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Facing Suffering and Death

Roimatahia

MARY THORNE, MIKE RIDDELL and STUDENTS from Pompallier Catholic College discuss suffering in Church and society

MANUEL BEAZLEY and PETER MATHESON on death and meaningful rituals

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EDITORIAL

Looking into Mystery

"Oh no!" The conversation stops immediately. "What's happened?" Our friend, a young mother of a nine-year-old, has been killed in a car accident. We're stunned — the colour leaches from the day.

Last year Charlene had come to pick up her son and we began talking. She'd just graduated as a surveyor and had a full-time job. This was a mighty achievement. She'd had her son when she was 14. With little family support she'd been determined to finish school, putting the baby into the school crèche. She'd been championed by a couple of teachers, her advocates when most dismissed her or thought her presence tarnished the school's reputation. She'd persevered and made it to university, become engaged — "we were so poor" she remembered — and gave a home to her partner's brothers. She and her partner had saved and were on the verge of buying their own home. As another friend said: "We all believed in her dream." Now, as we contemplate the finality of her violent death, we weep and our hearts break for her whānau.

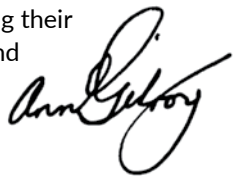
It is a tradition to remember the dead in November. We expect death to happen in generational order coming at the end of a long life, but deaths such as Charlene's teach us it is not predictable. We grew up with images of heaven, purgatory and hell to explain to us what happens after death, but these images don't fit well now — we can't use them today to comfort the grieving. They are images which have been embellished by preachers endeavouring to scare the faithful into good behaviour, and been made ghoulishly comical in popular culture where ghosts and zombies pass for entertainment.

Science and evolution have given us different ways of thinking about death and what happens after death. Evolution suggests that after death our bodily structure breaks down and is incorporated into different molecular consistencies in Earth — that we continue somehow in the networks of the ecosystems of the planet. Faith suggests that our consciousness expands and is incorporated into the Source of Love at the heart of the universe — that we join the energy of Love.

For now, in the sadness of our loss, we want Charlene to go with our love into that greater vibrancy of Love. We'll look for her influence among us — her tenacity in following a dream, caring for family and friends, sharing her vulnerability and her heart for friendship — that will remind us of her. We'll endeavour to gather as community around her family. And we'll think of her as going before us into the mystery of the communion of love which is life after death. We'll miss her.

The contributors to this November issue continue the conversation about our experience of suffering and death. We thank them all for their generosity in sharing their expertise and scholarship, art and craft, faith and reflection in this issue.

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



Conversations about Dying

Death surrounds us. It looms large in our collective imagination and fills newspaper inches every day. Because death will come to us all, this makes perfect sense, and yet many of us have not experienced the death of someone close, or had conversations about it.

Our reluctance to discuss the end of life with others contradicts our very human preoccupation with it. It is the kind of incongruity which makes us ill-prepared to deal with what is inevitable. We avoid what we should accept, we're shocked by suicide and violent deaths and we often fail to comfort those who need it most.

This "out of sight, out of mind" mentality, I suspect, is one of the reasons we have been reluctant to discuss the needs of those nearing the end of their lives with the legalisation of euthanasia.

It is telling that the enthanasia laws being introduced in countries around the world have found wide support. In Australia, over 70 per cent of people support the concept of a person in immense suffering to be permitted to choose to end their life.

Last year, 65 per cent of New Zealanders voted in favour of euthanasia and this month the End of Life Choice Act will be implemented.

In Australia, the State of Victoria introduced voluntary assisted dying (VAD) laws in 2019 and gradually other States are following suit. This is not without opposition, especially from faith communities, as in New Zealand.

Assisted dying laws in both countries impose similar and rigorous eligibility criteria. Patients must be diagnosed with a terminal condition that threatens to end their lives within 12 months or fewer, or they must be in intolerable pain. Two doctors have to sign off on the procedure and the person requesting euthanasia must be of sound mind and be acting out of free will.

In the 18 months since the introduction of legalised euthanasia in Victoria, nearly 230 people have chosen it — fewer than one in 200 deaths from all causes. Their average age was around 70 years. The most common cause of their suffering was cancer, the second cause was debilitating neurological diseases.

In other States, euthanasia laws are less stringent. For example, doctors are legally permitted to broach the topic of euthanasia with eligible patients, they can consult with patients digitally and, in certain circumstances, nurses are allowed to facilitate the end of a person's life.

Those opposed to euthanasia often speak of a "slippery slope" — that the laws give too much power to doctors and will be subverted to end a life too early, that the vulnerable will be cooerced into their decision, or that euthanasia will replace proper palliative care. This could be true. For example, in New Zealand, euthanasia is funded by the State while hospices offering palliative care are partially funded by the State and partially by fundraising. Certainly, these concerns are legitimate and they demand strong legislation and regulation.

We cannot downplay the gravity of making a decision to end our life — death is final and there is no reversal of it. No one, neither those who voted for voluntary euthanasia nor those who oppose the legalisation, wants a person to die in intolerable pain. All want the dying to breathe their last breath without unnecessary pain and suffering. Those who voted for the introduction of euthanasia did so from compassion as did those who voted against it — their intention was to relieve suffering.

But death is not straightforward. The statistics in Australia reveal that one in five deaths by suicide is committed by someone with a terminal or debilitating illness. Among the other four are young people whose "untimely" deaths stun us. Our compassion for these people makes us seek the means to relieve their suffering before they take that ultimate, irreversible action to end their lives.

Our conversations about death and dying are just beginning. We want every person to have the opportunity to make peace with the world and to die peacefully without unnecessary pain, surrounded by family and to be farewelled by their communities. ●

Photo by Nomito/Shutterstock.com

Jack Derwin is a senior reporter at *Business Insider Australia*. His interests include all aspects of social justice particularly in the South Pacific region.

LIFTING THE WEIGHT OF SUFFERING

MARY THORNE shares how the restrictions caused by the pandemic can provide opportunity to relieve suffering in society and in the Church.

We are certainly living through complex, interrelated crises. It is entirely possible that I am going a bit mad.

As I write, I have not put petrol in my car since the end of July! No big deal, you will rightly think, and, certainly, a welcome reduction in carbon emissions and a reprieve for the planet. But this is a big change — usually my station wagon is zipping around, stuffed to the gunnels with this and that, going hither and yon! Life has been locked down and I'm understanding again that in stillness and silence, our awareness is heightened.

Unlike many, my household is quiet and something about experiencing significant periods of stillness and silence thins and makes permeable the insulating barrier that keeps us focused on our own busy orbits. We discover that our minds seem more acutely perceptive and our hearts sensitised to the beauty, joy and the pain around us.

Sharing the Weight of Suffering

With all of Aotearoa, I entered wholeheartedly into the worry for the family — father and three daughters — lost in ocean or bush and the grief at the tragic death of three young daughters in Timaru. And I rejoiced when the lost father and girls returned.

Within my own circles I have journeyed with my 90-year-old friend who battled depression when the social framework of her days and weeks vanished and time seemed heavy and endless. Fully vaccinated and masked, I deliver groceries and try hard to maintain the correct tension between distance for her physical safety and closeness for her mental health. We smile together that

the 5pm television programme "The Chase" has become the anchor point at which we can, separately, pour a glass of wine and feel we've made it through one more day.

Another friend travelled to be with her very elderly mother who is in that hard place between life and death. Other family members cannot travel so she is alone in this companioning. "A better day, today," she emails. "I fed Mum some gourmet pumpkin soup. She said it tasted good."

A familiar quiz show and a spoonful of tasty pumpkin soup — both seem inconsequential things but each is a small triumph in the midst of suffering.

Humankind is grappling with suffering all over the world right now. Even the slow escalation of the disastrous environmental crisis has not evoked the widespread tsunami of difficult emotions that we see in response to this pandemic. Deeply felt loss, grief, fear, anxiety, exhaustion and disheartenment are evident everywhere.

Change Our Expectations

I've been re-reading Denis Edwards' book, *Deep Incarnation: God's Redemptive Suffering with Creatures.* He writes of experiencing the natural world as a loving embrace of God but emphasises that what is beautiful has emerged only through evolutionary processes that involve huge upheaval and eruption of Earth — predation, competition for resources, pain and death for Earth's creatures. This is integral to the mystery of the universe and life.

We are mistaken when we expect stability and serenity to be the norm from which we are temporarily tossed. In fact, Edwards tells us, the glory of Earth's profusion and vitality is balanced with the tragedy of its disharmony and decay. But even in horrific events God is present in faithful love as the promise of life.

We know this. Our faith tradition teaches us that talent and flaw, gift and wound, life and death are inextricably woven together and, somehow, all are good, all are necessary. Our own humility, compassion and commitment to recovery and transformation grow out of our failures more than our triumphs. Individuals, communities, societies and humankind as a whole are challenged to reflect on our fallibility, our blindness and deafness, our self-defensive destructiveness and adjust our behaviours regularly. We must be active, creative participants in creation's ongoing evolution.

Suffering in the Church

So, what can we do, during Lockdown's abundance of time, to keep our thinking and wellness in good balance? There are myriad answers from crochet to garden remodelling. I've taken the opportunity to explore online the "Root & Branch Synod" held in Bristol, England.

The Root & Branch Synod was initiated in response to an article by journalist Joanna Moorhead published in *The Tablet* (UK) last year. Responding to Pope Francis's call for a synodal Church, Moorhead wrote: "We need a synod that, instead of ending with women, starts with them. And focuses on them. A synod that ends, not just with the right sort of words, but with a commitment to make change, inside the Church, centre stage. It's not complicated. It's not even controversial. And it's definitely time."

A small group of lay volunteers responded to this challenge because they were concerned for the deep, grievous flaws that have brought our Church to the present point of crisis. Canon 212.3 of Canon Law gives the laity the right — in fact, the duty — to make known their thoughts and concerns about the Church but there is no real listening mechanism by which this communication can take place. Consequently, the group spent over a year listening to a wide range of people to gauge the issues that they wanted to discuss. All topics were on the table. The process resulted in four areas for discussion which they described as redefining and reclaiming ministry, embracing of diversity, a rethink of moral theology and the sharing of authority.

Participation in the synod was either by physical attendance or via Zoom and around 1,000 people from around the world shared in the event. Declan Lang, Bishop of Clifton, the diocese in which the synod was held, welcomed the assembly. Highly respected speakers addressed the four topics and panels responded with further exploration and conversation.

The synod was stimulating and significant. The presentations are available on YouTube. In her keynote address Mary McAleese urges us to reclaim a principle of the early Church — "What affects all will be discussed by all." Presentations by Thomas O'Loughlin, Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, James Carroll and many others are all well worth watching.

Lay-led Synod in Aotearoa

In Aotearoa, the opportunities for stillness and silence can enable us to dream big and allow our thoughts to be a bit wild. The "Be the Change, Catholic Church, Aotearoa" group is exploring the possibility of holding our own lay-led synod, following the Root & Branch model. We are clear that our motivation is our conviction that a reformed, healed Catholic Church can be the transformative presence that our desperate world needs. We ask to be able to be fully part of that healing.

A photograph from a Synod presentation by Sister Myra Poole shows a group of women religious, one of whom holds a placard saying: "We're trying to change the world. Sorry for the inconvenience."

If we stay alert, there are numerous initiatives everywhere every day to change our world for the better. Some really inconvenience us. Change prods our inertia and challenges our sense of control. Bring it on! ●

Painting: *Social Distancing in the Mission* by Jennifer M Potter © Used with permission www.jennifermpotter.com

For the programme of Root & Branch Synod: www.rootandbranchsynod.org

For presentations: YouTube: root and branch

Mary Thorne is retired and derives great delight from exploring the inner reaches of the Manukau Harbour with her tiny granddaughter.

Freedom Is a Community Ideal

Mike Riddell discusses individual freedom and the common good.

In the early centuries of the the first millennium, Christianity grew quickly in those corners of the Roman Empire where plagues were spreading. Not so much because the believers were preaching life after death, but because they stayed behind in cities to care for the sick while others fled. This degree of practical love spoke louder than any amount of doctrine. The third-century bishop Dionysius described how Christians "heedless of danger ... took charge of the sick, attending to their every need".

In our own era, a self-styled bishop, Brian Tamaki of the Destiny Church, has suggested his followers "do away with the masks" and take a stand against a Lockdown he describes as "home detention". Call me naïve, but I was taken by surprise to find that large sections of the New Zealand church were at the forefront of the anti-vax movement.

Peter Mortlock, ex-real estate agent and head of the megachurch City Impact, recently promoted the rally that Tamaki was involved in organising under the "Freedom and Rights Coalition", telling the faithful: "I think sooner or later we are going to have to make a stand — a stand for our rights, the way our freedoms are being stripped away." His church has Eftpos machines installed for the convenience of worshippers.

Face Up to the Questions

How did we go from putting ourselves at risk for the sake of those suffering from contagious diseases to putting others at risk for our own sense of righteousness? And what is this freedom, that is assumed to be a personal right, which is being infringed on? Our current debate about coronavirus and vaccination highlights these issues, and drives to the heart of what faith is all about.

Individual Freedom and the Common Good

The two sides of the conversation are those of individual freedom and the common good. As far as the former is concerned, the rot started some time ago. It can arguably be traced to the famous Descartes line "I think therefore I am." This dictum based truth and rationality on the discrete individual. The descent into

individualism was an unintended consequence that has shaped Western history since the 17th century.

This is a massive shift from the idea of commonwealth, and the traditional understanding that we are all in it together when it comes to society. The result has been seen in free-market monetarism and hardline individualism. This ideology is now so pervasive that it is unnoticed and assumed to be orthodoxy. People everywhere are keen to complain that their personal rights have been infringed.

Freedom for All

When it comes to freedom, few have understood it or suffered for it more than Martin Luther King Jr. He said: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." That would certainly be a reasonable descriptor of the COVID age in which we live, and the importance of making good judgements in such a time.

In his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, King spoke of the white people who had joined the mass of Blacks at the rally, saying "they have come to realise that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom". "We cannot walk alone," he insisted. In other words, freedom is not an individual right but a corporate ideal to be worked toward. Freedom is never freedom in the company of the oppressed.

Corrupting Ideas of Freedom

And so we are in a battle for the meaning of the word "freedom". When Margaret Thatcher famously opined "There is no such thing as society", she was extolling current orthodoxy which holds that the welfare of the individual is of paramount importance in the face of suggestions of corporate responsibility. That ideology, with historical roots, has festered in many parts of the globe.

We have all observed this concept writ large in contemporary US politics. Trump exemplified his right to make money through duplicitous ventures, exclude refugees and has been accused of sexually abusing vulnerable women. This is a freedom of sorts. More specifically a freedom from consequences of bad behaviour. And now, in that country, Republicans are blocking the passage of Biden's "Build Back Better" bill which would make for a fairer society.

To a large extent, their opposition to this bill is based upon the same premise as the Republican refusal to wear masks or restrict gun rights — any government imposition on individual freedom is described as an attack on liberty. God save us all. But it is a demonstration of how lethal a corrupted notion of freedom can be. It is the major contributor to extreme poverty in many parts of the world.

Experiencing an Alternative

It was a gift to me to spend years working among the urban poor and dispossessed in Central Auckland. There I learned of the inherent dignity of every person. I also discovered generosity, honesty, sharing, black humour, acceptance and forgiveness among those who were at the bottom of society's hierarchy of importance. It was me that needed conversion to see people for their sacred worth.

The concern of some Churches for their own freedom (and connection to ridiculous conspiracy theories) is a total corruption of the ministry of Jesus. Whereas the early Christians courageously threw their lot in with the suffering and dying, it seems some of the contemporary members of the faith are intent on promoting the suffering and dying of others for their own deluded notions.

It beats me why anyone would imagine receiving a free vaccine to halt the progress of COVID-19 as some sort of plot against them. The same people are happy to submit to obtaining a licence as a prerequisite for driving or carrying a passport as a condition to travelling. These are regulations that are not pernicious, but guarantee some level of safety for us all.

Freedom is of the Common Good

And there we have it. It's the "for us all" notion that is the stumbling block on which the Gospel falters. It is this sense of the common good that is integral to Christian life. As Pope Francis has it in *Fratelli Tutti*: "Solidarity is a word that is not always well received; in certain situations, it has become a dirty word, a word that dare not be said. Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community."

Brian Tamaki and Peter Mortlock are false prophets. Whatever their motivation may be, it is not that of living out the Way of Jesus.

Solidarity is a word that is not always well received ... Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community.

From an outside perspective, it seems that their concerns are more to do with entitlement and prosperity. Our frail elderly who are dying in hospitals don't appear to trouble their conscience. Unfortunately their influence has persuaded many.

We're in this together. Our government has been running a "common good" philosophy to look after everyone with a minimum of compulsion. Though times are tense, we are doing comparatively well in sticking together and caring for one another. It is this love of fellow citizens that promotes the health of us all. My prayer is that we may hold the course, and find in our experience a model for a redemptive future. ●

Photo by Mat Napo on Unsplash

Mike Riddell writes novels, plays, films and apology notes. He cooks when he can and breathes intentionally on a daily basis.

Make Sure BLACK LIVES MATTER!!!

ISAAC GOING, DESTINY LIM, EMMA GOLIGHTLY and AISHA ATIQ examine the connection between the social issue, Black Lives Matter, and Catholic social justice principles.

Why do you think it is important to educate your Religious Studies classes about this topic?

Teacher: Black Lives Matter is one of the defining issues of our day. From newspaper headlines to the new History curriculum, we see people calling for the recognition and addressing of racial injustices. As Catholics we are inspired by our Social Justice Principles to stand in solidarity with those who are opppressed and to advocate for the human dignity of all people.

Have you ever experienced racism towards yourself or someone you know?

Student: When I was younger, around 10 years old, a boy would regularly say "Konnichiwa" to me, then proceed to pull his eyes backwards and laugh. Not only did he make fun of my facial features but he also assumed I was Japanese when I'm Filipino. Another instance is when I was on a school trip and one of the instructors asked me "How are you enjoying New Zealand so far?" assuming that I was an exchange student.

Do you think New Zealand is as open-minded as our country is made out to be?

Student: I don't think that we are as accepting as a nation because there are so many instances in which Māori and other people of colour are treated differently from Pākehā. One example of this is New Zealand's prison ratio. 52 per cent of our prison population is Māori however only 17 per cent of our population is Māori. I think it is better than what it used to be but a large majority of New Zealanders are still racially prejudged whether it's on purpose or unconscious racism.

Was there a time when someone else did/said something racist and you didn't speak up?

Student: Unfortunately, yes. One of my friends made a racist comment towards someone else and wanting to be "cool", I laughed along. Looking back, I was ignorant of the impact that prejudiced comments can have on people and since then, I've educated myself more on racism and discrimination and have apologised to the person.

What privileges do you have that others don't?

Student: When turning to the media as a white individual, I see people of my race widely represented. I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or get bad grades without having people attribute these choices to the "bad" morals, the "poverty", or the "illiteracy" of my race. If I am accused of a crime, I'm less likely to be presumed guilty, less likely to be sentenced and more likely to be portrayed in a fair manner by the media.

What privileges do you not have that others do?

Student: Being a person of colour, I have to work twice as hard as the average white individual to achieve the same privileges that they are immediately born with. I have to worry about employers judging me based on what I look like rather than the skills I could offer. As a minority, speaking out against the discrimination that I, and many others face, is difficult. However, it is not impossible and I want to do what I can to help future generations.

What is White Privilege?

White privilege means that people who are born with white coloured skin tend to have more opportunities in society than those born with coloured skin. An excerpt from George Cunningham, a student from Pompallier is a prime example of this: “Before studying this topic, I never gave much thought to my unearned privilege because I never noticed it. I don't attract the suspicion of security guards when I walk into a store. I have a white-sounding name which might help me get a job one day. I have never experienced racial abuse. I can see plenty of white faces when I watch a movie, read the news, or browse social media. I realised that these very normal benefits for me are not common to everyone in our society. But perhaps the most powerful privilege I have is to be able to be silent in the face of racial inequality. While I could live in

Graphic by Melitas/Shutterstock.com
Graffitti photo by Simon Daoudi on Unsplash

blissful ignorance of the social issues going on around me, to uphold the human dignity of my neighbours I need to stand in solidarity with them."

What is Microaggression?

Microaggression is a form of racism, in which a comment, situation, or action unintentionally subtly discriminates against an ethnic group. It is important to understand that what separates macro- and microaggression is up to the oppressed themselves. However, it is important for all individuals to understand what microaggression can look like on a daily basis for people of colour.

Examples include but are not limited to: assuming a bad driver is Asian, telling someone they "speak good English", clutching your purse in the presence of a person of colour, saying that you or someone else isn't racist because they have a friend of colour.

You may have seen or heard these things. You may have done or said these things yourself.

Subtle or unconscious racism is often swept under the rug in social situations with authority, friends, family.

Effectively, racism thrives as long as microaggressions and like situations continue to occur. We must reconcile with our own faults surrounding microaggression and improve in our daily lives. We must learn to speak out for the hopes of progression in society when unconscious and subtle racism occurs.

Are You Aware of Systematic Racism In New Zealand?

DID YOU KNOW that the percentage of school leavers leaving with less than NCEA Level 1 was 19.1 per cent for Māori and only 7.6 per cent for non-Māori?

DID YOU KNOW that the percentage of adults receiving welfare support was 24.5 per cent for Māori and 7.1 per cent for non-Māori in 2017? And for Māori in 2018, it increased to 24.7 per cent, whereas for non-Māori, decreased to 7 per cent?

DID YOU KNOW that the percentage of the unemployment rate for Māori was 10.1 per cent and for non-Māori 3.9 per cent in 2017? In 2018 the percentage for Māori was 8.9 per cent and for non–Māori was 3.6 per cent.

DID YOU KNOW that the average personal weekly income from wages and salary was $985 for Māori and $1,136 for non-Māori in 2017? For Māori in 2018 the average income was $994 (increase of $9) whereas for non-Māori it was $1,192 (increase of $56).

DID YOU KNOW that in 2017 the imprisonment rate (per 100,000 population) for Māori was 700 and only 122 for non-Māori? In 2018 it increased by 17 for Māori, whereas the non-Māori rate only increased by 4.

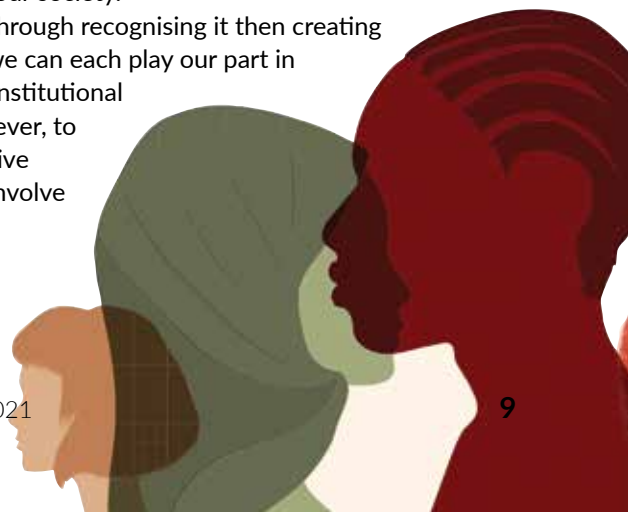
DID YOU KNOW that the demand for social housing (per 1,000 households) was 15.5 per cent for Māori and 1.7 per cent for non-Māori in 2017? In 2018 the percentage increased by 24.9 per cent for Māori, however for non-Māori it only increased by 2.8 per cent.

How to Help

To take action against institutional racism you can help those who are being negatively impacted by the system through giving back to those affected. This can be carried out by volunteering for organisations that take care of those suffering and signing petitions for a reform of the system. A way Pompallier students give back is through Young Vinnies — students from our school and around New Zealand serve the less fortunate in their local communities.

Taking action can also involve recognising and gaining a deeper understanding that institutional racism impacts nearly every aspect of life for people of colour. You can become an advocate through educating others about how our system is causing the bias in favour of white skinned people. This can be achieved through social media, protesting and discussions on how racial discrimination is prevalent in our society.

Overall, through recognising it then creating awareness, we can each play our part in dismantling institutional racism. However, to create effective change will involve solidarity. ●



Answering the Call

MARK CHAMBERLAIN talked to ANN HASSAN about his ministry as a chaplain in Dunedin Hospital and at the University of Otago.

I sat with Mark over coffee and talked with him about chaplaincy, a ministry he has been involved in for many years. "I've been hospital chaplain since around 2008. Another priest used to be the chaplain but he was becoming very unwell, so I would cover for him — it gradually happened like that. Then he needed to resign because of his ill health, so I stepped in. I decided the best way to handle the role was to ask others in the parish to help me. A group of about 10 of us work together — someone might be responsible for a particular ward or unit, visiting people on the list and offering communion and other support. If someone is really unwell they'll let me know: 'You need to visit'.

"I'm usually in the hospital about three times a day, and then I can be called in through the night. I learned early on that it's far better at 2am to just get myself to the hospital than to sit on the phone and get all the information — the person's name and condition, who is there and who isn't — and then get to the unit and think 'Oh, I haven't got a clue what this is about'. I'd much rather just get my body there and then I'm fine and I can function. I learned that early — just get there.

"Sometimes people want to talk about something that has been unresolved for them. They might want me to listen and give a blessing. But normally what happens is I go in and offer a blessing or one of the sacraments, and see if the person wants to receive that and respond to that. Or at other times, when they've been alert, they've told the nurse what they want. When I get there they might be unconscious but the nurse knows what they wanted.

"Once that anointing has happened, people use words like 'presence' or 'no longer alone' or 'peaceful'. Something happens with

the sacrament — they don't feel as if they're dying alone. Because I never ask people: 'How was that?' — I just let it be for them."

Recently, Mark was called to a well-known Dunedin identity. "Both eyes were shut, and I said: 'Joan, it's Father Mark here'. One eye opened and I said: 'Now look, Joan, in the book of Hebrews we read that God would never be so unfair as to forget all our goodness and kindness.' The other eye opened and she said: 'Father, do you reckon?' And I said: 'I do, yes.' She said: 'That's good'. And it would have been half an hour after that that she died. But it was good to see: I was always worried about Joan dying on George Street or at a bus shelter but here she was and the staff were so loving and supportive, and it was good to have her in a nice bed. Yes, it was good."

Some situations are distressing. "The hardest thing to deal with is when a young person has a diagnosis with something like pancreatic cancer and I journey with them — this journey of fear, and hope, and treatment and then hope and despair and loss and isolation. I can remember a young man dying and his little three-year-old girl jumped on the bed about an hour before he died and she said: 'Daddy, I've got a sore tummy.' And I can remember him lifting her T-shirt and trying to kiss her tummy. And when that person dies what I find hardest is that the next day I go in and there's another three people. Often the outcome is good but often it isn't."

Lockdown presented new challenges as visitors were not allowed and staff were fully focused on their core roles. Families had to communicate with loved ones via technology and sometimes seeing the deterioration in the person was a shock. "Usually the nurse would hold the cellphone so that we could do a video call. They became very expert. The learning I had from that is that the technology is good, but you need to warn the family beforehand — suddenly they see their daughter in a very different condition. It was often very difficult, but the family still want to be there."

Mark spoke about his ministry as a university chaplain for students and staff. "Young people come to me and say: 'Someone is dying at home, or I'm worried about this or that.' Or they might need to talk about their own self — they're unsure about their sexual identity, or struggling with addiction or substance abuse, or one of their classmates has suicided, or it could be feelings of depression. It's about being with people and listening to their experience. And although I'm a Catholic chaplain we're actually chaplains for all of the students.

"Sometimes I get into an advocacy role — I remember it was one of those cold winter days, and a student had suicided in his flat, and his flatmates no longer wanted to stay in the flat. And I approached the landlord to say: 'Look, we need to find a way for these guys no longer to live in your flat.'"

Describing his ministry with university staff, Mark said: "The difficulties within a department, the struggles with trying to do research, publish, teach and have a family — how to manage all of that. It's to try to help people to realise that they have a deeper part of them which we could call spirituality. It's the part where they sit at home in stillness or out in the garden, or drink a cup of coffee slowly and appreciate this whole other level that goes beyond superficiality to a deep place. And that's their faith journey — it may not be identifiable by a particular church group but it's just as important and valid. For me, that's where a lot of university chaplaincy falls."

Mark is conscious that what he does is supported by many others he works alongside. "Chaplains are important because we know that God is addressing everyone in this world all of the time through everybody and through creation. There are critical times on our journey when we need support that goes to another dimension.

"As chaplains I think our own prayer life keeps us calm, so we try and go into [our work] open and vulnerable and affected by it, but there's a calmness we can bring, because we know in the midst of all this, Jesus is here with us — we don't know how or in what way. Often I see great tenderness amongst the staff — their care for each other and for the families of the person.

"What gives me most joy is the goodness of people. In our students, I'm in awe of them at times, their kindness and their care and their real inherent sense of goodness. And that's in the hospital too — without a doubt it's the ongoing support of the staff, their way of caring and feeling for.

"We all do good things. That's it for me — the sheer goodness of people."

I came away thinking that Mark has a sensitivity with people that is needed in chaplaincy — he listens without judging, he's attuned to his company and is empathetic. I could imagine him being a welcome presence at a hospital bedside or, equally, among a group of students. ●

Mark Chamberlain, as well as his chaplaincy, is parish priest of Holy Name, Dunedin.

Ann Hassan is Assistant Editor and Administrator of *Tui Motu*.

IMPORTANT MOMENTS OF HOPE

BRUCE DRYSDALE shares some of the effects of the pandemic restrictions on people in an intensive rehabilitation centre.

I work as a chaplain in a facility that carries out intensive rehabilitation with people who have received traumatic brain injuries (TBIs).

The "big three" TBI causes are: motor vehicle accidents; falls; and assaults, in that order. Other causes include everything from suicide attempts to medical misadventure.

It is a place where individuals experience both suffering and hope, and can move from one to the other very rapidly. The suffering comes from the fact that in a tragic instant, a person's life — their physical, mental, emotional or social functioning — has been drastically changed. Sometimes the change is permanent.

The hope comes from the strong focus of the entire rehab community on the gradual steps toward healing and wholeness of each individual.

The first step in the rehab process is to move the person out of post-traumatic amnesia (PTA). Most clients do not remember the incident that caused their TBI and for a time afterwards have difficulty retaining memory of post-incident events, conversations, timelines, names, instructions, etc.

A client is determined to have moved out of PTA when they can achieve a Westmead score of 12 out of 12 on three consecutive days. (Westmead is an internationally recognised test using selections of words, pictures, people and objects to be remembered from one day to the next.) When the word goes around (usually by internal email) that "Mary is out of PTA" or "John scored his second 12/12 on the Westmead", there is great rejoicing among the dedicated and highly professional team of therapists, medical staff, social workers and liaison staff.

Visitors (especially whānau) play an important part in the rehab process and are normally greatly encouraged. Visitors are caught up in both the suffering and the hope. They suffer seeing their loved ones severely impaired or in pain. It is also distressing not being able to easily communicate with a close friend or family member or, occasionally, not even being recognised by them. Visitors also add to the atmosphere of hope by: the tremendous loyalty they show with their regular visits; the help they give to the staff with the daily caring tasks; the encouragement they give; and, by joining in the celebrations when milestones are achieved — whether by their loved ones or other clients.

Suffering levels increase each time there is a COVID Lockdown. Communication (already difficult) is further impaired when staff are masked or in full PPE. As chaplain I often rely heavily on my smile to show I am there to help or to put someone at ease. It is very hard to smile through a mask! Extra stress comes with staff absences caused by a household member being in isolation and the staff member not being able to return to work until proved COVID negative.

More importantly, Lockdowns severely limit visitors. None are permitted at all during Level 4 and only one visitor per client, for short periods, is allowed during Level 3. The reason is simple: people with a TBI are very immune compromised. The effect, however, is complex: staff have to assume family/visitor roles, and communication with family can take place only by means of phone or Zoom calls (problematic when clients have speech, hearing, sight or positional problems). It is very hard for visitors to share in the hopeful moments by proxy or from a distance.

During these times, grasping and celebrating any moments of hope becomes even more important.

Each Sunday morning I lead a small ecumenical church service. Numbers vary from 20+ to just the necessary "two or three gathered in my name".

Sally, a regular attendee, is nearing the end of her stay with us but has residual problems organising her thoughts and activities. I was running late one Sunday so was delighted to see that Sally had got herself to the meeting room early and set up everything ready for the service — even down to the prayer focus which she had prepared exactly as I had had it the week before (including the same flowers, a little worse for wear).

On another occasion, when I had explained that our usual sign of peace would have to be limited to a socially-distanced nod, Tamati (who can't speak, has extremely limited physical control and is usually slow to respond to stimuli) solved the problem by slowly raising his "good" arm in a two fingered peace sign accompanied by a heart warming smile.

I was blessed to be able to keep a little hope alive by sharing the initiatives of Sally and Tamati with their respective therapists, and Tamati now leads us each week in the sign of Christ's peace. ●

[Note: For privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this article.]

Painting: ***Bring Peace to the Party*** by Danny O'Connor © Used with permission
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Bruce Drysdale, as well as chaplaincy, combines floristry with his role as a wedding and funeral celebrant.

Living Wairuatanga

MARU KARATEA-GODDARD writes that an evening ritual of prayer brought people together virtually during Lockdown.

Wairua Tapu nau mai rā, Wairua Tapu mai runga
Ūhia mai ngā taonga pai, Homai tō aroha
Wāhia kia tika ākona mai rā kia ū ki te pai
Horoia kia mā tonu rā, Nōhou te tino korōria

This waiata led us into karakia every night at 8.00pm during Level 4 Lockdowns. It became our Maru-and-Danny way of being Māori and being Catholic when we offered others a space and moment to share in a decade of the rosary and karakia.

We were fortunate to have different generations — Daveda and our granddaughter Wailan — living with us. The young ones, savvy with cellphones and WiFi, gave us the capacity to send out tono inviting everyone interested to join our nightly karakia on Facebook.

The karakia became our ritual and routine. We encouraged people to jump on board this waka whakapono (spiritual canoe) to navigate together the uncharted waters of COVID. We shared sorrows, joys, glorious and luminous moments during karakia. We acknowledged family celebrations, newborn mokopuna, birthdays, wedding anniversaries and graduations. We supported those who needed us. We linked into funeral services and facilitated their night prayers where needed.

Now at lower alert levels, people miss the nightly karakia that filled a place in their hearts from 8.00pm to 8.30pm. This is heightened because Miha (Mass) is not occurring as often as before.

Te Wananga o Raukawa, my tribal Wananga, acknowledges wairuatanga as one of 10 guiding principles: "Wairuatanga acknowledges the spiritual dimension of our lives and in mātauranga. It is embedded in the extensive web of relationships that weaves present, past and future generations together. Wairuatanga is explored, expanded and nourished as we strive to maximise our contribution to the survival of… Maori as people."

Our nightly karakia acknowledges the spiritual dimension of life and in mātauranga. Each of us, whoever we were, contributed as people of prayer in the web of relationships to the building among us of aroha, tika and pono.

I was raised within a Māori Catholic farming marae community. The greatest koha I bring to Danny's and my union is that of being raised as a mokopuna whāngai (adoptee) by the second cousin of my maternal great-grandmother. Their grandmothers were sisters. Why do I mention this? From a Māori worldview, this matriarchal paradigm is a traditional Māori way of acknowledging the spiritual nature of relationships that exist.

My tupuna kuia, my mother, would say: "E Maru, ma te mahi ka kite", "By doing you will know". My spirituality today is shaped and influenced by the actions of love, of service and by the collective greatness of those in the past, present and the future to whom I whakapapa.

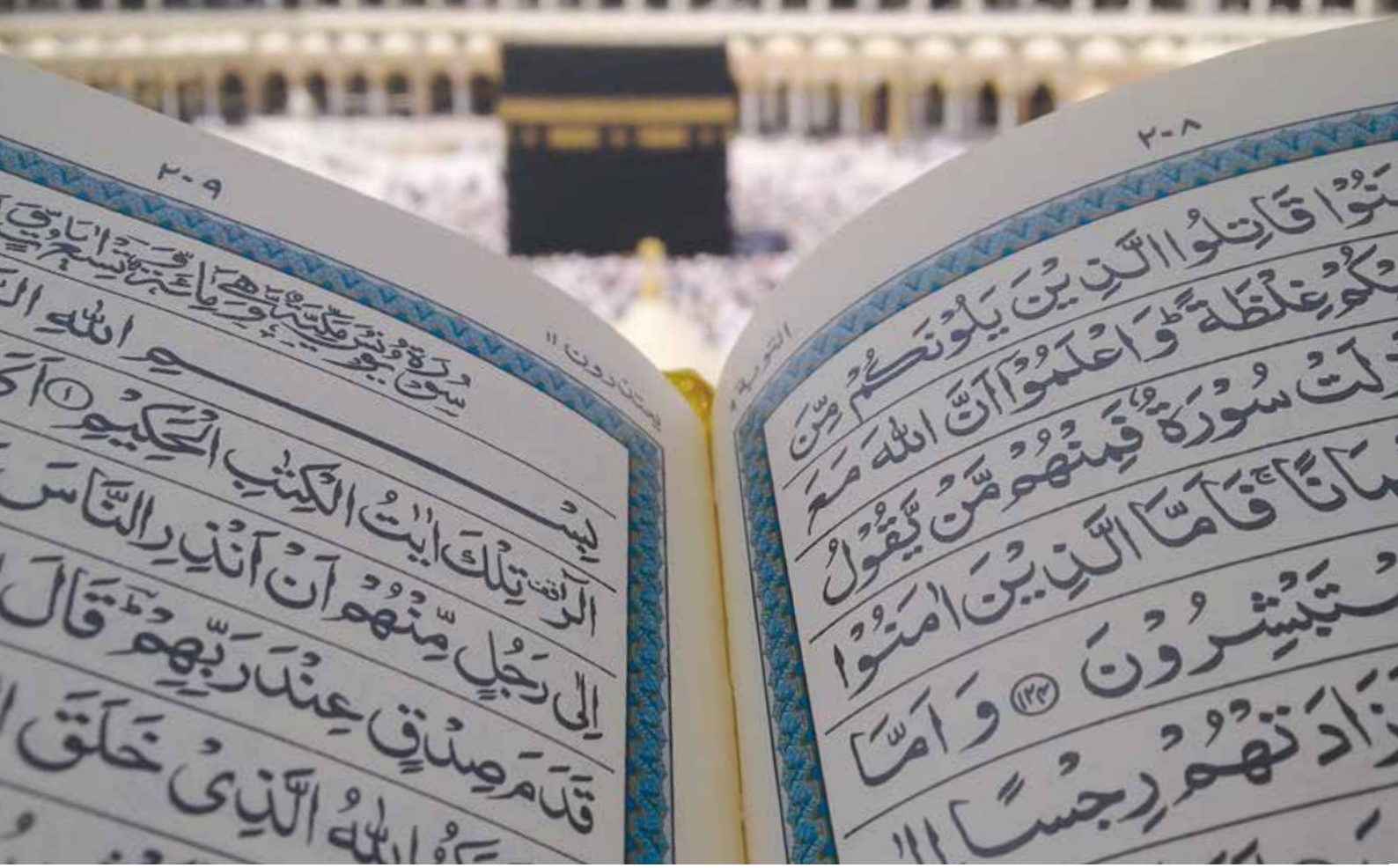
I highlight "striving to maintain our contribution to the survival of…." as the key to why we established evening karakia. Danny and I have been formed by an inter-tribal movement called Whakatupuranga Rua Mano. This movement has enabled us to combine and support our different ways of being and our diverse realities. The kaupapa has enabled us, as a couple, to give and receive amazing actions of love for our people who survive as Māori, with tikanga Māori and tikanga Katorika. The kaupapa in action expresses the intention of our hearts for our people, and urges us to care for and serve them in their ways that respect their own being, wherever they live facing their different situations. In this way we can follow in the footprints of our parents. We continue to serve the various communities that they loved and belonged to.

I recognise that Danny and I were raised among people who lived lives of service — to use the words of Caritas, people who practised "Love in Action". These people were our role models. And this was their gift to us — to love in action without boundary, inclusive of all, embracing others, whoever they are, in their different circumstances.

Our people are now "Māori plus", and we see our tamariki mokopuna also reflecting on how they will respond to the changing environments and new realities. They, too, are enmeshed in the extensive web of relationships that weaves present, past and future generations together in love and service. ●

Photo by James Coleman on Unsplash

Maru Karatea-Goddard, married to Deacon Danny Karatea-Goddard, is a Cultural Supervisor Consultant, mother of four and kuia of five mokopuna.



Engaging with the Spirit

ZAIN ALI shares how technology has brought together friends and family around the world to reflect on their spirituality.

A few weeks ago, my sister who lives in Canada informed us that her husband, my brother in-law, and my niece had COVID-19. Fortunately, my brother in-law was vaccinated and had mild symptoms and my niece, who is too young to be vaccinated, experienced only mild symptoms — fever and headaches. Neither was admitted to hospital, and they are both fully recovered. Our family is deeply thankful.

Another elderly family member in Fiji was not so fortunate. She had the virus and spent several days in hospital where she died. This was a very difficult time for her immediate family, especially with restrictions on attendees at funerals. Following her death, the wider family met up for prayers via Zoom. We read passages from the Qur'an and prayed together.

Zoom Sessions Evolved

These Zoom sessions became a daily occurrence with family from around the world joining in. We had readings from the Qur'an, prayers for family members who were also facing challenges and shared family stories and memories.

The Zoom gatherings have evolved. We have short daily prayers and also larger gatherings on Saturday evenings. We also developed a learning curriculum of sorts.

Each Saturday a family member was assigned a short *surah* or chapter from the Qur'an. They then present this *surah* as a focal point for discussion and spiritual reflection.

Reflections on Surah Quraysh

When it was my turn, I chose the *Surah* Quraysh, the 106th chapter of the Qur'an, made up of four verses. In English it translates as:

In the name of God, most Gracious, most Merciful
1. For the accustomed security of the Quraysh
2. Their accustomed security [in] the caravan of winter and summer
3. Let them worship the Lord of this House,
4. Who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger and made them safe, [saving them] from fear.

This particular chapter of the Qur'an seeks to engage with the Quraysh, the tribe that prophet Muhammad belonged to 1,400 years ago. He had been preaching to them about Abrahamic monotheism, and while they recognised their

genealogical link to Abraham, they couldn't bring themselves to set aside their tribal idols and worship God alone. They were hostile to Muhammad and his message.

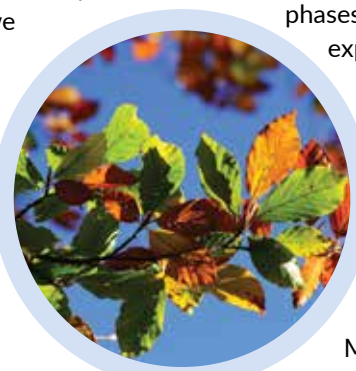
As I read it, this chapter is a reminder to the Quraysh about their privileged position, to recognise their blessings and the invitation to return to Abrahamic monotheism.

The Quraysh were also guardians of the temple in Mecca, and this earned them a great deal of respect from the neighbouring tribes. Their privileged position also meant it was easy for them to engage in trade.

According to Arab tradition, the temple in Mecca and its surrounds were under God's protection. This *surah* can then be seen as a gentle invitation to return to the God of Abraham.

Belonging

The *surah* leads us toward a number of spiritual reflections. For example, from the idea of a tribe, comes a question of belonging. How do we, here in the modern world, belong? A family member pointed out that we have drifted from our tribal roots and this has made us more individualistic. In the tribal world view, things are not seen as belonging to individuals and land is not something to be owned. In a sense, you belong to the land.



Seasons in Our Journey

There is also the idea of journeying through the seasons. The Quraysh journeyed various trade routes during the seasons of summer and winter. This can invite us into spiritual reflection as well. We each have a journey, our life journey, in which we have season-like experiences — times of happiness and joy, moments of sadness, grief and loss. Or we can think of life as a whole as being made up of seasons — the spring of youth, the summer of maturity, then autumn and winter as we head into old age.

Listening to Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* can take us on a meditative journey. The Byrds *Turn, Turn, Turn* draws heavily on Ecclesiastes 3:1-13:

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh.

The seasons serve as a metaphor for different moments, phases and stages of our experiences.

We are in a difficult season and the journey ahead is uncertain — we need faith in science to improve our vaccines, faith in our politicians to be able to make the right decisions, and also faith in God who is our Light.

Significance of the House

The Quranic *surah* also mentions "the House" *(al-bayt)* — a reference to the temple in Mecca at the time of Muhammad. It was the focal point of a yearly pilgrimage for many of the Arab tribes before beginnings of Islam. According to Arab tradition, it is where Hagar and her son Ishmael settled after they left Abraham, Sarah and Isaac. The foundations of the temple are said to have been laid by Ishmael with the blessing of his father Abraham.

The temple still exists today in Mecca and is the site of the annual pilgrimage (the *Hajj*). We refer to this temple as the sacred Mosque or *Masjid al-Haram Sharif*.

When Muslims pray, we pray facing this sacred Mosque. It is a focal point in the daily practices of Islam. The Qur'an also mentions Abraham's prayer, that this city be a city of peace and safety.

When I'd finished my reflections on the *surah*, I invited reflections from other members of the family who were gathered on Zoom. A number of them had done the *Hajj* and visited Mecca and the sacred Mosque. They spoke about feeling peace, stillness and the presence of God.

I recall speaking with a respected elder in the Muslim community, who had accompanied several Muslims from Christchurch on the *Hajj*. Many of these individuals were caught up in the Mosque attacks, and experienced ongoing struggles with anxiety and depression. The elder noted that during the *Hajj*, a number of them spoke about feeling safe and at peace and being able to sleep — something they often found difficult.

Blessing of Technology

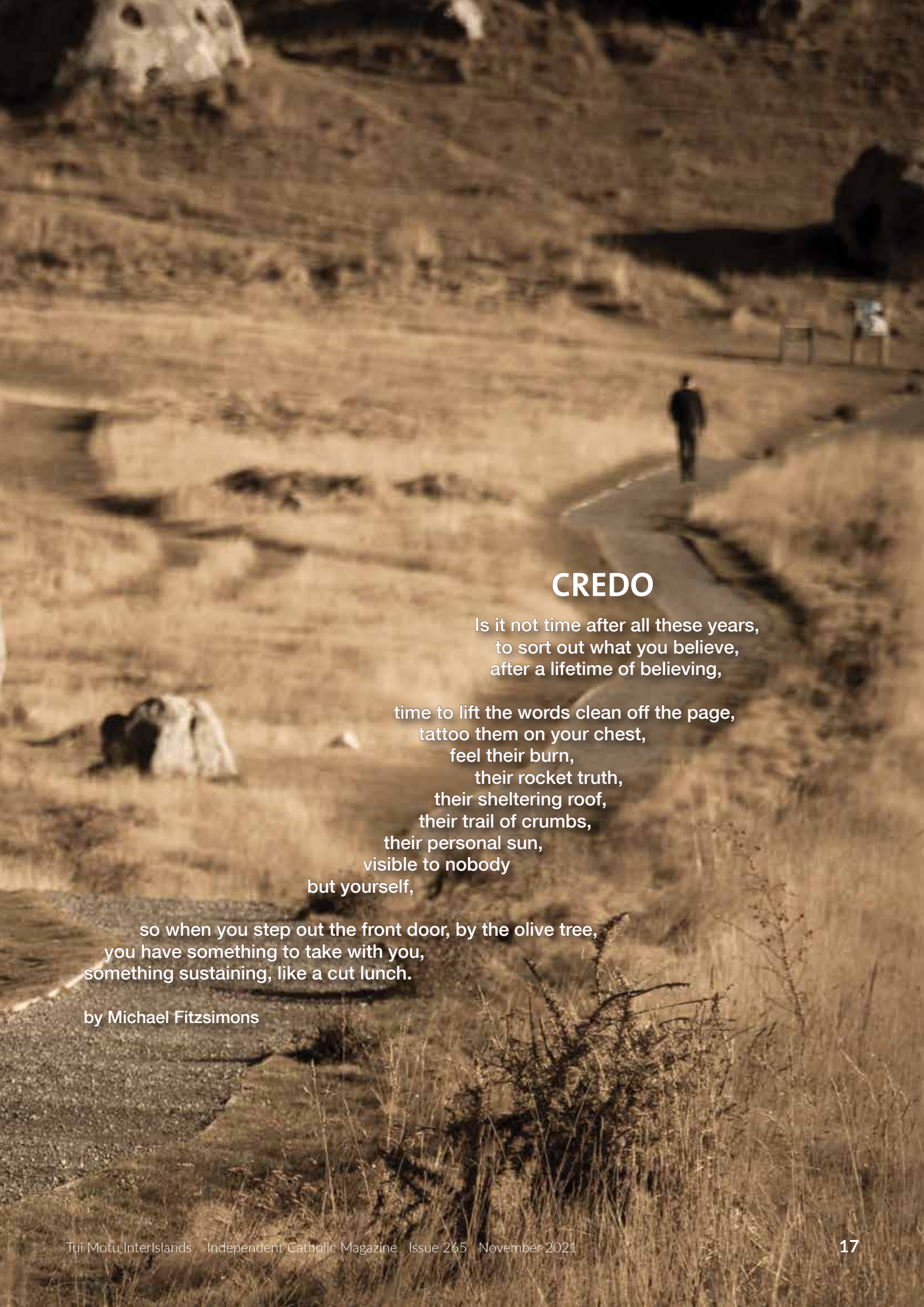
Many of our families are gathering virtually during Lockdown. This is far from ideal, but technology is a blessing. Times are tough for many people, especially those whose incomes have been affected and those living alone. The coronavirus itself is mutating, spreading faster and killing many. The USA alone has had well over half a million COVID-related deaths.

We are in a difficult season and the journey ahead is uncertain — we need faith in science to improve our vaccines, faith in our politicians to be able to make the right decisions and also faith in God, who is our Light.

In the meantime, we can appreciate the little things: Zoom, Netflix, coffee and pets. We are in a challenging season; let us take time to engage with our spirit. ●

Zain Ali is a scholar of Islamic studies and an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Auckland. He lives in Auckland.

Photo by Melanie Dretvic on Unsplash



CREDO

Is it not time after all these years,
to sort out what you believe,
after a lifetime of believing,

time to lift the words clean off the page,
tattoo them on your chest,
feel their burn,
their rocket truth,
their sheltering roof,
their trail of crumbs,
their personal sun,
visible to nobody
but yourself,

so when you step out the front door, by the olive tree,
you have something to take with you,
something sustaining, like a cut lunch.

by Michael Fitzsimons

Remembering the Dead

MANUEL BEAZLEY explains the significance of tangihanga in bringing together the living, the dead and their ancestors, and the efforts made to continue this ritual in COVID times.

Māori acknowledge the dead at all gatherings, irrespective of the nature and purpose of the meeting, through karanga (calls), whaikōrero (speeches), waiata (songs), oriori (chants) and tears. The walls of whare tupuna (ancestral houses) the length and breadth of the country are adorned with the photographs of ancestors and deceased relatives. Similarly, in many Māori homes photographs of deceased loved ones are hung in places of prominence, often on a wall or section separated from photographs of the living. Such is the importance of the dead in Māori traditions.

This remembering of those who have passed away is a link to our whakapapa (genealogical links) and a way to reinforce certain cultural imperatives such as the importance of life, people and relationships.

Tangihanga Central Ritual

Tangihanga, the mourning ritual, is the ultimate Māori cultural expression; the most durable of our traditions. It is the space where relationships are celebrated, renewed and nurtured, challenged and defined. Tangihanga employs the full range of ritual and emotion, showcasing oratory, song and storytelling of the highest order.

Whanaungatanga, the focus on relationships and manaakitanga, the reciprocal exchange of hospitality, respect and aroha are the underpinning values of tangihanga.

In the period of sickness leading to death and during the ensuing tangihanga rituals, there is a heightened awareness of tapu, the sacred. The observance

of tapu during this time regulates certain mahi (actions of encounter), and can also extend to other forms of encounter such as whakaaro (thoughts), wairua (attitude), and kōrero (speech/communication).

Christian Influence on Māori Belief

With the introduction of Christianity to Aotearoa, the tangihanga process and in many ways its fundamental tikanga (cultural norms and practices) have evolved. At a tangi, we might hear the phrase addressed to the deceased, "Haere ki te whare o Hine-nui-te-Po" or "Haere ki te pō, te pō nui, te pō roa, te pō e kore e oti." These and similar phrases call on the imagery that the deceased descends to the darkness. In traditional Māori mythologies the demigod Maui attempts to enter through the vulva of Hine-nui-te-pō, the Great Maiden of the Night, in effect reversing the birthing process and so securing immortality. In that pursuit, Maui is crushed during his attempt and dies, therefore committing the fate of humankind to suffer death.

In the Christian tradition, where Maui failed, Jesus Christ succeeds and conquers death. Through Jesus's death and resurrection the potential for eternal life is now made possible for humankind.

How, then, have Māori Christians reconciled the traditions of Māori religious and spiritual beliefs and the teachings of the Christian faith concerning death and the afterlife?

Jesus's Death

One such attempt is to acknowledge that Jesus "descended into hell". This is not the hell of popular imagination with fire and brimstone, but is more akin to the Jewish tradition of Sheol, a transliminal state into which all the dead enter. Usually Sheol was identified as being deep down within the earth. And so Jesus's descent into hell is like Te Pō (the nght). At his resurrection three days later, Jesus takes all the dead with him to the light of the kingdom of heaven.

COVID-19 has significantly challenged tikanga Māori, and particularly those tikanga about tangihanga. Marae are closed during the higher Alert Level restrictions. This means whānau have not been able to lay their deceased loved one in their ancestral house. Only graveside services have been possible, sometimes only being performed by funeral directors and not a priest or katekita (lay minister in Māori Catholic communities).

Through the tangihanga ritual the deceased is re-membered, that is, he or she is ritualistically re-joined to the ancestors, "te hunga mate ki te hunga mate" and the living re-membered to one another, "te hunga ora ki te hunga ora."

Tangihanga Re-joins Living and Dead

Remembering is important — it's a process of uniting. Through the tangihanga ritual the deceased is re-membered, that is, he or she is ritualistically re-joined to the ancestors, "te hunga mate ki te hunga mate" and the living re-membered to one another, "te hunga ora ki te hunga ora." To break these links is tantamount to an eternal death for Māori.

In the absence of the appropriate mechanisms for the deceased to be tangihia (mourned) and mihia (eulogised), tapu (sacredness) and mana (dignity) have been affected in a negative way. The effect on the whānau pani (mourners) is a sustained grief which, if not addressed appropriately, may adversely affect the physical, emotional, spiritual and relational well-being of an individual and/or their whānau.

The physical practice in Māori terms called kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) is the basis of the customs of the tangihanga. Just the ability to physically embrace and comfort another in grief is an innate human behaviour.

Challenges of Technology

Although digital technologies have allowed Māori to shift "kanohi ki te kanohi" practices and rituals to the virtual space, allowing people to participate and engage, there is the tension of how the tapu nature of tangihanga is managed in a digital environment. For example, how are still and/or moving images of the deceased to be displayed or stored online? What becomes of the whaikorero (speeches) relating to tapu elements, such as whakapapa, which traditionally are reserved for the whare tupuna, now that they are accessible online?

Because of this and other tikanga considerations, digitally mediated grief and grieving and the reliance on technology for tangihanga in a COVID-19 environment have proved challenging for Māori.

Being Present at Tangihanga

While some tangihanga rituals have adapted and are still adapting, tangihanga still remains the most authentic of all Māori cultural practices. In Māori terms there is but only a thin veil which separates the world of the living from the world of the dead. This is why we address the deceased with: "Haere ki tua o te arai" "Go beyond the veil." There is a dynamic communion between te ao wairua (the spiritual world) and te ao kikokiko (the world of the living). Celebrating the life and death cycle in a way that links us to our past, present and future is essential for the health and vitality of tangata Māori. ●

Painting: ***The Nurturing*** by Gareth Barlow © Used with permission www.gbarlow.com

Manuel Beazley affiliates to Ngapuhi and Te Rarawa iwi of the Hokianga, Northland. He is the Vicar for Māori in Auckland Diocese.

Death Is Not the End

PETER MATHESON **asks what happens when we stop marking a person's death in the community.**

We're in a funny place these days about death, and how we mark it. I live in an apartment complex and recently one of our long-term residents died. No one told us and only by accident did we even hear that he had been in hospital. A brief death notice in the paper informed us that at the request of the deceased there would be no public funeral. Nor was there any support, except from one neighbour, for us collectively sending the widow flowers or a card. He was simply gone. As if he had never existed. We found that desolating.

I gather this is a growing tendency. Even when the deceased is a person of faith, often the children are not, and have no interest in a church service, or a secular celebration. A funeral director told me this is partly to save money, but obviously there are other considerations. We seem, though not in Māori or Pasifika contexts, to have lost a handle on the big words, the immemorial gestures of love, that used to mark death. No doubt it's partly because of a rampant individualism. But we also need to ask in the Church where we are falling short.

In her beautiful Shetland poetry collection, *Moder Dy*, Roseanne Watt cites an old burial formula from the island of Yell. *"Yurden du art…"* Earth thou art for of earth thou wast made / to earth thou now returnest when dead / From the earth you shall return / when the Lord shall blow the last trumpet *"… naar Herren aar syne bastnan blaa."* In briefest compass, the life of the deceased is set in the context of all human life, death is

recognised for what it is, and both life and death are seen to have meaning. The island community then stands around the grave of the departed, with whom it has walked the last walk to the graveyard, and commends them to the Lord. No one is left alone.

Down the centuries, funeral practices in the Church have varied enormously. We know, too, that all too often war, famine and plague played havoc with whatever pattern was normal. Many war chaplains never recovered from what they had seen. My own father left for WWII a young man and returned from a prisoner of war camp with grey hair.

At their best the Church's liturgies were never trite formulations, but intimations of the numinous, which held the faithful in the presence of the God who is beyond all our thinking and knowing.

He had seen too much. So we cannot pretend that things were ever easy. Death is never normal.

There were, however, some constants. A wake, for example, or mourning at the finality of death. Dark clothes could be important to spell this out. Tears were appropriate. Other emotions, too. "Do not go gentle into that good night." This emotional openness is well expressed in the Māori tangi. I do understand the frequent insistence these days on a cheerful celebration of life at Pākehā funerals but too much is repressed, suppressed. Grief should be recognised.

Another constant is the interplay of prayers, Scripture readings, communal singing, the act of committal — all references pointing beyond the life of this particular person. These days the profusion of photos and wordy tributes tends to make everything one-dimensional.

If we read the traditional liturgies we will notice that again and again the note of consolation is sounded. Death has been swallowed up by victory. There is a note of judgement, too, though thankfully glib references to heaven or hell are less frequent these days. It is interesting to ask how this has happened. Perhaps our concept of God has mellowed and deepened, but I suspect secularising trends are also in play. Why, though, is cremation no longer prohibited (for Catholics since the 1960s)? For a long time the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body made cremation impossible. How and why has our thinking changed? What do we now understand by the resurrection of the body?

Undoubtedly huge theological questions lurk behind these changes in practice.

We tend, for example, to pray these days for the soul of the departed, the language of resurrection making little sense. My father's generation had no doubts about the afterlife, but that is no longer the case.

Is it possible that our difficulty in talking about these ultimate mysteries of life and death, and instead taking refuge in familiar pious phrases, is turning many of our fellow Kiwis away from a church funeral, and from the comfort it could bring?

It is hard to reflect on these mysteries when hearts are breaking, but it is surely important that we ponder them before bereavement strikes.

We are kaitiaki in the Church of centuries old wisdom. We may not follow to the letter the burial rite from the Island of Yell, but I think that at their best the Church's liturgies were never trite formulations, but intimations of the numinous, which held the faithful in the presence of the God who is beyond all our thinking and knowing. ●

Painting: *Nor'wester in the Cemetery* by William A Sutton,1950. Oil on canvas. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1954.
Reproduced courtesy of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū

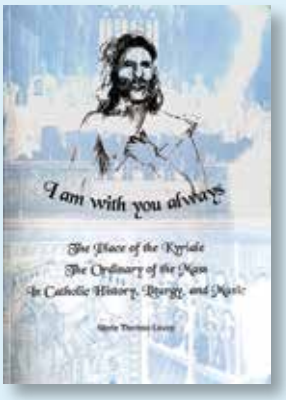
Peter Matheson is a peace activist, a Church historian, Emeritus Professor of Knox Theological College, Dunedin and author.

The Place of the Kyriale: The Ordinary of the Mass in Catholic History, Liturgy and Music

by Marie Therese Levey
Published by Sisters of Saint Joseph Generalate, 2021
Reviewed by Ray Stedman

Some 40 years ago, I wrote that the liturgy is a treasure, and that we need only lift the lid to experience its wonders.

Marie Therese Levey has certainly done that and revealed much more; a history of huge complexity, discovery, loss, recovery and discernment leading to the preservation of the Church's nearly 2,000-year music heritage, proper to the liturgy. Truly something to savour, to delight in, something which is uniquely ours.

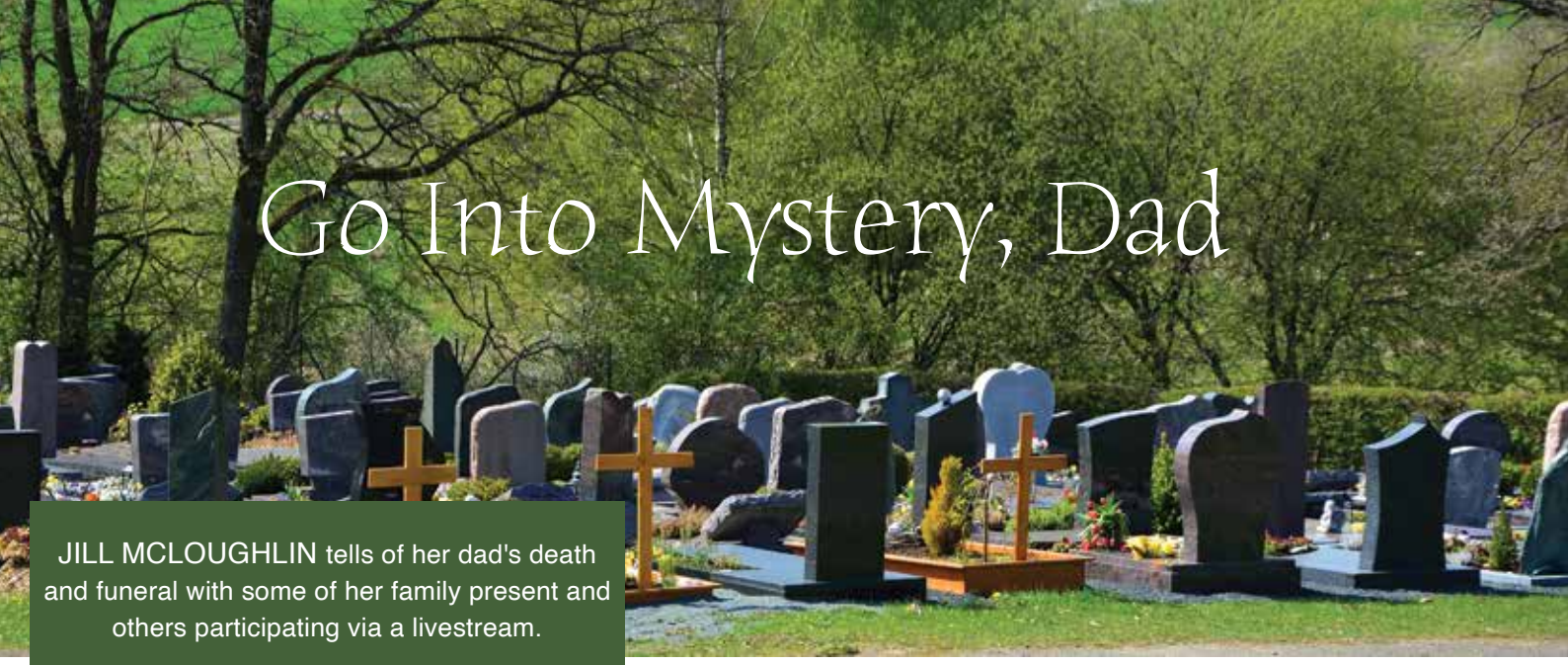


Levey tells the story of the plain chant settings of the common of the Mass (the Kyriale). The story's strands are myriad, the complexities far ranging. Her management of them is virtuosic. With copious footnotes, cross-references and a huge bibliography, this is a scholarly undertaking. This is a book for dipping into, gleaning knowledge each time.

Persons interested in or involved with the liturgy, particularly its music, will be reminded of their heritage. However, it is not a book of music — but many scores are available online.

Today the Mass is frequently burdened by the four-song, three-chord, two-strum school of music. This book reminds us that liturgical music should connect us with the Divine. ●

Go Into Mystery, Dad



JILL MCLOUGHLIN tells of her dad's death and funeral with some of her family present and others participating via a livestream.

Our family farewelled Dad this year. The date 17 July will be forever etched in our memories. Not long after midnight at Waikato A&E, my mother Peg, sister Nicki and I let Dad go into eternity, to be one with his faithful God, reunited with his loving parents. My brother Jeremy was keeping his own vigil in Perth awaiting the inevitable news that our beloved Dad, Bede, had passed away.

It happened quite quickly in the end and was a very peaceful death. We prayed and sang with Dad as he breathed his last. The experience of being with one you love, watching them surrender to death is such a mystery. While we shed soft tears, we were also in awe of this indefinable moment between life and death. When once there was the sound of breathing now there was a great stillness. It was a profound, sacred moment.

The attentive hospital staff were very sympathetic and as Ana-Maria, our funeral director, wheeled Dad out to the hearse, they all stood in respectful silence which was extremely moving.

The journey to this moment had been a long one. Dad had congestive heart failure and his kidneys were barely functioning over the last year. We knew his death would be imminent. Each time Dad had an appointment with one of the many specialists who monitored his health condition, he always acknowledged how grateful he was to have lived for 89 years. He had lost his Mum at the age of three and his Dad when only 16. Life was indeed a precious gift to him.

As we reflect on Dad's passing, we are grateful that this happened while we were relatively free in terms of COVID-related restrictions. Exactly a month later it would have been a different story. I do acknowledge that it was very difficult for Jeremy not being able to travel from Perth. The Trans-Tasman bubble had burst by then which precluded him from coming over. One consolation for us was that Jeremy and his family had been able to visit just over a month earlier when the bubble was operating. This meant so much to Dad and Mum and was a poignant opportunity for them to say their goodbyes.

Aware of the current precarious situation regarding Lockdowns here in Aotearoa, we appreciate that we were able to give Dad a wonderful farewell with the family and friends around us. Technology is a great advantage in this COVID age as we were able to bring Jeremy and family to the funeral through livestreaming. While being physically present is ideal, we sensed our Perth family's presence as they gathered at their home and participated in Dad's Requiem from afar. Father Mark Field, who presided at the service, ensured that they were included as he spoke to them during the service. Of course, many others were able to be present via the livestreaming, too. This technology has become the new norm these days — maybe one of the benefits of living in a COVID world.

Bringing Dad home for those few days before his funeral was healing for us, especially for Mum. After 66 years of married life together it was important for her to have Dad close by to sit and talk with him. As many others will have experienced, bringing our loved ones home helps with letting them go.

We opted to have a small prayer ritual at home the night before his funeral rather than take Dad to the church. A few of Mum and Dad's retirement village friends, parishioners and others joined us. We brought Jeremy and his wife Merryl in via FaceTime. It was comforting to pray together and to share memories of how Dad had touched our lives. Through the stories, tears and laughter, we experienced the gifts of remembering, intimacy and healing.

It is during these major life events when the loving support of community really matters. We, as a family, will be forever grateful for the many ways that that love was expressed over those days and beyond.

We experienced what Helen Keller described: "What we once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes part of us." Rest in eternal peace, dear Bede. ●

Jill McLoughlin is a Sister of St Joseph living in Kirikiriroa where she appreciates the beautiful Waikato landscape, awa and people.

Human Rights & Climate Change

MARGARET BEDGGOOD **writes that we can wait no longer to introduce effective action to reduce climate change.**

One aspect of climate change which has attracted little general or media attention, even in the lead up to the UN Climate Change conference (COP26) is its effect on the enjoyment of human rights.

The two disciplines have operated almost entirely in separate silos, despite the potentially devastating consequences of climate change, pollution, environmental destruction and loss of biodiversity for almost all internationally recognised human rights and the values which underpin them, not only from climate change itself but also from measures taken to mitigate it. Any practical assistance which such a linkage can provide has also been ignored.

For there is scarcely any human right which will remain unaffected by climate change and its ripple effects. These include the core fundamental rights, both individual and collective, whether civil, cultural, economic, political or social, as outlined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two Covenants which give it legal force. Rights such as those to life, to health, to work and an adequate standard of living. These rights are expressly to be enjoyed by all people, whatever their gender, race, disability or age.

The more recently recognised communal rights, to sustainable development, to peace, to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment will be even more difficult to achieve. The "democratic" rights to information, consultation and participation, so clearly recognised as essential in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (DRIP), will again be at risk. Also under threat are the values of dignity and equality for all and care for the most vulnerable which underpin the "human rights project".

But this obvious connection has not gone entirely unnoticed.

Especially in the last two decades, committed non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been working to draw attention to this critical issue, with specific examples and calls for action. These include specialist NGOs such as the Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL) but also more general human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and faith-based ones, including for example Franciscans International (FI) which has long taken the approach to human rights and care for creation now adopted by Pope Francis in both *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*.

A recent statement from CIEL says: "Climate change is not only an environmental issue, but one of the greatest human rights challenges facing our generation ... Just as climate change has serious impacts on human rights, the responses taken to address climate change have direct and indirect implications for the full and effective enjoyment of human rights."

In our own region we are increasingly aware of the ill effects on life and livelihoods — in Aotearoa New Zealand from floods and droughts, in the Pacific from sea level rise and salt water contamination, in Australia from out-of-control bush fires.

Around the world such catastrophes can also lead to the amplification of conflicts, to tensions and structural inequalities and force people into increasingly vulnerable situations and displacement.

Various United Nations bodies, spurred on by such non-governmental pressure, have also turned their attention to climate change. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has called for recognition of its consequences for human rights protection. Since 2008, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has adopteded a series of similar resolutions. Several human rights UN Special Rapporteurs have drawn attention to its effects in their areas of expertise. Goal 13 of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals states: "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts."

At its 8 October meeting in the run-up to COP26, the UNHRC passed two important resolutions. One recognised the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The second established a Special Rapporteur on human rights and climate change — a goal advocated for by NGOs. The potential effect of these two resolutions for further regional and local implementation is already being discussed.

We have been down this road before in our efforts to draw two separate disciplines into cooperation, with all the inevitable mistakes, regrets, lessons and, eventually, achievements, which such a course entails. Human rights groups and activists have learned to work with health professionals, with development specialists, with peace negotiators, and with those working on the responsibilities of businesses. Now, surely, is the time for human rights and environmental activists to make use of these two developments and to cooperate as co-defenders in the struggle against climate change. ●

Photo by Sam Lawrence/Shutterstock.com

Margaret Bedggood is a member of the Third Order of the Society of St Francis and a human rights teacher and advocate.

BE ALERT TO THE SIGNS

KATHLEEN RUSHTON **explains that in the apocalyptic chapter, Mark 13, Jesus is warning disciples to look for the signs that are announcing the endings of old ways and the beginnings of new.**

Mark 13 has a strategic role in the Gospel. The discourse is written in an apocalyptic style which can be a difficult genre for contemporary readers to understand. The discourse tells of endings — the end of the temple and the end of the earthly life of Jesus. At this time we are drawing to the end of the 2021 liturgical year.

The discourse also suggests beginnings — Jesus is the new temple and the reign of God is evolving as a new way of being in the world. At this time we are beginning the two-year process of preparation for the Synod 2021-2023 (For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission). Pope Francis is asking Catholic dioceses around the world to consult with the People of God. The preparation is primarily a process of discernment.

In this reflection on Mark 13 I use the three contexts or worlds of the biblical text, as described by Sandra Schneiders: "While history lies *behind* the text and theology is expressed *in* the text, spirituality is *called forth by* the text as it engages the reader."

1. History Lies behind the Text

The Temple Had Been Destroyed

Herod began massive renovations of the temple in 19 CE which were completed in 64 CE. No other buildings looked more permanent and indestructible. Yet six years later it was destroyed. The Marcan Jesus tells of these events — the Roman general Titus had captured the city and destroyed the temple in 70 CE. Mark's criticism of the empire *(basileia)* of Rome is veiled because the Roman armies were in control of Galilee. In contrast, the temple and its leaders are denounced vehemently. Jesus accused the scribes of devouring widows' houses. The story of the poor widow is a criticism of a temple treasury practice.

Kathleen Rushton RSM is a Scripture scholar and author of *The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor: Hearing Justice in John's Gospel* (SCM Press 2020).

To Imagine a New World

The early hearers of Mark 13 would have recognised its apocalyptic intent. This type of writing uses symbols and vivid images to help people see their experiences within a larger context so that they can imagine a new world. The chapter focuses on the coming of the *basileia* of God, revealed through Jesus's words. By moving between reassurance and warning, Jesus's discourse addresses the situation of the people of the time and of the future — for our time.

2. Theology Expressed in the Text

Text's Key Position

Mark 13 is a farewell discourse placed in a key position between Jesus's prophetic judgement on the temple (Mk 11-12) and the passion narrative (Mk 14-15). Knowing that he is about to die, Jesus gives instructions and offers his disciples consolation (as in John 14-17). This is framed by two stories of women who offer generous

gifts at great personal cost. The first is a poor widow who gave the temple "all she had to live on" (Mk 12:41-44) and the second a woman who pours "very costly ointment of nard on Jesus's head (Mk 14:3-9). These link the earthly temple and the new temple "not made with human hand" that God is creating in Jesus (Mk 14:58). Jesus's words echo those of the prophets. He sees God acting in history. Earlier events anticipate and unfold the meaning of later events.

Ongoing Insight

The disciples ask Jesus about the signs that are to happen. Jesus responds in a series of warnings about the difficult times ahead. The word "see" (Mk 13:5,9,23,33), translated as "watch out," "beware," or "be alert," is significant. The Greek suggests to take heed, look, watch, view, notice with your eyes, comprehend. It's about being in a process of understanding Jesus — of insight. The disciples are to be alert to signs of the times and to be aware of who Jesus really is. And they are not to be deceived by those who falsely claim "I am," that is, "I am Jesus."

The Synod is "intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships.

Jesus warns of hard times ahead. Then he continues: "The good news must first be proclaimed to all the nations" (Mk 13:10). Followers of Jesus are to be confident and serene: "for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit" who inspired the biblical authors (Mk 12:36). Later, Jesus extends his commission to his disciples — and to us: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15).

Whole Cosmos Affected

The word *thlipsis*/suffering (Mk 13:19) has cosmic implications. It means the whole cosmos is affected — sun, stars and the powers of heaven. For Jews, the temple was a microcosm of the universe — its centre, and the meeting point of the heaven and earth. The Risen Jesus is active in the cosmos and "his elect" who are being gathered "from the four winds" suggests that the Gospel is being preached to all peoples and the *basileia* of God is being established.

3. Spirituality Called Forth by the Text "Let the Reader Understand"

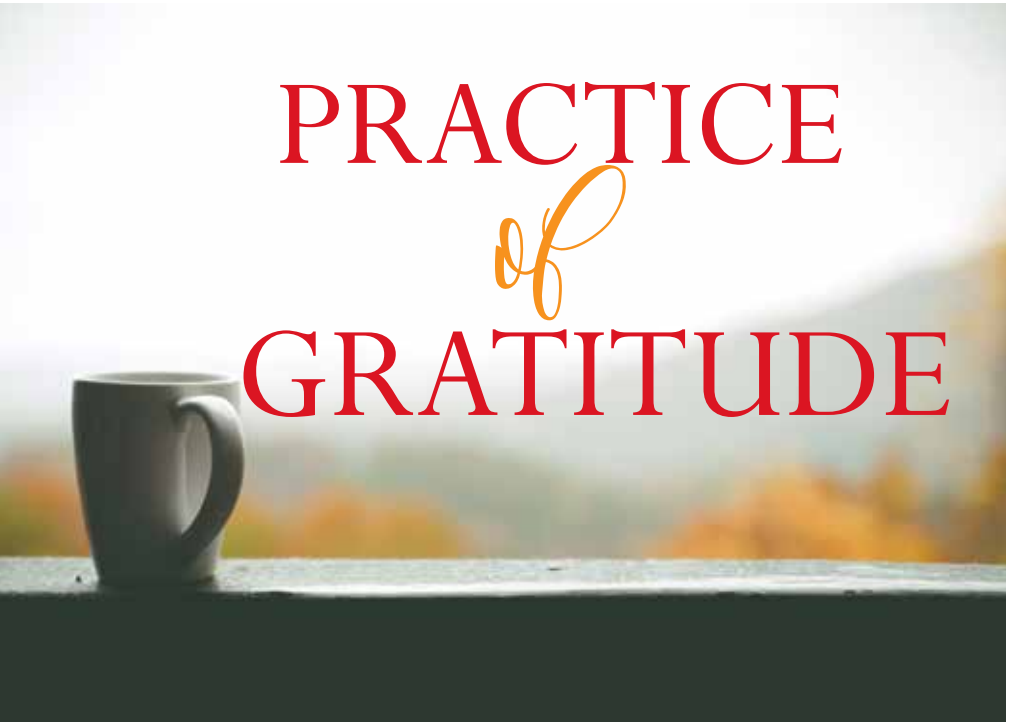
Just as every session of Vatican II began with: "We stand before you, Holy Spirit", the Synod preparation is for the People of God to listen to the Spirit in this time. We can go into the experience confident that the "truly *synodal experience* of listening to one another and walking forward together, [is] guided by the Holy Spirit."

Some of the critical signs today are global issues — the pandemic, war, climate change, migration, injustice, racism, sexism, violence, persecution and increasing inequalities — affecting life in Earth that need our urgent attention. We need to take heed of them, not in a way that paralyses us but humbly and with commitment to life-bringing change.

The Synod is "intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission." As we are walking the path together we take heed, look, watch, view, notice, comprehend and share. We are journeying together in a process of insight to hear the voices of "those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical and existential peripheries of our world."

Sandra Schneiders suggests that "the world" we are concerned with is the *good world* to which we are missioned, the *evil world* which we confront, and the *alternative world* we are called into with Jesus to complete the works of God by hearing and committing to both the cry of Earth and the cry of those suffering. ●

14 November
Mark 13:24-32 — RL 33rd Sunday Ordinary Time
Mark 13:1-8 — RCL 25th Sunday After Pentecost



PRACTICE of GRATITUDE

I stumble into consciousness bleary-eyed and slightly confused. Another Tuesday. Soon, I will go running; soon the list of things I need to do will engulf me like an avalanche; soon I will go and wash my face. But there's something I have to do first.

Sometimes it's silent, inside my head. Sometimes I open my palms, wrists pale and awkward in the morning light. Sometimes I speak out loud. "Thank you, Jesus, for this day", I pray, and then I open the curtains and let the light come in.

When I was younger, I reluctantly attended a family meeting every Sunday night. In an order decided by a complicated and pointless competition, each family member would list what they were grateful for over the past week. I moaned about it somewhat at the time, as my mother can probably attest to, but the principle was a solid one: to reflect on the week that had been, and to be grateful.

This practice of gratitude has taught me something: to remember that there are good things in my life, even when things are hard. "Thank you for a good sleep." "Thank you for this toast and marmalade." "Thank you for the tree outside, its leaves whirling in the breeze." There are many things in my life to pay attention to: these are all things that are made by God, and God longs for me to enjoy them.

I inherit a long tradition of thankfulness. I sometimes struggle reading the Psalms; they all sound the same. The psalmists give thanks like I do, though they're often more eloquent. They are thankful that God is everlasting, that God protects them, that God is restoring them. We don't know all the details of these people's lives, but they lived in a war-torn world, learning to love God, knowing the depths of their own human fallibility.

The Apostle Paul, too, is remarkably thankful. He might be writing from prison, but he tells the people he writes to that he gives thanks to God always for them, gives thanks for his own salvation, the small and big miracles he is witness to. The circumstances of my life are often beautiful, if slightly overwhelming; I am not in prison, or ministering to people spread across thousands of kilometres, but I can still be thankful.

And as I am thankful, I learn: the conditions of my life are not something I've earned. Instead, all I have, whether that feels like a lot or a little, comes from the abundance of God. Gratitude is a way to turn my attention back to God; to exist in God's generosity at every moment I can.

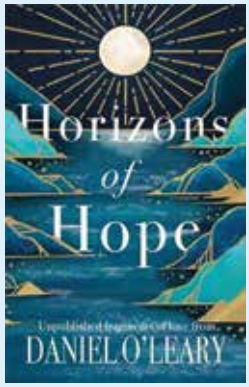
I fail at this, of course; and there are times and spaces for anger and mourning in the life of God (this is another thing to notice in the Psalms and the letters of Paul). But I live my very ordinary life, being tugged and spun towards God, often — often by gratitude.

At the end of each day, I stretch across my floor, usually noticing that the carpet needs vacuuming; that miscellaneous study books are in teetering piles; that my skin is dry. "Thank you God for this body." I undo my hair and brush my teeth. "Thank you for this house and its shelter." I climb into bed. "Thank you God for all the gifts of today." ●

Shanti Mathias is at Victoria University, Wellington, enjoying using long words and immersing herself in the intricacies of media, politics and literature.

Horizons of Hope: Unpublished Fragments of Love from Daniel O'Leary

by Daniel O'Leary
Published by Garratt Publishing, 2021
Reviewed by Mary Betz



Poet, priest, prophet, mystic, writer — these are some of the ways we know Daniel O'Leary, who died in 2020. *Horizons of Hope* explores his major conviction that if we are seeking God, we need look no further than ordinary everyday life. The Introduction images God as the unfolding love-energy of life, and, had he lived, Daniel intended to further explore God incarnate in all creation, an Incarnation that has been happening for 14 billion years.

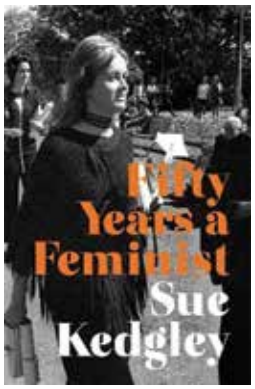
The book's 46 chapters were originally *Tablet* articles and unpublished correspondence, mostly 2-4 pages each. They focus on myriad ways of seeing God everywhere: people, music, art and nature; creation as theophany; real presence as everyday life; the grace of seeing; love; loneliness; and awareness and attentiveness as doorways to God's presence. Daniel was a great reader, so each chapter is full of references to other theologians and spiritual writers (my only criticism would be that I would have liked all the references footnoted!).

Anyone willing to look for God outside the sanctuary and be open to fresh creative understandings of traditional ideas will be swept along in the Spirited breeze of Daniel's writing. ●

Fifty Years a Feminist

by Sue Kedgley
Published by Massey University Press, 2021
Reviewed by Diana Atkinson

In *Fifty Years a Feminist*, Sue Kedgley details the triumphs and travails of 50 years of activism in the women's liberation movement. Her experiences of sexist cultures — as a university student, in her work for the "global sisterhood" at the United Nations in New York, in TVNZ and as a Green Party MP — personalise this story.



Kedgley was key to the women's liberation movement. She worked with and for women from many countries and cultures with divergent needs and aspirations. Her enduring energy and passion are sustained by the need to dismantle 6,000 years of patriarchy.

Her story moves briskly. It is well structured, referenced and sprinkled with photos. It's an easy read. I enjoyed her positivity and celebration of even small successes. Stories of her marriage and motherhood show the changes already achieved for women. She leaves others to tell the story of patriarchy in religions and for Māori women.

Although I lived through these decades I learned much about them from this book. For younger generations it is an interesting and informative New Zealander's account of women's liberation. Kedgley leaves us with a sobering reminder of how relatively easy it is in our digital world for new forms of patriarchy to emerge and oppress women. ●

Enabling Dialogue about the Land: A Resource Book for Jews and Christians

Edited by Philip A Cunningham, Ruth Langer and Jesper Svartvik
Published by Paulist Press, 2020
Reviewed by Kathleen Rushton

This book addresses the single issue that often stops Jewish-Christian dialogue: controversy over the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. While aimed primarily at Jewish-Christian dialogue, I highly recommend *Enabling Dialogue* as a resource for Christians and denominations who are often reluctant to address this challenging conflict. The book's purpose is to provide a way forward for those seeking genuine dialogue and to offer materials for deeper theological reflection.

Part I comprises essays from 16 contributors who engaged for years in the "Promise, Land, and Hope" research project of the International Council for Christians and Jews. In accessible ways and taking into account the complexity and intricacy of the conflict, these Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Palestinian scholars, living in the Land of Israel or the State of Israel or outside the land, discuss religious and cultural priorities to promote understanding that can lead to productive dialogue.

In Part II, "Partners in Hope", a discussion group process centres on a range of modern texts for constructive interreligious dialogue. The book cover summarises: "While not intending to "solve" the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *Enabling Dialogue* encourages interreligious conversation that moves away from endless disputes over policies toward engaging with differences as a path toward constructive understanding." ●

PIG

Directed by Michael Sarnoski
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

At one level, *Pig* belongs to the popular genre of a food film, but not as we have come to know them. It certainly isn't a free-spirited celebration of haute cuisine in the manner of *Babette's Feast* or *The Hundred-Foot Journey*. Dark and ominous in places, *Pig* is much more about the people behind the food, who they are and what makes them tick.

The film opens with Robin (Nicolas Cage), a slow-moving, reticent and unkempt character, hunting for truffles with his pig in a sun-dappled Oregon forest. But if we thought this was the start of a woodland idyll, we are swiftly disabused of this notion when Robin is brutally assaulted and his prized porker — a gentle, tawny-coated creature — is stolen from him.

The rest of the film charts Robin's attempts to recover his (unnamed) pig. Along the way, we learn a good deal about this introverted and isolated man, his kidnapped pig, the food and restaurant trade, and — if we care to attend to the movie's deeper subtexts — ourselves. We follow Robin on a disconsolate and, at times, unnerving journey through Portland and the city restaurant scene, a setting that is by turns brutal, dark and shallow.

Robin is accompanied on his quest by Amir, an outwardly smart and confident young produce buyer who, like his companion, is nursing inner wounds. Even more damaged is Amir's wealthy father, who runs the local catering trade like a mafia boss and shows open contempt for his son.

Robin's own values as a chef and a human being become clearer as the film advances. His interview with the chef of a smart, expensive restaurant reveals the emptiness and pretentiousness that mark one part of the culinary scene. To Robin, this is all a wicked waste, a betrayal of food as well as the people who prepare and consume it. He himself has nothing but respect for the ingredients he sources and cooks and the customers he serves. He can remember every meal he's cooked and every diner he's fed.

As he tells his fellow chef in what is perhaps the film's most memorable line: "We don't get a lot of things we really care about." As I left the theatre, these words triggered reflections about my own values, the things I have chosen to devote my energies to, and whether I can truly claim to be passionate about them. Food for thought. ●

Ecumenical Intercommunion

The Auckland Diocesan Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations recently sponsored an online evening with Rev Joseph Zachariah of St Peter's Syrian Orthodox Church. Impassioned in his belief that Christians confess one God, one Christ, one holy, catholic and apostolic Church, he is frustrated with the failure of inter-Church dialogue to forge a doctrinal route to celebrating Eucharist together.

Rev Joseph cites Irish American philosopher Richard Kearney: "A restricted Eucharist is false. Whoever loves his brother has a right to the Eucharist." Kearney recalled a devastated Anglican woman who was denied communion by the Catholic bishop presiding at the ordination of her close friend. She felt like the Syrophoenician woman, thinking "even the dogs receive the crumbs from the table". Why have we turned Jesus's loving symbol of unity into a mark of exclusion? Should our criteria for shared Eucharist be our love and our hunger, not doctrine?

The Laudato Si' Action Platform

Following on from Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical, an "action platform" will be launched on 14 November — a seven-year effort to move the global Church to sustainability. There are also seven goals (responding to the cry of Earth, responding to the cry of the poor, ecological economics, ecological education, ecological spirituality, adopting simpler lifestyles, and community engagement/participatory action) to be implemented in seven different sectors (families, parishes and dioceses, religious orders, educational institutions, health institutions, economic institutions, and lay groups).

Some excellent resources sourced from a myriad of Catholic, other Church and secular organisations have been pre-released on the platform's website. They include prayers, videos, sustainable living tips, discussion programmes, reports, and Lent, Advent and Christmas green guides. Two favourite resources are the Global Footprint Network video, "Food and the Ecological Footprint" and "Weekly Environmental Tips" from the Catholic Climate Covenant.

Listening to COVID

COVID is revealing humanity as part of creation, not the apex as we have been taught. We may have reflectiveness (which we should use more often), but we can be brought low by a simple virus made up of fat and protein. If we continue unwise incursions deep into the home ecosystems of other creatures, we will continue to see crossover of viruses to humans, and more pandemics.

COVID is also sharply illuminating the inequalities in our society. Catholic Social Teaching tells us that no one is free until there is justice for all. Now that COVID has reached the gangs, the poor and vulnerable in emergency and transitional housing, the message could not be clearer: if we want to be free from COVID, we must attend to the well-being of the poor and marginalised, ensuring all have access to good housing, food, health (including mental and dental) care, employment or benefits and education.

Consumer confidence and spending have declined in our latest Lockdown. What if we were to take that as good news rather than bad, and realise we don't need to buy more? Carbon emissions from transportation have also been cut — can we continue to use our cars less? What if we were to try on Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics or Pope Francis's ideas for "de-growth"? Can we learn from COVID what is most important in life, and change our consumption for the sake of our common home and all its inhabitants? ●

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

The magazine invites contributions from writers of Catholic and other Christian traditions or faith backgrounds, who can offer our readers insights which resonate with the Gospel as it affects us today. We value diversity and seek contributions which are representative of our church and our society: Māori, Pākehā Pasifika, other cultures, a range of ages and genders, lay and ordained. We offer feature articles, interviews, reviews, poetry, comment and opinion on theology, spirituality and history, as well as on social justice and ecology.

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

The editor reserves the right to abridge longer letters while keeping the meaning.

MAKE HOSTS OURSELVES

In the Catholic tradition, the Mass is centred in the Eucharist, where the priest invites Christ into the host. The problem I see is that we offer no other option to Christ than transubstantiating in a waffle product of modern agriculture inexorably containing traces of pesticides, biocides, insecticides, herbicides, plus the intention of doing so.

The question emerges. Do we have to kill so much in order to produce a host? Wouldn't the host be humbler if grown in a way that promoted all life forms in the environment in which it grew?

I propose we start participating in producing a local host, made by the people of each parish, with organic flour anyone can buy at the store, and preparing and baking an unleavened bread that we can proudly walk to the altar during the offering procession.

We will find resistance in proposing this, starting from our own doubts: "How can I pretend to bake the host?" Reversing the question reveals an answer: "How can I stay uninvolved in preparing the host for our *common-union*?" An organic host made with our own hands is good preparation for communion and a core tool for starting the greening of our churches.

Guillermo Aldao-Humble, Southland

REMEMBERING THAT SHAMEFUL TIME

I agree with everything in the article "The Polynesian Panthers and Social Justice" (*TM* Oct 2021). I am 95 and lived through those times [the 1970s] while raising a family and teaching at a convent school. I even challenged the Papakura MP, Merv Wellington, when one of our Pacific Island boys was mocked and told if his dad took him to the Islands he would never be allowed back here. It was a heartbreaking time. I would like to see this story on Facebook where those who follow Jacinda meet. I do admit one of our parish priests was Father Terry Dibble RIP who worked so hard with the downtrodden and despised.

Kath O'Sullivan, Auckland

SEASON OF CREATION 1 SEPT TO 4 OCT

The Season of Creation has an interesting, ecumenical history. In 1989 Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I proclaimed 1 September as a day of prayer for the environment — the Orthodox Church year starts on that day.

Norman Habel, an Australian Lutheran eco-theologian initiated in Adelaide an annual time to focus on the Creator and creation with gratitude, awe and repentance for the damage done to Earth, from 1 September to the feast of Francis of Assisi 4 October in 2000. Since then, it has been an option for parishes of many denominations in New Zealand, North America and Europe. A resource for Catholic participation was developed by the Australian Columban Missionaries.

Meanwhile, the proposal to celebrate a Time for Creation during those five weeks was made by the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Romania in 2007. In 2008 the World Council of Churches invited member Churches to observe it. In 2015, Pope Francis urged Catholic parishes to join in celebrating Creation.

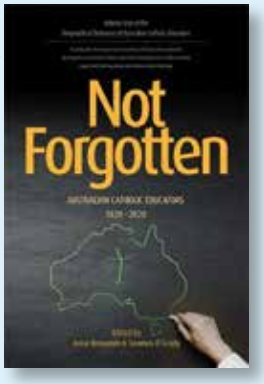
So in this Season, Christians of all traditions pray together our awe, gratitude, repentance and we commit to action for mending our Home.

Trish McBride (abridged)

Not Forgotten: Australian Catholic Educators 1820-2020

Edited by Anne Benjamin and Seamus O'Grady
Published by Coventry Press, 2020
Reviewed by Jenny Collins

Not Forgotten features 30 biographies and reflections about Australian Catholic education. It is written as a tribute to the lay teachers, clergy and the thousands of teaching sisters, brothers and priests who founded and ran Catholic schools.



Published in 2020, the book celebrates 200 years of Catholic education in Australia and is the first publication from the proposed *Biographical Dictionary of Australian Catholic Educators*.

The book is a rich historical resource. Although some accounts tend to be hagiographic in style, I enjoyed reading about key figures such as Ronald Fogarty FMS, who wrote a seminal history of Catholic Education in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, which I mined extensively in my own research.

The selected biographies ensure that educators' contributions to Catholic schools are not forgotten. Given that teaching sisters formed the vast majority of workers in the vineyard it is surprising to find they are given so few entries — half the accounts feature the contributions of clergy and male religious. As it stands, *Not Forgotten* is an intriguing sample of a much bigger story, one that could provide fascinating insights into the history of Catholic education for readers and historians on both sides of the Tasman. ●

Looking OUT and IN

In the last fortnight I have been supporting the public health response to the large COVID-19 outbreak in Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland). It has been an intense time, and yet I have felt hopeful witnessing the compassion, persistence and kindness of public health colleagues — "What kind of dog food shall we get for your spaniel while you are isolating at home?" The office is the engine of activity — some are collating the case numbers announced in the daily media updates; others are identifying people at risk in transitional housing and providing information and arranging manaaki (care) packages; still others are supporting stressed families and coordinating testing, vaccination and public health management.

I had slipped into the corridor to make a phone call so as not to disturb colleagues in my open-plan office. A woman, (I'll call her Liz), alone in a neighbouring office, pulled me in there. I finished my call and sat down briefly to write notes. But I didn't race back to my desk. After some polite introductions, the two of us fell into conversation about our childhoods in the rural North Island, about adoption of children and all the complexity and beauty that can be tangled together in this relationship. She generously started to share her story of finding out as an adult that she had been adopted. She told me about the courage needed to first write to her birth mother. Then trepidation of that first meeting with a mother who had been waiting for this for decades. She discovered and connected with a whole new family in mid-life and yet was also so thankful for her adopted parents and the stability and love that they had always provided. My new friend explained how she was now in good relationship with both her adopted and birth families, who have met and thanked each other for the role they each played. It was a tender conversation with someone I had never met in a neighbouring office, in the middle of a frantic day of work. An unexpected gift.

My Dad was always quick to strike up a conversation with strangers — someone on a train, a bus or when walking in the neighbourhood. I've learned from him. It requires me to pause and to engage with someone else. I notice this random conversation happens frequently in the gospels too. Jesus strikes up conversation with a woman at a well. The disciples chat to a boy who turns out to have fish and rolls in his lunch box that he is happy to share. The couple walking to Emmaus.

Joe Keohane in a recent article in *The Atlantic* says that talking with strangers works well for us as individuals, to make us happier, more connected to our communities, mentally sharper, less lonely and more trusting. Conversation has the potential to make societies more trusting and connected which expands civilisation. Conversations facilitate other relationships and engagements. He says they happen more commonly in some countries like Brazil, and less so in countries where the state provides all the social support, such as in Nordic countries.

The 30 minutes of conversation with Liz made me feel as if I belonged in a new workplace — even in the temporary. It connected me into our vulnerable spaces with another. Conversations can be a sharing of our humanity and recognising of our commonalities with other people. I like the unexpectedness of it too. A hurried phone call in a corridor turned out to be a new friendship. In these days of COVID it is easy to feel mistrustful of others, but conversations and connecting to each other feel more important than ever. I'm planning to keep striking up conversations with strangers for many years ahead. ●

Most days **Kaaren Mathias** rides a bicycle, teaches university students, parents her children and goes walking with Tussock the dog.

With the wisdom of our ancestors
With the encouragement of our companions
With the hope of generations to come
With the love in which you created us
With the communion that unites us
Bless us, Source of Life

From the *Tui Motu* team