the Poor

In Aotearoa poverty has become more visible. Outside supermarkets and at traffic lights we see people with signs asking for money. Their signs usually list the reasons for asking — to help with rent, to pay power bills and child support, or because they're living in a tent, or have no food or job. We find people congregating in the evenings in our parks to sleep in their cars or pitch tents, creating temporary mini-villages.

In most cities and towns we have more people living on the street sleeping in shop doorways. Recently I saw

homeless people making their beds outside the front door of a church — perhaps this was their safe space. I just wished that the church had opened the doors and invited them to come in for the night. It could have been in the same way that someone offered hospitality — albeit a humble space — for a heavily pregnant woman and her husband in Bethlehem, the house of bread, all that time ago. That simple act is remembered because the woman gave birth there to the child Jesus, who would later call himself the “bread of life” and change the world.

**Our compassion for the hungry ... today, compassion for the way their mana is being disrespected and the lack of hospitality they are being shown, may compel us to act to share from our own resources so that we all have enough.**

Perhaps reflecting on the child born that night in the “house of bread” gives some answers for our dealing with the cost-of-living crisis. That night Mary and Joseph didn't have super hospitality but they had enough. Later in his life Jesus received the terrible news that Herod had killed his cousin John. Deep in grief he spent the day healing people, and then because they were hungry, he felt compassion for them and provided a meal for over 5,000 people from a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish. Later he fed over 4,000 in the same way. It wasn't that Jesus had huge quantities to give away — it was that the crowds shared what they had together and there was enough. On both occasions people were full and even took food away with them.

Compassion for the hungry moved Jesus to act on both occasions. Our compassion for the hungry in our society today, compassion for the way their mana is being disrespected and the lack of hospitality they are being shown, may compel us to act to share from our own resources so that we all have enough. And we can act, now, on behalf of those who will be made hungry by the economic decisions that are diverting funds from the well-being of the poorest in our society to profit the rich.

When Jesus's disciples today come together motivated to action by compassion, amazing things can happen. Compassion expressed in action provides the bread of life — aroha — in the community. ☞

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# GET THE BASICS RIGHT

**Paul Barber** reminds us that as Christians we must be active in making sure all families in our country have food, housing and resources to live without hardship.

A WELL-KNOWN biblical story calls us to recognise the presence of God in every single person. Jesus says: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in” (Matthew 25:35). What we do for others is the expression of our love for one another and for God.

Do we as a country ensure that everyone has enough good food to eat, a good and affordable home to live in and safe and thriving families to be part of? That is the theme of *Kai, Kāinga, Whānau: The Basics – Food, a Home, Family*, the 2025 Salvation Army *State of the Nation Report* released in February. It is intended as a very direct reminder that these are the things that matter and the things we expect governments and our nation to prioritise.

## **Food Insecurity & Child Poverty Rising Again**

Food insecurity has been increasing rapidly over the past two years – more than a quarter of households with children are going without food sometimes or often, almost double the rate just two years ago. It is even worse for Pacific families where more than half reported food insecurity, demonstrating how hardship has unequal and unfair impacts.

In our work at The Salvation Army, we see the lengths that people go to and the sacrifices they make to try

and ensure their family has enough to eat. We should all cringe with shame at this appalling reality that in our food-producing and wealthy country we allow so many children and families to go without food.

But the government response is in fact deepening that hardship. At the same time that food insecurity is rising, food hardship and other welfare hardship support is being reduced. Both the number and the amount per grant of food assistance payments have reduced in the past year as Work & Income tightened access to this kind of assistance.

A week after the *State of the Nation Report* was published, the latest child poverty statistics for the year to June 2024 were released by Statistics NZ. Rising child poverty is the bad news from the past two years. Since mid-2022 the number of children living in households experiencing high levels of material hardship has risen by over 36,000, reversing the reductions achieved between 2019–2022 (See: [www.salvationarmy.org.nz/research-policy/social-policy-parliamentary-unit/state-nation-2025/](http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/research-policy/social-policy-parliamentary-unit/state-nation-2025/)).

Material hardship measures the actual effects on children of poverty. Whether their households go without meals often or sometimes, do not have adequate clothing or footwear, are not able to get medical appointments

because of cost or other barriers, or are living in cold and/or damp housing.

The progress made to reduce hardship through to mid-2022 was built around lifting household incomes through low unemployment rates, larger increases in wages for lower earners (eg, through increases to the minimum wage), and increased incomes for those not in paid employment through higher welfare benefits and hardship support payments. Alongside this there was increased access to food support through free school lunches and foodbanks, improvements to housing quality through Healthy Homes rules and increases in the number of social housing units.

Since mid-2022 rising inflation, increasing unemployment and tightening of access to hardship support, such as food grants and emergency housing as well as increased use of benefit sanctions, have increased the pressure on lower income households.

This, combined with reduced funding to social service organisations that offer support such as food banks, financial mentors and social workers, has resulted in tens of thousands more families in hardship.

### Rising Homelessness

A surge in the number of people without housing seeking help from The Salvation Army and other community services was a feature of the past year. The government's decision to reduce access to emergency housing and hardship assistance had almost immediate impact. Many people were able to be helped into social housing through a greater focus on getting people out of emergency housing and into social housing or even private rentals. But it is not known where about a fifth of the several thousand people who left emergency housing have gone. Hundreds of them are back on the streets and many are seeking help from community organisations.

### Stresses on Whānau & Families

The stresses in families and whānau come through strongly in the report. Unequal societies tend to be more violent societies and the goal to reduce economic and social inequality is about addressing this long-term driver of violence in communities.

Some good news emerging from the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS) data was the decline in the proportion of adults experiencing at least one family violence offence in 2023. About 70,000 people or 1.6 per cent of the population are estimated to have experienced domestic violence, the lowest rate since the Survey began in 2018. The huge amount of work by many people in communities, the police and other government agencies

to reduce family violence looks to be having some impact.

The bad news is that overall, reported violence has been rising over the past year. The NZCVS is now providing quarterly updates of estimates of violent crime since December 2023 and those figures show a steady increase in violent crime, with an estimated 201,000 victims of all violent crime in August 2024, 10.3 per cent higher than in October 2023.

### Transformative Change

It would be easy to succumb to despair or simply switch off to these difficult statistics, but that is not our calling as people of faith. Our task is to understand and to act together in a way that can bring change for the better based on what we know works, carried by the spirit of God's unfailing love.

Transformative change in communities will need to be built on food abundance, affordable housing for people on low incomes and supports that enable whānau and families to thrive.

We are calling for no further cutbacks in crucial social supports. The welfare system must support families with children not in the paid workforce at a level that keeps them out of poverty and hardship. A large proportion of households receiving welfare assistance have incomes well below the official poverty line and this should not be allowed to happen.

Aiming to support people into employment is a great goal but it needs to be backed up by the kind of practical support that actually helps find work. This includes employers willing to take on people who are on the margins of the workforce, and training and skills

development opportunities that are readily available to those with few resources.

Continuing to increase the amount of social housing is crucial to ending homelessness alongside expanding the proven effective services such as Housing First and Transitional Housing.

This is not "pie-in-the-sky" thinking. It is a realistic response to ensure our nation's health and well-being is built on the foundation of thriving children and their whānau and families. ✨

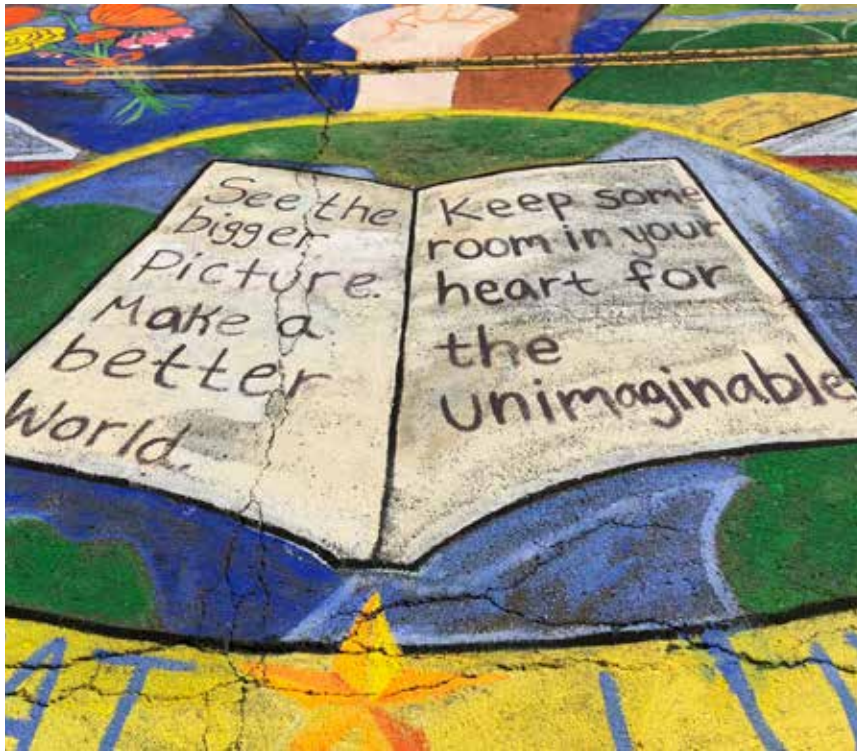
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# PEACING Together

**Eugene Doyle** writes that *peacemaking in its many forms expresses the hopes and work of Christian discipleship.*

NEW ZEALAND'S 2025 budget is looming and the government has signalled a major increase in defence funding, moving from around 1.2 per cent of GDP to possibly 2 per cent. That represents billions of dollars that will not be spent on health, education, infrastructure and initiatives like the Ka Ora, Ka Ako — Healthy School Lunches Programme which has already been gutted of \$100 million.

Those billions in new defence spending will make New Zealand, in the words of our Prime Minister, "a force multiplier" for the US. A long-anticipated Defence Capability Review is also around the corner and is likely to come with a shopping list of expensive gear.

## BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

God did not love the world to see it turned into warring states for the benefit of elites. Nowhere in the Beatitudes does Jesus say: "Blessed are the generals and arms manufacturers." Nor does he praise governors, potentates or warlords. Jesus's message is clear that militarism is not compatible with Christianity: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

In the 1960s during the Vietnam War, Martin Luther King summed up the great divide between Christianity and militarism: "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defence than on programmes of

social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

King also made a crucial link between the elements of the capitalist system that have immiserated the lives of millions of men, women and children across the planet: "We must recognise that we can't solve our problem now until there is a radical redistribution of economic and political power. This means a revolution of values and other things. We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together. You can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others."

### **MILITARISM DESTROYS TRUST**

We have a tradition of pacifism and peacemaking which opposes the militarisation that impoverishes us. Pope Francis, speaking in Bolivia in 2015, said: "Time, my brothers and sisters, seems to be running out; we are not yet tearing one another apart, but we are tearing apart our common home. Today, the scientific community realises what the poor have long told us: harm, perhaps irreversible harm, is being done to the ecosystem. The Earth, entire peoples and individual persons are being brutally punished. And behind all this pain, death and destruction there is the stench of what Basil of Caesarea called the dung of the devil."

"An unfettered pursuit of money rules. The service of the common good is left behind. Once capital becomes an idol and guides people's decisions, once greed for money presides over the entire socioeconomic system, it ruins society, it condemns and enslaves men and women ... it destroys human fraternity."

Capitalism has been dynamic and has at many times and in many places been a wealth generator, but it is unquestionably also a voracious devourer of human beings, a corruptor of the individual who ends up losing sight of the common good of all, for their own profit. The current US pursuit of Ukraine's minerals in exchange for efforts to stop Russian's invasion is a case in point.

In the Gospels Jesus warns against making wealth and power a goal. "No one can serve two masters: for a slave will either hate the one, and love the other; or be devoted to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Mt 6:24).

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for someone who is rich to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mt 19:24).

These statements are about the incompatibility of rampant capitalism and materialism with Christian discipleship. And yet we can ignore it. Some might say: "Jesus was a nice guy but he didn't understand the real world." I'm not one of them.

### **ACT FOR PEACE**

The Western world's history of plundering weaker states should be impossible to reconcile with Christianity and yet it continues. It is prophetic men and women, such as Martin Luther King, Pope Francis and those in Aotearoa like Whina Cooper, who call us to account and ask us to understand our priorities. I'm encouraged by the Sisters of Saint Joseph in Whanganui, some of whom I've known all

my life. Even now in old age they turn out weekly in the city to show support for the Palestinian people in their long and cruel suffering under Israeli occupation.

We know from all those who have lived and died for peace and justice that Christian discipleship comes with a cost. It demands courage. And it also energises; it's a wonderful thing to know we're doing the right thing for the sake of our neighbour, for the common good.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR THIS TIME**

Although many of us are involved in actions promoting peace and community over division and military spending, the following ideas may be helpful.

#### ***Write Letter to MPs and Councils***

The Budget is coming up. Write to your MPs now and say we want to build our country not a war machine. We can ask questions. Is your local Council supporting refugees from conflict zones? Is your local MP focused on peace and diplomacy or military build-up? Why has New Zealand spent more supporting the Israeli military than the victims of their violence?

#### ***Join a Peace Vigil***

This can be pleasant and low-key. I know small groups in Wellington and Whanganui who meet weekly in public spaces, holding signs supporting peace not war. Bring a flask, a cake and a sign. Ahakoa he iti, he pounamu (every little bit counts).

#### ***Share Stories over Tea***

Create a space, for example after Eucharist, for tea and conversation to discuss war's harm and the Christian call to reject violence and support victims.

#### ***Boycott War-Linked Brands***

Avoid purchasing from companies profiting from conflict. Make sure your personal or company funds are not invested in anything that profits from war or is in any way involved in funding the occupation of Palestine. Send the stockbroker and your bank an email.

#### ***Support Refugee Families***

As a tangible act of peace, donate time and/or goods to local refugee support groups in New Zealand and those helping people in war zones. Reach out to organisations like the Red Cross.

#### ***Share Articles with "Persuadables"***

Reach out to people who might be open to "getting off the bench and getting involved". Share articles and other material with them.

I'll give the last word to Pope Francis and I wish him recovery from his illness: "The future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of great leaders, the great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of people and in their ability to organise" (address at the World Meeting of Popular Movements, Bolivia, 2025). ✎

**Eugene Doyle** is a Wellington based writer. He has written extensively on the Middle East, as well as peace and security issues in the Asia Pacific region. He hosts the public policy platform [solidarity.co.nz](http://solidarity.co.nz)





## Baptism *in a* Synodal Church

Thomas O'Loughlin discusses how Baptism makes us all participants in a synodal Church.

SYNODALITY HAS BECOME a buzzword in Catholicism. It has moved from being a rare technical term to being an idea seen as offering us a whole new vision of Church. In this new vista, Baptism and what Baptism means to us is rarely the focus of discussion; our attention seems drawn inexorably to issues relating to ministry (eg, can a woman be ordained a deacon) and to structures (eg, what can be done so that lay concerns are taken seriously by episcopal conferences). Yet discussing synodality without Baptism is like describing a motor vehicle without mentioning fuel.

This silence is not surprising. Catholics have assumed

since the time of Trent that Baptism is a simple matter, relatively uncontroversial, and something where we all know more or less all we need to know — and are agreed about it.

Infant Baptism is still our “normal” and very few who discuss synodality would have a memory of their own Baptism (I was baptised when I was about a week old). The liturgy of Baptism is relatively invisible in the life of most Catholics. It is rarely seen and when seen it is usually submerged in being just the formal (and least memorable) part of a larger family celebration. Quite naturally, the

focus is on having a new daughter, son, grandchild, niece, nephew or other relative, and the joy of a healthy, beautiful infant. Any concerns about “ecclesial regeneration” seem but the chatter of a nerd seeking to be the boring boffin at the party.

So it is with great interest that I saw how Anglican Archbishop Michael Jackson opens his essay on synodality in the January/February 2025 issue of *Conversations*: “Synodality, a bold vision of Pope Francis, is very much of our time. It seeks to re-imagine the Church as the People of God, making Baptism not ordination the primary, pivotal sacramental reality.”

I could not express the nature of the project on which Catholics have embarked more succinctly.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

After more than a millennium of seeing Ordination as that which gave form and shape — indeed reality — to the Church, this shift of attention to Baptism is going to be far more difficult than most Catholics realise. A church imagined with Baptism as pivotal is a church not only of the laity but one where clergy form but a secondary element.

There is a story of John Henry Newman when asked by a Catholic bishop about “the laity” and who they were — the assumption being that the church was formed around Ordination — that he replied that the church would look rather silly without them! Clearly, Newman saw the church as being constituted by Baptism — and everything after Baptism as being somehow derivative from it.

That Newman had a higher regard for Baptism within his theology is not surprising given his upbringing in a church of the Reformation. While Catholics, after Trent, almost never debated Baptism, in the Reformed tradition it became one of the “hot potatoes”: just think of the disputes about infant versus “believer Baptism” which led to the emergence of the “anabaptists” (ie, literally, those without [infant] Baptism) whose name was then shortened to “the Baptists”. In Wales, for example, between c.1750 and c.1850 there were great public disputes between the established “Church” and “chapel” in almost every parish about the nature of Baptism, but this is a chapter in Christian history virtually unknown to Catholics.

This means that as we Catholics seek to recover a richer theology of Baptism we have either to seek a composite patristic understanding, a revival of the scholastic analysis in such texts as Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae*, or we can look at modern ecumenical documents.

## COMPOSITE PATRISTIC UNDERSTANDING

The problem with the first approach is that while we have built the rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) process upon it, unless this is the norm in a community then it will not reach people. Perhaps putting the RCIA in place in all our parishes should be our goal (liturgists have been calling for this since the 1970s), but there seems little energy for what would be unsettling for many communities.

## THOMAS AQUINAS’S TEACHING ON BAPTISM

While Thomas Aquinas has a far richer theology than that used in most contemporary Catholic summaries, he

presents us with three major difficulties. First, his work is built around the notion that Baptism imparts a “character” on the individual which acts as a passive potency for the reception of grace. But how can we convey the notion of “potency” — much less the notion of a “passive” potency — as a relationship without using some mechanical analogy?

If we start thinking of Baptism as an app that we have “in” or “on” our soul which allows us to “download” something divine, then it is better to stop that thinking immediately and to start completely afresh.

Second, since most scholastic analyses, not just that of Aquinas, approached Baptism starting with “character” — a perspective determined in turn by medieval canon law — these could not treat Baptism apart from Ordination (and, incidentally, Confirmation). This steers us towards understanding Baptism by what distinguishes it from Orders (understood as “active potency”) and an approach to Baptism as but a first step in which Ordination is the summit. This is precisely the approach that does not fit with synodality and the pivot to taking Baptism as the foundation of our ecclesiology.

The third drawback is less tangible but the more serious: scholastic theology, even when nuanced by such practitioners as Aquinas, had an in-built desire to be comprehensive, to tidy up loose ends, and to boil matters down into easy-to-remember formulae.

This “keep it simple” tendency — generally unappreciated by seminarians who found the textbooks complex — continued and continues in the catechism tradition. The underlying message is that we have all the answers, they can be made into a simple system of bullet points, a closed circle of knowledge, and there is really nothing new to be discovered. It is all there, just absorb it!

But the chasm separating us from the heyday of catechisms is the awareness, still shocking to many, that we do not have all the answers; and that when we thought we had the answers, we were wrong. The People of God are on a pilgrimage: perfect understanding, along with the complete church, will only come at the eschaton. Our knowing of what it is to be a Christian, to be baptised is for now but a “dim reflection” (cf. 1 Cor 13:12), and we must set out anew each day to discover the mystery.

Baptism is the name we give to a ritual which is but a marker of a mystery — and if we ever think that we can communicate the nature of that mystery we delude ourselves by confusing our thoughts with the inchoate experience of the Divine.

## BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY

In 1982 the World Council of Churches produced a wonderful, short discussion document: Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM). It deliberately did not seek the encyclopaedic style of Isidore of Seville whose genius still lurks in works such as the current official Catechism, but rather to throw out headings to open up an ever-growing conversation and a process of mutual discovery. That is why it is still so valuable.

BEM was sent to virtually every church on the planet and each was asked to see how it found its faith,

practice and theology reflected in its text, and then these responses were to enable churches to have more fruitful dialogue about their differences. The replies ranged from a paragraph or two, to substantial texts such as that which came from the Vatican. However, it is BEM itself that is still the most useful. Its second paragraph is stunning in its apparent simplicity but also in what it wants its users to do. Here it is:

## THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

"Baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ. It unites the one baptised with Christ and with his people. The New Testament scriptures and the liturgy of the Church unfold the meaning of Baptism in various images which express the riches of Christ and the gifts of his salvation.

"These images are sometimes linked with the symbolic uses of water in the Old Testament. Baptism is participation in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom 6:3–5; Col 2:12); a washing away of sin (I Cor 6:11); a new birth (John 3:5); an enlightenment by Christ (Eph 5:14); a re-clothing in Christ (Gal 3:27); a renewal by the Spirit (Titus 3:5); the experience of salvation from the flood (I Peter 3:20–21); an exodus from bondage (I Cor 10:1–2) and a liberation into a new humanity in which barriers of division whether of sex or race or social status are transcended (Gal 3:27–28; I Cor 12:13). The images are many but the reality is one" (BEM).

It does not try to contain or define, but simply to make true statements offered to us as basic blocks which can be assembled and upon which a larger edifice can be built. It aims to open up discussion rather than simplify it and tie it down. It offers 11 references to the New Testament documents but this is not to provide "warrants" or "proof texts", much less a narrative that could be construed as "what the Bible teaches" — for all such approaches assume that we can grasp the mystery and then fight about whose theology is the correct one.

Instead, implicitly knowing that there is no one theology of Baptism in those early, now canonical, documents but many strands of thinking including those which would later be labelled heretical, it offers a range of images from those documents (all images which have been, in one way or another, valued by the churches). Then, disarmingly, it declares: "the images are many, ... the reality is one" — but it does not try to define or delimit that reality.

Here is a starting point for an exploration of the mystery of the pilgrimage, but also a starting point for an exploration of synodality and what it means to be Church — and an ecumenical one at that. The paragraph invites us to explore the images for a fresh understanding of being the People of God.

## PARTICIPATING IN BAPTISM

However, if the mystery that is celebrated in Baptism is just that, a mystery, the ritual itself is a matter of water and words and community — it belongs very much in the world of the tangible and, if it is important in Christian faith (as we claim), should be part of our experience.

This is not a moral — an "ought" — but a logical necessity: if this experience — and the rituals of the

*mysteria* are by nature experiential — has significance, then it must have a place in our experience.

But this is simply not the case: we talk about Baptism, but unless one is a minister who regularly baptises, it is something that is seen rarely (eg, it might be seen at the Easter Vigil — itself an under-appreciated and often poorly celebrated event) or at the Eucharist on the feast of the Baptism of our Lord (when there is information overload).

Moreover, when it is "seen" it is presented as "seeing the Baptism" rather than celebrating the Baptism with the baptisand — and we might note that our earliest written reference to Baptism is the injunction that all are to take part in the event by fasting alongside the one to be baptised. Baptism needs a community.

## BAPTISE IN THE COMMUNITY

So how do we make Baptism visible as an event and make it a participatory experience? This is one of the practical liturgical problems that now confronts each community that wants to take synodality seriously and which wants to, in Archbishop Jackson's words, make "Baptism not Ordination the primary, pivotal sacramental reality".

For Baptism to become not just a family celebration but one of the local church, means it needs to be celebrated as part of the Sunday eucharistic liturgy — because this is when the community gathers — and this is obvious.

Likewise, the practice of single Baptisms — just one infant at a time — should become the rare exception. The notion of a delay until there are several children to be baptised still strikes a curious note of fear for many: as if there is not already a long delay before a child's Baptism is ever mentioned. We no longer, thank God, live with high infant mortality rates nor present the mystery of Baptism using the rhetoric of coercion and fear.

But how to make entering the community an event with a community is not a topic for a theologian sitting at the desk. It is for discussion and experiment within each community. We have to discover the community nature of this celebration anew. There are obvious points — many can make the sign of the cross on the infants' foreheads, others can offer the lighting candle, but these are just details.

It is only when everyone present senses that this celebration tells me about who I am, one who is baptised, that we will be in a position to say that our liturgy is being adequately celebrated. Then this new "primary, pivotal sacramental reality" may lead to a greater renewal in the Church. ♦

P10: *Baby Swaddled* by John Rowe © Used with permission  
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# DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE LOUD WOMAN

*Ann Gilroy, using the story of the Canaanite woman, suggests the first steps in synodality are listening to all church members and planning action together.*



SYNODALITY IS CALLING us to make a huge mind-shift of direction for the Church. We have to change from thinking of the bishop or priest as leader and laity as followers, to thinking of the Church as a team walking together with the Spirit. Neil Darragh compared this shift to the turn a huge ship has to make in the Waitematā Harbour in order to face the right direction for docking at the wharf. “Its own engines and steerage with a team of tugs push and pull this behemoth around

at right angles to its former momentum and force it towards its berth against a wharf. The huge bulk of the institutional Church with its thousands of passengers and crew, its structures and power centres, is gradually being hauled around, partly using its own momentum built up over thousands of years, partly powered by its own engines, and partly pushed and pulled by smaller forces, towards a new destination. This is the task of synodality” (TM April 2023).

## BAPTISM MAKES US DISCIPLES AND PARTICIPANTS

Fundamental in the shift is for us all to practise our Baptism as the foundation of Christian life. Baptism confirms our relationship within the communion of the Trinitarian divine and specifically invites us to be Christian disciples. The Synod document says: "There is nothing higher than this baptismal dignity, equally bestowed upon each person, through which we are invited to clothe ourselves with Christ and be grafted onto Christ like branches of the one vine."

But in the Church we've neglected the significance of Baptism as the criterion for participation in church life, in favour of other criteria — age, gender, culture/race and role. For years those other criteria have been used to limit, and even exclude, participation in the Church.

For example, children (as evidenced from the Royal Commission) were not only abused but they were treated as "minors" by Church — as lesser baptised who could be ignored and disbelieved. It speaks of the belief that there are degrees in our theology of Baptism. Children are a little bit baptised compared to the fully baptisedness of those who abuse and who cover up the abuse.

Then, in terms of participation, we have male Baptism — straight and gay — trumping the Baptism of all females. And, again, we can see the skewed theology of Baptism that male Baptism is somehow more than female Baptism.

Lay people of cultures other than the dominant one, in this country Pākehā, can be limited by exclusionary situations like language, understanding of and honouring of customs, withholding formation — as if their Baptism is somehow below par and they don't have to be taken seriously.

Then when we get to clericalism, which is when male Baptism plus Ordination is treated like an extraordinary specialness — a misrepresentation of Thomas Aquinas's idea of ontological change — and which entitles the recipient to autocratic control of his part of Church. Clericalism is when male Baptism plus Ordination is practised and associated with entitlement and power over others.

We are so used to such distortions of participation of the baptised, that we don't even register what's wrong. It's like racism — it's become endemic in the institution. A simple example: When we celebrate a diocesan Eucharist, like the Easter ceremonies or the Ordination of a bishop, and the liturgist brings in seminarians to serve at the altar instead of the young girls and boys who usually serve every Sunday. Seminarians, who are lay men in a discernment process for Ordination, are somehow elevated into the layers of clericalism and given a status above the children or young people who have already been doing the job.

A "synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible church" we read in the Synod on Synodality's Final Document. It promotes accountability for our local church, asking: "How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them and the steps to be taken? How is authority and governance exercised within our local church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How are evaluations conducted and by whom?"



## A WORRIED MOTHER

The story of the Canaanite woman and her daughter in Matthew's Gospel, when read through the lens of participation in Church, offers us valuable insights (Mt 15:21-18). It begins by describing how Jesus has had a busy, crowded few weeks and has left Galilee with his disciples for the district of Tyre and Sidon for some R&R by the sea. They're walking along the street when a local woman comes along and starts shouting: "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David, my daughter is tormented by a demon." The texts says that Jesus ignores her. This is deliberate ignoring because the woman is loud and she keeps following them shouting for help.

The disciples, thoroughly fed up with her, tell Jesus: "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." Meaning do a quick fix or something so that she shuts up. They're embarrassed by her. Jesus says to them, not to the woman: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" — implying that this woman is none of his business.



But the mother doesn't give up. She comes and kneels in front of Jesus: "Lord, help me!" By kneeling in front of Jesus she ensures that he has to stop. Then Jesus speaks to her for the first time: "It's not fair to take the children's food and throw it to dogs."

She is a desperate mother and understands something that Jesus hasn't yet understood. She counters: "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

It's as if a light bulb goes off in Jesus's head. He now senses that what he had thought of as his ministry is not enough. "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed.

### STORY IS ABOUT MINISTRY IN GOD'S MISSION

This story comes halfway through the Gospel. Up to this time Jesus has healed daughters and sons when their fathers asked him to and has shown care for all manner of people. So his refusal to listen to the woman or heal her daughter seems very strange.

I don't think the story is about Jesus's action in ministry — he's exhausted from his efforts. This story is about Jesus understanding more about his part in God's mission — and how he and others participate in God's mission. He has to widen the focus of his ministry.

Up to this point he'd ministered among the people of his own culture and religion. The woman who confronts Jesus is not Jewish — she is a Canaanite. Today we'd say she is an Indigenous woman and Jesus is in

her territory. She's a woman and she is asking stridently for healing for her daughter. She wants to participate in God's healing. But she's asking for something that is not a priority in Jesus's ministry.

When Jesus finally speaks with the woman their interchange focuses on who gets food and who misses out. Jesus's argument is that the food is for the children of Israel — not for dogs like the mother and her daughter. It's not exactly an argument we'd expect from Jesus! He hints at the scarcity of food and how it needs to be kept for more important people.

The woman counters with the insight that there is enough food for all — children, the master and the dogs. And Jesus understands. He wasn't sent to keep the good news just for the Jews. God's mission includes all people and all life, and we are all to share in it. The image of the table with enough room and food for everyone is what helps broaden Jesus's understanding. It is God's table and God is of abundance not scarcity.

Jesus goes on to change his ministry to include those

who were formerly outsiders, invisible and different. And he did this after listening to and speaking with a woman whom he initially ignored because she was wasting his time and energy.

### BEING LISTENERS AND PARTICIPATORS

We can imagine the characters in this story. There's Jesus — exhausted from there being not enough hours for meeting the needs of the poor around Galilee. He's firm in his call and experience of doing God's will. He thinks ignoring the woman will shut her up because as a Jewish man his helpers are other men — they're all he needs.

The disciples are also tired. They don't want to be caught up in the fiasco the woman is creating. But they take notice of her and hear what she is asking. So they tell Jesus to do something quickly and send her away. They are used to Jesus going out of his way to help people. But none of them challenges Jesus's approach to the woman as being "out of character". They let it slide.

Then we have the mother — a woman, different, with a sick daughter. She sees the person who can heal her daughter and she is determined to let nothing stop that happening. The mother has a vision of the future, and she sees in Jesus someone who is close to God. She becomes a feisty advocate for her girl.

Finally a conversation ensues between the mother and Jesus. Both listen to the other and both learn something new and something transformative through listening and conversing. The mother learns that God's option is for all the poor and that she mustn't fear being criticised — and that she can be courageous.

Jesus learns that God's mission is not confined to Jews but to all people regardless of gender, class and religion. Further, he learns that he doesn't have all the answers. He needs to listen to other people to understand more about God and his own ministry in God's mission.

### SYNODALITY IS LISTENING, CONVERSING & ACTING

This is the whole point about participating synodally in the Church. No one or two people in the Church, a diocese, a parish or a Religious Congregation have all the wisdom. Each of us, all the baptised, whatever our role, vocation or charism, needs to listen to others, to those whom decisions are going to affect, to the "inconvenient" others, in order to come to participative decisions that build community and are focused on mission.

Even Jesus needed the Canaanite mother's courage to break open his ministry to the expansiveness of God's mission — and now as disciples we're being asked to get over obstacles and encourage one another into synodality. ✨

P13: Dimitry Rodionov on Unsplash

P14: *The One with the Crumby Dog* by Ally Barrett ©

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# No Ordinary Dawn

The people were walking along the flax-lined way when someone asked,  
“Do you know Israel fired missiles into Lebanon overnight?”

The people remember the elegant cedars.

And someone added “Israel continues to bomb Gaza.”

The people remember the ancient promise of the return home.

The people are unsettled.

They are silent.

They remember the lament of one man, longing to gather.

The people remember a staunch woman of the Red Cross  
walking into Gaza between armed soldiers to gather three hostages.

The people hear her cry, “Cease your fire, everyone.”

Her voice a prophet’s flame lighting hearts.

And the people walk the winding way from cross to garden trembling  
in the tentative light of dawn.

No ordinary dawn this.

Jesus is here, clothed in his holy name.

The Christ.

The wind is music in the leaves.

The people bow down.

They are overwhelmed in light.

Anne Powell ©





## FROM RONCESVALLES TO ESTELLA

*In this third article in a series, Barbara Henley describes the first few days walking the Camino de Santiago.*

### DAY TWO: EARLY CHALLENGES

I looked up the meaning of a “challenge”. A challenge is something new and difficult which requires great effort and determination.

Day one wasn't too bad, I thought to myself — not for long, however, as the very next day proved challenging in so many ways. It was wet, we were cold, the track out of Roncesvalles was uphill, narrow, rough and stony and I was adjusting to an 8kg backpack I didn't normally carry around with me. I didn't expect it to be smooth walking and I was relieved to be well away from the main roads. In fact, I preferred the mountain tracks to the smooth, sealed, roadside paths. I didn't want it to be easy — just not too hard.

The descent into Zubiri was another challenge as the beautiful countryside of the Esteribar Valley was distracting in its beauty and colour, inviting me to sit and enjoy its wonder.

We finally crossed the famous, ancient Rabia Bridge which spans the course of the Arga river. We splashed ourselves in its cooling waters. The several hundred other pilgrims were obviously fitter and perhaps wiser than Anne and I because there was no room in any inn on our second night. We had to break the budget and stay at a local hotel in Zubiri but, joy of joys, they had a bath and a bar to soak away the aches and pains. Bliss!

After a full and nourishing breakfast, which was

included in the accommodation price, we headed off at Anne's decisive pace. We realised that an early arrival at the end of the day's walk guaranteed a bed — even if it was a top bunk. This was another mountainous up-and-down trek along a rough track. It was an early challenge to remind pilgrims the Camino was not a walk in the park. I left my jacket at the lunch stop. I was so annoyed with myself as I do NOT like losing my possessions, especially this jacket because I'd borrowed it. I had to get over it and thanked Pedro who phoned the café and made enquiries about finding the jacket for me. A challenge beyond my limited Spanish.

### DAY THREE: THE RUNNING OF THE BULLS

Finally, we walked or rather stumbled into Pamplona where we were allotted a tiny spacesaver pod and a stretcher. It was quite flash but busy, noisy and crowded and we were anxious about our packs and possessions. Why did we worry so? Had we not asked Santiago to protect us along The Way?

After the obligatory ablutions and laundry rituals we headed out into the fascinating, historical city of Pamplona which was alive with tourists, pilgrims and locals and adorned with large, fierce-looking plastic *torros* throughout the streets and in all the souvenir shops.

We walked the streets along the route of the running of the bulls and pretended to be chased into the huge arena.



*El Toro* is certainly a focus of the city but at what cost to the poor bulls or the brave toreadors?

We prayed the rosary with the local community in the majestic Catedral de Santa Maria la Real and the memorable singing of the *Gloria* by the small group of men at the end of each decade still resounds in my ears. Helped by the sublime acoustics, the group sounded like a professional, operatic choir. There we encountered the elderly at prayer. Meanwhile out in the plaza the younger generation gathered around the fountains and shop steps engaged in their own rituals, laughing, chatting and drinking.

I loved the old city of Pamplona with its narrow streets, small shops, enticing signs, colourful displays, various plazas and ornate buildings. I bought another light rain jacket for 50 euro. It proved invaluable.

I had a good sleep in my spacesaver pod as did Anne on her stretcher.

Up early again. No more sleeping in, Barbara. However, it was a most beautiful walk through old and then new Pamplona up the valley and out through fields of sunflowers — acres and acres of smiling "faces" encouraging us on our journey.

## THE NAVARRA

I wonder if you remember the sculpture of the pilgrims at the summit of Alto de Perdón, the Mount of Forgiveness, in the movie *The Way*? Well, we stopped there to enjoy the spectacular view across the Navarra countryside and take action photos in front of that sculpture once we could find

our personal moment among the throngs of pilgrims also trying to capture the same image.

Up and down, up and down we plodded along, still getting used to our backpacks and treading gently on feet which were not used to carrying extra weight nor walking so far day after day. Parts of the Navarra are flat and dry, and there was a long procession of pilgrims rambling along dry dusty paths past fields of wheat, corn and alfalfa. Then, suddenly, we were climbing up the Basque mountainside. It was possibly about then when many started to really feel the pain of their blisters. Fortunately, my very comfortable Salamander shoes saved me from this.

Finally, we made it into Puerto de la Reine and after Eucharist we were invited to share a meal with a friendly group of pilgrims. Little did we know how special that group was to become for us. Nor did we know how extremely grateful Nikki was for the encouragement and sweets Anne offered her on the crossing of the Pyrenees. She was carrying an enormous pack and was ready to give up on the first day because she was suffering pain and exhaustion. Finding English-speaking companions among the mix of accents and languages was refreshing and interesting.

## DAY 6: CAMINO COMPANIONS

It was at Estella where I learned the significance of the village plaza. Around 6pm every evening family groups would gather in the plaza. The adults chatted over a wine or coffee and watched the children play. There Anne and I again met up with Nikki and Diana, BJ and Jo, Dominique and Francoise. We were warmly welcomed at their table where we shared faith stories, life adventures, dreams and ideas. We connected instantly and they were a regular joy and highlight of my Camino pilgrimage.

Thank you Santiago for bringing colourful, joyful characters into my pilgrim journey — such a blessing and a delight. Guide all Pilgrims on their Camino. ❖

Photos above supplied by author

**Barbara Henley RNDM** now lives in Napier. Her ministries have included teaching, prison chaplaincy and pastoral care.





# Developing a Safe, Hospitable Culture

*Ann Hassan reflects on what we learned while preparing for and engaging with the Church safeguarding reviewers at our recent audit.*

LAST MONTH REVIEWERS from the National Office for Professional Standards (NOPS) visited the Tui Motu office. Two reviewers spent the day with us, meeting with The Independent Catholic Magazine Board, with the magazine's two staff members and with two representatives from our volunteers who help to pack and post the magazine every month.

## The Work of NOPS

NOPS responds to complaints of abuse involving clergy and members of Religious Congregations, and oversees the Church's safeguarding policies and practices. NOPS is responsible for communicating the Church's safeguarding message, identifying safe practices, responding to complaints and concerns, monitoring compliance with the national policy and providing formation and training.

*Tui Motu* is something of an anomaly for NOPS. We don't fit into any of the standard categories of Catholic life in Aotearoa — we're not a diocese, parish or school, for instance. Nor are we a Catholic provider of social services. And we're not under the umbrella of the usual Catholic authority like a diocese or parish. We're a company governed by a Board.

But we are a Catholic magazine and a Catholic workplace. Our shareholders are Religious Congregations: the Dominican Sisters, the Dominican Friars and the Sisters of St Joseph. Our editor, Ann Gilroy, is a Sister of St Joseph.

## Safeguarding Not Just Sexual Abuse

Safeguarding isn't only about sexual abuse. At *Tui Motu*, we seldom have contact with children. Visitors to the office are a special treat — our volunteers and our printer's agent visit regularly, but other knocks on the door are rare. Most of the time, it's just Ann and me in the building. So for us safeguarding is understood broadly, encompassing health and safety, the particular vulnerabilities of the staff and volunteers, the way we interact with people visiting or on the phone, and the safety of information. For instance, our NOPS auditors asked questions about how and where we store personal data and what protections we've undertaken against cyber attacks.

Before our audit, we'd not thought we had contact with vulnerable adults. But the auditors explained that a vulnerable adult is anyone who, due to age, illness, disability, or other reasons, may not be able to protect themselves. Some of our volunteers have mobility issues, needing help to get to their cars — we had thought of this as helping the person, but not as the person being vulnerable.

And it's true, too, that among those of us who don't have mobility issues, and aren't frail, there are times when we've been vulnerable — around a death, say, or a time of illness. So our simple idea of a vulnerable adult is being replaced with an understanding of vulnerability that better reflects all the complexity of being a person: vulnerable in some ways and not in others; vulnerable at some times but not always.

## Health, Safety and Well-being

At *Tui Motu* we try to be vigilant about health, safety and well-being. Our offices are in a turn-of-the-last-century two-storey house on Union Street West in Dunedin – right in the heart of the Otago University campus area. The building is owned by the Dominican Friars and was at one time their University chaplaincy house. It's still very much laid out as a "house" – the bathroom has a shower (unused) and the kitchen has an oven (non-functional).

When our volunteers come to pack the magazine, we're in what was once the dining room – handy to the kitchen but not overly spacious. This means we've become conscious of keeping the space as clear as possible – boxes and bags kept up off the floor to reduce trip hazards. The only bathroom in the building is upstairs, too, so we keep the hallway completely clear. After our editor Ann Gilroy broke her leg (temporary vulnerability), we installed a handrail on the turn of the stairs. Earlier, a new back doorstep was built to reduce the step from outside to inside. And we have in place, of course, all the usual policies around what to do in case of fire and evacuation.

One of the few benefits of the Covid pandemic was that it brought with it a heightened awareness of health and safety. We adopted a range of policies around social distancing and disinfecting. Some have remained – like the very best restaurants and hotels, we offer single-use cotton flannels for drying our hands in the bathroom! But what has lingered most is that health and safety is never off our radar; we're more conscious of sharing a responsibility for the well-being of those around our workplace.

For a long time, we've been conscious of theft, keeping the front door snibbed when the downstairs office is empty so that no one can walk in off the street and remove valuables like computers. But the NOPS auditors encouraged us to think about our own safety as workers, so from now on, when either Ann or I am alone in the building, the front door will be snibbed. Being alone at work was a vulnerability we'd not really considered.

## Abuse and Safeguarding in the Magazine

*Tui Motu* has also participated in the discourse around abuse and safeguarding through its content. We've been fortunate to have survivors of abuse contribute to the magazine, writing about their personal experience – both their story of being abused and the long-term effects of that abuse. These can be hard stories to read, but they're part of the story of our Church.

The abuse crisis has taught us the danger of living in a climate of secrecy and unquestioned authority. In response to this, and in the Vatican II spirit of openness and dialogue reemphasised by the Synod on Synodality, we publish regularly on aspects of Church organisation and culture, including the discussion of contested and sometimes difficult issues – abuse but also clericalism and the role of women, among others. Canon lawyers regularly contribute to the magazine, sharing their knowledge of Church rules and regulations.

Importantly, *Tui Motu* gives voice to lay people of all kinds – not just Catholic but other Christian and other

faith – and people who may not be of any faith but are working for the common good. We're independent – not responsible to a diocese but with a clear mandate – which means our greatest responsibility is to our readers. With media outlets of all kinds dwindling, and in a world where communications are often partisan and even propagandised, this seems more important than ever.

## What We've Learned

NOPS will soon submit their report to The Independent Catholic Magazine Board, which will give us the full picture of what improvements we can make. But the visit of the NOPS auditors has already heightened our awareness and it's clear that this is the vital shift: making safeguarding a priority in every aspect of our work – in our responsibilities to our volunteers, subscribers and others, and in the way we occupy our workplace. Safeguarding shouldn't be an "add-on", but an essential contribution to making the wider Church a safer, more inclusive and hospitable place. ✦

**Ann Hassan** is the Administrator and Assistant Editor of *Tui Motu* magazine. She lives with her sons in Ōtepoti/Dunedin and is a parishioner of St Francis Xavier in Mornington.



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# WHEN FORGIVENESS IS NOT THE ANSWER

**Trish McBride**  
*discusses why the  
Church must focus on  
healing and not ask  
those who have been  
abused to forgive  
their abusers.*



AS CHRISTIANS WE can be so imbued with the sense that to forgive is the necessary response to injury, that we give little thought to the damage forgiving can do. The Royal Commission on Abuse in Care pointed out to the Church that forgiveness has been prioritised over accountability, which allowed abuse to continue. Church teaching in some instances has compounded the damage done to many innocent children. Until the 1990s, scant attention was given to understanding the consequences of abuse, the probably addictive nature of paedophilia and the misuse of spiritual power in the abuse of children and adults.

It is time for a hard look at church teaching on forgiveness and what “forgiveness” can actually mean in practice. Jesus preached forgiveness to men who were used to “an eye for an eye”. That is a very different context from women in violent relationships, sexual abuse survivors or traumatised people. Jesus was addressing the powerful about forgiving the less powerful — not vice-versa.

## **Forgiveness Cannot Be Demanded**

We have learned that forgiveness is necessary if we ourselves are to be forgiven. This is reinforced by gospel quotes taken out of context, the Our Father “forgive us as we...” and in some sermons. I’ve heard preaching that “anyone who refuses to forgive has one foot in hell” and “anyone who says they have forgiven but not forgotten, hasn’t forgiven” and that “issues” or mental health problems can be attributed to a “refusal to forgive” or “unchristian bitterness”.

## **Process of Understanding and Healing**

There is a common understanding that for forgiveness we need to engage in reconciliation — to mend the relationship — as we hope God forgives us. But in situations of abuse and trauma to insist on forgiveness or reconciliation is harmful. A group of professional counsellors came up with a spectrum of possibilities in the process of healing.

To forgive a person might mean not taking revenge, or acknowledging the reality of what happened, or calling for accountability through the community, or letting go of anger, or physically separating themselves, or reconciling.

The counsellors also said that neither forgiveness nor reconciliation could take place if:

- It is too soon.
- Anger and other feelings have been suppressed, especially when there is significant trauma.
- It is under duress or pressure, or seen as a moral duty.
- It is part of an abuse cycle.
- It is misplaced compassion intended to “help the perpetrator” in some way.
- There are addictive behaviours involved.
- It is conditional – eg, in the hope of restored love and acceptance.
- It is for the “greater good” but damaging to the person.
- Some institutional responsibility would be short-circuited.
- There is institutional support for the offending to continue.

Where there has been trauma-inducing injury, the



person needs to set aside thoughts of forgiveness and any guilt at being unable to do so, in order to focus on self-compassion and healing.

Whatever the choice of position it must include the safety of the person. For example, Women's Refuge workers have observed that women identifying as Christian find it harder to leave a violent partner because of the internalized pressure they felt to keep forgiving.

### Analysis of Power Structures

The *Kairos Document* (1985), the statement by 150 South African theologians on "forgiveness and reconciliation" versus "prophetic action" in the efforts to end apartheid contrast "standard Church theology" with the need for

"prophetic theology" where there is oppression. It offers some clarity around the steps needed before forgiveness or reconciliation can come about.

"No reconciliation, no forgiveness, and no negotiations are possible without repentance. There can be no real peace without justice and repentance ... like Jesus, we must expose [this] false peace, confront our oppressors and sow dissension.

"When Jesus says we should turn the other cheek he is telling us we must not take revenge ... not that we should never defend ourselves or others.

"We can point to a lack of social analysis. Church theology tends to make use of absolute principles and apply them indiscriminately and uncritically to all situations. Very little attempt is made to analyse what is actually happening in our society and why.

"Throughout the Bible, God appears as the liberator of the oppressed. God is not neutral. God does not attempt to reconcile Moses and Pharaoh, the Hebrew slaves with their oppressors ... God takes sides with the oppressed.

"The Church must help people understand their rights and their duties. There must be no misunderstanding about the moral duty of all who are oppressed to resist oppression and to struggle for liberation and justice."

The document stresses the need for social analysis of what is really happening to people. Without that the idea of forgiveness or reconciliation is empty. We have witnessed abuse survivors through the Royal Commission take a prophetic stand, saying: "You may no longer do this to us. You are being held accountable for the damage done."

In Scripture we find active support of those suffering to get out of their situations.

"God does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame" (Is 42:3).

"Get up, take the child and his mother with you and escape into Egypt" (Mt 2:13).

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ... has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives... to set at liberty them that are oppressed" (Lk 4:18).

The Greek word *aphiemi* in the New Testament, translated as "forgive" in English, has multiple meanings – cry, forgive, forsake, lay aside, leave, let (alone, be, go,

**"Throughout the Bible, God appears as the liberator of the oppressed. God is not neutral. God does not attempt to reconcile Moses and Pharaoh, the Hebrew slaves with their oppressors ... God takes sides with the oppressed."**

have), omit, put or send away, remit, suffer, yield up. They denote action but none of them specifies reconciliation. The "let be", "let go", "lay aside" variations may seem like healthy possibilities for damaged people.

### Need for Well-Informed Practice

Australian Bishop Geoffrey Robinson and US priest Thomas Doyle were early supporters of victims of sexual abuse by clergy. They warned against Church pressure on victims to forgive their abusers because this could retraumatise them.

They recognised that simplistic understandings of "forgiveness" may add trauma to people's spiritual and mental health journeys rather than contribute to their healing.

Given all this, I see a need for reviewing the pastoral teaching of forgiveness. The usual Church teaching too often fails to engage with social analysis and psychological realities in a way that is helpful to struggling victims of abuse or betrayal. Hopefully, deeper reflection on forgiveness will better equip all those in ministry to promote healing and not impose guilt on those unable to forgive. ✦

Image by Jack Sharp on Unsplash

**Trish McBride** served on the original Archdiocesan Complaints Committee, contributed to *Te Houhanga Rongo – A Path To Healing*, and has been a survivor advocate since the 1990s.





# Rising with Christ

**Kathleen Rushton** shows how the reading of John 20-21 after Easter is also used in the Final Document of the Synod to guide the way of synodality.

DURING THE EASTER Season we will read from John 20-21 four times in Eucharistic liturgies. These are the same post-resurrection gospel stories used in the Synod on Synodality's Final Document – specifically in the Introduction and Parts I-4. Synod members agreed that "the race to the tomb on Easter morning and the appearances of the Risen One in the upper room and on the lakeshore inspired our discernment and enriched our dialogue. We invoked ... the Holy Spirit ... to teach us what we must do and show us the way forward together" (FD par 12).

At the beginning Pope Francis wrote: "I now hand over to the whole Church all that is contained in the *Final Document* restoring to the Church what has matured over these years through listening and discernment and as an authoritative orientation for the Church's life and mission."

## INTRODUCTION

"Jesus came and stood among the disciples and said: 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord" (Jn 20:19-20).

"Every new step in the life of the Church is a return

to the source. It is a renewed experience of the disciples' encounter with the Risen One ... Like them, during this synodal Assembly we, too, felt enfolded in His mercy and drawn to His beauty. We felt His presence in our midst as we lived conversation in the Spirit and listened to one another: the presence of He, who, in bestowing the Holy Spirit, continues to build among His people a unity that establishes harmony amidst differences" (FD par1).

## PART I – THE HEART OF SYNODALITY

### Called by the Holy Spirit to Conversion

"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved" (Jn 20:1-2).

"We encounter ... Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved. Each of them is seeking the Lord in their own way; each has their own part to play in enabling the light of hope to dawn. Mary Magdalene is so driven by love that she is the first at the tomb ... Peter, weighed down by his renunciation of the Lord, has an appointment with mercy, the mercy which he will minister in the Church. Mary remains in the garden ... She recognises the Lord. He commissions her to proclaim his Resurrection to the community of disciples ... the Church recognises her as Apostle of the Apostles. Their dependence on one another embodies the heart of synodality" (FD par13).

## PART II – ON THE BOAT, TOGETHER

### The Conversion of Relationships

"Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said

to them: 'I am going fishing.' They said to him: 'We will go with you'" (Jn 21:2-3).

"Lake Tiberias is where it all began. Peter, Andrew, James and John had left the boat and the nets to follow Jesus ... In the night, a dialogue is heard on the shore: 'I am going fishing.' 'We will go with you.' The synodal journey also began like this: we heard the invitation of Peter's successor, and we accepted it; we set out with him ... We prayed, reflected, struggled and dialogued together. But above all we have experienced that it is relationships that sustain the Church's vitality, animating its structures. A missionary synodal Church needs to renew the one and the other" (FD par 49).

### PART III – CAST THE NET

#### The Conversion of Processes

"Jesus said to them: 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him: 'No.' He said to them: 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish" (Jn 21:5-6).

"The fishing has not borne fruit ... a voice rings out ... inviting the disciples to do something that they alone would not have done, pointing to a possibility that their eyes and minds could not grasp: 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat.' During this synodal journey, we have sought to hear this Voice and to welcome it. In prayer and dialogue, we have recognised that ecclesial discernment, the care for decision-making processes, the commitment to accountability and the evaluation of our decisions are practices through which we respond to the Word that shows us the paths of mission" (FD par79).

### PART IV – AN ABUNDANT CATCH

#### The Conversion of Bonds

"The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish ... Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish ... and though there were so many, the net was not torn" (Jn 21:8,11).

"The nets cast upon the Word of the Risen One yielded a bountiful catch. All the disciples work together ... Peter plays a particular role ... fishing is an action undertaken together: everybody has their own particular task, different but coordinated with the others. This is the synodal Church in action – it is founded on bonds of communion that unite us and with space for all peoples and all cultures. In a time when there is great change occurring in the way we conceive of the places where the Church is rooted and on pilgrimage, we need to cultivate new forms of the exchange of gifts and the network of bonds that unite us" (FD par 109).

### PART V – SO I SEND YOU

#### Forming a People for Missionary Discipleship

"Jesus said to them again: 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them: 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 20, 21-22).

"Jesus gave the disciples the salvific gift of his peace

and made them sharers in his mission. His peace represents the fullness of life, harmony with God, with sisters and brothers, and with creation. His mission is to proclaim the Reign of God, offering to every person, without exception, the mercy and love of the Father. The subtle gesture that accompanies the words of the Risen One recalls what God did in the beginning. Now ... with the breath of the Spirit, the new creation begins: a people of missionary disciples is born" (FD par140). ✨

Full text of Final Document:

[www.synod.va/en/news/final-document-of-the-xvi-assembly.htm](http://www.synod.va/en/news/final-document-of-the-xvi-assembly.htm)

Reading for 20 April: John 20:1-18

22 April: John 20:11-19

27 April: John, 20:19-31

4 May: John 21:1-19

"Come, Have Breakfast" by Sieger Köder © Detail of stained glass window  
St John Church in Piflas, Germany.  
Photo by Zvonimir Athletic / Shutterstock.com

Kathleen Rushton RSM is currently the  
Denis Edwards Visiting Scholar  
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in Oxford, United Kingdom.



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# Honouring Life

I RAPIDLY SPIN a whirligig, holding the top steady while moving the handle in a stirring motion. A whirligig is a glorified spanner specifically designed to open and close trap boxes. Once the lid screw has risen an inch, I slide the lid of the box to the right, revealing the trap mechanism inside. After hundreds of traps, the motions have become muscle memory. But emotionally, every trap brings a sense of anticipation, like opening the door on a potential crime scene. Has this trap caught anything? This one has killed a stoat. As I remove the carcass, I reconnect with the audiobook playing from my phone in my chest pocket. "...I believe in a God of scandalous grace. I have pledged allegiance to a King who loved evildoers so much he died for them, teaching us that there is something worth dying for but nothing worth killing for."

I am listening to *The Irresistible Revolution* by Shane Claiborne. The book admonishes us to seek justice through nonviolent action. Claiborne outlines how redemptive violence — violence intended to achieve good — only leads to more violence. It's a message I want to incorporate into my life on many levels.

I see many cases where nonviolent responses are disregarded, leading to tragic escalations. Wars in Gaza and Ukraine spring quickly to mind. What can I do to inspire nonviolence in these massive and far away conflicts? Closer to home, in day-to-day interactions it is easy for me to react aggressively to unkind words. When in a heated disagreement, I naturally batten down the hatches and load my voice box rifle with insults, sarcasm and "I told you so!" Rather than defensively objecting and escalating an argument, I can choose to connect to the pain and grief below anger.

Most present for me, I consider this stoat's life. Stoats and other invasive animals are trapped throughout Aotearoa to give kiwi, kākā, mātuhihi, mohua and other native bird chicks a chance of survival. In this way conservation in Aotearoa also follows the pattern of redemptive violence. Ecologically, eradication of invasive predators is undeniably the best action. But how can I pair this knowledge with the call to practice nonviolence? If culling and eradication of invasive animals is the only way to avoid extinctions, how can I participate in these actions while having compassion for the life I am taking?

Maybe it's like the choice between eating meat respectfully or being vegetarian — both of these choices transcend cold indifference. As I clear stoats from traps, I can acknowledge that their lives included more than predating vulnerable birds. They knew the alacrity of a young lithe body. They felt the persistent Fiordland rain on their backs. They curled up to sleep in cosy dens. Rather than wrinkle my nose in disgust, I can honour this stoat's sacred life and mourn the human mistakes that necessitate the killing of innocent animals. What else can I do? ♡

Photo: Volunteers at Oroua Blue Duck Protection project by Dept of Conservation

**Oak Jones** has a passion for plants, poetry and wild places. He is currently living and working in Te Anau.



# Reviews

## Te Tiriti o Waitangi Relationships: People, Politics and Law

Edited by Metiria Stanton Turei, Nicola R Wheen & Janine Hayward  
Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2024. (NZD 50)

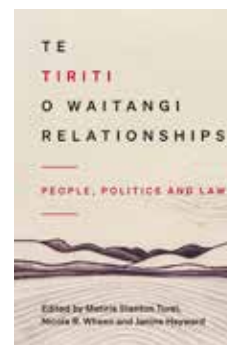
Reviewed by Celia Costelloe

*Te Tiriti o Waitangi Relationships* is the third in a series exploring the intricacies of Te Tiriti issues in Aotearoa New Zealand. This volume looks into the evolving Māori-Crown relationships.

This volume is easy to dip into and read a thought-provoking essay. It is a clear and accessible explanation of how Te Tiriti continues to shape and influence modern Aotearoa. While it covers complex legal, social and political issues, it does so in bite-size chunks and uses case studies and well-known examples, like Ihumātao, to illustrate these issues. This makes it easier for readers without specialist knowledge to access and understand the relevance of Te Tiriti for today.

One section that I particularly enjoyed was Jacobi Kohu-Morris's chapter "Mana Whenua in Twenty-first Century Aotearoa New Zealand". It was especially relevant in today's political climate, when the current government is considered regressive concerning Māori rights. This essay looks at the historical evolution of the meaning of the phrase "mana whenua" and how it is central to Māori identity and rangitiratanga. It also highlights the "difficulty in bringing the English and Māori legal traditions together" (p126).

*Te Tiriti o Waitangi Relationships* would be a great resource for many groups of people. Basically, anyone interested in understanding Aotearoa New Zealand's evolving political climate regarding Te Tiriti o Waitangi would learn something from this volume. The content is balanced, engaging and thought-provoking. 🌟



## A Bowl of Perfect Light: Stories of Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Repairing the World

By Megan McKenna

Published by Orbis Books, 2024. (USD 19)

Reviewed by Cathy Harrison

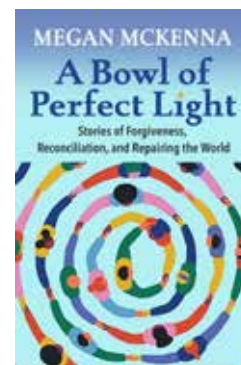
*A Bowl of Perfect Light* is a profound exploration of forgiveness, restorative justice and healing of trauma. The title, inspired by the Hawaiian belief that each child is born with a "bowl of perfect light", symbolises the true self.

Megan McKenna, theologian and storyteller from New Mexico, draws on her experience of working in restorative justice. This includes the impact of colonisation on First Peoples and the Catholic Church's sexual abuse crisis. Though rooted firmly in Catholic tradition, she also integrates Jewish midrash, Indigenous and other stories into everyday life experience. She shares creative

metaphors for light, emphasising the need for ongoing and necessary restoration of relationships and, where possible, forgiveness.

The book is ideal for individuals seeking spiritual growth, for group discussions, and for spiritual directors, restorative justice and trauma informed practitioners. The contemporary, in-depth readings of biblical narratives are insightful. As a storyteller McKenna subtly reminds us that the story begins when the speaker stops talking.

In a world full of conflict, violence and injustice McKenna urges Christians to be accountable and to live radically by challenging oppressive systems and loving their neighbours. Our world needs more bowls full of perfect light. 🌟



## On Reflection: Looking for Life's Meaning

By Richard Holloway

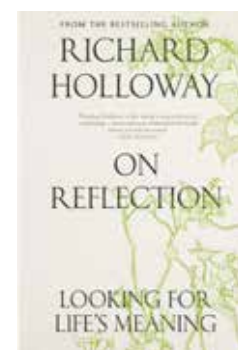
Published by Canongate Books, 2024. (NZD 39.10)

Reviewed by Beverley Smith

*On Reflection* is a captivating book. I have read many of Holloway's books and found in this one insights missing from my reading on spiritual matters. Among them the thought that religion is basing its morality on 2,000-year-old values and that through reflection and discussion we gain new insights into their meaning. For example, for most of history we thought it was moral to enslave other humans, but came to accept the immorality of that position and so abolished the slave trade in 1865. Women got the vote in Britain in 1918 when it was found that it was

absurd and immoral to deny them franchise. The Church of England decided that it was absurd and immoral to deny women entry into the priesthood and started ordaining them in 1994.

I appreciated how Holloway used poets and artists to illustrate his points. Religion, like art, he says quoting Yeats, begins "in the foul rag and bone shop of the heart". This is not to diminish its worth. We come to value it in a different way, "less interested in the authority of its origins than in the gifts of interpretation it offers us for understanding our own lives". I recommend *On Reflection*. 🌟



# Reviews



## A COMPLETE UNKNOWN

Directed by James Mangold (US, 2024).

Reviewed by Paul Tankard

WITH ITS NARROW focus on the years 1961-65, this film about Bob Dylan is not exactly a biopic (a word which, incidentally, does not rhyme with “myopic”). But it certainly gives enough of Dylan’s life to contextualise the much-mythologised moment which ends the film: the point at which, at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, and as it is put in the title of the book on which the film is based, *Dylan Goes Electric*.

Who Dylan was before 1961 hardly matters, though there are brief nods to him having come from Minneapolis and having once been Robert Zimmerman. Who he was after 1965, everyone knows.

Dylan (Timothée Chalamet) arrives in New York City out of nowhere. The scene into which he plunges is not rock’n’roll, which seems barely to exist, but the lively, intellectual, fiercely tribal folk music scene, which — for his embrace of living traditions and the purity of his sound and his politics — is presided over by Pete Seeger. Dylan seeks out Woody Guthrie (Scoot McNairy), who is hospitalised with Huntington’s disease and meets, at his bedside, Seeger (a terrific performance throughout, by Edward Norton). It is clear that these men are not going to make music that is going to attract the new mass audience of teenagers, or the record companies.

Dylan is depicted as realising intuitively that if he is too readily pinned down he will never make it — make music or fame — on his own terms. “What music do you like?” asks Seeger; Bob replies: “Oh, I like everything.” He attracts a girlfriend, Sylvie Russo (Elle Fanning) and Albert Grossman, of Columbia Records as his manager, who also manages established pure-voiced folk singer Joan Baez (Monica Barbaro). Dylan drifts into and out of musical and romantic intimacy with Baez, while becoming more and more successful.

Dylan goes to the Newport Folk Festival in 1963 and 1964 and is imagined by Seeger and the ethnomusicologist and folk song archivist Alan Lomax to be the artist who is going to make folk music a youth movement. But Dylan is hearing other things: blues, country, jazz and, of course, rock music. For the folkie community, going electric means dumbing down, going commercial and capitalist — giving up on civil rights.

Wisely, the film is packed with the music that alone explains Dylan to anyone who doesn’t know, and is a feast for those who do. It features 40 or so songs at least in part and those by Dylan, Seeger and Baez are performed by Chalamet, Norton and Barbaro. The commitment and achievement of all these actors is remarkable and underlines the film as a passion project and true ensemble piece.

At Newport in 1965, did the humble and virtuous Seeger attempt to cut the power to Dylan’s set with an axe? Did Grossman and Lomax have a punch-up? These questions are less important than the film’s success in allowing Dylan’s amazing body of work to reach a new generation, while Dylan himself — articulate, allusive, ambitious, evasive — remains an enigma. 🌟

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# Cross Currents

by Jane Higgins

LENT CALLS US to *metanoia*, a radical change of mind and heart. While we reflect on this for ourselves, it's clear that we desperately need such a change from our government.

Like many governments before it, the Coalition is stuck in an endlessly repeating narrative of "going for economic growth". But, as Gareth Hughes has observed (*TM* Dec 2024), the growth our politicians demand damages Earth and the wealth that growth generates is captured by those who already have more than enough.

So we arrive at a situation in which the government has missed all of its child poverty reduction targets. To be fair, governments have been failing to make a substantial dent in child poverty for a long time. And yet, GDP grows, year on year. The economy grows. Child poverty remains. As they say: "You do the math."

And because child poverty remains with us, we have a school lunch programme. The Minister in charge, David Seymour, has replaced meals that schools described as enjoyable and nutritious, with meals that make daily headlines for all the

wrong reasons. He has decided that these lunches must be shipped in from hundreds of kilometres away instead of being made fresh locally. To those who protest, the Minister responds (*Checkpoint*, RNZ, 27 Feb): "You need to have a reality check here. These are free meals being paid for by the taxpayer."

And he has his supporters, complaining loudly about children not being adequately fed by their parents. In fact, this was precisely the line offered by the Prime Minister when asked about lunches that included melted plastic being delivered to children at Murchison Area School.

It would be interesting to ask those who are lambasting parents in this way if they are charging affordable rents to the families in their investment properties, and if they are paying at least the living wage to their lowest-paid employees. What has failed here is not parents, but a system in which many parents are paying a substantial portion of their income in rent, while receiving not even a living wage to make ends meet. Plainly, our economic system is

failing a great many people.

In search of *metanoia*, let's stand this government's ahistorical, context-free, individualistic worldview on its head. There's a Ngāi Tahu whakataukī that says: "Mō tātou, ā, mō kā uri ā muri ake nei — For us, and our children after us." It's a version of "It takes a village to raise a child" but it's more than that. It seems to me that it's saying: let us, together as a community, look to the future and invest in those who come after us — our children, their children and so on. An investment made by all, so that all will thrive.

If this was the mindset of government, imagine how different its policies would be. It would be embracing a green transition instead of backing away and looking for an excuse to be a free-rider on the rest of the world's efforts. It would be respecting community preferences for low speed limits in suburban neighbourhoods, especially around schools. It would be investing in affordable, accessible public transport. It would be safeguarding our landscape and ocean from overseas corporate interests. And our children would be eating healthy lunches. ✦



**TUI MOTU InterIslands**  
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

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

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## PACIFIC NATIONS AT RISK AS AID CUTS BITE

CARITAS AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND is calling on the New Zealand Government to increase climate finance and foreign aid spending in the Pacific as other international donors cut back on development and humanitarian spending.

USAID was suspended in January, with 92 per cent of its international programmes now terminated, including vital projects across the Pacific. This has been followed by drastic cuts to aid budgets by key European countries. Aid cuts across USAID, the UK and Europe are estimated to amount to about NZ\$138 billion.

The cuts have already impacted more than 30,000 people who were receiving help from a Caritas sister agency in Micronesia, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji. This has affected access to clean water, food security, health

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## Letters to the Editor

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

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

The views and opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are those of the individuals and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor.

services, and climate adaptation initiatives.

"These cuts have caused deep uncertainty for our partners in the Pacific, where projects providing medical aid, fresh water, and disaster preparedness have suddenly come to a halt," said Mena Antonio Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand Chief Executive. "People are being left without basic necessities, while those least responsible for climate change are being forced to bear its worst effects."

### Cuts Another Blow for Climate Finance

The loss of international aid has increased financial strain on Pacific nations already struggling with climate-related disasters. Rising sea levels, extreme weather and environmental degradation have forced many countries to take on climate-related debt. Samoa, Tonga and Fiji now spend more on debt repayments than on health and education. Without alternative funding sources, this burden will only increase.

"This is not just about aid – it's about justice," Antonio said. "The richest countries in the world are responsible for climate change, yet the poorest are the ones suffering the most. Aotearoa must stand in solidarity with our Pacific whānau."

On 17 March, the Council for International Development (CID) released an open letter signed by Caritas and 21 other NGOs, which urged the New Zealand Government to maintain and expand its commitment to climate finance and development aid. The letter calls for:

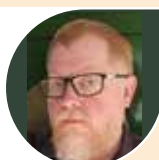
- An increase in New Zealand's annual climate finance to at least NZ\$558 million in 2025, ensuring contributions remain additional to Official Development Assistance (ODA).
- Retaining New Zealand's grant-based approach, rather than adding to Pacific nations' debt burdens.
- A roadmap to increase ODA to 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income by 2030, in line with UN targets.

With the New Zealand Budget due to be released in May, CID, Caritas and other aid agencies are urging the government to step up and fill the gap left by the US and other donors.

Antonio emphasised that New Zealand has a unique opportunity to lead by example: "We welcome the Government's commitment to grant-based climate finance, but now is the time to strengthen that approach. If we fail to act, we risk pushing our Pacific neighbours further into debt and hardship." Caritas has a long history of working alongside Pacific communities to build resilience against climate change. Projects in Kiribati, Samoa and Fiji have helped local communities adapt through sustainable farming, disaster preparedness and climate-resilient infrastructure.

"We see firsthand the impact of climate change on Pacific communities," Antonio said. "In Kiribati, soil salination is destroying crops. In Samoa, coral bleaching is devastating fisheries and tourism. In Fiji, every cyclone is worse than the last. Without urgent investment, these challenges will only escalate." ❖

**Damian Kean** is the Marketing Communications Advisor at Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand.



### MĀORI ARE TANGATA WHENUA

Patrick Snedden (TM Feb 2025) stresses the importance of knowing our history, then quotes an historical claim (from 1987) that probably is wrong. The idea that Māori were "not newcomers" but had settled here "before the Normans invaded Britain [1066]" is contradicted by Michael King (2003) who notes that scholarship generally tends towards the view that Māori arrived if not around 1350, then perhaps 100 years earlier. Google, if it can be trusted, states Māori settled here between 1200 and 1300 – approximately 300-400 years before Tasman got here. In contrast, the Aboriginal people of Australia are estimated to have lived there for up to 50,000 years. So on a comparative scale of a group living in a place, Māori were newcomers to this land. If history is being put forward to support an argument, then indeed we should know our history and see it in context.

*Forrest Chambers, Taitoko/Levin*

### ORDAINED MINISTRY IN NEW ZEALAND

I read recently that 14 seminarians entered Holy Cross College, and of that number only three are New Zealand-born. In Wellington diocese we are being asked to fund seminarians and some parishes looking to build presbyteries are being required to build housing that includes rooms for seminarians. It is an indictment on the ministry of priesthood in New Zealand that only three of the 14 seminarians are New Zealand-born. We need to ask is it due to the ministry being exclusive to men rather than inclusive of all? It may also be the loss of trust in relation to power abuses, including sexual abuse. While we celebrate cultural diversity in the Church, our New Zealand Church has its own unique culture which is not best served by people from other cultures. New Zealand was the first country in the world to allow women to vote. If we do not find a solution to the exclusion of women from ordained ministry, New Zealand-born Catholics will continue to walk away from the Church and stop funding it. I would rather see funding to support women in ministry than donate to the perpetuation of the priesthood in its current form.

*Teresa Homan, Te Awa Kairangi ki Uta/Upper Hutt*



# For What It's Worth

WHEN MIKE TURNED 69, he made a promise to me. He said he'd get to 70 and then review things. Although prostate cancer lurked in the background, we never guessed he'd fail to keep his promise so spectacularly, dying in his sleep just three days later.

Promises are made to be kept and yet.. That's the dilemma I've faced and agonised over these past months. You see, my promise was to my Mum. I'll never let you go into a rest home. You will always be just next door, with all the help provided.

Mike and I talk regularly. Out of the blue one day he said: "You can't always keep your promise" and reminded me of his unexpected death. But he was really saying something else. Telling me the carers and my support weren't enough anymore. He was right. But that was unbelievably hard to hear. How do you tell a 96-year-old woman who's mentally sharper than you, who reads without glasses, who can still name the Great Lakes of Canada, who completes a crossword regularly and castigates herself loudly if she misses one, how do you tell her that her days of independence are over? Except here's the thing. She's not really independent. When she says I must buy a new plant for that corner, or that chair leg needs repainting or I'll swap over my winter clothes — none of this will be done by her. Showering, dressing, preparing meals, visits to the doctor, dentist, podiatrist and library all require someone else.

In her mind, she's still quite capable, but her body has let her down badly. She has no truck with excuses or a little bit of latitude.

My four brothers were united. The time has come. So were friends and neighbours. I dreaded breaking my promise to her. The guilt was overwhelming. My critical inner parent reminded me how selfish I was — over and over.

A good friend offered to pray about it. I couldn't see how that might help. But on the morning I decided to visit Mum and break the news of the inevitable, I received a phone call, just before I was due to leave. It was from the hospital where Mum had been admitted a fortnight ago, ostensibly for tests, weighing in at 38kg.

The doctor had delivered the news I'd been afraid to. She couldn't go home. She was too frail and likely to have a fall. Could I come in? Mum was very upset. And so she was raging at the medical people and her body for failing her, sobbing like I've never seen her before. And then she dried her eyes and declared: "They're probably right."

The miracle was I didn't have to break my promise. And her change of heart was nothing short of a miracle, too. So unexpected. Such a grace-filled moment. And all that time I'd wasted on guilt. We heap burdens on our shoulders, as if we do this alone. But we don't. ✧

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



Every day, may our use of water  
refresh our sense of Baptism  
and our promise to spread  
hope, justice, peace and love  
in the world.



From the Tui Motu Team