Tui Motu

InterIslands

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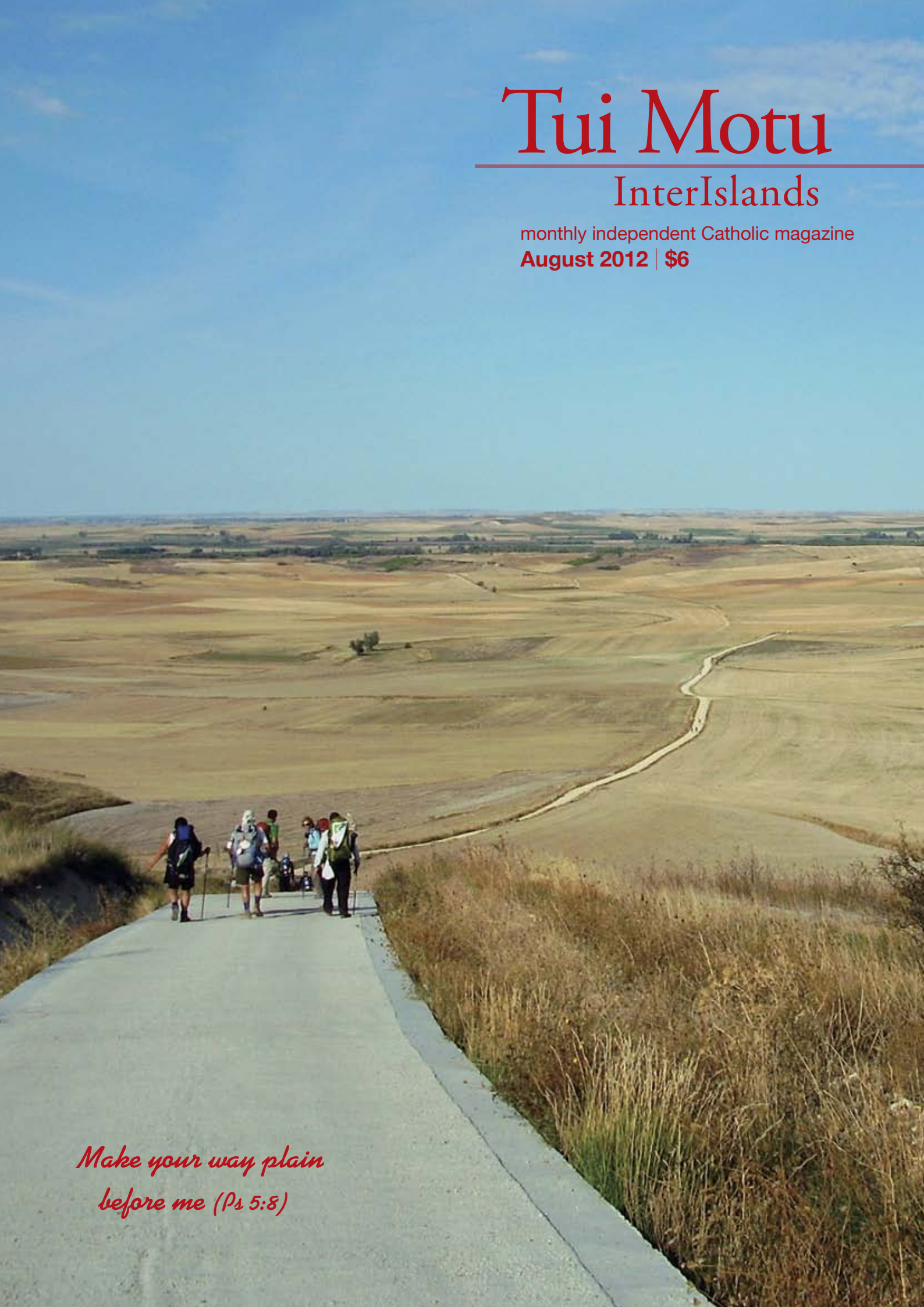

Make your way plain before me (Ps 5:8)

A pilgrim people

"Wow! You're off on pilgrimage!" There was a hint of envy in the way these words were spoken to me. But behind that I sensed awe, awe in its best and most significant sense: the way in which we each yearn to face our God — in love and expectation and in the hope that the fullness and goodness of our humanity will be revealed before the immensity of an infinite but incredibly loving God.

If that seems too lofty an ideal, other lesser senses crowd in: the desire to focus on the sacred in a way that cannot easily be done in daily life; to take time out and review my life (which was brilliantly portrayed by Martin Sheen and his co-pilgrims in the film *The Way*); to pray for healing for myself and others; to find a new resilience of spirit for the journey of life. And these are but a few possibilities! It's a universal experience, and there are so many places of pilgrimage in our world: close by and far away.

For centuries Jews have made for Jerusalem, Hindus to Benares, Muslims to Mecca and Christians to Jerusalem, Lourdes, Canterbury… Certainly for me, lucky enough to have been in Palestine and Israel, I will never read the gospels in the same way again. Their meaning has been transformed.

Those who write about pilgrimage in this month's issue (pp 6 -11) give me a fine sense of the variety involved in being a pilgrim — a month on the Camino to Santiago de Compostela, three months in Kenya, and a day on Croagh Patrick. It's clear that beauty and awe, resilience of spirit, and sheer determination are common to the experiences of Kath, Rebecca and Seán. Being a pilgrim is not for dummies. You need to be prepared and ready for the discipline which their very diverse experiences imposed on them. By extension, being called 'a pilgrim people' is not a bad metaphor for the way we Christians hope to respond as the People of God and the Body of Christ.

Tony Watkins, in his lament over Rio+20 (pp 12–13), is asking us to take another form of pilgrimage, an eco-pilgrimage — using our individual and collective power to change systems resistant to change. This pilgrimage is not a journey for the faint-hearted.

Syria and its tragedies are mirrored in what John Dear has to say on the opposite page. How the Syrian people must long for that new covenant of peace, and for the love, forgiveness and compassion which would assuredly flow from it.

KT

contents

This month's cover photo: The Meseta is a wilderness section of the Camino, on the dry arid plain of Old Castile. This photo is taken near Castrojeriz, an old Roman town. [*Photo: Kathleen Rushton.*]

The Eucharist's new covenant of nonviolence

to honour Peace Sunday, 5 August, 2012

When Jesus offers the bread as his body and the cup as his blood, Jesus becomes the Passover meal. As others have written, he fulfills humanity's exodus out of slavery, symbolically demonstrates what will happen the next day on Calvary, memorializes his own life and witness, and invites us to participate in that Paschal Mystery by partaking of his very body and blood.

But as I ponder these words and gifts within the context of our world of permanent war, the Eucharist takes on another level of meaning. There in the upper room, Jesus reaches the epitome of creative nonviolence. He starts a new covenant "in my blood, which will be shed for you".

Of course, any mention of a covenant in the Bible is critically important. Here, to my way of thinking, Jesus invents "a new covenant of nonviolence". He will not hurt others or kill others for us, but he is willing to suffer and die for everyone, and wants us to do likewise. He wants us all to join his underground movement of transforming nonviolence, his campaign of resistance to injustice, war and empire. He calls us to give our bodies, our blood, our hearts, our very lives for one another, for suffering humanity, for the reign of God.

When Jesus invites us into his new covenant of nonviolence at the Last Supper, he throws away the old covenant of violence. With this historic, salvific breakthrough, he frees us from the old rules, laws and ways of violence, war and empire. He dismisses the ancient fundamentalism that once sanctified violence. He does away with every justification of violence. From now on, in his new covenant of nonviolence, we live by a new set of boundaries, based on peace, love, forgiveness and compassion, and so we dwell in Christ's peace.

At the Last Supper, with this new covenant, Jesus sets humanity on a new path toward peace. The days of violence and killing are formally declared over.

When we partake of Jesus' Eucharist, we take a public stand against the culture of war, violence and empire, and its anti-Eucharist. But it's one or the other. We can't have it both ways. We can't celebrate the Eucharist of Christ's peace and still support the culture's ongoing anti-Eucharist of war and destruction.

Perhaps we don't often think of the Eucharist in light of Gandhi's hermeneutic of nonviolence. I think that's because we're still stuck in the old covenant of violence. Few live this new covenant, or teach it, or preach it, yet it remains at the centre of our faith, at the heart of our weekly worship.

This Eucharist of nonviolence summons us to renounce the old covenant of violence, accept Jesus' new covenant of nonviolence, and persistently reconcile with every living human being as sister and brother. The body and blood of Christ disarms us, heals us and gives us a peace not of this world. Bound by this new covenant of nonviolence, we are sent forth as peacemakers into the world of permanent war to give our lives in the struggle for justice in his memory. As keepers of the covenant of nonviolence, we espouse a consistent ethic of life, and resist war, executions, nuclear weapons, greed, environmental destruction and violence in all its forms. We no longer partake of the anti-Eucharist of war. We celebrate the Eucharist of peace.

John Dear SJ

(with kind permission of the author)

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

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

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light in darkness

In the midst of darkness there shines a light and that light is called *Tui Motu*. The July edition had three of your regular writers at their very best. Pauline O'Regan writes so clearly on historical reasons for current practices, these practices which cause such pain and confusion to people of faith. Anna Holmes writes about the church in action through women in particular and then Robert Consedine summed up so much of what is happening as brought about by the Holy Spirit. His tone was playful but the message was very clear. Those of us who profess to be Catholic, in spite of the obstacles placed by our church, will continue our journey with the support of the Holy Spirit and of one another.

When I feel the journey is too hard, my *Tui Motu* or *London Tablet* arrives in the letterbox. Thank you.

Kathy Watson *Christchurch*

taking issue

Unlike your subscriber who cancelled his subscription because he considered you were too 'left wing' I greatly enjoy your publication although I do not always agree with the articles therein!

I must take issue with you over your stance on the partial sell off of some state assets. Much of the hype is just straight ignorance and whilst I would not accuse you of that I do consider you are wading into tricky waters. For example, you assume that our electricity under the current ownership is efficient and cost effective — if that is correct then why is electricity in the USA which is not Government owned approximately one third the cost it is in NZ?

I am not aware of Caritas' submission but I am suspicious of bodies such as England's Ofgem. Conveniently you and other commentators do not offer alternatives as to how NZ will pay its bills and provide for all the social services we all demand.

Terry Mikkelsen *Auckland*

breaking barriers

Congratulations on an excellent multi-faith issue of *Tui Motu* (July). The content reminded me of a personal experience about five years ago. I was in Amman airport. Because I was feeling ill, I went into the quiet of the prayer room to get some sleep. I bedded down on some rugs. A little while later a group of Muslim men came in to pray. At once I got up to leave and apologised to them, assuming they would not want a woman in the room while they were praying and feeling I had transgressed so many rules. My (prejudicial) assumption was wrong as they insisted I stay. As I listened to the rhythm of their prayer I felt at one with them. Before leaving they gave me another rug and some water. Their kindness and care broke down barriers forever.

Sharon Lont *Dunedin*

an ostrich-like stance

The article by Anna Holmes (TM, July) is a poignant one. It highlights the deep hurts and frustrations of many people who would find a profound empathy with her view that the Vatican actively attempts to control and limit the contribution of women in the church. She puts her case clearly and with endearing, persuasive gentleness which deserves serious recognition and wider attention. If she feels that she is banging her head against a brick wall I can well understand this for the problem she refers to is age old. The fact that despite this she is still willing to try to change things is wholly admirable and she deserves our congratulations and support. The ostrich-like stance of the Church in this matter is deplorable and the sooner the church takes its head out of the sand the better! Let us pray for that!

John Vincent *Dunedin*

another view

I wish to comment on Anna Holmes' impassioned article. Yes, Rome appears to be blind to the reality of the lives of many of its members. But it is not only women who suffer injustice; most of the laity and clergy too. One example is the imposition of the new translation of the Mass. We should be seeking justice for all members of the Church and not concentrating on the contentious matter of women's ordination.

The Roman Catholic Church makes much use of symbols — bread, wine, water, etc. My understanding of this symbolism is that through it a truth is represented. What of the symbolism of the Church as the Bride of Christ? In the Mass the priest represents Christ — for me, this symbolism would be totally gone if the priest were a woman.

In our society we don't lack causes to fight for. Abortion and the gap between rich and poor are injustices worthy of a Christian crusade. Further, the news informs me that for millions of women, a large proportion of whom are not Christian, their priority is to feed themselves and their children. Jesus said feed the hungry. This is what we will be judged on.

Kathleen Kenrick, *Dunedin*

☞ letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not changing the meaning.
We do not publish anonymous letters otherwise than in exceptional circumstances.
Response articles (up to a page) are welcome — but please, by negotiation.

poverty and parenthood

Nicola Atwool

Many New Zealanders are aware that a significant number of children have their lives compromised by poverty. The most conservative estimate indicates that one in five children is living in a family who fall below the poverty line. The government's solution to this problem is to encourage parents (mothers and fathers) to engage in paid work. Claims that the solution to poverty is paid employment completely overlook the fact that in the 2008 Living Standards Survey 15 percent of all children who experienced four or more items in a measurement of deprivation came from non-benefit dependent households. The drive to get parents off the benefit and into the workforce fails to address the possibility that this will simply increase the stress of daily life without necessarily improving the financial situation.

parent's contribution valuable

Over and above the risk of increased stress, such a solution completely overlooks the valuable contribution that parents make to children's well-being. Poverty alone does not result in poor outcomes for children. Research has shown that it is the accumulation of risk factors that limits children's potential. Poverty is not just about lack of money; it increases the likelihood of exposure to other risk factors. When this happens the real danger becomes impoverishment of the spirit — a pervasive feeling of hopelessness that undermines parents' and children's sense of self and diminishes any possibility of positive outcomes.

balancing risk and protection

It is the balance between risk and protective factors that makes a difference in determining outcomes. One of the most critical protective factors is a supportive family environment and this is particularly important during the early years of a child's life. Politicians may not accord a monetary value to time and energy invested in children but there is good evidence that substantial financial costs accrue from childhood deprivation. The first three years of a child's life provide the foundation for the rest of their life.

committed & available parent

Quality care is crucial for the brain development that is central to this foundation. It is difficult to replicate outside the home the environment created by a committed and available parent. High quality early childhood care and education are expensive and the most vulnerable children are more likely to be exposed to lower quality provisions. Supporting families through the benefit and taxation systems so that a parent can be at home with children may prove to be a relatively small investment when compared with these costs.

importance of family time

Even when children are of school age having parents who are available and supportive is important. As part of the Green Paper consultation process staff from the Office of the Children's Commissioner asked children (years seven and eight) about what makes a good childhood. Many identified the importance of family time and parents being available to listen and to support them. Another group of young people aged 12 to 18 reiterated these themes indicating that the commonly held assumption that teenagers have less need of their parents is not necessarily valid. When asked how they thought government should help families many commented on the hours worked by their parents and the low minimum wage.

addressing the balance

Reducing the number of people on benefit may be an appealing goal because it is measurable within a political term. It is not, however, a good measure of whether or not we are addressing poverty and working toward a better future for our children. Any long-term solution has to address the balance between the unpaid work of parenting and the demands of paid employment. Productivity and sustainability are not driven by economics alone. The relationships between people and the interrelationship of family, community and society are equally important and failure to invest at this level is likely to be at least as damaging as lack of financial investment. ■

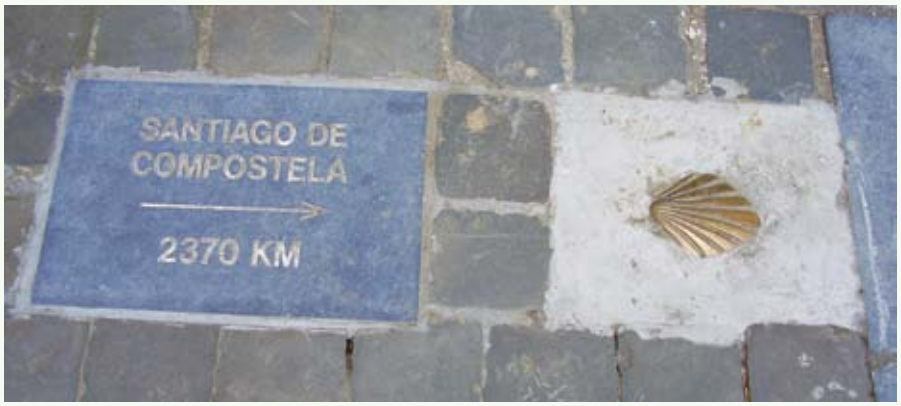
Dr Nicola Atwool is Senior Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Otago. From 2006-2011 she was principal advisor in the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

the camino – the end is the beginning

The writer takes us on her journey along the Camino to Santiago de Compostela. The symbol for this journey is the scallop shell, the most ancient sign of the christian pilgrim.

Kathleen Rushton

If it is to happen, I shall know. So I told myself in early April, 2011 when the group with which I was to walk the Camino to Santiago de Compostela was cancelled. Two months later, outside St. Jacob's (James) Church in Leuven, Belgium, I looked down. At my feet was a plaque: 'Santiago de Compostela 2370ks.' An arrow pointed in its direction and there was a scallop shell, the ancient pilgrimage symbol.



This discovery nudged me to walk the Camino alone. I set out on an experience which took my trust in the Providence of God to a new level. After decades of tramping in the South Island foothills with companions, maps and an emergency locator beacon, setting out alone went against the grain. In this as in ever so many ways on the Camino I was reassured. The three seated with me in the train from Bayonne to our starting point of St-Jean-Pied-de-Port in the French Pyrenees were women doing the Camino alone.

stepping on the earth

The Camino or the way implies movement. The early Christians were 'followers of the way'. Walking the Camino is a means of expressing the life condition of being 'on the way'. I am aware of generations before me who went to the tomb of the apostle St James (Santiago) and were called *pellegrini* (pilgrims). We enter into a state of *peregrinatio* (from the Latin, *per* 'through' and *ager* 'field' or 'countryside') which is a process of emerging at a starting point, being on the road, living in foreign parts, going on to the very end (*finis terrae*) and arriving at a destination.

My feet stepping on the earth are like fingers moving over the beads of the mysteries of the rosary. My body is engaged in the rhythm of pilgrimage, my mind and spirit soar. Walking 800kms over 29 days, I see the Camino, the landscape, the people and life itself with new eyes.

> Life becomes simpler — to walk, to pray, to eat, to sleep. I need little.

After a few days of walking, the Camino turns westward toward distant mountains. From dawn to dusk the sun is behind. The sunrise is behind. I cannot go forward looking backwards. The sun blazes on my back. My body is the dial. My shadow jogs in front of me. Its position tells me the time of day. My watch is redundant. I walk facing my shadow. That which is usually unconscious is visual. I journey inward.

learning to trust

At first, the destination of the day is my goal. To get a bed in the best albergue (dormitory) and to catch up with new friends is compulsive. I need to slow down, to take time, to enjoy the way, to pray and reflect, and to listen to my body. I learn to trust in Providence. There will be a bed somewhere.

Life becomes simpler — to walk, to pray, to eat, to sleep. I need little. I have my boots, the clothes I walk in, another set and a few essentials in my backpack. The backpack I carry at times becomes the baggage I carry.

The Camino Francés passes through ever-changing landscapes dotted with the villages, towns and cities of the Basque country, the provinces of Navarra, La Rioja, Burgos, Palencia, Castillla-Léon, the region of the Maragatería people and Galicia. The pilgrim, however, tends to divide the Camino into three parts.

body adjusts

During Part One, winding over hillsides of vineyards my body adjusts to walking. I know weariness and physical pain. My well-worn boots which gave me no grief previously do not breathe sufficiently in the heat. A blister develops between one big toe and the next and extends on

to the ball of that foot. A volunteer foot specialist advises: "Change your socks hourly and dry them on the back of your pack." My feet and boots become friends again.

I pray in village churches and stunning cathedrals. To go forward at the end of evening Mass for the blessing of pilgrims and discover I am among my own: "Where are you from?" asks the priest. "Ireland … Brazil … France … Czech Republic … Poland [every nation on earth it seems, then] … New Zealand … Germany … New Zealand … New Zealand [and then I chorus] … New Zealand." What a meeting we four have!

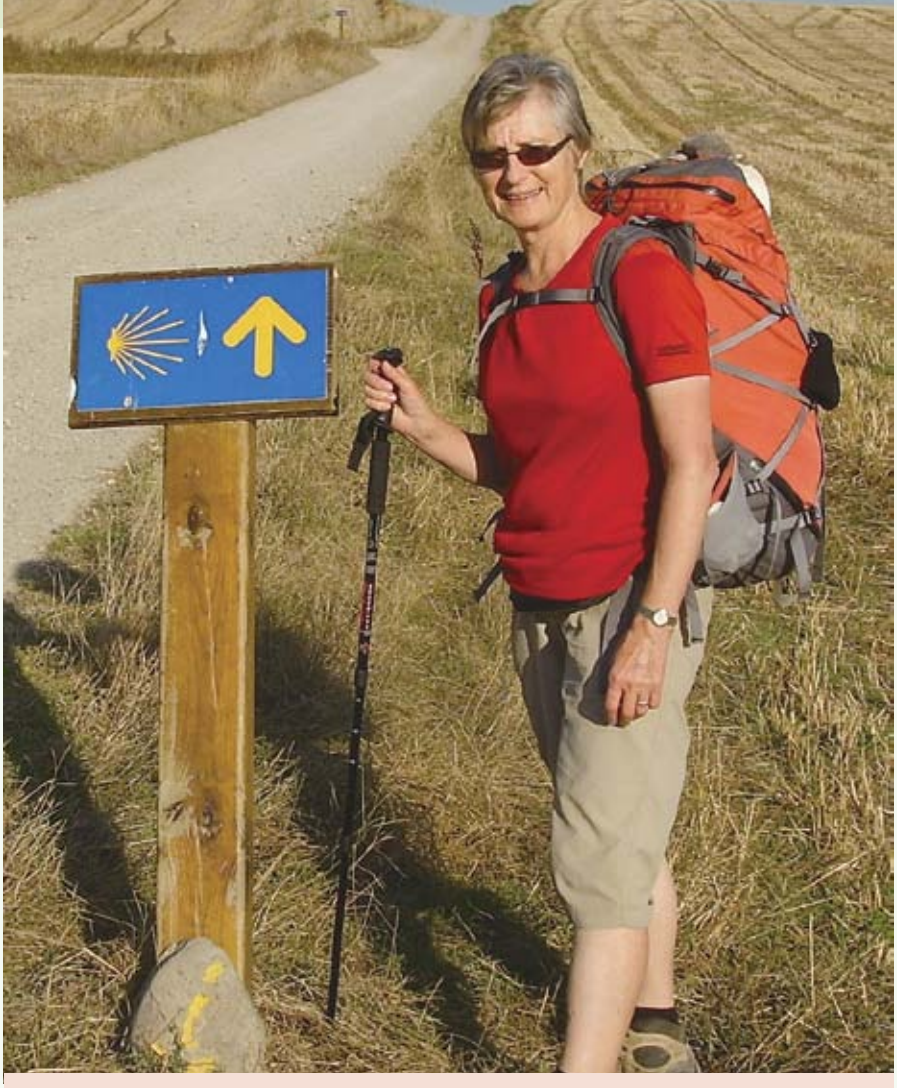
mental stamina tested

In Part Two, my mental stamina is tested in the *meseta* which is a dry dustbowl in late summer. This plateau of undulating expanses reaches out into infinity in all directions. I find it hauntingly beautiful and away from the noise of civilisation; yet the wind, grasses, birds and insects mean it is far from silent. On its long straight stretches, I learn not to assume that I would reach a particular destination, or even complete the Camino. Some companions have ceased walking.

I am grateful I emailed friends and sisters a month before the Camino inviting them to pray for me as I would for them. Two friends set an alarm for 10 pm ANZ time/ noon Spanish time. To walk to some point on the horizon is possible, because by then Jane and Paul would be at prayer.

exhilaration

In Part Three, I experience exhilaration and a sense of well-being as I climb up into the beautiful autumn-tinted region of Celtic Galicia. Now only 158kms remain. Reaching Santiago seems possible. I am feeling strong. I want this to continue forever! The memories! Wonderful people from the four winds! Little purple crocus-like



Kathleen walking the Camino

flowers surprise me in barren high places. Yellow arrows at every turn assure me there will be one in turns of my life. The way is astonishingly beautiful as when I walk to the Benedictine Monastery of Samos where pilgrims have found hospitality for over 1,000 years. I email home that I have run out of superlatives to describe my experience.

Santiago draws near. Its unspectacular modern suburbs are tinged with anti-climax. The scallop shells embedded in streets of lesser towns to guide the pilgrim are missing. The painted yellow arrows usually at every turn are sparse. I have to search for them. The towers of the Cathedral are lost in the maze of the old city. I come to a halt and wait until a medieval festival procession with acrobatics, juggling and large knives passes. I am already late for the noon pilgrim Mass. As the Sanctus is being sung, I arrive in the packed cathedral. I shed tears of joy and gratitude. I join the queue to the large statue of St James, pray with my hand on his shoulders and go down into the crypt where it is believed he is buried.

the end is the beginning

We write from left to right. So, usually we see written in Greek A (alpha) and Ω (omega), the beginning and the end. The Camino goes from east to west, from the beginning to the end. On the Camino, the letters are placed right A to left Ω, aligned with the direction the pilgrim walks. I have walked with the sun (Christ) from the beginning to the end. Although I could not find it, I am told that this reverse symbol is also on a portal of the Santiago Cathedral.

For a pilgrim leaving the Cathedral, the end is the beginning … ■

Kathleen Rushton, a Sister of Mercy from Christchurch and a regular contributor, walked the Camino in September, 2011.

reflections from kenya

There are many forms of pilgrimage. This story from three young women who recently spent three months in Kenya speaks of the pilgrimage of mind and spirit they encountered in meeting the often difficult challenges which arise when young people face new cultures, languages, and ways of living.

Rebecca Bergin, with Bronwen Peterken and Stephanie Burgess

It is 2 pm on a dusty, hot Kenyan day. We are sitting in a tiny corrugated iron dwelling, in the heart of Mukuru kwa Ruben — a slum in the industrial area of Nairobi. Nine of us squashed onto two small couches. Outside children play happily, jumping across smelly streams of water, squealing in their imaginary games. Inside, I admire Catherine's home. The tiny room contains not only two couches, but also a small table and cabinet. A bed is hidden behind a lace curtain. Here we enjoyed a delicious Kenyan lunch, and had sodas pressed into our hands. As humble as the room was, inside it I enjoyed one of the most welcoming experiences of my life. As we laughed and joked with the friends of Catherine's who had accompanied us to her house, I was overwhelmed with a sense of pure contentment.

happiness and contentment

Experiencing feelings of happiness and contentment in unlikely places was something which we became accustomed to during our time in Nairobi, Kenya. Arriving in Kenya, we had little idea of what the country would hold for us. Bronwen, Stephanie and I travelled to Nairobi to volunteer for three months with the Edmund Rice Network.

edmund rice network

The Edmund Rice Network is a Catholic organisation composed of individuals connected with the Christian Brothers and their ministries. Their activities include running camps for disadvantaged youth, advocacy work, running spirituality and retreat centres, and organising volunteers to work alongside individuals in countries around the world. Stephanie, Bronwen and I spent our time volunteering at the Ruben Centre — a development centre in the heart of Mukuru kwa Ruben, a slum which houses approximately 600,000 people.

ruben centre

The Ruben Centre is an oasis in the midst of a bustling community, where it ministers to the people of Mukuru kwa Ruben. The Centre is led by an Australian Christian Brother, Frank O'Shea, who works closely with the staff of the Centre to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the community as effectively as possible.

The Ruben Centre offers many services, including providing free schooling for over 1700 primary students; offering economic services such as microloans for individuals starting small businesses; providing a health clinic employing twenty staff; and providing social services and vocational training for youth and adults in the area.

much with little

The Centre does amazing things with limited resources, and is constantly improving. During our stay there we witnessed the birth of a permaculture organic garden, as well as the construction of a new kitchen, built to allow all students to receive a free breakfast daily. An upgrade to the medical clinic is being planned, and a gymnastics club was established.

what bronwen and i did

With so much activity and enthusiasm happening in the Centre, it wasn't difficult for us to find things to do. Bronwen and I worked in the health clinic, helping with several public health activities. The staff we worked with were inspiring in their professionalism and dedication to serving the people of Mukuru. Each morning up to 100 patients would come, patiently waiting to see the doctor, dentist, physiotherapist, nurse or psychologist; or to attend the clinic's popular antenatal clinic or tuberculosis clinic. Each day the small clinic would be bustling with activity, with children playing happily, and prayers and singing happening each morning.

stephanie's skills

Stephanie used her teaching skills in the classroom, where she was primarily responsible for teaching a class of 14 and 15-year-old children who were in their final year of primary school. While the classes were conducted in corrugated iron rooms, the energy and enthusiasm of the children was amazing to see. We also spent a significant proportion of our time helping to prepare an application to establish a community radio station which would provide relevant information and education to the community surrounding the Ruben Centre. We all felt privileged to be able to work with such determined individuals, who were working so hard to improve the lives of their community.

contradiction and paradox

Reflecting on our time in Kenya, my overwhelming impression of our time there is one of contradiction and paradox. My experience of Kenya was

one where poverty, death and suffering at the hands of global forces co-existed with beauty, generosity, determination and overwhelming happiness. When walking through Mukuru, our senses would be assaulted with sounds, smells and sights. We would hear vibrant pop music emanating from tiny stalls, as well as the sounds of babies crying in hunger. We would smell the delicious aromas of chapattis being made on the road, as well as smelling the fumes of the factories operating next to the slum. We would feel like super stars, being greeted and followed by swarms of beautiful children, and a moment later feel heartbroken at the sight of a severely disabled person attempting to make it through the crowds.

resilience of spirit

Such contradictions were difficult for us to comprehend. That beauty and determination could exist in such difficult circumstances is a tribute to the resilience of the human spirit. During our time there this resilience was apparent in so many that we met. While many possessed so little, almost everyone we met had the time and the generosity to welcome us and speak to us.

'you're very welcome'

The phrase 'Karibu Sana', meaning 'You're very welcome' was one of the first phrases we learnt. Whether it was the Christian Brothers welcoming us to stay with them for the three months because our planned accommodation wasn't ready, or the staff at the Ruben Centre sharing their morning tea with us, everyone seemed to go out of their way to make us feel appreciated and comfortable. This generosity was truly astounding, and made us appreciate the power of simple acts of hospitality and kindness in making people feel welcome.

Another trait that was in abundance in Mukuru was the ability to be happy in spite of extreme difficulties, and very few material possessions. It was common to hear someone state "I might be poor, but I can afford a smile." People did not complain about the size of their homes, or the conditions that they were working in. Rather, they would comment on how grateful they were to have somewhere to sleep, and means to pay their bills.

a friend in mukuru

In particular, I remember one of our friends who lived in Mukuru telling us about how he hadn't slept well the previous night. His bed was positioned underneath a crack between two sheets of corrugated iron, and as it had been raining during the previous night, he had been kept awake by a constant dripping of water on his face. When I exclaimed that this must have been horrible to experience, he merely smiled and said that at least it made a good story.

Such a cheerful attitude to adversity did not mean that the people of Mukuru did not strive to improve their life. Rather, they seemed to exemplify the well known phrase attributed to theologian Reinhold Niebuhr — "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." Where they were in situations beyond their control, people were able to accept them with grace. Where things could be changed, people would work as hard as possible to change them.

cheerfulness in adversity

This was especially clear in the students attending the Ruben Centre primary school. As many viewed education as one of their only means to improve their lives, they would be working at school from as early as 7am, and would stay until 6pm each night, doing all they could to ensure they got the best possible grades. Such dedication to improving their place in the world was also seen in the parents working long hours as casual labourers in factories, or stall owners on the roadside.

final day

On our final day Brother Joseph told us that every day people leave the house clean, yet come back with mud on their shoes. He asked us what 'mud' we had collected from our journey. During our time away, we learnt a lot from the people of Kenya. We learnt about the importance of being present and welcoming to others. We learnt about the resilience of the human spirit, and above all, we learnt that love and beauty can be sourced in the most unlikely places. These lessons comprised just some of the 'mud' that we managed to collect along our journey, and I think it's true to say that we will always carry some of that African soil in our hearts. ■

Rebecca Bergin, Bronwen Peterken and Stephanie Burgess are members of the Edmund Rice Network.

an irish pilgrimage

In this article, we hear of another form of pilgrimage, a penitential one, in which the writer and two of his children pit themselves against the elements by climbing to the holy site atop the mountain, Croagh Patrick.

Seán Brosnahan

There is an element of 'pilgrimage' in any Irish descendant's return to the ancestral homeland. This past March I had the good fortune to spend a week on the ancestor trail across Ireland. I was following in the footsteps of other members of my extended family, with cousins, parents and siblings having been there before me and able to share useful data and contacts. Years of researching and teaching about Irish migration and settlement in New Zealand gave my quest an extra edge. Best of all, I was accompanied by an adult son and daughter. Sharing the experience with them made it even more special. It was altogether a marvellous trip: one week, a rental car, a 2000-kilometre circuit of the island, and four ancestral 'turangawaewae' spots successfully located.

heffs at faulmore

In the midst of our ancestral pilgrimage we slipped briefly off track. It was Tómas Ó hEimhrín's fault. Known in New Zealand as Thomas Heffernan, he was a pioneer goldminer, roading contractor, and the founding proprietor of the South Dunedin hotel that still bears his name — 'Heffs'. Before all that, he was just a poor boy from Faulmore in Co Mayo. Having studied Thomas's life in New Zealand I wanted to see where he had come from. Faulmore lies at the very tip of the Erris peninsula, an isolated promontory that forms the westernmost point of the Irish mainland. Ironically for a future colonial roadmaker, Faulmore had not a single road when Thomas Heffernan left it in 1860. It was a stronghold of Gaelic language and culture, but deeply impoverished. Today, Faulmore is still Irish-speaking, being part of a 'Gaeltacht' — one of Ireland's special zones dedicated to the preservation of the language.

land of boycotts

Mayo is a strugglers' county. On the eve of the Great Famine it was the poorest county in Ireland. Over 70 percent of its farms were mere subsistence holdings between one and five acres. The rural population crowded on to these smallholdings had the highest population density and lowest per capita income in the country. Not surprisingly, the Famine cut a deadly swathe through Mayo. The mass emigration that followed saw its population plummet by more than half.

Not many Mayo folk made the long journey to New Zealand — most would have been too poor to afford the fare. Those who did, like Thomas Heffernan, must have watched with pride as their county led the charge later in the century for reform of the iniquitous Irish land tenure system. The 'Land War' started in Mayo. So did the non-violent technique of mass resistance known as 'boycotting'. It took its name in fact from its first target; a Mayo landlord by the name of Boycott.

mayo legends

Mayo also features strongly in legends surrounding St Patrick. The key source is a 9th-century manuscript, the Bethu Phátraic (or Tripartite Life), which is the earliest account of the saint's life written in Irish. It records how St Patrick spent forty days and nights fasting on a mountaintop in southern Mayo.

The mountain is Croagh Patrick, known to locals as the Reek. Alone on its barren summit, Patrick was tormented by demons in the form of black birds. He chanted 'maledictive psalms' at them before finally throwing his bell at them so hard that it broke. When the birds finally flew off, the saint broke down and wept. Consoled by an angel, he showed his love for Ireland by arguing with his celestial comforter and demanding special dispensations for the Irish people. Croagh Patrick is also the place where oral tradition has Patrick casting the snakes out of Ireland.

penitential pilgrimage

People have been climbing Croagh Patrick as a penitential pilgrimage since at least the early 12th century, and probably long before. At first the tradition was to climb to the summit on St Patrick's Day but in 1113AD thirty pilgrims died on the mountaintop during a thunderstorm. Harsh weather made a March ascent so generally hazardous that the date was fixed instead as the last Sunday in July. This tied in conveniently with the old pagan Irish festival of Lughnasa marking the end of summer, and suitably Christianised it. Today, over 15,000 people descend on Westport, the nearest town to the mountain, for the annual climb on 'Reek Sunday'. It is quite the thing to do, transcending a narrow concept of pilgrimage without losing the penitential core of the ancient practice. The truly dedicated climb without shoes, and the men shirtless.

providence intervenes

The holy mountain of St Patrick was not on our itinerary. But when the

Heffernan diversion saw us stopping overnight in Westport in the middle of Holy Week, it seemed providential. We were only a few kilometres away and what better way to finish an Irish Lent than by climbing the Reek? To be honest, I never expected to get very far. My son does not share my religious sensibilities and I was anticipating a short hike up the track, a bit of sweat and strained muscles, followed by a mutual agreement to push on with our 'proper' journey.

Instead, all three of us were drawn into the drama of the mountain — it is a brooding, dark lump against the sky — and determined to make the summit. It was in fact a beautiful day but the climb is steep and rocky. I was reminded of Mt Peel in my native South Canterbury but without any trees or bush cover and lots of scree slopes; or of the blasted volcanic plateau of Tongariro and the precipitous cone of Mt Ngauruhoe.

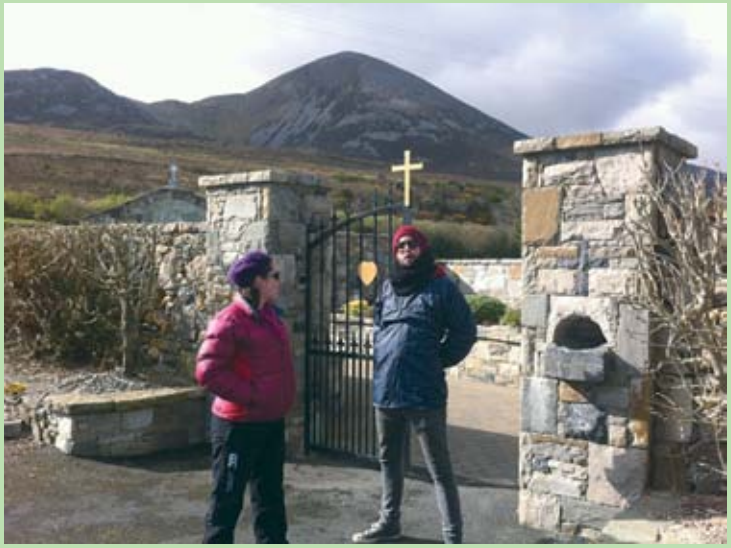
an epic climb

Whatever you compare it to, the Reek is an epic climb. Fierce winds howl across the exposed and narrow pathway. There are magnificent views on every side, especially north toward the spectacular beauty of Clew Bay. I found it hard to imagine what it must be like on the July Sunday when thousands struggle up the slope. With just a dozen or two climbers spread across the mountain, it still took care to pass in safety and not send dislodged rocks bounding down on those below. "Not far now" was the encouraging call from those on their way back down. Then, quite suddenly after a couple of hours of steady climbing, we came out on to a flat and circular summit, crowned with a shining whitewashed chapel. I was a bit miffed to discover that this was locked — on Reek Sunday there are Masses and confession to be had there throughout the day.

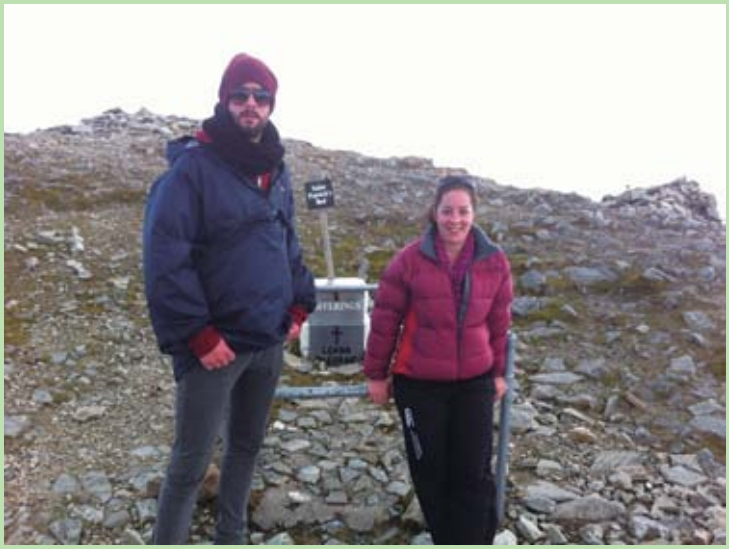
a soaring spirit

I struggle a bit with myth and legend. Most saints — beloved St Patrick included — sound somewhat crazed to the modern mind. Seeing Patrick's rocky 'bed' atop Croagh Patrick did little to encourage a change of heart. If Patrick truly spent 40 days and nights here, it is not hard to see why he might have screamed maniacally at the crows and tossed his holy bell as far as he could. But for four hours of penance — having a biting mountain wind tear the very beard from your face — it would be hard to beat the Reek. Coming down was as difficult as the ascent but my spirit soared even as my aching knees begged for relief. Amidst a plethora of fabulous Irish experiences, climbing the holy mountain of Patrick proved to be the real highlight of my trip. ■

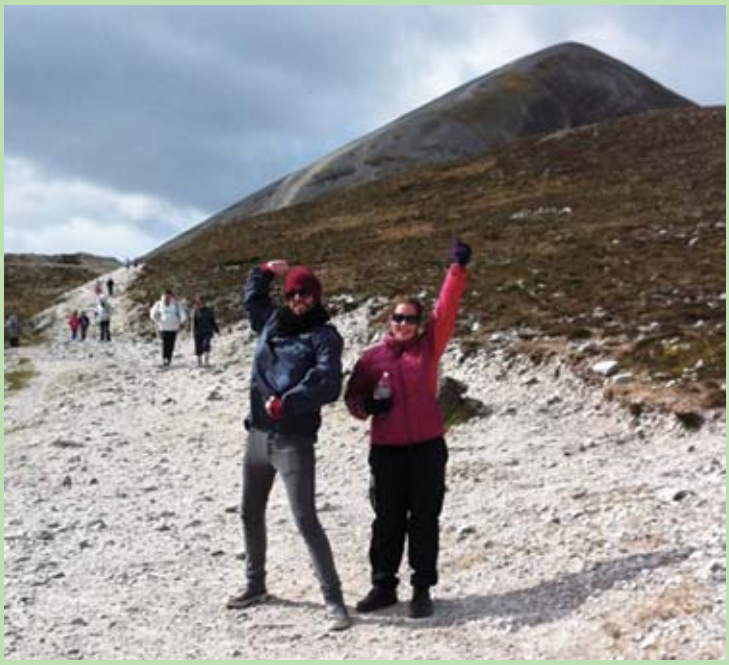
Seán Brosnahan is a Dunedin historian who specialises in Irish and Scottish migration history.



Croagh Patrick's summit looms over the shrine at the base of the mountain.



Hugh and Lorna Brosnahan by St Patrick's 'bed' on the summit.



The triumphal descent. [All photos Seán Brosnahan]

rio+20 – thoughts from an outsider

The question of what happened at the recent Rio conference is tackled here by a retired university teacher of architecture and town planning, who was present 20 years ago at the first Rio Conference. He laments the lack of progress from the time of the first conference until now.

Tony Watkins

Conversations you have in the hot pools at Ngawha Springs, in the north of New Zealand, have an air of unreality about them. Precisely because they are real. People say what they think without any attempt at manipulating or massaging the message. These conversations can be as informative as they are startling. You look at life right in the eye, and then are left to ponder what to do about it.

I asked one individual what he had been up to during the day. "Shooting ducks." "You like eating ducks then?" "No, it's the killing I enjoy." I must have looked startled, even through the steam. He wanted to set my mind at ease. "I'm into conservation too." he went on. "One of my mates has set aside 500 acres where the pheasants are protected so they can breed." He thought wistfully, and then added "When they open it up the shooting will be fantastic."

a world in denial

Rio+20 was a world in denial, confused by all the smoke and mirrors of green economics, and completely lacking the honesty you find at Ngawha Springs. At the UN Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 we were eyeballing life and getting on with it. Those of us involved in ending the Cold War believed that anything was possible, and sorting out the environmental mess was just a process of getting on with the job. Tough, but possible. We knew you had to be focused and to see clearly.

a pretence

Rio+20 seemed to be only pretending to be concerned about the environment. Rather like those academic conferences where participants are focused on advancing their careers rather than changing the world. Before UNCED 1992 we had done our homework, and afterwards we followed through on what had been achieved. In Rio we convinced Susan Maxman to bring the issues forward to the UIA/AIA Congress the following year, and New Zealand played a leading role in that Congress. Back home the 1993 Papatuanuku Conference polarised the architectural profession. The seeds for Enviroschools were planted. All over the world Agenda 21 offices were opened up as local governments everywhere tackled the issues we had raised.

The decision makers at Rio+20 seemed in contrast to have lost touch with the realities of both the natural and the built environment. Our Environment Minister Amy Adams, for example, went all the way to Rio to say that there were important domestic imperatives for protecting oceans, such as fishing.

Not 'from fishing' apparently. It seemed that it was the killing she enjoyed. Meanwhile "The World Bank was seeking an initial $250 million of funding which it would use to leverage $1.2 billion from businesses, NGOs and other organisations." Did they really mean that volunteer NGOs were now to take time out from protecting the environment to provide money for the fat cats in the World Bank? What the money would be used for was not clear. Indeed nothing at Rio+20 was very clear. It was just a gigantic public relations junket. A significant negative cost to the environment.

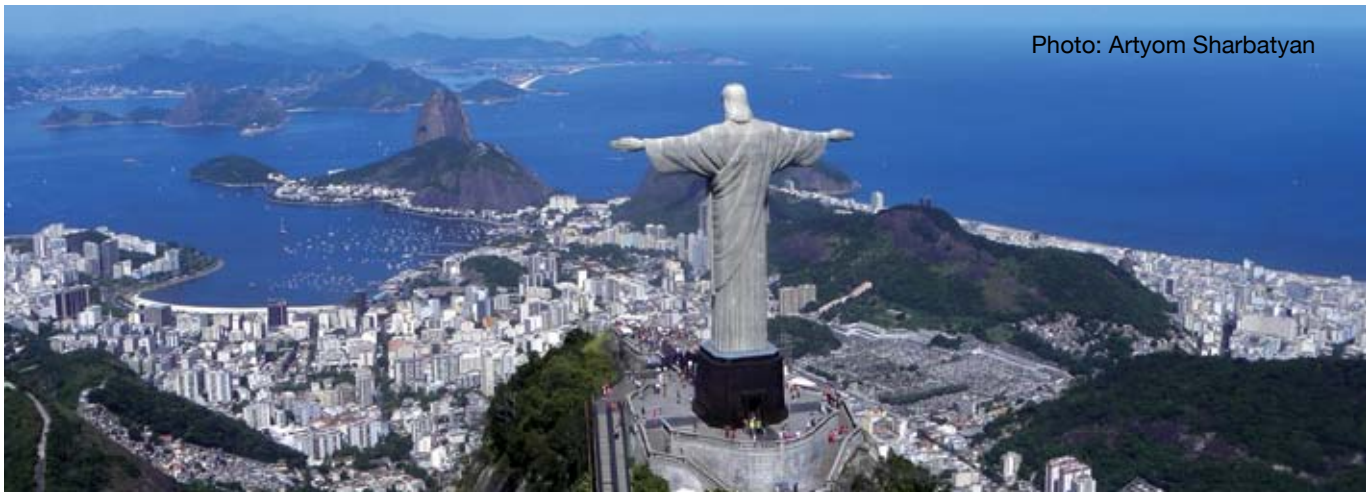


Photo: Artyom Sharbatyan

political mileage only?

The World Bank had launched their Global Partnership for Oceans last February, but only eight countries signed up, so that was a fizzer. New Zealand was one of those countries, but it would seem we did so just to get some political mileage. At Rio+20, in a speech to the summit Amy Adams proudly spoke of the 8 percent of New Zealand's territorial waters protected by reserves. Green MP Kennedy Graham, who also travelled to Rio de Janeiro, pointed out that just 0.41 percent of the country's Exclusive Economic Zone was protected. Debating statistics became just a cover for opening up Antarctica waters for oil exploration or destroying what was left of the Kermadec Trench.

'reaffirm' the key word

Gwynne Dyer noted that "the final document contained the verb 'reaffirm' 59 times. In effect some 50,000 people from 192 countries travelled to Rio de Janeiro to 'reaffirm' what had been agreed there 20 years ago." The text said fundamental changes were needed but gave no idea as to what they might be. He noted that people "are already dying from the effects of environmental destruction in poor countries, but that makes no difference because they are powerless."

What Rio+20 really did was to reaffirm the power-base which was supporting both the architecture of power and the way in which it was destroying the natural environment. Gwynne Dyer rued that "few leaders of the main powers even bothered to attend." They did not need to. Hundreds of large corporations were represented at Rio+20 and they came away happier than anyone else. Business as usual had been confirmed. Rio+20 confirmed the right of multinationals to set the agendas, rather than governments.

leadership sold out?

Even those we might have looked to for leadership seemed to have sold out. Janez Potocnik, the EU Environment Commissioner, talked about how a green economy would lead to salvation. It felt as though John Key might have written it. "Rio+20 has turned into an epic failure. It has failed on equity, failed on ecology, and failed on economy," said Kumi Naidou, executive director of Greenpeace.

It did not however fail to provide carefully managed photo opportunities. Brittany Trilford from Wellington, 17, who had won the "Date with History" contest, spoke to all the world leaders at Rio+20, saying that 20 years ago "They made great promises, promises that, when I read them, still leave me feeling hopeful." Great photos, but she became just a pawn in a very big game. Auckland Council used the police to remove the 'Occupy Auckland' protestors because that avoided needing to look at the issues.

1992 unced

At UNCED in 1992 "there was plenty of energy and hope around". At UNCED we knew what we wanted to achieve and we got on with the job. Our arguments were convincing and the nations of the world signed up. By Rio+20 no one was interested any more. In the period between the two conferences we had lost three million square kilometres of forest, along with any sense of urgency. Greenhouse gas emissions had risen by 48 percent, and the wealthy were now more comfortable than they had ever been. Gwynne Dwyer noted that "Politicians are always reluctant to be linked to lost causes, and the struggle against poverty and environmental destruction now seemed to fall into that category."

The Telegraph Group noted that "twenty years ago the basic documents were drawn up by experts who packed them with content. This time they were drawn up by negotiators, meaning that they started close to the lowest common denominator and went downhill from there. There seems to be a growing lack of competence in the international process." It was good for those of us involved with UNCED to be acknowledged, but not much consolation.

'other' and 'one world'

One of the main failings of UNCED 1992 was the way in which NGOs were kept far away from the meeting of governments. But the Istanbul 1996 conference had changed all that. Everyone mingled together at the same pedestrianised venue. Rio+20 went back to the old format. The closed shop of lavish hotels and business-class flights for those in power, and NGOs talking to each other on the other side of town. 'Other' has become the term for our time. Twenty years ago we were talking about 'one world'. That idealism seemed to have been forgotten.

As Rio+20 came to a close, George, the last remaining Pinta Island tortoise, died on Santa Cruz Island. Another species came to an end. Rio+20 moved the world a little closer to the day when the human species too would quietly become extinct.

good news?

It would be good news if we had at least agreed at Rio+20 to leave intact the wonderful planet we have been privileged to live on, and only set about destroying ourselves. The New Zealand government celebrated the end of Rio+20 by allowing mining exploration in the marine mammal sanctuaries that protect rare dolphins, whales and seals. The New Zealand Conservation Minister, Kate Wilkinson, pointed out that steps would be taken to minimise harm. We could do with some of the honesty you find at Ngawha Springs. It's the killing we enjoy. ■

Tony Watkins is an Auckland emeritus teacher of architecture and town planning, and co-founder of Arc-Peace, an international architects' peace group accredited to the United Nations.

by the poor for the poor

While New Zealand's healthcare costs spiral skyward, Dr Edric Baker and his team of 90 health workers have pioneered an astonishingly successful model of healthcare by the poor for the poor in Bangladesh. Michael Fitzsimons talks to the man behind the miracle.

Getting to interview Edric Baker is a mission in itself. Edric is the inspiration behind the Kailakuri Health Care Project in Bangladesh and is back home for a short stint before returning to healthcare's frontline.

His agenda is very full, meeting people, talking to groups, being handed from friend to family member to supporter. Having time with him is an experience to savour. My opportunity comes by picking him up from an early morning flight into Wellington, chatting with him over tea and toast and then passing him over to his younger brother.

He's 70 years old, slightly built and gently spoken. He marvels at the harbour view from our front window above Worser Bay, the sun just risen – a world away in every sense from the Kailakuri Health Care Project, situated 160 kms north of Dhaka in the heart of impoverished Bangladesh.

dedication to the very poor

Edric's story is one of extreme dedication and service to the very poor, underpinned by a fervent Christian faith. He grew up in the Anglican Church in Wellington and felt the call to do medical missionary work when he was very young. He graduated as a doctor in 1965, worked for three years in Wellington, and then embarked on a lifetime of medical service abroad.

His first work was in Vietnam, then came Papua New Guinea and Zambia, and finally Bangladesh, where he has worked for more than 30 years. The trajectory has been steadily downward to live among and serve those in desperate need.

called to bangladesh

"I felt I had to go to Bangladesh, one of the poorest and most densely populated countries in the world. I had two jobs before the current project. Those jobs convinced me that I would need to do something that no one else was doing to help the very poor."

The hospitals in Bangladesh, even the mission hospitals, are out of reach of the very poor, says Edric. It is estimated that 30% of the country's 160 million population are poor, 18% are extremely poor. There are quite extensive government health services in Bangladesh but the government hospitals are completely overwhelmed.

> "The total cost for the project is NZ$222,000 per annum, which would pay for two people employed by the Wellington City Council. This is the total cost."

the cost of treatment

Says Edric: "When the poor do manage to see a doctor, the doctors frequently prescribe treatment they have no way of affording. That gives them several options – going without, selling essential home assets or borrowing from money-lenders at an interest rate of 100% per six months.

"So we are trying to reverse this. We are trying to make basic health services available and accessible to the poor, and friendly to them. I am based in a village called Kailakuri and our clinic has a staff of 90. The poor here can't afford to pay for anything. If you really want to benefit the poor you need to do it at a very low cost, which means you have to simplify. First you have to identify the most important health problems, and then you have to work out the simplest, cheapest methods of treating them."

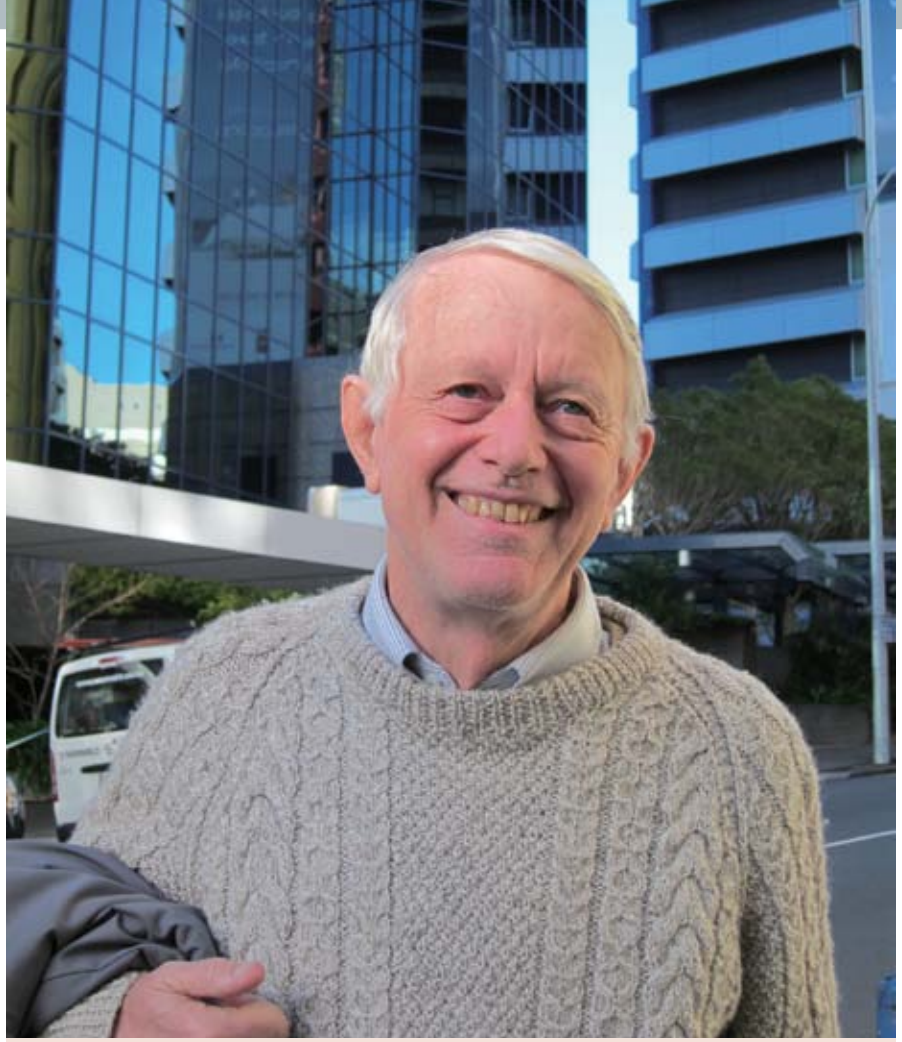
revolutionary model of care

These realities have led to a revolutionary model of healthcare provision that defies Western logic. The model involves selecting young people with little education and bleak prospects from the surrounding villages and training them as doctors, nurses, health educators, accountants and support staff. Employing qualified staff requires high salaries so at Kailakuri the choice is to train their own.

"A principle I was taught in Otago was that common diseases occur commonly. People forget this. I was recently staying with a surgeon in New Zealand and I was told that in hospitals here one is supposed to think about all the rare conditions a patient could possibly have, and every expensive form of treatment is used to establish that they don't have them. This doesn't make sense. I think we're finding that even the New Zealand tax payer can't afford this style of healthcare."

a grassroots healthforce

Certainly Bangladesh can't. Edric's health workforce is taken from the poor community, given ongoing training to deal with common



Dr Edric Baker: [Photo: Michael Fitzsimons]

diseases and paid the local wage. The result is they stay immersed in their local community, reaching them in a way that traditional medical services seldom do. This health workforce is not an elite, they do not fly off to better prospects and bigger salaries. They do not live apart from the community.

"These people understand their own people. They are of the same socio-economic group, the same educational level. They know how to motivate their own people."

workforce has grown steadily

This grassroots health workforce has grown steadily over the years, supported by the expertise and experience of Edric and a Japanese doctor, Dr Mariko Inui, who deal with the more difficult cases. In 2012 the team is made up of two doctors, 22 paramedics, five health educators, 17 village workers doing Plunket-type nursing plus health assistants, gardeners, cooks and support staff.

the results are stunning

"Last year we made 33,000 outpatient visits, all by paramedics mostly without school certificate. 21,000 people received health education — patients, relatives, and people in the village. This is more than all Auckland hospitals put together in a year. We have 1,200 diabetic patients, over half on insulin, all managed by the paramedics. Last year there were 1,100 inpatients, usually 35–40 at a time. We have 1,000 children from 0–4 years on regular home health care: disease treatment, immunisation, etc. Last year there were 70 patients treated for TB, with a 94% cure rate. 60 patients were sent away for surgery, almost all at our cost.

"The total cost for the project is NZ$222,000 per annum, which would pay for two people employed by the Wellington City Council. This is the total cost. If people want to donate to the project, they can feel that their money goes a long way."

The funds from Kailakuri come entirely from private donations from New Zealand and America. New Zealand philanthropist, Gareth Morgan is a major funder.

an unassailable faith

Edric has spent almost his entire medical career at the sharp end of Third World poverty. He has an unassailable faith in Jesus Christ that has been his constant motivation for a lifetime. Raised an Anglican, he moved into the Catholic Church when he was in Vietnam and these days he considers himself to belong to both denominations. At Kailakuri, his faith sits comfortably alongside the faiths of his colleagues — 50% are Muslim, 35% Christian and about 15% Hindu. Each day the multi-religious clinic community prays together, another evolutionary idea that churches the world over could take heed of.

"We read from the Koran in Arabic, we read from the Hindu scripture Gita and we read from the Bible in Bengali," says Edric. "It is a very moving thing to be part of."

edric's experiential learnings

"What have I learnt from this life? That all people are of equal worth, dignity, and value, that all people are precious in the sight of God. It is incredibly humanly satisfying to help people whose needs are so great. It is extremely humanly gratifying to join hands with them, as an equal, and to pray with them. It is enormously humanly gratifying to be accepted in another culture, even by people of a different religious group.

But for Edric Baker, the deepest motivation, the one that binds him to God and has sustained him for most of his life, is spiritual. He describes it in just a few words.

"Since high school I have believed Christ is everything and in everything, and I still believe this." ■

Anyone interested in funding Edric Baker's work, or finding out more, can contact him on edricbaker@gmail.com

God bo

"It is certain that…
If God is to be born in the soul
it must turn back to eternity…
It must turn towards itself
with all its might,
must recall itself,
and concentrate all its faculties
within itself,
the lowest as well as the highest.
All its dissipated powers must be
gathered up into one,
because unity is strength.

Photo: Patrick Fitzsimons

ɔrn in us

Next, the soul must go out.
It must travel away from itself
above itself…
There must be nothing left in us
but a pure intention towards God.
We must exist only to make
a place in us
where God may work.
There, when we are no longer
putting ourselves in the way
God can be born in us."

— Johann Tauler (1300-1361)

chariots of a more sacred fire

Every athlete in the Olympics and Paralympics will be going for gold, cheered on by the crowds. But there will also be moments of self-sacrifice that most spectators won't see, which will be seared in the memories of those competing for glory.

Daniel O'Leary

It was1962. A wet Sunday afternoon in Cork. Six of us were lined up for the All-Ireland 100 yards sprint final. There was a puddle in my lane, just where I was trying to secure my starting blocks. This was a huge blow to my chances of a 'flying start', of 'going with the gun'. Even though recently ordained, I cursed my luck. Then quietly, the athlete in the adjacent lane (with whom I had previously trained) simply said "I have no chance of winning this race. You have. I'll switch lanes with you."

To this day, the memory of that generous gesture lifts my heart. If the roles had been reversed I would have been found wanting! Moments such as these give us hope in the human capacity for goodness and compassion. As it turned out, I only managed to take the bronze medal, but in retrospect, I was enriched in a far deeper way.

Sport is about more than the medals, we like to think. Yet soon, at the London Olympics, we will see many examples of 'win-at-all-cost' attitudes, of drug abuse and cheating, of desperate and extreme measures taken to capture that euphoric moment of golden glory before the eyes of millions. Many athletes have freely admitted they would sacrifice years of their life-span for the sake of an Olympic medal.

Yet every now and then, when our faith in the human condition begins to waver, there will be a different kind of golden moment when the human spirit triumphs over the fierce attraction for the limelight. In the teeth of competition, there will be a flash of grace, a light of compassion, when an exceptional athlete transcends the will to win, and freely chooses to challenge another more subtle competitor — the powerful, persuasive rival within, the ego with No. 1 on its shirt.

One such moment happened in the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. Jesse Owens was watching his dream slipping away. He had fouled his first two attempts at the long jump. His blond German opponent Ludwig 'Lutz' Long explained to him how he could avoid a final foul by using a simple strategy. Owens took his advice and went on to win the gold medal with a final leap of 9.06 metres. And Hitler stormed out of the stadium.

Moved by the spontaneous graciousness of his closest opponent, Jesse Owens later said: "It took a lot of courage for him to befriend me in front of Hitler ... You can melt down all the medals and cups I have and they wouldn't be a plating on the twenty-four carat friendship that I felt for Lutz Long at that moment."

In his popular little book *Great Moments of Sportsmanship*, Paul Smith records this and many other moments of compassion, fair play and spiritual motivation that rarely hit the sporting headlines in a world so focused on the all-consuming but utterly volatile cult of winning. In his foreword to the compilation, Ryder Cup golf hero Paul McGinley writes: "Intense competitiveness that also touches our soul is the essence of great sport."

It is to hidden moments and small miracles such as these that people often look for evidence of spontaneous goodness. They inspire glimpses of hope in a desperately competitive world, cameos of compassion in a ruthless society. These acts of altruistic love sustain the world. They are mostly unnoticed in the run of an ordinary day. Even when they happen in the crowded stadium, they have a shy invisibility about them. No chariots of fire await the heroes and heroines of the soul.

Why are some people capable of those astonishing gestures of pure compassion, these sudden epiphanies of love that never cross the minds of others? One afternoon in May 1988 on a hillside in Oakland, California, a grandson of Mahatma Gandhi was attempting to give us an answer. He pointed out that both as individuals and as a planet we are genetically coded for compassion, for *karuna*. "Competition becomes combat," he called out, "when compassion is absent."

On the day he died, Thomas Merton spoke about the interdependence of all things. "Compassion

has no boundaries," he said. Anthony de Mello points out that "a spirituality named compassion" is in tune with the best tradition of Christian mysticism, Muslim Sufism, Hindu Advaita, Zen's atomism and Tao's emptiness. Compassion is pure when it makes no distinction between the subjects of its loving concern. It springs from an original intimacy that softens the edge of rivalry.

For Christians who believe in the full reality of the Incarnation, the Olympics can carry many other graced moments of meaning. The sheer perfected physicality of athletes, for instance, can reveal something of the power and beauty of God's own being. This belief in the humanity of God only enriches each one's viewing of the games. In the utter poise and beauty of an athlete's coordinated mind and body — the temple of the Holy Spirit — we catch a reflection of divine elegance, and the harmony of the Trinity.

A myth has it that racing angels entertained St Columba on Iona. God's delight was complete in the little skips and leaps of the boy Jesus over blocks of wood in his father's work-place. God is delighted too, St Irenaeus reminds us, wherever humanity excels itself. Christians will see the Games as a celebration of both God and humanity — because ultimately these two mysteries are inseparable. Even heaven may tune in on 27 July!

Between them, the Olympics and especially the Paralympics offer sacramental moments of possibility and self-belief to inspire millions of oppressed, disadvantaged and hopeless young hearts. They will send signals for peace and liberation that reach out, through radio and television, to comfort and transform, if only for a moment, countless isolated souls in shattered communities where only war, greed and awful oppression prevail.

For all their inevitable flaws and failures, in this respect the Olympic Games have few rivals. They are watched by millions across our planet. The uniting power of the Olympic Torch now tracing its way across our land, the imminent pageantry of the opening and closing ceremonies, the many symbols, rituals and anthems, the will to weave as well as the will to win — for all too brief a moment, this banquet of beauty will bless our country. ■

Fr Daniel O'Leary's website is www.djoleary.com

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The Missionary

these things are handed down to him
by his father, the Orangeman:

an orange satin yoke with a fringe

a scarlet satin sash like a priest's stole

with a triangle of red gems stitched onto it

and a metal skull

and a mystical ladder

and a tiny little open book, a
Protestant bible

he thinks how much it all looks like the
furniture in a doll's house

FAITH takes him (newly-wed) to
Papua New Guinea

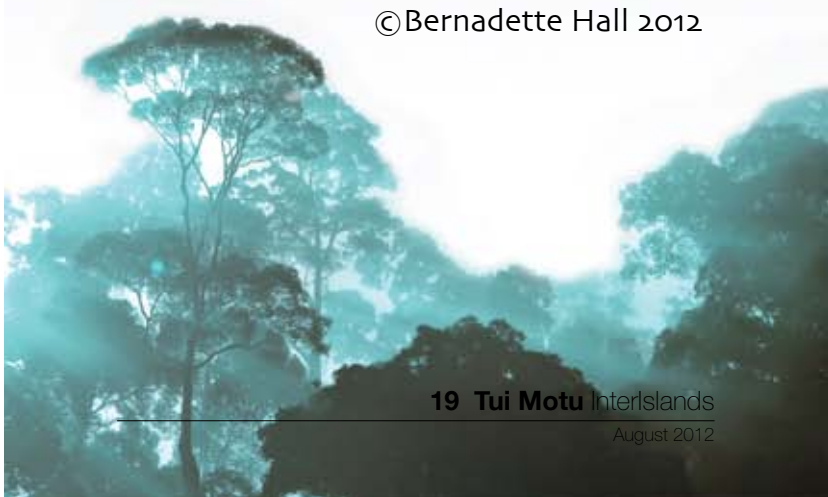
he doesn't make a run for it when the
Japanese arrive

he sends his wife home to New
Zealand, she's expecting a baby

he'll stay on to look after the people,
the children, the women, the men

how are they to understand the
notion of Europe

let alone the war that's raging



speaking truth to power

In the tradition of Emile Zola's speaking truth to power with his letter "I accuse", the author makes many bold and — for the sake of brevity — unsubstantiated assertions. He suggests that readers reject them, but conduct their own research allied with some insight into human frailty — as often revealed in classic literature. Always be wary of the 'official version' of events and question the vested interests.

Hugh O'Neill

Mark Twain said of democracy: "We have the best government money can buy." One suspects that if he were a Kiwi today, he'd be feeling short-changed: the current snouts in the NZ trough — on the evidence of recent revelations — appear clumsy, morally suspect and uncreative, except when giving their best recollection. Haunting the shadows is the spectre of the offshore corporate with undue influence over key members of an administration not acting in the best interests of its people, but pursuing some Wall Street 'privatisation' ideology.

spot the pattern

Having observed the Thatcher kleptocracy, it is easy to spot the pattern: state-owned services (public broadcasting, utilities, health, prisons, schools, transport infrastructures) are starved of investment then sold off as unprofitable dinosaurs to rapacious foreign investors who funnel their profits offshore; their only use for this country is to make a fast buck — irrespective of damage to its people's welfare or environment. These ideologically driven crimes are almost blatant, whilst their shameless facilitators hold us in contempt: indifferent to protest, petition or pleading, they claim election as their mandate. Such politicians need be mindful of Tony Benn's Five Questions: "What power have you got? Where did you get it from? In whose interests do you use it? To whom are you accountable? How do we get rid of you?"

concentrating wealth and power

Hierarchies are the most effective way of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of the few. In his *Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon marveled not that the Roman Empire fell, but that it had endured so long despite being rotten to the core. For corrupt hierarchies to persist requires willing compliance of key players (who can be bought), brutal elimination of any protest, and the apathy of the lowest echelons who subsist on an unhealthy diet of junk food and (reality TV) entertainment. Ancient Rome seems comparatively more generous — since bread and circuses were free for the plebeian class, thus securing their distraction and peaceful subjugation.

for universal good

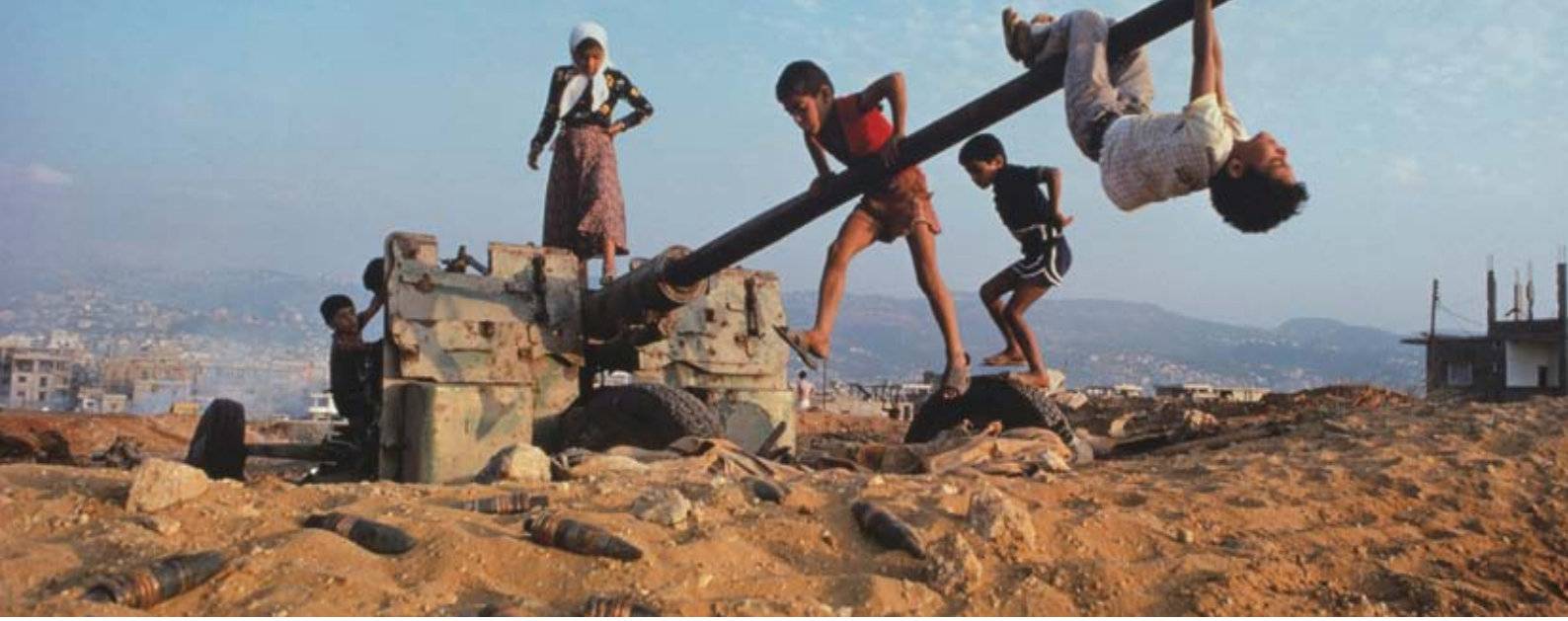
Hierarchical structures work best where power is exercised for the universal good e.g. in a sailing ship: the captain has the experience and the best interests of his ship at heart (they are all on the same boat), whilst the need for dynamic decision-making is inimical to democratic process. When power is abused to the detriment of the many, then the hierarchy will cloak its actions in secrecy. Truth is the life-blood of liberty and good governance: when politicians operate in secret cabals, democracy is a sham. George Orwell said: "Political language … is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable". Another wise man said: "The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie — deliberate, contrived and dishonest but the myth persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Belief in myths allows the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought." The Greek tragedian Aeschylus wrote 2,500 years ago: "In war, truth is the first casualty". Following that logic, truth must be the enemy of war and thus champion of peace and justice.

under rigid domination

We might flatter ourselves that civilisation has come a long way in 2,500 years of monarchies, empires, tyrannies and revolutions but we still live under rigid domination — despite the democratic veneer. When asked to explain the difference between capitalism and communism, the economist John Kenneth Galbraith replied: "In capitalism, man exploits man. In communism, it's the exact opposite". Humanity is still confined by power imbalances — be they racial, religious or otherwise.

all are created equal

The noble aspiration that "all men are created equal" remains just that: inequality of wealth means inequality in education, health and access to justice. However, these rights are as nothing compared with that most basic human right — the right to live without fear of violence. The Bush-led invasion of Iraq (as of 2006) had



killed 655,000 civilians — more than the total of military and civilian deaths suffered by the British in WWII. Operation Enduring Freedom is a heavy cross to bear. The torture in Guantanamo and the desecration of Iraqi corpses are the legacy of the state's corruption — their words made flesh.

resurgence of frustration

Frustration caused by injustice is the driving force behind phenomena like the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street Movement and bitter street protests globally. John F. Kennedy said: "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible, will make violent revolution inevitable." Fascism in Europe began through the political guise of addressing injustice by finding some 'other' to blame.

There is a resurgence of such sentiments across Europe whilst similar elements have increasingly influenced America since Roosevelt warned of a 'secret government' in 1906. Eisenhower's farewell address of 1960 warned of the power of the military industrial complex. When JFK attempted to broker the path to peace in 1963, he was publically assassinated, as a warning to the foolhardy. His brother Robert ignored the warning and met the same fate in 1968. The real murderers were concealed under the 'plausible deniability' doctrine, employing fabricated evidence. The criminal cover-up remains while the vilification of its victims shows no signs of abating.

a fragile balance

In the fragile balance of a growing world population dependent on ever-dwindling resources, the Malthusian catastrophe looms closer. The continued exploitation of people and resources is unsustainable and people everywhere — be they bankers, politicians or corporations — need Damascene enlightenment. In the context of taking the world back from the edge of nuclear holocaust, John F Kennedy said: "For in the final analysis, we all inhabit the same small planet, we all breathe the same air, we all cherish our children's future, and we are all mortal." Those words have even more resonance today than when first delivered in 1963. Likewise, he reminded us: "Our problems are man-made, therefore they may be solved by man. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings." If the waste of never-ending war were turned from swords back into ploughshares, then equitable solutions might be found.

one small step

It takes time and effort to change but that does not mean we should not try: there is a Chinese proverb whereby the journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step. Lest it appear that the thrust of this polemic is anti-American, let me assert that America, despite its rotten political system, still has a great heart (though it may need the intervention of the Wizard of Oz). Americans have the compassion, integrity and intelligence once again to become the standard bearers of liberty, peace and justice. But to realize that potential, it requires the courageous process of Truth & Reconciliation as in South Africa and Rwanda. Americans must demand the truth or else we are all condemned to live under the yoke of warmongers' lies. Orwell wrote: "Speaking the truth in times of universal deceit is a revolutionary act." Edmund Burke said: "All that is needed for evil to succeed is for good men to remain silent."

planting and nurturing

An old man once asked his gardener to plant a tree. The gardener objected that the tree was slow growing and would take 100 years to reach maturity. The old man replied: "In that case there is no time to lose: plant it this afternoon!" We need to plant and nurture this particular tree of knowledge now lest our Garden of Eden become a desert with the skeleton of a burned-out tank half-buried in the sand like Ozymandias in Shelley's eponymous sonnet:

Nothing beside remains.
Round the decay of that colossal wreck,
boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away. ■

Hugh O'Neill is a Dunedin marine pilot.

the vatican state – how come?

In the first part of this article, one of New Zealand's best known writers looked at the way the the Papal States and Rome were lost by 1870, and the remarkable impact that had on the state of the Papacy. In this second part, Sister Pauline shows how the loss of the Papal States was the incentive to the creation of the independent Vatican State with the Pope as its secular ruler.

Pauline O'Regan

When Pope Pius IX lost both the Papal States (1860) and the city of Rome (1870) he did two things: he refused to recognise that Rome now belonged to the new Italy. The Eternal City belonged to the Pope. Rome was his. Secondly, he retired to his palace as a self-proclaimed 'prisoner of the Vatican'. For the next six decades, his successors followed suit, living in such strict confinement as not even to come out on to the balcony to bless the people. This situation remained a thorn in the flesh of the Italian government, as it was meant to be. It continued unresolved, as the 'Roman Question', until 1929.

Pauline O'Regan

cardinal ratti elected pope

In 1922, Cardinal Achille Ratti, Archbishop of Milan, became Pope as Pius XI. He had long been deeply concerned about the path Italy might take in the future.

"You know", I said to my young enquirer, "the Church has always been very nervous of the S words: sex and socialism. Sex is still a great worry to the Church, but it was the other S — Socialism — that it was more afraid of after World War I."

"It seems to me", said my friend, with a flash of insight, "that the Church is always more comfortable with the right wing."

He was right, of course. It happened that a new star had risen on the political horizon of Italy. His name was Benito Mussolini (commonly known as *Il Duce* — the Leader), and to say he was right-wing would have to be an understatement. He was also a confirmed atheist, he was anti-clerical and he hated the Catholic Church. He had written a novel entitled, *The Pope's Mistress*, which embodied all this. But he also hated Socialism.

answer to all italy's ills

Archbishop Ratti saw him as the answer to all Italy's ills. He said such things as: "This man alone has a proper understanding of what is needed in this country." And he believed that Mussolini 'was a man sent by Providence.' As Archbishop, he allowed the Fascist flags to be hung in his cathedral and he directed priests to encourage their parishioners to vote for the Fascists. He also used his influence with the King to have him make Mussolini the Prime Minister. And so it happened that in the very year that Pius XI was elected, Mussolini was made Prime Minister of Italy.

mussolini's ambitions

Mussolini, bent on the establishment of a one-party State with himself as head, saw what it would mean to his ambitions to have the support of the Church. He quickly put his atheism to one side and began to woo the new pontiff. He was successful beyond his wildest dreams. Secret negotiations began in 1925.

mussolini's concessions

Mussolini was ready to make huge concessions to the Church. Amongst other things, he undertook to pay compensation for the loss of the Papal States, (60 million pounds), to make Catholicism the official religion in Italy, to see that no Italian law was contrary to Church teaching eg, on abortion and homosexuality, to make Catholic instruction compulsory in State schools, to pay all clergy handsome salaries, to make it compulsory for a crucifix to be hung in every classroom and in courtrooms.

the pope's demand

But there was one demand the Pope made of Mussolini that was not negotiable. He wanted the establishment of an independent State with the Pope as its ruler. The negotiations almost stalled over this one. But Pius made it clear that he was ready to scuttle all the concessions

. . . there was one demand the Pope made of Mussolini that was not negotiable. He wanted the establishment of an independent State with the Pope as its ruler.

Il Duce Benito Mussolini

Pope Pius XI

promised up to that point, if this one thing were not granted. In the end, Mussolini succumbed. He had too much to lose.

On 11 February, 1929, the Pope and *il Duce* signed what is known as the Lateran Treaty and Concordat which established the Vatican State. "And there", I said, "in the merest outline, is the answer to your question."

three more questions

He had three more questions:

Just what did Mussolini get out of the deal? When it became clear that the Pope supported his government, he gained huge prestige in Italy. It was no coincidence that in the elections of 1929 he won 98.33 percent of the vote. Of even greater importance to him was that other countries were more ready to recognise his regime because the Pope recognised it.

any papal regrets?

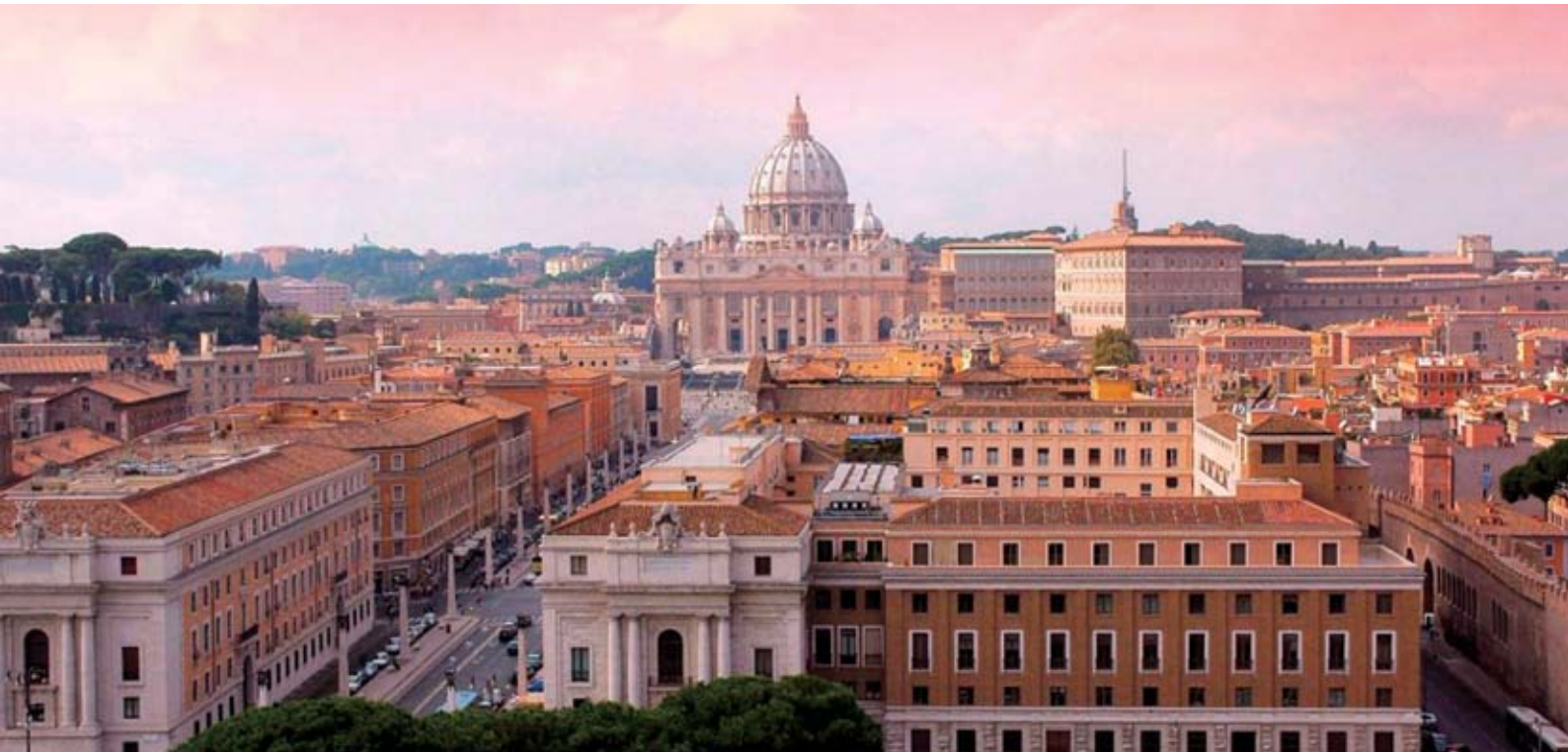
Did Pope Pius XI ever have regrets? The desire for an independent State was too great for there to be regrets. He did, however, later have misgivings. I would like to tell you that he protested the Italian invasion of the sovereign State of Abyssinia in 1935. But he gave his blessing to the departing troops, equipped as they were by the munitions factory owned by the Church. In 1938 he protested Mussolini's treatment of the Jews, but it was too late. He was ignored.

tainted at source

What do you think about the Vatican State? I think it is the Scriptural 'house built upon sand'. It is built on the false premise that secular power is necessary to promote the apostolic mission of Christ. This reliance on worldly power is directly the opposite to the teaching of Jesus. When they wanted to make him king, he fled. Worst of all, we have the Vatican State from the hands of one of the most evil dictators in modern history. It is tainted at its source.

My young friend went away a sad man. ■

Sister Pauline O'Regan is a member of the Aranui Mercy Sisters' community



the challenges ahead

The 2008 financial crisis made people think more widely about money and its purpose. Here the authors look at a number of ways in which local communities may share more deeply of their resources establishing local currency systems which complement our accustomed banking practices.

Deirdre Kent and Helen Dew

Until two centuries ago, Christians, Jews and Muslims were united in condemning usury as sinful, the Catholic Church going so far as to excommunicate usurers. Interest serves self-interest, however, and, Muslims excepted, we gradually learnt to overlook the sin.

beginnings of banking

For landless Jewish goldsmiths, charging interest on loans to fellow Jews or to Christians wasn't an option, for fear of excommunication. Gentiles were the exception to this rule. When they deposited their gold with the goldsmiths they were given receipts in exchange. On realising that depositors were using the receipts as currency rather than uplifting their gold, the goldsmiths began lending more 'receipts' than they had gold to back them. They also began charging interest, a practice eventually legalised by Henry VIII in 1545 after he had broken ranks with the Pope, laying the foundations of today's banking system.

banking today

The same system is used today. Notes and coins created interest-free by the New Zealand government amount to a mere 1.6 percent of our money supply; the rest is created as interest-bearing bank debt, a system harbouring the seeds of its own destruction. Deregulation of banking 30 years ago compounded the problem, leading to a range of riskier and riskier 'financial products' and a credit bubble. The resulting Global Financial Crisis that began in 2007 is nowhere near fully unwound.

> Few realise that there are, potentially at least, many different forms of money, and each type can affect the economy, the way people behave and the natural environment.

flaws within

The fatal flaw with the current money system is that money is always in short supply. Banks providing loans create the principal only, leaving borrowers to find extra money to repay the interest, either by increasing their production, competing with others facing the same problem or by further borrowing. So the money supply must keep increasing and with it the total debt.

Therefore:

- The never-ending need to increase production causes intolerable demand on natural resources.
- The competition for an inadequate supply of money is a bit like musical chairs; someone misses out; bankruptcy is inevitable for some of the losers.
- Further borrowing compounds borrowers' problems, consigning them to long-term and often inescapable debt.

various types of money

Currency is the lifeblood of an economic system. Most people think that there's only one type of money, because that's all they've ever known. Cheques and credit cards represent special-purpose options, but money is money, they think, regardless of the form it takes. Few realise that there are, potentially at least, many different forms of money, and each type can affect the economy, the way people behave and the natural environment. The design of money creates the world we live in and affects our behaviour.

money and sustainability

Increasing attention is finally being paid to the role of money in the sustainability debate. The Club of Rome has just published *Money and Sustainability, the Missing Link.* The authors say the present system has five mechanisms that make our money system incompatible with sustainability. They are:

1. Amplification of the boom and bust cycles.
2. Short term thinking.
3. Compulsory growth.
4. Concentration of wealth.
5. Devaluation of social capital.

Given the above effects of the present money system it is little wonder that regionally, nationally and globally we are now faced with escalating debt, environmental damage, economic strain and social dislocation. The money system leaves a trail of destruction in its wake.

The gigantic credit bubble may take decades to unwind. If Greece is

anything to go by, wages have fallen by up to 50 percent, much more than prices have fallen. New Zealand is vulnerable because our household debt is high and we are a trading country with long supply lines, importing 97 percent of our oil. With our banking system exposed to the Euro and to the Australian banking system it may be prudent to consider changing to locally owned banks.

do-it-yourself currencies

The growing concern about the pathological nature of the monopoly national currency has prompted communities to create their own interest-free exchange systems, connecting unused or underutilised resources with unmet needs, and enabling exchanges to take place despite a shortage of national money.

The most common forms of these complementary currencies operating in New Zealand are babysitting circles — where parents earn 'points' for caring for one another's children; Timebanking — where members earn 'Hours' by giving and receiving a wide variety of non-commercial services; and Local Exchange and Trading Systems (LETS) — mutual credit systems for trading goods and services, including commercial activity.

timebanking

Timebanking's primary purpose is reweaving community, where everyone's Hour is equal, regardless of the type of service given. Introduced to New Zealand in 2005 by Project Lyttelton, Timebanking has now been embraced by twenty one communities, with five more in the planning stage. The Lyttelton Timebank proved invaluable in the wake of the devastating earthquakes; its database and established networks immediately became part of the emergency response teams. Project Lyttelton Chair Margaret Jefferies, asked "Have you ever seen an entire household move from one house to another within 45 minutes? This is possible when you can pull work groups together quickly."

trading circles

Local Exchange and Trading System's (LETS) members form trading circles, list their offerings and needs, and offer and accept payment for goods and services either wholly or partly in the local currency. Ten percent of Golden Bay households use this system, particularly for buying and selling locally produced food. Golden Bay and Wairarapa LETS use beautifully designed 'vouchers' as well as the electronic transfer system used by LETS in 50 countries.

In economic downturns complementary currencies thrive. They work alongside and supplement the national currency.

The principle advantages of complementary currencies are:

- Protection against global economic instability
- Stemming 'leakage' of community wealth to outsiders/offshore
- Support for local small/medium businesses
- Business opportunities in import substitution
- Less fuel needed for imported product
- Increased employment opportunities
- Less conventional money required for desirable projects
- Enhanced sense of community

scaling up

In international examples a business-to-business system, the WIR, currently used by 65,000 Swiss businesses has been in operation for the past seventy-five years. Dozens of regionally based local currency systems have spread throughout Germany. In Uruguay and Brazil, large-scale local currency systems have reduced unemployment by providing working capital to small and medium sized enterprises outside the constraints of the mainstream economy.

no need to remain victims

While most politicians and economists fail to look beyond conventional solutions to the growing debt crisis, local communities are leading the way in implementing liberating and life-giving exchange options that serve people and planet.

place of parishes

Parishes, being natural communities, are in an ideal position to work collectively on initiatives described. Challenges on many fronts represent a cauldron of threat yet an exciting time of creativity, calling people of faith to be salt and light in a troubled world. ■

Deidre Kent and Helen Dew are members of the Living Economies Educational Trust.

The Living Economies Educational Trust is a nationwide charity dedicated to strengthening regional economies by conserving local resources, nurturing local enterprise, promoting regional self-sufficiency and developing community-and business-friendly means of exchange. Visit: **www.le.org.nz.**

bread for a hungry people

John 6
17th-21st Sundays of Ordinary time — 29 July-26 August 2012

Kathleen Rushton

O God, you who feed the hungry, let me be bread for your people.

This antiphon leapt out at me as I prayed the Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy this morning. Prayer merges with my life. Last night I returned from Marion School, Hamilton, where I was teaching a scripture course to a wonderfully enthusiastic 'hungry' group of over thirty. They were 'bread' for me and I trust I was 'bread for your people'. Today, it is 'hunger' and 'bread' again for the gospel readings of 17th–21st Sundays of Ordinary Time (29 July–26 August). All are taken from John 6.

immersing ourselves anew

There is a lot of talk these days about the new evangelisation. In my understanding, that is what we were about in Hamilton — teachers, trainee teachers, a hospital chaplain immersing ourselves anew in Sacred Scripture. By evangelising (from the Greek word for 'gospel' or 'good news') ourselves anew, we may live our faith in this time of the Church in which we find ourselves.

We are dealing with a changing situation that goes beyond the Church while affecting it radically. The wide-ranging changes we have experienced over recent decades come from deep changes which have occurred in Western societies which take their origin from Western Europe. The nature of the relationship between Christianity and those societies has changed. The change is from Christendom to pluralism or pluralistic societies. Australian theologian, Frank O'Loughlin, explains that by Christendom "we mean that

social, cultural and political arrangement by which European society and Christianity were virtually merged. To be one was to be the other … By 'pluralist' we mean a social, cultural, political arrangement in which in principle no particular religion or worldview is established as an intrinsic part of that society."

times of transition

In this transition in which we find ourselves, one long period of Christian history is drawing to an end and a new period of Christian history beginning. I have a hunch that our time in the Church is more like that of those who first heard John 6. They were in transition from and within Judaism to be Christians in a world where their worldview was certainly not the established one. They would have identified with the hungry crowd Jesus saw and to whom after giving thanks *(eucharistein)*, he himself distributed the bread (vv.11–12).

These Christians heard, and we need to discover, the 'hunger' and 'bread' words in John 6 in the feeding of the five thousand (vv 1–15) and later in the 'bread of life' discourse (vv 22–59). To hear and discover "It is I; do not be afraid" when Jesus comes to the disciples walking on the sea (vv.16–21). We need to eavesdrop on the conversation between Jesus and disciples and to join with Peter in his statement of belief in Jesus "You have the words of eternal life" (vv.60–71). They would have heard echoes of the manna in the desert from the Exodus story and also of Wisdom who gathers her disciples: "come, eat of my bread and drink of my wine" (Prov 9:5).

the human speaks of the divine

We live in a time when evangelising needs to be a part of all that we do whether we are involved in any form of pastoral care or social justice work, teaching, or whatever we are doing. We need to re-discover the sacramental — sacred — nature of all life. When Jesus proclaimed, "I am the bread of life," he gave a human grounding to the Eucharist.

We talk about bread in a double sense. Bread is a specific element of food. Bread is also spoken about as part-for-the-whole as in such sayings as "we earn our bread by the sweat of our brow."

We eat bread (food). We need to eat. There is a very deep dependence at the heart of our existence. We are not able to keep ourselves alive. We must take something from outside ourselves into ourselves so that we can stay alive. Indeed, we are not the source of our own life. When Jesus said, "I am the bread of life," he invites us to consider the very radical nature of bread in our lives. This projects that insight into the meaning of Jesus for human life. In the sign given to us, we go beyond what we

see and touch into the discovery and celebration of the mystery of Christ.

self-giving

In the human reality of a family meal, the food on the table is provided by parents. It is there because those parents have worked to give that food. They burn their energy. The very cells of their bodies work. In our living and working, we tire and age and wear out. In a sense providing food for their children wears parents out and costs them their lives. The meal as a sign of the Eucharist speaks of what Jesus does in his life and self-giving death, his sacrifice (from the Latin word — to make holy).

The bread (food) that we grow or work to buy comes, and indeed we ourselves exist, because of a chain of realised possibilities built upon one other in the emergence of the evolving universe. Interconnected systems such as the heat of the sun and rainfall plus human interactions such as the tilling of the earth, harvesting, transport, buying, selling and baking feed our hunger.

the star and the koru

At first glance, the chalice and bread in the graphic opposite, from the red parish booklet of new translation of the Mass in English, looks like a standard Eucharistic symbol. A closer look shows two other symbols — the four stars of the Southern Cross and the unfolding fern frond, the koru. The koru is symbol of new life. The chalice and the bread embrace the koru. One star of the cross is within the chalice, in the wine. The divine bursts into the earth. This star links the chalice to Jesus' death and to our context in Aotearoa New Zealand. ■

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

The graphic by Fitzbeck Creative is from *New Words. Deeper Meaning. Same Mass.* Published by the New Zealand Catholic Bishop's Conference, 2010.

Epiphany in Psychosis

Here is my mind, broken for you.
But listen, He's waiting in the next womb.
Leap for joy. Two circles almost intersecting.
Only our inequities prevent His birth.
On Earth, he continues walking in the midst of gravities,
forsaken, forgotten, misunderstood, mistaken for a stranger.
Divine Child yet to come, we have instead this Man of Sorrows.
Mirror of frailty, what glory will flash in you, in us?
Can each of these wounds become a meadow?

You raise your fools who watch by night
to follow individual stars, leading to multiple Holy hills,
to many simple frames, where sunlight,
birdsong spills upon myriad windowsills.
These initial vistas fall away; lies, painted sets.
The landscape of the world's cruelty
is found by one more dawn to be even deeper yet.
No human heart could imagine it;
but from His own mouth we are bold to say,
My God, My God, why have you gone away?

Today, Lord, restore not sanity but memory.
Lord, I implore, help thou my unremembering.
Help me remember the journey by which you find me.
Who would believe how you arrive and surprise?
Igniting the straw of this soul, In a feeble stable of bone,
in moments broken like bread, in new advent and adventure,
growing undreamed of colours, rainbows of unending spectrum,
worlds within worlds without end.

Thank you God and thank you friend;
it was your will to send Yourself in us,
to meet and join on weekday Calvary.
Kill me anew, If it be your will.
A bloody sunset, baptism of another dark night.
Recreate me again until I fit your bright image,
my birthright. I have enough faith.
In spite of everything, I'll see you tomorrow.

-Hayden Williams

redeeming the past

Redeeming the Past: My journey from Freedom Fighter to Healer

Fr. Michael Lapsley ssm
With Stephen Karakashian

Published by Orbis
ISBN 978-1-57075-992-5

Reviewer: Anna Holmes

"The truth is that pain unites human beings ... In the end though, what matters most is whether we are able to transform pain into a life giving force."

This is a painful, hopeful, gripping story of healing and transformation. On 28 April 1990 Michael Lapsley received a letter bomb from the South African Army and lost both hands and one eye. Priding himself on his independence, he asked "Will I ever have a meaningful life again?"

His grief proceeded in a zigzag, with stops and starts. His spirit was nurtured by continuous messages of love and support. He traces the path from victim to creative human being. He faces the fear of another attempt to kill him, cheerfully critical of the efforts of hotels and other facilities to meet the needs of the disabled.

Throughout this time, he reflected on the Suffering Servant and concluded that disability is the norm of the human condition and those with visible wounds are models for the rest of humanity. His wounds deepened his faith and compassion and enriched his commitment to justice and liberation.

He grew up in Hastings, the fifth of seven children with parents who worked hard to enable each of their children to flourish. He speaks of the egalitarianism and good education for all in New Zealand at that time. He describes himself as a pious, stroppy young man who did not enjoy high school.

He wanted to be a priest from the age of four and applied to join the Society of the Sacred Mission at the age of 13 but had to wait until he was 17 before being allowed to join. He was ordained in 1973. He requested to go to Japan but was sent to South Africa.

There he was appalled by the spiritual and emotional impact of apartheid: good Christians don't do politics. In response he became a very politically active chaplain at Durban University. Following the Soweto massacre he was elected National Chaplain, expelled from South Africa to Lesotho and eventually joined the African National Congress (ANC) in 1977, abandoning his pacifist stand. He remained National Chaplain in exile making trenchant political statements about just war and the evils of apartheid. The church, he felt, was mortified by his political stance and he was angry at their continuing compromises. He saw his role as serving a God who sides with the poor.

In 1982 when Michael was in New Zealand he played a considerable role in forming the NZ political stand on apartheid. South African forces raided Lesotho and killed 42 people and when he returned he was ordered by the Bishop and the SSM Provincial to leave Lesotho. He refused and appealed to the Archbishop. He ended up in Zimbabwe working on a Masters degree with Adrian Hastings, also noted for his criticism of institutional church and colonial oppressiveness.

Negotiations for an independent South Africa began about the time he was bombed. When he felt well enough to work, his bishop in Zimbabwe was unable to accept a disabled priest. However, in Cape Town, Desmond Tutu said to him, "I've got one priest who is deaf; I have another who is blind and now one with no hands. Wow. Come." He was asked to be chaplain in a centre for victims of violence and torture. Michael found he had a particular gift to offer with his damaged self. Gradually a workshop was developed and the Institute for Healing of Memories founded. This involved bearing witness to the stories and suffering of victims so they could heal memories. Requests for workshops came from many other countries: Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe, KwaZulu Natal, Cuba, USA, Northern Ireland, Australia, Colombia. In prisons everywhere the workshops helped to 'peel the onion' of people's pain.

"Disability has taught me that we need one another to be fully human, and we can be healers of one another." ■

the past's hold on the present?

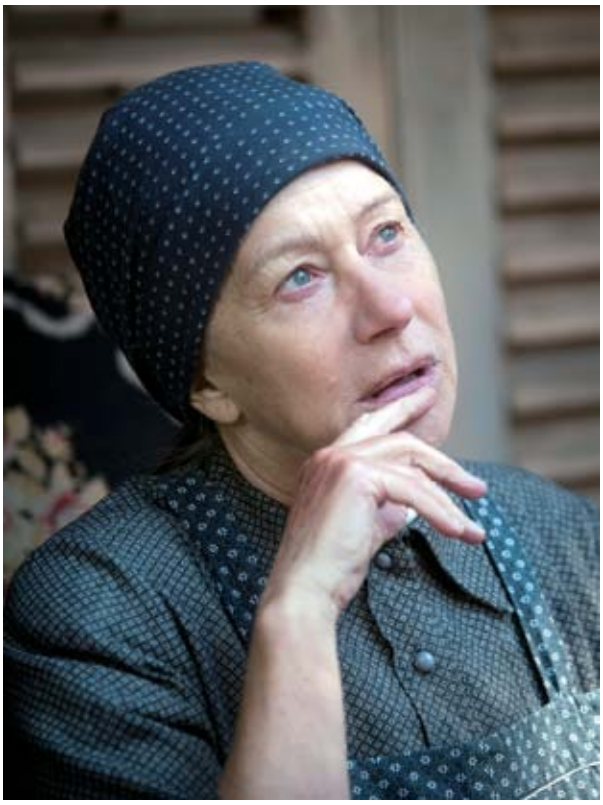
The Door

Director: István Szabó

Reviewer: Paul Sorrell

This mysterious, difficult film stars Dame Helen Mirren in a most unexpected role as a fiery Eastern European peasant and domestic servant, Emerenc — all bravely performed by one of the screen's most seasoned actors without an ounce of make-up. Based on the novel by Magda Szabó and set in communist Hungary in the 1960s, the film traces the unfolding but always troubled relationship between Emerenc and her elegant and sophisticated employer, Magda, who lives with her husband in a big house in the same village.

Their relationship is an unlikely one from the outset. Magda, calm and cultured and an increasingly successful novelist, goes out of her way to make Emerenc feel welcome in her large and gracious home — perhaps to the point of patronising her. Emerenc is Magda's polar opposite. Hot-tempered, moody, contrary, alternating between acts of kindness and generosity and words of bitter condemnation, she is the kind of person to whom the phrase 'walking on eggshells' is eminently applicable.



Despite her fierceness and unpredictability, Emerenc is held in esteem, even reverence, by her fellow villagers. She has helped many in direst need. Yet her relationships are fraught with paradox. As one of her neighbours remarks, "She trusts no-one, but is trusted by everyone." As the story advances, a series of flashbacks reveals something of the deep trauma she suffered during the wartime years, experiences that go a long way to explain her behaviour and personality.

The film's title is significant. Emerenc keeps her front door locked at all times, even entertaining friends on her front porch. Speculation is rife as to what may lie within. By contrast, she treats her employers' house as an open home, sometimes surprising Madga and her husband Tibor in an intimate moment. We are given to understand that breaking down the door to her cottage would be to violate her deepest secrets.

Perhaps the major theme of *The Door* is the way in which our past experiences make us who we are in the present, shaping our character and actions and, in extreme cases, leading to miscommunication, destruction and even death. Exploring human psychology can lead us into some murky places, and not everything in this film is brought clearly into the light. Perhaps for this reason, it will lead viewers to engage in vigorous debate about its meaning and merits long after the cinema lights have gone up. ■

Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

see, judge, act

Helping people to help themselves and others requires much greater effort than just giving a handout. Giving may make me feel virtuous but the value of my gift depends on the effect it has on the recipient.

In a recent *Business Herald* article, Chris Barton describes the evolution of a philosophy of philanthropic giving among the administrators of various personal and business foundations formed for this purpose in NZ. From an approach whereby applications for funds were selected with little or no reference to their social context, there evolved a realization that patterns among applications could be discerned. This eventually led to a recognition that properly directed philanthropy could have a kind of ripple effect in developing social programmes.

Now, instead of making small one-off grants, there is a growing emphasis on making fewer but larger and longer-term grants. This entails rigorous selection and evaluation processes, and regular updates on progress to enable mid-course correction; some foundations hold induction courses and yearly workshops for funded applicants.

Applying business rigour to social needs can result in basic change, in contrast to temporary palliative effects.

education policy

Vast amounts of international research make it clear that there are causal links between relative poverty and socially undesirable outcomes.

The transition from having a market economy to being a market society has resulted in long term rises in many social problems. Surprisingly, in more unequal societies there are greater difficulties among the wealthier as well as among the poorer. The key factor is the income gap between the top and bottom 20 percent of a given population.

Many still maintain the poor are poor because they are lazy, and that various minorities falsely claim discrimination when their lot is really attributable to their own failings. Pat Snedden's article, 'It's education, Jim, but not as we know it' (TM, May), affords proof positive that, given encouragement and support targeted at their needs, the socially disadvantaged can foot it with the best.

Surely a venture as successful as the *Manaiakalani* cluster could serve as a model for other schools in low decile areas. It has the advantage of being indigenous. There is a structure that can be applied, and the practical aspects of its implementation can easily be studied.

Why import from another culture something like Charter Schools requiring tinkering to (hopefully) conform to our needs?

stem cells

Last year The Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture implemented a joint initiative agreement with a U.S. international biopharmaceutical company engaged in adult stem cell research, NeoStem Inc.

The partnership is focused on four things: first, to influence public perception regarding stem cells; second, to promote the advancement of adult stem cell technology; third, to create bioethics study programmes in high schools and universities; and finally, to update and train a new generation of pastors and academics in the bioethics of adult stem cell research.

Dr. Robin Smith, chief executive officer of NeoStem says its board, employees and shareholders are excited about the partnership because it's groundbreaking and part of a paradigm shift. Together they will be training future generations and advancing science. When asked how he, as a Jew, felt about the partnership, he replied: "NeoStem does not have the reach of the Vatican. We're really humbled to be chosen."

Their planned international conference aimed at fostering a multi-disciplinary approach was postponed owing to lack of finance.

priest shortage

The Taiwanese Episcopal Conference recently decided that in response to the shortage of priests "married permanent deacons should be promoted." Candidates must take a second university degree in addition to one in philosophy and theology so that they can deal with matters priests cannot, "such as financial administration, construction and information."

The working paper for the October Synod on New Evangelization notes that: "all the responses (to the February 2011 draft) voiced concern about the insufficient number of priests … Many mentioned the need to envision a more integrated organization of the local Church, involving lay people along with priests in the animation of the community." (§84)

§81 states: "… parishes have the responsibility to become real centres for propagating and bearing witness to the Christian experience and places for attentively listening to people and ascertaining their needs."

The permanent diaconate is not a step towards priesthood; laymen and women could validly do what deacons can. For many centuries in the western church the role was performed by laymen. In some cultures the status of deacon makes sense. But in NZ?

It seems to me the Synod should examine the roles of priests regarding the material administration of parishes, and of pastoral planning and implementation. Being the 'chief executive' differs from being an essential member of a combined approach. And why, given the nature of the permanent diaconate, can women not be considered? After all, the 2011 draft stated: "Business as usual is not an option." ■

guests and sexuality

Peter Norris

At a College formal dinner I invited, as a guest, a colleague and his gay partner. It is amazing how sexuality can define us. It seems to define Catholic clergy and it defines people who are gay. Whatever Jesus thought about it seems to be lost in the mists of time. What the officials who follow him think is a little more defined.

We could choose any number of things to define ourselves and others. We could define by height, by weight, by colour, by temperament, but currently, sexuality is one of the ways we, or more correctly churches, use to define people. Many of the other ways that were used to define people are now classed as insensitive, illegal, or just crass. But sexuality currently seems to be OK. I think that will change in the next decade but one never knows.

I have seen a number of individuals and other churches go through massive changes and much grief over sexuality linked with leadership. The Catholic Church, because of celibacy, has been spared some of that. I guess the problem has been buried rather than dealt with, and sometimes I wonder if temporary burial is a bad thing.

At times we think we can deal with anything and that we can understand everything about the human condition. In reality we are not omniscient and I feel even less so. When my friend's appointment was made I thought that students would not be accepting but was pleasantly surprised to find how open they were. In fact, it did not seem to be an issue at all. I felt a little ashamed for having doubts.

A younger generation has grown up with different standards of assessment and has bypassed the old sexuality ones. I know that there is still some material inherited from parents and families but there is a remarkable freedom. Some worry that the new openness may mean that anything goes and that anything is OK. However, I find this does not happen and in practice students, while not necessarily wanting to save whales and sharks, do not discriminate against people.

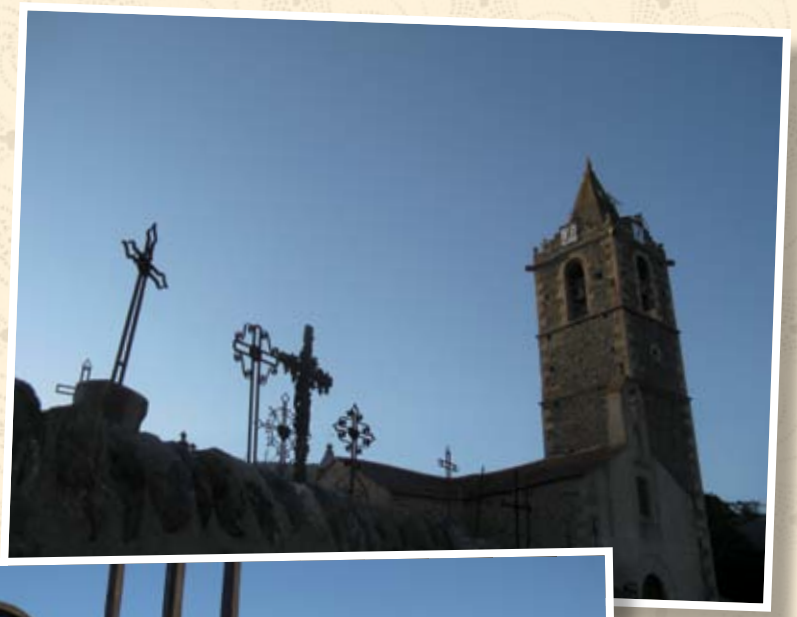
We have great ideas about natural law and various rules about intrinsic morality but I find that most people are more understanding than we realise. We are not disagreeing with the ideas from natural philosophy and from various teachings of the various churches but sometimes it is better to let something be lightly buried and not try to give an immediate answer to a problem. Sometimes, in the area of relationships we do not know the answer and can say silly or hurtful things. We may be right, but sometimes we are not, or there is more gray that we are capable of realising.

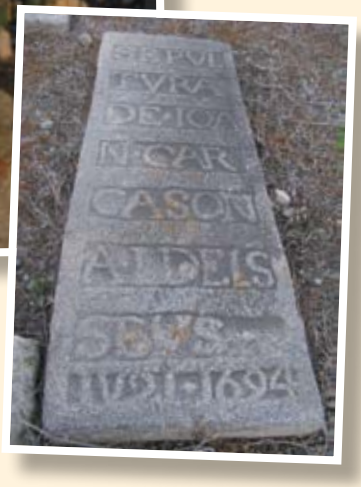
So, when I saw how accepting our students were of the guests I was proud. When I heard how others respected the guests I felt proud. When I thought about my own fears I did not feel proud. We do not have all the answers to life's many problems. I have stopped wanting all those answers now and I would rather just settle for the correct numbers for Lotto. ■

Father Peter Norris is the Master of St Margaret's College, University of Otago.

a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias





The old church was built in 892. The tall spire pointed to the sky — a silhouetted and triangular finger. In the velveting dusk we walked slowly around the outside. We brushed our hands over the rough stone. We wondered about the impossibly distant lives of those who had built this church in the tiny village of Err, nestled on the flanks of the Pyrennees in South France.

The four children were all tucked up in the tent asleep and a late evening walk was at last a chance to walk and talk with Jeph. We looked slowly at the gravestones in the cemetery surrounding the church. This map of lives passing. Stone etched headstones — one dating back to 1694. Others too worn and blurred to read anymore. Wrought iron crosses above most of the headstones. Many shapes. Many sizes. Marking the burial sites of many sized and shaped followers of God in this tiny French village. We wondered what was the story of Marie Fort, née Llane, who had died aged 23 years in 1890 something. We were somehow glad too that this ancient place of worship and memorial is still in use. There was a fresh mound of dirt and a notice marking the burial of a 56 year old village man in June 2012.

Apart from a dusky glow on the hills to the west, it was now all dark. We wandered slowly back to the campground through lanes and stones houses, now silent and black. Back to our sleep-lisping children and our own night's rest. ■

Kaaren Mathias lives and works in community health and development in North India with her husband Jeph and four children. In July they were visiting family members (and churches) in Europe.