

Gospel Challenge – to be the Church of the Poor

Joshua J. McElwee

The Catholic Church must fundamentally reorient itself to place its institutions and financial resources at the service of the world's poor, one of the 19 new members of the select and powerful group of church prelates known as the College of Cardinals said.

'The origin of the church is poverty,' said Philippine Cardinal Orlando Quevedo. 'And the journey of Jesus Christ was the journey with poor people. Today, the church has riches, institutions. But I would like to think that the only way the church can redeem these resources as well as its institutions would be to place them at the service of justice and of the poor for the sake of the kingdom of God.'

Quevedo, who heads the Philippines' Cotabato archdiocese, was made a cardinal in February along with 18 other prelates in a ceremony presided over by Pope Francis in St Peter's Basilica. He spoke of an Asian vision of Church built on basic ecclesial communities with a collaborative leadership style. Asia's vision of church is relevant to the vision of Pope Francis, 'who is looking at the periphery rather than at the centre,' he said.

Giving a homily with the cardinals at St. Peter's Basilica, Francis pointedly told them they are 'not a royal court' and must avoid 'intrigue, gossip, cliques, favoritism and preferences.'

And like many of the others chosen for the honor by the pontiff, Quevedo comes from an area of the world not previously represented in the elite group. His Cotabato archdiocese, located in the southern Philippine island of



Mindanao, is known for struggles with high rates of poverty and near equal populations of Catholics and Muslims (48 and 47 percent, respectively).

Noting that more than 50 percent of the people in his archdiocese live below the poverty line, Quevedo said the idea of the church becoming 'a church for the poor' is 'not extraneous to the beginning and the core of what the church should be.'

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who announced the kingdom to poor people, chose poor people to be his first disciples. I think the Church should be like that. Is it easy to do? No, it is difficult. It has to have a radical change of mind from laypeople, clergy, religious, bishops -- a radical change of mind and a radical change of the use of institutions. But we need to start. We're not talking about a change of doctrine. It's a change of view, a change of whose side is the church on. Is it with the rich and powerful or is it with poor people and the powerless?'

'And if Christ were here, what Christ would do is to choose the poor and the powerless. Yes, he visited rich



people, but in order to convert them. He dined with rich people, but on the occasion of dining and eating with rich people, he gave a lesson, a conversion about use of property or so forth. I think the Church should be like that. As the poor Christ, so the poor Church.'

The new cardinal spoke first of his expectations for his new role, saying it 'is not one of honour, one of privilege, one of power.' Instead, he said, the expectation for a cardinal is 'one of great service to people, greater service. I would like to be as I was before: simple, approachable, no formality, and just go out to the people. I would like to continue doing that. When I go to the mountains in the Philippines, the people will not know whether I am cardinal or not.'

Quevedo also spoke of the need for the Vatican's central bureaucracy to listen to the different needs of Catholics in different parts of the world. He referred many times to the idea of the 'local church,' something he has spoken and written frequently about, particularly while he served from 2005 to 2011 as the secretary general of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. The federation, a central gathering space for bishops' conferences throughout the region, was launched following the Second Vatican Council.

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 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 engage in regular prayer and we also 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.** *The Common Good:* Editor: Jim Consedine - jim.conse@xtra.co.nz; Layout - Barbara Corcoran - burkespass@gmail.com

New model of Church

'I believe that the vision of a local church, the Church in Asia, has is very relevant to the pontificate of Pope Francis, who is looking at the periphery rather than at the centre. The main pastoral priority in Cotabato is the building of basic ecclesial communities in which the idea of forming persons of dialogue is being implemented.'

'The idea of leadership that is shared, not just a dictate from above, but collaborative, consultative -- what is called participatory church -- is being built in the basic ecclesial communities. It is the grassroots response to the problems of the wider society, which is one sometimes of political dictates, dictating what is important for the people rather than consulting the people.'

Mentioning a 1991 plenary council held in the Philippines, Quevedo said that council articulated a new vision of church. One of a participatory church, a church of the poor, an enculturated church, and a church of authentic disciples -- true followers of Christ, not only in name but in deed, If you translate that vision of Church into the whole world, that's the vision really. I think that Pope Francis is following: a humble Church of the poor, a simple Church, a Church that is consultative.'

'The idea of leadership that is shared, not just a dictate from above, but collaborative, consultative -- what is called participatory church -- is being built in the basic ecclesial communities. It is the grassroots response to the problems of the wider society, which is one sometimes of political dictates, dictating what is important for the people rather than consulting the people.'

Does the cardinal have any specific ideas for how the Church can reorient itself to the poor?

'A radical change of mind. Also what theologians would call *metanoia*, a radical change of heart. But I said also a radical change in the use of institutions. Just that one part alone, change of mind and change of heart is formidable. It's a formidable challenge. I considered that vision of a Church of the poor in the second plenary council of the Philippines as the most challenging vision. It is easy to say the Philippines is a Church of the poor, because population-wise, it's a Church of the poor.'

'But the idea of a Church of the poor is a theological point of view. It is turning its center of gravity toward the poor, to be in solidarity with the poor. And it is really difficult, often, for priests, clergy and bishops -- and a whole institution, like a school -- to be facing the poor rather than facing stability, progress, that sort of thing. When you face the poor, you have to be ready for insecurity because being with the poor makes you poor.'

Joshua J. McElwee is The National Catholic Reporter's national correspondent.

Editorial 1 Why Jesus blesses the poor?

The poor man in the biblical sense is not the beggar, the starving or the unemployed. He is the average person who has a house, children and work, who dresses like everyone else, does the shopping, goes for coffee, who buys an overcoat when he is cold and goes to the doctors when he is ill. He is the average human being – the minister, the bishop, the peasant, the craftsperson, the old man, the boy, the mother, the poet, the worker.

He or she is everyone!

But who can claim to be poor in the biblical sense? The one who comes to understand under pressure of suffering or in the light of God, what it means to be human.

The one who enters his own limitations, who enters into the mystery of what it means to be a creature rather than a creator.

Anyone, that is, who knows that he is sick, sinful, small, weak, vulnerable, needful of everything; who stands at the mercy of history and of wickedness in high places, prisoner of hostile circumstances, who has learnt humility and discretion from the pain and anguish of his experience, who is thirsting for help and for love. The person man, in short, is the person who has found his or her own limitations.

Such a one is blessed and becomes blessed if he or she accepts such limitations as coming from the hand of God in order that the Kingdom might become a reality within. Naturally, the beggar, the starving, the

ragamuffins are included in this category – indeed they are! – but they are not the only ones, and nowhere is it said that they are blessed *because* they are without food. Thus we can say that each one of us forms a part of the Church of the poor.

When Jesus spoke of or to the poor, he had in mind the whole of humanity and not a particular category of people. He had no intention of establishing some kind of inverted racism or of preaching a religion suitable for only a handful of initiates or a group of fanatics. By establishing the beatitude of poverty as the basis of his programme, he brought it fairly and squarely into the wider context of reality as a whole.

Nothing is more real for each one of us than the fact of being poor. For simply by being born we are poor, children who have need of everything; by living we are poor; creatures thirsty for everything; in our dying we are poor, leaving everything behind us. Have we not been defined as the poor of Yahweh?

But there is a new element in what Jesus said. His declaration that this is ‘blessed’, his explanation, that is of the fact that, had we accepted our poverty in a spirit of love, peace, trust and conviction, we would have been blessed, we would have experienced some measure of happiness, even here on earth.

—Carlo Carretto, *In Search of the Beyond*

Editorial 2 Earth’s Climate - the stark reality

There is something surreal to the climate epic that is beginning to define the fate of the planet – and the human species with it.

It is symptomatic of the climate debate that its impact on human society in the future – the driving force, the dynamics, the outcome – is assessed and expressed almost totally in economic terms. The rationale for and against short-term mitigation, medium-term adaptation, long-term generational equity, is all expressed in the context of GDP and other monetary indices.

Hardly a thought is given in official circles to the emotional dimension of facing the next generation as it scrambles for the physical security of their children, twenty years from now.

Nor to the psychological effect on humanity of far-reaching climate distortion to the planet we inhabit.

Nor to the existential angst of recognising that we, as a species, are altering the terrestrial habitat we share with all other life-forms, to our collective detriment.

The fate of the climate is, above all else, a consequence of human values – an issue affecting, and being affected by, the human spirit.

The ancient biblical injunction was to go forth and multiply, replenish and subdue the earth, and have

dominion over every living thing. The Koran, a millennium later, updated things – depicting humans as vice-regents of Earth with a custodial responsibility. Eastern philosophies draw from human serenity and individual harmony with Nature – from the ancient Tao through to contemporary yogic belief.

Yet independent of our religious roots, modern nation-states of every civilizational hue are generally busy degrading their piece of the planet.

My own politics on climate policy is unswervingly devoted to support for, and reliance on, the scientific endeavour that underpins the IPCC work. I have huge respect for science of recent centuries and especially the past few decades. That respect extends to the individual scientists engaged in the process, not the least the Kiwis among them. I base my policy judgements directly on their work.

This does not of course exclude an appreciation of the spiritual and philosophical dimension of the climate epic – and I know that the scientists would agree. It is just that we need to carefully separate the discrete thought categories for what they are, and what they can offer.

I mention this because the prospect of ‘catastrophic’

rather than 'dangerous' climate change now has to be acknowledged. And because the strong human instinct for prevarication has switched in the debate from denying the fact of climate change to denying its anthropogenic cause to, more recently, dismissing the need for mitigation in favour of adaptation. The spin of various establishments around the world has almost imperceptibly slid from the second argument to the third as the evidence refutes the second.

Adaptation to climate change has always been recognised as a necessary component of global and national policy. We knew, since the beginning, that some climate change was certain – given the planet has warmed 0.8°C in 130 years, of which 85% is in the past 30 years. We'd better learn to adapt, alright.

But there is a new siren call. It is that adaptation is all we need bother with. And it is a temptation because mitigation is a hard policy-path – especially for political

leaders. But pretence, that adaptation is sufficient, amounts to a crime.

The critical new challenge therefore is to distinguish between:

- Adaptation to such climate change that we know to be certain – which is close to the 2°C threshold, perhaps closer to 3°C; and

- Mitigation to avoid global emissions that will cause the planet to warm anything above 2.6°C, which is the lowest feasible mitigation scenario that the IPCC now conveys to us..

The reason is, with stark simplicity, that we shall not successfully adapt to anything higher. Three of the four scenarios in the IPCC WG-I report of 2013 – we shall not successfully adapt to any of those.

—Kennedy Graham

The Spirit of Pentecost

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton



Last summer, Pope Francis made his first international trip to Brazil, where a World Youth Day was being celebrated, and he spoke to the thousands, tens of thousands of young people there. He challenged them to be witnesses to Jesus, and he told them, "You do not need to read anything else. If you want a plan of action, then you should read the Beatitudes in Mathew and Luke's gospels and Matthew 25. You do not need to read anything else."

So what was Francis challenging them to do? I think we all know Matthew 25 and the beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor. Blessed are those who are gentle and peacemakers," and so on, but Matthew 25: "When I was hungry, you gave me [something] to eat. When I was thirsty, you gave me [something] to drink. When I was in prison, you visited me. When I was a stranger, you took me in," and so on. Then they say, "Well, when did all that happen?" "When you did it to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me." You witnessed to Jesus.

Wouldn't that be an extraordinary plan of action for us, to begin to live out the Beatitudes, to take it as our plan of action, or Matthew 25 as our plan of action? How we're going to witness to Jesus? "When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat." You know, there are a lot of places around our cities where the hungry -- those who are homeless, without resources -- come to eat.

Recently, I read an article about the inmates of a

prison in California known as the toughest prison in our country. More than 300 inmates have spent over a decade locked in windowless 8-foot by 12-foot cells for 22 hours a day or more, and then dozens have been there more than 15 years in solitary confinement.

Do you know what that does to people? It destroys them. It's a form of torture. But our prisons are for-profit prisons, and they don't care about the prisoners. They're making money. Don't we need to reform? You know, we may not go and visit people in prison, but maybe we ought to be alert to what's happening in our country, where we have percentage-wise of our population more people in prison than almost any country in the world. We have people in prison for the least crime because three strikes and you're out -- they go for life.

That's not the way it should be if we're really witnessing to Jesus. "When I was in prison, you visited me." That's a call to us to do something. Or being peacemakers.

There are so many ways in which we could continue to look at the beatitudes and to listen to Matthew 25 and discover our plan of action for being witnesses to Jesus and to the good news that he proclaimed on Easter Sunday. On the feast of the Ascension, Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the earth."

That's the call Jesus gives to us -- to be those witnesses to the ends of the earth by living according to what he taught us that is captured so well in those two Scripture passages. As Pope Francis says, "That's all you need. Reach those, pray those, follow those, and you will be a witness to Jesus."

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton is a retired bishop from Detroit. This from NCR, 13 June 2014.

My Three Kidneys

Jim Consedine

This is the story of the culmination of a lifetime of gradual kidney decline. Polycystic kidneys are a family heirloom inherited from my mother and grandfather – and probably way back beyond. I am the third of four siblings to receive a transplant.

Preparations

About three years ago when my time came to start preparing, it was made clear that I needed to find a donor myself. We have so few donors in New Zealand. We set up a process to find a suitable donor with my sister Marie acting as secretary. After some time a friend from my parish, Maria Fresia, came and offered. She is Italian and the most loving generous soul you would ever meet. She went through a series of tests over a 14 month period as to suitability (blood grouping and matching tissue being the primary two).

So the journey began. I couldn't have asked for a more compatible companion on the road. As my health continued to decline, she grew stronger in support and acceptance of what was needed. The only worry I had was that I might wake up speaking only Italian!

In hospital

On the Sunday of my entry to hospital, the parish community at St Mary's, New Brighton, anointed Maria and me and another sick friend during the Eucharist. The parish prayed for successful outcomes.

That afternoon, I entered Christchurch Public Hospital, for the operation. The nephrology department there is simply world class. They have the best team of people you could assemble, kind, caring and extremely able - surgeons, nephrologists, nurses and the ever cheerful cleaning and tea ladies. The public health system when it is working is fantastic. I must say that I was extremely conscious that I was in a very privileged position with such First World skill and care available on tap when millions in the world lack basic healthcare. Still, God placed me here in this time and context.

The operation itself took about three hours for each of us in two separate theatres. The surgeon told me later that when the kidney arrived upstairs from Maria, he thought it was stunning. 'It nearly leapt off the table into your stomach,' was his wry comment.

The six day hospital stay began with some distress but gradually improved. About half way through the week I realised that I was actually on Retreat with so many opportunities to think and pray and reflect. Clearly I was in no substantial pain for which I was deeply grateful. I had placed my declining health in God's hand many years before and never had a moment's genuine fear.

With the operation being deemed an initial success, Maria came to see me in my isolation room. She was

tired but determined to see that I had made it through. I asked her how she had coped at home the night before the op. 'I never slept a wink', came the reply. 'What did you do?' 'I talked to the kidney all night. I thanked it for being my friend for all of my 52 years. I then told it I wanted it to go now and do the same for Jim.' I dissolved in tears. 'Greater love has no one'.

A Slow Recovery

Maria went home after five days, I after six to my family. Quickly I came to see that I was still in Retreat mode. I had time to think through so much, to pray in peace and quiet and I felt closer to the divine for longer periods than I had for some time.

I started communicating with the new kidney. I needed a name, needed to acknowledge the Italian connection. The name Angelo popped up. Perfect. I would name my new friend Angelo, after Saint John XXXIII, the wonderful pope who had launched the Second Vatican Council. I thought, 'maybe I had better check with him'. I sought him out. He was delighted. He said that he was just back from his canonization in Rome, which he had thoroughly enjoyed, but to have a kidney named after him would be the icing on the cake! And he rocked back on his heels and shook with laughter.

I always thought that when I had my kidney transplant, they would block off the old kidneys and the new one would take over. Not so. I now have three functional kidneys. My new one and my old two which will continue to operate at 8% capacity until they quietly fade away.

And so the recuperation continues slowly. While it is early days, both Maria and I are doing well and getting stronger. I can't believe how well I feel. The disease is gone. Maria is as bright as a button. She is so pleased it has all worked out for the best. Such generosity. Unbelievable.

Two months after our initial anointing, we were able to attend our parish church at St Mary's and thank the people. Personally. I felt totally at one with God, the people and life. All the difficult bits from the past were integrated. It was a moment to cherish. My Retreat was over.

Postscript: New Zealand is desperately short of kidney donors. We're now seeking a kidney for my older sibling Robert, within two years. Anyone who would like to consider gifting him a kidney could email my sister Marie to discuss it on email at: marie.consedine@paradise.net.nz. In 2001 Marie gifted her kidney to my eldest brother Michael. All I can guarantee is that any offer would be confidentially and lovingly received.

Jim Consedine lives at Thomas Merton CW in Christchurch.

Every Child Counts

Susan St John

Christians are called to help their 'neighbour' and do so willingly on a person to person basis according to the teachings of Jesus. But in an election year, Christians have a special responsibility to challenge each and every political party to show how they will care for the poor with appropriate, workable national policies. Continuing with the present ones will just see more and more families swept way to become the flotsam and jetsam at the margins of society. A badly structured economy where desperately poor people need foodbanks and loan sharks to survive, means churches and other NGOs become overwhelmed in meeting basic needs. This leaves too little time for the church's key role of nurturing the spiritual growth of families and helping to strengthen relationships and build cohesive communities.

Politicians must say how they will make sure that all low income families, especially the most marginalised, those supported by benefits, have enough money to survive on and to prevent the damaging effects of poverty on their children.

Current policies for families have been driven by a focus that has made paid work, of any kind, society's ultimate goal and source of value. Families on benefits have become the new pariahs in a judgemental, punitive and uncaring society. A mother's unpaid work of nurturing her children has been rendered invisible and treated as of no worth.

The welfare system does not allow parents to supplement their benefits in meaningful ways and the tax system is punitive. Another cruel policy is adding GST at 15% on to all the basics families must have, like food and electricity. Policies such as *Working for Families*, *Paid Parental Leave*, and early childhood care and

education subsidies are discriminatory, badly designed and inadequate. With high costs for school fees, uniforms, daycare, school trips, doctors' visits and medicines for over 6s, many children have blighted and restricted childhoods. But worse, a regime of benefit sanctions is now tipping the most vulnerable into an abyss from which they may never recover. In an election year these policies must be challenged by Christians.

Christians understand the need for inclusion and the power of redemption. No-one deserves to be shut outside, let alone innocent children. For the past three years we have been told by the Ministry of Social Development that 175,000 of our children live in families where the disposable income after housing costs is less than 50% of the median household income adjusted for family size. This line is impossibly low and these families have nothing in reserve, hence the growth in foodbanks and debts to loan sharks and hospital admissions for third world diseases.

We should remind our politicians that shocking as 175,000 of our children in significant hardship sounds, we were actually misled. After correcting for Treasury's major blunder in counting, we now know that as many as 250,000 children are below the 50% line. Many are well below.

Can our politicians please pledge to treat all children equally, to change policies such as *Working for Families* to give the proper support to all of the worst-off children, to see all work as valuable, and to treat those who cannot work with respect?

—*Susan St John is Associate Professor of Economics, University of Auckland*

Around the Traps

We celebrated Holy Week with the traditional ritual of the 'washing of the feet'. It is a ceremony that is eagerly looked forward to each year as its stark simplicity highlights something of what we are about a CW community right throughout the year. Everyone takes it very seriously, mindful of the symbolism it represents. One major CW community claim that this a sacrament which the Church should reclaim. Afterwards, we discussed its meaning in our contemporary society before sharing our meal. One Italian visitor was particularly impressed writing later from Rome to say 'thanks for having welcomed me among your friends and to have made me live the

most authentic 'washing of the feet' of Our Lord Jesus. Grazie.

After 50 years of remote preparation leading to chronic kidney failure, Fr Jim finally had a kidney transplant in May. His kidney function had declined to a single digit percentage point and his Zumba participation was falling off in the weeks prior to the operation. More than a year ago, his donor, Maria Fresia, a friend from his old parish in Lyttelton, had generously volunteered to give him one of her kidneys if it fitted. It did.

The operation has been a great success. Jim says that he thought having an extra kidney would give him the luxury of retiring the two originals 'like a couple of well-raced horses who have done their bit

and deserve retirement in the paddock'. Not so – apparently they have to keep working until they drop. He has been blown away with the powerhouse of prayer and love that he has received from so many, with the skill and professionalism of the hospital staff and amount of family and community support. He knows many do not receive such graces but he is grateful to God that he has.

If love is the soul of Christian existence, it must be at the heart of every other Christian virtue. Thus, for example, *justice* without love is legalism; *faith* without love is ideology; *hope* without love is self-centeredness; *forgiveness* without love is self-abasement; *fortitude* without love is recklessness; *generosity* without love is extravagance; *care* without love is mere duty; *fidelity* without love is servitude. Every virtue is an expression of love. No virtue is really a virtue unless it is permeated, or informed, by love (1 Cor 13)

Richard P. McBrien

Suzanne Aubert CW will be closed for earthquake repair work some time during the spring. As is usual for EQC, firm dates are given and not adhered to. We are therefore unclear as to exactly when this will happen. When this occurs, we will temporarily suspend our Wednesday night community gatherings for worship and a meal. This is a property we purchased in 1993 and is the only one we actually own. We have rented other houses in times past depending on the need and the availability of volunteers. We are hopeful that come summer, we will be back in business there again in a repaired house.



Some CWs have been going around lately saying ‘Go in peace, the mass is ended – and prepare and share the casserole.’ They’ve pinched the saying from *Welcom*, the archdiocesan paper, so it is not original. Many feel it says a lot about the continuing outreach that the Mass intends for those who participate.

Resisting US Intervention in the Philippines

Peter Murnane

To receive an invitation to the Philippines, fare paid, was surprise enough. My amazement increased when I saw that the invitation was to a January 2014 conference organised by bishops, on the topic of resisting US intervention. In the past, certain bishops have not been at all happy with the nonviolent direct actions I have taken part in; not least the April 2008 Ploughshares action that briefly disabled the US National Security Agency-directed spy base at Waihopai. The invite was so unusual that I did a brief check: yes, there really *is* an *Ecumenical Bishops' Forum*. It was not, as one friend suggested, a US Central Intelligence Agency trick to get me out of the country - they are too busy with Julian Assange and Edward Snowden. So, from my remote address in the Western Solomon Islands, I made my way to Manila, then to Davao City on the southern island of Mindanao,

where more than 30 bishops from diverse churches and half a dozen countries gathered to look hard at the damage being done by the USA through its military and corporations in Philippine ports and rural areas.

Two of the Catholic bishops who founded this Forum were present. It is now in its thirtieth year. Most of the others were from Protestant churches around the Philippines, but two colourfully-gowned Syrian bishops from Kerala in India brightened up the room, and the Anglican Archbishop of Quebec was inspiring in his awareness of the deeper social and political realities. It was good to hear a bishop from Sri Lanka telling something of that country's tragic story. I found it sad that these men probably did not represent the mainstream of episcopal thinking but were more than likely marginalised for their views.

It Was Not Armchair Stuff

On the first day the bishops set off in three directions to look at facts on the ground. Those who headed for a destructive mining zone were put on the backs of motor-bikes, and rode muddy hill tracks, often above terrifying ravines. Armed guards turned them back at a road block. It seems the benefits that US mining business brings to the Philippines are too sensitive to be seen by the public, least of all church leaders who might help the people towards solidarity and opposition. To keep their secrets, they have often used violence, death threats, and “extra-judicial killings”. The bishops had to be content to meet members of local Indigenous communities and small-scale miners whose land and livelihoods are being destroyed by the huge St Augustine Gold and Copper Ltd.

A second group heard from workers whom the Dole fruit company is exploiting by paying low wages and denying them security. They heard too about the *genetically modified organisms* (GMOs) that are being used in agriculture without sufficient testing, and huge potential damage that they could cause. Another group visited the port environs and heard from those among the poorer populace who had experienced the impact of thousands of crew members from US ships who often land for leave. This always leads to local women and girls being exploited for the “recreation” of US personnel.

Although US military bases were expelled from the Philippines more than 20 years ago, the Visiting Forces Agreement already gives the Navy access to even more ports than before, and the US is negotiating for still wider presence. Within the Mutual Logistics and Support Agreement the US is constantly angling for a firmer foothold, for it plans to station 60% of its naval forces in the Pacific “to defend itself against China”. The Philippines is the most convenient focus for this. So as to better “defend democracy” and “preserve global peace and security” they are already using drones – remotely controlled pilotless aircraft that spy and/or kill – but the people and mayors of Mindanao - where Davao City is located - are so far strongly resisting their use.

To Continue to resist Social Destruction

The bishops, putting aside any differences, reflected on the social destruction caused by this new US “invasion” of their country. Their published statement listed the evidence; then challenged representatives of the USA in the Philippines to recognise the serious harm the US military and transnational corporations are doing to people and environment. The bishops also appealed directly to those who *invest* in transnational companies to examine carefully what their money is doing. Their statement also spoke to those who come to the Philippines to work for the US military or transnationals. Recognising that poverty often forces people to work in such damaging jobs, the bishops called on the Philippines government to help them to find alternatives.

No Nukes

As the children of ancient Babylon
Lined up for the six o'clock news
On CNN and the BBC,
To whom they would give thanks
That they could breathe in ionised air,
drink from the cup of depleted uranium,
be born with six-fingered hands,
malformed limbs and tumours on the spine',
while the legal costs was all they could see
in London and Washington D.C.
where they say,
'no suing me for acts of war!'

As they pulled their soldiers out,
The focus was on 'generation kill'
And 'how did you feel about this war?
Did it affect your relationship?
Give you something to write home about?
Like 'Mama, I killed a man today?'

History now restates that
The 'king of bluster' and 'the prince of bluff'
Jumped the gun,
As Blix and Baradei could say.

And as silence descended,
On a radio-active graveyard,
And the land bathed in an anarchic scourge
We all knew
There were no nukes there,
No weapons of mass destruction,
nor warheads to deliver them.

—Matt Walton

Finally, this small, courageous group of church leaders pointed to their own basic principle of living as “to love God in our fellow human beings” and called on all other bishops, all Christians, and other believers to stand in solidarity with them.

Father Peter Murnane OP, Adrian Leason and Sam Land are the three Catholic Worker peace activists who deflated one of the Waihopai spy base's domes in April 2008. They were acquitted of all criminal charges by a Wellington jury in 2010; so then the spy agency which operates Waihopai, the NZ Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB), sued them personally for the \$1.2 million cost of replacing the dome. This civil suit wound its way through the court system until, in early 2014, the State threw in the towel and dropped the suit.

Raising Children Within The Catholic Worker

Susan Hurtado

When I approached my priest three years ago to discuss my intentions of practicing voluntary poverty, he first responded with a glance of confusion. Then, with a furrowed brow, his second thought was of my four children and how this would affect their lives.

Up until that point my husband and I were spending every last dime we had to provide our children with the very best, most elite, private Catholic schooling possible.

We had also been studying Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement for a couple years, slowly dipping our toes in bit by bit before that day when I officially gave myself over to the movement completely. But as I went, so went the rest of my family. They refused to be left behind in this journey and so we studied, planned and sacrificed together, serving the poor with the very last of what we had left over.

My children had their young feet stuck in two different worlds. By day they would put on their cute little plaid skirts and precious little loafers and spend the day bathed in knowledge, critical thinking, bagel breaks, catered lunches, credit cards and fashion labels. But at 3:00 PM they would return home to our cramped, two bedroom apartment, where we would begin to prepare dinner for the poor. Taking boxes of food four miles down the road from their well-manicured campus we would, as a family, spend the evening with an entirely different peer group. My 6 year old would stand next to me, comfortable providing hand-shakes and hugs to our friends who struggled with labels of a different nature: felon, addict, illegal, schizophrenic, dirty, smelly, worthless, ugly. My teenagers would stand with the eyes of eagles for anyone that was in need. They would return home and, having gladly given away their allowance, their shoes, their school jackets, they would begin the mentally exhausting chore of preparing for the next school day.

As any CW knows, you can begin by handing out leftovers but as you more clearly recognize Christ in the faces of the poor, you can't continue handing out scraps for very long. It seemed every time we had tuition money in our pockets, some great need would present itself. I was playing games of trying to stay afloat; trying to maintain our family's disparity between belief and practice, but whenever I had \$20 in my pocket, someone would need \$20. Looking back I can see it as a celestial joke. But it was not funny when my children began to suffer. My 5th grader began to be bullied, badly, at school for being the only kid who wasn't wearing Nike. My son had watched a YouTube video about sweat shops and he empathized with the low wages and suffering the workers endured while making these fashion statements. I could only watch him being shoved into water fountains or isolated at lunch and pushed down at recess for so long before we broke down and bought a pair of \$14

Nike socks. Thinking his suffering was over, I remember he was so peaceful getting ready to go to school that next day. Sadly the administration said the stitching of the socks was red instead of white and he was considered out of uniform. So we went back and bought more socks. Of course the socks offered no solution. My child was isolated and punished by his classmates. He began vomiting daily from the stress. Our parish priest did not understand the predicament. What is wrong with Nike? Our pleas for justice were ignored.

The inconsistencies glared at me like the sun in my eyes and were impossible to ignore for much longer. For instance, the parish began a \$7 million campaign to build a new school building but refused to keep a food closet in the church for the poor. My frustration was growing and my ability to keep my mouth shut was wearing thin.

One winter day I dropped off my kids at school accompanied by a man we had picked up out of the snow. He was drunk on mouthwash and had hit his head and was bleeding. I thought briefly about taking him into the church to warm up but I knew that would never be allowed. And then my heart broke. This man, a stranger full of the failings of the world, wished my kids a good day at school. He was sincere and generous as he held our hands and wanted to pray. The irony that my priest was so concerned my children would suffer if they were not pampered with a luxurious lifestyle but here my son was being blessed by a man who had nothing. My children did not suffer for lack of, they suffered at the hands of those in abundance; they suffered at the pursuit of false idols.

The fight to try to fit into a culture that we were no longer a part of quickly came to an end. Divorce from the world of privilege was more drawn-out than it should have been, I guess. It was painful and full of tears.

I cannot say today that I have completely come to terms with the truth that I choose to give our money to strangers rather than provide my own amazing children with the best education possible. It still pains me every day. But there is salve for my wounds. When my son reminds me to wake him up early on a Saturday so he can help make biscuits and gravy for strangers who would otherwise have no breakfast. When my daughters would rather stand in the cold, handing out hot coffee and bread than go to the movies with their friends. When my daughter checks to see if there is an active CW near the universities she is considering after graduation.

There is no hesitation from my children to serve. They stand under the banner of Christ, out from the crowd, above the trappings of this world and alongside the needs and rights of the poor. We have all found a home within the Catholic Worker Movement.

Susan Hurtado is a member of the Catholic Worker, Tulsa, Oklahoma - catholicworkertulsa@gmail.com

THE SPARROW SINGS

By Don Timmerman

For over 30 years, the Casa Maria Catholic Worker community held a nonviolent protest of war taxes, many of them leading to arrests. We believe that the military is the main reason for our poor economy and yet it receives the most entitlements from taxpayers. The media tells us that the U.S. military gets only 20% of the budget pie, and it is never challenged on this fallacy. In their pie, much of military spending is hidden in other departments other than the Department of Defense.

According to the War Resisters League, 45% of taxes or \$1,307 billion go to the military. The U.S. accounts for 48% of the world's total military spending, more than the next 45 countries combined, and continues to be the number one exporter of weapons to cruel governments that use these to kill or maim their own citizens and eventually our own. Israel, a violator of 77 U.N. resolutions, received \$2.775 billion in military aid and is now asking for \$4 Billion more. Since 1973, Israel has cost the U.S. taxpayers about \$1.6 trillion. The U.S. continues to spend \$12 billion a month in Iraq and Afghanistan and has already spent over \$3.2 trillion on these illegal and immoral invasions since 2003. That adds up to \$6,300 per American. Also, the U.S. still has to pay to rebuild what it destroyed in Iraq and Afghanistan, to pay for the recovery of the young who were physically and mentally damaged, pay for the upkeep of the families of the many thousands of vets who

did not return or are disabled for life; and it has to compensate the families of the tens of thousands Iraqi and Afghan civilians who were killed and disabled for life. Former defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld said the Pentagon cannot account for as much as \$2.5 trillion of tax money. Chuck Spinney, a retired employee at the Pentagon, said it could not account for as much as \$1.1 trillion. He reported this to Congress, but nothing was done about it. No legislator will deny money to the U.S. military for fear of not getting re-elected to office. It is a 'sacred cow.'

Meanwhile, only 0.15% of the U.S. GNP goes toward assisting the 2 billion most needy in the world. My wife and I cannot, in conscience, give any money to the military that could otherwise be used to save lives both here and abroad. For this reason we continue to live below the taxable poverty level. If we have any extra money it goes to those who lack the basics of life. Giving money to the military leads to more invasions and occupations, more destruction of property and lives, more orphans and widows, more wounded for life, more sickness and death due to weapons tipped with depleted uranium, more hatred and violence. 'The Tea partiers' need to ask, 'Why is there always money for war and not for health, education and employment?'



Letters

Saint Francis and St Therese CW
52 Mason Street,
Worcester, MA 01610

Dear Jim,

We received *The Common Good* yesterday. It is always a sign of hope for us. I'm glad you addressed climate change. For too long, here in the US, we have had to deal with climate change denial, as well as those who recognize it is happening, but feel it is too expensive to address. It was good too to see that a bishop supports you all.

Claire and I were at a conference last weekend on the canonization of Dorothy Day. Robert Ellsberg, Karl Meyer, Rosalie Riegle, Martha Hennacy and Tom Cornell spoke, as did we. It was inspiring. Claire and I went out for an ice cream on our last night there, but they wanted to serve it to us in a styrofoam bowl with a plastic spoon. If the manufacturers of petro-chemically based products had to pay the real cost of their disposal, they'd vanish from the market due to their extreme expense.

Finally, if New Zealand is getting a new flag, why don't you put the Flight of the Conchords on it. We love their humour and music.

Blessings,

Scott Schaffer-Duffy

Bishop's Office,
Private Bag 11 012
Palmerston North

Dear Jim,

The Common Good is an extremely important contribution to the dialogue. Thanks for it.

Blessings,

+ *Owen Dolan*

Coadjutor Bishop Emeritus

48 St Andrews Square
Christchurch 8052

Dear Friends,

Reading in the news about the imprisonment of an 84-year old nun, Sister Megan Rice, for breaking into a US nuclear weapons complex, I was reminded of a nun I corresponded with, many years ago. She was 'serving time' for a similar 'ploughshares' action. The motivation of both women was their opposition to warfare and the corporations that profit from war.

It's all very well for John Kerry to speak in Indonesia about climate change, but will he say the same in the US? Wars are fought for energy resources, while at the same time consuming vast amounts of energy.

If the US were to focus on reducing emissions for the sake of the world's climate, it would have to restructure its militarized economy, a challenging task as the corporations involved are politically very powerful. Instead, all effort would need to be directed at 'greening' the US economy, creating conditions for a more equitable, just American society and into relieving abject poverty worldwide. A fraction of the US military expenditure could accomplish all of these good projects.

Such transitional change would offer hope for humanity's survival.

And, one result would be, no more headlines 'US nun jailed.'

Yours,

Lois Griffiths

Funeral Choice

www.funeralchoice.co.nz

A Catholic Worker project
Cheaper alternatives to consumer
funerals

CW website

Leading articles from the first 16 years of
The Common Good
Alternative funerals
Restorative justice
Other theological issues
www.catholicworker.org.nz

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The Common Good

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



Are you not a robber, you who consider your own that which has been given to distribute to others? This bread that you have set aside is the bread of the hungry; this garment you have locked away is the garment of the naked; those shoes that you let rot are the shoes of him who is barefoot; those riches you have hoarded are the riches of the poor.

—St Basil the Great, 330 - 379