

The Common Good

Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor

A newspaper of the Christchurch Catholic Worker

No 75, Advent 2015

Price: free or donation

75th
Issue

Honouring the Prophets

Jim Consedine

A nation can be considered great when it defends liberty as Lincoln did; when it fosters a culture which enables people to 'dream' of full rights for all their brothers and sisters, as Martin Luther

King sought to do; when it strives for justice and the cause of the oppressed, as Dorothy Day did by her tireless work; the fruit of a faith which becomes dialogue

and sows peace in the contemplative style of Thomas Merton.

—Pope Francis, US Congress, 24 September 2015

In probably the most important public speech of his recent US tour, Pope Francis cited four famous Christian Americans as moral examples *par excellence* for people to emulate and follow. In his address to the joint session of the US Congress, he named **Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Martin Luther King Jr** and **Abraham Lincoln** as being inspirational leaders for today.

Francis could have chosen other famous but less controversial figures. Instead, **he chose four prophets of social justice**. Each in their time was 'stoned' by the righteous, marginalised and persecuted for their beliefs. Abraham Lincoln, who abolished slavery, and Martin Luther King Jr, the great civil rights leader, are known internationally for their prophetic witness. Both were assassinated and have enjoyed public adulation since. Less is known of the other two.

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) remains the guiding spirit behind the Catholic Worker movement which, since its founding in 1933, has inspired tens of thousands to work for social justice and 'to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned.' The CW has done this through the foundation of Houses of Hospitality and

farms for the poor, the homeless and 'discards' from our modern consumer culture. Catholic Workers advocate for the voiceless, practise peacemaking, and reach out to those most rejected and abandoned. Dorothy also taught 'small is beautiful' economics, practised personalism, promoted the Gospel practice of non-violence and the pacifist teachings

of Jesus.

In May 1933, she founded a monthly paper *The Catholic Worker* to promote these views. She charged one penny a copy, a price that remains

to this day. At one stage prior to WWII, the paper's circulation reached 180,000. While that is much reduced today, the CW movement continues to thrive more strongly than ever. There are currently more than 200 independent CW houses in a dozen countries around the world, including New Zealand.

Although described as 'the most influential Catholic of the 20th century' and a daily Mass attendee for decades, Dorothy Day was always treated with suspicion and perceived as a threat by the mainstream Church. She took the Gospel too seriously. When she died in 1980, although known, respected and loved worldwide, not one bishop attended her Requiem Mass. Three decades later, the entire US Bishops Conference unanimously recommended she be canonised!

Thomas Merton (1915-1968), the great Cistercian monk and writer, was a towering literary figure for the period of 65 years from 1949 when his autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain* was first published. No serious student of Catholic writing since could have failed to read something of the immense amount of work he published on prayer, monastic life and spiritual development. In addition, during the social upheaval of the 1960s and in the shadow of the Cold War, the rise in the US of the civil rights movement and the escalating nuclear threat, Merton wrote prolifically on social issues like non-violence, pacifism, the effects of war,

Our job is to love others
without stopping to inquire
whether or not they are
worthy.
—Thomas Merton



institutionalised racism, arms proliferation, unemployment and poverty.

Like Dorothy Day, he also suffered persecution. In the early 1960s, Thomas Merton was silenced for some years by his Order and refused permission to publish writings on social issues. Although he reluctantly complied, this caused him great pain and suffering. However, by the time of his sudden accidental death in 1968, he was writing freely again.

Coping with prophets

The poor tell us who we are; the prophets tell us who we could be; so we hide the poor and kill the prophets. This quote from the prophet and peacemaker, Phillip Berrigan, (1923-2002), gives us an insight into how we treat the prophetic voices of our time. Generally speaking, he says, we hide the poor and ‘stone’ or kill the prophets who highlight injustice or speak out on behalf of the poor.

Why do we do this? Is it that prophets make us uncomfortable, pointing to where injustice lies? To where things need to change? Perhaps they remind us of truths at the core of the Gospels that are often not taught in our churches? Remind us of how God sees things? *The Word of God...cuts like any double edged sword but*

more finely. (Hew 4/12) None of us take kindly to being ‘cut’ like that. Most of us hate being disturbed from our comfort zone. I certainly do. The same applies in the Church and in the wider society. Most don’t want to hear and reject what is being said.

Twice in the New Testament, the list of gifts given to the Church has prophets listed second in importance immediately behind apostles and ahead of such charisms as teachers, healers, preachers and administrators. In scripture, prophets are regarded as vital to a healthy Church.

Prophets don’t foretell the future. They simply point the way to it if justice is to be served. That is their role. Being a prophet is not a title. It is not a special honour. No true prophet seeks to be one. Nor do all necessarily have religious beliefs. Like other true vocations, prophecy is simply an inner call. It is a call each must follow in conscience. For believers, it is a call from God.

Yet, even though every Christian is baptised into the ‘prophetic’ dimension of Christ at baptism, it seems that as adults when that charism flowers, most don’t want to recognise it in themselves or others. So despite better scriptural knowledge and theology today, prophets are treated no differently now than in former generations.

New Zealand prophets

In Aotearoa, famous prophetic voices over the years have included Te Whiti o Rongamai and Tohu Kakahi of Parihaka, Kate Shepherd, Archibald Baxter, Mother Suzanne Aubert DOLC, Princess Te Pueha Herangi of Tainui, John A. Lee, Ormond Burton, David Taylor, Ron O’Grady NCC, Fr John Curnow, Norman Kirk MP, Elsie Locke, Tom Newnhan, Muriel Morrison, Rod Donald MP, James K. Baxter and Dame Whina Cooper of Nga Puhī. There have been many more.

A sample of contemporary prophetic voices includes Ricky Houghton of Nga Puhī Kate Dewes; the Aranui Sisters of Mercy; John Minto; Helen Kelly of the CTU; Adrian Leason, Sam Land and Peter Murnane OP of the Waihopai Ploughshares; Bunny McDiarmid of Greenpeace; Kennedy Graham MP; Elizabeth Mackie OP; Cathy Harrison; Patrick O’Connor of PEETO; Ivan Snook; Mary Baker; Brian Turner; Dr Lance O’Sullivan; Ken Orr of Right to Life; Susan St John and Mike O’Brien of Child Poverty Action; Robert Consedine of Waitangi Associates; TPP opponents Professor Jane Kelsey and Gen de Spa; Jeannette Fitzsimons MP; Tama Iti of Ngai Tuhoi and Sue Bradford to mention only a few.

These lists are by no means complete. The question for us is this: Do we continue to ‘marginalise’ prophetic voices today as Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton and others were marginalised in the past? Or do we make them welcome, seeing their role as being vital for a healthy, vibrant Church and society?

Jim Consedine of the Christchurch CW has been an advocate for social justice for many years.

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 - burkesspass@gmail.com

Editorial Bitter Fruit - the TPPA

Betrayal is a word that one should use sparingly, if ever. Yet it is the word that most fits the feeling of tens of thousands of New Zealanders as they reflect that their Government, the one they elected to represent their best interests, has with great stealth and secrecy, locked their futures and those of their children and grandchildren and their grandchildren into a binding contract that is against their best interests. One needs only to have been awake to know that, during these past months in all 12 signatory countries, hundreds of thousands of people have marched to protest the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA).

Our Government neither listened nor dialogued. It claimed it was just another trade deal. That is false. In reality, TPPA is more than a trade deal. It is also an investment deal whereby our markets are further opened up to whoever has the biggest purses, the deepest pockets. We will be at their mercy.

In handing over such a huge amount of power to un-elected and non-democratic multi-national companies whose bottom line is not the Common Good of the people but their own corporate profits, the Key Government is continuing to con the New Zealand public into believing that economic considerations are the only things that matter, and that corporations will act in the best interests of all. They believe that the future lies ultimately with corporations, not democratic processes. Their vision is that corporate rule of the world is best and inevitable. They spin the notion that corporations will rule justly.

As history shows, this is plainly untrue. The millions of dollars touted as gain from the TPPA is really a huge bribe. We are being sold a pup. There is absolutely no guarantee they will be achieved. It leaves open the question. Is the 'golden calf' the Government's only compass? On this issue it would appear so.

This is more than betrayal. It is an act of treachery, created by the world's richest and most powerful elite to benefit themselves. Our Government is going along with it. It betrays the struggles of past generations of New Zealanders to build a nation based on moral principles of openness, justice, accountability, inclusion and care for all its citizens. It defies the best current wisdom of those who are able to think in moral terms, outside dollar incentives. While being sugar-coated for public consumption, the TPPA remains a bitter

pill to swallow for those who care about our future and that of future generations.

These are strong words. But what else can one say? The government and corporate business spin machines are on full throttle promoting the 'so called' benefits. Whatever they may be, they are purely economic. Other planetary and human issues like the protection of the environment, climate change, the treatment of the poor, the ready availability of affordable generic medicines, protection of fisheries and local industries, the ability to make decisions on key political issues here in NZ, have potentially been traded for these thirty pieces of tarnished silver. And a welcome mat at the White House.

The Catholic Worker has for several years joined the mainstream churches, including the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference, in opposing this so-called trade deal. Besides economic and social reasons, we have argued that it will benefit mainly the already-wealthy and hit the poor hardest. It runs contrary to the Gospel of Jesus, who brought people freedom from, not enslavement to, ideology, and who sided with the poor and brought them 'good news', not bad news.

It contradicts 120 years of the Church's social teachings in several ways, including the Church's solidarity with workers and their rights, with the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, the notion of sovereignty under the Treaty of Waitangi, and the gospel's 'preferential option for the poor'. Most pointedly, it fails each of the five component parts necessary to achieve the Common Good.

Pivotaly, it continues to pretend that the 'trickle-down' theory of economic liberalism is beneficial to all. This is a blatant lie. Pope Francis has repeatedly condemned neo-liberal economics saying, 'the worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose'. #55, *The Joy of the Gospel*, 2013.

The TPPA is a classic case of neo-liberal economics in action on a grand scale with few controls or restraints. There is still hope that our parliament may show some backbone and reject the proposals as not acceptable. Now, that would show some real political and moral leadership!

—Jim Consedine

The Privatisation of State Housing

John Minto



Following the 2014 election the National government embarked on what it intends will be the largest privatisation of State assets in New Zealand history – dwarfing any of the

sales successive Labour and National governments have posted in the last 30 years. National is beginning the sale of New Zealand's estimated \$15 billion in State housing stock. No less than three National government ministers are now directly involved – Housing Minister Nick Smith, State Housing Minister Bill English and Social Housing Minister Paula Bennett.

The first stage of privatisation involves the sale of 6,000 to 8,000 houses over the next few years with up to 2,000 being sold in the first year. Though they claim otherwise, it's clear that if unchecked National will sell every last State home. The latest proposal for mass privatisation of State housing comes close on the heels of National Party attacks on Housing New Zealand (HNZ) and its tenants from its first two terms.

Early in its first term National forced HNZ to slash State house waiting lists, close most local offices and strip tenure (the right to stay in your home) from existing tenants. It drove staff morale to rock-bottom and HNZ has been stripped of its role in assessing tenants for housing needs. Work and Income NZ (WINZ) has taken over this function and will allocate eligible tenants and families to HNZ or private 'social housing providers'.

The state of State houses

One of the reasons the Government gives is that HNZ has been a poor landlord and tenants need better. It's true the condition of many State houses is appalling. Successive National and Labour governments have failed to invest in upkeep and maintenance, preferring to require hundreds of millions in dividends from HNZ. They have treated it as a cash cow rather than an essential social provision for low income tenants and families. National has plans to keep milking these tenants, saying in 2014 it was demanding \$252 million in dividends from HNZ over the following three years. Dividends paid by HNZ to the Government in recent years: \$71 million in 2010; \$68 million in 2011; \$77 million in 2012; \$90 million in 2013.

Such is the appalling condition of many of them that two recent deaths were attributed by doctors to cold, damp State houses. In Auckland, 37-year-old Soesa Tovo and two-year-old Emma-Lita Bourne died in August 2014 leaving the National Government with blood on its

hands. All Nick Smith could say was: 'People dying in winter of pneumonia and other illnesses is not new.' He may as well have spelt it out. 'We are working hard to squeeze every dollar we can from State house tenants to increase the dividend Housing New Zealand pays the Government. If that means our houses stay cold and damp and people die – too bad. If we insulate these houses it will cost money and reduce our dividend.' How many more children and vulnerable adults will die because the biggest slum landlord in the country – the National government – demands hundreds of millions in dividends from HNZ tenants while refusing to upgrade their homes to a decent standard?

State subsidies for private landlords

In reducing the State housing stock the Government is now extending the IRRS (Income Related Rental Subsidy, which has only been available to HNZ tenants) to tenants in social housing. However, the IRRS will be capped, on Treasury advice to protect the Government from 'fiscal risk'. This means tenants who gain a place in a HNZ house, for example, will also have to wait for what the Government calls a 'financial vacancy' to become available. In other words, they will go on a second waiting list - waiting till another tenant leaves or is evicted before the subsidy will be available to them. This extension of Government subsidies is not for the benefit of tenants but for the benefit of landlords. Already over \$1 billion is being paid out each year in rental subsidies which lines the pockets of property speculators and property investors.

In the first step to expedite the sale of State houses, the Government earlier in 2015 transferred 2,800 houses in Tamaki (Glen Innes, Point England and Panmure) to the Tamaki Redevelopment Company. It's jointly owned by the Government and Auckland City Council but has a corporate agenda unlike the public service model of Housing New Zealand. To take HNZ right out of the picture the Government has since passed legislation enabling two housing ministers to bypass the normal process of Housing New Zealand selling houses. The Social Housing Reform (Transaction Mandate) Bill allows designated ministers to sell Housing NZ properties without the approval of the board of the corporation.

Even Treasury raised its eyebrows at what it described as giving ministers a 'private law power of attorney'. It's clear the Government is 'clearing the decks' for the State house selloff, with fire-sale deals to be done with property investors and speculators using a social housing prodger as the public face of corporate greed.

Foreign buyers

The major problem faced by the Government has been the lack of local interest from social housing providers to buy into its policy. In a major blow to the credibility of the privatisation programme the largest legitimate social housing provider – the Salvation Army – announced it would not buy any State houses. The Methodist Mission followed suit and what is left is a group of smaller providers without the capacity to take on the delivery of housing services for hundreds of families. No problem to Bill English. Recently he has announced the Government is proposing the sale of hundreds of State houses to an Australian company called Horizon Housing.

Any self-respecting minister would be embarrassed to sell State housing assets – the most critical, socially strategic asset we have – to an Australian company but the ideological adrenalin pumps so strongly through his veins that better an Australian company than the New Zealand State keep them. This is music to the ears of National's property developer and speculator mates as, over time, more tenants are forced into the private sector to drive up rents and untaxed capital values. More unearned income for the landlord elite who fund the

National Party. Of course Bill English says the sale of State houses is to improve things for State house tenants because the Government isn't doing a good job and the private sector can do better. Not even the most intellectually challenged New Zealander would believe such rubbish!

The Way Forward

Across the world only governments have the resources and capacity to provide quality affordable housing for families and tenants on low incomes. That's the experience at all times in all countries. We have a housing crisis in New Zealand for low-income families living three families to a house, in cars or cockroach infested caravans. The National Government, however, appears to want to turn the clock back to Victorian England where there was no State assistance in housing – just charities and churches to provide food and housing for the needy.

John Minto is National Convenor of SHAN – the State Housing Action Network. www.shan.org.nz

Ordination at Kopua



It's freezing, early spring, a few brave lambs are about. Sunlight dances on the crashing waves as Jenny Dawson, Peter Stuart and Kathleen Gallagher drive up the stunning Kapiti

coast at dawn. They stop briefly at Dannevirke for a hot drink, and then on to Southern Cross Abbey, Kopua, where they join the CWs from the north who arrive after a similar journey. Here Br. John Pettit OCSO, who hosted the CW national hui at the monastery in 2013, is to be ordained and become both Fr John and the new Superior of Kopua. Gentle Fr John is all in white - white hair, white beard, white gown.

The whole occasion is memorable and moving, with beautiful music, a lovely homily by Emeritus Bishop Peter Cullinane from Palmerston North and significant parts in the service taken by key people, like Shirley



Duthie of Pleroma Books, who does a reading. The ceremony has more details of commitment than its matrimonial equivalent, and John responds clearly with the words 'I am'. The presentation of the gifts is done by young people of the Land family, and Father John

himself is very happy and relaxes (after the serious bits are over!) We all share Holy Communion and the Mass ends with us singing with great joy 'Lord of the Dance'.

The 'light luncheon' in the refectory afterwards proves to be a feast! Celia Gawith, who lives with James on the organic farm next door to the monastery, has made the most exquisite sugar-free cake with a forest and a hermitage and a white robed monk – representing Fr John and his passion for the environment - walking on a little path outside through the forest. Fr John has planted many native trees in the monastery grounds over the years.

The earth, the sky and the water are waiting patiently for our loving attention. Pope Francis has instructed us thoughtfully in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* regarding our care of our environment. The post-ordination speeches include references to Fr John's years in the Australian outback and with the Catholic Worker in Brisbane. He responds with challenging words about our responsibility to care for God's world.

After the ordination and the feast, 10 Catholic Workers from the Whirinaki, Opononi, Kopua, Wellington, Christchurch and Brisbane gather around the big table in the warm room of the guest house with Fr John. We mediate and discuss how to move forward in this rapidly evolving environment, remembering our prayer life which is essential, the Open Door of hospitality, and where we come from. Such is the vision.

—Kathleen Gallagher, Marissa Dowling and Jenny Dawson

Around the Traps

Peter Land, kaumatua at St Francis CW Farm, suffered a stroke earlier in the year. He has returned home to Whirinaki and is being cared for by his family, with Joseph leading the care team. Marissa Dowling reports from the farm that she and Patrick and their baby Lucia are 'doing well playing families and the next edition of *Bread and Roses*, their CW newsletter, is in the pipeline.'

The launching of Kathleen Gallagher's new book, *Earthquakes and Butterflies*, is a highlight for the CW in Christchurch. It is both a death and resurrection book as can be seen in the title. We gather in her parish hall at Sacred Heart, Addington, for the official launch. Various speakers describe the mystical quality of the writing, as Kathleen blends her poetic skills into a focus on developing the characters of a novel. The result is a stunning book, very contemporary, very readable, very moving, set in quake-ravished Christchurch immediately after the earth moved. It's a wonderful read and would make a great Christmas present. (Cf Joy Ryan-Bloore's review p11)

We extend our heartiest congratulations to Jim Dowling of Brisbane, a CW for nearly 40 years, who turned 60 in October. Jim is a father of seven, a grandfather, and has been married to the wonderful Anne Rampa for most of that time. Jim has been a constant thorn to successive Australian Governments as they have ramped up their coat-tailing onto US war policies. He has lived the CW vision in very practical ways with great commitment. *Ad multos annos!*

In October 2015, there were 260,000 children living in poverty in New Zealand. That is 24% of children. Statistics: *Child Poverty Action*.

Veteran Australian CW Ciaron O'Reilly pleaded guilty 24 February 2015 to violating special restrictions that named him among four people be kept away from the G-20 meeting in Brisbane which hosted world leaders in November 2014. He had hoped to confront Barack Obama about the persecution of whistle-blowers Chelsea Manning (35 years in prison) and Julian Assange (holed up in a London Embassy). No one else was convicted under the special legislation passed for the duration of the G-20 meeting. The law is now redundant. He was not sentenced, having already served 42 hours in custody after his arrest.

New Zealand's suicide statistics are startling. In 2014, 564 people died this way and disproportionately, 93 were Maori. That is two deaths every three days! Included in this number were 22 farmers, 15 men and 7 women. *RNZ News*, 6 October 2015

'It cannot be stressed too much: love of enemies has, for our time, become the litmus test of authentic Christian faith. Love without courage and wisdom is sentimentality, as with the ordinary church member. Courage without love and wisdom is foolhardiness, as

with the ordinary soldier. Wisdom without love and courage is cowardice, as with the ordinary intellectual. But the one who has love courage and wisdom moves the world.' - *Ammon Hennacy*, CW member, New York 1952

In all of America's 239 years of existence, only roughly 20 of them have been without warfare of some kind, meaning we spend more on the Pentagon's budget than 175 nations' total economic activity. We're living in the middle of the longest (endless) most expensive global struggle ever. *AlterNet*, 5/17/15

The latest crime survey from the Ministry of Justice found the incidence of crime in NZ dropped 30% from 2008 to 2013. There were 800,000 fewer crimes. This latest survey suggests assaults, robberies and burglaries are trending down. Maori, single parents and those living in deprived areas are more likely to be the victim of a crime than the overall NZ average. *The Press*, 8 October 2015.

Syrian Boy

all day long the screen flickers
mirroring vacant stares
frightened yet hope-filled
desperate to escape
Syrians fleeing the war

packed to the gulls in rickety boats
life-savings stolen
they tackle dangerous waters
searching for humanity
long absent from home

handsome faces, strain etched
they are the crucified Christ
nailed on the cross of tyranny and war
tossing about the Mediterranean
a cemetery for refugees

at water's edge, face down
Aylan Kurdi lies
a rag doll, red t-shirt, blue pants
his tiny body a universal symbol
innocence - and evil

—Jim Consedine
1 September 2015

Exploitation: Filipino Remittances

ILPS-Philippines

There are more than 30 000 Filipino workers in New Zealand. Many send remittances to the Philippines to sustain their families there.

Balikbayan Boxes are packages of personal effects of Filipinos residing or working abroad meant as presents to their families or relatives in the Philippines. It has deep cultural values beyond crass capitalism.

Philippines Bureau of Customs chief, Alberto Lina, appointed by President Aquino, is desperate to raise campaign funds for next year's presidential elections and is eyeing the hard-earned remittance payments/savings and Balikbayan Boxes of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

'It is a disservice to 10 million Filipinos living in over 190 countries abroad and their families and loved ones at home,' the Philippines Chapter of the International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS-Phils) said in a statement, 15 August 2015.

Personal remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in 2014 were an all-time high for the Philippines at \$26.93 billion, breaking the previous record of \$25.35 billion in 2013. Even the IMF-World Bank has been keen on using these migrant remittances for private profit of corporations and banks. The Philippine economy is consumption-driven and now heavily dependent on remittances from abroad.

'To treat personal effects and presents of OFWs as vulnerable to smuggling and government loss is plain stupidity. These are all consumables which are not even capital goods. It is local senselessness of global proportions,' the ILPS-Phils noted.

It also said that, 'luxury cars for the ruling classes whiz through customs and flood the streets, but Balikbayan Boxes of workers are not spared by this Aquino customs carpetbagger.'

Liberalized trade, such as that under the regime of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and other capitalist 'free trade' agreements, removed tariff barriers and eased any government regulations which became inimical to people's interests.

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) estimates that an average of 1,000 containers, each with 400 Balikbayan Boxes, arrive in Philippine ports each month. BOC claims that the government is losing P600 million a year. Smuggled goods are estimated to be \$20-24 billion a year based on disparities in official import records.

The BOC plans to increase clearing fees for all containers entering Philippine ports to as much as P100,000 to P120,000. The first increase of P40,000 per container was imposed last July 27, while another wave of increases was to take effect on October 1st before it was met with a massive wave of protests. On August 23,

the BOC released a statement that there will be no tax increase on Balikbayan boxes.

Cronyism at Customs

Alberto Lina is known to have contributed a large amount of money to the campaign kitty of then senator and presidential candidate Benigno Aquino III. Lina is a close associate of Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima in the Hyatt 10, and allied with the Senate President, who is also the vice chairman of the ruling Liberal Party.

Lina replaced John Sevilla who took over from former congressman Ruffy Biazon as Customs chief in December 2013, after Biazon was implicated in the pork barrel scandal. Sevilla later resigned due to 'political pressures'.

Customs chief Alberto Lina is the chairman of the Lina Group of Companies, which includes Air21, Shopinas.com, Integrated Waste Management Inc., Cargohaus Inc., DOS 1, Warm (Waste and Resource Management), U-Freight Philippines, Linaheim Properties, Solarlina, LGC Logistics, Credit Solutions & Business Alliances Inc., Lina Farms, GO 21, E-Konek, Ube Media, 2100 Customs Brokers Inc, U-Ocen Inc, and Linaheim Corporate Travel and Tours.

Most of these companies are in logistics or freight forwarding, warehousing, customs brokerage, and related businesses.

Lina warned that, 'the contents of a Balikbayan Box must not exceed US\$500 in value. Canned goods, grocery items and other household effects must not exceed a dozen a kind, while apparel, whether used or new, must not exceed 3 yards per cut. Only one consignment per sender during a one-month period is allowed.'

He asserted that the BOC is allowed by law to check the boxes. 'Home appliances are not allowed unless these are consigned to returning Filipino residents and overseas contract workers. We will seize these prohibited shipments and revoke registrations of forwarders or consolidators if we find any violations.'

With these steps, Lina is able to: 1) squeeze funds for the upcoming elections; 2) remove his business rivals in an intensifying competitive market; 3) make it appear that the government is sincere in cracking down on smuggling and fighting corruption.

The ILPS-Phils called on Filipinos and migrant workers to resist imperialist domination, fight bureaucrat-capitalism and corruption, end this semi-feudal backwardness and replace it with a self-reliant, balanced and sustainable system for the Philippines.

Two paths to peace: the secular and the sacred

Joan Chittister



In late July, while John Kerry sat across a table in Paris from Mohammed Zarif, chief Iranian negotiator for the Iranian-US nuclear treaty, I and six other Americans from the Global Peace Initiative of Women sat across tables from some of the major religious figures in Iran. We were in Qom, the Vatican of Shia Islam.

It might be a good moment for all of us to review the history of modern U.S.-Iran political relations. It's not too complex. On the contrary, the data is far too clear: In 1953, according to CIA documentation, the CIA and the British MI6 removed democratically-elected Iranian Prime Minister Mossadegh from office in order to give Shah Reza Pahlavi the power to stop Iran from nationalizing their oil fields.

But by 1979, the Shah who introduced Americanism to Iran was branded an American puppet and driven out of office by a coalition of both religious and secular forces. Two months after Pahlavi's ouster, Iran's major religious figure, the Ayatollah Khomeini, exiled from Iran by the Shah years before, returned from Paris. Almost overnight the Iranian Constitution was rewritten, and Iran became 'The Islamic Republic of Iran.' What the Ayatollah Khomeini called 'West-toxification' ended.

But the tug of war had begun. With international tempers still roiling in 1979, Iran held 52 U.S. hostages captive for 444 days. In 1985, Oliver North, a U.S. Marine Corps lieutenant colonel, sold weapons to Iran despite the fact that breaking the embargo violated U.S. policy. In 1988, the United States shot down an Iranian civilian airbus we said we mistook for a military plane. Then, in the wake of 9/11, in 2002, President George Bush proclaimed Iran, Iraq and North Korea the 'Axis of Evil.'

What remains of such a history in Iran is a country whose people have lived divided between Westernization and Islamization, the clear signs of which are still apparent. The memories of Iran's American period linger to this day. Iranian children recognized Americans immediately and tried out their English on us. Families stopped our delegation on the street to tell us 'We love Americans.' Everyone talked about the meetings in Paris with great hope that the old drawbridge to the West would once again drop into place.

Our response to this pending nuclear agreement is an important moment in international relations. It's true -- Iran pulled out from under the Western orbit once before. Relations are still uneasy. But the point must not be missed: Iran has a case of its own to make. We have both sinned. We are not the only ones in this partnership with a reason to doubt the other, to wonder about the desirability of beginning a new future with such an unpredictable suitor, to want authentication of the other's good will.

But there was one meeting that sounded a clarion call for a new beginning. After days of discussion with Iranian administrators, with theological scholars, with professional peers and religious wisdom figures, the last meeting was with the Grand Ayatollah Alavi Boroujderi. This session with the highest ranking of the six Grand Ayatollahs in Qom did more to reduce the distance between us than any other. He was a gentle and genial man, white haired, smiling, kind.

After 20 minutes of welcome and wisdom, the Ayatollah opened the discussion for our questions. I raised my hand. 'Ayatollah, I have been in interfaith work for years now,' I said, 'I have taught Islam and other world religions as well as participated in interfaith encounters. But I am now concerned that some of my explanations may be incorrect. I would appreciate your telling us exactly what 'jihad' means in Islam and explain its uses to us.' The atmosphere in the room tightened a bit. The reserved, grandfatherly-looking old man leaned forward in his chair. His arms flew up. He looked straight at me. His face set: 'No. No. No.' He looked to his translator for help. 'This not jihad. Not Muslim. Not Islam.' He paused. 'This ISIS -- these groups like this -- not Islam. These are evil people hiding behind Islam to do evil.' He searched our faces for signs of understanding. 'Neverrrrrr Islam,' his voice rang out.

The message is clear. The Crusaders did not carry the heart of Christianity. The Taliban does not bring glory to Islam when it murders Christians and destroys the shrines of Buddhists. The Koran does not accept the persecution of Jews who, like us, are 'the people of the Book who deserve respect.'

The silence in the Ayatollah's chambers that day was a saintly one. After all, when a man that long at the centre of a faith speaks out, the timbre of truth rings through the world. From where I stand, that's the kind of holiness that invites us across the drawbridge of differences carrying the best of the faith that is in us. Then we can all stop worrying about the other side being unfaithful.

Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister OSB, a writer and prophet, lives in the US. This article is from NCR, 25 August 2015.

From the Archives

Catholic Worker
36 East 1st Street,
New York, NY 10003

30 January 1977

Dear Fr (Noel) Consedine,

It was thrilling to get a letter from the Antarctic – a terrifying waste land to me. I am always in awe of what man can do, what he can endure. Have you read Solzhenitsyn? As I write this I think of him and what he has endured and what faith he has displayed. Soviet scientists are saying that just the fact of ‘creation’ brought them to God. Here in NY City, blazing heat. In fact, all the east coast.

August 5th

I find this letter in my folder but not your letter which I started to answer. So do forgive the delay and pray for me who has been recovering from a heart attack and resting up as I have been ordered. Do send me a picture postal now and again – I get much joy in them.

Hoping this reaches you, sincerely in Christ,

Dorothy Day

PS Did you ever read Shackleton’s account of his trip to a whaling station, stranded on the opposite side of a mountain, which he and his companions surmounted, all the time feeling the presence of a Third Person with them?

Letters

Viet Nam
24 September 2015

Hi Jim,

Great to hear from you when I was back in Wellington recently. I have only been back in Viet Nam for three weeks, yet I have already managed to employ another teacher and take on 5 more children! Fortunately, these children come from families who are better off financially than our other children, so they will pay a slightly higher school fee. These fees will cover the cost of the new teacher’s salary so there won’t be too much of an additional cost to me.

Even having taken on these six new children, we still have ten children on the waiting list and this week I have turned away 3 children. One Grandmother was begging me to take her grandson..... it’s heartbreaking having to say no. But I remember what my very wise son Pat said to me when I left for Viet Nam the first time - ‘Mum, just remember you can’t help everyone’. So many times over the last 8 years I have had to remind myself of that. Whenever the days begin to hang heavy and I am

Obituary

John Duggan DC (1933-2015)

One of the Christchurch CW’s strong supporters over many years, John Duggan, finally succumbed to cancer on 20 September, aged 82. John was widely known as a Doctor of Chiropractic medicine, and practised for over 50 years in Christchurch. He also ran a free twice-weekly clinic at Cardijn House CW for several years. At times, it was so busy there he had an assistant help out.



John’s inquisitive nature held an inexhaustible passion to know more. He was never quite satisfied with what he had and sought new insights where he thought they might be found. This was not restricted to his own field of expertise. For example, in May, when he was already very sick, he, with wife Carol, participated in a seminar on the links between Jung and the mystic Meister Eckhart. It reflected the goodness of the man and the continuing desire he had to know more and live life better.

John’s faith, while grounded in a Protestant upbringing, was of the ‘free spirited’ type, as one of his sons said at his funeral. More latterly it was rooted in a Cosmic Being whose heart was love and justice. That is a label that could be laid at John’s door as well, as many who paid tribute remarked.

We acknowledge John’s special work for the Catholic Worker and his great work around the city. We offer condolences to his family. May he rest in peace.

struggling, I remind myself to look at the difference we are making in the lives of the children that we can help. I really do have a blessed life being able to do this.

I have about 10 people now who are doing this and it has certainly helped me. These days, with the donations, I now only have to pay for about 80% of the schools costs. Such a huge help for me but not just financially. Just knowing that there are others out there willing to share this experience with me is so spiritually rewarding.

I do enjoy reading your poems and the one about Aylan. Yes, the Mediterranean certainly has become a cemetery for refugees. I wonder where it will all end and will it end in my lifetime?

Choicest blessings,

Maire McCann

Maire McCann is a nurse from Paraparaumu who has founded a charity called Paddy’s Jewels (named after her father). For the past 8 years she has worked mainly with desperately needy deaf children in Vietnam who receive no help from the State. If you wish to donate to her work, her Kiwibank a/c is 38-9000-0154836 06.

Auckland
October 2015

Kia ora Jim,

Thank you for your article *Spinning the War* in the Pentecost issue. I too continue to feel uncomfortable at the way we have increased the hype around Anzac Day commemorations. It has, and continues to be, a process of socialising the young to accept the importance and inevitability of war.

I feel sad on Anzac Day to see the faces of an increasing number of young New Zealanders looking misty eyed at dawn ceremonies and having that feeling linked to the heroism of their forebears. I had an uncle die in Greece during the Second World War. No glory, the only son in a family of four daughters. Never met him. Tragic.

Best wishes,

Tony Spelman

Kanisstraat 5 / 1811 GJ
Alkmaar
The Netherland
6 August 2015

Hi Jim,

Greetings from Holland. You may know that, besides being the 70th anniversary of the destruction of Nagasaki by an atom bomb, August marks the 72nd anniversary of the martyrdom of Franz Jägerstätter. Jägerstätter was an Austrian Catholic farmer who, for his refusal to collaborate with the Nazi regime, was beheaded in Berlin on the 9th of August 1943. Jägerstätter saw with amazing clarity what was going on around him. Aware of the demonic character of Nazism, he spoke out clearly and without fear to both neighbours and strangers about the hell Hitler's movement was rushing into. He has come to be widely recognized as a patron saint of conscientious objectors.

A few years ago he was beatified by German-born Pope Benedict in the cathedral in Vienna. Yet during Jägerstätter's lifetime no member of the Austrian or German hierarchy declared that it was a sin to join the Nazi Party or to fight and kill in Hitler's armies. The bishops closed their eyes and their mouths — just as the vast majority of Church leaders in the US did during the greater part of the Vietnam and Iraq wars. Lest we forget.

Jim Forest

<http://jimandnancyforest.com/2008/09/jagerstatter/>

Paraparaumu 5032

Dear Friends,

Thank you for copies of *The Common Good*. They are being read by Quakers in our meeting.

Your friend,

Barbara Mountier

Bishop's Office,
Palmerston North.

28 August 2015

Dear Jim and all,

Greetings. Please find enclosed a small donation for the work.

Salud,

+ Owen Dolan
Coadjutor Bishop Emeritus

West Melton

21 July 2015

Dear CW Trust members,

I would like you to know how much I appreciate the standard, style and information contained in *The Common Good*. I wish you a wonderful and fulfilling future.

Blessings,

Denis F. Power

P O Box 29
Whakatane 3158

Hi Jim,

Occasionally we touch sides in your contributions in *The Common Good*. I fully agree with your views about the TPPA. We live in an increasingly insane and evil world where America can 'mint' trillions of dollars without any repercussions, but Europeans refuse to do the same for Greece!

Best wishes and keep promoting sanity,

Francis de Groot.

Reviews

Kathleen Gallagher - *Earthquakes and Butterflies*, Wickcandle, 33 Crichton Terrace, Christchurch 8022, Ph 03 332 9192 224 pp, \$30 (plus \$3 p/p) www.wickcandle.co.nz

Reviewer : Joy Ryan-Bloore

Once again, Kathleen Gallagher has given us a precious gift - a book which puts all of us in touch with the deeper realities in life. A book which assists us not only to reflect on the painful journey which began in our city five years ago, but to enter more deeply into the eternal mystery of suffering and death which is part of our human existence. A mystery which is also at the heart of our evolving universe.

For what has happened to all of us over these last five long years since the deadly earthquakes is connected to a much greater Mystery. Somehow we all know that something very big is happening in our world, and the human tide of refugees currently sweeping through Europe is tragic proof of that.

Kathleen's prophetic book invites us into this Mystery. Many books will record the external details and experiences flowing out of the destruction and rebuild of our city; very few will provide food which will help us focus on the deeper meaning of what has happened and its significance in the Cosmos as a whole. For those who have the eyes to see and hearts big enough to be broken, Kathleen has sown the seeds for a deeper transformation. So this book is a deep meditation, which is aided by the wonderful photos of her husband, Mike Coughlan. The book has the power to take us into the deepest mystery in our lives - the mystery of suffering and death and the unfathomable connection between good and evil.

Without books like this, humanity inevitably suffers from the kind of moral and spiritual sickness so prevalent at the present time. The necessary food of the Spirit - that which would heal and restore our humanity - is missing.

In an age of corporate rationalism, resulting in gross neglect of people's basic needs, Kathleen's book is a bright light in an otherwise sterile environment. It calls us once more to focus on the basic truths of our human existence and the healing power of community. Truths which are at the heart of Christianity and embodied so



richly in the symbols and rituals of the *tangata whenua* of this land.

For this reason, we have much to thank Kathleen Gallagher for in writing this beautifully produced and easily readable book. We give thanks for *Earthquakes and Butterflies*.

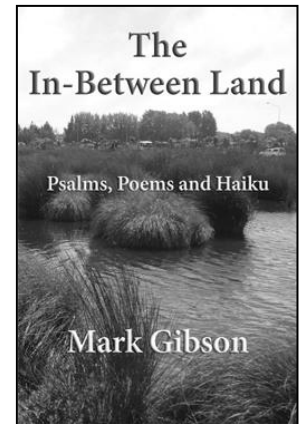
The In-Between - Land, Psalms, Poems and Haiku, Mark Gibson, 2015, Phillip Garside Publishing, Wellington. 136 pages. Available from P.O.Box 18-786, Christchurch. Price: \$25. Reviewer: Jim Consedine

Mark Gibson is a Methodist minister, a 6th generation Cantabrian, attached to the New Brighton Union parish in East Christchurch. He has been their minister right through the earthquakes and has been very involved in community re-building since. East Christchurch is the most damaged suburban part of Christchurch. Mark also leads the River of Life project and co-leads the Avon Otakaro Network, both based in the east.

These groups with others are struggling to maintain public access and ownership of red-zoned areas between the city and the sea. They are struggling to make the Government and the local authorities hear what ordinary people from the grassroots say regarding their future. This struggle is reflected in much of the poetry.

In this, his first book of palms, poems and haiku (small 3-line poetic observations), he shares with insight observations into the ordinary everyday things of life. One can feel the ground shaking as he describes huddling under the kitchen table, or being caught in his church, or being on the beach as the quakes rumbled. One can see the sunsets, hear the birds and wonder at the beauty of these parts. One can feel the creative Spirit of God echoing through the lines of this deeply spiritual man.

The In-Between Land is insightful, and often deeply moving. It carries the reflections of a man with a heart for justice and the soul of a real poet. Let's hope we have more from Mark's pen in the future.



CW website

Leading articles from the first 19 years of
The Common Good
Alternative funerals
Restorative justice
Other theological issues
www.catholicworker.org.nz

Funeral Choice

www.funeralchoice.co.nz

A Catholic Worker project
Cheaper alternatives to consumer
funerals

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The Common Good

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



In the Eucharist, fullness (of life) is already achieved. It is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to Christ present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed, the Eucharist itself is an act of cosmic love: ‘Yes cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world.’ (JPII) The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation.

— Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* #236