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Tui Motu

InterIslands

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Live in Hope
Noho I runga I te Tūmanako

KĪNGITANGA & FAITH
WAYNE TE KAAWA,
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WOMEN & CHURCH
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MASSIMO FAGGIOLI

SKILLS FOR READERS
THOMAS O'LOUGHLIN

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

IN OUR PREPARATION for the Synod on Synodality being held in Rome this month we had two expansive images. The first was that of the global church walking together and conversing with one another about how the church was doing in our part of the world. We wanted to identify the good but also the gaps and blindspots hindering us from being a mission church. The second was the image of stretching out the tent pegs in order to widen the space of the tent to make enough room for all who wanted to be there — especially for the contemporary equivalent of "widows and orphans", those judged unworthy, lesser and as not belonging. Both images evoked energy, movement and participation — a fresh sense of the community we could be as a Gospel people "on the way". Those images and our preparation stoked our hope that the church, which for many has grown heavy with institutional dullness and denial, might be stirred by the Spirit at this time and enter into a process of transformation. The Synod is now in progress and we live in hope.

In many respects hope accumulates — we can become more hopeful by experiencing hope around us. Recently we watched the Kīngitanga iwi in action at Tūrangawaewae as they mourned the death of Kīngi Tūheitia and annnounced his successor Kuīni Ngawai hono i te po. Just weeks before his death Tūheitua had invited Māori iwi from around the country to a hui, to discuss their response to policy changes and proposals from the Government which would disadvantage and disrespect Māori. Tūheitia's vision of unity played out in the wake of his death. The tent pegs stretched so that tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti, friends and enemies, young and old, dignities and ordinary folk, Christians and other faiths, found welcome and hospitality, inclusion and respect. It was tikanga in action — and on a huge scale. We saw a vision of unity take shape in reality – and it increases our hope.

But we cannot take hope for granted. Disappointment and discouragement, which can render us passive and disinterested, are the enemies of hope. This is why community is so important for engendering hope. Community calls for mutuality in our relationships — for giving and receiving, for speaking and hearing, for caring and forgiving. Not only does community require that we stretch the tent pegs to make room for all comers, but that we also begin conversing rather than judging and practising hospitality rather than feeling constrained by barriers. Practice will turn the good we do into virtue — it will become the way we are. And the practice of hope will energise us to be a mission church, a Gospel people, in these times. This is our hope of the Synod.

The contributors to this issue offer articles, commentary, reviews and perspectives for our thoughtful reading and discussion. We thank them all for sharing their scholarship and experience, faith and reflection, art and craft.

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

No Excuse for Inequality

I WENT TO Tūrangawaewae for the tangi of Kīngi Tūheitia and watched the coronation of Kuīni Ngawai hono i te po. For over a week we witnessed the fantastically choreographed, impossibly clever and brilliantly assured way that the Māori community demonstrated how to bury a king and crown a queen without a hitch. This was the very best of our citizenry on show. It resonated with mana and was an expression of kotahitanga/unity.

After the burial, the young Ngawai hono i te po, who will possibly have 50 years or more in the role ahead of her, was welcomed as Kuīni with unanimous joy by those inside the marae, as well as the hundreds lining the riverbank — mourners now turned revellers. It was perfect. I was deeply moved.

On the evening of the burial and coronation a young man was gunned down in the Auckland street where my son lives. We knew of him through a close friend who had taught him. The young man was just 18, profoundly deaf, adrift from his whānau, and caught in the crossfire of someone else's dispute.

The juxtaposition of these events tells a story of Aotearoa today. We have enormous capability as a nation but our eyes remain closed to our sin of inequality. The experience of racism grinds at our soul and impoverishes our capacity to strive and thrive. We have to change this. We need to learn the lessons of Tūrangawaewae.

Two months ago, the final report of the Royal Commission of Historical Abuse in State Care and Faith-based Institutions was released. It paints a dreadful picture of abuse over generations — my own lifetime of 70 years. I ask myself: When did I object to what was going on here? Was I too busy developing a career to hear the pleas of the abused? Was I too vested in my roles in service of the governments of the day to take a wider view, to seek out the signs of moral and personal decay and raise my voice in protest? How real is the defence: "I did not know"?

We lock up our brown offending citizens, pretending we can train them into goodness. Yet we pay little regard to their capacity to be "made whole". Currently we are witnessing the opening of new youth facilities (read: prisons). These facilities do everything the Royal Commission says is wrong. They show we have learned no lessons. While the government speaks of a culture of "innovation" and "far-sightedness" we know these facilities will repeat past mistakes. They show none of the consultation, expertise and insight we saw at Tūrangawaewae.

When will we say "no" to this mistreatment of Māori? How will we make real the values and societal structure to which we aspire, the values on show at Tūrangawaewae?

Consider the fierce conversation taking place about the Treaty Principles Bill supported by ACT. ACT leader David Seymour did not attend the hui at Tūrangawaewae called by Kīngi Tūheitia in the month before his death. Seymour's absence (and excuse that he wasn't invited) made a statement about his distance from the Kīngitanga. His behaviour was a politically manicured snub.

But we saw rangatiratanga in action when Seymour came to Kīngi Tūheitia's tangi and rendered his whaikōrero in te reo. He was warmly welcomed as a Minister of the Crown whose party is part of the government.

Rangatiratanga does not require subservience. It values directness and willingness to be brave. Its very framework welcomes dispute, debate and challenge and it protects all participants because it aims at kotahitanga above all else.

This is our nation's gift. We must not allow it to be squandered by the narrow-minded and the bigoted. Our hearts and hopes are bigger than that.

Photo by Chameleons Eye/Shutterstock.com

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

KĪNGITANGA, FAITH & KOTAHITANGA

THE RECENT DEATH of Kīngi Tūheitia Potatau Te Wherowhero VII saw a flood of memories, tributes and tears from tens of thousands of people who arrived at Tūrangawaewae marae to mourn him. During his 18 years on the throne I was privileged to share his company on a number of occasions as a mentor and as a friend.

The first Māori Kīngi Pōtatau (1858-1860) aligned Kīngitanga with Christianity. At his coronation Te Heuheu, the paramount chief of Tūwharetoa said to Pōtatau: "Let the religion of Jesus Christ be what unites us." Pōtatau responded with the words: "Through the eye of the needle pass the white thread, the black thread and the red thread, hold fast to charity, the law and to the faith, forsake all else."

Pōtatau further grounded the place of Christianity when he stated to his people before his death: "Prior to me your God was Uenuku Kaitangata, after me your God will be Ihowa o ngā mano, the God of the Bible".

Tāwhiao, the second Māori Kīngi (1860-1894), was associated with the prophet Te Ua Haumēne of the Pai Marire faith, an expression of independent Māori Christianity begun in Tāranaki, based on goodness and peace. Tāwhiao developed his own version of Pai Mārire calling it Tariao, the morning star. It combined Pai Mārire karakia/prayer with new forms of ritual. The late Kīngi Tūheitia was not only Kīngi but he was also the titular head of the Tariao faith.

BIBLE AS WORD OF GOD

Faith and the Bible are important to Kīngitanga. During the coronation of Kīngi Pōtatau, the Holy Bible was placed upon his head. The Māori monarch is the only monarch in the world to be crowned with the Bible. Other monarchs have a crown made of gold and jewels — diamonds, rubies and sapphires — but the crown of the Māori kīngi or kuīni is the Bible. The same Bible has been used for every Māori monarch since the first coronation.

FAITH IN PRACTICE

Every monarch has their own flag or standard that is flown at the Kīngitanga marae. The flag designed by Kīngi Tuheitia has the cross of Jesus Christ in a prominent position. Faith and spiritual matters such as karakia and the Bible were important to Kīngi Tūheitia. Every week he would spend time in karakia with his whānau and he often would discuss questions of faith. Before he travelled on international business, Tūheitia would gather his people for karakia. The people would gather for prayers for the Kīngi's health at those times when he suffered illness. When he was in residence at Tūrangawaewae marae the day would begin at 7am with karakia during which time his flag was

raised. Each evening karakia would ring out over the marae as the flag was lowered.

When Kīngi Tūheitia was working through his reforms of Kīngitanga, he asked me to establish his Kahui Wairua — a Council of Spiritual Advisors consisting of church leaders. The Kīngi felt it was important that the first voice he heard when needing advice was the voice of God. The responsibility to reflect and articulate the word to the Kīngi was given to the church leaders of the Kahui Wairua. Tūheitia asked for there to be a Roman Catholic voice on this Council. During the reign of Tūheitia's mother Te Atairangikaahu, Catholic Bishop Takuira Mariu, until his death, delivered the homily at each anniversary of the Kuīni's coronation. At Te Atairangikaahu's request Bishop Mariu baptised her granddaughter Ngawai hono i te po, signifying the union in faith of Kīngitanga and the Roman Catholic Church. After Bishop Mariu's death Pā Hemi Hekiera SM took the Catholic seat on the Kahui Wairua until his untimely passing.

CARE OF THE POOR

A pillar of Kīngitanga is the Poukai. It is the annual series of visits by the Kīngi or Queen to the various Kīngitanga marae in the Waikato region and beyond. Kīngi Tāwhiao was concerned about the state of his people after their land confiscations which had caused widespread poverty and hunger. He reflected that biblical passages spoke of the king's duty to care for the least in society — the widow, the orphan and the poor — and he committed to this as the work of kīngitanga.

In 1885 Tāwhiao instituted the Poukai to provide for people living without proper support and necessities. He introduced the biblical concept of tithing. All food was donated, nothing was brought, and those who could gave a monetary donation.

The Kīngi received 10 per cent of the donated money and food to support the objectives of Kīngitanga. The remaining 90 per cent of food and money was given to support the least in society. The food was divided among the people and the money used for the practical support of the people.

KOTAHITANGA

Embedded in the principles of the Poukai is the concept of kotahitanga, unity. Tawhiao foresaw that for the Kīngitanga movement to be successful it was crucial that there was unity among his Waikato-Tainui people. The Poukai is a conversation and it is held on over 30 marae during the year. Whenever something is considered important to the people, the issue is brought to a Poukai where it is robustly discussed and debated in a public forum at which the people have a say.

In this last year of his reign, Kīngi Tūheitia called for kotahitanga in response to government policies that many considered would have a negative impact not only on Māori but on all people. Tūheitia's call for kotahitanga went beyond being a rallying call for Māori to unite. He extended the call to Pākehā as Tangata Tiriti/people of the Treaty and Pasifika as Tangata Moana/People of the Ocean to stand together. Amazingly, thousands of Tangata Tiriti and Tangata Moana have heeded his call to unity, signing petitions, writing letters, taking part in hīkoi, protest marches, publicity and educational awareness-raising events. For once, Tangata Whenua, Tangata Tiriti and Tangata Moana are united in a common cause to honour te Tiriti o Waitangi and te reo Māori.

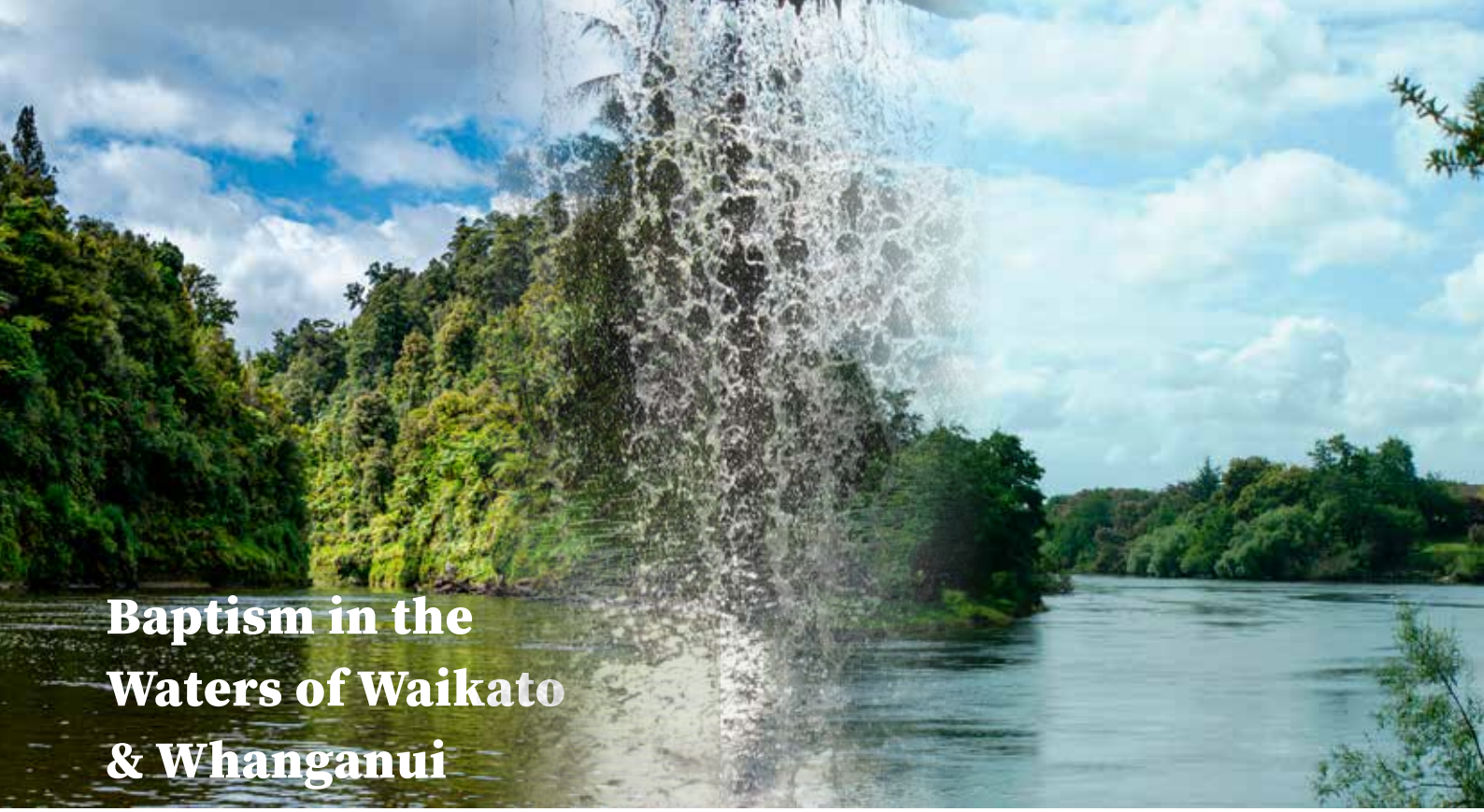
During the celebrations of his 18th coronation anniversary at Tūrangawaewae marae, Kīngi Tūheitia spoke publicly about kotahitanga. He encouraged all people to be positive, not to be afraid of the storm, reminding us that we are stronger together with kotahitanga as the wind in our sails. Then the following week on 30 August aged just 69, after suffering years of ill health, Tūheitia's heart stopped beating.

CORONATION OF THE QUEEN

Before Kīngi Tūheitia was buried we saw the coronation of his 27-year-old daughter Ngawai hono i te po as the new monarch, Arikinui and Kuīni. (She is the late Kuīni's granddaughter who was baptised in the Catholic Church.) While this is a major generational shift, the principles of Kīngitanga remain unchanged and will continue into the next generation, although they may be expressed in new ways. At the heart of Kīngitanga is faith in God and Jesus Christ, the Bible, prayer, abidance to the law and care for the least in society, the widow, the orphan and the poor. Forsake all else.

Photo of *Crowning of Ngawai hono i te po* taken from RNZ video

Wayne Te Kaawa is is an ordained Presbyterian minister and former Moderator of the Presbyterian Māori Synod and Ahorangi of Te Wānanga a Rangi.



Baptism in the Waters of Waikato & Whanganui

David Gledhill *tells how the new Kuīni was baptised as a child in the Catholic Church as a sign of the unity in faith of Māori from two regions.*

THE LATE MĀORI Queen, Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu, who died in 2006, asked Pīhopa/Bishop Tākuira Mariu SM to baptise her granddaughter. She made the request when they were both at Parikino on the Tira Hoe Waka (the annual canoe trip down the Whanganui River). Her aim was to "join the two rivers" of Waikato and Whanganui. That is, to form a bond between the Tainui Waka, Waikato and the Aotea Waka of Whanganui — a bond of faith between the people of the Kīngitanga and the Hāhi Katorika/Catholic Church.

Catholic Pīhopa Mariu was of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, an important whakapapa to the region. He followed up on the Māori Queen's request and baptised Ngawai at Huntly. Hence, her name: "Ngawai hono ki Parikino", the "joining of the rivers" at Parikino, the place where the Baptism request was made.

Ngawai hono's growth in faith continued. The Kahui Ariki (the family group who surround a person of the Royal line) contacted me because of my links to the Whanganui River people, and said it was time for Ngawai to complete her Catholic journey by receiving the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Communion.

I wrote formally to the Kahu Ariki outlining the formation Ngawai needed for this process. The Kahui agreed and they came with Ngawai for formal instruction to Taumarunui, the place where Pā Hemi Hekiera and I were stationed.

Ngawai hono celebrated Reconciliation first. This took place with the support of her family in the chapel at Hopuhopu near Ngāruawāhia on the Waikato River. When Ngawai hono told her father Kīngi Tūheitia that she was to celebrate Confession, he is reputed to have said to her: "When you do, make one for me, too!"

At that time a Confirmation name was explored for Ngawai. You cannot add any name to someone of royal line, even that of a saint. So they sought the advice of the local kuia Sophie Albert. And "Sophie" — as in Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat, the founder of an Order of Sisters for the education of girls — was chosen as Ngawai's patron for Confirmation.

Pā Hemi Hekiera SM prepared the liturgy for Ngawai's Confirmation and Communion which took place within a Miha Māori/Catholic Mass at Tūrangawaewae marae and was linked with the gathering for the anniversary celebrations of the Coronation of Kīngi Tūheitia Te Pōtatau Te Wherowhero VII. I was nominated to bless the gathering and say the opening karakia. I took a large rau/branch and generously sprinkled all those who had gathered, Catholics on one side and Tainui iwi on the other.

The late Bishop Denis Browne had intended to confirm Ngawai, but he was unable to come, so Monsignor David Bennett took his place. Despite the day starting exceptionally wet and cloudy, the sun broke through at the time of Confirmation and shone on the gathering, a "tohu" or sign of blessing. This moment was enhanced by the late kuia Biddy Mareikura giving a karanga/ceremonial call to the Holy Spirit and Ngawai was confirmed and made her first Communion.

Whanganui River by Ron Kolet/Shutterstock.com
Waikato River by Richard Faragher/Shutterstock.com

Pā Rāwiri Gledhill, David Gledhill SM, now living in Ōtaki, has ministered among Māori for nearly 60 years. He had a stroke two years ago and is grateful for your prayerful support.

Takes Two to Treaty

To all Members of Parliament

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, rau rangatira mā, tēnā koutou katoa

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9).

Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? The one … who does what is righteous, who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind (Psalm 15).

We support Te Tiriti o Waitangi and oppose the proposed Treaty Principles Bill

As Christian leaders from across Aotearoa New Zealand we express our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We affirm that Te Tiriti o Waitangi protects the Tino Rangatiratanga of hapū and iwi. That rangatiratanga over land and taonga is to be upheld. We therefore express our opposition to the proposed Treaty Principles Bill.

The proposed Bill is inconsistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi in that it does not recognise the collective rights of iwi Māori or guarantee their relationship with the Crown. It would undermine what Te Tiriti guarantees, and what decades of law, jurisprudence and policy have sought to recognise.

We note with concern the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal's interim report, Ngā Mātāpono — The Principles, including that the Bill "distorted the text of Te Tiriti o Waitangi".

The Treaty Principles Bill may destabilise and harm Aotearoa New Zealand

We note with deep concern the harmful impacts the Bill may cause to Aotearoa New Zealand's social cohesion. Te Tiriti o Waitangi provides a basis for finding common ground, recognising and reconciling past wrongs, and acts as a moral and equitable compass for our democracy. By contrast, we believe the Treaty Principles Bill will lead to division between the peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand, cause the spread of disinformation and hinder efforts at healing and reconciliation.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a covenantal relationship

We affirm the Church's ongoing, special and historic relationship with Te Tiriti o Waitangi which many Christians view as a sacred covenant. As inheritors of the legacy of the missionaries involved in the drafting, promotion and signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, we acknowledge a duty of care for upholding the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We commit our own churches to deepening our Te Tiriti o Waitangi education and pursuing reconciliation. We will work to ensure the flourishing of life in Aotearoa New Zealand for all peoples living here, both Tangata Tiriti and Tangata Whenua, as Te Tiriti of Waitangi enables.

We call on all Members of Parliament to oppose the Treaty Principles Bill

We therefore view with concern, and oppose the proposed Treaty Principles Bill. We call on all Members of Parliament to do everything in their power to not take this Bill to Select Committee and to work towards the ongoing restoration of the Tiriti relationship.

With love, and the hope for a flourishing and peaceful future for our people

From the leaders of Christian Churches

At the time of printing this letter had gathered over 500 signatures. You can add your support to the spirit of this letter: **www.commongrace.nz/common-grace-actions/churchleadersletter**

Hongi by Fiona Stirling © First used *Tui Motu* cover Issue 213 March 2017

Journey of Hope to the Synod

Christina Reymer *share her hopes for women's equality as baptised members in a synodal Church.*

I WRITE AS a lay person from my experience of following the Spirit's lead. In the last five years I have been a founding member of Be the Change. We are a small community of faith-filled women (and a few men) committed to church (with a small "c"). To a greater or lesser extent we've been worn down (even worn out) by the years of service we've given and the hope and action for change. We want to be recognised, affirmed and respected as women, equal in dignity to other baptised members, and equal in all aspects of life in the church, in service, leadership and ministry.

We don't yet have recognition, and so to nourish our souls and spirits, we come together to create liturgies that reflect the change we aspire to. We share our experiences, hopes and frustrations, listening to one another and to the Spirit as she calls. We break bread and share the fruit of our hands.

Involvement in Synod Walking Together

We were delighted when, in 2021, Pope Francis called us to become a synodal church, a listening church, a welcoming and inclusive church in which all may find a home! Like many groups around the country, Be the Change got on board, submitting our responses to the questions in the first phase of the Synod, the consultation of the people of God. We shared our stories of years of service and still not being recognised, valued or respected as equal members of the Church. We collected "Pink Shoes" (women's worn-out shoes and their stories) and took them to the Vatican to line the streets, illustrating our frustration that we are still left standing at the door, denied entry. We called again for the right to celebrate liturgy in inclusive language, to have our voices heard, and to invoke images of a God that were not constrained by patriarchy.

We submitted about our concerns for the planet, humanity's ongoing failure to care for Papatūānuku, the earth mother who sustains us, our children and future generations.

We submitted about our failure in Aotearoa to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the continued marginalising of Māori, Tangata Whenua in Aotearoa.

And we submitted about our families, our communities — locally and globally — and about how we care and fail to care for one another.

Women Members of Synod

We were excited to see the Working Document of the Continental Stage of the Synod on Synodality, "Enlarge the space of your tent" (March 2023) which called for a more inclusive, welcoming Church. For the first time, women were invited to participate in the synod as full voting members, and the process of engagement was radically different.

Participants gathered around a table to listen to one another, male and female, lay and clerical alike, as equals.

Concern of Sidelining Women's Issues

But we also had concerns. The Synod is carefully orchestrated, and the question of the status of women in the church is not even on the agenda for the second session taking place this month (October 2024). This is dismaying, but our hopes aren't dashed and we trust in the Spirit.

Taking Inspiration

And we don't wait passively in the pews to see what happens. Instead, we assert our right to act, to take responsibility for our own lives and the world we want to live in. We are part of a much wider global reform community that in 2023 organised its own synod, Spirit Unbounded. This ran in parallel with the official synod and aimed to hear the voices of the marginalised, to read the signs of the times and of the Spirit already working in the many global movements to bring about a safer, more just and peaceful world that embraces the diversity of humanity created in the image of God.

We are inspired by the movements of young people calling for action on climate change; by the science and technology being developed to make a cleaner, more sustainable world; by Indigenous peoples' movements to reclaim their languages, lands and cultures; and by ordinary people committed to recycling, composting, growing our food, caring for our communities, our neighbours and ourselves. Many of us can see the Spirit active in our children who have long ago left the church but are working for the good of the world.

I believe we are on the cusp of change. We are in a time of transition from one era to a new era. Last month a new young Queen was chosen in te ao Māori; a woman is vying for the USA presidency. There is hope!

Technological changes, such as the electrification of our energy sources using solar and wind, are happening so rapidly that we may make some meaningful advances in reversing climate change, while at the same time improving the living standards of marginalised populations. These are just a few of the signs of hope and change for a better world.

Trust and Hope in the Spirit

And in the church? Maybe, just maybe, we will trust in the Spirit to lead us on to become a truly synodal church, an inclusive welcoming global community that embraces our diversity, and is enriched by it, reflecting the true nature of God in the world, allowing us to be who we are.

Last month the Australasian Association for Catholic Reform (ACCCR) hosted a webinar called "Synodality of Oceania" to respond to the call to become a synodal church. The webinar focused on the question: What does "becoming a synodal church" mean in our region of Oceania?

Four people from our region spoke about how they envisage synodality happening in their part of our region.

For the first time, women were invited to participate in the synod as full voting members, and the process of engagement was radically different.

Two of the speakers are official delegates to this month's Synod on Synodality, and all speakers have been closely involved in the writing of documents collating responses from our region. The speakers included Fr Victor Roche SVD from Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, Kelly Paget from Australia, Dr Susan Sela from Fiji and Manuel Beazley from Aotearoa NZ. I moderated the discussion.

Wairua tapu tau mai rā,
Wairua tapu mai runga,
uhia mai ngā taonga pai,
homai tō aroha.

Wāhia, kia tika,
akona mai rā kia ū ki te pai.
Horoia, kia mau tonu rā
mōhou te tino kororia.

Alight Holy Spirit, come to rest
Holy spirit from above
cover all we hold dear
give us your love.

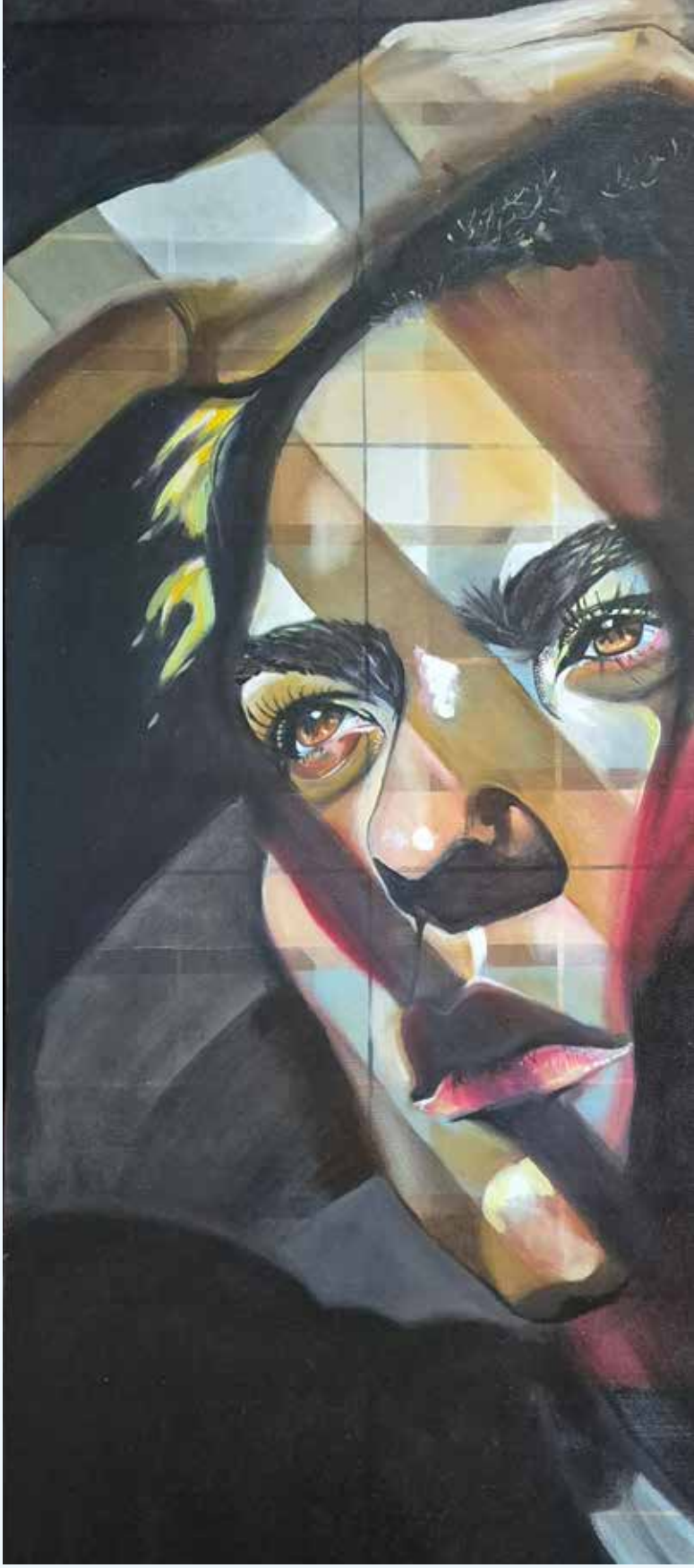
Lay us down (as firewood), so all is right
teaching us to hold firmly to the right.
Wash/clean us, so that we may keep holding
yours is the true glory.

Suffragette Women sculpture by Margriet Windhausen in Kate Sheppard National Memorial, Christchurch Commons Wikimedia

Christina Reymer is a cradle Catholic, a Dutch Kiwi, business owner, wife and mother of five amazing children and she lives in Hamilton.

Women's Leadership in Society & Church

Massimo Faggioli *writes that while politics normalises women's leadership, the church continues to debate women's roles, revealing a growing gap between societal progress and ecclesiastical practices.*



THE FAST-PACED developments in the US presidential election campaign during the months of July, August and September have painted a picture that has some relevance for the immediate future of the Catholic Church.

In July, the dominus and owner of the Republican Party Donald Trump, chose junior US Senator JD Vance from Ohio as his vice-presidential nominee. Vance's views on women and family, influenced by his 2019 conversion to Catholicism at age 35, strike many Americans as paleo-conservative. In the Democratic party, following President Joe Biden's debate disaster with Trump on 27 June, the most powerful Catholic politician in Congress, the representative from California Nancy Pelosi, pushed President Biden out of the race. Pelosi, a nun-educated (the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur's Trinity Washington University) public servant and the first woman to serve as Speaker of the House, spoke on behalf of many in the party to USA President Joe Biden, the "high priest" of America, "a nation with the soul of the church" (GK Chesterton).

This opened the way for the nomination of the current US vice president, Kamala Harris, as the Democratic Party's candidate for the presidency. Harris is the second woman candidate after Hillary Clinton, who was defeated by Trump in 2016. Unlike the Clinton campaign eight years ago, Harris and the Democratic Party have not focused much time or energy on defending the idea that a woman can serve as President of the United States.

Women's Leadership in USA Society Is Changing

The American theologian Phyllis Zagano wrote recently: "The Catholic Church is in a bad way when the Democratic Party in the United States brings more hope and joy to people — especially to women — than Pope Francis."

In the same two months that elevated Harris as the US presidential candidate who may become the first woman president of the United States, different events developed in the Catholic Church.

Uncertainty about Women's Leadership in Church

On 9 July the office of the Synod published and presented to the public the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the second assembly of the Synod on Synodality taking place this month from 2-27 October. At the press conference, the four speakers were all members of the clergy, despite the fact that several women are members of the Synod and have worked in various positions since the Synodal process began in 2021.

The *Instrumentum Laboris* instructed the Synod not to address the issue of the diaconate of women: "Some theological and canonical questions concerning specific forms of ecclesial ministry — in particular, the question of the necessary participation of women in the life and leadership of the church — have been entrusted to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, in dialogue with the General Secretariat of the Synod (Study Group No. 5)" (*IL*, par 30).

At the same time, *Instrumentum Laboris* puts that question front and centre in the text (*IL*, par 12), while

having to deal with Pope Francis's May interview with the American television network CBS, where he voiced his firm opposition to women deacons unequivocally, "if it is deacons with Holy Orders."

What happens in America rarely stays in America. Harris might become the first woman president of the United States. But even if she does not, the message emerging from American politics in 2024 is that during the last decade the country has moved beyond the question of "can a woman be president?" We are observing the normalisation of the idea of a Madam President, also in light of more pressing concerns — especially the future of American democracy.

Gap in Women's Participation in Society and Church

Now, the situation in the Catholic Church presents a different picture. We do not know what will happen at the Synod and after the Synod on the issue of women. It is clear that Pope Francis does not want the Synod to be hijacked by any issue — such as women but also gender and LGBTQ Catholics.

But it is also clear that women in the Church today still need to say things that women elsewhere no longer need to say, or to say as much, concerning their participation and leadership in politics and society.

It is more than a problem of doctrine in the church. It is an issue of confronting already existing practices, the reality of lived Catholicism in many churches around the world (as has emerged already at the 2019 Synod for the Amazon region).

The 2024 assembly of the Synod, and the post-synodal handling of the issue of women by the Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith led by Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernandez, might decide to kick the can down the road once again.

Currently, there is no document from the Catholic Church that says that women cannot be ordained to the diaconate. And the reports from the two commissions created by Pope Francis to study the issue remain unpublished leaving their content unknown. This is relevant because it would be important to know what Francis received in those reports and if and how they shaped his decisions.

Danger of Clericalism

The Vatican might resort to the argument that women cannot be ordained to the diaconate because women cannot image Christ. If this happens, regardless of one's position on the ordination of women to the diaconate, it will be difficult to convince women, especially those who believe in the synodal process, to avoid the conclusion that the club of male celibates known as the Roman Catholic clergy once again seems on the verge of doing its best to keep women "in their place".

During the last century, the gap between women's opportunities for participation in politics and in the church has increased. Now, this gap has become visibly greater, especially from the point of view of Catholic women in the United States, in the Anglo-American sphere, and in many European countries. This is a serious problem for what the church needs to do in terms of evangelisation.

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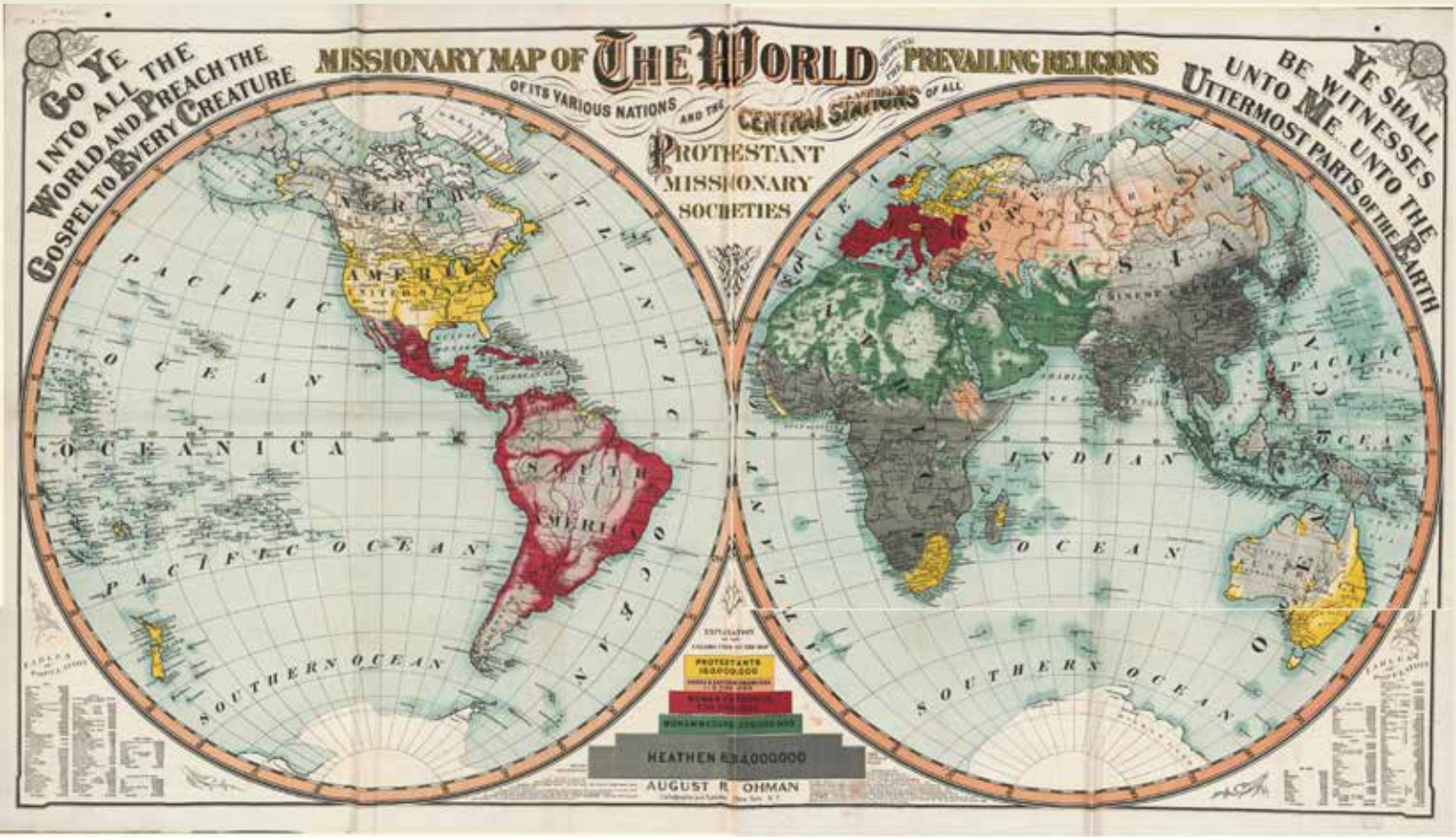


From Overland to Overseas Mission

In the second of her three-part series, **Susan Smith** *explains how maritime nations in the 16th century changed the focus of missionary activity from Asia to the "new worlds" of Africa and the Americas.*

THE "DISCOVERY" OF the Americas saw the decline of overland missionary activity to the Far East, and overseas mission to the “new world” became all important. Overseas mission was easier, faster, and allowed for more efficient transport of people and goods both to and from Europe’s imperial strongholds.

Ship Travel Changed Missionary Focus

As the 16th century dawned, the Portuguese and Spanish, maritime nations par excellence, were the first to recognise the economic and political potential of newly “discovered” continents, but the English and Dutch were not too far behind. In 1494, the nefarious Spanish-born pope Alexander VI drew up the Treaty of Tordesillas which divided the world into two spheres of influence: Portugal responsible for one hemisphere, and Spain for the other.

By 1526, Portugal had begun transporting slaves from Africa to its new colonies, and was soon followed by other nations. Sailing vessels carrying slaves, military forces, merchants, settlers and missionaries returned home laden with silver, gold and other treasures stolen from Indigenous people rapidly being subjugated by colonial authorities.

Conversion of “Pagans”

Missionaries were far more successful in converting “pagans” in the Americas and Africa than was the case in India, China or Japan. Unlike the Asian continent with its great world religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, or Islam, Indigenous peoples of the Americas had no such literary traditions, and missionary efforts seem to be more numerically rewarding in those situations.

The possibilities that newly discovered lands offered the church for missionary activity understood as *plantatio ecclesiae* (planting the Church), saw hundreds of priests, particularly Jesuits, but also Franciscans and Dominicans, leaving Catholic Europe for distant shores. Women religious from Spain were also journeying to Latin America, and French Sisters travelled to Canada in the early 17th century.

Sadly, some missionary activity was accepting of collusion with imperial authorities in their work, but there were some wonderful exceptions, such as Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas, who struggled to protect the rights of the Indigenous peoples in Spanish colonies. Jesuits in Paraguay also attempted to protect Indigenous peoples through the establishment of “reductions”, settlements which sought to isolate Indigenous peoples geographically from rapacious Spanish colonisers.

Notable Italian Jesuit Missionaries

Italian Jesuits Alessandro Valignano (1530-1606) and Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) were just two of the Jesuits who

took seriously what we now call inculturation. Valignano was sent to Japan where he sought to adapt to Japanese culture, encouraging his priests to dress like Zen Buddhist monks and to become fluent in the language.

Matteo attempted something similar in China and his attempts to learn the language and culture meant he was able to enter parts of the country closed off to foreigners. In the 16th century, Italy was far from being a nation state, as the papacy controlled much of central Italy while Spain governed the rest. Perhaps Italian-born Jesuits such as Valignano and Matteo were less enthusiastic about mission seen as part of the imperial task, and more concerned about the relationship between cultures and faith?

Catechisms of Church Teachings

But at the same time as overseas mission was assuming such importance for the church, church authorities were worried about the impact of the Protestant Reformation on Catholic life in Europe. Many were leaving the Catholic church for supposedly greener pastures. But rescue was on the way in the form of catechism texts which the Church saw as an effective response to the Protestant insistence on the Bible being translated into vernacular languages, and so able to be read, or even worse, interpreted by all.

Dutch Jesuit Peter Canisius wrote the first catechism intended to teach Catholic truths to wavering Catholics, or to those who had turned to Lutheranism or Calvinism. The Jesuits proved highly effective in this ministry, and this led to catechism texts assuming more importance than biblical texts in the faith formation of Catholics, a situation that persisted until Vatican II.

Missionaries Sisters

From the 16th century through to Vatican II, mission was a church-building activity rather than a reigning of God activity, and in order for the institution to grow, people needed to be baptised. Church authorities recognised that the work of Sisters was important although certainly subordinate to the sacramental ministry of priests. Sisters' ministries in orphanages, dispensaries or kindergartens often responded to a local community's expressed needs. Sisters rather than priests were more likely to be the first port of call in the communities in which they lived and worked.

In such situations, the embodied word of Sisters proclaimed more loudly the good news perhaps than the preached word of the priest. (I have recently finished working with one of our Burmese Sisters on a history of the Mission Sisters in her province. We found a letter from 1941, in which New Zealander Isabelle Hewson joyfully wrote that "fifty-five unwanted babies had been brought to our door, received into the true fold, and made children of God".)

No baptism meant no salvation, hence the importance of orphanages which ensured both the physical and spiritual well-being of unbaptised children. An interesting aside — as early as the 13th century, it had seemed unfair that innocent but unbaptised children could end up in hell, so "Limbo" was invented to resolve the problem of a harsh God. There is no mention of Limbo in the 1992 and later editions of the Catholic Catechism of the Church.

Mission as Numbers in Church

To summarise, church authorities from the 16th century through to Vatican II understood mission as a church-building activity rather than a reignocentric activity. Christian missionaries, whether Catholic or Protestant, believed that people had to be converted if they were to be saved. Catholic and Protestant mutually often regarded the work of the other as the work of Satan. They both thought that believers in "pagan" religions were living in darkness on their way to eternal damnation.

Such negative feelings increased in intensity in the 19th century, when missionary activity was ever more bound up with the ambitions of Europe's imperial powers. Covert and overt examples of cultural superiority on the part of Western missionaries helps to explain their attitude towards people of different cultures and religious traditions.

Extraordinary Service

But having said that, reading the histories of those congregations founded to go on the foreign missions prior to Vatican II fills me with admiration. The commitment, energy and enthusiasm of Sisters, Brothers and priests (there were virtually no lay people involved) were extraordinary despite the challenges of harsh tropical climates, unsuitable dress, disease and sickness, distance from family and homelands and the absence of prompt and reliable communication. Yet they persisted and, in many instances, the schools and hospitals so many established are still highly regarded and respected today.

Just as Columbus's discovery of the Americas lead to extraordinary change in the way the church understood mission, Vatican II (1962-1965) was going to usher in a time of even more extraordinary change, as we will soon see.

Missionary map of the world showing prevailing religions of its various nations and the central stations of all Protestant missionary societies by August R Ohman Credit: Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

The Missionary Boat by Henry Scott Tuke (1858-1929) in The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society, Tuke Collection. Wikimedia Commons

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.*

GIVING & RECEIVING

Philip Casey *has recently resigned from the Board of The Independent Catholic Magazine (commonly called Tui Motu Board) after nearly two decades of service. He talked to* **Ann Hassan** *about his time on the Board, the magazine, and his experience of Guillain-Barré syndrome, an autoimmune condition which attacks the nervous system.*

YOU'VE SERVED ON THE *TUI MOTU* BOARD FOR 18 YEARS, WHICH MEANS YOU CAN TAKE A VERY LONG VIEW OF THE MAGAZINE. HOW HAVE YOU SEEN IT CHANGE OVER THE YEARS?

I feel very privileged to have been part of the *Tui Motu* journey from the time of the original editor and assistant editor, Michael [Hill IC] and Francie [Skelton], and then Kevin [Toomey OP] and Elizabeth [Mackie OP), and now Ann [Gilroy RSJ] and Ann [Hassan].

One thing that's changed is what the Board deals with at meetings. Mostly that's in response to necessity — the Charities Commission [now Charities Services] has changed drastically what is required of a not-for-profit charity, the way it's run, the reporting that's required. It was very different when I first joined the Board. Never a meeting went by that Michael didn't remind us that we were a cottage industry — that's true in the sense of the scale of it, but things have changed dramatically as to what is required of us.

And so much changed with Covid — we all went online. I can remember the Board having group phone calls. We all had to dial in at a certain time and put in a code and so on — now of course with Zoom it's so much easier and we get to see one another.

But since Covid we very rarely meet face-to-face and for me, just the kind of person that I am, I really miss that — the chat over morning tea, catching up with other Board members and being able to spend the day with the editor and staff so you get that broader context. I think the reports that the editor puts together for the *Tui Motu* community are amazing and go a long way towards filling that gap.

The thing I miss most is the opportunity we had twice a year to hold an event with subscribers — to spend an evening with them and hear what they liked and didn't like. I really valued that. I'm not putting these changes in the negative basket; times are different and I also realise

there's costs associated with face-to-face meetings. In these times where budgets are incredibly tight — I think about inflation or whatever it is that's caused postage to go through the roof! — it may not be easy or even justifiable for the Board to meet in person.

I THINK ONE OF THE BIG THINGS ABOUT THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE ... WAS THE HUGE AMOUNT OF LOVE AND SUPPORT I GOT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

And the thing that hasn't changed? The magazine. The spirit, the mission of the magazine hasn't changed. To me that's quite miraculous. I think it's had a lot to do with our editor and assistant editor and what together they bring to the magazine. There's real synergy, and I'm talking about three sets of two here: they've all been on the same wavelength and really committed to the mission of the enterprise, with a strong understanding about what that means. And there's a complementarity of skills and strengths that mean that two snap together to become one amazing machine that pumps out 11 magazines a year. And of course the whole enterprise has always relied on volunteers — that's a consistent thread that has been vitally important to the magazine. It's fantastic that Francie is now a volunteer — I was thrilled to see that.

HOW DID YOU COME TO BE ON THE BOARD?

I was aware of *Tui Motu* from the beginning. My parents were subscribers from the early days because we all had a relationship with Michael Hill. He was principal when I was in my senior years at St Peter's College in Gore and I always admired him. Maura Toomey also taught me at St Peter's and was another person I admired and got on well with. I know she was one of those people at the beginning of *Tui Motu* who gave everything a shove — which doesn't surprise me because that's the kind of woman Maura was.

When I was living in Gore, we had a small but enthusiastic and committed social justice group within the parish. One of its leading lights was Katie O'Connor. After I'd left Gore, Katie, who I regarded as a good friend, rang me up and said: "Philip, I'm Chair of the *Tui Motu* Board, and I'd like you to come on the Board with me." Katie is not somebody who is easy to say no to! She's a bit of a whirlwind; she's a wonderful person. Katie was after somebody with a social justice interest, and we had an easy relationship.

IN 2021, AFTER EXPERIENCING SUDDEN AND ALMOST TOTAL PARALYSIS, YOU WERE DIAGNOSED WITH GUILLAIN-BARRÉ SYNDROME AND SPENT A YEAR IN HOSPITAL. HOW HAVE YOU MADE SENSE OF THIS TIME IN YOUR LIFE?

Well, when I listen to interviews on the radio and the interviewee says "That's a really good question," I think "Yeah, yeah, get on with it!" But this is something I'm still pondering and working on. I suppose I have to recognise that despite what was happening there was some kind of inner strength within me, even in those first weeks when I was completely paralysed from the shoulders down — not a twitch.

I would sing health workers' praises forever. They were so positive in saying: "This is what's going to happen, but you'll get better." I grabbed hold of that and very quickly saw myself as part of a team — I never felt isolated or that it [the work of recovery] was falling on me alone. And somebody gave me a book — not a self-help book but one of those that has positive messages — and one line in it was: "One of our greatest freedoms is how we react to things." That really resonated with me. I was choosing to be positive. I was choosing to work with all the medical and therapeutic teams around me and to make the most of that, showing my respect for them and for what they were trying to do.

IT WAS QUITE OVERWHELMING AND I REALISED THAT IT WAS SOMETHING THAT I'D TAKEN FOR GRANTED — OR MORE TO THE POINT THAT I'D OFTEN JUST SET ASIDE.

I was in hospital for a year, and most of that year fell in 2021. When we were locked down in August 2021, the medical staff were put under a lot of stress. Patients had absolutely no visitors, and the medical and therapeutic staff were wonderful because they realised how difficult it was for patients, stepped up and filled the gap left by family and friends. They gave so much support and love. It makes me very distressed now when all those medical people, all those people in hospitals and elsewhere, are feeling really undervalued. I find it very difficult to take.

DO YOU STILL FEEL THAT SUPPORT NOW THAT YOU'RE HOME FROM HOSPITAL?

Yes. I think one of the big things about the whole experience, which was in a way more amazing than what was happening to my body, was the huge amount of love and support I got from family and friends. It was quite overwhelming and I realised that it was something that I'd taken for granted — or more to the point that I'd often just set aside. Learning to accept that love was quite a lesson for me. And then, of course, sending that love back. And I think that's probably the single biggest lesson, the biggest thing that's happened to me. That makes you reprioritise what's really important — it changes your life forever.

Don't miss the *Tui Motu Podcast* with Philip Casey.

Collage of Philip Casey by Ron Patrick Raab CSC © Made for the article www.ronaldraab.com

Philip Casey was the Service Deliveries Manager at Hutt City Libraries and served as a director of the Independent Catholic Magazine Board from 2007-2024 and as Chair from 2013-2015.

How Can I Say I'm Sorry?

How can I say I'm sorry
When so much harm's been done?
How can I expect forgiveness
When so much dignity's been squashed?
Abuse has stripped the flower of youth
From so many in our care
And we who stand for truth are shamed
By the lie-lived lives we dared.

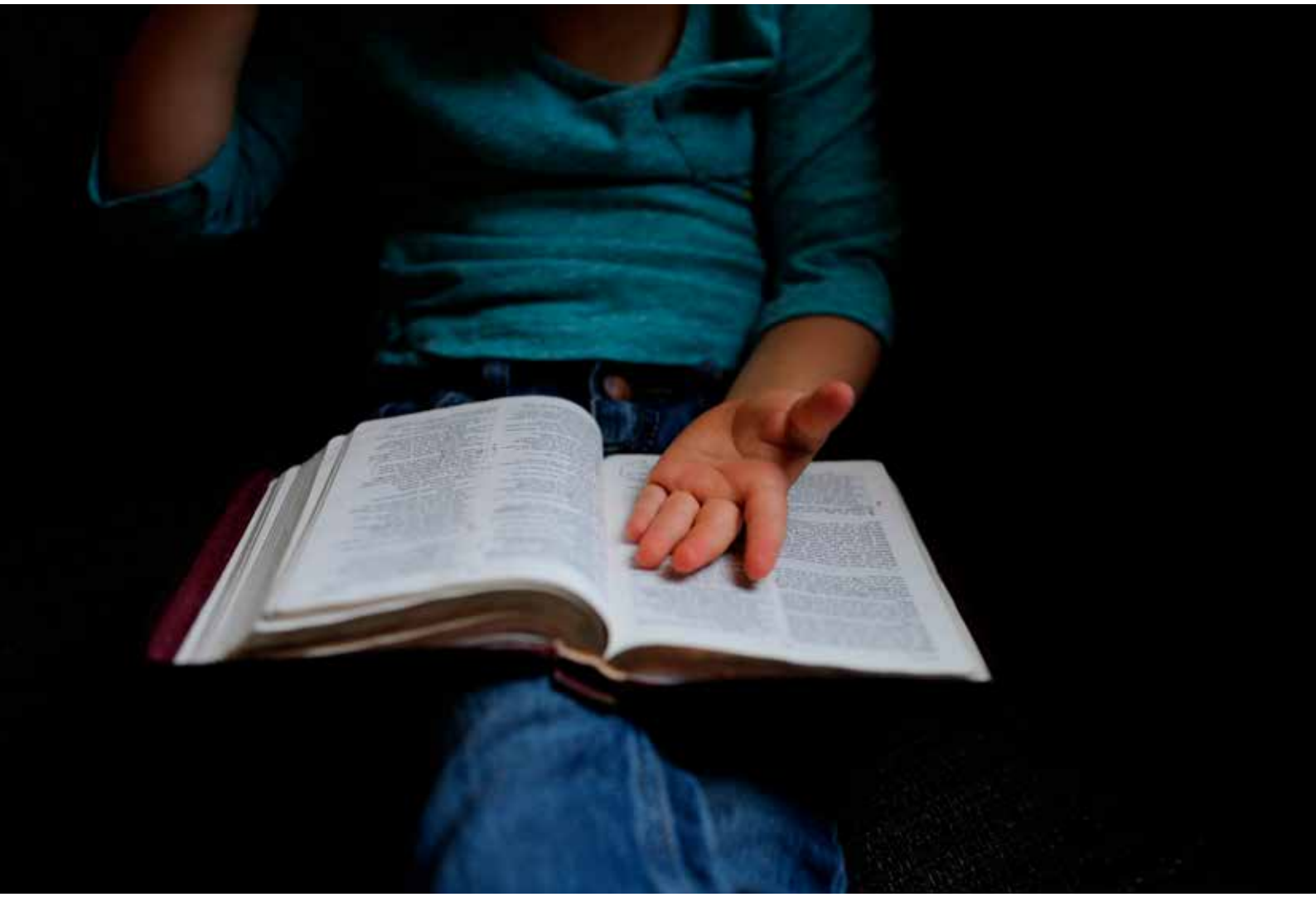
How can I plead innocence
When it happened on my watch?
How can I stand apart
While sharing Holy Orders?
I may not have groomed or soiled these souls
Or held them captive to my lust
But I'm linked in priesthood to the fact
That we've shattered sacred trust.

The holy ground on which I stand
Before the burning bush
Seeps through all with blood-red fire
Staining abusers' guilt
A guilt that's spread with vampire horror
Catching all priests in its bite
For victims' sake we must all atone
And together put things right.

I cannot change your yesterday
Or the nights you lived in fear
I cannot chase the dreams away
That chain you to the past
But I can and do believe your cry
Your suffering and your pain
And give my best in prayer and deeds
To keep all abuse at bay.

I will stand with you who've been abused
And felt powerless against power
And I'll own the evil guised as good
With humility and selflessness
Then perhaps a day will dawn
When a victim turns to me
Accepts my sorrow with a heart restored
Letting both of us walk free.

James B Lyons August 2024



The Reader Performs the Word of God

Thomas O'Loughlin *discusses why we have readers in the Eucharist and the skill they need for the ministry.*

THIS SCENE IS no doubt familiar: It is less than five minutes before the Sunday Eucharist begins. Tricia (sacristan) has noticed that Jim Nolan hasn't arrived and so asks the presider (trying to compose his thoughts) for directions. "Try Marian Dean." Not there. "Okay, get Winston!" (always there, and he loves "doing the reading", even if he mangles sentences). And so off Tricia goes to sort it. Crisis over. Anyway, there is a fall-back: the presider does it, and several in the congregation prefer that!

Within a generation the requirements for a person to be able to read the Scriptures at the Eucharist has gone from only someone with holy orders to being a task that anyone, it appears, can take on.

I remember the excitement in the 1970s liturgy — the readings in English, a new lectionary, and in some places even women were being asked to read. We adopted these changes without a murmur. But now it is taken for granted and we hardly give reading a thought. In some places "doing the readings" has become the property of the little sacristy huddle. In other places it is seen as such a generic skill that it is little more than another way of involving someone with a "simple" job. There's a feeling that reading Scripture aloud in public is not exactly "rocket science".

The Reader Is a Minister

Reflecting on how we got to this can show us in miniature how Christian liturgy has evolved — and draw attention to the tensions and confusions in what we are doing.

First, let's note that we do not simply refer to "doing the readings" (prioritising the action) but to "the reader" (prioritising the actor). "Reader" and "lector" are identical in function, but we tend to keep "lector" for a formally instituted "ministry" (in effect reserved to seminarians). But

whether we use reader or lector, we are talking about a minister, a servant of the community.

We might ask why we have lectors. Since we already have presbyters (priests) and in some parishes deacons, don't we have enough people for the liturgical tasks?

Early Tellers of the Christian Story

One of the few structures we can see at work in the earliest communities in the first century is their interest in retelling the story of their identity as the disciples of Jesus. For this purpose there were travelling teachers, preachers and evangelists. They arrived, stayed with a community, gave their performance and left — and from the surviving documents we can reconstruct some of their travelling patterns. This has been dubbed "the holy internet".

Whether we use "reader" or "lector", we are talking about a minister, a servant of the community.

Most of these evangelists have left no trace: their words may have inspired many scattered small groups but all we have are little ripples in the patterns of early theology.

However, a few not only performed their Gospels, but left a recording of their message to be re-performed later.

These recordings — as is the way of recordings whether on papyrus or a smartphone — could be copied and shared with groups who might never have heard that evangelist in the flesh. The recordings were precious for they not only celebrated the memory of Jesus but were an audible link with celebrated brothers such as Mark, Matthew or others whose names have not survived.

Because of this preserving instinct Mark's performance was still kept and copied despite the fact that virtually all of it could be found in Matthew. Moreover, both Matthew and Luke were kept despite being virtually duplicates of one another. Likewise, John was kept though he contradicted the others.

Skill of Early Lectors

Just to demonstrate the skill required of the storytellers, look at this passage that early lectors would have read:

INTHEBEGINNINGWASTHEWORDANDTHEWORDWAS
WITHGODANDTHEWORDWASGODHEWASINTHE
BEGINNINGWITHGODALLTHINGSCAMEINTOBEING
THROUGHHIMANDWITHOUTHIMNOTONETHINGCAME
INTOBEINGWHATHASCOMEINTOBEINGINHIMWASLIFE

You'll see immediately that there is no word spacing, punctuation, or upper and lower case lettering. Those things we use to read, what we call the "the grammar of legibility", came into existence later precisely to make reading easier and a more diffused skill among Christians.

Reading was a skilled activity in antiquity. It required the ability to convert marks made with ink into sounds that could be heard. The lector in the early churches was more akin to a cassette player converting signals back into sounds.

Greater Skill Required of Lector than Presider

We can go further and compare the reader's skill level with that of the presider. The presider had to have public speaking skills to announce the great thanksgiving prayer. Many presiders were expected to be able to formulate such a prayer *ex tempore* (one of the ripples we see is the feeling that long, pre-formulated prayers were "not the thing" for Jesus's followers. See Mark 12:38-40). Even in the second century Justin Martyr, the Christian apologist, tells us that the presider should make the prayer "as best he could". But if that was a problem, he could fall back on memorised prayers that were known (and memorised) by all.

This "default" lack of creativity by presiders is, after all, what links the eucharistic prayers of the *Didache* to later texts such as the *Apostolic Tradition*.

But being a lector was a role requiring far more skill. In order to convert the letters on a page into sounds was not just the matter of getting used to havingnospacesbetweenwords, but it required knowing where sentences began and ended (early documents had no punctuation). It required knowing the tone: was it a question or a statement? Was it to be heard ironically or as

a joke? This ability took grammatical skill — formal learning — and much practice: a good reader was a real asset in the community. Indeed, without the reader the Scripture codex was as useless as a pen-drive without a computer.

Listening to the Reader

Looking around at Sunday Eucharist it is clear that many think that even if the readings are not a waste of time, (there is a widespread belief that the Old Testament is such: witness how often it is dropped), then having a reader is unnecessary.

We notice people in the gathering reading from booklets or personal missals rather than listening. I've even seen presiders not listening but reading a booklet! So, should we continue the practice of the readers, or is that a bit of irrelevant antiquity?

The case against having readers is strong. Nowadays we are all more comfortable with the notion of obtaining knowledge through personal reading — much as you are doing now — than with getting information aurally. We believe that we can follow the argument on an important matter better on paper than viva voce. This is why many people like to have the readings "in front of them".

The Gospels emerged in the celebration of community memory. Hearing that story we have ... our group identity. We are not just individuals.

Asking people to sit and listen goes against the cultural grain. We can see this in the current practice of "presentations" where people read out the information on PowerPoint slides and then give everyone a printed copy of them. We can listen when we are in entertainment mode whether it is live or broadcast; but we feel the Scripture readings are something other than entertainment. Indeed, if the presider said: "Take a moment to read today's Gospel and then we will talk about it", we might find that we absorb far more.

We Need Readers

However, I believe that the argument in favour of readers in the Eucharist is stronger because it reminds us of aspects of Christianity we are apt to ignore. And so, making use of a modern page layout designed for personal reading, I shall make my case in "bullet points".

- Having a reader reminds us of the nature of the documents from the first generations of disciples. They emerged in an oral environment and were for performance. Treating them as modern books denatures them and distorts their communication.
- The Gospels emerged in the celebration of community memory. Hearing that story, we have the basis for our group identity. We are not just individuals with a common philosophy.

- When we listen to fresh performances of the evangelists and early teachers we are celebrating: it is a fresh performance of what has drawn us together as disciples. We are not downloading either a sacred codebook, a set of instructions, nor a collection of divine oracles. Early Christian documents are not functionally equivalent to the Qu'ran; our texts are shared memories of people who saw and heard — and the reader allows us to hear afresh.
- That these texts should be heard — just as some plays need specific theatre arrangements — reminds us that they do not come from our modern culture. Therefore, these texts need critical interpretation. Reading ancient texts can easily decline into fundamentalism.
- Our liturgy is a celebration of the memory of Jesus before the Father, it is not a bible study group. Having a performer, the reader, acting as the focus, this action of remembering is different from a teacher taking a class. But, alas, too often the lectors — even those who are also deacons or presbyters — sound more like the shipping forecast than a performance of "the word of life".
- Lastly, a reader reminds us of the aural nature of the good news: "Remember ... those who spoke to you the word of God; ... and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7) or "Truly, truly, I say to you, they who hear my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life" (John 5:24) or "Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father" (1 John 2:24).

The Four Evangelists in Coptic Illuminated Manuscript (1175-1200) Wikimedia Commons via Picryl.com

Storyteller by Mariana Homem de Mello © Used with permission www.facebook.com/marianamell/

Thomas O'Loughlin is Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology. His latest book is *In Christ Now We Meet Both East and West: On Catholic Eucharistic Action* (2023).

Leftovers *from* My Beloved

WHEN OUR DAUGHTER Polly died, a number of items she cherished went into her coffin "to keep her company on the journey", as we said. It seemed the right thing to do and it also avoided the vexing question of disposing of those things later. Mike took nothing with him but a favourite jacket. And now as I contemplate his study packed with books, computers, old cameras, his family's photos albums and other paraphernalia that I can't even identify, I feel a deep sigh well up within me.

It's been two years and five months since my husband died in his sleep and only now am I able to think about changing his study in the garden to a different space — maybe with a chair, a sofa, a bookcase, of course, and little touches to make it mine.

Mike was very computer savvy and the crazy profusion of cords snaking across the floor leading to various black boxes made sense to him, but makes none to me. I arranged for a computer technician to visit and explain. I understood some of what he said, but there's a lot to grapple with. And even if I deal with that, there's more. I'm left with a whole lot of stuff I don't want to keep — and that's where the guilt kicks in.

I feel guilty. It's almost like I'm disposing of Mike along with his things. As I go through them, I say to myself: "No need for that. No place for this." And every little thing that goes, everything that he held precious, is now up for disposition in what feels like a very clinical move.

And then I come across an old typed letter written to him and signed personally by then Prime Minister Norman Kirk. What to do? Keep it and leave it as a problem for my children to deal with when I die? Take a photo and dispose of the letter? Advertise it on Trade Me? It all seems too daunting, too fraught and somehow too mercenary.

I never had this problem with Mike's clothes. They either went out or to the op shop. But memorabilia isn't so clean cut. There are whispers of "should" and "ought" that follow me around during the day and keep me awake at night.

The guru of organisation and disposal Marie Kondo suggests: "Keep only things that speak to your heart. Then take the plunge and discard all the rest". Mike's letter opener, his old camera, his tokens and trophies don't say anything to my heart, but unlike his clothes, I cannot jettison them to an opportunity shop.

What is it about memorabilia, those odd trinkets and bits and bobs that we display on shelves, tuck in cupboards and hang on walls, never letting them go, only to have another decide what goes and what stays when we're gone? Do we realise what a task we leave to others?

If the dead could speak to us, I wonder what they would say. Maybe, "I don't need any of it. The decision is yours and I'm at peace with that."

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).

365 Days, 40,000 Lives, One Hope: Peace

Peter Lang *writes of the toll on the Palestinian population in the Gaza strip after a year of unrelenting war.*

OCTOBER 7 MARKS one year since the devastating conflict in the "Holy Land" began. The atrocities committed that day were abhorrent and unacceptable, taking more than 1,000 lives and the retaliation plunged the region into chaos. In the ensuing 12 months we have seen and heard of some of the worst of humanity. We have also seen humanity at its best, as aid workers risked their lives to help those in need, and people around the world stood in solidarity for peace and justice.

In one year, the ongoing assault on Gaza has claimed more than 40,000 lives (a figure which includes only known deaths directly caused by conflict) and permanently changed hundreds of thousands more. The statistics that have come out of this awful conflict are staggering: the scale and intensity of devastation is difficult to imagine.

Unholy Destruction and Killing

The Gaza Strip, smaller in area than Waiheke Island, is home to more than two million people, more than the combined population of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. In the past year, the Israeli Defence Force has dropped more than 75,000 tonnes of bombs into this area, creating more than 100kg of rubble per square metre in the territory. This scale and intensity of devastation is difficult to imagine.

The internet and social media have brought home the harrowing realities of the conflict to people around the world. Both victims and perpetrators have livestreamed and shared atrocities as they happen although much of what we see is sanctioned by Israel as foreign journalists are blocked from entering Gaza unless they're embedded with the Israeli military. While some public figures have used this public focus as a political issue to drive people apart, countless ordinary people have been moved to stand up for peace and justice through protest, prayer and donation.

Thousands of aid workers from within Israel and Palestine and

from around the world are working tirelessly, and at great personal danger, to bring relief to the civilians in the firing line. Tragically more than 270 aid workers have been killed in the conflict so far, alongside 134 journalists and media workers and around 500 medical workers. It is already the deadliest conflict for journalists in the 21st century, and the deadliest ever for United Nations workers.

People on the Ground

Alarming statistics grab headlines and can easily dominate discussion. However, it is important that the numbers do not distract us from thinking of the innate human dignity of every person, and the story of every family. People in Gaza are not living as statistics, waiting to cross into the fatalities column of a spreadsheet. They are living in trauma every day as parents, siblings, children and friends, and we owe it to them to think of them as such.

It can be distressing and humbling to think about the conflict on such a human level. The pain of someone who is the last surviving member of their family; the terror of a parent who can do nothing to protect their children every time they hear a plane overhead; the confusion of a child whose whole world has been reduced to rubble. Every person's story is different, and each is important.

It is in the personal stories we also find cause for hope. George, who leads one of our partner organisations on the ground, relocated to the Holy Family Parish in Gaza with his wife and children. "We are in Jesus's house, we are in his hands," he says. "We choose life, despite being surrounded by death." Despite the loss of their home, the family maintains their love for God and one another. "We strive hard to provide our children with safety and protection," he says. "All we have is to tell them that we love them above all else." Faith has provided a source of hope in the darkness. "For the first time in our history, we are making the communion bread in Gaza with our own hands," George shares. Gaza is his homeland.

Although many of us in New Zealand feel helpless in the face of a distant conflict, there is something powerful in recognising and witnessing the humanity, bravery and determination of others. Through prayer, vigil or whatever means are appropriate for us, we can show those still hoping for peace in the face of war that they are not ignored, not forgotten, and not just a news item or statistic. In the words of a Palestinian doctor, who has since been killed: "We did what we could. Remember us."

We Can Help

Alongside solidarity, we have the ability to make a material difference in the lives of those in need. Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand has been supporting our partners on the ground who have set up temporary medical centres to treat almost 11,000 people, provided cash assistance to more than 20,000 people, and psychosocial support to over 500 children, caregivers and staff.

Compared to the millions of civilians in Gaza, these numbers may seem small — but when we remember the innate importance of every human life, they become monumental. Medical treatment, which can be difficult to access, allows hurt bodies to recover from past injuries. Cash assistance lets parents put clothes and shoes on their children in the winter. Counselling helps scared children have hope for tomorrow. In each person's life, this is an enormous difference.

And our global efforts add up. In the past year, the Caritas Internationalis network has provided medicine, food, shelter, counselling and cash assistance to more than 150,000 people. This is something to be proud of, but we cannot afford to be complacent, especially given the danger of escalating conflict in the West Bank and Lebanon. Hundreds of people have been killed in both of these regions already in the past year, but all-out war would be cataclysmic.

We know exactly what needs to happen to bring an end to this unnecessary suffering: an end to escalation in Lebanon, an end to violence in the West Bank and an immediate ceasefire in Gaza that will allow humanitarian aid to reach those in desperate need.

We cannot make these changes on our own, but together we have a powerful collective voice. Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand has spoken out over the past year alongside Caritas Canada and Australia, New Zealand's Council for International Development, and the New Zealand Catholic Education Office. We have contacted Cabinet Ministers and government officials in New Zealand and abroad. We have kept our supporters informed and listened to what they had to say.

Being a voice for the voiceless, calling out injustice, and speaking up for peace are something we can all do.

See more about the work of Caritas at: caritas.org.nz/holyland

Photo supplied by Caritas

Peter Lang works as an Advocacy Analyst for Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand.

Beginning of the Good News

Kathleen Rushton *discusses how the "beginnings" in Mark 10 point to Jesus as good news in the Gospel and to the challenges of discipleship.*

IN HIS BOOK *Less Is More*, economic anthropologist Jason Hickel insists on using the term "climate breakdown" rather than "climate change". He does so because this is what he believes is happening — a breakdown of multiple, interconnected systems with capitalism as the root cause. Capitalism has colonialised us and in turn we Christians have colonised the Bible by separating the interconnection of God, creation and humanity. We need to change the way we see the world and our place in it.

We are in a time of fragmentation — of "climate breakdown" — and of capitalism so rampant and all-pervasive that it alienates us from one another and our planet. Jewish Jesus lived in Roman occupied Palestine, and experienced an interconnected world where God, creation and humanity were as one.

During October four passages from Mark 10 are proclaimed in the liturgy. I shall explore Jesus's radical teachings in the chapter which is set in three "beginnings" in the central section of Mark's Gospel.

"Beginning"

Mark's Gospel uses the Old Testament as its framework and substructure and inserts Jesus, son of God, in his humanity into the three interconnected relationships with God, people and Earth. In the first sentence Mark connects Jesus to three beginnings. First, the opening word of the Gospel is the noun "beginning" *(arche)* which evokes the Genesis creation story. Then the whakapapa of Jesus connects him to creation, to God and to humanity: "Beginning of the good news of Jesus the Christ [the anointed one], the Son of God" (Mk 1:1).

Central Section

Mark 10 is part of the central section which focuses on the formation of the disciples (Mk 8:22-10:52). The description of what it means to follow Jesus is set in the context of a journey, with much tripping around in different landscapes.

The journey begins in the seafront town of Bethsaida after the healing of a man who is blind. Peter declares Jesus is the Messiah as they are "on the way" to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Six days later, Jesus is transfigured on a mountain. Then they "went on from there and passed through Galilee" to the lake-side town of Capernaum. And they continue through Judea and beyond the Jordan to Jericho where this section ends with the healing of Bartimaeus who was blind (Mk 10:46-52).

"From the Beginning of Creation"

In Mark 10:6, "beginning" occurs again, this time "from the beginning of creation". We are ushered into Jesus's radical teachings on poverty, powerlessness and childlikeness. As a new creation through the death-resurrection of Jesus, we are called "to receive the kingdom of God as a little child".

Childlikeness is an attitude of being in relationship which enables us to recognise Jesus's teachings "from the beginning of creation" as revealing God's loving destiny for human persons. In five areas of ordinary life, Jesus teaches the disciples about returning to the way of original simplicity to enable us to follow him "on the way".

First Teaching

Jesus talks about the unity between man and woman that was "from the beginning of creation" as the norm for human relationships (Mk10:2-9). In biblical thought, flesh is the whole human as present in the visible world. Often this discussion on divorce is dealt with apart from the whole of this gospel and its context of Mark 10 which focuses on how to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child".

Second Teaching

Previously Jesus embraced and placed a child in middle of the twelve saying: "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me" (Mk 9:36). He seems to be teaching the disciples the value of powerlessness. Yet again, Jesus holds up children as models of

"Immediately, Bartimaeus regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way" (Mk 10:52).

detachment:"whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (Mark 10:15). The disciples try to turn the children away. Jesus holds these little ones up as ideal members of the reign of God.

Third Teaching

In a dialogue set up between Jesus and a rich man, the disciples are taught that they must divest themselves of possessions and learn to trust totally in God's Providence (Mark 10:17-30). The difficulty here is not possessions but attachment to what we own which is spiritually perilous. This essentially good man who kept the commandments and whom Jesus loved shies away from the ideal that demands so much. The man goes away.

Fourth Teaching

The failure of the disciples to grasp these teachings is shown in parallel incidents that focus on first Peter (Mk 10:35-45) and then James and John (Mk 10:35-45). First, Jesus assures the disciples that "for God all things are possible." This way of living demands total dependence on God. The words that pass between Jesus and Peter show how little Peter has understood. Peter balks at Jesus's demands, focusing instead on what he has done already: "We have left everything and followed you."

Second, James and John ask: "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." Jesus replies "whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant [*diakoneo*] ... For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve [*diakonein*]" (Mk 10:44-45). The irony of the disciples' dimness is highlighted by placing these incidents either side of Jesus's third and most explicit prediction of his suffering and death (Mk 10:33-34).

Fifth Teaching

Bartimaeus, the beggar was blind. Out of his powerlessness and poverty, he is ready and able to become a disciple of Jesus. His story is the reverse of the rich man who was not able to become a disciple because of his possessions. Bartimaeus cries out. Jesus instructs the disciples to call him. Then "throwing off his cloak" which symbolises his few possessions, "he sprang up" when told to "rise up". This word "rise up" [*egeiro*] describes Jesus's resurrection (see *Tui Motu*, Sept 2024, pp.22-23). "Immediately, he regained his sight and followed him on the way" (Mk 10:52).

Bartimaeus affirms the potential of every human person to follow Jesus's way "from the beginning of creation." This way of poverty, powerlessness and childlikeness is explained by Jesus in his radical teachings on trust in God.

Between these two stories of the recovery of physical sight, Jesus speaks three times of his rejection, suffering and death-resurrection. The disciples stumble around blind. They do not get what Jesus is teaching them.

In this Gospel the three beginnings give hope. At what looks like the end are images of the new day and the return to Galilee, the place of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus and, subsequently, that of the disciples. They are commissioned, as we are, to: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15).

Readings for Sundays 6-27 October: Mark 10

Photo by Mika Baumeister on Unsplash

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

TREASURES OF LOVE

I SPEND A few hours helping my parents pack up my grandmother's house. We call my grandmother Voh and she is preparing to move to a new living situation. In many ways relocating is lots of work — moving furniture and packing up boxes. It is also sad because we know that Voh would prefer to stay put but it would be difficult for her to look after herself. Mostly, I'm finding this task interesting. It's answering the question: "What makes a life?" Or, perhaps: "What makes this life?"

I find many photos of us grandchildren; those of us based in Aotearoa and those overseas whom Voh hasn't been able to see very often. I feel incredibly loved — Voh loves me regardless of what I'm doing. Most likely I would hold myself in the world differently if I didn't have her kind of love as a foundation.

Voh, my dad and family moved to Aotearoa from India in 1970. "Those were given to your great-grandmother before we moved to New Zealand," Dad tells me as I wrap inlaid wooden boxes. They're beautiful. It must have been a fine artist who made them. As I hold them, well over 50 years old, I feel connected to this line of people, my family, who lived somewhere else in the world. I think of Voh and her young family adjusting to life in a different country and what it might have been like for them. I learn about other objects, too. Artwork made by Voh's dear friend captures my attention now. Together these things represent the patchwork of people and relationships who have made Voh who she is.

My family moved lots when I was growing up so we weren't able to keep much of our childhood artwork or writing. Here, though, I discover a letter I wrote to Voh's mum, my great-grandmother, about 20 years ago, along with a cute poem about a puppy. My childish looping letters and misspellings make it precious. Voh met me the day I was born and has seen my many iterations through adolescence to adulthood. It's lovely to see this artefact of my younger self kept by her.

As we empty the kitchen cupboards we find a bag of mixed peel and a Christmas pudding steamer. I hadn't known Voh made Christmas puddings — she hasn't done so for a few years. But Dad tells me it was one of her signature dishes.

I discover inside a book a whole bunch of pressed autumn leaves, bright orange and fragile. My appreciation for the natural world apparently goes back a few generations. I most often relate to the world around me with action, running, tramping or swimming. Voh appreciated the beauty of the leaves.

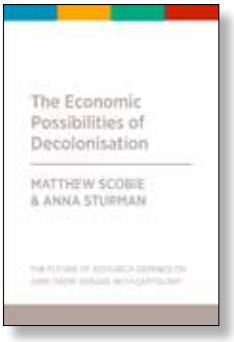
Packing all Voh's things carefully gives me new insights into my grandmother and her place in our family. Her "treasures" are mostly symbols of the people she loves and has loved and who love her. Her things speak to me of who Voh is, and who I am as well. It encourages me to reflect on what is making up my life and how I can live it well.

Shar Mathias lives in Ōtepoti/Dunedin where she is engaged in postgraduate studies at the University of Otago.

Reviews

The Economic Possibilities of Decolonisation

By Matthew Scobie & Anna Sturman
Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2024 (NZD 18)
Reviewed by Tui Cadigan



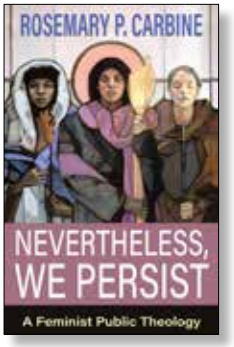
The subtitle to this book reads: "The future of Aotearoa depends on how Māori engage with capitalism". In only 126 pages, authors Scobie and Sturman, citing credible Māori and other experts, provide sufficient historical information on the relationship between Māori and colonisers to argue their thesis. The book looks at the colonial-capitalist economy and the search to engage with Māori economies both post- and pre-settlement to articulate how the country moves forward without the current imbalance, which favours the colonisers.

The Economic Possibilities of Decolonisation comes to us at a time when the New Zealand coalition government is attacking Māori on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, health outcomes and educational needs among other issues. The challenge to the wellbeing and mana of Māori is intrinsically linked with colonial government — this book is a way to discuss the economic implications of Aotearoa's colonial and capitalist history.

I enjoyed the book and would recommend it as a resource in secondary and tertiary education, for Christians of all persuasions in Aotearoa and Tangata Tiriti. Those with political aspirations will find it enlightening, too. ★

Nevertheless, We Persist: A Feminist Public Theology

By Rosemary P Carbine
Published by Orbis Books, 2023. (USD 27)
Reviewed by Anne Priestley



In *Nevertheless, We Persist*, Rosemary Carbine brings together feminist and public theologies to construct a theoretical framework for testing the public witness of various 20th- and 21st-century movements in the USA. These include Plowshares, Nuns on the Bus, the Civil Rights Movement and, the US Catholic Bishops' response to *Laudato Si'*.

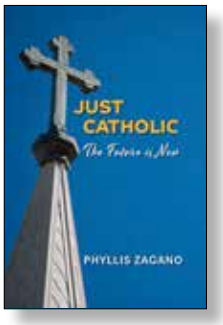
Word, symbol and prophetic action all play a part in re-creating the body of Christ among us. Carbine is especially interested in uplifting women's and "subaltern" work and witness.

As I read, I thought of comparable stories in Aotearoa. From Te Ao Māori come very significant movements: the kaupapa of the Waitangi Tribunal; Te Kōhanga Reo; the manaakitanga of marae extending deep within local communities. Remember also the Springbok Tour protests/anti-racism work; the Peace Movement; today's youth-led climate action; *Tui Motu* itself.

This book, a densely academic piece of writing, offers tools to reflect on such stories — our local attempts to love, to disturb, to disrupt an oppressive status quo and to liberate. The women portrayed on the cover embody the solidarity, strength and determination needed for the work. ★

Just Catholic: the Future Is Now

By Phyllis Zagano
Published by Clear Faith Publishing, 2023. (USD 15; Pleroma has a special offer NZD 20)
Reviewed by Cecily McNeill



As the Catholic Church in Aotearoa reels under the judgement of the Royal Commission on Abuse in Care's finding that complaints were made against 14 per cent of Catholic clergy, Phyllis Zagano's thoughts on clericalism shed welcome light.

Just Catholic is a collection of her columns published mainly in the US *National Catholic Reporter*. Zagano's writings often call for fairer representation in church leadership.

Her columns on clericalism seem more apt today than ever. Clericalism often prevents pastors from "smelling of the sheep" as Pope Francis would have it. Clericalism "has everything to do with careerism and nothing to do with ministry." Privilege is vaunted and the poor are excluded.

In a decades-long championing of the ecclesiastical rights of women, Zagano has plumbed history for examples of a fairer hierarchy, for example, in the early church when deacons controlled the church's money. Then, deacons were the service arm of the church. It was only with Gregorian reform in the 11th century that ecclesial power became concentrated in Rome and the corruption of clericalism took hold.

Zagano's writing is well-informed, wide-ranging and topical. *Just Catholic* will appeal to anyone seeking to learn more about the Catholic church — its history, how it is today and what it might become. ★

Reviews

The Outrun

Directed by Nora Fingscheidt
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

Anyone who knows me will not be surprised that I read a lot of natural history books. I had begun Amy Liptrot's memoir *The Outrun*, expecting it to focus on the flora and fauna of her homeplace, the Orkney Islands, only to find that it contained a compelling personal story. When I discovered that a film version of her book was playing at this year's New Zealand International Film Festival, I placed a big tick beside it in the programme.

The Outrun begins by invoking the Celtic legend of the selkies — seal women who cast off their skins and dance together on the shore. If they are seen by a human, they cannot return to the sea and are fated to live unhappily on land. Rona (flawlessly played by Saoirse Ronan) is one such displaced soul. Raised on lonely, windswept Orkney by a pious Christian mother and an unstable, bipolar father, she feels constantly at odds with her environment. The film chronicles her flipping back and forth between her island home and the fleshpots of London.

Alcohol runs like a poisoned stream through the film. A slave to drink, Rona cannot function in her close-knit island community and fares even worse in the metropolis, where even the pubs and clubs can't handle her out-of-control behaviour. She gradually loses her friends, including her patient and understanding boyfriend, Daynin. But Rona begins a slow and painful fightback against her affliction, joining AA groups in both London and Orkney. One of the many gifts of the film is its clear-eyed portrayal of alcoholism and just how hard it is to even begin the process of recovery.

Rediscovering her skills as a biologist, Rona submits herself to Orkney's gravitational pull and determines to make it her world, a place where she will seek purpose and wholeness. As she wades into the Atlantic, calling to the harbour seals swimming in the shallows, we are left with the feeling that, this time, she might just succeed.

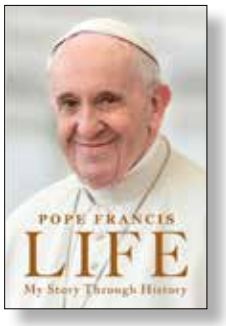
This rendering of *The Outrun* is not flawless. At times the symbolic parallels and antitheses are pushed too hard, and information dumps — ranging from the effects of alcohol on the body to the uses of seaweed — are deposited at intervals throughout the film. But as a credible — and, at times, exhilarating — portrayal of a wounded woman's struggles to overcome her demons and find her true passion, this is a brave attempt. ★

Life: My Story Through History

By Pope Francis with Fabio Marchese Ragona
Published by HarperCollins, 2024. (USD 29)
Reviewed by Tracy Robinson

Reading this book is like sitting down and chatting with Pope Francis. It is written as if in conversation, with co-author Fabio Marchese Ragona recounting a tale about the Pope, before Francis comes along to finish the story, giving his perspective, teachings and insight.

The authors discuss Francis's life within the context of the historical events of his lifetime, so that we hear the Pope's story and the story of our age. For Francis, such storytelling is vital: "Humans are story-telling beings. Stories influence our lives … even if we do not realise it."



Reading *My Story Through History* has influenced me more than I anticipated. For one thing, I have a whole new understanding of the European Union. I have learned more about other aspects of history and a different way of looking at things — the importance of listening to avert crisis, how sport has the potential to prevent people from losing their way and how Pope Francis sees clericalism as having become a disease, a plague in the church.

Francis concludes the book by saying "goodbye" to me, the reader. But by the end of the book I felt like more than the reader — I felt like Francis's friend. He asked me to pray for him, and I will. ★

Cross Currents

by Jane Higgins

YEARS AGO, I had a friend who had lived with serious disability from an early age. She was wise and articulate about what it meant to be disabled in this country. This month, when we celebrate Labour Day and reflect on the dignity of human labour, I think of her. Every day, she spent disciplined hours exercising and doing what she could to bolster her own health. She regarded this as her work: to remain as healthy as possible for as long as possible. She also volunteered for Blind Low Vision New Zealand. As her health deteriorated, her mother stepped in to become her carer.

None of this activity involved what is generally understood as "employment", but all of it expressed the dignity of human labour.

In recent months, that dignity has been impacted by a series of policy decisions directed at New Zealanders living with disability. Both those with impairments, and those caring for them, have been adversely affected.

Since 1983, a wage exemption scheme has enabled employers to pay disabled workers as little as $2 per hour — workers who might otherwise be on the minimum wage. The 2023 Budget offered employers a wage supplement to bring this hourly rate up to the level of the minimum wage. The 2024 Budget axed that supplement, returning many workers to the $2 hourly rate.

In August, residential care funding was frozen. No new residential places will be funded in the 2024/25 year. This will impact carers at home, many of whom are aging parents caring for disabled children. They are now expected to continue their caring work without the option of their disabled family member moving to a safe residential environment should the need arise.

Meanwhile, Enabling Good Lives (EGL) ,a major initiative of disabled New Zealanders, has been paused. EGL began as a social movement in the disability community and grew to become an official approach in which disabled people and their families took some control over available resources to create the conditions they needed to live good lives. EGL is based on the principle that decisions affecting disabled people should be made by disabled people: "Nothing about us, without us." This approach is in keeping with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which New Zealand is a signatory. EGL is now at risk.

As part of this new approach, the funding and provision of health services to disabled people, which rested with Whaikaha, the Ministry of Disabled People, has been removed from that Ministry and placed with the Ministry of Social Development.

These changes appear to have been put in place with little consultation with the disability community.

When viewed in the light of Catholic Social Teaching these changes are found seriously wanting. The principle of subsidiarity requires that, as far as possible, people should be able to make decisions about their own needs rather than higher authorities taking over these decisions. The principle of distributive justice requires that income, wealth and power are allocated to ensure that everyone's basic material needs are met. The principle of human dignity speaks for itself.

Finally, the principle of solidarity calls on those of us fortunate enough to be able-bodied to support disabled New Zealanders as they protest these changes.

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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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.

USE COMMUNICATION MEDIA WELL

Pat McCarthy and Peter Cullinane have initiated discussion on the best ways to provide news, information and faith formation for our Catholic community (*TM* August). Has the time come for the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand to put effort into online news and information services and divest herself of printed media? I doubt we should turn the discussion into a question of "either/or". Certainly, the electronic media has already altered the face of social communications and will continue to expand and develop. But the printed word still needs a place in our evangelising arsenal.

Bishop Peter identifies two groups of "seekers" — those who deliberately look for Catholic news and those who unintentionally stumble across it. The former will be less intimidated by online offerings; the latter may find themselves surprisingly engaged by a casual contact with an article or other printed item. There's a permanence

about the written word that engraves its place in society. Sharing, checking and researching are made easier when there's something in writing as a basis for reference.

The "word", however, is by nature oral. Depending how it's spoken, a word can create or destroy, challenge, encourage, support. The Bible opens with God speaking life into existence and when God's own Word became visible in Jesus, it spoke healing, mercy, forgiveness and, above all, love. Radio provides immediacy and is the go-to medium in any emergency. My experience in broadcasting convinced me that the spoken word is indispensable for evangelising.

Locally we should be using all social communications media in making known the good news of Jesus Christ. As a Church we have downplayed radio and have yet to realise the potential of newer electronic media. And now our print publications are under threat. I sense, as far as the Church is concerned, the issue is less related to finance than to a miscomprehension of the word's ability to form, reform and transform human behaviour.

In the 21st century we must use ALL means of communicating if we want to do more than simply talk to ourselves. "Communication is more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion. At its most profound level, it is the giving of self in love" (*Communion et Progressio*, par10).

James Lyons, Te Whanganui-a-Tara/ Wellington (abridged)

CHRISTIAN UNITY

It is wonderful news to witness such Christian unity in Aotearoa New Zealand, with so many leaders of Christian churches uniting together to influence the government on how it should treat its citizens. This unity is coming nearly 2,000 years after Christ's wish that we will all be one as Christ and the Father are one (John 17:21). He experienced Calvary and so earned for us all our eternal salvation.

I hope that this is the beginning of "all citizens" being made welcome by the same churches at the Lord's table to receive Eucharist/Holy Communion. Then we all can become "one Church, one Faith, one Baptism" the hope expressed in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (Eph 4: 1-6).

Jim Donald, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland

MARY THE TOWER IN ANCIENT RESOURCES

I appreciated Trish McBride's reference (*TM* August) to my article "Mary the Tower" (*TM* July), however, I have serious reservations about her enthusiasm for the *Gospel of Mary* and Gnostic writings. I drew on evidence uncovered by historians Elizabeth Schrader and Joan Taylor from three resources: textual variants (changes made or differences) in early manuscripts of the four canonical gospels; archaeology and the writings of early Christian theologians such as Origen and Jerome. Along with other biblical interpreters, I follow Schrader and Taylor who advocate that the Apocrypha/Gnostic Writings are best avoided in serious research as stories related in them are not supported by evidence found in the three ancient areas of information. (For resources on Mary, see www.futurechurch.org/wicl/mary-of-magdala/)

Kathleen Rushton RSM, Ōtautahi/ Christchurch

FORMATION OF PRIESTS

Thank you Christopher Longhurst for your coverage of priestly formation (*TM* Sept). I concur with you. I went through that seminary system in the years 1959-1961 and 1967-1971. I took a five-year break between those years and was a social worker and farmer. I returned the second time finding little had changed in spite of Vatican Council II having taken place. It is a miracle that some survived that system and grew to become wonderful pastors. Others, sadly, were or became wounded souls who in turn were ill-equipped to serve others holistically. And bringing students and clergy from overseas clericalist churches perpetuates our problems without resolving anything. Yes, every local faith group has within it the capacity to form our future priests with God's grace.

Michael Blakely, Tāmaki Makaurau/ Auckland

BEING GOOD NEWS

What an inspiring, yet challenging, edition *TM* Sept 2024. As a well-retired priest (not Catholic) my respect for your magazine continues, and I have confidence that eventually your church will come into a maturity hardly recognisable from its not too distant past. The articles by Christopher Longhurst, Brendan Daly and Susan Smith issue healthy challenges — on the formation of priests; the recognition of church-guilt in abuses and the leadership roles of women. In my own denomination, I have experienced great ministry and leadership from inspiring, ordained women (with a few disappointing male priests) and we're addressing our own failure to care, and not abuse. As for spreading the Good News of God's love, I'm in my 80s and about to take a faith lesson in a local primary school, and maybe make a weekly faith-based radio programme. Am I, with my sometimes frail level of faith, up to these attempts to sow some seeds on often dry ground? We can only give it a go!

David Day, Ahuriri/Napier

For What It's Worth

SPRING IN FULL flush displays the wonderful bounty of creation. We come face to face with the almost prodigal generosity of God presented as lush new leaves, lambs, blossoms with their promise of more bounty, baby birds, tasty spring veg, full-uddered cows, festoons of flowers and rapidly rising crops. We shouldn't be surprised. Since the time of the ancients, this has been God's promise: "Thus, I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rain, so that you may gather in your grains, new wine and olive oil" (Deuteronomy 11:14).

Better to be surprised though, than to take it all for granted, or worse, to see it as an opportunity to plunder. This would seem to be the attitude behind the shortsighted decisions being made by the present government to rush through the removal of restrictions on oil and gas exploration and encourage mining even on conservation land. Some would argue that we (humankind) are meant to use and enjoy the gifts of creation and a superficial reading of the Genesis creation stories would seem to support this. However, the ancients also warn us against the overuse of God's gifts.

When God saves the Israelites with an abundance of manna in the desert, Moses warns them to collect only enough to meet their family needs for one day at a time. Those that are greedy and gather extra lose much of what they have gathered to rot and maggots! The sixth day is the only day the people are permitted to gather extra, and this is to enable a time of rest and thanksgiving on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:9-25).

How, then, do we appropriately enjoy God's bounty?

All of this was swirling in my head recently while contemplating the beauty of blossoms, (albeit in bonsai form) in my garden. My reverie was interrupted by a song on the radio. It was the old Simon and Garfunkel hit "Mrs Robinson" with the oft repeated line "heaven holds a place for those who pray". I've heard the lyric many times before, but this time I was struck by its interesting "theology" — especially coming from a pop song written over half a century ago.

What is prayer if not opening ourselves to God in gratitude? Contemplating the beauty of the gifts of God is a way of "using" them without abusing them. Nothing is removed from the trees in blossom by our appreciating their beauty. In most spiritualities God is seen as complete, whole, not needing anything from us. Thankfulness, therefore, is probably the one thing we can truly give to God. It is a position of gratefulness to be at one with creation rather than to dominate it. To be at one with rather than dominate creation is to hold a position of gratefulness.

So perhaps Simon and Garfunkel are on to something with their "heaven holds a place for those who pray". If we are opened up by prayer, we enable the kindom of heaven to be progressed through us. Heaven is held open by prayer and "those who pray" hold this "place" for all who would enter it with respect and gratitude. Surely it is a much better way to respond to, and enjoy, the bounty of spring.

Photo by Mika Baumeister on Unsplash

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

Our last word

May hope,
like breath on embers,
stir our desire
to gather all together
at God's hearth.

From the *Tui Motu* Team