

The Common Good

Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor

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USURY - alive and well in Aotearoa

Jim Consedine

The visit was a routine one as I popped by Joanne's place late in May. She met me in tears. She was financially broke and, put under pressure by a friend, had gone to a money lending agency and borrowed \$600. It was to buy firewood and other winter essentials. The tears came from her struggle to keep up the repayments. They were simply beyond her.

I looked at the paperwork she had – all of it perfectly legal and above the financial board. Overnight, the \$600 had become \$763, consisting of additional payments of \$145 'establishment fee' and \$18 'annual programme fee', arguably two acts of theft. She was required to repay 16 weekly payments of \$61.42 out of her single woman's income benefit of \$190, a grand total of \$979.64. In just three months, the original loan had grown an extra \$379.64 in addition to the principle of \$600. No wonder she was in tears.

This is usury and it is alive and well in New Zealand. It signals how much we are a part of a global financial system built on greed and exploitation and based on usurious lending practices. Predatory lenders and truck-shops are everywhere, prowling poorer suburbs. At street level, they are geared mainly to the financially desperate and most vulnerable. It is not uncommon for 800% interest per annum to be charged. Just how massive loan costs can be can be shown by the example of someone buying an iPhone 8 from a truck-shop for 156 payments of \$25.64, adding up to \$4000 repayment, when the phone cost only \$1249. (*The Press*, 28 June 2018)

The History of Usury

Originally, usury meant interest of any kind on a loan. For 19 centuries, the Catholic Church taught



Meg Crocker-Birmingham

that lending at interest was sinful. Then the teaching changed. For political and commercial reasons prevailing at the time, the 1917 Code of Canon Law redefined usury as 'taking only excessive interest on loans'. It left undefined the meaning of 'excessive'. The Church today still condemns usury, meaning extortionate charges. (C2354 of the *Code of Canon Law*, 1983).

Usury these days is more commonly defined as, 'the practice of making unethical and immoral monetary loans that unfairly enrich the lender.' That is the oft ignored working principle which has led to the financial chaos and indebtedness which prevails in so many countries and situations.

Usury creates and maintains poverty and inequality and sits at the heart of the militarized, industrialised system of corporate capitalism we see daily crushing the poor and gobbling up resources that in God's justice belong to them. It is a principle cause behind one billion children being in poverty through malnutrition. It oils the arms race and the numerous wars. Its greed is most obvious in things like huge CEO salaries, executive bonus incentives, and the off-shore tax havens that blight our world. It also is responsible for the creation of 'stocks and credits' like sub-prime mortgages, credit default swaps, even a 'shadow' banking system. These processes steal billions of dollars from people like Joanne who don't get to share in the common-wealth created. They are all based on the paper pushing principle of making money out of money. They constitute grand larceny and theft from the poor. They are evil.

Pope Francis has been outspoken in his condemnation of corporate capitalism and the usurious practices of the free market. *'We have created new idols. 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.

Recently he told the Italian Anti-Usury Foundation, 'Usury humiliates and kills. It is a serious sin: it kills life, tramples on the dignity of people, is a vehicle for corruption and hampers the common good. It also weakens the social and economic foundations of a country. In fact, with so many poor people, many indebted families, so many victims of serious crimes and so many corrupt people, no country can plan a serious economic recovery or even feel safe.'

Usury and the Catholic Worker

The Catholic Worker has long advocated the position of the early Church in relation to usury even before the development of modern-day free-market economics. Interpreting what is a fair rate of interest is very subjective, which is why we have stood out against 'reform of usury' principles. We define usury as 'the charging of interest above administrative

costs' (*CW Aims and Means*, May 2018). The CW appeals to the teachings of the ancient Prophets of Israel, Jesus and the early Mothers and Fathers of the Church and attempts to apply their teachings to modern circumstances.

Obviously, such literalism is not something that we apply to all ancient religious and biblical teachings. Many, like those on war, slavery, cultural norms and relationship customs, have evolved and over time been superseded by deeper moral insights and better practices. But with regards to the taking of interest on loans, can we honestly say the world is a better place for the usurious monetary system that has developed in recent centuries? The reason they are still so potent is that they seek to protect the wellbeing of everyone, not just a powerful elite.

The CW believes that holding to the ideals of these ancient religious teachings remains 'the gold standard' marker in a financial world adrift in a sea of moral chaos where dog-eats-dog is accepted practice. Is this the sort of social reality we really want to accept as unchangeable? The colossal inequality and poverty spawned by unfettered free market capitalism and usurious practices answer a resounding 'NO' to that proposition.

What the CW stands for is a recognition of the root causes of such inequality. It challenges society to refocus on basic justice principles about money which protect the common good. Over eight decades, in practising 'voluntary poverty' ourselves, we have joined others in promoting a myriad of urban co-operative ventures, credit unions, farming co-operatives and micro-credit organisations as alternative ways forward. We have also tried to maintain a moral conscience for how things could be if we remained true to our biblical roots, Church social justice traditions, and worked for the common good of all.

New Zealand review

The NZ Government is about to review the *Credit, Contracts and Consumer Finance Act* with a view to reining in loan sharks and putting some stronger boundaries around loans and consumer protection. This is an Act that can't be tinkered with but needs a radical overhaul based on principles of social justice, the common good and real-life borrowers' needs. At a practical level in the present climate, we do support a cap on interest rates, limits on the total cost of borrowing, more transparency about the end cost of borrowing, and the abolition of extraneous fees. We also need to consider a periodic debt amnesty. These are just ways of re-righting a badly listing ship where steerage passengers keep being the first tipped into the water.

Joanne was the latest to nearly drown.

Who are we?

Members of Te Wairua Maranga Trust, which publishes this paper, have since August 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 peacemaking, 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

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Editorial 1 Challenging ‘the principalities and powers’

At the Christchurch CW, we were recently reflecting on the prophet Amos’s warning in the 8th century BC of impending disaster because *‘the powerful were trampling on the needy...by lowering the bushel, raising the shekel, swindling and tampering with the scales...and even selling the leftovers of wheat (normally reserved for the poor) for profit.’* And the promise of God that *‘a famine will come not of bread, a drought not of water, but of hearing the real Word of God.’* Amos 8:4-11

The pattern of history hasn’t changed since those times. What an apt description, almost a template, of the relationship between the modern industrialised economic world and traditional world religions which still thrive in so many places, yet *‘the people stagger from sea to sea, north to east, seeking the Word of God and failing to find it’.* Amos 8:12

They fail to find the Word because it has been largely co-opted by corporate capitalism and reactionary religion and emptied of meaning. They fail to find it because the Christian Church has consistently failed to preach this ancient message of liberation and hope and far too often confined itself to preaching personal salvation and devotional practices. Too often, Christians have extracted the sharp teeth from the Word of God and left a gummy substitute! The result is an increasing spiritual famine in the wider society that is not being satisfied.

In this edition of *The Common Good*, we have decided to try and tackle arguably the biggest evil facing the well-being of people across the planet: the skewed economic model of neo-liberal corporate capitalism to which all other major social injustice issues are tied. These issues include widespread malnutrition and hunger, abject poverty, racism, pollution, sexism, climate change, war-mongering and ecological destruction. They are referred to in the Sacred Scriptures as ‘the Principalities and Powers.’ They hold sway and have a power of malignancy and evil behind them.

It’s a big task to attempt! Most of us feel powerless in the face of the massive inequality spawned by neo-liberal capitalism. We only have to remember how many thought a major battle had been won last year when the US pulled out of the TPP talks, only to find that they were all back on again and it was signed and sealed within months. Such is the power of this multi-headed financial hyena!

Catholic Worker economics

Where does one start to tackle this system of grand larceny? The Catholic Worker has an 85-year history of viewing the economy through the lens of the Hebrew Scriptures, the teachings of Jesus and the social teachings of the Church. We practise personalism which treats everyone as important and take a ‘small is beautiful’ approach to economics, influenced partly by the teachings of the Christian economist E.F. Schumacher in the 1970s. We take seriously, for example, how ‘the world debt crisis leads poor countries into greater deprivation and a dependency from which there is no foreseeable escape.’ (*CW Aims and Means*, May 2018.)

We practice voluntary (evangelical) poverty and non-violence personally and collectively. We recognise our neighbour in whatever country and from whatever nationality, race, religion and culture as our sister or brother in Christ. This can lead to many conflicts with authorities. At any given time around the world there are between 10 and 50 Catholic Workers before courts for non-violent peace actions and refusal to harm their neighbour through violence of one form or another, be it economic, war-mongering, ecological or poverty induced. We oppose the arms race, practice pacifism, and try and to practice hospitality, sharing what we have with those who have little or nothing. It becomes a way of life, personally challenging yet enriching in ways beyond telling.

The teachings of Jesus are not soothing words for a service club. His message is sharp and incisive, one of identity with and liberation of the poor.

Naïve and foolish?

Many think we are naïve and foolish. Yet one has to ask who is the more foolish (and indeed wicked) – those who add to the world’s woes and benefit from an economic system that deprives its wealth from the sweat and labour of billions of people enslaved in work unbecoming human dignity? Those who allow the machinations of the wealthy to profit through corporate banking, international money laundering and tax avoidance? Those who promote massive deception fuelling consumer hype in order to keep the poor ever dependent?

Or alternatively, those who stand for something different which they believe to be of divine origin and promotes the common good of all? This stance requires commitment and often sacrifice but rewards us with personal freedom, self-respect, positive community relationships and a great connection to our planet and our needy neighbours

Pope Francis is with us in this quest and has spoken on this issue hundreds of times. As recently as February 2018 he said,

‘Together, let us make an appeal for a new economic humanism, which puts an end to ‘the economy of exclusion and inequality’, to the economy that kills, to economic systems in which men and women are no longer people, but are reduced to the tools of a throwaway logic that generates profound imbalances.’

Most famously, he expressed the same views in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’* on ecology, economics and climate change, and in his address to a joint session of the US Congress in 2016. There he named Dorothy Day, our Catholic Worker co-founder, as one of four great aspirational US models of human leadership to stand alongside President Abraham Lincoln, monk, mystic and writer Thomas Merton and inter-racial prophet of nonviolence Martin Luther King Jr.

Are we foolish and naïve? Maybe. But as Jesus said, *‘by their fruits you shall know them.’*

—Jim Consedine

Editorial 2 An Unequivocal Call to Justice

The Gospels are clear that the divine image and dignity is inherent in every being. We have the freedom and honour of choosing to grow (or not) in our unique likeness of this image. Jesus is one clear example of this path, a visible incarnation of the union between human and divine, matter and spirit. He models inclusive, nondual, compassionate thinking and being.

Why then does Jesus tell stories that show harsh judgment, casting the rejected into 'outer darkness' and 'eternal punishment' (see Matthew 25:46)? This seems to undo all the mercy and forgiveness Jesus demonstrates in the rest of his life and teaching. Let me explain how I see it.

Clear-headed dualistic thinking must precede any further movement into non-dual responses, especially about issues that people want to avoid. We cannot make a nonstop flight to non-dual thinking or we just get fuzzy thinking. First use your well-trained and good mind, and then find your response in a holistic (body, mind, soul, and heart) response. This is the heart of spirituality.

Note that Jesus reserves his most damning and dualistic statements for matters of social justice where power is most resistant: 'You cannot serve both God and mammon' (Matthew 6:24); 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich person to enter

the kingdom of God' (Matthew 19:24); or the clear dichotomy in Matthew 25 between sheep (who feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the imprisoned) and goats (who don't).

The context is important. Jesus' foundational and even dualistic bias is against false power and in favour of the powerless. If you do not make such points absolutely clear (and even if you do, as Jesus did), history shows that humans will almost always compromise on issues of justice, power, money and inclusion.

Unfortunately, Christians have historically managed to avoid most of what Jesus taught so unequivocally: nonviolence, sharing, simplicity, loving our enemies. Thankfully many Christians are returning to Jesus' foundational messages and seeking to follow his example. They are not shying away from the embarrassments and evils of our churches, politics, and economy and the ways we each contribute to and are complicit in them.

We are all challenged to respond to Jesus and the prophets' calls to, '*do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly with God*' in this world (Micah 6:8).

—Richard Rohr, OFM

They shall inherit the Earth

John Dear

I've spent my life chasing an idea—the idea of nonviolence. When I was young, I noticed that the greatest people in modern history—beginning with Mohandas Gandhi, Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King, Jr.—gave every moment of their lives to nonviolence. I decided that if that's what our greatest people did with their lives, that's what I should do to.

For nearly four decades now, I've pursued the ideal of nonviolence around the nation and the world. I've walked through the war zones of Israel, Palestine, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Colombia, Haiti, Iraq, Egypt, the Philippines, South Africa and Afghanistan; been arrested some eighty times in nonviolent civil disobedience against war and injustice; spent time in soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and jails across the US; and stood before a million people in crowded churches around the nation and the world struggling to articulate and lift up the vision of creative nonviolence.

One thing I've learned is that if you are going to stand up publicly every day of your life and advocate nonviolence—someone will inevitably stand up and justify violence whether through the just war theory, the latest US war, the need to have a gun or a bomb, or the broken human condition of violence. In other words, I've spent nearly every day of my life trying to talk people out of killing others, waging war, or quietly supporting the culture of violence. It's been a long difficult trip, but as my friend Daniel Berrigan once said to me, at least it hasn't

been dull.

Pilgrimage of Peace

My life is a long pilgrimage of peace, a pilgrimage of nonviolence. After every trip, every arrest, every talk, I've returned home over the last fifteen years to my mountaintop hermitage on a remote mesa in New Mexico, where I look out at sixty miles of my own Southwest paradise. I take in the beauty of the surrounding landscape, breathe in the peace of creation, open the Gospel, sit in the presence of the Creator and listen again to the words of peace.

Over the decades, I have witnessed the destruction we humans have done to Mother Earth and her creatures. I've read about catastrophic climate change, and experienced the changes—the droughts, the strange weather, the extreme fires and tornadoes and rainfall—in the Southwest and elsewhere. I grieve for Mother Earth and the creatures who die because of our systemic greed, violence and destructive habits. But I never made or felt the connection between my vision of nonviolence and the ongoing destruction of Mother Earth. Until now.

One day, while sitting in my house studying the Sermon on the Mount, I saw it right there in front of me. 'Blessed are the meek,' Jesus says in the Beatitudes. Thomas Merton wrote that 'meekness' is the biblical word for nonviolence. 'Blessed are the nonviolent,' Jesus is saying, as if he were an ancient Gandhi, an ancient

Dorothy Day, an ancient Martin Luther King, Jr. ‘They will inherit the earth.’

There it is. Blessed are the meek, the gentle, the nonviolent—they will inherit the earth. A life of nonviolence leads to oneness with creation and her creatures.

A life of violence, of course, leads to an abrupt discord with creation. In a time of permanent warfare, nuclear weapons, and catastrophic climate change, the message couldn’t be clearer. The God of peace, the nonviolent Jesus, and his Holy Spirit call us to practice nonviolence. In that way, we’ll renounce and stop our environmental destruction, tend our Garden of Eden together, and restore Creation to its rightful peace. In the process, we will discover peace with one another and all the creatures.

One with Creation

Here on my mesa mountaintop, surrounded by coyotes, jackrabbits and juniper, it all came home. I was inheriting the earth. I was one with creation. I had entered the Promised Land. A life of nonviolence had led me to this geography of peace.

More, this is the journey we are all called to live, to make the connection between active nonviolence and oneness with creation, so that we all might dwell peacefully in this paradise. In that moment, I saw not just the vision of peace and nonviolence, but the vision of a new creation, where we all live as one in peace with one another, Mother Earth and her glorious creatures. It’s that

vision of peace, nonviolence and the New Creation, the vision of the Promised Land before us, the practice of proactive nonviolence, that offers a way out of environmental destruction, as well as permanent war, corporate greed, systemic racism, and extreme poverty.

All we have to do is open our eyes to the reality of creation before us, to be present to it, to take it in and honour it and welcome its gift of peace—and do so within the boundaries of nonviolence. In that present moment of peace, a new creation is offered to us once again.

Just as the vision of peace guided me to speak out over the years, especially after September 11th and the start of the US wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, so too a vision of creation inspires me to speak out against our destructive environmental policies, systems and habits so that Mother Earth and her creatures might survive, so that future generations might have a chance.

We need not be blind any longer. We can reclaim this vision of peace for ourselves, Mother Earth and her creatures. We can go forward in peace to make peace with creation and welcome a new future of peace at one with all creation. The choice is ours. All we have to do is take the next step on the path of peace.

Rev John Dear is a US priest who has devoted his life to peace-making. He has been arrested over 80 times and served prison time for his peace-making efforts. He visited the Catholic Worker in NZ in 2014.

Peter Maurin - Co-founder of the Catholic Worker

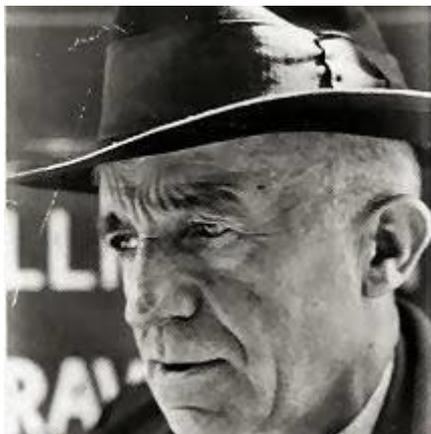
Tommy Tighe

Peter Maurin helped found the Catholic Worker movement, but he has never caught on in the public consciousness in the same way fellow co-founder Dorothy Day has.

Born in 1877 in a poor farming community in France, Peter was one of twenty-four children. If that isn’t the perfect environment for developing strong ideas of solidarity and community in difficult times, I don’t know what is.

Discouraged by French politics and the relationship between religion and the political movements, Peter moved to Saskatchewan, Canada, to start a life living off the land. This proved to be difficult and not a good fit for him. This led to his arrival in New York City, the place where he experienced a religious conversion inspired by the life of St. Francis of Assisi. He began writing poetry, tutoring students in French without charge, and eventually came upon Dorothy Day.

Dorothy had been in Washington D.C. just prior to their meeting and prayed at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 8 December 1932, for inspiration



from God for her future work. When she returned home to New York from her assignment in D.C., Peter was sitting at her kitchen table. For Dorothy, Peter was the answer to her prayers, the man who would help her understand what God wanted from her in this life.

From the earliest days, Day and Maurin worked together in a way that clearly showed they were on a mission from God. They started the *Catholic Worker* newspaper and, within a year of the first issue rolling off the printer, they became known for their establishment of the Houses of Hospitality we see helping those in need around the world today.

Maurin was a man of big ideas, wanting to transform the social order through these Houses for Hospitality, the establishment of rural farming communities (he was known for his slogan ‘There is no unemployment on the land’), and the creation of roundtable discussions in community centres to engage others in thinking and acting.

At the same time, he was practical. He didn’t want to sit around and waste time allowing the perfect to

become the enemy of the good in his effort to create a revolution of the heart. Instead he would often quip, 'The thing to do is to start.' His quick wit, easy essays, and short slogans would be the stuff of legend in today's world of tweets and texts.

Maurin's quotes show that his ideas consisted of heroic virtues that, to this day, have the power to change our lives and the life of our entire society.

'The world would be better off if people tried to become better, and people would become better if they stopped trying to be better off.'

'I want a change, and a radical change. I want a change from an acquisitive society to a functional society, from a society of go-getters to a society of go-givers.'

'What we give to the poor for Christ's sake, is what we carry with us when we die.'

Peter constantly urged everyone to practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, he attended daily Mass (which he referred to as 'the greatest act of love between God and his children'), and his friendship with Dorothy Day ignited one of the most important movements within the Catholic Church in recent history.

Tommy Tighe is an American commentator on Catholic issues and works in mental health in California.

CWs Wedding

Kathleen Gallagher

Tiny olive leaves wrapped in music sheet cones
Jack and the five groomsmen waiting nervously
at the altar

Fr Peter Healey, and the cellist playing softly
holding the peace

Hanneke and her three bridesmaids arriving
Jack kissing her and a great smile spreading
over his face - and never leaving

the wonderful reading of Jesus turning water
into wine by Hanneke's Uncle Ray, aged 92, with
hands and heart

homily by Fr Jim Consedine of the Catholic
Worker encompassing the planting of garlic in mid-
winter, love, endurance, fire in the belly,

the passion of Pentecost and the young people
of Berrigan House and their precious mahi

Fr Peter and the Lewthwaite whanau choir
gently manoeuvring the entire ceremony into a prayer
and song-filled joyful wedding celebration

the children scattering olive leaves everywhere
as the wedding party dances, all of them, out of the
church

Later we gather for kai, korero and dancing at
the wharenuī that only 2 months earlier had been
filled knee deep with pigeon shit

(Jack apologised to the pigeons in his speech)
and had been cleaned up and painted in series of epic
working bees, in a way the beginning of the wedding
celebrations

The mothers Christine and Shelley and fathers
Frank and Adi recalled the bombshells and the
bouquets

groomsman Kirke dropped some pearls of wily
wisdom,



Hanneke Lewthwaite and Jack Leason

Hanneke's sisters Jeannie and Sonya drop dead
eloquent, wittily detailing the 10 stages of Hanneke's
life - how they once again had to pick up the pieces
for their spoiled little sister,

as they did after her escaping from Oamaru to
live in Oman on the beach...

had the entire 400 or so of us in fits of laughter
Hanneke assured us that only some of their
speech had any basis in truth...

Wonderfully, the local school kapahaka group -
children and parents - sang throughout the serving
and eating of kai

Then to top it off, a wonderful spinning barn
dance

winding together the two families, and all the
whanau and friends from all around about

Around the traps

We have been privileged to have had our old friend **Bishop John Osmer** visiting regularly on a Wednesday night during the winter months. John is always a welcome visitor and shares his insights on developments in Southern Africa with us. This included the wonderful recent decision by the Zambian Government to grant 6000 residency permits to persecuted people from neighbouring Rwanda. John had lobbied hard for this for some years. We also welcomed **Dr Kaaren Mathias** to our Wednesday gathering. Kaaren is a Christchurch-born doctor who, for some years, with her husband Jeb and family, has practiced medicine in Northern India among the poorest, focusing on their mental health needs. It was great to hear her share something of her work.

Steve Mulqueen RIP - We note with sadness the recent sudden passing of Steve Mulqueen. Steve was a lifelong friend of many CWs initially through his membership in the Young Christian Workers' movement (YCW) in the 1970s. A jeweller by trade, he made many creative pieces though a lifetime devoted to his artwork. He was remembered with affection at a Wednesday night CW Mass, and Francis, Mike and Tony drove south from Christchurch to Dunedin for his funeral. May he rest in peace.

Corporate banks sit at the heart of our usurious economic system and benefit most from it. For example, the interim report of the 2018 Australian Royal Commission into Banking, 'has found appalling behaviour by Australia's major banks and financial planners from the past decade, including alleged bribery, forged documents, repeated failure to verify customers' living expenses before lending them money, and mis-selling insurance to people who can't afford it. Australia's leading wealth investment firm, AMP, admitted to lying to regulators, and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia was fined \$700 million after 53 000 customers were defrauded. It also admitted some of its financial planners have been charging fees to clients who have died.' *The Guardian, Australia*, 11 June 2018.

The NZ Government is to pay more than \$2.3 billion to purchase four new military aircraft, P-8A Poseidons, known as submarine killers, to replace our aging P-3K Orions. While the Orions are best known for their monitoring capacity and rescue work, the P-8As will have a fighting capacity which will limit their ability to focus on fisheries monitoring and search-and-rescue operations. This purchase clearly signals that the NZ Government wants to have the option of engaging in anti-sub warfare alongside its allies, Australia, the US, and the UK, all of which have the P-8s. NZ should have taken a more non-aligned stance, similar to what it had in the 1980s. This is a generational opportunity lost to take a principled moral stand for peaceful operations and the protection of our fragile planet.

plover patience

in this shingle allotment
on the old church site
fancifully imagined
to be a dried-up river bed
she sits stoically, bristling
astride a pile of twigs
she calls home
weeks leading to months
hardly moving
except to forage occasionally

on bitter July nights
frosts minus four
he guards from a distance
awaiting the lay
the promise of life
a crack of shells
six weeks hence
their new family

spur-winged plovers
living the perennial cycle

—Jim Consedine

for Steve Mulqueen

tall man with soft red hair
and deft fingers
in your long high light filled
brick-wall glass ceiled workshop
shaping metal ammunition cases
into lustrous poppies
calling for peace
drawing, sculpting on hillsides,
making jewels and rings and things
a rascally grin
a quirky eloquent take on life
in the old YCW tradition
you peace loving radical
you taking flight
on a winter's night
shining the unruly stars

—Kathleen Gallagher

Letter from America to Pope Francis

Camden County Jail
Georgia, USA

7 April 2018

Your Holiness,

Warm regards in the blessed hope of Easter. We are a community of seven North American Roman Catholics, long-haul friends, and fellow labourers, each of whom have dedicated our lives to the practice of the works of mercy, Gospel nonviolence, and holy struggle with God's poor in places throughout the United States and across the world.

For decades we have gathered to collectively ask the question that each of us continually struggles with individually in our home communities: What is God asking of us now, at this moment in history, in light of what we have seen and heard and witnessed in the attempt to love as Jesus loved? The fruit of this discernment has illuminated many paths for us toward a deeper solidarity with those who suffer directly from the myriad forms of state-sponsored violence and social sins of racism, militarism, and economic injustice.

We reach out to you today, from the Camden County, Georgia jail, in a spirit of humility and love. Our request is simple: We ask only that you hear, bring to prayer, and share with your brother Bishops a lament that we hear rising more profoundly and urgently each day, not only from the hearts and neighbourhoods of those to whom Jesus sends us, but from the very Earth itself. Our nation, its land and its people are rapidly reaching a breaking point.

Mother Earth bleeds from the unabated assault of extractive industries that pollute and desecrate her beyond repair, while the exponential rush toward extremes of wealth and poverty now appears to have become the guiding principle of public policy in the United States. White supremacy continues to fracture our nation. Overarching all of this is the ever-present spectre of nuclear annihilation, which stands closer to becoming reality than at any time since the mid-1950s.

Direct Action

On 4 April 2018, the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., we seven entered the Kings Bay Trident Naval Submarine Base in St. Mary's, Georgia, in an attempt to non-violently en flesh the prophesy of Isaiah:

'They shall hammer their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. One nation shall not lift the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.' (Is. 2:4)

Kings Bay is home to six of our nation's fleet of fourteen Trident submarines, each of which carries

missiles that possess the destructive capacity to end all life on Earth. Moreover, as you and several of your predecessors have been teaching for decades, the mere building and possession of these weapons represent not only a direct and immeasurable theft from the poor; they are an idolatrous blasphemy against God and all of creation.

We went to Kings Bay with a message that we believe to be completely aligned with the message you have been tirelessly teaching and proclaiming for as long as you have been leading the Church. That message as we have articulated it is, in part, as follows: The existence of nuclear weapons is an ongoing, relentless assault on the human community and the planet itself. They are built in outright violation of both U.S. Constitutional and international law, and the standing threat to use them gives authorization to every other form of violence, eviscerates the rule of law, entrenches white supremacy, perpetuates endless war and environmental destruction and ensures impunity for all manner of crimes against humanity.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s public life was centred on exposing what he called the 'triplets of evil' in our society: racism, militarism and extreme materialism. Near the end of his life, he said, 'The ultimate logic of racism is genocide.' Nuclear weapons are not only a mortal threat to our future. They are used every day. They kill, every day. They are the ultimate logic of the delusions to which we as a nation are addicted.

In the faith that we share as sisters and brothers, we sincerely ask you to redouble your efforts to see that this message reaches the faithful of our beautiful continent. Please exhort our Bishops and priests to courageously proclaim it in our churches, and to insist that it finds ample voice in the formation of public policy.

Recent initiatives by American lawmakers are calling for the expenditure of an additional \$1.2 trillion to upgrade and increase the arsenal of these terrible weapons over the next thirty years.

Clearly, your message of peace, hope, and faith in the unarmed Christ has never carried more urgency for us than it does at this very moment. We would be greatly encouraged by any intervention that your heart and conscience might move you to provide.

'The only solution is love...' Dorothy Day.

Gratefully in Christ,

Carmen Trotta #015636
Clare Grady #015632
Patrick O'Neill #015637
Elizabeth McAlister #015633
Stephen Kelly #015634
Martha Hennessy #015631
Mark Colville #015635

Deport sex tourists, not missionaries

Shay Cullen SSC

There are as many as 16,000 Filipinos or more living and working and earning just and good wages in Ireland. There are 4,265 that are nurses and thousands more are caregivers and other professions. They are welcomed, trusted and highly respected here and they send their hard-earned money back to the Philippines to support their families. They are caring, trustworthy and dedicated to their profession and loved by the people of Ireland. They are key employees in the Irish health system. Many church communities are inspired by the Filipino choirs as most are faithful to their Christian faith and attend church. The Filipino Muslims abroad are faithfully going to the mosque.

Overseas workers endure the loss of being with their families in the Philippines, but they sacrifice themselves to earn a living and support their children and parents. The Philippine economy is said to be growing at an estimated 6.4 percent although the accuracy of the figure is hard to confirm. Yet the unemployment situation is dire, and millions of Filipinos have had to leave home to find a decent-paying job

Deplorably in the Middle East, some of them suffer abuse and exploitation by unscrupulous employers where they are victims of human trafficking, sexual abuse and even murdered. There are 600 Filipinos in shelters at the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait where they reside having been rescued from their places of employment by Embassy staff in a controversial move that angered the Kuwaiti authorities.

There will be an agreement signed soon between Kuwait and the Philippines whereby the rights and dignity of the 170,000 Filipinos working there will be protected and respected, we hope. How important it is for the government to protect the rights of the OFW. In every country in the world, working Filipinos are found and they are well accepted and respected in most. Filipinos working abroad send back as much as an estimated 14 billion US dollars to the Philippines every year. It is the mainstay of the Philippine government and economy.

Most of the foreigners in the Philippines are employees of multinationals or local business corporations or investors in sex bars and clubs that exploit Filipinos shamelessly. They seem to enjoy impunity from drug raids or rescue missions by government authorities. The women in Kuwait were rescued under the noses of the Kuwaiti authorities. Here in the Philippines, the abuse and exploitation of young Filipino women and children and drug use is generally tolerated. It is mostly non-government agencies that rescue and save some of the victims.

The other foreigners are those missionaries who have come to serve the Filipinos. They are unpaid volunteers and they too have sacrificed their normal lives of having a family and children and the simple comfort of their home country and relatives. They sacrifice their lives

to work among the poor and the oppressed without pay and do so out of love and solidarity with the oppressed, abused, deprived Filipinos in areas of hardship. They risk their well-being, and several have been killed and kidnapped over the years. They deserve recognition for doing the work of defending the exploited, abused and victims of human rights violations. This is the work of government social services, which is lacking, and this is where the charitable volunteers step-in by showing compassion, concern and bringing relief and help. They are branded as being engaged in 'political activism.'

Sister Patricia Fox, 71, an Australian, 27 years serving the poor is superior of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Sion in the Philippines. She was arrested by immigration officials a few weeks ago and brought to the Bureau of Immigration for investigation and questioning. Her missionary visa has been revoked and she will be deported in September. She is accused of engaging in 'political activities' for being an advocate for human rights and the rights of oppressed farmers and indigenous people in Mindanao.

She was threatened with deportation when she was accused of 'political activities' for being an advocate for human rights and the rights of oppressed farmers and indigenous people in Mindanao.

Opposition lawmakers made a statement that said, 'Helping the poor is not a crime and joining peaceful activities to advocate peasant welfare and human rights is not against the law.' They called on the government to release her immediately. After some time, she was released and was not deported.

When serving the poor and protesting human rights violations becomes a crime and branded wrongly as political activity, then that is a black day for Philippine democracy and is a slide towards tyranny and greater oppression.

All who believe in mercy, compassion and justice are called by their faith and their commitment to the values of Jesus of Nazareth to imitate him and take a stand against oppression and violations and speak out about the right and wrong of it. It is a matter of witnessing to our faith, by being prophetic and doing what our faith calls us to do. Faith without action is dead. Taking a stand for life is being alive and human. We must not be afraid to challenge wrongdoing or be intimidated by the wrong-doers.

The people that need to be investigated by the Bureau of Immigration are those foreigners who are overstaying, bribing officials and allowed to run sex bars and exploit young women and minors with impunity, not those missionaries who are serving the poor.

Irish Columban priest, Shay Cullen SSC, has worked among the poorest in the Philippines for 40 years.

Obituary Teresa Mary Dickson 1928-2018

Teresa was born in Westport, a beautiful, isolated town on the West Coast of New Zealand, where family and community were central to her life. Later, belonging to a huge seamless network of people, she was hospitality personified and had a heart for all, especially those who lived on margins or edges of society.

I met Teresa in the late 1980s when she was cooking several evenings a week for a number of homeless youth who were generally referred to as Street Kids. Many found their way to St John of God Waipuna Refuge where the highlight was the evening meal cooked by Teresa. She also gave them her presence, her smile (those blue eyes, windows to her beautiful soul and warm, compassionate heart), and her love – allowing these young people to reclaim their sense of self-worth in her company – an antidote to coldness elsewhere.

Teresa also worked voluntarily with the Hebron Young Parents Group. Vicki Burns, the Coordinator recalled how ‘she provided a listening ear to mothers’. While they took courses, Teresa’s patience and loving ways soothed and settled the children, many of whom had not experienced routine. The staff often met at her home – encountering first her rambling garden, birdsong and bubbling stream, and then her open arms at her door as you inhaled the delicious aroma of her home-made bread and

soups, scones and chocolate cake – all lovingly made on her wood-fired stove.

Teresa was a woman with profound faith and a heart for justice. She aligned herself with several community groups which advocate non-violence and supported human rights. For many years she was a member of the Catholic Worker in Christchurch. At Cardin House she continued a rich tradition of hospitality and unconditional love.

Over a cup of tea (and we had many) Teresa shared the fact that she did not want a eulogy at her funeral. She said, ‘I just want people to know that I loved and was loved’. Described at the time of her death as ‘one of life’s givers’, Teresa was mother to many – our Mother Teresa.

—Cathy Harrison



Clarification of thought

Tene koe e Jim,

Sometimes writers in your commendable little publication, *The Common Good*, tend to contrast justice and charity in the process of trying to positively relate them. Your own article in the Pentecost 2018 #85 issue does the same. And so I offer you a few thoughts on the matter – for reflection.

Justice and charity are not opposites – not even as opposite sides of the same coin. What is meant by ‘charity’ in your article is merely giving to others from our leftovers, or do-gooding, or philanthropy. You are right - these are often called ‘charity’ in the sense that you contrast with justice. But they are not what charity actually means.

Similarly, what provides ‘crumbs from the table’ while justice offers ‘a place at the table’, is not charity. If it were, then the fullness of justice would render charity obsolete. But, as we know, it outlasts everything else.

The current English translation of the liturgy fares no better. One of Pope Benedict’s concerns was to restore ‘charity’ to its proper biblical meaning, which can’t be reduced to do-gooding. The trouble is that to modern ears, that is what ‘charity’ does mean, and that is why it sounds very weak in the prayers of the liturgy. Even though ‘love’ has different levels of meaning, I think it is less likely to be misunderstood than ‘charity’, which is why I sometimes re-translate it, so that the congregation doesn’t mistake it for anything less than love.

You do well to highlight the insufficiency of philanthropy. But we can’t do this at the expense of

charity. Charity is just too important to be made to look like a poor cousin.

Properly understood, charity means loving in the way that God loves us – unconditionally. This is what drives us to do the works of justice. Social justice needs charity as its strongest motivation; and charity demands justice as its proper fruit. So, far from being in inverse proportion to each other, justice and charity are in direct proportion to each other! Which is why we can’t really put them in contrast.

Somehow, we need to highlight the true meaning of charity. The scriptures know all the meanings of love, each of which has a different word in the biblical languages. But in English, the one same word ‘love’ seems to do for all of them. And if it is good enough for our English translations of the Bible to translate *caritas/agape* as love, then it is good enough for me.

Jim, this little bit of sophistication doesn’t really solve the problem you were addressing; it just says ‘let’s see if we can resolve it without giving ‘charity’ a bad name.’ And sincere congratulations to yourself for taking on the difficult subjects. May all go well for you.

Blessings

Bishop Peter Cullinane (ret).

The Catholic Worker movement has a founding principle of ‘clarification of thought.’ Although the major point of how little social justice is preached in homilies is not addressed, we welcome Bishop Peter’s response to our leading article in CG84, ‘Charity and Justice – two sides of the same coin.’

From the archives

Bailie School,
Shandan, Gansu Province,
China
16 March 1987

Dear Jim and Terry Dibble,

I am having an amazing, exciting and rewarding time at the Bailie School in Shandan. But here is news for you guys. My old teacher from Villa Maria primary, Sister Therese, would love this. We were at the site of the Buddhist temple outside Shandan. I had just been thinking that these parts had never been affected (if that is the word) by Christianity when half an hour ago at our cafeteria, some of the teachers were discussing the new pupils, and I heard the words 'Tin Jue Jiang', which I know from my Hong Kong teaching days means, 'Catholicism'. I asked, 'how do you know about this?' The answer stunned me. 'One of the new students is a Catholic. She crosses herself like this.' It was authentic all right. 'But there is no Catholic church in Shandan.' 'Yes, there is. In one small village 50 km away, everyone is Catholic.'

So, I asked what had happened there during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s-70s? 'Nothing', was the answer. Thinking of the fervour with which the Red Guards only 20 years earlier had blown up the Temple of the Great Buddha in Shanda (including the biggest Buddha in China – 1600 years old and 43 metres high) as part of the exercise of attacking all things reactionary, traditional and foreign, I could only marvel. Either God, or distance or isolation were on their side. They told me a Catholic missionary had passed through those parts 50 years ago.

I will bide my time and visit that village and do a story on it. I thought they might have been Nestorian Christians until I heard about the Catholic missionary. Boy, they weren't just rice-Christians to have stuck to the faith of their ancestors through the Cultural Revolution! Pax vobiscum,

Tom Newnham

Tom Newnham (1926-2010) of Auckland was a teacher, a social justice, peace and anti-racism campaigner for 50 years, a fluent Mandarin speaker and a long-time secretary of CARE, the Citizens Association for Racial Equality.

Letters

Worcester CW
June 2018

Dear Jim and CW,

Thank you so much for your newspaper *The Common Good*. I didn't know much about Frederick Ozanam and appreciated your article. So often we forget that our roots are often so much more faithful to the Gospel

than our current practice.

I also appreciated Pope Francis's words on usury. Unfortunately, most Catholics do not view usury as the charging of interest on a loan, but as the charging of *exorbitant* interest on a loan. They manage to argue for incredibly high rates so long as they can point to others who are charging more. Peter Maurin echoed the scriptures in opposing usury. It deepens the poverty of so many until there is no hope for them to ever escape its grasp. Mario Carrotta wrote extensively on usury. I think he even went to Rome to petition the Vatican.

Clare and I just came back from London and Germany, having attended the European CW gathering. We were very inspired by them and wish we could visit you as well. Please know you are all in our hearts. We won't forget you at the CW's 85th anniversary gathering at Rochester, NY, in July. Keep up the fine work.

Peace,

Scott Schaeffer - Duffy

Honolulu CW

Aloha, Jim!

Barbara Bennett, resident of our new CW house forwarded your good wishes. Thank you for checking in! I have forwarded your email to brother Jim Albertini on the Big Island.

Yes, we are all excited about our new venture, a dream a long-time simmering. We did try to launch a CW community some years back but were unable to keep it going. Not having a 'house' was partly to blame, tho' this was probably more of an excuse than a rationale. This time around I plan to be a lot more active and committed.

I look forward to each issue of *The Common Good* and have already donated some back issues to our new house. I see it is a good model for what we can produce as time goes on.

If you've had a chance to peruse the newsletter, you have noted that we are housed in an old rectory on the grounds of an Episcopal Church. Barbara and David are Third Order Franciscans with years of CW experience in Brazil and US.

The church property is surrounded by homeless people living in tents and makeshift shelters, which are subject to frequent 'sweeps' by the law. The church has become something of a refuge to many of these folks, providing showers, occasional meals and a place to store belongings before they are confiscated by police. It's rector, Rev. David Gierlach, is a long-time friend. He, Jim Albertini and I were arrested many years ago for hopping a fence at a nuke storage site at Pearl Harbour. He is also a lawyer and works one day a week as a family court judge.

Kay and I fondly remember our visit with you some years ago. We were so grateful for your hospitality.

Let's keep in touch,

Pace e Bene!

Wally Inglis

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The Common Good

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Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.

— International Synod of Bishops, 1971