Tui Motu InterIslands

July 1999 Price $4

Restorative Justice — is it the answer?

Contents

..as we forgive those..

Our cover picture shows Fr Jim Consedine outside the prison cell on Robben Island, off Cape Town, where Nelson Mandela spent 18 years. "It was one of the most emotional moments of my life", says Fr Jim. Mandela went into prison a disciple of violence, and emerged a disciple of peace. And the world has marvelled at the miracle of national reconciliation already achieved during his time as President.

For Jim Consedine it also brought memories of the years of protest during the 70s and 80s: the marches against the Springbok Tour, the deep divisions within New Zealand society brought about by that one event, the chorus cries on Christchurch streets of *Free Nelson Mandela!*.

This issue focuses especially on the theme of *Restorative Justice*. Fr Jim has been the mouthpiece of this movement, but he would be the first to insist it is a movement embracing many others, including lawyers and police. We read how it is already working in the District Court and in the community. In the editorial (opposite) Fr Jim gives us a tantalising glimpse how he recently offered it as a *process* to the gunslingers on both sides of the divide in Northern Island.

No one pretends that it is an easy option. Wreaking revenge panders so readily to the most primitive instincts in human nature. We see it happening daily on our TV screens on the streets of Kosovo. We feel it in our own hearts.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are at the heart of the Gospel. The process includes several vital steps: admission of guilt by the offender, the seeking of forgiveness, making recompense; acceptance on the part of the victim, and a gesture or liturgy of reconciliation. It's a hard road to forgive someone; indeed it's *divine*. It is a God-given grace. Perhaps for that reason, in the public arena especially, it is a place where Christians ought to be before all else. ■

M.H.

Promoter's Corner

Dear *Tui Motu* people,
Tui Motu continues to grow – but not fast enough. It has become apparent that a significant number of potential readers would prefer to buy a copy by the month at the church door. For this to happen someone has to be there: would you be that person? If you are even slightly tempted to 'give it a go', read the formula below and join the *Tui Motu Vendors' Club*: a very inclusive club with no entrance fee!

Procedure for selling *Tui Motu* at parish masses (one Sunday a month except January)

1. Check with your parish priest to confirm that the initiative has his support. In addition request 60 seconds at the end of the Sunday Mass(es) to say a few words about the issue on sale; not necessarily at every Mass but at the main ones. This is usually forthcoming, (but if not your presence outside with the magazine will attract attention anyway).
2. You may wish to involve a few others in the initiative. Our parish has a team of three: between them they sell *Tui Motu* after each of the three Masses.
3. Order the number of copies you want (10 is a handy number to begin with) by contacting the Dunedin Office (address etc below right). Change the order number as events unfold, but in the short term send copies left over to likely friends/relatives.
4. Bring some cash in a plastic bag (about $15) as people often want change.
5. If someone wants one and has no cash with them, give them one on credit. You can rely on such people to come through.
6. Each month or two send the proceeds from the actual sales to the office by cheque, deducting 20 percent to cover incidental expenses.

Best wishes for your endeavour; it is a very Christian thing to do – spreading the good news (the gospel view of the world), and without doubt it will be a source of blessing for you and for others.

Tom Cloher

Tui Motu-InterIslands
ISSN 1174-8931

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.

Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

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.

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Printed by John McIndoe Ltd

Seventy times seven

Jim Consedine

Talking restorative justice recently with members of the paramilitary in the *Falls* and *Shankhill* Roads of Belfast, Northern Ireland, was a bit of a shock to the system. They remain at enmity with each other. Nowhere within the social structures of Northern Ireland have the hardliners of the two communities been able to make eye contact, to hear one another's stories and start to repair the damage wrought by years of conflict. Yet their stories are so similar, their aspirations and dreams for their two communities almost identical. What separates them is their tribal histories and their mind sets.

Restorative justice procedures enable such meetings to happen. Guided by a skilled facilitator, people with opposite views are encouraged to meet and share their stories. And, like Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, they learn from one another. It is only when such stories are told and pain is shared that healing can begin and love can grow.

The same applies to crime. How much anguish and pain could be healed if only criminal justice structures were in place to enable healing and reconciliation to commence. How much safer our society would be if instead of only having courthouses pitting offenders against the state, we also had restorative justice gatherings – with offenders meeting with their victims in facilitated conferences. Jesus advised us to do just that. *Don't take your brother to court,* he said. *Try first to get it sorted out.*

That would require a paradigm shift in thinking for most of us. We would need to change from being punishment focused to being primarily reparative. The whole focus of biblical justice in the Hebrew Scriptures is not on punishment but centres primarily on the *Covenant* between God and the people, *promoting social justice* as demanded by the prophets, and *seeking shalom*. Shalom means wholeness, fulfilment, health and well-being, peace and prosperity. Each requires that damage done by crime be repaired. Punishment is always secondary to seeking to repair the harm done.

In the New Testament Jesus specifically rejects *an eye for an eye:* that proportional response so distorted by popular usage. *If anyone hits you on the right cheek,* says Jesus, *offer him the other one as well.... Give him your coat and your tunic, walk two miles, not one*(Matt. 5:38). This is radical stuff – yet quite practical today, if properly understood.

Jesus is asking for a generous response from those who have been victimised by crime. He knows that otherwise they will usually finish up being doubly victimised. The first will be the actual crime. The second will be through the hurt, bitterness and feelings of vengeance that can so easily poison a person's spirit if allowed to germinate. Wise teachings indeed!

When dealing with crime, Jesus teaches us generosity of spirit. To the woman facing the death penalty, he simply tells her: *go and sin no more*. Through the parable of the farmer who hired day workers, Jesus taught another reminder of how God's justice works. Each got paid at the end of the day what they needed to feed their families, even though they had worked uneven hours.

Generosity of spirit is always at the heart of the Gospel teaching on crime and victimisation. Forgive 70 times seven! Surely too hard? *Not so*, says Jesus. *It's not easy but it can be done.* In effect he teaches that if we don't attempt these very difficult matters, we run the risk of being ourselves damaged spiritually.

Restorative justice options are not easy. But they sit at the heart of the Cross and at the doorway to the Empty Tomb,. They are life-giving. We short-change ourselves and our neighbour if we are satisfied with anything less. ■

Lack of trust by school Proprietors

Caliban in *Crosscurrents* (June issue) paints a dark picture of today's schools. In fact, the vast majority of schools function very well under a system that partners professionals and parents in collaborative governance. The schools where problems do occur often have difficulties in defining the relationship between Boards of Trustees and Principals.

What Caliban does get right is the need to give even greater control of schools to local communities. The Ministry has been quick to adopt a culture of decentralisation, and is to be applauded for demonstrating quite high levels of trust in Boards and Principals, allowing them to get on with the job. As Principal of a Catholic Primary school I find it is our own proprietors who regularly try to keep and maintain a much tighter central control. It is there that one strikes a climate of distrust.

The Ministry is constantly looking to use the expertise of local Principals. For instance, as well as looking after our own million dollar budget, this school also administers the local *Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour scheme* for a local cluster of 12 schools, including two Catholic. This entails looking after half a million dollars of resources on behalf of these 12 schools.

The Proprietors on the other hand have a tendency to ignore available expertise. For example, as money comes on stream for major maintenance the Proprietor in Auckland is showing reluctance to have schools handle even quite small projects. I suppose this just mirrors a church history where those at the top know best.

Rob Allen
St Mary's Avondale.

Alpha 1 – what people need

I find the article *The Burgerisation of Religion* to be challenging, thought-provoking, somewhat condescending and censorious. What it does say and imply is that whether ecclesiastical authority and bureaucratic government agrees or otherwise, the real power in the church

letters

lies in the people of the church.

For the church to be credible it is essential to meet the people where they are, not where the church considers they should be. Jesus was skilled in this. if they were in error and living shameful lives, he gently told them of a better way.

No doubt the *Alpha* programme has angered traditionalists. It is too successful. It has a different kind of power base. It is interesting that Nicky Gumbel has declined to become a bishop.

I am with a very successful group here in Riverton, W Southland. It is bringing back more of the lapsed and lukewarm than anything previous. Maybe burgers are not a balanced diet, but neither was manna in the desert!

Denis F Power
Riverton

Alpha 2 – a simple message

The Lord is using *Alpha* to spread the good news through the world. It reaches many by its down-to-earth approach and the genuineness of the programme presenter, Nicky Gumbel.

After the programme, non-churchgoers can choose to seek out a place of worship, and churchgoers discover that their own place of worship is deeply enhanced by this new and real encounter with the Lord. The purpose of calculating the attendance numbers is, I presume, a form of measuring whether the programme is on the right track.

Simplification is a significant factor: the message of the Gospels is simple, and the people are flocking to hear this 2000-year-old good news. Theology may be an interesting intellectual exercise, but this programme introduces people to the person of Jesus, to the love the Father has for all of us, as well as the importance of the Spirit to lead us to live this on our lives. Simplicity is not something to be concerned about: it is something to celebrate.

There is no 'iron cage' in *Alpha.* It enables people to relate to Jesus and his way. It does not restrict. The programme leads the people to freedom. *Alpha* does not promote religious imperialism. It cuts across cultural and denominational differences, and people are then more able to express who they are and where they come from.

The theology of the Cross is very dominant. But it also leads people to people. It helps build community. Perhaps the changes will be so dynamic that at long last people will look and say: *See how those Christians love one another.*

Marie Morgan
Tauranga

Alpha 3 – an informed choice

The travesty portrayed in Pete Ward's article bears no resemblance to the *Alpha* courses I have experienced. Far from being the denatured, unnourishing, commercial product he suggests by comparing it with McDonald's fast food chain, I have found *Alpha* presents the Christian Gospel to the point where the hearer makes an informed choice to accept or reject the claims of Jesus and the truth of his teaching. The title *Alpha* was chosen deliberately: it implies that *Alpha* does not provide the whole, but only a beginning.

Pete Ward casts a slur on *Alpha* when he accuses it of being an 'iron cage'. His statement that "Christian theology is complex and varied" is a truism, but theology is not the truth, nor is it a search for the truth. It is a human science which has revealed truth for its subject matter... all it can do is develop understanding of what is already given.

This article will certainly deter some from running an *Alpha* course, as well as sway potential listeners from attending. On reading it I had the distinct feeling of nausea, partly no doubt due to my dislike of McDonald's products, but also because it was the sort of thing a smart scribe would have written in the *Sanhedrin Gazette* at the time of Jesus.

Patrick Cronin
Nelson

Tui Motu **welcomes letters – which should be kept to 200 words, please – *Editor***

Election 1999:

How do the politics of the New Right square up with Catholic Social Teaching? Author Paul Vallely looks at this crucial issue as it affects western democracies. This article has been sent to Treasurer Bill English and other leaders and economists for comment.

The rich you will always have with you

In the past few decades something has altered in contemporary Britain. It is a change which took hold seriously under the economic and social revolution accelerated by Margaret Thatcher, but which Tony Blair was the first politician to perceive most clearly. Indeed he built his landslide election victory at the last British General Election upon it, focusing all his electoral effort upon winning the confidence and affection of what we have learned to call 'Middle England'. For we are all middle class now.

Efficiency and freedom were at the heart of the Thatcherite vision which so dominated the 1980s. It had power because it spoke persuasively to one source of human motivation – *economic self-advancement.* Its promotion of unfettered markets may have created wealth but it has also, in the West, accelerated the decline in manufacturing industry creating a class of people whom many now dub not merely unemployed but unemployable.

Globalisation has permitted massive movements of capital, currency – and now jobs – from one side of the world to the other (to wherever the greatest profit can be made). Economic changes are now felt more markedly as pressure is put upon the welfare state. In our changed world the old welfare system seems unaffordable.

Amid all of this, the power of markets, with their demand for increased mobility among the workforce, has unravelled traditional forms of social life and has brought changes in the nature of work. Ever increasing demands are made for increased mobility, detaching individuals from localities and weakening commitments to families: marital breakdown is commonest in places where labour mobility and unemployment are both high. Joblessness has emasculated the power of trade unions to combat this.

It is a world in which the gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots' increases. In the United States, in years between 1990 and 1995, average earnings rose by 16 per cent. But annual redundancies went up by 39 per cent. To underscore the widening gap between the rich and the poor, total corporate profits in the same period were up by 75 per cent and chief executives' average pay went up by 92 per cent.

The impact has spread over the past ten years to the middle class too. What was once called 'downsizing' (and is now, thanks to the POR people, called 'right-sizing') has promoted a rise in redundancy, casualisation, an increase in part-time work and the growth of a contract culture.

Combine this with the degradation of public services and rising crime levels and the result is that high degrees of risk and uncertainty have become routine. Stress is reaching unprecedented levels in our society. It is a world of Social Darwinism. From a culture of contentment we have moved to a culture of resentment: those in work, work too hard, and yet are insecure; those who are without a job find themselves increasingly sentenced to long-term unemployment and dismissal as the 'underclass'.

> *...today efficiency and freedom increasingly eclipse social justice..*

For all the material wealth of what the Archbishop of Canterbury recently characterised as the 'two-car, two-holiday, two-video' culture, there is a general intuition that society is fragmenting under economic pressures and the anti-social philosophies of the market.

We may all be middle class but we are also all now mere hired hands. If richness is a question of material goods, then our society is indeed rich; if it rests on emotional security and social cohesion, then the answer is somewhat different.

Something has got seriously out of kilter in the equation Maynard Keynes argued must be kept in balance by society – with *economic efficiency* and *personal freedom* being held in harmonious tension with *social justice*. Today efficiency and freedom increasingly eclipse that third social element to the point where our sense of community or the common life has become elusive. We need to find a way to make it real again. ▷▷

Church teaching

So what does the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church have to say in such a world? Catholic social teaching was first formulated in the old monochrome world. The first major modern document on the subject was issued in 1891 when Pope Leo XIII, afraid that the church might lose its flock to the attractions of the new religion which was communism, published *Rerum novarum* (Of New Things), a critique of the exploitative excesses of industrial capitalism. It condemned communism for restricting individual freedom and robbing people of incentives; but it criticised capitalism for giving economic efficiency priority over social justice and creating a society where not everyone benefits from the creation of wealth.

In the 16 major social encyclicals which have followed, under various popes, the church broke new ground in moving beyond the realm of personal morality and scrutinising the ethical behaviour of institutions and social structures.

But if times have changed significantly over the century, the principles which have been evolved in church thinking still constitute important and useful tools for those seeking a moral basis in charting a route across our changed socio-economic landscape. Its theology of *Human Dignity*, for example, maintains that the rights of individuals are intrinsic; they do not stem from some social compact and thus cannot be alienated or abrogated according to what works, rather than what is right. People must be considered not for what they have, do or produce but simply for what they are – a concept which has profound effects on how society should view the poor and the weak. From this stems every individual's right to basic living standards, including education and employment. There is a right and a duty to work, for work in its fullest sense is what makes us fully human.

From that follows much else. The theory of the *Common Good* offers a mechanism to strike a balance between the wider good of society and the rights of the individual which contemporary society tends to overemphasise much as it overstresses the primacy of economic efficiency and profit. The market must be a tool not an ideology, and the state has a role to play in regulating that market.

The notion of *Integral Human Development* contends that no-one should be excluded from the benefits of social development, and requires the authorities to lean towards the interests of the most vulnerable; some redistribution of wealth is to be required. The principle of *Solidarity* insists that interdependence is a moral issue; that rich individuals and nations have a duty to help the poor, that all have a responsibility to commit themselves to the Common Good.

The doctrine of *Subsidiarity* requires that the state should not take upon itself what individuals can do; but it also requires that the state should not shirk from doing what it can do better than individuals or private bodies – issues concerning the environment or the regulation of international finance and trade are obvious examples.

The concept of *Structural Sin* offers the insight that wrong can reside in social and economic structures or institutions as well as in the acts of individuals. Through its concept of *The Indirect Employer* the church rules that anyone who benefits from exploitation – knowingly or not – has moral culpability for it. Consumers, pension funds, shareholders and multinational firms cannot claim limited moral liability – without seeing those whom their actions might offend.

Tony Blair's much vaunted idea of the *Third Way* is an attempt to find an answer to the central dilemma of our time: how accelerating changes in technology and the economy can be reconciled with the abiding human need for stability and a sense of common purpose. The trick is this: how do you preserve the creativity and dynamism of market forces but then balance them with a sense of social justice which protects the vulnerable and creates a sense of cohesion in society?

There is a right and a duty to work, for work in its fullest sense is what makes us fully human

The principles of Catholic social teaching suggest a need to rebalance our political programmes on both the domestic and international fronts. Some of the broad-brush changes needed are self-evident. The imperatives of the bias to the poor are straightforward. So are those which point to a more inclusive society in which all are empowered and encouraged to participate.

Subsidiarity requires greater participation in the processes of government in ways which give ordinary people greater say in their lives; the Common Good requires more transparency in government to enable greater accountability; Solidarity insists on effective safety nets for the disadvantaged, though Subsidi-

arity insists that these must not create disincentives to work.

Full employment possible

Work is a key area here. Creating full employment through government borrowing and spending on public works, as Keynes advocated, may now be circumscribed by the influence of dereg-ulated markets. Nonetheless, the church's teaching on work has a lot to say to a modern finance minister.

Work, insists the present Pope, *is the quintessential human activity:* it is the defining act which makes us fully human; work expresses human dignity and also increases it. It is unethical for governments to use unemployment as a tool to control inflation, with the benefit for the many falling as a disproportionate burden on the shoulders of an unfortunate few. Unemployment can never be 'a price worth paying'. Unemployment on the scale we have seen over the past decade is not an economic inevitability.

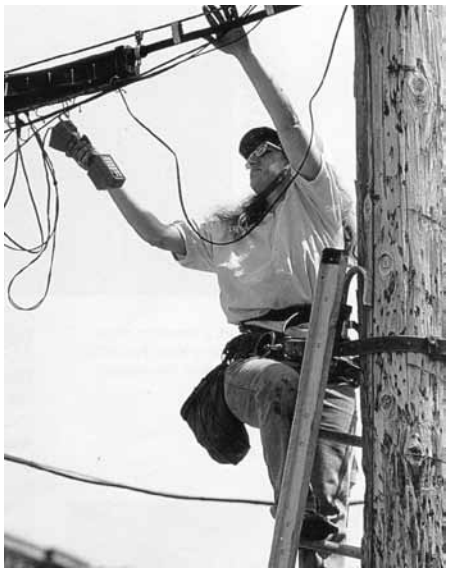
Some economies, like that of the United States, have made full employment one of the primary goals of the strategy of both government and the US Federal Reserve*. Countering the social exclusion created by unemployment is, then, a primary task. The imperatives of the Common Good, Solidarity and Subsidiarity put employment at the top of the contemporary agenda.

But that must not be done by endorsing wages so low that workers find it difficult to live. Catholic social teaching draws here on the medieval concept of a *just wage*, one which allows the worker to sustain a minimum standard of living, meagre but decent. Where wages fall below this level the state may step in and fix by law an acceptable minimum wage.

Tony Blair's policies on devolution, decentralisation and the minimum wage are all directly rooted in Catholic social teaching. So is the idea of a *stakeholder economy* and the policy of *welfare to work*, which takes two key Catholic ideas – about human dignity and subsidiarity – and works to create a balance between them. On the one hand it acknowledges the inalienable right of every individual to "everything necessary for leading a truly human life: food, clothing and shelter..." On the other hand it warns against the danger of robbing people of the incentive to work.

Catholic social teaching also suggests that the government needs to widen its thinking on the definitions of what constitutes 'work' so that we might include voluntary, charitable or caring activities which existing social-security regulations exclude. Tackling social exclusion is about empowering people rather than giving hand-outs, and voluntary work is among the most empowering to be seen anywhere.

There is much to do too in addressing the global imbalance between rich and poor in the First and Third Worlds. The rich world continues to impose tariff barriers upon imports of developing countries' goods. The *World Trade Organisation* is becoming a hindrance rather than a help to the development of poor economies. "The more global the market", as Pope John Paul II has said, "the more it must be balanced by a global culture of solidarity, attentive to the needs of the weakest." The rich world, as he says, needs to act more responsibly through organisations like the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation.



Work is the quintessential human activity" (Pope John Paul 2)

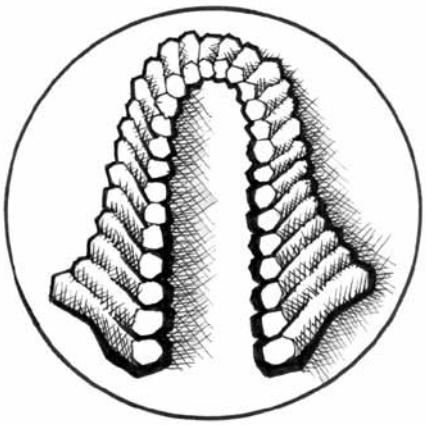
The rich, it seems, we will always have with us. In the growing insecurity of our modern world the rich may be more difficult to identify – especially if that instability increases our reluctance to turn our gaze inwards when the issue is raised. But the fact that the task is more difficult because the picture is more clouded, does not absolve us of responsibility. To discharge it we do not need to look out to the wider world, but in to our own hearts. ■

*Paul Vallely is an author (*The New Politics: Catholic Social Teaching for the 21st Century*) and a journalist with* ***The Independent*** *newspaper (London).*

** The Federal Reserve is the US equivalent of the NZ Reserve Bank*

Restorative Justice

Putting a stop to re-offending... and giving the victims of crime a fair deal. Restorative Justice is a promising way of achieving both



Get tough on crime! Lock 'em up and throw away the key. Hearing this sort of slogan on the airways is a sure sign election time is getting closer. One place where that sort of thing isn't being heard is South Canterbury where in recent years custodial sentences have gone down – and crime has gone down with it.

Two factors have contributed to Timaru appearing to buck the national trend in crime stats. One is the mode of operation of the District Court presided over by Judge Ed Ryan (*pictured left*), and the other is the adoption over the last three years of *Project Turnaround*, a pilot scheme – one of three throughout New Zealand – to prevent re-offending and meet victim's needs. *Tui Motu* paid a visit to Timaru to observe one place in the country where so-called 'Restorative Justice' seems to be working well.

When Judge Edward Ryan was appointed to the District Court in South Canterbury six years ago the police initially were horrified at his somewhat

A book for all concerned about justice

Restorative Justice – Contemporary Themes and Practice
Edited: Jim Consedine & Helen Bowen
Ploughshares Publications
Review: Norman Elliott

I am convinced that increased prison terms for serious offending are no answer to our worrying crime statistics. They do not reduce crime nor, sadly, do they contribute to the rehabilitation of the offender. The reverse is probably the case. While one can understand calls for greater penalties for the offender emanating from distraught and frustrated victims or members of their families, we have to find other effective ways to achieve justice in the criminal context.

In New Zealand the concept of restorative justice has developed from the *Family Group Conference* which became a part of our legislation affecting young offenders in 1989. In more recent years the model has been actively promoted by some judges in the sentencing of adults. In this context it has come to be called a *Community Group Conference*. Judge Fred McElrea, a contributor to this book, has helped to pioneer restorative justice processes in the District Court.

Helen Bowen describes the practice of restorative justice in this way: "Restorative justice sees crime as a violation of people and relationships. It creates obligations to make things right. It involves the victim, the offender and the community in a search for solutions that promote repair, reconciliation and reassurance."

I found this book very informative in its explanations of the concept of restorative justice and its accounts of how it is applied in practice. The book is divided into three sections. The first and largest contains articles on the topic from 12 contributors including the two editors. Two are written specifically from a Maori perspective.

The second section contains summarised accounts of seven community conferences. In simple and readable style these summaries illustrate what happens at a conference. The third section contains five court judgments, one from the High Court and four from the District Court, in which restorative justice processes have been considered by the judges when sentencing an offender.

The processes are soundly based on Christian principles. They are a light in the darkness of our inability as a country to reduce crime and rehabilitate offenders. I am grateful to the editors for giving me a better appreciation of the concepts and practices of restorative justice. I hope that the book will be read by all who are concerned about law and order and justice – and that should be all New Zealanders!

unusual approach. "*Who is this soft and lenient fool who has come amongst us? If this sort of thing carries on, crime will be out of control.*" But when they saw that it worked they quickly came round, and indeed the Police Area Controller's wife, Linda Gaskin, is the coordinator for *Project Turnaround*. So called 'community diversion' is a lot harder than traditional forms of penalty because it involves personal acknowledgment, understanding and acceptance. Judge Ryan thinks that *Project Turnaround* got off the ground in Timaru largely because of acceptance and encouragement by key members of the police and the community.

"Restorative Justice is a term I don't like to use," says Judge Ryan, "because it means so many different things to so many different people. It's a convenient term, however, for a system which focuses on trying to get things right rather than on incarceration, in order to improve things.

"The number of people in NZ against whom the public needs to be protected is very, very small. It is said that many sentences are imposed as a deterrent – but I'm not aware of any evidence that such punishment actually works as a deterrent. What may seem to be a deterrent to some people, is no deterrent to others. The people who *are* deterred are the people who are least likely to need to be deterred.

"There are some people whose behaviour is so appalling that they must be incarcerated. But how can the court deal with all the others so that they are less likely to offend again? There is no simple answer. But there are some cases where the setting up of a conference scheme as used in the Youth Court can also be used in the adult court. The present law allows us to do this."

So how exactly does it work in Judge Ryan's Court?

"I ask the probation officer to write a pre-sentence report, which is a normal procedure. I suggest to the officer in what seems to me an appropriate case, that the preparation of the report might be assisted if a meeting were held with the people most affected – which allows a Community Group conference to be set up. There is no reason why such a process cannot happen.

"Dr Julie Liebrich published *Straight to the Point* in 1993. It is a series of interviews of offenders. I cannot remember one of them saying they gave up offending for fear of being caught again. Most offenders give up because they reach the conclusion that it's about time they stopped. They grow out of it! By the time most offenders reach the age of 25 they have decided to give up.

"Some, like the recidivist drink-driving offenders, keep on offending – but they are in a class of their own. Likewise with white collar offenders: dishonest lawyers and accountants need to be struck off so that they are simply removed from their area of offending. And it is that category of offender which is likely to have a greater impact on the general public than most others! The theft of people's retirement funds and so forth affects people

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Taking the justice message round the world

Christchurch priest Fr Jim Consedine returned recently from a two-month journey to Europe and Africa promoting the cause of Restorative Justice. His first engagement was to speak to the *Prison restore* conference in London – 130 delegates from 58 countries. At the conclusion the Conference made restorative justice one of its six planks for prison reform.

On to Dublin for a meeting with various professionals in the Justice system. "Ireland," says Fr Jim, "appears wide open to restorative justice - apart, that is, from the tabloid media: they sell their papers on lurid crimes, so have a vested interest in crime. Also some politicians are uncomfortable since they see restorative justice as a vote loser."

In Belfast he spoke to activists on both sides of the conflict (*see Editorial page 3)*. In spite of their apparent intransigence Jim's impression is that the peace process is well on track. "What I offered them was a process: how to build a safer community and a more just system based around the concept of restorative justice and Family Group Conferences. What is vital is the meeting together of offender and victim, with the professionals standing back. In Northern Ireland both sides are looking for a new way forward – and the restorative path is a new way. An essential element is to find skilled and trained facilitators who are neutral.

"The people driving this change are often motivated by their Christian faith. Yet the official church tends to drag its feet. Of all related issues criminal justice seems to be the cinderella. Having said that, I found the Archbishop of Armagh, Sean Brady, very interested and enthusiastic. Having the NZ Bishops Pastoral Letter on Restorative Justice in my pocket was a real boon."

In South Africa Fr Consedine spoke in Pretoria to a prison officers' conference. His last stop was Harare (Zimbabwe) to spend three hours with a national conference of judges and magistrates. In Fr Jim's opinion they have inherited the worst aspects of the colonial legal sytem in S Africa, and still operate out of an apartheid mindset.

▷▷ in general – far more than young men hitting each other on the street.

"When someone comes before me on a drink-driving charge I usually take the trouble to inquire how this came about. The vast majority of people who appear, are there *by mistake*: they have misjudged, they have misunderstood how much alcohol will get them to a particular level. There are other categories: those who don't care, and those who are seriously affected by alcohol. I usually ask them: *what happened? How did this come about?* This is to help them understand how the problem came about, so they can the better avoid it happening again.

"Often if you can only get defendants to reveal their feelings and their hopes for the future, it may be possible to encourage them to make a commitment. I feel that that's why I am there. Sometimes this line of discussion leads nowhere. But often enough they will get themselves to a position where they will say, *well, I'm not going to do that again*. They may even use language which I normally would not accept in court, but I let it go: it's their way of expressing strong feelings

"I might ask what changes they propose to make so they won't reappear in court, and they may say: *Oh, I'd better stop drinking*. And I can say to them that there's no shame in accepting help. *Ask for help – there's no shame in that*. Or to a young man who has hit someone else I might ask them would it not take more courage to walk away than to retaliate. It's a challenge for them to take on board another way of thinking.

"I don't have many experiences of people who are obdurate. Then I try not to overreact. My aim is never to decide on a sentence when I am angry. It seems to me not the proper way to go. Sometimes I have to proceed to sentence, and will say, 'I'm sorry, I don't seem to have been able to get through to you. You do not understand what I am endeavouring to do. So I will impose this sentence upon you, but I warn you, if I see you again, I am likely to remember this day.' But most people respond to being spoken to politely and fairly."

Judge Ryan is quite aware that many of his colleagues in the District Courts around the country would not think and proceed the way he does, but he is also conscious that in recent times some of his colleagues have become interested in what has been happening in South Canterbury and are minded to operate along the same lines.

There are other judges now involved with restorative justice procedures. Recently the retiring Chief Justice, Sir Thomas Eichelbaum, spoke very sympathetically of the developments in the field of restorative justice, quoting Judge Fred McElrea of Auckland and Fr Consedine. Sir Thomas has shown great interest in what has been achieved in the Timaru district: the rate of imprisonment has gone down and so has the rate of offending. "Of course," says Judge Ryan, "it's impossible to demonstrate that this is cause and effect. It is now five and half years since I came here and adopted this approach – and the pattern still holds good."

the rate of imprisonment has gone down and so has the rate of offending

He acknowledges that he has not always thought and acted along these lines. "When I was first appointed to Palmerston North in 1985 I went along with normal sentencing procedures, following the traditional pattern because I knew no other way. Levin was one of the centres of the much-feared Nomad gang. The local police seemed to be caught up in an interminable cycle of young offending, especially young Maori." Some of these young people seemed to be locked into the criminal justice system over recurrent traffic offence fines. None of them could afford to pay for proper driving instruction, let alone licence fees. So the Judge asked why some group could not be organised to help these young people. "A short time later I was invited to attend the opening of *Judge Ryan's Driving School*!" One of the ladies who often attended the Court, a local *kuia*, organised a programme of instruction and three months later the first certificates were awarded.

The ones who troubled to qualify themselves were showing that they could live within the law and intended to do so. "Some of these offenders were tough customers," says the Judge. "They would never have sought help on their own. On the other hand if two or three of their mates went – that was different. It wasn't the threat of punishment which was turning these lives around: simply the invitation to consider their situation and perhaps decide to do something more constructive with their personal lives."

In Edward Ryan's opinion the young people who stand before him in court week after week are the true 'poor' of our world. Often they have come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, or they are semi-literate. They have drifted into a feckless pattern of behaviour, and they need to be helped to find a way out of it. If the gospel bids us to bless such people rather than curse them, then the methods adopted by the Judge in his District Court and by the community diversion schemes are surely doing just that –providing them with a blessing instead of a curse. ■ *M.H.*

Project Turnaround

Getting an offender to front up to the victim is often the key factor in preventing re-offending

Jo Gregan, Timaru community panel member

Jo Gregan lives in a quiet Timaru suburb, after retiring off the farm a few years ago. But now she has become highly involved in a revolutionary pilot scheme aimed at finding a solution to the problem of petty crime.

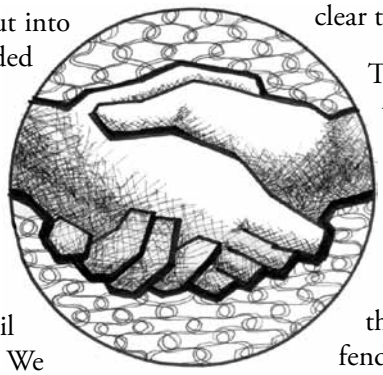
"I was always interested in Jim Consedine's Restorative Justice message, and then I saw this ad in the paper – about *Project Turnaround*... I applied and was accepted for training as a 'community panel member'. I like working with young people. I'm a learning assistance tutor with the adult literacy programme, and some of the young men with learning difficulties are also offenders. Another thing which prompted me to apply– I've a lot of sympathy with the victims of crime. I've always thought they should have some input into what happens to the people who have offended against them.

"So I became part of this pilot project here in Timaru. There are 16 of us on the panel representing the general public. The coordinator, Linda Gaskin, will phone me on a Monday morning and arrange which meetings I can attend. She gives me a thumbnail sketch of the offender we will be dealing with. We come together in the community policing rooms in the middle of town. The offender has been referred to us by the Court, and the victim has to be persuaded that the case should come before the panel. If that is agreed, the offender will be brought before us; but even during the session the victim can say *No! – I'm not satisfied with this person's attitude* – and that's it. It then goes back to the District Court.

"What happens in the room," says Jo, " stays there. Confidentiality is absolute – and that includes the victim. At each meeting there are two of us community panel members. The coordinator, Linda, is always there. She sets the whole thing up; it's her job to run the meetings and to follow the process through. The victim is usually there: about two-thirds participate in person, the others are represented in some way, even by letter. The victim can bring someone along as a support. The perpetrator, of course, is always present – and they too can have a support person."

The procedure for a Community Panel runs roughly as follows: a summary of the facts of the case is read by the police officer present. Linda verifies with the perpetrator and the victim that that is what exactly happened. She will then ask the victim: "What impact did these events have on your life?" For instance, a person may describe how after an assault they felt so insecure they practically barricaded themselves in their home. Linda chooses panel members according to the case, and she knows that Jo will not put up with any '*Poor little me*' excuses from the offender. The community members need to be upfront with their questions and convey clearly the impact that offences can have: vandalism, for instance, impacts on everybody, and the offenders need to be told this.

Often the perpetrators have no idea of the impact of their crimes – often because it may have been drug or alcohol induced. That may be a reason – but it is made abundantly clear to them that in no way is that an excuse.



The sessions can be quite lengthy. Sometimes the offender may appear arrogant, but it is usually a 'front' – a form of bravado because they're cornered. In a couple of cases where Jo has been, the offender has nearly walked out, saying he'd rather go before the court. The hardest thing for them is to have to face the person they've offended. Until the young offender is faced with the victim, the crime has been anonymous. Suddenly they discover it's a real person whose car they've wrecked! The atmosphere can become really heated. Jo admits occasionally to getting 'really stuck into' a person who appears to think they can do what they like in the community and expect no redress. It is, says Jo, a form of catharsis: tension and resentment can be vented behind closed doors – and then a healing process becomes possible.

Finally, the victim is asked what he/she thinks should happen. The panel then tries to reach consensus on an appropriate 'sentence'. Often the perpetrator is directed to a drug or alcohol programme or for budgetary advice, or is given certain community service tasks to perform. Someone who has ▷▷

committed acts of vandalism may be required to make good the damage they have done. A person on a cannabis charge was required to read a book and produce a synopsis of each chapter! The number of hours of community service required will depend on the gravity of the offence or the police time that has been wasted. A written letter of apology to the victim may be required. The offender may even be required to contribute to some charity nominated by the victim.

One young man who had been a sportsman was directed to help in coaching with a view to getting him back into healthy recreation again. "We try to make the punishment relevant to the crime", says Jo, "and they've sometimes got to feel it financially – something they won't forget in a hurry."

The offender then has to agree, and signs a contract that they will perform these tasks. This process is supervised, and if they fail to fulfil it they are referred back to the court. But if they do perform satisfactorily, the police are advised and the charges withdrawn. The 'sentence' has to be finished by the time the case is due to go back to court. Linda Gaskin will then report back to the court that the situation has been resolved satisfactorily. The case is then dismissed without conviction.

So far the scheme has been going in Timaru for two and a half years, and it has been funded for another year. Does it work? Jo cited a case where a young man who had vandalised someone's car, was directed to go and do work for that person – and in the course of time they became good friends. In another case the victim finished up taking the perpetrator fishing and introducing him to a healthy occupation. They have also learned by their mistakes along the way – for instance, always to deal with a group of offenders singly, never together.

when this process is gone through. She cited one case where the victims did everything they could to help the person who had stolen off them to do the task, even to find a proper job. In another case where the victim was well known to the offender, she took it upon herself to take him to counselling and see he completed all the tasks. "She was so forgiving," says Jo, "In fact she did our work for us!"

Offences dealt with include burglary, fraud, assault, intentional damage and theft. Jo could not recall a situation where the process had completely failed. Sometimes, especially where a trust has been betrayed, the victim may be very reluctant to participate, but if they can be persuaded to 'give it a go' it can often lead to diminished animosity and even to reconciliation. The pilot scheme has clearly been successful in Timaru – at least in the eyes of the people, who are operating it. Timaru has been fortunate, thinks Jo, because the key people have co-operated to make the scheme work.

She does not believe Project Turnaround is a soft option, as some opponents will suggest. The perpetrators don't like being put through a process of having to face their victims and having to face themselves. In a small room the offender's eyes will sometimes be all over the place – but eventually it is this person they have to face, the one they have robbed or assaulted or defrauded. They will sometimes admit they haven't been able to sleep before the interview, and often it comes as a mighty relief.

Most people who come up before the Courts are the real 'poor'. They have dropped out of the school system, they lack home support, they drift into petty crime, they have a poor self-image. They need rescuing, not punishing. And that is what Project Turnaround is all about. ■

M.H.

ims often are

Restorative Justice in Prison

The Sycamore Tree Project is a programme of restorative justice taking place within prisons throughout the world, and co-ordinated by the Prison Fellowship International. It brings together a volunteer group of prison inmates and victims of crime for six two-hour sessions.

The inspiration is the Gospel story of Zacchaeus (*Luke 19: 1-10*). The offender must volunteer – as Zacchaeus did. There is an encounter between offender, victim and representatives of the community. The context is Christian and emphasis is placed on biblical standards of justice. The project ends, as did the encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus, with celebration.

One of the prisons where the scheme has been piloted was Arohata Women's Prison near Wellington. The photograph (left) shows the ceremonial planting of a sycamore tree outside the prison to celebrate the successful ending of the pilot programme.

(Bible Society)

The Most Dangerous Man in Scotland

The story of one violent man's moment of truth – and transformation

There was a time when Jimmy Boyle was proud of being dubbed "the most violent man in Scotland". The title gave him status and identity, factors which were missing in a violent and deprived childhood which led to his lengthy imprisonment. "That reputation was all that I had," he told Tim Sebastian in a recent BBC *Hardtalk* interview.

Jimmy Boyle, now 55, has put his years of violence and crime behind him in a remarkable change of direction. He attributes art to changing his life, giving him an outlet for the anger and frustration which had in earlier years earned him a reputation of a man not to be meddled with. "When you've got nothing, having a name as a good fighter is to have something," he says.

The die was cast for Jimmy right from the start. He was born in the Gorbals, the notorious slum area of Glasgow, into a society where violence was the norm. His father was a safe-blower and a bank robber; his mother tried to hold the family together while working 15 hours a day "cleaning rich people's houses". He considers his life sentence began the moment he left the womb. From the time he was 11 until he was 38 Jimmy Boyle was in prison for all but twelve and a half months. Being in prison for Jimmy was just like being at home in the Gorbals, except for the wall round the premises: family, friends and neighbours were all inside with him!

Crime was a way of life – and Jimmy started his career early: petty thieving of things he didn't even want – like soap and bleach – just to show that he could do it. He had no self-esteem, felt he had no choices, and his only confidence was in the culture of violence which surrounded him. He progressed in his violent world to the role of 'extortion' man for money lenders, and regarded the ensuing shootings and stabbings as just a part of life: for Jimmy, there was never any sense of right and wrong.

Yet there was a code of honour. In 1967 Jimmy Boyle was convicted of a gang killing because he would not 'grass' on a mate who in fact carried it out. He claims never to have killed, yet during the 15 years served of a life sentence he often wished he had been guilty of the murder: at least then there would have been some purpose to his incarceration.

The life sentence almost broke Boyle. Because he could see no way out and felt he had nothing more to lose, he organised and led prison riots, which resulted in his being put in solitary confinement for a total of seven years, for part of the time inside a cage in the cell.

It was as a result of the riots and the solitary confinement that Jimmy Boyle was eventually transferred to a special unit run on more democratic lines where the prisoners had some say in running the facility. It was there that he was introduced to art. He began sculpting. He describes the experience as if "a great creative dam burst inside me. All my anger and frustration could be expressed without anyone getting hurt. My life was changed forever. I was still perceived as an animal. Art was a way for me to say: 'I'm not an animal; I'm this other person'."

Boyle's mother never lived to see this transformation. She died of cancer ten days after her last visit to her son, while he was still in solitary. He desperately wanted to show his love for her at this visit, to hug her – but " that wasn't the done thing. If I had, they'd have said: 'Boyle's gone soft'." He still feels the pain of going to her funeral in chains, attended by police, dogs and a helicopter. "She deserved better than that. I kept thinking: 'what have I done?'"

The encounter with art, the facing up to the anger which had driven him to a life of crime, was the beginning of a painful process for Jimmy Boyle. He describes it as being broken into a million pieces in order that he be rebuilt; confronting his past, confronting the pain he had caused others, being changed from a de-sensitised person into a sensitised one.

During his early stages as an artist and writer, just after he had one book published, Jimmy Boyle was visited by Sarah Trevelyan, a medical student with whom he had a friend in common. They married in 1980 and are still happily married, with two children, 11 and 14, who know all about their father's past but consider it just that – the past.

Jimmy's life has changed beyond belief. he has a career as a novelist, a playwright, a sculptor. he enjoys the trappings of success – a large house, a Rolls Royce. But he has never lost the memory of where he came from and what it led to. He suffers remorse for the pain he caused his mother and the victims of his violence. He takes full responsibility for abandoning his son (from a relationship before he started his life sentence) who turned to drugs and was murdered. And he still feels anger about young people being homeless and without hope. He set up the *Gateway Exchange*, which looks after young people whose lives have been broken, and he has established a trust fund "to help the Jimmy Boyles of the future".

For today's Jimmy Boyle violence is over, but the awareness of the part it once played in his life is ever present. The anger has been re-routed into positive outlets. "I had to let go of the 'bad man' persona. I had to make a conscious decision that sorting people out the old way was no longer part of my equipment." His novel *Hero of the Underworld* is a grim testament of the days when it was. ■

Kathleen Doherty

Jubilee 2000: a debt-free start for a billion people

The call for the world to cancel unpayable debts of the poorest countries was made a few years ago by Pope John Paul as a Jubilee gesture. It is being taken up many world agencies from the EU to the IMF. The unfairness of these debts is shown in a country like Mozambique, which pays 10 times as much in debt interest as on health care for its people. The total sum involved – some US$300 million – sounds astronomical. It is less than the rich countries of the world earn in three days!

Parish groups or others wishing to study the Jubilee 2000 proposals should contact *Christian World Service* to obtain their *Right to Livelihood* study series. (P.O.Box 22 652, Christchurch)

The Jubilee 2000 Charter

The Jubilee 2000 Charter suggests a solution to the problem of Third World debt which is attractive to both debtors and creditors. It proposes the remission – by 31 December 2000 – of the unpayable debt owed by highly indebted poor countries to commercial banks, creditor governments and multilateral bodies (such as the IMF, the World Bank and Regional Development banks).

The Jubilee 2000 Charter proposes that:

• there is an overwhelming need for the remission of the backlog of unpayable debts owed by highly indebted poor countries. Debt remission should relate to commercial, government and IMF/World Bank debts, and debt reduction would comprehensively include all three forms of debt.

• creditors as well as debtors must accept responsibility for these high levels of indebtedness.

• the remission would be a one-off, unrepeatable act, tied to the celebration of the new millennium. It would set no precedents for future loans.

• the precise details of remissions should be worked out in consultation with both creditor and debtor for each debtor country.

• these details should be agreed by arbitrators nominated in equal numbers by both creditor and debtor, under the aegis of the UN.

• their deliberations should be transparent and well publicised, taking into account for each debtor country, that country's probity, economic management, social policies and human rights record.

• funds available after the remission of debt should be channelled into policies which benefit the poor, in line with UNICEF's recommendations for investment in social development.

• low income countries – with an annual income per person of less than US$700 – should receive full remission of all unpayable debt.

• higher income countries – with an annual income per person of between US$700 and US$2000 – should receive at least partial remission.

• the Jubilee 2000 Charter is offered as a model for a workable and acceptable solution to the problem of the debt of poor countries. It would create a new, disciplined beginning to financial relations between North and South, and a fresh start for millions of the world's poor.

A Filipino Story

A few decades ago the mangrove forest of Danao, on the southern island of Mindanao in the Philippines, was large and bountiful. It was normal for there to be lots of good food, with easy access to fish, crabs, shrimp, shellfish and even lobster. But now with the mangrove swamp nearly gone, the people eat poorly.

During the 60s and 70s control of the swamp fell into the hands of a powerful family, who cut down the trees to make charcoal and hundreds of acres were destroyed. After years of abuse the coastal waters were ruined. So a local lady, Nida Tacang, mobilised the villagers to restore the dying swamp by planting thousands of mangrove seedlings.

But the government ordered the people to stop planting because they planned to develop the area commercially. The international financial community has forced the Philippines government to exact more money from the people and the land to pay the debts accumulated during the Marcos regime. Much prime farmland is now devoted to export crops controlled by agro-businesses. The country's mangroves are being converted into ponds to produce fish and shrimp for export. The renewable cycles that keep the land and sea alive are being assaulted by the vicious cycle of indebtedness.

Far away from the boardrooms of the financial world, policy-makers who insist of the repayment of foreign debt, pay no heed to the efforts of Nida Tacang and the villagers of Danao. ■

East Timor: awaiting the day of reckoning

Wellington priest Fr Gerard Burns has gone to East Timor for two months as part of a team of five, representing *Caritas* Australia and New Zealand. The first week was spent in establishing contacts with the local church and other aid agencies. Fr Gerard reports the situation in Dili as "calm because of the presence of so many foreigners, journalists, diplomats. But in the outlying districts, especially to the west and south, things are not so good with selective assassinations of suspected pro-independence leaders and general intimidation of the population (houses burnt, property stolen; threats that if a pro-integration vote is not forthcoming there will be a bloodbath etc).

"The big hope is that the United Nations presence with 200 electoral stations around the country and the supervisory police force will bring more peace to the areas where the military are. The difficulty is that they will be accompanied by Indonesian police, who are closely linked with the Indonesian military, so the question is *who will supervise who*?

"The development of the paramilitary groups was a strategy prepared, it seems, last year emulating the 'low intensity conflict' tactics used in Central America against indigenous and nationalist uprisings. There is no doubt that these groups are trained, funded, armed and indoctrinated by the Indonesian military, which does not want to lose this territory and any economic interests they may have here. So they are going to make this vote as difficult as possible to ensure it either cannot go ahead or the vote is for autonomy.

"Anyone suspected of being pro-independence is under threat, so the Caritas staff are in that category too. They and most of the locals really appreciate our presence as a form of security. As the UN gradually builds up its presence we should be able to move around a bit more."

In a later report Fr Gerard describes the atmosphere. "Being alongside the people you soon start hearing the stories of people beaten, disappeared, massacred. It can be overwhelming in its sadness for a people so obviously with a gentle disposition. The different looks on people's faces is an insight into what is happening: the smiles and waves of most locals as they see white faces – or angry looks from the military or officials; the despairing looks of locals as they see more police being off-loaded from ships at the wharf in the centre of Dili.

"On the one hand we hear of the UN being given the runaround (although they know what is going on) of continuing atrocities and of militias and military prepared to slaughter the population if the vote goes against autonomy. On the other we hear of the UN's plans to set up its stations around the country, to speak directly to the people by radio, television and print media – and our hopes go up again.

"The bravery and patience of the people is remarkable, and the way the sisters and priests maintain a presence in the rural areas where the people have virtually no other assistance, deserves high praise. I think we need to pray for something of a miracle that the Indonesian military has a change of heart or can be talked into an honourable and peaceful withdrawal." ■

The Gift of God in Creation

On the 7th March 1988 my husband, myself and our two children were living in Ruatoria on the East Cape of the North Island. I was expecting our third child and was overdue. That day I had seen the local G.P. who had travelled to town from Te Puia Hospital, the local hospital about 20 minutes away, and this was where I planned to have my baby. At this consultation we had discussed a trip to Gisborne for induction if the baby had not arrived within the week.

The house was quite busy as my parents had arrived to help while I was in hospital. Our two energetic preschoolers were finding the confines of inside rather frustrating. However, this was unavoidable due to the continual rain we were experiencing. In fact, the rain got heavier and heavier and it was becoming obvious that we were in the grips of a cyclone.

At approximately 9.30pm my waters broke, and it was apparent I was going to go into labour. I recall a relative calmness surrounding me and the flurry of activity around me did not panic me (I am not sure I can say this for the others). As 'luck' would have it the Doctor had been unable to leave town due to the destruction of the bridge out of town, the same reason I was unable to travel to the hospital. So in the presence of my husband, my mother, the local Public Health Nurse and the Doctor, Catherine Foster was born without complication at home shortly before midnight.

A Special Gift

It was as though she had always been special;
her mother said she remembered the night she was conceived.
The night she was born – she came in the eye of a storm.
She seemed to know
as though she had waited,
waited until the bridge was out, waited to be born at home.

Her birth was quick, without the use of anything of the day –
no power, no medical technology.
Her father would remember the natural beginnings of his special child.
It seemed natural they should treat her birth with specialness.
For the first time they kept the placenta, the umbilical cord
to be planted beneath trees only known to them.

Would she be drawn back to these places?

The day she was baptised people heard of it
spoke of her beginnings.
Others shared the day with her parents, brought gifts.
She wore a gown worn by others in the 70 years it had survived.
She was the centre of attention.
She accepted it as though she knew.

Perhaps she was special because she was a survivor.
She would later be told of the girl just four weeks her junior,
she with the same name, who passed away in her sleep.

Why not her?

She was always special.
Some say the third child always is.
Her father would say it was for the strength she gained from the earth,
the strength drawn from the whenua planted on her ancestors' land.
Her grandmother would treasure her as she shared her birthing.
Her mother knew she was special as she was her daughter;
she had given her life.

Every birth is special. Catherine Foster was born at the height of Cyclone Bola – so her birth was very special.
Her mother, Judy McHardy, wrote this reflection and poem as part of her* Walk By Faith *course, and kindly allowed us to publish it

When reflecting on the birth of Catherine and recalling my thoughts at the time, I am able to see God's presence in the event.

I recall vividly my composure at the time and when people have spoken to me about it the most commonly asked question is: "Weren't you scared?" I was not scared and have previously related this calmness to it having been my third birth. I did feel a strong sense of faith at the time that everything would be O.K. and knew that God was with me.

Many of the events at that time we described as 'luck'. However, these were situations that God had a hand in – the doctor being in town, the nurse having a sterile delivery kit with her, our two small children sleeping soundly throughout their sister's birth, my mother being there to help.

The significance of cyclone Bola is integral to the whole event. The fury of the storm caused great environmental damage. However, much of this is due to the lack of care by humans for the earth. I cannot recall vividly the strong wind and rain on the night of Catherine's birth. However, the collapse of hillsides, roadways, bridges, the loss of life, both human and stock, remind me of the responsibility we have to care for the land. The clearing of native forests from the steep terrain left it with no protection from the elements. In hindsight everyone is wise and vows not to commit the sins of the past; however, we continue to exploit the land.

I referred to the burying of the placenta and umbilical cord in my reflection and have generally attributed this to the Maori impact on our lives at that time. This is spiritual and I now see it in terms of acknowledging life force and returning to the earth the fuel and energy it needs to sustain life. This reminds me that the creation of new life is also linked to the return of our souls to God when our bodies can no longer maintain life.

This was a time of wonder in my life, a time when God was with me and, more importantly, a time which is now part of our family history. It is a constant reminder of the part God plays in creation and the special gift that creation is. ■

British author and peace activist, Brian Wicker, *looks at the war in Kosovo against the larger backdrop of nuclear deterrence. We need to listen, he suggests, to the wise words of Pope John Paul*

A House Much Divided

A Yugoslav child gazes into the future. What does it hold for her?

The word *tragedy* has been bandied about pretty indiscriminately in commentary on the Kosovo war. Yet there is a sense in which it is the right word for the occasion. For tragedy happens when, through some earlier circumstance or action, an actor is caught up in a dilemma from which there is no escape without disaster. Thus Agamemnon, in the play by Aeschylus, is trapped by the contradictory wills of the gods, who simultaneously insist (a) that he *must* avenge the theft of Helen (his sister-in-law) and (b) that in order to do this he *must* kill his own daughter Iphigenia, because this is the only way to ensure a favourable wind for his fleet of avenging ships. So whatever he chooses to do, he has to be punished.

In Kosovo, something equally tragic is being enacted. What has happened is that the principal players failed to measure up to the challenge set them by the 'villainous' Milosevic when he seized power, riding on a surge of nationalist fervour cleverly manipulated by himself, using the pervasive Serbian sense of victimhood. Yugoslavia had disintegrated, and Bosnia was all but destroyed, before NATO was brought in to restore some semblance of 'peace'. But the Dayton agreement was based on the assumption that the Milosevic regime would play by its rules. Yet it was already evident that, far from being part of the solution, this regime was in fact the root problem.Plenty of analysts had predicted what would happen. Kosovo was simply the next domino to fall. But the major players failed (or refused) to appreciate this.

Perhaps they had no choice, given that the 'international community' is actually a collection of self-motivated actors playing under a legal regime designed to preserve their own freedom of action in defending their own interests. They were prevented from understanding what should be done by the very structure of interests they had themselves constructed for themselves. This made tragedy and disaster practically inevitable. Once the forcible expulsions and killings of ethnic Albanians had begun, the major players were in a truly Agamemnon-like dilemma. Something had to be done to protect the dispossessed Kosovars yet everything that could be done made things worse. Given the complex politics of an alliance comprising 19 separate sovereign states, a relatively trouble-free air bombardment was as much as could be agreed on. Yet it was equally clear that an air campaign by itself could never solve the problem. There was no agreement at the beginning to play the one trump card that NATO held: forces on the ground. The result? *Tragedy* in the strictest sense.

Even when Milosevic crumbles and NATO's conditions are met, the tragedy will not be over. For the violence unleashed against a relatively small but hugely aggrieved nation which believes it has been illegally and unjustly attacked, will only beget more violence.

There is every chance that Serbia, even under a government not of Milosevic's stamp, will turn into what the big players like to call a 'rogue state'. It may well resort to vengeful terrorism all over the NATO area. The Brixton and Soho nail bombs (primitive versions of NATO's cluster bombs) suggest what a 'rogue' Serbia consumed by self-pity could do to the West if it so chose.

The only statesman who has clearly seen all this is Pope John Paul II. Ordinary politicians *dare* not understand the truly Agamemnon-like condition in which they place themselves by their own failure to act in time. They are condemned to believe that there is a saving solution: in this case a just war. But the Pope is not an ordinary politician, and has the privilege of being able to see tragedy for what it is. He insists that states must not, for example, go in for selling armaments because profit or the national interest seems to demand it, impose unfair and crippling debts upon the poorest states, or ruin the environment. If they refuse to listen, tragedy will follow. Equally, they must persist in negotiating for as long as it takes, and in good time, even with dictators. In short, they must avoid violence because this only begets more violence, and *even when it has become obligatory and unavoidable violence solves nothing.*

The Pope's tragic view of international life is not confined to wars. It also covers the way in which the big international players commonly try to prevent them, by threats of nuclear terror, or 'deterrence'. During the Cold War this policy led to a tragic dilemma John Paul drew attention to when, at the UN General Assembly in 1983, he reluctantly conceded that under certain conditions nuclear deterrence was still morally acceptable. For the conditions he spelled out were manifestly unattainable. One was that deterrence had to be based on 'balance'. The Pope insisted on this condition despite the fact that in the very same speech he reminded the UN Assembly of some words of his predecessor, who had pointed out that nuclear deterrence compelled states to engage in an unwinnable game of trying to out-do each other by the invention of ever-newer means for trumping each other's nuclear cards. In other words there could never be such a thing as a stable balance of nuclear terror. A second condition was that deterrence had to be a stage on the way towards the negotiated elimination of nuclear weapons. He must have known that this condition would be unacceptable to the nuclear weapon states themselves. To this day, they insist that their own nuclear weapons are essential to their security. This insistence is the seed of a new, tragic holocaust which the Holy See has long been warning us of.

Once the cold war was over, and the original excuses for maintaining deterrence ceased to hold, it became clear to the Holy See that nuclear weapons had become a chief obstacle to peace. Hence the various speeches by the Holy See's UN spokesman, Archbishop Renato Martino, during the 1990s, in which – with ever-increasing force – the point has been made that unless the nuclear weapon states give up their belief in security through nuclear weapons, the world will be heading once more for disaster.

At this point the Holy See appears to concur with the clear message of the Canberra Commission that 'the proposition that large numbers of nuclear weapons can be retained in perpetuity and never used – accidentally or by decision – defies credibility'. Yet once again the nuclear-weapon states have so far refused to listen. If they persist they will in due course find themselves in another Agamemnon-like dilemma. And then, *whatever they do, they will be punished.*

The proponents of nuclear terror often claim, with some justification, that the beauty of nuclear weapons is that they make the old fashioned aim of *winning wars* unattainable. In other words, the lust to dominate others, which theorists from St Augustine onwards have condemned as a common motive of warfare, may be purged by the impossibility of achieving a nuclear victory. Now Augustine and Aquinas, both profound theologians, understood and feared this male motive of lust *(libido dommandi)* in warfare. They would have understood how offensive weapons, from spears to ballistic missiles, plainly exhibit phallic characteristics, and are designed to penetrate the individual or corporate bodies of the enemy. That is, to put it bluntly, their *point!*

offensive weapons exhibit phallic characteristics and are designed to penetrate

By contrast von Clausewitz, the most celebrated theorist of war in modern times, failed to spot this sexual aspect of war, despite his important thesis that defence is the stronger form of war because the defender understands the territory over which the battle is fought. (Perhaps Clausewitz saw that the female is the stronger when it comes to winning the sexual battle.) Unlike Augustine and Aquinas, Clausewitz was a happily married and faithful husband who perhaps did not experience the uncontrollability of lust in human affairs, or was too frustrated to understand it.

Be that as it may, the impossibility of victory, or success for the urges of the *libido dominandi,* in a nuclear conflict may suggest a limit to warfare in the next millennium. But don't count on it! As John Paul II says, we have been warned. Nuclear deterrence seems to hold an umbrella over the world, but beneath it many ordinary kinds of war, motivated by ordinary lust for domination, still take place. We would be foolish to expect a nuclear future to be other than tragic. ■

Brian Wicker is a member of Pax Christi and has been vice-President of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain

Historical basis for biblical faith

Was Moses a real person? And does it matter anyway? *Tui Motu* threw this hot potato to two O.T. scholars and listened in on the ensuing discussion. *Damian Wynn-Williams* (below left) is lecturer in Sacred Scripture at Holy Cross Seminary, Auckland. *Maurice Andrew* is the retired Professor of Old Testament Studies at Knox

Damian – The only evidence we have for the existence of Moses is within the biblical text itself. The biblical text is a historical datum. The only way we could prove or disprove the existence of Moses is by bringing in some criterion from outside the Bible. We don't have that. We have a biblical tradition in which Moses is a central figure. We have a body of tradition which articulates an experience of God, an understanding of national, religious self-identity, a world view all gravitating round the name 'Moses'.

Maurice – The first question to ask is "what kind of writing is this biblical text?"; and then you have to ask "can it be a history?" *The Book of Exodus* lacks all the apparatus of sources and dates which any modern history depends upon. For instance it talks about 'Pharaoh' – but never says *which* Pharaoh. The answer to the question is that the book is not history so much as theology. God used a person like Moses to lead the people from slavery to liberation: so 'Moses' becomes a medium for confessing one's faith that God is a liberator.

Damian – For me, the crunch is the view of God which is contained in the text, not so much that there was a describable event like the Exodus. Scholars speak of the likelihood of many migrations to and from Egypt. Moses may have been the catalyst. Undoubtedly many of the laws ascribed to Moses in *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy* spring from a time many centuries later than the date given for the Exodus.

Many people assume that 'history' is somehow objective. But I would say history is interpretative and ideological. We only have to look today at what is going on in Kosovo: it depends who's telling the story! In the Bible we have versions of what happened from the Israelite point of view, looking back after the Exile. Presumably other inhabitants of the land of Palestine would have had given a quite different interpretation to these events. Significantly there is no mention of an 'Exodus' outside the Bible.

So what we have is a post-Exile interpretation, an ideological slanting of events which may have taken place. My faith therefore is not dependent on the historicity of Moses or of details of the life of King David: it depends rather on the religious experience that is articulated in the text.

Maurice – I would agree. Certain people experience certain things and in the Bible we have a witness to that: that much is historical. I have a lot of sympathy with people who are uneasy about the scholars' doubting the historical nature of biblical events, because the Christian faith depends on the witness of people in the past, to which we in the present respond. It is not a philosophy.

Damian – Detailed descriptions of biblical events may be subject to outside historical criteria, for instance the siege of Jericho in *Joshua* cannot have been as described, since archaeological research shows Jericho to have been uninhabited at that time. But that does not

affect the totality of one's biblical faith. I think Christians today are happy to accept that many of the stories of the invasion of the Holy Land are in part legendary.

Maurice – I accept that we cannot prove these things historically. Nevertheless as Christians we have made a choice that the uniqueness of the Israelite tradition means something creative to us which, say, the Assyrian traditions do not. Crucial to this is the continuity that we find through the Old Testament as well as the acceptance by New Testament writers of the Old Testament tradition. The fact is it didn't get lost – it went on in a way that the traditions of the Philistines didn't.

Damian – The Jewish people have, through several millennia, continued on as an identifiable and self-conscious group. It's not a question of genes – it's a question of faith! There is a historical givenness about the continuity of Jewish Faith and their sense of Covenant. Confucianism and Hinduism by comparison seem far more diffuse.

There is an uncomfortable side to this, when today the biblical tradition is used to justify exclusive claims to the land. For instance, if the stories of David's Empire contain elements of fiction, how does that affect the claims today of some Israelis to a 'Greater Israel'? Contained within this tradition which we Christians see as canonical is the notion of the ban, the *herem*, which justified the ethnic cleansing of the Canaanite population by Joshua. It's a gruesome portrayal of God!

The view of God as we read it in the Bible is not uniform. God can be portrayed as vengeful – or as a God of mercy and forgiveness; as the God of salvation – or as the God who calls to account and is making demands on the people. The *herem* refers to a people specially chosen, which implies the non-choice of others. A parallel could be the sort of regulations which Catholics laboured under a few years ago – not attending non-Catholic services and so forth. This 'ban' gives a sense of separation. But it needs to be corrected from other parts of the biblical tradition: it conflicts with the notions of inclusive love found also in parts of the Old Testament as well as in the New.

Maurice – You cannot just look at one aspect of biblical history. So the stories of Joshua cannot be used, for instance, to justify ethnic cleansing today. In the Israelite view the conquered people and their goods belonged to their gods, and the only way you could deal with it was to offer them to your God who had helped you to conquer. They did not belong to you so you destroyed them! It was a very particular view belonging to that period, and it would be quite wrong to apply those ideas today. Too much emphasis is laid on these extermination stories, because even within *Joshua* and *Judges* there were other traditions which have become overlaid, like "caring for the stranger who is in your midst". *Deuteronomy* contains exclusive strands, yet a more inclusive God is characteristic of that book: caring for the widow, the orphan and the stranger.

Damian – In another example, the Boers saw themselves as like an Old Testament people of God seeking liberation. What was reprehensible was their denigration of other people – the classification of native Africans as sub-human. Of course, you cannot have it both ways. If you hold to a concept of election or choice, that does imply a differentiation, but it should never mean that those who are different are therefore lesser.

Christianity too can fall into the same trap. The notion of 'being the elect' must never mean that the others are less loved by God, or less human, or somehow outside God's plan.

The notion of being special to God, which the Irish and the Scots have also had, has something fine about it. The danger lies in being selective in one's use of Scripture and forgetting about *Genesis* 1: 26: *We* – everyone – *are made in the image and likeness of God.*

Maurice – You simply cannot take one part of the Bible and make it the be-all-and-end-all. You have to see the parts in relation to each other; the one part will question another or complement it, sometimes even contradict it! There is a myriad of relationships which we read there. That is why it goes on speaking to people.

Damian – There is a real danger of making the Bible into an object. The Bible does not exist on its own. It exists within the faith community for which it is an articulation of faith. Meaning does not simply reside in the text: meaning is unlocked in the encounter between the reader and the text. The Bible therefore exists *within* the Church or *within* Israel: the meaning is in the interplay between the stories and what the people have made of those stories. It's a dynamic thing. What I have found exhilarating is the variety of strands and strata in the Old Testament: to me it's a warning not to try to define God or to pin God down. We are drawn into the story, but if we are looking for exact, logical definitions we are doomed to disappointment.

Maurice – This brings us back to the beginning of the discussion. What matters is the relationship between history and faith. Christians and Jews will always be preoccupied with this relationship, because it is through it that God speaks to us. The way I respond to the Bible is influenced even by this discussion tonight. It's an ongoing thing which is past, present – and we hope will continue in the future. ■

http://www.biblesoc.org.nz

Exploring the Beatitudes – 2

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Mike Riddell

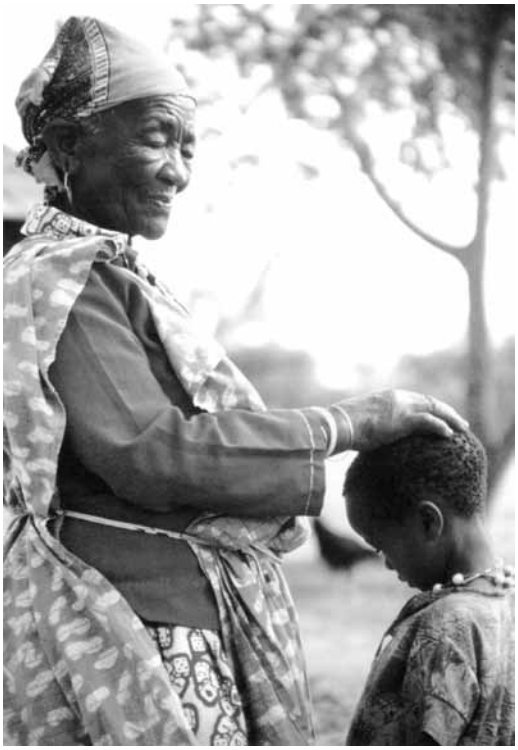
In one of the last poems which he composed, James K. Baxter complained:

> *How can I live in a country*
> *where the towns are made like coffins*
> *And the rich are eating the flesh*
> *of the poor*
> *Without even knowing it?*

It is fortunate for him that he died before these words lost some of their air of hyperbole. These last 15 years have seen the entrenchment of poverty, and the concurrent improvement in the quality of life of the wealthy. The turn of events seems a bizarre parody of the 'reversal' which the Sermon on the Mount is said to represent.

In the face of enforced poverty, the first of the beatitudes has an air of passivity and even blasphemy. How easy to assure the poor of their reward in another age, and to give religious legitimation to their suffering. The gospel of *Luke* at least adds *woe to the rich* in promise of divine justice in the coming age. There is little doubt that the 'pie in the sky' interpretation of the beatitudes, for all its mockery, has been of genuine encouragement to large sections of humanity in their sufferings. African American spirituals are full of a sense of longing for ultimate relief from their troubles. And for those who have no other avenue of change, the extension of hope to another realm is better than no hope at all.

However, we minimise the teaching of Jesus if we reduce these central sayings to the equivalent of 'Chin up; it'll all come right in the end.' At the very heart of the gospel is the revelation that the kingdom is drawing near now, not just at some distant point in the future. I suspect there is truth in the beatitudes



for all of us in the here and now, as uncomfortable as it may be to hear it.

The first thing we should note is that few of us who are reading this magazine are poor, or even capable of being poor. Poverty is not defined by income or possessions, but rather by the skills necessary to access resources in any society. Most of us retain these skills regardless of how much money we have; we know how to make the system work for us.

Secondly, it is always wrong to romanticise poverty; a temptation which seems to befall Christian commentators more than others. The poor at least are realistic about their own reality, and would be happy to change it. Poverty is grinding, desolate and wearying.

Thirdly, while we who are comfortable can never be poor in a material sense, we may be blinded by our possessions to our abject spiritual poverty: *For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing. You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.* (Rev 3:17). Our very comfort may be the source of our poverty.

In this situation, we may need to rec-ognise that the wealthy have become poor. Is the reverse true in some sense? Are the poor rich in spirit, or blessed? While needing to be very cautious about proposing this argument, I think there may be some elements of truth in it. I would hardly dare to suggest it, had I not first heard the idea from followers of Jesus in 'undeveloped' countries. What then is the wealth of the poor? How is it that 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven'? At the risk of misunderstanding, I suggest three qualities which are sometimes consequent on poverty, and which are of spiritual significance for us all.

- The first is that of *generosity.* Many

years ago while hitchhiking around the country I learned something interesting. The more beat-up and aged the car that was coming toward you, the more likely you were to be picked up. Mercedes and BMWs would speed past with their single occupants; big families in clapped-out Holdens would find a space for you beside the dog and a sack of spuds. Those who have so little are often more willing to share it.

• Then there is the quality of *compassion*. It seems that those who have suffered at the hands of others are willing to recognise the essential dignity of being human. I was lucky enough for some years to work amongst the psychiatric community, and to experience first-hand the breadth of acceptance and care which people showed to one another. The simplest of actions, such as the sharing of cigarettes, expressed a practical form of love.

• And finally, there is the much-pilloried virtue of *humility*. Enforced poverty provides a realistic assessment of the value of one's own life. The university setting in which I work sometimes seems like a vineyard of egos, with people desperately competing to prove themselves better than others. Among the poor there is the innate recognition that 'being up yourself' is an aberration of the spirit.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, says Jesus. Why? Because they are able to see something more clearly than those of us whose lives are complicated with wealth. They catch sight of what it is to be fully human, even if they fail to attain it in their own broken lives. It may be that what they catch sight of is God's beckoning dream, the kingdom of heaven. ■

Mike Riddell is a Dunedin-based writer and theologian

Still Born

There is an emptiness
I cannot touch or fill
a void within me where
just yesterday
you slept.

In the cradle of my womb
so much so loved a part of me
so soon for cradling in my arms
but now, my child
still born.

It was nothing I did
they told me
and nothing I could do
or anyone could do
they said.

You were within me
and I longed for your appearing
now I am without you
and we have lost each other.
My child, still born.

Still born
yet, born still
in my memory, my heart
the stillness echoes my love
and my loss.

This will be my prayer
now and forever. Amen.

James B. Lyons

walking on water

you know when jesus walked
on the water
he did
that's what he did,
walked on the water
no sweat
no crap either
not a parable or a myth or a
made up story to prove a point
he did it
he walked on the water
walked out across the water
and he freaked them all,
everyone of them in the boat
who is this they said
this man walks on water
and they were afraid and hid
but he walked across the water
towards them
and climbed in the boat
with them, people like you and me
he got in the boat with them
and they were blown away
but he went in the boat
with them

Kathleen Gallagher

Living with teens

Psychotherapist, **Paul Andrews, SJ** *continues this series on young people by putting the focus on adolescence*

The invention of adolescence as we know it dates from the 1950s, when the business opportunists of the Western world discovered that a large population of teenage boys and girls, still living at home, were earning money in part or full-time jobs, with few commitments and much disposable income. A huge market was created and served, with blue denim, T-shirts and tops, constantly changing styles of hair, boots, magazines, and above all with music, first in records, then tapes and compact discs, music in a thousand distinctive styles, but all *young* music. Put together, it amounted to a separate culture, which at its loudest conveyed values hostile to those of most adults, and shouted sex, drugs and rock and roll.

Those teenagers, now today's 40-year-olds, may have acquired knowledge and some wisdom about the ways of the world, but they have never experienced the life of today's teenagers. They have not lived with the dominance of computer games and the built-in categories of thinking they impose; or the accessibility of sexual experience together with the new hazards of AIDS; or the fierce academic competition with little prospect of employment at the end; or the shadows of a drug culture which has to be faced in one's peers; or the political disalignment of the globe, with the uncertainty about what is next. This is a different world, and young people sense the falseness of formulas for living which do not take account of these pressures.

There *are* abiding values. Teenage children rely on their parents to draw limits and to challenge – even though the limits are constantly broken and the challenges ignored. Parents will not communicate those values by quotations from a book, but by listening and talking to their children as intelligent and good humans; with a readiness to go over their own beliefs and conduct to find a new firmness for themselves; with a determination to survive as a couple by mutual support in face of pressures; and with passionate resort to the Lord, often with the desperation of King David in the darkest psalms, hanging in there while the floods seem to be rising.

Matthew in the Doldrums

Matthew is sixteen and in sixth form. He is not studying and nothing you do seems to motivate him. He is a nice boy, easy to live with, but idle and letting the precious months slip away.

He is in the doldrums, a boy of average ability, having a first introduction to some new subjects like *Accountancy*, with a strange vocabulary and a new way of thinking about money. He notices how much more quickly other students master the work than he does. Try a few lessons yourself in some new subject, say *Russian* or *Japanese*, and you will taste the sense of barely subdued despair Matthew may feel: a sense that it is all too much, that he will never get on top of all this strangeness; that the teacher is moving too fast, and he has not yet mastered what she covered last week.

On top of that, Matthew is trying to discover what he wants to be, not just in terms of a job but also in his lifestyle, clothes, taste in music and philosophy of life. In six years' time you will see a young adult who knows who he is, what he wants and what he likes. He cannot jump into that finished state. It comes by experiment, and that can seem a threatening process. Some will opt to be clones of their parents, prolonging childhood and taking their tastes and opinions from their elders. Some will do just the opposite, and reject everything represented by their parents, but be unsure what they want themselves: a negative identity.

It sounds as if Matthew is neither of these. You still matter to him, yet he knows he is not a child any more, knows also that his choices are going to differentiate him from you in a way that never happened in childhood. It is no good trying to impose solutions on him. Whatever he works out has to be his own. At this stage he has made the important decision about new subjects. The next urgency will arise when he has to make choices about courses after school, and that is some distance away. Meanwhile he feels in the doldrums, seldom coming to life. He is made constantly aware of the targets proposed for him by the adult world.

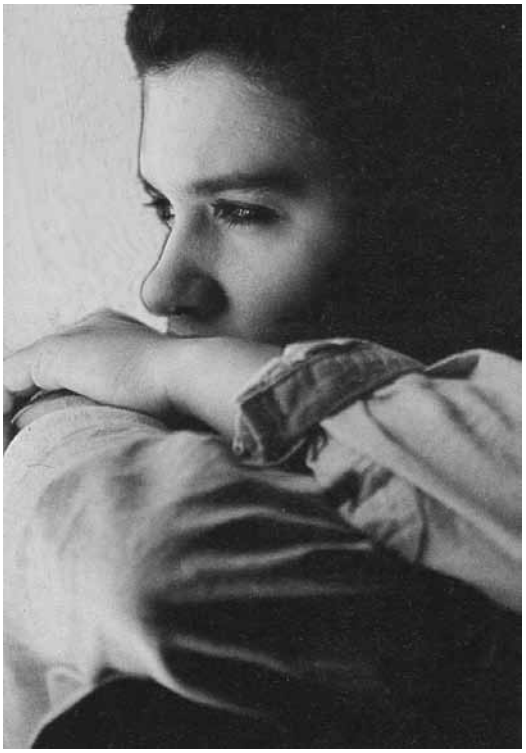
What are the targets which, consciously or not, he would set for himself?

The first is to *avoid false solutions,* the sort of compromises with society's demands where the price seems to be one's deepest dreams and integrity.

Secondly, in the doldrums of the teens it seems important to *feel real,* with all the intensity of which a healthy young body is capable. The occasions for this may be rare, such as good concerts and parties, when young music, and the heightened

emotion it generates, make you want it to last for ever. If you cannot feel real, then many opt to feel nothing at all, and the easiest way to do this is to stay in bed or watch television. One could form a populous club of oldish teenagers who live at home, stay in bed all day, and at night watch TV or talk to their friends: an unnerving sight for parents, who fear depression or psychotic breakdown, sometimes with reason.

The third target is to *prod society* repeatedly so that society's antagonism is made manifest, and can be met with antagonism. Secondary teachers will remember the barely concealed delight of older students when they have wrong-footed a teacher or Principal into a display of in-



justice or temper, which then legitimises their protests and indignation.

The final target is to *defy,* in a setting in which dependence is met and can be relied on to be met. Nothing makes more demands on parents than this: to hold the limits within a family, to face unreasoned anger and ingratitude, and meet it with firmness but no retaliation, no vindictiveness. Nothing tests the vocation of a father more than this: to experience the limits of his control over his children, to run out of punishments and rewards, but not out of love.

Even as this is written, it seems bland and complacent. The agony of a parent is not just about the immediate crisis – will Matthew come home before morning? How to answer the Principal when he tackles me yet again about his behaviour? Some crises reflect more than a passing phase.

Parents' deeper concern touches the long-term effects on their children's lives. There are 16-year-old alcoholics, whose planning and pleasures all revolve round the availability of drink. There are teenage mothers whose unplanned pregnancy will affect their emotional life for years, and, if they keep the baby, will radically affect their career. Those who fall into delinquency will find that the possession of a police record dogs their movements and opportunities for years. Where adolescent defiance leads to drug-dependency, unwanted pregnancy, delinquency or academic failure, then it is more than a passing phase: the inevitable consequences are not transitory. Yet it remains true that the great majority of what adults see as teenage problems, are cured not by intervention, but by the passing of time.

That wise observer of adolescents and children, Dr D.W. Winnicott, put it pithily in *The Family and Individual Development* (London, Tavistock).

'The big challenge from the adolescent is to the bit of ourselves that has not really had its adolescence. This bit of ourselves makes us resent these people being able to have their phase of the doldrums, and makes us want to find a solution for them. There are hundreds of false solutions. Anything we say or do is wrong. We give support and we are wrong. We withdraw support and that is wrong too. We dare not be "understanding". But in the course of time we find that this adolescent boy and this adolescent girl have come out of the doldrums phase and are now able to begin identifying with society, with parents, and with all sorts of wider groups, without feeling threatened with personal extinction.'

What will you do meanwhile about the warning notes from school, the money wasted on alcohol or other drugs, and all the other signs of the doldrums phase?

What can you do? First of all, believe in

what adults see as teenage problems are cured by the passage

Matthew. Keep the conviction alive in yourself that he will find what he wants.

Secondly, avoid the tempting solution of treating him as a child, supervising his homework to the point where he may feel it is your job rather than his. Avoid the other extreme of going along with the unrealistic proposals Matthew may make: of blaming the school and looking for a change, or pinning his hopes on a breakthrough into the pop music scene. Do not imagine that putting him into a boarding school with supervised study will produce working habits. Some of the most idle 16-year-olds I know spend three or four hours a day in supervised study, in a sort of trance in which they barely get through their homework, much less tackle revision.

It is an age at which an encouraging and well-liked teacher can make a great impact. The particular skills and training of a Guidance Counsellor can be at their most useful here in helping Matthew to see where his strengths of personality and ability might lead.

With a boy like Matthew coercion does not work, but negotiation does. He may be rather full of himself, and hard to live with, but part of that is unspoken envy at your security, while he has all the crises in front of him. Recognise the points of pleasure in his week, which make the drudgery more bearable, and keep the real opportunities in front of him. It would be easy to envy Matthew his opportunities, but that would spoil your dealings with him. Instead, help him towards self-control by your own self-control. Keep the realities of his future calmly and repeatedly before him. ■

George Basil Hume (1923-1999), Archbishop of Westminster

We buried Basil Hume today, Friday 25th June. There were over 2000 people present at his requiem Mass and burial. There were probably about 700 clergy present and along with them there were government Ministers, members of Parliament and people from all parts of public life. The Premiers of the United Kingdom and Eire were present, prior to going on together to Northern Ireland to resolve the intractable problems associated with that benighted country. I hope they asked George Basil to help them.

It's interesting about George Basil Hume that he had an ability to reconcile people, to bring people together and above all to realise that the differences which mark humankind can be unified with prayer. Because he was a prayerful man, with one great quality, that is a sense of humour. Meetings with him were always rather jolly, because a joke was never far from his lips. He appreciated a joke and I was always very grateful, because he laughed at my jokes.

As he grew into the role of a bishop, he became very benign and remember he had an enormous task when he came to Westminster in that he barely knew any of the clergy. The secular clergy are not necessarily the easiest people to know. They are an independent bunch, made more independent by their lifestyle. Not for them the easy relationship of the monastic community.

But by bringing those skills already honed in the government of the monastery at Ampleforth, he endeared himself to his priests and made a point of getting to know them well. The bravest thing he did at the beginning was to install a separate telephone with the number ostensibly known only to the clergy. He was signifying his availability.

His relationship with people was what mattered and he gave himself wholeheartedly to meeting the people. I admired his technique in getting round a parish hall, giving everyone the impression that he had spoken to them individually and if the truth was known, he had come only to see them as individuals. All this was done with a smile, good humour and a commitment to the welfare of the diocese.

Thousands of words have been written in appreciation of him in the week since he died. Most of the tributes point to the quality that marked out George Basil Hume as being someone exceptional, for it is of his spirituality that people speak. He was a man of prayer and that is the most important thing that I can say about him. From that, everything flowed. His humility, his kindness, his forbearance, and his genuine interest in people made him a person people could relate to.

On the occasion of the bicentenary of Rosmini's birth, he celebrated a Mass in Westminster Cathedral. He was hesitant about preaching on Rosmini, because he said he did not know very much about him. But I said it wasn't necessary to know a great deal about Rosmini because he could preach so well about the spiritual life and that what he would say would carry conviction because he was the man he was.

He has made prayer an attainable commodity for people. He has encouraged publicly the spiritual life. His approach to death has given strength to people and the manner of his dying has shown his fortitude. I hate the phrase that he has been 'the people's Cardinal', but it is true! So people do mourn here in Great Britain today for the loss of this great man. He will be especially missed by his clergy, for whom he was a father figure and by his people, who saw him as a friendly fatherly figure. His humour, which was considerable, and his affability, made him the easiest of men to talk to and his stand on some public issues have earned him universal respect. An hour with him was a great tonic. A great follower of sport, he was a remarkable rugby coach and he maintained a lifelong interest in rugby and soccer, being a lifelong supporter of Newcastle United.

For myself, I mourn the loss of a very tolerant newspaper proprietor. He just let me get on with it and never interfered in the production of the *Westminster Record* and he liked the mix. It was the vehicle for him to reach out to his flock, he said. Once, when I asked him for a message for Christmas, he just told me to write one on his behalf, because he said very modestly, "You're better at doing it than me".

We have indeed lost a good man and I can truthfully say he was a man who walked with God and there is no greater tribute that I could pay. ■

Fr Kit Cunningham is a Rosminian, a parish priest under Cardinal Hume for 20 years, and editor of the diocesan newspaper

Relationship is a grace

Soul Mates: Honoring the Mysteries of Love and Relationship
by Thomas Moore
Harper Collins 1992, Perennial pbk
Price: US $13.50
Review: Albert C. Moore *This review follows Albert Moore's major review of* Care of the Soul *(*T.M. *June issue) by the same author.*

book reviews

Inevitably a sequel is going to evoke mixed reactions. Whether it is a film (as in *Star Wars)* or a book, the sequel has to continue the main themes which appealed the first time around, yet also to develop them in new directions.

Soul Mates continues to stress the soul's need for intimacy, its love of ordinary things, places and people and especially of the imagination which can deepen it. In this book the term 'soul mates' applies first to enduring friendships and intimate relationships as in marriage, with someone to whom we feel profoundly connected. But this can have a wider range of application to family, colleagues and neighbours, friends whom we may learn to care for. Moore's aim is "to suggest ways of being in any relationship soulfully". This gives his book a wide coverage and appeal.

The five major sections feature headings such as *The Soul in Love*, *Intermingled Souls* and *Pleasures of Soul Mates*, all directed to the soulful relationship. Every reader is likely to find in these some pages to skip through, others to re-read and dwell upon. So, unashamedly, I select for this review part of the central section on *The Intimate Imagination* which for me would justify getting the book. This is chapter 6, *Conversations and Letters*. In his introduction Moore earlier states, quite rightly I believe, that intimacy is not something that comes naturally without education or initiation. We therefore need to have "the schooled imagination" in order to talk intimately, to nurture friendship and "to write letters that waken souls". Moore does not pretend to have all the answers on such matters. Rather, his personal insight and examples give practical pointers to the ways we can enrich these activities, so often taken for granted yet able to affect us deeply.

Conversation is an inherently soulful activity, not a matter of winning an argument or politely exchanging pleasantries. It requires listening to the other person, pleasurable exchange and the willing engagement of the soul; "conversation is the sex act of the soul". Moore also suggests that psychotherapy is helpful because it is conversational. He cites childhood memories of taking long walks while talking with his uncle, as well as the pleasurable and rewarding walks as part of the schedule as a seminary student. "Walking inspires and promotes conversation that is grounded in the body, and so it gives the soul a place where it can thrive". More than ever, in this technological era, we need to develop intimate expression; yet the abundant means of electronic communication seem designed to interrupt and stop such conversation. (A recent cartoon points up the ambiguity: "Say, we really must talk. I'll e-mail you".)

Letters too are a form of "mutual conversation between friends", as Erasmus wrote long ago. But letters take time to write, usually much more time than talk; they can endure, to be treasured and re-read; they give our thoughts 'presence' and existence outside ourselves. Moore brings out beautifully the charm of the whole process of preparing and delivering letters. Here he likens the postman to the Greek God Hermes (Mercury) – the go-between of the soul and the 'guide of souls' through the depths of life.

This leads on to my concluding question about Moore's frequent references to ancient Greek deities such as Aphrodite (Venus), Artemis (Diana) and Hermes – a somewhat tricky fellow to follow. Moore himself was strongly influenced by the thought of Marsilio Ficino, the Italian thinker who revived interest in Greek polytheism at the Renaissance. How literally does he take these deities and how is the reader to take them?

James Hillman, Moore's colleague, states that in archetypal psychology gods are *imagines*, not believed in religiously. So there is no intention to revive a dead faith, because "psychologically the gods are never dead". I would want to go on to ask why Hindu deities and Maori *atua* should not be included also. However, I agree that the Greek pantheon has a lot going for it in its perennial appeal (even on TV). Readers who wish to explore this further could refer to the thoughtful books by the Californian Jungian therapist, Jean Shinoda Bolen: *Goddesses in Everywoman,* 1984 and *Gods in Everyman,* 1989. Meanwhile, I think that our educational programmes could help to educate the imagination by using not only literature but gesture, drama and theatre, to express these images of the deities and heroes of the world's religions imaginatively in our bodily form.

In all this, it is important not to misunderstand the central thrust of Moore's writings: to free up our lives by imagination and to enrich the soul. This, he concludes, has a deep and mysterious undercurrent of the divine; "relationship is not a project, it is a grace". ■

Challenging the New Right creed

Only Their Purpose is Mad: the money men take over N.Z.
by Bruce Jesson.
Dunmore Press 1999
Price: $27.95
Review: Tom Cloher

Bruce Jesson identifies the share market boom and bust during 1984-88 as a defining moment in the history of New Zealand. Impressive flows of foreign capital poured into this country precipitated by the complete deregulation of the financial system, the floating of the dollar and abnormally high interest rates; the latter being stepped up by a rigid monetarist policy that guaranteed low inflation. It was a speculator's dream, a one way bet.

The subsequent rise in the value of the NZ dollar made our exports less competitive. At a deeper level, and worse still, New Zealand forfeited its productive culture for one dominated by finance; more money could be made through financial transactions than by actually producing something. Our claim to an autonomous economy evaporated too, as 61 percent of the sharemarket became overseas owned.

In his view we were tested as a nation and failed badly. Why? Reasons ascribed include the behaviour of a "greedy and gullible middle class" that succumbed to the opportunistic charms of the market, "an elderly business oligarchy" that offered slight wisdom and even less commonsense (Hugh Fletcher excepted), and an incompetent financial press adding to the speculative hype instead of hosing it down. More fundamentally we failed, he believes, because we still had the colonial mindset of dependence, unable to withstand the depredations of financial adventurers, particularly those politicians who perilously exposed our modest economy to the global marketplace.

The subsequent debacle gutted our society as well as the economy. Ethical standards took a dive; it became smart to be regarded as amoral, a callous tone characterised media discussions as well the language of politicians and business people, and the ethos of traditional public service was scorned. Those businesses focused exclusively upon production were regarded as historical freaks. Social devastation was evident too in the wake of privatisation, as organisations were restructured, jobs lost, people's lives disrupted, and wealth transferred from the public sector to the private sector.

Jesson's critique could be more easily dismissed or diminished had he not managed to practise as well as preach a different order of things. Serving as chairman of the Auckland Regional Services Trust for three years in the mid-90s he successfully led resistance to the privatising of the Ports of Auckland and the Yellow Bus Company. In doing so he employed corporate expertise and methods of the highest calibre, but in the interests of the public good. Debts were repaid, profits made, and public ownership retained. This suggests, he rather modestly claims, that there is an alternative to the New Right creed.

He did not underestimate its proponents. The Business Round Table and its associates are recognised as being most articulate and cohesive opinion-makers, adamant that theirs was the true faith and energetic in promoting it; and if results to date are not impressive it simply means that we have not taken their advice seriously enough. There also remains substantial adherence to their perspective amongst bureaucrats, politicians, and academics.

Jesson believes that a reforming government will face a very considerable task to turn these things around but he has some suggestions. The culture of global finance can and must be challenged as he sees it as destructive of democratic institutions. Finance must become servant, not master. The primacy of social objectives must be restored amongst government departments, and senior executives capable of understanding this as well as being financially literate should be appointed. Consultation and debate should be encouraged so that a genuine constituency of the left can contest the country's future.

He makes a special appeal to consider the advantages of republicanism, as it would announce to the world and ourselves that we are determined to discover our true identity and develop a culture to support it. Absence of this he regards as the fundamental cause of our incapacity to recognise and resist the challenges to our statehood thrown up by the sharemarket collapse.

This a very important book, thoughtful, analytic, concerned, utterly sincere, critical but not cynical. It is also a demanding read for novices in economics and finance (like me); it does not talk down to the reader. One senses nonetheless that no self-respecting library could do without it, and it ought to be a text in tertiary courses in commerce and political science departments.

Two afterthoughts: surprising that MMP was not discussed; it introduces some checks and balances into New Zealand's all too simple system of governance. It makes us less vulnerable to ideologues. Had it been operative in the 80s the excesses identified by Jesson might not have occurred. There also remains the paradox of a country labelled as immature and unsure of its identity taking a stance on nuclear weaponry that startled the international community.

And one postscript: Jesson indicated on a radio programme a couple of weeks before his untimely death that his affiliation with Christianity went out the window on reading Darwin's *Origin of Species* as it undermined the biblical story of creation. (A half decent Scripture scholar should have been able to put this seeming problem to rights.) If, as some believe, there is life after death, the first words Jesson might hear could be "Well done, Bruce, well done". ■

Celebrating the NZ identity

*Rights of Passage: Beyond the New Zealand Identity Crisis*by Chris LaidlawHodder Moa Beckett Price: $29.95**Review: Jim Elliston**

Culture comprises the complex of institutions, myths, rites, laws, beliefs, codified everyday behaviour, value systems and material techniques elaborated by a group of humans... it does not necessarily need to be made explicit in order to function (Umberto Eco).

Former All Black, Rhodes Scholar, Diplomat, Race Relations and Human Rights Conciliator, Christ Laidlaw, opines that as New Zealanders we don't seem to see ourselves very clearly at all. He asks how we can preserve our social cohesion in a fractious world in which individuality and homogenisation are constantly at war with each other.

This is not an academic sociological work. It is a collection of reflections on the author's varied experiences, under 55 headings, illustrating points of significance in discerning our own culture. Written in an easily readable style it is a serious work with plenty of humour. He points out the wealth of contributions available from all ethnic groups, be they English, Dutch, Scottish, Samoan, Maori etc. His observations include a sympathetic insight into the Boer psychology, the roles of Rabuka and Mara in Fiji, the Lange-Douglas falling out, Whitehall's imperial mind-set, the Human Rights Act, and the role of sport.

The sense of belonging, of being part of a community, is as important to an individual as an ability to see, hear or smell. He urges us to get to know, celebrate and build on our strengths as a people. He makes interesting observations about the impact individual New Zealanders are making in all manner of unexpected places, unsung at home but accepted by the locals because of a lack of 'power play'. He notes the extraordinary international impact of an independent foreign policy initiative such as New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance: "a few statements of principle and a willingness to extend our psychological comfort zone out beyond the U.S. and Britain".

The Maori renaissance which causes such discomfort to so many people is part of a global pattern of ethnic revival. Seen through the narrow prism of a contest for identity in N.Z. it might seem frightening and destabilising. By the standards of others it is relatively benign. The squabble over the burial of Billy T. James showed that there will be times when the two cultures have to go their separate ways and people will occasionally be hurt by that.

"We are in danger", Laidlaw comments, "of sacrificing our fraternity on the altar of liberty and the artifice of equality. We need to re-examine the way we put the individual first and society last." Nevertheless, shining beacons of individuality are emerging in our music, humour, movies, literature, cuisine, wine, tourism, architecture, sport etc. But against this is the powerful force of globalisation – the McWorld. We are the ones who have to choose.

We may not yet have found the means to articulate it clearly, but we are different and it is our people who make the difference. ■

Divine hospitality

From one to Another: an encouragement to deeper prayer
by Alan Roberts
Catholic Supplies (N.Z.) Ltd
Price: $15
Review: Mary Jackson Kay, r.c.

How wonderful to find a book that invites you to experience "the Divine hospitality of God"! Many books talk about prayer, while this one actually invites you into a rhythm of prayer and action, creating the atmosphere for a more just world through contemplation and action.

The years of personal prayer of the author and the experience of conducting prayer seminars reflect the practical inspiring words of this little book. Take it, sit down and live it to the full... you won't be disappointed! ■

TV drama – a mirror of life

Crosscurrents
by Caliban

Dramatising religious beliefs and translating these into stories which relate to real life was the beginning of theatre as we know it today. From the great allegorical tales of the Ancient Greeks, to the medieval Mystery plays down to the modern playwright who interprets and translates the society in which he or she lives, theatre has held up a mirror to the human condition. This traditional role has now been taken over by television, but the quality has been eroded.

A good drama on television is capable of having the same impact on an audience as a good play in live theatre. A play which has been written for the medium, using all the tricks and techniques of the latest technology, can make an enormous impact. The result depends on the quality of the writing, on the author's ability to communicate.

Plays reflecting a slice of life and exploring a moral or ethical issue are becoming much harder to find on the small screen. A recent episode of *Kavanagh QC* dealt with the story of a pathetic young couple who had been in care all their lives and who had a baby. The boy was violent and the girl, in a depression born of loneliness and despair, suffocated her baby so that it would not have to endure the misery which she had experienced. At the heart of the problem was the loneliness born of deprivation and the disinterest of those around her.

The programme also examined the loneliness of the High Court judge, bewigged and crimson robed, arriving at the court in his chauffeur driven limousine, for whom life at the top had become an empty charade. And for both lawyers in the case, Kavanagh and his head of chambers, there were professional and personal problems to face because of their loneliness. The writer successfully explored the debilitating effect of feeling isolated, lonely, without anyone to turn to – how this can erode confidence and self-worth regardless of class, education and social standing. It was a powerful piece of drama.

Shakespeare used his plays as vehicles for every human emotion, but always managed to explore the ethical and social issues of his time. In *Henry V* he has ordinary soldiers talking about the coming battle. One of their number is the king:
"But if the cause (reason for the war) be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make when all those legs and arms and heads, chopped off in a battle, shall join together at the latter day and cry all 'We died at such a place'... I am afeared there are few die well that die in a battle; for how can they charitably dispose of anything when blood is their argument? Now, if these men do not die well, it will be a black matter for the king that led them to it..."

The king is left alone ruminating on his responsibilities: "Upon the king! Let us our lives our souls; Our debts, our careful wives, our children; and our sins lay on the king! We must bear all." The lowliest member of society can go to bed and sleep after a day's toil and be spared the sleeplessness caused by the king's worries and responsibilities.

In the world of television drama, many producers have decided that raising such issues are dangerous because they disturb comfort zones. Far safer is to produce situation dramas showing ordinary people living out their daily lives against a background of sexual, social and financial intrigues. *Coronation Street* is a good example of this kind of drama. It is episodic with frequent scene changes, switching from pub to shop to house or street, showing people engaged in confrontation, gossip or intrigue.

No-one thinks outside the square or brings radical ideas or questions of ethics to disturb viewers' comfort zones. The level of presentation is aimed at what could be described as being slightly below average standards of taste and respectability so that no-one is going to feel uncomfortable and may perhaps be able to feel slightly superior to those who appear on the screen. There is no lifting of the spirit, no challenge to viewers to re-think an attitude or a prejudice. Shows like this, however, do fulfill a certain need for viewers to sit and 'blob out' in front of the box.

Reality television has proliferated and much of this depends on being able to watch other human beings in embarrassing, difficult or unpleasant situations from the comfort of one's own sitting room. Each is designed to catch an audience by offering a sensation of some kind, often allowing the viewer to feel smarter, more sensible or superior. In the same way the soap opera, originally designed as a vehicle to accompany advertising and to hold a radio audience until the next advertising segment, relied on sensation to grab its audience. Soap operas still perform that original function, while quality drama has diminished in the same way that television has eroded live theatre.

The reason behind this drop in standards is dependence on advertising, and behind that is the gross materialism which has overtaken western society. The philosophy which dominates our society is one of profit at all costs, even if it means cutting the work force, cutting the quality of the service provided, reducing the quality of the product on offer and then concealing such a dimunition by brightening one's public image. The fall in the standard and quality of television simply reflects the changes in society's values. We have moved away from being a world in which we condemned Judas for selling his master to one in which he would be condemned for not getting a better price. ■

The Pope as Leader of Anglicans and Catholics

Pope John XXIII's dream of church unity took a leap forward a few weeks ago with the issuing of a document *The Gift of Authority* by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). The Commission had already reached substantial agreement in previous reports on Eucharist and Ministry. Now after five years it has presented some daring proposals, including the suggestion that the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, be accepted as leader of both the Anglican and Roman Catholic communities.

The Commission looked at the way in which the church transmits the Gospel message from generation to generation. The Scriptures have always occupied a unique place in revealing God's word, especially the Gospel of the Word made flesh in Christ. But the Gospel can only be fully understood within the church. The word of God and the church of God cannot be separated.

ARCIC points out that since the church began, there has been diversity in the way the Gospel is presented to meet the needs of the times. Biblical scholars, theologians and the wisdom of holy people assist in this process. Today there is need to take what is best from the various expressions of tradition so as to present the Gospel in our own time. It is the People of God as a whole who are the bearers of the living tradition. Those in the ordained ministry exercise oversight (*episkope*), but they must not be separated from the "symphony" of the whole People of God. The bishops, and those whom they ordain, proclaim the word, minister the sacraments and help in administering discipline for the common good. In both churches the bishops periodically meet together as a college, as those who have authority for the wider life of the church.

The document traces the way in which this collegiality has been exercised in each church and goes on to consider the claim for infallibility in church teaching. It states that "in special circumstances those with the ministry of oversight may together come to a judgment which is free from error. That is what is meant when it is affirmed that the church may teach infallibly."

This leads on to the question of the papacy itself. Within the college of bishops a universal primacy has always been associated with the Bishop of Rome, although "this service has been a source of difficulty and misunderstanding among the churches". The document reflects, however, that solemn definitions pronounced from the Chair of Peter within the college of those who exercise *episkope*, declare the authentic faith of the whole church. "We believe that this is a gift to be received by all the churches."

A proviso is added that all Christians, including bishops and popes, share the fragility of human nature, and, like St Peter, must be open to loyal criticism and reforms when these are necessary. The notion of Anglicans affirming the infallibility of the Pope and Anglican bishops sharing teaching authority with their Catholic counterparts, breaks new ground on the ecumenical scene. The practical implications are enormous.

The document has been prepared by distinguished members of both churches. They warn against hasty, superficial responses to the fruit of their five years of intense work. The next step is for Anglican and Catholic authorities to assess to what extent the Report expresses the faith of their respective churches. ■

Jim Neilan

A faithful pastor

A few weeks ago, Fr.Jim Consedine came back to his parish of St.Joseph the Worker in Lyttelton after two months absence overseas, during which time he spoke to many groups about restorative justice. He is well known and respected in this field and is considered an expert. He has written books on the subject and is consulted, at national level, on matters pertaining to prisons, inmates and justice. It is ironic that this is the very year that politicians are trumpeting policies about getting tough on criminals. It says a lot about this dedicated priest that he works in this contentious and difficult field and can still administer a parish.

As a parishioner, do I consider his ministry a success? His return was welcome. The congregation listened to his first sermon. He spoke of meeting many groups of people in many countries, all of whom shared a common humanity and yearned for the same goals of justice and redemption. There were no anecdotes from his travels, no personal stories of his trip. Fr.Jim switched immediately and easily into his role of pastor to his people.

His people are interesting. There is a mix of younger families and couples of all socio-economic groups, older citizens of course, young singles and sometimes a whole back row of foreign sailors, who are made very welcome. The parish is blessed with a house of resident nuns from the Sisters of Mercy. The congregation has no geographic boundaries and remains loyal to the one mass on Sunday, and fiercely loyal to its priest.

Every one of us knows that Fr.Jim administers to the sick, comforts the unfortunate and attends to the dying. But, for the moment, I do not consider myself to be one of these. On Sunday, I need my faith to be strengthened, I need spiritual stimulation and I need the sermon to be relevant to my life today. Our pastor does this well. He uses the readings of the day as the basis for his talk and applies them, in the context of Christian lore, to any current situation of importance. He has researched and prepared the text. He speaks with insight and humour and never patronisingly. He listens to parishioners' comments afterwards with patience and forbearance. He is a good pastor.

The pastor and the parishioners have melded into a symbiotic relationship, each drawing strength from the other and each supporting the other. St.Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians tells us that the Lord gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets and some to be pastors and teachers. As a parishioner of St.Josephs, under the guidance of Fr.Jim Consedine as pastor and teacher, I rest my case. ■

John Honore