

# Herod exits the White House

Jim Consedine

The Church has traditionally celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany on 6 January. The feast is the acknowledgement by the non-Jewish Gentile world that Jesus was the divine liberator and saviour, the one sent by God to proclaim the beginnings of the reign of God on earth. It is a wonderful feast and wonderful news.



"Death and the Abbot" Hans Holbein, 1538

But Epiphany also has a dark side relating to political power. It is not just about three wise seers coming to acknowledge the divine presence. It is also about the role of King Herod, a man threatened by a perceived new source of power. In an attempt to kill off a rival, Herod used deception and lies to seek out and kill more than 300 innocent children in and around Bethlehem. This unprovoked slaughter we commemorate with the feast of the Holy Innocents.

## The power of evil

This year, the Feast of the Epiphany, 6th January 2021, provided another epiphany of its own. It was the day of the incredible attempted coup d'état by white supremacists to take over Capitol Hill in Washington DC in a bid to prevent the transfer of power to a new Administration. The whole world was watching. We saw it unfold on the telly.

There is something deeply ironic and even more disturbing that the USA, which purports to have been a predominantly Christian nation these past 400 years, on the Christian feast of the Epiphany should experience this direct violent assault on the symbolic power base of American democracy.

A riotous mob, many prepared with gas masks, pipe bombs, awash with guns, waving confederate flags, believing conspiracy theories and fake news, and stoked by the chief protagonist, the US President Donald Trump himself, attempted a fascist uprising, an insurrection. The scars of this uprising, fuelled by anger and hatred, are deep, prolonged and on-going.

The consequences will be many.

Rightly is Satan is called 'father of lies'. When lies get preached repeatedly, they undermine confidence in truth and sow confusion. One of the greatest theologians of the past millennium, St Thomas Aquinas, taught that truth and justice are companions. You cannot have one without the

other. Injustice builds on lies; hatred inflames them.

This insurrection had been fermenting in the US for generations as inequality, poverty and alienation hit poor white voters, especially in the South among the former slave states. They looked for scapegoats. Distant powerbrokers in Washington became the target. The 'swamp' needed to be drained. It took only a match to set this explosive cocktail of the disaffected alight. On Epiphany Day 2021, Donald Trump lit that match.

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In a perverse way, maybe the rioters did us all a favour by exposing the American underbelly to full global scrutiny. The racism, inequality and violence displayed sadly reflects a large part of their culture and their history. The body cannot heal until the boil is lanced. The terrible statistics on prisons, race, poverty, education, unemployment, homelessness and addictions tell much of the story.

But not all of it. Millions of American people are among the most generous, kind, inclusive, just and caring people in the world. They were as shocked and



saddened by these events as the rest of us. In a nation already deeply divided, the fault lines were exploited in chasmic proportions during four years of Trump rhetoric and misinformation, aided by key allies in Government and the Congress.

### **Christians in the mix**

It is challenging to try and understand how more than 80% of white evangelical Christians and 50% of Catholics voted for Trump in the recent elections when he had such a disastrous, sinful track record of narcissistic bullying, womanising, xenophobia, racism and pathological lying. More than 30 000 lies (*Fact Checker*, Jan 2021) were publicly documented over four years. Yet they did vote for him. Ideology and propaganda triumphed over faith.

It is even harder to understand how so many US Catholic bishops supported Trump during his term of chaos. Trump lied about his supposed ‘pro-life’ credentials by playing to the bishops’ Achilles heel, abortion, and promising anti-abortion Supreme Court judges, which they got.

Important as these issues are, later, these bishops chose to focus primarily on abortion and euthanasia

as their election strategy in the face of other life and death issues posed by deteriorating planetary health, and the various climate crises - global warming, rising sea levels and vital eco-systems facing extinction. The continued burning of rain forests, the ‘earth’s lungs’, the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic racism, immigration issues, social inequality, rising unemployment, widespread poverty and the always-present threat of nuclear war were sidelined as the primary foci of their teaching. In addition, Trump executed 13 prisoners in his last days in office, the most by any US President in more than a century. ‘Pro-life’? Indeed!

Talk about leadership abdication! These bishops defied the advice of Pope Francis; Trump played them like a fly-fisherman angling for a catch. They made a mockery of their own professed beliefs about God’s love and justice, to curry favour with a man who unashamedly replicated a modern-day Herod.

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### **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](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)**

### **Hope for the future**

We Christians have just celebrated at Christmas the birth of God into human history in the person of Jesus. This birth should be a gamechanger for people of faith. Our hopes for the future are based on this event and on the dignity and justice for all this birth brings – none excluded! We hold to these Gospel teachings and in faith and love work to live them ourselves and put them into practice. We follow the simple but very radical command of Jesus – love your neighbour. Love your enemies. Inclusively. Challenging stuff, these teachings sit at the heart of who we are meant to become.

By definition, we are social beings called to live justly with our neighbours. Let us pray that the United States will overcome their divisions and emerge morally stronger, more just, more democratic in future years. That Christians of all persuasions will lay aside violence and follow the real Jesus, who is non-violence personified, arm-in-arm with their Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and indigenous neighbours and all people of good will. That their practice of fairness and inclusiveness built on justice, compassion and mercy will begin to heal their nation’s soul. And that the Church will again be on the front lines in the trenches, proclaiming and living this message.

# Editorial Looking at Race in NZ

Lent is often a time we attend to our inner journey, sometimes through increased time for prayer or study groups, or by cutting out coffee – anything that helps our self-absorbed- material - selves remember our need for God. It is a time to pay more attention to the shadow side of ourselves and consider opportunities for new thinking or ways of being too.

An opportunity that I am taking this Lent, is to spend time understanding more about the impacts of the white settler history and colonisation on me, on Aotearoa and people in other places in the world. Through reading, listening to the experiences of people who have not benefitted from the current world systems, discussing with friends and prayer, I hope to understand more of national and global systems that have led to the fact that nearly all the richest and most powerful people in the world are white. They are also mostly male.

I have thought a lot about gender as a cultural construct, but less about race, but it is everywhere, although often slightly veiled. Here are some comments I have heard in the last few months from friends and neighbours, which seemed banal enough at surface value but can you notice a sub-text?

*'It is a pretty rough area where we are in Whangarei, but we have installed a burglar alarm and we seem to be ok.'*

*'I used to help out with the Waitangi Day celebrations but the Maori committee members as usual are fighting among themselves so I pulled out.'*

*'He speaks quite good English considering he is from India.'*

*'My son got really high marks but getting into medical school is pretty much impossible if you're not Pacific or Maori or rural now in New Zealand.'*

*'Of course Black Lives Matter but surely every life matters.'*

Each person saying these things to me has assumed that as another white person, I am sympathetic to the speaker's sub-text which it is possible to interpret as negative judgement or diminishing of the experience of people who are not white. The code we use to convey our racial prejudice is increasingly subtle and insidious, but it is part and parcel of life in any country that has been settled by white people or who have done well out of global imperialist actions through the past centuries. This includes most countries in Europe as well as the UK, Canada, Australia, USA and New Zealand.

Years ago, I didn't consider race affected me much either positively or negatively. As a European New Zealander, I have said 'I don't see or think about someone's colour' and thought that race is something that people who aren't white experience. I told myself that white privilege is not something relevant to me and I thought I had some great reasons for saying this: I was

born in India and I have lived and worked there as person who is an ethnic minority for many years. Many of my friends are not white. I am married to someone who isn't white. But none of this lets me off the hook. I have recently got clearer in my head that although race doesn't have a biological basis, it is a socially constructed identity which impacts may interactions in Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

## White privilege

So here are some of the ways that I have benefitted by being a white Pakeha member of the settler population of Aotearoa/ New Zealand (ie. ways I have experienced white privilege):

One set of my great-grandparents came from England as a landless farm labourer and bought land in the South Waikato from another settler who had bought it at bargain prices from the original tangata whenua of that area. Since then our family has benefitted from that lovely farm which is now owned by my cousin, and the income from that farm enabled my mother to go to university, which changed the trajectory of her future and mine.

Both my parents were first in their generation to get university degrees, and both trained as teachers. For them and for me, practically every teacher through school and at university was ethnically European which is likely to have made it easier for them and me to imagine becoming a professional, and to make a plan to follow university education. I wanted to be a doctor when I grew up, and it was much easier for me to imagine this when nearly every doctor who treated me in my early years was also a white European. Recognising that people who looked like me did this job, made me think this was something I could do. As a doctor, I have had the privilege of status, opportunity for a very good income and all sorts of perks. For instance, last year we rented a house in Christchurch without being asked for a reference from another landlord or without any credit checks, even though both my husband and I were unemployed at the time. And I didn't even take notice of that at the time as I am used to being seen as trustworthy.

I recognise that being a white New Zealander has meant I have benefitted through my history, my daily interactions and my access to resources. Justice and peace, core to the Catholic Worker, involve us all doing some hard work (reading, thinking and acknowledging ways we are complicit in the tangled wrongs of this world). So here's to hoping that Lent can push all of us into places that are uncomfortable as we read, think and pray and that we also each take every opportunity for sharing power, speaking up for justice and showing compassion.

—Kaaren Mathias

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# Nuclear Ban Treaty

Kate Dewes

In 2017, a landmark agreement was adopted by the UN which categorically prohibits ownership or production of nuclear weapons. It was agreed to by 122 countries. Known as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, (TPNW), it required 50 countries to ratify it before entering into force. It has now been ratified by 51 countries and came into force on 22 January 2021.



NZ was the first country to celebrate this important day with gatherings around the country including one on the New Brighton Pier, which Catholic Workers from Christchurch attended.

The Treaty obligations include never under any circumstances to develop, test, produce, acquire, stockpile, threaten to use, transfer or host nuclear weapons or assist with or encourage any such activities.

The Treaty's entry into force demonstrates the power of small states to resist the pressure and coercion of larger powers, just as Aotearoa/New Zealand did when we became the first Western-Allied country to declare itself nuclear free in 1987. In pledging to this new Treaty, we join nine other countries from the Pacific, a region which has experienced more than 350 nuclear weapon tests in the past 70 years, which have left such a destructive trail in their wake.

## Kate's address to Christchurch gathering

Today is very exciting for me and those of us who have worked for this day for decades.

As we gather at the Pacific Ocean edge we join with all those around the world who have died from the use or testing of nuclear weapons and the *hibakusha* – survivors especially in Japan, and indigenous peoples from the Marshall Islands, Tahiti, Samoa, and Australia.

We connect with millions throughout the world who have for decades worked to see this UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons come into force. From the first UN resolution 75 years ago which opposed nuclear weapons, to the protests, petitions, marches, and campaigns over the decades..... we have all made a difference.

I want to acknowledge especially the actions of those from our city who made significant contributions to shifting the mindset from the day the first nuclear bombs was dropped on Japanese cities in August 1945:

- In the very early days Quakers and CND members commemorated the use of this illegal weapon with marches and public meetings.
- In 1963 Elsie Locke and Mary Woodward, as CND

coordinators, collected over 80 000 signatures nationally for the *No Bombs South of the Line* petition - calling for the Southern Hemisphere to become a Nuclear Free Zone.

- They were joined by Norman Kirk, MP for Lyttelton and later PM who in 1973 sent a warship to protest French testing at Mururoa and joined Australia and other Pacific Island states to take France to the International Court of Justice, effectively forcing them to stop atmospheric testing in the Pacific. He also advocated in the UN for a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone.

- In late 1970s coalition of groups developed here out of which grew the nuclear free zone movement led by Larry Ross and others calling for cities and boroughs to be declared NFZs. Christchurch was the first nuclear free city declared in March 1982 along with Rangiora and Lyttelton.

By 1984 over 66% of population lived in NWFZs and the Labour Government, under the leadership of David Lange, won the election promising to legislate against visits by nuclear powered and armed vessels.

In 1987 NZ passed the first nuclear free legislation in the world and joined Belau, the Solomons and Vanuatu as nuclear free countries. This legislation is now what all countries joining the Ban Treaty will have to pass at national level.

At the same time local magistrate Harold Evans began a campaign to ask the International Court of Justice to rule on the legal status of nuclear weapons. Ten years later the UN's highest court ruled that the threat and use of nuclear weapons was generally illegal under international law. All 14 Judges ruled that 'there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control'.

This Ban Treaty we are celebrating today built on this ruling – and it has taken another 25 years to finally get a treaty with many NZers taking leading roles along with Pacific Island states – 9 of whom have joined the 51 ratifying states – ie making up a 1/5 of all states ....

Well done everyone who signed petitions, wrote letters to MPs and Councillors, wore badges, declared their homes NF, and supported the campaigners – together we have succeeded in banning the most horrific weapon ever through this iconic legislation.

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# Al-Noor Mosque Attack – Second Anniversary

Sr Dorothea OCD

Two years ago, on Thursday 4 April 2019, Sr Marietta, Sr Mareta, and I needed to go out to get passport photos at a place in Addington in Christchurch as we have to keep them updated for identity purposes.

After we got our photos, we drove across to Riccarton via Hagley Park. Suddenly we realised we were quite close to the fated Mosque where horrendously, 2 weeks earlier, 51 people were killed and many more injured while they were at prayer. The gold dome came into view. All the news we had heard and seen crashed in on us as we looked at that dome very differently as never before.

The Muslim man who leads prayers at the Mosque, saw us from the doorway and came down to greet us. We felt really drawn to go with his warm invitation to come in, hardly believing what was happening. There was a sense of something wonderful to be able to pay our respects and personally express our love and concern. What an extremely rare privilege for us to be there! And not planned at all.

At the door, we were hailed by a welcoming group of people – Muslim men and women who warmly embraced us as we gave a quick explanation of who we were. We all gelled straight away. Courteously, we were asked to remove our shoes at the door, like Moses, which we did.

It was such a loving atmosphere. We told them that we had very much wanted to write a sympathy letter but could not find their address! But here we were to do that - in person – on the way to a passport appointment! Only God could have possibly arranged all those little details for this to happen.

We were overcome to think we would soon be standing in the very place of such terror and bloodshed, which we had followed closely and prayed so much about. We had also watched by link the moving Hagley Park National Memorial Service with PM Jacinda Ardern speaking and Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens) singing – and thousands of people gathered to grieve together and support relatives and friends of the victims.

People crowded around us. It was peaceful and joyful. There were some lovely women, too, who so enjoyed talking with us, and vice versa. A young lady poignantly told us that her husband was killed and she was three months pregnant. Others spoke of accepting everything and talked of forgiveness.

## Attending Prayers

Their quiet serenity spoke volumes. By this time, we had entered the prayer room of the Mosque. A very moving moment. No words could describe what had happened there. Quite large and bare, but homely, and only a grey but warm lining on the floor before it would be carpeted properly. The podium was in place at the front for a speaker. This reminded us that the bus load of a visiting Bangladesh cricket team were impatient to arrive in time for the sermon that day to be preached from this podium.

But they had several annoying hold-ups of a minute here and there along the way, which saved their lives. They arrived to see the most horrifying scenes unfold before their eyes.

As we moved further inside this room, still surrounded by happy smiling, peaceful people, I felt my tears running with deepest sorrow, shock, and emotion of actually standing in this place. I thought I was dreaming! But realised I was not when I could not find my handkerchief! The smiling, kindly prayer leader - in his white robes and Muslim prayer cap - noticed. He hastened to sit me down on a chair. He sat close in front of me and ever so gently wiped my eyes with several snowy white tissues. Then he carefully dried the rest of my face like a loving mother. and asked me if I was okay? And we were supposed to be there to comfort them! It was the most tender, beautiful, unexpected gesture. I was thinking is this really happening?? Fancy a Muslim man wiping tears from a Carmelite nun's face! I was dumbfounded and humbled and I felt so silly that I had forgotten my hanky. I thanked him profusely.

It was now about 5.00pm, which signalled their prayer time. About seven men along with my solicitous 'carer' stood facing the front of the prayer room. Then the Imam began the haunting prayer chant which filled the room. Another friendly lady beside us, whom we had just met and was a Muslim convert, translated the beautiful prayers for us.

## A forever memory

We said good goodbye and walked down the short passage to the outside driveway where more things were in store. There were some people there – a man and a woman and a few others who asked if they could interview and film us. We asked what it was for and it turned out they were a Reuter's news team. That was overseas stuff so we complied – hoping it would all be 'offshore'. We were still feeling a bit dazed after such an emotional experience in the Mosque. They said our answers were perfect which seemed like another little miracle in the circumstances.

Now we were really worried about the time and we walked quickly to the car, passing the two policeman who were still sanding patiently with rifles at the ready.

We said a heartfelt thank you to them for their bravery on that fateful day, and also for their long vigils at the Mosque. They were very appreciative. Another thing was achieved which we had so wanted to say.

*Sr Dorothea OCD is the Prioress of the Carmelite Monastery in Christchurch. Printed with permission. We have featured this article to honour the men, women and children killed two years ago in the Al-Noor Mosque attack near our Catholic Worker house in Christchurch.*

# Around the Traps

**# Christmas at the CW** – Another great Christmas dinner was celebrated at Suzanne Aubert CW in Christchurch on Christmas Day. About 60 people braved the wet morning to gather in time for the sun to appear at noon and grace our gathering. Jim breezed in at noon to welcome our guests, acknowledging those who had died during the year, while Kaaren and Jalori led a bi-cultural grace to get proceeding under way. Earlier in the day, the Italian contingent – Maria, Guliana, Sandra and John - had descended in force to help preparations. They were joined by Tony, Francis, Aaron, Jock, Sharmaine, Tui, Sister Judith, Vanessa and Louise. Patrick and Violet, Vanessa, Paddy, Jen and Clare generously help to supply the fare, which was abundant and enjoyed by all. Many left with leftovers to help with Boxing Day. Our 32nd Christmas meal together was about as good as it gets!

**# Same-sex civil union:** ‘Homosexual people have a right to be in a family. They are children of God, have the right to a family. You can’t kick someone out of a family, nor make their life miserable for this. What we have to have is a civil coexistence law; they have the right to be legally covered.’ *Pope Francis, October 2020*

**# I endorse the reported comments** of Pope Francis on same-sex civil unions. I know that he is anxious for LGBTQ people to know that they are valued members of the family of the Church as they are of their own families. We want their happiness, and for them to know that they are loved.’ *Bishop Patrick Dunn, President, NZ Catholic Bishops’ Conference*

**# Medical apartheid** - Israel has distributed the highest number of vaccinations for COVID-19 per capita in the world to its own citizens. It has denied access for vaccines to Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and Gaza. This is the policy of the Israeli government. 5.2 million Palestinians have no access to vaccines, even though Israel controls their lives and destinies. 1500 have already died in Gaza . *Democracy Now, 6/1/21*

**# U.S. billionaires’ gouge** - The collective wealth of America’s billionaires has jumped by \$931 billion, or nearly one-third, since mid-March, roughly the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, even as the U.S. economy was reeling from a huge spike in joblessness and a collapse in taxes collected. The total net worth of the nation’s 644 billionaires has risen from \$2.95 trillion on March 18 to \$3.88 trillion on October 13, despite growing needs and economic hardship caused by the pandemic. Needless to say, ordinary workers did not fare as well as billionaires during the pandemic: nearly 62 million lost work between 21 March and 19 September 2020, while 22 million adults reported not having enough food in the week between Sep. 2-28,

including 14 million with children in the household.

**# US death penalty** – Former US President Donald Trump’s outgoing Administration carried out its 13th and final execution five days before his term finished. The last time the federal Government carried out executions during a presidential transition period was in the 1800s. No other presidency has executed so many people in 120 years. All failed to win clemency from the Supreme Court, which Trump has stacked with Right-wing ideologues. The final execution, January 15th 2021, Martin Luther King’s birthday, was of Dustin Higgs, a black man, who never killed anyone. It wasn’t enough for Donald Trump and William Barr to simply end a 17-year moratorium on the barbaric and ineffective federal death penalty. They’ve also set a grisly record for the most-ever federal executions in a single year. Inmates are usually given at least 120 days’ notice before their state-sponsored deaths.

Lisa Montgomery, a mentally impaired and badly abused woman who had been on death row for 17 years, killed on 8th December, was given only 56 days. She was the first woman killed by the federal government in nearly 70 years. Her lawyer said, ‘There’s no possible way for her to get a fair clemency hearing.’ We Christians cannot accept this outrageous injustice. Pope Francis, the National Council of Churches, and countless other Christian leaders have long spoken out against the death penalty. As Jesus said, ‘Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.’ Let’s follow the example Christ whose birthday is near. ---*Don Timmerman, Casa Cry CW paper*

**# ‘The extent and degree of hate** that exists in the general population of the U.S. today is unprecedented in my eighty years of living here. The members of political parties, ethnic groups, religions and media are sophisticatedly, cleverly or brazenly daily spewing out hate and inciting people to hate. But as with all continually chosen evil, it is only a matter of time before ‘the chickens come home to roost,’ or as the New Testament puts it, ‘Do not be deceived. God is not mocked; you will reap what you sow’ (Gal 6:7). Those who incite human beings to hate others will eventually, when it serves their purposes, use their skills to incite those whom they previously deceived into hating others, to hate each other.

—*Theologian Emmanuel Charles McCarthy*

**# Annual Appeal** – the annual appeal for the Catholic Worker/*The Common Good* was held in November and from 51 donors, \$10,175 was returned. We appreciate that many are living in economically harder times so are really appreciative of these generous donors. Our outlay each year is \$25 000, but Providence is an amazing presence to have in our group so we survive into another Covid year. *Gratias.*

## the bitter fruit

with the world watching  
chaos ascended Capitol Hill  
a coup attempt in all but name  
insurrection before our eyes

within this poisoned culture  
built on the cowboy myth  
centuries of slavery, inequality  
worship of the golden calf

endemic racism, poverty  
a war economy, trust in violence  
guns more common than soap  
rage flowed alive and virulent

religion co-opted, corporate, tepid  
gummy structures, few teeth  
betraying the Gospel of love  
in the face of demonic forces

despite these seismic events  
fire still burns in a million hearts  
spiritual dynamite  
fueling social justice

beacons piercing darkened skies

—*Jim Consedine*

## bumping into Christ

at the fish shop in the Mall  
Chen Liu gives bigger serves  
to the poor who squat outside

in the carpark out the back  
a young man crouches on the concrete  
counselling a disturbed addict

during the tangi at Rapaki  
the power of presence  
remains poignant for days

visiting a state house in Linwood  
friendship and kindness  
received with appreciation

at the rest home in Harewood  
compassion can be touched  
respect and dignity are bywords

from the dairy on Selwyn Street  
leftover pies and savouries  
feed the hungry

called to serve our neighbour  
bumping into Christ  
an everyday reality

—*Jim Consedine*

## 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)



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# Abolish the SAS

Jim Dowling



In 2014 Greg Rolles, Tim Webb, Sam Quinlin, and Dave Sprigg were brutally assaulted by SAS soldiers on Swan Island, a highly secretive training base at the bottom of Victoria. They were hooded, stripped naked, threatened with rape and drowning, dragged along the ground, kicked and walked on.

Recently I returned with Greg to Swan Island along with Dominican priest Fr Peter Murnane and a friend, Shane Anderson. We went there once again to offer ongoing witness and resistance to Australia's war crimes in the Middle East. For Greg it was also a chance to face the demons of his own home-grown torture at the hands of the SAS.

We received a very different reception from Greg and friends four years ago.

You see, the Australian military is facing the most shameful exposure in its history. A long investigation has concluded SAS troops murdered at least 39 unarmed Afghans, often for no reason other than the desire to kill another human being. This is Australia's My Lai.

For ten years prior to the release of this report, a group of Christians had been offering nonviolent resistance to Australia's illegal and immoral wars, by blocking the gates or walking onto Swan Island, to place their bodies in front of the war machine.

In 2014, while being assaulted, more than one of the victims told later of the thought going through his mind, 'If this is what they do to us, imagine what they do to Afghans and Iraqis?'

Now we know.

## Revisiting the scene of the crime

Our own reception was nothing like that. I believe the change reflects the universal shame the military, and indeed all Australians, are feeling right now.

We entered the Swan Island base before dawn, walked to the training area right near the scene of the assaults, and held our banner, 'Stop Training Killers – Abolish the SAS'.

When we were finally spotted by a security guard, he calmly told us the police were coming. Soon after we heard over the loudspeakers, 'There are peace protestors on the base. All personnel are to remain in their quarters till further notice.' Greg live-streamed all our activities. No attempt was made to stop him. In fact, he continued to record in the back of the police

van.

The police were ultra-polite. They drove us off the base and released us. Summonses for trespass would be sent in the mail, they said.

On the same day as we entered Swan Island, the Chinese published the mock picture of an Australian soldier cutting the throat of an Afghan boy holding a lamb. Of course the post was inspired by the section of the Breerton report claiming the SAS cut the throats of two 14-year-old boys and left them on the side of the road 'for others to clean up the mess'. The prime minister immediately demanded an apology. But none is forthcoming. The China /Australia diplomatic war has just opened its most shocking front.

On the long drive home to Brisbane, Greg and I turned on the radio for the first time. The voice of MP Jacqui Lambie greeted us. She was demanding that Defence Chief Angus Campbell resign over the whole issue. But mostly she was talking about the terrible problem of Defence Force suicides. Of course, recent developments can only dramatically exacerbate the problem. It is indeed a tragedy.

## Moving forward

But the solution is not to cover up the horror of war with empty platitudes. Empty platitudes about our brave and noble troops. Such platitudes help ensure each succeeding generation of youth, who have not seen the horror of war, will bravely sign up for it.

We need to see a time when the truth is told. That war is a terrible evil. It dehumanises all who take part. We need to face up to fact that war crimes are not just committed by individual soldiers, or even the generals who Jackie Lambie seeks to blame.

Surely the first war criminals are the politicians who sent young men and women off to kill people who posed no threat to us. As someone once said, 'War is about killing people who are not our enemies for people who are not our friends.' The Howards, Abbotts, Gillards, Morrisons of this world should all be put on trial for instigating and/or continuing this mindless bloodshed. Bloodshed for the rich and powerful to become more rich and powerful.

Once the initiators of the war crimes are held accountable, maybe we can honestly face the shame.

*CW Jim Dowling has been a Catholic Worker in Queensland for more than 40 years. A long-time nonviolence resister, he has innumerable arrests to his credit and shows few signs of slowing down his resistance to war, poverty, racism and militarism.*



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# Diamond Jubilee dinner speech

Rev Pat Crawford

I was ordained in 1960 along with eight others in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Christchurch, into the Latin and Trent Church. Our identity was clear, our sense of absolutes defined. It was like living in a separate world within the world.

During that first decade after my ordination, the Vatican Council occurred. Following the Council, we experienced a very energetic diocese during the seventies and eighties. The bishop was working with his consultants after meeting with the Diocesan Pastoral Council whose membership came from representatives of the Senate (or Council of Priests), the Association of Religious and the Lay Assembly.

My experiences at the time were through the lay formation groups, the YCW, YCS and CFM and their approach of See, Judge, Act. This process enables one to live their faith as distinct from practicing a religion. If you start a process from the abstract reading of doctrine and the Scriptures, that is where you will likely stay – with an abstract and theoretic faith. Alternatively, if you look at your faith after reflecting on the realities of life, you have a better chance of living your faith. See, judge, act is a vital mantra.

## **The Moon, Mars and Venus**

Also, in my first decade of priesthood, the first humans got to the moon. Humanity saw a photograph of our planet from the outside for the very first time. This beautiful blue and white planet came up over the moon's horizon. But as NASA's satellites explored the various planets and got further away from the earth, we saw the earth looking no more than a speck of sand in the distance. Just a little bright speck of sand in the morning sky where every piece of history has taken place.

Nothing has ever happened in human history outside that speck – every culture, every war, every language, every kingdom, every race of people, every achievement. It fascinates me when I hear this claim, that everything, politics, art, technological and scientific advance, pieces of literature, everything, including Jesus' Incarnation and our Redemption has occurred on this planet.

In 2018, we were confronted at the National Assembly of diocesan priests with some of the challenges to our priesthood. James Mallon's analysis highlighted how the Institutional Church was undergoing a cultural change where the future requires a whole new process more than just new programmes. As the Church is not a static institution, the process will require the whole People of God to

be involved in the Church's mission.

And Bishop Vincent Long highlighted the horrors of child abuse and of clericalism. A good proportion of the world sadly sees us priests as much a cause of suffering, pain, poverty and injustices as people eager to help overcome them. Both speakers spoke of the need to re-vision our future.

Then the next year, Brother Guy from the Vatican Observatory came to our diocese speaking about the universe God created and so loves. He spoke about the inadequacies of Greek science to try and explain the mysteries of faith to 21st century people.

We are left today to present Jesus, the Gospel, and the mysteries of faith to an educated people taught about the laws of thermodynamics with the energy/entropy activities, and the mysteries of quantum physics where science tells us that everything in the solar system is interrelated and interdependent through the energy link rather than things being independent substances. There is no such thing as an independent substance. We hear again Jesus' prayer, 'Father, may they be one as we are one so that the world will know that it was you who sent me'. (John 17.21ff)

## **Living among atheistic views**

Today's extensive knowledge of the cosmos indicates that even the sun looks like a speck of sand alongside millions of other suns and billions of other planets within our galaxy, the Milky Way. So, have we any special status in the eyes of God? And now with the Hubble telescope giving us our first glimpse of the enormity of the universe, that even the entire galaxy could look no bigger than a grain of sand in this massive, massive, universe.

And then there is God beyond and within all of creation – an expansive God, a big God, a God of cosmic proportions. But still a God who loves us all dearly. The Spirit of God, the Incarnation of Jesus, and the Gospel are as essential today as ever.

The natural world bears the footprint of God. It is a book we can all read. The mission continues. But has anyone any idea of what life on earth or elsewhere in the solar system will look like when our current deacons come to celebrate their diamond jubilees in 2080?

Life for me has been a privilege and faith a great blessing which brings with it a hope for the future.

*Pat Crawford, a firm friend of the Catholic Worker, gave this address (abridged) at a recent dinner honouring his diamond jubilee of priesthood.*

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# Child abuse in the Philippines

Shay Cullen SSC

Thank you for welcoming me to your virtual meeting to share with the Council of Europe some information and concerns about the condition of children today in the Philippines and the danger and violence they suffer from child sex abusers through on-line sex shows and child pornography.

The same dark forces of evil that have trafficked and lured as many as 100,000 or more children into sex slavery and commercial sexual exploitation in the Philippines, as UNICEF estimates, the same criminals are also at work in Europe and all over the world. The Internet with all its good benefits has become the international highway for child abuse.

The horrific condition of sexually abused children online in the Philippines makes our country the international hub of on-line child sexual abuse, according to both UNICEF and EUROPOL. The majority of the customers are from developed nations. They pay people (many of whom are relatives of the children) to access children for the purpose of sexual abuse. The global connection by on-line communication makes online sexual exploitation of children a concern for every nation.

## The unregulated internet

There is no nation without its paedophiles and most of them are using the internet and worldwide web to collect and view child pornography and pay for on-line sexual abuse. Many can do it with impunity because the Internet Service Providers and the Telecommunication Corporations are mostly unregulated. Anyone can post almost anything there and the corporations are not held responsible.

The attitudes still persist from the past that paedophilia is not a serious problem and that attitude may persist as child pornography and on-line sexual abuse persist and continue to spread and grow especially in this time of lock-down and Covid-19 pandemic. There are 73 million Filipinos using the internet. Twenty-five million are children and 70 percent of these children are on-line without supervision.

Online child abuse has increased by 264 percent during the COVID pandemic, according to the Philippine National Police. Online customers for child sex abuse are mostly from developed countries, including member and observer States of your organization. Victims are as young as three years old. Relatives are the abusers and paid by courier.

There has been indifference and apathy in the past to crimes of child abuse. More resources have to be devoted to detecting and apprehending child abusers and increasing the penalties for crimes against children. Billions of euros are being spent on anti-terrorism

prevention and apprehension, yet the greatest and most prolific of terrorists are those within society. They rape, abuse, physically and sexually assault children. They do it undetected and it happens in secret behind closed doors and not on the streets. That is why there is less response and action to end it, and they do it around the world through live child sexual abuse videos on the internet.

## Widespread abuse

The numbers in the Philippines are truly shocking. About 80 percent or 32 million children suffer from violence at some time in their lives. Seven million of these children between the ages of 10 to 18 are sexually abused every year and 20 percent or 1.4 million are under 6 years old.

We can safely assume the sexual abuse suffered in childhood damages millions of children in Europe and the Philippines and around the world. The anger and hatred we see being released in therapy shows the devastating effects of sexual violence on children. The many millions of children abused never report it out of fear or shame as most of it is done by biological fathers, stepfathers or live-in partners and paedophiles.

Few victims are able to speak out or get therapy or help. They grow up carrying the pain and hurt and anger within them. Should we be surprised if this anger at the world is expressed in acts of anti-social, political violence and crime or even acts of terrorism? Everything has its cause and psychologists will testify that childhood violence has life-long consequences.

Lastly, a final thought for consideration. On this planet Earth, humans can achieve many amazing inventions and achievements, but as yet have failed to deal with that psychological and emotional condition in some humans whereby they sexually and physically attack children and those children have to live with the consequence with little or no help.

We humans talking about human and children's rights and dignity must together seriously dedicate ourselves all the more to continue the on-going work of eradicating, as much as possible, this evil scourge of child sexual abuse. We need to strictly regulate the internet and the many platforms of social media, the most important place to continue this work.

*Rev. Shay Cullen, an Irish Columban priest, has worked with young people in the Philippines for more than 40 years. He gave this address via Zoom to European leaders.*

# Letters

Malu 'Aina  
Hilo  
Hawaii 96760

Aloha NZ Catholic Workers and friends,

Warmest greetings! Friday 27 November 2020 marked 1000 weeks of the distribution of a new peace leaflet prepared as part of the Hilo peace vigil held weekly on the Big Island, Hawaii. It is distributed widely by email, on our website ([www.malu-aina.org](http://www.malu-aina.org)) and handed out on street corners.

We started this weekly peace vigil on the day after 9-11, a day that resulted in the tragic deaths of nearly 3000 people. The theme of the 1st letter published in 2001 was 'Restraint NOT vengeance'. However, the US lashed out and attacked at least 7 countries; Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Yemen and Pakistan, killing, injuring and displacing more than 37million people and causing widespread destruction.

Both Democratic and Republican Administrations support the US war machine and its 800 overseas military bases surrounding Iran, China and Russia. No wonder the US empire is considered the greatest threat to world peace on the planet!

Jesus, Mohandas Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King and millions of others have taught, 'love your enemies'. Gandhi said, 'Any eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind.' Non-violence must always be our guiding light. In all that we do, the means we use must always be in line with end we seek.

After 41 years, we, at Malu 'Aina, continue to grow food for people in need and have long served as an emergency food pantry. We continue efforts to demilitarize Hawai'i and the planet and shift resources from warfare to healthcare, education and the environment. Protecting the planet from nuclear war and climate disaster are two of the biggest challenges we face. But we also face the urgent healthcare crisis of this Covid-19 pandemic and all the associated human needs that go with it.

Once a year we write to ask your help to sustain the work of Malu 'Aina, our all-volunteer organisation committed to justice, peace and a living planet. Donations are tax deductible if made out to : Center for Non-violent Education, and Action, P O Box 489, Kurtistown, Hawai'i 96760, USA.

With gratitude, aloha, and in solidarity forever,

*Jim Albertini*

Carmelite Monastery  
Christchurch

Dear Jim,

Blessings to you and all who contribute to *The Common Good*. Thank you for all the work that goes into your paper. The world sure needs peace in our time. How it could have changed the world in such a huge way! Our world is bleeding and so needs God's help and comfort. Thank you for helping to bandage some of her wounds through your articles, viewpoints and action at the Catholic Worker. Keep up the good work.

With much love from us all and our prayers always,

*Sr Dorothea OCD and sisters*

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Southern Star Abbey  
RD 2 Takapau  
Hawkes Bay

Dear Jim,

I was born on Anzac Day, 1934, and ordained a priest 16th April 1959. Ever since I have always offered Mass for our deceased Anzacs. They died that we might live in peace and freedom. We owe them an eternal debt of gratitude. The thousands of Anzacs and their allies willingly fought and died in a six-year war against the Nazi regime, the greatest empire of diabolical evil that brought suffering and death to millions of innocent people.

Yours sincerely,

*Max Palmer*

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32 Ilam Road  
Christchurch

Dear Fr Jim,

Thank you for the continued messaging of relevant and important matters. However, I am very disappointed that, included in the Advent edition of *The Common Good* (no 95), the claim by Jeph Mathias that the NZ prime minister is 'humane' went unchallenged. I wonder if the unborn, dismembered as a result of legislation promoted by the prime minister, would agree that she is 'humane'?

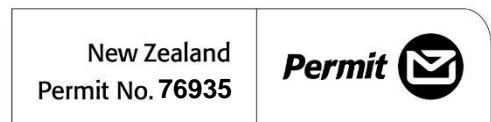
May God bless you,

*Frances Johnson*

<b>In this issue</b>	<b>Page</b>
Herod exits the White House – Jim Consedine .....	1-2
Lenten Reflection: Decolonisation – Kaaren Mathias.....	3
Nuclear Weapons Ban – Kate Dewes.....	4
Anniversary – Al Noor Mosque attack.....	5
Traps and Poems.....	6-7
Abolish the SAS – Jim Dowling .....	8
Pat Crawford reflects on 60 years of priesthood .....	9
Letters .....	11

**The Common Good**

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



‘It was a hot summer day in New York City. As I stood clinging to a pole in the midst of a packed, noisy subway car, I longed to be anywhere else. But as I looked around, I became aware of the incredibly diverse array of humanity. No two were alike: each one was dressed differently, with different accents, hair styles, body types, skin colour, and faces. Yet each one was aglow with Life. I realized that the whole subway car was full of the presence of God. If that’s true of a subway, it’s true of everything, everywhere.’

—Quoted by Richard Rohr OFM