

Neglect of Social Teachings

But why does our beloved Church continue to fly on this one wing into the social storms breaking out all around us when a healthy two wings are so desperately needed?

Perhaps the principle reason is because our second wing, the major Church Social Teachings, are neglected. They concern the love of neighbour. Many are ignored and have been placed in 'hermetically concealed containers and locked away', as Catholic Worker co-founder Dorothy Day used to say 60 years ago, quoting Peter Maurin. These teachings apply to the relationships we live in the wider world community – with the economy, poverty, refugees, the environment, inequality, workers' rights, the arms race, the imprisoned, with nature and the ecological balance, with war and peace issues, and with different cultures and ethnic groupings to mention some. The few social teachings for which the Church is well known publicly do not apply to these issues. They concern abortion, euthanasia, divorce and same-sex marriage. It is almost as if we pretend God doesn't care about these other pro-life issues.

No wonder we have an integrity problem and are losing ground so rapidly in our better educated world. We have no credible voice on these other issues because, while our social teachings are rooted in our best theology, we

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 peace-making, focus on issues of justice, support prison ministry, help create intentional communities, and try to practise voluntary poverty and personalism.

We engage in regular prayer and we also celebrate a liturgy every Wednesday at 6:00 pm at the Suzanne Aubert House, 8A Cotterill St, Addington, (off Poulson St, near Church Square), followed by a shared meal. Anyone is welcome – phone Francis, 338-7105.

We do not seek funding from traditional sources. We hope to receive enough to keep our houses of hospitality open and our various works going. Catholic Worker houses do not issue tax receipts since they are running neither a business nor a church social agency. We invite people to participate personally and unconditionally. Should you wish to make a regular contribution, you may do so through our Te Wairua Maranga Westpac Trust holding account (number 031703-0036346-02). Donations may also be made to **Te Wairua Maranga Trust, Box 33-135, Christchurch. The Common Good:** Editor: Jim Consedine - jim.conse@xtra.co.nz; Layout - Barbara Corcoran - burkespass@gmail.com

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have failed to teach them as essential components of the proclamation of Jesus, the salvation of humanity and a humble recognition of our planet's place within the wider cosmos.

We have failed to consistently preach the Christ who truly liberates and frees and calls us today to transform structures of injustice as witnesses to his teachings. In particular, we have failed to discover the Risen Christ in the poor and the marginalised and committed resources to a presence with them in their midst. The poor can teach us about the presence of God in ways we never find elsewhere. Pope Francis teaches this. Among them is the place where, through the eyes of faith, Christ is most easily accessed.

All of creation is inter-connected and unless we see the connections between the differing parts, we will keep departmentalising our faith into personal and social dimensions and not seeing them as integrated parts of the whole.

The Centrality of Women

This is where women's voices would bring a whole extra dimension of passion, insight and commitment to the table. Women are primary nurturers of children and families. They have hearts that beat with protective love for people and relationships. They care what happens. Their further advocacy at the top tables of international, national and local bodies, including the Catholic Church, would be invaluable.

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Christians are called to be people of hope, people of the resurrection, witnesses to the ongoing living presence of the Spirit of God dynamically present in our world and everyday lives. Yet structurally, the Catholic Church has, on dubious 2nd century cultural grounds, side-lined fully one half of its adult membership, confining them to ancillary roles. While fierce debate continues within Church circles about the issues of women's place, mandatory celibacy and models of governance, tragically the planet has come under threat to its continued viability and almost made these issues side-shows to the real event.

Maybe we all need to refocus, size up the situation and then act - step out in faith, be courageous and take bigger risks with the Gospel. Backed by the power of the Holy Spirit, it can only be a win-win situation.

Now not only the Church but the future of our planet, depends on it.

Jim Consedine is a founding member of the Christchurch CW and lives at the Thomas Merton CW in Burwood.

Editorial 1 Watershed Discipleship

It would be hard to overestimate the crisis facing humanity today. Runaway climate change, the looming threat of nuclear annihilation, unprecedented economic disparity, rampant social discrimination and violence, unsustainable agricultural and industrial practices resulting in water, soil and air pollution, and species extinction are a few of the biggies.

With the globalised capitalist system driving us ever closer to an economic and environmental apocalypse, potentially the destruction of all life on earth, I want to make the modest suggestion that Christians need to urgently and radically re-imagine what the Kingdom of God looks like today and what it means to pursue this as a disciple of Jesus.

The call to repent and live the Gospel (Mark 1:15) confronts us in this *kairos** moment as it did to those in occupied Palestine 2000 years ago – Christians have a choice between denial or discipleship.

Wendell Berry wrote, ‘The great obstacle is simply this: the conviction we cannot change because we are dependent on what is wrong. But that is the addicts excuse and we know it will not do.’ Environmental consciousness and creation-care theology have become increasingly accepted among Christians. However, too often this is a nice green sentiment which leads only to cosmetic changes such as buying energy efficient light-bulbs or taking reusable bags to the supermarket, rather than the ecological conversion Pope Francis call us to in *Laudato Si*’.

We dutifully put out our recycling, but are generally oblivious of where our food, water or energy come from; the human and environmental costs that got them to us; who our neighbours are; or the health of our local waterways and forests and their inhabitants. We fail to address the controversial issues such as industrial agricultural practices or fracking. Too focused on ‘heavenly pie in the sky when you die’, and other displaced theologies, many Christians continue to take full part, directly or indirectly, in the wholesale devastation of God’s good Creation.

Watershed Discipleship

I recently read a group of essays written by a group of young activists and theologians on the topic of Watershed Discipleship, a movement that has grown in response to the *Kairos* moment currently facing humanity. It represents a compelling and essential paradigm shift for ecological theology and practice, a kind of ‘integral ecology.’ A watershed is the area of land covered in waters’ journey from the start of its hydrological cycle to the body of water where it eventually winds up, usually an ocean or lake. For example, the watershed of my *turagawaewae*, Otaki, is nestled between the Otaki River and Waitohu stream, whose catchment is the mid-western Tararua ranges and who flow into the Tasman Sea.

A small-scale decentralised and place-based approach to life, Watershed Discipleship recognises that our individual discipleship and life and witness of the local church take place inescapably in a watershed context.

Christians must root themselves in specific places in order to deeply know, and even love, that place and its inhabitants: disciples *within* our and disciples *of* our watersheds. We need a re-placed identity if we are to unshackle ourselves from the ecocidal, ‘dis-placed’ path of globalised capitalism and realise the Kingdom of God which honours all members of Creation.

Watershed Discipleship and the CW

As a movement of renewal and resistance, Watershed Discipleship shares a lot in common with the Catholic Worker spiritually and in practice. The ‘small is beautiful ethic’, anarchist tendencies, opposition to all desecration of life, committing to people and place are just a few common points. In Aotearoa, many communities base their efforts on the gifts and needs of the particular place they inhabit, and there are many beautiful glimpses of Watershed Discipleship around about us.

Examples include St Francis CW farm in Hokianga, where they grow food without using chemical fertilisers or tractors so as not to pollute or degrade the valley that sustains them. Urban Vision teams are rooted in their neighbourhoods and committed to building meaningful relationships with the people within that place, particularly the marginalised. The Otaki CW community follows Jesus in the Otaki watershed through organic farming, sheltering the homeless, journeying alongside *tangata whenua*, and engaging in political activism such as blockading the weapons conference in Palmerston North late last year.

These communities are often on the fringes of mainstream churches and are unknown to many Christians. But the Church is called to discipleship not denial and therefore must radically change in response to the *kairos* moment facing our species and life on earth. Imagine if your church community dug up its car parks and established a community garden to feed the neighbourhood? Or set up schools of ‘ecological conversion.’? What if we learned the history of our neighbourhood from the perspective of both land and people who have been marginalised? *Tangata whenua* know what it means to deeply belong to a place and have also lots of experience protesting State violence to protect their land and people.

With a vision of Watershed Discipleship, maybe our loyalty to abstractions such as the State or ‘free’ market would die and we could move towards decentralised and democratic governance, restorative justice and local sustainable economies based on the common good, a vision of a new society within the shell of the old.

Watershed Discipleship provides us with a new (yet ancient) paradigm with which we can become more deeply a ‘placed’ People of God and respond to the *kairos* moment which faces us.

**kairos* – a Greek word meaning an absolutely critical moment for decision-making or action.

Jack Leason is a member of the Berrigan House CW community in Wellington. This article is reprinted from the house newsletter, Kairos, No 2, Nov 2018

Editorial 2 Justice for Seafarer Centres

As reported in the last edition of *The Common Good*, the Lyttelton Seafarers Centre has provided hospitality to up to 10 000 seafarers when they have been in port over the past three years. While some ships can pay up to \$22 000 to dock each night they are in a New Zealand port, there is no provision made for their workers who come ashore and have nowhere to go. These are usually poorly-paid men from the Philippines, South Korea, India or Russia, who can be at sea and away from their families for many months. The Seafarer Centres are the only safe places they can gather to contact their families, buy small supplies, rest and recreate.

Throughout NZ, these centres are run on a volunteer basis in each port with no funding from port companies, the City Councils or the Government, all of whom make many millions of dollars from their operation/ownership of the ports every year. It is a situation screaming injustice and reeking of a lack of hospitality.

The Apostleship of the Sea, Mission to Seafarers and the Catholic Worker would like each ship to pay a nominal fee of \$100 each night it is berthed in port. This could be put in a special fund and used to help support Seafarer Centres. We have lobbied Maritime New Zealand and the Government in this regard. Such a figure would be a tiny drop in the ocean for shipping lines to pay. They wouldn't notice it gone. Yet it would mean so much to the seafarers and to the volunteers who, besides giving up regular time to serve in the centres, also have to raise the funds by soliciting donations, running raffles and sausage sizzles to keep them running.

Charity Gig

In late November, out of the blue came a phone call from Adam McGrath, lead singer of the *The Eastern*, a

world renown band based in Lyttelton. Adam had read *The Common Good* articles (CG87) on the need to fund Seafarer Centres. The band performs a charity gig every year before Christmas and gifts all the income to a chosen charity. 'Would the Lyttelton Seafarers Centre like to be the recipient of their 2018 charity gig?' 'Of course we would,' was the heartfelt reply.

On Saturday evening, 22 December, nearly 300 people joined eight members of *The Eastern* and guest Barry Saunders of the Warratahs (who flew from Wellington especially for the event) in a rollicking evening of music, craic, dance and camaraderie at Blue Smoke in the Tannery Arcade in eastern Christchurch. After more than three hours of great music, the Pogues' Christmas song, *Fairy-tale of New York*, proved to be a fitting finale to the evening. It seemed to go on forever as the band moved among the crowd, enjoyed a brief cameo from Marlon Williams, and kept the rhythm going until exhaustion struck around mid-night.

The show was a real buzz which raised more than \$2650 for the local coffers. Several members of the Apostleship of the Sea, the Mission to Seafarers, and the Catholic Worker were on hand to maintain law and order! It was a great occasion, a much-appreciated Christmas gift.

Much and all as the charity gig was appreciated, Seafarer Centres need more than charity to function fully. They need justice to adequately meet the wellbeing needs of the visiting workers who bring 90% of our consumer goods into this country. It is time Seafarer Centres received proper sustainable funding.

A \$100 daily levy from the shipping companies for each ship tied up would be a great start.

—Jim Consedine

Editorial 3 Catholic Worker Outreach

Our Christchurch CW will celebrate its 30th birthday in August 2019. Back in 1989 when we started, we thought that if we reached 30 years we would have done enough and either all be retired or have died. Our work would be done. It seems that is not going to be the case. Some of the originals when last checked were still breathing and seem to have no desire to either retire or pass over.

What we have done as we have aged is evolved our focus to meet changing circumstances. While we still provide hospitality from our houses, we have also developed what we call the Catholic Worker Outreach,

which to a very small degree does exactly that. Rather than focusing only on people coming to live with us in community, we more often go to them in their setting and provide witness to the Works of Mercy and offer solidarity, advocacy, friendship and support.

There is nothing radical or new about this. It happens all over the world in good Christian communities and from churches with a social conscience, including more than 180 CW communities. But we haven't named it before for ourselves - until now.

—Jim Consedine

A Voice for the Silenced

Ron Healing

After the Second World War, the major European colonial powers began to grant independence to their former colonies. In 1949, the Dutch relinquished control of their colonies in the East Indies to the Indonesian Republic, except for Netherlands New Guinea, the western part of New Guinea later known as West Papua. The indigenous Papuans are Melanesians and have inhabited the land for 40,000 years. Throughout the 1950's the Dutch worked with the people of Netherlands New Guinea to prepare them for self-government.

In 1961 the Dutch established the West New Guinea Council and submitted a plan to bring the land under the United Nations administration but failed to gain the necessary support. Later that year the West New Guinea Council voted for a name change to West Papua and selected the Morning Star flag and a national anthem. The Council passed resolutions supporting the Dutch plan for self-determination.

In response the Indonesian authorities despatched hundreds of paratroopers to claim West Papua for Indonesia 1962. Seeking to resolve the situation, the Dutch and the Indonesians signed the New York Agreement in August 1963 giving the United Nations initial control before transferring control to Indonesia seven months later. The West Papuans were excluded from these negotiations although, in the Agreement, the United Nations guaranteed all adult West Papuans be given the opportunity to exercise free choice on the question of whether they should remain part of Indonesia or become a self-governing nation.

In July and August 1969, after six years of brutal repression, the Indonesian authorities orchestrated an act of self-determination, the so called 'Act of Free Choice', which most West Papuans refer to it as the 'Act of No Choice'. A mere 1022 Papuans out of a given population of 800,000 were given the opportunity to vote. (0.128%.) The 'voters', all handpicked, were subjected to brutality, coercion and death threats, making the outcome a foregone conclusion.

The United Nations accepted the result and Indonesian control. In desperation, the Papuan people formed the pro-independence party Organisasi Papua Merdeka. Ever since, thousands of Papuans have either lost their lives or been raped or tortured. It is conservatively estimated that as many as 100,000 Papuan lives have been taken by the Indonesian forces since 1963. Over the same period, Indonesia has resettled hundreds of thousands of Javanese who now dominate much of the local economy. They now make up close to 50% of the population.

Pope Francis on Indigenous Rights

Pope Francis has spoken strongly on the rights of indigenous peoples:

'The world's peoples want to be artisans of their own destiny. They want to advance peacefully towards justice. They want their culture, their language, their social processes and their religious tradition to be respected. No actual or established power has the right to deprive peoples of the full exercise of their sovereignty... for peace is founded not only on respect for human but also on the respect for the rights of the peoples, in particular the right to independence' (Paraguay. 11 July 2015)

In terms of natural resources, West Papua is exceeding rich. Vast deposits of gold, copper, oil and natural gas are being systematically exploited by American, British and Australian multinationals. The Grasberg Mining complex, with its main shareholder US mining company Freeport McMoRan, is the largest gold mine in the world. The company fills the coffers of the Indonesian State funds with billions of dollars each year. The impact of the mining operations is an environmental disaster with millions of tonnes of tailings dumped in the nearby Ajkwa River.

Even worse is the systematic deforestation of the pristine rain forest, habitat of the native wild life and home to the traditional tribal land-owners. Exploited for timber exports, notably the hardwood Kwila which is used extensively in New Zealand for decking and outdoor furniture, it is very often illegally imported. Once cleared, the land is used for Palm Oil plantations resulting in widespread pollution of rivers and waterways.

Pope Francis warned:

'The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet' (LS par 48)

The future of West Papua

Despite the enormous wealth of natural resources in their land, systematic exploitation and persecution of the people has resulted in West Papua today having the highest poverty and illiteracy rates in Indonesia. This is further compounded by high child malnutrition and a chronic shortage of doctors and medical supplies.

For decades New Zealand has continued to ignore the slow genocide occurring in West Papua. However, there is hope as more and more New Zealand MPs, recognising the grave oppression occurring in that blighted land are declaring their support in Parliament for West Papua and for its reinstatement on the UN Decolonisation list.

Ron Healing is a member of West Papua Action and serves on the Christchurch Commission for Justice and Peace.

Around the traps

Christmas Day celebration - The usual Christmas Day feast was a great affair at Suzanne Aubert CW with about 60 people in attendance on an overcast but warm day. A really good spirit prevailed as guests shared the fine food prepared. Sister Judith was on hand to guide the preparation process and her worker bees included Sharmaine, Everett, Tony, Joseph, Natalie, Mike, Tui, Maria and family members John, Sandra and Carolina. Many took home leftovers to help during the following days.

Annual Appeal – Our annual postal appeal held in November this year brought in \$12,885 dollars from 75 donors. While the annual budget for running the Catholic Worker and publishing *The Common Good* is \$25 000, we are very thankful for the generosity of people who have contributed. Trusting in Divine Providence is a wonderful thing and we have continued to flourish for 29 years with only one annual appeal.

Rich richer, poor poorer - New Zealand's two richest people added \$1.1 billion to their fortunes in a year when the poor just got poorer. Oxfam research has painted a damning picture of New Zealand's growing wealth divide. The Public Good or Private Wealth? Report found that in the 2017 to 2018 year, the richest five percent of New Zealanders collectively had more wealth than the bottom 90 percent. That means 239,700 of us have more combined wealth than 4.3 million of us.

The two richest New Zealanders, Graeme Hart and Richard Chandler, were worth \$15 billion and \$3.1 billion respectively. Between them they added \$1.1 billion to their wealth in the year. The poorest half of New Zealand, about 2.4 million people, became collectively \$1.3 billion poorer in that same year. *The Press, 21 January 2019*

United Nations Statistics – In November 2018, there were 68.5 million people forcibly displaced worldwide. Of these, 40 million were displaced internally, 3.1 million were asylum seekers and 25.4 million were refugees. Of this latter grouping, 57% came from three countries – Syria 6.3 million, South Sudan 2.4 million and Afghanistan 2.6 million. There are also 10 million stateless people. **About 44 400 people are forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution every day.** Where are they? About 85% are in developing countries, not the West. Top refugee host centres – Turkey 3.5 million people, Uganda 1.4 million, Pakistan 1.4 million and Iran 979 400 people. *UNHCR Statistics – November 2018*

funeral day

a striking hot nor'wester
fuels profound sorrow
a haunting sense of emptiness
mates, family, whānau
bonded in tragedy

friends in mourning
milling around, shell-shocked
bewildered
raw wounds exposed
bleeding in the sunlight

hot rubber burn-outs
speed, adrenalin, the thrill
their extreme sport
tear-away teens, bulletproof
joyriding stolen cars

crash red lights
green to their dancing eyes
outstripping cops
screaming sirens
the ultimate challenge

as booze, drugs, bravado
a refusal to connect the dots
prop up shattered lives
from primal depths
torrential grief cascades

anger mixed with despair
huge sadness
the futility of it all
better understood
on funeral day

—Jim Consedine

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

— Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

Filipino Children: Victims of the Global Economy

Shay Cullen SSC



The Philippines is a country with some of the greatest inequality. There are 16 million Filipinos who suffer serious poverty out of a population of 107 million. Six million live in extreme poverty. They suffer the burning heat of summer and the downpours and floods of the rainy season in hovels made of plastic sheeting, scrap wood and rusty metal sheets. They eat only a meagre one meal a day and seldom high protein fish and meat scraps. Most are uneducated, jobless and have low access to health care.

The children are the worst-affected. They suffer from bad food resulting into stunted growth and learning disabilities, and often live in negative dysfunctional families. Here, harsh words and rejection, hard work and abuse is the norm. They witness violence and sexual activity from an early age. They are the abandoned throwaway children and families of the Philippines and the poor everywhere.

They eat less low-quality rice and a pinch of salt, a spoon of vegetables and seldom meat, if ever. The urban poor eat recycled leftovers from uneaten dinners from restaurants called 'papa.' Their life is harsh, crude, rough and hopeless. Year after year, more children are born into dire poverty. Government, which is supposedly there to uplift the lives of the poor and create a more equal society, has conducted a war-on-drugs policy since May 2016, killing as many as 22,360, according to the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.

The children take to the streets to survive, to escape beatings, broken homes, hunger, and survive by joining street gangs, sniffing industrial glue to block the pain of living without love, care, education and enduring a life of misery without a future. They are mostly innocent children aged from 10-15 years old and while not criminally liable for misdemeanours are nevertheless arrested for being homeless street children. They are jailed illegally and suffer beatings and 'slavery' to other older inmates, sexual abuse and life in crowded cells.

The Real Thieves

Children commit only two percent of all crimes in the Philippines. Their alleged survival strategies – petty theft and drug use, are not crimes but an unconscious response to live and they endure injustice, greed and selfishness of society that condemns them as criminals and does little to change their dire situation. They are the first line victims of a Philippine economy dominated by a tiny rich elite where an estimated some .00001 percent own as much as 70 percent of the national wealth. They are part of a globalized world economy that creates dire poverty for hundreds of millions.

The wealthy politicians are mostly members of the

economic elite, the ruling dynasties, and they buy their way to government positions of power to protect the wealth of the .00001 percent of the Philippine super rich. They pass laws to benefit themselves and their rich supporters with lower taxes and low level of regulation so their corporations and multinational partners can more or less do what they want to save money, like disregarding environmental protections laws.

The inequality grows greater with the globalization of the world economy. Corporations are moving production to poorer countries that allow the lowest wages and overhead costs. They frequently have sweetheart deals with politicians and pay bribes to get ahead with illegal transactions. This is a simple statement but holds much truth. The rule of the rich, through dynastic families keeps the poor very poor, uneducated, jobless, and ready to sell their votes for a trifle and re-elect their oppressor.

Global Corporations

It allows the global corporations to exploit natural resources and earn vast profits and this concentrates the wealth throughout the world in the hands, pockets, and bank accounts of very few people. They are known as the one percent of a world rich population. So, while a few are very rich, many hundreds of millions of people are very poor, hungry, unemployed or earning starvation wages.

It is now a proven fact that one percent or less of the world's population owns, controls and enjoys more than half of the entire wealth on the planet. According to Credit Swiss Bank, the wealthiest one percent of humans grew richer by six percent since 2012 and now own as much as US\$280 trillion.

According to Oxfam research, the inequality is getting much worse. It is revealed that 82 percent of all the wealth created in the past 12 months (2018) went to the one percent of the world's population amounting to few million people. Whereas, 3.7 billion impoverished people who make up the poorest half of humanity got nothing. They live in dire poverty, struggling to survive and stay alive. That's the greatest inequality the world has ever known. Greed and selfishness are king.

The most equal countries in the world starts with Iceland, a very small country with a vocal and vibrant democracy that tolerates no corruption. It is followed by the Scandinavian countries – Norway, Denmark, Finland, Slovenia and then Austria and Sweden. The Philippines is among the most corrupt, according to *Transparency International*, and among the greatest unequal countries of all where thousands of children marked as criminals are jailed.

Irish priest Shay Cullen SSC has lived, worked with and written about the poorest in the Philippines for more than 40 years.

Recognising Clericalism

Robert Consedine

Clericalism, which concerns not just clerics, is an attitude that affects all of us: clericalism is a perversion of the Church, a sinful state. —Pope Francis, August 2018

I think one of the major difficulties the Church faces in dealing constructively with what Pope Francis repeatedly calls, the ‘pernicious and sinful’ culture of clericalism, is that most don’t know what it is they are supposed to be changing. That is how insidious and embedded it is within the culture of the Church! A wonderful woman religious friend of mine once said to me, ‘Clericalism may be hard to define, but you certainly know when you encounter it.’

Part of the problem comes from our own experience. Priests and nuns have been an integral part of my entire life. I grew up in an Irish Catholic parish in a supportive and rich Catholic environment on the edge of Protestant Christchurch. I have had the privilege of knowing and being mentored by some wonderful priests, many now deceased. Others, in dwindling numbers, continue to spread the gospel and serve the people.

Some of the splendid and influential relationships in my life have been nuns. Dedication, hard work, self-effacement, simplicity of lifestyle, and a courageous faith have been the hallmarks of those who have sustained the schools and communities on my journey.

Accountability

I have, however, always been astonished at the complete lack of accountability and ongoing training of priests. Beyond the seminary, there seems to be little if any ongoing training requirement. I have met some who said that they have never read a book on spirituality or theology since they left the seminary, and others who use internet homilies! How can such priests possibly nourish the needs of those they seek to pastor?

Years ago, I remember reading George Wilson SJ’s seminal book, *Clericalism – the death of priesthood* (2008), and thinking it would be wonderful if this book was read by everyone concerned about the future of the Church. He highlighted several definable points of identity in the clerical culture.

One of the biggest is the **sense of entitlement** that goes with being a priest. Instead of priesthood being a ticket to the margins where Pope Francis urges them to go (message to new cardinals, 2015), for many it is a ticket to a middle-class job, even career, which is given respect and authority, particularly within parish communities. He is regarded as being automatically credible.

Priests **wear a uniform** that sets them apart. Many seem to need it to confirm their identity as priests and may not appreciate that their black uniform, in the 21st century, could be a major hindrance to evangelisation. The best

priests I’ve known over 60 years of active involvement in the Church have rarely worn a collar!

Clericalism is tied to a **title**, which many make their new identity, whether it is earned or not. How can someone not be left thinking, ‘I must be something special. Like a doctor, I have done all this training. They all call me ‘father’.’ Personally, I have not used a priest’s or Bishop’s title for over 40 years. I address them by their baptismal name. Some are uncomfortable with this. I do not do this out of disrespect, but rather as a mark of recognition that, like them, I too share in the priesthood of Christ, that we are on this pilgrim journey together and we both have important roles to play among the People of God.

I think some clergy run a great risk of being perceived as **having total control** because of the power they are given as pastors. Their position, at the head of the parish power structure, can lend itself to such behaviour, even to bullying. Most do not operate this way. But I regret to say that far too many do.

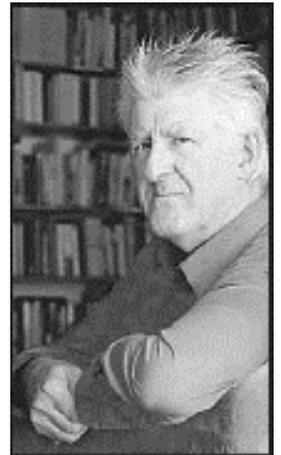
My observation is that many priests who are not involved in the day-to-day pastoral care of the poor and needy, ‘getting their hands dirty’ as Pope Francis says, tend to end up being ‘civil servants’ of the Church, content on maintaining law and order and the status quo. The fire of Pentecost seems foreign to them. And that is sad – and a fruit of clericalism.

Our involvement

However it is defined, we need to recognise that clericalism could not survive without the collusion, overt or subliminal, of religious women and men and the People of God. While change would be an enormous challenge for priests, we need to accept that we all play a part in maintaining clericalism and we all need to re-jig our thinking. Priests would be the first to benefit from such a change.

As we were helpfully reminded by Pope Francis recently at the canonisation of St Oscar Romero, it is among the poor that we meet Christ most effectively, and in their struggles for justice that we can be liberated from clericalism.

Author and columnist Robert Consedine has been active in the Church for more than 70 years. This article first appeared in NZ Catholic, 2 December 2018



How to save Western Civilisation – Again

Joan Chittister



Sinking ships are not difficult to identify. You can watch their long, slow, laborious decline as the stern begins to slip away and the bow, the head of the ship, becomes useless. You can see that it is no longer making any kind of real progress into the wind. You know that it has lost control of itself.

The interesting thing is that governments and churches decline in exactly the same way: first the people, the body of the institution, begin to cast off, to disappear; then little of importance is heard from the leadership.

Collapse is obvious and immanent. What is difficult to figure out is why once great institutions suddenly begin to sink. Even more disconcerting is the notion that nothing could have been done to stop the implosion in the first place.

Causes of decline

The probable causes of such decline are also many, of course — the environment maybe; systemic breakdown, perhaps; and surely the internal strain that comes eventually to all systems and structures that have been allowed to become arthritic over time, taken for granted over time, become lethargic over time.

But whatever the cause of the shipwreck, it's essential to remember that it is not only institutions that disappear. The people, who depended on them, go down with the ship, too — their trust in it misplaced, their unconsciousness of the danger ships just naturally embody overlooked, their sense of eternal security shattered. Until the impossible happens and the fragility of life reasserts itself. Over and over and over again. From century to century.

Governments go down. Churches, too, sinning as much as they save, lose their bearings. So how is it that we stand by while our institutions shrivel, and our courage shrinks? It's not our fault, we argue. The cause is outside ourselves — in the institution itself, we say. Not in us.

Wrong. The truth is that very great social debacle starts with us, with the people who look away while it happens, who allow the attitudes that feed it to prevail.

Today, in an era of government upheaval, I want to explore this question of institutional breakdown but from a perspective formed over twenty centuries ago and the vision of the man who set out to restore the heart of the human enterprise.

The legacy – Benedict of Norcia

In the 6th century, Rome — the invincible — began to crumble from the inside out. Its Roman legions, the ground of the empire's political power, had sucked the resources out of the colonies and, no longer earning their keep, were now draining Rome itself instead. The rich had become dissolute. The poor were destitute and desperate. The immigrants on the border — foreigners — were beginning to stream into Rome, not to destroy it but to share in its bounty.

They had emperors who were intent on enlarging the empire and popes whose major concern was establishing papal pre-eminence. So, who was there to reverse this race to the bottom of one of the greatest empires the world had ever known?

The answer was as unlikely as the problem. A young student, Benedict from Norcia, disillusioned by the low moral condition of the much-heralded Rome, turned his back on the system. He dropped out. He left school rather than commit himself to the goals and desiccant values of a place that had squandered its wealth and its purpose on itself. Rather than pursue the priorities of the then society, he began to teach another way to live.

Benedict developed small communities and, in a world where power and bullying, egregious greed and pathological individualism, authoritarianism and narcissism left a sense of community behind, taught that pride is the basic flaw in the human system. Humility, the cornerstone of society, of civilization, of the social order, he taught, is its corrective.

He based his rule of life on twelve principles of humility that, historians say to this day, saved Western Civilization.

It's those principles of life that need to be revisited in our own time if either church or state can possibly lead the world through the self-centeredness of society in our own time.

Moral principles for today

From where I stand, it is those twelve principles of life — recognition of my place in the universe, the need for wisdom rather than power, self-revelation rather than self-aggrandizement, and right relationships — that are badly needed now. If we are ever to recover from the twisted and contorted systems that pass for church and state at the present time, we must begin to examine the assumptions and attitudes that we are allowing to creep into our institutions and, worse, into our own souls.

Maybe if we can discover what is undermining our best efforts, we might at least arrest our present plunge to the depths.

Sr Joan Chittister OSB is a Benedictine sister of Erie, Pennsylvania.

Book Review

Inangahua Gold, Kathleen Gallagher, King Fisher Publishing Ltd, Christchurch. 2018, 184 pages: \$30. Available from www.wickcandle.co.nz.

Reviewer: Robert Consedine

It was a night of celebration and creativity. We were gathered at the old Spencer Street Hall in Addington to launch another creative work by author, Kathleen Gallagher. The gathering included Michael Coughlan, who provided the superb illustrations for the book.

I found the book a gripping very accessible read. The author clearly has a love affair with the environment and draws the reader into a journey by four younger people walking up the Hurunui River, over the Southern Alps and down the Taramakau River to Te Tai Poutini – the West Coast, where the author has roots.

It is about the sometimes fraught relationships: Bavarian, Māori, Irish, Chinese, all speaking their own native languages (two are bi-lingual) reflecting the culture of the times while surviving in a challenging environment. There were many arguments. The author illustrates what it must have been like as new immigrants poured into the West Coast.

I found the dialogue fascinating. Unsurprisingly, the Maori in the group, who knew the landscape, finally got them through. It was the descriptions of the environment in Te Reo and English which really draws the reader into

Letters

P O Box 489
Kurtistown HI

Dear Jim and CW friends,

Once a year we write to ask for your help to sustain our work of Malu 'Aina for justice, peace and a living planet. We are grateful for whatever donation you can make. We have been planting seed and sharing food with people in need for nearly 40 years, feeding many thousands.

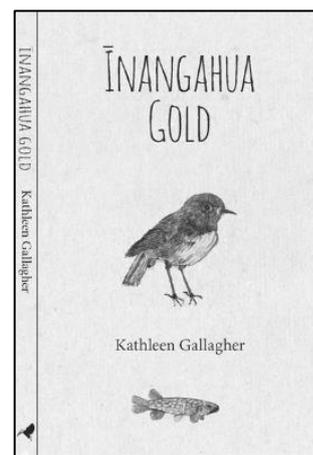
This year has been especially difficult for us located in the Puna district of Hawaii Island. Kilauea volcano lava flows have changed Puna forever. We were very fortunate not to be in Pele's direct path but the near constant earthquakes for several months during the eruption and the 52 inches of rain in three days, have taken their toll. We had to redo cement foundation pier blocks on a couple of buildings and clear a major drainage way through our farm clogged with debris.

Our planet is in climate crisis with intensifying storms, fires and other weather extremes. Violence, hate, economic disparity, wars and displays of militarism are all on the rise. Hawaii, already one of the most militarised places on the planet, is now facing Military Special Ops training on our beaches and parks. It seems one of the hardest lessons to learn is that we cannot bomb, kill and exploit our way to a world of justice, peace and respect for

the journey and sometimes makes the book a page-turner. At one stage in the book I came across the Hail Mary in the Irish language. Given my own limitations, it was the only language I was able to instantly translate!

Kathleen has a strong Catholic faith; is a feminist with a deep spirituality and is very committed to family. She has a breathtaking output of films, novels, biography and poetry. This reviewer's history teacher at Massey many years ago, encouraged students to read novels and watch films set in a time and place in the period of history they were studying. It was good advice as the imagination of the novelist can give depth to what is otherwise mundane facts.

The endorsements on the cover of the book are amazing: author Fiona Kidman, poet John Weir SM, and Sir Tipene O'Regan, who concluded; 'Her story is fiction which gives truth to place. Her sense of place gives truth to fiction.' It is a great holiday read.



the earth and one another.

In such a time, work for justice, peace and respecting the sacred is more important than ever. We are in this together. Your support keeps us from being discouraged. We pledge to never give up. Blessings on this holy season to you and your loved ones.

With gratitude and aloha from my co-workers Ruth Aloua and Adhann Iwashita,

Jim Albertini

Donations are tax deductible and can be made to the Center for Non-violent Education and Action, P O Box 489, Kurtistown, Hawaii 96760, USA. Or check www.malu-aina.org for an easy Pay Pal account.

2705 Mt Mee Rd,
Ocean View,
Queensland 4521

Hi CWs,

Since 1982, a few people have maintained a 3 day fast and vigil for life at Greenslopes Abortion clinic in Brisbane from midnight Christmas night till the Feast of the Holy Innocents on 28th December. For our troubles, we have been abused, assaulted and threatened with death,

for displaying placards such as 'Support Mothers not Abortion', and 'Jesus Was an Unborn Child'.

From the 3rd December 2013, along with the new legislation legalising all abortions virtually until birth (two doctors need to sign off on any abortions after 22 weeks), the State has made it illegal to display any information relating to abortion within 150 meters of an abortion clinic. The maximum penalty for any such 'crime' is one year's jail. In no other similar circumstances can one be arrested in this State for merely exercising the right of free speech.

We wondered what to do about the vigil this year. Eventually, in the words of the late great Dan Berrigan, Anne and I felt 'we could not not do it!'. Unfortunately, on Christmas night Anne was very sick with stomach pains, so I maintained the first night's vigil without incident. The next morning, I was arrested and taken to the watch house where I refused to sign bail conditions preventing me returning until the end of the vigil. Anne was arrested on the morning of the 28th December, and similarly, she refused bail till the end of the day. We were both released at 4pm that day just before the usual end time of the vigil.

Our trial is set for 13th March in Brisbane. In this culture of death, a win by pro-lifers seems less likely.

The struggle goes on. Blessings on the New Year,

Jim Dowling

Carmelite Monastery,
Halswell,
Christchurch

Dear Fr Jim,

We just want to send you our Christmas greetings and to wish you a blessed New Year. We appreciate what is written in *The Common Good*. It is well produced and must take a lot to get it printed and distributed every three months. There is always something of interest and this world gets no better in its need for peace, justice and fairness. They are all 'virtues' that don't spring up naturally but need big dollops of grace, empathy and forgiveness. Keep up the good work and thank you for all the work that goes into it.

Blessings on you and the Catholic Workers,

The Carmelite Sisters



Greenmeadows,
Napier 4112

Dear Sir/Madam,

After years of picking up odd copies of *The Common Good* from the back of the church, I have decided to support it through a small donation. I always enjoy the articles and goings on within the paper and the Trust. My best wishes and kind regards,

Pat Lynch.

Dominican Priory,
Cape Town,
South Africa

Dear Fr Jim

May you have a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Thank you for sending me your magazine *The Common Good* during the year. I find it very interesting. I wish we had something like the *Catholic Worker* here in South Africa. It is greatly needed. Perhaps God will ask you to set it up! Your cousin and my great friend Kathleen Keary OP would be proud.

Many blessings for 2019 on you and your co-workers and those who benefit from what you do. I fight with God about the hungry and the poor - they are not all receiving good things as promised in the Magnificat. I was horrified recently by some pictures I saw of children in Yemen - skin and bone, too weak to cry! We keep on praying while many are dying.

Blessings galore and my prayers,

Sister Margaret Wall OP

CW Website

Leading articles from the first 23 years of
The Common Good
Alternative funerals
Restorative Justice
Other theological issues
www.catholicworker.org.nz

FUNERAL CHOICE

A Catholic Worker Project

Cheaper alternatives to consumer funerals

www.funeralchoice.co.nz

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The Common Good

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



Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting – over and over announcing your place in the family of things.

—*Mary Oliver* (1925-2019)