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Burying the Dead

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Cover photo:
Chrysalis by Karen Scott RSJ

EDITORIAL

Laying Down the Dead

Over a couple of days five-year-old Micki buried two beloveds — her elderly rat in the back garden and her great-grandfather in the cemetery. "Grandad John," she prayed at his funeral Mass, "I miss you very much now you've gone to heaven. My rat, Rosie, died too so will you look after her please? I love you Grandad." Micki captures our belief that death is not the end but that the person lives on in a different, transformed and unknowable way. "Life is changed not ended." And the five-year-old, along with theologian Franciscan Ilia Delio, knows that cats, rats and other beloveds share life after death however and wherever they are in the mystery of God.

It's the "in-between time" when we deal with the dead body that is the theme of the April issue — the work of mercy, burying the dead. Along with Christian writers, we asked friends of other faiths to share what they do when a person dies, the customs they follow and how these express their beliefs. This magazine offers a range of accounts outlining different spiritualities and ways of preparing bodies and of accompanying the dead. A common thread is the respect the living give to the dead and the care taken to bury or cremate with dignity, prayer or ritual. Of interest too are the descriptions of how the faiths think of what happens after a person has made the final surrender of life into death.

Easter gives wings to our Christian belief in the risen life — the life beyond this familiar one. We reenact in symbol, ritual, reading, music and food our great faith stories. While we traverse the misery of Jesus' arrest, torture, execution and burial, weighted with memories of similar events happening to innocent people today, we hope fervently that goodness will always flourish. While we weep with the confused and traumatised disciples and equally with families torn apart by violence in the world, we commit to life-supporting ventures. Like the women seeking the tomb in dawn-darkness to tend Jesus' dead body for the last time, our sadness germinates into practical kindness, respect, reconciliation and resistance to death-dealing. Like the women, we're caught in the exquisite alchemy of Jesus' incredibly liberating resurrection. So we bury our dead in this Easter spirit. We feel the gap they leave among us, we're awed by the courage of their last breath, we give them to Earth and we trust in the communion of Love.

We thank all the contributors to the April issue who shared generously their spirituality, ideas, opinions and skill in writing, art, poetry a nd craft. And as is our custom the last word is of blessing. ■

A human heart will not be caged

The deep friendship between John Paul II and the philosopher Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, revealed recently, surprised the world. The available details of St John Paul II's friendship with Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka are evoking all kinds of reactions across the world.

Since he presented such a gritty, determined persona in public life, the news of his more human side is surprising, even shocking, for millions.

Looked at from a traditional point of view, the revelation may seem alarming. It should not have happened, people complain. Yet from another angle, the story is but another way of saying that this powerful Roman Catholic leader was also a needy, vulnerable man with as much right to have women friends as anyone else.

It is small wonder that variations on that relationship happen for many of us lower down the ranks. The oil of Holy Orders does not inoculate us against catching love. Neither does compulsory celibacy. As a river flows and a bird flies, a human heart will not be caged. But the danger is that many celibate priests will try to stifle nature, to scramble love's direction, and to sublimate that good energy into other channels. These channels can often become addictions—to money, alcohol, ambition, abusive relationships.

When love happens, it can bring ecstasy and agony in its wake—for the priest and for the other person. It often entails an unhealthy hiddenness that stunts its growth. Many will identify with the Pope's efforts to avoid publicity, to cover his tracks from the secret police of Communist Poland, and even to risk his friendship with Anna-Teresa by staying silent when the Vatican tried to omit her name from a book on which she had collaborated.

But in spite of her hurt at this "betrayal" as she called it, the longing for intimacy continued, and seemingly increased, as she dashed to be at his side after the assassination attempt. After all, she passionately felt she "belonged to him". This relentless hunger of the heart lives in everyone, made as we are in the image of the dynamic Trinity, the symbol of a yearning desire to give and receive love.

And we priests are no exception to that holy inscription written into human flesh and spirit. But it usually stays buried deep within us. Nor is there any safe forum for talking openly about it. For those who are not specifically called to a celibate life—the vast majority of priests—it can be a heavy burden. Even for a pope.

The awareness of all this dawned only gradually on many of us naive young clerics as we began our ministry in parishes around the world. Caught up in the clerical regime of minor and major seminaries, we gave scarcely any attention to the implications of a life commitment to celibacy. All we wanted was to be useful, to serve, to make a difference in our world; celibacy was just a part of the package deal.
Later we learned that love is vital for full living, the source and sustenance of the vocation to priesthood. The human heart needs the oxygen of love to stay true to its mission. Without it we are dead men talking. Love alone can awaken what is divine within us. "When we love and allow ourselves to be loved," John O'Donohue believed, "we begin more and more to inhabit the kingdom of the eternal."

Despite institutional justifications for compulsory celibacy, a holy door in the heart is forever closed, and our lives will be lived along radically different lines from the norm. Deep friendships, of course, continue to provide essential nourishment for the soul. Yet, for all its blessings, maintaining an appropriate relationship between priest and woman-friend has never been easy. Too many tears. Without any real foundation in dogma, scripture or spirituality, and originally imposed for earthly and practical reasons, compulsory celibacy will surely soon be radically reviewed.

John Paul and Anna-Teresa would have shed tears too. She was his "vocation". The "inner voice" of his heart told him so. For both curate and cardinal also, the natural need to share intimately in a loving mutuality, holds true. Ignoring, denying or abusing this innate intensity has led to terrible consequences. Individuals and families have been damaged.

Carelessness and ignorance have left too many lifetime scars on hearts and minds. Not many of us priests can claim innocence in this respect. There is a widespread, silent need for repentance and forgiveness, especially in this Jubilee Year, for the sins of our past.

In the meantime, what needs to be affirmed and protected is the priceless gift of friendship and encouragement between priests and laity. Women friends continue to play a huge part in supporting the vocation, the spirit, the goals of priests and bishops. Without them many of us would surely flounder. Because, in spite of suspicion and gossip, there is no real substitute for this kind of loving support. And in a clerical environment of swiftly diminishing numbers in churches and seminaries, a great loneliness is never far away.

A deep disillusionment in the minds of many older priests has depleted their energy, making their practical, pastoral work more difficult to face. The pedestal has been knocked over; a kind of anonymity awaits. But there remain for many, the life-giving richness and empowerment of a friendship, "a gift from God" as the saint himself put it, bringing courage and new hope in a relationship that is true, open and full of grace. In Gaelic, such a person is described as an *anam chara*, the guardian angel of the soul. ■

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Irish-born **Daniel O'Leary** is a priest of the Diocese of Leeds UK, an author and teacher. He is an award winning author of 12 books. His website is www.djoleary.com

Burying the Dead *as a Work of Mercy*

Neil Darragh notes that while to bury the dead is a traditional work of mercy it nevertheless benefits those burying as well as the dead.

"Bury the dead" seems odd among the seven traditional "corporal works of mercy" — feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, bury the dead — in the sense that it is not clear who the beneficiaries are. Those to whom mercy is shown clearly benefit from the other works. Who benefits from an act of burial? Does the dead body? Burial of a body is hygienic and so benefits those still living. Presumably those who do the burying are also better off for carrying out a virtuous act of respect. But in what way can the dead person be said to benefit from this act of mercy?

To "bury the dead" goes to the heart of what we are doing at Easter and what we think happens to us at death.

In Christian belief, it is not the physical act of burying a body that matters — whether that is in the earth, placed in a vault, buried at sea, or cremated. What matters is that we "bury" with respect. Hence the horror of bodies left to rot, bodies lost somewhere and never recovered, mass graves, and especially acts of desecration. Burying the dead displays an attitude and is most clearly expressed in our funeral rites.

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Three Spiritualities of Death

Most of the Christian or Christian-backgrounded funerals in New Zealand are likely to express one or more of three spiritualities of death. We can see and hear these different spiritualities being enacted in most of the funerals we attend. Some funerals make a definite option for one or other, but many funerals combine two or three together depending on who is speaking or acting at the time and what formal ceremonial is being followed. Two of these spiritualities are traditional and one more modern.

Spirituality of Remembrance

The more "modern" attitude is non-committal, or ambiguous, about whether there is any personal continuity of the individual person after death. Nevertheless, it may express some other kind of continuity, such as the dead remaining in the memories of those who loved them, or more negatively, as still influencing the lives of those they have damaged, or as a dispersion into the larger forces of the cosmos.

In this case, funerals are focused on the bereaved who are left behind, rather than on the dead person whose reality is uncertain. The funerals focus on dealing with grief, bringing a sense of "closure", and retaining memories. They can be desperately empty. But they may be also a "celebration of the person's life" — though focused on the past rather than the present or future.

Such funerals may also have a public function. The memories of the dead person may be directed towards encouraging good attitudes and behaviour in the attenders (especially

the young). Ordinary secular funerals are often like this. And Christian funerals can be like this when the dead person's family, or the funeral celebrant, are uncertain about non-sensory realities and treat Christian stories of resurrection and life after death as important but mythical. It also serves as a lowest common denominator at mixed funerals where the funeral celebrants or speakers want to be "inclusive" of everyone there, including the agnostic.

Spirituality of Passing On

A more traditional attitude is belief in a disembodied soul that leaves the corruptible body after death and goes into another state of existence — "passes on". The hope is that the dead person has gone on to a better life.

Funerals can celebrate the bodily life of a person but death can also be seen as a liberation, a merciful release from distress, if the dead person is ill or suffering. We can be sad that the person has gone, but the sadness is for us rather than for the dead person.

Many of the funeral rites of the Christian churches are like this. For example the prayer of commendation says: "Receive his/her soul and present him/her to God the most high". These rites are not just about memory and celebration of the dead person's bodily life but also pray for the future wellbeing and a commendation to God of the living soul of the dead person.

This spirituality can have its aberrations, the most common of which is an excessive focus on life after death which can belittle living life now.

Our funeral rites will include celebrating the dead person's life because it is a God-like life that enables death to be a surrender into God. They will deal with the grief of the living. And they are our last act of companionship and accompaniment of the person.

Spirituality of Resurrection

The strongest Christian tradition however is centred on the resurrection of a transformed body. Death is a transformation of the whole person — body and soul. It is not simply the cessation of a human life, nor the release of a disembodied soul, nor the resuscitation of a corpse (as in the case of Lazarus — John 11:38-44). The funeral rites are not just about celebrating what has gone, or release, but about our accompaniment of a person through a difficult, perhaps painful, transition. From the point of view of the living, the stilled and disintegrating body is withdrawing all sensory contact with us.

A Christian death is not a movement into anything known. It is a surrender into the care of a benevolent Creator made with trust, but without knowledge of what it will be like. If we did not trust God very much before death it may take some time after the point of death for that surrender ("letting go") to become a truth, rather than just a hope.

In this spirituality, our funeral rites will include celebrating the dead person's life because it is a God-like life that enables death to be a surrender into God rather than just a closedown. The rites will also deal with the grief of the living. But primarily the rites are our last act of companionship and accompaniment of the person. In death "life is changed, not ended". This central belief is founded on Christ who "embraced the pain of death and so passed into glory". This is the path the disciple of Christ hopes to follow. This is the central Christian belief that is celebrated at Easter and which Christian funerals re-enact.

This kind of spirituality can have aberrations too. The desire to create faulty, even foolish images of what it is like after death, is almost overpowering — spirits with misty outlines of a body or visions of a paradise like an idealised life on earth.

At best, our imagination can help us to understand the nature of transition rather than what life is like after death. It is like a seed that dies in the ground and produces a new and different life, like the butterfly that emerges from the chrysalis, or like the child who lets herself fall from a height knowing she will be caught by someone she trusts.

Burying the dead is a respectful act of letting the dead go on a journey that we cannot possibly understand, or control, and where we have no idea of how long it might take. Our funeral rites are intended primarily to accompany and commend this person into that unimaginable Benevolence that has already made sense of living. ■

Photos: Hayden Melville

Neil Darragh, besides burying the dead, is fully occupied as a priest, writer, and theologian. He lives is Auckland, and is currently the Chair of the *Tui Motu* board.

Tangihanga in Aotearoa

Piripi Whaanga reflects on what he learned from his family about acknowledging and respecting the dead.

Photo: Hayden Melville

In Aotearoa New Zealand the word *tangi* is associated with crying, mourning and grief. A *tangihanga* is comparable to a Pākehā funeral. I grew up with a Māori father and Irish mother and although I lived mainly in a Pākehā world, we also inhabited the Māori culture, especially in burying the dead.

A traditional Māori philosophy of life can seem back-to-front. The past is seen as being before us (*ki mua*) as a model for how to live. The ancestors and their lives are a major part of this. That's why from a Pākehā media perspective, Māori may seem to be preoccupied with the past—especially when resource and land claims feature. However in a Māori worldview, the future is unknown because philosophically it is behind us (*ki muri*). As it comes into view, it becomes the present but it is superimposed on what is before us. So everything of the present is vetted through that prism. In this light, "burying our dead" takes on a new meaning as does "living in the present".

The *tohunga Kereopa*, a ritual expert, has criticised the modern practice of erecting a gravestone in a *urupā* (graveyard) one year after the death. He thought the dead should be remembered by their descendants as living memorial stones rather than memorial stones.

Stories hold beliefs

The traditional Māori concept of an afterlife uses myths to convey metaphorical meaning, just as the biblical writers used the creation stories. *Tane*, one of the children of *Rangi-nui* (Sky father) and *Papa-tū-ā-nuku* (Earth Mother), was said to have created the first woman out of the earth, *Hine-ahu-one*. He then mated with her. When she learned her husband was also her father, she fled to the underworld changing her name to *Hine-nui-te-pō*. There she awaits her children. The values operating in the story are relational as are those operating in the *tikanga* (customs) surrounding *tangihanga*.

Piripi Whaanga learned his *reo* on a golf-course with his dad and helped the birth of Māori journalism and Iwi Radio.

> *The body lies in an open coffin in the meeting house surrounded by whānau who take turns to sit or lie beside the loved one.*

Traditional Māori believed the dead person went to *Rarohenga* (the underworld) but they could return as troubled spirits if something needed to be attended to in this world. Psychologist, Donna Awatere, says it is not uncommon for Māori to be visited by ancestors. Another Māori psychologist, Mason Durie, stresses that Māori mental health is dependent on a functioning relationship between the *wairua* (spiritual *mauri* or essence) of a person, their *hinengaro* (mental faculties), their *tinana* (body) and their *whānau* (extended family). A close-to-home comparison is seeing all humankind as belonging to the Body of Christ. How we interact with one another, how we show and receive love and compassion, determine our *wairua* wellness. In Māori *tikanga*, this is expressed as *whanaungatanga*, as belonging within a supportive framework, where all of creation is kin.

Expressing *whanaungatanga*

A person's death is understood in this relational, supportive framework. Grieving is encouraged and when the *tangihanga* is held on a *marae*, or in an urban community hall, the mourning can take some days. This allows people to travel to pay their respects, have their say, unload and reconnect. The locals swing into action on a rural marae, supplying the food, the cooks, the elders and *kuia*, the ministers and even the entertainment after the burial.

When an aunt, uncle or cousin has died, there's always that phone call that sets the ball rolling. The first questions are where did they die and are they "going home"? That's the urban situation I grew up with. Sometimes the burial wishes of the bereaved compete with the locals who want to honour the deceased with a home burial.

With my father's generation there was no question that when you died, you were taken back to the home *marae* to be mourned and buried in one of the family *urupā* (cemeteries).

We lived in Palmerston North and when my Irish mother died it was different. My aunties from Nuhaka, in northern Hawke's Bay, came down our road crying and calling the *karanga* as they approached. Dad went out on the road and asked them to stop as we lived in a Pākehā neighbourhood and the *karanga* might

not be understood. He had learned only too well how to keep his head down. This was New Zealand in 1974. My nannies listened to dad as they were far from home and were respectful of Pākehā sensitivities at the time.

In recent years our family has travelled back home to the Wairarapa for *tangi*. If there is enough notice of when the body will be taken from the undertakers to the *marae*, we can usually get most of the family together to meet up along the way and arrive as one group. This makes it easier for the home people to welcome us onto the *marae*. Their speakers and singers of the *waiata* can rest between groups arriving. The deceased person is referred to as the *tūpāpaku* or *taonga* (treasure) and the bereaved family, the *whānau pani* (orphaned family). The body lies in an open coffin in the meeting house surrounded by *whānau* who take turns to sit or lie beside the loved one.

As each group arrives, there are speeches making the connection between the *tūpāpaku*, the things they did in life and the wider Māori world. Tribal chants or *waiata* embellish the conversations. *Karakia*, ritual prayers, mark the transitions of the day—from the start of the day, meal times in the *whare-kai* (dining room), to the evening service and close of the day.

The night before the burial is reserved for everyone to celebrate the life of the *tūpāpaku*. Funny stories are told, sometimes little dramas are performed, as well as *kōrero* (speeches) which are sometimes critical of the deceased. It's an "open mic" night and very cathartic, especially for the *whānau pani*.

The burial day usually begins with more visitors arriving, a service and then the burial. Usually *whānau* members dig the grave the night before the burial and fill it in after.

After the burial everyone is invited back to the *marae* for a sumptuous *kai* and the *whānau pani* are encouraged to re-join the land of the living. ■

TANGI – LIFE AFTER DEATH

Aotea te Waka
Whanganui te Awa
Kaiwhaiki te Marae
Tongariro te Maunga
Makareta Takahia Tawaroa
taku ingoa
Tihei mauriora

Most iwi (extended kinship groups) have their own understandings about the journey that our *wairua* (spirit) takes in death. Many *iwi kōrero* (speak) about the *wairua* travelling to Te Rerenga Wairua at the top of the North Island. From there the *wairua* leaps into the ocean and travels to distant Hawaiki. References to *hui-nui-te-po*, the Goddess of the Night, who travelled to an underworld of light and peace, are as common as "*haere ki te ao marama*", to enter into the world of enlightenment.

Hoea ra tō waka ki Hawaiki nui, Hawaiki roa, Hawaiki pāmamao. This *kōrero* was part of a speech to a notable Māori scholar who died recently. It is wrapped in metaphorical language with allusions to geographic places of significance, traditional places that the spirits of the dead travel to. It farewells the deceased as they canoe toward the ancient, distant homeland of Hawaiki, where their ancestors reside. Death acknowledges those who have departed and in whose footsteps we follow. We acknowledge those who have already gone. My mother used to tell me: "Without our old people we would not be here today." Many of our people, even our *rangatahi* (younger generation), live much closer to the spirit world than to the so-called "real world", happily accepting the presence of ancestors in close proximity.

At a recent *tangi* I heard *"haere ki te wa kainga"* which speaks of going to a home that will last. And *"haere ki te kainga tuturu"* which speaks of going to one's true home.

I learnt early as a child, that death is an important part of life, that there is nothing to fear because we are returning to our ancestors who are waiting for us. Some even come when we are still alive. When my big sister was on the precipice of death, she asked me: "Who are all these people?" I told her to go towards them.

My late cousin, Morvin Anatipa Simon, was a prolific composer of *waiata* (song), *whakataukī kōrero* (proverbs) and *karakia* (prayers or chants). He shared the kōrero below with me in the latter part of his life.

Tangihia
Tangihia ko nga mate huhua nei,
Kua riro atu ki te rangi, ki te ao Marama e,
Kore mutu te aue o te Wairua,
Ki a ratou kua wehe arohaina.

Let us join together and respect our
innumerable dead,
who have passed beyond the veil to
eternal enlightenment,
where the unceasing lament of the soul
persists,
for those who departed being loved and
cherished.

E te hākui, mākūkū tonu nga kamo,
E kore e warewaretia,
O tauira, o mahere o te ora,
Whāia tonutia e mātou.

Our dear revered elder, our eyes are still
moistened with sadness.
How can we forget your example, or the
conducted order of your life,
Something we are still trying to emulate!

Tuohu nei ko o maunga kōrero,
(tāne) Pātuki nei ko te Mānawa ki a koe e.
Toitū te whenua mo āke nei,
Nei mātou, ko Te Whānau
E tu whakaiti nei e, moe mai e te koro e!
Whakangaro atu ra ki nga ringa o Te Atua!

Your tribal mountains,
Indeed pay homage to you, as do we,
your children and grandchildren
as we present ourselves in humility.
Sleep well with our fondest farewell! ■

Makareta Tawaroa RSJ lives in Kaiwhaiki Marae on the Whanganui River. Aotea is her *waka*, and Tongariro her mountain.

Death and Rebirth

Peter Small shares his Tibetan Buddhist beliefs around death and what follows, and the way the living community supports the deceased to rebirth.

Buddhists have very detailed scriptures about death and the after-life. There are three critical junctures — the actual death, the *bardo* existence between death and taking rebirth in the next body, and the rebirth in a new body itself.

Common to all dying people is the need to be given space and peace to develop a warm heart. Scriptures say that the rebirth which one takes can be influenced quite a lot by the frame of mind at the time of passing. While Buddhists feel the loss of death as much as any, their concern is with the dying person, wanting them to be at ease with the process and in a compassionate, loving and enlightened state of mind. So as Buddhists we minimise our expressions of sorrow and loss around the dying person. They are already facing dislocation from everything and everyone they know, which is upsetting enough without their loved ones being visibly upset too.

Ideally we hope to die with a mix of love, compassion and wisdom in our minds/hearts. When my dad was dying, I assured him we would be ok, and advised him not to be concerned for any one of us — "think of everyone".

After breathing has stopped we usually step up our spiritual practices and come together for group prayers in the presence of the deceased. Because the mind may reside in the body for some time after a peaceful passing, we'll always try to let the body lie undisturbed for a while, especially if it has been a peaceful death and the person is known to be a spiritual practitioner. Here in Dunedin one Lama stayed in his body for more than two weeks after death, but that is a very rare occurrence. Normally the usual signs of decay will show in a day or two and it is obvious the mind has left the body.

Peter Small credits his Christchurch Catholic family upbringing with his enthusiasm for Dunedin's Dhargyey Buddhist Centre teaching program since 1990.

> ***Tibetan funerary traditions are unusual. The majority of people have a "sky burial". It had the benefit of giving the animals food — a final act of generosity.***

Tibetan funerary traditions are unusual. Burial was mostly for people who had died of serious diseases. The majority of people underwent what they call "sky burial". The body would be taken up to a high place where it would be cut up and fed to vultures. In some areas they were given to packs of wild dogs. This was the lot of ordinary people and it had the benefit of giving the animals food — a final act of generosity. For people of high status and the very spiritual, the body is offered to the Buddhas in a ritual cremation ceremony.

Tibetan tradition is that you do not speak the name of the deceased for some time. As much as anything this is out of concern for the loved ones left behind, to avoid stirring up their feelings around the bereavement.

After a death it is usual to say some prayers at the end of each seven days. Buddhism holds that the average lifespan of someone in the *bardo* is seven days. After that time, if they have not found a rebirth as a human or an animal, or some other life form, then a new *bardo* body is found. For most people this cycle can be repeated only up to seven times.

In normal daily practice we often light incense as an offering to the enlightened beings. This is also done for the recently deceased within the 49-day period — incense is offered and fragrant food is set aside too. From the smell of these offerings the recently deceased in the *bardo*, can obtain some nourishment. If we are able to sustain them for some time they may find a more suitable rebirth.

During this time many people will say extra special prayers, or perform deeds of generosity or charity, dedicated to the welfare of the deceased. These practices are done to generate good karma for the deceased, to help them find a life where they can continue to grow spiritually.

Really great Buddhists can maintain a degree of control throughout the death process. If so they may choose to be born as a human in a peaceful place, in a good family, where Buddha's teachings are available. They could be born in more enjoyable celestial realms, but as humans we experience the suffering of sickness, aging and death, which forms the bedrock of love and compassion — the basis of real spirituality. If there are indications that the recently deceased is of that calibre, sometimes an effort is made to find their reincarnation, out of love for their former self and in the hope these genius Buddhists may re-invigorate the life of the teachings of the Buddha again. ■

Returning to the Creator

Najibullah Lafraie reflects on how Islam's understanding of life beyond death is expressed in the rituals of death.

"Verily, unto God do we belong and, verily, unto Him we shall return."
(The Qur'an, 2: 156).

This verse of the Holy Qur'an sums up a Muslim's attitude towards life and death. God Almighty created humans from clay and breathed in them from His spirit. The life in this world is a test on whether humans cling to the clay and follow their animal urges or use the divine spirit to ascend towards perfection (of course never reaching it, because only God is Perfect). Death is the end of this testing phase of our existence and the beginning of the next phase, our return to our Creator in order to answer for what we did in this world.

The final accounting—as well as its recompense—takes place on the Day of Judgement, following the resurrection of each and every human being from death. Sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, however, talk about the soul being taken to the presence of the Almighty right after death (and only the ones belonging to the righteous are allowed to pass a certain point), the process of questioning starting in the grave, and the souls awaiting resurrection having a glimpse of their final abode. It is also said that although the soul departs the body upon death, it remains close and somehow connected to it for some time.

Muslims' funerary customs and rituals reflect their belief in our return to our Lord and being held accountable for our life in this world. Although at death the body is void of the soul, it still symbolically represents the person. This is why the corpse is treated with respect. It is reported that: "A funeral passed by the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, and he stood up. It was said to him: "It is a Jew". The Prophet said: "Was he not a soul?"

To prepare the person for return to the Creator, the body is washed clean in a manner similar to Muslims' ritual ablution. Preferably some sweet smelling substance, such as rosewater or camphor, is also used. Then the body is shrouded in a few pieces of clean, unsewn, white cloth. This represents purity and simplicity—and as some Muslim poets stress, these are the only worldly goods we take with us to the grave. Interestingly, Muslim men use similar clothing—two pieces of unsewn, white cloth—during the *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) rituals. *Hajj* is not only a physical but also a spiritual journey, reminding us of our death and return to our Lord.

Before the body is buried, it is taken to a special funeral prayer for the deceased (*salat al jinaza*) and put in front of the worshippers. It is a congregation prayer somewhat similar to Muslims' other congregation prayers—an imam leading the prayer and all others standing in well-ordered rows while facing Mecca. However, unlike other prayers, it is held standing only; and there are no bowings down and prostrations. During the prayer the worshippers, among other things, pray for forgiveness for, and happiness of, the soul of the deceased.

Muslims bury their corpses, and cremation is not allowed. There are certain guidelines for digging the grave—including the notion that the grave is aligned perpendicular to Mecca. The body is buried lying on its right side facing Mecca—the same position that the Prophet Muhammad told Muslims was preferable to sleep. A casket can be used to carry the dead body to the grave, but burying the body in a coffin is frowned upon—unless it is out of necessity.

Muslims' practice of burying the dead body as soon as possible and their mourning the death also reflect their belief in what happens in the Hereafter. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: "Hurry up with the dead body (for its burial), for if it is pious, you are speeding it to goodness and if it is otherwise, you are laying an evil off your necks." As for mourning, it is recommended it not last more than three days. Acts of crying out loud, beating one's face or chest, shaving hair, and tearing clothes in grief—as was the practice in Arabia before Islam—have been forbidden. There is no problem with weeping quietly. Doing so is natural, and as the Prophet said: "It is a mercy that God made in the hearts of His servants."

To participate in funeral ceremonies of a Muslim (bathing the body, prayer, and burial) is a collective obligation (*fard al-kifaya*) of all the Muslims; that is, if a number of them do it, others are absolved of the obligation; however if no one does it, everyone is held responsible. Thus, a Muslim participates in a funeral as an act of worship as well as an act of mercy and kindness to the deceased. Bathing is usually done by close family members and friends. The prayer is held either in the graveyard or at a mosque, and hundreds of those who do not personally know the deceased participate. In the burial also many people who may be acquainted only remotely with the deceased take part. Many participants rush to carry the casket and fill the grave with earth once the body is laid down. It is done in anticipation of a reward from the Merciful Lord; but it is an act of mercy, nonetheless. ■

Dr Najibullah Lafraie is a Lecturer at the University of Otago. He was Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in Afghanistan, 1992-96.

My Soul Progresses Towards God

Claire McGrail reflects on her Bahá'í beliefs of the soul's journey from conception to death and beyond.

Image: The nine pointed star is a widely used symbol of the Bahá'í Faith because of the association of the number nine with perfection, unity and Bahá'.

Joe Paczkowski
www.joepaczk.com/index.html

My soul is associated with my physical being at conception. I develop inside my mother's womb, preparing for the visible world to come. I am birthed. I continue to grow.

My growth in this world is assisted by my outer abilities of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and feeling. My soul, which is "entirely out of the order of the physical creation", emanates properties that enable me to discover and comprehend as far as my human capacity permits. These inner powers are imagination, thought, comprehension, memory and the common faculty; a sense that communicates between these outer and inner powers. My soul also has the faculty of inner vision, the ability to see into spiritual realities, whereas my mind and body are limited in their vision. My body, which is of the physical world, is like a mirror where the qualities of my soul are reflected through my actions. The less conditions and dross of this world spoil my mirror, the more potential I have to reflect these heavenly attributes.

Just as my life in my mother's womb was to prepare me for this life, my life in this world prepares me for the next. As I grow into my youth, I find a spiritual path to guide me in this journey towards the next world. I have many questions to ask. I learn my purpose is to know and love God and I can learn about Him through His Divine Messenger. The Bahá'u'lláh says: "Since there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with His creation, and no resemblance whatever can exist between the transient and the Eternal, the contingent and the Absolute, He hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless Soul be made manifest in the kingdoms of earth and heaven."

From the Revelation of the Blessed Beauty, I learn continuously. I try to follow and obey His teachings. I grow to love Him, love God, and love myself. He teaches me that to detach from this world and reflect my true beauty, I need the "Spirit of Faith". Without the "Spirit of Faith" I remain bereft of the heavenly bounties. I yearn to be of service and the confirmations of the Holy Spirit are beginning to touch my life. I can feel and sense the Divine reality around me and I am able to serve God in a whole new way.

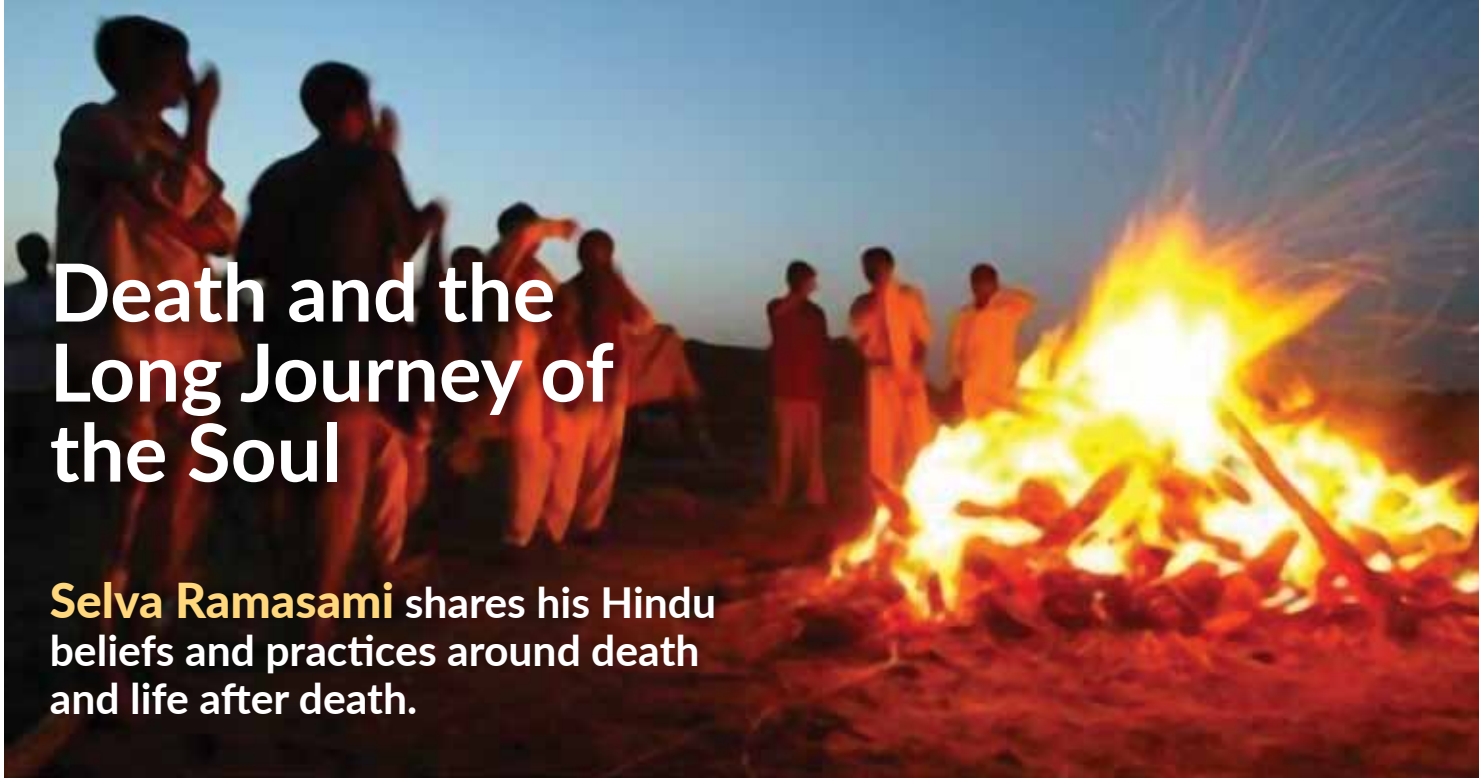
One day my physical life will come to an end so I prepare a Will. I buy a burial ring to wear when I pass. The ring has an engraving that reads: "I came forth from God and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His name, the Merciful, the Compassionate."

I also prepare a white shroud to wear, seven metres of silk or fine cotton, to be wrapped around my body within a coffin of hard fine wood. My body has served me well on this earth and deserves respect so it will be buried. There will be a "Prayer for the Dead" read beside my burial place. My gravesite will be no further than one hour's journey from the place where I die.

Then, when my soul takes flight, detached from my physical garment and ready to soar in the limitless space, there will be no limits of space and time. All the veils will fall away, everything I didn't understand will be made clear and all hidden truths understood. I will depart this world in the condition I leave it and my soul will continue to progress towards God. My new birth, my new life will begin.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote: "Know thou of a truth that the soul, after its separation from the body, will continue to progress until it attaineth the presence of God, in a state and condition which neither the revolution of ages and centuries, nor the changes and chances of this world, can alter. It will endure as long as the Kingdom of God, His sovereignty, His dominion and power will endure. It will manifest the signs of God and His attributes, and will reveal His loving kindness and bounty. The movement of My Pen is stilled when it attempteth to befittingly describe the loftiness and glory of so exalted a station." ■

Claire McGrail: I'm 37, live in Whanganui, married with two boys, an artist, singer, songwriter and I work at a Māori healing centre.



Death and the Long Journey of the Soul

Selva Ramasami shares his Hindu beliefs and practices around death and life after death.

In the life of a Hindu, *Antyesthi*, the last sacrament, is a completion of the last stage of life and ending the life of the body. A Hindu believes death is not a tragedy but a transition in the long journey of the *Atma* (soul). The *Atma* is unaffected by death. Death is detachment of *Atma* from a body. It is the transmigration of *Atma* from one body to another. According to the *Law of Karma*, the *Atma* will not take a new birth until it has completely exhausted the Karmic account.

Stula Sariram, the human body, is a combination of *Pancha Puthas*, five basic natural elements namely: *Agni* (fire), *Jala* (water), *Vayu* (air), *Prithvi* (earth), *Akasha* (space/ether). When the *Agni* (fire) ceases in the body, death occurs.

While burial is not unacceptable, cremation is widely practised. *Sadhus* (saints) and babies may be buried but most Hindus are cremated.

The fire element in the cremation is used to complete the detachment of *Atma* from the body. A Hindu believes that the cremation is not just a disposal of the dead body but is *moksha*/liberation of the *Atma*.

Usually it is the family members who prepare the body for cremation. In New Zealand the role of preparing the body had been given over to funeral directors. But Hindu families increasingly are getting involved in the preparation of dressing the deceased in traditional attire.

The cremation is ideally carried out in an eco-friendly way without embalming and before the next sunset, if the situation of the family permits. The efficiency and responsiveness of the system in New Zealand may render this requirement impractical for families to carry out.

Death is a transition in the long journey of the Atma. Death is detachment of Atma from a body. It is the transmigration of Atma from one body to another.

In the villages in India, the cremation is usually carried out in open ground using firewood. It has been a practice amongst the villagers to carry some logs to the cremation ground. This is the community getting behind the deceased's family to lessen their financial burden of purchasing the firewood. In contrast, the rich and famous have a preference for expensive sandalwood for cremating their loved ones.

Puja (ritual) is performed for the immersion of the cremated remains in *Ganga*, flowing water. It is a wish of a Hindu that his or her remains will be immersed in the Ganges River in India. Some Hindu families in New Zealand endeavour to fulfil this wish by carrying the ashes to India to immerse in the Ganges River.

The mourning period varies amongst Hindu families according to their geographical and social origin. It could be three days in a farming community as they are expected to get back to their livelihood to tend to their farm and cattle. It can be from three days to thirty days depending on the family practice.

It is common for the families, particularly the women, to wail and cry during the funeral and mourning period. Prayers and *bhajans* (hymns) during the bereavement period help to heal the family members. There are *Oppari* in the Tamil folk tradition that grieve the death of men through story and song.

Such mourning practice is a form of therapy for the family to accept the loss of their loved one and overcome their depressing situation.

There are some challenges for the Hindu families in New Zealand to find suitable persons, *pandits*, to perform the funeral rites and the immersion of the cremated remains in a dignified manner. ■

Selva Ramasami lives in Wellington with his family. He is a NZ delegate to the Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia and an Ethnic Reference Group member for SuPERU and JPs.

May God's great name be exalted and sanctified

Philip Culbertson tells about Jewish beliefs and customs around burying and mourning the dead.

The first book of both the Jewish and Christian Bibles begins with the Genesis stories of Adam and Eve. They are understood to be the first human beings who died, having been created in God's image yet without God's immortality.

In Judaism, life is valued above almost all else. The Talmud notes that all people are descended from a single person and taking a single life is like destroying an entire world. And saving a single life is like saving an entire world. Of the 613 commandments, only the prohibitions against murder, idolatry, incest, and adultery are so important that they cannot be violated under any circumstances. Otherwise, Judaism requires a person to violate the commandments if necessary to save a life. Abortions to save a mother's life are mandatory (the unborn are not considered human life in Jewish law, thus the mother's human life overrides).

Philip Culbertson, theologian, author and musician, now lives in Seattle after years teaching pastoral theology and counselling at Auckland University.

Because life is so valuable, Jews are not permitted to do anything that might hasten death, not even to prevent suffering. Euthanasia, suicide, and assisted suicide are strictly forbidden by Jewish law. However, where death is imminent and the patient is suffering, Jewish law permits "pulling the plug" or refusing extraordinary means of prolonging life.

As a sign of respect, the body is never left alone. Those who sit with the dead body are called "guards" or "keepers."

Care for the Dead

After a person dies, the eyes are closed, the body is laid on the floor and covered, and candles are lit next to the body. As a sign of respect, the body is never left alone. Those who sit with the dead body are called "guards" or "keepers." An autopsy is seen as a desecration of the body except where it may save a life or is required by local law.

In preparation for the burial, the body is cleaned and wrapped in a plain linen shroud. The Sages decreed that the dress of the body and the coffin should be simple so that a poor person would not receive less honour in death than a rich person. The body is not embalmed and no organs or fluids may be removed. The body must be buried in the earth, not cremated. Coffins are not required, but if they are used, they must have holes drilled in them so the body comes in contact with the earth.

Mourning

Jewish mourning practices can be broken into several periods of decreasing intensity. When a close relative first hears of the death of a relative, it is traditional to express the initial grief by tearing one's clothing (what the Bible calls "rending one's garments"). The tear is made over the heart if the deceased is a parent, or over the right side of the chest for other relatives. In prayer, the mourner describes God as "the true Judge," an acceptance of God's taking of a relative's life.

From the time of death to the burial, the mourner's sole responsibility is caring for the deceased and preparing for the burial. This period is known as *aninut*. During this time (a day or two), the mourners are exempt from all positive commandments ("thou shalts") because the preparations take priority. Condolence visits should not be made during this time.

After the burial, a close relative, neighbour, or friend prepares the first condolence meal for the mourners, consisting of eggs (a symbol of life) and bread. The meal is for the family; only after this time are condolence calls permitted.

The next period of mourning is known as *shiva* (seven, because it lasts seven days). *Shiva* is observed by parents, children, spouses, and siblings of the deceased, preferably all together in the deceased's home. Mourners sit on low stools or the floor, do not wear leather shoes, shave or cut their hair, do not wear cosmetics, work, or seek comfort or pleasure, even in bathing or studying Torah. Mirrors in the house are covered. Prayer services are held where the *shiva* is held, with friends, neighbours, and relatives making up the *minyan*.

The next period of mourning is known as *sheloshim* (lasting until the 30th day after burial). During that period, mourners do not attend celebrations, shave or cut their hair, and do not listen to music.

Kaddish

Kaddish is commonly known as a mourner's prayer, but in fact the prayer has nothing to do with death or mourning. The prayer begins "May His great Name be exalted and sanctified in the world that He created as He willed . . ." A person is permitted to recite *Kaddish* for other close relatives as well as parents, but only if his or her parents are dead. ■

Illustration: *Zachor Memorial* by Chana Zelig. Copyright 2011. Reprinted with permission. www.chanazelig.com

The central word, *Zachor*, is the Jewish directive to "Remember." The words swirling in the autumn wind are from Mourners' Kaddish, "May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, upon us and upon all Israel."

Love is Many Things

Love feels like a damp stick clutched in my grubby hand,

and the brittle quality of a woven flax mat.

It feels like my feet graunching against the dirt as I walk and slip down a bank.

Love sounds like, "welcome to the clubhouse!" in hushed tones through the undergrowth;

this is a privilege we have created for ourselves.

Perhaps we had no pot to piss in,

but we pissed in the bushes rather than walk down to the public toilets because they were full of broken glass and sometimes the older kids would jump us on the way.

Love tastes like

white bread and a little bit of marmite, the margarine so thick it pools on top.

Weetbix and raw sugar.

Pour the milk on first, then add the sugar, so the kids see they got some!

Love smells like

cigarettes and tomato plants, slow cooked corned beef and vegetables.

Love sounds like

Mum yelling down the phone at her siblings, she'll drive to Wanganui to cook her dinner if she won't do it herself – so rinsed is her sister with home-brewed alcohol.

Love feels like

headgear biting into my scalp, mouth guard clenched, the smell of other people's sweat in my nostrils as I weave, but Mandela checks me with a quick left hook.

Love looks like a familiar face at the counter of the wharekai,

but when I last saw him one eye was swollen shut and weeping pus.

His eyes are clear now and small lights dance when I remember his name and give him toast.

Ka pai, Rimutaka.

Love feels like the grass beneath my hands in Hastings cemetery, my sister and I cartwheeling in front of a burial plot.

A matriarchal widow and children focused on honouring their father's desire to make good on his father's migration for a better life.

Wallah Poppa, your children's hands caught the torch you threw,
we will clean your gravestone and lay flowers.

Love is the extra place set at the table.

My Mum immortalised this with cutlery mounted on a canvas on the kitchen wall.

Reserved for someone who's been away for a short time, or a long time.

Prison, rehabilitation and death can be quite occupying.

But Mum always believed love is a movable feast,

and the common thread amongst the dinner guests
whenever they arrive.

Cavaan Wild from New Plymouth is studying law and arts at Victoria University. He enjoys writing, boxing, cooking and is trying to read more.

Burial and the Resurrection of the Body

The Apostles' Creed has been showing up at Mass more often recently. I am not sure why, though I suspect the lugubrious new translation of the Nicene Creed must have helped the cause of its shorter rival. Whatever the case, there are a couple of points at which the Apostles' Creed is more than just a précis of the Nicene one. The first is the reference to Jesus descending "into hell." The second is the clause about the resurrection of the body. What Jesus was doing in hell would require another article; here I just want to focus on the resurrection of the body, because it has been central to the way in which Christians have treated their dead over the centuries.

Burial of Christ. Altarpiece in the Chapelle des Sept Douleurs, in the Cathedral of Rodez, France. [Photo: Nick Thompson]

Bodies are Good

Early Christianity's resurrection of the dead was not a late Victorian séance with disembodied spectres and astral projections. Rather, it had to do with bodies. This was partly in reaction to Gnostic Christianity's contempt for the body. Gnostic Christians claimed that the material world was evil, and that Jesus came to liberate us from it.

The Gnostics' opponents (the communities that called themselves "Catholic") rejected this view. God, they argued, had described the material world as "good" when it was created. Jesus himself had taken on human flesh. In that flesh he died and rose again. Moreover, this resurrection of Jesus' "flesh and bones" was just the opening act for the resurrection of all human bodies on the Day of Judgement—a day that most Early Christians believed was coming very soon. It was this Catholic vision of the afterlife that eventually won out.

Explaining Bodily Resurrection

The non-Christian world found this emphasis on bodily resurrection bizarre. Critics asked incredulously how it could make sense to speak of resurrection for bones that had scattered as dust with the passage of time. They asked exactly which bodies Christians expected to get back. Would dead children be resurrected as adults? If so, how old would they be? What about hair length, or the marks of disease and disability?

Christian answers to these questions were always confidently emphatic, but couldn't conceal the fact that not even Christians agreed on exactly what the body's resurrection meant. For example, at the end of his book, *On the City of God against the Pagans*, Augustine argues vigorously that women will remain women on the Day of Resurrection. This seems a strange point to labour until we realise that he was responding to Christian communities that claimed women would be "perfected" as men on the Last Day.

Some Christians, noting that spheres were the perfect geometrical shape, speculated that we might all be resurrected to glory with spherical bodies. At this point it is hard not to imagine the afterlife as anything other than a protracted game of marbles.

Place to wait for Judgement Day

Another problem with bodily resurrection was the question of what happened to people between their deaths and Judgement Day. In what sense could an embodied person be said to exist once their body had decayed? Again, early Christian answers were vague and not entirely consistent.

It wasn't until the fourteenth century that the Western Church decided finally that souls were admitted directly to Hell or Purgatory to wait there until they were reunited with their bodies on Judgement Day. But in the first Christian millennium we find references to much vaguer locations like "the bosom of Abraham" or "receptacles" where souls were maybe awake, maybe sleeping, but mostly waiting for the sound of the last trumpet.

Care for the Dead

The centrality of the resurrected body shaped the way in which Christians spoke about "care for the dead" until the end of the Middle Ages (and well beyond in many cases). Firstly, most Christian communities wanted to be physically close to their dead.

An account of the martyrdom of the bishop Polycarp, which dates from the second or third century of the Christian era, refers to his people gathering his

Nick Thompson explains how and why over the centuries Christians have changed the emphases of what happens to the dead and the relationship of the living with the dead.

The preserved body of Pope John XXIII, in St Peter's, Rome.

bones from the pyre on which he was burnt to death, so that they can store them in a place, "where the Lord will permit us to gather together . . . in gladness and joy, and to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, for the commemoration of those that have already fought in the contest, and for the training and preparation of those that shall do so hereafter."

In other words, the bones of martyrs were gathered into shrines and churches so that the memory of their witness to Jesus would encourage courageous witness in others.

More to the point, it was believed that the faith of the martyrs made them powerful intercessors with God. The second century *Passion of Perpetua* recorded that the martyr's prayer freed her unbaptised brother, Dinocrates, from the underworld.

With stories like these being publicly recited as part of the early church's liturgy, it is easy to see why more lukewarm Christians might have wanted to be buried close to martyrs like Perpetua. On the terrible Day of the Lord, who would not want to be standing close to someone who had prayed her brother out of Hell?

Dead Caring for Living

Meanwhile Christians gathered to press cloth to the martyrs' bones or drain olive oil from containers stored close to them. Since sick persons had been cured by contact with handkerchiefs and aprons which had touched Saint Paul's body (Acts 19:12), the martyrs' bodies were presumed to do the same. Here it was not so much a case of the living caring for the dead, as the dead caring for the living.

Saint Augustine disapproved of the idea that souls could be prayed out of hell (though the practice continued after him). However, he did wonder whether the prayers and good deeds of the living might make hell a little more comfortable for those who had ended up there. In addition, Augustine discussed the fate of those he called "the not very good," and it's here we see a second important feature of Early Christian "care for the dead" emerging.

Because it was clear that most dead Christians were not nearly as good as the martyrs, their families and friends worried about how they could "make up" for the moral shortcomings of the lacklustre deceased.

It was at this point that charitable giving became a standard part of the funeral ritual, as well as subsequent anniversary commemorations.

Of course, charitable giving is still a part of most funeral arrangements, though we have mostly forgotten its connection with Augustine's "not very good."

Death and Life Intertwined

By the High Middle Ages, this fellowship between the martyrs, the living, and the mediocre dead had developed into an elaborate ritual woven into every aspect of public and private life.

The funeral antiphon "in the midst of life we are in death" (*in media vita in morte sumus*) would have confronted late medieval Christians visually in the neat stacks of bones that crowded the charnel houses beside and under churches, in the throngs of priests and tiny chapels whose only function was the offering of Masses for the souls in Purgatory, in the elaborate "cadaver tombs" built by the rich to warn onlookers (and themselves) that death might snatch them away at any moment, and in the burgeoning collections of saints' relics that attracted throngs of "not very good" pilgrims looking for bodily healing and a powerful intercessor on Judgement Day.

For an equally complex set of reasons, the Protestant Reformation swept these rituals of death away. Even in Catholic Europe they were radically pared back. The more "advanced" Protestant countries like Scotland tried to abolish funerals altogether. The dead were placed in the ground

continued on page 19. . .

Nick Thompson is Senior Lecturer in Theological and Religious Studies at the University of Auckland.

FINAL THOUGHTS

When you throw away
my shoes

consider my collection
of the brightest
acrylic jerseys

wonder at the six
that are my bowling balls

or run your hands
one last time through hair
you never thought
could be so soft
on an old man

will you know
that I have left
this shabbiest
of tenements
for a paradise
you can only
dream of

— Gregory McNeill

A GOOD DEATH

Kathy Lynch discusses her research into the reasons palliative care professionals encourage the use of excellent care rather than euthanasia.

New Zealand is approaching a decision-making moment on euthanasia which will shape our future as a nation. In common with many other developed nations we are being asked to consider the issues of euthanasia and assisted suicide and whether we want legislation changes allowing people to choose these forms of death. Such amendments to our legal system can be seen to be compassionate, enabling an end-of-life decision originating from personal autonomy, residing with the individual who deems their quality of life no longer worth living. Is this really the case? Would such a change create a more compassionate New Zealand society? I do not believe so.

Through many years of nursing in hospice palliative care I have had the privilege of accompanying dying patients and their families. Enabling patients to die with dignity is the primary goal of palliative care. However it is also the professed reason behind the promotion of euthanasia and assisted suicide legislation. These life-ending practices inherently contain a choice about the value of human life, about which life retains dignity and which does not. Life is a sacred, God-given *taonga*. Knowing that we are loved into being, held tenderly in merciful love throughout our lives and welcomed home by God at life's end, gifts us with our true dignity. Each human life is a unique treasure, which we hold not with ownership but in stewardship. Here, for me, is the major point of divergence between the concept of "death with dignity" held by euthanasia proponents and the concept as understood by the palliative care movement.

I recently researched the concerns of palliative care providers with regard to the legalisation of euthanasia and physician assisted suicide. I interviewed 25 New Zealand physicians and nurses working in palliative care. While a few were ambivalent about the social value of legalising life-ending practices, the majority did not believe that this should happen. Unanimously they viewed euthanasia and assisted suicide as having no place within palliative care treatments. Despite their differences in faith — Christian, Buddhist, Agnostic — the concerns they held, from many years of intimate experience of working with the dying and their families, were remarkably similar.

Vulnerability

It is not uncommon for patients to request that the dying process be sped up. Nurses and doctors explored with the patient the reasons underlying their inquiry. If the fear or experience of physical symptoms, such as pain and nausea, precipitated these inquiries, once these symptoms were controlled the requests usually dissipated. Myths exist around analgesia shortening life but research has shown that relieving pain increases the quality of life and does not shorten it.

Requests of a philosophical or psycho-social origin were more lasting. In a society which holds in high regard, youth, beauty, independence and the ability to earn, it is not surprising that physical frailty and dependence upon others are an anathema to many. Fear of being a burden to their loved ones, either through physical care or financial cost, can come from patients themselves or be imposed by others. The nurses and doctors considered the elderly to be at particular risk of pressure to request euthanasia or assisted suicide should legislation allow this, even though under other circumstances they would wish to continue living. They could see the contradictory message of working to prevent suicide in the young, while allowing others access to legally sanctioned assistance to end their own lives.

What makes life worth living in the face of death?

Walking with someone who has a terminal diagnosis can be a painful and yet paschal experience. The palliative care professionals spoke of witnessing growth in relationships, reconciliations and achievement of deep peace, which can occur for patients as they move towards death.

One palliative care nurse said of a patient: "She and her partner learnt, with the help of the spiritual carers, to say I love you. And she had time to grieve for a baby who had died. All of these amazing things happened from the time of diagnosis to when she died. But if you'd given her that option of euthanasia when she was diagnosed, she might have taken it and missed out on all of that."

Walking with someone who has a terminal diagnosis can be a painful and yet paschal experience.

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"I've just seen the most magic things happen that you just wouldn't have had happen if you terminated their lives. And sometimes those little moments can actually change how the family then perceive their relationship with that person for ever."

The philosophy of palliative care encompasses not only the care of the person who is dying but also the care of the *whānau*, family and significant loved ones. The dying process enables family members and the dying person to give and receive tenderness and compassion. The journey towards death is sacred. Weeks or days once lost cannot be reclaimed.

A doctor, referring to how the time leading up to death contains experiences that facilitate the grieving and healing of those left behind, said: "I've just seen the most magic things happen that you just wouldn't have had happen if you terminated their lives. And sometimes those little moments can actually change how the family then perceive their relationship with that person for ever."

Loss of Autonomy

Research in the States of Oregon and Washington showed that loss of autonomy is the most common reason given by patients when applying for physician-assisted death. Partnership with patients and respect for their autonomy are valued palliative care principles. Because of this, autonomy caused a dilemma for palliative care professionals with regard to the "right" of individuals to choose their time of death. This was particularly so when this patient-choice conflicted with their professional belief that euthanasia was not the answer to physical or emotional suffering. They commented that not all family members may agree with the patient's desire for euthanasia. Euthanasia, seen as an individual's "right", originates from a view of autonomy comprising "unrestrained self-determination". However this interpretation "does an injustice to the human being in its totality" as autonomy is exercised in the whole context of social, cultural and familial relationships.

This Jubilee Year of Mercy offers us the opportunity to think about issues that affect us as a society and to explore more deeply the values that inform our beliefs. Prematurely terminating life should not be considered compassionate treatment for the dying. There is an alternative. We could all advocate for universally available, affordable, gold-standard palliative care. The choice for or against euthanasia is a choice for the type of New Zealand society we will inhabit in the future. Let light and life be the hallmark of our society rather than darkness and death. ■

This research was undertaken in fulfilment of a Masters of Health Science Degree: University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee: reference number 010892.

Kathy Lynch is a Mercy Sister and registered nurse with over 15 years of palliative care and hospice experience.

Burial and the Resurrection of the Body

. . . continued from page 15

as soon as possible, and with no public ritual. Burial inside church buildings was discouraged, and in some cases old bones and fresh bodies were removed to new burial grounds on the outskirts of a town. Even in Protestant countries that reformed their funeral rituals rather than abandoning them completely, any sense of active, mutual fellowship between the living and the dead was largely discouraged.

Even for an historian like me, trying to understand the past dispassionately, it's hard to mourn the partial collapse of the late medieval death-industry. Like some modern charitable corporations, it had become an end in itself, focused as much on funding its own expansion as it was on fostering the bonds of love between the living and the dead. In addition to that, modern New Zealand culture conditions many of us to find early Christians' attachment to their bones just a bit morbid — "Catholic taxidermy," as my sister-in-law memorably describes it. While travelling in Europe I have seen St Anthony of Padua's preserved tongue and St Catherine of Siena's detached foot, but it's hard for me to regard them with more than an historian's curiosity.

At the same time, I'm attracted by early Christianity's fleshy vision of a community reassembling its life together at the end of time. The corporeality of the Last Day is especially well captured by the English artist Stanley Spencer in a series of paintings that show the resurrection of the dead in the Berkshire village of Cookham. In one painting a risen daughter combs her risen mother's hair. Beside them a woman rests her hands on the knees of a man she just seems happy to touch again. In all of the paintings people stretch and yawn as warm light touches their skin. Spencer's resurrection paintings affirm the holiness of a sensual, embodied world. A truly "Catholic" Christian vision of the afterlife has, likewise, to incorporate at least this. ■

UNDERTAKING THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

Cecily McNeill interviewed funeral director, Larry Greco, about his role with families after the death of a loved one.

Larry Greco is a man of near infinite patience—a quality he has developed over 13 years as a funeral director.

In a weekend on duty at the funeral home, Larry could meet four or five different groups who are grieving for their loved ones. When accompanying a group of people connected with the dead person, whether they be family or friends, Larry finds himself drawing on a well of sensitivity, understanding and patience which he has found ably equips him to serve his clients. Negotiating people's grief takes some skill, particularly with families for whom issues from the past may still not have been resolved.

Larry speaks of two families he has worked with recently. He had to make sure to treat everyone equally. If there was one family member who seemed to be left out of the discussion, Larry tried to ensure they received a fair hearing.

. . . people can go to great lengths to follow the wishes of the deceased but, in the end, they must also do what those left behind want.

He finds he has to listen to what is not being said as well as all that is expressed.

"I try to make eye contact with them and make sure everyone feels comfortable with what's happening. Someone within the family might be put out, or feel left out. This is draining, particularly when voices are raised," says Larry.

Funeral arrangements

Many don't know how to begin to arrange a funeral. Larry tries to avoid looking like a salesperson: "It's not our job to tell them what to do but to listen and guide them or give some advice and it is important not to do that too quickly."

The first aspect to establish

quickly is whether the deceased will be buried or cremated. Because cremation is so final, a medical practitioner has to check the body within 24 hours of death and file a certificate with an extensive questionnaire to ascertain that the death was from natural causes. If the person is to be buried, the preparation is less rigorous because there is the possibility of exhumation should foul play be subsequently alleged.

Larry says people are talking about disposal — whether it be burial or cremation — more openly these days so family members are clear about their loved one's wishes. "Many people are now pre-arranging a funeral service or documenting their thoughts in their will."

It was St Augustine who said in his treatise on caring for the dead: "All such things as embalming the body, selecting a fitting place for burial, and bearing the corpse thereto with due dignity, are comfort for the living, rather than help for the dead."

Larry says some people can go to great lengths to follow the wishes of the deceased but, in the end, they must also do what those left behind want.

For some, the death is too distressing — it may be sudden or tragic — to glean this information in an initial phone conversation. Sensitivity dictates that this question can be left until the first meeting when the funeral director goes to the family home or receives the family at the funeral home, as long as this takes place within 24 hours of death.

Cost of a funeral

The relative costs are significant. These depend on the charges particular local authorities make, but a burial in the monumental section of a cemetery could cost up to $3,000, and slightly less in the plaque section, whereas for cremation the cost could be about $1,000.

Preparing the body

The question of whether to embalm depends on the length of time between death and burial or cremation. If the family wants to have the person at home, or to have the coffin open, the body must be embalmed for reasons of hygiene as well as dignity and respect. Māori particularly have welcomed the practice of embalming as it enables them to have the deceased safely and respectfully on the marae for the duration of the *tangi*.

Larry's colleague, Mike Wolffram, who has had 40 years' experience in the industry and taught embalming at Weltec for some years, says embalming delays the progress of natural decay.

"We are preventing some of the natural aspects of decomposition which could be distressing for some family members — odours, changes to colour and texture of the skin."

If the family wants to have the person at home, or to have the coffin open, the body must be embalmed for reasons of hygiene as well as dignity and respect.

He says: "Humans have always wanted to be involved with the deceased before disposal and, with varying success, have found ways to prevent those things that happen. Embalming is a modern approach to the old ideas about not wanting the body to decompose too fast."

He says there are a number of products available today that help to preserve the body including some plant-based oils that can be used if the body does not need to be maintained for more than a few days.

However, some Middle Eastern cultures — including Muslims and Orthodox Jews — eschew embalming in favour of a ritual washing, wrapping the body in a shroud and dressing it ready for burial, usually within 24 hours. Prayers and incantations are offered throughout the process.

Funeral Celebrant

Larry Greco says families are increasingly choosing non-religious services, sometimes on a beach or in a park. If this is the case, Larry will ask if they have someone in mind to lead the service. Or he might ask if they want the funeral home to engage a celebrant.

Where different cultures or religions are concerned, Larry says funeral directors will ask the leader of the community about what is appropriate for the service. He suggests to those who are faithful to a particular religion that they contact the minister or priest as soon as possible.

The Coffin

Some families will know the wishes of the deceased in terms of a casket. It could be wood with a stain, or customwood with a veneer. Some choose quickly from photos at the funeral home, others like a little more time.

Larry says practices around the casket are varied, such as putting symbols of the person's life — a garden trowel or a photo — in the coffin, and dropping petals or soil on top of the casket. One family wanted a pet's ashes placed in the coffin.

Some have invited mourners at the funeral to write messages on the casket and children have placed stories or pictures inside.

"This helps the grieving process," Larry says.

Often these days families are wanting to fill in the grave after burial and some even choose to dig the grave. For others a small symbolic gesture, such as dropping some soil or flowers into the grave, is enough for emotional closure.

Larry Greco says for the funeral director it is important that those left behind can be confident that they have given their loved one a good send-off. ■

Cecily McNeill is a Wellington journalist who has a 37-year-old passion for social justice which she delights in finding new ways to communicate.

Reading Luke's Gospel with ecological eyes

In part three of her series **Elaine Wainwright** writes of the experience of resurrection in Luke 24:1-12 as Jesus breaking open astounding new possibilities.

Luke 24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they [the women] came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in, they did not find the body. 4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. 5 The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. 6 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." 8 Then they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

It seems appropriate at this point in the church's liturgical year to turn our ecological lens onto the account of the resurrection of Jesus as told in the Lucan gospel. We heard this story during the celebration of Easter. We might be tempted to think that resurrection could scarcely be associated with the ecological as it seems to point beyond the corporeal to what is often named as spiritual. The recently celebrated vigil liturgy would remind us otherwise. There, light broke into darkness as fire was kindled. Water flowed abundantly. Bread was broken and shared, and wine drunk. It seems that resurrection could be celebrated only in and through the material.

With resurrection, something new has happened right in the midst of the Earth community. The women's spices are no longer necessary and the heavy tomb door can be rolled back.

Desecration of the Body

Before engaging resurrection, however, we need to recognise that for Jesus, resurrection cannot be separated from the absolute degradation to which his body and person was subjected, crucified at the hands of the Roman political system. This abjection captures our attention today as we recognise that human persons are still desecrated at the hands of political and economic forces and that their environment (houses, land, waterways and more) suffers similar destruction. The resurrection of Jesus speaks of hope beyond death and the return to Earth of his human body is not the last word.

Cyclic Time

The Lucan gospel narrative of Jesus' resurrection is replete with materiality and physicality. The narrative begins with a time reference — on the "first day of the week", and "at early dawn" (Lk 1:5; 8:22; 10:35; 22:7). These references to time invite readers into cyclical time. It is the "first day of the week", a day of expectation, of new possibilities as a new week begins. It also invites our openness to these possibilities particularly in the face of the despair that the distress of our Earth can cause us. "Early dawn"—the time of transition as the sun breaks in on a new day—also turns our minds and hearts to potential transformations.

Women come to the tomb, that place of death and entombment in Earth of Jesus' desecrated body. They bring with them "spices they had prepared". They had given time and love to the preparation of the "spices and ointments" (Lk 23:56) in order to care for the body of Jesus beyond entombment. They honour the body. They invite reflection on the intimate interrelationship between the gifts of Earth and the human community. And they question how these gifts can be used respectfully. They are showing right relationships.

Breaking into Right Order

Resurrection breaks in on the women's right ordering. The material world has changed. At the end of the day before this Sabbath, the women had observed the tomb and how Jesus' body was laid (Lk 23:55). Now they find that the order has been disturbed—the stone is rolled away from the tomb and Jesus' body is not there (Lk 24:2). This reordering terrifies the women who bow their faces to the ground. They can no longer rely on Earth and its seemingly right ordering. With resurrection, something new has happened right in the midst of the Earth community. The women's spices are no longer necessary and the heavy tomb door can be rolled back.

Life in Places of Death

Like the women with their spices, the ecological reader is invited to be open to the possibility of the new even in the face of the most abject of situations. And Earth, like the risen one, has the power within to find life in places of death. It can break open what appears to destroy and restrict. We see grasses and plants squeezing into life between rocks and in crevices. We see the possibility of transformation even in the hardest of human hearts. These transformations will allow such issues as climate change to be addressed, the development of alternatives to fossil fuels, and the cessation of the pollution of our waterways.

Seeing and Telling

As the Lucan story unfolds, we learn that resurrection, the breakthrough from death to life, must be told and proclaimed. The spice-bearing women, initially terrified by resurrection breaking into their physical universe, return to tell their companion disciples (Lk 24:9). The Lucan narrator gives these women authority by naming them, "Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them" (Lk 24:10) and by telling their experience at the empty tomb. But their message of the transformation of the material body of Jesus, of transformation that can take place in any material context, is said to "seem an idle tale" within the biblical narrative. The male disciples do not believe the women.

This short resurrection account has a fascinating ending. Peter goes looking for evidence of what the women have witnessed and told the disciples about. Luke tells of Peter as seeing differently from the women who "did not see the body". Peter sees the cloths that covered Jesus' dead body lying "by themselves" — a sign of the physical transformation. But unlike the women he does not explore the transformation further or share it with others. He simply goes home amazed.

Responding to Transformation

The contemporary ecological reader is attentive to the key moments of transformation experienced and witnessed in this account. They evoke the changes we see and experience taking place now in our world. Luke's resurrection account alerts us to the different responses we can make to the extraordinary transformations — those changes from abject death-dealing to life-enhancing resurrection. They invite us to attend, hear and believe what might seem like an "idle tale", as well as encourage us to tell about the new experience — rather than just return home amazed.

Newness is taking place in ecological consciousness. Transformation is occurring with ecological action. Easter invites us to engage profoundly with this newness. ■

Illustration: *Sophie and the Women of Jerusalem.* by Dina Cormick. Watermedia. www.creativewomanartist.com

Elaine Wainwright RSM is the Executive Director of Mission and Ministry for the Mercy Sisters in Australia and Papua New Guinea. She is an international biblical scholar.

Jesus the Resurrected Gardener

Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalen by Juan de Flandes

Kathleen Rushton traces the themes of creating and re-creating in John 20:1–9 and highlights the resurrected Jesus as completing the work of the Divine Gardener.

Easter Sunday 27 March 2016

Time and again, we hear that in John's resurrection story Mary Magdalene was confused when, "weeping outside the tomb," she turned, saw Jesus and thought he was the gardener (John 20:11, 15). It could be that Mary was confused. It well may be, also that Mary was absolutely correct — Jesus is the gardener. How can this be so? In John's gospel many strands of creation and re-creation are evoked to tell the story of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus. Creation and re-creation interweave. In the Scriptures, creation is the Garden of God. God is the Gardener. John's gospel begins by evoking the garden of Genesis: "In the beginning..." (Jn 1:1) and ends with: "Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb" (Jn 19:41). Here incarnation, death and resurrection are linked with re-creation. Jesus is the Gardener!

The climax of the liturgical year is the feast of the Resurrection. During the octave of Easter, John 20 is proclaimed in the eucharistic liturgy. Eastertide continues over six weeks, keeping in focus the risen Jesus who empowers the people of God every day of the year. Pithily, Augustine describes our identity and new way of being: "We are an Easter people and alleluia is our song." Benedict XVI describes re-creation through Jesus' resurrection as "like an explosion of light, an explosion of love ... It ushered in a new dimension of being ... It is a qualitative leap in the history of 'evolution' and of life in general towards a new future life, towards a new world which, starting from Christ, already continuously permeates this world of ours, transforms it and draws it to itself." (*Easter Vigil Homily*, 2006).

The Divine Gardener

God "planted a garden in Eden, in the East" (Genesis 2:8). Like a gardener, God cultivated it (Gen 2:9) and walked in it (Gen 3:8). Elsewhere, God is described explicitly as a gardener (Numbers 24:6; 4; Maccabees 1:29). Throughout the first five verses of John's gospel, other creation motifs are evoked — light, life and darkness. As God is central to biblical creation, so too is Jesus inserted into God's creation. In the prologue, Jesus is portrayed as Wisdom-*Sophia*, who was with God at the beginning of the work of creation (Proverbs 8:22-36). Only John's gospel places the death-resurrection of Jesus in a garden. In addition, we are told that Jesus rose on the first day of the week (Jn 20:1) and also appears to his disciples on the first day of the week (Jn 20:19).

"Let there be light"

In the Genesis creation narrative, the first specific creative act of God deals with the darkness which covered the earth. God acts by the creative word: "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). Darkness is not dispelled by the creation of light but ordered in relation to light. In John's incarnation narrative, the Word was the life which was "the light of all people" (Jn 1:3). "The One", later named as Jesus, is: "The light [which] shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it" (Jn 1:5). The resurrection narrative begins, also, with darkness evoking re-creation: "Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb" (Jn 20:1).

We are called to enter into God's creative process for in "the Christian understanding of the world the destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ."

In Genesis 3:3, the woman tells the serpent that they are not to touch the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. Exactly the same Greek verb is used when Jesus tells Mary Magdalene not to touch him (Jn 19:18). A link is made here between the woman of Genesis who does not obey and Mary Magdalene who does obey by telling the disciples that Jesus has risen. It would seem here, too, by the use of the verb "touch," the materiality of the body is acknowledged.

Completing the Works of God

Several times we hear about how the works of God are to come to completion in Jesus. This is especially so as Jesus' death approaches. Just before he said: "I am thirsty," we are told: "Jesus knew that all was *finished*." His last words on the cross are: "It is *finished*." Earlier, Jesus had explained his own work in relation to God's work. His food is to *finish* the works of God (Jn 4:34). God gave him works to *finish* (Jn 5:36). These references echo Genesis where: "God rested from all the work that God had done in creation" (Gen 2:2). A completed creation is sealed by Sabbath rest, yet God's work is incomplete. Jesus continues God's work. He heals and re-creates even on the Sabbath.

Re-creation

As Jesus rose on the first day of the week (Jn 20:1), he appears to his disciples also on the evening of the first day of the week (Jn 20:19). The centrepiece of John 20 are the verses 19-23 when the disciples were gathered and Jesus came and "stood in the midst" of the community. This positioning of the Risen One links back to the tree of life in the midst of the garden (Gen 2:9). Jesus on the cross, too, was in the middle of two others who were crucified with him (Jn 19:18).

Two actions unfold, initiated by Jesus. His "Peace be with you" greeting fulfills his promise to give a peace the world cannot give (cf. Jn 14:27; 16:33). He shows them his hands and his side. Repeating the gift of peace, Jesus, then, commissions the new People of God as he had been commissioned by God. Second, he "breathed on them" saying "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:22). The verb "breathed on" is found only here in the NT and three times in the *Greek Bible* (of the early Church) referring directly to creation. Jesus' action evokes God giving life to the Earth creature (*adam*) who was formed from the Earth (*ha'adam*) with God's breath. (Gen 2:7, cf. Wisdom 15:11). The prophet Ezekiel is told to breathe on the dry bones that the House of Israel may be re-created.

John 20 concludes by referring to the believers "of all times" (Jn 20: 30-31), in other words, the Church. We are called to enter into God's creative process for in "the Christian understanding of the world the destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ." (*Laudato Si'* par 99). Pope Francis also pointed out that "The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth." (*Laudato Si'* par 66). Deborah Manning's disturbing yet hopeful article (*TM* March 2016) offers a practical alternative to the environmental impact of organic material rotting in landfills in Aotearoa New Zealand. She outlines how that food can be collected to feed the needy. We are an Easter people and alleluia is our song. We are to be Gardeners in the work of re-creation: "Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope" (*Laudato Si'* par 244). ■

Kathleen Rushton RSM tends her vegetable garden, walks in the hope her feet will allow her to tramp again and delights in learning about Scripture.

a GEN-Y perspective

Social Justice
How do we go about it?

There are many things that need "fixing" in this world. From the nice-to-haves, to the dire humanitarian emergencies that we see on the news, such as the Syrian refugee crisis and poverty in the Pacific Islands.

Having dabbled in a few different activist groups in my university years, knowing a lot of people who care deeply about social issues, and having a strong mandate to create long-term social change myself, one of the key things I have learned over the years is the importance of how, as activists, we frame our causes and the messages we communicate to the wider audience.

I must admit to being a bit of a "cause snob" when I was a young-gun, undergraduate student. I touted myself as a good person with strong moral fibre while caring desperately about the state of education in New Zealand, human rights around the globe, and climate change. Admittedly, I was also a little judgemental of those who didn't care as much "about the cause" as I did.

A few years on, I'd like to think that I have gained a bit of wisdom and compassion. Everyone has worries, whether these be day-to-day stresses or monumental challenges. While this line of reasoning can very easily lead to an excuse for apathy, it is important to acknowledge that we all experience the world through our own lens, and it is very easy to feel overwhelmed. I always try to keep in mind that "suffering is suffering". No matter our circumstances or where we live in the world, part of the human experience is to suffer.

One of the key things I have learned over the years is the importance of how, as activists, we frame our causes and the messages we communicate to the wider audience.

In taking this idea of suffering and hardship as an intrinsic part of humanity, there is a strong need to engage people effectively in social action. The key to this is how messages are communicated and emotional connection is established. For example—I was involved in a movement in 2012 protesting the government's cuts to tertiary education. While the protest was intensive, in my opinion it was not effective in engaging the wider public. The nature of the protests served to demonise the cause by complex messaging, visible anger at the government, and unrealistic demands for free tertiary education in New Zealand. As well, street protests were confused in their intention and direction.

In comparison the youth-led Generation Zero has an organised approach to addressing climate change and shows the power of communicating a cause effectively. Generation Zero uses positive messaging in all its campaigning. It has a really good system for providing critique and alternative plans and drafts for government initiatives. And they do not slag off individual politicians with whom they don't agree. By having a strong mandate for providing New Zealand with options for cutting carbon pollution, the group is able to steer achievable campaigns. These include more buses on Auckland roads, a congestion-free road network and advocating for a Sky Path over the Auckland Harbour Bridge. The beauty of this approach is that the message is understandable and accessible to the wider public.

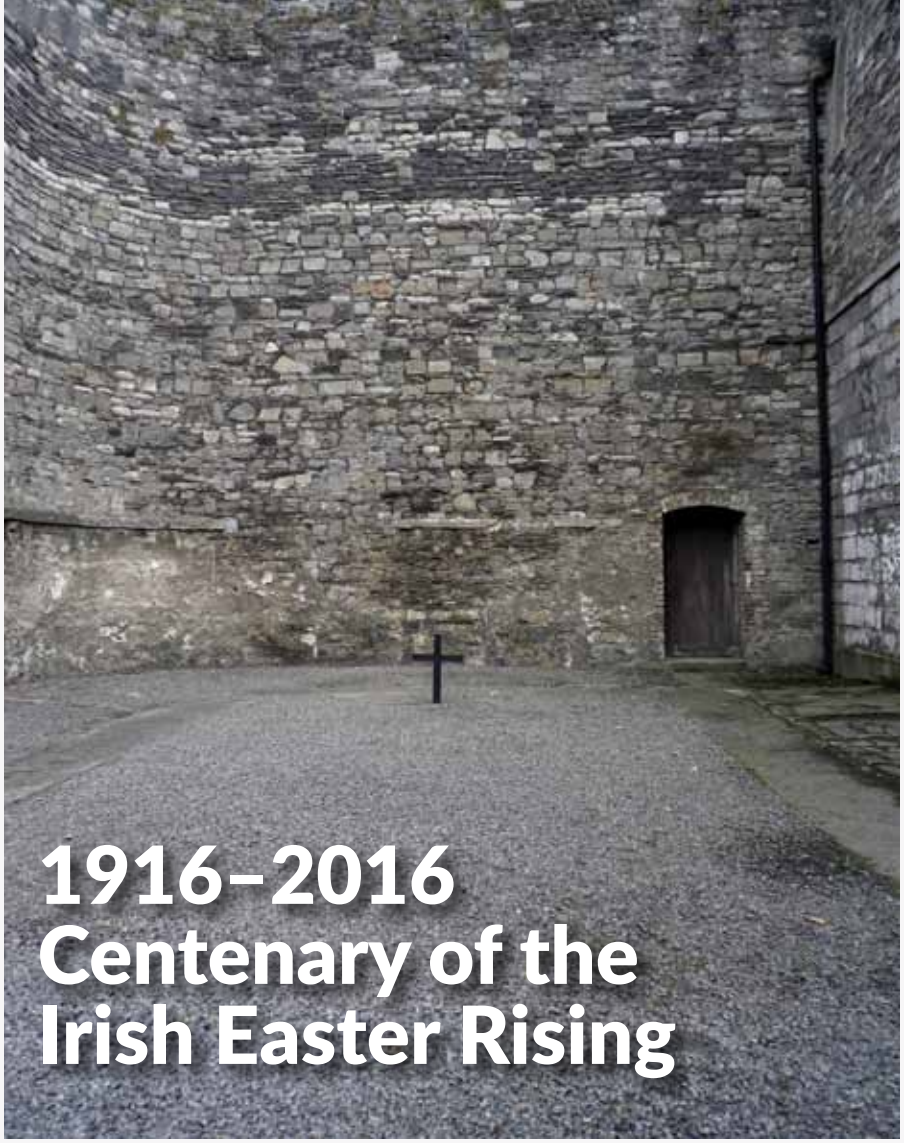
The key to engaging people in a cause that will effect positive social change comes down to a few simple ingredients. First, clear, simple messaging is key.

Second, a positive, uplifting and empowering tone is crucial. For example: "We have the opportunity to make an incredible difference to the health of the environment" is more empowering than: "Our generation is practically bleeding carbon and we should all be ashamed of ourselves."

Third, breaking down the size of a problem to make it more accessible to individuals. Just think—no one person is able to solve hunger in the Sub-Saharan Africa and the sheer size of that problem can paralyse people. However, by framing solutions in bite-sized chunks—such as giving people hope that they could help a family, or provide materials for a village to improve the water supply—we provide an achievable action and give people access to sufficent information.

By employing these basic techniques, we give people the opportunity to grow their passion for what is right in the world and serve to advance the causes that we care about. ■

Louise Carr-Neil is an Auckland native who is passionate about gender equality and human rights. In her spare time she enjoys running and vegetarian cooking.



1916–2016 Centenary of the Irish Easter Rising

A lone cross stands in the centre of the enclosure, a few feet from the hideous stone wall in the execution yard in Dublin's Kilmainham Gaol. The crucifix stands as a stark testament to the brutality which ended the lives of 15 of the 90 people sentenced to death by a vengeful British Government between 3–12 May 1916. A plaque lists 15 names of those executed by firing squad. Amongst them were Patrick Pearse, Joseph Plunket, Thomas MacDonagh, James Connelly and Thomas Clarke. Roger Casement was hanged in London.They are among the most famous names in Irish history which include Theobold Wolfe Tone, Lord Edward Fitzgerald and the (unnamed) women of 1798, and Robert Emmett, Daniel O'Connell, Michael Collins and Charles Stewart Parnell of the 19th century.

The 1916 uprising was mounted by Irish republicans to end British rule of Ireland and establish an independent Irish Republic. It was the most significant uprising in Ireland since the rebellion of 1798 led by the protestant, Wolfe Tone.

The British Government's reaction to the 1916 uprising followed an historic pattern of brutality, floggings, collective punishment, torture, imprisonment and executions. Afterwards the security forces flattened the inner city of Dublin and arrested 3,430 men and 79 women. Of these 1,841 were interned in England. Those thought to have organised the insurrection were held back in Ireland for trial—190 men and one woman, the Countess Constance Markievicz.

The 1916 Easter Rising was the latest in a long nightmare of Irish resistance against English colonisation. In 1169 Pope Adrian IV had authorised King Henry II of England to conquer Ireland as a means of bringing the Irish Church into line.

English repression was enforced through the 17th century Penal Laws which regulated every aspect of Irish life—civil, domestic and spiritual. It seemed that Irish people had no right to exist. The repression was symbolised by the British Chief Justice's words: "Except for the purpose of repression and punishment, the law does not suppose any such person to exist as an Irish Roman Catholic".

Charles Trevelyan, in charge of relief for Ireland in 1846, said: "God sent the Famine to teach the Irish people a lesson." He believed that nature should take its course. But the deliberate starving of the Irish was not famine—it was genocide and has been described as Western Europe's worst modern peacetime catastrophe.

The scar of the 1845-1853 Famine, triggered by the failure of the potato crop, is carried in the psyche of Irish diaspora around the world. Irish food was exported to England under armed guard during the so-called "Famine". Market forces, administered by political quacks, prevailed. While two million English people were fed with food from Ireland, valued at £15 million, the Irish starved.

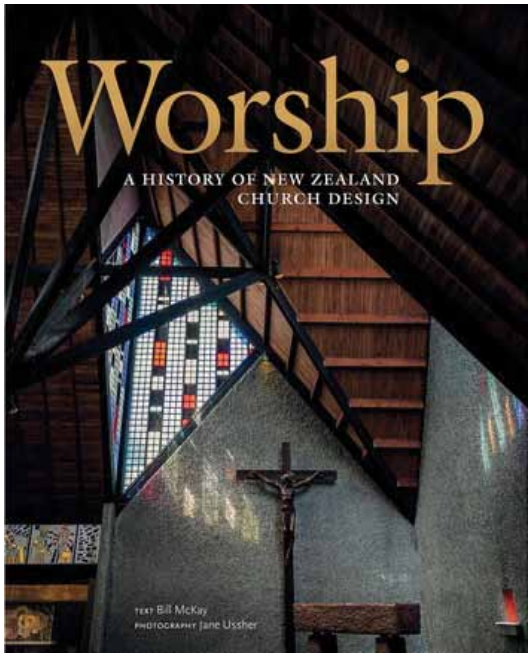
Token relief, valued at £8 million, arrived in 1846. The Irish poor were made to work for food in schemes involving such demoralising "work" as digging holes in roads and then filling them in again. Evictions of farming families by absentee English landlords continued throughout the Famine. A clause in the *Poor Law Legislation* required that any family holding more than one-quarter of an acre could not be granted relief, either in or out of the workhouse, until they gave up their land. Starved and dispossessed, Ireland lost more than 2.8 million people over 15 years.

William Butler Yeats commemorated the doomed rebellion with his poem, *Easter, 1916*:

Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

This Easter, Ireland commemorates the centenary of the Easter Rising and invites all Irish people to come together. ■

Robert Consedine "My Irish revolutionary ancestors and my Catholic experience taught me justice. I have always been surrounded by love and wisdom and trust the invisible world."



Worship: A History of New Zealand Church Design

By Bill McKay
Illustrated by Jane Ussher
Published by Random House NZ
Reviewed by Michael Melville

Bill McKay's book, *Worship*, makes its intent clear from the opening paragraph to the last page; history is ephemeral, architecture is fragile, and people forget easily. The Canterbury earthquakes brought home these grim realities when New Zealand lost a swathe of historic churches. In doing so it highlighted a major issue in our society that has been picked up by Bill and championed in *Worship*. Our churches are suffering from benign neglect and we need to act "lest we lose those, too".

Many of the churches in *Worship* represent some of New Zealand's earliest and most important architecture because they played a formative role in facilitating the growth of New Zealand society. Today they run the risk of becoming invisible, consigned to a quainter New Zealand, offering little to a secular world. Can a kind of cultural entropy be at play? One that seeks to bury the traditions of religion along with the houses they occupied?

The book does not dwell just on the historic but celebrates the contemporary, in fact, it starts with today and makes its way back in time. The vastness of contemporary Assembly of God halls reflects a dramatic shift in the trending of religion that runs parallel to the urbanisation of New Zealand society. McKay comments briefly on the relationships of contemporary churches servicing large community groups with the rise of "radically new forms" of mall architecture and big-box retail. But he does not delve too deeply into what effect urban drift and the charismatic movement have had on rural communities and their churches, a topic worthy of debate in itself.

One of the engaging things about *Worship* are the descriptions given of the experiences McKay and Ussher have had in the churches they visited. The photography records the architecture as austere if it is traditional, quiet if the place is intimate, dramatic if it vaults to the skies—it is satisfyingly appropriate and the only thing missing is people. This is merely a personal criticism of architectural photography and Ussher's work stands on its own merit.

The blurb texts follow a comfortable pattern that locates each church within an historic and cultural context and then unashamedly drops in some of the intangible struggles we deal with on a daily basis, ". . . the trouble the congregation have taken to build it, reflects the contemporary circumstances of making a house for an old faith in a new world in complex times. And the result is a beautiful place to be." What follows is a series of photos of the Waterfall Chapel in Maungatapere—you can smell the timber and sense the struggle.

There are churches we have all been in whether to celebrate, mourn, worship, or even study for academic enlightenment. There are churches I have driven past dozens of times and often wondered what they are like inside, but never seen the need to stop and satisfy my curiosity. Something we would do without thinking if travelling through Europe. Our Lady of Victories, Christchurch, being the most prominent of these, with Ussher's hero photo on p55 unpredictably showing the "ski-ramp" (what we called it as kids) on the outside. Timaru's Basilica of the Sacred Heart is another one but my curiosity for this focuses on the incongruous scale in a small town. Next time I am home I will make a point of visiting these churches and do as McKay asks, "give generously" when I go.

Worship is a book on architecture that could be considered a coffee table read for the curious and I suspect readers will automatically go searching for the places that are meaningful to them. But in other hands it will become an important public record that celebrates our cultural history while at the same time warns of the risk of letting these marvellous structures disappear. ■

The Lady in the Van

Directed by Nicholas Hytner
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

Entering the cinema, I was hoping not to be served up a bland "feel-good" story about a cantankerous old lady living in a broken-down van in a famous writer's driveway and the warm, fuzzy relationship that forms between them.

Fortunately, *The Lady in the Van* turned out to be a much more nuanced offering than the trailer had suggested. Like most of the residents of the comfortable, arty, middle-class London suburb of Camden Town in the 1970s, playwright and author Alan Bennett (played by Alex Jennings) is cagey about having a homeless old woman in the neighbourhood, let alone parked up in his drive.

And Mary Shepherd — played to perfection by Dame Maggie Smith — is indeed difficult to live with. Cantankerous is only the start. She is stubborn, insanitary, fiercely independent, and frightens the local children. Having spent several unhappy years in a convent, she is subject to religious delusions — or are they epiphanies? She also harbours a number of secrets that are hinted at during the course of the film — her time as a nun is one of them — but only brought out into the open at the end. During her 15-year stay in Bennett's driveway, she gives very little away about her past — so much so that her exchanges with her host follow an unvarying pattern of cautious tolerance versus bemused defensiveness.

Mary forms one of a pair of dependent elderly women who have an important role to play in Bennett's life — the other is his mother, living in Yorkshire, whom he settles into a care home over the course of the film. This duo is matched with another pairing — seemingly bizarrely — Bennett the man and Bennett the writer are presented as different characters, each played by Jennings. Their constant wry banter is not only amusing in itself, but makes the wider point that the most ordinary material can be transmuted into art. Bennett's own unconventional lifestyle as a single gay man forms a subplot that offers a further parallel with Mary's story.

Based on Bennett's 1989 memoir of the same name (which was later turned into a play), *The Lady in the Van* is a beautifully crafted, intelligent film that entirely avoids sentimentality, despite its subject matter. The heroine's extravagantly comic apotheosis in the final scene has attracted criticism, but should perhaps be seen as a comment on the writer's freedom over the characters he creates. It certainly won't spoil a good night out. ■

CROSSCURRENTS

Jim Elliston

Apostolic Training

In his book, *Dedication and Leadership*, former UK Communist Party official Douglas Hyde described the Party's effective training system.

The secret? Party activists invited anyone showing an interest to attend an introductory course. To progress further, candidates were required to sell copies of the Party's daily on street corners. Those who persevered realised their ignorance when subjected to questioning so were motivated to study more. As they graduated to higher levels they helped with lower level courses. The result? Many committed apostles skilled in the Marxist-Leninist perspective and in leading others to change society.

Barry Elsey, of the University of Nottingham, described four models of education — Recreation-Leisure, Work Training, Liberal and Progressive, and Radical.

The Liberal-Progressive model approached learning as a key to personal and social change, educated the whole person, and assisted in social betterment and progress.

The Radical Model aimed to analyse the underlying assumptions and structures of society with a commitment to action. "Education is seen as an active ingredient in bringing about change in society and accompanies two other key processes — organization and agitation."

Hyde wrote that many Communist Party recruits were former Catholics who wanted to change the world. He had converted to Catholicism in 1948, and said he had met many other converts dissatisfied because when they offered their help they were asked to clean the church, etc.

Many parishes have good programmes catering for parishioners' needs, community building, charitable works, but these fall mostly within the Liberal Progressive model and are insufficient for effecting changes to meet contemporary needs.

Gospel-based change movements teaching the "see, judge, act" method in the 1950-1960s, all but disappeared in the 70s. The critical analysis of society's underlying assumptions from the Catholic Social Teaching (CST) perspective, has also diminished.

Anomaly

Why do many Catholics make no contact with the parish except to enrol their children in a Catholic school (and have them baptised if necessary)? Two major factors. Our parishes are inward-looking not "prophetic". And, as Ivan Snook explains, our schools are not prophetic either. (*TM* Feb, March 2016). Parents for whom religion makes little difference, choose Catholic schools because they appear to have higher standards.

Courageous Witness

Agitation can assist with change while intransigence cannot.

Pope Francis has organised a two-pronged attack on clerical sexual abuse. He is confronting head-on the scandalous mire of clericalism and triumphalism that allows the perpetrators to flourish, and he established a special Commission tasked with developing policies to safeguard the vulnerable. While rapid completion is imperative, doing it thoroughly is essential. This lies at the heart of a recent dispute.

Marie Collins and Peter Sanders, both survivors of child sexual abuse by priests, are the Commission's lay members.

Sanders publicly claimed that the Commission is a PR exercise, a cover for Vatican inaction: "It should investigate (people he named)." The Commission does not have this power. He then allied himself with some activist groups who refuse to acknowledge good faith on Francis's part. In effect they are counter-productive zealots.

Collins, who graduated from agitator against Church inaction to organiser of Church radical action, responded. While critical of some Curia officials, she expressed full confidence in the Commission members and current progress "which undoubtedly is laborious, tedious and slow."

Marie Collins could have remained silent but her commitment to progress encouraged her to risk being vilified by the people she is working for. ■

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

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

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

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Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd,
52 Union Street, Dunedin North, 9054
P O Box 6404, Dunedin North, 9059

Phone: (03) 477 1449

Email: editor@tuimotu.org

Email for subscriptions: admin@tuimotu.org

Editor: Ann L Gilroy RSJ

Assistant editor: Elizabeth Mackie OP

Design & layout: Greg Hings

Printers: Southern Colour Print, 1 Turakina Road, Dunedin South, 9012

Board directors: Neil Darragh (chair), Rita Cahill RSJ, Philip Casey, Paul Ferris, Elizabeth Mackie OP, David Mullin, Kevin Toomey OP, Cathrine Harrison, Agnes Hermans

Honorary directors: Pauline O'Regan RSM, Frank Hoffmann

Website: www.tuimotu.org

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We welcome letters of comment, discussion, response, affirmation or argument of up to 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge longer letters, while keeping the meaning.

We do not publish anonymous letters except in exceptional circumstances.

TEACHING A NON-SENSE AND NEEDS CHANGE

Michael Fraser, in his fine article (*TM* Feb 2016), expresses misgivings about the Catholic Church's description of homosexuality as a disorder. But the Church's "declaring" that homosexuality is a disorder does not make it a disorder. In the 17th century the church insisted that the sun revolved round the earth. Fortunately, the church's teaching had no effect on the planets; they continued on their merry God-given way.

The Church also attempts to link homosexuality with "intrinsic moral evil". The word "evil" in English is heavily weighted. All would agree that the Holocaust was evil. All would agree too that it would be an egregious untruth to say that a loving relationship between two same-sex persons can be compared to the murder of six or seven million Jews and others. Nobody in their right mind would use the same word to describe these two realities.

If the Church's teaching is a non-sense, we must speak up and acknowledge that non-sense. This is not dissent. Gareth Moore OP in his book *A Question of Truth* concluded, "in this area the Church teaches badly". There are no sound, reasoned arguments to assent to.

So yes, we must pray that in this Year of Mercy our bishops will be inspired to shine the mercy-full truth-filled light on the area.

Jim Howley, Auckland.

THANK YOU FROM INSIDE

I would like to thank you for placing me on the mailing list. There are four other Catholics in the unit whom I am passing the copies of *Tui Motu* on to and they are enjoying reading them. I will continue to keep doing this so the one magazine gets to all of us here.

LSMcK

CANON LAW AND WHEAT ONLY HOSTS

I noted with interest an advertisement in *TM* Feb 2016 for communion breads "in keeping with Canon Law". Canon Law (942/2) says "the bread must be wheat only and recently made so there is no danger of spoiling" — so where does that leave us coeliacs? Are we sure the bread broken at the Last Supper was made only of wheat? It probably was unleavened, but as it was not involved in temple sacrifice, it could have been made from any grain. Surely it does not matter what grain it's made from. For a coeliac, eating a wheaten host (even a reduced wheat one) is rather like saying to an alcoholic "just one little nip won't hurt you!" Maybe its time to look at Canon Law with its 1752 Canons, and try and turn them into something "that makes us live out the gospels with a sense of joy" — Pope Francis.

Margaret White, Yandina, Qld

SCIENCE CONTRIBUTES TO FARMING IN NEW ZEALAND

The *TM* March 2016 issue on food contains many opinions expressed as facts without supporting evidence. Most of the purported "facts" centre on organic food production versus modern, scientific methods as used by most New Zealand farmers. I'm referring to things like regular applications of phosphate and nitrogen to promote grass and other crop growth and the use of fertilisers containing chemicals, such as selenium and sulphur, which are deficient in NZ soils.

I'm not a soil scientist. I describe myself as a "peasant farmer" these days but it was my good fortune to work with the late Professor T W Walker (the "prof" of Maggie Barry's *Garden Show*) for 30 years. He spent a lifetime as a widely acclaimed soil scientist. His verdict on organics which he expressed widely: "Great for the privileged few able to afford such foods but if adopted world-wide half the population would die of starvation."

Des McSweeney, Akaroa

Looking OUT *and* IN

Photos: Kaaren Mathias

I remember an Anthony de Mello video at a retreat in Auckland. "Each time you do something, try to take a little longer than the time before!" It seems only slightly more absurd now than it did two decades ago. Sometimes though, going slowly is the only option. I've learned to enjoy an hour or two of marinated interactions in the bazaar when shopping rather than setting a personal best time for a return trip to the supermarket. Our house perched 200 vertical metres above Mussoorie bazaar, in the Indian Himalayas, is a perfect training ground for "slow shopping".

The first rule is to pre-load your backpack with robust plastic and cloth bags for supplies. Tomatoes and candles escape from flimsy plastic. Second, go by foot. Mussoorie roads can be luge-tracks in winter and stream-beds in monsoon. Third, plan a trajectory to include drop-offs and sequenced to pick up the heavy stuff last. Actually forget all that. Slow shopping transcends enumerated guidelines. Just saunter off and learn as you go.

Today I head downhill and first drop a clock at the watchmaker's for repairs. Next, Chaukit, the tailor, fills me in on his recent blood test. "Friday, your *kamiz* (long shirt) will be ready. *Pukka!*"

At Temple Chowk is Adarsh dairy. "Please, two litres of fresh buffalo milk and a half kilo of *paneer* (a soft, fresh cheese)!" Adarsh can issue heavy-weight plastic bags tied with rubber bands but I have brought empty bottles from home. Adarsh's son slowly measures out the milk with his 250ml scoop and explains why Sachin Tendulkar is the best cricketer ever. I heft the milk into my bag and turn uphill to find the *bartanwala* (pots and pans man). He has panelbeaten our dinged pressure-cooker lid. I poke it into my trusty backpack beside the milk.

Opposite the Sikh *gurudwara* is our regular fruit stall. Now in early spring there's a plenitude of oranges and guavas. "One kilo of each please."

"*Kala kela?*" Harish asks. His battered black bananas from the bottom of the basket are free—and essential for our muffins.

"*Han ji!*" I smile gladly. I rest my load on the concrete steps while Harish carefully picks over his baskets finding choice fruit and twiddles with weights on the scales.

Shouldering my lumpy pack, I puff up past the shoemakers to Himalayan Haat—with its oddities like *marchha* (amaranth seed), a traditional Himalayan cereal that we like for breakfast. Pushpa tells me about her daughter struggling to study in the cold weather. No *marchha* today, but I come away with a bottle of sweet crimson rhododendron cordial.

Across the road now to Raju's for dry rations. Kidney beans, sugar and a hefty 5kg of rice. I decide to skip the 10kg sack of chapatti flour for another day. The steep hill and a backpack persistently ask me what's really necessary. Some days I do without rather than walk further or carry more. I'm at the top of the Mullingar hill now and last of all is, Victory Eggs. Abdul packages 30 eggs between cardboard trays, a handle tied cleverly into the twine. He's done this before.

I trudge the steep paths back to our house. Shopping here is also morning aerobics and immunisation against osteoporosis. Sweat. Grunt. Haul. Home at last! My backpack would make a locavore smile. The food miles are low, my shopping carbon footprint is nil. It's satisfying and quite exhausting . And, with four hungry children at home, "slow shopping" isn't a one-off apprenticeship. I get to do it all again—more slowly and better maybe, in two days' time. ■

Kaaren Mathias lives in north India with husband Jeph and their four children. She works in community mental health in Uttarakhand state and is the programme manager for the NGO Emmanuel Hospital Association.

Blessing

With love as tender as crocuses
We bless you

With friends as steadfast as labradors
We bless you

With memories as lively as butterflies
We bless you

With possibilities as inviting as parkland
We bless you

With life as hopeful as ducks' eggs
We bless you

With mercy as transforming as sunrise
We bless you

From the Tui Motu *team*