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# Tui Motu

InterIslands

December 2024

## PEACE AND JUSTICE

EUGENE DOYLE, PATRICK SNEDDEN,  
TUSIATA AVIA & OTHERS

## FRANCIS'S LATEST ENCYCLICAL

MARY BETZ, MARY THORNE

## SYNODALITY NOW BEGINS

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI, CASEY STANTON

Welcome Every Child

Haere mai, Nau mai Tamariki Mokopuna

INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC MAGAZINE



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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.



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# Editorial

PEACE, JOY, GENEROSITY, togetherness, food, rest — these are some of the Christmas ingredients we hope for. It's that time of year when the spirit of hospitality enthruses us and it feels easier to share. Churches, charities and groups around the motu provide us with giving opportunities to ensure that no child will be without gifts, all families will have festive fare and no one is left alone. We feel again the pull towards neighbourliness and community with children as our particular focus. We experience a boost of the second part of the Christmas message — "good will to all".

The first part of the Christmas message, "peace on Earth", is less tangible. Last Christmas we thought that the wars on Ukraine and Palestine would soon end. We hoped that the global good will and peacemaking efforts would prevail. But month by month that hope has drained and this Christmas the situation is more entrenched and savage: basically, the Palestinians in Gaza are facing genocide and the Ukrainians are threatened with nuclear missiles. Yet we continue our efforts because we are a global community. So we continue to demand action for peace and justice from our political leaders, we pray, lament and donate and we refuse to accept that the situation is "not our concern", "not our faith", "not in our region" and among people who are "not like us".

From our faith perspective, Christmas is the celebration of the incarnation, God's birth in Earth as an infant utterly dependent on others. We know about the years of care and devotion parents commit to their children — a commitment required from infancy through every phase of development into young people and adults. We also know the commitment of care and resources the community provides — the payment of taxes for health and education for a start. We can think of such contributions as motivated from our faith in the daily incarnation of community. It calls us to continual responsibility for God's mission of "peace on Earth, good will to all".

Our belief in God's presence among us is why we keep sentimentality over one special baby Jesus at bay and focus on loving all babies and children. It's why as a church community, we need not only to apologise for the dereliction of care and the abuse of children by church people but also on what we are going to do to make amends. Christmas is when, inspired again by God among us, we make everyone our concern because everyone is us.

We thank our many contributors whose research, reflection, writing, art and craft make this — our 299th issue — a great Christmas read. Happy Christmas!

There is no January magazine so look forward to our 300th issue in February 2025. When you renew your subscription during 2025 we invite you to give a "freebie" to another person. The freebie is a six-month free subscription after which time we'll invite the person to become a subscriber. We want to keep *Tui Motu* going into the future.

Happy Christmas to you all! As is our custom, our last word is of encouragement and blessing.



## Protect Te Tiriti o Waitangi

IN THE LAST weeks Aotearoa played host to the expansive nationwide Hīkoi mō te Tiriti and the tabling of David Seymour's Treaty Principles Bill. In the theatre of political engagement our parliament was the reluctant host to the haka delivered by one of our youngest MPs, supported by others. Her demonstration in opposition to the Bill created a worldwide sensation on TikTok and YouTube.

I joined in this hīkoi over the Auckland Harbour Bridge and onto Ōrākei Marae. In 1975 I had watched from afar as the Māori Land March led by Dame Whina Cooper captivated the nation. That hīkoi resulted in a moment of national contemplation as questions about the rights and privileges of citizens came into public examination. The challenge of historical relevance was front and centre. Why were Māori upset? What had been the impact of colonisation on our population of First People? How could we address something wrong that needed rectifying?

In the nearly 40 years since, we have seen massive change. The introduction of the Waitangi Tribunal was our national gamechanger. This gave all citizens the opportunity to hear the unheard stories of the "other". Māori had a story to tell that the rest of us hadn't heard — and it was time we did. Hearing that story has shaped the narrative of the decades since. It has been revelatory, but not always popular because home truths have been tough truths. The sense of Māori public grievance voiced through the Waitangi Tribunal has been deeply uncomfortable for many non-Māori and many have wanted it to just "go away".

It is abundantly clear that the resistance to engage is operating in full force within our year-old government administration. Te Reo is being removed from the public sphere. Anything that looks remotely like Māori preference is being attacked. Mr Seymour is framing a new narrative that exempts non-Māori from their Te Tiriti obligations. He's proposing that Te Tiriti o Waitangi was simply a business arrangement and, as often happens, business relationships sometimes go wrong and one side benefits to the disadvantage of the other. So, he says, Te Tiriti needs a reinvention and it certainly can't result in privileges for

Māori that non-Māori don't experience.

Well, the hīkoi demonstrated that the Māori "side" of this conversation is not having it. Three things stood out for me about this hīkoi both at Ōrākei and at Parliament.

First was the overwhelming positive manaaki (hospitality) of Māori for all who joined them. Everybody associated with the hīkoi, including the support staff, the general public and the police, was greeted with respect and humour.

Secondly was the respect paid to the population at large by the conduct of the march onto Parliament. This was disciplined, focused and on message. The appearance of the Māori queen Ngā wai hono i te po Paki created a sense of high protection for the mana of the person and the essential truth of the public intervention. These are axiomatic to the Māori sense of hospitality and respect for the other host, who is Crown, even when the subject matter is injurious to their own interests.

Finally we may have witnessed a turning-point moment in Parliament when Hana-Rāwhiti Maipi-Clarke performed the haka and ceremoniously ripped up the bill tabled by David Seymour. The speaker was flummoxed. The moment elevated the cultural chasm between Māoritanga and Pākehātanga. It may turn out to be a watershed moment.

This was not aberrant behaviour but rather a highly competent and powerful display of theatre expressing abhorrence of a proposal that cuts to the quick of Māori recognition as the First People of Aotearoa. A First People who welcomed all other nations to this land as immigrants but maintains their own mana motuhake and rangatiratanga (self-determination and sovereignty) in our own lands.

Indeed they are not having it — and they are right! ✳

Photo supplied

**Patrick Snedden** works with Odyssey House in drug rehabilitation and with Manaiaakalani in education in Tāmaki Makaurau.







# Babes of Bethlehem & Gaza

**Eugene Doyle** reflects on the dire outcome for babies and children in Gaza, at this time, and urges us to do all we can to bring to a close Israel's war on Palestinians.

THE CHRISTMAS CONCERT at St Mary of the Angels in Wellington was wonderful. The Bach Choir, Chiesa Ensemble and excellent soloists sent a thrill through my body. But the final piece, Antonio Vivaldi's "Gloria" (RV 589), unsettled me.

We know the Gloria as a traditional element of the Catholic Mass, and the maestro's version is a perennial Christmas favourite. But hearing it again in 2024, in the middle of the Gaza genocide and Israeli landgrab, it must call us to more than turning up to church and enjoying the choir. How can we translate *Gloria in excelsis Deo* to communicate today?

## ***Gloria in excelsis Deo. Glory to God in the highest.***

The best way to venerate is to emulate. This gave rise to the American bumper sticker theology of "WWJD", What Would Jesus Do? —

quite a practical question. The curious part is they come up with the craziest answers. American bombs, delivered by Israeli soldiers, have killed thousands of Palestinian children and severely injured others.

A year ago, in the early days of these crimes against humanity, I heard a life-changing sermon by Palestinian minister Munther Isaac, delivered in the Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. He spoke about "Christ in the rubble". At that time he feared not just for Gaza but for all of Palestine. He said: "We are tormented by the silence of the world. Leaders of the so-called Free World lined up one after the other to give the green light to this genocide against a captive population."

We are approaching a second Christmas and the situation for Palestinians is far worse. Northern

Gaza is facing what one United Nation official called "an apocalypse". The Israelis are refusing access to aid organisations. The UN's Volker Türk said: "As we speak, the Israeli military is subjecting an entire population to bombing, siege and risk of starvation." He insisted that a massive expansion of aid for the Gazans is the most Christian thing we can do this Christmas.

Governments are not only witnesses to genocide, they are participants. New Zealand is actively supporting Israel on multiple fronts including sending troops to the Red Sea as part of Operation Prosperity Guardian. US B52 bombers and UK jets are attacking Yemen, a country already wracked by hunger thanks to Saudi Arabia and the West, and we have troops there as well.

Israel is now giving Lebanon the

Gaza treatment — bombing the people from a distance which only triggers more misery. If the war between Iran and the West breaks out, millions could be forced to head north into Europe. As one commentator pointed out about Westerners: for people who don't seem to like refugees, they sure know how to make them.

Heroic officials like Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, have published reports trying to activate people across the globe to protest the killing. Major reports such as “Anatomy of a Genocide” (March 2024) and “Genocide as colonial erasure” (October 2024) are well worth reading.

***Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. And peace on earth to people of good will.***

Jesus, a Palestinian, died a violent death at the hands of a colonial regime working in concert with local elites. We know where his sympathies would lie today — with the refugees, the starved, the sick, the persecuted.

When confronted with something on this scale, it is important we refrain from despair or helplessness. We can be part of building a global movement of solidarity with suffering humanity.

- This is a time for activism eg, join demonstrations in support of Palestine. They bring good people of all faiths and outlooks together.
- Tell your bank and your stockbroker (if you have one) to divest from Israel. If you are an ASB customer, check out the Don't Bank on Apartheid campaign.
- Donate to organisations like Justice for Palestine.
- Gift books on Palestine for Christmas. I recommend *The 100 Years War on Palestine* by Palestinian-American writer Rashid Khalidi and *A Very Short History of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* by Israeli



historian Ilan Pappé.

- Expand your news sites. Al Jazeera is the best mainstream media site. Jadaliyya.com is edited by distinguished scholar Mouin Rabbani. Middle East Eye and Middle East Monitor are more informative than our major news sites.
- Write to Parliamentarians, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Winston Peters, about your concerns, eg, that it is time to join South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ); to expel the Israeli ambassador in protest; to take our US ally to task for their part in the genocide; to

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**Eugene Doyle**, a Wellington-based writer, 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](https://solidarity.co.nz)



call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire; to withdraw NZ troops from Operation Prosperity Guardian; that New Zealand must live up to its obligations under the ICJ ruling 19th July 2024 “not to recognize as legal the unlawful presence of Israel in the Occupied Territories and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation”; to restore and massively increase funding to UNRWA and to condemn attacks on the United Nations and to call genocide by its name.

***Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. You who take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.***

Jesus was not born in a stable so that thousands of Palestinians could be born in tents. If God so loved the world, do we imagine our loving God would approve of the violence being meted out to 2.3 million Palestinians this Christmas? Or the continuing violence in Ukraine, Sudan and other parts of the world.

Would God forgive the leaders of all the Western governments, including New Zealand's, who have supported this daily slaughter of the Innocents?

The Babe Jesus isn't the only baby we should be caring about this Christmas. All people of goodwill need to oppose these crimes and do all we can to bring to a close Israel's war on Palestinians.

***Miserere nobis. Have mercy upon us.***

Come on, New Zealand, let us support the Palestinian people in their hour of need. ✱





# JESUS LOVED US / *DILEXIT NOS*

Mary Betz comments on Pope Francis's encyclical on Christ as the loving heart of the world.

LIKE MANY OF us, I knew the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary from childhood holy cards, certificates of family consecration and church statues. I was never fond of those images of bleeding hearts exposed on otherwise fully-clad enfleshed bodies.

So, for me, this encyclical has been both surprising and instructive. It reveals a different Pope Francis from the one I knew in *Laudato Si'* or *Evangelii Gaudium*. It also tells a story of the Sacred Heart (in ways both helpful and disturbing) which I had not known before.

## CHAPTER 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HEART

In this, my favourite chapter, Francis explains classical, biblical and contemporary symbolic understandings of the heart, identifying it as the deep, interior core of a person – not to be dualistically divided from the soul and mind

(although even he falls into this at times). Knowing our hearts is critical for being able to know and be known by others. We risk losing our centeredness if we immerse ourselves in consumerism or overuse technology. Our hearts can become cold, indifferent and even evil if we lose our focus on what is really important.

We need to give ourselves time to reflect on questions: Who am I? What am I looking for? What direction do I want to give to my life? Why am I here? Attending to "heart" questions reminds us of our uniqueness and what we bring to others: "if love reigns in our hearts, we become ... the persons we are meant to be, for every human being is created above all else for love."

## CHAPTER 2: ACTIONS AND WORDS OF LOVE

Francis regards the heart of Christ as the symbol of his

love and the core of the Gospel. Jesus calls us friends and is “God with us”. He seeks out and attends to women and men, poor (especially) and rich, sick and well. His words and actions reveal his love. This chapter, only two-and-a-half pages, could have been expanded to better show how Jesus’s life and message embody the compassion and justice of God’s realm to which we are called.

### CHAPTER 3: THE HEART THAT LOVED

Emphasising that images of the Sacred Heart are only symbols of Christ’s love, Francis admits that some may be tasteless and not conducive to affection or prayer. He urges us to recognise the affective nature of Christ’s love, noting that popular piety (the Stations, devotion to the wounds and blood of Christ and the Sacred Heart, and Eucharistic devotions) arose in response to an over-emphasis on the divinity of Christ (and later to the lack of mercy present in Jansenism) as well as bridging gaps left by theology (I would have liked some elaboration on those).

A few pages here totally lost me. They seem to isolate Jesus’s “human heart” from the unified person who is both human and divine, use a plethora of exclusive language (from both Francis and those he quotes), and in a single paragraph mix metaphors of birds, bridegrooms and stags, all to my great confusion.

This chapter ends with teachings of the Magisterium, for example, Pius XI declaring devotion to the Sacred Heart a “*summa*” of Christian faith, and Francis’s statement that devotion to Christ’s heart “is essential for our Christian life”. At the same time, he says, “no one should feel obliged to spend an hour in adoration each Thursday”, and we should not feel forced to follow the visions or mystical showings of saints should they not prove helpful to our own spiritual journeys. Francis says that such devotions may be counterpoints to recent dualisms, like new forms of disembodied spiritualities, and being caught up in church reforms that have nothing to do with the Gospel. Again, I wish his allusions were more specific.

### CHAPTER 4: LOVE THAT GIVES ITSELF AS DRINK

This longest chapter, at 15 pages, is problematic for me. Francis begins beautifully by establishing the historical biblical theme of living water (as in the psalms, prophets and wisdom literature) as a sign of God’s love to a people who were thirsting — thirsting for water, in the desert, and when deserted, thirsting for love. Living water is equated with knowing God.

He then cites verses from John and Revelation that note Zechariah’s reference to looking on (an unidentified) “one they have pierced” (Zech 12:10) and to the cleansing fountain (Zech 13:1). The Johannine community considered Jesus’s pierced side to be the promised fountain from which he invites them to drink. Francis continues for far too many pages citing numerous “fathers of the church” [sic], monastics (women and men) and popes who write of drinking of the sweet, adorable and delectable living waters from Jesus’s pierced side, heart, breast or bowels. For me this takes a metaphor decidedly too far.

Finally, Francis encourages readers to contemplate the

sufferings and death of Jesus which atoned for our sins. Many contemporary theologians understand Jesus’s death as a consequence of his life and message which threatened the religious and political powers of his time. Like them, in my reading of the Gospels, I don’t understand Jesus as coming (or being sent) to suffer and die as atonement

**Francis begins by establishing the biblical theme of living water ... as a sign of God’s love to a people who were thirsting — thirsting for water, in the desert, and when deserted, thirsting for love. Living water is equated with knowing God.**

for our sins. Rather, I know a Jesus who lives and dies in faithfulness to his belief in, and loving practice of, God’s mercy and justice.

### CHAPTER 5: LOVE FOR LOVE

Francis devotes his final pages to our responsibilities to our sisters and brothers, suggesting contemplation of Jesus’s pierced heart as a motivation to attend to the suffering of the world. If it does this for people such as Pope Francis, then it is indeed of value.

There are also millions of people working to alleviate suffering through peacemaking, advocacy for justice, and hands-on ministries who look to the Scriptures, their own traditions (eg, Judaism, Unitarianism, Buddhism), or simply respond to people and situations when they see great need. They do it from the love and justice in their hearts and are sustained by their communities, nature, the arts and many ways of prayer.

Christians have a wealth of spiritual resources to draw on, yet often seem no better at restoring the common good and building a world of love than others around us. If there was one “magic bullet”, we probably would have discovered it by now. Each of us needs a spirituality as unique as we are which transforms whatever is selfish in us into truth, generosity, goodness and love. We need to keep company with Jesus — and others — like Whina Cooper, Martin Luther King Jr and Dorothy Day, opening ourselves to the beauty and woundedness of people and all creation around us. \*

*The Cosmic Christ* by Annett Hanrahan RSCJ © Used with permission  
Photo by Sylvanna Andzakovic (Baradene College)

Mary Betz lives in Waitākere, West Auckland, and is a writer with a background in ecology, theology, justice and peace. She has two daughters and is a proud grandmother.







# Love Is the Way Forward

Mary Thorne responds  
to Pope Francis's latest  
encyclical *Dilexit Nos* /  
Jesus Loved Us.

## DEAR POPE FRANCIS,

I am a 72-year-old lay woman from Aotearoa New Zealand. My ancestry is Irish Catholic — I'm shaped by that tradition and by my family's experience here in the South Pacific for seven generations. I think a great deal about how to communicate the deep truths of our Christian faith to the generations that follow, in ways that make sense to them. I have always experienced a hunger to study, explore and deepen my faith in God, the source of life and love.

### Love Is the Centre of Global Community

I was pleased to learn that you were writing to the worldwide Catholic Church community about the centrality of love. It is a subject we need to ponder deeply at the moment. You describe the contemporary white Western worldview as dominated by insatiable consumption, in search for deep meaning and dulled by the frenetic pace of life (*Dilexit Nos* par 2). Our world is painfully torn by wars and aggressive division, suffering from ecological crises, and crushed by widespread depression and loss of hope.

You warn us against "a dominant mindset that considers normal or reasonable what is merely selfishness and indifference." This mindset "consolidates a 'structure of sin'" (*DN* par 183).

I receive *Dilexit Nos* with gratitude and respect, and I have some questions. I know your recounting of the stories of many Catholic saints is motivated by love and will be welcome and meaningful to many. But I'm left asking how we can re-express our vision for the future — this is my most urgent and heartfelt question. I believe the answer is implicit in your words at the end of the document: "We are called to build a new civilisation of love" (*DN* par 182). "[God's] love alone can bring about a new humanity" (*DN* par 219). Do we Catholics have to allow for that love to flow through many different channels?

### "Sacred Heart" Paintings Have Lost Appeal

You acknowledge that some have questioned whether the heart as a symbol of love is still meaningful today (*DN* par 2). You trace the development of belief that the heart is



the profound core of every human, where love and truth reside, from the ancient Greeks and Hebrew scriptures to the Gospels and Catholic devotion, and then to the Sacred Heart.

These days, though, medical science has changed the way we understand our bodies. I wonder whether articulating our belief in fresh ways that incorporate new understandings of science might be better received? Especially for those who are curious about both science and faith.

The image of the Sacred Heart was widespread in Catholic homes in Aotearoa New Zealand when I was growing up in the 1950s. But I wasn't deeply affected by those pictures of a handsome, European-looking Jesus who pointed to his exposed heart surrounded by a crown of thorns, rays of light and sometimes even flames.

### Love Inspires Discipleship

I attended Sacred Heart College in Whanganui and was taught by the Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth. It is the teaching and care of those strong, intelligent women which influenced me and lives in my memory. Vatican II was taking place during this time and there was excitement about a dynamic church, seeing the signs of the times and moving meaningfully into the future.

The inspiration, strength and comfort of God with

prioritises connection and care. The majority, coloniser community has much to learn about mutual relationships with tangata whenua. Your letter speaks to us of humility and reparation (DN par 189). This is a timely reminder to us in Aotearoa.

You are right that love is the only way forward (DN par 219). You join a great chorus of voices calling for this.

### Empathy and Love

As long ago as 2013, Jonathon Porritt concluded his book *The World We Made* by asserting that none of the highly advanced social and technological systems that saved life on the planet in his imagined future would have made a difference without the careful cultivation of empathy.

The fostering of imagination — seeing someone else's joy or suffering as if it were your own — lies at the heart of the education system in the world he describes. Empathy and love are close.

Thank you for acknowledging that. "The Church also needs love, lest the love of Christ be replaced with outdated structures and concerns, excessive attachment to our own ideas and opinions, and fanaticism in any number of forms, which end up taking the place of the gratuitous love of God that liberates, enlivens, brings joy to the heart and builds communities" (DN par 219). I have come to believe that an evolutionary worldview is necessary.

## Pope Francis, you are right that love is the only way forward. You join a great chorus of voices calling for this.

us, in the person of Jesus, as experienced through the gospels and throughout life lived with openness and love, is transformative.

A profound influence on my own understanding of the person of Jesus of Nazareth is Ched Myers' commentary on Mark's Gospel, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*. Myers describes Jesus as a resistance leader who confronts oppressive power without hate, heals, exorcises and liberates the crowds of poor and oppressed, and begins to build a restored community.

### Love Invites Loving Action

In *Dilexit Nos*, you write: "All our actions need to be put under the 'political rule' of the heart. In this way, our aggressiveness and obsessive desires will find rest in the greater good that the heart proposes and in the power of the heart to resist evil. The mind and the will are put at the service of the greater good by sensing and savouring truths, rather than seeking to master them as the sciences tend to do. The will desires the greater good that the heart recognises, while the imagination and emotions are themselves guided by the beating of the heart" (DN par 13).

In Aotearoa two young men, Philip McKibbin and Max Harris, have written of a politics of love. They invite us to explore a values-based politics which affirms the importance of all people, all non-human animals and the natural world within an actively inclusive framework.

Love is active in many contexts. Māori culture

Human thought and all of created reality is constantly evolving. We cannot afford to become stuck.

### Love and Dignity

The celebration of Christmas draws near and the refrain of "peace on Earth and love of all" will resound again. Once again we ponder the mystery of "God with us, God as part of our lives, God as living in our midst" (DN par 34). We ask: If we are made of God-stuff, if God is life itself, do we live in God?

You remind us that "Jesus brought the great novelty of recognising the dignity of every person, especially those who were considered 'unworthy'" (DN par 170). We try to be open to receive this incomprehensibly abundant love and allow it to flow through us and be medicine for our world.

Ngā mihi o te Kirihimete me te Tau Hou. Greetings for Christmas and the New Year Papa Francis and all your widespread community. ✱

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Mary Thorne lives on the Manukau Harbour, is a former prison chaplain and is enjoying time with family and her grandchildren.





# THE SYNOD ENDS, SYNODALITY BEGINS

**Massimo Faggioli** discusses the Synod on Synodality and how the Final Document sets out a vision of a synodal church that both leans on the teachings about church from Vatican II and points to the exploration of new participation of all the baptised in a missionary church for these times.

WHEN FRANCIS WAS elected pope in 2013, “synodality” was a technical term used mostly by ecclesiologists and church historians. But a synodal church was the hope of many who did not have the word for it. The conclusion of the second assembly in October did not necessarily satisfy those hopes. But the process and the final document suggest that Catholicism is moving in the direction of a more communal, participatory and missionary church — if slowly.

The assemblies of October 2023 and October 2024 had the difficult task of slowing down runaway local synodal experiences (Germany, for example) while at the

same time spurring synodal momentum in churches where it was lacking (including some US dioceses). The model Pope Francis had in mind was Latin American, infused with Jesuit practices.

The process has been complex conversations at the local, national and continental levels, and then at the central level. It differed from previous synods and Vatican II, where the *restitutio* to the local churches of what was elaborated at the centre, took place formally only at the end of the synod’s assembly in Rome.

But there was a sensible improvement from the first assembly in October 2023 to the second. The first took



the form of a “conversation in the Spirit,” with little or no integration of theological expertise. But the intersession and the second session of October 2024 corrected this in important ways — providing evidence that theology still matters.

### Media & Social Media

Another difference from previous synods was the way information was imparted to the public. In the past, the speeches that participants delivered during the proceedings provided a view of what was developing.

This time, the media had limited access to the proceedings, so as to allow participants to speak more freely while also encouraging them to focus on the spiritual dimension — while also limiting the likelihood of it being covered as a media event (this succeeded only in part). But there were daily press conferences with speakers chosen by the synod’s leaders. The feed available to the public had a feel akin to a World Youth Day split: between the 350 attendees and their followers “sharing” their enthusiasm, and the rest of the church that was not in Rome.

The social dynamics of the “peri-council” at Vatican II and its predecessors — theological work in informal meetings and evening lectures — turned into the social-media Synod: selfies and photos of colleagues’ and friends’ reunions, dinners and gelato.

## The Final Document lays out the vision of a synodal church in an official way for the first time, as a source of church teaching and not just as a theological study.

Synodality as communion and participation now must take into account the digital virtualisation of religious and ecclesial identities — a reality that simply didn’t exist at synods of Francis’s predecessors.

### Vision of Synodal Church

The church’s work on synodality since 2021, locally and in Rome, has been important. If the Synod on Synodality didn’t settle on a clear preference for a theory or theology of synodality, it did settle on a style: one based on Vatican II. Francis and the synod’s central office laid out the synodal path as a process, not as an event. But there is an “*evenementiel*” aspect to the Final Document, which as a whole was approved almost unanimously — by bishops, clergy, and laywomen and -men.

The Final Document lays out the vision of a synodal church in an official way for the first time, as a source of church teaching and not just as a theological study.

Synodality is magisterially rooted in Vatican II, but also accepts that the theology and ecclesiology of the Council need to be augmented in important ways.

### A Step Forward from Vatican II

Overall, the Synod on Synodality is a step forward. The institutional discourse on synodality has now acquired a stability that could also make it useful for other churches

dealing with the issues Catholicism is dealing with in the third millennium. Its reception by Catholic churches around the world may differ by country, or even within countries — including the United States.

Some of its proposals had already been approved at Vatican II but have not been uniformly adopted in the global church during the last 60 years (eg, councils at the parish and diocesan levels); some have already been implemented (eg, on transparency and accountability) in some parts of global Catholicism, and it is hard to imagine how long it will take for them to implement those where the legal and financial structures and cultures in which the church operates is very different from the Anglo-American.

Some of the proposals open unexpected possibilities that are nevertheless fully part of a synodal conversion of the church, like the one on liturgy and synodality.

Others, like the one on the procedure for the appointment of bishops, will face a wide variety of canonical and political hurdles (appointing bishops for China or Russia or Vietnam is very different from appointing them for Oceania or Germany).

### Issues Not Sidelined

On the other hand, the synod and the Final Document show that the people of God “represented” in the two assemblies did not quietly accept Pope Francis’s attempt to remove certain issues from the agenda for discussion and discernment, especially on the diaconate for women. This had interesting consequences in terms of procedure.

The rule on the secrecy of interventions in the synod was broken with the decision to publish comments from Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernandez, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith on 21 October; then, the audio recording of his 24 October meeting with members of the synod was released online.

Paragraph 60 of the Final Document received the highest number of “no” votes (97, still less than one-third of the total), but it also puts in writing something very important: “There is no reason or impediment that should prevent women from carrying out leadership roles in the church: what comes from the Holy Spirit cannot be stopped. Additionally, the question of women’s access to diaconal ministry remains open. This discernment needs to continue” (Final Document par 60).

The openness of Cardinal Walter Kasper to this, expressed in a 31 October interview with *Communio*, was surprising. Given Kasper’s critical position about the German Synod in the last few years, this recent statement says that the issue of the diaconate for women is not just an *idée fixe* of a few theologians or activists, but central to the future of ministry in the Catholic Church.

The way Francis and Fernandez chose to manage the issue showed that when something delicate is on the table, the Vatican’s instinct is still to hand it over exclusively (and opaquely) to the former Holy Office. It’s a reflex dating to the Counter Reformation, one the 2022 reform of the Roman Curia apparently has not changed.

It also demonstrated that, unlike Paul VI at Vatican II, Pope Francis is capable of removing certain issues from the



**There is no reason or impediment that should prevent women from carrying out leadership roles in the church: what comes from the Holy Spirit cannot be stopped.**

agenda. "Rome has spoken, the case is closed" does not work anymore, or at least not in the same way.

There were questions going into the second assembly about how the issue of LGBTQ Catholics would be handled.

Though the Final Document does not explicitly address it, this time around there was much less tension than there was at the Synod on Family and Marriage in 2014-2015, to say nothing of the pre-Francis era, when mere talk of it was taboo.

The sex-abuse crisis has only a marginal role in the document. This reflects the very different ways in which the churches in Africa and Asia deal with it; the reluctance of leaders of non-Western churches confirms what scholars and experts have experienced and reported in the last few years.

### **Final Document Has Magisterial Value**

On the divisive issues the synod leaves the door open since it's ultimately for Francis, or his successor, to decide. Francis will not be writing a post-synodal exhortation.

This decision, a first in the history of the post-conciliar Synods when Paul VI issued *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975, can be interpreted in different ways. Certainly, it departs from what Francis did in 2020, with the exhortation *Querida Amazonia* — which followed the Synod for the Amazon Region and ignored many of its recommendations.

Francis also dismissed that synod as something more "parliamentary" than "synodal". This time, he accepted the final document because it contains proposals that are less radical than the final document of the 2019 Amazon synod.

### **Synodality for Future**

Though there is a clear intention to continue with the "synodal turn," just what that means for the future of a synodal Catholic Church is less certain. As Jesuit Christoph Theobald, one of the theologian experts, put it in his lecture at the Pontifical Gregorian University the week after the synod: "We have left behind a model of the church" and have entered a "phase with unpredictable contours," given the synodal form advocated by Francis.

### **Synod as Institution**

And what about the synod's future as institution? Also hard to say. Will bishops continue to dominate, with only minimal non-episcopal additions? Or will there be real representation of clergy, religious, and laypeople?

Francis has changed many important institutional features (membership, procedure) while maintaining its consultative nature.

The Final Document says that "the Synod of Bishops" is "preserving its episcopal nature." But it does not make a proposal, because ultimately it's in Francis's hands, like the issue of how synodality affects or does not affect the Roman Curia. This has happened often in conciliar history, with the Curia exempted by the councils' decision and shielded from the bishops' attempts to reform it.

### **Place of Pope and Bishops**

What is the future of conciliarity and papal primacy in synodality? The papal office is affected by this in ways that Francis hasn't talked about yet. But on 27 October, he concluded the Synod on Synodality with a Mass. At the end, from his wheelchair, he led the faithful in the veneration of a relic of St Peter's chair — a wooden throne symbolising papal primacy. This sent a message: a more collegial and synodal church still has a pope who can use his primatial power.

### **Change at Local Level**

The synodal turn could mean a new wave of local synods, as in the 1970s, or could lead to different ways of governing the Church beginning at the local level.

The concept of synodality has been extended under Francis's pontificate, from the development of "episcopal collegiality" of Vatican II being implemented in the institutional life of the church, to a more spiritual and social idea of synodality.

### **Prompts Needed to Engage in Change**

But given what we've seen since 2021, in some churches the synodal turn will simply not be made — unless Rome acts authoritatively. Much will depend on Francis. The





theme and structure of the next synod, the date of which is not known, will tell what the pope makes of the Synod on Synodality.

### Bishops' Role and Clericalism

The synodal path creates a bit of cognitive dissonance around the role of bishops and the clergy, especially in the Euro-Western world: we can't live with them or without them.

The Final Document says that the synod remains "episcopal," but since 2013 Francis has reduced the role of bishops significantly and gave rise to a new phase of centralisation at the expense of the local bishops' authority.

The question is whether synodality is an attempt to build a different system of relationships between charisma and institution, people and hierarchy, or is it instead just an attempt to emasculate an episcopal hierarchy — without which Catholicism simply cannot function, administratively and otherwise.

The fact that the church will continue to be made up of clergy and laity does not necessarily entail the continuation of clericalism. This is important for imagining ministry for evangelisation in the third millennium, and for overcoming an ecclesiological dualism devised at the beginning of the second millennium and that finds no justification in the Gospel.

### Papal Primacy and Synodality

Francis's pontificate seems to show that papal primacy and synodality are proceeding on parallel paths — close, but still separate.

Francis has given synodality an unprecedented boost, opening Catholicism to a theology of the church that develops key themes of Vatican II.

At the same time, papal primacy in this pontificate is supported by a unique theological and institutional structure unavailable to synodality.

The key question is how to provide synodality a stable and visible dimension without simply creating other ecclesiastical institutions that would interest and involve only a few people.

We are entering a very delicate phase: how to shape and reform the institutions, old and new, of the Church in ways that also keep alive the hopes and energies of the spiritual, ecclesial movement towards synodality. ✱

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See: *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission: Final Document* [www.tinyurl.com/yz8yznyf](http://www.tinyurl.com/yz8yznyf)

Photos p10; p12: [synod.va/Lagarica](http://synod.va/Lagarica)

Above: *Westside* by Miranda J Caird © Used with permission [www.mirandajcaird.art](http://www.mirandajcaird.art)

**Massimo Faggioli** is Professor of Theology at Villanova University. His recent book *Global Catholicism: Between Disruption and Encounter* (2024) is co-authored with Bryan Froehle.





## Women Deacons Discussed at Synod

*Casey Stanton talks to Ann Gilroy about how the Synod brought discussion of women's participation in the church and women deacons to the agenda.*

### ***How has the synod handled the issue of women deacons?***

"The synod gave space to begin to grow more of the conversation about the synodal nature of the diaconate, and to explore whether the Holy Spirit is calling women to this order of ministry (and calling the church to receive women in this order of ministry!)"

"Cardinal Fernandez, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, indicated that the question of women's ordination to the diaconate was not yet mature enough for the Holy Father to be able to give an affirmative answer — but he underscored that the question was still open. This was ratified by the final document voted on by the Synod Assembly which states: "Additionally, the question of women's access to diaconal ministry remains open. This discernment needs to continue" (par 60).

"While this phase of the synod is over, the process of becoming a synodal church is just beginning. And part of the next phase may call for a renewed vision for what a deacon is."

### ***Could that vision include something other than a permanent diaconate?***

"I think the question is about centring the needs of the poor, struggles for justice and dignity, and helping the

message of the Gospel be alive in the realities of people's everyday lives.

"The role of the deacon is as a bridge-builder, listening to the needs of the people of God and the broader community. I think that a synodal church needs tons of deacons! And I think that the Holy Spirit has been stirring a vision for this kind of diaconate in the hearts of many women and men throughout the world. A prophetic diaconate that is tuned into the needs — especially those who are often overlooked or feel they are forgotten, on the edges of our communities."

### ***How long do you think it will take before we have an answer on the issue of women deacons?***

"I think we'd have to ask the Holy Spirit that one ... I do hope and trust that in the next phase of the discernment of this question there is room for those in the Vatican to hear from communities on the ground: from bishops who rely on women to exercise diaconal ministry in order to meet urgent pastoral needs.

"I know women today who would jump at the opportunity to discern a vocation to the diaconate with their local bishop as a way to strengthen their ministry and to honour the communities they serve."



### **How did the synod promote women and women's participation?**

"The synod process overall created unprecedented opportunities to hear directly from women around the world, who consistently expressed the urgent need to rethink women's participation and discern concrete steps around expanding women's leadership, exploring women's ordination to the diaconate, and including women in decision-making.

"The synod's final document is framed throughout by the collaboration and reciprocity of women and men in carrying out the primary proclamation of the church: that Christ has conquered death. It's significant to begin the



## **Pope Francis wants to see a church where everyone feels fully unleashed by their baptism to go live the Gospel and proclaim the good news. This is beautiful.**

document with Mary Magdalene! Men and women have always been collaborators, both called by God to share in the mission of healing and proclaim good news. This is not a modern idea being imposed on the church from the outside — it's at the heart of the Gospel.

"The document also doesn't essentialise women, and I think that's because of the participation of women in the process. It's the church that suffers when there are obstacles to women being able to fully realise their charisms. We're not called to an idealised fantasy — we're called to be co-equal with men."

### **Would women deacons add another layer of clericalism?**

"Pope Francis is trying to drive out the scourge of clericalism in the church and so I think he's hesitant at this moment to emphasise holy orders as the primary path of exercising discipleship today.

"And yet — I think opening up paths for women to exercise sacramental ministry would help lessen the distinctions between women and men in the life of the church, and the abuses of power that are at the root of clericalism."

### **In Aotearoa deacons tend to be retired men who have free time and can fund themselves. It makes it hard for a different person to take on that responsibility.**

"I think this connects with the invitation to continue to renew and revision the diaconate so that younger men, including those with families, can feel encouraged to discern if they have a vocation — and especially, if their community is calling forth gifts for preaching and leadership that would traditionally be the charisms of a deacon.

"If a young man was 33 and felt that he was called to be a priest we wouldn't say: "Oh, no, let's wait till you're retired to start living your vocation." But in many places today, that is the response that someone who is feeling a call to the diaconate might receive. This reinforces the notion that it is a role only for retired folks, rather than a vocation for the whole of a life.

"I really feel for clergy because I think our priests are stretched and we have people with gifts for ministry who could help sitting right in the front row of the church."

### **Tell us about your experience of the synod.**

"My experience of the synodal journey is that it has drawn me closer to the heart of the Paschal mystery that is the heart of the church.

"Sometimes it's frustrating — I want to see change here, in the land of the living. But the patient way, if it helps to build trust, consensus and deeper communion, feels worth going through the processes of discernment.

"It's thrilling to realise that we really are protagonists, and that each one of us can contribute actively to living the church's reality and mission in the world, right now, no more permission needed!" ✳

Photo p14: synod.va/Lagarica Photo p15: supplied

**Casey Stanton** is co-director of Discerning Deacons. She was Adult Faith Formation minister at Immaculate Conception Parish in Durham, North Carolina. She lives in Durham with her husband and their three children.





Photo: Te Pati Māori MP Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke during the haka at Parliament after the first reading of the treaty Principles Bill 14 November 2024 by Samuel Rillstone  
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# In Praise of Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke

(a poem for my daughter)

And today, \*Hana-Rawhiti rose —  
more than stood — she rose

like Nafanua, goddess of war  
like Hine-nui-te-po, goddess of death

like the wahine toa who is exactly like herself  
She rose from that house full of insects

and she tore that white bill —  
white as the whites of her eyes

staring down the enemy on the battlefield  
She tore that white bill right down through the backbone

tore it into two and she held it  
one in each fist

like the two flags of war  
like the twin battle-clubs only the war goddess may hold

and she shook them in the faces of those  
enemies with hearts as empty as their faces —

faces white as their insides, red as their outsides  
their empty red mouths

and their empty white guts  
and she cried the cry that brought more cries

from those who sounded through her  
down from the heavens

and down from those who stood above her  
on earth as it is in

the place our tupuna and our tupuaga stand  
She cried the cries of all those who came before her

and will come after her.

And that is you, Sepela —  
that is you too, my daughter

so, watch closely  
this woman who leads the battle cry

these are the songs you are learning to make  
the battle dance you are learning to dance

watch closely this wahine toa  
this is the wahine toa

you are also learning to be.

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# Path to Missionary Priesthood

**Michael Gormly** *reflects on 60 years in missionary priesthood mostly spent among the people of South Korea.*

GROWING UP IN Aotearoa New Zealand, I developed an early respect for the mana and the legacy of Bishop Pompallier and the Marists from France. The memory of the 1839 founding mission shaped the spiritual culture of my family, parish and school community.

In my youth, I was fascinated by stories of people like Suzanne Aubert, Francis Douglas, Emmet McHardy and Tom Cunningham. They were people of faith, ready to leave home, cross the oceans, face challenges and make sacrifices.

My parents and friends were not surprised when I spoke of becoming a priest and heading for the missions.

After ordination in 1965, I was assigned to make a contribution to the church in South Korea. I learned to communicate with language and adapt to local customs and culture.

I found that I had much to receive from people with a rich culture and a long religious experience. When I crossed the boundaries of faith, cultural and social realities, I discovered fresh dimensions of my own life and a new

appreciation for the struggle in the lives of others.

## Second Vatican Council

My mission narrative runs in the shadow of the Vatican Council. The directives from Pope John XXIII were first interpreted as a few top-down adjustments to be made in the field of liturgy. Latin gave way to Korean in the Mass. Altars were turned around.

But there was much more in store. The global church was entering a process of change over which we had little control. The impact of the Council has been around me for 60 years.

Conservative voices assured us that things would eventually settle back to old familiar practices. But, the realists insisted, genuine reform and renewal would take decades to absorb, appreciate and integrate. They were right!

The purpose and the practice of mission came under intense scrutiny. Vatican II was far more than a series of top-down decrees. It was an all-absorbing happening





across the Catholic world.

Two profound elements called for recognition and conversion. First, mission is in the hands of God. All mission is the mission of God. Second, mission is not a service to benefit the church. Mission calls the church to reach out to the needs of God's wider world.

For me, the lived experience of reform and renewal demanded radical change in terms of justice, peace, dialogue, integrity, reconciliation, inculturation, human rights, ecology, climate change and now synodality.

## **As a returned missionary I ponder how the local church is keeping God's mission alive in uncertain circumstances. My role is to keep mission perspectives to the fore on home church agendas and into the unfolding future.**

The names of a few friends deserve mention. Hubert Hayward, from Christchurch, was a man who came through two wars and gave service to the Diocese of ChunCheon for 50 years.

Maurice O'Connor, also from Christchurch, played a significant role in building urban parish communities in the major cities of Seoul, Pusan and KwangJu. His easygoing, low-key assurance often helped me along.

A third friend was Robert Brennan, from Auckland. He spent 12 years in remote mountain areas before moving to Seoul where, as pastor, he was involved in housing issues, advocating for people dispossessed of their homes in the name of redevelopment. When he was awarded a prestigious prize in recognition of his civic work, the mayor said: "The blue-eyed foreigner is a model of selfless dedication and sacrifice on behalf of the poorest members of our city."

### **Reverse Mission Perspectives**

A Māori proverb evoked the image of walking backwards into the future. "Ka mua, ka muri" speaks of the past shaping not only the present, but also the emerging future.

My personal challenge is to keep God's mission alive in local communities, making the church ready to meet the needs of the world. I resist the tendency to consign all mission to distant places and past experiences.

As a returned missionary, I ponder how the local church is keeping God's mission alive in uncertain circumstances. My role is to keep mission perspectives to the fore on home church agendas and into the unfolding future. The mission perspective is foremost.

I am encouraged by a few wise and insightful words

from the late Bishop Takuira Mariu: "If the church in Aotearoa New Zealand is to be truly Catholic, we need to be given the freedom to express our Catholicity in the language and in the idiom that is ours. Christ must be given the freedom to come alive in us, with and among us ... using the idioms that are ours and which speak profoundly to our hearts."

Cardinal Tom Williams suggested if Bishop Pompallier could speak to us, his emphatic appeal would be: If you really want to honour me, create fresh ways of being missionary. Seek out and support missionary disciples and prophets among us.

I was fortunate to encounter the late Pā Henare Tate, and his associates at Hāto Petera College, who opened to me the sacred world of Māori religious wisdom. He left a

body of theology and spirituality relevant to local religious culture and heritage. His invitation to radical spiritual awareness is significant, especially when it awakens sensibilities to the rich notion of Creation.

I value my association with people of diverse backgrounds who value justice, peace, ecology and who practice aroha, mercy and compassion, responding to the needs of the brokenhearted in our midst.

In turn, I am encouraged to make my own personal and practical responses to the plight of the vulnerable, the homeless and the aged in my neighbourhood. I join the prophets among us who profess a strong commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi as a source of unity and harmony for a better future. \*

**Please remember, my friends,  
there is an enduring place in my heart for all of you.  
As I celebrate 60 years of missionary priesthood,  
I give thanks to God every time you come to mind.  
I carry an enduring sense of appreciation for  
all the people, places, events and shared experiences.  
Yes, I was shaped by what we shared along the way.  
Thank you for your tolerance of my shortcomings.  
I go now to what lies ahead — the call of God.**

**Michael**

*He Sent Them Out Two by Two (Il les envoya deux à deux)* by James Tissot (1886–1896) Photo by Brooklyn Museum

**Michael Gormly** is a Columban Missionary Priest with an enduring interest in mission spirituality and contemplative elements of priesthood.





**Gareth Hughes** writes that it is urgent we restructure our economic system and proposes new economic structures with the flourishing of the lives of people and Earth at the centre.

# RESHAPING THE ECONOMY

ON 4 OCTOBER 2023, people were protesting the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there was a Code Pink anti-war protest, the Nobel Prize in Chemistry was awarded for work on semiconductor nanocrystals, and care workers were on strike in the US. It was also the day Pope Francis spoke out about the climate crisis in the apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum*. It was a follow-up to his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* and in it Pope Francis called for speedier action against the climate and environmental crisis.

Responding to the existential challenge of climate change and planetary breakout is at the heart of the mission of Wellbeing Economy Alliance Aotearoa (WEAll) to reshape our economy to deliver well-being for people and the planet. We agree with and understand Pope Francis's acknowledgement that "care for one another and our care of Earth are intimately bound together" (LD par 2).

However, the current economic systems that we live, play and work in do not make it easy to care for Earth and one another. Why does it feel like people and nature are in service to the economy, when it should be the other way around?

We believe our current economic system is not ensuring the well-being of all our people and our places, but like all systems it can be changed and that's what we are working on.

Our current economic system encourages individual greed, short-term extraction and commodification. Successive governments have seen their purpose as to grow

the size of the economy as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but despite rising numbers, inequality, poverty and environmental damage continue to worsen.

## Situation in Aotearoa

Where does that leave us now? Aotearoa is currently exceeding 6 of 9 planetary boundaries. If everyone in Earth consumed the amount of resources we do in Aotearoa we would need between four to seven planet Earths to maintain our resource consumption. WEAll Global estimates that 75 per cent of Standard & Poor 500 (Stock Market Index) companies would be bankrupt if they had to pay the true bill for their environmental damage.

The poorest half of New Zealanders own only 2 per cent of the wealth and the wealthiest pay a tax rate half that of nurses and teachers. Growing homelessness, food insecurity and poverty amid corporate super-profits have led to two-thirds of the country now reporting that "New Zealand's economy is rigged to advantage the rich and powerful" according to a 2024 New Zealand Ipsos poll.

The story that if we continue to grow the economy the extra wealth will trickle down, has come up short. Between 1984-2004 Aotearoa became 50 per cent richer as measured by GDP but despite that increased wealth, relative child poverty was twice as high.

## Structure of Economy

How we structure our economy has a huge impact on our



society and the environment. The old, still dominant view is that the economy is separate and superior to our environment — that we can take, make and waste as much as we want. In this worldview, existential problems like the climate crisis or biodiversity collapse are externalities that we need faster GDP growth to be able to afford to fix.

In Aotearoa, it is four decades since our economy was last fundamentally redesigned. Commencing in 1984 with the neoliberal reforms of Roger Douglas, this period of painful change saw privatisation, deregulation and free market capitalism takeover. In a short number of years New Zealand went from one of the most regulated countries in the OECD to one of the least, and saw some of the fastest growing rates of income inequality.

### Time to Redesign the Economy

For me the 40th anniversary of the neoliberal reforms is an important chance to be reminded that our economic system is a product of design and can therefore be redesigned. Big change has happened before and it can happen again.

More and more we are understanding that inequality, poverty and environmental destruction are symptoms of our economic system and no amount of increasing the quantity of GDP will fix that. We need to think and act systemically.

The WEAll message is that we can lay down new economic tracks with human and planetary needs at the centre.

### Economy to Serve People and Place

At WEAll we advocate for well-being economy approaches that encourage a greater purpose than just growth: preventing environmental and social damage from occurring in the first place; increasing community resilience in managing shocks; asking the economy to do more of the pre-distribution of resources and opportunities; incorporating greater public participation; and centring on people and place.

### Economy for the Common Good

We need to bring values back into the heart of economics. WEAll has identified five principles of a well-being economy: fairness, dignity, purpose, participation and nature. These principles closely echo the principles of Catholic Social Teaching: participation, solidarity, common good, stewardship and human dignity to name a few.

We are building a movement to reshape our economic system to deal with the challenges of our age — issues like climate change, poverty and inequality. In Aotearoa we work in a non-partisan way to reshape our economic system



through sharing and creating new knowledge and policy to influence change; spreading and amplifying powerful narratives of hope; strengthening and connecting existing mahi to build a movement for a well-being economy and advocating for tools such as community wealth building, intergenerational thinking and for-purpose business.

Pope Francis put it best when he said “the most effective solutions will not come from individual efforts alone, instead above all from major political decisions on the national and international level” (LD par 69). We need to work together to drive those national and international political decisions. We need to be working together for a strong movement for change.

It is nine years since *Laudato Si'* was published and a year since *Laudate Deum* and in that time New Zealand and the world have been affected by severe climate disasters. Yet we still haven't turned the corner to reduce emissions at a scale to avoid the worst impacts.

We are hopeful there is still time to build a low-carbon, climate-safe economy. We are seeing encouraging signs of that movement Pope Francis described growing and strengthening. \*

For more information see: [www.weall.org.nz](http://www.weall.org.nz)

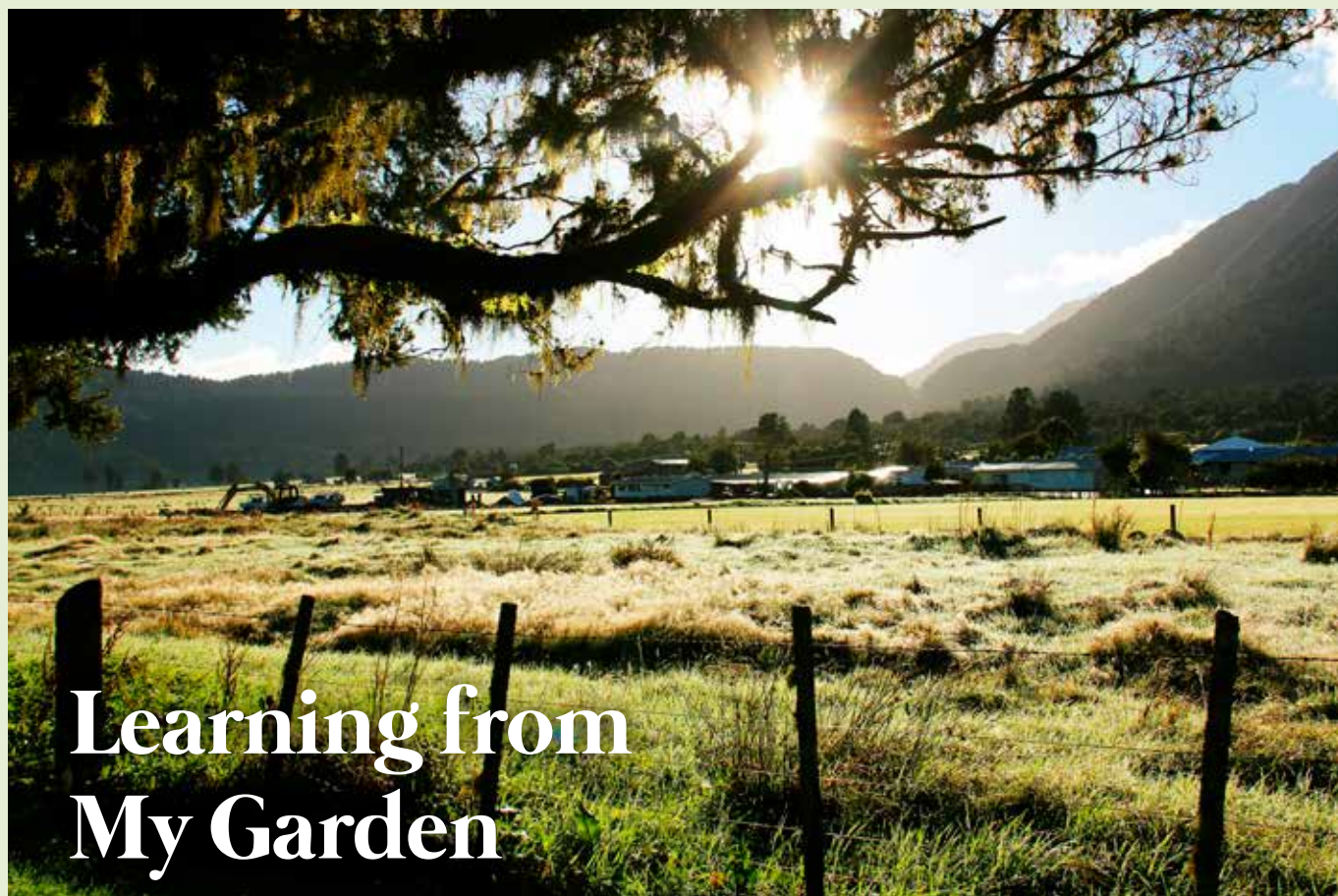
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**Gareth Hughes** is the Director of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance Aotearoa. He is an author, political commentator and former Green MP.







# Learning from My Garden

I'M KNEE DEEP in weeds. In particular couch grass, which, like rabbits, was brought here by European settlers in the mistaken belief that it would make good pasture grass. Big mistake, I complain, as I dig and wrench, trying to lift the rhizomes snaking their way through the soil. My garden has largely been wrestled from a paddock, uneven and weedy, and to turn it into a beautiful space has been a monumental challenge.

The garden has been a teacher, with me the reluctant pupil. There are life lessons in a garden as any constant gardener will know.

I've come to this later in life and now wish I'd stopped and listened more to my father, a consummate gardener who wrote gardening columns that were syndicated around the country's newspapers and had a gardening radio programme when he lived in Palmerston North. Dad wrote of his organic practices long before it was trendy to do so.

But here I am with half an acre of land that every spring threatens to run amok with weeds. I realised a couple of years ago I needed a plan. Enter Veronica, a professional

landscape gardener, who strolled the property, listened to what I wanted, measured, thought and came up with The Plan. It involved a pergola, a wildflower garden, a section given over to NZ grasses, hedging along the boundaries and much more.

One of the challenges involved removing work Mike had undertaken — her rationale being it was out of step with the integrated look she had devised. And she was right. But I did feel guilty ripping out his schist steps and rockery area.

The thing about a garden plan is that it takes time to implement. And time involves patience — not something I'm very good at. Tiny grasses spent a winter in the ground looking decidedly spindly and certainly at odds with the tussock that covers the Pig Route, a road I travel frequently from Central Otago to Dunedin. Other plants survived a summer but assailed by wind and

frost in winter gave up. My boundary hedge of Portuguese laurels is struggling and we haven't figured out whether the tips are being eaten by rabbits, or possums, or even wild red deer that roam the area.

I'm reluctant to trap the possums or shoot the rabbits, but the day may be coming.

My major job is weeding and there are days when the sun is out and the only sounds are the sheep and the occasional blackbird. That's when I sit with my garden fork, attack the weeds and, more than any other time of the day am really present.

However much I get done is okay. Tomorrow I'll do more. The garden is teaching me to rest as well as labour. It's teaching me to listen and to look. It's teaching me that things take time to come to fruition, that some things work and some don't. It's teaching me to trust. ✱

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







# WE ARE SORRY

The Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa wrote to the church renewing their apology to victims and survivors of abuse and lamenting the terrible harm victims and survivors have endured in church care.

“shame and everlasting disgrace”. But they also speak of the hope we share, a fruit of our faith in God. Starting from the place of shame and disgrace, but emboldened by hope we, as the faith community, must continue working to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

Over the past three decades we have made significant changes to our procedures and protocols. We have become more aware of the warning signs of abuse. We know that some earlier responses and solutions were ill-advised and had devastating consequences. We recognise that the police are best placed to investigate criminal allegations. We are striving to create better opportunities to assist those who have been harmed. We have learnt that safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.

We are guided by the words of Pope Francis: “Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated.”

May the Lord strengthen and guide us, to ensure we care for those harmed within the church and create and maintain safe environments for all.

## Bishops' Lament

We lament the crimes and sins of sexual, physical, emotional and spiritual abuse perpetrated by clergy against children, young people and vulnerable adults.

We lament the failure of pastors and shepherds who did not respond to the cries of the abused, the arrogant and suspicious attitudes toward them, the inability to admit wrongdoing. ***Be merciful, O God, for we have sinned.***

We lament the crimes and sins of sexual, physical, emotional and spiritual abuse perpetrated by religious men and women against children, young people and vulnerable adults.

We lament the betrayal of trust and “power” over victims; and the sadness and distress of loved ones of victims who have been left to grieve with unanswered questions. ***Be merciful, O God, for we have sinned.***

We lament the crimes and sins of sexual, physical, emotional and spiritual abuse perpetrated by lay men and women against children, young people and vulnerable adults.

We lament the many lives tragically cut short by the indescribable pain of abuse and the deep pain of those who have been unable to share their story. ***Be merciful, O God, for we have sinned.***

*It's OK to Cry* by Kenneth Crane [www.kennethcrane.com](http://www.kennethcrane.com) Used with permission of Christian and Missionary Alliance © [www.cmalliance.org](http://www.cmalliance.org)

## Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On 12 November, we bishops gathered together and listened as the Prime Minister apologised to those who suffered abuse in state and faith-based care. It was an important moment in our nation’s history.

Many of you have told us of the horror, grief and outrage you felt as you read the Royal Commission’s report and survivors’ accounts of abuse and the scale of that abuse. The sins and the crimes of our people — priests, religious and lay — working in Catholic settings fill us all with shame.

In addition to reading these accounts, we have also met with many survivors. They have shared their personal accounts and have told us of the catastrophic impact of the abuse they suffered. They have told us how the response of church leaders was often inadequate, inappropriate and, in many cases, added to their grief and trauma.

In this week of apology, we renew our sincere and unconditional apology to victims of abuse in the Catholic Church. We do so knowing that words alone can never replace what was stolen and can never fully restore that which was destroyed.

We cannot change the past, but we can shape our future. Survivors, and many of you, have demanded that the church has an unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety of children, young people and others who are vulnerable in our church community.

Again, many of you have asked that we work with survivors. We assure you of our ongoing commitment to do this. In meeting with and listening to survivors, we are learning much from them. We honour them for their courage.

We are continuing to reflect on the lessons of the Royal Commission. At the same time, we acknowledge the burden you feel as members of a church within which so many people were harmed. You have told us how the impact of abuse has strained or broken relationships. You have shared how your faith has been tested by seeing people who claimed to serve God revealed as abusers.

The readings at Mass today (17 November) speak of



# BEING ACTIVELY FAITHFUL

**Kathleen Rushton** describes how significant words in the Prologue of the Gospel of John (Jn 1:1-18) provide clues for discipleship as faithful participants in God's unfinished work.

THE GOSPELS INTRODUCE Jesus in different ways. In Matthew's Gospel, the Magi follow a star to the infant Jesus in Bethlehem and worship him (Mt 2:1-12). In Luke's Gospel, angels announce Jesus's birth to shepherds who "went with haste" to Bethlehem (Lk 2:8-16). Both stories have outsiders discovering that Jesus is born and who respond as a group to be with him.

In John's Gospel Jesus's coming is not expressed as a birth. John says that the Word became "flesh (*sarx*) and lived among us" — literally "pitched a tent in us" (Jn 1:14). Jesus's becoming is neither as a male person (*aner*) or a human person (*anthropos*). "Flesh" recalls the Old Testament (OT) view of the human person as an undivided whole. In biblical as well as other ancient writings, "flesh" has a range of meanings which link human persons with other living creatures.

## ANCIENT UNDERSTANDINGS

While "In the beginning" (*En arché*) evokes Genesis 1, at the time when John's Gospel was written, this Greek expression had cosmological and philosophical meanings. It was about what was there before anything else. It was a causal explanation for the world and its wonders that did not have to be explained.

Jesus is "the Word" (*logos*, Jn 1:1, 14). This recalls the dynamic energy and power of the "word of God" in the OT as well as in Hellenistic (Greek) understandings. The extent of *logos* is illustrated by Plato who, according to French philosopher Remi Brague, "uncovered the principle of creation and gave it a Greek name that evokes a thousand resonances: *logos*." The Greek word *pánta*, translated as "all things" (Jn 1:3), was one of the names of the universe and its totality.

The Prologue introduces the tone, the language, the time and characters

and vital clues for the unfolding of the gospel story. "The Word became flesh" (Jn 1:1-5, 9-14) and is plunged into what we understand is God's unfinished, evolving universe where people choose either to "receive him" or "not accept him" (Jn 1:11-12). The Prologue read in the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas offers disciples today the same choice.

## THE VERB "TO BELIEVE"

Although faith and belief permeate John's Gospel, neither noun is used in the Gospel text. John uses dynamic verbs — doing words and action. The verb "to believe" (*pisteuein*) occurs 98 times which contrasts with 11 times in Matthew, 14 times in Mark and 9 times in Luke. In John, 74 of the 98 uses of *pisteuein* occur in the first part of the Gospel in the Book of Signs (Jn 1-12) where Jesus is giving people the option of believing. Later, in the Book of Glory (Jn 13-21), Jesus is



speaking to those who believe.

For us, “believe in” may suggest an intellectual faith or belief. In the ancient Middle Eastern world, these words along with fidelity and faithfulness, bound one person to another. They are sentiments that come from the heart, the centre of a person’s being, which give expression to the social and emotionally rooted values of solidarity, commitment and loyalty. All this underpins “believing into.”

## “BELIEVE INTO”

John 1:12 tells us: “But to all who received him, who believed into (*pisteuein eis*) his name, [Jesus] gave power to become children of God.” “In” and “into” in this context have distinct meanings. Sometimes bible translations use “believed in” which is correct, however, ‘in’ does not accurately translate “into” (*eis*) when it is written in one of John’s favourite phrases. He uses it 36 times — to “believe into” God twice; to “believe into” Jesus 31 times; and to “believe into” the name of Jesus four times.

There is a dynamic quality to faith in John’s Gospel — faith is not a past event but a continuing attitude that unfolds throughout life. “Believing into” denotes this active commitment.

The expression *pisteuein eis* is found only in the New Testament. Raymond Brown says it is “an active commitment to a person and in particular to Jesus ... it involves much more than trust in Jesus or confidence in him; it is an acceptance of Jesus and of what he claims to be and a dedication

of one’s life to him.” It describes a willingness to respond to God’s invitations as they are presented in and by Jesus.

We can see how “believing into” the mystery of Jesus unfolds in the Gospel story. For example, after Jesus fed the 5,000 (Jn 6:1-14), many of the crowd went looking for him and asked: “What must we do to work the works of God?” (literal translation). Jesus answered them: “This is the work of God, that you believe into him whom [God] has sent” (Jn 6:28-29).

## “THE WORK OF GOD”

This “work of God” continues in time all over the world. We participate by “believing into” Christ and doing God’s unfinished work in the world — the work of creating community, seeking truth, reconciling, making peace in our complex, evolving, beautiful, suffering world.

Palestinian theologian Mitri Raheb writes that “God had done [God’s] part. The ball was now in the court of humankind ... The transformed faithful were to engage the world ... and to live the life of an already liberated people ... belief in Jesus as the yearned for Messiah replaced the idea of divine intervention with the direct intervention of the faithful.”

*They Who Are of God Hear the Word of God* by James Tissot (1886-1894) Brooklyn Museum

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



## BELIEVING INTO IN AOTEAROA

John’s preference for action words (verbs) resonates with the Māori concept of whakawhanaungatanga (making right relationship happen) in our context. Pā Henare Tate explained that the concept comprises a noun (whanaungatanga) and a causative prefix (whaka) which turns the noun into action. Making right relationships is threefold: i te tanga (with the people), i te Atua (with God) and i te whenua (with the land). The three are interrelated systematically and dynamically — always connected but always changing. If we enhance or diminish our relationship with God, our relationship with the people and with the land is also either enhanced or diminished.

One way to prepare for this Christmas could be to reflect on “believing into” Christ as a constant but ever-changing action: believing into as a doing word. We can listen and respond to “both the cry of Earth and the cry of the poor” (LS par 49) — in whakawhanaungatanga by promoting Te Tiriti relationships, in reconciliation with survivors of abuse by Church and State and in just peacemaking in our families, country and world — which is participating in the work of God. ✳

Reading for 25 December: John 1:1-18

## Review

### The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory

By Abigail Favale

Published by Ignatius Press, 2022 (NZD 19)

Reviewed by Forrest Chambers

The issue of gender and transgender rights are alive in society. Abigail Favale writes as a feminist christian (lower case “c”), mother and academic. Her book is an attempt to find coherence between gender theories and her evolving (Catholic) faith. In *The Genesis of Gender* she discusses why she rejects gender theory, and instead writes of how our sexed embodiment is a gift, part of the created order.

Favale discusses feminist theories, the “intersex” person, the appeal of gender theory, especially to teenage girls, and asks: “What is a woman?” She concludes that the issues arising about gender reflect a deeper philosophical disagreement about the nature of reality.

*The Genesis of Gender* could be useful to those interested in a “christian” gender discussion even if you think she’s wrong. 🌲

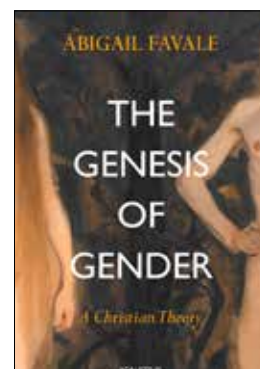




Image by Prill/Shutterstock.com

# Saying Goodbye

THE END OF THE year is imminent and as I'm preparing to leave Dunedin, I've been thinking about endings. I moved to Ōtepoti for study after secondary school, and in the seven years since I've lived in many flats, made lots of friends, learned and graduated — and I know I've grown. So leaving is emotional: there is sadness at leaving this familiar place and beloved friends, excitement about what is to come, weariness associated with the practicalities of sorting, packing and sending my stuff on, and thankfulness for this time of my life.

I've written about the value of rituals before. I've been thinking about how to mark my leaving Dunedin in meaningful ways. Through the year I gathered fortnightly with a group of friends in a writing group. We read and critique one another's work, recommend things to read and sit together writing in silence. Our last meeting was to be my final time with the group. I suggested we have a potluck dinner beforehand — a ritual of my departure. But after we'd shared kai, instead of the usual sharing of readings and working on our separate projects, a member of our group took us on a walk through the streets of our neighbourhood. We walked a familiar route: round the corner, past the supermarket and fish 'n' chip shop, and then turned into a weedy driveway I had not noticed in the hundreds of times I'd biked along the road. At the end of the driveway was an abandoned carpark that was brimming with life.

We sat in this interesting, unexpected place with our notebooks, among the flowering gorse and broom, tall grasses and a few saplings. In my last week in Dunedin this mysterious location had surprised me — and comforted me in some strange way. When we'd looked around, thrown some rocks and sniffed leaves, we left the green industrial paradise and walked back to do some more writing over dessert.

While writing, I'd wondered whether it was selfish to make the gathering different merely because I was leaving. Talking about leaving at church, at my university lab group and with friends had been similar — should I make it all about me, or slink off quietly? Leaving has felt like a big deal to me and I wanted to mark it somehow.

At the end of the night, each shared what they had written about the excursion. It was amazing to hear the diverse responses to the same shared experience. I felt deeply thankful for the people who were there, and for the discovery of a new place in this town that I thought I knew so well. The ritual I had planned was one of goodbyes; my friends had prepared a ritual of introduction.

We finished sharing what we'd written about the weedy carpark, and I mentioned my appreciation for everyone in the group and the experience we'd had together. People packed away their things, put on bike helmets or dug in bags for car keys, and we went our separate ways. The ritual I'd imagined was well-worn and familiar: a potluck dinner and

the opportunity to say goodbye. This group had filled me with life; the ritual they prepared was full of that life. Having a shared new experience consoled me that our connection would continue. ✨

Shar Mathias is moving from Ōtepoti/Dunedin after finishing her studies at the University of Otago.



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# Reviews

## Peace is Her Song: The Life & Legacy of Hymn Writer Shirley Erena Murray

By Anne Manchester

Published by Philip Garside Publishing, 2024. (NZD 50)

Reviewed by Jill McLoughlin

As a musician, I read with interest this well-researched biography. Author Anne Manchester explores Shirley Erena Murray's profound influence on contemporary hymn writing in Aotearoa and globally. It is refreshing that Shirley's hymns reflect who we are in Aotearoa as she challenges old language and musical traditions that do not fit in our part of the world. Active peacemaking was very important to Shirley who was an ardent supporter of Amnesty International. Her commitment to inclusive language and to themes of peace, hope and social justice are reflected in her writing: "Singing faith joins me to the

community of hope. I want to write about that hope by singing new meaning into the Christian story."

I especially enjoyed the personal anecdotes from family, friends and colleagues which spoke of Shirley's enthusiasm, warmth and intelligence. Interspersed throughout the biography are excerpts of Shirley's own writing which provide a glimpse into her family life, her support of her husband John's ministerial work and her journey towards becoming an internationally recognised hymn writer.

Having read this book, I sense that I have been acquainted with a remarkably gifted woman who was passionate about singing our faith. Shirley's life story is indeed inspiring. 🌲



## In-tensional: A Way Forward for the Church

By Justin Duckworth and Alan Jamieson

Published by Philip Garside, 2024. (NZD 30)

Reviewed by Neil Darragh

Justin Duckworth is the Archbishop Tikanga Pākehā of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia. He is co-founder of Urban Vision, a movement of local residential intentional communities. Alan Jamieson has been an Aotearoa New Zealand pastor for 30 years. He is also a sociologist who has researched faith development and church growth in New Zealand over several decades. Duckworth and Jamieson's analysis of the condition of the church in New Zealand today uses a helpful distinction between "church-centre" and "edge-church" as equally important components of "church". The centre church is

generally an established, organised community of people who gather regularly for worship in a particular place. Edge-church is often seen as radical or fringe and can form as the result of dissatisfaction with church-centre.

Rather than opting for one or other of these components, this book advocates a critical conversation between these two. This tension between centre-church and edge-church can be a source of fresh life for ordinary churches across post-secular New Zealand.

The central chapters of this book draw upon the considerable experience of these two writers across the broad spectrum of the New Zealand church to demonstrate how church leaders could engage in this conversation. 🌲



## On These Islands I runga i nga motu nei: Quaker Faith & Practice in NZ

Written & Published by Quakers Aotearoa New Zealand, 2024. (NZD 25)

Reviewed by Patricia Williams

*On These Islands* is a collection of Quaker writings, correspondence, prayers, reflections and poetry from the 1830s to the present. It is a valuable personal and historical record of the beliefs and practices of the Society of Friends (Quakers) whose presence here precedes the signing of the Treaty. The first Quaker family settled in the Hokianga in 1836 and, interestingly, young Quaker artist Sydney Parkinson accompanied Joseph Banks on board the *Endeavour* in 1796.

The collection reveals a cross-section of the Quaker approach to life from the mundane to the deeply spiritual.

They embrace life through the lens of faith and formulate theology in their lived experience.

The book's topics such as tangata whenua, racism, climate change, social justice, relationship with the natural world, ageing, dying and after death, are relevant for today's reader. And the dynamic art invites deeper reflection and exploration.

Quaker worship is a meeting of a community of "Friends" who gather in silence to listen to the Spirit within and in one another. I found this simple, uncomplicated approach especially appealing.

I recommend reading *On These Islands* reflectively to be challenged and nourished. 🌲



# Reviews



## THE RETURN (UK, 2024)

Directed by Uberto Pasolini

NZ International Film Festival, 2024; general release in December

Reviewed by Paul Tankard

This re-telling of Homer's epic *The Odyssey* omits all the legendary adventures of Odysseus and his men — the Cyclops, the lotus-eaters, Circe, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis — and skips straight to Odysseus (Ralph Fiennes) washing up on the shores of Ithaca: older, battle-scarred, naked and alone.

When Odysseus left for Troy he left behind his wife, Penelope (Juliette Binoche) and infant son, Telemachus. For 20 years they have not known if he was alive or dead. The Odysseus who returns is unrecognisable, and assumes the guise of a beggar while he susses out how things are.

On Ithaca, community life, authority and productive labour have all broken down. Penelope shelters in her crumbling court, besieged by dozens of suitors who want to step into Odysseus's roles as king and husband. Telemachus, no longer a child (Charlie Plummer), is now seen by the suitors as a potential threat to their ambitions.

This is the set-up. But much less than this happens on screen. Fiennes is not Homer's "wily Odysseus," but a tired and bewildered hero, like a washed-up boxer. For much of the film he is almost non-verbal — Fiennes's script would hardly take up an A4 page — and he's clearly suffering from modern conditions like survivor guilt or male menopause or PTSD, or similar.

Odysseus knows that he is not returning to his people as a hero. Apart from lingering views of the stunning landscape, viewers are asked to watch the two leads as, in silence, they grapple with (we presume) such questions as: Was Odysseus right to go away? Is he right to return? Can he and should he retain the kingship, or his wife? Does Penelope, for all her artful deflecting of the suitors, even want him?

These questions are there or are implied in Homer. Odysseus could have returned to a red carpet and a ticker-tape parade. But as we know from Tolkien's "Scouring of the Shire" and Jordan Peterson telling young men to tidy their rooms, you can be a storied hero, fighting other people's picturesque battles, at war or in online games, and still have to confront the mess at home.

Odysseus does confront his mess at home, and the final 20 rather gruesome minutes of *The Return* won't surprise anyone. This is a plausible and compelling reading of *The Odyssey*, but perhaps some of the Cyclops and Circe would have made a more gripping film. 🌲

## Habitats of the Basileia: Essays in Honour of Elaine M Wainwright

Edited by Robert J Myles, Caroline Blyth and Emily Colgan

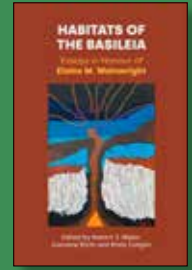
Published by Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2024. (GBP 65)

Reviewed by Susan Smith

Elaine Wainwright's death in July 2024 saddened many — Mercy Sisters worldwide, former students, *Tui Motu* readers, academic colleagues, and all those committed to interpretative processes of the biblical word that enhanced the role of women in church and society, that recognised the need for more effective responses to the environmental crises facing us, and that understood the de-colonising process did not finish with political independence for Pasifika peoples.

Former colleagues and students have sought to honour Elaine's memory in essays gathered in *Habitats of the Basileia*. Parts I and 2 primarily offer insights around our reading of Matthew's Gospel, the focus of much of Elaine's research over the years. Part III directs attention to the insights Elaine's methodologies can offer to Tongan and Samoan approaches to the text and to her work of building networks of women scholars so that there was support for them as they tackled issues important for us all — sexism, racism, colonialism and environmental degradation.

*Habitats of the Basileia* presumes that readers have a reasonable familiarity with contemporary biblical studies, and some knowledge of biblical Hebrew and koine Greek. For such readers, this work offers valuable insights on possible responses to contemporary issues. 🌲







# Cross Currents

by Jane Higgins

ADVENT IS HERE. The daily readings are full of fierce joy and confidence in anticipating a world transformed. Given the current state of things, I find this call to joy a challenge.

Two years ago, writing my first Advent Cross Currents article, I wrote about hope and particularly about the hope offered by the synodal process to which Pope Francis had called the church.

Last year in Advent, I wrote about Gaza and the Palestinian children starved and killed by that horrific war. The horror of the war continues unabated: tens of thousands killed, and many more in desperate need of the basics of life denied them by the bombing of places where they have sought refuge.

Now, as we approach Advent 2024, where can we look for the joy to which Scripture calls us?

The synodal process came to an official conclusion in October. Was it hopeful? In part. There remain open questions about significant issues, notably the participation of women in leadership and ministry. Additionally, the final document calls for a church that does not exclude people because of their marital situation, identity or

sexuality. These developments are an advance on exclusion, but they feel frustratingly inward-looking. It's hard to be patient with this when there is so much to do in the world.

Perhaps Pope Francis is impatient too. He spoke with urgency at the final Mass of the gathering, calling on the church to be attentive to "the challenges of our time, the urgency of evangelisation and the many wounds that afflict humanity". He warned that "a sedentary church, that inadvertently withdraws from life and confines itself to the margins of reality is a church that risks remaining blind and becoming comfortable with its own unease. If we remain stuck in our blindness, we will continuously fail to grasp the urgency of giving a pastoral response to the many problems of our world."

Now is the time, Pope Francis said, for the church to "get its hands dirty" and "carry the joy of the Gospel through the streets of the world".

This is a powerful exhortation, and yet we are still arguing about the inclusion and participation of people who wish eagerly to be involved in this mission.

Pope Francis's words echo those

of Dominican liberation theologian, Fr Gustavo Gutiérrez, who died in October, aged 96. Gutiérrez wrote of the "earthiness" of Christian love, saying that there is no aspect of human life that is unrelated to discipleship. Our spirituality of discipleship is "all embracing", he said, because the whole of human life, personal and communal, is involved in that journey.

Gutiérrez's work was grounded in the belief that we find God in our lived experience. And particularly, he said, God's presence in history is to be found in the lives of the poor. It was in the day-to-day experience of the Christian communities in Latin America – in their poverty, but also their joy – that Gutiérrez encountered Christ. That joy, he wrote, is born of the conviction that the injustice afflicting them would be overcome.

Christmas offers us a stark proclamation of God's preferential option for the poor: a child born in a stable. May it also offer us deep joy in knowing God's presence in the earthiness of our lives. ✧



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

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

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## Letters to the Editor

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

### LISTEN PROPERLY TO WOMEN

Bishop Anthony Randazzo, the president of the federation of Catholic Bishops Conference of Oceania to the synod, seeks to censor the promptings of the Spirit expressed by women of Oceania in calling for attention to the issue of women's ordination. As is the norm, the bishop does this by attempting to pitch women and their needs against one another in true patriarchal style.

His opinion that women of Oceania challenging the exclusive male priesthood is akin to colonialism which devalues the plight of women in Oceania suffering from political, economic, deprivation and sexism, is a failure to hear the Spirit. Bishop Randazzo, in dismissing women's ordination as some sort of popular fad, is unconscionable and denigrates all women of Oceania. The bishop's unqualified judgement of women prioritising this injustice over other injustices as if they are in opposition to one another rather than sides of the same coin, is hurtful and offensive. His failure to understand or listen to the voice of women of Oceania renders him unqualified to speak on behalf of women. Women need to be heard, and the synod process is where the church is supposed to be listening. Randazzo proves himself unable to engage with women and the issues that concern them most and should be required to step aside and allow someone open to the Spirit replace him.

*Teresa Homan, Whakatiki/Upper Hutt*

### TRUTH AND CONSCIENCE

Kathleen Rushton (TM November 2024) builds a case for truth, as used in the Gospel of John, referring to God's faithful action. I believe that this unnecessarily complicates things. When Jesus is relentless about telling God's truth it is because doing anything else, even to save his own life, is untenable for him as it would violate his (truthful) relationship with God, which is more important to him than anything else.

When Jesus says: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Light" he is sharing truth he learned from God but always, always, he wants us to pray to the Father who will share the same truth with us if we are open to it. There is no need to hope for God's faithful saving action, whatever that might look like in the 21st century. There is every need to develop our own desire to learn God's truth, through waking up and developing the conscience mechanism that God instilled in each of us, and then to take action accordingly.

*Karen Pronk, Tāhuna/Glenorchy*

### FUNERALS

I'd like to supplement the reflections on funerals by Peter Lineham and Peter Matheson (TM November 2024). I have been an unattached occasional funeral celebrant since the late 1980s, which is when the noticeable move away from church occasions began. There are many people of faith who have detached themselves from churches and still want a funeral that connects with the often explicitly Christian spirituality they still live and practise. In the words of Diana Butler Bass: "They are fashioning a way of faith between conventional theism and any kind of secularism devoid of the divine." My initial questions to a bereaved family are: "What do you want to do? Say? Hear?" I ask about their understanding of any afterlife. They want personal words, and yes, hopeful words so it is a celebration of their loved one's life and their positive contribution to God's world – even if it doesn't carry that label. There is music appropriate to them. Their community from whom they will receive ongoing support is present. There is an intense distillation of love and grief. All this is truly sacred! The emphasis has shifted from the church focus of hope that this person has gone to heaven, to empowering the living to choose words and form a ritual that will work and is real for them. My focus is ministering explicitly and personally to those grieving and, as appropriate, offering a God who both lives with us here and receives every single one of us into eternity with overwhelming love and acceptance.

*Trish McBride, Te Whanganui-a-Tara/Wellington* 🌲

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# For What It's Worth

RECENTLY, WITH A shared meal and blessing, we sent off a colleague on maternity leave. The warm and light-hearted celebration was very much focused on the wonderful event expected a few weeks later. Though I know the mother-to-be quite well, the first I knew of the pregnancy was when the "All Staff" email arrived giving the date and time for the farewell celebration. How had I missed the pregnancy? I'd obviously missed the maternity attire clues. Was I too distracted by significant events in my own life to notice the very significant, expectant and hope-filled journey taking place in the life of another?

Advent is also a time of expectant, hope-filled waiting and similarly a time that can easily slip by unnoticed as our attention is diverted (or maybe subverted) by the "main event" – Christmas.

Secularism is partly to blame, of course. Well before Advent starts, we are pummelled with reminders of the need to hurry, hurry, hurry (and shop) as there are only x days until Christmas! However, even for those who are aware of the spiritual significance of Christmas, the season of Advent can come and go without receiving due attention. Why is that?

Maybe it is because too much of the religious rhetoric around the birth of Christ describes an outside intervention that happened long ago bringing about individual redemption. This means we can be somewhat aloof from the "pregnancy" – the birth is going to happen anyway – and all we need do is accept the "gift" when it arrives. If, however, we celebrated this birth as a continuation of the intrinsic unfolding of incarnation in all of creation, that is both the result of, and a response to the aroha of God, we would be drawn more fully into the midwife-like role of providing a holistically healthy environment in which new life may flourish.

We need to ask the right questions of ourselves, our communities and the earth regarding where revitalisation is needed and where the new life of the incarnation will be transformative. By reflecting on the "answers", however they come to us, we will be in a better position to respond

to the angelic announcements of "peace on earth" and "goodwill to all" that accompany the birth of Christ.

How we journey often conditions what we discover at our destination. Consider the disciples on their way to Emmaus. They were fully attentive to the "stranger" who accompanied them. Questioning, and responding to questions, led them to reflect deeply on all that was happening in their world, recalling their hopes and dreams for a new future. Without this attentive attitude to the journey and to Jesus would they have fully "recognised him at the breaking of bread" at the journey's end? (Luke 24: 13-35)

If we are not fooled by the "maternity clothes" of overblown Christmas decorations that fast-forward us to the Big Day and are not distracted by unhelpful pieties (that overplay redemption and understate incarnation), maybe we can savour the expectant time of Advent. By truly preparing ourselves, we might enable the Christ child to be born into a receptive environment that induces peace, sustenance and justice for all rather than competition, greed and excess for a few. Sounds like the Reign of God to me. ✨

Commemoration in Italy of all the children killed and dying in Gaza from Israel's onslaught (November 2023).

Image by Fabio Dell/Shutterstock.com

**Bruce Drysdale** is the chaplain at ABI, a facility for rehabilitation for people with serious brain injuries.



## Our last word

May the blessings of Christ build our unity and hope and deepen our love for all this Christmas season.



From the Tui Motu Team