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# Tui Motu

## InterIslands

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### LIVING CAREFULLY IN EARTH

NEIL DARRAGH, MARY MCGANN,  
PETER HEALY AND OTHERS

### MISSION & IMAGINATION

CATHY ROSS

### MESSAGE TO CLASSMATES

KADE WEST-HILL

Be Good in Earth  
Kai pai ki te Whenua

INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC MAGAZINE



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#### COVER PHOTO

McLean Falls, The Catlins, South Island  
by Anders Ipsen on Unsplash



## Editorial

### Season of Creation

WE'RE IN THE CHRISTIAN Season of Creation which continues through September until the feast of Francis of Assisi on 4 October. In our part of the world it's heralded by Matariki and continues through Spring — an intense time of new light and life.

The *Tui Motu* plum tree is our seasonal marker. It produced its first blossom in mid-August and is now in full flower. The tree, planted years ago in the backyard of the property, once produced buckets of plums for the families who lived here and despite the changes to its habitat has continued to fruit. The original back garden is now a carpark and as the plums ripen the birds and summer school students compete for them. That's because we at *Tui Motu* are on holiday at harvest time — but we've had the odd year when the season was late and there has been enough fruit for jam when we've returned in January.

Year after year the plum tree has marked the seasons with blossom, leaves, fruit and dropping its leaves, outliving the human inhabitants of the property and faithfully being its authentic self. It hosts native mistletoe, tūi, kererū, sparrows and blackbirds, diverse insect and plant life and breathes and stirs the atmosphere and enriches the ground around it. Its upper branches have been shaped into a topknot by the prevailing wind. In turn it is protected by an old brick wall that it grows alongside.

It's easy to value trees according to their usefulness to us — as shade, food, wood — and underestimate their contribution to the community of Earth. There's a wholeness to God's creating. We can understand why Jesus would say "I am the vine" when the vine, like our plum tree, lives doing exactly what it is created for — being a vine or plum tree in the mission of the Creator. And the seed falling into the ground trusts in the process of germinating to continue the cycle of life.

The Season of Creation can intensify our consciousness of the rest of creation and, as Neil Darragh discusses, of how we have sinned against other life. It gives us an opportunity to grow in appreciation of other lives in creation not just for the delight they give us but for themselves — creations of the Divine, benefactors of all that makes our human life possible and cohabitants of our common home, Earth.

Many of the contributors to this issue encourage us to live well in Earth through their reflection, writing, art and craft. We thank everyone, who in sharing their experience and skill, has provided thoughtful reading.

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



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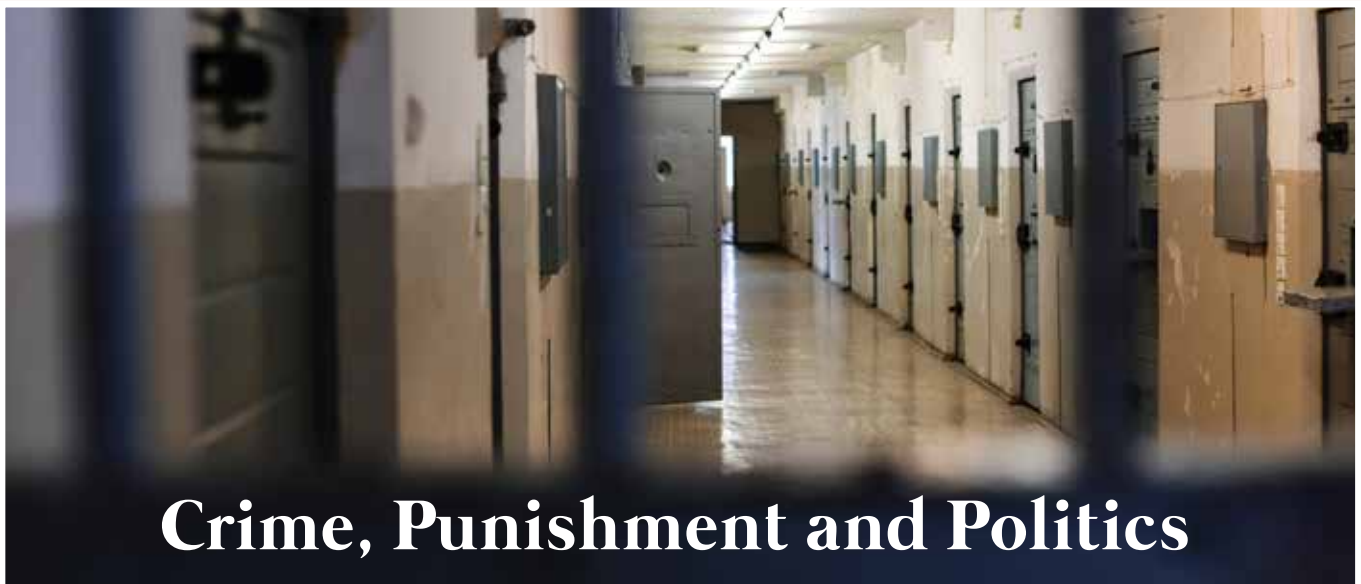
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# Crime, Punishment and Politics

WE ARE BEING SATURATED with political promises to be tough on crime and tough on criminals. If you have never served time in prison or visited a family member or supported someone in strife then my advice is to throw the political pamphlet in the bin.

There is a brutal hardness about prison. It is unrelenting in its diminishing of the human spirit. It is frightening in its ever-present threat to your healthy existence and demands a hardness in response. It is difficult to picture rehabilitation as possible in that environment.

So when someone next knocks on your door to tell you to vote for their party which is tough on crime, I suggest you ask if they have ever been to prison, and find out if they really know what they are talking about. Do they even appreciate there are serious alternatives to prison? We need to spend time talking about them.

Some people think there is only crime and punishment and nothing in between. Most likely they have never been to one of Aotearoa's three specialist Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Courts — two are located in Auckland and one in Hamilton.

Consider the scene for a moment. A packed drug treatment facility: friends and family of former drug users who are graduating from their experience of having been clean of drugs sufficiently long to finish the programme. This will not finish their journey — it is to remain clean for the rest of their lives.

One by one we hear the testimony of the experience. It is gritty and devastating in its honesty and pathos. Children are witnessing their fathers and mothers own their journey that nearly killed them and destroyed many of the relationships around them.

These are lives, smashed by drugs, that had almost lost hope in the justice system. This was before two visionary judges, Emma Aitken and Lisa Tremewan, pleaded with Justice Ministers to try another way to address their addictions.

Out of their pleadings came the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court which began as a pilot in 2012 and is still growing. It is showing success.

As the graduates receive their pounamu signifying the completion of the course, they join the line for the harirū

or hongi where they are embraced by the judges — often those that had sent them to jail in the first instance.

There is no soft option about the way the District Court describes this intervention.

"The court is solutions focused and aims to 'break the cycle' by treating the causes of offending. It targets offenders who would otherwise be imprisoned, but whose offending is being fuelled by their unresolved 'high-needs' issues of addiction or dependency. They are also assessed as being 'high-risk' in terms of their non-compliance: in other words, past sentences and court orders made have not changed their situation. Consequently, they are on a treadmill of offending, typically being punished but then going on to reoffend.

"As an alternative to prison, the court applies evidence-based best practices in a potentially transformative programme of case management, treatment, drug testing, monitoring and mentoring.

"Sentencing is deferred while participants go through the rigorous programme, which includes regular court appearances to check on progress, and may take one to two years to complete."

This is a circuit breaking intervention that redeems lives. So as the fervour about reducing crime rises in anticipation of this year's election, make it your personal "citizen test" to challenge the banality of solutions.

Don't be silent when you hear nonsense being spoken among your friends and companions about crime and punishment. Take the time to read up about the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court and use it in your conversation.

Often it is just the conversation with friends that can have a really redemptive outcome as we address our prejudices and look for new solutions to the most taxing of challenges. ♦

Photo by Matthew Ansley on Unsplash

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







## FRONTING UP TO THE DAMAGE WE DO TO EARTH

Neil Darragh *discusses guilt and sin in developing an Earth consciousness in our spirituality.*

FOR SOME YEARS NOW, many local churches have inserted a four-week "Season of Creation" into their annual liturgical cycle. This has helped refocus church-going Christians on the basic Christian belief in God as Creator — Creator not just of humans but of everything. It seems obvious; yet it's a moral minefield. Inherent in this belief in a Creator God is the moral mandate to treat all created beings (for us this means, in effect, the beings and processes of Earth) as worthy of appreciation and respect.

This mandate requires us to maintain careful limits on when and how much we use other beings for human benefit. We will, almost certainly, continue to "use" other Earth beings for our own well-being,

especially for food and shelter. But given this, can we still hope that our fundamental attitude might be one of appreciation and respect?

### FROM USING TO APPRECIATING

Over the last 100 years or so, scientific measurement has brought us face-to-face with the destructive effects of human behaviour in the planet Earth. Our simple naiveté about the "goodness" of industrial development has largely disappeared. An awareness of the delicacy and complexity of our relationships to the other creatures of Earth is now widespread. Few of us still assume that "progress" ("you can't fight progress") is always approved by God and the angels.

Many Christian Churches,

such as those belonging to Eco Church NZ ([www.ecochurch.org.nz](http://www.ecochurch.org.nz)) and organizations like A Rocha ([www.arocha.org.nz](http://www.arocha.org.nz)) have recently moved beyond a largely personal spirituality ("me and God" or "me and the Church") towards a spirituality committed to reducing destructive human behaviour in the Earth.

Even relatively painless liturgical changes, such as Prayers of Intercession concerned with the environment, and homilies which interpret the Christian Scriptures for an ecologically alert congregation, help to move us on to a more Earth-focused spirituality. A great deal of Christian education, especially in schools, has also, perhaps even more rapidly, changed from an emphasis

on personal spirituality and Church-belonging to an emphasis on the wholeness (an “integral ecology” in Pope Francis’s terms) of human beings and the larger Earth.

Yet one thing that has not happened, as far as I am aware, is a reinterpretation of the Christian understanding of “sin” and its close companion, “guilt”. These are the underside of Christian spirituality and may reveal more of what we really are than do our aspirations to beauty, wonder and wholeness.

### **GUILT AS STIMULUS FOR CHANGE**

Many (most) Christian educators and thinkers seem to be avoiding talk about “guilt” and “sin” as too negative. Yet the ecologists and environmentalists among us are actively, and with increasing effectiveness, provoking feelings of guilt in us.

The intention here is to confront people, organizations and governments with messages that say: “You shouldn’t be doing this. This is wrong.”

While accepting the accusation and the guilt, we need nevertheless to distance ourselves from that “disabling guilt” which leaves us helpless and hopeless. Psychologists and therapists often need to deal with this kind of disabling guilt. Yet there is a need, too, to rescue the concept of “guilt” from its sometimes disabling effects. Guilt can be a positive stimulus for change, an awareness that there is something in my life that I should change.

### **“SIN-TALK” AS A RESOURCE**

Over the centuries, a Christian spirituality which practises some regular form of examination of conscience is simultaneously uncovering the width and depth of “sin”. This is the underbelly of our spirituality which anchors us within the real world.

Some sins are more destructive than others; some are more trivial than others and need to be treated so. Some just aren’t sins at all but leftovers from childhood or parental safeguarding. Some of this sin-talk has been damaging and left people

immobilized in guilt. A lot of this is being re-evaluated and re-sorted nowadays.

Some areas of spirituality and moral action have been barely talked about at all. One of these neglected areas, it seems to me, is that of identifying and dealing with our sinful relationships with Earth.

We may prefer to talk about “wrongdoing” or “making bad choices” instead of “sins”. Any of these probably works in some circumstances, but “sin-talk” is older, more sophisticated and better mapped, I think, so there is some value in retaining it.

## **HOMILIES WHICH INTERPRET THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES FOR AN ECOLOGICALLY ALERT CONGREGATION HELP TO MOVE US ON TO A MORE EARTH-FOCUSED SPIRITUALITY**

Sin is about doing harm. Even if we would rather avoid “sin-talk” altogether, it is clear nevertheless that many human beings (not all) are doing a great deal of harm to Earth. Where these sinful Earth relationships have been recognised, there have already been moves, individually and collectively, towards less destructive, more integrated relationships.

Canadian environmental lawyer David R Boyd has named some of the successes over recent decades in pushing back the damage: endangered species preserved, thousands of new parks, the salvation of the ozone layer, the exponential growth of renewable energy; the race to be the greenest city in the world; remarkable strides in cleaning up the

air and water; the banning of dozens of the world’s most toxic chemicals; and some movement towards a circular economy where waste is a thing of the past.

### **ACTIONS, ATTITUDES, COLLUSIONS AND OMISSIONS**

In spite of some successes, our respect for Earth still seems to stand alongside or in addition to our normal everyday spirituality and morality. It seems unlikely that we can reverse our still widespread destructive behaviour unless we can bring our Earth spirituality into the central core of our morality. There are often “no-go” areas, or “too-hard” areas in our day-to-day self-assessment where we just don’t notice the failures. For many of us, our Earth relationships are one of these moral vacuum areas.

We can begin to uncover some of this when we note that sins, traditionally, are not simply actions, they may also be attitudes, collusions and omissions.

As well as destructive actions, our sins may also be attitudes (not just single actions) which lie behind and result in an array of repeated wrong actions.

There are also sins which are collusions with unjust and destructive structures. We probably did not cause these and didn’t deliberately decide to do anything evil. We have just gone along with the way the world is.

And then there are sins of omission. There is evil that we are caught up in not by positive choice but just by allowing them to continue without protest.

Perhaps it is because many of the destructive relations with Earth are cases of collusion or omission that we fail to see them or take them seriously – and to recognise them as sins.✧

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Photographer: Sait Akkirman

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## Food and Earth

Mary McGann writes about how our food choices are shaping the future of the planet and how the Laudato Si' Action Platform can help.

IN 2021, THE VATICAN launched a global grassroots initiative described as the Laudato Si' Action Platform. Under the leadership of Pope Francis the plan intends to mobilise the world's 1.2 billion Catholics to support principles of "total sustainability" in the next decade. Parishes, schools, religious communities and other groups have been invited to work together toward seven goals that respond to the urgency of how climate crisis and planetary degradation are endangering communities around the globe.

One key goal proposed by the initiative is the "adoption of sustainable lifestyles," which invites all of us to choose wisely how we

use Earth's resources. Among the ways proposed for meeting this goal is the adoption of sustainable dietary habits, and specifically reducing meat consumption and opting for a more plant-based diet. Research on the impact of meat production makes clear the importance of this option in six distinct ways.

### Climate Change

Animal agriculture is currently the single largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, making it one of the largest drivers of climate change. Key to this contribution is the release of methane gas from livestock production, which is on the increase around the globe. Since 2007 the concentration of methane in the

atmosphere has risen precipitously, faster than any other greenhouse gas.

In fact, the global warming potential of methane is estimated to be more than 25 times greater than carbon dioxide over a 100-year period. A leading cause of this increase in methane is the 25 billion livestock (including 21 billion chickens) grazing in pastures and confined in feedlots around the globe, belching methane gas and producing vast amounts of waste that generate additional methane and nitrous oxide.

To keep global warming under 1.5 degrees — a key goal of the Paris climate agreement — methane emissions must drop by nearly half by 2030. Meeting this goal is out of sight, experts say, without a cutback

in the number of livestock raised for slaughter, and thus a reduction of the global consumption of meat. Every effort counts here: even committing to two plant-based meals a week can make a significant difference.

### Deforestation

Livestock currently graze on more than one third of Earth's ice-free land surface. Much of this land was once forest or grasslands, both of which have a huge potential for capturing and sequestering carbon.

In the Amazon rainforest, clearing land for grazing cattle accounts for 70 per cent of recent deforestation, with additional forest being cleared for growing soy to feed livestock.

A recent study published in *Nature Sustainability* estimates that restoring these lands to native ecosystems or forests holds out a huge "carbon opportunity", with potential to sequester quantities of carbon dioxide that could significantly offset decades of global fossil fuel emissions.

### Human Health

Beyond its impact on reversing the ill effects of climate change, a plant-centred diet improves personal health. The overconsumption of meat in Western diets and increasingly in other countries, increases the risk of obesity, diabetes, cancers, cardiovascular diseases and other chronic diseases.

A University of Oxford study from 2016 on "imbalanced" diets — those that are low in fruits and vegetables and high in red and processed meat — estimates that better, plant-rich food choices could save up to 8 million lives by 2050 and lead to substantial savings on healthcare costs.

But this switch will not be easy: choosing a diet with less meat goes against a dearly-held belief of many people that animal protein is crucial for good health — an assumption that has led many to consume meat well beyond the recommended daily intake of protein set by national health standards.

### Global Food Availability

The benefits of choosing a plant-rich diet reaches well beyond personal health. Demand for resource-

intensive animal foodstuffs limits the global availability of food. A single calorie of beef requires some 10 calories of grain or soy. One study shows that growing plant-based replacements for major animal food-sources can produce two to 20 times as much food that is nutritionally similar to meat.

out their days in concentrated animal-feeding operations, known as factory farms. These farms sacrifice the well-being of animals by confining them to small spaces and putrid conditions, treating them as "production units" denied their most basic needs.

Chickens, for example, selectively bred for rapid growth, often suffer

Choosing sustainable, compassionate and health-producing diets ... can make a significant contribution to *healing* a suffering planet.

Researchers suggest that replacing all animal-based products in people's diet with plant-based alternatives would save enough food to feed millions of people.

### Clean Water

Animal agriculture is likewise a major cause of water pollution, contaminating drinking water, causing toxic algal outbreaks in local waterways and killing fish. Slaughterhouses that process and package poultry, beef, pork and other meats dump millions of pounds of harmful substances directly into rivers and streams. Phosphorous and nitrogen pollution from slaughterhouses have created huge "dead zones" in major bodies of water, where water is stripped of oxygen and fish are forced to flee or suffocate.

### Well-being of All Sentient Animals

Humans consume more animals today than ever before. Worldwide, some 80 billion animals are raised and slaughtered for food each year.

In the name of "efficiency", many animals raised for human consumption around the globe live

chronic pain due to bone deformities and joint instability. Moreover in some parts of the world, factory farms are exempt from animal welfare regulations applied more broadly.

Thus, the call to embrace a plant-rich diet is an invitation not only to a more sustainable diet but a more compassionate one.

Food choices that honour the well-being of all sentient beings can build a world where greater consciousness of interspecies care and reciprocity abounds.

Today, how we produce and consume food is a defining challenge for humanity. Choosing sustainable, compassionate and health-producing diets, as encouraged by the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, can make a significant contribution to healing a suffering planet, while shaping an awareness of how our food choices affect the entire Earth community. »

Another version of this article appeared in *America* (online), March 14, 2022

*Basket of Potatoes* (1885) by Vincent van Gogh  
Courtesy of Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam  
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

**Mary E McGann** RSCJ, Adjunct Associate Professor of Liturgical Studies at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University and Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California. Her most recent book, *The Meal That Reconnects* (2020) won first place for Catholic Social Teaching in the 2021 CMA Book Awards.







# The Mauri Is in the Forest

**Peter Healy** *tells about a tree planting project on the sacred site of Pukekaraka Ōtaki.*

WE ARE IN THE Season of Creation/ Te Wā Orokohanga and it's a good time to reflect on our ongoing community work of returning pasture to forest — a practice of loving creation and letting justice and peace flow through the whenua.

**Ko te mauri he mea huna ki te ngāherehere.**

**The mauri is hidden in the forest**  
It's now tangaroa-ā-roto, the last

quarter of the moon, and in tune with the Māori lunar calendar, it's time to get on with the work of tree planting.

We're conscious of mauri — the life force — on the winter's day we gather for tree planting. The land awaits and we are committed to working together. We're seeding the land for a future that will be green-leaved and habitat-rich. In our opening karakia/prayer we are encouraged by

ancestral connection, the presence of past and trusting in the future ... tihei-wā mauri ora!

We acknowledge that we're in the realm of mauri/life force of the trees and plants unique to Aotearoa — akeake, mānuka, māhoe, karo, ngaio, karo and harakeke — that will hold and protect the site and ready it for bigger trees in the future. Through mauri we are present to the essence



of things, to their being and vitality, their continuity and connectivity with te wao tapu nui o Tāne/the sacred forest of Tāne. The interrelated tikanga of tapu/sacredness, hau/breath, wairua/spirit and mana/dignity are the vital forces of well-being and generativity of Papatūānuku — the life-sustaining forces in which we are held and carried.

Our tree planting is part of a long-term endeavour to shift land from pastoral grazing into forest cover — hard but worthwhile work, especially on steep land unsuitable for stock. It is the whenua/land of Ngāti Kapu and this endeavour is a journey for us. We are learning by doing.

We have already had several working bees on the land to remove the aged hawthorns entangled with gorse — both introduced to this area decades ago. The clearing was difficult and at times a risk to life and limb on the steep slopes. Once we'd cleared the site we discussed what we'd do with the remaining pasture grass. Should we spray the whole site? The grass was in its dormant winter phase so would it be ok to plant directly into it? Or should we spray individual planting spots ready for each tree? In the end we chose to plant directly into the grass. We knew we'd have to manage the new trees into spring and summer. We're all learning to trust the land's integrity as we participate in its unfolding towards becoming a forest.

**Kotahi karihi nāna ko te wao tapu nui a Tāne**

**The creation of the sacred forest of Tāne is from a single kernel**

Like the seed that starts a forest, we knew our project would need to start small and that we'd need to work out all the unknowns and uncertainties we'd encounter along the way. We're practising being "good ancestors" in the hope of a forest for future generations. Tāne, the atua Māori of persistence and integrity, is the guardian. We trust in the regenerative processes unique to this land. We are sowers of a sacred forest of the future, co-operating with the flourishing of life around us and ahead of us. We work filled with hope, gratitude and karakia.

We hope for the spring rains to water the little trees on the fast-draining sandhill. Because the site faces south-east, it will not suffer the intense summer heat and we're grateful for that "aspect" on our side.

We've all gathered — whānau, community groups and parishoners for tree planting. Our first task is to move the trees across a muddy paddock and carry them up to our site. We have energy and experience on our side.

We sort the plants. Some trees are root bound and others are too small for planting this season. I overhear conversations. Have we been given the right ngaio trees or are these Tasmanian ngaio, which we don't



**The children now know these trees, and their generation and later generations will enjoy the forest they're beginning on this whenua.**

want? Then the karo tree: We'll need to be careful as it can be invasive and take over a site. Maybe the karo will create a pittosporum desert?

After consideration we decide to plant all the ngaio and swap some of the karo for harakeke. Ideally we'd love to have our own nursery so that we'd have full control of seed sources, tree types and planting. These are just some of our considerations as we

participate in restoring what's been broken and lost in this whenua.

The children from the local kura/school arrived after the weekend to plant harakeke. We showed them how to plant a tree — how to dig the right sized hole, free up bound roots, space the trees correctly on site and add the fertilizer tablets. The children now know these trees, and their generation and later generations will enjoy the forest they're beginning on this whenua.

**Kia kaha tātou ngā kaimahi whakatō rākau!**

**Strength and power to the tree planters!**

Our working together on this restoration project is a practical contribution to Creation. At this time when almost half Earth's forests have been destroyed, returning what has been taken is doing justice. Our native forests have diminished, so we welcome the opportunity to participate in the peace of wild things and the integrity of creation. We plant in the hope that our trees will grow safely and be one of many gateways to a life-sustaining world.

Our work in the domain of te tapu o te wao nui a Tāne/the integrity of the great forest of Tāne will not be lost. We are resisting everything that diminishes life and loving all that sustains life. At this time when creation groans under so many travails, we trust our tree planting extends our love of the wholeness of creation like a mighty river of transformation.

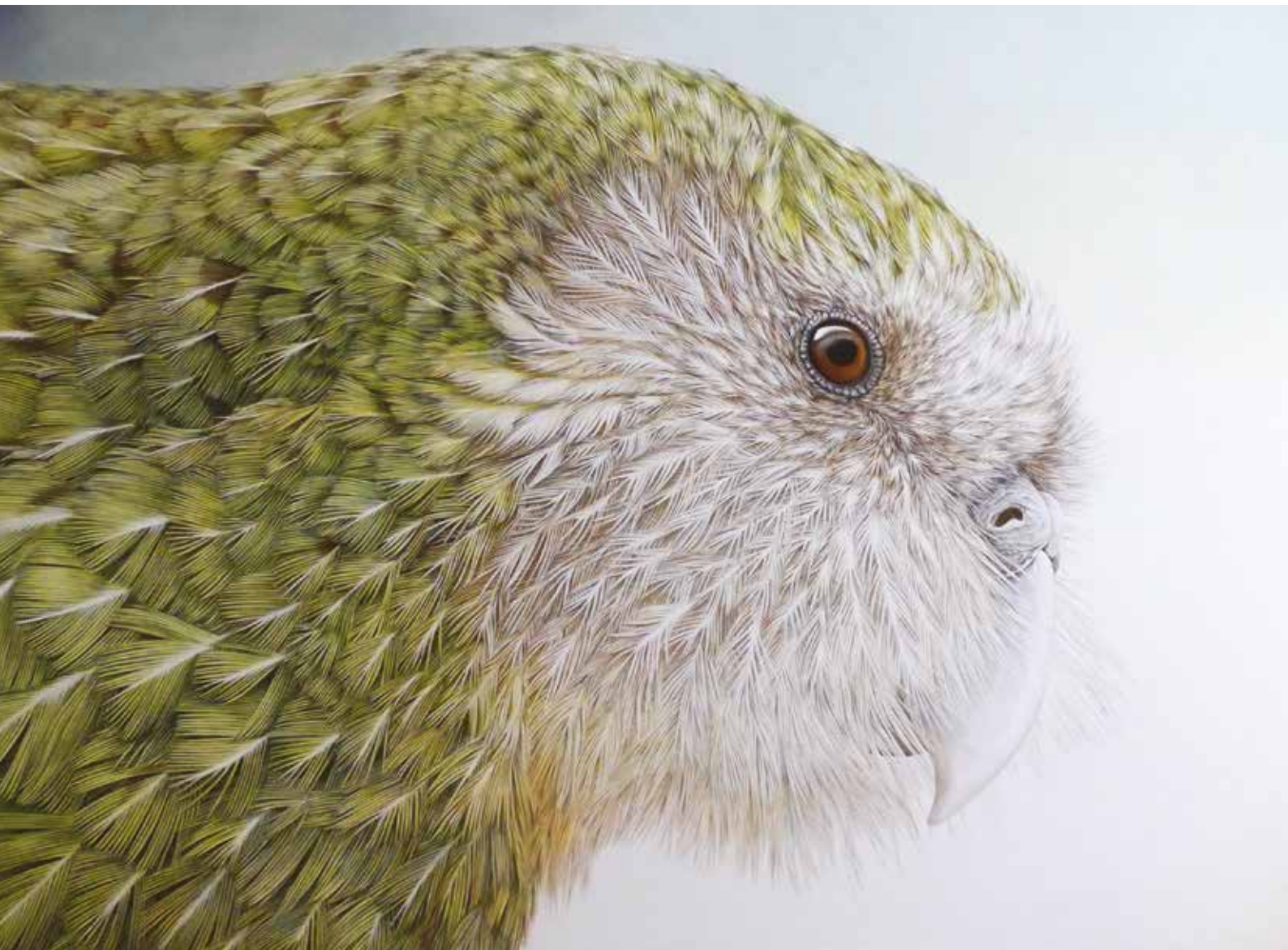
**E ngā māhuri hou, e ngā māhuri tau, kia tupu, kia hua, kia puāwai i tēnei wā morearea.**

**To our new attractive little trees; grow, flourish and flower in this time of crisis.**

*Sharing Coastal Vision* by Rosemary Eagles ©  
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Available in a limited print edition

**Peter Healy SM** is an ecologist and artist and a member of the Integral Ecology Committee in the Archdiocese of Wellington. He is a member of the Marist Community that has sacramental care of the Ōtaki-Levin parish area.





# IT TAKES **ONE** PERSON

**Robin Kearns highlights the efforts of Richard Henry of Pigeon Island to preserve the native bird populations in the south of Aotearoa.**

.....

I WRITE FROM A position of privilege. I suppose most of us as writers do. Sufficiently fed, warmly housed and supported by an ecology of whanau, friends and potential readers, we spend time committing thoughts to screen.

But as I write today, the privilege feels particularly acute. It is where I write from: Tamatea/Dusky Sound. Few have the time, resource and opportunity to visit this vast inland seaway well south of the better-known and over-touristed Milford Sound. And today I learned for the first time of a pioneer ecologist:

Richard Henry. I may be wrong but I suspect he doesn't loom large in most people's canon of national heroes. He should.

Richard Henry was the caretaker of New Zealand's first island wildlife sanctuary and an international pioneer of the live transfer of birds to island refuges.

## **STUDY OF BIRD LIFE**

Like so many migrants of his time, Henry was born in Ireland and moved to Aotearoa in the 1870s, finding a home in Te Anau where his varied occupations included handyman,

rabbit-culler, shepherd, taxidermist, boat-builder, explorer and guide. All the while he studied the local birdlife.

## **WEASELS DISASTROUS FOR BIRDS**

During the late 19th century a series of unfortunate "acclimatisation" experiments resulted in the introduction of weasels, ferrets and stoats to New Zealand. These mustelids had an immediate impact on native bird populations, and it became obvious that strenuous efforts would be required to save our vulnerable flightless birds.

Stoats, especially, are wily



creatures and finely evolved killers. Males can impregnate immature females who only become fully pregnant upon maturity, meaning populations can expand at an exponential rate. And like rats, another earlier catastrophic arrival, stoats are capable of swimming impressive distances.

## BIRD SANCTUARIES

By the late 1800s, there was growing concern at the ravages of predators on our birdlife. Richard Henry maintained that the only way to cease the carnage was the establishment of sanctuaries for flightless birdlife on difficult-to-reach islands.

His concern added to a momentum that culminated in the establishment in 1891 of Resolution Island in Fiordland's Tamatea/Dusky Sound as a publicly gazetted reserve. This, the seventh largest island in Aotearoa's archipelago, seemed the perfect outpost for species like kākāpō, our ground-dwelling nocturnal parrot, to recover.

## RESOLUTION ISLAND RESERVE

After fighting disillusionment at the decline in birdlife, and mental-ill health including suicide attempts, in 1894 Henry was given his dream job: caretaker of the new but very remote Resolution Island reserve.

For the next 14 years he lived on nearby Pigeon Island, rowing distance away. He went beyond the call of duty in grim weather and hard living conditions to transport numerous kākāpō and kiwi to Resolution Island, in the hope they would be safe and breed there.

In his first six years as caretaker, Henry transferred more than 700 kākāpō and kiwi from the mainland to Resolution as well as to Pigeon Island. His muzzled dog wore a bell, allowing Henry to follow it to the location of birds which he then caught and held for short periods in a pen constructed of punga trunks. All this was innovation and a world first.

## STOATS DESTROY THE SANCTUARY

Sadly, Henry's valiant efforts at translocating kākāpō were dashed

when, at the turn of the century, stoats arrived on Resolution. He had underestimated how well stoats could swim and they had crossed the 800 metres of sea between Resolution and the mainland. The dream of a predator-free Resolution was over, at least for Henry and his generation.

## CONSERVATION WORK CONTINUES

Disillusioned, Henry stopped work on the island in 1908 and later became ranger on Kapiti Island. His efforts on Resolution were not entirely in vain: although kākāpō did not survive there, efforts at saving and sustaining a kākāpō population have continued elsewhere.



From a last resort at Whenua Hou (Codfish Island off Rakiura/Stewart Island) other footholds have been established such as on Anchor Island in Fiordland. Many other species have been translocated between islands (now mainland as well as offshore) and saved: kōkako, tieke/saddleback and mohua/yellowhead to name three.

Well over a century after Henry, the trapping of predators across New Zealand has now become a mainstream activity and is bringing back birdsong. The net result is that a broader range of species is now heard in many of our back yards and parks. Species that were once just surviving are now thriving.

## PRESERVING BIODIVERSITY

We live in a strangely blinkered society. We are aware of heroes who score tries, climb mountains or build financial empires to the point of it being near-heresy not to know their names. But we are largely blind to those who have dedicated their lives to saving our biodiversity. Richard Henry is one such hero.

Walking the paths of Pigeon Island, as I did today, little remains of Henry's efforts: a brick fireplace, some bottles and glass photographic plates and — incredibly — the punga posts supporting the enclosure he built to transition birds between locations.

I now anticipate returning to my own island home on Waiheke a degree more inspired thanks to learning of Richard Henry and seeing where he lived out his vocation of hope.

I will return more appreciative of the kākā hooning around in the twilight sky and the tūi that whistle in the valley.

I will return determined to keep setting my rattraps near my compost bin. And I will have deeper respect for those whose work on Waiheke continues Henry's legacy: the quest to restore Aotearoa's biodiversity to its fullness.

As David Bowie sings: "We can be heroes, just for one day." This year is perhaps the time to be inspired by Richard Henry's eco-heroics and seize the opportunity to appreciate our biodiversity.

Perhaps it's time to be local heroes and dedicate more of our lives to biodiversity's endurance. It just might mean the world to the next and following generations. ♦

*Sirocco (Kākāpō)* by Janet Luxton ©  
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Richard Henry above: *On the Watch*, c.1900. Dr Roberts photograph, P1966-004-001a, Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

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## THINKING AND LOVING

*Ilia Delio describes the need for mysticism as a bridge creating a wholeness between our ideas of God and the reality of evolution.*

Many of the psalmists and prophets were mystics who spoke of God's deep relationship with us: "O God, You search me and You know me O Lord, You know my resting and rising, You discern my footsteps from afar" (Ps 139). Jesus of Nazareth was a mystic, deeply united with the one he called "Abba." He drew his strength and wisdom from the deep inner source of divine life. The early Fathers of the Church were mystics as well. Their theological writings emerged from long periods of contemplation and bore the vibrancy of the mystical mind searching for truth.

### Mysticism Seeks Love

Mystical theology was integral to theology until the rise of Scholasticism in the Middle Ages. Knowledge and love were entwined in the path to God. Cistercian

mystics, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, said that thinking is a form of loving. For the mystics, thinking is a habit of affection, a leaning of the mind toward the heart. The theologian's role, Bonaventure indicates, is to plumb the secrets and depths of Scripture which is the primary source of theology. Nature too is a prime source of theology because all life flows from the mouth of the triune God. The very act of creation discloses the depth of divine mystery and the role of the theologian is to search the secrets and depths of nature.

The theologian is like a treasure hunter — like the seeker of pearls — who fathoms the unsuspected depths of the divine mystery, searches out its innermost hiding places, and reveals its most beautiful jewels.

When God expresses something of the divine mystery it is then left to the theologian to search it out or penetrate it insofar as we allow ourselves to be inhabited by the wisdom of God which alone brings all things to light. Theology is to make God manifest so as to orient ourselves toward an encounter through love.

### Teilhard de Chardin on Mysticism

While medieval philosophers saw the *intellectus* as the basis of mysticism; and mystics were advised to hush the busy *ratio* (mind) in order to gaze quietly, a modern mystic, Teilhard de Chardin, set reason at the centre of the mystical.

Teilhard's mysticism is intellectually creative because it is the power of the mind or thought that pushes evolution forward



toward greater complexity and unity. We begin with a world that is not understood and come to know God at the point where experience lights up the fire of knowledge.

### Mysticism Creates New Truth

Mysticism is not a matter of contemplating a truth already established but lay in the very act of discovery. That is, the mystic creates a new truth because the knower is a unifier. The mind searches its depths by extending beyond itself. "Each time the mind comprehends something," Teilhard wrote, "it unites the world in a new way." To think is to unify, to make wholes where there are scattered fragments; "not merely to register the fragments but to confer upon them a form of unity they would otherwise (that is, without thought) be without."

Thinking is a spiritual act. To think is to take a long, deep, hard look at reality where the knowing process becomes more than the vision itself. Thinking requires use of the intellect, as well as judgment, consciousness and connectivity to the object of thought. It is not a mere accumulation of information but the synthesizing of information into ideas and insight.

Thinking is the work of the spirit, not only the human spirit but God's Spirit; it is the dynamic engagement of the mind with the world as we know it. The mind creates by perceiving the phenomena of reality and, in doing so, continues the fundamental work of evolution. Each time the mind comprehends something it unites the world in a new way. Teilhard said: "To discover and know is to actually extend the universe ahead and to complete it."

### Discovery and Openness

Of course, discovery of the world is ultimately self-discovery, and openness of the self to the infinite, is openness to God. The mystic who plunges into the depths of the divine mystery enters into the mystery of the soul: the outer world and inner world become one and the same world.

God reveals Godself not as a thought or an idea but in the concrete person of Jesus Christ. The very

nature of revelation is an invitation to relationship with God. True theology is not so much about doctrine but about the fountain of life, the source of life we name as God. Without the experience of God, theology is empty and useless.

If theology is going to have anything to say to the world today, searching for God is necessary. God is not an idea to be proved or even believed, but an awareness of immediate experience. One who experiences God is changed to the core. We experience God in the finite, in matter, as the depth of matter or the overflow of our existence. To become aware of this overflow is to experience transcendence; God is not outside us but the depth dimension of our very being.

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**If religion is to thrive in the 21st century, the Church must be a training ground for mystics. Nothing else will suffice.**

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### Consciousness of Unity

Thomas Merton's breakthrough into a level of Christ consciousness on the corner of Fourth and Walnut Streets in downtown Louisville, changed him profoundly: "I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers."

The more we are reconciled inwardly on the level of Christ consciousness, the more we live by the life of the whole. Teilhard de Chardin wrote: "If I am to be All, I must be fused with All."

The mystic does not have the answer before the question; rather, the whole of life is living into the questions themselves. Maybe that is why Jesus asked questions without providing any definite answers. Being surpasses doing; to be is to become, to be on the way toward the fullness of life. God is a divine depth to be searched and fathomed by one enkindled by the fire of love.

### Mysticism for a Sustainable Future

We cannot evolve toward more life unless we are searching for life itself, the transcendent wholeness of life, which is God. Mysticism is essential for a sustainable future and the advance of evolution toward more life. Only love can pull the heart into the unimaginable depths of God and draw us higher into the higher realms of overflowing life. A crisis of mysticism is a crisis of love; and a crisis of mystical love is a rightful future.

### Searching into the Mystery of God

When we are living in search of the ever-deepening mystery of God we are constantly moving in the depths of divine love.

We need theology in the 21st century, not a well-honed argument for the existence of God, but the deep search into the mystery of God. The theologian must be committed to deep diving into the uncharted depths of divine mystery, ready to encounter the ever newness of God's creative love. This is no time for nostalgia, for Latin Masses or papal monarchies. If religion is to thrive in the 21st century, the Church must be a training ground for mystics. Nothing else will suffice. ♦

Ilia Delio's fuller article:  
[www.tinyurl.com/3yx77pu4](http://www.tinyurl.com/3yx77pu4)

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### Polynesian Child Playing with Water

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# Beyond the Season of Creation

**Colleen O'Sullivan** writes that the Season of Creation is always with us, but each year we set specific time aside to intensify our awareness of creation, climate and ecological change in Earth.

We both respond to and resist evolution, consciously and unconsciously. Mystics/cosmologists Matthew Fox and Brian Swimme are aware that because of this evolutionary force impelling us, change is happening at all levels. We human beings are always involved in this change by the way we respond, or do not respond, to this evolutionary force. The process is larger than the individual; according to Teilhard de Chardin, Fox and Swimme, we are like cells within a larger being. We each have a part to play in the greater drama.

## Recognise and Integrate Consciousness of Evolution

In spite of our resistance to the evolutionary impulse, the time and space set aside to reflect, wonder and act moves our consciousness forward to create something new: something of spiritual significance that lies dormant in deep time. That new something waits to be recognised and integrated into the riverbed of life, the river of consciousness, the river of justice and peace. "The river of justice and peace" is the theme for this year's Season of Creation.


These two components of true humanity emerge from what Buddhist ecologist Joanna Macy calls the "field of grace" in which we exist. But these powers must consciously be drawn into existence at deeper levels all the time.

We are immersed completely in this field. It embraces us in all directions and flows from the heart of Divinity: from the heart of love.

## The "Noosphere"

De Chardin describes our way of existing in this field of grace as the "noosphere". According to de





Chardin, the noosphere is sacred space for the birth of a new human story.

Swimme and Fox believe that for all of the devastation that we have inflicted on each other and our beloved planet, the noosphere can be harnessed as a potent force that empowers us to consciously create a new story.

This story will be one in which we will no longer figure as masters and overlords of creation but in oneness with all of creation, loving and living in unity.

The story is being written now by poets, artists working in different mediums, prophets and those whose awareness of the nature of creation is changing and growing.

This writing of the new story is the spiritual challenge of our time.

Our task is to bring this new story to life. While the reality has existed since time began it has often been clothed in darkness and only glimpsed in a blurred way.

It was birthed many times but not more so than by Christ who offered us the vision of the Kin(g)dom.

### What Is Stopping Us?

Joanna Macy asks: "What prevents us taking the risk of seeing and claiming what is emerging at the heart of our spirituality?"

Macy has used what she calls the "truth mandala" many times. The four quadrants of the mandala invite us to name our deepest emotions when we reflect on what is happening in our world. These personal emotions reflect communal emotions that shrink from change and move us to despair, making it impossible to write our story anew.

Grief, fear, anger and emptiness prevent the flow of life and refuse the invitation to sustain the river's flow. They lead only to injustice, violence, isolation and prevent the growth of relationship and trust in the sacredness of Mystery.

### Power of Hope

Yet Macy says if we understand the truth mandala, its ground is hope. She would be supported by Liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, who see hope as the fundamental virtue for the healing and reconciliation our world needs.

Hope is not the same thing as optimism. But hope is fundamental to a modern spirituality. To quote Emily Dickinson: "'Hope' is the thing with feathers — / That perches in the soul [ . . . ] Yet — never — in Extremity, / It asked a crumb — of me."

Dickinson, perhaps, emphasises the passive element of hope but she recognises that the power of hope is latent in every creature. Events call it out into action.

**Hope and love  
are alive and active  
in all our Calvaries,  
even the one we  
are experiencing  
today because of the  
ecological crises.**

### Hope and Love for New Story

A more modern poet goes a step further than Dickinson. Jane Hirshfield's poem *Hope and Love* is written out of deep observation of the behaviour of a blue heron. She says in the poem that she does not understand how all herons live, just this one heron.

This beautiful bird sleeps among horses in winter. Perhaps for him this place with other animals is a place of security yet these are two separate species. One belongs to the air and the other to land.

Hirshfield's poem flows from

her observations of the heron's behaviour and the insights born of this observation. The heron trusts he will not come to harm but there is still risk involved. Even the comparative size of the animals indicates this.

Towards the end of the poem she writes: "I know that / hope is the hardest / love we carry."

How long does it take to come to understand that truth?

We are asked to carry hope and love entwined into our new story no matter how long it takes to do so.

### Hope for Today

Ultimately God is the source of our hope. Even at the moment before his death on Calvary Jesus gave hope to others.

In Luke's Gospel the criminal executed with Jesus who begged for mercy was given the promise of life: a promise beyond his expectations. Not in some distant future but "this day!" We need to ask for hope to be activated within us and our world.

On "this day", in Scripture, at the junction of life and death, the Word of God brought hope to life. It is the same in our present moment and in every moment.

Hope and love are alive and active in all our Calvaries, even the one we are experiencing today because of the ecological crises. By believing this more deeply each moment, we begin to rewrite creation's story.

Love and hope become vital parts of the river of justice and peace newly shaped, now, this day.

As we allow this new consciousness to arise in us, we realise that our trinitarian God, who is mercy within mercy within mercy, is also the heart and wellspring of our hope.

*Siren Song* by Jean McCann ©

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# ‘My peace I give to you’

The quiet mind and carefree conversation,  
where have they gone?

They have disappeared without saying a word  
while I was distracted with other things.

The white roses on the table  
are drooping.

The lightness has retreated  
to the garden

so we go there where the tūī  
swoops down on emerald wings

and we light a fire with the wood from the old plum  
and lose ourselves listening and looking out to sea

and the stillness which has been missing all day  
curls around us like smoke.

Michael Fitzsimons ©





Photo by Timon Wanner on Unsplash

# Global Church Moves to Universal Stage of Synod



**Massimo Faggioli** writes that the synod process comes as the Church moves from being a eurocentric Church to a global Catholic Church.

WE DO NOT KNOW what the final result of the Synod on synodality will be. But we will not have long to wait before the bishops and other synod delegates meet in Rome next month for the universal stage of the Synod. Every continental assembly for the synodal process revealed and exposed the complexity of what the Catholic Church is going through at

this moment. The assemblies for the Middle East and Europe offer a good example.

## **The Eastern Churches and Synodality**

"Synodalism is a core of the heritage of our Eastern Churches," noted the closing statement of the continental assembly for the Middle East, which took place in Bethania, Lebanon in February. Besides the neologism "synodalism" — which is used instead of synodality in the translation from Arabic to English — it was interesting to see how much the Catholic Churches in the Middle East have in

common with those in other parts of the world.

It was also interesting to see how this continental assembly escaped the Vatican's somewhat romantic view of the synodal tradition in the Eastern Churches (Catholic and Orthodox), which Rome sometimes evokes against more progressive demands that surface in other synodal assemblies.

At the same time, the Eastern Catholic Churches are singularly able to demonstrate the long tradition on which Pope Francis's synodal process is building and how synodality is



helping ecumenical dialogue move forward. In November 2022 the Pro Oriente Foundation in Austria and the Angelicum University in Rome organised two conferences on listening to Orthodox and Eastern Churches on their theology and experiences with synodality.

The Eastern Catholic Churches are essential – and this was very visible already at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) – in offering a more catholic view of Catholicism: the Church's Roman and Latin identity has often been ideologised (see the ongoing and exacerbating controversies on the pre-Vatican II "Latin Mass") to make it co-essential with the Catholic faith – something that is both historically and theologically erroneous.

### Europe and the East-West Rift over Vatican II

The second example is the Continental Assembly for Europe which took place in Prague, Czech Republic, also in February.

Besides the obvious and expected attempts to contain the bold theological proposals coming from the German "Synodal Path", what emerged was a series of rifts within Catholicism in Europe. There is a rift between the Eastern and Western parts of Europe on the reception and perception of Vatican II.

For the Churches that have survived Communism and the Cold War on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain, it is much more difficult to have an optimistic view of the possibility for the Church to coexist peacefully and creatively with secular culture.

Czech theologian Tomas Halík has often talked about the fact that the Catholic Churches beyond the Iron Curtain during the Cold War had a very different relationship with Vatican II compared with the Catholic Churches in Western Europe, and how that has created a certain mindset of denial about the abuse crisis in the Church.

There is also an intra-continental divide between Southwestern Europe and the small but militant Churches north of Germany, with Catholicism

in Scandinavia and the Baltic States concerned that Church reform must always defend Catholic teaching and never "capitulate to the 'Zeitgeist'" – as the Scandinavian bishops wrote in their March 2022 letter to the German bishops.

The list of signs and symptoms of intra-continental rifts that emerged from the synodal assemblies could go on and on.

But what's important to note is that the synodal process is more than a battle between progressives and conservatives – even though there are clearly different and opposed agendas in play.

### The de-Europeanisation of Catholicism

The defining feature of this process is that it is redesigning some important features of our common home, the Church, because it coincides chronologically and is part

unprecedented ways. John Paul II had "invented" the "special assemblies" of the Synod of Bishops dedicated to each individual continent. But they always took place in Rome and under strict control of the Roman Curia.

This time is different, as it was different already at the Synod assembly for the Amazon region in 2019.

We will see how the different continental synodal assemblies earlier this year will inspire the Synod of Bishops' assemblies that take place in Rome next month and in October 2024. Important procedural aspects of these two assemblies are not clear yet although the working document *Instrumentum Laboris* has been published and the Synod delegates – lay and ordained, women and men – have been chosen from every continental region of the Church.

The institutions of the Catholic

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## The Eastern Catholic Churches are essential – and this was very visible already at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) – in offering a more catholic view of Catholicism.

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of a historical turn towards a de-Europeanisation of Catholicism.

This is more complex in the United States than it is in the geographical area stretching from the Baltic States to Portugal – not to mention the question whether contemporary Catholicism in the United Kingdom is culturally and theologically closer to, say, France and Germany, or to the United States.

Church leaders are adamant to emphasise that the synodal process is not primarily about changing structures. But the process is already doing that, by letting different continental Catholic styles and traditions express themselves in

Church – the Synod included – are still largely based on institutions of the Roman Empire. Canon law is also still largely based on Roman law. Already decades ago, legal historian Stephan Kuttner said the Catholic Church's law must redefine its relationship with its roots in Roman law.

This is one of the things that the synodal process, which deceptively has very little to do with canon law, might be able to accomplish. ♦

Read more at: <https://tinyurl.com/tahyxwch>

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*Western and Eastern Church Collage*  
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**Massimo Faggioli** is a Church historian and Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Villanova University, USA. He writes regularly for newspapers and journals on Church, religion and politics. His latest book, edited with Catherine E Clifford, is *The Oxford Handbook of Vatican II* (2023).





# MISSION IS AN ADVENTURE OF THE IMAGINATION

**Cathy Ross** discusses how we need to use our imaginations to participate in God's mission at this time.

WE TEND TO THINK of mission as about sharing Jesus with those who do not know him, in places where the Gospel is not known. But we need a fresh approach to the presentation of the Gospel and a new approach to evangelism as the Christendom era is over. We desperately need the gift of imagination and in our postmodern and post-Christian Western contexts an indirect method of evangelism is more likely to gain a hearing and response.

## **Imagine Mission as Local**

Mission is best done by the insiders or the local people. The Gospel is universal but the Gospel's thought forms, metaphors and the way it is communicated will vary from place

to place and age to age. Each age and context needs imagination to communicate the Gospel afresh. This is best done by insiders. If the Gospel is to be genuinely understood and lived out by a local culture and context, then the locals are the best ones to work this out.

We need to be far more radical in allowing this to happen. We (whoever "we" may be – the Westerners, the older Christians, the incomers onto a local housing estate) need to let go and to allow the insiders to get hold of the Gospel, understand and live it in ways that make sense to them.

Too often, we want to protect, to guard and to defend the Gospel,

thereby limiting its power and potential to embed and root itself in the local context.

We need not be afraid of the local; instead we need to allow the locals to mine their own culture for its riches, seams and veins that can begin to communicate the Gospel afresh. We can react by wanting to protect our own version of Christianity and declare it as the normative one, the default setting. Or we can declare that each expression is indeed valid and then proceed to enjoy our own in isolation from the others. We need one another to enlarge, correct, challenge and refocus our own understanding of Christ. Then



these different worlds and fresh ideas can be just as useful to Christianity worldwide as Greek philosophy and thought had been to the European outworking of the faith.

Even more exciting is that this uncovering of the Gospel is a two-way process of mutuality. Christianity is nurtured by and in cultural encounters and then in turn, develops and nurtures those cultures. For example, it was only when the Chinese took in Jesus and nurtured and understood him in Confucian ways that he became Chinese enough to be understood. In this way other cultures can also benefit from the “Chinese-ness” of the Gospel and the creative interchange that is sparked by this.

### **Imagine Mission as Cherishing the Weakness of Limited Means**

With financial challenges already present and looming for the foreseeable future, we are learning to cherish weakness and vulnerability, uncertainty and our inability to fix things. When we do this, then the temptation to wield power and to collect capital is minimised. Limited means also has the beneficial side-effect that we have to trust and rely on God rather than on our own resources. Unsurprisingly, we are finding that this could put us in line with most of the rest of the world who are familiar with the reality of limited means.

Perhaps the pandemic has forced us to review our Western way of life and to ask some searching questions about it. What do we want our world and our communities to look like? The Old Testament embodied a theology of enough. Creditors were instructed to exercise restraint, all loans had to be interest-free and every seventh year, all loans were forgiven (Deut 15:1).

Too often we have succumbed to a scarcity mindset rather than looking for the resources that already exist in a community or context. A theology of enough encourages contentment, gratitude and humility and fosters generosity. A theology of enough allows for give and take. If we could model these attitudes in our relationships with humanity, creatures

and the cosmos, then our mission might begin to look more humble, organic and mutual. We may also find it easier to cherish the weakness of limited means.

### **Imagine Mission as Costing Everything**

Mission will mean conversion and conversion is a turning, a radical reorientation of a person towards God, a changed relationship through repentance and faith in Christ. We need to face some difficult questions

## **A THEOLOGY OF MISSION THAT IS GROUNDED IN CURRENT REALITIES MUST BE INTERDISCIPLINARY AND ASK SEARCHING AND CHALLENGING QUESTIONS.**

as to what conversion means and how it works in cultures with little or no Christian heritage and be realistic about the challenge this presents.

Although God may be patient, it is nonetheless true that conversion may cost us everything and can cause much suffering. Non-essential obstacles must be removed, but we cannot remove the Cross. The rich young ruler had to abandon his privilege as a condition of discipleship and his coming to Christ has social as well as spiritual implications. There are no universal rules — each situation has to be measured and judged afresh. This requires much discernment and wisdom and is a harder road to follow.

Jesus only knows saving faith in concrete responses. Salvation comes to Zacchaeus when his new relationship with Jesus compels him to return half his goods to the poor

and repay four times what he has cheated. Salvation comes to the Samaritan leper, not when he was healed, but when he returned to thank Jesus.

Our practice of mission is undergirded by our theology. What if our theology were not safe? Theology has a missionary role in its task to communicate the truths of the Gospel to a world that is constantly changing. Therefore theology must emerge out of a dynamic encounter with the world. A theology of mission that is grounded and rooted in current realities must be interdisciplinary and ask searching and challenging questions.

Just as Jacob wrestled with an angel, so we, too, need too need to wrestle with theological questions and issues that arise, as engage in mission. It is a serious undertaking. It is a long undertaking with no certain outcome. We need to experiment. We will make mistakes but it is absolutely necessary if we are to develop a missional theology that is fit for purpose and be of service to the world and the Church. This is why mission can be dangerous.

### **Make the World a Better Place**

We need to be imaginative, to be humble and gentle in our witness, to take risks, to encourage the local to flourish, to be at the edges, to travel light, to acknowledge that mission can be dangerous and will cost everything and to discern the presence of the Spirit of God already at work.

Imagine mission as trying to make the world a better place. Imagine if mission were as simple — and as complex — as that. Essentially mission is the redemption and healing of all things under Christ. It is a yearning to see all things renewed — our relationships, our societies, our environment — our world and our cosmos. ✦

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[www.karensmithdesigns.com](http://www.karensmithdesigns.com)

**Cathy Ross** is a New Zealand-born scholar of missiology. She leads the Pioneer Mission Leadership Training in the Church Missionary Society in Oxford and is a lecturer in Mission at Regent's Park College. She is also canon theologian at Leicester Cathedral, UK.







# What a Gift!

**Composer Anton Spelman and producer Simon Lynch share their experiences of collaborating in publishing two new music settings for Eucharist.**

FORTUITOUSLY, JO AYERS brought together two talents, composer Anton Spelman and producer Simon Lynch. Jo had taught Simon in primary school in the 1960s. Much later she was a member of the St Benedict's community, which became the Rongopai Eucharistic Community, where Anton served as music minister. Over the years Anton

composed and taught the community his songs and they hoped that there was a way to make his music more widely available. Through their collaboration Anton and Simon have brought that hope to fruition.

## Simon's story

My family was one of the first 500 families to settle in Papakura, the new southern suburb of Auckland, and we were part of the wider Catholic community in 1960s Papakura. When Jo was teaching us in 1965, the Catholic Mass was still conducted in Latin and there wasn't much I can recall about the music we sang in church. Meantime music was exploding in the playground — the Beatles, the *Sound of Music* and The Seekers.

The spirituals sung by The Seekers had a profound effect on me. Over the years I remember various attempts by

the Church to introduce new music and responses to certain parts of the Mass.

Because of my Papakura connection with Jo Ayers and our shared history with the likes of Father Tom Ryder and Father Terry Dibble and my interest in Michael Ayers' music, we stayed in touch.

I knew of Anton Spelman and that he'd written new music for the liturgy. So Jo organised us to meet when Anton was in town.

Anton brought his sheet music to the studio where I worked and as a classically-trained musician I could tell immediately that his 11 pieces of new liturgical music were very special. The melodies were simple and highly memorable and there was an ease and grace about the compositions.

I agreed immediately to produce a recording session at Auckland's Stebbing Recording Centre and bring Anton's compositions to life.



The recording session took place over the course of one day in December last year. Anton had rehearsed a group of six singers from the Rongopai Eucharistic Community, two men and four women.

I soon realised that as well as being a composer Anton was a good pianist, so we decided to record him and the singers "live" in the studio. Our only overdub was a flute solo on one of the pieces.

By day's end, we'd recorded all the 11 pieces. The recording quality was outstanding – credit must go to young, Stebbings engineer Oli Allan.

Once recorded I transferred the pieces to digital format and then uploaded both the *Mass for Tāmaki* and the *Freedom Mass* onto YouTube on the Anton Spelman Music channel.

We also created instrumental (piano only) versions of the songs so they are able to be distributed as digital files to parishes around the country – and world – together with the sheet music.

I am proud to be involved in bringing Anton's dream of making his new music compositions available to other Catholic communities.

I believe he has created some of the most exciting new music written for the Church in decades. It's inclusive, memorable, simple and inspirational.

I encourage everyone involved with leading the responses and the singing in Catholic liturgies, and in other Christian churches, to listen to Anton's work and embrace this wonderful new contribution from an outstanding New Zealand composer.

## Anton's Story

I'm a perfectionist and one of the hardest things for me is to accept a compliment. It is more than your typical Kiwi reticence. It's a personal version of the "don't look at me I'm just a person" mantra that many of us rehearse on a regular basis.

On the day I met Simon Lynch he challenged me with a compliment to accept the positive judgement of another who knows what he is talking about. As a producer, Simon has worked with the best in

Auckland over many years. He is an accomplished musician and I could see as he quickly went through the manuscripts that he knew what he was looking at. He liked what he saw and he said so.

I find writing music is an unqualified joy. I derive huge energy from the process but there is nothing logical or orderly about it. I recognise that it can give the appearance of being idiosyncratic and somewhat mysterious (where do these melodies come from?) but to leave it there would be to misrepresent the essence

**My dream is of others listening to these Mass settings, discovering that they help them pray and claiming them for their liturgies.**

of the creative process at work.

My best compositions have come about when I have a strong connection with the people I'm writing for. I don't believe you can write music for yourself. There are a lot of things to consider, particularly in a congregational group setting, like structure and direction. There are choices to be made about musical forms to be used and many other things.

I think I'm at my best when I allow my whole body to contribute to composition and I try and do that as much as I can. These days I also prefer playing the piano using the whole of my body as well. This may be alarming to some but there it is.

When Simon had finished looking through the manuscripts he quickly outlined our next steps, the key decision points and a timetable for recording. Then, with a big smile, he added that there would be no charge for his services on this recording project. I was shocked at his generous response but before we could respond he said why.

His experience of being taught by Jo Ayers had made such a lasting impression on him that he had decided to gift his time and expertise in acknowledgment of that special contribution to his life all those years ago.

The *Mass for Tāmaki* and the *Freedom Mass* belong to the Rongopai Eucharistic Community. Members of this community have made a commitment to be Church to each other and it shows.

While still within the genre of church-related liturgical music, each of the two Mass settings is really a "People's Mass", each comes from the people. They are not owned by the clergy or the institutional Church.

My dream is of others listening to these Mass settings, discovering that they help them pray and claiming them for their liturgies. This is the basis for Simon, myself and the Rongopai community offering this work as a gift to the whole Catholic community and to other Christians who want to use them. ✦

The recorded and sheet music is available for download from Anton Spelman's music channel: [www.tinyurl.com/7u59jxvp](http://www.tinyurl.com/7u59jxvp)

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**Anton Hikairo Spelman** lives in Ōtaki and belongs to Ngāti Kikairo ki Kāwhia. He is a musician and has three sons, a daughter, their partners and mokopuna.



**Simon Lynch** is an engineer and technician at Stebbing Studios and a playing musician. In the early 1980s he was in The Snipes, The Valentinos and The Broken Dolls, later in Ardijah and D-Faction. He co-founded Southside Records.



# I AM IN YOUR MIDST

**Kathleen Rushton** says that *Matthew 18:15-21* challenges us to show evidence of our ecological conversion.

IN MATTHEW 18 JESUS talks about life in the church, the community which with God's guidance continues the reign of God in their time and local place.

The discourse has two main sections. The first (Mt 18:1-14) shows the attitude of humility in the community especially in how it cares for vulnerable members. This section ends with the parable of the lost sheep.

The second section (Mt 18: 15-35) outlines a way for dealing with deviant behaviour (Mt 18:15-19) which is placed within the context of limitless forgiveness and reinforced by the parable of the unforgiving servant.

While Mt 18:1-14 is concerned with the danger of "little ones" straying from the church, Mt 18:15-21 considers how a person who misbehaves may remain within the church.

Australian biblical scholar Brendan Byrne suggests that in this chapter we can discern a pattern to guide us in the sensitive issue of brotherly/sisterly correction which is set in an overall framework that advocates humility and radical forgiveness. The hope is that the steps outlined will lead the person to transform their ways and be integrated into the holiness of the community. The pattern offers an opportunity for growth to those involved.



## "I Am in the Midst"

The understanding that God-with-us, found at the beginning and at the end of Matthew's Gospel (Mt 1:23; 28:20), permeates the story and emerges explicitly at this point in the context of a community: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20, literal translation).

Where "two or three" — no number is too small — are gathered in Jesus's name they belong to him. In worship, prayer, life together and action, the Risen Christ is present "in the midst of them". Because Jesus is with the community, the *basileia* of God is there.

The instructions and assurances

outlined in this section only work in a small local community. What emerges is a deep sense of the value that Christian community and life have in the sight of God. We will hear this reading during the Season of Creation and it can prompt us to new insights.

## Belief in a Creator God

While we regularly proclaim the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth", Neil Darragh asks: "In our local church, what evidence is there of belief in a Creator God?" (in *What Is the Church For?*). His question invites us to consider critically how our local church engages in God's mission towards the well-being of Earth and





its constituent beings and processes. Pope Francis notes that the 2023 Season of Creation theme “Let Justice and Peace Flow” draws on the prophet Amos: “Let justice flow on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (Am 5:24). Francis asks: “How can we contribute to this mighty river of justice and peace?” and suggests that Christian communities can do so “by resolving to transform our hearts, our lifestyles, and the public policies ruling our societies.”

### **Transform Our Hearts**

We can join the mighty river by transforming our hearts, the beginning of all transformation. John

Paul II called us to “ecological conversion” which is to acknowledge our relationship with the rest of creation. Ecological conversion has four interconnected relationships: with God, with our brothers and sisters of today and tomorrow, with all of nature and with ourselves.

### **Transform Our Lifestyles**

To transform our lifestyles we need to repent of our “ecological sins”. In his encyclical *Laudato Si’*, Francis says “to care for creation through little daily actions ... education can bring about real changes in lifestyle” (par 211). By starting with appropriate and manageable change we can reform our habitual behaviour.

Neil Darragh says that all local churches “will have a strategy and priority towards current environmental issues if it does actually believe in a Creator God as it proclaims.” This could be like the statement of priorities of the NZ Forest and Bird Society: “If each and every member keeps these issues — clean water, clean air, sustainable oceans, the impacts of climate change — to the forefront ... then we will have achieved a real impact.”

Local church communities could draw up a similar list of priorities and actions, include them in their mission statement and keep evaluating how the combined and individual actions of their members are progressing.

### **Transform Public Policies**

A further commitment is to promote Earth-consciousness in the public policies of our local council and national government. This will require us to be informed

about ecological policies aimed at protecting waterways, air and land, care of animals and protection of habitats and to discuss these with our neighbours. It involves signing relevant petitions in keeping with ecological safety. We can listen to and learn from tangata whenua.

We know that the rich nations of the world have incurred the most “ecological debt” and must pay that debt if Earth is to continue to be a common home for all life (LS par 51). We can urge our government to be strong in committing to just restraints of rich countries for the sake of the whole world at the world leaders COP28 summit in Dubai (30 November-12 December 2023).

We can engage in this conversion together in our local churches.

### **Shared Synodal Journey**

The Season of Creation (1 Sept — 4 October) ends on the feast of St Francis of Assisi which coincides with the opening of the Synod on Synodality. Francis writes: “In this Season of Creation, as followers of Christ on our shared synodal journey, let us live, work and pray that our common home will teem with life once again. May the Holy Spirit once more hover over the waters and guide our efforts to ‘renew the face of the earth’”.

Jesus assures us that: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am in the midst of them.” We hope that in our local churches we correct our patterns of damage to Earth and transform our hearts, lifestyles and policies to show our belief in a Creator God. ✠

Message of Pope Francis:  
[www.tinyurl.com/bddcfyf](http://www.tinyurl.com/bddcfyf)

Reading for 10 September: Matthew 18:15-21

*Four Seasons* by Michele G Dodds © Used with permission [www.micheledodds.com](http://www.micheledodds.com)

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





to her at all. I'm choosing to jump in and trust the adage "there is no time like the present".

Finally, it can help to have a topic. Deciding ahead of time we wanted to talk about spirituality meant everybody was prepared for the kind of thinking and listening this entailed. I've found that robust discussion is often prompted by what's in the media — sending a news article I found surprising to someone, then mentioning it the next time I see them can lead to great chats. When my flatmate finished a book she'd borrowed from me, we decided to talk about the way it portrayed the women's suffrage movement in the early 1900s, because that had lots of interesting ideas for both of us.

My life is filled with opportunity for conversation. With my flatmates around the dinner table. During a run with a friend. While having tea before Church. In my office when we are supposed to be working. On the phone to a family member. I am imperfectly learning how to use these conversations to listen well, challenge my own thinking and understand the people around me better. ✦

Image by Bewakoof on Unsplash

**Shar Mathias** writes, explores the mountains and enjoys cooking. She is an ecologist and lives in Dunedin.



THE LINE SNAKES from the counter, spilling out to a noisy construction site on George Street. I stand in line with my friends waiting to buy coffee. Like everybody else, we've been lured in by a special \$1 coffee deal. "So, should we each share our story of how we got to what we believe spiritually?" my friend asks. It feels like an incongruous topic for this busy area, and we soon relocate to a quieter park bench to hear each other without background drilling. That morning, I learn lots about my three friends, and leave with reflections on what I believe and what has brought each of them to where we are.

This recent discussion about faith—hopefully one of more to come—didn't emerge from a vacuum. Rather, it occurred after a less formal conversation about spiritual beliefs. This grew the idea that creating a formal time for it would ensure we didn't just make chit-chat. This year, I have been thinking lots about how valuable it is to seek deep conversations, and what makes these conversations possible.

The most important thing about deep conversations is that they are vulnerable. That's why we find them harder than small talk. It requires courage to be able to expose what you think is most important, and risks judgement. What if my friends don't agree with the party I want to vote for, because they don't understand why I think their policies are important? What if I

break down while explaining an upsetting family entanglement? It's scary, but if you can trust that everybody in a conversation is willing to be respectful and kind, things will probably be all right.

Another thing about having deep conversations is knowing that there's never going to be a perfect time or place. A crowded coffee line is not the easiest place to hear three others talk about their spiritual journeys, but if we had waited for the perfect moment, our conversation wouldn't have occurred. Recently I've discussed romantic relationships while biking down a busy road, and often talk to my sister while cooking because otherwise I wouldn't find time to talk



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# Reviews

## Claiming the Space for Spirituality: Pasifika Health and Wellbeing

By Cabrini 'Ofa Makasiale

Author Self Published, 2023 (NZD 20 from [spaceforspirituality@outlook.com](mailto:spaceforspirituality@outlook.com))

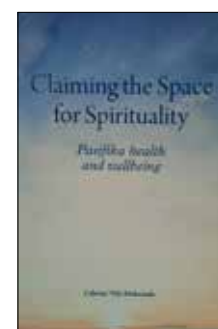
Reviewed by Delphina Soti

In *Claiming the Space for Spirituality*, Makasiale explores spirituality and its connection to well-being. She discusses interconnectedness and its breakdown through intergenerational complications. She points to how physicists and neuroscientists are articulating what our parents and ancestors always knew: "Physical and spiritual is all one irrespective of shape or shade. This essence is the same." I appreciated the book's cultural sensitivity. Makasiale respects the diversity of spiritual beliefs within the Pasifika community, the importance of our cultural

heritage and also individual spiritual paths. This inclusiveness allowed me to see the intersections between my cultural identity and personal well-being.

Makasiale presents abstract spiritual concepts and academic literature through relatable stories and metaphors. My 80-year father is reading this book as are two of our Pasifika youth workers. They are loving it! *Claiming the Space for Spirituality* incorporates Pasifika traditions and folklore, and Makasiale invites readers from diverse backgrounds to appreciate and learn from Pasifika wisdom. I found this inspiring and liberating — a dose for the soul.

I found this book a profound and empowering read. *Claiming the Space for Spirituality* is timely given the escalation of unwellness in our society. *Malo lava le tauata'i, malo le folau manu'a.* ★



## Introducing the Women's Suffrage Petition

Edited by Jared Davidson

Historical Essay by Barbara Brookes

Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2023. (NZD 18)

Reviewed by Ann Hassan

This short book considers the document which drove New Zealand to adopt women's suffrage: the 1893 Women's Suffrage Petition. From her Christchurch home, Kate Sheppard collated the signed petition sheets of women all over the country, then pasted them end-to-end and rolled them around a broomstick — a 274 metre scroll in support of women's enfranchisement.

The book is divided into two sections. Part I relates to the petition itself, including short biographies of some of the signatories. These are fascinating: with their stories of widowhood, divorce, abandonment and remarriage, they

show the precariousness of women's lives and the near-impossibility of single life for women. They also show the debt we owe to the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

Part II is an erudite essay by Professor Barbara Brookes which gives the context for the petition, especially as it relates to Te Tiriti — when it was signed, Māori women had more rights regarding property than their Pākehā counterparts. Although Brookes ends her essay with a reminder that the gender pay gap indicates work still to be done, this is a story of hard-won progress.

This book is an encouraging account of successful collective action which will appeal to readers of Aotearoa history and anyone wanting an example of ordinary women working together for extraordinary change. ★



## To Move the World: JFK's Quest for Peace

By Jeffrey D Sachs

Published by Random House, 2013. (USD 20, new and used copies available)

Reviewed by Lois Griffiths

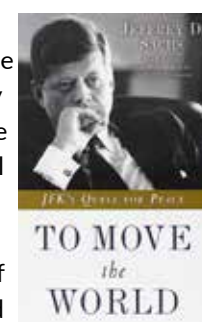
*To Move the World* examines the time from October 1962 to September 1963 when the world came perilously close to a nuclear confrontation after the USA discovered nuclear missiles had been installed by the Soviet Union in Cuba. Fortunately war was avoided. Khrushchev removed the missiles and Kennedy pledged not to invade Cuba and to remove American missiles from Turkey.

Both leaders had internal struggles: attacks from hardliners, pressure from their military-industrial complex. Each was aware of the need for a compromise that did not

humiliate the other. Kennedy believed that a "genuine peace" was possible — one step at a time. On 26 July 1963, Kennedy announced at the United Nations that the US, UK and Russia had agreed to a Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

It is 60 years since Kennedy delivered his significant peace speeches, the texts of which are appendices to the book. He said genuine peace is "the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, and the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope, and build a better life for their children."

I recommend this book. It shows how President Kennedy, by maintaining negotiations with President Khrushchev, was able to avoid a nuclear confrontation. The speeches and striking photos are a drawcard in themselves. ★



# Reviews



## Sweet As

Directed by Jub Clerc

Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

The 47th International Film Festival is upon us, and my first pick was an Australian offering, *Sweet As*, a movie that explores the power of photography not just to tell our stories, but to reframe and heal our memories and histories.

Combining elements of the coming-of-age film and the road movie, and the feel-good vibes of a story of personal redemption, *Sweet As* centres its fast-moving narrative arc on Murra (Shantae Barnes-Cowan), a young Aboriginal woman. Living with her mother, Grace, who has relapsed into a destructive lifestyle fueled by alcohol and drugs, Murra needs a break. Luckily, she comes under the wing of her policeman uncle, Ian, who arranges for her to join a photographic tour of the outback designed for at-risk youngsters. There Murra joins Elvis, another Indigenous youth whose high spirits belie a troubled history; Kylie, a sexually precocious teen caught in an abusive relationship; and Sean, a delicate lad plagued by suicidal thoughts.

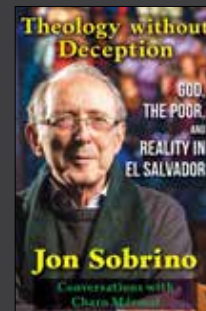
Despite their harsh backgrounds, the kids manage to engage in some group high-jinks (and near tragedies), as well as sparking inevitable tensions that sometimes spill over into raw aggression, especially between the two girls. The safari is led by the photography-mad Fernando (Nando) and his sidekick Mitch, who predictably have their hands full keeping the group together and on-task.

At the heart of the film is the notion of photography as a therapeutic tool — as Nando puts it: we take photographs to tell our story. The photos Murra makes track her progress with her new companions and the stunning landscape that unfolds before them, as their van traverses the vast red, green and blue expanses of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. The captions she adds shed further light on her emotional journey.

As the film progressed, I wondered if some of the characters' achievements and transitions were a little too easily won. For example, the Grace we see at the end of the movie is a very different person from the woman we saw at the beginning, with no explanation offered. Thus there is a certain stylisation in the way that the characters, their feelings and predicaments are portrayed. Perhaps the film is best seen as a series of snapshots mounted in an album, leaving us to bridge the gaps.

As a study of how hardship, abuse and mental fragility can affect young people and their families, and how negative cycles can be disrupted through creative ways of intervention, *Sweet As* is definitely worth circling on your festival programme. ★

## Theology without Deception: God, the Poor, and Reality in El Salvador



By Jon Sobrino

Published by Orbis Books, 2023

(USD 28)

Reviewed by Chris Farrelly

Jesuit Jon Sobrino is a pioneer of liberation theology. *Theology without Deception* is described as his theological memoir. I prefer Sobrino's description of that book as a "word walk" — an intimate walk with an incredible man looking back over his 82 years. It is a walk with the poor and the Central and South American martyrs following in the steps of Jesus.

Sobrino's theology is shaped by his close relationship with oppressed people in El Salvador. They include all those martyred, among them his fellow Jesuits, Oscar Romero and thousands of women and men murdered by troops in El Salvador. Sobrino discusses his relationship with other great liberation theologians Boff, Gutiérrez, Segundo and the bishops Helder Camara and Oscar Romero.

Sobrino describes his own "awakening" when he arrived from Spain and was confronted with the "realidad" — the reality of the poor around him and the oppression in which they lived. One highlight for me was the stunning 1965 "Pact of the Catacombs" signed by 40 bishops (and, later, a further 500) in which they pledged to live in poverty and service.

I warn readers that *Theology without Deception* could lead to your own awakening or, at least, a stirring and challenge — are we a Church of the poor today? This is a book for all followers of Christ and particularly for our bishops, leaders and aspiring leaders. ★





# Cross Currents

by Jane Higgins

IT'S SPRING, AND our corner of the planet is blossoming with new life and beauty. Through the winter many of us have watched with horror as wildfires raged across southern Europe in the wake of years-long drought, and as record-breaking heat threatens not only human lives but all life in those regions. The climate emergency is real.

Meanwhile, we are witnessing an election campaign in which major parties are stalling and even rowing back on action to address climate breakdown.

Who among those politicians and their supporters would admit to having no care for their children and grandchildren? None, surely. And yet they seem willfully ignorant of the urgency of the crisis and its implications for those who follow us.

Recently, Sophie Howe visited Aotearoa. Sophie was the first Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, a role generated by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This legislation requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, including as these relate to poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

The role of the Commissioner is

to: "(i) act as a guardian of the ability of future generations to meet their needs, and (ii) encourage public bodies to take greater account of the long-term impact of the things that they do."

The work includes monitoring and assessing the extent to which well-being objectives set by public bodies are met.

How many of the policies we are hearing about in this election campaign would reach the standard of enabling future generations to meet their needs?

Given the speed with which climate breakdown is occurring, it is precisely our children and grandchildren (and not those who are many generations distant) who will suffer from the lack of foresight and courage of our current crop of major party politicians.

Part of the problem is the tendency to place climate into the "too hard" or the "nice to have" box. Let's deal with the immediate problems, they say. The cost of living. Pot holes.

But climate touches everything. Our roads are disintegrating because they've been wiped out by extreme weather events, or are so waterlogged

that they are easily damaged by heavy traffic. Our fruit and vegetables are expensive for many reasons, but one of them is shortage due, again, to extreme weather. We cannot put the climate in a box and deal with it later.

In fact, placing it in a box at all is a fundamental error — as Pope Francis tells us in *Laudato Si'*. "Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature" (LS par 139). He writes of his namesake, Francis of Assisi: "His response to the world around him was so much more than intellectual appreciation or economic calculus, for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection."

*Laudato Si'* invites us "to feel intimately united with all that exists" and to refuse to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled (LS par 11).

Let's take note of how every single policy announced relates to care for our common home. And then, let's turn away from our screens, go outside and marvel at Earth's beauty and bounty. ✧



**TUI MOTU InterIslands**  
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*Tui Motu* magazine provides Catholic as well as ecumenical and inter-faith perspectives and discussion on current issues in church and society. It 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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## Letters to the Editor

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

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

Opinions in letters are not necessarily those of the Magazine.

### WOMEN AND CHURCH

Congratulations from an ancient Anglican to contributors to *TM* August 2023, and all who have made

me an appreciative reader of *Tui Motu*'s brave, deep, broad coverage of theological and ecclesiological topics through the years.

It has been much easier (but perhaps no less perilous) to make some changes within the Anglican Church of Aotearoa-New Zealand and Polynesia (an autonomous Province of the worldwide Anglican Communion) than within Catholicism, and not without old-boys' muttering. But the obvious changes in the positions of women in ministry (ordination of women to priesthood from 1974, the world's first diocesan bishop 1989), with synods since the year dot, are now old news. Top-down, male-dominant power structures of Anglican ministries of word, sacrament and pastoral care have become faint memories among Anglican pew-sitters older than 40 who nevertheless wonder, too, how to get younger folk "back to church".

So getting women into dog-collars and robes has been good but not a whole answer. Nor have inward-facing synodical talkfests.

Today's and tomorrow's mission context urgently poses radically different questions. I reckon we'll find a gospel-rooted future not by attracting more people to come in but by going out — listening responsively out in the loved world where so many are trying to see a future — weeks rather than generations ahead.

It is in the nature of all institutions to be driven by the wish to maintain yesterday's traditions, place and agendas. So good luck with confronting the issues so well raised by *Tui Motu* in a climate of short-vision but mostly hidden despair at all levels of Aotearoa society and throughout the West.

*Boyd Wilson, Auckland/Tāmaki Makaurau*

## Thanks for the Light Pompallier-ites

I'M KADE WEST-HILL, a year 13 student at Pompallier Catholic College, Whangarei. For the past few years you may have noticed me constantly wearing a mask around school, sitting close to the door at assembly, or having a feeding tube through my nose, along with other things that are not normal for the everyday teenager. This is because I have a serious medical condition that affects my body's digestive system. But it affects more than just that. It affects the brain, joints, heart, my whole body really.

There is currently no cure for this condition, and it is with me for the rest of my life. I've had multiple stays in hospital, for life threatening complications and to receive intense medical treatments like a chemotherapy drug. However, this is not the only treatment I take, it comes with a handful of tablets required in the morning and evening, making me extremely immunocompromised. As a result, every day is a struggle. Every morning I contemplate and wonder

what's going to happen. I get up and see whether I am well enough to attend school and often I am not.

But through all these challenges I have learnt some important life lessons. Life is too short to spend it complaining about my health. I try to make the most of every day that I have been given. I try to be a positive influence to those around me — encouraging them to be their absolute best. I encourage you all to do your best!

I also know that Christ is always by my side. Even in the most depressing of times Christ is there to guide and

support me. Sometimes that support is enough to get me through the day. Sometimes that support is found in the actions of you in this room. It may be through a kind word that one of you says to me. It may be just a simple smile. Who knew a smile can be so powerful?

So I would encourage you all to be that person. The person who shines the light of Christ. You never know when a simple act of kindness will make the world of difference to someone else. Let your light shine so there is a little less darkness for the rest of us. ✨





# For What It's Worth

THE AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND general election is nigh! If that sounds a tad apocalyptic it might be because (at least in my imagination) the buildup to the 2023 election seems to have started earlier and is much more present in the daily news than it has been in previous election years. Perhaps this is because we live in more turbulent times – even more turbulent than three years ago. The term “global boiling” has been coined recently to describe the disastrous leap forward in the heating of the planet, but it could equally be applied to the militarist, geopolitical, economic and social turbulence of today’s world. This calls for deep discernment of how and why we vote and for whom we vote.

We have a civic duty to vote – even a Christian obligation. But the selection process is not easy and we need to choose wisely. If we look to the Scriptures for guidance around wise choices, we very quickly come to Solomon. It is when he is about to take on the leadership of the nation (succeeding his father, David, as king) that Solomon makes his responsible and altruistic response to God’s invitation: “Ask what you would like me to give you” (1 Kings 3:5). The name Solomon remains synonymous with wise judgment and true justice – with seeking better governance rather than personal gain.

It would be wonderful if we could provide similar opportunities for election candidates to respond to such questions and choices as God put before Solomon. It would be very helpful to be able to ask: “Is your real motivation personal gain, prestige and the advancement of your peers? Is your top priority the well-being of the entire nation, especially those most in need?” But we could probably guess (if not necessarily trust) the answers. These questions must, in some way, be asked and answered if we are to wisely and responsibly choose those who will govern our country.

We can’t (like God) know what is truly in the hearts of political candidates, but we can have an honest look

at what is in our own hearts. We can ask ourselves: “Do I vote for the person or party who will do the most for me or, do I vote for the person/party who will do the most for those who need the most?” I am bold enough to define those most in need as: the materially poor and the planet. There are many ways of being poor of course – having physical or mental health problems, suffering prejudice or violence, even being lonely or estranged by circumstance – but all of these are exacerbated by material poverty. The planet is most in need because we humans have (almost) removed Earth’s ability to heal herself and continue to provide for her inhabitants. The elections are perhaps our personal opportunity to respond to the invitation God put to Solomon.

Solomon was given the wisdom he asked for and, for a time, (maybe the length of a couple of terms of our government) provided well for all the people of the land (1Kgs 5:5), took care of strangers from other lands (1 Kgs 8:41-43) and lived in harmony with the natural environment (1 Kgs 5:13). ☞

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## Our last word

May blessings of  
contrition, understanding  
and wisdom  
help us live well  
in Earth our home.

From the *Tui Motu* Team

