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Tui Motu

InterIslands

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JOURNEYS FOR JUSTICE
MAKARETA TAWAROA, BROOK TURNER, MARY BETZ & OTHERS

ATTEND TO THE SIGNS
NEIL DARRAGH, KEVIN CLEMENTS, MASSIMO FAGGIOLI & MORE

SHARING ABOUT FAITH
ZAIN ALI, NICK POLASCHEK & OTHERS

Attend to the Signs of These Times
E Kōrero Nga Tohu

INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC MAGAZINE

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Stone Cairn — Where to From Here?
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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

Attend to the Signs Today

WE'RE WELL INTO autumn which, somehow, suits the post-Easter season this year. Two thousand years ago the first disciples were flummoxed, endeavouring to make sense of what they had experienced over the sudden arrest, death, burial and the unexpected news of Jesus's rising. The gospel accounts make it sound as if the disciples went from traumatised to delight overnight. But we can assume they would have gone through similar phases of loss and grief to those we do. Death is death, after all. Jesus's rising did not discount his death and all that went before it, but the resurrection seeded a new vitality within the disciples: a sense of a future, a reason for joy, a capacity for understanding Jesus's vision, a community to be with and an evolving faith in God being with them.

In autumn we see the plant community limit its growth and draw its energy into the ground to preserve life over winter. It is definitely not giving up on life. It's responding to the signs of change in Earth's distance from the sun.

Autumn can be a sign for us, too, not to give in to disillusion, powerlessness or disengagement. Though the daily news of how powerful forces are prolonging war, famine and the death of children, women and men in Gaza, the Sudan, Ukraine and other ongoing wars is dispiriting, we have reason to seek gospel-led responses. Pope Francis and other Faith leaders are among those offering leadership by examining strategies to both stop the wars and allow people to live in their lands with justice after war. By listening to the voices of reason, joining in acts of generosity, support and prayer and seeking out critical information, we are also preparing for this longed-for resurrection of peace.

On the homefront where drought, land and services restoration, job losses and the cost of living are just some of the difficulties confronting us, discouragement is not an option for us as gospel people. We need to read the signs of what might be divisive in the community and why, and equally of what might be fostering the common good of all and how and why. We need to be alert to how language is used to promote or denigrate, who and how proposed policies will reward or punish, which groups are silent or silenced and why.

Attending to the signs at these times asks Christians to practise outside the church building what we pray for together inside. We need to show that we are concerned for more than our own family and kind. Our response to the signs will cause us to draw on the creative vitality, practicality and joy of the resurrection.

We thank all the contributors to this April issue. Their research, reflection, writing, sharing, art and craft provides thoughtful reflection for this autumn month.

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

Learning from Friends

I MISS HUGH and Joe. They were both my mates. They were so different from each other that it's a wonder I clicked with both of them, but I did. I was thinking about them when yet another discussion on the importance or not of Te Tiriti o Waitangi excited the conversation over our national day. These men would have had something to say. Joe was both blunt and generous with those whom he disagreed. He believed in direct action and led the occupation at Bastion Point, a sentinel moment in race relations in our recent history. He died just two years ago.

Hugh's language, always elegant, polished and professorial, was also generous. Once at their Ōrākei Marae, Hugh spontaneously invited me to speak to a conference of philanthropic trusts about the history of Ngāti Whātua while he looked on. It was a terrifying experience for me. Then, using a whiteboard, Hugh wrote from memory in te reo the full text of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and translated it into English. The effect of this silenced a whare of 200 people for half an hour.

Hugh had been present as a six-year-old in 1933 when Ngāti Whātua hosted a hui on the Tāmaki foreshore to mark 92 years since the landing of Governor Hobson at Okahu Bay. At that hui were two 90+-year-old kaumātua who had been present at that original occasion with Hobson. Hugh's translation of Te Tiriti is our nation's official translation.

Generosity has to be an ingredient — one that develops the flavour of the sauce as it were — for our Treaty conversations. We can't, always be angry with those on the other side of the debate. I was with Joe in 1988 when he got the news from government ministers that Ngāti Whātua was to have its land returned to their ownership. Hugh was also present. In that encounter with ministers in the parliamentary office both men talked about their different perspectives, why they saw the world as they did. They were so different from each other, often at odds, yet they shared a common purpose. It took years for them to reconcile their perspectives and when they did their tribal group began to thrive.

I think this is a story that can resonate with all of us. Hugh and Joe, both reasonable, capable and well-informed, differed in their views. Can't we also allow each other some breathing space in this conversation?

I am trying to follow their example and do this with David Seymour and his version of the Treaty. I confess I am not finding much middle ground as he attempts to reinterpret what those who drafted our origin statement actually wanted. But I am determined to hear him out because other people are paying attention to what he is saying, and they deserve our respect for wrestling with this part of our history and our present.

In my own story I have experienced what honouring Te Tiriti looks like at the coalface of negotiations as a Chief Crown Negotiator. Settling claims has been one of Aotearoa's most extraordinary undertakings. It involves iwi agreeing with the Crown about a historical narrative that outlines and quantifies their loss through the Crown's illegal confiscation of their land and other taonga, such as access to water and natural resources. The Crown apologised and committed to ongoing relationship of recognising mana whenua/tribal authority over the area where the whenua had been taken. This is for perpetuity.

If we start undermining Crown undertakings by redefining Te Tiriti relationships as Mr Seymour would have it, we breach the very undertakings we have agreed to support. No New Zealand citizen, fully informed, would consent to that.

L: **Sir Hugh Kāwharu** (1927-2006) was chairman of Ngāti Whātua Ōrakei Māori Trust Board (1976-2006).

R: **Joe Hawke** (1940-2022) was the leader of the Bastion Point occupation (1977-1978) that saw the land returned to Ngāti Whātua.

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

Mahi for Justice Continues

Makareta Tawaroa *remembers the effort to reclaim Pākaitore and writes that we cannot rest from the mahi/work for justice.*

ON THE 28 FEBRUARY, Whanganui Iwi and Hapū gathered to remember what happened 29 years ago. I will never forget that day. Whanganui Iwi and Hapū reasserted their mana whenua (power associated with possession and occupation of tribal land) over Moutua Gardens and renamed it Pākaitore — the name of the Māori village, trading post and safe haven that it had once been. Māori knew this land had been set aside from the New Zealand Company's purchase of Whanganui in 1848, but the city denied these claims.

And so the occupation began. We stayed for 79 days, reclaiming our Indigenous rights and Indigenous law. We spent time in wānanga — deep learning and reflection, trying to understand what had happened to us as a people since the early days of colonisation.

One memory stands out. I was setting up my tent when someone gave me a list of tenting by-laws. I looked around at this wonderful sight: people preparing for the long haul, setting up communal tents, marking out boundary fences, preparing the marae to welcome visitors, setting up the cooking areas and the whare kai ready to feed people. There was an air of excitement. I thought to myself: "We are well and truly past city by-laws."

Moana Jackson — Man of Wisdom

At Pākaitore the late Dr Moana Jackson (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Porou) was our adviser. Under Moana's guidance we drew up a tribal document "Te Tikanga Tūturu o Whanganui". It is a longish document about our cultural kinship and relationships and our spiritual bond with Papatūānuku. It describes our legal bonds with rights and obligations through whakapapa; including laws that regulate, monitor and establish legal processes, ensuring the well-being of the young and old. It is about political power that expresses our Whanganuitanga.

Māori Legitimacy

There is no need for Māori to seek the legitimacy of tauiwi/non-Māori for anything. The challenge is for us to believe that we have the legitimate right to do what is consistent with our tikanga and then find the appropriate ways to do it. These ways would differ from hapu to hapu and iwi to iwi. One iwi Māori never sought legitimacy from another iwi Māori in order to pursue its own rangatiratanga.

So why should we seek legitimacy from te iwi Tauiwi or te iwi Karauna/Crown? The challenge for us is to say "of course we can do it". We must exercise our own rangatiratanga which we never gave up.

There is a whakataukī/proverb: "E rere kau mai te awa nui, mai I te kāhui maunga ki Tangaroa, ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au / As the river flows from the mountain to the sea I am the river and the river is me." But if we don't believe in our self-determination, and are asking permission to be ourselves, then this proverb is meaningless. Without our own legitimacy these words are mere poetic language.

When "Te Tikanga Tūturu o Whanganui" was presented to the Whanganui City Council for discussion, everyone was speechless. They were expecting a document written in legalese. But our document was different. It looked at the world in a totally different way. Then in 2017 the groundbreaking Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act was passed, encouraging a shift away from the traditional Western notion of law to a more tikanga, values-based Indigenous law approach.

Moana was a gifted teacher and a wonderful friend in our time of need. His gentle presence and wisdom gave

us strength and hope. We grew in stature and knowledge through his influence. We remember Moana with deep affection and gratitude.

Nga Paraikete Kōrero/Talking Blankets

I am part of a group of women who use blankets like a canvas to tell stories about Pākaitore. We call it "Blanket Art". We have been buying up old grey and white blankets from second-hand shops, together with fabric, wool, material, paint and anything decorative. Our blankets are colourful and have strong messages. They are displayed on Pākaitore Day and create a lot of interest. One of our women worked for an organisation that banned their workers from visiting Pākaitore. Her blanket expressed her pent-up frustration.

According to Dr Cherryl Smith, "the blanket has become an international symbol of colonisation for Indigenous peoples. Along with the musket and the axe, blankets were traded by colonisers for food, land, timber and flax fibre." Woollen blankets were rare in Aotearoa before the arrival of the European. Māori then adopted them for clothing similar to korowai/cloaks and piupiu/flax skirts and also to carry babies on their mother's back.

Valuing Water

I am also part of our water movement group who stopped Company Aqua 182 from bottling and selling water from our region — at least up to now. As Awa Tupua, we cannot allow our waters to be sold though it is difficult to keep up with the speed in which authorities give resource consent. For example, when we took our concerns to the local Council, unbeknown to us, resource consent had been given to another bottling company operating just out of our tribal zone. It was some weeks before we found out.

Bottled water is the most consumed packaged drink in the world and is now a USD 300 billion industry dominated by global corporations. Its single-use plastic containers are ecologically disastrous.

In his book *Unbottled: The Fight Against Plastic Water and for Water Justice*, sociologist Daniel Jaffee helps us recognise the deeper economic, social and political consequences of the everyday decisions most of us take for granted. In the USA one-in-five people no longer use tap water because they believe the marketing around trendy but erroneous ideas of hydration and health. For example, one company's advertisement portrays a corroded public water pipe with the text: "Your tap water could be contaminated with bacteria and heavy metals."

Some of our cities in Aotearoa are having trouble with their pipe infrastructure. United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 6 is to ensure global access to safe water, but with an addendum that bottled water could be a "medium-term solution". What a copout!

There are many countries in the world that do not have clean drinking water and that goal is long in coming. But it is not right that the poorest people in the world have no alternative but costly — to people and land — packaged water.

Seeking Justice for Others

Several years ago I was part of a small group of local people who set up Palestine Solidarity Network Whanganui. We have been meeting every Saturday for the last six months to demonstrate our abhorrence at Israel's demonic treatment of Palestinians.

Noam Chomsky in *Truthout* began his essay "The Assault on Gaza": "An old man in Gaza held a placard that read: 'You take my water, burn my olive trees, destroy my house, take my job, steal my land, imprison my father, kill my mother, bombard my country, starve us all, humiliate us all, but I am to blame: I shot a rocket back'."

His words remind me of when Claudette Habesch of Caritas Jerusalem visited Hiruharama on the Whanganui River in 2012. She described the dispossession of Palestinian families in these words: "Who is sleeping in my bed, who is riding my bike, who is playing with my toys?"

These are stories of injustice — against tangata/people, whenua/land and awa/water. As Māori we are concerned for our mana whenua. And we support others in their efforts for justice, wherever they may be.

Just as I was "past" city by-laws, we need to be "past" our parochial fixation on national borders and seek justice for all.

P4: *North South East West— "There are no un-Sacred places, only Sacred places and Desecrated Places"* by Claire Beynon © Used with permission www.clairebeynon.com www.instagram.com/claire.beynon/

P5: *Māori Woman and Child, 1900, New Zealand*, by Frances Hodgkins. Gift of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, 1936. Te Papa (1936-0012-62)

Makareta Tawaroa, Te Awa Tupua, lives in Whanganui. She is a Sister of St Joseph, Nanny (Auntie) and Community Worker for Nga Paerangi, Whanganui.

I Was a Reluctant Pākehā

Brook Turner *shares his new understanding of himself as a Pākehā man in Aotearoa after taking part in the Pākehā Project.*

BEING OFFERED THE chance to do the Pākehā Project in 2023 by my CEO completely changed my understanding of who I am as a Pākehā man, and who I am called to be.

I had always cringed when I heard the word Pākehā. Without consciously acknowledging it, I had associated the word with colonisation, but I'd been reluctant to accept it as part of my own personal identity.

Both Denying and Supporting

The truth is that, for years, I subconsciously disassociated myself from the term Pākehā, because to accept it meant I must also embrace the truth that I am a descendant of, and a participant in, a system that has disadvantaged and exploited Māori.

While subconsciously — and sometimes consciously — suppressing and rejecting my Pākehā identity, I chose nonetheless to pursue a course in work and life to learn, support and champion the work of Māori leaders whom I've come to know and love.

Yet these two journeys — denying and suppressing the colonising parts in my history while uplifting, supporting and advocating for Māori — rarely converged.

Determined to be a force for good, I pressed forward in attempts to ally with Māori, but without traversing the deep rivers within, where unconscious programming and assimilation into Western thinking dominated me more than I could comprehend.

This is not to say that I was oblivious to my actions and inaction as contributions to the foundational and constitutional issues facing Aotearoa. Committed to making a difference for those excluded and marginalised by society, I'd forged a career in the non-profit sector, written about the disparities in the care system for rangatahi Māori and designed community-led responses to some of New Zealand's greatest social issues.

It's easy to defend yourself as a white man when you are doing something, anything, to support minorities, because so few do. White exceptionalism, I've learned,

asserts to be "good" on the basis that any small acts to support Indigenous rights redeem a person, solely because of their good intentions.

Breaking Through Denial

My personal awakening started with a post on LinkedIn. I decided to post an *E-Tangata* article by Jen Margaret on becoming "really Pākehā". Within moments of publishing the trolls were out with their keyboard knives. Dozens of comments mounted on my page from successful white men and leaders of industry — people like me!

The point they made was crystal clear: each of these successful men believed emphatically that they faced as much opposition to get where they are today as any Māori. The only demographic of friends who came to my defence in the comments were Māori, females and those belonging to an ethnic minority. Go figure!

The hate hurt, but as I reflected on being offended by a few guys on social media who look like me, I also pondered how much harder it must be for Māori to have this debate when this kind of hate is so prevalent.

> How fragile of me to be so hurt by simply learning the truth and having a few insults and reality checks hit me and my religious preferences along the way.

Learning About Colonisation

Initially, I thought the trolls were just angry white men, and again fell into the trap of thinking I was an exception to this white supremacy nonsense. However, it all changed when our Pākehā Project guides asked me to read *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F Saad. Suddenly, I was exposed to terms I'd never heard before, such as "white silence", "white centring", "white saviourism", "white fragility" and "tone policing".

During the ensuing retreats I became aware of the horrific acts of migrating powers from Europe into the Pacific, spurred on by the Doctrine of Discovery (1493) issued by Pope Alexander VI which supposedly gave God's blessing to the acquisition of land and resources by force, with an unwarranted pardon to bring Indigenous peoples into servitude through any means necessary.

As a son of a minister and missionary, my heart began to shatter.

What was this new history I was learning about? How could I have been so blind to my own participation in colonising acts masked as "pure motive" evangelism throughout my overtly Christian upbringing? My faith remained genuine, but my soul was in anguish.

Breaking Through White Fragility

That was until I remembered that I am the privileged one. I was simply suffering from a mild case of white fragility. A new voice spoke and reminded me that Māori don't get a break from the systemic racism in this country. Māori don't get any reprieve for the breaches of the Treaty or the use of their history as political fodder.

Oh, how fragile of me to be so hurt by simply learning the truth and having a few insults and reality checks hit me and my religious preferences along the way. Perhaps the pain was a friend and not an adversary.

I decided to run towards the discomfort: to bury myself in the thorny issues by asking questions instead of shrinking away in fear. I was beginning to see that, although the results of colonisation in our history are not altogether my fault, it is my responsibility to help to undo them.

New Understanding

We can't escape the effects of the past — they echo through our bloodlines. The acts of our ancestors soak into the ground, the rivers, the trees and our very cells as humans. Yet, among the smoke and fire and ongoing wreckage created by the failures in our system, there is still an old, but new, way which we can all embrace.

Hearts and minds are being awakened around the globe to facts that recognise the broken design of a system that gave birth to colonisation. The polluted rivers of neoliberalism that continue to perpetuate the suppression, confiscation and rejection of Indigenous culture are finally becoming visible.

And here's the thing: we are the system! If the system is us, then when we heal ourselves, we begin to heal each other and the world. The river can be restored!

Getting Started in a New Way

Recently, I made the hīkoi to Waitangi on Waitangi Day to stand alongside Māori I know, and those I don't know, and claim He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi as our constitutional foundations — irreplaceable taonga — woven into the halls of our past and holding the keys to a unified future.

As I stood barefoot on the beach I listened to a brave rangatahi/young person recite an ancient Māori chant to an ocean of faces. He was followed by a kaumātua/elder with an equally beautiful and eloquent chant — a chant older than colonisation and its effects.

Before 2023, I wouldn't have gone to Waitangi on a public holiday. I'd have put my feet up and watched a movie or gone with the family for an outing. Instead, I was at Waitangi, surrounded by Māori from across Aotearoa, and feeling 100 per cent at home in myself.

Today, I'm a changed man and the rewiring has begun. As I drift off into my imagination, I ponder whether the same rewiring happening in me can take place in all of us.

My heart can't stop singing. We are just getting started.

First published in *E-Tangata* 3 March 2024. To read the full version see: www.tinyurl.com/4xnn9ee8

Gulls at the Lighthouse by Sheila Brown © Used with permission www.sheilabrown.co.nz

Brook Turner works at the social service agency Visionwest to address homelessness, reduce poverty and build a more food-secure Aotearoa. He lives in Waitakere, West Auckland.

On a Journey Together

In this first of a three-part series, **Neil Darragh** *discusses the synodal way as a church willing to learn and engage in the process of transformation.*

HOW WOULD YOU go about reforming the church? This is the invitation to all members of the Catholic Church together with their critics and well-wishers. The Catholic Church worldwide is currently trying to implement the "synodal way", that is, the church as people journeying together.

This is different from the old two-tiered church of clergy/laity, teachers/taught, or shepherds/sheep that many of us grew up in. The "synodal way", journeying together, has taken a particular form in the present time as we journey towards October 2024 and the second of two Assemblies of bishops where they hope to discover how to put this synodal way into practice. The first Assembly took place in Rome in October last year and produced a report entitled "Towards a listening and accompanying church" which emphasises the importance of "listening" to one another.

Nearly everyone I know who is involved in the church agrees that there are many ways in which it should be reformed. But what kind of reform? A reform could leave us worse than we are now. Many reforms have. If we can agree that the church is in process and willing to learn — and there is no point at all in talking about a synodal way if we don't — then we also need to agree on what its mission is. If we are going to reform it, let's reform it so it is better at doing what it was founded for. So many discussions about mission today are in fact about how to attract more people into the church. But would they, and would we, be better off?

Church as Contributor to the Evolving Realm of God

At the centre of any of these current debates about the church is what we think the church is for. What is its mission?

The "realm of God" (kingdom of God, reign of God, kingdom of heaven) as we find it in the Gospels is God's hope, actively underway but not yet completed, for the

whole world — a much bigger reality than the church. This is an image of a process, based in the present but also projected into the future, of life-giving relationships among human beings within the vitality of the planet Earth.

A contemporary idea that can alert us to signs of this process within the world today is that of "well-being". Such "well-being" includes the whole planet Earth, not just human beings. It includes the well-being of all people, not just of some elite groups or our own nation or some cultures rather than others.

The church is a much smaller reality than the realm of God. Its mission is to act in service to, to be an active contributor to, the evolving realm of God. The key point here is that the church is not just about itself and its own members. The church is called to be engaged in the environmental, social and economic issues of society as participation in the evolving realm of God. The first criterion for a good reform is that it gets us closer to this purpose.

The mission of the church is concerned primarily with the larger reality of the realm of God. Yet — and here stands the core of the issue for a "synodal way" — we'll never achieve this purpose, nor even get close to it, if we don't live out that realm of God within the church itself. This means a call at the same time to a reform of the church itself, ensuring loving, life-giving relationships within the church community and supporting the personal growth in holiness of its own members.

Yet there is a further danger here. This is the stumbling block where church members focus too much on themselves and their own well-being. The practicalities of maintaining good human relationships and Church organisation can become distorted so that our primary focus is on ourselves. This would be a self-focused church concerned mainly with, for example, the salvation of our own members or with building a lively local community, or with attracting more and more church members.

Reform of Self-focused Church into a Mission-focused Church

We can easily name some obvious ways in which the real church that we live in needs reform. The proven cases of abuse of vulnerable people by church personnel show such a need. Also obvious are other abuses of power or wealth that come under the headings of clericalism, sexism, ethnocentrism, elitism and egotism. Alongside these we can put the simple, even if not malign, lack of cooperative leadership skills in many church leaders and the subsequent collapse into authoritarian management.

In the recent past, it has become common for Christian communities, parishes in particular, to see their mission as mainly community care and community development. The objective in this case is to develop a Christian community that is vibrant and welcoming. This is a friendly community that provides a fertile spiritual ground for everyone to grow in love and wisdom. This is a beautiful yet still self-focused church. It is concerned more with building up the church than being a contributor to the wider, evolving realm of God.

Nearly every local church engages in some form of care for people in need regardless of whether they are church members or not. This is a compassionate community, yet it remains primarily self-focused if it ignores the full agenda (social justice, peace, planetary care, etc.) of Christian mission which extends well beyond this immediate sense of compassion.

Nearly every local church community also has a committee or process for receiving and welcoming new members into the church. It reaches outwards but its outreach is focused on increasing church membership rather than transforming society.

Most of the local Christian communities I am familiar with are self-focused rather than mission-focused. They have mission activities of some kind (compassionate care for the vulnerable, processes for attracting and welcoming new members).

> A mission-focused church is one in which service to the realm of God is seen as the church's primary purpose.

But a mission-focused church is one in which service to the realm of God is seen as the church's primary purpose. Most of its energy is directed outwards to the well-being of this wider realm of God. This church will still engage in internal church activities such as care for one another, vibrant liturgies, catechetical programmes, etc. Yet in a mission-focused church, all of these are both relativised and invigorated by its primary purpose of service to the larger realm of God.

Education, for example, would alert people not just to inner church beliefs and common practices but also to action for well-being in the wider society. Similarly, liturgy would not just gather church members together in celebration but also send them out purposefully into God's wider world. Pastoral care would not just attend to people's needs but strengthen and equip them for engagement in the wider society and the health of the planet. A mission focus does not abandon the traditional activities of a Christian community, but it shifts our centre of attention and refocuses the direction of all these activities outwards.

The synodal way is a journey where the first steps are to reform the church itself so that we do in fact become mission-focused and fit for mission.

This article is the first of three on this issue of church transformation. Two following articles in the May and June issues, will focus in particular on leadership in the church.

Together We Are Strong by Sharyn Bursic © Used with permission www.artfinder.com/artist/sharyn-bursic/

Neil Darragh is a pastor, theologian and writer in Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland. His latest book is *But What Is the Church For?: What is the Mission of the Local Church?* (Wipf & Stock, 2022).

EXAMINING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Massimo Faggioli *writes that Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the West's response to it are forcing the Catholic Church to discern anew how to witness to the Gospel demands of peace and justice.*

COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS ARE never just communication problems. And that is true also in the Church. Such is the case with Pope Francis and his recent interview with Swiss broadcaster RSI in which he used unclear words to call for peace in Ukraine. Recorded in February, though not due to be broadcast until last month, this interview — during which the pope never even mentions Russia — represents something more than a media blunder. Yes, Francis should give fewer interviews and not be casual in his language on incredibly delicate and complicated issues like the wars currently waging in Ukraine and Gaza.

But there is something deeper here, and it has to do with "the signs of our times". The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) stated that "the Church has always had the duty of examining the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 4). The Council took place 60 years ago, nearly 20 years after the end of World War II and right in the middle of the Cold War. The expression "the signs of our times" referred to a number of things: a new sense of awareness of the role of the church in history; the betterment of the working class; the new social role of women; the formation of an international conscience; the liberation from colonialism;

and, especially, the fact that Christians had learned something from the deals with Fascism and Nazism in the first half of the century. There was the sense that humanity was taking a step forward.

Church and Major World Events

But today, in the 21st century, the notion of the signs of the times is more complicated. There are some positive signs: the acknowledgment that women must be given a greater role not only in society but also in the church; a new understanding of homosexuality; and the Anthropocene in the urgent run to protect creation. These are signs on which the global church does not have a unified voice, and yet there is a horizon in front of us.

One of the signs of our times, and not one on which the church is clear or unanimous, is the expansion of the post-WWII military alliance largely dominated by the United States known as NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Since its establishment in 1949, NATO's membership has increased from 12 to 32 countries over 10 rounds of expansion. Finland became a member in 2023 and Sweden join the alliance in March 2024.

Defence of NATO's Expansion

In a recent article in *Theological Studies*, US Catholic ethicist Gerald Beyer argues that NATO's existence and enlargement are justified in light of the right of nations to self-determination and legitimate defence according to the ethic of solidarity as understood in the Catholic social tradition. He further argues that NATO was not only justified to expand after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, but that it should also be open to allowing Ukraine and the countries in the region to join the alliance in accordance with the above-noted tenets of Catholic social teaching.

The enlargement of NATO is one of the signs of the times because it is part of a larger picture that has unfolded since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 — namely, the re-armament of Europe (even in countries like Germany where this was a taboo after 1945) and the return of just-war doctrines (not just in the church).

There is also a wider historical context to be considered. Following Great Britain's withdrawal from the European Union in 2016 (Brexit) there has been a temptation to "continentalise" Europe — not just by severing ties with its Western wing in the UK and the East with Russia, but also through the fortification of the southern border with the Mediterranean which is no longer a *"mare nostrum"*, but a buffer zone against the Middle East and a far more distant Africa.

Pope and Ukrainian Bishops: Different Points of View

What are the values that guide our ways of "examining the signs of the times" today? Clearly there is a difference between Pope Francis's call for disarmament as "a moral duty", which he stated during his 3 March Angelus address, and the message on war and a just peace that the Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) issued almost a month earlier. The UGCC said that "In order to achieve a fictional peace, pacifists are often willing — consciously or unconsciously — to withdraw the perpetrators of peace from responsibility. The arguments vary and sometimes are even highly moral, such as the desire to avoid further human losses. This is the argument that is often raised in the context of Russia's large-scale aggression against Ukraine."

This palpable tension between the Vatican and the Catholics of Ukraine is not just a diplomatic or political problem. The question we all face now is where we can find a fuller expression for the Gospel in our historical context, where we see the "signs of the times". Is it by working towards a ceasefire and then forging peace through the renunciation of military means and the practice of "active nonviolence"? Or is it by defending the values of democracy, the self-determination of people and respect for minorities by confronting militarily an aggressor like Putin who has never made a mystery of what he wants to make of Ukraine?

Most Urgent Task

This is a problem for the geopolitics of Catholicism. Francis, who does not come from the "first world", has buried a certain alignment that has existed over the past several decades between the Vatican and the geopolitics of Catholicism in NATO countries where liberal-progressive Catholics are now facing the dilemma of what to do with Putin's Russia. Catholics in Asia, Africa or Latin America have no such dilemma before them.

Something else also happened in the last two years. The pope's approach to the Russian invasion of Ukraine has also indirectly reopened a discussion on the meaning, for those Catholics who take Vatican II seriously, of "examining the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel". This is not the usual rift between liberal and conservatives, pro-Vatican II versus anti-Vatican II Catholics. There are deep questions that the Council did not address. The post-conciliar theological and magisterial tradition, with the help of Francis, is still trying to find its way in tackling them. One such issue concerns the moral limits of self-defence in the age of nuclear warfare.

The most urgent task is to distinguish the prophetic, Gospel-like shift in church teaching towards a Christianity engaged in peace-building from a certain kind of Catholic pacifism of the post-Vatican II period that was a post–Cold War reverie, the theological version of the "end of history". But there was no end of history, and Francis has shifted the position of the Vatican on the geopolitical map. A new iron curtain has descended and this time it passes right through St Peter's Square.

Read full article: www.tinyurl.com/24ey4vdk

The Road to Calvary by Carol Readman © Used with permission www.artbythesea.co.nz

Massimo Faggioli is a Church historian, Professor of Theology at Villanova University, columnist for *La Croix International* and contributing writer to *Commonweal*.

Litany for Peace

Kevin P Clements wrote: *"I took John O'Donohue's wonderful wishes as challenges to all the turbulence around us. My contribution is a* Litany to Peace *with deepest thanks to John O'Donohue. My problem is that I can't/couldn't see any easy solution to any of the wars in the world at this time. I found O'Donohue's poem helpful and it boosted my own hopefulness."*

FOR PEACE

By John O'Donohue, Irish poet and philosopher

From: ***Benedictus: A Book of Blessings***

As the fever of day calms towards twilight
May all that is strained in us come to ease.

We pray for all who suffered violence today,
May an unexpected serenity surprise them.

For those who risk their lives each day for peace,
May their hearts glimpse providence at the heart of history.

That those who make riches from violence and war
Might hear in their dreams the cries of the lost.

That we might see through our fear of each other
A new vision to heal our fatal attraction to aggression.

That those who enjoy the privilege of peace
Might not forget their tormented brothers and sisters.

That the wolf might lie down with the lamb,
That our swords be beaten into ploughshares

And no hurt or harm be done
Anywhere along the holy mountain.

LITANY OF PEACE

The preventable death of anyone, anywhere, diminishes our common humanity. This humanity, love, care and compassion are under serious threat right now as wars in Gaza, the Ukraine, the Sudan and many other countries continue to exact their bloody toll.

There is no ease for the 31,000 Palestinians killed and 71,000 injured in Gaza. There is no ease for the 2 million displaced Gazans.

There is no ease for the 1,200 Israelis killed in the Hamas attack on Israel. There is no ease for those stuck on the front lines of Ukraine and Russia, nor for the 3 million displaced Ukrainians.

There is no ease for the 15,000 killed in the Sudan nor for the 6 million forcibly displaced. The fever of the day continues to blind those committed to violence.

May all that is strained and violent in these places come to ease.

As we pray for all those suffering violence, how do we make sure that our prayers aren't hollow but are accompanied by actions that ease suffering and provide healing balm to raw, open wounds?

How do we challenge the hatred and vicious cycles that make war acceptable and serenity a distant prospect? Are we willing to sacrifice our comfort and stand alongside those whose lives are shattered and know no peace?

How can we ensure that our intercessory prayers are truly radical? Can we do any of this if we have no serenity to share?

Help us find our serenity in the service of others.

How do we create spaces for peacemakers and humanitarian agencies to deliver food and other items essential to life in all these war-torn cauldrons?

How do we support and encourage all the peacemakers struggling to respond to war nonviolently and peacefully?

How do we support diplomats and United Nations officials seeking negotiated solutions to the issues that drive conflict and violence?

May all of these people, risking their lives for peace, glimpse providence at the heart of history.

How do we challenge all those who make their riches from war? Military expenditure is increasing all around the world. Fear-based politics is driving all those who make their riches from war. The United States leads the world in military expenditure. Pentagon spending since the war in Afghanistan totals over USD 14 trillion with one-third to one-half of the total going to five military contractors: Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics, Raytheon and Northrop Grumman. The USD 80 billion in Pentagon contracts received by Lockheed Martin, for example, is well over one-and-one-half times the entire budget for the State Department and the Agency for International Development, which together totalled USD 44 billion.

How do we persuade those making their riches from blood money to dream and hear in their dreams the cry of the lost?

How do we stop negative othering, manufactured fear, fear of strangers, fear of death so that we might see through our fear of each other and can treat each human being as a "holy place", deserving of dignity, care, respect and inclusion?

What is needed to develop a new vision to heal our fatal attraction to aggression? How do we deal with the latent and manifest anger and aggression within ourselves so that we have some standing in the search for a peaceable kindom?

For those of us living in peaceful New Zealand, (Aotearoa is number three on the Global Peace Index), how can we avoid the sin of smugness and remember all our brothers and sisters tormented and overwhelmed by war?

How do we enlarge our boundaries of care and compassion so that they include those who know nothing but war, violence and daily horror?

Let's never forget all those who are tormented, traumatised by war.

How do we maintain our idealism in the face of death and destruction and not succumb to paralysis, despair and hopelessness?

Wolves and lambs can coexist; swords can be turned into ploughshares. We just have to believe that these visions are possible and realise them in the face of violence.

How do we liberate the peaceful visions in all religious traditions and, especially, honour those peace churches who have adopted absolute pacifist positions? As the Quakers said in their famous letter to Charles II: "We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever; and this is our testimony to the whole world."

Let's maintain hopefulness and give thanks to those who have nurtured pacifism as an alternative vocation down the years.

Finally, how do we ensure that we cause no hurt or harm anywhere along the Holy Mountain? That's the task of every one of us — to do no harm, to work for the common good and to ease suffering wherever we encounter it.

We must make sure that we etch these goals deep on our hearts so that they remain open and resistant to the iron fist of intolerance, prejudice, hatred, demonisation, death and despair.

Lead us from despair to hope doing good to others, serving others and ensuring the welfare of others.

Together in Prayer by Melani Pyke © Used with permission
www.melpyke.com

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

LIVING MORE SIMPLY

Mary Betz *encourages us to think about what is unnecessary in our lives and to live with less so that others have more.*

MORE THAN 40 YEARS ago I travelled to Venezuela to visit some Maryknoll friends and learn about their mission work. In a *barrio* of Barinas, we were invited into the home of their neighbour, Rosa, who saw they had a visitor and wanted to offer hospitality.

Rosa seated us in a small dirt-floored room with three plastic chairs, a small folding table and, incongruously, a TV. A picture of Our Lady of Guadelupe hung on the wall. Then she disappeared to an outdoor lean-to kitchen which had a sink draining into a bucket and a single cooking hob. After a time, she brought us cornmeal *arepas* (fresh and hot) stuffed with crumbled *queso blanco* — some of the most delicious food I have ever eaten. She also gave us steaming cups of *café con leche*. It wasn't until we had walked well down the road afterwards that my friends told me our meal would have been Rosa's family's meal that evening.

Returning to Canada a week later, a friend in Toronto whisked me away in a private plane for a day at a luxury golf club some distance away. The glaring contrast between the two experiences (both previously alien to me) could not help but awaken me to global realities.

Ecological and Resource Inequality

I began to connect the dots between the way developed countries consume the land, soils, forests, fossil fuels and minerals of developing countries to produce many of our

foods, fuels and electronics. Developed countries left behind devastated landscapes and soils incapable of sustaining more than a few rotations of exotic cropping. As a consequence, the cities were flooding with millions of now landless small farmers living precariously with what work they could find.

With the advent of the ecological footprint and dawning knowledge of climate change, it became clear that most of us in wealthy nations are using a disproportionate amount of Earth's resources and thus are more responsible for its ecological breakdown.

A recent London School of Economics (LSE) study showed that high-income countries with only 16 per cent of the world's population use 74 per cent of the world's resources. Our countries would need to scale back resource use by 70 per cent to achieve ecological sustainability, a feat which would require radical political action, and for both the relatively and obscenely affluent to adjust their lifestyles and expectations.

Inequality from a Christian Perspective

Interestingly, the study took as a premise that "the planet's resources and ecosystems are a commons — a natural shared wealth — and that all people are entitled to a fair share within sustainable levels." This is exactly what church "fathers" and Catholic social teaching have been saying for centuries. When we attempt to put right drastic inequalities, we can think of the statesman and bishop Ambrose of Milan (b339 CE), who wrote: "You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor, but you are giving back what is theirs ... The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich."

Jesus warns us in John's Gospel of thieves who steal, kill and destroy while, in contrast, Jesus comes to give life in its fullness. As a wealthy nation which consumes many products that are unsustainably produced from the land, resources and labour of poor countries, we might ask ourselves how much we "buy" into prevailing systems of production and consumption, rather than accepting Jesus's invitation to follow him into a true fullness of life — one of freedom, compassion, manaakitanga, generosity, justice and whanaungatanga.

Inequality is, of course, just as much in evidence within Aotearoa as it is globally. Most of us take it for granted that we are entitled to what we have. Last month a prominent political figure demonstrated a blatant but seemingly unconscious sense of entitlement to a housing allowance on top of a huge salary, seven houses and additional private wealth. But am I, albeit with much less, also guilty of presuming I am entitled to superannuation, a life of comfort and possessions — not all of which I need?

Roles of Individuals and Government

There is much we can do to live more sustainably, including suggested actions from the Laudato Si' Action Platform toward the goal of sustainable lifestyles. These include transitioning to more plant-based diets; gardening and composting; flying and driving less as well as choosing an electric vehicle when possible; buying mostly local, in-season food; reducing purchases of new consumer goods; and lessening our use of water, heating, lighting and cooling where possible.

But in light of the LSE study, achieving ecological and resource sustainability would also require governments to change taxation, subsidy and benefit systems and adjust to lower GDP. It would require many individuals to bring their lifestyles to a level which is more basic and provides for needs but not necessarily wants. If solving inequality meant giving up even 50 per cent of my belongings, wouldn't I do it to ensure others could eat, have a home and equal access to education and health care?

Living Simply — Why?

Sustainable lifestyles are simpler lifestyles. Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, provided food, housing and community for the poor, drew attention to systemic injustice against women, factory and farmworkers and voluntarily lived the same poverty they did. Thomas Merton embraced evangelical poverty when he joined the Gethsemani Abbey, looking to strip away everything in himself that was not God — and this gave him the freedom to see and write about the evils of war, poverty and social injustice. Jesus and St Francis also embraced voluntary poverty so that nothing was in the way of their ability to relate to others. Voluntary poverty may be a step too far for most of us, but "living with less" is surely doable.

Simple lifestyles can unencumber us from possessions and pursuits that distract us from what is important in life. Rosa, in Venezuela, had the freedom to offer me generosity from her heart that I will never forget. It involved sacrifice — self-giving — something Catholics once embraced perhaps in the wrong kinds of ways, but the principle is one we should retrieve.

Today the lifestyles we live separate us from those in the developing world and even those in our own cities. I talk to people begging in front of suburban shops, but I don't have good friends outside my middle-class comfort zone.

Living more simply would be a challenge, but it would make more resources available for those who really need them, break down barriers, offer new freedoms and open us to the fullness of life we are meant for.

Joshua Tree Roots Mid Elevation by Juniper Harrower (2019) © Upcycled acrylic paint, Joshua tree seed oil and roots (pre 2022) 18"x24" Used with permission www.juniperharrower.com

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.

September 1, 1939

(excerpt)

Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.

By W H Auden

Photo by neom on Unsplash

Love God, People and All of Nature

Zain Ali *reflects on the significance of Ramadan for refocusing on the most important purposes in life.*

IT'S 7.30PM, AND I'm with my family on the top of Puketāpapa (Mount Roskill). Other Muslim families are gathered here as well. As the sun sets, we look out towards the horizon hoping to catch a glimpse of the new moon. This is an age-old tradition but today it has special significance. That's because the new moon signals the beginning of Ramadan. On this day the sky is very cloudy and we can't see the sun, let alone the moon. It grows dark and we place our mats on the ground and gather for the maghreb (evening) prayer. There are many children about and after the prayer folks hand out various snacks and glow-in-the-dark sticks. We haven't seen the moon but the mood is festive.

There is much joy and lightness in being outside, praying together and enjoying one another's company.

Significance of Greenery

From the top of Puketāpapa we see the various motorways, the many suburbs of Auckland and the other mountains nearby. The greenery of the mountain is comforting. About a year ago I spent a couple of weeks in the Middle East. After a while I really began to miss the colour green. The desert there was hot, dry and rather bleak, even veering towards forbidding. It was a relief coming back to New Zealand with its welcome abundance of greenery.

The Qur'an describes the inhabitants of heaven as being dressed in green garments of fine silk and brocade. The Arabic term for heaven is Jannah and sometimes this word is translated to mean garden. Green is perhaps symbolic of heaven, or God's great garden, and according to Muslim tradition the gates of heaven are wide open during Ramadan. The Qur'an also links greenery with water:

"Do you not see that God sends down rain from the sky, then the earth becomes green" (Q 22:63).

Significance of Water

During Ramadan water takes on a quality of its own — especially the refreshing effect of water after a day's fasting. I often find myself gulping down water without really paying attention to what it is. But a long day of fasting from water changes things quite quickly. I begin to crave water, longing for that coolness in my throat. That

first sip at sunset when breaking the fast is heavenly. We take so much for granted. It is often the little things that matter, and Ramadan helps to bring such things into focus.

Within Muslim tradition water is also used before prayer. This involves washing our hands, face and feet. These traditions are ancient but the ritual is welcome and has a wonderfully refreshing effect especially on a hot day or during a busy day at the office. When I'm fasting the coolness of water on my skin comes as a welcome relief.

Prayer during Ramadan also takes on added significance. At most Mosques during Ramadan there are prayers every night for the month. These prayers involve recitations from the Qur'an, starting at the beginning and continuing to the end of the text. If you attend all the evening prayers, you will have heard the entire Qur'an. The experience of listening to the Qur'an can be deeply meditative, especially if the reader is skilled in reciting Arabic. It's almost like hearing a musical instrument, and the skilled reciter can make the text come alive for listeners. There is also an uplifting effect when we pray together as a congregation. It's our collective spiritual connection before God.

Significance of Fasting

Then there is the fast itself. This involves waking up before sunrise and having something to eat and drink. My dad recalls his childhood where his mum would wake early and make fresh chapatis. My children are very Kiwi in their ways. They prefer Milo cereal and halal mince and cheese pies — which we buy in bulk from the local halal butcher. As you can imagine, waking up before sunrise comes with its challenges and we have to be careful not to get too grumpy with one another. We learn to be patient and the shared experience also brings us closer. The Qur'an encourages patience: "Be patient. God is with those who are patient" (Q 8:46).

A friend of mine in Egypt observed that the first few days of Ramadan were tense, especially on the streets and in the traffic, largely due to folk suffering from caffeine withdrawal. However, he noted a more welcome change. The streets came alive in the evenings because families would stay out late into the night. The atmosphere was festive — children would get new clothes, homes would have a "spring" or Ramadan clean — it is a time for renewal on many levels.

Significance of Giving

Ramadan is also a time for giving charity. The experience of fasting helps us realise what is it to be without. To be without water, to be without food, to feel the dryness of thirst in our throats, the burning sensation of hunger in the pit of our stomachs and, as our energy levels drop, the experience of lightheadedness.

We are fortunate that at the end of the day we can break our fast, usually with dates, chocolate almonds (my kids call them Kiwi dates), fresh fruit and cold drinks.

Many are not as fortunate and so we make a conscious effort to donate to charities that help the poor and needy. The prophet Muhammad is reported to have said:

"He is not a believer whose stomach is filled while his neighbour goes hungry."

These are strong words, although they are very much aligned with the dual command to love God and to love our neighbour. It wouldn't be very loving to ignore our neighbour, especially when they are hungry. The world is full of hunger and hungry children — to ignore their plight is also to ignore God.

Purpose Is to Love

Ramadan, I believe, helps us focus on those things that help us live a meaningful life. The love of God expressed through prayer and sacrifice, love for the poor, the needy and the stranger expressed through charity, love for family shown by our time spent together and love for nature through being outdoors. I find a deep sense of gratitude emerging during the fast. It is not surprising that various practices of fasting exist across a range of religious traditions. And perhaps it is also not surprising that fasting, or intermittent fasting, has become a healthy-living trend. We do not live on bread alone, and we should not live on bread alone.

Reflecting on fasting and its spiritual dimensions, Rumi writes:

"A table descends to your tent, Jesus's table.
Expect to see it when you fast,
this table spread with other food better than the
broth of cabbages."

Zain Ali lives in Tāmaki Makaurau with his family. He is an honorary academic at the University of Auckland.

Dialogue with Jews and Muslims

Nick Polaschek *shares about efforts to understand the lives of faith of people of other religions through interfaith dialogue.*

THESE DAYS IN Aotearoa we regularly encounter people of other faiths, particularly Islam and Hinduism. This is different from even 20 years ago when Christian traditions predominated here and other faiths were scarcely noticed or welcomed.

The Christian churches including the Catholic Church, have had a negative view of other religions through history. They taught that they were lost in error and portrayed them as ignorant and primitive. Christian governments in Europe persecuted Jewish people and the persecution was supported and at times promoted by the church. Christianity had negative interactions with Islam from the time of the Crusades. And European colonisation of Indigenous peoples around the world was justified by Christian ideology and supported by Christian missionaries.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam Share a Common Ancestor

One of the outcomes of Vatican Council II in the 1960s was the document *Nostra Aetate* which for the first time recognised that Christianity shares an ancestor in faith with Judaism and Islam. *Nostra Aetate* said that both Judaism and Islam are positive, though incomplete, forms of the collective religious response to the one God. We have similar forms of prayer and share similar ethical attitudes on many issues. The document also recognised positive elements in other religions.

Dialogue with Other Faiths

Nostra Aetate opened the way for various forms of Jewish-Catholic dialogue around the world. One example in Aotearoa is the Wellington Abrahamic Council, born from the Wellington Council of Christians and Jews, which has had Catholic representation since its beginning in 1991. The Council is dedicated to increasing understanding and cooperation among the three Abrahamic faiths within Aotearoa New Zealand.

During his pontificate Pope Francis has developed the seeds of pluralism encapsulated in *Nostra Aetate*. When he visited a Roman synagogue in 2015 he said: "You are our brothers and sisters in the faith. We all belong to one family, the family of God, who accompanies and protects us, his people." We are now beginning to appreciate that our Christian faith does not simply contrast with Judaism from which it arose, but is a faith expression deeply rooted in the Jewish faith. We can fully understood Christianity only in terms of our Jewish roots.

In the United Arab Emirates in 2019 the Pope met the Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayeb, leader of the Shia Muslims, and signed a document which began: "Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved." It states: "The pluralism and diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and languages are willed by God in His wisdom, through which he created human beings." In this statement the Pope acknowledges Islam to be a part of the divine purpose which Christians view as fulfilled in Christ.

More broadly, like other forms of human diversity, religious diversity is not an aberration caused by the sinfulness of humanity, but is in accord with the divine intention. As Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of Britain said: "God has spoken to humankind in many languages: through Judaism to Jews, Christianity to Christian, Islam to Muslims. Only such a God is truly transcendental — greater not only than the natural universe but also the spiritual universe articulated in any single faith, any specific language of human sensibility."

Dialogue Is Intentional Learning

Sallie B King in the *Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity* (2011) says that interreligious dialogue is more than neighbourly discussion or conversation among members of different religious. She defines it as "an intentional encounter and interaction among members of different religions as members of different religions." The intentional nature of the encounter takes into account how to approach interreligious dialogue today. The Canadian priests of the Scarboro Missions and Ron Rolheiser OMI offer principles that will help orient, guide and support the process of interfaith dialogue.

Overall, we recognise that each of our religious traditions is embedded in particular cultures and articulated within specific contexts in terms of language, symbols and ideas derived from those cultures.

We recognise that each of our religious traditions has its own history, which generally includes significant diversity and changes in our understanding, values and practice, and in our interactions, often complex and difficult, with other religious traditions.

We seek to be open and honest about our tradition, the character of our religious commitment and experience within it, while also recognising various limitations in its forms of understanding and practice through history.

We acknowledge our limited understanding of other religious traditions, our historic misunderstanding of other traditions and the past negative social interactions among our traditions.

We assume the intrinsic value of our religious tradition and we accept and respect the intrinsic value of the other's religious tradition for their adherents in supporting the realisation of the potentiality of our shared humanity.

We appreciate commonalities among religious traditions in terms of understanding, values and practice, even as we acknowledge significant differences among them.

We listen with respect, openness and appreciation when other religious traditions share and describe their beliefs, understandings, experience, values and practices.

Dialogue means we are open to change and development in our understanding of the other religious traditions and of our religious tradition.

Through interreligious dialogue we witness to the significance of our religious tradition for us and the other's religious tradition for them.

This respect means we do not seek to proselytise.

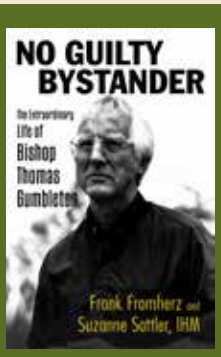
Interreligious dialogue is based in our shared humanity and is a way to enhance our shared humanity.

Through interreligious dialogue we come to understand ourselves better as Christians within our own culture and are able to respect, understand and support those of other faiths in society.

For further information: www.abrahamic.nz

Photos (left to right) by Josh Applegate, Shraga Kopstein, Rumman Amin on Unsplash

Nick Polaschek, a Catholic layperson from Wellington, is Christian CoChair of the Wellington Abrahamic Council.



No Guilty Bystander: The Extraordinary Life of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton

By Frank Fromherz and Suzanne Sattler
Published by Orbis Books, 2023.
(USD 30)
Reviewed by Peter Hassan

Bishop Gumbleton, according to Director of the Beatitude Center John Dear, is "the greatest bishop in US history … one of the great saints and prophets of our time." Frank Fromherz and Suzanne Sattler trace the influences that formed him to be an advocate and agent for peace and justice. Free from responsibility for a diocese, Bishop Gumbleton has served a wide range of groups and individuals and been an ardent spokesperson for justice and peace on the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Heeding a senior bishop's advice, "Just be yourself", and nourished by prayer and the example of Jesus, Gumbleton speaks the truth "welcome or unwelcome" and puts himself on the line to expose injustice and offer practical help. The authors present a very readable account of his actions on behalf of political prisoners in Vietnam, US hostages in Iran, LGBTQ people, and victims of the School of the Americas, of the sanctions in Iraq, of the Haiti earthquake and of clergy sexual abuse.

I recommend this account of an inspirational and practical Christian leader so committed to bringing about God's reign in Earth. I would certainly be happy to have Bishop Gumbleton on my side if I was in trouble.

LUTHER & ROME IN DIALOGUE

"YOU MUST NEVER go inside that church!"

It was the 1950s and my mother was warning me to avoid the Lutheran Church just a block away from our home.

Dannevirke was, and still is, a small town in southern Hawkes Bay. Among the early European settlers were many Scandinavian families, most of them Lutherans.

We were Catholics and, in those days, regarded ourselves as belonging to "The One True Church". Lutherans, like Anglicans and Presbyterians and all other denominations, were not on our side.

I thank God that much of that is behind us.

Five years ago, I preached in the Lutheran Church in Wellington and with a mixture of humour and humility told the people of my mother's warning. It was a watershed moment!

I was then, and remain, a member of the Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue established by the leadership of our two Churches. It is now very common for Christians of varied persuasions to officially meet to discuss their differences and — more especially — to develop closer ties by celebrating aspects of the faith that bind them together.

Our Lutheran/RC team meets quarterly. We open with prayer and lunch together before entering a dialogue session on some theological issue that has contributed to the division that still endures.

It's over 500 years since German-born Martin Luther reacted against what he perceived as failures within Catholicism. This scholarly Augustinian friar condemned the practice of selling indulgences with the promise of salvation, and sparked the fire that would engulf Western Christendom in what became known as the Reformation.

The following centuries saw a mix of acrimony, anger, hatred and bloodshed as Christianity continued to split and splinter, hardening into an "Us and Them" standoff.

My mother's warning about avoiding the local Lutheran church building prefaced a "climate change" in relationships, a thawing in how we viewed one another.

The Ecumenical Movement, embraced by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), encouraged talking with one another rather than past each other, making our awareness of what we held in common more evident.

The first project chosen in our Lutheran/RC Dialogue was the Sacrament of Baptism. We quickly saw that not only was our ceremony almost identical, but our understanding of what the Sacrament meant was exactly the same.

Baptised Together in Christ is our first joint publication. Adapted from a similar document of our Australian counterpart, it was jointly approved by the NZ Lutheran Church and the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference in 2021.

The Statement affirms a shared belief "in one baptism for the forgiveness of sins as confessed in the Nicene Creed" and that "in baptism through water and the word, a person is immersed in Jesus Christ and journeys with Christ through his death and resurrection to a new life."

From a pastoral perspective, a significant barrier is removed by our agreement that: "A parent couple that includes both a Catholic and a Lutheran partner are encouraged to bring their child for baptism in the church of their choice. They may seek to have both of their pastors/priests present in the baptismal ceremony."

To highlight the positive growth of our Dialogue, the Sixth Sunday of Easter (this year 5 May) is being marked as A Festival of New Life. It precedes the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, inviting the renewal of baptismal promises and a strong resolve to follow the love of Jesus for us in our love for one another.

In today's "climate" I know my mother would joyfully abandon her warning.

Painting by Sieger Köder Photo by Zvonimir Atletic/Shutterstock.com

James Lyons is a priest of the Archdiocese of Wellington. Retired after 52 years in parish and social media appointments, he assists in chaplaincy at the Home of Compassion, Island Bay.

Our Synodal Walk

IT IS LATE summer here in Aotearoa. We're picking apples and bottling peaches, watering kawakawa so the leaves don't droop and harvesting lemon verbena. We're flicking away mosquitoes at dusk, listening to noisy cicadas and hearty pīwakawaka/fantail and spotting a ripening fig before a blackbird pecks at it. And from the wintry Northern Hemisphere the Vatican asks the Catholic Diocese of Waitaha/Canterbury, Te Tai Poutini/West Coast, Rēkohu/Chatham Islands, and the global church, to unravel the second stage of the Synod here — to sit inside, pray and ruminate about concrete actions and structures to enhance co-responsibility and inclusivity in our decision-making, liturgies and homilies, scriptural and spiritual formation.

The first stage of the Synod on Synodality was on the principles and this second stage is on the concrete actions. Here karoro gulls are dropping pipi from a great height onto the sand to crack them open just wide enough to feed on the kaimoana. Somehow in this motu far from the Northern Hemisphere, we, too, need to feed ourselves with nourishing kai for our bodies, spirits and souls.

Kevin Burns says at Mass that the fish was the symbol of the early church and of the empty tomb.

We know about fish and fishing. We know how present we need to be when fishing — to the tide, the sun, a passing cloud, the moon. It's whakarongo, that deep listening attentiveness with all our senses that watches for fish to emerge.

This is how we begin the second active phase of the Synod in late summer. We watch for the fish as we go to a place of deep listening to the breath, the wind, the sea, the sky. This place of stillness, quiet is the place where each synodal discussion begins.

We open ourselves and we move with Mary, outside the empty tomb and into the garden, where she sees that the gardener is Jesus and she is not afraid. We pray that we, too, can recognise Jesus here in our late summer.

The second phase of the Synodal discussion begins — outside, walking across rough, uneven ground, in whakarongo like the prodigal son.

We walk alongside other Christians to Al Noor Mosque of Light where many of the 51 people killed and more injured on 15 March were praying five years ago.

We walk through Hagley Park to the Transitional Cathedral on a Saturday evening carrying a cloth inscribed with the names of the children killed in the Holy Land since October 2023.

We gather to pray on Wednesday nights under the Bridge of Remembrance, vigiling for peace in the Middle East and for the end of all wars — intention, prayer, deep longing, stilling, profound listening.

At St Mary's our Synodal discussion begins with Jesus's story of the Prodigal Son — compassion, embrace, kiss, placing of sandals on his bare feet, forgiveness. This is where the second phase of the Synodal discussion begins — outside, walking across rough, uneven ground, in whakarongo like the prodigal son. It is from this place during our late summer, where we, people of the Diocese of Waitaha, Te Tai Poutini and Rēkohu, are invited to begin the second part of the Synodal discussion on concrete action — with compassion, forgiveness and deep listening.

And it is as we move forward from the place of quietness into kōrero that we will begin to feed ourselves and others in the Southern and Northern Hemispheres, with good nourishing kai and new fish, for our bodies, our spirits and our souls.

Photo by Antoine Pouligny on Unsplash

Kathleen Gallagher is a poet, playwright and filmmaker from Ōtautahi/Christchurch. Her most recent film is *Rohe Kōreporepo — The Swamp, The Sacred Place*.

Abide & Bear Fruit for the World

Kathleen Rushton *reflects on the image of the vine and the branches in John 15:1-17.*

JOHN'S GOSPEL IS a web of relationships. Prominent in the story is the relationship of God to Jesus, Jesus to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, God to the world, Jesus to disciples, disciples to Jesus, Jesus and disciples to the world, disciples among themselves and the relationships between groups in God's new family. These relationships are expressed in many ways which include "abiding."

IMAGE OF "ABIDING"

"Abide" *(meneo)* is found 40 times and is translated as stay, continue, remain, endure, live or dwell. The practice of using various words obscures the powerful poetic image of Jesus's invitation to those seeking him (Jn 1:38-39); the relationship of Jesus and the Spirit (Jn 1:32–33); the reciprocal abiding between Jesus and the disciples in the Eucharist (Jn 6:33); the relationship of Jesus and God (Jn 14:10); and the many abodes in God's house (Jn 14:2).

In John 15:1-17, "abide" is found 15 times to suggest that deep, continuous union with Jesus is always present. The earliest Christians would have recognised Jesus's words here as part of a farewell address (Jn 13:31–17:26) which well-known leaders or teachers gave when they knew their death was near. The leader announced his death; expressed concern for the well-being of the group and individuals; stressed that relationships were to continue; and talked about the good things that were to happen as well as the hard times ahead.

VINE AND BRANCHES

Previously, Jesus had assured his disciples that he would always be present in the community. Now, in the image of the vine and the branches, he tells how this will be so. Jesus begins with "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower" (Jn 15:1) to describe the relationship of disciples with Jesus and with God (Jn 15:1–11).

PRUNING

Vine imagery holds together joy and suffering. Of all the plants that provide food, grape vines can grow in adverse places like stony soils and on steep hillsides. Where little else grows, vines are most productive. Natural and living organisms of root and soil interact to produce fruit. This agricultural image of the vine suggests growth, fruitfulness, being itself. Yet, this life-giving image does not bypass suffering and death.

The vine is very much tied to the seasons. Pruning suggests the chill and dying of winter, which looks forward to the new buds of spring and the fruitfulness of late summer and early autumn. When we open ourselves to the love of God in Jesus, when we permit God, the vintner, to prune our lives in order that we might bear fruit, we become free to love

one another. As a vineyard produces good grapes for good wine to bring joy to humanity, so the members of the Church are to love one another, discover true joy and share this with the world.

For Dorothy Lee, "abiding" is "an icon of wholeness and intimacy" which "move[s] through suffering, to accept the reality that life and fecundity come through pain and death, through pruning and the pierced side (Jn 7:38; 19:34). "Abiding," along with the vine and pruning, offers a language of love (Jn 13:35) which suggests a language of discipleship as a language of fullness. People are like the branches of the vine, pruned to bear fruit by abiding in the vine.

This differs from the discipleship language of self-sacrifice and self-denial found in the synoptic gospels which requires taking up one's cross (Mk 8:34; Mt 16:24; Lk 9:23) and which follows Jesus' prediction of his death. The exhortation for disciples to take up their cross and follow Jesus is not found in John.

TRELLISING

When pruned, the vines are tied to wires supported by poles spread throughout the vineyard. This wiring structure, called trellising, directs vines in their growth. Trellising is like the structures and rules in a community that guide, support and give stability to the common life. When we live independently without such structures, we easily become hurt and have no direction. We wither and bear no fruit. Vine and branches constitute a group of friends. Disciples are friends of Jesus, not slaves (Jn 15.13–14).

"Abiding" suggests a community of interrelationship, mutuality and indwelling. It expresses Jesus's relationship to God (Jn 15:10), Jesus's relationship to the community (15:4,9) and the community's relationship to Jesus (15:1,7).

JUSTICE FOR ALL

This viticulture image conveys the biblical hope of transformation through justice for all. The neglect of the poor affects the whole vineyard. God, Isaiah warns, "enters into judgement with the elders and princes … you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil [Hebrew

"stolen things"] of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" (Is 3:14–15). God's vineyard will only flourish if the powerful and strong stop exploiting the poor and vulnerable.

The image of the vine declares that wars will cease. Soldiers are to "beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks." The Hebrew word for the latter refers to the knife a vintner used to prune vines. People "shall all sit under their own vines … and no one shall make them afraid" (Micah 4.3–4).

BRANCHES CONNECTING TOGETHER

Ancient culture was deeply rooted within an agricultural world. The understanding of human flourishing was different from our contemporary focus on maximizing production and profit.

The use of chemicals and fertilisers in growing grapes now often interferes with natural organisms. This can tend towards a posture of working "against" something — against nature, against problems — rather than working as part of creation. For many people, consumerism is like a spirituality that gives a sense of identity, comfort and a brand.

Vines are an interconnected and dynamic reality. The language of viticulture can refresh our Christian imagination and reinvigorate what it means today as we journey together as synodal church. Creation and redemption are intertwined. The vine offers a rich and organic view of the Christian life through a spirituality of joy in the earth and in our senses.

Disciples are to be grounded in God's economy, which is not based on competition and maximum profit, but on mercy, forgiveness and love. Persons are not autonomous and isolated consumers, but branches connected together and nurtured by Jesus and cared for by the vintner, God. God tends the vineyard by watering, pruning and protecting it day and night (Is 27:2–3) and guiding it to thrive and be fruitful (Hos 14:7), to grow into a fruitful community and a blessing to others (Is 27:2–6).

Reading for Fifth & Sixth Sundays of Easter 6 & 13 May — John 15:1–17

P24: *Allegory of March: Pruning the Vines* (detail) by Francesco del Cossa, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons
P25: Photo by David Kohler on Unsplash

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).

NO NEED TO COVET

RECENTLY, THE LECTIONARY readings at church for the third Sunday of Lent included the Ten Commandments from Exodus. "Oh yeah, I know these already," I thought as the reader began. I don't usually connect to the Old Testament. I listened anyway. This time, the final commandment, "You shall not covet" (Ex 20:17), seemed to speak to me in a way it hadn't before.

Most of the commandments are about actions, such as to keep the Sabbath or not worship false idols. Coveting is defined as "to be consumed with desire for". Unlike these other commandments, it's about our thoughts, about our way of being.

Initially, it's a confusing verse because some of the examples of what we might covet, such as a neighbour's slave, oxen or donkey, feel completely removed from my 21st-century Aotearoa life. As I thought about it, I could recognise ways I covet what I do not have or need every single day.

One way I was thinking about this is with adventures in the mountains. Tramping and climbing is my one of my favourite forms of recreation, as it is for many of my friends. It's an excellent way to enjoy God's creation, use our bodies and connect to others. But as with lots of aspects of life, sometimes it leads me to jealousy. I'll hear about what friends and connections have been doing and find myself thinking: "Why haven't I climbed that mountain?" Or, "I should have spent my weekend being part of that adventure." Essentially, I start to think that if I did these things, my life and my self would be better, cooler somehow.

When I'm focused on what I'm missing out on, I'm not appreciating what I'm doing and who I'm with right now — I'm missing out on fully experiencing my own moments. And often the time I'm not focusing on — the time I'm spending wishing I was somewhere else — is actually more valuable than any time up a mountain: it's time studying, or gardening, time connecting with my family or doing little jobs for others.

Coveting things that I think will make my life different and better is certainly not limited to mountain adventures. I fail to appreciate in many ways who I am, the things I have and the place I live. I think most of us do, whether it's by wanting more money, or a different house, or some external measure of success.

The system of consumerism and advertising in our society capitalises on this very human sin, telling us we will be different and happier if we look to fulfill our wants rather than our needs.

Wanting life to be different from how it is distracts us. We become unable to fix our eyes on our callings, to be thankful for what we have and where we are, to participate in the Kindom.

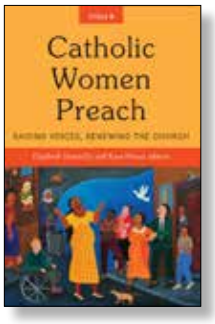
I've been working on conveying the delight and wonder and fulfillment I feel in mountainous places, rather than seeking the coolest trip. Maybe I can keep getting better and loving who I am without desiring the life and things of someone else.

Shar Mathias lives in Ōtepoti/Dunedin where she is engaged in postgraduate studies.

Reviews

Catholic Women Preach: Raising Voices, Renewing the Church (Cycle B)

Edited by Elizabeth Donnelly and Russ Petrus
Published by Orbis Books, 2023. (USD 25)
Reviewed by Margaret McLean



Catholic Women Preach is the second of three volumes that follow the three-year Lectionary cycle. Sixty-six women from all over the globe share their insights and experience, highlighting the relevance between the lectionary readings for Year B and present-day realities.

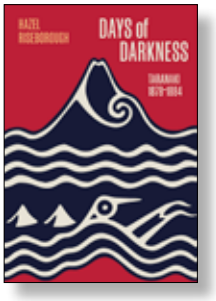
In contrast to long and winding sermons that can leave the listener unmoved, this volume provides a model of succinct and challenging reflections on readings for Sundays, solemnities and feast days. The issues raised by the contributors highlight the contemporary context of discussion and reform in the Church.

Many of the homilies were written during the global pandemic when both the rising death toll and the lockdowns highlighted the fragility of life and the need for connection and communication with others. As a result, the contributors' observations of the unequal impact of the pandemic raise questions about the possible alternatives to exploitation and domination of both people and the environment.

With enthusiasm and encouragement, the authors challenge us to do something about what we believe. With the synodal process proceeding, the *Catholic Women Preach* series is an encouraging sign that women's voices can be a channel for transformation and renewal in the Church. ★

Days of Darkness: Taranaki, 1878–1884

By Hazel Riseborough
Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2023. (NZD 50)
Reviewed by Liz Hickey



Days of Darkness provides a detailed account of the shameful dealings of the colonial government with the Parihaka community from 1878-1884. It shows that the government's decisions and actions were both expedient and in the interests of settlers.

Tohu Kākahi and Te Whiti o Rongomai were the charismatic and spiritual leaders of the Parihaka people. They encouraged their followers to use passive resistance against the government's move to occupy their fertile land that had been confiscated. This led to the invasion of their peaceful village, the burning of their homes and destruction of crops and the imprisonment of the men.

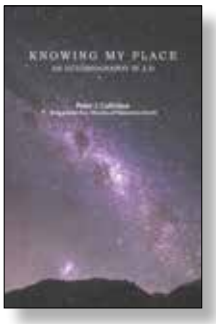
Why would the government forces invade Parihaka, a peaceful and established Māori village? The answer is a confronting one: parliamentarians considered the peaceful nonviolent actions of the Parihaka people to be a threat to colonial power.

It is timely that *Days of Darkness*, first published in 1989, was rereleased in 2023. Under Jacinda Ardern's Labour Government schools were directed to provide a more balanced New Zealand history curriculum which taught how Māori experienced colonisation.

I recommend Hazel Riseborough's book to those wanting a scholarly portrayal of Parihaka's story. The prophetic leadership and peaceful, passive resistance of Parihaka is an inspiration to us in this time of vigorous constitutional discussion. ★

Knowing My Place: An Autobiography in 3-D

By Peter J Cullinane
Published by the Diocese of Palmerston North, 2023. (NZD 25)
Reviewed by Marie Skidmore



In *Knowing My Place* Peter Cullinane reflects on his family life in rural Hawkes Bay, his priestly studies in Rome, his experience of other cultures and his 32-year service as bishop of the Diocese of Palmerston North. Implementing the insights of Vatican Council II was Peter's life work.

"Moving beyond how things are to how they can be requires imagination but is to be expected of leaders" he writes. Peter emphasised the formation of all the baptised to be co-responsible for the church and what it does, hence the benefit to so many of the Pastoral Centre in Palmerston North. He said that the sciences, the State and our Church have one thing in common — to make human beings more authentically human. "The Diocese was not a place, it was ourselves!"

Peter is far-reaching in his discussion of the diocese as church but what stands out for me is his personal spirituality and his fidelity. Summing up the diocese, Peter says: "It's about the things we did together."

We can give Peter a huge thanks for this record of his life and ours in the Palmerston North diocese. ★

Reviews

The Zone of Interest

Directed by Jonathan Glazer
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

I INITIALLY SHIED away from seeing this film, repelled by the horror of what continues to unfold in Gaza. There are only so many photographs of starved babies or toddlers with limbs blown off that I can stomach. Thankfully, there are no such graphic images in *The Zone of Interest*. They are not necessary in order to offer the powerful analysis of the Holocaust and the mechanisms that enable genocide that is presented here.

The whole point of *Zone* is to show how atrocity can be normalised, indeed sanitised. In a sense it is a domestic drama. At the centre of the film stands Rudolf Höss, commandant of Auschwitz, his wife Hedwig and their children and servants. Much of the film is set in their large, well-tended garden, abutting the wall of the camp. Inside the spacious house, Hedwig and her maids try on confiscated shawls and fur coats as if they had been sourced from the local op shop.

The film maintains a rigid separation between these two adjacent worlds. We see barrack roofs and watchtowers, but never the inmates. However, a continuous soundtrack of rumbling machinery, bursts of gunfire, gutteral commands and muffled cries leaves us in little doubt as to what is happening beyond the vine-draped garden walls. The noises drifting over from the camp are always there, even when our attention is focused on the action unfolding before us.

Höss's professional life increasingly impinges on the domestic idyll that he and Hedwig have created. He is part of a complex killing machine, albeit one that is cloaked in euphemisms. Besuited crematorium company reps speak of more efficient ways of processing "objects" and "units". "The cogs are really turning for me now", says Höss, learning that his tenure at Auschwitz is being extended so that he can oversee the extermination of Hungary's Jews.

Very occasionally the barrier between the two worlds is breached. Prompted by Höss reading to his children at bedtime, thermal photography is used to show one of the Polish maids leaving out apples for work parties of prisoners, like a character in a Grimm fairytale. Another crack in the illusion of normalcy appears when the commandant finds detritus from the crematorium chimneys in the river where he and his children are relaxing. Immersive, chilling and utterly compelling, *Zone* sends out a message that, as Jewish director Glazer made clear during his acceptance speech at the Oscars, reaches across time and space to encompass today's unfolding horrors in Palestine. ★

The Moth Podcast

www.themoth.org
Reviewed by Shaun Davison

IF YOU LIKE listening to people share their stories, *The Moth* podcast series might be your cup of tea. Each episode features recordings from live *"Moth"* events (think: drawn to the flame) where individuals tell true stories about their lives. The stories range from amusing to poignant, offering a glimpse into different facets of human experience. Originally from the USA, *Moth* events have expanded to other English-speaking countries. *The Moth* organisation also runs workshops with disadvantaged groups whose stories are seldom heard.

I first came across the series in 2013 and have been drawn to it ever since. Storytellers in each episode receive training in crafting a compelling narrative, with a unique twist — no notes are allowed. The audience is always supportive and this ensures that even the most nervous speakers receive uplifting applause.

Sometimes the stories are a portal into experiences well outside my own. But more often the charm of *The Moth* lies in its celebration of the ordinary aspects of our lives.

These stories invite us to reflect on, empathise with, and endure shared human experiences. The podcast's appeal is in its ability to turn simple moments into stories that resonate and connect with us. ★

Cross Currents

by Jane Higgins

I WAS STRUCK by Clare Curran's article in last month's *Tui Motu*. She wrote that her adult son, and everyone he knew in his generation, felt no hope for the world and did not believe a sustainable future would happen. This is a lament so powerful that it's difficult to know how to respond.

We are surrounded by many reasons for despair. And yet here we are, in Eastertide, when the Resurrection challenges us to embrace hope. It invites us to affirm that life can come from death, that something transformative can grow from utter failure.

These days, to hold onto hope is a real act of faith. The hope that the Resurrection calls us to is not a gentle, flowery, greeting card emotion or a simple promise of heaven. I think of it in terms expressed by Vaclav Havel: as "an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart … the ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed."

This is hard work: mahi, in the multiple senses of that word, which means not only "to work", but also "to make" and "to practise".

How do we work at hope? Make it? Practise it?

First, we don't do it alone. Millions of people around the world march together every week for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine. And thousands of New Zealanders are supporting those public figures, trade unionists, academics, journalists, sporting figures and others who are speaking out about the way the policy programme of the current government will further marginalise those who are poor and vulnerable, and will worsen our ecological crisis.

Secondly, as people of faith, we are guided towards hope by Scripture and tradition, including the Church's social teaching.

Catholic social teaching, sometimes called the church's best kept secret, emerged as a focus from the synodal meeting in Rome last October. The Synthesis document observed: "The Church's social doctrine is a too little-known resource. This needs to be addressed. Local churches are invited not only to make its contents better known but to foster its reception through practices that put its inspiration into action."

From that doctrine, the document calls us unequivocally to stand with those who are poor and to engage with them in caring for our common home: "the cry of the earth and the cry of those living in poverty are the same cry." Standing together, working together is an act of hope.

When I left school in the 1970s, I wanted to act for justice, as so many young people do. Sr Susan Smith invited me onto the Mission Group of the Christchurch Catholic Commission for Justice and Development, as it was then called.

These were people of faith committed to social justice. For several years we met regularly to study Catholic social teaching through documents such as *Evangelii Nunciandi* and *Popularum Progressio*. We brought what we learned to an understanding of the world around us. It was a profound formation for me as a young Catholic. Forty years later I remain grounded in that formation, and I remain friends with members of the Mission group. They are staunch in their commitment to the principles of social teaching we studied together. They give me hope.

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

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

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Letters to the Editor

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

GRATEFUL FOR NEW UNDERSTANDING

I feel compelled to reply, saying how much I appreciate some of the recurring messages in *Tui Motu*. So many writers converge on the idea of "the kingdom of heaven" starting here, in our world. I am speaking as someone who had always been made to think of heaven as somewhere you go to (if you're lucky!) when you die. The world we live in being a passing phase, even a vale of tears etc. So many of the prayers at Mass repeat that message. I could go on but I will just say: "Thank you."

Jack Thompson, Ōtautahi/Christchurch

OPEN LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU

You haven't been to our country but many of us have been to yours. Some are still there, in graveyards in Gaza and on the Mount of Olives, the oil from which anointed Jewish leaders long before our islands were discovered by Indigenous Māori. And later, Europeans. Along with other "Commonwealth" troops, our military gave their lives to liberate Indigenous peoples from an oppressive Ottoman empire.

Many of us worked on *kibbutzim* during decades when plucky immigrants were admired for "making the desert bloom" — and for courageously defending newly-declared Israel against "Arab armies" wanting to destroy her. As a then teacher, I used to repeat such stories of Exodus peril and innovation that created a David state amid Goliath enemies.

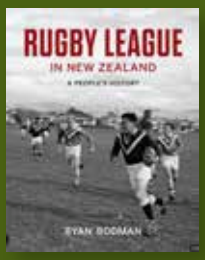
Since 1985, we in New Zealand have worked to redress our colonial landgrabs, our confiscations for rebel resistance. And when our scholars revealed our full history, we instituted a cross-party-accepted tribunal process that heard land claims. Thus began a 40-year return-and-compensation process. So far more than 5,000 submissions have resulted in 86 settlements (financial), including land returns and $2.2 billion worth of payouts. While these settlements are only four per cent of the unimproved value of lands seized, these compensations — and accompanying public apologies — have enabled us to move on.

Mr Netanyahu, as a functioning democracy we cannot understand how embargoing 95 per cent of your foundational year archives can be justified until 2039. As chief archivist Yaacov Lozowick challenged you in 2018: "What democracy does this?" Either Israelis don't know about the forcible displacements of 750,000 Palestinians via 33 massacres in 1948 — verified by your new historians — or believe ongoing occupation is the best way to protect a homeland only they deserve. Why not redress these foundational crimes with return-and-compensation packages — and observe how the goodwill created can conquer natural revenge?

Mr Netanyahu, you have achieved much for your country. But only redressing foundational injustices can eradicate terrorism's roots. The best way for permanent security is to redress root causes: 1948's forcible displacements, ongoing landgrabs, the systemic *hafrada* identified by B'Tselem?

We in Aotearoa eventually acknowledged our landgrabs and other injustices towards the Indigenous Māori. So why not face your history, and yourselves? Appoint a similar land disputes tribunal, and build a peace based on full human rights — surely the bedrock of peaceful coexistence. And yes, set in train some reasonable compensation for the manifest inequities that knowledge of your full history will show you are directly responsible for. Why not become Israel's de Klerk?

Steve Siddle, Ahuriri/Napier



Rugby League in New Zealand: A People's History

By Ryan Bodman
Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2023. (NZD 60)
Reviewed by Tony Eyre

Growing up in Auckland in the 1960s, I played 7 a-side rugby at primary school and the 15 a-side game at secondary level. Rugby union, that is, not rugby league, for league was largely non-existent in the schools. As a result, I knew little about this team game of 13 players with its "V "design jersey, apart from an Auckland venue called Carlaw Park, and an annual premier trophy competition that rolled off your tongue — the Roope Rooster.

However, this incredibly well-researched 350-page history of the game, with extensive notes and treasure trove of black-and-white and colour photographs, has certainly filled the gaps in my knowledge and appreciation of the game which had its early roots firmly grounded in working class communities — the freezing workers, watersiders and coalminers — as well as the marginalised like Māori and Irish Catholics, and later migrant Pasifika communities.

Widely covered in the book is the prejudice, hostility and deliberate obstruction from the rugby union hierarchy that hindered the early growth and development of league, especially in schools.

Rugby League explores how the modern game has become an industry ruled by the big money of the corporates at the expense of the grassroots club game built on community inclusiveness.

I highly recommend *Rugby League* to any sports lover, especially those fans of the game played with the oval ball. ★

For What It's Worth

AFTER A DISCUSSION with some colleagues, I was left with mixed feelings. We had been putting the world to rights, so to speak, and I said that I'd never had so much cause to, than in the "first 100 days" of the new government. I've found myself writing to the Prime Minister, signing petitions and donating my pitifully few dollars to pressure groups. Most of my colleagues agreed that something has to be done to stop the plethora of death-dealing decisions being made, but others said action was pointless: "You're never going to change his mind with a letter", "One signature doesn't make any difference." I was taken aback by this show of apathy and went home despondent questioning whether the time and energy I had put into my meagre efforts to affect change had been wasted.

I am a lover of trees and, for many years, have been keen on the art of bonsai. I have quite a collection now, many started from cuttings or air-layering, some "rescued" and others yamadori specimens (trees collected from the wild that have been "bonsai-ed" by weather conditions, animals or location). An example of yamadori was the bonsai that caught my attention on the day of the discussion I've just described.

Many years ago, while admiring a large and well-kept lawn, I noticed a (non-grassy) leaf sticking up among the blades. Running late for a meeting, I didn't have time to investigate further. I noted the location of the interesting leaf and returned a few hours later only to find it had disappeared! Or, more correctly, had been dealt to by the lawnmower. "Oh well, that's that," I thought. However, a couple of weeks later two leaves appeared in the same spot and upon investigation I worked out that they must be the result of a seed landing not too far from the nearby apple tree. Sticking a twig into the ground to mark the spot, I intended to come back a couple of days later (with pot and trowel) to rescue this budding apple tree. However, when I returned (you guessed it) the lawnmower man had beaten me to it and both twig and leaves were already composting somewhere.

When, a few weeks later, I spied three apple tree leaves sticking up among the grass I wasted no time. I carefully scraped back some soil to reveal a short, sturdy trunk and a well-established root system, suggesting this little battler had clung to life, one leaf at a time, for months or even years.

Now, 35 years later, still small but no longer young, the apple tree is thriving in my bonsai collection and after prodigious pruning (with secateurs not a lawnmower) it produces little fruit in abundance. All this happens because, many years ago, one tiny seed grew and persisted to "protest" its right to exist and flourish — one leaf at a time.

"Let the fields exult and all that is in them,
let the woodland trees cry out with joy" (Psalm 96).

After watering the apple tree and her companions I went indoors, opened the laptop and resolutely signed one more petition. And the tree continues, every day, to sequester a tiny bit of carbon, doing its small but significant bit for the planet.

Photo by Bruce Drysdale

Bruce Drysdale is the chaplain at ABI, a facility for rehabilitation for people with serious brain injuries, and combines floristry with his role as a wedding and funeral celebrant.

Our last word

As we puzzle, question and discuss walk with us at this time Risen Christ as you did the Emmaus disciples and have continued through time.

From the *Tui Motu* Team