

# Post-Covid – a new Pentecost?

Jim Consedine

Whatever else we have been told about the effects of Covid-19, we have learned that nothing will be the same in the future as it was before. Many ways of seeing and doing things will have to change. Returning to a hopelessly unequal, racist, and unjust world hurtling towards the destruction of the planet is simply not an option. And that challenge applies to the Church as well. An enormous opportunity has presented itself in the evolution of humanity and of our Church.

In this modern era, we have not been well-served by new 'idols' — corporate capitalism, exorbitant wealth in few hands, power acquisition, success, celebrity culture, widespread militarism, youth immortality, unbridled and unregulated technological development. Have we too often left behind not just our neighbour but our collective soul? Have we forgotten that we are made of spirit too?

These idols are parasites. They give us the impression of enrichment. In reality, they empty us spiritually, sucking us dry. Is this the legacy we want to leave future generations? As Christians, are we being asked for a paradigm shift in our thinking?

Worldwide, young people are starting to reject these false idols. Two recent examples. The Bernie Sanders campaign in the US gave us a hint of that. A crusty 78-year-old senator, by daring to dream with passion about social justice, rallying the youth a quarter of his age to a more equitable, cleaner vision. And the world-wide youth rebellion against weak climate policies and corporate self-interest coupled with the impact of Greta Thunberg's rallying cry for a better future.

## Future Church

What sort of Church should we hope for when things settle? One thing for sure is that there will not be a revival of church attendance to any great extent in the Western world. The model of clericalized Church that most of us have grown up with has done its dash. It is over.

The tote is closed! The nation's priests heard that spelt out clearly at their assembly two years ago. The facts are staring us in the face. Many do not want to accept them. Pope Francis does. He speaks to it all the time. In remarks welcomed by the NZ Bishops' Conference (8 May 2020), Pope Francis at Easter said the time was ripe for 'new imagination', allowing for 'the breath of the Spirit' to open new horizons. Our Church needs to evolve into something different, guided by the Spirit and become more relevant and nourishing for peoples' lives.

Because one model dies, that does not mean that everything dies. It means that we will have to rebuild a Church that is more relational, more community-based and orientated, less hierarchical, more literate, more empowering, more involved with ordinary life, more lay-driven. More based on a living, dynamic faith in the light of the Gospels.



Pat Marrin

***Pope Francis at Easter said the time was ripe for 'new imagination', allowing for 'the breath of the Spirit' to open new horizons.***

That is the vision Vatican II challenged us with more than 50 years ago. That is the model circumstances now dictate we need to further develop for our survival and growth. If we listen carefully to 'the signs of the times' and want to survive as a Church with a relevant message, we cannot delay any longer. The old model needs to move over and let the shoots of a new one flower.

We also have to revisit the Vatican II teaching on the Priesthood of the Faithful. And the huge elephant in the room — the continued discrimination against women in ministry. We can no longer continue to fly on one wing. The current model of clericalized priesthood and the male power structure is well past its use-by date. It is time for a renewal of the priesthood in our Church. We need a Church where priests regardless of gender are builders of community, servants of the Word, nurturers of the needy, presiders at liturgical gatherings and leaders of local



communities.

Our current model of Church was formed in patriarchal times. That formation no longer serves us well. Women deserve equality of opportunity to respond to their vocational callings just as men do. It is a question of God's justice, a power of love which sits at the heart of our Christian faith and empowers our response. We need a Church living the freedom of the Spirit and committed to such development.

### **The Beatitudes and Corporal Works of Mercy**

At its core, our future Church will be a return to a deeper understanding of and commitment to living the scriptures better. The Beatitudes (Luke 4, Matt 5) and the Corporal Works of Mercy (feed the hungry, clothe the naked etc) were the 'penny catechism' of the early Church before most people were literate and before the Church became clericalized. For the first 300 years, believers were taught and encouraged to live these radical Christian teachings which were central to scripture and basic to their lives as Christians. They learnt them by heart.

In a new post-Covid age and facing a planet under threat as never before because of human action, are we being called to revisit these and other key fundamental texts and apply them to life as the early Christian did?

#### **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 Considine, [jim.conse@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jim.conse@xtra.co.nz). Layout: Barbara Corcoran [burkespass@gmail.com](mailto:burkespass@gmail.com).

**[www.catholicworker.org.nz](http://www.catholicworker.org.nz)**

Some of the great thinkers and prophets in our spiritual history started movements through their desire to live these foundational teachings more authentically.

Many religious orders came from such an understanding of Christ's teaching. People saw the needs of the poor in particular and responded. Ask Suzanne Aubert, Catherine McCauley, Mary McKillop, Vincent de Paul, Euphrasie Barbier, John of God, a few among a large selection. Mohandas Gandhi was greatly influenced by them, as were Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day.

I spent part of my lockdown time reading a 600-page book, *Voices from the Catholic Worker*. It contains interviews with hundreds of mainly younger people who came to a committed understanding of the Gospels and the Church through their reflections on the Beatitudes (particularly their challenge around social justice and peace-making) and their desire to practise the Corporal Works of Mercy. These teachings changed their lives, fuelled their faith, gave them a meaningful existence.

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Most have continued to live a committed Christian faith while remaining part of the Church, raising families, being involved with community development, taking 'an option for the poor', practising hospitality, struggling for more just social structures, active peace-making and witnessing to Christ in the marketplace.

#### **Fresh thinking**

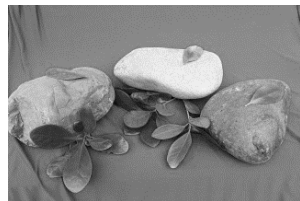
Another central foundation stone will have to be to en flesh the 2015 vision of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* for a serious involvement to preserving the health of our planet. This is no longer an option. Our planet is being suffocated to death by a million cuts daily. One example. Due to climate change, the world has lost more than one quarter of its land-dwelling insects in the past 30 years. From bees and other pollinators crucial to the world's food supply, to butterflies that beautify our spaces, the bugs are disappearing at a rate of about 1 percent a year (*Nature, May 2018*). The August 2019 report of the UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) calls for 'rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society in order to avert global warming' which poses 'an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies and the planet'.

If we proceed to consume and practise at our current levels, we will continue to be part of the planet's sinful destruction. Our response as disciples of Christ does not allow for this. What is our message in the face of this unprecedented challenge? What are we doing about it in concrete terms?

Is a new Pentecost called for? 'If nothing will be the same in the future as before Covid', haven't we been presented with a great opportunity? What is the Holy Spirit asking of us today?

At our last Māori mass here in Ōtaki, we named and blessed three *kōhatu mauri* or life-force stones. This is a traditional Māori practice for helping people focus and ground their intentions.

Our three *kōhatu mauri*, called *Te Whenua*, *Ngā Wai* and *Te Tuarangi*, represented our land, our waters and our universe and heavens. The *kōhatu* when blessed were given the task of embodying for our community a collection of concerns and hopes.



The *kōhatu Whenua* was tasked with holding the coronavirus within the context of the larger issues facing our earth community.

We named inequality of income, our climate crisis, our biodiversity crisis, our over-consumption/waste crisis, our race and hate crisis, our refugee and wars crisis and our housing crisis.

The *kōhatu Wai* was tasked with holding the coronavirus within the context of the many issues facing the waters of our world. We put into this stone our concerns for the world's oceans, in particular their warming and acidification. We included our world's lakes, rivers, streams and springs along with seasonal rains.

The *kōhatu Tuarangi* was tasked with embodying all that is sacred, and the mysterious immensity of our heavens. We acknowledged the human community, and all of Creation, as an unfolding journey of evolution.

In blessing these stones we honoured their shape and weight and all they represent for us, we commended them into the goodness and grace of God, in hope of their guidance as we journey into uncertain territory.

## Context

Our coronavirus, like everything and everyone in our world, exists in a context. The ultimate context is that everything is connected, everything is a gift and promise of our Creator. The *kōhatu mauri* remind us of the wider ecosystems of life in which everything has its place. The coronavirus is with us in a steadily warming world, a world where temperate winters are getting shorter and milder. Warmer conditions and shorter winters mean conditions become optimal for certain creatures to thrive.

A warmer world means conditions everywhere are changing, and in some cases collapsing. World wilderness areas are warming, especially ice pack and glacial zones. In cooler times these places had greater

integrity, ecosystems were more balanced and checked. In our time of climate crisis, we have entered into imbalances of many types due to habitat loss and unpredictable weather patterns.

We also live in a world chock-full of people. A good number of affluent people are now *global citizens*. They have the means to travel across seas, borders and landmasses regularly. A biologist once commented, that not only are human beings full of microbial life and dependent on them, the microbes invented us in order to get around! In a densely populated, urbanized and polluted world, microbes find themselves with ingredients and conditions enabling them to flourish.

The human community is hunkering down during this pandemic, to see it out, and in many cases in order to survive. This is necessary and wise given our threat levels. Many will want to return to business-as-usual lifestyles when the pandemic is over. The ingredients and conditions that have enabled this crisis may be easily forgotten and overlooked. Opportunities that have opened for us, discussions we needed to have will be passed up.

In this global pandemic we are displaying to each other that we care and are able to respond radically. We are altering our lives in response to changing circumstances. A similar responsiveness is needed at all levels everywhere to address the climate crisis and its deeper underlying causes and calls.

## Opportunity

Ecological commentators are reminding us that this is an important moment of choice. It is an opportunity to pause, reflect and reset. The more our world sinks into uncertainty and fear, the greater the opportunities to be compassionate and present. We can even begin the great task of re-imagining our civilization. All of this can happen in our global moment of pause and reflection, because what's before us is the possibility of genuine re-connection to the Source of all life.

We are being called to muster all the awareness and presence we are capable of, doing this we will lean into the future wanting to come to be through us. We will find the resourcefulness to make the changes like a clean energy transition in support of a genuinely life-sustaining society. We will name and address many other transitions we have to make in order to draw down our harms and enter a time of full renewal.

*Catholic Worker Peter Healy SM is a member of the Marist Ecology Commission and lives at Otaki Beach.*

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# Covid-19 and the Wasting Disease of Normality

‘But what of the price of peace?’ asked Jesuit priest and war resister Daniel Berrigan, writing from federal prison in 1969, doing time for his part in the destruction of draft records. ‘I think of the good, decent, peace-loving people I have known by the thousands, and I wonder. How many of them are so afflicted with the wasting disease of normality that, even as they declare for the peace, their hands reach out with an instinctive spasm in the direction of their loved ones, in the direction of their comforts, their home, their security, their income, their future, their plans -- that twenty-year plan of family growth and unity, that fifty-year plan of decent life and honourable natural demise.’

From his prison cell in a year of mass movements to end the war in Vietnam and mobilizations for nuclear disarmament, Daniel Berrigan diagnosed normality as a disease and labelled it an obstacle to peace. ‘Of course, let us have the peace,’ we cry, ‘but at the same time let us have normality, let us lose nothing, let our lives stand intact, let us know neither prison nor ill repute nor disruption of ties.’ And because we must encompass this and protect that, and because at all costs -- at all costs -- our hopes must march on schedule, and because it is unheard of that in the name of peace a sword should fall, disjoining that fine and cunning web that our lives have woven... because of this we cry peace, peace, and there is no peace.’

## A new normal?

Fifty-one years later, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the very notion of normality is being questioned as never before. While Donald Trump is ‘chomping on the bit’ to return the economy to normal very soon based on a metric in his own head, more reflective voices are saying that a return to normal, now, or even in the future, is an intolerable threat to be resisted. ‘There is a lot of talk about returning to ‘normal’ after the Covid-19 outbreak,’ says climate activist Greta Thunberg, ‘but normal was a crisis.’

In recent days even economists with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and columnists in the *New York Times* have spoken about the urgent necessity of reordering economic and political priorities to something more human. Only the thickest and cruellest minds today speak of a return to normal as a positive outcome.

Early in the pandemic, the Australian journalist John Pilger reminded the world of the baseline normal that Covid-19 exacerbates: ‘A pandemic has been declared, but not for the 24,600 who die every day from unnecessary starvation, and not for 3,000 children who die every day from preventable malaria, and not for the 10,000 people who die every day because they are denied publicly-funded healthcare, and not for the hundreds of Venezuelans and Iranians who die every day because America’s blockade denies them life-saving medicines, and not for the hundreds of mostly children bombed or starved to death every day in Yemen, in a war supplied and

kept going, profitably, by America and Britain. Before you panic, consider them.’

The pandemic has brought home what the threats of global destruction by climate change and nuclear war should have long ago- that the promises of normality will never deliver in the end, that they are lies that lead those who trust in them to the ruin. Daniel Berrigan saw this a half century ago, normality is an affliction, a wasting disease more dangerous to its victims and to the planet than any viral plague.

Author and human rights activist, Arundhati Roy, is one of many who recognizes the peril and the promise of the moment: ‘Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to ‘normality’, trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.’

## Call to conversion

‘Every crisis contains both danger and opportunity,’ said Pope Francis about the present situation. ‘Today I believe we have to slow down our rate of production and consumption and to learn to understand and contemplate the natural world. This is the opportunity for conversion. Yes, I see early signs of an economy that is less liquid, more human. But let us not lose our memory once all this is past, let us not file it away and go back to where we were.’

‘There are ways forward we never imagined – at huge cost, with great suffering – but there are possibilities and I’m immensely hopeful,’ said Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby at Easter. ‘After so much suffering, so much heroism from key workers and the NHS (National Health Service) in this country and their equivalents all across the globe, once this epidemic is conquered we cannot be content to go back to what was before as if all was normal. There needs to be a resurrection of our common life, a new normal, something that links to the old but is different and more beautiful.’

In these perilous times, it is necessary to use the best social practices and to wisely apply science and technology to survive the present Covid-19 pandemic. The wasting disease of normality, though, is the far greater existential threat and our survival requires that we meet it with at least the same courage, generosity, and ingenuity.

*Brian Terrell, a CW for more than 50 years, lives with his wife Betsy Keenan at the Strangers and Guests CW, Maloy, Iowa.*

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# Suicide: Redeeming the memory of a loved one

Jim Consedine

Last year in New Zealand, 685 people, of all ages and backgrounds, died by suicide. That is nearly two every day. This is double the traffic accident rate. Yet, so often we don't talk of suicide with the same freedom and insight and openness with which we speak of other forms of death. This must change.

A spiritual writer for whom I have the greatest respect, Ronald Rolheiser, an American Catholic priest and lecturer of my generation, has every year since 1986, written an article on suicide for his worldwide syndicated columns which are read weekly in more than 30 countries.

His belief is that we too often define our relationship with the deceased through the prism of the person's death – and not their life. I think he is right. We all have difficulty placing the early, middle and later years of a suicide victim's life to the forefront of our remembering, because of the sadness and shock of what has happened at death.

He says suicide is the least glamorous and most misunderstood of all deaths and gives sage advice on how to approach a death by suicide.

Rolheiser gives us four points to ponder.

In most cases, suicide is the result of a disease, a sickness, an illness, a tragic breakdown within the emotional immune system. Or simply, it could be a mortal bio-chemical illness.

For most suicides, the person dies as does the victim of any terminal illness or fatal accident, not by his or her own choice. When people die from heart attacks, strokes, cancer and accidents, they die against their will. The same is generally true in suicide.

We should not worry unduly about the ongoing life of a suicide victim, still believing as we used to, that suicide is the ultimate act of despair. This is rarely the case. God's hands are infinitely more understanding and gentler than our own.

We need not worry about the fate of anyone, no matter the cause of death, who leaves this world honest, over-sensitive, over-wrought, too bruised to touch, and emotionally crushed, as is the case with most suicides. Often those who have died by suicide are spiritual seekers who can find no relief for their pain this side of death's curtain. God's understanding and compassion exceed our own. God isn't stupid.

We should not unduly second-guess ourselves when we lose a loved one to suicide. What might I have done? Where did I let this person down? If only I had been there at the right time! Rarely would this have made a difference. Most of the time we weren't there because the person who fell victim to the disease did not want us there. He or she picked the moment, the spot and the means precisely so we wouldn't be there. Suicide seems to be a disease that picks its victim precisely in such a way so as to exclude others and their attentiveness. This is not an excuse for insensitivity or neglect. Rather, it is a healthy check against false guilt and fruitless second-guessing.

Indigenous cultures including Maori and mainstream traditional religions have for thousands of years reminded us that life and death are two sides of the same coin. Maturity of growth as human beings comes from accepting the light and dark sides of life and working out ways whereby one doesn't dominate and control to the detriment of the other. These cultures and spiritual traditions teach us that physical death simply moves us to another phase of living.

Regrettably, our modern consumer culture allows no such understanding, insisting that fulfilment, success in life and happiness come from making more money, getting higher status and constantly buying more new things – which, of course, quickly become old things. That is why our planet's very existence is threatened by the amount of its rubbish!

Our whole modern cultural approach is false, based on specious, passing promises that like ever-changing quicksand, engulf us and leave us bereft of spiritual nourishment and fulfilment - and of hope. And wondering why.

For most, suicide is a result of a disease of the mind, a collapse of the emotional immune system. There are some diseases that all the love and care in the world cannot cure, hard as we may try.

It is incumbent upon us, the loved ones who remain, to redeem the memory of those who die and not let the manner of their deaths become a false prism through which their lives are now seen.

A good person remains a good person in eternity and a sad death and misunderstanding does not change that.

## CW Website

Leading articles from the first 24 years of  
*The Common Good*  
Alternative funerals  
Restorative Justice  
Other theological issues  
[www.catholicworker.org.nz](http://www.catholicworker.org.nz)

## FUNERAL CHOICE

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

## For a New Beginning

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,  
Where your thoughts never think to wander,  
This beginning has been quietly forming,  
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,  
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,  
Noticing how you willed yourself on,  
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of  
safety  
And the grey promises that sameness  
whispered,  
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,  
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,  
And out you stepped onto new ground,  
Your eyes young again with energy and  
dream,  
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear  
You can trust the promise of this opening;  
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning  
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;  
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;  
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,  
For your soul senses the world that awaits  
you.

—John O'Donohue

## two metres apart

sitting at the bus stop  
a pause during my walk  
one sunny morning late April  
the year of Covid  
feeling how surreal  
this lockdown really is

noticing families out walking  
an aberration on a weekday  
hailing passers-by  
who swerve onto the road  
like rugby wingers in full flight  
but return the greeting, smiling

pondering the mystery  
how an organism,  
microcosmically tiny, totally invisible  
has brought our modern world  
industrialised, corporatized, militarised  
to its knees, begging

two metres apart

—Jim Consedine

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# Around the Traps

**Homeless housed** – More than 1000 NZ motel units have been made available for the homeless since the lockdown started and they are being assured they can stay. The Government is pumping **\$107.6 million** into facilities and services to keep the most vulnerable New Zealanders in need of housing under a roof for a long time. Since the alert levels were put in place, more than 1100 additional motel units have been secured for people living rough and homeless by government agencies, community housing, iwi and Maori providers. — *The Press*, 27 April 2020.

**Climate change and Covid** – Compared to Covid-19, we may feel that climate change is unlikely to kill us. A dangerous misconception. You may never see it written on any hospital chart, but every day, climate change is facilitating the circumstances for mass human fatalities. Wildfires, drought, intense storms. Reduced food and water supplies, which will exacerbate hunger, disease, violence and migration.

If we are going to spend NZ\$20 billion stimulating the economy, let's spend a bunch of that money on a Green Covid response – infrastructure projects that hasten us towards a zero-carbon future rather than landing us slap bang in the middle of another existential crisis. This is critical.

—Russel Norman, *Greenpeace NZ*, April 2020

**Covid threat in Africa** – South Sudan, which has suffered famine, has four ventilators for its population of 11 million people., and 24 intensive care beds. Somalia has 15 ICU beds for its population of 15.8 million people.

—*The Press*, 18 April 2020.

**Poverty exacerbates Covid threat** – Aid agencies have expressed grave fears for the 855,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, whose borders are sealed. In Cox Bazar, Bangladesh, there are 40,000 people per square mile living at eight times the density of the ill-fated Diamond Princess cruise ship. Moria camp, on the Greek island of Lesbos, originally built for 3000 people, now houses nearly 20,000, with 160 people sharing each toilet and more than 500 people using one shower. In some parts of the camp, 325 people use one tap. This violence makes basic living standards untenable.

—*The Press*, 18 April 2020

**Trump's insane attacks on Mother Nature** - President Donald Trump's relentless attack on sane and enlightened environmental policy tramples years of intense work among environmental groups, US industry and politicians of every stripe to achieve broad consensus on pressing issues. The attack also shreds the plea of Pope Francis' 'Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home,' the encyclical that gathers into one document Catholic thinking, accumulated over years, about the faith community's relationship to creation. This is unfathomable thinking.

—NCR, 24 April 2020

**Homelessness worldwide** - More than 1.6 billion people worldwide live in substandard housing. Of those, at least 150 million have no home at all. On any given night in the United States, 41,000 unaccompanied youth, aged 13-25, are without a home. And on all of those nights, hundreds of Catholic women religious are working to shelter them, feed them, and protect them.

—*Global Sisters Report*, April 2020

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## A Universal Basic Wage

Street vendors, recyclers, carnies, small farmers, construction workers, dressmakers, the different kinds of caregivers: you who are informal, working on your own or in the grassroots economy, you have no steady income to get you through this hard time.

The ills that afflict everyone hit you twice as hard. Many of you live from day to day, without any type of legal guarantee to protect you.

This may be the time to consider a universal basic wage which would acknowledge and dignify the noble, essential tasks you carry out. It would ensure and concretely achieve the ideal, at once so human and so Christian, of no worker without rights.

Our civilization — so competitive, so individualistic, with its frenetic rhythms of production and consumption, its extravagant luxuries, its disproportionate

profits for just a few — needs to downshift, take stock and renew itself.

I give thanks for all the people, especially women, who multiply loaves of bread in soup kitchens: two onions and a package of rice make up a delicious stew for hundreds of children.

I think of the sick, I think of the elderly. They never appear in the news, nor do small farmers and their families who work hard to produce healthy food without destroying nature, without hoarding, without exploiting people's needs.

I want you to know that our heavenly Father watches over you, values you, appreciates you and supports you in your commitment.

—*Pope Francis, Easter Sunday 2020*

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# A Shepherd's Call for Peace

**Bishop Thomas Gumbleton**

Once again information has surfaced regarding US governmental efforts to mislead and misinform people about the disgraceful destruction caused by United States wars of choice against people who meant the US no harm.

In the Afghanistan Papers, the US Government officials privately acknowledged their own uncertainty about why they were going to war against Afghanistan in 2001. The trove of newly released documents about the 18-year war unmasked years of high-level deceit and deliberate efforts to obfuscate realities on the ground in Afghanistan.

The US War on Terrorism began in 2001. However, a decade earlier the US invaded and bombed Iraq and followed the aerial attacks with an economic war in which sanctions cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. In 2002, the US invaded Iraq under false pretences, sparking a vicious civil war, destroying the country's infrastructure, harrowing the ground for Al-Qaeda in Iraq and the rise of ISIS, turning the country into a bloodbath which continue to this day.

US wars have literally set the Middle East on fire. Several million people in the Middle East and North Africa have been killed, and tens of millions have been maimed, traumatised and made refugees. Over the past 19 years, US forces have detained tens of thousands of people in dozens of countries. Prisoners have suffered ghastly torture. Some will remain at Guantanamo Bay without trial until they die.

## **US is permanently at war**

The US has killed untold numbers of civilians by unmanned aerial drones, bombing raids, cruise missile attacks, and special operations missions in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. The US toppled the Libyan Government leading to years of violent chaos. In all these places US war-making has helped cause humanitarian catastrophes.

Rather than follow the lead of the Vatican and other states that have signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear weapons, the US now exacerbates a new nuclear arms race by upgrading every warhead and delivery system, along with every production, command and control site in the nuclear weapons complex.

This tragic pattern and destroying begs the question of our responsibility as Catholic followers of Christ. The endless War on Terrorism has fallen short of the Church's Just War requirements on multiple fronts. I call on Catholics in the military, including chaplains, as well as all who work for the military and any branch of the armaments industry to heed Pope Francis's call to set aside the futility of war.

All Catholics should refuse to kill and should refuse co-operation with US wars. Catholic taxpayers should make every effort to avoid paying for war and weapons. Rather, embrace Jesus, who calls us to love our enemies, put up the sword, and take up the Cross.

*Bishop Thomas Gumbleton is the retired auxiliary bishop of Detroit.*

## **Our Passionate God**

The Christ who went to the poor like steel to a magnet was poor himself. He was poor in his origins and in his birth, but even more so when he left behind the uncertain but more or less stable life of a village tradesman and took to wandering around the country without job, home or income. Yet finally, even that was not enough, for cultural and economic poverty only symbolise the deeper poverty of human beings.

The deepest poverty is the lack of God and only a poor God could be vulnerable enough to share that, a God who has 'emptied himself' and 'become obedient even to death', as the poor have to be, who die young at the will of others. The poor Christ is not just the wandering preacher who has nowhere to sleep unless somebody took him in. He is above all the one who died.

—*Rosemary Haughton, The Passionate God, p328*



# Obituary Peter Land - prophet 14.6.27 - 22.3.20

Peter lived a long and interesting, though seldom comfortable life. Being a prophet, he pursued and proclaimed what he thought was right whether it made him friends or not. Usually the latter.

Born in Tonga nearly 93 years ago, he was very much raised in the ways of the British colonial empire. His parents called England home, though neither had ever been there and insisted on strict segregation between 'we the British' and 'them the anyone else, especially natives, Catholics and Irish'. Their mistake was to allow their children to be cared for by the said natives and the naturalness and joy of living Peter experienced as a child with the Tongan women in their household somewhat subverted all the efforts of the Empire to form him.

At age 8, with a foot in each of these opposite camps, he was sent to boarding school in NZ, the newly opened St. Peters, Cambridge, modelled on English prep schools. The trauma of being uprooted from the warmth of Tonga and Tongans to the chill of an all-white Waikato school was huge and from that moment onward he never felt at home anywhere. All his schooling years were in NZ, with summer breaks back in Tonga until World War II broke out. Just too young to enlist, he went on to a BA in Auckland and Christchurch, before deciding to train at St John's Theological College, Auckland, for the Anglican ministry.

However, weeks prior to his intended ordination his theology studies persuaded him to become Catholic. Socially, this was a deep shock to his family who saw it as betraying King and Empire. Now without a future, he retrained as a secondary school teacher during which time he met Judith, also a recent convert to Catholicism, at Teachers College. They married in 1958 and promptly moved to Fiji where Peter's father had grown up before moving to Tonga. However, Peter's attraction to the indigenous people and their way of living put him and

Judith offside with the other Europeans. This made for a difficult and often lonely life, though we, their children, had a glorious upbringing not knowing black from white. Six of their nine children were born in Fiji. Then in 1971 it was back to NZ, six years near Whangarei, before a shift to Whirinaki where he lived for the last 42 years.

Though often plagued with anxieties and feelings of inadequacy and being very self-absorbed, Peter also had a broad and cosmic outlook on life which he strove to share. Always counter-cultural and prophetically aware of the hugely destructive nature of western capitalism, he deliberately chose the valley in Whirinaki as a place to live an alternative way. His values of manual labour and hospitality and challenging the system paved the way for some of the following generations to embrace the Catholic Worker ideals into their lives. And so we got St Francis CW Farm.

Peter also had an attraction to classical Chinese philosophy and taught himself ancient Chinese so he could read the originals. This led him on to publish his own translation, *My Tao*. He found the Chinese expression much more compatible with his Christian faith than the Greek philosophy which so affected western Christianity.

On becoming Catholic, Peter formalised his attraction to St Francis of Assisi by joining the Franciscan tertiaries and that spirit of a love of 'Lady Poverty', of things natural, was always with him, especially at the hour of his death. Like Francis he chose to die outdoors, alone, embraced by the mother earth, content to go. In his last months all his anxieties dropped away, and he faced each hurdle with a little chuckle.

He and Judith produced nine children, 64 grandchildren and, so far, 56 great-grandchildren. May he rest in peace.

—Joseph Land

## Reviews

**Book Review. *The Outlaw Ocean*, Ian Urbina, The Bodley Head, London, 2019, \$40. Reviewer: John McLister**

*The Outlaw Ocean* by *New York Times* investigative reporter Ian Urbina, is about a sea voyage few of us will ever take. Urbina's book pulls us from our armchair view of the sea and into the lives of the men and women who work on the world's oceans. It is not a pretty place.

Urbina documents his time spent with crews from trawlers off the coast of Thailand to the Sea Shepherd patrolling the Antarctic seas. The subtitle of his book sums up his findings: '*crime and survival in the last untamed frontier.*'

The crimes are brutal: Cambodians sold into slavery to work on Thai trawlers; security guards on Taiwanese

vessels off the coast of Africa executing local fisherman; the physical and sexual abuse of Indonesian fisherman on Korean boats.

Along with exploitation of people, Urbina reports on the pillaging and spoiling of the oceans: rough fishing trawlers from Spain devastating tooth-fish population in Antarctica; thousands of oil rigs sunk to the bottom of the sea when obsolete; and cruise ships secretly flushing the waste of thousands of passenger into the ocean.

But with every lawless place, there are those who seek to bring order from, chaos. Urbina's stories are not just doom and gloom but of courageous women and men fighting for justice and protecting the wonders of sea.

Next time you are in your armchair reaching for a book, Urbina's *The Outlaw Sea*, described by Naomi Klein as 'just incredible', makes for a fascinating if chilling read.

**Film Review. *A Hidden Life*, Starring August Diehl, Valerie Pachner and Matthias Schoenaerts. Directed by Terrence Malick. 174 minutes. English/German Reviewer: Jim Consedine**

Occasionally true heroes rise up from the ashes of war, heroes who shed light on what might be if only God's law of love and peace-making was followed. Such a hero was Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian peasant farmer, who refused to fight in Hitler's army in World War II – and paid the ultimate price for his act of conscience.

Franz believed war to be evil and against the Will of God. 'We're killing innocent life' he told his parish priest. He let it be known around his deeply Catholic village that he was a conscientious objector and wouldn't fight for the Nazis based on his Catholic beliefs. This was an extraordinary position to take in Hitler's Germany.

When finally he was called up in 1943, he declined, despite the urgings of his bishop, his parish priest and his entire village. And in sharp contrast to nearly the entire established Catholic Church in his country! His wife, Fani, and three daughters stood with him in his decision, despite the price they would all have to pay of ostracization and scorn of their Catholic neighbours – and his absence from the rest of their lives.

In a remarkable document written in prison after his arrest, Franz described a dream he had in 1938 in which crowds of people were struggling to board a shiny new train. At some point he heard a voice announce, 'this train is bound for hell.' Franz interpreted the train to be a

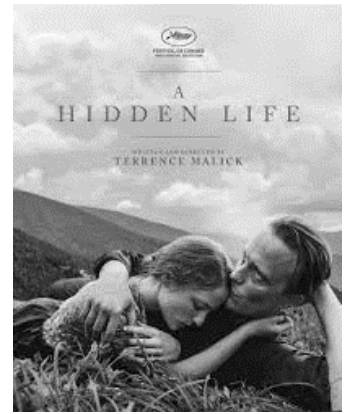
symbol for the Nazi movement. He realised he would never be able to pledge allegiance to Hitler nor to serve the Nazi war machine. It was simply against his conscience, a mortal sin.

He was arrested, maltreated, tried by a military court where he pleaded conscientious objector status based on his understanding of his faith. This plea was denied and he was beheaded in prison, 9 August 1943.

*A Hidden Life*, Franz Jägerstätter's story, is told very well by Terrence Malick, a veteran filmmaker with a history of good movies behind him. It is lengthy but absolutely gripping. The music score is beautiful. As is the scenery – some of the best rural, alpine and valley views of Europe.

The acting is impressive, portraying well the sense of rampant nationalism, racism and xenophobia that enveloped Europe at the time. And somewhat foreboding given current developments there and elsewhere.

With his wife present at the ceremony, Franz was beatified by Pope Benedict in October 2008. He has become a significant figure in peace-making and Catholic Worker circles because of his courageous stance. His feast is 21<sup>st</sup> May.



## Letters

Malu 'Aina Center  
P.O. Box 489  
Kurtistown, Hawaii 96760

Aloha and Greetings Brother Jim,

Great to hear from you and thanks for the retreat model, your poem and Fr. Pete Healy's reflection. All much appreciated.

We are all in the same boat. I'm with you --over 70. I haven't seen a predicting loss of lives yet for Hawaii, but it's coming no doubt. Hopefully this time of hunkering down and social distancing will help us all change the curve of life for our planet.

Hang in there. Solidarity!

*Jim Albertini*

Worcester CW  
Massachusetts, USA  
30 March 2020

Dear Jim,

Peace! The virus has turned the world on its head. Our day-to-day bears only some resemblance to what it was three weeks ago. We are serving our meals at a super long table to give each guest at least a metre or two between the others. We have been watching the Pope's daily Mass on-line. Our weekly peace vigil has become a time when we hold signs to try and encourage others not to lose hope. We stand two meters away from each other.

Please exercise caution. You are a bit older than Claire and me. We want you around for many more years. Hopefully, your stay-at-home retreat will prove a blessing and make you even more creative and holy.

Blessings from Worcester,

*Scott Schaeffer-Duffy*

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South Brighton  
Christchurch

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212 Burwood Rd  
Christchurch 8083

Dear Jim,

Dreams are free. What if New Zealand, instead of taking part in the upcoming RIMPAC war preparation exercises with the US, Australia, and 18 other invited countries, instead stayed away and spent the millions it was going to cost us to attend on providing COVID-19 assistance to small Third World nations with insufficient funds and resources to look after their people? Spend the money on welfare instead of warfare? Who knows, we just MIGHT embarrass some of the other participants into doing the same.

In solidarity,

*Rex Knight*

19 March 2020

Dear Editor

How ironic it was that on Wednesday, 18 March, the day our parliament made courageous and welcome changes to social practices to enhance the health and wellbeing of the nation through the Covid-19 proclamations, they also voted to make a woman's womb the deadliest place on earth for thousands of unborn children under the same health and wellbeing banner. It seems only those already born have a right to life!

Yours faithfully,

*Jim Consedine*

*This letter, though sent to The Press, was not published.*

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## Power or Leadership?

Have we made a mistake and set our sights on power rather than leadership all along? Why is it that, in the midst of a pandemic, we had only one naval commander who stood up for care in a care-less system? We had one public health doctor who stood up for ethical experimental processes in the national science laboratory in a country of thousands of them? And he lost his job for doing it.

How is it that leaders suddenly assume power when, clearly, 'leadership' and 'power' are two different things? Nazi concentration camps ran on power but there was not enough leadership in the system to stop the enforcement of its rawness, of its bestial efforts at conquest. And all of that in the very age when the world's witnesses to it are still alive.

Surely it is time to remember again that leaders are meant to call a group to become the best of itself, not to prey on the worst of human appetites. Leadership unifies a group; it doesn't divide it. Leadership pursues the common good, not the personal good. Leadership saves the future for us rather than render it stillborn in the present.

The saints and martyrs and prophets of the church never taught a cloying subservience in the name of obedience when the world needed prophetic truth.

Real leadership is about the quality of life the leader shapes for the entire society. Leadership is about the compassion the leader shows to those who seek good at the gates of the nation that promises good to all. Real leaders carry the beacon of justice and truth within themselves and so shine the way for others to carry it on after them. The leader exists to maintain the highest values and virtues of the land, so that those values may live forever in the hearts of the people s/he leaves behind.

From where I stand, we have been confused about the difference between power and leadership. We have been too long in awe of tumult devoid of vision. We have lost a taste for real solid gold leadership and accepted the gold-plated lookalike instead.

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

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**The Common Good**

Te Wairua Maranga Trust  
 Box 33-135  
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 New Zealand



**Suffering and Hope**

We in the midst of a highly teachable moment. We have a chance to go deep and go broad. Globally, we are in this together. Depth is being forced on us by great suffering, which, as I like to say, always leads to great love.

*—Richard Rohr OFM*