

# The Common Good

*Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor*

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## Towards an Integrated Ecology

Jim Consedine

What does Christian faith have to offer that might help us better approach the environmental crisis our planet is facing? Calls at the recently-concluded Amazon Synod included the need for 'ecological conversion' and the need to pass from 'theory to practical action' and adopt 'an ecological morality in the knowledge that ecological sin exists, which can also be described as 'ecocide'.

In the face of this 'filthy rotten system' as Dorothy Day called capitalism, which today is destroying our very fragile planet through rapacious greed, accelerating climate change, war and structural violence, Christian faith has several core teachings that are helpful and which continue to offer hope in the midst of this dire situation.

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Firstly, let us remember that God's primary revelation is through Creation and not the Bible. Or any other holy book. All around us we see the Divine Revelation in the beauty of creation. That is why it is so sinful to degrade or exploit nature for nefarious ends.

Flowing on from that teaching, we hold to a belief that there is an overall Spirit of Life which

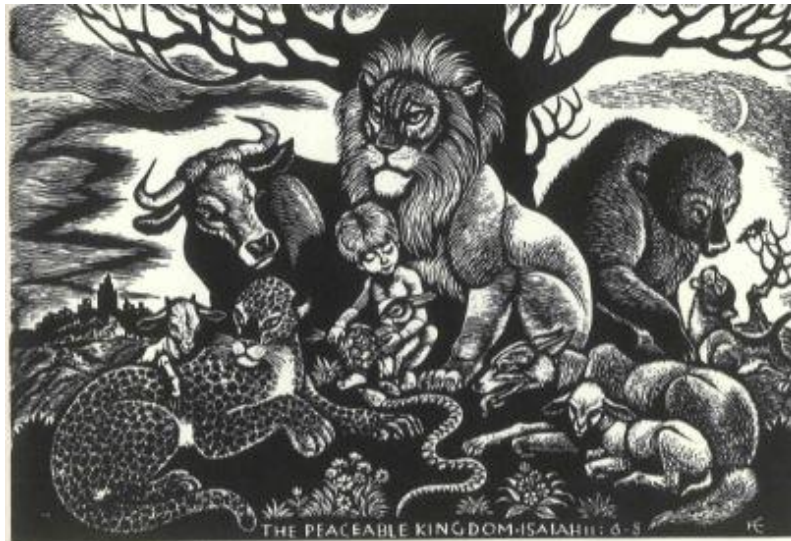
exists, whom many call God, who is accessible at every turn in our daily lives if we develop spiritual antennas and become aware of this presence.

Secondly, the appearances of Jesus following his resurrection reveal how the risen Christ restores relationships by reconnecting with those who followed him. In these Easter encounters, whether in the Upper Room or on the road to Emmaus, in the garden or on the beach, Jesus makes

connections about everything in the scriptures, 'beginning with Moses and all the prophets' who referred to him (Luke 24:44). The purpose of his action is not simply to erase the slate of sin but to engage his disciples in becoming a new creation. We have been left with that mandate!

The new creation includes our deepening connection to Mother Earth and the transformative power we engage with through our relationship with the Risen Christ, with the Divine life within the Cosmos. As Teilhard de Chardin wrote, 'To live the cosmic life is to live dominated by the consciousness that one is an atom in the body of the mystical and cosmic Christ.'

Thirdly, we should remind ourselves that a whole stream of prophets ranging from Meister Eckhart, Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen in the Middle Ages to Teilhard de Chardin, Mohandas Gandhi, Pope John Paul II, Matthew Fox, Ilija Delio OSF, Joan Chittister OSB and Daniel O'Leary in more recent times have placed the Divine Presence within nature and creation and not parked out somewhere in 'the heavens'. We teach both a



transcendent and incarnational divine presence available to all.

### Thomas Berry – ecology prophet

This insightful prophetic tradition led another prophet to issue a stark warning nearly 40 years ago as to the state the planet was coming to under the burden of unbridled corporate capitalism. His analysis applied also to state socialism.

In 1983, Thomas Berry, priest, prophet and internationally acclaimed cosmologist and geologist (earth scholar), published a widely publicised essay on the economic system which was destroying the planet. He said that the Earth’s crisis is fundamentally a spiritual crisis and the Earth was being destroyed by rapacious economic ideologies.

‘The industrial economy itself is not a sustainable economy. It is a failing system. It is closing down the planet in its most basic modes of functioning. The difficulty comes when the industrial mode of our economy disrupts the natural processes, when human technologies are destructive of earth technologies.’

#### 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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‘Yet we can be sure that whatever fictions exist in Wall Street bookkeeping – for example, that the national GDP is our only measurement – remember the Earth is a faithful scribe, a faultless calculator, a superb bookkeeper. We will be held responsible for every bit of our economic folly.’

He went on to say, ‘Only within the ever-renewing processes of the natural world is there any future for the human community. Not to recognise this is to make economics a deadly affair.’

A deadly affair. Nearly forty years ago, Thomas Berry defined the industrial economy and free market capitalism as a deadly affair. How seriously did we take his warning?

### Pope Francis

Fast-forward nearly 40 years to the person who has brought these threads and many others together in recent times, **Pope Francis**. His first two social encyclicals in 2013 and 2015, sit alongside some of the most insightful, erudite and lucid writings of our age. They are master classes of how to present complex issues in a relevant readable style.

For example, in *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) he says ‘*Just as the commandment ‘thou shalt not kill’ sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, so today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not kill’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. ...Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless.*’ #53 What an indictment of capitalism, of free-market, trickle-down economics!

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And he challenges us to build an **integrated ecology** – so that we hear ‘both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.’ Not one distinct from the other. And ‘*to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God’s creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet.*’ #9 That is some teaching!

### Amazon Synod

The recently concluded Amazon Synod, which brought together Church leaders from Central and Latin America, had a primary focus on the ecology of the planet, with the Amazon Rainforest, as a

special target. The Synod concluded with this challenge and warning.

‘Ecological sin is a sin against future generations and manifests itself in acts and habits of pollution and destruction of the environmental harmony, transgressions against the principles of interdependence and the breaking of solidarity networks among creatures and against the virtue of justice.’

‘The Amazon Rainforest is a 'biological heart' for our increasingly threatened land. It is on a frantic race toward death. It requires radical changes as a matter of urgency, a new direction to save it.’

‘Faced with the pressing situation of the planet and the Amazon, integral ecology is not a path that the Church can choose for the future in this territory, it is the only possible way, because there is no other viable path to save the region.’

‘We call for the Church in the Amazon to join and support divestment campaigns from companies engaged in socio-ecological damage, and simultaneously advocate "for a radical energy transition and the search for alternatives."’

## Conclusion

In conclusion, let us join the Apostles in **becoming guests** at the Last Supper and hear the command of Jesus, ‘love one another’. Because all things are interconnected, we now know this includes all of Creation and the whole environment in which we live. When we love one another, we create harmony, practice justice and God is alive and present among us. And we respect and protect our living planet.

When someone among us is hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless or imprisoned and we reach out in love, we are loving our Creator, who is always present among us and among them. When we care for our seas, earth, rivers, water, air, the wellbeing of our planet and all its creatures, love challenges us to share, preserve, look after our planet and strive to build a just society where the Reign of God is more evident. That is the good news of God’s love. It is that simple.

What a positive fruitful way to live our lives.

*Jim Consedine gave much of this address to the EcuAction gathering in Christchurch earlier this year.*

## Repent, convert, pray, give up fossil fuels

Now is the time to abandon our dependence on fossil fuels and move, quickly and decisively, toward forms of clean energy. We have caused a climate emergency that gravely threatens nature and life itself, including our own. Find a naturally beautiful place and think about how God created the universe and declared it good; then he created human beings and gave them creation "as a precious gift" to safeguard.

Tragically, the human response to this gift has marked by sin. Selfishness and self-interest have turned creation, which was meant to be a place of encounter and sharing, into an area of competition and conflict. People have forgotten that they, too, are God's creation and not lords of the universe, free to exploit anything they want.

Pollution, the incessant use of fossil fuels, deforestation and intensive farming are causing global temperatures to rise and already threaten the lives of the world's poorest people. Melting glaciers, a lack of clean drinking water, the development of more frequent super storms and the considerable presence of plastics and microplastics in the oceans are signs of how human greed is making the planet increasingly hostile to life.

We have forgotten who we are: creatures made in the image of God, called to dwell as brothers and sisters in a common home. Now is the time to rediscover our vocation as children of God, brothers and sisters, and stewards of creation. Now is the time to repent, to be converted.

In silence and prayer, people should recognize the beauty that God has created and given to all people, but they also should pause to consider how the choices they make about what to eat, what to buy, how to travel and how they use energy and water impact God's creation, including other people.

Listen especially to young people who are calling on everyone to make "courageous decisions" and undertake "prophetic actions" to fulfil longstanding promises to stop polluting the environment and to protect all life.

Let us choose life. Let us say 'no' to consumerist greed and to the illusion of omnipotence, for these are the ways of death. May God, the lover of life, grant us the courage to do good without waiting for someone else to begin or until it is too late.

*Pope Francis, World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, 3 Sept 2019*

# Editorial Hope – Conquers distrust and fear

*Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.* Robert F Kennedy

As the fear relating to climate change escalates within the social context of the Brexit mess and the instability coming from the US, Russia and China, plus the on-going wars in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and many parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia, we have all been challenged as to how to cope with the knowledge these events have brought. To many they bring fear and despair. To others, not so.

Being Christians, we believe from our Easter story that death is overcome and life prevails. That is the central truth of our faith journeys. Given that great insight and experience, it seems we are being called above everything else to be people of hope – even in the midst of what appears like social disintegration. We may not have much else to offer except that which forms the foundational stones of our religion – faith in God, love at all times, hope in the midst of crises. *Kia mau ki te tumanako, te whakapono me te aroha.* Hold fast to hope, faith and love. (Maori proverb)

There is a distinction between hope and optimism. Rabbi Johnathan Sacks, Jewish scholar, says, ‘Optimism is the belief that the world is changing for the better. Hope is the belief that together we can make the world better.’

And Sister Laurie Brink OP recently told NZ audiences, ‘In order to be the Davids against the Goliaths of prejudice, racism, climate change catastrophe and the

myriad of woes facing us in our fractured world, we must first have a primary and personal experience of God’s love’. In that we place our hope.

Modern-day prophet Richard Rohr OFM also has some wise words to help us with hope. Rohr says:

*‘Until we walk with despair, and still have hope, we will not know that our hope was not just hope in ourselves, in our own successes, in our power to make a difference, in our image of what perfection should be. We need hope from a much deeper Source. We need a hope larger than ourselves. Until we walk with personal issues of despair, we will never uncover the Real Hope on the other side of that despair...This very journey is probably the heart of what Jesus came to reveal.’*

Look around. There are many signs of hope already if we have eyes to see. Hundreds of thousands of people are already taking personal responsibility for climate change, cleaning up the environment, using alternative transport, creating new employment opportunities, building co-operative ventures, and engaging in struggles for social justice. These are all signs of hope. Do these impact on the ‘big scene’? Yes – every single action is a pebble tossed in the pond of the universe, sending out ripples of hope.

Will they be enough to avoid catastrophe? Our job as Christians is not to decide whether such steps will be enough. At this time, it is to say with firm belief to one another – let each of us be a small sign of hope on the journey despite the difficulties we face.

For since we walk in the power of the Spirit, we carry hope in our hearts and can offer it to others.

—Robert Consedine

## Christian Zionism in NZ

Forrest Chambers

Why is the Israeli Ambassador talking with Christian groups around New Zealand?

In September I was invited to a series of talks on Israel ‘from a biblical perspective’. The talks were to be given by a member of a local independent church. At the end of the series, the Israeli Ambassador himself would be coming to address assembled Christians.

So, I went along, curious to hear about Israel’s ‘past, present and future’. The (pre-Ambassador) talks essentially stated that God promised Israel to the Jews, that the success of Israel is proof of God’s blessing (and existence), and that the

‘most important moment in the history of the whole universe’ is getting closer, because when Israel is restored, then Jesus will return to Jerusalem and from there, wage battle against evil and reign for 1000 years. The intense interest in Israel, we were told, stems from the ‘fact’ that whoever controls Jerusalem, controls the return of Jesus.

This brought to mind to the ancient Pharisees, who believed that they could hasten the arrival of the Messiah by achieving purity: when all the ‘chosen’ were fully pure, the Messiah would come. So Christian Zionism seems to believe that by restoring Israel, Jesus will return, no



Rev Chris Kirby and Rev Andy Hickman

doubt about it.

Confused by all this, I talked with a friend who told me that (because he is Christian) he had been invited by the local (Christian) Friends of Israel society, to volunteer with an organisation called Sar-El. Sar-El gives volunteers from around the world an expenses-paid trip to Israel in order to assist with the Israeli Defence Force (along with time off to see the Holy Sights). So it seems that the pay-off for Christians joining Sar-El is (apart from an international trip) to make a tangible contribution to speeding up the time when Jesus will return, and the pay-off for Israel is additional non-combatant support for their Defence Force, as well as good PR.

Disturbed by the fact that Israel seems to be wooing Christians to support its military, political and expansionist aims, a small protest was organised for the evening of the Ambassador's address. Members of different churches, and non-religious, joined with members of the local Palestinian community to hold a peaceful vigil at the venue. After the vigil, I went inside to hear the Ambassador.

I was surprised at the large size of the very supportive crowd, who seemed to be of one mind, that supporting Israel was completely in line with their ultimate Christian hope: the Second Coming. Our local kaumatua, Wiremu Te Awe Awe (and whanau) gave an overly warm welcome, and the Ambassador spoke in bland generalities, likening Israel to a 'start up' nation and asking all present to continue to support Israel and pressure our government to oppose UN sanctions against Israel. He did not seek for volunteers to join Sar-El.

However, it was revealed that he would be visiting at least one other Christian gathering (in the Hawkes Bay). Clearly, the Ambassador sees an opportunity to notch up popular and political support for Israel by appealing to a large number of Pentecostal and evangelical Christians around the country who confuse Christian Zionism with authentic Christianity. This can only be described as deeply cynical diplomacy, as Israel is officially a secular government, and certainly would dismiss hopes for the Second Coming as a lunatic's fantasy but is quite willing to play to these lunatics in return for tangible support.

### **Christian Zionism - what is it?**

It's bigger than you think. Among the Pentecostal churches in NZ, it seems to have become one of the assumed planks in the raft of faith that holds Christians up out of the waters of 'worldly' chaos. It stems from a literalist reading of scriptures relating to the return of Jesus specifically to Jerusalem. While Christians have at various times through history eagerly expected the return of Jesus, this current brand of religious thinking

originated in 19th century 'dispensationalism'.

Christian Zionism has now grown to become synonymous with US evangelical Christianity, and we are seeing its influence in Pentecostal churches worldwide. It now drives US foreign policy with regard to Israel, from the Bush dynasty and now Trump's top advisers, who believe that the 'final conflict' between Gog and Magog will be a spectacular nuclear conflagration between Israel and Iran.

Of course, the Jesus envisaged in the triumphalist and fiery Second Coming is unrecognisable alongside the Jesus of the Beatitudes. The important question is: what are the results of a literalist Christian Zionist doctrine? Those who expect this world to be burnt up, hoping for a cosmic evacuation for themselves, will not be concerned for the state of our planet, or the suffering of all people through ecological collapse, nor concerned for the vast suffering caused by war waged with WMD. They will be less likely to pray and work for transforming this world to be more like heaven. Ultimately, the doctrine separates the 'saved' from the 'damned'; so the human family is divided, and we plant our feet in the native soil of hatred and war. The fact that Christian Zionism attaches religious hope to a 'holy war' shows it to be ethically equivalent to Islamic jihadism.

### **Jesus teaches**

One of my favourite teachings of Jesus comes to mind: 'Let the wheat grow with the tares (weeds) until the harvest.' Of course, the harvest is the end of time – God's time, not ours. The harvest, and dividing of peoples is God's work, not ours. We hope and pray that we turn out to be like wheat, and not a weed, and we nourish all people, hoping they will turn out to be wheat, because we simply can't separate them out, as the Gospel makes clear. Christian Zionists, however, want to speed up the harvest because they regard themselves as the wheat, and can't stand living with the weeds any longer.

As to the question of how we read the biblical references to the return of Jesus that is NOT literalist and not jihadist is an important task. I live in hope that by offering, and living out, a more compelling and consistent vision of how we conceive Jesus' return, and engaging in friendly dialogue with our Christian brothers and sisters, Christian Zionism may be unravelled, and seen for the harmful turn that it is.

This is no small task. There are powerful political and financial forces actively promoting Christian Zionism. We pray for humility, wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit and a large dose of common sense.

*Forrest Chambers is a Catholic Worker living in Levin with his family.*

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# NZ treatment of seafarers – a national disgrace

John McLister

The other day, a group of Filipino seafarers came to the Seafarers' Centre in Lyttelton. They wanted to know where they could buy some small goods. I took them to a local business where they could purchase everything they wanted. I asked the shop assistant if they could get a discount because of the amount they were buying. He insisted he couldn't do that as the prices are fixed.

Next one of the men asked if they could get some plastic cups to drink from. The shop assistant said 'sure' and produced some plastic cups from behind the counter, saying they were 50c each. When they came to pay, they wanted to use American dollars. All seafarers are paid in this currency. But because Lyttelton has no bank to change it, Lyttelton business are happy to do so, not at the current exchange rate which is \$NZ1.50 for \$US1.00, but dollar for dollar. So for a \$150 transaction, a business makes a profit of \$NZ75. This is literally daylight robbery!

Banks will charge a fee to exchange US dollars dollar into Filipino money, and the shipping company also does the same. So, when a seafarer heads to a Lyttelton shop, that US\$100 he might be clutching is all he has to spend for the month.

## Exploited labour

Actually, a lot of people profit from the labour of seafarers. The NZ annual \$66 billion export and import trade is carried on ships worked by men from poor developing countries. The shipping company Maersk, whose ships regularly come to Lyttelton, is richer than Microsoft. In 2018 it earned US\$30 billion. Ports are extremely profitable business too. Last year the port of Tauranga made \$100 million in post-tax profit. And City Councils that own ports receive millions of dollars in dividends each year.

From the coffee we drink to the cars we drive, all are transported here on ships worked by seafarers. And all these things are affordable, all this is profitable because at the base of this economic pyramid is a cheap workforce. And then we want to charge them 50c for plastic cup!

Worse, we often deny seafarers a fundamental human right. Two years ago, NZ became a signatory to the Maritime Labour Conventions. The conventions are seen as the 'Seafarers Bill of Rights,' an attempt to offer some protection to a vulnerable work force.

**One provision of the convention states that ports should have places where seafarers can go for rest and relaxation when on shore leave.** And at these seafarers centres they will be able to connect to the internet to talk to family change money, top up their phones, get information about the town they are visiting, and most importantly, if they have a welfare issue, they can raise it with a trained seafarers' welfare worker. **To date, no NZ port meets this international agreed standard.**

In Wellington, the port authority only allows the Seafarers Centre to open during cruise ship days. So if you

are on a container ship there is no place you can go to. Port Taranaki in New Plymouth has no centre at all. Timaru's seafarers centre is staffed by kids from one of the local high schools, because they cannot afford to pay for welfare staff. The Lyttelton's Seafarers' Centre, due to funding constraints, can only open in the evenings. The rest of the time, if a seafarer wants internet access, they have to stand on a street corner - even in winter weather.

And apart from a couple of exceptions in NZ, the government, shipping companies, port authorities and councils that own ports – all the entities that profit from seafarer labour – **make little or no financial contribution to these seafarers' welfare centres.** In fact, Tauranga which made that huge profit last year, charges its Seafarers' Centre \$30,000 a year to rent a building!

## Gospel response

In our Gospel reading today (Luke 10/25-37) about the Good Samaritan, there are those who profit by robbing the traveler passing through their county; and those that ignore this robbing.

But there is also another person, someone who is moved with compassion and is willing to offer hospitality. They don't have to, there is no profit in doing so, but they cross the street, not just because there is someone in need, but because they see a person of value, who has the right to be treated with dignity.

Each evening, in Lyttelton, a volunteer opens the seafarers centre, warmly welcome seafarers in from the cold, gives them the password to our free internet, and changes their money for them at a reasonable rate

And if there is a welfare issue on a ship - like unpaid wages, safety concern or breach of contract - we can guide the seafarer to where they can receive help. And if a seafarer wants a cup, we will give it to them free.

Last year at this time, we called for city councils and port authorities, who make nearly \$300 million from seafarers' cheap labour last year, to do the honourable thing and put up some regular finance towards providing seafarers with safe, hospitable and just conditions on shore. We suggested a small levy (\$50 – \$100 per night) should be charged to every ship that comes to port to help towards funding such a resource. This amount would be peanuts compared to the \$20 000 ship owners can pay to tie up dockside for a 24 hour stay. They wouldn't even notice it on their balance sheets!

So far, there has been a positive initial response from the Christchurch City Council and the Lyttelton Port Company but nothing elsewhere. This is a disgrace. It could be fixed so easily. It is time visiting seafarers experienced some justice and genuine hospitality from New Zealand in this matter.

*John McLister is vicar of All Saints Church, Lyttelton, and the Mission to Seafarers Port Chaplain.*

# Honouring the prophets - Greta Thunberg

Jim Consedine

I'm worried about Greta Thunberg – the diminutive 16-year-old suddenly thrust from absolute obscurity into the heart of world politics, into the 'belly of the beast', as John's scripture attests. Her message, crystallising what millions know to be true, has taken the world by storm. But it has pitted her against the lions of commerce, political power and social dis-order. Such lions when aroused usually take no prisoners! I fear for her future.

That she is a prophetic voice is clear. Anyone who has studied the prophets of social justice down the centuries can recognise a prophetic voice or movement when it arises. It is inevitably sharp, focused, relentless and uncompromising. It speaks truth to power. It doesn't have to provide all the answers. It points to the issues and challenges the 'powers that be' to act.

That is what Greta does. God has made her a wonderful example of the weak confronting the strong. Her Asperger's disability, which would normally have marginalised her to the periphery of mainstream society, has proved central to her approach. Its characteristic of being direct and often confrontational, which is the only way she knows, has been one of her great strengths. She says it how she sees it and doesn't pull her punches! And she sees it clearly through educated teenage eyes - while all the highly paid executives, politicians and experts don't appear to want to see. 'There are none so blind.'

## Worldwide movement

Among the young, she has sparked a worldwide movement of nonviolence and pacifism, teachings which sit at the heart Catholic Social Teaching. For her, using violence is not an option. These are wonderful spiritual gifts she is harnessing to propel a movement for climate change and social justice. They are indicators of God's guiding spirit. This is a rare thing that needs to be protected and nurtured – not panned, undermined and scorned as girlish optimism.

She does have a huge investment in the future. The stats say she could live another 70 – 80 years. But unlike her detractors, none of her investment is for monetary gain or pure self-interest. Her interest is her own future wellbeing and the life of the planet itself.

In contrast to her detractors, much current destructive social and economic policy is governed by personal vested interests and the abuse of power. Reflect on the burning Amazon Rainforest as one example to make the point, or the myriad of clothing sweatshops of Asia for another. These are intolerable destructive situations, eating up precious irreplaceable resources or exploiting

workers/labour in slave-like conditions for the profit of the few. Greta demands things change.



Does Greta have to be able to explain what should happen to the economy if corporate capitalism, built on exploitation and greed and focused on over-consumption, is curtailed? Does her message become invalid because she can't provide all the answers? No. She is not an economist, a politician nor an accountant. She is a schoolgirl who has heard, read about and reflected

on the consequences of climate change on our planet and her future. She has joined up some of the dots and called out, 'the emperor has no clothes.'

Her message is simple – we need to change, or we face catastrophe. We should act where we can. And act now – locally, nationally and internationally. Each of us has a part to play.

## no room at the inn

into this world, this demented inn  
in which there is absolutely no room  
for him at all,  
Christ comes uninvited

but because he cannot be at home in it  
because he is out of place in it  
and yet he must be in it  
his place is with the others for whom  
there is no room

his place is with those who do not belong  
who are rejected by power, because  
they are regarded as weak  
those who are discredited  
who are denied status of persons  
who are tortured, bombed and  
exterminated

for those for whom there is no room  
Christ is present in this world

—Thomas Merton

# Around the Traps

**Sister Helen Goggin RSM at 90.** Through 23 years and 90 editions, Christchurch Sister of Mercy, Helen Goggin, has been the ‘final set of eyes’ upon the completed script of *The Common Good* before it went to the printers. The reason we have been saved from spelling mistakes and embarrassment about punctuation during all these years is because of Helen’s wonderful eye and profound knowledge of English language and syntax and her proven skills as a teacher. Misplaced participles and absent commas are her specialty! We were very happy to join many others on 2nd August at St Mary’s parish centre, New Brighton, to honour Helen on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and thank her for her generous spirit and dedication to our CW cause. Thank you Helen.

**Maureen Borell RIP** – It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death 16th August of one of our most faithful Christchurch CW members, Maureen Borell. Maureen had been unwell for some time but her death came as a surprise to many. She had been a regular attendee at the CW weekly liturgy on-and-off for nearly 30 years, often attending with some difficulty as her health failed. At her wonderful tangi at her son Phillip and daughter-in-law Stephanie’s home, attended by nearly 100 people, Jim led the funeral service, Mike Coughlin built the casket and Francis, Kathleen and Sister Judith spoke of Maureen’s place in our CW community. Many others reflected on her deep faith, her kindness, her humour and her simplicity of lifestyle. She will be remembered with great affection by all who knew her.

**We were also sad to hear of Egbert (Ben) Spekrijse’s death** in early September after a lengthy illness. An immigrant from Holland after the war, Ben was a regular visitor at our CW Wednesday night services for some years and always had a strong point of view to express. A deeply spiritual man, a real searcher after truth, Ben will be missed by his wife Cara and his family. May he rest in peace.

**Drug addiction – to criminalise or heal?** – The US has 5 percent of the world’s population but nearly 25 percent of the world’s incarcerated people locked up in their prisons. An astounding one fifth of its 2.3

million prisoners are behind bars on drug charges. Many are imprisoned merely for the possession of drugs.

Portugal has taken a different approach. In the 1990s, the country was wracked by a drug epidemic which led to significant drug-fuelled violence and death. In 2001, Portugal decriminalised all drugs. The outcome was that drug use actually decreased, deaths by overdose plummeted by 89 percent and new HIV infections among drug users fell from 52 percent to seven percent.

We shouldn’t be surprised at these results. Portugal began dealing with addiction as a health problem. The substances remained illegal but possession of small quantities ceased to be. People are now referred to professional medical services rather than to police stations and courtrooms. Portugal wants its citizens to recover rather than follow a punitive approach.

—Jack Derwin, *Tui Motu*, May 2019.

**Bruce Kent 90!** Heartiest congratulations to Bruce Kent, one of the founders of MAW, the Movement for the Abolition of War, who recently turned 90. Bruce has for decades been involved in the UK with MAW, Pax Christi, CND and IPB as an instigator of public debate and organiser of campaigns. He was recently awarded the Sean McBride Prize, awarded annually by the International Peace Bureau, for his outstanding leadership on peace and justice issues in the UK and abroad. Ad multos annos, Bruce! *Abolish War*, August 2019

**Hunger in a World of Abundance** -The new 2019 Food Security Information Network report records that approximately 113 million people in 53 countries experienced hunger and high levels of food insecurity in 2018. Moreover, another 143 million people in another 42 countries are just one step away from acute hunger. (*Food Security Information Network report 2019*). In New Zealand, new research from Auckland City Mission finds about half a million – 10% of the population – experience food insecurity, not having enough appropriate food. (Sarah Robson, *Radio New Zealand*, 16 October 2019).

## CW Website

Leading articles from the first 23 years of  
*The Common Good*  
Alternative funerals  
Restorative Justice  
Other theological issues  
[www.catholicworker.org.nz](http://www.catholicworker.org.nz)

## FUNERAL CHOICE

A Catholic Worker Project  
Cheaper alternatives to consumer funerals  
[www.funeralchoice.co.nz](http://www.funeralchoice.co.nz)



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# Guilty of Peacemaking

*Prophecy has ragged edges. It sets out to deconstruct the present situation. It critiques social structures to which many have given their lives or in which they have status. ... the ring of real prophecy lies in its uncommon courage.* Sr Joan Chittister OSB

The Kings Bay Ploughshares group of Catholic Workers, Carmen Trotta, Clare Grady, Patrick O'Neill, Martha Hennessy, Mark Colville, plus veteran peacemakers Elizabeth

McAlister (79) and, Jesuit priest Stephen Kelly SJ, stood trial October. 21 2019 in Brunswick, Georgia, each on charges of three felonies and one misdemeanour.

Earlier they had written an **Open Letter to Pope Francis**, in which they explained the moral compulsion which called them to act.

'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.'

'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.'

'The existence of nuclear weapons is an ongoing, relentless assault on the human community and the planet itself. Each Trident submarine can carry 24

submarine-launched ballistic Trident B5 missiles. Each missile can carry up to eight 100 kiloton nuclear warheads, about 30 times the explosive force as the Hiroshima bomb.'

'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.'

This symbolic disarmament of a nuclear weapon was, indeed, prophecy in action – real, ragged, discomfiting, and not to be ignored.

The jury, after a four-day trial, found the accused Christians guilty as charged. They were remanded for sentencing to early January 2020.



## Reviews

**Rod Orange, *See, Judge, Act*, - training Catholic activists in New Zealand, 1937-1983, Steele Roberts Aotearoa, Wellington, Pb 252 pages. Price - \$40. Available from [steelersoberts.co.nz](http://steelersoberts.co.nz) or your local bookshop. Reviewer: Jim Consedine**

What a labour of love this book is! For more than 10 years, Rod Orange researched, wrote and has finally produced an amazing history of not just one Church lay organisation, but four – the Catholic Youth Movement (CYM), Young Christian Workers (YCW), Young Christian Students (YCS) and the Christian Family Movement (CFM). These movements thrived in New Zealand during the 1960s and 1970s and gradually died out in the 1980s

At their peak, they helped form several thousand lay Catholics nationwide about Christian life and how to live it in today's world. Their formula was simple – to follow the mantra of the prophetic Belgian priest/founder Joseph Cardijn: See, Judge, Act. Nourished by their regular weekly meetings, these folk went into their workplaces, homes and wider communities to bear witness to the message of Christ as found in the gospels and in Catholic teaching.

Rod Orange explores in much detail the *modus operandi* of the movements, interviews many key leaders and draws on written archival material. Ultimately he asks and attempts to answer the difficult question– why did they flourish so successfully for so long and then wither and die within a short few years? He looks at the key role bishops and chaplains played, the secular social movements that arose during the latter period, the upheaval in the Church after Vatican II, and the influence changing social mores and values had on Church lay movements.

He has produced a very readable popular history, filled with facts and insights. Illustrated with more than 100 photographs, many of them along with a lucid text provide historic insights into the youth of previous generations and their involvement with the Church.

*See, Judge, Act* largely succeeds in its aims to provide an eyewitness account of the lay movements of the era, 1937-83. That he opens up many questions which need far more in-depth reflection is clear and answers are not immediate. Historians in the future will hopefully seek resolution to such questions and will find this book a great aid in their further research.

This is a brave effort at a huge task and the author

accomplishes it well and is to be heartily commended. It is a book well worth reading if one wants to understand the times surrounding Vatican II and the turmoil in society and the changes in the Church that followed. And, more pointedly, what happened to these successful lay movements and why.

**Film Review – *Amazing Grace* – Starring Aretha Franklin and the Southern Californian Community Choir. Reviewer: Jim Consedine**

*Amazing Grace* is a documentary filmed in black-and-white in January 1972 which has only now been released. It shows the making of what became Aretha Franklin's greatest LP and the biggest selling gospel record of all time.

I enjoyed it immensely. Exhilarating, full of passion, her voice is at times gentle and soft, at other times soaring and electrifying in its delivery. Backed by the Southern Californian Community Choir led by Rev. James Cleveland, *Amazing Grace* gives full opportunity for Aretha Franklin to return to her gospel roots and deliver from deep within her soul and the heart of black gospel music. And deliver she does – in spades!

And it set me thinking. The theology of black gospel singing, with its origins among slaves in the plantations of the southern states of the USA in the 1800s, has sustained Afro-Americans through two subsequent centuries of systemic racism including lynchings and public humiliation, and through the period of Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement. It nurtured their souls, providing a spirituality that was authentically theirs, home-spun from their

## Letters

25a Nyhane Drive,  
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Dear Jim,

I always enjoy receiving *The Common Good*.. Articles are both challenging and inspiring. We live in a tumultuous time in human history. I feel we humans have done more damage to our planet in the past 30 years than in the whole of history prior. Climate change and the extinction of creatures small and large in the next 10-15 years is both scary and potentially horrendous. Our youth are leading the charge for action NOW, not in 2, 5 or 10 years' time.

Great editorial on Extinction Rebellion (CG89), and Thomas Berry is a hero of mine. Economic growth is an absolutely ridiculous phenomenon to gauge development on. It comes through economists being disconnected to the reality of natural ecological systems.

Your wring and presentation to the EcuAction meeting, along with Kathleen Gallagher's piece, Water, Climate Change and Christian faith (CG90), I found VERY powerful and uplifting. Also, Kathleen's piece is hopeful and speaks of the earth's amazing ability to bounce back once we support her to recover and renew.

For too long humanity has lived with a disconnect

struggles.

In a sense, their wording is frozen in time. And yet it is not. There is something compelling about it that overrides any theological constraints. To hear the voices of the oppressed rising in song, believing in and calling on Jesus to liberate them, be their saviour and lead them to freedom is compelling. It is a universal call, valid regardless of time and context. They identified with God's message of liberation – and believed.

Having seen first-hand the docile exclusive Jesus preached in 'whites only' churches in South Africa in the apartheid era, watched senators in the US Congress today coming from prayer breakfasts to enact even harsher laws against immigrants and the poor, and noted how for generations in NZ we have 'tilted the scales' against the poor to favour the rich through discriminatory laws including taxation, it is clear that the Jesus many claim to follow has little in common with the Jesus of the oppressed peoples of the world.

Reflecting upon *Amazing Grace*, I realised southern gospel song writers read and understood the scriptures through different eyes to their slave masters. I came to understand that the Jesus of black enslaved people spoke to their souls and is not the acquiescent Jesus of much of white Christianity, despite a common language and primary biblical source. He is a Jesus who liberates and frees and offers hope of a better future for them. That is what makes this soul music so powerful - even today.

The film provided more food for thought than I anticipated.

with nature. Can humanity turn around this world of ours that is crying out for change? I'm hoping and praying for this. My sense is increasingly Aotearoa is waking up to the need for urgent action on many fronts. Probably the greatest urgency is to move away from an economic system that is flawed and out-dated. I admire PM Ardern but she still trumpets on about economic growth.

Keep up your awesome reflections and challenging articles. God bless our FUTURE and our NOW! God's mercy and abundant graces on you and the incredible Catholic Worker movement.

Namaste. With respect and gratitude,

*Gaike Knottenbelt*

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Palmerston North,  
6 August 2019

Greetings Jim.

Congratulations on another fine issue of *The Common Good*. You have a gift for putting into words the insights that come through what you do, and what you do is a fine example of actions accompanying words. You do well to publish what you write, and what you and your team do.

I had been reflecting on the work of the British group Campaign Against the Arms Trade and wondering what I could do from a country that isn't selling arms to Saudi Arabia. And you told us about Rocket Lab. I despise Israel's gross injustices against Palestinians, and the way they try to skew criticism to make it look like anti-Semitism. And in your letter to the Prime Minister, you just tell it straight! I have always admired Pauline O'Regan; you published a twenty-three-year-old letter that could have been written yesterday. I have felt frustrated by the 'social and fiscal failure' of our prison system; you have described a really enlightened alternative (and shared the ludicrous episode of the cards you sent.)

We all know what happened to the seed sown in different kinds of soil; you have reminded us that it doesn't grow at all without water. We all know the importance of *The Common Good*; you show how it is violated by a president who can tell his people 12 untruths a day for 869 days, (because many seem to like it!), NZ's record rates of family violence, and the rate at which Americans are killing each other, which sooner or later has to happen where violence is used for entertainment.

Congratulations, too, on the book of poetry. Really good poems!

Kind regards

+ *Peter Cullinane*

Emeritus Bishop of Palmerston North

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454 Ouhiwa Road  
RD1, Onerahi 0192

Dear Catholic Workers,

Congratulations and thanks to all you beautiful people connected to *The Common Good*, the Catholic Worker and Te Wairua Maranga Trust, for a very worthwhile Spring 2019 edition of your magazine..

We rejoice in your 30 years of witnessing to the Gospel and working for peace and justice in our context of Aotearoa. May God bless you all with insight and courage to continue your mission.

With you in Spirit and peace,

*Mary Maitland RNDM and  
Susan Smith RNDM*

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Hawkes Bay,  
21 July 2019

Dear Father Jim,

What a treasure you and your team are!

As I have mentioned before, we in Sister Mary McCann's Environment and Social Justice Group in the Parish of Hastings, always feature and promote your publication, and we were deeply touched by the Easter

Edition and your articles. *The Rivers of Blood to Rivers of Love* was something everyone in the country should read, as were all the articles actually. Daniel O'Leary's last article was deeply moving too – and to the point!

Thank you for the work you do and thank you for the lives you touch. It fills us with happiness and joy.

On another note, we have started a 'Welcome Cuppa' every Wednesday morning. Held in the foyer of Sacred Heart Church where we also have a small kitchen, we have opened this to EVERYONE and ANYONE! The Parish supplies the tea and coffee and Sr Mary and I do the muffins and biscuits etc. The numbers attending are growing every week which fills us with great joy. We have been joined by some of our Muslim brethren, fellow Anglicans, our own parishioners, especially those who are on their own and/or a tad lonely and local passers-by. We have sent invitations to Age Concern which is just up the road and people come in from there, and this afternoon we will do an invitation drop to the houses and flats near the church. It is strictly NOT religious, just welcoming and warm.

On yet another note, great to see that 'Pretty Penny Loans' are in trouble for their usury!!!

Please remember us in your prayers as we remember you and your great team.

With love,

*Nicola Green*

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Manila  
The Philippines  
July 2019

Dear Jim and fellow CWers!

Congratulations on that milestone of 30 years! Wow. That is something to celebrate! Yes, what a journey it is, and indeed, 'often a hard struggle' as you put it. Our consolation is we participate in the Cross of Christ by doing this, and that he is with us in this journey

You speak of your community as small and local. We are, too. Dorothy Day anyways always said to stay small and do what is best to put love where there is none or little love. Thanks for including the events regarding the Philippines in your newsletter. Things here are not as rosy as President Duterte and his allies want the world to believe. Yes, please, include me in your mailing list and we would be happy to receive your newsletter. It can be awfully lonely at times, and knowing we are bound together as a universal/Catholic movement lessens our loneliness. Thank goodness for this virtual community, for Dorothy Day used to say that 'community is the solution to the long loneliness.'

Thank you for reaching out to me. You're the first from the list! I'll add you to my prayers.

Sincerely,

*Noel E. Bordador*

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**The Common Good**

Te Wairua Maranga Trust  
 Box 33-135  
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 New Zealand



The Pentagon has many installations and we just walked out of one of them – the court. It’s a place where they weaponize the law and they wield it mostly against the poor. Once in a while people of privilege like us get a taste of it, and when we do, we should hear the word ‘guilty’ as a blessing on us because it gives us an opportunity to stand with people who hear ‘guilty’ all the time, every day.

*—CW Mark Colville, Kings Bay Ploughshares peacemaker*