

The Common Good

Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor

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Content with Enough

Jim Consedine

There is an urgent need for a change of direction, a decisive resolve to pass from the 'throwaway culture' prevalent in our societies to a 'culture of care' for our common home and its inhabitants, now and in the future. Pope Francis, July 2022

One of the biggest causes of the crisis the planet faces is that of overconsumption in so-called developed countries, and malnourishment and hunger among the majority of the world's population.



Catholic Worker co-founder Peter Maurin, 1941

do to help save our planet Earth from self-destruction. All the international scientific evidence is that global warming is the increasingly speedy trajectory we are on at the moment. It is coming at us with like a metaphoric fireball-tsunami. As the Extinction Rebellion movement reminds us, *'Centuries of domination and exploitation of land, sea and people have brought our planetary home to an existential catastrophe.'*

A UN report, May 2022, says that greenhouse gas concentrations, sea levels, ocean heat and ocean acidification all hit new records last year, in what they say was 'a litany of humanity's failure to tackle climate disruption'.

And according to the World Meteorological Organisation's (WMO) annual *State of Climate Report*, the past seven years have been the warmest ever. It warns that climate change is compounding with the impact of war and the Covid - 19 pandemic to 'undermine decades of progress towards improving food security globally', with a growing number of countries at risk of famine.'

What a legacy to leave future generations!

What is enough?

We live in a consumer culture dominated by corporate interests where what you own helps define who you are, providing a key to identity. That is an underpinning foundational stone of free-

A UN report, May 2022, says that greenhouse gas concentrations, sea levels, ocean heat and ocean acidification all hit new records last year, in what they say was 'a litany of humanity's failure to tackle climate disruption'.

Indeed, starvation is a major cause of death on a planet that throws good food away at an alarming rate. Figures from the Rabobank – Kiwi Harvest Food Waste Research Survey, June 2022, show that last year Kiwis trashed and threw away food to the tune of \$3.1 billion, or 13.4% purchased (\$1520 annually per family), up from 8.4% in the year prior. At the same time, 41 million people in 43 countries faced famine or starvation, up from 27 million in 2018. What a contrast!

This is only one of many interrelated issues that comes to mind when accessing what each of us can



market capitalism, which is geared to the accumulation of capital not the wellbeing of people regardless of social consequences.

It constantly hammers us with messages that we need new things and will find happiness and contentment with ownership of them. Just listen to commercial radio or watch the ad breaks on TV! They present a huge lie, the ultimate 'fake news'. Their claims are false. We cannot find fulfilment on this pathway.

Our consumer society offers much by way of innovative production but little by way of spiritual nourishment and has no built-in mechanism to guide its growth to take account of the common good of humanity and respect for the planet itself. Indeed, the opposite is the case. Its built-in mechanisms are towards ever-increasing expansion, which by its very nature constitutes a

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 regular liturgies 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.

www.catholicworker.org.nz

subliminal death wish.

The neoliberal economic doctrine of ever-increasing GDP, a cornerstone of every major economy, is a threat to Mother Earth and the life of the planet itself. Continuing to follow it is like sticking rigidly to a policy of sipping poison daily and hoping the cumulative effects over time won't kill us. It will.

Take cars for example. Fifty years ago cars generally were bought to fit the need of the required occupancy. Nowadays, they have too often become more of a symbol of prestige and prosperity. They seem to get bigger every year. In a planetary crisis, it seems unconscionable that the numbers of four-wheel drives and large vehicles continue to dominate our roads, further congesting the cities and polluting the atmosphere.

Spiritual guides since time immemorial from every religious tradition have taught that fulfilment in life comes from following a spiritual path and has little to do with what we possess. These pathways have been well marked for centuries. Most of us are continuing to ignore them at our peril, which is now staring us all in the face.

Ethical and moral issues

Thus, we are faced with many interrelated moral and ethical questions. In a world of finite resources which are rapidly running out because of widespread exploitation, over-consumption and wastage is a principal one for all of us.

It raises the question, what is enough and why aren't we content with enough? What is it that makes us want bigger, better, greater and more, when the planet cries out for us to live more humbly with smaller and less?

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Contentment, peace of mind and heart, is not to be bought at any monetary price. It is a spiritual gift from our Creator, the Great Spirit of Love many call God or Christ or Atua or the Buddha or Yahweh or Allah or other sacred names. It is acquired by the turning of our hearts to this Source and frequently drawing on the nourishment that comes from making such a connection.

This spiritual source is available anytime, anywhere, to anyone. It is like a never-ending waterfall pouring from beyond the horizon, surrounding us and dissipating into a million streams, creeks and waterways which constantly continue to nurture us and our planet. All we need to do is step under this waterfall to drink and be refreshed.

Accepting such a gift teaches us to be content with enough. As St Basil the Great, a towering figure in his time and a Doctor of the Church, taught in the 4th century: *'What we own over and above to what we need, does not belong to us but to the poor who have nothing.'* This means that our private ownership of resources has justice implications towards our neighbour and requires social responsibility.

What to do

Only massive structural change worldwide to limit corporate dairy farming, fishing, mining, airline travel, deforestation, and oil and gas exploration among other things can prevent irretrievable ecological catastrophe occurring to Mother Earth during the remaining decades of this century.

One thing we can't do is shrug our shoulders and say, 'It's not my problem.' In this time of crisis, promoting the common good and planetary health is everyone's problem. We all know that being 'content with enough' starts with us.

While this is a gigantic task, there is much we can do to personalise the issues, keep us aware of the problems and live more ethical and morally just lives. The teachings of Jesus on social justice sit at the heart of any response. Individually, we can inch our way towards living more sustainability, more holistically and help the life of the planet. By so doing, we will nurture our hope that, 'God co-operates with those who seek to do good.' (Romans 8/28).

Among many achievable things, there are six actions reflecting core social justice values we

could take now to make life more sustainable:

#We can reduce energy use and minimise wastage in our homes and workplaces. Look at packaging! Look in the fridge and the garage. Remember the \$3.1 billion annual NZ wastage mentioned earlier!

We can change our diet and eat less meat. According to the UN, meat production produces more greenhouse gases than all the planes, cars and trains combined. Ruminant animals like cows and sheep, burp methane – which is 28 times more potent than CO2.

We can end use of and support the ban on synthetic nitrogen fertiliser on our farms and move to regenerative food production by growing some of our own food (as most families did 50 years ago) and supporting local growers who do. Growing more organic food is vital.

We can protect and repair the land, water, rivers and seas by becoming more aware of how sick they are and doing what we can to support groups already involved, like Greenpeace and Forest and Bird.

We can work with others to end inequality in housing, income and wealth and create a more just playing field where everyone can achieve their human rights of appropriate and safe housing, food and employment. Note the crazy (evil?) free market housing crisis in NZ!

We can walk, cycle or use public transport more and make a habit of it.

The Catholic Worker movement, co-founded by Peter Maurin (pictured p1) and Dorothy Day, has been attempting to live such a sustainable alternative vision for more than 90 years in their more than 200 communities around the world. Many other spiritual movements share similar visions.

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<p>CW Website Leading articles from the first 24 years of <i>The Common Good</i> Alternative funerals Restorative Justice Other theological issues www.catholicworker.org.nz</p>	<p>FUNERAL CHOICE A Catholic Worker Project Cheaper alternatives to consumer funerals www.funeralchoice.co.nz</p>
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Editorial 1 Fairer Taxation

EcuAction, a Christchurch-based interfaith justice group, is lobbying for a fairer tax system and says that GST is at the core of New Zealand's unfair system. GST, they say, needs to be scrapped and replaced by taxes which targeted the wealthy, who should pay a proportionally larger share of their income as tax, as they do in many other countries similar to New Zealand.

Addressing an EcuAction winter seminar in Christchurch, social justice advocate John Minto told the meeting, 'The Sheriff of Nottingham would be proud of how much tax we take from the poor to support the lifestyles of the rich. The rules are seriously unfair and need to change. The system is loaded against poor people. Those on the lowest incomes pay much higher proportions of their income in tax than the wealthy and super-wealthy.'

We all pay GST ... so it sounds fair. But a person in the lowest income decile pays 14 percent of their income in GST, because they have to spend all their income. Those in the highest income decile pay less than 5 percent of their income on GST because they are able to save and invest part of their income rather than spend it.

Then there's the imbalance in income tax. IRD reports show many wealthy people declare incomes low enough to avoid the top income tax bracket. The combined effects of unfair income tax and unfair GST show some horrid truths.

Minimum wage workers pay nearly 30 percent of their income in tax. The super-wealthy pay less than five percent of theirs. This unfairness is hard baked into our tax system. Wage and salary earners pay tax on every dollar earned and every dollar spent. They cannot avoid tax. It's taken out of pay before they get

it. Retailers deduct it with every purchase. Whereas for the wealthy, tax is almost voluntary. They have many ways to avoid or reduce their dues.

It is morally wrong. The wealthiest five percent now own 37 percent of the country's wealth and their share is growing at the expense of the rest of us. Meanwhile the poorest half of our society, who pay the highest rates of tax, have just two percent of the country's wealth. Tax policy must change. It is unjust. It's what has got us into this dreadful iniquitous mess.'

EcuAction spokesperson, a past president of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Rev Brian Turner, told the meeting that the just way forward, which would be far more in line with the values of the Gospel, would be to abolish GST and raise the \$25 billion needed to replace it with three specific taxes focussed on the wealthy. As a result, those 'currently paying pocket-money levels of tax' would then be paying a fairer share.

A **Financial Transactions Tax** (FTT), also known as a Tobin Tax, would put about 0.1% tax – \$2 a week for most – on all money transfers through banks and financial institutions. This, plus savings from removing GST, will bring in large amounts from the high-value money flows in areas such as currency trading which take place each day. It should bring the government \$15 billion a year. A **Wealth Tax** (targeting the top 5 percent) would bring in about \$10 billion. And a **Capital Acquisitions Tax** would be for those receiving cash windfalls – eg large inheritances. All three tax categories are commonly used in countries New Zealand compares itself to.

—John Minto, Brian Turner

Editorial 2 Synodal lessons from cricket tests

I have been pondering the recent amazing turn-around in fortunes of the England men's cricket team against NZ following the visionary appointment of a new captain and a new coach.

The staid, upper-crust establishment administrators of English cricket, facing further humiliation of their team after a record streak of losses, stepped outside the previous failing model, broke with tradition and put their faith in a couple of overseas-based Kiwi mavericks to play a more adventuresome and exciting game.

Though the rules stayed the same, these two instilled a new team culture whereby each player was

encouraged to show belief, play to his strengths, take personal responsibility and display initiative. It paid off in spades, producing a transformed game and four test wins in a row!

I couldn't help but equate what cricket had done to what Pope Francis is trying to do through launching the Synodal initiative. Because more and more the Church is failing the mandate Jesus gave his disciples, 'to bring good news to the poor, liberty to captive, sight to the blind,' (Luke 4), Pope Francis is encouraging us to do world-wide what the English coach and captain did in their sport. He is taking an old, tired and failing Church structure and returning

to the original roots of its mission. Like the England cricket leaders, he wants transformation.

The Church, especially in the industrialised West, is clearly in crisis. By almost every measuring stick, it is failing – not unlike the England cricket team had been for some years. Numbers are down everywhere, belief is often tepid, the structures dated and sexist, too often the leadership appears to show little faith or trust in lay people. They seem unable to unlock the Church's treasures for general consumption.

Without creative leadership at all levels, a more dynamic faith, the daily accompaniment of the scriptures, links to the best of our Tradition especially the central insights of Vatican II, and attention to the presence of the Holy Spirit walking daily with each person, the Church is doomed to continue to fail as were the English cricketers on their previous trajectory.

Enter Pope Francis and his invitation to a Synodal journey of living a more mature faith. 'As Christians we do not receive a vocation individually, we are also called together. We are like the tiles of a mosaic. Each

is lovely in itself, but only when they are put together do they form a picture. Each of us shines like a star in the heart of God and in the firmament of the Universe. At the same time, we are called to form constellations that can guide and light up the path of humanity, beginning with the places we live in.'

Jesus never preached an individualistic faith without social content. He preached a model of life calling for a growing relationship with God, a developed spirituality, mature friendships with other like-minded people, and a chance to take some personal responsibility for the faith of future generations.

The Synodal journey is already under way. The journey will not be easy and will take vision, courage and deeper faith. We will all be challenged to take more responsibility, to grow beyond where we are now. There will be struggle and pain. That is guaranteed.

But there will also be fulfilment and wonderful fruit of gifts of freedom, love and a positive legacy.

—Jim Consedine

Editorial 3 No to Rocket Lab

In these unstable times, it is tempting to snuggle up to the biggest players for protection and comfort internationally. That is fine if what they offer is life-giving and peaceful. This is not the case with NZ-founded Rocket Lab, now partnered up with some of the biggest and most dangerous arms-producing corporations in the world.

Rocket Lab is a large corporation that launches satellites from New Zealand and the USA. It also produces satellite components, assembles them, and provides 'on-orbit' management. A major investor in Rocket Lab is Lockheed Martin – the biggest corporate arms manufacturer in the world. Another investor is the CIA's In-Q-Tel.

Rocket Lab launches satellites directly implicated in the US warfighting operations. 'Launch integration and mission management service provider TriSept Corporation signed a contract with the US Space and Missile Défense Command for a mission aboard a Rocket Lab Electron vehicle in the first quarter of 2021.' (*Satellitoday website, 22 October 2020*)

The Gunsmoke-J science and technology effort will provide new and advanced capabilities to tactical war fighters in a satellite about the size of a loaf of bread (*US Army website, 8 July 2021*)

Rocket Lab's customer base is evenly split across government and commercial organisations including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

(NASA), the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). (*Rocket Lab website, 25 August 2021.*)

In December 2018, Rocket Lab launched what is described as an 'educational' mission for NASA. The US Defense department confirmed that the satellite was in fact a DARPA project intended to improve a radar system whose uses included detecting missiles and stealth aircraft.

More recently, Rocket Lab successfully launched its second mission for the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), a US military intelligence agency. In addition, Rocket Lab won a contract to supply components for an upgrade to the US military's missile defence system. (*NZ Herald, 4 August 2022*)

Nuclear-free New Zealand, long known and honoured for its independent stance in military matters, should be very wary of welcoming the US military push into the Mahia Peninsula via Rocket Lab.

We should not be naïve about such matters nor conned by big spending corporations about jobs and wealth creation. We all know how lies and deception are the first platforms of warmongering and we should stay well clear of any promises from corporate interests with military ties.

—Warren Thomson/Jim Consedine

Around the Traps

Nuclear war threat – Addressing the United Nations, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, said: ‘We have been extraordinarily lucky so far. But luck is not a strategy, nor is it a shield from geopolitical tensions boiling over into nuclear conflict. Today humanity is just one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation. We need a treaty of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons as much as ever.’ *The Press*, 2 August 2022

A fresh study on the global impact of a nuclear war has concluded that any nuclear conflict would plunge the world into darkness, cause temperatures to plummet and wipe out much of the world’s sea life. Researchers at Louisiana State University found that in all scenarios, firestorms would release soot and smoke into the upper atmosphere, blocking out the sun and forcing temperatures to fall by an average of 7 degrees Celsius in the first month.

That in turn would cause ocean temperatures to fall and sea ice to expand by more than 15.5 million square kilometres, blocking many major ports. Changes to the Arctic Circle would likely last thousands of years. It would create ‘a nuclear little ice age’. *Washington Post*, 6 July 2022

Cultural genocide – Pope Francis said that the Catholic Church’s past treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada amounted to a cultural ‘genocide’ and warned against a colonialist mindset that continues to view Native peoples and customs as

‘inferior.’ Francis said that ‘taking away the children, changing the culture and mentality’ and erasing ‘an entire culture’ was effectively a ‘genocide.’ *NCR*, 29 July 2022

Free Julian Assange – Wikileaks founder and war crimes whistle-blower, Julian Assange, continues to languish in solitary confinement in Belmarsh Prison in London awaiting an appeal decision by London court as to his extradition to the US on charges of leaking American war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan to the world’s media. Married with two children to Stella Assange, he has been remanded in custody since April 2019. He is usually locked in his cell for more than 20 hours a day alone, which is causing his mental health to fail. *The Press*, 3 July 2022

Gunmakers’ profits – Assault rifles, marketed as a way for young men to ‘prove their manliness’, have made US\$1 billion (NZ\$1.6 billion) for leading gun manufacturers over the past decade according to a US Congressional hearing. *The Press*, 29 July 2022

Too many cows - In 1990, New Zealand had 3.5 million cows. Now we are home to 6.3 million of them. Kiwis used to joke about being outnumbered by sheep. Now we can add cows to the list. A paradox is that agriculture is responsible for producing 49% of New Zealand’s emissions, with dairy cows producing nearly half of those. Yet our milk production has the lowest carbon footprint in the world! *The Press*, 1 June 2022

Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki – the Truth about War

Peter Murnane OP

On 6th August 1945, the day the atomic bomb was first used in war, peace-making came to mean what it could not have meant before: the task of saving humanity from collective suicide. On that day, the nuclear era was inaugurated by a light that incinerated Hiroshima and killed 125 000 of its inhabitants. On that day the blessing of peacemakers became the blessing for our century...No one can be a Christian without being a peacemaker. Henri Nouwen

We pause to remember and pray for our dead, in many wars. As followers of the Risen Christ, we are called to seek and speak the truth: to repent; to see the

bigger picture. Applying this to the violence that people use against each other in war, we are faced with Jesus’ clear command: ‘love your enemies’.

The Australian continent first began to see war on a large scale when the British Empire arrived here in 1788. In the following 200 years, about 60,000 First Nations people have been killed in the Frontier Wars, and their cultures largely destroyed, often deliberately. So we remember and pray for them.

We pray too for the European-Australian soldiers who have died in many wars, from the 1890s Boer War, when we joined in the invasion of South Africa; and invaded Turkey at Gallipoli in 1915. We pray for

the 60,000 who were killed in WWI, and about 28,000 in WWII, and 5000 in Vietnam. Then there is our part in the more recent invasion of Iraq; the prolonged fighting in Afghanistan, and many other places.

We also remember and pray for the many soldiers of other countries who died opposing our soldiers. And the countless millions more civilians: children, women, the old, who died as a result of our weapons and our poisons: Agent Orange in Vietnam and depleted uranium in Iraq. We think of, and pray for, people who are dying in wars today where we are physically involved: in Yemen, Ethiopia, Palestine and Ukraine.

While we need rituals in commemorating the dead, we must be careful lest our remembrance ceremonies give even a hint of glorifying war. The first Christians, for 300 years, refused to fight in wars. Only when the Roman Emperor Constantine began to grant favours to the church, did he get Christians into his armies. Before that, we used to follow Jesus' command: 'love your enemies'. Sadly, in our own day too, we have sometimes believed our governments and the media when they tell us to hate Germans, Japanese, Russians or Muslims.

The crime of war is always based on lies. In every war, governments use heavy censorship to stop us from knowing what is really happening. During the terrible battles on the River Somme and at Passchendaele, when 60,000 men were slaughtered in one day on 'our' side alone, the British newspapers reported a day of successful fighting.

What is war? It is not glorious; it is legalised murder; always a crime and a sin. If we see two individual people fighting over something, violently smashing each other's faces, we call the police, bring them before the court, perhaps lock them up. If governments tell us to smash and destroy other people, we too-easily obey. We need to listen to those who know war's true horror and pray for all war's victims.

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Killing other human beings goes completely against our nature, so war always damages all those who take part, and the families they return to. Those

who kill and who see murders around them are always seriously affected by some degree of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. More Australian soldiers now kill themselves after they return home, than are killed in battles.

Let us pray in repentance for the terrible crimes that all sides commit in wars. Rape is very common in war, and the torture of prisoners. Remember My Lai, the village in Vietnam where angry soldiers massacred more than 500 Vietnamese villagers? Such things happened often. Remember Abu Ghraib and Bagram prisons in Iraq, where US and British soldiers tortured prisoners? In Iraq, we were one of the 'allies' who, against international law, destroyed water, power and sewage systems, causing untold misery and death.

War is terrorism. Our opening bombardment of Iraq was called shock and awe. War creates terrorists among the people we defeat; has given thousands of young Muslims good reason to hate us and to seek revenge against us. War is enormously wasteful. Just 3% of the trillions of dollars spent on weapons would very quickly feed and educate all the world's children.

What can we teach our children? That there are always alternatives to war. That in the 20th century more great social problems were solved by non-violent means than by war: the peaceful expulsion of the British Empire from India; the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa; the dismantling of the Berlin wall and the entire Soviet Union; African Americans gaining civil rights in the southern USA, all without war. There are many more examples.

Do we teach our children that in every major war, a few brave people have gone against the crowd, followed their conscience and refused to take part? Those conscientious objectors were often severely punished for speaking against the war: imprisoned, even tortured, for doing what the gospel teaches.

What can we teach our children? That there are always alternatives to war.

Surely we Christians need to oppose arms 'fairs' where companies like Lockheed, Boeing and Raytheon advertise their deadly products, and children are invited to play with guns and climb on tanks? Surely we need to shun the needless violence in movies, video games and toys that promote killing people as a normal part of life.

Australian-based Dominican friar, Peter Murnane OP was a member of the Waihopai Ploughshares disarmament action which highlighted the role that NZ spy base plays in current wars. He gave this homily on Anzac Day in Sydney.

Nuclear disarmament our only hope for the future

by Patrick O'Neill

On June 13, 1982, *The New York Times* reported that on the previous day 700,000 people had marched from the United Nations to Central Park in Manhattan as part of the country's largest-ever protest calling for an end to the nuclear arms race and in support of global nuclear disarmament.

It was 40 years ago, at a time of great Cold War tension between the US and the Soviet Union. The march was held during the U.N. Second Special Session on Disarmament, part of an international effort to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction.

The Times story stated: 'Asserting that the nuclear arms race, while threatening mankind with extinction, already damages life on the earth, scores of speakers at yesterday's disarmament rally sought to show how their individual constituencies were suffering.'

'There were black and Hispanic leaders pointing out the connection between big military budgets and reduced social programs for the poor, union leaders asking for jobs instead of costly weapons, doctors voicing concern about current radiation levels and mothers worrying about their children's future.'

Unfortunately, the points made in that story are still applicable today. Ironically, four decades later, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the threat of the use of nuclear weapons has never been greater.

Since the inception of nuclear weapons, US officials at the Pentagon, as well as other leaders of nuclear-armed nations, have argued that the weapons will never be used because of the prospect of mutually assured destruction (MAD), which asserts that no nation would use nuclear weapons because any retaliatory response could mean the end of the world. MAD basically implies that nuclear weapons are props, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The nuclear stakes have been raised due to the war being waged between Russia and Ukraine. Yes, Russia is the clear aggressor, but with the US sending billions of dollars' worth of weapons to Ukraine, the tension is rising as US weapons are being used against Russia, causing much death and

suffering for all involved.

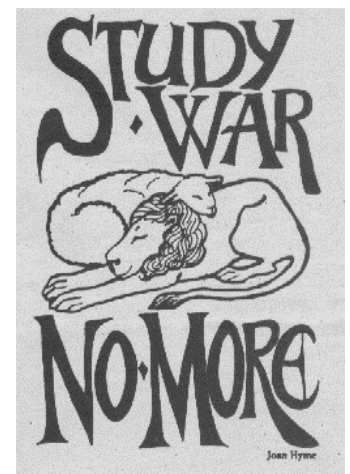
Vladimir Putin has put his nuclear arsenal on high alert. And former President Donald Trump also threatened the use of nuclear weapons against North Korea, also a nuclear power. Trump told Kim Jong Un the US had a 'much bigger and more powerful' nuclear button, and he would answer any threats 'with fire and fury like the world has never seen.'

Every day, there are stories published addressing heretofore unmentioned topics such as 'World War III' and the possible 'limited' use of 'tactical' nuclear weapons by the Russians. Such considerations should be unthinkable in a rational world, but with emotions high, and most Americans supporting our proxy war with Russia, there is the absence of rational thinking here at home and in Russia and Ukraine.

Political pundits are now contemplating the unthinkable: If his back is to the wall in Ukraine would Putin use nuclear weapons to fend off defeat?

And what would the US response be to Russia's use of nuclear weapons? Just thinking about such a scenario is gut-wrenching. In order for MAD to be a viable strategy, nuclear weapons can never be deployed; those weapons must remain unused in perpetuity.

Recently released from prison for a Ploughshares action, Patrick O'Neill is a co-founder of the Fr. Charlie Mulholland Catholic Worker House, in Garner, North Carolina. He is serious about peace-making.



NZ Catholic Bishops: End Palestinian suffering

It is a matter of great anguish for the Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand that the Holy Land continues to be a land of turmoil, bloodshed and fear for many of those who live there, but most particularly for the ordinary Palestinian peoples of the occupied territories of the West Bank of the Jordan River and of Gaza. Many of the Palestinians are followers of Islam, but a substantial number are also Christian. For decades now, these ordinary Palestinians have been reduced to the status of refugees in their own homeland.

The conflict in the Holy Land cannot be allowed to continue with no serious moves towards finding a just and peaceful solution for the peoples of Israel and Palestine, but particularly for the Palestinians, whose long years of turmoil, occupation, blockading (as in Gaza) and impoverishment are a blight on the region and indeed on humanity.

Last November, Pope Francis held what was his sixth Vatican meeting with Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian President. After the meeting, Pope Francis stressed that it was absolutely necessary to reactivate direct dialogue in order to achieve a two-state solution via a more vigorous effort on the part of the international community. He reiterated that Jerusalem must be recognised by all as a place of encounter and not of conflict, and that its status must preserve its identity and universal value as a Holy City for all three Abrahamic religions, through a special internationally guaranteed status.

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The Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand concur. ‘Jerusalem is a Jewish city, a Christian city, a Muslim city,’ wrote a delegation of British and Continental European Catholic bishops after a visit there in May. ‘It must remain a common patrimony and never become the exclusive monopoly of any one religion... The Christian community is essential to Jerusalem’s identity, both now and for the future. Yet its continued presence is threatened by

occupation and injustice.’ This is something we as Catholics in Aotearoa New Zealand can raise our voices over.

Our government should consider using its good international standing to call for and gain support for a meeting or other forum of world leaders to find ways to bring a lasting just peace to Israel and Palestine. No government is taking such an initiative. There is no reason we can’t campaign as a neutral but caring party to get an initiative moving.

Our government should consider using its good international standing to call for and gain support for a meeting or other forum of world leaders to find ways to bring a lasting just peace to Israel and Palestine. No government is taking such an initiative. There is no reason we can’t campaign as a neutral but caring party to get an initiative moving.

We can also offer peacekeepers for a just solution. Our military personnel have built peacekeeping skills in many countries and conflicts, near to us and far away. For 40 years, New Zealand has contributed personnel to the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), the international peacekeeping force on the Sinai Peninsula which oversees the terms of the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

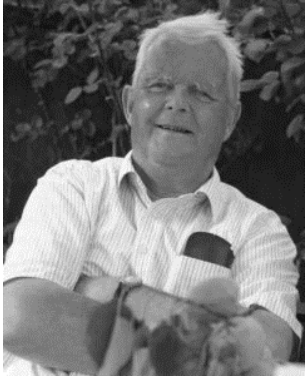
It was 20 years ago that the Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand wrote in a formal statement on the Israel-Palestine conflict that ‘no amount of repression, occupation, or military force can dim the desire of a people to live with dignity and freedom in their homeland. We affirm the right of the Palestinian people to find dignity and freedom through the establishment of an independent state, which surely can be denied them no longer. Their freedom will also be freedom for Israel – freedom from fear, and the opportunity to move on from a conflict which has haunted the state of Israel since its birth. Justice will bless both peoples with peace.’

It is a matter of terrible sorrow that little has happened to move on from that conflict in the 20 years since we wrote that, and that our words as written then need to be stated again today.

This is an abbreviated version of a statement from the NZ Bishops, issued 13 July 2022

Obituaries

Bruce Kent – Prophet and Peacemaker



It is with great sadness, but deep gratitude for his life and gifts, that Bruce Kent's family announce his death, on 8 June after a short illness. He would have been 93 on 22 June.

At the time of his death Bruce was a Vice-President of CND, a Vice-President of Pax Christi, and Emeritus President of the Movement for the Abolition of War.

After national service in the Royal Tank Regiment and a law degree at Brasenose College, Oxford, Bruce Kent was ordained a Catholic priest for the Diocese of Westminster. Between 1958 and 1987 he served in several London parishes, as secretary to Cardinal Heenan, and as the RC Chaplain to the University of London.

It was his Christian faith that brought him to reject nuclear weapons as fundamentally immoral because, even without their use, nuclear deterrence itself depends on a willingness to commit mass murder. As a leading spokesperson for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the 1980s, Kent became well known as a formidable opponent of Margaret Thatcher's defence policy at a time when public opposition to the acquisition of Trident and Cruise missiles was escalating.

With his warmth and wit, Bruce Kent was a popular speaker with audiences of all ages from primary schools to pensioners' groups. His commitment to innumerable peace and human rights campaigns over many decades included the Campaign Against the Arms Trade, for the reform of the United Nations, and the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (which came into force in 2021). He was always actively concerned about the welfare of prisoners, especially those maintaining their innocence, and prison reform.

Among his heroes was Franz Jägerstätter, the Austrian farmer who was executed in 1943 for refusing to fight in Hitler's army. As recently as 15 May, Bruce Kent took part in the annual ceremony in Tavistock Square, London, to honour conscientious objectors throughout the world.

He was an Honorary Fellow of Brasenose College, and in the past year was awarded the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth Cross for Ecumenism.

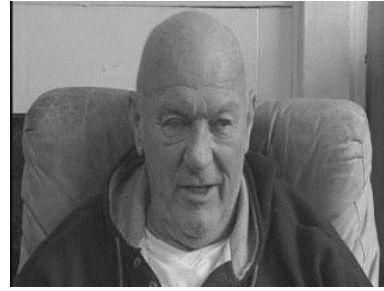
Bruce Kent is survived by his wife, Valerie

Flessati, his sister Rosemary Meakins, sister-in-law Ruth Kent, and their extensive families.

The Common Good, CG101, quoted excerpts from a recent speech by Bruce in an editorial in our last edition. He was firm supporter, often sending notes of encouragement.

Bruce Kent – *Presente!*

Fr Carl K. Kabat, OMI



Fr Carl K. Kabat, OMI, 88, Christian prophet and peacemaker, died on 4 August 2022 at Oblate Madonna Residence, San Antonio, Texas.

Fr. Carl K. Kabat was born on October 10, 1933. He professed his first vows as a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate (OMI) in 1957 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1959. His first ministry assignments were in Minnesota and Illinois, as well as in the Philippines and Brazil.

Early on in his priestly ministry, he heard a call to be a prophet against the proliferation and potential use of nuclear weapons. He took seriously Pope St. John XXIII's statement in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963): 'Hence justice, right reason, and the recognition of man's dignity cry out insistently for a cessation to the arms race.'

The stockpiles of armaments which have been built up in various countries must be reduced all round and simultaneously by the parties concerned. Nuclear weapons must be banned. A general agreement must be reached on a suitable disarmament program, with an effective system of mutual control.'

Fr. Carl was always willing to put his own freedom on the line to get this message across to governments and individuals. As a result of various actions of civil disobedience, he spent 17 years in federal prisons, seeing those judicial sentences also as a way of being a prophet of peace.

He also lived for several years at the Karen House Catholic Worker community in St. Louis.

Carl Kabat - *Presente!*

Winter 2022

Three layers of merino warm my chest inside
I nod in gratitude to the sheep, the farmers and the
shearers.

Tying the apron strings in place to slow cook a
winter soup
I feel Tui adjust the ties, her recipes sustaining me
today.

As snow thickens on Kaikoura mountains, my
spinning wheel rests
Watching the Irish flag flutter after the storm.
Torea scurry along the shore, long orange beaks
feeding children
No oysters here but other recipes left behind by
their mums - just like mine.

A winter of Covid and flu and war persists
Masking miracles usually seen.
Matariki is here - Aotearoa celebrates and
breathes out
A freesia blooms beside the gate, its benediction
candled stem promises more.

Waiting for spring and warmth, appointments and
scans return
A keeping watch - will the mesothelioma
hibernate longer this winter?
A row of white freesias bloom and bow their
heads
The candle alight, we maintain a vigil together.

—Joanne Doherty

Letters

Napier,
1 May 2022

Morena Jim.

Am sitting by the fire. My grandson Travis has
turned on Al Jazeera TV showing Russia and the May
Day parade, followed by the elections in the
Philippines. My comment to Travis was, 'more
trouble Travis!' Am confined to my home as I have
Covid, with doctor warning me to 'stay home till
clear'.

So am reading *The Common Good*, Issue 100 and
CW synod response *Dear Pope Francis*. Again, more
than reinforces your Catholic Worker community 100
issues of 'Massive Faithfulness - where we stand is
what we see, who we listen to is what we hear, what

we do is who we are.'

Taiao - Our National Environment by Kathleen
Gallagher is also excellent. Bruce Kent and Quaker
Friends will rejoice with you in your 100 issues
towards our common good 'with our Planet that
sustains us.' We would agree. Common folks like you
and me 'are builders for eternity. From a shapeless
mass, with a living Planet to support our kaupapa'

Ngā mihi nui
Pat Magill

Movement for the Abolition of War
11 Venetia Road,
London N41EJ

Dear CW friends,

They say, 'fair exchange is no robbery'. So our
little publication *Abolish War* is a small return for
your ever interesting *The Common Good*. Keep at it.
You are a nice bright light in a rather gloomy world.

Warm greetings,
Bruce Kent

9 Harrington Street
Port Chalmers 9023

Dear Jim

The two pieces on vaccination in CG 101 by Judith
Woolston and Marissa Dowling provide insight into
how people come to make very different decisions
about the government's approach to dealing with the
Covid-19 pandemic still raging around the world.
Covid caused the death of my beloved mother-in-law
Cecilia Corcoran (Cec), who contracted the virus
while in hospital for another health issue. She was due
to be discharged home when she tested positive, and
so, at 100 years of age, she resigned herself to a lonely
death where the only human touch was through PPE.
This was right before vaccines were rolled out. Like
so many others, we grieve.

Vaccination must be one of the modern world's
stars of the common good. We should be celebrating
the fact that diseases such as smallpox, polio, tetanus,
measles, flu and Covid no longer have the power to
ravage entire populations. But so many people choose
'freedom' over support of the common good. It
breaks my heart to see the carnage continue when a
few simple actions could see it end.

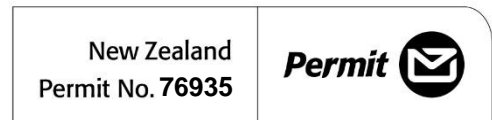
Love
Barbara Corcoran

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Read The Common Good online at <http://wp.catholicworker.org.nz/the-common-good/>

The Common Good

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Spirituality draws us into the depths of our being, where we come face to face with ourselves, our weaknesses, and with ultimate mystery. Many understandably prefer to avoid this frightening prospect by sinking into external religiosity and the safe routines of liturgy or ritual. A genuinely spiritual person passionately commits to this inner development. He or she knows that life is a spiritual journey, and that each one of us must take this journey alone, even while surrounded by loved ones.

—*The Mystic Heart*, Wayne Teasdale