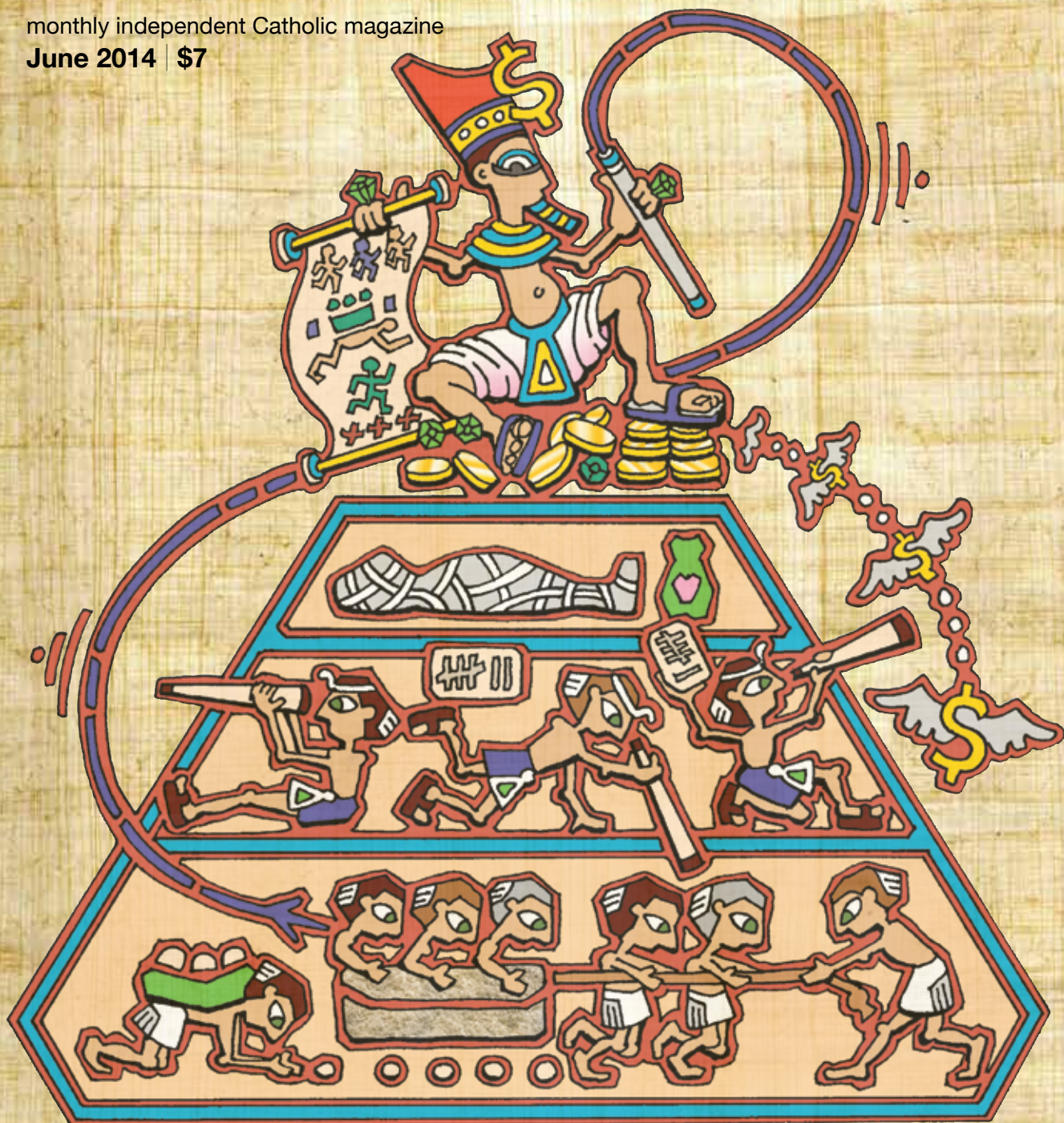


# Tui Motu

InterIslands

monthly independent Catholic magazine

June 2014 | \$7



*Our Unequal World*



# iniquitas radix malorum

Tweets cause such a flutter. Following his predecessor's example, Pope Francis recently sent a three word Latin tweet: *Iniquitas radix malorum* [Inequality is the root of social evil]. This created a squawk of protest. "How dare the Pope enter the sacred temple of economics!" "He has no right to trespass on our patch!" "Pope Francis could have had no input directly into his twitter account," it was speculated, and therefore his words can be discounted. Well, not so fast. This three word Latin arrow points directly to Jesus and his gospel values in *Evangelii gaudium*:

"As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world's problems or, for that matter, to any problems. Inequality is the root of social ills." (no 202)

Our first three articles deal with questions of economics, and inequality in particular. Paul Dalziel asks

how is it that New Zealand could have moved from 1984 when the question of child poverty was not on the radar to the present time where one in six children goes without bare essentials? An extraordinary shift within one generation! The answer: social and economic policy have been separated. Paul illustrates that through deliberate economic management, successive governments have created a low wage economy where parents are trapped into jobs that do not pay sufficient to give children what they need. "Social policy is too weak to fix this fundamental problem in economic policy". Further, "The only way to fix this is by a change in economic policy (not social policy) to create better opportunities and social justice."

Max Rashbrooke shows us that inequality in New Zealand has increased massively over the last 30 years (the same period Paul uses) when incomes of the richest 10 percent have doubled while barely increasing at the lower end. Moreover he points out that wealth in NZ is far more unequally distributed than income. This drives the inequalities in income. To address this, and quoting

a recent author Thomas Piketty, he asks should NZ join other countries in pushing for a global tax on wealth? This is a prophetic idea. However, a capital gains tax which would target the 1 percent of our country which holds 16 percent of our assets (while the bottom 50 percent owns just 5 percent) could raise funds for direct use with low income families in building up their asset base. These two experts give us a bundle of quiz questions for politicians and candidates of every stripe.

Enjoy, too, Jim Neilan's taking a telescope to the workings of the GCSB and what it means for our freedoms as individuals. And agree or disagree with the action of the Waihopai Three, Adi Leason in hindsight comes across as a man of integrity whose love of the gospel is self-evident. Finally, another Waihopian, Father Peter Murnane, reflects upon the spirituality of resistance to the Empire — fiery stuff.

Along with some great columns, enjoy our centrespread and Joan Chittister's fine rethinking for today of an old question "Who is God?". Fine meat for a month! **KT**

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Cover illustration: Donald Moorhead.

# from the chair

What would it take to bring out over a hundred Aucklanders on a wet Friday night in early May? The correct answer is an evening for *Tui Motu* friends, subscribers and contributors, as well as the *Tui Motu* Board members. And they were all richly rewarded. Professor Kevin Clements of the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies of the University of Otago soon had the whole hall buzzing as we reflected on the roles played by Truth, Justice, Mercy and Peace in achieving a place for Reconciliation in conflicts. It was a stimulating, challenging but also reflective process, which engaged every participant.

The evening also provided for the Board and Editor excellent feedback from readers of the magazine. The subscribers spoke of material they particularly appreciated, the appearance and layout of the magazine, and ideas for topics in future issues.

Although few were able to suggest ways of promoting *Tui Motu* in the Auckland region, three people came forward offering to sell on a monthly basis in three Auckland parishes. This is great news. Experience shows that someone with passion for *Tui Motu* and the perseverance to 'front up' once a month to sell, can make a



Professor Kevin Clements answering questions at the subscribers' evening in Auckland  
[Photo courtesy: Sr Jacqui Ryan OP]

significant contribution to the spread of the magazine to new readers. The *Tui Motu* office will supply guidelines and the magazines. But the passion and perseverance come from generous people in parishes throughout the country. Perhaps you, on reading this, might consider taking on the task in your parish? We'd love to hear from you.

The Board AGM was held the following day, with annual reports received and discussed and future plans developed. Chief among the

plans at present is the recruitment of a new editor to lead the magazine forward when Kevin Toomey completes his five-year term in December 2014. (See the advertisement on page 32 of this issue.)

Overall, *Tui Motu* is in good heart, grateful for loyal and enthusiastic readers such as those who came out on that wet Friday night in Auckland.

**Philip Casey**  
Chair *Tui Motu* Board



**Tui Motu**  
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*Tui Motu – InterIslands* is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed.

The name *Tui Motu* was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

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## on cloud nine

Like Robert Consedine (*TM*, May 2014) I too came away from the lectures by the Franciscan theologian, Sr. Ilia Delio, “spiritually on cloud nine”. Here is a faith-filled woman with a well-reasoned account of the *ex nihilo* creation of the universe in the light of current scientific understanding and from a Catholic perspective.

Sr Ilia’s message is that science and theology must collude, not collide. Her own impressive scientific background leaves her in no doubt that the universe is 13.8 billion years old (not the 10,000 year time-frame that biblical literalists would have us believe) but that this evolutionary time-scale poses a challenge to modern day theologians. Some, like the Jesuit Jack Mahoney *Christianity in Evolution* have risen to the challenge but, to quote the Passionist Thomas Berry interpreting the Genesis accounts of creation, we are maybe “between stories”.

My grandchildren will take what is for me the “new” cosmology as gospel. They need to hear the Christ story in the language of the 21st century, not the medieval refrains of yesteryear. If the likes of Sr Ilia Delio are listened to then, to use Sr Pauline O’Regan’s line, “There is hope for a tree”.

John Walsh, *Christchurch*

## self-fulfilling prophecy?

I am in several minds about the canonization of two VERY recent Popes. Actually I’m in several minds about the canonization of Popes at all as it seems akin to bestowing “honours” on essentially self-serving politicians. I think what riles me most is the business about “miracles” — as Sir Robert (Bob) Jones attests in a recent NZH column, such tests surely serve only to provide ridicule fodder to the enemies of both the Church and its founder.

I’m not suggesting that “miracles” (or whatever) do not happen; but surely “sainthood” should measure:

## letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not changing the meaning.

We do not publish anonymous letters otherwise than in exceptional circumstances. Response articles (up to a page) are welcome — but please, by negotiation.

to what extent an individual was Christ-like in his/her outlook and actions? To have as a critical measure of “sainthood” the replication of some of the extraordinary actions of Jesus (he was/is God after all!) surely gives rise in the minds of vulnerable men and women the need to predicate a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Peter Slocum, *Auckland*

## an open letter to hans kung

Dear Brother in Christ,

The third and final volume of your memoir in German is now published. The English translation is not yet available, so I am relying on secondary sources. The report that you consider hastening your death has evoked concern and introspection in me — hence this letter.

Most of your adult life you have been an academic theologian. You have influenced the world tremendously through your writing. So it seems to you only logical that if you are not able to write any more the purpose of your life is completed and you would want to bring your life to its conclusion by means of assisted suicide. Although I can understand the line of thought underlying your reasoning, this raises for me some fundamental questions.

My queries are mostly about the nature of the human person. Are we on firm ground when we reason that fulfilling a particular charism is what

we are here for? In your case you have done your utmost to bring to fruition your theological charism. My question is, is that the whole of you? How can you or anyone reduce the totality of you to academic theology alone? In my view, the final stage in the life of a human person is full of possibilities. As temporal existence is drawing to a close and human beings are going through the process of dying unhindered, they may be able to discover aspects of themselves they have not been able to recognise before. They enter the limitlessness of the mystery they are and grasp the wonder of their being. It will be a tragic waste of the deeply hidden potential inherent in us if we prematurely curtail the fullness of the process of dying.

Furthermore, who is the subject that makes the decision for euthanasia? Do we have the “authority” to treat the failing physical aspect of us as an object? When functionality is diminished, does our embodiment become worthless? I

have noticed that the fading physical dimension of our being can heighten and bring to conscious mind the depth of our being. This is simply the shifting of background and foreground and the interplay of the multi-dimensional life we are called to live.

The other question I have is about control or the limit to control. Do we need to exert total control over life and death? I see a richer alternative. We have the capacity simply to say “yes” to life’s honest offering, even if it is Parkinson’s disease or blindness. To me, the invitation is to an unconditional trust; the greater the disability, the more profound can be the trust in the goodness of the One who called us into existence. Then finally when the last breath is drawn, your life’s ending can become an essential part of the Christ-event. That is my heartfelt wish for you! It certainly will be an appropriate climax of a life that has been so immensely blessed!

Laetitia Puthenpadath, *Auckland*

# modern slavery

## *The call for global solidarity*

Katrina Brill

Pope Francis, speaking recently to a group of diplomats, called for more co-operation, and effective strategies to facilitate “adequate legislative measures in countries of origin, transit, and destination” which could help reduce trafficking of people in what is being called “modern slavery”. It is a call for us to work together in solidarity to uphold the dignity of vulnerable people trapped in “slavery” everywhere.

Last month, when 234 kidnapped Nigerian Muslim and Christian schoolgirls made headlines everywhere something moved in the “global heart” of the world. One *Guardian* report stated that Yakubu Ubalala, whose two daughters kidnapped from school by Boko Haram militants, cried out that “the abduction of our children and the news of them being (forcibly) married off is like hearing of the return of the slave trade”.

Reports keep coming that families have tried everything from confronting the militants in the Sambisa Forest to protesting the slowness of President Goodluck Jonathan’s Government to take action. TV reports show the girls’ parents on the edge of despair, leaving us feeling like helpless onlookers.

Often the media is accused by the cynics and critics of sensationalising incidents or “getting mileage” out of a tragedy or having a particular bias. Seemingly Boko Haram has made earlier attacks on schools that promote Western secular education, with several thousand people killed and schools burnt. There was, at least in New Zealand, no notable international media coverage of these incidents.

The driving motive for giving Nigeria support from Britain, US, France, China, Israel and others is

probably unclear, complex and full of paradoxes. But at least people have responded and co-operated with the Nigerian government to provide considerable practical help. They have been “touched” to the core of their being to do the more noble thing. A movement of global solidarity has developed seeking to locate the girls and return them to their families. Here in New Zealand many, including school communities, are joining these protests.

### **slavery in aotearoa nz**

Maybe this is a window of opportunity for New Zealanders to grow in awareness of the more subtle, hidden ways that people and especially young girls are “trapped in slavery” here in New Zealand.

While NZ is not a major destination for trafficking, subtle forms of slavery are occurring. Such things as forced marriages, underage street prostitution, women being trafficked into (legal) brothels and the exploitation of foreign workers particularly on some foreign-chartered fishing vessels are surfacing.

**Forced Marriages:** These are also happening here in NZ. At the 2013 *Prevent People Trafficking* Conference in Auckland, Farida Sultana spoke of a group called Shakti which works to promote awareness of forced marriages and pushes for dialogue that will hopefully lead to legislative change in NZ. At present this country does not have culturally competent interventions offering protection against forced marriage.

**Forced Prostitution:** A survey done by the NZ Prostitutes Collective shows that 5 percent of migrant women who had been trafficked into legal brothels here had no access to their passports. This is evidence of coercion leaving these women with the capacity for very few choices.

**Underage Street Prostitution:** Last year a Maori warden reported that girls as young as 13 were prostituting themselves on Hunters Corner in Papatoetoe. The local community brought this awareness to the local council, who are seemingly finding it a complex issue because of the Prostitution Reform Act 2003.

**Forced Labour:** Dr Christina Stringer of Auckland University researched labour and human rights abuses aboard foreign charter vessels fishing in New Zealand’s waters. Using ILO indicators of forced labour as a framework, significant discussion was had with the NZ Ministry of Fisheries. This helped the Minister of Immigration, Michael Woodhouse, introduce legislation last year that will penalise employers who exploit migrant workers.

### **what can a person do?**

- Continue to join with others in a solidarity movement to return the Nigerian girls to their families ([www.walkfree.org/nigeria-schoolgirls](http://www.walkfree.org/nigeria-schoolgirls));
- Look at web sites connected with *ECPAT* (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking); the Salvation Army, and *STOP THE TRAFFIK Aotearoa*.
- For teachers and Boards of Trustees, download the resources from The Prescha Charitable Trust, Waikato, which provide excellent information for schools.

Cardinal Nicholls, Archbishop of Westminster, interviewed on Vatican Radio about the recent London Conference against trafficking, enumerated four stages in tackling this modern slavery. They are: “... being aware, being committed, being compassionate and being co-operative.” ■

*Katrina Brill is a Sister of St Joseph and a member of ANZRATH (Aotearoa NZ Religious Against Human Trafficking)*



# gross inequality costs everyone

*The writer looks at both New Zealand and overseas with particular reference to an Oxfam challenge to the World Economic Forum. This leaves us to ponder seven challenges to us and to government.*



This article is part of the GOSPEL MANIFESTO 2014 (see *Tui Motu*, March 2014)

Rodney Routledge

The Gospels make it abundantly clear that Jesus repeatedly had harsh things to say about those who acquired great wealth, especially at the expense of the least well off. Ignorance, turning a blind eye by the wealthy to the desperate plight of the poor was not an acceptable excuse for Jesus either.

At best careful, prudent, responsible stewardship of one's gifted wealth was paramount for Jesus. Worse, he made it clear that accumulated wealth was a real stumbling block for those seeking to join him in bringing in the Kingdom of God. In short they were better off without it!

And this same locked-in, structural inequality strikes at the very core of the social well-being of societies today. It rips out their economic heart by continuing a massive concentration of resources in the hands of fewer people, presenting a major threat to inclusive and just political and economic systems.

A recent Oxfam report reinforces this damaging development, noting that a mere "eighty-five people control the same amount of wealth as half the world's population. That is 85 people compared with 3.5 billion".

Worse still it appears to be totally beyond the capacity of the world's richest nations "to try to stem the tide of rising inequality.



The have-nots and the have-yachts

The report says that seven out of ten people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in thirty years."

And New Zealand is one of these countries where wealthy elites have co-opted political power to rig the values of the economic game, undermining democracy and entrenching growing inequality.

As Max Rushbrooke succinctly notes

- "New Zealand now has the widest income gaps since detailed records began in the early 1980s.
- From the mid 1980s to the mid 2000s, the gap between the rich and the rest has widened faster

in New Zealand than in any other developed country.

- The average household in the top 10 percent of New Zealand has nine times the income of one in the bottom 10 percent.
- The top 1 percent of adults own 16 percent of the country's total wealth, while the bottom half put together have just over 5 percent".

The most damning aspect of our national social, economic and political crisis is that New Zealand children are more likely to be poor, feel unsafe and unwell, than children in most other developed countries. Added to this is the "shocking statistic for New Zealand ... the

disproportionate number of Maori and Pacific people living below the poverty line.”

Sadly New Zealand will remain grid-locked into this growing grave, extraordinary economic disparity simply because it is not in the interests of the elite powerful few to address the unjust gross economic inequality that locks in and perpetuates their many privileged advantages. In fact, they continue to exacerbate it, for example by seeking further to liberalise labour laws to the detriment of waged workers, and engaging in another round of “benefit bashing” by making it possible to prosecute partners of defrauding beneficiaries.

At a macro level this hyper-inequality is compounded by the irreversible trend in modern capitalism to create job-less growth by investing in capital for super efficient technology to make waged workers redundant, further concentrating accrued wealth into fewer and fewer hands. And all underpinned by rules rigged through financial deregulation, unregulated monopolies, tax evasion and excessive chief executive salaries. Hence recent calls for international cooperation to ensure companies such as Google, Apple and Starbucks

start paying their fair share of taxes.

In spite of the entrenched nature of this gross inequality we don’t have to accept that this is simply the way the system should work. A Christian response requires action at a number of levels, beginning with ourselves and examining our own particular life styles, priorities and commitments; then lobbying our national church leaders to follow the lead of Pope Francis in spelling out and actively seeking to address gross inequality in its many forms.

We could also respond to the Oxfam Report’s challenge to those gathered at Davos for the World Economic Forum, who have the power to turn around the rapid increase in inequality. “Oxfam is calling them to pledge that they will

- Not dodge taxes in their own countries or in countries where they invest and operate, by using tax havens;
- Not use their economic wealth to seek political favours that undermine the democratic will of their fellow citizens;
- Make public all the investments in companies and trusts for which they are the ultimate beneficial owners;

- Support progressive taxation on wealth and income;
- Challenge governments to use their tax revenue to provide universal healthcare, education and social protection for citizens;
- Demand a living wage in all the companies they own or control
- Challenge other economic elites to join them in these pledges.”

As noted above, gross inequality was rampant in Jesus’ time, rigidly satisfying the society of his day. Jesus did not shirk from challenging those who created it and the cancerous impact it was having on society.

Two thousand years later in a different time and context corrosive, gross inequality is increasing social tensions and increasing the risk of social breakdown. May we, who profess to be part of a Christian church, walk in the footsteps of Jesus in an uncompromising response to the socially crippling challenge of inequality, which costs everyone, especially those on the lowest incomes. ■

*Rodney Routledge is a Minister, Community Development Worker and former Lecturer in Social Work at Canterbury University.*

## The return of Christ to Futuna Chapel

The combined height of three plain-clothed policemen, or the length, unfurled, of an orange shawl — how else to measure the returning bird-man, the weight of him free-standing or afloat, lifted from a white unmarked van. Flesh of the wooden sea-swallow, sap of his veins, unwound from a rain-drenched blanket and restored in grey wall-space, partitioned light so it must be, in good time, the tree god is reclaimed by the ordinary forest, the storm petrel returned to the storm.

— Greg O’Brien



# well-being economics

*What have we achieved in 30 years of Rogernomics? What other ways are there to express more clearly the value of the human and the well-being of all our citizens? The author proposes another way of looking at this question.*



Paul Dalziel

July 14 is the thirtieth anniversary of the 1984 snap election that saw the end of Sir Robert Muldoon's autocratic approach to economic policy and launched what became known as Rogernomics. 2014 is another election year, and so it is timely to think about what has been achieved over the last three decades and about the values we share for opportunity and social justice in New Zealand.

## cardinal williams' message

Many of the economic reforms implemented after 1984 were controversial at the time. I well remember the 1990 Christmas message of Cardinal Tom Williams, who commented in the following terms on the deep cuts in social security that had been announced by the government:

"Irrespective of the country's financial straits, those elected to serve in government lose compassion and humanity when they make the vulnerable even more vulnerable, the least powerful even more powerless. Seeking to put right problems facing the country by plundering the poor while leaving the higher paid unscathed is folly comparable to the death wish of modern warfare."

Cardinal Williams drew on decades of rich Catholic social teaching when he made those comments. That tradition judges a country's policies by their impact on the vulnerable and powerless, and insists that compassion and humanity must persevere even in difficult times.

After the 2008 global financial crisis wreaked havoc all around the world, we are again living in

difficult times. Policy responses in New Zealand have included lower income taxes, a higher rate for GST, and further cutbacks in our social security system. As in 1990, the bulk of the burden is being carried by the vulnerable and poor.

## how to evaluate management

There are many ways we can evaluate New Zealand's approach to economic management since 1984. There is no question, for example, that people with good education and good incomes have much wider choices and greater economic freedoms than before. But what has been the impact on the vulnerable and powerless?

In September 1984, at the beginning of the reforms, the government hosted an Economic Summit Conference to take a hard look at the country's economic and social problems. Speakers talked about rising unemployment and social exclusion; notably, however, child poverty was not an issue. In contrast, a recent report produced by a research team at the University of Otago included the following summary facts:

"The 2013 Monitor shows that one in four Kiwi kids are growing up in income poverty and one in six are going without the basic essentials like fresh fruit and vegetables, a warm house, decent shoes and visits to the doctor. Ten percent of children are at the hardest end of poverty and three out of five kids living in poverty will live this way for much of their childhood."

How have we moved from a position in which child poverty was



Paul Dalziel

not an issue to the current situation where one in six children are going without bare essentials? How could this have happened in New Zealand in one generation?

## a separation made

An important part of the answer is the way in which economic policy is now separated from social policy.

When we think about economic policy, for example, we adopt phrases such as "building a productive and competitive economy" (to quote the recent Budget). Economic policy is designed to achieve goals such as export-led growth, regardless of whether the jobs created by this approach are well paid.

Support for children and families is then considered under a separate heading such as "delivering better public services" (again quoting the Budget). Even when these discussions do focus on individual or community wellbeing, they are often framed by



the priority given to economic policy objectives such as announced commitments to lower tax rates.

As a result, we fail to think about how our economy can be managed so that more people are able to earn good incomes to expand their own wellbeing. This is a critical failure because the economic system is much more powerful than social policy. A social security safety net may prevent extreme poverty, for example, but it cannot fill the gap created when new jobs in an economy are low skilled and low paid.

### **an acceptable family life**

The typical level of income needed to live a socially acceptable family life is called the country's living wage. The Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit has estimated that the New Zealand value is about \$18.50 an hour. Last year, the Treasury analysed Household Economic Survey data to reveal the following features of wages in New Zealand:

Over half of the sole parents with dependents who are working have wage rates below the Living Wage, and most of these earn less than \$15 per hour. In 25 percent of households with two adults and dependents, the principal earner of the household is on a wage rate below the Living Wage. This earner may also have income from other sources, but generally the partner and dependents will have an even lower wage rate if they are earning wages or a salary.

These figures represent very high proportions of adults with dependent children. They indicate that economic management in New Zealand is creating a low wage economy, in which large numbers of parents are trapped in jobs that do not pay them enough to give their children what they need. Social policy is too weak to fix this fundamental problem in economic policy.

This observation does not mean we should raise the statutory minimum wage to \$18.50. The minimum wage sets a floor for the earnings of any worker, including young people in their first job. As workers gain qualifications and experience, however, they should be able to expect their pay will rise so that they can earn a living wage through their own efforts.

This expectation is currently not feasible for large numbers of New Zealanders. By definition, the inability of parents to earn a living wage

must give rise to child poverty and cause other damage to the quality of family lives. The only way to fix this is by a change in economic policy (not social policy) to create better opportunities and social justice.

In particular, we need a framework for economic management that directly promotes the capabilities of people to live the kinds of lives they value and have reason to value. I and others have argued that wellbeing economics provides such a framework.

Beginning with the basic principle that the purpose of economic activity is to promote the wellbeing of persons, this framework advocates cooperation among individual, communal and government activities for directly achieving that goal.

### **2014 election focus?**

Returning to Cardinal Tom Williams's Christmas message cited above, compassion and humanity mean that this year's election should focus on economic policies that will promote the wellbeing of the most vulnerable and powerless in our communities. A country blessed with our natural and human-made resources should not be experiencing such high levels of child poverty as have emerged under our approach to economic management over the last three decades. ■

*Paul Dalziel is Professor of Economics at Lincoln University.*

**Paul Dalziel and Professor Caroline Saunders have written a book to be published in July 2014 by Bridget Williams Books on the subject of "Well-being Economics".**



# from pickett to piketty

*The inequality debate steams on. A New Zealand expert on the subject talks not just about poverty and inequality, but about the nature of wealth and its uneven distribution both within our country and throughout the world*



Max Rashbrooke

**F**ive years ago, *The Spirit Level* landed like a bombshell. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett's book, which bore the subtitle "why equality is better for everyone", argued that society's biggest health and social problems — homicide, imprisonment, obesity, and so on — were largely caused by very wide income gaps. In more unequal societies, people trusted one another less and competed more, with terrible results for the social fabric.

## a hot topic still

Wilkinson and Pickett have just been back in New Zealand, giving lectures in Auckland and Dunedin and explaining how their work has stood the test of time. They know that in the five years since their work appeared, income inequality has become one of the hottest topics in politics and economics. They know too that there has been a gradual acceptance of one of their central points, which is that after countries have reached a certain level of wealth (a level that New Zealand has passed), they don't get any health and social benefits by trying to become wealthier still. They get those benefits only by reducing income gaps.

This, Wilkinson and Pickett argue, is a fundamental flaw in capitalism and its promise that greater economic growth will lead to a happier society. In recent months, another blockbuster book has been pointing out more very large flaws in the current system.

That book, which is having an impact equal to or perhaps even greater than that of *The Spirit Level*, is by a French economist, Thomas Piketty, and is entitled *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Its principal point is that, for decades now, we have thought far too little about wealth and the role that it plays in increasing income gaps.

## new data taken into account

Drawing on centuries of previously unseen data, Piketty argues that the normal state of capitalism is that people who have wealth can always make more money by investing it than the rest of us can hope to make in the ordinary way through wages and salaries. Investments tend to grow at 4-5 percent, salaries and wages at 1-2 percent. The period of much greater equality between the 1940s and the 1980s, which so many people look back on with great fondness, was the only time in recent history when that relationship was reversed and salaries grew faster than investments.

Piketty's arguments are so frightening, and have provoked such an extraordinary intellectual convulsion in just a few months, because they imply that we are rapidly heading back to the 19th century. At that time, wealth was extraordinarily concentrated among the top 1 percent; much of this wealth was inherited, and it earned its owners huge returns. The situation now is not quite that dire, but it is rapidly becoming so.

Piketty's conclusions are not inconsistent with those of *The Spirit Level*;

they simply take the debate on another step. We are right to be worried about inequality, he says, but we mustn't forget that much of it is driven by the way that wealth is distributed.

## info for election year

These two books have landed — or re-landed — in New Zealand in election year, and it will be interesting to see how politicians react to them. So far this year, there has been considerable debate about inequality, but much of it has gone no further than largely unproductive arguments about whether inequality is increasing right now. It probably is, though we don't have the data for the last couple of years that would prove that; but the real point is that inequality in New Zealand has increased massively in the last 30 years, which no one disputes. Incomes for people in the richest 1 percent (and indeed 10 percent) have doubled during that time, while barely increasing for those at the lower end.

When there has been more substantial debate about income inequality, it



Startling inequality in Brazil.



has tended to focus on policies for raising people at the lower end of incomes closer to the middle. Many of these arguments are seen through the prism of helping children. Hence you have Labour's Best Start policy, essentially a universal child payment of \$60 a year for children aged 0-3, plus expanding paid parental leave to 26 weeks.

Other arguments revolve around helping lower income families more generally. There is a lot of momentum behind the Living Wage campaign, which argues that the minimum wage of \$14.25 is not really enough for people to live with dignity and enjoy the fruits of the society that they have helped create. Instead they would need around \$18.80 an hour, based on calculations of the outgoings of typical families.

The Living Wage has already been adopted by the Wellington City Council and many private employers. The Warehouse has come up with its own version. Many more councils, including those in Christchurch and Auckland, are looking hard at the idea.

Piketty, however, would argue that these policies, even if valuable in their own right, are missing at least two crucial points. First, they don't do anything to address the inequalities of wealth that he believes are driving inequalities of income; and second, they don't have much to say about the 1 percent and the need to curb very high incomes when they are not justified by exceptional talent, hard work or contribution.

## wealth distribution

Wealth in New Zealand, as in other countries, is far more unequally distributed than income. The richest 1 percent of New Zealanders own 16 percent of all assets; in contrast, the entire lowest half of the country owns just 5 percent. Piketty would address this by arguing that New Zealand should join other countries in pushing for a global tax on wealth. This would be a tax on all kinds of assets, including investments, houses and land. It would be applied at low levels (in the order of 1-2 percent of the value of the assets), and it would be levied every year.

This is a utopian idea, as even Piketty has admitted, although Gareth Morgan has advocated something fairly similar for New Zealand. Those concerned about wealth inequality have mostly focused on the capital gains tax advocated by the Labour and Green parties, among others. Not only would this tax the income made from assets, it would also reduce the value of those assets. Funds raised by this tax could, conceivably, go into helping low-income families build up their own asset base.

The capital gains tax also targets the 1 percent, who probably benefit by far the most from selling assets such as houses. There are of course other ways to try to curb unjustified high incomes, such as increased personal taxes (Piketty says the evidence is that the top tax rate could be as high as 80 percent without damaging the economy), or

some form of action around pay ratios — the idea that the highest-paid person in a particular organisation should not earn more than, say, 10 times the lowest paid person.

Other ideas for reducing income inequality are unlikely to get much of an airing, in this election at least. Inheritance taxes have their supporters, but it is hard to discern much debate on the issue. There is undoubtedly a bigger groundswell of opinion behind an unconditional basic income; Morgan, again one of the main proponents, has suggested paying everyone in the country \$11,000 as of right. But no party has wholeheartedly embraced the idea, probably because of concerns around its cost (especially if paid at a more generous level) and whether it is compatible with a complex modern world in which different people have very different income needs.

## what now?

All of these ideas, of course, have pluses and minuses, and there may be good reasons to reject any one of them. But we can't deny the need to debate them. Thanks to both Pickett and Piketty, and countless others, there is very little doubt that inequality is one of the most pressing issues the world faces. How to address it is the next, and most important, question. ■

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# to spy or not to spy

*It is almost a year since a law was rushed through parliament, by a majority of one, making changes to the way in which surveillance can be carried out on New Zealand citizens. At the time, serious concerns were raised about aspects of this law. The author reminds us of these and asks whether in the run up to the election there are questions we should be asking our politicians about our right to privacy.*



Jim Neilan

“If you’ve done nothing wrong, you’ve got nothing to worry about.” These trite words have always annoyed me, but when I heard them delivered with a shrug and a grin by our Prime Minister to justify extending the power of the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) I felt much more than annoyance. Here was a Prime Minister implying that in the eyes of government an individual citizen’s right to privacy is not important.

The whole debate of privacy and surveillance has mushroomed over the past year or so with the revelations of the whistleblower Edward Snowden. What he revealed about the illegal and secretive operations of his employer, the American National Security Agency (NSA) had world-wide implications. We saw the anger of world leaders, when they

discovered how their privacy and that of their citizens had been invaded.

## a whistleblower’s right

Snowden is no angry leftie; he supports the need for national security and agrees that secrecy and surveillance are sometimes necessary. But when he heard the heads of the NSA lying to Congress, covering up the extent of surveillance on ordinary people, he decided to speak out, regardless of the consequences for himself. The dishonesty and corruption which Snowden exposed in the US system prompted enquiries in other countries.

In New Zealand we had our own revelations of privacy invasion. The most publicised was that around German-born NZ resident Kim Dotcom who had his home invaded and his records seized by armed police acting on behalf of the GCSB. It was

subsequently proven that raid was illegal. The head of the GCSB insisted that this was a one-off mistake, but a review of the Bureau conducted by the Cabinet Secretary, showed that it had unlawfully spied on up to 85 others, that there were many failures by staff, and that a number of important files had mysteriously gone missing.

Surely here was an opportunity to have a complete review of our spy agencies and even aim at cross-party agreement for the future. But on 8 May 2013, without any widespread discussion, the Government Communications Security Bureau and Related Legislation Amendment Bill was introduced to parliament. There were many expressions of disquiet from people well respected in the areas of law and civil rights — Sir Geoffrey Palmer and Rodney Harrison QC, the Law Society and



GCSB Tangimoana ECHELON Station, 30km west of Palmerston North. [Image: Google Earth]

the Human Rights Commission. Instead of listening to these concerns, ministers treated them with demeaning and sarcastic put-downs.

### widening powers of GCSB

We were given repeated assurances that the new law does not widen the Bureau's powers, it merely corrects irregularities. This is not true. The new bill does allow the GCSB to carry out activities that were previously unlawful. It could be argued that, of itself, the GCSB cannot legally spy on NZ residents but it can do so in roundabout ways such as cooperating in spy activities with other government agencies — the SIS, Police or Defence Force. With new powers it is also allowed to spy on New Zealanders for "cyber protection" (involving computers, smart phones and networks like Google etc) in a way that would not have been legal under the old legislation.

Also, as New Zealand is part of the "Five Eyes" spying alliance with the UK, Australia, Canada and USA, the GCSB can access information on locals through foreign spy systems. The act does not set down limits about what can and cannot be shared.

We're told that this surveillance is necessary due to the threat of terrorism. We ask, "What threats?" and are told this is "security sensitive information". "You just have to trust us", they say. If there have been real threats, how strange that we know at least 85 people were spied on (illegally) over the past ten years, but not one has been arrested or prosecuted. And yet the budget for running the Bureau for one year is 64 million dollars.

### trust and mistrust

All agree there is need for some surveillance and censorship to protect us from genuine threats of danger, but those deputed to carry this out need to have the trust of the public. At present there is an instinctive mistrust of government agencies, with fears of political interference and with too many high profile cases of private information ending up in the wrong

hands. We need to have an authority independent of political parties to decide if a warrant should be issued to follow up legitimate suspicions of serious wrongdoing. Only then should surveillance be carried out by an appropriate agency. Otherwise we should be allowed to go about our lives free from surveillance.

Taking away our right to privacy is itself an act of terrorism. It undermines all our basic freedoms. The argument, "If you've done nothing wrong, you've got nothing to fear" is a fallacy — a nonsense. It is designed to mislead us into feeling uncomfortable, disloyal or even criminal if we object to legislation which invades our privacy. It's a variation of "You're guilty until proved innocent".

Article 12 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights says: No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence.

### a curious case

Some time ago a Christchurch resident, Debbie Richards, emailed friends in the USA a photo of a pizza billboard lampooning George W. Bush. None of the emails arrived. After many enquiries she was told that her email address had been blacklisted because of "controversial material" she had sent. It's quite possible then that the email sending this article to *Tui Motu* will have been intercepted by spy agencies in America and so would be available to our GCSB. I've used words: "war on terror", "Edward Snowden", "terrorist attacks" — all potential triggers for being put on "the list". The next step would be a check on my email contacts, medical and bank records, what I look at on the computer etc. This is what is secretly happening to thousands of innocent people. It took an Edward Snowden to expose the truth. Is this the sort of atmosphere in which we want to live?

There are too many questions which the government refuses to answer. Why was the controversial bill drafted and rushed through so hastily? To what extent is the NSA

allowed to carry out surveillance on New Zealanders? How will we know and how can we challenge it? How can we get wrong information about ourselves deleted? How will our surveillance laws be affected by the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations that are being carried out in secret? Why is the government so opposed to an independent non-partisan oversight of the GCSB?

### who checks "the guardians"?

Are we sleep walking into a "Big Brother" style surveillance society? There's a great temptation for governments to gather as much information as they can about individuals who oppose their policies. But who checks on the guardians?

Angela Merkel was brought up under the Stasi regime in East Germany. She knows all about state abuse of surveillance systems. No wonder she was furious to find out the American NSA had been secretly intercepting her personal phone calls and emails. Would she be satisfied with a text from the NZ Prime Minister, "Don't worry, Angela. If you've done nothing wrong, you've no need to worry"? Somehow I doubt it.

What Benjamin Franklin said in 1755 seems very apt in 2014: "Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." ■

*Jim Neilan is a parishioner of Sacred Heart Parish, Dunedin.*

The morning after I had completed this article the head of the GCSB, Ian Fletcher, spoke to reporters on National Radio's Morning Report. He kept repeating the phrase, "We operate within the framework of the law", but the questions I raised still remain unanswered.

One hopeful note was that he said the government wanted to start a debate about "What organisation, rules and framework our community wants to have ... so that we can live our online lives as safely as we can." Let's hope this time they will treat genuine concerns seriously. J N

# witness at waihopai

*Spy base protestor Adi Leason recalls the daring raid on Waihopai in 2008 and tells Michael Fitzsimons about his drive to be a man of moral character.*

It's a blue autumn day when I come to visit Adi Leason at his rural Otaki home, sun pouring down on the long grass where his kids are playing.

Some pots are cooking on the outdoor fire beside the verandah, smoke drifting through the fruit trees nearby. He appears on the verandah, a modern-day Moses with a lush straggly beard and big welcoming handshake. He lives here with his wife Shelley, seven children — aged five to 18 — and a small community of others he has taken under his wing. They live off a small patch of land with a main house and other small dwellings dotted around the property.

It's a bracing version of the good life, dividing his time between school teaching at a local primary school in Otaki, running a little farm, and being a social activist/community worker. From a young age, "the idea of going to work from nine to five, coming home and watching the telly seemed so mindless up against the adventure of radical discipleship."

Adi is one of the Waihopai three, who in April 2008 broke into the government spy base near Blenheim and slashed the giant plastic dome covering the satellite dish with sickles. It was a very controversial protest against New Zealand's complicity in the "mad violence" of the Iraq invasion and the War on Terror. To do less, he says, would have been negligent, [as he knew that "... somehow the GCSB and the base are intimately involved with the war machine."]

The action drew many responses, including outrage. Outrage at the destruction of public property, at a cost of \$1.2 million. The Catholic newspaper NZ Catholic condemned the action and New Zealand's bishops chose not to support the three men publicly. On the



Adi Leason at his rural Otaki home

other hand, a big cohort of supporters and fellow activists occupied Katherine Mansfield Park near the US embassy for the length of the trial.

## adi's background

Adi Leason pours us a cup of tea and we get talking. He was adopted by a cockney London couple in the mid 60s and grew up mainly in Wellington. He had a spell at St Pat's Town and after a year's labouring went to Teachers' Training College.

Adi's desire to live out radical discipleship began in an evangelical context. It was 30 years later when he joined the Catholic Church.

"I got caught up in Youth for Christ which was very formative in my late teens. I did a bit of teaching up North, in Thames, and that politicised me — I ended up getting to know a whole lot of street kids, and they moved into my house. I was just 22. That was inspired by some of the folks I'd known in Youth for Christ.

"I was also politicised by working

at the Panat Nikhom refugee camp in Thailand in the late 80s. I ran a school, with just two others, for 1000 children. When you're 22, it's very formative. I was trying to make sense of a broken world, from a young age."

Over the years there has been a lot of non-violent civil disobedience in Adi Leason's life. In 1994, newly married to Shelley, they moved into the Granville Council Flats in Berhampore, starting a seven-year involvement and advocacy on behalf of fellow tenants.

## the waihopai action

The Waihopai action was born out of frustration.

"A French researcher once calculated that 36 million people worldwide marched against the Iraq invasion. And it fell on completely deaf ears.

"I remember seeing a photo in the paper of a grandfather holding the body of his grand-daughter, with no legs, in front of the rubble of his house, which had been hit by a cruise



missile, with guidance systems built by Rakon up in Auckland. Fifty two of his relatives had died. And I'm thinking to myself: we can protest, write letters to the editor, demonstrate, and do a whole lot of other positive, non-violent, legal activities. But meanwhile the war machine rolls on. Four years on I'm still looking at this image, and incidentally she looks surprisingly like my little girl.

"My conscience says, "Hold on, if the situations were reversed, would I want someone to do more than write a letter to the editor, more for me and our need?" I would. I found that very difficult. That quickened my conscience."

Adi met Waihopai fellow protestors Father Peter Murnane and Sam Land at a Catholic Worker hui at Hiruharama.

"That's where we started to talk about Ploughshares activism and the nucleus of our conspiracy of love really formed. We decided that the best place we could be was in prison, to protest this barbaric loss of life. And that not to be in prison, to sit back, would be negligent. That's the level of conviction we felt."

The Waihopai spy base was the obvious target. It was a conduit, used and programmed overseas and intimately involved with the war machine, he says, "... and we are not even driving it."

The practical challenges were formidable. There's no security facility in New Zealand that comes close to the Waihopai base. It is surrounded by a 40,000 volt electric fence with razor wire, then a second steel bar fence with razor wire, both covered with motion sensors, spotlights, and cameras. Past that is the main compound, with another steel bar fence, before you get to the domes.

Says Adi: "We came up with this amazing idea to take a crane, put us in the bucket, and drop us over the first two fences, then cut through the final fence and in. We bought the crane, set it up here in the back yard, mocked up the spy base on the back paddock, and at night-time with headlights and stop watches did time trials. There was one

time we had a gear malfunction and Father Peter, 68 at the time, was left dangling six metres up. That night, during debriefing, he urged us to look at our safety measures. But he was always in good spirits.

"To cut a long story short ... we take the truck down to Picton and enter the property early in the morning. Sam stays behind to chain the gate on the main road to slow police. We drive on, cut through a vineyard on a muddy road, take a corner, and the whole truck slides off the road onto its side. We're going, "Oh, by jingos, what do we do now?" Sam arrives, covered in blood from crashing his bicycle on the way. So we sit there, the three of us, not really sure what's going to happen next.

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**"Being at the spy base while it was deflating, covered in mud, that was a beautiful time of prayer."**

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"We decide to have a prayer. All through the story we've been moved by a sense that we're not trying to beat anybody. We're just trying to be men of moral character.

"We pack up all our gear — our banners, sign, shrine, bolt cutters — and continue along the road through the vineyard. After two more corners we stumble across a camp of vineyard workers, sleeping. If we'd driven we'd probably have woken them. So we tiptoe on, get to the base, cut through the hurricane netting, and have another prayer. If you're doing anything like this yourself, having a Catholic priest involved is excellent, because they have a prayer for every situation. Sam and I heard this little voice say to us, at the same time, "Why don't you pass the bolt-cutters to Father Peter?" So we pass the bolt cutters to Father Peter and suggest that he might like to cut the 40,000 volt electric fence. He makes one cut, it sparks, makes a

noise, breaks, and then he cuts another couple, and makes a hole.

"We cut through the next fence with some difficulty, and then the next one. The dome itself is 30 metres tall, with a red light on top for planes, and we're touching it now, and we pray. I think I said, "In the name of Jesus Christ we disarm you", and we take our sickles and stick them in, and all the air in the dome comes whooshing out. Sam has a sickle, I have a sickle. Sam with his good Catholic background cuts crosses and I start cutting around the bottom of the whole thing, almost do half of the circumference before the whole thing starts to collapse towards me. Sam comes around and cuts me out.

"Meanwhile Father Peter sets up a shrine, and a candle, and some photos and pictures and icons. Being at the spy base while it was deflating, covered in mud, that was a beautiful time of prayer. We pray and sing and cry, and reflect on the victims of war, and suffering, and our complicity with that.

"After about 15 minutes, some security guards come out and find us. We say "It's okay, we're here to pray, would you like to join us?" They decline, and ask us to remain there. Then Sam gives them the keys to let the police in."

The men were charged and spent five days in the Blenheim cells, during which time they fasted. They were bailed and returned home.

### **the legal odyssey**

Then began the legal odyssey. First came a successful appeal to have the case heard in Wellington, on the basis that a fair hearing was not possible in Blenheim where there were such strong links between the local community and the military base.

Two years later the criminal trial began in Wellington, the three men charged with burglary and intentional damage, which carries a sentence of up to seven years. The media were there in force. According to Adi, the trial itself

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*... continued on page 23*

# *"What is more likely . . ."*

what is more likely  
than that Teilhard de Chardin  
should raise his head in the midst  
of each thought wave  
a voice entirely at one  
with a cosmos at one with  
itself  
focused on the central  
energy and force  
germane to origins  
and creativity  
desert beauty of uncertain  
survival awash in colours  
of unprecedented light  
translucent gentle  
softness of sand and light  
of thought waves  
pulsing in this openness  
space of unending darkness  
and vibrant starlight  
voice of unity  
take our hands as the  
thunder rolls ever closer  
across a tidal wave of impressions  
linking earth, sky and  
the tiny patter of rain  
an oasis in time here in this place  
of heat and clarity  
we are alive in our waiting  
for a new experience of  
communion

— Joanie Roberson





The Orion Nebula. Image captured by the Hubble Telescope.



# the god who beckons

*A contemporary woman theologian looks again at our vision of God, and finds that delving into the meaning of evolution gives us another more adaptable way of seeing our ever creative God.*

Joan Chittister



Katie was a second-grader in one of our schools. One Friday at art class as the teacher roamed the aisles checking progress, she stopped at Katie's desk and asked, "Well, Katie, what are you drawing?"

"I am drawing a picture of God," Katie said proudly.

"Katie," the teacher answered, "you can't draw a picture of God. Nobody knows what God looks like."

Katie said, "They will when I'm finished." We are all invited now to draw a new picture of God.

Picasso said: "God is just another artist. He made a giraffe, an elephant and a cat. He has no style. He just keeps trying new things." And Simone Weil wrote, "It is only the impossible that is possible for God. He has given over the possible to the mechanics of matter and the autonomy of his creatures."

There was a time when asking a question about the purpose of life was simpler than it is now because the answer never changed. Whatever existed and happened, we knew, was the eternal will and calculated design of the God who had made things.

The process was clear. The rules were unequivocal. We learned that God had a particular function or role for each of us: male and female, clergy and lay, slave and free, ruler and ruled. In that schema the purpose of life was certain, however obscure the project itself. It was, in other words, a game of cosmic

dice. Some people won; some people didn't. And God was in charge of it all.

## until charles came along

The unfolding of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and the launch, ironically, of the priest Georges Lemaitre's big bang theory — you can imagine how popular that made him in the church — changed everything. Evolution and the big bang theory may have clarified the questions of science about the origin and end of life but they continue to this day to unsettle the relatively standard, unarguable theological conclusions concerning the ways of God with the world.

After billions of years, of multiple mistakes, a cycle of chemical configurations and a series of hit-and-miss successes, life as we know it, science tells us, simply emerged. With no sense of uniqueness, no evidence of completeness, and no supernatural intervention.

With an explanation like that, the whole notion of life's meaningfulness simply evaporates into the bizarrely unique chemistry that sustains it.

## a subtler god

Of all the statements Einstein ever made, beyond relativity, beyond the bend in space and time, it is what he said about God that may, in the end, be seen as his most profound insight of them all.

"God," said Einstein, "is subtle but not malicious."

Such subtlety, in fact, is barely sustainable without the eye of blind faith in the light of the injustices and struggles of the real world around us.

If life, as science says, is self-creating, what can possibly be the cosmic or overarching purpose of life? What, in fact, can be the purpose of God?

It all depends, of course, on who we say God is. A wag said: First God created humans; then humans created God. And we did. To the point that nothing we know about science now equates with what we have told ourselves about God.

And this great crossover point, this new Galileo moment in history, gives us a sense of purpose in life that is beyond the sanctification of the self. Indeed, this is the moment after which everything religion has said about the nature of God must somehow shift.

The God of creation, the religious world determined, was all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present and all-holy. The problem lay in the fact that a God of these proportions failed, it seemed, to exercise such power when it came to the creation this very God had created.



This God did not save the world from evil, did not exercise blatant power in behalf of the good, did not save the righteous from the unrighteous, did not act in behalf of the oppressed. This was a God whose merit theology, whose rule-driven scorekeeping, trumped care, compassion and love.

Not only was this God not a "subtle" God but how could we say with certainty that this God was not a

malevolent one, except that our hearts tell us that God, to be God, must be more than that.

As a consequence of theology like that, we enthroned maleness. We exalted a “rationality” that was far too often deeply irrational. We talked about “free will” but got tangled up again in the implications of what it means to be the weanlings of an all-knowing God. We chafed under the burden of “perfectionism”.

But then came Darwin and evolution. In this world, every act of creation is not the unique act of an eternal God. Instead, the God of creation becomes the God of ongoing creation, of life intent on its own development, and of life involved in contributing to its own emerging form.

From this perspective, creation, life itself, is a work in process. It grows from one stage to another. It is immersed in both possibility and mistakes. It is a creature of imagination on the way to the unimaginable. The God of grand but hidden designs becomes the God of evolution, of the working out of creation as we go. Suddenly free will, the choices we make as we labour at the project of life, becomes important. Decision-making becomes universally significant, and selection of our actions determines the shape of an ongoing evolving world.

### the humble god

A self-creating universe becomes co-creator with the humble God who shares power and waits for the best from us and provides for what we need to make it happen. We become participants in the process of life and the development of the world that is not so much planned as it is enabled. As nature grows, experiments, unfolds, selects and adapts, so then must we. Growth, not perfection, becomes the purpose of life. Ongoing creation, not predestined fate, becomes the purpose of life.

The very process of human growth, not human puppetry in the hands of a disinterested and demanding God, becomes the purpose of life. And God

### Prayer for Aotearoa New Zealand in an election year

God, give us a vision of our country

As a land of tolerance where all races and creeds can live together in unity,

A land of justice where basic human rights are respected,

A land of compassion where poverty is unknown and oppression is ended,

And a land of peace where order does not depend on force.

God, help us to make this vision our reality.

Amene.

— Ron O’Grady

becomes the God of a universe on its way to growing into glory, of becoming one with its creator. In an evolving world, then, God becomes “becoming.” God is the one who stands by as we grow from one self to another, from one level of insight to another, from one age and awareness to another. God, we come to understand, is not the God of fixed determinations now. The past is no longer a template of forever. God becomes instead the God of the future. God, we come to see in the model that is evolutionary, is promise and possibility and forever emerging life.

The spiritual implications of a creation that goes on creating are major.



We are meant to create with the creator. In this world, the God of evolution becomes God the mother as well as God the father. God the mother understands pain. She bears us and then lets us grow from error to solution, from failure to success. She loves us for trying. She not only sets the standard, she helps us over the bar.

She, the biblical God, “Cries out as a woman in labor” (Isaiah 42:14). She

is the one whom the psalmist sees as “a nursing woman” (Psalm 131: 1-2), who in Hosea (11:3-4) is a cuddling mother who takes Israel in her arms, and who, in Proverbs as wisdom, “is there with God in the beginning” (8:22-31).

In a world in evolution is there purpose in the universe? The answer must certainly be: Never more so than now. Evolution is, in fact, a great spiritual teacher. We learn from the fossils of the ages that development is most often a slow and uncertain process, a precarious and breakneck experience that demands both time and trust in the future that is God, and in the God of the future. Evolution teaches us that movement from one stage of life to another is often both cumbersome and painful but that the pain is prelude to a better self.

We learn that failure is a necessary part of life, not its misdoing. It is simply a holy invitation to become more than we are at present. Time is grace and trying is virtue. Struggle is a sign of new life, not a condemnation of this one.

Now human beings can begin to revel in what is meant by growing to full stature as a responsible and participative spiritual adult whose work on the planet really, really matters. Life, suddenly, is more a blessing both to the universe and to the self than it is simply a test of a person’s moral limits. To be alive, to be a person in the process of becoming, it becomes clear, is a blessing, not a bane. We are, alone and together, significant actors in the nature of life and the strengthening of the fibers of humankind.

Evolution gives us a God big enough to believe in. ■

*Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister is an author and international lecturer on topics of justice, peace, human rights, women’s issues, and contemporary spirituality in the church and in society. Permission to publish this article has been requested.*



# an antipodean answer

*What is the place of the laity in our contemporary Catholic church?  
Here is one way in which the community of the people of God is recognized  
and enhanced for the benefit of the whole Church.*

John Walsh

When Europe was the centre of the known world, the teachings of the church fathers, especially those of St. Augustine (354-430 AD), condemned the notion that there were lands and people on the opposite side of the planet. The implication was that if there were people at the Antipodes they could not have descended from a Middle Eastern Adam and Eve. Then the church moved on.

In the 17th century Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was instructed by the church fathers to recant his support for Copernicus' helio-centric (sun-centred) solar system theory. Their geo-centric (earth-centred) cosmology of the time was derived from the Bible. Then the church moved on.

## approaches for the synod

Accepting that some church teaching is not immutable, we move to the dawn of the 21st century where there is an indication that the church is prepared to reconsider its present teachings on marriage, the family and relationship issues. Pope Francis has called an Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October this year to discuss the pastoral challenges facing the family today. This comes at a time when the very definition of "family" is being challenged in the secular arena as evidenced by The Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act passed by the New Zealand Parliament in 2013. In a complete departure from tradition, we laity (of the "people



St. Peter's Rock Group at the Halswell Cross on Good Friday with hot cross buns to follow.

in the pews" variety) have been invited to contribute our views ahead of this Synod. This is a first in my lifetime.

As I completed my Survey-Monkey questionnaire on-line, I gave an "Antipodean" answer to many of the questions in this worldwide survey. In particular, Question 3 headed "The Pastoral Care of the Family in Evangelization" and 3D: "In what way have the local Churches and movements on family spirituality been able to create ways of acting which are exemplary?" and 3E: "What specific contribution can couples and families make to spreading a credible and holistic idea of the couple and the Christian family today?" My answers espoused the value of the Antipodean-originated Passionist Family Group Movement (PFGM).

## a new down-under movement

The Congregation of the Passionist (commonly known as "the Passionist fathers") began this movement in Sydney, Australia in 1973. It is based on the "basic ecclesial community" model found elsewhere in the world but modified to produce the equivalent of an extended family grouping of say 25-30 people who gather monthly to start the process of building relationships within the group. The gathering might be as simple as a picnic or barbeque but over time there comes a bonding akin to a blood family. The Passionist fathers saw a need in parishes under their care. The people attending mass did not know one another to the extent they could respond to the other's needs or even celebrate their milestones let alone evangelise the lapsed or unchurched. So the Passionist model stressed the need to involve everyone in these

extended family groupings — solo parents with children, migrants, single people, young marrieds, separated and divorced people, empty nesters and grandparents. The motto they chose for the Movement was “A Family for All”.

As the Movement took hold in Australia, one of the key success factors was put down to the simple rule that a third party (be it a parish priest or a PFGM parish co-ordinator) was involved in the make-up of the groups — just as you cannot choose your own blood family members. And this ensured each group comprised an age spectrum from grandparents down to young children. One of the initially unforeseen by-products of the Movement was the appeal it would have for spouses or family members who did not attend church. In many cases, the PFGM gathering was their only experience of “church”.

### arrival in new zealand

In 1988 the PFGM arrived in New Zealand and Rob and Lynn Hill were appointed its first New Zealand directors. They initially set up the Movement in their local parish of Paeroa and then, with the help of regional co-ordinators, facilitated the spread of PFGs to over 100 parishes throughout New Zealand over the next 25 years. Papal recognition for Rob and Lynn Hill’s outstanding missionary efforts and commitment was accorded them in December 2013 when they were awarded Benemerenti medals by Bishop Denis Browne at Sunday mass in Waihi.

My local parish of St. Peter’s in Beckenham, Christchurch watched from the side-lines for a few years to see what effect the Movement would have on other parishes in Christchurch. When we took the plunge in 1996 it transformed the parish community and we cannot imagine parish life today without it. Initially, six groups were set up but in time we had to add a seventh. Our parish priest for the first 16 years with Passionist Family Groups, the

late Fr Tom Power (see *Tui Motu* Sept 2012), was an avid promoter who used to say that he could see the relationships build and friendship and support develop before his very eyes, especially evident to him at baptisms and funerals.

As one of the initial parish co-ordinators for the Movement, I was concerned that Fr. Tom, then aged in his late 70’s, was going to run himself ragged trying to attend nearly all the seven individual group gatherings that take place in the parish each month. But he was always willing to celebrate a house mass (inevitably followed by a shared meal) which nearly every group would request once a year.

### change over time

In our 18-year history with the PFGM, the make-up of each group has changed over time although the parish co-ordinators try to maintain a balance of age ranges and family groupings to preserve the extended family aspect of each group. Some people have left the parish (and some the planet) while others have been welcomed in. In post-earthquake Christchurch, where there has been unprecedented dislocation and disruption to family life, their Passionist family group has been a constant for some families. And for St. Peter’s parish, the PFGM is where the parish community turns to welcome and

integrate newly arrived families. Some St. Peter’s children have grown up with the Movement and in my own group, for instance, we have six in their mid-teens who still regularly attend our gatherings.

Initially, each of St. Peter’s Passionist family groups was known by the names of their first leaders (often a married couple). But as the role of co-ordinating the group’s activities was devolved throughout each group it was decided to name each group after some attribute of our patron saint rather than change the group’s name at regular intervals. My group became St. Peter’s Rock Group.

The stated aims and goals of the PFGM are simple

- (a) to share our Christian lives together
- (b) to support one another in times of need and celebration
- (c) to give example to and involve children in Christian sharing
- (d) to build and promote community within the parish
- (e) to live and love like the early Christians.

Could it be that the Antipodes provides one of the answers that Pope Francis is looking for from the Synod of Bishops in October 2014? ■

*John Walsh is a member of the  
Passionist Family Group Movement,  
living in Christchurch.*

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# contemplation and resistance



Peter Murnane

**T**o deflate a million dollar dome concealing spy-antennae is not the usual work of a Catholic priest at age 67. Why did we do this, Sam Land, Adi Leason and I? Six years on, our reasons may be easier to understand.

The Waihopai base is part of the “Five Eyes” network controlled by Washington’s National Security Agency (NSA). It uses massive computer capacity to record billions of messages, invading the privacy of so many using telephones or the internet. Whistle-blowers like Katharine Gunn, Bradley Manning, Julian Assange and Edward Snowden have shown the extent of this violation of privacy.

We protested against the base as a tool of Empire, that unjust structure by which, throughout history, small elites have contrived to dominate the majority by violence. Currently the world’s largest Empire is controlled by the US government and affiliated multi-national corporations.

Any greatness or nobility achieved under Empires has been despite their essential inhumanity. As Orwell noted, empires hide behind denial and lies; and some readers may find it hard to believe what I relate here. The US Empire rapaciously amasses power and ultimately respects no-one’s rights. It began by cruel conquest of Hawaii (1893) and the Philippines

(1899-1935). It broke treaties with its Indigenous races, almost exterminating them. Until 1865 its prosperity was built largely on millions of black slaves. Now it pretends to honour the “rule of law” but dares “legally” to kidnap, imprison indefinitely without trial, torture and execute by drones, US citizens included.

Since World War II the USA has interfered in the affairs of more than 50 sovereign countries, bombing, invading and arranging coups to overthrow legitimate leaders. I was shocked in 1973 to learn that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) helped replace the elected Allende government of Chile with Pinochet’s fascist reign of terror.

## encountering sr dianna ortiz

I encountered government terrorism personally when I met Sr Dianna Ortiz and heard her story. In 1989 this young non-political sister was teaching children in Guatemala when kidnapped and horribly tortured by the military. Repeatedly gang-raped, she was burned with cigarettes more than 100 times. Why? In Guatemala in the 1950s the USA wanted to “protect our interests” — the Dulles family’s United Fruit Company. When plantation workers asked for better conditions they were judged “Communist agitators”.

Allen Dulles, head of the CIA, was soon training Guatemalan troops in “counter-insurgency”. In following decades those troops tortured, murdered or “disappeared” around 40,000 Guatemalans.

Although blindfolded, Sr Dianna noticed the North American accent of the man directing her torturers. Escaping back to the USA, after long searching she confirmed he was a CIA agent. The torture of thousands was US government policy. It still is. I have read documents linking the horrors of Abu Ghraib with orders given by Vice-President Cheney.

Shortly before our action at Waihopai the USA’s “interests” led it to invade Afghanistan and Iraq to replace the Taliban and Saddam Hussein, whom it had first supported. Although New Zealand was officially neutral about Iraq, it collaborated in that immoral war by gathering information through the Waihopai base.

Some people accept the total surveillance that Waihopai enables because “it makes us more secure”. Does it make us secure to give total power to an unprincipled few, without accountability? Why should they claim the sole right to privacy?

## the truth of god’s kingdom

As a Dominican friar my task is to offer people the truth of God’s Kingdom.

Empire is the exact opposite to God's Kingdom and runs on basic lies:

- It urges its subjects to fight an imaginary "enemy": Communists, Moslems, "terrorists". In contrast, Jesus' Good News is that God loves everyone without limit and frees us to love all others (Matthew 5:7). Each neighbour's distress is our concern: "What you did not do for any of these least, you failed to do for me" (Matthew 25:45).

- In offering jobs and prosperity it seduces people to serve in ways that progressively become more immoral. To protect "national security", citizens, soldiers and leaders of the industrial-military complex will commit atrocities like My Lai, Abu Ghraib and Hiroshima, threatening to use nuclear weapons again — their defence being "I was only following orders".

Jesus rejected the sword (Matthew 26:52) and strongly resisted Empire. In driving the money-changers from the temple he was not only attacking a few stall-holders but the whole

temple economic system, whose High Priest/administrator was appointed by Rome. The Roman Empire murdered Jesus, this being its usual way to terrorize the poor into submission.

Not to resist Empire's crimes would be for me to consent to them. We chose symbolically to unveil and disarm the Waihopai base, an instrument of war, then waited to be arrested and bear witness to war's evil folly.

### **a charter for the future**

Every person can stand against the power of Empire by:

- penetrating its secrecy. Scholars like Michel Chossudovsky, William Blum, Noam Chomsky and websites like *Information Clearing House* or *Democracy Now* show us the truth that the Emperor has no clothes.
- praying together. We felt the need to be empty, in solidarity with the poor of the majority world, in order to know the resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit. To prepare for our action we took

time to "do nothing". We contemplated, like Jesus who fasted in the desert; and like Gandhi who, when followers were urging him to act, waited for weeks in silence not knowing how to proceed. Out of that emptiness came Gandhi's idea of the Salt March, a turning point in the struggle against the British Empire in India.

Our action did not close Waihopai. The Empire still commits murder and threatens to destroy everyone by its ecological irresponsibility and nuclear madness. But we can all work to liberate humanity, a "necessary, beautiful, impossible, eternal task, which can be realised fully only at the end of history". (Jim Douglass) ■

*Peter Murnane is a Dominican priest, living in the capital of the Solomon Islands, Honiara, working presently as postulant and student master for the Dominicans of the Solomons and Papua New Guinea.*

## **witness at waihopai** *continued from page 15 . . .*

progressed badly for them until the Judge gave an interpretation of Claim of Right which changed everything.

"He said that Claim of Right means that if these men believe they were acting legally, under the laws established by UN conventions around human rights and war atrocities, and agreed to by New Zealand, then the jury had to acquit us. The jury went out, sat for two hours, and came back with a unanimous not guilty."

A civil case was then lodged against the three for \$1.2 million in damages to the base. Despite the "not guilty" verdict, defeat loomed. They lost the summary judgment, lost at the Appeal Court, and were heading to the Supreme Court when a letter came from the Crown Law Office offering to stop all proceedings and waive all court costs.

### **a podium for nonsense?**

The reason for the about-turn was not clear. Maybe, he suggests, it was because it was election year, maybe they were sick of "spending all this public money building a podium for these guys to talk their nonsense. Father Peter, in a lovely bit of theatrics, said "Look, I've been a priest for 50 years, and I haven't had a bank account for 50 years." How do you fight that kind of moral high ground? It's just gorgeous."

These days Adi is a Catholic and member of St Mary's Parish Otaki. The Waihopai action has drawn condemnation from many but he doesn't seem too bothered about that. There is a lightness to this man of serious moral purpose and, like the prophets of old, he's not in the business of pleasing people.



What does matter to him is that he and his wife Shelley are on the same page. "We've done these adventures together because we see it as part of the good life."

"Christ tells us that transcendence comes through living a moral life, not a comfortable life. I think we are called to nurture our conscience, and follow our conscience and get in trouble for the sake of our conscience."

"Acting on behalf of the most vulnerable, engaging in solidarity with the women and children and victims of Iraq and Afghanistan — that is my privilege," he concludes. ■



# re-forming the church from within

*The work of theologians behind the scenes has had a tremendous influence on the life of the Church. Often it is unheralded. This is the remarkable story of an unheralded and mistreated Dominican.*

Bruce Drysdale

Pope John XXIII was once asked the question; “How many people work in the Vatican, Holy Father?” “About half,” was the Pope’s reply. One of those magnificent people who was a strategic worker for the Vatican and who helped bring the Second Vatican Council to fruition during Pope John XXIII’s time as pope was the Dominican friar, Yves Marie-Joseph Congar OP.

## his history and background

Born in 1904 in north-west France, Congar once said of himself, “I am a Celt of the Ardennes”. As a boy he witnessed the horrors of the first World War as his home town was occupied by German soldiers. This experience must have influenced his desire to make the world a better place. He mixed freely with Protestants and Jews an experience which was to shape his adult desire to advance ecumenism. At that time ecumenism was far outside the scope of the way that the Catholic Church thought. Till then, the Church had stuck strictly to the idea

## *The Hitchhiker's Guide to* **CHURCH HISTORY** 1800–2000

that it was the one true church, and that Catholics were to have nothing to do with Protestants and people of other faiths like the Jews and Muslims.

## time spent in exile

In 1930 Congar was ordained a Dominican priest. Very soon because he was quick in his way of thinking and very intelligent, he secured a teaching position as a professor of theology in France at Le Saulchoir, the Dominican house of studies in Paris. This priory was a powerhouse of intellectual instruction and research in the early part of the twentieth century, and a place where the Dominican friars were not afraid to reflect as theologians on the horrible experiences of war and depression. These had so dominated their lives and the lives

of so many people in the Europe of that time. Remember fr Yves’ own experiences in the Ardennes as a child? Congar also identified another phenomenon, the Achilles heel of “Christian” Europe — that the Catholic church had become increasingly clerical and hierocratic (this is a technical word meaning “dominated by priests”).

Fr Yves challenged this predominant and dominating way of thinking about the Church at that time. He tried in his many books to find new ways to think about the Church and especially about the place of lay people within it. So new were these ideas that what he taught was seen as being injurious, and he was openly charged by the appropriate Vatican congregations as being someone who was promoting and teaching heresy.

Because of these avant-garde opinions, fr Yves was exiled from his post as a theology professor and forbidden to publish what he was thinking. As well as being forbidden to have any contact with students of theology, he was sent into “exile” for a number of years in the mid 1950s to the Dominican Priory in Cambridge, England. There he felt lonely, isolated and unable to do what he had set his heart upon doing. For a man as bright and productive as he had been till that time this was a very harsh punishment.

## role in vatican council

Congar’s time in exile came to an end in 1960 when he was invited by Angelo Roncalli (Pope John XXIII) to be a Consultor for the Theological Commission set up to prepare for what became the Second Vatican Council. He had more input into the writing of preliminary material for bishops and the final documents than any other person.

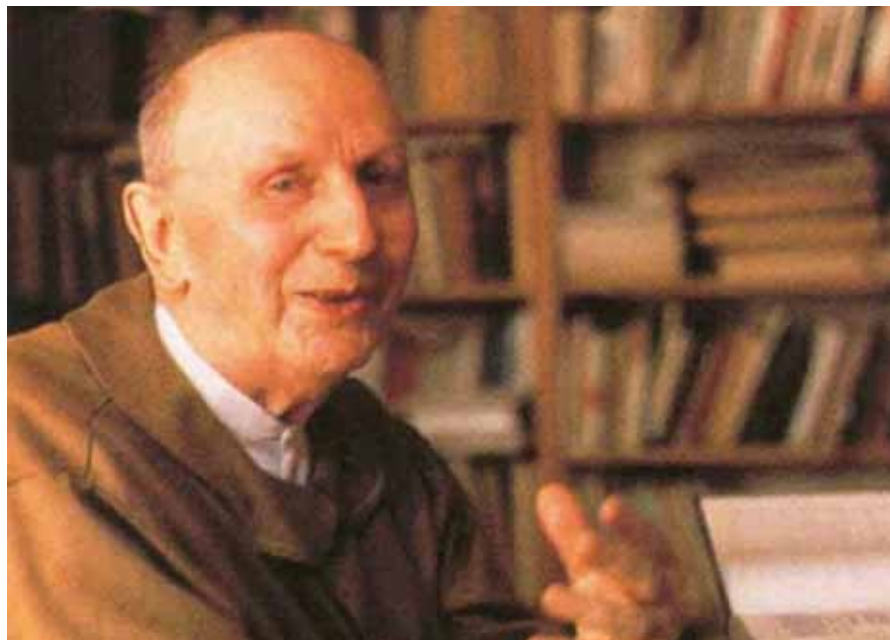


fr Congar OP in Warsaw

It was in the context of this council that the Catholic church looked again at its claim to be the one true church, and made some important adjustments in its teaching about this. This came about partly because of the way in which fr Congar was able to persuade the bishops at the Council that other Christian churches also had an important role to play in the modern world. He called on the Catholic church to have an “ecumenical metanoia” — to change its ways of thinking and acting in relation to the other Christian churches. This was only one of the ways in which he had a major influence on the Council’s documents.

Fr Congar kept a meticulous log diary about the proceedings of the Council and left instructions that it should not be published until the year 2000. These notes reveal the depth of his interaction with the bishops. He believed that a large number of bishops were incapable of having a comprehensive view of the Church and the world around it because he claimed they had lost the habit of studying.

Interestingly Congar’s notes reveal an intriguing encounter with Archbishop Karol Wojtyla of Krakow Poland, who later became Pope John Paul II. Some preliminary texts of the Council which Archbishop Wojtyla had edited as part of its ongoing work, were found by fr Congar to be confused and full of errors. Congar, however, was glad to meet and work with the future



pope. It was Pope John Paul who made fr Congar a cardinal in 1994, a year before he died.

### contribution as a reformer

Congar’s contribution to Vatican II as an ecumenist and a reformer was so immense that some would say it could almost be called “Congar’s Council”. His role as reformer makes him an architect of the contemporary church. He regarded the Church as God’s people in history, guided by the Holy Spirit of God. He was in no doubt that the Church while it was in need of reform, also needed to pass on the faith and practices it inherited from earlier generations. His ecclesiology was centred on the motif of the “People of God”, a biblical idea that was hugely influential.



Congar placed the lay apostolate at the forefront and centre of theological discussion and in so doing he recovered teaching from much earlier times in the Church (including from St Dominic, founder of the Order to which he belonged) and of many contemporary theological thinkers. He offers us a theological reflection on the laity which was sorely underdeveloped before Vatican II.

Albert Einstein once said that “Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds”. Yves Congar is empirical proof of this statement. ■

*Bruce Drysdale is the Director of Religious Studies at St Dominic’s College, Henderson.*



The young Yves Congar



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# “god so loved the world”

John 3:16-18 Trinity Sunday 16 June



Kathleen Rushton

Of his time on the surface of the moon during the Apollo 14 mission in February 1971, Alan Shepard said: “If somebody’d said before the flight, ‘Are you going to get carried away looking at the Earth from the Moon?’ I would have said, ‘No, no way.’ But yet when I first looked back at the Earth, standing on the Moon I cried.” It was similar for Apollo 8 and 11 astronaut, Jim Lovell: “We learnt a lot about the Moon, but what we really learnt about was the Earth.” The first person to travel in space in 1961, Yuri Gagarin exclaimed: “What beauty. I saw clouds and their shadow on the distant dear Earth ... The water looked like darkish, slightly gleaming spots ... the rich colour spectrum. It is surrounded by a light blue aureole that gradually darkens ...” According to Apollo 14 astronaut, Edgar Mitchell: “We went to moon as technicians; we returned as humanitarians ... You develop an instant global consciousness, a people orientation, an intense dissatisfaction with the state of the world, and a compulsion to do something about it. From out there on the moon ... You want to grab [a person] by the scruff of the neck and draw him [her] a quarter of a million miles out and say ‘Look at that ...’”

Two strands emerge from the experience of these astronauts. One is their surprise at learning about the beauty and mystery of the Earth. The other is how they were changed and came to understand the state of the world in a new perspective. As Neil Armstrong, the very first person to walk on the Moon, put it: “Mystery creates wonder and wonder is the basis of [humanity’s] desire to understand.” This desire to understand the paradox of the beauty of Earth and the state of the world as caused by human persons is a helpful lead-in to “the world” in the gospel according to John.

## “the universe” & “the world”

In Old Testament Hebrew, what we would call “the universe” is described as “heaven and earth” which was created by God’s word. Later, *kosmos*, the “world,” expressed Greek appreciation of the order of the universe. In John, the “world” (*kosmos*) is the reality God so loved that God gave the Son (3:16). The expression “comes into the world” highlights the physical universe and is associated with Jesus, the light who has “come into the world” (1:9; 3:19; 12:46). Another take on “coming into the world” relates to Jesus as the Messiah (6:14; 9:39; 11:27; 16:28). It is like a technical term for the mission of Jesus. “To be sent into the world” is

used of Jesus’ mission (3:17; 10:36). The disciples and Christians today are drawn into this mission when in the farewell discourse Jesus prays: “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” (17:18).

The “world” (*kosmos*) can mean more than the physical universe. It may refer to that universe as related to humankind. In this sense, “the world” suggests a creation that is able to respond. “The world” finds expression in humankind created in the image and likeness of God and so in relationship to God and to one another. It seems to me this biblical sense is what Teilhard de Chardin evokes when he speaks of evolution coming to consciousness in the human person. He understands the human person to be the arrow of evolution; the direction evolution will take because of human creativity and knowledge. Even more directly, “the world” can refer to society or what we call humankind.

## structures of sin

The shadow of rejection is there from the beginning for Jesus came to “his own and his own received him not.” (1:11). It is not simply rejection. In the second half of John’s gospel, opposition and hostility accompany the use of “the world.” What this might mean today is clarified

by John Paul II. He wrote about “sin” and “structures of sin” seldom being applied to the situation of the contemporary world. He names “the collective behaviour of certain social groups, big or small, even whole nations or blocs of nations” where “cases of social sins are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins.”

These personal sins cause or support or exploit evil. Those in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit social evils fail to do so out of laziness, fear, silence, complicity, indifference or they take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world or sidestep the effort or sacrifice needed. Thus individuals comprise and support the structures of sin. (*On Social Concerns*, 36)

For John, the coming of Jesus, the light, made a decisive difference between the past and the present, for darkness had been the prevailing atmosphere (1:5). Each person, and consequently society or humankind, that is “the world”, makes a response to choose light or darkness. They choose to believe or not to believe. Faith and action are linked. John does not give a list of “dos” and “don’ts.” In the present, in “the world” that is, human persons judge themselves in the now by choosing light or darkness (3:19-21). That this gospel has no description of Jesus’ return in future or of the heavens opening or Jesus coming down on the cloud of heaven in judgment is striking. Instead the language is relational: “I ... will take you to myself”(14:3). This promise centres on a person, on relationship rather than place.

### relationships of abiding

Being with Jesus is about enduring relationships of abiding (14:10; 15:4-10). In the outpouring of the Holy Spirit who “abides with you and will be in you” (14:17) and the work of his disciples, the risen Jesus continues to abide with us in the world which God loved. This is what the Trinity is about — relationship. The Eastern Church has a word for this: *perichoresis* (*peri* around; *chorea* dance) which

suggests a being-in-one-another, a continuous dynamic interaction between persons mutually permeating each other, interdependence, the divine dance, the mystery of the one communion of all persons in diversity, divine as well as human. As Catherine Lacugna points out the doctrine of the Trinity ultimately is not “a teaching about ‘God’ but a teaching about God’s life with us and our life with one another.”

Further, and uniquely, John’s gospel tells of eternal life being experienced now in the world God so loved. In relationship to the world in all its senses, humankind has the potential to respond with awe and

wonder. Such a response to beauty changes the ones who see the now in new perspective, fires the human imagination to abide in, care for and protect the Earth and the whole Earth community.

*Note: Above, I refer to “the son.” English translations insert the pronoun “his” where the Greek has “the.” Elsewhere in the New Testament, the Greek has “the” to describe the relationship between God/Father and son, never “his.” ■*

*Kathleen Rushton is a Sister of Mercy working in adult education in the Diocese of Christchurch.*

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# celebrate social justice

## Book: But is it Fair? Faith Communities and Social Justice

Edited by Neil Darragh

**Publisher:** Accent Publications,  
Auckland 2014, NZ\$30-00 (avail-  
able from Accent Publications  
[[www.accentpublications.co.nz](http://www.accentpublications.co.nz)])

**Reviewer:** Fr Gerard Aynsley

Neil Darragh's latest edited work, "But is it fair?" provides the reader with a rich array of inspiring examples of lived social justice. Drawing on the insights of contributors from a great variety of faith backgrounds and from unique contexts, *But is it Fair?* brings the notion of fairness to life.

Each writer — some more successfully than others — draws out the ways their community's social activities are originated from, and are being motivated by, a vantage point of faith. A faith perspective contributes something important and unique — a richer, more nuanced grasp of social realities, I would suggest. *But is it Fair?* is, at its best, a celebration of justice arising from faith.

One of the real strengths of this book is that the editor has invited contributors to reflect on the lived example of fairness occurring in faith communities, rather than concentrating on the experiences of individuals. The communities considered were diverse: I enjoyed, for example, Cecily McNeill's article on Challenge 2000 and Robyn McPhail's reflection on rural faith communities. The concerns were also diverse, including housing, outreach to prisoners, the overcoming of marginalization, the environment, the treaty and the support of immigrants. There are some inspiring examples of what is occurring in our schools and colleges, such as the insights of New Plymouth



DRS, Anna Zsigovits-Mace. She explores some of the practical ways her school seeks to broaden the child's outlook to see fairness from the other person's perspective, not just their own.

This is the sort of book that allows the reader to pick through articles as and when inspired. Invariably it made me think of other examples that could have been included in a book such as this. It is good to be given reason to pause and think of the many ways people of faith reach out, offer friendship and stand in solidarity with those on the margins.

I thought some insights from younger generations would have added something to the book. Much as younger people are considered within many of the articles, the younger generations (those under 50) were not well represented — if at all — among the contributors. Would their take on things bring a different slant, I wonder?

Each article takes only a few minutes to read, but the practical examples given help inspire, encourage and challenge the reader. The reader will surely be prompted to consider the ways his or her faith community also practises, or could potentially practise, fairness. ■

# mind the gap

## Book: My Ecumenical Journey

**A Collection of Papers selected and edited by Elizabeth Delaney SGS, Gerard Kelly and Ormond Rush.**

**By Bishop Michael Putney**

**Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2014.**

**Reviewer: Sr Catherine Jones SMSM**

Picture the scene: sunrise walk along the bank of the Brisbane River during a session for those involved in ecumenism and interfaith relations. A figure in the distance is striding it out under his hat and sunnies, his t-shirt emblazoned, "Mind the Gap".

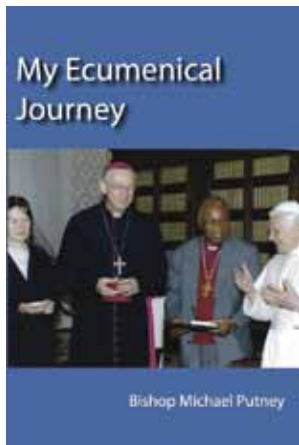
As he got closer, I realised it was Bishop Michael Putney, one of the keynote speakers, and he was surprised to be greeted by the trans-Tasman pilgrim also camouflaged under hat and sunnies.

At the time, I had no idea what "mind the gap" meant. Only later did cycling friends enlighten me on that. Yet over these past few months, I have come to understand how apt the motto is for Bishop Michael. He was a man who in so many ways knew how to "mind the gap", particularly in the field of ecumenical relations. He knew how to mind the gap and to build bridges of friendship and dialogue across that gap.

In the opening chapter of this collection of key papers and addresses collated by friends who worked for him for many years in ecumenism, Bishop Michael describes the origins of his ecumenical journey. As a young seminarian, he entered an oratory competition, and chose to speak about the life of the French priest Paul Couturier (1881 -1953), a leading figure in ecumenism before the Second Vatican Council. Michael notes: "I won the competition, but more significantly, [Couturier] won



# a winter warmer



## Film: Sunshine on Leith

**Director:** Dexter Fletcher

**Reviewer:** Paul Sorrell

If the notion of a Scottish musical sounds distinctly odd, then *Sunshine on Leith* has all the ingredients to surprise and delight. Based on the stage musical by Stephen Greenhorn, the film deals with the rapidly changing fortunes of a trio of love matches, punctuated at frequent intervals by the toe-tapping music of Scots folk-rock group The Proclaimers. The narrative is a reworking of the old, old story of boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy and girl find each other again.

The film opens with soldier mates Davy and Ally on patrol in Afghanistan, breaking into the first number — “Sky Takes the Soul” — just as their humvee is hit by a roadside bomb. The scene switches to Edinburgh, where the two lads, their tour of duty over, burst in on Davy’s parents, Rab and Jean, and sister Liz — who just happens to be Ally’s girlfriend. It’s not long before the boys are busy making the difficult return to civilian life, and Davy has been set up by Liz with her best mate, Yvonne, who hails from London. As the title suggests, Edinburgh forms an omnipresent backdrop to the action — not in the manner of a glossy tourist brochure, but rather to help anchor the emotional vagaries of the narrative.

Despite its universal schema, the plot takes numerous twists and turns, reaching a powerful climax at Rab and Jean’s 25th anniversary party, where a dangerous secret is revealed and all three relationships suffer a major setback. The Proclaimers’ songs — with their democratic spirit and ability to express the full range of everyday human experience from longing to loss, love to hate, despair to celebration — are ideal vehicles for expressing the volatile emotional landscape unfolding on screen.

Unlike the film version of *Mamma Mia!* — reviewed in this column in 2008 — where the plot forms a very creaky vehicle for a couple of dozen Abba songs, the dialogue is sharp and the story line has been crafted with care. Occasionally, though, we can see a narrative line coming, as when Liz sets up a moving rendition of “Letter from America” as she prepares to take up a nursing job in Florida. Other scenes have been more subtly prepared, as when museum manager Harry, who has long held a candle for Jean, leads her and the other staff in “Should Have Been Loved”.

Sassy, funny, touching, and with fine tunes galore, *Sunshine on Leith* is the ideal tonic for driving away low-lying mists in the Edinburgh of the South, or any other Kiwi town this winter. ■

me to ecumenism as a deep, spiritual commitment of my life”. From that day on, Michael was gifted with the conviction: “there can be no true ecumenism without a conversion of heart.” (UR 7)

The key chapter to this collection of papers is on “Koinonia – an ecumenical breakthrough”. The theology and spirituality of *koinonia*/communion, rooted in the life of the Trinity, has emerged as foundational to all modern ecumenical dialogues on the nature and mission of the church. Michael would have rejoiced to see the recent publication of *The Church: towards a common vision* (Faith and Order, WCC, Geneva, 2013). Watch this space for the most promising developments in the ecumenical dialogue.

For anyone new to ecumenism, the two chapters on a Catholic understanding of Ecumenism (pp 157-190) are a good place to start. A comprehensive index is helpful to the reader looking for information on the various bilateral dialogues with Orthodox, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, Reformed and Pentecostal churches.

While quite distinct from ecumenism, interfaith relations are also covered in this collection, with a particular focus on relations with the Jews, and with the Muslim community.

Bishop Michael how now bridged the final gap, has been called from life to new life, and knows the fullness of the *koinonia*, communion in the Trinity, on which his ecumenical vision was built. ■



# Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

## housing and economic revolution

Does society, via the government, have any responsibility regarding housing — supply, affordability, basic construction standards, minimum standards for healthy living etc? The housing market is caught up in the economic turmoil that besets the world. Auckland is a prime example, with prices making it impossible for many to buy their own home. Those with more money can buy up houses as rental stock; they can trade this when they wish to make a tax-free capital gain.

A picture emerges from some recent *NZ Herald* items.

A pre-Christmas headline tells part of the story: “Developers picked to net \$M28 from Crown land sell-off.” The article explains how state houses and their sections are on the market and that developers, by building high-cost replacements, could do very well out of the deal. Developers have the resources to buy up vacant land and hold it until they are ready to proceed. They have no incentive to build low-cost housing because it generates less profit. Ratepayers have to foot the bill for additional road-ing and underground services, and productive land is lost.

A 20 March article provided many figures and details: “Surprise census figures suggest that poverty may be breaking up the nuclear family.” It is suggested that the welfare system meant many couples were better off separating because if one partner lost a job they can’t get a benefit if the other is working.

25 March: “Foreign funds eye our real estate. Kiwi property joins list of favourite locations for Asia-Pacific fund managers with \$2 trillion to spend.” NZ comes in at number eight on the list.

April 25: “... in 2011 Housing

NZ slowed down its repairs and maintenance to fund an unexpected \$M45 jump in dividend from \$M63 agreed in the agency’s statement of intent to \$M108.”

The government has effected some positive changes regarding housing but they are minor. NZ is enmeshed in an extremely complex international economic system; the matters referred to above require radical action. It seems to me that two sets of conditions are required.

- The first set is that there be a well-developed consciousness among ordinary people world-wide that the system is sick, that there be a genuine recognition among the movers and shakers that it is so, and that there be a reworking of economic orthodoxy that provides a solid base for the needed changes.
- The second set calls for leadership at those three levels.

In recent times there has been evidence of growth in understanding and consciousness-raising at the first level. As for the second set, Lord King, Governor of the Bank of England from 2003 to 2013, says the major rebalancing needed for the global economy to become sustainable is likely to be resisted to the last; that the global financial crisis is far from over and the underlying problems that gave rise to it remain unsolved. Pope Francis is giving new impetus to Catholic Social Teaching, and is working closely with the Archbishop of Canterbury. As for the third level, a recent work by Thomas Picketty has rocked the world of economic orthodoxy by showing that capitalism as currently applied (i.e. light or no regulation) is of its nature pre-ordained to increase inequality, foment social unrest, and (as Marx claimed) to undermine itself. Is it

reasonable to hope that our politicians will face up to economic reality instead of blindly following a failed orthodoxy?

## stem cells and old age

It is reported that stem cells have been successfully created from the skin of adults as old as 75. Hitherto this technique has been limited to the skin of infants. The nucleus of an unfertilized egg is removed and replaced with a skin cell; stem cells can grow into any kind of tissue. It is expected that various follow-up processes will result in a replacement body part for someone in need.

This opens the prospect of remedying the ravages of various diseases affecting people older than babies. It also undermines arguments in favour of cloning embryos for purely medical purposes.

A problem remains in that, if the plans for widespread adoption of this technique are to be fulfilled, a supply of unfertilized eggs will be required from donor women. A number of issues in this regard remain to be addressed.

## god-particles, inflation and faith

Scientists now think they have proof of an event that occurred at the beginning of our universe which seems to explain some puzzling aspects of its behaviour. This is a fascinating subject. Last year we were regaled with stories about the discovery of the ‘God-particle’ — the Higgs boson. A scientist wrote a book on the subject; the publisher chose the name to promote sales. The scientist had made no such claim.

Some people find all this disturbing. Others rejoice in their interpretation that it proves there is no God. My faith tells me that knowledge of how creation works reveals something of its Creator. This is something found throughout Sacred scripture. ■

# richness of gifts in community

Peter Norris

When I wrote my last column I was preparing for the visit of John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York. The visit took place. Margaret, John's wife, and he spoke to different groups and they were both made Fellows of our College. However, among all the words, the event that stood out for me was not based on words. John and Margaret took over my kitchen from 11.00 am to 6.00 pm and cooked a meal for our student welfare staff. Fourteen people sat down to eat a lovely meal. I said afterward that everyone would forget his words within a few weeks but no one would forget that he cooked a meal for our group. The student staff talked to their friends in the College, to their incredulous families, and to anyone they could brag to. We had a great meal.

Events like these are crucial for a life of faith. It is actually hard to see them and digest them. But there are other faith filled events around us. I am just back from a month's sabbatical leave where I had some great examples of this. I stayed for the first two weeks at the Norbertine Abbey, just outside of Philadelphia. When I was a student they welcomed me in the mid-year holidays. A friend

of mine tutored me in German and Latin for my university work. I was not a good student but I loved the company. The order, older than the Franciscans and Dominicans, consists of Canons Regular who, in my easy way of defining, are like Diocesan priests living in community. When I was a student I was impressed by their friendship and also by their promotion of the academic life. I also loved their celebration of liturgy.

This visit rekindled my links and personally refreshed me. I seemed to spend half of my time sleeping but needed it. I actually enjoyed seeing the people in the Abbey relating to one another and I enjoyed the differences among them. My close friend is a palaeographer and was engrossed in doing translations of medieval manuscripts as well as working with retreats. Some others were working in schools and some in parishes. It was sad to walk through the abbey cemetery and see the graves of so many that I knew from when I first visited in the late 70s. The foundation abbot is there and I remember him saying to me once that whenever any of the priests lost a lot of weight he always wondered, "What is her name?"

We only have an autocratic monarchical episcopal system here in New

Zealand, but people like the Norbertines represented a more collegial system. The abbot I remember from when I was younger was elected to three six year terms. He did not stand again and the community went through a divided stage. We often want democracy in choosing bishops but it does not always mean that the right person would be chosen. The Abbey is now working well again and is a lovely place to visit.

Our church is broader than we realise, as here in New Zealand we do not know the monastic tradition. With only the Cistercian monastery at Kopua in the North Island, most people are unaware of this richness within the church. In the past abbots often employed bishops to do various tasks. Staying with the Norbertines reminded me of the church's wider history and I learnt what community means. We all need special moments in our faith and we all have them. It may be a meal cooked by someone special and it may be people engaged in a different task. These moments that help us reflect. ■

*Father Peter Norris is the Master of St Margaret's College, on the campus of the University of Otago in Dunedin.*

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# a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

“So we sang some worship songs about the goodness of God and the good in daily life. Then the priest talked about who God is and the importance of our journeys to knowing the Unknowable through our lives of faith, unfaith, belief and unbelief. Why we need continually to seek the Holy One. He then talked of my mother, who she was, her faithfulness in worship and how tirelessly she cared for both her family and others around her. He gave us ideas on how to cope as we mourn her going. And then we all said our farewells to her with half-familiar rituals and words. After the cremation, we went back home and shared food together. It was really a moving funeral for us all.”

Though he is from a Hindu background, Sanju explained that he hadn't been into a Hindu temple since his conversion to Christianity over 30 years ago. He had attended this funeral with some trepidation but respectful of the importance of a son's presence at the funeral rites for his mother. Sanju is now a pastor of a Protestant church

— but the thing that struck me as I listened to Sanju's account was how similar this funeral seemed in form and content to any parish funeral in New Zealand.

I also was struck by the sense of God's presence at Sanju's Mum's funeral in that Hindu temple.

In the gospels Jesus often seems to challenge the Pharisees tightly-defined rules about where God is and isn't. He resists attempts to put God and God's laws into a tidy, tied-up package. He pushes back when quoted the minutiae of rules about the Sabbath. He re-defines rules about what truly makes a person unclean. He simplifies the in and out rules of eternal judgement in Matthew 25 to an extraordinary welcome to all who have shown compassion to the poor and marginalised “Welcome to your eternal rest, for all of you who visited those in prison, fed the hungry and clothed the naked. As much as you did this to the very least of my people, you did it unto me”. A key message in the gospels that I keep stumbling across is: “Keep your

eyes peeled for the presence of God in surprising places. In the tears and perfume gift of a forgiven commercial sex-worker. In the repentance of a corrupt tax collector. In the drawing of water and conversation with a migrant woman who has had many husbands.”

I get the idea that humankind is too blinkered to be too definitive about who is in or out of the Reign of God. All too often

I will miss out on seeing God's presence or hand in a situation because I have a too restricted (and unimaginative) vision of who and where God is.

Sanju's story of his mother's gentle Hindu funeral prods me. As an individual and a family I hope we can keep our eyes and minds more open to seeing God among us — perhaps our Hindu friends and neighbours can even be part of our journey to knowing God. ■

*Kaaren Mathias lives with her husband Jeph and four children in North India, where she works in community health and development. Her email address is: kaarenmathias@gmail.com*



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