

# The Common Good

Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor

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## Restorative Justice – Building a Parallel System

Jim Consedine

*Restorative justice is a challenge to all caring people to create a more positive, fruitful criminal justice process to carry us into and through this next millennium.* - Archbishop Desmond Tutu

New Zealand is at a crossroads as regards its criminal justice processes. We have developed a largely punitive rather than restorative public culture, fuelled by the corporate media and politicians among others. We have continued high imprisonment rates (8613 imprisoned, *December 2013*), second only to the US in OECD countries. Imprisonment has become extremely expensive, with the average prisoner costing nearly \$100 000 per year. Finance Minister Bill English has said prisons are too expensive, describing them as ‘a moral and fiscal failure.’ (22 May 2011).

And for what result? For most, the opportunity for inmates to mix and bond with like-minded people and develop further anti-social skills. They have little hope for their futures when they are sentenced. None is installed in prison.

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***Only when we develop restorative justice processes on a wider scale, properly resourced, publically funded, and using well trained facilitators at community level, will we seriously tackle crime and its causes, and offer real hope to victims and offenders alike.***

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By any standard, current imprisonment policy is an expensive social disaster. It is also often a violent one as recent murders and beatings in custody attest. Most NZ

prisons continue to have problems with violence, suicide, drugs and gangs. On average, prisoners have poorer mental and physical health than the general population.

Most have problems with addiction, low educational achievement, lack of employment skills and dysfunctional family relationships. According to government statistics (2014), about 89% have a lifetime prevalence of substance abuse and 52% have psychotic, mood or anxiety disorders. Prisons have become a dustbin for the poor, the mentally ill and the addicted.

For every person sentenced to imprisonment, there are at least 10 family members badly affected by that sentence. In NZ, that is over 80,000 people. Obviously, while spouses and partners are affected, there are also thousands of children

growing up who have or have had a parent in prison. Is it any wonder that many end up in prison themselves? Their role model for life has been an imprisoned parent.

The brutal murder in March 2015 of Benton Parata at Christchurch Prison sadly highlights this scenario. He was the son of a gang member who spent long terms in prison while Benton was growing up. Benton was the latest of nine inmates murdered in prison since 1996. Hundreds more have been beaten up.

For serious crimes, prison sentences have more than doubled in length compared to 20 years ago. It is the families of inmates who suffer as well. Increased poverty is often the price they pay. Jobs are lost. Children with a parent in prison, victimized. They are innocent parties.

### Expanding Restorative Justice

Restorative justice processes speak to the heart and soul. They are about accountability and healing. They are



not just about law. Properly done, they can offer so much help to victims of crime, their families and to willing offenders. They have yet to be fully tested in an imaginative way in New Zealand. The original government pilot processes, while interesting, were strangled to a large degree by red tape. The legislated system currently operating faces similar problems. It is vastly under resourced and over bureaucratized. Is it any wonder that so few take part and delays in the process are prevalent?

Only when we develop restorative justice processes on a wider scale, properly resourced, publically funded, and using well trained facilitators at community level, will we seriously tackle crime and its causes, and offer real hope to victims and offenders alike.

Prisons victimise the poor, do not provide proper justice and offend against the common good. On a global scale, according to Pope John Paul II, prisons have become 'structures of sin'. Maori and Pacifica traditions, Christian teaching and the Scriptures, all offer constructive and positive insights, values and guidelines for conducting more just and fairer restorative processes to help deal with most criminal offending. We ignore such time-proven insights at our peril.

A background of material poverty, mental illness,

addiction and unemployment is a fact for 80% of offenders. RJ can offer little to change these. But there are other important forms of personal poverty and deprivation which can be addressed. International research speaks of poverty of self-esteem through shame, poverty of social skills, poverty in emotional literacy, and poverty of empathy. RJ processes can help hugely with these. These are all issues of justice.

The community's role is to create the conditions most favourable to the restoration of both offender and victim. It aids this healing process by providing trained facilitators, recorders, venues, support personnel, judges and the like.

### **A Political Rethink?**

Is an across-party political rethink of RJ necessary? Compelling evidence would suggest so. The current system is being killed by 1000 cuts! It has been bureaucratized. It lacks vision and freedom to be creative. It has lost sight of the focus of what 'true justice' tries to deliver. It is being badly short-changed through a lack of resources, especially trained facilitators. It has clogged up the courts to the point where it almost begs the question: has RJ been structured to eventually fail?

As a nation we need a culture change in our thinking about justice commensurate to the change which occurred in our nuclear-free thinking. The policy of the last 20 years of imprisoning yet more people for longer periods is a cop-out. It guarantees greater institutionalization and simply panders to ignorance and our basest fears. It absolutely guarantees even more victims in the future.

Of course, there are a percentage of offenders for whom RJ is not appropriate initially, who need to be kept out of circulation for the safety of the community. They are too dangerous to let loose. In NZ, they probably number a thousand or two, but not 8000 plus. As for most of the rest, do we really want to continue to create so many criminally 'up-skilled' graduates from our prisons? **For** that is what we currently do.

The recent law change, which requires all cases where there is a guilty plea and which have an identifiable victim to be referred to an RJ conference, is clearly not working. The eight week remand period is a major problem. In truth, it is unworkable. It was never meant to be a compulsory process. Many victims and offenders simply do not want to participate in such a meeting. Compulsory attendance guarantees a very high failure rate. The courts are clogged up. RJ is copping the blame, leading to the whole RJ philosophy and practice being unjustly discredited and undermined.

### **Practicing Justice Better**

**Is it time to develop a fully resourced stand-alone RJ court system to run parallel to the current retributive system and not simply be an adjunct to it?**

Restorative justice needs to be separated out from the

#### **Who are we?**

Members of Te Wairua Maranga Trust, which publishes this paper, have since 1989 been operating as a community following a Catholic Worker spirituality. We view the Treaty of Waitangi as our nation's founding covenant. We try, however inadequately at times, to live the Sermon on the Mount and its modern implications. We operate three houses of hospitality in Christchurch named after Suzanne Aubert, Joseph Cardijn 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

retributive system, so it can live and breathe on its own. A return to basic principles could be a starting point. This doesn't mean back to the drawing board. But we need to ask again, what are we setting out to achieve? What does justice really look like? What is in it for victims? Offenders? The wider community?

Like the drug courts and other parallel systems, it could have its own protocols and *kaupapa* which offenders and victims could opt to be part of provided they meet basic criteria. Either victims or offenders could apply. Hopefully both. Offenders must engage openly and honestly, accept responsibility for their actions, and commit to implement agreed outcomes. Victims would find understanding, acceptance, a chance to speak to the issues, and hopefully find some healing and closure. This would bring them into a central role in the process. This is true justice in action.

Such a system would also provide real incentives for offenders seeking to change who would be held much more accountable on a personal face-to-face basis. A process like this would bring our delivery of justice much closer to the teachings of Christ.

After an RJ conference and upon agreement, a case would be returned to the RJ Court from where the follow-up would be monitored. The beauty of this would be that officials engaged would be specifically trained. For minor crimes, RJ court officers could facilitate a

process of apology and reparation. But RJ processes need time. Rushing them will not provide better justice outcomes.

New Zealand could also start expanding current RJ services. This could be a win/win situation for all concerned and it would ease the pressure on courts. Victims would have a much more respected place in the criminal justice processes. Their pain would be more fully recognized and acknowledged. Healing for them could begin.

The stakes could be high. But as overseas evidence clearly shows, crime would be substantially reduced, more victims healed, and offenders held much more accountable. It would keep many out of prison, saving substantial tax-payer money. Many families would not be broken up, children left without a parent.

There is a strong case for a parallel RJ court system. Because of our size and relative homogeneity, New Zealand could lead the world with such adult RJ processes as we once did with juvenile justice. With faith, vision and courage, we could create a much fairer justice system.

Isn't this what we all want?

*Jim Consedine, a prison chaplain for 23 years, was the founding national coordinator of the Restorative Justice Network, and author/co-editor of two books on restorative justice.*

## **Editorial** Social Justice and the TPPA

When was the last time you protested? For me it was university days. That's shall we say quite a while ago! But recently I have felt a stirring within me to bring my faith into the public forum in a visible way.

There is a growing brittleness in our world. Russia's bullying of Ukraine, atrocities in the Middle East, intolerances almost everywhere.

Our own country isn't free of tensions. The gap between the rich and poor in New Zealand is the greatest since records have been kept. This isn't by chance. Government economic policy and the collapse of a sense of governance (in reference to higher principles like the Common Good or equality of opportunity) favour the already wealthy becoming even wealthier.

When I was at university, the counter to this was the 'trickle-down theory'. Excess wealth was supposed to trickle down to the low paid. Yeah, right! As Pope Francis has put it: 'this theory expresses a crude and naive trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and meanwhile the excluded are still waiting.' (Evangeli Gaudium 54). And now the government's new housing policy sees a reduction in government housing and an increase in rent subsidies, which go where? Into the pockets of landlords.

Ideological policies rather than principled policies are placing more and more pressure on the least well off in our country. A further recent example is the approval and introduction of demeaning zero-hour contracts.

What I wish to draw our attention to is the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA). A large range of commentators and leaders are warning us against this agreement. What I find most distasteful is that it is being negotiated in secret. This undermines democracy and heightens the concern that the agreement places the interests and power of the largest multinational companies above the interests of individuals, ordinary families, authentic national interests, and the Treaty of Waitangi.

Citizens have a right and duty to protect our egalitarian principles, our kiwi culture, and our expectations of fairness in health, educational and business spheres. Absolute freedom to market anything, anyhow, is not in our interests and most certainly is not a "right" that can trump the democratic duty of a government to regulate and govern a national economy broadly in accord with the wishes of a nation's citizens.

I shall be joining the protest against the TPPA calling for the Government to be transparent about the full implications of what it is committing New Zealand to. You may wish to join me.

+ **Charles Drennan, Bishop of Palmerston North**

*The Anglican and Catholic bishops have also issued a joint statement calling for the release of the TPP's proposed agreement for wider study by New Zealanders before it was signed.*

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# Oppose the TPPA

## *An open letter from The Catholic Worker to MPs*

The biggest moral question (outside climate change) facing this country at the moment concerns the **Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement**. We are worried sick about it.

The picture of the Italian luxury liner *Costa Concordia* tilting dangerously on its side as it sank provides an apt metaphor for what the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) offers its signatories. Shapely but hopelessly unbalanced, its guts had been wrenched out forcing people to die below decks in terror and darkness, swamped by the in-rushing sea and trapped and powerless to change their situation. The captain and ship owners are denying all responsibility.

The public spin-controlled image of the TPPA resembles this doomed ship. With the whole world economic system tilting dangerously and listing in choppy seas through its lopsided distribution of wealth and the resulting poverty that has flowed, the TPPA promises millions more people will become victims of neo-liberal economic policies as the rich elite seek to maintain their global grip on wealth and power. Our ship of state will list even further.

There is every incentive for the rich and powerful to further entrench inequality into the current social and economic systems. Why would they not? They are driven by pure greed. The TPPA does that for them. It seeks to trade away small signatory nations' independence in everything but name.

The TPPA represents the sale of NZ's sovereignty to overseas transnational corporations, and greatly reduces the effectiveness of our democratic processes. It is an attack on democracy itself. And it is all being done in secret.

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***These secret TPPA negotiations are all about further enriching the corporate elite of world capitalism. They are evolving internationally binding structures involving blatant structural theft on a scale possibly unseen before. There will be virtually no accountability. In particular, the TPPA further disenfranchises the very people Jesus blessed while on earth – the poor and the disadvantaged.***

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There are a number of dimensions which could be highlighted. One standout feature is that the TPPA will give international corporations the right to sue democratically elected governments if they interfere with corporate profits and don't toe the line on imports, workers' rights and internal treaties with indigenous peoples. 'Any NZ government could be sued if it wanted to reclaim ownership of electricity, stop building private

prisons, phase out charter schools or bring in costly mining regulations.' *The Nation*, TV3, 26 October 2014

In January 2015, *Wikileaks* posted the almost completed investment chapter of the secretly negotiated TPPA. It made chilling reading. It confirms the NZ Government has already capitulated to US demands, including the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS).

Globally, there are growing concerns over the threats that the massive surge in ISDS cases poses to some national policies and public budgets. Countries like Germany, France, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador have all taken strong stands against them. Prominent critics now include former World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz, and the Chief Justices of Australia, Robert French, and New Zealand, Dame Sian Elias.

In May 2012, over 100 prominent jurists in New Zealand, including retired judges, former attorney generals and law professors, signed a letter opposing investor-enforcement in the TPPA. The Government ignored their plea.

Indeed, New Zealand did the *exact opposite*, signing up to new obligations with the Korea Free Trade Agreement which gives South Korean firms similar rights to sue us if we change our laws in ways that significantly harm their bottom line and impinge on their profits.

### **Secret Dispute Resolutions**

'Investor-state' disputes (ISDS) are fought out in multi-national investment tribunals where decisions commonly favour investors and awards often run into the hundreds of millions of dollars. For example,

- Chevron is suing Ecuador, one of the world's poorest countries, to overturn a \$18 billion court order to clean up toxic damage in the Amazon basin that has killed thousands of indigenous people.
- Germany is being sued for US\$6 billion by Swedish energy giant Vattenfall for its decision to phase out nuclear energy.
- Australia and Uruguay have both been dealt billion-dollar law suits as a result of their tobacco control laws, while last year we saw the largest award in history, \$US50 billion, being made against Russia, 10% of its annual budget.
- A property developer in Libya, who invested only \$5 million in a project he didn't complete, was awarded \$US900 million. It was mainly for lost future profits after Libya cancelled his 99-year lease. Money sucked out of Libyan state coffers!
- According to the OECD the costs of defending a case averages \$US8 billion. The Philippines – a country with almost 27 million people below the poverty line

has so far paid \$US58 million in legal costs for a long-running dispute over an allegedly corrupt contract to build an airport terminal – and an investment tribunal just decided it has no authority over the claim.

Unlike most other countries, New Zealand does not have many agreements with ISDS. Agreeing to ISDS in the TPPA, which includes the US, will allow some of the largest and most litigious companies in the world to sue New Zealand if they think the government has damaged their investment.

- Veolia, the company that operates Auckland's train system, recently sued Egypt for US\$80 million for raising its minimum wage.
- Newmont, the gold-mining company that operates in Waihi, recently launched a billion dollar claim against Indonesia for regulation requiring domestic processing of raw materials, which resulted in Indonesia accepting a regulatory concession.
- The tobacco companies have threatened to sue the government if it goes ahead with the plain packaging tobacco laws.
- The TPPA will prevent PHARMAC from bulk bargaining some generic drugs at the lowest price, thus increasing the costs of our medicines. Overseas trans-nationals will ultimately decide what drugs PHARMAC can buy.
- The Treaty of Waitangi will be over-ridden if it interferes in any way with corporate business conducted under the TPPA. Maori will not be able to contest in court any decisions detrimental to their interests made under the TPPA. The Crown won't be able to either on their behalf.

Even Business New Zealand said it sees no need for ISDS in countries that have good functioning unbiased domestic courts.

## Moral Issues

There are huge moral issues at stake which Christians and all people with a heart for justice should be gravely concerned about. The TPPA process undermines some fundamental concepts of Church social teachings, and strikes at a core message of Jesus concerning the dignity and freedom of the sons and daughters of God as human beings. Billions of the already poor will be most disadvantaged.

Take *the common good*, first spelt out in detail by St Thomas Aquinas 800 years ago and held as sacred Church teaching ever since and a foundation stone of social justice. In our time, the common good is based on the presence of **five** integral features - the protection and enhancement of the **environment**, the need for

**solidarity** with all those affected by decisions detrimental to them, the protection of the principle of **subsidiarity** so that the strong and powerful don't dominate the poor and weak, protection of basic **human rights**, and a 'preferential option for the **poor and the oppressed**'.

Where is there any evidence that any of these conditions will be met by the TPPA? Where is the analysis which says that trade pacts like TPPA are good for the ordinary people of a country and that they fit the prescriptions of the common good? Who will be the voice for the poor and the voiceless affected by these policies? Where are the issues of justice for workers and consumers considered? Why don't worker organizations and consumer groups get a say in the formation of the agreements? Where are indigenous rights and treaties considered? They are not. They are simply ignored.

What rights will workers have to a fair wage and decent conditions when trans-national corporations are even further dominating the world's economies? What about the freedom of manufacturers to get a just return for their products? If countries are locked into a pact with 'slave labor' economies, where will free will and choice fit into their efforts to promote fair trading practices? The TPPA is the antithesis of the common good.

These secret TPPA negotiations are all about further enriching the corporate elite of world capitalism. They are evolving internationally binding structures involving blatant structural theft on a scale possibly unseen before. There will be virtually no accountability. In particular, the TPPA further disenfranchises the very people Jesus blessed while on earth – the poor and the disadvantaged.

Pope Francis frequently, and more recently the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in Rome, have been damning in their condemnation of 'economic liberalism' and 'the idolatry of the market.' The TPPA is a process of economic liberalism and a product of a desire to have the so-called 'free market' control everything. The pope has labelled this concept another word for idolatry.

New Zealand First has a *Fighting Foreign Corporate Control Bill* before parliament that would stop the Government including ISDS in any future treaty. We are urging you to oppose the TPPA at every turn because of the damage it will do. If that means setting aside party politics and supporting the Bill, so be it. We are begging you to do what is best for the people of this country. Give this issue an informed conscience vote.

Please. Don't vote for the TPPA in any form.

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# 8th National CW Hui

Although arriving in in dribs and drabs, there was nothing dribby or drabby about the 8th national CW hui held at the Otaki CW farm in late March. Up to 60 people gathered, including many children, for three days of discussions, planning, prayer and celebration. Shelley and Adi Leason and their family were the primary hosts for the hui, regarded by many as one of the best for a long time. Among the participants were Mike Lloyd and six others from The Gathering, Papatoetoe, who put the hangi down and produced a stunning feed for guests at the Briggs Well blessing.

The hui commenced with a lengthy discussion about where we were at and what the future held. The energy of the young people present quickly recharged the batteries of the older folk and led to a development of great hope for the future. Each person gave an input as to how they saw themselves in terms of future goals and commitment, before, in a very fruitful exercise, we reviewed our goals as CWs. Later we joined a further 200 people gathered to bless the Mark Briggs Well on the Leason property. (Cf box below)

A session on militarism followed led by Edwina Hughes from Peace Movement Aotearoa at which we looked at the role New Zealand was playing in response to the war/violence erupted around the world. The non-violence of Jesus and CW pacifist stance formed the basis of our focus. New Zealand's peacekeeping function, which had been enacted in East Timor and the Solomon Islands where no blood was shed as a result of our involvement, was highlighted as a role that could be developed to enable international commitments to be met. The combat role, which we have left ourselves open to as a result of our coat-tailing the US into Iraq, was condemned as counter-productive. We called for New Zealand troops to stay at home.

On the Saturday, after people had recovered from the Friday night dancing, Fr Peter Healy led us in a short retreat as we allowed the Spirit to seep into our hearts and speak in the silence. This was followed by a workshop on Earth Community Needs, an ecological view of where our planet needs to head if it is to survive. 'God has given us the privilege of guardianship (kaitiaki) of the earth', said Sarah. Another good workshop followed on hospitality, in which the joys, struggles and kaupapa of CW hospitality houses was shared. Francis Simmonds, who has been living at Suzanne Aubert CW for many years, led this korero. Smaller workshops followed: on writing led by Kathleen Gallagher, health care by Orewa Hinga, and the spiritual meaning of Tolkien's works led by Finn Leason.

An outdoors largely bare-footed celebratory Eucharist, adjacent to the Mark Brigg's Well, concluded the formal part of the hui. More than 60 adults and many children joined to thank God for the delight of being present and having the Spirit direct our lives through the

CW spirituality. Readings from Dorothy Day and Fr Thomas Berry, the great cosmologist/ecologist, complemented the scripture readings of the day, with Jenny Dawson leading the discussion. It was a Spirit-filled time, appreciated by all.

That led into our spit-roast meal and barn-dance under the awnings in the open air tent, with music for 150 provided 'til late by Jack Leason, Liam Gallagher and the CW All Star band. On the Sunday we joined the local Otaki parish community for the Eucharist before concluding with the poroporoaki and farewells. The cooking team led by Shelley, Dianna, Jo and Apples were singled out for special honour for all the hours they had put in behind the scene preparing acres of lovely food. No CW gathering celebrates on an empty stomach! As they say in the CW, justice is good but food is essential!

## Mark Briggs – WWI Conscientious Objector

More than 100 people gather on the Friday evening of the 8th national CW hui to celebrate the blessing and opening of the Mark Briggs Well. Mark Briggs, a great-uncle of CW Shelley Leason, was a WW1 conscientious objector and one of 14 sent to the front line in France.

After Pat Hakaraia, a local kaumatua, had welcomed us, Adi Leason spoke of the myth of redemptive violence 'where you kill the baddies and we all live in peace and harmony.' He reminded us of the power of redemptive suffering as practised by Jesus. He described Mark Briggs as one who practised this to an extreme degree. In reflecting on the nature of water, he called the Mark Briggs Well, 'a well of love, a well of healing'.

Poet and medical doctor Glenn Colquhoun was the main speaker. He outlined the journey of Mark Briggs which led him from a background of pacifism and a prison cell in Wellington to the 'No 1 field punishment' inflicted upon him by NZ soldiers in France. Among other things this included starvation rations, physical and emotional abuse, and him being dragged two miles to a position just short of enemy lines and 'being tied by his ankles around a 3 metre post on a slight angle so that prisoner's weight went on these points as they hung forward'.

Eventually, due to the intervention of an official, he was repatriated to New Zealand. He recovered to the point where he became a member of the NZ Legislative Upper House of Parliament. He was one of only two members there to oppose New Zealand's involvement in WWII. Glenn concluded his presentation by singing a new poem he has written called 'William Little's Lament', about another heroic WW1 CO who was shipped overseas. William Little stood by his principles of non-violence and was harshly punished. He died unheralded in France.

## The Scapegoat

shuffling, hands manacled  
head bowed, shaved  
in orange jumpsuit  
prisoner No 4277

special unit, cell 59  
high profile, humiliated  
locked-down, 23 hours  
one book, no bed

carrying community burdens  
as old as the Fall  
the Caiaphas dictum  
'one man must die'

our sins and his  
weighing him down  
victims scarred, damaged  
some beyond repair

within a fractured society,  
intrusive media  
bay for blood  
gleefully gorging themselves  
vengeful, self-righteous.

but victims, offenders, broken families?  
where is apology, forgiveness  
repair, restoration, healing?  
where indeed does 'justice' lie?

not with us it seems  
but him

the scapegoat.

—Jim Consedine

## The Hui

fuelled by aroha  
smiling faces everywhere

the sense of community  
touched, smelt, inhaled

silence, meditation, prayer  
one in the Eucharist

the spirit pounding open hearts  
bare feet, jeans nearly ripped

acres of nosh, beautifully prepared  
miraculously, out of sight

pulsating music belting out  
rhythmic in a field under stars

joy-filled celebrations  
korero, music, kai

grace for the journey  
Christ at the hui

—Jim Consedine

## Love Your Enemies

The New Testament prohibits not only revenge but any form of vindictive justice, any grudge. Love of enemy is not just a divine commandment for all; it is the heart of God's own economy of salvation, fully manifest Jesus Christ. Consequently, it is a central dimension of discipleship in the footsteps of Jesus and in the image and likeness of God. 'Life in Jesus Christ' is unthinkable without an active and creative love of enemies, with the hope to rescue them and reconcile them.

—Bernard Haring, CSSR

# Around the Traps

## Suzanne Aubert CW

The house is back up and running after months of earthquake repairs. Tony Suddaby and Brian McNabb are residents there, along with Francis, who remains partly living with his brother. Wednesday night 6pm liturgies have resumed and good numbers have been attending. Leony has returned from a break in the Philippines and she, Merna, Jacqui and Sister Judith have once again become key suppliers of food for our CW gatherings. Hospitality and pastoral ministry remain our chief works, with migrant workers in Christchurch for the rebuild a special new focus.

## Honour Deserved

We join many in congratulating **Sister Helen Goggin RSM**, who was recently awarded a special Apostolic Blessing from Pope Francis for her 40 plus years of service to music ministry at St James Parish in Christchurch East. Besides her music ministry, Sister Helen has been the final set of eyes on all 73 editions of *The Common Good* published these past 19 years, checking for mixed metaphors, hyperbole and misplaced pronouns and conjunctions. Well done, Sister Helen! None deserve the award more.

## Military Spending

Last year, global military expenditure was US\$1.747 trillion, on average US\$4.8 billion every day. By way of contrast, an average of 24 000 children under the age of five died every day from mainly preventable causes – lack of access to adequate food, clean water and basic medicines. It would take less than 7% of global military expenditure to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty around the world, and to meet the aims of the UN Millennium Development Goals. New Zealand maintains armed forces in a state of combat readiness at a cost of more than NZ\$3.7 billion, an average of NZ\$10 million every day. By way of contrast, 27% of children in New Zealand live in poverty and a further 17% of children live in conditions of material hardship. – *Peace Movement Aotearoa*

## Anzac Commemoration

On a mild Christchurch evening, the CW joined 80 others to vigil at the Bridge of Remembrance on the 100th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli which killed so many NZ, Australian, British and Turkish young men. Poems were read, descendants of COs imprisoned spoke and candles lit in remembrance of those who died so futilely. Comments were made about how easily they all became pawns of military might, the arms industry, empire builders and bullish politicians - who stayed safely at home!

## Fossil fuel gluttony

The Pentagon is the largest consumer of fossil fuels globally and the single entity most responsible for destabilizing the Earth's climate. It has a nuclear arsenal that can destroy ALL LIFE on the planet, has already used depleted uranium with lethal and drastic effects on human life and the environment in places like Iraq, and used chemical warfare agents in Latin America in waging of the so-called 'war on drugs.' In bringing huge profits to the large multinational corporations, this drug war has destroyed livelihoods and inflicted lethal and life altering health effects on millions of poor people in South America. This waging of and planning for war is destroying our planet! - *CommonDreams.org*.

## TPP leaked memo

A key section of the secret TPP trade agreement called the Investment Chapter would grant broad powers to multi-national companies operating in North America, South America and Asia. Under the proposed accord, companies and investors would be empowered to challenge regulations, rules, government actions and court rulings, federal, state or local, before tribunals organised under the World Bank or the United Nations. This clause gives greater priority to protecting corporate interests than promoting free trade and competition. - *Huffington Post*, 27 March 2015

## Pope Francis: life sentences a 'hidden death penalty'

Pope Francis has branded life-long prison terms 'a hidden death sentence' in an attack on 'penal populism' that included severe criticism of countries that facilitate torture. He says that prisons to fix social problems is like treating all diseases with one drug.

In a wide ranging speech to a delegation from the International Association of Penal Law, Pope Francis said believers should oppose life-long incarceration as strongly as the use of capital punishment. 'All Christians and people of good faith are therefore called upon today to fight, not only for the abolition of the death penalty whether it is legal or illegal and in all its forms, but also to improve the conditions of incarceration to ensure that the human dignity of those deprived of their freedom is respected.... A sentence of life (without parole) is a hidden death penalty.'

'In recent decades a belief has spread that through public punishment the most diverse social problems can be resolved, as if different diseases could all be cured by the same medicine.'

He reiterated the Catholic Church's teaching that the use of capital punishment was a sin.



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# Spinning the War

Jim Consedine

One of the most impressive monuments in Christchurch is the Bridge of Remembrance, battered now by the earthquakes, but still standing tall and proud. Many times over the years, I have paused and looked at the inscriptions engraved on its impressive walls, with places such as Passchendaele, the Somme and Gallipoli carved into the stone. Every year, commemorative wreaths are laid at its steps by citizens, anxious to remember those who died in the Great War.

The tragedy is that they were all victims of a huge propaganda machine which would have made Goebbels look on with envy. As the proverb says, 'truth is the first causality of war.' All wars are spun with gross deception and outright lies, and none more so than World War One. The beating of drums, conscription and the appeal to nationalism was overwhelming. Little did our young men know when they left with such high hopes that 18,166 of them would be killed in battle or die horribly from its effects.

Battles, like that at the Somme, witnessed slaughter beyond imagination with 60 000 deaths in one day, 1.2 million by the time it finished. What madness! Gallipoli was little better. A disaster from day one. The statistics for WW1 could go on – 16 million lives lost, 36 million casualties, 6500 ships sunk by German U-boats, 1.2 million soldiers horribly gassed, tens of millions shell-shocked.

And for what? Four losing empires were dismantled, their territories carved up, seeds sown for future wars. The winner-takes-all Treaty of Versailles set Hitler and a humiliated Germany up for World War II. We never learnt then. We still haven't. Witness Iraq.

French 2nd Lieutenant Alfred Joubaire wrote home saying, 'Humanity is mad. It must be mad to do what we are doing. What a massacre. What screams of horror and carnage. I cannot find words to translate my impressions. Hell cannot be so terrible. Men are mad.' No glory here. No romance.

Yet here in New Zealand, we have commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing almost like a sacrament. This is holy ground! Few seem to question it. This is not happening by chance. This commemoration has been skilfully engineered. It is propaganda at every turn. Anzac Day has become a sacred icon to the 'heroic feats of war', rather than a solemn recognition of the demonic presence of violence, carnage and death. The subliminal message is insidious. War is sanitised under

the banner of heroism.

Sadly, many New Zealanders have also embraced the notion that our identity as Kiwis is somehow tied at the umbilical cord to Gallipoli. This is not to question the courage of those who fought and died there. But let's not forget they were invading a foreign country thousands of miles from their own unthreatened homeland. They had no business being there. No wonder the Turks fought with such vengeance.



Gallipoli has been milked to the nth degree by vested interests in NZ as we have commemorated the centenary of that landing. To challenge the widely held perception that this was all about gallantry is to risk being accused of trivialising the 'heroic sacrifice' of our soldiers. Questions of loyalty and patriotism are raised, friendships strained.

Despite many recent documentaries and films about the casualties WWI inflicted, why are we elevating Anzac Day to rank as a virtual second founding day of our nation? The Gallipoli campaign it commemorates was an absolute disaster. Talk about sending lambs to slaughter! Such was the horror, most who survived wouldn't talk about it for the rest of their lives.

On the 100th anniversary, the massive propaganda effort by the Government and all major media outlets was mind-blowing. We were saturated with dawn-till-dusk war stories. 'Dear Jessie' letters from the Western Front, or 'my granddad's great-great Uncle Bert from the Somme,' read during prime-time TV may well help the ratings, but have done little for the soul of this nation. There was no mention of the conscientious objectors who refused to kill an unknown enemy, nor many New Zealanders who opposed this war on moral grounds. No mention of 100 years of peace-making since.

Thirty years ago, New Zealand stunned the world, stood up to the biggest empire on earth and said 'no' to nuclear powered or armed ship visits to our ports. The world accepted we stood for peace-making, not war. We stood for something different. For a short while, we stood close to the last words and command of the non-violent Jesus, 'put away the sword.' Since that time, we have struggled to maintain that non-nuclear position. We are still holding on by our finger tips, despite the US repeatedly shaking the branch. That is something to take pride in.

Let the Anzacs legacy be what they fought for, a lasting peace. Let us stop sanitising war.

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# Sabotage Appeal Succeeds

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeal has handed down a decision in favour of the Sister Megan Rice and Catholic Workers, Michael Walli and Greg Boertje-Obed, who were convicted in 2013 of sabotage for their July 28, 2012

**Transform Now Ploughshares** protest of nuclear weapons production at the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

“The purpose of the action of Michael, Megan and Greg was to call attention to the ongoing production of thermonuclear weapons components at the bomb plant in Oak Ridge and, more specifically, to oppose plans to build a new, multi-billion dollar bomb plant—the Uranium Processing Facility—at Y12,” said Ralph Hutchison, coordinator of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance. “They were nonviolent protestors in the tradition of Gandhi, not saboteurs. We are pleased the Sixth Circuit appreciated the difference.”

The court ruled 2-1 in a decision handed down on May 8, 2015, that the government failed to prove the Transform Now Ploughshares activists intended to “injure the national defence,” a requirement for



conviction under the sabotage act. Disposing of the government’ arguments one by one, the court finally states simply: “The defendants’ convictions under §2155(a) must be reversed.”

The circuit court had the option of merely reversing the sabotage conviction but letting the defendants’ sentences stand on the other charge for which they were convicted—depreddation of government property. Noting the lesser charge would have resulted in lesser sentences—the men received 62 month sentences and Megan Rice a sentence of 35 months—under federal sentencing guidelines it appears that their new sentences will be substantially less than their time already served in federal custody. The court chose to vacate all sentences and remand their cases for resentencing on the remaining depreddation count.

Michael Walli is currently serving his sentence at McKean federal prison in Bradford, PA; Greg Boertje-Obed is in Leavenworth, KS; Megan Rice is in federal prison in Brooklyn, NY. Her release date is currently in mid-November, 2015. At this time, it is not clear when resentencing will take place

## Letters

Columban Mission,  
Lower Hutt.

Dear Jim

Warmest greetings. When I returned to New Zealand last year to take on the role as mission coordinator of Columban Mission in NZ, I decided to also become a member of the JPD commission for the Archdiocese of Wellington. As a member of the commission, I received an email copy of your Open Letter from the Catholic Worker to MPs. I have a particular interest in your letter because I am also on the Wellington TPPA action group which is chaired by John Maynard.

Thank you for this well-written letter. The use of the image of the ill-fated cruiser was an appropriate one. I also fear that many MPs have little idea of the implications of this agreement. Interestingly, the lengthy and highly technical *Free Trade Agreement between New Zealand and the Republic of Korea* that was signed recently, contains a series of statements that outline a

process entitled "Investor State Dispute Settlement" (section B of Article 10). This is found on pages 1318-1326!

There are other sections that claim to protect the interests of Maori under the Treaty of Waitangi and the environment of New Zealand. But, from my little understanding of the legal language that is used, there appear to be enormous conflicts of interest. Who wins out in the end if a dispute arises? I'm not sure. But when such procedures are hidden deep in the bowels of such a significant document, it makes you wonder whether someone has something to hide!

Thank you again for your letter and I hope it receives the attention it deserves.

Sincerely,

*Rev. Tom Rouse*

38 Bennetts Road,  
Otaki 5512

Kia ora, Catholic Workers,

Prime Minister John Key has been in the international news for repeatedly 'horsing around' with the ponytail of a female restaurant worker. There is more to this story than meets the eye.

I recently read two best-selling, very well written books about the lived experience of the working poor in service to the 'comfortable' economy. Both *Nickel and Dime*, by Barbara Ehrenreich (2001) and *Hand to Mouth*, by Linda Tirado, (2014), angrily report a culture of humiliation in the workplace as a signatory experience of the working poor in the new café society. Such pressures on the daily grind of the working poor could well intensify if the 'trade in services and investor state agreement' John Key has just signed with South Korea is extended to the US-dominated TPP treaty.

One reason John Key's restaurant behaviour was international news was the way it is symptomatic of the culture of his 'investor state'.

Best wishes,

*Alistair McKee*

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40 Perth Street,  
Invercargill 9801

Dear Jim,

Greetings and congratulations on the Advent issue of *The Common Good*. It's an excellent issue and I especially liked the editorial, 'Go to the Margins' by Pope Francis. Keep up the good work. I look forward to future editions.

Yours in Christ,

*Rev. Tom Keyes*

Pukerua Bay  
Porirua 5026

Dear Jim,

Thank you so much for sharing these writings with me (and with my Jim who really appreciated them too). All excellent but your clericalism piece was my favourite with its emphasis on the abuse of power. I have realised often recently what a protected role priests have, especially for me as all my adult life I have had a formal role in the church (as a vicar's wife and then as a parish priest myself). Now I sometimes feel like I don't belong but I have to remind myself that I do, as much as anyone else. Position and privilege is indeed addictive! It was wonderful to catch up with you in the CW hui in Otaki. Take the best care of yourself.

Arohanui,

*Jenny Dawson*

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Seaward Downs  
RD 3, Wyndham

Dear *Common Good*,

I really do enjoy reading your newspaper and I do pass it on or leave it in the church. At 84 years of age, I find it has so much in it that we can all relate to. And it is not always what makes us feel pleased, but that is the way things are. Both my parents and my husband's parents came from Ireland in the early 1900s and were great Catholics. In recent years I have felt very concerned as to where our Church is going but with Pope Francis to lead us, I feel better about things. I pray for him every day. Please find enclosed a cheque towards the cost of publishing *The Common Good*.

Yours faithfully,

*Mary Duffy.*

## Funeral Choice

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

A Catholic Worker project  
Cheaper alternatives to consumer  
funerals

## CW website

Leading articles from the first 19 years of  
*The Common Good*  
Alternative funerals  
Restorative justice  
Other theological issues  
[www.catholicworker.org.nz](http://www.catholicworker.org.nz)



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**The Common Good**

Te Wairua Maranga Trust  
 Box 33-135  
 Christchurch 8244  
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**Radical Forgiveness**

Surrendering to violence and revenge leads to the death of the moral person that a victim once was. The desire to choose life is the catalyst that moves a victim to positive action. By deliberating choosing to pray for the offender, by reaching out to others in acts of goodness that engage and change one’s thoughts to thoughts of love and peace – by such responses – one clears the air of violence and turns in the direction of healing and former well-being.

Violence crucifies us all, but every time someone responds with love and forgiveness, that person and all humankind are raised up to a new vision and quality of life. This is salvation. This is mirroring the God who makes good come out of evil. This is the beginning of the end of violence.

- Carmelites of Indianapolis, *Hidden Friends*