

# Tui Motu

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*I was a stranger...  
and you welcomed me*



## Contents

2-3	...editorials	<i>Mary Woods</i>
4	...letters	
5	...overseas news	
	<b>focus on l'Arche</b>	
6	...poems	<i>Mary Woods, Joy Cowley</i>
7-9	...I met an extraordinary man	<i>Judith Graham</i>
10-11	...The best place on earth	<i>Sue Townsend</i>
12-13	...George – a story of homecoming	
14-15	...Journey with the Jewish people	<i>Trish McBride</i>
16-17	...Caritas	
18-19	...Why I am still in the church	<i>Jeff Pratley</i>
20-22	...Reading the Scriptures: how the scholars can help us	<i>Tom Deidun IC</i>
23	...Forgiveness & the burden of hate	<i>Paul Andrews SJ</i>
24-25	...An incarnation of sorts	<i>Kevin Dobbryn FMS</i>
26	...Reconciled with everybody	<i>Desmond Smith</i>
27-29	...film & book reviews	<i>Nicola McCloy, Mike Crowl, Michael Mullins SM, E.J. Miller</i>
30	...Crosscurrents	
31	...What is truth?	<i>Charles Drennan</i>
32	...postscript	<i>Kate Vincent</i>

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## Who is my neighbour?

Jonah Lomu has been sent to purgatory. He's doing penance before he can enter the All Black Valhalla. But then it is that season. The MPs are back in the Beehive, and the rest of us are back at our computer screens and workbenches, while the sun is still beating down outside. "Unwillingly to school..."

And Ash Wednesday suddenly happens as a stern reminder. "Remember that you are dust..." Lent challenges us to turn our eye once more to distant horizons. It does more. It bids us to pray and to fast. "Go without, give alms and do works of mercy." That's its message. And of these, the last is probably the most demanding because nothing shakes us out of ourselves than having the needs of another invade our private space.

This issue of *Tui Motu* we focus especially on one very needy group, the intellectually disabled. Mary Woods (on page 3) clearly shows how topical this is. And we explore the vision of a singularly graced man. The movement of Jean Vanier and his influence has spread throughout the Catholic world quietly and powerfully like a leaven. *L'Arche* crosses the denominational barriers. Vanier's visit to the Lambeth Conference last November was a highlight and an inspiration to the world's Anglican bishops (see December *Tui Motu*). The *Faith and Light* communities have flourished in New Zealand for many years, and one year ago the first *L'Arche* community was established in Paraparaumu.

Meanwhile, deep in the Beehive the bees are buzzing again. Mrs Shipley is busy making honey. "It's going to be a great year", she tells us.

Saatchi squared would be proud of her. There must be an election looming. The very same day figures are published giving the lie to her optimism. The fruits of 15 years of economic rationalism, we are told, are greater unemployment, skilled people working longer hours for less money and poorer security; only the top 10 percent or so are much better off. Which of course includes Mrs Shipley and her colleagues.

One of the contemporary weasel words is *dependency*. Welfare services must be slashed because they create dependency. The 12th commandment is: *Thou shalt not create dependency*. (The 11th is the one recently broken by one W. J. Clinton). The Business Roundtable loves to import Christian voices who will denounce welfarism and dependency, and boost the doctrine of individual self-help.

Yet nothing could be further from the words and actions of Christ. The fact is some human beings will always be dependent. And all of us are dependent some of the time. We have to be picked up, dusted down and set on our feet again. What the work of Jean Vanier teaches us is that in selfless service of a needy person the essence of Christian love is touched. The presence of Christ is felt. And when the actions are done in a reverential and human way the giver soon becomes the receiver. Read the story of George on pp 12-13 of this issue if you need to be persuaded.

A final word about Jean Vanier. One who has known him well says Jean is always growing. As his experience increases his message continues to develop. No more need be said.

*M.H.*

*Tui Motu* welcomes discussion of spiritual, theological and social issues, in the light of gospel values and in the interest of a more peaceful and just society. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.



Mary Woods (left) and Anne McCormack (right) are community liaison chaplains for the Christchurch Templeton centre for the intellectually disabled

living in a household of six other people in a street somewhere in the city. They are moving to live in 'the community'. Some people may want to argue the motivation and the appropriateness of this move. But the reality is

that it is inevitably happening.

At the official end the process has had its challenges. Relocating a large number of people who have limited ability or who are unable to care for themselves is a major task. However, the

from other members of the community to express their spirituality.

What does this mean in practice for the churches? For some this may just mean church people visiting and being with them, in the way we might go and have coffee and sit with another friend. Some people will only experience God through the love shown them by others. Some congregations are enjoying the enthusiastic participation of new members in their church services – singing, altar serving and being there with other parishioners.

Many see God in other places than in church. Having people experience the beauty and power of God's creation, participating in music and especially in singing; seeing or doing art or drama: these are all ways that people with

In an Advent letter of 1998 Pat Favaro, of *l'Arche Calgary* writes: "We read in the Christmas story that God appeared to some shepherds through an angel. They were terribly afraid, but the angel said to them, '*Do not be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people*' (Lk.2,10). Like the shepherds we encounter people who are different. Perhaps we meet someone who thinks differently from us, or perhaps we meet someone from a different culture or religious tradition. Perhaps it is someone who has different needs and abilities from our own. As we encounter these differences our response can be like the shepherds, which was to be afraid. People who are strangers to us can sometimes disturb us.

"In *l'Arche* we believe that, whatever their gifts or limitations, people are all bound together in a common humanity. Everyone is of unique and sacred value, and everyone has the same dignity and the same rights. In our community life we are trying to diminish the walls that exist between people. We all need an environment where we can experience a sense of home, of safety and of companionship. In an environment like this we can face our fears and grow."

This message relates closely to what is happening in New Zealand at this time. De-institutionalisation is occurring all over the country as people with intellectual disabilities are being moved from the institutions they have lived in for many years to houses in the community. They are moving from living in an isolated situation along with maybe 500 other people of similar needs, to

contracts have been let, and interested providers have bought houses and employed staff to provide care. Residents have moved into their new living and working environments, and are adjusting – and in some cases blossoming – in their new locations.

But what about the community? After all, these people have moved to live in 'the community'. How has the community responded? In Christchurch I would have to say: "Variably". Like the shepherds some people are terribly afraid, and have expressed their fear by showing hostility to their new neighbours. Others have been most hospitable and welcomed the newcomers into their neighbourhood.

People with intellectual disability may have difficulty communicating through speech. Yet each is "unique and sacred", to quote Pat Favaro. Like the rest of us they have physical, psychological and spiritual needs. They need to be treated with respect; they need to belong to a community; and they need to express their connection with God in whatever way they perceive God. But because of their disabilities they will need support

intellectual disability can be in touch with God. But they need others to help them do these things. Who better than the church?

A group who particularly focus on the spiritual needs of the intellectually disabled are *Faith and Light*. They aim to have a family member and a friend for each person with an intellectual disability in the group. But the scenario of large numbers, many without available family members locally, coming from an institution to live in the community has put them under pressure. Church members can help by volunteering to be a friend in a *Faith and Life* group.

The movement of people with intellectual disability out of institutions and into the community creates a challenge and an opportunity for the churches. There is the challenge of learning to relate to another group of people. It can be hard work and require patience and commitment. And there is an opportunity to be enriched by the gifts they bring us if we can slow down enough to be able to receive them. ■

Mary Woods

## People with intellectual disability

## letters

### US Bombing of Baghdad

I fear the US has no other policy to offer except more and more violence toward those who seem to threaten us. My greatest hope is to be able to nurture a movement in the opposite direction, urging people that it is not only good Christianity but also common sense to return good for evil in this violence-prone world of ours.

I reached Baghdad only four or five weeks after the Ameriya shelter was hit by two of our 'smart bombs'. Dr Boghassian, Director of the Yarmuk hospital, took us to the shelter and gave us a personal tour. This was one of the most horrible experiences of my life, in which we were literally walking through the ashes of women and children to look at the damage inside the shelter. A truck was pumping water from the lower level. Water had been sprayed into the building for days after the bombing to try to reduce the level of heat. At the time we were there the bodies had not yet been

removed from the flooded levels. One evidence was that flies were swarming around us constantly.

Dr Boghassian told us the shelter had indeed been intended for VIPs like himself. Thus it may well be that even Saddam and/or some of his top staff took shelter in it occasionally. However, Dr Boghassian insisted that such people as himself used the shelter only one or two nights at the beginning. "We announced we would not be using the shelter any more, and soon after it was made available for local women and children."

I talked to several men in the neighbourhood. All of their wives and children had been killed in the shelter. The women and children were there because they thought it was a safe place to sleep at night. I never heard of any hint of pressure being put on them to stay there.

I have no admiration for Saddam Hussein and his way of ruling the people by terror. Nevertheless I don't think that truth is served by blaming Saddam for

things he apparently did not do. I am convinced that God only works through the truth.

*Don Mosley*, Jubilee Partners, Comer USA (abridged)

### Helping to make connections

The short piece "Another Crib Scene" by Sandra Winton (in December *Tui Motu*), so beautifully written, filled part of a gap in me that has ached for a long time. How things go when women tell what we know, transforms the world, I believe.

And Mary-Ann Bailey's *A Psalm – Yahweh clothes Herself in the beauty of creation* connected up a lot of things in my life. Thank you for these.

Something that didn't do anything for me though, was the paragraph heading *Holy Father and the Wrinklies*. That designation made me angry when I was younger and I hate it more now I am older. If the headline had been about Maori or people with disabilities it would have been accepted as offensive. Why different for older people?

*Sophie Hall*, Johnsonville.

## Rosary House Spiritual Life Centre Retreats

### Care of the Soul, Care of the Spirit

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Fr Mark Chamberlain and Team

A retreat which will explore the many ways in which life invites us to live holy lives

### Preached Retreat

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Fr John O'Connor

"TO GO WHERE GOD LEADS" An opportunity to grow in awareness of the presence and action of the Spirit of God in our lives, as we become aware of obstacles to this growth

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OPENING: 7.00pm Fr John O'Connor

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Cost \$30.00 per day

### Personal Directed Retreat

August 17-26

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(Maximum eight days)

### All I Want is to Know Christ

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Fr Bryan Montgomery

SM

There is only Christ; he is everything and is in

everything

### Preached Retreat

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Fr Philip King-Turner SM

To know the truth of yourself and your mission –  
*POVERTY OF SPIRIT*

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Team

A journey towards the healing of life's hurts. This retreat is a blend of meditations on the humanity of Jesus, of input on the normal and necessary grieving/healing process, private time and individual accompaniment

### Personal Directed Retreat

December 9-18 Fr Mark Chamberlain and Team

(Maximum eight days)

### Personal Directed Retreat

For bookings and further information contact:

Rosary House, 15 Dublin Street  
Christchurch 8001

Phone (03) 379 1298 Fax (03)366 1418

Email: roho@xtra.co.nz



# Pope in America condemns neo-liberal economics

## Pope John Paul in Mexico

Pope John Paul's visit to Mexico in January was his first to that country since 1993. His message this time was often in sharp contrast to that of six years ago. He still appealed to the devotional practices of Mexican Catholics – making Our Lady of Guadalupe the official Patron of both North and South America. He still made allusions to the dangers of 'indigenous theologies' and reminded the bishops to care for the rich as well as the poor.

The change in emphasis came in three days of repeated demands for justice for the powerless and for a change in global economic priorities. Even after the Asian and Brazilian economic crises, Mexico's government still adheres to a policy of belt tightening, with less money available for education, the closure of hospitals and the ongoing privatisation of government-held assets. The Pope spoke out boldly against this approach. "More and more," he said, "in many countries of America, a system known as neo-liberalism prevails. Based on a purely economic conception of man, this system considers profit and the law of the market as its only parameters, to the detriment of the dignity and respect due to individuals and peoples. At times this system has become the ideological justification for certain attitudes and behaviour in the

social and political spheres leading to the neglect of the weaker members of society. Indeed, the poor are becoming even more numerous, victims of unjust policies and structures."

Human rights groups are continually condemning the Mexican government for its use of torture, kidnapping and organised violence; and the Pope took up this theme on several occasions. In an emotional homily he pleaded with the people: "My beloved brothers and sisters, now is the time to eliminate everything that destroys life. 'No' to violence, terrorism and drug trafficking. 'No' to torture and other kinds of abuse such as unnecessary capital punishment. 'No' to the exploitation of the weak. 'No' to racial discrimination. 'No' to the rings of slums which gird our cities. These are intolerable evils that cry to heaven."

The Holy Father made it clear that he sees the Americas as one region, a region which contains 60 percent of the world's Catholics. One Vatican commentator remarked that the Pope appears to want to make Mexico City the 'Rome of the Americas'.

## Bishop claims false accusation

The 70 year old Archbishop of Cardiff in South Wales, John Ward, was arrested last month over allegations that he sexually assaulted a 7-year-old girl

while he was a parish priest in London over 30 years ago. The Archbishop has denied the allegations.

In a statement the Archbishop said: "Tragically there have been cases where priests have been guilty of heinous crimes which must be condemned. But many priests have been falsely accused, and because of police connections with the media their lives have been made a misery and their ministry damaged. In the present climate none of us is safe from false accusations. I have never touched a woman sexually and that is why I am at peace with myself. I can say before God that there was no action by me against her."

## Benedictines say Cheers!

The population of New Norcia in Western Australia is 50 but it gets 50,000 visitors annually.

It is the site of Australia's only Benedictine monastery, and the local monks already own the town's bakery, museum, guesthouse and library. There is only one other business and the monks have now purchased it – the hotel and the pub.

The Prior, Dom Christopher, said: "The town is struggling to survive. We thought it had its best chance for survival if the monks operated all the businesses in town." ■

For those who follow this column with interest and forbearing I have some good news. Do you recall my reference to an erstwhile benefactor who declared an intention to will *Tui Motu* something. My response suggesting a contribution sooner rather than later has prevailed, and a 4 figure cheque has reached our office. (The first digit is *one*, lest you conclude that all financial worries are now over!) It is a significant and welcome event, the precursor of further support we hope.

Widespread reinforcement has emerged with a very strong response

## Promoters Corner

to the February subscription renewal, which is an exceptionally large one. 90 percent of respondents to date have renewed for 12 months, and many who could afford to give more have included a donation. This has demonstrated for us what we had hoped: that TM readers are crew rather than passengers.

Almost as important as money is your energy and time if you are willing to brave the church porch once a month and sell *Tui Motu* at \$4 per copy. The copies are sent direct to you at home, and you forward the sales income direct

to the Dunedin office every three months or more often, as you choose. At the time of sale you may feel as I do – like a 'frog on a log'. But it works, and even better if your friendly parish priest is amenable to a 60 second commercial (by you) at the end of Mass. If you are even slightly tempted to undertake this not too onerous apostolic work, drop me a note or phone me and let's talk further about it. Or contact the office if that is more convenient.

26 Hopkins Crescent, Auckland 1005:

(ph. 09 521 1342)

Tom Cloher

# Who is my neighbour?

Mary Woods

Who is my neighbour?  
I need you to walk beside me  
and help me find the way to God.  
And who is God?  
Made in God's image  
I am Godlike.

Man, woman.  
I feel, I sense,  
I may even understand  
but I can't tell you how it is.

What I haven't got  
I cannot give  
but I have gifts for you.  
Yet it's not our gifts that matter  
like goods to trade.  
God is the linkage  
in our relationship.

God is in the  
patterns of our lives;  
the changing of the seasons  
the celebration  
of you and me.

*But how can I respond to you?  
I'm frightened.  
I cannot understand you.  
I don't know what to expect of you.*

*You might embarrass me.  
Or even worse, will you injure me?  
You seem so different, so out of step.  
What about my family? my children?  
Will you be a danger to them?  
It's all so scary.*

*You ought not to be here  
showing yourself in  
our decent neighbourhood  
facing me with my limitations  
or stirring memories of losses  
buried long ago.*

*I'm kind and good  
and go to church.  
I'm independent and  
don't need help or charity.  
So why are you coming  
here and unsettling me?*

I'm part of you  
as you are part of me.  
Our link is called humanity  
and God is one with us.

You sent me away to live apart.  
Now you call me  
back to the community.  
But I come with wounds,  
wounds of rejection,  
wounds of institutionalisation,  
wounds inflicted by people.  
And I'm vulnerable still.

Yes, I am out of tune.  
I don't know how  
to live in your world  
But remember I am human too.  
I am also frightened  
by the change.

I need you  
to listen to me  
to hear my pain  
to walk with me  
to find a way  
for us to be together  
in community.

I need to grow  
in new and different ways.  
I need to belong  
to that community where you belong  
and know the answer when I ask  
Who is my neighbour?

## The Eternal Love



Stop!  
You look in the wrong direction!  
I am not two thousand years distant  
but right here beside you,  
my shoulder against your shoulder,  
my hand resting on the back of your neck,  
my breath mixed with your breath  
in the same nowness.

How could you miss me?  
Forget the history and the politics  
that make truth small.  
They are not important enough  
to be pursued or rejected.  
Turn with the eyes of your heart  
and see who has not left your side  
since your soul took human journey.  
Say my name in our own secret language  
and remember what we have always been  
to each other.

Lean on me, Beloved.  
Trust to die in my love.

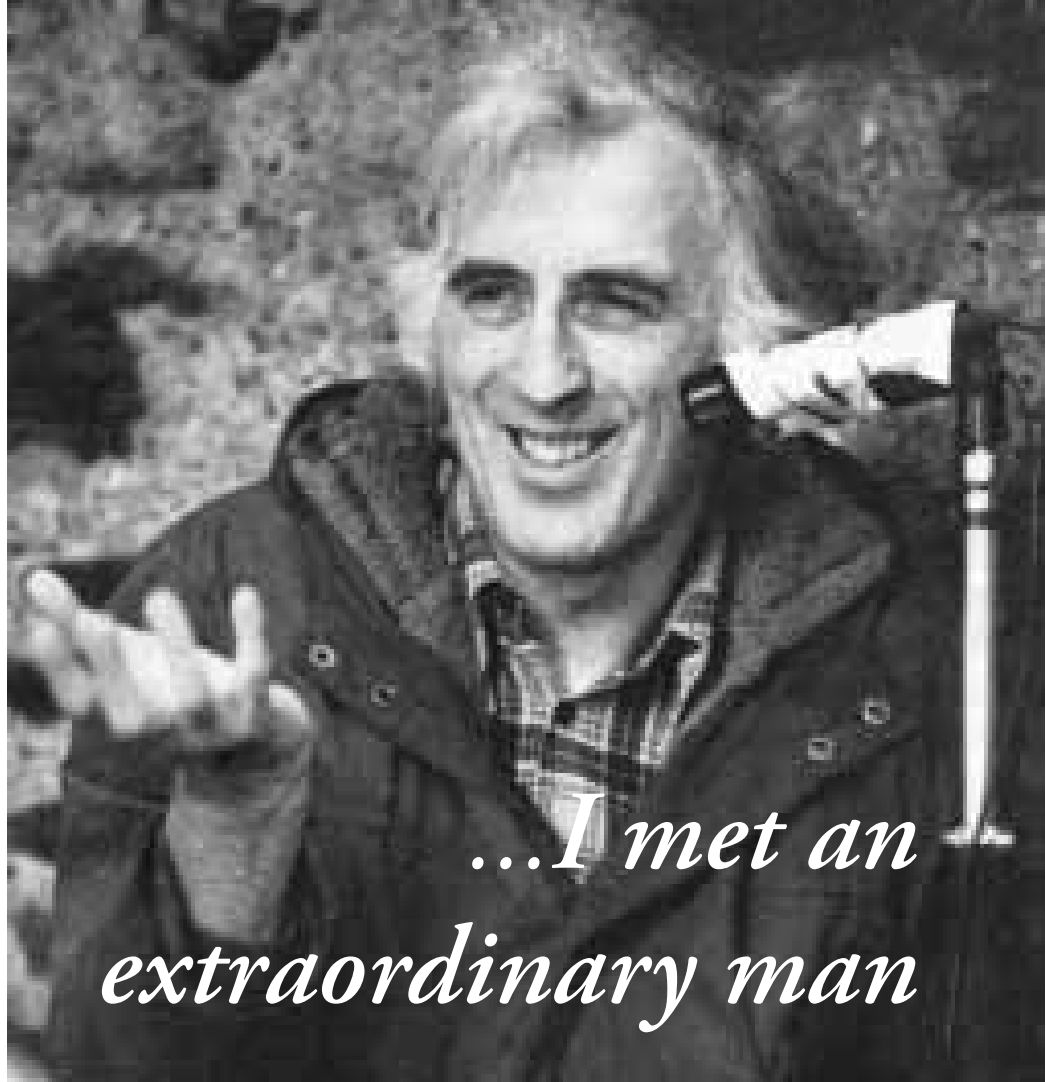
Joy

*Judith Graham  
tells the story  
of Jean Vanier,  
founder of l'Arche  
– and how she met  
him*

I met an extraordinary man last week. Not 'met' in the physical sense but more 'soul to soul'. I heard him speak on tape from conferences he gave during an earlier New Zealand visit; I read a biography, some of his works – especially the biography of his father's spiritual life. I met Jean Vanier, a truly extraordinary human being who has a wide following throughout the world, a spiritual leader and founder of *l'Arche* communities in Europe and Asia, the inspirer of the *Faith and Light* movement.

Sometimes reading of someone so obviously *of God* can depress and alienate us. We recognise their sanctity but are too frightened to let it infiltrate our comfort zones. But Jean Vanier charms us – with his honesty, his simplicity, his acceptance of the human condition; and mostly because we recognise, if ever so guardedly, the authentic voice of Christ in the late 20th Century.

I had just finished reading about the case of a mentally handicapped woman found by the police near death in her flat in a North Island town. Neighbours reported they had not seen her for several weeks, that she was known to be strange, shuffling through the suburban streets avoiding eye contact, unwilling to talk. When the police broke into her house they found her filthy and near death through starvation and neglect. She had been an outpatient in a mental hospital and, wanting her independence, had been deemed fit to cope by herself in the community.



And then I read Jean Vanier: "Much of my life over the last 20 years has been with men and women having a mental handicap. I have seen and touched their pain: the terrible pain of being a disappointment to their parents... This feeling of not being wanted, just as they are, engenders a sense of guilt... So they think they are worthless, just a nuisance – maybe even evil.

"And from this loneliness arises anguish and confusion, an inner brokenness, no trust in themselves or in others... and so they are put aside even more, rejected. They sense they belong nowhere and to no one" (*The Broken Body* 1988, p 12).

He goes on to write that over the years of living with people who have been "crushed or put aside" he has discovered not only the depths of his own heart, not just the "mystery of Jesus and of his message", but how that message "lights up humanity and its history". Jean Vanier reminds us of what Christ taught: that those society rejects because it is afraid of them, are the very people

who have most to teach us about trust and openness and love. And even more, in this age of self-awareness and the quest for self-growth, these supposed rejects can help us find our true selves.

And Jean Vanier doesn't merely write about this. Up till 1964 he had been searching for a kind of community living that would satisfy him. His search led finally to *l'Arche*.

Jean was born to Pauline and General George Vanier, a distinguished soldier and later Governor General of Canada. At first he looked for a military life himself at the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth in England. (A report noted that Jean showed some good qualities but that he "lacked respect for his senior officers". His father is reported to have commented: "As long as he never shows a lack of respect for those under him, he'll be all right!")

He resigned his commission with the Royal Canadian Navy in 1950 and moved to a poor suburb of Paris to



join the community of *Eau Vive* ('Living Water') which was attached to a Dominican Priory, where some 80 students were being trained in prayer and metaphysics. He became their Director – but this did not go down well with the Dominicans who would have preferred a priest-director. So he started to train to be a priest. But he was required to sign

a document of complete submission to church authority. He refused and was dismissed, and that was the end of his seminary studies.

What this dismissal did for Jean was to make him stand outside the hierarchy of the church and some of its rigid traditions, and look more acutely at what was for him the essence of



Jean Vanier and Raphael celebrate the 25th anniversary of *l'Arche*

## So who is Jean Vanier?

As a leader, Jean Vanier has the grace of knowing himself well. He's an excellent judge of character, and has good 'people' skills. He frequently speaks and preaches on "servant-leadership" – and he practises it in his own life. His aim is always to enhance the conditions whereby a person, or a community, can grow.

As a person Jean is great fun. He often plays jokes and has a wonderful sense of celebration. When he is at table with a group he is inclusive of everyone present. He meets people at the level which is best for them.

As a spiritual guide he has the gift of understanding the human heart: its generosity as well as the dark side. He is not afraid to confront the brokenness in a person. Once his stance might have seemed to people to be challenging and rather starkly prophetic. Nowadays he is more gentle. "Jesus invites you ...", he says.

Since the time he founded *l'Arche* his relationship with the official Church has always been respectful. Yet he has a message to give – his ardent conviction

that *unity* is the destiny of the Christian churches. And he believes that it is the weak and the marginalised who will lead the churches back to unity.

Jean notices how anguished a mentally disabled person becomes when their assistants are themselves in dispute. The disabled find the divisions between Christians totally unintelligible. As a result the *l'Arche* communities tend to be especially aware of the scandal of Christian disunity.

Jean Vanier is a passionate person in the sense that he is completely dedicated to the work and the members of each community. When *l'Arche* becomes established in a new place, he is at pains to 'take to heart' the new country or location, its culture and its special character. He is a courageous man. Once an angry person turned up and attacked one of the community members. Jean was sent for, and he insisted that if blows were to be traded he should be the recipient. The man hit him so hard that he suffered a punctured eardrum, and has had impaired hearing ever since.

Mike Noonan

Christian tradition – the meeting of Jesus. He tried living in a Trappist monastery. He tried living by himself. He completed a Doctorate in Theology and began a teaching career in Toronto.

Then, one day he visited a mental hospital and met there two unhappy male inmates, Raphael and Philippe. He asked to take them back with him to his little house in Trosly. It was 1964 and that was where *l'Arche* was born. Here Jean Vanier found what he had been seeking for ten years, a community where the lonely and rejected, the outcasts of society can share life with others who are carers but are also learners; where both groups are teachers and where "a revolution of love and compassion" takes place daily.

Jean Vanier was the child of very spiritual parents. I find it revealing that he has written a book on the spiritual sources of his father's strength: *In Weakness, Strength* (1969). Those strengths are the familiar ones – daily Mass (a room in the vice-regal home was converted into a chapel); a daily half hour set aside for meditation which was sometimes "dry and difficult for him... But whether in dryness and distraction or peace and recollection, he was always faithful to the half hour". Georges Vanier showed an openness to people and a kindness and generosity to his own. He recognised the spirituality in all religions. "He welcomed opportunities to worship in churches other than his own," said the *Montreal Star*, reviewing this biography.

I say I find this revealing, because although Jean Vanier saw his father as a man of power and social status, yet he chose to write a spiritual biography, about what was secret and unknown to many. Jean acknowledges that the source of all goodness comes from a poverty of spirit that opens the soul to God's work – an awareness of God, an ability to listen to God in prayer as well as in the anguish of those whom the 'real world' rejects. What greater gift can any parent give to any child? Vanier



is obviously a person very close to God. His spiritual writing is beautiful – but his life is even more so: his relationship with those whom we avoid by saying they need the care of paid clinicians and experts. He shows that of course these people do need clinical care, but they also need love. They need to be listened to and valued for themselves. Sometimes such qualities of care are found together, but often enough the *patient*, the *client* disguises the *person* in the eyes of the carer.

Jean Vanier takes this same openness to prison visiting. He knows he is likely to be rejected by the prisoners, even reviled and abused. He listens, he offers cigarettes; he does not talk *at*. And he does not take offence at what is said. He accepts it as one who is himself imprisoned – by his fears, his upbringing, his comfort zones.

*If I go into prison  
I find myself before*

*men and women.  
They look at me*

*I look at them.*

*Their eyes call me*

*I start to listen*

*I start to listen to a man...*

*I discover*

*he has lived in misery...  
he has known only discord  
contact with alcoholism,  
drugs, crime, violence...*

*And I discover*

*I have received so much –  
a family who love me,  
few material problems,  
few worries – peace*

*So I discover*

*he is true to the logic  
of his being*

*truer than I am.*

*Perhaps it's I*

*who should be in prison*

(Be Not Afraid 1975)

So, I have met an extraordinary man. I envy those who have met and known him personally. His life and example make me think beyond the tiny parameters of my own life. His characteristic openness to goodness anywhere, especially in places we tend to overlook, is as good a guide as any for the new Millennium. ■

## First *l'Arche* community in NZ

The first *l'Arche* community in New Zealand has just celebrated its birthday. On 21 February 1998 *l'Arche Kapiti*, in Paraparaumu, came into being when it welcomed James, its first disabled member. He was joined the next day by Kim and shortly afterwards by Todd and Julie. Angela Capes, the community's leader, had two years experience at the *l'Arche* community in Canberra to prepare her to take on the responsibility.

Also in the team are Dana, from Poland who has belonged to communities in Canada and the UK. Br Des Quirke is a part-time assistant. And Fr Rod Milne, from Otaki, is the pastoral minister. The four disabled members of *l'Arche Kapiti* are all from the Wellington area, so their families are close by. Todd, who is the most disabled, was looked after at home for the first 32 years of his life. His mother wrote to Jean Vanier nine years ago, and Jean replied she must pray for a solution for Todd's ongoing care. *l'Arche Kapiti* is a response to her prayer.

The Paraparaumu community has followed closely the Australian pattern, starting small with just four disabled members. Eileen Glass, *l'Arche* Zone Co-ordinator, has kept a supportive eye on its genesis. The cost of buying the first house has been born through money on long term loan from the

*Friends of l'Arche* in New Zealand. A second house nearby has just been acquired. Angela says that this development is very much a step in faith, but she feels having more than one house is part of the healthy growth of the community.

So where did it all start? Fr Rod Milne, a Marist priest presently stationed in Otaki, just up the road from Paraparaumu, has been interested in the movement since spending four months in the *Daybreak* community in Canada in 1990, where the late Henri Nouwen was a member. When he returned to New Zealand Rod joined a well-established *Faith and Light* group in Porirua. It was *Faith and Light* who invited Jean Vanier to lead a retreat in Christchurch in 1993, attended by more than 150 people. A group of some 30 met up with Jean, who outlined for them the steps to take in preparation for the eventual establishment of the first New Zealand *l'Arche*. They were to keep in touch and establish a newsletter, and contact New Zealanders who had worked in *l'Arche* overseas. As a result Rod Milne, like Angela, spent time in Australia preparing for a first foundation.

The pastoral minister is an integral part of each community. Rod feels that while each community member has a gift to share, his gift is his vocation as

Founder members of *l'Arche Kapiti* community:  
(l to r) Todd (in wheelchair), James, Kim (at back), and Julie



# The Best Place on Earth

*Sue Townsend visits another community of Intellectually Disabled people based on Gospel lines. Marrolomeda, in Christchurch is coming up to its tenth birthday, and is alive and well*

In a society that places high value on competence and 'normality' the death of a person with an intellectual disability often passes virtually unmarked. Not so for Mary de Roo, who died in July last year. The sudden death of this quiet, gentle 50 year old woman created ripples that drew a capacity congregation to the parish church of St Joseph's in Papanui, Christchurch, for Mary's funeral.

For the last six years Mary had been a resident of Marrolomeda, a residential community providing lifetime care to people with intellectual disabilities, in a family setting. Based on the philosophy of Jean Vanier and the *l'Arche* movement and named by the Australian Aboriginal word meaning "the best place on earth", the community is the fulfilment of a dream for Catholic couple Anne-Marie and Roger Pike, both of whom forsook teaching careers to make their vision a reality.

According to Anne-Marie, this first experience of losing a community member has had a transforming effect on the lives of the 19 residents and their carers. Although they had always known that a commitment to lifetime care meant they would have to face the death of a resident sooner or later, it was only a theory: now it's a reality. "In a way we came of age, having someone in heaven. It was a difficult time but a rich one, a time of helping a lot of our people to come to terms



Ross McEvoy with his dog Lady and Anne-Marie Pike

with the whole concept of death and all that goes with it."

The majority of residents came to the community from institutional care, where death might have been handled in a very different way. A moving illustration of this came from



## NZ's first *l'Arche* community

a priest. But he quotes Henri Nouwen, who said: "In *l'Arche* the priest is not imposed on the community. He is called forth by the community". So, as pastoral minister he visits at least once a week, usually just to be there and be part of the team, but available to celebrate Eucharist or lead prayer when asked. In Paraparaumu there is already a close bond between the community and the Catholic parish – the church

is just along the road. Angela hopes that an equally close link can be established with the other Christian churches there. Rod and Angela both attend the Board meetings, not as members, but their presence helps to keep the Board constantly aware of the spiritual nature of *l'Arche*.

Rod Milne feels that, like Henri Nouwen, he has felt a change in the way he appreciates the gift of priesthood.

Jesus asked, "Can you drink this cup?" Nouwen said: "the nature of my priesthood has now become a compassionate 'being with'".

A compassionate 'being with' is what *l'Arche* is all about. ■

*Anyone interested in becoming an assistant to live and share the life of the community should contact Angela Capes, l'Arche Kapiti, 15 Redwood Close, Paraparaumu.*

Mary's room-mate, who, very soon after her friend's death, asked Anne-Marie when Mary's clothes would be taken away. Obviously she was used to things being cleared away pretty quickly before the next person was moved in. "I told her we would put a rose on Mary's bed and just leave everything for a while, and deal with her clothes when we were ready."

An important part of dealing with the grief and loss is hands-on involvement. Community members dressed Mary in her best clothes while she was at the funeral director's premises and then had her at home for three days before the funeral. Everybody was encouraged to contribute what they could – making cards, drawing pictures and joining in times of prayer. Mary's artworks and her soft toys were displayed.

One resident was initially apprehensive about approaching Mary's body, hiding behind Anne-Marie when they were close to the casket. Later on Anne-Marie found her alone in the community's activity centre with Mary, and watched her pull up a chair beside the casket and sit down, saying "Here we are, Mary". Not only were the residents able to grow from their loss – the carers, too, felt an impact. One assistant shared with Anne-Marie a realisation that hit her after Mary's death. While showering Ross, a task she has been doing for the last 5 years, she suddenly began to see with a new clarity what a sacred and privileged task the task of caring is.

After nearly 10 years of life, the Marralameda community still finds its heart in the Gospel message of caring, lived out through the minutiae of daily life. Its main task is building relationships and nourishing the innate spiritual gifts of this small group of gentle people who differ from society's norms.

"Because they aren't intellectually 'bright', they bring up spiritual values," Anne-Marie Pike reflects. "They have a capacity to love that would floor you because they don't look at whether you are good-looking or fat or thin - they just love you."

A fruit of Jean Vanier's first visit to New Zealand in the late '70s was the establishment of *Faith and Light*. There are now 11 *Faith and Light* groups throughout the country, three of which are in Christchurch. Elaine Swain and her Down's Syndrome daughter Clare belong to one of these communities which has been in existence 18 months although Elaine and Clare have been involved in the movement since Clare was 7, and she is now in her early 20s.

"Ideally", says Elaine, "the communities are small – 30-40 people. Of these about a third are intellectually disabled, a third are family members and the rest are friends and supporters. The group

## Faith and Light

meets roughly once a month. News is shared and then the group settle down to work through an activity based on the theme for the month. This often involves music and mime. This leads into a time of prayer."

There is a shared meal, which in the case of Elaine's group closes the proceedings. The meetings are well supported, and Elaine says that for her daughter the meetings are a highlight of her life. Elaine can see real spiritual growth among the handicapped members – but also in the families and friends. It is of mutual benefit.

"What we do here isn't grand. The TV cameras are not going to come out and say 'fantastic!' But for the people here it *is* fantastic. It's a place where they're accepted and loved and respected for who they are. It's about recognising each other's gifts - that you've got something to offer and I've got something to offer, and together we can make the world a better place. Ernie, for instance, laughs. You just can't feel grumpy in his company. But no-one's going to pay him an hourly rate for doing that."

"Our original dream was to live a simple life based on the Gospel. Now I've got a fax, a computer, a cellphone and a 42 page contract with the Regional Health Authority, so I'm not sure what happened to the simple life! But the concept is still the same." ■



Ann Miller knitting



Ernie King on his bed



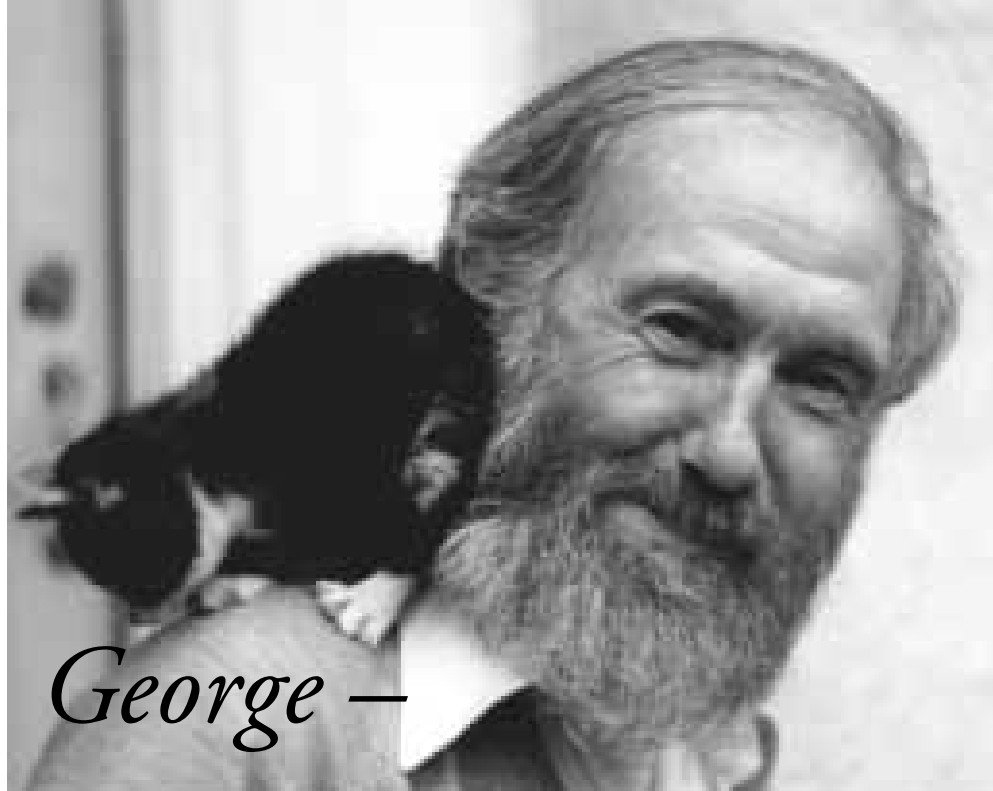
Margaret Bowring practices writing skills with assistant Moira Tolan

Although the origins are Catholic, it has been ecumenical from the start, since the problem of finding a place for intellectually disabled people seems to be common with all Christian groups. In *Faith and Light* there is no such problem. Family members can relax and share in the meetings because they know their 'child' is accepted and welcomed. Which is not always the case in the Christian Assembly!

Once disabled people were regarded by the church as 'infants', incapable of spiritual growth. *Faith and Light* has shown this to be quite untrue. They are capable of a spiritual maturity – and they give as much as they receive. ■



*Mike and Maria Noonan spent nearly 20 years in various l'Arche communities in Britain before returning to New Zealand in 1995. Their story of George paints a vivid picture of life in a l'Arche community*



## *George – a story of homecoming*

George arrived at *The Anchorage*, one of the community houses of l'Arche in Liverpool, one wet night in 1977. He was brought there by his brother who was rigid with tension, stating that if the community wouldn't take George he would kill him.

George was intellectually disabled but also suffered from a high degree of anxiety neurosis. He was anti-life. He hated

his family crazy, and had been thrown out by every institution, including the church ones. Only the Calvary Baptist church tolerated him, and they did this by sending him upstairs into a gallery by himself where he wouldn't disturb anyone! But they at least stayed faithful to him.

He appeared to hate life – yet he was petrified of death. He had seen both his parents lowered into the ground in a box, and so he had developed an obsessive persecution mania about undertakers – and one firm of undertakers in particular, who he was sure were out to get him. His arrival at *The Anchorage* soon precipitated the need for the community to start a second house, called *The Well*, and that was where George found his home. Initially he was so destructive and negative that his health began to deteriorate – as did the sanity of the other community members. A crisis arose: how to cope with George? It was George who succeeded in puncturing the myth that 'in this inclusive Christian community we can handle anyone'. People would wake up in the morning dreaming how they could get rid of George. He succeeded in confronting everybody's darkness.

"George brought us to our knees, literally," says Mike who was one of George's carers. The community sought the help of Thérèse Vanier, a medical consultant, Jean Vanier's elder sister and one of the founders of l'Arche in Britain. Thérèse told them they must seek the best medical, psychological and spiritual help available. She suggested medication – they should find out what medicine would assist them to reach George, but not what might obscure his personality. Meantime the community met weekly in prayer asking for the grace of survival – how to survive George.

*they should find what  
medicine would assist  
them to reach George,  
but not obscure his  
personality*

The local doctor was extremely helpful and they found the medication which would help him. And over a period of three years George was gradually transformed.

First they established a routine for him, of diet and of bathing, which spared him the agony of having to



his body. He could not stand seeing his fingernails grow. He disliked most food. He hated having a bath. He was dirty and smelly. His odd mannerisms earned him much persecution by youths on the street, and this upset him greatly. He could not stop talking. He drove



make choices. This went against one of their basic principles – but it was necessary for him. He needed to eat separately and that meant breaking another cardinal rule of the house. But he always joined the community for tea or coffee. He began to accept the kindness of others. And he developed a warm friendship with Colin and Margaret, two of the other community members.

One day he was given a new overcoat, and they showed him himself in a large mirror. At first he did not know who he was looking at – he had always avoided mirrors. But then a broad smile broke across his face. George was beginning to accept himself.

Maria had learned weaving, and this along with candle-making became activities for some community members. George learnt to weave and the process would calm him for up to half an hour. Maria remembers his delight and astonishment when someone actually paid money for a belt he had woven.

From being the ‘problem’ of the Liverpool community, George gradually grew to become the much-beloved grandfather. After he had been with them for some eight years he developed an internal cancer. When he went to hospital he became, for the first time, aware of the sufferings of others. He was able to gradually accept the fact that he was dying, and could even speak about his own death. On his last birthday there was a great celebration round his bed. His family had by this time become fully reconciled and were all present.

He was needing constant care, but his bedside became the hub of the community. One day he asked for a mirror, and looking at his wasted frame he said, “This is my body”. A eucharistic moment, remembers Mike. The community members assured him that he would not even be aware of ‘going down into the earth in a box’. He would be in heaven but his friends would all be there to bid him farewell. And they were. Over 300 people attended his

funeral at the Calvary Baptist church.

Maria recalls how people like George made the spirituality of *l’Arche* truly incarnational for her. When the community sat around and retold George’s story, he became present for them again. He seemed to be alive even to those who had never known him. It was a sacred remembering, a form of eucharist. Says Maria, “At a time when all my

contemporaries seemed to be leaving the church, *l’Arche* made Christianity something real and alive for me”. It was the Beatitudes in action. George was one of the “poor in spirit” who became blessed on earth – “as indeed we were, when we were brought to our knees!” *l’Arche* helps people to find God in their inner poverty. It is a unique and precious spirituality. ■

### *..a great part of our lives..*

*l’Arche* was founded by Jean Vanier in 1965, at Trosly near Paris. The co-founder was Jean’s friend and mentor, the Dominican priest Père Thomas, and it was he who encouraged Jean to go to Trosly. From that first community the movement spread across Europe, to India, and throughout the world. There are now over 100 *l’Arche* communities in 30 different countries.

In 1971 representatives of the movement from all over the world met and drew up the Charter. They called themselves ‘communities of the Beatitudes – places of welcome and hospitality’. *l’Arche* respects the individuality of each member. Each community has to choose its ecclesial identity – Catholic, Lutheran, or inter-faith or whatever. To be a member of the movement each community has to have a pastoral minister, who is its spiritual guide.

Jean Vanier never desired that the movement should become dependent on him as Founder, so it has evolved to be an autonomous body, governed by an international council. Jean Vanier remains simply its spiritual leader.

Jean Vanier visited New Zealand in 1976, and Maria Noonan, then a young teacher in Winton, went to hear him speak in Dunedin, and was captivated. She resolved to visit Trosly when she went overseas the following year. In London she met Thérèse Vanier, and it was Thérèse who encouraged her to join the Liverpool community.

Mike in the meantime had come across Jean Vanier by accident when he read a book about Vanier by Bill Clarke SJ, called *Enough Room for Joy*. It was 1976 and he was inveigled into visiting the *l’Arche Kent* community near Canterbury. At once he was impressed by the welcome and the inclusiveness of the group. Mike had been seeking a religious vocation. In Kent, he says, “for the first time the Beatitudes meant something to me”.

In the early years, Mike observes, the Vanier communities might have welcomed homeless wanderers, but it was found that in the long term the two categories didn’t really mix. So *l’Arche* concentrated on the mentally disabled.

In 1978 Mike too moved up to Liverpool where he met Maria. They worked together there for many years. In 1987 they were married and after a visit back to New Zealand, they returned for a few more years at another *l’Arche* community at Inverness in Scotland. They finally moved back to Dunedin in 1995 with their two daughters. Mike is Director of Dunedin diocese Catholic Social Services, and Maria is Project Leader of the Otago Youth Wellness Centre.

The first fully established *l’Arche* community was started last year in Para-paraumu on the Kapiti coast. The Noonans are thrilled by this new venture. Mike insists that for *l’Arche* to succeed it must grow always out of the local culture. ■

# Journey with the Jewish People

*Trish McBride, from Wellington, retraces a path of personal repentance*

Some reflection on my journey with regard to the Jews, the Chosen People, has been prompted by recently reading in *Tui Motu*: of the pain caused them by lack of an adequate apology by Pope John Paul II for the Church's stance against Nazi Germany; and more recently by the honouring in beatification of Edith Stein who became a Catholic Christian, a Carmelite nun, and was killed in Auschwitz offering her death for "our unbelieving people".

I have an early memory of asking my mother what *perfidious* meant. That was how Jews were described in our Good Friday bidding prayers. Whatever her response, the word is unpleasant and demeaning. It was a relief to have it dropped from the ceremonies in the post-Vatican II move towards interfaith respect.

And there was a story I read about a small Jewish boy who was beaten up by some gentile yobs and taunted with the word 'kike'. He had gone home and asked his mother what a 'kike' was, and she told him it meant a Christ-killer. Not surprisingly, that added bewilderment to the blood and bruises. I cried for him and the unfairness of it all. Nonetheless, pictures of the liberation of the death camps at the end of World War II somehow fused these images together in my child mind – if they were, as the Church said, "perfidious", then maybe some of these ghastly things were somehow deserved.

The issue faded from consciousness till well into adult life when I became acquainted with the Old (now known as 'First') Testament as the book which foretold the Messiah, the Christ. My



prayer group, later a covenant community, felt a unity with the Jewish faith heritage. We noted that many of the prayers of the Mass were based on traditional Jewish *bereka*, (prayers). *Blessed are you, Lord God of all Creation...* took

*many of the prayers of the Mass are based on Jewish bereka*

on another dimension when we realised that we prayed this in common with our Jewish sisters and brothers. We explored their rituals, and used an adapted form of the household ceremony to lead in the Sabbath.

For them it is the ancient Friday night ceremony, where the mother of the household lights the candles and prays blessing on her family. Two loaves of

bread representing the tablets on which the commandments were given, initially covered on the table, are blessed and shared as each family member gives thanks for something. A cup of wine is also blessed and shared. With readings and prayers, thanks are given for the gift of the Sabbath itself, God's gift of re-creation. Then the age-old greeting *Shabat shalom!* – "the peace of the Sabbath!"

For us as Christians, this was a Saturday night event to herald our Sunday-Sabbath. Several families joined together, and children and adults became familiar with our Jewish faith-roots. There was something deep and awesome in recognising that Mary of Nazareth would have lit the candles and prayed the same *Kiddush* prayer in her home as we women prayed for our families at these Sabbath meals.

As we grew familiar with the Old Testament stories, we explored the Jewish festivals based on the Book we have in common. There is *Purim*, to celebrate the rescue of the Jewish people by Queen Esther and her uncle Mordecai from the plot to eliminate them by the wicked Haman. There is *Sukkot*, the Feast of Tabernacles or booths, which like others was originally an agricultural observance, but became a commemoration of the time that Israel lived in tents in the desert. There is Passover, with the *seder*/meal where families re-enter the experience of the Exodus with food symbols and the retelling of the stories of the escape

*for how many Christians  
is this traditional meal  
a familiar context within  
which to hear the gospel  
stories of the Last  
Supper?*

from Egypt. For how many Christians is this traditional meal a familiar and real context within which to hear the gospel stories of the Last Supper? On the table in that upper room would have been the lamb, the bitter herbs, the *haroses*, the salt water, the eggs – not simply the unleavened bread and wine of Leonardo da Vinci's painting.

*Hannukah*, the Feast of Lights, is when Jewish children receive their gifts, as those of Christian-based cultures do at Christmas. This feast celebrates the re-dedication of the Temple in 165BC after the Maccabees had defeated the colonising Syrian Greeks. A book about these festivals gave me much pleasure as I recognise the correspondences with the familiar stories.

But a comment on the customs for this feast caused my blood to run cold: American Jewish parents were encouraged to confine giving gifts to children to *Hannukah*, and not to conform to the prevailing culture by using Christmas. And then: "Christmas celebrates the

birth of the one they call the Prince of Peace. But his followers have meant anything but peace to our people for 2000 years". I was stricken with an awareness that the Christian church and people have not been 'good news' to Jesus's own people. How could they possibly hear any proclamation of the Messiah, when appalling persecution has been meted out by the 'ambassadors for Christ,' at such regular intervals?

About that time I had a nightmare: I saw women and children being rounded up in front of the Bundestag where Hitler was making a speech. I woke in terror, knowing exactly what was going to happen next. I reached for my bible as a way to ease my fear and tension. It opened at Psalm 22 (the psalm quoted by Jesus on the cross) – and did nothing to soothe: *I am like water draining away, my heart is like wax melting inside me; my palate is drier than a potsherd and my tongue is stuck to my jaw. A pack of dogs surrounds me, a gang of villains closes me in; they tie me hand and foot and leave me lying in the dust of death. I can count every one of my bones, and there they glare at me gloating; they divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothes.* And the images of the death camp prisoners coalesced with the familiar words.


Some German people still carry a sense of communal guilt about what their country did to fellow human beings during the war. In the middle of that night I felt the weight of guilt for what Christians have done to Jews across the centuries, of which the Holocaust was the extreme, but not isolated example. So I was compelled to seek out my very few Jewish friends to say to them "I am just beginning to understand what we Christians have done to your people, and I am so sorry".

Then I met Viktor Frankl's classic book *Man's Search for Meaning*. He survived incarceration in Auschwitz, and as a psychologist himself reflected on what made survival possible. His conclusion that love is what gives meaning to life has inspired millions. He is a shining

example of God's word in *Zechariah 8* in our shared Testament ...*those of nations of every language will take a Jew by the sleeve and say, 'We want to go with you, since we have learnt that God is with you'.*

As a Church, as a Christian people, we have sinned. We have sinned both against the Jewish people, and against the good news-bearing Jew we know as Jesus. I would like the Pope to apologise again on behalf of us all, for the events of this and the last twenty centuries. I would like him to understand why the lack of an apology hurts, and why honouring Edith Stein distresses. And I affirm all moves to establish inter-faith respect and dialogue with those with whom we share so much. ■

Free



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## Caritas in action...

### The Story of Vo Thi Hong Thuy

Women in Development in Vietnam – Ho Chi Minh City

Thuy lives in what can best be described as a modest abode in the city with her husband and three children (their ages are ten, nine and ten months). When she was 16 Thuy's father died leaving her and her mother to look after the family of nine. Thuy became a tailor to help support the family. Her childhood passed quickly and in poverty; she lacked many of the things other children took for granted.

In 1989 Thuy and her husband moved out of her mother's house and bought a small plot of land in what used to be a shallow canal. They built a simple house and within two years owned the land freehold. Thuy's husband worked as a *cyclo* man (a bicycle taxi) with a rented taxi, but the work was weather-dependent and income was very irregular. Thuy's income from sewing was enough to feed the family but she often had to borrow money to purchase needles, cotton and buttons.

Thuy and her family started facing difficulties when her third child was born. Not only was it an extra mouth to feed but the baby required more time – time which would normally be spent working.

Thuy's daily income was slashed by two-thirds. Luckily, the credit scheme initiated by Caritas' partner, CIDSE, reached the area around this time. Thuy was able to borrow

money to buy sewing materials, repair her husband's *cyclo* (a type of bicycle), and buy enough rice for one month's family meals.

With more materials ready at hand, Thuy was able to make more clothes. However, she still had to spend more time with her child and after the first loan period their situation had not improved significantly.

With a small amount of capital and the first loan (including interest and savings) paid off, Thuy entered her second loan cycle. She borrowed more money to repair the *cyclo* and buy some more rice. Her husband is working more now and therefore providing a steadier income. The meals have improved and are much more nutritious. Bricks have been laid on the floor of the house so that the children no longer have to sleep and play on the wet ground. Now, with some stability in their lives, Thuy is turning her attention to her children and the possibilities that will come with giving them a good education.

Like so many others who are part of the Caritas savings and credit scheme, Thuy is able to provide her family with opportunities and possibilities that she never saw herself. No one will deny that it is hard work but the results are forthcoming. ■

## Hope for East Timor

Following years of political upheaval and human rights violations in East Timor, Caritas Dili has identified social action and rural development as key priorities in the years ahead.

Timor remains the poorest province in Indonesia and local people often struggle to grow food on the poor land they have been left with.

Working together, Caritas agencies in Dili, Australia and New Zealand have embarked on a five-year project in which 500 rural Timorese families will receive the training and resources they need to improve their situation.

The project begins with the formation of farming groups which elect a community organiser. By looking at their

situation – their problems and also their local knowledge – village farmers have identified their priorities. Key among these is the need for safe supplies of water, both for drinking and to irrigate their lands.

Resources from Caritas will help villagers to establish water supplies in the area, as well as training in managing the new systems. Alongside this, work will be done in integrating tree crops into the agricultural cycle as well as providing key people with primary healthcare skills.

Particularly important is also training in areas such as leadership and human rights. Timorese communities face a dangerous and difficult environment and such assistance helps rebuild their own confidence. ■

(Caritas Aotearoa)





# Why I am still in the Church

Jeff Pratley was a Marist priest. He left the priesthood during the 80s to marry Bridget. He is 'on the outer' – yet there is only one place he belongs. Here he writes in response to questions asked in the February issue: who exactly is the Church?

When I was a practising priest, I used to run an exercise concerning *The Church*. "Imagine", I would invite the seminar group, "that you are in a church. Those who feel absolutely comfortable in *The Church* are right up by the altar rails – let us not presume by the clerical altar! Those who are absolutely alienated are cowering in the back pews. I want you now to place yourselves where you feel you belong."

And there would be a shuffling to the back or centre. "So", I would ask, "Where do you think *The Church* is?" Blank stares or noises indicating the front. "No", I would retort, somewhat glibly but with, I think, a truth, "Here is *The Church*. Wherever **you** are. **You** are the Church, the People of God."

I laugh ironically at this now. For I am an ex-priest for about 12 years with four children – a late but potent start! I am active in my local parish. I have been involved in the parish council, and help direct the music and children's liturgies. Yet legally speaking I am right out the back door. Nevertheless, O miserable worm that I am, I am part of the People of God, a follower of Jesus, a baptised Catholic.

When Bridget and I were married, an Anglican priest took our vows, a nun directed the liturgy of the word, and a priest-friend conducted the prayer and song – all in an ecumenical chapel. I was neither laicised nor likely to be (nor am now). The Papal Nuncio requested all the names of those priests who attended from my former Marist provincial – who did not bother to comply. The National Service Group of Charismatic

Renewal published a statement in *The Tablet* excommunicating me from any participation in prayer groups.

When I was appointed as a PR in English at Sacred Heart in Lower Hutt, many were scandalised. We should have gone somewhere else, become invisible. We had a vigilante group calling themselves *Catholics for Catholic Education* invade our home and picket me at parent-teachers' evening. We put a little picture by our front door of two cats peering out of a basket and the maxim: "Just because you're paranoid does not mean that they are not out to get you!"

I retell all this, not to ruck up the past, or to point a finger of blame. After all I had broken trust and commitment and messed up relationships. But to stress the process of alienation that we went through. Later, because of this alienation, we helped lead services in a Baptist Church and ran ecumenical retreats. But once a Catholic always a Catholic, and after a few years we returned through the back door of the institutional church.

So. Why? Why am I still in the Church?

Well, true to my statement at the beginning, I have never really left it. What we have come back to is a worshipping community. I've asked the same question of a number of ex-priests and religious. One said simply "Sheer perversity, as many higher rung Catholics would like us to go away!"

The most common response was because it is home, family, whakapapa, culture. It's where I belong – for better or for worse. Ultimately it is the community that I hunger for; not the institutional structure (though of course I recognise the interrelationship). People that I can share with, who can nurture me. And it is this that Bridget and I want our children to share in. And to share in the historical wisdom and the depth and breadth of Catholic spirituality. So now we sit in the front pews, wanting to be fed, and trying to contain our hoha children. However, there are still reactions, points of tension.

As an ex-priest I was saddened by the news that Dennis Horton and five other Auckland priests had departed from their ministry last year. As if there

L to R: Nicholas, Jeff, Jonathan, Hannah, Aaron



hasn't been enough already! The New Zealand bishops recently made a courageous statement concerning this and the need for married priests at the Oceania Synod. But I feel it is too late. The horses have gone. And what we have is often an overloaded and tired clergy and heightened expectations from the pews.

And there is the emptiness beside me in the pews. June MacMillan (*Tui Motu*, Feb 1999) claims that only one quarter of those claiming to be Christian attend church. So that means about three-quarters of the Church are outside the church. I suggest that the issue is not one of redressing a clerical model. Or

of bringing back 'the lost sheep' into the same old structures (numbers of these lost sheep enjoy a more mature spirituality than those of us in the Sunday pews). But something more radical. A conversion to community. Widening the tent pegs. New bottles for new wine. The fact that there is now no single clerical student studying for the priesthood at *All Hallows* in Dublin but 550 students enrolled for theology courses suggests where the new wine is.

Bridget and I have been loved back into the worshipping community. However we also have had to work with this

re-entry. A wise Jungian analyst once warned me that if I did not forgive 'the Church' – however I projected it, – then I would be captured by the power that its shadow would have over me. I wish the same love and freedom, the same openness to those outside the community that Bridget and I have experienced.

The Holy Spirit is "deep down things". She works with and in all sorts of unlikely situations. She will not abandon us – the alienated, the 'enpewed'. The sign of the times is clear. Behold I make all things new. We are in good hands. ■

## WCC World Assembly, Harare

John Roberts, a Wellington Minister, was a delegate for the Methodist Church to the World Council of Churches Assembly in Harare before Christmas. There he was elected to the WCC Central Committee. New Zealand normally has a representative, but John is the first Methodist to represent this country.

Since Harare was the 50th year of these World assemblies the Jubilee theme was very prominent, says John. The Old Testament idea of Jubilee gave rise to three special issues: debt, land, and globalisation as seen as the modern counterpart of enslavement. The Third World nations divide into the *most impoverished* states, mostly African, and the *moderately impoverished*, such as Zimbabwe, where 60 percent of people currently are unemployed, those who are employed are poorly paid and there is rampant inflation. The universal problem seems to be that money which should be going into welfare and education goes instead into servicing debt. The WCC requested individual churches to pursue the G8 countries to cancel debt altogether for the most impoverished and reduce it for the moderately impoverished. The conditions for loans should not be imposed by the lenders unilaterally: there was opportunity for the churches to be involved in ensuring conditions which would be equitable.

In Zimbabwe the land issue is still a pressing one: much prime land is still owned by white people while so many of the poor are landless. The question was *how* to return the land to indigenous people.

Globalisation is a peculiarly modern threat, posed by the extraordinary power now wielded by multinational

corporations as well as the prevailing neo-liberal economic theories which are treated as dogmas. The Assembly proposed four criteria for a life-centred economy: participation and inclusion; equity and fairness; accountability and responsibility; sufficiency and good quality of life.

John spent much of the Assembly attending the workshop which met to consider the Decade of Solidarity with Women. In retrospect it was felt strongly that the churches as such failed to get behind this movement. A day was spent on the theme of violence done within the churches to women. Speakers told moving stories of sexual abuse and harassment; racism especially in its effect on women; of women theologians ignored or demeaned by the official church. Women often found themselves disabled and undervalued by a largely male authority structure.

Responding on behalf of the male sex Conrad Reiser insisted that the sickness of male oppression of women was in all the churches. As far as there was abuse perpetrators must be dealt with and victims helped. In general debate the WCC Assembly considered all such violence as an offence against God, humanity and the earth itself. The Assembly was challenged to officially declare such discrimination against women as a sin.

A highpoint of the Assembly was the unexpected visit of Nelson Mandela. He arrived accompanied by an ANC choir consisting mainly of women whose singing was most impressive. Mandela was eloquent in thanking the churches. "Without you," he said, "I would not be here". He urged all the churches to identify with the people of Africa in their struggle for justice. ■

# Reading the Scriptures: how the Scholars can help us

*If we read a piece out of the Gospels like the Stilling of the Storm, we can read it simply as a miracle story. Scripture scholars, however, can help us glean so much more out of our reflections simply by noting the context of the story and some of the words the writer has chosen to use. Here, English New Testament scholar, Tom Deidun IC looks at Matthew's version of the Stilling of the Storm and shows how it is really a lesson in discipleship*



Each evangelist has a mind of his own and a particular way of presenting the traditions about Jesus. He is not just a collector of traditions, but a real author writing for the needs of his community.

*Mark* is the earliest Gospel, and Matthew and Luke, working quite independently of each other, used *Mark* as

one of their primary sources. This is accepted by the great majority of scholars nowadays.

It is also generally accepted that both Matthew and Luke, again working independently of each other, utilised another common source, which has not survived, but which scholars use as a necessary working hypothesis to explain

the material which is common to *Matthew* and *Luke* but which they did not get from *Mark*. This source is thought to have been a collection of the sayings of Jesus. It is usually referred to as 'Q'.

The passage from *Matthew* which we are going to examine is Mt.8,23-27, the miracle of the *Stilling of the Storm*. Matthew bases his account of this miracle



on Mk.4,35-41. Look at the two versions side by side (overleaf p 22), and see how Matthew ‘edits’ Mark’s version. Though we are mostly interested in the actual account of the miracle, we cannot see it in isolation. We must look at it in its context, and take note of the passage placed just before it. We all know that a TV producer can give his own slant to his material by making it follow some other item, or sandwiching it in between two items. In this case note that immediately before it *Matthew* has placed a little block of material dealing with the following of Jesus (verses 18-22). This block is not in *Mark* but it is in *Luke* – which means it must belong to the ‘Q’ material. Mark has placed something quite different before his account of the *Stilling of the Storm*.

### Gospel structure

The structure of *Mark* is a large part of his message. *Mark’s* Gospel is a sort of diptych, with two portraits of Jesus: Jesus as the Son of God in power in the first half and Jesus as the abandoned Son of Man in the second. Both come together in the mystery of the Cross, where the Son of God is recognised in the moment of abandonment. The Gospel is meant to challenge believers to deeper faith in the paradox of the Cross.

The Cross, of course, is central in *Matthew’s* thinking as well. But he sees Jesus in a fuller light and against a more varied background. Although Mark frequently says that Jesus went about teaching, he gives us very little of **what** he taught. *Mark* has very few discourses whereas *Matthew* has huge chunks of his Gospel devoted to the actual content of Jesus’ teaching. It is clear that he sees Jesus as someone who has a great deal to teach the community here and now. So Matthew’s Gospel is like a text book – or at least a book of instructions for the Christian community. No wonder that whereas Mark calls his Gospel a ‘gospel’ (Mk 1,1), Matthew calls his a ‘book’ (Mt 1,1).

Matthew sees Jesus as an authoritative teacher, the fulfilment of the great teacher of Israel’s history: Moses. In

*Matthew*, Jesus is not just a second Moses; he transcends Moses. He is Messiah – a far more majestic figure than in *Mark*. The disciples in *Matthew* treat Jesus with great reverence. For he is their Lord.

And this brings us to another aspect. Matthew has projected back into the life-time of Jesus his own experience of Christ as Lord of the community. The Jesus in *Matthew* is the Christ who is still present in the post-Easter community – it’s no accident that the Gospel finishes with the words: *Behold, I am with you always* – Jesus continues to speak to the Church. Jesus seems to come out of the past and speak directly to the community; the disciples represent the members of Matthew’s own community and speak the language of that community.

### The Storm in context

Recall the analogy of the TV producer. He knows where to place his material so as to give it a particular slant and emphasis. So does Matthew. He places his account of the *Stilling of the Storm* immediately after the verses about following Jesus. He has gone out of his way to get these verses: he did not find them in *Mark* but in ‘Q’. (We know this by comparing it with what Luke does with the same sayings of Jesus.) Matthew has brought it forward so as to make it serve as a sort of introduction to his account of the *Stilling of the Storm*.

When we look at the contents of verses 18-22 we realise what Matthew’s reason was. This section is about **discipleship** – about the radical act of abandonment which it involves. Jesus is speaking directly to the community as its *Teacher* and *Lord*. And if he takes this passage and uses it as an introduction to the *Stilling of the Storm*, it is because he wants us to read this miracle with the theme of discipleship – or, rather, our own situation as disciples of the Teacher and Lord – fresh in our minds.

Matthew also alters the introductory

passage slightly, but significantly, in order to make it speak more clearly to his community. For example, in v.19 of Matthew we find the title *Teacher*. Luke, in the corresponding verse of his passage (Lk.9,57) has no title at all. Matthew wishes to remind his community that this is *their* Jesus – their *Teacher*. That means that they must also think of their own discipleship. In v.21 he speaks of ‘another of his disciples’. In *Luke* the person concerned is just ‘another man’.

Isn’t it rather surprising that Jesus should say ‘Follow me!’ to someone who is already a disciple? He is already a disciple – but a disciple who does not yet realise that discipleship claims everything. He is in two minds. And it is to such a disciple – precisely in his moment of doubt – that Jesus’ command rings out: *Follow me!* Matthew, notice, has kept back this command until the last verse. In *Luke*(9,59), it precedes the man’s hesitation. In *Matthew* it comes like a hammer-blow in the midst of the disciple’s hesitation, because Jesus is is-

Jesus is issuing a call to radical decision to those already his disciples

suing a call to radical decision to those who are already his disciples – who already have faith in him, but too little faith: not enough faith to burn their boats and follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

In the *Stilling of the Storm* Matthew has transformed Mark’s account of the same incident, to make it speak more directly to his community. In *Mark* (see overleaf p 22), the account really is a story. Mark delights in narrative details – he mentions the crowd, the other boats, the stern and the cushion – all grist to the mill in a good story. Matthew is not primarily concerned with the narrative, but wishes to turn the event into a lesson: to teach the community what is involved in being a disciple of Jesus, who is *Teacher* and *Lord* of the community.

## The words of the story

Now we have only to read the first verse of Matthew's actual account of the *Stilling of the Storm* (v.23) to confirm what we have said. For he begins his account with the words: "And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him." These words are not in *Mark*, whom Matthew is using as his source for the miracle. But Matthew wants to highlight the fact that the miracle about to occur involves Jesus' disciples who followed him. Of course, on one level, to follow here means to follow in the physical sense. But something has happened to the word now. For by placing the discipleship passage immediately before the miracle passage, Matthew has ensured that we now understand followed him in a deeper, figurative sense. It is now symbolic of the disciple's commitment to Jesus. And notice that they go into the boat.

Mark also mentions the boat, but perhaps Matthew sees the boat as a symbol – just as he understands 'following' symbolically. Perhaps he sees the boat as a symbol of the Church. Matthew seems to be saying: 'I am about to set forth the miracle as a lesson in discipleship and what it means to be disciples of Jesus in the Church.'

In v.24 Matthew says that there was a great upheaval, where Mark calls it merely a 'storm'. Matthew goes out of his way to use an odd word. Elsewhere in the New Testament the same word refers to the upheavals of the last days – the end of history (Mt 24,7; Mk 13,8; Apoc. 6,12; 8,5 etc). Is Matthew suggesting that the storm at sea is symbolic for him of the upheavals, tribulations and persecutions which the followers

of Jesus – already living at the end of history – will have to undergo before the Kingdom is fully realised? At all events, the upheaval at sea in Matthew's account represents the extreme dangers and trials which all Jesus' disciples must face.

In the same verse (v.24) we read that the boat was being 'swamped'. Matthew appears to be saying the situation is desperate. In v.25 of *Matthew* the disciples cry to Jesus: "Save, Lord, we are perishing." (Mark has: "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?") Notice the titles are different. Although Teacher is a favourite of Matthew's, he does not retain it here, because for him Jesus is Teacher when he speaks rather than when he is called upon to act. Instead, he puts Lord, a title which belongs to the risen Christ, and especially as he is

it differs from the rebuke in *Mark*. Mark questions whether the disciples have any faith at all; in *Matthew*, Jesus knows that the disciples have faith – they represent the members of his own community. Matthew wishes to say that they have little faith – their faith stops just where it should begin: when the situation is apparently hopeless, when all human possibilities have come to an end. The rebuke calls for total reliance on Jesus – in whom God is present to save. The expression men of little faith is to be found elsewhere in *Matthew* (6,30; 14,31; 16,8). In every case, it carries a challenge to the disciples to trust in spite of appearances.

In *Matthew* Jesus challenges the disciples' faith **before** he calms the storm, while the storm is still raging. *Mark* has the rebuke coming **after** the miracle, because what interests him most is the mighty act itself.

In the last verse, we are told "the men marvelled, saying: 'What sort of man is this?'" Why does Matthew go out of his way to say the men. Mark has simply: "**they** were filled with awe"). Why doesn't he say 'the disciples'? Perhaps it is because he now wishes to extend the challenge to faith beyond the commu-

nity. He is thinking of the missionary task of the community, to go out and make disciples of all nations: a discipleship which will consist in the same faith to which the community itself is called.

The men is a reminder of those outside the community who have already come to share, or must be called to share, in the celebration of the community as it 'marvels' at the fact that it has the Lord of creation as its saviour. And it is a reminder to us. ■

### Matthew 8, 18-22

Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. And a scribe came up and said to him, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go'. And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head'. Another of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father'. But Jesus said to him, 'Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead'.

### Matthew 8, 23-27

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold there arose a great upheaval on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves. But he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, 'Save, Lord, we are perishing.' And he said to them, 'Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?' Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. And the men marvelled, saying, 'What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?'

### Mark 4, 21-34

(Here we have a series of parables which are unrelated to the passage which follows)

### Mark 4, 35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.' And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him, and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care if we perish?' And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?' And they were filled with awe, and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?'

experienced in the liturgical celebrations of the community. It is a title of divine majesty. On the lips of the disciples it is a confession of discipleship: Save, Lord would have recalled for Matthew's community their own liturgical acclamations (see, eg Acts 2,21; Rm.10,13). Matthew has brought the miracle right to the heart of the Church's experience, as the community of those who call on their Lord for salvation.

In the next verse (v.26) Matthew reports Jesus' rebuke to the disciples. Note how

# Forgiveness...

## and the Burden of Hate

*Paul Andrews is an Irish Jesuit priest who practises as a psychotherapist. While in New Zealand last year he worked with groups of counsellors and psychotherapists*

Ruth was only one year old when Jason was born. He seemed autistic at birth, and it took all his mother's energy and love to bring him through the first five years. He is fifteen now, and Ruth has always been cold and hostile to him, has never forgiven him for grabbing mother's attention when she was a baby.

Ruth really suffered, and there *is* something to forgive. Through no fault of her mother's, she suffered the greatest wrong a baby can suffer. For a one-year-old girl, the time, attention and love of mother and father are meat and drink, what keep her alive and bring the gleam to her eye and the smile to her lips. She blames the loss of them on this strange, silent young bundle, Jason, who cast her out in the cold when she was basking warmly in mother's sunshine. She could not understand the claims he made upon mother. All that she knew was a sudden change of life, like a rejection or a bout of malnutrition; and that at an age when she could not talk or put words on things, so it is not even a coherent memory for her.

Her mother has told her again and again how much she loves Ruth, even though she is such a centre of friction in the family. All mother meets is the cold look in her eye and a denial that she has done anything wrong. She finds it hard to forgive either parent. The worse hurt any of us can experience at any age, is the hurt suffered at the hands of someone we love and from whom we expect love. It is hard for mother to accept that she inflicted such pain on her daughter when she was wearing herself out trying to bring Jason into the human race. It is hard for Ruth to accept that the cold anger she feels about him goes back to an incident that has a reasonable explanation, that in fact he did her no deliberate wrong, except by being there, with all his clamant needs.

It is no accident that the parables of Christ return again and again to forgiveness. The story that best describes God the Father in human terms is the parable of the Prodigal Son, where the central figure is the father, and a father who has been deeply hurt by someone he loved passionately. The prodigal son had made a fool of him, grabbed his money,

squandered it, brought the family into disrepute – you can hear the neighbours saying: 'The old fool, he always spoiled that boy. He was too soft. I could have told him what would happen.'

Down through history there have been countless fathers who responded to such behaviour in an unforgiving way. You have had your chance and wasted it. You will never darken the door of my house again. That is what the older brother, the obedient and conscientious one, felt and advised. Tell the story to children, and they will identify with the older brother, not the father. They feel the anger that anyone could naturally feel against the feckless and wilfully selfish prodigal.

Jesus does not underestimate the difficulty of forgiving; he highlights it. At the end of the story we do not know whether the older brother will remain outside, sulking in unforgiving fury, or whether he will come in and join the party, taste the fatted calf, and lay down the burden of his anger by greeting his brother. What is clear is that the one who suffers from the anger is not the prodigal son but the older brother. He is the one who is still unfree, out in the darkness, his mind and energies consumed in indignation at the sins of his brother. He is still living in the past, and cannot free his energies for his own future as long as he cherishes that passion to get even with the brother who has hurt him and the whole family. The father is free. He does not deny the folly and evil of what his son did; but he no longer holds it against him.

Can Ruth accept what is at the origin of her anger? Can she see that it is she, not Jason, who is suffering? Those who are injured often feel that by giving up their anger, they will be benefiting the offender in some way. Anger is never given up without reluctance and pain. We are giving up part of ourselves, something we have cherished. But it is something that maims us and hampers our freedom. When we do forgive, though it feels like losing a limb, we come to realise that it is not our offender, our enemy, that we are healing, but ourselves. ■





*Kevin Dobbyn FMS a missionary in Kiribati, shares an experience of Church in another land and culture which may help someone or, at the very least, give added meaning to the 'inter islands' of Tui Motu*

## An Incarnation of sorts

I was fortunate first to have been immersed in a sub-culture of Aotearoa New Zealand, having spent some years on the West Coast. Even though I had learned, especially in the first two years, to whisper the fact that I was from Auckland, I grew to love the Coast and its people, and still do. When I've had the chance to visit since, it is with a sense of home-coming. I remember the community, and the Catholic community in particular, as vibrant and alive – not without its ups and downs, of course, with occasional interference from the people 'over the hill'. In a too brief period of five years, I had put down roots and learned also to understand the beginnings of my own Celtic, Kiwi and Catholic tradition.

### Entering a new world

Learning a new language of sorts on the Coast as well as its isolation enabled

me to enter into the 'strange' world of Micronesian Kiribati. Oops! Here was my first lesson. *It* was not strange. *I* was, with my furry arms and white skin and my outside experiences of life in what I hesitate to call a 'first world' country.

The more I continue to learn of the language and culture of the people, the more I appreciate the similarities with and differences from my own. For example, there are many degrees of relationship and family connection in Kiribati, more so than in my own culture, and there are words to describe people as you get to know them more closely. On an outer atoll for four years, I learned the difference between *te i-abatera*, the stranger, *te irua*, the guest (a word used also of I-Kiribati living on an island they are not from), and *kain te aba*, those of the atoll island or the land itself. *I-Matang* appears to be equivalent

to *palagi* or *pakeha*, and is how I would be described. I haven't quite belonged to that category: being Marist Brother gives me the appellation of *Te Tari*, the nearest equivalent of which is 'Brother'. Not a few times, on another level, have I received the compliment, eyes wide with wonder and pleasure, *Bon te I-Kiribati, ngkoe* (You're an I-Kiribati). As flattering and affirming as that may be, the white, furry skin and patterns of thinking that go in direct lines rather than cyclic ones, means I will always be the outsider.

### The church of my boyhood and its distant God

My first experience of the church in Kiribati was one full of wonder and praise for the gusto of the liturgy and the beautiful harmonies of the singing. On special occasions there were dances bringing in the Word of God and the gifts for the altar. I was naive enough to think that with an increasing grasp of the language I might soon participate. But my naivety lay in my forgetfulness. It was, in a curious sense, a return to the church of my boyhood, a church which was heavily burdened with the kind of Irish Catholicism of which *Angela's Ashes* gives us a picture, rather than the Celtic Christianity in which the Spirit is alive and well. The church in Kiribati has suffered from a life-sapping, dualistic spirituality and from the dictates of hierarchical clericalism.

Kiribati society is still largely an oral culture. So only a bilingual élite has had access to alternative ways of viewing the world and further education in faith. People have suffered from a certain





over-protectiveness that was a mark of the church of my childhood. But that is changing, jolted by education, modern communication and travel. The church today is at the edge of much that needs to be changed in society as well.

So, I find myself asking what place is there for 'strangers' who profess to be brothers to the church we live and work in. I draw strength from the struggle of women in the church. I am encouraged when I hear of their efforts not only to stay Catholic and resist the temptation to become Retired Catholic or Post-Christian, but to actively challenge the institution in its temptation to settle for a monolithic and medieval mindset. These efforts to bring to birth a church renewed, have led me to reflect upon my own vocation.



In the church here, as elsewhere, the vocation of Brotherhood is not well understood. In Aotearoa New Zealand I am occasionally asked when I am going to be ordained, and here I have been greeted with a puzzled expression that cannot understand why I am not ordained since I am 'intelligent enough'. I have come to think of this as an advantage. We Brothers are 'outsiders' in terms of the power structures of the church. That means we are freer to align ourselves with those who have little or no place in society or, sadly, in the church. It means that perhaps rather than staying silent, we can ask questions, even if that question might be a statement such as Mary made: *They have no wine*.

Jesus was neither priest nor catechist; he didn't study theology at this or that

institution. He was scandalous in his regard for women and for the neglected. Was there not something of 'universal brotherhood' – a phrase not meant to be exclusive – about his style and approach in relationship with others?

### Signs of hope

I am aware of the pitfall that expatriates in mission can fall into when their kingdoms become more significant than the reign of God. But the reign of God does mean there is room for dialogue and speaking the truth of our experience, with respect and sensitivity. To be effective, cross-cultural mission has to become intercultural dialogue, which only happens at the level of interpersonal relationships. Otherwise the racist tendency in all of us draws us into the trap of pontificating about the other, rather than asking open-ended questions respectfully.

Being Brother in Kiribati means aligning myself with signs of hope, for that is where the Spirit moves, where God comes down-to-earth. And it can be easy to see in Kiribati. The more I have to do with women's concerns and the neglected, the more noticeable are the signs of the Spirit at work. The sacraments of God are so palpable in the squeal of a baby on a moonlit Christmas Eve, or in the girl fetching water from the well.

There is hope in listening to a priest tell of his need for friendship and writing songs of his own conversion experiences; in a catechist who speaks humbly of his own experience in a homily on the need for a heart open to reconciliation. There is hope, in Catholic and Baha'i couples working together to make for better communication and equality of relationships among women and men in their villages. The liturgy sparks into life when some are daring enough to adapt the near-forgotten chants of old and attempt different dances in the search for meaning in the liturgical rites and customs of far away Rome. Eucharistic elements abound within the cultural

practices of hospitality and welcome and the various meal gatherings in Kiribati that focus on the *m'aneaba*, central to the best of Kiribati tradition. In a society that is proud of not having a strong chiefly tradition, the Eucharistic elements of universal brotherhood are plain to see. There is much yet to be done to Kiribatise the Eucharistic celebration.

**Cross-cultural mission has to become intercultural dialogue which only happens at the level of interpersonal relationships**

There is a voice worth listening to in a church whose women and leaders have challenged government about the employment of young women in Hong Kong for work as 'housemaids', or about just wages for employees of multi-nationals providing 'aid' for Kiribati. There is some light in the darkness when church leadership has actively supported women in their call to address issues of family violence and education programmes for alcohol awareness. But there has been some consistent groundwork laid in the years since Vatican II. A hopeful sign is the call for a Pastoral Council to reflect on the meaning of inculturation and the need both to Kiribatise Christianity and to Christianise Kiribati.

When I was on the West Coast, it used to be jokingly said that you weren't a Coaster until you'd been there at least 40 years, and even that was questionable. People who entered into the life of the Coast were readily accepted and welcomed, even though they were regarded as 'from away'. Perhaps it is not so different in mission, crosscultural or otherwise. As it was for Jesus – 'the ultimate stranger' says the missiologist Aylward Shorter – perhaps it is for local and expatriate, immersed in a spirituality of the ordinary that lives openly with the questions, together tracing the path of common discipleship and mutual dialogue as the reign of God comes near. ■

# Reconciled with Everybody

Desmond Smith

There were almost too many images to recall. The look on the little boy's face as he gazed at the priest; the gestures of the young mother as she spoke of her faults; the tiny tot who interrupted in the middle of an adult's confession and received a smile and a blessing from the priest; the grandfather with head bent over the kneeler in earnest conversation with his confessor; the smile with which an especially nervous first penitent was received as she approached.

It all added up to a perfect picture of what reconciliation is all about – a community movement towards our God, in sorrow, yet with an audacious surety that He will forgive. "Of course I want to cure you" as Jesus says in Luke 5:13. This was no individual celebration of merciful love. It was the Body of Christ seeking forgiveness from its Head.

The occasion, a parish celebration of the second Rite of Reconciliation had been combined with First Confession for youngsters trained that year. Natural, therefore, that the extended family should be present. But it was certainly not confined to those families. Many were the other parishioners who came, folk with no connection whatever with the children concerned, there by right of their community membership. And this was on a very sunny Sunday afternoon no less!

There were of course a few non-parish people there though – the priests co-opted from the adjoining areas to make a total of seven clerics available for the Sacrament. They made an impressive sight as they processed in, garbed in alb and stole and preceded by the book of the Word held high.

The ceremony itself was simple; an introductory prayer, reading and psalm, followed by a short homily which didn't stretch the patience of the many young children present. Finally, a number of intercessory prayers were said from various parts of the church by parents of the children involved. Then it was soft organ music as a background while the priests distributed themselves throughout the sanctuary and transepts of the church and some sought absolution at their colleagues' hands to begin with.

*reconciliation – a  
community movement  
towards God... with an  
audacious surety that God  
will forgive*

The next half hour or so seemed to slip by almost unnoticed as dozens and dozens of penitents of all ages found a confessor and spent two or three minutes with him. No one appeared to be rushed.

Set up at the front of the church, just before the sanctuary, there was a symbolic centrepiece. It was dominated by the large pascal candle in the middle, surrounded by a garland of blooms and these, in turn, were enclosed by many small flat candles arranged concentrically. As each person came back from confession, s/he took a small candle and lit it from the pascal candle. Thus the light in each individual soul was figuratively relit from the Light of Christ. Quite by chance, the symbolism was carried still further when the flame on the large candle

accidentally extinguished towards the end of the service and the light was left to be carried by the multiple small flames at the base.

The liturgy concluded with a prayer of thanks, the Sign of Peace, a further hymn (*Freely, Freely* of course) and a blessing. Particularly noticeable was the reluctance of the organisers to extinguish those many tiny flames on the centrepiece at the end, even though the church by this time had largely emptied of congregation.

But perhaps the image that remains dominantly from that whole wonderful occasion of divine forgiveness was the sight of the assistant priest, having given absolution to many others, approaching the parish priest for his own reception of God's tender grace.■



## The Virgin Queen

*Elizabeth*

Film Review: Nic McCloy

If there is one thing that I am a sucker for it is a high quality period drama. Give me a film with sumptuous frocks, fine performances and a true story, I'll give you a happy viewer.

Despite a bad experience with Elizabethan history in Mr Melvin's tedious seventh form history class, I was really looking forward to seeing this film! The life of Elizabeth I was a fascinating one and one which probably warrants a series rather than a film. Wisely, the makers of this movie decided to base the film only on the early years of Elizabeth's reign rather than trying to cram all her years into two hours.

The first five minutes of the film were unquestionably the most powerful and compelling that I have ever seen. Opening this film with disturbing images of "heretics" being burned at

the stake set the tone of some of the scenes to come. However, I felt a little disappointed that *Elizabeth* was unable to maintain a high level of compulsion throughout the film.

*Elizabeth* swung from being engrossing to frivolous to downright confusing in a relatively short time but I felt that the film was ultimately saved by the high calibre cast. Cate Blanchett was incredible as a growing, changing and developing Elizabeth. She made the progression of her character from carefree girl to untouchable queen with absolute ease. A stirring performance well deserving her Oscar nomination. Other standouts were Geoffrey Rush as Walsingham and Kathy Burke's cameo as Mary Tudor. The one casting decision I really couldn't cope with was Eric Cantona as the French Ambassador. I am quite sure that any soccer fan would understand my reservations there!

From a historical perspective, the film threw up some interesting questions. Elizabeth's relationship with Dudley

comes under the microscope in the film and we are shown a convincing portrayal of her reliance on Walsingham as a protector. My major reservation about the historical nature of the film was the portrayal of Mary de Guise, mother of Mary Queen of Scots. The film failed to clarify de Guise's relationship to Mary Queen of Scots and this has led to confusion among a number of people I have spoken to.

Another interesting concept which the film deals with in a novel way is Elizabeth becoming known as "The Virgin Queen". It throws up some interesting ideas about the deification of Royalty and also about the nature of the reformation in Elizabethan England.

While not necessarily the best film of its genre, *Elizabeth* has enough merit to make it worth seeing. A film which has the ability to generate the amount of discussion which this has is, in my book, worth \$10 and two hours. ■

## Morris West bland and disappointing

*Eminence*

By Morris West

Harper Collins Publishers, 1998

Price \$34.95

Review: Mike Crowl

Having read West's *The Clowns of God* several years ago and enjoyed it thoroughly, I came to *Eminence* with high expectations of a well-told story and passion about spiritual matters. I was surprised at my reaction to this book. West has taken such an objective approach that I longed for him to exhibit some passion. Instead he remains as bland and urbane as his characters.

The story concerns Luca Rossini, a priest who in his early years was brutally assaulted by the South American military, had an affair with the daughter of the man who saved him, was whisked to the Vatican for his own safety, and under the patronage and forgiveness of

the Pope, eventually rose to the rank of Cardinal.

When *Eminence* begins, Luca is having a crisis of faith, and the Pope is dying. The rest of the story deals with the reactions of the various Cardinals as they head towards the election of a new Pope, especially after it is discovered that their conservative leader has had second thoughts about the way in which he ruled the Church.

Along the way, West throws everything into his melting pot: the Pope's stolen diary sold to the media, a diplomatic Cardinal who was also hand-in-glove with the military, a lesbian reporter, a middle-aged priest wanting to leave the Church because he has fallen in love with another man, a Cardinal involved with *Opus Dei*, and all the current issues that affect the Church. More than enough, along with Luca's dark night of

the soul, and his undying love for the woman who rescued him, to have made a gripping story.

Yet page after page consists of long dialogues between the characters that skim the surface and never go into any depth. Too often, in fact, because we have the dialogue only and no indication as to which character is speaking, it's necessary to backtrack to see *who* is actually talking to *whom*. There are scenes that ought to be high drama – but the actors remain polite. And at the climax of the story, when the Pope is finally elected, West allows the scene to be obscured in such a way, that I had to go back and check that I'd understood who had actually won.

Oh dear! perhaps my reading skills have deteriorated. Or perhaps West has written it all in a bit of a hurry, and forgotten to provide the necessary signals for the reader. ■



## Prophetic nature of religious life

### *Fire on the Earth*

By Kevin J Barr, MSC

Spectrum Publications, Melbourne

Price: \$21.95 approx.

Review: Michael Mullins

Many books have been written on religious life. *Fire on the Earth – Prophetic Religious Life in the 21st Century* presents us with an excellent synthesis of the best of that writing over the past 20 or so years. It is seminal reading for all religious and particularly for formators who have the formidable task of journeying with young people along the path of vocational discernment.

It is not an exaggeration to say that religious life as we've come to know it in the West is dead. The pattern is now all too clear. Yet in many Congregations there is a handful of men and women who carry (sometimes reluctantly) the seeds of refounding in this enduring phenomenon within the body of the Catholic Church. Invariably such people have recognised the prophetic dimension of religious life often in the context of enormous confusion, chaos and opposition. As Barr emphasises, whatever the future shape of religious life, the prophetic aspect will be central. Barr's exploration of the term 'prophetic' is well done and he draws heavily upon the works of the scriptural scholar Walter Brueggemann for this section of the book. He writes: "As religious we are meant to be prophetic, to keep alive the alternative consciousness of the Kingdom." (p.56)

The prophet always is in danger of being killed off, and not always by stoning. Religious run the risk of being secularised by the world in which they must immerse themselves, or of being tamed or domesticated by a Church which is sometimes uncomfortable with their message. The history of religious orders is replete with this sort of thing – even in New Zealand! The recent Synod for Oceania is an interesting case in point

where there has been a call by Rome for religious to "return to their monasteries". But, for the apostolic religious at least (and this is the majority) the 'monastery' is not the proper locus of their ministry. Apostolic religious are not monks or nuns. Domestication is an ever-present reality and is as much a threat from within as from without, thriving in those systems which promote dependency and patronage. Unfortunately the Church in its human aspect is no exception to this rule.

The book gives a concise history of religious life with reference to the writings of John Padberg and Joan Chittister both of whom would be known to many New Zealand religious. It was encouraging to see Tony Arthur's lucid work in this area recognised also.

Returning to his central theme Barr emphasises that the option for the poor and the search for justice are central issues if religious are to live out the prophetic dimension of religious life. How this is to be lived out in practice is a complex question but one cannot deny the validity of these two benchmarks if one is to be faithful to the following of Jesus. The answers are to be

found in a commitment to contemplation of the Gospel and in the needs of the women and men of our times.

This book provides a useful framework to do some hard thinking about contemporary religious life. It is imperative that religious, and particularly those in leadership positions, critique the current situation with integrity and courage. There's no place for wimps here – or time either for that matter! As Joan Chittister sharply observes: "...religious in the West by and large – give or take a few 'prophets' in every group – go on doing little more than they always did, properly, professionally, silently, and, as a result, religious themselves contribute to sustaining the very system the gospel would condemn." (p.54)

*Fire on the Earth* is recommended reading. It points the way to a clearer understanding of the key dynamic of an authentic religious life. It is well-researched and has a helpful bibliography. It could be taken as a companion volume to Coghlan's recent (1997) book *Renewing Apostolic Religious Life* which looks at the management of change from the perspective of organisational development. ■

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(Issue 1: Summer 1996)

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- *Taku Wana*, Helen Fisher's musical theatre, broadcast Concert FM Waitangi Day – including full lyrics, both in Maori and English
- *NZ Secondary Students' Choir: First Ten Years* – Lois Coplon/Roger Stevenson
- *Exploring Reality and Meaning in Absolute Music* – Patti Whaley's keynote address, Sea of Faith Conference 1998
- *Drafting Pens, Compass Points and Westerlies: hymns for a rural NZ* – Bill Bennett
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# An invaluable and practical series

*Christian Feminism: an Introduction*  
by Helen Stanton

*Humanity and the Heart: Ministry to the Sick in the Catholic tradition*

by Martin Dudley

*Catholic Evangelism*

by Stephen Ridley

Darton, Longman & Todd

Price: \$16 each

Review: E.J. Miller

These are the latest in a series *Affirming Catholicism*, edited by Jeffrey John, aiming to “affirm confidence in our Anglican Catholic tradition and to explore, explain and share with others a lively, intelligent and inclusive faith”. Each booklet has a list of questions for discussion and a bibliography for further reading.

## *Christian Feminism*

An explanation of different types of feminism and the implications of their positions is followed by a discussion of Christian Feminism and its theology. The theologians have set out to ‘re-claim’ Bible stories and to demonstrate how women have been overlooked and neglected. Very active in this field are Asian and African American theologians. Their theme is the ‘triple jeopardy’ for women of race, poverty and gender. *The Women’s Bible* demonstrates much of the violence and cruelty towards almost invisible women, except perhaps Sarah, who laughed! Abraham’s relationship with God is celebrated in the Bible but we must wonder how Sarah celebrated his use of her in Egypt or his preparation to sacrifice her son! It is painfully obvious that Sarah was unimportant in a patriarchal society.

And Mary? The idealised virgin mother is not an achievable model for adolescent girls. In medieval times female saints were noted for protecting their virginity to the death before their spiritual gifts were celebrated. With one notable exception, it was sufficient to consider only a man’s spirituality. As

the body was valued less than mind and spirit, women were seen to be predominantly of the despised flesh. Hence the panic today about a woman priest: she might become pregnant!

Stanton calmly outlines the problems of history and language and shows how much the Church has to gain from the new thinking woman. The next time someone says, “Of course, ‘man’ includes woman,” it will be useful to use the word ‘woman’ inclusively.

## *Humanity and Healing*

The growing awareness that sickness and suffering leading to death might be connected to sin develops through the Bible. Jesus was noted for forgiving sins before healing as well as offering a positive view of death and heaven. In medieval times, with elementary surgery and a perception that only miraculous cures might be expected, sickness was seen as the time for a sufferer to prepare for eternal life. Elaborate rituals were developed for supporting the dying on their journey. Compassion and care for the sick was a very important Christian work and anything that might be achieved by ‘crucifix, candles, incense, and holy water’ was not spared. Today there is far more trust in medical science and some of these earlier rites have been overlooked. Dudley presents a view of the sacraments and the ministry to the sick that is clear and helpful, although I found the discussion of the different types of oils that might be used rather irrelevant. The main point is that God would have us all concerned in the ministry to the sick for “faith helps (the Christian) to grasp more deeply the meaning of suffering”. I would have liked more discussion about this.

## *Christian Evangelism*

For those whose hearts sink when asked to go out to spread the word, this book is very helpful. After a brief survey of the problems facing first

and 20th Century churches (and they were remarkably similar), Cottrell concentrates on contemporary issues. He recognises that the road to Emmaus rather than the Damascus light is the experience of most Christians – the slow growth of faith. But nowhere does he belittle anyone’s experience. Instead, he stresses the importance for each person to recognise and celebrate their own journey as well as being aware of other journeys. A good diagram shows how contact with seekers can lead to their becoming travellers committed to the Church. They move forward to become pilgrims and then apostles, who in turn can initiate new contacts. There is a detailed description of how a fading church community developed a model for mission that supported them as they became more confident in living in love in the community. There is a very clear analysis of what is necessary for a church sharing in evangelism, rather than leaving the responsibility to one person. Particularly telling is the quote from St Peter, “We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard”.

If the other books in the series open up discussion so competently in such a small space, they will be valuable reading. ■

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# Murdoch, Shipley – and Truth

The late and celebrated TV writer Dennis Potter was fearful for the future of television – that it might be subverted to the designs of an international tycoon. In his final work, *Cold Lazarus*, world television is controlled by two or three vast multi-national companies whose corporate greed is one of the two features they have in common. The other is their amorality. The people are deemed to have a right to know the truths however distasteful, however suspect – but only *as we see them*, as we tell them. They are not to make up their own minds; they must rely on us because we know best and tell it like it is!

Potter both hated and *feared* Rupert Murdoch and saw that television could be used to consolidate and strengthen his empire. To Potter, this was the evil empire, a threat hovering over the future well-being of western civilisation. In his own work he always attempted to treat the medium of television as an art form and to experiment with visual storytelling in an effort to make his viewers think, question and perhaps even talk about his work. Otherwise TV audiences would end up wanting simply to be entertained, diverted, rescued from the reality of the world around them, cushioned from the harshness of the real world.

It is possible to see this happening in New Zealand. In the row over news readers and whether one supports Richard or John, there appears to be greater credence given to the importance of the messenger than to the substance of the message. News on the main channels has become little more than a carefully orchestrated entertainment package designed to keep the audience sitting, ready for the advertising onslaught. Television viewers appear as a passive audience, ready to accept a third rate service which is being delivered by the SOE, content that its profits should be returned to government. Almost no cur-

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## Crosscurrents

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by Caliban

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rent affairs, no political forum and little social comment characterise a service which has shown scant regard for the well-being of its viewers.

### The UK Parallel

A parallel can be seen in the United Kingdom where Blair's reluctance to go into the Euro is governed by fear of the Murdoch press. With ownership of the big-circulation tabloid, *The Sun*, as well as the influential *Times*, in addition to powerful television interests, Rupert Murdoch is set firmly against the move into Europe. Blair is committed to holding a referendum and appears to fear that Murdoch's opposition will cause him to lose it. Indeed, for all Mr Blair's braggadoccio in standing firm alongside President Bill Clinton and in helping him bomb Iraq, his feet of clay are showing in his unwillingness to confront Rupert Murdoch and take that final step into Europe.

Murdoch's clammy hand, clapped across the mouths and nostrils of those who produce his largest papers, is more apparent in the general dumbing down of television in this country than in the print media. His influence is not expressed through leaning on editors or tapping TV Directors on the shoulder, but through the ownership of massive money machines. Football clubs, tabloid newspapers and satellite television support each other, mirroring and magnifying different aspects of a vast empire, which, like the saga of Alexander the Great, seeks conquest after conquest in the pursuit of opportunistic ambition.

### Spin Bowling

One effect of the manipulation of news which has become more obvious recently is that of 'spin-doctoring'. The

term 'spin' began to appear in Britain in the mid-eighties, a term which had been used in the United States to suggest a particular journalistic angle or twist which a story might be given. It would appear that the Prime Minister, Mrs Shipley has greatly increased the size of her public relations team and probably many of them will be there to help organise news reports in a manner which will show her and her government in a favourable light. Just as news reporters look for an angle in a story which will make it 'newsworthy' and put their own spin on the information to enhance the byline where the writer's name shines for all to see, so the PR official will look for the opportunity of adding another spin which will favour his or her employer. This means setting up a network of friendly journalists, dispensing favours, leaking information on political developments or dishing out confidential information so that, in the end, favours are owed.

This allows the PR person or spin doctor to play a part in a critical report which is going out to the media and, if he or she is successful, it will be muted or toned down in a way which minimises political damage and fall-out. Creative Public Relations has become so much part of the system that in the end it devalues all news. Everything is viewed with some suspicion and the cynical reader or viewer wonders where the truth exists.

The pictures taken at the time of the recent Waitangi celebrations were a spin doctor's dream. Prime Minister Shipley hand in hand with activist Titewhai Harawera, walking together, praying together, and even shedding a tear together. The projected image was that all is well with Maori, breaches have been healed, past wrongs forgiven and that a new partnership has been forged. Sadly, the reality is far from this piece of PR creativity, perpetuating a myth which has no basis in the state of relationships between our two people. ■

# What is truth? Pontius Pilate in the Beehive

Nature abhors a vacuum: she fills it. So, if we eliminate God, who – or what – takes God's place? In the 19th Century Marx, Freud and Nietzsche all tried to account for human behaviour while sidelining God. In this Century we have reaped the harvest: a gradual collapse of the religious spirit and a suffocating of the supernatural. So what does take the place of belief in God? Ideology. Dogma is by no means rejected in this 'brave' new age: its contents are changed. Principles and ideas are still taught, but cut off from God they become flawed and subject to appropriation. The pursuit of truth suffers. Political gobbledygook oozes into the gap. Secularism rules. Meanwhile the political spin doctors strive to promote a semblance of unity or order by applying verbal glue in the hope that the pieces will appear to have a sense of cohesion.

Just what exactly does the word *ideology* mean? A system of ideas from which policies are formed and decisions are made; a sceptical label for all theoretical knowledge; programmed lying! Ideology in this sense depends on one's position. For example, the ACT party's ideology could be reduced to the single slogan *Lower taxes!* All policies, irrespective of their intrinsic worth, must endorse this overriding principle.

by Charles Drennan

The term *ideology* dates back to the philosopher Francis Bacon (1561-1626). He identifies ideology as *idola mentis* ('idols of the mind'), and sees it as a block to the pursuit of knowledge. These idols are prejudices and preconceptions which distort an individual's judgment, thereby clouding objective truth. Bacon argues we can never grasp truth in its entirety. We will always prefer to present knowledge in our own colours (political, social, cultural etc). Rhetoric replaces revelation.

The problem originates in a failure to acknowledge the limits to human reasoning. The solution lies in being humble enough to recognise that truth is objective and needs to be discovered rather than invented. The next step is to admit that every person receives his or her existence from God. The "I" is a thing received – not achieved. Failure to accept this leads to rampant individualism, of which we are only too familiar! The slogans of our times might be *I speak, therefore I am right* (Gilbert Myles of the *which* party this month?) On a more general level we get *I can, therefore I shall* (the cloned Dolly and the genetic engineers). The consequences? Ideol-

ogy, if detached from truth, in the end becomes pointless. The system starts to unravel. The politicians come not to believe in each other. No matter how fast the spin doctors spin, individuals start to fall off. The 'tight five' become loose. Deborah Morris goes off to try and find herself away from the Beehive. Pam Corkery says "I'm bored" and seeks stimulus elsewhere. Meanwhile we the voters sink deeper into a morass of political malaise.

What to do? Pope John Paul in his latest encyclical *Fides et Ratio* makes an impassioned plea to bring *truth* back to centre stage. He urges a strong partnership between philosophy and theology, so that the truths of human reasoning and experience and the Truth of revelation embodied in Jesus Christ can be brought together and our lives ordered accordingly. This is not a call to theocracy (government by God!). It is an optimistic invitation for us to become pilgrims in search of truth – the truth which sets us free. Election year is also a year for us to ask the deeper questions. The Beehive is shaped like a circus tent. Let us demand that its centre is more than just a ring. ■

Fr Charles Drennan, Administrator of Timaru North Parish, is a priest of the Christchurch diocese. He also teaches philosophy at Good Shepherd House.

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## Discovering you are valuable – to sweet music!

I wish I felt better about being so valuable to so many people. I know that I am: I've been told so three times today by representatives of three large organisations, in such caressing tones – and it's only 1pm.

The trouble is, I wanted to speak to a real live person, and instead I kept getting told by a recorded voice that I was valuable and I was in a priority queue (what other sort of queue is there, pray tell) and one of the skilled operators would be with me shortly, and then it was back to the music. I promise you, if I hear another tinny version of *Lara's Theme*, I will not be responsible for the consequences.

The person-to-person encounter is going out of business, and with it is going thousands of jobs, and all this at the same time as people on benefits ...oops, the community wage... are

being told that they must find work, even if they have school-age children or an ill partner.

How many times in the past year have you read of businesses being centralised, local offices being closed down in favour of a centralised call centre, skilled people being laid off because all encounters are now to be via telephone? It is quite possible (if you have the staying power in the priority queue) to do all the banking and bill paying and find out when everything departs and arrives and opens without speaking to a single person. All you need is a quick finger for the touch telephone and a good memory to remember which option you want after you have been given the list. You usually get only one run-through so it helps if you have studied Edward de Bono or been a Girl Guide brought up on Kim's Game.

It is all meant to be in the cause of efficiency. Evidently it is more efficient to have half the country listening to *Lara's Theme* and feeling good about being valuable in their priority queue than it is to have them calling at an office, talking to someone who knows what they are talking about and having their problem solved simply and quickly.

When you try, as I did last week, to ascertain the estate debt owing to a government business, and you are on the telephone for 28 minutes while you tell your story to four different people, all newcomers to the organisation, none of whom has knowledge of the situation, and then you are told to put the problem in writing, it is hard to believe that efficiency has triumphed. Soaring blood pressure and cost-cutting are the victors.

Have a nice day. You are valuable. ■

Kate

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