

# The Common Good

*Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor*

A newspaper of the Christchurch Catholic Worker

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## Holy Innocents – the Forgotten Feast

Jim Consedine

There is a significant feast day virtually overlooked each Christmas season. The feast of the Holy Innocents is officially recognized by the Church on 28 December. It forms an essential part of the Christmas season, which stretches from the Nativity through to the Epiphany. Without it we only hear part of the Christmas story. Why then is it virtually ignored every year?

There are a variety of reasons for this. The birth of Jesus is such a joyful celebration. It comes with much feasting – and rightly so. For the right reasons, Christians in particular make it an important part of their year.

Then there is the timing. In the southern hemisphere Holy Innocents falls just as we take off for our holidays. Summer and the beaches beckon and, even if they don't, most move into holiday mode. And that is good too. We all need a break at that time. In addition, the feast falls in the midst of the immediate post-Christmas sales boom, touted so much by the media and the business community alike. It can be a busy time. What it means is that the Holy Innocents gets buried in the flotsam and jetsam of the season.

Yet the significance of the feast is central to a proper understanding of the Christ birth and its implications for the human family. It can only be properly understood in its fullness, which includes the Holy Innocents and the Epiphany. That is the triduum of feasts which fully celebrate the Incarnation.

### The Biblical account

The story itself is well known. According to gospel accounts, the three wise men from the east alerted Herod to the birth of Jesus, the long awaited Messiah, whom Herod would have heard about. Herod immediately saw this as a threat to his throne and to the power of the Roman Empire. For the Roman Empire, violent repression was the way to deal with dissent or threats as thousands of



contemporary Jewish people had found out to their cost. Herod decided to deal with the Jesus issue by snuffing him out in infancy. He did what all dictators do. He sent the military in. Every baby boy under the age of two in the Bethlehem district was summarily killed.

This was a significant act of slaughter unleashed in an attempt to maintain imperial power.

It wasn't the first time that an emperor had attempted to halt the plan of God in its tracks. The Pharaoh of Egypt back in the time of Moses had sought the same thing. 'Every infant boy born of the Hebrew must be thrown in the Nile, but every girl may live.' (Ex 1/22) This was an episode well known to the Hebrew people.

And so Herod unleashed his troops. Every baby under two was slaughtered within days of the birth of Jesus. We know he escaped though divine intervention and the courage of his parents who fled and hid in Egypt. They only returned after the death of Herod some years later when they settled in

Nazareth.

This story should form an important part of the Christmas event because it shows clearly what empires will do to protect their power. The child Jesus is perceived as a threat to the ruling powers. Imperial power will brook no threat then – and no threat now!

### Death of innocents

In brushing this event out of the Christmas story as understood by billions of people every year, aren't we selling the complete story short? Aren't we selling Christ short in understanding his full message? His birth and the message he came to proclaim, while Good News for ordinary people and the poor in particular, was a threat to imperial power. It was then. Properly lived, it is now.

It is not surprising that we are too often left only with the tinsel version of the Jesus story – angels singing,



shepherds running, cattle lowing and a painless birth. No wonder such a story has such little impact on our contemporary world. We also know that the consumer society has itself largely hi-jacked the story in order to sell goods and maximise profits. Enter the North Pole reindeer and Boxing Day sales!

### Reclaiming Christmas

Just imagine if we put an appropriate emphasis on the shadow side of the birth story, the killing of the Innocents. Just imagine if we were seriously reminded each year of the response of the ruling powers to this tumultuous event. We might just take the birth as it was intended to be – a game changing event for the whole human family which re-orientates the relationships between and among people.

Imagine if we lived as if the divine spark in each individual person signalled by the incarnation was to take precedence over social status and power. Maybe then ‘justice would flow like a river’ for all, and there might be ‘peace on earth for all.’ That is the biblical vision of the Christmas story. No wonder it needs to be side-lined by the modern imperial powers!

The story of the killing of the Innocents needs to be placed also in a modern context. It is not just the children of ancient times who are the victims of mass slaughter.

#### 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 two houses of hospitality in Christchurch named after Suzanne Aubert and Thomas Merton. 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 33-125, Christchurch.**

The killing of the Innocents goes on in our own time. There are children being killed every day through preventable war, poverty and domestic violence. There are 16,000 children who die each day around the world from hunger. These deaths are as real now as in the time of Pharaoh and Herod, except now they are conducted on a much larger scale. Even greater numbers are aborted, many at virtual full term. All over the world in so many ways young lives are snuffed out in infancy. Most of these deaths are preventable.

While we jingle and jangle our bells and sleighs in consumer frenzy, millions of children are threatened by the powers of empire right under our noses in our own time. The corporate empire which enslaves so many in factories and fields through sub-human conditions and starvation wages; the military empires which kill ‘to protect their interests’; the arms manufacturers; the abortion industry; the killing goes on and on and on.

### Drone strikes

Add to that the new weapon of choice, the armed Predator drones used by the U.S. military. They carried out 333 drone strikes in Afghanistan in 2012 alone – more than the entire number of drone attacks in Pakistan over the past eight years combined. The U.S. military has begun to use the term “harvest” to describe the killing done in this push-button combat of drone warfare.

Recently the Bureau of Investigative Journalism in Britain documented 178 children among over 900 civilians killed by U.S. drones in Pakistan and Yemen alone. Why is there such an aversion to acknowledging the human cost of war? Drones are ‘harvesting’ children. The killing goes on in new guises.

The message of the non-violent Jesus offers much for our own time. Veteran Catholic Worker Ciaran O’Reilly points to the non-violence of the infancy narrative. ‘There are also stories of heroic nonviolent resistance contained within the Gospel narrative. The Magi break Herod’s injunction and refuse to return to him with targeting intelligence for his search and destroy mission against the Christ child.’

‘Today that resistance is echoed in the lives of whistleblowers Chelsea (Bradley) Manning, recently imprisoned for 35 years in the U.S., Wikileaks director Julian Assange, presently encircled by British police in the Ecuadoran Embassy in downtown London, and ex-NSA operative Edward Snowden, exiled in Russia. All three are being pursued by modern day Herods who would rather we were kept in the dark in relation to the nature of their murderous deeds.’

Is it any wonder that modern society has brushed the Feast of the Holy Innocents out of the Christmas picture? To focus on the systemic killing of innocents every year immediately after the birth of Jesus would be a very serious feast. Protecting children and the life of children would become central to the festive season.

## Editorial 1 Our Beautiful World

There are now problems in the world that are universal which Governments seem unable to solve. All Western Governments, including New Zealand, are now controlled by global corporations who dominate their domestic political agenda.

Sometime during the 1980s a global cancer took over New Zealand and the world. It is a religious belief in unfettered markets and financial speculation. It destroys employment, education, health, media, community, the public sector, environment and the world's resources. It has no limits, no boundaries, no morality and is above the law. It primarily benefits the 1%.

Those who miss out are in jail, starving, homeless, unemployed, unhealthy and prematurely dead. They are blamed for their own failure as the social costs escalate.

This is a system promoted and managed by sociopathic political and economic leaders with no moral compass. They have triaged the poor while giving welfare benefits to their rich supporters. They build their lives and their careers on lies and self deception. They promote endless war for profit.

They have looted the wealth of generations of people through the cult of privatization. They are not interested in relieving poverty. Inequality is ignored. Trapped in their own limitations, fear is their weapon. Police state laws and surveillance is their response to legitimate protest.

They never question their own assumptions. Economic growth at any cost is their religion.

Pope Francis calls this 'savage capitalism....a tyranny which unilaterally and irremediably imposes its own laws and rules....and which denies the right of control to states

which are charged with providing for the common good.'

Teilhard de Chardin contrasts the choice starkly, 'humanity is being taken to the place where it will have to choose between suicide and adoration.'

Hannah Arendt insightfully says 'that the sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil.'

In the midst of this chaotic world, goodness prevails by the bucket-load. There are heroes everywhere amongst the tens of thousands of organisations and millions of ordinary people working for social justice. They are in every corner of the world at every level of every society determined to heal the planet. They risk their lives, work for peace, cross borders, blow whistles on corrupt governments, go to jail, tackle problems ignored by Governments and the corporate media, build community, live simply and work miracles.

The grace of God, the Holy Spirit and a spirit of gratitude and hope permeates their lives. They are active at every level of society reflecting diverse beliefs with a common purpose – service to humanity. This is co-creation at work for a more peaceful future for our earth and all who share it.

Our ancestors knew intuitively the empowering presence of the great spirit.

The divine life force is everywhere in every living thing, in nature, the earth, the wind and the rain the heat of the sun and in all of humanity.

—Robert Consedine

*This article first appeared in Tui Motu, October 2013*

## Editorial 2 Funeral Dignity for the Poor

'Mrs Brosnahan lived and died in poverty.'

These were the chilling opening words of the recent Judgment delivered in the High Court by Justice Stephen Kos in response to an application by Mrs Brosnahan's husband (aided by the CW) seeking clarification as to who should receive the WINZ funeral grant.

The judge found that the crux of the case involved whether the funeral grant (available on application from WINZ, maximum \$1971.30) should be given to the surviving spouse, or to the deceased's estate. It was originally intended by parliament to aid the spouse or family during the early weeks of bereavement.

But WINZ have been paying it to the estate of the deceased and arguing that it can then be used to help pay for funeral costs. The judge said 'no' – 'the purpose of the four-week terminal benefit is to provide immediate financial aid to the deceased's immediate family.' He ruled that the terminal benefit should be paid to the surviving spouse. It was not designated for funeral costs.

As outlined in an accompanying article (p 4), current policy has resulted in a real injustice to those we number among the poorest of the poor in this country. The Catholic Worker has helped bury many such people over the years. Justice Kos was in no doubt that the Department erred in its policy and needs to change it.

The funeral grant is only available, under strict conditions, to those who cannot afford a funeral for a loved one. Currently a family can apply for a grant or a portion thereof to cover certain nominated costs eg cremation fee, burial costs, newspaper notice etc. Some 5,504 grants were paid in year ending June 2012, of which 1659 were paid to surviving spouses. The decision has set a precedent that could force the Ministry of Social Development to audit thousands of payments dating back decades.

Justice Kos's Judgment concluded (Para 51-54) that the Ministry's current payment policy 'is unlawful, the terminal benefit should have been paid to the spouse not to

the estate, and the Appeal is allowed.’

It might only mean a few more crumbs from the table,

but sometimes, that is all the poor ever get.

—*Jim Consedine*

# In Quest of the Funeral Grant

**Jim Consedine**

Our friend Blanche Brosnahan died in August 2011 in Princess Margaret Hospital in Christchurch. Married to Barry for more than 20 years, she had been in poor health for some time. She died peacefully. Members of the Catholic Worker transported her body from the hospital and took her back to Suzanne Aubert CW house where some of our women laid her out.

A few days later, we conducted a funeral service for her to which about 15 of her friends came. We provided a casket built by Mike Coughlan, prepared some readings and celebrated her life with prayer and music. After taking her body to the crematorium in our station wagon, we returned to the CW for shared afternoon tea and more story telling.

We have facilitated many of these funerals for the poor over the years. From time to time, we apply for a WINZ funeral grant to help pay for the basics – a casket, a grave or cremation fee and a newspaper notification. The rest we do ourselves – preparation of the body, providing transport for the deceased, for relatives, refreshments, and filling out paperwork for government departments.

Blanche left no estate, so we decided to apply for a funeral grant to cover the basics. We sought \$1450 reimbursement. The maximum grant is \$1956 (a funeral director charges on average between \$6,000-\$10,000), so we were well under the maximum available. No price gouging here!

Imagine our surprise when the local WINZ office declined our application. We went to see why. They explained that because her estate had been paid four weeks of Blanche’s benefit after her death, this should be used for the funeral costs. We argued not so, that the extra payments were intended by parliament to help the surviving spouse adjust to widowhood and ease things in the first few weeks after a death. If it was meant to be used for funeral expenses, this would have been spelt out in the legislation. They disagreed.

By now our ‘injustice’ antennae were up good and proper. This seemed to be yet another trick to wheedle the poor out of an entitlement in the interests of saving money. It seemed to be grossly unfair. There was a principle which could affect other families in similar situations. We decided to fight the issue.

## Appeals

Our first appeal was held in a small room at Nga Hou e Wha Marae where three senior government officials came to hear our case for reimbursement. They listened for an hour as Francis Simmonds and I outlined the circumstances of this impecunious couple. We asked

whether or not the legislation was intended specifically for these sorts of people who owned nothing of substance. The officials were sympathetic but declined to change the ruling.

We next appealed to a three-person national panel. WINZ flew me to Wellington for this hearing. This was held in a formal court type-setting, with a top lawyer from the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) appearing for the Crown. I presented a substantial case prepared by a very good lawyer, Simonette Boele, from Community Law in Christchurch. I must say I felt a bit like Perry Mason (minus the wheelchair!) as we batted the case to and fro in front of three distinguished public officials. Forty years of preaching stood me in good stead! I thought we had done enough to win. But I hadn’t realized the intransigence of the bureaucratic mindset. A week later we were notified we had lost again.

Our lawyer urged us to go to the High Court. I pointed out that the Crown had already spent several thousand dollars in defending the status quo. But Simonette would have none of it. ‘It’s the principle of the matter. There will be other families denied their just entitlements. We are among the few strong enough to challenge this injustice. Let’s take them to court.’

So we did. On 19th August our case was called in the Christchurch High Court. A Crown lawyer was flown from Wellington to appear for the Ministry of Social Development and the case was held before Justice Stephen Kos, a High Court judge, also from Wellington. This time Simonette argued our case. She was brilliant. It took the whole morning. Justice Kos seemed very fair-minded, asked lots of questions, and acknowledged the strength of our case and its presentation. Both parties accepted that the nub of the question was: to whom should the terminal benefit have been paid – to Blanche’s estate or to Barry, her surviving spouse? We adjourned at lunchtime.

Judgment was delivered on 9 October. We had won our case. Justice Kos ruled that the MSD process of rejecting our application was unlawful. In a 14 page decision he outlined where successive appeal panels had erred in their interpretation of the law. He ruled that parliament clearly intended that the purpose of the four-week terminal benefit was to ease the transition of the surviving spouse into widowhood and that the funeral grant was something separate. It could be applied for and used to pay for funeral expenses regardless of the transition benefit. As the judge’s statement said, ‘Mrs Brosnahan lived and died in poverty... The terminal benefit should have been paid to Mr Brosnahan... The Ministry’s payment policy was unlawful.’

This clearly is a victory for justice, for the poorest

who can't afford a decent funeral for a loved one. It has involved more than two years of struggle. The judgment found the Ministry of Social Development have been

squeezing the poorest of their funeral entitlement at their most vulnerable time.

## Our Bodies, Our Selves, Our Souls

Anne Rampa

I have been speaking to quite a few people recently about how to speak about sexual activity to young people. How do we help them consider the seriousness of it, when it's often treated as casually as a game of tennis by society around us, as if it's a form of recreation?

I find this especially contradictory in our Australian culture since we are so cautious about expressions of physical affection.

If we shake someone's hand it's a communication of readiness to be accepting and friendly. But we only hug or kiss on the cheek people we are especially close to, and have a friendship or relationship with. These people will be ones with whom we already have an established intimacy on a verbal and emotional level. Yet it's supposed to feel perfectly ordinary to meet someone at a party, kiss them passionately, and even have sexual intercourse with them.

Jesus was saddened when Judas betrayed him with a kiss. Our bodies are vehicles of communication, and we shouldn't lie with our bodies, especially when we are expressing a relationship. Yet this is what we are actively encouraged to do by our culture – to lie to each other through a physical expression of a relationship that isn't true.

What should our relationship with someone be in order to speak truthfully with our bodies by having sexual intercourse? As Christians we would say we should be married, or at least this physical oneness should be expressing lifelong commitment and care, as if we shared the same body.

The fallout from the terrible meaningless of sexual activity these days is hard to grasp because it's so pervasive, and unacknowledged. But the effects are physical, emotional and spiritual, because we are physical, emotional and spiritually integrated beings.

On an emotional level one effect written about by author and psychiatrist Dr. Meg Meeker, in her book *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*, is that engaging in sex puts teenage girls at higher risk of depression. Casual sex is deeply degrading because we have given our whole self to someone without requiring the commitment such a gift should be accompanied by.

On a physical level we have unwanted pregnancies, and rampant sexually transmitted diseases.

On a spiritual level the result is a yawning emptiness. Our faith tells us our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and as such should be communicators of truth and

love. Thomas Merton wrote about this in his book *Seeds of Contemplation*, saying:

“Nowhere is self-denial more important than in the area of sex, because this is the most difficult of all natural appetites to control, and one whose undisciplined gratification completely blinds the human spirit to all interior light.”

We hear a lot of talk these days about leadership. Our schools are supposedly training young people for leadership. Yet the qualities of integrity, honesty, self-control, respect, and responsibility that we hope to engender our young with in order for them to be good leaders, are often disregarded when it comes to this most intimate of physical

expressions! One young woman commented that, after a sex education session at her school, the presenters were talking to them as if they were cats and dogs that couldn't control themselves.

Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche Communities, wrote in *Man and Woman He Made Them*: “When sexual relations between a man and a woman involve neither love nor celebration, when they are not the sign and fruit of a covenant, they cannot bring true joy. They are rather the fruit of anguish, and come from the fear of isolation.”

We may be trying to solve our feelings of loneliness in this way, but it doesn't work. The way forward, according to Jean Vanier, is to build stronger communities, and authentic friendships.

Of course this is not conducive to those who want us to be big consumers, because our lack of true connection with each other, with creation, and with God, is what drives us to material accumulation. We feel insecure without these vital, life-affirming relationships, and we turn to material wealth to give us that sense of security.

I'll end with these words by Bl. John Paul II, in his 1981 encyclical on the Christian family in the modern world, which reiterates the sentiments with which this article began:

“... sexuality... is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death. The total physical self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving...”



CWs Anne Rampa and Jim Dowling

*Anne Rampa, mother of seven, lives with her husband  
Jim Dowling and family at Peter Maurin Catholic*

*Worker farm, Queensland.*

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# 7th National CW Hui

Kathleen Gallagher

The idea for a hui to be held at Southern Star Abbey and Nurturing Soul Farm came about one month after my son, Kieran, died at Solway in the Wairarapa on 5 September 2012. My husband, Mike, and I were following the route Kieran had taken before he died and we landed at the monastery at Kopua where Kieran had spent a week in late August 2012, and then at James and Celia's 150 acre Nurturing Soul Community Farm which adjoins Kopua Monastery. It felt like just the right place for a hui, and we suggested it be called in August 2013. After Aunty Reina Paniora died in May 2013, Ade and Forrest and I discussed the details of how a hui might look and work, while travelling in the car on the way home from Aunty Reina's tangi in the Hokianga. And so the 7th Catholic Worker hui came into being.

For me, the combination of Kopua and Catholic Worker was very special. I loved, when I could, attending the psalms sung in plainsong by the monks through the day – 4.00am, 6.00am, the 8.00am sung Mass, midday, 4.00pm and 8.00pm. An ancient 4th century Christian tradition, they carry the old Benedictine practice of balancing your day with prayer, study, manual work and contemplation. Just being and staying there and on occasion singing the psalms in plainsong, gave me a feeling of great inner peace. I feel folk in the 4<sup>th</sup> century had worked things out in a way that folk nowadays have maybe forgotten at our peril.



Being together in the heart of the Manawatu – with seventy other people from a diverse range of backgrounds and places, with a prayer-filled kaupapa at the heart of our time together, was an experience I truly needed at this time. The wonderful barn dance - band and caller – held in James and Celia's barn on the Saturday night; the morning and late afternoon Maranatha twenty-minute meditations with Br John Petit; the Saturday afternoon Catholic Worker Mass with all the young folk reading in the Kopua guesthouse; the amazing orchestration of beddings and straw and sleeping bags through two houses, one

guesthouse, one hermitage, a barn, and other assorted dwellings, and the amazing food we continued to eat day in and day out thanks to Forrest, Christa, Mike, Jill, Mary, Ade and Shelley and others from the Palmerston North/Manawatu Catholic Worker community.



Hearing, spellbound, Ade tell the tale of his and Sam's and Fr Peter Murnane's journey into Waihopai and out again, listening to Krista's special poem about what it takes to be a Catholic Worker, hearing folk from Thames in the Coromandel talk about knitting peace blankets and covering war memorials with them, hearing the young ones talk about what it is like to grow up in a Catholic Worker house, hearing about Catholic Workers in Israel and London and Michigan, meeting a young Catholic Worker couple who have adopted two down-syndrome children, walking 15 minutes through farm land between the barn and the guesthouse each day, hearing James and Celia talk about their vision for the farm, seeing Fr Peter Healey's special artwork and workshop on the unfolding of the cosmos, lighting the four beautifully crafted candles by Pania from Hokianga for Kieran, Reina, the Kopua hui and the prisoners still in Guantanamo Bay – so many highlights!

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***An ancient 4th century Christian tradition, they carry the old Benedictine practice of balancing your day with prayer, study, manual work and contemplation. Just being and staying there and on occasion singing the psalms in plainsong, gave me a feeling of great inner peace. I feel folk in the 4<sup>th</sup> century had worked things out in a way that folk nowadays have maybe forgotten at our peril.***

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Thank you, thank you, thank you to all those in this life and the next, who helped to make this a loving vibrant

and special time for all of us.

# Around the Traps

**Transform Now Ploughshares Update.** At the request of Catholic Workers Greg Boertje-Obed and Michael Walli, and Sr. Megan Rice, the sentencing of the trio has been postponed until January 28, 2014. They have been convicted for opposing nuclear weapons and the new bomb plant proposed for the Y-12 Complex in Oak Ridge. They hammered on the cornerstone of the newly built Highly-Enriched Uranium Manufacturing Facility (HEUMF), splashed human blood over it and left spray painted tags on the recent construction which read: Woe to the empire of blood; The fruit of justice is peace; Work for peace not for war; and Ploughshares please - Isaiah.

The reason for the delay was to give Judge Thapar time to make a decision on the motion to drop the sabotage conviction. This he declined to do. The defence lawyers need time to put together strong motions for downward departures from the sentencing guidelines. As it stands now, with the 2 convictions of sabotage and depredation of property, Greg's sentencing guidelines range from 6.5 to 8 years, while the others would likely be less, based on their background of previous convictions. The three also would like time to put together a list of character witnesses and expert witnesses for sentencing.

**Poverty in the World** – A billion people around the world live in extreme poverty, living on less than \$1.25 per day. Twenty percent of the world's poorest people live in countries near Australia (and New Zealand). This means that in our region, Australia (and New Zealand) constitute 'the rich man and Lazarus at our gate.' Australian Catholic Bishops – Social Justice Sunday

**Bob Leonard (1938 – 2013)**, veteran peacemaker, was 74 years old when he died, not 72 as reported in the previous edition of *The Common Good*. Sorry Bob – it was your youthful spirit that confused us!

**Restorative Justice update** - As of October 2013, thousands more victims of crime will be able to access Restorative Justice services, following a \$4.4 million funding boost. The funding will double the number of restorative justice conferences in Christchurch, and services will be opened in courts across the country. The Government aims to triple meetings nationwide, offering 3600 conferences by 2015.

*The Press*, Christchurch 6 October 2013

## **Funeral Choice**

**www.funeralchoice.co.nz**

*A Catholic Worker project*

Cheaper alternatives to consumer

## A Catholic Worker

has a lot of hair  
drinks copious quantities of tea  
has dirty hands & dirtier feet  
cooks in 30 litre pots  
knows how to turn anything into wine  
makes amazing bread,  
and coffins  
has big biceps from digging spuds or holding  
protest banners  
is mostly called 'Mike'  
is a Buddhist  
is an agnostic  
is normal  
is a man with his smokes stumbling down the road  
at night  
has a cow called Andromeda or Nancy Russell  
is a bearded man running across a field with a  
sickle  
stands outside the Beehive in white jockeys,  
singing  
not only gives his coat to John Key, but his car-  
keys too  
can turn swords into ploughshares  
might burn her bra  
if she has one  
is the only Kiwi to still write by snail-mail  
reads the newspaper briefly in the loo, before using  
it for something more important  
lives on salmon, brie, pesto & champagne, or  
whatever was in stock in the dumpster that week  
thinks birds Tweet and i Pod peas  
is highly cultured -  
especially from eating yoghurt and cheese  
Ka mohio te Kaimahi Katorika i te Reo, me nga  
waiata tekau  
A Catholic Worker is maybe not Catholic, or a  
worker;  
A Catholic Worker does not know he is what he is.  
A Catholic Worker does not know she is what she  
is.

—Krista Fullerton  
Written for CW hui, 2013

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# Waihopai Activists Stuck with \$1.2m bill

Ploughshares activists Fr Peter Murnane OP, Adrian Leason, and Sam Land, who damaged the Waihopai spy base in Marlborough now face a \$1.2 million damages claim, after the Court of Appeal found against them.

In 2008, they entered Waihopai and punctured an inflatable dome covering a large antennae.

They believed the operation of the base was contributing to the second Iraq war, and their protest was aimed at exposing it.

The Attorney-General filed trespass charges and sought the cost of repairs to the facility, put at \$1.2 million, winning its case in the High Court.

In May this year, lawyers for the trio told the Court of Appeal that the spy base was illegally established and did not act in New Zealand's interests, which meant their clients could not be held accountable for the damage they did.

However, the court has rejected those arguments. It found the Crown's claim for the cost of repairs at Waihopai is founded on its ownership of the facility and the damage the men caused by their admitted trespass.

Documents released to *Radio New Zealand* contain a summary of invoices for work carried out after the attack on 30 April 2008.

They show producing and installing a new dome cost the GCSB \$1.1 million. Just over \$80,000 was spent hiring cranes. Wrenches and hard hats, as well as pies, savouries, beer and juice for workers are also included.

Dominican friar Father Murnane, who is in his early 70s, has not had a bank account for half a century.

In May he said anyone demanding compensation from him would have to grab him by the ankles and shake him to find any money.

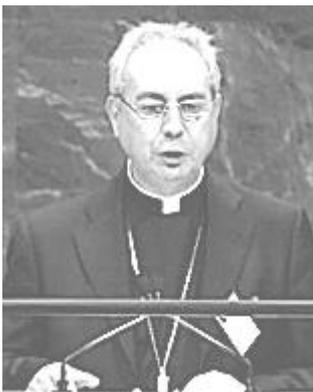
## Meanwhile...

A Catholic priest has been fined for breaking into an RAF base in England in protest against the use of drones. CW Fr Martin Newell was among a group of six who used bolt cutters to break into RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire on 3 June 2013, from where armed drones are operated. Each was fined £100. Judge John Stobart said he passed the sentence with "a heavy heart" and described the six as "dutiful people", adding that he would welcome an appeal.

*The Tablet*, 12 October 2013

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# Vatican Challenges Nuclear Powers' Disarmament Efforts



"Concern over the proliferation of nuclear weapons into other countries ring hollow as long as the nuclear weapons states hold on to their nuclear weapons."

Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, secretary for Relations with States, challenged the sincerity of U.S. and other nuclear power disarmament efforts at a

meeting of the United Nation's General Assembly on 27 September.

"Under the terms of the [1970] Non-Proliferation Treaty, states are enjoined to make 'good faith' efforts to negotiate the elimination of nuclear weapons," Mamberti reminded delegates, "Can we say there is 'good faith' when modernization programs of the nuclear weapons states continue despite their affirmations of eventual nuclear disarmament?"

"The doctrine of nuclear deterrence adopted by states with nuclear weapons is not working, Mamberti said. 'For many years, the world has been told that a number of steps will lead eventually to nuclear disarmament. Such argumentation is belied by the extraordinary nature of today's meeting, which surely would not have been called if the steps were working. They are not.'

'We cannot justify the continuation of a permanent nuclear deterrence policy,' he went on, 'given the loss of human, financial and material resources in time of scarcity of funds for health, education and social services around the world and in the face of current threats to human security, such as poverty, climate change, terrorism and transnational crimes. All this should make us consider the ethical dimension and the moral legitimacy of the production, processing, development, accumulation, use and threat of use of nuclear arms.'

Mamberti said that military doctrines based on nuclear arms 'as instruments of security and defense of an elite group, in a show of power and supremacy, retard and jeopardize the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.'



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# The Rocky Tiger Ploughshares Trial

Sean O'Reilly.

Rockhampton is a provincial town of 60,000, 650km north of Brisbane and is strongly associated with cattle and mining industries. It is near the Shoulwater Military Training Area which is the central area for the bi-annual joint US-Australian military exercises which began in 2005. They are one of the USA's biggest joint military exercises and during this period have had as one of its foci the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Activists have travelled to Rockhampton on each occasion to protest, raise awareness and interrupt the exercises by way of blockade and incursions into the training area.

In July 2011 Bryan Law, with the assistance of Graeme Dunstan, set out to take that resistance further and ground one of Australia's Tiger Reconnaissance Attack Helicopter (RAH), stationed at Rockhampton Airport. The Tiger RAH's, similar to the Apache helicopter, were employed in the exercises and intended for deployment to Afghanistan. It was all the more amazing as Bryan had stated on several occasions that he had intended to undertake such an action and was in poor health. On that day they entered the military base openly and 'disarmed' a Tiger helicopter. Both were immediately arrested and remanded for trial.

In October 2012 Bryan moved to Rockhampton to build further support in the local area and prepare for the trial. Bryan looked forward to his day in court and to argue before a jury the reason for his actions, believing that the outcome would likely be a lengthy prison term. Sadly Bryan passed away in the last week of March this year. A very sad loss for his wife Margaret and son, Joseph, and one that was felt far beyond.

Bryan's death would also mean that Graeme would be going to trial alone and supporters from as far away as Melbourne made their way to Rockhampton for the trial commencing on 19 August

The prosecution's case was made quite easy by virtue of the ROI. There was very little by way of cross examination apart from questioning (by telephone) of the two soldiers involved in Bryan's arrest as to their role and that of the Tiger RAH and Talisman Sabre exercises. The high point was putting before the jury the evidence from Graeme, Simon Moyle and Donna Mulhearn, and the *Collateral Murder* video.

On day 2 Graeme went into the witness box and spoke of his transformation from officer training at Duntroon Military Academy to peace activist, community artist and his journey eventually to Rockhampton to oppose Talisman Sabre and support Bryan. We later mounted a case for the showing of the *Collateral Murder* video and introducing our two other witnesses, Simon and Donna.

There was opposition from the prosecutor but not so compelling nor so forcefully argued that Judge Samios had difficulty making a ruling in our favour.

The showing of the *Collateral Murder* video was almost certainly the first time that it had been shown in a trial anywhere in the world. It appeared to have a strong impact on the judge and some of the jurors and how could it not do so? Those 17 minutes encapsulated for me many of the reasons Bryan was moved to take this action and the reason Graeme came forward in support, enabling Bryan to accomplish this act of disarmament. And the reason we were all in that courtroom. The Tiger RAH's were part of the Talisman Sabre 2011 exercise and it was clear at that time they were intended for deployment to Afghanistan.

Day 3 commenced with each side presenting their summary. Graeme recounted his life journey in peace activism, opposition to the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and Australia's ongoing involvement and arrival at deciding to assist Bryan in achieving his act of disarmament. Graeme spoke with emotion and conviction.

On the morning of Day 4 Judge Samios reported that the jurors had reached a unanimous verdict and our responses would not be required. It remains unknown as to what changed in the minds of the two jurors holding out. The jury was then brought back into the courtroom and stood in a line in front of the jury box. They were all asked for their verdict and responded guilty before being dismissed by Samios. One juror was observed to be crying as she left the courtroom.

We were to return to court at 2.30pm and I prepared notes to challenging the figure of \$162,000 in damages.

Sentencing remarks were quite generous to both Bryan and Graeme 'I accept that you are genuine about how you feel. Peace should be the primary way we live rather than be consumed with war. There is no doubt that from the views you expressed about the film that was shown to the jury, called *Collateral Murder*, there is no doubt people would be moved by the thought that those people died the way they did. It included two journalists... I take the view...that it is understandable because of your convictions...to see peace in the world...' The sentence was then handed down of a 2 year fully suspended sentence, 3 year good behaviour bond and \$162,000 in restitution.

*Sean O'Reilly is a long term peace and justice activist in Queensland and a former CW*

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# Child Poverty Appeal Update

Susan St John

In May of this year Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) sought a declaration from the Court of Appeal that the In Work Tax Credit, worth at least \$60 a week for the support of children in low-income families, unjustifiably discriminates against families on benefits. Traditionally New Zealand has given a weekly family assistance social assistance payment to the caregiver based on the number and ages of the children. The *'In Work Tax Credit'* marks a portion of this payment off and denies its benefits to some 230,000 of the lowest income children. This policy is a major contributor to the extent of child poverty that we are seeing across New Zealand.

Our long journey into lengthy and complex Court hearings over many years has raised the profile of this issue and more people now understand that our income policies for children entrench poverty. In spite of a relentless political campaign that has resulted in beneficiaries being the most stigmatised group in New Zealand, a recent *NZ Herald* digipoll found over 50% of those surveyed supported the CPAG in seeking an extension of the In Work Tax Credit to all low income children. The kind of discrimination found in the *Working for Families* package is inimical to the Kiwi way of a fair go for all and, to the belief that New Zealand is a great place to bring up children.

To make the argument tractable from a legal position, the grounds we had to argue on in Court were more limited than CPAG's wider concerns. We see all kinds of unfairness with the design of the *In Work Tax Credit*, not just for those on benefits. Families have been denied access to the IWTC for a variety of reasons; due to redundancies and disasters such as the Christchurch earthquake; because they are students; or are over 65 receiving New Zealand Superannuation. However, the glaring anomaly is the exclusion of 230,000 children in benefit households from a tax-funded child tax credit paid to the caregiver, almost always the mother, to meet the needs of her children.

We are pleased that the bizarre argument that the Crown used in the Human Right Tribunal (2008), the High Court (2011) and the Court of Appeal (2013) based on one very strange table been dismissed. The hours of

argument and detailed submissions on the hypothetical comparisons in this table deflected the gaze away from 230,000 of our poorest children.

Agreeing with CPAG, the Court of Appeal found that there is discrimination against all beneficiaries with children, not just the narrow group Crown Law wanted to limit it to, and that as part of the test for discrimination, this different treatment causes material harm. The value of this decision should not be underestimated. It might be regarded as a major win, clarifying the test in a helpful way for future discrimination cases.

Nevertheless, despite the clear finding of discrimination, the Court of Appeal then went on to declare that the discrimination was justified because it was aimed at getting beneficiaries into work. Calling a payment for children a 'work incentive' does not change its nature. The harm of denying adequate income support by this discrimination is not trivial; it is inflicted on 230,000 of the poorest children in our society. Furthermore, the corresponding social gain of shifting beneficiaries off benefits has proved minimal or even zero in the recession.

Parenting is challenging and expensive work, (note that it is actually work) even for the well-resourced, so it is hard to imagine a justification for departing from the principle of treating all children in low income families equally for all child-related tax-funded payments. This is especially true when by so doing, child poverty and all its ills is perpetuated. It is great a pity the Court did not protect children by finding such discrimination unjustified.

Unlike some countries with upper and lower houses, New Zealand has few checks and balances on policy development. CPAG has used the human rights framework to draw attention to our obligations under the Human Rights Act, the Bill of Rights Act, and the various international treaties and conventions such as UNCROC. Appropriate proper policy process was not followed when the *Working for Families* package was introduced and the discriminatory IWTC exemplifies the resultant flawed policy.

Perhaps the election year is a good opportunity to achieve the change we seek. We are still considering our legal options.

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## CW website

- Leading articles from the first 16 years of *The Common Good*
- Alternative funerals
- Restorative justice
- Other theological issues

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

# Letters

8a Cottrill Street  
Christchurch

Dear CW

Whether we like it or not, we are all cramped and thrown together on this little ball, spinning through space, a seething mass of humanity. To live together without killing each other off at times seems impossible.

Have we in our blindness and lack of compassion, developed a planet/world of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'? The 'haves' live in most cities and countries and their 'survival' components of greed, security, status are uncontrollable, fuelled by their fear, their intransigence, their stubborn belief that what they have they have earned. But it is never seems quite enough.

The planet continues to spin and the sun still shines, but I worry for my children/grandchildren's future on our unstable planet. I worry about the euro and I worry about the bank account. Sometimes, the birds sing but I can't hear them.

Somewhere beneath this seething, swaying mass of humanity are the untouchables, the unseen, the 'have-nots'. Sometimes they unsettle us, even prick our consciences. They can even be a threat to my painted house and manicured lawn. I introduce laws, lots of laws to keep my lawns safe, but still they come.

I am continually looking and seeking for security, stability, comfort and happiness. Surely, that is not too much to ask for? Well, in a suffering world where 30 000 children die each day from hunger, maybe it is too much to ask. We have become 'cornered' and hung-up on bank accounts and ownership. Have we lost sight of what is real, true, and important? Have we removed or had removed from our lives the only things that matter - love, kindness and compassion,? I sometimes wonder.

Best wishes

*Francis Simmonds*

Irwin County Detention Centre # 22100  
132 Cotton Drive,  
Ocilla, GA 31774

Dear Jim

I remember you and can see you there at Jonah House when you visited. Thank you so much for doing all you can from there 'down under' to encourage resistance to US nuclear ongoing activity.

I sit here on a quiet day in our privately owned contracted federal 'Detention Centre' keeping watch, as I write, on up to 70 plus women held here in one pod/dorm. It has 50 double decker beds, 25 up and 25 down.

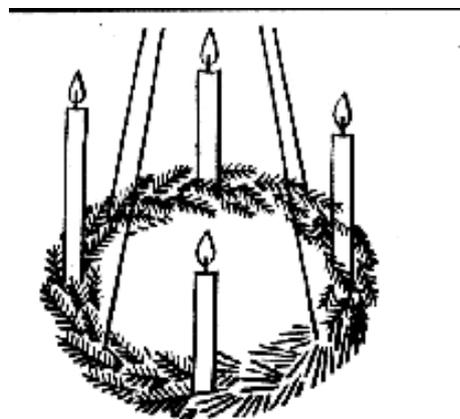
I think often of NZ's creative solution, restorative justice. Can you send me anything on it, and I will share it with a caring 'captain' - one of the civilian non-government employees of the prison contractor, who might be open to some more positive approach to detention programmes.

Naught to do in here but await trial dates, placement in a fed prison, sleep, gossip, play cards, look at poor TV or read. People can be here 4-5 months awaiting sentence, but we carry on in ministry and awareness raising. You know the story. Thanks for writing ,

Love,

*Megan Rice*

PS - Our sentencing has been postponed until 28 January 2014.



Adé Bethune

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**The Common Good**

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



**Hospitality and Justice**

Hospitality of itself isn't enough. It is not enough to give a sandwich if it isn't accompanied by the possibility of learning to stand on one's own feet. Clearly that does not change the situation of the poor enough. True mercy, which God gives and teaches us, calls for justice, for a way in which the poor find a way out of poverty.

Pope Francis  
 12 September 2013