

The

# Common Good

Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor

A newspaper of the Christchurch Catholic Worker

No 89, Easter 2019

Price: free or donation

## Christchurch Mosque Attacks

# Rivers of Blood to Rivers of Love

Jim Consedine

*Christchurch is called the Garden City. In the garden, there are different types of flowers. They are different, but together they make a beautiful garden. They stand alongside each other, in peaceful co-existence, even though they have differences. We human beings have to be like this. I may have one faith, you may have one faith, but together we are a beautiful garden.* Farid Ahmed, National Remembrance Service, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Arguably, the highlight of the National Remembrance Service, *Ko Tātou, Tātou – We are One*, were the words of Farid Ahmed. The service was held as our country came together to mourn the loss of life, recognise the injured and honour those who responded to the twin mosque terror attacks of 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018, in Christchurch,

Speaking on stage from a wheelchair before an international audience of millions, 14 days after his wife, Husna, was killed trying to save him, he taught us all a lesson in forgiveness and mature spiritual growth. In a firm voice laced with emotion, Farid issued a plea for forgiveness to become the centre of peoples' lives and relationships. In saying he had forgiven the gunman, Farid said,

'I don't want to have a heart that is boiling like a volcano. A volcano has anger, fury, rage – it doesn't have peace. It has hatred, it burns itself within, and it burns the surroundings. I want a heart that is full of love and care, and full of mercy, a heart that will forgive lavishly.'

### Moment of grace

It was a moment of grace for our nation and our world, the culmination of two weeks of outpouring of grief, anger, solidarity, compassion, action, reflection, and love following the massacre. It was evangelisation at its very best, the true face of Islam in action!



Like most people, I was deeply moved by the experience of being in Christchurch during those weeks and witnessing the response of our community – the almost universal stunned-mullet reaction of people that this should happen in our peaceful city, the prompt response of emergency services and police to the attack, and the amazing outpouring of grief, sorrow and public acknowledgement. Among many ways, this was shown graphically by the way tens of thousands of bunches of flowers and messages were laid with love and prayer along the Botanic Gardens in Rolleston Avenue, and outside the mosques where the attacks took place – the Masjid Al-Noor Mosque in Deans Avenue, Riccarton, and the Linwood Islamic Centre in East Christchurch.

So much grace, so much aroha, so much unity, such a coming together of people of all faiths and none, to share these spiritual moments together. I felt the whole country had been the recipient of wondrous graces not experienced before in recent times. For a few short days that seemed longer, the heart of our nation beat as one.

### Meaning

One of my lasting impressions of those early weeks was the revelation of the hunger for meaning and spirituality among those who congregated. All wanted to make a significant connection with the events and with their own inner spirit – and be nourished by the experience. However one describes it, there is a hunger for spiritual meaning out there that is not being adequately addressed. The rituals people created for themselves and those which were prepared by the various authorities were appropriate for this occasion. But they will not address the long-term spiritual hunger that our modern consumer society has created and cannot fill.



Like many, I was left wondering also whether something had truly shifted in the Kiwi-consciousness and identity. Have things changed forever for the better? Has there been anything like a paradigm shift in our thinking? This is a very hard question to answer yet. We all dream that things will be better. Already, there is a much better appreciation of the Muslim community now than ever before. Mainstream NZ is no longer as shy of Muslim men, women and children who interact with them. Fear and suspicion have been somewhat allayed. There is a new level of sensitivity as to who they are and what they believe.

### **A spiritual depth**

To a large degree, this has been greatly helped by the openness displayed by Muslims in their shock and grief. Their community showed us some amazing things, most of which flowed from their deep spiritual commitment to Allah and the religious requirements of Islam. This included the talk of forgiveness by Farid Ahmed and several imams and was a huge gift to the nation as a whole. But it is not just Muslims who have responded – thousands of non-Muslim Kiwis have responded generously to these overtures, opening their hearts to a new experience, to fresh opportunities, to the need to be

more aware, tolerant and understanding of minority cultures, of which there are more than 200 in New Zealand. They form part of who ‘Kiwis’ are!

No longer can any of us doubt or plead ignorance as to the spiritual depth of the Muslim community in New Zealand. It was on public display at every turn. They taught us all about the deep spirituality they practise. If only all Christians took their faith and its teaching as seriously! How many of us who profess Christian faith know and can quote the Scriptures and the social teachings of the Church about ‘love of neighbour’ with the clarity that the Muslim community brings to its understanding of the Qur’an and the teachings of the prophet Mohammed?

Are there major difficulties lying still in the future? Almost certainly. Fundamentalist Muslims who practise sharia law literally and maintain cultural norms flowing from that literal interpretation will continue to face the same type of problems that face fundamentalist Christians who practise a literal interpretation of the Bible, particularly the First (Old) Testament. Both narrow traditions will continue to confront mainstream pluralistic societies in challenging ways that many will find demanding.

### **Racism evident**

And there is the issue of racism, a worldwide scourge. Despite the almost universal goodwill expressed in the aftermath of the mosque shootings, we have to accept that New Zealand has always had an ugly racist underbelly. It surfaces in structured discrimination in housing and workplaces, in some gangs, in the small white supremacist and white power groupings, in individual actions. Sadly, it is more widespread than most of us want to admit.

After the shootings, while many Muslim leaders did reflect on the racism – both overt and covert – that continues to blight NZ society and their communities in particular, they also showed a remarkable degree of sensitivity to the wider grieving non-Muslim public who wanted to reach out and say how sorry they were for what happened. The Muslim community made this so much easier by opening their lives and sharing their grief in a public way never before seen here. They also opened the doors of their mosques to people around the country and invited them to visit. For the first time, the general population was led to a point where we could recognise our unity, despite our cultural and religious differences.

As a nation, we have also developed a sharpened awareness of other groups who face discrimination. This awareness cannot be retracted. It has become part of who we are, and I think will include other minorities including racial and ethnic groupings, the LGBT communities, those with mental health and addiction issues among others. Sadly, I think some Christian churches have a long way to go to adequately address these issues and the continuing discriminatory practices within their own structures.

We have been taught some wonderful spiritual truths by the Muslim community these past months – and gained insights into our own often generous hearts. May we continue to build on that.

#### **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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# Editorial 1 Extinction rebellion

Two hours prior to the Mosque shootings in Christchurch, thousands of school children throughout the country went on strike from school and marched and protested about government inaction on our climate emergency. Their protests never made that day's TV evening news bulletins, for obvious reasons.

Yet on the day, they were the youthful face of a growing worldwide movement called Extinction Rebellion (XR), which now has more than a million members in 35 countries. The growing movement consists of people from every type of background, from white-collar professionals marching in suits and ties to blue-collar manual workers, from religious people of all denominations and faiths to students of all ages. In March 2019, 16-year old Greta Thunberg, of Sweden, sparked a worldwide school student strike, a challenge picked up in many countries by young people including Lucy Grey, the 12-year old, who helped organise the Christchurch protest on 15 March.

Their rallying cry worldwide is, 'What are you people in positions of corporate power and government doing to help save our planet, nurture it and keep it safe for us and our children? It is our planet too; we need action, not more talk.'

The findings of the recently released Government report, *Environment Aotearoa 2019*, confirms their worst fears. 'Almost two-thirds of rare ecosystems were threatened by collapse and thousands of individual species were either threatened or at risk of extinction. Those species include 90 percent of all seabirds, 84 percent of all reptiles, 76 percent of freshwater fish and 74 percent of terrestrial birds.' The report also found that, 'On average, rivers in pastoral areas remain degraded, likely as consequence of agricultural expansion. On average, rivers in pastoral areas had 15 times as much E coli, 10 times as much nitrogen, and more than 3 times as much phosphorus as a river in native land cover.'

ER's goal is to trigger an enormous political and cultural shift big enough to save the planet from what appears like certain doom. 'They say they need about 3.5 percent of the population on board to make radical change. One of the core things that ER is saying is that we need to tell the truth and start acting like it. We need to stop pretending that we will sort things out and that we have 50 years to do so.' (*The Press*, 7 March 2019)

## A movement of nonviolence

ER members use nonviolent means to promote their message and are against damage to property and people. They use creative ways to make their voices heard, including blocking traffic through '10-minute swarms' and handing out leaflets at busy intersections. They even use graffiti paint that washes away! As we discovered in NZ during the 1970-80s campaign against apartheid, as the movement expands, thousands of other creative ideas will

be actioned.

They are fed up with vested interests who have made gods of money and continued economic growth (GDP) as their only criteria of success, and worldwide have exploited labour and precious resources, and raped and pillaged the land and forests, pocketing the profits and creating a huge gap between the wealthy elite and the bulk of humanity. Meanwhile, the planet is perishing before their non-caring eyes.

## Thomas Berry, prophet

Nearly forty years ago, priest, prophet and internationally acclaimed geologist Thomas Berry, wrote a widely publicised essay on the economic system which was destroying the planet. He said, '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.'

'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.'

'Only now have begun to consider that there is an economics of the human as well as an economics of the earth as a functional community. We have begun to recognise that the primary objective of economic science, of the engineering profession, of technological invention, of industrial processing, of financial investment, and of corporation management, must be the interaction of human wellbeing within the context of the wellbeing of the natural world. This is the primary purpose of economics. 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.'

Providing it retains its non-violent approach, ER will continue to sit nicely with the Catholic Worker tradition of environmental concern, non-violent direct action, personalism and manageable economics. The ER movement draws inspiration too from the emphasis that Pope Francis has given to the urgent need for radical economic and environmental change. This has been a central theme in each of his three substantive encyclicals on social justice, especially the latest one, *Laudato Si' - On Care for our Common Home*.

Extinction Rebellion is reminding us that the chickens are well and truly coming home to roost - and that time is of the essence if our planet is to continue as a liveable and nourishing habitat for humanity.

—Jim Consedine

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## Editorial 2 Racism — Collude or Collide?

I was helping the friendly old man at reception to confirm his bus timetable to Christchurch. Waiting for the call centre's human to speak, we filled in time listening to numerous automated messages and music concerts. We talked for several minutes about the cold weather, the Christchurch and Kaikoura earthquakes and the upcoming All Blacks test.

Suddenly the conversation changed, when he looked at me and said,

'Gee, there are a lot of darkies in this town.'

'What do you mean by that?'

'Well, can't say 'blacks' can I?'

'No – and you shouldn't call people 'darkies' either – I think you'll find they are vineyard workers from Vanuatu or other Pacific Islands.'

Silence descended. Awkwardness and discomfort grew. Eye contact was lost. He spent the remaining time staring at his shoes and the tiles on the floor.

The human from the call centre intervened, and the old man's travel arrangements were clarified and sorted. He was grateful for my help. We smiled, and as we said goodbye, I wished him safe travel.

### Responding to racism

The decision to respond to racism feels challenging because of the unpredictable dialogue that follows and the risk to relationships.

If I say nothing, I collude – if I say something, I collude. Saying nothing leads the speaker to think I agree with their view, their joke or their comment. My silence or awkward smile is interpreted as a subtle reinforcement of an opinion I disagree strongly with.

Almost 25 years ago I visited a café with a colleague and caught my son wagging his 7<sup>th</sup> form class with a mate and two female students. We had an interesting mother and son discussion! As my colleague and I waited at the counter for our lattes to be made, she whispered in my ear, 'Gorgeous girls – shame about the colour though.' I was shocked. I wanted to cry. I said nothing. Twenty-five years later, I still feel mute and ashamed of this time when I colluded by saying nothing.

Saying something risks my relationship with another human being, even if they are strangers. It is even riskier when they are my work colleagues or family members, as our relationship is affected – we collide.

I have called people racist in the past and wonder whether our relationship would have been less affected if I had called their comment racist, rather than them as a person?

When I do recognise racism, I feel it like a visceral kick in the gut, or a stab in my heart. I am Pakeha but I learned this empathy and value from my mother. I recognise my own racism these days when my unconscious has become conscious, and my comfortable

white privilege has become uncomfortable for me.

I sit beside Maori friends and hear their experiences of trying to organise rental accommodation, their humiliation of being asked in shops to show the contents of their bags, and the overwhelming numbers of their whanau experiencing mental health challenges or prison, or both. The cleaner at the DHB tells me that a complaint was made to HR because she sang her waiata softly as she worked; the Maître D at a restaurant informs a whanau he has had a complaint from a fellow diner about their noisy waiata sung after a 21<sup>st</sup> birthday speech; the landlord confirms the rental with my colleague but when she brings her Maori partner to meet him to sign the agreement, it is suddenly no longer available.

### Changing attitudes

I live and work beside people who don't collude. My grandchildren correct our te reo pronunciation, a colleague's small child asks why the 'new' national anthem wasn't being sung at school on the day when it only sung in te reo Maori, Whanganui is spelt correctly and the name of my maunga Taranaki is reclaimed; three- and four-year-olds in pre-school know their pepeha; a patient is delighted and surprised that between the car-park and his outpatient clinic four different people say 'kia ora'; and changing our justice, health and education inequity is close to action yet still teetering.

And then to the massacre of 15 March 2019. The responses within Aotearoa New Zealand continue to be significant. Tolerance is our new noun. Compassion, education, written words and spoken korero are in many kitchens, classroom and offices. Prayers and passages from the Koran are shared in corporate offices and Parliament, the Crusader rugby franchise will meet with the Muslim community about their rugby team name and the Mongrel Mob have been guarding the Hamilton mosque at Friday prayers.

Tolerance is accepting another's belief or culture even if it differs to mine, and especially when it differs to mine. It is a verb as well, a 'doing' word. Some of the verbs I will 'do' to be more tolerant include learn, accept, permit, endure, include, stand for, hear, give, receive, sanction, suffer, sustain, undergo, bear, go along with, live with and love.

Collude or collide was my beginning question. Now there is a third – collaborate?

*Joanne Doherty is a health professional and a writer. She belongs to Te Wakaiti, a small bi-cultural marae close to Featherston. A mother and grandmother, she currently lives on the edge of Wellington Harbour, exploring the foreshore and seabed with her twelve mokopuna.*

# Last testament – it's in dying, we are born

Daniel O'Leary

*Dear Tumour, I thank you. I thank you with all my heart and soul. You are a true child of the universe, of the mystery of creation, yes, even of incarnate Love itself. Love did not send you. Love never could. You, my Tumour, exactly like the cross of wood for Jesus, are the tumour of flesh that I must 'freely accept'. You are the cup that, also like the unwilling but obedient Jesus, I must continually bring to my lips. I resist you with all my strength, but I embrace you with a more fierce intensity than ever. Because to reject you, is to reject God.*

The enduring melody of my life, my one unshaken belief, penetrates and dissipates my deepest fears. When I equate God with life itself, a transformation takes place in the way I understand our Catholic Christianity. Once I remove everything that separates divinity and humanity, Heaven and Earth, grace and nature, I begin to live and move in another milieu. Once I use the same name for the gracious mysterious Mother of all becoming that I call God, and the primal energy of Creation, my faith can never be the same again. And once I commit to identifying God's intimate presence in my evolving perception of the world's most beautiful artistry and creativity, in my darkness and my invisible light, and in my very breath, then I am living the incarnation of God in Jesus in my life – and living it now with a passion at the hour of my death.

Soon I'll be at the waiting-room exit door. I am anxious to be in my best bib and tucker for the occasion. This, as you know, has been my desire – to be free of fear and bitterness, and full of love and desire, as I step up for the final inspection. So I must be careful in what I write next.

## Compulsory celibacy

I now believe with all my heart that compulsory celibacy is a kind of sin, an assault against God's Will and Nature. Let me avoid the minefield that this could

drag us into! I am just pointing out that one of the fallouts of mandatory celibate life is the violence it does to a priest's humanity and the wounds that it leaves on his ministry. Again, I can hear the voices calling me a traitor to the cause. But, please remember, I am only recalling the memories, convictions and awakenings that are filling my soul during these ever-so-strange final days and nights.

Some priests hang onto their authentic, essential selves; many of us do not. The enemy, we were warned back in the 1950s, was a failure in prayer; falling in love was the cancer; suppression, sublimation and confession were the cure. Emotion was the threat; detachment was the safeguard; becoming too human was the risk; the subtle carapace of clericalism was the precaution. Clericalism is a collective malaise which keeps vibrant abundant life at bay; it quarantines us for life from the personal and communal expression of healing relationships, and the lovely grace of the tenderness which Pope Francis is trying to restore to the hearts of all God's people.

*Fr Daniel O'Leary, internationally acclaimed author, columnist and pastor, died peacefully on 21 January 2019, aged 82. A long-time columnist, these few words form part of the last article he ever wrote and were published in The Tablet (UK), 2 February 2019. His recent best-selling book is reviewed on pp 10-11.*



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# letter to my son

Kathleen Gallagher

on Monday at 4 o'clock I went to the walk and vigil  
of the young people  
outside the Al-Noor Mosque in Hagley Park  
called by the head boy of Cashmere High School,  
Okirano Tilaia  
he called using Martin Luther King's quote  
*'Darkness cannot drive out darkness,  
only light can do that  
Hate cannot drive out hate  
only love can do that'*

once again young people from schools all over  
Canterbury gathering  
just four days after they had had to leave Cathedral  
Square  
at one forty pm on Friday when the attacks began  
it felt like a continuation of that joy-filled gathering  
when they were calling for us  
to turn from our ways to stop harming our earth and  
each other and  
to love and cherish our earth and all the peoples to  
stand as one and to cherish and to heal her

the young people in their school uniforms and in  
mufti were walking  
across Hagley Park from all directions carrying  
flowers and candles talking softly walking  
I found your friend Tariq Omar's tree and a photo of  
him  
at the foot of the big oaks facing across the road  
from the Al-Noor Mosque in Deans Ave  
surrounded by flowers thick knees deep  
and people kneeling and praying and standing quiet  
and still  
some talking some singing softly

different groups from different schools all around the  
city sang  
in Māori and Pacifica and English Cashmere High  
began  
as they had lost two pupils and two past pupils  
including Tariq  
I kneeled and prayed the Rosary beside a Muslim  
woman  
who was kneeling and praying in Arabic  
under one of the big oak trees there on the grass with  
the fallen acorns under my knees  
I have never done this before

there were more than a thousand young people  
and other folk there too

a little old lady with a white perm  
standing by a tree for her neighbour  
who had died 'he was a good man' she kept saying  
'he would do anything for anyone  
he looked out for all of the people on our street'

these fifty folk who have died while praying were not  
just anyone  
they were saints loving kind compassionate people  
living and working quietly away  
in their own communities  
I got to another tree all these young working folk in  
their thirties were standing around the tree  
flowers and a cluster of candles  
all standing there holding hands  
not saying anything, all in stillness and in prayer for  
the loving young man their friend who had died  
he was one of them and they loved him 'love is  
bigger than death'

while I was standing under Tariq's tree  
a large group of young men - about one hundred -  
gathered in the field behind me  
they were all wearing the blue school uniform of St  
Thomas's they were  
all ages and they were there all gathered in a great  
circle a great Pacifica circle  
and they moved out and in and danced and sang this  
most beautiful Pacifica song  
you probably know it with 'Alleluia' in it  
it went on and on and I stood there and cried and they  
were all still and quiet  
and then they turned out from the circle and stood as  
one  
and did the haka of tumanako and aroha - hope and  
love

I thought you would like to know  
I was in front of Tariq's tree standing there with you  
in my heart  
when all of this happened

Love you

*Mum*

*Kathleen Gallagher's son Liam, who lives in  
London, played in the same soccer team as mosque  
victim Tariq Omar for several years.*

## **an ironic legacy**

fifty-one dead, dozens injured  
faithful Muslims killed at prayer

an evil act, cold, calculated  
devastating its effects  
astonishing its simplicity

mind-blowing its proportions  
hundreds of thousands mourn  
many wearing hijab

innocence gone forever  
more tolerant, open, sensitive  
the soul of a nation grows softer

shows greater compassion  
inter-faith awareness  
sees the face of true Islam

unexpected gifts  
an ironic legacy

—*Jim Consedine*

## **The Long Fence of Flowers**

who could ever forget, once seen  
the long fence of flowers, the site of tribute  
the sight overwhelming, rainbow colours  
crowds still coming, murmuring  
awed, shocked, disbelieving  
still bringing flowers,  
candles, teddy-bears

chalk to inscribe the footpath  
write what we struggle to describe  
taking a depth-sounding, the enormity of  
love  
hatred  
generosity  
our place in the world

I place my gathered roses, different colours  
for the kaleidoscope of mourners that we are  
my note reads –  
you're Muslim, I'm Catholic  
we pray to the same God  
rest in peace  
my brothers and sisters

—*Sally Dunford*

## ***this is faith***

to walk where there is no path,  
to breathe where there is no air,  
to see where there is no light -  
this is faith

to cry where there is no silence,  
the silence of the night,  
and hearing no echo,  
believe and believe  
again and again -  
this is faith

to hold pebbles and see jewels,  
to raise sticks and see forests,  
to smile with weeping eyes -  
this is faith

to say 'God, I believe when others  
deny,  
I hear when there is no answer,  
I see though naught is seen' -  
this is faith

and the fierce love in the heart,  
the savage love that cries hidden  
Thou art yet there!  
Veil thy face and mute thy tongue,

yet I see thee, love,  
beat me down to the bare earth,  
yet I rise and love thee, love!  
this is faith

—*Ruhiyyih Khanum (1910-2000) -  
attached to a tree opposite Al-Noor  
mosque in Hagley Park, 15 March  
2019*

# Around the Traps

**# Terror victims' funerals** - The Catholic Worker was able to host some visitors during the funerals of the 50 who died in the terror attack. At Suzanne Aubert CW, Tony and Francis hosted two Somalian men, Omar Uma and Abdi Ra Han, who had flown down from Auckland, and provided hospitality to their friends who used the house as a base during the daytime. And Mike Coughlan and Kathleen Gallagher hosted a Syrian family of seven for several days.

**# Official Child Poverty Numbers in NZ** – About 183,000 Kiwi children live in poverty before housing costs are deducted – that is 16 percent. That jumps to 23 per cent – about 254,000 children – after housing costs are deducted. In the year ending June 2018, 13 percent of children lived in households experiencing material hardship. The Government set interim targets to reduce the number of children in material hardship down to 7 percent within 10 years. *Statistics New Zealand*, 2 April 2019

**# \$2.3 billion to be wasted on war planes** – The New Zealand Government is poised to spend \$2.3 billion to buy four Boeing P-8A Poseidon war planes. The P-8 aircraft is designed for military operations, signalling a troubling shift in foreign policy. The planes, optimised for anti-submarine warfare, will be outfitted with surveillance systems, communications platforms, and weapons targeting, all geared to work in tandem with the American and Australian P-8s. The scheduled purchase of four planes signals an even closer military alignment with the United States and reflects badly on New Zealand's non-aligned status. The \$2.3 billion to be spent on the P-8s could be saved for much needed social spending, such as increasing wages for teachers and nurses, building houses, and fixing our healthcare system. We can and need to do better than this! Liz Remmersvaal, *World Beyond War*

**# In NZ, 80 000 rental homes still not insulated to proper standard** – The law requires that every rental home have underfloor and overhead insulation unless it is impossible or extremely cumbersome', by 1 July 2019. This law was passed by the then-National Government in 2016. Reports are that between 80 000 and 100 000 homes have still not been insulated to the required standard. *The Press*, 26 February 2019

**# Retired Bishop John Osmers** has been a regular visitor to the Wednesday night gatherings for the past couple of months. He brings wisdom and insight to our discussions and is always a welcome member of the group. He has returned to Zambia until October.

**# Pope Francis visits prison on Holy Thursday** – On Holy Thursday, Pope Francis visited Velletri Correctional Centre in South Rome where he celebrated Mass and washed and kissed the feet of 12 prisoners. It is a prison with 570 inmates, only forty percent of whom

are Italian, the remainder immigrants. This was the seventh time Francis has chosen to celebrate Holy Thursday with the imprisoned. His first year as pope in 2013, he chose a juvenile detention facility. The next year, he washed and kissed the feet of people with severe physical handicaps at a rehabilitation centre. That was followed in 2015 by men and women detainees at Rome's Rebibbia Prison, imprisoned refugees in 2016, inmates in the Italian town of Paliano in 2017, and prisoners at Rome's 'Regina Coeli' prison in 2018.

**# US prison population** - The US penal population of 2.2 million adults is the largest in the world. In 2012, close to 25 percent of the world's prisoners were held in American prisons, although the United States accounts for about 5 percent of the world's population. The US rate of incarceration, with nearly 1 of every 100 adults in prison or jail, is 5 to 10 times higher than rates in Western Europe and other democracies.

Since 2002, the United States has had the highest incarceration rate in the world. Although prison populations are increasing in some parts of the world, the natural rate of incarceration for countries comparable to the United States tends to stay around 100 prisoners per 100,000 population. The US rate is 500 prisoners per 100,000 population. *Research Council of the United States*.

**# Family values Trump-style** – The Trump Administration wants up to two years to find potentially thousands of children who were separated from their families at the border with Mexico. The US Justice Department said it will take at least 12 months to review about 47 000 cases of unaccompanied children taken into Government custody in the year July 2017 and June 2018 and separated from their parents. *The Press*, 8 April 2019

**# Structured injustice of massive proportions** - When people use food stamps for special costly items, they are called 'selfish.' When the US military cannot account for \$21 trillion of taxpayer money it does not matter because we need people who kill to 'make us safe'. When we give billions to bail out farmers it's called 'unfair'. When we give billions to bail out banks, 'it's good for the economy'. When we give trillions to billionaires it is 'good for America'. But when we need money for the homeless, refugees, insurance for the sick and dying, food for the starving or social security for the elderly, suddenly, 'Oh my God, it's a handout.' We Catholic Workers refuse to pay federal taxes since 60% of the tax money goes for war, weapons and violence. If we want peace, how can we pay for war? Don Timmerman, *Casa Cry*, April 2019



## Peace Picnic at Parliament

Almost 50 people attended the Peace Picnic on the Parliament Lawn in Wellington on the first day of Parliament for 2019, Tuesday 12 February, where we presented our petition to Green MP spokesperson on Defence, Golriz Ghahraman. Golriz grew up in Iran, is our first refugee MP and has worked as a human rights lawyer overseas.

The petition asks the government to reconsider spending \$2.3 billion on four Poseidon planes with highly sophisticated international equipment which attack submarines. They are far in excess of what is

required to patrol our waters and safeguard New Zealand's security, which would cost a fraction of this amount.



This is the first picnic of the year and we will come back again and again for as long as needed. The picnic was organised by **World Beyond War, Aotearoa** in conjunction with Berrigan Catholic Worker House and was attended by many different people of all ages, including members of the NZ United Nations Association, Quakers and attendees of the Otaki Summer Camp.

*Liz Remmersvaal is a Quaker and secretary of World Beyond War Aotearoa.*

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## The Catholic Worker and Julian Assange

Ciaron O'Reilly

As Christians, we are all called to be 'peacemakers' to help realise God's Kingdom in our midst. This should be part of our DNA. By definition, it also means we stand in solidarity with other peacemakers and those who oppose war and war mongering.

One such person is my friend and fellow-Australian anti-war activist, Julian Assange. By November last year, it was clear that Julian, the founder of the world-shaking whistle-blowing WikiLeaks (2006), was under imminent threat of armed extraction from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London.

The Ecuadorian Embassy that was once a sanctuary for him had become a trap under the new Ecuadorian President and strong United States ally, Lenin Moreno! Moreno wishes to serve Julian's head on a platter to those who through war continue the Slaughter of the Innocents, from Yemen and Syria to Palestine and Somalia.

The US Government despises Julian for exposing the war crimes of the rich and powerful! The same death-dealing states – the US and the UK - that lied about 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' and conjured up a war in Iraq in 2003, now lie about and smear Julian Assange for exposing their lies. And the same gullible people are believing them once again! The leaked documents exposing the war crimes were published in such prestigious papers as *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Le Monde*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Guardian*, and numerous others worldwide. Their veracity has never been challenged. As *The Guardian* opined, 'Assange always shone a light on things that should never have been hidden.'

### Vigil of solidarity

On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, with support from the London/Camden Catholic Worker and many allies, I resumed a 24/7 solidarity vigil outside the Ecuadorian Embassy in Knightsbridge, London. For five months, I lived 15 metres from Julian. I slept on the sidewalk under cardboard and heavy plastic in what was by now the English winter. As we spoke, prayed and sang under his

bedroom window, we assume Julian could hear and see us and realise he was not completely abandoned and alone! Julian had spent six and a half years encircled by the British state in conditions of sensory deprivation. His conditions inside the Embassy had changed dramatically with the election of Trump admirer President Moreno.

We maintained a 24/7 solidarity vigil with Julian Assange right up until April 12<sup>th</sup> this year.

The reason we have stood in solidarity with Julian is that he is in serious jeopardy of many years of imprisonment if the US Government get their hands on him for exposing their war crimes through Wikileaks. As John Pilger wrote, 'These crimes include the truth about the homicidal way the US conducts its colonial wars, (currently they are engaged in anti-terror campaigns in 76 countries), the lies of the British Foreign Office in its denial of rights to vulnerable people such as Chagos Islanders, the expose of Hillary Clinton as a backer and beneficiary of jihadism in the Middle East, the detailed descriptions of several US ambassadors of how the governments in Syria and Venezuela might be overthrown, and much more. It is all available on the WikiLeaks site.'

We have now taken up vigil on a traffic island outside Belmarsh Category A Maximum Prison in Woolwich, South London, where our brother Julian is being held. It is locally referred to as 'UK's Guantanamo.' I have a large wooden box (coffin) as a shelter at night and warm clothing. It looks as if we will need to be here for the long haul!

Julian is the canary in the mine shaft. Essentially, we are protecting a vital principle of freedom of speech in the face of war crimes, and in so doing, calling for the accountability of the most powerful!

*Australian-born Ciaron O'Reilly has been a Catholic Worker since 1977, and currently resides in London. In his 42 years of CW involvement, he has been imprisoned for non-violent resistance to war in Australia, the US, Britain and Ireland. Email address – ciaronx@yahoo.com*

# Obituary Sr Pauline O'Regan RSM (1922-2019) - Prophet



Not many nuns achieve legendary status in their lifetime, but Sister Pauline O'Regan RSM, religious Sister of Mercy, prophet, teacher, internationally acclaimed author, feminist, historian, raconteur, humble, wise and holy woman, proud West Coaster, lover of God

and God's people, special friend of the poor, managed to do just that. Pauline died in Christchurch, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019, aged 96, after a lengthy illness.

It would take a multi-volume biography to do justice to Pauline's 75 years of religious life. This simple obituary is not that. I am restricting myself to her impact on the Catholic Worker and on my own personal life, nourished by weekly Eucharist for more than three decades with her community and encouraged by her committed friendship. Which means I am omitting her first five significant decades as a teaching religious and her substantive work in both the Aranui and Burwood parish communities. People closer to those communities will write of them.

In 1973, moving from a senior position at Villa Maria College in Riccarton and seeking to en flesh the Church's 'option for the poor' taken at the World Bishop's Synod in 1971, she joined Sisters Teresa O'Connor and Helen Goggin in a state house in the economically deprived working-class suburb of Aranui, in East Christchurch. It was a radical move, opposed by many in authority and difficult to make. A prophetic move, nonetheless, emulated later by other religious.

In order to create an income so they could be financially independent, Pauline taught for five years at Aranui High School, holding responsible positions, including being form mistress for a third form class, 3OR, a class she took great delight in teaching. These were years she loved and often spoke about with great affection.

Twenty years later, had you driven past the local shops in Hampshire Street, you would have seen an enormous mural painted on a wall, honouring and picturing the three original, 'Aranui Sisters'. It was recognition by the local community, grateful for their presence and their impact on local lives.

Pauline had a heart for justice and the voice of a prophet. She used her remarkable ability with both pen and voice to highlight injustice, challenge the powerful and affirm the best of Church social teaching. In August 1996, Pauline wrote the leading article for the first-ever edition of *The Common Good*, titled 'Opting for the Poor'. For 40 years, she was a sought-after speaker on social justice issues throughout the country. For 10 years, she had a slot on *RNZ Morning Report*, commenting on the issues of the day. She also wrote several books, her first, *A Changing Order*, becoming a best-seller.

Pauline had a deep love for the poor and a loathing of injustice. When the Catholic Worker purchased the Suzanne Aubert house in Addington in 1993, we invited Sister Pauline and Muriel Morrison, a pacifist and leading Quaker, to jointly open it. Ever since that time, Pauline has been a great supporter of the CW, always encouraging and affirming our work for peace and justice, around prison issues, addressing poverty, economic inequality, addictions and other health issues, racism and the development of Christian faith along Gospel lines.

We honour Pauline and acknowledge her legacy of love and her commitment to social justice, prayer and the Gospel of Jesus. She was a giant in the spiritual life and her footprint is everywhere in this country. We thank her for her involvement in the wider community as a religious sister, witness to Christ and friend. Sister Pauline made everyone she met feel important. She will be missed by so many. May she rest in peace.

—Jim Consedine

## Book Review

***An Astonishing Secret, The Love Story of Creation and the Wonder of You; Daniel O'Leary, Columba Press, Dublin, 2017, Pb 254 pages, Price - \$25. Reviewer : Jim Consedine.***

In the course of my life, I have occasionally come across a book that excited me with its vision and changed the direction of my thinking. Dorothy Day's autobiography *The Long Loneliness* (1952), Pope Paul VI's encyclical *On the Development of People*, (1967), *Original Blessing* by Mathew Fox (1983), Thomas Berry's *The Dream of the Earth* (1988) and Howard Zehr's *Changing Lenses* (1990) were five such texts. *An Astonishing Secret* has entered that select group, a book that has taken me to a new level of consciousness about life, evolution, its meaning and where faith fits in.

I first met Fr Daniel O'Leary, (who died in January 2019), decades ago through his regular columns in *The Tablet* (London). They were always erudite and challenging yet very down-to-earth. More recently, he has become a constant companion as I have joined him in exploring the mysteries of evolution and of our relationship with the Great Spirit of Life, our Creator God. He has helped me more than any other to grapple with a Universe that is



continuing to expand in a wondrous way, while enabling me to maintain and expand my own Catholic faith and the best of its teachings.

*An Astonishing Secret's* structure is simple. The author takes short extracts from *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis's amazing 2015 encyclical on ecology and climate, and teases them out into 49 three-page easily read reflections. I'd like to say that at first read I couldn't put it down. But the opposite was the case – I kept putting it down because of the stimulation it was providing. His God was one of cosmic proportions and his becoming human in Jesus revealed the divinity in us all. It is an astonishing message. The end result was that it took me more than a month to read carefully.

Like Pope Francis, he is trying to bring us up-to-date on the evolving story of our ever-expanding universe, where we sit along with other forms of life on our fragile

planet and where Mother Earth and its inhabitants fit into the story. These are concepts way beyond my normal comprehension, but he proves to be a valuable guide to understanding these mysteries.

It's a spiritual classic, a book about love to savour and not just read – about how astonishing is the love story of our Creator God with each of us and all that surrounds us. Needless to say, it is a must-read for those who seek spiritual nourishment yet remain grounded on Mother Earth. I have been encouraging people, especially couples and small groupings, to read it out loud together and use it as a tool for daily reflection. It opens up new horizons of what might be – based on what we now know, already is.

I had to take a yellow highlighter to earmark special passages to more easily find them again. Now that is some recommendation.

## Letters

Honolulu,  
16 March 2019

Aloha, Jim,

As soon as I heard the horrible news of the mosque shootings, I thought of you ... and your Catholic Worker community. More than ever we need to live and spread the message of nonviolence, and to show loving solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters everywhere.

Our small Catholic Worker group here is slowly developing into a cohesive community. I look forward to reading your wonderful publication, *The Common Good*, when it appears from time to time in our mailbox. Thank you for sharing with us and helping us to better clarify our thoughts, which hopefully will bear fruit through action.

Blessings to you and the grieving people of your city,

*Wally Inglis*

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Emeritus Bishop's Office,  
Palmerston North

Dear Jim,

It's all good, this latest *The Common Good* – it's fine, strongly written, vital issues.

Muchas gracias,

+ *Owen Dolan (Ret.)*

The Big Island,  
Hawai'i  
17 March 2019

Aloha Jim,

As soon as I heard of the Christchurch mosque shootings, I thought of you and friends there. Blessings to you to comfort the afflicted and spread the wisdom of *The Common Good*. Fascism is surely on the march worldwide. We all need to step up and live the message of nonviolent solidarity for justice, peace and the earth. We stand with you in this effort.

*Jim Albertini*

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Open Door CW Community  
PO Box 10980  
Baltimore, MD 21234

Dear Jim,

I pray that you are well and holding up your end of this chaotic darkened world. Please pray for homeless folks, friends on death row, and my beloved wife Murphy Davis, who has been ill. While prison is the neo-slavery of today, homelessness is the neo-lynching. We can outlaw alcohol consumption. We cannot stop drinking. We can outlaw abortion. We cannot stop abortions. Let us practice kindness and pursue justice. With a broken hallelujah and following the Dove of Peace with a wounded wing.

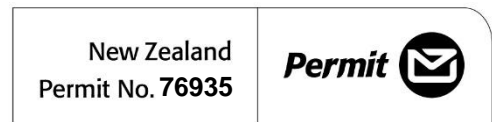
Much love and thanksgiving,

*Edward Loring*

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**The Common Good**

Te Wairua Maranga Trust  
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 Christchurch 8244  
 New Zealand



The reality seems to be that the Church can never do full justice to the Gospel – there is simply more to the Gospel than any human society, any community, any Church can ever cope with at any given time. People of the Gospel will always be disappointed to some degree with the Church. The Gospel in a real sense is God and we can never do full justice to God. There will always be something or someone calling us forward into ever stronger solidarity with God and with others.

— *Sister Pauline O’Regan RSM*