Tui Motu
InterIslands

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parish... the church's heart

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New postal codes. The Post Office has advised us ***not*** to change the postal codes for our monthly postout just yet.

The worshipping community

One very good definition of parish is 'a worshipping community'. Lying behind this is the notion of community itself. One of the best descriptions of community – or society – is that of St Augustine: ***a group of people united in the things they love.***

The parish is like a living cell. It is the heart of the church. The experience of parish can shape a person's faith, especially when young. The connection with the parish school draws parents into support of the development and sacramental foundation of another generation of parishioners.

Parishes can also be the site of many community activities beyond the purely religious – a place for forming deep friendships. They are a focus for ongoing care of families, of the sick and elderly and of the socially deprived.

However, parishes today are under threat. Fewer people go to church, so loyalty to the local parish community has diminished. Catholic priests are fewer – and greyer – than a generation ago. Several parishes may have to be served by one priest. That means inevitably that the traditional means of pastoral care are stretched. The challenge is to find new ways of ensuring that the People of God is served. It is vital that these natural communities of faith are not weakened by lack of leadership.

This issue includes a series of articles (*pp 6-11*) – one piece from a busy parish priest; an interview with a long-serving parishioner; an article by author and lecturer Mary Woods on lay volunteers in the church; finally an interview with Joan McFetridge, director of the *Launch Out* programme for training lay leaders in Wellington.

Several facts emerge from this enquiry:

- that the laity are already hugely involved in every aspect of church in a way that, for Catholics at any rate, was unimaginable one or two generations ago. This can be seen as a direct consequence of the Second Vatican Council, which defined the modern church simply as 'the People of God'.
- lay leadership is happening anyway, but for it to be effective, training programmes need to put in place in all dioceses: training which is both spiritual and pastoral.
- priests are often under unprecedented stress. In New Zealand, in spite of scandals and bad press, Catholics generally hold their priests in high esteem and with considerable affection. They see them as hardworking and dedicated, often working beyond the age when their lay contemporaries are enjoying retirement. Unfortunately, some people still expect the same service from priests they once had. That is neither possible – nor even desirable.
- changes in parish organisation are inevitable. But they should never occur unless consultation of the people is thorough – and seen to be thorough.

The church of tomorrow will be very different from anything we have known in the past. It will be largely lay run. Priests will carry less administrative burden. Their task will be as spiritual leaders and evangelisers. Hopefully it will more and more come to resemble the church of the Apostolic age. And that will be no bad thing.

War in Lebanon

Once again carnage and mayhem have erupted in the Middle East. Israel claims the right to defend itself from alleged terrorism. For every casualty it suffers, ten Palestinians or Lebanese are slain, mostly civilians (*see p 30*).

Why does the world stand by and sanction this continuing slaughter and expulsion of the innocent from their homes?

M.H.

Project 100 – the next step

Publishing 11 issues a year, receiving awards for journalism, nine years experience behind us, possessed of a substantial national and international readership – we're cruising. What's the fuss about? Why don't we sit back and enjoy the cruise? Why this exhausting emphasis upon the future?

The short answer is, those who do not provide for the future may not have one. The business of a Board of Directors is not just to ensure that *Tui Motu* thrives in 2006 but to ensure that is has the resources necessary to do its job nine years from now, when its 200th issue should be due.

Essentially a spiritual project, the temptation to leave its future to providence may be tempting but self-defeating. The saintly axiom is as pertinent as ever: 'we must pray as if everything depended on God and act as if everything depended on ourselves'. Our appeal is simply the best way of taking this advice.

It focuses upon our most prominent perceived weakness; what happens when our current editor must one day be replaced? Will a person with similar gifts and qualifications be available, *and* be a member of a religious order? The answer is *possibly yes*, *probably no*. To cope with the latter we need to have funds on hand to recruit an appropriately gifted layperson.

The Board of Directors is urgently committed to being prepared for such a challenge. We are reaching out to our readership first, and beyond to those who appreciate that *Tui Motu* is a theological and Scriptural reference of value to many, and would want it to remain so.

Three Ways. to help

There are three ways by which the appeal can be accessed and advanced.

• ***by selling Tui Motu in your parish*** (with appropriate permissions) or by selling some in your neighbourhood (no permission required). Arrangements can be concluded with the TM office. This initiative has the virtue of adding to TM income *and* to its spiritual influence, without being too demanding: a once-a-month round up is all that is required. Fifty TM readers have already indicated their willingness to be sellers. Can you think of joining them?

• ***By making direct donation(s)*** to the ***Tui Motu Trust Foundation***.

This can be done as a one-off contribution or each year for a period of years. The amount concerned will obviously vary according to one's financial circumstances. The IRD could make available its rebate of one-third of the contribution, as *Tui Motu* has registered charity status, assuming other taxation parameters are observed.

There is something magnificent about direct giving as it places funds into the *Tui Motu Trust* without reservation thereby making an immediate impact upon its future security.

• ***By purchasing debentures.***

Debentures allow the Foundation Trust the use of capital for an agreed time, during which the Trust retains the interest but the capital remains on call for the donor at the end of the period agreed (or sooner than agreed, if required). This is a gracious option that might appeal to those who wish to secure Tui Motu's future while providing for other responsibilities they have to be concerned for.

How secure is all of this?

It will be as secure as the best accountants and lawyers can make it. This will become obvious as the documents to support this appeal come to hand. No expense is being spared to insure that whatever monies are entrusted to the Foundation, security will be the operative word.

Conclusion

We have much to be grateful for in the years leading up to issue. So many people have given so much of their time, talent and resources to take us on the *Tui Motu* journey thus far. The best thanks we can accord them may be our active participation in the appeal that is calculated to ensure that the journey will continue with as much purpose as before.

Tom Cloher

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Tui Motu-InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed. The name *Tui Motu* was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

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Theodora the 'Bishop'?

I read with interest Dr Mary Betz's colourful and imaginative rewriting of history in her article on women in priestly ministry, (*July '06*). Perhaps Dr Betz's data has been given a one-sided reading?

To use one example, the myth of 'Theodora the bishop' and the title 'episcopa' found in the basilica of Santa Prassede, Rome. When Constantine achieved imperial dignity (313 AD) his mother, Helena, became entitled 'Augusta', although she never ruled the Roman Empire – and for centuries this custom was followed in the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire whenever occasion for it arose. It would be spurious scholarship to claim that Helena was an emperor like her son. The title 'Augusta' points out she was the mother of the Emperor.

The title 'episcopa' was used in the early church to describe the wife of a married bishop. But Theodora was not the wife of a bishop. She was more important than any bishop. She was the mother of Pope Paschal I, who added the glorious chapel of St Zeno in Santa Prassede as the tomb for his mother Theodora, from whom he first learnt the Catholic Faith. She was his teacher.

The chapel was prepared by her grateful son, for her to be buried with the early church women martyrs, the sisters Ss Praxedis and Prudentia, who gave their lives for Jesus Christ. Pope Paschal seemed quite at home with the role of women in the church. Theodora did not need to be a bishop to be praised. Being a virtuous wife and mother was enough dignity for her papal son. *(abridged)*

Carl Telford sm, Wellington

The real meaning of deterrence

Had governments taken note of Churchill's warnings in the 1930s, the world would have been spared the horrors of World War II. Hitler correctly identified that Britain had neither the weapons nor the will to prevent the holocaust that was to follow. By contrast Khrushchev's attempt in 1962 to base rockets and atomic warheads in Cuba was reversed by US threats of a massive military response.

Today's threat stems from a new and ever-increasing group of religious fanatics prepared to immolate themselves and their foes. If and when they have nuclear weapons and the means of delivery, they will not hesitate to use them. That's why we have to take all steps necessary to frustrate their endeavours.

The change of mind and heart to which Gerard Hughes refers (*TM June*) is unattainable, but we must strive to achieve that objective. In the meantime it is essential to retain an adequate and effective arsenal to deter the potential aggressor.

Dorothy Day asks "What is the difference between throwing innocent people into ovens and throwing ovens at innocent people?" The Nazis herded their Jewish slaves into the concentration camp gas chambers. There was no alternative. But the people of Japan had the opportunity to bring pressure on their government to end hostilities. *(abridged)*

Richard Galliano, Marlow UK

letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not altering meaning.

Response articles (up to a page) are also welcome, but need to be by negotiation

Intercommunion

Full Communion, or Intercommunion has been a hobbyhorse of mine since studying the vision of Vatican II, way back in the '70s.

Recently it bought tears to my eyes when a priest offered Communion to an Anglican minister and his wife at a funeral of a mutual friend. He read the Christ-given moment beautifully, when, without fuss or hesitation, he recognised the offering being made by these two appearing so humbly in front of him.

Good things are happening. We just have to be patient I guess, and wait on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

June Swain, Kilbirnie

Women, the church and saints

Having read Fr. Humphrey O'Leary's column (*July* issue) this quote came to mind:

"Men had always been able to seek holiness when they wanted to because some woman was back at home taking care of their obligations. That's why most of the saints were men and why most of the women saints were virgins." (***Side-show*** by Sheri S. Tepper, published Harper/Collins).

And some of those old saints have a lot to answer for in the church's view of women! Perhaps we should just be grateful for all those everyday saintly people we come across in our communities.

Gil Price, Kaitaia

Rogan McIndoe

Twin pillars

Charity and social justice

Recently, a close friend who had returned from a year's work in Ireland said that in the time she had been there, she had attended Sunday Mass in a variety of parishes. While charity had been a regular theme in homilies, never once in all that time had a priest mentioned social justice.

Her remarks set me thinking about the relationship between charity and justice. Charity we understand. But what is it about social justice that sticks in the craw of so many? When we truly love our neighbour, surely we must act with justice towards them. That is what the Scriptures tell us. That is what the church teaches us. It is a notion absolutely basic to a Christian understanding of life. We cannot truly love without practising justice.

Yet many seem unwilling to embrace social justice as a lifestyle choice. Fewer still display a passion for it. The sacred Scriptures reveal a God of justice who has compassion for the poor, and condemns the lawmakers and the rich for their injustice. The prophets make it clear that social justice sits at the very heart of the nature of God. Its practice is a principal expression of God's love of the people. It is when the poor are marginalised, the sick unattended, orphans ignored and widows neglected that the prophets issue their harshest condemnations. They speak in the name of God.

Thus does Scripture reveal that love is not complete without justice. Justice is a deeper more committed version of the love of neighbour. Together charity and justice constitute love. One is not complete without the other. Jesus, who said he came to fulfil the Law and the prophets, freed many he met from unjust social situations. In so doing, he reveals that the practice of social justice takes us into the heart of the divine, the source of love.

There is a large body of church social justice teachings that grows by the year. It covers practically every dimension of human social interaction. It is part of Catholic teaching. It is part of our good news for the modern world. The last several popes have made social justice a central part of their teachings. The Synod of Bishops in 1971 declared justice to be "a constitutive dimension in the preaching of the Gospel." Justice forms part of our church constitution! How much clearer can we get as to its importance?

Why then is so little heard in the church about social justice? Why is it systematically ignored in homilies? There are probably many reasons. Three stand out. Surely a principal cause lies in our level of material comfort. In terms of income and stability, New Zealanders live among the top five percent on the planet. Our nation's goals are wedded to greater economic growth and wealth accumulation. Social justice questions do not sit easily with such goals.

A second reason could be our own prejudices. We all have them. Having them challenged can be upsetting. A third reason will be our fear of losing popularity. Highlighting injustice tends to upset people, including family and friends.

Yet billions of God's children live in poverty under unjust structures of oppression. Christ teaches they are our brothers and sisters. Could it be that church leadership (and membership) has become so comfortably materialist, so soft morally in relation to our poor neighbour that it is convenient to simply ignore our own social justice teachings? Have we made such a god of our material comfort that, as James K. Baxter wrote, we "seek to serve comfort first?"

Let's hope not. Social justice sits at the heart of good race relations, the abortion debate, issues concerning ecology and the environment, global capitalism, law and order, corporate power, world poverty, immigration policy, technology development, our attitude to war, our relations with one another. Why then do we make it an optional extra for the dedicated few? How many parishes have a social justice committee? How many sponsor overseas projects to alleviate poverty? These are simple litmus tests of our commitment.

How can we say we are truly Christian if we blithely ignore so much injustice in God's world? A few months ago we celebrated the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus the Christ. He calls us to a new way of being here and now. He teaches us that God's reign has started. Resurrected power should transform our way of seeing and doing things. The message of Christ is one of hope built on love, founded on justice. The Law and the prophets fulfilled; charity and justice producing love: it's there for the taking.

Christopher Carey

What is 'Parish'?

Wellington priest Alan Roberts recently moved to a new parish, Blenheim

It made him question what constitutes a parish. How should changes take place while respecting the rights of people?

In the Encyclical on Evangelisation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI asks: "What is the state of the church 10 years after the Council?"

He then asks: "*Is she firmly established in the midst of the world and yet free and independent enough to call for the world's attention? Does she testify to solidarity with people and at the same time to the divine Absolute? Is she more ardent in contemplation and adoration and more zealous in missionary, charitable and liberating action?*

"Is she ever more committed to the effort to search for the restoration of the complete unity of Christians, a unity that makes more effective the common witness, 'so that the world may believe'? We are all responsible for the answers that could be given to these questions."(EN 15)

I offer this quote, because we find in it an answer to the question, "what is a parish?" Answering Paul VI's question some 30 years further on, I think we could say, in spite of the progress we must yet make, that 'we're on the road. There are lots of reasons for hope.'

Where this hope must be seen is in parish life. It is all very well to have sophisticated developments at higher levels, but if it is not filtering down to parish, then we are in trouble. By examining the health of parishes and comparing them with Pope Paul's reflections on the church, we begin to understand what makes a parish.

The question "what is a parish" needs to be asked because these are difficult times for our church and for many of our parishes. Some will have to close or adjust enormously because we face problems caused through the shortage of clergy, the shifting population, the growth in cities. Some places will be affected more than others.

When decisions about closure are to be made, surely the most important question to ask is ***what is a parish?*** In other words, what justifies its existence? What needs to be there in order to leave it untouched? The questions from Paul VI's statement give us the criteria we need for a decision.

In reflecting back over more than 30 years in parish life, the one thing that strikes me is the depth of involvement from our laity. Certainly there are gaps, but from spirituality to social justice to Scripture, lay people are now competently involved. This year for instance, two lay people will be involved in the preaching of the clergy retreat for the Wellington Archdiocese.

In recent days I have been endeavouring to lay out in print the structure of my new parish, its various groups and committees, in order to obtain a better understanding of how we operate. Glaringly obvious is the huge number of people involved. I marvel at their commitment and their desire to make the parish a living cell in the Body of Christ.

Last week I was invited to a viewing of photos taken by a couple interested in organisations to relieve poverty in our world. I didn't know what to expect, but I was hit with all the facts and figures that show us how injustice reigns today, and then presented with the challenge to correct the imbalance.

This couple used their travels to understand world poverty and how best they might be able to help. The need to be concerned for justice is growing rapidly, something born out by the large number of people who participated in this section of the Wellington Synod last month.

Pointing out the positives from parish life helps us understand just what exists and can come to be within parish; and you will find these prophetic and apostolic actions in almost any parish.

It isn't as though every parish is equipped with all the facilities and personnel to train all who want to go deeper. Probably every person who has moved in the spirit of Vatican II has found the inspiration to do so from their parish. Some parishes may be very alive; others may be limping and even on the way to extinction. Yet somehow they have helped produce great apostles and prophets among us.

An ageing priest once said to me: "The parish must be the oasis for the laity." Today I realise the wisdom of his words, for I have come to know

that the evangelised will automatically become the evangeliser. The command to spread the Good News is just a reminder to stimulate us into action. It's a question of ***seek first the reign of God, and all else will follow.*** *(Lk 12:31)*

In my dreams I would like to see each parish build a small retreat centre. The pastor would be one not occupied with administration, but would spend time there to guide, listen and support. This doesn't mean that a parish does nothing but pray! The challenge to evangelise and be concerned with justice must be presented. We need an apostolate, something to get our teeth stuck into. In Christ our visions can become reality because faith tells us ***nothing is impossible to God.*** (*Lk 1:37*)

When therefore we look at what defines a parish, we surely need to look at something more than a Mass centre. The Documents of Vatican II state: *"the parish exists solely for the good of souls"*. Paul VI says: *"The church is an evangeliser, but she begins by being evangelised herself."* If we reflect on these two statements and tease them out a little we begin to understand.

When people these days tell us they are searching for a parish or express dissatisfaction with their own, it usually relates to the way they are being fed and challenged. Perhaps the important question is ***does it nourish?*** Like the Shepherd, will it revive our drooping spirits? Are we not justified in looking for this, and should we not expect this from any parish?

Practicality forces us to ask if we have too many unnecessary parishes. Can we close or combine some? We have to bear in mind the cost of keeping a parish in existence. Then, on the other hand, why should it always be the little ones that are the first to close? If they are a genuine parish, an oasis for the people of the area, should they not be left untouched? Are they not entitled to a resident priest as much as a larger community? If we are talking about a place of worship, which is just a convenience and the people could easily be part of the central church, then the answer is obvious.

Sometimes, I gain the impression people think Mass can be demanded in a certain place "because it always has been". The hardest thing is asking people to adjust to a change that affects their routine. The reality is that almost everyone will have to make a sacrifice in regard to sacramental timetables sooner rather than later, but if attendance dwindles to almost nothing because of these changes, then I doubt if a parish ever existed in the first place.

These are times that call for change, vision, letting go and courage. It is a time for new dreams, and therefore for us all a time to re-examine what defines a parish. If the church exists for the laity, and the laity share the ministry of their bishop and priest, it doesn't take a genius to deduce that the church will be nothing without the laity and their apostolate has to be valued above all.

So the Vatican Council in the *Document on the Laity* perhaps easily concluded that:

Offering an obvious example of the apostolate on the community level is the parish, inasmuch as it brings together the many human differences found within its boundaries and draws them into the universality of the church.

The laity should accustom themselves to working in the parish in close union with their priests, bringing to the church community their own and the world's problems as well as questions concerning human salvation, all of which should be examined and resolved by common deliberation.

As far as possible, the laity ought to collaborate energetically in every apostolic and missionary undertaking sponsored by their local parish. They should constantly foster a feeling for their own diocese, of which the parish is a kind of cell… (AA 100). ■

Around parishes – *how does change happen?*

Aucklander Shirley Temm is a long serving parishioner, often as a parish council member. She is disturbed by the way changes in parishes are taking place. Tui Motu *interviewed her.*

What do you think a parish is in its essence?

It is the 'worshipping community'. It has a history – it is not just an occasional community gathering. A parish has continuity and there are local customs. e.g. how to distribute communion. In our parish ministers decided that since they were the servants – or 'hosts' – they should receive last, after the people. Local custom arrived at this conclusion: then a rule was imposed to counter it. Priests may come in and change things arbitrarily.

Introducing change is not easy. Change should have a theological reason behind it. It is like an outsider changing the furniture in your home. People need to be given very good instruction before changes happen.

People are accustomed to having roles in liturgy, and if these roles are suddenly and arbitrarily taken away they will be upset. After Vatican II,

Fr Eugene O'Sullivan, the Dominican, instructed a team of people in the Auckland Diocese; then the team went around helping the people to understand the changes. It was a good way.

What are the stresses caused by the shortage of priests?

A parish may be threatened with losing its Sunday morning Mass; or even its very identity by being absorbed into somewhere else. There will always be change. But how is the change introduced? With care. With often long preparation. With careful explanation. When a small parish is being threatened with being absorbed – should it be just 'convenience' which is the driving force? The people's 'convenience' seems to take second place. It is the people who are the parish. They are Body of Christ. That becomes meaningless unless it is acted out. I ask: ***is a change happening, therefore, because it is best for the people under the new circumstances – or because it is more convenient for the priest?***

When a priest moves in from outside, imposes new ideas, and interrupts the continuity of a well-established parish, then there will be real resentment. They have been singing parts of the Mass in a certain way for years – and the new priest insists on changing it.

Or a priest may say: "Not in my church" – to forbid a proposed change. "I won't have guitars in *my* church". But it is not *his* church. The dictatorial priest is effectively bullying the people into conforming to his way.

How should the 'Body of Christ' be acted out?

People must be reverenced and consulted:

- the purpose behind change should be made clear to all;
- the priest needs to say clearly to the people: 'these are the problems I see. What do you see? I would like to hear about it';
- proposals need to be talked through with the Parish Council – and then at a parish meeting. People have a right to be heard. And the process needs to be done with a sense of humility, serving the needs of the people;
- an amalgamation of parishes is an extreme case and both parishes need to be fully consulted – the total group which will be affected.

How do you prepare people for amalgamation?

A few years ago the plan in Auckland was to form 'mega-parishes'. Different existing parishes in one area would be combined and one big church built. But this plan was rejected. People were horrified by the size of these mega-congregations. What would happen to community? The people didn't understand.

There are many things happening in a parish apart from sacramental ministry: the various pastoral and social needs are looked after largely by lay groups. What happens to all these other activities if a parish suddenly ceases to exist?

Parishes will survive and flourish without a resident priest, provided good structures are in place. A lay leader will often come to the task without the sense of authority that a priest has. They come with a sense of humility: 'I am only a channel'. Their prayer is "I am only an intermediary, Lord. Don't let me get in the way".

So what would you say to a young priest, who desires to serve his people faithfully and well?

I would say: read *John*'s Gospel where Christ washes the disciples' feet. Christ does the slave's work. The servant ideal is primary.

You have this sense of a new responsibility – but don't let that be a reason for throwing your weight about! ***Servanthood*** must come first. You must listen – and not be moved to an arbitrary decision by the first powerful voice you hear.

Every priest who moves into a parish should have it mind, that he will make no changes; he will touch nothing for at least a year... until he gets to know how the parish ticks.

Because if he rides roughshod over the local customs he is giving the message that '*what you used to do didn't count; it is not worth preserving*'!

A priest who moves in from elsewhere will have lost the support group in his old parish. He may be grieving. It will help if there is a liturgy to introduce the new priest. There may need to a liturgy of closure. People have to be well prepared by such liturgies for radical change.

Parish First Communion

Where a little parish community is a long way from anywhere it is very hard for the bishop and priests to maintain ministry. In the city amalgamation also breaks apart existing communities. Any process of amalgamation, any major change needs very thorough consultation. Any decision must be carefully explained.

In the early church Mass was celebrated in a central place and the consecrated species taken out to households and local communities as well as to the sick. Is that a model we should return to? Our present model is so fixed that a circumstance like a temporary shortage of priests causes the structure to collapse. Is it the structure which is too rigid and cannot adapt? ■

Lay volunteers in the church

Author Mary Woods has spent much of her working life as a volunteer, studying how volunteer work happens, and writing and lecturing about it. Here she examines two instances of church volunteers and draws some conclusions

Paul grew up in a family where serving at the altar, reading at Mass and printing the parish bulletin on Saturday were as natural as going to school and doing homework. At University, he joined the Newman Society who nominated him to the Lay Assembly. From here he was elected to the Diocesan Pastoral Council. He also joined the Christchurch *Commission for Justice and Development (CCJD)*, which became increasingly important in his life.

After spending six months at the Taizé ecumenical community in France, assisted by a grant from the National Commission for *Evangelisation, Justice and Development* (EJD), Paul returned to New Zealand and became chairperson of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. Twenty-five years later he still remembers how he felt part of a movement that was exciting and empowering. Laity were rediscovering Gospel values of community in the post Vatican II church.

He was affirmed and inspired by his mentor, Bishop Brian Ashby, who put great faith in people and good processes. Paul remembers a time when the DPC agreed to shift the next Lay Assembly to the West Coast. Bishop Ashby, absent from that meeting, said to Paul afterwards "I think the DPC has made a mistake but I will support your decision 100 percent." It was this sort of respect and faith that empowered Paul.

Paul's energy focused on justice issues. He helped initiate the EJD project, *Made in God's Image*, examining sexism in the church. The project came under fire from some clergy and laity, but strength came from the justice of the cause and from the mutual support that the people in the project gave each other as well as very positive and grateful responses from many Catholics.

Then a sea change occurred. In his diocese the Lay Assembly was discontinued and the DPC abolished. Paul and the rest of the CCJD were simply dismissed and dishonoured. "I felt bitter about that, and still do. I trusted the processes and believed that subverting processes by abuse of power interfered with the work of the Spirit. All the forums for sharing responsibility were shut down."

Paul's story is played out in a New Zealand context but bears lots of similarity to the experiences of Barbara in parishes on opposite sides of the world. Barbara grew up in a small NZ community in a family that had been Catholic for generations. She became a church reader as her mother had before her. She didn't really see herself as a volunteer, but rather she found it difficult to say "no" when somebody invited her to do something for the church.

Then she went to live in England where she was invited as a new parishioner to join 'CAFOD', an organisation that raised funds for projects overseas. She had a sense of loyalty and responsibility, and she was young and able to do this work. Besides, she was new to the parish and wanted to become involved. She also saw that the group was filling a real and worthwhile need. Her involvement brought her fun, fulfilment and good friends.

Barbara later became a member of the parish pastoral council. Its focus was pastoral and its style was collaborative. The council worked from a spiritual base. This involved time spent in reflection related to the issue. 'What might early Christian communities have done in this situation?' 'What was the greater need of the parish?' Each person in the group was listened to. Responsibility was shared and not driven by just one person. They were journeying together. When the parish priest left suddenly, the parish was able to continue to function.

Like Paul, Barbara too found all this a fulfilling experience. On a practical level she enjoyed learning the mechanics of how a parish functioned. But she also knew her contribution was valued and appreciated and that together the pastoral council had created a community that was able to sustain itself through difficult times.

Barbara returned to New Zealand and found herself in a parish that was seeking members for a parish council, so she responded to the call. What she found was a more priest-driven parish. Meetings were less collaborative and democratic, and this did not lend itself so easily to her skill and experience, so she resigned. Both Barbara and Paul continue ministries as readers in their parishes, but the church has lost the opportunity to access their other considerable skills and experience.

I thought I could write this article independent of the politics of the time. But as I listened to these stories, I knew I couldn't. Church politics have huge implications for lay people in the church. The scenarios played out in the personal stories are also played out in the wider church. Since 1962 when Vatican II was described as Pope John throwing open the windows of the Vatican and inviting the Holy Spirit to blow through, the church has come on a shaky journey.

By the 1980s many lay people had read the documents and grasped the concept of the priesthood of the laity. They were ready to take up their rightful role in the church. But after the first rush of enthusiasm the weight of the hierarchy damped them down. Many left, sad, hurt and disillusioned. Some stayed disgruntled in the pews, their ability to contribute severely curtailed.

Then came the exposure of a deluge of sexual abuse among the clergy world wide. The church was revealed in all its weakness as an institution as vulnerable as its members. Despite this, people still hang in there recognising that for all its frailty the church is still the source of our beliefs and our Sacraments. It still matters that we belong to our worshipping communities.

Now in 2006 the church is faced with a shrinking clergy, but what of the laity? This time the lay volunteers will be involved by default. There can be no church without them. However, volunteering is always a choice. People have many demands pulling them towards paid work and family and community activities. The secular world is becoming more aware of how to maintain and keep their volunteers by understanding their needs. Lay people will be driven away from the church if they feel powerless, unappreciated, unsupported and not listened to.

In 2003 the Bishops' Conference issued a *Code of Ethics for Church Volunteers*. This document does not do volunteers justice. It does not take into account their huge diversity, and is irrelevant to most. But far more importantly, the document appears to be putting all the responsibility on the volunteers without accepting that the church too has responsibilities. Yet this is spelled out in the *Code of Canon Law*. Volunteering should be a partnership between the volunteer and the church where each party has rights and responsibilities.

People who volunteer in the church usually see themselves as doing this as part of their Christian duty. Like Barbara and Paul, many volunteers are often seeking to belong to their church community. They want to do their jobs well, to know what is expected of them and some may need training. They may need affirmation that they are doing a good job and that the roles they are performing are worthwhile and necessary.

The Bishops' document, born in the shadow of clergy sexual abuse, does not seem relevant to the needs of today's volunteers. There are potential issues of abuse in any group and these are magnified by the power involved in a position established by the church. Maybe we would be better served by a principle that says: ***Volunteers will recognise the power that their position in the church gives them. They will take care to use it in a way that does not exploit any person emotionally, sexually or spiritually***.

The *Code of Ethics* states: ***At all times volunteers will conduct themselves in a manner, which ensures that all people are supported, and empowered through the services they provide.*** I would strongly endorse this statement, but this can only happen if the volunteers are themselves supported and empowered by the church.

This is a time when dioceses are grappling with how to deal with a shrinking numbers of clergy and the inevitable changes in church roles. Is it too much to hope that every pastoral plan will include plans for how the volunteers in the church will receive the respect, training and support that is their right, to enable them to do their jobs well? ■

Launching out in Wellington

interview with Joan McFetridge

Wellington's *Launch Out* Formation programme is now in its fifth year. Its Director, Joan McFetridge, is confident it's going well and that the Archdiocese is "doing something very right". The candidates, she says, who are in their fourth and fifth year show real signs of growth in their understanding of church and faith, enabling them to exercise leadership in the church.

The candidates must complete four years of formation including spiritual formation and complete a Diploma in Pastoral Leadership which takes four or five years. They also do a pastoral project every year. Currently there are 23 in the Programme with five in their final year. About two-thirds who start are on track to complete the course. They are all working towards lay leadership in parishes. And they know they are not 'pretend priests'.

There are principles set down for establishing new pastoral areas in the Archdiocese which guarantee the integrity of existing parishes (see below). They will not get 'lost' in the new pastoral areas. Each area will have a priest and lay leaders who together

form the pastoral team. Each parish will have one person, priest or lay leader, responsible for it.

The priest will be the sacramental minister across the pastoral area. Some may be older, semi-retired men. But it is found that priests who come into parishes regularly from outside tend to be welcomed and greatly loved by the people. Parishes in close geographical proximity are the first to be formed into pastoral areas. There will be a reciprocal ministry between these parishes.

Initially, the Wellington parishes were encouraged to define their own pastoral areas. There was wide consultation of the laity. The Hutt Valley chose to go into eight areas. "We may discover", says Joan, "that eight are too many. Eastbourne and Petone are presently linked, with a priest resident in Eastbourne and the new Pastoral Leader resident in the Petone presbytery. The presbytery is her home. A similar situation is being set up between Taita and Naenae. Both of these pastoral areas could eventually gain a third parish and that may well work better.

"We have learnt that before a Lay Pastoral Leader goes into a parish a team needs to go in and prepare the ground. We speak to the people about leadership and collaborative ministry, and about the role and vocation of the laity in the church.

"The Archdiocese pays the Lay Leader a professional salary, which may include accommodation. They are invited to join the Archdiocesan pension scheme. There is a job description and employment contract which is tailored to each particular pastoral area. The Archbishop is their employer. They will have security of tenure in their new position."

Lay consultation

Joan insists that consultation before any change takes place needs to be very wide. The diocesan paper *Wel-Com* is used as a means of informing people what might happen. Any suggestion to merge parishes must come only from the people of the parish, not from 'above'. All voices have to be consulted before there is any decision to merge.

The bishop's role is crucial. The *Launch Out* people know they are responsible to him. He needs to be seen, for instance, when a new Pastoral Leader is installed at the Sunday Mass, so that as many parishioners as possible are witnesses. The lay people still 'love Father', so the installation of a lay leader has to be done with great diplomacy.

The priests have to be supported, because they too are feeling under threat in these changing times. The recent Archdiocesan Synod was very affirming in these respects. *Launch Out* and lay leadership is now seen as a real vocation in the church.

The overall lay response has been favourable. Nevertheless, at every appointment there will be disappointment: some will regret 'we don't have Father any more'. It is a real challenge to the new Leaders to get it right so that the new system will be accepted. There is already evidence that the Lay Leader sometimes can enable something to happen which a priest might find very difficult. It is bringing a new energy into ministry, and this is no reflection on the existing priests. The priests must be helped to move with dignity into what is for them a very new situation.

The responsibility of Lay Pastoral Leaders will include helping with sacramental preparation, training of ministers. It is they who will employ other members of the parish staff. The principle is that if you are going to give a lay person responsibility in a parish, you have to give them the authority which goes with it. They are literally the parish leaders. It is a totally new situation in the modern church, and it demands a courageous new strategy. ■

Principles for the establishment of Pastoral Areas Archdiocese of Wellington

1. Each parish will keep its own identity and community.
2. Each parish will have at least one celebration of the Eucharist either on a Saturday evening or a Sunday.
3. Parish Pastoral Councils and Parishes will be prepared before a Pastoral Area is established. This will include principles of Collaborative Ministry.
4. Each area is to establish a Pastoral Area Council. It is to carry out consultation amongst the parishes in order to establish those areas of pastoral ministry that belong primarily to each parish, and those which can be worked more effectively in collaboration with all the parishes in the pastoral area.
5. The position of Lay Pastoral Leader is to be advertised. Those in consideration for the position will have *Launch Out* qualifications or its equivalent.
6. The decision for the establishment of Pastoral Areas will reside with the Archbishop, in consultation with the Appointments Committee and the Advisory Committee.
7. Parishes within Pastoral Areas will not be disadvantaged sacramentally or financially because of lay leadership.
8. Every parish will retain access to the sacraments.
9. The fact that a priest might be retiring or accepting another appointment does not necessarily mean that that Pastoral Area will become operative.
10. Parishes in close geographical proximity to one another will be among the first to be considered when deciding on the establishment of an operative Pastoral Area within the Archdiocese.
11. The spiritual and pastoral care of the parishioners is of paramount importance. That is, appointments are made for the sake of the parish/pastoral area, not for the convenience or need of the clergy or lay pastoral leader.

Thoughts on women's ministry

Bridget Taumoepeau

Recently I was on holiday in a small New Zealand town. I was pleased to see there was a Saturday night Vigil Mass. I went along to a lovely church with about 50 friendly people there. At the beginning a parishioner announced: "Father cannot be here". This was the first time that I had attended a Eucharistic service conducted by lay members of a parish.

What a wonderful experience! Lovely music provided by two women musicians; thoughtful prayers and readings; the prepared sermon was read beautifully; an air of respectful informality. It was a service to remember and I was sorry that it had not been longer. Nearly all the liturgy was conducted by women including a young woman as a Eucharistic Minister – I suspect she was the daughter of the other Minister!

In the quiet moments, I pondered, as I often do, on the role of women in the church. Without women we would probably not have had this lovely prayer time, including receiving the Eucharist. Everyone in the congregation connected with them, and I am sure they are women actively involved in the running of the parish. There was a joyousness and a feeling that these women were fully in the world running their families, working, contributing to society, yet with an active spiritual life.

As a young woman, I became a Catholic for what I thought were 'intellectual reasons'. I quickly realised that what I enjoyed in the church was the catholicity of it; the connection wherever I was in the world; the huge range of attitudes in the faithful, which was very stimulating; the sense of history and tradition; the beauty of the liturgy.

I was fortunate to get to know many religious Sisters over the years and to work with them. What wonderful women, so devoted to their humanitarian work, often working with the most needy people in society – seeing Christ in all. They also take such a pragmatic approach, which is so refreshing. Practical Christianity at its best.

On the other hand I have had some fairly mind-blowing experiences – it being suggested to me, at the men's University College where I was at Mass, that I should attend Mass at a women's college, presumably because of my gender. I felt like leaving the church on that occasion, and I have heard many people say they have indeed left, following times when they have felt very excluded or judged, with none of the compassion or inclusiveness that we should expect from the church.

The other area that has amazed me has been the realisation of the rules and regulations that emanate from Rome. A parish priest, admittedly in a rather embarrassed way, told me at a rehearsal for readers at Mass, when I should bow or genuflect. I could not believe that this was laid down by regulation. Apart from the impersonality of it, I felt quite insulted that I couldn't express my devotion and respect spontaneously.

More seriously, young members of my family recently approached a priest about enrolling their child at a Catholic school and were criticised and humiliated. Not surprisingly, the child is now at the local government school and the wonderful opportunity for engaging that family in the church again was lost.

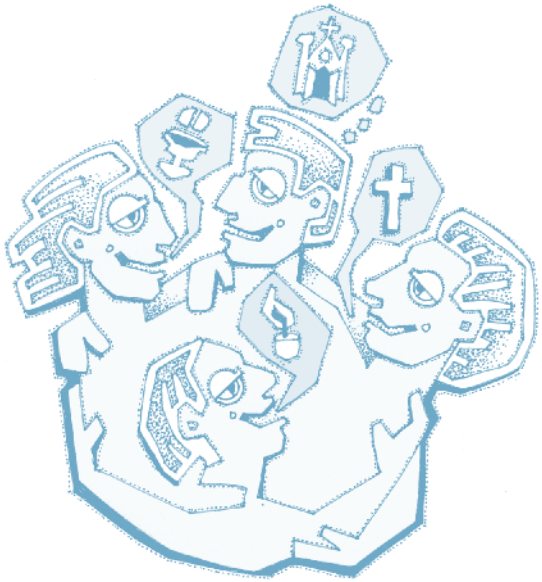
And so to the future of the church – obviously the laity, predominately women, have taken more and more responsibility, but have they been given more respect? It is hard to see women still being excluded from the priesthood, whereas they are in high positions in every other area of life and we pride ourselves on equal opportunities and respect for women. There is much concern about other religions' view of women, but what is happening in our own?

And for myself? It has been hard to keep faithful and positive. Sometimes I think that it has been good for me to be exposed to a degree of suffering. I am no longer complacent, or even particularly comfortable, in the church. While I have no doubts about my personal relationship with Christ, I struggle on a daily basis with my place in the church. In the end I realise I love the church and just hope that the church will love me.

Bridget Taumoepeau is a psychiatrist, living in the Horowhenua

Overcoming discord in the church

Former Master General of the Dominicans, Timothy Radcliffe OP, looks at polarisation in the Catholic Church. The first thing that needs to happen is for the two sides to talk to each other



In some parts of the world, the church is deeply fragmented. This is acutely the case in some European countries such as Holland and Austria, and in some countries in Latin America. And I don't know why, but I think it is most acutely felt in the United States, more than anywhere else.

There have always been tensions within the church. This is necessary and healthy. But I have the impression that it has reached a stage when we have an urgent obligation to heal these divisions. A young American theologian, Christopher Ruddy, wrote: "Polarisation is a luxury which the church can no longer indulge or even tolerate... Polarisation has strangled the church's ability to be genuinely evangelical or missionary."

I devoted two chapters in my latest book, *What is the Point of Being a Christian?*, published earlier this year, to healing divisions in the church. My core thesis is: we usually think of this polarisation in terms of the dichotomy of left and right, progressive and conservative. But these categories are alien to Catholic thinking. They derive from the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment philosophers believed that the light had dawned because they had cast off the darkness of tradition, and especially of Catholic dogma. They liberated themselves from the past. But this supposes an opposition between tradition and innovation – and that is alien to Catholicism. It is the tradition that we have received, the Gospels, St. Paul, the great theologians of the past, who always renew us and provoke fresh insights. St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the most creative theologians ever, would have been absolutely astonished if you had said to him that he was somehow against the tradition. The Second Vatican Council, for example, was a moment of incredible newness, and simultaneously a return to the Gospels and the theology of the early church.

What has happened is we have allowed ourselves to become prisoners of other people's ways of thinking. As Catholics we have to claim our own categories. So how are we to describe this division? I opted for the terms *Kingdom Catholics* and *Communion Catholics*. I want to make the case that we need both.

Kingdom Catholics

By ***Kingdom Catholics***, I mean those of us who have a deep sense of the church as the pilgrim people of God, on the way to the kingdom. The theologians who have been central for this tradition have been people like the Jesuit Karl Rahner, and the Dominicans Edward Schillebeeckx and Gustavo Gutiérrez. This tradition stresses openness to the world, finding the presence of the Holy Spirit working outside the church, freedom and the pursuit of justice. They became very much identified with a publication called *Concilium*.

Communion Catholics

By ***Communion Catholics***, I mean those who came, after the Council, to feel the urgent need to rebuild the inner life of the church. They went with theologians like Hans von Balthasar and the then Joseph Ratzinger. Their theology often stressed Catholic identity, was wary of too hearty an embrace of modernity, and they stressed the cross. They too had their publication. It was called *Communio*.

Of course, all this is a bit of a caricature. I am able to go into a more nuanced analysis in my book. Most of us will feel some attraction to both of these traditions, but will probably feel a primary identification with one or the other. We will only heal the divisions if we stretch our imaginations open to understand why the others think and feel as they do. Before we can talk, we must sympathise, and feel how it is that their way of understanding the church offers them a home, a place in which to be at peace.

Both are suffering

Both Kingdom and Communion Catholics are suffering from what Mindy Thomson Fullilove calls *root shock* in her book of the same title. She was describing the traumatic experience

for black communities of enduring the destruction of their neighbourhoods. Millions of black people found not just their houses destroyed in the name of urban development but their communities dispersed.

So root shock is the loss of home. Fullilove writes that "root shock is the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem. ... Root shock undermines trust, increases anxiety about letting loved ones out of one's sight, destabilises relationships, destroys social, emotional and financial resources, and increases the risk for every kind of stress-related disease, from depression to heart attack. Root shock leaves people chronically cranky, barking distinctive, croaky complaints that their world was abruptly taken away."

One of the effects of root shock is that you want to live with people like you. You become suspicious and nervous about people who are different. I argue that all Catholics, especially those in the United States, are suffering from root shock.

Both Kingdom and Communion Catholics find their sense of being at home in the church threatened and undermined. Kingdom Catholics were filled with joy by the Vatican Council, and felt themselves to be on the way to a deeply renewed and less clerical church, which would be a sign of hope and liberation. But as the years went by, they often felt disappointed and betrayed. The church was not turning out to be the home they had hoped for.

And Communion Catholics also felt betrayed. They endured the loss of beloved traditions, ways of celebrating the liturgy, a sense of a Catholic world. Nuns threw away their habits, and it seemed that you could believe and do whatever you liked. And so both blamed the other side for destroying our home. And this produced just the anger and insecurity that Fullilove described. Each side blames the other for their exile, and that produces anger and frustration.

How todeal with this division

The first thing that we must do is to get some feel of the loss of home that 'the other side' feels. We must get some sense of their pain in exile. Then, we need to grasp that the church needs both parties if it is to flourish.

Both understandings of what it means to find a home in the church are present at the Last Supper. On that night Jesus shared with his disciples his body and his blood. I argue in my book that it is vital to see the difference between the words of the bread and the words over the wine. It differs slightly in each of the synoptic Gospels, but the thrust is the same.

The bread is given to the disciples. ***This is my body, given for you.*** The sharing of Christ's body gathers the community together around the altar. This is the community of Christ's small band of friends, who have shared his life and now his death. But the cup of wine is blessed ***for you and for all***, as it says in the Eucharist. This is the cup that Jesus will not drink again until the Kingdom. It looks forward to when the whole of humanity will be gathered into communion in Christ.

So the sharing of the bread is centripetal, one might say. It gathers us into the community of Christ's friends and disciples. It is a sign of that interior life of the church which is so crucial for Communion Catholics. But the cup of wine is centrifugal. It expresses that outward thrust which is important for Kingdom Catholics, the reaching out to all humanity, ready to find the Holy Spirit working in all people.

The central sacrament of the church, the sign of our shared home, then has this double rhythm. It gathers in and reaches out. It is like breathing. We breathe in and we breathe out. If we just emptied our lungs or just filled them, then we would die! We need both if we are to live, just as the church needs a fruitful and living tension between Kingdom and Communion Catholics. I believe that it is a tension which is present in the very name of our church, Roman Catholic. *Roman* stresses the clear identity that we have, in communion with the see of Rome, an identifiable community, with its particular ways of talking and praying. *Catholic* stresses the outreach for what is universal, and which can be impatient with too secure and fixed an identity.

This tension has always been present in the church. It is, one might suggest, the tension between *Matthew*'s Gospel and *Luke*'s, between Peter and Paul. It is present today still. We need to live this tension happily and fruitfully, and not as a battle to the death. And that means that we have to dialogue.

Conversation

Let's begin with a basic objection to my whole project of *dialogue*. When Cardinal Joseph Bernardin began the *Common Ground Initiative*, his aim was to create a space for dialogue, in which the different groups within the church could talk to each other. But many of his fellow cardinals rejected it from the beginning.

The message seems to have been that if we disagree about fundamental truths of the faith, then there is no need to dialogue, since we already know what is the teaching of the church. And if we disagree on what is not fundamental, then what need is there for dialogue anyway, since people are free to believe what they wish? Dialogue is a liberal sort of idea anyway, and so to make dialogue a priority is to opt for the agenda of those who I have called Kingdom Catholics.

In a lecture which John Allen of the *National Catholic Reporter* gave earlier this year in Washington on the spirituality of communion, he said, "In the first place, dialogue is a term with political baggage, because it has come to be seen as a characteristic virtue of the left. At the level of popular perception, liberals talk about dialogue, conservatives about truth. Whether that's fair or accurate is, for the moment, beside the point. In some

Catholic circles, pleas for 'dialogue' are believed to mask a relativism in which one theological or ecclesiological stance is considered as good as another, so the aim is simply for everyone to 'get along,' rather than to establish which positions cohere with the faith that comes from the apostles and which don't. As a result, the term 'dialogue' is by now ideologically charged and therefore unhelpful."

I would like to stand up for dialogue. It is not just a trendy liberal idea. It lies at the very roots of the Western intellectual tradition. Perhaps the most influential texts from the ancient world are Plato's dialogues, and Plato was anything but a wishy-washy liberal. Pagan philosophers like Seneca and Marcus Aurelius wrote dialogues and Christians followed their example. The *Acts of the Apostles* describes Paul as literally dialoguing with people left, right and centre. St. Justin Martyr wrote dialogues in the second century, as did St. Anselm of Canterbury in the 12th century.

If traditionalist Catholics dismiss the whole idea of dialogue as a trendy liberal idea, then it simply shows that they do not know the tradition. But if one is going to get dialogue going, then one has to be very sensitive to how people hear words, and there is no point in getting things off to a bad start. So let's try another word – *conversation*.

Conversation is a beautiful word. Its original meaning was "to live together," "to share a life." This hangs on in the English legal term 'criminal conversation,' which means to have an illegal sexual relationship! Conversation came to mean talking to each other in the 16th century, because it is by talking to each other that we build community. A shared life means shared words. So the church is held in unity by the millions of conversations that cross theological boundaries and which heal divisions.

This is one of the ways in which we find our place in the life of the Trinity. The Trinity is the Father speaking the Word, which is the Son, and their shared sending forth of the Spirit. Indeed Christoph Schwöbel, a German theologian, has said: "God is conversation."

Talking about the truths

What about the objection that we do not need to talk about the fundamental truths of our faith? They are, after all, defined. But we need to go on talking about even the basic dogmas of the faith. We need to go on thinking about them, arguing about them, trying to find new ways to express them. To think otherwise would be to fall into a very modern and fundamentalist understanding of faith, which thinks that you can get the truth wrapped up neatly in a few formulae and stop thinking.

Every great theologian has known that one hangs on to the tiniest glimpse of the mystery of God by going on talking. It is true that the church has, for example, defined the Resurrection of Christ as part of our faith. A Catholic cannot just drop that from his or her faith. But we will never cease from struggling to understand what that means. We will always be wrestling with the Gospel, like Jacob wrestling with the angel who is God, to obtain a blessing. We shall never stop trying out new hypotheses, challenging other people's way of expressing the faith, searching for new metaphors, until we see God face to face.

Think of Thomas Aquinas. As a Dominican I often do! He wrote hundreds of thousands of words, and the fruit of all those words was to glimpse the mystery beyond all words. And so he exclaimed that all he had written was but straw. But if he had not struggled to write, then he would never have had that moment of revelation.

From the National Catholic Reporter, *May 5, 2006, a mix of the printed text and spoken word of a lecture delivered April 1 at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress.*

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As T.S. Eliot wrote in the *Four Quartets*:

There is only the fight to recover
what has been lost
And found and lost again and again:
and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitous. But perhaps
neither gain nor loss.
For us, there is only the trying. The
rest is not our business.

So discussing our faith, putting questions, arguing with each other, debating, is not a wishy-washy liberal activity, whereas a faithful Catholic just accepts what is given. From the beginning, the church has needed this dialogue – let us call it 'conversation' – to help us draw near to the mystery of God which is beyond words. God, of course, is the mystery beyond words, wrapped in silence. But that silence does not mean that we do not need words. As Schwöbel said, it is a silence between our words. Our words make a space for the silence that speaks. ■

Next month, in Part II Fr Timothy looks at ways in which 'conversation' can take place between the two poles of the church.

Artist ar

Tui Motu's illustrator, Donald Moorhead, wearing his hat as art critic, just how

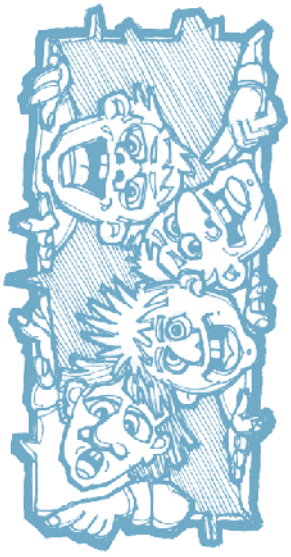
The illustrations

***Albert*:** Illustration is a basic form of communication. The foot washing picture **(November '05)** is a literal illustration of *Jesus washing the disciple's feet*. For me it has an earthy, nuggety feel. What were your own feelings when you sketched it?

***Donald*:** I express things better with a pencil or a brush than by talking. I read and reread a text until an image comes to me. Then I have to decide whether to express that image as a cartoon, or in abstract, or whatever. The 'chunky, rugged and earthy' expressed what I felt...

***Albert*:** ...but that's exactly what the article is all about: '*put your money where your mouth is!*' The invitation is to live the Christian way, not ostentatiously, but doing something down to earth. It relates well with the reading.

***Donald*:** I zeroed in on this Gospel event – Christ washing the disciples' feet – because it seemed to sum up perfectly the 'servant' image of the church expressed in the article.

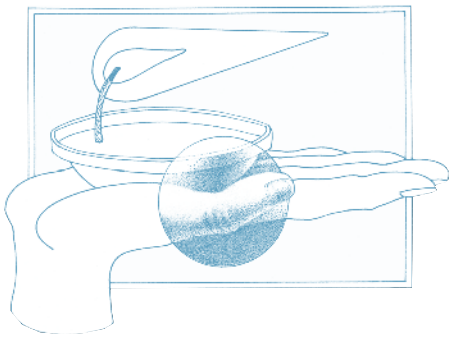


Albert: The *Hole in the Roof* Gang **(March'06)** illustrates the story of the four friends who brought the paralysed man to Jesus to be healed. Here is your caricature style – the almost leering faces looking down on the scene. You can imagine the people below saying 'Hey! what's going on?'. And it corresponds again to the mood of the article – the fourth man at the end walking away saying "Who's going to fix the roof?"

Donald: The four faces I drew were ordinary 'Kiwi blokes'. I didn't think at all of the First Century. I liked the challenge. Here was a new aspect, four faces looking down. The faces and the hands had to be sketched sufficiently correctly that the 'snapshot' was believable. They are people looking down on a scene...

Albert: ... but it also captures the people in the room looking up and seeing the intruders. It's quite funny.

Donald: Glynn Cardy is often easier to illustrate because the story invites this sort of cartoon type presentation. Whereas Diana Pendola, for example, demands something more abstract or symbolic.



Albert: Let's look at one of hers, then. *Darkness into Light* **(March '05)** contrasts the bleak darkness of the author's experience with the light that comes in the end. Why did you choose this style of image?

Donald: I wanted it to be minimalist – like an old-fashioned camera shot which focuses only on one aspect. It's simply an outline drawing, reflecting the austerity of the Carmelite woman's life. The thumb detail indicates that it is real.
Quizzically, I was also offering a challenge to the editors to see if they would pull it off on the page! It was a pencil sketch, not an ink drawing as I usually do.

Albert: So this was an experimental drawing?

Donald: I have four or five different styles: abstract, realism, cartoon, icon pictures – and ones like this which are different again.

Albert: The illustrator therefore is always striving to enlarge what the article is describing.

Donald: If a piece is weighty and serious, you don't want a cartoon. You have to give due honour to what the mood and style of the article is. Sometimes I make a false start. Probably about one in ten drawings I have to begin all over again. The whole illustration process is a gestation – it's a struggle. In the end you finally achieve it and it expresses something personal. The challenge is a single image has to tie up a lot of what the article is about.

The artist

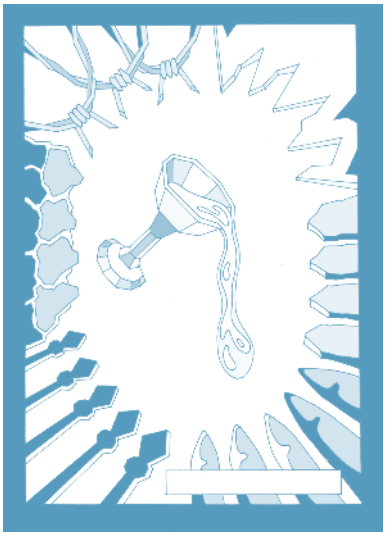
Dunedin artist and musician Donald Moorhead has been *Tui Motu*'s illustrator since the very first issue. An Aucklander by birth, Donald trained as a primary teacher. After a few years teaching he was 'captured' by the commercial world, working in advertising and developing his natural talents as drawer and cartoonist.
Since moving to live in Dunedin in 1990, he has become a freelance artist. He is also a music teacher and performer – pianist/organist. He has further developed his painting skills. Sandro

nd critic

explains to Professor Albert Moore,
Donald's creations come to life

Donald (*left*) showing Albert (*right*) how it all happens

The magazine covers



Albert: The recent *Blood Spilt* cover (**June '06**) is very dramatic. It obviously derives from the photograph of the *Last Supper* in the leading article where the 'blood' is spilt on a white tablecloth.

Donald: I didn't have to think about this one! Michael said: "Draw me a chalice with 'blood' spilling out". The creativity was in the outline – the spears, the razor wire, the different fences. All the barriers to intercommunion as expressed in the article.

Albert: What is also impressive is the gradation of colour. The final result is quite beautiful. It gives us a simple, definite image.

Donald: First, I do rough sketches in pencil. Then I build these up into a drawing. I make a photocopy to work out a colour scheme, but the office has to put all that in for me.

Albert: The *'Benedicere'/Blessing* (**February '05**) is again different in style and in some ways more complex. It is like a stained glass window, illustrating a New Year's prayer of blessing composed. I was struck of course by the hands – God above and the person in prayer below. I missed the earth in the middle! If there had been more colours, I suppose that would have stood out more clearly.

Donald: The window is open, suggesting a sense of openness to giving and receiving blessing. "May your hands remain open...", the poem says.

Albert: Another unusual feature is having the whole text of the poem on the cover itself. You can spend time looking at the poem and reflecting on it. As you read the poem you see a lot more in the sketch. Full marks for an illustration which 'leads you on'!

Albert: The *Hiroshima* image (**August '05**) is not so obviously a religious image. What thoughts came to you here?

Donald: There was the link with the London bombing – hence the Underground sign and the fractured dove of peace. Three images are being combined into one. To achieve all the gradients means the original artwork looks quite complex. I have to imagine it and keep it harmonious.

An image like this, in contrast with an abstract image which is simple and clean, has lines which are broken, stopping and starting. The black and turquoise colours provide wonderful variety of tone.

Albert: Even with the limitations of a two-colour process there are so many radiances and shades that are possible.

Thank you for taking me inside the artist's soul! ■

at work

Botticelli is his particular inspiration: notably in the clarity of line and colour that distinguishes the great Florentine.

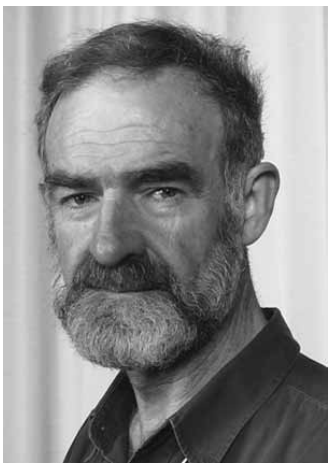
The influence of Botticelli can be seen in Donald's pictures especially in his figures – the way he draws hands and fingers, limbs and ankles. "I think in lines. I draw them on paper. Then I fill in the colour", Donald declares.

Here he is interviewed by another great friend of *Tui Motu*. Albert Moore is retired Professor of Religious Studies. Albert too is fascinated by music, including jazz, and the visual arts.


Helen Bergin

Celebrating a Dominican Jubilee

Two Dominicans discuss contrasting ways God can touch people through the preacher


Peter Murnane

The Living Word of God: the preacher's task

All Christians are called to preach the Word of God. Since 1206, Dominican women and men have responded to the call in a particular way. This article will reflect on the gift of preaching from the perspective of the preacher.

While some might restrict preaching to speaking publicly in a church environment, the preached Word is often more powerfully experienced in the *actions* of a person moved by the Word within. We suggest that there are two 'movements' to preaching the Word. The first happens when a person who is alert to the Word of God is challenged in some way, either from deep within themselves or by outside events. The second movement occurs when a person, disturbed by the Word, recognises its implications and begins expressing them outwardly in words or actions.

The remarkable claim was made of St Dominic that he spoke only "to God or about God". Engaging with God is the start of all preaching. Telling about God is a consequence. Living for God is the fruit.

Preaching with our lives

Helen: One significant manner of preaching occurs through actions, especially symbolic actions. Peter, you were involved in such an action last year when you celebrated 40 years of priestly ministry. How did that experience embody your call to preach?

Peter: I had been looking for a way to celebrate this remarkable gift. There must be some inner digestive process, for one day I awoke convinced that 40 days in the desert would be a good symbol, and a bike pilgrimage to Uluru might be a feasible way of doing that. This insight coincided with my deepening awareness of the suffering of Australia's Aboriginal people. The history is coming clearer now of the appalling injustices that we white newcomers have committed against the Aboriginal people for the past 228 years. I've lived here in Aotearoa for many years and my own inaction had been gnawing at me.

The initial inspiration was exciting. It was followed by fun-work on the internet, measuring road distances (2,700 km), seasonal temperatures and wind-roses (direction diagrams). I listened to many riders' stories. It was harder work getting on the bike and testing how far an old bloke could cover in a day. My training goal was 200 km per week; seldom achieved! On the pilgrimage we averaged 84km per day.

At first I didn't see the pilgrimage as an act of preaching. It was a holiday with an ethical point! Now I realize it *was* preaching, and it taught me how preaching might be conceived in a moment, but needs then to be processed and prepared for, perhaps over months. Others heard about the plan through email or 'grapevine'. I invited colleagues to assess my sanity and was delighted to find that some – including a bishop – wanted to participate! We told Aboriginal groups and Reconciliation Networks around Australia. We informed politicians, media and schools.

Five people began the ride at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, then visited the Federal Parliament, where legislation harmful to Aborigines originated – and is still enacted! Some members of both Houses graciously emerged on that cold August morning to farewell us – with speeches, of course! Electronic and print media gave good coverage.

Helen: How has this act of preaching affected you?

Peter: It energized me, even before I was confident I could do it. Should we measure all our inspirations to preach in this way? Is it a sign that our preaching is going to give life to people if, for instance, the coming Sunday homily makes us jump up and down, eager to 'hit the road' and deliver it?

Riding hundreds of kilometres across plains and semi-desert was a wonderful opportunity to meditate. It made me more contemplative. I chose to ride alone for several hours daily. From the saddle I could see and hear things completely lost in a sealed, speeding car.

Most satisfying were our encounters with Aborigines. I deeply regret that until I was 20 years old I did not meet an Aboriginal person, so totally had we segregated them. I have since met Aborigines who were part of the eight 'stolen generations', taken violently from their families by government policy. The pilgrimage let us make deeper contact – from Canberra to Central Australia. Best of all, the Pilgrimage attracted Phillip Yubbagurri Brown, an Aboriginal who works for Black-White reconciliation. He became our ambassador, steward, driver, friend and didgeridoo player!

I believe this kind of dialogue is genuine preaching. It taught and changed me as much as it may have changed those we met – including the many school children we were privileged to encounter in classrooms.

Preaching with our words

Peter: But here, back home, 'ordinary' preaching is also important. Perhaps the commonest form we know occurs during Eucharist. Helen, you have occasionally preached on Sundays. When preaching, how would you describe what you are doing?

Helen: As with your experience, Peter, I agree that a preacher does not start from nowhere. When preaching, I recognise my connections to personal and social histories as well as to various communities. I draw strengths and limitations from all.

I do not find preaching easy despite believing in its great worth. Preaching is one outreach of mission – discovering the Word and letting what is interior be shared. It requires attentiveness to the Word of God. For me, there are phases of ruminating, struggling and waiting for insights about the Word. However, preaching also requires attentiveness to the people addressed and to their stories. The most beautiful words will miss the mark if they do not engage people's lives with the vitality flowing from God's Word.

Peter: What happens to you as a preacher?

Helen: Something quite profound takes place when I am privileged to preach. First, I hear the Word as spoken to myself. I am challenged by the Word, whether it come from a First Testament prophet speaking of neglecting the sheep, or from Jesus describing the woman donating her tiny coin to the Temple treasury. Second, as I read the Word of God out loud, I often experience an energy or passion which happens in the very reading aloud within community. It is not just my head and mouth that are affected. My whole person is touched by God's Word. I am invited to transformation.

Alphonso Doss, India, *Christ Preaching*, 1988

Peter: What about listening to preaching during a religious service? Have you found that powerful?

Helen: Sometimes it has been, when I have been open to hearing a Biblical insight interpreted by the preacher. For example, I participated some years ago in a liturgy arranged by the now deceased Presbyterian minister, Ian Cairns. The gospel theme was *Can you drink this cup*? – the question Jesus asked the sons of the Zebedees. The sons' answer was so eagerly positive. Ian Cairns preached briefly, inviting each of us to respond to Jesus' question – *if* and *when* we were ready. In response, we could approach a huge wooden cross at the base of which we were to kneel and sip from a cup of wine. We then continued around the chapel to a table where we were offered an ample piece of bread. Our journey finally ended when, further on, another participant washed and dried our hands – a symbol of support for our journey. The homily was so powerful that many had actually hesitated before leaving their seats to engage with the message. In this preaching, words and actions had come together.

Yet, I have also been affected by witnessing preaching in others' lives. I have recognized the Word of God preached when hearing of a 14-year-old boy willing to spend time helping younger siblings with their homework, when reading of the earthquake-devastated Pakistani people trying to shield one another from cold December temperatures, or when listening to a woman pediatrician tell of her deep gratitude in assisting children orphaned during the Vietnam war.

The Word of God is powerfully preached by young and old, by skilled and unskilled, when persons follow in their own lives the practical wisdom lived and taught by Jesus of Nazareth. Preaching has many forms and innumerable faces. It brings life and it transforms what it touches. It is God's gift and when received it spreads beyond itself. The Word of God is truly alive and active. ■

Helen Bergin is a Dominican sister belonging to the Catholic Institute of Theology and teaching within the School of Theology, Auckland.
An Australian Dominican friar, Peter Murnane is a member of the Dominican Preaching Team and lives in Auckland

Christ at the Centre

Lately I've been thinking about St Paul. Remember this story? He was hunting down the early Christians, who at that time were called "followers of the Way". He was buoyed up and justified by the strength of his own religious convictions. He felt that he was doing the right thing. He thought he was serving God and his nation. He was on his way to Damascus to arrest any followers of Jesus that he could find, when he was knocked from his horse. He heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" he asked, and the voice answered, "I am Jesus, and you are persecuting me."

I confess that I feel ashamed to be associated with many today who name themselves as Christians or who call themselves Catholics. I feel ashamed of the 'Church'. Not the mystical church; not the body of Christ that is co-extensive with the entire universe; not the church of so many women and men who have been luminaries in my life and the life of the world. Rather, I am ashamed of the churches, Catholic and Protestant, who have taken Jesus as captive; the churches who have imprisoned the light of Christ within the parameters of their own narrow thinking.

I grieve the Catholic Church which has marginalized me as a woman, persecuted me as a lesbian and disrespected me as a complete human-being. My personal experience of oppression at the hands of the church sensitises me to so many who have been violated by its misuses of power. It has lost contact with the Christ at the Centre; the Christ who is the divinising energy at the core of our humanity; the Christ who is transforming us into incarnate Love. The Christ who says, "May they all be one. As I have become one with the Unitive Source and the Unitive Source has become transparent through me, may they be one in us."

What I want is to plead the case for Christ:
the Christ who is hope,
the Christ who is faith the Christ
who is unconditional Love.
The Christ who reconciles all
things into the Divine Self.

I want to plead for the Christ who
is singing outside my window
the yellow-bodied bird with black
wings and an orange flame face.
The Christ who plays in the
new-born calf, running and jumping
in the summer day.
I want to plead for the Christ who
recognizes Her Self looking through
my eyes,
manifesting in the myriad world.

I want to plead for the Christ who
suffers in my gay friend:
cast out of Christian community,
excluded from a pharisaical church
that wounds and crucifies the
prophets among us.
I want to plead for the Christ
who is that man.

I want to plead for the Christ of the resurrection:
the Christ who is more than Jesus.
The Christ who is on-going
revelation unfolding
from the heart of creation,
from the heart of matter,
from the heart of humanity.

I want to plead the case for Love:
that is patient and kind,
that does not judge or boast,
that is the summation of the
entire law and the prophets.

I want to plead the case that
God is Love:
the energy holding the stars,
the gravitational field
attracting us to all that is
good.

I want to plead the case that
Love is God
And where there is Love
there is God...
just that simple.

Jesus was crucified by people entrenched in a structure of righteous religiosity not unlike the fundamentalisms besetting so many of the religions of our day. Just as for Paul on the road to Damascus, transformation will come by direct experiential contact with the Divine. This journey is a deeply personal one. It leads into the depths of ourselves and the depths of the universe.

Jesus, recognizing his impending death, said to his friends, "In the world, you will have trouble. But be at Peace. I have overcome the world."

I want to plead the case that this "I" from which Jesus speaks is our deepest identity,

our truest Self,
our Christ-nature
reconciling all things in us.

For this reconciliation we need hearts as big as Love itself. For this we need the heart of Christ. ■

Diane Pendola

A Mother's Journal...

Why does everyone here keep asking us to drink cups of tea? They don't even know us."

Sharhirah's question is yet another I don't know if I can answer. Even as I start to try another Himachali mother leans over her verandah and calls "Betho! Chai piyo!" These invitations to "Come, Sit. Drink tea" can't only be because we're recognised from our clinic down by the river. They happen when we're in far away villages too.

My children have become embarrassingly blasé about it all. "This one's taking a long time. I wish they'd hurry up – they're wasting our trekking time Mum!" fumes Shanti as we sit on a verandah waiting. It's a good chance to notice other things about village life, though.

An older man walks quietly up the stone steps below. Children and adults stoop and touch his feet in respect. "They like old people in India, aye Mum." He's called into to sit on the balcony with us. Our new friend only speaks Pahari, ('Mountain'ish') the local language and we only speak bad Hindi. We sit and smile at each other. Our chai arrives, milky, sweet and in small glasses. The old man dips the fingers of his right hand into his cup and flicks a few drops onto the courtyard of drying wheat below us. Later Prema, our flatmate and clinic health worker we explains the custom of thanking/ remembering the gods before eating or drinking.

We walk on under the dark green cedars and stop where old frying pans, broken locks, trident forks, pieces of dog chain, some battered spoons, a motorcycle chain and a hundred other metal items are nailed to a tree. Each rusting piece is a kept promise. The tree is a favourite place for one of the local deities who is partial to metal. People strike deals: "Help me pass my exam..." "Make my son better from his sickness…""Bring the rain this month"…. – and I'll bring you some iron." A few prayers must have been answered over the years. A lots of people have kept their promises too.

Even if I don't believe too much in this ironmonger god I respect the faith of the villagers here. They live respecting elders, thankful to Higher Beings for the good things in their lives, they're prayerful and honest, they keep their word and they are deeply hospitable to us, strangers in their land. Conversation often turns to faith and spirituality here– it's so much part of life. Faith is not as black and white and easy to explain as my children would like… as I would like. But that's good too. Boxing people into Right and Wrong, Saved and Not would be so much easier - but at the end of the day deciding who's in and out is not my job.

We just follow our track winding through the trees which takes us up this steep hill. I have lots to learn from people who stoop to touch the feet of elders, sprinkle chai in thankfulness, give and receive hospitality easily. I won't save up all my old bits of metal but even iron trees remind me to be faithful to my word.

We cross through the knee-high corn growing in fields each side of the path and into another cluster of houses.

"Betho! Chai piyo!" calls a clear high voice.

Kaaren Mathias

Accepting one's kids, warts and all

Paul Andrews, S.J.

Years ago I was startled by the comment of St Alphonsus Liguori, an Italian who lived three hundred years ago. Towards the end of his life he remarked: I who for long years have heard the confessions of so many women of all walks of life, do not remember having found one who was happy with her lot.

Was that because the only women who went to confession were the unhappy ones? Or does it reflect a state of oppression of women, which has happily been remedied in many countries? We cannot check it out with Alphonsus, but it came back to me lately when I was visiting an old people's home where most of the residents are women. So many of them poured out to me not merely sadness but above all a sense of guilt, that I was reminded of Alphonsus' remark.

You'd have to admit that it is not easy to be happy in an old people's residence. You are no longer in your own home, or with your family, and mortality stares at you from every corner. But whereas the men there grumbled more about being cut off from the convivial relief of the pub (and drinking together was not allowed in the home I visited), the women's misery came mostly from self-reproach.

This was true even of the widows and mothers. You might expect them to be comforted by the memory of past loves, and by the thought of their children. To quote one mother of six (the first of them died as an infant): I feel this awful sense of guilt that I am responsible for all my family's failings, that I was not a good mother.

Forgive me: from inside a male skin I marvel at the capacity of mothers to give themselves, to risk the huge commitment not just of marriage but of rearing children and so giving hostages to fortune. You will never be the same again. There is no such thing as complete success, either in marriage or in children. There must be failures. Marriages will fail, not just in break-up, but in loss of communication, in wandering affections, in sexual boredom. Children will fail, because they are not machines – only machines are perfect.

Here as in our working life, success is what we do with our failures. But failures in marriage or mothering touch us so much deeper, because they involve the most deliberate and costly decisions of our life. Choosing a spouse, (or for me, choosing to join the Jesuits) is the biggest option we will ever have made. Failure here is not like a business failure where you can pick up the pieces and move on. The pieces here are pieces of ourselves, our sense of identity.

Failure is different with children – when they grow up selfish, deceitful, violent, greedy or whatever. They reflect their parents' influence, but they have their own identity. Once they are through the first few years of life, they answer for themselves. If they misbehave in class, teacher has to deal with the child, not his parents. If they neglect their homework, it is they, not their parents, who are responsible.

After a period in which we have to do everything for them, we reach the stage where the best policy is to do nothing for them that they can do for themselves, whether that be housework, transport, making friends, homework, or offering a safety net when things go wrong.

The Scriptures do not offer much advice on family problems, but we can pick up clues. We know nothing about the later life of Jesus' mother. But can we imagine Mary reproaching herself for what happened to her son, cut off in the prime of life? Or blaming herself in middle age for the horror of Jesus' final days: If only Joseph had been around, it would not have happened. Why couldn't I have stopped him talking himself into danger like that? She stood by the cross and shared Jesus' disgrace and sufferings, but we cannot imagine that she blamed herself for them.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father (the nearest approach Jesus makes to imagining God) allows his feckless son to make his mistakes and sow his wild oats. When the boy has brought shame and sorrow on the family and squandered his inheritance, the father enjoys him when he comes home, shushes all apologies or resolutions for the future, and simply expresses his own delight by throwing a party.

Here we have Jesus' model of what it is to be a parent. He is not overprotective. He allows his son the freedom to follow his own dream rather than his father's, to take risks and to make mistakes. He is still there for the son who has made a fool of himself and brought shame on the family. He absorbs the jealousy and anger of the older son but does not yield to him. He shows what it is to be a man: there when he is needed; faithful to wife and children; able for lifelong commitment; nurturant, forgiving, patient, and aware that children can learn from their mistakes.

He does not blame himself. When the boy is bursting with rehearsed self-reproaches (I have sinned against heaven. I am not worthy to be called your son…), the father has no time for them. Instead he blesses and heals.

Where parents are felt to be bristling with spoken or unspoken condemnations, children simply shy away from them; and still more from parents who blame themselves for their children's failures. We hate to be made to feel a disappointment to those we love. And we hate them to feel guilty over happenings that were not their fault. But we warm to the parent who, without any illusions about what has happened, is still ready to fall on our necks and kill the fatted calf. ■

A worthy cause

Cataract blindness takes away far more than just sight

Brendan Bergin is National Director for New Zealand of CBMI – Christian Blind Mission International.

A principal work is cataract blindness in Third World countries

As war rages in Lebanon and hundreds of innocent lives are destroyed my thoughts turn to the children and parents who are blind or have disabilities. Their lives are vulnerable and iconic in a war that will disable thousands more. In 1908 Ernst Christoffel, a German pastor, started a medical mission to the Middle East where he established a home for children who were blind or disabled, many of them orphans.

"The house," he said, "was meant to be a refuge for all those who had been turned away by other missionary societies, irrespective of race or religious belief. The blind were given top priority. However, since nobody in need of help could be turned away from Bethesda's doors, we also had cripples, imbeciles and a whole host of normal orphans who were nobody's children in the fullest sense of the word, and each of whom had their own particular story to tell."

The stories of children like these continue to be heard in projects funded by *Christian Blind Mission International* (CBMI), the development and relief agency that carries on the ministry of Ernst Christoffel. From the Middle East to South Africa, central Europe to Asia, central America down to south America, 1005 projects in 113 countries provide medical support and rehabilitation to families affected by blindness, hearing impairment and disability. In 2005 CBMI funded over 600,000 cataract operations – one cataract operation per minute somewhere in the world. It is also the world's largest funder of hearing devices to people with hearing impairments.

Late last year I visited an eye project supported by CBMI in Dar Es Salaam. The community-based rehabilitation hospital sends a bus out into the Tanzanian countryside every week to collect people assessed for cataract surgery.

When you're blinded by cataracts and living in a remote community, unable to afford medical treatment or the transport to get to a hospital, you resign yourself to being blind for the rest of your life. That means losing your independence, your ability to work and earn an income. Often you need another family member to give up their life so you can have yours, leading you around the community, helping you with the tasks of everyday life, even taking you to the toilet. Cataract blindness takes away far more than just sight.

While I was there the bus pulled up at the front entrance to the hospital, expectant faces pressed against the window. Most were elderly, many were unseeing. There were 45 people on the bus that day. They joined a queue of over 200 who had come to the hospital for treatment. I heard the story of Mariaju Miamu, a 78-year-old lady who couldn't tell the difference between a person or a tree. "My sight got foggy over one year, and in the evening I could no longer see. I couldn't do my jobs, or visit my friends. I would like to see the difference between a person and a tree, but now I can't."

Two days later the people from the bus climbed aboard again, this time without help. Sight restored, they were independent again. For them, this was the true miracle.

Each person contributes whatever they can to the cost of an operation. That's not usually much but nobody is turned away because they cannot pay. This was an important guarantee for Ernst Christoffel in his struggle to create awareness of the needs of people in the Middle East who were blind or had disabilities. Many locals denied that they existed or that they should receive institutional support.

As Christoffel said, "Whenever I come across this principle, at home or abroad, it makes me indignant. What does it mean to be worthy or unworthy of help or support? Where would we be if God used this principle when dealing with us?" My thoughts return to the blind and disabled children in Lebanon and the Middle East. ■

Explaining God... a child's view

One of God's main job is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die, so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth. He doesn't make grownups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way he doesn't have to take up his valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times beside bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this. Because he hears everything, there must be a terrible lot of noise in his ears, unless he has thought of a way to turn it off.

God sees everything and hears everthing and is everywhere which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting his time by going over your Mum and Dad's head asking for something they said you couldn't have.

Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any in Chula Vista. At least there aren't any who come to our church. Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work, like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn't want to learn about God.

They finally got tired of him preaching to them and they crucified him but he was good and kind, like his father, and he told his father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said O.K. His Dad (God) appreciated everything that he had done and all his hard work on earth so he told him he didn't have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So he did.

And now he helps his Dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones he can take care of himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important.

You can pray anytime you want and they are sure to help you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the time. You should always go to church on Sunday because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God! Don't skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong. And besides the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon anyway.

If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He's around you when you're scared, in the dark or when you can't swim and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids.

But...you shouldn't just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and he can take me back anytime he pleases.
And... that's why I believe in God. ■

Written by an 8-year-old from California. Sent to Tui Motu *by a reader*

ADULT EDUCATION TRUST

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Richard Rohr, OFM

Fr Richard Rohr, a Franciscan of the New Mexico Province, was founder of the New Jerusalem Community in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1971, and the Centre for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1986. He has written and teaches widely on Scripture as liberation and on the integration of action and contemplation.
His website is: www.cacradicalgrace.org

Christchurch visit: 27th – 29th October 2006

Friday 27 October 7.30-9.30 pm ($10): Spirituality of the Two Halves of Life
This theme will help us understand the huge conservative-liberal divide. Life has at least two very distinct stages and tasks: many problems arise from not clearly distinguishing these two major spiritual journeys.

Saturday 28 October 9.30am-4pm ($40): Men Matter: A Quest for the true Self
A Spiritual Event for Men and Women
Many males today have trouble in regard to relationships, self-image, self-confidence, and spiritual/human growth. What are the causes? What are the answers? Interesting material for young men and women, and for every generation.

Sunday 29 October 10am-2pm ($30): The Contemplative Stance in an Active Life
How do dedicated people learn to be both still and engaged at the same time?

All events held at Lower Common Room, first floor, University of Canterbury, Student Association (UCSA), Ilam Road, Christchurch Registration essential ($70 to attend all events)
Phone (03) 348 3912, (03) 942 7954, (03) 960 7670
Post to Adult Education Trust, 85a Totara St, Riccarton, Christchurch

Reflecting on Mark

Mark 10:17-22 – The Rich Man

Susan Smith

The story of the rich, young man is one that we all know well. *Luke*'s text speaks of a **certain ruler**, *Mark*'s character is simply **a rich man**, while *Matthew* identifies him as a rich **young** man. How we respond to this story is often determined by our own socio-economic status. If we are vaguely or obviously middle class, the story is discouraging. After all, if the rich man who lived a just life and experienced Jesus' love, walked away sad, who can follow Jesus?

If we are further down the socio-economic ladder, then the story may explain the difficulty we experience in conversations with those better off than us regarding justice issues raised by Catholic social teaching. The text can become ammunition for us when a well-meaning, well-off Catholic acquaintance baulks at taking a stand on behalf of the poor or oppressed in case this diminishes their power or prestige.

The story demonstrates that wealth and the desire for it can block out the call to discipleship. In particular, wealth can distort our relationships with others. When Jesus refers to the 10 Commandments in his response, he refers only to those that spell out our relationships with other people. This suggests that wealth prevents us from fulfilling the second great commandment, love of neighbour.

Earlier, in *Mark 10:15*, Jesus has taught that no one can be part of the Reign of God unless they have become like little children, a wonderful metaphor indicating that discipleship demands movement away from all that confers status and power over the other. This is precisely what the rich man cannot do. He departs with sadness from Jesus because he cannot let go of the socio-economic prestige of being 'a rich man' to embrace discipleship. Ironically, the arguments about greatness among the disciples suggest that they might prefer a form of discipleship that would permit them to have some form of prestige or influence as well. There are probably many of us who can identify with the man.

Today, almost half of New Zealand's politicians, including some Catholic MPs, want to dismantle a tax system that, whatever its many faults, has sought to ensure some economic equity. We need to ask what impact Catholic social teaching, which so clearly indicates our responsibilities towards the poor within our country and in other countries, has on any of us. Not too much!!

We could be forgiven for thinking that Catholic teaching on sexuality morality was the only sort of Catholic teaching that warranted our attention. Why can Catholics be so passionate about anything concerned with sexuality and sexual ethics? If only the extraordinary public outbursts about The *Da Vinci Code*, or about Channel 4 TV programmes could be complemented by the same passion to overcome the appalling poverty in which so many millions live and die. n

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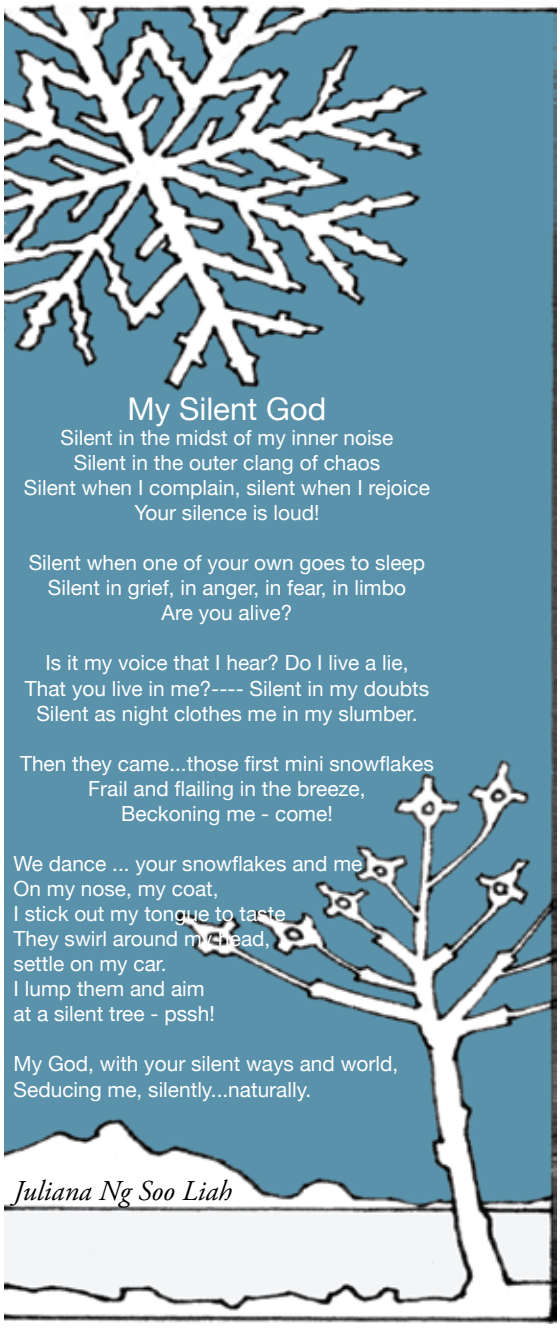

Blokes in Garage

Mike Marshall and Case Genefaas

Late in May Case Genefaas was given about three months to live. Case was first diagnosed with prostate cancer six years ago. It had spread and was inoperable. I suggested to Case that, between us, we tell the story of Blokes in Garage. *He died before he was able to read the draft*

Kees, pragmatically renaming himself 'Case', to ease Kiwi pronunciation, came to New Zealand with his wife, Ria, and three sons in 1961. They settled in Christchurch.

They were asking for boilermaker-welders for New Zealand, and I thought it would be a good idea to have a look around. But we had a young family, three young boys, and I had a look into it. Ria loves her family, a big family, one of eight. It was an enormous decision.

Ria was not happy at first. We said we'll give it two years, we won't buy anything. We'll save every penny. After two years if you're not happy, Ria, we go back.

If you want to stay, OK, well get a washing machine and all sorts of things. So that's what happened. After two years we made up our mind; we're going to stay here, over and out!

Over the years Ria and Case looked after many children…

And that was the whole thing – Ria's love for children, well it just happened. Colleen McBride started a group for the girls from Kingslea – that was different. The idea was that over a weekend, or a Saturday to have one of the girls stay in a family – do your normal things and they can see what happens in an ordinary family.

Then the Genefaas family became part of a new parish being set up in Christchurch.

With Kevin and John (priests) we built up a real community of people, there was a place for everybody, people had a chance to develop in different ways.

Case and Ria were involved in a range of parish and community activities. In 2000 I was invited to join a new group, which rapidly branded itself 'Blokes in Garage'. It had its genesis in the people of the parish.

B.I.G. was started for different reasons – the main one was more or less for me. Being told I had cancer, I more or less panicked, and I thought it would be good that I had a circle of friends around me. I was walking out of the church with Michael and another friend, a male palliative nurse, and I said I was going to die, a dramatic bloody business. He put me in my place, and told me it will take ages.

Anyway the idea was born then, to have like-minded people around me to support me. I usually have a drink in front of the garage if it is nice weather, so I invited a few people to come and have a drink with us.

We meet – and have met - in Case's garage, for a couple of hours every month more or less for six years. Case welcomes us with a hug and a beer. And because Case hosts us, warmly welcomes us with love and lets us drink his beer, then it's not a one-way process.

The garage is chilly, grubby and full of useful stuff – a regular Kiwi shed. The group has a fairly stable membership of about a dozen, a regular attendance of

about seven or eight, sometimes boosted by a visit from one of Case's sons.

Case has become an ardent home brewer, so each month we sample some of his better, and worse, creations. He suggested the reason we came together was to build his coffin, and get the lid covered in beer stains, using it as a table!

If you like drinking, well, I tried all sorts of things. I used to make my own whisky too but it was too complicated. But it's coming to an end now. I'm not going to do any more (laughter). It's just a hospitality thing – my gift to you; it's not much, symbolic sort of. That's all it is.

In the group there is another Dutchman, Kiwis of course, a Samoan, a couple of Englishmen, a Welshman, some who identify with Ireland, especially with a few beers on board, and one with Indian heritage. Conversations cover anything and everything. Most of us have a shared parish history, and now we are exploring new paths together.

One time we even formed a totally fictitious political party 'The Enough is Never Enough Party' (in response to Brian Tamaki) with no money, no big backers, no candidates, no policy, no future but a great mission statement (extract below)

"We're entering our dotage
Getting into strife
Bits falling off our bodies
Surgeons with the knife
This can't go on we cry
We pour it as we puff
This home-brew tastes divine
And enough is never enough"

I've been reading a lot about having support groups. It is very important to have people more or less like-minded and not too big... no structure, no bosses, servants, leadership. We are all leaders, we all guide each other.

It somewhere clicks because it's still alive and well after six years, and the friendships and the bonds we build, especially in a spiritual sense.

The symbolism of the circle, having nobody as a leader – we are all equal. The Lord circles us. The Irish prayer: "Lord circle us, keep the good things in, and the bad things out".

Given that Henk is the baby of the group, pushing 50, currently recovering from a knee reconstruction, many of us are of the age where we are facing aspects of our mortality. Henk is one of the two non-Catholics who have joined the group.

Henk: I got to know Kees through my wife. Because I am a non-Catholic, first it was a bit daunting, but I was welcomed with open arms and (it) made the discussions very interesting. It is good for each of us to open up and to talk freely of problems we have and gain support. I know that it helped me.

I've found that most agnostic people have enormous spirituality. They might not even know it themselves, but the message they give out has great spiritual value, for me anyway.

The purpose is to come together as a group of friends. The main thing is to have trust, that you can reveal your innermost emotions – that's the most beautiful part. The friendship we've built up, not superficial, a real bond we have with each other, and now it is special in this crisis – it is just about tangible.

I'm at peace. I might be uncomfortable but I'm at peace. I'm happy. I'm happy to have you and all the other ones and Ria. Peace. After nearly 80 years – well, why shouldn't I be in peace? Why? I've reached my destination at marathon running, I might have hit a wall at the last 30 kms, only 10 kms to go.

That wall wasn't as far away as he thought. On Sunday morning after Mass eight of us gathered around Case's bedside in the hospice. He called us by name, hugged each of us, once again we stood in a circle with hands joined, and each said a prayerful and tearful good-bye.

Case said: It's beautiful. I should die more often!

Case died early on Tuesday afternoon surrounded by his family. Case's five sons invited us to a special 'Blokes in Garage'. We took Case out into the garage with us, and remembered his life with love and laughter. We lit his candle, took the lid off his simple coffin, built by the Catholic Worker Movement, and, drinking the last of his home brew, used the lid as a table as he had requested! We were honoured to be asked to carry him from the garage to the station wagon for his last ride to our parish church.

On Saturday morning, Ria, his five sons, two daughters, family and many friends came together at his Funeral Mass to prayerfully and tearfully commend his spirit to the Lord.

Blokes in Garage intend to carry on, in another garage, and Case's son Eric wants to join us on a regular basis. But I'll give the last word to Case:
I just want to experience it all, the pain and everything. I don't know how I'll feel at the end, but I'm at peace. ■

Invaluable handbook for those striving for Social Justice

Capitalism as if the World Matters
Jonathon Porritt
Earthscan 2005 (325pp)
Review: Jim Elliston

The *N.Z. Herald* recently published an overseas report warning of serious problems for investors in China. Their profits are under threat. Environmental pollution arising from unregulated economic activity is the cause. To date the economic cost of environmental protection has not been factored into prices, but there is now pressure for a change. One suggested solution is to redirect investment to countries with environmental laws weaker than those in China.

There tend to be three kinds of reaction to this:

- Capitalism is fundamentally evil so must be replaced;
- Capitalism brings many more benefits than disadvantages and must not be tampered with;
- its worst effects can be mitigated by various forms of intervention.

In this meticulously researched and analytic work, British environmentalist Jonathon Porritt is highly critical of not only the first two reactions, but also of many of the positions taken by champions of the third, showing them to be superficial and unrealistic. (He acknowledges his suggestions would "have them running back to their gently simmering organic lentils".)

Part 1 of this book gives an account of the problems with their underlying causes and related attitudes that affect corporations, governments, and society in general, carefully defining terms and presenting their positive as well as negative aspects. Part 2 begins to explore what an alternative model of Capitalism might look like. He describes a framework of five 'capitals': Natural, Human, Social, Manufactured and Financial.

The problem is that the resources of our biosphere are finite and are being rapidly depleted, directly and indirectly through the effects of capitalism, which of its very nature demands continuous growth. *The solution* is that capitalism is the only economic system that is credibly on offer at the moment. Thus the only chance for economic and environmental sustainability in the foreseeable future is to make that growth consistent with sustainability, rather than conjuring fanciful visions of how to do without it.

In the third part he shows how current mind-sets favouring, or resulting merely in tinkering with the destructiveness of, the 'true economic faith' can be tackled in a realistic manner. Environmental sustainability must move from the periphery to the centre of economic policy. But it is essential to inspire hope and encourage cooperation, since "conventional environmentalism's appeal is too narrow, too technical, too anti-business, too depressing, often too 'heard-it-all-before'".
The role played in the global economy by multinational companies lies at the very heart of the problem, but some are moving in the right direction.

The recently published *Compendium of Catholic Social Justice* would no doubt be very useful to them. Porritt's book, which sits comfortably with that teaching, shows the huge role economic systems play, usually without our realising it, in forming our attitudes and judgments. He regards 'spirituality' as part of human capital. And he shows the relationship between sustainability and poverty, disease, corruption, war and cultural conflict – the everpresent problems of today's world.

His assertion that goodwill is evident amongst many business executives is reinforced by an *Observer* article recently published by *The Herald*, entitled *The growing army of corporate greens*. Sustainability, at long last, is now more favourably treated in our business press.

Only Governments have the democratic mandate to intervene in order to shape market forces. Porritt describes new ways to measure progress, presents a positive vision and actionable principles for business, civil society, governments and individuals. The approach is holistic.

This is an invaluable Social Justice handbook, a sober but inspiring work. It gives practical suggestions – with charts, diagrams and lists – which the churches can work with in order to speak in the 'language' of all our people thus helping in the process of developing a truly New Zealand culture. ■

The trauma of the trapped victim

The Lioness Tale
Diane Pendola
iUniverse, Inc, New York, Lincoln, Shanghai, 2005
Review: Sandra Winton OP

The indefatigable Green Party MP, Sue Bradford, has recently introduced legislation that would make it possible for women in prison to keep their babies with them for two years, rather than the six months now permitted. Diane Pendola has worked for years with women in prison in California. Their experience is reflected in this book. So too is other human experience of outer or inner imprisonment, lack of freedom and entrapment in suffering.

This short book (68 pages) takes the form of a story about a lioness who is captured young and held first in a zoo cage and then in a reserve. The story is dark and heartrending at times – especially when the lioness's cubs are taken from her. But in the end the focus is on the lioness's inner state. The liberation that comes is not from physical fences or walls but from the inner bars that keep her from experiencing her own dignity and inner freedom.

This story reads best as an extended metaphor – the literal narrative is not always convincing. As a metaphor or allegory it brought to my mind the suffering of imprisoned women. It also speaks to the human potential, even in the most difficult circumstances, to find in oneself connection with the divine source and purpose of personal being.

This is a book that may be valued by readers who are seeking to find hope and self-belief, especially after crushing life events or oppression of spirit. For any reader it points towards the need for relationship to sustain hope and the journey to self-realization that Jung believed to be the chief task of adult life. It suggests that the divine may be experienced within. Like Wordsworth, Pendola believes that we come to life 'trailing clouds of glory' and that the full trajectory of our lives can bring us through despair and obstacles to return to glory. ■

Music a key for human tragedies

As it is in Heaven
(Nominated for an Oscar as a 2005 best foreign film)
Film Review: Denzil Brown

This tells the story of a noted conductor who returns to his boyhood village in Sweden to escape the pressures of musical fame. The local pastor, eager to take advantage of a welcome windfall, presses him to become parish cantor-choir master. Reluctantly he accepts the appointment. His unorthodox but innovative methods unleash undiscovered talents in the choir members, and has far reaching consequences on their personal lives and relationships. Liturgy and life interact in ways the pastor and his officials neither comprehend fully nor can comfortably manage.

Here we see that when music is truly 'made' it touches the inner springs of personal life, as in the intellectually handicapped youth who finds new fulfilment, while it also enables disclosure of the violence behind apparently calm home settings. The film touches on the drastic, long-term effects on the victims of abuse and on the persistence of the attitudes of the perpetrators. The film also raises the dilemma of the pastor's own understanding of the role of sexual relationships in the light of his Lutheran theology and the realities of his own marriage.

It explores the way ecclesial structures which seek to utilise the artistic spirit for the church can, however, strongly react when energies are released that are not susceptible to formal control. While the anxieties of the conductor means he wrestles with how one knows whether love felt is the real thing, the film testifies that love itself endures in many different circumstances.

To me the worth of a movie can be measured in part by how often its theme comes back to mind and whether it leads to continuing reflection on the characters and events of the story. Here is a film that might with profit be seen by a church-related group and provide them with useful insights for their discussion. ■

Ongoing Rape of the Palestinian people

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

The capture of the Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, has led once again to an Israeli invasion of Gaza, the further killing of civilians and the destruction of the Gaza Strip's civic infrastructure. The Israeli army has bombed roads and bridges, destroyed the electricity grid and arrested nearly a third of the members of Hamas's West Bank government. Now an assault on Lebanon threatens once again to endanger the whole of the Middle East in a war of attrition.

When does a half-truth become a lie? George W. Bush responds to Israel's incursion into Gaza with the remark that "Israel has the right to defend itself". On Lebanon, he replies, "Whatever Israel does should not weaken the Siniora government in Lebanon". Bush's *War on Terror* must proceed. The implacable hatred in the soul of Ehud Olmert revealed itself when he stated to the Israeli Cabinet: "I take personal responsibility for what is happening in Gaza. I want nobody to sleep at night in Gaza. Nobody dies from being uncomfortable". The half-dead ghost of Ariel Sharon seems to be at Olmert's shoulder, calling to mind Sharon's massacre of women and children in the refugee camps of Lebanon over 20 years ago.

The state of Israel is a political construct which has deprived Palestinians of sovereignty over that land. There are two factors which undermine Israel's legitimacy. Firstly, Israel is defined as a *Jewish* state which *ipso facto* deprives Palestinians of many basic rights and excludes them from rights to common land. Secondly, the legitimacy of Israel cannot be grounded on a mythical sacred origin or on the genocide of the Holocaust. Palestinians have been rendered homeless by colonisation, not by the legitimacy of Zionist claims to a homeland for Jews.

The two-state solution is not working. Why should Hamas recognise Israel's 'right to exist' if Israel is seen to be eliminating Palestinian sovereignty altogether? For decades, Israel has been expelling the Palestinians from their homes and confining them to cantons. Prime Ministers Sharon and Olmert have declared that this open policy of ethnic cleansing is inherent in its 'right to exist'.

Israel has passed from defence to conquest and by so doing has alienated the entire Middle East. It practises state terrorism which can be defined as random violence against non-combatants. Under the rubric of *War on Terror* and with American financial and military support, Israel continues its strategy of destruction which allows it to raise the level of violence against Palestinian society and in the disputed borders with Lebanon.

Terrorism breeds retaliation of the same kind. Because no one in the Middle East can match the military might of Israel, the response can only be one of isolated forays, sometimes suicide bombings and now the capture of an Israeli soldier. Israel responds with a vicious cycle of civilian massacres that is contrary to all aspects of human rights as laid down in the Geneva Convention.

The United Nations should be first among mediators : its own integrity is at stake. However, John Bolton, United States representative at the UN, continues to block any action against Israel as the US has done for the past 30 years. It is the only country which shields Israel from public opprobrium, and this protection is becoming an obscene counter-productive alliance at the heart of American foreign policy.

Israel should be subject to economic sanctions and a world wide boycott of its exports until a cease-fire is negotiated under the terms of an immediate United Nations Security Council Resolution which the US must not veto. If it did veto such a resolution against Israel, it would again antagonise every country in the Middle East.

The lies, the terror, the domination and injustice that sustains Israel's occupation of Gaza and its incursions into neighbouring states cost Jewish as well as Palestinian blood. Do the Israelis really believe that by killing whole families in a blood bath of retaliation, all will be resolved? Generations of Arabs and Muslims will remember. ■

Life in the Gaza Strip

The Israeli army's operation *Summer Rains* kicked off on June 28 with air raids that targeted the Gaza Strip's infrastructure, including the main power plant in central Gaza, which supplies most of the region with electricity. It was completely destroyed and set ablaze, plunging Gaza City and the Strip's central and southern sectors into darkness. As a result water shortages are being experienced across wide areas.

The Executive Director of the Council of Churches' *Department of Services to Palestinian Refugees Gaza*, Constantine Dabbagh, spoke of a situation that is becoming slowly but surely a hopeless one. Young Palestinians are scared stiff by Israeli planes' sonic booms that are becoming more frequent. A granddaughter of Mr Dabbagh, on a summer visit from Romania, felt quite traumatised with the booms. In the past when sonic booms of Israeli fighter jets were heard over Gaza, there were psychological repercussions on children that lasted for some time and that required, in some cases, medical intervention.

Yet, as Mr Dabbagh argues, we Palestinians in Gaza know quite well Israel's might and our children hear it very loudly, so what are the Israeli military trying to prove? Over the last month at least 27 Palestinian civilians in Gaza have lost their lives due to Israeli bombardment in retaliation to the launching of the Qassam rockets.

(written before the present escalation of violence)

A glimpse into the background of Mother Teresa

Some years ago I stayed for a few days with the Redemptorists in Kolkata, the city we used to call Calcutta. On my last morning my conscience troubled me. I had done nothing about looking at the work that Mother Teresa initiated there to help the desperately poor. I mentioned at breakfast to my confreres my desire to get to the place, presumably quite distant, where her Missionaries of Charity cared for the needy. The response was, "Mother actually lives quite close to here. Probably we can take you to see her. We'll give her a ring". Her reply was, "I am going out at 9.30. If Father can get over here by then I will be happy to talk to him".

So I soon found myself on the back of a motor cycle, transported to where she lived. I then took up 15 minutes of a saint's time, sharing about such matters as the outback region of Australia where her sisters had gone to care for aboriginal youngsters in need.

The most interesting part of the morning came after we left. Without a word of further explanation my guide said, "I'll take you to see a project at the Loretto Sisters' high school". It was of course at their high school in Calcutta that Teresa had been teaching prior to feeling the call to leave the Sisters and devote her life to the needs of the poor rather than those of the middle class girls who were her pupils.

My guide introduced me and I was shown a project in which the senior students were engaged. Each girl was involved in teaching an illiterate housemaid to read and write. Each housemaid had a personal workbook. She worked through it with her youthful tutor. If she could be with her several times a week, fine. If she could not get to be with her for several weeks, they would simply carry on from where they were when they last met. It was a highly practical system.

The benefit for both of them was considerable. The housemaid learned a basic skill that she would otherwise lack. The high school student learned that from her privileged middle class position she could and should be of help to others less advantaged than herself.

My guide made no attempt to point out to me the significance of what I had seen. It was obvious. Sixty years ago Teresa had felt that the Loretto Sisters gave her little opportunity to serve and benefit the poor. Maybe that was true at the time. But they had learnt the lesson. They were still running Catholic secondary schools for girls. But they had found a way within that operation of being of practical assistance to the poor and of imparting to their students the lesson that the needs of the poor must not be ignored.

Accounts of the life of Mother Teresa do not dwell on her years as a Loretto Sister. Given her conviction that she would be better employed serving the Lord elsewhere, one could form the judgment that the Lorettos were a rather second rate bunch. My Redemptorist confrere obviously want to rid me of such a judgment. The Sisters were doing a good job within the parameters of their teaching apostolate.

Few of us are called like Teresa to move to the disadvantaged areas of the world to serve the poor. But like the Loretto Sisters we may well find within our personal zone of living utterly practical ways of helping the disadvantaged. ■

Humphrey O'Leary

Starting to live the real me

I have been thinking a lot about guilt lately. Possibly because the thought of separating from the church involves a lot of dealing with guilt, well it does for me anyway. The funny thing is, it's hard to pin down exactly what I feel guilty about. After a lot of reflection I've decided that it's not about the faith side of it, and that's kind of a surprise. Mostly its about letting people down. Letting my parish priest down, someone who I suspect shares many of the same concerns that I do, letting the community down, all those people who supported my questioning voice often as an outlet for their own concerns, and also because I spent many years saying that you can't change the Church without being in it. And here I am thinking seriously about not being in it.

But none of these reasons is particularly significant as a reason to stay. They are more personal discomfitures for a person who likes to be 'thought well of', who wants to be 'known' within a group of people, who perhaps needs those pats on the back. Not exactly healthy reasons for an attachment to church!

It has raised for me the question about 'being enough'. In a world where consumerism is on a high, where beliefs/identity/belonging and acceptability circle around brand names, job titles and fame, being enough just who I am, is no small goal. I know that I have responsibility for investigating how this operates in my life and reconstructing poor beliefs in a more healthy way, but I also think that the church feeds some of these as well. Does the church foster 'enoughness' in its people, less dependency, more belief in self? When I leave a church service do I feel that I am more 'okay' or 'enough' than when I entered… not often. And as a woman in the Catholic Church, never have I felt enough in terms of institutional doctrine.

One of the things this world is short of is people who believe in themselves strongly enough to take risks. Belief in God and Christ is part of that sure, but I also need to believe that I am enough just the way I am; that I don't need perfecting to be okay; that I don't need a catalogue of rules to make good choices; that I don't need continual validation from a group to verify my beliefs, and that I can trust God working in me just the way I am. It does not mean that I stop working on myself but only that I accept who I am at this moment enough to live it.

Someone once said to me that we need to stop searching for 'me' and start living 'me'. That maybe I am already who I am meant to be, as imperfect as that is. That God is enough and we are enough. There is little room for guilt there. ■

Eve Adams