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Tui Motu

InterIslands

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ROYAL COMMISSION UNCOVERS TRUTH
ROCÍO FIGUEROA, BRENDAN DALY, MAKARETA TAWAROA & OTHERS

MORE ON THE SYNOD
NEIL DARRAGH

SEASON OF CREATION
MARY BETZ, TONY WILLIAMS

Grieve in the Season of Creation
Pōuri I te Wa o te Hanganga

INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC MAGAZINE

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

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Editorial

IT IS AS if winter dug up our callowness and spilled it over the landscape like glacier moraine — a mess of pettiness and cruelty, hypocrisy and elitism, domination and blame, self-centredness and menace. It was on show when the Act leader announced he was "staying at work" rather than attending the hui with other political leaders at Tūrangawaewae to listen and celebrate with Māori. His repeated misrepresenting of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori partners allows those who might otherwise feel censured by society to voice racist comments, attitudes and behaviours.

The mess includes the authoritarian boulders squashing the truth about the "care" in child health and welfare institutions from 1950 to 1999. These boulders were upended by the Royal Commission, which over the last six years listened to and recorded the experiences of many of the children and young people who were entrusted to state and church-based care institutions. For the first time in many survivors' lives, the commissioners believed their stories rather than the "whitewashed" accounts of those who abused them. But our focus on the Royal Commission mustn't end with the release of the final report. There follows a raft of requirements and recommendations for church and society both about measures to restore justice and dignity to those who survived abuse and ways to ensure transparency and accountability of institutions in the future.

Then we have the sands of the Synod on Synodality. The second session of the Synod will take place in Rome next month. The document for that session has been published, as you'll read in Neil Darragh's article, and it suggests that our local church is alive with preparations, discussions and explorations for the Synod. I suspect that's not so in this country. If they're not *Tui Motu* readers, most parishioners will have heard little about the Synod since the "group phase" in 2022. The main idea of the Synod is to involve all the baptised together in mission — like a new pentecost. We were to transform the church, heavy with clericalism, into service of God's people in the world. And one outstanding hope for many in Aotearoa and beyond, as early Synod documents showed, was to allow women to be equal in the church. Maybe with the coming of spring some of these hopes will take root in the sands.

This month is the Season of Creation, inviting us to draw on the energy of spring to hope and act for the community of Earth. Moraines give geologists an opportunity to examine what was once hidden but has now come to light. We can do the same — and then allow the beauty beyond to fill our hearts with resolve and love. We can grieve the damage we've done to people and environments and let our grief change us into more humble, truthful and community-minded people.

We thank all the contributors to this issue for sharing their experience and research, study and faith, art and craft in a thought-provoking magazine.

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

Whakamā Is Not Enough

HOW CAN PEOPLE behave with cruelty, sadism and depravity towards others at work and then go home to their families and behave lovingly? I like to think I am different from them, but given circumstances where such behaviours are permissible, normalised and even encouraged, would I do those things, too, and justify them to myself? I'm terrified that the answer is: "Yes, I would."

These were my thoughts as I read the final report of the Royal Commission into Historical Abuse in State Care and in Care of Faith-based Institutions between 1950-1999, "Whanaketia — through pain and trauma from darkness and light" (2024). One word encapsulates how I felt after reading the report: whakamā/shame.

The Commission estimated that about 250,000 people were abused or neglected during the period it covered. It also found that Māori, Pacific people and disabled people have been over-represented in state and faith-based care, and as victims of abuse in care.

The Report made 95 recommendations for redress and 138 others, including a formal apology from the prime minister, formal apologies from the pope and other heads of churches, renaming streets and amenities named after a proven perpetrator and reopening criminal investigations into possible offending.

It recommended that a Care Safe Agency supported by law be established to prevent and respond to abuse and neglect in care.

The Commission made multiple, detailed recommendations on how state and faith-based care entities should ensure safety within their institutions, and called for better government investment in mental health and disability care.

But will we change? Now, while the report is fresh, we feel public distress and shame — but will our resolve dissipate as we get on with our daily lives? As a society that mandated the institutions, the practices and the destructive power over others, do we have the will to change?

Journalist Chris Trotter recently wrote: "the brutally straightforward explanation for those 50 years of abuse is that, for at least the 50 years that preceded 1950, persons categorised as: 'alcoholics, imbeciles, illegitimate children (and their mothers), prostitutes, criminals, the feeble-minded, lunatics, epileptics, deaf-mutes, the unemployable, the tubercular, the immoral (eg, homosexuals), anyone from another race' were branded by credible authority figures — senior public servants, academic experts, medical professionals and political leaders — as threats to the moral, social and racial 'hygiene' of the nation. It was sanctioned that such individuals must be isolated from the rest of the population in closed institutions."

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the conservative God-fearing sectors of society perceived the mentally ill as people on the outskirts of society — "unfortunate folk" to be ashamed of and hidden away.

Admittedly, mental health practice was on the brink of change, but New Zealand psychiatric hospitals were understaffed and supervised. Seacliff Hospital near Dunedin continued to use unmodified ECT into the 1970s. ECT was sometimes used not to heal but as punishment for "difficult" patients and on their sensitive body parts.

Most psychiatrists were wary of the new concepts of psychoanalysis which could have been a more suitable treatment for some in care. It involved listening closely to a patient, guiding them to tell their stories and make sense of them as a means of facilitating recovery.

Now in 2024 we can tell ourselves that things have changed. Have they really? There is still pressure on mental health facilities and care for young and old. French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a standard-bearer for the idea that people are innately good. After many years pondering this, I don't agree. I think we have to strive for goodness. We need to continuously and critically check our motivations and encourage others in that pursuit for the common good of all in society. The report by the Royal Commission is a stark reminder of what happens when we don't.

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

READ, LISTEN, BELIEVE, ACCOMPANY

Rocío Figueroa *writes on how we can respond to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.*

AS CATHOLICS IN New Zealand, what will be our response to the Royal Commission Report? Many of us may feel overwhelmed, impotent and confused about how to address it, or how to respond.

About 2,300 people came forward to the Commission, 43 per cent of whom came from faith-based care institutions, and revealed that they suffered from physical, psychological, spiritual and sexual abuse. Additionally, more than half of the survivors who provided evidence to the Inquiry said they were sexually abused after going through a Catholic institutional setting. It is estimated that between 53,000 and 106,000 people may have been abused in faith-based care settings from 1950 to 2000. This estimate of the rate of abuse has been calculated mainly on international evidence.

Our failure as a Catholic community is appalling. Children, Māori, Pasifika, young and adult women have not been safe. Unfortunately, this is not just a problem of the past.

FACE SURVIVORS' STORIES

To begin a path of reparation and reform, the first step has been taken by the survivors themselves, who have bravely told their stories. A second step will be for our Catholic communities to commit to read the summary "Survivors' experiences of abuse and neglect in faith-based care: Summary and Key Messages". It is not easy reading but a very concrete way to do justice to the survivors and ensure that the report does not remain mere words on paper. Reading the testimonies and written reflections is an opportunity for us to ponder their content.

This report belongs to the group of international independent reports that have been written by Royal Commissions or other ad hoc public institutions.

WHY WE NEED TO READ STORIES

From a theological point of view, these reports invite us to read them as "signs of the times" and interpret them in the light of the Gospel. The voices of the survivors become a source for theologising. Their voices are a cry to God for justice. The cry demands that as a community we must place the most vulnerable, the poor, the victims of any type of violence and abuse, at the centre of our concern and mission.

In this task of pondering the signs of the times, I would like to highlight three elements from the report that I found to be a wake-up call for our communities:
1) the relationship between spiritual abuse and sexual abuse in religious settings; 2) the systemic problems that have enabled abuse; and 3) the necessity to be a trauma-informed community.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Firstly, the Inquiry heard from some survivors of faith-based settings who "talked about the manipulation they experienced in the form of spiritual abuse, whereby religious leaders used religious authority and claims of closeness to God to dominate, control or coerce them" (*Survivors' experiences* p19). In our communities we are now more aware of sexual abuse, but not much attention has yet been given to spiritual abuse.

Spiritual abuse happens when churches, priests, religious sisters or pastoral agents use religious symbols, texts, teachings, prayers or their leadership to violate or threaten someone's spiritual self, their freedom and their personal relationship with God. In religious settings, spiritual abuse can exist without sexual abuse, but what becomes almost certain is that when sexual abuse happens in a faith-based community, it is usually preceded by spiritual abuse.

To create safe communities, attention to power dynamics becomes essential. All of us are called not only to serve but also to exercise our power with responsibility. We must become more aware of how personal power (confidence, skills, knowledge, social influence, authority and roles, resources, etc.) can be used or misused.

This will equip us to identify situations in which abuses flourish. We learn to recognise the warning signs. Being attentive to the misuse of power helps everyone in the community to avoid becoming perpetrators of abuse, even unintentionally.

SYSTEMIC PROBLEM ENABLING ABUSE

Secondly, regarding the systemic factors, the report reads: "The church leadership has made minimal and inadequate attempts to understand the fundamental and broader systemic factors that have influenced abuse. This has meant the church's prevention of further harm has been limited at best" (*Survivors' experiences*, p49).

The horror of abuse has not been just the presence of bad apples; rather, we have a systemic structure that has frequently failed to respond adequately.

There are at least four interconnected factors that have contributed to this failure: clericalism, the role of women in the church, the abuse of power and the lack of transparency. These have formed a dangerous combination that has enabled and concealed abuse within the church.

A hierarchical structure has concentrated power in the hands of a few. This creates a toxic environment and usually means that disclosures of abuse are handled internally, to protect the image of the institution. It is no coincidence that the decision-makers are invariably male. The lack of female presence in decision-making processes means that a male-dominated culture has not been challenged.

BECOMING A TRAUMA-INFORMED COMMUNITY

A third element to ponder is how to be a trauma-informed community. We all have experiences of pain and loss — suffering that we integrate into our lives. But trauma is different: the person is not able to integrate, remember, or grasp their suffering. This is why trauma has lasting adverse effects on the nervous system of the person who experiences it.

For some people, reactions to a traumatic event are temporary, whereas others have prolonged reactions that move from acute symptoms to lifelong symptoms with mental health consequences (eg, post-traumatic stress and other anxiety disorders, substance use and mood disorders) and medical problems (eg, arthritis, headaches, chronic pain).

THERE ARE AT LEAST FOUR INTERCONNECTED FACTORS THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS FAILURE: CLERICALISM, THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH, THE ABUSE OF POWER AND THE LACK OF TRANSPARENCY.

It is very sad to read in the Commission's report on "Qualitative analysis of abuse in care" that "of the 2,329 survivors accounts, 683 survivors (29 per cent) were incarcerated at some point during their life" (p28).

The person who has experienced trauma needs to be able to tell their story and be believed. The violent event needs to be spoken about and brought to light. We need to talk about the truth of violence in our homilies, in our narratives.

But as well as talk we must also listen. If someone tells their story, another person must witness this testimony, creating not only a safe space for speaking but also receiving the words when they are spoken.

HOLY SATURDAY SPACE

Theologian Shelly Rambo talks about the theology of Holy Saturday for trauma survivors (see *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*). Sometimes we want the person to "move on", to pass from death to resurrection. We forget that for many people their wounds continue unresolved in the present. They need our love and presence to remain in this middle space between death and resurrection.

The government has announced that on 11 November this year they will publicly issue their apology. We now wait to see how the government and the churches implement the report's many recommendations. In the meantime, we can put efforts towards creating a more trauma-informed community in which we can remain in love with those suffering from trauma. We are called by God to believe their stories and accompany them in their Holy Saturday.

For further information see: www.abuseincare.org.nz

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When the Lid Is Lifted

Brendan Daly *writes about the ramifications for the church of the Royal Commission Report on Abuse in Care.*

THE ROYAL COMMISSION Report on Abuse in Care included physical, emotional, mental and sexual abuse. The report was released on 24 July 2024 and the figures are appalling: it is estimated that of the 655,000 people in care between 1950 and 2019, between 114,000 and 256,000 were abused. The Commission reported there were 592 perpetrators of abuse in the Catholic Church who had abused 1,296 victims — these 592 perpetrators included 14 per cent of the New Zealand clergy during the time covered by the inquiry. The report notes there are systemic factors behind this abuse and Catholic leaders have been neither accountable nor transparent about the abuse they knew of.

Report Recommendations

The Commission made 138 recommendations including: a new police unit to investigate and prosecute cases of abuse and neglect in care; a national care strategy to prevent and respond to abuse and neglect in care; an apology from the Pope; public honours, memorials and street names of abusers be changed; the Bishop of Christchurch to deal with St John of God so that new victims are properly able to complain and be cared for, and that all victims receive compensation from the new redress scheme; Archbishop Paul Martin is to ask for an apostolic visitation in Papua New Guinea to deal with potential abuse by the St John of God order there; all people in care need to have a system of independent advocates; that there be mandatory reporting of abuse, even including from religious confessions.

Of these recommendations, there is only one that cannot be accepted; the church will not agree to the violation of the seal of confession.

The Catholic Church leaders have been given two months to agree to join Puretumu Torowhānui, the new redress system, once it is established. There is the potential for losing their tax-exempt status if they fail to agree. It has been recommended that changes be made

to ACC to provide tailored compensation for survivors of abuse and neglect.

The report recommends that the Church implement the 95 holistic redress recommendations in the interim report on redress. The recommendations include: giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in appointments to all positions; and that all policies and procedures include respect for Māori and Pacific cultures, as well as for all people with disabilities.

Establish Independent Care Safe Agency

A major recommendation is to establish an independent Care Safe Agency with wide powers including vetting carers and clergy before they enter ministry. The church entities will have to report annually to this body. All entities providing care will need to ensure they have appropriate complaints policies and procedures, and a centralised database of complaints and disclosure of incidents of abuse. Each individual report or claim of abuse must be notified to this Care Safe Agency.

Clergy and religious in future are to have performance appraisals and independent supervision. They, and all staff, are to have training and professional development so that codes of conduct and policies are properly observed and implemented.

Abuse procedures must be set in place, including that: standdown procedures are required for those in religious ministry who are subject to complaints; if a complaint of abuse is substantiated, the person in religious ministry is to be permanently removed from ministry; where there are convictions for abuse, clergy are to be dismissed from the clerical state and all members of religious institutes are to be dispensed from their vows; there is to be a national register of people in religious or pastoral ministry with a substantiated complaint or conviction; there is to be a risk assessment of persons in congregations with a conviction or a substantiated complaint of abuse.

Record Keeping

The report requires: records to be kept for 75 years; provision of safety measures around private areas such as confessional boxes; an annual report from church entities on implementing the recommendations.

Catholic Response

People are shocked that this abuse could happen and be perpetrated for so long. Catholics feel anger at the perpetrators who have done so much damage to people and who were masquerading in roles that called for respect and privilege.

Pope Francis understands these feelings. He said in Hungary in April 2023: "The abuser is an enemy. Each of us feels this because we empathise with the suffering of the abused ... even talking to the abuser involves revulsion; it's not easy. But they are God's children too. They deserve punishment, but they also deserve pastoral care."

Catholics, including priests, feel betrayed that leaders of religious institutes and bishops were guilty of the most profound clericalism and covered up this abuse and allowed it to continue.

Abuse has been a crime in canon law for most of the church's history. However, church leadership has often been anti-canon law, resulting in leaders excusing abuse as a moral fault and not dealing properly with the crimes. It seems that no religious brothers were dismissed from religious institutes for sexual abuse crimes before 2020 and only two priests were dismissed from the clerical state. This is a dramatic statement of the abdication of responsibility. It is ironic that a secular government commission is telling the church to implement its own law.

In Pope Francis's encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), he reflects on the parable of the Good Samaritan: "The story of the Good Samaritan is constantly being repeated ... leaving great numbers of the marginalised stranded on the roadside. The priest and Levite pass by in nervous indifference." This shows that belief in God and the worship of God are not enough to ensure that we are actually living in a way pleasing to God. A believer may be untrue to everything that his faith demands of him, and yet think he is close to God and better than others."

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The revelations of abuse in New Zealand and elsewhere have had a gigantic impact on church attendance and practice. Many are left wondering about the future of the church and its survival.

Jesus promised to be with the church until the end of time (Matthew 18:20). It is also good to remember a gospel incident which parallels people leaving the church. In John 6 Jesus teaches about the Eucharist, which is central to the life of the church. Many of the crowds were leaving Jesus because of his teaching about eating his body and drinking his blood. Jesus says to his disciples: "Do you also wish to go away?" Peter replies: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

The Temptation in the Wilderness by Briton Rivière (1840-1920) Wikimedia Commons

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BROKEN BUT SURVIVING

Makareta Tawaroa *discusses why Māori should be part of decision-making in all matters affecting whānau and hapu.*

WHENEVER I TRAVEL on State Highway 3 and pass the Lake Alice Hospital turnoff, about 30 minutes from Whanganui, I remember my beloved late cousin Mere. A kind and generous person, Mere was a young adult who suffered from depression and in the late 1970s she was a patient at Lake Alice. She was under the "care" of psychiatrist Dr Selwyn Leeks, described by a survivor of the institution, as a "psychopath on the loose for 35 years". Mere was kind and generous. She shared with me the pain she had suffered through electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), and its serious side-effects throughout her life.

Mere is one of the many young people who suffered humiliation instead of care. The Royal Commission's final report (July 2024) reveals the scale of abuse and the powerlessness of whānau to protect their children. Dr Leeks, lead psychiatrist at the Child and Adolescent Unit at Lake Alice Hospital in the 1970s, conducted ECT on young people and administered paralysing drugs as punishments rather than for therapeutic purposes. There were also allegations that he sexually abused patients.

In New Zealand about 200 to 300 adult patients were treated with a form of ECT every year. Approximately 25

per cent of them said their memory was affected, which is why it was reserved for severe cases. But at Lake Alice, ECT was used on children. Many treatments were reportedly carried out without proper consent from patients or their guardians. Former patients reported severe psychological trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression.

Clinical psychologist Dr Barry Parsonson testified before the Royal Commission that ECT was used like aversion therapy. “ECT appeared to be frequently used as punishment for things such as fighting, smoking or expressing homosexuality. Inflicting pain was used to stop people doing things that were probably perfectly normal. The treatment was not therapeutic. It bordered upon maltreatment if not torture," he said. "The consequences, I think, have been trauma and a distrust of authority."

However, Dr Leeks never admitted that his patients were undiagnosed and the “treatment” did not work. In archival footage of a *Sunday* programme he said: "What was treatment then may not be seen as treatment now.”

DONALD’S STORY

The Commission heard from Donald Ku who now lives in the Te Awhina Unit at Whanganui Hospital. Donald was born in 1963 in the central North Island town of Raetihi. His iwi on his mother’s side is Ngāti Maniapoto. On his father’s side he is Tūwharetoa. He was sent to Lake Alice labelled as having “marked retardation”. He said: “I hated seeing that in my [medical] notes” when he was a patient at Te Awhina Psychiatric Ward, Whangaui Hospital. “I don’t think I was retarded at all; I was just a young boy struggling with being brought up in a hard environment.”

Ku was one of five siblings. His early years were happy. “I have good memories of those early years with my grandmother,” he told the Royal Commission. “She started teaching me a lot about living off the land and looking after our home.” But life changed when his mother asked the authorities for help. She was told that the state could do a better job and at seven Donald was in foster care. He said the family was split up by Social Welfare and he saw only one brother after that. “This was the start of my life within the system and the start of my suffering in so many different institutions.” He was sent to Lake Alice where he was sexually abused and administered ECT as punishment. “Where I really belonged was with my mum and dad — with my whānau. When I was removed from that environment, they took me away from my Māori culture. I wish they had given me to my grandmother. I think my life would have been different if they had.”

Donald’s story is one of many at the time. Survivors described their “treatment”: electro-convulsive therapy given as punishment; sexual abuse, and being locked up in isolation. One woman alleged that Dr Leeks raped her.

ABUSE OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

Many experts describe the young people at Lake Alice Hospital as having behavioural issues rather than psychiatric disorders. After analysing a number of case files Dr Parsonson said: “At the very least, the actions of Dr Leeks and the unit staff was an abuse of power and medical authority, an unjustified assault on the human dignity and the rights of the young persons in an inhumane regime of maltreatment that induced fear, emotional and physical harm.”

I knew the late John Watson, clinical psychologist in the early 1970s, who started ringing alarm bells about the maltreatment at Lake Alice and institutional failures across agencies including police and Social Welfare to protect children. Then in the mid-1970s a young Niuean boy hid a coded message in Niuean in his drawing: “Mum, the people have given me electric shock, as well as the paraldehyde injection and it’s painful. I am crying. I am in pain.” But it wasn’t until 1978 that Lake Alice was closed — five years after the first alarm sounded.

STOLEN GENERATIONS

Māori advocates want greater redress for the collective loss to hapu from the “stolen generations” between the 1950s and the 1990s. The majority of “stolen” children were Māori — 80 per cent of the estimated 200,000. Today we see it for what it is: large-scale abuse, underpinned by the systemic racism that persists into today.

Boys’ home and Lake Alice survivor Fred Rawiri told the Commission: “I can’t help but think that the rest of my childhood would have turned out differently if I had been allowed to go and live with my family.”

Barrister Kingi Snelgar, who works with generations of former wards of the state said: “The story of abuse in care is directly linked to our colonial history. We know that Māori are more likely to be uplifted and are treated differently in care. The impact of the care system on the people that I represent is a huge loss of identity, a huge loss of belonging. The cost on both the individual and the collective cannot be measured in numbers. It’s the loss of culture, the loss of kaumātua and kuia that can run our marae, the loss of generations from their whakapapa.”

The harm that people like Dr Leeks caused, and the failure of institutions to oversee the care given to vulnerable people, will be felt for generations to come. When I remember Mere and all those who suffered at his hands, I think Dr Leeks should be charged posthumously with medical misadventure.

Chairperson of the Medical Council of New Zealand Dr Rachelle Love accepted the Royal Commission’s final report and apologised on behalf of the Council: “We are deeply and unreservedly sorry for this failure and the intergenerational consequences our actions have caused. Not only did we fail to hold Dr Leeks to account, we also prioritised the doctor’s perspective over that of the patient and neglected to maintain proper records of information.” ◆

Facing Uncertainty by Kay Fuller © Used with permission
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Christopher Longhurst *discusses how and why we need to transform priestly formation for a safe and synodal church.*

Good Priestly Formation

CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD IS significantly impacted by seminary formation. Priests can be fit for purpose only when the systems and structures under which they are formed change. And that will not happen until effective changes have been made to the church's internal systems, structures, laws and even doctrines.

To the extent that priestly formation remains rooted in the church's juridical and hierarchical power, theological misogyny, institutional protectionism and cult of secrecy, Catholic seminary formation risks continuing to form dysfunctional clergy.

Experience of Seminary

When I entered the seminary in the 1990s, I learnt things I should never have learnt. For instance, I learnt how to see the institution with its laws, structure, hierarchy and organisation as more important than anything else in the world, and to conflate that institution with something divine.

I learnt that institutional reputation was more important than human integrity, and that I must sacrifice myself for "the good of the Church" — understood as the institution.

I learnt that the good of the institution was sufficient reason for being silent about things the *Catechism* refers to as "what ought not be known". I learnt how to keep secrets, not to question authority, and that the right to communicate truth was conditional (par 2488). I also learnt how to use discreet language (par 2489).

On the academic side, I learnt idealistic and romantic ideas about celibacy and human sexuality, to repropose abstract formulas, repeat ideas from ancient church writers, suspend reason under the pretext of faith, and surrender my will to another man's will which I was supposed to follow unconditionally.

There was no dialogue or engagement with other faith traditions or different knowledge. There was no openness to diversity or encounter with the poor. Questioning doctrines was considered troublemaking.

On the side of human formation, I learnt how to be closed to the world and separated from those I was supposed to serve. Rather than solve conflict, I had to avoid it. Instead of healing woundedness, I needed to tolerate it.

Regarding relationships, having a particular friend was forbidden. In fact, it was considered "an occasion of sin". Therefore, I learnt to accept being alone in community, to deny myself, suppress my emotions and be submissive.

I learnt not to nark on my fellow seminarians, to please my superiors through blind obedience — which was rewarded, as was silence in the face of wrongdoing.

I also learnt how to claim moral superiority, demand reverence towards myself and feel entitled, in fact soon to be "ontologically changed" — without questioning its ridiculousness.

In "spiritual formation" I learnt how to pray polished and prideful prayers, and to love the liturgy more than humanity.

In one formation class I even learnt how to detect a paedophile, and therefore, avoid being caught for sexually assaulting a child. In other words, I learnt how to cover up.

In short, I learnt how to be a hypocrite.

I eventually came to the realisation that I did not want to be part of this kind of community. So I went to another seminary. However, I experienced the same situation there. So, I tried another seminary. Alas, I found the same situation there as well.

Seminary Not Different Today

Some will say: "But that's all changed". Talking with newly-ordained clergy today and reviewing Catholic seminary formation across countries, there appear to be no substantial changes regarding internal seminary structures, systems and operations. In fact, there is a striking likeness across Catholic seminaries worldwide.

I believe it would be presumptuous to claim that introducing psychological assessments, professional counselling, police checks and a few new academic courses would be enough to generate a culture change in seminaries. To say that church and seminary culture has changed because of these would be like pouring new wine into old wineskins and thinking the result would be good (Luke 5:38).

Wide-scale Transformation Necessary

Cultural transformation means behaviours and mindsets of people have been fundamentally transformed producing different values, systems, and structures.

Current church culture inherited from post-Vatican I popes — Pius X's "church as essentially an unequal society" — remains skewed away from Jesus's vision, mission, teaching, and core values. Such misalignment indicates that current systems and structures remain barriers to achieving the church's authentic mission.

Right now, the systems and structures that failed us by producing priests who abused, covered up abuse, or remained silent about abuse thereby endangering others, have not changed. Nor has questionable church teaching on the nature of priesthood itself changed.

The Real Change Needed

Today we need a synodal seminary formation. First, we need to entirely abandon the seminary itself. Let seminarians be formed in organic social contexts. Jesus's disciples were well-socialised, mature persons with significant life and work experience.

Have seminarians live in the homes of good families, Catholic and other, in "normal" environments, and be involved in the family's life.

Learn to Be Pastoral by Working

There must be no pastoral work for them. It is not fair to have seminarians use other people's lives as a pastoral training ground. No seminarian I've met possessed the knowledge and skills required to perform safe pastoral work. Let their "pastoral work" be a day-job volunteering at the local city mission under close professional supervision.

Spend Time with Poor

Let them spend time — a lot of time — on the periphery with the poor. This will bring them into touch with reality. Let them do manual labour for parishioners whom they are called to serve, and assist the priest when appropriate in clerical duties, but no role-playing, ever! Candidates for priesthood are not priests.

Study, Read, Reflect in Context

Send them to the local theology school where interreligious and intercultural dialogue will be part of their learning. Ensure they read the Bible thoroughly and understand it correctly, and be seen to apply its teaching by their good example.

Let Laity Be Involved

Have two extraordinary lay formators assigned to each candidate. They will make the final unanimous judgement of the candidate's "worthiness". Keep bishops out of the process. It is the community out of which a vocation comes that priests are to serve (see Mark 10). That must be involved in the decision making. The vocations director must also be a layperson for the same reasons.

Stop Clericalist Practices

Coming to Aotearoa New Zealand to pursue the priesthood raises serious questions, as does going overseas to recruit seminarians from clericalist churches. These are clericalist practices, eg, against Catholic teaching — vocations are to come from the local community.

Further, such a recruitment practice is placing our nation at continual risk. As GCPS Consulting's assessment of the New Zealand Catholic Church's implementation of safeguarding standards recently reported: "There is limited evidence that countries now sending priests and seminarians to Aotearoa New Zealand have records of allegations of abuse amongst clergy available to them." (*Final Report*, 31 July 2024).

Further, importing seminarians risks harming the seminarians themselves. Is it right to bring young men to Aotearoa and into a system which produced priests who abused us? Is it reasonable to claim that police checks, psychological assessments, studying safe ministry, Māori pastoral care, and teaching New Zealand church history have changed the church systems that allowed abuse to occur?

Become Synodal

In order to transform seminary formation in an effective way, church leaders must first transform their hearts and minds. Once they are transformed, then laity and clergy can work together, synodally, to ensure that our system — a clergy-focused and clergy-led top-down culture fed by dubious doctrines which has enabled priests to abuse — can be changed.

For church leaders to claim a "culture change" in the church before then is deceptive and can lead to keeping our church and society unsafe.

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The Last Trial by Miki de Goodaboom © Used with permission www.miki-fonvielle.pixels.com

How to Be a Missionary Synodal Church

Neil Darragh *discusses the Preparatory Document for the second session of the Synod on Synodality to be held in October.*

"THE CHURCH IS not a democracy!" is a slogan that in the past has served to silence church members who proposed to tell bishops and priests how to run the church. The appropriate response to that slogan would be, "If not, why not?" A model of "democracy", after all, where everyone is supposed to have a say is much closer to the New Testament view of what a Christian community should be than any of the other models we have used in the past: monarch, dictator, feudal lord, corporate manager, hereditary chief, mouthpiece of God, and so on.

In any case, a system of governance which acknowledges the rights of the individual person, co-responsibility and authority as service to the common good, is closer to what the Catholic Church is searching for in the process we now call "the synodal way".

The Synodal Way

Along with many small group conversations, the synodal way, in its current version, involves two synods of bishops, the first of which took place in October 2023 and a second planned for October 2024. The preparatory document for next month's synod, "*How* to be a missionary synodal Church" (published by the General Secretariat of the Synod, 9 July 2024), asks all Catholics to re-examine their understanding of the church by responding to the question of "*How* to be a synodal Church in mission?" This central question breaks down into a number of more focused questions:

- how to engage in deep listening and dialogue;
- how to be co-responsible in the light of the dynamism of our personal and communal baptismal vocation;
- how to transform structures and processes so that

all may participate and share the charisms that the Spirit pours out on each for the common good; and,
- how to exercise power and authority as service.

Deep Listening and Dialogue

For those who have already been involved in the discussions that led up to and followed the 2023 synod Assembly, the first of these questions *("How to engage in deep listening and dialogue")* has already been partly answered through the experience of "spiritual conversations" where people in small groups were asked to listen deeply to one another's thoughts and feelings about the church without judgement and without debate. The preparatory document for the 2024 Assembly gives a definition of "synodality" as "the particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the church, a style that starts from listening as the first act of the Church" (par 36).

This practice is intended to distance these "spiritual conversations" from other kinds of persuasive talking such as religious "preaching", political propaganda, ideological grandstanding, parliamentary heckling, and even the "robust debates" of academic argument.

These spiritual conversations are ones in which everyone is listened to, especially those who have been at the margins of power and influence. They are also intended to be different from the more hierarchical top-down style of many official Catholic church institutions.

The Stage of Discernment

The second question proposed in preparation for next month's Assembly of the Synod is: *"How to be co-responsible in the light of the dynamism of our personal and communal baptism."* This question places responsibility for the state of the church on our common Baptism rather than any special "Ordination". It is a step beyond listening. It requires discernment.

We should note here that this preparatory document is not proposing to abolish hierarchy or authority in the church. This whole process is instigated and managed by the church hierarchy. The document recognizes though that we need changes in our current understanding of church authority. It holds firmly to the responsibilities arising from Baptism but it leaves the "how" of this co-responsibility up for discussion along the synodal way.

The document does not solve the question of how this discernment will resolve the contradictions between different kinds and degree of responsibility. But it does give us some pointers along the way. It advocates for "transparency, accountability, and evaluation" (par 73) in the church's decision-making. It makes clear, too, that this means accountability to the community, not just to established authority (responsibility downwards as well as upwards) (par 77).

Transforming Structures and Processes

The third question *("how to transform structures and processes so that all may participate and share the charisms that the Spirit pours out on each for the common good")* digs deeper into the heart of co-responsibility and it is here that our "walking together", the synodal way, may begin to stumble. Listening and spiritual conversations are an amiable stroll in the park. Transforming established church structures is a struggle through tough undergrowth.

This document is a preparatory document and is not meant to solve the issues before the actual synod assembly itself. Yet there is a sense in the document that, although its intention is to transform, many of these issues are going to remain business-as-usual.

We could name some of these as they affect our own local churches. One, the most obvious, and already noted in this preparatory document under the heading, "Sisters and brothers in Christ: a renewed reciprocity", is gender inequality in the church. The current lack of reciprocity is already emptying the churches and remains the largest issue in "participation". This synod of bishops will need to solve it or at least show a willingness to do so.

Mission Priorities

A second major issue is the unclarity about the church's mission. While "participation", in the sense of *transforming the structures and processes* of the church receives major attention in this document, "mission" is a dim drumbeat in the background, insistent but undirected and unfocused. Yet how we participate in the church's life, and especially the kinds of leadership skills needed, will change depending on our mission priorities.

Is our mission about serving God's mission for a better world, a more just world, a more peaceful world, a more equal world, a healthier planet? Or is it about increasing the numbers of church members? Or, more simply, is the church primarily a means for each of us to obtain our individual salvation?

Whichever we decide is our priority, mission will require different kinds of structures and processes in the church. It is the mission that determines the style of participation, not the other way round.

Reform of Sunday Eucharist

A third major issue is like a sacred cow wandering about and interrupting the flow of people on the synodal way. The preparatory document repeats (often) that the Eucharist is the source and culmination of the church's life (par 50, 55). Yet our Sunday Eucharists, rather than a people walking together, where all are listened to and all are valued, show a formal local church dominated by a solo male presider who occupies a central place, talks for most of the time and wears colourful, flowing robes to demonstrate his authority over this assembly. This is not the source and culmination of a synodal way.

Any other reforms of the structures and processes of the church, and especially its mission orientation, require a major reform of our Sunday Eucharists.

And this leads us rather abruptly into the fourth, glaringly unaddressed, question of this preparatory document: *"How to exercise power and authority as service".*

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

PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS

This is the first of three articles in which **Susan Smith** *explores how Catholic understanding around mission has evolved in the centuries since Jesus proclaimed the imminent reign of God among us.*

MARK TELLS US that shortly after Jesus's baptism, Jesus tells the assembled people that the Kingdom of God is near (see Mark 1:9-11). At Jesus's baptism, the Spirit descended upon him, empowering him to begin his mission. Baptism was not about cleansing Jesus's soul of sin, nor was it about Jesus becoming a child of God. It was about Jesus beginning his mission.

BAPTISM AND MISSION

Baptism, not ordination, not profession as a religious sister or brother, is the sacrament that calls us to mission. Paul wrote: "As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27-28). Baptism for the young Christian community dissolved economic, ethnic and gender distinctions so that all were one in Christ. The loss of such distinctions meant all were called through baptism to proclaim the good news.

PAUL AND MISSION

Paul understood that through baptism, distinctions so important in a patriarchal culture were to be washed away — women could be heads of household churches (see 1 Corinthians 1:11), women could be co-workers with men (see Philippians 4:3), deacons (Romans 16:1), apostles (Rom 16:7), or workers in the Lord (Rom 16:12). But after Paul's execution in Rome around 64 CE, his followers reverted to patriarchal culture's beliefs about women. In the letter to Timothy which Catholic biblical scholars now recognise was written by one of Paul's disciples, we read: "Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty" (1 Timothy 2:11-15). Other letters formerly attributed to Paul but which we now know were written after his death demonstrate a similar patriarchal mindset.

MISSION IN WESTERN EUROPE

Until the Edict of Milan and the baptism of the Emperor Constantine in the early 4th century, Christians were a minority, and often a persecuted group, in the different parts of the Roman Empire. This did not prevent them proclaiming the good news in both Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and those countries we today call the Middle East. But Constantine's baptism meant that Christianity became the official religion of the Roman

Empire — a development that has since generated hundreds of learned articles as to whether or not this was good for the faith life of the church.

Constantine's embracing of Christianity certainly led to its expansion to distant parts of the world. By the 8th century, Benedictine nuns and monks from England were to be found in those countries we know now as Germany and Switzerland. The key roles of monks, and also of Benedictine nuns, in these various missionary activities in Western Europe cannot be underestimated.

However, it was not too long before church culture reverted to its favoured ideological stance — women were subordinate to men, and so nuns could not be co-workers with monks in the proclamation of the good news. The Council of Chalon (CE 813) stated that canonesses with their weak and unstable minds had to lead more austere lives than male canons. The Council decreed that nuns were to be strictly cloistered, and management of their private property was given to bishops or abbots. As monasteries and abbeys became increasingly wealthy, there was no way that abbots and bishops were going to relinquish their control over nuns and convents. This situation prevailed for centuries.

MISSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND FAR EAST

But missionaries were not only active in Western Europe. There is evidence that the East Syrian Church had advanced as far as China by the 7th century, although this missionary movement seems to have petered out by the early 10th century. Nor was it well regarded by church authorities in the Western and Eastern parts of Empire as such missionaries, after the Council of Chalcedon in 451, were condemned as Nestorian Christians. Nestorius was a 5th-century theologian whose beliefs about the two natures of Jesus were condemned by the councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451). By the 13th century, Franciscan and Dominican monks were making their way to China from the West along the different silk roads that explorers and merchants, such as Venetian Marco Polo, were also traversing.

MISSION IN KERALA, INDIA

By the 5th century, the Church seems to have been well established in Kerala in south-west India. Tradition holds that Thomas the apostle was the first to bring the good news to Kerala. This cannot be historically verified, but Jews, including Jewish Christians, could well have made their way to Kerala after Roman troops harshly quelled Jewish revolts in 70 CE and 135 CE.

These early eastern Christian communities whether in India, Syria, Persia or China, had and still have their own distinct liturgical rites, very different from those found in Roman Catholicism. But the situation of 8th-century Christian communities in Syria, Egypt and Persia was changing given the extraordinary advance of Islam. While there was little persecution of Christian communities prior to the First Crusade at the end of the 11th century, the appealing simplicity of Mohammad's message meant that many, long tired of the on-going theological controversies characteristic of the church at this time, turned to Islam.

Today, in Aotearoa, we are blessed with the presence among us of members of some of these Eastern-rite communities, eg, Catholics from Kerala have their own Syro-Malabar rituals, likewise Chaldean Catholics from Iraq have their own rite and pray in Aramaic, the language of Jesus in 1st-century Palestine. A third Eastern rite Catholic community is the Melkite Catholic community whose leader is based in Damascus, Syria.

These three Eastern rite churches, now part of our religious landscape, are in full communion with Rome. The origins of these three churches may be obscure, but their presence in Syria, Iraq and Kerala predates the arrival of Christianity in Ireland and in England, and testifies to the valiant efforts of those early followers of Jesus. Their presence among us demonstrates that Catholicism is about communion and unity, not about uniformity — an important truth for all of us today as we, empowered by the gift of the Spirit at baptism, proclaim the Reign of God among us.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we learnt at school, in 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue, and was the first European to come across the Americas. While sailing around the world in the *Santa Maria*, a small ship only about 36 metres long, is not something that appeals today, it was decidedly better than spending 3-4 years making one's way overland to China.

Missionary attention in the Western Church turned to those countries that could be reached by sailing ships, while the ever-growing strength of Islam in the Middle East and further east saw the decline of missionary activity in those parts of the world. How will the church's understanding of mission evolve as the Middle Ages draw to a close?

Caravan on the Silk Road Source: *Atlas Catalan* (1380) by Cresques Abraham Commons Wikimedia

Susan Smith RNDM lives in Northland. She has researched and written on mission and has authored books on missiology as well as editing *Zeal for Mission: The Story of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions 1861-2011.*

The potential of sap

Start with the tree
dense leaves
branches
trunk
hands on its hips, Here I am
and feet firmly planted in earth.

Start with the tree
the single step
with the ears of your feet
where you hear earth's pulse
sounding through the trunk
rising like sap
through the leaves.

Start with the tree
with the parting of leaves
hide-and-seeking
till you sight the face
in the eyes of your heart.

Start with the tree.

By Anne Powell ©
In *The Edge of Things* (2018)

LIVING THE SEASON OF CREATION

Mary Betz *explores what gives hope for the healing of a suffering creation.*

WE ARE INVITED to celebrate the Season of Creation in liturgy, prayer, reflection and action from 1 September to 4 October each year. This year's theme is hope for the healing of a suffering creation.

Woven into the reflections below are some wisdom writings from our rich tradition of spirituality and eco-theology. May our contemplation during this season lead us all to hope and change.

Dissonant Words and Actions

When we celebrate Eucharist, we acknowledge God as creator, particularly in the prayer over the gifts. This beautiful prayer derived from the Jewish *hamotzi* (blessing of the bread), begins: "Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given, and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life."

While we honour our creator in worship, how do we honour God's creation in the rest of our lives? We rely on creation for physical, social and spiritual sustenance. Human hands also transform its gifts into many things we do not need but are tempted to acquire. Do we give thought to how these things are gleaned from the Earth and the harm caused to our companions in creation in the process?

Kinship with Creation

What might change if we thought like Francis of Assisi, who regarded all created things, whether sun, moon, birds, flowers — even death — as our brothers and sisters? This is nothing new to Māori for whom rivers and mountains are tūpuna, their mana and tapu to be reverenced. It does not mean that we and other creatures would not still rely on or

take the lives of other creatures to live. But it does mean that our actions could be respectfully and prayerfully considered. It means that we no longer think of ourselves as pinnacles of creation, but as part of a family.

Science has helped us see the closeness of our relationships by discovering our common origins in the beginnings of our universe billions of years ago. All the elements and particles that now make up living and non-living creation came from the explosive Big Bang and the generations of stars that have come and gone since. We now understand that "we are stardust"; that we consist of and breathe in the same particles that made up the early cosmos, primitive plants and animals and our human ancestors. I think of this with awe each Ash Wednesday when we are told: "You are made from dust and to dust you shall return."

Our kinship with the rest of creation underlies Pope Francis's encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, in which he says: "Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each creature and which unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth."

Ilia Delio sees this pilgrimage as one of conversion, which is both a turning toward God and toward Earth. And turn we must, to reverse the climatic and ecological damage we continue to cause.

Acknowledging God's Indwelling

Neil Darragh describes what we are doing in this way: "To exploit Earth ignores/insults the God-immanence in Earth, violates the inner being of the resource/gift of Earth and also the inner being of the user, for these are ultimately the same." He recognises, as many theologians, Indigenous peoples and mystics of all religious affiliations have done for centuries, that God dwells in Earth and in every created thing.

Henare Tate writes of "the immanence of Atua in creation, the personal presence of Atua in every part of creation, the embodiment of the divine in all created realities." Thomas Merton reminds us: "We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent and God is shining through it all the time."

Lack of reverence for creation is, in the words of Denis Edwards, "an act of contempt for the divine self-expression". If we recognised the sacred in every created thing, would we see and live any differently?

Encountering God in Creation

I love the quote from *Walden* in which Henry David Thoreau writes: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately … and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." From time to time I realise I have just been floating along without reflecting on what I am called to do, who I am meant to be.

Walking the Earth in stillness and awareness can re-open our hearts and minds to what creation has to teach us. Thomas Merton reminds us "how necessary it is … [to spend time] in the fields, in the rain, in the sun, in the mud, in the clay, in the wind: these are our spiritual directors … They form our true contemplation."

"Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each creature and which unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth."

Thomas Berry writes: "The very nature and purpose of human experience is to experience this intimate presence that comes to us through natural phenomena … when we see a flower, a butterfly, a tree, when we feel the evening breeze flow over us or wade in a stream of clear water, our natural response is immediate, intuitive, transforming, ecstatic. Everywhere we find ourselves invaded by the world of the sacred."

Pope Francis reminds us: "The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to … discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things."

Hope and Action

New perspectives, gratitude, peace and goodness may seep into us when we spend time in the forest, on the beach, or in the garden. But along with these are more subversive learnings. Ilia Delio warns us that we may "see the truth of God hidden in the fragile things of creation" and demands may be placed on us to care for them: "Contemplation is linked to costly discipleship."

Finding the sacred in creation can give us renewed energy for our discipleship journey, and the resolve to lighten our footprints on Earth. The hope is that we can live more deliberately, choosing to act for the common good of our human and non-human sisters and brothers. We also hope and pray for the energy to advocate for the well-being of our Earth kin who have no voice, on whose thriving we also depend for survival.

Spiring Whites by Sue Graham © Used with permission
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Mary Betz lives in Waitākere, West Auckland, and is a writer with a background in ecology, theology, justice and peace. She has two daughters and is a proud grandmother.

Challenges in the Season of Creation

Tony Williams *discusses how a change in our lifestyle now will ensure that Earth continues to be a home in the future.*

IT'S THE SEASON of Creation and two full-page newspaper advertisements grab my attention. The first, "Enchanting Japan Discovery Adventure, 15 nights", and the other, "European River Cruising, 15-day Splendours". Both were urging us to travel thousands of kilometres return. Obviously the marketers expect a reasonable number of people will pay and make the trip. But why should we pause?

These days we are familiar with climate change and its effects. Scientists today know that climate change is the warming of the Earth's land, sea and atmosphere with the burning of coal, oil and natural gas. Since the industrial revolution, our mining, refining and burning fossil fuels has reversed the storage of carbon in the crust of the Earth — stores that took hundreds of millions of years to build up. The planet's natural processes can adjust — but it takes time. Ice ages and inter-glacial periods are typically measured in tens of thousands of years, whereas life expectancy in New Zealand is around 80 years. So, the melting of icecaps, the retreat of glaciers, the rise in sea level, the increased energy in cyclones and tornados, the destruction by wildfires are events that will affect generations beyond our own.

Change Our Lifestyle

What to do? It is obvious we cannot save the world on our own. We can't save even New Zealand (small as it is) on our own. It is a truism to say we New Zealanders do not know how lucky we are. We have not experienced the conflicts, the warfare, the violence, the fear, the hunger, that are commonplace in many other countries. We have a freedom of choice socially and politically that is far from universal.

Pope Francis wrote to the world in *Laudato Si'*: "Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change" (par 202). The issue of environmental degradation challenges us to

examine our lifestyle.

This plea is in the spirit of Pope Gregory VIII's appeal to Christendom in 1087 to unite in order to restore access for pilgrims to the Holy Land after the route had been conquered by the Turks. The response, organised by political leaders across Europe was a number of uncoordinated crusades which met with varying success and a host of unintended consequences.

Refuse to Buy Things

Can we do better? For many New Zealanders — faced with the need to provide food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, transport, recreation for themselves and their families — floods and wildfires in other countries are well down the list of things that need attention.

When we see pictures of destruction and starvation overseas we feel genuine sympathy for the people involved but we don't automatically think: "I caused that." It's not that we are solely responsible, but that all the processes in Earth are interconnected. And on a per capita basis our environmental footprint is among the highest in the world. It's true that we are willing to recycle — we can see the sense of that — but recycling is at the bottom of the list of what is needed. Instead, refuse is at the top of the list. In other words, if we don't buy in the first place we are saved the hassle to Reduce, Reuse, Repair and Recycle.

Recycling Is Not Enough

Recycling involves two major hurdles: sorting and transport — getting objects from the home where they are no longer wanted to a place where someone else can get enough of them to be able to do something useful long-term. So, we can talk to the collectors. Find out what they want and how they want it (as a rule of thumb, clean and crushed — otherwise you are paying good money to shift fresh air from one place to another). But being realistic we know there are some things we do need, and providing there is no waste, natural environmental processes can cope. But it takes time. So, restraint and patience are habits we need to develop in ourselves and instill in our children.

Recognise Complexity

Given the complexity of the world it is unlikely that there will be a single simple solution to a world-wide problem. Of more concern is that there are people who believe the answer will come through technology eg, wind turbines. I am not opposed to wind turbines, but we need to keep in mind that anything new comes at a cost. Wind turbines don't grow on trees. Nor are they made in New Zealand. To erect a wind turbine here requires mining, refining and manufacturing overseas and transporting to us, all of which produce the greenhouse gases we are trying to reduce.

Join In Activities

There are many things we can do. What we choose will depend on our own past experiences and our understanding of how things are connected, what we are capable of doing, and what we know of what other people are doing. There are many good programmes already up and running, especially in some of our schools. Let's give our support to these, encourage our youngsters to be conservation-minded, active in gardening, tree-planting and beach and riverside "clean-ups". Every little action helps, but it does take time. So, patience and restraint.

Planning for Long-Term

At government level we need to bring Aotearoa's immigration policies into line with God's goodness and plan of creation. Our occupancy of land does not give us a right to exclude others. Psychologically, people are happiest when in their own culture. But sea level rise, salination, drought, crop failure in various parts of the world are forcing millions of people off their traditional holdings. For many, migration is the only option. We need to be preparing for this — the only restriction that is reasonable is that the rate of immigration is kept within what can be handled urgently but respectfully for everyone. Migrants will need houses, schools, hospitals, transport, recreation and sporting opportunities — all of which will require careful, long-term planning.

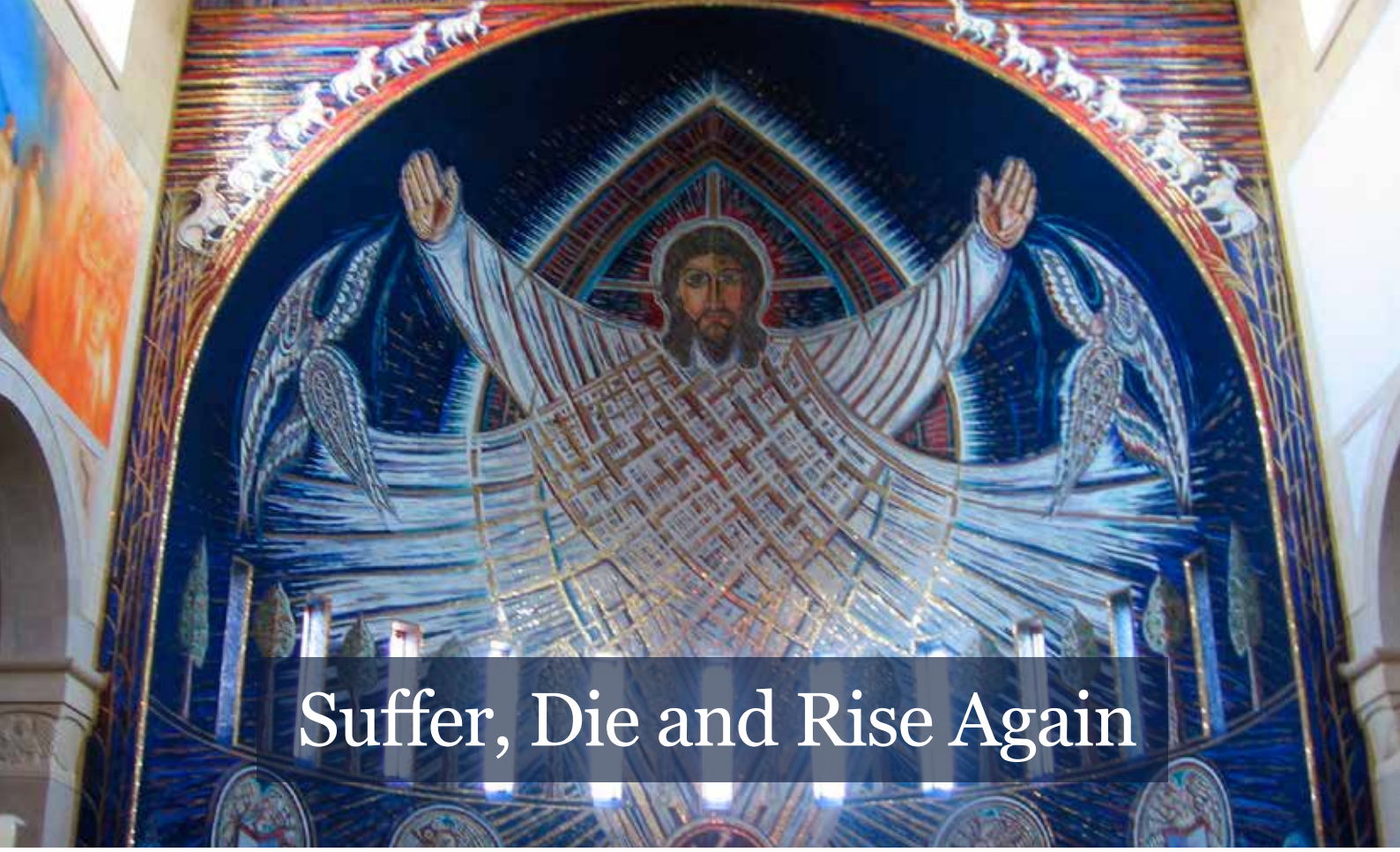
We will need to face not just the truth of now, in which we use our recycling bins, but the truth of a future which will demand from us major and permanent lifestyle changes.

Believe and Act

Pope Francis quoted the *Earth Charter* (2000): "As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning … Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace and the joyful celebration of life." He continued: "Disinterested concern for others and the rejection of every form of self-centredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment … if we overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant change in society" (*LS* par 208).

Detail from the mural at Waihi ***Waihi Mining Time-line*** by Shane Walker www.shanewalkerart.com

Tony Williams is a Marist priest, ordained in 1959. His family connections are Nelson, Hokitika, Ross, the Buller region, Christchurch, Invercargill. He lives in Hawkes Bay.



Suffer, Die and Rise Again

Kathleen Rushton *discusses why Jesus spoke of this death-resurrection in Mark 8:27-35 and 9:30-37.*

THERE IS LITTLE detail or description about crucifixion as capital punishment in ancient texts. German historian of religion Martin Hengel, in his extensive survey of ancient sources, said that the only detailed account of a crucifixion was in *The Histories* by Herodotus writing about Artaÿctes, a local ruler: "They nailed him to planks and hung him there. And they stoned Artaÿctes's son before his eyes." A few more descriptions come from Roman times but Hengel wrote that "the passion narratives in the Gospels are in fact the most detailed of all. No ancient writer wanted to dwell too long of this cruel procedure."

Christian Devotion

In the four Gospels and throughout the New Testament, the death of Jesus is always associated with his resurrection. However, Christian tradition has emphasised his suffering and death. Popular piety grew up centring only on the suffering and death of Jesus without including the resurrection. This obscures the truth that it is the Risen One who was present in the communities from which the Gospels arose and who is risen Christ among us today.

Gerard Sloyan in *The Crucifixion of Jesus: History, Myth, Faith* provides an overview of the history of the unity of death and resurrection and how the two became separated. He explores two significant questions. How did the mystery of the cross become so separated from the mystery of the resurrection? And, what happened to the declaration, so clear in the New Testament, that "Christ, once raised from the dead is never to die again: he is no longer under the dominion of death" (Romans 6:9).

Death-Resurrection

Many marriage partners hyphenate their surnames as a way to emphasise their individual identity and their unity as a couple. Similarly, we can emphasise the unity of the mystery of the cross and the mystery of resurrection by hyphenating the two terms. I learnt this practice from Raymond Collins' writing about passion-resurrection and crucifixion-glorification in John's Gospel. I've adopted the practice to hyphenate death-resurrection and I think it can be applied to the whole of the New Testament.

In Mark 8:27-35 and 9:30-37 Jesus refers to his death-resurrection. The closeness of death-resurrection is clear when we look into the context of Mark's Gospel.

People "Raised Up" in Their Households

At the tomb, the women are told that Jesus "has been raised" (*egeiro*, Mk 16:6). The verb *egeiro* hints that a more-than-human force has been at work and it describes God's response to the suffering and death of Jesus. It is used to describe what happened to several characters within a household *(oikos)*.

The term *oikos* referred to the household of an extended family in Jesus's time. Jesus visited a household where he raised up (*egeiro* Mk 1:31) and healed the mother-in-law of Peter and she began to minister. Jesus returned to Capernaum where the man who was paralysed is "raised up" (*egeiro* Mk 2:9,11,12), healed and told to go to his household. At the synagogue leader's household, his daughter is

"raised up" (*egeiro* Mk 5:41, NRSV "get up").

On the Sabbath in the synagogue, Jesus said to the man with the withered hand: "Rise up" (*egeiro* Mk 3:3, NRSV "Come forward"). On the roadside, Bartimaeus who is blind is told "rise up" *(egeiro)*. Bartimaeus rises up *(anistēmi)* and follows Jesus "on the way" to Jerusalem (Mk 10:46-52). Jesus himself is forming a new household of God where all are welcome.

Forty years later in the Roman Empire, Christians gathered for worship in large households where they were to "raise up" one another to follow Jesus. And today we are "raised up" to live the death-resurrection of Jesus in our households of parishes, neighbourhoods and in our ever-new household of God, the church.

Formation of Disciples

The end of Jesus's ministry in Galilee (Mk 1:14-8:30) comes to a climax when Peter declares of Jesus: "You are the Messiah" (Mk 8:29). Immediately, Jesus sets out with his disciples "on the way to Jerusalem" (Mk 8:31-10:52). The focus during "the way" is on the disciples' formation. At the centre of both Mark's Gospel and this journey to Jerusalem is the transfiguration of Jesus (Mk 9:2-10). Before and after his transfiguration, Jesus speaks three times of his coming death-resurrection.

In Mark 8:31 we read: "Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering … and be killed, and after three days rise *[anistēmi]* again." Then, Jesus "called the crowd with his disciples and said to them: 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me'" (Mk 8:34).

Transfiguration

Six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James and John with him to a high mountain where he "was transfigured before them." The transfiguration reveals that the whole story is the cross-plus-transfiguration. God's creative power transforms and transfigures suffering humanity into persons of radiant joy.

After Jesus's transfiguration, Jesus and the disciples continue their journey to Jerusalem. In Mark 9:31, Jesus for the second time speaks of his death-resurrection and then again for a third time in Mark 10:34.

Our Religious Imagination

Images of the cross and crucifixes displaying a Jesus as dead are prominent in Catholic churches. Such images bolster a piety divorced from Jesus's death-resurrection as depicted in the New Testament and in the art of early Christianity. Gerard Sloyan's research traces how the artistic trend of the cross alone developed over the Christian centuries and continues to influence the Christian imagination in our time.

In early Christian art there are depictions of Jesus, but the symbol of the cross that is familiar to us was rare. There are a few in the catacombs. When Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, Christ was portrayed as a royal, even superhuman figure. If the cross is imaged, it is jewelled or burnished gold. For example in the 6th-century Ravenna mosaics, the face of Jesus is often at the centre. Jesus is depicted on the cross, but not as a suffering or dead figure. He is presented as clothed and risen (see *Tui Motu*, March 2024, p25).

In some places influenced by Post-Vatican II *aggornimento* there is emerging a retrieval of the scriptural and theological understandings of death-resurrection of Christ in God's household. Instead of using a "traditional" crucifix, some church buildings have hung one which depicts Jesus as the Risen One with the cross in the background.

In 1991 Pope John Paul II recommended that the devotion of the Stations of the Cross which used to end with Jesus's burial be extended to include the resurrection. This aligned the popular devotion with Scripture by including the resurrection and post-resurrection scenes.

Readings: 15 & 22 September: Mark 8:27-35; 9:30-37

Church of the Transfiguration at the Community of Jesus, Orleans, Mass USA Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License

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

FLYING IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

I RECENTLY WATCHED the excellent play *Scenes from the Climate Era* in Auckland. I was moved and challenged by a section in which characters spoke about the last flight they took: one had never returned to flying after Covid; another stopped flying because the turbulence, which is exacerbated by global heating, had become too scary. Another took a flight even though his friends judged him for the carbon required, because his sister needed help with a new baby. This dug at the many complex motivations underpinning transport choices, and acknowledging the underlying reality of how those choices are part of our wider society.

Aviation has contributed to about 4 per cent of global warming to date, much less than, say, livestock, which are estimated to have contributed 18 per cent of global emissions in 2023. However, it's one of the most emission-heavy individual actions we can decide for ourselves. Flying from Auckland to Perth to see grandchildren, for example, will generate about 1.9 tonnes of carbon dioxide, most of the 2.5 tonnes of carbon scientists say each person in the world can generate per year if we want to keep global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius. And we don't all fly: only about 10 per cent of the world, mostly the richest people, fly each year, with a smaller fraction of that group taking multiple flights.

Climate organisation 350 Aotearoa has been running a campaign against private jets around the country, featuring everything from a strutting red carpet at Auckland airport to draw attention to the private jet terminal around the corner from the public terminal, to unfurling a banner on the hill outside Wellington Airport reading "End Private Jets". Their point is a salient one: the extremely wealthy generate many, many times their fair share of emissions to travel in cushy personal jets, without ever pausing to consider what the impact on others might be.

Flights are one example of where individual choice intersects with social and political factors. The underlying question is: what does it mean to care for the people and other living things who will be most affected by climate change? As individuals, we can choose not to fly, sending a signal to the corporation with our dollars. But for many people, flying is cheaper and easier than other transport options, and sometimes the only way to visit loved ones. It's a hard choice. When all our glaciers have melted (on current projections Aotearoa will have no permanent ice by the end of the century), tourists won't be paying top dollar for flights to Queenstown. So there's a financial motive to innovate as well as a moral one.

But we can't rely on private companies to do the right thing. The political system must force companies to stick to emission targets, and reduce the number of private flights. In France, for example, the government has banned short-haul flights where viable train routes exist, and has increased the fuel tax to 70 per cent for private jets.

And all of us, whether we've bought a flight ticket in the last month or not, owe it to one another, and our hope for the future, to demand this. We can demand loudly, with submissions and letters to our MPs or councils; and quietly, in conversations about why we need a future with magnificent glaciers and houses not threatened by sea level rise — all in the grace and surrender of prayer.

Shanti Mathias, twin to Shar, lives in Auckland and is a journalist for *The Spinoff*.

For What It's Worth

A BLACKBIRD IS on the picket fence waiting. Then gone, then back with a twig in his beak. Then flitting off. Blackbirds have being and doing down to a fine art. I watch the bird's purposeful act of listening for food. Hop, stop, hear. Head cocked on one side, listening for the slightest move of the worm beneath.

We insult someone by calling them a "bird brain". Yet one look at the nest birds craft from bits of wood, paper, feathers and mud, rounded into a ready home for the family to come, leaves me marvelling at their ingenuity and sense of design. There are a number of old nests dotted around the trees on my property. The rowan tree has three, which confirms blackbirds like to build in the same area. I have often wondered why they don't reuse a home. Science says it's to reduce the prevalence of nest parasites, such as mites. This makes sense to a human, but do birds really have such knowledge and memory? Is it what we refer to as "instinct" that drives them to create a new home every spring?

And what of the many stories that abound about how we relate to blackbirds? Are they harbingers of death and misfortune, or symbolic of a lost loved one? I've heard say that if you place blackbird feathers under someone's pillow, they will tell you their innermost secrets. A Druid legend says that listening to a blackbird sing can transfer you to a higher place of existence. Now that's one I could subscribe to.

That aside, blackbirds are fascinating to watch and follow. Their territorial nature ensures that other birds don't stay long. Even the cheeky sparrow learns to move on after the bow and run display of a blackbird. And the thrush gets short shrift too.

When I watch a blackbird sitting or foraging I get the oddest feeling that it is also watching me. Research tells us that birds can sense if we're observing them and, more than that, they can recognise a human face or voice.

Perhaps they see more than we think. Maybe that's true of all the natural world.

Winter is an ideal season for watching and necessarily, for waiting. The garden is asleep, waiting for the earth to warm in spring. Lately the ground has been covered with a dusting of snow which lingers in the shady spots. Puddles stay frozen waiting for a child to stamp them to pieces. The birds seem unaffected by the cold, though they don't stop to sing as heartily as in summer. They have work to do — finding food, building a nest, watching me watching them.

And so winter passes while I wait. I watch the blackbird, marvelling at this small creature. Maybe it's marvelling at me too. I wait for answers. I wait for God to speak, while God in turn waits for me to listen.

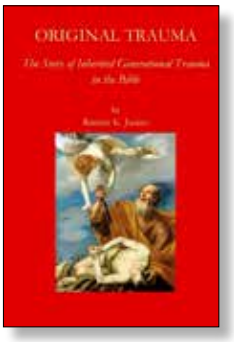
Photo by Marco Midmore on Unsplash

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

Reviews

Original Trauma: The Story of Inherited Generational Trauma in the Bible

By Ramon K Jusino
Published by Ramon K Jusino Services, LLC, 2023. (USD 25)
Reviewed by David George



As the Bible is a field that has been ploughed and harvested copious times I wondered if Ramon Jusino had anything new to offer. Neurodivergence and its various manifestations is a current pertinent topic. So, could "trauma" be a modern glyph on words like "shame", "guilt" and "sin"? If this was all there was to this book, I'd be turning the corner, not the page. But it isn't.

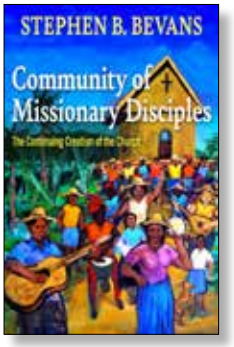
Could we expect an ingrained patriarchy to bring about faith, and healing? Ever? Jusino suggests this is possible and the reader will find refreshment and hope within these pages. *Original Trauma* offers a vision of the whole body of Jesus Christ participating as equals.

Jusino discusses a range of topics from Lot's daughters to the schism between the Orthodox and Catholic churches. He places himself inside the narrative. The book is not inaccessible or remote: Jusino was a teacher of teenagers and has a crisp writing style.

Today is the era of "breathwork" — a time when we need calm — and seeking our God in the moment. The writer gives us permission to see the past in perspective, and provides us with a model. ★

The Community of Missionary Disciples: The Continuing Creation of the Church

By Stephen B Bevans
Published by Orbis Books, 2024 (USD 55)
Reviewed by Peter Cullinane



Bevans is a missionary and theologian who is tired of hearing "mission" spoken of as something tacked on to an already existing church. Rather, mission is what brings the church about. It comes out of the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, making all creation new. Our participation in that work is the church's reason for being. For this we are called and sent.

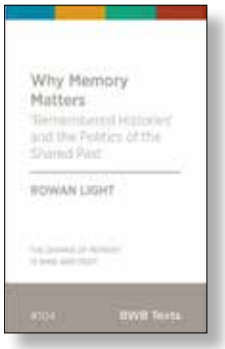
The mission of the Holy Spirit is "the continuing creation of the church" (the book's subtitle). The Acts of the Apostles is a paradigm, where we see the Spirit enabling the community to be both faithful to its origins and creative in adapting in new situations.

Bevans re-visits familiar images of church, church structures and ministries, through the lenses of mission. Perhaps he attempts more than can be dealt with satisfactorily, eg, the section on "human sexuality" is superficial; the issue of women's ordination cannot be reduced to what people can do; the place of typology in salvation history cannot be ignored.

Nevertheless, this wealth of scholarship, both ancient and recent, is a needed synthesis, and will be very helpful to all who have teaching, formation and leadership roles in the community of disciples. ★

Why Memory Matters: 'Remembered Histories' and the Politics of the Shared Past

By Rowan Light
Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2023 (NZD18)
Reviewed by Marie Skidmore



This short book critically reviews how we in Aotearoa have acknowledged our past via our recorded history and our commemorations. Author Rowan Light reminds us that when we remember as a collective group we are often prompted to acknowledge powerful moral and social imperatives. Light stresses the importance of memory and its power to make life meaningful and increase our sense of belonging.

Case studies of events which have given rise to dispute and controversy are used to illustrate how we've fallen short in our remembering, eg, the vandalism of Captain Cook statues in Tūranganui-a-Kiwi. Events such as these clearly reflect our need to encompass different expressions of meaning by integrating the many threads of various groups' experience — especially when recording events of colonisation. As a reader, I found I was encouraged to reflect on what we have chosen to commemorate publicly and the impact that has had on my personal development, and to question what we have ignored.

Why Memory Matters is timely as we prepare to commemorate the bicentenary of the Treaty of Waitangi. It is particularly useful for those preparing public events to recognise local history. It urges them to ensure memories are shared in a more truthful and inclusive manner. ★

Children's Books for Traumatic Life Events

By Linda Tuhiwai Smith
Published by Huia Publishers, (English and Te Reo Māori versions) 2023-2024. (NZD 22 each)
Reviewed by Jude Gilroy

Linda Tuhiwai Smith has written a series of five books, each one tackling a traumatic event in a child's life — domestic violence, death of a parent or sibling, suicide — in a sensitive and child-centred way. The language is honest and truthful and appropriate for a child. The stories are from the child's point of view and often in their own voice. Isobel Joy Te Aho-White's beautifully clear illustrations enhance the books which will help children to understand the story as adults read alongside them.

The aim of the books is to tell kaupapa Māori stories about aroha and nurturing the resilience of children in the face of the difficult life events, in order to help children and the adults talk about what has happened and support their well-being. Each book has a series of "activity notes" and "learning objectives" at the end.

As a child psychotherapist I was pleased to see "recognise and name the thing that is terrible", "talk about feelings that are hard to talk about" and "validate feeling sad, angry, distrustful or resentful" at the forefront, as I know they are the foundation of a child's experience of trauma.

Riwia and the Stargazer

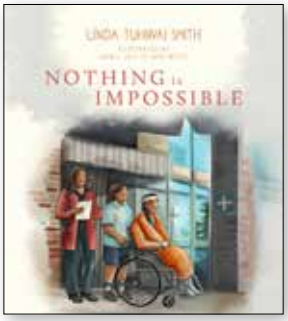
Riwia and the Stargazer tells the story of Riwia and her Mum and Dad who live in a van, The Stargazer. They are living near Starship Children's Hospital where her baby brother Tawa is sick. Dad works, Riwia goes to school and Mum stays with the baby. Sadly, baby Tawa dies and the family returns home to whānau and the tangi. This is a beautifully sensitive story about loss told from a child's point of view.

I Am a Little Voice

I Am a Little Voice is Rawhiti's story in his own words about recovering from his injuries, both physical and emotional, after domestic violence at home.

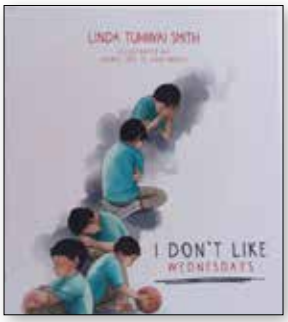
This is a heartfelt and hopeful story of a little boy who is feeling hurt, alone and frightened and through being surrounded by aroha and care finds his voice and place in the world.

Nothing Is Impossible



In *Nothing Is Impossible* Rangi tells of being taken from his home by a social worker after his Mum is attacked by her boyfriend. He goes to live with his Nan and Koro and although he is safe there, he doesn't want to go to school or do his homework, feeling it is all impossible. It is presenting research into his mother's life to his class that helps him to understand not just the "amazing" and "brave" person his mother is, but that he is brave, too.

I Don't Like Wednesdays



I Don't Like Wednesdays is a story told by a little boy whose big brother Apa commits suicide. Wednesday is the day when Apa and his little brother hang out together but when Apa dies on a Wednesday his little brother stops going to school. His whānau, community, friends and school pull together to support him to return to school and to make Wednesday "Apa's day" in memory of his brother, giving him hope that perhaps Wednesdays can be good again.

Te Wai, Tama and the Moon

Te Wai, Tama and the Moon tells the story of Te Wai, who wants to talk to the moon about her mother who is very sick. She sets off with her friend Tama. Auntie Cherrie takes them to see the moon in her red spaceship (van) and explains that Te Wai's mum is getting closer to the moon and will soon be one of the stars in the sky. This story is about dealing with death.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's thoughtfully-written books are not just for children. They are an excellent resource for adults supporting children dealing with traumatic events. They provide a way to talk about difficult feelings and difficult events and help adults who care for young children to see a way forward. ★

Reviews

The Dry

Directed by Robert Connolly
Streaming on Netflix
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

Last year, having struck a dry patch at the movies, I asked Google to suggest some top-ranking movies on Netflix. Heading the list were a couple of Aussie thrillers, *The Stranger* and *The Dry*, both based on books. I reviewed the former in *Tui Motu* (August 2023) and set aside *The Dry* for another day, hoping it would be as rewarding as its companion.

The title says it all. Kiewarra is a small township in central Victoria where everyone knows everybody, and knows enough about their business to take the shine off the rural idyll. Parched fields surround the town, a burnt landscape where no stock are to be seen, only rabbits. As the policeman protagonist puts it: "It's as dry as tinder — it could all go up any time." There are hints that even this harsh way of life is threatened; farmers muse if selling out to agribusiness is the answer.

The Dry canvasses the familiar trope of the local boy made good returning to the scene of his youth — in this case to solve a mystery, an apparent murder-suicide involving a local family. In a twist that adds depth and complexity to the plot, Melbourne detective Aaron Falk (Eric Bana) is himself under suspicion over the drowning death of a local girl, Ellie, when they were both teenage friends.

Along with Luke and Gretchen, Aaron and Ellie spent their summers hanging out together and splashing around in the Kiewarra creek, their youthful high spirits charged with the inevitable sexual tension and (in the person of Luke) a recklessness that at times verges on cruelty. When Ellie drowns after arranging to meet Aaron at the river, alibis are confected and the town is split over who is to blame.

Moving backwards and forwards in time through the deft use of flashbacks, the film feeds us gobbets of information and innuendo about both Ellie's death and the recent homicides. As Aaron pursues his investigation, he links up with a varied cast of locals including the aggressive, short-fused Grant, the naive town cop, the local GP and the troubled headmaster — and ignites a romantic spark with Gretchen. Haunted by images of Ellie's death, Aaron's anxiety pulls like a painful ligature throughout his stay in Kiewarra.

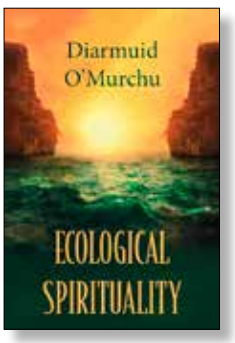
A finely worked and subtle narrative, *The Dry* lacks the dark palette and emotional intensity of *The Stranger* and the ending lacked the knock-out punch I was looking for. But a good Netflix night in, nonetheless. ★

Ecological Spirituality

By Diarmuid O'Murchu
Published by Orbis Books, 2024. (USD 26)
Reviewed by Ruth Mather

Despite each year bringing yet more climate disasters, humanity is unable to make the necessary changes to our consumerist lifestyle that will reverse global warming. Diarmuid O'Murchu's latest book asserts that the only way out of our paralysis is with an ecological spirituality, which can aid us to "become enchanted by creation once more." The Holy is found in the world around us. By recognising this, we can be restored to our rightful place in creation, as one of many species of Earth's inhabitants.

O'Murchu identifies our major dilemma as the lack of ethical principles because religion has lost its role as a moral guide. An ecological spirituality can provide such guidance in these times. He examines the *Earth Charter* through the lens of spirituality, and suggests how it can provide ethical guidance. Each of the nine chapters in *Ecological Spirituality* concludes with a list of critical issues for ongoing discernment which could be useful for group reflection.



The breadth of O'Murchu's research and his ability to synthesise knowledge is impressive and stimulating. His reference list encourages the reader to explore further. I recommend this book for anyone who wants to address the global climate crisis. ★

Cross Currents

by Jane Higgins

MY LITTLE MOKOPUNA has taken to singing the national anthem around the house. She has been learning it at her preschool. She chirrups her way merrily through the te reo Māori verse, then, when she gets to the English verse, she launches with gusto into this: "God and nature at thy feet…"

After all, what do four-year-olds know about nations? Nothing at all, and that's how it should be. But, if they are lucky, they do know about nature, so her rendition makes perfect sense.

Nature knows nothing of nations either. Climate change is coming for everyone — indeed, is already here for many.

The argument is often made that our own nation is too small to make a difference in emissions reduction so "why bother?" In fact, New Zealand contributes about 0.15 per cent of the world's gross emissions. This amounts to three times more than our fair share given our population. But let's consider the "why bother?" argument.

China and the United States produce the highest levels of emissions: China at around 30 per cent, and the US about 11 per cent. But 200 countries contribute nearly 40 per cent of emissions while producing less than 2 per cent each. This includes the UK and Germany as well as New Zealand. If these countries all decided that they were too small to make a difference the world would have no chance of addressing the climate emergency. Similarly, we have roughly the same population as many major cities – Sydney, Los Angeles, Berlin. They are not abandoning the cause. Why should we?

And yet, that appears to be exactly what the current government is doing. In its recently released emissions reduction plan, there is very little about emissions reduction and a lot about planting cheap trees, mainly pines, and hoping that technology such as carbon capture will rescue us. It won't. Climate scientists have long argued that the world cannot plant its way out of the crisis. And technologies like carbon capture do not operate at the scale needed to make a difference and are not going to in the time we have left.

New Zealand is effectively opting to be a free-rider in the climate space. We are relying on other countries to do the hard work so that we can benefit, while we are refusing to focus on what's needed: reducing emissions. Instead, we are going for the cheap and ultimately ineffective option of buying our way out with pine trees and a vague hope in technology.

Our Pacific neighbours contribute 0.03 per cent to global emissions while being highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Yet they have not let their small size prevent them from acting: Niue was among the first countries in the world to become carbon neutral, and Pacific leaders have been vocal in their commitment to act.

Our government is calling the option of offsetting carbon emissions with low-cost trees "more affordable" than genuine emissions reduction. The question this raises is, of course, more affordable for whom? Not for our mokopuna who will pay dearly for this selfish, short-term approach.

"God and nature at thy feet, in the bonds of love we meet. Hear our voices we entreat…" It has a powerful ring to it. I'm going to adopt it myself.

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

Tui Motu magazine provides Catholic, as well as ecumenical and inter-faith perspectives and discussion on current issues in church and society. It acknowledges its role in honouring and fostering relationships arising from Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It focuses particularly on issues affecting Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific. Its intent is to promote the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, engaging faith and the world through informed, thoughtful comment and discussion for a general readership. The magazine publishes 11 issues per year in print and regular digital postings on social media. The magazine invites contributions from writers of Catholic and other Christian traditions or faith backgrounds, who can offer our readers insights which resonate with the Gospel as it affects us today. We value diversity and seek contributions which are representative of our church and our society: Māori, Pākehā, Pasifika, other cultures, a range of ages and genders, lay and ordained. We offer feature articles, interviews, reviews, poetry, comment and opinion on theology, spirituality and history, as well as on ecological and social justice.

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cbm Expanding to Remote Areas in Papua New Guinea

WITH SUPPORT FROM generous people like you, amazing progress has been made by cbm New Zealand (Christian Blind Mission) over the last 40 years to help people with disabilities living in the remote Highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

But the need is great and in places of great need, I believe together we can respond to the call, as in Isaiah 54:2; to "enlarge the place of our tent" by widening our hearts, to "stretch our tent curtains wide" as we see and grow God's vision of hope for a brighter future, and to "lengthen our cords and strengthen our stakes" as we grow in our belief in, and act on, the promises of God.

cbm has an opportunity to expand its ministry into even more remote parts of PNG. A new partnership, with a local and well-established Catholic health provider, will increase access to eye health services (including cataract surgeries), and to hearing and other specialist health services in remote areas to further prevent avoidable long-term disability. Our advertisement on the back page gives particulars of how you can donate to this ongoing work.

Letters to the Editor

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

Opinions in letters are not necessarily those of the Magazine.

ACCOUNTABILITY ESSENTIAL

Our Bishops and congregational leaders sent a letter outlining the Church's response to the release of the Royal Commission's final report on abuse in state and faith-based care. The letter told us that they promised to consider the report in depth, and an edict that we all need to play our part to eliminate abuse of children. The first step I suggest is we the church faithful need to ask how we, who should have known better, came to this. More importantly, who are the perpetrators of the abuse, inclusive of those who sanctioned it by their silence? They need to be confronted and asked to explain their actions or lack of. The church in general did not commit this offence and the church in general should not be apportioned blame by their association with the abusers, unless it is for our silence. Those who are and were in positions of power assigned to them by holy orders must front up and offer recompense to the abused. They need also to be answerable for the loss of faith their actions have caused for those so grievously harmed and for all the church who have put their faith in them, and who they have failed. While the church in general should not be held responsible for the abusive actions of some, we do need to take responsibility for dismantling a system of authority that gives the hierarchy impunity to behave as they choose without answerability.

Teresa Homan, Orongomai/Upper Hutt

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION FOR TODAY

I thank Bishop Peter Cullinane for his thoughtful response to my proposal for an online Catholic news and information service (*TM*, August 2024). After spending most of my working life in print media, I appreciate its qualities. But time has moved on, and most people now receive their news and information — good or bad — online. Digital communication has many advantages. It allows for instant dissemination of information. Users can provide feedback and share content. It has a lower environmental impact than print. And it can be delivered to anyone who has a smartphone — without their having to go looking for it. This enables an outreach that is much more in keeping with a "mission model" of church than a "maintenance model".

Pat McCarthy, Tāmaki Makaurau/ Auckland

REPAIR AND RECYCLING

We are basking in the golden glow from the Paris Olympics, but there are important things we can learn from France. Nearly 70 years ago I was loading sulphur at Bayonne in France. Sulphur was normally loaded in Texas and it was dirty, dangerous stuff, the complete opposite of the pristine yellow crystals being loaded into our ship. A local said: "In France all natural gas supplied for fuel must be free of sulphur to avoid pollution, so the sulphur is removed and sold commercially." Pollution into profit! In staging the Olympics France has gone for sustainability. Many venues are erected for the games and will be removed afterwards; where possible materials are reusable — wood, not steel or concrete; and the Seine has been cleaned up. The French passed a law banning the sale of unrepairable appliances. No more chuck it out and get a new one. Many of us will remember being able to put a new element in the electric jug or toaster. I was therefore delighted to see things being repaired at the South Canterbury Eco Centre. Is our town leading the way nationally as we did with the three-bin rubbish system?

Dennis Veal, Timaru

SUPPORT FOR 501 DEPORTEES

I am thankful for David More's insightful article about the plight of "501s" in New Zealand (*TM* August 2024). I know one of these men and have been aware of his intense and hopeless suffering and that of his family. After four years the sadness remains. PARS gave wonderful help, after his arrival. The St Vincent de Paul charter sets out inspiring aims for its work with people. But I am wondering how much more St V de P could realistically be expected to do. They already provide for many people with a variety of needs. How much further could they stretch? Some Christians in Christchurch offer a men's group for ex-prisoners. It's run weekly by a pastor, a social worker in addictions and a couple of others. They start with a meal of pizza and a pudding treat cooked by a motherly figure from the congregation, then they talk and pray and are supported. Some have joined the congregation. All know they will be welcome the next week. It isn't all plain sailing but much good has been accomplished. I am in awe of their work. Are we ready for this? Or is there some other way we might help? Does anybody have ideas?

Sue Thompson, Ōtepoti/Dunedin

Our last word

When we disbelieve,
Let us listen for truth.
When we overlook evil,
Let us confront it.
When we are racist,
Let us discover kin.
When we seek to dominate
Let us draw on community.

From the *Tui Motu* Team

cbm
christian blind mission

Help transform the lives of adults and children with disabilities living in remote communities in Papua New Guinea...

6-year-old Monica was born with congenital bilateral cataracts.

Like many children with disabilities in the world's poorest places, Monica's family could never afford the sight-saving cataract surgery she urgently needed.

Without surgery, Monica would struggle to read her books or the chalkboard at school.

Without extra support, she would miss out on vital education and be denied the opportunity to build a better future for herself.

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Please will you prayerfully consider sending a gift today, to help transform the lives of adults and children with disabilities in the world's poorest places.

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