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Tui Motu

InterIslands



HOPE FOR THE WORLD

MARY THORNE, KEVIN CLEMENTS & OTHERS

SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

MASSIMO FAGGIOLI, CHRISTOPHER LAMB, BRENDAN DALY

CHRISTMAS BLESSING

TUI MOTU TEAM

We Yearn for Peace
Tau mo te Rangimarie

INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC MAGAZINE

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Armoured Dove of Peace by Banksy
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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

We Yearn for Peace

LET THERE BE peace in the world — and may it be for Christmas! Maybe it's because we celebrate Christmas in summer that we invest this feast with the potential to fulfil our dreams — of being our best selves, of having united families, inclusive communities and peaceful neighbourhoods. Whatever's happened during the year that's grieved, traumatised, disappointed, unsettled or endangered ourselves and others, we're ready to hope for better. Christmas, with warm weather and holidays, family and friend gatherings, food and rest, creates breathing space for us and conspires to energise and encourage us. And not least is the realisation that divine Love is present in every child and adult, in every aspect of the community of Earth and the universe. This belief, emphasised at Christmas when we celebrate Jesus's birth, encapsulates the potential for hope and love at the heart of Christmas.

This year our longing for peace is accentuated — our longing for the restoration of truth, reconciliation, humility and neighbourliness in the world. So much seems dire. Right now, media attention is focused on the war in the Holy Land, but the war in Ukraine continues, as do under-reported civil conflicts in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. We may be at a geographical distance from the "piecemeal WWII" erupting overseas, but we are affected by the heartbreak and loss of faith in humanity that war spawns. And here in Aotearoa, we're seeing threats to our social cohesion and sense of community. The world's leaders seem ineffectual in stopping violence and slow to set up processes for peace negotiations. In the meantime mayhem savages people, their homes, cities, infrastructure and future. And they are our kin.

We long for peace because of our kinship with all people in Earth whether they're protagonists of war or peacemakers. We are family. And from a religious perspective, as Christians we're closely related to Jews and Muslims — we're all the children of Abraham. Not only do we share humanity's DNA kinship, we share the spiritual connection of "love of God/Allah and of our neighbour as ourselves" with over 70 per cent of the world. We have far more in common to unite us than to keep us apart, and many, many who, like us, hope for God's peace to be among us.

So if we're giving and receiving gifts at Christmas and feel weighed down by the grief of war, we can unite with all those people of faith and hope in the world who are working for justice and love and creating foundations for peace. We can become peacemakers ourselves.

This issue offers a feast of reflections and discussion for the Christmas season. We thank all our contributors for their generosity in sharing their study, questions and research, art and craft with us.

There will be no *Tui Motu* magazine in January. February will be the first issue for 2024.

And as is our custom, our last word is of blessing and peace. Happy Christmas!



► SMALL MOMENTS THAT GROW HOPE

THE LAST COUPLE OF months have been grim. After a succession of terrible world and local events I was left feeling shattered and dispirited by humanity. On 7 October, Hamas launched an attack on southern Israel. Israeli military forces retaliated with extensive strikes on the Gaza Strip and invaded Gaza. As I write this column, thousands are dead, mostly civilians, and chances of de-escalating the conflict are uncertain.

I found myself transported back to the intractable world conflicts that formed the backdrop to my childhood, teenage years and well into my 30s. They included the “troubles” of Northern Irish nationalists and the Protestant Unionists through the late 60s and into the 80s; Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990; the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s; the 1994 Rwandan genocide of the Tutsi ethnic minority by Hutu militias. These are just a few of the conflicts that dominated world news and sparked in me a lifelong quest to fathom what lies at the core of the human capacity for hatred, revenge and violence.

I haven’t worked it out, but I am increasingly convinced we all have a deep-seated capacity for committing atrocities given a set of circumstances.

On 14 October, our comrades across the ditch voted down the 2023 Australian Indigenous Voice referendum where voters were asked to approve an alteration to the Australian Constitution to recognise Indigenous Australians through prescribing a body called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. If successful, the Voice would have been able to make representations to the Parliament and the government on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The proposal was rejected nationally — by a majority in every state of around 40 to 60 per cent.

Inherent racism runs deep and despite societal change it can take many generations to disperse. Maybe there’ll be a next time for the Voice to be heard. I hope it’s in my lifetime.

Also on 14 October, the people of Aotearoa delivered the message that they no longer wished to be represented by the New Zealand Labour Party. While the election result wasn’t totally unexpected, I found it a bitter pill to swallow after the Labour government’s steerage of New Zealand through the pandemic and the saving of many thousands of lives. But that success during a time of crisis was soon swamped by the economic pains and irritations of today.

Amid the doom and gloom, in my day job I provide peer support to people in mental distress. I find myself increasingly focused in our discussions on how awareness of small moments of joy in each day can provide a pathway towards well-being. The key is to recognise and acknowledge those moments, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant they are.

I like to watch people and find time sitting at an airport to be soul-refreshing. I see joyful moments of greeting and poignant farewells publicly on show.

I recently spent some time collecting for a local charity outside The Warehouse. Those hours could have passed in tedium but I marvelled as people made eye contact and made excuses, then changed their minds and turned to search their pockets and bags for spare change to donate. The generosity and warmth of strangers over a shared cause is truly a measure of humanity.

Small moments spent recognising joy and acknowledging the needs of others are the stepping stones that build bridges between us. I choose to believe that the inherent goodness of humanity, though it sits alongside inherent darkness, will shine through given opportunity and encouragement. It does require practice. Every day. ♦

Clare Curran, former MP, is a committed advocate and representative on social justice issues and a writer of novels.





Let There Be Peace in Earth

Mary Thorne holds on to hope for justice and peace promised in this new time of Christmas.

DURING NOVEMBER THE *Tui Motu* community pondered the reality of death. In December we celebrate the birth that is at the heart of Christian belief. The birth of Jesus, and a new way of seeing more clearly the divine and the ordinary integrally woven together in all reality. Birth and death: the rhythm of life.

This year Christmas comes amid widespread anxiety, grief and stress. We feel deep sadness about wars, climate crises and devastation, economic hardship, racism, depression and anger. How do we sustain our hope of peace and well-being founded in justice? Where do we look for guidance and help so that we become part of healing and restoration?

Beginning with Ourselves

I have a vivid childhood memory of Harry Secombe singing: "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me ... Let this be my solemn vow: to take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally." I love that old song and now, even more, I think it's a good starting point.

We need to find and keep peace in our own hearts

and minds in order to meet the complexities of our immediate and extended families, our neighbourhoods, our country and our planet this Christmas season and beyond.

The Christmas babe grew to the adult Jesus whom we follow as a prototype of God-filled/human living. Jesus shared insights derived from observing ordinary activities in the household and in the fields: he spoke of bread-making and seed-sowing; mustard trees, vines and stones. Connecting to what is simple, ordinary and natural, helps us find wisdom and peace of mind.

I've been participating in the Pākehā Project under the umbrella of Leadership New Zealand because I want to better equip myself to join in conversations about the future of Aotearoa, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and ending colonisation. I'm discovering that I have an enormous amount of learning to do about myself first — I will never be able to be part of healthy dialogue and decision-making if I don't find openness, peacefulness and connection within myself.

Connecting with Love

One of the Pākehā Project designers Louise Marra, urges us to reconnect with nature through the intelligence of trees. She says: "It helps us collectively create a connective tissue that enables new solutions to emerge for our global problems. Our solutions must come from a rooted, not a separated place."

To some this may sound fanciful and weird — but it's not. It resonates with the writing of Ilia Delio who describes God as the evolutionary energy of love carrying all life forward as in a great river of intimate interconnection. And Marie Skidmore's book review (*Tui Motu* November 2023) describes Joan Chittister's theology of God as the energy holding an evolving wholeness and unity.

Developing an Evolutionary Perspective

Can we find hope in these insights? I think we can if we have an evolutionary rather than a static worldview, and an unshakeable faith that God is in partnership with us in this process of bringing to birth a new world, the realm of God.

We know that evolution is a tumultuous and violent process. We also know that birth involves stretching, struggle and pain. That which is new is being born.

We can never allow ourselves to lose empathy for the tragedy and suffering of our sister and brother human beings, for the abuse of other living creatures or for the violation of Earth. We can never stop trying to alleviate and improve harmful situations. But we can hold fast to hope that we are journeying through this. Just as in our personal tragedies we have to be brave and kind and persevere in hope.

It's natural to resist suffering, but we are mistaken if we believe we are entitled to entirely stress-free, comfortable lives. That expectation results in bitterness and resentment. Our longing for peace must be accompanied by gratitude for every breath and all goodness, and a willingness to surrender some of our own wealth, position, power and pleasure. The birth of a child may be longed-for and joyful, but it is seldom stress-free or comfortable. Likewise, to bring into the world social and ecological peace and well-being, we will need to relinquish some of our comforts.

Connecting Our Beliefs With Life

If the Christmas birth is an event at the heart of Christian faith, so is the Good Friday death and the Easter triumph of love and life. Our belief is that new life followed a violent injustice. The Christmas promise of a marvellous new beginning is being fulfilled; it is a new way of being in relationship. When I was a chaplain I often reminded the imprisoned women that what looks now like unmitigated disaster may be the opportunity for a transformed life. Much depends on our hope and courage.

We need honesty and courage to reflect critically on our culture and to grow in understanding of what we collectively prize and reward and what we denigrate. Our family Christmas traditions benefit from regular review. Leading up to Christmas we'll hear the angels' song of

"joy" and "peace" everywhere, yet aspects of Christmas celebrations tend towards extravagance. If justice is the only sure foundation for peace, we will need to address this excess.

The essence of the Christmas story shows that God has particular care for the outcasts and the poor. We need to carry this awareness even as we celebrate. This year with my "Christmassy" decorations, I want to include something that indicates our awareness of and empathy with all the suffering on our planet. I'm not sure yet how I will do it. Perhaps some plain stones and the words: "Let there be peace on Earth." The idea is evolving.

Letting Hope Burn Brightly

It is important that distress does not dominate our thinking and equally important that we don't deny or ignore the catastrophic trauma that is present. We learn to sit with the discomfort of understanding that there is still much to be done. This is the paradox within the mystery of the Christmas promise and evolutionary life.

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If we accept the evolutionary worldview — each of us is a drop in the great river-flow of life held in God-energy, moving towards ultimate fulfilment of time and space — then we understand that the health or sickness of every drop affects the well-being of the whole. We cannot go down a spiral of helplessness or hopelessness. We hold onto calm and trust that goodness will prevail. We petition and protest and donate what we can, and persevere day by day to be hopeful and loving.

We remain people of hope. Hope is not a flimsy, weak thing. It is strong and resilient. It can withstand many setbacks, storms and tragedies. May our Christmases be peaceful and blessed and may hope burn brightly in our hearts. ✧

Paintng: *The Birth Project No 57:*

"Oh I didn't know" — And you opened like a flower in the heat.

Your beauty on my eyes like a masterpiece.

Never has skin tasted so sweet.

And you said, 'Oh, I didn't know, that we could go, so many kisses deep'

We were face to face and lips to lips and cheek to cheek.

And you said: 'Oh, I didn't know that we could go so many kisses deep'"

(A Cohen)

by Amanda Greavette © Used with permission www.amandagreavette.com

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





Longing for Justice and Peace

Kevin Clements writes that only a negotiated peace that fulfils the aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis will stop the violence in the Holy Land.

"Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven" (Psalm 85:10-11).

THIS PSALM ASSERTS that there will be no peace or truth without kindness. Furthermore, justice and peace must kiss if harmony is to replace deep division and violence. There will be no justice without peace and no peace without justice. This wonderful promise of hope from ancient Israel seems a long way from the carnage afflicting the Holy Land in 2023. Love, mercy and compassion seem naively utopian in the current environment yet without them the prospects for peace seem slight.

Attack and Vengeance

Hamas's desperate attacks on innocent civilians on 7 October were brutal, shocking and completely unjustifiable. The ferocity of the Hamas violence against innocent Israelis was appalling and many war crimes were committed in the first 24 hours of the invasion. After the initial shock, Israeli military vengeance was swift in coming.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised "Vengeance". He stated that there would be no "restraint on the military" and that the newly formed coalition government would crush Hamas, whose fighters he called "wild animals" and "barbarians".

"We are fighting a cruel enemy, an enemy that is worse than ISIS," he said, adding "and we will crush and eliminate it, like the world crushed and eliminated ISIS." While the swift military responses were understandable, an unencumbered Israeli military operation to extract vengeance for the 1,200 Israelis killed has already generated more than 10,000 deaths since Israel "laid siege" to Gaza. The Israeli government cut off water, power, electricity and food supplies and has been engaged in constant bombing since 8 October. Medical and health facilities are overstretched and the health system is collapsing with many more innocent men, women and children losing their lives.

Battle in Gaza

There are two wars currently in play. The first has to do with the battle on the ground. Initially Hamas's unrestrained militia had the upper hand, but the formidable Israeli military machine moved into action with terrifying consequences for the 2.3 million inhabitants of Gaza, not all of whom are Hamas supporters by any means. One million Gazans are under the age of 19 and a child is being killed every 10 minutes in the Israeli invasion. The Israeli air force has been dropping thousands of bombs on Gaza. The number of explosives dropped equals the explosive power of the Hiroshima nuclear bomb. Millions have

been forced to flee their homes in the Gaza Strip, as heavy bombardments continue to hit the Palestinian enclave. The Israeli Defence Force have generated massive internal displacement of the population and a humanitarian disaster. There is nowhere for these displaced persons to go.

For three weeks there were no exits to Egypt and certainly none to Israel. The international community was unable to get assistance into Gaza. Under pressure from the world community, Israel eventually agreed to some humanitarian convoys. None of these convoys equal the 500 trucks that used to come into Gaza on a daily basis bringing food, medical supplies, etc. Israel has also been attacking schools and hospitals on the pretext that Hamas has command centres and tunnels beneath them. Under the rules of war there is never any justification for attacking schools and hospitals.

Battle for War Narrative

The second battle is for control of the narrative. Israel immediately moved into a victim narrative, comparing the Hamas assault to 9/11, Pearl Harbor and the Holocaust. President Biden called the Hamas attacks “pure evil”. All of these comparisons were intended to evoke memories of swift and “legitimate” military action and justified “vengeance”. All Palestinians in the Gaza Strip were deemed to be complicit in the Hamas attack on Israel. For this collective guilt, the Israeli government applied collective punishment. This is another infringement of the rules of war which argue for a strict distinction between combatants and civilians.

Hamas, on the other hand, claims that its actions were justified by the original expropriation of Palestine in 1948 and years of blockade, oppression and humiliation. Gaza is often referred to as the largest open-air prison in the world.

The world’s media (led by the USA) promoted the first narrative while pro-Palestinian states and free Arab media the second. Neither narrative, however, can be used to demonise and justify unrestrained bloodshed against the other. And neither of these narratives creates ripe conditions for a ceasefire or a negotiated peace settlement. On the contrary the competitive victimisation narratives of both sides fuel the conflict.

War a Disaster for Everyone

All victims will and must be grieved and mourned by friends and families. War is a disaster for everyone. There was no justification for Hamas’s savagery nor justification for Israel’s disproportionate military response.

We know from bitter experience that military action never generates a political solution. Two wrongs don’t make a right and global opinion has swung against Israel for its gross violation of human rights, infringement of the rules of war and excessive use of force against a largely innocent population. If Israel had not unleashed a war of vengeance against all Gazans, world opinion might still have been empathetic to Israel.

Negotiated Peace Needed

Israel must see its legitimate needs for security materialised. And Palestinians must see a clear perspective

for the establishment of their own state realised. Only a negotiated peace that fulfils the legitimate national aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis, together with their security alike — the long-held vision of a two-State solution, in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and previous agreements — can bring long-term stability to the people of this land and the wider Middle East region.

Only a negotiated peace that fulfils the legitimate national aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis, together with their security alike ... can bring long-term stability to the people of this land.

In the meantime, we are witnessing a humanitarian catastrophe unfold before our eyes. We cannot remain mute in the face of violence from either direction. There can be no military solution to the Palestinian conflict. It is critical that there be swift negotiations to generate a ceasefire and an opening of more humanitarian corridors to let those that wish to leave Gaza do so and to enable the UN and other humanitarian organisations bring in water, power, food and medical supplies to serve the needs of a besieged population.

It is also important (even as the Israeli army has invaded Gaza) that both sides are reminded of and are willing to fight according to long-established rules of war. Proposing that Israel will fight “without restraint” is a recipe for multiple human rights violations in response to those already perpetrated by Hamas and both sides need to be held to account. There is no room for impunity in this war.

Let’s hope and work for a return of hostages, and reinforce all Turkish, Arab and UN moves for a ceasefire and negotiations to end the war. Without imagination and courage there will be no end to Palestinian hopelessness, humiliation, death and destruction. Without imagination and creativity on the Israeli side there will be no real security, and cycles of vengeance and violence will be deepened and normalised. The challenge is to draw on all the rich Jewish traditions of forgiveness and reconciliation to ensure that the responses to Hamas’s appalling slaughter are proportionate and restrained. There is no room for Gaza to become another Warsaw Ghetto with Israel responsible for vengeful death and destruction.

Let’s hope that tomorrow might indeed be a kissing day between justice and peace so that love, kindness and compassion may prevail. ✦

Witness of Love by Harem Tahir © Used with permission
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Kevin P Clements is the Director of the Toda Peace Institute. He was the founding Professor of the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Otago University.





Online Threats to Offline Peace

Sanjana Hattotuwa *discusses how disinformation in social media is undermining our efforts for communities of peace.*

THE END OF Sri Lanka's three-decade-old violent conflict in May 2009 was called "a war without witness". This was patently untrue. The act of witnessing then was a lived experience, carried on as memories by those who survived, and archived in the horrific captures of digital cameras and smartphones left behind by tens of thousands of those who did not.

Because this material contested the Sri Lankan government's propaganda, which projected a scorched earth policy as a humanitarian effort to rescue civilians, it was never even hinted at in the media. When apps for social media didn't exist, and without the ubiquity of mobile broadband connectivity, there was no livestreamed or near real-time capture of war from the perspectives of victims, first responders or aid workers. William Sherman notably said "War is hell," and that "[i]t is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the

shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, for vengeance, for desolation." He was right. My challenge in writing now is to communicate this, and what it means for New Zealand.

I want to be honest about what's entering, and is now widely distributed in New Zealand's information environment especially over social media since 7 October. The material studied is deeply distressing and enduringly graphic in nature, repeatedly portraying the severe trauma inflicted on children, infants, and families, aside from non-combatant men and women.

Social Media Imagery More Graphic

A recurring theme across the content featured is the graphic depiction of death and injury among the youngest and most vulnerable victims. These include photographs and videos of children and infants, either deceased or grievously injured. The imagery is haunting, and harrowing. A significant

portion of the content focuses on the aftermath of bombings and shelling. Some posts show the direct impact of violence, such as first-person videos of school bombings and footage of children being rescued from under rubble. The visceral vividness of these scenes is heightened by children on gurneys, shivering, and in complete shock, narrating their experiences amidst other dead bodies, covered yet still visibly marked by the violence inflicted upon them.

To date, I have studied hundreds of awful versions and still frames taken out of the March 2019 Christchurch mosque massacre livestream video, thousands of photos from war's end in Sri Lanka over the years, and since February 2022, hundreds of videos and photos depicting horrific battlefield and civilian deaths in Ukraine. And yet, I have never studied content as graphic and violent as I have since 9 October 2023 — all day and every day.

Impact on Groups in Aotearoa

A war on the other side of the world, unceasingly and unflinchingly rendered across all social media platforms has already had a significant domestic impact in New Zealand. Jewish schools and synagogues closed, with community spokespeople noting: “Israelis and the Jewish community throughout the country [are] feeling unsafe and betrayed by a country they love.” Media reports reflect a disconnect between what security agencies have publicly stated, and what Palestinian and Muslim communities, including those impacted by the March 2019 attacks, have communicated regarding fears, anxieties and concerns.

In an op-ed this week, the Chief of the Human Rights Commission noted: “In recent weeks, the number of Israel and Gaza-related complaints received by the Human Rights Commission has spiked,” and went on to say: “The great majority of people are appalled by the abuse, but nonetheless, New Zealand’s social cohesion is in jeopardy.”

Disinformation Is Manipulative

Disinformation research shows complex and coordinated efforts on various social media platforms aim to manipulate public opinion and exacerbate division. One of the key strategies now used is the widespread sharing of violent images and videos. This tactic is not just about shocking viewers; it’s deliberately designed to stir up strong emotions like anger and revulsion.

Some behind these efforts cleverly disguise the content as neutral or unbiased coverage of war, but their real aim is to overwhelm our ability to distinguish meaning, and veracity.

When we are emotionally exhausted, and with our guard down around content consumed reflexively, manipulation becomes much easier. It’s a strategy that farms anger on a large scale, creating a cycle of outrage that feeds on itself.

A particularly worrying aspect of this situation is how this dynamic can lead to increased violence and hate crimes in our communities. Research

has shown that this isn’t limited to one group: Jewish, Palestinian, Muslim, Māori, immigrant and minority communities are all affected, though at times, some more than others.

Blaming NZ Groups for Conflicts Overseas

Another critical point is the role of social media in erasing the distance between foreign conflicts and local communities. Consequential developments, both online and offline, happening far away have a direct and lasting impact on New Zealand’s information environment, which in turn influences societal behaviours and attitudes.

This constant back-and-forth of content that appeals to specific groups, and violently portrays others, can lead to a rise in nationalistic and ideological fervour. In turn, and very quickly, people become more entrenched in their views, making it harder to consider presentations involving the accommodation or negotiation of difference, and embrace of diversity.

Dogmatic thinking which sees “the other” as a threat contributes to what’s called “affective polarisation” — where people’s feelings towards those who differ become increasingly hostile and violent. This division both adds to and accelerates sociopolitical splits already intensified by the disinformation that defined Covid-19.

Democracy Is Threatened

It isn’t a stretch to say New Zealand’s liberal democratic firmament is being stress-tested like never before, and is at risk because of the unbridled import and diffusion of very harmful material — including by highly sophisticated, strategic domestic actors who have their own, parochial interests and end states in mind.

The greater challenge, in my experience, is to talk about any of this in a country which remains convinced

at an institutional level that planned reform or existing guardrails around disinformation and harmful content are fit for purpose. Any submission that stronger, more meaningful policy frameworks are urgently required immediately leads to a divisive discourse coloured by phenomena I’ve dealt with above, with sound supplanting substance.

Disinformation Is a Weapon of War

Social media today is part of war, and an extension of it. That war is not just about Ukraine and Russia, or between Israel and Hamas. It is a battle for liberal democracy and a rules-based order. I am constantly reminded of this as I study what I do, given Sri Lanka’s post-war descent into chaos, in large part because of pervasive and persuasive disinformation narratives.

New Zealand is not immune from or inoculated against similar consequences, which on both sides of the Atlantic have, just since 2016, severely eroded the liberal democratic firmament.

It is crucial that this country faces squarely the challenges brought about by a radically changing information environment that impacts the whole of society, and all of government. What’s online always spills over into what happens offline.

Knowing this should alert us to the urgency of more fully realising the former Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta’s four tikanga Māori guiding the country’s foreign policy, which map equally well to policies and other meaningful responses addressing digital harms and disinformation: manaakitanga (hospitality), whanaungatanga (connectedness), mahi tahi and kotahitanga (unity through collaboration), and kaitiakitanga (guardianship and the protection of intergenerational well-being). ◀

Two Wrongs to Ruin by Anne Holliday ©
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Peace Among the Children of Abraham

Zain Ali reflects on the challenge to be at peace with the will of God personally and with all people.

I AM AT THE Auckland Museum with my children and my sister's children in tow. We are here to see the exhibition on ancient Egypt. My young entourage is keen to see if a mummy is part of the exhibition. They're hoping it may wave back at them! The exhibition itself is extraordinary. The many intricate pieces of jewellery really capture my attention. There are pieces that date back many thousands of years, yet they would not look out of place in a modern-day jewellery store. I am a little taken aback that a people so ancient could create objects of such intricate beauty. Perhaps we are biased in thinking we are advanced in our technology and tastes. Before me lay the proof of the ancients' skill. My musings are interrupted by my son and nephew who have discovered the mummy and I must follow them.

Sure enough there was the mummy in a large glass box, wrapped in bandages and resting within what looked like a sarcophagus. The children stared at the mummy, fascinated. The accompanying infographic identified the body as female, and as likely having been of high enough standing within society to be mummified. I wonder if her soul is at peace. I pray that she may be at peace.

It strikes me as bizarre that we are gathered around the body of this person who died thousands of years ago. Is this display perhaps sacrilegious? Imagine if our loved ones were exhumed and put on display to titillate crowds in the future.

Self-Knowledge Needed in Spirituality

Being of a religious bent, I think about the place of ancient Egypt within the Biblical and Qur'anic heritage. There is Joseph, who after much turmoil becomes an Egyptian prince, and Moses, who also experiences upheaval in leading his people out of slavery.

Ancient Egypt seems to embody the best and worst



of human nature. Rumi, one of the Sufi thinkers, has a spiritual view:

*Mention of Moses has bogged down your minds
supposing these tales tell of long ago
Mention of Moses, a veil cloaking eyes
But, my good man, Moses' light, look to it.
Both Moses and Pharaoh dwell within you
Seek out these two foes in your inner self.*

There is light as well as darkness within us and they exist in tension with each other. Several years ago I joined a Sufi meditation group. The practices include silent meditation, where an intention is made on the heart directing it to the divine. I pay attention to my heart and my heart pays attention to the divine essence. There have been moments where I have experienced a profound sense of peace, a deep and loving connection with God and the world around me.

There were other moments when I felt deeply unsettled, moments where I become aware of myself, I see my own being with its light and zones of darkness. The darkness is troubling — it exhibits itself in how I view myself, and

how I view and treat others. To move from darkness to light is to move from selfish self-centredness, toward being selfless. The Sufi poet Rabia writes:

*O my Lord, if I worship you
from fear of hell, burn me in hell.
If I worship you from hope of Paradise,
bar me from its gates.
But if I worship you
for yourself alone, grant me then
the beauty of your Face.*

Rabia draws our attention to being in proper relationship with God, warning that if we are not careful, our spirituality can become self-centred. Then our sole concern is with divine reward and punishment.

Challenge to Be Peace-Loving

Our search for peace may bring us face-to-face with the Pharaoh within, an inner aspect of ourselves which is happy to take on the role of God. This tension within human nature also has echoes within the very word "Islam". The Arabic word Islam is linked to the word peace, or *salam*. *Salam* is also a component of the common Muslim greeting "As-salamu alaykum", which means: "Peace be upon you." Islam is also linked to the ideas of submission or surrender. These ideas are combined, so that *Islam* means something like surrendering to the will of God, or being at peace with the will of God.

"O God, You are Peace, from You is all peace, blessed are You O Possessor of majesty and honour."

There is an inherent tension between peace and surrender. In English, terms like "submission" and "surrender" can have negative connotations — that something is being given up perhaps due to force.

Peace on the other hand has positive connotations of freedom and happiness. Within the term *Islam*, both "submission" and "surrender" are brought together. This reflects that there is a tension in our human nature — as if Moses and Pharaoh dwell within us.

Peace Is Defiantly Hopeful

As we draw nearer to Christmas and the close of this year, we are witnessing around the world and in the Holy Land, heartbreaking conflict and death and the disregard for life, especially a disregard for women, children and the old.

The heartlessness reflects the worst of Pharaohic excess. We humans have taken life and death into our hands. Where is our Moses, the one who can stand defiant before inhumanity, and reminds us that we are not God? Who can place an ocean between us and evil?

I appreciate life is not always simple. The Abrahamic heritage leans strongly toward the light and the very real hope that we can make progress, as hard as it may be. We all need to be Moses — defiant in the face of darkness.

Walking with Hopes for Peace

My young entourage has become bored with ancient Egypt and wants to go to the earthquake room. The room resembles a regular Kiwi living room with bookcases, sofas and TV. Then it begins to shake, simulating an earthquake. We're all on edge, but we love it. After that we regroup for the promised flavoured slushies and finally head out of the museum to the winter gardens in the Auckland Domain.

It's a beautiful day, the sky is clear, the Waitematā Harbour glistens and lots of families are out in the sunlight. We are fortunate in this part of the world.

I am reminded of a prayer for peace, a prayer for all the children of Abraham — it's so appropriate as we move towards Christmas:

Allahumma antas-Salam wa minkas-salam. Tabarakta ya Dhal-jalali wal- ikram.

"O God, You are Peace, from You is all peace, blessed are You O Possessor of majesty and honour." ✦

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SPECIALIST TEAM-BASED RESPECTFUL INNOVATIVE DEDICATED EMPATHETIC

WIPE THE DISFIGURED FACE OF HUMANITY

Marie-Armelle Beaulieu tells how the tiny Christian community in the Holy Land is fearful of the violence surrounding it, yet practises hope.

THE HOLY LAND is at war. Israel and the Palestinian Territories — about the size of Wales or New Jersey — are home to roughly 15 million people. There is an equal number of Jews and Muslims, while there are only 350,000 Christians. Half are natives of this land, the other half are migrants.

Many of us have been reduced to silence in the face of violence, in the face of the hatred that hardens hearts and slyly comes knocking at our doors to draw us into its madness.

The Christian community is not uniform. Hebrew-speaking Christians include Israelis. They react like their Jewish compatriots, suffering in their flesh the massacres that could have been theirs. Four Christian migrants died in the villages bordering the Gaza Strip.

The native Christians of this land are Palestinians. Their mother tongue is Arabic and the history of Palestine is their own. While the West fears that the conflict will be exported to its shores, many feel that it is the West that has imported its civilisational struggles here. By invoking Israel's right to defend itself, the West is giving its people a license to kill their co-religionists and allowing them to toy with the idea of driving them out of the land where they are the guardians of the Christian faith.

Threat in Being Different

People here are infuriated by the West for the way it is instrumentalising their plight, while claiming to defend them. In the end, this pushes them to leave their homeland.

It's not politically correct to say so, but the Christians who are natives of the Holy Land fear those Jews who believe the land is exclusively theirs.

Taybeh, the last entirely Christian village in the West Bank, has been attacked by Jewish settlers three times in one week. Its residents are caught in a vice. Like the other Christians in the West Bank, they do not fear Islam, but they do fear Hamas, which claims to be the sole bearer of Palestinian nationalism, and whose line you have to toe if you don't want to be considered a traitor.

In Israel, the 7 October massacres have reinforced the Israeli identity of some Christians, while others are reliving the dark hours of 1948. Before the Jews, all feel they must hide in the shadows and bow their heads, accused of being Arabs.



Expressing Hope for All Believers

I have collected testimonies from some of the Christians in our community for the magazine I edit. The following is an extract from Sister Camelia of the Sisters of Nazareth:

"We are tired of the darkness of ideologies in a land where the Lord illuminated the world with his glorious Resurrection, tired of discrimination in a land where Christ came to unite the children of Abraham. Are we still capable of throwing off our cloaks, running to Jesus and hearing him say to us: "What do you want me to do for you?" Anything is possible: when I extend my hand in greeting and say a word of hope and life. When I join my Muslim neighbour who asks me to pray with him and beg Allah to save us from this catastrophe. When I listen to a Jewish technician rebel against hasty decisions that lead to death. When my heart weeps for the victims, whatever their background. When, instead of hiding behind the veil of fear, I use it to wipe the disfigured face of humanity."

The Christian way is a narrow one. It wants to resolutely bring hope to all believers, together. ✦

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Painting: *6th Station of the Cross: Veronica Wipes the Tears of Jesus* by Tea Schiano (2017) © Used with permission
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Further info: FB: Angels' Atelier Retreat Ranch

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Dark Synodal Times

Massimo Faggioli writes that compared to the hope for global peace of Vatican II the Synod on the future of the Church is taking place in the middle of a piecemeal World War III.

COUNCILS AND SYNODS of the Catholic Church have often taken place during wartime. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) was supposed to begin in 1542, but was delayed for a few years because of the war between the Roman Emperor Charles V and Francis I of France. Then it was suspended in 1552 because of the wars between the Empire and the Protestant princes.

The First Vatican Council was called into session on 8 December 1869. But it was suspended indefinitely on 20 October 1870, a month after the newly-created Kingdom of Italy captured Rome and the Papal States on the sidelines of the Franco-Prussian War. The emergence of the Fascist regime in Italy was one of the reasons that cautioned against re-convening the Council in the mid-1920s. Vatican I

was never officially closed until 1960, shortly after John XXIII announced plans to hold the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

Vatican II and World Peace

In the intersection between the history of councils/synods and armed conflicts from the early centuries to the modern period, the Church and the papacy were often at the centre of those conflicts – not as a spectator or a mediator, but as a party to the disputes.

But one of the expectations of Vatican II and of conciliar theology was that, after 15 centuries of European Christendom (when Christianity reigned or prevailed in all aspects of life), the coming of the post-Constantinian age and the self-redefinition of the Church as a “humble servant” would welcome a

new, more peaceful order of things.

Through the Message to Humanity issued on 20 October 1962, the bishops attending Vatican II vowed to “serve” others by “patterning [themselves] after the example of the Divine Teacher, who ‘came not to be served but to serve’... (and) made peace through the blood of his cross”.

The same message expressed a key representation of the Council itself: “This very conciliar congress of ours, so impressive in the diversity of races, nations, and languages it represents, does it not bear witness to a community of brotherly love, and shine as a visible sign of it?”

A Synod in the Shadows

The first session of the Synod on Synodality tried to be such a visible sign but it was a muted assembly. In the time of social media, it appeared



like a silent movie. It was held behind closed doors, protected from the media and, even more, from its internal divisions.

It took place in the shadows of the Marko Rupnik case (celebrated priest artist and alleged serial sex abuser) and ongoing national investigations on the abuse crisis. Just before the Synod assembly was convened, there was a report from Switzerland and the airing of the series "Godvergeten" ("Forgotten by God") by the public Dutch-language TV station in Belgium. And during the last week of the assembly an independent report on clergy sex abuse in Spain was released.

There were also visible divisions among Catholics around the world concerning the wars between Russia and Ukraine and Israel and Hamas.

These shadows are in stark contrast to the mood of the Second Vatican Council. Although it took place at the height of the Cold War between the Communist world (in East Asia, the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Cuba) and the "free world" led by the United States, Vatican II opened and closed with signs of peace-making. In October 1962 John XXIII made interventions during the Cuba missile crisis and in October 1965 Paul VI visited the United Nations in New York where he delivered his now-famous

speech: "Jamais plus la guerre, jamais plus la guerre" — "no more war, war never again".

In January 1964 — between the second and third sessions of Vatican II — Paul VI became the first pope ever to travel to the "Holy Land" (he never uttered the word "Israel" in those fledgling days of Catholic-Jewish and Vatican-Israel relations).

Vatican II ... benefited from a global movement pointing to an ideal of unity and communion in the one human family. The Synod on Synodality does not have that luxury, nor does the Catholic Church as a whole.

Eleven months later — in December 1964 — he travelled to Bombay, in what was then a modernising, democratic India open to religious diversity.

Vatican II also helped launch a new phase in the Holy See's diplomatic engagement with the USSR and the Communist states in Eastern Europe, the Vatican's Ostpolitik in parallel to the Federal Republic of Germany's Ostpolitik.

"This Is a Dark Hour"

The Synod on Synodality occupies a very different position in global history. The Russian invasion of

Ukraine in February 2022 cast a sombre shadow on the grassroots synodal consultations in Europe — especially on the continental phase in Prague in February 2023.

Even more, the first session of the Synod assembly overlapped ominously with the start of the war between Israel and Hamas. At dawn on 7 October — after a three-day pre-synod retreat led by the well-known Dominican preacher and theologian Timothy Radcliffe and at the end of the first week of the Synod assembly — Hamas launched its pogrom-like attack against Israel, savagely killing 1,400 Israeli soldiers and civilians (men, women and children) and kidnapping more than 200 people (many of them co-nationals of other countries).

Between 28-29 October, at the very end of the Synod, Israeli armed forces expanded their operations in the Gaza Strip. They had already spent three weeks of ferocious bombardments that made little distinction between Hamas operatives and Palestinians.

In the midst of all this, antisemitism is again on the rise, both in its rawest version and in high-brow sophistication. The 1990s neo-conservative narrative of "the clash of civilisations" seems restrained today in light of the splits within the Western world.

Pope Francis articulated the particular mood of the Church at the conclusion of the Day of Prayer, Fasting and Penance for the Middle East and the other many places in the world torn apart by wars. "This is a dark hour," he said calling on the prayer of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "This is a dark hour, Mother."

Freedom and Terror

As a Catholic Christian, I feel powerless watching the mutual destruction and self-destruction of the two closest siblings in the Abrahamic family — Jews and Muslims. I am an "eighty-niner". I'm one of those came into the world as a citizen of the world and also as an active member of the Church in 1989, when I was a first-year student at the University of Bologna.

The Berlin Wall fell on 9 November of that year and the world seemed to no longer be divided by borders, especially in Europe. It felt as if the effects of the long wave of Vatican II had finally arrived: religious liberty, dignity of all persons, human fraternity in the one family of nations. The Polish pope John Paul II had put the Church on what now is unwisely called "the right side of history" (only to be clouded by that victory in dealing with the churches of liberation theology in Latin America).

My 1990s passed in a flash. I was hitchhiking in Syria just a few weeks before the 9/11 attacks in the United States and it felt like the end of a world. Looking back now, that day appears to be merely a prologue or a sequel, depending on where you were fated to be born. In fact in certain countries the terror of 9/11 is an almost everyday occurrence.

Time to "Set Our Faces" for a New Journey

These are very dark days for all persons, citizens and believers who are even minimally aware of what is happening and what it means for the various Churches and religions. There will be time to study and reflect on the accomplishments of this first session of the Synod on Synodality. But for now, it is important to take stock of the global situation to give



One of the expectations of Vatican II ... was the coming of the post-Constantinian age and the self-redefinition of the Church as a "humble servant" would welcome a new, more peaceful order of things.

adequate measure to our intra-Catholic debates.

Vatican II, for all its human naivete and hypocrisies, benefited from a global movement pointing to an ideal of unity and communion in the one human family. The Synod on Synodality does not have that luxury, nor does the Catholic Church as a whole. It does not make a difference whether you have faith in this Synod or not.

The evangelist Luke tells us that Jesus "set his face" to go to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51). The Greek verb means "strengthened" but also "hardened" his face. Indeed, this is the time to set our faces for a journey that will be different from that of Vatican II.

"This is a time of active waiting," Timothy Radcliffe told Synod

participants during a spiritual reflection he gave at the beginning of the assembly's 16th general congregation. He then repeated the words of Simone Weil which he had quoted during the pre-Synod retreat:

"We do not obtain the most precious gifts by going in search of them but by waiting for them... This way of waiting (and) looking is, in the first place, attentive. The soul empties itself of its own contents in order to receive the human being it is looking at, just as he or she is, in all their truth." ♦

Article first printing in *International La Croix* 2 November 2023.

Photo p13: By Drop of Light/Shutterstock.com
Photo p14: By Vatican Media
Image above: *Catholic ecclesiastics of several countries in Rome for Vatican Council I (1870)* by unknown artist

Massimo Faggioli is Professor of Theology at Villanova University and is currently lecturing at the Catholic University Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium as the recipient of the Francqui Chair.



Haere Mai e Hehu

It was getting near Christmas
and just another working day,
traffic nudging time at the red lights,
legs snipping lengths of a busy pavement,
people too separate to be called a crowd,
a day to be registered and counted
in offices all over the city.

But on this day something happened.
Maybe it was the busker with his accordion,
or the laughing girl outside the coffee shop,
or the homeless man on the corner,
bare to the waist and in lotus position,
face and hands lifted to catch the sun,
or maybe it was the pigeons in a mating dance,
feathers shining like oil on water,
or the way a sudden breeze
made the young pohutukawa trees
shiver with ecstasy.

Something disturbed the solemn face of time.
Something shook the folds of perception,
lifting the veil for a golden moment.
In that instant, the busker's music filled the universe,
and people became pure light and lost their boundaries,
and the warm breeze that ruffled leaves and feathers
was recognised as the breath of eternal Love.

By Joy Cowley

Published in *Come and See*.
Pleroma Christian Supplies, 2008: p10-11



Photo by Tim Mossholder on Unsplash



THE CHURCH BEGINS TO DREAM

Christopher Lamb writes that the first session of the Synod on Synodality in Rome signals significant reform in the Church.

THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY has laid a foundation stone for a deep reform of how the Catholic Church carries out its mission and how it contains disagreements that threaten its unity.

The document released at the conclusion of the first of the two-part climax to the Synod process points toward

a profound shake-up of the Church. Its proposals include an expanded role for women in ministry, making lay involvement in decision-making mandatory, an overhaul of the seminary system, and a revision of the Church's Code of Canon Law. On women deacons, the Synod agreed that this issue needs more discernment and asked that the

findings of previous papal commissions on the issue be presented to the concluding assembly in October 2024.

It was never expected that this October's synod would home in on the most contested topics in the Church and make dramatic proposals. This was the first round of a synod double-header, which began at the local level two years ago. "Today, we do not see the full fruit of this process, but with farsightedness, we look to the horizon opening up before us," Pope Francis said in his homily at the Mass in St Peter's Basilica concluding the assembly.

The synthesis document acknowledged that the Church's "anthropological categories" when it comes to sexuality and identity had not adequately taken into account human experience and the sciences.

New Process for Working Together

The breakthrough achieved by the Synod was not to be found in the texts focusing on particular issues, but in the widespread acceptance of the ways of discussing and discerning that were adopted at this Synod for the first time. The radically different approach encouraged attentive and prayerful listening among small groups of cardinals, bishops, priests and lay people seated around tables.

All 350 or so members of the Synod were able to speak, each of them being allotted the same time. The process led to the unprecedented sight of cardinals from the Roman Curia sitting at round tables with women from Asia and Latin America. "It was a levelling of the participants," one delegate said.

The prophets of doom who had warned of a conspiracy to overturn church doctrine and had predicted a schism, or a descent into irreconcilable polarisation, were proved wrong. Each paragraph of the final "synthesis document" was voted on in turn, and all received the approval of at least a two-thirds majority. Several bishops who had voiced concerns or had been openly sceptical of the Synod were won over by the new process.

Every Christian denomination has been experiencing deep divisions in recent decades, particularly over the recognition of same-sex relationships.

What is remarkable about the way this issue is being discussed in the Catholic Church is how — so far, at least — the synodal process has established a container that is both holding disagreements and — at the same time — building communion. There is considerable tension, but the container is succeeding in balancing a more inclusive conversation with the authority of the papacy.

Synodality New Way for Whole Church

"The real miracle is the overwhelming agreement that synodality is the way of proceeding in the

Church," the Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny told me as we walked together past the Swiss Guards and up to the side entrance of St Peter's Basilica for the closing Mass last Sunday.

The cardinal, a Jesuit, is the leader of the Holy See's office for integral human development and has worked in Africa, Central America and North America. "Going into the Synod was like walking into a laboratory," he said. "We were testing something, and it wasn't clear if it was going to work. But the test results are encouraging."

This can no longer be dismissed as a fashion or a fad. Synodality — a way, a style of walking together — is what the Lord expects of the Church in the third millennium."

The Inclusion of Lay People

That there were close to as many women present as voting delegates as there were cardinals — was also groundbreaking. The presence of lay people led to relentless questioning from critics of the Synod — and sometimes from bishops speaking in the Paul VI Hall — of the status and authority of the Synod, and whether it could still be called a "Synod of Bishops".

According to the final report, some still want to reserve membership of the Synod to bishops, and it was acknowledged that the "criteria by which non-bishop members are called to the assembly" should be clarified. Given the particular role bishops have as teachers and successors to the Apostles, some proposed that the "ecclesial assembly" of bishops and lay people should be followed by a separate "episcopal assembly" to conclude the process of discernment.

Synod Is a Consultative Body

The Synod remains a consultative body, as it has been since Pope Paul VI set it up during the final session of the Second Vatican Council. The Pope has the final say. Bishops do not operate in isolation, and the success of the assembly showed that their discernment is helped by the presence of priests and lay people, as well as fellow bishops.



"This is the Church we are called to 'dream': a Church that is the servant of all ... that never demands an attestation of 'good behaviour', but welcomes, serves, loves, forgives; a Church with open doors that is a haven of mercy."



The process is a development from the structure established by Paul VI but, as the Australian theologian Ormond Rush pointed out in a well-received address, in which he quoted extensively from Joseph Ratzinger, tradition is dynamic rather than static, legalistic and ahistorical.

Synod Discussed Issues of Importance

One source close to the proceedings put it this way: "The progressives got the process, and the conservatives got the content." The final document did not use the term "LGBTQ Catholics" (as the working document had), despite the shift in pastoral approach the Pope has modelled over the past decade.

"I would suspect that most LGBTQ Catholics will be disappointed that they are not even mentioned in the final synthesis," Fr James Martin SJ, the Jesuit priest who has a high profile ministry to gay Catholics, said afterwards. "The document, as it turns out, does not reflect the fact that the topic of LGBTQ people came up repeatedly in both many table discussions and the plenary sessions, and provoked widely diverging views." Nevertheless, he said that the Synod was a "great grace" and that it "hasn't finished yet".

While gay and lesbian Catholics were not expressly mentioned, the synthesis document acknowledged that the Church's "anthropological categories" when it comes to sexuality and identity had not adequately taken into account human experience and the sciences. That is a significant admission, and it opens the door to what could be a wide-ranging reimagining of Catholic teaching on sexuality.

How the LGBTQ question was handled reflected a

Church that is no longer dominated by Europe and the west, but one which is multipolar and where the global south is growing in influence. We also saw this in the agreement that bishops in Africa should promote a "theological and pastoral discernment" on the question of polygamy, including how to accompany those in polygamous unions.

"Today, we do not see the full fruit of this process, but with farsightedness, we look to the horizon opening up before us."

Discussions of the Church's ministry to Catholics in same-sex relationships were at times tense. At one point, the delegates heard the powerful story of a young woman from Poland who took her own life because she was bisexual and did not feel welcomed into the Church. Sources also told me that one high-ranking Eastern Catholic prelate refused to sit at the same table as Fr Martin SJ.

Seminary Training to Change

Although the synthesis document steers away from topics where agreement wasn't possible, it includes potentially significant proposals. One is that the system for the training of priests in seminaries should undergo a "thorough review" in light of the Church's "missionary and synodal dimensions".

It calls for programmes where lay and ordained are formed together and a greater integration of women in

the seminary system. It suggested candidates for ordained ministry need to experience living in a Christian community before entering a seminary and that formation houses should not create an “artificial environment, separate from the ordinary life of the faithful”.

Accountability Called For

On the question of accountability, it suggests that bishops undergo performance reviews to assess how they exercise authority and manage finances and that “priests and deacons” undergo a “regular audit” of how they are carrying out their role.

Bishops do not operate in isolation, and the success of the assembly showed that their discernment is helped by the presence of priests and lay people, as well as fellow bishops.

There is also a proposal to consider the “reinsertion of priests who have left the ministry in pastoral services” on a case-by-case basis, and to give “further consideration” to the ordination of married men.

Preparatory Study for Second Assembly

What a more synodal church looks like regarding church law and structures still needs to be studied. The Synod proposed that an “intercontinental special commission of theological and canonical experts” be established to work on proposals ahead of next year’s assembly.

Pastoral Councils Obligatory

The final document also called for pastoral councils, bodies including the non-ordained and the clergy, to be made obligatory at the parish and diocesan levels.

Synodality to be Implemented throughout Church

While the Synod was a transformative experience for the several hundred bishops, priests and lay people involved, the real test of its success will be the extent to which synodality is taken up at parish, diocese and national level. While several local churches have followed the synodal initiative, plenty more have simply ignored it.

The most “no” votes came for the paragraphs on female deacons, while the section calling for “further consideration” of mandatory celibacy for priests also received a substantial number of “no” votes.

The Synod took place against the backdrop of the unfolding war between Israel and Hamas and Russia’s continuing war in Ukraine. The world leaders were gathering in Dubai for the latest COP gathering to address the climate crisis (Francis expects to join them). It is within this context of war, conflict and fragility that the Church has to carry out its mission.

As the Synod concluded, Francis said the Church must put God and service before personal agendas. “This is the Church we are called to ‘dream’: a Church that is the servant of all, the servant of the least of our brothers

and sisters,” he said. “A Church that never demands an attestation of ‘good behaviour’, but welcomes, serves, loves, forgives; a Church with open doors that is a haven of mercy.”

Second Synod Session October 2024

The second and concluding session of the Synod on Synodality will be held in the Vatican in 10 months’ time. It will be vital for the realisation of Francis’s “dream” that the work continues and the momentum created by the first session is sustained. But the synodal and missionary Church is already emerging. ✦

Article first published in *The Tablet*, 4 November 2023

Painting p18: *Listening* by Wai Ping Mo © Used with permission

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SYNODALITY IN EVERY DIOCESE

Brendan Daly discusses the *Final Report of the first Synod assembly* and the synodal processes we can expect our local bishops to initiate.



THE FIRST STAGE of the Synod on Synodality in Rome has been completed. The focus now moves to the local churches and how they continue the process, before the second and final stage of the Synod in Rome next year.

Participants, Dynamics and Process Changed

There is no doubt that the Synod of Bishops has changed dramatically. In the past lay people have spoken to the bishops, but they were not fully participating as voting members as they were this year. Photographs of the Synod in action in past decades show mostly bishops speaking to an audience of nearly all bishops and cardinals. Previously, delegates had an eight minute slot allotted to them and they spoke while everyone sat in

the Audience Hall and listened. After seven minutes there was a warning bell that time was almost up. If someone kept on talking overtime, his microphone was turned off.

This year's photographs were of circular tables of about 10 women and men participants — bishops, lay people, priests and religious — discussing issues and listening to one another. The dynamics and the process have clearly changed. The teaching and proclaiming Church is now listening to what individuals in the groups have to contribute.

Church Is Registering the Changed World

There is no doubt that the world is changing. The West is in decline and many now question the right of Americans and Europeans to tell

others how to live. Similarly, there is a change within the Church. The West is no longer seen as the future of the Church. The Church is much more global and the perception of problems in the world is not just seen through Western eyes.

In New Zealand we live in a very particular context and social milieu — it's not the norm. Like everyone else in the world we face questions, concerns and issues. We're in a digital world. In this context we still must find meaning and purpose in our lives.

LGBTQ Missing in Final Report

There have been many criticisms of the Synod and its Final Report. One criticism concerned the removal of the word "LGBTQ" from the final statement. The Final Report instead stated, "In different ways people who

feel marginalised or excluded from the Church because of their marriage status, identity or sexuality also ask to be heard and accompanied.” Apparently, the removal of the word “LGBTQ” related to some members of the Synod from the global south having negative experiences with the word “LGBTQ” being used as part of conditions to receive foreign aid from Western countries.

Polygamy in Africa to Be Addressed

On the other hand, “polygamy” was added to the Final Report because polygamy is a challenge for the Church in Africa. The Final Report included a paragraph on the issue of “promoting theological and pastoral discernment” as well as the pastoral care for people who are in polygamous unions but drawn to the Catholic Faith. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states polygamy is contrary to the moral law but notes that Christians who have previously lived in polygamous unions have a grave obligation in justice to honour the obligations they have contracted in regard to former wives and children.

Concern for Oriental Churches

There are 23 Oriental Churches in full communion with the Catholic Church. The Final Report was concerned about the situation of many of these Oriental Christians and calls for a permanent Council of Patriarchs and Archbishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches to advise the Holy Father.

Women in the Church

There is no doubt that one of the very notable results from the Synod concerns the role of women. Women’s involvement in the Church is based on baptism. The Final Report states: “It is urgent to ensure that, wherever possible, women can participate in decision-making processes and assume roles of responsibility in pastoral care and ministry.” The addition of the word “urgent” strengthens this part of the Final Report.

The Synod delegates thought women should have substantial roles in ministry, but it was recognised that the roles and ministries would

vary in different parts of the world. There was wide support for women as deacons, without addressing women’s ordination as deacons or installation in the ministry of deacons.

Canon Law Changes Needed

It is my opinion that there is a need to change some canon law especially canon 129. Diocesan Pastoral Councils and Parish Councils and Finance Committees need to be made obligatory. Far too many parishes do not have parish councils and consultation with parishioners is too often only minimal.

Processes need to change so that, for example, amalgamating two or more parishes would require consultation with lay bodies such as diocesan pastoral councils and parish councils, rather than the legal requirement now only being consultation with the Council of Priests.

Change is needed in canon law so that it is clearly stated that women can actually participate as judges in all canonical processes at all levels in the Church. All members of the Church are called to be missionary disciples on the basis of baptism.

Legal Structures for Transparency and Accountability

We also need legal structures and processes so that there is transparency and accountability in the Church. The lack of accountability and transparency is demonstrated time after time as the Church continues to struggle to address the sexual abuse crisis. Bishops and religious superiors in different countries do not seem able to learn from what has gone wrong elsewhere in the world.

There is a need for division of powers so that judicial, legislative and executive powers are separated. One person ought not to be “judge, jury and executioner”. We should not be surprised that there are problems when the bishop is the one imposing

penalties, while canon law requires him to have a brotherly concern for his guilty priest (c 384) and care for his lay victim (c 383).

Liturgical Language to Relate to the People

The Final Report recognises the necessity of making liturgical language more understandable and related to the culture of the faithful in each country. There is a recognition of the need for episcopal conferences to be entrusted with a wider responsibility in this regard.

Synodality Process Paramount

For Pope Francis, the Synod was not just about the hot-button topics. The Final Report makes mention of a number of these issues including gender identity, sexual orientation, end-of-life issues, difficult marriage situations and ethical problems associated with artificial intelligence. These are all major issues for societies and countries around the world as well as being major issues within the Catholic Church. But for Pope Francis the Synod was always about the synodal process, which he hoped would overcome divisions in the Church and recommit us to the mission of Jesus. The challenge is to grow and to be one in Jesus Christ.

Local Bishops to Act Now

It is clear from the Final Report that a lot depends on the local diocesan bishop. The Final Report states: “The conviction with which the bishop himself adopts a synodal approach and the style by which he exercises authority will influence decisively how priests and deacons, lay men and women and those in consecrated life participate in the synodal process ... The bishop is called to be an example of synodality for all.”

The process of synodality really starts at the end of the Synod. ✠

Image by AI/Shutterstock.com

Brendan Daly teaches canon law at Te Kupenga Catholic Theological College. He is a Judicial Vicar of the Tribunal for New Zealand and author of *Canon Law in Action* (2015).





The Word Became Flesh

Kathleen Rushton explains how Jesus comes into creation in John 1:1-18 not as a baby, as we read in Matthew and Luke, but as the Word becoming flesh and pitching a tent in us.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS, such as “O Little Babe of Bethlehem,” evoke scenes from the infancy narratives of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The wonder, lowliness, humanity and vulnerability of the newborn Christ Child inspires cribs, cards, midnight and dawn liturgies and the hearts of millions young and old.

“The Word Became Flesh”

In the Prologue of John’s Gospel (1:1-18) the coming of Jesus is not expressed as a birth. He did not become “a man” in the sense of a male person (*aner*), or even “a human person” (*anthropos*). Instead his coming is expressed as “the Word became flesh (*sarx*) and pitched a tent in us” (Jn 1:14, literal translation).

The Incarnation is not presented as a one-off event to be celebrated only at Christmas time. In John the Genesis creation stories with their ancient cosmologies are reshaped in order to insert Jesus, “the Word became flesh,” into an evolving understanding of the incarnate, dynamic God and the universe.

Sarx — Flesh

The word *sarx* in John does not characterise humanity as subject to the power of sin nor does it contrast flesh and spirit as found in Paul’s Letters. In John, it emphasises the true humanity of Jesus whom we see tired and thirsty (Jn 4:6-7, 19:28); whose emotion we hear in his voice (Jn 11:33); who wept (Jn 11:35); and whose spirit is troubled as his death approaches (Jn 12:27; 13:21).

“The Word” took on human form and chose the same

earthly existence as that of every human person. “Flesh” suggests a human person in the fullest bodily sense including a rational soul. We homo sapiens have evolved with consciousness, imagination, language and religious awareness through a process which required delicate cosmological and geological conditions.

“All Flesh”

While “flesh” refers to human persons as, for example, man and woman are “one flesh” (Gen 2.24-25) and “flesh” is circumcised (Gen 17.11,14), the Word become “flesh” is not limited to humans.

Humanity is not distinct from other living creatures. God’s continuing relationship with creation is with “all flesh.” In the flood, the focus is on “all flesh” (Gen 6:13-22; 7:15-16); the covenant is made with “all flesh” (Gen 9:8-11); God sustains “all flesh” (Ps 136:25); and “all flesh” praises God (Ps 145:21). While “flesh” identifies the incarnation of Jesus with human persons and with all living creatures, there is also difference.

First Difference: Flesh Is Embodiment

Genesis 1 describes God’s creation of the world and of humans as realities that God looked down upon and saw were “good” and “very good.” Through Jesus becoming flesh, the divine enters the materiality of the created world through his body. For those incorporated in Jesus as adopted children of God, the human body is forevermore a valued part of God’s creation uniting the divine and the material.

Our evolved bodies are the bearers of human uniqueness. In our embodied existence, we face the realities of vulnerability and suffering, as well as dependence that is central to our human condition. The paradox of the Word and the flesh is reflected in the divine paradox — the understanding that out of our fragility comes our strength. The tent, a fragile sheet that can be folded up or knocked over, is a symbol of flesh and its vulnerability.

Second Difference: *Imago Dei* Image of God

God is portrayed as creating humanity in God's "image" (Gen 1:26, 27). This *Imago Dei* is associated with reason and intellect and is related to humankind's dominion in planet Earth. South African theologian Wentzel van Huyssteen says that *Imago Dei* offers a more holistic way of humanness because it "strongly underlines the sacredness and irreplaceable value of each individual human person [when] seen in the broader context of the imitation of God, the *imitatio Dei*." Being created in God's image obliges us to act in accordance with God's love — doing God's creative work in our everyday lives.

Imago Dei relates to humanity's bodiliness and includes the capacity to reflect on the experience of living — being-in-the-world. Through our body we are interconnected in the universe and through our consciousness/soul we have the capacity to live out our relationship with the Creator.

Third Difference: To Work with God

In some ancient myths, humans are said to be created as workers for the sole purpose of relieving the gods of the burden of labour. The purpose of humans in the biblical tradition is different. Humans are created to work with God. Humans in the image of God are co-creators. Their labour is to love, build and sustain creation but, as we know, humans can also undermine God's creative activity.

Humanity is not distinct from other living creatures. God's continuing relationship with creation is with "all flesh."

In John's Gospel there are 28 references to "work" or "working" among which are "completing the works of God" and Jesus or the disciples working in open and public places.

No Body Now but Yours

This understanding of "the Word became flesh and pitched his tent in us" can affirm and challenge us. Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* and follow-up *Laudate Deum* call us to heed and respond to the cry of Earth and the cry of the poor. In John's language this is the call to "flesh" to respond to "all flesh".

Francis says it is urgent that we respond as he showed in joining the world's leaders at COP28. As co-creators we

work within God's complex, evolving, beautiful, suffering and global world.

And recently Francis urged theologians to make a "paradigm shift" in their theologising to "a fundamentally contextual theology capable of reading and interpreting the Gospel in the conditions in which men and women live daily, in different geographical, social and cultural environments." This recognises that the Word made flesh is known, loved and expressed differently in different parts of the world.

We need contextual theology, Francis wrote, to help bring about change in the Church and the world: "A synodal, missionary and 'outgoing' Church can only respond to an 'outgoing' theology."

During the Advent and Christmas seasons we can take to heart Teresa of Avila's words: "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on Earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks lovingly on this world. Yours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good." ✦

Gospel Reading for Christmas Day: John 1:1-18

Christ in the Wilderness: The Hen by Stanley Spencer www.wikiart.org

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



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Tears in the Fabric

to imagine what life looks like for the person who made each item. It was probably a woman, working in a room full of other women bent over sewing machines. No robot has yet been able to match human dexterity for assembling clothing.

Most of the clothing for sale in New Zealand is imported, and opaque subcontracting processes mean that it's difficult to know exactly where or how items are made. Most garment workers in the world aren't part of a labour union, and most companies choose to produce clothing in places where labour is cheap and workers have little protection.

The New Zealand government — after years of pressure from World Vision and Tearfund — has committed to implementing modern-day slavery legislation which requires companies to report on their supply chains, but this only applies to companies worth more than \$20 million. And companies need only report labour violation risks, not how these risks are being mitigated.

I spin for fun not work, and I sometimes think my concern with clothing is vain and superficial. Jesus urged people not to fuss about their clothing but to have faith that it would be given by God, like the beauty in creation: "See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin." But then Jesus wasn't talking to people who were worrying about what to wear — he was talking to people who were worrying about how they would be clothed. Jesus's promise was that in God's kingdom clothes — like food and water — would be abundant. But in the system of clothing production today, which weaves the globe together as it creates environmental destruction and human rights violations, the people who make our clothes are often enslaved and impoverished — like those who in Jesus's time would have struggled to clothe themselves. First, we must acknowledge that we are deeply connected to the people and places that make our clothes, and second, call for God's grace to help change these ugly systems. ✎

Photo by Sundry Photography/Shutterstock.com

I FOUND A NEW obsession this year. When I found an old spinning wheel at my parents' house, it possessed me like few things have done in my adult life. I dreamed of spinning; I woke at 3am wondering if it was spinning time yet.

My sudden interest in spinning made me watch dozens of YouTube videos about the technique. I promptly purchased a drop spindle — a simple piece of technology that adds twist to fibre using gravity via a weighted and hooked stick. I read a book by an archeologist who studied shreds of textiles to understand women's labour through time.

Participating in the creation of cloth, from fibre to finished object, links me to people across space and time. Wool is one of the oldest fibres worn by humans. Learning firsthand the mechanisms of spinning, weaving and knitting — chiefly, how slow they are — has helped me to appreciate the actual labour of creating fabric. This labour has been performed for millennia, by people not so different from me.

Spinning is a hobby for me, but the production of clothing is hard, poorly-paid work for many people around the world. We just need to check the labels on the clothes we're wearing. I'm wearing a cotton top made in India and a linen shirt and polyester skirt made in China. I try

Shanti Mathias was runner up in the "Junior Feature Writer of the Year" category of the 2023 Voyager Media Awards for her journalism in *The Spinoff*.



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Reviews

Histories of Hate: The Radical Right in Aotearoa New Zealand

Edited by Matthew Cunningham, Marinus La Rooij & Paul Spoonley

Published by University of Otago Press, 2023. (NZD 50)

Reviewed by Richard Wild

In a world of increasing polarisation and intolerance, *Histories of Hate* outlines in a series of essays how the “radical right” has evolved in New Zealand up until the present day. The authors explain how early themes of mono-culturalism, intolerance and racism increasingly transformed into a fear of communism after 1917.

Since WWII many of these previously mainstream ideas have become “fringe”, but Cold War angst masked a surprising amount of Neo-Nazi and White Supremacist activity. In more recent decades Islamophobia was a key preoccupation for many New Zealanders, but the

Christchurch terror attack considerably changed this motif. It also brought into sharp focus the role of the internet in disseminating various far-right doctrines, and radicalising those who felt marginalised.

While current New Zealanders of the “radical right” present a far more complex and nuanced face to public scrutiny, a consistent trope has been the blaming of “them”, or the “significant other” for personal problems. This modern-day scapegoating echoes 19th-century colonial racism. Editors Marinus La Rooij, Matthew Cunningham and Paul Spoonley have provided a comprehensive and chilling analysis of right-wing extremism. *Histories of Hate* is essential but confronting reading for all New Zealanders wishing to be properly informed. ★



The Forgotten Prophet: Tāmāti Te Ito and His Kaingārara Movement

By Jeffrey Sissons

Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2023. (NZD 50)

Reviewed by Makareta Tawaroa

The Forgotten Prophet is set against a Christian Pākehā settler history in Taranaki during the late 1850s–1880s, a tumultuous time in the history of our country and where we see colonisation at its worst.

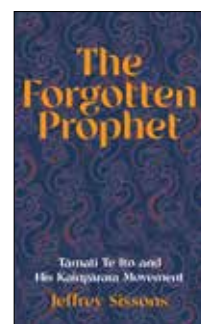
I am not surprised that Tamati Te Ito Ngāmoke, a prophet of Taranaki known as Ngarara, the reptile eater, and founder of the Kaingārara movement, is not well-known. He destroyed so much good in Māori culture within Taranaki. He burned treasures, carvings and other tapu objects associated with atua or the ancestral spirits on

huge bonfires in cleansing ceremonies. And he cleared lands that he thought had dangerous influences.

One of the destructive effects of colonisation is to cause Māori to lose cultural reference points and so begin the breakdown of traditional Māori ways of life, beliefs, social structures and systems of discipline and justice.

Tamati Te Ito destroyed many objects we would consider important taonga. It is understandable that he is forgotten, save by his own people. Perhaps some stories need to be kept hidden.

That being said, those interested in Taranaki colonial history will find *The Forgotten Prophet* an illuminating read. ★



Glimpse

By Jane Higgins

Published by Text Publishing, 2023. (NZD 24)

Reviewed by Shar Mathias

The novel *Glimpse* follows Jonah, a teenager living in the D-Zone, an area severely damaged in the first of many earthquakes and populated largely by paperless immigrants. People in the slum-like D-Zone live on the edge. Jonah can “glimpse” earthquakes before they arrive. A malicious cult moves into the area and a TV show begins to interview glimpsers. Tensions rise as the seventh anniversary of the quakes approaches.

Glimpse was inspired by the author’s experiences of Ōtautahi’s earthquakes. Higgins includes real issues—the difficulties faced by immigrants without citizenship,

inequality between the D-Zone and wealthier suburbs, the insidious messaging of a cult, and how large media companies influence their audience — all within a novel that is gripping and well-written for the teens who are its intended readers.

At times it felt like there were too many thematic elements. With a fast-paced plot and lots of drama, the relationships between characters and their backgrounds tended to be more “telling” than “showing”. But there were moments when I was so hooked I kept going to finish a chapter. *Glimpse* will appeal to young people and discusses some important issues. It could make a great Christmas gift! ★



Reviews



Uproar

Directed by Hamish Bennett and Paul Middleditch

Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

11 August 1981. The Springboks were in Dunedin to play Otago at Carisbrook. I was one of over 1,000 protesters moving up the Southern Motorway to the ground, where the police had assured us we could yell our slogans from a position overlooking the hallowed turf. However, the Blue Squad cut us off near the top of the rise, forming a line with visors down and batons thrust forward, eyes focused on infinity. Our response was to wheel in front of them in a vast, silent arc and head back down the hill.

In *Uproar*, which is set in Dunedin during the Springbok tour, this event takes place in the heart of the city amid violence and confusion. *Uproar* is a genial, knowing comedy-drama of the kind that has become a hallmark of New Zealand cinema. No one is pretending this is a documentary, so what's a little artistic licence among friends?

If the action is focused on the tour, then the unprepossessing figure of Josh Waaka (Julian Dennison) stands squarely at its heart, with a large cast orbiting around him. *Uproar* is in many ways a classic coming-of-age movie that, without too much seriousness, ushers us into the world of an overweight, unconfident Māori boy who seems unable to fit in anywhere.

Son of a struggling solo mother (Minnie Driver), Josh is doing it hard on the streets of Dunedin, delivering pamphlets in the suburbs with his Pākehā mum and a Samoan friend. His taciturn, sporty brother draws him into the St Gilbert's First XV rugby team, where he feels anything but comfortable, especially given the school's militant pro-tour ethos. As a counterweight to rugby, Brother Madigan, St Gilbert's quirky drama teacher (Rhys Darby), spots Josh's acting potential and encourages him to prepare some audition pieces for the national drama school. Meanwhile, anti-tour protests are hotting up, making Josh aware of his Māori heritage and straining his allegiances.

There may be too much going on in *Uproar*, but the comedy-drama genre is capacious enough for the various plots, themes and characters to fit together reasonably comfortably. Indeed, the point of the film is that, given a catalyst like the tour, these elements will inevitably collide, revealing the weak spots and enduring tensions, not only within Josh, but in the wider society.

Always entertaining, *Uproar* also aspires to be a film about courage, passion and identity, summed up in Josh's rendition of *Foreskin's* classic chant, "Whadarya?" ★



Fear: New Zealand's Hostile Underworld of Extremists

By Byron C Clark

Published by HarperCollins, 2023
(NZD 40)

Reviewed by Peter Slocum

After his landslide defeat in the 1984 NZ General Election (and how appropriate is that "Orwellian" date!) ex-Prime Minister Robert Muldoon (who some commentators have suggested was inspirational in launching the political leadership careers of Sergio Berlusconi and Donald Trump) engaged in some alternative theatrical pursuits. His opening line as the narrator in *The Rocky Horror Show* was: "I would like, if I may, to take you on a strange journey." This might well have been the opening line of Byron Clark's *Fear: New Zealand's Hostile Underworld of Extremists*.

Be warned, this is neither an easy nor savoury read: However if, like me, you comfortably float around in the relative safety of the social, political, religious, gender, racial, "whatever" middle ground, then you will be drawn into an informative (and possibly a better) understanding of the "rabbit holes" of white supremacy, Islamophobia, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, vaccine and climate change denial.

Byron Clark exposes what perhaps should be "feared" about the "alt-right" – however, he is largely silent as to what the "alt-right" fears most. For this Muldoon-era survivor, I'm not inclined to be fearful – however thanks to Clark, I am somewhat better forewarned. ★



Cross Currents

by Jane Higgins

LOOKING BACK OVER 2023, I notice that one of the threads of these columns has been the well-being of our tamariki, our children. So many of the challenges facing us have profound implications for them. Some of these challenges should be simple to address, such as making room for cycleways so that children can bike safely to school. Others are complex but urgent, such as child poverty with its devastating life-long effects. And one is existential: the climate emergency.

It seems clear that we aren't doing well by our tamariki. The electorate has chosen a right-wing government whose policies double down on refusal to address these challenges. Child poverty will increase as benefits fall behind. Building more roads will not only worsen air pollution, harming the health of the unborn and infants, but will also deny children the chance to move about safely unless in the cocoon of a parental vehicle. And, perhaps most punishing of all, denial and delay over the climate emergency will profoundly damage the futures of all our tamariki.

Children are also the casualties of on-going conflicts in Ukraine, in Israel/Palestine and in many other, often overlooked, wars around the world.

So much has been said about the conflict in Israel/Palestine since Hamas launched its terrible attack. No one is better placed to speak on this than two fathers, one Israeli, one Palestinian, who both lost daughters to the violence of this conflict, one in 1997, one in 2007. Smadar Elhanan was 14 when she was killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber. She'd been out shopping with friends. Abir Aramin was 10 when she was killed, shot by an Israeli border police officer as she went to buy sweets.

The story, and deep wisdom, of Rami Elhanan and Bassam Aramin, is powerfully told in Colum McCann's 2020 book, *Apeirogon*. In May this year, both men were in Australia to speak about peacebuilding. And on 30 October ABC Radio spoke to them again to ask them about the current explosion of violence. It's an interview worth hearing. (Find it on the ABC RN Breakfast programme online). Here is a little of what they said (in their words):

"Because we love our kids, we need to protect them. We need to stop taking revenge. We have the right to live in peace and security. The one common enemy is the Occupation. If there is no Occupation, there is no reason for Hamas. We are not only calling for the ceasefire now, we are calling to start a political process to end the Occupation and start a reconciliation process between our people... We need to understand that killing anyone will not bring our daughters back, and causing pain to someone will not ease our pain... You don't do self-defence by killing little children. There is a long line of dead bodies of little children, Israelis and Palestinians, and the violence brings more violence, it solves nothing. We need to stop it. We need to sit down and talk to each other."

Entering Advent we await the birth of a child. This Jewish child, who had to flee the violence of adult greed when just a few days old, calls us to determined action and, hard though it seems right now, to hope. ✧



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

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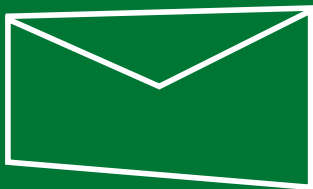


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Letters to the Editor



We welcome letters of comment, discussion, response, affirmation or argument in the spirit of the magazine of up to 200 words. Opinions in letters are not necessarily those of the Magazine.

WAR MUST STOP

Israeli journalists Amira Hass and Gideon Levy, Israeli academics Jeff Halper and Ilan Pappé, Israeli human rights NGO Bat Shalom and Americans of Jewish Voice for Peace, are just a few examples of the many, many Jewish people who openly oppose oppression of the Palestinians. Yet time is running out. The current Israeli regime is the most openly brutal ever. Pogroms by heavily-armed religious fanatic Zionists are being carried out in the West Bank. Netanyahu's "War on Gaza" is genocidal.

It must be condemned and stopped immediately. The people we should admire are those who have empathy for all — all of their fellow human beings. That's what it means to be human. ✦

Lois Griffiths, Christchurch/Ōtautahi

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE YOUNG

There is a barely audible, ever present, low-toned moaning of grief in my parish. "Where are our youth?" We are dying without them. This leads to a flurry of surveys and ineffective "same old" type actions. In the wider Church Francis has instigated a synod. I wait in hope for wisdom from meetings held at that level. Then I read Shar Mathias's "Darkness, Bats and Presence" (TM Nov 2023). I look to the bare ingredients contained in the story and find parallels that would have the wisdom of John of the Cross and his poems proclaiming the "lucky dark" jump off the page at me. I say to the author: "There is much more to come." And if I was John of the Cross, I think I would manage a cartwheel! ✦

David McCann, Feilding/Aorangi

Reviews

Teilhard de Chardin: A Book of Hours

Edited by Kathleen Deignan and Libby Osgood

Published by Orbis Books, 2023 (USD 18.75)

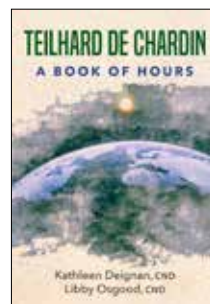
Reviewed by Peter Healy

In the introduction to *Teilhard de Chardin*, editor Kathleen Deignan says: "What you hold in your hand is a devotional companion for postmodern contemplatives created from the inspired cosmopoetics of one of the great visionaries of our planet, the Jesuit priest-scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin." It is a breviary "for those who love the world".

The book is designed according to the traditional monastic hours of the day: "Dawn", "Day", "Dusk" and "Dark" for the seven days of the week. The editors have

added an eighth day called "Tomorrow Toward Omega". Each hour gives a selection of Teilhardian gems from his many books and essays. The references for Teilhard's writing in each prayer, reflection and reading are at the back of the book.

This *Book of Hours* is a treasure-trove of Teilhard's writings. If you are looking for a way of praying that offers a unique spiritual vision, then this breviary is for you. I have been using it for personal prayer for the last month and find it to be a cosmopoetic devotional companion for our time. ★



Anti-Asian Racism: Myths, Stereotypes, and Catholic Social Teaching

By Joseph Cheah

Published by Orbis Books, 2023. (USD 26)

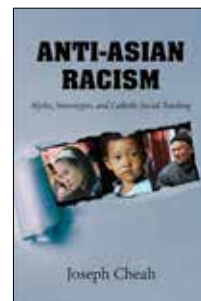
Reviewed by Tui H L Cadigan

Anti-Asian Racism is very timely because it speaks to the historic and current reality of Asian American and Pacific Island experience. It also resonates with tensions among some New Zealanders and migrant peoples who have settled here.

Writing from a Catholic perspective, Joseph Cheah considers the experience of being Asian American and the dynamic between Asians, African Americans and those he terms "whites", particularly Irish Catholics. He explains terms such as "perpetual foreigners", "yellow peril", "white privilege"

and "racism as powerless defence" — terms which are also relevant to Aotearoa. Cheah challenges readers, especially Catholic readers, to think critically about how we engage in right relationships in our society.

I found *Anti-Asian Racism* very informative. This small book is a necessary read for politicians, Catholics, Asians, Pacific Islanders and those who equate being white with superiority. With relationships on all levels in Aotearoa descending into violence and intolerance, the insights articulated by Cheah are a call to all age groups to embrace relationships in Aotearoa in line with Catholic Social Teaching and the example of Jesus. ★



For What It's Worth



ROUND AND ROUND in a tumble dryer or going through the wringer — both metaphors are pretty apt for the month I've just had. Three big events collided in a very untidy fashion. Two of them were anticipated, one welcome, two not.

And the thing is when you're in the middle of the maelstrom, there's nothing for it but to soldier on. Or as Winston Churchill put it more eloquently, when you're going through hell, keep going.

The first took me back to my old stamping ground, but this time I was in the public gallery of the Court watching the man in the dock who was about to be sentenced for our daughter Polly's death. It had been a long time coming, five years to the day, so I'd had plenty of time to reflect on concepts of justice, mercy and revenge. In the end, and knowing he was likely to get a home detention sentence, I settled for the sad reality of "that's the law". But the sense of loss and the absence of Mike made the day a hard one. I fought the pointlessness of Polly's death with the knowledge that somehow, in a way I don't understand, God holds us all with a love so much deeper and vaster than I could ever contemplate. And sometimes, that's enough.

The second event was the most welcome writers' retreat we hold annually in our small village. Thirty-one writers come from all over the country to experience the landscape, the ever-changing light and the conviviality of mixing with other creatives. We seven trustees conduct workshops, meet with writers individually, hold dinners and bring in two nationally-known speakers to inspire and encourage. It was a busy week this year, the best so far, until Covid gate-crashed the party on the fifth day. All told, 21 of the retreatants caught Covid, along with another nine in the village. Some went home immediately, others braved

it out with distancing and masks. But I couldn't help feeling an awful sense of disappointment at the anticlimax of the ending — no group photos, no "one last coffee", no hugs. No final party where skits and songs and dancing reigned as in past years.

And of course the third event for me was Covid. In a mysterious twist, I got it not once but twice, or maybe it was another virus, or maybe the negative was really positive or vice versa. Why knows? It laid me low — I do know that — and my energy levels are slow to return to normal.

Maybe this month will be calmer. Maybe I'll make some sense of the tumult. Maybe not. But it's life isn't it? Sometimes it hurls us around and then spits us out. And we stagger to get our balance again, a little wobbly but still upright. ♦

Photo by Sarah Kilian on Unsplash

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Our last word

Like a beam piercing clouds
may the light of Christmas
spark joy within us
and the flame of peace.



From the *Tui Motu* Team