

## *Lenten Reflection*

# Forgiveness – A Radical Option for Healthy Living

Jim Consedine

In many respects forgiveness is probably the most difficult virtue to practise. Yet it remains central to any lasting healing process, personal or collective, though its importance is often underrated and unspoken. On the surface it sometimes seems an unfair thing to attempt, given the pain caused by an injustice. But practising forgiveness is a foundation stone for healthy living. It is the step we need to take to be free of the ongoing negative effects of past injustice. It has unique transformative qualities.

To decide to forgive is to create a future free from control by the past. It doesn't mean forgetting. It means remembering the past in a different way, leaving one free to develop the future. One is re-empowered, not controlled by events from the past.

For many, forgiveness essentially comes from God and is a divine gift. Specifically for the Christian, it flows from an understanding of the death and resurrection of Christ. But, regardless of religious views, forgiveness is among the most healthy mature things we can do as human beings and is a derivative of love. It can be freely offered or sought, given or refused. Forgiveness is a central part of holistic healing and at some time needs to form part of the journey for any party seeking to be fully restored from pain, loss or hurt.

### The Essential Forgiveness

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa during the late 1990s through which a whole nation came to grips with its criminal past, heard literally thousands of testimonies from victims and offenders during the four years of the commission. He speaks eloquently and passionately about forgiveness as an essential component of healing. He says it is never a simple or an easy option. Grace is always involved.

'I have been bowled over by the incredible humility

one has experienced from the victims, both black and white, who have suffered as much as they have. By rights they should have been hate-ridden by lust for revenge. They have exhilarated me by how ready they are to forgive. I have come to see that. Yes, of course you have an acknowledgment by the wrong doer that they have done something that was very wrong, that they owe to us confession so that the victim, the survivor be enabled to forgive. But I have come to believe fervently that forgiveness is not just a spiritual and ethereal thing unrelated to the real world, the harsh world out there. I have come to believe very fervently that without forgiveness, there is no future.'



He points out that to forgive is not just to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-

interest. These emotions are all part of being human. As he says, 'When I talk of forgiveness, I mean the belief that you can come out the other side a better person – a better person than the one being consumed by anger and hatred. Remaining in that state locks you into a state of victimhood, making you almost dependent on the perpetrator. If you can find it within yourself to forgive, then you are no longer chained to the perpetrator. You can move on and even help the perpetrator become a better person too.'

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Tutu goes on to say that 'forgiveness is the capacity to make a fresh start. That is the power, the rational of confession and forgiveness. And forgiveness is the grace by which you enable the other person to get up, to get up



with dignity and begin anew. Not to forgive leads to bitterness and hatred, which just like self-hatred and self-contempt gnaws away at the vitals of one's being. Whether hatred is projected out or projected in, it is always corrosive of the human spirit.<sup>1</sup>

## No Cheap Grace

Drawing on personal experience, Fr Michael Lapsley SSF, NZ-born Anglican priest, who was the subject of an apartheid security branch bomb and lost both hands, an eye and suffered lifelong internal injuries, writes with insight on forgiveness. He stresses reparation/restitution where appropriate as an essential component. In a recent interview in Auckland, he uses a metaphor to contrast what he calls 'bicycle theology' with real forgiveness.

He explains. 'I steal your bicycle. Then six months later I say, 'I am very sorry for stealing your bicycle. Please forgive me.' Being a good person you say, 'Yes, I forgive you.' But the bike is not returned. In this case, with no attempt at restitution, is forgiveness complete?'

'Some speak of forgiveness as if it were something glib, easy and cheap. Whereas, the real thing is costly and painful. It is something that where possible must involve making reparation. The story of Zaccheus, the corrupt tax collector, is the scriptural counter to bicycle theology. When he met Jesus, he had a conversion experience. Zaccheus promised to repay *with four times*

*the amount* all he had cheated from the people. In other words, he is moved to a spirit of generosity of heart. That is a sign of biblical restitution.'

The person who assembled Fr Michael's letter bomb has not acknowledged his crime. Michael holds the key to that person's freedom from guilt. But since the person has not taken responsibility for his/her action, Michael says he is in no position to forgive. 'Forgiveness is an *I-Thou* process. At this time there is no *Thou*. Therefore I cannot unlock the door which would free this person. Forgiveness is not an abstract transaction. I am not full of hatred. I am not bitter. I do not want revenge. But I need to know the person is not still making letter bombs! And I would need to know that the person had had a genuine change of heart.'

'I believe in the justice of restoration, restorative justice, 100 times more than in the justice of punishment. Maybe I'd sit with the person and drink tea and say, 'I have forgiven you – but I still have no hands, only one eye, damaged eardrums, and I'll need some ongoing help.' That is not a condition of forgiveness. It is reparation, restitution. It is part of returning the bike.'<sup>ii</sup>

Restorative justice advocate Howard Zehr points out that the victim's forgiveness is a letting go of the power that the offence and the offender have over him, while not condoning or excusing that person. It means no longer letting the offence and the offender dominate. 'Without the experience of forgiveness, without this closure, the wound festers and takes over our lives. It, and the offender, are in control. To forgive a person is to let go. It is to say that I will not define myself by your actions towards me. I will not allow you to have any power over me. Real forgiveness allows one to move from victim to survivor.'<sup>iii</sup>

## Conclusion

Forgiveness then is the process of the victim letting go of the rage and pain of an injustice so he or she can resume living freed from the power of the violation. Though public perception is the exact opposite, the truth is that the primary beneficiary of forgiveness is the person who forgives.

Forgiveness may take time, it may not come easily, it may involve a lengthy struggle. It is often not simply a one-off effort. Because it involves change in relationship, it needs to be worked at to achieve its completeness.

The alternative is often bleak – a vengeful poisoned nature, filled with anger and self-pity, stuck in a time warp of hurt and pain, unable or unwilling to move on. Forgiveness forms the soul of a healthy family and community life. As Desmond Tutu rightly says, 'without forgiveness, there is no future'.

*An earlier form of this article appeared in The Common Good, Advent 2007.*

<sup>i</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Rider Books, London, 1999

<sup>ii</sup> Anglican *Taonga*, Advent 2012

<sup>iii</sup> Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses*, Herald Press, Scottsdale, 1990

### Who are we?

Members of Te Wairua Maranga Trust, which publishes this paper, have since 1989 been operating as a community following a Catholic Worker spirituality. We view the Treaty of Waitangi as our nation's founding covenant. We try, however inadequately at times, to live the Sermon on the Mount and its modern implications. We operate three houses of hospitality in Christchurch named after Suzanne Aubert, Thomas Merton, and Joseph Cardijn. We offer hospitality to people in need either on a temporary or more permanent basis. We have a continuing outreach to a number of families offering friendship and support. We usually receive back more than we ever give. We promote non-violence and a 'small is beautiful' approach to life, practise co-operative work and peace making, focus on issues of justice, support prison ministry, help create intentional communities, and try to practise voluntary poverty and personalism. We also engage in regular prayer and generally struggle along like everybody else.

We celebrate a liturgy every Wednesday at 6:00 pm at the Suzanne Aubert House, 8A Cotterill St, Addington, (off Poulson St, near Church Square), followed by a shared meal. Anyone is welcome – phone Francis, 338-7105.

We do not seek funding from traditional sources. We hope to receive enough to keep our houses of hospitality open and our various works going. Catholic Worker houses do not issue tax receipts since they are running neither a business nor a church social agency. We invite people to participate personally and unconditionally. Should you wish to make a regular contribution, you may do so through our Te Wairua Maranga Westpac Trust holding account (number 031703-0036346-02). Donations may also be made to **Te Wairua Maranga Trust, Box 33-135, Christchurch.**

## **Editorial 1** Resurrecting Jesus

*In modern culture, particularly on television, Jesus is often trivialized and mocked. A Jesus without teeth or guts, the 'good old plastic Jesus' model, is standard fare. A frontline Catholic Worker in the US for 30 years, Scott Schaeffer-Duffy knows a different Jesus.*

Much of the blame for Jesus' trivialization probably rests with Christians. Millions of Jesus' modern disciples belong to the NRA (National Rifle Association) and the Tea Party, and even outright sexist, racist and anti-environmental organisations. Many more portray Jesus in a mushy, sentimental or harshly judgmental mode. Either extreme is off-putting, to say the least. Aside from a recent campaign against global warming during which evangelicals asked, 'What kind of car would Jesus drive?' few denominations make concerted public efforts to present Jesus as relevant to public events.

Consequently more and more young people understand Jesus as a plastic figure or a guru for reactionaries and old folks. They'd be hard-pressed to describe his philosophy or life's work. Christ just doesn't figure in their economic, political or personal choices. In social settings, Jesus is a major non-starter. When was the last time anybody under 30 described Jesus as their hero?

This is tragic because the actual Jesus described in the New Testament is witty, intelligent, brave, creative, funny, theatrical, humble, commanding, compassionate, physically fit, fully human and divine. He's a great story teller who makes sure there is plenty of wine at a wedding and food at a picnic. He won't tolerate racism or sexism. He freely associates with outcasts but does not confine his outreach to the fringe. He is an orthodox Jew with

the wisdom not to be trapped by legalism. He sees human misery and acts to ameliorate it.

He challenges one of history's greatest empires without ever using or endorsing violence. He walks on water and bleeds when he falls. He knows what it is like to be hungry and thirsty. He identifies with workers and the poor. He chastises the rich and the powerful. He inspires change without taking up governmental office or joining a political movement or party. He sees beyond ideology to find goodness in a soldier and rich man. He elevates love to the highest of all virtues. He suffers a martyr's death, as millions still do, but, unlike most, holds to non-violence to the end. Ultimately, He is resurrected as an example to all of us that God will not allow evil to prevail.

His message and personal example remain one of, if not the most powerful, in human history. I believe it grieves him to watch human beings flail around with violent and greedy value systems that are capable only of increasing human misery.

Ultimately, the question of whether or not the integrity, philosophical wholeness and wisdom of Christ slips into obscurity or irrelevance is not up to the media. It is up to those of us who claim to be his followers. Our lives need to be so closely modeled on his that people can find the opening to Him in us. We should be great introductions to the Gospels. And when we are inevitably asked why we live counter-culturally, why we eschew war, and welcome the poor into our homes, we should be able to respond, 'Why, the Sermon on the Mount, of course.'

*Reprinted from The Catholic Radical, December 2012.*

## **Editorial 2** Jesus, man of peace

Above all we want to make the voice of Jesus heard. He was always a man of peace. It could be expected that, when God came to earth, he would be a man of great power, destroying the opposing forces. That he would be a man of powerful violence as an instrument of peace. Not at all. He came in weakness. He came with only the strength of love, totally without violence, even to the point of going to the Cross. This is what shows us the true face of God, that violence never comes from God, never helps bring anything good, but is a destructive means and not the path to escape difficulties. He is thus a

strong voice against every type of violence. He strongly invites all sides to renounce violence, even if they feel they are right. The only path is to renounce violence, to begin anew with dialogue, with the attempt to find peace together, with a new concern for one another, a new willingness to be open to one another. This is Jesus' true message: seek peace with the means of peace and leave violence aside.

—Pope Benedict XVI, Good Friday, 2011

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# Saint Dorothy Day? A View from Down Under

Jim Consedine

Whenever people suggested to Dorothy Day that she was a saint, she always replied, 'Don't call me a saint. You can't get rid of me that easily.' And indeed we can't. Her prophetic reply has come back to haunt her legacy.

There are official moves afoot to have Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, canonized an official saint of the Church. Recently, all 230 members of the US Catholic Bishops Conference voted unanimously for that course to be pursued. Already she has been declared a Servant of God, the first step on the road to canonization. Given some powerful backers, it seems only a matter of time before she becomes Saint Dorothy Day.

One would imagine that Catholic Workers around the world would be delighted with such progress. Some may be but most it seems are not. So what's the problem? Why are Catholic Workers generally at best indifferent, at the worst skeptical even hostile, about the possible canonization of their founder?

At its essence, the answer lies in the paradox that was Dorothy Day's life. In life, Dorothy was an orthodox Catholic in matters of doctrine and morals, a daily Mass attendee, a great woman of prayer.

But her social analysis was anything but orthodox. She had a vision of the Gospel and what Church might mean that involved a radical commitment to the poor and a steadfast resistance to all forms of war and violence. Dorothy's agenda was a meaningful application of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy as found in the gospels. 'Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned. Blessed are those who hunger for justice. Blessed are the peacemakers.' Dorothy lived these beatitudes. She challenged others to do likewise.

She was committed to following the non-violent Jesus as revealed in the New Testament. Like the Christians in the early Church, she shared all she had with the poor and practiced pacifism to the point of rejecting all violence, all war.

Her analysis of capitalism was blunt and unequivocal. She called it 'this filthy rotten system.' She had no time for the modern consumer society and its materialist idols. The US national ideology of imperialism and war mongering was anathema to her.

The US bishops made no mention of these things in media comments after their vote. They highlighted her repentance after an abortion, her conversion

experience and entry into the Catholic Church, her enforced celibacy when she couldn't marry the man of her dreams, her prayer life and orthodox doctrinal views. These things do form an important part of the complex picture of Dorothy's life.

However, they are not the first things that spring to mind when one considers her life's work. Fifty years editing *The Catholic Worker* espousing justice issues comes to mind. Decades of serving in soup kitchens because people were too poor to eat. So does witnessing at countless vigils opposite police lines come to mind, nationwide speaking tours opposing injustice, and numerous arrests and imprisonment for direct action against war, racism and imperialism. These things come to mind. They speak loudly about her life. And her understanding of Church.

In her lifetime, she begged the bishops to oppose war and live the beatitudes more fully. Few took any notice. She was marginalized for her radical commitment to the gospel. When she died in 1980, dubbed the most 'influential Catholic in America', no bishop attended her funeral.

Dorothy Day was a woman of her time, yet before her time, a prophet in every sense of the word. As a single parent raising a child during the great Depression, she lived freely among the poor, identifying with their needs. She spent 50 years writing and speaking about the gospel ideals she practised to those who would listen. Her stance on non-violence and feeding the poor, on war and racism, on economic justice and homelessness, still give radical insight into the teachings of Jesus for today. Her open-house policy of hospitality 'because it is where we meet Christ disguised,' led to the establishment of more than 200 houses of hospitality around the world.

Dorothy lives on in her followers every day. She remains a prickly witness to the hard teachings of Jesus that mainstream churchgoers tend to ignore. She is no plastic figure, no candidate for a plaster-cast statue. Most Catholic Workers don't want her as one, sanitized beyond recognition. They have already acclaimed her a saint, a holy iconic figure.

For them, canonization seems almost superfluous. Hence the indifference.

*Jim Consedine has been a member of the Thomas Merton Catholic Worker, Christchurch, for the past 25 years.*

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# The Non-violence of Jesus

Kevin Burns

On this feast of Christ the King, we have several important themes to reflect upon. Pilate and the high priest see Jesus as a pretender to the throne. ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ Pilate asks Jesus. Jesus replies, ‘Do you ask this of your own accord or have others spoken to you about me?’

I would like to go back to a few earlier verses in John’s Gospel and recall the arrest of Jesus before he was brought before Pilate. As Jesus was being arrested, Peter, his apostle, in a moment of loving fury cut off the high priest’s servant’s ear with a sword. Peter must have grabbed a sword from one of the soldiers because Jesus’ band of followers carried no weaponry.

Jesus made a quick response. ‘No more of this,’ he says to Peter, and heals and restores the man’s ear. As one modern scripture commentator writes, Jesus has spent his entire ministry opening people’s ears to hear his message. He is not about to start cutting them off! Jesus does not tolerate violence and he specifically outlawed the sword. ‘All who take up the sword,’ he said, ‘will perish with the sword’.

Jesus’ style was to engage in dialogue, in conversation. This is what he promoted. And we all know that if violence is introduced, dialogue is not possible. By cutting off ears, combatants can no longer hear one another, nor do they want to. Ears have to be restored for dialogue to happen and for dialogue to cease.

Jesus refused the sword of Peter because he is committed to the word as the only form of interaction. The word Jesus is forming, the Kingdom Jesus is creating, relies on the word, not on violence.

Let’s get back to Pilate. Peter didn’t slice Pilate’s ears off. Nevertheless, Pilate’s ears were blocked. Pilate had difficulty hearing Jesus and understanding

him.

Jesus attests before Pilate he was not a pretender to his or anybody else’s throne. In fact, he was opposed to thrones built on violence and maintained by force. Pilate seems unable to catch the distinction between his own earthly realm and any other reality. ‘Yes, I am a king,’ challenges Jesus, ‘a king who will bear witness to the truth. And all who are on the side of truth will listen to my voice.’

We are a people who endeavour to do this. This is what we do – listen to the voice of Jesus, the Christ. Listening to Christ is like having our ears refitted in order to take in the sounds of truth.

Jesus strategy to arrive at truth is through dialogue – often conversation. An example of this is in John 4 where we are treated to an uplifting conversation between Jesus and a woman. She has come to the village well to draw water and Jesus asks her for a drink. After a hesitant beginning, a rather brilliant dialogue takes place between them. They both know that by rigid custom they should not be talking. He was a Jew, she a Samaritan. They talk and even challenge each other in their beliefs.

Finally Jesus reveals the truth about himself – that he is the Christ. She leaves her water jar there at the well and goes into the city to tell the people of her great discovery. And it is our discovery too! Christ is a loving king bringing people to the truth. Christ is a king not by throne or bending human beings with all his might. Christ is truly king because out of love he foregoes all force and continues to talk, to listen, to converse and restore ears.

*Fr Kevin Burns preached this homily on the Feast of Christ the King, 25 November 2012, at St Mary’s Church, New Brighton.*

## ***Funeral Choice***

**[www.funeralchoice.co.nz](http://www.funeralchoice.co.nz)**

*A Catholic Worker project*

Cheaper alternatives to  
consumer funerals

## **CW website**

- Leading articles from the first 14 years of *The Common Good*
- Alternative funerals
- Restorative justice
- Other theological issues

**[www.catholicworker.org.nz](http://www.catholicworker.org.nz)**

# Around the Traps

## Christmas Day

Christmas dinner at Suzanne Aubert CW brought the usual mixture of old friends, fresh faces and assorted others – 60 in all – to a full dinner served outside under the awning Mike had constructed. After Jim and Francis had welcomed everyone, Brian said grace as usual and we hoed in. Peter brought his keyboard and played some background music to dine by. It was a grand affair! Lots of seconds completed by a variety of desserts kept everyone happy. Mike, Jacqui, the two Peters, Raewyn, Sharmaine, Brian, Leoney, Judith, and Vilma provided the backbone of the hardworking kitchen staff. Many guests took a plastic container of leftovers home to see them through Boxing Day.

## Congratulations

To **Therese Gallagher-Power** and **Ronnie Fisher** on the occasion of their nuptials at Sacred heart Church, Addington, in early January. Therese's mum, Catholic Worker Kathleen Gallagher, walked her daughter up the aisle, while cousin Fr Dan Doyle officiated. Ron's mother, Brenda, his Aunt Marian and brother Adam all made the trip from Canada for the big day.



It was a splendid occasion with full nuptial Mass and the reception in the adjacent hall afterwards. Therese and Ronnie were determined that, in as much as it was possible, they would prepare all that was needed for the wedding themselves. All of their wedding food and decorations were made by hand. Therese and her wonderful team lovingly stitched, hammered and then hung all of the decorations, while, Ronnie and his crew of dedicated chefs (which including Adam fresh off the plane) prepared all of the food. Thus the reception was largely a home grown affair.

A gaggle of Catholic Workers arrived from the north to enjoy the occasion and helped with the Canadian visitors to set the hall up and wash dishes afterwards (well – they had to pay for their meal somehow!!). Liam made the speech of the night, though he was in good company with some of the others. Kathleen sang the romantic love song *Sunrise Sunset* (from *Fiddler on the Roof*), a beautiful solo to her daughter, backed by a splendid support chorus. Then we danced. And danced. And danced some more. We wish the young couple well for their future.

## Overseas Guest

It was great to be able to host an old friend, **Bishop John Osmers** of Zambia, on a Wednesday evening during Advent. John was born and raised in Christchurch before ordination and a subsequent posting to South Africa. His opposition to apartheid led to a car bombing in 1979, which blew off a hand above the wrist. Recovering well from his ordeal, John threw himself into his work with the Anglican Church, a mission which eventually led to his election as bishop in Botswana, a position from which he has now retired.

Bishop John was home for a visit to his family in New Brighton during December. He gave us a vivid picture of his work for many years with refugees in Southern Africa. He spoke of the generosity of the Zambian Government over an extended period of time in welcoming hundreds of thousands of homeless refugees from war torn countries like the Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe and other neighbouring countries. He compared their generosity to that of successive New Zealand refugee intakes, capped at 750 for the past several years, and asked whether this was the best we could do? At a time when we recall that Jesus himself became a refugee, it was a question well worth asking.

## Grateful thanks

Our Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, our outreach work and our little paper *The Common Good* are solely dependent for funding on an annual postal appeal we make. Our newspaper costs alone are around \$10 000 per year. The latest appeal has brought in **\$6560** from 81 individual contributions. We thank supporters and subscribers who have contributed so generously.

## Remembering and Honouring

With the death of Paul Holmes, broadcaster, it is timely to remember that it was a couple of live sessions on the *Holmes* TV programme filmed outside Addington Remand Prison in 1993, that forced the then Minister of Justice, Doug Graham, into an immediate announcement that no more impecunious inmates would be held in prison because of debt. These weren't big debts running into millions. They were often sums of little more than \$100. They inevitably involved the economically poor.

Imprisonment for debt laws had been in place for centuries. Charles Dickens was inspired to write because of the imprisonment of his family for debt. Despite representations from chaplains throughout the 1980s, governments and legal academics alike continued to argue the law couldn't be changed. The catalyst for change was a war veteran who had fallen

on hard times. He had been imprisoned for a \$300 debt. This was paid out by a prison chaplain.

Confronted by Holmes demanding an explanation and live on nationwide TV, Doug Graham announced, 'This is obviously unjust. We will change the law!' The collective gasp of the Wellington bureaucrats could be heard all over the country! No one creates new policy on live TV! Yet not one more person ever went to prison for debt. The same thinking was later applied to bail sureties and unpaid fines defaulters and seemingly

unchangeable laws were amended. No longer were the poor to be targeted in such a blatant fashion.

Both men thus played a key role in abolishing the iniquitous medieval law which over the years had kept hundreds of the poor in debtors' prison. It was live television at its very best, spotlighting an obviously unjust situation and demanding answers. It took a broadcaster with a sense of fair play and a minister with a conscience to do the right thing. Together they were unstoppable.

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## Peace Trip to Afghanistan

Culley Palmer

I visited Kabul in December as part of an international delegation to meet with community groups and ordinary people to learn about the impacts of the war, and about local peace-building efforts. Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, is considered the most corrupt city in the world, and one of the most polluted. Afghanistan also has the highest number of internal refugees in the world. In the last decade, millions of refugees have arrived in Kabul from rural provinces, escaping the violence and poverty of the war.

We had daily meals and discussions with the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers, who had invited our delegation to support the launch of their petition on Dec 10, International Human Rights Day, for a ceasefire from all armed groups. Some well known folk came to support the Peace Volunteers, including authors and activists Shane Claiborne and Fr. John Dear, former US diplomat Anne Wright, and Nobel Laureate Mairead Maguire from Ireland. The petition was delivered to the UN.

The Peace Volunteers aim to gather at least 2 million signatures, for the 2 million Afghans who have died in wars in the last 40 years. Please consider joining the petition at [2millionfriends.org](http://2millionfriends.org)

The Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers are a mixed ethnic group of Afghans, mostly students, who are living together and studying nonviolence. They are committed to non-military solutions to the war, and they are building friendships between people from different backgrounds and different sides of the conflict as a way to work towards peace.

We spoke to a lot of people about what it's like to live in Afghanistan, and how the war affects ordinary people. People said things like 'The Americans being here is giving Afghans an excuse to kill other Afghans.' Some said that things are worse than 11 years ago, some said things were better, and many said that things had not changed.

We asked a lot of people what it would take to bring peace to Afghanistan. It is hard to answer because violence has been a part of life for as long as most people remember. Bringing peace means a lot more than ISAF forces leaving or defeating the Taliban.

As an outsider, I don't have answers. But the Afghans

we spoke to suggested many ways forward. Education barely exists there. Even with the US claims of schools opening, we were told that often teachers will just sign in and leave to work another job, returning to sign out and collect their pay, because they can't support themselves on a teacher's wage. People there, especially children and women, need education. Teachers need to be paid and trained properly. Many children do not go to school because they have to work to survive. Many more are not allowed by conservative families to attend schools.

### Women's Issues

The women, those confident enough to speak to us, told us of the daily struggles of women there, and the pain of the war. One woman told how she lost her husband to the violence and now she cries every day. Women spoke about difficulties in their homes, especially financial trouble if their husbands were dead, unable to work, or if their husbands had second wives. It's very difficult for women to learn income-generating skills, but even if they do, as women in this society it's very difficult to sell things. Women are not very able to participate in public life.

Some women we met with told us they were afraid that if their husbands knew they were meeting to speak with other men, they may divorce them. And if people knew they were meeting with foreigners, they could be beaten or killed. We met with a group of women who were meeting to learn sewing skills, and were making duvets for the winter. Unlike many skills programs for women in Afghanistan, this group of women were not paid to learn. They were only making money from what they produced. Discussions were taking place about forming a workers' cooperative.

### Corruption

Corruption needs to be addressed. People told us that most of the aid money sent from foreign countries is never even seen by the people. People still starve and freeze and school children still sit on the floor. One of the men we met with had worked with the Taliban before realising it was achieving nothing for the people. He told us that old men like him, with white beards, were

responsible for the corruption in society, and it is up to the young people to get educated and bring change. He said that all foreign powers need to leave for peace to come, adding that they are only there for power and money.

People we spoke to were overwhelmingly opposed to the Taliban's involvement and of foreign involvement in Afghanistan.

People generally thought that ISAF being there made things worse, but ISAF leaving suddenly would make things worse too. A woman told us that the US was responsible for destabilising the region, and for creating some of the social problems, and the US will now be responsible if there are massacres and human rights abuses after they leave.

The security situation is still so far from stable, even 11 years into the occupation. Earlier in 2012, Kabul had been the site of the fiercest resistance since the invasion, with people firing rifles and rockets at parliament and the battles lasting for most of a day. When we visited the parliament we were quickly taken behind concrete barricades and razor wire and searched for weapons.

Many people are terrified of what will happen after ISAF troops leave. The US has now said they may leave up to 9000 troops in Afghanistan after 2014, in addition to special forces and drones. Iran or India may or may not support Afghanistan with troops, but the sudden absence of the US centralised command and Air Force will leave the country in a precariously unstable situation.

While the Gillard government plans to withdraw troops by 2014, our troops were only token support. The SAS are not withdrawing, and neither is our intelligence support – and these are Australia's real contributions to the war. NZ troops are leaving in April 2013.

Australian SAS operate throughout Afghanistan's rural provinces, mostly in the south where armed resistance has been strongest. In coordination with British, US and other countries special forces, they forcibly enter homes in the early hours of the morning, guns drawn, balaclavas on.

Australia also provides intelligence and training support for the US. We now host bi-yearly US training exercises across all states, and have a permanent US marine base in Darwin. Our satellite interception facility at Pine Gap feeds all data straight back to the NSA, and is implicated in targeting for the CIA's extraordinary rendition and torture of people without trial from Middle Eastern and Northern African states, as well as drone targeting in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen. Drones are remote controlled aircraft that the US are increasingly using to fire missiles into people's homes.

Because these drone attacks are remotely controlled and premeditated, and are known to almost always kill and injure civilians, they are a war crime in which Australia is complicit.

*Culley Palmer is a CW living in Brisbane.*

## Remembering Kieran

a quiet, seemingly unobtrusive young man  
stands with a guitar  
as people mill about the Wednesday  
gathering  
he moves to the circle of very assorted seats  
with even a few actual chairs  
and begins to play.  
confidently, but not too loudly  
giving people the space to listen  
or join in straight away  
or remember the words  
or find them in the songbook  
  
that was Kieran  
sensitive, clever, alert, waiting for his time  
to lead us  
to gather us  
but without showing off.  
he was more like a momentary centre of the  
universe  
drawing the scattered energy  
  
of the over-full hearts and the broken ones,  
of the tremblingly fearful of yesterday or of  
tomorrow  
of the brave but tired out of today  
  
mustered our separate selves and secrets  
into music, song and praise  
to create a liturgy  
for the never-to-be-exactly-repeated  
collection of people there that night

—Margaret Ingram



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# NY Times on Dorothy Day's Canonisation

Mark and Louise Zwick

The recent article on the front page of the *New York Times* about Dorothy Day's canonization precipitated a lot of interest and a flurry of articles in other publications. Unfortunately, the editors of the *New York Times*, to the best of our knowledge, are not Catholic Workers and the article confirmed that. But a half a loaf is better than none.

They had a few good lines, which brought comfort to the ears of Catholic Workers, but they missed some important ideas and realities from Dorothy Day's and Peter Maurin's vision and practice of the CW.

Someone commented recently that many Christians live in a way that would lead one to the conclusion that they had not read the Gospels or the Prophets of Israel. No one could suggest such a thing about Dorothy or Peter. Their lives reflected their beliefs. Here are the Gospels: live them out. Here are the papal encyclicals: implement them. Listen to the Prophets of Israel. Of course, many followers of the Nazarene live these things in a hidden way and observers may not be aware of their sincerity and works of mercy.

When the *NYT* author mentioned that Dorothy was committed to social justice and loyal to church teachings, she did not spell out what Dorothy meant by social justice, which has become a vague term thrown about by those from various points of view.

She did not mention Dorothy's criticism of the savage aspects of ruthless economics (from whatever theory), her support of small business and small agriculture. Not mentioned was the way in which she was able to break through the barriers that keep the church's social teaching from the market place. Dorothy was pro life. For her, this meant also being concerned about hungry children, about the evil of dropping bombs on civilians in the midst of war because all are members or potential members of the Mystical Body of Christ. Dorothy opposed the death penalty and war. She opposed violence in all its forms.

Dorothy inspired those who followed her to protest against violence. Daniel Berrigan credits her in his introduction to her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*:

'Without Dorothy, without that exemplary patience, courage, moral modesty, without this woman pounding at the locked door behind which the powerful mock the powerless with games of triage, without her, the resistance we offered would have been simply unthinkable. She urged our consciences off the beaten track; she made the impossible (in our case) probable and then actual. She did this first of all by living as though the Truth were true.'

## Prophetic Voice

At the meeting in November where the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops voted unanimously to support Dorothy's canonization, Cardinal George of

Chicago commented, '...the greatest threat to world peace and international justice is the nation state gone bad, claiming an absolute power, deciding questions and making 'laws' beyond its competence. Few there are, however, who would venture to ask if there might be a better way for humanity to organize itself for the sake of the common good. Few, that is, beyond a prophetic voice like that of Dorothy Day, speaking acerbically about 'Holy Mother the State,' or the ecclesiastical voice that calls the world, from generation to generation, to live at peace in the kingdom of God.'

'Her solution to the injustices of capitalism was the works of mercy,' the cardinal added, noting Day's criticism of what she saw as the inherent totalitarianism of nation states.

All the great saints spoke of the necessity of the Works of Mercy outlined in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, for the lives of followers of the Nazarene. For Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin the practice of the works of mercy, on which we will be judged at the end of life, was the underpinning of everything they did. For them, seeing Christ in the poor, the suffering, the oppressed, not only involved giving bread to the hungry, clothing to the naked, visiting the prisoner, giving a place to stay to those without a home, but as Dorothy said,

'The love of brother, that care for his freedom is what causes us to go into such controversial subjects as man and the state, war and peace. The implications of the Gospel teaching of the Works of Mercy, lead us into conflict with the powers of this world. Our love of God is a consuming fire. It is a living God and a living faith that we are trying to express. When we begin to take the lowest place, to washing the feet of others, to love our brothers with that burning love, that passion, which led to the Cross, then we can truly say, 'Now I have begun.' (*The Catholic Worker*, November 1955).

The surprise expressed in the *New York Times* article that the Catholic Bishops would support the canonization of a person with her radical reputation reflects the general lack of awareness of the profound spirituality that was the basis for her actions.

The article's mild comment that Dorothy was loyal to church teachings did not scratch the surface of her profound understanding of living out the Gospels and the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, her understanding and acceptance of Catholic teaching as a source of meaning and the basis of freedom in the world, the freedom to accomplish so much good with God's grace.

Her radical following of the Gospel, her prophetic voice, flowed from her profound liturgical spirituality and her stated understanding of the primacy of the spiritual. She emphasized not only the corporal Works of Mercy, but also the spiritual Works of Mercy: admonishing the sinner, instructing the ignorant,

counseling the doubtful, comforting the sorrowful, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving all injuries, and praying for the living and the dead.

She said in the CW charter document *Aims and Purposes of the Catholic Worker Movement*:

‘We are working for ‘a new heaven and a new earth, wherein justice dwells.’ We are trying to say with action, ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven’... We must practice the presence of God. Jesus said that when two or three are gathered together, there He is in the midst of them. Christ is with us in our kitchens, at our tables, at our breadlines, with our visitors, at our farms... What we

do is very little. But it is like the little boy with a few loaves and fishes. Christ took that little and increased it. He will do the rest. What we do is so little we may seem to be constantly failing. But so did he fail. He met with apparent failure on the Cross. But unless the seed fall into the ground and die, there is no harvest...’

*A full version of this article by Mark and Louise Zwick, founder members of the Houston CW, appeared in The Houston Catholic Worker, in December 2012 <http://cjd.org/>*

## Room for Christ

Dorothy Day



It is no use to say that we are born two thousand years too late to give room to Christ. Nor will those who live at the end of the world have been born too late. Christ is always with us, always asking for room in our hearts.

But now it is with the voice of our contemporaries that he speaks, with the eyes of store clerks, factory workers and children that he gazes; with the hands of office workers, slum dwellers and suburban housewives that he gives. It is with the feet of soldiers and tramps that he walks, and with the heart of anyone in need that he longs for shelter. And giving shelter or food to anyone who asks for it, or needs it, is giving it to Christ.

If we hadn't got Christ's own words for it, it would seem raving lunacy to believe that if I offer a bed and food and hospitality for Christmas--or any other time, for that matter--to some man, woman or child, I am replaying the part of Lazarus or Martha or Mary and that my guest is Christ. There is nothing to show it, perhaps.

It would be foolish to pretend that it is easy always to remember this. If everyone were holy and handsome, with *alter Christus* shining in neon lighting from them, it would be easy to see Christ in everyone. If Mary had appeared in Bethlehem clothed, as St. John says, with the sun, a crown of twelve stars on her head and the moon under her feet, then people would have fought to make room for her. But that was not God's way for her nor is it Christ's way for Himself now when He is disguised under every type of humanity that treads the earth.

We can do it too, exactly as they did. We are not born too late. We do it by seeing Christ and serving Christ in friends and strangers, in everyone we come in contact with. While almost no one is unable to give some hospitality or help to others, those for whom it is really impossible are not debarred from giving room to Christ,

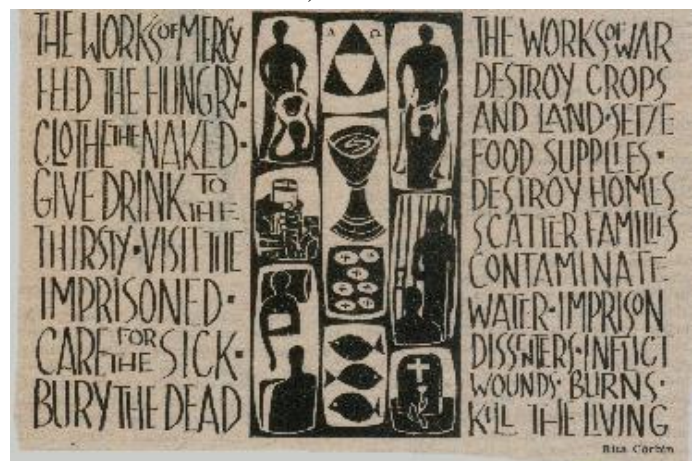
because, to take the simplest of examples, in those they live with or work with is Christ disguised. All our life is bound up with other people; for almost all of us happiness and unhappiness are conditioned by our relationship with other people. What a simplification of life it would be if we forced ourselves to see that everywhere we go is Christ, wearing out socks we have to darn, eating the food we have to cook, laughing with us, silent with us, sleeping with us.

All this can be proved, if proof is needed, by the doctrines of the Church. We can talk about Christ's Mystical Body, about the vine and the branches, about the Communion of Saints. But Christ Himself has proved it for us, and no one has to go further than that. For He said that a glass of water given to a beggar was given to Him. He made heaven hinge on the way we act towards Him in his disguise of commonplace, frail and ordinary human beings.

Did you give me food when I was hungry? Did you give me something to drink when I was thirsty? Did you take me in when I was homeless and a stranger? Did you give me clothes when my own were all rags? Did you come to see me when I was sick or in prison or in trouble?

And to those who say, aghast, that they never had a chance to do such a thing, that they lived two thousand years too late, he will say again what they had the chance of knowing all their lives, that if these things were done for the very least of his brethren they were done for Him.

*The Catholic Worker, December 1945*



# Letters

SS. Francis and Therese CW,  
52 Mason Street,  
Worcester, MA 01610

Dear Jim,

Peace! Thank you so much for your card and kind words. We are so glad you liked our paper, *The Catholic Radical*. I love receiving yours as well. Too often we lapse into a view that is too US-centric. Its wonderful how love works in hidden mysterious ways. A life in one part of the world helping to sustain another. All this is a reminder to trust the presence of God in the work that we do.

Wishing you all a blessed Christmastide and a New Year of peace, good health and deeper knowledge of the heart of Christ,

God bless,

*Scott & Claire Schaffer-Duffy.*

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40 Perth Street,  
Invercargill 9810

Dear Jim,

Greetings and a happy New Year. I am writing to tell you how much I appreciated the latest issue of *The Common Good*. The whole issue was full of interesting articles, especially the one on James K Baxter and the one on the Philippines. Would you have any more copies or returned ones? I would be grateful for any spares.

I still have the Sunday lunch for the poor and try to help them. Addictions are the main problem but since life for many of these people is so boring I can't do much about their addictions. Only God can help and I am very conscious at the moment of how much is the need I have of God and of prayer. Prayers for your work - I pray for you every day.

God bless and keep up the good work

*Tom Keyes.*

*Retired priest, Fr Tom Keyes, who celebrated 60 years of priesthood in July 2012, hosts a Sunday lunch for the homeless in Invercargill.*

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230 Napier Road,  
RD 10,  
Palmerston North.

Hi Fr Jim, Kathleen, Mike and Francis,

We have moved into our barn. Think small, 32 square metres with a loft. It is great to be here at last. Forest has been working his socks off building and it

is nearly done. We do have water now and it is great.

It is also great to be in the country but just a bike ride into town. We haven't started milking yet but have four cows/calves here and a big veggie garden. We are trying to find a caravan for people to come and stay in, but there is always a bed, so please feel welcome, anyone. Our Friday liturgy group is going OK; not as CW as we would wish but.....I'm missing CW people, so hope to see you all soon.

Blessings for the New Year,

*Krista Fullerton*

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P O Box AB  
'Orla' (Kurtistown)  
Hawaii

Dear Friends,

I write to express my gratitude and ask for your continued support of *Malu 'Aina's* work for justice, peace and aloha 'aina (love for the land).

*Malu 'Aina* has been planting seeds and sharing food with people in need, the least among us, for 32 years. The number of people in poverty continues to increase and the gap widen between rich and poor, those doing very well and those with diminishing hope of a better life.

*Malu 'Aina* is now in its 585<sup>th</sup> consecutive week of sponsoring a Friday peace vigil at the downtown Hilo Post Office/Federal building. Each week a new peace leaflet is prepared for worldwide distribution on the internet and on the downtown street corner. 585 weeks is more than 11 years of widening war and trillions of dollars spent for death and destruction. There seems always to be enough money for new weapons systems and wars but never enough money for building a more just world, meeting basic human needs and caring for the earth.

Together, we want to see a change in priorities, a world where we fight less and talk more; where love and kindness, not violence, is affirmed as the law of our being; where everyone has the basic necessities of life; where 'justice rolls down like waves and righteousness like a mighty stream;' and where we treat the earth, our mother, with the respect it deserves.

We are truly blessed by the gifts of your solidarity,

With gratitude and aloha,

*Jim Albertini*

*PS Feel free to click 'subscribe' on Malu 'Aina home webpage – [www.malu-aina.org](http://www.malu-aina.org) - and receive our weekly peace leaflet free.*

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| <b>In this issue</b>                                  | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| Jim Consedine on forgiveness as a radical option..... | 1-2         |
| Should Dorothy Day be canonised? .....                |             |
| Kevin Burns on the non-violence of Jesus .....        | 5           |
| Around the traps .....                                | 6           |
| Peacemaking in Afghanistan .....                      | 7           |
| Letters .....   | 10-11       |

**The Common Good**

Te Wairua Maranga Trust  
 Box 33-135  
 Christchurch 8244  
 New Zealand



No ideology – not environmentalism, conservationism or even pacifism – is fully aligned with Christianity. No matter how close the ideology is to Christ, it is not the bulls-eye that is Christ. We need to be converted to Christ. This orientation changes everything. Instead of reading our preferences into religion, the religion starts to form our preferences, and Christ really becomes our teacher and head.

—Clark Massey

*Pass it on— When you've finished this issue of The Common Good, why not share it with someone else? You could give it to a friend or workmate, or leave it for the next reader to find - in the creche, bus depot, magazine rack at Bellamy's, local library... Help The Common Good get around.*